

INTRODUCTION

Like any history, The following history of VQ-2 is a work in progress. There will always be new data to show up that can be added to this effort. I welcome such inputs. Although I have covered the shootdowns and major accident losses of aircraft and personnel of VQ-2 in this history, this web site manager, John Herndon, also has a web site on the specific subject of VQ losses, which contains much more details and photos. Please see that source (VQ-2 Accidents and Crashes – www.portlyautey.com/ecm-2). Also, many thanks to John Herndon for making his excellent VQ-2 web site available for my history. His site also contains other pertinent information on the squadron. See his website at: Electronic Countermeasures Squadron Two (ECMRON-2)/Fleet Air RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON TWO (VQ-2) HISTORY. NO PORTION OF THIS HISTORY MAY BE USED OR REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE EXPRESSED CONCENT OF THE AUTHOR, DON C. EAST.

Author's Preface

To my knowledge this is the initial attempt to produce a written history of the U.S. Navy's Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron, VQ-2. It is the story of a highly dedicated group of men and women who seem to be permanently relegated to second-class citizen status within Naval Aviation even though their product has been repeatedly praised by operational commanders as the "vital force multiplier." Yes, this is the story of the U.S. Navy's own "band of gypsies;" experts in the art of community survival and "midnight small stores," who produce a first-class product with "hand-me-down" aircraft and equipment. The beginnings of the Navy's airborne electronic reconnaissance efforts were in the Pacific theatre during World War Two. Therefore, The first portion of this VQ-2 history will dwell on events in that theatre before later shifting to VQ-2 and the European theatre of operations.

The small size of the airborne electronic reconnaissance community, and the classified nature of its squadron operations, have discouraged past attempts to tell this story. Consequently, little published information could be found for this undertaking. The squadron history summaries were infrequently submitted and were of little value because the "classified mission" waiver usually resulted in a blank narrative section. Fortunately, the few narratives that were completed (now declassified), provided some crucial information. The majority of the information for this VQ-2 history, however, came from dusty cruise boxes and the memories of the community's "old timers." The gaps were filled in by the author's personal recollections of over 30 years in the reconnaissance business and numerous weekends in the extensive Naval War College library at Newport.

PART ONE – THE REQUIREMENT

Tactical commanders tasked with carrying out the fundamental war fighting tasks of the U.S. Navy always require the most accurate and timely information available. This information can be provided through reconnaissance of potentially hostile forces on, under or above the seas, and in related littoral land areas. Therefore, capabilities are needed to collect, process, evaluate, and report the various types of information relative to the activities and intentions of these potentially hostile forces. These capabilities must function in a manner which is sufficiently timely to satisfy the immediate operational needs of the tactical commanders.

Since the advent of electronics, warfare has become increasingly complex. Specifically, in the years since World War Two, there has been a dramatic explosion of electronic technology and it shows all indications of continuing into the foreseeable future. Today it is difficult to point to any aspect of warfare, whether it be air, sea or land, that does not involve electronics in some manner. The electronics associated with sensors and weapon systems invariably involve the transmission of signals in the electromagnetic spectrum. By observing foreign military operations through the collection and analysis of these electromagnetic signals, the Navy has developed and maintained a unique and highly technical capability. Electromagnetic signals exploitation, and the associated timely reporting of this information, has proven to be operationally critical. A tactical commander must be provided with such timely information to update his understanding of who is out there, where they are, the composition of their force, the capability of the force, the intentions of the force, when they are likely to carry out these intentions, and what is their state of operational readiness. An effective signal exploitation system is capable of collecting data relevant to all these questions, processing and correlating the data to assess its tactical significance, and rapidly passing the synthesized product to the user.

Because of certain basic characteristics, the fixed-wing aircraft is a prime platform for the electronic reconnaissance mission. First of all, the aircraft has the mobility and speed to allow rapid movement to the area of operations. Second, the aircraft has an operating altitude which allows it to take advantage of the line-of-sight nature (radio horizon limitations) of signals above the HF portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. Third, aircraft have the range and endurance to transit considerable distances and remain on station for extended periods of time. Fourth, aircraft have the payload capacity to carry considerable quantities of equipment and sizeable operating crews. With these basic qualities of a fixed-wing aircraft platform, a highly skilled and professional aircrew can effectively collect, distill, correlate, synthesize and transmit the collected intelligence required by the supported commander for timely tactical decision making.

PART TWO – THE BEGINNINGS IN THE PACIFIC DURING WORLD WAR TWO

It Began in a War

The story of the Navy's airborne electronic reconnaissance squadrons began in the great global struggle of WWII. Just as it was a war of destructive, or "hard kill" weapons, it was also an electronic or "soft kill" war. Sir Winston Churchill recognized the latter and termed it the "Wizard War".

Even before entry into the conflict, America recognized that a combination of the military, civilian industry and scientific communities was urgently needed to conduct research and development for the electronic war. The need became a reality when President Roosevelt directed the creation of the National Defense Research Committee (NDRC) in June 1940. In turn NDRC formed the United States Radiation Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology four months later. Since the U.S. had very little information on radar development in Japan or Germany, the radiation laboratory was tasked with development of U.S. radar, as well as countermeasures for enemy radar systems.

The Navy became directly involved in the soft kill solution only four days after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, when a preliminary meeting was held to discuss formation of a U.S. organization devoted solely to the development of radio countermeasures. In short order a formal conference was held between the Navy and NDRC resulting in establishment of the Radio Research Laboratory (RRL) within the Radiation Laboratory at MIT. From these beginnings came the first intercept receiver built for airborne use, the P-540, which later evolved into the SCR-587 and finally the APR-1.

Although considerable progress had been made by the British in their "Wizard War" in Europe by early 1942, there were no serious studies of enemy radar in the Pacific. But the fortunate capture of a Japanese radar system on Guadalcanal caused great interest and effort to be expended on electronic reconnaissance in the Pacific Theater.

The first US. Navy airborne electronic recon missions were flown from Guadalcanal in 5th Bomb Group B-17Es in late 1942.

Meanwhile, the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) at Anacostia had been involved to some degree in radar and radio experiments since the 1920s. By 1942, NRL's efforts had resulted in the production of a few crude crystal-type intercept receivers suitable for airborne use. These receivers, designated XARD, had a frequency coverage of 50-1,000 MHz. In a crash program to get a Navy airborne electronic reconnaissance capability to the Pacific, six radioman petty officers were selected to attend a two-week cram course on the new XARD system in September 1942. These men had just completed the Radio Material School near Anacostia. After their training on the XARD they were formed into a detachment designated Cast Mike Project NR 1 (Cast Mike for countermeasures) and, with their new equipment, transferred to Hawaii. Two of these men, Chief Petty Officer Jack Churchill as POIC and Petty Officer Robert Russell, soon departed Hawaii for the Pacific War Zone. The Cast Mike team arrived at headquarters, Commander Air South Pacific, on Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands in early October.

The mode of operation at Espiritu Santo for the Cast Mike team was to “hitch hike” themselves and their experimental electronic reconnaissance equipment on any aircraft large enough for the “extra baggage”, and whose mission profile was generally compatible with that of conducting reconnaissance.

The Initial Airborne Electronic Reconnaissance Missions

Churchill and Russell soon had their XARD Receiver installed in an Army Air Force B-17 of the 11th Bomb Group. Chief Churchill flew with the first B-17 electronic reconnaissance mission 31 October 1942 from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal, Bougainville and return. Unfortunately for such a historic occasion, no Japanese radar signals were intercepted. During the next month seven more B-17 electronic reconnaissance missions were flown to the Solomons and New Britain, but still no enemy radar signals were detected. Whether this lack of signal intercept was a result of the primitive XARD equipment or a paucity of Japanese radars in the region is not clear.

In December 1942 Churchill and Russell began flying their XARD receivers on PBV-1 seaplanes of Patrol Squadron 72. The Navy Catalinas operating in this theater were painted black and primarily flew at night. The Cast Mike team hitchhiked missions with VP- 72 from Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo, performing electronic recce around the Solomon Islands. Although the Cast Mike gypsies continued their airborne electronic reconnaissance missions throughout the remainder of 1942, using B-17s and PBVs, no Japanese radar signals were intercepted by their XARD receivers.

The Army Air Corps Also Gets Into the Act

Meanwhile, the Army Air Force was dedicating considerably more funding and personnel to its embryonic electronic reconnaissance effort. Instead of a ragtag band of nomads who hitchhiked on aircraft belonging to other units, the AAF developed a coherent program which would soon pay dividends. While RRL was designing and fabricating the first production airborne electronic reconnaissance equipment in the fall of 1942, the Army established a four-week radio countermeasures course at the Airborne Radar School in Boca Raton, Fla. Upon graduation these officers were designated Radio Observers. At this same time the AAF Chief of Staff, GEN Hap Arnold, directed the initiation of a crash program to develop a dedicated airborne electronic reconnaissance capability. This project, code named “Ferret,” turned out to be a modified B-24D Liberator equipped with the SCR-587 receiver and a developmental version of a radar pulse analyzer. The pulse analyzer became a vital tool to assist the airborne operators in identifying the type of enemy radar being intercepted.

And The Navy Struggles Along

The Cast Mike team became a band of electronic gypsies “hitch-hiking” missions with various squadrons operating in the Solomons area. Early missions were flown with VP-72 in PBV-1 Catalinas, one of the first “Black Cat” squadrons which won fame for their night operations in the Pacific. PBV-1 carries underwing Yagi antennae during takeoff run in late '42. Black Cat squadrons later painted their aircraft all black for their nocturnal forays.

After its completion in February 1943, the modified B-24 Ferret, with two Boca Raton radio countermeasures course graduates on board, deployed to Adak, Alaska. On 6 March the B-24 flew the first successful AAF electronic reconnaissance mission, gaining valuable data on Japanese radars installed on the Aleutian Island of Kiska. The success of this initial AAF program soon led to a second-generation platform. This time, a few B-17s were acquired and fitted with the latest equipment available from RRL efforts, including the APR-1 and the newer APR-3 wide band receivers, pulse analyzers and most importantly, a direction finding (DF) capability. Although this initial airborne DF capability was crude, it allowed the aircrew to obtain several lines of bearing on the intercepted radar signal so that its location could be determined.

By Nov 1943, Cast Mike had been expanded to include several teams in the Pacific and began operations with VP-104 PB4~1 Liberators at Guadalcanal.

Meanwhile, back state side, on 24 May 1943, the Navy organized Special Project Unit Cast at NAS Squantum, Mass., under a Bureau of Aeronautics directive. The unit was to provide services for flight testing the electronic equipment under development at the Radio Research Laboratory. Perhaps the Navy finally recognized the failure of the XARD in its wartime OpEval and decided to conduct realistic airborne tests on future equipment before deploying to the war zone!

Early in 1943 the Cast Mike team in the Pacific received a few ARC-1 receivers (Navy version of SCR-587); a vast improvement over the experimental XARD system. Chief Churchill and PO Russell had continued their missions with the Catalina squadrons in the South Pacific. On the night of 18 June, while flying with a VP-54 crew, they acquired their first intercept of a Japanese radar. The enemy signal was intercepted while flying near the Shortland Islands, just south of Bougainville. Unfortunately, the Navy had not provided the Cast Mike team with an airborne DF capability like that of the AAF; therefore it was impossible for Churchill to pinpoint the location of his all-important initial radar intercept.

With no prospect of acquiring airborne DF equipment in the near future, Churchill and his team did what VQ squadrons continue to do even today in their "special projects" or "bicycle shops"- improvise their own capability. Assisted by VP-54 metal smiths, they constructed a pair of yagi-type directional antennas which they installed on either side of the Catalina's nose, pointing forward. The "Rube Goldberg" antennas were then connected through a receiver switching assembly to a cathode ray tube (CRT) display unit where the signal strength could be interpreted by the operator as being to the left or right of the aircraft. Through coordination between the PBY pilot and the Cast Mike operator, the aircraft could be steered until it was pointing directly toward the intercepted radar site. At this point, a line of bearing would be logged. After repeating this procedure at several geographically separated points, a reasonable fix of the radar site could be calculated.

On the night of 8 September 1943, the Cast Mike and VP-54 team obtained three good lines of bearing on the Japanese radar signal and established its position on Poporang Island south of Bougainville. Following this initial successful mission, a photographic recon- naissance aircraft obtained photographs of the enemy radar site, which was then attacked by fighter-bombers. After their long and arduous struggle to prove the concept of USN airborne electronic reconnaissance, Chief Churchill and his Cast

Mike Project NR 1 team were disbanded in the fall of 1943. However this unique band of gypsies, operating with begged, borrowed, stolen and improvised equipment, while flying on “other folks” aircraft, had nevertheless performed a major service to their country and to the future of U.S. Navy airborne electronic reconnaissance. Many years later, in recounting his experience as an airborne electronic reconnaissance operator, CDR Jack Churchill commented that he had “started my Navy career in electronic intelligence and when I retired I was still in electronic intelligence.”

In the place of the Cast Mike team, the Navy slightly upped the ante in airborne electronic reconnaissance by organizing several teams of aircrew officers to carry out much the same program accomplished by Churchill and his men. These officer teams continued the marginally-satisfactory procedure of temporarily installing and operating radar intercept equipment in resident Navy patrol (VP) or patrol bomber (VPB) aircraft.

One of those team members was LT Lawrence Heron who, with another officer, reported to Henderson Field, Guadalcanal in November 1943. There they joined VPB-104, flying PB4Y-1 Liberators. Circumstances were not much different for LT Heron than they had been for Churchill. Heron still had to fabricate his own installation rigs to enable the APR-1 receivers and other equipment to be transferred from one aircraft to another. As unbelievable as it may seem, there was still insufficient support within the Navy for the electronic reconnaissance mission to acquire even a few dedicated aircraft solely for the task.

A Little Organization is Finally Started

Late in 1943 a major event occurred when a new headquarters unit was formed in the Southwest Pacific Theater for coordination of Allied electronic reconnaissance. The new unit, designated Section 22 of General Headquarters, included personnel of all U.S. military services along with British, Australian, New Zealand and Dutch allies. Section 22 was responsible for collecting information on enemy radar and radio systems, analysis, dissemination of the resulting intelligence and requisitioning and assigning electronic countermeasures/reconnaissance personnel and equipment. The need for such an organization in the theater had been evident for some time. By mid-1943 USAAF B-24 Ferret aircraft had been assigned to the Southwest Pacific Theater, and shortly thereafter Section 22 was beginning to assemble a detailed picture of the Japanese radar network in the area. Section 22 would quickly note the more effective operations of the “dedicated” AAF Ferrets and soon force the Navy into a similar mode of operation.

Meanwhile, as the momentum of the war in the Pacific swung to the Allies and our ground forces began the island-hopping advance toward Japan in early 1944, airborne electronic reconnaissance joined the northward migration. In March 1944 VPB-116, based on recently- captured Eniwetok Atoll, began flying electronic reconnaissance missions around the strategic Japanese naval base at Truk in the Caroline Islands. The VPB-116 PB4Y-1s, with their electronic reconnaissance “hitchhikers”, were tasked to locate and collect information on Truk’s radar installations. This data proved extremely valuable during the following carrier air strikes on the atoll.

The Navy is Dragged into the Future

By spring of 1944 it became painfully clear that the AAF's permanently modified Ferret aircraft, entirely dedicated to the mission of electronic reconnaissance, were markedly more effective than the Navy's makeshift installations operated by the "gypsy" air crewmen. In recognition of this glaring fact Section 22 directed the formation of a dedicated Navy unit, where all its personnel, equipment and aircraft would be responsible solely for the electronic recce role.

The Navy selected an old hand to form and lead this new dedicated airborne electronic reconnaissance unit, LT Lawrence Heron. The new unit was temporarily based at the Palm Island seaplane base near Townsville, Australia, and equipped with two PBY-5A Black Cats to be modified for electronic reconnaissance.

The Consolidated PBY seaplane entered service in 1936 and became the Navy's principal patrol bomber. The amphibious PBY-5A was the model primarily employed for electronic, reconnaissance. It was powered by two 1,200-hp engines, cruising at 95 kts with a service ceiling of 13,000 ft and had a crew of 7 to 9.

The installation of the ARC-I receivers in the Catalina was simple enough, but again, the direction-finding antenna system had to be locally manufactured. Because of the location of the new DF antenna, pointing downward from the rear fuselage gun hatch, the PBY could not take off with the system in place. Instead, it had to be manually attached after takeoff, which created some interesting and exciting situations for LT Heron's crews.

Continuing their association with the patrol squadrons throughout the war; the teams increased their capabilities with the PB4Y-2 Privateer flying first with VPB-106 in the spring of 1945. The Privateer became the mainstay of the Navy's dedicated AER missions until relieved in the early '50s by the P4M-IQ.

After the Navy had been more or less forced to dedicate a few aircraft and men to the function of electronic reconnaissance, on 13 May 1944, CNO directed the Chief of Naval Air Technical Training to establish a training pipeline for the new mission. The facility was to be called the Special Projects School for Air and was assigned to NAAS San Clemente Island, off San Diego, Calif., with training to commence 1 June 1944.

Meanwhile, back in the Pacific, Heron completed the modifications and moved his Black Cats to New Guinea to begin flying electronic reconnaissance missions from the seaplane bases at Port Moresby and Samari Islands. By late 1944 as operations expanded in the Pacific, Heron's Black Cats were flying electronic missions out of the Philip pines. He and his small group performed with the utmost distinction and courage throughout the remainder of the war in the Pacific, participating in most of the major battles and campaigns.

By autumn of 1944 the navy had been convinced of the merits of electronic warfare in general, and specifically of electronic reconnaissance. Consequently it was ready to begin, employing these air-borne capabilities on a much larger scale. Thirteen of the eighteen land-based VPB squadrons in the Pacific already had some of their aircraft modified to carry the APR-1 radar receiver and the APT-I, APT-5 or

APQ-2 radar jamming equipment. In addition, a few Navy Liberators were equipped with the newer APR-5 receiver to search for Japanese radars in the higher frequency spectrum (microwave). Carrier-based aircraft, such as the TBF/TBM Avenger, also received an allocation of the new electronic warfare equipment.

An important addition to the Navy electronic warfare effort was made in the spring of 1945 with arrival in the Pacific of the new PB4Y-2 Privateer in VPB-106. The Privateer was derived from the PB4Y-1 Liberator and was specifically modified for Navy long-range maritime patrol operations with a crew of up to 16. In its conversion from the AAF B-24, the twin tail was changed to a single tail and a seven-foot extension was added to the fuselage for the countermeasures compartment. A large number of radomes were also added to cover the countermeasures antennas. Because of these radomes protruding from its skin the Privateer received the nickname "Wart Hog".

The countermeasures compartment included the following: for electronic reconnaissance there were APR-1, APR-2 and APR-5 radar intercept receivers with associated pulse analyzers and DF equipment. Additionally, APR-5 and APR-7 communications intercept equipment was available. If electronic countermeasures operations were required the PB4Y-2 included the APT-1, APQ-2 and APT-5 jammers. Furthermore, the Privateer's standardized equipment mounting racks allowed the electronic warfare suite the flexibility to be quickly tailored for each mission. With this new capability, VPB-106 immediately began flying barrier patrols in support of naval forces preparing for the assault on Iwo Jima. Operations continued throughout the closing months of WWII.

One of the earliest carrier-based electronic reconnaissance missions was flown 16 Feb 1945 by a TBM-3D of VT(N)-90 from Enterprise (CV-6). LCDR Charlie Henderson, pilot, with LCDR Henry Loomis and LTJG Ted Halbach operating specially-installed gear, reconnoitered Japanese radar characteristics and positions in support of the first carrier raids on Tokyo 16-17 Feb.

PART THREE = THE RUSH TO DEMOBILIZE, A NEW THREAT, AND THE NEED ARISES AGAIN

In the post-war era of rapid demobilization, the Navy's fledgling airborne electronic reconnaissance capability suffered accordingly. By the end of 1945, RRL's manpower had decreased dramatically and the Navy pushed hard to complete development of the new APR-9 radar receiver set before the shop doors closed. The APR-9 was in fact completed, later manufactured in large numbers and would be at the heart of the Navy's airborne electronic reconnaissance for many years to follow.

On 31 December 1946 Special Projects Unit Cast was disestablished at NAS Squantum. The unit's personnel, materials and functions were transferred to the Air Support Division of NRL. Even so, the capability would survive. Like most other fields of military endeavor during the post-war period, Navy airborne electronic reconnaissance undoubtedly survived mainly through the dedication of a few "true believers".

It appeared the small group of airborne electronic reconnaissance proponents had finally won an influential following. They now felt secure that the United States would never again be found without the technical skills and equipment necessary to fulfill the airborne electronic reconnaissance mission, unfortunately such was not the case. The severe economy programs between the end of WWII and the Korean War took their toll of the established airborne electronic reconnaissance programs, severely inhibiting the research and development required if the systems, technicians and aircraft were to keep pace with jet-age technology.

Only one year after V-J Day, the massive military demobilization had taken such a toll of technicians and spare parts that a large percentage of all U.S. Navy electronic equipment was inoperative. Since too few technicians remained in the service for electronics repair, and since the radio and radar equipment was fundamentally required for the mission of the aircraft, the second-priority electronic reconnaissance equipment fell into a general stage of disrepair.

The New Threat Arises

By 1949 U.S. military planners fully realized they had insufficient information about the location, capabilities and overall technical characteristics of Sino-Soviet Bloc radar systems. Also, the Soviet Union was now involved in the development and testing of high technology weapons such as surface-to-air missiles. Therefore, by the beginning of 1950 the collection of electronic intelligence on these systems became a high priority. Such an ambitious collection program, however, required reasonably sophisticated electronic equipment. Unfortunately for the United States most of the equipment built to conduct electronic reconnaissance during WWII had since been sold to junk and surplus dealers.

A Renewed Need For Electronic Reconnaissance

When it was decided to equip two patrol squadrons to conduct the electronic reconnaissance mission, the Navy found it had insufficient equipment on hand. The Navy sent two chief electronic technicians to locate and buy back some of the equipment which previously had been sold as surplus. Wearing civilian clothes and carrying large quantities of cash, the two chiefs roamed through war surplus stores in New York City. They purchased all the intercept receivers, direction finders, pulse analyzers and other electronic reconnaissance equipment they could locate. This equipment was then repaired by Navy

technicians and installed in Privateers and P2V Neptunes for the high-priority electronic reconnaissance or Ferret (the Air Force term used unofficially by Navy crews) missions around the periphery of the communist nations, particularly Russia.

The Navy Takes a Dual Approach

In order to accomplish the significant airborne electronic reconnaissance requirements of the late 1940s and early 1950s, it appears the U.S. Navy took two separate but coordinated directions.

One direction was oriented toward “mission support” of the aircraft in which the electronic reconnaissance equipment was installed. This evolution was primarily reflected in the VP squadrons where the equipment was usually operated by normal squadron personnel as “just another sensor” to assist the conduct of the squadron’s missions of anti-submarine patrol, surface surveillance, bombing, mining and general area surveillance. This mission support airborne electronic recce effort was fairly significant considering the proliferation of the Privateer (redesignated P4Y in 1951) to patrol squadrons worldwide soon after WWII.

The P4Y-2 was followed shortly by introduction of the P2V series to patrol squadrons. The Lockheed Neptune entered operational service in 1947 and remained the mainstay of U.S. Navy land-based patrol aviation for nearly 20 years. The P2V-1 of the late 1940s evolved into the P2V-7 final production model of 1954. Major design changes were introduced in the P2V-5 which first flew in 1950. A pair of Westinghouse J34 turbojets were added to -5s to boost the takeoff and speed-over-target capabilities of the standard 3,500 hp reciprocating engines. This model, with a ten-man crew, was designated the P2V-5F and was frequently employed in electronic reconnaissance.

Both Privateer and Neptune aircrews performed routine electronic reconnaissance in support of their anti-submarine and surface surveillance missions worldwide. Additionally, their electronic recce operations often paid high dividends in the intercept of information which was of Navy and national interest, well beyond the mission support function. Perhaps it was the Communists’ appreciation of this fact that accounted for several of their attacks on “normal” VP aircraft during the 1950s.

The second direction taken by the Navy was oriented toward dedicated electronic reconnaissance, performed by highly specialized and trained personnel who conducted their missions in a few specially-configured aircraft. These special aircraft operated within normal Navy patrol or airborne early warning (VW) squadrons. This “branch” of U.S. Navy airborne electronic reconnaissance operations subsequently gave birth to VQ-1 and VQ-2. From the end of WWII until the early 1950s these “dedicated” electronic reconnaissance assets remained as a part, or detachments, of otherwise normal Navy squadrons. These squadrons, including the electronic reconnaissance detachments, primarily flew the P4Y-1, P4Y-2 or the newer P2V series. The Navy’s dedicated airborne electronic reconnaissance units, after getting their rough-hewn start in 1944 with LT Heron’s two PBY-5A Black Cats, struggled along in typical “orphan” style.

Although information on these small dedicated units is incomplete, it appears that one each was set up in the Pacific and Europe. By the late 1940s-early 1950s, the European and Pacific airborne electronic

reconnaissance detachments had settled in at NAS Port Lyautey, French Morocco, and NAS Sangley Point, Philippines, respectively. From the limited evidence available, it appears that while the detachments remained in place, the parent squadrons would rotate through the two sites on normal operational deployments. For example, Patrol Squadrons 73, 63 and 26 operated at Port Lyautey during this post-war period. Similarly, several VP squadrons rotated through the Philippines during this same time. Thus the Navy's dedicated airborne electronic reconnaissance capability, although still an orphan, hitchhiking on other folk's aircraft with hand-me-down equipment, was at least beginning to take root at fixed sites in the two major theaters of operations.

PART FOUR - A DANGEROUS OCCUPATION

This Business Could be Hazardous to Your Health!

Both the Navy's dedicated and mission support electronic reconnaissance aircraft soon became involved in surveillance missions of the Communist periphery and just as quickly found this to be a dangerous undertaking. In fact, to crewmembers of the Navy's Ferret aircraft, the "cold war" appeared to be a serious misnomer! During this era U.S. airborne electronic reconnaissance missions became involved in a bloody series of clashes in which they were victims of Soviet, North Korean and Communist Chinese aggression while in international airspace.

This series of incidents lasted from 1950 until 1969, costing the Navy approximately a dozen electronic reconnaissance aircraft and the loss of at least 79 lives. But the Navy was not the only victim of Communist airborne aggression during the post-war period; the U.S. Air Force also was involved in more than a dozen incidents, wherein at least 46 of its airmen were killed between 1949 and 1964. This sequence of deadly incidents clearly indicates the dangers faced by Navy airborne electronic reconnaissance crews on their daily missions, while emphasizing the importance the Communists place on thwarting enemy aerial reconnaissance in any way possible.

The Legalities

During this tense and turbulent inter-war period of increased Communist military preparedness and attempted forceful territorial expansion, it was imperative to maintain U.S. reconnaissance coverage. Electronic reconnaissance was one of the most effective methods of maintaining coverage and most of the operations were done by fixed-wing aircraft of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force. These Ferrets operated around the periphery of the Communist states while intercepting, analyzing and recording electromagnetic signals of interest. Such peripheral airborne reconnaissance missions were entirely legal as long as they remained over international waters. At the same time, they were always exceedingly dangerous because the record has shown that Communists do not always observe international law.

In this regard it has been suggested by some that there may have been a trend in international law toward the emergence of a right, especially of Communist states, to proclaim and enforce a contiguous zone for the prevention of "passive" electronic reconnaissance by foreign ships or aircraft during peacetime. An examination of the evidence, however, does not support such a theory. Instead, the seizure or destruction of foreign electronic reconnaissance ships or aircraft by Communist nations has consistently been justified as "legal" by the assertion that such units had penetrated their territorial seas or national airspace. The evidence further indicates that Communist governments do not appear to have ever officially asserted that electronic reconnaissance from international waters is a violation of international law. In summary of this point, international law does not forbid passive electronic reconnaissance from the high seas during peacetime and does not empower the coastal state to interfere. Such reconnaissance is nevertheless likely to be resented and resisted by the coastal state.

Although the Communist states exacted a toll of U.S. electronic reconnaissance flights during this turbulent period, the U.S. has never responded in kind. Despite the fact that Communist electronic reconnaissance aircraft have made hundreds of flights along the borders of Canada, Alaska and the

Continental U.S., and have occasionally strayed from international areas, the U.S. has never attempted to shoot one down.

PART FIVE – KOREA AND A RENEWED EMPHASIS ON ELECTRONIC RECONNAISSANCE

The “Cold War”

The five short years of peace following WWII were characterized by an unsteady era usually termed the “cold war”. During this period tensions between the United States and the Sino-Soviet Bloc increased steadily until June 1950 and the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. Shortly after U.S. forces entered that conflict it became readily apparent their need for airborne electronic reconnaissance would be even greater than during WWII. During The Cold War intelligence collected by VQ-2 crews allowed top-level decision makers to formulate a picture of what the Soviet Navy and government were involved in around the Mediterranean and the European theatre of operations.

Korea was the first in a series of new conflicts called “limited wars”, wherein political and military considerations were equally important. In this new limited war each decision was evaluated in terms of diplomatic consequences and such considerations drove the need for intelligence to new highs. With the dramatic rise in electronics and particularly in communications, sensor and navigations systems, the requirements for military electronic reconnaissance rose correspondingly. The Navy satisfied its airborne electronic reconnaissance requirements in the same pattern developed during the closing months of WWII with both mission support and dedicated approaches.

The mission support assets remained primarily in the patrol community. In addition to the routine anti-submarine patrols, weather reconnaissance, coastal and open-ocean surveillance missions, Pacific VP squadrons during the Korean War conducted other “special functions”, which apparently included electronic reconnaissance.

PART SIX – THE BEGINNINGS OF VQ-2

The Genesis

With the background for the Navy's airborne electronic reconnaissance efforts established in the Pacific theatre, the remainder of this history will concentrate on the European theatre and VQ-2. Records of the early days of the Navy's aerial electronic reconnaissance efforts in the European area are vague. Through research of unit histories, personal interviews, and with some speculation, the following story can be told.

In much the same way as in the Pacific, the Navy's dedicated airborne aerial reconnaissance program in Europe had its genesis with patrol squadrons in World War Two. It appears that one of these European-based squadrons had a secondary task of electronic recce. At the end of the war, VP-114 had a three-plane detachment of Consolidated PB4Y-1 *Liberators* based at NAS Port Lyautey, French Morocco. Following the war, until June 1950, the squadron (variously designated VP-HL-6 and finally VP-26, which it carries today) maintained a permanent detachment of PB4Y-2 *Privateers* at Port Lyautey, while the parent squadron switched between the Moroccan base and NAS Patuxent River, Md.

During this period, the Port Lyautey detachment aircraft were specially configured for the electronic reconnaissance mission, and thus present the earliest traceable origins of VQ-2.

The primary operating areas for the electronic reconnaissance versions of VP-26's PB4Y-2's were the Baltic and Adriatic Seas, with tasking against Soviet radar facilities. The squadron's "electronic" *Privateers* operated from Port Lyautey under the guise of acting as courier aircraft for US embassies and missions throughout Europe, Scandinavia and Western Asia. During one of these Baltic Sea missions, the first of a long series of "Cold War" incident occurred that involved U.S. reconnaissance aircraft and Sino-Soviet fighters.

The First Navy Airborne Electronic Reconnaissance Loss

On 8 April 1950, a VP-26 PB4Y-2 (BuNo 59645) and its ten-man crew were lost in the Western Baltic Sea, apparently after being attacked by Soviet aircraft approximately 80 nm southeast of Gotland Island. Earlier in April the *Privateer* had deployed from Port Lyautey to the U.S. Air Force Base at Wiesbaden, Germany. Leaving one crewman on the ground, Aviation Electronic Technician- Stephen Zakian, the patrol bomber took off at 1031 Saturday, 8 April on a classified mission.

PB4 Y-2 BuNo 59645 was shot down 8 Apr 1950 over the Baltic by Soviet fighters to become the first victim of the "Cold War." The fate of its ten-man crew was never confirmed, but it is suspected at least some of them were imprisoned in Russia.

At 1330 the aircraft reported it was flying over Bremerhaven, Germany, and at 1440 made its last radio report. At 2330 VP-26 headquarters at Port Lyautey received a dispatch from the commanding officer of the U.S. Naval Base in Bremerhaven stating PB4Y-2 bureau number 59645 was declared overdue by USAF Flight Service in Frankfurt. According to a later Soviet report, the Navy aircraft was sighted at 1739 on 8 April over Leyaya, Soviet Latvia, and mistakenly identified as a B-29 bomber. It was then intercepted and ordered to land, whereupon it reportedly exchanged fire with the Russian fighters and headed out to sea. The credibility of the Soviet report was seriously weakened by the fact that the *Privateer's* only armament was a .45 cal. pistol carried by one of the officer crewmen. According to

subsequently declassified VP-26 reports, by 0400 on 9 April three PB4Y-2s were ordered from Port Lyautey to Wiesbaden to conduct a search for BuNo 59645. VP-26 *Privateers* piloted by LT Rice, LTJG Linker and a third by LT Cobb, with the squadron executive officer on board, were launched in quick order. After a short stay in Wiesbaden, the aircraft moved on to Copenhagen, Denmark, and initiated search operations by the 10th. Before the search concluded, a fourth VP-26 *Privateer* and approximately 25 USAF aircraft would scour the Baltic for ten days.

No trace of the ten-man crew was ever found and eventually they were presumed dead. The crewmembers were: LTs John H. Fette and Howard W. Skeschaf; LTJG Robert D. Reynolds; ENS Tommy L. Burgess; AD1s Joe H. Danens Jr. and Jack W. Thomas; AT1 Frank L. Beckman; CT3 Edward J. Purcell; AL3 Joseph J. Bourassa; and AT3 Joseph N. Rinnier Jr.

A life raft, identified as VP-26 property, was picked up by a Swedish fishing vessel a few days after the search was suspended. Similarly, the British freighter *Beechland* pulled an empty aircraft life raft from the Baltic Sea 45 miles southeast of Stockholm. The raft was positively identified by the serial and contract numbers as having been issued to a PB4Y-2. After the incident a stiff note of protest and a rebuttal of the Soviet report was sent to the Russian government by the U.S. State Department.

Numerous Soviet naval and air contacts were reported by U.S. search aircraft, and in the VP-26 squadron report, at least two PB4Y-2 APS-15 radar operators reported noise-modulated radar jamming. The jamming obliterated the APS-15 scopes in up to 30-degree sectors for as long as three hours. The reports varied as to the origin of the jamming, but it was believed to have originated from a Soviet submarine or from ashore in Latvia.

In January 1955, two Americans were repatriated from Russian prison camps where they had been held since the end of WWII. They reported hearing of American prisoners who had been shot down over the Baltic Sea. Actual sighting of the Americans was reported by a third repatriate, a Yugoslav, who had served time in the infamous Soviet prison coal mine of Vorkuta, above the Arctic Circle. He alleged that one of his fellow prisoners had been a U.S. Navy officer from the lost *Privateer*. However, this claim was never confirmed.

A series of investigations by Naval Intelligence and demands to the Soviets by the State Department were to no avail. The fate of the VP-26 crew was never determined positively

But The Operations Must Go On

VP-26 officers were shown in a photograph shot in front of the old French BOQ at Port Lyautey in a ca. 1950 photograph. These officers were identified as follows: Back Row, from left: Ken Lampkin, Harry Farmer, Ed Tomko, Avn Midn Ken Owen, Gene Rice, Swede Erickson, Dick Kirkland, Ned Hayes, Boyce Webb, Walt Marusa, Bill Cobb, *Bob Reynolds, Dave Prior, Avn Midn Jim West and *Jack Felle. Front: Mead Massa, Ken Horn, Dennis Henderson, Fred Daley, Ed Siergiej, CDR Whilener, CDR Johnston, LCDR

Murphey, Avn Midn Chuck Clarke, Lew Julian, Chandler Smith, *Howie Seeschaff, Bob Stafford, Don Heberling, Doc Linker. (*Shot down over the Baltic in BuNo 59645)

VP-26 Det 214 crew, ca. early 1948 was shown in another photograph as follows: Back row, from left: LTJG Harwood, LTJG Hoerr, Avn Midn Hubbard, ENS Garrison, LTJC Ambler; LTJC Schwager, LCDR Reed, LTJC Finnegan, LCDR Pollard, LTs James and McKinney. CPOs McKinnis, Amato, Barber, Kroto, Marshal and unidentified. Front row: Kraus, (?), Zimmerman, Suttles, Linn, (?), Ryan, (?), (?), (.), Meehan, (?), Cook, Cassese, Geeding, Carlon, Michels, Hall, Almorì and unidentified.

PART SEVEN – THE FIRST ELECTRONIC RECONNAISSANCE UNIT IS FORMED

The NAF Patrol Unit

Although definitive evidence is sparse, it appears that concurrent with VP-26's departure from Port Lyautey in the summer of 1950, a new unit was formed there utilizing three VP-26 detachment PB4Y-2s and some operating personnel from the squadron. This organization, designated *NAF Patrol Unit*, was manned by approximately 70 personnel and was dedicated to the mission of airborne aerial reconnaissance for the European theater.

By 1951 the new unit had replaced its *Privateers* with four Martin P4M-1Q *Mercators*, and later added a stripped Lockheed P2V-2 *Neptune* for pilot training. As covered earlier in this history, the P4M-1Q was a specially configured modified version of the basic P4M-1 patrol bomber with two reciprocating and two auxiliary jet engines.

In 1997, the author received a letter from Capt (ret) Ralph Huth, who had served a tour in VQ-1 earlier in his career and was later the Commanding Officer of VAQ-130. Capt Huth said he was in the NAF Port Lyautey Patrol Unit from June 1951 until February 1953. In the earliest days the units personnel were a part of the NAF Operations Department. He remembered the unit slowly became a mini-squadron of 12 officers and around 50 enlisted. As an interesting aside, he said one of the widows of the April 1950 Baltic Sea PB4Y-2 shutdown (discussed earlier) eventually married the Pasha of Port Lyautey.

Heading the new unit as OinC was a CDR Larson, with LCDR Peeler as his assistant. An interview with a former P4M-1Q tail gunner, Freeman Dias of Bristol, R.I., indicated CDR Robert R. Sparks, who later served as a commanding officer of VQ-2, relieved CDR Larson as OinC about mid-1953.

Mr. Dias recalled the P4M-1Q had some protection against the ever present threat of communist shutdown in the form of 20mm nose and tail guns along with a .50 cal. upper fuselage turret. Even with this protection there were, nevertheless, instances of hostile action against the reconnaissance aircraft. For instance, sketchy information shows a P4M-1Q shot up badly during a mission in late 1951 or early 1952. A LT Huddleston was the *Mercator* pilot during the attempted shutdown incident, where at least one crewman was killed.

Another loss

On 7 March 1951, VP-26 special detachment lost another PB4Y-2, this one to mechanical failure. The aircraft lost 3 of its 4 engines over the Mediterranean Sea and ditched a few miles off the Italian coast. Eight of its fourteen man crew were lost and presumed drowned. The casualties were: Lt Richard E. Lampkin, jr, ENS Elmer E. Jackson, ADC Roy R. Radcliff, AOC Andrew A. Andrews, ET2 Russell Aiken, AL3 Donald E. Jones, ADAN Ernest E. Craig, and AOAN Frank J. Dacunto. The other six crewmen were rescued.

Upon VP-26's 1950 departure from Port Lyautey, NAF Patrol Unit was formed to assume the European airborne electronic reconnaissance mission. Initially acquiring VP-26's special PB4Y-2s, they were soon traded for these three P4M-1Q *Mercators*, modified from the standard Marlin patrol bomber.

The Unit Redesignated

By May 1953, NAF Patrol Unit was redesignated as Detachment Able of Airborne Early Warning Squadron Two (VW-2). VW-2 Det Able operated much the same as VP-26's detachment, a permanent unit at Port Lyautey under a squadron homeported at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland. Growing out of the resources of VW-2 Det Able, the airborne electronic reconnaissance assets of that unit were established as Electronic Countermeasures Squadron Two (ECMRON Two) on 1 September 1955. ECMRON Two was assigned the alpha-numeric designation VQ-2. The unit was officially homeported at NAF Port Lyautey, with a total complement of 24 officers and 78 enlisted men. Cdr Kalin was the first Commanding Officer of the unit. The unit was assigned the tailcode of "JQ," and by 1 January 1960 the name of the unit was changed to Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Two.

The First VQ-2 Loss

The newly formed VQ-2 lost its first aircraft on 7 September 1952 when a P4M Mercator was forced to ditch due to engine failure. The aircraft ditched at night off the coast of Turkey. 14 crewmen were rescued after several hours in the water. However, the pilot, LT Robert B. Hager, drowned while saving others.

The squadron initially used the P4M-1Q, and later, the P2V *Neptune* as mission aircraft. Two models of the *Neptune* appear in available records, the P2V-3 and the P2V-5F. The single "dash three" was used only for pilot training and logistics. The P2V-5Fs would serve the squadron faithfully in the electronic recce role until the spring of 1960 when they began a phase-out period.

PART EIGHT – NEW ASSETS, MORE LOSSES AND THE MOVE TO ROTA, SPAIN

The Whale Arrives

The newer and faster carrier-capable A3D-1Q *Skywarrior* began arriving at VQ-2 in September 1956. During July, two VQ-2 pilots had begun familiarization training at Patuxent River and in September ferried the first two *Skywarriors* to Port Lyautey. Later, on 6 December, the A3D-1Q flew its first operational mission with Skipper Kalin as the pilot. In military aviation, speed often means life. The arrival of A3D-1Q (EA-3A) *Skywarriors* to VQ-2 greatly enhanced the survivability of squadron aircrew. The slow-moving VQ-2 *Mercators* were “sitting ducks” and had several encounters with communist fighters resulting in losses of aircraft and crew

More Losses

Several major aircraft accidents occurred during VQ-2 operations while based at Port Lyautey, two of which resulted in loss of life. On 6 January 1958 a P4M-1Q crashed at Ocean View, Va. Four crewmen were killed, nine survived with two receiving major injuries, and the aircraft was destroyed. Those killed were: PHC Richard Demoss, AQ1 Robert Danna, AD1 William Peters and AA Thomas Hinton. The aircraft was being ferried from Port Lyautey to Norfolk, Virginia. After experiencing problems with the jet engines, the port main recip engine lost power in the landing pattern. The aircraft then lost altitude and crashed near E. Ocean View Avenue and 22 Street.

Then, on 16 October, an A3D-1Q crashed in the landing pattern at night while operating out of Incirlik AFB near Adana, Turkey. All four crewmen perished in the mishap. Those lost were: LCDR Charles Moore (pilot), LTJG Charles B. Lynch (pilot/nav), LTJG Carl W. Buckenhauer (eval), and AQ1 Charles S. Stompski (ESM op).

And the Operations Go On

indicating the limited number of qualified personnel available for the VQ mission, CDR Sparks returned to the squadron as CO. He served from 1 July 1957 until 6 October 1958, by which time the squadron had grown to 48 officers and 281 enlisted.

Near the end of Sparks' tenure an interesting article appeared in *El Rotando*, the Naval Base Rota, Spain, newspaper on 26 September 1958: “One of the U.S. Navy's hottest attack bombers, a twin-jet Douglas A3D *Skywarrior*, roared down the runway of the Spanish-American naval complex here yesterday morning and was logged as the first jet aircraft to make an operational landing at the growing base. The powerful, near supersonic bomber was piloted here from her home base at Port Lyautey by CDR Robert R. Sparks. The copilot was CDR Clarendon Sigley.” Although not stated in the article, the visit to Rota by the VQ-2 CO and XO was probably in conjunction with the upcoming relocation of the squadron from Morocco to Rota.

CDR Sparks was relieved by CDR Sigley in October 1958. After his selection to captain in later years, Robert Sparks was killed in a helicopter accident in Iceland.

The Move to Rota and More New Aircraft

The Move

CDR Sigley was at VQ-2's helm during its move to Rota from late 1958 through the first few days of 1959. The move was officially completed 14 January. During the squadron's relocation, five A3D-2Qs were received to replace the less-capable A3D-1Qs. It was not until 14 January 1960, with CDR P.D. Halpin as skipper, that VQ-2 was officially transferred to the joint U.S.-Spanish base. Earlier, on 1 January, the official name of the squadron was changed to *Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Two* (VQ-2).

Shortly after the move, on 19 January, a VQ-2 *Mercator* crashed during daylight hours while on approach to Incirlik AFB in Adana, Turkey. . The aircraft was returning from a mission over the Black Sea. The crash took the lives of all 16 crewmen on board as follows: LCDR Franklin B. Moore (pilot), LCDR Warren J. Hampton (pilot), LT Thomas H. Edgerton (nav), LTJG Donald C. McIntyre (eval), LTJG Robert G. Ogden (eval), nATC John M. Boling (radar op), AT1 Joseph A. Cote (plane captain), AT1 Marvin A. Radtke (radio op), AE1 Murphy J. Martinez Jr (Flight Engineer), AO2 Richard C. Nouzum (Flight ordnanceman), AT2 John M. Criswell (ESM op), AQ2 Richard D Criterden (ESM op), AT2 Harold L. Berg (ESM op), AM3 Rex H. Gregory (flight structural mech), and AT3 Francis E. Tomkowski (ESM op).

Here Comes the Willie Victor

But operations must go on, and on 26 February the squadron received the first two Lockheed WV-2Q *Super Constellations*, or, more popularly, "*Willie Victors*". On 31 March 1960 VQ-2 had an inventory of five A3D-2Q, two WV-2Q, three P2V-5F and two P4M-1Qs. The P2V-5F and P4M-1Q were soon to be phased out. Meanwhile, the newer WV-2Q and A3D-2Q continued to arrive at the squadron. In October 1962 the WV-2Q would be designated EC-12IM and the A3D-2Q became the EA-3B. Regardless of what designation they bore, these *Willie Victors*, or "*Connies*", and *Skywarriors*, or "*Whales*", would serve the VQ community for many years to come.

VQ-2, now under the command of CDR Arthur G. Elder, soon settled down at its new location and quickly adapted to its replacement aircraft. Meanwhile, the squadron continued its business of airborne electronic reconnaissance in support of the *Sixth Fleet* and national intelligence collection programs.

More Losses

While under the command of CDR H.E. Fitzwater, on 22 May 1962 tragedy again struck the squadron when a WV-2Q, operating from Furstenfeldbruck, West Germany, was lost in a mishap with its 26-man crew. For unexplained reasons, the tail section of the *Connie* separated in flight just over a mile southwest of Markt Schweben, Germany, resulting in an uncontrollable crash.

As a petty officer second class, the author, then stationed with the Naval Security Group Activity Bremerhaven, was detailed to the crash scene to assist in recovery of classified material. In a bizarre incident one of the crewmen happened to be in the aircraft's head, which was all the way aft, when the empennage broke off at the main cargo door point. The intact tail section, with its single passenger, was

reported by several witnesses to have “flown” in a wide arc after the breakup and made a semi-controlled “landing” in a large freshly-plowed farm field. The crewman, apparently unhurt up to this point, was thrown from the tail section directly into a tree, where he was killed instantly from a broken neck. Killed in this accident were: LCDR Conner M. Petrie, Jr. (pilot), Lt Jack L. Duval (pilot), LTJG Marvin R. Armstrong (nav), LCDR Charles A Patschke (eval), LTJG Robert Poole (eval), ATRAN Gilbert J. Austin (crew), AT2 Donald R. Ballard (crew), AT1 Gene P. Bartram (crew), AM1 Martin J. Brennan (crew), AT2 Gerald. R. Carlton (crew), ADRCA Eugeno George (crew), ATR3 Edward N. Hawkins (crew), AMH1 Gerhard K. Heimerl (crew), ADR2 Michael Kostium (2nd flight engineer), ATS3 Orville R. Malone (crew), ATCA Jared M. Rose (crew), AE3 Timothy D. Steward (crew), ATN3 Lee P. Strong (crew), AT2 Jamos W. Tyler (crew), AT2 Ronald P. Wajda (crew), ATR3 Joseph H. Watkins (crew), ATCA Thomas E. Young (crew), and 4 U.S. Army personnel.

PART NINE - THE NATIONAL MISSIONS

The Peacetime Aerial Reconnaissance Program (PARPRO)

In addition to the tactical electronic reconnaissance supports the VQ squadrons provided to tactical land and sea operations, there was another category of missions that were flown. This monthly series of flights were more strategic in nature and were planned and executed in cooperation with our U.S. Air Force counterpart and the National Security Agency (NSA). These flights came under the title of the Peacetime Aerial Reconnaissance Program or PARPRO. This was a more sensitive program involving a wider and higher level of participants and was designed primarily to satisfy national intelligence requirements. Although the Navy participated in this program, the VQ tactical fleet support missions were first priority and assigned PARPRO missions could be cancelled if the assets were required instead for fleet support.

PART TEN – A SERIES OF PEACETIME CRISES AND VIETNAM

The Cuban Missile Crisis

In October 1962, VQ-2 deployed a detachment of aircraft and men to operate from NAS Key West, Fla., in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. The electronic intelligence collected by VQ-2 was used to integrate the photography acquired by RF-8s, U-2s and RF-101s into a coherent set of intelligence information to assist in resolving this major superpower confrontation.

An accepted fact of an international crisis is the political and military decision-makers' need for a greater quantity of near real-time intelligence. This important factor lay at the heart of VQ operations in its early days, and continues to do so today.

The Cyprus Crisis and Fleet Support with the Whale

Following the Cuban missile confrontation in 1962 was the Cyprus Crisis of 1964. At the time, CDR R.M. Davis was in command of VQ-2. Afterwards, a series of eastern Mediterranean crises provided ample opportunities for the squadron to collect and provide timely intelligence information to top-level decision-makers.

During the decade of the sixties, VQ-2 operations took on a more direct tactical fleet support role. This role was primarily in response to a rapidly growing and modernizing Soviet Navy which had established a continuous presence in the Mediterranean Sea, concurrent with the Cyprus Crisis. In the years to come, VQ-2 would experience a steady increase in the number of its electronic reconnaissance missions tasked against the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean and other oceanic areas.

CO CDR Art Elder brought an A3D-2Q aboard the Independence (C VA-62) for touch-and-go on 25 Jan 1961 to become the first VQ pilot to take a VQ airplane aboard a carrier. The initial EA-3B deployment to a Mediterranean aircraft carrier occurred in October 1964 to the USS Forrester (CV-59). Then, the first VQ-2 permanent carrier det deployed to the Saratoga (CVA-60) in Jan 1965. For the most part, VQ-2 operated incognito during late '50s to late '60s.

Partly because of the growth of the Soviet Navy as a new factor in the Southern European theater, the first VQ-2 EA-3B detachment went aboard a Mediterranean-based carrier in January 1965, under Skipper CDR C.A. Kiser. Since this initial Whale det embarked in *Saratoga* (CVA-60), VQ-2 provided almost continuous electronic reconnaissance support to *Sixth Fleet* carriers.

The First VQ-2 Carrier-Based Whale lost

The first loss of a VQ-2 *Skywarrior* during carrier operations came on 11 March 1966 while the squadron was under the command of CDR J.H. McConnell. EA-3B buno 146458 was on a night approach to the USS Independence (CV-62) just south of Sicily in the Mediterranean Sea. For unexplained reasons, possibly an altimeter malfunction, the aircraft apparently impacted the water at cruise speed. All six crewmen were lost as follows: LCDR Monteo L. Lilleboe (pilot), LTJG James H. Stilz (nav), LTJG Victor C. Vogel (eval), AT1 Lawrence Gallagher (ESM op), ADJ2 Keith . KLEIS (PLANE CAPTAIN), AND ATR3 DAVID W. MCCUSKER (ESM OP).

The Vietnam War

It was not only in routine recce operations and in peacetime crisis situations that VQ-2 saw action. There was also a HOT war to be fought. The conflict had heated up in Southeast Asia, and by the autumn of 1965 the U.S. Navy required a degree of electronic recce capacity beyond that available in VQ-1. Consequently, beginning under the tenures of CDRs A.D. Burkett and E.Y. Laney, detachments of VQ-2 EA-3Bs and EC-121Ms were provided to the Pacific theater to conduct electronic reconnaissance in support of Navy combat operations in Vietnam. VQ-2 aircraft initially operated from NAS Cubi Point, the Gulf of Tonkin carriers, and DaNang. After detachment facilities were established at DaNang, VQ-2 EA-3Bs operated almost exclusively from that site with VQ-1 aircraft. VQ-2 provided surface-to-air missile (SAM) and MiG threat warning services, which significantly contributed to the survivability of Navy strike aircraft. These VQ-2 assets also provided signals intelligence (Sigint) collection for electronic order of battle (EOB) updating and combat contingency planning.

More Losses

VQ-2 lost one aircraft and a portion of a crew in two separate incidents in Southeast Asia operations between 1965 and 1968. In the spring of 1966, VQ-2 had EA-3Bs and crews operating TAD with VQ-1 to cover activity in the Vietnam combat zone. On 26 May an emergency mission was launched from NAS Cubi Point, Philippines to cover unusual activity in the combat zone. At the time the VQ-2 EA-3B was down and a VQ-1 bird took the flight. In the scramble to locate crew for the quick reaction mission, two VQ-2 ESM operators were suited up to fly with the VQ-1 crew. These two were ATR3 Richard Hunt and ATR3 Richard Stocker. During climb out, the EA-3B encountered typhoon weather conditions and experienced a rare flame out of both engines at around 18,000 feet altitude. As the pilot, LCDR Dave Caswell of VQ-1 fought the controls and attempted engine re-start, he activated the bail out bell and blew the lower hatch. The back end crew of 1 VQ-1 officer (LT LINZY), one VQ-1 enlisted (atc Aubin), and the two VQ-2 enlisted listed above bailed out. Then, the plane captain froze in the companionway refusing to bail out. By then the pilot had regained control of the aircraft and acquired re-start of the engines at around 8,000 feet altitude. The aircraft was then returned to NAS Cubi Point. The four men that bailed out apparently drowned in the high seas and only PO Stocker's body was ever recovered.

In the summer of 1968 an enemy rocket attack against the base at DaNang resulted in the partial destruction of a VQ-2 EA-3B (BuNo 144848) in its revetment. Although a VQ-1 EC-121M and EA-3B were also damaged in this attack, there were no personnel injuries. The VQ-2 Whale, although heavily damaged in the nose/cockpit section, was subsequently placed aboard an MSTC carrier to be transported to ConUS for repairs. On 14 December 1968, the EA-3B broke loose from its deck tiedowns during rough weather in Tokyo Bay and was lost overboard. This incident signaled the beginning of the end of VQ-2 operations in Southeast Asia, as things were again heating up in the Med.

During the remainder of the Vietnam War VQ-2 continued airborne electronic reconnaissance operations at a high pace in the crisis prone Mediterranean. While operating from Ramstein AFB, Germany, in the spring of 1968, another EA-3B bailout occurred. The aircraft, piloted by LCDR "Stu" Corey, was entering the Ramstein landing pattern near the town of Landstuhl on 16 March, when an inboard slat malfunction occurred at approximately 1,200 ft. With the EA-3B apparently entering a stall in a nose-up port turn, the pilot signaled for crew bailout. (EA-3B crews do not have the luxury of

ejection seats!) The “back end” crew, consisting of LTJG “Dick” McBurnett, CPOs “Obie” O’Brien and Bob Johnson, and PO1 Dave Barlag, quickly “hit the silk” as they had practiced numerous times in squadron ditch and bailout drills. Because of the low altitude, the crew had only one or two swings in their chutes before landing in a heavily wooded area. Only Barlag landed on firm ground, while the other three chutes were caught in tall fir trees. Chief O’Brien was removed from his tree by the local fire department, while Johnson managed to free himself, suffering minor injuries.

Regrettably, LTJG McBurnett was less fortunate. In trying to disentangle himself from the tree, his chute broke free, resulting in a fall of 50-70 ft and severe back injuries. After two hours, McBurnett was finally located and rescued by a USAF helicopter. Ironically, his father also was injured a few kilometers from this accident site. He was hit by artillery fragments during the Battle of the Bulge in WWII.

Meanwhile, after the crew bailout, LCDR Corey recovered the EA-3B when the slat became operative, and successfully landed at Ramstein. Corey’s skillful recovery of the aircraft came only seconds before the final crewmembers, CPO Sweitzer and LTJG “Shep” Smith, were to bailout. The author, who was standing the Squadron Duty Officer watch in Rota at the time, can recall the initial telephone conversation with LTJG Smith after he arrived at Ramstein operations. As Smith was reporting the grim details of the bailout, the sound of heavy fight boots at a dead run over the tile floors could be heard in the background. Fortunately, these sounds were made by Dave Barlag as he arrived, parachute and all, after hitchhiking a ride to base operations with a German civilian in a Volkswagen “Bug.” He brought the good news of sighting the other three chutes on his way down.

An earlier incident involving an EA-3B aircraft occurred on September 1966. LCDRs Jack Taylor and Joel Graham and crew diverted to Sigonella, Sicily where they encountered severe thunderstorms en route. Following repairs to some radome damage, they launched for Rota. During climbout, the entire radome disintegrated; however, they were able to recover safely at Sigonella.

The Loss of a Skipper

Several other accidents occurred during the 1960s resulting in the loss of 56 additional lives. In a 4 June 1968 EA-3B accident, the new squadron CO, CDR T.E. Daum, was killed, along with his electronic warfare department head, LCDR Bruce Ford; the special security officer, LCDR Jim Frazee; and the squadron navigation officer, LCDR Charlie Best. Two petty officer crewmen, Jim Henderson and Jack Snowdy, miraculously survived, but were hospitalized for several months. CDR Ted Daum had been CO of VQ-2 only 33 days at the time of his death.

Apparently the *Skywarrior* lost an engine just after takeoff and slowly lost altitude until it struck the ground in a sugar beet field approximately one mile east of the Rota airbase. The tail probably touched down first on the downslope of a small hill, which pitched the nose downward to begin a violent tumble. As the aircraft disintegrated, Petty Officers Henderson and Snowdy were thrown clear. LTs “Gus” Littlefield and Tom Fritz were on their way to work at the squadron when they saw the aircraft go down. After parking their cars and making their way across the field on foot to the accident site, they initially found no signs of life. Shortly thereafter, a weak voice from a clump of grass asked, “Hey Gus, you got a

cigarette?” It was then that Littlefield and Fritz found Henderson, and a few moments later, Snowdy, alive, but very badly injured.

And The Operations Go On

CDRs R.W. Arn, H.G. Hatch, and A.A. Gallotta led VQ-2 through the remainder of the busy 1960s when Soviet naval activity and Arab-Israeli tensions in the Mediterranean, as well as the Vietnam War, tugged at the squadron’s limited assets. With the dramatic increase of Soviet Naval activity in the Mediterranean, VQ-2 personnel, led by the ELINT Analysis Division Officer, LT Don East, developed the Hull-To-Emitter program to identify specific Soviet vessels by the specific parameters of their radar systems. This program shortly went global and evolved into a global system developed and operated by NSA.

A Period of Continued Crisis

The decade of the 1970s was frequently punctuated by international crises in VQ-2’s theater of operations, especially in the Mediterranean. Notable among these were the 1970 Jordanian Crisis, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the 1974 crisis in Cyprus and the continuing unrest in Lebanon. These and other situations invariably resulted in the presence of the Sixth Fleet offshore, which in turn required the services of VQ-2 in providing urgently needed tactical intelligence. Under skipper CDR Al Gallotta, VQ-2 received a second Meritorious Unit Commendation for superior electronic reconnaissance operations during the Jordanian Crisis 9 September to 31 October 1970. In part the citation stated: “These units (including VQ-2) contributed significantly to the effectiveness, mobility and success of fleet operations which were vital toward maintaining peace in the Mediterranean.” Skipper Al Gallotta would later be the first “Home Grown” VQ Commanding Officer to attain Flag rank.

With the presence of the Sixth Fleet at these crisis situations, came the ever-increasing presence of the Soviet Navy in Fleet Admiral Gorshkov’s new peacetime instrument of foreign policy role. VQ-2 had to split its collection assets to monitor the actions ashore and those of the nearby Soviet naval units in an eyeball-to-eyeball stance with our own Sixth Fleet ships.

Some days things just don’t go your way. Waterspouts in front of carrier forced this EA-3B flown by LCDR Mall Moore, Navigator LT “Shep” Smith, EVAL LT Don East and four enlisted operators, to divert to Sigonella only to confront Moore with a 50-kt crosswind landing with near-predictable results. The aircraft departed the runway losing a main mount. With the help of most of the NAF Sigonella personnel and a heavy lift cherry picker, the damaged aircraft was moved back on the runway and transported to a hangar for repairs. Only minor crew injuries resulted, but the same aircraft got a “cold cat shot” off Roosevelt (CVA-42) 26 Feb 1970 with the loss of entire crew.

Arrival of the EP-3E

The 1970s also brought a vastly improved electronic reconnaissance platform to the VQ squadrons. The aging EC-121M was no longer able to meet the demands of high-tempo fleet reconnaissance missions in the dynamic environment of superpower competition. Consequently, on 31 July 1971 while under CDR

J.E. Taylor, VQ-2 received its first Lockheed EP-3E Aries (Airborne Reconnaissance Integrated Electronic System). By 1976 the sixth and final EP-3E had arrived in the squadron, for a total complement of six EA-3Bs, six EP-3Es, a TA-3B which had been acquired in May 1972, and a UP-3A acquired shortly afterwards. The TA-3B and UP-3A were valuable for pilot training and logistics purposes.

Another Loss

Although the very high fatality count of the 1960s was not repeated, mishaps nevertheless continued with the deaths of 12 VQ-2 flyers. On 26 February 1970 an EA-3B was lost while operating from *Roosevelt* (CVA-42) in the Mediterranean. The catapult system malfunctioned in mid-stroke, resulting in the *Skywarrior* “dribbling” off the bow and being run over by the carrier. Four of the crewmembers made the ultimate sacrifice for their country in the accident, as LCDR Blaine Thrasher, LT Tom Walls, AEI Bond and an unidentified passenger were lost at sea. A fifth VQ-2 crewmember, the plane captain, Petty Officer “Rosey” Rozier, miraculously survived to be picked up by the plane guard. Petty Officer Rozier was interviewed by the author a few years after the accident. Rosey was thrown from his 3rd crewman position as the aircraft broke up after it went off the bow of the carrier. He remembered going underwater the entire length of the carrier and seeing the ships large screws turning as he somehow went through them and came up to the surface aft of the ship. He was then picked up by the plane guard destroyer.

The Soviet Buildup of Client States Military Hardware

VQ-2 was under the command of CDR Jack Taylor from June 1971 to July 1972. While a relative calm was ongoing in the European theater at the time, the significant military hardware buildup in Soviet client states such as Libya, Syria and Egypt drew the majority of the squadron’s attention. This buildup would soon erupt into a period of open hostilities between the Arabs and Israelis.

CDR J.D. Meyer became the 18th skipper of VQ-2 on 6 July 1973 and would soon be faced with a period of extremely high-tempo operations associated with the Yom Kippur War that October. For the extremely valuable electronic reconnaissance operations performed by VQ-2 during that conflict, the squadron was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation.

Another Whale Bites the Dust

On 8 March 1974 another EA-3B was lost at sea while recovering on board *America* (CYA-66). Fortunately no deaths or injuries were associated with the incident, largely due to the superior airman ship of the pilot. LT Dave Longeway, kept the Whale in the best possible attitude when ditching became inevitable. Cause of the accident was determined to be the parting of the purchase cable, which is connected to the arresting gear below decks, inside the coupling which attaches to the cross-deck pendant. All seven crewmen exited the aircraft before the Whale, true to its nautical nature, finally sounded, approximately five minutes after water entry. *America’s* rescue helicopter picked up the crew, and LT Longeway was awarded the Air Medal for his superior airmanship.

And More Loss of Life

Tragedy again struck VQ-2 9 July 1974, when the squadron's trainer/logistics aircraft crashed shortly after takeoff from Naples, Italy. The TA-3B was transporting maintenance personnel back to Rota, where they had been involved in repairing another squadron aircraft. Upon takeoff the aircraft rolled right and went inverted to crash into a field. Suspected split flaps or pilot heart attack were the cause. Killed in the crash were the pilot, LCDR Dwight L. Worrell, navigator LTJG Douglas N. Davis and six enlisted aircrewmen/ground maintenance personnel: AMN2 Robert F. Carney, ADJ2 Robert S. Charrington, AE2 William P. Beuler, AQ2 John G. Pauljohn, ADJ3 Orval T. May and AE3 Carl F. Schwartz. July 1974 also brought the retirement of the squadron's last EC-121M.

EP-3Es and EA-3Bs are the mainstay of VQ operations since the 1974 retirement of last EC-121M. Both aircraft serve faithfully and well, but were aging. Each of these aircraft were designed more than 30 years previously. Plans at the time had an ES-3 version of the Viking to replace the EA-3B. More on this later.

PART ELEVEN – SOME HISTORIC FIRSTS

Some Changes

Five more commanding officers led VQ-2 through the decade of the '70s: CDRs D.J. Alberg, D.N. Hagen, T.A. Peltz, G.J. Hopkins and CAPT J.E. Taylor.

One of these COs recorded a "first" when CDR Dale Hagen became the first Naval Flight Officer to command a VQ squadron. He would later become the second "Home Grown" VQ Commanding Officer to attain Flag rank and the first NFO to do so.

The "nonpilot" aviation officer came into being 16 October 1956 when the first five graduates of the Navigator/Bombardier School at NAS Corpus Christi, Tex., received their Naval Observer wings. Later, in the 1960s, the Naval Aviation Observer (NAO) was created when naval aircraft began to take on missions sufficiently complex to require the fulltime services of an aviation officer other than the pilot. In 1969 the NAOs were redesignated as Naval Flight Officers (NFO), given a new style set of wings, and promises of more "positions of responsibility," which translated to commands. The command opportunities for NFOs came slowly, however, as the traditional "pilot as a crew leader" philosophy prevailed.

The author can still vividly recall the frustration experienced as an NFO junior officer in VQ-2 from 1967 until 1970. In those early days, before the "enlightenment," an NFO was not allowed to lead a detachment as officer-in-charge, even if senior to the pilot. Fortunately, the Navy recognized the morale and other implications of such a policy, and by the mid-1970s NFOs had begun to garner a few command positions in Naval Aviation. Since CDR (later RADM) Dale Hagen's tenure, many other NFOs have commanded VQ-2 (See section on VQ-2 Commanding Officers later in this history for an analysis of these pilot/NFO numbers).

CAPT J.E. Taylor, who had commanded VQ-2 June 1971-July 1972, bears the distinction of having commanded VQ-2 on two occasions. CAPT Taylor's second command tour came during October 1978-June 1980. The repeat performance occurred as a direct result of an overall deterioration in the quality of squadron operations and a corresponding need for strong, experienced leadership to overcome a difficult period in VQ-2's history. As an individual who had accumulated a total of four previous tours in the two VQ squadrons, as well as 10,000 flight hours, "CAPT Jack" was the logical choice to put VQ-2 back on track. For the three-week unscheduled turnover period until CAPT Taylor was able to return to Rota, CDR Robert L. Prehn came from CTF-67 staff to fill in as interim commanding officer.

CAPT Taylor and his XO, Tom Fritz, had their hands full re-establishing the unit's performance. However, through strong leadership and the dedication of the men and women of VQ-2, the squadron excelled, and was awarded a Meritorious Unit Commendation for the period 1 March 1979 to 1 April 1980. In part, the citation accompanying the MUC read: "During this period, Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Two consistently displayed outstanding leadership, unparalleled expertise, and untiring dedication in ensuring the success of vital airborne reconnaissance endeavors."

PART TWELVE – THE FRANTIC 1980S

Way Too Busy!

Satisfied that VQ-2 was back on course, CAPT Taylor relinquished command of the squadron to CDR Tom Fritz, who led VQ-2 from June 1980 until June 1981. As VQ-2 entered the 1980s, with the usual high standards of excellence restored, the squadron would face perhaps its most dynamic and productive period during peacetime operations. The Arab-Israeli situation, the "Crazy Colonel" Gadhafi in the Gulf of Sidra, a crisis in the Baltic involving Poland and the Soviet Union, and the ever-increasing activity level and modernization of the Soviet Navy, all kept the squadron's assets stretched very thin through CDR John Flynn's command tour. In addition to heavy tasking within the European theater, the Iranian Hostage Crisis and increasing tensions in Nicaragua pulled some of VQ-2's already scarce electronic reconnaissance assets out of their primary theater of operations.

Libya claimed the Gulf of Sidra as a closed bay and part of its territorial waters. The United States refused to recognize this because it violated the established international laws. After the Libyans harassed U.S. reconnaissance flights, the U.S. Navy was ordered to begin Freedom of Navigation (FON) operations in the Gulf of Sidra. After Ronald Reagan came to the presidency, in August 1981 he authorized a large FON operation led by the USS Forrester and USS Nimitz carrier battle groups. Under Skipper Flynn VQ-2 provided electronic reconnaissance support to this operation with an EP-3E detachment in Sigonella and EA-3B carrier flights. After numerous Libyan aircraft were intercepted and escorted by the carrier-based aircraft on the 18th of July, the operation intensified on the 19th. Two Libyan SU-22 (Fitter) aircraft launched from Al Ghurdabiyah air base near Sirte, Libya. Alerted by the VQ-2 crews and then tracked by a Nimitz VAW-124 E-2C Hawkeye airborne early warning aircraft, the two Libyan Fitters approached the U.S. Navy battle groups. After one of the Fitters fired an AA-2 Atol missile at one of the Nimitz F-14 Tomcats, they were engaged by two VF-14 "Black Aces" Tomcats. Both Fitters were downed within seconds with AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles. These were the first recorded air-to-air kills for the U.S. Navy since Vietnam, the first ever for the F-14 Tomcat, and the world's first engagement between variable geometry (swing wing) aircraft. One of the VF-14 Tomcat pilots, LT Lawrence "Music" Muczynski, was later assigned temporary duty to VQ-2 as a Landing Signal Officer (LSO).

As VQ-2 entered the mid-1980s, the frenzied pace of operations did not let up. The Arab-Israeli Bekka War, the continuing Beirut Crisis with the U.S. Marine barracks bombing, and the Sixth Fleet December 1983 air strike into Lebanon, allowed little leisure time for the squadron.

Highly Decorated

VQ-2's high op tempo and extreme professionalism from 1 June 1982 till 31 December 1983 did not go unnoticed. During this period VQ-2 won more unit awards than ever before in its history, including the first ever Battle "E" for a fleet air reconnaissance squadron. Under skipper Don East, VQ-2 was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation for the period 1 June 1982-31 May 1983 "for meritorious service in connection with airborne reconnaissance in support of Second, Sixth and Seventh Fleet operations." The award citation went on to say: "Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Two demonstrated an unprecedented capability to react to contingency requirements in the Atlantic, European and Indian

Ocean Theaters. This outstanding performance, during a period of difficult and complex tasking, displayed aggressive enthusiasm and the highest degree of professionalism which made Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Two the leader in battle group support and signals intelligence collection.

The second award won by VQ-2 during this 18-month period was the Navy Expeditionary Medal for its crucial role in the 1982 Lebanon Crisis. The squadron was awarded the NEM for the period August-November 1982. Finally, a third award came on 29 February 1984, VQ-2 was notified that it was recipient of the Battle "E" for 1983. This period spanned six months each of CDR East and CDR John Draper's CO tours. For this award, VQ-2 competed in the Special Mission category for NavAirLant squadrons Reconnaissance Squadron Two the leader in battle group support and signals intelligence collection."

During this time frame VQ-2 aircraft deployed to Athens, Greece, Sigonella, Italy, the Caribbean and numerous sites in England and Germany. The EA-3Bs operated aboard the aircraft carriers Kennedy, Nimitz, America, Eisenhower, Saratoga, and Independence.

VQ-2 Joins a New Club and the Operations Continue

During this period VQ-2 began reporting to Tactical Support Wing One in Norfolk, Virginia for training and personnel matters. Also, for the first time, this allowed the squadron an avenue of eligibility for the Battle "E" Award. The squadron adopted "Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty" as its official motto and skipper East had this phrase by Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson painted in large letters across the front of the squadron hangar.

CDR Draper turned over command of VQ-2 to CDR E.A. Caldwell as the situation in the Mediterranean remained intense through the mid-1980s. Terrorism continued to show its ugly head in the Achille Lauro hijacking incident and the follow-on U.S. Navy force-down of the Egyptian airliner carrying the Arab hijackers to freedom. In short order, these incidents were followed by the Rome and Vienna airport slaughters perpetrated by Arab terrorists and the resulting U.S./Libya confrontation. And so, the need for VQ-2's quick-reaction airborne electronic reconnaissance capabilities continued the ever-increasing spiral while the then 26-year-old EA-3B and 22-year-old EP-3Es struggled to meet the fast-paced demands.

VQ-2 experienced a period of no major aircraft accidents or flight casualties during the first seven years of the 1980s. After substantial damage from a bleed air leak in the center wing box to an EA-3B at Rota 5 June 1975 (no injuries), the squadron began a long series of major mishap-free flight hours.

CDR T.L. Hanson assumed command of VQ-2 in January 1986, with CDR Jay R. Kistler as XO, while activity in the Mediterranean remained at a high level. At this time VQ-2 operated six EA-3B, six EP-3E, one UA-3B and one UP-3A. CDR Hanson's command tenure began in the midst of the large-scale U.S. Navy operations in the Central Mediterranean off Libya. These operations were a strong message to Gadhafi and his state-sponsored terrorism. During these operations, a muscle-tensing situation developed as a VQ-2 EA-3B, operating from Coral Sea (CV-43), was intercepted by two Libyan MiG-25s 120 miles north of Tripoli. After coming close to the Whale and passing underneath it, the Foxbats left without incident.

Interception of U.S. intelligence aircraft is not uncommon and usually passes without incident these days, But it is never a comfortable situation and the recce crews are always faced with that great uncertainty.

It was VQ-2's operations during crisis situations such as those in the Central Mediterranean, as well as overall superior performance, that led to a second Battle "E" award during this period.

Teaching the "Crazy Colonel" a Lesson

The January 1986 operations in the Central Med would not be the Navy's last encounter with the "Crazy Colonel", however, as two other clashes occurred in late March and mid-April. The first of these began when Sixth Fleet aircraft operating in international waters of the Gulf of Sidra were fired upon by Libyan SA-5 missiles- During the next 24-hour period at least two Libyan missile patrol boats were destroyed by Navy tactical air and surface combatants, as was the Sirte SA-5 site guidance radar by AGM-88 (HARM) anti-radiation missiles. There were no U.S. losses.

The second period of hostilities occurred in the wake of Libyan terrorist bombings of a Berlin nightclub and a TWA airliner, where U.S. citizens were killed in each case. These Libyan-sponsored terrorist activities drew the military response promised by President Reagan, involving both *Sixth Fleet* and USAF F-111 assets in a major strike against Al Azziziyah Army Barracks, Tripoli's airport, the port of Sidi Bilal, Al Jumahiriya barracks and Benina Airfield. Note: One of these USAF F-111's landed at NS Rota Spain after the bombing raid with damages where VQ-2 personnel help repair the aircraft.

A Tragic Loss:

On 25 January 1987, VQ-2 EA-3B buno 144850 (Ranger 12) was lost at sea during night recovery operations aboard the USS Nimitz. Seven crewmen were lost. The whale was returning from an operational mission in the Mediterranean, and after several unsuccessful attempts at getting aboard, it crashed on the flight deck during an attempted barrier trap. Killed were LCDR Ronald R. Callander, Lt Stephen H. Batchelder, LT Alan A. Levine, LT James D. Richares, AT2 Richard A. Herzing, CT13 Patrick R. Price, and CT13 Craig H. Rudolf. The EA-3B in this crash was eight years older than the 26-year old pilot. Ironically, on the same day as the crash, America observed the first anniversary of the seven Americans killed in the space shuttle Challenger explosion. Unlike the much publicized Challenger loss, the public was informed of the VQ-2 Ranger 12 loss in a one-paragraph statement issued by the public affairs officers in the pentagon. At the time of the Nimitz EA-3B accident, SecNav John Lehman was struggling to acquire congressional and Navy approval for funds for a carrier capable aircraft to replace the aging EA-3B. He noted the enormous volume of press coverage afforded the anniversary of the Challenger accident and initiated a quick-reaction press project to generate public interest of these seven young Americans that lost their lives an aging aircraft. SecNav directed a team to be formed to produce a human interest story of the Nimitz EA-3B accident that might not only recognize the service of these seven Navy crewmen, but also possibly sway his congressional and Navy critics on the need for a follow on aircraft to replace the EA-3B. He called on a very highly respected writer of military subjects, Jim Stewart, and a team of eight experienced Skywarrior pilots, NFOs, etc. to provide all the necessary technical and operational details to Stewart. At this time, the author was assigned nearby at the Naval

Technical Intelligence Center in Suitland, Maryland and was ordered to be a member of the team. The team was quickly assembled in the Pentagon and was provided direction and guidance from SecNav. He wanted to put a human face on the Nimitz accident and emphasize the need for a replacement for the aged EA-3B in flying these critical intelligence missions. The team members provided writer Jim Stewart with information on the EA-3B and its missions as well as answering his specific questions. SecNavs staff arranged to have Stewart's resulting lengthy article appear in the Sunday edition of over 40 major newspapers all across the United States on 12 April 1987. A copy of the Atlanta Constitution newspaper containing this story can be found as a sidebar on John Herndon's Faireconron Two website. As one of the contributors to the article, the author noted only one major error in the story. Writer Stewart had erroneously credited the EA-3B with afterburners on its two engines – which of course it does not have. Apparently the moving story worked on the public and the congressional/Navy critics, resulting in approval for the ES-3A (Shaddow) replacement for the EA-3B. This replacement aircraft is discussed later in part thirteen of this history. This tragic Nimitz EA-3B accident brought the total to two hundred and seventeen the number of U.S. Navy airborne electronic reconnaissance personnel lost in shoot downs and accidents.

Despite this tragic loss, the last of the VQ-2's Cold War fatalities, the EA-3B would remain in the aerial electronic reconnaissance program for several more years. Specifically, the Whale would remain in front line service with the VQ squadrons until October 1991, serving with distinction in one last conflict, operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Other Happenings in 1987:

Beginning in the spring of 1987, CDRs Kistler, Quigley, and Leonard led VQ-2 through the remainder of the 1980s. At the beginning of this period, the squadron had six EP-3E ARIES, nine EA-3B A-3 Skywarriors, one UP-3A ORION and one UA-3B Skywarrior aircraft assigned. Naval Communications Station Rota, Spain and Naval Security Group Activity Athens, Greece continued to provide temporary duty personnel essential cryptologic talent to the VQ mission.

During this period, VQ-2 operated aircraft out of bases at Rota, Spain; Mildenhall, U.K.; Athens, Greece; Sigonella, Sicily, Eskisehir, Turkey; Keflavik, Iceland; Ramstein, West Germany; and Mediterranean deployed USN aircraft carriers. These carriers included the Coral Sea, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Theodore Roosevelt, America, Forrestal, and John F Kennedy.

Early in 1988, the first two of the squadron EP-3E aircraft were sent stateside for CILOP (Conversion in Lieu of Procurement) upgrades and in November three EA-3Bs were transferred from VQ-1 to VQ-2. Also that year, there were four equipment installations in squadron EP-3E aircraft for test and evaluation. The first of these, Prototype Air and Ground Reporting Operations Node (PARAGON) provided the capability to track target country information near real time, based on inputs from both organic and non-organic sources. Next, the Cast Eyes optical tracking system was installed to enhance the passive surveillance capability. Next, the Musketeer Emma digitized collection/recording system as an upgrade to the aircraft collection system. Finally, the Joint Operational Tactical Information Exchange Interface System was installed. These new operational or prototype systems were all elements in

attempts to upgrade the squadron aircraft probability of intercept, identification of target, and rapidity of reporting.

More Hostilities:

In 1988, under CO Tom K. Quigley, events in the Persian Gulf continued to be the focus of operations for VQ-2. After attacks on USA and Panamanian-flagged commercial ships, the USN sank Boghammer speedboats and Iranian Navy fast attack and frigate units. Other hostilities involving U.S. forces supported by VQ-2 broke out in Libya. Under CO Ray Leonard in 1989, Tomcats from the USS JFK and supported by VQ-2 assets downed two MIG-23 (FLOGGER) aircraft off Tobruk over international waters.

The squadron also supported the early deployment of the USS Coral Sea to the east Mediterranean in reaction to terrorist activities there. Another highlights during this period was the visit of President George Bush to the USS Forrestal. Other USN carrier battle groups supported by VQ-2 in the Mediterranean theater of operations during this period were the America and Teddy Roosevelt.

During this period the squadron operated four EP-3E ARIES, seven EA-3B Skywarrior, one UP-3A Orion, and one UA-3B Skywarrior aircraft.

PART THIRTEEN – IRAQ, IRAN, AND AFGHANISTAN, AND MORE

The “Peace Dividend” is Short Lived

Under the command of CDR D.W. Durfee, the early 1990s, the world tensions between the two superpowers lessened a bit when Premier Gorbachev's Glasnost and Perestroika programs were established. That was the good news.

However, for the bad news, this "Peace Dividend" was to be short lived when on 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. With the Independence and Eisenhower in the eastern Mediterranean, the former was directed to the Northern Arabian Sea in support of Operation Desert Shield. These carrier battle groups were soon followed by rotations from the USS JFK, Saratoga, America, and Eisenhower. By January 1991, this action transitioned to Operation Desert Storm as the United States began the liberation of Kuwait. During this action, VQ-2 units supported both land operations as well as sea actions by USS Ranger and Nimitz. The decade of the 1990s brought VQ-2 to the Persian Gulf during the Gulf War and subsequent support of Operation Northern Watch and Southern Watch. Also at the end of the decade, VQ-2 provided reconnaissance for NATO operations during the Kosovo War. On the other side of the world, the Rangers supported counter-narcotics operations during Operations Inca Gold and Carib Shield with the U.S. Southern Command.

According to an article by LCDR Tom Brennan that appeared in The Naval Aviation News Magazine in the September-October 1991 issue, VQ-1 began operations from a detachment in Bahrain early in Desert Shield, and in late November 1990, this detachment was augmented by an additional EP-3E and crew from VQ-2. The combined efforts of this VQ -1 and 2 detachment ensured around-the-clock coverage for sea and land-based strikes throughout Desert Storm. Through March, both squadrons remained in Bahrain and continued to fly tactical reconnaissance flights for the Arabian Gulf battle force and coalition forces. In mid-November, a VQ-2 EA-3B Skywarrior detachment was established in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and flew daily reconnaissance flights along the Saudi-Iraqi border to monitor the steady build-up of Iraqi forces. When hostilities commenced on January 17, 1991, this detachment stepped up its operations and provided vital intelligence for the furious onslaught of strikes launched from the decks of the Red Sea battle force's three carriers: John F. Kennedy, America, and Saratoga. By the end of the 40-day campaign, this single two-plane detachment had flown nearly 100 combat missions and logged over 575 hours. For an aircraft which started its operational life during the Korean War, this was an impressive performance.

Completing the total commitment of VQ-2's aircraft to the war effort, in late January, VQ-2 was tasked to fly EP-3E reconnaissance missions in conjunction with Allied air strikes originating from Turkey. With this mission, the combined forces of VQ-2 completed the VQ encirclement of Iraq. Contributing significantly to the Desert Storm success. In addition to the Desert Shield/Desert Storm operations, VQ-2 continued to fly tactical reconnaissance over the Mediterranean Sea to monitor potential threats to deploying forces passing throughout the Mediterranean theatre.

With the commencement of operation Provide Comfort in April, VQ-2 was again tasked to fly EP-3E missions to assist that humanitarian relief effort for the Kurdish refugees along the Turkish-Iraqi border. The EA-3Bs of VQ-2 were the last operational "Whales" in the Navy and along with the ancient EP-3E Aries I, provided shore-based intelligence information to the Mediterranean battle group commanders since the cessation of EA-3B carrier operations in 1987. In the summer of 1990, the squadron provided

electronic reconnaissance during the evacuation of 2,000 non-combatant personnel from war-stricken Liberia in operation Sharp Edge.

The End of the Whale

A sad note to this era was the end of long history of service by the venerable EA-3B Skywarrior aircraft. The “Whale” as it was affectionately called, bowed out of operational service in October 1991 after serving in the Persian Gulf conflict. These were the last operational Skywarriors in the US Navy. However, the old bird would not go quietly. It was due some accolades. The EA-3B was honored on several occasions after its retirement. During a ceremony on 13 July 2004, an EA-3B was dedicated to the National Security Agency’s Cold War Memorial. This facility is named the National Vigilance Park, and is located on the Fort George G. Meade reservation in Maryland. The park honors all military crews who risked and often lost their lives performing airborne signals intelligence during the Cold War. The dedicated EA-3B bears the marking of the VQ-2 Ranger 12 aircraft lost on the Nimitz.

Memorials in the form of restored Skywarriors can also be found today on board several aircraft carrier museums and at other sites. These aircraft have been relocated, refurbished and stand as memorials to this heroic old bird and its crews. Leading the efforts to establish these A-3 memorials were Mark Swisher, Al Rankin, JJ Anayannis and others of the A-3 Association. There were also numerous donations and other forms of assistance from the VQ association and other organizations and individuals.

Due to these efforts, fourteen other Whale memorials have been established at the following sites: an EA3B at the Vintage Flying Machine Museum at Meacham International airport in Ft. Worth, TX; an RA-3B at Castle Air Museum in Atwater, CA; an NRA-3B at NAS Whidbey Island, Washington; an EA-3B on board the USS Yorktown (CV-10) at Patriots Point in Charleston, South Carolina; an NTA-3B at the Pacific Aviation Museum, Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; an A-3A at the Edwards AFB Test Flight Museum, CA; an EA-3B at the National Museum of Naval Aviation on the Naval Station in Pensacola, FL; a KA-3B at the Yanks Air Museum in Chino, CA; an XA3D-1 at Johnstown-Fulton County Airport in Johnstown, NY; in the Pima Air and Space Museum in Tucson, AZ.; in the Oakland Western Aerospace Museum at North Field Oakland International Airport in Oakland, CA.; On board the USS Midway (CV-41) in San Diego, CA.; on board the USS Lexington (CV-16) in Corpus Christi, TX.; and at the New England Air Museum at the Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, CT. Additionally, there are cockpits, nose sections and other parts of Whales on display at other sites in the United States.

The details of the placement of the EA-3B aboard the USS Yorktown at Patriots Point was indeed an interesting saga within itself. This whale was originally installed adjacent to the BOQ on Naval Station Rota, Spain as a monument to Commander Ted Daum, the VQ-2 commanding officer killed in an EA-3B accident nearby. Through the herculean efforts of several former VQ-2 personnel volunteers, the old bird was cleaned up, made ready for movement, and towed to the nearby Naval Base Rota piers. Then, it hitchhiked a free ride on the navy amphibious ship USS Wasp to Norfolk, Virginia, where it was eventually offloaded and transported to Patriots Point in Charleston, south Carolina. There it was lifted by crane aboard the USS Yorktown. There it was further refurbished and officially dedicated at a ceremony on 15 April 2011.

The Collapse of the USSR and Disarray in the Balkans add to the Tasks

The collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s brought about a vacuum of power in the region as ethnic unrest and severe economic conditions emerged in the republics of the former USSR and nations of the Eastern European Bloc.

Meanwhile in VQ-2, under COs R.A. Kusada and B.L. Clark, requirements in varied locations stretched assets to the limits. Bosnia-Herzegovina and other former republics of Yugoslavia, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, and other global hot spots competed for VQ-2 electronic surveillance support operations. In November 1990 VQ-2 joined VQ-1 with an EP-3E and crew at Bahrain early in Desert Shield. By mid November a VQ-2 Skywarrior detachment was established in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to monitor the steady build-up of Iraqi forces along the Saudi-Iraqi border. When hostilities commenced on 17 January 1991, the detachment stepped up its operations and provided vital intelligence for the onslaught of strikes launched from the decks of the U.S. Navy's Red Sea Battle Force's 3 carriers: Kennedy, America and Saratoga.

A Replacement Aircraft For Carrier Operations

When the replacement aircraft for the EA-3B finally arrived, it came in the form of a band-aid capability called the ES-3A Shaddow. This program resulted in 16 modified S-3 Viking aircraft that entered into operational service in 1993. Like all prior VQ aircraft, these S-3 airframes were older models handed-down from the carrier-based anti-submarine community (VS). The ES-3As were organized into two new Navy electronic reconnaissance squadrons, the VQ-5 (Sea Shaddows) and the VQ-6 (Black Ravens), based at North Island, California and Cecil Field Jacksonville, Florida respectively. The ES-3A crew was comprised of a Pilot, an NFO Senior Electronic Warfare Evaluator (SEVAL), and two Electronic Warfare Operators (EWOPs).

However, this stop-gap program only lasted a total of five years before both squadrons and all sixteen aircraft were decommissioned. In August 1992 the VQ community received its first ES-3A (Shadow) aircraft assigned to VQ-5 and VQ-6. The severe conditions associated with carrier operations soon degraded the electronic surveillance equipment and relegated the bird to mostly tanker operations. The last 2 of these 16 aircraft were retired in 1998. Since that time, there has not been a manned airborne electronic reconnaissance capability organic to the Navy's aircraft carriers. Fortunately for the United States, all conflicts and operations the Navy has been involved in since then have been in regions of the globe where land-based EP-3E aircraft could provide the needed SIGINT support. However, with the return of the Russian Navy to sea and the emergence of a Chinese blue water fleet, the critical need for an on-board airborne signals intelligence capability for our aircraft carriers will become painfully evident in the future.

The Squadron Remains Stretched Thin:

During 1993 and 1994, VQ-2 under COs L.G. Holmes and J.S. Snowdon kept watch over operation Restore Hope off Somalia, operation Southern Watch, and Deny Flight. The squadron also aided in policing the no-fly zone over southern Iraq and operation Provide Promise in the United Nations efforts

in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Carrier battle groups supported during this period were the Nimitz, T. Roosevelt, America, George Washington, and Independence.

The Mid 90's Brings More Demands For the Assets

During the years 1995-97, under Commanding Officers J. P. Vinson, R. G. Leeds, and R.S. Abernethy III, VQ-2 continued a wide variety of operations in widely scattered geographic areas of the globe in support of United States national interests. Operations Joint Endeavor, Desert Strike, Southern Watch, Deliberate Guard, and Sharp Guard required VQ-2 support, as well as operations with the Enterprise, Nimitz, Kitty Hawk, T. Roosevelt, George Washington, America and Carl Vinson carrier battle groups. Operation Deliberate Guard operations were in support of the NATO peace-keeping forces in the former Yugoslavia.

During this period VQ-2 operated five P-3E ARIES II, one EP-3E JSF and three P-3C aircraft.

1995 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Navy's two original electronic reconnaissance squadrons (VQ-1 and VQ-2). Since their humble beginnings in 1955, these squadrons underwent many changes in names, technology and operating bases, but the one common denominator all along has been they always performed their vital mission using old, hand-me-down aircraft.

Two New Squadrons Enter the Airborne Reconnaissance Business

In the late 1960s, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, recognized an operational requirement for a specially trained quick reaction maritime patrol unit. This unit must possess the necessary expertise, flexibility and quick reaction capability to respond to immediate tasking from the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The detachment, began at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland under the leadership of LCDR Ralph Hastings, and was composed of highly trained, operationally proven aircrew and maintenance professionals. The modified P-3 aircraft used in this endeavor were equipped with surveillance equipment in the electromagnetic, acoustic, imagery and other arenas. Accordingly, the personnel assigned largely had VQ and VP squadron backgrounds. Rather than operating on a scheduled deployment status, these assets were deployed where and when needed.

With the Soviet Navy nearing its apex at this time, it was the focus of the majority of the new unit's operations.

With a sister unit formed on the west coast at Barbers Point, Hawaii, these two units were initially labeled as VP Squadron Special Projects Detachments with a LCDR OIC. By 1969 the east coast unit had been transferred to NAS Brunswick, Maine and assigned to Patrol Wing 5 and housed with VP-8. Initially, the flight crews and some support personnel were borrowed from VP-8. Later, in 1975, this responsibility was transferred to VP-26. This practice of "borrowing" some of the flight personnel from the parent squadron gave way to permanently assigned personnel by the late 1970s and designation as independent Patrol Squadron Special Projects Units in July 1982.

By 1996 the VP-26 Special Projects Detachment became a squadron designated VPU-1 (Old Buzzards), and continued basing at NAS Brunswick, Maine for Atlantic and Mediterranean operations. VP-4 Special Projects Detachment became VPU-2 (Wizzards) and was based at Barbers Point, Hawaii for pacific region ops. In July 2009, VPU-1 relocated to NAS Jacksonville, Florida. VPU-2 relocated to the USMC base at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. Because of the geography and nature of their operations, VQ-2 and VPU-1 shared targets and personnel over a 44-year period.

Over the years, VPU-1 has earned seven Joint Meritorious Unit Commendations, Six Navy Unit Commendations, seven Meritorious Unit Commendations, seven Navy battle "E" Awards and various other unit, service and campaign medals.

Unfortunately, to keep pace with the ever changing worldwide environment and fiscal demands, it became necessary to disestablish VPU-1 in 2012. Commander Leslie W. Boyer III was the last VPU-1 Commanding Officer. At the conclusion of the disestablishment ceremony at NAS Jacksonville on Friday, 27 April 2012, a group of Old Buzzards gathered on water side of the NAS BOQ and "wet down" a tombstone for the dearly departed VPU-1.

Does it Ever End?

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, VQ-2 under Commanding Officers J.W. Hamill, J.C. Scorby, Jr., and K.B. Sherman, a high operations tempo continued in the eastern Mediterranean, the Adriatic Sea, The Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf.

The squadron provided reconnaissance flights during the Kosova War and on the other side of the world, provided support to counter-narcotics operations during operations Inca Gold and Carib Shield to the US Southern Command. Aside from land operations, the Enterprise, Eisenhower, Abraham Lincoln, John Stennis, Kitty Hawk, JFK, George Washington, and Harry Truman Carrier battle groups received support from VQ-2 assets.

In later years, Jack Scorby would become only the third "Home-Grown VQ Commanding Officer to attain the rank of Admiral, and the second NFO to do so.

Arrival of the EP-3E ARIES II

On 29 June 1991, the first EP-3E Aries II arrived in Rota. The EP-3E Aries II is a land-based Multi-Intelligence reconnaissance aircraft based on "previously owned" P-3 Orion airframes. The EP-3E Aries II was upgraded from SIGINT to Multi-Intelligence and is the Navy's only land-based reconnaissance aircraft. The EP-3E aircraft in the Navy's inventory provide fleet and theater commanders worldwide with near real-time tactical SIGINT and full motion video intelligence. With sensitive receivers and high-gain dish antennas, the EP-3E exploits a wide range of electronic emissions from deep within targeted territory. The crew fuses the collected intelligence along with off-board data and disseminates the collaborated information for direct threat warning, indications and warning,, information dominance, battle space situational awareness, suppression of enemy air defenses, destruction of enemy air-defense, anti-war warfare and anti-submarine warfare applications.

More Conflict and another Award

The early 1900s brought even more conflict. The US initiated operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in retribution for the terrorist actions and the violence in Iraq rose to another high point. VQ-2 Commanding Officers A.W. Eddowes, Keith W. May and J.N. Barata dealt with these and other actions with deployments of assets to the region. In addition to the normal operating sites, VQ-2 aircraft also operated from Manama, Bahrain and Curacao, Netherlands Antilles during this period. Five carrier battle groups, 3 amphibious ready groups and 2 amphibious task groups, totaling more than 200 coalition ships deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom. These operations demonstrated the importance of naval aviation to the nation's defense and further, it highlighted the Navy's need for real-time ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance).

Carrier battle groups supported by VQ-2 during this period were the Harry Truman, Enterprise, Kitty Hawk, T. Roosevelt, Constellation, Carl Vinson, Stennis, and Abe Lincoln.

VQ-2 was the recipient of the 2001 Association of Old Crows Outstanding Navy Unit Award for the best Electronic Warfare Unit in the United States Navy.

The Squadron Moves to the West Coast

VQ-2 Relocated from Rota, Spain to Whidbey Island, Washington effective 01 September 2005. The relocation of VQ-2's six aircraft and 340 sailors to the United States was in keeping with the Navy's ongoing transformation of forces in Europe, and helped reduce costs and eliminate redundancies throughout its force structure worldwide. This relocation, under the command of CDR C.A.Gringle, was accomplished in three months, while simultaneously maintaining full, uninterrupted worldwide operational deployment responsibilities. The relocation involved 950 personnel and their families, 300 privately owned vehicles, and more than 45 metric tons of furniture and equipment over a distance of 7,000 miles without a single ground or aviation mishap. For their efforts during this difficult period, the squadron was awarded the 2005 Battle "E" Award.

The move co-located the squadron with VQ-1, already based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, therefore realizing efficiencies through the consolidation of personnel deployment practices, aircraft maintenance practices and air crew training for these unique Navy squadrons. The two squadrons were now strategically located together, maximizing their training and readiness posture and their ability to surge worldwide as required.

At this time, the squadron operated five EP-3E, and four P-3C aircraft. Assigned were 90 officers, 406 enlisted and 2 civilians.

Both VQ squadrons operated under the administrative and training control of Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing Ten. When deployed, the detachments shifted to the operational control of the Battle Force or Theatre Operational Commanders for tasking.

More Unrest to Cover

The Commanding Office tenures of CDRs G.W. Crewse, C.A. Grindle, and M.P. Burns carried VQ-2 through the spring of 2007.

As of early 1996, VQ-2 maintained a detachment in Sigonella, Italy, with two aircraft flying combat missions supporting the peacekeeping force in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. As of 1997, VQ-2 operated four EP-3E Aries II aircraft and two P-3C Orion aircraft from its home base at Rota and a two-plane detachment at Naval Support Activity Souda Bay, Crete.

The squadron had flown more than 10,000 hours since 1992 as part of operations Deny Flight, Sharp Guard, Joint Endeavor, Decisive Endeavor, Deliberate Force, Provide Promise and Deliberate Guard.

The squadron completed 50,000 mishap-free flight hours in the EP-3E and EA-3B aircraft on 21 February 1996. This made up a nine-year safety record that began in 1987.

In 2006, the first P-3C to EP-3E conversion emerged from the L-3 Communications Modification Facility in Waco, Texas. It would be the first of five P-3C to EP-3E conversions to be delivered that year to the fleet. This initial aircraft would be the replacement for Ranger 26, which was earlier damaged in an accident at Souda Bay, Crete.

In March 2007, VQ-2 also provided electronic reconnaissance during the evacuation of non-combatant personnel from Albania following unrest from a failed pyramid scheme during operation Silver Wake.

The Afghanistan and Iraqi Violence Continues

The Commanding Officer terms of CDRs J.M. Hart, R.E. Pauley, and B.W. Coffey during the 2008-2010 era was characterized by VQ-2 conducting multiple deployments to fight aggression at sea and on land. The squadron aircrews flew missions against terrorist and insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq. Their collected data was provided to land-based commanders as well as Navy carrier battle groups headed by the Nimitz, Truman, Reagan, and Lincoln. Landbased operations were from bases such as Al Udeid, Qatar; Incirlik, Turkey; and Curacao, Netherlands Antilles

During this period the squadron operated eight EP-3E and three P-3C aircraft and had 71 officers and 123 enlisted assigned.

Libya becomes a Problem Again

In 2011, VQ-2 aircrews under Commanding Officer CDR B.W. Durkee participated in the confrontation of the Libyan forces of strongman Moammar Gadhafi under operation Odyssey Dawn. These operations were in addition to those ongoing in Afghanistan and Iraq.

PART FOURTEEN – THE LAST COMMANDING OFFICER AND SQUADRON DISESTABLISHMENT

The Final Acts

Having wrapped up more than eight years of missions in support of operation Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn, in the final weeks of 2011, VQ-2 began the year under the last Commanding Officer, Mark G. Stockfish, as it was engaged in the war in Afghanistan. Those supported operations included Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, Nomad Shadow, Odyssey Dawn, Odyssey Guard, Inca Gold, and finally, United Protector, which involved enforcing UN Security Council Resolution 1973.

At this time, the squadron operated three EP-3E and one P-3C aircraft.

Those missions competed for the squadrons scarce resources with hot spots ranging from Iran's nuclear ambitions and Syria's expanding civil war, to instability in a host of governments still reeling from the consequences of the Arab Spring. Carrier Battle Groups supported during this time frame were the Lincoln, Enterprise, G.W Bush, Stennis, Eisenhower, and Reagan.

Amid these high tempo operations, the days of VQ-2 as a Navy squadron were rapidly coming to a close. The Naval Aviation Master Air Plan 11-2 and the Navy's Program Objective Memorandum (POM) 12 Efficiency Initiatives called for the consolidation of VQ-1 and VQ-2 through the disestablishment of VQ-2. This action would maintain the current number of operational aircrew and aircraft to support mission tasking and allow for a reduction in "total ownership cost" through the consolidation of personnel administration, maintenance and training.

The vast majority of the VQ-2 Rangers would transition to the VQ-1 World Watchers to continue the fulfillment of the intelligence requirement of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Theater Commanders.

The Disestablishment Ceremony

The disestablishment ceremony at NAS Whidbey Island, Washington on 17 May 2012 marked the end of 57 years of proud professionalism, accomplishments, and sacrifice. The solemn ceremony, held in one of the large NAS hangars, was attended by several hundred personnel. Many of these individuals were former VQ-2 men and women that had travelled long distances to say farewell to an entity they considered to be an old friend. Since its establishment, VQ-2 called three continents home, operated four airframes, and collected intelligence on countless areas and units of naval and international interest.

Retired Captain and former VQ-2 Commanding Officer Don C. East was the featured speaker for the event. His speech is contained as a sidebar on this same site. The last VQ-2 Commanding Officer, Mark Stockfish, received the Command Pennant from CMDCM (AW/FMF) Robert C. Lemons to conclude the ceremony and VQ-2 faded into the sunset of history. A tombstone honoring VQ-2 was placed on the grounds of the Officers Club on NAS Whidbey Island, Washington, the last home of the heralded squadron. Following the disestablishment ceremony, a group of active duty and retired former VQ-2 members appropriately "wetted down" the tombstone.

PART FIFTEEN – THE VQ-2 COMMANDING OFFICERS

A Listing of all VQ-2 Commanding Officers

The following is a complete listing of VQ-2 Commanding Officers followed by some of the associated statistics:

	Rank/Name	Desig.	Period Served	Location	qualification
1.	CDR M.L. Kalin	Pilot	1 Sept 1955 to 1 Jul 57	Port Lyaute, Morocco	Multi-engine prop
2.	CDR R.R. Sparks	Pilot	1 Jul 57 to 4 Oct 58	Port Lyaute	Multi-engine prop/jet
3.	CDR C.H. Sigley	Pilot	4 Oct 58 to 24 Oct 59	Port Lyaute/Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
4.	CDR R.D. Halpin	Pilot	24 Oct 59 to 18 Apr 61	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
5.	CDR A.G. Elder	Pilot	18 Apr 61 to 31 Apr 62	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
6.	CDR H.E. Fitzwater	Pilot	30 Apr 62 to 20 May 63	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
7.	CDR M.W. Davis	pilot	10 May 63 to 12 May 64	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
8.	CDR C. A. Kisner	Pilot	12 May 64 to 17 May 65	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
9.	CDR J.H. McConnell	Pilot	17 May 65 to 3 Jun 66	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
10.	CDR A.D. Burket	Pilot	3 Jun 66 to 5 May 67	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
11.	CDR E.V. Laney	Pilot	5 May 67 to 3 May 68	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
12.	CDR T.E. Daum	Pilot	3 May 68 to 4 Jun 68	Rota. Spain	Multi-engine jet
13.	CDR R.W.Arn	Pilot	17 Jun 68 to 3 Jul 69	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
14.	CDR H. G. Hatch	Pilot	3 Jul 69 to 15 Jul 70	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
15.	CDR A.A. Gallotta	Pilot	15 Jul 70 to 14 Jun 71	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
16.	CDR J.E. Taylor	Pilot	14 Jun 71 to 16 Jul 72	Rota. Spain	Multi-engine jet
17.	CDR J.F. McRae	Pilot	14 Jul 72 to 6 Jul 73	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
18.	CDR J.D. Meyer	Pilot	6 Jul 72 to 17 Jul 74	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
19.	CDR D.J. Alberg	Pilot	17 Jul 74 to 17 Jul 75	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
20.	CDR D.N. Hagen	NFO	17 Jul 75 to 9 Jul 76	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
21.	CDR T.A. Peltz	NFO	9 Jul 76 to 7 Oct 77	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
22.	CDR G.J. Hopkins	Pilot	7 Oct 77 to 14 Sept 78	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet

23. CDR R. Preen	14 September 78 to 19 October 78	Rota, Spain	(Temp. Assignment)
24. CAPT J.E. Taylor	Pilot 19 Oct 78 to 20 Jun 80	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
25. CDR T.W. Fritz	NFO 20 Jun 80 to 3 Aug 81	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
26. CDR J.P. Flynn	NFO 3 Aug 81 to 19 Jul 82	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
27. CDR D.C. East	NFO 19 Jul 82 to 1 Jul 83	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
28. CDR J.J. Draper	Pilot 1 Jul 83 to 16 Oct 84	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
29. CDR E.A. Caldwell	Pilot 16 Oct 84 to 17 Jan 86	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
30. CDR T.L. Hanson	Pilot 7 Jan 86 to 24 Apr 87	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine jet
31. CDR J.R. Kistler	NFO 24 Apr 87 to 19 Jul 88	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
32. CDR T.K. Quigley	NFO 19 Jul 88 to 27 Oct 89	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
33. CDR R.E. Leonard	Pilot 27 Oct 89 to 5 Dec 90	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
34. CDR D.W. Durfee	NFO 5 Dec 90 to 3 Dec 91	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
35. CDR R.A. Kusada	NFO 3 Dec 91 to 7 Dec 92	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
36. CDR B.L. Clark	Pilot 7 Dec 92 to 29 Oct 93	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
37. CDR L.G. Holmes	Pilot 29 Oct 93 to 10 Nov 94	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
38. CDR J.S. Snowden	NFO 10 Nov 94 to 8 Sept 95	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
39. CDR J.P. Vinson	Pilot 8 Sept 95 to 2 Aug 96	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
40. CDR R.G. Leeds	NFO 2 Aug 96 to 2 Jul 97	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop/jet
41. CDR R.S. Abernethy III	NFO 2 Jul 97 to 1 Jul 98	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
42. CDR J.W. Hamil	Pilot 1 Jul 98 to 15 Jul 99	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
43. CDR J.C. Scorby Jr	NFO 15 Jul 99 to 7 Jul 2000	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
44. CDR K.B. Sherman	Pilot 7 Jul 00 to 11 Jul 01	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
45. CDR A.W. Eddowes	NFO 11 Jul 01 to 20 Jul 02	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
46. CDR K.W. May	NFO 20 Jun 02 to 6 Jun 03	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine rop/jet
47. CDR J.N. Baratta	Pilot 6 Jun 03 to 20 May 04	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop

48. CDR G.W. Crewse	NFO	20 May 04 to 20 May 05	Rota, Spain	Multi-engine prop
49. CDR C.A. Grindle	NFO	20 May 05 to 25 May 06	Rota/Whidbey Is., Wa.	Multi-engine prop/jet
50. CDR M.P. Burns	NFO	25 May 06 to 4 Apr 07	Whidbey Is.	Multi-engine prop
51. CDR J.M. Hart	Pilot	4 Apr 07 to 18 Apr 08	Whidbey Is.	Multi-engine prop
52. CDR R.E. Pauley	NFO	18 Apr 08 to 7 May 09	Whidbey Is.	Multi-engine prop
53. CDR B.W. Coffey	NFO	7 May 09 to 23 Apr 10	Whidbey Is.	Multi-engine prop
54. CDR B.W. Durkee	Pilot	23 Apr 10 to 21 Apr 11	Whidbey Is.	Multi-engine prop
55. CDR M.G. Stockfish	NFO	21 Apr 11 to 17 May 12	Whidbey Is.	Multi-engine prop

A Brief Analysis of VQ-2 Commanding Officers

During the span of 57 years of VQ-2's existence as a U.S. Navy aviation squadron, there were a total of 54 commanding officers. A complete list of these individuals is found above. CDR R. Preen (14 September 1978 to 19 October 1978) was not an official commanding officer of the squadron. He was temporarily assigned for a period of only one month before returning to his assignment at CTF-67 in Naples, Italy. He was ordered to the assignment as an interim caretaker when CDR G.J. Hopkins was transferred early from the command. A complete listing of the VQ-2 Commanding Officers is provided later in this section.

Only three "Home Grown" VQ Commanding Officers have attained the rank of Rear Admiral (O-7). All three of these were former VQ-2 Commanding Officers. Two of them were NFOs (Hagen and Scorby) and one a pilot (Gallotta).

The first 19 VQ-2 commanding officers were pilots. Naval Flight Officers (NFO) were not eligible for command until 1975 when CDR D.N. Hagen became the first VQ-2 NFO commanding officer. Beginning with CDR Hagen, the final 35 VQ-2 commanding officers consisted of 14 pilots and 21 NFOs, for an equitable mix. CDR and later CAPT J.E. Taylor was the only VQ-2 commanding officer to hold the job on two occasions (14 June 71 to 16 July 72 and 19 October 78 to 20 June 80). He was selected the second time to fill the commanding officer position after the relief of CDR G.J. Hopkins.

Two VQ-2 Commanding Officers commanded both VQ-1 and VQ-2, these were Dale Hagen and J.D. Meyer.

The VQ-2 commanding officers spanned the normal American ethnicity spectrum. Their ethnic backgrounds were reflective of the normal American "melting pot" of Italian, Hispanic, Irish, Scandinavian, German, Scot, English, Asian and the Slavic group. In addition, there were two commanding officers of Native American origin (CDR D.C. East and CDR K.W. May). Both these individuals were of Alabama Muscogee Creek Indian origin. Also, there was one African-American (CDR R.S. Abernathy III), and one of Japanese origin (CDR R.A. Kusada).

CDR T.E. Daum was the only VQ-2 commanding officer to be killed on active duty while in command (on 4 June 1968), after only one month at the helm.

Of the VQ-2 pilot commanding officers, 20 were multi-engine prop qualified, 15 were multi-engine jet carrier qualified, and 19 were dual prop/jet qualified. Of the VQ-2 NFO commanding officers, CDRs D.N. Hagen, T.A. Peltz, T.W. Fritz, D.C. East, R.G. Leeds, J.R. Kislner, T.K. Quigley, and K.W. May qualified in both multi-engine prop and multi-engine jet aircraft. All other VQ-2 NFO commanding officers were qualified for multi-engine prop aircraft only. This was partly due to the demise of the EA-3B in 1992. CDR Terry Hanson was the last of the EA-3B pilot VQ-2 Commanding Officers.

Several of the VQ-2 commanding officers had served in the enlisted ranks before receiving their officer commissions. Three of these (CDR/Capt J.E. Taylor, CDR D.C. East, and CDR M.G. Stockfish) were eligible for, or held the rank of Chief Petty Officer. Further, J.E. Taylor was the only VQ-2 commanding officer to have served as an enlisted pilot (AP).

Three of the VQ-2 Commanding Officers also served as the Officer in Charge or Commanding Officer of VPU-1 which conducted multi-sensor reconnaissance in the same European, Atlantic, Mediterranean, and southwest Asia regions as VQ-2. These were Tom Fritz, Don East, and Jack Scorby,

PART SIXTEEN – WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

If We Only Had a Crystal Ball!

Today IN 2015, and in the foreseeable future in an age of transformed national security concerns, terrorist threats must be balanced with rapidly emerging great powers and rogue nation challenges. With all this on our plate, comes the complication of the cyber threat from all levels. What is at risk under this scenario is our Navy's ability to secure the oceans and project power. Unfortunately, in the face of all this, it could be concluded that our Navy is shrinking while those of our primary adversaries are growing. Based on these challenges, the thumb rule of "the higher the threat, the more intelligence/reconnaissance one requires," continues to be paramount.

A major factor in the history of the Navy's VQ squadrons had been the indifference of Navy leadership over the airborne electronic reconnaissance acquisition. Some feel this benign neglect of the VQ capability was primarily due to the ago-old unkept promise by the "national sensors" to provide tactical commanders with near real-time operational and technical intelligence data. Others feel it was primarily the reluctance on the part of the "hard kill" advocates to recognize the electronic warfare "soft kill" as an integral part of their sensor and weapons suite. In other words, they failed specifically to understand and/or appreciate the force multiplier effect of airborne electronic reconnaissance. Without the explicit support of the "hard kill" bomb droppers and missile shooters in the U.S. Navy, the miniscule VQ community could not separately garner the support necessary to obtain state-of-the-art aircraft platforms and sensors. If the old Navy saying "community size translates to the health and well being of the capability" is true, then it is no wonder the very small VQ program was terminally ill! The squadrons managed somehow to stay alive as long as they did by their stellar performance and ability to overcome years of naval aviation leadership coolness to airborne ISR information, surveillance and reconnaissance in general, and SIGINT in particular. The snail pace of initiating an EP-3E follow-on airframe and the total lack of a carrier-based asset appeared to be another example of this mind set.

The future of the VQ mission is a bit cloudy at this point in time (early 2015). The rumor mill indicates the VP community will take over the mission and then be known as the Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Force flying the new P-8 Poseidon aircraft. This aircraft will be equipped with the electronic systems to handle both the Patrol and Reconnaissance functions and will be manned by a mix of personnel trained in both functions.

Afterwards, by around 2020, both VQ-1 and VPU-2 will be eliminated. Critics, including Navy officers familiar with the program, warn these changes and cuts will degrade intelligence gathering for not just the Navy, but also land forces that have depended on the VQ planes for combat operations.

Ironic

It is very ironic that only three years after both VQ-2 and VPU-1 were disestablished and recent plans stated to also eliminate the remaining VQ-1 and VPU-2 units, that the US Defense Department made a frightening announcement relative to our Electronic Warfare program. In March of 2015, the Deputy Secretary of Defense signed the Electronic Warfare Executive Committee into being. Led by the Pentagon's acquisition chief and the VCNO Admiral Winnefeld, this new committee was established to ensure that the United States stays competitive in the electromagnetic spectrum. According to a memo from the Deputy Secretary of Defense, this committee will seek to correct the fact that the defense

department has “lost focus” on electronic warfare at the programmatic and strategic level. This group has been formed, in part, because of concerns about the electronic warfare capabilities of potential adversaries. Where the United States has traditionally seen electronic warfare as a supporting technology, other nations view it as more of a core weapon, as a fundamental domain of warfare. An example of this can be found as one of the key lessons of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Their electronic warfare operations in that conflict illustrated the potency of their program. Their electronic warfare capability is the product of decades of focused investment on their part. Does all this sound like “I told you so!!”

The Band of Brothers

Even after all traces of the VQ and VPU squadrons are gone, for many years thereafter there will be a feeling of brotherhood among those that served in these units. Although Lord Nelson probably coined the phrase “Band of Brothers,” this concept of solidarity was around since the first organized group of mankind banded together to achieve a strongly held goal. A brotherhood or band of brothers has several identifiable aspects. First, there must be a shared commitment, goal, or mission. Secondly, those involved must be absolutely committed to the goal. Thirdly, there must be a common trust among the groups membership. Fourth, there must be an element of high stakes or physical danger in achieving the goal. And finally, there must be a strong commitment to each other among the group. With these factors in play, hardship or difficulty in achieving the goal only intensified the group’s determination to achieve the goal. A feeling of brotherhood or band of brothers is not a temporary emotion, it is instead a lifetime feeling of involvement in a shared commitment to a highly held goal. Once a person becomes a member of such a group, they will never find themselves alone. This feeling of brotherhood, along with a common threat of patriotic service, brings all of us that have served in these VQ and VPU units together for the rest of our days. The proud 57-year legacy of the Officers and sailors that have been members of VQ-2 is a legacy of professionalism, accomplishment, and sacrifice. They will not be forgotten!!

PART SEVENTEEN – POSTSCRIPT

The People, their Jobs, and Training

The following final paragraphs provide information on the personnel, training, and other aspects of VQ-2 not specifically covered in the preceding history.

Prior to its disestablishment , VQ-2 continued to produce top quality intelligence collection, while flying some of the oldest aircraft and employing some of the most motivated and professional personnel in the fleet. Like any military organization, the fleet air reconnaissance squadrons recognize people as their principal asset. To identify the unique talents of its officer and enlisted aircrewmen, the VQ squadrons employ the following personnel designation descriptions:

1. Mission Commander— The MC designation is reserved for select pilots and NFOs, who by virtue of their extensive knowledge of the principles of electronic warfare, squadron aircraft operations and crew coordination, have been designated by their commanding officer as the individual ultimately responsible for conduct of the mission. This responsibility makes it imperative that the MC maintain full awareness of every aspect of the intelligence collection mission.

2. Electronic Warfare Aircraft Commander— the EWAC is a pilot with a high degree of maturity, experience, aeronautical skill, ability to perform under stress and a knowledge of electronic warfare. His primary responsibility is to ensure the in flight safety of his aircraft and crew.

3. Electronic Warfare Tactical Evaluator (Senior Evaluator or SEVAL)— The EVAL is a Naval Flight Officer tasked to manage the planning, collection and reporting requirements of the mission. The political sensitivities inherent in the various areas of VQ operations require the EVAL to be completely knowledgeable in areas of U.S. and foreign national objectives as well as military strategy and tactics.

4. Electronic Warfare Navigator— the EWAN is an NFO with a complete understanding of several navigation systems as well as a thorough knowledge of the airborne electronic reconnaissance mission.

5. Electronic Warfare Aircrewmen— The backbone of the VQ electronic warfare crew is made up of highly professional enlisted naval aircrewmen. The flight engineers on the EP-3E are usually drawn from the AD, AM and AE ratings. They are responsible for overall airworthiness of the airframe, from preflight through completion of postflight. In the EP-3E, the radioman's position is usually manned by an AT who must be fully knowledgeable of the aircraft communication/navigation systems. The EP-3E Airborne Electronic Supervisor, or "tech", is a senior AT who is responsible for ensuring all the sophisticated electronic warfare equipment is in optimum operating condition. The laboratory or "lab" operator is an airborne electronic warfare analyst whose tasks require a detailed knowledge of the complex analysis and recording systems of the aircraft. The bulk of the VQ naval aircrewmen aboard the EP-3E and EA-3B are designated Electronic Warfare Operators (EWOP). These highly trained technicians master the operations of complex electronic reconnaissance equipment as well as the myriad details of electromagnetic signals of interest. These individuals are normally of the CT or AT ratings.

Although an extremely important segment of the VQ aircrew, for security reasons, the specifics of the officer and enlisted VQ crewmen of the Naval Network Warfare Command will not be discussed in this history.

Even though the aircrew personnel seem to receive the primary focus of attention and publicity, they could not perform their vital mission effectively and safely without the dedicated efforts of the ground support personnel who are involved in such areas as aircraft and equipment maintenance, administration, training, intelligence, safety, signals analysis and reporting, legal, public affairs, and a variety of “creature comfort” functions. These personnel are equally as proficient and dedicated as the aircrews in their performance of mission.

The “Sand Crabs”

In addition to the men and women in uniform, the VQ squadrons also employ a variety of DoD and industry contractor civilian personnel to perform certain highly-specialized functions. These VQ civilian personnel are fondly referred to as “the Q-Crabs”.

One group of these civilians is furnished to the VQ squadrons by the Reconnaissance, Electronic Warfare and Space Operations, Navy (REWSON) Division of the U.S. Navy Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command. These individuals, operating in technical/operational pairs, act as special assistants to the VQ squadron CO as well as performing specified engineering functions in the squadron special projects “Bicycle Shop”.

“Chuck” Christman began the VQ-1/REWSON association in 1955 in the Pacific theatre with VQ-1, and was paired with “Elmer” Ackerman, who arrived in the mid-1960s. Christman remained with VQ-1 until 1979 when he was replaced by Larry Sharp. Winton Lowery and “Nick” Nickelson began the VQ-2 association in 1967, and were replaced in the 1970s by “Pete” Petersen and Max Richardson. John Boyd and “Mark” Franklin then occupied the REWSON billets afterwards. Other civilians supporting the VQ squadrons over the years have been the technical representatives (Tech Reps) of the Lockheed and Douglas Aircraft Corporations, as well as intermittent support by various computer and electronics companies. Some of these individuals, such as the late “Danny” King, have been ardent supporters of the VQ community, both on and off duty.

The Association

Birds of a feather flock together. VQ and VPU personnel are no exception to this natural law. For decades there was an annual reunion held in the Washington, D.C. area. This was a two event gathering consisting of an evening reception and dinner, followed by a family picnic and softball game the following day. The softball game was a spirited contest between the Atlantic and Pacific units of VQ-2/VPU-1 and VQ-1/VPU-2 respectively. Organization and execution of this annual event was the responsibility of the VQ commanding officer most recently assigned to the Washington area. Then, in 1987, that individual dropped the ball and refused the job. J.D. Meyer, then a retired VQ former commanding officer, picked up the ball and formed the VQ Association. With this organization, he assumed responsibility for the annual reunion. From that point in time, the event became mobile and

was held in different locations around the United States. Membership in the association today is made up largely of retired VQ/VPU personnel and their dependents. A membership fee of a small annual amount is charged to handle mailing and other expenses. Association newsletters and roosters are mailed out periodically. The Association is managed by a volunteer staff consisting of President, Vice President, Treasurer, News Editor, and Historian. At the time of this writing Kieth May (A previous VQ-2 Commanding Officer) is the President of the Association. The Association also maintains a web site.

EW Training for VQ Personnel

EW Training for VQ Personnel Part One of this history documented the establishment of the Special Projects School for Air at NAAS San Clemente Island, Calif., on 1 July 1944. Since then the training site for airborne electronic reconnaissance crewmen has relocated on several occasions. At various times the officer and enlisted training could be found in Washington, D.C.; at NAS Glynco, Ga.; or at Corry Field in Pensacola, Fla. The training for airborne electronic reconnaissance finally settled at Pensacola, at the Naval Technical Training Center Corry Field in 1974 as the Consolidated Navy Electronic Warfare School (CNEWS). The CNEWS facility operates several courses structured for the individual needs of the electronic warfare evaluator, electronic warfare aircraft commander, and the various enlisted electronic warfare operators.

PART EIGHTEEN – THE VQ-2 PATCHES, LOGO, TAIL CODE AND NICKNAMES

The Squadron Bat Patch

The ECMRON-2 and VQ-2 squadron insignia probably best sums up what airborne electronic reconnaissance is all about. The emblem was designed in 1959 by LT Buckenhauer, who was killed shortly afterward in an aircraft accident. The black bat originally symbolized the P4M-1Q employed by the squadron in its earlier days. Today it represents the EP-3E and EA-3B. The lightning bolts are representative of electronic reconnaissance. The blue field and white stars represent the night sky which is the natural environment of the bat. The clouds represent high altitude flying and the use of cover, symbolizing undetected presence. The outer red border represents the original red field of the squadron flag, flown when VQ-2 was at Port Lyautey.

The Squadron Sandeman Patch

In the mid 70's during Vietnam deployments members at VQ-2 started making patches, utilizing the Spanish bodega "spook" from the Sandeman bodega, the emblem caught on and was placed on the tails of the aircraft, exhibiting the squadrons Spanish heritage. The orange and yellow colors represented the host Spanish flag colors the triangle represented a radar swipe. The emblem was removed in the late 70's and the Bat emblem was reinstated; In 1989 the VQ-2 CO CDR Thomas Quigley obtained permission from the Sandeman Bodega to again utilize the trademarked emblem on VQ-2 aircraft thus the Sandeman was reborn, this time due to changes in the Spanish flag colors the Sandeman patch utilized red and yellow colors.

Other Patches

There were several versions of the above two patches and also other non-official VQ-2 patches that appeared over the years.

The Squadron Logo

VQ-1 had their official logo in "In God We Trust, All Others We Monitor." However, up until 1982 VQ-2 did not have an official logo. Noting this, Skipper Don East elected to use the famous and inspiring phrase first uttered by the Patriot Thomas Paine and later used by President Thomas Jefferson – "Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty." This phrase symbolizes the constant vigilance provided by the aerial electronic reconnaissance missions flown by VQ-2 in the cause of liberty and freedom.

This selection was approved by the staff and painted in large letters across the top front of the VQ-2 hangar where it was visible to the squadron personnel as they came to work and stood morning quarters. The phrase remained on the hangar front for 30 years, long after VQ-2 relocated to Whidbey Island.

The Squadron nicknames and Tail Code

Over the years, VQ-2 has went by several nicknames, however, RANGERS has been the primary one. The squadron has also been unofficially known as BAT MEN and SANDEMEN. The tail code associated with the squadron was "JQ."

PART NINETEEN – ABOUT THE AUTHOR, DEDICATION, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

About The Author

A native of Cleavelands Cross Roads, Alabama, Captain Don C. East enlisted in the United States Navy in 1957. After boot camp, he attended one year of Cryptographic Technician “R” and “T” Branch training,

and then served operational cryptology tours at Karamursel, Turkey and Bremerhaven, Germany with the Naval Security Group. During these tours, he participated in operations involving cryptology support of VQ-2 missions in the Black and Baltic Seas. After attending the one-year Cryptographic Course at the National Security Agency (NSA), he was then assigned as an instructor in the "T" Branch Curriculum at the Cryptologic Training Center in Pensacola, Florida. During that tour of duty he attended night classes at Pensacola Junior College in the Russian language program. While awaiting the results of the CPO and Warrant Officer examinations in 1965, he was selected for Naval Flight Officer training. Graduating as his Pre-Flight Course Class Honor Man, he was later selected as the runner up for the Admiral Thurston James Award for the highest academic average in the Naval Air Technical Training system for the year 1966. He was then assigned to the NAS Glynco as an instructor in the Airborne ELINT Course. Next, he served a Junior Officer tour in VQ-2 Rota, Spain as the ELINT Analysis Officer and Senior Evaluator in both the EA-3B and the EC-121M. Capt East was then ordered to the USAF Security Service Headquarters in San Antonio, Texas as an Electronic Warfare specialist. He served a portion of that assignment with a special project at site 51. In 1972 he was accepted as a student at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where he received a BA in International Relations and an MA in National Security Studies, both Cum Laude. He was then assigned to Patrol Squadron Special Projects Unit (later VPU-1) at NAS Brunswick, Maine, where he served as the Operations Officer, and later as the Officer in Charge. He was then selected to attend the USAF Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB in Montgomery, Alabama, where he was a Distinguished Graduate. He was then selected for aviation command and assigned to VQ-2 in Rota, Spain. There he served as XO and CO and as a Senior Evaluator in both the EA-3B and the EP-3E. He was then selected to attend the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, where again he was a Distinguished Graduate. While assigned to the NWC, he attended night classes at Salve Regina College where he received an MA in International Relations with a Russian studies specialty. After NWC graduation, he remained there as the Admiral Thomas H. Moorer Chair of Electronic Warfare. While in this assignment, he authored the histories of VQ-1 and VQ-2, which won him the Contributor of the Year Award from the Tailhook Association's "The Hook" magazine. These histories can be found on the web at the Cold War Museum (coldwar.org) site. Capt East was then assigned to the Navy Technical Intelligence Center in Suitland, Maryland, followed by an assignment as the Senior Naval Advisor and Professor of Naval Operations and Russian Studies at the USAF Air War College. During his later assignments, and after retirement in 1992, Capt East participated with the Soviet and later, the Russian Republic Navy on various projects in Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Two of these projects involved being a member of the Bilateral US/USSR Incident at Sea Negotiating Team and a participant in the Joint US/USSR Conference on Shallow Water ASW. Capt East has been awarded the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (4 awards), The Navy Commendation Medal (2 awards), the USAF Commendation Medal (2 awards), the Navy Achievement Medal, and the Navy Good Conduct Medal (2 awards), along with various campaign and unit awards. He logged nearly 8,000 flight hours during his career. Capt East retired with 36 years of active duty in 1992 and returned to his roots in east central Alabama on Lake Wedowee. There, he is the owner and operator of The Creeks Tree Farms. He is also a part time writer and has been published in numerous books, magazines and newspaper articles. Capt East is married to Chao Cui (Cynthia) originally of Manchuria, Peoples Republic of China. His son Brant is a U.S. Navy W-4 Boatswain Warrant Officer, currently assigned to the

USS Oak Hill (LSD-51) and his daughter Amy is an employee at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Brunswick, Georgia.



Dedication and Acknowledgements

Dedication:

This history is dedicated to those two hundred men who gave their lives under hostile fire and in aircraft accidents while involved in airborne electronic reconnaissance in the serve of their country. Memories of their ultimate sacrifice and dedication will bear the VQ community through time

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portions of this history, I received help from John Herndon, Keith May, Ian Burgess and Kirt Wlaschin. Also, John Herndon allowed me to place this history on his VQ-2 website.

Additionally, the author wishes to cite the following publications as sources for his research:

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Author Captain (Ret.) Don C. East and web site owner AMHC (AW)(Ret.) John D. Herndon at the VQ-2 disestablishment ceremony on NAS Whidbey Island 17 May 2012.