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 81 **HTTP://WWW.VPASSOCIATION.ORG** **SEP 2020**

Welcome to another edition of the VP Association newsletter. Until further notice 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: *VP-92 P-3C Orion "Lima Yankee Three Three Six" on display at an air show held on Andrews AFB in Washington, DC during May 2005. Photo by Stephen Miller. Got something similar to share? Contact Marc Frattasio at marc_frattasio@yahoo.com.*

FINAL FLIGHTS:

We lost Fred Miller and Dick Norris recently. Both men were P-3 flight engineers in VP-92.

THE ADMIN FUND:

The VP Association has no dues but contributions are welcome to help defray the cost of web site hosting, postage, and other expenses. We'd like to thank Ray Guerin, Jerome Perrone, Dean Prodromos, and Tony Vaicius for their recent contributions to the "admin fund". Thanks guys!

SPEAKING OF 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.

SMALL WORLD:
Your newsletter editor has a brother who is the CEO of a company that installs and maintains IP based telephony systems. He has a network of contractors all across the country who perform most of the work for him. He recently engaged a new contractor based in North Carolina, a guy named Bill Miller, who was an AW in VP-9 in 1978 and was a member of the P-3 crew (CAC-6) that went down in the Bearing Sea in October 1978. He told me that he was assigned to go on another flight and was replaced by somebody else on the aircraft that went down ("Alfa Foxtrot Five Eight Six"). It's a good thing that he was replaced that day, since all three AWs on that flight perished from hypothermia while in a life raft. There's a very good book about this incident, "ADAK: The Rescue of Alfa Foxtrot 586" by Andrew C. Jampoler, that's well worth reading.

NAVY FUNDS NEW SONOBUOY TO TRACK QUIET SUBMARINES (Seapower 7/21):
The U.S. Navy is developing a new sonobuoy to enhance is ability to track newer and quieter submarines, according to a July 20 Defense Department contract announcement. The Office of Naval Research has awarded Undersea Signal Systems Inc. of Columbia City, Indiana, a $28.3 million cost-plus-fixed-fee-contract "to develop a prototype sonobuoy, known as Extended Range Directional Frequency Analysis and Recording (ER-DIFAR), to address new and quiet threat submarine targets."

Sonobuoys are deployed by Navy P-8A, P-3C and MH-60R aircraft to acoustically detect and track submarines. They are expendable sensors that float on the surface of the water and extend a hydrophone to depths to collect sound from submarine propulsion systems, auxiliary machinery and other sources of sound from a submarine.

Passive sonobuoys, such as the SSQ-53 DIFAR (Directional Frequency Analysis and Recording) sonobuoys were a staple of Cold War antisubmarine operations because they were able to detect and point to the sounds from a submarine. As Soviet and later Russian submarines improved in their acoustic quieting, the DIFAR sonobuoy became less effective. The Navy then emphasized active tracking sonobuoys such as the SSQ-125 sonobuoy, which used a sound source to "ping" a submarine, but also revealed to a submarine that it was being tracked.

A new extended-range DIFAR sonobuoy would increase the ability to passively track quieter submarines. The contract for the DIFAR-ER is a three-year base contract with a one-year option. Work is expected to be completed by July 2024.

Seapower article by Richard Burgess

RUSSIAN SUBMARINES TEST NATO IN ICY NORTH ATLANTIC (Wall Street Journal 7/6):
Late last year, 10 Russian submarines slipped out of their bases on Russia's Arctic coast and set an underwater course westward toward the North Atlantic. Deployments such as this, one of the largest exercises since the Cold War, are a demonstration of the strength and ambition of the Russian Navy

not only to defend its homeland but also to project power into the Atlantic, say NATO military officials and analysts.

Russia has spent billions of dollars in recent years upgrading an aging submarine fleet inherited from the Soviet Union with quieter, faster vessels that can evade detection and travel for longer at greater depths. Russia's Northern Fleet, based on the Kola Peninsula in the Arctic, is the main submarine force traditionally used to protect maritime approaches to the Russian north and the fleet's ballistic-missile submarines.

Russian deployments of submarines to the Atlantic have focused NATO's attention on the strategically important waters between Greenland, Iceland and the U.K., known as the GIUK Gap. Naval commanders from the U.S. and allies say that Russia is now deploying more submarines for longer periods in the Atlantic, where they could threaten North Atlantic Treaty Organization militaries' ships and critical U.S. infrastructure as the Russians patrol the U.S. East Coast.

Russian military officials say that they have increased the frequency and range of their submarine exercises and that they must boost their capabilities to counter what they call increasingly aggressive moves from NATO. The resurgence of Russia's submarine fleet, and its forays into the Atlantic, are a concern for NATO, which would rely on swift reinforcement of its forces in Europe by the U.S. via the Atlantic in case of a conflict with Russia. That strategy would grow in importance if the U.S. fulfills President Trump's order to withdraw more than a quarter of U.S. troops based in Germany. "We see it routinely now: more submarines, further away, for longer periods of time," Vice Adm. Keith Blount, commander of NATO's Allied Maritime Command, said in an interview.

U.S. Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis, commander of the U.S. Second Fleet, said in February that U.S. ships leaving the East Coast were entering a contested space and could no longer expect to cross the Atlantic unhindered. Large-scale Russian naval exercises like the one late last year "are unprecedented since the Cold War," said Norwegian Defense Minister Frank Bakke-Jensen in emailed comments. "It is vital to ensure freedom of navigation and that the sea lines of communication across the Atlantic are open if military reinforcement is needed."

Vice Adm. Aleksandr Moiseyev, commander of the Northern Fleet, said earlier this year that Russia was regularly carrying out naval exercises with 10 or more submarines and expanding the geographic range of its exercises to include waters beyond its home base. "When visiting our garrisons, it's impossible not to notice that many of our docks are empty," he said in March, according to Russian news agency Interfax. "That speaks to the fact that our crews are carrying out their tasks, perfecting their skills at sea."

The Russian Navy said the exercise in October last year involved testing weapons and diving to maximum depth in deep international waters off the Norwegian coast. The Norwegian Intelligence Service told the Norwegian national broadcaster at the time that one aim of Russian Navy leaders appeared to be to demonstrate their ability to send submarines into the Atlantic and test NATO's ability to track them. The service declined to comment further.

Mike Petersen, director of the Russia Maritime Studies Institute at the U.S. Naval War College, said the major mission of Russian submarines in the Atlantic is tracking critically important targets, everything from aircraft carriers to critical infrastructure in Europe and the U.S.

Wall Street Journal article by Thomas Grove and James Marson

F-22s INTERCEPT 2 RUSSIAN MPA NEAR ALASKA (Air Force Magazine 6/25):
North American Aerospace Defense Command F-22s, with help from a KC-135 assigned to U.S. Transportation Command, intercepted a pair of Russian IL-38 aircraft as they crossed into the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone late on June 24. The maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare planes got within 50 miles of Alaska's Unimak Island—the largest of the Aleutians—and spent about four hours in the zone, the command announced on June 25.

The aircraft never crossed into U.S. or Canadian airspace, NORAD noted. "For the fifth time this month, NORAD has demonstrated our readiness and ability to defend the homeland by intercepting Russian military aircraft entering our Air Defense Identification Zone," NORAD and U.S. Northern Command boss USAF Gen. Terrence J. O'Shaughnessy said in the release.

Previous incidents in June included two F-22 intercepts of Tu-95-led Russian bomber formations on June 10, and two more on June 16. Following each pair of these airborne events, Russia's Defense Ministry posted footage of its aircraft rendezvousing with USAF tails to its YouTube page. As of press time, though, the ministry hadn't posted footage of a new close-call with American aircraft.

On June 19, the ministry posted footage of Russian Su-30, Su-35, and MiG-31 fighter jets escorting a USAF B-52H as it flew over the Sea of Okhotsk. The B-52s had forward deployed to Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, a few days before, following a series of close encounters with Russian aircraft.

Air Force Magazine article by Jennifer-Leigh Oprihory

HOW US NAVY SUB HUNTERS PREPARE FOR INTERCEPTS (Business Insider 6/22):
US military aircraft are routinely intercepted by Russian and Chinese fighters in international airspace, and that can be a jarring experience, especially if the encounter is "unsafe." Intercepts that the US and NATO characterize as "unsafe and unprofessional" are not the norm, but are a sizable portion of all these aerial encounters. "I see it a lot," US Navy Capt. Erin Osborne, Wing Ten commodore, told Insider.

Three times in two months this year, Russian Su-35 fighter jets "unsafely" intercepted US Navy P-8A Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft over the Mediterranean Sea. In one instance, a Russian fighter conducted a high-speed inverted maneuver just 25 feet in front of the US aircraft, a move that could have come straight out of the movie "Top Gun." In another close call, two tactical aircraft closed in on both sides of the P-8, restricting its ability to safely maneuver.

Boeing P-8A Poseidons are militarized 737-800ERX aircraft that carry a crew of nine, are armed with torpedoes and high-end sensors. They're built to conduct maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare missions. Successor to Lockheed's P-3 Orion, the P-8s provide advanced maritime intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities and are among the best submarine hunters in the world. P-8 crews regularly patrol the seas, tracking subs, supporting drug interdiction missions, collecting intelligence, and carrying out search and rescue operations.

Another part of the job is sometimes being intercepted by foreign military aircraft. "We expect to be intercepted. I expect them to come out and take a look at us and see what we are doing," Osborne, who oversees the training, manning, and equipping of Navy P-8 squadrons, said. She said that because "most of our interactions with other militaries are very professional," P-8 crews do not go into a situation with an presumption that an intercept will be unsafe. But they are prepared for that possibility. "If you've never been intercepted, it can be disconcerting because you're not used to having someone in that close proximity to your aircraft," Osborne said. "We do training so that the crew feels comfortable with that."

The US Navy uses its own tactical aircraft, like the EA-18G Growler pictured in the above photo from a recent training exercise, to expose P-8 crews to maneuvers they might see. During the training, the tactical aircraft will form up on the P-8s to help crews understand how close is too close. "We want them to understand what is unsafe, what is unprofessional," Osborne explained. They will demonstrate, for example, an under run, which is when an aircraft is forming up on the P-8 but suddenly cuts underneath the aircraft. "If someone's never seen that before, they won't understand what they are looking at," Osborne said.

During an intercept, regardless of whether or not it is unsafe, a P-8 crew has very limited options, as the P-8 lacks the maneuverability that an approaching tactical aircraft has. "We can't predict what they're going to do. The only thing we can do is make ourselves predictable to them," Osborne said, explaining that the crew maintains steady airspeed, course, and altitude. "There's really not a whole lot else you can do."

"If they're doing barrel rolls over your airplane, there's nothing we can do. There's literally no maneuver that gets us out of that, and we wouldn't want to," she said, telling Insider that "the safest thing in that scenario is to just hold what you got." Osborne said that intercepts are typically silent affairs, although there is always the possibility of nonverbal communication, such as eye contact or hand gestures, between the US aircraft and the intercepting aircraft.

How long an intercept lasts can vary greatly by incident, but eventually, the aircraft go their separate ways, with all involved returning home safely in most cases. There have been tragedies though. In 2001, for example, a pair of Chinese J-8 fighter jets intercepted an EP-3E Ares II signals intelligence aircraft about 70 miles from Hainan. One of the J-8s collided with the US Navy plane, resulting in the death of Chinese pilot Lt. Cdr. Wang Wei and forcing the EP-3 to make an emergency landing in China.

Such incidents are extremely rare, as most intercepts, be it US stealth fighters intercepting Russian bombers near Alaska or foreign fighters intercepting US planes in various places around the world, are usually safe and professional.

Business Insider article by Ryan Pickrell

GERMANY HALTS P-3 MISSION SYSTEMS UPGRADE (Defense & Security Monitor 6/17):
Germany's Defense Ministry has put a halt to an ongoing midlife upgrade (MLU) of its fleet of Lockheed Martin P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) as it shifts to examining potential replacements. The news emerged via Reuters on June 16 after a confidential ministry document detailing the shift in Defense Ministry approach was leaked. The document – drafted for review by the parliamentary defense committee – allegedly shows that the Defense Ministry opted to drop the Orion MLU process following an economic feasibility study.

The legacy fleet of eight P-3C Orions were purchased secondhand from Royal Netherlands Navy (RNLN) stocks in 2005. The first unit entered German service in April 2006 following upgrades to P-3C CUP standard conducted by Lockheed Martin at its facility in Greenville, South Carolina, under a prior contract with the Dutch government.

After a government report released in April 2011 noted that the aircraft suffered from operational limitations, Germany sought rectification through an upgrade program via the U.S. Department of Defense's government-to-government Foreign Military Sales (FMS) mechanism. A request for sale to Germany of elements allowing for the procurement, integration, and installation of hardware and software required for upgrading the Orions' mission computer and acoustic systems was approved by

the U.S. State Department, with notification then given to Congress by the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) on April 11, 2014.

A contract was then agreed to between the German government, Lockheed Martin and Airbus Defense and Space on July 22, 2015. The contract called for production of eight midlife upgrade kits (outer wing, center fuselage and horizontal stabilizer) by Lockheed Martin, with Airbus responsible for installation of the kits on the German P-3Cs at its Manching facility. Additional planned upgrades formed part a broader modernization aimed at retaining the German P-3C Orions in service out to 2035.

But the cost and technical issues cropping up during the upgrade process – along with heavy damage inflicted on one P-3C unit in March 2020 – forced the Defense Ministry to acknowledge that delays in the ongoing modernization effort and consequent lack of fleet-wide operational readiness made termination of the mission equipment upgrades practical. However, according to the Defense Ministry, the re-winging measures being undertaken will continue in order to prevent an immediate capability gap from emerging.

As a short-term solution, the Defense Ministry is examining platforms to bring into service by 2025. These include the C-295 Persuader MPA variant from Airbus, the Rheinland Air Service (RAS) 72 Sea Eagle, and the P-8A Poseidon from U.S. aerospace giant Boeing. Notably absent from the list of alternatives put out via press release by the German Defense Ministry on June 17 is the Kawasaki Heavy Industries P-1 now in service with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) being pitched by Kawasaki globally as a potential MPA solution.

Germany's longer-term MPA solution will most likely be found via the Maritime Airborne Warfare System development program, set to be undertaken jointly by France and Germany post-2025 with an eye on achieving a new maritime patrol capability by 2030. The two countries signed a letter of intent (LOI) to develop this capability at the ILA exhibition in Berlin in April 2018 and have already have agreed to award manufacturers a two-year common requirements study determining the technical and financial elements involved.

Defense & Security Monitor article by Daniel Darling

NAVY SPECIAL PROJECTS PATROL SQUADRON CONVERTING TO P-8A (Seapower 6/11):

The U.S. Navy's only special projects patrol squadron has moved to its new base and soon will operate a new aircraft. Special Projects Patrol Squadron 2 (VPU-2), which flies modified P-3C Orion maritime patrol reconnaissance aircraft, "will transition to P-8A this summer," Cmdr. Jennifer Cragg, a spokeswoman for commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic, said in a statement to Seapower.

VPU-2 moved from Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, to Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, effective April 1. It was the Navy's last of four P-3 squadron to depart Kaneohe Bay. The other three squadrons — regular patrol squadrons VP-4, VP-9 and VP-47 — have moved to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, and have already made the transition to the P-8A Poseidon.

VPU-2 originated in the late 1960s as a special projects detachment of a patrol squadron but later became Patrol Squadron Special Projects Unit 2. It was upgraded later to a full squadron and its name was changed to Special Projects Patrol Squadron 2. VPU-2's P-3Cs were equipped with specialized sensors and other modifications for reconnaissance and special projects. Two years ago, the Navy had planned to deactivate VPU-2 but apparently reversed the decision.

Seapower article by Richard Burgess

6 TYPES OF SUBMARINES: THE RUSSIAN NAVY'S EXTREME MODERNIZATION (Forbes 6/3):
Russia and America do things differently. The U.S. Navy is currently building just one type of submarine, the general-purpose Virginia Class. From October it will be joined in the shipyards by the Columbia Class ballistic missile submarine, making it two types. In contrast, Russia is simultaneously building six distinct classes. Despite budget challenges, and resulting delays, Russia is investing big in submarines. Together the six types represent the greatest modernization since the Cold War.

Russia has a history of building multiple classes of submarines going back to the Cold War. Each submarine fills a distinct role, but also there were often alternative designs meeting the same basic need. But the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent economic woes curtailed Russian submarine building. Many projects were cancelled, or continued at a snail's pace. Now the submarine industry has began to recover.

Borei-II Class Ballistic Missile Submarine:
The first improved Project-955A Borei-II class submarine, 'Knyaz Vladimir,' was handed over to the Russian Navy on June 1. Six more are expected to be built, forming the backbone of Russia's seaborne nuclear deterrent for decades to come. Each submarine can carry 16 Bulava intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Belgorod Class Special Mission Submarine:
After the famous Typhoon class, this will be by far the largest submarine in the world. Yet this ginormous submarine defies classification. It is at the same time a 'special mission' spy submarine and a carrier for the Poseidon strategic weapon.

As a spy sub it will act as a mother-ship for the famous Losharik deep-diving nuclear-powered midget submarine. This could be used for operations like interfering with undersea cables.

The Poseidon weapon is unique. It is best described as an intercontinental, nuclear armed, autonomous torpedo. It is twice the size of a typical ballistic missile, have virtually unlimited range and be armed with a nuclear warhead. Exactly how Russia plans to use it is unclear, but it appears to be a second-strike doomsday weapon to literally go under missile defenses.

Khabarovsk Class Strategic Submarine:
The most enigmatic submarine on the list, Khabarovsk is expected to be launched this month. Public information is sorely lacking. What is known is that it will carry six of the massive Poseidon strategic torpedoes, like the Belgorod. This could be the defining submarine of 2020.

Yasen-M Class Cruise Missile Submarines:
A powerful cruise-missile armed submarine, the Yasen class has a reputation for stealthiness. They are armed with three types of cruise missile which can be loaded in combinations. Kalibr is a land-attack missile with a very long range, generally equivalent to the U.S. Navy's Tomahawk. The larger Oniks is a supersonic missile which is optimized against ships but can also hit land targets. And the smaller Zircon anti-ship missiles can travel at hypersonic speeds.

Lada Class Attack Submarine:
This is the latest generation of non-nuclear submarine built for the Russian Navy. Unlike the America, Russia still values having a large number of smaller and cheaper non-nuclear boats in its ranks. In the future these boats may have Air Independent Power (AIP) like Sweden and other nations.

Improved Kilo Class Attack Submarine:
The Kilo Class goes back to the 1980s, but improved models are still being built. The latest versions can launch Kalibr land-attack cruise missiles. Unlike the Yasen Class they have to be put in the torpedo room, so only a few can be carried.

So many different classes of submarines has pros and cons. It is seen as less efficient, but equally each type can be better suited to its intended role. And the massive spy sub, and Poseidon related classes, fulfill roles which are unique to the Russian Navy.

Forbes article by H.I. Sutton

LAST REGULAR NAVY VP SQUADRON TRANSITIONS TO P8 (Flight Global 5/29):
All of the US Navy's (USN's) active duty patrol squadrons have transitioned from the Lockheed P-3C Orion to the Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft. Patrol Squadron 40 (VP-40), the Fighting Marlins, completed the final transition on 14 May, the service announced on 28 May. The squadron started the transition in November 2019. The squadron, based at NAS Whidbey Island in Washington state, first began P-3C operations in 1968.

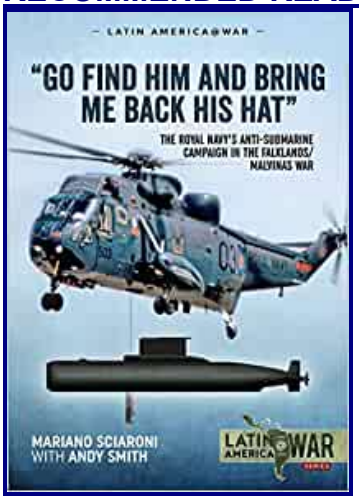
The first P-8A was delivered to the USN in 2011. The aircraft, which is based on the commercial 737-800 airframe with -900 wings, is much larger and quieter than the four-engined P-3C. That aircraft was developed from the 1950s-era Lockheed L-188 Electra commercial airliner.

The P-8A can carry 126 sonobuoys internally and four Boeing AGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missiles on hardpoints beneath its wings, as well as Mk 54 lightweight hybrid torpedoes and survival kits within an internal bomb bay. It can also fly higher and faster than its turboprop predecessor: up to 41,000ft and with a maximum speed of 490kt (908km/h). The aircraft is mostly used for maritime patrol and reconnaissance missions, such as anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, as well as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and search and rescue roles.

The P-8A is also operated by the Royal Australian Air Force and Indian navy, and is in the process of being introduced to service by the UK Royal Air Force. Aircraft are also on order for the Royal New Zealand Air Force, Royal Norwegian Air Force and South Korea's navy.

Flight Global article by Garrett Relm

RECOMMENDED READING:



"Go Find Him And Bring Me Back His Hat", by Marlano Sclaroni and Andy Smith is a new (December 2020) book about the British Royal Navy's ASW efforts against Argentinean submarines during the Falkland Islands War in 1982. This has been, to date, the only actual combat ASW operation since the Second World War. Check it out! You can purchase this book in Kindle and paperback version from www.amazon.com.

ON THE INTERNET:

George Driscoll suggests that you check this P-3 spoof video out - https://www.avgeekery.com/watch-the-screaming-eagles-crush-top-gun-with-prop-gun/

PARTING SHOTS:

ABOVE: *Members of the VP-92 CPO mess during the squadron's final year at NAS Brunswick Maine. Thomas Whitney photo.* ***BELOW:*** *VP-92 maintenance personnel throwing a football out on the aircraft parking ramp during an annual training detachment to El Salvador in 2003. Paul Marshall photo.*

ABOVE: *Paul Marshall working on the nose landing gear of a VP-92 P-3C while on AT in Ecuador during 2003. Got something similar to share? Contact Marc Frattasio at marc_frattasio@yahoo.com.*

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