

# Dive Right!

by LCdr. Kieran Twomey

It had been a great hop at the FRS. The student was sitting in the left seat for the first time and had performed exceptionally well on his first aircraft-tactical-system hop. We had stopped at a nearby MCAS to practice familiarization maneuvers from the left side and were on our way back to the NAS. The only item left on the grade sheet was a demo item involving the use of our tactical system for navigation.

It was a beautiful afternoon. The sun was nearing the end of its journey across the southern California sky. I opted to climb into the VFR corridor for our flight home. We leveled off in accordance with semi-circular cruising rules. I explained to the fleet replacement pilot how to use the system to place a reference mark at defined coordinates. I had him break open the approach plates to find the latitude and longitude of a navaid we would cross over on the way back. I coached him through the button-crunching necessary to input the latitude and longitude.

As we neared the intersection of the east-west corridor with our own north-south corridor, the ICS sparked to life. Our air crewman calmly reported, "Traffic, 11 o'clock—no, 10 o'clock..." and then, much more urgently, "The hell with it, dive right!"

I jammed the cyclic to the right and was astounded to see a small, twin-engine airplane growing much larger in the left window and then slide overhead of the canopy as he crossed a couple of hundred feet above us. I don't know if we would have hit this guy, but if we had, it would have undoubtedly been a leading news story across the nation. I could see the headlines now, "Navy helo plummets into a congested freeway in the last minutes of rush hour." I do know an alert crewman had saved us from coming extremely close. That civilian wasn't reading the same rule book I was.

I doubt he could have seen us: The sun was setting directly behind us. It probably was not very smart of me to distract a key set of eyeballs while navigating a busy VFR corridor, but the crew coordination and communication was in line with my NATOPS brief. The crewman responded in exactly the right way to a critical situation. During my briefs, I continue to enforce the crewman's see-and-avoid responsibilities, and I now have an excellent example. 

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