

VFA-137 Command Operations Report
Calendar Year 2009

1. Command Data

- a. Name: Strike Fighter Squadron One Three Seven
- b. UIC: 55142
- c. Commanding Officer: Wilson, Christopher T., CDR, USN
- d. Assumed Command: 2009-07-09
- e. Mission: To provide combat ready, trained and educated forces to Carrier Air Wing TWO enabling sustained, carrier based, air power projection.
- f. Home Port: Naval Air Station Lemoore, California
- g. Immediate Superior: Operational – Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO
Administrative – Commander, Strike Fighter Wing Pacific
- h. Task Force: None
- i. Forces under operational control: None
- j. Aircraft: 12 F/A-18E, tail code NE
- k. Tenant Activities: None
- l. Personnel Assigned: 22 officers, 182 enlisted
- m. Point of Contact: [REDACTED]
Public Affairs Officer
[REDACTED]@navy.mil
[REDACTED]@navy.smil.mil
(559) [REDACTED]
DSN: [REDACTED]

Commanding Officer
STRKFITRON 137
Unit #60148
FPO AP 96601-6239
- n. Organizational Structure:
 - Commanding Officer – CDR D.D. Kindley, Jan – Jul
CDR C.T. Wilson, Jul – Dec
 - Executive Officer – CDR C.T. Wilson, Jan – Jul
CDR K.D. Harms, Jul – Dec
 - Command Master Chief – AMCS (AW/SW) C. D. Miller, Jan – Sep
CMDCM (AW/SW) C.M. Scarano, Sep-Dec
 - Command Career Counselor – NC1 [REDACTED], Jan – Dec

Administrative Officer – ENS ██████████, Jan – Dec

Operations Officer – LCDR ██████████, Jan – Jun
LCDR ██████████, Jun – Sep
LCDR ██████████, Sep – Dec

Maintenance Officer – LCDR ██████████, Jan – Jun
LCDR ██████████, Jun – Dec

Safety Officer – LCDR ██████████, Jan – Jun
LCDR ██████████, Jun – Sep
LCDR ██████████, Sep – Dec

2. Commander's Assessment

Coming off a very dynamic and successful combat deployment in 2008, the Kestrels of VFA-137 spent 2009 mostly at its home port station of Lemoore, CA, providing the opportunity for some well deserved rest and time with family. However, the lack of a deployment did not signify a dearth of operations and challenges. Rather, the Kestrels took part in numerous exercises and surmounted many issues that proved just as demanding as previous years.

First, the squadron took part in a Sustainment Exercise in late January, maintaining their carrier deployable proficiency in case of urgent need. A testament to the skill and resolve of the maintenance department, the Kestrels achieved a 100 percent sortie completion rate while flying 64 sorties for 165.5 hours. Moreover, VFA-137 distinguished itself by performing above the air wing average in both day and night boarding rates.

In March we traversed the "Pacific Pond" in a demonstration of the squadron's maintenance prowess and conducted air-to-air training with the Hawaii Air National Guard (HANG) out of Hickam Air Force Base (AFB), Hawaii. The geography and airspace provided singular training that supplied complex scenarios and simulated actual combat. During this training exercise, VFA-137 completed 103 sorties and flew over 164 hours.

Next, the joint training opportunities continued when in April we transported our squadron across the country to MacDill AFB in Tampa, Florida. There, we participated in a combined exercise, *Jaded Thunder*, alongside all the other military branches as well as Joint and Coalition Special Forces in the combined capacity we were accustomed to in combat zones. The Kestrels logged 70 sorties and 123 hours for a 93.8 percent completion rate while conducting these intricate missions.

Unfortunately, that fast pace did not sustain itself through the tough funding cutbacks that took effect in the summer and would engulf all services before year's end. The drawdown in flight operations that took place strained both the Kestrels' operational and maintenance readiness. However, as the summer rolled into the fall, VFA-137 gradually increased its operational tempo in preparation for starting the work-up cycle.

Of note, VFA-137 took the lead role in planning and participating in a live missile exercise that occurred in early November. This intricate event involved 6 squadrons, more than 20 aircraft, and the firing of 18 missiles. This evolution provided an amazing opportunity for pilots to plan and execute a live missile shoot, thereby increasing the squadron's tactical proficiency and acumen.

Finally, the Kestrels closed out the year with a Carrier Qualification detachment to the USS *John C. Stennis* in early December, refreshing the squadron's proficiency with carrier operations and

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renewing the pilots' qualifications. During a two day period, VFA-137 flew an impressive 30 sorties and 34.1 hours while successfully performing 40 day and 31 night carrier arrestments.

Of course, numbers and dates do not provide the whole picture of the Kestrels' past year. A sterile recounting of empirical data without the corresponding human element would leave this report incomplete and do an injustice to the unique accomplishments and stories that took place. It is the names and faces of the Sailors that will stand out to those who look back upon 2009.

One such memorable moment was the commissioning of Aviation Structural Mechanic (Safety Equipment) Chief Petty Officer [REDACTED] to the rank of Ensign. This motivated Mustang took the oath of office in late December of 2008 and transferred to VFA-94 in early 2009 to become their Assistant Maintenance Officer. He left behind an inspiring example for all Sailors and the message that their "goals can come true as well."

Another Sailor who distinguished himself was Chief Warrant Officer Four (CWO4) [REDACTED]. While working as the Kestrels' Maintenance Material Control Officer and the Assistant Maintenance Officer, CWO4 [REDACTED] became the first Warrant Officer to win the Commander Robert E. Rothschild Aviation Maintenance/Logistics Officer of the Year Award. As the 2008 recipient, he was honored at a banquet on January 8, 2009. Moreover, CWO4 [REDACTED] was previously honored on the east coast in 2002 with the equivalent award, evidence of his continued excellence throughout his career.

Moreover, Kestrels excelled in areas beyond the professional realm. Aviation Electronics Technician Third Class (AT3) [REDACTED] earned the distinction of being named to the 2009 All-Navy Soccer Team. After participating in three weeks of tryouts and training in January, AT3 [REDACTED]'s defensive prowess led to his selection to the 18-man team out of 35 candidates. He immediately joined the team for the U.S. Armed Forces Men's Soccer Championship in early February. The Navy team finished the round-robin tournament with a victory over defending champion Air Force, leading to a hard-fought silver medal.

In addition, VFA-137 did its part in representing naval aviation in various public and civic-minded events. A flight of four Kestrel aircraft had the honor of performing the flyover for the commissioning of the USS *Stockdale* (DDG-106) held on April 18, 2009, at Naval Base Ventura County, CA. On hand for the ceremony were such distinguished guests as Senator John McCain, Ross Perot, Admiral Timothy Keating as well as 100 former POWs along with Admiral Stockdale's widow, Sybil Stockdale, who herself had done so much for the cause of POWs in Vietnam. The chosen flyover pilots of LCDR [REDACTED], LT [REDACTED], LT [REDACTED], and LTjg [REDACTED] were appreciative of their small part in honoring this revered naval aviator and American hero.

The Kestrels also provided their support towards the great American pastime of football. On October 18, 2009, LT [REDACTED] led the flyover of the Green Bay Packers vs. Detroit Lions game. LT [REDACTED], a native Wisconsin "Cheesehead," took the lead in the perfectly timed flight of two Hornets over hallowed Lambeau Field in Green Bay, WI.

Finally, VFA-137 celebrated the end of the year by acknowledging the exceptional Sailors that stood out during 2009. At the annual Christmas party held on December 4th, the Kestrels named the deserving Sailors of the Year. AME3 [REDACTED] was honored as Plane Captain of the Year. Blue Jacket of the Year went to AEAN [REDACTED]. The Kestrels then recognized AM3 (AW) [REDACTED] as Junior Sailor of the Year. HM2 (AW) [REDACTED] won distinction as Sailor of the Year. Last but not least, VFA-137 named AM1 (AW) [REDACTED] as the Senior Sailor of the Year. Ending 2009 with this award ceremony represented a fitting culmination to an eventful year.

In conclusion, VFA-137 will look back fondly upon 2009 with its professional and personal milestones and memories. Through the superb work of its maintenance and support departments,

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Kestrel aviators were given the opportunity to experience training unique to the Navy. We now stand proud and thankful to carry those experiences into a demanding work-up cycle and a follow on deployment in 2010.

3. Chronology and Narrative

2009 01 23 – 2009 02 05 : Command embarked USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) for Sustainment Exercise (SUSTAINEX) to ensure Carrier Strike Group-NINE (CSG-9) and its composite commands were ready to support rapid deployment if called upon.

2009 02 28 – 2009 03 14: Command conducts detachment to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii to conduct air-to-air training with F-15Cs of the Hawaii Air National Guard (HANG).

2009 04 18: Squadron division conducts flyover in ceremony commissioning USS Stockdale (DDG 106).

2009 04 24 – 2009 05 10: Command conducts detachment to MacDill Air Force Base, Florida to conduct joint exercise, *Jaded Thunder*, with Marine, Army and Air Force units.

2009 10 18: Kestrel jet leads the flyover of a Green Bay Packers vs. Detroit Lions game at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

2009 11 09 – 2009 11 10: Squadron participates in a live missile shoot exercise and also takes the lead in coordinating the evolution.

2009 12 07 – 2009 12 14: Squadron detachment conducts carrier qualifications onboard USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN-74).

4. Supporting Reports

a. Statistical Data:

i. Hours Flown

Ashore:	2935.5	Embarked:	204.5
Total:	3140.0		

ii. Sorties

Ashore:	1799	Embarked:	146
Total:	1945		

iii. Carrier Landings:

Day:	80	Night:	57
Total:	137		

b. "Battle Efficiency Award" submissions

i. Squadron Cover Letter

ii. Data Spreadsheet

c. "LTJg Bruce Carrier Award for Excellence in Maintenance" submission

d. "CNO Annual Safety Award" submission

5. Published Documents

a. Professional Articles:

- i. "Kestrels Turn 'Goat' to 'Mustang,' ENS ██████, *Golden Eagle*, January 23, 2009

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- ii. "Kestrel's [REDACTED] Honored as Rothschild Recipient," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, January 30, 2009
- iii. "Kestrels Sustain," ENS [REDACTED] *Tailhook*, Spring 2009
- iv. "Kestrels Retire Master Chief and Family," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, March 27, 2009
- v. "One Kestrel's Passion for Football," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, March 27, 2009
- vi. "The Kestrels Conquer Islands," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, April 3, 2009
- vii. "Kestrels bid Farewell to Chief [REDACTED]," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, May 1, 2009
- viii. "Kestrels Lend a Helping Hand," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, May 8, 2009
- ix. "Kestrels Embrace Soul of Aviation in Flyover," ENS [REDACTED], *Tailhook*, Summer 2009
- x. "Kestrels get Higher Education," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, June 12, 2009
- xi. "Kestrels See Off the Desk Chief," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, June 26, 2009
- xii. "Kestrels' Day of Fun," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, July 3, 2009
- xiii. "Kestrels Sail with New Skipper," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, July 17, 2009
- xiv. "Kestrels Retire Navy Thoroughbred," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, July 31, 2009
- xv. "Kestrels Reflect on 26 Year Career," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, September 18, 2009
- xvi. "Kestrels Retire Command Senior Chief," LTJG [REDACTED] *Golden Eagle*, September 25, 2009
- xvii. "Kestrels' Rock 'n' Roll Retirement," LTJG [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, October 30, 2009
- xviii. "VFA-137," LT [REDACTED] *Flying Ops at NAS Lemoore*, 2010
- xix. "Kestrels Gear Up For a Busy Year," LT [REDACTED], *HOOK*, Winter 2009
- xx. "Kestrel Soaring High in Military Racquetball Tournament," LT [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, December 18, 2009.
- xxi. "VFA-137 Celebrates the Holiday Season," LT [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, December 25, 2009.

b. Command Website: http://vfa-137.ahf.nmci.navy.mil/Main_Page.htm

c. Biography of Commander: "CDR C.T. Wilson, USN"

6. Photographs

a. Commanding Officer's Official Photograph: "CDR C.T. Wilson, USN"

b. A Flight of Four Kestrels Flying in Hawaii.