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Photo added by Darri

LT Kara Spears Hultgreen



BIRTH	5 Oct 1965 Greenwich, Fairfield County, Connecticut, USA
DEATH	25 Oct 1994 (aged 29) At Sea
BURIAL	Arlington National Cemetery Arlington, Arlington County, Virginia, USA Show Map
PLOT	Section 60 Site 7710
MEMORIAL ID	1786 · View Source



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US Navy Officer and Naval Aviator. She was the first American woman Fighter Pilot in the US Navy, and was also the first female fighter pilot killed after the Department of Defense Risk Rule (which prohibited women from entering combat units and from performing combat duties) was rescinded in 1991. Born in Greenwich, Connecticut, she moved to San Antonio in 1981, following her parents' divorce. She graduated from Alamo Heights High School, and attended the University of Texas at Austin, majoring in Aerospace Engineering, in the pursuit of her dream to become an astronaut. Believing that her best chance to become an astronaut lay with becoming a Navy pilot first, she joined the Navy, enrolling in the aviation officer candidate school at Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida. Graduating third of seven in her class, she was posted to the Key West Naval Air Station, flying A-6 Intruders, and learning ground attack roles. In late 1991, Congress repealed the combat ban for women, called the Risk Rule, and in 1993, she enrolled in the F-14 Tomcat program at Miramar Naval Air Station, California. After failing her first attempt at carrier qualification, she finally passed on July 24, 1994, becoming the first qualified female F-14 pilot. Assigned to Fighter Squadron VF-213, she prepared with her unit to deploy to the Persian Gulf aboard the Aircraft Carrier, USS Abraham Lincoln. She was considered a skilled pilot, ranking as Average to Above Average in all F-14 qualification tasks. When she wore obvious makeup for a television interview, her call sign changed from "Incredible Hulk" to "Revlon." She died just three months after passing her carrier qualifications, on October 25, 1994, when her F-14 crashed upon making a landing aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln during a routine training mission. Approaching the carrier at too high an altitude, she yawed the aircraft to lose altitude, and when the left engine (of two) suffered a compressor stall, she elected to go to full afterburner on the right engine to gain altitude, while raising the aircraft's nose. This resulted in a full unrecoverable stall and the aircraft began turning over to the left, falling towards the ocean. LT Matthew Klemish, the Radar Intercept Officer in the rear seat, immediately ejected and survived, but a second later, when Hultgreen ejected, the aircraft had turned over, and she was ejected downwards towards the water, killing her instantly. Nineteen days later, both the plane and her body were recovered; she was still strapped to the ejection seat, her parachute failing to deploy

Naval Board of Inquiry found that both engine failure and pilot error were responsible for the loss of the plane and her death. While mechanical problems with the left engine led to the emergency, her actions in slide slipping and failing to properly handle the aircraft led to its crashing. A video tape of the landing showed that she had only 20 seconds, from the moment the engine malfunctioned to her death, indicating how little time was actually available to make critical decisions while landing. At the time, her death was controversial since it was the first death of a female fighter pilot, and many critics argued that she was not qualified for the duty of flying combat aircraft. Since that time, however, over 100 female pilots have qualified and successfully flown fighter aircraft.

Bio by: Kit and Morgan Benson

How famous was LT Kara Spears Hultgreen?

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