

So Long, Old Friend

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The workhorse and backbone of Naval Aviation was retired this year. The A-6 *Intruder* served as the Navy's medium-attack mainstay during three decades of conflict, crisis and cold war. The *Intruder* made its first flight in April 1960. The aircraft's ruggedness and all-weather mission capability made it an awesome asset to Navy and Marine Corps air wings throughout its lifespan. Built by the legendary Grumman "Ironworks," 687 production attack *Intruders* were accepted by the Navy. A testament to the aircraft's versatility and longevity was the myriad upgrades and technological enhancements that kept it the world's premier long-range, all-weather attack aircraft for over 30 years. Carrying an impressive payload of ordnance, only land-based heavy bombers such as the B-1 and B-52 could carry more. A little-known fact is that the *Intruder* delivered more ordnance during the Vietnam War than the B-52.

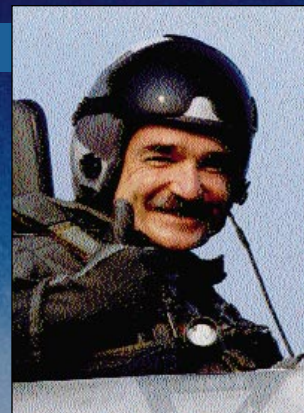
A tough and versatile aircraft, the A-6 was called upon to fly the most difficult missions. Its forte was to fly low and alone—in any weather. The *Intruder* engendered an *esprit de corps* in its aircrew that became legendary. This "spirit of attack"—as recounted in Stephen Coonts's book, *Flight of the Intruder*—personified the camaraderie and fraternity of the A-6 community. *Intruder* aircrewmembers are some of Naval Aviation's most-decorated combat veterans. Many

of the more recent alumni of this elite community are serving today in other aircraft missions throughout Naval Aviation, ensuring that the warfighting legacy and the spirit of attack lives on.

To the talented and resourceful engineers and metal benders of

Grumman Aircraft who made her, and to the dedicated aircrew and maintainers who flew and took care of her, we salute you.

The *Intruder* served our nation long and well. So long, old friend. We'll miss your sound of freedom. Fly safe. Be the best!



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