



Commanding Officer

CAPTAIN JOHN F. REFO

John Francis Refo was born in Washington, D. C., on September 19, 1918, son of Mrs. Miles P. (Mildred Lee Francis) Refo and the late Captain M. P. Refo, USN. He attended Woodrow Wilson High School in Portsmouth, Va., and Severn School in Severna Park, Md. He received a Presidential appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., and entered on June 12, 1936. He graduated from the Academy with a Bachelor of Science degree and was commissioned an Ensign in the U.S. Navy on June 6, 1940. He subsequently advanced to the rank of Captain on April 1, 1959.

After graduation, Captain Refo's first active duty was aboard the USS NEW MEXICO from June 1940 until August 1942. Upon leaving the NEW MEXICO, he underwent two months of instruction at the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadrons Training Center, Melville, R.I., and then entered flight training at Pensacola, Florida.

The Captain was designated a Naval Aviator in May 1943, and served as an Assistant Flight Instructor at the Naval Air Station, Lake City, Florida, before becoming the Executive Officer of Bombing Squadron 127 in January 1944. He served in that capacity until March 1945, when he returned to Annapolis for instruction at the Naval Postgraduate School (Aviation Ordnance). He then attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, graduating in 1947 with a Master of Science Degree in Aeronautical Engineering.

After leaving M.I.T., Captain Refo was assigned to the Guided Missiles Division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D. C., for a year, and then underwent special instruction at the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project, Sandia Base, N.M. He was Assistant Ordnance Officer of Composite Squadron 5 for five months, and then for the next three years was Ordnance Officer of Composite Squadron 6 (January 1949 until January 1952). For the two years following he was Project Engineer at the Naval Ordnance Test Station, Inyokern, California and then underwent two months instruction with Heavy Attack Training Wing ONE.

Captain Refo rejoined Composite Squadron 6 in April 1954, and served as Executive Officer for nine months and as Commanding Officer for fourteen months. After temporary duty on the Staff of the Commander, Naval Air Force, Atlantic, he served as Navigator of the attack aircraft carrier USS FORRESTAL from June 1956 until February 1957, and as Operations Officer until December 1957. From January 1958 until August 1960 he was head of missile tests of the Special Projects Office (POLARIS) in the Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

He graduated from the National War College in 1961, and became the Operations Officer on the Staff of Commander Carrier Division TWO. The Captain was assigned to the Missile Division in the Bureau of Naval Weapons, Navy Department, from September 1962 until July 1963, at which time he was ordered to duty as Commanding Officer, USS DENEbola (AF56). He served in that capacity until August 27, 1964, when he assumed command of the anti-submarine aircraft carrier USS RAN-DOLPH (CVS-15), flagship of Task Group ALFA.

Captain Refo was awarded the Legion of Merit, with citation as follows: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service from 14 January 1958 to 20 July 1960 as Head of the Ship Operations and Test Branch Special Projects Office. Responsible for the conduct of tests at flight test ranges in accordance with test requirements, objectives, plans and readiness criteria established for such tests, Captain Refo made a distinctive contribution toward equipping the United States and the free world with the Fleet Ballistic Missile Weapon System as a vital extension of sea power. Despite drastic acceleration and multiplication of objectives, he ensured that the testing of the POLARIS missile, so vitally important to the success of the program, was accomplished. Captain Refo's outstanding leadership, professional ability and inspiring devotion to duty throughout were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

In addition to the Legion of Merit, Captain Refo has received the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; and the National Defense Service Medal. He also holds the Expert Pistol Shot and Expert Rifleman's Medals.

Captain Refo has two sons; Carter Beaumont Refo, now a first classman at the Naval Academy, Ian Blair Refo, a freshman at VPI, and one daughter, Patricia Lee Refo, who resides with her mother in Alexandria, Virginia.