

#1 | CAPT BRIAN C. KESSELRING | USN

// Flight Leader / Commanding Officer

Captain Brian C. Kesselring is a native of Fargo, North Dakota. He graduated from Concordia College, MN, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts undergraduate degree with majors in Physics, Mathematics, and Business while also competing in basketball and track & field. Upon graduation, Brian attended Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, Florida, where he earned his commission as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy in March 2001.

Brian was designated a Naval Aviator in August 2003, and received orders to the “Gladiators” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106 at Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana, Virginia, for F/A-18C Hornet training. His first fleet assignment was as a member of the “Gunslingers” of VFA-105, where he flew the F/A-18C and F/A-18E and completed two combat deployments aboard USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was then selected to attend the Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN), where he remained as a staff instructor from 2008-2011.

Upon completing his tour at TOPGUN, Brian reported to the “Tophatters” of VFA-14 at NAS Lemoore, California, where he served as the Training Officer and deployed aboard USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) in support of Operation New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom. Following his Training Officer tour, Brian reported to the “Tomcatters” of VFA-31 as a Department Head, where he deployed aboard the USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Inherent Resolve. During his tour with the “Tomcatters,” he was honored to receive the “LCDR Michael Longhardt” award for superior leadership.

Brian then received orders to Carrier Air Wing One as Assistant Operations Officer where he deployed aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. Following this tour, Brian reported to the Naval War College earning a Master of Arts in National Security Strategy, while participating in the Halsey Advanced Research Program.

Brian was then assigned as the Executive Officer of the “Sunliners” of VFA-81 in March 2017, subsequently assuming Command in June 2018 and deploying aboard USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. While serving as Commanding Officer, the “Sunliners” were honored to receive the Navy’s coveted “Battle Effectiveness” award.

Brian joined the Blue Angels in September 2019. He has accumulated more than 4,600 flight hours and has 812 carrier-arrested landings. His decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, six Strike/Flight Air Medals, three Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, and various personal, unit and service awards.