



1966



1991

Diego E. Hernandez, Vice Admiral, USN (Ret.)
 "Duke"

Date of Designation: 31 August 1956 NA# 10169

Dates of Active Duty: 10 June 1955 - 1 February 1991.

Total Flight Hours: 5,732.6

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 750

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 4282 Prop: 400 Helo: 50 Civilian: 1,000

Combat Tours:

Vietnam: VF 21 (F4B) USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43) 9/66-1/67.

Vietnam: VF 21 (F4B) USS *Ranger* (CVA-61) 12/67-5/68.

Total combat sorties: 147

Commands:

OinC VF 101 Det. Key West.

CO VF 84, deployed on USS *Roosevelt* (CVA-42)

Commander Air Wing 7, deployed on USS *Independence* (CV-62).

CO USS *Truckee* (AO-147).

CO USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV-67).

Commander, Naval Forces Caribbean/Commander Fleet Air Caribbean.

Commander, Carrier Group 6, deployed on USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) and USS *Forrestal* (CV-59).

Commander, US Third Fleet.

Combat Awards:

Silver Star

Distinguished Flying Cross

Purple Heart

10 Air Medals

3 Navy commendation Medals w/ Combat "V"

Duty Assignment Chronology

6/10/55 Commissioned Ensign, USNR, under NROTC program.

6/55-8/56 Navy Flight Training.
 9/56-5/58 VF-43 flying F9F-8. Squadron decommissioned, redesignated VF-11, and transitioned to F8U-1.
 6/58-10/60 VF-11 flying F8U-1 aboard USS *Roosevelt* (CVA-42).
 11/60-7/63 VF 174, instructor at the F8 RAG, NAS Cecil Field, Florida.
 8/63-1/64 Aide and Flag LT, COMCARDIV 14 aboard USS *Wasp* (CV-7) and USS *Lake Champlain* (CV-39).
 2/64-6/65 Continued as Aide and Flag LT when Admiral was reassigned as Commander, Alaskan Sea Frontier. Flying T-33 with USAF 317th FIS.
 7/65-8/65 VF-101 RAG, Abbreviated transition to F4B.
 8/65-5/66 VF-103 Deployed on USS *Saratoga* (CVA 60)
 6/66-7/68 VF-21 Two combat deployments to Vietnam aboard USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43) and USS *Ranger* (CVA-61).
 8/68-5/69 Student, Naval War College, Command and Staff course.
 6/69-5/70 Faculty, Naval War College, Naval Command course.
 6/70-8/71 XO VF-101, then OinC VF 101 Det. Key West
 8/71-6/73 XO, then CO VF-84 aboard USS *Roosevelt* (CV-42).
 7/73-1/74 Prospective CAG aircraft checkout.
 2/74-2/75 Commander, Air Wing 7 aboard USS *Independence* (CV-62).
 3/75-1/78 Tactical Aviation Plans, then Executive Assistant to DCNO (Air).
 2/78-5/78 Senior Officer Ship Materiel Readiness Course
 6/78-1/80 CO, USS *Truckee* (AO-147).
 6/80-8/81 CO, USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV-67).
 9/81-5/82 Chief of Staff, COMNAVAIRLANT (Promoted to Flag Rank).
 5/82-6/85 Commander Naval Forces Caribbean/Commander Fleet Air Caribbean.
 8/85-8/86 Commander Carrier Group Six deployed on USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68) and USS *Forrestal* (CV-59). - Continued -

Duty Assignment Chronology continued

- 8/86-1/89 Commander, US Third Fleet.
2/89-1/91 Deputy Commander in Chief, US Space
Command, dual hatted as Vice Commander
in Chief, North America Aerospace Defense
Command.
2/1/91 Retired from active duty.

Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) In May 1966 failed the eye test during the annual flight physical while deployed. Appealed to a Board of Flight Surgeons in Washington, DC, and became the first Naval Aviator to receive a waiver to remain in Service Group 1 while wearing glasses. This later became the norm.
- (2) In November 1966 led the first strike conducted against two surface-to-air missile sites in North Vietnam.
- (3) In December 1967 while leading a strike against the Kien An Highway Bridge, North Vietnam, his aircraft sustained a direct hit that destroyed both hydraulic systems and rendered the control stick useless. With the stabilator locked in a full nose up position he flew the aircraft through a series of high G, rudder controlled barrel rolls out of enemy territory before ejecting safely with his RIO over the Gulf of Tonkin. They were rescued by helicopters from the North SAR destroyer.
- (4) In April 1968, while attacking a munitions cave storage area near Dong Hoi, North Vietnam, his aircraft sustained a direct hit from automatic anti-aircraft batteries and caught fire. With one engine out and the fire consuming the aircraft he headed for the coast five miles away. With systems failing and smoke in the cockpit he lost control of the aircraft as he crossed the coast and ejected safely with his RIO. They were rescued by helicopters from the South SAR destroyer.

Education

- BS Psychology, Illinois Institute of Technology, 1955.
MS International Relations, George Washington University,
1969.
Summer International Relations Program for Senior
Executives, 1983.