

# VF-11 Sundowners: The Elite Naval Aviation Unit that Flew the F-111



VF-11 Sundowners was an elite naval aviation unit that flew the F-111, one of the most advanced fighter jets of its time. The unit was commissioned in 1942 and saw combat in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam

War. VF-11 was decommissioned in 1995, but its legacy lives on as one of the most successful naval aviation units in history.



## VF-11/111 'Sundowners' 1942–95 (Aviation Elite Units Book 36) by Barrett Tillman

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 21118 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 128 pages



## History

VF-11 was commissioned on 15 July 1942, at Naval Air Station Norfolk, Virginia. The unit's first commanding officer was Commander John S. McCain, Sr., the father of future Senator and presidential candidate John S. McCain, III. VF-11 was initially equipped with the F-4F Wildcat, but later transitioned to the F-6F Hellcat.

VF-11 saw its first combat action during World War II in the Pacific Theater. The unit participated in numerous air battles, including the Battle of Midway and the Battle of the Philippine Sea. VF-11 also provided close air support for the landings at Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

After World War II, VF-11 transitioned to the F-8 Crusader. The unit participated in the Korean War, flying combat missions over North Korea.

VF-11 also participated in the Vietnam War, flying combat missions over North and South Vietnam.

In 1968, VF-11 was selected to be the first operational unit to fly the F-111. The F-111 was a swing-wing fighter-bomber that was designed to be able to perform both air-to-air and air-to-ground missions. VF-11 flew the F-111 in combat during the Vietnam War, where it proved to be a highly effective aircraft.

VF-11 was decommissioned on 30 September 1995. The unit's last commanding officer was Commander David E. Venlet. VF-11's legacy lives on as one of the most successful naval aviation units in history.

## **Aircraft**

VF-11 flew a variety of aircraft during its history, including the F-4F Wildcat, F-6F Hellcat, F-8 Crusader, and F-111. The F-111 was the unit's most advanced aircraft, and it was used in combat during the Vietnam War.

The F-111 was a swing-wing fighter-bomber that was designed to be able to perform both air-to-air and air-to-ground missions. The aircraft had a variable-geometry wing that allowed it to change its shape in flight. This gave the F-111 excellent performance at both high and low speeds.

The F-111 was equipped with a variety of weapons, including air-to-air missiles, air-to-ground missiles, and bombs. The aircraft also had a 20mm cannon.

## **Notable Members**

VF-11 has had a number of notable members throughout its history, including:

\* Commander John S. McCain, Sr., the unit's first commanding officer and the father of future Senator and presidential candidate John S. McCain, III \* Commander David E. Venlet, the unit's last commanding officer \* Captain Thomas J. Hudner, Jr., a Medal of Honor recipient who served with VF-11 during the Vietnam War \* Lieutenant Commander Michael J. Estocin, a Medal of Honor recipient who served with VF-11 during the Vietnam War

## Legacy

VF-11 Sundowners is one of the most successful naval aviation units in history. The unit has a long and distinguished record of service, and its members have been awarded numerous medals and honors. VF-11's legacy lives on as a symbol of excellence in naval aviation.



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