VC-8 REDTAILS
1958-2003

A-4 SKYHAWK
1952-2003

THE END OF AN ERA

VC-8

Dear Redtails, Scooter Drivers, Family and Friends of Naval Aviation, and Loyal Subjects of the Legendary Skyhawk,

Welcome aboard Naval Air Station Oceana and thank you for joining us as we honor the "end of an era" in Naval Aviation that has lasted nearly 50 years. To imagine that the Wright Brothers first took flight a century ago, puts into perspective the significance of today's ceremony. We honor a squadron and an aircraft that have operated with distinction for nearly half the time since those pioneering days in Kitty Hawk.

From Ed Heinemann's drawing board, and the Virginia shore at Chincoteague, have evolved two of the most diverse and important instruments of naval superiority ever developed-brought together in one unique squadron that would outlast any of its kind. A composite squadron unlike any other, and a jet immortalized in the hearts and minds of its pilots and on the canvas of artist R.G. Smith.

But this event is more than that. It is a tribute to the pride and passion of the A-4 and to the heroes and squadrons that flew them, and to the pioneers who built an aircraft that would surpass by 10 years the aircraft designed to replace it. It is a tribute to the indomitable *Redtail* spirit and VC-8's dedication to saving lives and preparing for combat the most powerful Navy the world has ever known. It is a fitting tribute to Naval Aviation.

I would like to thank the Association of Naval Aviation's Hampton Roads Chapter and Naval Air Station Oceana for their tremendous support in hosting and making possible this historic occasion. Finally, my deepest appreciation goes out to the *Redtail* Wardroom and the men and women of VC-8 whose leadership, professionalism, and inspiration define a proud legacy in Naval Aviation that will live on forever.

T. J. MCDONOUGH
CDR   USN

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Official Party Arrives*

Parade the Colors*

National Anthem*

Invocation*

Commander, Fighter Wing Atlantic Fleet Introductory Remarks
CAPT William G. Bond, USN

Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic Fleet Remarks
RADM James M. Zortman

Commander, FLECOMPRON EIGHT Remarks
CDR Thomas McDonough, USN

Guest Speaker Remarks
VADM John B. Totushek, USNR

Formation Flyover*

Disestablishment Proceedings*

Moment of Silence*

Navy Hymn*

Benediction*

Retire the Colors*

* Please Stand

COMMANDER THOMAS J. McDONOUGH

United States Navy
Commanding Officer, Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT

Commander McDonough was born in Boston and raised in Plymouth, Massachusetts. After graduating with honors from Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont in 1984, he attended Aviation Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, Florida and was designated a Naval Aviator in March 1986.

During his first tour, Commander McDonough served with HSL 35 *Magicians* at Naval Air Station North Island, California flying the SH-2F Seasprite (LAMPS MK I). While there he flew missions in support of Operations ERNEST WILL and PRAYING MANTIS while deployed to the Arabian Gulf with HSL 35 Detachments FIVE and TEN embarked in USS REASONER (FF 1063) and USS REID (FFG 30), respectively.

In 1989, Commander McDonough attended the United States Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where he received a Master of Science Degree in Information Systems and an aircraft transition to the SH-60B Seahawk.

After transitioning to the SH-60B in 1991 with HSL 41 *Seahawks* in San Diego, Commander McDonough reported to the newly established HSL 51 Warlords at Atsugi, Japan. While at HSL 51, he deployed twice to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH embarked in USS THACH (FFG 43); once as Maintenance Officer of HSL 51 Detachment THREE and again as Officer in Charge of HSL 51 Detachment ONE.

After returning from overseas in 1995, Commander McDonough reported to Joint Duty with the Secretary of Defense as Chief, Information Systems, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, located at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. While there he graduated from Air University, completing the Air Command and Staff College Seminar Program with the United States Air Force in June 1996.

In 1997, Commander McDonough returned to San Diego to complete his Department Head tour with HSL 47 *Saberhawks*. While there he deployed to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH as Officer in Charge of HSL 47 Detachment TWO embarked in USS KINKAID (DD 965). Following deployment, Commander McDonough served as Squadron Maintenance Officer.

In July 1999, Commander McDonough reported to the Pentagon, Washington D.C. as Flag Aide to the Director, Space, Information Warfare, Command and Control and Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Plans, Policy and Operations. He later reported to Norfolk, Virginia as Flag Aide to the Commander in Chief, United States Atlantic Fleet.

In September 2000, Commander McDonough was selected for future Command of VC-8 *Redtails* and assumed Command in June 2002. During his tenure, VC-8 won the Battle "E", the CNO Safety Award, and was selected as the CNO's Aviation Search and Rescue Command of the Year.

Commander McDonough's personal decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal (three awards), Joint Service Achievement Medal, Navy Achievement Medal (two awards), and various campaign and unit awards.

VC-8 Commanding Officers

CDR H J SILVERSTEIN		JULY 1958
CDR JOHN E BRAUN	JULY 1958	FEBRUARY 1960
CDR SELDEN N MAY	FEBRUARY 1960	FEBRUARY 1961
CDR W G ANDREWS	FEBRUARY 1961	FEBRUARY 1962
CDR DAVID A KRIBS	FEBRUARY 1962	JANUARY 1963
CDR THOMAS J CROSS	JANUARY 1963	APRIL 1964
CDR R D FOSDICK	APRIL 1964	APRIL 1965
CDR J R GEER	APRIL 1965	FEBRUARY 1966
CDR JAMES FOXGROVER	FEBRUARY 1966	APRIL 1967
CDR M E SMITH	APRIL 1967	JULY 1968
CDR DURWOOD LASHBROOK	JULY 1968	MAY 1969
CDR M L JOHNSON	MAY 1969	MAY 1970
CDR R R ZAPALAC	MAY 1970	MAY 1971
CDR R C NICHOLSON	MAY 1971	MAY 1972
CDR FRED SPELLMAN	MAY 1972	JULY 1973
CDR ROBERT CARLSON	JULY 1973	JUNE 1974
CDR STEPHEN SLOANE	JUNE 1974	JULY 1975
CDR PAUL H MONENDA	JULY 1975	JULY 1976
CDR KEITH BOATRIGHT	JULY 1976	JULY 1977
CDR RALPH CHANDLER	JULY 1977	JULY 1978
CDR DANIEL DUDA	JULY 1978	JULY 1979
CDR JOHN SKRZYPEK	JULY 1979	OCTOBER 1980
CDR GEORGE LUNDY JR	OCTOBER 1980	JANUARY 1982
CDR F R PURRINGTON	JANUARY 1982	APRIL 1983
CDR WILLIAM MACKEY III	APRIL 1983	JULY 1984
CDR KENNETH ALLEN	JULY 1984	JANUARY 1986
CDR BRUCE HOELLER	JANUARY 1986	AUGUST 1987
CDR P R BROWN	AUGUST 1987	DECEMBER 1988
CDR STEPHEN MOTOLENICH JR	DECEMBER 1988	MAY 1990
CDR THOMAS MACKIN	MAY 1990	JANUARY 1992
CDR FREDERICK GROENERT JR	JANUARY 1992	MAY 1993
CDR RANDAL SWEENEY	MAY 1993	AUGUST 1994
CDR BERND FORESTER	AUGUST 1994	JANUARY 1996
CDR W G WILCOX JR	JANUARY 1996	MAY 1997
CDR J G SPEER	MAY 1997	AUGUST 1998
CDR S D KORNATZ	AUGUST 1998	OCTOBER 1999
CDR BRAD A STEELE	OCTOBER 1999	MARCH 2001
CDR VINCENT DROUILLARD	MARCH 2001	JUNE 2002
CDR T J MCDONOUGH	JUNE 2002	SEPTEMBER 2003
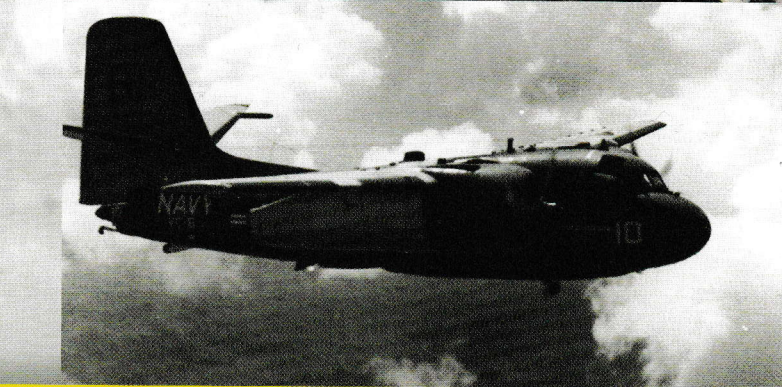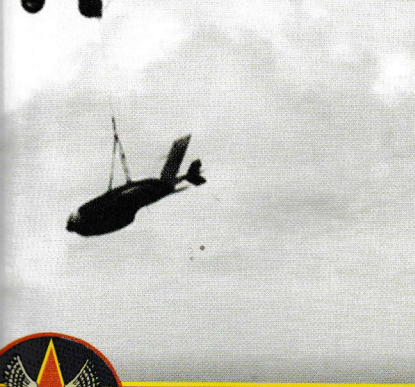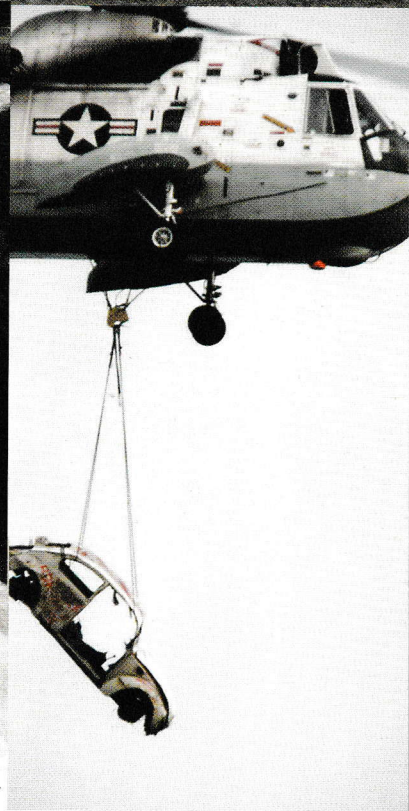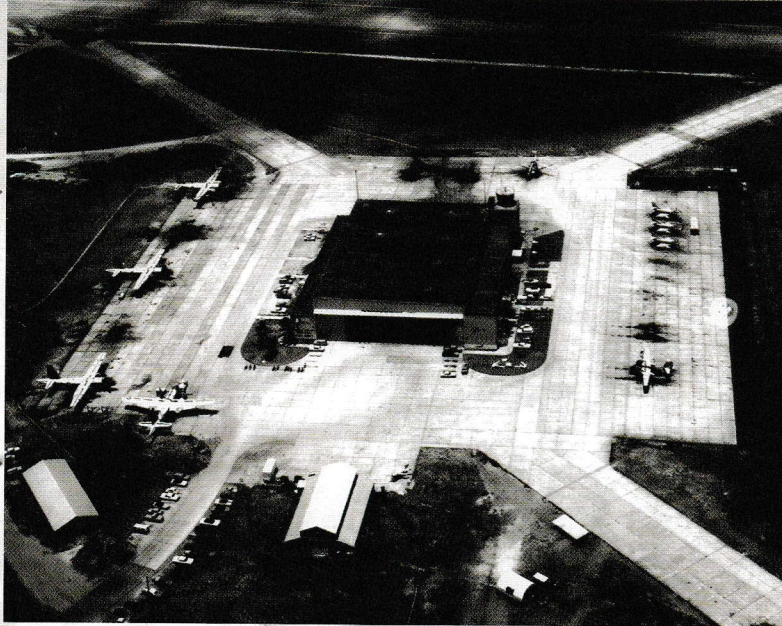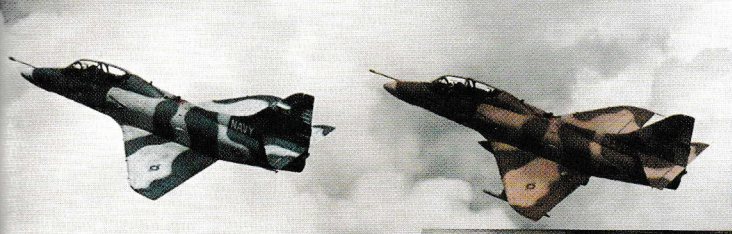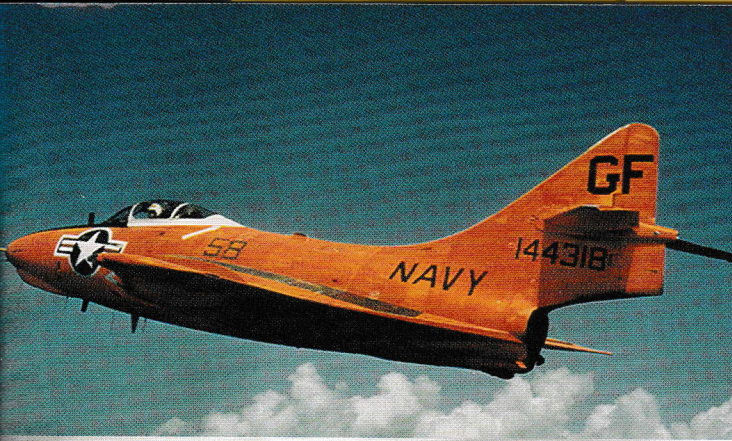
REDTAIL AIRCRAFT - THROUGH THE YEARS...

VC-8
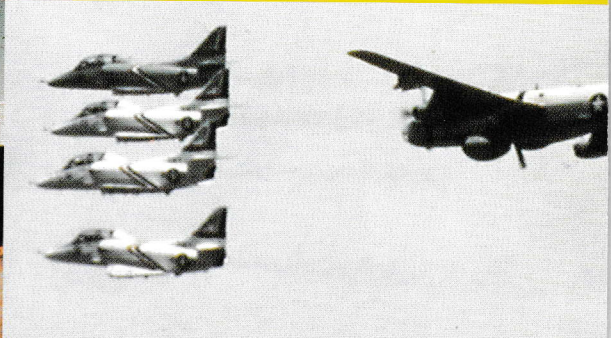
THE HISTORY OF VC-8

Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT (VC-8) was commissioned as Guided Missile Squadron TWO at NAS Chincoteague, Virginia, in July 1958. In January 1959, the squadron was transferred to U.S. Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. Re-designated Utility Squadron EIGHT in 1960 and finally receiving its current designation in 1965, the squadron served the fleet with distinction for 45 years.

FLEET ADVERSARIES

From its beginnings, VC-8's main mission has been to serve the fleet by providing realistic adversary training for fleet units. Initially providing realistic airborne targets for new shipboard anti-aircraft guided missile systems such as TERRIER, TALOS, and TALON, the squadron also provided Korean War-era F-9 fighters converted into jet drones as well as the KDA Firebee (later BQM-34) as targets for fleet exercises such as the annual "Operation Springboard".

Launching, guiding, and recovering these drones required a hangar full of aircraft. When the F-9 Red Dog drone (formerly the Panther) was flown without a live operator aboard, two FJ-3 Fury jets, one T-28 Trojan airplane, and three other ground control pilots were required. The Firebee drone additionally required a P-2 Neptune for launch and an H-34 helicopter for recovery. In 1963, the supersonic F-8 Crusader replaced the vintage FJ-3 Fury as primary drone control aircraft. With this diverse assortment of aircraft, the squadron set drone launch records and pioneered new multiple launch, low-altitude, and night adversary target presentations throughout the 1960's. In 1969, VC-8 flew and maintained 46 airframes spread across seven different type models... simultaneously!
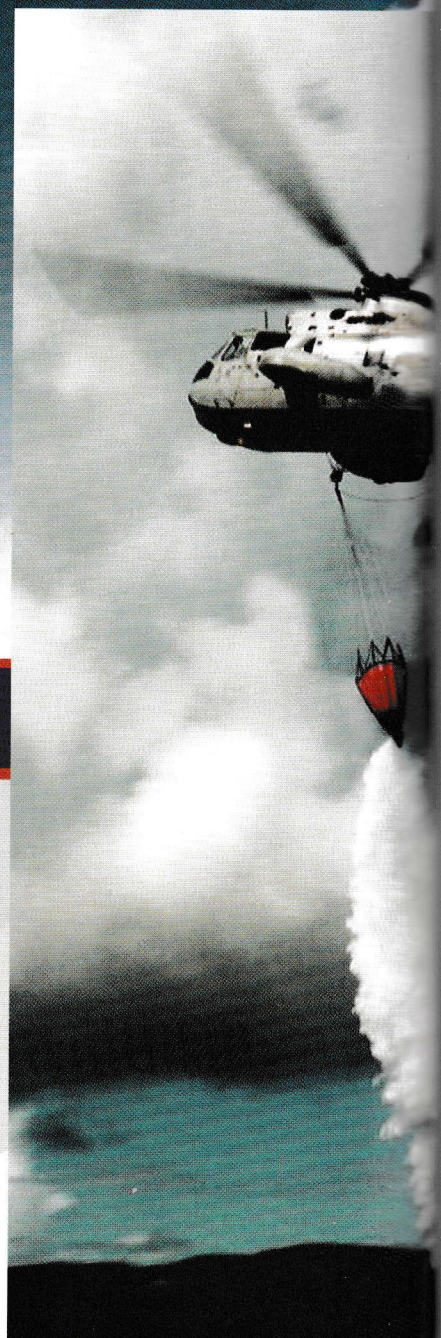
THE VALUE OF HELOS / A-4'S ARRIVING...

In addition to their workhorse duties, the squadron's two H-34's (or rather their crews) established the precedent as the Caribbean's finest search and rescue platforms by rescuing the pilot of a downed F-86 and the surviving crewmembers from an Army Caribou transport plane crash. They performed countless medical evacuations and transported dignitaries such as Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, and General Curtis LeMay.

In 1965, the squadron was tasked with launching the new supersonic AQM-37 target drone. The F-8's were not equipped to carry it, so three A-4B Skyhawks arrived to launch it. They were later replaced by A-4C's and finally the TA-4J. VC-8 missions expanded into radar tracking, air-to-air threat, and other adversarial missions as the Redtail jets supported fleet training exercises. The squadron also acquired more P-2 aircraft and the S-2 Tracker to provide range clearance for the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range.

By 1970, the squadron was operating the H-3 Sea King and a VC-8 crew quickly set a new world record by rescuing 26 survivors (at once) of a passenger jet crash off the island of St. Croix. Despite foul weather and rough seas, the crew proved that they would do everything possible to aid those in need.   On New Year's Eve, 1986, the DuPont Hotel in San Juan caught fire in the worst American hotel disaster to date. Once again, crews from VC-8 responded by launching three Sea Kings and rescuing 75 people from the rooftop of the burning building. The last 24 people saved were rescued in darkness after the fire had re-ignited.

In 1980, VC-8 retired the P-2 Neptune from the naval inventory, establishing a new mission area for the command and foreshadowing VC-8's retirement of the A-4 from naval service 23 years later. This composite propeller/jet patrol aircraft had been developed in World War II and was made famous by the long-distance record breaking flight of the "Truculent Turtle". According to LCDR Bill Storey, a retired Redtail, they flew these "and any other old flying debris the Navy had left lying around. Although the squadron was named Guided Missile Service Squadron 2, and finally VC-8, some of us thought Obsolete Aircraft Retirement Squadron 2 (OARS-2) was more appropriate". The P-2's retirement left the Redtails operating only the Skyhawk and the Sea King,

Working side-by-side, the pilots, aircrew, and maintainers of VC-8 perfected the art of delivering the best quality fleet training support during COMPTUEX and UNITAS exercises. Continuously improving, new missions were added such as Bambi Bucket helicopter fire-fighting support capability and attainment of Level II Adversary status in 1997 (making VC-8 the last active-duty adversary squadron in the Navy). The jets distinguished the squadron on adversary detachments to NAS Key West, NAS Oceana, NAS Fallon, NAS New Orleans, and NAS Dallas, while the helos were always ready to perform humanitarian missions after hurricanes and tropical storms.

On the night of April 18, 1999, Redtail 211 launched into the darkness to MEDEVAC four wounded and one deceased from a live-fire training accident on the island of Vieques. The accident would spark renewed protest in the Navy's
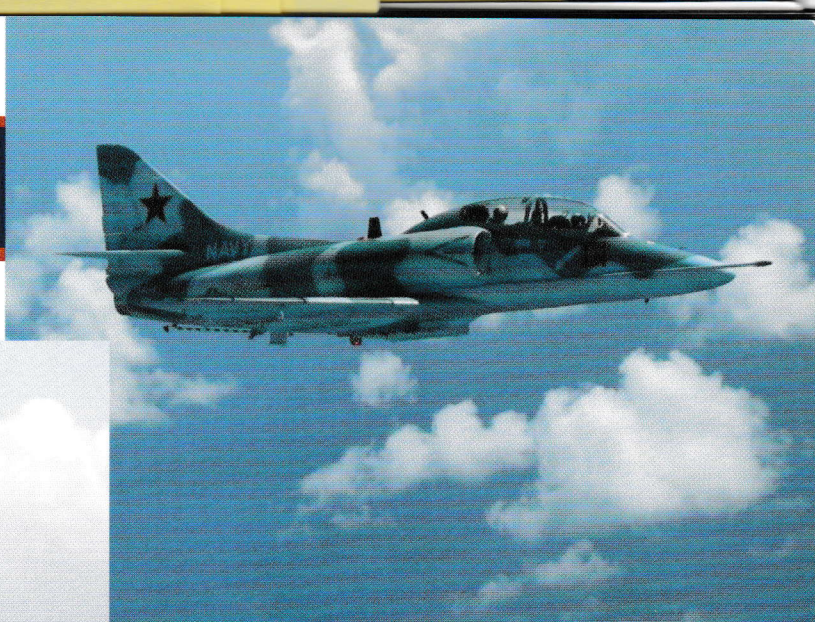
Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT shuts down after 45 years of service performing some of the most difficult tasks asked of any squadron. Despite the unique nature of the missions, remote location, and ownership of legacy aircraft, the pilots, aircrew, and maintainers ensured that deploying Battle Groups received the best training prior to going into harm's way. The squadron was the recipient of three Meritorious Unit Commendations, eight Battle "E" awards, and five Safety "S" awards. Additionally, VC-8 crews have saved over seven hundred lives. Thus, it is a fitting tribute that the squadron won the 2002 CNO Search and Rescue Model Manager's Unit Excellence Award.

use of Vieques as a training range. These protests would lead to the decision to discontinue operations in the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range, and likewise obviate the need for a fleet support squadron based out of Roosevelt Roads.