

NAPRA: The Global Choice for Depot Support

By Cdr. (sel) Edward Harter



An F-14 *Tomcat* suffers damage from a hard landing while deployed to the western Pacific. A Marine Corps C-130 *Hercules* is inducted for standard depot-level maintenance (SDLM) in Singapore. A P-3 *Orion* on Diego Garcia requires a depot-level fuel cell repair. A trailing edge flap bushing on an F/A-18 *Hornet* in the Mediterranean needs replacement. What do all these incidents have in common? The aircraft involved will

all be put back into service by the Naval Air Pacific Repair Activity (NAPRA), headquartered in Atsugi, Japan.

“Don’t let the ‘Pacific’ part of the NAPRA name fool you,” said NAPRA commanding officer Commander Karl Yeakel. “As of 1 October 1997, with the addition of a new detachment in Naples, Italy, NAPRA became responsible for the depot repair of every forward-deployed Navy and Marine Corps

aircraft in the fleet. Our new expanded area of responsibility will now stretch from Guam to the eastern Atlantic.”

Depot-level maintenance is beyond the capabilities of organizational or intermediate-level maintenance facilities, and NAPRA can provide that repair to in-service aircraft. For NAPRA, in-service repair often means maintenance personnel traveling to a remote site via carrier-onboard-delivery aircraft or heli-



copter, with tools and parts in hand. This kind of forward-deployed support is crucial when the discrepancy causes the aircraft to be nonflyable.

The NAPRA organization has been providing aviation depot maintenance in some form since the Korean War. First started by Commander Fleet Air, Western Pacific as the Fleet Air Western Pacific Repair Activity, most repair support was accomplished by foreign companies like the Japan

Aircraft Corporation.

The NAPRA detachment in Okinawa got its start in 1968 during the Vietnam War when it was established at NAS Cubi Point, R.P. As the Vietnam conflict grew in intensity, the detachment met the need for an in-theater facility to reduce the long turnaround time that resulted from shipping battle-damaged aircraft stateside for repair. In 1980, as the Navy's operational commitments grew in the Indian Ocean, the

det began stationing field teams aboard the battle group carriers. These teams ensured that depot-level repair services were immediately available to the air wing, and have dramatically improved readiness where the fleet most needs it—at the tip of the sword.

Before the Naples detachment came under NAPRA, it had undergone several name changes. However, the det has been keeping Navy and Marine Corps aircraft



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NAPRA provides depot-level in-service repair and maintenance, with services ranging from heavy structural repair of aircraft and components to complete rework. Whether repairing a catch on a CH-46 *Sea Knight* (above), machining parts for a CH-53 *Sea Stallion* (right), repairing sheet metal on a *Sea Stallion* (opposite top) or performing corrosion control on a crash crane (opposite bottom), NAPRA personnel are always ready to travel to remote locations to provide forward-deployed support to fleet aircraft.

safely flying in the European theater since the 1970s by providing, in partnership with several European aerospace companies, a full range of depot repair services ranging from on-site in-service repair to standard depot-level maintenance. It was when Det Naples joined the organization that NAPRA became responsible for all forward-deployed depot-level repair of aircraft, support equipment and associated components.

“Our employees are the super glue that holds this operation together. With such a large and highly mobile customer base, NAPRA employees must be flexible and ready to adapt to rapidly changing priorities,” Cdr. Yeakel stated. “Teamwork is the key that enables NAPRA to maintain a world-class operation to keep our fleet customers satisfied in this time of



diminishing resources.”

How does NAPRA keep its customers satisfied? The numbers tell the story: in FY 1997, NAPRA was responsible for completing 24 SDLMs, more than 400 depot-level in-service repairs (100-plus per-

formed at sea), and 55 aircraft modifications and repairs to 2,200 components and 300 support equipment units. With the addition of the Naples detachment, NAPRA’s numbers for SDLMs and in-service repairs are expected to increase

about 10 percent annually.

Making all this happen is NAPRA's highly skilled and diverse work force, which comprises a mix of more than 200 active duty military, civil service and foreign national employees. Trades and professions represented include aerospace engineers, workload planners and estimators, aircraft

metalsmiths, contract specialists, automated information experts, logisticians and librarians. At its locations in Atsugi, Okinawa and Naples, NAPRA offers depot services ranging from heavy structural repair of aircraft and components to complete rework. Although some organic repair capability exists, mainly in Det Okinawa, most of

the work is accomplished in plants located in Singapore, Australia, Korea, Italy and elsewhere in Japan.

In support of its repair efforts, NAPRA maintains one of the largest technical publications libraries in the Navy. The library contains a broad range of drawings and information on more than 20 type/model/series aircraft that operate in NAPRA's large area of responsibility. NAPRA employs the

expertise of several aerospace engineers, all with extensive stateside depot experience, in order to develop and authorize nonstandard repairs that exceed any guidance available in the technical publications.

The NAPRA team's success in performing its mission is reflected in the numerous commendations frequently received from Navy and Marine Corps aviation units operating in the western Pacific. As it did during Vietnam and Desert Storm, NAPRA is prepared to provide the nucleus of support for any surge contingencies in the western Pacific, Indian Ocean or Mediterranean theaters.

With nearly a half century of experience in forward-deployed depot repair, the NAPRA team is ready for the challenges it will face.

The fleet will continue to



receive the high level of support and service it has come to expect from NAPRA: the global choice for depot support.

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