

FLY INTO THE WIND

How to Harness Faith and Fearlessness
on Your Ascent to Greatness

LT COLONEL DAN “NOONAN” ROONEY

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TERMS ONLY FIGHTER PILOTS UNDERSTAND

ANGELS: Altitude in thousands of feet. (“Angels 3” is 3,000 feet.)

BANDIT: A known bad guy.

BENT: An inoperative piece of gear.

BFM: Basic fighter maneuvers. The 1v1 aircraft combat most commonly known as dogfighting. Gun kills are preferred.

BINGO: Low fuel status or a direction to head for the divert field. (“Lobo is bingo fuel,” or “Ghostrider, your signal is bingo.”)

BITCHING BETTY: The automated female voice that provides audible in-cockpit warnings in some fighter aircraft. She only has bad stuff to say.

BLIND: Wingman not in sight.

BOGEY: An unknown radar contact.

BOTOT: Bombs on time on target.

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BUG OUT: To exit a dogfight rapidly. (“Gucci is on the bug.”)

BUSTER: A direction to go as fast as possible.

BVR: Beyond visual range. The ability to engage an enemy aircraft prior to being able to see him.

CAS: Close air support. Supporting the troops on the ground by attacking ground targets.

CAVU: Ceiling and visibility unrestricted.

CHERUBS: Altitude in hundreds of feet. (“Cherubs 3” is 300 feet.)

CHICK: “Chicks in tow” describes fighters that are refueling in midair.

CODE 3: An aircraft condition. If a jet is “Code 3,” it requires maintenance action before it is safe for the next flight. A “Code 2” jet needs maintenance but is safe to fly. A “Code 1” jet is in perfect working order. These codes can describe other things like a pilot or your car. A pilot that is sick calls himself “Code 3.”

DEAD BUG: A fighter-pilot drinking game, usually in formal settings. Anytime the phrase “dead bug” is said, all pilots fall to the ground on their backs to resemble a dead bug.

DELTA: To change to a later time, either minutes or hours depending on the context. (“Delta 10 on your recovery time” means the jet is now scheduled to land ten minutes later.)

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DNIF: Duty Not Including/Involving Flying. The medical status of a pilot who is too sick to fly but can still perform other duties, as determined by the flight surgeon.

DOLLAR RIDE: The first flight of pilot training; you give your IP a decorated dollar bill as a thank-you. This is the only flight without the pressure of a grade sheet.

DOOFER BOOK: A storybook in which pilots recount mistakes in a humorous way. There are no rules about content or language. The only criterion is that the story must be at least 10 percent true.

FAIP: First Assignment Instructor Pilot. A pilot who graduates from pilot training whose first assignment is to return to pilot training as an instructor.

FEB: Flying Evaluation Board. Determines if you are safe to fly. An FEB can take away a pilot's wings.

FENCE IN/OUT: The procedure by which a fighter pilot sets his cockpit switches in order to prepare for combat. When he "crosses the fence," he "fences in" and sets his switches to the appropriate mode. He "fences out" when leaving.

FIREWALL: To push the throttles to their forward limit.

FNG: [Expletive] New Guy. The nickname given to pilots who are new to a squadron and have not yet received a call sign.

FOX: A code word indicating the type of air-to-air missile that has been fired. "Fox 1" is semi-active radar missile

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(AIM-7 Sparrow); “Fox 2” is heat-seeking missile (AIM-9 Sidewinder); “Fox 3” is active radar missile (AIM-120 AMRAAM).

FRAGGED: An indication that the airplane is loaded weapons-wise according to the mission order. (“Devil 201 is on station as fragged.”)

FRAT: An abbreviation for fratricide—the killing of a friendly by a friendly (blue on blue), whether on the ground or in the air.

FUBAR: [Expletive] up beyond all recognition. My favorite bar at Eglin is actually called the FU BAR.

THE FUNKY CHICKEN: What aviators call the involuntary movements that happen during G-LOC.

G: Gravity. Under one G, a pilot is in level flight and feels his normal weight. F-16s are capable of up to nine Gs. That feels like nine times your body weight.

G-LOC: G-induced loss of consciousness. A blackout caused by the loss of blood flow to the brain experienced by fighter pilots under high-G conditions.

GOUGE: The “inside scoop.” To have the answers or important information prior to an examination.

GRAPE: A pilot who’s an easy kill in a dogfight.

HOLDING HANDS: Two fighters that are in a close formation.

HOOK: To fail an upgrade flight. So called because of the

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hook-shaped U of “Unsatisfactory” that constitutes the grade of such a ride.

JEREMIAH WEED: A terrible-tasting whiskey that is often the drink of choice for fighter pilots. It is kept in the freezer of a squadron bar or fighter pilot’s home.

NAKED: Radar warning gear lighting up without indication of a missile threat.

NASA: Call sign for a pilot having no (NA) situational awareness (SA).

NOSE HOT/COLD: Usually used around the tanker pattern. An indication that the radar is or isn’t transmitting.

PICKLE: To expend ordnance. To “pickle” a bomb or “hit the pickle button” means to fire a weapon.

PULL CHOCKS: To depart. The crew chief pulls the chocks, which are generally just wooden blocks painted yellow, out from the tires, allowing the aircraft to taxi. When a pilot is ready to depart (even if it’s just to go home), he may say he’s “pulling chocks.”

PUNCH OUT: To eject from an airplane.

QUEEP: A term that is used to describe paperwork, reports, and other extraneous duties that keep a pilot out of the cockpit.

REDBALL: A request for maintenance response, generally when a pilot is starting up an aircraft to go on a mission. For instance, if a pilot has a radar problem, he will call,

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“Redball, radar,” on the radio, which is a request for radar specialists.

ROLEX: To change time over target.

RTB: Return to base. (“Big Eye, Eagle 301 is RTB.”)

SANDBAG: To “ride along” in the back seat of the two-seat version of a fighter, so called because single-seat fighter pilots generally don’t like back-seaters and sometimes view them as nothing more than extra weight.

SHACK: When a fighter pilot drops a bomb and makes a direct hit on a ground target.

SHELF CHECK: Browsing at the local military exchange. So called particularly during deployments to austere locations, where people often go to the BX/PX to see what’s for sale not because they need something, but because it’s “something to do.”

SIERRA HOTEL: Phonetic pronunciation of “S.H.,” which stands for “shit hot.” This is the highest compliment you can receive as a fighter pilot.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS: SA. The ability to know and understand what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen, as well as where you are in time and space. By the time loss of SA is recognized, it has been gone for some time.

SO TO SPEAK: STS. A fighter-pilot expression that follows any phrase that may in some way be construed as having a sexual connotation.

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SPIKED: Um, not that “spiked.” The real “spiked” is an indication of a missile threat on the radar warning receiver. (“Rooster has an SA-6 spike at three o’clock.”)

TALLY: Enemy in sight (as opposed to “visual,” which means friendly in sight). (“Nuke is tally two bandits, four o’clock low.”)

TANGO UNIFORM: Phonetic pronunciation of “T.U.,” literally, “tits up.” Something that is Tango Uniform is dead, inoperative, broken, or otherwise malfunctioning.

TEXACO: Either a label for the tanker or direction to go to the tanker.

TUMBLEWEED: When a pilot has a complete loss of situational awareness. Often occurs when a wingman is so confused that all he can do is stay visual with his flight lead and hope he’ll eventually figure out what’s going on.

VAPES: The condensation cloud created when an airplane pulls a lot of Gs.

VISUAL: Wingman (or other friendly) in sight (as opposed to “tally,” which means enemy in sight). (“Weezer, you got me?” “Roger, Weezer is visual.”)

WINCHESTER: Out of weapons.

WOM: Word of mouth. A WOM is generally an action or “rule” that is consistently quoted but no one can find any regulation to support it.

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