

Foreword

On a cool fall afternoon in 1976, while assisting the Spanish Navy in training carrier pilots aboard the light fleet carrier SNS *Dedalo*, I met retired Rear Admiral Joseph “Joe” Coleman on the pier and escorted him aboard the ship. *Dedalo*, formerly the USS *Cabot* (CVL-28) had just arrived at Mayport, Florida, from Spain, to pick up AV-8A Harriers, pilots, maintainers, and equipment for transport home.

Passing through the quarterdeck and into the hangar bay, Admiral Coleman stopped, looked around, and commented that this was the cleanest ship he had ever seen. That the ship was so clean was, perhaps, one reason the USS *Cabot* served both the American and Spanish navies for so many years as a CVL. It was kept in great shape by its crews. Admiral Coleman had been the commanding officer of the attack carrier USS *Ranger* (CV-61) during Vietnam some years earlier. He was a stickler for detail!

The CVL was somewhat of an unsung hero of WWII, Korea, and beyond. Several took heavy damage in combat but usually in the shadow of the large carriers. The fact that several nations possessed light carriers was a testament to their effectiveness and efficiency. During my time with the *Dedalo*, I was assigned a stateroom that had in it a plaque commemorating those who had died from a Kamikaze attack on 25 November 1944. That stateroom always inspired a feeling of reverence and quiet.

Operations from the deck of the *Dedalo* were not unlike those of a wartime CVL. Harriers used a deck run to get airborne as did the aircraft of earlier days. However, landings were always vertical because of the aircraft design and there were no arresting wires on the deck. Flying off the short-deck, *Dedalo* gave pilots an appreciation for what Corsair and Hellcat pilots faced in earlier times. The missions were the same: fighter, attack, and reconnaissance. Helicopters were also aboard the *Dedalo* for Search and Rescue (SAR), ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare), and transport.

As one of the last pilots to fly from a CVL, I understood why the *Dedalo*, as a light carrier, was tailored for the Spanish Navy mission of coastal protection. The ship was maneuverable, relatively quick, and carried a solid mix of mission-capable aircraft for rapid launch, deployment, and recovery.

During this same time frame of the 1970s, the US Navy was evaluating less-expensive, small-deck carriers, known at the time as the

Sea Control ship. The USS *Guam* (LPH-9) was the platform used in the trials. The idea being that, with VSTOL (Vertical Take-Off and Landing) aircraft on a small deck, an expensive attack carrier could be better deployed elsewhere. This vision never came to complete fruition but, due to VSTOL aircraft such as the AV-8A Harrier and F-35 Lightning II, several classes of aviation ships provide that capability today.

Unknown in the 1940s and 1950s, the CVL would become the genesis of smaller deck, multi-mission aviation ships we see today from several countries. With missions of jets and helicopters ranging from fighter, attack, reconnaissance, ASW, transport, and SAR, these descendants of the light carrier have become front line warships of today.

CDR Bruhn has provided an extremely well researched and written account of multi-nation CVL operations during the Korean War. His accounts of aviators in Dog Fights and Bombing attacks are even more fascinating because David is not an aviator, yet he captures the exhilaration of such flying. This book belongs in both your aircraft and ship collections.

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