

VS-30 DIAMONDCUTTERS DEACTIVATED

By LCdr. Rick Burgess, USN (Ret.)

Sea Control Squadron (VS) 30 held its deactivation ceremony on 9 December 2005 at NAS Jacksonville, Fla., marking the end of 53 years of active service. Cdr. William H. Suggs, Jr. was the last CO of the Diamondcutters.

VS-30 originally was established on 1 July 1946 as reserve Torpedo Squadron 781 at NAS Miami, Fla. The squadron was redesignated reserve Composite Squadron (VC) 801 on 1 November 1949, and subsequently redesignated reserve Air Antisubmarine Squadron (VS) 801 on 1 August 1950. VS-801 was called on 1 February 1951 to active duty and moved to NAS Norfolk, Va., where it operated 18 TBM-3E Avengers and one SNB-5. The squadron first went to sea on board *Mindoro* (CVE 120) on 23 June 1951. In February 1952 the squadron began transition to the AF-2S/2W Guardian antisubmarine aircraft. Between 1951 and 1953, VS-801 also operated from *Palau* (CVE 122), *Kula Gulf* (CVE 108), *Wright* (CVL 49), and *Block Island* (CVE 106).

VS-801 was redesignated on 4 February 1953 as VS-30. The squadron took its AF Guardians to sea in March 1953 on board *Saipan* (CVL 48) and through 1954 also operated from *Block Island* and *Mindoro*. In October 1954 VS-30 acquired new S2F-1 Tracker twin-engine antisubmarine aircraft, and in 1955 began acquiring S2F-2 versions. Between 1954 and 1959, VS-30 operated its Trackers on ASW patrols in the Atlantic and Mediterranean from the decks of *Siboney* (CVE 120), *Antietam* (CVS 36), *Tarawa* (CVS 40), *Wasp* (CVS 18), *Valley Forge* (CVS 45), *Leyte* (CVS 32), and *Lake Champlain* (CVS 39).

VS-30 was selected in 1960 to become the East Coast replacement training squadron for the S2F (later S-2) Tracker and moved to NAS Key West, Fla. The squadron adopted the nickname Diamondcutters to reflect its role of turning new pilots into skilled aviators. The squadron's S2F-2s were transferred out, leaving only S2F-1s (later S2F-1S1s or S-2Fs). In September 1960 the squadron's first S2F-3 (later S-2D) version arrived.

On 20 October 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, VS-30 was given a no-notice order to move to Norfolk for two months to make room for operational warplanes gathering in Key West for possible action against Cuba. VS-30 left Detachment

14 in Key West to fly ASW patrols for the duration of the crisis.

In 1964 VS-30 began training Argentine crews to fly the S-2. The squadron transferred out its last S-2F in September 1965. In April 1968 its S-2Ds were phased out, leaving only the S-2E. Training in the S-2G version began in November 1971. In July 1970 VS-30 moved to NAS Quonset Point, R.I., but shifted to NAS Cecil Field, Fla., in September 1973. Training of Greek crews began in 1972. By 1974 VS-30 was training S-2 crews for both East and West Coasts as well as Turkey, Brazil, Peru, South Korea, and Venezuela.

In April 1976 VS-30's role as a replacement training squadron ended as the squadron began training for its return to the operational fleet. The squadron received its new S-3A Viking twin-jet ASW aircraft between August and October 1976. As a unit of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 17, VS-30 deployed in April 1978 to the Mediterranean on board *Forrestal* (CV 59). After three more Mediterranean deployments, the last of which included the Indian Ocean, VS-30 switched with CVW-17 to *Saratoga* (CV 60).

In September 1981 VS-30 became the first carrier-based squadron to detect the Soviet Union's *Papa*-class nuclear-powered guided-missile submarine. The Diamondcutters also deployed detachments in 1985

and 1986 to NAS Bermuda to track patrolling

Soviet submarines. In October 1985 the squadron supported the operations to locate the hijacked Italian liner *Achille Lauro*, and in March 1986 supported fleet operations against Libya during Operation Attain Document III. In 1987 the Diamondcutters flew long-range ASW missions in the Mediterranean with aerial refueling support from KC-130Fs flown by Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 22.

After three deployments on board *Saratoga*, in July 1988 VS-30 became the first operational squadron to operate the S-3B version, which featured improved ASW and antisurface capabilities, including the AGM-84 Harpoon cruise missile and the APS-137 inverse synthetic aperture radar. In August 1988, VS-30 took its S-3Bs on board *Independence* (CV 62) from the East Coast around Cape Horn to the West Coast. In April 1989, the squadron became the first fleet VS squadron to launch a Harpoon missile.

VS-30 headed to war on board *Saratoga* on 7 August 1990 in support of Operation Desert Shield, the counter to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Beginning on 17 January 1991 VS-30 supported Operation Desert Storm against Iraq, flying 258 combat sorties in more than 44



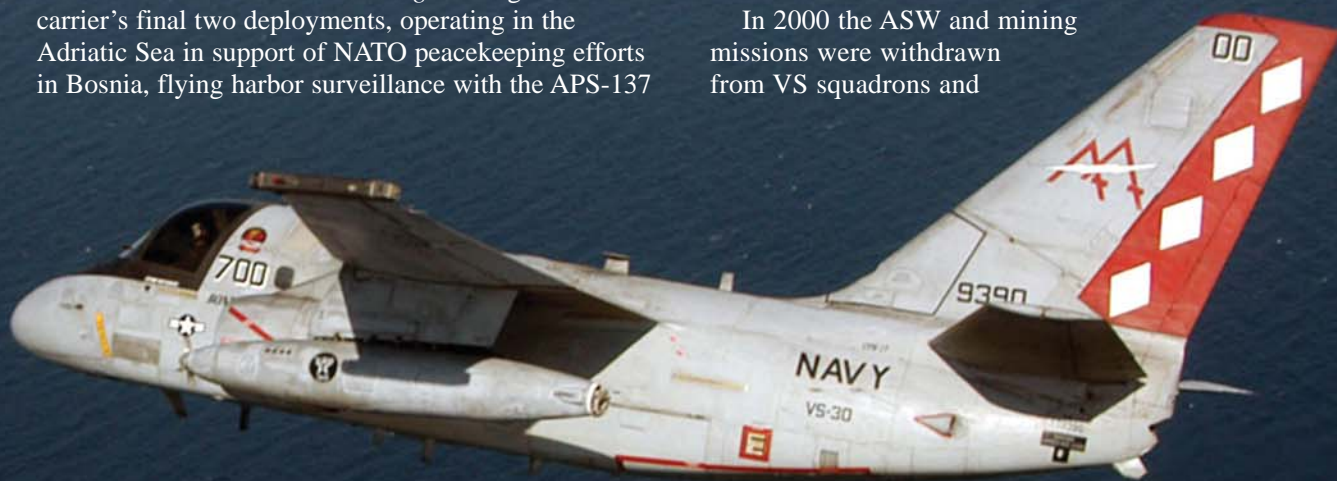
strikes, mostly as electronic support measures aircraft or aerial tankers. The squadron's S-3Bs sometimes carried naval flight officers from *Saratoga's* E-2C Hawkeye squadron to perform command and control duties.

On 16 September 1993 VS-30 was redesignated as a Sea Control Squadron (VS), reflecting the community's broadened roles, including the aerial refueling role for the carrier air wing adopted in 1989. The Diamondcutters flew from *Saratoga* during the carrier's final two deployments, operating in the Adriatic Sea in support of NATO peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia, flying harbor surveillance with the APS-137

Bosnia as well as Operation Southern Watch, the enforcement of a no-fly zone over southern Iraq.

In 1998, VS-30's S-3Bs were equipped with the AAW-13 data link pod for missile control and the AGM-65F Maverick air-to-surface missile and AGM-62 Walleye glide bomb. The same year, the squadron deployed to the Arabian Gulf on board *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69). Due to the closure of NAS Cecil Field, by 1999 the Diamondcutters had relocated to NAS Jacksonville.

In 2000 the ASW and mining missions were withdrawn from VS squadrons and



Background, a Diamondcutters S-3B Viking approaches *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) on 25 October 2004 during operations in the Arabian Gulf. Photo by MC3 Joshua Karsten. Above, a 9 December 2005 ceremony at NAS Jacksonville, Fla., marked the deactivation of VS-30. Photo by MC2 Jamar X. Perry.

radar as well as electronic surveillance missions and surface combat air patrols. In 1994 VS-30 was equipped with a Grey Wolf modification, including the APG-76 synthetic aperture radar, which allowed overland standoff surveillance. The squadron shifted with CVW-17 to *Enterprise* (CVN 65) in 1995 and deployed to the Mediterranean and the Arabian Gulf in 1996, supporting Operation Decisive Endeavor over

most ASW equipment was removed from the fleet's S-3Bs. VS-30 deployed in 2000 on board *George Washington* (CVN 73) in support of Operation Southern Watch over Iraq. This deployment was the first S-3B deployment with the Carrier Airborne Inertial Navigation System II and glass cockpit display.

In response to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, VS-30 deployed a four-plane detachment on board *George Washington* to support F-14 Tomcats and F/A-18 Hornets flying as part of Operation Noble Eagle, the effort to prevent further airliner attacks. In 2002, the Diamondcutters provided aerial refueling support for CVW-17 aircraft flying from *George Washington* in the northern Arabian Sea on strike sorties over Afghanistan.

VS-30 deployed for the last time on 7 June 2004, supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom with sorties from *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67). The deployment marked the first with the Maverick Plus capability, which included the ability to launch and control AGM-65E Laser Maverick and AGM-84H/K Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response. The Diamondcutters returned home to Jacksonville on 13 December 2004.

After a final week-long at-sea period on board *John F. Kennedy* in February 2005, VS-30 participated in drug interdiction operations staged from the Netherlands Antilles. Following this evolution the Diamondcutters returned to NAS Jacksonville to prepare for deactivation.