



Left to right, *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74), Dutch frigate *Hr Ms Abraham Van Der Hulst* (F 832), guided missile cruiser *San Jacinto* (CG 56), British destroyer *HMS York* (D 98) and British aircraft carrier *HMS Illustrious* (R 06) cruise in formation in the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Southern Watch in April. Photo by PM1 James Williams

USCG Ratings Change

By the end of next year, five Coast Guard enlisted ratings will have combined into three, bringing these ratings more in line with evolving technology. Aviation machinist's mate, aviation structural mechanic and 65 percent of the aviation electrician's mate rating will combine under the aviation maintenance technician rating. Aviation electronics technicians and the remaining aviation electrician's mates will become avionics technicians; and aviation survivalmen will become aviation survival technicians.

Hawkeye 2000 Flies

The fifth generation of the E-2C early warning command and control system, the *Hawkeye 2000* (right),

completed its first flight on 11 April at Northrop Grumman's St. Augustine, Fla., manufacturing facility. The first in a series of test flights

set the stage for the aircraft's transfer to NAS Patuxent River, Md., for evaluation. *Hawkeye 2000* improvements include a mission computer



upgrade, advanced control indicator set workstations, integrated satellite communications and an advanced equipment cooling system.

P-3 to the Pole

A P-3C *Orion* of Naval Force Aircraft Test Squadron, NAS Patuxent River, Md., flew to the North Pole to test the navigational accuracy of the new Replacement Inertial Navigation Unit (RINU) at high latitudes. Designed to replace the LTN-72 inertial navigation units used in fleet *Orions*, the RINU's ring-laser gyroscope will provide greater reliability and ease of maintenance

than standard mechanical systems, and the unit can be upgraded in the future with an embedded global positioning system module and enhanced controls and displays.

Carrier Corner

Naval Aviation regained part of its history when the remains of *Yorktown* (CV 5) were located in the Pacific on 19 May. The full story of this major discovery will be featured in the Sep–Oct issue.

On 26 May, Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton signed a contract officially transferring *Hornet* (CV 12) to the Aircraft Carrier Hornet Foundation, Alameda, Calif. Following restoration of the historic carrier, the foundation will open the Hornet Memorial

Museum in August.

On 11 June *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) completed initial sea trials in the Virginia Capes. The eighth nuclear carrier built by Newport News Shipbuilding was scheduled for acceptance trials at the end of June.

Mishaps

An F/A-18 *Hornet* from Strike Fighter Squadron 37, assigned to *Enterprise* (CVN 65), crashed near NAS Fallon, Nev., on 27 May. The pilot, Lt. Jonathan Nolan, was killed.

On 28 May, an SH-60F *Seahawk* made an emergency landing near NAS Fallon, Nev. Nine occupants survived and were treated for injuries; a tenth, AW2 Michael DeWitt, was killed.

Slam-er hits home



Following five successful, nonexplosive flight tests at Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, Calif. (above), the Standoff Land Attack Missile–Expanded Response (SLAM–ER) entered the live fire test phase. Right, a SLAM–ER equipped with a live warhead, fuse and booster impacts a target with spectacular results on 8 April. That month the second low-rate initial production of the SLAM–ER was approved, paving the way for Boeing to produce 22 missiles with an option for an additional 20. A decision on full-rate production is expected after operational flight testing is completed in late 1998.



F-154 Goes Digital

The Fighter Squadron 154 *Black Knights*, stationed at NAS Atsugi, Japan, converted their Tactical Air Reconnaissance Pod System (TARPS) to the digital-imagery version (TARPS-DI) while underway aboard *Independence* (CV 62) in the Arabian Gulf. Images captured by the F-14 *Tomcat*-mounted pod can be transmitted via existing communications equipment before the aircraft lands, allowing near-real-time battle management.



Photos by PHAN Chris Howell



The two-man crew of an F-14 *Tomcat* ejected safely shortly after takeoff from MCAS New River, N.C., on 21 May. Lts. Brian Parker and Marc Miguez are assigned to Fighter Squadron 102, NAS Oceana, Va.

The four occupants of an EA-6B *Prowler* ejected safely on 29 April for reasons unknown at press time. The Electronic Attack Squadron 142

crew from NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., was flying from Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Southern Watch.

The pilot of an F/A-18C *Hornet* was safely recovered after ejecting near the north Arabian Gulf on 27 April. The Strike Fighter Squadron 192 aircraft, assigned to NAS Atsugi, Japan, was operating from *Independence* (CV 62).

For the Record

Newport News Shipbuilding, Va., received a \$1.2 billion contract for the refueling and complex overhaul of *Nimitz* (CVN 68), which was set to begin in late May. The 33-month service is the first refueling operation for the 10 aircraft carriers of this class scheduled over the next 30 years.

Stennis, Anyone?



PHAN (SW) Robert Baker

Aircraft from Carrier Air Wing 7 fly over their carrier, *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74), on 27 April in the Arabian Gulf.

A T-45A *Goshawk* attached to the Strike Aircraft Test Squadron, NAS Patuxent River, Md., flew its 1,000th flight in February. This *Goshawk* was the second aircraft off the McDonnell Douglas production line in 1988.

Fatigue testing of the MV-22 *Osprey* began at the Bell Helicopter Textron facility in Texas on 1 April. The two-year test will determine if the aircraft can withstand loads in both airplane and helicopter modes and achieve a 10,000-hour service life, equivalent to 20 years in the fleet.

Corrections

The May–Jun 98 “Airscoop” contained two photographic snafus. On page 5, the designations were reversed in the caption; it should have read *John C.*

Stennis (CVN 74) and *George Washington* (CVN 73). And on page 6, a dynamic photo was marred by the misidentification of HC-4 MH-53E *Sea Dragons* aboard *Wasp* (LHD 1) on 24 March

(below). We are printing this photo again so that HC-4 squadron members, like Lt. Bobby “Disco” Linder, can fill the blank spot on Mom’s fridge. Thanks to the many readers who set us straight.



Photo by PH3 Renso Amariz

An HC-4 MH-53E *Sea Dragon* lifts off from *Wasp* (LHD 1).

Cut here to create refrigerator art.



Blackhawks

Disestablished

VP-68 Blackhawks

A 2 November 1996 ceremony at NAF Washington, D.C., marked the disestablishment (officially 31 December) of Patrol Squadron (VP) 68 after 26 years of service as a Naval Air Reserve Force squadron. Cdr. Jeffrey A. Lemmons was the 19th and last CO of the *Blackhawks*.

VP-68 was established at NAS Patuxent River, Md., on 1 November 1970 as part of the massive reorganization of the Naval Air Reserve. Initially equipped with SP-2H *Neptune* patrol planes, the squadron became the first East Coast reserve squadron to fly the P-3A *Orion*, which it acquired in May 1971. In August 1984, VP-68 switched to the P-3B "Super Bee" (TACNAVMOD) version, and moved to NAF Washington the following April. The squadron upgraded to the P-

3C Update I in June 1991, followed by the P-3C Update II.5 in November 1994.

Like all reserve patrol squadrons, VP-68 sent detachments to overseas sites—mostly in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Mediterranean—to augment active duty squadrons in antisubmarine patrols, shipping surveillance, drug-interdiction operations and other roles. The *Blackhawks* frequently tracked Soviet submarines during the Cold War. In recent years, VP-68 crews flew missions in support of Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti and Operation Sharp Guard in the Adriatic Sea off the former Yugoslavia.

VP-68 accumulated over 106,000 mishap-free flight hours before being disbanded as part of the post-Cold War reduction of military forces.



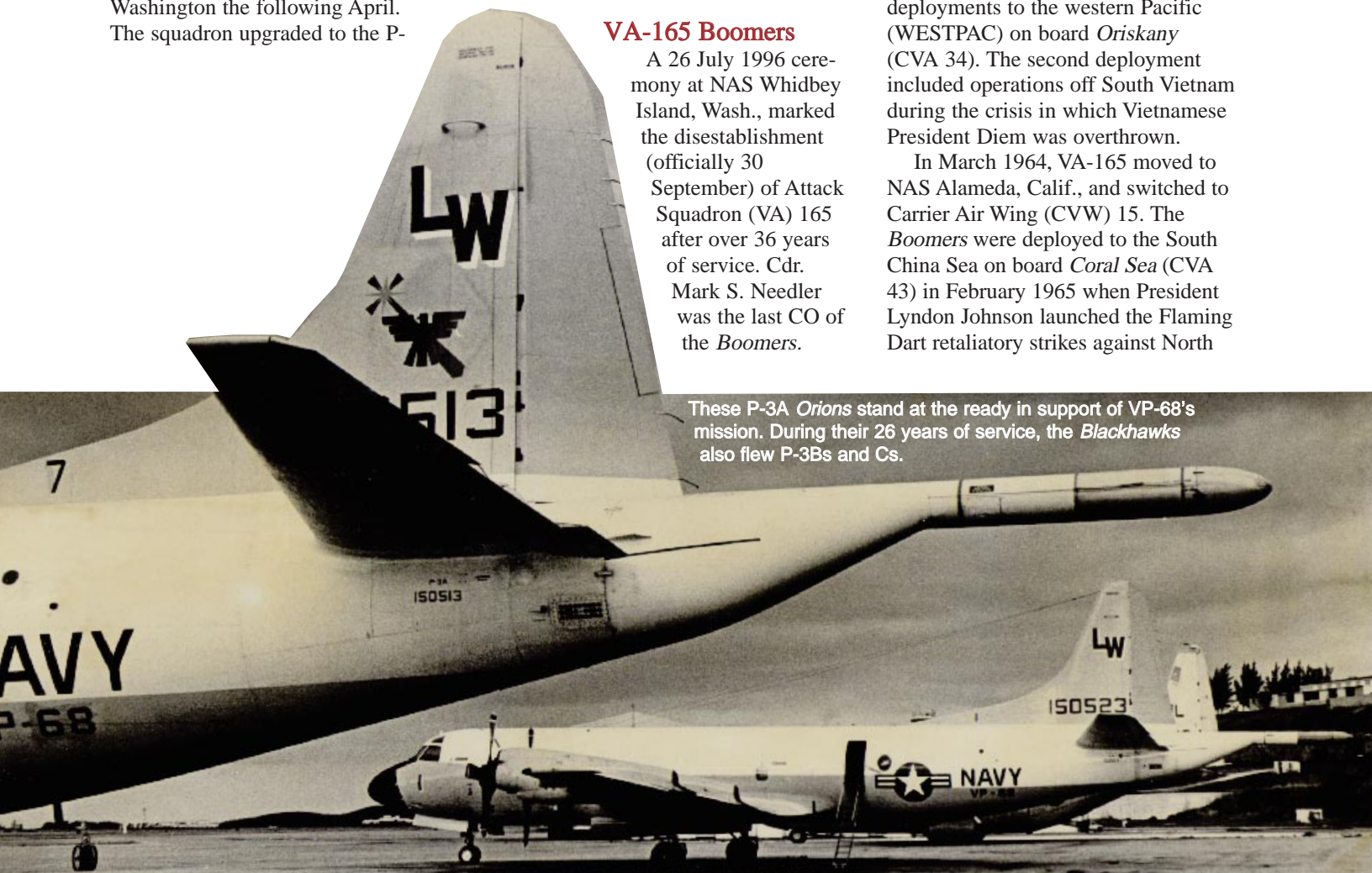
VA-165 was established at NAS Jacksonville, Fla., on 1 September 1960 as part of Carrier Air Group (CVG) 16, also established that day. The *Boomers* were one of the last Navy attack squadrons to stand up with the AD-6/7 (A-1H/J) *Skyraider*. When CVG-16 was transferred to the Pacific Fleet in September 1961, the *Boomers* moved to NAS Moffett Field, Calif. The squadron made two deployments to the western Pacific (WESTPAC) on board *Oriskany* (CVA 34). The second deployment included operations off South Vietnam during the crisis in which Vietnamese President Diem was overthrown.

In March 1964, VA-165 moved to NAS Alameda, Calif., and switched to Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 15. The *Boomers* were deployed to the South China Sea on board *Coral Sea* (CVA 43) in February 1965 when President Lyndon Johnson launched the Flaming Dart retaliatory strikes against North

VA-165 Boomers

A 26 July 1996 ceremony at NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., marked the disestablishment (officially 30 September) of Attack Squadron (VA) 165 after over 36 years of service. Cdr. Mark S. Needler was the last CO of the *Boomers*.

These P-3A *Orions* stand at the ready in support of VP-68's mission. During their 26 years of service, the *Blackhawks* also flew P-3Bs and Cs.



Vietnam. The Rolling Thunder strikes began the following month, with VA-165 flying interdiction and rescue combat air patrol sorties. The *Boomers* returned to Vietnam in 1966, operating from the deck of *Intrepid* (CVS 11) with CVW-10. During these two deployments with *Skyriders*, VA-165 pilots flew over 3,100 combat sorties encompassing 11,500 flight hours and expending 11 million pounds of ordnance. The *Boomers* lost four A-1s and two pilots to enemy action.

PH3 Ronald F. Reichnein



The tailhook of an A-6A *Intruder* from VA-165 catches the wire during an arrested landing aboard *Constellation* (CVA 64) in 1972.

Boomers

In January 1967, VA-165 moved to NAS Whidbey Island, trading its *Skyriders* for new A-6A *Intruder* all-weather jets. Later that year, VA-165 began the first of five Vietnam deployments with the A-6. The first two were with CVW-2 aboard *Ranger* (CVA 61) during which VA-165 also operated off the coast of Korea, first in response to the January 1968 North Korean seizure of the intelligence collection ship *Pueblo* (AGER 2), and again in 1969 when North Korean aircraft shot down a Navy EC-121M *Warning Star*.

In July 1969, VA-165 joined CVW-9, forming an association with that wing that would endure for the next 27 years. In 1970, the squadron deployed to Vietnam on board *America* (CVA 66), adding A-6Bs and Cs to its strength, and becoming the first squadron to operate the A-6C in combat. During this deployment, the *Boomers* flew 9,009 combat sorties and dropped 7.3 million pounds of ordnance against enemy targets. The *Boomers* made two cruises to Vietnam aboard *Constellation* (CVA 64), also operating the KA-6D tanker. During Operation Freedom Train, VA-165 helped turn back the April 1972 North Vietnamese offensive and flew in the Linebacker I strikes against North Vietnam later that year, earning the Presidential Unit Citation for its performance. During these last two deployments, the squadron flew 2,600 combat sorties and dropped over 500,000 pounds of ordnance. The



Boomers—the last A-6 squadron to see combat during the war—lost only two A-6s and three A-6 fliers to enemy action during the entire war.

VA-165 operated in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf in 1974 on board *Constellation*, the first carrier to operate in the gulf in 26 years. Upon return home, the *Boomers* upgraded to the A-6E version of the *Intruder*. The squadron made four more WESTPAC and Indian Ocean deployments on board *Constellation*. In 1981, the squadron acquired the TRAM (target recognition attack multisensor) version of the A-6E, and became the first A-6 squadron to deploy with the Harpoon antiship missile in the Indian Ocean. In 1983, the *Boomers* operated from *Ranger* off Nicaragua in response to tensions between that nation and Honduras.

VA-165 made two deployments aboard *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63), the second of which took them around the world so that *Kitty Hawk* could undergo a service-life extension program at Philadelphia, Pa. VA-165

made four major cruises on board *Nimitz* (CVN 68) to WESTPAC and the Indian Ocean. One included participation in Operation Earnest Will, the 1988 escort of oil tankers in the Arabian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War.

During 1989, VA-165 flew its *Intruders* in scenes of the motion picture *Flight of the Intruder*. The squadron made its last aircraft transition in 1990, to the A-6E SWIP (systems weapon improvement program) version. Also that year, the *Boomers* cruised on board *Constellation* around Cape Horn as the carrier sailed from NAS North Island, Calif., to Philadelphia for a service-life extension program overhaul.

During its 1993 deployment, VA-165 crews flew missions in support of Operation Southern Watch, enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq. VA-165 also was the last squadron to deploy with the KA-6D, retiring the tanker after returning home.

The deployment which began in December 1995 was to be the *Boomers'* last. The squadron flew in support of Operation Southern Watch for one month, but *Nimitz* was rushed to waters off Taiwan as a show of force during Communist Chinese military exercises intended to influence elections in Taiwan. To the very end, the *Boomers* were projecting the power of naval aviation.

During the squadron's farewell ceremony, a privately owned A-1D *Skyraider*, painted in *Boomer* markings, joined the squadron's *Intruders*. Even after disestablishment, a cadre of VA-165 personnel remained at Whidbey Island to maintain three spare A-6Es available to support the final two A-6 squadrons still deployed.