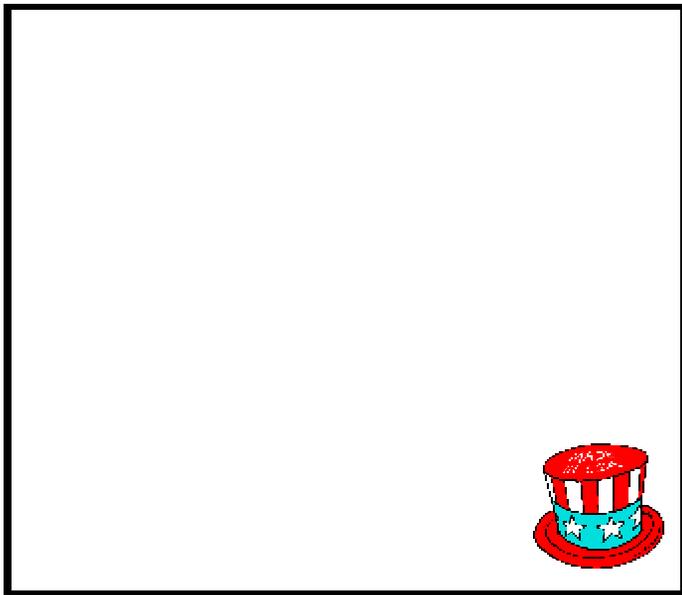


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**Who Says a Six Hour Mission has To be Boring?**

(continued from page 6) Not professional, but somewhat comforting) but somehow the ship was waiting for me to return at 0900 vice my wingman. All this technology....

As far as the cockpit was concerned, there were two different and distinct regions. From my knees down I was toasty and warm. "This little piggy" was getting sweaty in fact. Then the chilly zone above that. The wind was swirling around pretty good and I was trying to grab all the paper and shove it into my helmet bag. Only lost one bit of classified stuff. Not too bad all things considered. After twenty minutes, I started getting the shakes; after thirty they were fully developed. I tried to stuff my whole body down by the rudder pedals with limited success. Kept my hands warm though. Thank God for auto pilot.

About this time , my wingman came up and said, "Hey can you reach out and grab that thing, pull it in?" I looked over at him (not that he could see me) with a look of shock. Stick my arm out into that wind, get my arm blasted back and thrashed on the glass shards sticking up everywhere? "Have you ;lost your mind?!" "Oh yeah, guess it's kinda windy. Sorry." Like I said, it's strange the thoughts you have sometime.

My wingman and I talked about the airfield. Frequencies, layout, the fact that the locals like to shoot at planes landing there. You know, just normal airport talk. We talked about landing on a runway, something neither of us had done for three months. And we dumped fuel to lighten the load. We both were carrying two thousand pounds of unexpended ordnance so the Air Force guys were gonna love us. Lastly we dropped the landing gear in close formation and compared airspeed and AOA to make sure the KC10 hadn't damaged my AOA and airspeed probes as well.

I had him land first because I thought

the hose might drag on the ground and get rolled up on by the nose wheel. After that who knew what would happen. Dumped down to 3.0 each. Airspeed and AOA checked accomplished at 170 and 150 knots. Appeared fine. Approach was initiated from 5K AGL when the threshold was ten degrees down. Started to slow the descent at about five hundred feet. Landed on speed at the nine board. Don't remember seeing the VASI or anything. Airfield diagram on approach plate doesn't show any landing aids. The plane flew fine with all that junk on it. Just had to use the rudder pedals, which is kind of an emergency for a Hornet pilot.

When I slowed to on speed I got the "sunroof effect" pretty bad. You know when you're zorching down the road and you open the sunroof but leave all the other windows up? That vibration you get until you crack another window? Well I got kind of an advanced case of that during my Space Shuttle descent to final. We both rolled out fine. Well maybe not fine. We had to use all ten thousand feet and both had smoking brakes. (Our brakes hadn't been used like that in awhile. On the boat the wire brings you to a gentle stop without them, of course.)

The emergency crews were waiting for us. And they were pointing and gawking as would be appropriate for a situation such as this. Couple natives looked on in a disinterested manner. Of course I had to do a flight physical after all this. Had to make sure I wasn't on drugs before I launched on my six hour mission into Afghanistan. The facilities in Jacobabad ain't that bad. I'm here to tell you we are number one in tent technology. Our tents kick ass. They got AC and everything. Since it's an Air Force base, they got all the best entertainment. Drew Carry and Joan Jett had been there already. Shania Twain was supposedly coming too (broke my heart, if only I'd had better timing...) LCDR A. Wright, USN, (VFA-147)

(to be continued in the next issue)

**An Unusual Story \_By Curly Wright (421, 431)**

We were at Wake Island. Came out in the morning to go on a mission. Saw this huge contrail come up over the horizon. The contrail came out even with the island and there was this big fireball in the sky./ Capt. Hartmann, my A/C, had a navy lieutenant with us on the mission that worked at the tracking station. He told us that is was the first missile fired from Vandenberg AFB. When the missile got out even with the island they exploded it. Gave you a funny feeling to know someone in California could hit you out in the middle of the middle of the Pacific.

**Belgian Congo (cont. from page 3)**

logged over 115:50 over the four weeks. We felt we had accomplished our assigned mission even though we lost almost a week with the engine change. Our numbers looked good and we were happy. I am sure our crew chief and his team were glad to return and would enjoy good maintenance support from then on.

So this is my part of the 420th AREFS Great Adventure in the Congo as I remember it some forty years later. A number of the personnel of the seven crews who participated have membership in the TAC Tankers Association. I ask that they write up their experiences, as they will probably be different or a lot funnier than mine or that of my crew.

Dan Weber, 7/2001.