



MCAS BEAUFORT



Welcome to Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort

"The noise you hear, is the sound of freedom."



HISTORY

Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, home of the Marine Corps' Atlantic Coast fixed-wing, fighter-attack aircraft assets, is located in the heart of the South Carolina Lowcountry and is among the United States military's most important and most historically colorful installations. Consisting of some 6,900 acres 70 miles southwest of Charleston, South Carolina on Highway 21, the installation is home to seven Marine Corps F/A- 18 squadrons. Two additional Navy F/A-18 squadrons joined the Fighertown community in March 2000, strengthening the installation's economic contribution to the local area. Three versions of the F/A-18 Hornet are found aboard MCAS Beaufort, the F/A-18 Hornet A/Cs and the F/A-18 D.

A proud tradition

The acreage occupied by the Air Station was formerly the site of several prominent Lowcountry plantations, including the Clarendon and Edgerly, Bull and Deveaux plantations. In 1779, during the Revolutionary War, British troops landed at what is now the Laurel Bay Housing area and battled American revolutionary troops at Gray's Hill. The Beaufort area was also a staging area for both Confederate and Union troops during the civil war and elaborate plantation homes still line Bay Street, overlooking the Beaufort River.

By June 15, 1943, the Civil Aeronautics Authority established Naval Air Station Beaufort as an auxiliary air station which supported advanced training of anti-submarine patrol squadrons which ensured the security of shipping along the Eastern seaboard.

Today

Currently, the Fighertown family consists of more than 700 Marines and Sailors along with 600 civilian personnel who ensure approximately 3,400 personnel of Marine Air Group 31 and its component squadrons and tenant units are readily deployable.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Military Salaries:
active \$117,241,772
retired \$72,132,000

Civilian Salaries
NAF/DeCA \$35,543,978
retired \$177,725,004

Construction \$83,977,414
Concession Revenue \$42,746,415
Opportunities \$3,276,702
Medical \$26,240,140
Travel \$510,991
Contributions \$129,675

TOTAL:
\$561,524,091



Marine Aircraft Group 31

Marine Aircraft Group 31, formed in 1943 aboard Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., has been the largest tenant command at the Air Station in control of the six F/A-18 squadrons aboard the Fightertown, since 1961. The mission of MAG-31 is to conduct anti-air warfare and offensive air support operations in support of Fleet Marine Forces from advance bases, expeditionary airfields and aircraft carriers, and to conduct such other air operations as may be directed. Marine Aircraft Group 31 is preparing for tomorrow's threat by conducting world-class training for our Marines on the Joint Strike Fighter. MAG-31 has an illustrious history flying combat missions since its commissioning in World War II, MAG-31 continues to this very day supporting Marines in contact with the enemy.



SQUADRONS OF MAG-31



Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 115, also known as the Silver Eagles, originally began as Marine Fighting Squadron 115. The squadron was commissioned July 1, 1943 aboard Marine Corps Air Station Santa Barbara and was equipped with the F4U Corsair. The Silver Eagles, also go by the moniker 'Joe's Jokers' after Maj. Joseph Foss, for reaching the 26-enemy shoot-down record.



Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 122 was commissioned March 1, 1942 aboard Camp Kearny, Calif. Originally called the Candystripers, the squadron was outfitted with the F4F Wildcat, and then embarked on its first combat tour in October 1942.



Marine Observation Squadron 251, Marine Fighter Squadron 251, Marine Attack Squadron 251, the Thunderbolts have gone by many monikers over the years before becoming Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251. December 1, 1941, the Thunderbolts were commissioned as Marine Observation Squadron 251 attached to Naval Air Station North Island, Calif., and participated in World War II.



Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 312, also known as the Checkers, became commissioned as Marine Fighter Squadron 312 on June 1, 1943, at Page Field, Parris Island, South Carolina under Marine Aircraft Group 31.



Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224, also known as the Bengals, originally began as Marine Fighter Squadron 224 on May 1, 1942 at Barbers Point, Hawaii, flying the Grumman F-4F Wildcat.



Marine Night Fighter Squadron 533, or Black Mac's Killers, was commissioned Oct. 1, 1943, at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C. Flying Grumman F6F-3N Hellcats, VMF(N)-533 quickly distinguished themselves by gaining the most aerial victories of any night squadron while at Yontan Airfield Japan.

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 115

Silver Eagles

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 115, also known as the Silver Eagles, originally began as Marine Fighting Squadron 115. The squadron was commissioned July 1, 1943 aboard Marine Corps Air Station Santa Barbara and was equipped with the F4U Corsair. The Silver Eagles, also go by the moniker 'Joe's Jokers' after Maj. Joseph Foss, famous for reaching the 26-enemy shoot-down record in WWII, who assumed command of the squadron 16 days after its inception.

The Silver Eagles joined the Pacific Campaign in May 1944 as VMF-115 where they largely contributed to the efforts in the Philippines, Sulu Archipelago and Mindanao during WWII.

Marine Fighting Squadron 115 became the first Marine Corps squadron to qualify all of its Grumman F9F-2 Panther

fighters in December 1949. In November, 1950, VMF-115 was first to serve aboard a carrier, qualifying all 18 pilots without incident aboard the USS Roosevelt. In February 1952, VMF-115 deployed to K-3 Airfield near Pohang, Korea for combat operations. Marine Fighting Squadron 115 also provided close air support during several battles including the famous withdrawal at the Chosin Reservoir.

VMFA-115's achievements have highlighted the history of Marine Corps aviation; the squadron has seen extensive service in nearly every conflict in which Marines have fought, according to www.marines.mil/unit/2ndMAW/mag31/vmfa115/Pages/history. During the past sixty years, the Silver Eagles have carried out missions in the South Pacific, Philippines, North China, Korea,

Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand and the Middle East.

In the spring of 1957, the Squadron received the Marine Corps' first F4D Skyrays and were designated VMF(AW)-115. After flying Skyrays longer than any other squadron, VMF(AW)-115 was re-designated VMFA-115 January 1, 1964 and transitioned to the Mach II capable F-4B Phantom II.

"The Silver Eagles have built a distinguished career since 1943," John Chapin, retired Marine captain and volunteer at the Marine Corps Historical Center, said in a statement. "The squadron has played a prominent role in every national conflict from WWII to the Vietnam War, and has served in nearly every part of the globe."

Currently, VMFA-115 flies the

F/A-18 Hornet, and has since 1965. Also, through the Unit Deployment Program, the Silver Eagles are deployed to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan and will soon return to Fightertown after concluding their nine-month support in the Pacific.



Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 122

Werewolves

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 122 was commissioned March 1, 1942 aboard Camp Kearny, Calif. Originally called the Candystripers, the squadron was outfitted with the F4F Wildcat, and then embarked on its first combat tour in October 1942.

The squadron was officially named the 'Crusaders' in December 1957, when it became the fastest squadron in the Marine Corps with the delivery of its first F8U-1 Crusader.

The squadron is currently named the Werewolves, a name it has held since mid-2008. The name change reflected the squadron's upcoming combat deployment to Iraq that began in September 2008.

Having completed a second combat deployment to Afghan-

istan in mid-2011, VMFA-122 plans to return to the Crusader namesake in March 2012 to reflect the transition of its operational focus back to the Pacific theater, according to 1st Lt. David Ryan, the S-2 officer for VMFA-122.

In January 2011, VMFA-122 became the first F/A-18 squadron in Department of the Navy history to employ the GBU-54 Laser Joint Direct Attack Munition in combat. Additionally, the squadron supported more than 2,000 Joint Tactical Air Support Requests from the Ground Combat Element and never failed to support a JTAR due to maintenance reasons.

The squadron has a long and distinguished history in the Pacific Command area of responsibility, having participated in 13 Unit Deployment Programs to the Pacific theater.

"In my entire time with the unit, the Marines have always done a great job and done what I asked of them – with no complaints," said Sgt. Maj. David Cadd, former VMFA-122 sergeant major, during his relief ceremony. "I'm very proud of all they've accomplished and know they'll continue to do well."

They led the Marine Corps Aviation community in certifying the first Marine single seat F/A-18 pilot as a Forward Air Controller Airborne, July 2006.

The legacy of VMFA-122 continues to grow as Marines new and old are integrated into the unit's history.

"I've spoken to commanders who have retired and can be traced back to the 1970s who always say the same thing," said Lt. Col. Wade Weigel,

the commanding officer of VMFA-122. "They want to know how the Marines are doing and how far the squadron has come because they are proud of them."



Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224

Bengals

Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224, also known as the Bengals, originally began as Marine Fighter Squadron 224 on May 1, 1942 at Barbers Point, Hawaii, flying the Grumman F-4F Wildcat.

The squadron later went on to utilize many types of aircraft, as military-aviation technology advanced and previous aircrafts became obsolete, change names and switch locations.

Despite the complexity of the changes to the Bengals, one aspect of the 224 squadron has remained timeless since 1942; a proud group of warriors known as the Bengals still remains to protect America.

"This squadron has a lot of history through the operations we have

been involved in at home and abroad," said Staff Sgt. Daniel Black, the technical director program coordinator with Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224. "Our time here in Beaufort is just a small integral part of our squadron's history."

Since its arrival to Fightertown, March 6, 1993, VMFA (AW)-224 has utilized the F/A-18D Hornet an all-weather, multirole fighter jet in areas of operation all over the globe.

"Not only are we training to protect ourselves here on the Eastern Seaboard but we also train with our allies overseas in countries such as Japan, the Philippines and Thailand," said Black. "Going on training exercises overseas also allowed us to maintain a presence in case our allies needed us in a moment's notice."

The Hornet has honed its combat readiness by training to maintain air superiority and engaging mock ground targets during exercises at home and abroad.

"When the Hornet was introduced to the squadron it was an aircraft with the purpose of flying and dropping bombs," said Black. "As technology has progressed so has the F/A-18. There are different weapons we can use now. There is better guidance to use those weapons with and different counter measures for anything launched at us. It's interesting to see what the Hornet was before and what it has become now."

Since the beginning of its use as an aviation asset, the squadron has undergone changes in maintenance policy as breakthroughs in technology have improved

mission capabilities and overall versatility.

"We don't use the F/A-18 just to drop bombs on targets anymore," said Staff Sgt. Jon Scherr, a power line staff non-commissioned officer with VMFA (AW)-224. "There is such a wide variety of missions the Hornet can perform thanks to modern day technology and the Marines who operate and maintain it."



Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 533

Hawks

Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 533, also known as the Hawks, is the youngest aviation unit aboard the Air Station.

"We have a tradition of leading the way with technology and tactics to fight," said Capt. Michael Stroup, VMFA (AW)-533, assistant administration officer and pilot. "Our unit was originally a nighttime flight squadron. Saying 'we own the night,' is our way to strive for excellence and that is when we have an advantage over the enemy."

Marine Night Fighter Squadron 533, or Black Mac's Killers, was commissioned Oct. 1, 1943, at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C.

Flying Grumman F6F-3N Hellcats, VMF(N)-533 quickly distinguished themselves by gaining the most aerial victories of any night

squadron while at Yontan Airfield Japan. It was there Capt. Robert Baird arose in the ranks of 533 as the first night fighter ace.

The squadron was stationed in China and Hawaii before returning to Cherry Point in 1947, then flying the F7F-3N Tigercat.

The Hawks entered the Jet age in 1953 with the F2H-A4 Banshee, followed by the F9F Cougar in 1957 and the A-4D Skyhawk in 1959. It was with the acquisition of the Skyhawk that the Hawks were designated as Marine Attack Squadron 533. They then achieved all weather capability with the arrival of the A-6A Intruder in 1965.

After a deployment to Vietnam, they were recognized for their excellence with the Commandant's Aviation Efficiency Trophy.

"The squadron has a great reputation in the MAG and across the Marine Corps," said Capt. Chase Newman, VMFA(AW)-533, communications officer.

The Hawks' strong reputation in the 70s led them to become the first all-weather attack squadron to participate in the Unit Deployment Program in 1980.

Numerous deployments included tours aboard carrier cruises and a deployment in 1990 in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

The Hawks upgraded to the F/A-18 and became the first all-weather fighter attack squadron in 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing when they arrived to Fighter-town, Sept. 1, 1992.

From the Air Station, they pioneered new techniques

and procedures for the more capable Hornet that were put to the test.

The Hawks were a front-runner during Operations Southern Watch and Iraqi Freedom, which later earned the unit a Presidential Unit Citation in 2003.

Training became the main priority of the unit between 2003 and February 2006 when the Hawks returned to Iraq. There they conducted a myriad of operations, including reconnaissance and ground support.

Since then, the Hawks have trained diligently, participated in several Unit Deployment Programs, and stand ready to uphold the standard of excellence set by Marines before them.



Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251

Thunderbolts

Marine Observation Squadron 251, Marine Fighter Squadron 251, Marine Attack Squadron 251, the Thunderbolts have gone by many monikers over the years before becoming Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251.

December 1, 1941, the Thunderbolts were commissioned as Marine Observation Squadron 251 attached to Naval Air Station North Island, Calif., and participated in World War II.

The squadron's primary role in WWII was to provide aviation support to the Pacific Campaign.

During the Korean War in the early 1950s, the squadron also participated in missions after becoming Marine Attack Squadron 251.

It was not until 1961 that Fighter-town received VMF-251.

The squadron made history in February 1962 as the first F-8

squadron to be deployed on an aircraft carrier while aboard the USS Shangri-La in support of the Cold War.

While aboard the Shangri-La, the squadron also set the record for the most flight time in a month's time with more than 500 hours.

In 1969, the Thunderbolts were awarded its first Marine Corps Aviation Association's Robert M. Hanson Award as fighter squadron of the year. The award is given annually to the 'most outstanding Marine fighter squadron of the year,' based on mission success rate, number of combat operations flown, number of operations supported, flight hours and safety readiness.

In keeping with tradition, the Thunderbolts have managed to make smooth transitions from new and senior Marines for years.

"When we returned from our

last deployment we had a huge turnover – a lot of Marines left for various reasons, and we had to teach and qualify an almost new group of Marines," said Capt. Arthur Lotz, Thunderbolts power-line officer-in-charge. "However, we have been working diligently to prepare for our upcoming deployment to the Pacific and have more than enough experience to succeed."

Throughout their history, the Thunderbolts have cycled through junior and old Marines while maintaining competent support while deployed and in garrison.

"There is always a revolving change of the guard – but it is those experienced Marines that teach the incoming Marines who keep the unit successful," said Gunnery Sgt. Enel Laborn, Thunderbolts quality assurance representative.

In 2002 the squadron once again received the Robert M. Hanson. The Thunderbolts were also the first squadron to drop ordnance in Afghanistan and are deploying aboard the USS Enterprise and are expected to be the last F/A-18 squadron to drop ordnance in Afghanistan.



Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 312

Checkerboards

From the birth of Marine Corps Aviation on May 22, 1912, many air-to-ground combat operations have been executed by pilots and their respective squadrons.

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 312, also known as the Checkerboards, became commissioned as Marine Fighter Squadron 312 on June 1, 1943, at Page Field, Parris Island, South Carolina under Marine Aircraft Group 31.

The squadron's first combat mission was conducted from Kadena Air Base, Japan during the Battle of Okinawa. On April 12, 1945, the squadron intercepted 20 enemy Japanese aircraft, attaining eight kills and no losses.

A month later on May 10, 1945, 1st Lt. Bob Klingman was on patrol when he began to pursue a Japanese aircraft headed back to Japan. The enemy flew at a high altitude, making small maneuvers

dangerous for Klingman.

Machine gun capabilities were disabled due to the freezing altitude as the American aircraft began to close in. Slowly the lieutenant positioned his aircraft above his enemy and dove his front rotor into the Japanese rud-der. After a second collision, the enemy aircraft fell. Klingman ran out of fuel during his return back. The pilot took a steep glide before safely landing at the flightline with an aircraft riddled with bullet holes and rotor slowly spinning.

Photos of Klingman and his battle-worn aircraft are displayed in the Checkerboard's ready room.

"The actions performed by Lt. Klingman were one of the most exciting events in the squadron's history," said Capt. Chris Schwamberger, VMFA-312 squadron historian.

In 1993, VMFA-312 was awarded

its first Marine Corps Aviation Association's Robert M. Hanson Award as fighter squadron of the year.

A squadron receives the award for a high success rate in missions, number of combat operations flown, number of operations supported and safety readiness.

The squadron again received the Robert M. Hanson Award in 1994, 1997, 1999 and 2004.

"The history speaks for itself, the unit has succeeded in many operations both in and out of combat," said Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Sanchez, VMFA-312 sergeant major and native of San Antonio. "Marines in the squadron take pride in their work and provide the most combat readiness across [MAG-31.]"

Fightertown became home for the Checkerboards in January 1996- having flown 718 combat missions.

The Checkerboards deployed aboard the USS Enterprise, August 2003 in support of Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. In November, 2003, the squadron became the first in the carrier air wing to release ordinance in support of OIF.



Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 31

Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 31 along with Marine Aircraft Group 31, Headquarters Squadron 31 was activated on Feb. 1, 1943 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., as an element of the 3rd Aircraft Wing, Fleet Marine Force. Since its establishment, the Marines and sailors of MALS-31 have provided on-going support wherever MAG-31 squadrons are deployed – stateside and abroad, from land and from sea- including Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm; Operations Deny Flight, Joint Endeavor, and Decisive Edge in Bosnia; Operations Noble Anvil, Allied Force and Joint Guardian in Serbia and Kosovo; Operation Enduring Freedom on board USS Theodore Roosevelt; and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq as well as onboard the USS Truman and USS Enterprise.



Marine Wing Support Squadron 273

In June 13, 1986, Marine Wing Support Squadron 273, also known as the Sweathogs, was formed aboard Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort from different elements within Marine Air Base Squadron 31 and Detachment Bravo, Marine Wing Support Group 27. The assigned mission of MWSS-273 is to provide essential aviation and ground support to designated fixed-wing components of Aviation Combat Elements and all attached or supporting elements of the Marine Air Control Group. The types of support they provided vary from internal airfield communications, weather services, expeditionary airfield services, aircraft rescue and firefighting, explosive ordnance disposal, security and law enforcement and motor transport, engineering services and aircraft and ground refueling. Additionally, in garrison MWSS-273 is tasked to supplement Air Station facilities and services provided by MCAS Beaufort.



Marine Air Control Squadron 2 Detachment A

In April 1, 1944 Marine Air Warning Squadron 11 was formed at Cherry Point, North Carolina. The squadron later changed its name to Marine Air Control Squadron 2 Detachment A and in 1993 relocated to Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort. Currently, MACS-2 mission is to detect, identify and control the intercept of hostile aircraft and missiles, provide navigational assistance to friendly aircraft, and provide continuous all-weather, radar, non-radar approach, departure, en route and tower air traffic control services to friendly aircraft. The unit manages anti-air warfare assets within specific assigned sectors; it also detects, identifies and classifies all aircraft within its assigned sector. It maintains tracks of identified contacts and provides en route control/navigational assistance as required.



Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron

Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron is charged with supporting and enhancing the combat readiness of the Marine squadron and improving the quality of life for military personnel, their families and the work force assigned to Fightertown. The squadron is made up of approximately 600 Marines in many diverse jobs. From feeding the Marines to pumping fuel for the station's various squadron aircraft the Marines of H&S Beaufort are answering the call.





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MARINE AVIATION

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MCAS BEAUFORT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

596 Geiger Blvd. Beaufort, SC 29909

Tel:(843) 228-7225 Fax: (843) 228-6005

www.beaufort.marines.mil