The Initial Approach Fix

From the Director, Aviation Safety Programs: *I recently reviewed a mishap that made my heart sink. An aviator was killed because he went flying while feeling ill, and then lost consciousness because of hypoxia. The problem I had in reading about this tragedy was flight leadership failed to recognize an aviator in extremis. The information below highlights the types of errors I read about in this mishap report, and suggests ways to prevent these hazards from taking our most valuable assets from us. Keep your head on a swivel.—Capt. Ken Neubauer.*

Skill-based errors and decision errors continue to be the primary unsafe acts performed by aircrew. While we are familiar with the terms, it may be helpful to provide examples of what we're talking about.

- *Skill-based errors:*
  - Improper use of flight controls
  - Failure to recognize extremis
  - Poor technique
  - Improper use of equipment
- *Decision errors:*
  - Poor decision-making
  - Execute improper procedure
  - Failure to take specific necessary action
  - Accepting unnecessary risk

Adverse mental states and crew-resource-management failures continue to be the primary contributing factors to aircrew errors. To understand these unsafe acts, we must look at the preconditions for these errors.

- *Adverse-mental states:*
  - Inattention or distraction
  - Loss of situational awareness
  - Complacency
  - Channelized attention or fixation
- *CRM failures:*
  - Failure to communicate or coordinate
  - Failure to exercise leadership
  - Failure to backup
  - Failure to conduct an adequate brief

ROBD

- Instructors at the Naval Survival Training Institute (NSTI) now provide improved hypoxia-recognition training to refresher jet aircrew using the *reduced-oxygen-breathing device* (ROBD), coupled with flight simulation. ROBD instructors are trained to simulate actual flight-related duties, such as radio calls, interpreting flight instruments, and evaluating basic flying skills. This realism allows them to play the role of a wingman, backseater, or air-traffic controller (ATC) during ROBD flight scenarios. The ROBD scenarios will give the student a more realistic experience that is much closer to an actual hypoxia episode in their aircraft. For more information on ROBD visit: **http://safetycenter.navy.mil/aviation/articles/ROBD.htm**.

ROBD was featured in the May-June 2005 *Approach*, and the article can be viewed at: **http://safetycenter.navy.mil/media/approach/issues/mayjun05improvedtraining.htm**.

Best Practices

- *Fighting Complacency*

The Gunfighters of HMLA-369 have identified complacency as the No. 2 hazard the squadron faced during their OIF deployment, second only to anticoalition forces. To mitigate this hazard, the squadron generated an LOI with a comprehensive plan to keep complacency in check. This instruction applies not only to aircrew but touches practically every aspect of squadron operations. While some of the measures are specific to the operating environment or squadron organization, others may be adaptable for use by USMC or USN squadrons. For a copy of the LOI, visit the Safety Center website best practices page: **http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/aviation/complacency_avoidance.htm**.

- *Turnover binders*

A common problem the Safety Center sees on safety surveys is lack of an effective turnover binder for the safety officer and the ASO. A good turnover binder is especially important for a safety officer who has not been a previous ASO and has not been to ASO school. VFA-14 has a good example of safety turnover notes that makes a good starting point for any squadron safety office to build a turnover binder. The attached VFA-14 turnover notes would make a good starting point for any squadron safety office to build a turnover binder. Squadrons with a good turnover binder already in place may want to compare theirs against this one on our website: **http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/bestpractices/aviation/ASO_turnover.htm**.