

## New Aircraft:

1987: The E-6A Hermes makes its first flight. The aircraft was later renamed Mercury, the Roman version of the Greek Hermes.

1988: The T-45A Goshawk makes its first flight.

## Important Dates:

January 28, 1986: The space shuttle *Challenger* explodes shortly after launch, killing the crew of seven astronauts.

March 24-25, 1986: Two carrier task forces send strikes against Libyan targets after SAMs are fired against Navy aircraft, and Libyan gunboats menace the American ships in open waters.

May 2, 1986: The Navy initiates a contract for development of the V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft to replace the CH-46.

January 4, 1989: Two VF-32 Tomcats down two Libyan MiG-23s.

July 12, 1990: Cdr. Rosemary B. Mariner becomes the first

In 1986, naval aviation celebrated the 75th observance of Eugene Ely's landing aboard and taking off from the same ship in January 1911. The same year also saw naval aviation units engage in a mini-war against Libya in March and April. These actions were the combat debut of the FA-18.

Throughout this period, new aircraft continued to join operations. This transitional phase was typical of times that include changes in equipment. The fleet had a mix of older aircraft like the A-6 and F-4, while newer types like the FA-18, AV-8B and new models of established aircraft like the E-2C, EA-6B and F-14 filled out squadrons at the so-called "tip of the spear."

Two worldwide events deeply affected all American military services, the demise of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War of January-February 1991, now referred to as Gulf War I. The West had

# 1986-1995

woman to lead an operational aviation squadron when she assumes command of VAQ-34.

January 17, 1991: Naval forces makes first strikes of Operation Desert Storm aimed at evicting Iraq from Kuwait.

July 31, 1991: The Congress votes to permit women to serve in combat units.

August 19, 1991: The Naval Air Reserve celebrates its diamond anniversary.

January 13, 1992: The Navy and Marine Corps integrates VMFA and VMAQs into carrier air wings.

August 27, 1992: Operation Southern Watch begins to enforce the no-fly zone over Iraq.

September 4, 1992: Cdr. Linda V. Hutton assumes command of VRC-40 as the first woman to command an Atlantic fleet squadron.

December 9, 1992: U.S.-led forces land in Somalia for Operation Restore Hope. Marine Corps helicopters cover the landing in concert with aircraft from USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV-63).

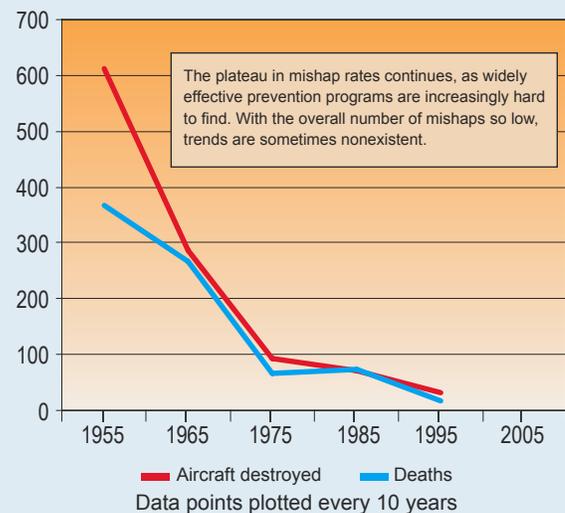
October 15, 1993: Aviation Officer Candidate School is consolidated with Officer Candidate School (OCS), and will take in aviation and non-aviation officer candidates.

July 31, 1994: Lt. Kara Hultgreen of VF-213 becomes the first woman to carrier-qualify in the F-14. She is killed on October 25 during another CQ period. Her RIO ejects and survives.

December 20, 1994: Mr. Robert C. Osborn dies at age 90. He had drawn safety cartoons for the Navy and Marine Corps for more than 50 years. Dilbert and Grampaw Pettibone were his best-known characters.

The mid-1980s began with a splash, a public affairs officer's dream: a blockbuster movie, "Top Gun." The real world was much less explosive, but for naval aviation, it was still a time of bringing new aircraft and programs on line while dealing with a shrinking budget and fleet. By the end of the decade, ships and aircraft were beginning to leave service, with replacements unable to fill in the gaps. But the naval services met their responsibilities as they deployed around the world.

## Naval Aviation Mishaps



won the Cold War, but the future was dramatically uncertain.

Instead of planning and practicing for either a nuclear war or wide-ranging conflict across Europe, America and its allies in NATO found themselves trying to help former members of the USSR prepare for and deal with their new independence.

When Iraq sent forces into Kuwait in the early hours of August 1, 1990, the U.S. organized and led a six-week war against the Iraqis, ousting them from Kuwait. All our services participated, and every type of aircraft in the arsenal saw action.