

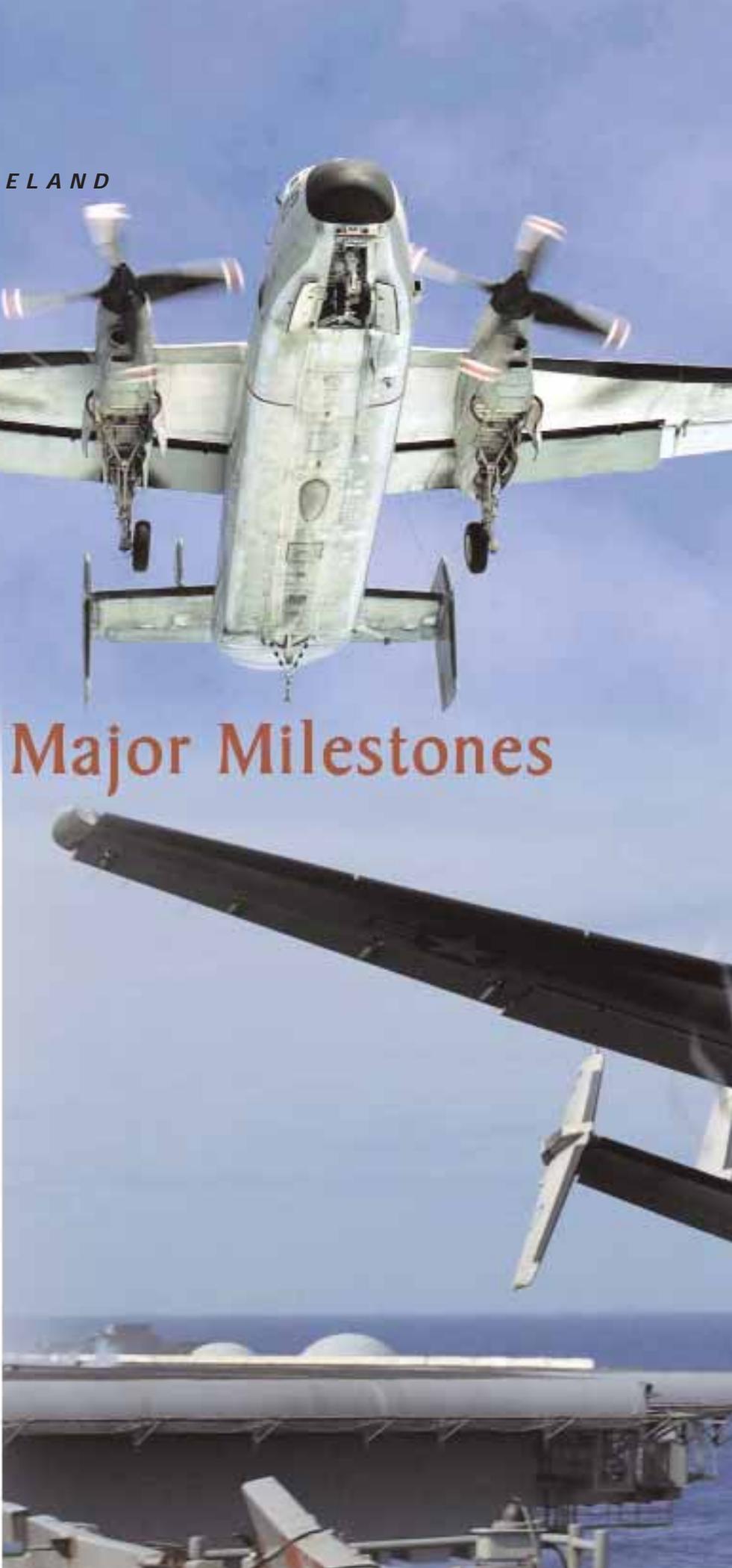
AIRSCOOP

EDITED BY WENDY LELAND

E-2/C-2 Hit Major Milestones

On 14 August the East Coast Hawkeye-Greyhound Ball in Norfolk, Va., celebrated the E-2 Hawkeye's one-millionth flight hour, as well as the 40th anniversary of the C-2 Greyhound's first flight. A C-2 service life extension plan and E-2 upgrades, such as new display units and redesigned propellers, will allow these time-tested platforms to provide stalwart service to the fleet for years to come.

Above, a C-2A Greyhound of VRC-30 approaches for a landing aboard *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72) on 6 August. Photo by PHAN Jacob J. Kirk. Right, a VAW-115 E-2C Hawkeye launches from *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) on 22 May. Photo by PH3 Jason T. Poplin.



S-3B Viking Testing Concludes

Carrier suitability tests for the Mass Memory Unit (MMU) upgrade to the S-3B Viking concluded in September. The MMU's AN/ASH-42 digital data set replaces the Viking's digital memory unit, transportable cartridge and USH-42 mission recorder/reproducer set. A 14-gigabyte hard drive replaces the 8mm recorder tapes as well as the transportable cartridge that contained the mission program and preflight data. The MMU will allow preflight programming and postflight analysis from a laptop computer. Fleet Vikings are expected to be modified during FY 2005.

Carrier Strike Group Staffs Renamed

Carrier Groups and Cruiser-Destroyer Groups have been redesignated Carrier Strike Groups (CSG), bringing them under the administrative command of the numbered fleet commanders. The CSG commanders will be accountable to the numbered fleet commanders for integrated and sustainment training, and to the type commanders for materiel readiness and unit level training.





PHAN Travis M. Burns

For the Record

On 28 June a **V-22 Osprey** experienced a component failure in the right nacelle during flight deck interaction testing with another Osprey. The cause was identified as the failure of a blower which cools drive system components. V-22 flight testing continues, and each test aircraft's blowers will be replaced every 100 flight hours.

On 29 July the Northrop Grumman Corp. delivered the 75th **EA-6B Prowler wing center section**, five months ahead of schedule. The program to replace the wing sections of fleet Prowlers began in 1994.

On 9 September, **Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 3** conducted a flag staff crossdeck at sea, above, from *Belleau Wood* (LHA 3) to *Essex* (LHD 2). The *Essex* ESG officially stood up the next day.

The Raytheon Co. received a sixth full-rate production contract for **AN/ALR-67(V)3 radar warning receivers** on the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet.

Mishaps

On 12 July a T-45C Goshawk of Training Squadron 7 suffered Class A damage when it departed the runway at NAS Meridian, Miss. The student pilot ejected without injury.

While operating in Oregon on 21 July, an F/A-18A Hornet and F/A-18B Hornet of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 134 collided in midair, with two fatalities.

On 10 August four aircrewmembers aboard a Sea Control

Squadron 35 S-3B Viking were killed following a crash on an island off Japan (see page 35).

An MH-53E Sea Dragon of Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 4 suffered Class A damage on 10 August when it became airborne during a stop on the taxiway in the wash area and struck the ground at NAS Sigonella, Italy.

On 11 August a CH-53E Super Stallion of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 166 crashed in Iraq, with two fatalities.

Three aircrew members aboard a Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 265 CH-53D Sea Stallion were injured during a crash at MCAS Futenma, Japan, on 13 August.

An F/A-18C Hornet of Strike Fighter Squadron 151 suffered Class A damage when it departed the runway at NAS North Island, Calif., on 26 August. The pilot ejected successfully.

During operations in the Arabian Gulf on 31 August, a UH-3H Sea King of Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 2 was damaged and its copilot injured when the rotor blades struck the tail pylon after landing.

On 14 September an F/A-18C Hornet of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 212 suffered Class A damage when it crashed while holding prior to approach for landing at Tindal, Australia. There were no injuries.

VFA-203 BLUE DOLPHINS DEACTIVATE

Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 203, a reserve force unit assigned to Reserve Carrier Air Wing 20, was deactivated on 30 June 2004 after more than 34 years of service. Commander Joel B. Levin was the last CO of the *Blue Dolphins*.

The *Blue Dolphins* were activated as Attack Squadron (VA) 203 at NAS Jacksonville, Fla., on 1 July 1970 as part of the comprehensive reorganization of the Naval Air Reserve to increase its combat readiness in the wake of the 1968 *Pueblo* Crisis reserve call-ups. The squadron initially was equipped with the A-4L Skyhawk attack aircraft in July 1971, switching to the A-7A Corsair II in April 1974, followed by the A-7B in August 1977. VA-203 moved to nearby NAS Cecil Field, Fla., in December 1977, and upgraded to the A-7E in September 1983.

When the *Blue Dolphins* upgraded to the F/A-18A Hornet strike fighter, the squadron was

redesignated VFA-203 on 1 October 1989. After Cecil Field was planned for closure, VFA-203 moved to NAS Atlanta, Ga., in October 1996.

The *Blue Dolphins* participated in numerous training exercises and deployments but were never mobilized for active duty. In the early 1990s, the squadron assumed adversary threat simulation and air combat maneuvering training among its roles.

VFA-203 began operating the F/A-18A+ version of the Hornet in 2002, but was soon selected for deactivation as part of the Navy-Marine Corps Tactical Air Integration Plan. Some of its aircraft were transferred to Fighter Composite Squadron 12 at NAS Oceana, Va., where they will be used to train reserve Hornet pilots in squadron augmentation units.

Contributed by LCdr. Rick Burgess, USN (Ret.)



Ted Carlson