



# 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 92**

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

**JUN 2023**

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](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com).

## **RECCO:**



**ABOVE:** VP-MAU P-3C parked outside the VP hangar at NAS Rota, Spain during the late 1980s after the Navy removed all squadron markings and numbers from aircraft in the wake of the air strikes on Libya. Got something similar to share? Contact Marc Frattasio at [marc\\_frattasio@yahoo.com](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com).

## **FINAL FLIGHTS:**

Many recent deaths to report among shipmates, unfortunately. Colby Rottler reports that Bill Dobbs and Bob Zemaitas have passed away. Alan Gilman reports that Verian Beebe passed away after a time in hospice care. Jim Fitzgerald reports that David O'Donnell and Richard "Dickie" Vecchiarello have also passed away. All of these men served in VP-92.

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

If you have an e-mail address and get your newsletter in the mail please contact George Driscoll at [gnddriscoll@gmail.com](mailto:gnddriscoll@gmail.com) ASAP so we can send it to you via e-mail. Remember, we do not charge

dues and operate on a shoestring thanks to volunteer labor, memorabilia sales, and donations. If you have an e-mail address and get a paper newsletter it would be better for us to send it via e-mail.

**LOST CONTACT:**

Be sure to inform George Driscoll at [gnddriscoll@gmail.com](mailto:gnddriscoll@gmail.com) about home or e-mail address changes.

**A NOTE AND A PHOTO FROM STEVE McDEVITT:**

Here's a picture of VP-92's CAC-11 on deployment in the Azores in 1986. There were two PBY Catalinas at that time that re-created the historic flight of the Navy's NC-4 flying boat across the Atlantic Ocean to help commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of naval aviation. They landed at NAS South Weymouth in place of the long-gone naval air station at Chatham, Massachusetts. They also landed at NAF Lajes. We took our crew photo in front of this one that was owned by Connie Edwards. I actually got a chance to pilot the other PBY at an air show a few years back. I also flew a TBM Avenger for the 100th Anniversary of Naval Aviation for the season.



In the photo presented above from left to right are Bobby Vallancourt, Jimmy Wing, Dick White, Jimmy "Fitzy" Fitzgerald, Bill Bradley, Jim Cunningham, Paul "Lumpy" Lancaster, Harry O'Keefe, Steve "Magoo" McDevitt, Wally Gorman, and Ed Rodgers. I'm enjoying retirement in Florida now, and a few weeks ago, connected with Donny MacPeek.

## **CAPT SUZZANE KRAUSE IS THE NEW COMMANDING OFFICER OF CAMP LEMONNIER:**



Suzzane Kraus, who was a pilot in VP-92 during the squadron's final years, is still serving in the USNR and recently became the CO of Camp Lemonnier in the East African nation of Djibouti. She'll be out there for about a year. As you should know, Suzzane is the other half of Scott Bailey, who was the last CO of VP-92. See the USN press release reproduced in the pages that follow for details.

## **VP-30 RETIRING ITS LAST P-3 ORION ON JUNE 23rd:**

VP-30 will be sending its last P-3 Orion to the boneyard at Davis-Monthan AFB in late June. Afterwards, the only P-3s remaining in US Navy service will be a handful operated by VXS-1 at NAS Patuxent River, MD and by VX-30 and VQ-1 at NAS Whidbey Island, WA. The P-3s operated by VXS-1 and VX-30 are used for Research & Development. VQ-1, which operates the similar Lockheed EP-3E Aries in the electronic surveillance role, uses its P-3s as "bounce birds". VP-30 is hosting a "sundown" ceremony to send its last P-3 off on Friday June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The ceremony will start at 9 AM at the VP-30 hangar on NAS Jacksonville, FL. Anybody who can get on to the base is welcome to come. Work schedule permitting, your newsletter editor intends to fly from Boston to JAX for the day to participate in this historic event. Everybody else who can do this should come too. VP-30's last P-3 appears to be BuNo 161404. This aircraft was assigned to VP-92 between 1996 and 1999. Thus, there is a very strong VP-92 connection to this sad event.

**Be a part of history!** PATROL SQUADRON THIRTY

Please join us for the historic sundown of the P-3C held by VP-30. Witness the send off of the last P-3C ever to be stationed at NAS Jacksonville!

**VP-30 Hangar**  
Friday 23 June 2023  
Time: 0900  
Notice: Entry to NAS Jacksonville will be attendee's personal responsibility.

## **VP-92 GETTING A MEMORIAL BENCH AT THE BRUNSWICK NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM!**



In early May former Minutemen Scott Fuller and Kevin Cahill organized a fund-raising campaign through the VP-92 Alumni Facebook group to purchase a bench to commemorate the squadron in perpetuity at the Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum. Thanks to the generosity of many of your old shipmates, the necessary \$15,000 was raised within a week. Our bench will look similar to the mockup shown here. The museum has already ordered it, and hopes to have it in time for the upcoming NAS Brunswick base reunion. Anybody want to organize a fund-raising campaign to obtain a bench for the VP-MAU?

## **THE 2023 NAS BRUNSWICK REUNION:**

The NAS Brunswick base reunion is approaching. This event, which is being organized as a fund-raiser by the Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum, will be held on old NAS Brunswick, ME on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday September 15<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup>. There will be events scheduled on each day, with the main event being a Maine seafood and steak banquet on Saturday. The Navy has also agreed to provide static display aircraft on Saturday if operational commitments allow it. VP-62 is sending a P-8, VX-30 is sending a P-3, and the training command is sending a T-6 and T-44. You can pay for admission to the reunion upon arrival, if you prefer, but if you intend to attend the banquet advance reservations are required. For more details, and to make reservations for the banquet, go to <https://bnamuseum.org>. Please do not wait until the last minute to get banquet reservations. The caterer, Cook's Seafood, has an 800-person limit and reservations will be taken first-come first-served until the cutoff, and then no more will be taken. Nearly 1,000 people showed up for the last NAS Brunswick reunion, which is twice what the organizers expected. To avoid possible disappointment, if you intend to go to the banquet please make your reservations immediately.

## **VP-MAU AND VP-92 MINI-REUNION:**

As we did two years ago for the last NAS Brunswick base reunion, your newsletter editor is sponsoring a combined VP-92 and VP-MAU mini-reunion in conjunction with the larger event. The VP-92 and VP-MAU mini-reunion will be held in the Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum's main exhibition hall from 11 AM to noon on Saturday September 16<sup>th</sup>. All former VP-92 and VP-MAU personnel and their guests are welcome, and there is no extra charge for the mini-reunion, but please note that you have to have purchased admission to the base reunion to come.

The mini-reunion will provide an opportunity for former VP-92 and VP-MAU personnel to connect at the NAS Brunswick base reunion. There were nearly 1,000 people at the last NAS Brunswick base reunion in 2021 and many more are expected to show up this year.

There will be some specially commissioned "geedunk" handed out to former VP-92 and VP-MAU personnel at the mini-reunion, while the supply lasts. The last time we handed out a package containing VP-92 or VP-MAU challenge coins, key chains, squadron insignia pins, and "zap" stickers. This year we'll hand out something completely different, but they will be things that we think you will really like. We want to bring enough stuff for everybody, but we also don't want to order too much. To avoid purchasing too much, or too little, we need to know how many VP-92 and VP-MAU alumni are coming. So, if you are planning to come to the mini-reunion please contact your newsletter editor at [marc\\_frattasio@yahoo.com](mailto:marc_frattasio@yahoo.com) so we can get as accurate a count as possible.

The "geedunk" will be handed out on a first-come first-served basis while the supply lasts. Once the last of these giveaways have been handed out, there won't be any more. To avoid potential

disappointment, if you are planning to come and were in VP-92 or the VP-MAU, please let us know before August 1<sup>st</sup>. We have to give the suppliers at least six weeks advance notice to allow enough time for the items we intend to order to be produced and shipped.

### **NATO HAS A RUSSIAN SUBMARINE PROBLEM (Newsweek 5/13):**

Russia's navy has taken a battering in the war with Ukraine, with a number of several high-profile humiliations, including the sinking of the Black Sea flagship, the Moskva, in the early days of the war. A vivid show of a declining surface fleet, the real threat Russia's military poses to NATO lurks elsewhere. The bulk of Russia's seafaring investment has been channeled into its high-tech submarine fleet. Russia's subs are widely considered to be a formidable force, and the U.S., along with its NATO allies, neglecting the war beneath the waves has left the alliance struggling to make up ground.

"Russia has massively invested in its underwater capability since 2014, first of all submarines," former Ukrainian First Deputy Chief of Defense and Chief of Staff of the Ukrainian Navy, retired Admiral Ihor Kabanenko told Newsweek, pointing to a slew of new Russian nuclear and conventional submarines being commissioned in the past decade. Questions remain about how well Russia has maintained its untested underwater fleet, but a consensus shows a distinct Western wariness of Moscow's capabilities, not least its 11 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), with the Borei-A class vessels. Russia also has its nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines (SSGNs), including its Yasen-class subs, in its underwater arsenal.

NATO's anti-sub capabilities, meanwhile, have "atrophied following the end of the Cold War and as attention had strayed elsewhere," Nick Childs, senior fellow for naval forces and maritime security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) think tank, told Newsweek. Finland's accession to the alliance, with Sweden's membership on the horizon, has brought the Russian submarine question into sharper focus. The inclusion of these Nordic countries into NATO not only expands Russia's borders with the alliance by hundreds of miles, but threatens the security of its critical maritime bases.

The Kola Peninsula, where Russia bases its key Northern Fleet and much of its nuclear deterrent, has always been "the most important military area for the old Soviet Union, the Russian Federation today," according to Mark Grove, a senior lecturer at the University of Lincoln's Maritime Studies Center at the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth, U.K. This Arctic region could become the frontline of tensions again as relations between Moscow and the NATO bloc become more strained. "The enlargement of NATO, in the minds of the Russians, undoubtedly raises concerns about the viability and the security of those facilities, and indeed, of the Northern Fleet itself," he told Newsweek.

NATO's inclusion of Finland, and soon Sweden, pulls the alliance closer to the peninsula. This may mean Russian submarine bases fall under "potential long-range artillery," according to Graeme P. Herd, of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. But the same principle applies to Russia's Baltic Fleet, housed in Russia's Kaliningrad region between Lithuania and Poland. NATO's Nordic expansion had an "enormous effect" there, Grove said, effectively turning the Baltic into what he called a "NATO lake." "It means that the Russian Baltic fleet, which is a much diminished force, compared to its Soviet predecessor, anyway, looks extremely vulnerable," Grove added. Newsweek has reached out to NATO for comment.

The Ukraine war, spurring Helsinki's and Stockholm's NATO applications, therefore changes the maritime situation not just in the Black Sea, but in the Barents Sea around the Kola Peninsula, the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea. And these are "significant and potentially long-lasting changes,"

Kabanenko said. It is in this context that Moscow's subs have been moving along "strange routes," deviating from the trajectories Western defense officials have come to expect, British defense minister Ben Wallace noted during a trip to Washington, D.C. in mid-April. He said the U.K. had been tracking the paths of Russian undersea vessels in the North Atlantic, Irish Sea and North Sea "that they normally wouldn't do."

Russian nuclear-powered submarines have also been spotted "off the coast of the United States and into the Mediterranean and elsewhere along European periphery," Michael Petersen, director of the Russia Maritime Studies Institute at the U.S. Naval War College, previously told Newsweek. But Russian submarines are not just a strategic nuclear deterrent. A new submarine war is emerging, experts say, bringing maritime security concerns into the world of "seabed warfare."

The head of the U.K.'s armed forces, Sir Tony Radakin, suggested at the beginning of the year that Moscow could "put at risk and potentially exploit the world's real information system, which is undersea cables that go all around the world". Speaking to The Times of London in January, he said there had been a "phenomenal increase in Russian submarine and underwater activity" and Russia has "grown the capability to put at threat those undersea cables and potentially exploit those undersea cables."

But this emerging tactic is one rooted in changes in Russian military thinking in the early part of the 21st century. "There was an understanding that you simply can't compete on terms of scale with the West, and so the Russians developed an idea of integrated warfare," reinvented from Soviet days, U.K. politician and Russian military strategy expert Bob Seely told Newsweek.

Russia looked towards asymmetrical warfare and at nurturing new capabilities where Moscow could undercut Western military dominance, which could mean targeting internet cables and pipelines, Seely added. Areas in the North Sea, including oil extraction operations, appear to be increasingly monitored by Russian submarines, Paul van Hooft, a senior strategic analyst at the Hague Center for Strategic Studies (HCSS), told Newsweek. Seabed warfare of this type is an area in which Russia has "invested considerable amounts," Childs said, focusing on technology such as special-mission submarines. It is also an area "in which it is dawning on NATO governments that they need to invest more in countering such threats," Childs said.

"This is something definitely that we've been slow to appreciate," Grove agreed. The modern world runs on these underwater cables, which are out of sight but of huge importance, he said. With a growing anxiety around undersea fibre optic connections and energy pipelines after last year's Nord Stream explosion, experts say decision-makers have finally appreciated the threat is a real and present one, and are "giving considerable assets to this."

In February, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced the creation of a Critical Undersea Infrastructure Coordination Cell, spurred on by the Nord Stream explosion and the "vulnerability of undersea energy pipelines and communication cables." "In response, NATO allies have significantly increased their military presence around key infrastructure, including with ships and patrol aircraft," the alliance said in a press release. "It is clear that this kind of asymmetric Russian underwater activities are taking on an increasingly prominent role in maritime strategic visions," Kabanenko said.

The underwater battle, with its submarines, increasing use of uncrewed underwater technology, and asymmetric warfare, should absolutely be a concern for NATO, experts say. Overall, NATO navies are "collectively significantly stronger than Russia's" but anti-submarine warfare, in all of its forms, is a "challenging business," Childs said. A concerted change has taken place in NATO consciousness in

recent years, experts say, waking up to what Frederik Mertens, another strategic analyst at the HCSS, called a "uniquely threatening weapons system."

Back during Cold War-era relations, the "most hot it got was underwater," Mertens told Newsweek. Yet after the simmering tensions of the 20th century, NATO countries looked away from the war underneath the waves, experts say. Moscow, however, did not. Throughout the past 30 years, NATO countries "were not particularly thinking about it," his colleague Van Hooft added, while NATO states saw the strategic landscape "too much through our own eyes" since the 1990s and "failed to study potential adversaries," Seely said.

Although Russia could not produce significant numbers of advanced submarines at the time, Moscow did invest in new submarine designs, Grove said. Despite Russia's relatively few submarines, they are what is known as a force multiplier, Grove added, meaning Moscow's fleet can have a "strategic effect out of all proportion to that small number." In recent years, "NATO navies have spent a lot of time and effort reviving their anti-submarine warfare skills and capabilities," Childs said. This includes initiatives such as new maritime patrol aircraft that have a "good capability to track submarines."

Yet NATO may still be hard-pressed to keep track of even small numbers of submarines for a long period of time, experts argue, although opinion is split on just how ready NATO now is to confront one of Russia's strongest military arms. "There's definitely space for improvements," Dmitry Gorenburg of the Center for Naval Analyses, a U.S. think tank, told Newsweek. Taking nuclear weapons and destruction out of the equation, "the Russian submarine threat is the greatest threat that Russia poses to NATO," Gorenburg added. However, there is now "definitely an appropriate level of awareness of the threat," he said.

"The U.S. and its allies have been playing catch up," Grove commented, although there has been considerable investment in anti-submarine warfare capabilities within NATO in recent years, experts note. Just last month, NATO embarked on a large-scale anti-submarine warfare exercise involving a dozen nations, intended to make sure its crews can "respond to threats posed by sub-surface forces."

After a slower start, some experts say NATO now matches up to or exceeds Russia's submarine capabilities, arguing that the alliance does not have "some objective, incredible weakness towards Russia in this domain." But Moscow has understood "that we haven't really invested in this, so they might be pressuring those weak points," Van Hooft added. Crucially, Russia does not view confrontation with NATO as taking place in just one region or sphere, experts emphasize. The war in Ukraine is perceived in the Kremlin, and by top military commanders, as part of a larger face-off with the West, Gorenburg said.

Sending out submarines in the world's oceans reminds the West of the consequences of direct confrontation with Russia over Ukraine, he added, pushing back into NATO's minds that Moscow can directly threaten cities across the U.S.

Newsweek article by Ellie Cook

#### **CLDJ CHANGE OF COMMAND FOCUSES ON SUCCESS, CONTINUING MISSION (USN 4/18):**

Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, the U.S. military's only permanent base in Africa, held a change of command ceremony on April 18. U.S. Navy Capt. Suzanne Krauss took command from U.S. Navy Capt. Brian Iber during a ceremony presided over by Commander, Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central Rear Adm. Brad Collins.

"(Capt. Iber) created processes and harnessed every opportunity to facilitate multi-lateral training opportunities, cultivate diplomatic relations, and empower his staff to provide high-level operational support to four component commanders and two fleets," said Collins. "His superior leadership served as the foundation of success to the U.S. mission in Africa."

CLDJ is currently home to 31 tenant commands, and provides world-class support to tenants through 24/7 flight operations, force protection, port operations, lodging, and facility management. "It is hard to see at times, when you are in the day-to-day grind, what you have done for our country and that of our national interests," said Iber. "You have demonstrated to the world that America can operate from any location and do so with confidence and excellence, surging lethal combat forces when needed and providing humanitarian aid and training to those who either need it or share our values."

While Iber focused on CLDJ's accomplishments over the past year, Krauss renewed CLDJ's priorities to supporting tenants. "I see you taking pride in your programs and doing your best, our Navy's best, in providing safety, security, and wellness to the thousands of Sailors, Soldiers, Marines, and Airmen stationed at our base. Continue to charge hard," said Krauss.

This assignment is Krauss' second tour at Camp Lemonnier. In 2010, she flew MQ-9 reapers in support of joint irregular warfare requirements and provided real-time decisional information for U.S. forces in the theater. Krauss has served in the Navy, on active duty and as a reservist, for 28 years and last served as the commanding officer of Navy Reserve Commander Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet Support Unit.

As the ceremony closed, there was a renewed focus on CLDJ's future and mission. "I look forward to strengthening the important partnerships with our Djiboutian host nation, State Department and Allies," said Krauss. "I am humbled to serve as your Commanding Officer, and I look forward to serving you - and serving with you."

CLDJ is an operational installation that enables U.S., allied, and partner nation forces to be where and when they are needed to ensure security in Europe, Africa and Southwest Asia. The base enables maritime and combat operations in the Horn of Africa while fostering positive relations.

*US Navy Press Release by LTJG Victoria Piccoli*

### **US SPY PLANE SPOTTED NEAR WHERE RUSSIA SHOT DOWN US DRONE (Vice 3/15):**

In the midst of a Pentagon briefing about one of its drones shot down by Russian fighter jets earlier this week, a manned U.S. maritime surveillance plane was spotted flying in the skies not far from the region where the incident took place.

According to Flightradar24 data, an oft-cited civilian aviation website pooling open source aircraft data from global networks, a manned U.S. Navy Boeing P-8 Poseidon surveillance aircraft was flying off the coast of the Black Sea in Romanian airspace not far from the Ukrainian port city of Odessa, a frequent target of Russian air strikes, on Wednesday. The sight of the U.S. aircraft near the Ukrainian border comes shortly after the first time American and Russian forces physically engaged one another since the war began.

Onboard pilots operate Poseidons, a larger reconnaissance jet than the unmanned MQ-9 Reaper that crashed Tuesday after an incident with Russian fighters. The planes have been spotted near the Ukrainian border with Romania several times since the invasion first began in February 2022. The Navy describes the plane as a multipurpose patrol aircraft used for "long-range anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance" missions.



Earlier on Wednesday, the Pentagon issued a statement about a phone call between Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III, where Shoigu was told that all U.S. aircraft wouldn't be intimidated and "continue to fly and to operate wherever international law allows." Austin discussed his conversation with Shoigu with reporters during the Pentagon briefing following that call.

The latest flightpath shows the Poseidon flying out of the U.S. Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily, Italy, and looping all the way up along the Romanian coastline, along the Black Sea where it has been loitering in circles. In May, when Ukrainian naval forces struck the Russian naval flagship Moskva, a Poseidon with a similar flight plan was reportedly spotted beforehand.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to multiple requests for comment on the Poseidon plane that flew in Romanian airspace. President Joe Biden's administration has already been known to pass along surveillance and intelligence information to Kyiv in its bid to aid Ukraine against the much larger Russian military. In the past, the Pentagon and CIA have shared information including real-time locations of Russian generals in Ukraine for assassination and images of Russian troop build-ups in neighboring Belarus.

Despite giving intelligence and billions of dollars worth of weapons to Ukraine, the Biden administration has stopped short of entering the war as a combatant, which would trigger a world war with Russia. The president and various Pentagon officials have continuously preached restraint and the need to communicate with the Kremlin to avoid a broadening conflict and the risk of nuclear war.

"We do not seek armed conflict with Russia," Gen. Mark Milley, the chief of the defense staff and the highest ranking soldier in the U.S. military, said in the same briefing. After Russian Su-27 fighters downed the U.S. drone Tuesday, Pentagon officials were quick to downplay the incident as an act of war. But they did accuse Russia of reckless and escalatory behavior.

*Vice article by Ben Makuch*

### **CANADA CONSIDERING P-8A POSEIDON PURCHASE (Air Force Technology 3/10):**

The Canadian government expressed its desire to replace the existing fleet of CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft with a new Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft (CMMA). In line with the modernization requirement, the country is currently considering the purchase of 14 units of P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft from Boeing to replace its ageing 14 units of CP-140 maritime aircraft. The whole program if signed is expected to value at around \$6 billion.

The CP-140 maritime patrol aircraft have served Canada for over 40 years, exceeding their expected service life since their introduction in 1980. While Bombardier's Global 6500 series business jet is also rumored to be in contention for the CMMA program, the P-8A Poseidon offers greater interoperability with allies such as Australia, the UK, and the US, as well as other NATO members. Additionally, the P-8A shares 86% commonality with the original equipment manufacturer's 737 NG aircraft, of which there are over 100 operating in Canada, making training pilots and maintaining supply chains and MRO more convenient. And, unlike the CP-140 Aurora, the Poseidon is also capable of air-to-air refueling.

Being a part of NATO, Canada's defense spending is driven by similar factors as its close allies. However, Canada's interest to purchase the P-8A Poseidon aircraft is driven by its continuing efforts to modernize its armed forces with platform upgrades and procurements to stay ahead of emerging threats. The country is also committed to providing continued support for its operational deployments worldwide, which require sustained investment in defense capabilities. The acquisition of P-8A

aircraft will enhance Canada's capabilities for maritime surveillance, anti-submarine warfare, and gathering intelligence in its regions of interest.

The RCAF's critical needs include having access to secure and non-secure tools capable of line-of-sight and beyond-line-of-sight communication as well as the ability to conduct multi-spectral sensing, process and analyze the data onboard the aircraft. The Air Force intends to achieve these requirements by exploiting automation, data fusion, artificial intelligence, and machine learning decision support tools. Regarding overall Canadian military procurement, Boeing has suffered recent setbacks as its KC-46 did not qualify for the Royal Canadian Air Force's (RCAF) Strategic Tanker Transport Capability project.

More recently, Boeing's F/A-18 E/F Block III Super Hornet was ruled out for the Future Fighter Capability Project. However, the CMMA project is a significant opportunity for Boeing to improve its standing and change its present predicament. Four of the P-8's current operators are part of the Five Eyes alliance, which means they share logistical infrastructure and tactical interoperability. As the CP-140 is a variant of the Lockheed P-3 Orion turboprop, interoperability among these operators is also crucial. Overall, the P-8 offers off-the-shelf, out-of-the-box capability that aligns with the RCAF's mission requirements.

*Air Force Technology article by Adam Williams*

### **RUSSIAN SUBMARINE "POPS UP" OFF THE US EAST COAST (Eurasian Times 3/10):**

US Navy Commanders are concerned that the emerging patterns of Russian nuclear submarine deployment off the US coast could threaten American security. Newsweek reported earlier this week that commanders and military observers are raising the alarm over Russian submarine fleet activity off the coast of the United States.

According to officials, Russian submarines have also been spotted more frequently in the Mediterranean and near the shores of the United States. This is besides the Russian preoccupation with the Ukraine war and the subsequent build-up of Russian forces and nuclear submarines in the Black Sea.

Michael Peterson, director of the Russia Maritime Studies Institute (RMSI), which researches the Russian military, said: "There are indications that "nuclear-powered submarines have been deploying off the coast of the United States and into the Mediterranean and elsewhere along Europe periphery." Peterson added that the Russian deployments resembled Soviet-style submarine tactics in the Cold War era.

This becomes more perceptible in light of the announcement made the Russian President Vladimir Putin while he oversaw the commissioning of a few vessels, including the Generalissimus Suvorov nuclear-powered submarine capable of launching ballistic missiles. Putin said his country would build more nuclear-powered submarines, "ensuring Russia's security for decades to come." This is also compatible with the assessment that Russia has continued to work on expanding its nuclear submarine fleet.

According to military experts, the exact scale of Russian nuclear submarine deployment remains unclear, but it has certainly seen a massive uptick in the last two decades. Russia has continued ramping up its submarine capability and has been conducting tests with its nuke-capable Belgorod submarine, which can launch Underwater Unmanned Vehicles (UUV). In January this year, reports indicated that Belgorod completed a series of tests of the Poseidon torpedo mock-up, hailed as a 'super weapon.'

The Russian Navy boasts the most diverse submarine fleets in the world. As a crucial component of its strategic deterrent, Moscow views some of these submarines as being able to launch ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads. Ever since the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, the country has been relentlessly working on upgrading its submarine force. Particularly in the last several years, Moscow has developed numerous submarines that can reach the most strategic targets in the United States and continental Europe. With an estimated 58 vessels, the Russian Navy oversees one of the world's largest submarine fleets. However, these vessels can be deployed worldwide, alarming US Commanders and challenging the US Naval influence.

An alarm was also sounded by the director of US Northern Command and NORAD, US Air Force General Glen VanHerck, who issued a warning last October over the increasing number of nuclear-powered Severodvinsk-class submarines off the shores of the US. The Commander also warned that Russia posed the biggest threat to the nation. "They just moved subs, their first [Severodvinsk submarine] into the Pacific," VanHerck told the Association of the US Army Conference. "Another [Severodvinsk] is out in the Mediterranean right now, and another that's out on its way into the Atlantic. That will be a persistent, proximate threat capable of carrying many land-attack cruise missiles that can threaten our homeland."

A month before VanHerck's comments, OSINT and naval analyst HI Sutton had claimed that Russian Navy forces had been bolstered in the Mediterranean. This could be significant given the region's strategic importance in the US calculations. Further, the US has been attempting to reinforce its presence in the Mediterranean. Further, Rear Adm. Michael Studeman, the Office of Naval Intelligence commander, highlighted the risk posed by Russia's Severodvinsk SSGNs, or the Yasen-class as it is popularly known. Studeman said, "Those subs are "very, very advanced," have "multi-mission capabilities" and are increasingly active.

Russian submarines are also present in the Pacific and the Atlantic. Studeman said in his remarks that these submarines have started undertaking patrols in the Atlantic, holding the United States in danger in certain regions. Thus, he added that tracking those submarines and their actions would be a dual-flank issue for the United States.

Earlier, a Russian military journal recently claimed that the US had "apparently" prepared plans to strike and neutralize Russia because of concerns it might be losing its global dominance. To combat this presumable threat, the journal suggested that Moscow could develop a novel military strategy using nuclear weapons to deter potential American aggression. Ever since Russia launched the invasion of Ukraine, the use of nuclear weapons has become a recurrent discussion, with the nuclear threat never entirely off the table.

Russia has continued to venture its nuclear submarines into far seas despite a full-blown war being fought close to home. Although military observers believe the Ukraine war would slow the formidable Russian Navy down for a couple of years, the current deployments are alarming the Pentagon.

*Urasian Times article by Sakshi Tiwari*

### **NAVY SHORTFALL IN P-8s COULD BE A PROBLE FOR THE AIR FORCE TOO (Forbes 3/8):**

For the last ten years, the U.S. Navy has been fielding the world's most advanced maritime patrol aircraft, a militarized version of the Boeing 737 jetliner that can fly farther and faster than the Cold War turboprops it replaces. Designated the P-8A Poseidon, it is often referred to as an antisubmarine aircraft because of its sophisticated suite of sensors and weapons for finding, fixing and finishing off hostile subs. But Poseidon is much more than that: it also tracks and targets hostile surface vessels,

conducts reconnaissance over land and water, serves as a communications node for coalition forces, and performs search-and-rescue missions.

Poseidon is a case study in successful program management by plane-maker Boeing, which has delivered 117 P-8s to the Navy on time and under budget—including during the pandemic, when many other weapons programs faltered due to workforce disruptions and supply-chain problems. Boeing contributes to my think tank. However, only three years after validating an operational requirement for 138 P-8s in 2018, the Navy cut its planned buy to 128—apparently in response to budget constraints.

The timing was not good. China was steadily increasing the size of its undersea and surface fleet (including with ballistic-missile subs capable of hitting America from launch sites in the South China Sea), and Navy planners had decided to cut the buy of Triton maritime surveillance drones from 65 to 27. Poseidon was supposed to operate in tandem with Triton to police the world's oceans. Cutting both parts of the antisubmarine air fleet implied a major shortfall in future capabilities.

And that was before Russia invaded Ukraine, a move signaling that any future restraint by Moscow concerning how it deployed its own naval forces around the globe was unlikely. Russian subs have repeatedly been detected operating in the waters near America's NATO allies, including around the British Isles.

The bottom line is that as the maritime threat grows, the U.S. Navy is shrinking its fleet of manned and unmanned patrol aircraft. Even when the P-8s of half a dozen overseas partners are included in totals, it appears the future fleet of manned antisubmarine aircraft will only be about a third the size of the Cold War force—183 planes versus 560 not so long ago.

Of course, today's patrol planes are far better than those of the past. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday describes Poseidon as “the most effective platform we have” for both wide-area search and localization of maritime threats. But like their Cold War predecessors, each Poseidon aircraft can only be in one place at a time.

The Navy needs a force of P-8s at least as large as its validated warfighting requirement, and maybe larger given how threats are changing. Boeing is pressing Congress to fund the remaining increment of ten P-8s. Now there is another reason why the full requirement should be funded—a reason few observers have noticed that could have big consequences for a sister service.

As noted above, the P-8 airframe is based on the Boeing 737 commercial transport. However, it does not use the 737 MAX airframe that the company currently builds for commercial carriers, it uses a previous variant called the Next Generation, or 737NG. Over 7,000 737NGs have been built, giving the P-8 a built-in logistics network around the world. However, the only thing sustaining production of the NG at this point is military orders, meaning mainly U.S. and allied demand for the P-8.

The problem the Air Force faces is that it wants to acquire a replacement of the aging E-3 AWACS radar plane using the same variant of the 737, and current Navy plans might not keep the production line and workforce intact long enough to be ready for building the Air Force plane. Designated the E-7, the Air Force's future radar plane is critical to monitoring global airspace and managing air operations. The service says it needs 26 aircraft, and last month awarded a sole-source contract to Boeing for its development.

The development process probably will not take long, because the AWACS successor will be an evolved version of the Wedgetail radar plane operated by Australia. But the Air Force has a raft of upgrades it wants to install on its version, so Boeing can't just start turning out more Wedgetails.

If the NG line gaps between the end of P-8 production and the beginning of E-7 production, then the Air Force will need to reconstitute both the work force and the supply chain, a process fraught with uncertainty. Filling out the Navy requirement with ten more P-8s would largely solve the problem, but Boeing assembles Poseidons at a rate of one per month, so it won't be long before the Navy's existing order for 128 planes is completed.

After that, the only orders keeping the line warm are those from allies. The 737NG line is thus fragile; if the Navy is not funded to its full requirement on P-8 or there are hiccups in allied plans, the Air Force's follow-on buy faces significant uncertainties. That is an unwelcome possibility given how decrepit the AWACS fleet has become. The head of Air Combat Command, Gen. Mark Kelly, says his service is "20 years late" developing a successor to AWACS, and describes the existing E-3 fleet as being in "hospice care." The Air Force can't tolerate any delays in its replacement plan.

The logic of buying ten more P-8s thus extends well beyond the growing maritime threat presented by China and Russia. Just as the Navy conducts antisubmarine missions in support of the entire joint force and U.S. allies, so the Air Force provides global air surveillance for the same diverse population of warfighters.

Keeping the 737NG line running is thus pivotal to executing military plans. Stopping short of the Navy's validated warfighting requirement is risky, and trying to build the Air Force's future radar plane on an airframe other than the 737NG is utterly impractical. Congress and the Biden administration need to think this through.

*Forbes article by Loren Thompson*

### **RUSSIAN NUCLEAR SUBMARINES OFF US COAST SPARKS ALARM (Newsweek 3/7):**

As Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine continues to rage, United States commanders and military observers are sounding the alarm about the activity of Russia's submarine fleet thousands of miles away, off the U.S. coast. Throughout the war, which began when Putin launched a full-scale invasion of neighboring Ukraine last February, there has been a buildup of Russian Navy forces in the Black Sea. There has also been an increasing presence of Russian submarines off of U.S. coasts and in the Mediterranean, according to officials.

The Russian Navy commands one of the most diverse submarine fleets in the world. Some are capable of carrying ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads, which Moscow considers key to its strategic deterrent. The nation has been working to improve its submarine fleet since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Over the past several years in particular, Moscow produced a series of submarines that have the capability to reach the most critical targets in the U.S. and continental Europe. In December, Putin said his country would be building more nuclear-powered submarines, "which will ensure Russia's security for decades to come."

There are indications that "nuclear-powered submarines have been deploying off the coast of the United States and into the Mediterranean and elsewhere along Europe periphery," Michael Peterson, director of the Russia Maritime Studies Institute (RMSI), which conducts research on Russian military and economic issues linked to the world's oceans, told Newsweek. Their deployments "mirror Soviet style submarine deployments in the Cold War," he said.

Last October, U.S. Air Force General Glen VanHerck, the head of U.S. Northern Command and NORAD, warned about the growing presence of the nuclear-powered Severodvinsk-class submarines off of U.S. coasts. He characterized Russia as the primary threat to the country right now. "They just moved subs, their first [Severodvinsk submarine] into the Pacific," VanHerck told the Association of the U.S. Army Conference. "Another [Severodvinsk] is out in the Mediterranean right now and another that's out on its way into the Atlantic. That will be a persistent, proximate threat capable of carrying a significant number of land-attack cruise missiles that can threaten our homeland." A month earlier, OSINT and Naval analyst HI Sutton said there has been a build-up of Russian Navy forces in the Mediterranean. VanHerck in 2021 described the submarines as being "on par with" domestic submarines in terms of quietness.

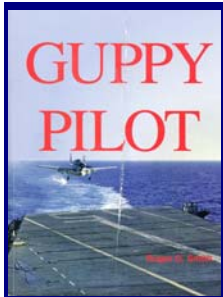
In February 2020, U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Andrew "Woody" Lewis told the U.S. Naval Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank that the increasing presence of Russian submarine activity in the Atlantic Ocean means that his service no longer considers the East Coast as an "uncontested" area or an automatic "safe haven" for its vessels. "We have seen an ever-increasing number of Russian submarines deployed in the Atlantic, and these submarines are more capable than ever, deploying for longer periods of time, with more lethal weapons systems," Lewis said at the time. "Our sailors have the mindset that they are no longer uncontested and to expect to operate alongside our competitors each and every underway."

The U.S. Navy is also undergoing a modernization drive. It has a total of 64 submarines in its fleet, including 50 nuclear-powered attack submarines, which are tasked with engaging and destroying enemy vessels; supporting on-shore operations and carrier groups; and carrying out surveillance, according to nonprofit Nuclear Threat Initiative. The U.S. began building its largest and most advanced Columbia-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) in June 2022. Three of the country's most powerful attack submarines were reportedly deployed by the U.S. Navy in July 2021. And in October 2022, the U.S. Navy deployed its stealthiest U.S. submarine in the Arabian Sea, the Ohio-class SSBN. Former submariner Tom Shugart, the adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, said its deployment could be "to show whomever needs to be reminded that the U.S. is willing and able to send SSBNs to virtually any ocean area it chooses, undetected."

The exact scale of Russia's submarine underwater activity remains unclear, though Peterson said there has been a clear increase over the past 20 years. Peterson noted, however, that he believes a "weakness" will be in place for the Russian Navy for at least the next three to five years due to Putin's war in Ukraine. "The [Russian] Navy is running out of munitions, I think that's clear. Their campaign against strategic infrastructure targets has slowed down. They're not shooting as frequently anymore, and I think that's an indication that they are running out of weapons or are in short supply," he told Newsweek. He added: "So that's going to be a weakness going forward for the next several years until the conflict is over, and the Navy is able to reconstitute."

*Newsweek article by Isabel Van Brugen*

### **RECOMMENDED READING:**



Former AD-4W Skyraider and S2F Tracker pilot Roger Smith wrote his Navy memoirs, which is called "Guppy Pilot". The book is a good read and covers his experiences flying AEW Skyraiders out of NAS Quonset Point, RI on active duty during the late 1950s and flying Trackers out of NAS South Weymouth, MA as a reservist in the early 1960s. To purchase a copy, send a check for \$30 to Roger Smith at 34464 SW Firdale Road, Cornelius, OR 97113. You can also shoot him an e-mail at 92rgs@coho.net.

**ON THE INTERNET:**

There is a truly amazing documentary video about the Soviet nuclear submarine Kursk (K-141), which sank in the Barents Sea on August 12, 2000. It was a pretty big story at the time due to concern about the release of highly radioactive material. One of the amazing facts presented in the video is that the submarine's construction was delayed because of dangerously poor quality steel provided by China. You can check out the video on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXI4aFtL3hl>

**PARTING SHOTS:**



***ABOVE:*** Open-air jet engine tail pipe maintenance performed on a VP-92 P-3C on the ramp adjacent to the VP hangar at NAF Lajes during the early 1990s.



**ABOVE:** VP-92 ADs working on a P-3C's engine inside the VP hangar at NAF Lajes during the early 1990s. Have 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”.**

