

Executive Flight Detachment Uniforms of Chief Warrant Officer, W-4, Robert D'Agostino

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THE U.S. Army Transportation Museum, Fort Eustis, Virginia, currently has in its collection several uniform items of Chief Warrant Officer, W-4, Robert D'Agostino.¹ These items consist of two flying jackets, two flight suits, and a white bib. Chief Warrant Officer, W-4 (CW4) D'Agostino flew as an army pilot with the Executive Flight Detachment from 1974 through 1976 during the Nixon and Ford Administrations.

The Executive Flight Detachment was established on 1 January 1958 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to facilitate removal of the president, his family, and other high ranking government officials to safer places in case of war or other state emergencies. After completing Camp David as a presidential retreat and second White House, the White House staff began contemplating the best means of transport from Washington, D.C. The conclusion was to use helicopters. Several types were tried and the Bell UH-13J was finally accepted; two of them being purchased for the mission. These were later changed for the more capable CH-34. After modifications, the model designation was changed to VH-34 to reflect the VIP status of the passengers. This change affected the helicopters with the Executive Flight Detachment only.

The detachment originally consisted of pilots from both the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps with shared responsibility between 1958 and 1976. The Army's detachment was formed at Davison U.S. Army Airfield, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, while the Marines used Marine Helicopter Experimental Squadron 1 (HMX-1) at Marine Corps Air Station, Quantico, Virginia. The



FIG 1. CW4 D'Agostino's AG 344 Flyer's Jacket.



FIG 2. Leather nameplate as worn on CW4 D'Agostino's AG 344 Flyer's Jacket.

detachment came solely under the Marine Corps operation in 1976 as a Department of Defense cost cutting measure.²

CW4 D'Agostino donated two of his uniforms at two separate times; the first time in May 2004, and the second time in June 2006. Both donations consisted of an AG 344 Flyer's Jacket and a Light Weight Short Sleeve Flying Suit. The second donation also had with it a white bib. Since the items of the first donation are currently on exhibit and similar to those of the second donation, this article will address only the second donation.

The AG 344 Flyer's Jacket is a 40%/60% wool/polyester blend and was standard issue for pilots. The outer shell of the jacket is a wool/polyester blend. The lining is green nylon.



FIG 3. Cloth Presidential Seal as worn on CW4 D'Agostino's AG 344 Flyer's Jacket.

There is a zig-zag stitch pattern along the inside projecting about 1.5 inches from the zipper. The outer shell and the lining are separated with a layer of batting material. There are two slit pockets in front, each with a single snap closure at its center. The front is opened and closed by means of a metal zipper. The collar and cuffs are black elastic material. Metal non-subdued W-4 insignia are worn on each shoulder loop (FIG 1).

The pilot's name tag is black leather and is worn on the left breast and attached to the jacket by means of a hook and loop fastener. The pilot's aviation badge, name, rank, and service component are embossed in silver onto it in that order from top to bottom with the rank and service component together on the last row. A clear plastic sheet that covers the tag is stitched along all four sides using a heavy cloth thread. A cloth Seal of the President of the United States of America is sewn onto the right breast³ (FIGs 2-3).

The flight suit is one piece made of a light weight polyester material. It has short sleeves and there is a black metal zipper along the entire front closure from the neck to the crotch. Two faux pleated patch pockets are at the breast and two slit pockets are at the front waist. The two hip pockets have flaps with a single hook and loop fastener at the center. The legs are straight without cuffs. The sleeves have a 1-inch cuff sewn fast. There is a false waist belt on the back. Inside the waist, about where the kidneys are located, are the loop parts of two hook and loop fasteners. Attached to this are adjustment tabs.



FIG 4. CW4 D'Agostino's Light Weight Short Sleeve Flight Suit showing placement of the Executive Flight Detachment Insignia.

The U.S. Army Executive Flight Detachment insignia is sewn onto the right faux pocket (FIGs 4-5).

The bib is the standard pattern bib issued for special use and occasions. It is white rayon with two short tails sewn along one end. The bib is secured with a hook and loop fastener; a small rectangle of hooks at the end of one tail with a corresponding rectangle of loops the opposite tail.

The AG 344 Flyer's Jacket and Light Weight Short Sleeve Flight Suit from the first donation are currently on exhibit, along with other Executive Flight Detachment items, in the U.S. Army Transportation Corps Museum (FIG 6).

Notes

1. TRAN 2004.004 & TRAN 2006.057.
2. It has been stated that the reason for giving the mission to the Marine Corps is because then President Gerald Ford was formerly a U.S. Navy officer. However, the author has not been able to confirm this statement.
3. Although officially labeled as AG 344, the shade appears to be grayer than the AG 344 Army Green Uniform. The same is true for the Light Weight Short Sleeve Flight Suit.



FIG 5. The U.S. Army Executive Flight Detachment Insignia sewn onto the right faux pocket of the Light Weight Short Sleeve Flight Suit.

All photos courtesy of the U.S. Army Transportation Museum.



FIG 6. CW4 D'Agostino's uniform currently on exhibit at the U.S. Army Transportation Museum.