

AIRSCOOP

EDITED BY WENDY LELAND



EA-18G Update

A 22 October 2004 ceremony at the Boeing Company's St. Louis, Mo., facility marked the startup of the production line for the EA-18G, the replacement for the EA-6B Prowler. EA-1 is the first of two test aircraft to be produced under a system development and demonstration contract. Assembly of EA-2 is expected to begin before the end of 2005. Test flights should commence in September 2006, and initial operational capability for the EA-18G is scheduled for 2009.

For the Record

The **Multimission Maritime Aircraft** program completed a systems requirements review on 30

An SH-60F Seahawk of HS-4 performs a flare maneuver alongside *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74) during an air and sea power demonstration on 29 October 2004. Photo by PH3 Mark J. Rebilas.

September 2004, allowing the program to continue the systems development and demonstration phase.

The **AIM-54 Phoenix** long-range guided air-to-air missile retired after 30 years of service.

The **RQ-4A Global Hawk** unmanned aerial vehicle made its first flight in October 2004 in California. This is the first of two Global Hawks slated for a Navy demonstration program to develop maritime UAV tactics and operating procedures.

Fighter Wing, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, was deactivated on 1 October 2004. The wing's remaining F-14

squadrons now report to Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

The EP-3E Aries II **Sensor System Improvement Program (SSIP)** upgrade completed operational test and evaluation, and was found to be operationally effective and suitable. Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadrons 1 and 2 fly twelve SSIP aircraft, and five P-3C airframes are undergoing conversion to become EP-3Es.

The Navy's newest San Antonio-class amphibious ship, *New Orleans*, was christened on 20 November 2004.

Strike Fighter Squadron 34, operating from *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67), dropped the Navy's first two **GBU-38 500-pound joint**

direct attack munitions during combat operations in Iraq on 20 October 2004.

Fleet installation of a mission computer replacement for **E-2C Group II** aircraft began in fall 2004 and is expected to be completed in spring 2005. Utilizing commercial off the shelf technology, the upgrade replaces the original Litton L-304 tactical mission computers used in the Group II aircraft since the late 1960s, and provides more reliable, high-performance processing.

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 received the first **CH-53E Super Stallion Ballistic Protection System** in September 2004. The armor system—consisting of 37 steel and Kevlar armor plates installed in the cockpit, cabin, and ramp to protect against 7.62mm rounds and blast fragments—was subsequently installed in



PH3 Joshua Karsten

A GBU-38 JDAM, right, is loaded on an F/A-18C Hornet of VFA-34 aboard *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) on 6 November 2004. The squadron dropped the first GBU-38s in combat the previous month.



VP-64 BECOMES VR-64

On 18 September 2004, Patrol Squadron 64 was redesignated Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 64. Cdr. Mark R. Greenwood is the first CO of VR-64. As Patrol Squadron 64, the Condors flew six P-3C Orions in antisurface, antisubmarine, and aerial mine warfare operations. As VR-64, the squadron will fly three C-130 Hercules to provide transportation for troops, supplies, and gear around the globe.



JO1 (SW) Michael Kramer

Right, Cdr. Mark Greenwood, the first CO of VR-64, speaks at the 18 September 2004 change of command ceremony, as VP-64's last CO, Cdr. Stephen Speed, looks on. Above, the new squadron's first C-130 sits on the ramp at NAS JRB Willow Grove, PA.



JOCS (SW) Doug Hummel

CH-53Es participating in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Mishaps

An F/A-18C Hornet of Strike Fighter Squadron 131 crashed after takeoff from Nellis AFB, Nev., on 9 November 2004. The pilot ejected safely.

On 2 November 2004 an EA-6B Prowler of Electronic Attack Squadron 138 suffered Class A damage when the nose gear collapsed on landing rollout at NAS Fallon, Nev. There were no injuries.

An F-14B Tomcat of Fighter Squadron 103 suffered Class A damage following catastrophic engine failure while in tension on the catapult aboard *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) on 22 October 2004.

On 19 October 2004 aboard Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), a blueshirt was injured when run over by a VFA-82 F/A-18C Hornet being towed under the direction of a yellowshirt.

An F/A-18F Super Hornet of Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 9 suffered Class A damage but landed safely with foddled engines after striking trees at night on short



Marines of HMH-461 install the Ballistic Protection System on a squadron CH-53E Super Stallion. The system adds approximately 1,500 pounds to the helo's weight.

final at NB Point Mugu, Calif., on 14 October 2004.

On 7 October 2004, an HH-60H Seahawk of HS-15 was damaged when it struck the ground following takeoff in Kuwait.

Marines of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, prepare to launch a Dragoneye remote scouting system near Al Qaim, Iraq. The five-pound, hand-launched, reusable vehicle flies at 300–500 feet at approximately 35 miles per hour, transmitting imagery to a ground control station.

LCpl. Christopher G. Graham





Sgt. Robert Carlson

VMFA-321 HELL'S ANGELS DEACTIVATE

An 11 September 2004 ceremony marked the deactivation (officially 30 September) of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 321, one of four VMFA squadrons assigned to the reserve 4th Marine Aircraft Wing. Lt. Col. William Reavis was the squadron's last CO.

The *Hell's Angels* were activated on 1 February 1943 at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., as Marine Fighting Squadron (VMF) 321. After an intensive workup period, the squadron deployed to the South Pacific in November 1943 and staged a detachment at Barakoma in the Solomon Islands. In December, the squadron moved to Bougainville and later to Green Island, and conducted combat operations over the Solomons and the Bismarcks with their F4U-1 Corsair fighters. Under Maj. Edmund F. Overund, an ace formerly of the American Volunteer Group (the *Flying Tigers*) in China, VMF-321 downed 39 Japanese aircraft and 11 probables while losing 8 of its own during intense combat.

In August 1944, VMF-321 moved to Guam, where it conducted strikes to neutralize Japanese forces on the Rota and Pagan islands. The squadron transferred in December 1944 to California for rest and was on its way back to the western Pacific when the war ended. The *Hell's Angels* were deactivated on 28 January 1946.

In early 1946, some Marine Corps aviators who served in VMF-321 began organizing a reserve squadron in the Washington, D.C., area. The reserve unit was reactivated as VMF-321 on 1 July 1946 at NAS Anacostia, D.C., and equipped with F4Us. On 1 April 1949, Marine Fighting Squadron 321 was redesignated Marine Fighter Squadron (still VMF) 321.

VMF-321 was mobilized on 1 March 1951 and equipped with F8F Bearcat fighters, preparing to deploy to the Korean War zone. Instead, the squadron sent its personnel to fill gaps in other Marine squadrons in Korea, but still maintained its official identity, in the form of a single Marine at Anacostia.

After the Korean War, VMF-321 rebuilt its personnel strength. The squadron acquired the AD-5 Skyraider attack aircraft and was redesignated Marine Attack Squadron 321 on 15 May 1958. In October 1961, the squadron moved to nearby NAF Washington, D.C., and on 1 July 1962 was redesignated as a Marine Fighter Squadron when it upgraded to FJ-4B (AF-1E) Fury jets.

VMF-321 switched to the supersonic F-8B Crusader fighter beginning in January 1965, and to the F-8K version in November 1970, although it operated a few F-8A, F-8L, and T-33A aircraft during its Crusader era. The squadron was known as the *Black Barons* beginning in 1973, but reverted to *Hell's Angels* in 1975.

On 1 January 1974, the squadron was redesignated VMFA-321 when it started transition to the F-4B Phantom II fighter. In 1976, the F-4N began replacing the F-4B. In late 1984, the F-4S took over for the squadron's F-4Ns. In 1991, VMFA-321 began transition to the F/A-18A Hornet strike fighter. During the 1980s through 2004, VMFA-321 participated in numerous exercises, including short deployments overseas. As part of the Tactical Aviation Integration Plan being implemented by the Department of the Navy in 2004, VMFA-321 was chosen for deactivation.

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

Sgt. Robert Carlson



Top, a VMFA-321 F/A-18A Hornet takes off from MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, on 13 July 2002. Above, squadron personnel gather on the flight line at Kaneohe.