

AIRSCOOP

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During a high-tempo exercise conducted off California in July, *Nimitz* and Carrier Air Wing 9 demonstrated just how much fire power can be projected from a forward-deployed carrier battle group. SURGEX was a strike warfare demonstration designed to “surge” the number of strike sorties flown by the battle group from 100 to 200 per day for four consecutive days. During 98 hours of continuous flight operations, over 1,000 sorties were launched, more than 800 of which were strike sorties that dropped over 1,300 air-to-ground weapons. This four-day surge was made possible by augmenting ship’s company with just 200 additional

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Images from SURGEX, counterclockwise from top: An F-14 *Tomcat* of VF-211 takes off from *Nimitz*; an ordnance crew attached to VMFA-314 loads a MK 83 inert bomb on an F/A-18C *Hornet*; CVW-9 aircraft prepare to launch as auxiliary command ship *Coronado* (AGF 11) passes by; and safety observer ABH3 Corey Vogel watches aviation ordnancemen deliver inert weapons to the flight deck.



PHAN John A. Bringer



Super Hornet Update

The F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet* program reached two major milestones this fall during testing at NAS Patuxent River, Md. On 29 August a single-seat F/A-18E achieved the program's 1,500th flight hour, and on 12 September another E-model logged the program's 1,000th flight.

On 3 September the *Super Hornet's* compatibility with aircraft carrier emergency barricades was tested at Naval Air Engineering Station, Lakehurst, N.J. An unmanned E-model fitted with wing tip missile launchers was successfully arrested after a 6,000-foot, 110.8-knot run atop a rail-guided push car powered by four

With almost two-thirds of the *Super Hornet* flight test program complete, the F/A-18E, below, has achieved 1,500 flight hours and 1,000 flights. Right, an unmanned E-model tested the emergency barricade at NAES Lakehurst, N.J.

jet engines. Other tests will examine the effect of different speeds and weapon loads.

The first production F/A-18E *Super Hornet* hit the assembly line at Boeing (formerly McDonnell Douglas) facilities in St. Louis, Mo., on 15 September. The first F/A-18Es are scheduled to be delivered in 1999.

Information on the F/A-18E/F program is available on the internet at <http://pma265.navair.navy.mil>.

McDonnell Douglas No More

August 1 marked the end of a major name in military aviation as

the McDonnell Douglas Aircraft Group became part of the Boeing Company. The merger of these two industry giants created one of the world's largest aerospace companies with about \$48 billion in annual revenue and over 200,000 employees.

Nimitz Cruises to Persian Gulf

Nimitz (CVN 68) departed her West Coast home port in Bremerton, Wash., for the last time on 1 September as she began a six-month Mediterranean cruise. After the deployment, *Nimitz* will head



Moving Toward CVN 77

Artists' concepts hint at the innovations that could be incorporated into the next *Nimitz*-class aircraft carrier, CVN 77. Newport News Shipbuilding, Va., the designer and builder of the ship, is examining both one- and two-island designs, featuring stealthier elements such as enclosed antennas, curved flight deck edges and internal aircraft elevators. The new carrier may utilize new operational concepts such as a "pit stop" type, semiautomated refueling and servicing station on the flight deck. CVN 77, scheduled for delivery to the Navy in 2008, will be a technological bridge between today's carriers and the carrier of the future, CVX.



Newport News Shipbuilding



Newport News Shipbuilding

to her new home port in Norfolk.

While the *Nimitz* battle group was in transit on 29 September, Iranian planes bombed rebel bases in southern Iraq, precipitating the launch of Iraqi fighters. Both the Iranian and Iraqi flights violated the "no-fly" zone established after the 1991 Persian Gulf war. In response the *Nimitz* battle group was ordered to the gulf on 2 October, ahead of its scheduled arrival in the region.

Sensor-to-Shooter Demo

Fleet Battle Experiment Bravo, the second in a series designed to test warfighting concepts and capabilities, took place during the Third Fleet's 10-week Pacific deployment that started 28 August.

The experiment began with Navy Sea-Air-Land team members transmitting a digital image of a target at

Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, Calif., via satellite to the Quantum Leap laboratory at Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado, Va., where it was placed on a classified web page. Personnel aboard *Coronado* (AGF 11) transmitted the image to the cockpit of an F/A-18 *Hornet*. The near-real-time imagery enabled the pilot to make a successful strike on the bridge.

This demonstration was a major

step in the integration of tactical air power into the "Ring of Fire" concept, in which all assets—ground troops, ships, submarines and aircraft—are linked together through a naval fire support computer network.

Marines Return to Miramar

A ceremony on 1 October marked the return of the air station at Miramar, Calif., to Marine Corps control following the Navy's 50-year tenure. MCAS Miramar's commanding officer is Col. Thomas A. Caughlan.

JSF Design Reviews



Lockheed Martin

Lockheed Martin's Joint Strike Fighter model during testing. Both Lockheed Martin and Boeing completed initial design reviews with program officials.

Both Lockheed Martin and Boeing completed their initial design reviews for their versions of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), in June and September, respectively, laying the groundwork for the detailed design phase. A competition winner will be selected in 2001, with actual fighter deployment planned for 2008.

Bataan Commissioned

The newest amphibious assault ship, *Bataan* (LHD 5), was commis-

sioned on 20 September at Ingalls Shipbuilding, Pascagoula, Miss.

Bataan is the second ship to bear the name, commemorating the heroic defense of the Bataan Peninsula, Philippines, during WW II. She will be home-ported in Norfolk, Va., as part of Amphibious Group 2.

Cargo Hook Soars



The SkyHook, shown here carried by an Army H-60 Blackhawk, is undergoing tests at NAS Patuxent River, Md.

Magellan Technology's patented SkyHook cargo management system (CMS) was delivered to NAS Patuxent River, Md., for testing in early October. The CMS is a computer-controlled, multihook cargo carrier that allows a helicopter to carry up to six payloads simultaneously, and release single or multiple loads on command. The three-hook configuration can carry 27,000 pounds, and can quickly be converted in the field to six hooks with a 36,000-pound total capacity. The computer provides real-time information about the load's condition, including individual and combined payload weights. The SkyHook was flown under a Marine CH-46 *Sea Knight* during the Hunter-Warrior Advanced Warfighting Experiment earlier this year and is also being tested by the Army.

Mishaps

On 11 August, an AV-8B *Harrier* of Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 542, MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., crashed 60 miles southeast of Yuma, Ariz., during a training exercise. The pilot, Capt. Samuel Hayden Smith, ejected safely. The plane's four unexploded 1,000-pound bombs were recovered the next day.

Another VMA-542 *Harrier* crashed near Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, on 16 October. Its pilot, Capt. Stephen E. Brooks, also ejected safely.

The pilot of an F-14 *Tomcat* of Fighter Squadron 143, NAS Oceana, Va., was accidentally ejected from his aircraft during a landing on board *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74) on 12 August. He was recovered from the water by a Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 5 H-60 *Seahawk*. *Stennis* personnel rescued the radar intercept officer (RIO) from the pilotless aircraft as it sat on the flight deck with engines still running. Both men were treated for minor injuries on board.

On 14 September an F/A-18C *Hornet* of Strike Fighter Squadron 15, NAS Cecil Field, Fla., crashed off Oman while operating from *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67), killing the pilot, Lt. Jason E. Jakubowski.

A Marine All-Weather Fighter-Attack Squadron 224 F/A-18D *Hornet* crashed off North Carolina on 15 September. Pilot Capt. Brian M. Smith and weapons sensor officer Capt. Stephen S. McDonald were killed.

On 2 October an F-14 *Tomcat* of Fighter Squadron 101, NAS Oceana, Va., crashed off North Carolina. The RIO, Cdr. Craig A. Roll, was rescued unhurt by a Coast Guard HH-60 *Jayhawk* from CGAS Elizabeth City, N.C. The pilot, LCdr. Logan A. Allen III, was not found.

Responding to a series of aircraft mishaps in several services, on 17 September Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen called for a 24-hour, service-wide suspension of military training flights.



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Disestablished

VA-196 Main Battery

Attack Squadron (VA) 196 was disestablished in a ceremony on 28 February 1997 at NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., after over 48 years of service. Cdr. Dave Frederick was the last CO of the *Main Battery*, the last A-6 squadron on the West Coast.

VA-196 was originally established on 15 July 1948 at NAS Alameda, Calif., as Fighter Squadron (VF) 153, the *Thundercats*, equipped with the F8F-1 *Bearcat* fighter. The squadron spent brief periods on board *Tarawa* (CV 40) and *Valley Forge* (CV 45) before upgrading to the F8F-2 version in May 1949. In January 1950, VF-153 made its first western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment, aboard *Boxer* (CV 21). While deployed, on 15 February 1950, the squadron was redesignated VF-194. Shortly after the squadron returned in June 1950, the Korean War broke out, and VF-194 briefly switched to the F4U-4 *Corsair* fighter before

A VA-196 A-6 *Intruder* traps aboard *Carl Vinson* (CV 70). *Vinson* and the squadron deployed from 1994 through the *Main Battery's* final deployment to WESTPAC and the Persian Gulf in 1996.

receiving the AD *Skyraider* in December 1950.

VF-194 deployed as a de facto attack squadron with the AD-2 version to the Korean War zone in October 1951 on board *Valley Forge* as part of Air Task Group (ATG) 1. The squadron flew interdiction and close support sorties in support of United Nations forces against Chinese and North Korean troops. VF-194 returned to the war zone in 1953 flying AD-4/4NA/4Q versions from *Boxer* (CVA 21) and was on station when the cease-fire went into effect.

In December 1953, VF-194 upgraded to the AD-6 (A-1H) version and returned to WESTPAC in September 1954 on board *Wasp* (CVA 18), covering the February 1955 evacuation of Tachen Island, under siege from Communist Chinese forces. On 4 May 1955, the squadron's attack role was finally recognized with its redesignation to VA-196. In 1959, the squadron moved from Alameda to NAS Moffett

Field, Calif., and in 1963 moved to NAS Lemoore, Calif.

The *Main Battery* made five WESTPAC deployments before two 1964 combat deployments to Southeast Asia, one each on board *Lexington* (CVA 16) and *Ticonderoga* (CVA 14) with ATG-1, and three with Carrier Air Group 19 on board *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA 31). VA-196 operated off North Vietnam following the August 1964 Tonkin Gulf Incident, conducting operations over Laos in October of that year. In 1965, the squadron made one more war deployment with A-1H/J *Skyraiders* aboard *Bon Homme Richard*, returning home in January 1966. The squadron lost three pilots and four A-1s to enemy action during that deployment.

VA-196 moved to NAS Oceana, Va., on 1 May 1966 for transition to the A-6A *Intruder*, changing to its final home port of NAS Whidbey Island on 15 November 1966. In April 1967, VA-196 departed on the

first of six war cruises with the A-6 to Vietnam, this time with Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 14 on board *Constellation* (CVA 64). A second cruise aboard *Constellation* included A-6B versions. The third A-6 deployment was made from the deck of *Ranger* (CVA 61) with CVW-2, but on 1 June 1970 the squadron joined CVW-14, beginning an association that would last almost 27 years.

The *Main Battery's* last three Vietnam War cruises were made on board *Enterprise* (CVAN 65). The first of these took the squadron to the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War. The second, which included KA-6D tanker versions, involved intensive participation in the Linebacker I and II operations over North Vietnam and in Operation End Sweep, the mine-clearing effort after the cease-fire. The third deployment saw VA-196 operating over Vietnam to cover the 1975 evacuation of Americans, Operation Frequent Wind. While operating over Southeast Asia, VA-196 suffered the loss of 11 A-6s to enemy action (including two shot down over China by Chinese MiG fighters), experiencing more losses than any other squadron. The losses included four crewmen killed, seven missing in action, and four taken prisoner (including two of the squadron's COs, Cdr. Leo T. Profilet and Cdr. Gordon R. Nakagawa).

After transition to the A-6E version in 1975, VA-196 made two



deployments on board *Enterprise* to WESTPAC and the Indian Ocean, the first of these including support of peacekeeping operations in Uganda in 1977. Three deployments on board *Coral Sea* (CV 43) followed, the first in support of the aborted 1980 attempt to rescue hostages in Iran, and the third being a 1983 round-the-world cruise which supported the Marine presence in Lebanon.

In 1984, VA-196 upgraded to the Target Recognition Attack Multi-sensor version of the A-6E and began a five-year association with *Constellation* (CV 64), making three WESTPAC and Indian Ocean

Carrier Air Wing 14 aircraft fly toward a target range during predeployment training in 1988. VA-196 A-6E Intruders fill the foreground, while a Main Battery KA-6E tanker refuels one of three F/A-18A Hornets in the background.

deployments, the second of which involved 1987 missions in support of Operation Earnest Will, the escort of Kuwaiti tankers during the Iran-Iraq War.

In June 1990, VA-196 deployed to the Indian Ocean on board *Independence* (CV 62) with the new Systems Weapon Improvement Program versions of the A-6E, and without the KA-6D tanker versions. When Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait in August 1990, *Independence* rushed to the Persian Gulf, where VA-196 began patrols to deter further Iraqi advance and to enforce United Nations sanctions against Iraq. The squadron returned home before Operation Desert Shield became Desert Storm.

In 1991, when *Independence* replaced *Midway* (CV 41) as the forward-deployed carrier in Japan, VA-196 cross-decked to *Midway* at Pearl Harbor for that carrier's last voyage home. In 1994 and again in 1996, the *Main Battery* deployed to WESTPAC and the Persian Gulf on board *Carl Vinson* (CV 70), flying missions over Iraq in support of Operation Southern Watch. Returning home for the last time on 11 November 1996, the squadron began the standdown process in preparation for disestablishment.

VAs 196 and 75 were the Navy's last two A-6 squadrons. See *NA News*, Sep-Oct 97 for a farewell to the *Intruder*.

Rick Burgess contributed the disestablishment article.

Robert L. Lawson

