



Photo by Vernon Pugh

Tenth Osprey Lands at Pax

The tenth and final engineering, maintenance and development (EMD) version V-22 *Osprey* arrived at NAS Patuxent River, Md., on 29 January. (Above, another EMD *Osprey* is towed out of the hangar for an early-morning test.) This aircraft will be used to test the *Osprey*'s capabilities—such as formation flying and confined area landings—and to train test pilots in preparation for operational testing in June. Sea trials are scheduled for the end of the year.

VAQ Name Change

The Chief of Naval Operations approved the redesignation of all EA-6B *Prowler* units from Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadrons to Electronic Attack Squadrons. The VAQ designator remains the same. Other changes associated with this redesignation include the renaming of the *Prowler* wing as Electronic Attack Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet, and the

Electronic Combat Weapons School will now be Electronic Attack Weapons School.

Flight Suit Clarification

On 6 March the Vice Chief of Naval Operations clarified the policy regarding when and where Naval Aviation personnel can wear flight suits and leather jackets. Personnel on flight status may wear a flight suit, with or without the issued leather flight jacket, to and from work (including short duration stops); on military transport aircraft; and during official business meetings away from the member's home base. Flight suits are still considered inappropriate for commercial travel. Refer to NAVADMN 164/97 for more information.

Dog Days at Willow Grove

Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, Willow Grove, Pa., found an unusual method to clear the airfield's runways of birds: a four-year-old



JO1 John Howard

Jackie the border collie—shown here with flight planning dispatcher ACAN Jim Cole, left, and one of her handlers, firefighter Michael Evanick—is on duty keeping birds away from the runways at Willow Grove.

border collie. And the plan seems to be working. In the previous five years, birds had caused about \$58,000 in damage to aircraft. Since

the runways came under the dog's watchful eye, only one bird strike has been reported.

Simplifying Seahawks

Fleet maintainers responsible for the *Seahawk* family of helicopters—the SH-60B, SH-60F and HH-60H—now have a portable reference library at their fingertips. The Interactive Electronic Technical Manuals system developed by Sikorsky Corporation includes over 15,000 pages of maintenance, testing, troubleshooting and parts manuals loaded into a single, hand-held device that resembles the display screen of a laptop computer. With the touch of a pen-shaped mouse on the touch-sensitive screen, users have ready access to information that previously was found in 100 printed manuals, and can search electronically for specific data.



Richard Zellmer

Sikorsky's Interactive Electronic Technical Manuals system puts a wealth of information literally at the fingertips of H-60 *Seahawk* maintainers.

Mishaps

An EA-6B *Prowler* of Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 134, NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., was flying over Turkey on 5 February

when it suffered a bird strike. The lower half of the radome was shattered, navigational equipment was lost, and debris destroyed the right engine. Despite these handicaps, compounded by compressor stalls



The VAQ-134 *Garudas* crew—left to right, Lt. Hayes, Ltjg. Carbone, Capt. Serage and Lt. Garcia—celebrate safely landing their damaged *Prowler* after a bird strike.

In the Gulf



PH3 Brian Fleske

John C. Stennis (CVN 73), top, arrived in the Arabian Gulf on 12 March to relieve *George Washington* (CVN 74). This six-month deployment is the first for *Stennis*, which will then proceed to her new home port in San Diego, Calif.

and flames in the left engine, the crew—Capt. Dave Serage, USAF, Lts. Mitch Hayes and Jacob Garcia and Ltjg. Chris Carbone—landed the plane safely at Erkilet Air Base.

On 8 February, an F/A-18 *Hornet* of Strike Fighter Squadron 81, NAS Cecil Field, Fla., was lost after launching from *Eisenhower* (CVN 69) during flight operations off Puerto Rico. The pilot, LCdr. Tom Halley, ejected safely and was recovered by an SH-60F *Seahawk* of Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 15, NAS Jacksonville, Fla.

Dynamic Super Stallion

A Marine Corps CH-53E *Super Stallion* lifts off from the amphibious assault ship *Wasp* (LHD 1) on 24 March during Exercise Dynamic Response '98. The training exercise illustrated NATO's capability to deploy strategic reserve forces into Bosnia-Herzegovina.



PH3 Renso Amariz

A Light Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 47 SH-60B *Seahawk* crashed during a flight from its home base at NAS North Island, Calif., on 6 March. The five occupants—Lts. Kelly Mackey and John Lee; Ltjgs. Donald Hillegas and Kent Koontz; and AW3 Daniel Garber—were killed.

An S-3B *Viking* of Sea Control Squadron 41, NAS North Island, Calif., crashed off southern California on 31 March. The crew—LCdr. Paul Ljuba, Lt. Robert Fryer, AW2 Mark Wendell and AW3 Brian Vaughn—were rescued by Helicopter Combat Support Squadrons 11 and 85, based at North Island.

A T-34C *Turbo-Mentor* of Training Squadron 6, NAS Whiting Field, Fla., suffered a bird strike just after takeoff on a night training flight on 26 March. The instructor pilot in the front seat, Lt. James Deyo, USCG, was knocked unconscious. The student, 2nd Lt. Bill Howlett, USMC, with only 15 hours of daylight flight time, took over the controls and prepared to land. On approach, the instructor regained consciousness and landed the plane despite serious facial injuries (see story, p. 15).

For the Record

- The T-45C *Goshawk*, equipped with the digital Cockpit-21, completed developmental testing at NAS Patuxent River, Md., on 9 February. It arrived at its permanent home, NAS Meridian, Miss., on 17 February for operational testing scheduled to run through August.

- Northrop Grumman was awarded a \$150 million contract to upgrade the EA-6B *Prowler*. The Increased Capability-III version will provide a reactive tactical jamming system and new displays, controls and software. Initial operating capability is planned for early 2004.

- The Navy and Air Force exercised a \$60 million option for 22 production T-6A *Texan IIs* for the Joint Primary Aircraft Training System, bringing the total ordered up to 46.

- Newport News Shipbuilding received contracts for work on two nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. The first is for the purchase of equipment and advance planning for the extended overhaul of *Enterprise* (CVN 65), scheduled to begin in 1999. The second covers preparation for the overhaul and refueling of *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69), scheduled for 2000.

Armed Helo Takes Off



On 19 January Light Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 44 Det 4 demonstrated the Navy's armed helicopter concept with the successful firing of an AGM-114 Hellfire missile.





Disestablished VF-45 Blackbirds

An 8 March 1996 ceremony at NAS Key West, Fla., marked the disestablishment (officially 31 March) of Fighter Squadron (VF) 45 after 33 years of service. Cdr. John T. DuGene was the last CO of the *Blackbirds*.

Established as Attack Squadron (VA) 45 at NAS Jacksonville, Fla., on 15 February 1963, the *Blackbirds* carried on the traditions of an earlier VA-45 that was disestablished in March 1958. The new squadron's role as a replacement training squadron for future A-1 *Skyraider* crews and maintenance personnel with A-1E/H and T-28B *Trojan* aircraft was short lived. In April 1964, VA-45 transferred its *Skyraiders* and acquired TF-9J *Cougar* jet trainers, operating them along with T-28Bs in its new mission as an instrument training squadron. The squadron also moved to nearby NAS Cecil Field, Fla. In March 1967, VA-45 began receiving TA-4F *Skyhawks* to replace its TF-9Js, and by 1969 its T-28Bs had been transferred.

In 1970, VA-45 assumed the additional mission of providing a detachment of A-4s to provide a limited air defense capability for the antisubma-

An F/A-18 *Hornet* and F-5E *Tiger II* from VF-45 display their adversary markings.

rine aircraft carrier *Intrepid* (CVS 11). Detachment 11, equipped with A-4C versions, operated in the Atlantic during 1971 and was disestablished in November. A second detachment, Det 1, was formed that year to fly the A-4E version from *Intrepid*. This det, deployed to the North Atlantic and Mediterranean from July to October 1972, was heavily involved in training its pilots in preparation for expanding the unit from 5 to 16 A-4Es as part of the new CV concept. Detachment 1 deployed to the Mediterranean on board *Intrepid* from November 1972 until May 1973; its operations ended with the decommissioning of *Intrepid*, and the A-4Es were transferred.

In 1971, TA-4Js began supplementing the squadron's TA-4Fs, replacing them by 1974. In 1976, VA-45 assumed the secondary mission of dissimilar air combat maneuvering (DACM) adversary training. In April 1980, the *Blackbirds* moved to Key West and assumed operation of the T-39D *Sabreliner* assigned there. On 1 October 1984, the adversary role became the *Blackbirds*' primary mission as they relinquished the instrument training role. A-4Es were acquired to perform the adver-



sary mission. On 7 February 1985, VA-45 was redesignated VF-45 and assigned to Commander Fighter Wing 1.

During 1986, VF-45 developed the first strike fighter air combat maneuvering syllabus for F/A-18 *Hornet* pilots. The squadron was assigned to Commander Light Attack Wing 1 (later Commander Strike Fighter Wing 1) on 1 October 1986. In August 1987, the F-16N *Fighting Falcon* and its two-seat variant, the TF-16N, were added to VF-45's line. These supersonic aircraft enabled the squadron to simulate more modern threats. Beginning in 1989, the F-5E/F *Tiger II* fighter augmented the F-16s and A-4s. In June 1990, VF-45 established a permanent A-4 detachment at Cecil Field to more easily support the strike fighter squadrons based there. The TA-4Js and A-4Es were retired in July 1994, followed in December by the F-16s. The F/A-18A *Hornet* was added in October 1994 to replace the F-16s.

The Navy's decision to consolidate all adversary training into the Naval Air Reserve led to the demise of VF-45, which transferred its F/A-18s, some to reserve Fighter Composite Squadron (VFC) 12 at NAS Oceana, Va., and delivered its F-5s to reserve VFC-13 at NAS Fallon, Nev. An F-5E flew the squadron's last flight on 7 March 1996, and the *Blackbirds* were history.

VFA-127 Desert Bogeys

A 23 March 1996 ceremony at NAS Fallon, Nev., marked the disestablishment (officially 31 March) of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 127 after 34 years of service. The *Desert Bogeys* were the Navy's last active duty adversary squadron.

The squadron traces its origins to 12 July 1961, when an advance party of one officer and 17 enlisted personnel arrived at NAS Lemoore, Calif. On 24 July, the group became Detachment Alpha of Attack Squadron (VA) 126, a jet instrument training unit headquartered at NAS Miramar, Calif. The det operated two-seat TF-9J *Cougar* jet trainers to provide all-weather jet-instrument and jet-transition training for Pacific Fleet aviators.

On 15 June 1962, the detachment was disestablished, its personnel forming the nucleus of the *Royal Blues* of VA-127, established the same day. In August 1966, the two-seat TA-4F *Skyhawk* began replacing the TF-9Js, which were phased out the following year. In 1970, with the increase in the number of A-7 *Corsair II* squadrons and the diminishing number of fleet A-4 squadrons, VA-127 took on the additional mission of fleet replacement training for A-4 pilots and maintenance personnel, many of whom took the A-4 into combat in the Vietnam War. With the new mission came single-seat A-4E and A-4F versions of the *Skyhawk* to augment the TA-4Fs.

In April 1971, TA-4Js began augmenting the squadron's TA-4Fs, and the squadron started training its first foreign students, Argentine Navy pilots, some of whom would fly the A-4 in combat against the British in the 1982 Falklands War. Later, in 1973, VA-127 trained A-4 pilots for the Singapore air force. The

squadron's A-4Es and A-4Fs were phased out in 1973 and 1975, respectively. The fleet replacement training mission was phased out in July 1975 as the last fleet carrier-based A-4 squadrons were being retired. The squadron continued instrument and jet transition instruction, as well as A-4 training for foreign pilots, and took on the mission of dissimilar air combat maneuvering (DACM) adversary training. DACM became an official mission in November 1975 and would eventually eclipse the squadron's other missions. Most of the squadron's operations involved training Pacific Fleet A-7 squadrons in defensive tactics against enemy aircraft. In 1981, the squadron adopted



the name *Cylons*. In October 1983, adversary training became VA-127's primary mission when instrument training was dropped as a mission.

On 1 March 1987, VA-127 was redesignated VFA-127, in concert with the advent of the F/A-18 *Hornet* strike fighter squadrons steadily replacing the A-7 squadrons at Lemoore. That September, the squadron's long-serving TA-4Fs were phased out and its TA-4Js were augmented by F-5E/F *Tiger II* fighters and, briefly by T-38B and QT-38A *Talon* trainers. The squadron moved that October to Fallon, from which it could more easily support carrier air wing training, and became known as the *Desert Bogeys*. The squadron's last *Skyhawks*, TA-4Js, were phased out in 1990.

In March 1992, VFA-127 acquired F/A-18A/B *Hornets*, allowing the *Desert Bogeys* to simulate the latest generation threat. The Navy's decision to transfer the fleet adversary training mission entirely to the Naval Reserve, however, led to the disestablishment of

VFA-127. The *Desert Bogeys* transferred their F/A-18s to other units and their F-5E/F aircraft to Fighter Composite Squadron 13, a reserve unit that moved from Miramar to Fallon in 1996 to assume the adversary role for air wing work-up training.

VF-24 Fighting Renegades

A 27 June 1996 ceremony at NAS Miramar, Calif., marked the disestablishment (officially 31 August) of Fighter Squadron (VF) 24 after 41 years of service. Cdr. Robert J. "Herb" Wilson was the last CO of the *Fighting Renegades*.

VF-24 was originally established at NAS Moffett Field, Calif., as the VF-211 *Red Checkertails*, flying the FJ-3M *Fury* jet fighter. The squadron made one western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment with Carrier Air Group (CVG) 21 on board *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA 31) in 1956–1957 before switching to the supersonic F8U-1 *Crusader* fighter. The squadron deployed with this aircraft aboard *Midway* (CVA 41) with CVG-2 during 1957–1959, operating off Taiwan during the Quemoy-Matsu crisis.

On 9 March 1959, VF-211 exchanged designations with sister squadron VF-24, becoming the VF-24 *Red Checkertails*. The squadron deployed to WESTPAC on board *Midway* later that year, operating off Southeast Asia during the first Laotian crisis. The next deployment, in 1961 with F8U-2 (F-8C) versions, brought the squadron off Southeast Asia for the second Laotian crisis. The squadron made two more WESTPAC deployments on *Midway* before shifting to Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 21 aboard *Hancock* (CVA 19) in 1964. In September the squadron moved to its new home at Miramar. From 1 to 17 September, the squadron marked its aircraft for an anticipated redesignation to VF-214, which was canceled.

From 1965 to 1972, VF-24 made nine deployments to the Vietnam war zone, all with CVW-21, and all on board *Hancock* except the second, which was aboard *Bon Homme Richard*. The squadron flew F-8H versions for the fourth and fifth deployments, and the F-8J version for the last four Vietnam cruises. The



An F-14B *Tomcat* from VF-24 during Operation Desert Storm.

squadron participated extensively in combat operations over Vietnam, from the initial Flaming Dart raids in 1965 through the Rolling Thunder campaign and the 1972 Linebacker I operation. Combat operations over Laos and Cambodia ended during the 1973 deployment, which also included operations in the Indian Ocean in response to the 1973 Yom Kippur War in the Middle East. The final Vietnam deployment saw the squadron covering Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of U.S. and Vietnamese personnel as North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam. During the war, VF-24 pilots shot down two MiG-17 fighters on 19 May 1967 and two plus one probable on 21 July 1967. During the war, VF-24 lost six F-8Cs, one F-8H and one F-8J to enemy action, along with three pilots killed and three captured, one of whom died in captivity.

Upon return in 1975, VF-24 retired its F-8s and began transition to the F-14A *Tomcat*, receiving the first in December. VF-24 and sister squadron VF-211 became the *Tomcat* squadrons assigned to CVW-9, an association that would last for 20 years. The squadron changed its name to the *Fighting Renegades* in 1979. VF-24 made four WESTPAC and Indian Ocean deployments on board *Constellation* (CV 64) from 1977 to 1982, including operations during the Yemen and the Iran hostage crises.

In 1983, VF-24 deployed aboard *Ranger* (CV 61) to WESTPAC and the Indian Ocean. On this deployment, the squadron also operated off Nicaragua as part of the U.S. effort to

influence political events in that strife-torn nation. When CVW-9 was assigned to *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63), VF-24 made two WESTPAC and Indian Ocean deployments in 1985, and a 1987 "round-the-world" cruise prior to *Kitty Hawk* entering Philadelphia Naval Shipyard for a service-life extension overhaul.

During a work-up cycle in April 1986, VF-24 was called upon to execute Operation Coyote, which involved positioning four fully capable F-14s, 150 maintenance personnel and all required spare parts more than 2,000 miles away to NAS Adak, Alaska, in less than 48 hours. The squadron made the move in less than 30 hours and operated from Adak for seven days, conducting long-range intercepts of Soviet reconnaissance aircraft.

After participation in a 1988 RIMPAC exercise on board *Nimitz* (CVN 68), VF-24 deployed in September 1988 to the northern and western Pacific, operating off Korea during the Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, as a discouragement against potential North Korean disruption. Later in the deployment, the squadron supported Operation Earnest Will, the U.S. escort of re-flagged Kuwaiti tankers through the Arabian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War.

In April 1989, VFs 24 and 211 became the first and only fleet fighter squadrons to transition to the F-14B version of the *Tomcat*. The *Fighting Renegades* operated their new aircraft in the Bering Strait from *Nimitz* during the 1989 NORPAC exercise. In August 1990, VF-24 became the first fleet squadron to drop air-to-ground ordnance from an F-14, a benchmark in an emerging strike role for the F-14 after two decades as strictly an inter-

ceptor and later also a reconnaissance aircraft.

VF-24 arrived in the Arabian Gulf in March 1991 on board *Nimitz*, enforcing the truce following Operation Desert Storm, and supporting Operation Provide Comfort, the relief and security effort for Kurds in northern Iraq. After returning to Miramar, VFs 24 and 211 traded their F-14Bs for F-14As in 1992, the result of a decision to consolidate all fleet F-14Bs on the East Coast. VF-24 returned to the gulf on board *Nimitz* in 1993, enforcing the no-fly zone over southern Iraq (Operation Southern Watch) and supporting the relief operations in Somalia.

In December 1995, VF-24 deployed to WESTPAC and the Indian Ocean aboard *Nimitz* one last time, supporting Southern Watch. *Nimitz* was pulled out of the Arabian Gulf early, however, to establish a presence off Taiwan in March 1996 as that nation held its first fully democratic elections in the face of military intimidation from China. VF-24 flew patrols off Taiwan to guard against military action from Chinese air and naval units exercising in the Taiwan Straits.

The decision to disestablish VF-24 in 1996 came as part of the restructuring of most carrier air wings to include only one F-14 squadron. Tactical Air Reconnaissance Pod System-capable VF-211 was chosen to remain as CVW-9's *Tomcat* squadron, and VF-24 transferred about one-third of its personnel to VF-211. As a tribute to its sister squadron, VF-211 added VF-24's trademark "fast check" marking to its "checkered field" tail markings.

Rick Burgess wrote the disestablishment articles.