

# EP-3E Aries II Completes Final Flight in U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Operations



Photo By [Petty Officer 1st Class Macadam Weissman](#)  
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U.S. 5TH FLEET AREA OF OPERATIONS – After nearly six decades of service, the EP-3E Aries II, a multi-intelligence reconnaissance aircraft, completed its final flight in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, Oct. 29.

A detachment from the “World Watchers” of Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron (VQ) 1 completed their final mission with their EP-3E ahead of their redeployment from the region.

The EP-3E Aries II served as a key intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) asset in the maritime patrol and

reconnaissance force (MPRF). The aircraft provided fleet and theater commanders near real-time tactical signals intelligence and full-motion video intelligence. The crew fused the collected intelligence along with other information for a variety of uses, including indications and warnings, information dominance, battle-space situational awareness, suppression of enemy air defenses, destruction of enemy air-defense, anti-air warfare and anti-submarine warfare applications.

"It's amazing to think of the number of folks who have been part of the EP-3 heritage over the last 55 years," said Lt. Cmdr. Justin "Gump" Roberts, the VQ-1 detachment officer-in-charge. "Success in this platform has solely been because of our hard-working maintenance team while on deck and our aircrew's superior ISR while on station. It's an honor to be part of a legacy that's bigger than sum of its parts."

Lt. Bradford "Chad" Holcombe, the aircraft commander, said VQ-1's history speaks for itself and that he is "tremendously grateful" to be part of that history.

"From my first day at VQ-1, it's been obvious to see the pride each member has in the platform, the mission, and most importantly the effort it takes to execute wherever and whenever we're asked," he said. "Flying the last mission flight is a privilege."

Capt. Dennis "Rudy" Jensen, Commodore of Task Force 57, has been around the P-3 since 1979.

"My father was a P-3 pilot during the Cold War, and I've flown the variants of the same aircraft since 2002. Few other airplanes are as 'time-tested & mother approved' as the P-3," Jensen said. "Its longevity and ability to operate from remote locations in austere environments for over half a century is a testament to those who designed, built, maintained and

operated it. Much like the ever changing platforms onboard the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, the mission systems inside the EP-3E have evolved over time. The ability to evolve has enabled the EP-3E to remain viable and effective through today.”

The transition from the EP-3E to the P-8A Poseidon and MQ-4C Triton platforms has been carefully planned to avoid capability gaps. These platforms offer enhanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, with greater range, endurance and the ability to operate in more complex environments.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses approximately 2.5 million square miles of water space and includes the Arabian gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean, and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal, and the Strait of Bab al-Mandeb.