

FLEET SUPPORT

Drug runners can't hide from VP-65 Tridents

CURACAO, Netherlands Antilles—During the Cold War, squadrons at the helm of the P-3C Orion used their advanced tactical systems to track down foreign submarines. Today, squadrons like Naval Reserve Patrol Squadron 65 (VP-65) from Naval Base Ventura County, Calif., use these aircraft to track down a different target—drug runners in the Caribbean Sea.

Operating at Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville, Fla., with the VP-10 Red Lancers, an active-duty patrol squadron based at NAS Brunswick, Maine, the VP-65 detachment patrols various ocean regions in the Eastern Pacific and the Caribbean. According to LCDR John Noland, the detachment's intelligence officer, the squadrons coordinate with local Coast Guard cutters and Navy warships to intercept and board the "go-fast" boats and the support ships used by the drug cartels.

"Go-fasts are high-powered speedboats used to smuggle shipments of illegal drugs, laundered money or other contraband into Mexico and the United States," Noland said. "These boats are small and fast. It's hard for surface ships to pinpoint them. That's where we come in."

Noland added that most of the Caribbean patrol missions last 10 to 12 hours. According to LCDR Scot Some, the officer-in-charge of the squadron's Jacksonville and Curacao detachment, both active-duty and Reserve squadrons find a drug-related contact approximately 20 to 30 percent of the time.

"We hold our own," Some said. "So far we've flown more than 80 flights, making numerous drug busts and finding other cartel support ships."

Some added that these percentages are excellent, considering the large region of ocean they have to cover. "It literally is like finding a needle in a haystack," said Some. "We depend heavily on the intelligence we receive to narrow down our search."

LCDR Scott T. Garner, one of the pilots with VP-65's Combat Aircrew Eight, said the tactical flights take off from locations like Jacksonville and Curacao daily.

"Our crew alone has logged more than 70 hours during our two weeks in the area," said Garner, a Federal Express pilot from Fremont, Calif. "My crew is flying every other day. We're here to keep as many drugs off our streets as possible."

On one of their larger "catches," the Tridents intercepted a go-fast carrying 1,650 kilograms of cocaine with an approximate street value of \$165 million.

"We took control of the bust as the scene-of-action coordinator during this mission," explained Some. "Our Orion found the boat and we instructed an HS-60 helicopter from USS Stump (DD 978) to intercept and halt the smugglers. Then we directed a local U.S. Coast Guard cutter to pick up the bales of drugs thrown overboard, as the go-fast tried to get away. Once we had secured the bust we turned control of the operation over to a U.S. Customs P-3 for continued surveillance."

According to Some, the experience and tactical expertise of the Reserve crews combined with the multiple sensors and communications equipment on the P-3C make this one of the few aircraft capable of coordinating these missions.

—JO1 Chris Halsey, Mobile Public Affairs Team 119

MOBILIZATION UPDATE

As of Oct. 22, all of the Services report a decrease in the number of Reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization. The net collective result is 5,120 fewer Reservists than one week prior.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Naval Reserve, 2,430; Army National Guard and Army Reserve, 123,912; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 20,033; Marine Corps Reserve, 11,270; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 1,249. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve on active duty to 158,894, including both units and individual augmentees.

VAW-77 Night Wolves help needy in El Salvador

FORWARD OPERATING LOCATION, El Salvador—Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 77 (VAW-77), a Naval Reserve Squadron from NAS Atlanta, is in Central America chasing the bad guys, but they are also finding time to help those in need.

With over \$400 million in confiscated illegal drugs, one would think that they would be too busy to help the people of El Salvador. The truth is, however, that the "Night Wolves" of VAW-77 and the active-duty staff of the Forward Operating Location at which they are based have spent countless hours donating their time, their money and some extra toys to assist three orphanages in El Salvador.

The U.S. military is in El Salvador stopping the transport of illegal drugs headed for the United States and Mexico from Columbia. But until a few years ago, El Salvador was a nation engulfed in a civil war. With much of the adult population killed in the fighting, many children were left without parents.

"I don't have any mercy for the bad guys that we bust," said AECS George Nieuwstraten, VAW-77 command senior chief, who has been spearheading the charitable operation. "But if we can help kids here, I think we can help this country."

Most articles in the press focus on the wars fought by the military, but the good that our service members bring to an impoverished nation is often overlooked.

"Our primary mission is to fight the drug war and reduce

crime on our nation's streets," said MACS Darren Mullen. "But as members of the military, we are ambassadors of goodwill and must never lose sight of that."

VAW-77 also volunteers in the Atlanta area through the "Toys for Tots" program, but helping children in a third-world country has special meaning.

"For the amount of money and time we spend in the States, it goes ten times further down here," said Nieuwstraten. "I can say that we have positively impacted the lives of close to 300 kids in El Salvador."

Living in a third-world country is difficult, and it's nice to receive help from visitors with a giving attitude.

"We really appreciate not only the material goods you give, but the time you [VAW-77] spend with us," said Alexia Rodriguez, director of communications and fundraising for one of the orphanages.

Because of the poverty and crime in El Salvador, many children fall through the cracks, and the members of VAW-77 want to make sure they catch as many kids as they can.

"It always amazes me that people so far away can care more about our children than people here often do, said Rodriguez.

For more information on how you can work with VAW-77 and help the children of El Salvador, contact Nieuwstraten at george.nieuwstraten@navy.mil.

—ENS Adam Clappitt, FOL El Salvador Public Affairs Officer



Photo by PH3 Paula Sato

CURACAO, Netherlands Antilles—LCDR Mike Fetsko, the tactical coordinator for Naval Reserve Patrol Squadron 65's Combat Aircrew Eight, plots out the course for the P-3C Orion's assigned patrol area. The crew conducted counter-drug operations over the waters between Florida and the Caribbean Islands to help identify suspected air and maritime drug trafficking activity in the area.

Naval Special Warfare

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The NSW Reserve realignment project promises the same positive impact in the way active and Reserve forces work together, train and deploy to sustain a wide range of new and ongoing missions around the globe. This realignment ends a period in NSW history and opens a whole new and exciting chapter where integrated active and Reserve personnel play major roles in fighting terrorism.

The NSW Reserve realignment project has three simple directives with clear and defined functions:

1. Build the infrastructure
2. Realign the force
3. Execute transition

On May 16, RADM Albert Calland, Commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, approved the proposed realignment, moving the project forward towards its execution stage and final implementation in 2004.

"It's a complete revamping of the way we train and administer our Naval Reserve, perhaps a model for the rest of the Navy," Wildrick said. "We will provide the right Reservist, at the right time, at the right place with the right capability to perform."

The goal is to provide theater commanders the most professional, highly-trained, flexible individuals, and units, to perform any task, anywhere, and at any time.

"It has created a central focus point for the entire NSW



Photo by PH3 Paula Sato

CURACAO, Netherlands Antilles—LCDR Alan Poremba, a pilot with Naval Reserve Patrol Squadron 65's Combat Aircrew Eight, examines the P-3C Orion's telescopic lens prior to leaving Curacao, the largest island in the Netherlands Antilles.

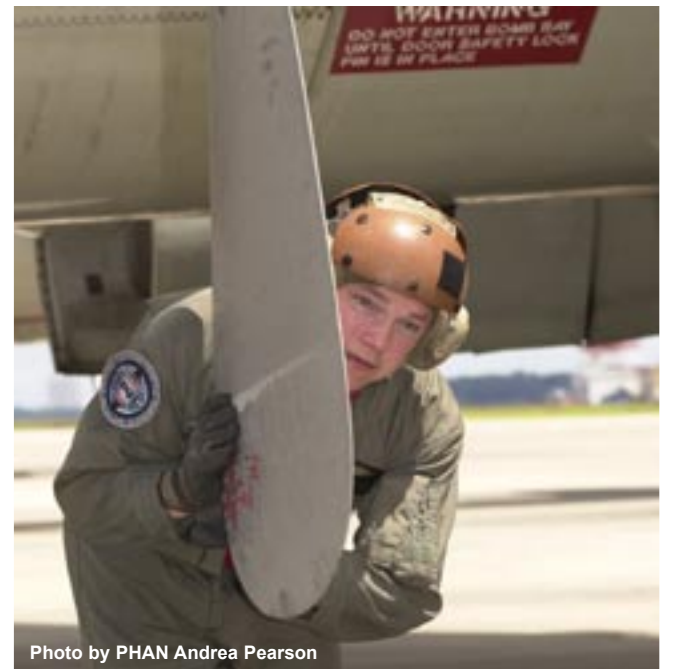


Photo by PHAN Andrea Pearson

NAS JACKSONVILLE, Fla.—AM1 Edward Brugger of Patrol Squadron 10 positions the props of the P-3C Orion aircraft, which ensures that prop fluid will not leak from the engine.

Reserve community. Before, I had to call up to 10 different Reserve centers to locate the right Reservist, with the needed background, and then start mobilization procedures for each individual to be activated at each original center. Now we can control the entire force from one central place where everyone is concentrated. And they understand and speak our language—SPEC WAR [Special Warfare] language," Wright said.

NSW Reservists will be assigned new units, and perhaps different jobs, following pre-selected criteria, based on current active duty needs, prior rate experience, related civilian experience, self-identified areas of interest, and commanding officer's recommendation.

In a period of 24 months, all new units will complete a detailed training and school matrix plan tailored for every unit, which includes specific schedules. These plans encompass knowledge and professional factors needed, list required reading materials, identify qualification requirements, and schools or correspondence courses to be completed according to rating.

"It's turning generalists into specialists, giving us better integration with the active-duty component," said Wildrick.

For more information on Naval Special Warfare visit the Web site: www.seal.navy.mil.

—AK3 Luis Vega, Naval Special Warfare Command Public Affairs