

SPECIAL FEATURE: HOW TO FIND BLACK HOLES AND AVOID THEM

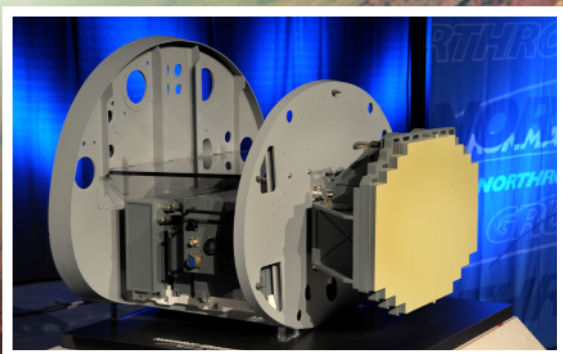
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War Veteran talks about the life experience that changed his view of flying

NAVY AUDIT

Confederation financial auditors are to release the results of the recent navy spending check

NEAR MISS

A BW conflict veteran confesses how a single mission can change the way you think, fly and fight

By Captain,TCNV Troy "Catscratch" Carter

I can still remember every detail, up until today. I had just, scratched away the academy and I had fulfilled the part of my big plan to become a Confed pilot. The bigger picture of the plan was to follow the steps of many noble pilots and war heroes like Christopher Blair, Michael Casey and writing my own history. But destiny had other plans for me, I guess.

In other words my career in Navy started exactly as I had hopped, with only one small glitch; timing. Yes, the year was 2673 and in less than a couple of months after being an active duty pilot for Confed Navy, I found myself in the middle of the Borderworld conflict tagged as a defector and traitor of the Confederation. It is these desperate hours where a rookie pilot, like me back then, is searching

somehow managed to outrun his reputation and put his position as one of the top forty aces in the history of Confederation. I still admire and respect him as a pilot, but as a mentor? My following experience taught me that in order to become a complete pilot you have to know and judge yourself seriously, first.

Once, this Major of mine told me about an incredible strategy he did to outsmart his enemies and shoot them down. I remember his exact words: "I fired a couple of missiles way over their heads so they think I can't just aim". The idea was simple. During a chase, you fire a couple of Dumpfire missiles without targeting on purpose and give the wrong impression to the enemy that you are newbie but in the end you hit them with a Heatseeker missile and that is the end of it. The genius behind this idea is that it has nothing to do with combat experience or skill but with pilot morale, pure psychology. As a result to destroy more than one enemies lazy-fast without the trouble of dog fighting. Now, the downside is that if your enemies are more experienced than you think they are, they could easily realize your trick, outrun it and immediately after you fall to the position to



The (at the time) 2nd Lt. Troy "Catscratch" Carter during his first assignment. (Img. courtesy TCN Public Relations Office)

My first assignment was to the TCS Lexington (CV-44) which was under the orders of Captain William Eisen and in the position of C.A.G. (Commander Air Group) Colonel Christopher Blair. You can imagine my excitement, being transferred to a carrier where I could learn from Confed's best.

for a raw model. Someone who could teach him the secrets of becoming a superpilot; an ace.

For me, there was a Major with extremely high confidence and a unique flying style. Although his flying style was commended from his superiors with words such as "suicidal", "unhealthy" and "idiotic", he

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Seduced by the actions of my senior officer, I chose to become him, he was my icon. But it wasn't long when the time came to reevaluate my choice. Soon, this mission came up which I voluntarily accepted. A satellite had to be traced and captured, it was located somewhere near the outer space of Circe VI in Epsilon Sector. It was a milk run and in such situations (without a wingman to back you up) tactics guide says that you keep a low profile and try to sneak and go, just like in a reckon patrol. Everything went fine when I finally traced the satellite but by the time I finished tractoring, a confed patrol came out of nowhere. It wasn't a trap, it was a scheduled patrol which happened to be in this position sooner than it was supposed to or at least sooner than our intelligence told us. In this particular situation I had two choices, according to tactics book. I either have to ask for reinforcements or abandon the place immediately and return to my base and because no reinforcements were ever available due to the incredible lack of pilots, I was left with the only choice to retreat. As you can imagine, I didn't. It was a typical patrol formation of two Hellcat Vs (breed for dogfights) and I was riding an Avenger (CAP killer) which was a torpedo bomber and the only ship available to tractor a satellite of this size.

During the engagement, the two confed pilots seemed to fly with a numbness that gave me



An Avenger class bomber, same as the one 2nd Lt. Carter flew during his mission at Circe VI. (Img. courtesy UBW Press Dept.)

the wrong impression that they were rookies just like I was. It seemed that I fell victim to their own plan. When the time came and I was in the perfect position to do as the Major had suggested, I fired a couple DFs with intention to miss and right before I was able to fire my HS the confed wingman broke his formation by hard breaking to his left (as if he knew) and in no time he managed to lock and fire at me an IR missile. I tried hard to evade the missile but I failed, soon the two Hellcats were on the offense. I came up flying an overloaded Avenger were its fore and after shields were down and its damage report was longer than my service report is now to the Navy. Next thing I remember, is myself ejected with the emergency beckon transmitting for help and the two Hellcats flying circles around me, like wolves, waiting for their transport to retrieve me, I guess they wanted me alive for questioning.

Lucky me, my wing commander received the emergency fast and he managed to save me and return me home safely after he beat those Hellcats like they were some kind of kittens.

My hot'headness and lack of respect of the enemies capabilities came to the following result. I almost lost my life, the satellite was lost, one of our precious bombers was also lost and I almost put in danger the whole carrier if I had been captured by the confeds first. In the end I was grounded by my superiors for good, although we were in desperate need for pilots.

Only after this shocking experience, I finally understood the phrase that someone wisely told me: "Want your name on a gold watch or a coffin!"