

A Bird's-Eye View of Aircraft Operations

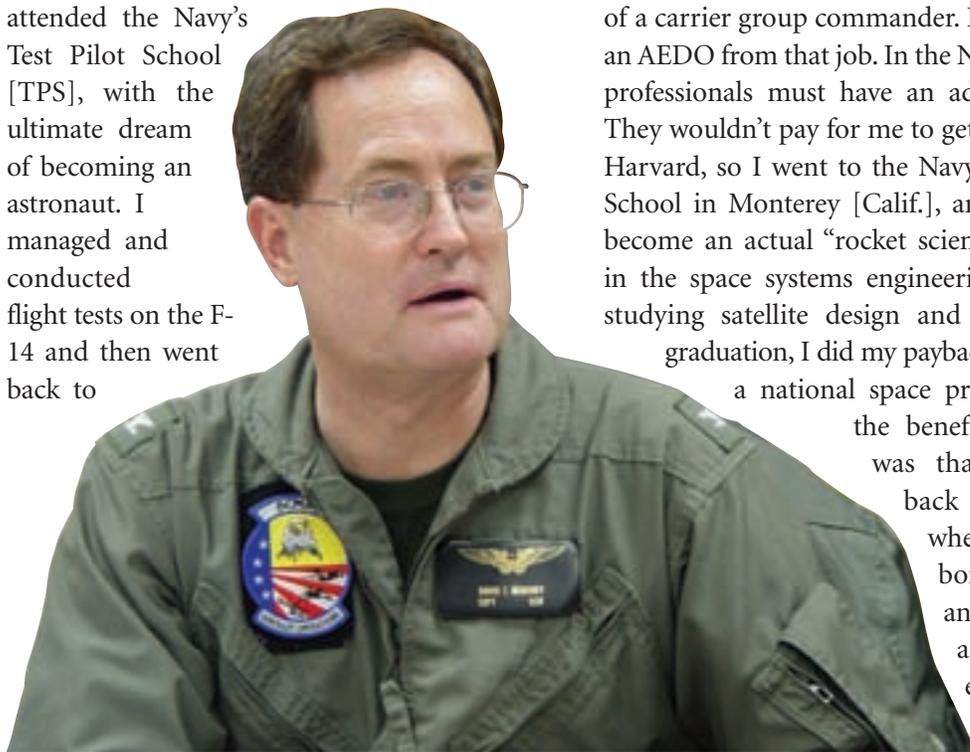
by Ms. Lindsay Gross, Staff Writer

The ever-cheerful Navy Capt. David Moroney is the Defense Contract Management Agency's (DCMA's) newest executive director for Aircraft Operations. The Communicator spoke with Capt. Moroney in December about joining the DCMA team.

Communicator (C): Welcome to DCMA, Capt. Moroney. Can you provide our readers with a little personal background?

Capt. Moroney (CM): I attended the Naval Academy, graduating in 1979, and then headed to Pensacola [Fla.] for flight training. For one operational tour, I flew Tomcats [F-14s] with VF-32 off the *USS Independence* and deployed to the Mediterranean Sea twice, flying reconnaissance flights over Beirut, Lebanon, as part of the multinational peacekeeping force there. Then I attended the Navy's Test Pilot School [TPS], with the ultimate dream of becoming an astronaut. I managed and conducted flight tests on the F-14 and then went back to

instruct at TPS. That was a great opportunity, and I enjoyed working in the acquisition side of the Navy that required engineering skills. It was a nice fit for me, since I was an aerospace engineer major at the academy. While at the Naval Air Test Center, I decided that I really wanted to be an aerospace engineering duty officer [AEDO]. At that time, in order to become an AEDO, you needed to have had two sea tours under your belt, so I committed to a tour as a flag lieutenant. It was a wonderful opportunity to see the operational world from the perspective of a carrier group commander. I was selected as an AEDO from that job. In the Navy, acquisition professionals must have an advanced degree. They wouldn't pay for me to get my MBA from Harvard, so I went to the Navy's Postgraduate School in Monterey [Calif.], and I decided to become an actual "rocket scientist." I enrolled in the space systems engineering curriculum, studying satellite design and the like. After graduation, I did my payback tour, working a national space program. One of the benefits of that job was that it took me back to Colorado, where I had been born and raised; and so I became a part of the very exclusive "Rocky Mountain



(Above) Navy Capt. David Moroney, executive director for Air Operations, in his office at DCMA Headquarters in January. (DCMA staff photo)

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Navy.” Following that tour of duty, I received orders to the D.C. area. After working a variety of jobs on major aircraft and weapons programs at the Naval Air Systems Command and the Pentagon, DCMA seemed like a great fit.

C: What are Aircraft Operations’ key responsibilities? What are you and your employees responsible for on a daily basis?

CM: The key mission of Aircraft Operations can be summed up in a simple sentence: “The conduct of safe and effective flight operations at our contractor locations.” Aircraft Operations focuses on ensuring that all aircraft built by contractors for the military perform as promised and that they are ready to fly and to fight.

Aircraft Operations is staffed with aviators and crewmembers from each of the Services, as well as specialized maintenance personnel who are stationed at military depots and contractor sites in the U.S. and overseas. When a new military aircraft rolls off the production line or an older aircraft undergoes an overhaul, receives drop-in modifications or has its avionics upgraded, Aircraft Operations is on hand to make sure that the work and the check flights are performed properly.

There are two focus areas to Aircraft Operations: Government Flight Operations, where military personnel perform the acceptance and functional check flights, and Contractor Operations, where company employees perform flight and ground activities with DCMA oversight.

The DCMA Government Flight Representatives [GFRs] at each site are responsible for approving the contractor’s flight/ground operations procedures and ensuring that they are carried out in accordance with approved policy. The

GFRs work with the contractors in an effort to make everything work correctly and cost-effectively. Many contract management offices [CMOs] within Aircraft Operations have small teams of two to four members of the Aviation Program Team, while larger facilities may have 10 to 12.

Aircraft Operations also provides training for all of the Defense Department’s GFRs. This is necessary because even if a new GFR is a trained test pilot, there is little likelihood that he or she has also had any substantial experience in overseeing contractors. So, we provide separate training courses to acquaint them with the processes and procedures of aviation contract management oversight and insight.

C: How is Aircraft Operations organized?

CM: The DCMA Aircraft Operations Directorate has just gone through an organizational realignment. With the realignment of the East and West Districts into product-focused divisions, the Aircraft Operations staff members from those two Districts were all brought into Headquarters. One result is that we now have the entire Aircraft Operations budget for all the Aircraft Operations CMOs in the areas



(Above) From left: Mr. Danny McDonald and Mr. Jim Gamache, contractors with Boeing Logistics Support Services in San Antonio, and Air Force Lt. Col. Mark Tidwell, government flight representative, DCMA Aircraft Integrated Maintenance Operations – Kelly (DCMA staff photo)

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of training, mission, supplies and equipment under the central management of a team led by my executive officer [XO], Air Force Lt. Col. Jim Broadway.

We also now have a dedicated team for policy and training under Mr. John Heib. He is responsible for the coordination and update of the overarching joint instruction, DCMA INST 8210.1, an expansion of the definition of what the [Defense Federal Acquisition Regulations Supplement] clauses say. This instruction is currently being revised in coordination with the Air Force, Army, Navy and Coast Guard, along with our industry partners' involvement as well. The Coast Guard has not previously been a signatory to this instruction.

C: Can you expand on Aircraft Operations' role in instruction and training?

CM: Part of our job is training DCMA and Service personnel on how to ensure that safe and effective flight operations are being conducted at our contractor facilities. We have the responsibility for training folks out in the field at CMO sites as well as Service personnel at government sites where there is no DCMA presence. If you're a GFR or an Aviation Maintenance Manager [AMM], Aircraft Operations oversees and provides the training to make you qualified to do your job.

We're continuing to update the GFR and AMM education and information packets as well as developing course updates. With the update of the joint instruction, this is a significant initiative.

We're also getting great interest from administrative contracting officers and many contractors who are requesting this training. They want a better understanding of the functions we perform. The contracting officers are the folks who are implementing government contracts with the contractor — by attending our course, they have a better appreciation of the services we can provide for them. Defense contractors I have spoken with personally have said that they, too, want to better understand the expectations of our GFRs and AMMs in the field.

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Quarterly training has been the standard, but the demand for these courses is growing, and we're expanding our offerings to meet that demand. I try to go out and introduce myself to the classes to make my face familiar and to help build the integrated teamwork philosophy between Headquarters and all the folks out in the field. This team approach is vital to our success.

C: Does Aircraft Operations handle any sort of staffing assistance?

CM: Oh, sure. The Aircraft Operations CMO support team works with the Services' personnel commands and the DCMA Human Resources Directorate to provide CMOs their [Aviation Program Team] military “human capital resources” — that is, the manning and the military billeting at DCMA sites for GFRs, AMMs, [chief flight officers] and CMO commanders. Working with the head of DCMA military manpower, Air Force Col. Gene Smith, we have developed coordinated processes for the interaction between DCMA Headquarters, CMOs and the parent Services. Together, we

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make sure people are placed correctly, and we move jobs around to ensure that CMO commanders are staffed with the right people, with the right skills, at the right time, in the needed locations.

The focus is on streamlining and organizing staffing — if someone needs a waiver, we have a format and process, and now the CMO commander writes and updates the position description for his [or her] billets. Previously, we would assist with writing those descriptions, and when the Services would identify a person to fill the position, it would sometimes be the wrong person because of incorrect input. Now we’re using the process as a tool, and we are dedicated to being customer-focused and performance-based.

In addition to documenting the processes to staff active-duty positions, we are also developing a similar process for our Individual Mobilization Augmentees, which is how we manage the Reservists. We are working to provide a single point of contact for everything, instead of multiple levels of coordination.

C: How involved is Aircraft Operations in the International Division and locations?

CM: Air Force Lt. Col. Matt Evans leads my liaison team with the International Division. He works Headquarters Aircraft Operations issues for the Americas, the Pacific region and Europe, handling manpower allocation and waiver requests.

Aircraft Operations also utilizes Air Force Lt. Col. Al Harris as our liaison with the Special Programs [SP] Division, working mainly with classified aeronautical programs as the interface with those employees and overseeing GFR

responsibilities, approving waivers, classified manning, etc.

Before the realignment, our liaison with International and SP was less formal. We have recently coordinated with their parent divisions to provide additional reporting responsibilities through my CMO support team lead, Navy Cmdr. Mike Tluchowski and I.

C: Can you talk about aircraft inspections?

CM: Aircraft Operations Inspections [AOI] can be likened to the Services’ standardization process. Last year Aircraft Operations developed an annual inspection process to review compliance with policy and instructions at each of our resident CMO sites. The scheduling of these inspections was a collateral duty for my XO, and as the process evolved and was implemented it improved and changed. With the additional people from the old Districts, I now have a dedicated team under Air Force Lt. Col. “Ocho” Ochotorena to standardize our AOI process and products. They make sure that we have an adequate cadre of Aircraft Operations personnel conducting all these inspections, that they are conducted in a consistent fashion and that the results are formally reported to the CMO commanders and the DCMA senior leadership team.

We are also documenting through Memoranda of Agreement with the Services how we will cooperate with them to meet both DCMA and Service inspection requirements at our sites. We have recently initiated this effort with the Army, having already closely worked with the Air Force and Navy over the course of the past year. If you’re a CMO that has multiple contracts through the different Services, you don’t want all the military and DCMA inspectors conducting inspections at different times throughout the

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year. We try to make it as minimally intrusive as possible.

We've completed one full inspection cycle in 2005, and we're starting up our second year with an eye towards improvement as we standardize this process. As this continues, and we show better performance and compliance with the CMOs, we intend to reduce the time between inspections from an annual requirement to a more risk-based cycle, hopefully decreasing the frequency of inspections at our low-risk sites by 2007. For sites that perform really well, we won't have to go back as often — we'll rely more on internal monitoring and inspections. This will allow us to address our non-residence sites in the future.

C: So, post-realignment — does all safety training responsibility now fall under your guidance?

CM: We have a dedicated Safety Team led by Air Force Lt. Col. Tim Nickerson. Developing and maintaining a safety-conscious climate and culture within the DCMA Aircraft Operations world is vital to our core mission. Previously, this had been a collateral duty for the three Headquarters Aircraft Operations officers from each of the Services. Here, too, the realignment has allowed us to concentrate our efforts on a critical area. Now we'll be able to perform trend analysis on aircraft mishap and safety data. We will identify chains of events leading to incidents; identify high-risk areas and dangerous or unfortunate trends at the CMOs; and better communicate safety trends across the Services. We are working hand-in-hand with Mr. Jim O'Kane, the lead of the new Contract Safety Specialists [CSS] Center, which handles ground safety, compliance and procedures. For example, at Lockheed Martin Dallas-Fort Worth, we have a non-aviator CMO commander, two new

GFRs, the AMM representative is retiring, and we have no CSS there. We worked with Jim to pull shared assets from some of the other Lockheed Martin and Boeing facilities in the area to provide more concentrated involvement at the Dallas-Fort Worth location.

In addition to the GFR/AMM/aviation safety officers [ASO] training courses, we hold an annual three-day [Aircraft Operations Training Seminar] where field, division and Headquarters Aircraft Operations personnel convene. We take time to introspectively self-examine, recalibrate and share stories to learn from each other's experience so we can all become aware of potential risks and how best to manage them.

There are other safety-related initiatives as well. A new safety newsletter is forthcoming, as is a DCMA Aircraft Operations Safety Policy and updated coursework for our ASOs. The CMOs are my principal customers, so I predominantly focus on their needs.

C: It seems like Aircraft Operations has taken on a lot of new responsibilities.

CM: Even more than you think — the last major area of focus as a result of the realignment is more operational in nature and is what we call “Global.” This team, led by Air Force Lt. Col. Shawn Hullihen, works the Contract Field Team, Rapid Response and Flexible Acquisition and Sustainment Tool for [Department of Defense] Service GFR support, rapid-acquisition and short-fuse contracts. The idea being here that safety and accomplishing business objectives are approaches that can be tailored using the right people to provide oversight and proper workload. Lt. Col. Hullihen's team is the lead for that monitoring and is an interface as well between us and the Aeronautical Division.