

5750
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9 Mar 03

From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron TWO
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-0502)

Subj: SUBMISSION OF FITRON TWO 2002 COMMAND HISTORY REPORT

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12H

Encl: (1) Fighter Squadron TWO Command Data
(2) Commanding Officer's Biography
(3) Executive Officer's Biography
(4) 2002 Chronology
(5) 2002 Narrative
(6) Fighter Squadron TWO Battle "E" Submission
(7) Fighter Squadron TWO News Releases

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) through (7) are submitted .

A. S. WHITSON

COMMAND DATA

Commanding Officer: Andrew S. Whitson, Commander, U.S. Navy
Executive Officer: Douglas J. Denny, Commander, U.S. Navy

Senior Administrative Command: Commander Fighter Wing, U.S. Atlantic Fleet

Senior Operational Command: Commander Carrier Airwing TWO

I. Squadron Mission:

To provide combat ready aircraft and aircrew capable of performing any air-to-air or air-to-ground mission when called upon. VF-2 is dedicated to maintaining the highest tactical proficiency possible by always training and evaluating each of its aircrew. Mission capable aircraft are provided by the constant upkeep and grooming performed by hard working maintenance personnel. Bullet aircrew in their F-14D Tomcat will always be ready to go into harm's way.

II. Aircraft: Grumman F-14D Bureau numbers:

100	163894	105	163418
101	159630	106	164342
102	164349	107	159595
103	164350	110	159600
104	164351	111	159613

III. Duty Station

When Ashore:

Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia Beach, VA

When Deployed:

USS CONSTELLATION (CV-64)

FIGHTER SQUADRON TWO 2002 CHRONOLOGY

January	FAC(A) Detachment – NAS Fallon, NV
February	FAC(A) Detachment – NAS Fallon, NV
March	Air-to-Air SFARP – NAS Key West, FL
April	Missile Exercise (AIM-54/AIM-9) – NAS Oceana, VA
May	Bullet Blowout – MIG killer symposium Air-to-ground SFARP – NAS Fallon, NV Missile Exercise – NAS Oceana, VA
June	TSTA II/III – USS CONSTELLATION (CV 64)
July	C2X - USS CONSTELLATION (CV 64)
August	CVW-2 Combined Detachment – NAS Fallon, NV
September	CVW-2 Combined Detachment - NAS Fallon, NV 9-11 Memorial Golf Tournament (benefiting TAPS)
October	CVW-2 JTFEX - USS CONSTELLATION (CV 64)
November	CVW-2 Deploys for WESTPAC 2002-2003
December	Missile Exercise (AIM-54)- USS CONSTELLATION (CV 64) OPERATIONS SOUTHERN WATCH and ENDURING FREEDOM

2002 Chronology Narrative

The VF-2 Bounty Hunters started the New Year by preparing for its upcoming deployment. In the past, time between workups has typically been 18 to 24 months, but due to events that took place during 2001, VF-2 would have to affect a turn around in about half that time, effectively completing two cruises within a 26-month period.

Only five months after the return from its 2001 deployment, VF-2 detached several aircraft to NAF El Centro, CA for FAC(A) training. Serving as an airborne Forward Air Controller (FAC(A)) is a critical mission as it allows for the direction and coordination of attacks on enemy forces without putting nearby friendly forces at risk. During this time, the squadron dropped an impressive 48,000 pounds of live ordnance as well as 218 Mk-76 practice bombs. Following this excellent training, the squadron headed to Key West for two weeks of air-to-air SFARP (Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program). Thanks to the beautiful Florida weather, as well as its own maintenance department, the squadron was able to complete 110 action-filled sorties against the F-5's of VMFAT-401. When the squadron returned to Oceana, VA, in April, training continued in the form of a missile exercise. The missilex was a complete success with 3 AIM-54C Phoenix and 1 AIM-9 Sidewinder successfully destroying 4 target drones earning the squadron four Boola Boola's.

The Bounty Hunters took advantage of a little down time in May to sponsor the Bullet Blowout, a symposium and reception open to all, where famous MIG-killers of the past were able to share their experiences with current fighter pilots and RIO's at the NAS Oceana Officer's Club. Guests included legendary F-4 pilot (and current Congressman) Randall "Duke" Cunningham, Capt. (Ret.) Sam Flynn, CDR (Ret.) Bill John, and CVW-2's own, CAPT Mark "MRT" Fox. May was also a turning point for the Bounty Hunters since this was when the squadron learned that it would transition to the F/A-18F Super Hornet the following July in Lemoore, CA.

A significant portion of the Tomcat's mission revolves around delivering air to ground ordnance, and for this training the squadron headed to Fallon, Nevada. With its excellent weather, live bombing and threat radar ranges, the Bounty Hunters were able to practice a variety of delivery techniques under some very realistic conditions. Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center piloted aircraft further complicated the problem by simulating enemy aircraft and tactics, but that did not prevent the Bullets from dropping 41,500 pounds of live ordnance on target as well as 38 LGTR's (Laser-Guided Training Rounds).

The opportunity for VF-2 to get its sea legs back came in the form of TSTA/COMPTUEX. After flying the squadron's aircraft cross-country to San Diego, the Bounty Hunters completed several FCLP (Field Carrier Landing Practice) periods at NAS North Island as well as at "the rock" (San Clemente island - ideal for carrier landing practice thanks to its remoteness and carrier-like wind conditions). The realistic training paid off as VF-2 excelled during the first line period with 3 top hooks, and a top nugget, allowing the squadron to finish second out of the eight fixed-wing squadrons in the air wing. The seemingly perennial fog and low cloud ceilings the air wing encountered off the southern California coast made the

squadron's performance that much more meaningful. The operational tempo during the Bounty Hunters' time aboard the USS CONSTELLATION (CV 64) was also noteworthy with the squadron sometimes flying as many as 18 sorties a day. Thanks to the hard work of the VF-2 maintenance department, the squadron logged 644.5 flight hours and 361 sorties over the 32-day at-sea period.

After six demanding weeks away from home, VF-2 returned to Oceana for some much-deserved rest. Work continued unabated for the maintainers though as they put in long hours to get the squadron's F-14's ready for Air Wing Fallon which took place during the end of August and beginning of September. Once again, the extra effort paid off as the Bullets were able to perform all assigned missions during three hectic weeks in Fallon. Of particular note was the squadron's performance in the area of Time Sensitive Strike (TSS). The F-14 is ideally suited for the TSS mission thanks to its dual crew; long loiter time, advanced LANTIRN pod (used for acquiring and accurately guiding weapons onto targets), and its ability to send back imagery of targets almost instantaneously. Despite the busy schedule, several of the squadron's enlisted personnel still found the time to compete in and ultimately win the CVW-2 softball tournament. Upon the squadron's return to Oceana, it sponsored a 9-11 Memorial Golf tournament raising \$750 for the TAPS program (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors).

As October approached, the squadron continued making preparations for its upcoming deployment and eventual move to Lemoore. After an intense period of FCLP's, the squadron flew its ten jets cross country to San Diego, CA once again, this time to complete JTFEX. The two-week exercise would be the last chance for the squadron to fine-tune its tactical abilities before cruise, and it excelled once again. With JTFEX complete, the squadron enjoyed a few days rest in San Diego before leaving for its 2002-2003 deployment.

On October 14th, the USS CONSTELLATION (CV 64) left San Diego with Operation Enduring Freedom still ongoing, and tensions rising in the Arabian Gulf region. As the ship passed near the Hawaiian Islands, the squadron took advantage of some of the local training ranges to conduct FAC (A) and strike training. After a three-week Pacific crossing, the squadron enjoyed five days of much-deserved liberty in Hong Kong. Shortly thereafter, the squadron spent six days in Singapore. Once the ship continued west toward the Arabian Gulf, the squadron conducted a very successful missile exercise in which the squadron launched four AIM-54's at three target drones with each scoring a direct hit.

The USS CONSTELLATION (CV 64) entered the Arabian Gulf on the 18th of December, and the squadron began flying Operation Southern Watch (OSW) missions the very next day. Fortunately a brief slow-down during Christmas Eve allowed the squadron to enjoy a fine "Connie" dinner as well as an anonymous "Secret Santa" gift exchange. Since then, flight operations have continued at a very demanding pace. Thanks to the hard work of its maintenance department, the squadron continues to meet all of its operational commitments. From the newest enlisted to the squadron commander, every Bullet is focused at the task at hand, and is proud to be part of the Bounty Hunter team.

From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron TWO
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-0502)

Subj: FIGHTER SQUADRON TWO BATTLE "E" SUBMISSION

Ref: (a) COMNAVAIRFORINST 1650.15

Encl: (1) Contributions to Weapon System Development
(2) General Contributions to Fighter Community
(3) Information for Fighter Squadron TWO "Safety S"
Submission

1. Per reference (a) the following data is submitted:

a. Operational Achievements (December numbers estimated)

(1) Flight Hours

(a) Total hours flown: 3344.2

(b) Total hours flown ashore/percent of total hours:

1. Day: 1578 / 47%

2. Night: 356.7 / 11%

(c) Total sorties ashore:

1. Day: 1025

2. Night: 300

(d) Total embarked hours/percent of total hours:

1. Day: 1201.1 / 36%

2. Night: 208.4 / 6%

(e) Total sorties embarked:

1. Day: 617

2. Night: 256

(f) Utilization rate per month/average for year:

1. January: 1.9

Enclosure (6)

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2. February: 2.7
3. March: 5.2
4. April: 2.6
5. May: 5.5
6. June: 2.2
7. July: 5.2
8. August: 4.9
9. September: 4.9
10. October: 7.0
11. November: Not available
12. December: Not available
13. For the year: 4.2

(2) Shipboard landings

(a) Total carrier arrested landings

1. Day: 624
2. Night: 305

(b) Boarding rate: .934

(c) Carrier Landing Grades: 3.374

(3) OPTAR management (Hours Granted/Hours Flown/%utilization):

3400 / 3344.2 / 98.5% (numbers estimated)

b. Training and Readiness

(1) Competitive exercises:

High Noon*

TARPS Derby - Winner

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Fighter Derby* LANTIRN Derby*

*Result can be obtained at SFWSL.

(2) Ordnance expenditures (list type and % of allocation expended):

LGTR	143 / 510%
GBU-12	9 / (0 allocated)
MK-20	23 / 135%
MK-82	108 / (0 allocated)
MK-83	38 / 158%
MK-83I	17 / 155%
BDU-48	20 / 56%
BDU-45	92 / 270%
MK-76	644 / 133%
MK-84	16 / 114%
AIM-9	2 / 67%
AIM-7	0 / 0%
AIM-54	7 / 175%
20MM	3439 / 57%

(3) Missile firings:

1 AIM-54	163900	30 APR 02	1 AIM-54	164346	11 DEC 02
1 AIM-9	163900	01 MAY 02	1 AIM-54	164350	11 DEC 02
1 AIM-54	159630	30 APR 02	2 AIM-54	163418	11 DEC 02
1 AIM-54	164345	30 APR 02			

c. Weapons System Readiness

(1) Aircraft material readiness (Rates based on SCIR data)

Month	FMC	NMC	NMC-Maint/	NMCSupply
January:	83.5	10.2	6.7	3.5
February:	82.1	8.5	3.5	5.0
March:	94.6	5.3	4.0	1.3
April:	77.2	18.0	15.9	2.1
May:	81.7	9.9	9.6	0.3
June:	83.6	6.8	6.8	0.0
July:	73.5	15.7	14.3	1.4
August:	70.1	9.5	5.1	4.4
September:	63.2	30.0	23.5	6.5
October:	70.6	22.7	20.4	2.3

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November: Not available
December: Not available

For the year: 78 13.7 11 2.7

- (2) Cannibalization rate per 100 flight hrs: 24.6
- (3) SQD "I" Level A799 rate/100 removals for cause: 7
- (4) AC material Readiness Report(SCIR)accuracy: 99.6
- (5) Total number of FOD occurrences: 2
- (6) Ave.# & type of aircraft in inventory: 10 X F-14D

d. Personnel Readiness

(1) Retention rate

- (a) First term: 32.1%
- (b) Second term: 66%
- (c) Third or subsequent term: 100%

(2) Advancement

- (a) Total eligible/TIR/time in service: 166
- (b) Total taking exams: 164
- (c) Total not recommended: 2
- (d) Total selected: 32
- (e) Total passed but not advanced: 129
- (f) Total failed: 3

e. Combat Readiness Inspections and Exercises

(1) Inspection Results

Subj: FIGHTER SQUADRON TWO BATTLE "E" SUBMISSION

(a) Material Condition Inspection: Exceptional performance on a "no prep" AMCI of 5 squadron aircraft. Numerous accolades from the inspection team with specific praise for VF-2's phase maintenance program.

(b) Conventional Weapons Technical Proficiency Inspection (CWTPI): Received a much lauded "OUTSTANDING" in all areas during the May 2002 CWTPI with the expenditure of (3) AIM-54, (2) TALD, (1) AIM-9, and (4) MK-82. All missiles were direct "Boola-Boolas."

(c) Integrated Weapon Systems Review: Completed on aircraft 104 with an overall grade and highest grade possible of SATISFACTORY.

(d) NATOPS Evaluation: 9 Sep 02 / SATISFACTORY

(e) Aviation Maintenance Evaluation: Completed in August with an overall grade of SATISFACTORY. Received praise for the HAZMAT program that was described as the "Best of Fighter Wing."

(2) Major Exercises/Special Operations:

FAC A DET	25 JAN - 09 FEB
A/A SFARP	01 MAR - 16 MAR
A/G SFARP	10 MAY - 25 MAY
COMPTUEX	16 JUN - 25 JUL
Air Wing Fallon	07 AUG - 06 SEP
JTFEX	14 OCT - 30 OCT
WESTPAC deployment	02 NOV - present

f. Achievements in Aviation Safety

(1) Alpha flight/flight related/ground mishaps: 0

(2) Bravo flight/flight related/ground mishaps: 2

Class B FM 01-02, 09 APR 02, Summary: Post-flight inspection revealed starboard engine ingested three fasteners from the no. 5 racetrack panel during the MF resulting in engine FOD.

Class B FM 02-02, 30 AUG 02, Summary: Starboard engine foddied in flight. Aircraft landed without incident. Two fasteners found missing on starboard side forward of the intake.

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(3) Hazard reports submitted: 1

(4) NATOPS Changes submitted: 1

g. Contributions to Weapon System Development: See enclosure (1).

h. Contributions to Tactics Development: Tactical Projects completed: As the chairman of the CVW-2 Time Sensitive Strike Warfare Board, VF-2 was instrumental in developing the Air Wing's standardized short-fuzed strike planning and briefing processes. The methodical process developed was successfully employed during the Air Wing Fallon Detachment and JTFEX with outstanding results.

i. General Contributions to Fighter Community: See enclosure (2).

j. Professional Articles

(1) "Keep All Super Hornets at Oceana" published in the October 2002 issue of Proceedings magazine by CDR Denny.

(2) Four articles pertaining to real-world fleet operations written by CDR Denny published in the "An Ocean Away" section of the U.S. Naval Academy alumni magazine, Shipmate entitled; "Running with Basher," "Fallon is Booming," "A Pirate Looks at 40, Forty Somethings at JTFEX" and "America's Flagship, the USS Constellation."

k. Medical Readiness: Scores to be provided by Fighter Wing.

1. Additional Squadron Remarks

(1) Squadron Awards: Winner TARPS Derby.

(2) Individual Awards: In the last CVW-2 line period LCDR [REDACTED] claimed the CVW-2 Top Hook with squadron pilots claiming 3 other positions in the Air Wing top ten as well as one of the top 5 nuggets. Overall the squadron performance ranked second in the Air Wing.

(3) Squadron Commanding Officer remarks: Currently engaged in combat operations in the Arabian Gulf, VF-2 is proving once again that it is the finest fighter squadron in the Navy and worthy of selection as the Battle "E," Safety "S" and Clifton awards winners.

After returning from a WESTPAC/Arabian Gulf deployment in September 2001, the BOUNTY HUNTERS have excelled in a very compressed 13 month IDTC while maintaining an outstanding operational drive and focus.

Subj: FIGHTER SQUADRON TWO BATTLE "E" SUBMISSION

The preceding numerical data undoubtedly highlighted the rigorous operational and training tempo the BOUNTY HUNTERS have maintained when compared with other fleet fighter squadrons.

In addition to the normal trials of the IDTC, the BOUNTY HUNTERS have been engaged in a transition plan that will see the squadron conducting a homeport change to NAS Lemoore upon return from our current deployment. Through all, the squadron has maintained its focus in preparing aircraft and aircrew to excel in any and all fighter missions during ongoing combat operations in Iraq.

Contributions to Weapon System Development

Fighter Squadron TWO has unquestionably been the leader in the F-14 Weapon System Development. Specific accomplishments include:

(1) Drove clearance review and validation process with NAVAIR for simultaneous carriage and release of JDAM and LGBs for F-14A/B/D aircraft.

(2) Drove the F-14A/B/D 56K max trap increase for combat operations.

(3) Through his own research of the F-14D display architecture, AT1 Seaman of VF-2 suggested an airframe change to allow LANTIRN and Fast Tactical Imagery (FTI) images to be displayed concurrently on two displays in the aircraft. This recommendation has been adopted by NAVAIR and will significantly enhance near real time target identification and target acquisition in Time Sensitive Strike scenarios. For this effort he received a 5,000-dollar "Beneficial suggestion" bonus. Battle Groups and Unified Commanders will receive an even-more capable real time strike asset, greatly reducing sensor to shooter timelines.

(4) VF-2 continues to provide operational and technical guidance to improve F-14D tactical tape D04/05 development. This command has submitted software improvements to include:

- Contributed to SMS improvements for D04 including JDAM integration.
- HSI page improvements for D04.
- New enhanced Digital Display (DD) layout.
- A solution for JDAM reporting/non-reporting in the Caution Advisory and Warning box.
- JDAM/LANTIRN interface improvements.
- JTIDS ACR compliance improvements
- Integrated PTID display improvements for tape D05.
- Radar "Set" incorporation in tape D05.
- Routinely consulted by NAVAIR through the FASTCAP deficiency process to produce solutions and advice on engineering challenges.

Encl (1)

General Contributions to Fighter Community

(1) Organized and promoted the Final Oceana Bullet Blowout Mig Killer symposium which featured Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham, CAPT Sam "Speed" Flynn USN(Ret.), CAPT Mark "MRT" Fox USN and CDR Bill "Goat" John USN(Ret.). This event, with well over 200 in attendance, achieved its goal of educating young and old fighter pilots on successful combat attributes and passing on the legacy of naval fighter aviation.

(2) Organized and promoted the Fighter Squadron TWO September 11th Memorial Golf tournament which generated 15 sponsors, over 100 participants, and \$1,000 for the Tragedy Assistance Program for Spouses (TAPS).

(3) Supported VF-101 fleet replacement training with over 25 sorties during a very compressed squadron IDTC training schedule.

Encl (2)

INFORMATION FOR FIGHTER SQUADRON TWO "SAFETY S" SUBMISSION

1. The following information is submitted for consideration for VF-2's selection as the 2002 "Safety S" award winner. Flight hours have been estimated through the end of calendar year 2002.

(a) Hours/years Class A mishap-free. 3559.4/1 yr 4 mo
(b) Total Hours CY 2002. 3344.2
(c) Embarked Hours CY 2002. 1409.5
(d) % embarked night hours CY 2002. 14.8%
(e) Total traps (day/night/%night). 624/305/32.8%

(f) Number of Hazard Reports, HMRS, QDRs, TPDRs, EMRs, EI requests submitted (List seperately).

- HAZREPS: 0
- HMRS: 7
- QDRs: 4
- TPDRs: 1
- EMRs: 3
- EI Requests: 4
- ADRs: 2

(g) Number of Pro-of-the-week / safety articles submitted.

- Pro-of-the-week submissions: 5
- Safety articles: 1

(h) Dates of squadron safety standdowns: 07 Jan, 22 Apr, 04 Oct, 07 Dec.

(i) Number of NATOPS Changes submitted: 0

(j) Dates of outside Safety Surveys (Safety center or COMFITWINGLANT only): None this calendar year.

Encl (3)

VF-2 Shines During First Line Period

The Bullets of VF-2 received some much-deserved recognition during Air Wing Two's Fo'c'stle Follies last Thursday (Nov 7) night. In between the squadrons' roll calls and humorous skits, the Constellation's LSO's (Landing Signal Officers - the individuals responsible for the safe recovery of aircraft and who also assign landing grades to pilots) gave out awards to the top performers for the first line period. Line periods are similar to quarters in a football game - they break up the air wing's performance during workups and deployment into segments that are easier to manage. The system also benefits pilots that may have gotten off to a slow start, since they will begin with a fresh slate each time a line period ends and the next commences. Last night's Follies reflected the line period for TSTA and COMPTUEX. Flights made during JTFEX will be included with the current line period.

First up were the "nuggets" - pilots who are making their first cruise. Making the Top Five Nugget list was LTJG [REDACTED] with a GPA of 3.32 and a 90% boarding rate. Grades are based on a 4.0 scale with a perfect pass scoring an "OK" grade of 4.0. Least desirable is a "cut" pass rating a score of 0.0 for unsafe deviations. Needless to say, a 3.32 is quite an achievement, especially when taking into account some of the challenging weather conditions that pilots faced during the first line period.

Even more competitive is the overall Top Ten for the air wing, and in this category VF-2 had a remarkable showing. Taking seventh place was LT [REDACTED] with a 3.67 and a 96% boarding rate. Sixth place went to the squadron's commanding officer, CDR Andrew "Slim" Whitson with a 3.68 GPA and a 100% boarding rate. LCDR [REDACTED] took fourth place with a 3.78 GPA and 100% boarding rate. And finally, first place went to LCDR [REDACTED] (who has recently left the squadron), with an astonishing 3.96 GPA and 100% boarding rate. Earning Centurion patches (given after completing 100 arrested landings aboard the Connie) were LT's [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] as well as LCDR [REDACTED]. Accepting his Bicenturion patch (given after 200 landings) was LCDR [REDACTED]. Overall, VF-2 finished an impressive second place out of the air wing's eight fixed-wing squadrons for landing performance. VF-2 is proud of its pilots' performance behind the carrier, and looks forward leading the Broadsword air wing throughout the current deployment. VF-2 is currently embarked aboard the U.S.S. Constellation (CV-64) for deployment and is scheduled to return to Oceana in May.

Bounty Hunters to Move to Lemoore

When VF-2 arrives in Lemoore for its transition to the Super Hornet next summer and becomes VFA-2, it will mark the beginning of a new chapter in the Bounty Hunter's already rich history. The Bullets of VF-2 can actually trace their roots back to the very beginning of naval aviation itself. From 1922 to 1927, it was the first squadron to be deployed aboard an aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Langley. There, the squadron's early biplanes were painted with a red, white, and blue stripe, which was called a, "Langley Stripe." More than 80 years later, the Langley is still proudly displayed on the squadron's Tomcats as well as aircrew flightsuits, and is being painted on all the squadron's F/A-18 F's as they come out of production.

To test the feasibility of using enlisted personnel as pilots, the Navy organized an all-enlisted squadron on Jan 1, 1927, with the original VF-2 being redesignated VF-6. The second VF-2 went on to distinguish itself in WW II by destroying over 500 enemy aircraft and sinking over 50,000 tons of shipping. No wonder Life magazine, in an October 23, 1944 article, called VF-2, "the hottest fighter squadron in the Pacific!"

Following WW II, the Bounty Hunters were disestablished. In 1972 however, the squadron was reestablished, this time in Miramar, with then brand new F-14A Tomcats. Two years later the squadron made the first of what would eventually be four cruises aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise (CVN-65) earning a Meritorious Unit Citation for its participation in Operation Frequent Winds, the evacuation of Saigon. The Bounty Hunters also played a significant role during the 1991 Gulf War. Flying from the deck of the U.S.S. Ranger (CV-61), VF-2 led other carrier-based squadrons in both flights hours (1,904 hours during the 43 day war, 96 the first day alone) as well as sorties (557). In 1993, the Bounty Hunters replaced its aging F-14A's with much improved D model Tomcats, and this is the aircraft currently flown by the squadron.

1994 saw the move of VF-2 from Miramar to Oceana, Virginia, where the squadron has been based ever since. With the upcoming transition to the 2 seat Super Hornet however, comes a permanent change of station, this time to Lemoore, CA. Once there, aircrew and maintainers will have to undergo an intensive transition syllabus to learn how to fly and maintain the Navy's newest strike-fighter. After being declared "safe for flight" the squadron will begin working up in the new aircraft in preparation for its next deployment, scheduled for late 2004.

Workups for the squadron's current deployment are coming to a close. October finds the Bounty Hunters embarked aboard the U.S.S. Constellation (CV-64) off the coast of southern California completing a joint task force exercise (JTFEX) along with the rest of CVW-2. Recent events have driven home the important role that VF-2 plays in fulfilling national policy objectives, and when the squadron leaves for deployment in early November, the squadron will be well prepared. From the newest enlisted to the squadron skipper, everyone is focused on the task at hand, and looks forward to carrying on the proud tradition of Bounty Hunter excellence.

In September while the squadron was conducting training in Fallon, NV, it sponsored a trip for its officers and enlisted to tour Lemoore firsthand. Although not every member of the squadron was able to make the visit, those who did were impressed by the efforts of NAS

Lemoore personnel to make the Bullets feel right at home. The squadron's future hangar space, officer and enlisted housing, and base facilities were all first class. VF-2 looks forward to becoming an important part of the NAS Lemoore base flightline, as well as the local community. VF-2 is currently under the command of Commander Andrew "Slim" Whitson, and its Executive Officer is Commander Doug "Boog" Denny.

Bounty Hunters Prepared for Deployment

When VF-2 leaves NAS Oceana in a few short weeks, it will be the Bounty Hunters' last deployment out of Virginia Beach. It will also mark the last time that VF-2 cruises with the F-14D Tomcat. Following the upcoming deployment to the western Pacific, the Bullets will give up their much-loved Tomcats in favor of the Navy's newest operational strike-fighter, the F-18F Super Hornet. Along with the transition to the newer two-seat aircraft comes a permanent change of station; Lemoore, CA will be the squadron's new home, where all of the fleet's Super Hornets are currently based.

Before a squadron can leave for cruise however, it must complete an intense set of pre-deployment workups. In the past, time between workups has typically been 18 to 24 months. Due to events that have taken place within the last year though, VF-2 will affect a turn around in about half that time, completing two cruises within a 26 month period. Only five months after the return from its 2000-2001 Westpac, VF-2 detached several aircraft to El Centro, California for FAC(A) training. Serving as an airborne Forward Air Controller (FAC(A)) is a critical mission as it allows for the direction and coordination of attacks on enemy forces without putting nearby friendly forces at risk. During this time, the squadron dropped an impressive 48,000 pounds of live ordnance as well as 218 Mk-76 practice bombs. Following this excellent training, the squadron headed to Key West for two weeks of air to air SFARP (Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program). Thanks to the beautiful Florida weather, as well as its own maintenance department, the squadron was able to complete 110 action-filled sorties. Primary focus was on intercepting the F-5's of VMFAT-401 acting as bandits, but with a healthy amount of post-merge maneuvering to develop skills in the visual arena as well.

A significant portion of the Tomcat's mission revolves around delivering air to ground ordnance however, and for this training, the squadron headed to Fallon, Nevada. With its excellent weather, live bombing and threat radar ranges, the Bounty Hunters were able to practice a variety of delivery techniques under some very realistic conditions. NSAWC-piloted aircraft further complicated the problem by simulating enemy aircraft and tactics, but that did not prevent the Bullets from dropping 41,500 pounds of live ordnance on target as well as 38 LGTR's (Laser-Guided Training Rounds).

The opportunity for VF-2 to get its sea legs back came in the form of TSTA/COMPTUEX. After flying the squadron's aircraft cross-country to San Diego, the Bounty Hunters completed several FCLP (Field Carrier Landing Practice) periods at NAS North Island as well as at "the rock" (San Clemente island - ideal for carrier landing practice thanks to its remoteness and carrier-like wind conditions). The training paid off as VF-2 is currently in the running for CVW-2's "Top Hook" award, an honor not often afforded Tomcat squadrons due to the difficulty in bringing the aircraft aboard ship. The seemingly perennial fog and low cloud ceilings the air wing encountered off the southern California coast made the squadron's performance that much more meaningful. The operational tempo during the Bounty Hunters' time aboard the Constellation (CV-64) was also noteworthy with the squadron sometimes flying as many as 18 sorties a day. Thanks to the hard work of the VF-2 maintenance department, the squadron logged 644.5 flight hours and 361 sorties over the 32-day at-sea period.

After six demanding weeks away from home, VF-2 returned to Oceana for some much-deserved rest. Work continued unabated for the maintainers though as they put in long hours to get the squadron's F-14's ready for Air Wing Fallon. Once again, the extra effort paid off as the Bullets were able to perform all assigned missions during three hectic weeks in Fallon. Of

particular note was the squadron's performance in the area of Time Sensitive Strike. The F-14 is ideally suited for the TSS mission thanks to its dual crew, long loiter time, advanced LANTIRN pod (used for acquiring and accurately guiding weapons on to targets), and its ability to send back captured images of targets almost instantaneously. Despite the busy schedule, several of the squadron's enlisted personnel still found the time to compete in and ultimately win the CVW-2 softball tournament.

The final portion of the squadron's pre-deployment work ups lies just ahead. Immediately after the squadron attends (and undoubtedly dominates) this year's Fighter Fling, it will once again make the journey out west. There, VF-2 will join the rest of CVW-2 aboard the Connie for a two week long joint task force exercise (JTFEX); the squadron's last chance to practice what it learned during the previous seven months, and further refine its skills. Recent events have driven home the important role that VF-2 plays in fulfilling national policy objectives. From the newest enlisted to the squadron skipper, everyone is focused on the task at hand, and looks forward to carrying on the proud tradition of Bounty Hunter excellence.

Landmark Day For VF-2 Bounty Hunters

December 11, 2002 marked a banner day for the VF-2 Bounty Hunters. After many long hours of work by the squadron's operations, maintenance, and ordnance departments, four of the squadron's F-14D Tomcats succeeded in destroying three target drones. The exercise was designed not only to validate the squadron's training as well the capabilities of the AIM-54 missile, but also to earned points towards the Navy-sponsored Boola Boola competition – a program designed to evaluate fleet squadrons' performance during missile exercises that also determines an annual winner.

Overall coordinator for the missile exercise was the squadron's own pilot training officer, LT [REDACTED]. His first task was to coordinate with Air Wing Two's ordnance officer to obtain four AIM-54C Phoenix missiles. With a price tag of over \$1 million, the AIM-54 is the world's longest ranged air-to-air missile, and is carried exclusively by the Tomcat. Next, he had to calculate the missile's splash pattern - the largest area where the missile could be expected to "splash" down into the water once it had used up all of its propellant. Then, based on expected ship's movement as well as nearby airline and shipping lanes, an exercise area was determined: a 22,500 square mile box approximately 200 miles south of Sri Lanka. With the help of CV-64's Navigation Department and CVW-2's Air Operations, notices to airmen and shipping warnings were issued so that the range would remain clear of traffic on the day of the shoot. Once the battle group commander, Admiral Costello, approved the MISSILEX, the details could be worked out and the plan executed.

Although VF-2 would be firing the missiles, the exercise could not have been completed without the help of the rest of the air wing. S-3's of the VS-38 Red Griffins ensured that the range was clear of surface contacts while an E-2 from VAW-116 provided overall control, coordination, and kept the range clear of civilian air traffic. F/A-18 Hornets from VFA-137, and VMFA-323 provided additional range safety and also launched the target drones (actually tactical air-launched decoys or TALD). With all elements in place and a clear range, the first section of Tomcats (pilot LT [REDACTED] and RIO LTJG [REDACTED] in one jet with LTJG [REDACTED] and RIO LT [REDACTED] in the other) fired their missiles and both scored direct hits. A few hours later, a second section (LCDR [REDACTED] and RIO LTJG [REDACTED] in one aircraft, and pilot LT [REDACTED] and LTJG [REDACTED] in the other) fired their AIM-54's with equally outstanding results. Overall, the day was a complete success with four direct hits. LT [REDACTED] commented after the event that it was, "encouraging to successfully exercise our weapons systems prior to going into combat. The exercise validated our ability engage and destroy our enemies should the need arise." From the VF-2 maintainers to the ordnance handlers to all the aircrew that participated in the event, the squadron's CO, CDR Andrew Whitson, passed a big Bravo Zulu. As an extra bonus, because the squadron chose to fire the missiles under more challenging than average conditions, it will receive extra "Boola Boola" points in that competition. The VF-2 Bounty Hunters are currently embarked aboard the San Diego based Constellation (CV-64) en route to the Arabian Gulf.

VF-2 Bounty Hunters in the Gulf

While friends and family back home relaxed and celebrated the Holidays with friends and family, the VF-2 Bounty Hunters were hard at work. Embarked aboard the San Diego-based Constellation (CV-64), the squadron is currently in the Arabian Gulf flying missions in support of Operation Southern Watch (OSW) enforcing the UN-mandated no-fly zone over southern Iraq. Missions are flown day or night, regardless of weather, and can last over five hours.

Despite whatever may happen during the mission itself, carrier pilots know the flight is not over until they complete the ever-challenging carrier landing. In this respect, VF-2 has once again proved itself one of the top squadrons in the air wing (CVW-2). For the most recent line period, three of the air wing's top ten "hooks" (pilots with the highest landing grades) were VF-2 pilots. LT [REDACTED] had a 3.65 GPA with a 97% boarding rate, while LCDR [REDACTED] boasted a 3.72 with a 100% boarding rate. Top Hook for the entire air wing was the squadron's own CO, CDR Andrew "Slim" Whitson with a 3.75 GPA and 100% boarding rate. With outstanding performances such as these, it is easy to see how VF-2 was able to finish third out of the eight fixed-wing squadrons that comprise the air wing.

The squadron celebrated major milestones for four of its aircrew recently. On December 27th, after completing a 3.6 hour Arabian Gulf mission, the squadron's XO, CDR Doug "Boog" Denny, and Administrative Officer, LCDR [REDACTED], completed 3,000 and 1,000 F-14 Tomcat hours respectively. Since then, LCDR [REDACTED] has completed 1000 hours in the Tomcat and CDR Andrew "Slim" Whitson flew his 3000th Tomcat hour on the 14th of January.

When the squadron is not actively engaged in Operation Southern Watch, it continues to train its aircrew. In order to formalize this process, the Navy has adopted the SFWTI (Strike Fighter Weapons and Tactics Instruction) syllabus, designed as a structured stepping-stone approach to teaching the basics and eventually the intricacies of employing the F-14 tactically. The squadron's most recent aircrew to have completed their level II training are pilots LT [REDACTED] and LT [REDACTED] as well as RIO's LTJG [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

LTJG [REDACTED]. They can now look forward to earning their section lead qualifications and assuming more of a leadership role within the squadron as they begin to pass on their knowledge to newer aircrew.

Despite the focus on Operation Southern Watch and their continued training, the squadron still found time to celebrate the Holidays in style. Following a fine Connie-prepared Christmas dinner, the officers participated in a blind gift exchange where people received gifts from "secret Santas" within the squadron. The squadron also enjoyed a recent three day port visit to Manama, Bahrain. Overall, the post holiday season finds the Bullets of VF-2 in high spirits and ready to resume flight operations in the Arabian Gulf.