
From: Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA)

Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 1:40 PM

Subject: Passing of RADM Richard C. Macke, USN (Ret.)

Fellow Flag Officers,

It is with deep regret I inform you of the passing of Rear Admiral Richard Chester "Dick" Macke, U.S. Navy (Retired) on 7 December 2022 at age 84. Admiral Macke entered the U.S. Naval Academy in June 1956 and served as a Naval Aviator until his retirement in 1996 following his last assignment as Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Command. His other commands included Attack Squadron SIX SIX (VA-66,) USS CAMDEN (AOE-2,) USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN-69,) Naval Space Command, Carrier Group TWO, and Carrier Group FOUR. He flew 152 combat missions in Vietnam flying the A-7 Corsair II on two deployments in 1968 and 1969, earning an individual Air Medal with 14 Strike Flights and two Navy Commendation Medals with Combat "V."

Dick Macke took the oath of office at the U.S. Naval Academy on 25 June 1956. He played on the undefeated Plebe basketball team, and then three years on varsity (he was 6'6"), and according to the "Lucky Bag," gained notoriety for fouling out in the first five minutes of a game against William and Mary his Youngster year (an early indicator of the intensity with which he did just about everything.) He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Naval Science and was commissioned an ensign on 8 June 1960.

Ensign Macke then reported to the Naval Aviation Basic Training Course (NABTC) at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola. This was followed by additional flight training commencing in March 1961 at Naval Auxiliary Air Station (NAAS) Chase Field, Beeville, Texas. He was designated a Naval Aviator on 9 August 1961. He then reported to Attack Squadron ONE TWO FIVE (VA-125) at NAS Lemoore, California for Fleet Replacement Squadron training in the A-4 Skyhawk light attack jet. He was promoted to lieutenant (junior grade) in December 1961 before reporting in March 1962 to Attack Squadron TWO THREE (VA-23) "Black Knights," flying the A-4 from attack carrier USS MIDWAY (CVA-41) for two deployments to the Western Pacific in 1962 and 1963-64. He was promoted to lieutenant in June 1964.

In February 1965, Lieutenant Macke reported to Naval Test Pilot School at Naval Air Test Center (NATC) Patuxent River, Maryland, where he was designated a Test Pilot in November 1965. He then flew test flights testing weapons systems for the A-7A Corsair II light attack jet in the Weapons System Test Division of the NATC Patuxent River Attack Branch Project Office. In January 1968, he reported to Attack Squadron ONE TWO TWO (VA-122) for refresher training in the A-7.

In April 1968, LT Macke reported to Attack Squadron TWO SEVEN (VA-27) "Royal Maces" flying the A-7 Corsair II. Embarked on attack carrier USS CONSTELLATION (CVA-64,) VA-27 deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin and commenced strikes into the panhandle of North Vietnam in June 1968. VA-27 and CONSTELLATION deployed again to the Vietnam War in 1969. During this period LT Macke flew 152 combat missions, while also serving as Squadron Admin Officer. He was promoted to lieutenant commander in May 1969.

After brief refresher training in Attack Squadron ONE SEVEN FOUR (VA-174,) Lieutenant Commander Macke assumed duty in July 1972 as Executive Officer of Attack Squadron SIX SIX (VA-66) "Waldos," flying the A-7E Corsair II at NAS Cecil Field, Florida, deploying to the Mediterranean embarked on attack carrier USS INDEPENDENCE (CVA-62,) operating south of Cyprus during the 1973 "Yom Kippur" Middle East War. LCDR Macke assumed command of VA-66 in August 1973, deploying to the Mediterranean again on INDEPENDENCE in 1974, including providing cover for the evacuation of American citizens following a coup in Cyprus (and subsequent Turkish invasion) during which the U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus was killed by a sniper.

In November 1974, LCDR Macke was assigned to the Navy Chief of Legislative Affairs, serving as Congressional Committee Liaison Officer, presenting the Naval Aviation program budget to members of Congress and staff. He was promoted to commander in July 1975.

In September 1977, Commander Macke commenced a nuclear propulsion training track at Nuclear Power School, Orlando, Florida, and then in March 1978 at Nuclear Power School, Idaho Falls, Idaho. In September 1978, he then attended the Naval Amphibious School, Little Creek, Virginia, followed in November 1978 by additional training at the Division of Naval Reactors, Department of Energy, in Washington DC.

In April 1979, CDR Macke assumed duty as Executive Officer of nuclear carrier USS NIMITZ (CVN-68,) deploying to the Indian Ocean from September 1979 to May 1980, including 144 consecutive days underway and the first (legal) serving of alcohol (a "beer day") aboard a U.S. Navy ship since General Order 99 in 1914. In April 1980, NIMITZ participated in Operation Eagle Claw, serving as launch platform for eight RH-53D helicopters as part of an attempt to rescue American diplomatic personnel held hostage in Iran. Aircraft from NIMITZ and USS CORAL SEA (CV-43) provided cover, with special markings to avoid confusion with Iranian F-14s. However, only six RH-53Ds reached the Desert One rendezvous point due to a sandstorm, only five of which were flyable, leading to a mission abort and subsequent on-the-ground collision in which one RH-53 and one EC-130 were destroyed, and five RH-53Ds were abandoned and captured. Eight Americans (five USAF and three USMC) were killed in the collision.

Promoted in August 1980, Captain Macke assumed command of fast combat support ship USS CAMDEN (AOE-2) during a 14-month complex overhaul in Bremerton, Washington and subsequent work-ups. In May 1983, CAPT Macke reported to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington DC, serving as Executive Assistant to the Director of Command and Control (OP-094.) In February 1984, he commenced a pre-carrier command training track, assigned to the staff of Commander Naval Air Force Atlantic (COMNAVAIRLANT.)

In May 1984, CAPT Macke assumed command of nuclear carrier USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN-69) for a short deployment to Portugal, United Kingdom and France in conjunction with the 40th Anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy. IKE then deployed to the Mediterranean from October 1984 to May 1985, and also earned the COMNAVAIRLANT Battle Efficiency award. In October 1986, CAPT Macke assumed command of Naval Space Command in Dahlgren, Virginia, where he instituted innovations to enhance space support to tactical naval operations. He was promoted to rear admiral (lower half) on 1 September 1987.

In March 1988, RDML Macke assumed command of Carrier Group TWO (COMCARGRU 2,) serving as Commander Task Force SIX ZERO (CTF 60) on two Mediterranean deployments, the first embarked on the last deployment of USS CORAL SEA (CV-43) and the second on USS AMERICA (CV-66.) On 1 April 1989, he was designated a rear admiral (two star) for service in a billet commensurate with that rank. In January 1990, RADML Macke assumed command of Carrier Group FOUR (COMCARGRU 4,) the East Coast training CARGRU, where he was responsible for training four of the six aircraft carriers that participated in Desert Storm combat operations in January-March 1991. In September 1990, he was promoted to rear admiral (two star.)

He was promoted to vice admiral on 24 May 1991 and commenced duty on the Joint Staff in Washington DC as the Director Command, Control, Communications and Computer Systems (J-6.) In December 1992, he became the Director of the Joint Staff, serving under the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell. On 18 July 1994 he was designated an admiral (four star) for service in a billet commensurate with that rank. He then assumed duty as Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Command (CINCPAC) in Pearl Harbor Hawaii, relieving Admiral Charles Larson in charge of the largest U.S. unified combatant command, responsible for joint operations across the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. He was promoted to admiral (four star) on 1 October 1994. He was relieved by Admiral Joseph Prueher on 31 January 1996. Following a brief period assigned temporarily to the Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet, ADM Macke retired on 1 April 1996 at his permanent grade of Rear Admiral (two star.)

ADM Macke's awards include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (four awards,) Meritorious Service Medal (three awards,) Air Medal (two awards and 14 strike flight,) Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V" (two awards,) Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Navy Unit Commendation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Battle Efficiency Ribbon, Navy Expeditionary Medal, National

Defense Service Medal (two awards,) Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Vietnam Service Medal (three campaign stars,) Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (silver star) DDSM, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Gold Star, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation with Gold Palm, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and Expert Pistol Shot Medal.

After retiring from active duty, Admiral Macke served as Senior Vice President for Pacific Rim Operations of Wheat International Communications Corporation; under his direction the Hawaii office became leading revenue generator for the company. He was a member of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, and a leader in the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA,) receiving the AFCEA Superior Performance Award in 2022. He was also an avid golfer and member of Professional Golfers American.

I have no information on funeral arrangements at this time.

There is a Navy expression that many of us learned as a midshipman or junior officer that “one ‘Aw, (crap)!” is worth ten ‘Attaboys!” In the case of Admiral Macke it was worth many times that. An indiscreet public remark and significant inappropriate use of military aircraft brought a premature end to an otherwise brilliant career of service to our nation in the dangerous world of naval aviation, including 152 combat missions over North Vietnam. Dick Macke came out of the blocks fast from the Naval Academy and never stopped – qualifying as a test pilot, superb performance while getting shot at, XO/CO of an attack squadron as a lieutenant commander, XO and CO of the newest nuclear carriers in the Navy, including yet another in a string of Battle “E”s for IKE. He was one of the Navy’s leading experts in Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I,) and his leadership of Navy Space Command bordered on revolutionary in finding ways to use space assets to better support tactical operations. He was not an easy person to work for; he was not reluctant to use the “wirebrush” as a leadership tool, but all to a purpose – his unrelenting drive for peak combat readiness. Those who served on the carriers in Desert Storm that he trained as COMCARGRU 4 will attest that the rigorous training, in a couple cases on virtually no notice, truly made a difference in their success in combat. He may have been hard, but he was also loyal to those who worked for him, proving he had their back in the event of incoming flak. Even after retirement from active duty, he continued to serve as a vociferous advocate for improved U.S. Navy capability. The U.S. Navy system of accountability can be harsh, but is for a purpose, and serves as an example. Nevertheless, on his last day as Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Pacific Command, as he exited the building all the J-codes and many staff lined the way and rendered a final salute – a testament of heartfelt respect for his many years of valor, sacrifice and dedication in the defense of our country, in which he truly made a difference, and for which he should be remembered the most. RIP “Warrior One.”

Rest in Peace Admiral Macke

Very respectfully,

Sam

Samuel J. Cox (SES)
RADM, USN (Ret)
Director of Naval History
Curator for the Navy
Director Naval History and Heritage Command