

# NFO'S GATEWAY TO THE FLEET FOR 40 YEARS



On 7 July, Training Squadron (VT) 10, NAS Pensacola, Fla., celebrated its 40-year heritage of training nonpilot aviation officers. The squadron traces its roots to the Basic Naval Aviation Officers School (BNAO), established aboard NAS Pensacola in 1960 to provide ground training for naval aviation observers. The BNAO became a full-fledged flight school when it received its first aircraft in 1962, operating the UC-45J *Navigator* and the T-2A *Buckeye*, which was soon replaced by the T-1A *Sea Star*. In 1965 naval aviation observers were redesignated naval flight officers (NFO), foreshadowing the school's redesignation as VT-10 in 1968.

By November 1970, VT-10 had trained over 6,000 student NFOs, earning its nickname of "NFO's Gateway to the Fleet." The next year, the squadron transitioned to the T-39D *Sabreliner* and the TF-9J *Cougar*, which was replaced two years later by the newer T-2C *Buckeye*. The squadron doubled in size between 1972 and 1974 to

Above, a VT-10 instructor conducts T-39 familiarization training for student NFOs in the mid-1970s. Opposite, a pair of T-2C *Buckeyes* from the *Cosmic Cats* soars through the sky in 1978. (The squadron changed its nickname to the *Wildcats* in 1993.)



Primary and intermediate instruction at VT-10 provides a foundation for naval flight officers and navigators to continue to advanced flight training on the way to earning their wings. Below, today's students get plenty of stick time in the T-34C *Turbo-Mentor* during the primary flight syllabus. Below right, fledgling NFOs become intimately acquainted with the flight log, an essential tool for cross-country flights.



accommodate an increased training requirement, maintaining 10 T-39Ds and 30 T-2Cs.

During the 1970s a navigation/communications trainer, instrument trainer and flight simulator were added to the program. In 1981 a reassignment of aircraft within the training command replaced VT-10's T-2Cs with T-2Bs. The squadron revised its training in 1984 and acquired 20 T-34C *Turbo-Mentors*, while Cessna T-47As replaced the T-39Ds in 1985.

In 1991 revolutionary changes were made to the NFO syllabus. To improve NFO air sense and situational awareness, 40 additional flight hours were added to the curriculum allowing instruction in basic piloting skills, including aerobatics, takeoffs and landings. The same year, the squadron replaced the T-47A with the T-39N *Sabreliner* with upgraded avionics and radar. The T-2Bs and the air combat maneuvering syllabus were transferred to VT-86 for advanced training, and VT-10 acquired 20 more T-34Cs and 2 new instrument trainers for primary and intermediate training.

In 1994 the first U.S. Air Force instructors and student navigators (NAVs) reported to VT-10 under a joint memorandum of agreement between the services. Two years later, the squadron transitioned from the T-39N to the Air Force T-1A *Jayhawk* as the training platform for the intermediate syllabus. In April 1996, VT-10 split instructor and student assets to assist in the establishment of VT-4 as a second NFO/NAV primary/intermediate training squadron.

**SINGLE-ENGINE JET FLIGHT LOG**  
 CHATRA-GCN 3740/7 (REV. 7-78) 5/NOT 19/LLCF 19482

DEP ELEV 30 CLNC DELIV 268.7 GND CONT 336.4 TOWER 340.2  
 ALT CORR TIME OFF 254 TAS 360 LBS PI 166

CLEARANCE 0F31 CAF NPA-254 TRADR-54  
 17 FL210 EX FL210 10MIN

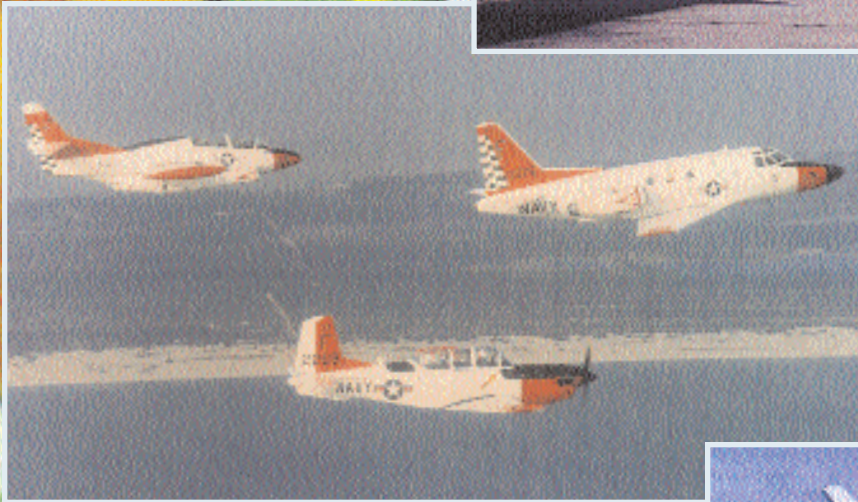
DEPARTURE 314.0

DIST 281.3 / 270.3 TOWER 340.2 GND CONT 336.4

PTO	IDENT	CHAN	CUS	DIST	ETE	ETA	LEO	FUEL	EPR	ANT	ICE
D740				370	1+06		4490				
D7TRADR		119		37	08						
D7SJ		100		55	10		920	3570			
D7MCB		100	268°	52	10		280	3290			
D7MEI		114	325°	50	09		280	3010			
D7NPA		117	050°	49	08		250	2700			
D7NPA		119	125°	76	21		220	2540			
D7NPA		119	180°	30	06		170	2030			
D7NPA		119	180°	11	02		60	1990			
D7VPS		119	260°	9	02		60	1730			
D7VPS		35	105°	50	0+08		320	1710			
D7VPS		35	78°	40							

APC CONT 358.3 (322.6) ALTITUDE 1020 TOWER 348.4

SEA LEVEL 260



Training Squadron 10 flew the Grumman TF-9J *Cougar*, above, in the 1970s. Left, 10 years later the squadron's stable of aircraft consisted of, clockwise from top left, the T-2 *Buckeye*, T-39 *Sabreliner*, and T-34C *Turbo-Mentor*. Below, while intermediate training for Navy students is conducted in the T-39, the intermediate platform for Marine, Air Force and international students is the T-1A *Jayhawk*, below.



Reflecting the squadron's joint nature, in 1997 the command of VT-10 was established to rotate from a Navy commander to an Air Force lieutenant colonel annually.

In 1999 the Air Force resumed training many of its own navigators, leaving the Navy training squadrons with only strike-designated Air Force students. Following the corresponding reallocation of several T-1s, the T-39G/N was reintegrated into the NFO intermediate training syllabus as the jet training platform for Navy NFOs, while the T-1 was still used for Air Force and Marine Corps students. The T-34C remains the sole aircraft flown by all students in the primary flight syllabus.

Each year VT-10's staff of 60 Navy, Air Force and Marine instructors typically trains over 270 NFOs and NAVs as well as 50 foreign student navigators from countries such as Germany, Saudi Arabia, Italy and Singapore. Most graduates proceed to VT-86, also in

Pensacola, for advanced flight training. These include Navy students designated for the S-3B *Viking*, EA-6B *Prowler* or F-14 *Tomcat*; Marine Corps students slated for the *Prowler* or F/A-18D *Hornet*; and Air Force students selected for strike platforms such as the F-15E *Strike Eagle*, B-1B *Lancer* or B-52 *Stratofortress*. Navy students destined for the P-3C *Orion*, EP-3 *Aries* or E-6A *Mercury* receive advanced flight training at Randolph AFB, Texas, and those preparing for the E-2C *Hawkeye* report to Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 120 in Norfolk, Va. Foreign students may either receive advanced training at VT-86 or return home, depending on the arrangements made by their countries.

For 40 years, VT-10's mission has remained the same. By providing naval flight officers and navigators the basic skills they need to proceed to advanced training and eventually join their designated commands, VT-10's "gateway to the fleet" has become a multiservice and multinational pipeline for nonpilot aviation officers. ✈

Special thanks to Air Force Capt. Mark Gaugler VT-10's public affairs officer, for his assistance with this article.