

## Weighty Worries

A CH-46 *Sea Knight* was tasked to fly cargo from NAS Overseas to USS *Ship*. The crew was told that cargo weight included one loading at 3,600 pounds and a separate box weighing 150 pounds. Shipping documents contained the same information.

Upon arrival, the load was found to be 17 55-gallon drums of lube oil and a small box. Prior to loading, the aircrew checked the drums to verify total weight. They noted that shipping labels on the drums differed on each drum. Most read "200," some "450." Some had both 200 and 450 listed in the weight section. No units of measurement were used on any of the shipping labels.

The proper weight of each barrel was determined to be 450 pounds, thus making a total load of 7,650 pounds — not 3,600 pounds as reported on the shipping documents. The way the items were marked, the weight of the drums could have been tallied to reach 3,650 pounds. But the real weight, 7,650 pounds, would have been about 4,000 pounds more than what was displayed on the shipping documents.

This weight would have exceeded aircraft gross weight limitations. It



could have caused damage to airframe components and set the helicopter up for ground resonance had the rotors been engaged.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Consarn it! If this aircrew hadn't gotten suspicious and worried about those weights, we coulda crushed a helo and maybe everybody in it. All because some folks didn't bother about the difference between kilograms and pounds. Even if the *Sea Knight* got into the sky, it sure couldna put down safely on a single spot ship. We all need to cotton to that good old saw about ATTENTION TO DETAIL: "It is the thing that separates the winners from the losers, the men from the boys, and very often the living from the dead."

## Hot Helo

An AH-1J *Cobra* launched from a naval air station on a round-robin navigation flight to an air force base using a VFR clearance. Following the stopover, the *Cobra* started back to NAS.

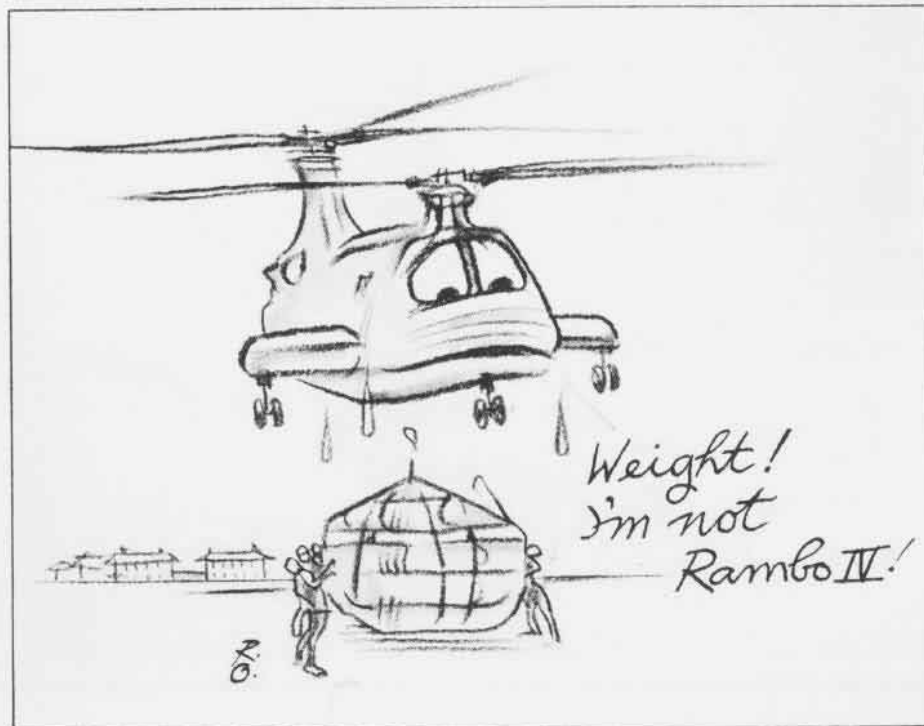
After a time, the pilot began a descent through an airport traffic area without proper clearance. The AH-1J continued on course at very low altitude until it struck a series of power lines in a slightly nose-down attitude in controlled flight about 70 feet above a major highway. The helicopter pitched nose up and appeared to do a wingover-type maneuver to the right, throwing a piece of the main rotor blade across the road.

The *Cobra*, in an upright attitude, then struck a group of trees. Upon impact the tail rotor and a portion of the vertical fin separated from the aircraft followed by the tail boom. Three to five minutes after impact, the *Cobra* caught fire. It was partially consumed by flames. The fire was extinguished by a nearby fire department crew. The two pilots had been electrocuted when the helo initially crashed into the power lines.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Another whisker singer! Terrible loss of life and aircraft! And that ugly word rises above the ashes like a



**black headline: FLATHATTING!**

The investigators found some things wrong with the unit's handling of their syllabus, flyin' hops out of sequence and not havin' properly qualified people signin' off on certain requirements. That tells ya somethin'.

Both flyers were late arriving for the flight and while the weather was checked and a flight plan filed, no preflight crew briefing was observed. The pilots had IFR pubs on board, but no VFR charts. That tells ya somethin' else.

Witnesses saw the Cobra flyin' 100 feet above the ground and lower. No question what that tells ya!

The copilot's personality profile revealed a "go-for-it" type. The pilot's background was such that "he assumed the way to fly the Cobra was low and fast at all times."

Hey, the bony hand of the grim reaper points to one simple reason for this tragedy: flathatting!

We can never accept it, folks. Don't do it. Don't let your shipmates do it, either.

**Poor Pop-Up**

An instructor and his student were in a T-2C *Buckeye* on an intermediate strike/operational navigation sortie. It was the second hop of the day for each man. They completed the prescribed low-level route without difficulty. The syllabus called for demonstration of an offset pop-up attack maneuver. (The Master Curriculum Guide, SOP and briefing guide all strictly prohibit any student from flying an attack maneuver.)

The *Buckeye* approached the designated practice target and, according to witnesses, circled the target twice at low altitude. During the third tight circle, the T-2C pulled up sharply. At the apex of the climb, the jet departed from controlled flight. It entered a flat spin, fell to the ground and crashed. The instructor and student Naval Aviator were killed.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Lemme tell ya why my bubble burst over this one! We'll never know for

sure but it appears the student was flyin' the bird at the time, put a quick and high-G load on the machine in the pull-up, lost control and maybe tried — with the instructor's help — to recover, but ran out of time and space. They got themselves into a predicament, perhaps tried to fly out of it and lost the precious few seconds needed to eject.

The instructor was highly experienced in flying pop-up attacks. The investigators reasoned it was unlikely, although possible, that the instructor would pilot a plane out of its envelope in a maneuver he was so adept at flying.

The student was highly motivated, aggressive and got good grades. On the other hand, one instructor described him as overconfident.

The instructor on the fatal flight was known to permit students to fly attack maneuvers — against regs. The student in this case actually asked to fly with this instructor, presumably in the hopes of makin' his own pop-up maneuver.

Nobody likes squealers. And heaven knows Naval Aviation needs tough, motivated flyers to carry out the mission. Ain't it too bad, though, that this instructor didn't get a talkin' to about his lettin' students do pop-ups? Could it be that the prohibition of students doing such maneuvers is there just to prevent the likes of this one from happenin'?

You skippers, is the atmosphere in your command conducive to unauthorized maneuvers?

