

# French admiral visits

**By Penny Randall**  
Editor

Rear Adm. Henri Bobin, commandant of the French Naval Aviation Command was on board NAS Meridian May 5 to visit with the 11 French Naval aviators currently undergoing instruction at Training Squadron 7.

This was Bobin's second visit to Meridian. His first came two years ago when he witnessed France's first female strike pilot earn her Wings of Gold during a winging ceremony. The purpose of Bobin's visit was to evaluate the training the French students receive in Meridian and at NAS Pensacola, Fla.

"I told the students that we are here in the U.S. to experience the tight Navy culture -- the Navy spirit," Bobin said. "I'm fully convinced that training here is the way go.

Training from the sea is a bit different than the way Air Force trains. In France, the weight of training in the Navy and the Air Force is completely different. The Navy is a smaller very efficient force. For me, the Navy way of doing things is very important. There is a richness to be able to work from the sea and the land."

Bobin said the training the French pilots receive in Meridian is invaluable.

"I can't find this training in France," Bobin expressed. "The training here is very well structured. It's very good for the French students to learn Navy culture."

Prior to arriving at NAS Meridian to train, French pilots are educated on the English language in a nine-week language course at the Defense Language Institute at Lakeland Air Force Base. They then attend primary training for about six weeks at NAS Pensacola. A few students remain in Pensacola. Currently three French aviators are located there, for advanced training while the majority transfer to Meridian.

In addition to the student aviators, VT-7 is also home to two French instructors, Lt. Cmdr. Jerome Laye and Lt. Benoit Leray who monitor their progress as well as train U.S. Naval aviators.

"The French students use the same grading scale as the U.S. pilots -- they are not treated any different or given any special treatment," Lt. Leray said. "The French pilots are going to the fleet in France when they leave here just like the American pilots.