



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
COMMANDER NAVAL AIR FORCE PACIFIC  
BOX 357051  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92135-7051

5830  
Ser N00/450  
20 Apr 15

THIRD ENDORSEMENT on CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) , USN, ltr of 15 Oct 14

From: Commander, Naval Air Force, Pacific  
To: File

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION REGARDING CLASS ALPHA MISHAP INVOLVING  
AIRCRAFT BUNO 164208 AND 164206 ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2014

1. Upon thorough review of the investigation and all relevant circumstances, I concur with the opinions and recommendations subject to the following:

a. Finding of fact (FoF) 6 is modified to read, "CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) reported to VFA-113 on 01 April 2013."

b. I do not concur with Opinion 4 as written. Opinion 4 is modified to read, "Aircraft BUNO 164206 was mechanically sound with no problems that would have influenced the mishap flight."

c. I do not concur with Opinion 7 as written. Opinion 7 is modified to read, "The collision was an accident. In Naval Aviation, Situational Awareness (SA), or the lack thereof, can prevent or cause mishaps. While there is no definitive evidence to suggest either pilot's SA or lack thereof directly contributed to this incident, greater SA by all parties may have prevented the collision."

2. Correction of administrative error:

a. Change the date of the Appointing Order listed in enclosure (1) to 17 September 2014.

b. Change the date of CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) NATOPS evaluation listed in enclosure (25) to 11 July 2014.

c. Commander, Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN ltr 5800 Ser N00/287 of 25 Nov 14 is hereby numbered page 9.

d. Commander, Carrier Strike Group ONE ltr 5800 Ser N02/242 of 16 Dec 14 is hereby numbered page 10.

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION REGARDING CLASS ALPHA MISHAP INVOLVING  
AIRCRAFT BUNO 164208 AND 164206 ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2014

3. The findings of fact, opinions and recommendations of the investigation as modified above are hereby approved. I concur with the Commanding Officer and Commodore's determination that this incident has been adequately addressed. The recommendations contained in this investigation for perfecting our safety procedures must be vigorously implemented and methodically reviewed. The training of our aircrews is always subject to some degree of risk. It is our duty as leaders and aviators to identify and minimize elevated risk to avoid future tragedies.

(b)(6)

TJ. M.V. SHOEMAKER

Copy to:  
COMCARSTRKGRU ONE  
USS CARL VINSON (CVN 70)  
VFA-113  
VFA-94



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
COMMANDER, CARRIER STRIKE GROUP ONE  
UNIT 25071  
FPO AP 96601-4704

5800  
Ser N02/242  
16 Dec 14

SECOND ENDORSEMENT on CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) ltr of 15 Oct 14

From: Commander, Carrier Strike Group ONE  
To: Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION REGARDING CLASS ALPHA MISHAP  
INVOLVING AIRCRAFT BUNO 164208 AND 164206 ON  
12 SEPTEMBER 2014

Ref: (a) JAGMAN, Chapter II

1. In accordance with reference (a), I concur with the findings, opinions, and recommendations of the Investigating Officer.

2. A Line of Duty Investigation regarding the death of LT Nathan Poloski has been convened and concluded separately.

(b)(6)

C. W. GRADY

Copy to:  
Commander, CVW-17  
CD (b)(3), (b)(6)

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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
CARRIER AIR WING SEVENTEEN  
FPO AP 96601-5072

5800  
Ser N00/ 287  
25 Nov 14

FIRST ENDORSEMENT OF CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) ltr of 15 Oct 14

From: Commander, Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN  
To: Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
Via: Commander, Carrier Strike Group ONE

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION REGARDING CLASS ALPHA MISHAP  
INVOLVING AIRCRAFT BUNO 164208 AND 164206 ON  
12 SEPTEMBER 2014

Ref: (a) JAGMAN

1. After carefully reviewing the subject investigation, I recommend approving the investigating officer's findings of fact, opinions, and recommendations.

(b)(6)

M. L. LEAHEY *✓*

Copy to:  
CDR(b)(3), (b)(6)

5830  
15 Oct 14

From: CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) , USN  
To: Commander, Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION INTO CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING  
THE MIDAIR CLASS ALPHA MISHAP BETWEEN VFA-94 F/A-18C  
AIRCRAFT, BUNO 164208 AND VFA-113 F/A-18C AIRCRAFT,  
BUNO 164206, WHICH OCCURRED ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2014 IN  
THE VICINITY OF 1935N 16222E, AND RESULTED IN THE  
DEATH OF LT NATHAN POLOSKI, USN

Ref: (a) JAGMAN, Chapter II  
(b) NAVAIR 00-80T-105 CVN NATOPS

Encl: (1) Appointing Order of 16 Sep 2014  
(2) Cost of Data for both Aircraft  
(3) Weather Conditions for 12 September 2014  
(4) CVW-17 Flight Schedule for 12 September 2014  
(5) CVN-70 Tower Take-off and Landing log for 12  
September 2014  
(6) CVN-70 Ship's Deck Log Sheet for 12 September  
2014  
(7) Summary of electronic data from Direct Altitude  
Identification Readout information on the TPX-  
42 from CDR (b)(3), (b)(6)  
(8) Initial Mishap Data Report for VFA-94/113  
(9) VFA-94 Flight Schedule for 12 September 2014  
(10) VFA-94 briefing guide  
(11) VFA-94 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)  
(12) VFA-94 Aircraft BUNO 164208 Aircraft  
Discrepancy Book (ADB) with last 10 flights  
Maintenance Action Forms (MAFs), Daily,  
turnaround, and post flight Inspections.  
(13) VFA-113 Flight Schedule for 12 September 2014  
(14) VFA-113 briefing guide  
(15) VFA-113 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)  
(16) VFA-113 Aircraft BUNO 164206 Aircraft  
Discrepancy Book (ADB) with last 10 flights  
Maintenance Action Forms (MAFs), Daily,  
turnaround, and post flight Inspections.  
(17) LT Nathan Poloski's Official Orders  
(18) LT Nathan Poloski's Flight Log Book from past  
six months  
(19) LT Nathan Poloski's NATOPS Evaluation 07  
August 2014

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION INTO CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING  
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BUNO 164206, WHICH OCCURRED ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2014 IN  
THE VICINITY OF 1935N 16222E, AND RESULTED IN THE  
DEATH OF LT NATHAN POLOSKI, USN

- (20) LT Nathan Poloski's Instrument Evaluation 14  
July 2014
- (21) Description of LT Nathan Poloski's Helmet
- (22) CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) Official Orders
- (23) CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) Flight Log Book from past  
six months
- (24) CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) Instrument Evaluation 7  
August 14
- (25) CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) NATOPS Evaluation, 2 July 13
- (26) Summary of Interview CAPT (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (27) Summary of Interview with CDR (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (28) Summary of Interview with LCDR (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (29) Summary of Interview with CDR (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (30) Summary of Interview with LT (b)(3), (b)(6)  
with regards to LT Nathan Poloski
- (31) Summary of Interview with LT (b)(3), (b)(6)  
with regards to CDR (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (32) Summary of Interview with CAPT (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (33) Summary of Interview with ABE2 (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (34) Summary of Interview with LT (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (35) Summary of Interview with CDR (b)(3), (b)(6)
- (36) Summary of Interview with CDR (b)(3), (b)(6)

#### Preliminary Statement

1. Pursuant to enclosure (1) and in accordance with reference (a), a command investigation was conducted to inquire into the facts and circumstances surrounding the midair collision of two F/A-18C aircraft which occurred on 12 September 2014 in the vicinity of 1935N 16222E, over the Western Pacific Ocean, resulting in the death of LT Nathan Poloski, USN.
2. All reasonably available evidence and information has been collected, and all requirements of reference (a) and enclosure (1) have been satisfied. LCDR (b)(3), (b)(6), JAGC, was consulted in preparing this report, and CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) and CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) acted as technical advisors.
3. The Aviation Mishap Board will maintain all original evidence.
4. A separate line of duty investigation was convened regarding LT Poloski's death.

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DEATH OF LT NATHAN POLOSKI, USN

Findings of Fact

1. LT Nathan Poloski reported to VFA-94 on 29 April 2014.  
[Encl (17)]
2. LT Poloski was an active duty first tour Naval Aviator who was designated an F/A-18C Pilot in Command, Night Vision Goggle High Altitude Pilot, and an Instrument rated pilot. His logbook indicated 454.6 total flight hours, with 221.4 hours in F/A-18C aircraft. He was current in all qualifications to include NATOPS Check, Instrument Check, Egress Training, Swim and Physiology, and Aircrew Coordination Training. He had a current Medical up chit. [Encls (18), (19), (20), (30)]
3. LT Poloski was considered a competent pilot. [Encls (19), (20), (29)]
4. LT Poloski's medical record contained no remarkable entries.  
[Encl (30)]
5. LT Poloski's Commanding Officer and fellow air wing aviators noted that LT Poloski obtained adequate crew rest the evening before the flight, and exhibited no apparent stressors or human factors that would impact his ability to accomplish his duties.  
[Encls (28), (29), (30)]
6. (b)(3), (b)(6)  
[Encl (22)]
7. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) is an active duty Naval Aviator who is designated an F/A-18C Pilot in Command, Functional Check Pilot, NATOPS Instructor, Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing System Pilot, Night Vision Goggle High Altitude Follow-on Instructor Pilot, and an Instrument rated pilot. His logbook indicates 2,426.7 total flight hours, with 2,138.3 hours in F/A-18C aircraft. He is current in all qualifications to include NATOPS Check, Instrument Check, Egress Training, Swim and Physiology, and Aircrew Coordination Training. He has a current Medical up chit. [Encls (23), (24), (25), (31)]
8. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) is considered a competent pilot. [Encls (24), (25), (36)]

Subj: COMMAND INVESTIGATION INTO CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE MIDAIR CLASS ALPHA MISHAP BETWEEN VFA-94 F/A-18C AIRCRAFT, BUNO 164208 AND VFA-113 F/A-18C AIRCRAFT, BUNO 164206, WHICH OCCURRED ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2014 IN THE VICINITY OF 1935N 16222E, AND RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF LT NATHAN POLOSKI, USN

9. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) medical record contains no remarkable entries. [Encl (31)]

10. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) fellow air wing aviators noted that CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) obtained adequate crew rest the evening before the flight, and exhibited no apparent stressors or human factors that would impact his ability to accomplish his duties. [Encls (27), (31), (36)]

11. Prior to Event 6D1 on 12 September 2014, LT Poloski last flew 11 September 2014 and logged 1.4 hours. [Encl (18)]

12. Prior to Event 6C1 on 12 September 2014, CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) last flew 11 September 2014 and logged 0.4 hours. [Encl (23)]

13. On 12 September 2014, LT Nathan Poloski, USN, was on active duty and assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron NINE FOUR (VFA 94), embarked on USS CARL VINSON (CVN 70). [Encl (17)]

14. On 12 September 2014, LT Poloski was scheduled to fly air plan Event 6D1, a 1.30 hour mission to drop six MK-76 inert bombs in a designated bomb box, located 100NM northeast of USS CARL VINSON in the western Pacific Ocean. The mission was scheduled to conclude with a night trap (landing back on the carrier). [Encls (4), (9), (28)]

15. LT Poloski was assigned F/A-18C Aircraft BUNO 164208 (call sign: Hobo 403). [Encls (5), (12)]

16. LT Poloski briefed Event 6D1 in accordance with VFA-94 Standard Operating Procedures. [Encls (9), (10), (11), (28)]

17. On 12 September 2014, CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) USN, was on active duty and assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron ONE ONE THREE (VFA 113), embarked on USS CARL VINSON (CVN 70). [Encl (22)]

18. On 12 September 2014, CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) was scheduled to fly air plan Event 6C1, a Pro "C" followed by a 1.30 hour War at Sea Exercise (WASEX), coordinated by VAQ-139. The mission was scheduled to conclude with a night trap. [Encls (4), (13)]

19. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) was assigned F/A-18C Aircraft BUNO 164206 (call sign: Sting 306). [Encls (5), (16)]



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20. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) briefed Event 6C1 in accordance with VFA-113  
Standard Operating Procedures. [Encls (13), (14), (15), (27)]

21. At the time of both Events 6D1 and 6C1, the deck was Case  
I, and weather conditions were partly cloudy with unrestricted  
visibility and light winds. [Encls (3), (5)]

22. Turnaround and Daily Inspections were completed on aircraft  
403 at approximately 0344/0956 (local) respectively and noted no  
discrepancies. [Encl (12)]

23. LT Poloski completed his pre-flight checks of Hobo 403 at  
approximately 1630 (local) and noted no discrepancies. [Encl  
(28)]

24. Turnaround and Daily Inspections were completed on Sting  
306 at approximately 0338/1613 (local) respectively and noted no  
discrepancies. [Encl (16)]

25. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) completed his pre-flight checks of Sting 306 at  
approximately 1630 (local) and noted no discrepancies. [Encl  
(27)]

26. Events 6D1 and 6C1 were scheduled to takeoff at 1730  
(local) and land at 1900 (local). [Encls (4), (9), (13)]

27. At 1736 and 1737 respectively, Sting 306 and Hobo 403  
launched from USS CARL VINSON. Sting 306, piloted by CDR  
(b)(3), (b)(6) accelerated to approximately 300 knots, climbed to 500  
feet, and proceeded to 11 nautical miles and 7,000 feet. CDR  
(b)(3), (b)(6) then turned to the west and slowed to approximately 250  
knots. Hobo 403, piloted by LT Poloski, accelerated to  
approximately 350 knots, climbed to 500 feet, and proceeded to  
10 nautical miles and 7,000 feet. LT Poloski then turned Hobo  
403 to the west and decelerated to approximately 300 knots.  
[Encls (5), (6), (7)]

28. At approximately 1740 (local) on 12 September 2014, Hobo  
403 and Sting 306 were involved in a midair collision which  
resulted in the loss of both aircraft and took the life of LT  
Nathan Poloski. [Encls (7), (8), (21), (26), (27), (28), (29),  
(32), (33), (34)]

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29. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) was unaware of the collision. He felt a compressor stall-like "thump" on his left engine. His aircraft yawed left 180-270 degrees accompanied by Engine Left, Angle of Attack (AOA), and Departure tones. He noticed fire moving towards the cockpit and that the aircraft was uncontrollable. [Encl (27)]

30. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) ejected from Sting 306 at approximately 1740 (local) in the vicinity of 1935N 16222E. He was recovered by an MH-60S helicopter (call sign: Red Lion 611) and received medical attention on board USS CARL VINSON. [Encls (8), (27)]

31. At approximately 1740 (local), multiple witnesses observed two objects on fire that descended for several thousand feet before impacting the water at separate splash points. The splash points were approximately 9.5 nautical miles, bearing 045 degrees, from USS CARL VINSON, and were separated by approximately 0.1 to 0.2 miles. [Encls (26), (32), (33), (34)]

32. Sting 306 and Hobo 403 aircraft impacted the water IVO 1935N 16222E. Two oil slicks separated by 0.2 miles marked the sites of impact for each aircraft. [Encls (26), (28), (34)]

33. Both jets immediately sank into the ocean in the vicinity of 1935N 16222E, leaving only fragments of the aircraft observed during search and rescue efforts. [Encls (26), (28), (34), (35)]

34. The crash site was subject to environmental set and drift. All wreckage and debris drifted to the southeast at approximately 0.3 knots. [Encls (3), (35)]

35. LT Poloski's helmet was recovered at 2017 (local) by the crew of an MH-60S helicopter (call sign: Red Lion 611). The helmet was damaged, including a crack that extended from the bottom right side to the crown with one hole half way up the crack. Additionally, the right temple was cracked and the chin strap was broken at the snap. [Encl (21)]

36. CARRIER Strike Group ONE assets, including USS CARL VINSON (CVN 70), USS BUNKER HILL (CG 52), USS GRIDLEY (DDG 101), USS STERETT (DDG 104), USS DEWEY (DDG 105), and helicopters assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 15 and Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 73, along with P-8 Poseidon aircraft from Guam

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and satellite imagery, searched for LT Poloski, covering more  
than 3,000 square miles over the course of 36 hours. LT  
Poloski's remains were not found. [Encl (35)]

37. The cost for the VFA-94 F/A-18C (BUNO: 164208) was  
\$77,343,287.80. [Encl (2)]

38. The cost for the VFA-113 F/A-18C (BUNO: 164206) was  
\$74,585,124.00. [Encl (2)]

39. CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) and LT Poloski were in compliance with NAVAIR  
00-80T-105 CVN NATOPS. [Ref (b) and Encl (7)]

#### Opinions

1. LT Poloski and CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) were fully qualified to perform  
the duties they were assigned on the flights scheduled for 12  
September 2014. [FF (2) - (5), (7) - (12)]

2. LT Poloski and CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) were in compliance with crew rest  
and currency requirements. [FF (2), (5), (7), (10), (11), (12)]

3. Aircraft BUNO 164208 was mechanically sound with no problems  
that would have influenced the mishap flight. [FF (15), (22),  
(23)]

4. (b)(5)  
(b)(5)  
(b)(5) [FF (18), (19), (24), (25)]

5. BUNO 164208 and BUNO 164206 collided when BUNO 164208,  
commanded by LT Poloski, came underneath the bottom left rear of  
164206. [FF (27) - (30), (34)]

6. Because LT Poloski's body was not recovered the precise  
cause of death is unknown. Based on aircraft placement and  
examination of LT Poloski's helmet, the most probable cause of  
death is massive head trauma. [FF (28), (30), (34)]

7. (b)(5)  
(b)(5)

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(b)(5)

[FF (27) - (31)]

(b)(5)

Recommendations

1. Based on the facts and opinions above, I recommend that any known or latent injuries suffered by CDR (b)(3), (b)(6) as a result of this incident be found to have occurred in the line of duty and not as a result of misconduct.
2. Carrier Air Wings should examine methods to encourage pilots to maintain SA by keeping eyes "outside" the aircraft and use technology as augmentation only. Systems on board FA-18C aircraft provide pilots with SA. These systems permit pilots to keep their eyes "inside" the cockpit vice "outside" the cockpit to maintain SA with respect to the other aircraft. Within 10 miles of the carrier during Case I operations, an overreliance on technology can be a disadvantage.
3. Carrier Air Wings should examine Case I communication procedures within 10 miles of the carrier. Communication during Case I recoveries are required to be "tactical" and "brief" in order to expeditiously get aircraft to depart or aboard the carrier. Also, pilots must check in and out on several different frequencies (Departure, Strike, Red Crown, HaveQuick, and Secure) immediately after take-off and prior to recovering. The perceived rush to check-in and out on all frequencies can be a distraction to pilots on Case I departures and arrivals. The focus should be on check in/out procedures, clear definition of Zip Lip procedures, and communications on Tanker Common. Such emphasis will refocus the carrier aviation community on the fundamental principles of AVIATE, NAVIGATE, COMMUNICATE.

(b)(6)

(b)(3), (b)(6)