

Lockheed Martin P-3 Orion Worldwide News Section

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United States

On March 28, 2012 a celebration took place at NAS Jacksonville to commemorate 50 years of P-3 Orion operations. In fact it was on 23 July 1962 that the first P3V-1 was handed over to VP-8 at NAS Patuxent River.

BuNo 159326 is another P-3C AIP+, which has the C4 ASW installed. By October 2012 five Orions had been modified, four of which had been delivered to NAS Jacksonville. In total 55 Orions will receive the C4ASW modification. Noted so far: 158564, 159326, 162774 and 163001. In November 2011 VP-30 had one AIP+ and VP-5 had two. Running next to the AIP+ programme is another modification programme in which 74 Orions will receive new acoustic computer hardware and software, after which these will be designated P-3C AIP ARTR. The ARTR has an array of four antennas for the acoustic receiver system aft of the sonobuoy chutes. The antennas are arranged in a "Y" with the arms to forward. In October 2011 already 31 aircraft had been given this extra modification. It is most likely that the 55 AIP+ aircraft will also get the ARTR modifications.

NASA's EFIS P-3B N426NA was flown to Thule in Greenland to participate in the NASA Operation Ice Bridge, an airborne mission to study changes in polar ice. It began another season of science activity with the start of the 2012 Arctic campaign on March 13 2012. From mid-March through mid-May, the Orion from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Wallops Island, Va., flew daily missions out of Thule and Kangerlussuaq, Greenland -with one flight to Fairbanks, Alaska and back- to measure sea and land ice.

Late 2011 US Customs and Border Patrol have retired the four P-3A LRT. All four were stored with LM at Greenville, SC. As a replacement two P-3B HW have been selected, both of which will be taken out of storage at AMARG, after which new wings will be fitted. Lockheed Martin delivered the fifth P-3 Orion (N431SK) with new Mid-Life Upgrade (MLU) modifications to the CBP more than 50 days ahead of schedule on June 12, 2012.

In March 2012 it was announced that VQ-2 will be deactivated on 31 August 2012. Its aircraft and aircrew personnel will be transferred to VQ-1. The official disestablishment ceremony of VQ-2 was held at NAS Whidbey Island on 17 May 2012. At the same time it was announced that VPU-1 will also be deactivated on 31 August 2012. Its aircraft and aircrew personnel will be transferred to VPU-2 and will move from Jacksonville to MCB Kaneohe Bay. The deactivation ceremony of VPU-1 took place on Friday 27 April 2012 at NAS Jacksonville.

Two VPU P-3 SPA Orions were seen early April. One with code 778 was seen at Djibouti airport, while code 764 visited Lajes on April 7th while en route to the USA. SPA is an abbreviation for Special Project Aircraft

The auction of the eight Aerostar Orions from Aero Union in March 2012 went pretty poorly. AirSpray only bid on two Orions, but these were rejected by the bank because the

bids were too low.

Aircrew and maintainers on board of P-3C 161333 of VP-16 paid a visit to the Republic of the Philippines to participate in exercise Balikatan 2012, which focused on improving interoperability and disaster relief response. The exercise ran April 16-27 and involved both American and Filipino maritime patrol personnel.

The bi-annual deployment change started again in May. In Japan VP-16 (LF) departed Kadena and was replaced by VP-5 (LA). The following Orions were reported with VP-16: 158215, 158567, 159885, 160283, 160610, 161012, 161333, 161338 and 161590. VP-5 has taken two of the P-3C AIP versions modified with the new C4 for ASW (anti-submarine warfare) upgrades with them on deployment. VP-5 has the following Orions deployed: 158215, 159885, 160283, 160610, 161012, 161338, 163001, 163002 and 163003.

Although some of the VP-16 Orions were frequently seen at NAF Misawa, probably supporting VP-1 (YB), of which the following were seen: 158935, 161132, 162998 and 163000, with the remainder of the squadron based at Comalapa AB. VP-8 (LC) moved in at Misawa, with detachments in Comalapa, El Salvador and Kadena, Okinawa. So far the following VP-8 Orions are known: 161126, 161408 and 163000.

VP-47 (RD) was replaced at NAS Sigonella and at Djibouti by VP-9 (PD). The following eight Orions were seen during the past six months: 157319, 158225, 159322, 159323, 159329, 159507, 160287 and 162315. Those underlined were flown back to the USA in May 2012, while VP-9 brought 158222 and a so far unknown Orion with them.

In the Middle East VP-26 (LK) has departed and was replaced at Al Udeid by VP-46 (RC). The following VP-26 Orions have been seen: 158210, 161589, 162316, 162318, 162777 and 163294, while the incoming squadron VP-46 brought 161766 and 161596 with them in May 2012.

Argentina

A country seldom heard of, but early April 2012 two P-3B Orions were still operational while a third aircraft may be made airworthy again. In March 2012 the following P-3Bs were seen in storage at Trelew-Almirante Zar airbase: 0867/6-P-51 and 0868/6-P-52.

Australia

On 28 January 2012 the Royal Australian Air Force's AP-3C Orion detachment achieved nine years continuously deployed in support of operations in the Middle East. Since 2003 two RAAF AP-3Cs, operating out of Al Minhad Air Base UAE, have flown overland operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan as well as over water ranging from the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Somali Basin and the Red Sea. Operations in recent years have expanded to include counter-piracy and counter-smuggling in the over water role.

Brazil

P-3AM FAB7200 was first photographed at Salvador AB in Brazil, on February 25th, 2012 which means at least three Orions have so far been delivered. 7203 in July 2011 and 7201 in October 2011. FAB7209 was last noted at Chico with Aero Union in October 2011.

Germany

Mfg.3 had once again a P-3C deployed to Djibouti, as P-3C 60+05 was seen at Camp Lemonnier on April 2, 2012.

International

Another Joint Warrior exercise took place at RAF Lossiemouth in the UK from 16 until 27 April. Noted during this period were P-3C's 159318 and 159320 both from VP-10, 159507 from VP-47 and 162771 from VP-30, while the RCAF sent three CP-140's: 140103, 140107 and 140111.

Japan

Another aircraft change took place at the African deployment site in Djibouti. On February 2, 2012 P-3C's 5063 and 5066 of 3 Kokutai were noted passing through at Diego Garcia. Both aircraft were seen at Djibouti airport on April 2, 2012.

Norway

A Russian fighter passed a RNoAF P-3C Orion 3299, flying over the Barentsz Sea, at an "uncomfortable distance" on 10 April 2012. Norwegian fighters often intercept Russian aircraft approaching Norwegian air space in that same area, usually without much drama. But this event was a different story. During a routine mission the Norwegian P-3 crew had spotted the Russian aircraft, a MiG31 Foxhound, twice at a visual safe distance. The third time however the MiG31 came in from behind and passed very close to the Orion.

New Zealand

The second modified P-3K2 NZ4201 was seen at the Ohakea 75th RNZAF Anniversary airshow on March 31, 2012.

Pakistan

During an official ceremony held on 21 February 2012 at PNS Mehran, the second batch of updated P-3C Orions was handed over to the Pakistan Navy. Aircraft involved were 88 (ex 159508) and 89 (ex 160289). On April 2, 2012 Pakistan Navy P-3C 86 (ex 159511) visited Lajes on the Azores, while in transit to the USA.

Portugal

On May 30, 2012 the Portuguese Ministry of Defense announced that the two surviving P-3P Orions that served with the Portuguese Air Force until last year are up for sale. Tail numbers are 14803 (BuNo 155294, ex-RAAF A9-294) and 14805 (BuNo 155297, former RAAF A9-297).

Spain

Early March 2012 the third and final modified P-3M started test-flying by EADS. The Orion

involved is the one in the new grey colour scheme, which is reported to have been given the new serial P.3M-08 coded 22-31. The first modernised Orion was delivered to the Spanish Air Force on May 7, 2007 and then the plan was to modernise all five P-3B aircraft. This had since reduced to three. The Spanish air force now operates two P-3A models: P.3-01, P.3-03 and three P-3M's: P.3M-08, P.3B-09 and P.3B-12.

Vietnam

According to an article in Aviation Week there are sources saying the Vietnamese are seeking to buy ASW aircraft and have shown interest in the Lockheed Martin P-3 Orion. The Southeast Asian nation wants the P-3s to protect its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea and to help stop Chinese submarines from entering Vietnamese waters. China's largest submarine base is on the southern tip of Hainan Island, just off the northern Vietnam coast.

Changes to the ALR since the previous reports

FAB7200	1/7 GAv	del	feb12
N431SK	MLU	mod	jun12
0867/6-P-51	storage		mar12
0868/6-P-52	storage		mar12
NZ4201	P-3K2	mod	mar12
158215	VP-5	215	may12
158224	VP-9	224	mar12
158564	VP-5	564	jan12
159326	VP-30	326	sep11
159885	VP-5	885	may12
160283	VP-5	283	may12
160610	VP-5	610	may12
N436NA	NASA830	ex N102Z	02apr12
161012	VP-5	012	may12
161126	VP-8	126	may12
161338	VP-16	LF-338	mar12
161408	VP-8	LC-408	mar12
161589	VP-26	LK-589	jun12
161596	VP-46	596	may12
161765	VP-62	LT-765	may12
162771	VP-30	771	feb12
163000	VP-8	000	may12
163001	VP-5	LA-001	mar12
163002	VP-5	LA-002	may12
163290	VP-30	290	jan12
140102	14 Wing		may12
5015	2 Kok		apr12
5024	1 Kok		mar12
5044	51 Kok		apr12
5045	203 Kok		mar12
5050	5 Kok		feb12
5051	2 Kok		jun12

5063 2 Kok
5067 5 Kok
5098 2 Kok

feb12
aug11
jan12

