

HMLA-267



Left to right: Capt. Ryan Welborn and 1stLt. Jonathan Chaiken.

Capt. Ryan Welborn, USMC, a functional-check pilot and pilot-in-command, along with 1stLt. Jonathan Chaiken, USMC, were scheduled for a full card, functional-check flight (FCF), following a periodic-maintenance-interval (PMI-2) package. After a thorough preflight and completion of the ground portion of the FCF, the AH-1W crew departed MCAS Camp Pendleton, Calif., and positioned themselves over the beach at 4,000 feet AGL.

As part of the in-flight FCF procedures, Capt. Welborn initiated a maximum-power assurance check on the No. 2 engine by setting the No. 1 engine throttle at flight idle. While 1stLt. Chaiken scanned the beach for traffic, Capt. Welborn wrote down the required engine-instrument readings. The aircraft then yawed to the left, and the No. 2 engine gauges decreased below flight idle. Diagnosing a possible engine failure, Capt. Welborn immediately entered an autorotative profile, rolled the No. 1 engine to full open, and positioned the aircraft for a precautionary-emergency landing (PEL) on the beach. Capt. Welborn then transferred controls to 1stLt. Chaiken in the front seat and executed an air start on the No. 2 engine—the engine started normally. During this time, 1stLt. Chaiken flew the aircraft along a PEL profile. After advancing both throttles to full open, Capt. Welborn assumed the controls and flew an uneventful landing.

A subsequent investigation revealed a fuel line from the aft fuel cell was not properly tightened during the PMI-2. This situation had allowed air to be sucked into the No. 2 engine's fuel line, causing a loss of pressure and subsequent flameout.

Timely decision-making, a sound knowledge of aircraft systems and procedures, excellent crew-resource management, and skillful airmanship were displayed by both pilots. Their actions directly were responsible for the preservation of a warfighting asset.

BRAVO Zulu

During a night flight in support of combat operations off USS Enterprise (CVN-65), the Dragonslayer 611 crew of LCdr. Rod Dill, Lt. John Roath, AW2 Dan Mills, and AW3 Eric Rydh heard a howl coming from the No. 1 engine compartment during a max-power check. Seconds later, as the pilots slowed the aircraft to troubleshoot, the No. 1 high-speed shaft catastrophically failed, sending FOD throughout the engine and transmission compartments. The crew performed the NATOPS procedures and made a single-engine approach, landing the damaged aircraft on the bow, without further incident.

Lt. John Roath, AW3 Eric Rydh, LCdr. Rod Dill, AW2 Dan Mills



Photo by Ltjg. Steve Smith.



VMFA-115

1stLt. Nick DiGuido
(now Capt. Nick DiGuido)

Capt. Frederick Lewis, USMC, and 1stLt. Nick DiGuido, USMC, were flying a section of Hornet aircraft while conducting unit-level training in the R2512 range complex, about 20 miles to the east-northeast of NAF El Centro. After completing multiple 2.75-inch-rocket attacks from a 30-degree-dive circular pattern, blade 22, 1stLt. DiGuido's aircraft, had dual bleed-warning lights while pulling off target. As he leveled at 9,000 feet, he completed the immediate-action NATOPS procedures for dual bleed-warning lights and simultaneously put NAF El Centro on the nose.

1stLt. DiGuido told his lead of the emergency, noting that the dual bleed-warning lights had not extinguished and that no secondary indications were present. En route to NAF El Centro, the blade 21 pilot flew a running rendezvous and performed a battle-damage check on blade 22. No external or secondary indications for a bleed-air leak were seen. Blade 21 coordinated with El Centro tower to fly a visual straight-in approach to runway 26.

Following an uneventful landing, blade 22 taxied clear of the runway and immediately shut down the aircraft. The time from the initial illumination of both bleed-air-warning lights until both engines were shut down was less than seven minutes.

After egress, 1stLt. DiGuido observed residual smoke coming from the aft portion of the aircraft. No further assistance was required after the crash crew arrived, and the aircraft subsequently was towed to the hangar. The maintainers removed the access panels in the keel-bay area and found extensive heat and smoke damage.

Sound crew coordination and adherence to NATOPS procedures by 1stLt. DiGuido and Capt. Lewis prevented the Hornet from receiving more severe heat damage and possible loss of aircrew and aircraft.

VR-56

On a C-9B logistics mission, JU361 made a stop in Johnstown, Pa., to pick up Marines and their cargo. While loading pallets on the Skytrain, loadmaster IT2(AW/NAC) Peter Gruettner noticed the pallets felt and looked heavier than the weights stated on the cargo manifest. He reported his concerns to the aircraft commander and asked to have the pallets reweighed. Recomputation showed the pallets were 2,300 pounds more than what originally had been reported. Even before IT2 Gruettner found this discrepancy, the takeoff weight already was critical. Had he not acted promptly to verify the weight, the aircraft could have taken off in a significant overweight condition, or it may not have been able to get airborne before the end of the runway. IT2 Gruettner's assertiveness most likely prevented a serious mishap.

