

# CMR REPORT

CENTER FOR MILITARY READINESS POLICY ANALYSIS

MARCH 1997

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Number 11

## NAVY REPORT CONFIRMS SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR FEMALE F-14 PILOTS

After a delay of more than two years, the Center for Military Readiness has finally obtained a copy of a January 31, 1995, report by Rear Adm. Lyle G. Bien, who was directed to conduct a field inquiry into questions raised by CMR in 1995. The six-page document confirmed the existence of special treatment and extraordinary concessions extended to two women pilots in tactical aviation. It also attempted to divert attention from the significance of information it confirmed.

The elusive Bien Report and a three-page Supplement dated May 4, 1995, were addressed to Adm. Rocky Sane, then-Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, in response to a January 16, 1995 letter from Elaine Donnelly to Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-SC). Despite three Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, Adm. Bien's response to Mrs. Donnelly's inquiry was withheld from her and from several members of Congress until January 8, 1997. At one point, Navy officials denied its existence.

In her January 16, 1995, letter to Sen. Thurmond, Elaine Donnelly presented nine detailed pages chronicling specific events, low scores, and major errors that occurred during the training of the first two women qualified to fly the F-14. The first was Lt. Kara Hultgreen, who was killed during an attempted landing on the carrier *Abraham Lincoln* on October 25, 1994. The second was Lt. Carey Dunai Lohrenz, who was removed from flight status on May 30, 1995.

In writing to Sen. Thurmond and in subsequent articles, Donnelly had protected Lt. Lohrenz' identity to the greatest extent possible by referring to her as "Pilot B." Lt. Lohrenz has since identified herself publicly, and is currently seeking reinstatement. The information about both women was received from an informed source, who expressed grave concern about what appeared to be a lowering of standards in naval aviation training.

The Bien Report stated that facts presented in the CMR letter were "*largely accurate*," and then inserted misleading, contradictory language—comparable to the statements of some officials following Lt. Hultgreen's fatal crash, which were contradicted by the Navy's own internal investigations. The May 4 Supplement stated that a point-by-point refutation of CMR's Special Report would be "*nearly impossible*," and recommended that further comment not be made.

### **Background and Overview**

From January through March of 1995, Mrs. Donnelly met once at the Pentagon with then-Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jeremy Boorda, and three times with then-Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Stanley Arthur. At the March 24, 1995 meeting with Adm. Arthur, which was also attended by an aide for Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-MI) and Chief of Naval Information Rear Adm. Kendell Pease, Mrs. Donnelly was shown a report summarizing the results of a field investigation conducted by Rear Adm. Lyle G. Bien.

Mrs. Donnelly and the senate aide were allowed to take notes on the document, but were not given a copy. The newly-released Bien Report conforms to their notes almost exactly. Both documents confirmed that the facts and chronologies presented in the January 16 letter were "*largely accurate*." This meant that:

- ❖ Lt. Hultgreen was retained in the program and graduated to the fleet despite low scores and four major errors (Downs) on her record, two of which were similar to mistakes made on the day she died.
- ❖ Pilot B earned low scores and an astonishing seven Downs, the last not recorded, apparently, so she could pass the course.
- ❖ The Navy was prepared to accept decisions made by the Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) regarding the two women, and apparently would not deter similar practices in the future.

### **CMR Issues Special Report**

Because of concern for safety and excellence in tactical aviation, the military's most hazardous occupation, the Center for Military Readiness published the CMR Special Report Double Standards in Naval Aviation on April 25, 1995. The CMR Special Re-

port included 20 pages of text and 105 pages of accompanying documents and training records earned by the two women in the course of their F-14 training. Copies of the April 25 CMR Special Report were made available to Navy officials, members of Congress, and the media, and a condensed version titled "*Double Standards in Naval Aviation*," was published as a six-page CMR Report in June, 1995.

With the exception of a three-page Supplement to the Bien Report dated May 4, 1995, which was withheld from CMR until February 25, 1997, the Navy has not issued any official, public response to the CMR Special Report. Nor has it challenged the authenticity of the records appended to it.

Similar actions occurred on the House side of Congress. In 1996, the Navy released a heavily redacted copy of a July 12, 1995, Department of Defense (DoD) Information Paper Re: Training Records of Female F-14 Pilots, which was resented by Rear Adm. Harry T. Rittenour to members and staff of the House National Security Committee. In one of several letters denying CMR's FOIA requests, the July 12 document was described as the "*only*" one that addressed CMR's questions. An unredacted version of the DoD Information Paper was later given to CMR by another reliable source.

Although useful because of the information it confirms, the July 12 DoD Information Paper only comments on the six-page condensed version of the CMR Report. The DoD paper has been analyzed separately in a CMR Analysis

### ***Bien Report Lowers the Bar***

The Bien Report confirmed that CMR acted in good faith and had sound reasons for doing so. As CMR has stated all along, extraordinary concessions were extended to the first two women to fly the F-14 so that they would not fail. Furthermore, the Navy failed to concede there was a 'problem, and did nothing substantive about it.

The Bien Report condoned special treatment that was costly, dangerous, and demoralizing to all who were aware of it. Apparent acceptance of its conclusions indicates that the definition of "qualified" has been radically changed, and the bar has been effectively lowered for favored trainees who may expect similar concessions in the future. This is cause for great concern, because tolerance of unacceptable risks in the unforgiving field of carrier aviation may have already contributed to the loss of a courageous female aviator.

### **FACTS ABOUT "ALTERED STANDARDS" FOUND "LARGELY ACCURATE"**

The following is an analysis of the January 31, 1995, Report by Adm. Lyle G. Bien, and the Supplement dated May 4, 1995. Direct quotes from the Bien Report appear in italics.

**1. Bien Report:** In January of 1995, a field investigation was conducted which included interviews with 27 officers with knowledge of what happened during the training of two women by VF-124, the since-disbanded Pacific F-14 Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS). In the second paragraph, Adm. Bien wrote: "*We, found the facts contained in [CMR's January 16 letter] to be largely accurate.*" (emphasis added)

**CMR Response:** With the words emphasized above, the Navy confirmed virtually all of the facts laid out in the January 16 Thurmond letter, which later formed the substance of the April 25 CMR Special Report: Double Standards in Naval Aviation. At the time the Bien Report was prepared, officials did not know that actual training records would later be released

At a highly-publicized news conference in San Diego on February 28, 1995 which showed the videotape of Hultgreen's fatal crash, and on subsequent network television interview programs, Navy officials did not contradict preliminary reports that engine failure was the primary cause, and that she was a pilot with above-average scores.

To the contrary, the Navy's own Judge Advocate General and Mishap Investigation Reports indicate' that pilot error was the primary cause of the accident. And in addition to their initial failure to carrier qualify, both women earned low scores and numerous "pink sheets" for unsatisfactory performance called "Downs" or "Signals of Difficulty" (SODs). One or two downs have historically resulted in dismissal of the trainee, depending on the seriousness or patterns of the errors and other factors such as low cumulative scores.

**Note:** Contrary to subsequent attempts to draw exaggerated distinctions between "Downs" and "Signals of Difficulty" (SODS) in the July 12 DoD Information Paper mentioned above, the Bien Report and its Supplement did not dispute CMR's listing of major unsatisfactory grades, marked with "pink sheets," as Downs. Both grades are virtually interchangeable terms denoting serious errors in performance. One requires a re-fly and one does not, but both are required to be documented with a pink sheet. CMR accurately reflected the Grading Criteria used by VF-124, the training squadron in question.

Interestingly enough, the July 12 DoD Information Paper counted both women's initial failure to carrier qualify as a Down, which is common in the lexicon of naval aviation. CMR did not do so, however, because the squadron's Grading Criteria did not list failure to carrier qualify as a Down.

**2. Bien Report:** "*There are some important errors, though, that warrant correction...*"

a) "*First, the author asserts that [Pilot B's] night grade in her first attempt at carrier qualification (CQ) was 'the lowest night grade in the history of [VF-124].'* Interviews with LSOs and instructors revealed one F-14 pilot, plus a recent F-18 pilot (another FRS) whose night grades were lower than [Pilot B]. Both these male pilots were allowed a second attempt to qualify

at the ship;"

- b) *"The writer asserts that 'male students have been permanently disqualified after their first CQ with grades higher than [Pilot B].' No one I interviewed could provide an instance wherein this was true... "*
- c) *"The [CMR] letter describes an incident in which the commanding officer of VF-124 allegedly directed an instructor to change a flight grade from a "down " to an "up " during the final stages of [Pilot B's] Tactics phase. My interview with the instructor involved revealed this assertion to be false... "*

**CMR Response:** CMR assertions that were challenged by the Bien Report, as quoted above, are fully supported by actual training records that subsequently came to light:

- a) Training records appended to the CMR Special Report, from 1986 to 1994, indicate that Pilot B did have the lowest night grades in the history of the FRS in question, excluding incompletes, and that no other pilot in the history of the FRS was allowed to attempt requalification with grades as low as hers. (See Attachments B5-1 through B5-14.) Unsubstantiated claims or references to other aviation communities are irrelevant to CMR's report. Even if it could be shown that Pilot B had the *second* worst training records, that would not inspire confidence.
- b) Training records that support this point appear in the CMR Special Report, Attachment B-5, pp. 24, and 12. Names are marked with large asterisks.
- c) Regardless of what Adm. Bien was told prior to publication of the CMR Special Report, the actual grade sheet for the flight in question (TAPF 170, 27 June, 1994) clearly shows that contrary to the squadron's own grading criteria, the "unsatisfactory" grade of 2.875 was not recorded as a Signal of Difficulty (Down). On the next day, the squadron CO took the place of the scheduled radar intercept officer (RIO), and gave Pilot B a passing grade, as if the previous failing grade had not occurred. (See Attachments B3-3, and C8-1 through C8-5, CMR Special Report.)

- 3. Bien Report:** *"Relatedly, I actively pursued the question of whether the instructors felt they had the 'same latitude to call a 'spade a spade' with the females as with the male aviators. They answered universally, 'yes.'"*

**CMR Response:** This statement has been and will be refuted. It is also contradicted by the Bien Report itself (page 3) which discusses the unmistakable message sent to aviation instructors when Adm. Arthur's promotion to become Commander in Chief Pacific was withdrawn, due to controversy surrounding a failing female pilot.

- 4. Bien Report:** *"I spent considerable time on the question of whether the (female aviators) ultimately met the same standards as their male counterparts prior to graduation .... "*

**CMR Response:** CMR has repeatedly stated that both women were technically "qualified" by the Navy following their second attempt at the carrier, but the definition of the word "qualified" was radically changed to ensure that the women would not fail, despite low scores and numerous errors that would have disqualified others.

- 5. Bien Report:** *"Further, no interviewee claimed that any of the women were unsafe or unqualified to fly the aircraft. I believe the perceptions that gave rise to [the CMR letter] are reflective of the means by which the female aviators met the standards, not that any standards were lowered."*

**CMR Response:** The first sentence in this statement has been and will be refuted. To speculate about "perceptions" in a report that has already confirmed documentary evidence to the contrary does not inspire confidence. The problem is not "perceptions," but the reality of extraordinary concessions that constituted double standards. If Bien's interpretation is taken to its logical conclusion, the Navy would be hard pressed to define failure. If seven downs combined with low scores are now acceptable, would ten be too many? What about fifteen—or thirty?

- 6. Bien Report:** *"I found evidence of special considerations given to (the) female aviators during their course of instruction. In the cases of Lt. Kara Hultgreen...these considerations were neither unreasonable nor extraordinary. In, the case of [Pilot B], significantly greater concessions were made. Examples include a greater number of sorties, especially during the Tactics phase of instruction, a less strenuous flight schedule during that phase, a second opportunity to carrier qualify despite performing poorly on her first attempt, and the provision of a fully ready spare airplane during the Tactics phase. With the exception of the "turning spare" aircraft, none of these special considerations is unprecedented... To be sure, extending extra help (special considerations) to students, male or female, is a hallmark of the success of any FRS."*

**CMR Response:** The Bien Report acknowledges that the practice of repeatedly providing Pilot B with a fully-ready spare aircraft was "unprecedented." By definition, the concession was extraordinary as well as expensive.

Acceptance of Pilot B's record as an example of "success" sets a regrettable precedent. Under this premise, what defines "reasonable" is virtually boundless—suggesting that training squadrons have unlimited financial and physical resources, endless time to train all pilots, and no trainee should ever fail the flight program. This is unrealistic and unfair to other aspiring trainees who might have cause to seek reinstatement because they were washed out despite their best efforts to succeed.

- 7. Bien Report:** *"What is unusual in the case of [Pilot B] is the combination of these concessions for one individual in a single course of instruction. Many of the officers interviewed, especially junior officers, thought the amount and nature of the accommo-*

*dations extended to [Pilot B] were excessive....As long as safety and common standards are maintained and progress is apparent, the FRS should accommodate a reasonable range of 'learning curves.' I believe that VF-124 was generous but reasonable in making the concessions listed to accommodate the learning curve of [Pilot B]."*

**CMR Response:** The women's "learning curves" were not consistently positive. To the contrary, training records attached to the CMR Special Report (B2-1 through B2-5 and B11-1 through B11-6) indicate inconsistent or negligible progress on the part of both women. Unsatisfactory grades earned by Pilot B on May 24 and June 21, 1994, (Downs #5 and #6) indicated deterioration in basic skills.

**8. Bien Report:** *"None of the 27 officers interviewed could cite personal knowledge of any direction or overt pressure being applied to anyone in the VF-124 chain of command to ensure graduation of the female officers."*

**CMR Response:** This statement is clearly contradicted on page 3 of the Bien Report, which quotes statements from several interviewees about: a) Acceleration of female pilots to the training squadron ahead of male students who had been waiting for up to a year; b) Personal visits and recognition of the female aviators from senior officers, VIPs, and the press; c) Frequent calls from a senior female Naval aviator in Washington D.C., inquiring into the status and progress of the women; and d) Personal congratulations on the bridge from the carrier's commanding officer following completion of the female pilots' carrier qualifications. (The male aviators were not similarly recognized.)

**9. Bien Report:** *"I am confident that, just as the commanding officer testified, there was no official direction or pressure placed on him regarding the female aviators..."*

**CMR Response:** There are multiple instances that contradict this statement. For example, during an all instructors meeting held in the summer of 1994, several FRS instructors expressed their frustration to the commanding officer of the squadron about what they perceived to be a blatant double standard in the treatment of female aviation candidates. In an attempt to quash any dissent, the CO informed the instructors that the women would go to the fleet—no matter what.

In making that statement the CO dispelled any doubt as to whether or not there was a political motivation to get women into combat units as soon as possible. In informing the instructors that the females would inevitably succeed he eliminated fear of failure—one of the critical components needed to discipline and teach good judgment to aspiring fighter pilots.

**10. Bien Report:** *"Throughout the inquiry, I found considerable concern about perceived pressures on the commanding officer of VF-124, and others above and below him, with regard to the female aviators.... Moreover, many officers cited events like Tailhook and the Tomcat Follies, and the issue involving Admiral Arthur, [which] ...created an atmosphere in which no officer wanted to appear to block the progress of integrating women into the Fleet. The Admiral Arthur incident is especially relevant ....Almost every officer, interviewed mentioned this as a case where a four-star aviator took what appeared to them as a correct and completely justified action to terminate the aviation training of a failing female officer. For his actions, he was seen to enjoy little support while being effectively punished for his action."*

*"Given this highly charged environment, combined with the success orientation of naval aviators, I believe that the junior officers' impressions that the Navy was predisposed to wanting these females to succeed was well founded. That the ...females were deserving of graduation and that the integrity of the evaluation process was upheld throughout their training is a fortunate coincidence." (Emphasis added)*

**CMR Response:** This statement discredited any belief or suspicion that the women were victims of sex, discrimination; i.e., the determination that they should fill because they were women. Adm. Bien's reference to "integrity" in the process was ironic and disconcerting, given Lt. Hultgreen's death and the Navy's actions in the aftermath of the accident. "Vindication" of Lt. Hultgreen became synonymous with vindication of the Navy's judgment in qualifying her to fly the F-14.

**11. Bien Report:** *"All the officers interviewed stated that the ultimate key to acceptance of women in ships and squadrons is performance; performance measured with the same yardstick as that applied to males .... Indeed, the women I interviewed expressed equally strong views opposing preferential treatment, perceived or real, based on gender. They strongly voiced the opinion that any altered standards to accommodate women would ultimately undermine the value of their qualifications, credibility, and achievements, thereby impeding the integration of women into the Fleet—the very goal the Navy is working hard to achieve.'"*

**CMR Response:** It is most unfortunate that the Bien Report disregarded the female interviewees' comments about the damaging effects of "altered standards." Instead, some Navy officials continue to suggest that differing standards simply don't exist.

**12. Bien Report:** The Report recommended an end to: a) Special recognition of women by senior offices and the media; b) All special "non performance" considerations based on gender; c) Accelerated entry for women into training squadrons; and d) Assignment of special living quarters despite long-established policies of seniority. The admiral also recommended that "...all levels of the chain of command both preach and practice that one performance standard applies to all personnel, regardless of gender. There must be no doubt that everyone meets a genuine and unchanging minimum standard for qualification."

**CMR Response:** The first four recommendations might have been helpful if the Navy had proclaimed them publicly. But even if they had, the message would have been contradicted by Adm. Bien's final recommendation. The admiral's, call for a "genuine and unchanging" qualification standard was rendered meaningless when he simultaneously condoned the squadron's ex-

traordinary actions regarding Lt. Hultgreen and Pilot B, and advocated "minimum" standards instead of *excellence* in aviation training.

**13. Bien Report:** *"The evidence is overwhelming, indeed universal, that [the two women] ultimately met the same standards as their male counterparts. In an era when it is popular to wonder about whether the military is upholding its traditional standards and integrity, this could serve as an example in the affirmative. Still, perceptions of unequal treatment and training methodology persist. Accordingly, the question of whether the commanding officer of the FRS violated his prerogatives, or more importantly, reasonable standards in the training of these females was aggressively pursued. I concluded this study believing that VF-124 did what was right in the training of the ...females in question."*

**CMR Response:** This conclusion is not supported by facts acknowledged in the Bien Report. Acceptance of the Report's fulsome praise of the squadron's decisions practically guarantees similar practices in the future—as if the Navy recognizes no real difference between poor performance and excellence. Depending on the person involved, some trainees who would otherwise fail may be "qualified" under an "altered" standard.

Which suggests a hypothetical question. What if Lt. Hultgreen's accident had been caused by an unmistakable maintenance error, and evidence of unusual squadron actions that may have contributed to the mishap was found to be "largely accurate?" Circumstances revealed by the Bien Report were no less serious. Matters of training are at least as important as engineering and maintenance in promoting safety and excellence in naval aviation.

**14. Bien Report:** *"But one has to wonder why, if the evidence is almost wholly supportive of the actions of the FRS in this case, why ill will persists in the aftermath of their training?"*

**CMR Response:** The problem is not "ill will," but palpable, justified concern about corruption of a system designed to cull out accident-prone trainees. The Navy as an institution will not alleviate these legitimate concerns as long as some officials continue to rationalize and excuse special treatment that is demoralizing, expensive, and dangerous. Indeed, the answer to Adm. Bien's rhetorical question was obvious and expressed in his own conclusion:

*"In the course of this inquiry, I believe we touched on much of the greater issue here, and it has to do with combat readiness. The twenty-seven officers (male and female) I interviewed all expressed what could be characterized as a passionate concern for the readiness of the Navy to fight and win in actual combat.*

*"... Their plea is not that we abandon the move to place females in combat positions. Rather, their plea is that we not move ahead with undue haste ('meet a predetermined quota'), and that we not judge our program by social/political engineering measures, but rather by the harsh yardstick of combat efficiency.*

*"Lastly, they plead universally that we not alter our standards to accommodate females. The pride expressed by the officers we talked with in serving the nation as carrier pilots and NFOs was so real you could touch it. We would serve our Navy and nation best if we acted only in ways that preserve that hard won, but always fragile quality."*

#### SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT ON AVIATION TRAINING ISSUES — MAY 4, 1995

Shortly after the full-length CMR Special Report was published, Adm. Bien wrote a three-page supplement to his January 31 report. Significant portions of the Supplement, which appear to include comment about Elaine Donnelly and "the principle emphasis of her work," were heavily censored. (CMR is appealing the redactions.)

Although different in tone, the Supplementary Report did not challenge the authenticity of training records that were published in the full-length CMR Special Report. Instead, Adm. Bien quoted officers who said they couldn't locate some of the information in their files. He also insisted that the squadron's actions were "proper," and apparently based his opinions on the unsubstantiated statements of persons who were directly involved in key decisions.

**15. Report Supplement:** Adm. Bien cited Lt. Hultgreen's failure to safely execute a practice bombing run and Pilot B's failure to turn off the right engine when approaching the "hot-pit" refueling area as errors that should have been corrected by the back-seat radar intercept officers (RIOs). Adm. Bien also suggested that these incidents indicated that some men were "emotionally predisposed to see (the women) fail."

**CMR Response:** Regarding the RIOs' motives, Adm. Bien contradicted his own prior observations about squadron members' paramount concern for safety and combat effectiveness, as expressed in item # 14 above. In essence, this was an attempt to have it 'both ways: Success for the women exemplified "integrity" in the training process, while failures were caused by the "emotional predisposition" of officers with ulterior motives.

Facts do not support the insinuation that RIOs flying with the two women might have deliberately endangered aircraft, colleagues and ground personnel in order to cast discredit on the women's performance:

- a.) An F-14 training squadron's "building block" approach requires new pilots to master basic skills before advancing to the next level. Advanced aerial engagements involving as many as eight aircraft are complex and dynamic, with a constant threat of midair collision. During a real or simulated dogfight, it is the pilot's responsibility to prosecute the primary threat, and the RIO's to maintain situational awareness of other threats. Instructors evaluate and teach, but the RIO cannot provide extensive

guidance in basic areas without compromising the tactical training objectives of the mission or the safety of the aircraft.

As stated in the CMR Special Report, Lt. Hultgreen's mistakes on two simulated bombing runs might have destroyed the aircraft and endangered life if live ordnance had been dropped. The grade sheet indicates that her errors were serious and different with each run, but she was still offered repeated opportunities to *succeed*, not to fail.

b.) The rear cockpit of an F-14 does not have an engine ignition light, and surrounding high-decibel noise often precludes detection of the engine's status, by hearing alone, by the RIO or approaching crewmembers who can be sucked into a turning engine during the refueling process. The only way the RIO can ascertain that the engine has been secured is to detect a subtle change in airframe vibration.

The instructor on the flight in question showed diligence and skill in alerting Pilot B in time to avert a catastrophe. Issuance of a Signal of Difficulty (SOD) instead of a safety-of-flight Down indicates a willingness for her to succeed, even if it meant bending the squadron's Grading Criteria to accommodate her unsatisfactory performance.

**16. Report Supplement:** Adm. Bien repeated his earlier statement regarding the squadron commander's intervention to change an advanced Tactics flight "down" grade to an "up."

**CMR Response:** As stated in Item #2 above, (pp. 3-4) the unsatisfactory grade marked on the sheet for the Tactics flight in question required the issuance of a pink sheet. The Signal of Difficulty was not recorded, however, after the CO re-flew the flight with Pilot B.

**17. Report Supplement:** Bien noted that the squadron CO changed another unsatisfactory Tactics grade to a "warm-up," but suggested that the change was justified due to a failure of automatic maneuver devices (AMD).

**CMR Response:** For safety of flight reasons, it is the pilot's responsibility to ensure that the AMD are engaged, in order to fly and fight the aircraft in a broad range of aeronautical conditions. If Pilot B did fight air combat maneuvering (ACM) engagements without the AMD engaged, it would be a serious violation of Standard Operating Procedures, which should have been documented with a Down. In either case, Pilot B failed this evolution but the CO did not properly document the failure with a pink sheet for unsatisfactory performance. (See Attachments B3-3, C4-1, and C4-2, CMR Special Report)

**Note:** Adm. Bien suggested that Pilot B's failure to notice disengagement of the automatic maneuvering devices (AMD) during a graded flight was not a cause for concern. But the July 12, 1995 Defense Department Information Paper, cited above, counts failure of the AMD as a valid reason for downing the aircraft. Those who "stand by" both reports cannot have it both ways.

**18. Report Supplement:** Adm. Bien stated that a point-by-point "refutation" of Ms. Donnelly's "Report" would be "almost impossible and ineffective," and recommended that a detailed rebuttal not be made because it "would only fuel an endless debate that will give Ms. Donnelly a continuing forum."

**CMR Response:** Adm. Bien's recommendation to summarily end all comment was a disservice not just to CMR, whose detailed inquiry had led to the investigation, but to the military community, the Congress, and all Americans who are concerned about aviation safety. There appears to be two reasons for it: "Largely accurate" facts cannot be effectively refuted, and further examination of the truth makes it difficult to justify the detrimental effect on morale and readiness.

**19. Report Supplement:** Adm. Bien stood by his original conclusion that "standards of VF-124 were not lowered to get the female pilots to the Fleet" and added that although additional money was spent and extra opportunities provided, in the end it was the women's "performance—not spectacular but within standards—that earned them graduation."

**CMR Response:** It is disconcerting to read Orwellian double-speak in a document that finds it "almost impossible" to refute facts to the contrary. The Bien Report established that VF-124's method of integrating women into the F-14 squadron required far more time, money, and greater risks, only to produce two female trainees—one of whom was killed and the other removed from flight status—who were "not spectacular" in their combat specialties. Acceptance of results such as this demonstrates that standards really were lowered not just for the women, but also for all future trainees.

### CONCLUSION

It is most unfortunate that the heartfelt concerns of naval officers who risk their lives every day in carrier aviation were heard but not forwarded faithfully to appropriate authorities.

The Center for Military Readiness requests that the Navy and members of Congress take firm steps to end the perception and reality of double standards in naval aviation. A responsible resolution will be difficult, however, without a straightforward acknowledgment that a serious problem exists. The future of naval aviation remains clouded by the Bien Report's apparent message: Mediocrity is acceptable; Excellence is optional; The definition of "qualified" is subject to change.

