

Background

The Association was formed by a group of early Naval Aviators who were guests of the United States Navy on board USS *Forrestal* (CVA 59), 16–18 September 1956.

The membership includes pioneers in Naval Aviation. Their designations as Naval Aviators, for the most part, were within the first 1,900 who qualified for Wings of Gold. The membership was later expanded to include Pioneer Helicopter Pilots, Pioneer Jet Pilots and Naval Aviators who qualified for carrier landings during the period when *Langley* (CV 1) was the only aircraft carrier. The membership also includes a limited number of Naval Aviators who, during their tour of duty were pioneers in the development of new concepts, received special citation for unusual, outstanding performance and who otherwise warrant special consideration.

Realizing in 1977 that new classes or groups of pioneers should not be identified as such, the membership decided that the future of the organization depended on the solicitation of individuals, exceptionally qualified aviators to fill the ranks.

Principal Officers (Flight Deck), 2026–'27

Chief Pilot: LtCol Howard DeCastro, USMC (Ret)

Pilot: RADM Matt Moffit, USN (Ret)

Co-Pilot: VADM Mark Fox, USN (Ret)

Navigator: LtGen Jon Davis, USMC (Ret)

Radio Officer: Col Stephan Hanvey, USMC (Ret)

Engineer Officer/Historian: CAPT Bill Young, USN (Ret)

Member Selection Committee Secretary: CAPT Bob Stumpf, USN (Ret)

Board of Governors, 2026–'27

All members of the Flight Deck, plus

2025 Start

VADM Tom Kilcline, USN (Ret)

CAPT Jeff Harrison, USN (Ret)

RADM Jack Zerr, USN (Ret)

LtCol Mike Mullen, USMC (Ret)

2026 Start

ADM Steve Abbot, USN (Ret)

CAPT John Leenhouts, USN (Ret)

LtGen Duane Thiessen, USMC (Ret)

CAPT Rodger Welch, USN (Ret)

Flight Leaders, 2026–'27

Northeast:

Col Frank Wickersham III, USMC (Ret)

Southeast:

RDML Rhett Butler, USN (Ret)

Central:

LtCol Charles Magill, USMC (Ret)

West:

CAPT Chuck Wright, USN (Ret)

Additional Officers: Executive Assistant: CAPT Dennis W. Irelan, USN (Ret)

Webmaster: CAPT J.R. Davis, USN (Ret)

Assistant Webmasters: RDML James A. Symonds and CDR Gerald D. Tucker, USNs (Ret)