



# 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 46**

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

**DECEMBER 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](mailto:vpassociation@aol.com). Please send all newsletter-related correspondence to Marc J. Frattasio, P.O. Box 30, Pembroke MA 02359, [marc\\_frattasio@yahoo.com](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com).

## **RECCO:**



**ABOVE:** Anybody remember NAS South Weymouth's blimp patrol squadron, ZP-911? When it was disestablished in 1958 most of its members were transferred into the reserve VS and VP squadrons on the base. This photo shows a ZP-911 K-Type blimp practicing touch-and-goes on Runway 26 during 1958. The reserve aircraft pool on the base had no blimps so ZP-911 had to borrow one from the NARTU at NAS Lakehurst on drill weekends. Weather permitting, a ZP-911 crew would be brought to NAS Lakehurst on Friday nights by one of the reserve VR squadrons on the base and fly the blimp to NAS South Weymouth Saturday morning. On Sunday morning a different ZP-911 crew would return the blimp and be flown back late in the day by a VR squadron R5D. Photo by Joseph P. O'Neill. Got something similar to share? If so, contact Marc J. Frattasio.

## **FINAL FLIGHTS:**

It is our sad duty to report the recent death of Tom Meehan, who served with VP-92. Tom had lived in Norwell, MA.

## **2011 ANNUAL REUNION:**



***ABOVE:*** *Some of the reunion attendees who wore uniforms or flight suits. Bill Hanigan photo.*

The 2011 annual reunion, which was held at Hanscom AFB in Bedford, MA on Saturday September 17<sup>th</sup>, was a great success. Attendance was a little bit down in comparison to previous years, perhaps due to high gas prices and the poor economy, but everybody who went seemed to have a great time. We noted many new faces and the absence of several people who have been fixtures at the reunion in previous years.

Many attendees, as suggested to honor the Navy's on-going 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of naval aviation celebration, wore uniforms or flight suits. In fact, this particular facet of the reunion proved so popular that we may invite you to wear your old military gear to all the reunions going forward. When it comes right down to it, how often do you get to wear a uniform or flight suit these days?

Our two special guests, former Patrol Wing 11 commodore CAPT Mark Turner and prospective VP-8 commanding officer CDR Todd Libby, came down from the Naval War College at NS Newport, RI to spend the afternoon with us. CAPT Turner delivered a terrific multi-media briefing that covered the current state of patrol aviation in the U.S. Navy and some of what's coming up in the future with the impending arrival of the P-8. After the presentation, CAPT Turner and CDR Libby answered questions from the audience. If you weren't there for this, well, you missed something really special.

Its not too early to make plans to attend the 2012 annual reunion. It will be held at the same place on a Saturday during the latter half of September. More specific information will be presented in the June newsletter. Please try to make it if you can and, just as important, please try to get some of your old shipmates to come too.



**ABOVE:** CAPT Mark Turner, CDR Todd Libby, and Ned Rodgerson.

**RIGHT:** Bob Allen, Maine National Guard Captain Darrell Davis, and Jim Fitzgerald. Darrell was formerly an AO with VP-92. He is now serving on active duty as an engineering officer. He earned a Bronze Star while serving overseas in the Iraq/Afghanistan War. Bill Hanigan photos.



The sad fact is that maritime patrol aviation is GONE FOREVER in New England. On the east coast there is NO MPA north of NAS Jacksonville, FL. The VP Association is pretty much all that's left of the more than half-century of maritime patrol aviation heritage that started just before the country entered WW2 when the Navy moved a few VJ-4 PBV Catalinas from NAS Norfolk, VA to NAS Quonset Point, RI and NAS Squantum, MA to fly FDR's Neutrality Patrols. Let's keep that heritage alive by staying in touch, and the VP Association's annual reunion is perhaps the best way to do this.

**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 who do not have e-mail. We'd like to thank Dave Childers, Gene Forgit, Herb Tallent, Robert Hickok, George Driscoll, Martin Grillo, and Robert Allan for their recent contributions to the administration fund.

**LOST CONTACT:**

We need a current e-mail (preferred) or street address for Troy Boswell, Pete Dormant, Robert Fitzpatrick, Dan Gilbert, Daniel Johnson, John Kipp, Charlie McCloskey, James Oliva, Mark Piscioneri, Paul Rood, Wayne Thomas, and Max Tucker. If you have this info contact Bill Hanigan.

**RECENT CHANGES OF ADDRESS:**

Mike Christensen  
56 Lincoln St.  
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David Church  
46025 North Greens Rest Drive  
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Please note a new e-mail address for Rod Neibauer at rod767@comcast.net and H. A. (Nick) Nichols at n-nichols@comcast.net.

**NEW MEMBERS:**

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**A SHORT NOTE FROM VP-92's BOB BELCHER:**

The ADCS in Fran Creney's picture (from the last newsletter) is Bob Fitzpatrick. He was my mentor and friend for years. I don't know his current whereabouts.

**A RECENT PHOTO FROM VP-92's RICK CAESAR:**



VP-92 alumni John Steckel, Scott Savelle, Rick Caesar, Scott Andrews, Chuck Pierce, Marty McCormack, Jake Reid, Sean Reid, Jim Custer, Tim Sheridan, and Mark Hausler are shown at the USNA football game on October 8<sup>th</sup>. C. X. Kennedy, Rod Messick, and Tom Lorenz were there too.

**A MESSAGE FROM JIM FOLLIS Of The DAV:**

VP Association member Jim Follis is the Department Commander for the Disabled American Veterans in Massachusetts. If you (or somebody you know) are a disabled veteran and require some assistance from the DAV call Jim at 617-727-2974 or e-mail him at gloriafollis@comcast.net.

**MARITIME PATROL ASSOCIATION NOW ACCEPTING MEMBERSHIPS:**

The Maritime Patrol Association, a new group closely associated with the active duty Navy that basically sprung out of the MPRF Symposium and Reunion that was held at NAS Jacksonville, FL in April, is now accepting memberships. Check them out at <http://www.maritimepatrolassociation.org>.

**SHEA FIELD NAVAL AVIATION HISTORICAL MUSEUM NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:**

The Shea Field Naval Aviation Historical Museum is now open to the public on the last Saturday of every month from 9 to 11 AM. The museum, which is located in the Shea Fitness Center (the old base gymnasium) on Shea Memorial Drive at former NAS South Weymouth, serves as a repository of photographs, documents, and other artifacts pertaining to NAS Squantum and South Weymouth. Admission to the museum is free. The Shea Field Naval Aviation Historical Museum is operated by the ANA Patriot Squadron, a local affiliate of the Association of Naval Aviation. See the group's web site at <http://www.anapatriotsquadron.org> for details. The ANA Patriot Squadron welcomes new members and will give a good home to any memorabilia involving Squantum or South Weymouth.

**FORMER NAS SOUTH WEYMOUTH PROPERTY TO BE SOLD AND BECOME A NEW TOWN:**

On November 14<sup>th</sup> the Navy agreed to sell the remaining government-owned land and structures on former NAS South Weymouth to developer LNR Properties for 25 million dollars. In related news, LNR Properties recently filed papers with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to have the entire SouthField development on former NAS South Weymouth designated a new town. NAS South Weymouth, and now the SouthField development, is currently part of Abington, Hingham, Rockland, and Weymouth. In anticipation that the SouthField development will be designated a town, the LNR Properties office building on former NAS South Weymouth has a large sign up facing Shea Memorial Drive indicating that it is now the "Town Hall".

**A NOTE FROM BOB CHAMPOUX OF THE VP-2 ASSOCIATION:**

*Right: The famous P2V-1 Neptune BuNo 89082 "Truculent Turtle". U.S. Navy photo.*



Perhaps you've heard that, in this centennial year of Naval Aviation, the Patrol Squadron Two Association has undertaken the challenge of raising funds to sponsor the most famous patrol aircraft

in Naval Aviation History – The Truculent Turtle. In 1946, the crew of the Truculent Turtle set a long-standing world record for non-stop, unrefueled flight by flying from Perth, Australia to Columbus, Ohio... a distance of 11,236 miles over a span of 55 hours and 17 minutes. That performance by one of the Navy's first P2V-1 aircraft was singularly responsible for establishing the Navy's role for land based maritime patrol after WWII.

This unique aircraft is now in a place of honor at the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola Florida, and needs a sponsor to ensure that it will receive the preservation and maintenance that such a famous aircraft deserves. Thanks to the donations of many individuals and some VP associations, we are well on the way to our goal of raising the \$50,000 needed for full sponsorship, but there is still a long way to go. If you haven't already done so, please make a donation to help preserve this airplane. You can also help by passing the word about this project to your other friends.

Send your tax-deductible check made out to the VP-2 Association to Doug Donohue at PO Box 2894, Gardnerville, NV 89410. To donate by credit card, please go to the National Naval Aviation Museum website donor page at [www.navalaviationmuseum.org/getinvolved/giving/contribution-form](http://www.navalaviationmuseum.org/getinvolved/giving/contribution-form) and fill in the information requested. In the drop down "Designation" box click on "Exhibits", and then in the "Comments" box insert "VP-2 Truculent Turtle". After submission, the museum will provide a receipt; please forward a copy to Doug Donohue at [nvsoar@charter.net](mailto:nvsoar@charter.net) to assure donation tracking and appropriate acknowledgment.

Refer comments and questions to Bob Champoux at [rchampoux@comcast.net](mailto:rchampoux@comcast.net) or 425-890-3857. Your financial assistance with this worthwhile project is greatly appreciated.

### **THE FLIGHT OF THE TRUCULENT TURTLE (by CDR Edward P. Stafford USN-R):**

This interesting narrative was forwarded to us by the VP-8 Alumni Association's Beth Perry:

"Truculent" means.....

- 1: Feeling or displaying ferocity; cruel, savage
- 2: Deadly, destructive
- 3: Scathingly harsh; vitriolic
- 4: Aggressively self-assertive; belligerent.

No matter which definition you use, this turtle and most notably its crew -- boldly took off in 1946 to set a night distance record that would stand for 16 years.

Commander Tom Davies. U.S. Navy, stood on the brakes and pushed both throttles forward to takeoff power. At the other end of the mile-long runway he could make out a knot of news photographers. Scattered across the air base, hundreds of picnickers stood at the sound of the engines and riveted their attention to the plane. But for Davies and his four-man crew, this was no picnic. He and Commander Gene Rankin, U.S. Navy, in the copilot's seat. scanned the engine instruments. All normal. Davies then released the brakes, and the "Truculent Turtle" began to roll. On this day. 29 September 1946. the Turtle was a veritable winged gas tank, 15 tons over maximum gross weight with fuel, so heavy it could not taxi for fear of breaking the landing gear in a turn (the fuel had been loaded in takeoff position on the runway).

The plane rumbled and jounced slightly, as the speed built up. As each 1,000-foot sign went by. Rankin called out the speed and compared it to predicted figures on a clipboard in his lap. With the second sign astern. the Turtle was committed. Davies could no longer stop the charging, gas-filled aircraft on the runway. It was now quite literally, fly or burn. When the wavering airspeed needle touched 105 knots, Davies punched a button jury-wired to his yoke, and four jet-assisted takeoff

bottles (JATO) fired from their attachment points aft on the fuselage. The crew could hear the roar of the bottles and feel their push. For a critical 10 seconds they provided the thrust of a third engine. The 4,000-foot sign and 115 knots came up at the same time, and Davies pulled the nose wheel off. There were some long seconds while the main wheels continued to rumble on the last of the runway, then they were still, spinning silently as the last pounds of weight were shifted to the wings, and the Turtle knew.

The instant he was sure he was airborne Davies called "gear up" and jerked his right thumb upward. Rankin hit the wheel-shaped actuator on the pedestal between the pilots, and the gear came up. The wheel doors closed just as the JATO burned out. Behind the pilots, Commander Walt Reid kept his hand on the dump valve that could drop 500 gallons of fuel a minute. Lieutenant Commander Roy Tabeling, at the radio position, kept all his switches off for now to prevent the slightest spark.

Now the Turtle was out over the Indian Ocean. With agonizing deliberation, altimeter and airspeed crept up ward. Walt Reid jettisoned the empty JATO bottles. At 125 knots -- stall speed with flaps up -- Rankin started the flaps coming in by careful small increments. At 165 knots Davies made his first power reduction, back to maximum continuous.

The sun was setting and the lights of the city blinking on as the Turtle circled back over Perth at 3,000 feet and headed out across the 1,800 miles of the central desert of Australia. On this record-breaking night, one already had been broken. Never before had two engines carried so much weight into the air.

The plan was to stay low -- about 3,500 feet -- for the first few hundred miles, burning off fuel and reducing weight so the climb to cruising altitude would require less gas. But the southwest wind, burbling and eddying across the hills northeast of Perth, brought turbulence that shook and rattled the overloaded Turtle, threatening the integrity of the wings themselves. Davies took her up to 6,500, where the air was smoother, reluctantly accepting the sacrifice of enough fuel to fly an extra couple of hundred miles at the other end of the flight.

Alice Springs at Australia's center slid under the long wings at midnight and Cooktown on the northeast coast at dawn. Then it was out over the Coral Sea where only just more than three years before the Lexington (CV-2) and Yorktown (CV-5) had put down the Japanese ship Shoho and turned back Shokuku and Zuikaku to win the first carrier battle in history and prevent the cutoff and isolation of Australia.

At noon the Turtle skirted the 10,000 foot Peaks of southern New Guinea, and in mid-afternoon detoured around a mass of boiling thunderheads over Bougainville in the Solomons. As the sun set for the second time since takeoff, the Turtle's crew stood out across the vast and empty Pacific Ocean and established an "at sea" routine, standing two-man, four-hour watches, washing, shaving, and changing to clean clothes each morning, eating regular meals. The two Wright 3350 engines ran smoothly -- on all the gauges the needles were in the green - and every hour another 200 miles of the Pacific had passed astern. The crew's only worry was Joey, a nine-month-old, 35-pound female kangaroo destined for the Washington Zoo. She had hunched unhappily in her crate and refused to eat or drink.

Dawn of the second morning found the Turtle over Maro Reef, halfway between Midway and Oahu in the long chain of Hawaiian Islands. In the first voice-radio contact of the flight, Honolulu Radio warned of icing and severe turbulence over Seattle, the Turtle's planned landfall in the United States. Davies changed course to hit the coast in northern California, dropped the empty 200-gallon fuel tanks from the wing tips and eased up to 10,000 feet. At noon Reid came up to the cockpit smiling.

"Well," he reported, "the damned kangaroo has started to eat and drink again. I guess she thinks we're going to make it."

The mission in which Joey's dim marsupial brain may or may not have acquired confidence was no stunt, despite her presence. In this early fall of 1946, the increasingly hostile Soviet Union was pushing construction of a submarine force nearly ten times larger than Adolf Hitler's at the start of World War II. Antisubmarine warfare was the Navy's responsibility. The Truculent Turtle was the first of the P2V "Neptune" patrol planes designed to counter the sub threat. Tom Davies' orders derived straight from the offices of Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal and the Chief of Naval Operations, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. A dramatic demonstration was needed to prove beyond question that the new patrol plane, its production representing a sizeable chunk of the Navy's skimpy peacetime budget, could do the job. With its efficient design that gave it four-engine capability on two engines, the mission would show the Neptune's ability to cover the transoceanic distances necessary to perform its ASW and sea-surveillance functions. And at a time when roles and missions were being developed to deliver nuclear weapons, it would not hurt a bit to show that the Navy, too, had that capability.

So far, the night had gone according to plan. But now as the second day in the air began to darken, the Pacific sky, gently clear and blue for so long, turned rough and hostile. An hour before landfall, great rolling knuckles of cloud punched out from the coastal mountains. The Turtle jolted and jarred. Ice crusted on the wings. Static blanked out radio transmission and reception. The crew strapped down hard, turned up the red instrument lights and took turns trying to tune the radio direction finder to a recognizable station. It was midnight before Roy Tabelling, with his years of electronics training and experience, succeeded in making contact with the ground and requested an instrument clearance eastward. A delightfully female voice reached up through the murk from Williams Radio, 70 miles south of Red Bluff, California.

"I'm sorry," the voice said. "I don't seem to have a flight plan on you. What was your departure point?" "Perth. West Australia." "No. I mean where did you take off from?" "Perth, West Australia." "Navy zero eight two, you don't understand. I mean what was your departure airport for this leg of the flight?" "Perth, West Australia." "But that's halfway around the world!" "No. Only about a third. May we have that clearance?" But the static and atmospheric closed in again, and now the weird and wonderful phenomenon of St. Elmo's fire added to the problems of the Turtle's crew. The two propellers whirled in rings of blue-white light. Violet tongues licked up between the laminations of the windshield. Eerie purple spokes protruded from the Neptune's nose. All those distracting effects would increase in brilliance with an accompanying rise in the volume of static on all radio frequencies then suddenly discharge with a blinding flash and a thump and begin slowly to rebuild. It was not for another hour, somewhere over the cliffs and ridges of the Donner Pass, that an instrument clearance could be patched together and the flight could proceed in regulation fashion.

The St. Elmo's fire had been annoying but not dangerous. Now came a serious threat to the mission. At the left center of the instrument panel a red-lighted pointer that all during the flight had been aligned parallel to its mate -- as though a pair of red clocks both read five minutes past one -- flickered, oscillated, dropped down to the left, came back up momentarily, then dropped off again, farther this time, built up and again dropped off. In the language of engine instruments, that tachometer was announcing that the Turtle's left engine was failing. In the jarring, crackling night sky somewhere over Nevada, Davies suddenly had much to ponder. Navy and civil flight regulations and common sense required an immediate landing at the nearest available field in the event of engine failure. But where was that? Probably Reno. Would that field be open, or did the present foul weather extend all the way to the deck? And what about the mission record? The Turtle was now 9,000 miles from Perth, 1,000 better than the old mark. But was that good enough? The Neptune



was now light enough for single engine flight, but how much farther could it go on one engine? And was it worth risking this first expensive aircraft of what should one day be a family of hundreds for the sake of improving a distance record?

Whatever the answers to all those questions, the first thing to do was to shut down the bad engine, reducing its drag and minimizing the damage. Davies reached up for the button that would feather the prop. But at that moment it struck him that something about this sick engine was not normal. The altimeter showed no loss of altitude. Control pressures remained unchanged -- no retiming or extra force had been needed on yoke or rudders. He jabbed the beam of a flashlight over his left shoulder. The prop out there whirled normally. There was no sign of smoke or oil. He checked the panel. Manifold pressure, oil pressure, and oil temperature and fuel now all were normal. Davies ran the throttle forward on the port engine and felt a welcome swerve under his hands and feet. Relief surged. That beautiful left engine was as good as ever. Only the tachometer was faulty.

The weather finally broke with the dawn of the Turtle's third day in the air, and all morning Davies followed the section lines of the plains states to the eastward. Nebraska, Iowa, and the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers slid past below. To the north, the haze of Chicago was in sight. But now, not surprisingly, fuel was becoming a problem. The wingtip tanks had long ago been emptied and jettisoned over the Pacific. The bomb bay tanks, the nose tank, and the big fuselage tanks were empty. The fuel gauges for the wing tanks were moving inexorably toward zero. Davies and his crew consulted, tapping the panel, calculating and recalculating remaining fuel, and cursing the gauges on which one-eighth of an inch represented 200 gallons -- more than an hour's flight, nearly 200 miles. At noon they concluded they could not safely stretch the flight beyond Columbus, Ohio.

At quarter past one that afternoon the runways and hangars of the Columbus airport were in sight. The Turtle's crew were cleaned-up and shaven and in uniform. And the fuel gauges all read empty. With the landing checklist completed and wheels and naps down. Davies cranked the Turtle around into final approach. As the plane leveled out in final, the left engine popped, sputtered and cut out. Not- now, he thought, palms moist on yoke and throttles, not after all the miles, just one mile from touchdown! But the right engine continued to provide power and the left caught and ran again (a fuel boost pump had acted up). At 1325 on 1 October, the Neptune's wheels once more touched the earth -- touched it hard, with tires that had been inflated to support the ten Cadillac's weight of fuel that had now been burned -- 11,236 miles and 55 hours and 16 minutes from where they had taken off.

Before that day was over, the Turtle's crew had been decorated by Secretary Forrestal and were scheduled to meet with President Harry S Truman. And Joey, observably relieved to be back on the solid earth, had been installed in luxurious quarters in the Washington Zoo. The record established by Tom Davies and the Truculent Turtle stood not just for a year or two or three, but through the remaining 1940s and the entire decade of the 1950s-for 16 years, until early in 1962.

A thousand sisters followed the Turtle. For a quarter-century after that epic flight, seven generations of Neptune's painted with the colors of a half-dozen nations have patrolled the oceans of the world and provided an effective global counter to the threat of hostile submarines. And today, that first long-legged Neptune with the Disney turtle painted on its nose stands in honored dignity at the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Florida, an inspiration to all, but especially to the generations of patrol-plane pilots who have followed in the daringly professional tradition of Commander Tom Davies and his crew.

Commander Stafford is a prolific freelance writer whose work has appeared many times in Proceedings. Among the many publications for which he has written National Geographic and Reader's Digest. Commander Stafford is perhaps best known as the author of the World War II

history of the USS Enterprise (CV-5), The Big E, now available as part of the U. S. Naval Institute's Classics of Naval Literature series.

**CP-140 AURORAS TAKE ON NEW ROLE (by CAPT Jill Strelieff):**

Originally designed for anti-submarine warfare, the CP-140 Aurora long-range patrol aircraft is showing off its capabilities in the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions that have come its way on Operation Mobile.

The bi-coastal Auroras, one is from 14 Wing Greenwood, N.S., and the other from 19 Wing Comox, B.C., arrived on March 25 at the NATO naval air station in Sigonella, Italy. The Sigonella detachment was the last-deployed element of Task Force Libeccio, the air component of Canada's contribution to NATO-led efforts to impose an arms embargo against Libya, impose a no-fly zone in Libyan airspace, and protect civilians in Libya in compliance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973.

The Aurora detachment includes about 80 personnel: 26 aircrew, and three crews of aircraft technicians and support staff from 19 Wing and 14 Wing. The first task the Auroras took on was to identify vessels in the embargo zone - the waters of the central Mediterranean Sea off Libya - and relay that information to the NATO task group patrolling the waters off Libya. Since March 25, a large fleet of NATO warships, including the Canadian frigate HMCS Charlottetown, has patrolled the embargo zone to reduce the flow of mercenaries, arms and related materiel to Libya.

Throughout those early maritime surveillance missions, the Auroras showed their top-class form. The Auroras are not only fast - they can travel at 400 knots, as fast as the CT-114 Tutor jets the Snowbirds fly - but they have plenty of stamina too and can stay aloft for up to 12 hours. They carry an array of sensors to gather and record the precise, reliable ISR data required to create a clear picture of the situation at ground level or at sea.

With this unique combination of capabilities, the Auroras were a natural choice for inland ISR missions, and now provide ISR data on Libya's coastline, highways, and command & control centers.

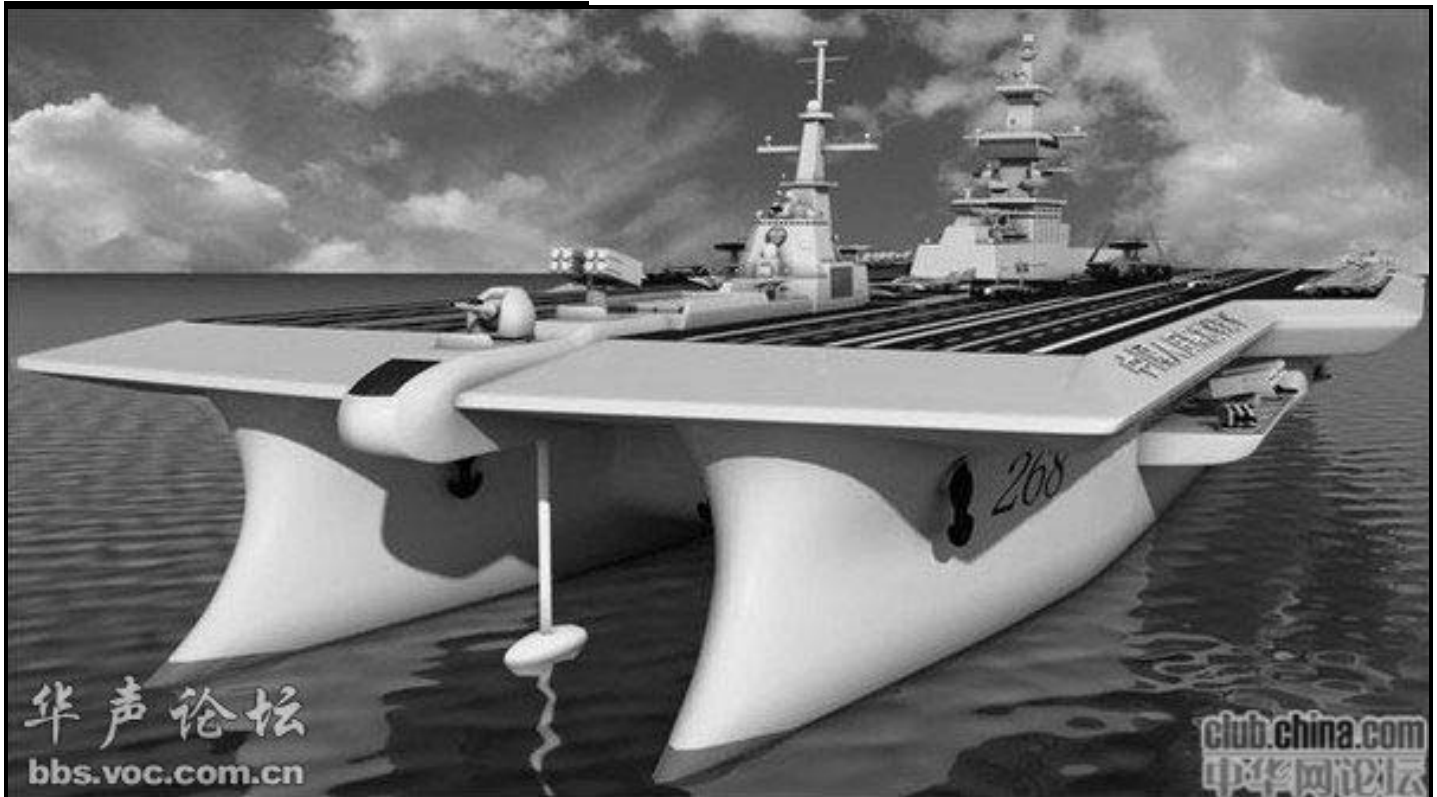
"This is a new role for us," said Captain Stephanie Hale, the air combat systems officer and operations officer on Roto 0 of the Sigonella detachment. "The new mission suite systems, including electro-optic infrared and overland equipment, have changed what we're able to provide, and changed where we're able to work."

The overland equipment mission suite (OEMS), a new addition to the Aurora, was acquired for Op Podium, the CF participation in security for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. With the OEMS, an Aurora crew can record three live video feeds from improved electro-optic infrared (EOIR) cameras. At the end of each sortie, the resulting imagery is transmitted to the Combined Air Operations Centre in Poggio Renatico, Italy.

"We're taking all the resources we have available in theatre and using them to maximize the effect of the mission," said Major Derrick Hotte, the Sigonella detachment commander on Roto 0. The Aurora detachment's most important resource is its people, who deployed on very short notice and flew their first mission within 72 hours of arriving in Sigonella. They've flown every day since.

"We've maintained a serviceability rate of over 90 per cent," said Maj Hotte. "That really speaks to the commitment and dedication of the maintenance staff, and the team approach to how we conduct operations. All of the staff have exceeded expectations and have done a lot to bring credit to the long-range patrol aircraft community and to the Canadian Forces."

## CHINA'S NEW AIRCRAFT CARRIERS!:

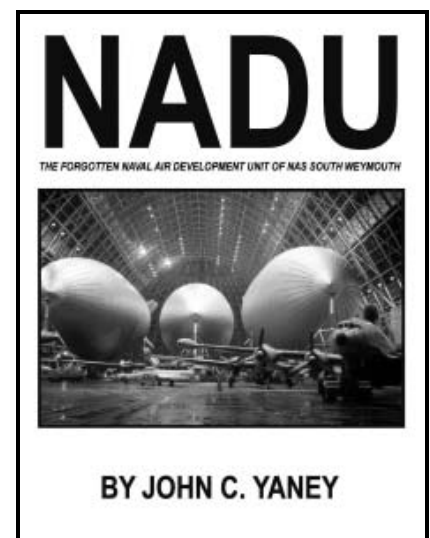


As reported in the previous VP Association newsletter, the ChiComs recently put the former Soviet Navy aircraft carrier Varyag, purchased in a partially completed state from the Ukraine in 1992, into service. The Chinese claim that the refurbished aircraft carrier, which they renamed Shi Lang, is being used for training purposes only. Well, here's what the Chinese People's Navy is training for...

The computer-generated illustration shown above is not a screen-grab from the television show "Thunderbirds", but allegedly depicts Chinese plans for a huge and totally new catamaran aircraft carrier. Note, this is just one example of how China is spending those American dollars that we've been sending their way via outsourced manufacturing. Do you suppose those cheap Walmart shirts and sneakers will prove to have been worth it in the long run?

### **RECOMMENDED READING:**

VP Association member John Yaney has recently completed a comprehensive illustrated history of the Naval Air Development Unit. NADU was a secretive regular Navy command that operated at NAS South Weymouth between 1953 and 1961 to provide aircraft to flight test classified military R&D projects. NADU was closely associated with the MIT Lincoln Labs and the SAGE (Semi-Automatic Ground Environment) air defense system. NADU operated a diverse fleet of aircraft that included jet fighters, patrol planes, radar picket planes, transports, and blimps. John's book has 571 pages and 405 illustrations. It is self-published and will not be sold in stores. To buy it on-line go to the link on the "Geedunk" page on the VP Association's web site at <http://www.vpassociation.org>. Alternatively, you can order by mail by sending a check for \$55 for the hard cover or \$40 for the soft cover version to John C. Yaney, 81 West St., Whitman MA 02382.



### **ON THE INTERNET:**

Bill Hanigan suggests that you check out a P-3 video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=55JXNDgCtLc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55JXNDgCtLc). He says that it will give you “a woodie”, whatever that means. Allan Gilman found a web site featuring many photos of retired military aircraft including lots of P-2 Neptunes at the “boneyard” at Davis Monthan AFB during the 1960s and 1970s at [www.dhc-2.com/Monthan\\_Memories.html](http://www.dhc-2.com/Monthan_Memories.html).

### **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:**

**RIGHT:** Peter Pace, who served with VA-912 and VP-911 at NAS South Weymouth between 1954 and 1960, sent along this photo of himself posed behind the tail gunner's station of a “7Z” Lockheed P2V-6M Neptune sometime during the late 1950s. The P2V-6Ms, which were originally designed as Petrel missile-armed anti-shipping aircraft, were assigned to the reserve aircraft pool at NAS South Weymouth during late 1957 to transition reserve patrol squadrons VP-911, VP-912, and VP-913 from the Consolidated P4Y-2 Privateer to the Neptune. The P2V-6Ms were not equipped with sonobuoys, MAD, or any other specialized anti-submarine warfare detection gear. The Naval Air Reserve Training Command used them mainly to familiarize reserve pilots and ground crew with the basic flight and maintenance characteristics of the Neptune. The first fully ASW-capable versions of the Neptune assigned to the Naval Air Reserve training program at NAS South Weymouth were P2V-5Fs (SP-2Es) that arrived about 1960. Got something similar to share? Contact Marc Frattasio at [marc\\_frattasio@yahoo.com](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com).



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

