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Kara Hultgreen

Kara Spears Hultgreen (5 October 1965 – 25 October 1994) was a lieutenant and naval aviator in the United States Navy and the first female carrier-based fighter pilot in the U.S. Navy. She died just months after she was certified for combat, when her F-14 Tomcat crashed into the sea on final approach to USS *Abraham Lincoln*.

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Youth

Hultgreen was born on 5 October 1965, in Greenwich, Connecticut, and raised in both Chicago, Illinois; and Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Hultgreen moved to San Antonio, Texas, in 1981. She attended Alamo Heights High School and received a congressional nomination to the Naval Academy but did not win an appointment. She attended the University of Texas at Austin, where she majored in Aerospace Engineering.^[1]

Military career

Hultgreen was commissioned through the Aviation Officer Candidate School at Naval Air Station Pensacola, where she was a Distinguished Naval Graduate.^[1]

Upon graduation she was assigned to Training Air Wing 4 at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, for primary flight training with VT-27 in the T-34C Turbomenter. Screened for the Strike Pilot training pipeline,

Kara Spears Hultgreen



Kara Hultgreen with an F-14 Tomcat

Nickname(s)	Revlon
Born	October 5, 1965 <div>Greenwich, Connecticut</div>
Died	October 25, 1994 (aged 29) <div>off San Diego, California</div>
Place of burial	Arlington National Cemetery
Allegiance	 United States of America
Service/branch	 United States Navy
Years of service	1987–94
Rank	 Lieutenant

she underwent follow-on training in the T-2C Buckeye and TA-4J Skyhawk II with Training Air Wing 3 at NAS Chase Field, Texas.

Following designation as a naval aviator, she received orders to fly EA-6A Intruders with Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 33 (VAQ-33) at NAS Key West, Florida.^[2] Upon the Navy's integration of women in combat in 1993, LT Hultgreen was selected to be among the first female pilots to undergo F-14 Tomcat training at NAS Miramar, California.

While with Pacific Fleet F-14 Fleet Replacement Squadron, Fighter Squadron 124 (VF-124), Hultgreen failed her first attempt at carrier qualification. Hultgreen successfully carrier-qualified during a second period aboard USS *Constellation* in mid-1994, becoming the first "combat qualified" female naval aviator.^[2] Upon completion of the VF-124 Category I fleet replacement pilot syllabus, she was assigned to the Black Lions of Fighter Squadron 213 (VF-213) and began preparations for deployment to the Persian Gulf.

Her call signs were "Hulk" or "She-Hulk", for her ability to bench-press 200-pound (91 kg), her 6-foot (1.8 m) frame, and a play on her surname of Hultgreen. Following a television appearance, in which she wore noticeable makeup, she received the additional call sign of "Revlon".^[3]

Death

On 25 October 1994, Hultgreen died when her F-14A-95-GR, BuNo 160390,^[4] coded "NH 103," crashed on approach to USS *Abraham Lincoln*. The incident occurred off the coast of San Diego after a routine training mission.^[5] Finding herself overshooting the landing area centerline, Hultgreen attempted to correct her approach by applying left rudder pedal, which caused the nose to disrupt the airflow over the left (inside) wing, as well as the airflow to the left engine intake. The port engine suffered a compressor stall and lost power—a well-known deficiency characteristic of the F-14A's TF30-P-414A engine when inlet air was no longer flowing straight into it. For this reason, the F-14 NATOPS flight manual warned against excess yaw. Loss of an F-14 engine results in asymmetric thrust, which can exceed rudder authority, especially at low speeds.

After aborting the approach, Hultgreen selected full afterburner on the remaining engine, causing an even greater asymmetry. This, combined with a high angle of attack, caused an unrecoverable approach turn stall and rapid wing drop to the left. The radar intercept officer in the rear seat, Lt. Matthew Klemish, initiated ejection for himself and Hultgreen as soon as it was apparent the aircraft was becoming uncontrollable. First in the automated ejection sequence, the RIO survived. However, by the time Hultgreen's seat fired 0.4 seconds later, the plane had exceeded 90 degrees of roll, and she was ejected downward into the water, killing her instantly.^{[6]:168-169}



Play media

Video of F-14A-95-GR's crash from two angles

On 12 November, 19 days after the crash, the Navy salvaged the plane and recovered her body, still strapped into the ejection seat.^[5] The wreckage was in 3,700 feet (1,100 m) of water. On 21 November, she was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, with full military honors.

The F-14A lost in the crash, BuNo 160390, had been one of the two involved in the Gulf of Sidra incident of 1981, when it was previously assigned to Fighter Squadron 41 (VF-41) at NAS Oceana, Virginia, and embarked with Carrier Air Wing Eight (CVW-8) aboard USS *Nimitz*.

As with most approaches to a carrier landing, Hultgreen's incident was videotaped by two cameras. The tape shows an overshooting turn onto final, then apparent engine failure, followed by an audible wave-off and gear-up command from the landing signal officer. Segments shown on broadcast television concluded with the rapid sequence of aircraft stall, roll, crew ejections, and impact with the water.

Controversy

Elaine Donnelly of the Center for Military Readiness, a group that seeks to limit the roles of women in the military, suggested that Hultgreen "may have been the victim of a flawed policy," a policy that overlooked her mistakes in training, two of which were similar to those that caused her death.^[7] The other pilot named by the center subsequently brought a suit for defamation against the CMR but lost because the court determined that, by virtue of her status as one of the first women to attempt to qualify as a carrier combat pilot, she was a "public figure" and had to prove malice on the part of those who published the charge of favoritism. She appealed but her appeal was denied with a statement that "Our conclusion about Lt. Lohrenz's public figure status does not suggest that she was not a good Naval aviator trying to do her job, and it does not penalize her for acting with 'professionalism.'"^[8]

An Accuracy in Media reports others quoting CDR Tom Sobiek, commanding officer of Fighter Squadron VF-124, as saying of the four female pilots in his squadron, "The women are going to graduate regardless of how they performed" and that "the Navy was in a race with the Air Force to get the first female fighter pilot". It quotes Sobiek denying making any such statement. "That is a flat **** lie," he said. "And whoever told you that, if they were under oath, should be taken to task."^[9]

See also

- Modern US Navy carrier air operations
- Dagny Hultgreen (Sister)

References

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 - "Kara Spears Hultgreen, Lieutenant, United States Navy" (<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/hultgrn.htm>). Arlington National Cemetery. Retrieved 2006-07-25.
 - "Photo of Hultgreen's F-14 Tomcat while in a previous squadron" (<http://www.airliners.net/open.file?id=0768943>).

Further reading

- Sally Spears (1998). *Call Sign Revlon: The Life and Death of Navy Fighter Pilot Kara Hultgreen*. Naval Institute Press.

External links

- Kara Hultgreen (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/1786>) at Find a Grave
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