

Sea Control Squadrons Deactivated

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VS-29 Dragonfires

Sea Control Squadron (VS) 29 is scheduled for deactivation on 30 April 2004, at NAS North Island, Calif., as one of the first VS squadrons to be disbanded in the drawdown of the S-3 Viking community. VS-29 will end 43 years of service after a combat deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Cdr. Keff M. Carter will be the last CO of the *Dragonfires*.

The unit was established as a split-off of VS-21 as Air Antisubmarine Squadron 29 on 1 April 1960 at North Island, its home base throughout its service. Equipped with S2F-1/1S (S-2A/B) Tracker antisubmarine warfare (ASW) aircraft, VS-29 joined Antisubmarine Carrier Air Group (CVSG) 53 assigned to *Kearsarge* (CVS 33). Except for a one-month exercise with CVSG-54 on board *Wasp* (CVS 18) in 1971, VS-29 remained with CVSG-53 until 1973.

While assigned to *Kearsarge*, VS-29 participated in numerous exercises in the eastern and central Pacific. The squadron's first major deployment to the western Pacific (WESTPAC) in March 1961 covered fleet operations in the South China Sea during the 1961 Laotian Crisis. The squadron participated in the recovery operations for two Project Mercury space capsules—*Sigma Seven*, carrying Cdr. Walter Schirra, and *Faith Seven*, carrying Maj. L. Gordon Cooper.

By 1963, VS-29 was equipped with S-2Fs (upgraded S-2As), which it flew during 1963 and 1964 WESTPAC deployments. The squadron upgraded to the S-2E in 1965 and deployed with this version on three more deployments to WESTPAC (1966, 1967–1968 and 1969), including the Tonkin Gulf, where the squadron supported combat operations in Vietnam. VS-29 crews flew shipping surveillance patrols, naval gunfire spotting missions and ASW patrols.

After return from the Tonkin Gulf in September 1969, VS-29 participated in exercises in the eastern Pacific from the decks of *Hornet* (CVS 12), *Wasp* and *Ticonderoga* (CVS 14). In 1972, the *Dragonfires* made a major WESTPAC deployment on board *Ticonderoga*, the squadron's last with S-2Es. VS-29 supported the intensive operations against enemy forces in Vietnam and guarded against the deployments of Soviet guided-missile submarines to the area.

In 1973, VS-29 retired its S-2Es as the CVS era ended and began transition to the new jet-powered S-3A Viking ASW aircraft. The squadron became a participant in the "CV Concept," which combined strike and antisubmarine aircraft in the same carrier air wing (CVW). In July 1976, the squadron made the first WESPTAC deployment of the S-3, joining CVW-14 on board *Enterprise* (CVN 65). The *Dragonfires* joined CVW-2 on board *Ranger* (CV 61) for a 1979 WESTPAC deployment and CVW-15 aboard *Kitty*

Hawk (CV 63) for its 1981 WESTPAC/Indian Ocean cruise.

VS-29 was assigned with CVW-15 to *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) in 1982 and in 1983 deployed to the Mediterranean and on through the Indian and Pacific oceans to the ship's new home port on the West Coast. Over the next seven years, VS-29 completed four WESTPAC/Indian Ocean deployments on board *Carl Vinson*.

During these operations, the *Dragonfires* operated near the Soviet Union and also supported Operation Ernest Will, the escort of tankers in the Arabian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War.



In 1990, VS-29 joined CVW-11 and *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72), accompanying the carrier around Cape Horn for a move to her new home port on the West Coast. After a 1991 deployment to WESTPAC and the Indian Ocean, VS-29 upgraded to the S-3B version of the Viking, and also acquired aerial refueling as one of its missions.

VS-29 was redesignated a sea control squadron on 16 September 1993, a reflection of its wider range of roles. However, in 1999 the ASW mission systems were removed from the S-3B. Two more deployments on board *Abraham Lincoln* to the Arabian Gulf followed in 1993 and 1995, which included missions in support of air operations over Somalia and in Operation Southern Watch, enforcement of the no-fly zone over Iraq.

After a 1996–1997 Arabian Gulf cruise on board *Kitty Hawk*, VS-29 made three more Arabian Gulf/Arabian Sea deployments, all of which involved combat operations. In December 1998, VS-29, on board *Carl Vinson*, supported Operation Desert Fox, a period of intensive strikes against Iraq. On its next deployment, beginning on 9 October 2001 aboard *Carl Vinson*, the squadron supported the first air strikes against Taliban and al Qaeda targets by providing vital refueling services for aircraft making the longest carrier-based strikes in history.

For its final deployment, on board *Nimitz* (CVN 68) in March 2003, VS-29 supported strikes against Iraqi forces

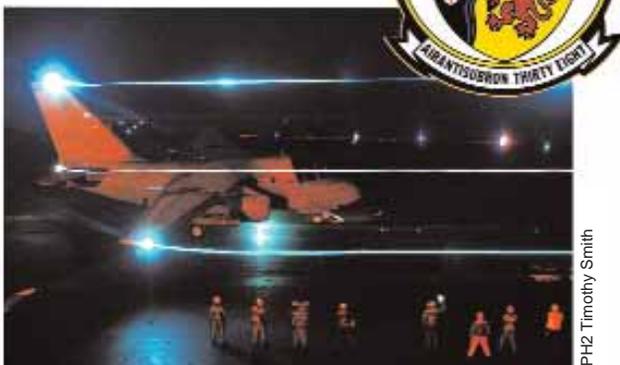
during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The squadron's forthcoming deactivation was foreshadowed on this deployment, however, as CVW-11 deployed with new F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, capable of aerial refueling while accompanying strike aircraft to their targets.

VS-38 Red Griffins

Sea Control Squadron (VS) 38 is scheduled for deactivation at NAS North Island, Calif., on 30 April 2004, as part of the planned phaseout of the S-3B Viking aircraft from the Navy. VS-38 will end more than 53 years of service as an active squadron, which was mobilized from reserve status during the Korean War and retired after combat service over Iraq. Cdr. Steven M. Kelly will be the last CO of the *Red Griffins*.

The *Red Griffins* began service as Air Antisubmarine Squadron 892, a reserve squadron based at NAS Seattle, Wash. Less than a month after the North Korean invasion of South Korea, VS-892 was activated on 20 July 1950. In mid-1951, the squadron and its TBM-3S/3W Avengers were ferried to the war zone on board *Sicily* (CVE 118), where the squadron conducted antisubmarine warfare (ASW) patrols from the escort carrier, as well as from *Rendova* (CVE 114).

On 4 February 1953, VS-892 was redesignated VS-38 and in April returned to the Korean War 1953 on board *Point Cruz* (CVE 119). In 1954, the squadron received the new S2F-1 Tracker twin-engine ASW aircraft, and in 1955 took the new aircraft on its first West Coast deployment, in this case to the western Pacific (WESTPAC) on board *Badoeng Strait* (CVE 116). In 1956, VS-



38 became a larger squadron when it absorbed sister squadron VS-25. Two more WESTPAC deployments were made on board *Princeton* (CVS 37) and *Hornet* (CVS 12) before the squadron was assigned to Antisubmarine Carrier Air Group 59 assigned to *Bennington* (CVS 20) in 1960. At the same time, VS-38 became smaller when VS-33 was formed from a segment of the *Red Griffins*.

From 1960 through 1968, VS-38 made six WESTPAC deployments—one with the S-2F-1/1S, one with the S2F-2,

and four with S-2E Trackers (the first squadron to operate in the fleet)—on board *Bennington*. These included four in the Tonkin Gulf, where the squadron flew shipping surveillance and antisubmarine patrols and naval gunfire spotting missions.

When *Bennington* was decommissioned in 1970, VS-38 operated from *Hornet* and *Ticonderoga* (CVS 14), completing one WESTPAC/Indian Ocean deployment in 1971 and returning to the Tonkin Gulf on *Ticonderoga* in 1972. Later that year, the squadron upgraded to the S-2G, and in 1973 joined Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 11 on board *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) as the wing's ASW component under the new "CV Concept." VS-38 completed two WESTPAC deployments on board *Kitty Hawk* before beginning in 1976 to make the transition to the new S-3A Viking jet.

In April 1978, the *Red Griffins* took their S-3As on a WESTPAC/Indian Ocean deployment with CVW-14 on board *Enterprise* (CVN 65), followed by two more with CVW-9 aboard *Constellation* (CV 64). In 1983, VS-38 was assigned to CVW-2, its parent command for the next two decades. During the 1980s, the squadron made three WESTPAC/Indian Ocean deployments on board *Ranger* (CV 61), the last of which supported Operation Ernest Will, the escort of tankers through the Arabian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War.

In December 1990, *Ranger* headed for the Arabian Gulf with VS-38 on board. The *Red Griffins* participated in Operation Desert Storm in January 1991, supporting the coalition forces in the gulf with surveillance missions. The squadron's S-3s began taking on the aerial refueling role from the A-6 Intruder. The squadron's 1992 WESTPAC/Indian Ocean cruise would be the last for the S-3A. VS-38 took the S-3A to sea for the last time in May 1993 when the squadron rode *Constellation* around Cape Horn to North Island following completion of the service-life extension program for the ship.

In 1993, VS-38 received the S-3B version of the Viking. In recognition of the multimission capabilities of the S-3B, VS-38 was redesignated a sea control squadron on 16 September 1993. The *Red Griffins* took the S-3B on four WESTPAC/Arabian Gulf deployments on board *Constellation* between 1994 and 2001, participating in Operation Southern Watch, the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Iraq. By 1999, the ASW capabilities had been removed from its S-3Bs, leaving them with aerial refueling and surface surveillance as their primary roles.

The squadron's final deployment took the *Red Griffins* to war once again. VS-38 deployed to the Arabian Sea in late 2002 and supplied aerial refueling support for the strike aircraft patrolling over Afghanistan. In March and April 2003, VS-38 provided support to the strikes that supported the liberation of Iraq from the regime of Saddam Hussein. One VS-38 aircrew fired a Maverick missile at an Iraqi vessel, marking the only time a missile was fired in combat by an S-3. Upon return home, CVW-2 received F/A-18E/F Super Hornet strike fighters, capable of serving as aerial tankers, and VS-38 was slated for deactivation. ✈