



Robert C. Coats Captain USN (Ret.)
 "Bob"

Date of Designation: 23 June 1941

Dates of Active Duty: 13 August 1940 - 1 February 1971

Total Flight Hours: 6,111

Carrier/Ship Landings: 373

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 400 Prop: 5,700 VF: 2,300 VA/VU: 1,900
 VT: 1,600 HU-16: 300

Combat Tours:

- WW II: VF-18, USS *Bunker Hill*, 1 Oct. 1943-1 Mar. 1944, SW Pacific - Solomon Islands, New Ireland, New Britain, Gilbert Islands, Tarawa, Kwajalein, Truk, Marianas, Saipan, Tinian, Iwo Jima (F6F-3)
 - WW II: VF-17, 1 Mar. 1944-1 Dec. 1944 NAS Alameda, Hilo, Guam, Ulithi (F6F-5)
 - WW II: VF-17, 2 Dec. 1944-5 Jun. 1945, USS *Hornet*, Japanese Homeland Islands, Okinawa, and Japanese occupied islands (F6F-5)
- Total Combat Missions: 131 (37-F6F-3 and 94-F6F-5)

Aviation Commands:

- CO, VF-43, 1 Oct 1948-5 June 1949 (F4U-4)
- CO, VF-14 Top Hatters, 10 Jun. 1950-31 Dec. 1951 (F4U-5)
- CO, VAAW-33, 1 Oct. 1959-1 Aug. 1960 (AD-5N, AD-5Q, TF1Q)
- CO, Naval Station, Chaguaramus, Trinidad (HU-16)

Combat Awards:

- Navy Cross
- Distinguished Flying Cross
- 6 Air Medals



Duty Assignment Chronology

- 8/10-6/41 Flight Training, NAS Pensacola and Opa Locka, FL.
- 6/41-8/41 Primary Instructor School-Corry Field, Pensacola, FL. (N2S).
- 8/41-2/42 Primary Instructor TS-11C, Rodd Field, Corpus Christi, TX. (N2S)
- 2/42-7/43 Advanced Instructor TS-14, NAS Corpus Christi, NAS Kingsville (F3F, SNC, SNJ).
- 8/43-10/43 VF-18, NAS Alameda, NAS North Island, (F6F-3).
- 10/43-3/44 VF-18, USS *Bunker Hill* (F6F-3).
- 3/44-12/44 VF-17 NAS Alameda, Hilo, Guam, Ulithi.
- 12/44-8/45 VF-17 USS *Hornet*, Ops. Officer (F6F-5).
- 8/45-9/45 NAS Alameda, CA.
- 9/45-6/46 NAS Corpus Christi, Operations Div., OIC Aircraft Acceptance and Transfer Unit.
- 6/46-7/48 NATC Patuxent River, Class Zero, USN Test Pilot Training. Acting Asst. Dir. Armament Test Div., Coordinator of Tests Projects, (P-59B, FH-1, FD-1, FJ-1, XBT2D, XBTM, TCM, F7F, F8F, B-25. JD1).
- 8/48-8/48 VF-22 (F4U-5).
- 9/48-10/48 Air Group 4, PCO VF-43 (F4U-4)
- 10/48-5/49 CO, VF-43, USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, NAS Jacksonville (F4U-4).
- 5/49-12/49 Navy Hospital Jacksonville, FL.
- 12/49-6/50 COMFAIRJAX (F4U-4/5, SNB).
- 6/50-12/51 CO, VF-14, NAS Jacksonville, USS *Wright*, USS *Saipan*, USS *Cabot*, USS *Siboney* USS *Kula Gulf* (CVE-108), and USS *Oriskany* (F4U-5).
- 1/52-12-52 Navy General Line School, Monterey, CA.
- 2/53-4/55 COMOPDEV FOUR, NAS Norfolk, Staff, Air Dept, Monitor of VX-3 NAS Atlantic City (FH-2 F2H-2/3/4, F7U, F9F-6/7).
- 5/55-8/57 BuAir Armament Div., (AD-5, SNB, T2V, A4D).

Duty Assignment Chronology continued

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| 9/57-10-58 | USS <i>Lake Champlain</i> , Operations Officer (TF, AD-5N,Q) | (4) | Early Jet Pilot. Capt. Jimmy Flatly got me sent to Patuxent River Naval Air Test Center. Became Naval Aviation Jet Pilot #170. Jet qualified in the United States' first jet propelled airplane, the Bell P-59B Airacomet on 15 April 1947. |
| 10/58-9-59 | VAAW-33, X.O, NAS Quonset Point, RI (AD-5N,Q). | (5) | While CO of VF-43, had a fire in the cockpit of an F4U-4 immediately following a catapult shot off of the USS <i>Franklin D. Roosevelt</i> , forced a controlled ditching in very rough seas in the vicinity of the Azores Islands on 12 Jan 1949, causing severe rib and back injuries. |
| 9/59-8/60 | VAAW-33, C.O., AD-5N, Q | (6) | Recovered from the injuries to command the VF-14 "Top Hatters" during the second half of 1951 on a Med Cruise with F4U-5s in USS <i>Wright</i> , and in the North Atlantic in USS <i>Saipan</i> for joint exercises with the USAF, plus several Caribbean cruises in USS <i>Cabot</i> , USS <i>Siboney</i> , USS <i>Kula Gulf</i> (CVE-108), and USS Oriskany. |
| 8/60-6/61 | Industrial College Armed Forces, Washington, D.C. (SNB, T2V). | (7) | Led a new Ensign in a section of F4U-5s above 40,000 feet during the USAF exercises with both cockpit canopies iced over inside most of the time. |
| 6/61-7/64 | Navy Department R&D Division, Branch Head (OP-722), Aircraft (SNB, T2V, F9F-8). | (8) | Mickey Weisner got me assigned to the "fanciest set of quarters in the Navy" as CO of the Naval Station at Chaguaramus, Trinidad and its HU-16 seaplane base. Transitioned into an amphibian aircraft commander in less than 20 hours and then, of necessity, became the primary pilot for the Station's HU-16 with the departure of all the other qualified pilots, the arrival of two helicopter pilot replacements without helicopters. The HU-16 was used extensively throughout the Caribbean on both sea and land operations including flights to COMTEN Headquarters at Puerto Rico, and U. S. Consulates at Barbados, Guiana, Venezuela and Antigua for administrative, logistical, SAR, medical, dental, commissary, grocery, R&R and postal support of Naval facilities. |
| 7/64-6/67 | CO, Navy Station Chaguaramus, Trinidad, (HU-16D). | | |
| 7/67-7/70 | Staff, CNATRA, NAS Pensacola, FL. Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, Director of Training (T2B, F9F-8, A4D). | | |
| 7/70-11/70 | The Strike Command, McDill Air Force Base, Tampa FL. Branch Head Southeast Asia Region, Plans and Programs Division. | | |
| 11/70-2/71 | Navy Hospital, NAS Jacksonville, FL. | | |
| 2/71 | Retired from US Navy active duty. | | |

Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) Flying VF-18 (F6F-3s) off the USS *Bunker Hill*, shot down three Japanese airplanes, two in one day, in 1944.
- (2) On 18 March 1945 while leading six VF-17's (F6F-5s) from the USS *Hornet*, which was in the process of launching a twenty plane fighter sweep of the Japanese Home Islands, the mission was abruptly canceled with fourteen of the airplanes still on deck ready to take-off. The six plane flight was vectored to an out-of-the-way holding pattern to clear the airspace for defensive anti-aircraft fire pending re-spot and recovery back aboard the carrier. Reported a sudden intermittent radio receiver failure and that was unable to understand the garbled vectors for the flight, "no comprende", thus proceeded on with the mission as planned with a flight of just six F6F-5s instead of twenty.

Crossing the coast line encountered 10 to 15 "Zekes" patrolling the beach in a defensive formation attempting to engage the six F6Fs, plowed right through them all destroying two of the Zekes and continued on proceeding further inland where a flight of seven more Zekes at 14,000 feet were encountered. Climbed up from behind the Zekes until reaching very close range and flamed them all. Proceeded south and destroyed two more Zekes.

Shot down 5 Japanese Zeke airplanes while the others in the flight shot down 6 more for a total of 11 aerial victories for Jocko on a single mission over the Japanese Home Islands.

- (3) Shot down 10 Japanese airplanes and 3 probables.

IT HAS BEEN A GREAT RIDE!