

PENNY PRESS

USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN

STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 34

BLUE BLASTERS

SPECIAL EDITION



VFA-34 In The Spotlight:

Squadron History, Photos, Highlights

A View From Above

Photos From The Cockpit

Know Your Shipmate:

AM3 Abel Salinas



VFA-34 CHAIN-OF-COMMAND



www.facebook.com/usslincoln
www.cvn72.navy.mil



COMMANDER MATTHEW C. PARADISE
Commanding Officer

Cmdr. Paradise enlisted in the Navy in 1985 and earned an assignment to Seal Team Two following completion of Basic Underwater Demolition School. In 1992, as part of the Enlisted Commissioning Program, Paradise was commissioned upon graduating from the University of Washington with a Bachelor's in Electrical Engineering. Paradise also holds a Master's degree in Systems Engineering from Johns Hopkins University.



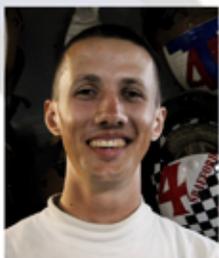
COMMANDER LOUIS J. SCHAGER JR.
Executive Officer

Cmdr. Schager graduated with merit from the United States Naval Academy in 1990, earning a Bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering. He attended flight training in Pensacola, Fla., and Meridian, Miss., and received his wings in 1993. A graduate of the Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor program at Navy Fighter Weapons School (Top Gun), Schager earned his Master's in National Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College in 2003.



CMDCM(AW/SW) KENNETH CRANE
Command Master Chief

CMDCM Crane enlisted in the Navy out of Kansas City, Mo., in 1984. Upon graduation from basic training, Crane attended Basic Electricity and Electronics school in San Diego before reporting to Data Systems Technician A and C schools in Mare Island, Ca. In 1987, he reported to his first sea duty on board USS David R. Ray (DD 971) in San Diego. Crane has been the VFA-34 command master chief since June 2008.

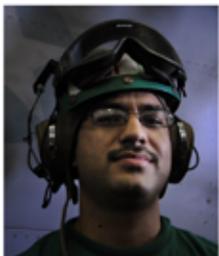


AT2(AW) DREW SPAFFORD
2009 Junior Petty Officer of the Year

AT2 Spafford, the VFA-34 2009 Junior Petty Officer of the Year, has been with the Blue Blasters for more than three years and works in the Shooter Shack as one of four troubleshooters. Spafford, a native of Atlanta, considers himself lucky for having the opportunity to work outside on the flight deck every day. "We're the last people who see the jet and say 'it's good' before it heads off. I love my job."

KNOW YOUR SHIPMATE

AM3 ABEL SALINAS



AM3 Salinas, from Laredo, Texas, has been a Blue Blaster since June 2008. He currently lives in Virginia Beach with his wife of six years, Dolores, and their five-year-old daughter, Sofia. Salinas said the best part of his squadron is the camaraderie. "We get along pretty good; we back each other up." Salinas plans to stay in the Navy for the long haul and eventually become a chief warrant officer.

Commanding Officer
Capt. John D. Alexander

Executive Officer
Capt. Timothy Kuehhas

Command Master Chief
CMDCM(AW/SW)
Susan Whitman

Public Affairs Officer
Lt. Cmdr. William Marks

Deputy Public Affairs Officer
Lt. Greg D. Raelson

Mini Public Affairs Officer
Ensign Robyn Gerstenslager

Media Department LCPO
MCC(SW/AW) Joel Huval

Editor/LCPO
MCC(SCW/FMF) Eric Powell

Assistant Editor/LPO
MC1(SW/AW) Ahron Arendes

Editorial Staff
MC1 Sarah Murphy
MC2 Seth Clarke
MC2 Christopher Dollar
MC2 Johndion Magsipoc
MC2 Luciano Marano
MC2 Brian Morales
MC2 Arif "Calendar Request" Patani
MC2 Barry Riley
MC3 Jimmy Cellini
MC3 Stephen D. Doyle II
MC3 Aaron Hubner
MC3 Zach Hunt
MC3 Jeremiah Mills
MC3 Colby K. Neal
MC3 Robert Robbins
MCSN Jerine Lee
MCSN Wade T. Oberlin
MCSA Adam Randolph

Layout and Design
MC2 Alan Gragg

Penny Press is an authorized publication for members of the military services and their families. Its content does not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy, or the Marine Corps and does not imply endorsement thereby.

Front Cover Photo
MC2 Alan Gragg

HISTORY OF THE BLUE BLASTERS

BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST SEAMAN JERINE LEE



As a front line strike fighter squadron, the Blue Blasters directly participated in World War II, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam Conflict and Operations Desert Shield, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The squadron has flown eight different aircraft types from the flight decks of 26 carriers while compiling an enviable list of firsts.

The squadron was originally commissioned as the VF-20 Jokers in 1943 as part of Air Group 20 stationed at Naval Air Station (NAS) San Diego. The squadron was composed of numerous newly-winged naval aviators along with a few combat-hardened pilots. Flying F6F Hellcats from the deck of the USS Enterprise (CVN 65), VF-20 was heavily involved in the initial invasion operations in the Philippines, including the epic battle of Leyte Gulf.

In 1996, the squadron was re-designated to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 34. The Blue Blasters immediately began the transition to the F/A-18C Hornet.

The Blue Blasters conducted another homeport shift in 1999, moving from NAS Cecil Field, Fla., to NAS Oceana, Va. In May that year, the Chief of Naval Operations approved a modification to the squadron's insignia tailoring the design to the F/A-18 strike fighter community.

The Blue Blasters called USS George Washington (CVN 73) home in 2000 for an extended deployment to the Mediterranean Sea and Arabian Gulf, where the squadron had the opportunity to project power abroad in support of Operations Southern Watch and Deliberate Forge.

Although they had just returned from deployment, the squadron executed a rigorous training cycle in 2001. The Blue Blasters were ready to protect the nation when called upon to participate in Operation Noble Eagle. VFA-34 continued to prepare for the next opportunity to defend, represent and honor the United States. That opportunity came again, when the Blue Blasters embarked the George Washington in June 2002 for a deployment. The Blue Blasters were among the last squadrons to fly missions over Iraq in support of Operation Southern Watch, as tensions with Iraq rose.

In March 2005, VFA-34 joined Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2 on the west coast-based carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). The squadron spent the better part of 2005 and 2006 preparing for their next deployment, which began in March, taking them to places in the Far East that Virginia-based squadrons rarely had an opportunity to visit.

While deployed the Blue Blasters were the air wing's maritime interdiction and defensive counter air subject matter experts during three of the year's most visible and force projecting exercises: Foal Eagle, Valiant Shield and Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC).

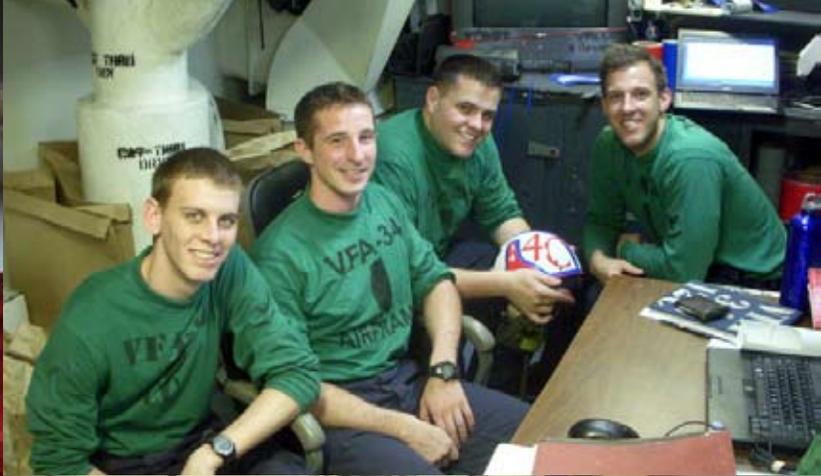
Starting in March 2008, the Blue Blasters put all of



their training to use on a seven-month cruise. Deploying once again with CVW-2 on the Lincoln, VFA-34 provided vital airpower in support of OIF. After protecting troops on the ground for two months in Iraq, the Blue Blasters, along with the rest of CVW-2, assisted coalition forces in Afghanistan.

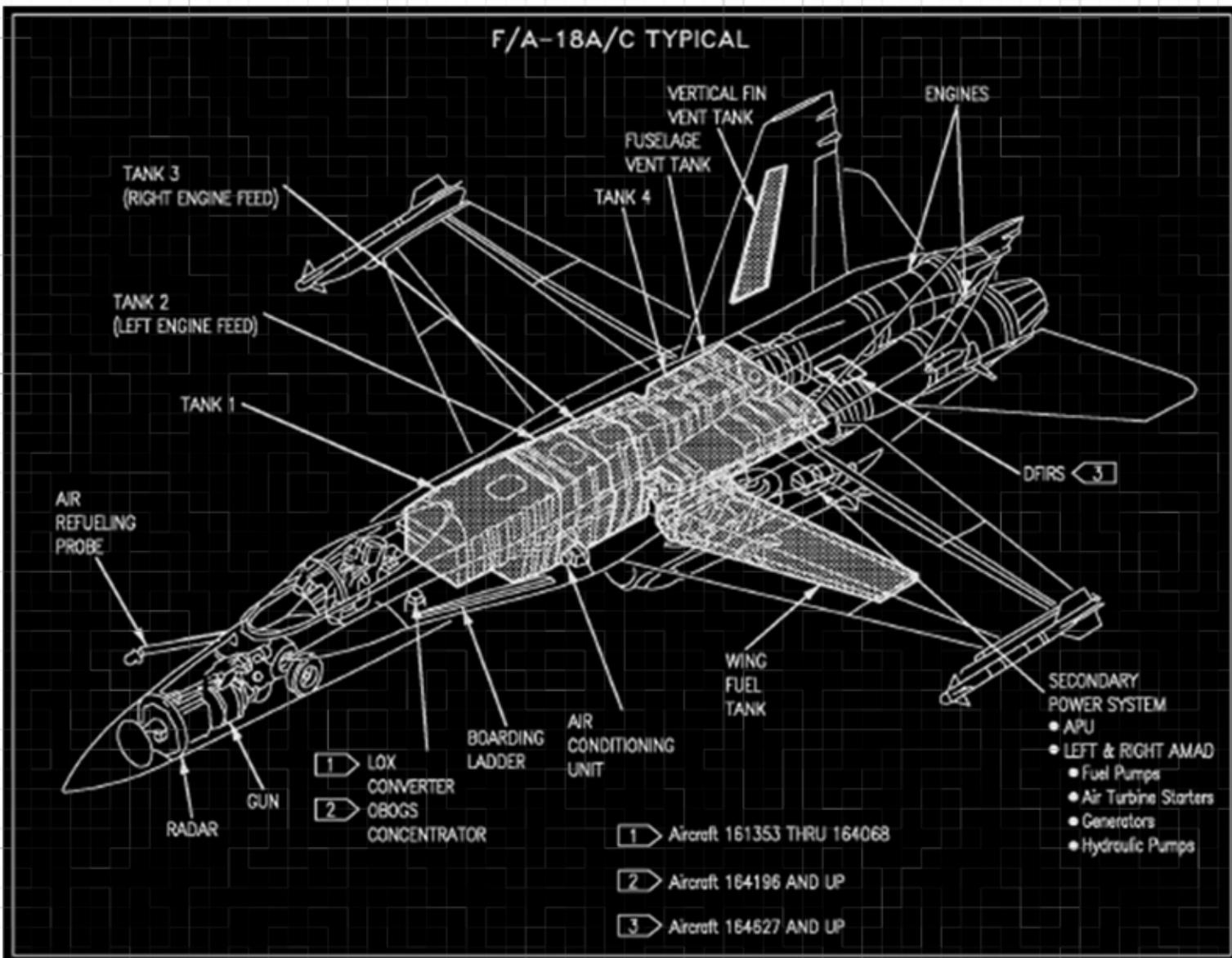
Following a successful deployment in 2008, VFA-34 continued its tradition of excellence by having a 100% sortie completion rate during the post-deployment sustainment cruise aboard Lincoln.

The Blue Blasters of today are a formidable fighting force, continuing in the squadron's 2010-2011 deployment. Through eight different aircraft types and 26 aircraft carriers, the Blue Blasters never lost their sense of tradition. The Blue Blasters are seen and heard in the skies all over the globe flying under the call sign, "Joker," as a tribute to their fighting heritage. The men and women of VFA-34 stand ready to heed our nation's call, hence their slogan: Have Gun...Will Travel.





F / A - 1 8 C H O R N E T



General Characteristics, F/A-18C Model

Primary Function: Multi-role attack and fighter aircraft.

Contractor: Prime: McDonnell Douglas; Major Subcontractor: Northrop.

Date Deployed: November 1978. Operational October 1983 (A/B models); September 1987 (C/D models).

Initial Unit Cost: \$29 million.

Propulsion: Two F404-GE-402 enhanced performance turbofan engines. 17,700 pounds static thrust per engine.

Length: 56 feet (16.8 meters).

Height: 15 feet 4 inches (4.6 meters).

Wingspan: 40 feet 5 inches (13.5 meters).

Weight: Maximum Take Off Gross Weight is 51,900 pounds (23,537 kg).

Airspeed: Mach 1.7+.

Ceiling: 50,000+ feet.

Range: Combat: 1,089 nautical miles (1252.4 miles/2,003 km), clean plus two AIM-9s

Description:

All-weather fighter and attack aircraft. The single-seat F/A-18 Hornet is the nation's first strike-fighter. It was designed for traditional strike applications such as interdiction and close air support without compromising its fighter capabilities.

With its excellent fighter and self-defense capabilities, the F/A-18 increases strike mission survivability in fleet air defense. F/A-18 Hornets are currently operating in 37 tactical squadrons from air stations world-wide, and from 11 aircraft carriers. The U.S. Navy's Blue Angels Flight Demonstration Squadron proudly flies them. The Hornet comprises the aviation strike force for seven foreign customers including Canada, Australia, Finland, Kuwait, Malaysia, Spain and Switzerland.



BEWARE OF
JET BLAST
PROPELLERS
AND ROTORS



THE BLUE STRIKE FIGHTER

DEPLOYMENT



BLASTERS

FOR SQUADRON 34

2010-2011



BLUE BLASTERS TRAVEL CROSS-COUNTRY TO DEPLOY WITH LINCOLN

BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS ALAN GRAGG



Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 34 moved equipment, personnel and aircraft from their homeport of Naval Air Station Oceana, Va., to join the west coast-based aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) for deployment.

VFA-34, the only east coast unit attached to Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2, hauled everything they needed for their mission to meet the ship in San Diego before departing on deployment. The pack-out spanned roughly 2,700 miles and required 125 pallets of gear and equipment to be transported over a four-day trip across the U.S.

With more than 200 people in the squadron and 10 fully-loaded aircraft to move, the logistical effort required support from Lincoln and CVW-2 units to ensure a smooth transit.

“Planning and having a backup plan were important,” said Logistics Specialist 1st Class Keisha McCallum, who works on VFA-34’s logistics team.

The trip to transit equipment across the country took four days. Some Sailors in the squadron flew to San Diego on a military sponsored flight to meet the ship and help with the on-load. The Blue Blasters had to bring gear and personal items aboard in a short period of time to be ready to go by the time the ship needed to get underway.

“We had to work 18-20 hour days, after we just flew from Virginia to San Diego,” said Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Ace Bernardino, a native of San Diego. “It was a lot of work.”

Along with moving everything for deployment,

the squadron had to make the same trip during each work-up phase as well, including a three-week underway period in the spring and another three-week deployment prep trip in the summer.

McCallum, originally from Jamaica, is on her second cross-country deployment with the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and used her previous experience with the pack-out to plan more effectively.

“You learn something every single time,” she said. “You learn to make contingency plans to overcome any issues that come up.”

VFA-34 became a part of CVW-2 in March 2005 and is on their third deployment with the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group, so the trip is nothing new for the squadron. They are always ready to pack-out and support the strike group.

“Its tedious work to move across the country; the toughest thing about it is that we have to leave our families a few days early,” said Chief Warrant Officer Alvin Scott, VFA-34’s material control officer. “Then, on the way home, it takes a little longer for us to get home too.”

Scott, a native of New Orleans, credited the logistics personnel for their accomplishments during all the cross-country moves.

“It’s a job that requires a lot of responsibility and all of our guys came together to get the job done. It’s really a group effort and can’t be done by one person.”

The Abraham Lincoln Strike Group is on a scheduled deployment to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility, conducting maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts to establish conditions for regional stability.



A VIEW FROM ABOVE THE CLOUDS: VFA-34's DOMAIN







WHAT IS THE MEATBALL?

BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS LUCIANO MARANO



So, what is the meatball, anyway? It's a common question asked around USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). Every hard-charger studying for their warfare pin knows that what is commonly referred to as "the meatball" is actually the Fresnel Lens Optical Landing System,

right? But what does it do? How does it work? One of the most important pieces of equipment on the ship remains a mystery to most of us, until now:

The meatball is the traffic light of the skyway; letting pilots know how close they are to their ideal glide slope while approaching the ship during their landing.

The meatball is actually more than one light, 12

to be exact, stacked on top of each other and angled to produce a single ball-shaped image visible to the pilots approximately a mile and half away, depending on conditions. The light is a bright amber color when they're on target, hence the nickname meatball. If they're coming in too high, then the light is a lighter color and darker if they're too low.

Of course, the flight deck is never perfectly still, so pilots have to make constant adjustments as they approach to ensure they hit the deck evenly and in the correct area. To compensate for various sea states and weather conditions, the meatball is stabilized to the ship's movement, not the horizon. This ensures the deck can pitch and the pilots will still be aiming for the same spot.

BLUE BLASTERS ON THE WEB

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/VFA-34FRG/109086662459629>



VFA-34 on Facebook:

VFA-34's official facebook page contains information to keep families updated about its monthly family readiness group meeting(FRG) while deployed in support of Operation New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom. Visit the link above the image to the left and click "Like" to become a member of the VFA-34 Facebook family.



VFA-34's Official Site:

VFA-34's command website is a communication tool that provides its internal workforce and the general public with an overview of VFA-34, its mission, vision and its successes. Recent news and photos involving the squadron are also published on the site periodically.

<http://www.public.navy.mil/airfor/vfa34/Pages/default.aspx>



HAVE GUN...
WILL TRAVEL