

Evolution of Naval Wings

(Breast Insignia)

Naval Aviator Wings

The origin of a distinctive device for Naval Aviators is somewhat obscure, but the idea was undoubtedly influenced by outside forces. It appears that the need for a distinguishing mark was voiced by the aviators themselves, particularly after Army aviators began wearing “badges” in 1913. Other influence outside the naval service also appears to have provided some of the initial impetus.

A review of the records indicates a lack of coordination within the Navy during the process to develop a Naval Aviation device. The dated correspondence of the Bureau of Navigation (BuNav) and the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Aviation Section relating to the “wings” does not coincide with the dated changes to the Uniform Regulations. The change to the Uniform Regulations that first identified the new “wings” was issued before the CNO’s Aviation Section and BuNav had agreed upon a final design. Several separate evolutions occurred in 1917.

A 29 June 1917 letter from the G. F. Hemsley Co., stating that the sender “takes the liberty” of forwarding a design for an aviation cap and collar ornament, may well have started official action. The first official correspondence on the subject appears to have been a CNO letter to BuNav dated 19 July 1917. This letter, which forwarded a suggestion from the G. F. Hemsley Co. for aviator cap and collar ornaments, rejected the ornaments but went on to say that since foreign countries and the U.S. Army had adopted an aviation device, Naval Aviators also should be given “some form of mark or badge to indicate their qualification, in order that they have standing with other aviation services.” The letter, prepared in the Aviation Section of CNO, enclosed a representative design for wings. From that date, the subject was kept alive by the exchange of correspondence concerning the design and production of the insignia by interested firms.

Lieutenant Commander John H. Towers, assigned to the aviation desk under CNO, requested the assistance of Lieutenant Henry Reuterdaahl in designing the Naval Aviator wings. Reuterdaahl played an important part in the design development. He was later assigned as an

artist to record the first transatlantic flight in May 1919, which was originally planned to be made by four NC aircraft. (Only one, the NC-4, completed the crossing—arriving in Plymouth, England, on 31 May.) In a 28 September 1917 letter to Bailey, Banks, and Biddle Company, he recommended simplifying the wings by bolder chasing (engraving) and a reduction in the number of feathers, noting that “most naval ornaments are too fine and not broad enough in character.” He also recommended changes in the anchor and rope and the introduction of a slight curve to conform to the shape of the body. He summarized his remarks by saying, “My idea has been to reduce all corners so that there will be no points which might catch in the clothing.”

Several different designs were proposed and submitted for approval. The sample pins passed through a number of changes. Bronze, the first metal proposed, was quickly rejected in favor of a gold and silver combination. This, in turn, was changed to all silver and finally, in October 1917, all gold was selected. The size changed from over three inches to the final of 2¾ inches. The “U.S.” was dropped from the design and stars on the shield were proposed and rejected as violating the laws of heraldry.

By October 1917 the Bailey, Banks, and Biddle Company took the lead over its competitors and on 24 October submitted its first sample pin. In early November it submitted other samples and was ready to make “prompt delivery of such number of devices as you may desire.” It is believed these various sample pins added to the confusion regarding the existence of official Naval Aviator wings. On the final decision to place an order, the record is obscure but it may have been a BuNav letter to the Supply Officer at NAS Pensacola, Fla., dated 21 November 1917, selecting “the higher priced pin” (\$1.15 each). The company was not named, but it seems fairly certain that it was Bailey, Banks and Biddle. Its letter to BuNav dated 19 December 1917 confirms a telegram stating: “balance aviator insignia shipped tomorrow.”

The first wings, made by Bailey, Banks, and Biddle of Philadelphia, Pa., were received by the Navy in

December 1917 and issued early in the following year. The fact that the first pins were delivered in this month is also confirmed in a 26 December letter from BuNav to NAS Pensacola reporting that the new pins had been received and “will be sent out as soon as they can be engraved to show the Aviator’s number, his name and branch of service.” The Bureau asked the jeweler not to sell the wings to individuals.

The requirement to engrave the aviator’s number posed a problem concerning the precedence list of trained naval aviators. This was solved by the preparation of an aviators’ precedence list, covering numbers 1 through 282, by the CNO Aviation Section. Thus, the development of wings was responsible for the first precedence list and, in addition, was a factor in the later assignment of fractional numbers to many aviators omitted from this first compilation.

When forwarded to BuNav on 19 January 1918, distribution of the first wings could begin. After almost eight years of Naval Aviation and nine months of war, Naval Aviators had wings—a badge of qualification that would set them apart. It seems likely that Commander Towers, senior Naval Aviator in Washington at the time, was an early—if not the earliest—recipient. The engraving of the individual’s name, Naval Aviator number, and branch of service was discontinued sometime during World War I.

The official approval for Naval Aviator wings was announced before a final design had been agreed upon. On 7 September 1917, the Secretary of the Navy approved Change 12 to the 1913 Uniform Regulations. The pertinent portion read: “A Naval Aviator’s device, a winged fowl anchor with the letters ‘U.S.’, is hereby adopted to be worn by qualified Naval Aviators. This device will be issued by the Bureau of Navigation (BuNav) to officers and men of the Navy and Marine Corps who qualify as Naval Aviators, and will be worn on the left breast.”

However, before any such wings were issued, the design was modified by Change 14, approved 12 October 1917 and issued in BuNav Circular Letter 40-17 of 20 November 1917: “The device for Naval Aviators will be a winged fowl anchor, but the letters ‘U.S.’ given in Change in Uniform Regulations No. 12, have been omitted.” Several other changes to the 1913 Uniform Regulations occurred regarding the Naval

Aviator wings before the design was finalized. Uniform Regulations, Change Number 18 of 1 April 1918, states “Naval Aviator’s Device-Device for naval aviators will be a winged fowl anchor, to be worn by qualified naval aviators. This device will be issued . . . and worn on the left breast.” Change number 20 (undated) has the following pertinent information: “Chapter 10 and changes 11, 12, 14, 16, and 18 of Uniform Regulations, 1913, are annulled and in lieu thereof this chapter is substituted: NAVAL AVIATOR’S DEVICE-Device for naval aviators will be a winged fowl anchor, to be worn by qualified naval aviators. This device will be issued by the Bureau of Navigation to officers and men of the Navy and Marine Corps who qualify as naval aviators, and will be worn on the left breast.” Another modification to the 1913 Uniform Regulation was made by Change 29, dated 13 May 1920. In Article 262, under “Naval Aviator’s Device” the title of the paragraph was changed to read “Naval Aviation Insignia” and the first sentence read: “Insignia to be worn by qualified naval aviators and by warrant officers and enlisted men holding certificate of qualification as naval aviation pilots, is a winged fowl anchor.”

The 1922 Uniform Regulations, approved on 20 September 1922, described the Naval Aviator wing design in more detail: “A gold embroidered or bronze gold-plated metal pin, winged, fowl anchor surcharged with a shield $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in height, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches from tip to tip of wings; length of fowl anchor 1 inch.” Except for a reduction in the length of the fowl anchor from 1 to $\frac{7}{8}$ inch, made by Change 1 to the above Regulations, and an elaboration of the description in 1951 which added dimensions for the shield ($\frac{7}{16}$ inch high and at its widest point) and for the width of the anchor ($\frac{1}{16}$ inch at the flukes and $\frac{7}{16}$ at the stock), the original design has changed very little since 1922.

The design pictured below was published by the *Air Service Journal* on 27 September 1917. A short article in the Journal identified it as a Naval Aviator’s Device of gold and silver metal as described by a Change in Uniform Regulations No. 10. It is believed the article may have been referring to Change 12 in the Uniform Regulations which was issued on 7 September 1917. This published design, most likely an artist rendition, also failed to take into account the shield.

This design, published in the Air Service Journal, was never issued as the Naval Aviator wing insignia.



The following artist rendition is most likely the design referenced in Change 12 of Uniform Regulations, 1913, and issued on 7 September 1917.



This contemporary artist rendition was never issued as the Naval Aviator wing insignia.

The photograph below is of the original design authorized by Change 14 of the 1913 Uniform Regulations, approved 12 October 1917, and quoted in BuNav Circular Letter 40-17 of 20 November 1917. This is the officially approved design made by Bailey, Banks and Biddle and issued to Naval Aviators in early 1918.



Original wings issued to Naval Aviators.

The following photographs trace the evolution of the Naval Aviator wings during the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s:



This photograph shows the highly detailed design used during the 1920s and 1930s.



This photograph shows a curved shield design used in the 1930s and 1940s.

During World War II Naval Aviator wings began showing a series of dots, or circles in the upper-part of the design where the wings break. The original design shows these as small feathers, not dots or circles.



This photograph shows the dots or circles in the upper-part of wing.

On most of the Naval Aviator wings there is a small dot or circle on one of the anchor flues. That design is part of the normal structure of an anchor and is called a becket. A becket is an eye with a line attached used for securing the anchor to the side of the ship to keep it from moving when the ship is underway.



This photograph shows the wing design, in gold or a gold finish, that has been the standard design since the 1950s.

Aircrew (Air Crew)/Combat Aircrew Wing Insignia

During World War II a new aviation breast insignia was designed in response to numerous recommendations from the Fleet to recognize the job done by enlisted aircrew personnel flying in combat. In a Navy Department press release of 18 May 1943, the new Air Crew Insignia was described as follows: "The Air Crew insignia consists of silver wings with a center disk surcharged with fouled anchor. Below the disk is a scroll with the legend 'Air Crew,' and above it is a bar on which gold stars can be placed."

The Bureau of Naval Personnel (BuPers) Circular Letter Number 90-43 of 29 May 1943 announced the approval of an Air Crew Insignia, recognizing the air-fighting ability of flight crews. The insignia was intended primarily for enlisted ratings in the flight crews of naval aircraft. However, any commissioned or warrant officer, other than pilots or designated naval aviation observers, who met the qualification require-

ments, were eligible to wear the insignia. The initial requirements for insignia were:

a. Having served, subsequent to 7 December 1941, for a total of three months as a regularly assigned member of the Air Crew of a combatant craft.

- (1) "Combat aircraft" shall be considered as all operating aircraft of the Fleet or Frontier Forces, and excepts utility aircraft which are neither designed nor fitted out for offensive (or defensive) operations.
- (2) The term "regularly assigned member of the Air Crew" shall be interpreted literally, and shall be substantiated by the battle station bill of the unit, under such instructions that may be approved and promulgated by the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

b. Having suffered injuries or other physical impairment, while engaged in combatant operations since 7 December 1941, as a regularly assigned member of a combatant aircraft, which precludes the possibility of fulfillment of the time requirements, stated in subparagraph (a) above, and is recommended by the Commanding Officer of the Unit in which injury or physical impairment was received.

c. Individual combat stars will be authorized by Unit Commanders, in conformance with instructions issued by Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet, to those members of Air Crews who:

- (1) Engage enemy aircraft, singly or in formation.
- (2) Engage armed enemy combatant vessels with bombs, torpedoes, or machine guns.
- (3) Engage in bombing offensive operations against enemy fortified positions.
- (4) A maximum of three combat stars shall be awarded for display on the Air Crew Insignia; combat actions reports in excess of three will be credited only in the record of the individual concerned.

d. Personnel qualified by provisions of subparagraphs (a) and (b) above may wear the Air Crew Insignia permanently.

The above set of requirements for qualification to wear the Air Crew Insignia were modified several times. BuPers Circular Letter Numbers 173-43 of 8 September 1943, 22-44 of 29 January 1944 and 174-44 of 16 June 1944 all make modifications to the qualifications but do not give a detailed description of the insignia.

BuPers Circular Letter Number 395-44, dated 30 December 1944, provided a comprehensive description of the Aircrew Insignia: "The Aircrew Insignia is a silver-plated or silver-color, winged, metal, pin, with gold-color circular shield with surcharged fowl anchor, superimposed on wing roots, with words "AIRCREW" below circular shield; a silver-color bar over the circu-

lar shield with three threaded holes to receive three gold-color combat stars when officially awarded. The insignia will measure two inches from tip to tip of the wings; circle on shield $\frac{3}{16}$ "; total depth of the shield from the top of the circle to the bottom of the shield $\frac{1}{16}$ ". The Uniform Regulations of 2 May 1947 provided the following description of the Aircrew wings: "A silver-plated or silver color, winged, metal pin, with gold circular shield surcharged with fowl anchor, superimposed on wing roots, with word 'AIRCREW' in raised letters on a silver-color background below the circular shield; above the shield there shall be a silver-color scroll; the insignia to measure 2" from tip to tip of the wings; circle on shield $\frac{5}{16}$ " in diameter; total height of the shield and silver background beneath the shield $\frac{1}{16}$ ". The scroll shall be $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide and $\frac{3}{4}$ " long and shall be centered over the wings. Gold stars to a total of three, as merited, shall be mounted on the scroll, necessary holes being pierced to receive them. A silver star may be worn in lieu of three gold stars."



This line drawing depicts an early Aircrew Insignia that was published in the Naval Aviation News magazine in April 1943. It shows the breast insignia without the stars.

In 1958 there was a major change in the Aircrew Insignia. On 10 April 1958 Change 5 to the 1951 Uniform Regulations was issued. The name Aircrew or Air Crew Insignia was redesignated Combat Aircrew Insignia. Besides the redesignation, there were a few minor changes to the breast insignia. The new description of the Combat Aircrew Insignia read: "A silver color, metal pin; winged, with gold color circular shield surcharged with a fowl anchor, superimposed on wing roots; with word 'AIRCREW' in raised letters on a silver background below the shield. Above the shield there shall be a silver color scroll. The insignia shall measure 2" from tip to tip of wings; the circular shield shall be $\frac{3}{8}$ " in diameter; height of anchor $\frac{1}{4}$ " with other dimensions proportionate; total height of shield and silver background beneath $\frac{1}{16}$ "; the scroll shall be $\frac{3}{4}$ " long and $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide; centered over the shield, each end to rest on top of wings. Gold stars of a size to be inscribed in a circle $\frac{1}{8}$ " in diameter, to a total of three, as merited, shall be mounted on the scroll, necessary holes being pierced to receive them.

A silver star may be worn in lieu of three gold stars.” Following the 1958 redesignation of the Air Crew insignia to Combat Aircrew Insignia, the Navy continued to allow the wearing of the redesignated Combat Aircrew Insignia for those Navy individuals who had previously been authorized to wear the device.



The Combat Aircrew Insignia as depicted in the post-1958 time frame.

With the establishment of a separate Aircrew Wing insignia the Navy no longer awarded or issued the Combat Aircrew Wing Insignia. The 1978 U.S. Navy Uniform Regulations removed the Combat Aircrew insignia from the authorized list of aviation breast insignia. However, the Marine Corps continued to use the Combat Aircrew Insignia and awarded the wings to personnel who met the qualification requirements.

A Bureau of Naval Personnel Memorandum, approved by Chief of Naval Operations on 7 November 1994, authorized Navy personnel, who flew as aircrew with Marine Corps units in combat, to wear the Combat Aircrew wings. However, the Combat Aircrew wings are not authorized for Navy personnel flying in combat aboard Navy aircraft. They are only authorized to wear the Aircrew wings. The appropriate change was made to the Navy Uniform Regulations.

Aircrew Insignia Wings

Change 5 to the 1951 Uniform Regulations, dated 10 April 1958, redesignated the Aircrew Insignia to Combat Aircrew Insignia and also established a new Aircrew Insignia. The new Aircrew Insignia was patterned along the basic lines of the Naval Aviation Observer insignia. Description for the new Aircrew insignia was: “Shall be a gold color metal pin; winged, with a circular center design and anchor upon which the block letters AC are superimposed. Width between tips of wings shall be 2¾”; circle diameter shall be ¾”; height of anchor shall be ½” with other dimension proportionate.”

On 11 August 1965, BuPers Notice 1020 authorized the wearing of the Aircrew Breast Insignia on a permanent basis. From the establishment of the Aircrew



The Aircrew Insignia approved in 1958.

Insignia in 1958 and until 1965, the insignia could only be worn by qualified personnel serving in an aircrew position. If an individual was assigned to a shore billet and not involved in aircrew duties, then they were not authorized to wear the insignia. Under the new guidance, a person who qualified to wear the Aircrew Insignia could continue to wear the breast device at anytime during their military service or unless the person was disqualified for aircrew duty.

Naval Aviation Experimental Psychologists and Naval Aviation Physiologists Wings

On 12 April 1967, the Under Secretary of the Navy approved a change to the Navy Uniform Regulations that authorized a new wing insignia for Aviation Experimental Psychologists and Aviation Physiologists. In February 1966, Aviation Experimental Psychologists and Aviation Physiologists were designated as crew members and ordered to duty involving flying. These individuals were assigned to duties such as in-flight analysis of human performance in fleet and training operations covering a myriad of weapons systems and tactics, providing extensive training for all aircrew personnel in airborne protective equipment and egress systems, and test and evaluation of new and improved aircraft systems.

The gold wings of the Naval Aviation Experimental Psychologists and Naval Aviation Physiologists are similar to those worn by Flight Surgeons, except the gold oak leaf does not have the acorn. The photo below shows the wings of the Naval Aviation Experimental Psychologists and Naval Aviation Physiologists.



Photograph of Naval Aviation Experimental Psychologists and Physiologists Wings.

Naval Aviation Supply Wings

Plans began in 1982 for the establishment of a Naval Aviation Supply Officer Program and the authorization for a breast insignia for qualifying Supply Corps officers. On 8 May 1984, during the 73rd annual Aviation Ball, the first Naval Aviation Supply wings were presented by Vice Admiral Robert F. Schoultz, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air Warfare), to Vice Admiral Eugene A. Grinstead, Jr., SC, USN; Rear Admiral Andrew A. Giordano, SC, USN (Ret); and Commodore John H. Ruehlin, SC, USN, Commanding Officer, Aviation Supply Office, Philadelphia, Pa.

Officers qualified to wear the Naval Aviation Supply wings must complete a demanding qualification program which required approximately 350 hours of study and practical experience. They must also pass an oral examination administered by supply and aviation maintenance officers at their operating sites.

The Naval Aviation Supply wings consist of the traditional Naval Aviator wing style with an oak leaf cluster in the center. The photograph below is a line drawing depicting the wings.



A line drawing of the Naval Aviation Supply Wings.

Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist Wings

In order to recognize enlisted personnel serving in Naval Aviation who were not aircrew members, a new program and set of wings was established. The Operational Navy Instruction (OPNAVINST) 1412.5 of 19 March 1980 established the Enlisted Aviation Warfare Qualification Program and the new wing insignia. The Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist wings are issued to enlisted personnel who acquired the specific professional skills, knowledge, and military experience that resulted in unique qualification for service in the aviation activities of the Navy.

The 1981 Uniform Regulations described the Aviation Warfare wings as follows: "A silver embroidered or silver color metal pin (for enlisted); winged, with a central device consisting of a shield with an anchor superimposed thereon and a scroll at the bottom of the insignia."



Photograph of Naval Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist Wings.

Balloon Pilot Wing Insignia

The exact date the Balloon Pilot wing device was approved is not clear. However, the description of the wing first appeared in the 1922 Uniform Regulations of 20 September 1922. In this Uniform Regulation the following statement appears: "Enlisted men holding certificates of qualification as balloon pilots shall wear the same insignia as in paragraph (a) but with the right wing removed." Paragraph (a) was a description of the Naval Aviator wings. There were no changes between 1922 and 1947. In the 1947 Uniform Regulations of 2 May 1947, the words "Enlisted men" are replaced by "Persons" in the above statement. The 1978 U.S. Navy Uniform Regulations removed the Balloon Pilot insignia from the authorized list of aviation breast insignia.



This photograph shows the Balloon Pilot Wings used between 1922 and 1978.

Flight Nurse Wing Insignia

A BuPers Circular Letter Number 86-45 of 30 March 1945 announced the Secretary of the Navy had approved an insignia for naval flight nurses on 15 March 1945. The change to the 1941 Uniform Regulations read as follows: "Aviation Insignia, Naval Flight Nurses—Nurses who have been designated as Naval Flight Nurses shall wear the following insignia: Gold-plated metal pin, wings, with slightly convex oval crest with appropriate embossed rounded edge and scroll. The central device shall be surcharged with gold anchor, gold spread oak leaf and silver acorn, symbol of the Nurse Corps insignia. The insignia shall measure 2" from tip to tip of the wings; oval crest $\frac{3}{16}$ " in vertical

dimension and $\frac{7}{16}$ " in width; oak leaf $\frac{13}{32}$ " in length, $\frac{7}{32}$ " in width, to be diagonally mounted surcharged on the anchor; silver acorn $\frac{1}{8}$ " in length surmounted on oak leaf." The insignia described above was to be worn until the designation "Flight Nurse" was revoked.

On 11 August 1952, the Secretary of the Navy ap-



This photograph shows the Flight Nurse Wings as approved in 1945.

proved a revision to the Flight Nurse Insignia. The BuPers Change Memo 1-2 of 6 February 1953 described the new Flight Nurse Insignia as: "The insignia shall consist of a gold color metal pin of the same design as that prescribed for Flight Surgeons . . . except that the acorn shall be omitted, and the width between wing tips shall be 2"; oval width $\frac{15}{32}$ " vertical and $\frac{5}{16}$ " horizontal axis; thickness at leaf center, $\frac{1}{8}$."

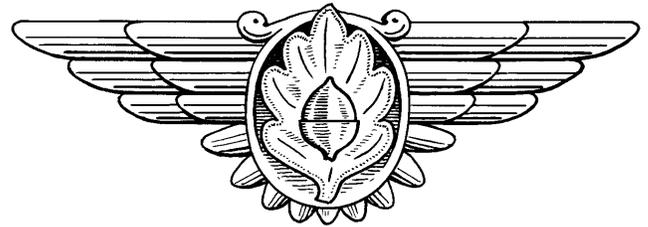


This line drawing depicts the Flight Nurse Wing Insignia that was approved in 1952.

Flight Surgeon Wing Insignia

On 18 May 1942, the Chief of Naval Personnel approved an insignia for Naval Flight Surgeons. A BuPers Circular Letter Number 107-42 of 29 July 1942 announced changes to the 1941 Uniform Regulations. These changes, as approved by the Secretary of the Navy, included the establishment of the new Flight Surgeon wings. The change to the Uniform Regulations read as follows: "Officers of the Medical Corps who have qualified as Naval Flight Surgeons shall wear the following insignia on the left breast: A gold plated metal pin, winged, with slightly convex oval crest, with appropriate embossed rounded edge and scroll. The central device to be surcharged with gold oak leaf and silver acorn,

symbol of Medical Corps insignia. The metal pin shall be of dull finish. Dimensions: $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches between wing tips, central device 1 inch in vertical dimension to lower edge of fringe. Lateral width of oval crest, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. Oak leaf $\frac{7}{8}$ inch in length, $\frac{9}{16}$ inch in width, to be vertically mounted surcharged on oval. Silver acorn $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in length surmounted on oak leaf." A Navy Press Release issued a few days earlier, on 27 July 1942, gave the following description: "It will consist of wings which are a modification of the Perian Feroher with a central design consisting of convex oval crest with appropriate scroll and rounded edge. The central device is to be surcharged with the gold leaf and silver acorn that serves as the Medical Corps symbol."



This line drawing depicts the Flight Surgeon Wings approved in 1942.

On 11 August 1952, the Secretary of the Navy approved a major revision to the Flight Surgeon wings. The new design superimposed the Medical Corps device (gold oak leaf and silver acorn) on the style of wings used for the Naval Aviator wing insignia. BuPers Memo 1-2 of 6 February 1953 and the change to the 1951 Uniform Regulations describes the new design for Flight Surgeon wings as follows: "A gold embroidered or gold color metal pin; winged; with an oval center design upon which the Medical Corps device (a gold oak leaf and silver acorn) is superimposed. Width between tips of wings shall be $2\frac{3}{4}$ "; oval with $\frac{5}{8}$ " vertical and $\frac{13}{32}$ " horizontal axis; thickness with acorn $\frac{3}{16}$ "; acorn and cup $\frac{7}{32}$ " long; acorn width $\frac{1}{8}$ "; cup depth $1\frac{1}{16}$ "; cup width $\frac{11}{64}$."



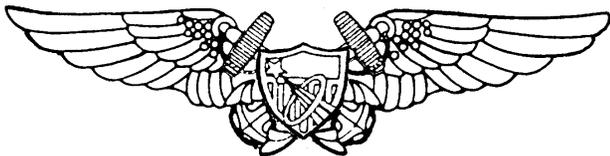
This photograph shows the Flight Surgeon Wings that were approved in 1952.

Naval Astronaut (Naval Flight Officer) Wings

The 1984 Uniform Regulations, issued on 6 February 1984, authorized the wearing of the new Naval Astronaut (Naval Flight Officer) wings. The regulations described the wings as follows: "*Naval Astronaut (NFO) Insignia*. A gold embroidered or solid gold metal pin; winged and containing a shooting star with an elliptical ring surrounding the trailing shafts; superimposed diagonally from bottom right to top left, on the shield of the traditional Naval Flight Officer's Wings."

A Naval Flight Officer or an active duty officer qualified as a Naval Astronaut (Specialist), who is not a Navy pilot or NFO, may wear the Naval Astronaut (NFO) Wings if they are designated by the CNO or Commandant of the Marine Corps after meeting the following qualifications:

- a. Currently on flying status as a Naval Flight Officer or a payload specialist as a shuttle astronaut (but not qualified as a Navy Pilot or NFO) in either the Navy, Marine Corps, or their Reserve components.
- b. Trained, qualified, and certified to fly as a mission or payload specialist in powered vehicles designed for flight above 50 miles from the earth's surface.
- c. Have completed a minimum of one flight as a mission or payload specialist aboard an extraterrestrial vehicle in a flight above 50 miles from the earth's surface.



The line drawing shows the Naval Astronaut (NFO) Wings.

Naval Astronaut (Pilot) Wings

The Navy's first Naval Astronaut (Pilot) wings were presented to Commander Alan B. Shepard, Jr., on 6 December 1961 by the Chief of Naval Operations Admiral George W. Anderson. On 18 December 1962, the Secretary of the Navy officially approved the Uniform Board's recommendation to include a description and photograph of the Naval Astronaut wing insignia in the 1959 Uniform Regulations. The Naval Astronaut (Pilot) wings are identical to the Navy Pilot wings with the addition of a shooting star superimposed over the shield. The shooting star symbolized the astronaut's spatial environment.

The Naval Military Personnel Manual states the criteria for designation as a Naval Astronaut (Pilot). A

Naval Pilot may wear the Naval Astronaut (Pilot) wings upon designation by the CNO or Commandant of the Marine Corps after meeting the following qualifications:

- a. Currently on flying status as a Naval Pilot in either the Navy, Marine Corps, or their Reserve components.
- b. Trained, qualified, and certified to fly a powered vehicle designed for flight above 50 miles from the earth's surface.
- c. Completed a minimum of one flight as a pilot or mission specialist aboard an extraterrestrial vehicle in a flight above 50 miles from the earth's surface.

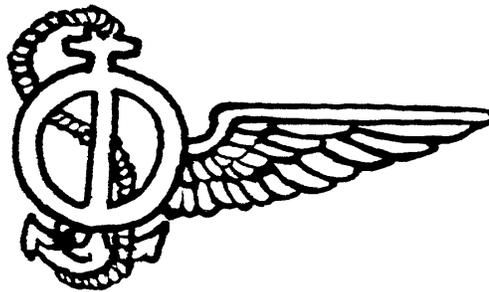


The photograph shows the Naval Astronaut (Pilot) Wings that were first presented in 1961.

Naval Aviation Observer Wings

The Naval Aviation Observer (NAO) designation had its origin in an act of Congress on 12 July 1921, which created the Bureau of Aeronautics and provided that its chief qualify within one year of his appointment as an "aircraft pilot or observer." The functions and qualifications for an observer were first defined on 27 March 1922; on 17 June of the same year, Rear Admiral William A. Moffett became the first to qualify for the designation as a Naval Aviation Observer.

The 1922 Uniform Regulations, approved 20 September, provided that officers designated as Naval Aviation Observer wear the same insignia as that worn by Naval Aviators, except with the right wing and shield removed and an "O" superimposed on the fowl anchor.



The line drawing is the first Naval Aviation Observer Wing Insignia. It was used by the Navy from 1922 to January 1927.

A 26 January 1927 change to the 1922 Uniform Regulations (Change Number 3) modified the Naval Aviation Observer design and changed it to the same insignia worn by Naval Aviators except that it was to be in silver.



Between January 1927 and October 1929 the design of Naval Aviation Observer Wings was the same as Naval Aviator Wings except the observer wings were silver, not gold like the Naval Aviator.

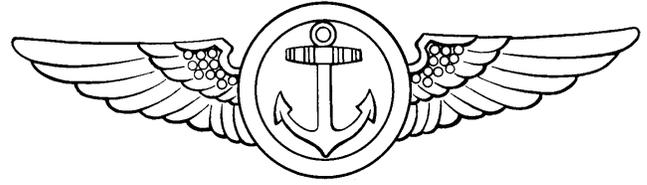
Bureau of Navigation Circular Letter 71-29 of 19 October 1929 (Change Number 7 to the 1922 Uniform Regulations) directed another change to the Naval Aviation Observer wings. This letter described the new design as: "...an insignia the same as for naval aviators as to gold wings, but that the central device shall be an 'O' circumscribing an erect plain anchor, both in silver. The 'O' and anchor to be in bold relief, the center of the 'O' being filled in gold." The 1941 Uniform Regulations, of 31 May 1941, repeated the previous description and added dimensions as follows: "... outer diameter of 'O' shall be $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, inner diameter $\frac{5}{16}$ inch. Height of anchor shall be $\frac{1}{2}$ inch."



This photograph of Naval Aviation Observer Wings is the type that has been used by the Navy between 1929 to 1968.

The Naval Aviation Observer wings made the same transition that occurred to the Naval Aviator wings during World War II. A change to the 1951 Uniform Regulations, issued on 6 February 1953 as BuPers Change Memorandum 1-2, directed the wing style used by the Naval Aviator breast insignia be adopted for the Naval Aviation Observer insignia. Hence, the series of dots, or circles were incorporated into the upper-part of the design where the wings break.

The following is a detailed description of the Naval Aviation Observer wings from the Uniform Regulations of 6 April 1959: "A gold embroidered or gold color metal pin, winged, with a central device consisting of



The Naval Aviation Observer Wings showing the dots in the upper-part of the wing.

an O circumscribing an erect, plain anchor, both in silver; the O and the anchor to be in bold relief, the center of the O being filled with gold. The insignia shall measure $2\frac{3}{4}$ " between wing tips; outer diameter of O shall be $\frac{3}{4}$ "; inner diameter of O shall be $\frac{5}{16}$ "; height of anchor shall be $\frac{1}{2}$ " with other dimensions proportionate."

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Naval Aviation Observer wings were worn by officers who were Radar Intercept Operators (RIOs), Bombardier/Navigators (BNs), and Airborne Electronic Countermeasures Operators (AECMs). They were also worn by enlisted personnel who were qualified Navigators, Airborne Electronic Countermeasures Operators, Airborne Radio Operators, VG Jet Aircraft Flight Engineers and qualified Observers.

On 18 July 1968, the CNO approved a new qualification breast insignia for Navy and Marine Corps personnel designated as Naval Flight Officers (NFOs). BuPers Notice 1020 of 24 August 1968 issued the change to the Uniform Regulations (NavPers 15665) for the new Naval Flight Officer wings: "This new insignia will replace the Naval Aviation Observer insignia currently worn by Naval Flight Officers and will be authorized for wear upon source availability. The Naval Aviation Observer insignia will become obsolete after 31 December 1968." This ended the old Naval Aviation Observer wings for a short period of time. However, they were destined for continued use by Naval Aviation.

Naval Aviation Observer and Flight Meteorologist Wings

On 21 May 1969, the CNO approved the use of the Naval Aviation Observer wings for wear by Flight Meteorologists and for those officers formerly entitled but not selected as Naval Flight Officers. This change was incorporated into the 1959 Uniform Regulations by Bureau of Personnel Notice 1020 of 16 June 1969.

The 1969 Uniform Regulations, issued on 17 October 1969, did not mention the Flight Meteorologist insignia. However, the 1975 Uniform Regulations, which replaced the 1969 edition, listed

the Naval Aviation Observers and Flight Meteorologist wings. The 1975 regulations states: “Naval Aviation Observer and Flight Meteorologist Insignia. A gold embroidered or gold color metal pin; winged, with a central device consisting of an O circumscribing an erect, plan anchor, both in silver; the O and the anchor to be in bold relief, the center of the O being filled with gold. The embroidered device shall be on a background to match the color of the uniform on which worn.”

Qualifications to wear the Naval Aviation Observer wings, the second oldest wings in the Navy, are outlined in the Naval Military Personnel Manual. Although not aeronautically designated, the following types of officers are authorized to wear NAO wings upon initial qualification: Flight Meteorology and Oceanography Officer; Special Evaluator (officers and warrant officers from the cryptologic community); Aviation Operations Limited Duty Officer (632X); Aviation Operations Technicain Warrant Officer (732X); and other officers assigned by the Chief of Naval Personnel to duty involving flying as technical observers and airborne command post crew members.

The Marine Corps authorized the use of the old Naval Aviation Observer wings for personnel completing the Naval Aviation Observer School at Marine Corps Air Station New River. Qualified aerial observers were to provide commanders with information of intelligence value not readily available from normal ground sources regarding enemy forces; procure information concerning terrain, and to supplement operational information of friendly forces; direct supporting fires for ground forces to include artillery, naval gunfire, and close air support; to perform utility and liaison missions as directed from an observation aircraft and to advise commanders of ground units on matters pertaining to aerial observation.

See the section on Naval Aviation Observer Wings for a photograph of the device.

Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) Wings

BuPers Circular Letter 88-45 of 31 March 1945 announced the Secretary of the Navy had approved an insignia for Naval Aviation Observers (Navigation) on 30 March 1945. It revised the 1941 Uniform Regulations by adding the following: “Officers designated as Naval Aviation Observers (Navigation) by the Chief of Naval Personnel shall wear the following insignia: A gold-embroidered or bronze gold-plated metal pin, winged, with silver center device superimposed upon crossed gold-color fowl anchors. The centerpiece shall have superimposed upon it, in bold relief and in gold color, one gold disc with eight

intercardinal points of the compass; superimposed upon this gold disc will be a second disc, in bold relief and in gold color, with four cardinal points and four intercardinal points of the compass. The insignia shall measure $2\frac{3}{4}$ " from tip to tip of wings; silver center device shall be approximately $\frac{1}{32}$ " in diameter; crossed fowl anchors shall be of a size to be inscribed in a circle $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter; the inner gold disc shall be approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ " in diameter, and the outer gold disc shall be approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter. Naval Aviators and Naval Aviation Observers will not wear the Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) insignia.”

A Bureau of Naval Personnel letter dated 18 March 1947 abolished the Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) insignia and authorized all officers designated as Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) to wear the same insignia as that worn by Naval Aviation Observers.



The photo shows the Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) Wing insignia used by the Navy for the period 1945–1947.

Naval Aviation Observers (Radar) Wings

The Secretary of the Navy approved the Naval Aviation Observer (Radar) insignia on 29 August 1945. BuPers Circular Letter Number 313-45 of 17 October 1945 announced the insignia and a subsequent change was made to the 1941 Uniform Regulations. The letter described the wings as follows: “Naval Aviation Observers (Radar) shall wear a gold embroidered or bronze gold-plated metal pin, winged, with silver center device superimposed upon crossed gold-color fowl anchors. The center piece shall have superimposed upon it, in bold relief and in gold color, a symbolic radar manifestation. The insignia shall measure $2\frac{3}{4}$ " from tip to tip of wings; silver center device shall be approximately $\frac{1}{32}$ " in diameter; crossed fowl anchors shall be of a size to be inscribed in a circle $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter. Naval Aviation Observers (Radar) shall not wear any other aviation breast insignia.”

A Bureau of Naval Personnel letter dated 18 March 1947 abolished the Naval Aviation Observers (Radar) insignia, and authorized all officers designated as Naval Aviation Observers (Radar) to wear the same insignia prescribed for Naval Aviation Observers.



The photograph shows the Naval Aviation Observers (Radar) Wing insignia used by the Navy for the period 1945–1947.

Naval Aviation Observers (Tactical) Wing

On 19 January 1946, the Secretary of the Navy approved the Naval Aviation Observers (Tactical) wings for Navy and Marine Corps officers performing duty as gunfire and artillery spotters and general liaison operations. A BuPers Circular Letter Number 28-46 of 5 February 1946 changed the 1941 Uniform Regulations to reflect that Naval Aviation Observers (Tactical) would wear a device similar to the Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) insignia except “the centerpiece shall have two crossed guns superimposed upon it, in bold relief and in gold color.” The PuPers letter provided the following description: “Naval Aviation Observers (Tactical) shall wear a gold embroidered or bronze gold-plated metal pin, winged, with silver center device superimposed upon crossed gold-color fowl anchors. The center piece shall have two crossed guns superimposed upon it, in bold relief and in gold color. The insignia shall measure $2\frac{3}{4}$ ” from tip to tip of wings; silver center device shall be approximately $\frac{15}{32}$ ” in diameter; crossed fowl anchors shall be of a size to be inscribed in a circle $\frac{3}{4}$ ” in diameter and the crossed guns shall be of a size to be inscribed in a circle $\frac{13}{32}$ ” in diameter.”

A Bureau of Naval Personnel letter dated 18 March 1947 abolished the Naval Aviation Observers (Tactical) insignia and authorized all officers designated as Naval Aviation Observers (Tactical) to wear the same insignia prescribed for Naval Aviation Observers.



The photograph shows the Naval Aviation Observers (Tactical) Wing insignia used by the Navy for the period 1946–1947.

Naval Aviation Observer (Aerology)

BuPers Circular Letter Number 87-47 of 15 May 1947 established the designation Naval Aviation Observer (Aerology). Besides establishing the qualifications necessary to be designated a Naval Aviation Observer (Aerology), the circular letter also stated the following: “Officers designated naval aviation observers (aerology) by the Chief of Naval Personnel will be authorized to wear the insignia already established for naval aviation observers . . .” BuPers letter (Pers-329-MEB A2-3) of 24 February 1948 issued Change 1 to the 1947 Uniform Regulations and states: “*Naval Aviation Observer Insignia*. Officers who have been designated as naval aviation observers, Naval Aviation Observers (Aerology), Naval Aviation Observers (Navigation), Naval Aviation Observers (Radar), or Naval Aviation Observers (Tactical) by the Chief of Naval Personnel shall wear the following insignia: A gold embroidered or bronze gold-plated metal pin, winged, with a central device consisting of an “O” circumscribing an erect, plan anchor, both in silver; the “O” and the anchor to be in bold relief, the center of the “O” being filled with gold. The insignia shall measure $2\frac{3}{4}$ ” between wing tips; the outer diameter of the “O” shall be $\frac{3}{4}$ ”, the inner diameter $\frac{5}{16}$ ”; height of anchor shall be $\frac{1}{2}$ ”. The embroidered device shall be on a background to match the color of the uniform.” See the Naval Aviation Observer Wing section for a photograph of the Naval Aviation Observer Wing.

Naval Flight Officer Wings

On 8 February 1965, a change to Bureau of Personnel Instruction 1210.4C authorized a new designator and name, Naval Flight Officer (NFO). The new designator was appropriate for “an unrestricted line officer, a member of the aeronautical organization . . . who may fill any billet not requiring actual control knowledge of an aircraft.” Eight subspecialties were available at the time: bombardier, controller, electronic countermeasures evaluator, navigator, interceptor, photographer-navigator, tactical coordinator and reconnaissance navigator. The new NFOs continued wearing the Naval Aviation Observer wings.

On 18 July 1968, the CNO approved a new qualification breast insignia for Navy and Marine Corps personnel designated as Naval Flight Officers (NFOs). BuPers Notice 1020 of 24 August 1968 changed the Uniform Regulations (NAVPers 15665). The notice stated: “This new insignia will replace the Naval Aviation Observer insignia currently worn by Naval Flight Officers and will be authorized for wear upon source availability. The Naval Aviation Observer insignia will become obsolete after 31 December 1968.” In this change to the Uniform Regulations (NAVPERS

15665) all references to Naval Aviation Observers were changed to Naval Flight Officer. Article 0157.2d. of the Uniform Regulations read: "*Naval Flight Officer Insignia*. A gold embroidered or gold color metal pin; winged, with a central device consisting of a shield superimposed on a set of small, crossed, fouled anchors. The embroidered device shall be on a background to match the color of the uniform on which worn."

The Naval Flight Officer wings were approved to



The photograph shows the Naval Flight Officer wings approved in 1968.

keep pace with the changes to the designators and new titles for personnel that had been designated Naval Aviation Observers. Flight officers are more closely aligned with pilots as opposed to meteorologists and other scientists. Also, the flying officer/crewmen were line officers who were allowed to compete for and earn any command assignment for which they qualify by demonstrated performance and ability, with the exception of a billet that required actual control knowledge of an aircraft. Hence, Naval Flight Officers were line officers who could qualify for command of a ship or carrier or commanding officer of a squadron just like Naval Aviators.

Navy and Marine Corps Parachutist Wing Insignia

BuPers Notice 1020 of 12 July 1963 issued information on a change to the 1959 Uniform Regulations concerning the adoption of a new wing insignia for Navy and Marine Corps Parachutists. This notice stated: "The old parachutist insignia . . . shall be renamed the 'Basic Parachutist Insignia' in conformance with the Army and Air Force nomenclature. The subject insignia shall be referred to as the 'Navy and Marine Corps Parachutist Insignia'." The description of the insignia was as follows: "A gold embroidered (Navy only) or gold-colored metal pin, same as that provided for Naval Aviator's insignia, except that a gold-colored open parachute shall be centered on the wings vice the shield and fowl anchor; width of the wings from tip to tip shall be 2¾"; width of the parachute ½" at the widest part; length of the parachute from top to bottom 1⅜"."

General qualifications for wearing the Navy and Marine Corps Parachutist Wings were:

(1) Have previously qualified for the Basic Parachutist insignia by completing formal parachutist training at an Armed Services installation.

(2) Have completed a minimum of five additional parachute jumps, under competent orders, with a Navy or Marine Corps organization whose mission includes parachute jumping.

Once a person qualified for the Navy and Marine Corps Parachutist insignia it will be worn in lieu of the Basic Parachutist insignia.



The photograph shows the Navy and Marine Corps Parachutist insignia approved in 1963.

Basic Parachutist Wing Insignia

The first mention of a parachutist designation and qualification badge is found in a change to the 1941 Uniform Regulations issued by a BuNav Circular Letter Number 51-42 of 31 March 1942. The circular letter stated: "The following Parachute Regulations, having been approved by the Secretary of the Navy on 6 February 1942, are published herewith for the information of all concerned:

1. (2) **DESIGNATION:** The designation (ratings) of 'Parachutist' and 'Student Parachutist' are hereby established for officers, warrant officers, and enlisted men of the Navy and Marine Corps of the United States, which designations (ratings) shall be in addition to such military or Naval ratings or ranks as are now or may hereafter be authorized by law.

(5) **RETENTION OF DESIGNATION AS PARACHUTIST OR STUDENT PARACHUTIST:** An officer, warrant officer or enlisted man of the Navy . . . who has attained a designation (rating) as a parachutist or student parachutis . . . provided, that officers, warrant officers, and enlisted men . . . who have been designated as parachutists pursuant to these regulations are authorized to retain permanently and to wear such qualification badge as parachutists as may be prescribed by competent authority."

However, the Secretary of the Navy did not authorize the parachutist badge, even though the above change to the 1941 Uniform Regulation references the wearing of such a qualification badge. There is no de-

scription of a parachutist insignia until January 1947. A BuPers letter (Pers-329-MEB A2-3) of 17 January 1947 issued changes to the 1941 Uniform Regulations as approved by the Secretary of the Navy. This letter states: "(j) A parachutist insignia, enclosure (B), has been authorized for enlisted personnel who have been designated as parachutists in accordance with the Bureau of Naval Personnel Manual. This insignia is the same as the parachutist insignia authorized by the Marine Corps and the Army. 2. The wearing of the parachutist insignia, enclosure (B), by officers and warrant officers who have been designated as parachutists in accordance with the Bureau of Naval Personnel Manual has also been authorized. Pending a revision of Chapters II and III, U.S. Navy Uniform Regulations, 1941, officers and warrant officers who are eligible to wear the parachutist insignia may do so under similar regulations contained in Art. 8-8 of enclosure (A)." A 14 February 1947 letter from BuPers issued the new Chapter II to the 1941 Uniform Regulations and included the parachutist insignia.

The 1951 Uniform Regulations described the Parachutist insignia as follows: "An open parachute, in silver, flanked on each side by wings, curved upward; the device to be 1½" wide and ¾" high." A BuPers Notice 1020 of 12 July 1963 issued information on a change to the 1959 Uniform Regulations concerning the adoption of a new wing insignia for Navy and Marine Corps Parachutists. This notice stated: "The old

parachutist insignia . . . shall be renamed the 'Basic Parachutist Insignia' in conformance with the Army and Air Force nomenclature."



Photograph of Basic Parachutist insignia.

Marine Aerial Navigator Wing

In June 1976, the Marine Corps approved the use of the old World War II Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) wings for use by Marine Corps personnel who qualified as Marine Aerial Navigators. See the section on Naval Aviation Observer (Navigation) wings for a description and photograph of the wings.

Marine Aerial Observer Wing

See the section on Naval Aviation Observer and Flight Meteorologist Wings. These are the wings worn by Marine Aerial Observers.



A Bat missile on the wing of a Navy Privateer, USN-701606.



A Loon missile being launched from Carbonero (SS 337), USN-402800.