

Navy League of the U.S. | Imperial Valley Council

June 2019 Speaker Biography

LT JOSHUA WILLHITE, USN

Officer-In-Charge

Navy Munitions Command

Detachment El Centro



It was in 1995 that our council adopted Navy Munitions Command (NMC) Detachment El Centro – we call affectionately call them “Weapons” for short. The weapons detachment's focus is to provide visiting commands and fleet warfighters with quality ordnance while training in the desert.

NMC El Centro is comprised of 1 Officer and 36 Enlisted Sailors, providing west coast ordnance management for fleet and shore stations: to requisition, receive, store, assemble, maintain and issue all ordnance authorized for use by the various hosts, visiting and tenant units. They assemble and deliver conventional air launched weapons to the aircraft prior to take-off.

We are pleased that to announce that Lieutenant Josh Willhite, the Officer in Charge of NMC El Centro will be joining us give us an update about what’s happening with his unit.

A native of Hanford, California, Lieutenant Joshua Willhite began his Naval Career on 29 July 2003 when he entered recruit training in Great Lakes, Illinois. Following completion of Aircrew training in Pensacola, Florida he joined the Fleet as an undesignated Airman. He reported onboard Strike Fighter Squadron FOUR ONE, Lemoore, California where he served as a Line Division Plane Captain until assigned to the Ordnance Branch where he attained the best rating in the United States Navy, Aviation Ordnanceman.

He completed three Western Pacific Deployments in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM as the Flight Deck Coordinator and earned his Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist and Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist pins.

Following these deployments he reported onboard Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit Lemoore, California and was assigned to the Ordnance Branch as an instructor where he taught 64 classes, consisting of 512 students. It was during this time he was advanced to First Class Petty Officer.

In June 2009 he headed up a first ever Mobile Training Team from Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit Lemoore (CNATTU) and transferred to Atsugi, Japan to teach three severely needed Aviation Ordnance and Aviation Electronics Technician classes to allow Carrier Air Wing Five to gain the requisite Navy Enlisted Classifications (NECs) to operate in a forward deployed status. In September 2011, just before transferring from CNATTU he was promoted to Chief Petty Officer.

He returned to Lemoore to Strike Fighter Squadron EIGHT SIX as the Ordnance Branch Chief where he aided in the transition from F/A-18C Hornet to F/A-18E Super Hornet. After joining the Sidewinder team he was redirected to USS RONALD REAGAN. On board CVN 76 he went through a homeport shift from San Diego, California to Bremerton, Washington. During this tour he was selected as an Aviation Ordnance Limited Duty Officer and reported to Strike Fighter Squadron ONE FOUR SEVEN in December 2012.

He deployed with Carrier Air Wing ELEVEN (CVW-11) on board USS NIMITZ in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in 2013 during political tensions between both IRAN and the United States, this deployment was also extended due to the Syrian conflict. During contingency operations in the Red Sea, he took the lead in deciphering system failures in rarely used, stand-off weapons, ensuring the time critical strike capability of the air wing remained intact. During this tour at VFA-147 he was requested to obtain additional duties and served as the Avionics/Armament Division Officer in addition to his Ordnance Officer duties.

In March 2016 he reported to Navy Munitions Command CONUS West Division Detachment El Centro, California as the Officer-in-Charge.

Lieutenant Willhite is a graduate of Embry Riddle University where he received his Associates of Science Degree in Professional Aeronautics. Lieutenant Willhite's personal decorations include Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (2), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (4), Good Conduct Medal (3), Flag Letter of Commendation, and various campaign and unit awards.