

Dictionary of American Naval Aviation Squadrons

Volume 2

The History of VP, VPB, VP(HL) and VP(AM) Squadrons

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First VP-40

Lineage

Established as Patrol Squadron FIFTY FIVE (VP-55) on 1 August 1940.

Redesignated Patrol Squadron SEVENTY FOUR (VP-74) on 1 July 1941.

Redesignated Patrol Bombing Squadron SEVENTY FOUR (VPB-74) on 1 October 1944.

Redesignated Patrol Squadron SEVENTY FOUR (VP-74) on 15 May 1946.

Redesignated Medium Patrol Squadron (Seaplane) TEN (VP-MS-10) on 15 November 1946.

Redesignated Patrol Squadron FORTY (VP-40) on 1 September 1948.

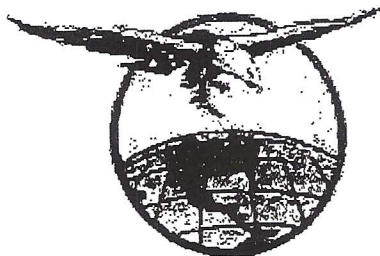
Disestablished on 25 January 1950.

REDESIGNATED PATROL SQUADRON FORTY (VP-40) ON 20 JANUARY 1951.
Squadron Insignia and Nickname

The first insignia for the squadron was submitted by VP-74 and approved BuAer on 15 January 1942. The circular design encompassed a soaring eagle above an oval globe. Colors: field, sky blue; border, yellow, royal blue and scarlet; eagle, black body, lavender wings, white head, yellow eye, yellow feet, red claws; oval globe had dark green water and olive green continents.



This insignia is the first version approved in January 1942.



This is the revised insignia approved in November 1944. The only difference between this design and the earlier squadron insignia is the highlighting of the North American continent.

A revision of the original insignia was submitted by VPB-74 and approved by CNO on 11 November 1944. It differed from the original only in the positioning of the continents of the globe to emphasize the lower

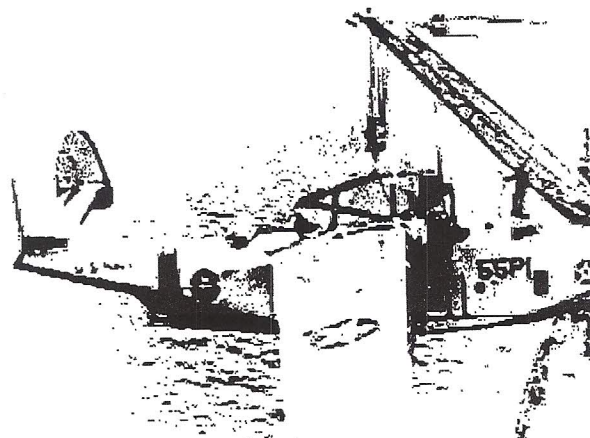
portion of the North American continent. This insignia remained in use until the squadron's disestablishment.
Nickname: None on record.

Chronology of Significant Events

1 Aug 1940: VP-55 was established at NAS Norfolk, Va., under the administrative control of PatWing-5 as a seaplane patrol squadron destined for duty with the Neutrality Patrol instituted on 6 September 1939 by President Roosevelt, the Neutrality Patrol was established to trail and report on any belligerent ships entering the Pan-American Neutrality Zone, an area extending over a 300-mile vector off the East Coast (and later extending to the 26th Meridian west longitude). VP-55 and sister squadron VP-56 were ordered to provide aerial surveillance for the ships of the Support Force on the offshore patrol. The first aircraft flown by the squadron was an XPBM-1, the pre-production version of the Martin Mariner. Training on this aircraft was undertaken at the Glenn L. Martin plant in Baltimore, Md., from 1 September through early October 1940. Engineering personnel were sent to the Wright engine plant for instruction. By the end of January 1941 the squadron's full complement of 12 PBM-1 aircraft had been delivered.

1 Feb 1941: A six-aircraft detachment was sent to NAS Jacksonville, Fla., for training. The six remaining aircraft at NAS Norfolk continued training and participated in the Neutrality Patrol.

1 Mar-5 Apr 1941: The destroyer units and Patrol Wing of Support Force (Neutrality Patrol) were reorganized as elements of Support Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet under command of Rear Admiral A. L. Bristol, USN, designated Task Force 4. The Patrol Wing of Task Force 4 consisted of Patrol Squadrons 51, 52, 55 and 56, with tender support provided by *Albemarle* (AV 5) and *George E. Badger* (AVD 3). On 5 April 1941, VP-53 joined Support Force. The original offshore patrol was



A squadron PBM-1 being hoisted aboard a seaplane tender.

now extended to include a northern patrol to strategic islands in the north and east to help ensure the safe passage of war materials to Britain.

1 May 1941: VP-55 flew to Gardner's Bay, N.Y., for 10 days of exercises with *Albemarle* (AV 5). On the conclusion of the exercises, *Albemarle* proceeded on to Argentia, Newfoundland. The squadron returned to NAS Norfolk.

1 Jul 1941: Patrol Wing, Support Force became Patrol Wing 7, remaining a patrol wing of Support Force. Patrol Squadrons 51, 52, 53 and 55 became Patrol Squadrons 71, 72, 73 and 74, respectively.

19 Jul 1941: A three-aircraft detachment was sent to Argentia, Newfoundland, based aboard *Albemarle* (AV 5) and *Pocomoke* (AV 9).

12 Aug 1941-Jan 1942: Six aircraft were dispatched to Reykjavik, Iceland, aboard *Goldsboro* (AVD 5). The VP-74 detachment operated from Skerja Fjord conducting convoy coverage patrols out 500 miles from base and air patrols from the Denmark Strait to Greenland. The aircraft carried no bombs, but merely reported submarine contacts. That system was abandoned after 15 October 1941 when a new destroyer, *Kearney* (DD 432), was torpedoed near Iceland. From then on, it was "Sink on Sight." On 15 January 1942, two of the Reykjavik detachment aircraft were sunk at their moorings during a storm.

2 Jan-Sep 1942: The squadron's Argentia detachment was relieved by VP-82 for return to NAS Norfolk. These aircraft, plus three from the Norfolk detachment, were assigned to duty at Bermuda, based on Darrell's Island, tended by *Gannett* (AVP 8). The detachment moved to NAS King's Point on 1 May 1942, remaining until September conducting antisubmarine patrols and air-sea rescue.

3 Jun 1942: Ensign John Cushman and his entire crew were lost at sea during a mission off Bermuda.

30 Jun 1942: Plane #1, flown by Lieutenant Richard E. Schreder, was credited with sinking *U-158*, Korvettenkapitän Erwin Rostin commanding. The submarine was spotted by the crew during a ferry flight.

Sep 1942: The entire squadron was relocated to NAS Norfolk, Va., with a two-aircraft detachment at San Juan, P.R. During this brief refit period, the squadron's original PBM-1 seaplanes were traded in for newer PBM-3s. After refit, eight squadron aircraft departed Norfolk on 22 September 1942, bound for Trinidad, B.W.I. Upon arrival the squadron began antisubmarine patrols and rescue work. During this assignment VP-74 came under the operational control of PatWing-11.

18 Dec 1942: Orders were received transferring the squadron to NAF Natal, Brazil. Upon arrival, *Humboldt* (AVP 21) provided tender service, while the squadron conducted antisubmarine patrols and air-sea rescue missions.

16 Feb 1943: The squadron at Natal received new PBM-3Cs.

24 Feb 1943: The squadron experienced its first encounter with the new German tactic of remaining on the surface to fight. Ensign W. J. Barnard sighted a U-boat in the act of torpedoing a ship. During his attack run against the submarine it surfaced and returned unusually heavy and accurate AA fire. Ensign Barnard and his crew escaped injury, but lost track of the sub on the return run. By this point in the war the German U-boats were being equipped with quad-mount 20-mm AA guns (Flakvierling) and presented a special hazard to aircrews pressing an attack when the element of surprise had been lost. Lieutenant Carey, Plane #6, was shot down in this manner in July 1943.

20 Mar 1943: A three-aircraft detachment was established at NAF Aratu, Bahia, Brazil.

28 Apr 1943: Ten of the squadron's PBM-3Cs were sent to NAF Aratu, while one remained at NAF Natal, Brazil.

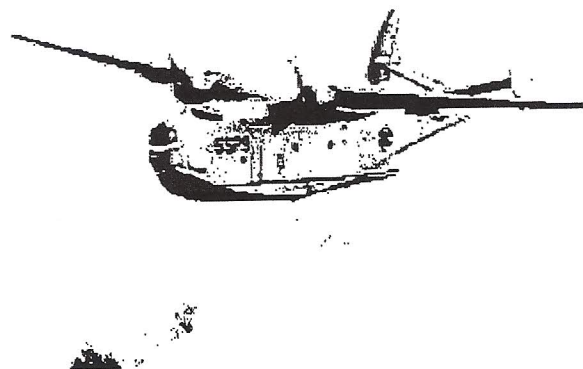
17 May 1943: Planes #5 and #6, piloted by Lieutenants Howland Davis and Carey, respectively, shared credit with *Moffett* (DD 362) and *Jouett* (DD 396) for the sinking of *U-128*, Kapitänleutnant Hermann Steinert commanding.

25 Jun 1943: A two-aircraft detachment was established at NAF Galeao, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

19 Jul 1943: Plane #5, piloted by Lieutenant (jg) Roy S. Whitcomb, was credited with sinking *U-513*, Kapitänleutnant Guggenberger commanding. The captain of the U-boat, a Type IXC boat, had elected to remain on the surface and fight it out with his AA batteries. Six depth bombs settled the issue quickly.

31 Jul 1943: Plane #7, piloted by Lieutenant W. F. Smith, shared honors with a Brazilian PBY in sinking *U-199*, Kapitänleutnant Hans-Werner Kraus commanding.

27 Sep 1943: Plane #2, piloted by Lieutenant (jg) Harry B. Patterson, was credited with sinking *U-161*, Kapitänleutnant Albrecht Achilles (Knights Cross) commanding. Two crew members were wounded in the attack by return fire from the U-boat.



A squadron PBM-1 in flight.

16 Oct 1943: VP-74 was relieved at NAF Aratu, Brazil, by VPB-211.

2 Nov 1943: The squadron returned to the States and had detachments assigned to NAS Norfolk, Va., with two PBM-3Cs and 1 PBM-3S and nine PBM-3Ss at NAS Floyd Bennett Field, N.Y.

14 Dec 1943–Mar 1944: The entire squadron was reassigned to NAS Elizabeth City, N.C., for antisubmarine patrols and coverage of convoy routes. From 8 January to March 1944, the squadron maintained a three-aircraft detachment at NAS Norfolk.

15 Dec 1944: A three-aircraft detachment was sent to NAS Coco Solo, C.Z., for convoy and ASW operations under FAW-3. The detachment was augmented on 2 January 1945 by three additional aircraft.

24–28 Jan 1945: VPB-74 was transferred to Coco Solo, C.Z., joining the six-aircraft detachment already stationed at that location. On 28 January 1945, VPB-74 was officially put under the operational control of FAW-3.

1–28 Feb 1945: The squadron relocated to NAAF Seymour Island, Galapagos, with a three-aircraft detachment at Corinto, Nicaragua. On 28 February 1945, an additional four-aircraft detachment began operations at Tanguis Cove, Galapagos, based aboard *Albemarle* (AV 5).

4 Apr 1945: VPB-74 was relieved for return to home port NAS Norfolk, Va., under the operational control of FAW-9. Shortly thereafter, the squadron was refitted with new PBM-5E Mariners.

28 May 1945: A three-aircraft detachment of VPB-74 returned to the Canal Zone for duty under FAW-3 at Seymour Island, Galapagos, aboard *Barnegat* (AVP 10). The last detachment arrived by 4 June 1945.

15 Sep 1945: After the formal Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945, the squadron mission was changed to the peacetime job of guarding the Panama Canal. The administrative elements of the squadron were transferred to Coco Solo, C.Z., on 15 September 1945. Over the next four years, a rotating three-aircraft

detachment was maintained at NAS Guantanamo, Cuba, for air-sea rescue missions.

Oct 1945: The squadron's aircraft were replaced by new PBM-5s.

9 Jan 1950: VP-40 was relieved for return to NAS Norfolk, Va. It was formally disestablished on 25 January 1950.

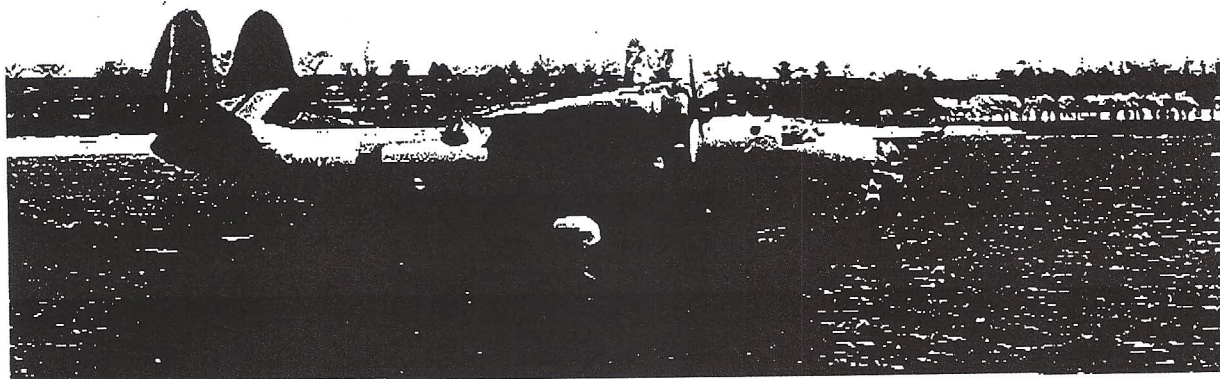
Home Port Assignments

Location	Date of Assignment
NAS Norfolk, Va.	1 Aug 1940
NAS Trinidad, B.W.I.	22 Sep 1942
NAF Natal, Brazil	18 Dec 1942
NAS Norfolk, Va.*	Nov 1943
NAS Elizabeth City, N.C.	14 Dec 1943
NAS Coco Solo, C.Z.	24 Jan 1945
NAF Seymour Island, Galapagos	1 Feb 1945
NAS Norfolk, Va.	4 Apr 1945
NAS Coco Solo, C.Z.	15 Sep 1945
NAS Norfolk, Va.	9 Jan 1950

* The squadron maintained a large detachment at NAS New York, N.Y., prior to the transfer of the entire squadron to NAS Elizabeth City, N.C.

Commanding Officers

	Date Assumed Command
LCDR A. B. Vosseller	1 Aug 1940
LCDR W. F. Cleaves	19 Feb 1942
LCDR W. A. Thorn	21 Jul 1942
LCDR J. C. Toth	26 Dec 1942
LCDR G. C. Merrick	21 Sep 1943
LCDR F. W. Brown	23 Apr 1944
LCDR J. C. Lafferty	16 Aug 1945
LCDR J. H. Graves	18 Jul 1946
CDR H. G. Perronet	21 Jun 1947
CDR T. R. L. McCabe	4 Dec 1948
LCDR W. D. Harrington	5 Oct 1949



A squadron PBM-1 floating offshore, 1941, NH-93645.

Aircraft Assignment

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
XPBM-1	Sep 1940
PBM-1	Jan 1941
PBM-3	Sep 1942

Aircraft Assignment—Continued

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
PBM-3C	Feb 1943
PBM-3S	Jun 1943
PBM-5E	Apr 1945

Major Overseas Deployments

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>PatWing</i>	<i>Base of Operations</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operations</i>
19 Jul 1941	*	PatWing-7	Argentina <i>Albemarle</i> (AV 5) <i>Pocomoke</i> (AV 9)	PBM-1	NorLant
12 Aug 1941	2 Jan 1942	PatWing-7	Reykjavik <i>Goldsboro</i> (AVD 5)	PBM-1	NorLant
2 Jan 1942	Sep 1942	PatWing-7/5	Bermuda	PBM-1	Lant
22 Sep 1942	*	PatWing-11	Trinidad	PBM-3	Carib
18 Dec 1942	16 Oct 1943	FAW-11/16	Natal/Bahia <i>Humboldt</i> (AVP 21)	PBM-3C/3S	SoLant
15 Dec 1944	*	FAW-3	Panama	PBM-3S	Carib
1 Feb 1945	4 Apr 1945	FAW-3	Galapagos <i>Albemarle</i> (AV 5)	PBM-3S	SoLant
28 May 1945	9 Jan 1950	FAW-3	Panama <i>Barnegat</i> (AVP 10)	PBM-5E	Carib

* Continued combat deployment in the South Atlantic, moving from base to base.

Wing Assignments

<i>Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
PatWing-5		1 Aug 1940
Patrol Wing Support Force/PatWing7 [*]		1 Mar 1941
PatWing-5		14 May 1942
PatWing-11/FAW-11 [†]		22 Sep 1942
FAW-16		21 Apr 1943
FAW-5/9 [‡]		2 Nov 1943
FAW-3		28 Jan 1945
FAW-9		4 Apr 1945
FAW-3	CA [†]	15 Sep 1945

* Patrol Wing, Support Force was redesignated Patrol Wing 7 (PatWing-7) on 1 July 1941.

† Patrol Wing 11 (PatWing-11) was redesignated Fleet Air Wing 11 (FAW-11) on 1 November 1942.

‡ The squadron remained part of FAW-3 but was assigned the tail code CA on 7 November 1946.

§ The squadron had a large detachment at NAS New York under the operational control of FAW-9. The entire squadron came under the control of FAW-5 when it was transferred to NAS Elizabeth City, N.C. on 14 December 1943.

Unit Awards Received

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Date Covering Unit Award</i>
NUC	22 Jan 1942 30 Sep 1942



A squadron PBM on the ramp at NAS Bermuda with ordnance in the background, 1942, 80-G-13341.

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



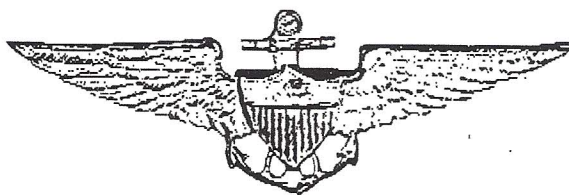
This contemporary artist rendition was never issued as the Naval Aviator wing insignia.

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.

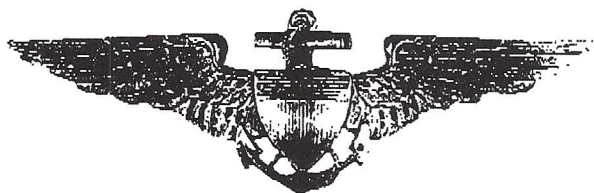


Original wings issued to Naval Aviators.

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 foul 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 foul 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 $\frac{3}{16}$ " 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 foul 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 $\frac{3}{16}$ " 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 $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide; centered over the shield, each end to rest on top of wings. Gold stars of a size to be inscribed in a circle $\frac{1}{16}$ " in diameter, to a total of three, as merited, shall be mounted on the scroll, necessary holes being pierced to receive them.