

*Missions for America
Semper vigilans!
Semper volans!*



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History of The Squadron Patch

Thames River Composite Squadron NER-CT-075

The patch design was adopted in 2002.

The patch was designed by then C/1st Lt Erik Nelson and his grand uncle, Andrew Crouch.

Design Element 1: The lighthouse is the New London Ledge Light and a landmark at the entrance to New London harbor.

Design Element 2: CAP Aircraft

Design Element 3: Submarine-Groton

where the squadron is based is known as the "Submarine Capital of the World." The Electric Boat-General Dynamics Corporation in Groton built the first U.S. Navy commissioned submarine, the USS Holland in 1900. Since that time, EB-GD has produced over 270 submarines, one-third of the total produced by the other 21 U.S. submarine builders.

CURRENT EVENTS

Airline Shoot-down

On Christmas Day, Azerbaijan Airlines Flight 8243, and an Embraer 190 carrying 62 passengers and five crew members crashed while attempting an emergency landing at Aktau Airport in Kazakhstan. At last 38 of the 67 people aboard were killed.



(Image credit- Mehmet Mustafa Celik

The aircraft was scheduled to land at Grozny in Russia but was diverted to Aktau in Kazakhstan. Initial reports were unclear about the cause, ranging from a bird strike to weather conditions in Grozny. When Flight 8243 entered Russian airspace, its Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) stopped transmitting reliable position data and strong GPS interference had been detected.

Russia had been conducting military exercises in the region. Russia did not admit culpability although President Vladimir Putin apologized for what the Kremlin called a "tragic incident" which occurred when Russian air defenses were engaged

in defensive operations against Ukrainian drones.

The aircraft was observed experiencing major digressions in pitch and attempted to land at Grozny but a question remains as to why the unstable aircraft was diverted across the Caspian Sea to land at Aktau, 273 air miles away! Some cynics speculate that Russian authorities were counting on the aircraft crashing into the Caspian to destroy evidence of Russian culpability.

Russian surface to air missiles have been blamed for the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 ten years ago killing 298 although the claim by Russian is that rogue elements or the Ukrainians did the deed.

Professor Wikipedia states that the first commercial airliner shoot-down occurred in 1938 when Japanese aircraft took down a China National Airlines DC-2 near Hong Kong. The aircraft made a forced landing and was repaired but two years later, she was destroyed when a Japanese fighter strafed her just after she landed in Yunnan.

In 1943, BOAC flight 777, a DC-3 owned and operated by KLM was flying a scheduled run from neutral Portugal to the United Kingdom when it was attacked by German aircraft. The DC-3 crashed into the Bay of Biscay killing all aboard including the famous English actor Leslie Howard.

In 1955, Bulgarian MiG-15s shot down an El Al Lockheed Constellation which strayed into Bulgarian airspace and refused to land.

The Israelis shot down Libyan Arab Airlines Flight 114, a Boeing 737, over the Israeli controlled Sinai in 1973. The aircraft was lost due to bad weather and equipment failure but refused to land when ordered to do so.

In September of 1983, the Russians shot down Korean Airlines Flight 007 near the Sakhalin Islands killing 269 including a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. The crew made a mistake entering data into their navigational computer and ending up flying over Soviet

militarily sensitive missile sites. The Soviets initially denied any knowledge of the incident but later claimed that it was thought to be a U.S. RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft.

In 1988, the *USS Vincennes* used a Standard SAM to shoot down Iranian Air Flight 655, an Airbus 300 killing 290 passengers and crew. The *Vincennes* mistook the Airbus for an Iranian F-14 Tomcat.

Shooting down commercial airliners is relatively rare. Some were genuine mistakes, some were caused by confusion and some were deliberate acts of war.

The Enemy of My Enemy is Now My Friend

The “enemy of my enemy is my friend” is an old aphorism. Although Winston Churchill was a fervent anti-communist, the alliance of convenience among the Allies and the Soviet Union in World War II led him to say that “if Hitler invaded Hell, I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons.”

It goes without mention that the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam had a long tragic relationship during the latter part of the 20th century. But times have changed and the Vietnamese, supported by the Chinese during the First and Second Vietnam Wars, are remembering past hostilities and reacting to present aggressions.

When Saigon fell, the forces of Ho Chi Minh “inherited” a treasure trove of U.S. aircraft: Douglas Skyraiders, Cessna Dragonflies, Northrop F-5s, Gooney Birds, Chinooks and Hueys to name just a few. They also had a complement of MiGs such as the MiG-21 Fishbed. Eventually, most of the war booty wore out and parts were not available but more advanced aircraft were supplied and the Peoples Air Force had a formidable inventory. But now, Vietnam is turning to the United States for trainers.

The United States lifted its economic embargo on Vietnam in 1994 and the United States-Vietnam

relationship has improved economically and diplomatically. Vietnam's national airline uses Boeing aircraft, the U.S. lifted its weapons embargo. In 2023, the two nations signed the US-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which included a commitment to promote the concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Vietnam has contracted to purchase 12 T-6C Texan II trainers for their Air Force Officers College, five of which have been delivered. The Texan II is a derivative of the Swiss Pilatus PC-9 built under license by the Beechcraft division of Textron Aviation.



The First Five Texan IIs in Vietnam
(Credit: Pacific Air Forces)

A Very Brief Reprise of Past Hostilities Between China and Vietnam

For two millennia, China has had imperial ambitions to control Vietnam either by direct military action or forceful imposition of a tributary system. But Western influences countered Chinese ambitions. In 1516, Portuguese traders landed at Da Nang and founded a trading post. Missionaries followed and the French military showed up to protect the missionaries and merchants.

In 1867, the French established a colony in the Mekong Delta, named it Cochinchina and expanded northward and westward. Ultimately, the French controlled what became known as French Indochina which ended with their defeat in 1954 in the First Vietnam War and the partition of Vietnam into a communist north and a republican south. The United States interceded into what was a civil war and the history of the Second Vietnam

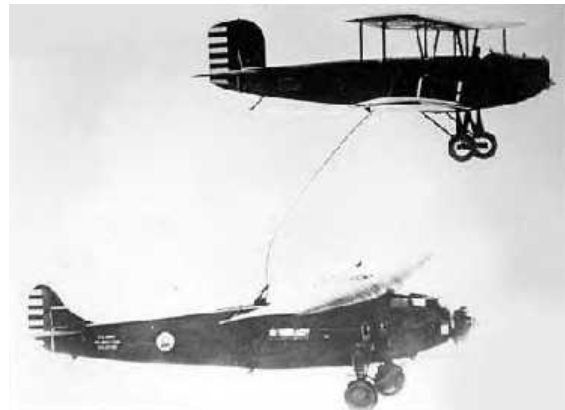
War is familiar to most readers of this essay.

The victorious communist north reunited Vietnam but gradually, the relationship between China and Vietnam deteriorated. Vietnam invaded and occupied Cambodia and in 1979, China, supporting Cambodia, sent troops into north Vietnam and in a month long campaign, inflicted heavy damage but the Vietnamese presented a stout defense and gave as good as the got.

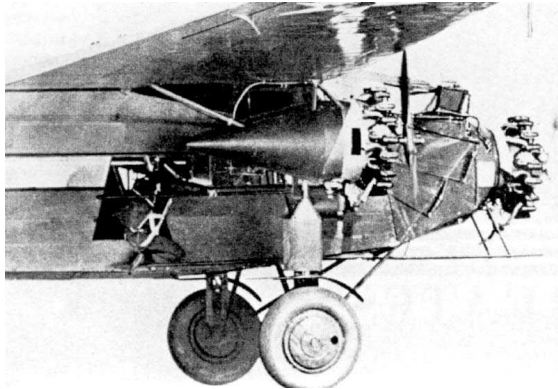
The squabble about control over portions of the South China Sea was another source of dissension between the former allies. The Vietnamese saw Chinese claims to territory as a threat to fishing and mineral rights and an attack of their national sovereignty. The relationship with China cooled. Today, the Vietnam attitude aligns with U.S. policies that seek to counter Chinese efforts to dominate the Indo-Pacific region and an old enemy is in progress to be a new ally.

AEROSPACE HISTORY FOR THE WEEK

January 1, 1929—A Fokker C-2A named “Question Mark” departed from what is now known as Van Nuys Airport for a six day mission to test aerial refueling. The crew consisted of Maj Carl Spaatz, Capt Ira Eaker, Lts Elwood Quesada and Harry Halverson and Sgt Roy Hooe. The two refueling aircraft were modified Douglas C-1s.



Question Mark Refueling



Sgt Hooe climbs outside while in flight to service engine.

There were 37 refuelings and six supply transfers. Engine problems brought the flight to an end, 150 hours, 48 minutes, and 14 seconds after take-off. The flight broke the world records for sustained flight and distance flown.



L-R: The somewhat bedraggled crew upon landing-Hooe, Quesada, Halverson, Eaker, and Spaatz.

Tooney Spaatz became a general and first Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force. Ira Eaker commanded the Eighth Air Force in World War II and retired as a Lieutenant General. Forty years later, Congress passed special legislation promoting him to General. Elwood Quesada was the first commander of the Tactical Air Force and retired as a Lieutenant General. He became the first Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration. Col. Harry Halverson led the first U.S. bomber mission over Europe, a raid on the Ploesti oil refineries in Rumania. Master Sergeant Roy Hooe supported a number of other record setting flights and retired after 30 years service. In 2001, he was inducted into the Airlift/Tanker Association Hall of Fame.

January 2, 1929 – World War I ace Wilfred “Wop” May and fellow bush pilot Vic Horner departs on a mercy mission to deliver diphtheria vaccine to Fort Vermillion, Alberta, 900 miles to the north. What became known as the “race against death” averted an epidemic.

Dr. Malcolm Bow passes the vaccine, wrapped in a blanket to Wop May.



Mayor Bury and Dr. Bow wish May and Horner good luck.

January 3, 1947 – The King's Flight of the Royal Air Force was re-established at RAF Benson. The Flight was equipped with a de Havilland Domine and later four Vickers Viking C.2s.

A special unit for transport of British royalty may be traced to 1929 and two Westland Wapitis which were purchased. In the following year, the Prince of Wales, who would ascend to the throne as Edward VIII personally purchased more aircraft. This might be considered the birth of the Kings Flight. The aircraft favored was the King's personally owned de Havilland DH.89 Dragon Rapide.



A Dragon Rapide bearing the livery of the Prince of Wales.



King's Flight Airspeed Envoy. The colors are red, royal blue, and silver.

Arguably, the King's Flight is the first "Head of State" aircraft unit. Later, an Airspeed AS.6J Envoy III replaced the Rapide. The exigencies of World War II then led to the disestablishment of the King's Flight in 1942.

In 1952 Princess Elizabeth became Queen Elizabeth II and the King's Flight became the Queen's Flight. A potpourri of aircraft were used as the occasion demanded. Leased BAe 146 were reconfigured to meet the needs of the royal VIPs and acquired the suffix "Statesman."



In 1995, the Queen's Flight was absorbed by No. 32 Squadron RAF which assumed the title No. 32 (Royal) Squadron. Since priority was given to military operations, the cost to the Royal Family

dropped and only direct flight costs were chargeable. But in 2010, rates were increased ten-fold and Royal flying decreased dramatically.



The Royal helicopter, a Sikorsky 2-76C+ is registered G-XXEA to honor the Airspeed Envoy F-AEEX. (Credit: Mark Harkin)

Except for the Queen, most royal travel is now on scheduled flights or charters. The Empire is not what it used to be.

January 4, 1964 – Pope Paul VI lands in Amman Jordan on a chartered Alitalia DC-8. This marks the first time that a pope has used an airplane for an official visit. Traditionally, the Pope travels outbound on a chartered Alitalia flight and if possible, returns on a chartered flight of the flag carrier of the visited nation. A Papal flight uses the call sign *Volo Papale* followed by the number of flights made by that pope.



An Alitalia DC-8

A footnote of interest is that when the Pope flies charter, the "collection plate" is "passed" to the media, roughly 70 reporters who pay business class airfare and ride in coach. The Pope's entourage, roughly 30 staff members are not charged and fly in business.

An Italian Air Force Augusta Westland AW139 is used for short hops within Italy. The Vatican heliport is located on the western edge of the city, diametrically opposite St. Peter's Square, and a

second heliport, *Portus Helicopterorum*, is at Castel Gandolfo, the Pope's summer residence, 16 miles southeast of Rome. The residence has extraterritorial status and enjoys privileges similar to that of an embassy.



January 5, 1903 – Birth of Harold Charles Gatty, Australian navigator, inventor, and aviation pioneer, and founder of Fiji Airways (which later became Air Pacific). Like Fred Noonan, he learned the navigation trade guiding freighters and ocean liners.

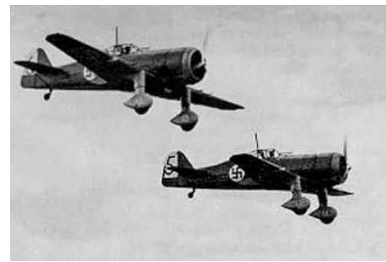
Gatty was Wiley Post's navigator when they broke the record for circumnavigation of the earth. Flying the Lockheed Vega, *Winnie Mae*, the landed after 8 days, 15 hours, 51 minutes breaking the old record set by the Graf Zeppelin by 12 days!



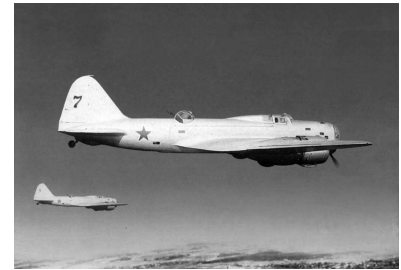
Post (without his eye-patch, Gatty, and the Winnie Mae at East Boston Airport.

Gatty was one of the foremost teachers of navigation, wrote several important books, one of which is still in print today, and developed techniques which advanced the art. Lindbergh called him “the Prince of Navigators.”

January 6, 1940 – Another Ace in a Day. Finnish Air Force Lieutenant Jorma Sarvanto flying a Fokker XXI downs six Soviet Ilyushin DB-3 bombers in four minutes.



The Finnish Fokker XXI



The Soviet DB-3

The swastika emblem bears explanation. Before the Nazis co-opted it, the swastika had been an ancient religious symbol and in the early 20th century, regarded by many as a mark of good luck. It was used by commercial and military organizations in various ways .

The first plane of the Finnish Air Force had been donated by Count Eric von Rosen and in his honor, they adopted the swastika, his personal good luck sign, as their emblem.

Sarvanto became the top scoring ace in the Winter War with 13 victories. In the Continuation War, he flew a Brewster Buffalo and scored four more victories against the Soviet Air Force.

Sarvanto in the cockpit of a Brewster Buffalo



January 7, 1949 – Israeli War of Independence and four RAF Mark XVIII Spitfires based in Egypt were patrolling over the Sinai when they spotted smoke. They found burning trucks, the result of an attack which the Royal Egyptian Air Force aircraft had mounted against an Israeli column a short time previously. When they went in for a closer look, the Israeli ground forces shot down one of them.

Now there were three RAF aircraft over the battle site.



British Mark XVIII Spitfires

The smoke was also spotted by another flight, Canadian John McElroy and American Chalmers "Slick" Goodlin, volunteers flying Mark IX Spitfires for the Israelis.



Israeli Mark IX Spitfire

As McElroy and Goodlin approached, they saw two of the Spitfires diving towards the trucks. In all likelihood, the British pilots were attempting to photograph the site. But McElroy and Goodlin believed they were Egyptians preparing to strafe the column. McElroy downed two of them and Goodlin got the third. McElroy and Goodlin returned to their base.

The RAF, not certain of what had happened, sortied four Spitfires and 14 Hawker Tempests to look for the missing aircraft.



Mark V Tempest

The Israelis decided to mount combat air patrols and on the last mission of the day, A former RAF pilot, the Israeli Ezer Weizman led two two plane elements south. They encountered the British patrols and having the advantage of height but not of numbers attacked. Bill Schroeder, ex-U.S. Navy, shot down one of the Tempests and Weizman damaged another.

A truce was declared that evening.

Goodlin posing by an Avia S-199, the Czech version of the Bf 109G.



McElroy and his Spitfire's tail, damaged in the dogfight.



The S-199 edges out Weizman by a nose.

John McElroy returned to North America and stayed in the United States for a time, fearing repercussions if he returned to Canada. When the Korean War broke out, he went back into the RCAF flying the F-86 Sabre. He and some squadron mates were involved in the crash of a U-2 in Germany in 1956 but that is a story for another time.

Slick Goodlin became a test pilot for Bell Aircraft and flew many of the early flights of the Bell X-1. Afterwards, he engaged in a number of aeronautical ventures such as promoting the Bernoulli lifting fuselage.

Bill Schroeder deeply regretted that he had killed a young British pilot. It was his first combat and his last for Israel. He packed his bags and left.

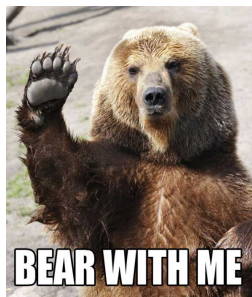
Ezer Weizman became commander of the Israeli Air Force and President of Israel.

January 8, 1988 – Boeing changes the name of the MD-95 jetliner to the 717-200. Boeing had skipped the 717 designation in its original commercial line.



Originally, 717-100 was Boeing's internal name for the KC-135 and 717-200 was the commercial variant. When Boeing and McDonnell-Douglas merged a decision was made to fill in the empty slot, probably for merchandising purposes.

HYSTERICAL HISTORY



Canada's 411 Squadron, the Grizzly Bears, conducted an unusual recruiting program. During

the war, a shortage of ground crew led them to enroll bears to act as ground crews and service the aircraft.

Bear Propping Plane (Credit: Richard Voliva)



The Canadian Army noted the RCAF scheme and inspired by a misreading of the 2nd Amendment of the U.S. Constitution claimed that they had a right to arm bears.



The practice continues today. President Vladimir Putin has ordered that the 1st Red Banner Air Force Base Guard Regiment be established for duty in Siberia.



*Over and over the story,
ending as he began: --
"There is no truce with
Adam-zad, the Bear that
looks like a Man!"*
Excerpted from The Truce
of the Bear by
Rudyard Kipling

And the Chinese People's Liberation Army found that the Panda is an economical trooper and can live on foraged bamboo rather than rice.

