



Photo by PH2 Shane McCoy

By Cdr. Samuel Schick

We just had inched to the Fifth Fleet area of operations on Sept. 11, one year after the terrorist attacks against our country. It was our fifth day of flying in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. We were getting comfortable with the procedures involved with flying in and out of Pakistan, supporting special operations forces in Afghanistan. We were fired-up to be in the North Arabian Sea, doing our part to “bring the fight to the enemy.” Our squadron aircraft had been holding up well, although I already had flown one single-engine approach to the ship. I thought this was my quota of problems for the deployment—think again.

It was the typical, soupy, summer day, with two-to-three-mile visibility and no horizon to speak of. We had a Case I launch, and I was not concerned in the least about the flight: It was daytime, and no night trap was required. The brief, man-up, start, and taxi to cat 3 were uneventful.

As we went into tension, I went through my normal litany of cockpit checks, “...all breakers in, hydraulics look good, gear down, flaps set 10 degrees, trim set

2-3-0, pitch feel good, max rudder set 20 auto 20, caution and advisory lights good, all engine instruments in the green, good TMT-horsepower-rpm, heading is 210.”

I got concurrence from my copilot, who was second-pilot qualified, and asked him to salute the cat officer. As you can guess, things went bad just after we started down the catapult. I heard a change in engine rpm, and, halfway down the stroke, the right engine spooled down past 72 percent. I told the crew we were losing the right engine—that was the last we talked to each other over ICS for the next few minutes.

By the time we got to the end of the cat stroke, I was feeding in left rudder to compensate for the inevitable swerve that was coming. Once airborne, I made sure the power levers were at max, put in more left rudder, and got the gear up. We safely were climbing away from the water, at 500 feet per minute, when I realized the aircraft was silent. There was no ICS, and UHF-1 was not working; we had missed the call from the air boss telling us to do a clearing turn off the cat.

The next part of the procedure calls for the copilot to feather the right engine, using the T-handle. I had to tap

Am I in the Simulator, Or What?

him on the arm, point at the right T-handle, and yell to him to pull it. With that done, the flaps and max-rudder system were set for the rest of the climb-out.

At 500 feet, I glanced down at the caution-lights panel, expecting to only see an R GEN caution light, because the right generator was not running. The R GEN light was on, but, in addition, the right transformer-rectifier (R RECT) light was illuminated, indicating an AC bus-tie failure. At the same time, the copilot said the right propeller still was windmilling, very slowly.

Basically, I had no ICS, no radios (except UHF-2), no carrier-aircraft-inertial-navigation system (CAINS), no heading- and attitude-reference system (HARS), no TACAN, no normal trim, no primary-attitude reference (except for nine minutes of standby gyro), and a windmilling propeller. I couldn't believe the scenario that had developed in such a short period.

I remembered thinking, "This is just like those simulator flights back at the FRS, when you get angry with the instructor, because there was no way the scenario he just gave you could happen in real life." I shook off that thought quickly, decided to deal with real life, and continued climbing to 1,000 feet.

At 1,000 feet, I asked the copilot for help holding in enough left rudder for balanced flight. With a takeoff setting of three units of right rudder and no rudder trim available, a large force was required to maintain the full left rudder necessary in the climb. My left leg was tiring rapidly. With his help, I continued the climb to 3,000 feet. Hawkeye aircraft and electrical fires do not mix well, and I wanted to be at a comfortable altitude for a bailout if the electrical gremlins turned into an ugly fire.

In the climb, I reset the L GEN switch, hoping that the AC bus-tie would work—it didn't. For some reason, the ICS started working again, and the propeller fully feathered—these two items are on the DC essential bus. I asked the combat-information-center officer (CICO) in the back to see if he could get the ship on one of the radios, but he said his radios were not working, and the their scopes were dead.

I turned to a downwind heading of 030, using the wet compass and standby gyro, to see if we could get a visual on the ship. Once wings level, I turned off the L GEN switch and manually selected "on" for the EMER GEN. I knew this would at least get our HARS attitude-heading, TACAN, UHF-1 and 3, and trim back.

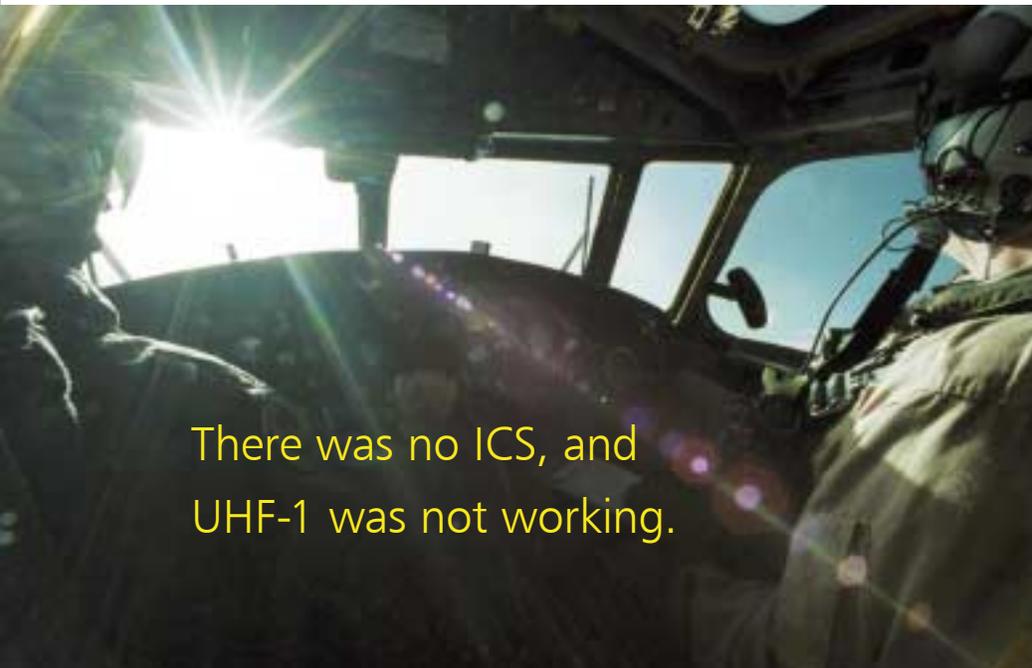
I immediately heard the air boss on UHF-1 telling the aircraft in the overhead stack, "Heads up...watch out for the Hawkeye in the pattern."

I now knew some radios were working. I had the CICO contact strike and let them know our situation, while we gave the air boss a heads-up on our position, relative to the ship, and asked for an immediate recovery. We went through the engine post-shutdown procedures, making sure we turned the fuel dump off as close to max trap as possible. We set ourselves up for a straight-in, single-engine, no-AOA approach (no indexers-AOA gauge), briefed paddles on our configuration, and landed with an OK 2-wire.

Crew coordination was key to the successful outcome of this unusual emergency. I had my hands full at the end of the cat stroke, and my copilot responded just how we had briefed an in-flight engine shutdown—although the communication method was a little non-standard. He then helped me hold the left rudder in until we could figure out what was going on. The CICO pulled out the pocket checklist, backed us up, and coordinated with the ship.

The air-control officer and radar officer backed up the CICO, provided altitude backup to make sure we didn't get wet, and had the checklists ready. The next time you are flying along fat, dumb and happy, get ready for that FRS flashback: "Am I in the simulator, or what?" Then think again—it is reality. 🦅

Cdr. Schick is the executive officer of VAW-113.



There was no ICS, and
UHF-1 was not working.

Photo by PHAN Christopher B. Stoltz