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 97 **HTTP://WWW.VPASSOCIATION.ORG** **SEP 2024**

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: *VP-92 P-3B Orion at NAS South Weymouth in 1984 with yellow markings used for a few years. Got something similar to share? If so, contact Marc Frattasio at marc_frattasio@yahoo.com.*

ILL SHIPMATE IN NEED OF CHEERING UP:

Laura Smallidge, who was an AK in the VP-MAU at NAS Brunswick, suffered a stroke in late July. She can't have visitors outside of family at this time but would appreciate cards and letters sent to PO Box 753, Mount Desert, ME 04660.

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. Please note that David Klein, who was a pilot with VP-92, has retired and has a new e-mail address. It is klein.d1315@gmail.com.

THE 2024 NAS BRUNSWICK REUNION:

This will be your final notice regarding the upcoming NAS Brunswick base reunion, which will be held over the extended weekend of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday September 13th, 14th, and 15th. After August 31st you will not be able to purchase admission tickets on-line or make reservations for the banquet. However, you can still purchase admission to the reunion (though not to the banquet – no more reservations can be taken for the meal) at the door. Go to the Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum's web site at https://bnamuseum.org for the schedule and more details about the reunion.

The US Navy has agreed to send a P-8A Poseidon and a P-3C Orion as well as some training aircraft (T-6A Texan II, T-44 Pegasus, and T-54 King Air) for static display on Saturday, operations permitting. Please note that there are only about a half-dozen P-3s remaining in service with the US Navy. One operator (VQ-1) is expected to retire its P-3s, which are only used as "bounce birds", early next year. The other two operators (VXS-1 and VX-30) will not have P-3s for much longer. At this point, you should consider any opportunity to see an operational US Navy P-3 Orion as potentially THE LAST TIME you will be able to do so. The organizers have been told that a Canadian CP-140 Aurora may come too.

A joint VP-92 and VP-MAU "mini-reunion" will be held in conjunction with the larger base reunion on Saturday September 14th. The command mini-reunion will be from 11 AM to noon in the Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum's main exhibition hall or outside under a large tent. Check with the base reunion people when you arrive for the location and they will direct you. All former VP-92 and VP-MAU personnel are welcome to come to the command mini-reunion. We will have some free "geedunk" to hand out, on a first-come first-served basis, while the supply lasts. If you want what we are passing out line up early because what we bring is all there is and when it is gone it is gone!

Please note that although there is no charge to attend the command mini-reunion, you will have to purchase admission to the base reunion to get in. We hope to see many of you at the NAS Brunswick reunion in September. Come see your old friends and come see your old aircraft. This is going to be a great time, and you'll be sorry if you don't go!

VP-92 TABLE AT THE NAS BRUNSWICK REUNION BANQUET:

Al Firnrohr and Bob O'Brien want everybody to know that they have reserved a table at the NAS Brunswick reunion banquet for former VP-92 personnel. They are inviting all former members of VP-92 who are coming to the banquet and want to sit together as a group to join them at the table.

A NOTE FROM JOHN SCHWIND (AKA "10 SPEED"):

Good morning shipmate! Another fine newsletter just like always. Thanks for publishing that photo of the patch for dumping the 1,000 gallons from the urinal. So many people can relate. I even dumped a few in my day. I do believe you do need to make one correction though. I retired as an ATC, not as an AVCM. Thanks again brother, take care!

A PHOTO AND NOTE FROM DICK SHAFNER:

Dick Shafner and Kevin Cahill, who were both flight engineers in VP-92, are shown in the image presented above seated in the relatively new P-3 Orion simulator cockpit at the Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum on old NAS Brunswick, Maine. I visited the museum for the first time in May after a short overnight trip to Boothbay Harbor. What a surprise it was for me to meet up with Kevin for the first time in many years. We go way back to when I was a SELRES and Kevin was a TAR who instructed and helped me get qualified as a P-3 flight engineer. In turn, I helped Kevin learn Morse code and pass the test to get his HAM radio novice license.

THE 2024 MINUTEMANCIPATION WEEKEND:

Over the extended weekend of August 16, 17, and 18 several former VP-92 AWs and a token few former FEs, AOs, and officers showed up at Marty McCormick's beach house in Green Harbor, MA for an annual event known as the Minutemancipation Weekend. From left to right in the photo above are Rick Caesar, Scott Alexander, Matt Sharpe, Marc Frattasio, Scott Savelle, Mark Hausler, Ron Clemments, A.J. Bucchi, Scott Andrews, Marty McCormack, Tom Drapeau, A. J. Bucchi's friend Tony (Senior Enlisted Academy instructor from the German Navy), Sean Reid, and Randy Minet. Not shown here, but also present, were Steve O'Donoghue, Scott Bailey, and Suzanne Krause. The dog belongs to A. J. Bucchi.

FIRST LOOK AT THE P-8A POSEIDON'S NEW MULTI-MISSION POD (Aviationist 8/17):

The Multi-Mission Pod (MMP), currently being tested on the P-8, was internally funded by Boeing and is intended to carry sensors that are not organic to the Poseidon. We might have got the first ever look at the new MMP for the P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA). The photo, sent to us by aviation photographer Connor Ochs at Airplane Fotos, shows a Poseidon assigned to Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 20 with the new MMP installed under its centerline attachment point. The aircraft, according to the ADS-B data, has been flying regularly from Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, the home station of VX-20. Boeing has recently detailed the ongoing testing of new capabilities on the Poseidon, including the Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) and the MPP.

The MMP was first announced in 2016, when Boeing said it was developing the new pod with internal funds. The company at the time said a prototype of the pod was built and used for two flight tests, with results defined as promising. The pod was first showcased at the Dubai Airshow 2021, where the company shown a rendering and provided more details. Boeing said the MMP is designed to house a wide range of sensors and mission systems, including potential multiple configurations of equipment provided by operator nations. "Customers might want to do signal or communications intelligence or different kinds of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions, and have their own functions or their own mechanisms to do that using their own capability within country," said Perry Yaw, Boeing's leader of P-8 global sales and marketing.

The pod was developed with the same digital design tools used for the T-7 Red Hawk advanced trainer, said Boeing, and intended to attach to existing attachment, power and cooling access points already provided for the APS-154 Advanced Airborne Sensor (AAS) radar. Wind tunnel testing was said to indicate only a negligible drag increase with the pod installed. A year later, at the Singapore Air Show 2022, Boeing provided some new details, mentioning the MMP is a 20 ft.-long module, designed to accept modular payloads. The company also said the pod can offer larger apertures for

sensors, compared to the ones on the aircraft, providing advantages for a “variety of multi-sensor, multi-spectral, multi-intelligent capabilities” that can be housed in the pod.

This year, at the end of June, Boeing confirmed that it has built a MMP and was scheduled to begin testing on the P-8A in July, with certification expected by the end of summer. The company noted that the U.S. Navy awarded a contract to integrate the pod on the Poseidon in September 2023. “The multimission pod is something that Boeing has been developing for several years,” said Jon Spore, business development manager for P-8 programs. “And to enhance capability in the aircraft, the multimission pod is designed to carry sensors that are not organic to the P-8. The current payload of the pod is unknown, although Boeing said, “any sensor that fits within the size, weight, power, and cooling parameters of the MMP are potential candidates for integration with the MMP and aircraft.”

Boeing also provided updates on the integration of the LRASM weapon on the P-8A, saying the activities should be completed by this summer. “The testing is currently going well. We expect it to be done later this summer if all things continue as planned. And that’ll be yet another capability that the US Navy will have at its disposal,” said Spore. The aircraft, once the integration is complete, will be able to carry four LRASMs on its under-wing pylons. The Navy did not provide further details but released a photo of the weapon during a fit test on the Poseidon. The AGM-158C LRASM, based on the AGM-158B Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile – Extended Range (JASSM-ER), is the new low-observable anti-ship cruise missile developed by DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) for the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy. NAVAIR describes the weapon as a defined near-term solution for the Offensive Anti-Surface Warfare (OASuW) air-launch capability gap that will provide flexible, long-range, advanced, anti-surface capability against high-threat maritime targets.

There are currently three variants, which comprise the OASuW Increment 1 program, designated LRASM 1.0, LRASM 1.1, and LRASM C-3. The LRASM 1.0 variant, which was fielded with early operational capability in 2019, has already been integrated on the B-1B Lancer and F/A-18E/F Super Hornet. The newer LRASM 1.1 variant was fielded last year and is undergoing Initial Operational Test & Evaluation this year, according to the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation’s report. It’s not confirmed if this is the variant being integrated on the P-8A.

The U.S. Navy started earlier this year the work on the first P-8 to be modified with Increment 3 Block 2 capabilities. These will enable the fleet to be outfitted with the full anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities outlined in the P-8A program’s evolutionary acquisition strategy, says the service. Increment 3 Block 2 provides a significant upgrade to the P-8A airframe and avionics systems, and includes new airframe racks, radomes, antennas, sensors, and wiring. The modification incorporates a new combat systems suite with an improved computer processing and higher security architecture capability, a wide band satellite communication system, an ASW signals intelligence capability, a track management system, and additional communications and acoustics systems to enhance search, detection and targeting capabilities.

“Increment 3 Block 2 brings the capability that the P-8A was made for. These modifications will allow aircrews to search, locate and track the most advanced submarines in the world, enabling the fleet to pace the threat with the required capability and capacity to win the fight,” said Capt. Erik Thomas, program manager for the Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft program office, PMA-290. “This delivery demonstrates the PMA-290 team’s outstanding work ethic, professionalism and dedication to the fleet.” Increment 3 Block 2 related modifications are currently in progress at Boeing’s Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul hangar at Cecil Airport in Jacksonville, Florida. The first fleet aircraft modification is expected to be complete in January 2025, said both Boeing and the Navy.

The Navy also said that, in response to evolving threats around the world, future P-8A modifications will be implemented via a sequence of rapid capability insertion efforts that build upon this new Increment 3 Block 2 baseline. The aircraft will also receive a signals intelligence (SIGINT) capability, as well as the payloads currently used by the MQ-4C Triton.

Aviationist article by Stefano D'Urso

U.S. CONFIRMS PENDING SIGINT UPGRADE FOR P-8A (Aviation Week 8/6):
A newly published U.S. government document confirms that the Boeing P-8A Poseidon will be upgraded to perform signals intelligence (SIGINT) missions. The document also shows the anti-submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft will receive the same payloads that are being deployed on the Northrop Grumman MQ-4C Triton Integrated Functional Capability-4.

Only Sierra Nevada and Argon ST will be allowed to submit bids for the P-8A ASW SIGINT payload, with a newly revealed ALQ-263 designation, according to a Navy special notice published via the U.S. General Services Administration on a government acquisition portal. Sierra Nevada and Argon ST produce the high- and low-bandwidth payloads of the Multi-Intelligence Sensor Development (MISD) system. The Navy developed the MISD payloads to equip the family of aircraft selected to replace the Lockheed EP-3E ARIES II maritime SIGINT fleet.

VQ-1, the last operational EP-3E squadron, will be retired by the end of 2025. The Navy, meanwhile, quietly prepared the P-8A fleet to form part of the EP-3E's successor. The 2016 Naval Aviation Vision outlined plans to replace the ARIES II with a mix of MQ-4Cs, P-8As and Northrop MQ-8C Fire Scouts. The latter will be retired by the end of this year, leaving only the MQ-4Cs and P-8As in service.

Aviation Week article by Steve Trimble

RUSSIAN ATTACK SUB SUNK IN MISSILE STRIKE CLAIMS UKRAINE (USNI News 8/4):
Russian diesel-electric attack submarine Rostov-on-Don was sunk Friday in Sevastapol, international news outlets reported. The BBC and Reuters, citing Ukrainian general staff online postings, said a missile attack sank the Kilo-class attack boat while it was at anchor in the Black Sea port.

This would be the second successful missile attack on the submarine in 11 months. Then, the Ukrainian defense ministry reported the attack sank the boat, which proved false. Although heavily damaged in that attack, the sub was repaired and may have been undergoing service trials. Russian government and military sources did not confirm the most recent attack.

The Ukrainian military also claims Friday's attack "significantly damaged" four launchers attached to a Russian S-400 air defense system protecting the city on the Crimean peninsula. The S-400 is the Kremlin's most advanced air defense system. The Ukrainian defense ministry did not elaborate on the missiles it fired Friday or how the attack was carried out.

On June 24, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a release, "the Kiev regime, with support from the United States and its satellites, committed yet another heinous terrorist crime against civilians in Russia by firing missiles at Sevastopol. For their terrorist attack, they specially chose a day – Holy Trinity Sunday – one of the most important holidays celebrated by the Russian Orthodox Church." The Kremlin said the missiles were American-made Army Tactical Missile System [ATACMS] guided by intelligence from United States satellites and a long-range reconnaissance drone.
Ukraine's continuing sea drone and missile attacks caused Moscow to disperse most of the Black Sea Fleet to safer ports far from Crimea in southern Russia last year. Novorossik, one of Russia's

largest ports for the export of grain and oil, has been the destination of many the ships assigned to the fleet. At least one-third of the 28 vessels assigned to it have been sunk or severely damaged. naval warfare experts told USNI News.

How safe those ports in southern Russia are from extended-range sea drone attacks is also open to question. The Ukrainian Navy boasted in July its advanced Sea Baby unmanned surface vessels could strike ships in that port. Russia's defense ministry reported destroying two Ukrainian naval drones in early July near Novorossik before they struck targets in the port or disrupted operations. The Ukrainian defense ministry in a Facebook posting on Friday's attack said, "The destruction of 'Rostov-on-Don' once again proves that there is no safe place for the Russian fleet in the Ukrainian territorial waters of the Black Sea."

Although Rostov-on-Don was possibly sunk Friday, the Russian Black Sea Fleet has moved in the last two weeks to re-establish its presence in those waters in backstopping the ground campaign, particularly in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian Navy spokesman Capt. Dmytro Pletenchuk, said, "For the first time, the enemy has launched three submarines that carry cruise missiles at once. In fact, these are all available in the Azov-Black Sea region. Sometimes, the Black Sea Fleet is called a submarine fleet. Now it is true."

The submarines would likely operate in conjunction with guided missile frigates also recently reported sailing in the Black Sea. The Black Sea Fleet did not participate in the Russian Navy's largest worldwide exercise in years that began in late July. The exercises involve 20,000 sailors and marines and 300 surface ships and boats, submarines and support vessels. Fifty aircraft are also involved in the drills. They are being conducted from the Arctic to the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific. "Units and formations of the Russian Navy have begun conducting planned exercises in the operational zones of the Northern, Pacific and Baltic Fleets, as well as in the area of responsibility of the Caspian Flotilla," the Russian defense ministry said.

It is unclear whether the stepped joint operations between Russian and Chinese navies near Japan and the Philippines are part of the much larger exercise. The Kremlin took control of Crimea in 2014, saying it was historically Russian and its citizens welcomed the takeover in a rigged referendum. Maintaining a Russian naval presence in Sevastopol dates back to the reign of Catherine the Great in 1783. Protecting the base was one of the reasons Moscow cited for the takeover.

USNI News article by John Grady

RUSSIAN WARSHIPS MAKE A NEW VISIT TO CUBAN WATERS (AP 7/27):

Three Russian warships arrived in Cuban waters on Saturday, Moscow's second such maritime voyage in as many months in a reflection of deepening ties between Russia and Cuba. The naval group, consisting of a training ship, patrol frigate and refueling tanker, are expected to remain docked in Cuba's port of Havana until July 30. The arrival of the vessels comes mere weeks after another squadron of Russian warships, including a powerful nuclear-powered submarine, visited Havana as part of planned military exercises last month. American officials closely tracked the mid-June military exercises, saying that the four-vessel group posed no real threat. At the time, experts described the warships' Caribbean tour as a show of strength in response to continued U.S. support for Ukraine.

Cuban defense officials announced the latest port call earlier this week, calling the arrival of the Russian warships a "historical practice" and show of "friendship and collaboration." But neither government elaborated on the purpose of this latest deployment. Cuba greeted the Baltic fleet on Saturday with a booming cannon salute. The docking of the flotilla has sparked a flurry of excitement among the general public, with Cubans strolling the port avenue to get a better glimpse of the

warships Saturday and authorities saying interested visitors would be admitted on board the Russian training ship, called Smolniy, on Sunday and Monday. “It’s a friendly thing. A bond between Russia and the Cubans,” said 29-year-old onlooker Maydelis Perez, pointing the hulking warships out to her three children. “I’m taking a family outing.”

Russia is a longtime ally of Venezuela and Cuba, and its warships and aircraft have periodically made forays into the Caribbean and docked in Havana. Though Cuba is not a key player in Russian foreign policy, experts say that Russia sees Cuba — with its port less than 100 miles (160 km) from Florida — as strategically important given its continued clout among developing nations.

Cuba and Russia — Cold War allies now both under severe U.S. sanctions — have strengthened their political and economic ties in recent years, particularly as Moscow aims to boost diplomatic support for its war in Ukraine and Havana seeks whatever economic assistance it can get. Cuba has consistently abstained on U.N. resolutions on the invasion of Ukraine and avoided criticism of Moscow’s war. Russia has sold significant volumes of oil to Cuba, which has struggled with regular power outages under Washington’s economic embargo.

AP article by AP Staff

WHAT CHINA STUDY SAYS ABOUT DESTROYING STARLINK WITH SUBS (NDTV World 7/22):
Elon Musk's Starlink has been covering the empty space above the Earth with its satellites with a plan to provide Internet to the remotest corner of the planet. But a study in China has claimed that People Liberation Army's (PLA's) submarines equipped with lasers would be able to destroy these satellites if the country's security was at risk. According to South China Morning Post (SCMP), the study has been conducted by the scientists of the PLA. It further said that such submarines will be produced in large numbers and deployed in various oceans to counter military threats to China.

The undersea vehicles will have the capability to remain submerged in water with a retractable "opto-electronic mast" coming out and firing at the target, the study further said. The research by Wang Dan, a professor with the Naval Submarine Academy, was published last month in the Chinese-language journal, Command Control & Simulation, as per the SCMP report. The entire project has been planned to hide the location of the attack vehicles (or submarines). Currently, missile launches are often accompanied by long trails of smoke, which can reveal the position of the attack vehicle. The team said this is too risky.

"Currently, the primary means of anti-satellite operations relies on ground-to-air missiles, but this approach has certain issues, mainly in terms of concealment," SCMP quoted Ms Ms Wang and her colleagues as saying in the study. "Taking the satellites launched by the Starlink program as an example, they are numerous, densely packed and small in size, making the satellite network extremely resilient. Even if a significant number of satellites are destroyed, there are redundancies to replace them. Therefore, using missiles to attack such satellites is highly inefficient," said the team. "Submarine-based laser weapons can solve these issues," the study document further mentioned.

It then detailed a step-by-step guide to attacking Starlink-like satellites. "First, one or several submarines equipped with laser weapons are deployed to the sea area where the operation is to be conducted. They enter the target sea area according to the command instructions and wait for the satellites to come within their attack range. The time to raise the laser weapon is determined based on the previously acquired satellite overhead time," said the study. "When the satellite enters the attackable range, the laser weapon is raised. Due to the limitations of the submarine's detection equipment, other forces are required to provide satellite position guidance for the submarine to attack

the satellite. After the attack is completed, the submarine can submerge and wait for the next mission or return to the home port," the researchers further said.

As of June 2024, there are 6,219 Starlink satellites in orbit, of which 6,146 are working, according to Astronomer Jonathan McDowell who tracks the constellation on his website.

NDTV World article by Amit Chaturvedi

ALLIED P-8 CREW HUNTS US SUBMARINE IN PACIFIC DRILLS (Business Insider 7/15):
The crew of a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare aircraft shared their experiences tracking a US Navy nuclear submarine and dropping training torpedoes on it off the coast of Hawaii last Wednesday. The drill, part of the large multinational Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), was a rare opportunity to test the plane's patrol and reconnaissance capabilities against a live target, the aircraft's crew said, per a release on the training.

The P-8A Poseidon, which succeeded the older P-3 Orion, usually serves in a surveillance and deterrence role. Since it first entered service in 2013, it's become widely considered one of the most sophisticated maritime patrol aircraft available, featuring various technical capabilities for detecting and tracking subs and ships. The anti-submarine warfare plane also possesses the ability to engage hostile vessels

The Australian P-8A was joined by a US Navy P-8A and an MQ-9A unmanned aerial vehicle, which recorded the exercise, according to a news release from US Third Fleet. The submarine targeted was the US Navy Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS Topeka (SSN 754). The nuclear submarine is the fourth improved Los Angeles-class vessel, featuring a more durable hull that allows the warship to dive deeper than other unmodified vessels of its class.

To find the sub, the Poseidon began with range surveillance, "essentially flying a grid search pattern at low altitude to hunt down the exact location of the submarine," the release said. In the exercise, the P-8s were given the broad coordinates for the submarine's location, but the crew had to independently "establish organic tracking and attack criteria," 3rd Fleet said. The P-8 turned to its sonobuoys to map the sub's movements. These are acoustic sensors used to find submarines. A float with a radio transmitter remains on the surface while a hydrophone is submerged for detection.

"We dropped sonobuoys to determine the track of the submarine," No. 11 Squadron Commander and Tactical Coordinator, Squadron Leader Tristan Hull, explained. Hull added that "once we were able to establish position, course, and speed of the submarine we were able to derive a solution that met our attack criteria and appropriate weapon placement to ensure maximum success."

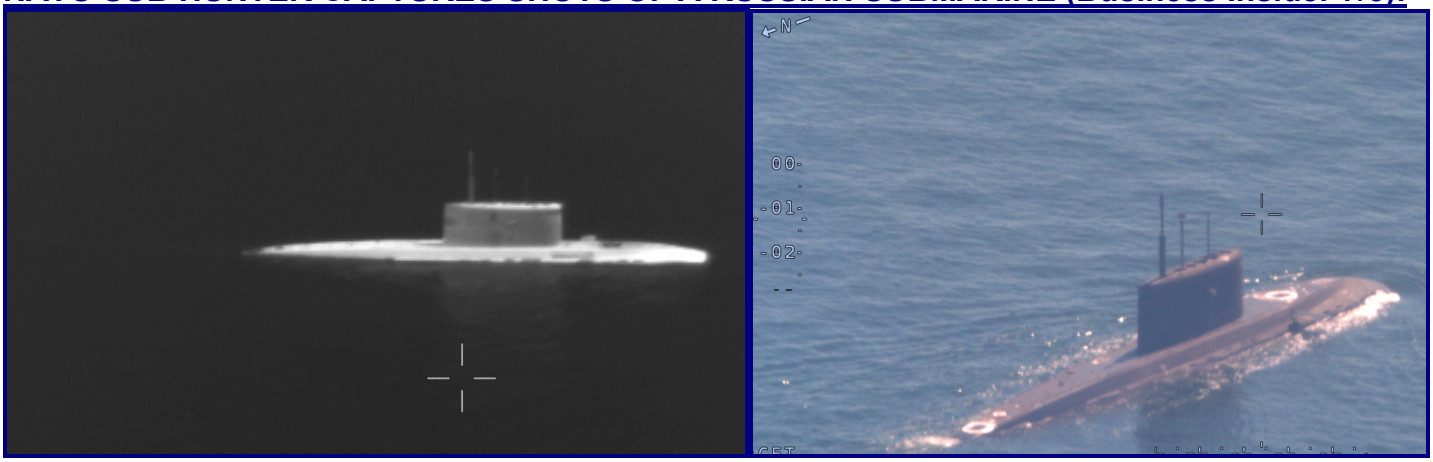
After locating the Topeka, the Australian sub-hunter dropped four Mark 54 exercise torpedoes. Hull described it as a detailed process involving the sonobuoys being placed correctly in the area, the acoustics operator accurately interpreting the information to locate the sub, and then the P-8A pilot flying over the target in time. It was the first time an Australian P-8A dropped this variant of the Mark 54 Lightweight Exercise Torpedo, the news release noted.

The larger RIMPAC exercise, during which this training occurred, is the world's largest international maritime exercise focused on the Indo-Pacific region. This year's exercise, the 29th iteration, included participants from across the region and beyond. Tracking, detecting, and engaging submarines in exercises such as this one helps train aircraft crews to better understand how to identify the various acoustic elements of a sub and how they differ from the feedback and noise of the surrounding ocean.

Maritime patrol aircraft crews routinely track submarines outside of structured exercises. Doing so can provide valuable intelligence about the undersea capabilities of potential foes. Recently, an anti-submarine warfare plane belonging to a NATO ally followed a Russian submarine in the Baltic Sea, and before that, a US plane kept tabs on another Russian sub before it docked off the coast of Cuba.

Business Insider article by Chris Panella

NATO SUB HUNTER CAPTURES SHOTS OF A RUSSIAN SUBMARINE (Business Insider 7/5):



A NATO ally's anti-submarine warfare aircraft captured photos of a Russian sub navigating the Baltic Sea last week, highlighting the alliance's continuous efforts to keep track of Russian activity in the undersea domain. The surveillance photographs, which show the surfaced submarine, were taken around the same time the Russian military conducted submarine exercises in the Baltic Sea , which involved a pair of subs engaging in a torpedo duel.

NATO Maritime Command shared the photos on X and other social media platforms on Wednesday, noting that the Russian sub was photographed by a Portuguese P-3 Orion maritime patrol aircraft, an ASW platform made by Lockheed Martin. The P-3 Orion anti-submarine and maritime surveillance aircraft was used by the US Navy for decades until it was succeeded by the sophisticated P-8A Poseidon, an advanced aircraft introduced in 2013 and highly regarded as one of the best maritime patrol aircraft in service. Other nations continue to use the P-3s, though.

A P-8 Poseidon recently operated over the Norwegian Sea late last month, joined by a US Navy nuclear ballistic missile submarine and other vessels and aircraft, including an E6-B Mercury "Doomsday" plane, in what appeared to be an unusual flex amid persistent tensions with Russia. While it's unclear what Russian sub was documented in these photos, Russia recently conducted a submarine exercise in the Baltic Sea. Two Russian Kilo-class, diesel-electric subs — the Novorossiysk and Dmitrov — held a training duel involving torpedo fire last week, around the same time the NATO photos were taken.

After wrapping up the duel, the Russian submarines — capable undersea assets known for being relatively quiet, especially the more advanced Novorossiysk — went on to conduct other combat exercises in the Baltic Sea, Russian state media said. The Baltic Sea, where the drills took place, has seen a major geopolitical shift in recent years with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Finland and Sweden both joining NATO. Sweden became the newest member in March 2024.

With eight of the nine countries bordering the Baltic Sea now being NATO members — the only remaining one Russia — the body of water is sometimes called a "NATO lake," although this term

has been criticized for glossing over how strategically important the region is for both NATO allies and Russia alike. Russian submarines are active far beyond the Baltic Sea and remain an important element of the Russian navy. For instance, the submarine Kazan was spotted in Cuba recently during a Russian navy flotilla visit and prior to exercises in the Caribbean. The Kazan is one of a class of Russian submarines that have concerned NATO allies for years.

Business Insider article by Ella Sherman and Chris Panella

CHINA INTERCEPTS SUBMARINE PROBE DROPPED FROM US AIRCRAFT (Reuters 6/26):
China recently intercepted a submarine probe dropped by a United States military aircraft into the South China Sea, said Yuyuan Tantian, a social media account affiliated with Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, on Wednesday. The U.S. aircraft were found hovering over the waters of the South China Sea and continuously dropped "unidentified items" downwards, Yuyuan Tantian added.

China's coastguard salvaged and checked an item, a video released on the account showed. It said the interception took place recently. "The probe can be used to detect Chinese submarine signals and to counter signals from submarines underwater," text on the video said, quoting an expert. **Editor's note, if you have not already figured it out, the "submarine probe" that the Chinese fished out of the water and were so spun up about was merely a sonobuoy dropped by a P-8!**

Reuters article by Ella Cao, Liz Lee, and Ros Russell

RON DESANTIS BREAKS SILENCE ON RUSSIAN SHIPS NEAR FLORIDA (Newsweek 6/14):
Forida Governor Ron DeSantis on Friday spoke out for the first time about Russian warships in Cuban waters, criticizing the Biden administration for espousing "weakness" on the global stage.

Footage released by the Russian Defense Ministry on Thursday showed the frigate Admiral Gorshkov and nuclear-powered submarine Kazan sailing into Havana Bay, about 100 miles south of Florida. They were not carrying nuclear weapons but were armed with Zircon hypersonic missiles and Kalibr cruise missiles. The Cuban Foreign Ministry described the Russian naval presence as a reflection of the country's "historically friendly relations" with Moscow, even greeting the ships with a 21-cannon salute. Moscow has defended its fleet presence as part of routine military drills conducted with allies.

"I'm the governor of Florida, I'm not the commander-in-chief, but if my responsibilities were different, that would not be something that we would allow to be happening," DeSantis said Friday in Hollywood, Florida, according to footage recorded by Florida's Voice. "I think it's really concerning that under this administration, they've put out a posture of weakness that has invited more aggressive actions from our adversaries." A spokesperson for DeSantis told Newsweek via email that the governor's remarks speak for themselves.

On Friday, a U.S. Navy fast-track submarine, the USS Helena, made "a routine port visit...while conducting its global maritime security and national defense mission," the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) said in a statement on social media. Prior to the ships garnering widespread attention, open source maritime and aerial tracking data appeared to reveal U.S. naval and air assets shadowing the Russian warships as they passed Florida's eastern coast while reaching their destination in Cuba.

The governor also called it "problematic" that activity conducted by hostile nations "is probably at a level we have not seen in many, many years." "I think that history has shown that these bad actors, they respond to strength and they're deterred by strength," DeSantis added. "They're not going to be deterred by weakness. "They're not going to be deterred by confusion. They're not going to be

deterred by a president wandering around aimlessly at the G7. They're going to be deterred because they know that's not somebody that you want to mess with." DeSantis was referring to video of President Joe Biden "wandering" away from world leaders at the Group of Seven summit Thursday.

Video shared on X accounts like RNC Research, which is managed by former President Donald Trump's campaign and the Republican National Committee, purport that Biden's actions during a skydiving demonstration were proof of his diminished mental capacity. The video footage, which has been circulated by other conservative outlets and publications like the New York Post, has been refuted by the White House and Democrats for not showing the full clip or providing correct context.

"The Murdoch outlets are so desperate to distract from @POTUS's record that they just lie," White House spokesperson Andrew Bates wrote on X. "Here, they use an artificially narrow frame to hide from viewers that he just saw a skydiving demonstration. He's saying congratulations to one of the divers and giving a thumbs up."

Newsweek article by Nick Mordowanec

US "SUB HUNTERS" CONVERGE ON RUSSIAN FLOTILLA OFF FLORIDA (Newsweek 6/13):

American military planes built for anti-submarine warfare flew back-to-back sorties around Florida on Tuesday as a Russian navy flotilla sailed past the East Coast of the United States. A time-lapse of aircraft data from the website Flightradar24 showed more than half-a-dozen U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidons—known as "submarine hunters"—converging on the Sunshine State. Some loitered outside U.S. territorial waters in hours long flights near the Florida Straits, relieving one another to ensure nonstop surveillance. Publicly available data pointed to operations out of NAS Jacksonville.

Russia's Defense Ministry is sending a nuclear-powered submarine and three surface vessels to Havana, 100 miles south of Florida's Key West. It is a telegraphed flex by the Kremlin, meant to demonstrate that its ability to project power in the Atlantic remains unhampered despite the ongoing war in Ukraine. Russia's Defense Ministry could not be reached for comment. The Russian warships conducted tactical drills to simulate missile strikes on enemy vessels 370 miles away, the ministry said. The flotilla was scheduled to arrive in Cuba on Wednesday before departing on June 17.

The U.S. has been "actively monitoring the Russian ships as they transit the Atlantic Ocean within international waters," a defense official told Newsweek. "Air and maritime assets under U.S. Northern Command have conducted operations to ensure the defense of the United States and Canada."

The Navy's Second Fleet, Fourth Fleet, the U.S. Coast Guard and Canada's Joint Task Force Atlantic were conducting "routine operations throughout the Atlantic," the Pentagon official said, "and we will continue to operate and engage from a position of strength." "Russia's deployments are part of routine naval activity which pose no direct threat or concern to the United States." On Tuesday, a State Department spokesperson told Newsweek the U.S. expects "heightened naval and air activity near the United States" this summer, before "a global Russian naval exercise this fall."

The four vessels calling on Havana this week include the Yasen-M-class submarine Kazan, the frigate Admiral Gorshkov, the replenishment tanker Academic Pashin and the tug boat Nikolay Chiker—all in service with the Russian navy's Northern Fleet. The Gorshkov is armed with the new Zircon hypersonic cruise missile, which is nuclear-capable. However, Cuba's Foreign Ministry said none of the vessels would carry nuclear weapons into port, and that the visit therefore "does not represent a threat to the region." The port call reflected "historically friendly relations" between the two countries, the ministry added.

P-8A maritime patrol aircraft carry nine crew members and can launch torpedoes and Harpoon anti-ship cruise missiles, the U.S. Navy says. They have an operational range of over 4,500 miles and are equipped for air-to-air refueling. Boeing Defense, Space and Security has built nearly 180 for the U.S. and Indian navies, as well as the air forces of Britain and Australia. The Poseidons were only one of multiple U.S. Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard assets operating in the area as the Russian ships made their transit. They are likely to have conducted their own training exercises.

Open-source analysis suggests the U.S. military had been tracking the Russian ships for well over a week before American and Canadian forces intercepted them off the Florida coast on June 11. "A pillar of U.S. Navy presence is to preserve peace by protecting international law and safeguarding the inherent right of all nations to the freedom of the seas," the U.S. defense official said. "The United States encourages the safe and professional maritime presence of any nation operating in international waters."

Newsweek article by John Feng

RUSSIAN FLOTILLA OFF FLORIDA COAST SPARKS DEPLOYMENTS (Military.Com 6/12):
The Pentagon deployed three Navy destroyers and maritime patrol aircraft this week to keep tabs on a group of Russian ships that conducted missile exercises and reportedly got within 30 miles of the Florida coast. "In accordance with standard procedure, we've been actively monitoring the Russian ships as they transit the Atlantic Ocean within international waters," a defense official, who spoke on the condition his name not be used, told Military.com in an emailed statement Wednesday. The official added that "air and maritime assets under U.S. Northern Command have conducted operations to ensure the defense of the United States and Canada," but wouldn't elaborate on what those assets were. Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh also wasn't able to offer specifics at a briefing to reporters Wednesday.

In contrast, Russia has been very clear about what ships were deployed and what they were up to. Russian state-run media announced last week that a group of four ships, including a frigate and a nuclear-powered submarine, would be making a port call in Havana between June 12 and June 17. On Tuesday, the Russian Ministry of Defense said in an online post that the ships conducted exercises in the use of "high-precision missile weapons in the Atlantic Ocean" and included video shot aboard the vessels. "As part of the exercise, the crews of a frigate and a nuclear-powered submarine practiced the use of high-precision missile weapons using computer-simulated naval targets that represent naval groups of a mock enemy and are located at a distance of over 600 kilometers," the statement said, while noting no missiles were launched.

The Pentagon would not say what U.S. assets were deployed in response to the Russian presence, but online amateur analysts used public flight and ship-tracking data to identify the three destroyers as the USS Truxtun, USS Donald Cook and USS Delbert D. Black on Tuesday. They also identified U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol and anti-submarine aircraft as part of the response. The defense official who spoke with Military.com on Wednesday would go only so far as to say that the Navy's U.S. 2nd Fleet, U.S. 4th Fleet, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area and Canadian Joint Task Force Atlantic were all "conducting routine operations throughout the Atlantic, and we will continue to operate and engage from a position of strength."

A Defense Department photo of the Truxtun taken last week noted that the destroyer was sailing with the Canadian frigate HMCS Ville de Québec and U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stone -- two ships that online analysts also suspected to be responding to the Russians. Online analysts also estimated that the Russian flotilla got within 25 miles of shore. The Miami Herald, citing unnamed U.S. officials, reported that the ships sailed "less than 30 miles off South Florida's coast" on Tuesday. According to

images uploaded to sites such as Telegram by Russian state-run outlets, the Russian ships, including the frigate and the submarine, pulled into Havana on Wednesday.

Singh, the Pentagon spokeswoman, downplayed the presence of the flotilla by telling reporters that "we've seen them do this -- these type of port calls before -- and these are routine naval visits that we've seen under different administrations." "We're always constantly going to monitor any foreign vessels operating near U.S. territorial waters ... but these exercises don't pose a threat to the United States," she added.

However, unlike prior port visits that involved less-advanced Russian vessels, the submarine and the frigate are some of the newest and most advanced Russian warships currently in that country's arsenal. The frigate, the "Admiral Gorshkov," was commissioned in 2018. Meanwhile, the submarine, the "Kazan," was commissioned in 2021 and is similar to U.S. guided-missile nuclear submarines, capable of carrying a range of anti-ship and land attack missiles, including the hypersonic "Zircon" anti-ship missile, according to an analysis by the U.K.-based think tank Royal United Services Institute, or RUSI.

RUSI's report noted that the Kazan has "a reported level of quietness comparable to the very best Western [nuclear submarines] and a long-range strike capability which exceeds that seen on most Western assets." USNI News reported in 2014 that a U.S. Navy official in charge of its submarine program was so impressed with that class of Russian submarine that he had a model of the lead boat -- the Severodvinsk -- placed outside his office so that he could look at it daily. The defense official who spoke with Military.com said that, while Russian naval visits to Cuba are routine, they have "ratcheted up because of U.S. support to Ukraine and exercise activity in support of our NATO allies." "We should expect more of this activity going forward," the official added.

Military.Com article by Konstantin Toropin

US P-8 SEARCHES FOR RUSSIAN SUB OFF FLORIDA (Bulgarian Military Dot Com 6/11):

The Russian Navy has deployed carriers of hypersonic Zircon and Kalibr missiles to Cuba. The Pentagon is closely watching the movements of the Russian fleet. Notably, one of the carriers, the Yasen-M-class nuclear submarine Kazan, is part of this Russian deployment in Cuba. It is for this reason, as observers claim, that yesterday the U.S. Navy launched the P-8 Poseidon “submarine hunter” into the sky. “U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon ‘Sub hunter’ is flying over the coast of Florida in search of a rogue Russian submarine,” writes the U.S. Civil Defense News X account. “The Russian Navy nuclear submarine Kazan is 66 miles away from the Florida coast, equipped with 4,500-km Kalibr-M missiles, off the coast of Cuba!! New Cuban Missile Crisis.”

Experts indicate that the U.S. is collaborating closely with the Royal Canadian Navy in the search. To support the effort, Ottawa has launched the Lockheed P-3 Orion aircraft, which works alongside the American P-8 Poseidon. Screenshots from air traffic tracking apps show these aircraft operating within a specific quadrant, flying in circles as they conduct their search. There’s no official word yet on the results of this Canadian-American naval operation.

Previously, BulgarianMilitary.com reported that the Russian Navy’s frigate “Admiral Gorshkov” and the nuclear submarine “Kazan,” along with a tanker and a tugboat, are expected to—or may have already—arrived in Cuba. This move is seen as a demonstration of strength, potentially unsettling the U.S. with the deployment of Zircon missiles aboard two of Russia’s latest vessels. The U.S. has responded to Russia’s latest maneuver with a stance that can be described as watchful yet not overly alarmed. Given the proximity of Russia’s newest vessels to the U.S. fleet, the situation remains tense. However, it’s also important to consider the potential impact on Russia’s allies.

In deploying Zircon missile launchers to Cuba—a nation that has not explicitly supported Russia's actions in Ukraine—the Kremlin seems to be gauging the response. Although Cuba maintains a neutral position, Ukrainian experts observe that it doesn't hinder the recruitment of mercenaries for Russia. Therefore, Russia might be using this naval move to strategically influence Cuba itself.

The Kazan Yasen-M class submarine, also known as Project 885M, is a nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine in the Russian Navy. It represents an advanced iteration of the original Yasen class, incorporating numerous technological upgrades and enhancements. The dimensions of the Kazan Yasen-M class submarine are substantial, with a length of approximately 139 meters [456 feet] and a beam of around 13 meters [43 feet]. These dimensions contribute to its formidable presence and operational capabilities. The propulsion system of the Kazan Yasen-M class submarine is nuclear-powered, utilizing a single OK-650V reactor. This reactor provides the submarine with a significant amount of power, enabling it to achieve high speeds and extended operational ranges without the need for frequent refueling. The maximum depth of immersion for the Kazan Yasen-M class submarine is estimated to be around 600 meters [1,968 feet]. This allows it to operate effectively in deep-water environments, enhancing its stealth and survivability. The displacement of the Kazan Yasen-M class submarine is approximately 13,800 tons when submerged. This substantial displacement reflects its robust construction and the extensive array of systems and weaponry it carries. The crew complement of the Kazan Yasen-M class submarine typically consists of around 90 officers and enlisted personnel. This relatively small crew size is made possible by the high degree of automation and advanced systems on board.

The capabilities of the Kazan Yasen-M class submarine are diverse and formidable. It is designed for a variety of missions, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, and land-attack missions. Its stealth features and advanced sensors make it a potent platform for intelligence gathering and surveillance. The Kazan Yasen-M class submarine is equipped with a wide range of systems, including advanced sonar arrays, electronic warfare systems, and integrated combat management systems. These systems enhance situational awareness and combat effectiveness. The types of weapons carried by the Kazan Yasen-M class submarine are extensive. It is armed with a mix of torpedoes, cruise missiles, and anti-ship missiles. Notably, it can launch Kalibr and Oniks cruise missiles, which are capable of striking both sea and land targets with high precision.

Sending P-8 and P-3 off the coast of Florida makes sense, as they are great tools for searching for underwater threats. The P-8 Poseidon and P-3 Orion naval aircraft utilize advanced sonar systems to detect submarines. These systems include both active and passive sonar. Active sonar emits sound waves that bounce off objects, allowing the aircraft to detect the location of a submarine based on the returned echoes. Passive sonar, on the other hand, listens for sounds emitted by submarines, such as engine noise or propeller cavitation, to identify their presence and location. Both aircraft deploy sonobuoys, which are small, expendable sonar systems that can be dropped into the ocean. These sonobuoys can either emit sonar pulses [active] or listen for underwater sounds [passive]. The data collected by the sonobuoys is transmitted back to the aircraft, where it is analyzed to detect and track submarines.

Magnetic anomaly detection [MAD] is another technique used by these aircraft. This method involves detecting the slight disturbances in the Earth's magnetic field caused by the metal hull of a submarine. The P-3 Orion is equipped with a MAD boom, while the P-8 Poseidon uses advanced sensors to perform similar functions. This technique is particularly useful for detecting submarines that are running silent and avoiding sonar detection. The P-8 Poseidon and P-3 Orion also employ electronic intelligence [ELINT] and signals intelligence [SIGINT] systems to detect and analyze electronic emissions from submarines. These systems can pick up communications, radar signals, and other electronic emissions, providing valuable information about the presence and activities of

submarines. Infrared and optical sensors are also part of the detection arsenal. These sensors can detect the heat signature or visual presence of a submarine, particularly when it is near the surface. The P-8 Poseidon is equipped with advanced electro-optical/infrared [EO/IR] cameras that enhance its ability to detect submarines visually.

Data fusion and advanced algorithms play a crucial role in the detection process. The P-8 Poseidon and P-3 Orion integrate data from multiple sensors and sources, using sophisticated algorithms to analyze and correlate the information. This helps in accurately identifying and tracking submarines, even in complex and cluttered environments.

Bulgarian Military Dot Com article by Boyko Nikolov

RUSSIAN HYPERSONIC MISSILE-ARMED WARSHIPS CLOSE TO USA (Urasian Times 6/11):
Over six decades after the Cuban Missile Crisis, a Russian nuclear-powered submarine has reached Cuban port, where they will be engaging in joint exercises beginning June 12. From Norway to Cuba, the Russian flotilla led by frigate Admiral Gorshkov equipped with Zircon hypersonic missiles was monitored by a jittery NATO's P-8 'Poseidon' anti-submarine aircraft.

The arrival at the port of the Cuban capital is the culmination of a long detachment that began on May 17. The detachment of ships of the Northern Fleet left the city of Severomorsk and headed for the Atlantic through the designated areas of the Barents Sea. The frigate's main strike weapon is the Kalibr-NK missile system. It is also armed with the latest Zircon hypersonic missile, developed and produced by the Reutov NPO Mashinostroyenia (part of the Tactical Missile Armament Corporation). But, the main part of the flotilla is one of the most modern nuclear submarines of Russia – Kazan. Cuba has assured that the submarine will not be carrying any nuclear weapons and poses no regional threat.

But, the timing of the port call right under the US nose comes as the Ukraine-Russia war is escalating, with NATO countries increasing their stakes in the war. Also, Cuba and the US being just 145 kilometers apart from their closest point doesn't help the situation. The Yasen-class are a series of nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines designed by the Malakhit Engineering Bureau and built at the Sevmash Shipyard (JSC PO/Joint Stock Company Sevmash), part of the USC (United Shipbuilding Corporation). The Kazan is capable of launching a range of anti-ship and land attack missiles. It is one of the quietest submarines in the Russian underwater fleet.

Apart from these two vessels, the flotilla has a fleet oil tanker, Pashin, and the salvage tug, Nikolay Chiker. The fleet's arrival at the port of Havana will be heralded by firing 21 salvos from one of the Russian warships and it will be reciprocated by an artillery battery of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces. Hans Kristensen, Director of the Nuclear Information Project, Federation of American Scientists, calls it an excellent opportunity to watch and learn more about the Russian submarines. "The inclusion of the Kazan nuclear-powered attack submarine in the Caribbean voyage offers the US Navy a unique opportunity to monitor and record the new Yasen (Severodvinsk) class sub in waters off the US East coast," he wrote. "For Putin, an effort to wave the flag – for NATO, a golden opportunity to track and learn," he added.

The Barents Observer reported that Admiral Gorshkov, in exercise mode, put an approaching NATO P-8 maritime patrol aircraft in gunsight somewhere outside the coast of Norway. The Russian Navy published a high-quality video on May 23rd that showed a P-8 aircraft tracking the flotilla. Steffan Watkins, a Canada-based OSINT specialist, said: "In the 23 May published video, you can see a P-8 Poseidon, which confirms the Russian Navy flotilla will be tracked from Norway to Cuba by

multinational NATO forces, including aircraft and ships from US Navy, RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force), RCN (Royal Canadian Navy), and others."

The US Navy P-8A Poseidon (number AE6880) was relieved by another Poseidon (AE67D7) between the Bahamas and Florida. In addition to the anti-submarine aircraft, USS Truxtun, CGC Stone, and HMCS Ville de Quebec have also been shadowing the Russian flotilla. "USS Truxton, HMCS Ville de Québec, and USCGC Stone conduct joint ops in the Atlantic. This "Tri-party" collaboration has ensured safe, open waters since 2015," the US 2ndFleet wrote on X on June 7, obliquely hinting at the contours of their mission.

The US has termed the Russian warship's presence so close to home as notable but not concerning. It is seen in line with Russian President Vladimir Putin's threat that Moscow could take "asymmetrical steps" elsewhere in the world in response to President Joe Biden's decision to allow Ukraine to use US-provided weapons to strike inside Russia to protect Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. The US expects the flotilla to visit Venezuela, too, to conduct routine military drills.

During the Cold War, the deployment of Soviet nuclear missile sites on the island triggered the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Relations between Russia and Cuba have been on the upswing since 2022 when Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel met Putin. The two heads of state also met on May 9 during the annual military parade on Red Square outside the Kremlin. Cuba is among the few countries that has not joined the international sanctions regime on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. On the contrary, the relationship between the two states has improved since February 2022. The Cuban President had earlier criticized the sanctions: "We are condemning, we are rejecting the expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders." However, a US intelligence official has told the reporters, as previously reported by the EurAsian Times, that the Russian military activity globally has intensified amid rising tensions between the two sides since it launched the invasion of Ukraine. "This is about Russia showing that it's still capable of some level of global power projection," the official said.

Urasian Times article by Ritu Sharma

US NAVY "SHADOWING" RUSSIAN FLOTILLA OFF FLORIDA COAST-(Newsweek 6/11):

US naval and air assets appear to be shadowing Russian warships that passed Florida's eastern coast on their way to make port in Cuba, open source maritime and aerial tracking data has revealed. Open-source intelligence (OSINT) analysts on Tuesday posted updates showing the CG Stone coastguard vessel, the USS Truxtun and USS Donald Cook destroyers, and the Royal Canadian Navy frigate HMCS Ville de Quebec travelling southwards down the Florida coast, purportedly following the Russian ships headed to Cuba. Above them, at least one U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon and Canadian CP-140 Aurora appeared to be conducting surveillance.

OSINT channel TheIntelFrog wrote on X (formerly Twitter) late on Monday that the American and Canadian assets "may be shadowing" the Russian flotilla. That and other OSINT social media channels followed the progress of the shadowing vessels and aircraft through to Tuesday morning, passing north to south along the Miami coast. As of 6 a.m. ET, the CG Stone could be seen on the VesselFinder website around 25 miles east of Miami.

Newsweek has contacted the Pentagon by email to request comment. A State Department spokesperson told Newsweek that the U.S. anticipates "heightened naval and air activity near the United States" this summer. "These actions will culminate in a global Russian naval exercise this fall," the spokesperson added. "Russia will temporarily send combat naval vessels to the Caribbean region, and these ships will likely conduct port calls in Cuba and possibly Venezuela. "There may

also be some aircraft deployments or flights in the region. Russia's deployments are part of routine naval activity, and we are not concerned by Russia's deployments, which pose no direct threat to the United States."

Russia's four-ship grouping visiting Cuba is made up of the Gorshkov frigate, the nuclear-powered submarine Kazan, the fleet oil tanker Pashin, and the rescue tug Nikolay Chiker, according to the Foreign Ministry in Havana. A report by the Russian state-owned RIA Novosti news agency on Tuesday cited the commander-in-chief of Russia's naval forces as saying that the flotilla would arrive in Cuba on Wednesday. The visit has been interpreted as part of Moscow's response to deeper NATO commitments to Ukraine—particularly the White House's approval for Ukrainian forces to use American weapons within Russian borders—though the Pentagon has said the visit poses no immediate threat. "Russia is likely to send combat naval vessels to the Caribbean, with potential port calls in Cuba and possibly Venezuela," Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Charlie Dietz said last week. "Aircraft deployments or flights in the region are also anticipated. These deployments are part of Russia's routine naval operations and pose no direct threat to the United States."

Russian naval visits to Cuba are not unusual, having taken place every year between 2013 and 2020. Such operations "impose a significant cost on the Russian navy, which faces challenges in maintaining readiness and conducting deployments with an aging fleet," Dietz said. "Given Russia's long history of Cuban port calls, these are considered routine naval visits, especially in the context of increased U.S. support to Ukraine and NATO exercises," he said.

President Vladimir Putin hinted at broad consequences for NATO nations that give Ukraine the green light to use Western weapons within Russian borders. "In the end, if we see that these countries become involved in a war against us, what they are doing makes them directly involved in a war against the Russian Federation, we reserve the right to act the same way," the Russian leader said. Moscow, he said, "will improve our air defense systems to destroy the missiles," and asked why Russia should "not have the right to supply our weapons of the same class to those regions of the world where there will be strikes on the sensitive facilities of those countries that are doing this against Russia?"

Newsweek article by David Brennan

US NAVY AWARDS $95M TO BAE FOR P-8A COUNTERMEASURES PODS (Defense Blog 6/6):
BAE Systems has been awarded a $95 million contract from the U.S. Navy to develop and produce advanced countermeasure pods designed to protect the P-8A Poseidon Multi-Mission Maritime Aircraft from missile threats and other hazards. The P-8A Poseidon, renowned for its role in anti-submarine warfare, maritime patrol, and reconnaissance missions, will benefit from the new electronic warfare (EW) pods that offer advanced threat detection and countermeasures. The pods are designed to intercept and neutralize air-to-air and surface-to-air missile threats, thereby expanding the operational range and survivability of the Poseidon and its crews.

“We’re working closely with the U.S. Navy to deliver innovative solutions to protect this critical, high-value aircraft,” said Don Davidson, director of Advanced Compact Electronic Warfare Solutions at BAE Systems. “We quickly prototyped a very capable system using proven technology to defend against air-to-air and surface-to-air guided threats.” BAE Systems’ countermeasure pods feature a flexible, open architecture that allows for rapid and cost-effective upgrades to counter emerging threats. This adaptability ensures the system remains effective against a broad spectrum of missile threats and can integrate new electronic warfare techniques as they are developed.

The engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) contract awarded to BAE Systems follows a successful rapid-response contract with the Navy in 2021, which demonstrated the system's effectiveness in detecting and countering threats. The development phase included designing, building, and testing a demonstration pod, showcasing strong collaboration between the military and industry. The P-8A self-protection pod is part of BAE Systems' Intrepid Shield approach to aircraft and ground platform survivability. This layered defense strategy employs the full electromagnetic spectrum to detect, exploit, and counter advanced threats. The modular design of the pod allows it to be adapted quickly for use on other high-value airborne platforms, ensuring broader applicability across various mission profiles.

BAE Systems will conduct the development and production of the P-8A countermeasure pods at its state-of-the-art facilities in Nashua, New Hampshire, and Austin, Texas. This contract is a testament to the company's ongoing commitment to advancing electronic warfare capabilities and providing reliable solutions to enhance the safety and effectiveness of U.S. and allied forces.

As threats evolve and the battlefield becomes increasingly complex, advanced countermeasure systems like those being developed by BAE Systems are critical in maintaining operational superiority and ensuring the safety of military assets. The P-8A Poseidon, equipped with these new countermeasure pods, will be better prepared to operate in hostile environments, securing its role as a vital component of the U.S. Navy's maritime operations.

Defense Blog article by Dylan Malyasov

TOWED DECOY PODS WILL PROTECT P-8 POSEIDONS (The Warzone 6/5):

US Navy P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol planes are one step closer to getting pods loaded with towed decoys, often referred to as 'little buddies,' and other defensive electronic warfare systems. The podded self-protection systems will be especially important for increasing the survivability of the P-8As, which are highly valuable submarine hunting, sea control, and intelligence-gathering platforms, during any future high-end conflict, such as one in the Pacific region against China.

BAE Systems announced earlier today that the Navy had awarded it a $95 million contract for the engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) phase of work on "advanced countermeasure pods to protect the P-8A." The company says it has already conducted "successful airworthiness and effectiveness testing" of the pod, the design of which evolved from a rapid prototyping effort back in 2021.

"We're working closely with the U.S. Navy to deliver innovative solutions to protect this critical, high-value aircraft," Don Davidson, director of Advanced Compact Electronic Warfare Solutions at BAE Systems, said in a statement in a press release about the P-8A pod contract award. "We quickly prototyped a very capable system using proven technology to defend against air-to-air and surface-to-air guided threats."

Details about the pod's exact capabilities are currently limited, but a towed decoy is a key element of the complete system. The prototype pod tested in 2021 was specifically designed to employ the AN/ALE-55, a decoy of this type from BAE Systems. The AN/ALE-55, which is already in Navy service on its F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, has the ability to jam hostile emitters, including radars on aircraft or on the ground, in order to prevent from locking on. It can also initiate more focused electronic attacks to break an established lock.

Trailing behind the deploying aircraft via a fiber optic line, the AN/ALE-55 can also help lure away incoming missiles. The decoy's fiber optic tether also allows it to receive specific commands,

including about what kinds of signals to pump out to respond to certain threats, from a central command unit installed on the deploying aircraft.

In May, BAE Systems received a separate contract from the Navy to develop a new Dual Band Decoy (DBD) that will offer improved capabilities over the AN/ALE-55. Details about DBD's specific capabilities are limited, but the company says its design will enable "higher performance and more capability with reduced size, weight, and power." The DBD could also potentially be integrated into the new self-protection pods for the P-8A in the future.

BAE says the self-protection pods for the P-8A will also contain additional electronic warfare and surveillance systems, including to help detect threats. In addition to the towed decoy, the 2021 prototype system included a "small form factor jammer" and "a high-powered amplifier," according to a previous company press release.

The pods also have a "flexible, open architecture design [that] allows [for] rapid and affordable modernization," according to BAE. This could even include the integration of additional capabilities provided by third parties down the line, the company's press release today notes. The pods are not exclusively tied in any way to the P-8A, either, and could be integrated onto other aircraft in the future.

When it comes to the P-8A, the jets already have radar warning receivers arrayed around the aircraft, as well as countermeasures dispensers to launch decoy flares to lure away heat-seeking missiles. The Poseidon also has a very robust electronic support measures (ESM) package built in already that is not only capable of monitoring for threats, but can also employed as an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) system.

It's also worth noting that the prototype pod design that the Navy tested in 2021 used a shell that was based on the shape of the AGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missile, one of the primary weapons in the P-8A's current arsenal. How the structure of the pod may have evolved in the last three years is unclear, but using an established form factor would help speed up development and testing. By all indications, the new production pods for the P-8A will carried on one of the jet's four underwing pylons. This will impact the number of weapons and other stores the aircraft can carry externally.

At the same time, trading one pylon's worth of stores capacity for the added protection that BAE's decoy-toting electronic warfare pod offers could be essential for the survivability of the Boeing 737 airliner-based P-8As in a future high-end conflict. China, in particular, continues to expand the scale and scope of its integrated air defenses, as well as other anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities, all of which would limit the freedom of movement of U.S. aircraft, as well as naval and ground assets down below in a future major fight in the Pacific.

At the same time, in that same conflict scenario, P-8As would be in high demand, particularly to help hunt for increasingly capable Chinese submarines. The aircraft's range and endurance would also be valuable for sea control, more general maritime surveillance, and ISR support missions across the broad expanses of the Pacific region.

The new pods for the P-8As could be valuable outside of the context of a major conflict in the Pacific, or anywhere else, too. Poseidons already regularly fly peacetime maritime surveillance and ISR sorties in international airspace off the coasts of hostile or potentially hostile countries and are largely defenseless against various aerial threats.

Iran's shooting down of a Navy RQ-4A Broad Area Maritime Surveillance Demonstrator (BAMS-D) drone flying over the Strait of Hormuz in 2019 is a prime example of the broader threat picture that P-8As and their crews also face. Since last October, Iranian-backed Houthi militants in Yemen have also shot down multiple U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drones further underscoring this reality. Smaller nation states like Iran and non-state actors like the Houthis are only continuing to field new and increasingly dangerous air defense capabilities.

The War Zone highlighted back in 2021 how it was hardly surprising that the Navy was looking at new ways to increase the P-8A's self-protection capabilities and those needs have only grown since then. The pods for the P-8As also reflect a broader push on the Navy's part to expand the size and scope of its entire electronic warfare ecosystem in the air and down below. This includes powerful new electronic warfare suites for the service's Arleigh Burke class destroyers and other ships, advanced ship-launched flying decoy drones, and additional podded systems that MH-60R/S Seahawk helicopters will carry.

Though not explicitly mentioned in BAE's press release, it is possible, if not highly plausible that the Navy will look to network the podded systems for the Poseidon to varying degrees with other existing and future capabilities to further increase their capabilities. The service has already been investing heavily in networked distributed electronic warfare capabilities through programs like the secretive Netted Emulation of Multi-Element Signature against Integrated Sensors (NEMESIS). When Navy P-8As might start flying with the new decoy-launching electronic warfare pods is unclear. Regardless, the aircraft have a clear need now for additional self-protection capabilities both to aid them in future major conflicts and help keep them safe during more routine missions.

The Warzone article by Joseph Trevithick

BOEING URGES FRANCE NOT TO DISCOUNT P-8 (Breaking Defense 6/4):

Despite France not yet “reaching out” to Boeing about buying P-8 Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) to replace its navy’s aging Atlantique 2 (ATL2) MPA fleet, the manufacturer is calling on decisionmakers to keep an open mind to the American defense giant’s offering. Paris appears publicly committed to working with European firms to develop the ATL2 replacement, but Tim Flood, Boeing vice president of international business development told Breaking Defense that hypothetically speaking, there’s a case to be made for switching lanes.

“I use the France example more as a kind of hypothetical, [because] as far as it’s concerned right now, I mean, France is not reaching out to Boeing specifically,” Flood said in an interview days before top European military and industry officials descend on Germany for the Berlin Air Show. “We’ve certainly discussed that informally with the French customer. They’re aware of the P-8 capability. They’re aware of where we are at from a program perspective. My point would be just to continue to encourage the French to not discount P-8 from broader considerations when they look at recapitalizing the Atlantiques.”

France has already linked arms with European manufacturers Airbus and Dassault, after the French procurement arm (DGA) in December 2022 awarded each company contracts, each valued at €10.9 million ($11.8 million), to conduct 18 month architecture studies of a future MPA (dubbed Patmar) based on their respective A320neo and Falcon 10X aircraft. When sharing news of the contract awards the DGA also appeared to rule out US companies from consideration, stating, “These solutions must remain open to cooperation with other potentially interested European partners.” France expects to formally launch the next generation MPA acquisition in 2026 and have the new aircraft in service between 2030 and 2040.

Complicating matters is the uncertainty surrounding France's commitment to the Maritime Airborne Warfare System (MAWS) effort with Germany, launched in 2017 to develop a joint future MPA to replace the ATL2 and P-3C Orion. The status of that effort is unclear, especially after France's unilateral move to go ahead with the architecture studies, converging on sensor technology, logistics based AI and future anti-ship weapons. Amid those permutations, Boeing hopes that the P-8 still can be considered as an alternative solution, disrupting the push for a next generation MPA. The plan, should France eventually decide to change course would be to offer the P-8 in collaboration with French suppliers.

Flood said Boeing's previous work with a variety of local manufacturers, including Airbus and Lufthansa, to sustain German orders for 60 CH-47F Chinook heavy-lift helicopters and 8 P-8 aircraft, could be an example for a joint French P-8 effort. One particular selling point, in Flood's mind, is cost. "Both companies [Airbus and Dassault] could certainly produce a pretty nice solution off a legacy A320, or a Falcon 10X for example, but at what cost?" he said. "Look at the US Navy programme to develop the P-8. They spent around $7 billion of R&D funds to actually just develop the plane not produce it, just develop, test it and get into a production ready platform. So that's the kind of figure that France would need to invest in an indigenous capability."

The French Navy operates 22 ATL2 aircraft out of Lann-Bihoué naval air station, which are used for anti-submarine warfare, anti-ship warfare, intelligence gathering and ground troop support missions, according to the DGA. Under an effort stretching back to 2013, a last of 18 aircraft is expected to be upgraded to Standard 6 by 2025, involving integration of Thales-made Search Master radars, WESCAM optronic balls, new Dassault navigation consoles and other Service industriel de l'aéronautique (SIAé) tactical display consoles.

Elsewhere in the interview, Flood said Boeing expects the first German P-8 to be delivered next year, two years ahead of Berlin taking delivery of its first CH-47F helicopter. "Germany has demonstrated a real commitment to modernization of the military, cemented by the €100 billion [$108 billion] injection into the defense budget to accelerate much needed upgrades, modernization and procurements," he said. "We've seen the benefits of that with both the Chinook and P-8 procurements."

Further afield, he said that the P-8 stands as a "potential solution" to replace four Danish CL-604 Challenger aircraft, used for surveillance, search and rescue and VIP transport missions. "They've got a lot of area to cover, both the local area plus Greenland and the Faroe Islands, so … the high north and Arctic security is paramount," added Flood.

Denmark launched a "number of analyses" as part of a first supplemental defense agreement in January, said a Danish Ministry of Defence spokesperson. "Among those, is an analysis on transport capabilities which will explore future possible replacement capabilities to the CL-604. When finalized, the analysis will be subject to political discussions. Consequently, it is too early to speculate in the exact approach and timeframe."

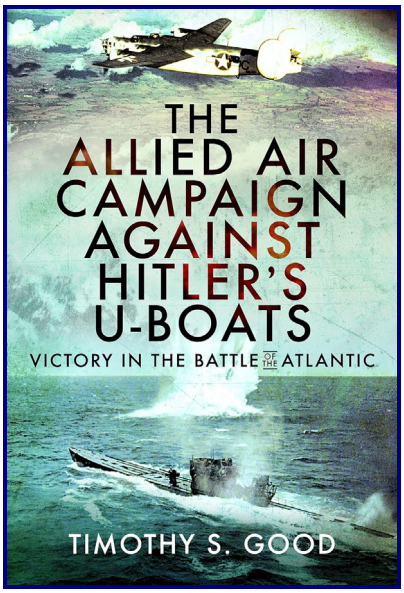
Meanwhile, Flood said that during the Berlin Air Show, Boeing "would like to" hold discussions with a "variety of customers" including Germany relating to the T-7 trainer. "It is a perfect solution to address what is, quite frankly, a pretty urgent need to train pilots, as all these nations like Germany are buying high-end fighters like the F-35," said Flood.

Boeing will also concentrate on F-15EX customer discussions at the show, after the manufacturer revealed in September 2023 that it is interested in selling the aircraft to Poland to fulfil an air

dominance requirement. Boeing faces competition on that front from aircraft including the F-35 and Eurofighter Typhoon.

Breaking Defense article by Tim Martin

RECOMMENDED READING:



Here is a recent book (2022) that covers the American, British, and Canadian airborne ASW effort against German submarines during the Second World War. The author, Timothy Good, is a US Navy officer who attended the Naval War College in Newport, RI. The book has 256 pages. Its ISBN is 978-1399096492. You can purchase it through Amazon or any other decent bookseller.

ON THE INTERNET:

A reminder that there are active groups on Facebook regarding NAS South Weymouth, NAS Brunswick, VP-92, and VP-MAU. Check them out!

PARTING SHOTS:

ABOVE: *VP-92 wash crew scrubbing one of the squadron's P-3C Orions during annual training at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico sometime during the late 1990s.*

ABOVE: *Arthur Ricca, Ray St. Onge, and Jacques Lavalee in VP-92 Maintenance Control circa early 2000s.* ***BELOW:*** *VP-92 P-3C Orion being prepared on the ground at Sigonella, Sicily for an Operation Sharp Guard patrol mission sometime during the mid-1990s. Have 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".