



VP ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

AN ASSOCIATION OF VETERANS WHO SERVED WITH THE NAVAL AIR RESERVE PATROL SQUADRONS BASED AT NAS SQUANTUM MA, NAS SOUTH WEYMOUTH MA, AND NAS BRUNSWICK ME.

NOTE, CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBERS OF ANY U.S. NAVY PATROL SQUADRON ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US!

ISSUE 103

[HTTP://WWW.VPASSOCIATION.ORG](http://www.vpassociation.org)

MAR 2026

Welcome to another edition of the VP Association newsletter. Please direct all VP Association-related inquiries or correspondence to Marc Frattasio, PO Box 30, Pembroke MA 02339, 781-294-4491, marc_frattasio@yahoo.com.

RECCO:



ABOVE: Night-time view of a VP-92 P-3C Orion inside the VP hangar at NAS Roosevelt Roads Puerto Rico during a two-week annual training detachment in 1995. Photo provided by Jerry Lach. Got something similar to share? If so, contact Marc Frattasio at marc_frattasio@yahoo.com.

FINAL FLIGHTS:

We lost John Holt, Alderic Leblanc, and Mike Ronsse recently. John was a flight engineer in the VP-MAU. Alderic was an AMS in VP-92 and Mike was a PN in VP-92.

REGARDING THE COST OF PRINTING AND MAILING NEWSLETTERS...

If you have an e-mail address and get your newsletter in the mail please contact George Driscoll at gnddriscoll@gmail.com ASAP so we can send it to you via e-mail. Remember, we do not charge

dues and operate on a shoestring thanks to volunteer labor, memorabilia sales, and donations. If you have an e-mail address and get a paper newsletter it would be better for us to send it via e-mail.

LOST CONTACT:

Be sure to inform George Driscoll at gnddriscoll@gmail.com about home or e-mail address changes.

NAS BRUNSWICK BASE REUNION IN SEPTEMBER:

The Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum will host another NAS Brunswick base reunion at old NAS Brunswick, ME on Friday and Saturday September 18th and 19th. Save the date! As you should know, the museum tries to hold these things every two years. The reunion committee expects the Navy to provide several static display aircraft and intends to have guest speakers at the event, as has been the case in previous years. Details will be provided as the date of the reunion approaches.

Your newsletter editor will sponsor a command mini-reunion on Saturday September 19th in conjunction with the base reunion for former VP-MAU and VP-92 personnel. We will have some kind of free squadron-branded “geedunk” to hand out to shipmates who come to this event, on a first-come first-served basis and while the supply lasts of course.

The Navy’s famous flight demonstration team, the Blue Angels, will be coming to old NAS Brunswick over the weekend of July 11th and 12th. Please note that this will be the Blue Angels only visit to New England this year. So, if you want to see them and don’t want to travel outside the New England area to do so, this is the place to go. See <https://www.blueangels.navy.mil/show/#show> for details.

A FRIENDLY REMINDER REGARDING TWO SMALL BUT RELEVANT MUSEUMS:

As you should all know, there are small museums dedicated to preserving the history of NAS South Weymouth (the Shea Naval Aviation Museum) and NAS Brunswick (The Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum) operating on the sites of both old bases. Both museums can use financial and volunteer assistance. If you’d like to help, reach out to either museum through the contact information provided on their web sites at <http://www.anapatriotsquadron.org> or <https://bnamuseum.org>.

DARRELL DAVIS RETIRING FROM THE NATIONAL GUARD AT NAS BRUNSWICK REUNION:



Anybody who was in VP-92 between the 1990s and the disestablishment of the squadron should remember Darrell Davis. He was a popular SELRES AO. After the squadron was disbanded he transferred to the Army National Guard, where he was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers. He’ll be retiring from the Army National Guard as a lieutenant colonel at the upcoming NAS Brunswick base reunion. If you are planning to go to the base reunion, be sure to look for Darrell and congratulate him.

SINGAPORE CLEARED TO BUY FOUR P-8A POSEIDONS (Breaking Defense 1/21):

The US government has approved a potential Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case for Singapore to buy the Boeing P-8A Poseidon multi-mission maritime patrol aircraft in a deal worth potentially over \$2.3 billion, according to a notice published by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. The approval also includes MK-54 lightweight torpedoes and other associated equipment including the

AN/AAQ-24(V)N Directional Infra-Red Counter Measures (DIRCM) and AN/AQQ-2(V) acoustic systems.

Singapore had said in September 2025 that it would acquire the P-8As as the first phase of the city-state's recapitalization of its airborne maritime security capabilities, which seeks to strengthen its maritime situation awareness and ability to counter sub-surface threats. Should the deal go through, the P-8As will replace five Fokker 50 maritime patrol aircraft currently operated by the Republic of Singapore Air Force.

Singapore's economy is heavily dependent on its port, which is one of the busiest in the world. The island nation is located at the narrow choke point where the Straits of Malacca meets the South China Sea, which are heavily trafficked by commercial shipping plying the shipping lanes between Asia and the Middle East as well as Europe. The country is also a security partner of the US, and hosts a rotational deployment of US Navy Littoral Combat Ships and US military logistics units that support regular visits of US warships and military aircraft.

The notice from DSCA is a congressional notification and is not final, as quantities and dollar totals often shift during negotiations. There's also the remote possibility US lawmakers could step in to halt the sale.

Breaking Defense article by Mike Yeo

NAVY P-8 USED FOR RARE PRESIDENTIAL COMBAT AIR PATROL MISSION (TWZ 1/20):

A U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol jet executed a rare presidential Combat Air Patrol (CAP) flight on Monday. It took place while President Donald Trump was attending the College Football Playoff National Championship (CFP) at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens. The aircraft provided "incident awareness assessment (IAA) support" for the United States Secret Service (USSS) during the presidential CAP, U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) told The War Zone.

"IAA involves the use of Department of War (DoW) assets to provide situational awareness in support of domestic operations," NORTHCOM stated. "IAA has been successfully utilized in the past for similar high-profile events, such as disaster response operations and large-scale public gatherings, where DoW assets provided critical situational awareness to support civilian authorities. A P-8 aircraft was identified as available to assist with this mission." Using a P-8 for presidential CAPSs "doesn't happen very often," a NORTHCOM spokesman added, however, he could not immediately provide greater details about the frequency.

@aircraftspots first posted about the peculiar flight, which was later highlighted by another open source plane tracker, @TheIntelFrog. The militarized 737 derivative, callsign JULIET ECHO 191, was launched from its home at Naval Air Station Jacksonville at 4:51 PM Eastern and began doing orbits at nearly 18,000 feet starting roughly 30 miles north of the stadium and extending over the Atlantic Ocean. Around 7:14 PM, the jet then flew tighter orbits at about 3,700 feet around 1.5 miles west of the stadium before flying a wider pattern at the same altitude, a few miles south, that lasted until about 8 PM, according to ADS-B data. It then flew additional loops at altitudes ranging from 15,000 feet to 18,000 feet east, southeast and northeast of the stadium before returning to base just after 10 PM.

The lower-altitude passes coincided with Trump's arrival in the area, but did not appear to follow the motorcade route. According to the White House, Marine 1 landed at North Perry Airport at 7:03 PM Eastern. Trump's motorcade traveled south and arrived at the stadium at 7:08 PM. The president

and his family attended the game, which the Indiana Hoosiers won over the Miami Hurricanes by a 27-21 score. Trump left at 10:47 PM.

The P-8 can provide overwatch capabilities fitting into the requirements of an IAA. According to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD): “IAA is similar to DOD’s definition of Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR). However, ISR is conducted outside the United States over foreign territory or within the United States during Homeland Defense events, while IAA is conducted within the United States in support of DSCA [Defense Support of Civil Authorities] operations. The change in title is necessary to make it clear that DOD does not collect Intelligence on US persons. IAA operations focus on providing timely and usable information to all levels of command and to local, State, Civil, and Federal leaders in order to save lives, reduce human suffering and protect property.”

There are three IAA mission sets, including Broad Area Coverage (BAC), Damage Assessment (DA), and Situational Awareness (SA). “Similar to ISR in the HD mission, IAA capabilities include Electro-Optical (EO), Infra-red (IR), Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), Multi-spectral/Hyper-spectral (MSI/HSI), and Full Motion Video (FMV),” NORAD notes.

While the P-8 is largely known for its anti-submarine, anti-surface warfare, and sea control roles, its suite of sensors makes it very well suited for an IAA operation over land as well. The P-8 is equipped with a very powerful Wescam MX-20HD electro-optical turret capable of capturing high definition moving video of targets on the earth’s surface. This combined with the P-8’s extensive communications system, as well as its fast response times due to its jet speed while still being able to loiter relatively low and slow, would be reason enough to use it for a mission like this. In addition, its onboard radar and electronic surveillance measures (ESM) suite could also come into play, to a lesser degree. A handful of P-8s can also carry the slab-like Advanced Airborne Sensor (AAS) that is attached to the lower forward fuselage of the aircraft. This is an incredibly capable and secretive radar capable of taking very high definition synthetic aperture radar maps and detecting moving objects down below in complex littoral areas. It likely has other functions that are not disclosed, possibly including spotting low-flying aircraft. Other modular surveillance payloads remain undisclosed, but an advanced communications intelligence system has been spotted bolted below the aircraft’s chin. Because of its size, the P-8 can also serve as an impromptu command and control platform, taking on specialist crewmen, if need be.

Suffice it to say, P-8s are extremely capable, multi-role aircraft. And that is why they are so heavily tasked around the globe. While P-8s likely help monitor maritime movements near where the president may be staying in some circumstances, flying a presidential CAP over land is unusual for a Poseidon. DHS has many aircraft that are equipped with similar imaging capabilities and are far more efficient than the P-8. It isn’t clear if these aircraft were simply unavailable or if some of the P-8’s unique capabilities were needed for this specific mission.

There is a wide range of threats, from drones to bad actors on the ground, that exist at such a high-profile affair as the College Football National Championship. This is all magnified when the president is in attendance, with many more contingencies being needed to be set in place, including route clearing for the motorcade and general overwatch of the facility and the area surrounding it. Security concerns may have been further heightened in the wake of threats Iranian officials made against Trump for his calling for anti-government protests there to continue while still mulling military action against the regime. The regime in Tehran has a long history of making direct threats against Trump, including implying they could use drones to assassinate him.

We may see Poseidons called upon for more presidential CAPs in the future. In the past, P-3C Orion patrol planes were sometimes used for these missions, the NORTHCOM spokesman told us, but the Navy stopped flying them last year. The CAP flight can be added to the already relatively huge and still expanding number of mission sets the P-8 can be called upon to execute at any given time.

TWZ article by Howard Altman

CHINESE ARM MERCHANT SHIP (USNI News 1/7):

A Chinese civilian ship was equipped with several armed and aircraft-launching configurations over the last few weeks, highlighting Beijing's ability to equip its civilian containership fleet for wartime roles. In recent weeks, a Chinese merchant vessel was seen at Shanghai's Hudong-Zhudong shipyard receiving numerous containerized armaments, including close-in weapon systems, vertical launching systems and radars. Chinese writing emblazoned on the side of the weapon systems translated to "containerized weapon module development kit." In all, the ship was equipped with 60 vertical launching system cells.

The ship, seen on maritime tracker sites as Zhongda 79, was near the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) Type 076-class Sichuan (51) landing helicopter dock, Beijing's latest amphibious assault ship equipped with an electromagnetic catapult capable of launching fixed-wing drones. Shortly after Zhongda 79 was spotted with its weaponized containers, UAVs and a ground-based electromagnetic catapult system were observed near the 97-meter-long vessel. These aviation-related capabilities were seen on the container vessel a few days later, replacing some of the missile launching cells.



Collaborative combat aircraft-styled unmanned aerial vehicles represented the majority of the drones seen near Zhongda 79. The aircraft, also envisioned to support Sichuan, will bolster Beijing's naval aviation capabilities and long-range air defense operations. Chinese unmanned aerial developments were featured prominently during the country's 2025 military parade.

The deployment of these unmanned fighters and electromagnetic launching systems on Zhongda 79 demonstrates China's capability to field numerous launch platforms across potentially hundreds of civilian platforms. Outfitting such ships with military technology brings the possibility that civilian merchant ships may support large scale combat operations and surprise attacks on adversary airfields or ports, particularly against those in the first and second island chains.

It is unclear if the Chinese military will pursue these configurations across the country's vast merchant marine fleet, which was developed as a dual-use capability to support Beijing's military operations. Among the most notable cases of China's integration of civilian vessels is with its fleet of large ferries that can transport substantial amounts of People's Liberation Army ground force troops during a potential invasion of Taiwan. The appearance of the missile-armed and drone-capable civilian container ship coincides with a recent string of milestones in Beijing's military modernization effort, including the finalization test of a hypersonic anti-ship ballistic missile from a Type 055-class destroyer and Pentagon claims of a vast Chinese aircraft carrier build-up.

USNI News article by Aaron-Matthew Lariosa

MARINERA TANKER SEIZED AS P-8 POSEIDON PATROLS (ItaMilRadar 1/7):

This afternoon, the Russian-flagged tanker *Marinera* (formerly *Bella 1*) was seized in the North Atlantic following days of mounting tension and sustained Western surveillance in the area. The operation unfolded within a crowded and highly revealing air picture, suggesting that the boarding was the culmination of continuous monitoring rather than an improvised or isolated action.

At the center of the airborne activity were multiple P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft operating across a wide swath of ocean between Iceland, the Norwegian Sea and the North Sea. A Norwegian Air Force P-8A was active to the north, in an area consistent with maritime and sub-surface surveillance tasks. Given reports of Russian naval units — including a submarine — maneuvering toward the tanker in the days preceding the seizure, it is plausible that the Norwegian P-8 was tasked with monitoring both surface traffic and potential underwater threats linked to the *Marinera*'s escort.

Further south, a Royal Air Force P-8 Poseidon was also operating in the broader North Sea region. While there is no confirmation that this aircraft took part directly in the seizure itself, its presence fits a pattern of layered maritime domain awareness. The RAF asset may have contributed to a shared operational picture, maintaining coverage over adjacent sectors and ensuring continuity should assets need to reposition rapidly during the operation.

A U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon was simultaneously active west of Iceland, a strategically sensitive area that controls access between the Arctic, the North Atlantic and the Greenland–Iceland–UK gap. From this position, the aircraft would have been well placed to monitor approaches to the operating area and track any Russian naval movements attempting to reach or support the tanker.

Crucially, the endurance of these maritime patrol missions appears to have been supported by a U.S. Air Force KC-135R aerial refuelling tanker operating in the same timeframe. The presence of the KC-135R strongly suggests that at least some of the P-8 sorties were refuelled in flight, allowing them to remain on station during the critical hours leading up to and following the seizure this afternoon. Such support is essential when maintaining uninterrupted surveillance over vast oceanic areas.

Completing the picture, a U.S. Air Force C-130J was also visible in the region. Although less directly associated with surveillance, aircraft of this type often support complex maritime operations through logistics, coordination tasks or communications relay, reinforcing the broader command-and-control framework surrounding the interception.

Taken together, the combination of multiple P-8 Poseidon aircraft, aerial refuelling support and auxiliary platforms points to a deliberately structured operation in which air assets played a decisive enabling role. The seizure of *Marinera* this afternoon appears to have been the final step of a prolonged tracking effort, highlighting how modern sanctions enforcement at sea increasingly depends on persistent ISR coverage and multinational coordination rather than reactive interdiction alone. Some of the assets that took part in the seizure operation of the Russian tanker *Marinera* are now returning to their home bases, including at least one USAF V-22 Osprey.

ItaMilRadar article by ItaMilRadar staff

DENMARK TO BUY THREE P-8A MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT (The Aviation Geek Club 1/6)

The US State Department approved a foreign military sale to Denmark of up to three P-8A Poseidon multi-mission maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft with indirect fire protection capability under a possible US \$1.8 contract. The US Defense Security Cooperation Agency notified the US Congress of the possible foreign military sale on Dec. 29, 2025.

According to Transmittal No. 25-102 The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Denmark of Multi-Mission Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft P-8A with Indirect Fire Protection Capability and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$1.8 billion. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency delivered the required certification notifying Congress.

The Government of Denmark has requested to buy up to three (3) P-8A Patrol Aircraft; four (4) Multifunctional Distribution System Joint Tactical Radio Systems; four (4) Guardian Laser Transmitter Assemblies for the AN/AAQ-24(V)N; four (4) system processor replacements for AN/AAQ-24(V)N with Selective Availability Anti-spoofing Modules (SAASMs); and eight (8) LN-251 with Embedded Global Positioning Systems / Inertial Navigations Systems with SAASMs. The following non-MDE items will be included: Tactical Open Mission Software; electro-optical and infrared MX-20HD systems; NexGEN Missile Warning Sensors for the AN/AAQ-24(V)N; AN/AAQ-2(V) acoustic systems; AN/APY-10 radar systems; ALQ-213 early warning management systems; A/N UPX-43 interrogators; KIV-78A cryptographic appliqué; A/N APX-123A Identification Friend or Foe transmitters; AN/ARC-210 ultra high frequency / very high frequency radios; AN/ALE-47 Countermeasures Dispenser System (CMDS) programmers; KY-100M communications security (COMSEC) devices; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The total estimated cost is \$1.8 billion.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a NATO Ally that is a force for political stability and economic progress in Europe. The proposed sale will enhance Denmark's capability to meet current and future threats by providing a credible force that is capable of deterring adversaries and participating in NATO operations. The proposed sale will support its goal of improving national and territorial defense as well as interoperability with U.S. and NATO forces. Denmark will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces. The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the military balance in the region. The principal contractor will be The Boeing Company, located in Arlington, VA.

The P-8 can fly up to 41,000 feet with a maximum speed of 490 knots. Fitted with an in-flight refueling system, the P-8's endurance and range allow it to conduct extended patrols over vast expanses of water, benefiting both military and humanitarian operations. A proven system with 172 aircraft delivered or in service, the P-8 has logged more than 660,000 flight hours around the globe. Each P-8 is engineered for 25 years of service and 25,000 flight hours in the harshest maritime flight regimes, including extended operations in icing environments.

The P-8 combines the most advanced weapon system of its kind and a cutting-edge mission system that ensures maximum interoperability in the battle space. By sharing 86% commonality with the 737 Next Generation and Boeing's expertise in commercial fleet management and derivative aircraft sustainment, the P-8 provides customers with greater availability at a lower operational cost. The Poseidon offers the size, weight, power and cooling capacity to support evolving mission needs, including the integration of additional mission systems to enhance operational versatility. The P-8's open mission systems architecture means rapid, affordable technology insertion for decades of mission readiness.

The P-8 has two variants: the P-8A Poseidon, flown by the U.S. Navy, the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force, the Royal Australian Air Force, the Royal Norwegian Air Force, the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Republic of Korea Navy, and the P-8I, flown by the Indian Navy. Other militaries, including the German Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force, have also chosen the P-8, further solidifying its reputation as a global leader in maritime patrol.

The Aviation Geek Club article by Dario Leone

US NAVY P-8 PATROLS OFF MEXICO AFTER MADURO'S CAPTURE (SSBCrack News 1/6):

Following the dramatic capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on drug trafficking charges, significant military activity has been reported off the Mexican coast. A US Navy P-8 Poseidon aircraft was observed conducting surveillance operations in an area known to be a key drug-smuggling hub, specifically near Tijuana. This elevated military presence coincides with heightened tensions regarding drug trafficking issues in Mexico, particularly following comments made by former US President Donald Trump, who has openly criticized the Mexican government for its perceived failure to control drug cartels.

Flight tracking data revealed that the P-8 Poseidon took off from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island in Washington. The aircraft made a series of passes along the coastline, indicating a focused reconnaissance mission targeting maritime drug trafficking routes. It was noted that Tijuana serves as a major corridor for cartels smuggling narcotics into the United States, with operatives frequently using the Pacific drug corridor for illegal activities—including the trafficking of fentanyl.

The Boeing P-8 Poseidon, renowned for its advanced surveillance capabilities, is equipped with state-of-the-art sensors capable of identifying both surface and underwater targets. Its design allows for extensive monitoring of maritime movements, proving particularly useful in countering narcotic smuggling efforts. With a flight speed exceeding 900 kilometers per hour and capable of climbing to altitudes upwards of 41,000 feet, the P-8 is well-suited for prolonged offshore missions, aided by its in-flight refueling capacity allowing it to remain airborne for extended periods.

The P-8 Poseidon has emerged as a critical asset in the US Navy's efforts to combat drug trafficking, with a fleet of 174 aircraft having logged over 700,000 flight hours since its introduction. Built for durability, the aircraft is expected to remain operational for up to 25 years and is frequently updated to address evolving threats in security.

Trump's remarks about Mexican drug cartels have reignited controversy around US involvement in combating drug violence in the region. He recently asserted that the cartels are exerting control over vast territories in Mexico, declaring, "The cartels are running Mexico, whether you like it or not." In a stark warning to Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, Trump threatened potential military intervention unless the Mexican government took decisive action against drug trafficking networks. "Would I launch strikes in Mexico to stop drugs? It's OK with me. Whatever we have to do to stop drugs," he stated, emphasizing the urgency with which he views the crisis.

The implications of these developments suggest an escalating focus on military and strategic operations in response to drug trafficking, both in Venezuela and Mexico, with the US asserting its position on international drug control efforts. Observers are closely monitoring the situation to see how these military maneuvers will impact both US-Mexico relations and the broader approach to combating drug trafficking in the region.

SSBNews article by News Desk

NORTH KOREA'S FIRST NUCLEAR POWERED MISSILE SUB REVEALED (Naval News 12/29):

North Korea's first dedicated nuclear-powered ballistic missile (SSBN) submarine has been unveiled during a DPRK state media broadcast showing North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-Un, touring the construction facility. The first of its kind in North Korean service, the submarine is a massive technological leap from the submarines currently or formerly operated by the Korean People's Navy, this comes as all current or former boats have been conventionally powered.

Larger than any other sub in DPRK service, the sub is claimed to be over 8,000 ton in displacement, with added weight aboard the submarine likely due to its nuclear power plant as well as the armament of “strategic missiles,” which hints at the possibility of the submarine carrying nuclear capable SLBMs. The submarine is estimated to 10 SLBMs in a sail-mounted configuration, a highly unusual method not present on any other SSBN in service across the world. This is supplemented by 6 nose-mounted torpedo tubes (presumably 533mm in diameter) and a likely present chin-mounted sonar array.



Which SLBMs will be present on the submarine and their range is unknown, but the missiles utilized will likely be some variation of the Pukguksong series of SLBM, possibly the Pukguksong-5. The Pukguksong-5 is the latest in the DPRK’s lineage of SLBMs, being tested in 2021 with a likely range of several thousands of kilometers.

The DPRK’s SSBN’s reveal occurred during a period of modernization within the North Korean Navy (KPN). This new wave of modernization is most certainly meant to alleviate the growing age of its current surface and submarine force, most of which are Soviet designs dated to the early/mid cold war. In particular, the North Korean Navy inducted 2 Choe Hyon-class guided missile destroyers into service in 2025, representing the most modern and heaviest surface combatants in North Korean service, with each ship surpassing 5,000 tonnes and capable of carrying nuclear weapons. This class of ship is also the first in KPN service to utilize VLS cells. The second ship, Kang Kyon was relaunched after the ship had capsized and partially sunk following a botched launching attempt.

Below the surface, the KPN had inducted two Sinpo/Gorae-Class SSKs into service since the 2010s, with each submarine capable of firing ICBMs/SLBMs. Besides these two boats, the majority of North Korea’s ~100 hull strong submarine fleet (including mini submarines) are dated to the early cold war and have weathered several decades of service with unknown maintenance cycles. The induction of the new SSBN is stated by Korean media to augment any nuclear second strike capability currently present within the KPN, and is a part of a broader initiative to enhance the maritime limited capability currently fielded.

Naval News article by Ethan Gossrow

RISING COSTS AND TRADE TENSIONS DELAY INDIA'S P-8I PURCHASE (NewsD 12/27):

Talks between India and the United States for buying six more Boeing P-8I Poseidon planes have not moved forward. Reports say the talks stopped because the price went up a lot and because a wider trade fight has started between the two countries. This happened even after many big meetings. Senior US defense officials and top Boeing leaders tried to push the deal ahead, but nothing changed.

The delay worries the Indian Navy. The Navy already uses these planes every day to watch the seas and protect the country. With no new planes coming soon, the Navy must work harder with the aircraft it already has. It must patrol huge areas like the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, and other important sea routes. The Navy has said many times that it needs at least 18 P-8I aircraft to watch many areas at the same time.

The P-8I Poseidon has become one of the most trusted planes of the Indian Navy. It works as a fast first responder in many missions. It helps in counter-insurgency work. It also flies during tense times like the current face-off with China. The plane keeps a close watch on enemy submarines deep in the ocean. The Navy calls this aircraft “Neptune”.

In September 2023, the P-8I completed ten years with the Indian Navy. In that time, the fleet flew more than 40,000 hours without a single major accident. During the 2017 China-India border standoff, these planes played a key role. They flew near the Line of Actual Control and gave the military eyes in the sky when it mattered most. At present, the Indian Navy operates 12 Boeing P-8I aircraft. Around the world, more than 160 P-8 aircraft serve with different countries. Together, they have crossed more than 500,000 flight hours. Apart from India and the US, countries like the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, and Germany also fly these planes.

Experts say Chinese navy submarines now stay at sea for longer times and follow more complex routes. This creates more pressure on India’s Navy. Defence Security Asia said, “What was once considered one of the most politically secure and operationally indispensable defence procurements in India’s maritime arsenal has instead become a case study in how economic coercion, inflationary pressure, and geopolitical misalignment can derail even the most mature military partnerships. The stalled P-8I deal, far from being a routine procurement dispute, now sits at the intersection of India’s maritime security imperatives, America’s tariff-driven economic statecraft, and the accelerating naval assertiveness of China across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR),”

The same report also explained why the aircraft matters so much. It said, “The P-8I’s true strategic value lies in its ability to compress the maritime kill chain by fusing wide-area surveillance, target classification, and strike cueing into a single airborne node that can operate seamlessly with surface combatants, submarines, and shore-based command centers,”

Earlier in August, confusion grew after a Reuters report claimed India had stopped defense talks with the US. The report linked this pause to US President Donald Trump’s tough 50% tariffs. It also said India planned to buy six P-8I planes and support systems for \$3.6 billion. Indian defense officials quickly denied this. They said, “The news reports on India pausing the talks related to defense purchases with the US are false and fabricated. It is clarified that the various cases of procurement are being progressed as per extant procedures,”

NewsD article by NewsD Staff

ENHANCING COOPERATION BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND INDIA (The Strategist 12/26):

Canberra and New Delhi should elevate their defense cooperation to a new level. This could include Boeing P-8 maritime patrols, joint naval patrols in the Indian Ocean, and military support for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) in the Pacific islands. Expanded defense cooperation would strengthen joint deterrence and help secure the Indo-Pacific, where strategic competition is intensifying. It could also help to consolidate the unity of the Quad amid instability in the relationship between the United States and India.

Since 2015, key joint maritime exercise Ausindex has enhanced interoperability between Australian and Indian forces and fostered a common understanding of best practices and operational procedures. The Royal Australian Air Force’s P-8A and the Indian Navy’s P-8I maritime patrol aircraft have participated in Ausindex drills. To progress cooperation, Canberra and New Delhi should consider regular, coordinated P-8 maritime patrol collaboration in the Indian Ocean, including by sharing real-time intelligence data and the RAAF refuelling the Indian aircraft in the air.

Canberra has been upgrading its airfield at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to support RAAF P-8As, while New Delhi has plans to extend the runway at the Baaz naval station in the Nicobar Islands to accommodate its P-8Is. Implementing the Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement, which Canberra and New Delhi agreed upon in 2020, would provide shared access to these military facilities. Joint P-8 patrols could be the proof-of-concept for negotiating further reciprocal access for air and naval assets.

Canberra and New Delhi should also create a mechanism to conduct joint naval patrols in the Indian Ocean. Sea lanes of communication that are crucial for both countries pass through the Indian Ocean. The Australian government highlighted the importance of the northeast Indian Ocean to Australian security in its 2024 National Defense Strategy.

Taking a further step, the information collected through Australian–Indian cooperative patrolling could be shared with the US and Japan, the other two members of the Quad. This effort could be linked to the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness, which was launched at the 2022 Quad Leaders’ Summit in Tokyo. Sharing the concrete results of coordinated defense initiatives by Canberra and New Delhi could help reinforce the Quad’s regional deterrence capability.

On 27 August the US imposed high tariffs on Indian exports in response to India’s purchasing of discounted Russian oil. It’s unclear what effect they will have on the US–India relationship and broader Quad dynamics. Considering its foreign-policy commitment on strategic autonomy, New Delhi’s relationship with Washington could come under strain, impeding the effectiveness of the Quad. Amid this uncertainty, the Australia–India partnership could help support the Quad.

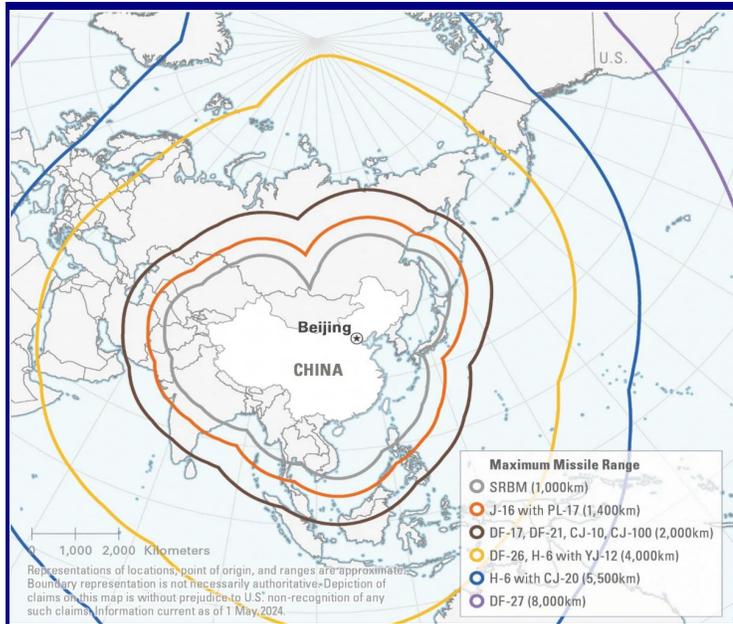
Another high-potential area for defense cooperation is military support for HADR in the Pacific, including in capacity building and rapid response. Australia maintains important partnerships with Pacific island nations, and Pacific stability is closely linked to Australia’s security and prosperity. Canberra has bolstered security partnerships with Pacific countries through the Defense Cooperation Program. The Australia-led Pacific Response Group is also a key platform to provide military support for HADR.

New Delhi defines the waters around the Pacific islands as a secondary area of interest. It has already made a commitment to the region by establishing the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation. India has strengthened defense engagements with Fiji in particular, providing military training and HADR support. The Indian Armed Forces have tremendous expertise and experience with conducting HADR missions inside and outside of India, but in general they are less familiar with the Pacific than Australia is.

Australia’s diplomatic relationships with Pacific island countries are therefore advantageous, enabling it to identify areas that Indian assistance would be most useful. Canberra and New Delhi could coordinate their regional activities to fill each other’s strategic gaps and expand diplomatic influence. Overall, this cooperation would align with the Quad’s objectives and reduce the space for malign activities in the Pacific.

Canberra and New Delhi have the potential to further expand defense cooperation between the Australian Defense Force and the Indian Armed Forces. Both nations face rising security challenges in the Indo-Pacific, including China’s growing military presence and the mounting uncertainty around sea lanes of communication. Strengthening defense cooperation in maritime domain would not only enhance the interests of both nations but also contribute to securing the peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

CHINESE FIELDING INTERCONTINENTAL ANTI-SHIP BALLISTIC MISSILES (USNI News 12/26):



The Pentagon has claimed that Chinese missile forces are operating a new type of anti-ship ballistic missiles that are capable of reaching the West Coast of the United States, according to the annual report on Beijing's military power. The People's Liberation Army DF-27 can strike land and maritime targets between 5,000 to 8,000 kilometers away, according to the Defense Department report to Congress.

A graphic detailing fielded conventional strike capabilities of the PLA publicly confirmed the DF-27's abilities for the first time. The map depicted the DF-27 covering the entire Indo-Pacific region and much of the West Coast.

China has deployed a first of its class anti-ship system that allows Beijing to hold vessels at threat at distances surpassing its current inventory of cruise, supersonic and hypersonic missiles, according to the Pentagon report.

While China has not revealed the system's existence, The Washington Post covered the Pentagon's assessment of the DF-27's supposed anti-ship capabilities following Pentagon leaks in 2023. The Defense Department's 2021 China military report to Congress also acknowledged its development, but did not claim that the missile could conduct maritime strike missions.

The DF-27 represents Beijing's continued development of increasingly complex and capable area denial systems, a trajectory that China has invested in to deter and defeat the blue water naval forces of its adversaries. Within the last decade, the PLA Rocket Force has made headlines for its deployment of the so-called "carrier killer" DF-21D and "Guam killer" DF-26 anti-ship ballistic missiles. China has also deployed maneuvering hypersonics designed to target warships via the DF-17.

This year's China military parade also showed off a plethora of air and naval-launched anti-ship systems. These missiles allow Chinese forces to strike land and maritime targets across the first and second island chains, where the bulk of the United States' Pacific forces and those of its allies are situated. In response, U.S. and allied forces have invested in more ballistic missile defense assets, including the construction of a dedicated air defense network for Guam.

The capability of the DF-27 was one of the most significant revelations in this year's Pentagon China military power, as it shows the implications for U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific, Dr. Andrew Erickson, a professor of strategy at the Naval War College, told USNI News in his personal capacity. "Taken together, China's ASBMs — now potentially extending to intercontinental ranges with the DF-27 — pose a potent threat to surface ships across much of the Pacific. In effect, they constitute a new form of naval force," said Erickson.

Erickson also said the DF-27 has "dramatically changed the naval balance" between Washington and Beijing. "Although the United States and its allies possess manifold countermeasures in what would

be a complex systems-of-systems contest, there is no denying that, by becoming the first major ASBM power and steadily expanding its ASBM families, China has dramatically changed the naval balance and the prospective ways of war in the Western Pacific,” Erickson told USNI News. *USNI News article by Aaron-Matthew Lariosa*

NAVY TOLD TO FLOAT FLEET OF AMPHIBS (AvBrief 12/25):



The Navy has been given the green light to investigate contracting a private fleet of amphibious aircraft to counter the growing capability of China in this niche. The War Zone came across confirmation of the plan in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed a couple of weeks ago. That may be behind the Navy’s interest in Japan’s US2 amphib, which it has been quietly testing. The Pentagon had been looking at equipping C-130s with floats to fill this role, but that program was quietly sunk a year ago. Fluctus has been keeping an eye on the development of the \$160 million flying boat.

The NDAA provision comes as China is rapidly developing a range of amphibious capabilities including the massive turboprop AG600, which can carry more than 25,000 pounds over 4500 nautical miles. These planes will likely serve forward operating bases in contested areas of the South China Sea, which is a major source of irritation in the area. While China and Japan have been investing in amphibious capability, the Pentagon hasn’t progressed past the artist’s rendering stage for any of those types of programs. So far, the U.S. military seems to be focusing on ground-effect vehicles

Contracting to a commercial entity is the only realistic option for getting an amphibious fleet off the water. Outside of China and Russia, there are less than a handful of companies making amphibians, and the US-2 might fill the bill for the NDAA provision. It will haul more than 50,000 pounds and has STOL capabilities. The NDAA says it wants the Navy to get moving on the project “in a timely manner,” but if it doesn’t then the authority for the pilot program ends in three years.

AvBrief article by Russ Niles

P-8A REACHES AIRBORNE CONNECTIVITY MILESTONE (Defence Industry Europe 12/18):

The U.S. Naval Air Systems Command has achieved a key airborne connectivity milestone after a P-8A Poseidon Increment 3 Block 2 aircraft successfully connected to the Minotaur Family of Systems Labyrinth hub. The connection was made during a combined development and operational test event held in December.

Increment 3 Block 2 represents a major upgrade to the P-8A airframe and avionics, including new racks, radome, antennas, sensors and wiring. It introduces an updated combat systems suite with improved processing, higher security architecture, wide-band satellite communications, anti-submarine warfare signals intelligence and additional communications and acoustics systems.

At the center of the upgrade is the Minotaur mission management system, a government-owned, open-architecture software suite that integrates data from multiple sensors. The system allows aircraft and other assets to share networked information, strengthening intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.

Labyrinth, the Minotaur cloud platform, enhances scalability by handling and correlating large volumes of data and enabling secure web-based access for external stakeholders. During a recent test flight, Air Test and Evaluation Squadron Two Zero connected to Labyrinth throughout the mission and generated thousands of relevant tracks.

“With P-8A connected to Labyrinth, our MPRA community is now able to exchange multi-domain, multi-sensor tracks between existing Minotaur-equipped platforms and the new I3B2 aircraft,” said Capt. Erik Thomas, PMA-290 program manager. “This connection allows the P-8A and the watch floor to share critical operational data, ensuring that all stakeholders are synchronized to deliver a decision-advantage.”

“This milestone was the result of a collaborative effort between PMA-290 and VX-20,” Thomas added. “Advancing the strategic goals outlined by the program office and demonstrating a commitment to rapid capability development we are directly supporting continuous development of a naval “family of systems” for maritime surveillance.”

Defence Industry Europe article by Martin Chomsky

RAF POSEIDON AIRCRAFT BUILD STRONGER TIES WITH ICELAND (Royal Air Force 12/17):

The RAF’s cutting-edge P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) has been at the forefront of surveillance operations from Iceland, having flown over 80 sorties since the beginning of November. This deployment was the largest yet of the P-8 fleet, supporting NATO’s Peacetime Vigilance Activity in the North Atlantic and providing the opportunity to enhance the RAF’s maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

Conducting activity over the North Atlantic from Iceland has provided RAF crews with the opportunity to hone their skills in detecting, tracking and neutralizing underwater threats. The P-8 Poseidon, equipped with state-of-the-art sensors and weaponry, has proven its value in safeguarding the UK’s maritime interests and supporting NATO operations.

The deployment also focused on interoperability, with the RAF working closely alongside NATO allies to ensure seamless coordination in joint maritime operations. This collaboration highlights the RAF’s commitment to maintaining security in the North Atlantic and beyond, confirming the RAF’s ability to rapidly deploy and employ its cutting-edge capabilities in diverse and challenging environments.

"This deployment demonstrates the critical role of the P-8 Poseidon in protecting our waters and supporting our NATO allies. It has allowed our crews to refine their skills and has reinforced our readiness to fly and fight and responsiveness to any maritime threat.", said Air Marshal Marshall, RAF Air and Space Commander.

120 Squadron has been central to much of the RAF's P8's activity from Keflavik airbase which underscores the importance of this partnership and the shared commitment to safeguarding the maritime domain. One of the P-8 Poseidon aircraft, is named "Spirit of Reykjavik" in honour of 120 Squadron's historic ties to Iceland, where a detachment was based in Reykjavik in 1942, followed by the entire Squadron relocating there in 1943. During this time, 120 Squadron achieved its greatest successes in anti-submarine warfare, earning it the distinction of being one of only two RAF Squadrons to be awarded its Standard early; recognition of the Squadron's exceptional performance in operations and contribution to national defense.

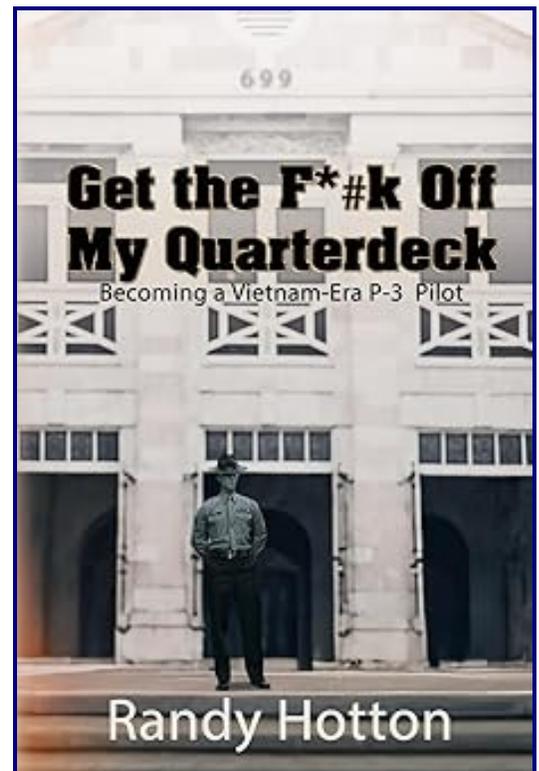
"This deployment to Iceland highlights the enduring importance of the North Atlantic and Arctic to the security of the Alliance. 120 Squadron has a proud history of working closely with Iceland, dating back to our vital role protecting these waters the last time the Squadron was based here during the Second World War. Today, operating the P-8A Poseidon, we continue that legacy by contributing to NATO's collective defence and ensuring the security of this strategically critical region. It's an honor to work alongside our Icelandic partners and NATO allies in our constant endeavour to safeguard the maritime domain.", said Wing Commander Higgins, Officer Commanding 120 Squadron.

The P-8 Poseidon is a vital asset in the RAF's fleet, providing long-range maritime patrol, anti-submarine warfare and intelligence-gathering capabilities. This activity ensures the RAF remains at the forefront of maritime operations, ready to protect the UK and its allies from evolving threats.

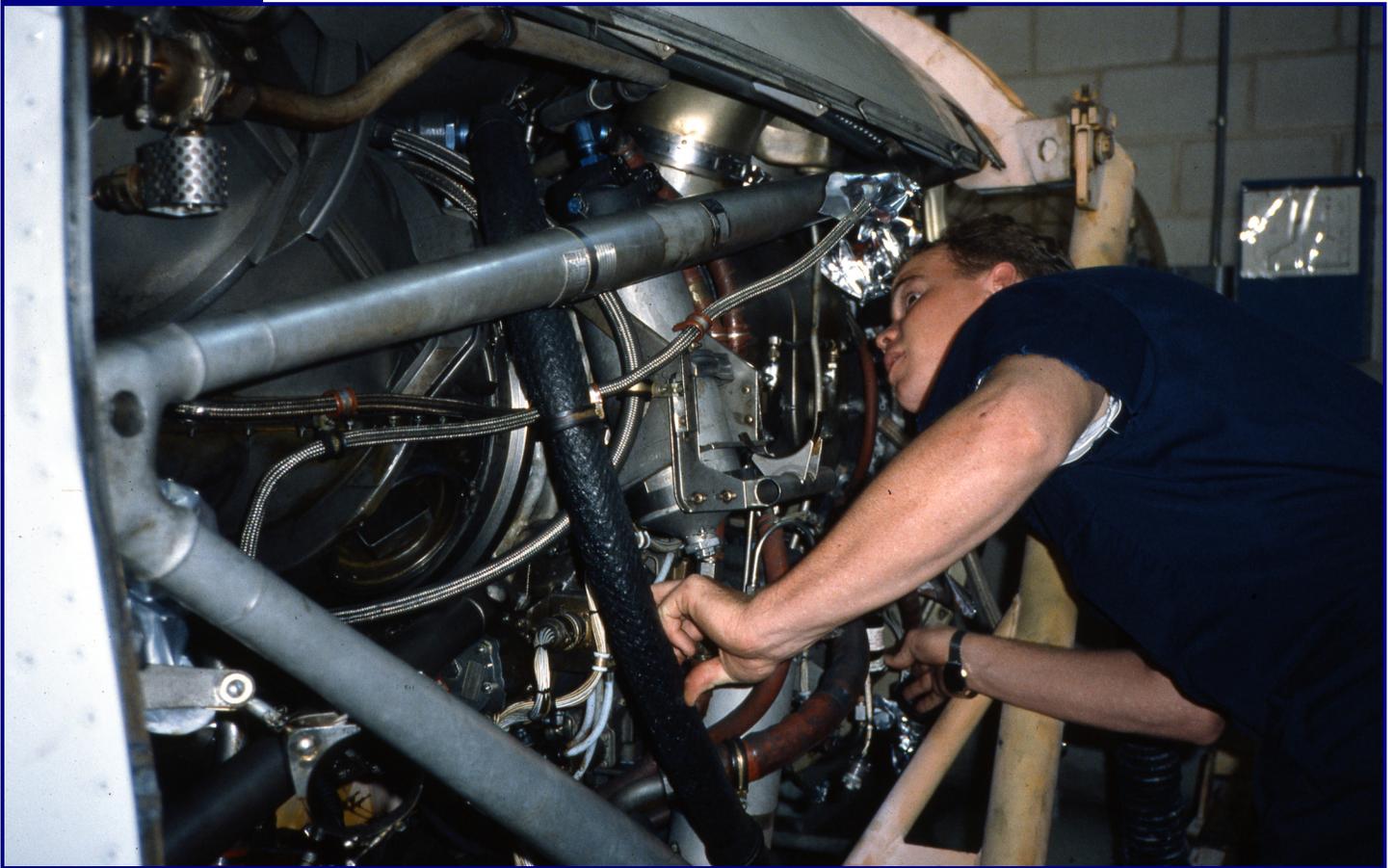
RAF Press Release

RECOMMENDED READING:

Author Randy Hotton is a retired Navy Captain with 26 years of service and a former P-3 Orion pilot. His new book, "Get the F*#k Off My Quarterdeck" (ISBN 978-1685136086), tells the story of how he became a Naval Aviator during the Vietnam War. It's a good book and we should encourage veterans like Randy Hotten to write down their military memoirs by supporting efforts such as this. You can purchase this book through Amazon or any other bookstore.



PARTING SHOTS:



ABOVE: VP-92 mech working on P-3C engine sometime during the 1990s. Photo provided by Dave Gilliland. **BELOW:** VP-92's CAC 10 on annual training in 2000. Photo provided by Geoff Such.



One Last thing. Let's try to get a great turnout for the upcoming VP-92 and VP-MAU squadron mini-reunion at the NAS Brunswick reunion in September. If you can make it, please plan on coming!



Until Next Time, Lose Not Thy Speed In Flight Lest The Earth Rise Up And Smite Thee – "Frat".

