

## VA-54

### Lineage

Established as Scouting Squadron TWO B (VS-2B) on 3 July 1928.

Redesignated Scouting Squadron THREE (VS-3) on 1 July 1937.

Redesignated Bombing Squadron FOUR (VB-4) on 1 March 1943.

Redesignated Bombing Squadron FIVE (VB-5) on 15 July 1943.

Redesignated Attack Squadron FIVE A (VA-5A) on 15 November 1946.

Redesignated Attack Squadron FIFTY FOUR (VA-54) on 16 August 1948.

Disestablished on 1 December 1949. The first squadron to be assigned the VA-54 designation.

### Squadron Insignia and Nickname

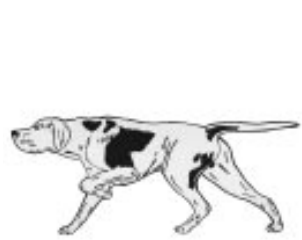
The squadron's first insignia was approved by BuAer prior to the squadron's winter cruise in 1930. A pointing bird dog was adopted to reflect the duties as a scouting squadron. The dog was black with white spots and white outlines highlighting the dog's features.



*As a scouting squadron, the pointing bird dog was an appropriate design for the squadron's first insignia.*

In 1933, VS-2B reversed the color for the dog, giving it an overall white color with black markings. This insignia was used by the squadron following its redesignations to VS-3 in 1937, VB-4 in March

1943 and VB-5 in July 1943. On 24 October 1945, CNO approved a new insignia for VB-5. It was a modification of an insignia used by a previous VB-5 squadron



*The squadron's pointing bird dog insignia was modified in 1933 when the colors of the dog were reversed.*



*During World War II, the squadron adopted this insignia to keep it in line with its mission as a bombing squadron.*



*Following World War II, the squadron adopted this insignia.*

that had been in existence prior to World War II. It was a winged devil's head with a red ball of fire and a black bomb with red markings. The devil's helmet and beard were black; the face and horn was red; yellow goggles and mustache; and red wings outlined in black.

CNO approved a change to the squadron insignia on 3 June 1946. The new insignia had a yellow circle with a green bomb, outlined in black, with a red tip on the bomb. Overlaying the bomb were four aces and the joker. The playing cards had a white background, outlined in black, with the aces in the appropriate colors, while the joker was black with red eyes and mouth. The five cards signified the squadron's number. The squadron continued to use the insignia when it was redesignated VA-54.

Nickname: unknown.

### Chronology of Significant Events

**Jan-Feb 1929:** Fleet Problem IX was the first time the Navy's two large carriers, *Saratoga* (CV 3) (with VS-2B embarked) and *Lexington* (CV 2), participated in a major fleet exercise.

**Mar-Apr 1930:** In March, Fleet Problem X was conducted in the Caribbean Sea, followed by Fleet Problem XI in April.

**May 1930:** VS-2B's aircraft joined with the planes from 9 other squadrons, which included *Saratoga*, *Lexington* and *Langley* Air Groups, for a three-day tour of east coast cities from Norfolk, Virginia to Boston. The flight was commanded by Captain Kenneth Whiting and consisted of 36 torpedo and bombing planes, 57 fighting planes, 24 scouting planes, 3 amphibian utility planes, 3 Ford tri-motored transports and 2 staff planes. It was the largest air parade that had ever been assembled on the east coast.

**5 Nov 1931:** The squadron's commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Oscar W. Erickson, was killed in an airplane crash at sea.

**1931-1934:** The squadron participated in Fleet Problems XII through XIX.

**31 May 1934:** A fleet review for President Franklin D. Roosevelt was held in New York Harbor.

**1935-1938:** The squadron participated in Fleet Problems XVI through XV.

**Apr-May 1940:** The squadron participated in Fleet Problem XXI. This was the last major fleet problem conducted before Pearl Harbor and America's involvement in World War II.

**Aug 1942:** VS-3 and the other squadrons in *Saratoga* Air Group provided air support for the landings on Guadalcanal.

**24–25 Aug 1942:** VS-3 participated in the Battle of Eastern Solomons and, along with other squadrons in the *Saratoga* Air Group, attacked and sunk the Japanese carrier *Ryujo*. Enroute back to *Saratoga* after their attack on the *Ryujo*, Lieutenant Commander Kirn, and ten of his SBDs attacked a Japanese flight of four Vals (Aichi D3A, Japanese Navy Type 99 Carrier Bombers), downing three and damaging the fourth.

**Sep–Nov 1942:** VS-3 operated from Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides until its return to CONUS in December.

**6–24 Jul 1943:** VB-5 departed Norfolk embarked in *Yorktown* (CV 10) enroute to Hawaii via the Panama Canal.

**31 Aug 1943:** VB-5, embarked in *Yorktown*, participated in a raid on Marcus Island.

**5–6 Oct 1943:** The squadron participated in a raid on Wake Island.

**Nov–Dec 1943:** VB-5 participated in operations against the Gilberts in support of the landings on Makin and Tarawa, as well as strikes against the Marshalls.

**Jan–Feb 1944:** The squadron flew strikes against the Marshall Islands and provided air support for the invasion of the Marshalls.

**16–17 Feb 1944:** VB-5, along with other squadrons in Air Group 5, flew strikes against the the Japanese stronghold of Truk.

**22 Feb 1944:** CVG-5's aircraft, including VB-5, raided the Marianas striking targets on Saipan.

**30 Mar–1 Apr 1944:** VB-5's SBDs struck ships and facilities at Palau in the Caroline Islands.

**21–23 Apr 1944:** Strikes were flown by VB-5 against targets on Wade Island and Hollandia in New Guinea. These operations were in support of the landings at Hollandia by General Douglas MacArthur's forces.

**29–30 Apr 1944:** VB-5 conducted another strike operation against Truk.

**14 May 1944:** Following a ten-month combat tour, which began in August 1943, Air Group 5 was relieved aboard *Yorktown* by Air Group 1 and the Air Group, including VB-5, returned to CONUS.

**07 Feb 1945:** CVG-5, with VB-5, embarked in *Franklin* (CV 13) and departed NAS Alameda for Hawaii, arriving there on 13 February. This was the beginning of the squadron's third major combat tour in the Pacific.

**19 Mar 1945:** Following the launch of CVG-5 aircraft, including SB2Cs from VB-5, for an attack against the city of Kobe, Japan, the *Franklin* was hit by two enemy bombs from a Japanese aircraft. Fires were ignited on the second and third decks from the first bomb and the second triggered munitions on the carrier. All CVG-5's aircraft still on the carrier were destroyed. The damage was one of the most extensive experienced by an *Essex* class carrier during World War II. A total of 724 were

killed and 265 wounded. However, the crew's heroic efforts saved the ship. CVG-5 personnel were transferred to *Sante Fe* (CL 60). CVG-5 aircraft in the air landed on other carriers, primarily *Bennington* (CV 20). Personnel in the water were picked up by destroyers.

**May 1949:** VA-54 was the last fleet squadron to operate the SB2C aircraft. The squadron completed its Operational Readiness Inspection on 19 May and the last operational flight of the SB2C.



*This photo shows a squadron O2U laying a smoke screen.*

### Home Port Assignments

<i>Location</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
NAS San Diego	03 Jul 1928
Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides	Sep 1942*
NAS San Diego	Dec 1942
MCAS El Centro	Jan 1943
NAS San Diego	Mar 1943
NAS Norfolk	Apr 1943
NAS Pearl Harbor	Jul 1943*
NAS Barbers Point	Sep 1943*
NAS Puunene	Oct 1943*
NAS Hilo	Dec 1943*
NAS Kaneohe	Dec 1943*
NAS Alameda	25 Jun 1944
NAAS Fallon	25 Jul 1944
NAAS Vernalis	29 Oct 1944
NAAS Santa Rosa	10 Nov 1944
Hawaii	Feb 1945*
NAS Klamath Falls	08 May 1945
NAS Pasco	28 Sep 1945
NAAS Brown Field	03 Dec 1945
NAS Barbers Point	25 Mar 1946
NAS San Diego	20 May 1946
NAS Seattle	13 Jan 1947
NAS San Diego	20 Mar 1947

\* Temporary shore assignment during World War II.



*This is a close-up view of the squadron O2U laying a smoke screen.*



*Squadron SU aircraft are parked on the forward flight deck of Lexington (CV 2) as she passes through the Panama Canal.*

**Commanding Officers**

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
LT Forrest P. Sherman (acting)*	03 Jul 1928
LCDR Virgil C. Griffin	03 Jul 1928
LT Forrest P. Sherman (acting)	Apr 1929
LCDR Dewitt C. Watson	21 Jun 1929
LCDR Adolph P. Schneider	01 Jun 1931
LCDR Oscar W. Erickson	17 Aug 1931
LT Robert P. McConnell (acting)	05 Nov 1931
LCDR Gordon Rowe	Jun 1932
LCDR Theodore C. Lonquest	Dec 1932
LT Harold M. Martin (acting)	Jul 1932
LCDR Felix B. Stump	13 Jul 1934
LCDR John F. Gillon	Jun 1936
LCDR Frederick W. McMahon	Jun 1937
LCDR Charles F. Greber	Jun 1938
LCDR Robert C. Sutliff	†
LCDR Sutlia	03 Apr 1941
LCDR Herbert L. Hoerner	01 Oct 1941
LCDR Louis J. Kirn	May 1942
LCDR Robert M. Milner	Mar 1943
LCDR Edgar E. Stebbins	Sep 1943
LT Charles P. Mason	25 Jun 1944
LCDR John G. Sheridan	02 Jul 1944
LT Harold W. Calhoun (acting)	15 May 1945

**Commanding Officers—Continued**

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
LTJG F. D. Brunner (acting)	31 May 1945
LCDR Paul J. Knapp	25 Jun 1945
LT Eugene M. Yoder (acting)	28 Aug 1945
LTJG H. M. Ziskin (acting)	07 Sep 1945
LCDR Howard L. Grimmell (acting)	08 Sep 1945
LCDR Allen L. Lewis (acting)	07 Nov 1945
LCDR Allen L. Lewis	05 Dec 1945
CDR Walter F. Madden	04 Oct 1947
LCDR Willard L. Nyburg (acting)	21 Jun 1948
CDR Edgar S. Keats	27 Jul 1948
LCDR R. A. Newcomb	04 Feb 1949
LCDR D. K. English	08 Apr 1949

\* Lieutenant Sherman was the senior officer assigned to the squadron during its establishment ceremonies. Following the establishment ceremonies Lieutenant Commander Griffin reported aboard and became the commanding officer.

† Assumed command sometime between October 1939 and June 1940.



*A formation of squadron SUs, circa 1933.*

**Aircraft Assignment**

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
UO	Jul 1928
FU-1	27 Aug 1928
O2U-1	Dec 1928
O2U-2	Dec 1928
O3U-2	Dec 1931
SU-1	May 1932
SU-3	Nov 1932
SU-2	Dec 1932
SBU-1	Jan 1936
SBC-3	Aug 1937
SBC-4	Mar 1941
SBD-3	Aug 1941

**Aircraft Assignment**

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
SBD-4	Jan 1943
SB2C	Apr 1943
SBD-5	Jun 1943
SB2C-3	25 Jun 1944
SBW-3	25 Jun 1944
SB2C-4	Sep 1944
SB2C-4E	Dec 1944
SB2C-5*	Mar 1946
F4U-4	19 Apr 1948
AD-1	May 1949
AD-4	Oct 1949

\* The squadron continued to operate the SB2C-5s until May 1949.

**Major Overseas Deployments**

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operation</i>
15 Jan 1929	Mar 1929	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	O2U-2	Central America/ Pacific
15 Feb 1930	21 Jun 1930	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	O2U-2	Pacific/Carib
05 Feb 1931	15 Apr 1931	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	O2U-2	Pacific/Carib
Feb 1932	19 Mar 1932	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	O3U-2	Hawaii
23 Jan 1933	17 Feb 1933	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	SU-1/2/3	Hawaii



*A formation of squadron SBC-3s in 1938 (Courtesy Robert Lawson Collection).*

**Major Overseas Deployments**

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operation</i>
09 Apr 1934	09 Nov 1934	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	SU-1/2/3	Pacific/Carib/ East Coast
May 1935	Jun 1935	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	SU-2/3	Hawaii/NorPac
Apr 1936	Jun 1936	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	SBU-1	Central America Pacific
Apr 1937	May 1937	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	SBU-1	Hawaii
15 Mar 1938	Apr 1938	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	SBC-3	Hawaii
02 Apr 1940	21 Jun 1940	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3	SBC-3	Hawaii
08 Dec 1941	19 Feb 1942	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3*	SBD-3	Hawaii
07 Jul 1942	Sep 1942	<i>Saratoga</i> Air Group	CV 3†	SBD-3	SoPac
22 Aug 1943	07 Sep 1943	CVG-5	CV 10	SBD-5	Pacific
29 Sep 1943	11 Oct 1943	CVG-5	CV 10	SBD-5	Pacific
10 Nov 1943	09 Dec 1943	CVG-5	CV 10	SBD-5	Pacific
16 Jan 1944	11 May 1944	CVG-5	CV 10	SBD-5	Pacific
03 Mar 1945	19 Mar 1945	CVG-5	CV 13	SB2C-4E	Pacific
31 Mar 1947	16 Jun 1947	CVG-5	CV 38	SB2C-5	WestPac

\* The squadron was operating from *Saratoga* in the Hawaiian area when, on 11 January 1942, the ship was hit by a torpedo from a Japanese submarine. With VS-3 aboard, *Saratoga* departed Hawaii and returned to Bremerton, Washington, for repairs. The other squadrons in *Saratoga's* Air Group remained in Hawaii.

† *Saratoga* was torpedoed for a second time on 31 August 1942 and VS-3 was transferred ashore at Espiritu Santo in early September.



A close-up view of a squadron SBC-3 in flight. Part of the squadron's pointing bird dog insignia is visible on the fuselage just below the pilot.

### Air Wing Assignments

<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
Saratoga Air Group*		Jul 1928
†		Sep 1942
CVG-5	S‡	15 Feb 1943

\* Squadrons assigned to the carriers prior to 1 July 1938 were part of that carrier's air group. However, it was not until 1 July 1938, when air group commander billets were established, that the air groups themselves became official organizations.

† When VS-3 was transferred ashore at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, from *Saratoga* the squadron's association with the *Saratoga* Air Group came to an end.

‡ CVG-5 aircraft were assigned the tailcode S on 12 December 1946.



Squadron SB2C-5 Helldivers fly over Boulder Dam in 1948.

**Unit Awards Received**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
PUC	31 Aug 1943	
	05 Oct 1943	06 Oct 1943
	19 Nov 1943	05 Dec 1943
	29 Jan 1944	23 Feb 1944
	29 Mar 1944	30 Apr 1944
NAVE	01 Jul 1947	30 Jun 1948
Campaign Medal (Asiatic/Pacific)	07 Aug 1942	09 Aug 1942
	23 Aug 1942	25 Aug 1942

**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
	31 Aug 1943	
	05 Oct 1943	06 Oct 1943
	19 Nov 1943	04 Dec 1943
	29 Jan 1944	08 Feb 1944
	16 Feb 1944	17 Feb 1944
	21 Feb 1944	22 Feb 1944
	30 Mar 1944	01 Apr 1944
	21 Apr 1944	24 Apr 1944
	29 Apr 1944	01 May 1944



*A squadron AD-1 Skywarrior loaded with dud rockets and general purpose bombs. The squadron's joker and card insignia and Battle E award are on the fuselage just forward of the pilot.*

## SECOND VA-54

### Lineage

Established as Bomber Fighter Squadron ONE HUNDRED FIFTY THREE (VBF-153) on 26 March 1945.

Redesignated Fighter Squadron SIXTEEN A (VF-16A) on 15 November 1946.

Redesignated Fighter Squadron ONE HUNDRED FIFTY TWO (VF-152) on 15 July 1948.

Redesignated Fighter Squadron FIFTY FOUR (VF-54) on 15 February 1950.

Redesignated Attack Squadron FIFTY FOUR (VA-54) on 15 June 1956.

Disestablished on 1 April 1958. The second squadron to be assigned the VA-54 designation.

### Squadron Insignia and Nickname

The squadron's first insignia was approved by CNO on 17 July 1945. The insignia was designed by Walt Disney Productions.



*The squadron's first insignia was designed by Walt Disney Productions.*

Colors for the dog on a winged bomb were: white background, pale yellow circle outline; blue powder head bomb with black body, blue middle fin, and bright orange corsair wings with white highlights; the dog was a mottled brown and black, jowls and chest a flesh color, nose black with white highlights, right eye ringed in black, eyeballs white, pupils blue with black centers, mouth black, and tongue red; boxing gloves orange; and collar black with blue loop and black leash.

Following the redesignation to VF-16A the squadron had a new insignia approved on 26 May 1948. Colors for the flying ace of spades were: black outer circle and red inner circle; black background; gold wings outlined in black; ace of spades and card markings were black; red bloodspots; copper arrowhead outlined in black. When the squadron was redesignated VF-152 it retained the flying ace of spades insignia.

A new squadron insignia was approved by CNO on 14 February 1951, a year after the squadron had been redesignated VF-54. The insignia's design was based on the statement "through Hell or High Water." Colors for this insignia were: sky blue background in the upper half and sapphire blue in the lower half of the insignia, the overall insignia outlined in black; a crimson devil's head was encircled by yellow, red and amber flames; the devil's features include black hair,



*The squadron's second insignia, approved in 1948, depicts the nickname "Copperheads."*



*The squadron's last insignia, the devil's head, gave them the nickname "Hell's Angels."*

eyebrows, mustache and highlights; his eyes were white with emerald pupils and vermilion iris; the mouth was white; and gold anchor, shield and wings. The squadron's motto was *Angeli Inferni* meaning Hell's Angels. When the squadron was redesignated VA-54 in 1956, it continued to use the Hell's Angels insignia.

Nickname: Copperheads, until 1951.

Hell's Angels, 1951–1958.

### Chronology of Significant Events

**29 Jun 1950:** VF-54 was deployed aboard *Valley Forge* (CV 45) in the Western Pacific when hostilities erupted in Korea on 25 June. The carrier was ordered north from the Philippines and the squadron's aircraft conducted a sweep along the western coast of Taiwan due to the concern that the North Korean invasion of South Korea might be a prelude to an invasion of that island by the Chinese Communists.

**3 Jul 1950:** The squadron participated in its first combat strikes since its establishment in 1945. These strikes were the first made by carrier aircraft in the Korean War. VF-54's Corsairs struck targets in Pyongyang, North Korea.

**15 Sep 1950:** VF-54 provided air support for the landings at Inchon, South Korea.

**26 Jul 1954:** VF-54's AD-4 Skyraiders were on a SAR mission looking for survivors, rafts or debris from a British Cathay Pacific DC-4 airliner, that had been shot down by the Chinese Communists, when they were attacked by two Chinese LA-7 fighter aircraft. Two of the squadron's Skyraiders, along with an F4U, shot down the two LA-7s 13 miles southeast of Hainan Island.

**Sep 1957:** *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA 31), with VA-54 embarked, operated in the vicinity of Taiwan in response to a buildup of Chinese Communist forces on the mainland opposite Taiwan.

**Dec 1957:** The squadron began the transition from propeller aircraft to jets.





*A squadron F6F-5 Hellcat in flight, circa 1947 (Courtesy Robert Lawson Collection).*

**Home Port Assignments**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
NAS Wildwood	26 Mar 1945
NAAS Oceana	01 Jun 1945
NAS Norfolk	02 Jul 1946
NAS Alameda	11 Aug 1946
NAS Sand Point	04 May 1948
NAS Alameda	28 Jun 1948
NAS San Diego	01 Dec 1949
NAS Miramar	19 May 1952

**Commanding Officers**

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
LCDR Hayden M. Jensen	26 Mar 1945
LCDR Levern E. Forkner	01 May 1947
CDR Robert G. Boyd	09 Jul 1948
LCDR Douglas K. English	01 Dec 1949
LCDR Paul N. Gray	16 Jan 1951
LCDR Henry Suerstedt, Jr.	27 Jun 1952
LCDR Christian Fink	21 Jul 1953
CDR Donald E. Bruce	Dec 1954
CDR Frank M. McLinn	Sep 1955
CDR William A. Lewiston	Jun 1956
CDR Emmit W. Blackburn	16 Dec 1957



*A squadron F8F-1 Bearcat on the deck of Tarawa (CV 40) in 1948 (Courtesy Robert Lawson Collection).*

**Aircraft Assignment**

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
F4U-1	26 Mar 1945
F4U-4	04 Jun 1945
F6F-5	10 Sep 1945
F8F-1	21 Oct 1947
F8F-2	May 1949
AD-4	01 Dec 1949
F4U-4B	14 Dec 1949
AD-1/4	Mar 1951
AD-6	Dec 1954*
AD-5	Dec 1954
AD-7	Jan 1957
F9F-8B	Dec 1957

\* VF-54 operated AD-6s for a short period of time between October and December 1953.

### Major Overseas Deployments

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operation</i>
31 Mar 1947	08 Oct 1947	CVAG-15	CV 36	F6F-5	WestPac
01 May 1950	01 Dec 1950	CVG-5	CV 45	F4U-4B	WestPac/Korea
28 Jun 1951	25 Mar 1952	CVG-5	CV 9	AD-2/3/4	WestPac/Korea
20 Nov 1952	25 Jun 1953	CVG-5	CVA 45	AD-4	WestPac/Korea
12 Mar 1954	Nov 1954	CVG-5	CVA 47	AD-4	WestPac
29 Oct 1955	17 May 1956	CVG-5	CVA 33	AD-6	WestPac
12 Jul 1957	09 Dec 1957	CVG-5	CVA 31	AD-6/7	WestPac



*A squadron F4U-4B Corsair prepares to launch from Valley Forge (CV 45) during a combat deployment to Korea in 1950 (Courtesy Robert Lawson Collection).*



*A squadron AD-6 Skyraider coming in for a landing on Kearsarge (CVA 33) during its 1955–1956 WestPac deployment.*

### Air Wing Assignments

<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
CVG-153/CVAG-15/CVG-15*	B/A†	26 Mar 1945
CVG-5	S/NF‡	01 Dec 1949

\* CVG-153 was redesignated CVAG-15 on 15 November 1946 and then redesignated CVG-15 on 1 September 1948.

† CVAG-15 was assigned the tail code B on 12 December 1946. It was changed to A on 4 August 1948.

‡ CVG-5's tail code was changed from S to NF in the latter part of 1957. The effective date was most likely the beginning of FY 58 (1 July 1957).

**Unit Awards Received**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
NAVE	01 Jul 1948	30 Jun 1949
NUC	03 Jul 1950	18 Nov 1950
	01 Jan 1953	05 Jun 1953
	21 Aug 1951	05 Mar 1952
KPUC	01 Jul 1950	18 Nov 1950

**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
KSM	30 Dec 1952	10 Jun 1953
	15 Aug 1951	11 Mar 1952
	30 Jun 1950	23 Nov 1950
	13 Aug 1951	01 Nov 1951



*Squadron F9F-8B Cougars on the flight line at NAS Miramar, California, in 1958.*

## VA-55

### Lineage

Established as Torpedo Squadron FIVE (VT-5) on 15 February 1943.

Redesignated Attack Squadron SIX A (VA-6A) on 15 November 1946.

Redesignated Attack Squadron FIFTY FIVE (VA-55) on 16 August 1948.

Disestablished on 12 December 1975. The first squadron to be designated VA-55.

### Squadron Insignia and Nickname

The squadron's first insignia was not submitted or approved by CNO. This insignia was a horned black cat, grasping a rat, astride a torpedo. The colors were: a red background with a black cat; the cat's face, claws and horns were red; the rat had a yellow face and a red body; the torpedo had a yellow nose and tail section with a red center and black markings; and the word Torpcats was black.



*This TORPCATS insignia was used by VT-5 during World War II but was never officially approved.*

On 10 July 1946, a new squadron insignia was approved by CNO. The insignia design was the face of a cat grasping a torpedo in its mouth. Colors were: a lemon yellow background; a blue cat's head with green eyes, gray jowls, black nose and whiskers, and white teeth; the torpedo was red with white highlights and outlined in black. This insignia was used by VT-5, VA-6A and VA-55 until September 1955.

On 27 September 1955 a new insignia was approved. The winged seahorse insignia was outlined by alternating white and dark green square blocks; the upper half of the insignia was turquoise and the lower half dark blue; the waves were highlighted in white; the seahorse was silver with gold wings and highlighted with black markings; the rocket was silver with red tail fins and nose, black markings, and a flame of red and yellow.



*This squadron insignia was approved for use in the post-World War II period, retaining the cat and torpedo motif.*

Nickname: Torpcats, 1943–1955.

Warhorses, 1955–1975.



*In the mid-1950s, the squadron adopted the seahorse insignia that became a well-known design.*

### Chronology of Significant Events

**15 Feb 1943:** VGS-30 was disestablished and personnel from the squadron were used to form VT-5 and VF-1.

**6–24 Jul 1943:** The squadron departed Norfolk embarked in *Yorktown* (CV 10) enroute to Hawaii via the Panama Canal.

**31 Aug 1943:** Embarked in *Yorktown*, the squadron participated in a raid on Marcus Island.

**5–6 Oct 1943:** The squadron participated in a raid on Wake Island.

**Nov–Dec 1943:** The squadron supported the landings on Makin and Tarawa, in the Gilberts, and flew strikes against Kwajalein in the Marshalls.

**Jan–Feb 1944:** The squadron provided air support for the invasion of the Marshalls.

**16–17 Feb 1944:** Squadron aircraft flew strikes against the Japanese stronghold of Truk.

**22 Feb 1944:** The squadron participated in a raid on the Marianas, striking targets on Saipan.

**30 Mar–1 Apr 1944:** Squadron aircraft struck ships and facilities at Palau in the Caroline Islands. The strike on 30 March was the first time the squadron's TBFs were armed with torpedoes in combat.

**21–23 Apr 1944:** Strikes were flown against targets on Wakde Island and Hollandia in New Guinea. These operations were in support of the landings at Hollandia by General Douglas MacArthur's forces.

**29–30 Apr 1944:** The squadron participated in another strike operation against Truk.

**30 Apr 1944:** The squadron's commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Dick Upson, failed to return from a SAR mission to locate a downed pilot.

**14 May 1944:** Following a ten-month combat tour beginning in August 1943, Air Group 5 was relieved aboard *Yorktown* by Air Group 1 and returned to CONUS to reform on 25 June 1944.

**07 Feb 1945:** Embarked in *Franklin* (CV 13), the squadron departed NAS Alameda for Hawaii, arriving there on 13 February. This was the beginning of

the squadron's second major combat tour in the Pacific.

**19 Mar 1945:** VT-5 was preparing to launch its aircraft for an attack against the city of Kobe, Japan, when the *Franklin* was hit by two enemy bombs from a Japanese aircraft. Fires were ignited on the second and third decks from the first bomb and the second triggered munitions on the carrier. All VT-5's aircraft on the flight and hangar deck were destroyed by the ensuing explosions and fire. The damage was one of the most extensive experienced by an *Essex* class carrier during World War II. A total of 724 men were killed and 265 wounded. VT-5's commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Edmands, was lost in the action. All surviving VT-5 personnel were transferred from *Franklin* and returned to CONUS.

**3 Jul 1950:** Participated in the first combat strikes by carrier aircraft against the North Koreans. The squadron flew its AD-4 Skyraiders on strikes against airfields, supply lines and transportation facilities in and around Pyongyang, North Korea. This was also the first use of the AD Skyraider in combat.

**12 Sep 1950:** Pre-invasion strikes against targets in and around Inchon and Seoul, Korea, began in preparation for the landing at Inchon.

**15 Sep 1950:** Strikes were flown to support the landings at Inchon.

**16 May 1951:** All VA-55 personnel, except 16 officers and 5 enlisted men, embarked USNS *General William Weigel* (TAP 119) enroute to Japan for duty with Air Group 19 aboard Princeton (CV 37). The remainder of the personnel were airlifted to Japan on 17 May.

**29 May 1951:** VA-55 embarked on *Princeton*, replaced VA-195 in Air Group 19, and proceeded to Korea for combat operations.

**Mar 1954:** The squadron was deployed to the Western Pacific aboard *Essex* (CVA 9) when the carrier was ordered to operate off the coast of Vietnam during the Viet Minh's assault against the French at Dien Bien Phu.

**Jul-Sep 1957:** Operated intermittently off the coast of Taiwan due to the build-up of Chinese Communist forces and the threat of a possible invasion of Taiwan or its off-shore islands.

**Sep 1958:** Operated in the Formosa Straits during the Chinese Communist shelling of Quemoy and Matsu.

**30-31 Oct 1962:** Participated in cross deck operations on HMS *Victorious* (R 38) in the South China Sea.

**Apr 1963:** *Ticonderoga*, with VA-55 embarked,

deployed to the South China Sea following several defeats of neutralist forces by the Communists in Laos. After a ceasefire agreement was arranged, the ship resumed normal Seventh Fleet operations on 5 May.

**Jul-Sep 1964:** Participated in special Yankee Team operations involving missions over Laos and South Vietnam.

**2 and 4 Aug 1964:** The squadron flew air support for *Maddox* (DD 731) and *Turner Joy* (DD 951) while the destroyers were on Desoto Patrol missions (intelligence collection missions begun in 1962) off the coast of North Vietnam.

**5 Aug 1964:** VA-55's Skyhawks participated in operation Pierce Arrow, retaliatory strikes against the North Vietnamese. Along with other aircraft from CVG-5, they were part of the mission that struck the Vinh oil storage facility. Ninety percent of the complex was destroyed.

**Oct-Nov 1964:** The squadron continued to operate from *Ticonderoga* off the coast of South Vietnam and participated in special Yankee Team operations, flying missions over South Vietnam.

**3 Jun 1966:** The squadron's commanding officer, Commander M. J. Chewning, while on a mission over North Vietnam, lost the use of his left arm due to a shrapnel hit. He continued his mission, striking a road target, and then returned to the carrier, making a one-handed carrier landing. For his exploits he was awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

**15 Jun 1966:** Lieutenant Commander Theodore F. Kopfman was awarded the Silver Star, in absentia, for his actions on a mission over North Vietnam. During the sortie his aircraft was shot down and he was taken prisoner. He was released by North Vietnam and returned to the United States in 1973.

**Apr 1972:** The squadron participated in Operation Freedom Train, tactical air sorties against military and logistic targets in the southern part of North Vietnam. It also provided close air support for forces in South Vietnam following a massive invasion by North Vietnam.

**May 1972:** Participated in the early phase of operation Linebacker I, heavy air strikes against targets in North Vietnam.

**Jun 1973:** Missions were flown in support of Operation End Sweep, the clearing of mines in the territorial waters of North Vietnam.

**Oct 1973:** With the outbreak of war between Israel, Egypt and Syria, the *Hancock* (CVA 19), with VA-55 embarked, was directed to leave Yankee Station and operate in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden.



*VT-5 flight crews in front of a squadron TBM-3. The squadron TORPCATS insignias on all the flight jackets, circa summer 1945.*

### **Home Port Assignments**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
NAS Norfolk (NAAF Pungo)	15 Feb 1943
Hawaii	Jul 1943*
NAS Alameda	May 1944
NAAS Monterey	Aug 1944†
NAAS Santa Rosa	Oct 1944†
Hawaii	Feb 1945‡
NAS Seattle	Apr 1945§
NAS Klamath Falls	08 May 1945
NAS Pasco	02 Sep 1945
NAAS Brown Field, Chula Vista	04 Dec 1945
NAS Barbers Point	25 Mar 1946
NAS San Diego	21 May 1946
NAS Miramar	20 Mar 1952
NAS Lemoore	Jan 1962

\* Temporary shore assignments at various air stations in Hawaii when not aboard *Yorktown* (CV 10).

† Temporary shore station for the squadron while it conducted training in preparation for its next combat cruise.

‡ Temporary shore assignment in Hawaii when not aboard *Franklin* (CV 13), no specific air station listed.

§ Temporary shore station awaiting reforming of squadron in May 1945.

### **Commanding Officers**

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
LCDR Richard Upson	15 Feb 1943
LT Andrew C. Lett (acting)	30 Apr 1944
LCDR Allan C. Edmands	18 Jun 1944
LT Charles H. Carr (acting)	08 May 1945
LCDR Tom B. Bash	18 May 1945
LT John D. Cornwell (acting)	31 Aug 1945
LT William L. Dodd (acting)	12 Oct 1945
LCDR Allard G. Russell	21 Oct 1945
LCDR William A. Rawls (acting)	01 Oct 1947
CDR Charles H. Crabill, Jr.	24 Dec 1947

**Commanding Officers—Continued**

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
LCDR Norman D. Hodson	14 Jan 1949
LCDR A. L. Maltby, Jr.	17 Jan 1951
LCDR L. W. Chick	03 Oct 1951
LCDR Jack T. Dowler	Feb 1953
LCDR R. J. Thompson	Oct 1953
CDR Jack T. Dowler	Aug 1954
CDR Franklin V. Bernhard	Nov 1955
CDR Billy D. Holder	20 Mar 1957
CDR D. H. Stinemates	21 Feb 1958
CDR J. E. McQuary	06 Feb 1959
CDR H. M. Richey	13 Nov 1959
CDR Lloyd F. Cooper	23 Nov 1960
CDR Earl F. Godfrey	23 Feb 1962
CDR E. J. Lawrence	01 May 1963
CDR H. Urban, Jr.	01 May 1964
CDR J. E. Krimmel	28 May 1965
CDR M. J. Chewning	04 Apr 1966
CDR E. E. Holt (acting)	03 Jun 1966
CDR E. E. Holt	09 Aug 1966
CDR Robert E. Kirksey	17 Oct 1967
CDR John F. Wellings	18 Dec 1968
CDR Frederick W. Lawler	27 Sep 1969
CDR Richard A. Hendricks	27 Mar 1970
CDR Maurice D. Fitzgerald	1971

**Commanding Officers—Continued**

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
CDR George J. Fenzil, Jr.	03 Jun 1972
CDR P. M. Feran	1973
CDR Almer C. Vold	21 Jun 1974

**Aircraft Assignment**

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
TBF-1	01 Mar 1943
TBF-1C	Oct 1943
TBM-3	Sep 1944
TBM-3E	Jun 1945
TBM-3Q	Oct 1946
TBM-3J	Mar 1947
AD-1	18 Jun 1949
AD-4	03 Oct 1949
AD-6	Jul 1954
AD-7	Dec 1956
FJ-4B	Nov 1957
A4D-2	Mar 1959
A4D-2N/A-4C*	Jan 1962
A-4E	Jul 1963
A-4C	12 Sep 1966
A-4F	29 Dec 1967

\* The A4D-2N designation was changed to A-4C in 1962.



*Squadron AD-4Q Skyraiders at NAS San Diego, California, in December 1950 following their return from a Korean combat tour aboard Valley Forge (CV 45) (Courtesy Robert Lawson Collection).*

**Major Overseas Deployments**

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operation</i>
22 Aug 1943	07 Sep 1943	CVG-5	CV 10	TBF-1	Pacific
29 Sep 1943	11 Oct 1943	CVG-5	CV 10	TBF-1	Pacific
10 Nov 1943	09 Dec 1943	CVG-5	CV 10	TBF-1C	Pacific
16 Jan 1944	11 May 1944	CVG-5	CV 10	TBF-1C	Pacific
03 Mar 1945	19 Mar 1945	CVG-5	CV 13	TBF-3	Pacific
31 Mar 1947	16 Jun 1947	CVG-5	CV 38	TBM-3E/Q/J	WestPac
01 May 1950	01 Dec 1950	CVG-5	CV 45	AD-4/4Q	WestPac/Korea
16 May 1951	29 Aug 1951	CVG-19	CV 37*	AD-4/4Q/4W	WestPac/Korea
16 Jun 1952	06 Feb 1953	ATG-2	CVA 9	AD-4/4B	WestPac/Korea
01 Dec 1953	12 Jul 1954	ATG-2	CVA 9	AD-4/4B	WestPac
01 Apr 1955	23 Nov 1955	ATG-2	CVA 47	AD-6	WestPac
06 Apr 1957	18 Sep 1957	ATG-2	CVA 19	AD-6/7	WestPac
21 Aug 1958	12 Jan 1959	ATG-4	CVA 20	FJ-4B	WestPac
06 Mar 1960	11 Oct 1960	CVG-5	CVA 14	A4D-2	WestPac
10 May 1961	15 Jan 1962	CVG-5	CVA 14	A4D-2	WestPac
25 Jul 1962	17 Sep 1962	CVG-5	CVA 64	A4D-2	SoLant/West Coast
03 Jan 1963	15 Jul 1963	CVG-5	CVA 14	A-4C	WestPac
14 Apr 1964	15 Dec 1964	CVW-5	CVA 14	A-4E	WestPac/Vietnam
10 Dec 1965	25 Aug 1966	CVW-14	CVA 61	A-4E	WestPac/Vietnam
29 Apr 1967	04 Dec 1967	CVW-14	CVA 64	A-4C	WestPac/Vietnam
18 Jul 1968	03 Mar 1969	CVW-21	CVA 19	A-4F	WestPac/Vietnam
02 Aug 1969	15 Apr 1970	CVW-21	CVA 19	A-4F	WestPac/Vietnam
22 Oct 1970	03 Jun 1971	CVW-21	CVA 19	A-4F	WestPac/Vietnam
07 Jan 1972	03 Oct 1972	CVW-21	CVA 19	A-4F	WestPac/Vietnam
08 May 1973	08 Jan 1974	CVW-21	CVA 19	A-4F	WestPac/IO
18 Mar 1975	20 Oct 1975	CVW-21	CV 19	A-4F	WestPac

\* See chronology entry for 16 May 1951.

**Air Wing Assignments**

<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
CVG-5	S*	15 Feb 1943
CVG-19 (X)†		23 Apr 1951
CVG-19	B	29 May 1951
ATG-2	W/NB‡	11 Sep 1951
CVG-5	NF	01 Apr 1958
ATG-4	ND	18 Aug 1958
CVG-5/CVW-5§	NF	19 Jan 1959
CVW-14	NK	01 Jun 1965
CVW-21	NP	05 Feb 1968

\* The tail code S was assigned to the air group and squadron on 12 December 1946.

† The squadron was assigned to Air Group 19 (X-ray), an air group that was organized in CONUS and then sent to Japan to replace the squadrons in Air Group 19 which had been operating in Korea aboard *Princeton* (CV 37).

‡ ATG-2 was assigned the letter W as its tail code on 24 July 1956. The tail code was changed to NB in 1957. The effective date for this change was most likely the beginning of FY 58 (1 July 1957).

§ CVG-5 became CVW-5 when Carrier Air Group designations were changed to Carrier Air Wings on 20 December 1963.

**Unit Awards Received**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
NAVE	01 Jul 1948	30 Jun 1949
	01 Jul 1949	30 Jun 1950
	1965	1966
AFEM	02 Aug 1964	05 Aug 1964
	11 Aug 1964	22 Sep 1964
	07 Oct 1964	29 Oct 1964
	02 Nov 1964	06 Nov 1964
	21 Nov 1964	28 Nov 1964
	02 Dec 1968	04 Dec 1968
	30 Oct 1969	
	03 Jan 1970	08 Jan 1970
	22 Feb 1970	25 Feb 1970
MUC	21 Aug 1969	31 Mar 1970
	20 Nov 1970	07 Mar 1971
NUC	02 Aug 1964	05 Aug 1964
	10 Jan 1966	06 Aug 1966
	18 May 1967	26 Nov 1967
	01 Aug 1968	22 Feb 1969
	08 Feb 1972	14 Sep 1972



**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
RVNGC	30 Mar 1972	15 Jul 1972
VNSM	15 Jan 1966	12 Feb 1966
	23 Feb 1966	22 Mar 1966
	30 May 1966	30 Jun 1966
	08 Jun 1967	11 Jun 1967
	18 Jun 1967	25 Jul 1967
	01 Aug 1967	03 Sep 1967
	25 Sep 1967	15 Oct 1967
	24 Oct 1967	12 Nov 1967
	23 Aug 1968	04 Sep 1968
	13 Sep 1968	15 Oct 1968
	23 Oct 1968	28 Nov 1968
	20 Dec 1968	15 Jan 1969
	29 Jan 1969	10 Feb 1969
	31 Aug 1969	24 Sep 1969
	03 Oct 1969	27 Oct 1969
	24 Nov 1969	17 Dec 1969
	18 Jan 1970	11 Feb 1970
	09 Mar 1970	26 Mar 1970
	19 Nov 1970	08 Dec 1970
	29 Dec 1970	15 Jan 1971
	23 Jan 1971	31 Jan 1971
	09 Mar 1971	10 Apr 1971
	17 Apr 1971	04 May 1971
07 Feb 1972	09 Mar 1972	
25 Mar 1972	02 May 1972	

**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
PUC	11 May 1972	01 Jun 1972
	12 Jun 1972	14 Jul 1972
	24 Jul 1972	17 Aug 1972
	27 Aug 1972	14 Sep 1972
	31 Aug 1943	
	05 Oct 1943	06 Oct 1943
	19 Nov 1943	05 Dec 1943
	29 Jan 1944	23 Feb 1944
	29 Mar 1944	30 Apr 1944
	31 Aug 1943	
Campaign Medal (Asiatic/Pacific)	05 Oct 1943	06 Oct 1943
	19 Nov 1943	04 Dec 1943
	29 Jan 1944	08 Feb 1944
	16 Feb 1944	17 Feb 1944
	21 Feb 1944	22 Feb 1944
	30 Mar 1944	01 Apr 1944
	21 Apr 1944	24 Apr 1944
	29 Apr 1944	01 May 1944
	17 Mar 1945	19 Mar 1945
	27 Jun 1950	03 Nov 1950
KSM	29 May 1951	16 Aug 1951
	26 Jul 1952	25 Jan 1953
UNSM	27 Jun 1950	03 Nov 1950
	29 May 1951	16 Aug 1951
	26 Jul 1952	25 Jan 1953



*A squadron A-4F Skyhawk piloted by Lieutenant Duncan, 14 February 1975.*

**SECOND VA-55****Lineage**

Established as Attack Squadron FIFTY FIVE (VA-55) on 7 October 1983.

Disestablished on 1 January 1991. The second squadron to be assigned the VA-55 designation.

**Squadron Insignia and Nickname**

The squadron adopted the insignia used by the first VA-55. It was approved by CNO on 12 May 1983. Colors for the flying seahorse were: alternating white and dark green square blocks outline the circular insignia; the upper half of the insignia was light blue and the lower half dark blue; the waves were highlighted in white; the seahorse was light gray-green with white and dark green markings; the wings were gold with dark green markings; the flames from the seahorse and rocket were red, outlined in yellow; and the rocket was white with a red tip.

*The squadron adopted the same flying seahorse insignia used by the first VA-55.*



Nickname: Warhorses, 1983–1991.

**Chronology of Significant Events**

**25 Mar 1986:** Due to the initiation of hostile fire by Libya on 24 March, a squadron aircraft attacked a Libyan Nanuchka II class guided missile patrol boat with Rockeye cluster bombs. The Libyan vessel was damaged by the attack and then sunk by a Harpoon strike from VA-85, an Intruder squadron operating from *Saratoga* (CV 60).

**14–15 Apr 1986:** Six of the squadron's Intruders participated in an attack against Benina Airfield at Benghazi, Libya. Numerous parked aircraft were destroyed and the surrounding hangars, support facilities, aircraft aprons, and other airfield equipment and vehicles were damaged. These strikes were in response to the involvement of Libyan trained terrorists in a specific incident (Berlin disco bombing in which American servicemen were killed).

**Aug–Sep 1989:** *Coral Sea* (CV 43), with VA-55 embarked, was ordered to operate off the coast of Lebanon following terrorist claims to have killed an American hostage, Lieutenant Colonel William R. Higgins, and the capture of Sheik Obeid from Lebanon by Israeli forces. The unstable situation in Lebanon ultimately led to the evacuation of the American Embassy. Squadron aircraft flew missions in support of the evacuation.

**22 Feb 1991:** The squadron held a disestablishment ceremony at NAS Oceana. It was officially disestablished on 1 January 1991.

**Home Port Assignment**

Location	Assignment Date
NAS Oceana	07 Oct 1983

**Commanding Officers**

	Date Assumed Command
CDR Stan W. Bryant	07 Oct 1983
CDR Robin Y. Weber	18 May 1985
CDR Warren C. Chewning	27 Jun 1986
CDR Ralph E. Suggs	07 Dec 1987
CDR John W. Henson	07 Jan 1989

**Aircraft Assignment**

Type of Aircraft	Date Type First Received
A-6E	25 Jan 1984
KA-6D	Feb 1984

**Major Overseas Deployments**

Date of Departure	Date of Return	Air Wing	Carrier	Type of Aircraft	Area of Operation
01 Oct 1985	19 May 1986	CVW-13	CV 43	A-6E/KA-6D	Med
29 Sep 1987	28 Mar 1988	CVW-13	CV 43	A-6E	Med
31 May 1989	30 Sep 1989	CVW-13	CV 43	A-6E	Med

**Air Wing Assignments**

Air Wing	Tail Code	Assignment Date
COMMATWING-1*		07 Oct 1983
CVW-13	AK	01 Mar 1984

\* Administratively assigned to Commander Medium Attack Wing ONE.

**Unit Awards Received**

Unit Award	Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award
NAVE	01 Jan 1985 – 31 Dec 1985
	01 Jan 1986 – 31 Dec 1986
NEM	20 Jan 1986 – 05 May 1986
NUC	02 Oct 1985 – 19 May 1986

**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
	23 Mar 1986	17 Apr 1986
AFEM	20 Jan 1986	05 May 1986

**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
	01 Jan 1985	31 Dec 1986
MUC	30 Mar 1988	30 Sep 1989



*A squadron A-6E Intruder; note the flying seahorse insignia on the tail.*

## VA-56

### Lineage

Established as Attack Squadron FIFTY SIX (VA-56) on 4 June 1956.

Disestablished on 31 August 1986. The first squadron to be assigned the VA-56 designation.

### Squadron Insignia and Nickname

The squadron's insignia was officially approved by CNO on 25 March 1957. A boomerang with a speed arrow and electron rings represented the squadron's capabilities as a jet attack squadron with modern electronic equipment. The circular insignia had a gold circumference outlined in dark blue, with a white background; a yellow boomerang outlined in dark blue and with white racing strips; dark blue speed arrow and stars; and the electron rings and banner lettering were black with a white banner outlined in dark blue and gold.



*The squadron's stylized insignia is an example of an excellent design that remained viable throughout the squadron's 30 years of history and numerous aircraft changes.*

Nickname: Boomerangs, 1957-circa 1958.

Champions, circa 1958–1986.

### Chronology of Significant Events

**25–31 Oct 1961:** VA-56 participated in Operation Crosstie with HMS *Victorious* (R-38), conducting flight operations from the deck of *Victorious* to evaluate the compatibility of USN/RN aircraft, armament, and handling facilities.

**16 Jul–15 Sep 1962:** The squadron was embarked in *Constellation* (CVA 64) during her transit from the East Coast, via Cape Horn, to her new home port on the West Coast.

**Jul 1964:** VA-56's A-4E Skyhawks participated in special Yankee Team operations, providing aerial refueling support and experimenting with the tactic of employing A-4Es as armed escorts for the RF-8 and RA-3 reconnaissance aircraft flying missions over Laos and South Vietnam to detect Communist military presence and operations.

**2–4 Aug 1964:** During a Desoto Patrol mission (intelligence collection missions begun in 1962) *Maddox* (DD 731) was attacked by three motor torpedo boats on 2 August off the coast of North Vietnam. Following this incident, the squadron flew sorties in support of the destroyers on Desoto Patrol.

**5 Aug 1964:** VA-56's Skyhawks participated in Pierce Arrow, retaliatory strikes against the North Vietnamese. Along with other aircraft from CVW-5, they were part of the first sortie that struck the anti-aircraft gun emplacements at the Vinh oil storage facility. Ninety percent of the complex was destroyed by the sorties flown against this facility. The squadron also participated in strikes against the Ben Thuy naval base, resulting in the sinking and destruction of several torpedo boats.

**10–29 Oct, 1–5 and 22–28 Nov 1964:** The squadron continued to participate in special Yankee Team operations off the coast of Vietnam.

**7 Feb 1966:** Lieutenant Commander Render Crayton was awarded the Silver Star (in absentia) for his actions while engaged in a combat mission over North Vietnam.

**10 Jun 1967:** The squadron's commanding officer, Commander Sherman, failed to return from a strike in North Vietnam and is now listed as missing in action, presumed dead.

**Jan–Feb 1968:** While embarked in *Enterprise* (CVAN 65) and en route to Yankee Station, the carrier was ordered to the Sea of Japan for operations following the seizure of *Pueblo* (AGER 2) by the North Koreans on 23 January.

**19 Jun 1968:** Lieutenant Commander Crater received the Silver Star for his actions in coordinating the successful night rescue of a downed F-4 crewman in North Vietnam. This action was part of the rescue operations in which Lieutenant Lassen, a helicopter pilot and not a member of VA-56, received the Medal of Honor for his exploits.

**1 Nov 1968:** The squadron's last A-4E Skyhawk was transferred and training began for the transition to the A-7 Corsair II.

**May 1972:** On 12 May *Midway* (CVA 41), with VA-56 embarked, shifted its operations from the area of An Loc, South Vietnam to targets in North Vietnam. It participated in the mining and interdiction of Haiphong Harbor and North Vietnam's extensive coastal waterway system. This was an extension of operation Pocket Money which was initiated on 9 May by squadrons from *Kitty Hawk* (CVA 63) and *Coral Sea* (CVA 43). It also participated in operation Linebacker I, the concentration of heavy strikes against targets in North Vietnam to interdict the flow of supplies into the country and reduce its ability to prosecute the war. Linebacker I operations lasted until 22 October.

**29–30 Apr 1975:** *Midway*, including elements of VA-56, participated in operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of American citizens from Saigon, South Vietnam.

**Aug 1976:** VA-56, embarked in *Midway*, operated in Korean waters following the killing of two American officers in the DMZ by the North Koreans.

**Apr–May 1979:** *Midway*, with VA-56 embarked, deployed to the Gulf of Aden to relieve *Constellation* (CV 64) and maintain a U.S. carrier presence following the out break of fighting between North and South Yemen and the fall of the Shah of Iran.

**Oct 1979:** As a response to anti-American demonstrations in Iran, *Midway* and its air wing, including VA-56, were ordered to deploy to the Indian Ocean for the second time in 1979.

**Nov 1979–Feb 1980:** Following the Iranian seizure of the American Embassy in Teheran and the taking of American hostages on 4 November, *Midway* proceeded to the Gulf of Oman and remained on station until relieved in early February 1980.

**May–Jun 1980:** *Midway*, with VA-56 embarked, operated off the coast of Korea due to the civil unrest in South Korea and the massacre of several hundred people in the town of Kwangju.

**May 1986:** The squadron was reassigned to NAS Lemoore as a result of the change in CVW-5's composition from A-7 and F-4 aircraft to FA-18A. It began the transfer of its personnel and aircraft in preparation for the disestablishment of the squadron on 31 August.



A flight of squadron F9F-8 Cougars that deployed aboard *Bon Homme Richard's* (CVA 31) 1957 WestPac cruise.

### Home Port Assignments

	<i>Location Assignment Date</i>
NAS Miramar	04 Jun 1956
NAS Lemoore	30 Jun 1961
NS Yokosuka/ <i>Midway</i> (CV 41)*	30 Jun 1973
NAS Lemoore	May 1986

\* Under the Overseas Home Port Program, VA-56 and CVW-5 were permanently based aboard *Midway* (CV 41) and home ported with the carrier at Naval Station Yokosuka, Japan. The home port was officially changed on 30 June 1973. However, *Midway* did not arrive in Japan until 5 October. Elements of VA-56, when not operating from *Midway*, were based ashore at NAF Atsugi or Misawa, Japan.

### Commanding Officers

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
CDR Richard O. Devine	04 Jun 1956
CDR C. G. Mitchell	31 Dec 1957
LCDR R. L. Walker	10 Dec 1958
CDR R. McBride	05 Dec 1959
CDR W. H. Hoover	06 Jan 1961
CDR James A. Homyak	31 Jan 1962
CDR Donald L. Campbell	17 Mar 1963
CDR Wesley L. McDonald	10 Feb 1964
CDR William G. Nealon	23 Mar 1965
CDR Carl Ray Smith, Jr.	28 Feb 1966
CDR Peter W. Sherman	17 Mar 1967
CDR Ernest R. Seymour	14 Jun 1967
CDR John L. Nicholson, Jr.	31 Jul 1968
CDR Joseph E. Potosnak	11 Dec 1969
CDR John W. Weed	Oct 1970
CDR Neil L. Harvey	21 Aug 1971
CDR Walter Lewis Chatham	02 Aug 1972
CDR Charles G. Andres	03 Aug 1973
CDR Ronald N. Artim	30 Jul 1974
CDR Gary L. Starbird	26 Sep 1975
CDR Robert E. Smith	19 Dec 1976
CDR Roger P. Flower	30 Mar 1978
CDR Leon C. Bryant	19 Jun 1979
CDR Charles S. Mitchell IV	22 Aug 1980
CDR Edwin E. Shipe III	28 Dec 1981
CDR Garold S. McDaniel	22 Mar 1983
CDR Paul R. Statskey	25 Jul 1984
CDR J. R. Hutchison	24 Jan 1986

### Aircraft Assignment

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
F9F-3	Jun 1956
F9F-8B	Jul 1956
F9F-8	Oct 1956
FJ-4B	29 May 1958
A4D-1	23 Dec 1958
A4D-2/A-4B*	Apr 1959
A-4E	15 Jul 1963
A-4C	23 Jul 1966
A-4E	18 Aug 1967
A-7B	Jan 1969
A-7A	Mar 1973
A-7E	24 Apr 1977

\* The A4D-2 designation was changed to A-4B in 1962.



*A squadron A-4C Skyhawk with Enterprise markings, 1966.*

### **Major Overseas Deployments**

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operation</i>
12 Jul 1957	09 Dec 1957	CVG-5	CVA 31	F9F-8	WestPac
06 Mar 1960	10 Oct 1960	CVG-5	CVA 14	A4D-2	WestPac
10 May 1961	15 Jan 1962	CVG-5	CVA 14	A4D-2	WestPac
03 Jan 1963	15 Jul 1963	CVG-5	CVA 14	A-4B	WestPac
14 Apr 1964	15 Dec 1964	CVW-5	CVA 14	A-4E	WestPac/Vietnam
28 Sep 1965	13 May 1966	CVW-5	CVA 14	A-4E	WestPac/Vietnam
19 Nov 1966	06 Jul 1967	CVW-9	CVAN 65	A-4C	WestPac/Vietnam
03 Jan 1968	18 Jul 1968	CVW-9	CVAN 65	A-4E	WestPac/Vietnam
14 Oct 1969	01 Jun 1970	CVW-2	CVA 61	A-7B	WestPac/Vietnam
16 Apr 1971	06 Nov 1971	CVW-5	CVA 41	A-7B	WestPac/Vietnam
10 Apr 1972	03 Mar 1973	CVW-5	CVA 41	A-7B	WestPac/Vietnam
11 Sep 1973	05 Oct 1973	CVW-5	CVA 41	A-7A	WestPac*
26 Nov 1973	22 Dec 1973	CVW-5	CVA 41	A-7A	WestPac
29 Jan 1974	06 Mar 1974	CVW-5	CVA 41	A-7A	WestPac
18 Oct 1974	20 Dec 1974	CVW-5	CVA 41	A-7A	WestPac
13 Jan 1975	18 Feb 1975	CVW-5	CVA 41	A-7A	WestPac
31 Mar 1975	29 May 1975	CVW-5	CVA 41	A-7A	WestPac
04 Oct 1975	19 Dec 1975	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7A	WestPac/IO
13 Mar 1976	26 Apr 1976	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7A	WestPac
19 May 1976	22 Jun 1976	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7A	WestPac
09 Jul 1976	04 Aug 1976	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7A	WestPac
01 Nov 1976	17 Dec 1976	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7A	WestPac
11 Jan 1977	01 Mar 1977	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7A	WestPac
19 Apr 1977	02 Sep 1977	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac†

**Major Overseas Deployments—Continued**

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operation</i>
27 Sep 1977	21 Dec 1977	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac/IO
11 Apr 1978	23 May 1978	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
09 Nov 1978	23 Dec 1978	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
11 Jan 1979	20 Feb 1979	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
07 Apr 1979	18 Jun 1979	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	IO
20 Aug 1979	14 Sep 1979	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
30 Sep 1979	20 Feb 1980	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	IO
14 Jul 1980	26 Nov 1980	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac/IO
23 Feb 1981	05 Jun 1981	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac/IO
26 Jun 1981	16 Jul 1981	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
03 Sep 1981	06 Oct 1981	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
26 Apr 1982	18 Jun 1982	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
14 Sep 1982	11 Dec 1982	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	NorPac/WestPac
02 Jun 1983	13 Aug 1983	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
25 Oct 1983	11 Dec 1983	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
28 Dec 1983	23 May 1984	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	IO
15 Oct 1984	12 Dec 1984	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
01 Feb 1985	14 Oct 1985	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	IO/WestPac
15 Nov 1985	12 Dec 1985	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac
17 Jan 1986	30 Mar 1986	CVW-5	CV 41	A-7E	WestPac

\* The squadron and *Midway* (CVA 41) arrived at their new home port, Naval Station Yokosuka, Japan. Since the squadron was permanently forward deployed all future deployments for the squadron will cover only those operations outside the home waters of Japan. The squadron returned to CONUS in May 1986, ending its overseas basing assignment.

† The squadron was shorebased at NAS Cubi Point during the latter part of April to August 1977 undergoing transitional training in the A-7E.

**Air Wing Assignments**

<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
CVG-5/CVW-5*	S/NF†	04 Jun 1956
CVW-9	NG	01 Jul 1966
COMFAIRALAMEDA		Oct 1968
CVW-2	NE	09 Jun 1969
CVW-5	NF	01 Jun 1970

\* Carrier Air Groups were redesignated Carrier Air Wings on 20 December 1963, hence, CVG-5 became CVW-5.

† CVG-5's tail code was changed from S to NF in 1957. The effective date was most likely the beginning of FY 58 (1 July 1957).

**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>
	21 Nov 1964 – 28 Nov 1964
	10 Jan 1970 – 13 Jan 1970
	12 Apr 1970 – 13 Apr 1970
	29 Apr 1975 – 30 Apr 1975
HSM	29 Apr 1975 – 30 Apr 1975
MUC	27 Oct 1969 – 12 May 1970
	07 May 1971 – 28 Oct 1971
	01 Jan 1978 – 20 May 1979
	13 Nov 1979 – 08 Feb 1980
	27 Jul 1982 – 01 May 1984
NEM	15 Apr 1979 – 06 Jun 1979
	21 Nov 1979 – 07 Feb 1980
	19 Aug 1980 – 13 Nov 1980
	12 Mar 1981 – 19 May 1981
NAVE	02 Aug 1964 – 05 Aug 1964
	18 Dec 1966 – 20 Jan 1967
AFEM	14 Jan 1968 – 26 Jun 1968
	29 Apr 1975 – 30 Apr 1975
	01 Jan 1978 – 30 Jun 1979
PUC	30 Apr 1972 – 09 Feb 1973
RVNGC	30 Mar 1972 – 15 Jul 1972
VNSM	05 Nov 1965 – 01 Dec 1965
	22 Dec 1965 – 14 Jan 1966
	22 Jan 1966 – 16 Feb 1966

**Unit Awards Received**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>
	01 Jul 1959 – 30 Jun 1960
	01 Jul 1977 – 31 Dec 1978
NAVE	26 Sep 1961 – 30 Sep 1961
AFEM	27 Sep 1961 – 01 Oct 1961
	10 Oct 1961 – 14 Oct 1961
	16 Oct 1961 – 17 Oct 1961
	02 Aug 1964 – 05 Aug 1964
	11 Aug 1964 – 22 Sep 1964
	07 Oct 1964 – 29 Oct 1964
	02 Nov 1964 – 06 Nov 1964

**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
	06 Mar 1966	31 Mar 1966
	10 Apr 1966	21 Apr 1966
	17 Dec 1966	17 Jan 1967
	31 Jan 1967	03 Mar 1967
	20 Mar 1967	18 Apr 1967
	28 Apr 1967	26 May 1967
	04 Jun 1967	21 Jun 1967
	21 Feb 1968	17 Mar 1968
	26 Mar 1968	24 Apr 1968
	11 Jun 1972	07 Jul 1972
	16 Jul 1972	13 Aug 1972
	23 Aug 1972	10 Sep 1972
	23 Oct 1972	23 Nov 1972
	03 Dec 1972	22 Dec 1972
	31 Dec 1972	
	04 Jan 1973	24 Jan 1973
	30 Apr 1968	21 May 1968
	30 May 1968	27 Jun 1968
	07 Jan 1969	30 Jan 1969
	15 Feb 1969	16 Mar 1969

**Unit Awards Received—Continued**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
	04 Apr 1969	17 Apr 1969
	16 Nov 1969	07 Dec 1969
	17 Dec 1969	12 Jan 1970
	29 Jan 1970	18 Feb 1970
	27 Feb 1970	30 Mar 1970
	16 Apr 1970	14 May 1970
	17 May 1971	09 Jun 1971
	29 Jun 1971	20 Jul 1971
	31 Jul 1971	17 Aug 1971
	26 Sep 1971	11 Oct 1971
	01 May 1972	01 Jun 1972
	11 Jun 1972	07 Jul 1972
	16 Jul 1972	13 Aug 1972
	23 Aug 1972	10 Sep 1972
	23 Oct 1972	23 Nov 1972
	03 Dec 1972	22 Dec 1972
	31 Dec 1972	
	04 Jan 1973	24 Jan 1973
	03 Feb 1973	09 Feb 1973



*A flight of squadron A-7 Corsair IIs, 1973.*