



## Naval Air Station Fort Lauderdale Museum

*National Register of Historic Places  
A Florida Heritage Site*

Educating . Preserving . Honoring Heroes  
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Dear Student,

Thank you for your interest in the Naval Air Station Fort Lauderdale Museum. Here are some answers pertaining the disappearance of Flight 19, one of the great aviation mysteries. At the bottom of this article you will find some helpful links to the history of Flight 19 (with photographs, documents, and information), on our website.

### 1- How did the Bermuda Triangle get its name?

- The US Military and NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), do not recognize the name or term "Bermuda Triangle." The term "Bermuda Triangle" or "Devil's Triangle" was first mentioned in an ARGOSY Magazine article, written by Vincent H. Gaddis in 1964. This area is an imaginary area that can be roughly outlined / triangulated on a map by connecting Miami, Florida; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and the Bahamas.
- Prior to the Argosy Article, in 1952, writer George X. Sands, had noted in a report in *Fate* magazine that an unusually large number of strange accidents had occurred in the region, such as Flight 19, which originated the mythology of the "Bermuda Triangle."
- Documented evidence indicates that a significant percentage of the incidents were based on false facts, inaccurately reported, or embellished by later authors.
- The area is a busy, and heavily traveled area, and it's known for sudden, violent storms, and seas that can quickly turn deadly.
- There are several Natural explanations to the disappearances such as: Compass Variations (one of two places on Earth where a magnetic compass does point towards true north); the surface current of the Gulf Stream (swift and turbulent- can quickly erase evidence of a disaster); Human Error; Violent Weather; and even large fields of Methane gas (where large bubbles could sink a ship).

### 2- What strange things have happened in that area?

- March 1918, during World War I, the *USS Cyclops* vanished in the Bermuda Triangle area. That

ship may have been a casualty of war, but the December 1945 disappearance of Flight 19, a training squadron of five U.S Navy Avenger torpedo bombers, became the most notorious of disappearances associated with the Bermuda Triangle. The squadron left Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with 14 crewmen and disappeared after radioing in several distress messages. A seaplane PBM Mariner, sent in search of the squadron also vanished 30 minutes into the search, with 13 men aboard. Those six airplane disappearances are frequently cited as the Bermuda Triangle legend/mystery.

- Besides the aircraft lost from Flight 19— six other aircraft incidents have happened (it's a dynamic list, so dates and occurrences vary).
- Eleven ships are noted as disappearances (it's a dynamic list, so dates and occurrences vary).

### **3- Are there any pictures or videos of strange things that have happened?**

Obviously it would be very hard to find any videos or photos at the actual time of the incident/disappearance. However, there are many books, magazines, artworks, re-enactments, and documentaries from many authors. Each relates their own versions of what they think happened.

### **4- What do you believe happened to Flight 19?**

The NAS Fort Lauderdale Museum is a repository of all things relating to Flight 19. We maintain a neutral stance of all the theories currently known. These theories go from earth's "phenomena" such as magnetic fields, or storms, vortexes, methane gases, extraterrestrials, to accounts that they survived by landing in the Florida Everglades and went AWOL (abandoned their military duty without permission). No trace of them was ever found, so that is why after all these years, it is still a mystery. Several colorful and far-out theories surround the planes' disappearance, including one where they were all abducted by extraterrestrials. Another theory asserts they wandered into a strong electromagnetic disturbance that interfered with their compasses. More practically, experts think that Taylor, the squadron leader, simply lost his bearings after his compasses failed. Believing he was over the Florida Keys, Taylor aimed the Squadron northeast, in hopes that would lead the single-engine bombers back to Fort Lauderdale. Instead, it led the Squadron out over the open Atlantic. To compound matters, the planes likely flew into the late afternoon stormy weather that was recorded on that day. Perhaps he realized his mistake and aimed the planes west toward Florida's coast, but only after it was too late.

### **4- What kind of things disappear?**

Ships (military, commercial, and private large and small vessels); aircraft (military, commercial, and private aircraft), and also there is a recorded incident on land in 1969: Great Isaac Lighthouse in Bimini, Bahamas - its two keepers disappeared and were never found (a hurricane passed through at the time of the disappearances).

### **5- How many things disappear a year?**

The U.S. Coast Guard receives more than 8,000 distress calls per year, averaging more than 20 per day from that area, often from sailors who have run out of gas. The Bermuda Triangle area claimed more than 1,000 lives during the twentieth century.

### **6- What or who was the latest disappearance so far?**

2015: SS *El Faro*, sank off of the coast of the Bahamas within the triangle on September 20, 2015. The boat was missing for exactly one month until search crews identified the vessel 15,000 feet below the surface.

## **FLIGHT 19 RESOURCES ON OUR WEBSITE:**

The Mystery of Flight 19:

<http://www.nasflmuseum.com/flight-19.html>

Disappearance of Flight 19: Visual Exhibit

<http://www.nasflmuseum.com/flight-19-exhibit.html>

NASFL Museum's Director relates Flight 19 – C-SPAN History Channel:

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?325815-1/mystery-flight-19>

Flight 19 – Annual Memorial Ceremony:

<http://www.nasflmuseum.com/memorial.html>

If you need in-depth research: the complete *Flight 19 Naval Report Investigation, & Exhibits*, are available, from the original U.S Navy investigation microfilms (all proceeds go to the Museum):

<http://www.nasflmuseum.com/museum-books.html>