



# Fist of the Fleet Association

a non profit 501 (c) (19) military organization

## NEWSLETTER

January 2017

Preserving the Past Providing for Today  
Promoting the Future

### WINTER EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

One thing is for certain and that is the next 4 years will be nothing like the last 16. Luckily, the transition from one leader to the next at the Association is never contentious, or pretentious, and we try not to strike a tone or a pose. But enough of that. John Chalker has stepped up as the next President of FOFA, and while we don't expect a dramatic change of course a leadership change in and of itself is enough to engender that. We've all got your back John, so set a course and chase the horizon, we're along for the ride.

Like many of you I served with John in the 70's, but back then there was still that class distinction between enlisted and officers, and conversations never strayed from the duties of Naval Aviation. It seems like that has changed in these present days, and more open lines of communication exist between E- and O-types, and that I applaud most heartily. Back then you just didn't bring your problems to your division officer because 9 out of 10 times they might not have the scope of experience to deal with the severe issues many of us had. I, for one, bottled it all up inside until I overloaded, and so became prone to explosive outbursts, and would just bounce off the bulkheads until I got it all out. Hence the name "Ricochet". The Navy was changing back then, still trying to shake off the issues of discrimination based on race and sex. When you read the squadrons's Operational Reports for the period time and again you see "Human Rights" "Equal Opportunity Training". Remember, in 1976 women were just then coming into to NAVAIR, and it wasn't but a few years before that racial tensions had exploded on the carriers towards the end of the Viet Nam War. Mix one part social change, one part disciplined work load, one part personal life stress and one part young male angst and bring to a high rolling boil. If it got to you, it could be a nightmare; and it got to a lot of us.

Still, with all that mess going on, it was some of the best days of our lives. Very few things I have done in my life have ever compared to the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, and only one job I had came close. There is nothing like tear-assing down the Green River in a 4-ship helicopter flight in close trail formation. Or, for sheer terror, close avoidance of a B-52 practicing low-level intrusion over North Dakota. Working as a surveyor can be thrilling, exhausting, and sometimes just a little deadly.

One bit of FOFA business we still need to resolve: a new Secretary must be found. Nick Johnson's term has expired and he has agreed to temporarily fill in until his replacement steps forward. So, those of you who are able, please contact John Chalker as soon as possible. We'll be set then for another 3 years. Fist '17 is in Charleston, SC, one of the the finest cities in the South. Quite a while ago I had the opportunity to spend a week there. I cannot wait to go back. See ya there!

John and Bonnie Chalker circa 1976



[www.fistofthefleet.org](http://www.fistofthefleet.org)

#### Mission Statement

Perpetuate the history of Naval Aviation Squadrons  
VT-17, VA-6B, VA-65, VA-25 and VFA-25,  
Remember deceased veterans and comfort their survivors,  
Conduct charitable and educational programs,  
Foster and participate in activities of patriotic nature,  
Assist current active squadron members, and  
Provide assistance to family members in times of  
emergency.

## President's Message

It's January, the start of a new year and a new President for the United States and the Fist Association. Following a contentious primary season and a hard fought campaign, the country selected Donald Trump to lead the nation in a new direction. At the Fist Association, our transition was much smoother, without the benefit of 20 plus candidates competing for the office of President. With Gary "Dome" Kerans arm twisting and a draft vote by the Board of Directors, I have assumed the role of President and hope to meet everyone's expectations and keep the organization on a steady course through the next four years.

I want to thank Gary for his 6 ½ years of service as President and his continued charge of the upcoming reunion in Charleston, SC in early November, 2017. And another 'thank you' to John "Rat" Leslie as Vice President, Chuck "Pooh" Webster as Treasurer, Public Relations guru Bob "Pistol" Schreiber and Member at Large Al "Mr. Big" Gorthy for their past and continued service. With them on my wing I won't stray too far off course. Alas, we bid farewell and thank Nick "Beef" Johnson for his work as Secretary; that's a spot we need to fill and the work is pretty easy so please give it a thought before we volunteer someone for the mission. Of course, I have to mention the Board of Directors, whom I listed above, for their participation and approval of my election; they would make a great electoral college in any "O Club" bar, if we still had "O Clubs". And finally a big thank you to Jerry Fritze for his great work on putting the newsletter together and helping to keep us in touch.

The upcoming reunion is located in a great city with many various activities for both the guys and spouses. Information is up on the FOFA website and I hope that all of you will attend and repeat those entirely true sea stories we are so fond of hearing; they get better with each year that passes. In fact, here's a short story that may jog your memory:

*A gray-headed old man shuffled into a downtown bar holding his head up high. His hands shook as he took the "Piano Player Wanted" sign from the window and handed it to the bartender. "I'd like to apply for the job," he said. "I was a Navy pilot flying in support of the Navy SEALs, spec war operators back in 'Nam, but at the end of my last tour all the thrill was gone, and I soon cashed out. I learned to play the piano at Officers' Club happy hours, so here I am."*

*The barkeep wasn't too sure about this doubtful looking old guy, but it had been quite a while since he had a piano player and business was falling off. So, why not give him a try.....? The old aviator shuffled his way over to the piano while several patrons snickered. By the time he was into his third bar of music, every voice was silenced. What followed was a rhapsody of soaring music unlike anything heard in the bar before. When he finished there wasn't a dry eye in the place.*

### OFFICERS

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### Blue Angels Tour Dates

Mar 11 NAF El Centro Air Show CA

Mar 18/19 NAWS China Lake Air Show CA

Mar 25/26 Tuscaloosa Regional Air Show AL

Apr 1/2 Wings Over South Texas NAS Corpus Christi TX

Apr 8/9 SUN 'n FUN Lakeland FL

Apr 22/23 Air Power Expo New Orleans LA

Apr 9/30 MCAS Beaufort Air Show SC

*The bartender took the old fellow a beer and asked him the name of the song he had just played. It's called "It's Full Throttle and Down 'N' Dirty, Baby" he said with a wink. After a long pull from the beer, leaving it empty, he said "I wrote it myself."*

*The bartender and the crowd winced at the title, but the piano player just went on into a knee-slapping, hand-clapping bit of ragtime that had the place jumping. After he finished, the old pilot acknowledged the applause, downed a second offered mug, and told the crowd the song was called "FUBAR in Saigon." He then launched into another mesmerizing song and everyone in the room was enthralled. He announced that it was the latest rendition of his song, "Blame it on P.I., I Sure as Hell Did!". He then excused himself and shuffled to the head.*

*When he came out the bartender went over to him and said, "Hey, fly boy, the job is yours; but do you know your fly is open and you're swingin' free?" "Know it?" the old pilot replied, "Hell yes, I wrote it!"*

But I digress. For those who don't know me personally, I graduated from the Naval Academy in 1972 and completed flight training in NAS Beeville before migrating through VA-122 with the "Rat" as one of my instructor pilots in July, 1974. I joined the squadron later that year, made the '76 WestPac cruise on Ranger and left the squadron in the summer of 1977 to be followed by my marriage to Bonnie in September, 1977 in San Diego and then an Officer Recruiting tour before discharging from the Navy in November, 1979.

As with most of you, some of my strongest memories were forged during my time in the Navy and some of my longest and strongest friendships are with you, my fellow squadron mates.

So I sign off by wishing you a Happy and Prosperous New Year and I look forward to seeing you in Charleston in November.  
John "Chalks" Chalker

## SKIPPER'S CORNER

Greetings Fist of the Fleet Association, I hope the New Year finds you doing well. It has been another great couple of months for VFA-25, we have hit the ground running in 2017. We are so thrilled to be home this time around as compared to a year ago. After enjoying a healthy Holiday Leave period, we are all back to work doing what we do best. It has been nearly eight months now since we returned from deployment, the same amount of time we were gone. As with most squadrons following a cruise, we have felt the impact of having a large number of Sailors leave the command as they head to other units that have a more pressing need. While there are a few replacements trickling in, the squadron is finding itself in the all too familiar situation of "doing more with less." Training still needs to happen and there are sorties that must be completed in order for us to maintain readiness. So as usual, the outstanding men and women of VFA-25 have stepped up and continued to show their true professionalism and dedication. We continue to put safe aircraft in



the air on a daily basis, while still completing all of our training requirements, running our programs, and exercising some of the best maintenance practices on the flight line. Not only are we capable of keeping up with our own requirements, but we were able to lend a significant hand to a sister squadron here in Lemoore that needed help in getting one of its jets ready in time to leave on deployment. A significant number of folks in our maintenance department banded together and worked overtime to help get this aircraft back in the air. With the outstanding Fistie pride that is always displayed, they pulled off this tremendous feat with style and grace. This truly embodies the type of teamwork that is required for all of us to be successful in Naval Aviation. Now, an aircraft put back together by Fist maintainers is forward deployed with CVW-2 as they stand the watch while we enjoy time ashore.

In the near future, it is business as usual from the sunny (sometimes foggy) flight line of Lemoore. The next scheduled deployment for VFA-25 may still be a few years away, so we will look for creative ways to keep our minds focused and our war-fighting skills sharp. A few detachments and a short trip or two to the carrier will be on order, but more to follow on exactly when and where. For now, we are excited to work hard during the day and enjoy our family time in the evenings and on the weekends. It's still a fantastic time to be a Fist!



### Have you paid your 2017 Dues?

Annual Dues: \$25/YR

Life Time Dues \$200

Mail dues to Financial Officer:

Chuck Webster 39224 132nd St. Bath SD 57427

### Only Voting Members receive a copy of the Directory

Become a Voting Member!

Visit the Membership Page

[www.fistofthefleet.org](http://www.fistofthefleet.org)

**FROM THE COCKPIT** By: LT Chad "IRIS" Duncan

Greetings from NAS Lemoore! VFA-25 is off to a fast start in 2017 and here is a quick sum up.

- 1) Pilots continue to work on qualifications through SFWT flights and future detachments.
- 2) With an outstanding maintenance department, our jets are ready for every event and then some.
- 3) Sailors are getting qualified in their respective shops and advancing to the next level of their careers.

**CAS TRAINING MISSIONS**

During the first week of January 2017, VFA-25 supported the 116<sup>th</sup> Air Support Operations Squadron (ASOS), an Air National Guard unit based out of Camp Murray, WA. As the 116<sup>th</sup> ASOS flew down to operate in Nevada live training ranges, VFA-25 provided multiple sortie coverage every day to maximize the training gained. Tactical Air Support Party (TACP) Airmen are specialists assigned to combat units and they advise ground forces on aircraft employment and capabilities and direct combat aircraft onto enemy targets. Pilots were able to provide great training for the TACP and were the leading squadron on the flight line in support of these operations. Highlighting the training was a section employing Laser Guided Training Rounds (LGTR) on a moving target.

**F-35C and Advanced Super Hornet?**

A historic event took place here in Lemoore on January 25<sup>th</sup>. The recently reinstated Rough Raiders of VFA-125 saw the arrival of the first four F-35C aircraft on that day. Hosted by the major aircraft company, Lockheed Martin, they spared no expense in laying out the red carpet for the introduction of their latest creation. The sight and sound of the division of F-35s flying overhead combined with the incredible hors' d'oeuvres on hand made for a truly remarkable ceremony. Being able to see the unique flight gear, cockpit, and design of the F-35C up close and personal gave us a sense of optimism and excitement for the integration of this new platform. Vice Adm. Mike Shoemaker, Commander, Naval Air Forces, US Pacific Fleet was in town for the ceremony and met with many of the Lemoore flight line pilots the day prior to talk about concerns and the outlook for the near future. I can tell you that he holds an optimistic view on the direction of Naval Aviation and is looking forward to getting it fully back on glideslope. VADM Shoemaker also mentioned the Advanced Super Hornet, and to say that pilots are excited about that would be an understatement. Imagine squadrons of Advanced F/A-18E/Fs and F-35Cs deploying together... simply an awesome thought! What an exciting time to be a part of Naval Aviation.

"I knew the United States was in the war, up to the neck and in to the death. I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful."

—Winston Churchill, 1941



## FROM THE HANGAR DECK

Greeting Faithful FOFA members,

Command Master Chief Henderson coming to you from the deck plates and it's been a while since I've had the opportunity to chat with you all. Although the deployment is becoming a fading memory for many of us, there has been lots of work and great times had here at the command since then. One of the biggest changes I've seen amongst the deck plates is the increased number of new cars since returning from deployment. I can remember many of the Sailors expressing their desires to buy a car once deployment was over and with the saving of some, if not all of their tax free money, many of them have achieved their goal. I just hope they listened to me and took advantage of the plethora of car buying seminars offered to them. They got their cars and many of them received another unexpected treat. As Skipper Scott talked about in the last edition, the detachment to Hawaii was nothing short of amazing. As a career surface Navy Sailor, I found myself asking the question, why it took me so long to get engaged with the aviation community. If going on detachments to one of the most beautiful places in the world is considered work, sign me up for another 25 years of service, please! The island was so beautiful that I didn't want to miss out on any part of the beauty that surrounded me. As a matter of fact, I can't recall ever being as excited about waking up to go to work or being sad at the end of the day because it was time to go to sleep. The island offered a type of energy and livelihood not often found in other places and I was thankful for the opportunity to watch our maintainers perform their duties, launching and recovering our jets, as I observed the combined exercises we did with the Hawaii Air National Guard. I was sure to call and send pictures to all my surface Navy friends who were bursting with envy as I hiked gorgeous mountains and witnessed beautiful waterfalls, swam at some of the best beaches, and ate some of the most delightful foods. After returning from our November excursion, we went into the holidays, where Sailors got to take advantage of spending time with family and friends during Christmas and New Year's. There is nothing like being home with family over the holidays and it gave many Sailors who remembered being on deployment the year before new found respect for those who were making the sacrifice this year. Most of our Sailors came back from the holiday break recharged and refreshed, ready to take on the New Year. What a start it has been, even though we have lost quite a bit of manning since the end of deployment, the loss of personnel and the knowledge that went with it has not stopped us from ensuring our jets are ready to go when needed. What we are seeing is the training of a new group of supervisors who have started to develop the technical acumen that will make them the next generation of go-to Sailors who will have attained the knowledge and know how to ensure our success on future combat deployments. The old adage of "train your relief" is alive and well here at VFA-25. The deck plates work hard to keep our F/A-18's in tip top flying condition. However, the last week in January brought about a much anticipated ceremony with the arrival of the F-35C Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) jet. The JSF's arrived to much fanfare as news cameras and reporters packed Hangar 4 of NAS Lemoore to get a good look at the Navy's newest fighter jets. As they roared overhead many of us on the deck plates watched as the jets took formation and loudly introduced themselves officially to the flight line. The JSF jet will help to ensure air superiority for years to come with its stealth capability and advanced technology. It was such a joy to see the future of the Navy first hand right here in our very own backyard. We can't depend on those assets just yet though, so today we still need to ensure the Fist of the Fleet aircraft are ready and able to continue our longstanding tradition of completing our mission, no matter how much that mission has changed or what that mission may be. Rest assured, you can always count on VFA-25 Fist of the Fleet and "The Best Damn Squadron on the West Coast" to deliver.

With the Utmost Respect,

Claude Henderson

Command Master Chief



## **FIST OF THE FLEET ASSOCIATION FINANCIAL REPORT**

Thanks to the generosity and contributions from our Membership and along with new and renewal members the financial health of the Association continues to improve. As of December 31, 2016, the Association has a balance of \$26,130.70 in assets and savings/checking account within the Navy Federal Credit Union.

One of the main indicators of the Association's financial health and stability is the continued growth of its dues-paying members. While this number increased during 2016, we need continued growth in our membership with past and present members of Fist squadrons in 2017. During 2016, a total of three new Life Members; Larry Wahl, XO Christopher Dentzer, Charles Overby and six Annual Members paid dues. Annual Members are reminded to make their 2017 payments either via PayPal or check.

The Educational Fund had no contributions during 2016 but there were two large contributions to support the Ltjg Harry Jones Award and contributions were made to support the Sailor of the Year Award. With the turnaround schedule for VFA-25, squadron members had very little opportunity to take any outside classes. The Association made no Educational Grant payments during 2016. Contact with VFA-25 appears that there will be usage of the Grant, possibly during the present turnaround. Remember, that any donation to the Educational Fund, the Ltjg Harry Jones Award, or the Sailor of the Year Award is deductible for federal income tax purposes and a letter will be sent to you for your tax preparation. There was also a very generous contribution to support the USS Midway Ready Room 3 Fund. A special thanks goes out to Captain C.E Church Jr.

The Association did make annual awards to Lt. Justin L. Reece for the Ltjg. Harry Jones Award and to PO1 Brandon J. Stevenson Sailor of the Year Award. Along with life membership, each award recipient is presented a FOFA Association challenge coin, and a \$500.00 check.

Finally, during the year of 2017 we will again hold a highly successful Fist 2017 Reunion in Charleston, SC between November 9<sup>th</sup> till November 12<sup>th</sup>. The reunion will be held at the Embassy Suites in North Charleston and you can make room reservations with the hotel now. We will soon be set up on PayPal to make registrations with the Association or by check to the FOFA Treasurer. The Association wishes to thank all those members who have given financial support during 2016. Chuck "Pooh" Webster

## **FIST OF THE FLEET ASSOCIATION NEWS**

A Book Review by Jay Stone, VA-25 Air Intelligence Officer. "*The Route 9 Problem.*" By: Dave Stockwell.

Since I returned from my last cruise as an Air Intelligence Officer aboard the USS Coral Sea to Vietnam in 1968, I have read dozens of books about that war. Most books we read about activities we were involved in don't seem to capture the same memories we have. There have been a few exceptions, like "Northern SAR" and "Flying Low", which were written by people who were there and experienced it firsthand. A few I have read are little more than "sea stories" that you can see through very easily for their exaggerations and misconceptions.

But I have just finished a new book written by Dave Stockwell, entitled "Rt. 9 Problem". It is the story of the famous battle of Lang Vei, the Special Forces camp which was attacked by the North Vietnamese on February 7, 1968. Stockwell was not there, but that may lend more credibility to his writing, since he relied on the recollections of dozens of men who were. Not only does he describe the battle in detail, but he gives you the flavor of who these men were...their families, their backgrounds and how they happened to all end up in that crucial corner of Vietnam in that critical time.

In February of 1968, the TET offensive had wracked the country and the North Vietnamese were surrounding the key Marine base at Khe Sanh, threatening to overrun it and turn it into the American Dien Bien Phu. The Special Forces camp sat astride Rt. 9, the pathway from Laos to Khe Sanh and the highest levels of the North Vietnamese government wanted it destroyed to clear a path. So they sent Russian tanks, for the first time, into battle. At the same time, the White House was receiving daily briefings about what was going on there and made some decisions for the battlefield commanders. It was a pivotal moment in the war.

Most every book one reads about the war approaches the story from the perspective of that service...the Marines, the Air Force or the Navy. All of these were represented at Lang Vei and worked together to rescue the seemingly doomed 8 men left in a command bunker with a North Vietnamese tank on top and hundreds of their troops destroying the camp and its defenders. How the Air Force FACs controlled the Navy A-1's from VA-25 in bad weather, how the Army's hatchet forces who sent their helicopters and how the Marines at Khe Sanh, 5 miles away interacted to produce a dramatic ending is a testament to their courage and skill. This is a book you will not want to put down once you start. You will not soon forget the names of Paul Longgear, Zip Rausa, Dennis Thompson, Toby Rushforth, Jim Biltz, Eugene Ashley, and many others who had key roles in this gripping book.

From the author:

Folks: The *Route 9 Problem* is now available in paperback form at Barnes and Noble. The Nook version of the book has been available on Barnes and Noble since Nov. 28, 2016.

If you feel so inclined, consider leaving a review on the Barnes and Noble website!

Dave

PS. Route 9 Problem has been nominated for two international book awards. More on that, and other updates at the book's website at [www.langveibattle.com](http://www.langveibattle.com).

## **DID YOU KNOW: NAVY, MILITARY AND OTHER INFORMATION**

Navy to give final farewell to USS Enterprise, world's 1st nuclear-powered carrier, next .

By : Brock Vergakis The Virginian-Pilot  
NEWPORT NEWS

The world's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier will be decommissioned next week in what will be the final farewell to a warship that has played a role in major world events from the 1962 Cuban missile crisis to the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The USS Enterprise has spent the past several years being defueled and dismantled at Newport News Shipbuilding, the shipyard where it was built and refueled. The "Big E," as it was affectionately called by its crew, was inactivated from service in 2012 in front of about 12,000 people in a ceremony at Norfolk Naval Station after completing its 25th deployment.

The decommissioning ceremony is a long-honored naval tradition that retires a ship from service through a variety of ceremonial services, including lowering the ship's commissioning pennant. The Feb. 3 ceremony is closed to the public, but the Navy said Wednesday the entire event will be posted on its Facebook page. About 100 people are expected to attend at Newport News Shipbuilding.

The ship joined the fleet in 1961 and has an active veterans' group dedicated to preserving its history, which includes launching the first aircraft strikes in Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorism attacks on the U.S.

The carrier was the eighth Navy ship to bear the name Enterprise, which dates to the Revolutionary War. The Navy has said a future Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier also will be called Enterprise. Sailors from the carrier's final crew built a time capsule from parts of the ship and allowed former sailors to fill it with notes and mementos. The time capsule will be opened by the commanding officer of the next Enterprise.



Enterprise at Newport News Shipbuilding Oct 2016



CVAN-65 in 1968



## **FISTORY: KOREA-PERILIOUS DAYS**

### USS Boxer CV-21

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.S. forces in the Far East had an urgent need for supplies and aircraft. The only aircraft carriers near Korea were USS Valley Forge and HMS Triumph. Boxer was ordered into service to ferry aircraft from California to the fighting on the Korean Peninsula. She made a record-breaking crossing of the Pacific Ocean, leaving Alameda, CA 14 July '50 and arriving at Yokosuka, Japan on 23 Jul, a trip of 8 days and 7 hrs. She carried 145 North American P-51 Mustangs and 6 Stinson L-5 Sentinels of the United States Air Force destined for the Far East Air Force as well as 19 Navy aircraft, 1,012 Air Force support personnel, and 2,000 tons of supplies for the United Nations troops fighting the North Korean invasion of South Korea, including crucially needed spare parts and ordnance. Many of this equipment had been taken from Air National Guard units in the United States because of a general shortage of materiel. She began her return trip from Yokosuka on 27 Jul and arrived back in Alameda on 4 Aug, for a trip of 7 days, 10 hrs and 36 min, again breaking the record for a trans-Pacific cruise. She carried no jet aircraft, though, because they were deemed too fuel inefficient for the initial defense mission in Korea. By the time Boxer arrived in Korea, the UN forces had established superiority in the air and sea.

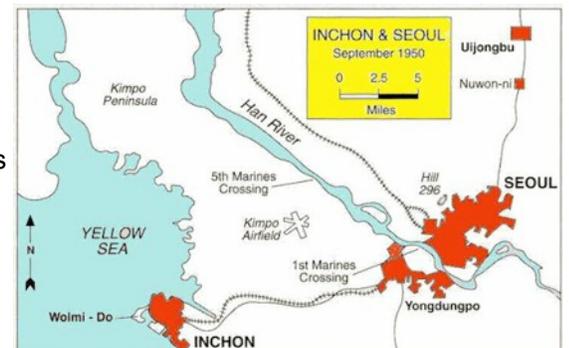
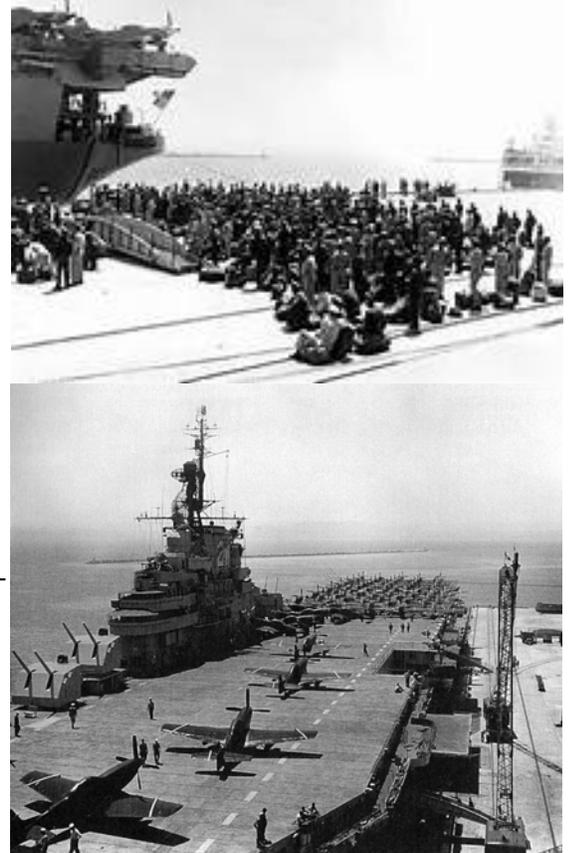
By Sept North Korean troops had driven American and South Korean troops into a perimeter around Pusan, on the southeast tip of Korea. Allied reinforcements and North Korean over-extended supply lines finally permitted a counter-attack to break out of the Pusan perimeter. On 5 Sept carrier strikes were scheduled for Kunsan and other coastal areas as part of an invasion deception. The fleet carriers Valley Forge (CV-45) and Philippine Sea (CV-47), and the escort carriers Badoeng Strait (CVE-116) and Sicily (CVE-118) were off shore during this period.

By 12 Sept both Boxer and typhoon Kezia arrived off Japan at the same time, forcing Boxer on a 400-mile southerly diversion to Naha, Okinawa for offloading the spare aircraft. On 13 Sept the bombardment of the island fortress of Wolmi-Do on the north side of Inchon harbor began. This island had a commanding view of the entire harbor and city, and being neutralized was critical for the main landings. Finally, on 14 Sept Boxer arrived in Sasebo with two hours of daylight for loading ammunition. The ship departed at dusk.

On 15 Sept the invasion of Inchon began at 0630 when the first ground units went ashore on Wolmi-Do Island and it was declared secure at 0807. VA-65 was about to go to war.

Sources: wikipedia, fisthistory.org

Air Force personnel board the USS Boxer, July 1950



**NEXT TIME IN KOREA-PERILIOUS DAYS: FIRST BLOOD.**