



MARITIME PATROL AND RECONNAISSANCE FORCE HALL OF HONOR

Vice Admiral Stephen Loftus

United States Navy

Born in Wellesley, Massachusetts on 27 October 1933, VADM Loftus graduated from the University of Massachusetts and commissioned an Ensign in 1956. That year he earned designation as a Naval Aviation Observer (NAO), ultimately being designated one of the initial Naval Flight Officers in 1965 when the Bureau of Naval Personnel authorized a new designator to replace the NAO. His first tour was in flying in AD-5 Skyraiders onboard the USS Forrestal. In May 1968, then LCDR Loftus penned a scholarly article, "Career Development for the Naval Flight Officer," published in the Naval Institute Proceedings and addressing the inequity of NFOs not having equal command opportunity with their pilot shipmates. His clarion call stimulated widespread activity and was seminal to President Nixon signing into law a bill providing NFOs equal command opportunity as pilots.

While assigned as a Department Head, in the Navy's first multi-sensor night interdiction squadron, Heavy Attack Squadron 21 (VAH-21), he was a tactical coordinator flying heavily modified P-2s, equipped with some of the most advanced sensors of the day. While deployed to NAF Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, he flew 33 low-level night attack missions in support of Project TRIM (Trails, Roads, Interdiction, Multi-Sensor). Just days prior to returning to the US, on 2 May 1969, his aircraft was heavily damaged, but he continued to direct his crew resulting in a highly devastating attack preventing valuable supplies from reaching enemy forces and for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. During this combat deployment, he earned 3 Strike Flight Air Medals with Combat "V".

Selected for command in 1974, he was one of the first NFOs to command a VP squadron, the Pelicans of Patrol Squadron Four Five, with the squadron earning a Sixth Fleet "Hook'em" award for ASW operations out of Sigonella, Sicily in 1975. In 1981, he reported to NAS Bermuda as Commander Task Group 24.3 directing numerous successful prosecutions of the newly deployed Soviet Union Yankee class ballistic missile submarines. After selection for flag rank, he served as Commander Fleet Air Mediterranean and Task Force 67 during the height of the Cold War. The first NFO promoted to Vice Admiral, he served his final tour in the Navy as Director of the Office of Program Appraisal, during the post-Cold War drawdown. There he was instrumental in maintaining funding for our community and the building of the AIP program, which eventually led to the decision to fund the P-8A Poseidon. When he retired in 1994, he was the Navy's Gray Owl, the most senior NFO in the Navy.