



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 105

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

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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-3C Orion "Lima Yankee Nine Nine Nine" heading out for a counter-narcotics patrol from Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico in 1995. Photo provided by Jerry Lach. Got something similar to share? If so, contact Marc Frattasio at marc_frattasio@yahoo.com.

FINAL FLIGHTS:

It is our sad duty to report the recent deaths of Joe Belotti, Henry "Hank" DeStoop, and Doug Miro. All three men were in VP-92 for many years. Joe was a SELRES pilot, Hank was a TAR electronics technician, and Doug was a SELRES ordnanceman.

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.

2026 NAS BRUNSWICK BASE REUNION RAPIDLY APPROACHING:

The Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum is holding their semi-annual base reunion at old NAS Brunswick, ME on Friday and Saturday September 18th and 19th. Although you can purchase admission to the reunion itself at the door, if you want to attend the Maine seafood banquet on Saturday you must make reservations before the end of the day on Friday August 4th. To avoid possible disappointment, please go to the museum's web site at <https://bnamuseum.org> and make your reservations on-line now.

The Navy is sending a P-3C Orion, a P-8A Poseidon, and a T-54 Marlin II for certain. These aircraft will be on static display on Saturday. VX-30 is bringing the P-3 and VP-10 is bringing the P-8. The Canadians and Germans were asked to bring MPA and VR-62 was asked to send a C-130 Hercules.

Please note that by the reunion VX-30 will be the only USN command operating P-3s. The Navy has indicated that parts availability and training is becoming problematic, so the one or two P-3s operated by VX-30 will not last long. You should consider any opportunity to see and board a Navy P-3 as potentially your last. For this reason alone you should come to the NASB reunion. Don't miss out!

In addition to the static display aircraft, there will be two very interesting guest speakers there. One is a WW2 veteran of VPB-21 and the other was on the VQ-1 EP-3E Aries that collided with a Chinese J-8 interceptor and was forced to land in China during 2001. Former VP-92 COs Sean Coffey, Sean O'Neill, and Tom Reck are coming to the reunion and there may be other squadron VIPs there too.

LTCOL Darrell Davis, who many of you may remember as AO2 Darrell Davis from VP-92, will be retiring from the Army National Guard at the reunion. He'll be expecting a good turnout of his old friends and shipmates there. Don't disappoint him!

Several local hotels are providing discounted room rates for reunion attendees, and these are listed on the museum's web site. Please note that the on-line registration process is a little different this year than in previous years. The most significant change is that every person has to register separately. Although inconvenient, this is not such a big deal and if you have trouble with the process the museum provides a contact on the on-line registration form that you can reach out to for assistance. Please note that for a small fee you can reserve an eight-person table at the banquet.

Your newsletter editor will sponsor a command mini-reunion between 1 and 2 PM on Saturday September 19th in conjunction with the base reunion for former VP-92 and VP-MAU personnel. We will have some free "geedunk" type souvenirs to hand out to shipmates who come to this event, on a first-come first-served basis and while the supply lasts of course.

VXS-1 RETIRING THEIR LAST P-3 ORION ON THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17TH:

As of this writing there are only two US Navy commands operating a tiny handful of P-3s, VXS-1 at Patuxent River, Maryland and VX-30 at Point Mugu in California. On Thursday September 17th VXS-1 will retire their last P-3C Orion, leaving VX-30 as the Navy's sole P-3 operator. VXS-1 will hold an aircraft retirement ceremony in their hangar at Patuxent River at 1 PM on that date. It is your newsletter editor's understanding that anybody who is able to get on to the base will be allowed to attend the ceremony and watch VXS-1's last P-3 fly off to the famous military aircraft "boneyard" at Davis Monthan AFB. Your newsletter editor attended similar P-3 retirement events held by VP-62 and VP-30 and was made to feel very welcome. If you would like to go to the VXS-1 event and need more information, you can try calling the VXS-1 Duty Office at 202-494-1249.



**CELEBRATING
63 YEARS SERVICE**

**JOIN US ON
SEP. 17
AT 1300
HANGAR 109**

**BID FAREWELL
TO THE MIGHTY P-3C**

PSCM MOLLY BERGERON RE-ENLISTS FOR ANOTHER FOUR YEARS:

On August 13th PSCM Molly Bergeron (Merdink?) was re-enlisted for another four years in the Navy by RADM Suzzane McDermott Bailey. Some of you may recall Molly when she was a PS3 in VP-92 at NAS Brunswick. Molly and Suzzane are among the shrinking number of VP-92 people still serving in the military.

RADM SUZZANE McDERMOTT BAILEY, COMMANDANT OF NAVAL DISTRICT WASHINGTON:



On August 12th former VP-92 P-3 Orion pilot RADM Suzzane McDermott Bailey became the commandant of Naval District Washington. In her previous assignment as deputy commander of the Third Fleet, Suzzane participated in the RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific) 2026 multi-national naval exercise off the coast of Hawaii. RIMPAC 2026 involved more than thirty thousand people from over thirty countries, thirty surface ships, five submarines, and over two hundred aircraft. Suzzane is married to VP-92's last commanding officer, Scott Bailey. In the image presented here, Scott and Suzzane are shown at historic Pearl Harbor in early August as the RIMPAC exercise came to a close.

THE 2026 MINUTEMANCIPATION WEEKEND:



Over the extended weekend of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday August 7th through the 9th, a number of former VP-92 sensor operators, a few other aircrew rates, and one token NFO gathered at Marty McCormack's beach house in Green Harbor, MA for an annual event known as the Minutemancipation Weekend. Pictured here on the beach behind Marty's place, drinking a toast to the late Brian Clougher, are Scott Alexander, Tom Drapeau, Matt Sharpe, Tom Gamble, Chuck Pierce, A. J. Bucchi, Scott Andrews, Scott Savelle, Steve O'Donoghue, Randy Minet, Marty McCormack, Marc Frattasio, Ron Clemments, Rick Caesar, and Mark Hausler.

CDR CONOR O'NEILL TAKES COMMAND OF VFA-192:



Former VP-92 commanding officer Sean O'Neill, son Conor, and wife Cathy are posed with an F/A-18E Super Hornet at NAS Lemoore, CA on June 26th. On that date, CDR Conor O'Neill became the C.O. of VFA-192. So, Sean O'Neill commanded VP-92 and his son now commands VFA-192!

NAVY P-8 MAKES RARE FLIGHT OVER TAIWAN STRAIT (Stars and Stripes 8/24):

A U.S. Navy surveillance plane has flown through the Taiwan Strait for the first time in five months, drawing scrutiny from China ahead of President Xi Jinping's expected visit to the White House. The P-8A Poseidon flew Friday through international airspace over the roughly 110-mile-wide waterway separating China from Taiwan, according to the U.S. 7th Fleet.

The aircraft traveled southwest from the East China Sea to the South China Sea in what fleet spokesman Cmdr. Matthew Comer described as a "routine transit." "U.S. Navy ships and aircraft routinely use the Taiwan Strait to transit between the two and have done so for many years," he told Stars and Stripes by email Monday. The United States regularly sends warships and, less frequently, aircraft through the strait. The Navy typically describes the trips as an exercise in freedom of navigation. "The aircraft's transit of the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," Comer wrote.

The last publicly reported transit of the strait by a Navy P-8A occurred March 11. China routinely criticizes U.S. military transits of the strait as provocative. The Chinese military monitored Friday's passage, the state-run Global Times reported that day, citing unnamed military sources. Commentary published by the newspaper Sunday characterized the flight as "close-in reconnaissance" carrying "an element of military pressure." Beijing considers democratic Taiwan a breakaway province that must eventually be unified with the mainland, by force if necessary. China also claims sovereignty and jurisdiction over the Taiwan Strait.

Friday's transit came about five weeks before Xi is expected to make his first state visit to the White House since 2015. The two governments have been preparing for the visit through months of high-level talks, including a meeting last month in Manila between Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. President Donald Trump and Xi are expected to discuss issues such as Taiwan, trade concerns and technology, Reuters reported Saturday.

Stars and Stripes article by Alex Wilson

NORWAY SOFTENS RESTRICTIONS ON MONITORING RUSSIANS (Barents Observer 8/21):

The skies inside the Arctic Circle have been busy this week. On 18 August several military operations took place simultaneously. While not all aircraft were visible to civilian tracking services, some flew with their transponders switched on, allowing their movements to be followed on services such as Flightradar24.

One of the visible aircraft was an Airbus A330 MRTT (Multi Role Tanker Transport), used by NATO for air-to-air refuelling. The aircraft flew north over Norway from Cologne, Germany, before circling over Hammerfest in western Finnmark. "We had normal training with F-35 fighter jets. That included aerial refuelling," said Vice Admiral Rune Andersen, Chief of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters (NJHQ). "The Rivet Joint was part of the training that took place over Finnmark," Andersen confirmed in a telephone interview with the Barents Observer.

A Boeing RC-135W Rivet Joint is a large reconnaissance aircraft used to gather real-time electronic intelligence, track signals and monitor communications networks. The aircraft is normally based at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire, the main operating base for British airborne intelligence aircraft and systems. However, the aircraft operating on 18 August did not come from England. Instead, it took off from Ørland Air Base in Norway.

It is not the first time allied surveillance aircraft have operated from Norwegian airports. However, this flight was highly unusual, following a route the Barents Observer had not previously observed by

allied intelligence gathering planes flying out of airports in Norway. North of Finnmark, the RC-135W continued through international airspace far to the east of Murmansk — waters of strategic importance to Russia's nuclear submarine fleet. The self-imposed restrictions Norway has maintained since the Cold War included limitations on NATO surveillance missions north of the Kola Peninsula, effectively preventing such flights from operating from Norwegian airports.

The British reconnaissance aircraft was not the only British military aircraft heading east towards international airspace over the Russian sector of the Barents Sea on 18 August. A P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft, often referred to as a submarine hunter, entered the area north of the Kola Peninsula shortly after a similar Norwegian aircraft had left. Like its Norwegian counterpart, the British Poseidon operated from Evenes Air Base near Harstad in northern Norway.

Until now, British and US Poseidons have generally operated from Keflavík in Iceland or RAF Lossiemouth in north-east Scotland when flying missions north of Russia's Kola Peninsula. "This is nothing special. P-8 Poseidons regularly fly over the Barents Sea," Andersen said. The Barents Observer, however, had not previously observed British maritime patrol aircraft flying missions east of the Varanger Fjord directly from an airport in Norway.

"Norwegian policy is still to take our Russian neighbours into consideration. We have nothing other than a defensive policy," Andersen underlined. "All such flights are cleared before they take place." The Chief of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters said the air force training this week had been planned in advance and that no unusual activity had been observed from the Russian military in the north.

Russia's Sevmash shipyard is currently working with the Northern Fleet to test two brand-new submarines of considerable interest to NATO: the Yasen-M-class Perm, which is capable of carrying the hypersonic Tsirkon missile, and the Khabarovsk, a special-purpose submarine intended to carry six nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed Poseidon torpedoes. In the telephone interview, Andersen said that the air force activity around Finnmark was not connected to NATO's unusually large and diverse deployment of air assets around Kaliningrad in the Baltic region, which took place simultaneously on 18 August and was reported by Defence24.com.

On Thursday, 20 August, air force activity continued over Finnmark. A pair of F-35 fighter jets from Evenes Air Base flew over Alta and Porsanger, the newspaper iFinnmark reported. From the Barents Observer's office in Kirkenes, the contrail of a Norwegian P-8 Poseidon returning from a mission outside the Kola Peninsula was visible in the afternoon sky. Norwegian submarine-hunting aircraft usually fly without their transponders switched on when patrolling international airspace outside Russia. This contrasts with similar British and US Navy surveillance aircraft, which are often visible on Flightradar24 during missions outside Russian airspace.

It was Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, and its increasingly hostile stance towards Europe, that prompted Norway to begin easing its self-imposed restrictions on NATO training and operations. When announcing changes to the restrictions last year, Minister of Defence Tore O. Sandvik said: "We remain a predictable and responsible neighbour, committed to preserving stability and low tension in the High North."

The Ministry of Defence, however, has been careful not to highlight the individual changes as they take place. "We are working on that now. More information will come soon," State Secretary Marte Gerhardsen told the Barents Observer last spring. Since then, no official press releases on the matter have followed. The changes, however, are visible in open sources such as Flightradar24.

Barents Observer article by Thomas Nilsen

RUSSIA'S DOOMSDAY SUBMARINE SETS SAIL FOR FIRST TIME (Barents Observer 8/18):



Khabarovsk is the first of three submarines of a new class designed to carry Poseidon autonomous, long-range nuclear torpedoes. Its design is based on the hull of the Borei-class submarine, but it is significantly shorter because it lacks the section for ballistic missiles. Several Russian military blogs, including Military Review and Amalnews Military, reported that Khabarovsk put to sea on 16 August. No official information about the voyage has been published by the Sevmash shipyard or Russian state media.

Construction of the submarine began in July 2014, long before Vladimir Putin announced in 2018 that Russian engineers were developing a nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed, unmanned vehicle designed to travel across the Atlantic or Pacific and strike coastal targets in the United States. The Poseidon is a second-strike weapon, aimed at taking out the enemy after the initial phase of a nuclear war, involving an exchange of warheads. For that reason, it has been called a doomsday weapon. The Barents Observer first reported on the existence of the weapon in 2016.

Khabarovsk was launched on 1 November 2025. The submarine was initially scheduled to enter service with the Russian Navy in 2020, but construction was significantly delayed for reasons that have not been made public. Construction of a second vessel in the class, to be named Orenburg, began last year. No information has been published on when the submarine will be launched. The same is true of the third vessel, for which it is not even known whether construction has begun. What is known is that Khabarovsk will be transferred to the Pacific Fleet, where a dedicated facility for the Poseidon weapon is currently under construction.

Norway intelligence warns about new nuclear weapons technology developed by Russia. In Severodvinsk, a special port facility supports the Poseidon programme, which has been under development and testing for at least a decade. Both surface vessels and the Belgorod submarine have carried the weapon into open Arctic waters for testing. The second submarine of the Khabarovsk class is expected to serve with the Northern Fleet.

In late October 2025, dictator Vladimir Putin claimed that a successful test of the Poseidon nuclear-powered underwater drone had been carried out. “For the first time, we were able to not only launch it from a submarine using its booster engine, but also to start the nuclear power plant, where the apparatus operated for a certain period of time,” Putin said.

Khabarovsk is reportedly capable of carrying six Poseidon torpedoes. The 24-metre-long weapon is said to have a range of 10,000 kilometres and a maximum operating depth of 1,000 metres, potentially making it difficult to intercept using conventional anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

Barents Observer article by Thomas Nilsen

DENMARK TO PROCURE NEW MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT (Naval News 8/7):

Under Sub-Agreement 2 on the Arctic and the North Atlantic within the 2024–2033 Defense Agreement, it was decided that Denmark will establish a maritime patrol aircraft capability in cooperation with a NATO Ally in order to strengthen its presence in the Arctic and the North Atlantic.

Denmark has a special responsibility for security and defense in the Arctic and North Atlantic. Following the recommendation of the Chief of Defense, it has initially been decided to procure two P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft. The aircraft will strengthen Denmark's presence in the region and further increase the Danish Armed Forces' responsiveness and combat power. In recent years, the Danish Armed Forces, in close consultation with Greenland's Naalakkersuisut, have strengthened the military presence in the region. With maritime patrol aircraft, Denmark's ability to conduct sovereignty enforcement and surveillance will be significantly enhanced.

The aircraft will also support Denmark's contribution to NATO's collective defense, including force goals related to anti-submarine warfare. According to the Danish Defense Command, the aircraft will improve long range intelligence gathering and surveillance, contributing to a stronger shared situational awareness. The Danish Defense Command has begun examining opportunities for cooperation with NATO Allies on the aircraft. Such cooperation could include a joint unit located at the same air base, covering areas such as procurement, implementation, operations, maintenance and training.

The aircraft to be procured initially are Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft. Several close Allies already operate the P-8A Poseidon for surveillance and for building the maritime situational picture. The Danish aircraft will primarily be used in the Arctic and North Atlantic region.

Naval News article by Naval News Staff

A NEW KING AIR 360ER FOR MALTA's MARITIME PATROL (AIN 7/20):

Textron Aviation has handed over a Beechcraft King Air 360ER to the Armed Forces of Malta. The U.S. airframer delivered the aircraft to Aerodata in Braunschweig, Germany, where it will be outfitted with maritime patrol systems. It is due to be operational next year.



Malta's small air wing is based at Malta International Airport at the former RAF base at Luqa. The primary roles are support of army forces, maritime surveillance, border control, search and rescue, and law enforcement. The current fleet comprises three Leonardo AW139 helicopters (with another on order), an aging Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander, and three King Air 200s. The latter have been in service since 2011 and were similarly tailored for maritime surveillance by Aerodata before service entry, including installation of a Telephonics RDR-1700B search radar. One of them was exhibited at the 2012 Farnborough Airshow.

Powered by PT6A-60A engines and outfitted with Collins Aerospace Pro Line Fusion avionics, the King Air 360ER offers improved surveillance capabilities and mission range/endurance over its

predecessor. The extra capacity it brings to the air wing will aid Malta at a time when human trafficking across the Mediterranean is at a high level.

AIN article by David Donald

ROYAL NAVY INTERCEPTS RUSSIAN PATROL AIRCRAFT (USNI News 7/8):



Two Royal Navy F-35B Lightning II fighters intercepted a Russian Tu-142 Bear F Maritime Patrol Aircraft over the Norwegian Sea after it repeatedly approached aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales (R09), the U.K. Ministry of Defense announced Monday. "The aircraft flew unnecessarily close to HMS Prince of Wales, dropped multiple sonobuoys nearby, and failed to respond on international safety frequencies. This activity was unsafe and unprofessional," the Ministry of Defense said in a statement shared to its official X account.

On Thursday, two embarked F-35Bs intercepted and escorted the Tu-142 until it left the area. The U.K. Carrier Strike Group is operating in the Norwegian Sea off the coast of Iceland on Operation Firecrest. The U.K. CSG includes Prince of Wales, destroyer HMS Duncan (D37) and fleet oiler RFA Tidespring (A136). "The Carrier Strike Group continues to operate with NATO allies in the High North, reinforcing security across the Arctic and North Atlantic," reads the ministry's statement, which did not state when the incident occurred though its released images of the intercept states it as occurring on Jul. 2.

The Ministry of Defense said the Tu-142 dropped a total of 10 sonobuoys into the water, The BBC reported. Sonobuoys are used for detecting submarines. In 2022, China accused Australia of harassing a People's Liberation Army Navy task group by dropping sonobuoys from a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon MPA near its ships. Australia countered that the use of sonobuoys for maritime surveillance was common practice and that the sonobuoys were dropped a significant distance away from the PLAN ship.

The intercept was conducted by 809 Naval Air Squadron whose aircraft are flown and maintained by an equal mix of Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel, according to a Tuesday news release from the Royal Navy. The U.K. CSG is conducting air policing operations as part of the latest phase of Operation Firecrest. This is the first time NATO has conducted air policing operations from a European aircraft carrier. "Air defense is a core role for the Lightning Force and having been accredited previously from land bases, it is great to see the capability expanded further to support our allies from an embarked environment," Cmdr. Nick Smith, commanding officer of 809 Naval Air Squadron, said in the release.

Operation Firecrest is the U.K. CSG's operational deployment to the North Atlantic and High North. Prince of Wales departed from Portsmouth in April to begin the deployment. The U.K. CSG is currently operating under NATO command, supporting NATO Vigilance Activity Arctic Sentry, a multi-domain military activity launched in February that is aimed at strengthening NATO's posture in the Arctic and High North.

NATO Joint Force Command Norfolk, which leads Arctic Sentry, said that incidents like the Tu-142 intercept underscore the importance of NATO's persistent presence and integrated operations across the High North. "Together, Allies remain ready, capable, and united – demonstrating credible deterrence, strengthening collective defense and ensuring the Alliance can respond to challenges wherever they arise," reads the statement.

Meanwhile Prince of Wales' sister ship, HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08), is now serving as the flagship of NATO's Allied Reaction Force (Maritime), also known as ARF (M). The U.K. took over the leadership role from Spain with Royal Navy Rear Adm. Mark Anderson assuming command of the force. The carrier is now the Afloat Command Platform from which Anderson and his battle staff command and coordinate ARF maritime operations, if activated, during the U.K.'s 12-month duty, reads a Royal Navy news release.

At the same time the Royal Navy takes charge of the ARF(M), the U.K.'s Special Operations Forces assumed leadership of the Special Operations Component Command within the ARF for the first time, according to the release. Spearheading its maritime element are Royal Marines of 42 Commando, who form the Special Operations Maritime Task Group, which also include a range of specialist teams drawn from across the Royal Navy and U.K. Commando Force.

USNI News article by Dzirhan Mahadzir

CANADA TO SCRAP RETIRED CP-140 MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT (Flight Global 7/7):



The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) will scrap four of its retired CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft. The four-engine turboprops, which are based on the Lockheed Martin P-3 Orion anti-submarine warfare platform, were retired from service after being declared surplus between 2023 and 2025.

The CP-140s are currently in storage at 14 Wing Greenwood in the Atlantic province of Nova Scotia. They will be partially dismantled and trucked to an aircraft retirement facility in Grenville, Quebec, for disposal. That journey began on 7 July. "As they would require significant work and resources to

return to flyable status, the decision was made to dismantle and transport them by road to undergo planned disposal work,” the Department of National Defence says.

The four Auroras now headed to the scrapyard first entered service in 1980. Ten CP-140 aircraft remain in service with the RCAF, with the fleet split between 14 Wing in Nova Scotia and 19 Wing in Comox, British Columbia, on Canada’s Pacific coast.

Canada is in the process of fielding up to 16 Boeing P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, which the RCAF has designated the CP-8A. Assembly of the first 737 fuselage for the Canadian P-8 program began in February 2026 at Boeing’s aerostructures facility in Wichita, Kansas, formerly operated by Spirit AeroSystems. Delivery of the first mission-ready CP-8A is expected in 2027.

The RCAF is also acquiring a fleet of General Atomics Aeronautical Systems MQ-9B long-range patrol UAVs that will team with the P-8 fleet to monitor Canada’s vast coastlines, including Arctic territory extending as high as the North Pole. The remaining CP-140/P-3 fleet will be gradually retired, Ottawa says, as the new CP-8A jets are delivered.

Flight Global article by Ryan Finn

\$65M LAND SALE ADVANCES UNION POINT REDEVELOPMENT (South Shore Times 7/7):

The long-awaited redevelopment of the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station has taken a major step forward, with Washington Capital Management selling its land at the Base to a joint venture of Brookfield Properties and New England Development. The \$65 million sale was filed last Wednesday in Norfolk and Plymouth counties, marking a significant milestone for one of the largest redevelopment opportunities in Massachusetts. Previous attempts to develop the former military installation ran into financial challenges and failed to deliver on the full promise of the site.

The former South Weymouth Naval Air Station has played a prominent role in the region’s history for more than 80 years. Commissioned during World War II, the site was originally built to support Navy blimp operations used in coastal anti-submarine patrols. In the decades that followed, the site became an important Naval Air Reserve facility, supporting Navy and Marine Corps training before its closure in 1997. Since then, local, state and private-sector leaders have worked for decades to return the property to productive use.

New England Development and Brookfield Properties are now proposing a mixed-use redevelopment that would include 6,500 housing units, along with about two million square feet of commercial and retail space. The project spans more than 1,400 acres in Weymouth, Rockland and Abington, and is expected to become the largest residential and commercial development project in Massachusetts.

The Base redevelopment proposal earlier won a unanimous vote of support of the Weymouth City Council, and overwhelming support at Rockland and Abington Annual Town Meetings, in addition to strong state support, particularly from House Speaker Ron Mariano (who has championed the site for 30 years), and Governor Healey and Lt. Governor Driscoll. The redevelopment effort has been strengthened by the continued partnership and commitment of municipal leaders in Weymouth, Rockland, and Abington, most notably Weymouth Mayor Michael Molisse and his team. "This is a good day for Weymouth and the entire Commonwealth. It shows the kind of results that true partnership between private investment and government at the local and state level can achieve for our citizens", said Mayor Michael Molisse.

House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy), upon being advised of the closing, commented “As the Commonwealth continues to navigate a housing crisis that has forced many residents to consider

leaving Massachusetts, the redevelopment of the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station into 6,500 new homes represents the kind of development that the Commonwealth needs more of if we are going to build enough housing to stabilize costs for our residents. That's why I'm encouraged by the acquisition of additional base land by Brookfield Properties and New England Development, respected developers who have demonstrated a strong commitment to seeing this critical project all the way through to completion. I look forward to continued progress towards realizing the significant residential and commercial potential of the old Naval Air Base, and I'm grateful to everyone who has remained steadfast in their commitment to this key project."

"Lowering housing costs is my top priority, and projects like this are how we get there," said Governor Maura Healey. "This redevelopment will create thousands of new homes, support good-paying jobs and transform a long-underutilized site into an engine of opportunity for the South Shore. My administration is committed to working with local leaders and our partners to move this project forward and make it easier to build the housing Massachusetts needs."

"This is exciting progress for the South Shore and another important step toward creating more homes for Massachusetts families," said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. "Strong partnerships are helping turn a long-vacant property into new housing, economic opportunity and lasting investment that will benefit this region for generations to come."

New England Development is one of the region's top real estate and development firms, specializing in mixed-use communities, premium retail centers and high-tech lab spaces in creative, entrepreneurial approaches. Brookfield Properties is one of the world's largest real estate owners and developers—managing more than 400 million square feet of commercial space and hundreds of properties globally.

"We are excited to be moving forward with the Base—a project that will have significant benefits to the towns of Weymouth, Rockland and Abington, as well as the region, and will create job and housing opportunities so urgently needed in the Commonwealth" said John Twohig of New England Development. "The Base redevelopment will be the largest residential and commercial project in Massachusetts."

As part of the project, Weymouth, Southfield Redevelopment Authority (the governing municipality for the Base) and the Master Developer have secured more than \$35 million in state and local infrastructure funding for water, wastewater, and road improvements. A major effort is underway to connect Weymouth to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) water supply through a 6.7-mile pipeline. The Final Environmental Impact Report for the pipeline is expected by the end of 2026, with completion of the pipeline projected for 2031. In the long term, the pipeline is expected to have the capacity to provide water on a regional basis to South Shore communities.

The taxpayer benefits of the redevelopment are expected to be significant for Weymouth, Rockland, and Abington. Projected net new annual tax revenue for the three communities totals nearly \$24 million—approximately \$14 million for Weymouth and \$5 million each for Rockland and Abington. The project also includes the preservation of more than 880 acres of open and restricted space, nearly two-thirds of the Base. That land is expected to provide wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and public amenities while preserving a substantial portion of the former military site as open space. Infrastructure work is expected to begin in fall 2026.

South Shore Times article by South Shore Times Staff

CHINESE DESTROYERS GAIN ASW BOOST WITH NEW HELICOPTERS (Military Watch 7/1):



The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy has been confirmed to have brought the Z-8D helicopter into service, with the aircraft relied on primarily for anti-submarine warfare operations, but also to support amphibious assaults, search and rescue, and logistics missions. The first clear images of the aircraft emerged publicly in March 2025. The new helicopter's more advanced capabilities complement the advanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities of new generations of Chinese warships, most notably its Type 052D and Type 055 class destroyers, which can accommodate the aircraft in their rear hangars. The Z-8D is thought to have significantly more modern sensor and self-protection suites, with visible additions include missile warning sensors, laser warning receivers, radar warning equipment, and countermeasure dispensers intended to improve survivability against missile attacks, providing a much improved capability to operate in contested environments.

The Z-8's large size makes it particularly valuable for anti-submarine warfare, with the aircraft able to carry more sonobuoys, larger mission equipment, greater fuel reserves, and heavier weapons compared to lighter helicopters such as the Z-20J. This is especially important as the Navy expands its blue-water operations into the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, with the U.S. Navy and other Western navies' lack of comparably advanced destroyers to those in Chinese service resulting in an increased reliance on attack submarines for offensive maritime operations. One of the most noticeable changes to the new Z-8 variant is its redesigned fuselage and enlarged side sponsons, with its enlarged sponsons are believed to house additional fuel, increasing endurance during long maritime patrols. The helicopter also appears to feature a revised nose, updated cockpit, and improved aerodynamics compared to earlier Z-8 naval variants.

Anti-submarine warfare helicopters can significantly extend a destroyer's ability to detect, track, and destroy submarines. While even the most advanced hull-mounted sonars are constrained by a ship's position and by underwater conditions, a helicopter can rapidly investigate contacts dozens or even hundreds of kilometers away, giving the destroyer a much larger defensive and offensive reach. One of the greatest advantages of helicopters is their ability to deploy dipping sonars. Rather than relying solely on a sonar mounted in the ship's hull or a towed array trailing behind it, the helicopter can hover near a suspected submarine and lower an active sonar into the water. It can then relocate quickly and repeat the process, building an accurate picture of the submarine's position. Shipborne helicopters also carry sonobuoys, allowing them to establish wide-area acoustic search fields far beyond the range of the destroyer's sensors.

Once a submarine is located, the helicopter can attack it directly using lightweight anti-submarine torpedoes, which is often much faster than maneuvering a destroyer into weapons range. A helicopter can fly directly to the contact, release a torpedo, and begin another search while the destroyer continues its primary mission. This rapid response significantly shortens the time between detection and engagement, reducing the submarine's opportunity to escape. Helicopters also provide a destroyer with the ability to pursue submarines independently of the ship's own movements. The development of a superior anti-submarine warfare helicopter is thus particularly important as China fields what are in many respects the world's most capable destroyers, and continues to expand the numbers in service at a comparable rate to all other countries in the world combined.

Military Watch article by Magazine Editorial Staff

AIRBUS AND KAWASAKI TEAM UP FOR ASW EURODRONE VARIANT (The Aviationist 6/26):



Airbus and Kawasaki Heavy Industries have signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate on the concept of a Eurodrone development focused on the anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and maritime patrol role. The two companies will now begin work on deciding the necessary modifications to the existing U950 Eurodrone design, including considerations of required sensor and payload packages for long range ASW and other maritime missions. Conceptually tailored for Japan's defense needs, Japan itself has yet to place a firm order for such an aircraft but has held an official partner status on the wider Eurodrone program since November 2023.

Eurodrone is a twin-engine medium altitude, long endurance (MALE) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) designed to fulfil a similar role to the U.S. made MQ-9 Reaper. Compared to the Reaper, the Eurodrone is 5-6 metres larger in both length and wingspan, and features a maximum takeoff weight over twice that of the MQ-9. Eurodrone's first flight is presently scheduled for 2029. Germany is currently the lead customer with 21 aircraft on order, followed by Italy with 15 orders, then France and Spain with 12 each. The four nations are collaborating on the aircraft's development through lead contractor Airbus and manufacturers Leonardo and Dassault. France, despite criticism of the program and a change in funding plans, has confirmed that it still intends to proceed with its procurement of the type.

With a planned endurance of up to 40 hours, the Eurodrone would be ideally suited to long missions over water providing persistent ASW and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)

coverage, augmenting crewed platforms. Japan, with its direct access to vast swathes of the Pacific Ocean and proximity to China's ever-expanding submarine force, is a key focus of this development. The country already operates dozens of Kawasaki P-1 and Lockheed P-3 Orion maritime patrol aircraft, and is now beginning to commence use of RQ-4B Global Hawks for long range ISR. While the Global Hawk is more than capable of providing elements of a maritime patrol capability, it lacks any form of ASW capability or the ability to carry weapons. Meanwhile, the envisioned maritime variant of the Eurodrone is planned to be able to utilise sonobuoys and torpedoes, much like recent developments of the MQ-9. Notably, Kawasaki's press release mentions that the MoU will also include exploration of how the Eurodrone could be partnered operationally with the P-1 maritime patrol aircraft, hinting at manned-unmanned teaming (MUM-T) capabilities.

Eurodrone's twin engine configuration, a requirement stipulated by Germany for safety over urban areas, has been maligned for adding weight and complexity to the aircraft. However, for this use case, the added reliability over platforms like the MQ-9 could prove to be a huge benefit. Although drones are considered more expendable than crewed aircraft, the cost of their loss – particularly when equipped with additional ISR equipment and/or weapon loads – can still deal a blow to a force's overall capability. This is especially true when the lost aircraft are not able to be replaced in a timely fashion, as the U.S. Air Force discovered following the loss of around 20% of the entire fleet during Operation Epic Fury. The MQ-9 has been described as the 'most valuable player' in the U.S. war effort, despite often being written off as too vulnerable for modern high-intensity conflicts.

The complexities of ASW mean that crewed aircraft are almost certain to be a primary component for many years to come, but having access to uncrewed aircraft to assist with ASW taskings would lessen the workload of each ASW aircraft and allow a greater area to be screened for submarine threats. A similar evolution is happening on and under the water, with expensive submarines and ASW frigates now envisioned to simply be the tip of a wider spear that encompasses a variety of automated and remotely controlled capabilities.

The Aviationist article by Kai Greet

FIRST P-8 BUILT STARTS NEW CAREER SUPPORTING MISSILE TESTS (The War Zone 6/22):

The very first P-8A Poseidon aircraft is now assigned to Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 30 (VX-30), the "Bloodhounds." TWZ was first to report last year that VX-30 was in line to get two P-8As to support long-range missile and other testing efforts. The aircraft will help the squadron address the increasing difficulties it is facing with its aging P-3 Orion aircraft. Only a handful of P-3s remain in service anywhere in the Navy, and are becoming increasingly challenging to operate and maintain.

VX-30 shared pictures of the P-8A arriving at its home base in Point Mugu, California, on its Facebook page last week. Naval Air Station Point Mugu, part of Naval Base Ventura County, sits right on the southern California coast with direct access to the expansive Point Mugu Sea Range. The Navy and other branches of the U.S. military, as well as defense contractors, regularly use the offshore ranges for missile and other tests, which the Bloodhounds support. Aircraft from VX-30 also often deploy to other locations around the world to support test and evaluation activities, including in other U.S. military range complexes in the Pacific Ocean around Hawaii and in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Florida.

As noted, the P-8A now assigned to VX-30 is actually the very first Poseidon ever built and is also known as T-1. The aircraft, which made its maiden flight in 2009, was used for years to support the Poseidon program. The Bloodhounds are also in line to get the second test P-8A, which is also still referred to as T-2. We will come back to this in a moment.



VX-30 already operates a variety of planes specially configured to support test missions, including the aforementioned P-3s. The unit also has KC-130T Hercules tanker/ transports, as well as its one-of-a-kind NC-20G and NC-37B jets. The NC-37B was specifically acquired to replace one of the squadron's NP-3D Orions, a variant nicknamed the "Billboard" because of its heavily modified tail. The NC-20G and the NC-37B reflect a larger push to revamp the Bloodhounds' fleets in recent years.

Collectively, VX-30's aircraft are equipped with a mix of radars, cameras, and other equipment to collect imagery, telemetry, and other data during tests. They have communications and data-sharing suites to be able to pass information along to test facilities on land to aid with live monitoring and for deeper analysis.

Aircraft assigned to VX-30 are also used for what is called range surveillance and clearance missions to keep unwanted visitors and errant bystanders out of the way in the air and down below during tests. This is where the P-8As will come in, at least initially. "Both aircraft will perform the Range Surveillance & Clearance mission as well as dedicated testing for Naval Air Systems Command programs supported by P-3 today," a NAVAIR spokesperson told TWZ last year. "T-1, the airworthiness P-8 aircraft, will have a radar modification to integrate an APY-10 in the airframe, as one does not currently exist. This will provide T-1 with a supportable radar configuration and capability that mirrors the baseline P-8 fleet. T-2 will be unmodified."

Raytheon's AN/APY-10 is the standard maritime search radar used on the P-8A, and is primarily designed to spot and track vessels on the surface, as well as masts belonging to submerged submarines protruding above the waves. It also has a synthetic aperture radar (SAR) mode that allows it to capture still images, even through cloud cover, smoke, and dust, and at night. The SAR mode is one of several capabilities of the P-8As that allows it to be used for surveillance in coastal environments and over land, as well as while flying over open bodies of water.

Standard Poseidon aircraft also have a sensor turret with electro-optical and infrared full-motion video cameras, as well as signals intelligence capabilities. The P-8A's core capabilities are well suited to the range surveillance and clearance mission. In an unmodified form, the Poseidon's other sensors might be capable of gathering additional visual and other data during testing, as well.

NAVAIR has also left the door open to potentially modify VX-30's 'new' P-8As in the future to take on an expanded role with the squadron. The Poseidon is based on the Boeing 737 airliner, and offers swap space that could accommodate additional systems down the line. The Navy already operates several more deeply modified P-8s with additional intelligence-gathering capabilities. Those aircraft are notably capable of carrying the AN/APS-154 Advanced Airborne Sensor (AAS), a large podded active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, under their fuselages. Boeing has developed other add-on sensor packages for the P-8A over the years, as well.

Unlike the P-3, the P-8A also has the ability to refuel in mid-air via boom-equipped tankers. That is another capability VX-30 might be able to leverage to enable longer-duration flights, whether in support of range surveillance and clearance or other missions. Overall, the "P-8 will go a long way to enabling range support operations and will provide new opportunities for future developmental programs," the NAVAIR spokesperson told us last year.

On top of the P-8A's inherent capabilities, even the older test jets are just younger and more modern, in general, than the P-3s that make up the core of VX-30's fleet today. The Navy took delivery of its last new-production P-3C variant in 1990, and Lockheed (now Lockheed Martin) shuttered the line afterward. This means the very youngest Orion is 36 years old now. As noted, the Navy has been steadily withdrawing Orions from service in recent years.

Several Navy test squadrons do continue to operate P-3s, but that's becoming an increasingly more complex proposition. This is not just because of the maintenance demands of aging aircraft that are no longer in widespread U.S. service, but also the availability of trained aircrews. As part of the transition of active and reserve Navy maritime patrol squadrons from the P-3 to the P-8, the service no longer has a Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) for the Orion. FRSs are the Navy's 'school houses' that provide training specific to particular aircraft types to aviators and ground personnel before they are sent to operational units. VX-30 now has to do that training in-house.

"The two P-8s will reduce sustainment costs and increase availability over the four P-3 aircraft VX-30 currently flies. P-8s also help alleviate P-3 manning challenges now that the FRS and operational squadrons have all transitioned to P-8 or decommissioned," the NAVAIR spokesperson told us last year. "P-3 aircraft require a Flight Engineer crew position, and as the P-3 model manager, the return on time invested to train incoming pilots or qualify Flight Engineers in the P-3 is rapidly diminishing for VX-30's primary missions."

It remains to be seen whether the configurations of T-1 and T-2 might evolve in the coming years to expand their ability to support testing over the Point Mugu Sea Range or elsewhere globally. In the meantime, T-1's arrival already marks a new chapter for VX-30 and the Navy's oldest P-8A Poseidon.

The War Zone article by Joseph Trevithick

US EXPANDS OPERATIONS AT PORTUGAL'S LAJES AIR BASE (The Resident 6/21):



The United States is investing in new infrastructure at Portugal's Azores military air base, Lajes, on Terceira Island, just as the Pentagon has announced it is reducing the U.S. military footprint elsewhere in Europe. Expresso explains the move is 'all about anti-submarine warfare operations', in the context of 'growing underwater threats' seemingly posed in the Atlantic, "including emerging Russian and Chinese nuclear-powered underwater drones".

The plan centers on "preparing for the possibility of deploying Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft to Lajes". Construction work is already under way on Building 705 within the complex to accommodate additional personnel and support anti-submarine warfare operations. The project forms part of a broader effort to enhance surveillance, says the paper, adding that the U.S. Navy maintained at least four P-8A Poseidon aircraft at Lajes in May during operations linked to the conflict in Iran. There was even one filmed arriving at the base on June 1 (The Asas dos Açores Facebook page is a font of information on the scale of aircraft passing through Lajes). In the case of maritime patrol aircraft, the Poseidon's passing through Lajes were "at times joined by two French Bréguet Atlantique aircraft, also specialized in anti-submarine warfare", says Expresso. This expansion follows "a decade of drastic reduction" in U.S. military personnel deployed at the base. Normally, a P-8A Poseidon operates with a crew of around nine people (pilots, tactical operations officers, and sensor operators) and requires 40 to 80 ground personnel per aircraft, although it has still not been possible to determine the scale of the proposed operation, the paper adds.

The investment predates the Trump administration's current strategic review of U.S. military deployments: in August 2024, U.S. contractor CMS Corporation was awarded an \$11.4 million (€10 million) contract to modernize facilities at Lajes. The company says only around 30% of the project has been completed. The works include a complete refurbishment of Building 705, support facilities for Poseidon operations, additional equipment storage areas and a dedicated post-flight aircraft washing system designed to remove corrosive salt deposits from aircraft operating at low altitude over the ocean. Military analysts say the upgrades reflect the growing concern over submarine activity in the Atlantic – and the vulnerability of undersea communications infrastructure. As we have

all been told on several occasions in the past few years, roughly 95% of global digital data traffic is carried through submarine cables, many of which pass through Portuguese waters.

Retired admiral Henrique Gouveia e Melo (and a former contender for President of the Republic) has long held that the Azores could become a central hub for Atlantic surveillance. He revealed that during discussions with senior U.S. Navy officials while serving as Chief of Staff of the Portuguese Navy, the possibility of basing P-8A aircraft in the Azores was already under consideration. While Gouveia e Melo believes the aircraft are more likely to operate through rotational deployments than a permanent detachment, military historian António José Telo argues that a long-term presence would be logical, given the continuous need to monitor submarine movements and maintain networks of sonar buoys used to detect underwater activity. “The Atlantic surveillance system must be reviewed jointly by Europe, the United States and Canada,” Telo tells *Expresso*, warning that nuclear-powered underwater drones have reached the point where they can travel “several times around the world” without recharging their batteries.

The growing U.S. focus on the Azores comes when it is otherwise urging European allies to assume greater responsibility for their own security, and when the government of the Azores is actually calling for a review of the cooperation agreement with the United States, for its use of Lajes. Gouveia e Melo has in the past suggested that NATO partners should increase their role at Lajes, transforming the base into a more multinational facility shared by both European and American forces.

U.S. Ambassador to Portugal John Arrigo also publicly highlighted concerns about protecting critical communications infrastructure earlier this year, warning that Portugal cannot afford to neglect the security of transatlantic data links. *Expresso* adds that neither the U.S. Navy nor the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon commented on the expansion plans when the paper approached them for its story. The Portuguese Air Force, which commands the base, said it continues to maintain permanent surveillance and control of Portugal’s maritime and airspace responsibilities around the Azores, using its own P-3 Orion maritime patrol aircraft.

The Resident article by Natasha Donn

NAVY PLANS TO FLY P-8s FROM REMOTE WAKE ISLAND THIS YEAR (Stars & Stripes 6/11):

The U.S. Navy wants to use the airfield on tiny Wake Island for operations involving P-8 Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft, according to a contract solicitation by the service. The Navy is planning to use the island’s airfield for two 60-day periods between Friday and Nov. 30 for what the solicitation describes as “Navy Summer Exercise 2026.” The P-8 aircraft will be operated by Task Force 72, which leads reconnaissance and surveillance forces in support of the Navy’s Japan-based 7th Fleet, according to the solicitation documents.

Wake Island, just under 3 square miles, lies about 2,300 miles west of Honolulu and 1,500 east of Guam. It has no permanent residents. The U.S. Air Force maintains and operates the island’s 9,800-foot-long runway. The scope of work being contracted by the Navy includes extensive airfield operations support, such as extending airfield hours for the P-8 missions, providing air traffic control, fueling support and daily weather observations. The contractor would also process and screen passengers, manage cargo operations and provide meals and berthing for up to 150 personnel. The 7th Fleet declined to provide details on the exercise in a statement emailed Tuesday.

“The Navy continues to maintain the operational use of the airfield on Wake Island to include support for the P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft,” the fleet said. “It is Navy policy not to discuss future operations or movements due to operations security.” The Navy’s massive Rim of the Pacific exercise will take place in waters around Hawaii from June 24 through the end of July.

Other Navy exercises in the Pacific this year include Pacific Vanguard in the late summer in the Philippine Sea and Malabar in late fall in the Western Pacific or Indian Ocean.

Wake Island was held by the Japanese through the entirety of World War II after capturing it on Dec. 23, 1941. During most of the Cold War it served as a logistical hub. In recent years it has been used as a refueling depot for military missions and assisting in missile testing. In 2020, the Air Force launched an \$87 million project to upgrade and modernize the runway and adjacent facilities to accommodate the service's C-17 Globemaster III cargo planes.

Stars & Stripes article by Wyatt Olson

MQ-9B SEAGUARDIAN SHOWS OFF SONOBUOY PODS FOR ASW (The Aviationist 5/30):

An MQ-9B Sea Guardian Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) has been shown with four Sonobuoy Dispensing System (SDS) pods on May 27, 2026, amid the aircraft's conversion for an Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) role. While the SeaGuardian has been tested for the ASW role for a few years now, almost all renditions and images so far have shown it with only two SDS pods.



GA-ASI had hinted at the use of all the four pods in a December 2025 test, which saw the SeaGuardian become the first unmanned system to drop Multi-static Active Coherent (MAC) sonobuoys. However, the officially released image showed the RPA with only two pods, although it is unclear if the picture in the press release was captured during that test. The latest frontal image of the SeaGuardian, showing the four pods facing diagonally, was released on the occasion of the Canada Security (CANSEC) 2026 exhibition, which was held from May 27 to 28. The RPA is also carrying another pod on the centerline, which can host either a Leonardo Seaspray 7500E V2 or a Raytheon SeaVue maritime search multi-mode radar.

Renderings and images with the radar pod on the centerline have appeared with only two SDS pods. The MQ-9B appears thus able to haul the payload of five pods, however it might have to sacrifice range and endurance. The SeaGuardian can fly for anywhere between 24 to 40 hours, depending on the payload. According to GA-ASI's product catalogue page on the SDS and the Sonobuoy Monitoring and Control System (SMCS), each SDS can carry up to 10 U.S. Navy standard 'A' size sonobuoys or 20 'G' size sonobuoys. This gives the drone the capability to carry 40 'A' size or 80 'G' size sonobuoys, depending on the number of SDS pods it would be lugging. An empty SDS weighs 132 kg, and 340 kg after being packed with sonobuoys.

In the December 2025 test, GA-ASI said that the pods installed on the aircraft were "more than previously tested, doubling the number of sonobuoys available." This suggested the MQ-9B SeaGuardian in that test carried four SDS pods, however, as we mentioned, the accompanying image showed the aircraft in a hangar with only two SDS pods. That trial saw the SeaGuardian

become the first UAV to test Mutli-Static Active Coherent (MAC) sonobuoys, with the AN/SSQ-125 underwater sensors. Including a January 2025 trial, GA-ASI has also conducted tests with the AN/SSQ-36 Bathothermal, the passive AN/SSQ-53G Directional Frequency Analysis and Recording (DIFAR) and the active AN/SSQ-62F Directional Command Activated Sonobuoy System (DICASS) sonobuoys from the MQ-9B's SDS.

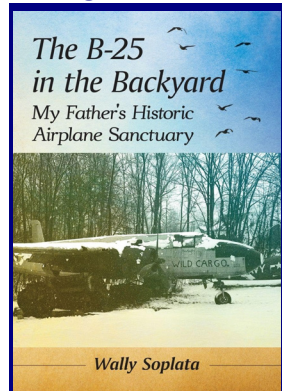
The press release from GA-ASI highlighted the effective combination of SDS and the Sonobuoy Monitoring and Control System (SMCS) on the MQ-9B SeaGuardian, while also offering the standard maritime surveillance, reconnaissance and battlespace awareness capability. "When combined with MQ-9B SeaGuardian's proven multi-domain sensors, the aircraft provides seamless coverage of the complete maritime environment, from the air to the surface, and now to the depths of the ocean," says the company. "SeaGuardian with the GA-ASI ASW System enables persistent submarine tracking while simultaneously maintaining maritime battlespace awareness. SDS pods and SMCS empower naval forces operating SeaGuardian to continuously guard crucial waterways, shipping lanes, chokepoints, and allied forces against the ever-increasing threat of submarines—all with a significant reduction in personnel and equipment, and at greatly reduced cost and risk compared to manned alternatives."

This comes as GA-ASI and Saab announced last week the first flight of an MQ-9B with Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) pods developed by the latter. The evolution of the MQ-9B into an ASW and AEW&C platform also comes as the drone showed its vulnerability in conventional warfare, with nearly 30 lost to Iranian air-defense and surface-strike fires, according to Air and Space Forces Magazine. ASF also quoted U.S. Air Force chief Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach who, in a May 20 appearance before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), still celebrated the MQ-9 as the "most valuable player" in Operation Epic Fury. Wilsbach pointed to its unmanned operation and ability to loiter far beyond the limitations of human endurance that nevertheless helped strike many Iranian ground targets and surface-to-air missile systems.

ASW and AEW&C moreover are even less riskier roles, with the aircraft operating at even greater distances from an enemy's weapons engagement zone, over friendly territory, and possibly not-so-distant from friendly assets. A single MQ-9 costs anywhere between \$16-30 million, depending on the variant, and how it is kitted out. A single MQ-9B SeaGuardian, acting in concert with P-8A Poseidon ASW maritime patrol aircraft and MH-60R naval helicopters, can significantly widen and prolong a search area unburdening the manned platforms, while also offering standard optical maritime surveillance.

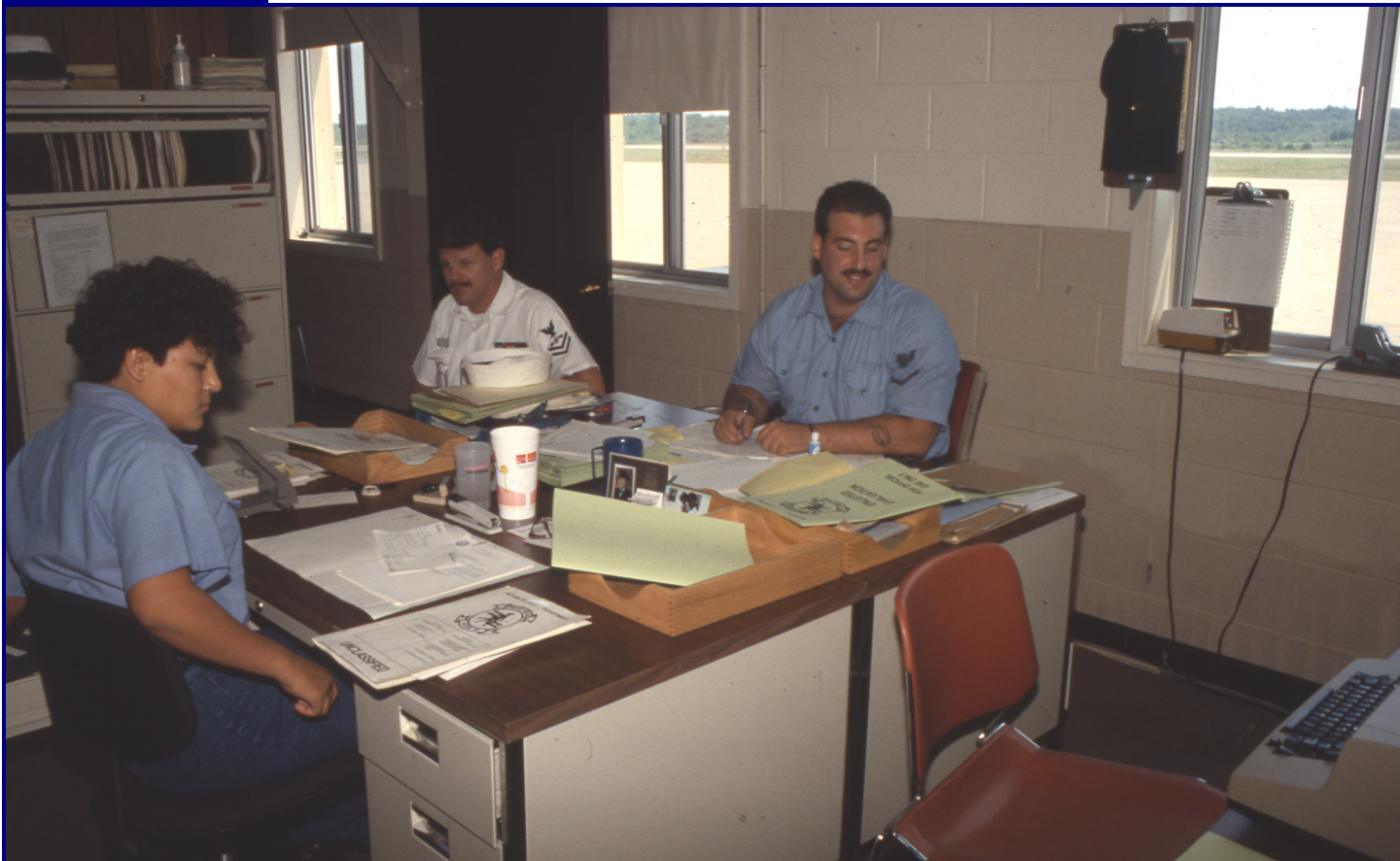
The Aviationist article by Partha Satam

RECOMMENDED READING:

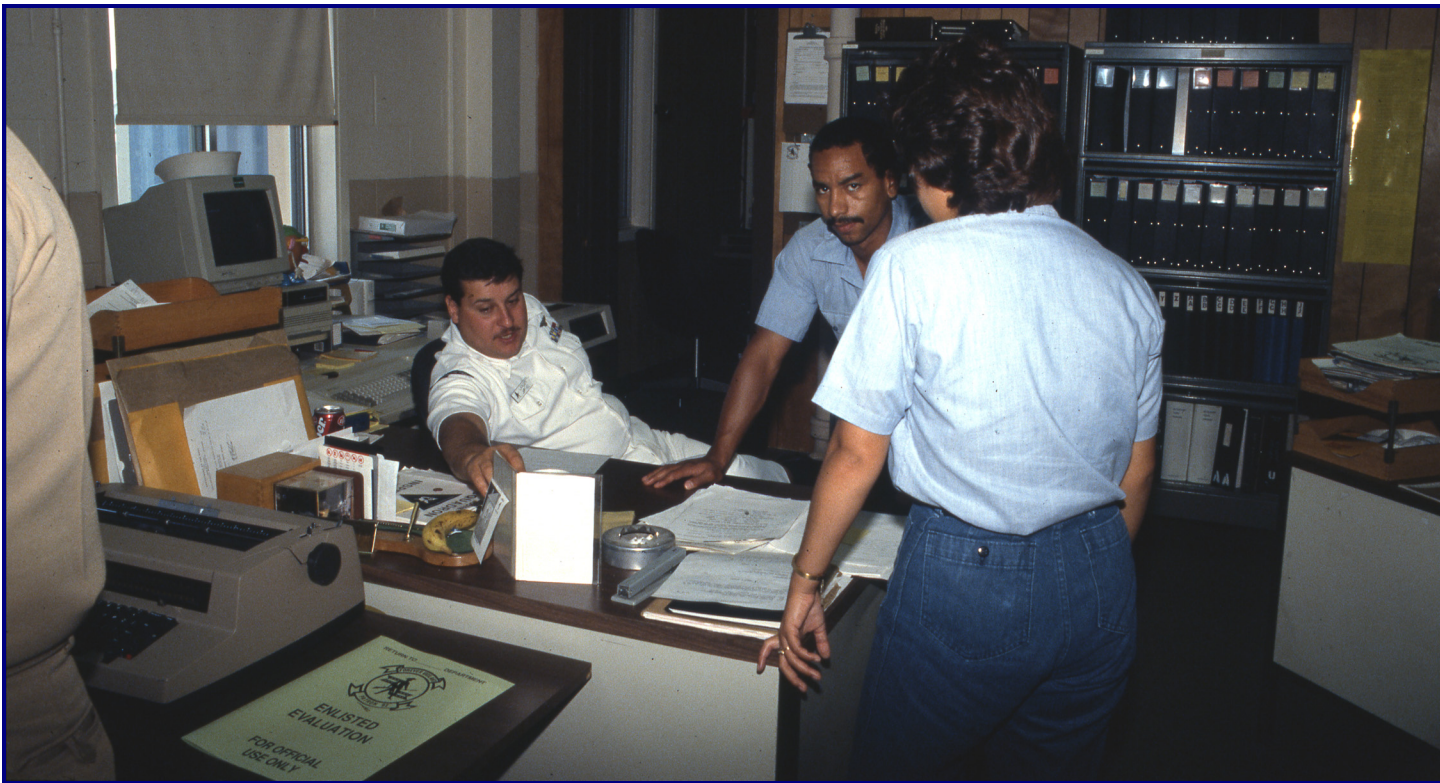


This is a very interesting book about the Walter Soplata aircraft collection written by Soplata's only son, Walter Jr. For those who are not familiar with the story or situation, the elder Soplata was a man of very modest means who managed to accumulate a huge collection of vintage military aircraft and major components of military aircraft during the 1950s and 1960s. These aircraft, in various states of deterioration, were scattered across his rural property in Ohio. He had incredible things, including the sliced up fuselage of a B-36 bomber. The B-25 in the Backyard (ISBN 978-1476680668) can be purchased through Amazon or any other bookstore.

PARTING SHOTS:



ABOVE: VP-92 AT shop at NAS South Weymouth circa 1995. **BELOW:** VP-92 admin office at NAS South Weymouth circa 1995. Both photos provided by David Gilliland.





ABOVE: VP-92 ordnancemen loading a MK-46 torpedo into the bomb bay of a P-3C Orion at NAS Roosevelt Roads on Puerto Rico during a two week annual training period sometime in the late 1990s. Photo provided by Jerry Lach. Have something similar to share? Contact Marc Frattasio at marc_frattasio@yahoo.com.

One Last thing. Let's try to get a great turnout for the upcoming VP-92 and VP-MAU squadron mini-reunion at the NAS Brunswick base reunion on September 19th. If you can make it, please plan on coming!



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

