



## ACTION IN THE GULF



PH3 Brian Fleske

**O**n 5 February *Independence* (CV 62) arrived in the Arabian Gulf, joining *George Washington* (CVN 73) and relieving *Nimitz* (CVN 68), which departed for her new home port of Norfolk, Va. The carriers and their battle groups stood ready in the event that air strikes were ordered against Iraq, where UN inspectors had been repeatedly hindered in their search for suspected weapons of mass destruction. Also on the 5th, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, formed around *Guam* (LPH 9), departed the Mediterranean to bolster the forces in the gulf.

Above, a Fighter Squadron 102 F-14B *Tomcat* launches from *George Washington* (CVN 73). Below, an explosive ordnance disposal team member lowers himself from an HH-60H *Seahawk* during a fast-rope training exercise aboard *George Washington*.



PHAN Johnnie Robbins



PH2 John Yoder



PH2 James H. Watson

Naval Aviation makes its presence known in the Arabian Gulf. Counterclockwise from top, an F-18 *Hornet* launches from *Independence*; AN Edgar Moya displays a weight board to AB3 Cary Strome prior to a launch from *Nimitz*; ABE3 Joshua Schwandt signals a clear launch of an F-14 *Tomcat* from *Independence*; and ABE3 John Brady communicates with the pilot of an ES-3 *Shadow* aboard *Nimitz*.



PH3 Christopher E. Mobley

PHAN Brian J. Hoosack



## Goshawk Arrives Home

The first T-45C *Goshawk* jet trainer took a respite from developmental testing at NAS Patuxent River, Md., for an appearance at an introduction ceremony at NAS Meridian, Miss., on 15 December 1997. The *Goshawk* returned to Pax River to complete testing with the Strike Aircraft Test Squadron in January 1998 before transferring to its permanent home at Meridian for operational testing with Training Air Wing 1 from February to June. When flight instruction begins in July, student pilots at Meridian will be the first to use the C-model's digital Cockpit-21, allowing students to transition more easily into fleet aircraft.

## Super Hornet Hubbub

The Navy's newest fighter, the F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet*, has made headlines with reports of wing drop during combat maneuvers. The Naval Air Systems Command is considering several potential solutions, which will likely combine a minor modification to the wing with a change in software; a final resolution is expected by March. Program officials project that the *Super Hornet* will finish the engineering

and maintenance development phase of flight testing in November, and be ready for operational evaluation in May 1999.

## Indy Simulator

In mid-January F/A-18 pilots on board *Independence* (CV 62) began using the first Carrier-based Weapons System Trainer (CV-WST) manufactured by the Boeing Company. The simulator can be used for Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization checks and to train for emergency procedures, and provides flight scenarios with weapons, varying weather conditions and enemy threats. Although designed primarily for pilots, the CV-WST will allow other aviation ratings, such as aircraft mechanics and crash and salvage crews, to simulate different situations they may encounter.

## VP-9 Gets SLAMmed

Patrol Squadron 9, NAS Barbers Point, Hawaii, has been selected to



The Navy's Pacific Missile Test Range Facility, Kauai, Hawaii, is slated to receive \$36 million for infrastructure enhancements.

receive the fleet's first Antisurface warfare Improvement Program versions of the P-3C *Orion*. The upgrade includes a long-range, high-resolution radar, long-range electro-optical sensor with a digital camera and new communications systems. For the first time, the *Orion* will have a significant land-attack capability with the addition of two missile types, the AGM-65F Maverick and AGM-84E Standoff Land-Attack Missile (SLAM).

## Mishaps

A Naval Weapons Test Squadron, China Lake, Calif., UH-1N "Huey" crashed in a mountainous area of California's Sequoia National Forest on 18 February. Four occupants were killed; a fifth was missing.

Two Marine Corps F/A-18C *Hornets* collided about 80 miles east of Kuwait City, Kuwait, on 6 February, killing one of the pilots. The Fighter-Attack Squadron 251 *Hornets*, home-based at MCAS Beaufort, S.C., were flying from *George Washington* (CVN 73) on a patrol of the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. One pilot was flown to *George Washington* and the other to HMS *Invincible*, also operating in the gulf.

On 3 February a Marine EA-6B *Prowler* flying over the Dolomite Mountains in Italy severed the cable of a ski resort gondola, which then



Lockheed Martin concluded 1997 with a successful program review of its Joint Strike Fighter concept.

## You're Invited . . .

Navy and Marine Corps tactical aviators and commands are invited for a three-day introduction to the Navy's newest weapon systems at Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake, Calif., from 6-8 May. The Naval Weapons Test Squadron's second annual Developmental Weapons Symposium will provide tours of the China Lake testing ranges and facilities and briefings by subject matter experts. Selected fleet aviators will have the opportunity to fly in various F/A-18 *Hornet* models, including a D-model outfitted with E/F *Super Hornet* avionics, for hands-on demonstration flights. Fleet aircraft are welcome to fly in to this event.

To attend, RSVP by 20 April with your name and rank, social security number, command, date and time of arrival and departure, DD Form 5520, and phone number. If arriving in a military aircraft, include the aircraft type and a phone number for Maintenance Control. RSVPs will be accepted via fax to 760-939-0371, or by phone to 939-8320; DSN prefix 437.



The second annual Developmental Weapons Symposium introduces the latest weapons at NAWS China Lake, Calif., such as the Joint Standoff Weapon (above) and Joint Direct Attack Munition (left). Demonstration flights, below, give aviators a unique hands-on learning experience.



fell to the ground, killing its 20 occupants. The sole occupant of a second gondola was rescued. The Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 2 *Prowler*, based at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., was operating from the air base at Aviano, Italy, in support of NATO operations in Bosnia. The *Prowler* crew was not injured, and the plane landed safely at Aviano.

## Inside the Industry

• On 12 December 1998 Raytheon Company announced the completion of its merger with

Hughes Defense, and announced the formation of Raytheon Systems Company. This new division will have five major components: defense systems; sensors and electronic systems; command, control and communications systems; intelligence, information and aircraft integration systems; and training and services.

• Rockwell Collins received a \$29 million contract for production of the High Power Transmit Set (HPTS). Comprised of a very low frequency/low frequency amplifier and trailing-wire antenna system, the HPTS will improve the reliability of

communications links from the E-6 *Mercury* Take Charge and Move Out aircraft.

• Raytheon Aircraft received a \$71 million contract to produce the ground-based training element of the Joint Primary Aircraft Training System program.

• Boeing Co. selected Hughes Aircraft Co. to develop an Advanced Targeting Forward-Looking Infra-Red sensor for the F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet* and earlier *Hornet* models.

• Northrop Grumman received a \$28.8 million Navy contract for 119 BQM-74E multirole aerial targets, the third option in a 1996 contract.



## Disestablished

### VAW-122 Steeljaws

A 14 March 1996 ceremony at NAS Norfolk, Va., marked the disestablishment (officially 31 March) of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 122 after 29 years of service. Cdr. Carl W. Dossel was the last CO of the Steeljaws.

Established on 1 April 1967, VAW-122 was formed when Norfolk-based VAW-12 was divided into four squadrons. At the time, VAW-122 was deployed with Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 6 on board *America* (CVA 66) in the Mediterranean Sea, on what became the first of 15 major carrier deployments over the next 24 years. In the Med, the squadron directed fighter protection for the intelligence collection ship *Liberty* (AGTR 5) after she

was attacked by Israeli aircraft and torpedo boats during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

During a 1968 deployment aboard *America* off Vietnam, the Steeljaws used their E-2A Hawkeyes to pioneer overland detection techniques against North Vietnamese MiG fighters, assisting in the downing of a MiG-21 by Fighter Squadron 33. VAW-122 also controlled interdiction missions over North Vietnam, vectoring A-7 Corsair IIs and F-4 Phantom IIs to hit trucks and watercraft detected by A-6 Intruders, RA-3B Skywarriors or Army OV-1B Mohawks.

After returning to Norfolk, VAW-122 transferred to CVW-7 on board *Independence* (CVA 62). A 1970 deployment to the Mediterranean engaged the squadron in operations during the Jordanian crisis. Transition in 1971 to the E-2B version was followed by a routine Med deployment

in late 1971. The squadron's next cruise involved its crews in intensive surveillance and fleet air defense operations during the October Yom Kippur War. After a quick turnaround, VAW-122 was back in the Med in July 1974 in time for contingency operations off strife-torn Cyprus.

In April 1975, VAW-122 became the last East Coast fleet squadron to switch to the E-2C, flying the new aircraft on a deployment to the western Pacific in late 1977 with CVW-11 aboard *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63). Upon return to Norfolk, the squadron rejoined CVW-6 on *Independence* and began transition to the Advanced Radar Processing System (ARPS)

upgrade of the E-2C. November 1980 took the squadron into the tedium of operations on Gonzo Station in the North Arabian Sea. During a 1982 Med deployment, the Steeljaws supported the landing of a Marine Expeditionary Force in war-torn Beirut, Lebanon, and the shuttle flights of diplomats to and from the Middle East.

VAW-122 was heading to the Mediterranean again in late 1983 on board *Independence* when the carrier was diverted to Grenada in October for Operation Urgent Fury, during which the squadron provided coordination and communications for combat operations ashore. While in the Med, VAW-122 supported the December retaliatory strikes against hostile anti-aircraft sites in Lebanon.

After a final deployment to the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean aboard *Independence* in 1984–1985, VAW-122 transferred in 1986 with CVW-6 to *Forrestal* (CV 59). During a 1986 cruise to the Med, the squadron participated in an experi-

mental program to relieve pilot fatigue by using experienced Naval Flight Officers as copilots for daytime operations. The necessity of the experiment was eliminated by improved pilot manning in VAW squadrons. A 1988 deployment to the North Atlantic was followed by another Med deployment in 1989.

In August 1990, the same month Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, VAW-122 was staged at Howard AFB, Panama, on its first drug-interdiction deployment in support of Task Force 4. The Steeljaws tracked and directed intercepts of aircraft on the Pacific coast of Panama suspected of running drugs to the United States. After two months, VAW-122 rejoined CVW-6 in preparation for its final carrier deployment (also the last for CVW-6 and *Forrestal*). During this 1991 Mediterranean cruise, VAW-122 supported Operation Provide Comfort, the effort to protect Kurds in northern Iraq after Operation Desert Storm.

Returning on 21 December 1991, VAW-122 prepared for disestablish-

ment in 1992 along with the rest of CVW-6 as part of the post-Cold War drawdown. However, the Steeljaws were retained in service specifically to support Joint Task Force 4's counter-drug campaign in the Caribbean area as well as to support fleet exercises.

From 1992 to 1996, VAW-122 made eight deployments to Panama, Puerto Rico, Guantanamo Bay and the Netherlands Antilles, tracking over 86,000 air contacts. Some missions were conducted deep into the interior of South America. The Steeljaws were directly credited with the seizure of over 14 metric tons of cocaine and two tons of marijuana. All the while, VAW-122 maintained its carrier qualification and readiness to deploy as a regular fleet squadron.

In the months before its disestablishment, VAW-122 transferred its Hawkeyes and some personnel to VAW-77, a Naval Air Reserve squadron established on 1 October 1995 at NAS Atlanta, Ga., to take over the drug-interdiction role.



Opposite, E-2A Hawkeyes from VAW-122 are lined up on the flight deck of *America* (CVA 66) as she conducts refresher training near Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in January 1968. Inset, the insignia used by the squadron until 1985. Above, a VAW-122 Hawkeye. Inset, this insignia was used by the Steeljaws from 1985 until their disestablishment.

## VF-21 Freelancers

A 12 January 1996 ceremony at NAF Atsugi, Japan, marked the disestablishment (officially 31 January) of Fighter Squadron (VF) 21 after almost 52 years of service.

The Freelancers were established on 2 March 1944 at Atlantic City, N.J., as VF-81, flying F6F-5 Hellcats. After additional training in Hawaii, the squadron embarked with Carrier Air Group (CVG) 14 on board *Wasp* (CV 18) in November 1944 for combat operations against Japanese forces and installations. VF-81 struck targets in the Philippines in November and later in Hong Kong, Formosa, Indochina and Okinawa. The squadron participated in the campaign to capture Iwo Jima and in the first fighter sweep over Japan, helping sink a Japanese light carrier.

The Freelancers returned to the United States in March 1945. Transitioning to the F4U-4 Corsair, VF-81 was assigned to Princeton (CV 37) and worked up with CVG-81, moving to NAS Quonset Point, R.I., and NAS Norfolk, Va., before transferring to the Pacific Fleet with Princeton in June 1946. The squadron cruised aboard Princeton to the western Pacific (WESTPAC) in July 1946, and while deployed was redesignated VF-13A (as part of CVG-13) on 15 November 1946. In 1947, the squadron switched to the

F8F-1B Bearcat, and on 2 August 1948 was redesignated VF-131. The Freelancers deployed to WESTPAC in October 1948 on Princeton.

In 1949, VF-131 moved to NAS Jacksonville, Fla., where on 15 February 1950 the squadron was redesignated VF-64. Moving to NAS Oceana, Va., VF-64 switched back to the F4U-4. Moving again, this time to NAS Alameda, Calif., VF-64 deployed with CVG-2 on board *Boxer* (CV 21) in August 1950 for the first of four combat cruises to the Korean War zone. VF-64 supported the landings at Inchon and participated in strikes against targets in North Korea. After only three weeks at home, VF-64 boarded *Valley Forge* (CV 45) in December 1950 and returned to combat operations. During this deployment, VF-64 cross-decked with CVG-2 to *Philippine Sea* (CV 47) and continued operations over Korea. A third deployment to Korea, which included operations against hydroelectric plants, was made in 1952 aboard *Boxer*.

VF-64 entered the jet age in 1953 with transition to the F9F-5 Panther, but the Korean War ended as the squadron deployed aboard *Yorktown* (CV 10). During a WESTPAC cruise on board *Essex* (CV 9) in 1954 VF-64 participated in the Nationalist Chinese evacuation of the Tachen Islands. After transition to the F2H-3 Banshee in 1955 and a WESTPAC deployment aboard *Shangri-La* (CV 38), the squadron and CVG-2 began a seven-year association with *Midway*

(CVA 41). After transition to the F3H-2 Demon and a WESTPAC deployment that included operations during the Quemoy-Matsu crisis in the Formosa Strait, VF-64 was redesignated VF-21 on 1 July 1959.

VF-21 made five more WESTPAC deployments on board *Midway*, the first two involving operations during the first and second Laotian crises. The squadron moved to NAS Miramar, Calif., in November 1961 and transitioned to the F-4B Phantom II in 1963. The last deployment

Right, four F-4Bs of VF-21 in close echelon formation in 1963.





An F-14A Tomcat from the VF-21 Freelancers drops a flare during a training flight in 1988.



aboard Midway took the Freelancers into their third war, starting with strikes in April 1965 on North Vietnam at the beginning of Operation Rolling Thunder. The Freelancers became the first “MiG killers” of the Vietnam War on 17 June 1965 when two crews downed two MiG-17s over North Vietnam.

VF-21 returned to the Vietnam war zone in July 1966 with Coral Sea (CVA 43), and again in November 1967 on Ranger (CVA

61); the latter cruise also took the squadron to waters off Korea during the Pueblo crisis in early 1968. Upon return to Miramar, VF-21 upgraded to the F-4J and made four more deployments to Vietnam by 1973. During the war, the Freelancers flew over 10,000 combat sorties and dropped over 5,000 tons of ordnance on enemy targets, losing only three F-4Bs and two crewmen to enemy action.

The Freelancers made three more WESTPAC deployments on board Ranger before transitioning to the F-4S in 1979–1980. Because the F-4S experienced carrier suitability problems on the squadron’s next carrier, Coral Sea, VF-21 switched to the F-4N version for its two subsequent deployments with Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 14 aboard Coral Sea. In 1983 the second of these cruises took the squadron around the world, including operations in the Mediterranean in support of the Marine Expeditionary Force in Lebanon. Upon return to Miramar in November 1983, VF-21 bid farewell to the F-4 and began transition to the F-14A Tomcat.

With CVW-14, VF-21 made three WESTPAC/Indian Ocean deployments on Constellation (CV 64)—the second involved Operation Earnest Will, the escort of re-flagged Kuwaiti

tankers in the Persian Gulf during the Iran–Iraq War. In 1990, VF-21 deployed with CVW-14 aboard Independence (CV 62); when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait in August, Independence rushed to the Persian Gulf, where VF-21 patrolled and helped thwart further Iraqi territorial gains as part of Operation Desert Shield. Independence rotated home in December 1990 before the outbreak of the Gulf War.

In 1991, VF-21 transferred to NAF Atsugi, Japan, still on board Independence but now a part of forward-deployed CVW-5. For the next five years, VF-21 operated in WESTPAC in defense of U.S. interests, participating in exercises with U.S. allies and responding to crises in Asia. Three excursions to the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf (1992, 1993 and 1995) were made in support of Operation Southern Watch, enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq.

The Navy’s decision to consolidate many of its F-14s into single squadrons on each carrier led to the disestablishment of VF-21 and transfer of some of the Freelancers aircraft and personnel to sister squadron VF-154.

Rick Burgess wrote the disestablishment articles.