



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 44

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

JUNE 2011

Welcome to another edition of the VP Association newsletter. As always, please direct all general VP Association-related inquiries or correspondence to William Hanigan, 23 Parkview Terrace, Duxbury MA 02332, 781-585-4950, vpassociation@aol.com. Please send all newsletter-related correspondence to Marc J. Frattasio, P.O. Box 30, Pembroke MA 02359, marc_frattasio@yahoo.com.

RECCO:



ABOVE: VP-92 P-3B Orion "Lima Yankee Twelve" at NAS South Weymouth on August 25, 1984. Photo courtesy of Lionel Paul. Got something similar to share? If so, contact Marc J. Frattasio.

FINAL FLIGHTS:

It is our sad duty to report the recent deaths of Robert McLaughlin, Stuart Millen, and Mark Moorhouse. Robert was a pilot who served as the C.O. of VP-912. Stuart was an AW with VP-92 in the 1970s and later a RATCEN instructor at NAS Willow Grove. Mark was a flight engineer in VP-92.

ILL SHIPMATES IN NEED OF CHEERING UP:

Walter O'Connell, Robert Shelton, and Lee Sleger have all had recent health issues. Walter (VP-92 plank owner) has had respiratory issues. You can contact him at 123 Colonel's Ln #4, South Weymouth MA 02189, 781-335-0553, wocon24376@aol.com. Robert (also a VP-92 plank owner)

had a stroke. You can contact him at 34 Gibson St, Malden MA 02148, 781-321-3356, maryshelton@mac.com. Lee (VP-913) had a heart attack. You can contact him at 549 Lowell St, Wakefield MA 01880, Isleger1@verizon.net, 781-245-5275. In addition, Francis MacIntire (Squantum and South Weymouth stationkeeper on VP-VR line) is still very sick and basically stuck home as indicated in previous issues of the newsletter. Cards and calls would be appreciated by all four men.

THE ANNUAL REUNION:

The VP Association's annual reunion banquet will be held at the Officer's Club at Hanscom AFB in Bedford, MA on Saturday September 17th from 1200 to 1700. The banquet, which will be buffet style once again, costs \$40 per person and a mail-in reservation form is on the last page of this newsletter.

Attendance is limited, reservations are required in advance, and will be taken on a first-come first served basis. Tickets will not be sold at the door. Please mail your reservation in as soon as you can to prevent possible disappointment and so we can tell the caterer how many people to expect. Note, although dress is officially CASUAL for the reunion, in honor of the Centennial of Naval Aviation (CONA) being celebrated by the Navy throughout 2011 we are STRONGLY ENCOURAGING all veterans and current military to wear a uniform (whatever you have) or flight suit this year if possible!

Hanscom AFB requires a military ID, active or retired, to be presented to the gate guards for entry under normal circumstances. If you do not have a military ID be sure to indicate this on the banquet reservation order form so your name can be added to the base's security access list for the reunion. All persons without a military ID will have to enter the base at the civilian gate, not the Hartwell gate. If you have any questions about this contact Bill Hanigan at 781-585-4950 or vpassociation@aol.com.

Anyone who wants to stay overnight should contact Hanscom AFB directly at 1-888-235-6343 for information regarding accommodations on the base or in the local area. Please try to get the word out about the reunion to as many of your old Squantum/SoWey/Brunswick reserve patrol squadron friends as possible. Don't assume that every former shipmate you're in contact with is affiliated with or aware of the VP Association. Guests, military or civilian, are also welcome to attend the reunion.

Our guest speaker will be former VP-92 flight surgeon CAPT Gerald "Doc" Hayes. Tables will be available in a room adjacent to the banquet hall for displays of any memorabilia that you may wish to bring. If you have photos, cruise books, patches, caps, NATOPS manuals, or any other interesting memorabilia that you'd like to show off please bring it with you. Your newsletter editor will be bringing a portable scanner to the reunion. If you have any NAS Squantum, NAS South Weymouth, or NAS Brunswick-related photographs or slides please bring them to the reunion so they can be scanned for possible future use in the newsletter.

ADMIN FUND DONATIONS:

The VP Association has no dues. Voluntary contributions are always welcome to help defray the cost of printing and mailing newsletters to shipmates without e-mail. We'd like to thank Philip Baker, Andre Castellano, Joseph Dias, Marty Diller, Jim Fitzgerald, Marc Frattasio (via Lulu Press and patch sales), George Griffin, and Frank Wall for their recent contributions to the administration fund.

SPEAKING OF THE COST OF PRINTING AND MAILING NEWSLETTERS...

If you use e-mail and are getting a paper copy of the newsletter via the USPS then we don't have your e-mail address. Please contact Bill Hanigan and get him your e-mail address so we can send your newsletter by e-mail. Remember, we have no dues and have to limit our expenses to do so.

LOST CONTACT:

Please let Bill Hanigan know whenever your street or e-mail address changes.

RECENT CHANGES OF ADDRESS:

Please note a new e-mail address for Fred Fitch at thefitchs@ymail.com.

NEW MEMBERS:

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NAS South Weymouth OPCON

STEVE O'DONOGHUE SELECTED FOR AWCS:

Steve "Odie" O'Donoghue, formerly of VP-92, stuck with the USNR after the squadron shut down in 2007 and was recently selected for promotion to Senior Chief Naval Aircrewman Operator (AWCS).

RICK SMEDBERG'S SON PETE IN IRAQ:

Army 1st Lt Pete Smedberg, son of VP-92 pilot Rick Smedberg, departed for Afghanistan on March 4th for an eleven-month tour of duty. Pete is assigned to the 3rd Special Forces Group 3rd Battalion Company A. In addition to his duties as the battalion Chemical Officer he will be in charge of security for Camp Montrone, the Special Forces camp located at Bagram Airbase outside Kabul. Here's Rick, Pete, and Barbara Smedberg on the occasion of Pete's departure to the war zone.



A NOTE FROM JERRY LACH, Formerly An AWC With VP-93 And VP-92:

I was pleasantly surprised by your December 2010 VP Association Newsletter coverage of our former VP-93 P-3B (BuNo 152748 LH02) located at the Selfridge Military Air Museum in Mt Clemens, Michigan. Some folks might find it interesting how this Mighty Hunter ended up in the museum.

When VP-93 was decommissioned by BRAC in 1994 the aircraft was moved into the existing museum. Unfortunately the interior was stripped of almost all parts. She sat for a few years and was maintained by a small number of the VP-93 Alumni Association, mainly Jesse Archibald, Charlie Doran and Bob Hudson. Slowly the word was put out that the museum was looking for all interior

equipment for LH02 with the intent to return her to the state she would have been while in service. Once the interior was restored the plan was to open her for museum visitors. As more and more of the VP-93 Alumni Association members retired/found more time the folks working on the restoration gradually grew to a sizable volunteer work force. Typical for VP sailors we were very successful in 'passing the word' to many shipmates located at other locations that we needed interior equipment. The pieces and parts started to show up. Examples were seats from the VP-94 Gate Guard at NAS New Orleans and many miscellaneous parts from a San Diego Air Museum RP-3A that was to be scrapped. A side note; even though we tried we were never able to obtain any equipment from AMARC, the legendary "bone yard" at Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ. Currently LH02's interior is 98% complete. It would take a real P-3B 'expert' to detect missing items. Note; all part "transfers" were communicated to NAS Pensacola as they still "own" the aircraft and its equipment.

Then there is the exterior of LH02. As she is in outside static display our Michigan winters (and hot summers) take a toll on her paint. Our volunteers have painted LH02 twice since 1994. In discussions with NAS Pensacola, after a good hand washing (not pressure washing) we used latex paint applied with rollers. The second time we used a high volume/low pressure paint sprayer. It will be interesting to see how the sprayed-on paint lasts. Once painted the detail of applying the squadron numbers, national insignia, Bureau number, NAVY, etc was completed. We have used vinyl stencils and paint-on stencils with mixed results. We found painted-on stencils to work the best.

After VP-93 was decommissioned in 1994 we organized the VP-93 Alumni Association, which is led by former VP-93 C.O. Captain Howard Rundell. The Association is open to anyone interested in VP aviation and there is no cost to join. We meet at 1900 hours the first Thursday of each quarter (i.e.; March, June, etc) at the museum. We have a Fall Muster in December (all hands reunion) and have an August picnic and golf outing. The picnic is held right next to LH02. Unquestionably LH02 is the center of our VP-93 Association, it is a force that keeps VP-93's memory alive.

Now for the Selfridge Air Museum. The Executive Director of the museum is retired LtCol L. Nigro. I can't stress enough his FULL support of our VP-93 Association. The museum has two large buildings housing many artifacts and a full size reproduction of a WWI Spad. It also has about 35 aircraft outside in an air park. The Museum is open weekends starting the first of April and ends the last day in October. Hours are 1200 to 1630 and there is a nominal entrance fee. VP'ers conduct tours of LH02 almost every weekend. Arrangements can be made for tours on weekdays with some notice.

It is our understanding that LH02 is the ONLY P-3 in existence that is open to the public. We enjoy giving tours and would welcome anyone interested in P-3's to come by and visit us. I coordinate the maintenance/up keep as well as tour guide schedules so you can contact me at ss1jsl@comcast.net, or visit the VP-93 and Selfridge Military Air Museum web sites. Since retiring from VP-92 I have participated in a couple of VP-92 activities; the retirement of AEC Paul 'Sweet Pee' Alshire, Senior Chief Fred Cantu's retirement (I flew with Fred when he was a young VP-93 IFT) and the sad decommissioning of VP-92. I would like to attend more VP-92 activities but the distance usually precludes it.

VP ASSOCIATION MEMBERS AT THE 2011 MPRF HERITAGE CELEBRATION:

VP Association members Al Firnrrohr, Jim Fitzgerald, Marc Frattasio, Bob Kawalewski, Sean O'Neill, and Ed Sabatini went to NAS Jacksonville, FL during the first week of April to attend a special Centennial of Naval Aviation (CoNA) event called the 2011 Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Heritage Celebration. Among the many special events held between Monday the 4th and Wednesday the 6th was a "Flight Suit Dinner" conducted on Tuesday night in one of the older hangars on the base. All active, reserve, and retired military attendees were encouraged to wear flight suits or uniforms. The VP Association attendees did, some borrowing a flight suit from a friend or buying one.

Your newsletter editor, in keeping with the historical theme of this event and wanting to stand out from the rest of the sage green garbed crowd and by so doing engage people in conversation (what's the point of attending if not to socialize?), bought an original 1960s vintage Indian orange K-2B flight suit and MK2 "Mae West" life vest on eBay during the weeks leading up to the MPRF Heritage Celebration. This ensemble was worn to the Flight Suit Dinner along with a vintage VP-8 squadron cap with old-style large felt letters in honor of Patrol Squadron Eight, which recently relocated from NAS Brunswick to NAS Jacksonville but due to operational commitments had no official presence at this event. VP-8 was the first patrol squadron to get P-3s during 1962 and was also the first unit to employ them operationally in the fall of that year during the Cuban Missile Crisis and Cuban Blockade. The vintage flight gear that your newsletter editor wore to this event was identical to what VP-8's pilots, NFOs, and aircrewmembers were wearing when flying the squadron's P-3As at that time.

After the MPRF Heritage Celebration concluded with the re-dedication of NAS Jax's PBY Catalina gate guardian on Wednesday afternoon, several VP Association members drove the six hours to NAS Pensacola to spend Thursday at the National Museum of Naval Aviation. We flew home on Friday.



ABOVE: *LT Patrick O'Neill, Bob Kowalewski, Ed Sabatini, Marc Frattasio, Al Firrohr, Jim Fitzpatrick, and Sean O'Neill at the MPRF Heritage Celebration on NAS Jacksonville on Monday April 4th. LT Patrick O'Neill, Sean's son and a pilot with VP-26, flew the last P-3 out of NAS Brunswick while his dad (a former VP-92 pilot and commanding officer) did the same thing when NAS South Weymouth was closed. Sean O'Neill collection.*



LEFT: Former VP-92 TAR CDR J. David Britt, who is perhaps best known as “Tuba”, was able to get away from his staff job long enough to make it down to NAS Jacksonville. Although he’s traded in his old VP-92 squadron patch for his current command (Commander, Patrol and Reconnaissance Force) he’s still letting everybody know that he came from NAS Brunswick. **BELOW:** Ed Sabatini, Bob Kowalewski, Marc Frattasio, Al Firnrohr, and Jim Fitzgerald at the MPRF Heritage Celebration “Flight Suit Dinner” on Tuesday April 5th. All photos Marc J. Frattasio collection.



MPRF HERITAGE CELEBRATION RECAP FROM JOHN LARSON OF THE VP-4 ASSOCIATION:

I just came back from the Centennial celebration of Naval Aviation and especially observing Patrol Aviation in Jacksonville, Florida. It was April 4-6, 2011. I’m going to recap for you the briefing we received on Wednesday from Rear Admiral Michael Hewitt, Commander Patrol and Recon Force.

After welcoming us to the event we were presented with a simulated briefing for a P-3 crew to fly against a Chinese Yuan class sub. The sub is a diesel-electric boat. It was first built in 2004. The speed of the sub is 20 knots. It has six torpedo tubes and can fire anti-ship missiles. The operating area for this event was in the Pacific Ocean east of Taiwan.

The briefing was then turned over to Commodore Tray Wheeler, CPW-11 in Jax. The breakdown of the Patrol Aviation community starts with ADM Hewitt as the commander of the MPRF. Under him are CPW-2, CPW-10 and CPW-11. There is an admiral commanding each operating area. Under him are CTF-57, CTF-72 and CTF-67.

At one point there were 450 P-3s but now we are down to approximately 85 mission-capable aircraft. A couple of years ago there were issues with the wings and some planes were "red striped", in other words put hard down. The fleet then got down to 49 aircraft. The planes are owned by the squadrons but they are also sharing them between squadrons. Sometimes they might leave a plane on deployment for the next squadron to use. Presently there are only two reserve P-3 squadrons left. They own their own planes but also share them. There are eighteen P-3 squadrons in all with 7,273 sailors: 1,346 officers and 5,927 enlisted personnel.

Commodore Dave Cutter from Wing Two spoke next. VP-4 is very busy with the Chinese Navy and are also providing relief in Japan. Other squadrons in Kaneohe are VP-9 and VP-47. Plus there is VPU-2. There is an ASWOC located in San Diego to assist squadrons working with the fleet. There has been a BAMS-D (D = "demonstrator") working in the Pacific for a while now. This is a Global Hawk UAV with special maritime sensors including cameras, radar, and communications gear for the Navy. It operates at 60,000 feet and has an endurance of over twenty hours. The pilots fly it from an undisclosed location in the desert while the TACCO and sensor operators are at Pax River. Usually there are three different crews on duty during these long UAV missions.

Commodore Pete Garvin from Wing Ten spoke next. The squadrons at Whidbey Island are VP-1, VP-40, VP-46, and VP-69. Also there is VQ 1&2. The VQ squadrons are deployed 365 days a year to Bahrain, Kadena, Sigonella Sicily, and Turkey.

Commodore Wheeler then spoke again. He said he had VP-5, VP-8, VP-10, VP-16, VP-26, VP-45, and VP-62, plus the special operations squadron VPU-1 at Jax. Patrol squadrons 8, 10 and 26 were at NAS Brunswick before it closed.

The Navy uses 24 different variations of the P-3 today. One version is the AIP. The improvements are: Radar, SAR (overland surveillance and radar images), ISAR (maritime surface detection images), Electro Optics/Infrared, ESM, Color Displays and Weapons-SLAM ER, and Maverick. The VP-5 crew that fired the Maverick off Libya had a LTJG TACCO and the PPC was on his first flight. They said they hope to declassify the video so we can see it someday. Presently VP-4 is in Kadena and Misawa. VP-5 is in Sigonella Sicily, Djibouti, and El Salvador (drug ops). VP-8 is currently in Bahrain and Qatar. The primary mission of the P-3 is still ASW. China has 66 submarines and the U.S. has 70 submarines. China has top of the line equipment and the subs are quiet.

If there is a piracy event, the Navy's interaction will have a P-3 overhead. In drug interdiction the bad guys have tried using semi-submersible and fully submersible subs to get drugs to the U.S. The Russians are still operating. They don't have a big presence like before, but they are out there. The Chinese are now considered a Blue Water Navy. They are operating beyond the "first chain of islands". That would be from Taiwan to Okinawa to Japan and East of that line.

The Navy's project manager for the P-8 spoke next. The Navy is buying 117 aircraft. It is a Boeing 737-800 with a -900 wing. It will weigh 187,700 lbs. It will cruise at 490 knots and maximum altitude is 41,000 feet. Its range is 4,000 miles or 1,200 miles with four hours on station. It has in-flight refueling capability. The P-8 is fuel efficient at 10,000 feet, but not so good at low altitudes. There is technology to launch sonobuoys at 10,000 feet to hit a lat/long position. The flight time is limited to seventeen hours due to engine oil limitations. It will have nine crewmembers composed of two pilots, two NFOs, three AWs, and two observers. There are five tactical crew stations in the back, and each is capable of being configured as any station (i.e. SS-3, TACO, NAV, etc.) as required. The plane is capable of carrying twenty total passengers. It can carry five MK-54 torpedoes in the bomb-bay behind the wings. There are four wing stations. It can carry 76 sonobuoys. They will be launched from three cylinders. They will be reloaded from the sono racks in flight. The cabin will remain pressurized. There is no MAD on this plane because of too much metal interference. There might be an expendable drone the size of a sonobuoy that could be shot out of the plane to fly MAD runs. This might happen in 2016. There are dual navigation systems. INS and also celestial info could be fed into the NAV system. The plane will come on line in 2013 and one Jax squadron will be the first to get it. It has early warning self-protection and ESM. The plane that was at the event was the third (T-3) built. There are six planes in flight-testing. The first production plane for the Navy is in Renton, WA going through the production line. There will be six aircraft and twelve crews in each squadron.

The events for the three days were; on day one there was a tour of the P-3 simulators, the new hanger which will house the current squadrons and the P-8s. They can fit ten P-3s in the hanger. Then in the afternoon was the fly-by. There were vintage aircraft; Stearman and TBM. Then there was a T-34C, C-12, and T-44C. Then came three P-3s. The first was painted in WW II PBV markings. The next two were in the old white and black or white and dark gray colors. Then the highlight was the arrival of the P-8. Unfortunately the PBV was not able to attend due to maintenance issues. They looked into bringing in a fire bomber P-2 but the operator wanted a lot of money and it exceeded the budget of the planners for this event. On Tuesday night was the heritage dinner. Vice Admiral Al Myers, Commander of Naval Air Force (Air Boss) was the guest speaker. There were seventeen admirals in attendance. The three P-3s the P-8 and the BAMS were parked outside the hanger for viewing. Then we had the induction of the first group into the Patrol Aviation Hall of Fame. One familiar name was Lockheed test pilot Jay Beasley, "Mr. P-3". ADM Hewitt said he would like to make the MPRF Reunion an annual event. On Wed morning we had the briefing from ADM Hewitt and the Commodores. In the afternoon, we attended the rededication of the PBV on the base. It took two years to restore the plane. There were four crewmembers from WW II who were on the PBV present at the dedication.

I have posted pictures and video that I took at <http://patrolaviationjaxapril2011.shutterstock.com> and at <http://patrolvideojax2011.shutterstock.com>. Most of the video is of the heritage dinner and dedication of the PBV, not to mention some P-3s flying. I had a great time at this event. During the dinner, they showed a video of the early years of Naval Aviation and then covered the Patrol Aviation era up to the present. In one scene towards the end is a shot of VP-4 commanding officer CDR Messeguee (1975) flying and chasing a sub. There was a copy of VP-4's P-2 "Ruler of the Sea" print hanging right outside the auditorium at VP-30. There were only two other prints on the wall; a PBV and P-3B. Being at the VP-30 hanger brought back memories of hearing the sound of an APU, and the Allison engines running. Not to mention the smell of JP. It was an honor being around some of our nation's finest young people who are now carrying on the mission of defending this great nation.

THE MARITIME PATROL ASSOCIATION:

The people who organized the recent MPRF Heritage Celebration at NAS Jacksonville want to keep the ball rolling and have similar reunions on a regular basis. To this end, they are putting together a new group called the Maritime Patrol Association.

The mission statement of the MPA Association is “The Maritime Patrol Association, Inc (MPA) was founded in 2011 to provide recognition and to enhance the prestige of the U.S. Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance community by promoting the use of the patrol and reconnaissance aircraft in the United States Navy. In pursuing these objectives, MPA will provide a forum whereby past, present and future MPA members can: interact and network with each other through a variety of meetings and events and media; provide recognition to those persons who have made significant contributions to the community; and be continuously informed of new developments and accomplishments in the Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance community.”

For more information about this new group write to them at Maritime Patrol Association, P.O. Box 600061, Jacksonville FL 32260-0061, send e-mail to info@maritimepatrolassociation.org, or check out their web site at <http://www.maritimepatrolassociation.org>.

UP-COMING PUBLIC AVIATION EVENTS AT FORMER NAS BRUNSWICK:

There’s going to be a pancake breakfast and fly-in at “Brunswick Executive Airport (former NAS Brunswick, ME) on Saturday June 4th between 8 AM and 4 PM. For details about this first-ever fly-in go to <http://www.mrra.us>. Also, don’t forget that the Navy is bringing the Blue Angels to Brunswick on the weekend of August 27th and 28th for the Great State of Maine Air Show & Business Aviation Expo. For more information about the August air show go to <http://www.greatstateofmainearshow.us>.

WHIDBEY LOSES POSEIDON, 1000s OF JOBS IN DOUBT (Whidbey News Times 2/15/11):



ABOVE: Boeing artwork showing a P-8’s hard points loaded with Harpoon missiles and its bomb bay full of torpedoes and other ordnance.

The Navy's announcement this week that Whidbey Island Naval Air Station will not be among the recipients of the new P8-A Poseidon jets has left many pondering an \$87 million dollar question: What does this mean for the base's existing P-3 squadrons and its 2,600 personnel? Unfortunately,

it's an answer no one seems to know. "We don't know anything yet," said Kimberly Martin, NAS Whidbey public affairs officer. "We haven't received any official statement. We're waiting to hear just like everyone else."

Base officials only learned of the news from a statement Congressman Rick Larsen released early Monday morning. It reported that the Navy has decided that Jacksonville, Fla. and Kaneohe, Hawaii would be the first two homes of the new P8-A Poseidon squadrons, which just last year had been promised to Whidbey. "This was a difficult decision for the Navy," Larsen said in the news release. "I am not happy about it."

Larsen, a Second District Democrat and a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said the Navy believes the P8-A Poseidon – a submarine hunter and surveillance aircraft - should be stationed as far forward in the Pacific as possible. The congressman added that he appreciated the strategy behind the decision but that he will "demand the full justification behind it."

According to Larsen's statement, basing the P8-A squadrons in Hawaii and Florida means those aircraft won't be sent to NAS Whidbey to replace the base's P-3 squadrons. The Navy had been planning to phase out the aging turbo-prop aircraft with squadrons of the newer P8-A jets, a transition that was expected to wrap up by 2020.

The airbase is by far Whidbey Island's largest employer, with a workforce numbering 10,000 strong - that includes about 2,400 civilian employees. Its total economic footprint is estimated at about \$575 million a year. The base's four existing P-3 squadrons, which represent about 2,600 jobs, are a big piece of that pie. According to Martin, their payroll alone is believed to dump roughly \$87 million into the island's economy every year.

But many Whidbey Island officials say it's way too soon to panic. Oak Harbor Mayor Jim Slowik said he's spoken with Larsen and that he got no indication that the Poseidon decision in any way threatens base's existing P-3 squadrons, even though they're destined for retirement. "What's good and isn't being said is that the P-3s aren't going anywhere," Slowik said. He also said that Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead's term is nearly up and that a lot could change with new leadership and a shifting economy. Decisions made today can always be reversed later on, he said. "This may be the initial cut, but it's not the final cut," Slowik said.

This would not significantly alter the message or focus of his trip to the Pentagon next month with city councilmen Jim Palmer and Danny Paggao. As they have for the past 19 years, the Oak Harbor contingent will remind the Navy's top brass just how important the air base is to the community and the nation's defense. Island County Commissioner Angie Homola, who is chair of the board of commissioners, could not be reached despite requests for comment Monday and Tuesday.

According to Larsen's staff, the congressman learned of the Navy's change of plans from Roughead himself in an early Monday morning phone call. However, they could not confirm by press time just how the decision may affect the base's P-3 squadrons. Larsen did say in his press release that the Poseidon decision may only be temporary, and that P8-A squadrons may yet end up on the base sometime in the future. It's an ideal location for the Navy for a variety of reasons, from the high quality of life and low cost of living the island provides to the wide access to good training ranges. "Northwest Washington will continue to be an essential region for the U.S. Navy as the Navy has committed to keeping a carrier in Everett, expanding the Growler program at Whidbey, and considering future opportunities for P8-A squadrons to come to NAS Whidbey," Larsen wrote.

BOEING BEGINS ASSEMBLY OF FIRST PRODUCTION P-8A (Tacoma News Tribune 3/11/11)

Boeing began assembly this week of the first of what will be 117 sub hunting aircraft at its Renton plant. The Navy P-8A is a militarized version of Boeing's popular 737 single-aisle passenger jet. The plane is modified to carry sophisticated electronic gear to track submarines and surface vessels. The aircraft will also carry weapons to destroy submarines.

The company has already built seven of the P-8A aircraft for testing. This week's assembly start will be the first of the production aircraft being constructed for the U.S. Navy. That first aircraft will be delivered to the Navy next year and go into regular service replacing the Navy's P-3 sub hunter. The P-3, many of which are based at the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, is a derivative of the turboprop Lockheed Electra passenger aircraft which first entered commercial service in the late '50s.

Boeing is hoping the Navy order will generate business from other countries for the surveillance plane. The Poseidon team is using a first-in-industry in-line production process that draws on Boeing's Next-Generation 737 production system. All aircraft modifications unique to the P-8A are made in sequence during fabrication and assembly.

VP-16 QUALIFIES FIRST CWO PATROL PLANE COMMANDER (Jax Air News 3/9/11):

VP-16 recently qualified CWO3 Dan Haller as a P-3C Orion patrol plane commander (PPC) – making him the first chief warrant officer PPC in P-3 fleet history. As a qualified PPC, Haller will be tasked to ensure the safe operation of the P-3C and ensure the crew and the aircraft return home safely.

The Flying Chief Warrant Officer Pilot Program was instituted in January of 2006. This extremely competitive program takes highly motivated enlisted Sailors and commissions them as warrant officers to complete training as naval pilots and naval flight officers (NFOs). The program allows chief warrant officers to serve as pilot or NFO in the P-3, EP-3, E-6 and the helicopter communities. The goal behind qualifying warrant officers is to create naval pilots and NFOs who are not restricted to the career path that is taken by unrestricted line officers.

Haller enlisted in the Navy in August 1997 as an aviation machinist mate. He attended aircrew school and was soon qualified as a P-3C Orion flight engineer. He successfully completed tours with VP-9 and later as an instructor flight engineer at the P-3C Fleet Replacement Squadron, VP-30.

Haller was commissioned Dec. 1, 2006. After attending aviation preflight indoctrination and primary flight training in Pensacola, Haller completed advanced flight training in Corpus Christi, Texas and received his wings of gold in August 2008. He then returned to VP-30, this time as a student pilot, and was then assigned to VP-16 in May 2009.

Haller said, "It is an honor to pave the way for future warrant officer aviators. My only goal is to set the standard for all other flying warrants in the fleet."

The historic achievement that Haller has accomplished serves as an example to all enlisted Sailors that other opportunities for advancement are available to them. The success that Haller has had during his career in naval aviation, as both an enlisted Sailor and as an officer, will bring the intrinsic benefits of the Flying Chief Warrant Officer Pilot Program to the attention of many within the aviation community and the Navy.

P-3 MAKES HISTORY WITH MISSILE FIRING (Navy Times 4/11/11):

The March 28 attack against a Libyan coast guard vessel was an historic moment for the P-3 Orion. Typically used as a maritime patrol aircraft and submarine hunter, it marked the first time in the airframe's 41-year history that a P-3 fired an AGM-65F Maverick missile on a hostile boat, according to a spokesman for Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn. It was an unusual occurrence for a plane that

has made a career as a sophisticated surveillance aircraft that has fired only at land targets and rarely at that.

While flying over the waters off Libya, the Orion, attached to Task Force 67, came across the Vittoria, a 12-meter vessel, and two smaller boats that were firing at merchant ships in Misrata. The port city is on the western side of Libya's coast where rebels and forces loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi are fighting. The boats were "firing indiscriminately," according to a JTF statement.

The Orion, belonging to the "Mad Foxes" of Patrol Squadron 5 based out of Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla., opened fire with two Maverick missiles. Vittoria beached itself after several explosions were spotted in the nearby port; the JTF did not respond to questions on whether the boat itself was damaged.

An Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt II opened fire on the two smaller boats with its 30mm GAU-8 Avenger cannon, destroying one boat and causing the crew to abandon the other. Nearby, the destroyer Barry managed the airspace and maritime traffic.

The P-3 acted to protect civilian lives, as permitted in the U.N. resolution that authorizes the action over Libya, said Marine Capt. Clinton Gebke, a spokesman with the joint task force. This engagement wasn't the first time the Orion has fired a shot in combat, but it demonstrates the airplane's versatility and the importance of early air dominance, Gebke said. If the airspace hadn't already been cleared of Libyan threats, the Orion would have been extremely susceptible to an attack and likely unable to target the boat, said Eric Wertheim, editor of Combat Fleets of the World. "It's both venerable and vulnerable," he said.

While equipped to engage watercraft, the March 28 attack differs from the Orion's primary role. Current versions of the P-3C are designed primarily for anti-submarine patrols and maritime surveillance missions. It has several surveillance and communication systems, but in the last two decades was reconfigured to carry the AGM-84K Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response, the MH-54 lightweight torpedo, as well as the Maverick guided missile, the weapon used in the recent attack. Even with the weapons capabilities, the Orion is still mostly used for patrols. The mission dictates whether an aircraft is equipped with munitions, Gebke said.

Used by the Navy, Marines and Air Force, the Maverick missile is designed for close-air support, interdiction, and defense suppression and can be used against ships, armor, air defenses, and other targets. There are different variants; the version used on the Orion is equipped with a 300-pound penetrating warhead and an infrared targeting system. The Marines have a laser-guided version on the AV-8B Harrier II while the Air Force carries an electro-optical guided missile on the F-16 Fighting Falcon and the Thunderbolt. While the Thunderbolt was a part of the engagement and can carry Mavericks, the missiles were not used.

The Orion's work over Libya is a major departure from the missions it was designed for when it became operational more than four decades ago, said retired Capt. George Watt, a former P-3C naval flight officer who served with VP-5, the squadron in the attack. During the Cold War, it used its 2400-mile range to track Soviet subs in missions that stretched over 14 hours. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loss of an adversary with an extensive and stealthy submarine navy, the Orion was reformatted to fit the surveillance-heavy role it fills today. It made it useful in counter-narcotics efforts as well as search and rescue missions, operations where endurance is extremely valuable, Watt said. "What's amazing is that we're flying the P-3 Orion at all. Here we have an airframe that's still reliable and completely outfitted," he said.

The Orion's days are limited. The Navy is in the process of replacing it with the P-8A Poseidon, a modified Boeing 737-800ERX. The new plane will be operational in 2013 and is expected to provide better anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare capabilities.

NASJRB WILLOW GROVE DISESTABLISHED:

Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove, PA was officially disestablished in a ceremony conducted at 1500 on Wednesday March 30th that included a final USNR flight from the airfield. The last Navy Reserve tenant squadrons on the base were VR-64, VR-52, and a C-12 detachment. All three units were relocated to nearby McGuire AFB. Established as NAS Willow Grove during the Second World War, the base became a major Naval Air Reserve Training Command facility during the immediate postwar era. It is now in the hands of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard and is called Willow Grove Air National Guard Base.

CHINESE AIRCRAFT CARRIER NEARS COMPLETION (Taiwan News 4/12/11):



ABOVE: The “new” Chinese aircraft carrier Shi Lang being readied for action. The ChiComs are naming it after the historical figure who originally conquered Taiwan for China. This is not good...

After nearly nine years of refurbishing work, China’s first aircraft carrier — a platform that could add to Taiwan’s defense concerns — could soon embark on its maiden voyage, Chinese media reported last week. Work on the Varyag, a refurbished carrier purchased from Ukraine in 1992 for about US\$20 million, was near completion and the hull was being painted in the standard Chinese naval color, a Web site associated with the state-run People’s Daily newspaper reported last Wednesday.

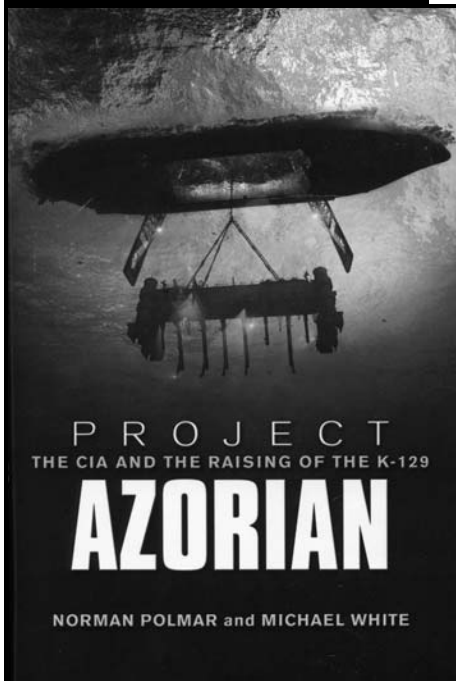
Seen as one of Chinese President Hu Jintao’s last accomplishments before he steps down next year, the aircraft carrier could take to sea as early as July 1, reports said. Expected to be renamed “Shi Lang,” after the Qing Dynasty admiral who conquered what is now known as Taiwan in 1681, the carrier has been undergoing modernization work at the port of Dalian since 2002. Although the hull was built in 1988 by the former Soviet Union, the vessel acquired by China did not include the electronic circuits, radars, antennas, engines or other devices. A report by UK-based Jane’s Defense Weekly on Friday said the carrier would come equipped with phased array radars and surface-to-air missiles, making it a more independent platform than its US equivalent, which is dependent on Aegis-type guided missile cruisers for protection.

Commenting on the reports, Lan Ning-li, a retired vice admiral in the Republic of China Navy, told the Central News Agency last week that after being assigned to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy fleet in the South China Sea fleet, the carrier would be in a position to move in areas surrounding

southern and eastern Taiwan, a scenario that would pose “a certain threat” to the country. Even if Taiwanese vessels could block entry from the north and south sides of the Taiwan Strait, the “Shi Lang” would still allow China to expand its naval activities eastward into the Pacific, he said. “That will make Taiwan vulnerable to enemy attacks at sea from both front and rear,” Lan said.

Despite reports that refurbishing work had entered its final phase, many of the sophisticated electronics on the carrier likely had yet to be installed, Lan said. A picture provided by the People’s Daily showed the large bridge, minus the phased array radar, nearing completion. The 302m long and 70.5m wide carrier, which comes with a loaded displacement of 67,000 tonnes and a speed of between 29 knots and 31 knots, can host as many as 50 aircraft of various types — possibly including Russian-made SU-33 and carrier-modified, Chinese-made J-10, as well as anti-submarine helicopters and early-warning helicopters. As Chinese pilots have no experience taking off from and landing aircraft on carriers, it could be a while before the impact on regional security of the deployment of the “Shi Lang” is truly felt.

RECOMMENDED READING:



Project Azorian: The CIA and the Raising of the K-129 by Norman Polmar and Michael White (ISBN 9-781591-146902) presents the story of the secret CIA project to raise a sunken Soviet Navy Golf-class SSB from the depths of the Pacific Ocean north of Hawaii. Employing eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes as cover, the CIA funded the construction of a special ship, the Glomar Explorer, to secretly raise the submarine in 1974 from where it had sunk with the loss of all hands in 1968. Though principally intended to retrieve a nuclear-armed ICBM and Soviet Navy cryptologic materials, the 500 million dollar (in 1974 funds) salvage project was only minimally successful since only a small portion of the forward section of the submarine’s hull was raised, the rest including the most sought-after section falling back to the sea floor and allegedly being smashed to bits as it approached the surface. 238 pages with several photographs. You can purchase this book over the Internet from on-line bookseller Amazon at <http://www.amazon.com> or special order it from any good book store.

ON THE INTERNET



Looking for an accurate model of the aircraft that you flew or maintained? Silent Thunder Models on the Internet at www.silentthundermodels.com or toll free at 1-888-745-3688 will custom-build desktop display models of PBY Catalinas, P4Y Privateers, P-2 Neptunes, and P-3 Orions in your choice of color scheme, squadron markings, bureau number, and side number for between \$195 and \$350 plus shipping. “Generic” Catalinas, Neptunes, and Orions similar to the P-3C shown here are in stock for immediate delivery priced between \$159 and \$179 plus shipping. For custom-built or custom-painted models one or more decent quality photos of the original aircraft is required.

MONTHLY MEETING:

Don't forget that we meet for lunch on the last Thursday of every month at the Officer's Club at Hanscom AFB in Bedford, MA from 1130 to 1330. Please join us if you can. If you don't have a military ID (base stickers are no longer required) contact Okie O'Connell at 781-335-0553 or Bill Hanigan at 781-585-4950 so your name can be added to the base's security access list. Note, all persons without a military ID are required to enter the base at the civilian gate, not the Hartwell gate.

PARTING SHOT:



ABOVE: Jeff Tech, Dick Norris, Wes Fash, and Dan Wheeler, shown here, were popular fixtures at VP-92 during the 1990s. Please consider joining us at Hanscom Field in Bedford, MA for this year's VP Association annual reunion banquet on Saturday September 17th. You never know who might show up from your old squadron and we normally get over one hundred attendees. Please consider joining us at the reunion this year. A reservation form is presented on the last page of this newsletter. If you intend to attend the reunion, please send it to Bill Hanigan ASAP. We'd love to see you there!



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



VP ASSOCIATION 2011 ANNUAL REUNION
HANSCOM AFB OFFICER'S CLUB BEDFORD, MA
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 17, 2011 FROM 1200 TO 1700
Appetizers and Cash Bar between 1200 and 1300, Dinner at 1300, Music between 1200 and 1630

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): _____

Military ID (Yes or No): _____

Amount Enclosed (\$40 Per Person): \$_____

Make Checks Payable to **"The VP Association"** and Mail to William 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.

Our guest speaker this year will be CAPT Gerald "Doc" Hayes. Doc Hayes, a pulmonary medicine specialist in civilian life, was VP-92's flight surgeon from 1992 until its disestablishment in 2007. He then transferred into the Seabees and was activated for duty in Iraq. He will describe to us some of his impressions of the situation over there and about the personnel in his unit.

Dress is CASUAL. However, in honor of the Centennial of Naval Aviation (CONA) being celebrated throughout 2011 we are STRONGLY ENCOURAGING veterans and current military personnel to wear a uniform (whatever you have) or flight suit to the reunion!

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.