

(Well, there I was) an F/A-18E Super Hornet vs. two Iranian Su-25 Frogfoots.

Well, once a Naval Aviator, always a Naval Aviator. I might have given up my wings for MAJestic, but I sure as fuck didn't give up my passion. Here is a story, it's first-person, don't you know, of an encounter by a F/A-18E Super Hornet with two Su-25 Frogfoots flown by the Iranian Air Force. It's a great read, and all credit to the authors.

Enjoy.

"There I Was: F/A-18E Super Hornet vs. two Iranian Su-25 Frogfoots" by Paco Chierici written on Sep 10, 2019.



Su-25 Frogfoot, Sukhoi. Heavily armored *attack and anti-tank aircraft*. The Su-25 is a well-armored aircraft, capable of carrying a large load under its shoulder-placed wing.

I've been hearing and telling "There I was..." stories for my entire adult life. It started for me in flight school, listening to a grizzled old sim instructor tell me about the day he got a MiG kill without taking a shot.



A Vietnamese MiG-21 .

A Vietnamese MiG-21 had been vectored at him thinking his F-8 was actually an A-7. As the story goes, after the pass, instead of tangling with the jet known as "The MiG Master," the Fishbed pilot established 2-circle flow and wisely ejected.

Kill's a kill.

I've got a few of my own, but they're mostly comical or nearly tragic. But I love hearing them. Last week I heard a great one:



The McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet is a twin-engine, supersonic, all-weather, carrier –capable, multirole combat jet, designed as both a fighter and attack aircraft (hence the F/A designation).

A couple years ago the Iranians issued a declaration stating that they would sink the next U.S. warship to enter the Persian Gulf. Further EU and U.S. sanctions against Iran related to their persistent nuclear program had begun to adversely affect the Iranian economy. The value of the Rial had fallen 40% in just a few months.



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WASHINGTON (April 16, 2013) The aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN 65) transits the Persian Gulf. Enterprise was one of several ships that participated in Operation Praying Mantis, which was launched after the guided-missile frigate USS Samuel B. Roberts (FFG-58) struck an Iranian mine on April 14, 1988. (U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Todd Cichonowicz/Released)

Iranian naval exercises coincided with a rare gap in carrier presence in the Persian Gulf and the Iranian Army Chief stated that if a carrier returned to the gulf, Iran would in no uncertain terms "take action."

Suddenly, after a couple decades of carriers and destroyers splashing around in their bathtub, the Iranians had decided the time was right to claim the Gulf as their own.



Launch of a silkworm missile.

Well the Persian Gulf is on the regular beat for U.S. carriers for the foreseeable future, despite the brief lapse at that time.

The *USS Boat* was to be the first to pop through the Strait of Hormuz since the edict and the ship was on a relatively high alert status crossing through the narrows.



Photo : Hossein Fatemi

FARS NEWS AGENCY

Silkworm missile being taken cared for.

Everybody knew about the Silkworm missiles lining the Iranian coast just a couple miles away as the Boat cruised through the 20-mile wide strait.

They all knew about the possibility of F-4s at Bandar Abbas and Bushehr, and the world's last flying F-14A Tomcats based in Shiraz.



Iranian F-14 aircraft.

A few uneventful hours after the passage, Wingnut had made his way to the flight deck to man the Alert on Cat 3.



Super Hornet ready for launch.

By this time, the ship was already 100 miles into the Gulf with not even a dust storm kicked up from the Iranian side. The tension level was easing slightly. As the feet of the pilot being relieved hit the deck, he told Wingnut, "Buddy, if you launch I will kick your ass."

Wingnut climbed up the ladder to the Rhino cockpit and snapped in his lap belts, leaving the shoulders off to provide a little freedom to move during the four-hour sit.



Catapult on an American aircraft carrier.

He checked the systems and the alignment to make sure he was squared away and then, settling down for the long alert, slapped a desert camo hat on his head to provide the only shade from the harsh sun. Earbuds and tunes in place, he pulled out a book and tried to pretend that he was somewhere else.

He'd gotten himself as settled and comfortable as he was going to be when the call came out over the flight deck 5MC: "Launch alert A, AAW package, side 207, initial vector 240, contact Strike on button 3!"



F/A-18 launching off the Ford.

The bored knots of sailors on the flight deck exploded into action and Wingnut scrambled to get his shit together while the Yellow Shirts, Ordies (Red Shirts) and Green Shirts sprinted in his direction. He started both engines while lowering the canopy and slapping his helmet on.



The bored knots of sailors on the flight deck exploded into action and Wingnut scrambled to get his shit together while the Yellow Shirts, Ordies (Red Shirts) and Green Shirts sprinted in his direction.

A minute later he was taxing the last couple inches to drive the launch bar into the shuttle. Before he had a chance to catch a breath he was shot off, slapping the gear handle up and was desperately trying to snap in the ejection seat shoulder restraints he had forgotten during the mad scramble on the flight deck.

At only five hundred feet and accelerating, the Boeing F/A-18E Super Hornet in full blower on a southwesterly heading, Wingnut checked in with Strike on button 3.



F/A-18 Super Hornet.

"Hot vector, on your nose. Fifteen miles, low. Flight of two out of Abu Musa."

That wasn't the Iranian mainland at all.

Abu Musa is a tiny mote of an island equidistant from Iran and UAE as the mouth of the Gulf begins to widen. There had never previously been a sense of a threat from there, despite the fact that U.S. warships routinely cruised between that island and the mainland conducting flight ops. But it did have a small airport.

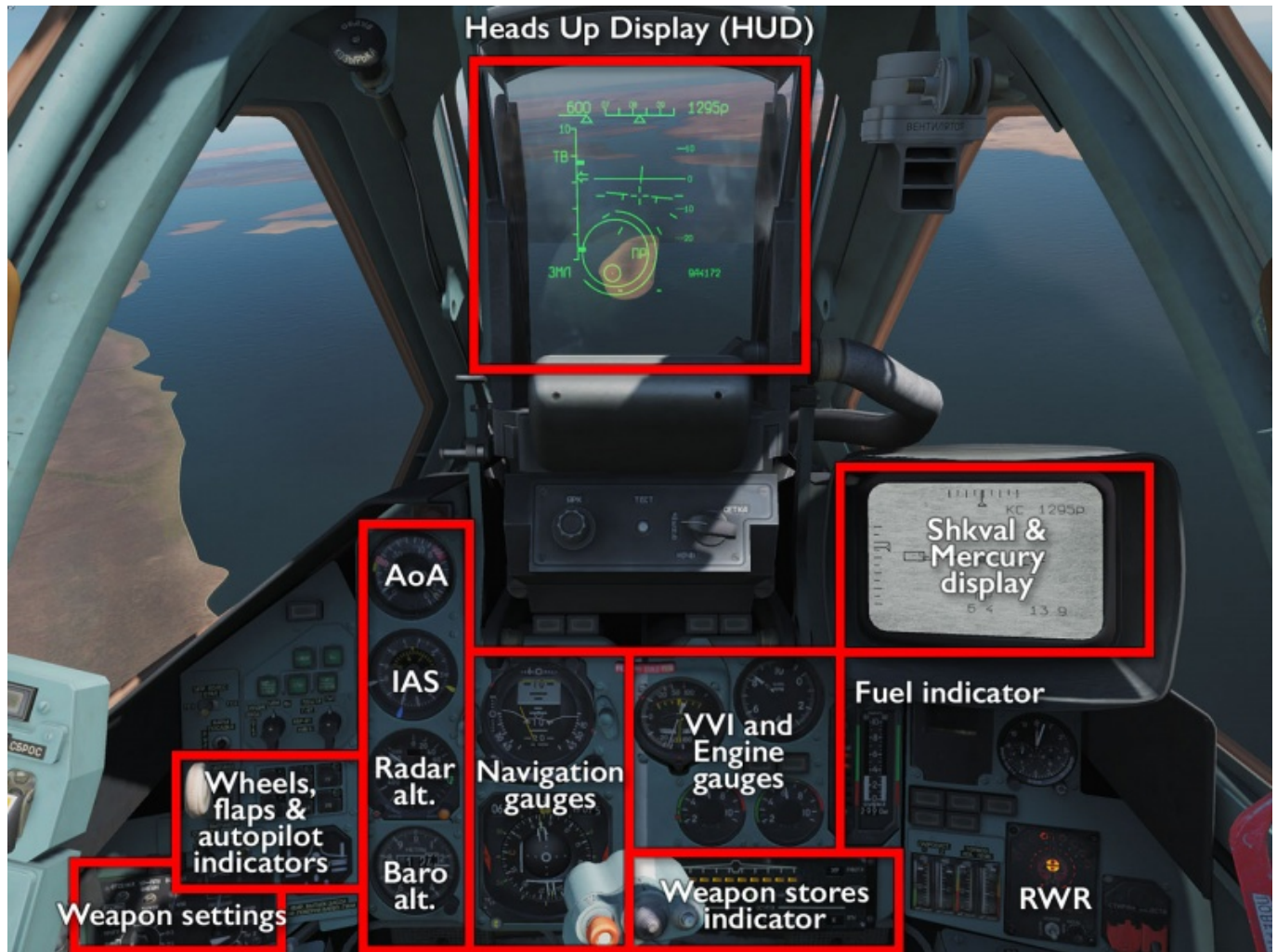


The United Arab Emirates has consistently and forcefully protested Iran's illegal occupation of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs from the moment Iranian military forces occupied the three islands on 30 November 1971, just two days before the establishment of the UAE and throughout the following decades.

Wingnut pointed his plane and radar in that direction and immediately got a lock. Instantly his system began flashing a symbol he hadn't seen since the simulators in training: HOSTILE.

He was barely off the boat and 5 miles on his nose was a flight of two Su-25 Frogfoots in combat spread out on the carrier just a couple hundred feet off the water.

Coming in low, and hot, armed with anti-ship missiles and flying just above the tops of the waves.



SU-25 Frogfoot dash.

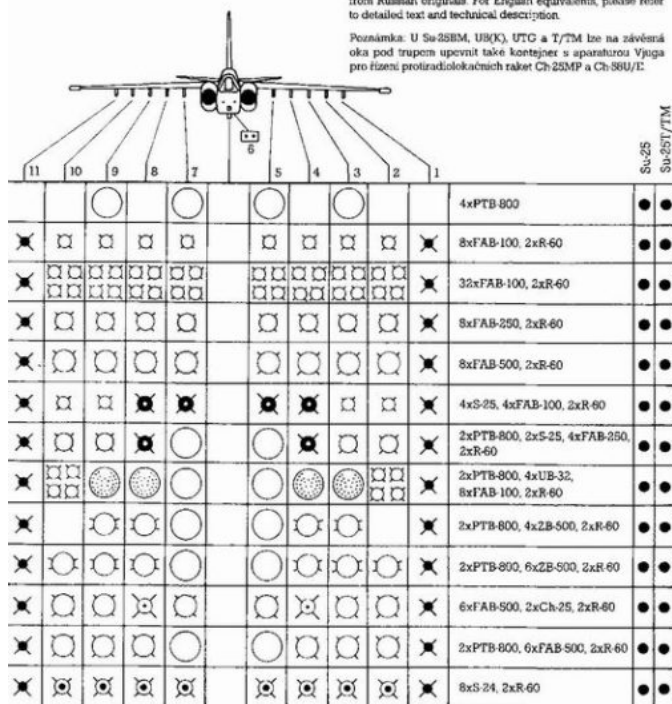
Wingnut reported the contact and a voice he recognized immediately as CAG commanded him to VID and check the wings for ordnance.

Roger that.

CAG came back with further instruction; if anything comes off those Frogfoots, splash 'em. He took the nearest Su-25 close aboard and sure enough he could make out, clear as day, Archers and two massive anti-ship missiles.

SU-25, T/TM

Poznámka: U Su-25BM, UB(K), UTG a T/TM lze na závěsná oka pod trupem upevnit také kontejner s aparaturou Vjuga pro řízení protiradiolokačních raket Ch-25MP a Ch-58U/E.



SU-25 Frogfoot weapons loadout.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | 8xS-25, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 4xS-24, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 4xS-24, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xSPPU-22, 2xUB-32, 16xFAB-100, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 6xB-8, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 8xB-8, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 6xKMGU, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 4xUB-32, 4xFAB-250, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 8xUB-32, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 2xSPPU-22, 2xB-8, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 8xB-13, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-600, 2xS-24, 1xSPS-141, 1xB-8, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 4xSPPU-22, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 2xCh-29, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 4xCh-25, 2x R-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 4xUB-32, 2xFobos | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 2xIAB-500, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 2xB-8, 2xR-73, 2xS-24, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 2xVichr, 2xR-73, 2xB-8, 2xR-60 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xCh-29, 2xVichr, 2xS-25, 2xB-13, 2xR-60, 1xChod/Kindal | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xCh-31, 2xVichr, 2xS-25, 2xB-13, 2xR-60, 1xMerkurij | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 2xPTB-800, 2xCh-35, 2xVichr, 2xR-77, 2xMPS-410, 1xKopjo-25 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 1xCh-29, 1xCh-58, 2xVichr, 2xS-25, 2xB-13, 2xR-60 | | |

It was close enough to the Boat that they could see the merge and everything that came after. They saw him max perform the jet in the vertical and come back around in trail, chasing the Su-25s from about a half mile astern.



Fighting the sense of surreal in the cockpit, Wingnut first locked the AIM-9 seekerhead on the right hand Frogfoot. Once he got a tone lock he switched to AMRAAM and locked the left hand bandit with the radar.

Fighting the sense of surreal in the cockpit, Wingnut first locked the AIM-9 seekerhead on the right hand Frogfoot. Once he got a tone lock he switched to AMRAAM and locked the left hand bandit with the radar.

All this with the ship rapidly filling his windscreen. Master arm was up and his finger was poised on the trigger. Given the slightest provocation it would be as simple as squeeze, select FOX-2, squeeze.



That plane broke left directly over the carrier salvoing out streams of flares.

As he reported to CAG that he was in a position to splash two, the SP0-15 in the left Frogfoot must have been screaming at high warble.

That plane broke left directly over the carrier salvoing out streams of flares. His wingman was right behind and as Wingnut converged he thought for a moment how sweet and awesome it would be to switch to guns and hose a Frogfoot down at 500' just off the stern of the ship.



The McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet is a twin-engine, supersonic, all-weather, carrier-capable, multirole combat jet, designed as both a fighter and attack aircraft. Designed by McDonnell Douglas and Northrop, the F/A-18 was derived from the latter's YF-17 in the 1970s for use by the United States Navy and Marine Corps. The Hornet is also used by the air forces of several other nations, and since 1986, by the U.S. Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels.

The Frogfoots aborted and disappeared into Iran.

When Wingnut trapped and shut down he said he felt like he was in a bad reenactment of the final scene in Topgun.

The flight deck personnel had witnessed the entire evolution, and as his engines spooled down they crowded about him, slapping him on the back and asked him absurd questions like, "Sir, did you have 'radar lock'?"



The F/A-18E single-seat and F/A-18F tandem-seat variants are larger and more advanced derivatives of the F/A-18C and D Hornet. The Super Hornet has an internal 20 mm M61 rotary cannon and can carry air-to-air missiles and air-to-surface weapons.

It's a great story and true.

There is video. It's also a little sobering to consider the implications had those SU-25 pilots been ordered to martyr themselves.

In all likelihood, the Boat would have sustained some hits and good men and women would have died.

It's a tight CV Op Area in the gulf. We do our damndest to avoid irritating the Iranians, but if they ever feel like taking a pot shot, the first one might do some damage.

Conclusion

It's a great little story and worthy of a posting.

If you enjoyed this, you can check out other posts that I have in my "Happiness" section. You can go there by clicking on this button below...

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