



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

By RAdm. John Nathman
Director, Air Warfare



CWO2 Seth Roseman

The "Year in Review" issue of *Naval Aviation News* gives us a great opportunity to look back at an eventful year. Combat operations in the Arabian Gulf and Adriatic Sea, major aircraft and weapon system developments and historic personnel initiatives made this past year one for the books.

A good place to begin is with a review of our accomplishments in the budget cycle. Readiness has been and remains our top priority, and we have continued to increase funding. We've added over \$5 billion to readiness drivers in the last three budget cycles alone. These funds were directed to depot-level maintenance, the flight-hour program, parts and engine inventories, and the training pipeline.

Our second budget priority—recapitalization—is focused on maintaining new procurement to replace our aging force structure. On this front, we've maintained multiyear procurement for the E-2C *Hawkeye*, AV-8B *Harrier II*, AH-1Z *Viper* and UH-1Y *Venom*, as well as restructured the SH-60R *Seahawk* program. We protected the F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet* production ramp and total buy, and funded accelerated production for the MV-22 *Osprey*. Additionally, we maintained sufficient numbers of T-45A *Goshawks* to complete our transition to the new

An air cushion landing craft leaves Kearsarge (LHD 3) as another approaches to take 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit personnel and equipment to the beach at Litohoro, Greece, in support of the NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo.

training aircraft as scheduled.

The F/A-18E/F, the centerpiece of future carrier air wings and the heart of Naval Aviation's revolution in strike warfare, was also a high priority in the recently completed budget cycle. Funding programs including AESA, IDECM, MIDS, JHMQS and ATFLIR ensure that as the *Super Hornet* hits the fleet, it will be properly equipped to fulfill the promise of significantly increased carrier striking power.

Moving from the budget to personnel initiatives, there's no question we've made tremendous progress in the last 12 months on issues that have a direct and meaningful impact on Naval Aviation's warriors and their families. The gains made will go a long way toward addressing the retention challenge, which is particularly daunting for Naval Aviation. These include a 4.8 percent increase for the year 2000, plus a rewrite of the pay tables that will increase critical mid-career paygrades by nearly 10 percent. We've seen a 29 percent increase in aviation career incentive

pay and are awaiting approval for new bonus programs, a thrift savings plan and the elimination of REDUX retirement.

The promotion picture is also improving. The time required to publish board results has been reduced and most boards have shown increased promotion rates. The number of above zone selections by the recent O5 and O6 boards and the precepts for the boards themselves, reflect an emphasis on promoting the best people, not merely looking for the perfect record. The bottom line is that everyone in Naval Aviation can feel good that we are beginning to see the fruits of the labor of the Chief of Naval Operations retention team, whose most important work was listening to the voices of the fleet.

Another important initiative undertaken to change the way the aviator training process is managed is Naval Aviation Production Process Improvement. This effort has already decreased the time required to train Naval Aviators by at least 16 percent across all aviation training pipelines, and will help us to better man our squadrons and streamline sea-shore rotation. Although the past year has clearly been a productive one in terms of the personnel initiatives I've highlighted, we have to "keep our knots up" to ensure we continue to

attract and retain the same high-caliber men and women who have always been the key to Naval Aviation's success.

Speaking of our success, world events during the past year have provided many opportunities for Naval Aviation to repeatedly prove a precise, decisive and indispensable instrument of U.S. national power. This was demonstrated again in the skies over Iraq and the Balkans. *Enterprise* (CVN 65), *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70), *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) and *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) not only put steel on target but carried out their forward presence mission as well. These carriers, along with the large-deck amphibs *Boxer* (LPH 4), *Nassau* (LHA 4) and *Kearsarge* (LHD 3), were able to maintain U.S. presence, deter aggression and shape the battle space. A major lesson relearned this past year was the dominant maneuver quality of America's aircraft carriers that kept air power in each of the world's troubled regions. Naval Aviation has also made an impact when based ashore, notably the performance of our forward-deployed Navy P-3 *Orion* and Marine Corps F/A-18D *Hornet* squadrons, and especially our jointly manned Navy and Marine Corps EA-6B *Prowler* units whose superb performance of the electronic attack mission was the linchpin of the allied air campaign in Kosovo.

Finally, and most importantly, this has been a banner year for Naval Aviation in the conservation of our most precious resource—our people. The Class A mishap rate has improved to a record 1.14 mishaps per 100,000 flight hours, a reduction of nearly 50 percent from FY 1998 to FY 1999 to date. Underlying our progress in safety

Navy and Marine Corps EA-6B Prowler units were the linchpin of the allied air campaign in Kosovo.



PH2 Grasso

has been the widespread acceptance and application of risk management, which is leading to the institutionalization of the Operational Risk Management process. Focused and led at the commanding officer level, we are empowering our flight leaders and mission commanders to make the right operational decisions.

As we conclude our brief look back, it is important to note that recent achievements are validating our vision for the future of Naval Aviation. Clearly, the revolution in strike warfare has been combat proven this year. These same combat operations are also validating our need for the next revolution—Network Centric Warfare. Looking ahead, we have every reason to expect a year just as exciting and fulfilling as the one we review in this issue.

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RAdm. John Nathman
Director, Air Warfare

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