



CVW-5 Prepares for Summer Float

After a four-month turnaround, Carrier Air Wing 5 again joined the *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) team in early February, deploying to the Western Pacific for its spring patrol. The short 7-week deployment enabled the air wing to “shake off the dust” around the boat, satisfying their training and readiness requirements while minimizing time away from loved ones at home at NAF Atsugi, Japan.

With the VS-21 Redtails having been deactivated and the S-3B Viking no longer part of the air wing, validating a Super Hornet-only tanker plan became the major objective during the first few days of training in the warning areas southeast of Japan. The Royal Maces of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 27 and the VFA-102 Diamondbacks quickly squelched any concern about Rhino-only tanking during some bad weather days at the beginning of deployment. Tanking above 20,000 feet, in the only clear air, was not an unusual occurrence while operating in the warning area in February.

Following a few days of cyclic operations to the north, Team Badman proceeded south to the Okinawa operations area for strike training and an air wing MISSILEX. Okino Daito Jima, affectionately known as “The Rock,” allowed aircrew and maintainers to sharpen their skills in live weapons training. As the only live weapons range used by U.S. forces in Japan, The Rock allows the air wing to test its end-to-end weapons capability.

Upon arriving in the warning areas east of Okinawa, Badman focused on using their air-non-combat expenditure allowance of air-to-air weapons. Lts. Donald Ricketts and Christopher Harris of VFA-102 expertly devised the scenarios and oversaw the execution of the exercise. Expending 8 AIM-9 Sidewinders, 5 AIM-7 Sparrows, and 3 AIM-120 AMRAAMS, the air wing was able to validate the latest air-to-air tactics.

Following the MISSILEX, the Gauntlets of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 136 led a high-speed antiradiation missile (HARM) shoot. Lt. David



Ganci, VAQ-136 training officer, meticulously coordinated the shoot with Commander Fleet Activities Okinawa, providing the shooters with a HARM target in the middle of the eastern warning area. Along with the Prowlers, the VFA-192 Golden Dragons and VFA-27 were able to execute their shots to perfection, providing valuable data for the folks back at the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center.

With the MISSLEX(s) complete, CVW-5 proceeded west for a welcome port visit to Hong Kong. *Kitty Hawk* then steamed back east to provide the air wing with the strike training needed to satisfy training and readiness requirements. By the end of this second week of pummeling The Rock with live and inert weapons, CVW-5 had dropped over 170,000 lbs of ordnance, while qualifying three new air wing strike leads.

When the dust settled from all of the bombs going off high-order, the air wing was ready for the final phase of

Ted Carlson captured this shot of CVW-5's fixed wing assets flying at NAF Atsugi, Japan, in December 2004.

the deployment, Exercise Fowl Eagle, a joint/international exercise with the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Republic of Korea forces. A port visit to Busan

[Pusan], South Korea, allowed final coordination between forces before the exercise. Designed to improve capabilities between U.S. and Korean forces, the annual exercise was a large success for CVW-5. After qualifying three more strike leads and sharing the latest air-to-ground tactics with our brothers in light blue (USAF) and green (USMC), Carrier Air Wing 5 was ready to return to NAF Atsugi, flying all aircraft back on a beautiful spring day in Japan on 26 April 2005.

The air wing/ship team set sail for their summer deployment in May, again providing the blanket under which the western Pacific sleeps. As always, the warriors of Carrier Air Wing 5 continue to hone their warfighting skills to remain combat ready to respond to any contingency. ✈