

VETERAN OF THE MONTH

Tellico Village VFW Post 12135



Captain Rick Creange, a native of Toms River, New Jersey, graduated from Admiral Farragut Academy, Pine Beach NJ in 1977. He attended the Pennsylvania State University and was commissioned an Ensign USN through the NROTC program in 1981. After attending flight training in Pensacola, Florida, he was designated a Naval Flight Officer in 1983.

Following receipt of his wings and Fleet Replacement Squadron training, Captain Creange reported to the VF-142 Ghostriders in December 1983 flying the F-14A Tomcat. There he completed several deployments in USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) including combat operations in support of multi-national forces in Lebanon. In 1986 he was selected to attend the Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN) at NAS Miramar, California.

In November 1986, Captain Creange transferred to Commander, Fighter Wing One at NAS Oceana, Virginia Beach, Virginia as the Tactical Development and Evaluation Officer while also fully qualifying as an instructor in the F-14 Tomcat at VF-101.

In July 1989, he returned to the fleet reporting to the VF-14 Tophatters flying the F-14A Tomcat where he served as the Assistant Operations Officer and Administration Officer. In August 1990, he deployed in USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) in support of Operation Desert Storm where he flew 43 combat missions over Iraq. In July 1991 Captain Creange was selected to attend the U.S. Air Force Air War College at Maxwell AFB.

In December 1992, he joined the VF-102 Diamondbacks at NAS Oceana, Virginia Beach, Virginia flying the F-14A/B Tomcat. He served as Safety Officer, Operations Officer and Maintenance Officer. He deployed in USS America (CV-66) flying combat missions supporting NATO, UN, and US forces in Bosnia, Somalia, and Iraq. For his accomplishments during this tour, Captain Creange was named the Commander Naval Air Forces, Naval Flight Officer of the year for 1994. In September 1994, Captain Creange was selected to attend the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia.

From January 1995 to May 1998, Captain Creange was assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Operations Directorate (J3), Special Operations Division in Washington, D.C. There he executed several National and Strategic level campaigns in support of continuing worldwide military operations.

In September 1998 Captain Creange reported onboard Strike Weapons and Tactics School, Atlantic as the Executive Officer and in December 1999 assumed Command. During his tenure, SWATSLANT led the

integration of precision strike, Forward Air Controller (Airborne) FAC(A), and Night Vision Device (NVD) capability in the F-14.

Following Command, Captain Creange was assigned as the Air Officer (Air Boss) in USS Nimitz (CVN-68) from March 2001 until July 2002. During this time Nimitz completed a Re-fueling overhaul, inter-fleet transfer, and deployment preparations.

After Leaving USS Nimitz in July 2002, Captain Creange reported to Commander, Operational Test and Evaluation Force, in Norfolk, Virginia. There he served as the Navy's Operational Test Director for the Joint Strike Fighter (F-35) and the new Ford class aircraft carrier, CVN-78.

From October 2004 until April 2006, Captain Creange served on the staff of Commander, Carrier Strike Group Eight as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations (N3) for the George Washington and then the Dwight D. Eisenhower Strike Groups.

In April 2006, Captain Creange reported to his last tour of duty on the staff of Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command as the Director for Special Programs (N89).

Captain Creange retired from Active Duty on September 1, 2008 after 27 years of service. After retirement, he joined the team at the Navy's Operational Test and Evaluation Force (OPTEVFOR) as a government civilian employee as the Director, Advanced Programs and led the operational test and evaluation, fleet integration, and doctrine development for highly classified advanced technology programs. He retired from OPTEVFOR in July 2022 after 41 combined years of service to the country.

Captain Creange has logged over 3000 flight hours, 200 Combat hours, and 800 carrier arrestments. His personal decorations include: Two (2) Legions of Merit; Defense Meritorious Service Medal; three (3) Meritorious Service Medals; three (3) Individual Action Air Medals with bronze "V" for valor; three (3) Strike/Flight Air Medals; Joint Service Commendation Medal; three (3) Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medals one with bronze "V" for valor; Navy Marine Corp Achievement Medal.

Captain Creange holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the Pennsylvania State University, a Master of Aeronautical Science Degree from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, and a Master of Military History Degree from Norwich University.

He is married to the former Christine Ann Bruetsch of East Hartford, Connecticut. They have two adult daughters, Kaelin and Nicole, and reside in Loudon, Tennessee. After being in full retirement for a year, Rick continues his service to his community. In June 2023, Rick was installed as the Commander for the Veteran of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post #12135.

The Tellico Village VFW Post #12135 General meeting is held at 7:00 p.m. in the Tellico Village Yacht Club every third Wednesday of the month. Further information can be found on the Post website at: <https://www.tvfw.org/>.