

Situational awareness or situation awareness (SA) is the understanding of an environment, its elements, and how it changes with respect to time or other factors. Situational awareness is important for effective decision making in many environments. SA is FAC imperative!

BACKGROUND

Out of pilot training, I flew the C-133A Cargomaster (widow maker) for 3 years before going to Vietnam as a Forward Air Controller (FAC). This was a great airborne flight simulator that had real-time emergencies (prop, engines, hydraulics, electrical, etc.) There were 8 crashes killing all crew members and one ditching that all survived. As a copilot, I experienced one two engine (one on fire) landing that only made it to 800 feet after takeoff. Most of our flights were 14-to-21-day trips to Vietnam and back.

I arrived at Tam Ky, Quang Tin Province April 1969. The Jake FAC IP had me combat ready in 5 days. The last thing he did was to put a bag over my head after getting airborne, fly to one of the valleys where we did recon in every-day life and tell me to remove the bag. Then, remaining at 1000' MSL, take him back to Tam Ky International (what we called our paved runway). He was ensuring that from previous flights I had learned that situational awareness was going to keep me alive as a FAC.

My family lived in England for 4 years while I supported an RAF Air Traffic Control unit near RAF Mildenhall. We often visited the city of Norwich, England, and I loved to check my 2 older sons and wife on their situational awareness. After walking all over the city, I would tell them to take me back to the car park to go home. Invariably they would head off in the wrong direction. I have also been working on my granddaughter, she has no idea what is happening around her all the time. Even though she is 16. Thankfully, she has no driver's license, or she would be an accident about to happen while driving.

My wife is experiencing early Alzheimer symptoms by seeing people in our yard. The Delaware State Fair. It had just ended after 10 days and the parking lot across a 4' deep ditch was full of cars. She said she saw people in our yard during this time and I told her there was no one there, which left her very frustrated. I told an elderly lady at church last Sunday of my wife's frustration, and she said what she sees is real to her and I need to agree with her that they are there. I've gone into the yard several times and yelled at these people to get lost. This past week she has been less frustrated and happier than me than having me telling her they don't exist.

Situational awareness ALSO means you have to see things as others see them.

My flying experience in the Air Force was a great way to learn situational awareness. I still use it while driving and doing computer tech work.

Bob Monroe, Jake 71/Bully 16