



# 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 77**

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

**SEP 2019**

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](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com).

## **RECCO:**



**ABOVE:** Lockheed SP-2H Neptune assigned to NAS South Weymouth's reserve aircraft pool on October 10<sup>th</sup> 1969. Nelson Hare photo via Stephen Miller. Got something similar to share? Contact Marc Frattasio at [marc\\_frattasio@yahoo.com](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com).

## **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 Tom Klett and Jerome Perrone for their recent generous donations to the admin fund.

## **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](mailto: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](mailto:gnddriscoll@gmail.com) about home or e-mail address changes.

**A PHOTO FROM JIM CRANDAL:**



I thought I would share this photo for the newsletter of a P-3C performing touch & goes into Patrick AFB on Satellite Beach, FL this past March. The base is located on a very narrow spit of land between the mainland and the Atlantic just south of Coco Beach FL. The altitude for a successful landing is low enough that the window observers get some wonderful eyeball liberty.

**A NOTE FROM BOB O'BRIEN:**

I always forward the VP Association's newsletter to my son Kevin. He enjoys reading it. He was the executive officer of the USS Freedom, and before that was the commanding officer of the USS Sioux City. This was his reply:

*Great newsletter. I've met Admiral Buck a few times. He just left Mayport as the 4th Fleet Commander and he will become the Superintendent at the Naval Academy. His replacement, RADM Gabrielson, came onboard 2 weeks ago with his boss, ADM Faller (US Southern Command - 4 star). The interesting thing about Gabrielson is he was the pre-com CO for FREEDOM so he is well versed in LCS and looking to employ the ship drug hunting in the near future. Thanks for passing along.*

**A NOTE FROM GEORGE GRIFFIN:**

The "Wings of Freedom Tour" [includes WWII Aircraft: B-17, B-24, B-25, P-40 and P-51] put on by the Collings Foundation from Stow, MA where you can book a reservation online or call their 1-800-568-8924 or 978-562-9182 for a 30 minute flight on the B-17 or the B-24 the cost is \$450, and for a 25 minute flight on the B-25 is \$400, although much more \$\$\$\$ for the P-40 and P-51 fighters. Airshow Entrance Fee: \$5 - \$15

Tour Stops at Beverly Airport (Airshow) from 9/15/19 – 9/17/19, Plymouth Municipal Airport 9/18/19 – 9/20/19, Worcester Airport 9/20/19 – 9/22/19, Nashua, NH 9/27/19 – 9/29/19. They make tour stops all over the US, not just the New England Area. You can also reserve a 40 minute flight on the F-4 Phantom and TA-4J Skyhawk at their Huston Texas Flight Facility. The cost is \$15k for the F-4 and \$8k for the TA-4J. Go to <https://www.collingsfoundation.org> for more info.

### **LAST CALL FOR THE 2019 VP ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REUNION:**

Time is running out if you want to attend the VP Association's annual reunion banquet in Weymouth, MA on Saturday September 21<sup>st</sup>. Reservations are required in advance and we must have them by no later than Monday September 16<sup>th</sup>. A reservation form is on the last page of this newsletter. If you intend to go and have not yet sent your reservation to Barbara Hanigan, please **DO IT NOW**. We have to tell the caterer how many meals to prepare at least one week in advance, and for this reason, we can't accept walk-ins. For more details regarding the reunion, see the last page of this newsletter. If you live within driving distance, please consider coming. It's a great time.

### **NAS BRUNSWICK REUNION:**

There will be an NAS Brunswick reunion event held in Maine during the weekend of August 14<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup> 2020. For more information contact Jeffrey Simpson at [Jeffthebubby2@gmail.com](mailto:Jeffthebubby2@gmail.com).

### **NAVY REDUCING FLIGHT HOURS TO COVER OVERFLYING P-8s (USNI News 7/16):**

Parts of the Atlantic fleet will reduce their flying hours for the remainder of the fiscal year to address a funding shortfall within the naval aviation flight hour budget, a Navy official told USNI News. On the East Coast, non-deployed P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol squadrons will see a 10-percent flight hour reduction. Non-deployed expeditionary detachments of helicopter maritime strike squadrons and helicopter sea combat squadrons flying the MH-60R and S will see a 25-percent reduction in flight hours. And support units such as Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 1, the "Rawhides" of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40 that fly the C-2A Greyhound airplane and bring passengers and goods to and from aircraft carriers at sea, C-12 logistics planes, and search-and-rescue aircraft out of Key West will see a 10-percent reduction in flight hours. These reduced flying hours will last for the remaining 11 weeks of the fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. Additionally, no new flyovers will be scheduled, though none that are already scheduled will be canceled, the official told USNI News. For the VFA-106 F/A-18 Super Hornet Tactical Demonstration Team specifically, the schedule will be curtailed, but the unit will still participate in the Oceana Air Show, the official added.

Rear Adm. Roy Kelley, commander of Naval Air Force Atlantic (CNAL), warned of a shortfall of at least \$100 million in an email last month. USNI News has learned the shortfall was created by deployed P-8s and MH-60s over-executing due to fleet commander needs in U.S. 6th and 7th Fleets. The aircraft deploy with a certain number of flight hours allotted, and the local commanders are asking the aircraft to operate beyond those hours due to operational needs – particularly the P-8s operating in the Western Pacific, the Mediterranean and other forward locations –creating challenges for CNAL leaders back home. "Naval aviation readiness is at the highest it's been in more than a decade, and to ensure that our deployed forces remain ready and continue to effectively execute their mission, we are managing our resources the best way we can to ensure we will fight and win," Cmdr. Ron Flanders, a spokesman for the Commander of Naval Air Forces, told USNI News today.

Overall, the operational tempo in Fiscal Year 2019 has been "robust" and "more than what we expected," the official told USNI News. Other unplanned events, such as the aviation component of the Hurricane Michael rescue and aid effort, have also contributed to spending money faster than planned, and naval aviation will now have to pare down its spending for the last two and a half months of the year. These unanticipated costs have thrown off the Navy's aviation budget, despite the FY 2019 budget being the first one in years to be passed by Congress on time without requiring a

continuing resolution to start the fiscal year. The Navy has dealt with its shortfall internally, reallocating resources within the 1A1A mission flight hours budget line. Deployed units have over-used those hours, so non-deployed units will have to scale back for the remainder of the year. By the end of the fiscal year, though, the Navy will have executed what Congress allowed without touching other parts of the budget.

Part of the challenge for the Navy this year is actually a good news story: success in nearing former Defense Secretary James Mattis' mandate of 80-percent readiness for strike fighter jets has changed how the fleet eats up available flight hours. Leadership had previously said that reaching the 80-percent readiness mark wouldn't necessarily be an expensive venture in itself – the service was spending money to bring in consultants from industry to share best practices on maintaining aircraft, but the new procedures and the improved layouts at depots wouldn't cost much in and of themselves. However, once readiness rates improved, that meant that squadrons were actually able to execute the full number of flight hours they had been scheduled for, since the planes were available to them. In past years, squadrons at home couldn't always execute all their flight hours because planes weren't ready to fly, leaving some breathing room in the budget for when deployed squadrons over-executed or situations like hurricane responses arose. With home-based squadrons now fully executing, that extra money isn't available to pay for over-execution in other squadrons, contributing to the budget shortfall going into the fourth quarter of the fiscal year.

The Navy was able to incorporate the 80-percent readiness requirement into its FY 2020 budget request, but Mattis' mandate came too late to affect the FY 2019 budget. However, the shortfall is not as bad as leadership worried at one point, the official said, and Kelley did not have to make the steepest cut he alluded to in his June email: shuttering an air wing. The air wing in question was CVW-8, the official told USNI News, which is attached to USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78). Ford remains in a lengthy post-shakedown availability and will not deploy for some time, but it already has an assigned air wing that is training and keeping up pilots' qualifications. CVW-8 is operating at full capacity and was not included in any of the cuts that Kelley selected to address the funding gap. Kelley and Commander of Naval Air Forces Vice Adm. DeWolfe Miller worked through the budget and selected options to address the financial shortfall for the remainder of the fiscal year. On Friday Commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command Adm. Chris Grady, Commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet Adm. John Aquilino, and other four-star leaders approved the plan. On the Pacific side, there were concerns that the Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) was facing increased costs to train new pilots, which could create a funding shortfall for the Pacific side. After a re-look at the budget, the gap was smaller than previously thought and any budget impacts have been mitigated, the official said.

*USNI News article by Megan Eckstein*

#### **ADMIRAL TAPPED TO LEAD U.S. NAVY DECLINES JOB, RETIRES INSTEAD (ABC News 7/7):**

The man set to take over as the head of the Navy declined the position over the weekend, less than one month before he was scheduled to begin the job. In a statement, Adm. Bill Moran confirmed that he had declined the appointment to Chief of Naval Operations, and regretted "any inconvenience" his decision caused President Donald Trump and Navy Secretary Richard Spencer. He said that though it was painful for him to retire instead, he did not wish to be an "impediment" to the Navy.

Said Moran, "I made this difficult decision based on an open investigation into the nature of some of my personal email correspondence over the past couple of years and for continuing to maintain a professional relationship with a former staff officer, now retired, who had while in uniform been investigated and held accountable over allegations of inappropriate behavior. To be clear, my decision to maintain this relationship was in no way an endorsement or tacit approval of this kind of conduct. I understand how toxic it can be to any team when inappropriate behavior goes

unrecognized and unchecked. Every Sailor is entitled to serve in an environment free of harassment or intimidation.”

Secretary Spencer said he had accepted Moran's request to retire. "Adm. Bill Moran recently brought to my attention that over the past two years he maintained a professional relationship with an individual who was held accountable and counseled for failing to meet the values and standards of the Naval profession. While I admire his faithful service and commitment to the Navy, this decision on his part to maintain that relationship has caused me to call his judgment into question."

A U.S. official familiar with Moran's resignation said he resigned because of an association with retired Navy Cmdr. Chris Servello. Servello worked for and with Moran several times over roughly a decade, with Moran serving as a mentor to Servello. Servello was investigated by the Navy for his behavior at a 2016 holiday party at the Pentagon, where he was accused of making unwanted sexual advances at women, including junior officers, while dressed as Santa Claus. No charges were filed against Servello, but he was counseled for bad judgment and excessive drinking. Servello, who was then working as the spokesperson for Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson, continued working in the Pentagon until he retired in spring 2019.

Moran maintained contact with Servello during and after the investigation, including communicating with him on his personal email account. The investigation into Moran's ongoing contacts with Servello was conducted by the Defense Department's Office of the Inspector General. Moran served as the Vice Chief of Naval Operations until last month, when he was replaced by Adm. Bob Burke. Moran was scheduled to take over as Chief of Naval Operations on August 1, replacing Adm. Richardson, who is set to retire. Richardson will now stay on until a new Chief of Naval Operations is nominated, according to the defense officials. By law, Richardson cannot serve as CNO beyond Sept. 17, 2019, when he will have served four years in the position

*ABC News article by Courtney Kube*

### **WHAT'S AN ADVANCED RUSSIAN WARSHIP DOING IN HAVANA HARBOR? (PBS 6/24):**

One of the Russian navy's most advanced warships entered Havana's harbor Monday and docked at the port used until this month by U.S. cruise lines. Here are some questions and answers about the Admiral Gorshkov's travels through the Caribbean.

#### **What is the Admiral Gorshkov?**

The Admiral Gorshkov entered service last year. It is one of the Russian navy's most advanced warships and is armed with cruise missiles, air defense systems and other weapons. The frigate is based at the Arctic port of Severomorsk and is part of Russia's Northern Fleet. It's the first ship in a new class of frigates intended to replace aging Soviet-era destroyers to project power far away from Russian shores. It is accompanied by the multifunctional logistics vessel Elbrus, the medium sea tanker Kama and the rescue tug Nikolai Chiker, the Russian navy says.

#### **What is the ship doing in the Caribbean?**

The navy says the Admiral Gorshkov crossed through the Panama Canal into the Caribbean Sea on or around June 18. The naval group has covered a distance of over 28,000 nautical miles since leaving Severomorsk in February, with stops in China, Djibouti, Sri Lanka and Colombia, the navy says. It says the ships are scheduled to make calls at several Caribbean ports, without specifying which. The naval group was greeted with a 21-gun salute from Cuban forces stationed at the entrance to the Bay of Havana. The Gorshkov responded with its own salute.

As the U.S.-Russian relations have sunk to the lowest levels since the Cold War, Moscow has been considering further steps to boost its global presence. Russia has not provided details about the purpose of its trip, but the Kremlin has moved to bolster Russia's military capability amid tensions with the West following the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The Russian armed forces have received hundreds of new warplanes and dozens of warships in recent years as part of a sweeping military modernization program that allowed Moscow to project power abroad.

As the U.S.-Russian relations have sunk to the lowest levels since the Cold War, Moscow has been considering further steps to boost its global presence. An air base and a naval facility in Syria are currently Russia's only military outposts outside the former Soviet Union but Russian military officials have talked repeatedly about plans to negotiate deals for Russian warships and aircraft to use foreign ports and air bases.

### **What message is Russia sending with the Admiral Gorshkov?**

Russian ships have become an occasional presence in Havana over the last decade. In 2008, after a visit by then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, a group of Russian ships entered Cuban waters in what Cuban media described as the first such visit since 1991. Another group visited the southern city Cienfuegos in 2010, reportedly with a cargo of wheat. Others visited in 2013 and in 2014.

In January 2015, the reconnaissance and communications ship Viktor Leonov arrived unannounced in Havana a day before the start of discussions between U.S. and Cuban officials on the reopening of diplomatic relations. The Viktor Leonov returned again in March 2018.

All of the Russian naval missions to Cuba have been seen as a projection of military power close to U.S. shores, although neither Cuba nor Russia have described them as anything other than routine. Early during his presidency, Russian leader Vladimir Putin ordered the military to shut a Soviet-era electronic surveillance outpost in Cuba and a naval base in Vietnam as he sought to warm ties with the United States. Amid tensions with the U.S., Russian military officials talked about the possibility of reinstating a presence on Cuba and in Vietnam.

Russian warships and aircraft have periodically made forays into the Caribbean. In a show of power, a pair of Russian nuclear-capable Tu-160 strategic bombers visited Venezuela in December in what the Russian military described as a training mission. The deployment came before the latest crisis in Venezuela. Russia also sent Tu-160s and a missile cruiser to visit Venezuela in 2008 amid tensions with the U.S. after Russia's brief war with Georgia. A pair of Tu-160s also visited Venezuela in 2013. It is not publicly known if the Admiral Gorshkov will visit Venezuela.

### **What does the Russian presence mean for Cuba?**

Russians were once the most important group of foreigners in Cuba, with many thousands of Soviet workers and advisers collaborating on projects in fields ranging from agricultural production to military defense. That ended with the fall of the Soviet Union, which saw the end of the Soviet and Russian presence and the start of a grueling depression in Cuba known as the "Special Period." That period ended with the start of Venezuelan aid around 2000.

In what some Cubans saw as a potent symbol of changing times, the Admiral Gorshkov is moored at the terminal where ships from cruise lines like Carnival and Norwegian formerly loomed. Cuba also somewhat diversified its economy by attracting Latin American, European and Asian investment, and tourism primarily from Canada, Europe and the U.S. U.S. tourism surged in 2015 and 2016 as the Obama administration loosed restrictions on travel to Cuba as part of the opening with the communist

government. That opening included allowing cruise ships. But the Trump administration has been trying to cut off income to Cuba and reduce the number of travelers to the island. The latest blow was ending cruise ship travel to the island, a measure that went into effect this month. In what some Cubans saw as a potent symbol of changing times, the Admiral Gorshkov is moored at the cruise terminal where ships from cruise lines like Carnival and Norwegian loomed over Old Havana as recently as June 6.

*PBS article by Michael Weissenstein, Andrea Rodriguez, and Vladimir Isachenkov*

**LEIDOS AWARDED \$72.8M FOR TRAPS SUB DETECTION SYSTEM (Defense News 6/24):**

Leidos Inc. was awarded a \$72.8 million contract for work on submarine detection sonar for the U.S. Navy, the Defense Department announced. The company, based in Reston, Va., will perform work on the Transformational Reliable Acoustic Path System, or TRAPS, one of two prototypes developed by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Defense Department agency responsible for the development of emerging technologies military applications.

Leidos' work on TRAPS comes under an indefinite quantity, cost-plus-fixed-fee contract with a three-year ordering period and no options, the Defense Department announced on Friday. The TRAPS system uses a fixed sonar node placed on the ocean floor, exploiting advantages of operating from the seafloor, to achieve large-area surveillance of the area surrounding the submarine. Each node communicates back to a floating "stationary surface node" through a wireless acoustic modem when the ocean floor node detects a sound.

The other prototype, called Submarine Hold at Risk [SHARK], has an unmanned underwater vehicle as a mobile platform to track enemy submarines. Both are part of DARPA's Distributed Agile Submarine Hunting [DASH] program. Leidos' work on the contract will be done at the company's Long Beach, Miss., facility, with an expected completion date of June 2022.

***Note from your newsletter editor: TRAPS and SHARK and DASH all appear to be part of a replacement effort for the old SOSUS system, which was declassified and decommissioned in the early 1990s soon after the Cold War ended. Better late than never?***

*Defense News article by Ed Adamczyk*

**IRAN CHOSE TO TAKE OUT DRONE INSTEAD OF MANNED NAVY JET (Military.Com 6/21):**

Iran could have shot down a P-8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft and killed Americans Thursday, but chose instead to target an unmanned Navy RQ-4 Global Hawk drone in order to avoid the possibility of all-out war, an Iranian general said Friday. The P-8 anti-submarine, anti-surface warfare aircraft "was also violating our airspace and we could have downed it too," said Brig. Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards aerospace force, according to Iran's Fars news agency. His forces refrained from targeting the P-8 and instead launched a missile at the \$100 million-plus Global Hawk "because our aim was to warn the terrorist forces of the U.S.," Hajizadeh said, according to Fars.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif rejected U.S. charges that the Global Hawk was in international airspace and said on Twitter that Iran had retrieved parts of the downed drone in Iranian territorial waters. Iran's claims on having the Poseidon targeted and the downing of the Global Hawk raised the stakes on what the U.S. response would be to the escalating crisis in the Gulf.

In a series of tweets early Friday, President Donald Trump confirmed that he called off at the last-minute planned air strikes Thursday night on Iranian missile launch sites and radar installations

believed to have been involved in targeting and downing the Global Hawk. "We were cocked & loaded to retaliate last night on 3 different sights [sic] when I asked, how many will die. 150 people, sir, was the answer from a General. 10 minutes before the strike I stopped it, not proportionate to shooting down an unmanned drone," Trump said.

"I am in no hurry" to attack Iran, although the U.S. military was "ready to go," Trump said in repeating his warning that the red line for the U.S. would be renewed Iranian efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. "Sanctions are biting & more added last night. Iran can NEVER have Nuclear Weapons, not against the USA, and not against the WORLD!" Trump tweeted.

*Military.Com article by Richard Sisk*

### **IRAN'S MINI-SUBMARINE FLEET CAN SINK WARSHIPS (National Interest 6/15):**

Iran's submarine force is by far the most numerous and technically capable arm of its navy and slated to remain so for the foreseeable future given Tehran's geopolitical investment in the Gulf region. While it is still unlikely to match the U.S. Navy in a pitched conflict, submarines would inevitably be the spearhead of a prospective Iranian anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) campaign to seal the Hormuz Strait, or to stage a surprise saturation attack against US defenses in the Persian Gulf.

Tensions continue to mount between Washington and Iran, with every week bringing forth a new round of diplomatic threats and accusations. Most recently, Revolutionary Guards commander Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami gave a blistering speech in which he assured the Iranian parliament that the "vulnerability" of American aircraft carriers will prevent the U.S. military from challenging Iranian power in the Persian Gulf. Such rhetoric is par for the course for Iranian officials and state media, who project unwavering confidence in Iranian military capabilities.

But just how capable is Iran's conventional military, and do they really have the means to effectively resist a U.S. offensive? The National Interest previously looked at this nuanced question with overviews of Iran's air force and surface navy. We now turn to what is arguably the core of Iran's conventional military strength, and the reason why it boasts the fourth-strongest navy in the world: its submarine force.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Iran's submarine roster is its sheer size, especially in relation to the rest of its navy. Whereas Iran's combined output of operational corvettes, frigates, and destroyers hardly exceeds 10, it currently fields a whopping 34 submarines. The vast majority of these are midget-class--or "littoral"--diesel-electric vessels, with roughly two dozen from Iran's homemade Ghadir class and several more from the North Korean Yugo class. Impressively, the Ghadir is much smaller but still has strong offensive capabilities; Ghadir vessels boast the same 533 mm torpedo tubes as the handful of Iran's much larger Kilo vessels, only fewer at two versus six.

To be sure, Iran's heavy concentration of mini-submarines makes for unflattering comparisons with the much more robust submarine fleets of its American and Russian counterparts. However, their roster makes a great deal of military sense within the context of Iran's strategic objectives. Iran has no need to project power sea power around the world, or even across the Middle East. Instead, the Iranian navy is constituted and organized around the specific goal of securing the Persian Gulf and specifically the Hormuz Strait. The limited range of Iran's diesel-electric submarines is irrelevant in the restrictive and shallow confines of the Gulf, while their near-undetectability mine-laying capability makes them ideal candidates for patrol and ambush operations against hostile surface vessels.

More recently, Iran has begun to diversify its indigenous submarine industry beyond the smallest vessels. The new Fateh class is intended to round out Iran's lopsided roster, coming in between the

Ghadir and Kilo classes at a displacement of 600 tons. In addition to the 533 mm torpedo tubes that are standard across Iran's submarine force, Iranian state media reports that the Fateh vessels--of which there are two at the time of writing--can fire anti-ship cruise missiles from submerged position.

Iran's submarine force is by far the most numerous and technically capable arm of its navy and slated to remain so for the foreseeable future given Tehran's geopolitical investment in the Gulf region. While it is still highly unlikely to match the U.S. Navy in any sort of pitched conflict, submarines would inevitably be the spearhead of a prospective Iranian anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) campaign to seal the Hormuz Strait or to stage a surprise saturation attack on US defenses in the Persian Gulf.

*The National Interest article by Mark Episkopos*

### **HOW ONE VERY OLD PLANE CAN STILL KILL SUBMARINES (National Interest 6/2):**

As of 2018, there are currently several aircraft in the United States military had have served for fifty years or more. The tried-and-true nature of these planes, along with technological upgrades, have allowed these old systems to continue serving effectively into the second decade of the 21st century. One of these aircraft is the Lockheed P-3 Orion, in service with the U.S. Navy. Initially designed as a maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft, it has since evolved into a multi-mission platform that has proven its worth in areas outside the core competency it was originally designed for. It is, without a doubt, one of the most versatile aircraft in the U.S. military.

The Orion debuted in 1962 as the P3V-1 and was based on the airframe of the L-188 Electra commercial airliner. A month later, the military revised its designation system and it became the P-3A. Throughout the Cold War, the Orion served predominantly in the maritime patrol and ASW role, tracking Soviet Navy submarines and preparing to destroy them, if necessary. The plane's versatility was recognized early; numerous P-3s were converted to suit a variety of specialized military and non-military roles, including scientific research, meteorology, customs and border security, and electronic intelligence (ELINT). This last role would produce the EP-3 Aries variant, which was involved in the infamous 2001 Hainan Island incident, in which a Chinese fighter collided with a Navy EP-3, killing the Chinese pilot. The American plane was able to make a safe landing, but its crew of twenty four were held captive for ten days before being released.

Other countries recognized the utility of the P-3 and the aircraft has gone on to serve with eighteen other nations. The list of foreign operators is quite diverse, ranging from staunch U.S. allies like Australia to sworn enemies like Iran (though the acquisition was made during the Shah's reign when Iran was an American ally).

At its apex, there were twenty four active-duty P-3 squadrons across the U.S., along with thirteen Naval Reserve squadrons, three test and evaluation units, an oceanographic development squadron, plus two "special projects" squadrons, whose activities were highly classified. Today, the Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance (MPR) community is about half the size it was from its halcyon days. The remaining P-3s in service are divided among Patrol and Reconnaissance Groups Atlantic and Pacific, the former possessing Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing Eleven and the latter Wings One, Two, and Eleven as well. Unlike during the Cold War, the MPR community is based almost exclusively out of NAS Jacksonville on the Atlantic side and NAS Whidbey Island on the Pacific.

Though there are eighteen squadrons across the two groups, the gradual replacement by the Boeing P-8A Poseidon has reduced the number of P-3 squadrons to only three, all stationed at NAS Whidbey Island. These are VP-1 "Screaming Eagles," VP-40 "Fighting Marlins," and VP-46 "Grey Knights," which has the distinction of being the second-oldest aircraft squadron in service. They are augmented by two Naval Reserve squadrons, a special projects squadron based at Marine Corps

Base Hawaii, and VP-30 in Jacksonville, which continues to serve as lone Fleet Readiness Squadron (FRS) for both the Orion and Poseidon. Finally last, but not least, the EP-3E Aries II continues to serve in a single squadron, VQ-1 “World Watchers,” out of Whidbey.

Viewed largely as a support platform, the Orion has participated in nearly every major military conflict involving the U.S. since its introduction. In October 1962, only two months after its operational debut, P-3s were patrolling the waters near Cuba to enforce the blockade against that country during the missile crisis. During the Vietnam War, the P-3 participated in Operation Market Time to interdict the supply of Viet Cong forces in South Vietnam. It was during Market Time the P-3 suffered also its first combat loss in April 1968.

During the 1991 Gulf War, P-3s were flying surveillance missions in-theater and were valuable asset. Though it expended no ordnance of its own, Orion crews coordinated attacks against Iraqi naval vessels, contributing the destruction of dozens of Iraqi surface combatants. When the Soviet Union collapsed later that year, it reduced the need for the P-3s but did not take the wind out of the sails of the P-3s original mission just yet. Rather, the P-3s needed to exhibit capabilities beyond ASW and maritime patrol to avoid the chopping block that the post-Cold War defense environment had created.

The P-3s succeeded in proving their worth two years later, when they were supporting the efforts of U.S. Special Operations forces in Somalia. During the infamous Battle of Mogadishu, in which over the U.S. lost two Black Hawk helicopters and one hundred Army Rangers and Delta Force operators held off thousands of hostile Somalis, Navy Orions provided vital aerial surveillance. In fact, the footage of the Black Hawk helicopters getting shot down was recorded by a P-3. The aircraft provided overwatch for the entirety of the battle, demonstrating its value as an all-seeing eye watching the backs of troops on the ground. This capability becomes even more critical with time.

From its start in 2001, the U.S. war in Afghanistan has been heavily aided by the P-3 in hunting down al-Qaeda terrorists and engaging Taliban fighters. Though largely a maritime platform, upgrades via the Anti-Surface Warfare Improvement Program (AIP) allowed the Orion to better-observe events ashore, including the mountainous terrain of Central Asia. P-3s not only watched the backs of American special operators, but also found hostiles hiding in the treacherous terrain and human-occupied caves through Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR).

It was ironic, perhaps, that it was during a kind of war other than what it was intended to fight that the Orion fulfilled its greatest potential. While it never de-emphasized its original purpose, the War on Terror has increased the demand of the P-3. Even at a time when the U.S. military has a wide range of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, ranging from the E-3 Sentry Airborne Early-Warning and Control System (AWACS), the E-8 Joint-Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (J-STARS), and a deep roster of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), the P-3, along with the Aries ELINT variant, offers an “intermediate” option – a manned aircraft equipped with powerful sensors, long on-station loiter time, the ability to operate at lower altitudes, and equipped with weaponry, allowing it to defend itself or carry out offensive tasks as needed.

Today, the P-3 continues to prove its worth in theaters of conflict all over the world, including in the highly-active Central Command (CENTCOM) region, specifically in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. Though specifics regarding their operations are sparse, official sources confirm Orion squadrons are conducting ISR in war zones like Iraq and Syria, along with ASW and non-military operations as well. Closer to home, P-3s are utilized by Customs and Border Protection to counter drug-smuggling and protect America’s borders.

A P-3 squadron will typically deploy for six months, followed by a thirteen to fourteen month inter-deployment ready cycle. During a typical deployment, aircraft and aircrews will be distributed among various locations within a specific geographical area. In recent times, P-3s have been deployed to Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia, Bahrain, Djibouti, Sicily, El Salvador, as well as number of other locations that remain classified. This is a testament to both the high demand of the Orion's services, as well the critical nature of the missions it performs. Even while not on deployment, P-3s and their crews are often tasked for short-term assignments, such as humanitarian missions, search-and-rescue, or assisting in counter-drug operations.

The latest iteration of the Orion is the Update III Block Modification Upgrade Program (BMUP)+. A vast improvement over earlier versions, it is equipped a wide range of sophisticated sensors and electronics, including the AN/APS-137A(V)5 Inverse Synthetic Aperture Radar (ISAR). The ISAR creates a high-resolution two-dimensional image of a contact using an object's own movement. This makes the APS-137 particularly useful in detecting smaller, well-hidden objects, such as pirates or a submarine's periscope.

In addition to its ASW war load, the newest variant also carries the infrared-guided AGM-65F Maverick, the AGM-84G Harpoon ICR, the AGM-84K SLAM-ER ATA, and even the satellite-guided GBU-32(V)2/B Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM). Currently, the U.S. Navy employs a crew of ten on the Orion. In the cockpit are two Naval Aviators (NAs); the Plane Commander (PC) and the Plane Second Pilot. They are assisted by two Flight Engineers, who maintain and monitor aircraft systems.

Within the fuselage are two acoustic Sensor Operators, designated SS1 and SS2, who analyze data from sonobuoys to detect and track hostile contacts. Another Sensor Operator, designated SS3, is the electronic warfare operator (EWO), who operates the radar, MAD, electronic support measures systems, and FLIR. The three Naval Aircrewmen report to the Tactical Coordinator, (TACCO), a Naval Flight Officer (NFO) who, as the title implies, is in tactical command of the aircraft. Depending on the mission, either the PC or the TACCO may be in command of the mission. Rounding out the crew is another NFO who serves as Navigator/Communicator and an in-flight technician.

The P-8, like its predecessor, is based on the airframe of a commercial airliner, the Boeing 737-800ERX. Its two CFM-56-7B turbofans allow the Poseidon to cruise at 490 knots, versus the P-3s 390. Though the P-8 is, by-and-large, a more sophisticated platform, it lacks some of the features that made the P-3 indispensable. Its weapon load is comparatively limited—it cannot fire the Maverick missile, nor can it employ JDAMs. More relevant to the ASW mission, the Poseidon lacks a MAD boom, though the Navy insists its ability to hunt submarines would not be hindered as a result.

As the sun slowly sets on the Orion, it continues to serve quietly on the frontlines. The Orion's career has been sustained by its ability to do many things very well. Those who have flown it may be sad to see it go, but they will bid the P-3 farewell knowing the future of Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance is in good hands.

*National Interest article by Edward Chang*

#### **RUSSIAN FIGHTER MAKES "IRRESPONSIBLE" INTERCEPT OF NAVY P-8A (USNI News 6/4):**

A Navy surveillance aircraft was intercepted by a Russian fighter over the Mediterranean Sea "determined to be unsafe," according to a late Tuesday statement from U.S. 6th Fleet. A Navy P-8A Poseidon was operating in international airspace over the Mediterranean when it was intercepted by a Russian Sukhoi Su-35 three times. While the first and third interactions were determined to be in line with international rules, the second was called out by 6th Fleet.

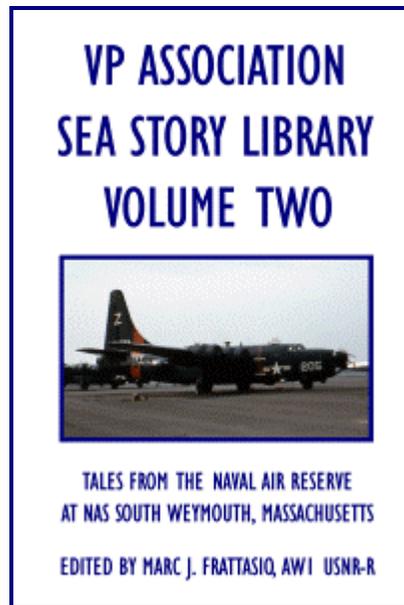
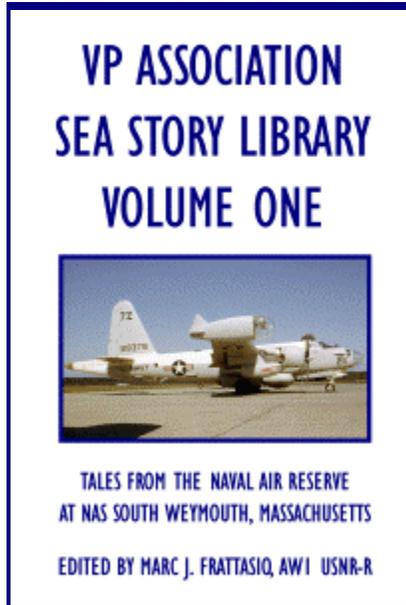
“The second interaction was determined to be unsafe due to the SU-35 conducting a high speed pass directly in front of the mission aircraft, which put our pilots and crew at risk,” read the statement. “The crew of the P-8A reported wake turbulence following the second interaction. The duration of the intercept was approximately 28 minutes.” The Navy release added, “while the Russian aircraft was operating in international airspace, this interaction was irresponsible. We expect them to behave within international standards set to ensure safety and to prevent incidents, including the 1972 Agreement for the Prevention of Incidents On and Over the High Seas (INCSEA). Unsafe actions increase the risk of miscalculation and potential for midair collisions.”

The following is the complete June 4, 2019 statement from 6th Fleet.

On June 4, 2019, a U.S. P-8A Poseidon aircraft flying in international airspace over the Mediterranean Sea was intercepted by a Russian SU-35 three times over the course of 175 minutes. The first and third interaction were deemed safe. The second interaction was determined to be unsafe due to the SU-35 conducting a high speed pass directly in front of the mission aircraft, which put our pilots and crew at risk. The crew of the P-8A reported wake turbulence following the second interaction. The duration of the intercept was approximately 28 minutes. While the Russian aircraft was operating in international airspace, this interaction was irresponsible. We expect them to behave within international standards set to ensure safety and to prevent incidents, including the 1972 Agreement for the Prevention of Incidents On and Over the High Seas (INCSEA). Unsafe actions increase the risk of miscalculation and potential for midair collisions. The U.S. aircraft was operating consistent with international law and did not provoke this Russian activity.

*USNI article by Sam LaGrone*

#### **RECOMMENDED READING:**



A friendly reminder that your newsletter editor compiled two editions of NAS South Weymouth VP squadron related “sea stories” some years ago as a fund-raiser for this organization. Both books are still available and the proceeds benefit the VP Association. To order, go to the “Geedunk” page on our web site at [www.vpassocaition.org](http://www.vpassocaition.org).

If you have an amusing or interesting “sea story” from your time in the reserves at NAS South Weymouth that you’d like have included in a future third volume, please contact Marc Frattasio at [marc\\_frattasio@yahoo.com](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com).

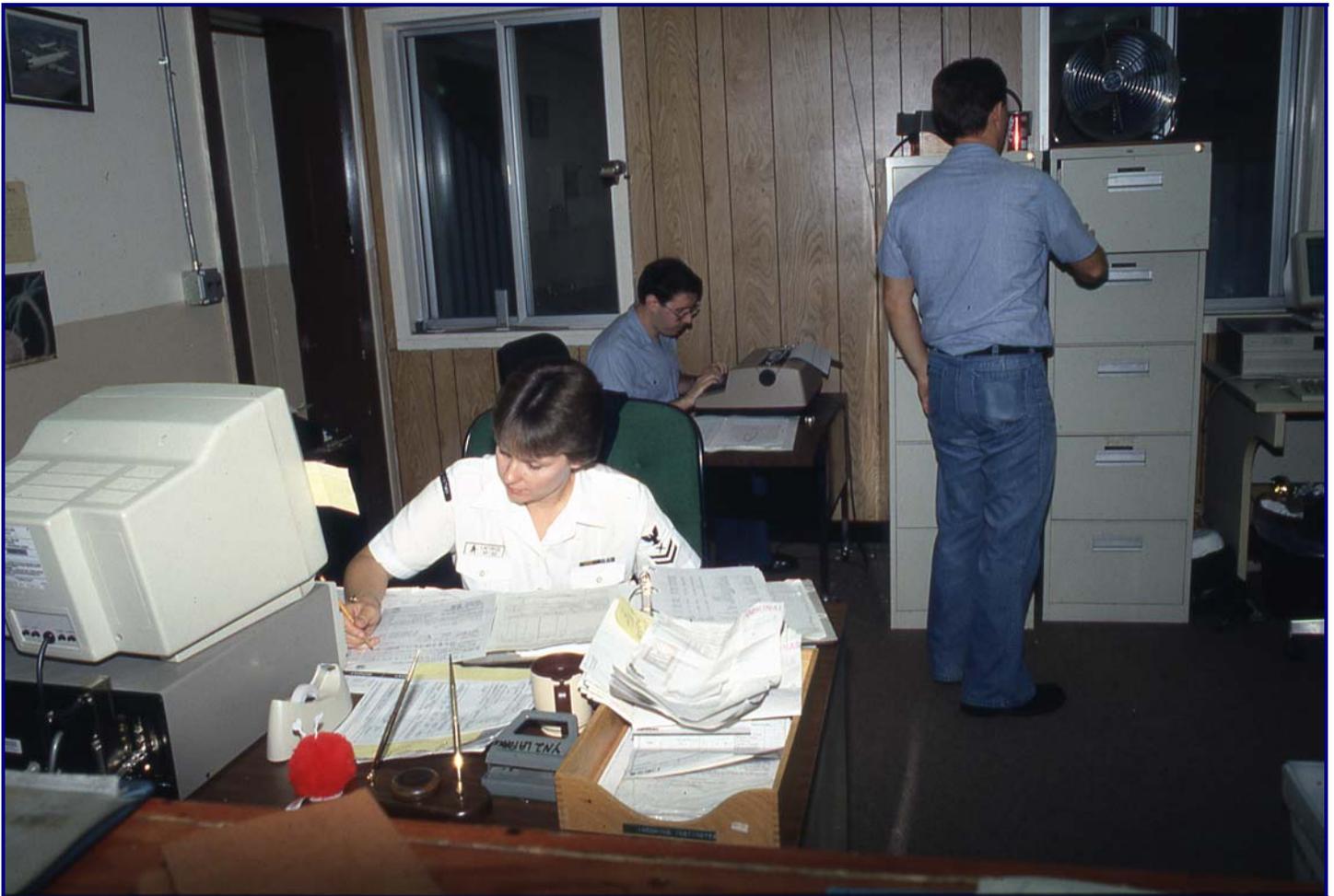
#### **ON THE INTERNET:**

There are fairly active groups on the popular social media web site Facebook for VP-92, NAS South Weymouth, and NAS Brunswick. You can check them out at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com). You may also find Nevins Frankel’s VP Navy web site at [www.vpnavy.com](http://www.vpnavy.com) very interesting too.

**MONTHLY MEETING:**

Members who can do so are welcome to join us for lunch on the second Thursday of every month at Warren's Place in South Weymouth, MA (in the Whole Foods Plaza off Route 18) from 11:30 to 13:30

**PARTING SHOT:**



***ABOVE:*** YN2 Laforge and other administrative personnel working what appears to be late into the night in the VP-92 Admin Office at NAS South Weymouth during the squadron's final years on this base. Come to our next reunion in September and come reconnect with old friends like this. Got something similar to share? Contact Marc Frattasio at [marc\\_frattasio@yahoo.com](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com).



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



VP ASSOCIATION 2019 ANNUAL REUNION  
WEYMOUTH SONS OF ITALY HALL, 54 WHITMAN ST., EAST WEYMOUTH, MA  
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 21, 2019 FROM 1200 TO 1700

*Appetizers and Cash Bar between 1200 and 1300, Meal at 1300, Guest Speaker following Meal*

BANQUET RESERVATION ORDER FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Squadron Affiliation(s) and Years: \_\_\_\_\_

Number in Party: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed (\$45 Per Person): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks Payable to **"The VP Association"** and Mail to Barbara Hanigan, 23 Parkview Terrace, Duxbury MA 02332.

***If you haven't been to a VP Association reunion before, how about joining us this year?***

***Don't assume that everybody you know from your Navy Reserve or regular Navy patrol squadron days is aware of the VP Association or the annual reunion banquet. Spread the word about us to your Navy friends and former shipmates.***

***Dress is CASUAL. However, if you would like to wear a uniform (any kind) or flight suit to the reunion that's fine.***

***Tables will be available for displays of any Navy memorabilia that you may wish to bring. If you have photos, cruise books, squadron or crew patches, squadron ballcaps, NATOPS manuals, or any other interesting memorabilia that you'd like to show off to your friends and former shipmates at the reunion banquet please bring it with you and we'll find a table for you.***

***Please help reduce Barbara Hanigan's workload by getting your banquet reservations in to her as soon as possible. Don't wait until the last minute. Thanks!***