



**James B. Stockdale, Vice Admiral, USN (Ret.)**  
 “Jim”

Date of Designation: 22 September, 1950 NA # V-1349

Dates of Active Duty: 23 June 1943 - 1 September, 1979

Total Flight Hours: 5,359

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 894

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 2,630 Prop: 2,729 VF/VA: 3,219

VR/VP: 487 VS: 1,059 VT: 290 Other: 304

Aviation Commands:

CO, VF-51, Sep. 1963 - Oct. 1964

Commander, Attack Carrier Air Wing 16, Feb. - Sep. 1965

Senior Naval Officer in the North Vietnam prison system:  
 Sept. 1965 - Feb. 1973

Commander, ASW Warfare Wing, Pacific, Jan. 74 - Apr. 76

Combat Awards:

Congressional Medal of Honor

Navy Distinguished Service Medal with two Gold Stars

Silver Star Medal with three Gold Stars

Legion of Merit with Combat “V”

Distinguished Flying Cross with one Gold Star

Bronze Star with one Gold Star

Purple Heart with one Gold Star

10 Air Medals

### Duty Assignment Chronology

7/46-8/46 USS *Carmick* (DMS-33), Asst. Gunnery Off.  
 8/46-1/47 USS *Thompson* (DMS-38), Asst. Engineer Off.  
 1/47-7/48 USS *Roan* (DD-853), Communications Officer.  
 7/48-6/49 XO, USS *Deming* (PCS-1392).  
 6/49-6/50 Naval Air Basic Training Command.  
 6/50-10/50 Naval Air Advanced Training Command.  
 10/50-1/51 FAETU Atlantic.  
 1/51-9/51 Air ASW Squadron 27 (TBMs) - Line Officer.  
 9/51-1/52 Corry Field - LSO School.  
 1/52-1/54 Air ASW Squadron 27 (AFs)- LSO/Flight Off.  
 1/54-7/54 Naval Air Test Center - Test Pilot Training.



7/54-11/54 Service Test Division - Test Pilot.  
 11/54-1/57 Test Pilot Training Instructor.  
 1/57-3/59 VF-211 (F8 Crusaders) - Ops. Off. WestPac.  
 3/59-8/60 XO, VF-24 (F8 Crusaders). WestPac cruise.  
 9/60-9/62 PG School - Stanford University (MA degree)  
 9/62-2/63 VF-124 (F8 Rag) - Replacement Pilot.  
 2/63-9/63 XO, VF-51 (F8 Crusaders). WestPac cruise.  
 9/63-10/64 CO, VF-51 (F8). WestPac combat cruise.  
 10/64-2/65 Various RAGS for Wing Commander job.  
 2/65-9/65 Commander Carrier Air Wing 16. Combat cruise  
 9/65-2/73 Senior USN Officer in North Vietnam prisons.  
 2/73-1/74 Naval Hospital Balboa, San Diego, CA.  
 1/74-4/76 Commander ASW Warfare Wing, Pacific Fleet.  
 4/76-10/77 OPNAV (OP-60B) Dep. Dir., Strategic Plans.  
 10/77-9/79 President, Naval War College, Newport.  
 9/1/79 Retired from active duty.  
 9/80-8/81 President of The Citadel.  
 4/81-7/96 Senior Research Fellow, Hoover Institution  
 at Stanford University. In July 1996, was  
 made Emeritus by Stanford University and I  
 retired retired.

### Summary of Significant Career Events

**Combat Tour 1.** The first was in 1964, with Air Group 5 aboard the USS *Ticonderoga*. I was CO, VF 51, flying F8E Crusaders. I had taken the precaution to equip my squadron with an air-to-ground capability while still stateside in the early days of 1964; I did this-independently - the RAG offering no syllabus for this - and the move was to have a profound effect on the utilization of my squadron during the opening days of the Vietnam War, six months later. We had just arrived in WestPac in early June when I was awakened before dawn on Sunday the 7th and told to get up and read a classified message from Vice Admiral Tom Moorer, Com7thFleet, directing my squadron to depart that day and fly to the USS *Constellation* at a location later known as Yankee Station. Our movement was secret; our mailing address remained *Ticonderoga*. A destroyer came alongside about noon to pick up my maintenance crews, as I and my pilots blasted off for a grand adventure over Laos and Vietnam.

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It turned out that all this was prompted by ground fire in Laos shooting down LT Klusman, pilot of an F8 photo plane, one of the first pilots to reconnoiter the Pathet Lao military units which were threatening to invade the Plain of Jars. He was a member of "Yankee Team" - a term I'd never heard before - a rapidly assembled cluster of F8 photo planes and pilots aboard the *Kitty Hawk* to meet this communist threat in Laos. The *Constellation* was taking over the "Yankee Team" duty from *Kitty Hawk* that very day. This was work that had to be done at low level and high speed for surprise and safety. Washington had ruled that the flights would continue, but that the photo F-8's would be escorted by air-to-ground capable fighters. The only airplanes in the Navy which could keep up with photo crusaders at 600 knots at tree top level were F-4's and F8's. The F-4's on the *Kitty Hawk* and *Constellation* had no air to ground capability - no guns, no rocket systems. The plan was to put VF-51, the only squadron in the Navy that was able to perform this escort mission aboard *Constellation*, and send the regular Connie F-4's back to Cubi Point.

We stayed aboard the *Constellation* from 7 June to 13 July, flying photo escort missions and occasionally being assigned ground targets to hit. This was a "do it yourself" war; there was no time to establish what the criteria for "combat missions" were, but I and others were frequently scared crapless by flak during that June and July, 1964. When it was time for the *Connie* to go into port, the "Yankee Team" obligation was passed to the *Ticonderoga*, and we flew over to our "mother" ship, which had made a port call in our absence.

Our F-8's, particularly with our 8 Zuni Rocket stations, started getting-called out for lots of special events day and night. In less than three weeks after we returned to *Tico*, the country was in the midst of what is know now as the "Tonkin Gulf Affair." This happened in the first week of August. There were three major air actions that week, and I led all three: (1) Going to the defense of the destroyer *Maddox* when she was attacked by three North Vietnamese torpedo boats on Sunday afternoon, August 2nd, (2) answering the call to defend the *Maddox* and *Joy* on the night of August 4th when they were supposedly being attacked by North Vietnamese PT boats about half way between the North Vietnamese coast and China-owned Hainan Island, and (3), the first American air raids into targets on the mainland of North Vietnam the next day, August 5th. In this "reprisal" for an event that did not happen the night before, my assignment was to destroy the POL storage facility in the city of Vinh. It consisted of 14 giant tanks, and with my six Crusaders were six A-4 flak suppressors and our "main battery", 4 A-1's loaded to the gills with bombs.

The Captain, Hutch Cooper, called me before dawn, told me that I was to lead the strikes over the beach he'd been assigned, and to get up and tell his XO, Hap Chandler what ordnance loads I wanted on the planes.

I had come aboard at 11 PM the night before, having been the first airplane over the *Maddox* and *Joy* that stormy evening. I had spent an hour and a half below 1,000 feet, lights off, looking for the big PT boat wakes I had seen so brightly on Sunday afternoon, and became convinced we were chasing phantom radar targets. I was so convinced of this that I forbade the wasting of zuni rocket hard points on

our F-8 fuselages with air-to-air missiles. We all went with full ammo and 8 Zunies. There was no question in my mind; they wouldn't be expecting us and there would be no air opposition. And there was none. And we wiped out ten of the fourteen big oil storage tanks, and left holes with oil spewing out of the others.

Soon thereafter I got dispatch orders to return to the United States to work up my own Air Group for a 1965 cruise.

**Combat Tour 2.** My second combat tour commenced in the first week of May, 1965. There was no significant air opposition yet, we no longer took A-1's on air strikes in the north, and in Air Wings like mine (no A-6's), it was the heyday of the little A-4's and their persistent bombing. Accordingly, I shifted my flying emphasis from the Crusaders to Skyhawks - about two A-4 combat missions to every single F-8 mission. I had flown the A-4 at Patuxent ten years before, and had flown it occasionally over the years since. I had spent time with the A-4 RAG at Lemoore between cruises, but never connected on a carqual deployment. The *Oriskany's* skipper was Bart Connolly, and he was game for every improvisation I came up with (like loading Crusaders with a 2,000 pound bomb under each wing). In early May I was on the bridge watching a morning launch of A-4's loaded with bombs, and I remember casually saying to the Captain: "On the next cycle, if you see an A-4 having trouble getting aboard, don't worry about it - it'll be me, and I've never done it before." In reply I got nothing but a big broad grin. And I had no trouble of course; after four full deployments in Crusaders that A-4 was a piece of cake in the groove. Four months later, I was shot down in one - but I was just hit at point blank range on a low run - pilot technique was in no way a factor.

Our first line period was 46 days at sea. In was during this time that a ring of SAM sites was being built around Hanoi and Haiphong, and we were prohibited from hitting the sites under construction. Our most notable strike of that period was against the Nam Dinh oil storage facility on 2 July. It was the first attack against that large city, and all tanks were burning brightly when we completed the maneuver and started south for the *Oriskany*.

We then had a week and a half in Japan, and on the first anniversary of the reprisal raids of the year before, August 5th, we headed south for a second line period. At least half of our Alpha Strikes were against the Thanh Hoa bridge on this second line period. With A-4's delivering most of the ordnance, their 500 pounders were just ricocheting off the over-built girders. It was on the last day of this line period, September 9th, that I was shot down. On this cruise I had already flown over 100 combat missions. It was a Thursday and we had already lost two pilots KIA that week. That made 7 KIA pilots during my time as CAG. Two more were killed during the rest of the deployment. Four of us CAG 16 pilots on this 1965 cruise lived through the ordeal of prison.

**Combat Tour 3.** My third combat tour was seven and a half years of imprisonment, throughout which I was leader of the underground. I was in solitary for over four years, in leg irons for two, and tortured to submission 15 times.