



CDR Brent M. Strong  
COMMANDING OFFICER

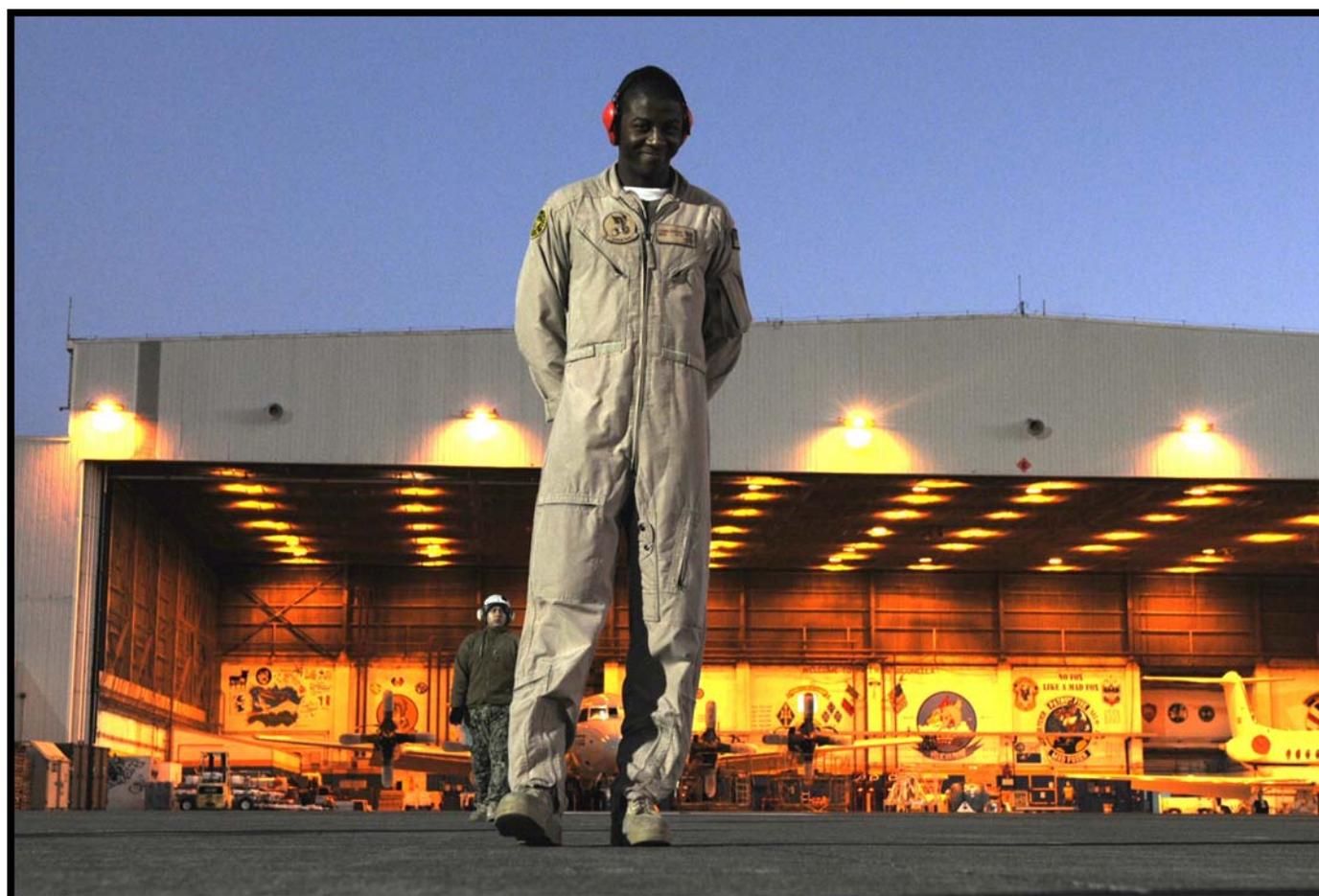


CMDCM Gary Smedley  
COMMAND MASTER CHIEF



CDR Jay C. Stapleton  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## On-station-Vol.1-January 2013



## CO'S CORNER



Skinny Dragon Ohana,

Ciao from Sigonella Sicily. I hope this January edition of the VP-4 Newsletter finds you healthy and in good spirits following the hustle and bustle of the holiday season.

Despite our business on deployment, each detachment site managed to break free to celebrate with a holiday party. While not always on the traditional calendar holidays, due to the need to support various ships and ground forces throughout the European and African areas of responsibility, every "Skinny Dragon" had the opportunity to celebrate.

As you are well aware, December was a very busy month for VP-4. As a squadron, we flew twice as many hours as compared to our busiest month during our home cycle, which coincided with RIMPAC in July. In spite of the pace of operations, we are focused on the mission and doing our respective jobs abroad to ensure that the United States remains a free and prosperous nation.

Aloha,

Skipper Strong

## SIGONELLA DIRECT



flank steak in all of Italy! The First Class Petty Officer's Association hosted a burger burn for their fellow "Skinny Dragons," and we are quickly becoming well known regulars at the local Sicilian restaurants.

Buongiorno dalla Sigonella! Greetings from Sigonella! First month of deployment is in the books, and what a demanding month it was. It's been great supporting the SIXTH Fleet's Area of Responsibility and finally putting all of our hard training to good use. The deployment mustaches are coming along well, but unfortunately the CO and XO are still refusing to grow theirs. The Army/Navy game was a huge success.

**BEAT ARMY!!** The chief's mess hosted the wardroom for a night full of festivities, with CMC Smedley manning the grill. He cooked the best



Everybody here is in the Christmas spirit. It's tough to be away from our loved ones for the holidays but the VP-4 ohana is staying strong. To help raise the spirits, CSD hosted a Holiday party and it was a blast. The First Class Petty Officer's Association walked the halls of the barracks leaving stockings full of goodies at each door. NAS Sigonella also held fun events like the five mile Jingle Bell Run around the airfield.

The weather has been a bit colder than Oahu, but the Sicilian countryside and the view of Mt. Etna to the north make the tradeoff worthwhile. Everyone is hoping for an opportunity to gallivant around Sicily, but for now we are busy focusing on the mission and thinking of our loved ones back home. Farewell and God speed!



## ROTA DIRECT

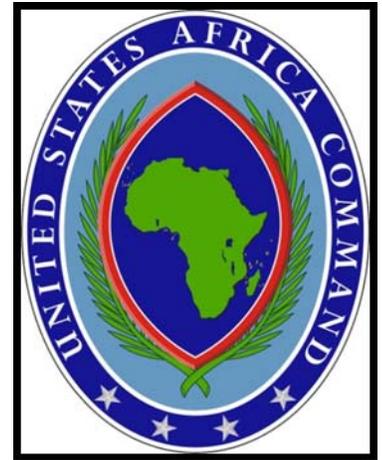
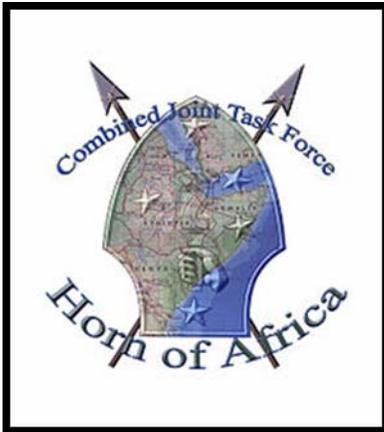
December was an exciting month for the “Skinny Dragons” manning the single crew Rota detachment. Located on the Atlantic Ocean at the north end of the Bay of Cadiz, Naval Station Rota certainly isn't lacking in the location department.

After a quick turnover with VP-9, CAC-2 was flying missions alone and unafraid only a few days after arriving in Spain. Within a week of flying missions, CAC-2 received a Bravo Zulu from CTF-67 for their success.

Rota also serves as popular overnight stop for aircrews on their trans-Atlantic journeys. CAC-2 hosted aircraft from several squadrons, including their own VP-4 brethren. The Rota Dragons threw a full-fledged Christmas party,

complete with a gift exchange raffle and Santa and elf costumes. The non-flying days are filled with maintenance vs. aircrew competitions ranging from ultimate Frisbee to volleyball. While being a single crew detachment away from the rest of the squadron can be difficult logistically, NS Rota is the place to be if you're looking for awesome food and beautiful scenery.





## DJIBOUTI DIRECT

Detachment one here! And what a time it has been in the ever so popular southern front! This first month of deployment has set the bar high for future residents of Camp Lemonnier. Heading south with high enthusiasm, the first settlers were sent to the popular island known as the Seychelles, where expectations of a long stay were brewing. Folks were able to enjoy local fishing, which resulted in a fish fry on the beautiful beach. As familiarization flights came to an end, the VP-4 team instantly packed up and resettled into their new home at Camp Lemonnier in the African desert.

During the holidays, the "Skinny Dragons" were in a frenzy decorating their Contained Living Units (CLUs), risking life and limb in attempt to get the lights and decorations in the perfect position. The A/C units were put on full blast in an attempt to have a white Christmas this year.

The detachment one team is making the best of their new African home, and is happy to be contributing to the valuable mission. What Camp Lemonnier lacks in comforts, it makes up for in crew camaraderie and experience. The safe and efficient execution of the mission will continue, as detachment one ensures that the pirates are running scared.

# VP-4 IN ACTION



# VP-4 HOME FRONT



# WHAT'S HAPPENING: SKINNY DRAGONS

## PEASE GREETERS SAY FAREWELL TO VP-4

LTJG Ryan Miller

On Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012, members of Patrol Squadron FOUR (VP-4) were offered a warm farewell from the patriotic members of the Pease Greeters on their last stop in the U.S. prior to deploying overseas. Stepping off the plane at Pease International Airport in NH, the members of VP-4 were immediately reignited with high spirits as they were led through the airport on their way to an unexpected buffet of food and drinks, all the while, surrounded by hundreds of Greeters cheering, clapping, and showing their support.



The ceremony continued with a picture under the Pease welcome sign to be added to Hero's Walk, a hallway in the Pease airport dedicated to the service members who have passed through. As the Pease Greeters gathered, VP-4 was blessed from the Greeters Chaplain and Colors were presented. The National Anthem was sung and "the shirt off their back", a sweater signed by the Pease Greeters was given to LCDR Jamy Brassfield. LCDR Brassfield stated, "Within 10 hours, we had run the gambit of emotions: from saying goodbye to our families to a hero's send off. I don't usually struggle for words, but the rousing send off we received left me speechless. The generous volunteers at Pease reminded every one of us why it is, we do what we do. It is truly amazing to receive such homecomings and sendoffs compared to my father's generation that came home from Vietnam welcomed by empty terminals and protests. We are blessed to know that the people of this great nation support us." They were then saluted saying, "We, the old Warriors, salute you, the young Warriors".

As the ceremony came to an end, the members of Patrol Squadron FOUR were given a star from retired flags to carry on them as well as a beanie from Prayer Shawl Ministry with an attached saying "Knitted for you with appreciation & pride in every stitch". The Greeters presented their last hugs and handshakes prior to the VP-4 members entering the plane. With high spirits, satisfied bellies and nice warm heads, the emotional service members said their last goodbyes. As the plane taxied for takeoff, the patriotic members of the Pease Greeters had gathered outside the gate around a lit up American flag, in the cold of night, for one last spectacular showing of support to the VP-4 members as they waved sparklers and gave their one last goodbye.

Patrol Squadron FOUR would like to thank the Pease Greeters for their support and hospitality. It was a remarkable experience that will not be forgotten. Photos of the experience as well as information about the Pease Greeters can be found at <http://www.peasegreeters.org/>.

# PATRON FOUR HOSTS LOCAL VISITORS

LTJG Mike Rueda

The Skinny Dragons of Patrol Squadron FOUR (VP-4) proudly hosted the Lions Club of Misterbianco. The visit was one of the many community relation events sponsored by Naval Air Station Sigonella. "I was amazed how friendly the group was. It was a real honor to host the members from the local community and build new relationships," said LCDR T. Ryan Davis, the Command Services Officer of VP-4.



The tour began in the VP-4 hangar with a short introduction and a group photo. The Lions Club witnessed

the large variety of ordinance the P-3C Orion aircraft carries. The club was then escorted and given a tour of the aircraft by LT. Ever Garay, Senior Chief Stanley Lenover, and Petty Officer Third Class Daniel Phillips. Following the display the group was presented a briefing in Italian on the P-3 mission and history.

This community relations event marks the "Skinny Dragons" arrival to Naval Base Sigonella and is the first of many such events. The president of the Lions Club stated, "Patrol Squadron FOUR showed tremendous hospitality. I am very pleased that our club was the first to welcome VP-4 to Sicily."

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM PATRON FOUR

LTJG TAYLOR COMBS



The men and women of Patrol Squadron FOUR (VP-4) were surprised upon returning to their barracks rooms on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December. The First Class Association, consisting of NC1 Aquino, AT1 Engle, AM1 Webb, and AT1 Peterson (with special help from Command Master Chief Smedley) went from room to room delivering stockings and holiday cheer.

After some investigation, we managed to catch one of the elves, NC1 Aquino. "Operation Elf was in full effect, and thanks to the Single Sailor Marine program we were able to fund and provide for over 220 holiday stockings." Filled with Christmas spirit, VP-4 began calling individual rooms to confirm the 'elf break-ins'. "I thought it was a very thoughtful way of VP-4 showing holiday spirit and reminding us that we are all part of a family here. It definitely brought a smile to my face," said AWO3 Dmitroff.

# PATRON FOUR COMMAND SERVICES DEPARTMENT TAKES THE AFTERNOON OFF

LTJG TAYLOR COMBS

The enlisted Sailors attached to Patrol Squadron FOUR Command Services Department were given an early Christmas gift, in appreciation for their hard work dedication over the first month of deployment. AM2



Pack, QM3 Lockhart, AOAA Torres, AN Havea, AN Ware, and MCSA Menhardt were temporarily relieved of their duties December 22, 2012. The junior officers of CSD, LT Garay, LTJG Hill, LTJG Rueda, and LTJG Combs voluntarily assumed the afternoon geedunk shift.

Geedunk is the military slang for convenience store. The geedunk helps keep the squadrons' morale high by providing various snacks, drinks and pleasantries to the hard working Sailors of VP-4. A properly stocked and friendly geedunk is paramount to keep the sailors stomachs satisfied and offers a pleasant change of atmosphere from the shops. Upon release for the day, CSD duty section met for a pizza lunch with the CSD department head, LCDR Davis.

Understanding the importance of the high-speed geedunk, the CSD warriors have spent numerous hours taking trips to the commissary for supplies, feverishly stocking shelves and maintaining a proper inventory of goods. The hard work has not gone unnoticed, so the staff was rewarded with the afternoon off.



## The "Skinny Dragons" Serve Holiday Cheer

LTJG Taylor Combs

The Skinny Dragons of Patrol Squadron FOUR (VP-4) served up big dishes of holiday cheer on Christmas day at the NASSIG galley. VP-4 is a Hawaii based Maritime Patrol Squadron on deployment in the SIXTH Fleet area of responsibility. Over six thousand miles



away from family and friends, the Officers and Chiefs of VP-4 came together and volunteered to serve a full spread Christmas dinner to each galley patron. Whether sailors came to eat a delicious Christmas dinner or they jumped at the opportunity to see their senior leadership in full apron, the Skinny Dragon Sailor turnout was high. "It reminded me of home cooking," said Petty Officer Tyrel Unsell. "Moms looked a little different, but the love was still there!"



Over two hundred dishes were served and every seat in the galley was taken. The Department Heads manned the food line while the Chief Petty Officers worked the dining room. "It was an opportunity for us to serve our sailors and show our appreciation for the amount of hard work and effort they have put forth so far this deployment," said LCDR Dave Drake, a VP4 Department Head and acting chef.



Sailors were given five star services. The Maintenance Master Chief, Master Chief Barnes, greeted Sailors as they arrived and took drink orders, and Command Master Chief Smedley returned used dishes and trays to the kitchen. "It's great to know that the Officers and Chiefs care so much about the Skinny Dragon family," said Senior Chief Stanley Lenover. "I know the Skipper puts a lot of focus on family. I'm glad he does, and I really felt a part of a big family today."

# VP-4 CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAYS

LTJG Dustin Wilmoth

The Patrol Squadron FOUR (VP-4) “Skinny Dragons” celebrated a late Christmas on Friday December 29th aboard Naval Air Sigonella Italy. The all hands celebration took place at JOX, and was complete with some motivational words from VP-4’s Commanding Officer, Commander Brent Strong. Commander Strong thanked the squadron for their hard work during the first month of deployment, and ensured the Dragons that what they do on deployment matters to Americans back at home.

A Christmas celebration wouldn't be complete without costumes and a gift raffle, so the Command Services Department held the annual Christmas costume vote to determine who would wear the Santa and Christmas tree costumes during the Holiday party. With 100's of votes cast on the final day, the Dragons with the most votes were Master Chief Dewayne Barnes and LCDR Jon Horn. They both took the news in stride and wore the costumes for the entire event, posing for many photo opportunities. After dinner, several gifts were raffled including gift certificates, five iPod Shuffles, and a grand prize of \$100 cash. Each department



also recognized one of their stellar Sailors with a 24 hour liberty pass to explore the beautiful Italian island of Sicily. Lastly and after much anticipation, Commander Strong and Command Master Chief Gary Smedley announced the 2012 Command Advancement Program awardees. Three Petty Officers were meritoriously promoted one pay grade for their dedication, professional knowledge, and work ethic within the squadron.



AWV1 Jeremy Housel, HM2 Zachary Wilson, and AD2 Blaz Kenyon were all surprised to hear the news, and the “Skinny Dragon” crowd erupted in cheers. After the official business, tables were removed and a long night of dancing and socializing ensued. When the celebration subsided, AWOCs Stanley Lenover remarked, “It was great to see the junior Sailors get to blow off some steam after a busy first month of deployment.” The “Skinny Dragons” are excited to see what the New Year has to offer for the remainder of their deployment.

