

NAVAL FIGHTERS NUMBER FIFTY - TWO

DOUGLAS A-4E/F

SKYHAWK

IN MARINE SERVICE



BY STEVE GINTER AND STEVEN ALBRIGHT

STEVEN P. ALBRIGHT

Steven P. Albright was born into Marine Corps Aviation, thanks to his father, who was a Marine fighter pilot. He has been hooked on the Naval Fighters series since he grabbed his first copy of Naval Fighters Number Eighteen, Vought F-8 Crusaders Part 3, Marine Fighter Squadrons. He is a contributing editor to the "Hook" (journal of the Tailhook Foundation), "Smoke Trails" (journal of the F-4 Phantom Society), and the "Yellow Sheet" (from the Marine Corps Aviation Association). He wrote A History of Marine Fighter / Attack Squadron Two Hundred and Twelve for the History and Museums Division, HQMC in 1997. He resides in Corsicana, Texas, with his wife and two daughters.

INTRODUCTION

Douglas A-4E/F Skyhawks In Marine Service is the companion volume to Naval Fighters Number Fifty-One, Douglas A-4E/F Skyhawks In Navy Service. The Navy volume contains 41 pages of development, aircraft description details and drawings, as well as 19 pages of armament details and drawings that pertain to Marine A-4E/Fs.

Although fewer Marine squadrons were equipped with the A-4E/Fs than Navy squadrons, the type still saw extensive usage in Vietnam. The close air support that these aircraft provided to our deployed troops were invaluable and saved countless American lives.

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FRONT COVER:

VMA-131 A-4E 150001, assigned to MARTD Willow Grove, on a practice bombing mission over the Arizona desert on 17 January 1980. This A-4E had been upgraded to A-4F standards including the canted refueling probe. Note the small blue practice bombs mounted on the outboard wing pylons. (Harry Gann)

Below, four bomb-laden A-4Es from VMA-311 in flight over Southern California. (Douglas)

MARINE ATTACK TRAINING SQUADRON, VMAT-102 "SKYHAWKS"



VMAT-102 was activated with A-4Cs on 1 January 1969 and started the attack training syllabus in May. The syllabus emphasis was:

- A.) Weapons delivery with instruction on ground targets
- B.) Technical training for maintenance personnel
- C.) Close air support
- D.) Armed reconnaissance
- E.) Helicopter support
- F.) S.A.T.S.
- G.) Conduct O.R.I

In 1970, the unit began receiving A-4E aircraft. It flew the A-4E and TA-4J until supplemented with A-4Fs in August 1973. Today they fly the F/A-18 Hornet.



From May 1969 through September 1973, the squadron established a safety record of 40,000 accident free hours in the Skyhawk. They were the only tactical jet squadron to reach that figure up to that point in time.

Above, VMAT-102 A-4E 150010 landing at MCAS Yuma in 1971. Tail and drop tank markings were red. (Douglas) Below, VMAT-102 A-4E 150060 in 1971. Note the squadron number 102 is repeated on the drop tank in red. (Fred Roos via Ginter) Bottom, A-4F 150039 with red boarding ladder attached in 1971. (Fred Roos via Ginter)

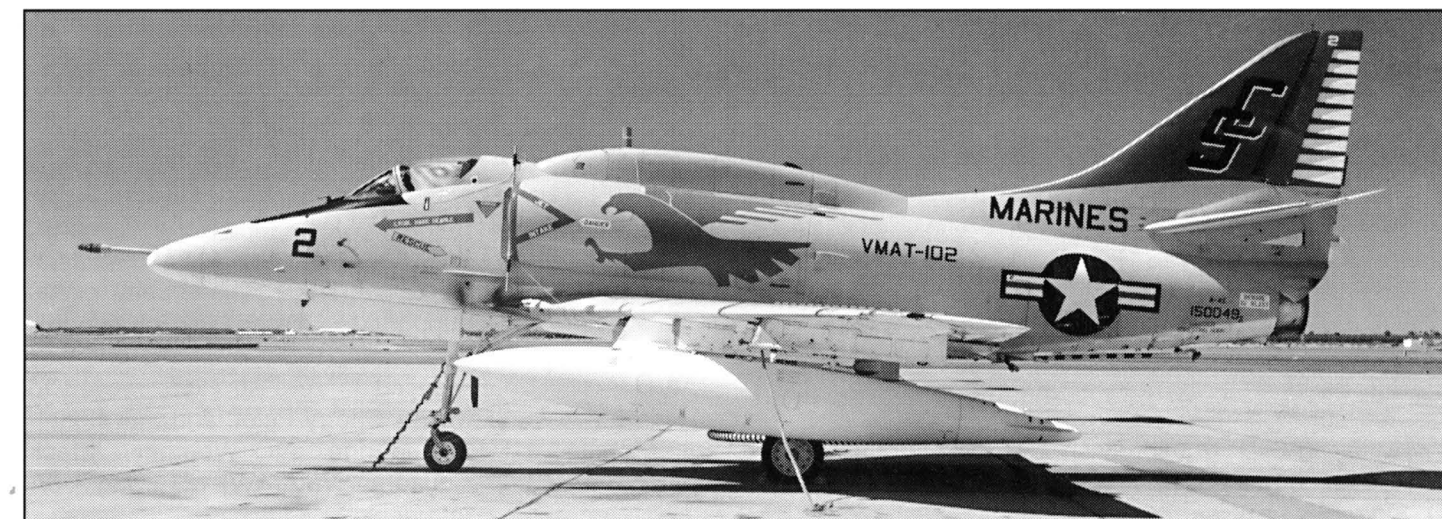




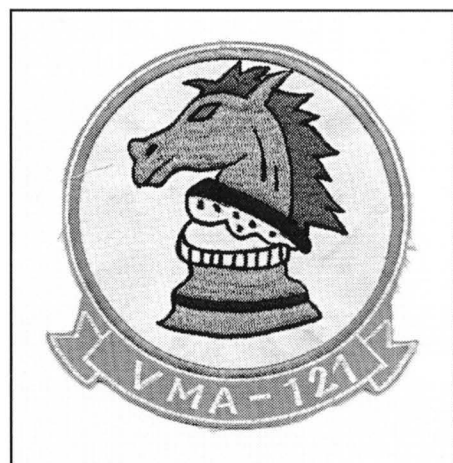
Above, VMAT-102 TA-4J 153669 was white with red trim; it was escorted by A-4E 150134 near Yuma in 1972. (Harry Gann)
Below, A-4Es 150134 and 150073 on a training flight over the Arizona desert in 1972. (Harry Gann)



Above, VMAT-102 A-4E 150039 on 31 July 1971. The aircraft had hydraulic and oil leak stains along the side of the fuselage. Heavy gun blast stains are also evident opposite the 20mm gun muzzle. (Dr. Joe Handelman via Kaston) Below, A-4E 150049 at Yuma in 1975. Stylized Skyhawk and tail markings were red. (Swisher) Bottom, A-4E 150049 at NAS North Island on 15 June 1974 with the number one on the fuselage. (Robert Lawson via Fred Roos)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON ONE TWO ONE, VMA-121 "GREEN KNIGHTS"



Marine Fighting Squadron 121 (VMA-121) was activated on 24 June 1941 at MCAS Quantico, VA, and equipped with the Grumman F4F Wildcat. During WWII, the unit operated from Guadalcanal, and produced such aces as Joe Foss. They returned to the US briefly, before redeploying into combat with the Vought/Goodyear F4U/FG Corsair. By the end of WWII, VMF-121 was credited with 208 air-to-air kills, the highest score of any Marine unit. The squadron was deactivated on 9 September 1945 and remained dormant until 1 July 1946, when they were reactivated at NAS Glenview, IL., and equipped with the F8F-1 bearcat and F4U-4 Corsair.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, the unit returned to active duty as a Marine Attack Squadron on 15 May 1951, and was equipped with the AD Skyraider. Known as the Wolf

Raiders and Heavy Haulers, the unit supported Allied operations in North and South Korea. They remained at Pyong-Taek (K-6) until 1957, when they moved to MCAS El Toro, CA, and re-equipped with F9F-8B Cougars.

The Green Knights transitioned to the Douglas A4D-2 Skyhawk in 1959. The following year, they deployed aboard the USS Coral Sea (CVA-43) for a WestPac cruise, returning in the spring of 1961. They moved to Cecil Field, FL, in November 1962 to oversee the wind-down of the Cuban Missile Crisis, returning the following month. In March 1964, the unit deployed to Japan for a one-year WestPac tour.

VMA-121 was ordered to Vietnam in August 1966, arriving in Japan on 2 September. They made a final move to Chu Lai, RVN, from 14

Above, VMA-121 A-4E 151060 at NAS Alameda in September 1966. The Green Knight insignia and the tail markings were green. (Larry Smalley via Swisher) Below, VMA-121 A-4E 151129 in flight with Bullpups loaded on the outer pylons on 14 April 1966. (USMC)

November to 7 December 1966, under the command of LTCOL Donald R. Stiver. The unit remained in combat until June of 1967, when it was pulled back to Iwakuni. After training in Japan and Naha, Okinawa, the unit returned to Vietnam in September 1967. The Green Knights supported US troops in Vietnam until 1 February 1969, when the unit was reduced to zero strength, moved to MCAS Cherry Point, and redesignated Marine All Weather Attack Squadron; VMA(AW)-121 flying A-6A Intruders.



VMA-121

Above, VMA-121 A-4E 151129 being refuelled for a practice bombing mission on 26 April 1966. One crewman pressure-fuels the fuselage tanks while another crewman opens the drop tank filler cap. (USMC) Above right, ordnance man loads practice bombs on the outboard pylons. (USMC) At right, Green Knight pilot climbs up ladder to commence his training flight. He is wearing an orange flight suit with olive drab G-suit. Boarding ladder was red. (USMC) Bottom, plane captain assists pilot in hooking up for his mission. Diminutive size of the Skyhawk's cockpit and canopy are evident here. (USMC)



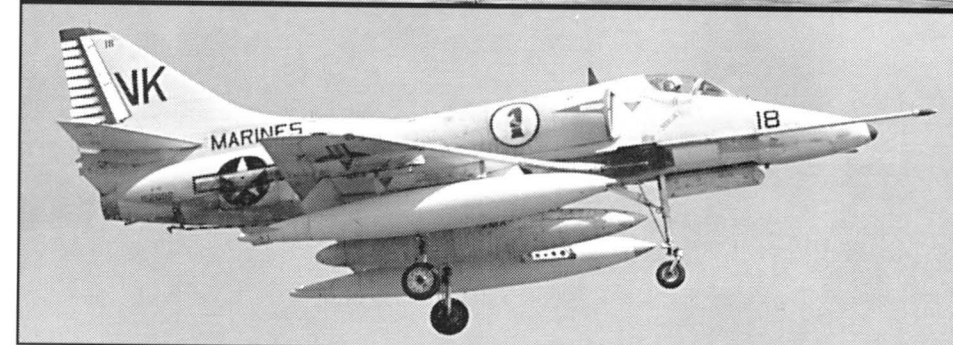


Above, VMA-121 A-4E in fresh paint and with the Spanish national insignia on the engine intake and Spanish fin markings, date unknown. (Ginter collection) Below, close-up of air transportable starter cart in front of VMA-121 A-4E. (USMC)



VMA-121

Above, VMA-121 A-4E 151050 taxis at Chu Lai, Vietnam, loaded with fourteen 250lb. Snakeye bombs and a centerline drop tank in 1968. Bombs were olive drab with yellow tips and silver fuses. (USMC via Fred Roos) At right, VMA-121 A-4E 150092 at Royal Thai Air Base (RTAFB) Ubon in late 1968. Refueling probe stripes were green. (A. C. Piccirillo via Fred Roos) At right below, VMA-121 A-4E 152099 landing at NAS Atsugi on 23 September 1968. Large squadron insignia on the fuselage side was white with a green border and green knight chessman. (T. Matsuzaki) Bottom, VMA-121 151080 loaded with two Snakeyes and two conventional bombs waits for a mission outside a make-shift revetment at Chu Lai, Vietnam, in December 1967. (USMC via Fred Roos)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON ONE TWO FOUR, VMA-124 "WHISTLING DEATH"



The squadron was formed on 7 September 1942 at Camp Kearney, CA, with remnants of VMF-121. They became the first Marine squadron to utilize the Vought F4U-1 Corsair. The Death's Head squadron (later "Checkerboards") arrived on Guadalcanal on 11 February 1943 and participated in the Russell Island,

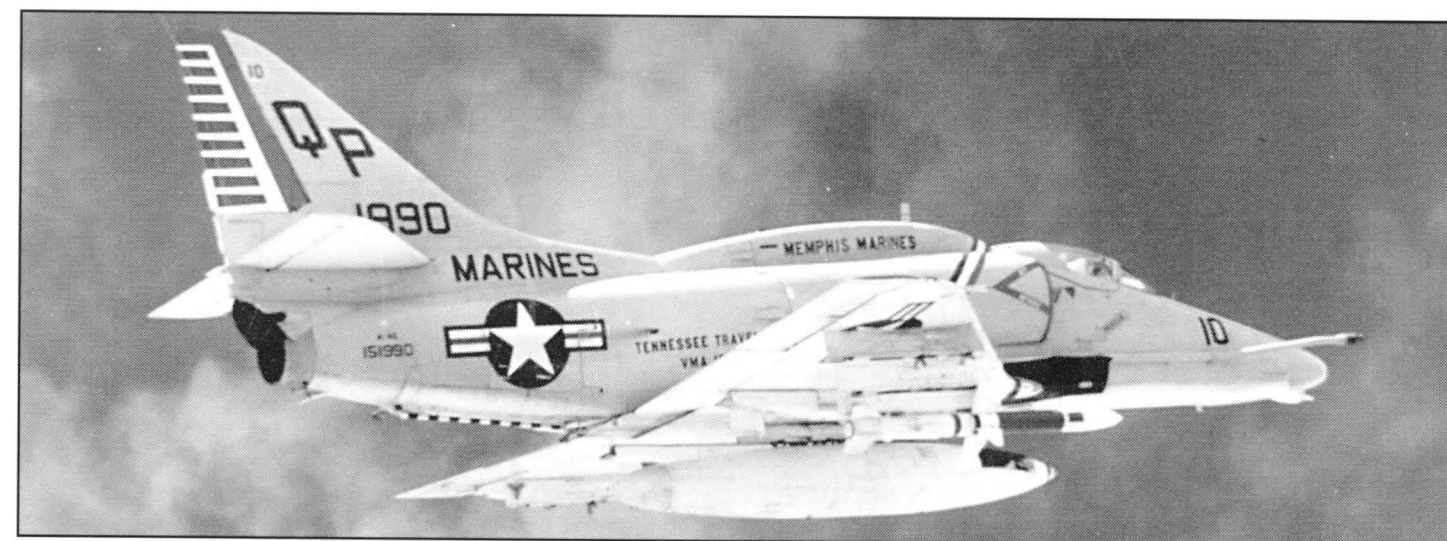
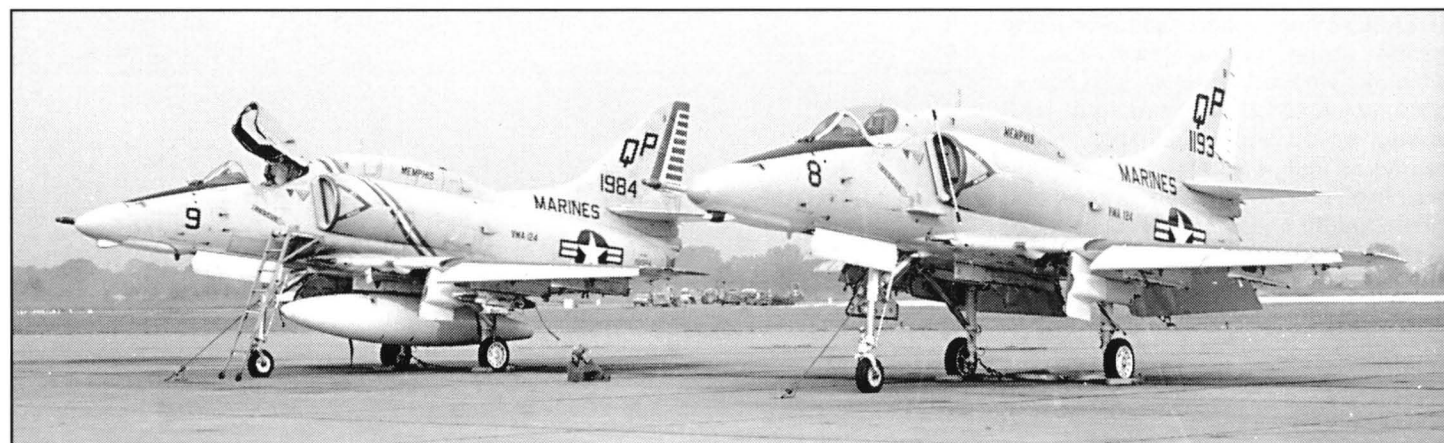
New Georgia, and Vella Lavella campaigns. The squadron returned to the West Coast in October of 1943 where they remained until September 1944, when they moved to Pearl Harbor, TH. They boarded the USS Essex on 28 December 1944 and supported the Lingayen landings, Iwo Jima landings, and attacked Tokyo and Okinawa. The squadron returned to the West Coast in April 1945, before redeploying to Ewa, TH, in September. Following the surrender of the Japanese, the squadron returned to El Toro, where it was deactivated on 31 January 1946.

The squadron was reactivated as the Whistling Death Squadron at NAS Memphis, and assigned the F4U-4 Corsair, from which it derived its name. VMF-124 became the first squadron to reach full strength under the Marine Air Reserve Training

Command. As VMF-124, the squadron transitioned to F9F-6 Cougars and FJ-4B Furies.

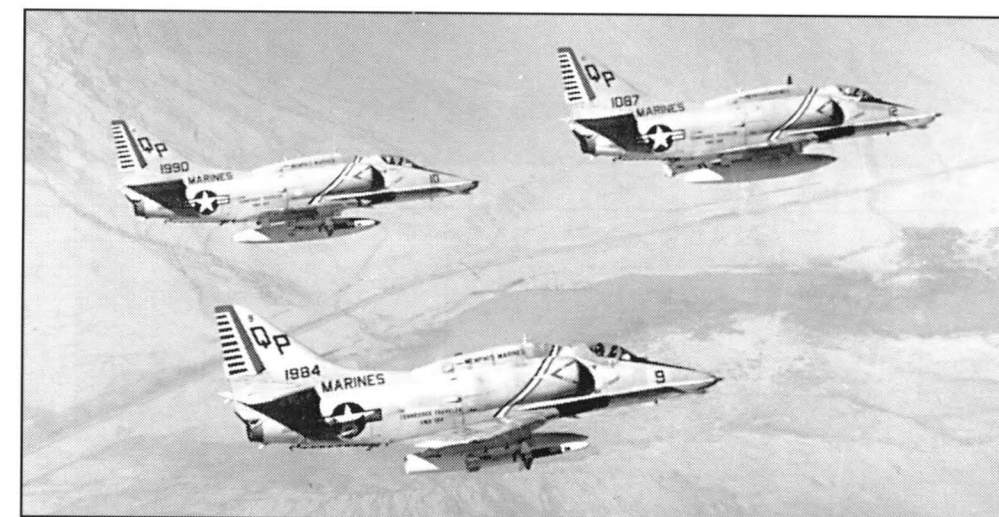
The unit was redesignated VMA-124 on 1 May 1965, and equipped with the A-4A/B Skyhawk. The squadron received the A-4L in the early 1970s and the A-4E in the late 1970s. The A-4Es were replaced with A-4Ms in the 1980s and utilized until 1994, when the unit was reduced in strength and moved to NAS Ft Worth, JRB (Joint Reserve Base). The unit was redesignated VMFA-124 as a paper squadron attached to MAG-24. It was deactivated in 1997 without ever receiving any aircraft.

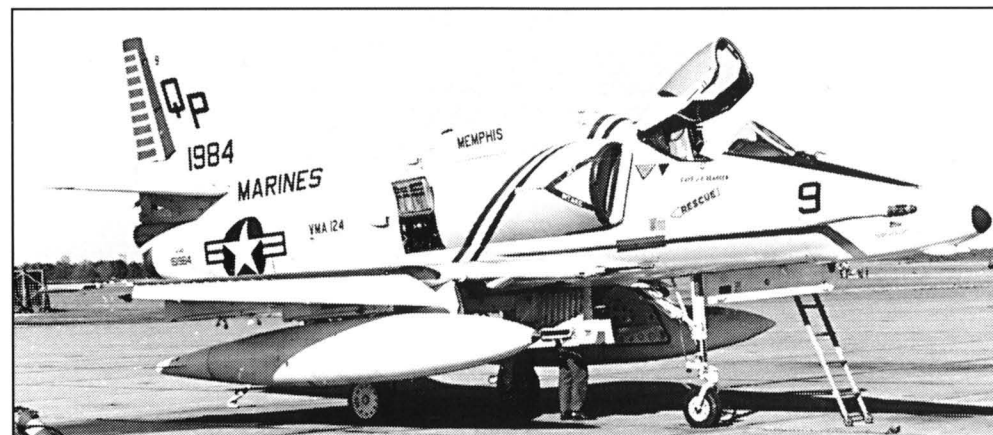
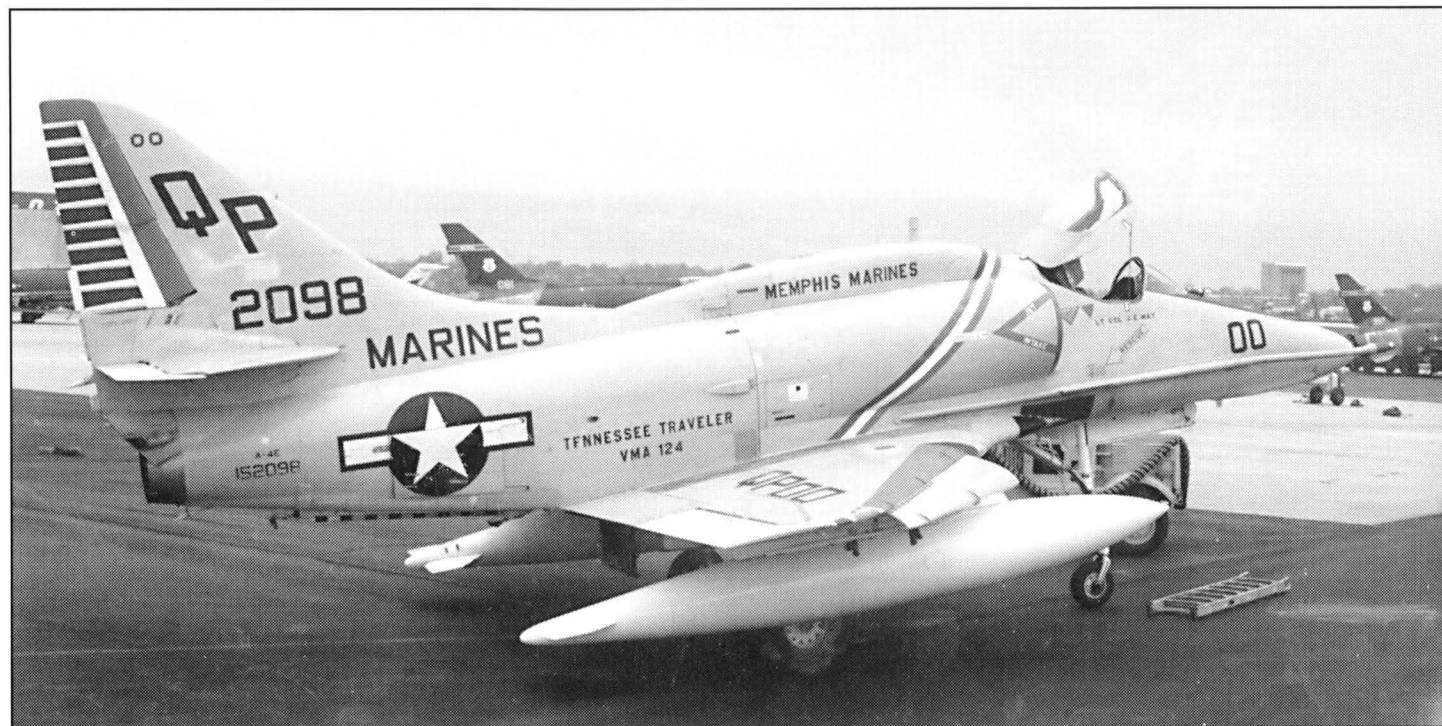
Below, A-4Es 151984 and 151193 at NAS Memphis on 13 September 1980. (F. Harl via Norm Taylor) Bottom, A-4E 150110 on 24 September 1976. (Fred Roos)



VMA-124

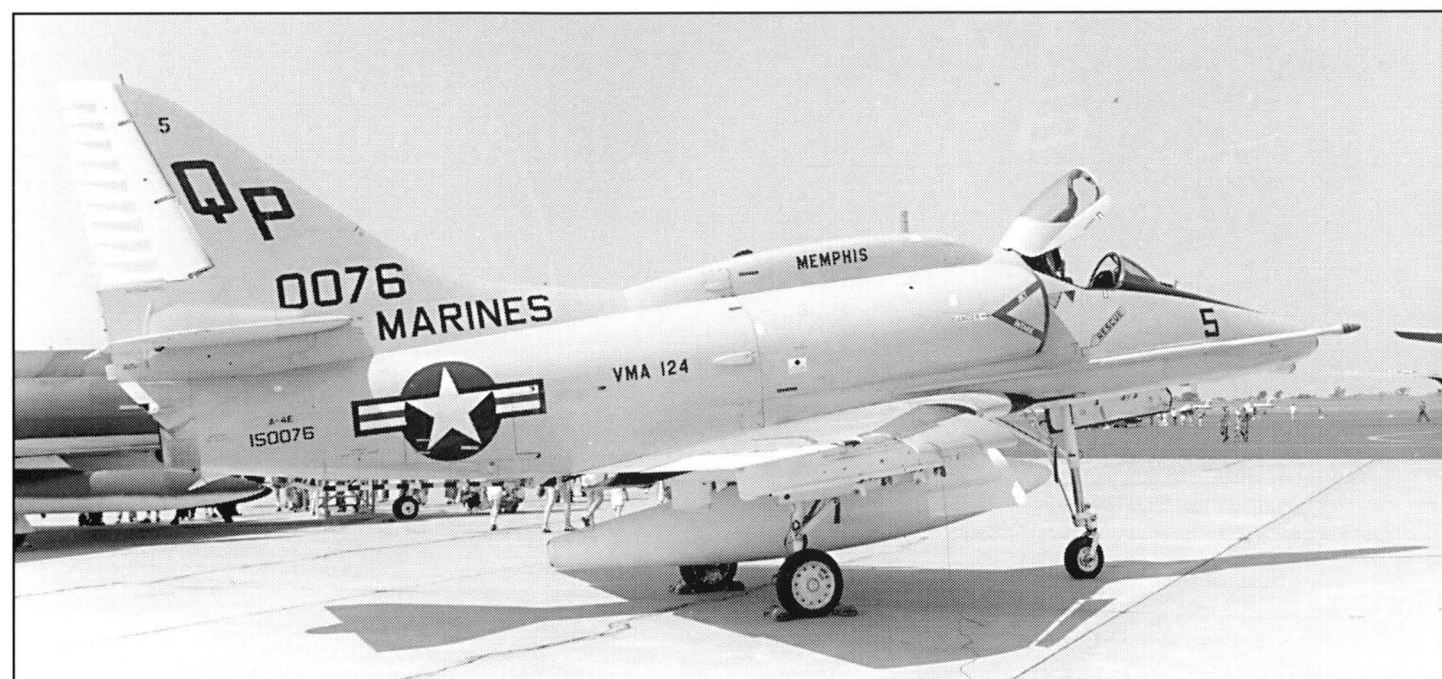
Above, "Tennessee Traveler" A-4E 151990 in flight on a training mission with a Shrike attached to the inboard right pylon. (Harry Gann) At right, A-4Es 151984, 151087 and 151990 over the Arizona desert in 1977. Fuselage stripes fore-to-aft were red-white-blue. Vertical rudder stripe and tip were red and horizontal stripes were blue. (Harry Gann) Bottom, A-4E 151087 with a Shrike missile attached to the outer left pylon. The Shrike was white with blue markings. (Harry Gann)





VMA-124

Above, "Double Nuts" Memphis Marines CO's A-4E 152098 at St. Louis ANGB in April 1978. Note location and size of wing codes. (MO ANG via Fred Roos) At left, A-4E 151984 being serviced at Memphis in 1978. (via Burger) Bottom, A-4E 150076 at Richards - Gebaur AFB, MO, on 14 June 1980. (C. Gerdes via Norm Taylor)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON ONE THREE ONE, VMA-131 "DIAMONDBACKS"



One of the oldest units in Marine Aviation, the squadron began life as VMS-1 and became VMSB-131 in July 1941. Flying the SB2U-3, the unit moved to MCAS Ewa in September 1942, and became the first Marine torpedo bombing squadron when they transitioned to the Grumman TBF-1 Avenger. The unit moved to Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo in November. The unit was redesignated VMTB-131 in June 1943, and returned to the US. They returned to

At top, A-4E 152061. (Mark Morgan) At right, A-4E 150001 in 1978 with rocket pod on the outer left pylon over the Yuma range. (Harry Gann) Bottom, A-4E 151078 returns from a practice bombing mission in 1978. (Harry Gann)





the South Pacific in April 1944 and supported operations against Okinawa in May. The unit was deactivated on 16 November 1945.

The unit was reactivated in the Marine Corps reserves and located at Floyd Bennett Field, NY, as VMF-131. From January 1951 to July 1953, VMF-131 became an active duty squadron in response to the Korean War. By 1958, the unit was operating the F9F-6 Cougar. During the 1960s, the unit transitioned to the A-4B, A-4C and TA-4F and was redesignated VMA-131. In 1971 with A-4Ls, VMA-131 along with VMA-133 and VMA-142 CarQualed for three days on board the USS Independence.

The Diamondbacks moved to NAS Willow Grove, PA, in September 1972. They began operating the A-4E in March 1975. These were supplemented with A-4Fs in the 1980s, and the unit continued to make periodic deployments to Yuma with the Echo and Foxtrot, until the A-4M arrived in 1988. The Diamondbacks relinquished their A-4Ms in 1994 and became a paper squadron until their deactivation in 1997.

At top, A-4E 151078 over Yuma in 1978. (Harry Gann) At left, A-4E 150013 drops 750 lb. bombs over the Yuma range. (Harry Gann) Bottom, A-4E 151078 and 151038 head out on a practice bombing mission. (Harry Gann)



Above, A-4Es 152070 and 151090 at Shaw AFB in October 1978. Scroll on the fuselage side read "Dimondbacks" in yellow on red. (Barry Miller) Below, A-4E 150013 was typical of markings used by VMA-131 prior to the '80s. The diamond stripes were red with yellow diamonds. (Barry Miller) Bottom, A-4E 150001 in 1975. (Fred Roos via Ginter)





VMA-131

Above, A-4Es 150001 and 151194 escort an F-15A over the Arizona desert. (Harry Gann) At left, A-4E 152061 taxis in September 1981. Squadron trim colors changed to black and yellow for the rudder and fuselage stripe in 1980. (via Kaston) Bottom, A-4E 150001 banks over the runway at MCAS Yuma, AZ, on 17 January 1980. Squadron tail code "QG" was outlined by yellow. (Harry Gann)



VMA-131

Above, A-4E 151078 at the Dayton Air Show in July 1982. The forward fuselage was plastered with red descriptive placards and an AIM-9 training missile was fitted to the outer pylon. (Barry Miller) At right, A-4E 151030 08/QG in low visibility paint scheme in 1982. (via Burger) Bottom, A-4E 150121 in flight during a practice bombing mission with Snakeyes. (via Burger)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON ONE THREE THREE, VMA-133 "DRAGONS"



Originally established on 1 May 1943, the Flying Eggbeaters operated the SBD-5/6 from MCAS El Toro. The unit moved to MCAS Ewa where it was split in half for Anti-Submarine Patrol in Palmyra and the Johnson Islands. The unit eventually moved to Torokina in the summer of 1944, and carried out missions against the Japanese at Bougainville and New Britain until December, when the unit was moved to Emirau. The squadron supported operations into the Philippines until the end of the war. They were deactivated on 1 August 1945.

The unit was reactivated in the 1950s as VMF-133. The squadron's first jet aircraft was the McDonnell



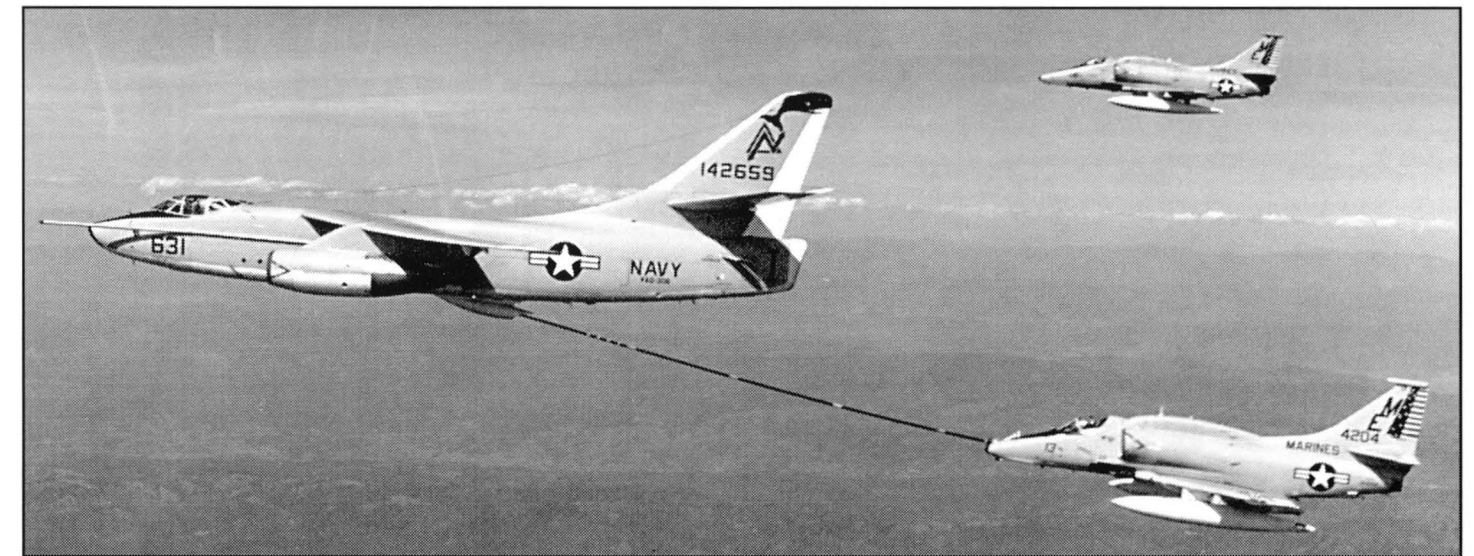
F2H-2 Banshee.

They were assigned A-4Ls in August 1971, when, with VMF-131 and VMF-142, they CarQualed aboard the USS Independence.

VMA-133 operated the A-4F until 1989, when the squadron transitioned to A-4Ms provided by VMA-211, which had switched to the AV-8B Harrier. When VMA-211 gave the Dragons A-4M BuNo 158428 on 27 February 1990, it marked the last time

that the Skyhawk was used by an Active Duty unit. VMA-133 operated the A-4M until it was deactivated in 1992.

Above, VMA-133 A-4Fs in echelon in 1976. The vertical rudder stripe was blue with white stars and the horizontal stripes were red and white. (Harry Gann) Below, A-4Fs 154194 (03/ME) and 155025 (02/ME) off the California coast. (Harry Gann)



Above, A-4F 154204 refuels from a VAQ-308 KA-3B Skywarrior in 1976. (Harry Gann) Below, CO's A-4F 155057 at NAS Alameda on 8 February 1976. "COL Robert J. Weiss Commanding" was stenciled below the canopy. (Fred Roos) Bottom, A-4F 154196 at MCAS Yuma on 14 February 1980. (William Swisher)





Above, A-4F 154987 in February 1980 at MCAS Yuma. Emblem on the fuselage side showed a bridge and said "Bay Area Golden Gate". (Fred Roos via Ginter) Below, A-4F 155025 (02/ME) on 13 March 1982 in low visibility paint scheme. (Fred Roos) Bottom, A-4F 155018 (12/ME) in 1982 in low visibility scheme with dark grey tail code. (via Burger)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON ONE THREE FOUR, VMA-134 "HAWKS"



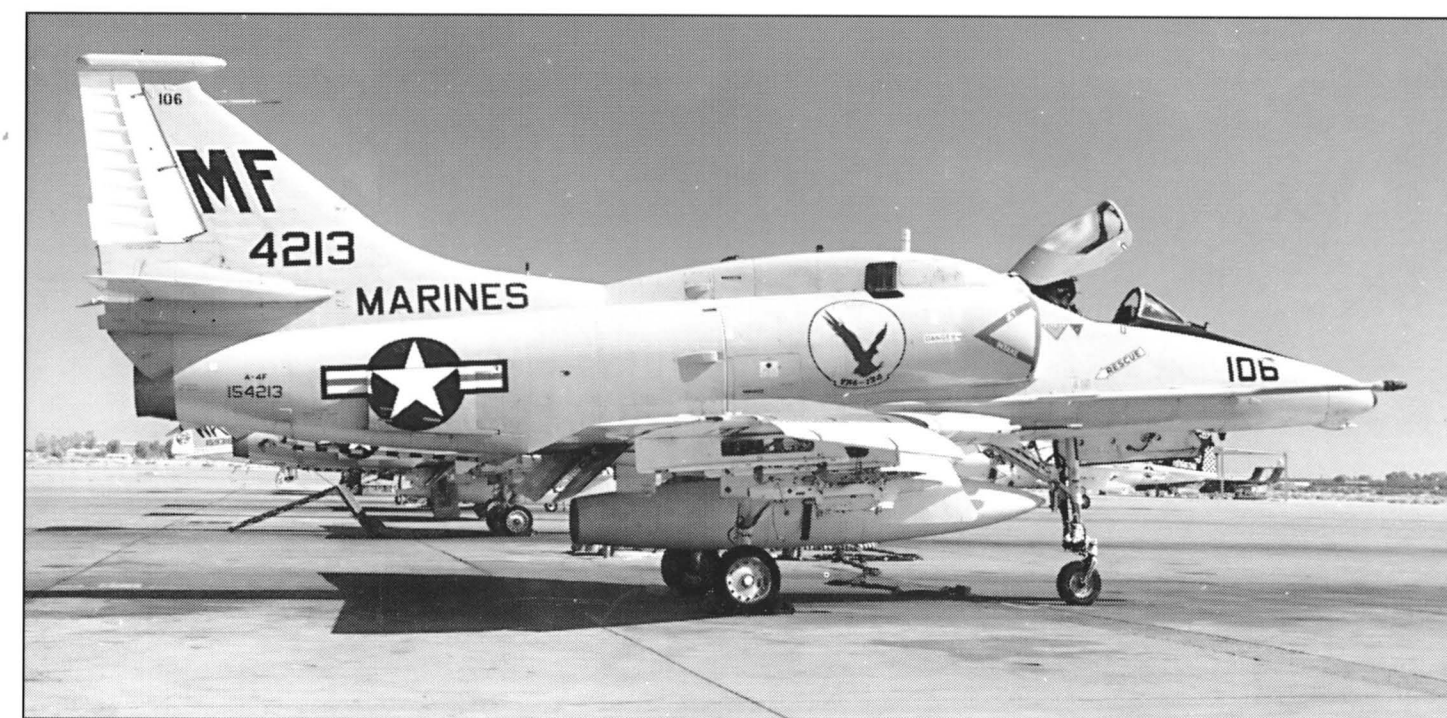
VMSB-134 was established on 1 May 1943 at MCAS Santa Barbara, CA, and flew the Douglas SBD-3. The following month, they were redesignated VMTB-134 when they upgraded to the TBF/TBM Avenger. They deployed to Espiritu Santo in October and began pounding the Japanese on Bougainville. VMTB-134 became the first squadron to use airborne forward firing rockets in combat during operations against Rabaul on 17 February 1944. For that distinction, they named the unit the "Rockettes". During the spring of 1944, they flew strikes against Rabaul and Kaveing. The squadron provided anti-submarine patrols out of Peleliu until the end of the war. The unit joined MAG-32 in

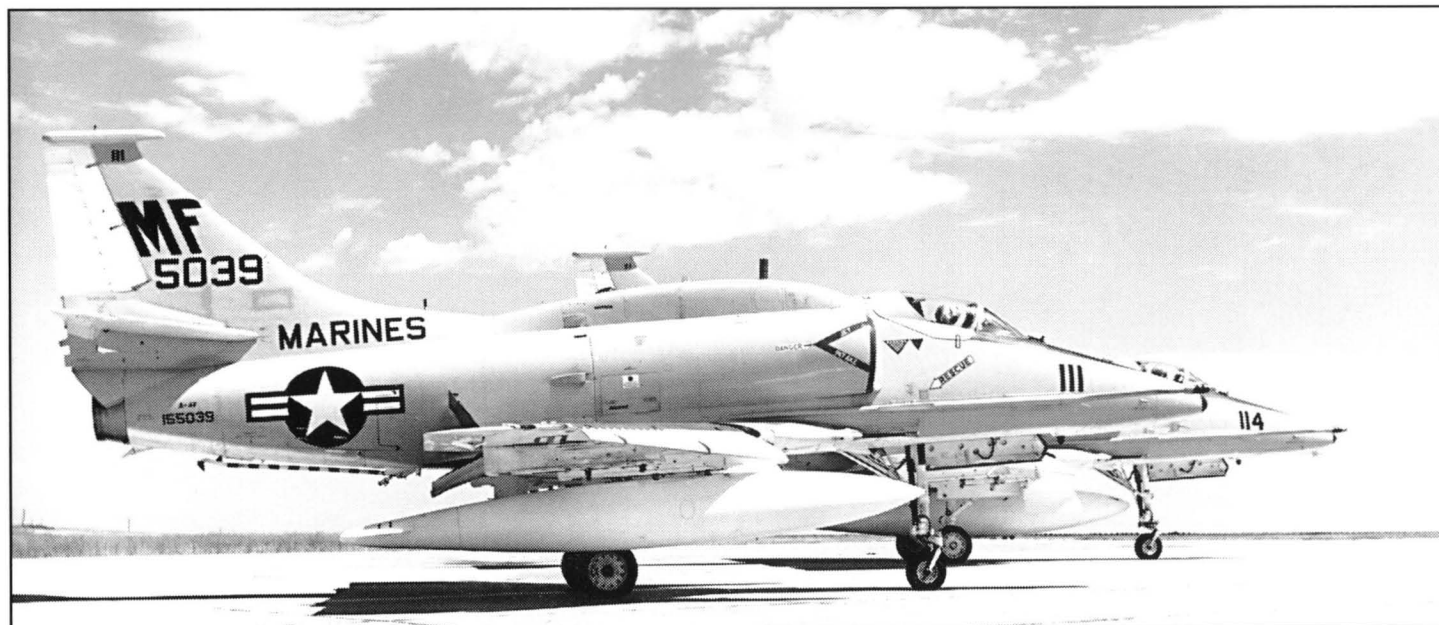
Tsingtao, China, in October 1945. The unit was deactivated on 30 April 1946.

VMF-134 was reactivated at NAS Los Alamitos on 15 April 1958, and equipped with the Grumman F9F-6/7/8 Cougar. They were redesignated VMA-134 on 1 July 1962 and equipped with the A-4A Skyhawk. By 1965, they were flying both A-4As and A-4Bs. They upgraded to A-4Cs before being transferred to MCAS El Toro in 1971 when NAS Los Alamitos was deactivated and made a Joint Reserve Base. While at El Toro, the squadron transitioned to the A-4F Skyhawk. The Hawks made periodic deployments to MCAS Yuma, AZ,

NAS Fallon, NV, NAS Roosevelt Roads, P. R., and MAF 29 Palms, CA.. VMA-134 operated the A-4F until 1 October 1983 when they accepted the F-4N Phantom II and were redesignated VMFA-134 Smokes. Today they fly the F/A-18 Hornet from MCAS Miramar.

Above, A-4F 155000 at MCAS El Toro open house on 15 May 1977. (Ginter) Bottom, A-4F 154213 at MCAS Yuma on 6 September 1979 with large Hawk insignia on the fuselage side. (Swisher)





VMA-134

Above, A-4Fs 155039 and 155066 taxis out for a flight from MCAS Yuma. Note that the upper wing spoilers that are unique to the A-4F are deployed. (Fred Roos via Ginter) At left, A-4F 155066. (Fred Roos via Ginter) Bottom, A-4F 155000 at NAS North Island, CA, in May 1976. Aircraft was assigned to VMA-134's Commanding Officer, COL K. H. Wilcox. (via Norm Taylor)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON ONE FOUR TWO, VMA-142 "FLYING GATORS"

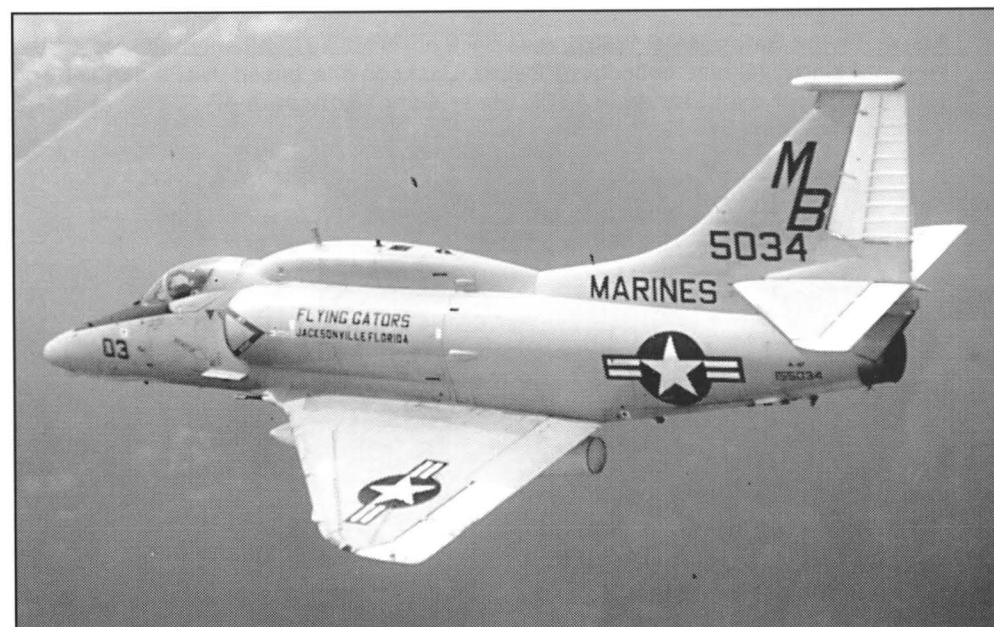


VMSB-142 was activated on 1 March 1942 at Camp Kearny, CA. After deploying to Guadalcanal in October, the unit flew anti-submarine patrols in the Espiritu Santo area. The squadron moved to the Fiji Islands on 23 April 1943 before moving to Emirau in September. They supported operations in the Philippines until 21 September 1945, when they were deactivated at MCAS Ewa, TH.

VMF-142 was reactivated on 1 July 1946 as part of the Marine Reserves at MCAS Miami, FL. While flying the F9F Cougar, the squadron was redesignated VMA-142 on 15 May 1958. The squadron moved to NAS Jacksonville in 1959 and transitioned to the A-4B Skyhawk in 1964.

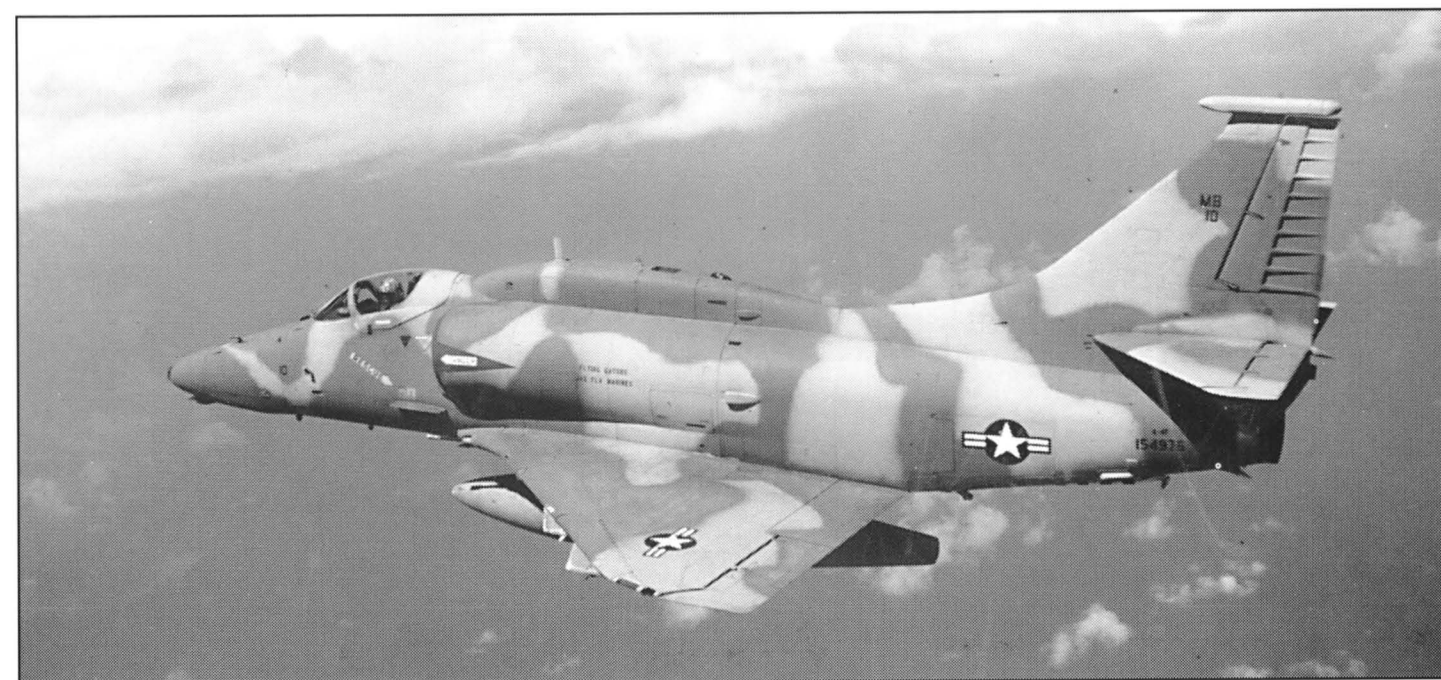
Above, Flying Gators A-4F 155022 (see back cover) in 1976 bicentennial red-white-blue markings. (Ginter collection) Below, Jacksonville based A-4Fs 155034 and 155013 in flight over Florida in 1978. (Harry Gann) Bottom, A-4F 154989 at MCAS Yuma on 6 September 1979. (William Swisher)





VMA-142 went aboard the USS Independence in August of 1971, along with pilots from VMA-131 and VMA-133 for three days of carrier qualifications. The squadron was flying the A-4L at the time and continued to operate the 'Ls until 1976, when they re-equipped with the A-4F and TA-4J. When the squadron moved to NAS Cecil Field in December 1978 they were flying the A-4M Skyhawk. They transitioned to the F/A-18A Hornet on 21 December 1990 and was redesignated VMFA-142.

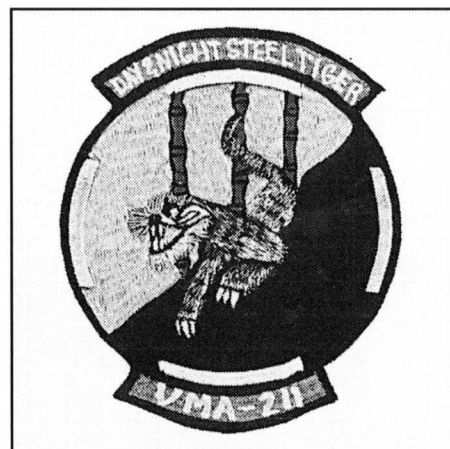
VMA-142



At left top, A-4F 154989 at NAS Jacksonville in 1978. (Harry Gann) At left, A-4F 155034 over the Atlantic in 1978. (Harry Gann) At left bottom, A-4F 154976 (10/MB) in brown aggressor colors in 1978. (Harry Gann) Above, A-4Fs 155034 and 155047 in slow flight with gear down. (Harry Gann) At right, A-4F 155034 right side view in 1978. (Harry Gann) Bottom, right side view of brown aggressor pattern on A-4F 154976 in 1978. (Harry Gann)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON TWO ONE ONE, VMA-211 "WAKE ISLAND AVENGERS"



The unit began as VF-4M on 1 January 1937 at NAS San Diego, CA. Equipped with a half-dozen Grumman F3F-1 biplane fighters and a mixture of SU-4s, O3U-1s, SBC-3s, and F2F-1s. They were redesignated VMF-2 on 1 January 1937. VMF-2 became the first Marine unit to deploy aboard a carrier, en mass, when they took their F3F-2s aboard the USS Ranger (CV-4) in 1938.

The unit moved to MCAS Ewa, TH, in January 1941. They were redesignated VMF-211 in July, and transitioned to the F4F Wildcat in September. With the deterioration of US/Japanese relations, a detachment of VMF-211 was moved to Wake Island on 4 December. Three days

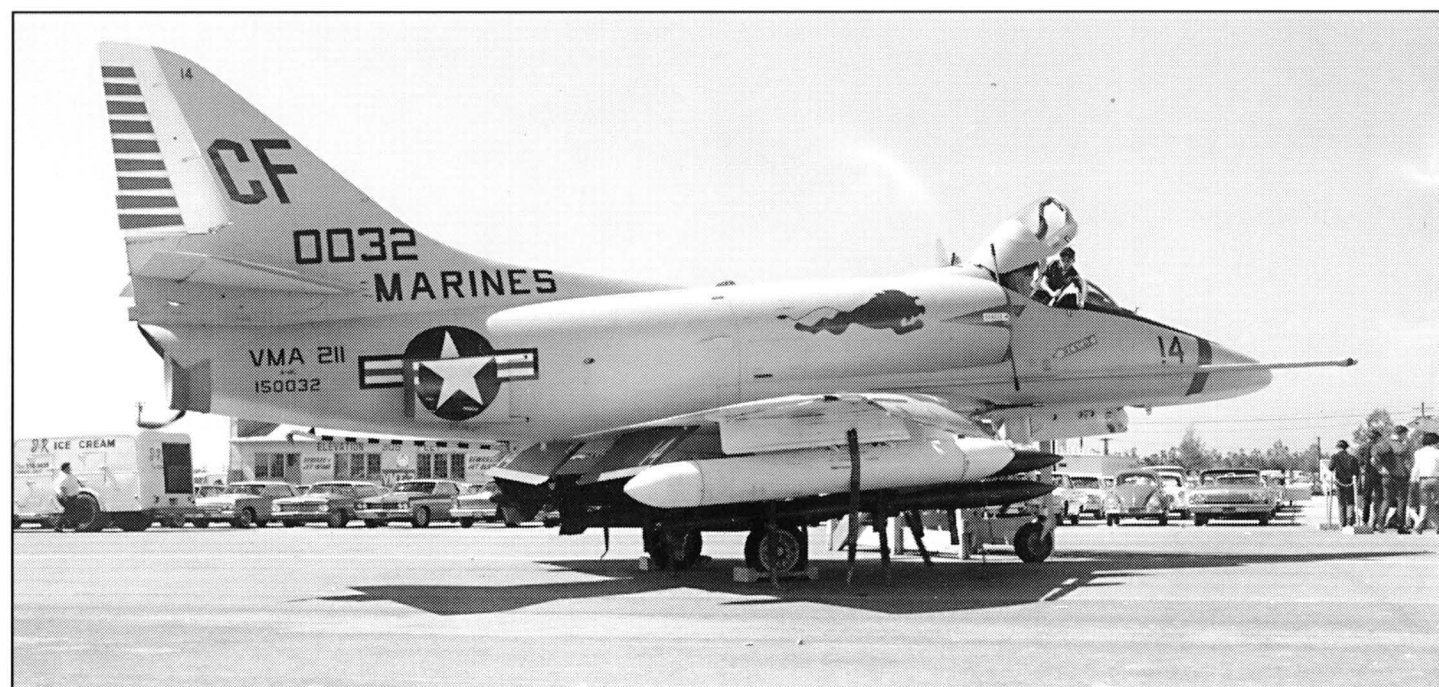
later, the island was attacked by Japanese Naval Air Forces. After fierce fighting, the aircraft were decimated, and all remaining aviation personnel engaged the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. The remaining forces surrendered on 23 December.

VMF-211 was quickly reorganized at Ewa, and adopted the name, Wake Island Avengers. Equipped with the F4F-4, the unit was moved to Palmyra Island for anti-submarine patrols. They returned to Hawaii in June 1943, and transitioned to the Vought F4U-1 Corsair. After training for several weeks, the unit was moved to the South Pacific, where they engaged the enemy at Guadalcanal and Bougainville. The unit was

moved to Leyte in December 1944 to support operations in the Philippines. The Avengers ended the war with 91 enemy planes shot down, and supported the occupation process from Peiping, China in 1945. After deploying aboard the USS Rendova (CVE-114) from November 1948 to May 1949, the unit moved to MCAS Edenton (later Cherry Point).

The Avengers took their Corsairs aboard the USS Midway (CVB-41) for

Below, A-4E 150032 at MCAS El Toro on 14 March 1965. Nose stripe, rudder stripes and lion were red. Zuni rocket pods were on the outboard pylons. (Swisher)

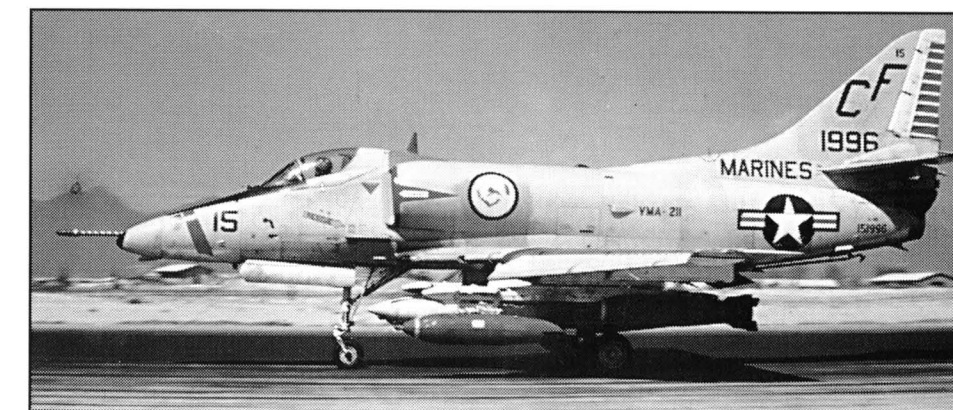


a Med cruise in July 1950, and again, in 1952 aboard the USS Coral Sea (CVB-43). The unit was redesignated VMA-211 on 1 July 1952 and transitioned to Douglas AD-2 Skyraiders. They deployed on a WestPac cruise with AD-4/4Bs in 1954.

VMA-211 began its 33-year affiliation with the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk on 9 September 1957, when it accepted the A4D-2. In 1958, the unit traded places with VMA-224 at MCAS Iwakuni, and accepted the Bengal's A4D-1s. The Avengers were reassigned to MCAS El Toro in 1959, and upgraded to A4D-2Ns. They returned to WestPac in March 1962, but this time, flew the 7,000 mile journey with the help of KC-130T aerial tankers.

The unit returned to El Toro in 1963 and transitioned to the A-4E a year later. They redeployed to MCAS Iwakuni in 1965, as the US built up its forces in support of operations against North Vietnam. LTCOL

Above, A-4E 151993 taxiing at Chu Lai after returning from a mission in Vietnam. (USMC) Below, A-4E 151996 departs for a close support mission from Chu Lai in 1968. (USMC via Fred Roos) Bottom: A-4E 151096 lands at Chu Lai. (USMC vis Fred Roos)





William E Garman brought VMA-211 into Vietnam for the first time on 11 October 1965, when his squadron landed at Chu Lai. Their first combat sorties involved helicopter escorts against the 1st VC Regiment at Heip

Above, A-4E 151088 loaded with Snakeyes prepares to launch from Chu Lai in 1967. (USMC via Fred Roos) At right, A-4E 149989 sits in a revetment at Chu Lai. (via Steve Albright) Below, A-4E 151059 at Yokota AB, on 16 May 1970. (T. Matsuzaki)



Duc. 1LT Thomas F. Eldridge was hit, on 29 December, as he rolled in on a target. He tried to make it back to Chu Lai, but crashed enroute. VMA-211 pulled back to Iwakuni in July 1966, and returned three months later. They stayed again until September 1967, rotated to Iwakuni, and returned again to Chu Lai in December 1967 and remained in-country until February 1970. During 1967 and 1968, VMA-211, along with the other MAG-12 A-4 units, kept a constantly high sortie rate against enemy operations.

After a massive springtime invasion by the North Vietnamese army, VMA-211 arrived at Bien Hoa, SVN, on 17 May 1972 under the command of LTCOL Willis E. Wilson. MAG-12s A-4 units initially provided close air support for the Loc Ninh area, under siege by the NVA. They also provided support for the An Loc region, which was the focal point for three NVA divisions. Bien Hoa air base was within close proximity to NVA positions, and often VMA-211 conducted air strikes within a few miles of their base. The A-4 squadrons were vulnerable to enemy rocket attacks, and on 23 May 1972, the first of a series of rockets struck the base. The worst attack occurred on 1 August, when the base received 101 rockets. During a nine-month period, the rocket attacks killed two people, injured eight, and damaged six Skyhawks.

CAPT James Walsh was hit by anti-aircraft fire on 26 September, after dropping his ordnance on positions in the An Loc area. He ejected from the burning A-4 and landed in the middle of a communist camp site. He was captured almost immediately and had the distinction to become the last Marine POW to be captured.

At top, A-4E 149983 landing at MCAS Iwakuni in 1972. (Fred Ross collection) Above, A-4E 150132 at Chu Lai in 1973. (via Ben Berger) At right, A-4Es 152061 (6/CF) and 151125 (01/CF) landing at MCAS Iwakuni on 19 July 1973. Refueling probes are red and white striped. (S. Ohtaki via Norm Taylor)





Above, A-4E 151167 at Misawa AB, Japan, on 16 July 1974. Pilot prepares for a training mission armed with practice bombs on the outer pylons. (N. Taylor) Below, A-4E 149983 assigned to MAJ T. C. Byall "Brett" at Misawa AB on 16 July 1974. (Norm Taylor) Bottom, A-4E 149653 at Misawa AB on 15 May 1975. (Norm Taylor)



Weather became a factor in October, and MAG-12 brought the avionics packages on the A-4s dorsal back on line. MAG-12 and VMA-211 flew missions into South Vietnam and Cambodia into the early months of 1973. VMA-211 left Vietnam for the last time on 1 February 1973, and arrived at Iwakuni the same day. The Avengers lost fifteen A-4s, seven pilots, and incurred one POW during the Vietnam War.

VMA-211 transferred to MCAS El Toro in August 1976 and re-equipped with the A-4M the next month. The unit moved to MCAS Yuma in 1987 in preparation of receiving the AV-8B lift jet. On 21 February 1990, the last two active duty Douglas Skyhawks in the Marine Corps were transferred out.



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON TWO ONE FOUR, VMA-214 "BLACK SHEEP"



With MAJ Greg Boyington at the helm, the Black Sheep made numerous successful fighter sweeps over Rabaul. Shortly before the unit rotated back to the US, Boyington was shot down and taken prisoner.

VMF-214 arrived at MCAS Santa Barbara in January 1944 for rest and retraining. They returned to the Pacific theater aboard the USS Franklin (CV-13). The Franklin was bombed and nearly sunk, and the squadron regrouped at MCAAS EL Centro, where it was deactivated. VMF-214 accounted for 127 enemy aircraft shot down.

VMF-214 was activated on 1 July 1942 at MCAS Ewa, TH, and equipped with Grumman F4F-4 Wildcats. The unit moved to Guadalcanal in March 1943 and transitioned to the Vought F4U-1 Corsairs in June. With the new aircraft, the unit became known as the Swahbucklers. After a combat tour in the Russell Islands, the squadron members went to Australia for a little R&R. Meanwhile, a Major attached to the Air Group, borrowed 214's squadron number, obtained aircraft and pilots from the group's personnel pool and formed the most infamous Marine squadron ever, "The Black Sheep".

VMF-214 was reactivated in 1948 and equipped with F4U-4s. The unit moved to Japan in July 1950 and boarded the USS Sicily with F4U-4Bs for operations against North Korea. VMF-214 moved to MCAS Kaneohe Bay, TH, and transitioned to the McDonnell F2H-4 Banshee. They were redesignated VMF(AW)-214 in December 1956. The squadron deployed aboard the USS Hancock (CVA-19) from April to September 1957. The unit transitioned to the North American FJ-4B Fury upon their return, and were redesignated VMA-214. In October 1958, MAG-13 attack squadrons, VMA-212 and VMA-214 responded to the Quemoy-

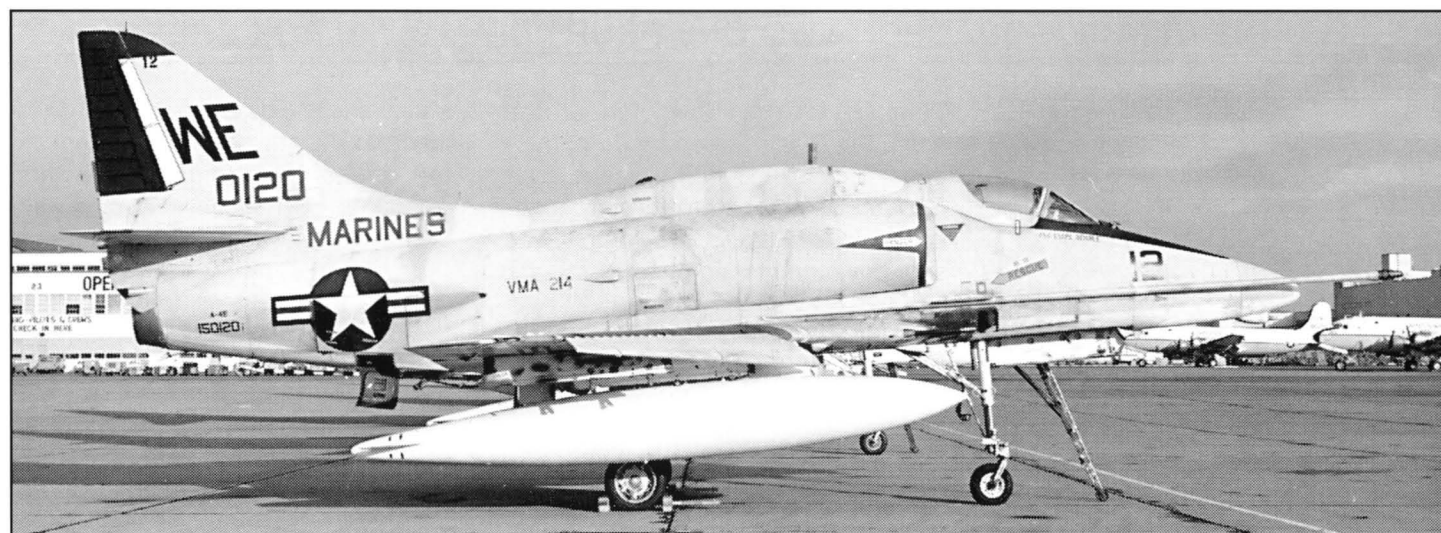
Matsu shelling by flying the entire distance to Japan, using KB-50 tankers for refueling. It marked the first TransPac of a single seat naval aircraft.

The Black Sheep transitioned to the Douglas A4D-2 Skyhawk in January 1962. The unit sent a detachment aboard the USS Hornet (CVS-12) from October 1963 to April 1964. By March 1965, VMA-214 had upgraded to A-4Cs and deployed to Japan. LTCOL Keith O'keefe brought the unit to Chu Lai, RVN on 21 June 1965, and the Black Sheep began combat operations in support of Operation Starlite and Harvest Moon. The unit was pulled out of Vietnam in May 1967, after flying over 13,000 sorties.

VMA-214 transferred to MCAS El Toro and transitioned to the A-4E/F. The Black Sheep graduated to the A-4M Skyhawk during the early 1980s. In the late 1980s, the A-4Ms were replaced with AV-8Bs.

Below, A-4F 154192 at MCAS Yuma on 18 March 1972. Trim on rudder and drop tanks was dark blue. Aircraft assigned to LTCOL J. J. McCarthy. Note the green shamrock below his name. (Swisher)

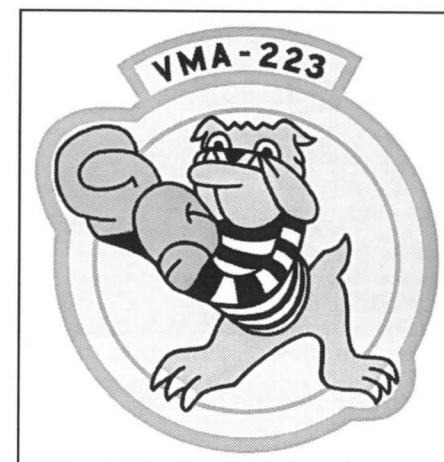




VMA-214

Above, A-4E 150120 at NAS Alameda on 23 October 1970. (D. Kasulka via Fred Roos) At left, A-4F 154191 at Fairchild AFB in May 1972. (A. Swanberg via Norm Taylor) Below, A-4F 155006 at Fairchild AFB in May 1972. (A. Swanberg via Norm Taylor) Bottom, A-4F 155064 at MCAS El Toro with rocket pods on the outer pylon. (Harry Gann via Fred Roos)

MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON TWO TWO THREE, VMA-223 "BULLDOGS"



VMF-223 was formed on 1 May 1942 at NAS Barbers Point, TH, with Brewster F2A Buffalos. Flying the Grumman F4F-4 Wildcat, the "Rainbows" deployed aboard the USS Long Island and supported the August landings at Guadalcanal. The unit moved ashore on 20 August to Henderson Field. VMF-223 remained in combat until October, when they were withdrawn to San Diego for rest and retraining. The unit accounted for 83 enemy aircraft shot down, mostly by MAJ John Smith and CAPT Marion Carl with just under twenty aircraft apiece.

The Bulldogs, as they had become known, transitioned to the F4U-1 Corsair, in June, and moved to Efate, in the New Hebrides Island chain. They supported operations in Bougainville, Green Island, and

Rabaul, before moving into the Philippines in January 1945. VMF-223 transitioned to the F4U-4 in May, and were supporting allied advances into Okinawa when the war ended. The Bulldogs accounted for 132.5 enemy aircraft shot down.

VMF-223 was moved to El Toro in March 1946, and then to MCAS Cherry Point, NC, in June 1948. They deployed to the Mediterranean in 1949, and returned in January of 1950. The unit entered the jet age in July, when they accepted the Grumman F9F-2 Panther. The Bulldogs moved to MCAS Cherry Point in September.

The squadron deployed to NAS Atsugi, Japan, in September 1953, and were transferred to El Toro a year later. The Bulldogs were redesignat-

ed VMA-223 on 1 December 1954. The unit transitioned to the North American FJ-4B Fury in August 1957, and eventually switched to the A4D-2 Skyhawk in January 1961.

VMA-223 accepted the A-4E Skyhawk in June 1964, and deployed to NAS Fallon and MCAS Yuma for familiarization with the new jet, and sent detachments to various aircraft carriers to keep their pilots CarQual'ed.

Above, A-4Es 151059 and 151057 on 26 April 1964. Rudders were gull grey. (USMC) Below, more colorful markings were applied to squadron aircraft in 1965. A-4E 151040 had yellow and black rudder and fin stripes and a yellow lightning bolt bordered in black. (Harry Gann)





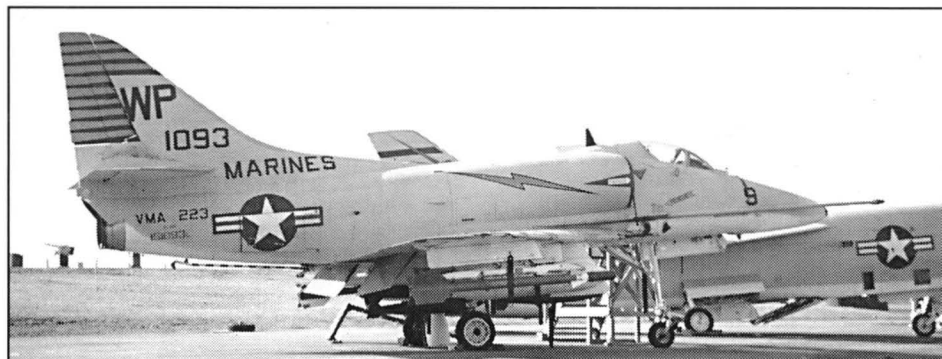
The Bulldogs deployed to MCAS Iwakuni in September 1965. LTCOL Alexander Wilson brought the unit into combat on 15 December, when the squadron was transferred to Chu Lai, RVN. As a component of MAG-12, VMA-223 supported Harvest Moon sorties. As the runways at Chu Lai were being repaired, the squadron resorted to jet-assisted takeoffs (JATO) in order to utilize the limited runway space available. VMA-223 supported Operation Double

Eagle in February, and Operation Utah in March. In spite of the high tempo of combat flight operations, LTCOL Robert Sinclair flew the squadron's 10,000th accident-free flight hour on 29 April.

The Bulldogs began using a bi-directional catapult system in May, in lieu of the JATO bottles for short field takeoffs. The unit incurred their first combat loss on 3 June 1966. VMA-223 was relieved by VMA-121 on 4

December, and the Bulldogs returned to Iwakuni. During its reprieve from combat, detachments from 223 were sent to Cubi Point and Naha for training exercises. The squadron returned to Chu Lai on 1 March, and five days later endured a rocket attack on their base. Then, on 15 March, CAPT Stanley P. Krueger was safely rescued after his A-4 was hit by ground fire.

Above, squadron prepares for a cross country exercise in April 1965. (Harry Gann) At left, A-4E 151093 at El Toro during the 1965 open house. Practice Sidewinders were loaded on the outer pylons. (Clay Jansson) Below, A-4E 152054 armed with rocket pods and A-4E 151140 armed with napalm canisters taxi out for a close air support mission from Chu Lai, RVN, on 24 September 1966. (Bob Lawson via Tailhook Association)

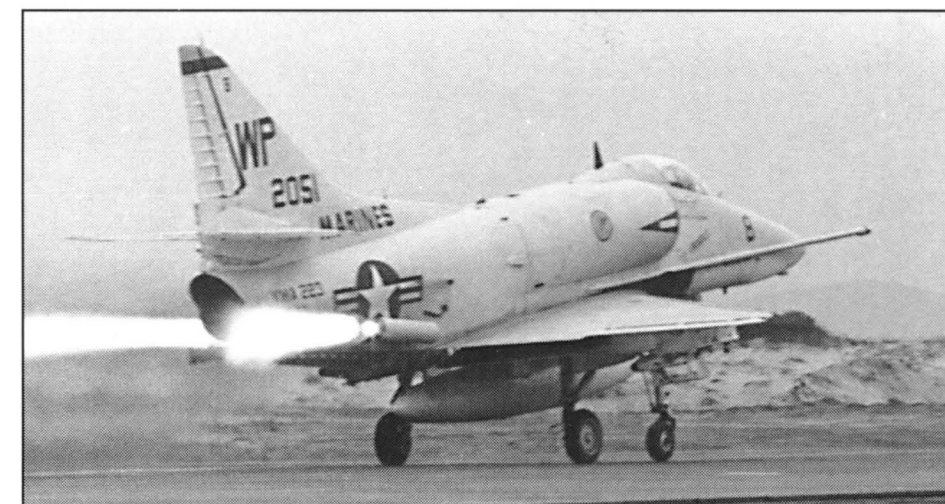


MAJ Robert L. Snyder was killed on 10 May when his jet was hit with a surface-to-air missile in the Dong Ha area. CAPT George A. Kinser was shot down in the same area three days later, but was successfully recovered. Seven of VMA-223's aircraft would return with battle damage before the month was out. The pace of operations slowed in June and July, and the unit remained in the I Corps area. A pilot from H&MS-12, flying a Bulldog A-4, was killed in a crash after developing an engine problem on 13 August.

VMA-223 received the CNO Safety Award in November for the third consecutive time. The Bulldogs returned to Iwakuni on 1 December, after being relieved by VMA-211. They returned to Chu Lai on 23 April 1968 and began combat sorties into North and South Vietnam. May of 1968 had the bitter taste of the previous May, when, on the 6th, a pair of A-4Es collided in mid-air, forcing the pilots to eject. Corporal Arthur L. Waldorf was fatally burned in a flash fire during a refueling cycle on the 13th. CAPT Steven J. Driscoll was shot down by ground fire thirty miles from Chu Lai on the 24th, and he was rescued safely.

CAPT Charles B. Coltrin had a bad month in June, when his A-4 overturned while taxiing on the 6th, and then was shot down near Khe Sanh on the 25th. His luck changed after he was rescued by helicopter. MAJ Ralph K. Park ruptured a fuel tank, on 24 June, after settling back down onto the runway during a take-off attempt. He ejected immediately, but suffered a fractured ankle and burns. The A-4E was sent to Japan for repairs. For the next three months, the Bulldogs incurred only minor bat-

Above right, A-4E 152051 blasts down the runway at Chu Lai during a JATO take-off in 1966. (USMC via Kaston) At right, CPL D. L. Peterson and LCPL J. P. Thomas attach a 200 lb JATO bottle on a VMA-223 A-4E in 1966 while VMA-311 A-4E makes a JATO take off in the background. Each bottle adds 4,500 pounds thrust. (USMC via Kaston)





Above, VMA-223 A-4E returns to Chu Lai after a close support mission in 1967. (USMC) Below, VMA-223 armorers load 2.75" FFRs into a 19-shot rocket pod at Chu Lai, RVN. (via Dave Ekstrand)



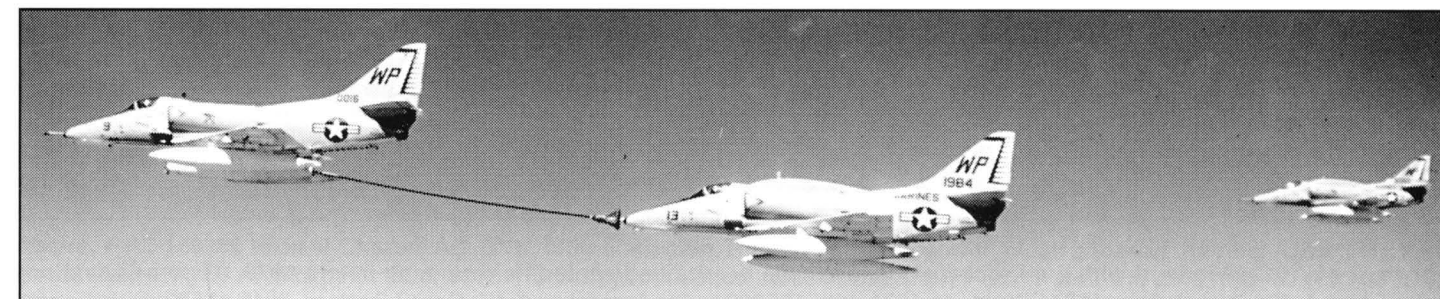
tle damage to their Skyhawks. Their next aircraft loss occurred on 1 October 1968, when 1LT David Habermacher, Jr. blew a tire during takeoff and struck an object adjacent to the runway. The pilot successfully ejected, but the A-4 was a write-off.

Another jet was lost, on the 21st, when CAPT David Wellman drifted too far to the side of the runway and struck the arresting gear revetment. CAPT Wellman fared better than the Skyhawk, which was destroyed. The first loss of 1969 occurred in January, when CAPT Michael Green was shot down near Thuong Duc. He ejected over the ocean, and was picked up by a Navy boat, uninjured.

VMA-223 set a MAG-12 record for sortie rates in February with 965 missions. 1LT Dennis R. Grose flew the unit's 25,000th combat sortie on 10 March. The VC reciprocated with a sortie of their own on 21 March, when they rocketed Chu Lai. The Bulldogs left Chu Lai on 14 January 1970 and moved to MCAS El Toro, where the squadron was placed in cadre status in March. In Vietnam, the squadron flew more than 32,000 combat sorties and logged over 38,000 flight hours. The unit began receiving the A-4F Skyhawk on 31 July and were reactivated on 1 September 1970 with both A-4Es and A-4Fs. VMA-223 began a routine training cycle with deployments to Yuma and Fallon for air-to-ground workups.

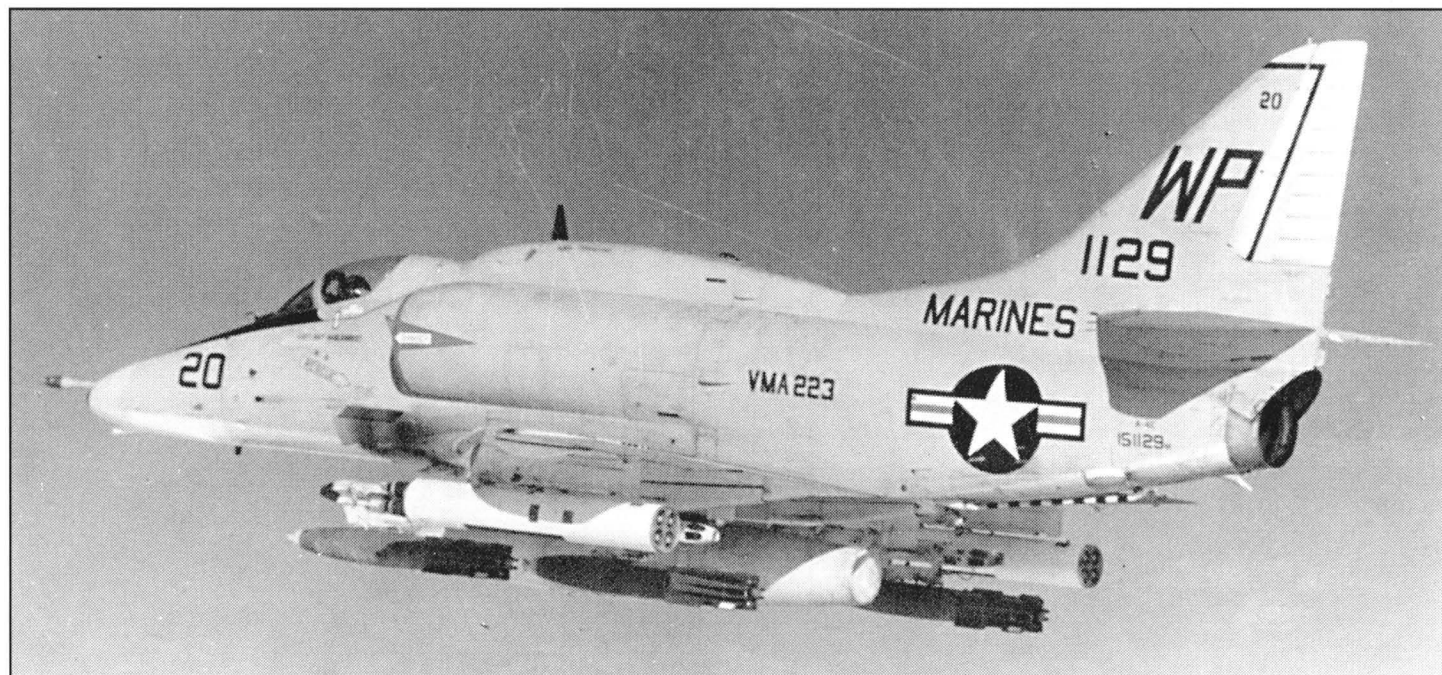
The unit moved to MCAS Yuma in June 1972. In October 1973, the Bulldogs began air-to-air combat exercises by playing the Aggressor role for the USAF Red Flag school, and Navy Top Gun students. The Bulldogs transitioned to the A-4M in 1975.

At left, VMA-223 A-4E launches from Chu Lai with four 19-shot 2.75" rocket pods on 20 March 1967. Two VMA-223 Skyhawks were sent to suppress Vietcong fire which had pinned down a 16-man Marine Recon team 15 miles south of Chu Lai, so that helicopters could rescue the patrol. (USMC)



At top, A-4E 151163 at NAS Alameda on 4 March 1969. Rudder fore-to-aft was white, then dark blue, then yellow with red stiffener ribs. The fin tip was yellow too. (Smalley via Swisher) Above, A-4E 150016 refuels A-4E 151984 in 1972. (Harry Gann) At right, A-4E 151984 and A-4F 155065 continue their training mission after re-tanking from A-4E 150016. VMA-223 flew a mixed bag of A-4Es and A-4Fs after returning from Vietnam. (Harry Gann) Below, A-4E 150016 fitted with Buddy refueling tank in 1972. The tips of the drop tanks were yellow. (Harry Gann)





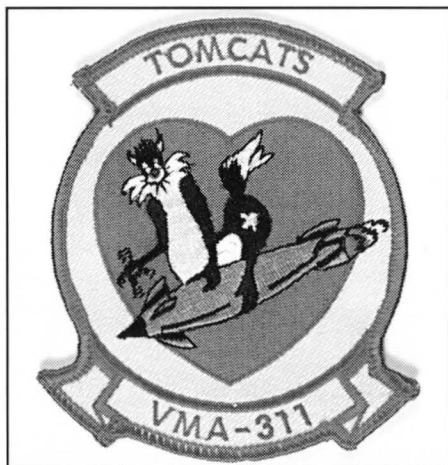
Above, A-4E 151129 inflight with Zuni rocket pods, Snakeye bombs and centerline drop tank in late 1970. (Ginter Collection) Below, two A-4Fs launch from MCAS Yuma in 1971 with 155029 in the foreground. (H. Gann) Bottom, A-4F 155032. (H. Gann)



Above, A-4E 149989 taxis at Chu Lai AB, RVN, after a mission. Rudder was yellow with black between the ribs. (USMC via Fred Roos) Below, A-4F 154986 in October 1973. Note diagonal yellow nose stripe. (Harry Gann) Bottom, A-4E 150110 at Kelly AFB, TX, on 2 March 1973. (Norm Taylor)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON THREE ONE ONE, VMA-311 "TOMCATS"



VMF-311 was formed on 1 December 1942 at MCAS Cherry Point, NC, and initially equipped with North American SNJ Trainers. The unit transitioned to the Vought F4U-1 Corsair in April 1943 and moved to Page Field on Parris Island, SC. The squadron went to the South Pacific in August, and eventually arrived on Wallis Island, before moving to Samoa in January 1944. VMF-311 participated in the Marshall Islands campaign during 1944, and the Okinawa campaign in 1945. The Hell's Belles accounted for 71 enemy aircraft shot down.

After the war ended, the unit was moved to the West Coast, before set-



ting at EL Toro in September 1946. VMF-311 became the West Coast's first jet squadron, on 20 July 1948, when they accepted a pair of Lockheed TO-1 Shooting Stars. The unit adopted the nickname, "Willy Lovers" to represent the phonetic pronunciation of their "WL" tailcode. The Grumman F9F-2B Panther replaced the TO-1 in March 1950.

The unit arrived in Yokosuka, Japan, in November 1950, and departed for Korea in December. The squadron flew close air support combat missions with the F9F-5 during the Korean War and returned to El Toro in May 1955. The Tomcats upgraded to the F9F-8 Cougar in

March 1957, and were redesignated VMA-311 on 1 June 1957.

The Tomcats began their affiliation with the Douglas Skyhawk in 1958, when they accepted the A4D-2. VMA-311 moved to MCAS Yuma in 1959, and transPac'd to NAS Atsugi, Japan, in March 1961. The Tomcats returned to El Toro in March 1962. The unit upgraded to the A-4E in

Above, A-4Es 150057 (9/WL) and 150054 (7/WL) on a training mission with eight 250lb. bombs. (Douglas) Below, VMA-311 A-4E in 1964. Rudder and drop tank trim was red. (Clay Jansson)



June 1963 and flew their 15,000th accident-free hour in October. The unit participated in numerous exercises during 1964 in Yuma, and CarQuals aboard the USS Hornet and Yorktown. They prepared for a TransPac by flying their jets, non-stop, to MCAS Cherry Point, using the C-130 for aerial refueling. The Tomcats successfully completed their

TransPac on 1 April, when they were assigned to MAG-12 at Iwakuni.

VMA-311 deployed to Chu Lai, RVN, on 24 May 1965, and its aircraft arrived several days later. LTCOL Bernard J. Stender's squadron began combat operations on 2 June, as MAG-12 supported Harvest Moon. Many of the air strikes occurred with-

Above, four VMA-311 A-4Es on a practice bombing mission in 1964. (Douglas) Below, A-4E 150055 entering the forward elevator of the USS Yorktown (CVA-12) in 1964. (Douglas)

in a few miles of the base, and the ground personnel of VMA-311 were able to see the fruits of their labor. A





mishap occurred on 25 August, when a Skyhawk collided with a bomb dropped by a wingman. The damaged A-4 returned safely to base. After a high tempo of combat operations, VMA-311 was pulled back to Iwakuni in December. They returned

to Chu Lai on 15 February 1966 and relieved VMA-214.

1LT Augusto Xavier was killed on 19 March 1966, while strafing VC troops in the A Shau Valley. The Tomcats supported Operation

Above, VMA-311 A-4E being lowered on the starboard elevator after a Car Qual cycle. Below, VMA-311 launch from the USS Hornet. (Douglas)

Hastings in July. 1LT Thomas H. Hawking was shot down on 6

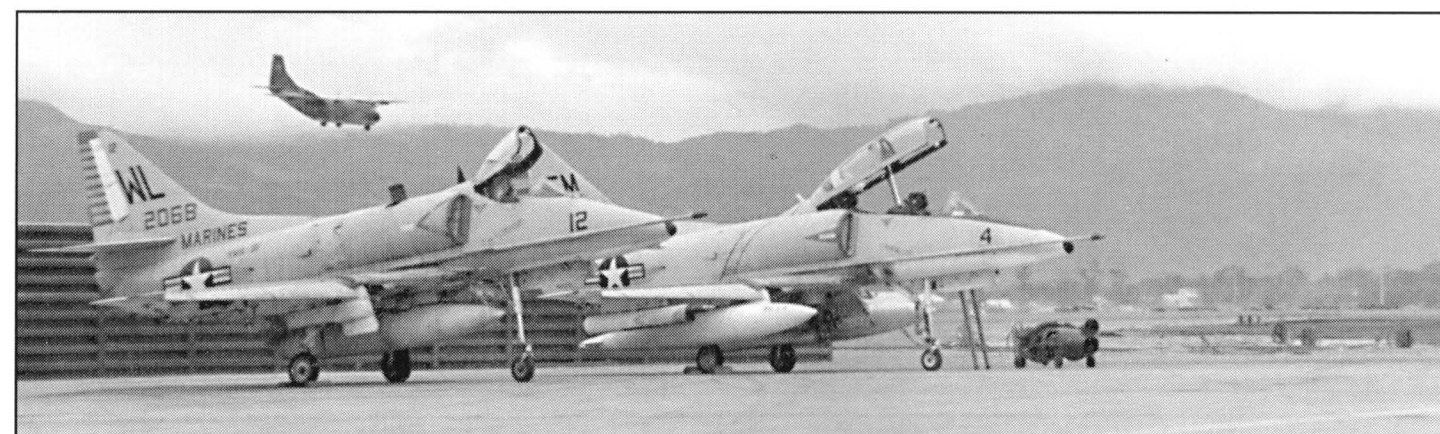


September as he was bombing a target in South Vietnam. He ejected safely, but was killed during a helicopter extraction.

VMA-311 reached the 10,000th combat sortie in January 1967, and five of its pilots had surpassed the

200 mission mark. MAG-12 participated in Operation DeSoto in February. 1LT Richard N. Boomberg was hit by antiaircraft fire on 4 February, and brought the crippled plane back to Chu Lai for a perfect dead stick landing. VMA-223 relieved the Tomcats in March,

Above, VMA-311 A-4E Skyhawks refuel on Wake Island prior to the last leg of Operation Hammer Head, the Trans-Pacific flight to the Far East in April 1965. A-4E 151997 is in the foreground. (USMC) Below, VMA-311 flightline in Vietnam in September 1965. (USMC) Bottom, A-4E 152068 alongside a H&MS-15 TA-4F Fast FAC at Chu Lai. (USMC)





Above, Snakeye loaded A-4E 151046 receives last minute electronic maintenance prior to a mission from Chu Lai, RVN, on 29 November 1967. (USMC) Below, VMA-311 A-4E is tensioned for a SATS catapult shot at Chu Lai on 3 June 1968. (USMC)

and VMA-311 returned to Iwakuni.

After training in Naha and Cubi Point, the Tomcats returned to Chu Lai in June. MAJ Ralph E. Brubaker was shot down by a SAM, on 6 July, near the DMZ. He suffered a dislocat-

ed knee, and had to hide out in a bomb crater until he was rescued by helicopter. MAJ Gerald L. Ellis was shot down by ground fire on 27 September and was rescued safely.

VMA-311 conducted numerous air strikes in support of Marines under siege at Khe Sanh in January 1968. CAPT Bobby G. Downing and William E. Loftus were shot down in separate attacks, and both were recovered safely. By the end of May, the unit held the highest MAG-12 sortie rate of 20,000 missions, and CAPT Peter A. Kruger surpassed 500 missions. MAJ Donald S. Carr was hit on a strafing run in the A Shau Valley on 16 August, and ejected safely near Hue. CAPT Phillip D. Barger was killed on 10 November while attacking troops near Danang.

A pair of 311 A-4s caught up with a group of 30 enemy troops, on 19 November, and began orbiting over-



Above, A-4E 151124 taxis out for a mission with Snakeyes and napalm canisters in 1967. (via Pima Air and Space Museum) Below, VMA-311 pilots plan a close support mission at Chu Lai, RVN, in 1967. A-4E 152060 can be seen in the background. (USMC) Bottom, A-4E 150111 taxis out from Chu Lai with four WWII style iron bombs in 1968. (USMC via Fred Roos)

head. The enemy literally came out with their hands up as they surrendered to Marines on the ground. The Tomcats supported six major operations in December, and surpassed 28,075 sorties during 33,907 flight hours. Chu Lai was attacked with rockets on 21 March 1969, destroying four VMA-311 jets and damaging four others. 1LT Peter W. Oatis was shot down on 23 May by ground fire near Danang. He ejected safely and was recovered.

CAPT Durwood K. Schnell flew his 533rd combat mission in August, more than any other Marine attack pilot. VMA-311 was awarded the 1969 CNO Safety Award in September and flew its 35,000th sortie. During the Fall of 1969, the squadron lost a pair of A-4s in separate takeoff attempts, and in each case the pilots ejected successfully.





1LT Jan H. Nelson was killed on 11 April 1970 while attacking an enemy base camp near Danang. CAPT Fred Palka was hit on 7 June near Dak To. He ejected and was rescued. VMA-311 moved to Danang in

July and surpassed 50,000 combat hours. 1LT John D. Lawson was killed on 1 September as he attacked enemy troops near Phu Bai. Ten days later, 1LT Bernard H. Plassmeyer was shot down and killed in the same

Above, A-4E 152070 was assigned to VMA-311's Commanding Officer in 1968-69. Aircraft was loaded for a mission with Snakeyes and extended fuses at Ubon RTAFB. (A. C. Piccirillo via Fred Roos) At left, VMA-311's CO and VMFA-314's CO enroute to a close air support mission in 1969. (USMC) Bottom, A-4E 151078 at Yokota AB on 13 August 1971. (T. Matsuzaki)

vicinity.

The Tomcats returned to Iwakuni in May 1971, after logging 47,663 combat sorties. The unit made periodic training deployments to Naha, Okinawa, during the remainder of 1971, and the early months of 1972. The Tomcats moved to Bien Hoa,

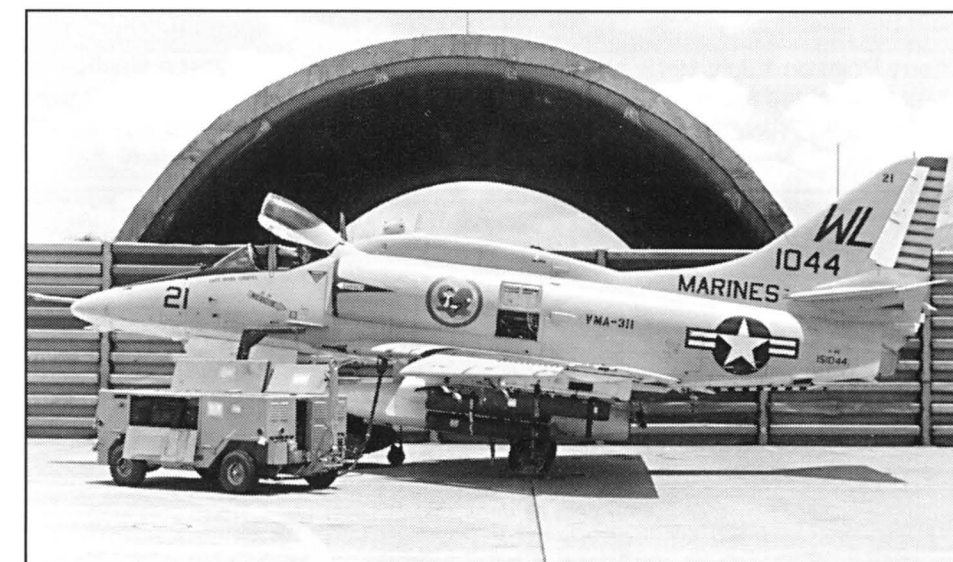


At right, A-4E 151078 taking off at MCAS Iwakuni in 1972 with a second VMA-311 aircraft. Rudder top and stiffeners red, areas between stiffeners yellow, rest of rudder white. Squadron insignia is a black and white Sylvester cat riding a flaming dark grey rocket, superimposed on a red heart in a yellow field with a red surround. (via Fred Roos) Below right, A-4E 151044 at Chu Lai. (via Burger) Bottom, A-4E 151036 at MCAS Iwakuni on 19 July 1974 with practice bombs attached. (Norm Taylor)

VMA-311

RVN, to support the South Vietnamese after the NVA's Easter Offensive. The MAG-12 units maintained an extremely high sortie rate, and endured a rocket attack on their base on 1 August. Several of 311's personnel were injured and three jets were damaged. The unit returned to Iwakuni on 29 January 1973 after flying 54,625 combat sorties.

While stationed at Iwakuni, the Tomcats made deployments to Naha and Cubi Point. VMA-311 was disbanded at Iwakuni on 5 June 1974 and reestablished at MCAS Beaufort, SC, on 1 September and equipped with the A-4M. The AV-8B Harrier replaced the A-4Ms in June 1988.



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON THREE TWO TWO, VMA-322 "FIGHTING GAMECOCKS"



VMF-322 was established at Cherry Point on 1 July 1943, and subsequently moved to Parris Island, SC. They left Page Field in January 1944,

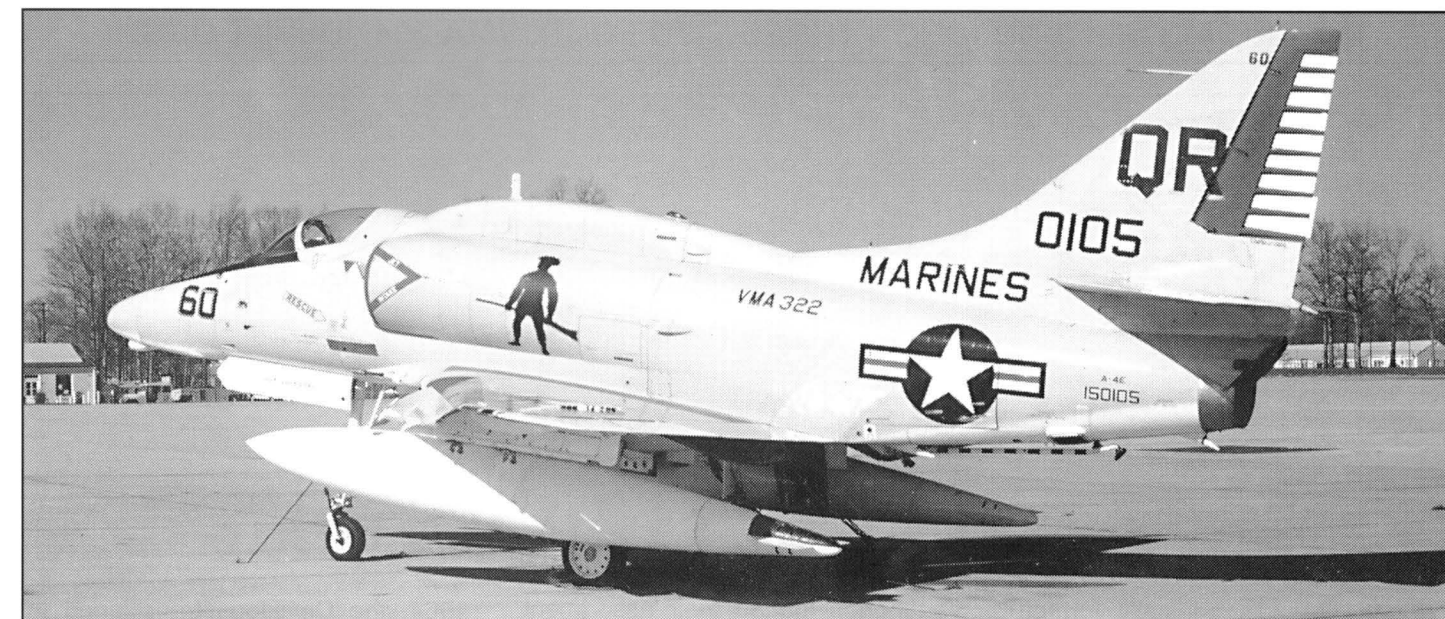
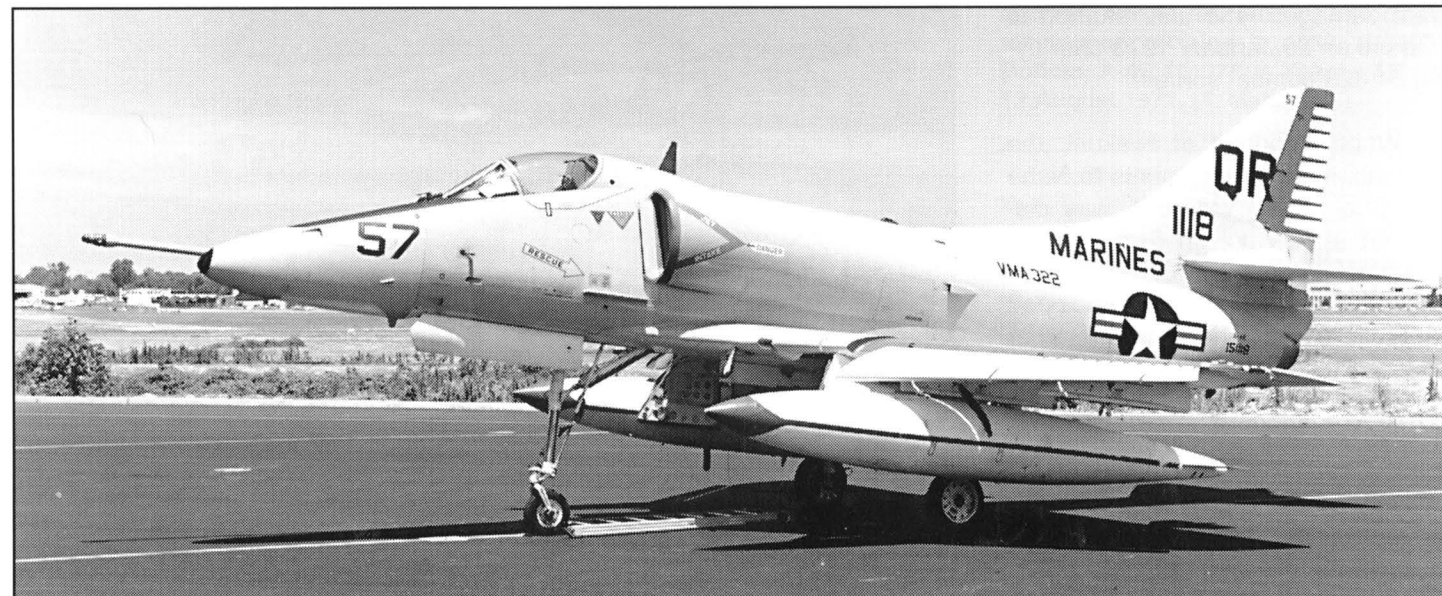
and eventually arrived at Emirau in September. Flying the F4U-1, -1D, and FG-1D, the Fighting Cocks supported operations into Okinawa in 1945. The unit moved to Midway Island in November with brand new Vought F4U-4s. The Fighting Cocks moved to MCAS Ewa, TH, in July 1947. The unit transferred again in April 1949 and was deactivated on 30 November 1949.

VMF-322 was reactivated on 6 July 1951 as a Marine Reserve unit at NARF Squantum, MA, and moved to NAS South Weymouth in 1953. The Grumman F9F-6 Cougar replaced the F4U-4 in January 1954. The unit was redesignated VMA-322 in May 1958,

and changed their name to "Fighting Gamecocks". The North American FJ-3 Fury replaced the Cougar in November 1959.

The squadron accepted the Douglas A-4C Skyhawk in September 1962, and eventually transitioned to the A-4E. The Echo was replaced by the A-4M and the unit was decommissioned on 27 June 1992.

Below, A-4E 151118 at Robertson ANGB, MO, on 19 June 1974. The rudder and drop tank trim was green. (Fred Roos via Ginter) Bottom, A-4E 150073 on 19 June 1974. (Fred Roos via Ginter)



Above, A-4E 150105 at Andrews AFB on 7 April 1979. The Minuteman was black and the "QR" tail code was bordered in white. (E. L. Zorn via Kaston) Below, A-4E 151125 (00/QR) in two shades of grey and one shade of blue-grey. (Ginter collection) Bottom, A-4E 149985 in low-visibility grey scheme in 1984. (via Burger)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON THREE TWO FOUR, VMA-324 "DEVILDOGS"



VMF-324 was originally formed on 1 October 1943 at MCAS Cherry Point and equipped with the Vought F4U-1 and Goodyear FG-1. The unit was eventually moved to Midway in September 1944. The unit was brought back to MCAS Miramar a year later, and deactivated on 15 October 1945.

VMF-324 was reactivated on 17 March 1952, and flew a mixed-bag of Goodyear FG-1s and Grumman F6F Hellcats. The unit was moved to MCAS Miami in April. In November, the unit was redesignated an attack squadron and assigned Vought AU-1 Corsairs and Douglas AD-4B Skyraiders. In October 1953, the



Vagabonds loaded their assortment of AD-4, -4B, and -4L Skyraiders aboard the USS Saipan CVS-48 for a WestPac cruise, returning to Miami in July 1954. The Vagabonds deployed to the Med aboard the USS Lake Champlain (CVA-39) from September 1955 to April 1956. Upon their return, the unit transitioned to the AD-6 Skyraider. VMA-324 transitioned to the Douglas A4D-2 Skyhawk in May 1959.

They took their Skyhawks aboard the USS Coral Sea (CVA-43) from September 1960 to May 1961. They went to sea again in August of 1963 aboard the USS Independence (CVA-62). When they returned, in March

1964, the Devildogs transitioned to the A-4E Skyhawk.

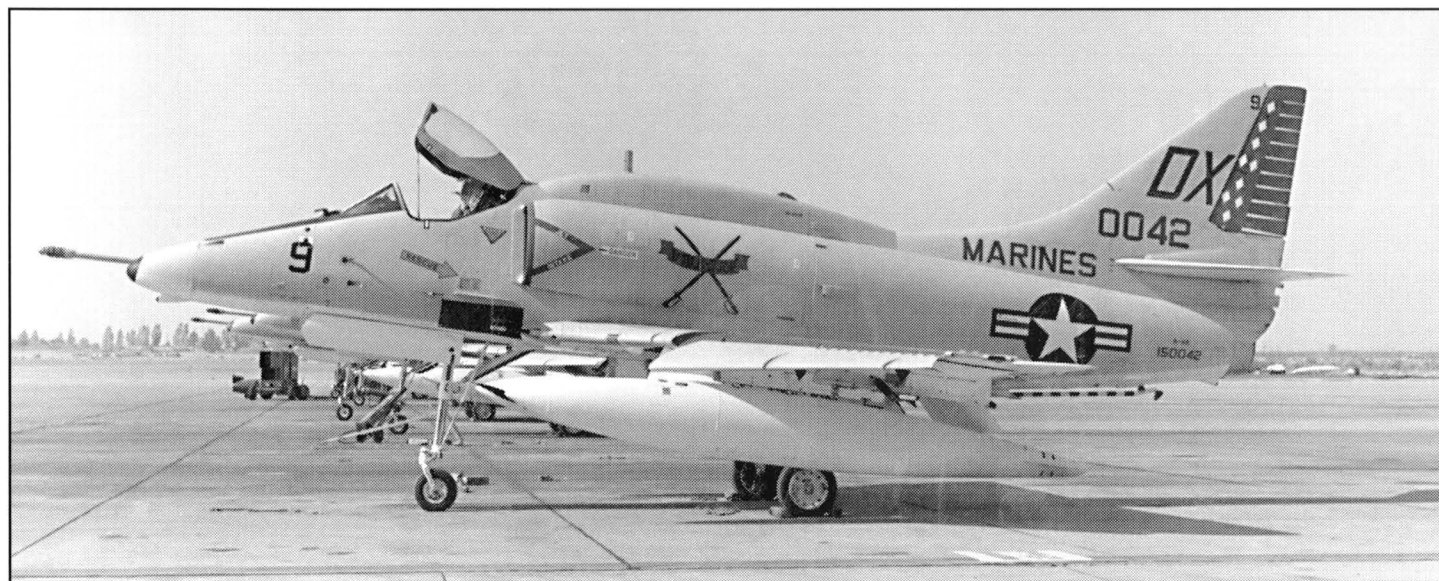
With the new A-4E, VMA-324 deployed aboard the USS Independence from June 1966 through February 1967. The squadron transitioned to the A-4M on 16 April 1971 and were deactivated on 29 August 1974.

Above, A-4E 150090 on the deck of the USS Independence in 1966. Rudder colors were red and white. Bottom, A-4E 150016 among it squadron mates with practice bombs fitted on the outer pylons. (Ginter collection)



Above, A-4E 150098 loaded with Bullpups is prepped for a training flight. (via Wayne Morris) Below, A-4E 150016 at NAF Detroit on 9 May 1971 VMA-324 on a red scroll over black crossed swords. Black gun blast area was painted opposite the 20mm cannon barrels on the lower fuselage. (via Fred Roos) Bottom, A-4E 152012 at Randolph AFB, TX, in May 1971. Note that MARINES is absent from the fuselage side. (J. Wible from Norm Taylor)





Above A-4E 150042 with crossed swords and scroll in 1971. (Harry Gann via Fred Roos) Below, A-4E 150035 at Randolph AFB in May 1971. (J. Wible via Norm Taylor) Bottom, A-4E 150056 at NAF Detroit on 9 May 1971 with new Devildog insignia as utilized on their A-4Ms. (via Fred Roos)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON THREE THREE ONE, VMA-331 "BUMBLEBEES"



VMSB-331 was activated at MCAS Cherry Point on 1 January 1943 and equipped with several models of the Douglas SBD Dauntless. In September, the unit was moved to Wallis Island before arriving on Nukufetau. The Doodlebugs supported operations in the Gilbert Islands campaign. The unit was redesignated VMBF-331 in October 1944 and equipped with the Vought F4U Corsair. By the end of December, the unit transitioned back into the SBD and assumed their previous designation, VMSB-331. The squadron supported the Marshall Island Campaign throughout 1945, and were deactivated on 21 November 1945.

VMF-311 was reactivated at

MCAS Miami and equipped with Grumman F6F Hellcats. The unit was redesignated a Marine Attack Squadron (VMA-331) in February of 1954, and equipped with the Douglas AD-5 Skyraider. In May 1958, the unit deployed to WestPac as the last active duty Marine AD unit, and returned to MCAS Beaufort for transition to the Douglas A4D-2 Skyhawk in September 1959. During the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, the squadron's commanding officer was LTCOL Donald Conroy, "The Great Santini".

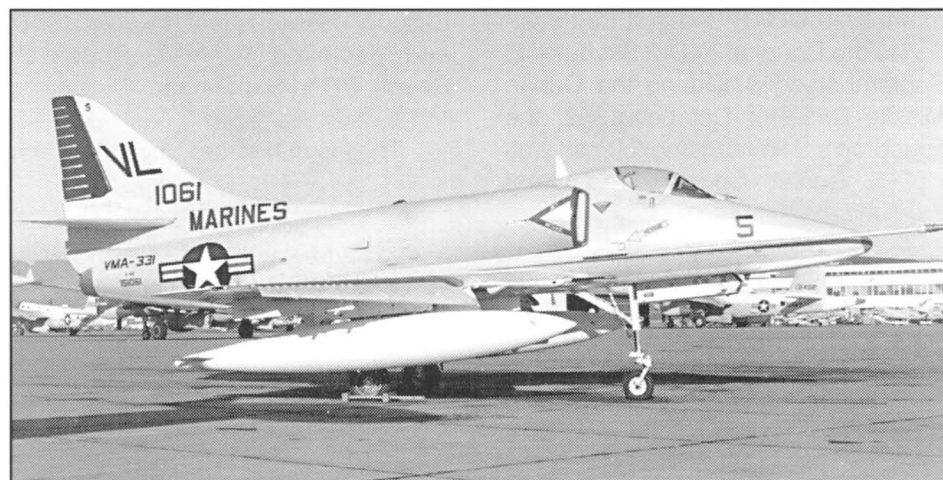
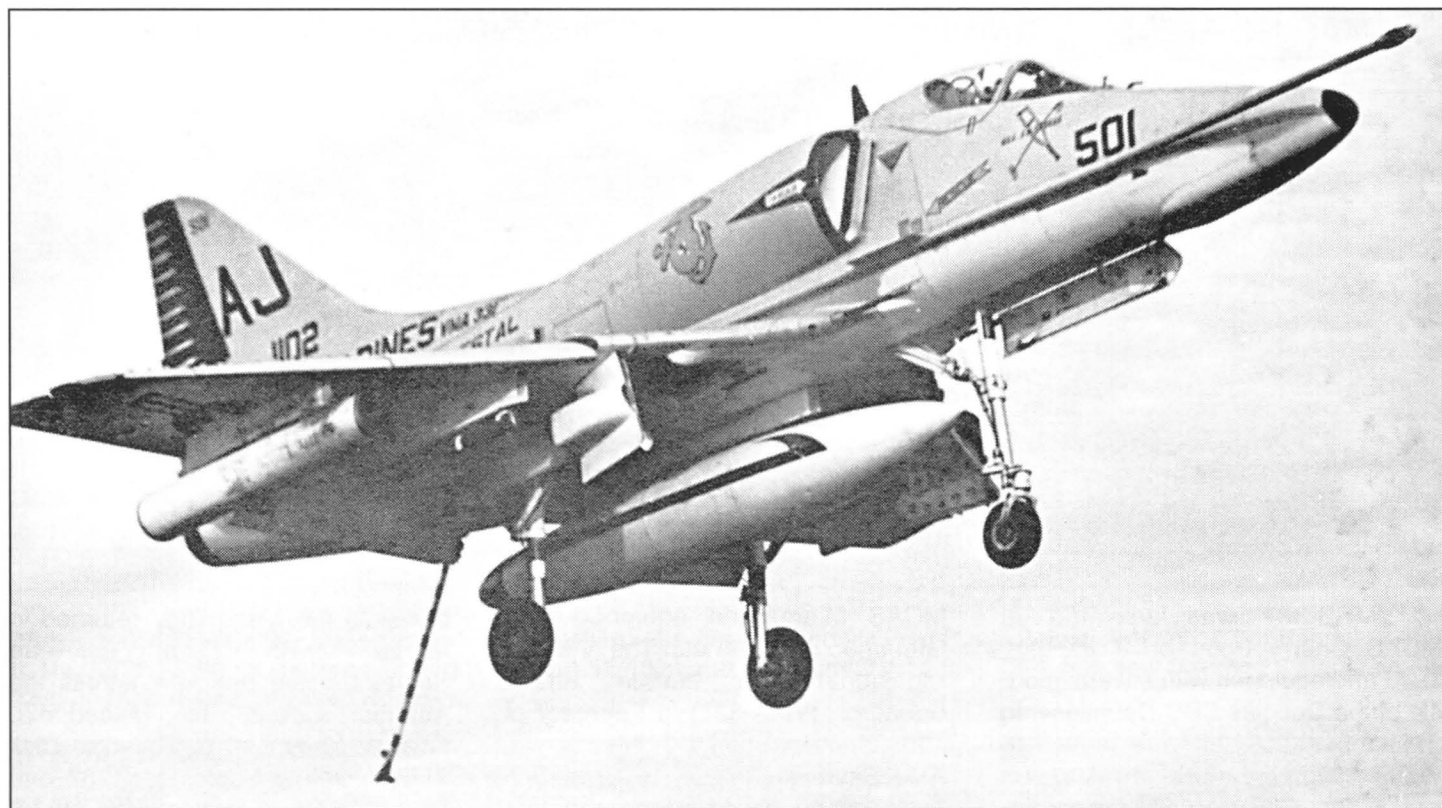
The Bumblebees became the first Marine unit to receive the A-4E in June 1963. A year later, they boarded the USS Forrestal (CVA-59) for a

cruise to the Med. They returned in March 1965. The following September the unit flew across the Atlantic Ocean to Macedonia, Greece. They also deployed to Cigli AFB, Turkey, in September 1967, and flew training exercises with NATO forces. The squadron completed a Bullpup missile shoot in July 1968, and deployed to NAS Roosevelt Roads, PR in September.

The Bumblebees boarded the

Above and below, A-4E 150047 and A-4E 150118 at MCAS Yuma on 24 March 1964 with practice bombs on the centerline pylon. Rudder was black with yellow trim. (Swisher)





USS Independence for another Med cruise in June 1970, and returned to Beaufort in February 1971. VMA-331 transitioned to the A-4M on 16 April 1971 and received the last A-4M to be built on 27 February 1979.

Above, A-4E 151102 landing on CVA-59 in 1964. Rudder was green with yellow trim. (via Ginter) At left, A-4E 151061 at NAS Alameda on 28 October 1967. (Steve Kraus via Norm Taylor) Bottom, A-4Es 152011 and 150082 refuel from a KC-130 over the Atlantic in 1966. (Douglas)



VMA-331

Above, A-4E 149988 at MCAS Beaufort on 29 May 1967. Aircraft was loaded with Shrikes and conventional bombs. During 1967 aircraft sported the national insignia on the nose, which was unusual for A-4Es. (Swisher) At right, A-4E 149985 launches with a Snakeye on the left pylon. (via Harry Gann) Below, heavily weathered A-4E 150016 was loaded with Snakeye bombs. (USMC)





At top, VMA-331 Commanding Officer's A-4E 151177 in June 1969. (D. Kasulka via Harry Gann) Above, close-up of "King Bee", LTCOL Tom D. Andrea's aircraft. (via Harry Gann) Above left, close-up of MAJ Blackington's nose art. (via Harry Gann) At left, close-up of MAJ C. J. Seals' A-4E. (via Harry Gann) Bottom, VMA-331 flight line in June 1969 with A-4E 152067 in the foreground. (D. Kasulka via Harry Gann)



VMA-331

Above, A-4E 151072 at Milwaukee Airport on 28 July 1968 during an open house. (P. Stevens via Norm Taylor) At right, A-4E 152012 became a CAG aircraft on the USS Independence in 1970. "Commander Carrier Air Wing Seven" was painted on the fuselage side. (via Burger) Below, A-4E 151163 on the transient line at NAF Detroit in June 1971. (via Fred Roos)



MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON THREE THREE TWO, VMA-332 "POLKA DOTS"



VMSB-332 was activated at MCAS Cherry Point on 1 June 1943 and assigned Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bombers. The unit moved to MCAS Mojave in January 1944 before moving to MCAS Ewa, TH, in February. The following month,

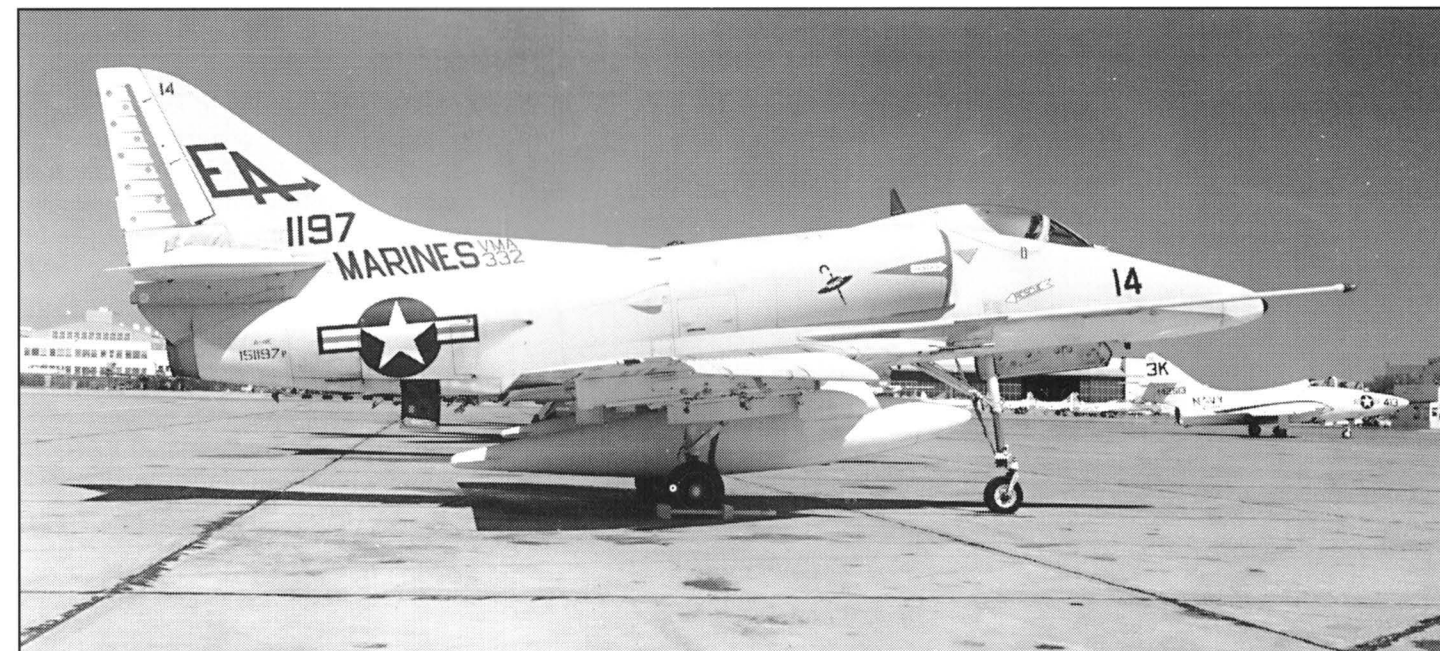
they transferred to Midway Island before returning to Ewa in July to transition to the Curtiss SB2C dive bomber. The squadron was redesignated VMTB-332 in March 1945 and operated the TBM Avenger until the unit was deactivated on 13 November 1945.

VMF-332 was reactivated on 23 April 1952 at MCAS Miami and equipped with Grumman F6F Hellcats and Vought F4U-4 Corsairs. The squadron was redesignated VMA-332 in June. They boarded the USS Point Cruz (CVE-119) in April 1953 and sailed to Japan with its complement of F4U-4 Corsairs. The unit adopted the name, "Polka Dots", and Frank McClanahan designed a patch with a top hat (flat-top carrier) and cane (tailhook) encircled by red

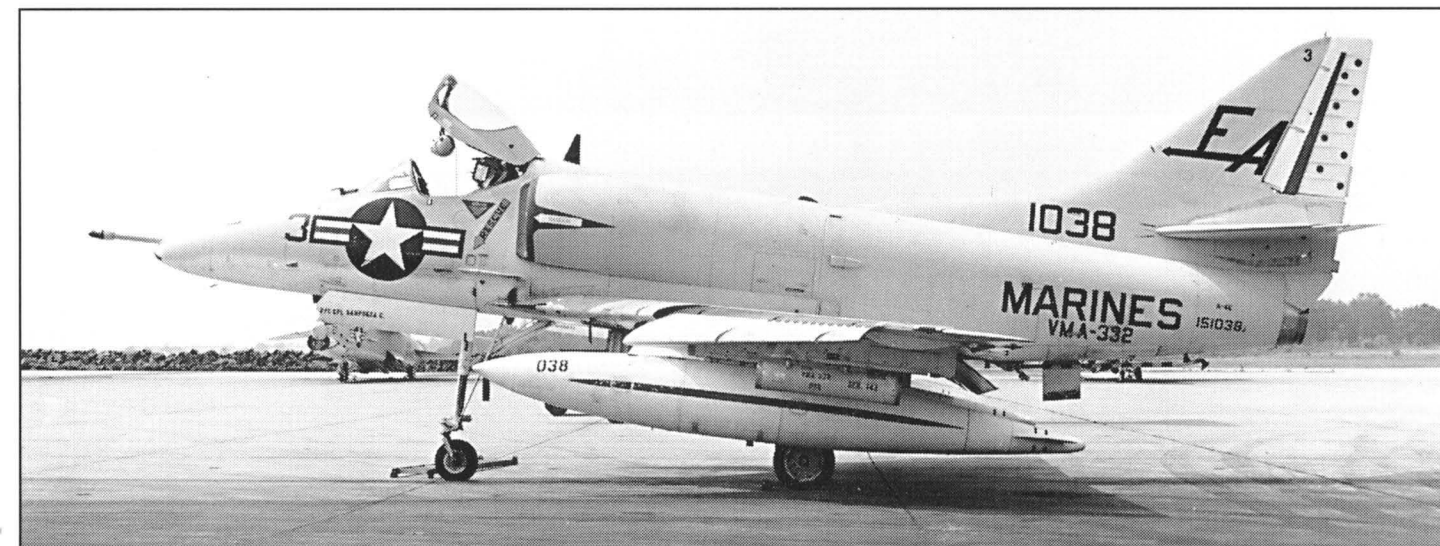
polka dots (from the cowls of their Corsairs).

After a combat tour in Korea, the Polka Dots returned to Miami in December of 1953, and transitioned to the AD-4 Skyraider. The unit later upgraded to the AD-5 and AD-6 before accepting the Douglas A4D-2 in 1958. They upgraded to the A-4C two years later. The A-4E arrived in 1965 and in August 1968, the unit was redesignated VMA(AW)-332, and accepted the Grumman A-6A Intruder, thus becoming the "Moonlighters"

Below, A-4E 150013 poses with typical weapons available for use on the diminutive A-4 series of aircraft in 1967. Rudder stripe and polka dots were red. (USMC)



Above, A-4E 151197 at NAS Alameda on 10 July 1965. Note Top Hat insignia aft of the intake. (William Swisher) Below, A-4E 151038 with a rocket pod on the outer pylon at MCAS Cherry Point in 1967. (Ginter Collection) Bottom, A-4E 149654 assigned to an unknown unit with practice bombs. (Harry Gann via Fred Roos)





Model kits of the Douglas A-4E/F have been very prolific. What follows is a sampling of kits that have been released. By no means, have I included all available kits ever made.

TAMIYA 1/100 A-4E

Issued in markings for VA-83 on the USS Independence. Kit was provided with centerline tank, bombs, and rocket pods.



TESTOR / ITALERI 1/72 SCALE DOUGLAS A-4E/F SKYHAWK

The Testor's kit was issued in 1990 and was a repackaged Italeri kit #181. The fuselage was molded with the late version's fin tip antennae, which must be removed to build either aircraft featured in the kit's decals. The kit provides decals for an A-4F of VA-212, and an A-4F from VA-164. Armament provided with the kit included two rocket pods and a centerline tank. The kit also offers you the choice of a straight or offset refueling probe. The fuselage is molded with the electronic hump attached and has raised panel detailing.



FUJIMI 1/72 SCALE BLUE ANGELS A-4F / TA-4J SKYHAWK

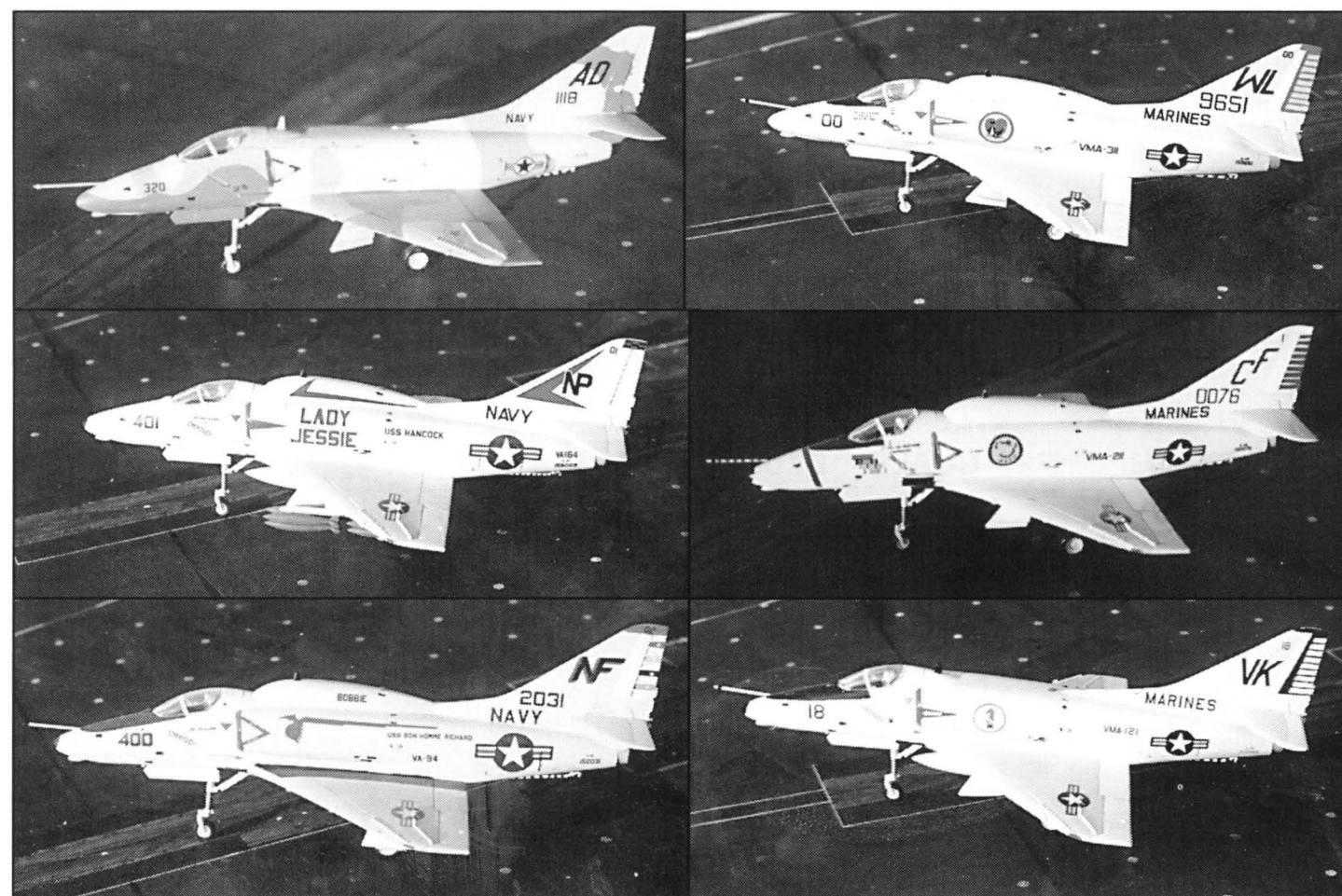
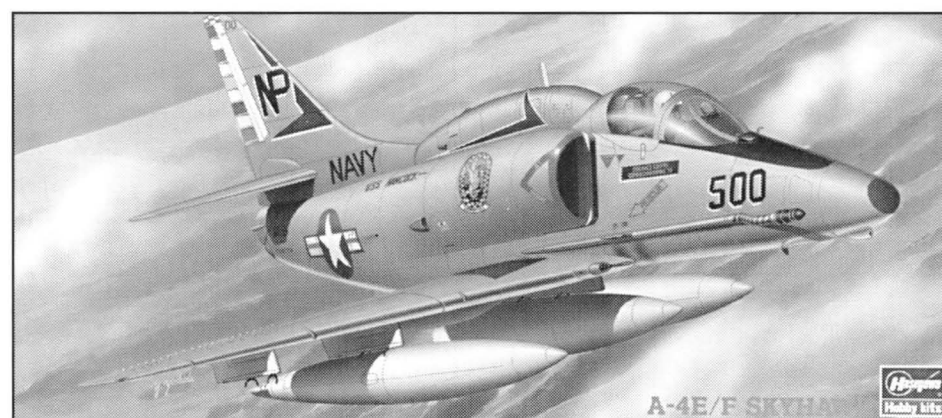
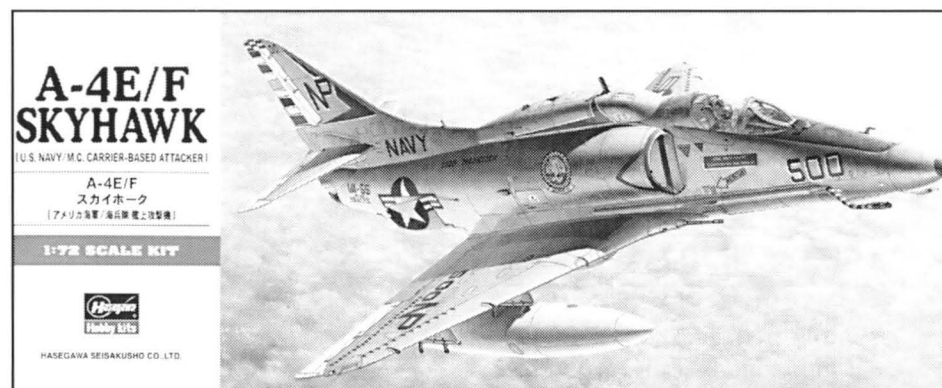
This kit came with choice of noses to make either a Blue Angel single-seat A-4F or a Blue Angel two-seat TA-4J. Decals were provided for demonstration aircraft one through six and the two-seat aircraft number seven. Three drop tanks were provided as well as canopies molded as closed or open versions. Optional position slats, flaps and speed brakes were provided, as well as straight and offset refueling probes.



The 1/72nd Hasegawa A-4E/F kit has been around since the early 1970s and has been re-released every two-to-three years. At right is the 1999 box top and below right is the 1995 box top. Both kits have decals for VA-55 and VMAT-102. The original kits had decals for VA-212, VMA-211 and VMA-311.

These kits had a pilot figure and raised panel lines. The electronic hump was optional and the speed brakes could be fitted open or closed. A full weapons load was provided. This included eighteen bombs, two Bullpups, two Shrikes, and three drop tanks.

Below, the Hasegawa kit displayed in the markings of six different squadrons, both Navy and Marine.



The new Hasegawa 1/48 scale Douglas A-4E/F kit is an excellent offering, save one shortcoming: no armament. The kit only contains the Skyhawk's two wing drop tanks. The box top depicts the CAG bird from VA-192, and alternate decals for a humpback VA-22 CAG bird are provided, too. A neat feature of this kit is the boarding ladder always used on the A-4s.

Below, box-top decals on Hasegawa kit by Lee Rinitz. Bottom, kit built by Mike Castro in VA-22 markings with Bullpups and six centerline bombs from the spares box.



The 1/32 scale Hasegawa kit of the Douglas A-4E/F has been around since the late '70s and is still a nice looking kit. The kit comes with a pilot figure, Bullpups, bombs, and drop tanks.

Two box tops are shown at right. The upper one has been released many times and was reissued in 2000. The lower one was also released in 2000 and depicts a Blue Tail Fly (VA-153) A-4F. During 2000, Hasegawa also released an aggressor A-4E in 1/32 scale.

Below, "Lady Jessie" A-4E model built by Mike Castro.



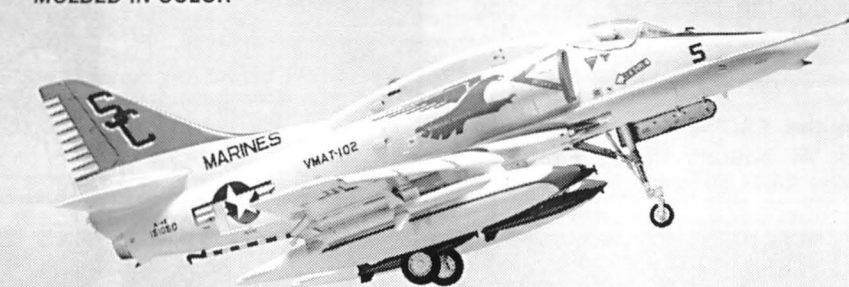
The Monogram 1/48 scale A-4E Skyhawk kit has seen many incarnations. At right is the 1977 box top with VMAT-102 markings. Below right is a later offering as an A-4E aggressor aircraft, which had a choice of two markings. It was also issued in a Blue Angels' box and several others.

The Monogram kit included a centerline ejector rack with six bombs, two wing tanks, and two Shrike missiles. Also included was a pilot figure and optional position speed brakes and canopy. The kit can be built with or without the electronics hump, and although dated still makes a handsome model.

Below, the Monogram kit finished in the original 1977 decals provided with the kit. Model by Mike Castro.

MONOGRAM SKYHAWK A-4E

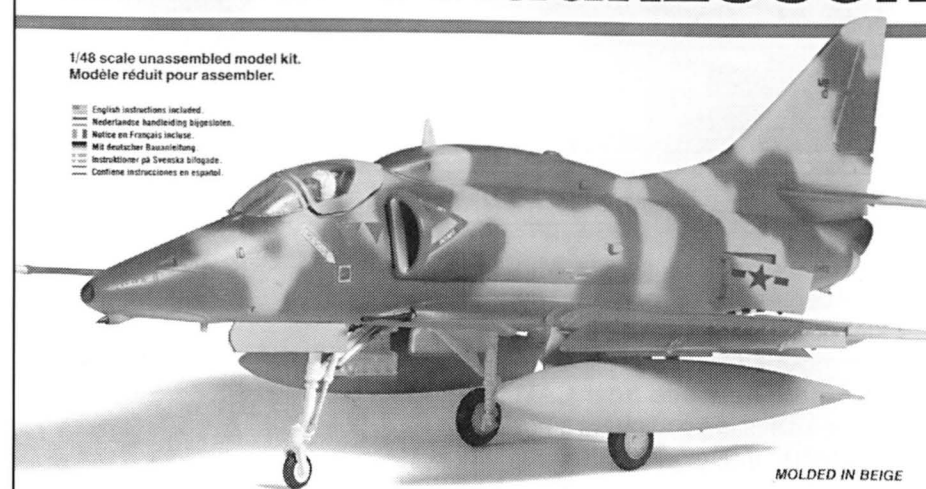
1/48 scale unassembled model kit
Modèle réduit
MOLDED IN COLOR



MONOGRAM A-4 AGGRESSOR

1/48 scale unassembled model kit.
Modèle réduit pour assembler.

English instructions included.
Nederlandse handleiding bijgeleverd.
Notes en Français incluses.
Mit deutscher Bauanleitung.
Instruktioner på Svenska bilagade.
Contiene instrucciones en español.



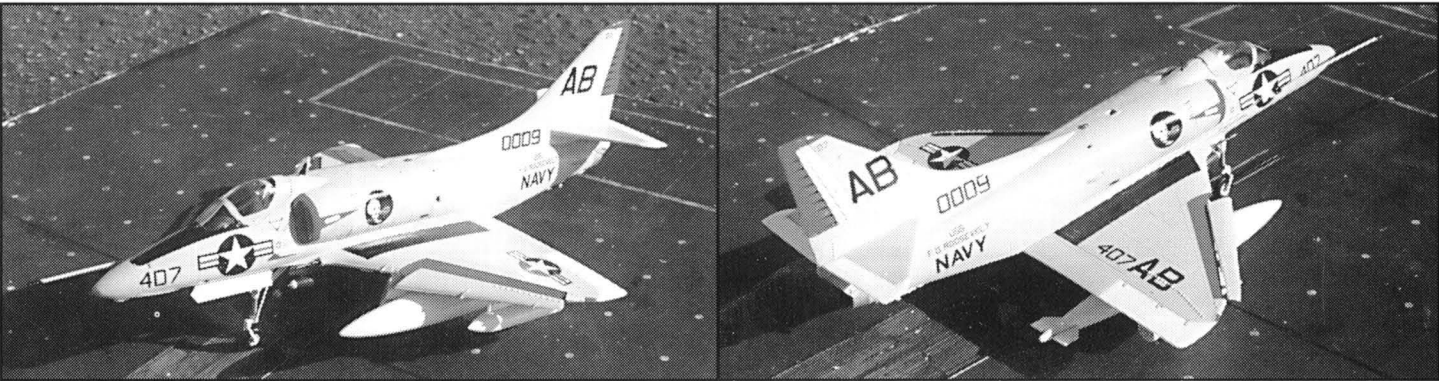
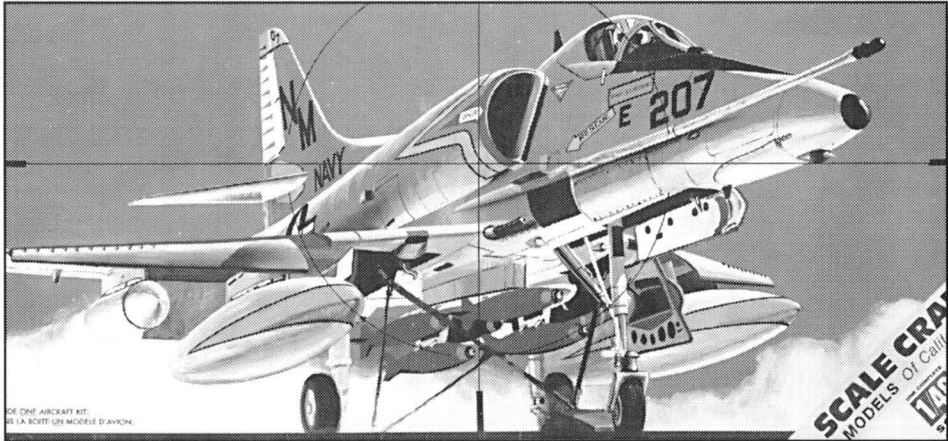
MOLDED IN BEIGE



ESCI / SKILLCRAFT 1/48 SCALE A-4E/F SKYHAWK

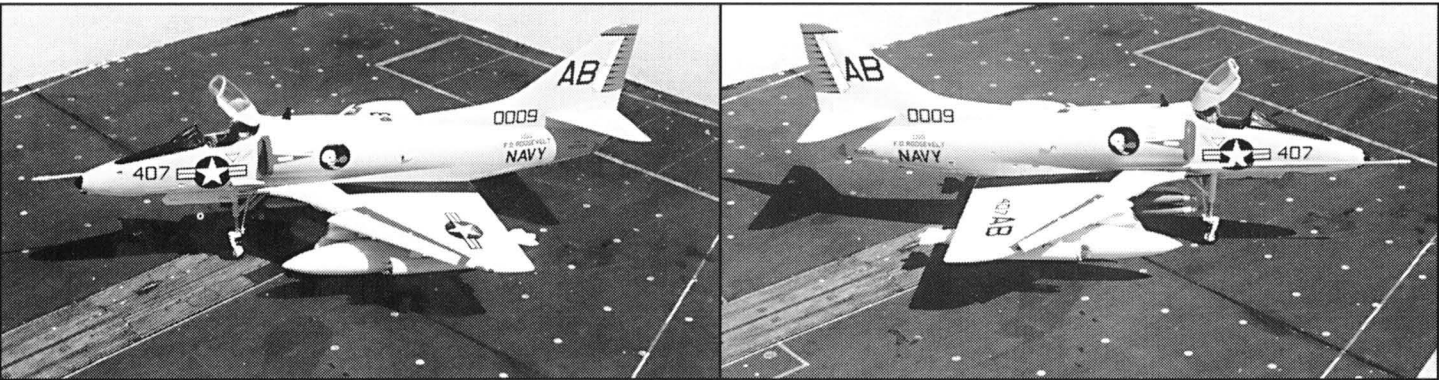
The ESCI 1/48 scale A-4E/F kit came out in 1983 and included decals for three versions. These were: VA-192 from the USS Ticonderoga, VF-43 aggressor aircraft and a Royal Australian Navy aircraft from No. 805 Squadron. The kit included six Mk. 82 bombs for the centerline, two wing tanks, and two rocket pods.

Below, the ESCI kit, model by Mike Castro. At bottom, Hobby Craft kit, model by Steve Ginter.



HOBBY CRAFT 1/48 SCALE A-4E/F SKYHAWK

The Hobby Craft kit comes with aggressor decals and drop tanks. The other kits in the series have multiple weapons included. Decals used on the kit shown here came from CAM decals. The kit's fit is good overall, but the directions leave a lot to be desired. The kit includes most all lumps, bumps and antenna ever used on the A-4E/F, but the directions do not show their placement. It's a minor point, but annoying. You will certainly need a book or magazine article for enough references to properly build the kit.



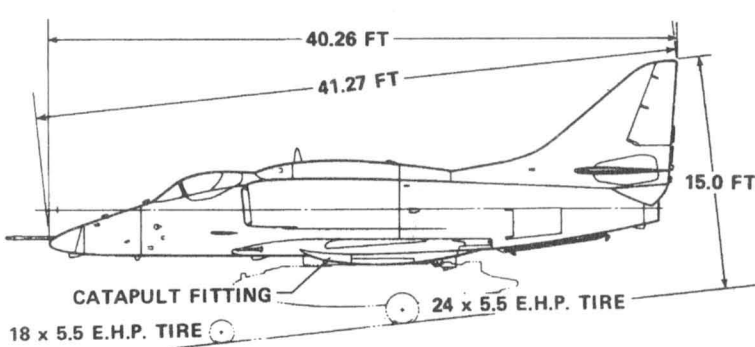
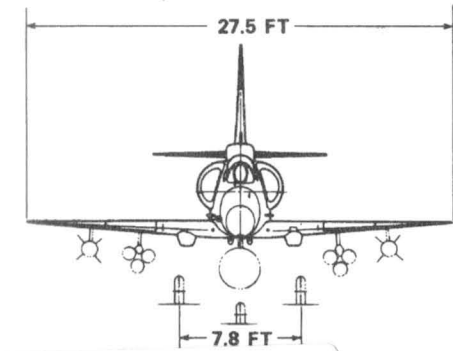
A-4F SKYHAWK STANDARD AIRCRAFT CHARACTERISTICS

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY						
TAKE-OFF LOADING CONDITION		(1) HI-HI-HI Clean Airplane	(3) S.L. Store Delivery 1-MK 28 Store	(5) Close Support 1-300 Gal Tank 12-MK 81 Snakeyes	(7) Close Support 3-AGM 128 (Bullpup A) 2-300 Gal Tanks	(9) Ferry 3-300 Gal Tanks
TAKE-OFF WEIGHT	lb.	16,576	19,356	23,572	23,814	23,999
Fuel internal/external (JP-5)	lb./lb.	5440/NONE	5440/NONE	5440/2040	5440/4080	5440/6120
Payload	lb.	NONE	2040	3600	1710	NONE
Wing loading	lb./sq. ft.	63.8	74.4	90.7	91.6	92.3
Stall speed—power-off	kn.	116	125	141	141	142
Take-off run at S.L.— calm	(A) ft.	1900	2570	4110	4210	4280
Take-off run at S.L.— 25 kn. wind	(A) ft.	1280	1780	2980	3080	3120
Take-off to clear 50 ft.— calm	(A) ft.	2870	3740	5750	5880	5970
Max. speed/altitude	(A) kn./ft.	589/3500	561/7500	478/10,000	496/5000	539/6000
Rate of climb at S.L.	(A) fpm.	10,300	7900	4750	5250	5650
Time: S.L. to 20,000 ft.	(A) min.	2.6	3.6	7.1	6.0	5.4
Time: S.L. to 30,000 ft.	(A) min.	4.3	6.5	—	15.4	12.0
Service ceiling (100 fpm)	(A) ft.	41,900	37,300	28,000	30,200	31,500
Combat range (tanks and stores retained)	n.mi.	1100	780	895	1175	1735 (C)
Average cruising speed	kn.	418	408	368	390	401
Cruising altitudes	ft.	34,800-40,500	30,600-35,500	23,500-29,300	24,600-33,400	25,200-36,900
Combat radius/mission time	n.mi./hr.	515/2.5	185/0.9 (B)	210/2.1	435/3.2	—
Average cruising speed	kn.	418	410	382	398	—
COMBAT LOADING CONDITION		(2)	(4) Store Retained	(6) Tank Dropped Stores Retained	(8) Tanks Dropped Missiles Retained	(10) Tanks Retained
COMBAT WEIGHT	lb.	14,400	17,180	21,349	19,337	17,879
Engine power		MILITARY	MILITARY	MILITARY	MILITARY	MILITARY
Fuel	lb.	3264	3264	5440	5440	5440
Combat speed/combat altitude	kn./ft.	530/36,600	556/S.L.	486/5000	507/5000	533/S.L.
Rate of climb/combat altitude	fpm/ft.	3150/36,000	9100/S.L.	4750/6000	6300/5000	8200/S.L.
Combat ceiling (500 fpm)	ft.	43,900	38,800	29,200	34,500	36,800
Rate of climb at S.L.	fpm.	12,000	9100	5600	7300	8200
Max. speed at S.L.	kn.	588	556	477	506	533
Max. speed/altitude	kn./ft.	590/3500	562/8000	491/12,000	507/5000	540/7000
LANDING WEIGHT	lb.	11,942	12,734	13,324	13,282	13,667
Fuel	lb.	806	858	1015	1095	1228
Stall speed—power-off/approach power	kn./kn.	98/94	101/97	104/99	103/99	107/102
Landing distance—ground roll/over 50 ft. obst.(D) ft./ft.		3300/4015	3450/4165	3555/4270	3550/4265	3620/4335
NOTES						
(A) Military Thrust, takeoff weight, stores and tanks retained.						
(B) With 2-300 gallon tanks, the combat radius is 540 nautical miles.						
(C) Ferry range is 1880 nautical miles if tanks are dropped when empty.						
(D) With spoilers open after touchdown.						
NOTE: All loadings except clean airplane include guns, ammunition, and pylons on all stations.						
Performance Basis: NATC and DAC flight tests of the Models A-4F and TA-4F.						

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 NOTE: All loadings except clean airplane include guns, ammunition, and pylons on all stations.
 Performance Basis: NATC and DAC flight tests of the Models A-4F and TA-4F.

A-4F (J52-P-8A)

FEBRUARY 1971



top to bottom:

A-4F 154976 from NAS Jacksonville (Ginter collection) VMA-211 A-4E 151996 at NAS Jacksonville (Fred Roos) VMA-223 "Skyhawks" A-4E 151050 in 1974. (Harry Gann) VMA-223 "Bulldogs" A-4F 155032 in 1971. (Harry Gann) VMA-324 "Devil Dogs" A-4E 149994 in 1971. (via Harry Gann) VMA-133 "Dragons" A-4F aircraft in flight in 1976. (Harry Gann) VMA-133 A-4F 155025 at NAS Alameda on 13 March 1982. (Fred Roos)

BACK COVER Right side top to bottom:

VMA-142 "Flying Gators" A-4F 155022 from NAS Jacksonville, FL. (Ginter collection) VMAT-102 "Skyhawks" A-4E 151050 in 1974. (Harry Gann) VMA-223 "Bulldogs" A-4F 155032 in 1971. (Harry Gann) VMA-324 "Devil Dogs" A-4E 149994 in 1971. (via Harry Gann) VMA-133 "Dragons" A-4F aircraft in flight in 1976. (Harry Gann) VMA-133 A-4F 155025 at NAS Alameda on 13 March 1982. (Fred Roos)

