

vVF 161 FIGHTIN' STINGRAYS

SQUADRON HANDBOOK

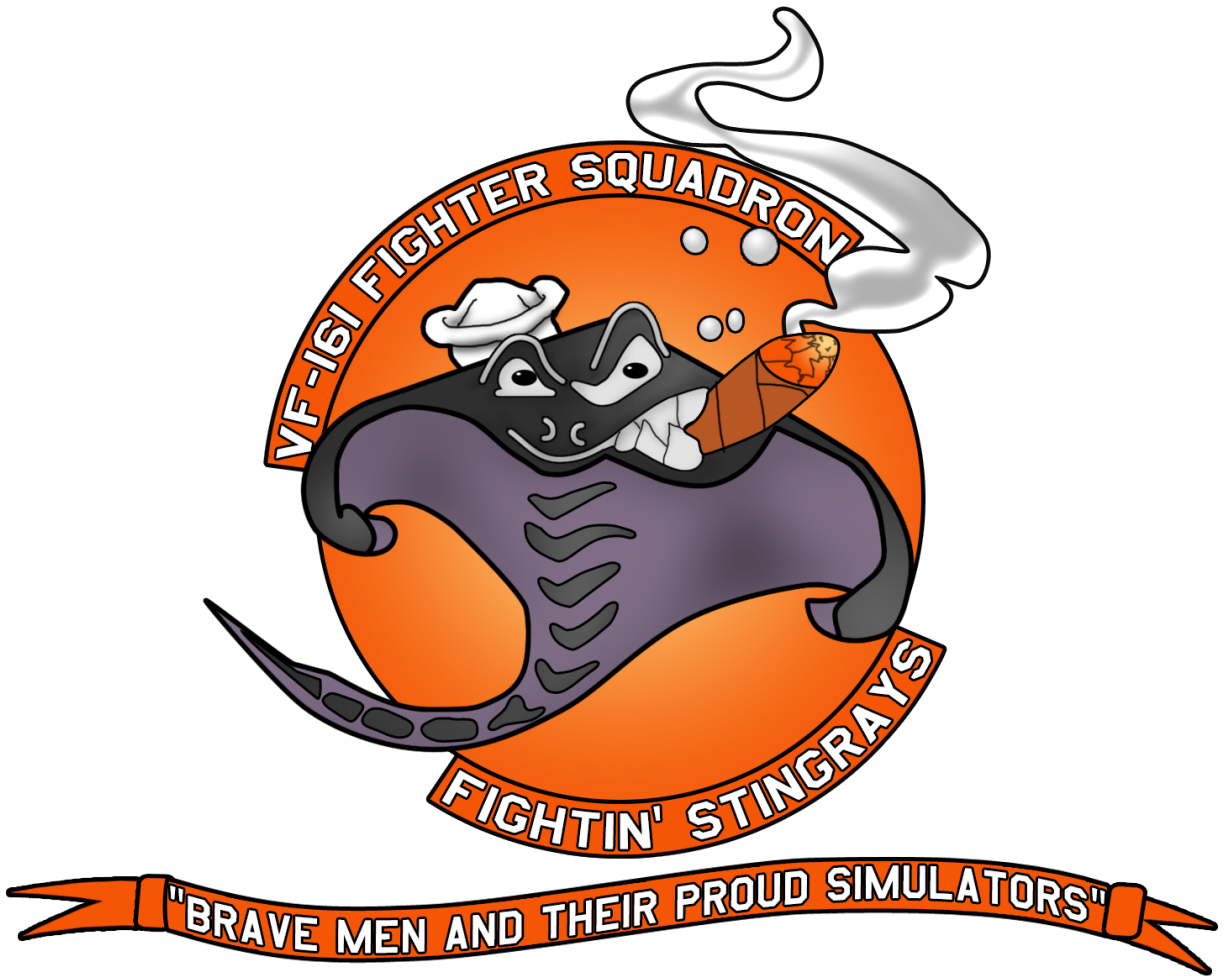


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CHAPTER 1 ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

- 1.1 **SCOPE.** This publication is issued by the authority of the vVF-161 Fightin' Stingrays Command Staff. It is intended as an indoctrination into the Stingrays. Upon reading this, members will understand what the squadron expects from them, and what to expect from the squadron. However, no manual is a replacement for sound judgement.
- 1.2 **CHANGES AND UPDATES.** This manual will be periodically updated when deemed necessary by squadron admin. To suggest a change or addition, submit in writing in #admins-inbox or verbally to a member of the admin staff. Changes are listed later in this publication.
- 1.3 **LIST OF EFFECTIVE CHANGES.**

CHAPTER 2 VVF-161 FIGHTIN' STINGRAYS

2.1 **PURPOSE.** The vVF-161 Fightin' Stingrays was put together to be a fun place for enthusiasts to come together for a fun atmosphere, while also improving skills. The over-arching goal of the squadron is to answer the question: "How do Naval Aviators do what they do?"

We don't intend to be a full "mil-sim" group with rigid rank structures, Sir/Ma'am honorifics, or giving "ranks" to our members. We do intend to come together as a team, respect the hierarchy of squadron leadership, and work together to improve the squadron's battlefield performance in DCS, as well as our own skills in the jet.

The squadron is meant to equally be a place where members can get together to have a good time and form real friendships, as well as step to the jet with a "fangs out" attitude when we start the aircraft.

A note on the name: vVF-161 Fightin' Stingrays, in all places possible to be confused with a Real-World squadron, use the preceding subscript "v" to denote "Virtual". In internal documents, Liveries, communications etc., the preceding "v" can be omitted, so the squadron can simply be referred to as "VF-161 Fightin' Stingrays".

We look forward to flying the sometimes not-so-
friendly skies with you,

VF-161 Fightin' Stingrays

"Brave men and their proud simulators"

2.2 ATTENDANCE POLICY. The Stingrays understand that members are not being paid to be here, nor have they joined an organization which can or should enforce its will upon its members, but in order to maintain cohesiveness and fairness an Attendance Policy must be in place.

2.2.1 Flight nights. A weekly flight night is set by admin staff, currently Thursday nights at 20:30 US Eastern Time. All squadron members are expected to attend unless qualified for absence as detailed below.

2.2.2 Alibis. Should a member be unable to attend flight night due to real-world considerations, they will inform admin as soon as possible by using Alibot on the squadron discord. The channel #snivel-log, by typing “!alibi “ followed by the reason for the alibi, such as:

!alibi I am required to work late tonight; I will not be home until 23:45
at the earliest.

While the squadron understands that real-life takes precedent and will not expect serious sacrifices with work, friends, and family, there are some exceptions. For example,

!alibi My favorite sports team is playing a game.

Make vVF-161 Fightin’ Stingrays your favorite, the Stingrays are your new favorite.

2.2.3 Absence. An “Absence” is any time a member has missed a flight night without providing an alibi, or providing an alibi that is rejected by leadership.

2.2.4 Absence Limit. Should a member fail to attend or alibi 3 consecutive flight nights, or any 4 within any 6-week period, they will be moved to Leave of Absence (LOA) status. After 8 weeks on LOA without an expected return date, members will be dismissed from the squadron. Members who have not *technically* met this limit can be placed on LOA or dismissed by decision of CO.

2.2.5 Leave of Absence (LOA).

Those who have met the absence limit or requested leave of absence will be placed on LOA status. On LOA status, access to the Cadre roll and the various text channels to which that role grants the member will be temporarily removed.

2.2.6 Dismissal. Dismissal from the squadron means just that – The member is removed from the discord server and no longer considered a stingray. Note that dismissals are not terminal, as outlined below.

2.2.7 Return from Dismissal. Any member who has been dismissed will be granted reentry to the Stingrays and the roles and responsibilities they last held. Returns are subject to CO approval, but it is almost always granted unless a former member has made intentional moves to damage or discredit the squadron.

2.3 SQUADRON REQUIREMENTS

2.3.1 Base Program. The Stingrays use DCS Openbeta Standalone exclusively. Modules purchased through steam can be transferred to the standalone version.

2.3.2 Modules. At a minimum, members must own the F/A-18C or F-14B, Supercarrier, Syria, and NTTR. Downloading the free Marinas map is also required. Members may own and fly as many modules as they like. However, squadron events will be in the Hornet and Tomcat, and flown on Caucasus, Marianas, Syria, or NTTR maps.

2.3.3 Hardware. Members are required to have some form of flight stick controller and either Track IR, VR headset, or some form of view manipulation device at a minimum. Flying tactically in close proximity to others would be nearly impossible without these items. The Stingrays do not dictate what hardware members use specifically.

2.3.4 Mod Packs. All members will be given access to the Squadron modpack, which can be installed and maintained with OVGME. The Mod Pack contains various skins, kneeboards, and object additions, and is required by all members to join any mission. The basic mod pack for trainees is hosted at: www.fightinstingrays.com/modPack/baseMods (NOTE: Do not go to this URL, copy to OVGME as shown in What it takes to fly.)

2.3.5 Simple Radio Standalone (SRS). All Members shall be required to have, understand, and use SRS. Help will be made available in getting SRS set up and working properly. The Training Syllabus for new recruits covers radio usage.

2.3.6 Voice Attack/VAICOM. Any squadron members who prefer to use Voice Attack may do so at their discretion. However, non-radio calls that are internal to operating the jet (such as “LABELS,” or “FLAPS”) shall not be heard externally nor broadcast over SRS. The squadron can assist in setting this up so that this does not occur.

2.3.7 Board Numbers. Upon completion of the Training Syllabus (see **Error! Reference source not found.**), Each pilot will choose a unique Board Number beginning with 5 or 6 and using only numbers 0-7. Board numbers will also be used to assign IFF and laser codes.

2.3.8 Crew Roster. All members who graduate training shall fill out the Crew Roster. The Crew Roster tracks module ownership, availability, and crew positions for the squadron.

2.3.9 Greenie Board. All members shall participate in the “Greenie Board.” This is a ranking system for carrier traps that is intended to improve a player’s skill. The Greenie Board will be posted in the squadron for all to see. The bottom member on the ‘board will face ridicule, sarcasm, and insults until they suck less.

2.3.10 Required Viewing. All members must watch the Kelsey Grammer film *Down Periscope!* as many references within the Stingrays are from this film. Any member who has not watched the required viewing within a reasonable timeframe shall be given a callsign which will be the most demeaning callsign the squadron can come up with. You will also be fined 5 squadron dollars.

2.4 NAVIGATING THE SQUADRON The Stingrays have a number of places where members can find resources and information. Feel free to ask any member of the Cadre where to find anything you need, but this section will provide a good reference.

2.4.1 Squadron Discord. The squadron maintains a very active discord server. Provisional members are limited to voice and text channels required for training. Cadre members are given access to various additional channels to discuss various topics. Some of these include #general, for posting memes and conversing with squadron mates, #screenshots for posting screenshots of DCS (please don't discuss them there), and #other-games and #hobbies to discuss other areas of interest. In general, topics of discussion in particular channels is not strictly enforced, but conversation should take place in the channel in which it fits best.

2.4.2 www.fightinstingrays.com

The squadron website provides some background information on the squadron, a downloads page to gather resources such as the Training Documents Pack (TDP), the squadron Greenie Board, and as of 2024, the Olympus control page.

2.5 CALLSIGNS. Upon joining the Stingrays, members may initially choose their own callsign with CO oversight. Upon graduation of the training cycle, a callsign will be assigned to you by squadron leadership during a graduation and callsign ceremony. Callsigns shall be voted upon by all members except that member whose callsign is in question. Callsigns are not intended to be politically correct or necessarily flattering and are usually based on a personality trait or buffoonery exhibited by the pilot. Once bestowed with a Stingrays-assigned callsign, members may not change it until retired, removed from Squadron service, or the Squadron votes to change it again.

2.5.1 In-game Player Name. Each pilot will set their DCS name to

STINGRAY <board number> <callsign>

EXAMPLE:

“Stingray 536 Otto”

2.5.1.1 Special Characters. Use of special characters, such as vertical bars “|,” or parentheses “()” etc. are restricted leading to server crashes when using some scripts. Pilots are also required to know their in-sim flight assignments for speaking to AI units. This can be done by requesting start up, or azimuth from an airbase, or a Vector from an AWACS. The Player's AI voice will say the appropriate call sign.

CHAPTER 3 SQUADRON ADMINISTRATION

3.1 SQUADRON COMMAND PERSONELLE

Commanding Officer (CO): Mongo

Executive Officer (XO): Otto

Training Officer (TO): Prince

Admin Officer (AO): ION

Commander, Carrier Air Operation Center (CAOC): Weld

Tactics/Intel Officer (Tac O): JYNX

3.2 DOCUMENT CONTROL

3.2.1 Access to documents. Squadron documents such as this SOP, the brevity terminology handbook, training materials, etc. are considered property of the squadron. Members who have been granted access to the originals will not make unauthorized edits or modifications.

3.2.2 Edit Approval Process. Edits will be reviewed by the relevant member(s) of leadership. Any suggested or required revisions will be notated with a color which notates from which officer the suggestion comes. Each officer will review the proposed edit in turn, marking revisions with their individual colors. The colors are:

CO: **RED**

XO: **Green**

Ops O: **Blue**

Admin O: **Yellow**

3.2.3 Dissemination of changes. Changes will be marked in the LIST OF EFFECTIVE CHANGES section, a version number will be assigned, and the revised document will be used to replace the original source. From there, the document PDF file will be generated and hosted in place of the original.

3.3 SQUADRON UPGRADE PATH

- Provisional:
 - Assigned when a new pilot joins the squadron.
- Basic Wingman (BUG):
 - Completion of training syllabus with a composite score of 80% or better, or,
 - Completion of all check rides and sign off from Training-OIC
- Basic Instructor Pilot (BIP)(Voluntary):
 - Must volunteer and be accepted by Training-OIC and OPS-O. Must pass oral check ride only.
- Section Lead (SLUG):
 - Have 6 months in squadron minimum with consistent attendance. Must obtain recommendation by any Flight Lead. A check ride is optional and given on a case-by-case basis as required.
- Flight Lead (FLUG):
 - Must be Section Lead and Basic IP with a minimum of 12 months in the squadron. A thorough check ride shall be given by a senior IP.
- Senior Instructor Pilot (SIP)
 - Must be Flight Lead qualified and requires approval by CO. Must pass a thorough check ride by a Senior IP.

CHAPTER 4 – FLIGHT NIGHT OVERVIEW

A normal squadron fight night consists of a time hack, roll call, mission briefing, step, fly, land, and debrief. When attending a fight night, it is expected that members be on time, bring their A-game, and have a “fangs-out” yet professional attitude. Missions are planned in detail and the squadron will fly that plan as any real-world squadron would do.

The post-mission debrief is crucial; this is where the learning happens. You are encouraged to admit your mistakes, respectfully “throw spears” at other members over theirs, and generally strive to improve as a squadron. Once debrief is finished, we open the “bar.” The bar is where stories are told, jokes are attempted, and general shenanigans are pulled. We really have a good time in the bar, and virtual squadron mates will quickly become real-world friends.

4.1 TRAINING VS. MISSIONS. During training sorties, members should expect to utilize all procedures in order to maximize learning, even if they might seem awkward or obvious. This is to instill good habits and ensure all members are familiar with the concepts introduced during training. Likewise, some procedures and concepts may apply and be employed in combat ops that are not necessarily applicable to the training environment.

4.2 MISSION PLANNING RESPONSIBILITIES. The head of the Mission Planning Staff (MPS), called the Carrier Air Operations Center Commander (CAOC) is primarily responsible for mission planning, coordination, and creating the briefing materials. The MPS is composed of volunteers to complete mission planning tasks as assigned by CAOC.

Prior to the weeks’ mission, leadership shall meet either verbally or via messages, to coordinate and discuss the coming mission profile and briefing. This meeting is only to provide direction for the mission planners, not to mission plan. This is intended to provide adequate preparation for the coming flight.

During mission planning, a Mission Commander (MC) will be assigned. MC will be responsible for completion of the assigned mission and will “hold the hammer” on issues that arise during planning and execution.

4.3 MISSION BRIEFING. Mission briefings will begin 30 minutes prior to step (may be earlier if more time is needed and agreed upon by MC). All briefing materials will be made available prior to the briefing. The brief will consist of flight assignments, target and AOR callouts, intelligence reports, flight plan overviews, and any other materials as needed. Whenever possible, flight assignments will be prepared prior to the start of the brief so that each pilot can gain SA on their role.

NOTE

This is why putting in an Alibi for each expected absence ASAP is so crucial. This allows the MPS to plan and assign flights with the given roster.

Squadron nominal briefing timeline: Time hack and Roll Call; 10-30 minute overview briefing for all members; 10-15 minute briefing for individual flights. Crews are expected to be on deck in cold/dark jet at briefed step time.

Crews will be provided with Mission Data Cards (MDCs) by the MPS. Additionally, crews are encouraged to bring their own personal kneeboard items as they see fit.

4.4 STEP BRIEF. Each flight will commence to a short step brief after the main mission briefing to discuss details of it's mission. Flight leads are responsible for the content of step briefs, but typical talking points are loadouts, specific wingman tasking, formations, etc.

4.5 STEP. All flights will step at the agreed upon time, slotting into their jets as instructed by MPS. In some cases, flight step will be staggered to conserve parking spaces. When the flight steps, Pilots will mute themselves on discord, but do not deafen. Virtually all communication is done over the radio, but discord can be used for an emergency backup in case of SRS failure. The squadron refers to this practice as "get out and walk over".

4.6 FLIGHT. Each mission will be flown as close as possible to the plan laid out in the briefing, with the exception that each flight lead and wingman is given initiative to react to a changing battlespace. Flights are planned to last 2-3 hours maximum. Flights constitute the operational phase wherein the squadron fulfills its role on the battlefield, validating the efficacy of our training and professionalism under fire. Coordination among flights is imperative, ensuring alignment with the overarching objectives spelled out in the briefing.

4.7 DEBRIEF.

Both in training and operational flights, debrief is where the learning happens. In debrief, each pilot may take the opportunity to voice what they think went well, and what needs to be improved upon. The squadron maintains the attitude that the 'insignia come off' during debrief, so that the newest trainee can point out anything they have seen as a problem to any member of the squadron Admin staff, regardless of whose fault it may be. Debriefings are separated between training and operational flights, as they serve a different purpose.

4.7.1 Training. Debriefs in training are handled by each IP and detailed to the switchology for each flight member. This is to allow for each trainee to gain as much knowledge and understanding as possible with every flight, and to never make the same mistake twice. This also allows the trainee to call attention to anything they find lacking in the prepared training materials, briefing, flight plan, or IP.

4.7.2 Operations. Operational debriefs are by necessity much more concise than training debriefs. Each flight lead will explain the tactics employed and their effectiveness. Critiques for other flights will be explained in brief by each flight lead, as the offending flight's lead will likely be aware of the issue and have remarks prepared. Individual wingmen will only draw attention to any tactical or procedural errors they or their flight made.

4.7.3 The Bar. Once debrief is finished, we open the bar (metaphorically speaking). The bar is where stories are told, jokes are attempted, and general shenanigans are pulled. We really have a good time in the bar, and virtual squadron mates will quickly become real-world friends.

CHAPTER 5 TRAINING PROGRAM

vVF-161 Fightin' Stingrays provide new pilots with in-depth training on their selected aircraft/role.

5.1 TRAINING SYLLABUS. The squadron has developed a Training Syllabus which is designed to take new members of any experience level and train them up to Stingrays standard. This is a ground-up approach, starting with cockpit familiarization and ending with complex many vs many BVR scenarios.

A detailed breakdown of the Training Syllabus is available in the TDP (Training Documents Pack, but a basic overview is as follows:

All pilots are given all training materials including homework, ground schools, and briefs prior to the beginning of the syllabus. The syllabus duration is 12 weeks, with each week focusing on a specific area of training with clearly defined Desired Learning Objectives (DLOs). Those weeks (subject to variation in order) are:

- 1) Orientation
- 2) Airmanship & formations
- 3) Navigation & AAR
- 4) Air-to-ground 1 – Bombs
- 5) Air-to-ground 2 – Missiles
- 6) CASE-I
- 7) CASE-III
- 8) Air-to-air 1 – Weapons and systems
- 9) Air-to-air 2 – Multi-ship BVR
- 10) Air-to-air 3 – BFM

NOTE

Pilots and RIOs in the F-14 will focus on Air to Air RADAR and weapons employment while Hornets are training on Air to Ground.

5.2 HOMEWORK. Homework is assigned, and can be found in the syllabus, for each week. The homework is a list of resources available including internet pages, Chuck's Guides, in-game training missions, tutorial videos, etc. Not all of the resources are required to be read/watched/completed, but it is expected that students will be familiar with the information they contain. There will be detailed instruction on implementing skills in the Ground School Prior to the week's mission brief.

5.3 GROUND SCHOOL. Each week will have a Ground School portion in which experienced IPs (Instructor Pilots) will provide detailed training on the DLO. This will include a slideshow and detailed discussion of systems and procedures included in the week's training.

5.4 CHECK RIDES.

New recruits who have experience in their chosen aircraft may be exempted from training flights if they complete a series of check rides with a qualified Senior Instructor Pilot (SIP). Check rides will be a pre-planned flight in which recruits can show competence in specific skills, and by completing all check rides a recruit can skip some, most, or all, of the training syllabus.

5.4.1 Grading. Check rides are assessed differently from training flights. Training flights involve a set of Desired Learning Objectives (DLO), in which each student receives specific instruction. On the other hand, check rides consist of pre-planned flights where a recruit is tasked with performing various assignments. Each check ride includes a list of Failure Points (FP), outlining actions that recruits are expected to avoid. If a recruit breaches any of the failure points, the check ride is deemed unsuccessful. In such cases, the recruit must either attempt the flight again or undergo additional training as outlined in the training syllabus.