

Guidelines for Navy Aviation Squadron Lineage and Insignia

THE LINEAGE OF NAVY AVIATION squadrons has been a source of confusion since the advent of the squadron concept after World War I. Much of this confusion arose because of the terminology used by the Navy; the lack of a consistent policy in selecting alphanumeric squadron designations; the reuse of letter and numeric designations; the many establishments, redesignations and disestablishments of aviation squadrons; and the use of the same insignia by different squadrons. Naval aviation insignia is a modern form of heraldry that dates back to the early period of Naval Aviation in the 1920s and captures many proud moments of its history. This practice fosters a sense of pride, unit cohesion and contributes to high morale, esprit de corps and professionalism within the naval aviation community. It also serves as an effective means of preserving a command's tradition, continuity of purpose and recognition, as traced by the squadron's lineage.

The following terms are essential in developing an understanding of how lineage is determined:

Establishment: A squadron's lineage and history begins on the date it is established and assigned a letter and number designation, such as VP-46. In the past the terms commission and decommission have been incorrectly used interchangeably with establishment and disestablishment, resulting in additional confusion regarding squadron lineage. These terms should not be used interchangeably and should not be connected with each other. Commission and decommission refer only to ships. They do not refer to squadrons because squadrons do not receive commissioning pennants when they are established.

Redesignation: A squadron's function may be changed from time to time due to changes in technology or mission requirements. As an example, a squadron such as VP-1, established as Bombing Squadron 128 (VB-128) during World War II, underwent the following redesignations: Patrol Bombing Squadron 128 (VPB-128), Patrol Squadron 128 (VP-128), Medium Patrol Squadron (landplane) 1 (VP-ML-1) and then to Patrol Squadron 1 (VP-1). These redesignations involved changes in the squadron's mission as well as the type of aircraft assigned to the squadron.

Deactivation: This term means the squadron's personnel and equipment are all reassigned and it is placed on an inactive status list. The squadron designation remains on a record of inactive squadrons until it is reactivated and becomes an active operating unit once again.

Reactivation: A squadron may be reactivated from the inactive list and placed back in active operational service with new personnel and equipment. When this occurs, the squadron can only be reactivated using the last designation it was assigned prior to deactivation. The history of this reactivated squadron may be traced using the lineage of the squadron prior to its deactivation. A squadron cannot be deactivated and reactivated the same day or activated and redesignated on the same day.

Under current Navy policy for squadron designations and lineage, as set forth by CNO's OPNAV Instruction 5030.4E of 19 March 1998, once a squadron letter and number have been assigned to a squadron, that letter and number combination can never be assigned to another squadron. As an example, if VP-5, a currently active squadron, were to be deactivated none of the squadron's designations in its lineage could be used as a designation for the establishment of a new squadron. That means the following designations in VP-5's lineage could never be used to establish a new squadron: VP-17F, VP-17, VP-42, VB-135, VPB-135, VP-135, VP-ML-5 and VP-5. VP-5, if deactivated, could be reactivated and placed in an operational status but all the former designations in VP-5's lineage will always be associated with only VP-5. Hence, the letter and number combinations of VP-17F, VP-17, VP-42, VB-135, VPB-135, VP-135 and VP-ML-5 may never be used again by any squadron other than VP-5.

Historically, confusion has reigned regarding squadrons that have been assigned the same designation. As an example, since the squadron concept was established in the early 1920s there have been five separate squadrons assigned the VP-1 designation. Hence, when one speaks of VP-1 you have to ask what time frame in order to identify the correct squadron. Due to the confusion resulting from the use

of the same designation time after time, with no lineage connection between these squadrons, the new set of guidelines, referenced in the above paragraph, were developed to end the lineage and insignia confusion. After 1998, when a squadron is deactivated its designation and approved insignia will be placed on the inactive list. The lineage and insignia of the squadron is retired and remains with the history of that deactivated squadron. A newly established squadron cannot adopt the insignia of a deactivated unit. A squadron that is reactivated will use the insignia it had approved for use prior to its deactivation. The records for inactive or deactivated squadrons are maintained by the Director, Air Warfare's Assistant for Aviation History and Publications (N88H). Establishment, redesignation or activation of any

squadron by any Navy aviation command will be cleared through (N88H) for consistency with the historical record. Insignia proposals for newly established squadrons also will be cleared through (N88H) in accordance with OPNAV Instruction 5030.4E.

The policy regarding activation or deactivation only applies to squadrons listed in enclosure (2) of OPNAV Instruction 5030.4E. Any squadron designations that were disestablished prior to 19 March 1998 may not be considered for reactivation. Reactivation only applies to those squadrons listed in enclosure (2) or established as new squadrons after 19 March 1998.

The old policy regarding squadron lineage was published in Appendix 5 of the *Dictionary of American Naval Aviation Squadron, Volume 1, The History of VA, VAH, VAK, VAL, VAP and VFA Squadrons*.



Patrol Wing One insignia.
