

# Honor the **Blue Threat**, Or It Will Kill You

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**T**he threat on the battlefield, the airspace above, and the surrounding sea is well-understood by our VT-4 instructors, who have had an opportunity to engage the enemies of our nation and allies overseas. As warriors and student warriors, we constantly are training and learning to get our chance at the global war on terrorism.

Here at the Warbucks, we constantly are briefing operational and personal risk management, both on and off duty, as a squadron and as individuals, so we safely can complete training and strap on our jets and prop aircraft and take the battle to our enemies. Some may feel this is overkill (so to speak), but I invite your attention to a quote from RADM George Mayer, former CNATRA and currently head of the Naval Safety Center.

“We must view the hazards we face every day, in training or in our everyday lives, in the same way we

view our enemies: as real threats,” said RADM Mayer. “What if we were to always treat low visibility or wet runways as a threat (with the ability to take out an FA-18) equal to that of a surface-to-air missile? What if we viewed fatigue-impaired decisions as a threat as dangerous as an anti-aircraft-artillery piece? What if we approached the threat of following too closely in automobile traffic or the reckless drivers who cut us off on the highway in the same way we deliver weapons into a Red-Threat envelope? We need to treat the threats we can control, the Blue Threats, with the same energy we approach fighting the Red Threats. Because, today, Blue Threats—our errors and poor decisions—are our deadliest enemies.”

Here is someone well-versed in the aviation business as a squadron CO, my former CAG, and battle-group commander. He is an expert in the hazards of operational and training command. I find it

Navy photo by PH3 Rob Gaston



The Blue Threat isn't solely an aviation concept...



...These two motorcyclists, for example, are their own worst enemy because they're not wearing helmets.

intriguing his point to honor the threats while training like we would in combat. We never would think about being late to the target in combat because of the consequences, both to the troops on the ground and to our aircraft. Maybe we should treat entering a low-level route as if we were going downtown to the target. Honoring entry time like honoring the threat is another control we could put in place to mitigate the training threat.

How about a bigger threat, especially during the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays? The weather typically isn't so nice—the winds pick up, making vertical navigation (VNAV) and hitting your point-to-points much more difficult. As played out in safety statistics, though, a bigger threat this time of year is getting around in our personal motor vehicles (PMVs). It's only natural that our thoughts turn to taking some leave, getting back to our hometowns, seeing family and loved ones, and eating holiday meals.

Before we strap into our cars, however, here is something to mull over. Naval Safety Center statistics show PMV mishaps involve six especially hazardous factors: driving between the hours of midnight and 0600, driving during the weekend, not using seat belts, drunk driving, speeding, and driver fatigue. Leadership must engage and address these factors, as a minimum.

As officers, we are all leaders, so we bear the responsibility to address and honor the threats associated with trying to get home. From the Warbucks per-

spective, we conduct safety training and hold work-shift-change briefings to focus on avoiding/mitigating and controlling the hazards encountered on the road. If holiday travels involve being on the road during the late night, over a weekend, or where fatigue can be a factor, we stress stopping, identifying the risk, assessing it, implementing controls, and supervising the risk—sound familiar?

We urge our Sailors to plan departure times so they don't need to hurry—speed kills, in case you haven't heard it before. We also stress using seat belts while driving. Just like flying, honor the threat anytime you're driving and make it back ready to train, fight or simply take care of business. ■

#### *Message From Commander, Naval Safety Center*

*I want all Sailors, Marines and civilians supporting our mission to know that every loss of life, every injury, and every mishap greatly impacts our ability to carry out the mission. As this author noted, I used the September-October 2006 (Blue-Threat focus) issue of Approach to point out the vast majority of mishaps are the result of our own doing. We really are our own worst enemy. The Blue Threat isn't solely an aviation concept; it extends to everything we do, 24/7, on and off duty, in our cars or on our motorcycles. Risk management and prudent decisions are our best defenses against this threat.*

*RADM George Mayer*