



Dennis W. Irelan, Captain USN (Ret.)
 “Denny”

Date of Designation: 9 November 1969

Dates of Active Duty: June 1968 – June 1997

Total Flight Hours: 5,087

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 1,054

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 5,000+

Combat Tours:

Vietnam: VA-212 1972 (A-4)

Total combat missions: 100

Aviation Commands:

CO, VA-93, 1982–1984 (A-7).

COMCVW-14, 1986–1988 (F/A-18, F-14, A-6, S-3, SH-3).

CO USS *Independence* (CV-62), 1993–1995.

Combat Awards:

Air Medal w/numeral 8 device

Bronze Star

Navy Commendation Medal w/combat “V” and three gold stars

Duty Assignment Chronology

CAPT Dennis Wayne Irelan, USN (Ret.) from Joplin, Missouri, then Torrance, Calif., graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1968.

Designated a Naval Aviator in November 1969, he served initial aviation tours in A-4 Skyhawk series aircraft — flight instructor, NAS Kingsville, fleet replacement pilot, NAS Lemoore and light attack pilot with VA-212 embarked in USS *Hancock* (CVA-19). He flew 100 combat missions over North and South Vietnam.



After his first fleet tour, Irelan transitioned to the A-7E Corsair II while serving as an instructor pilot with VA-122 at NAS Lemoore. Selected for the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (TPS), Patuxent River, MD, he graduated in 1976. After TPS, he served at the Pacific Missile Test Center (PMTC), Point Mugu, Calif. as Tomahawk Cruise Missile project officer and pilot.

At PMTC, he was directly responsible for Tomahawk land-attack and anti-ship test and evaluation flights. He launched flight test vehicles from specially configured A-6 aircraft and then provided flight safety. During air and submarine-launched flight test operations, he escorted the Tomahawk to many U. S. targets. These flights ranged from the PMTC off shore Southern California to target ranges in California, Utah and New Mexico.

Flying the A-7E with the VA-146 "Blue Diamonds", embarked in *Constellation* (CV-64), 1980-1981, he participated in the introduction of the Forward Looking Infrared Receiver weapon system.

Irelan commanded VA-93, embarked in *Midway* (CV-41), 1983–1984. While embarked in *Midway* he participated in flight operations from the Northern Pacific Ocean to the North Arabian Sea. He was the recipient of five Top Hook Awards on board *Midway*.

His sequential command was Carrier Air Wing Fourteen embarked in *Constellation*, 1986–1988. Significant flight operations included escort missions of reflagged merchant ships through the Strait of Hormuz. He was day and night qualified for carrier operations in the F/A-18, F-14 and A-6 aircraft. He also completed day helicopter flights as pilot including small-deck flight operations, helicopter inflight refuel operations and medical evacuation.

He then served as Director, Technical Support Group within Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Naval Warfare) (OP-07/TSG).

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Duty Assignment Chronology continued

He was selected to command USS *Sacramento* (AOE-1) and deployed to the Persian Gulf from 1990–1991 during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. From 1992–1993, he served as Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations (N3) for Commander Seventh Fleet. He then commanded USS *Independence* (CV-62) 1993–1995 during Operation Southern Watch. From 1995–1997 he was Chief of Current Operations, U.S. Atlantic Command, Norfolk, VA.

As a Naval Aviator serving in fleet squadrons, carrier air wing and in research, development, test and evaluation units, Irelan flew 23 different military aircraft, more than 5,000 hours and completed 1,054 carrier arrested landing. His decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (w/three gold stars), Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal (three, w/gold star), Air Medal (w/numeral eight), Navy Commendation Medal (w/combat “V” and three gold stars) and other campaign and service medals.

He has a master’s degree in international relations from the Naval War College, Newport, R.I. and holds a master’s degree in business administration from Salve Regina College, Newport.

CAPT Irelan retired from military service in 1997. After working with the Boeing Company as field representative, San Diego, he then joined the Tailhook Association in 2007 and remains the editor of The Hook magazine. He is married to Carol (Tierney) Irelan from Torrance, Calif. They have three daughters — Lori, Gina and Erin.

Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) 100 combat missions over Vietnam as part of CVW-21 embarked in USS *Hancock* (CVA-19).
- (2) U.S. Navy Test Pilot School, Class 69, graduated June 1976.
- (3) CO VA-93 as part of CVW-5 embarked USS *Midway* (CV-41), Forward-Deployed Naval Forces, 1983–1984.
- (4) COMCVW-14 embarked in USS *Constellation* (CV-64), Operation Earnest Will, 1986–1988.
- (5) CO USS *Sacramento* (AOE-1), *Desert Shield /Desert Storm*, 1990–1992.
- (6) CO USS *Independence* (CV-62), *Southern Watch*, 1993–1995.