Navy Deploys More EA-18G Electronic Attack Jets to EUCOM



A U.S. Navy EA-18G Growlers assigned to the "Garudas" Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 134, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, waits to receive air-to-air refueling from a Royal Air Force Voyager tanker assigned to 101 Squadron, RAF Brize Norton, United Kingdom, during a Red Flag-Nellis 22-1 mission Feb. 3, 2022, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. *U.S. AIR FORCE / Airman 1st Class Zachary Rufus*

ARLINGTON, Va. — A squadron of U.S. Navy EA-18G Growler electronic warfare aircraft has been deployed to the European Command as part of the build-up of forces in support NATO's eastern flank.

According to Defense Department spokesman John Kirby, the six EA-18Gs of Electronic Attack Squadron 134 (VAQ-134) — the Garudas — and their support personnel were to be staged by

March 28 at Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany, home of the U.S. Air Force's 52nd Fighter Wing, which fields one squadron of F-16CJ fighters. The EA-18Gs are home-based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington. Spangdahlem is approximately 650 miles from the borders of NATO countries in Eastern Europe with Ukraine.

"The purpose of this deployment is to bolster readiness, enhance NATO's collective defense posture and further increase air integration capabilities with our allied and partner nations," Kirby said in a release. "They are not being deployed to be used against Russian forces in Ukraine. They are being deployed completely in keeping with our efforts to bolster NATO's deterrence and defense capabilities along that eastern flank. The deployment is not in response to a perceived threat or incident."

The Navy has five-land-based expeditionary VAQ squadrons in addition to nine carrier-based VAQ squadrons, all equipped with EA-18Gs. For many years they deployed to bases in Southwest Asia to support combat in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, and currently deploy to Misawa, Japan. The Navy's Growlers provide electronic attack support for all of the armed services. The aircraft can jam enemy radars and communications and fire anti-radiation missiles at radar sites.

"I am extremely proud of the men and women in VAQ-134," said Navy Capt. Christopher M. Bahner, commander, Electronic Combat Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet, in a Defense Department release. "The Garudas have performed exceptionally well during their planned work-up cycle and stand ready to support U.S. expeditionary and allied task forces in Europe. Expeditionary EA-18G squadrons integrate with joint and coalition forces to provide our commanders capabilities to defend our forces in all potential phases of operation, while allowing our Carrier Air Wing EA-18G squadrons to remain at sea, defending freedom of navigation with our carrier strike group teams."

Another EA-18G squadron, VAQ-137, currently is deployed with Carrier Air Wing One on board USS Harry S. Truman in the Mediterranean Sea. VAQ-137 has been flying patrols over Romania and Poland in support of NATO operations since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.