



PHC Chet King

A P-3C from VP-45 returns to Sigonella after a long flight over the Mediterranean Sea.

MARITIME PIPELINE

By Lieutenant Dan McDonald

Thursday morning arrives and at Training Air Wing (TraWing) 4, it is time to start the next group of maritime pipeline flight students on the last step to their Wings of Gold. That's the day that indoctrination into the advanced pipeline always begins for each new group of students.

Located at NAS Corpus Christi, Texas, TraWing-4 is the home of advanced maritime flight and E-2/C-2/C-1 multiengine training. The air wing also trains one-quarter of all primary students in the Naval Air Training Command, using the T-34C *Turbo-Mentor*.

Students arriving for advanced maritime flight training come from TraWing-5 at NAS Whiting Field, Fla., or are "homegrown" at TraWing-4. They have completed both the primary and intermediate stages of flight training and have approximately 90 hours of flight time under their belts. Those who have been selected for the E-2/C-2/C-1 pipeline have already completed close to 180 hours of flight training in the T-34C and T-2C *Buckeye* and come from Training Air Wing 1 at NAS Meridian, Miss. These students will only need to complete the familiarization stage of maritime training.

Advanced maritime and E-2/C-2/C-1 multiengine training takes place in the T-44A, the twin-engine turboprop

military version of the popular Beechcraft C-90 *King Air*. The T-44 is fully instrumented with a complement of dual VORs, Tacan, RNAV, ADF and weather radar. Its seven-place cabin is air-conditioned and pressurized. Since its introduction in 1977, the T-44 has enjoyed a very successful career training advanced maritime students.

During their training, student Naval Aviators will complete 187 hours of academics covering meteorology, aerodynamics, flight rules and regulations, aircraft systems and navigation. Maritime students will also receive 20 hours in the 2F129 full-motion T-44 flight simulator, and can expect to graduate with approximately 88 flight hours in the T-44. The entire maritime curriculum lasts about 130 days. Comparing the other phases of flight training with advanced maritime, many flight students agree that the transition from a single-pilot cockpit into the world of dual-piloted aircraft requires a realignment of flying skills to include the skills of your copilot. The learning environment in the advanced squadrons is more relaxed, making this transition easier for the student.

Upon completion of the course, the maritime graduates receive their Wings of Gold and are sent to fleet readiness squadrons to transition to fleet aircraft, such as P-3s, EP-3s and EC-130s. The E-

2/C-2/C-1 graduates will be designated Naval Aviators after completing the first 11 T-44 familiarization flights and will go on to take their places in the world of carrier aviation.

Students consistently finish their course of training on time. Once in the squadron, they can expect to be scheduled just about every day.

One of the best aspects of the training that students receive at one of TraWing-4's T-44 squadrons is the comradery they find in the wardroom. Both Training Squadrons 28 and 31 have long-standing reputations of excellent junior officer development. The student Naval

Aviators are not simply temporary additions to the unit, but are quickly accepted as true members of the wardroom.

Training Squadrons 28 and 31 flew over 18,000 hours each in fiscal year 1984 and have averaged a total of 2,300 hours a month in 1985. Composed of approximately 40 officers and 22 enlisted personnel each, these squadrons annually train about 400 aviators for the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and foreign governments.

The pace in the training squadrons is decidedly different than in the fleet. Instructors in the T-44 average 50-80

hours a month, and the opportunity for cross-country training flights in a truly outstanding cross-country aircraft is very great.

With reliability of the aircraft averaging well over 80 percent, scheduling is no problem. Working hours are consistent and long-range planning works. The ability to plan ahead with confidence is probably the biggest benefit the T-44A has brought to the Training Command.

Instructor duty in the Training Command offers many challenges and opportunities, including more flight hours and more flight experience. ■

A T-44 flies over Corpus Christi.

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