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First woman picked to lead carrier air wing

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Cmdr. Sara Joyner, who was selected for promotion to captain, is the first woman selected to head a Carrier Air Wing, according to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead

Roughead made the announcement Thursday at the 23rd annual Women's Leadership Symposium in Washington.

The specific wing and date of assignment has not been announced.

Joyner, a Naval Academy graduate, joined naval aviation in 1991 — two years before Congress changed the rules to allow women in combat roles.

Being one of the first women warriors who served amid the change was difficult, Joyner said in a 2008 Navy release.

"Recognition and respect grew each year as we proved that women could be valuable members of the Navy. ... We didn't attempt to lessen the Navy's demands, but instead worked as part of the team to excel as equals," she said.

Today, there are 317 female pilots, representing 4.2 percent of the Navy's total, and 228 naval flight officers, which is 6.9 percent of that field.

Joyner has more than 3,300 flight hours and 600 traps. She has flown the A-4 Skyhawk with two composite squadrons and the F/A-18 Hornet with three fighter squadrons.

Notably, she was the first woman to command an operational fighter squadron, the VFA 105 Gunslingers. She took the stick in March 2007 and led the Gunslingers during a seven-month combat deployment aboard the carrier Harry S Truman. The squadron flew more than 1,880 combat missions and delivered more than 35,000 pounds of ordnance in support of coalition ground troops in Iraq, according to Navy records.

In 2008, Joyner joined the staff of the director, Air Warfare Division at the Pentagon.