



AIRSCOOP

EDITED BY WENDY LELAND

Last Tomcats Use ROVER

As VF-31 and VF-213 conduct the final deployment of the F-14 Tomcat, on board *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71), their aircraft are now equipped to provide real-time reconnaissance and target identification data to forward ground controllers. In November 2005 the squadrons requested that their F-14Ds be upgraded to be able to download data to the Remotely Operated Video Enhanced Receiver (ROVER) system. Squadron personnel determined that it would be possible to modify their aircraft using off-the-shelf technology for just \$800 each. Naval Air Systems Command personnel installed the first systems onto the Tomcats on 10 December, just six weeks after the initial request. On 11 December a VF-213 aircraft launched the Tomcat's first ROVER-capable mission. Above, the new system is visible on the underside of a VF-213 Tomcat.

Sea Stallion Envelope Expanded

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 363 conducted wind envelope expansion testing of the CH-53D Sea Stallion on board *Boxer* (LHD 4) in September 2005, right. A lack of wind envelope data restricted the Sea Stallion's use on multipurpose amphibious assault ships. Test data allowed both the day and night flight envelopes to be significantly increased, and the aircraft is now able to operate off LHDs with wind speeds of up to 45 knots off the bow.



CH-53K on the Horizon

On 3 January the Sikorsky company received an \$8.8 million initial system development and demonstration contract for the follow-on to the CH-53E Super Stallion, designated CH-53K. (An artist's concept of the new aircraft is shown at right.) Technologies under consideration for the new aircraft include a glass cockpit; high-efficiency rotor blades with anhedral tips; low-maintenance elastomeric rotorhead; upgraded engine system; cargo rail locking system; external cargo improvements; and survivability enhancements. Fleet Marines should start receiving the first of 156 new heavy lift helos in 2015.



Stockdale, a former Naval Aviator who received the Medal of Honor for his actions as a POW in Vietnam.

Osprey in Production

The Marine Corps accepted the first production MV-22 Osprey in a ceremony at Bell Helicopter facilities in Amarillo, Texas, on 8 December 2005. The aircraft passed operational evaluation in summer 2005, and in September full-rate production was authorized. The first operational MV-22 squadron, VMM-263, stands up in March, with initial operational capability in 2007.

The next combat logistics force underway replenishment naval vessel will be named after **RAdm. Alan B. Shepard, Jr.**, a former Naval Aviator who became the first American in space.

The **RQ-4A Global Hawk** conducted its first wargame exercise 28 November–8 December 2005, demonstrating the unmanned aircraft's long-range maritime surveillance capabilities.

For the Record

The next Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer will be named in honor of **VAdm. James Bond**

Concluding a 1999 contract with IMP Aerospace for standard depot level maintenance of the **H-3 Sea King** fleet, the last overhauled aircraft was delivered to the Naval Air Systems Command in November 2005.



A VMX-22 MV-22B Osprey takes off from *Wasp* (LHD 1) during deck landing qualifications on 15 November 2005.

PH3 Timothy Bensken



Contractor Darrin Wagoner, right, briefs SECNAV Dr. Donald C. Winter on the operational capabilities of the Scan Eagle unmanned aerial system on 29 January in Iraq. Photo by JOC Craig P. Strawser.

Ship Clips

John C. Stennis (CVN 74) conducted sea trials and returned to her homeport in Bremerton, Wash., on 17 December 2005 at the conclusion of her docked planned incremental availability period. Upgrades included the installation of the Steer Control Console, which consolidates the mechanical features of the older helm and lee helm into an electronic system.

George Washington (CVN 73) conducted sea trials and returned to her homeport in Norfolk, Va., on 17 December 2005 at the conclusion of her docked planned incremental availability period. Upgrades included modernization of spaces to support the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet.

Mishaps

On 18 January the pilot of an F/A-18C Hornet of VFA-97 was killed in a crash at NAF El Centro, Calif.

A T-34C Turbo-Mentor of VT-27 suffered Class A damage after a forced landing in Texas due to an inflight engine failure on 12 January.

On 10 January a T-39N Sabreliner of VT-86 crashed in Georgia during navigation training, with four fatalities.

An SH-60B Seahawk of HSL-48 crashed into the water while operating off *De Wert* (FFG 45) in the eastern Pacific on 13 December 2005. Three crew members were lost at sea.

On 6 December 2005 a VMAT-203 AV-8B Harrier II crashed in the Atlantic; the pilot safely ejected.



In summer 2005 Fighter Composite Squadron 13 stood up a detachment at NAS Key West, Fla., comprised of 20 pilots (both active duty and reserve), 40 enlisted members, and 12 aircraft. Previously the squadron transported personnel and aircraft from NAS Fallon, Nev., to conduct adversary missions at Key West several times a year. The det logged its first official flight on 6 December. Left, a VFC-13 pilot preflights his F-5N Tiger at NAS Key West.

HORNETS HEAD TO AL ASAD



Cpl. Micah Snead

In November 2005 approximately 50 personnel and 5 F/A-18C Hornets of VFA-15 and VFA-87 detached from *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) to Al Asad, Iraq, while the carrier made a scheduled port call in Dubai. The squadrons adopted an abandoned MiG-25 hangar as a work center, and took advantage of the experience of VAQ-141, VMFA-332, MALS-26, and MAG-26 to make the short detachment a success. Right, on 15 November Hornets from the two squadrons that will participate in the detachment later in the month prepare to take off from *TR*. Above, on 24 November AMAN Levi Fackler communicates with a VFA-15 pilot during a preflight check in Al Asad, while a VFA-15 Hornet taxis on the flight line, below.



PHAN Stephen Early



Cpl. Micah Snead





Marines conduct maintenance on a VMA-214 AV-8B Harrier II as *Peleliu* (LHA 5) participates in Expeditionary Strike Group 3's Joint Task Force Exercise off California on 23 January. Photo by PH3 Nathaniel J. Karl.