

Deactivated

VP-91 Black Cats

A 13 March 1999 ceremony at Moffett Federal Airfield in Mountainview, Calif., marked the deactivation (officially 1 April) of Patrol Squadron (VP) 91 after more than 28 years of service. Cdr. Jeffrey R. Allmon was the last CO of the *Black Cats*.

VP-91, known at various times as the *Pink Panthers*, *Stingers* and *Black Cats*, was established as a reserve force squadron at then-NAS Moffett Field, Calif., on 1 November 1970 as part of a general reorganization of the Naval Air Reserve. The squadron was formed from Detachment Alpha of Naval Air Reserve Training Unit Alameda, Calif., which had been established on 1 March 1967 to transition reserve crews from the SP-2 *Neptune* to the P-3 *Orion*. The unit became the first reserve squadron to operate the P-3A maritime patrol aircraft. VP-91 frequently joined in fleet operations along the West Coast, tracking Soviet ballistic-missile submarines in the eastern Pacific and deploying for month-long periods annually to sites in Alaska and the western Pacific. In 1974, VP-91 became the first reserve force squadron to relieve an active duty squadron on deployment, in this case at NAS Agana, Guam.

In 1978, VP-91 upgraded to the P-3B. During deployments to the Western Pacific in 1979 and 1980 the squadron participated in the rescues of Vietnamese "boat people" fleeing their homeland. In March 1981, the squadron switched to the TACNAVMOD version of the P-3B, a transition that greatly expanded the squadron's combat capability.

In February 1990 the *Black Cats* began receiving the Navy's last production batch of P-3C Update III versions. During the 1990s, VP-91 provided many drug interdiction detachments in the Caribbean area and made deployments all over the Pacific and Indian Ocean areas tracking Soviet submarines. VP-91 was the only reserve P-3 squadron deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, flying more than 100 combat hours during which one of its crews assisted in the destruction of two Iraqi naval vessels.

VP-91 amassed a safety record of 105,700 mishap-free flight hours. The deactivation of the *Black Cats*, forced by budget constraints, leaves the Navy with seven reserve force patrol squadrons, down from a high of 13 in 1994.



Established in 1970, VP-91 was the first reserve squadron to fly the P-3A *Orion*, upgrading to the B and C versions during its career. The *Black Cats* performed sub-hunting and drug interdiction missions, and was the only reserve P-3 squadron to serve in Operation Desert Storm.

