

Who's the Dumm

By AME1 (AW) Jason Deeken

Flight ops aboard USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN-74) had been going smoothly for nearly three months in the Gulf of Oman. Flight-deck personnel had fallen into a good daily and nightly routine—one that made for safe and successful operations. It stayed that way until a simple but different tool-control issue struck.

One regular, routine action is uploading and downloading ordnance from our Hornets parked on the flight deck. Anytime ordnance is involved, the job is regimented and attention to detail is critical because no room for error exists. The A1-F18AE-LWS-000 is the

publication used for airborne weapons and stores. When followed, it leaves no room for misinterpretation.

Our problem had started several months ago, when a gun made its way to AIMD, with rounds still in the drum, causing the command to have a QAR present during downloads to make sure the gun is empty. On this particular night, I was present for a gun download on elevator No. 2. The night's flight schedule was done, and the AOs had had to transfer 500 rounds from the gun of aircraft 314 to a transporter. After the gun was emptied, the transporter was moved away, and technicians started the download verification. They placed



y Now?



one dummy round in the transfer unit, closed the gate, and began to cycle the gun.

When I had witnessed gun downloads in the past, two dummy rounds always had been used, which is what the pub said to use. I asked the AO night-shift supervisor what dictated whether one or two rounds were used for verification. He said sometimes one was used, sometimes two, but no real logic existed. It didn't seem to make any difference to me, either. One or two rounds, what did it matter? It was obvious the gun was empty.

However, the LWS-000 states, "The use of two dummy rounds will ensure gun system is completely empty of ammunition when cycled completely through the gun system." I raised this point with the QALPO the next day, asking for input from him and my fellow QARs. It was clear and unanimously decided that the procedure in the pub was what we should be using. We passed that info to the AO LPO, who also agreed.

Then a problem arose; the other dummy round could not be found.

After an extensive search of the shop, all 12 of our aircraft's guns, and AIMD, the round still was MIA. A survey of the missing tool began, training on tool control was administered, and the importance of using pubs was stressed.

Downloading the gun seemed to be a no-brainer to the Blue Diamond QARs and the technicians who actually performed the task. However, had all of us been familiar with the procedures in the publication, we would have saved ourselves dozens of man-hours in a search for a tool that still remains missing. This situation made us all realize the importance of getting into the MIMs, knowing the details of every job, and doing good maintenance, no matter how easy a job seems. ✈️

Petty Officer Deeken works in quality assurance at VFA-146.