# Sea Dragon Exercise Tests ASW Skills for Maritime Patrol Aircraft Crews



Members of the Royal Australian Air Force, Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, Indian navy and Royal Canadian Air Force, along with Patrol Squadron (VP) 5's "Mad Foxes" and VP 8's "Fighting Tigers," pose for a photo at the conclusion of Exercise Sea Dragon. U.S. Navy / Lt. Cmdr. Kyle Hooker

Maritime Patrol aircraft and crews from five partner nations gathered at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam to participate in Sea Dragon 2021 Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) exercise. The exercise wrapped up Jan 27.

The Sea Dragon series of exercises are led by commander, Patrol & Reconnaissance Force, 7th Fleet (CTF-72), based out of Misawa, Japan. They are intended to demonstrate advanced ASW tactics, while at the same time continuing to build on multinational participation with U.S. allies and partners, as well as commitment to the security of the Pacific region.

This year, P-8A Poseidon Maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft and crews from Patrol and Reconnaissance Squadrons (VP) 5 and 8 trained together with the counterparts from the Royal Australian Air Force, Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, Indian navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force during the exercise.

The "Mad Foxes" of VP-5 are currently deployed to Kadena, Okinawa, and the "Fighting Tigers" of VP-8 are operating from Misawa, Japan. Both squadrons are based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida.

The U.S., Australia and India took part in the exercise with Boeing P-8 Poseidon aircraft. Japan flew the Kawasaki P-1, while Canada operated the CP-140 Aurora.

Sea Dragon 2021 centered on ASW training and excellence. The exercise included 250 hours of ground and classroom training and 125 hours of in-flight training ranging from tracking simulated targets to the final problem of finding and tracking Los Angeles-class nuclear submarine. The classroom training sessions helped the aircrews build plans and discuss how to incorporate tactics, capabilities and equipment for their respective nations into the exercise.

At the beginning of the exercise, Lt. Cmdr. Kyle Hooker, officer in charge of the VP-5 detachment, said he was eager for the opportunity to further develop our partnerships with Japan, India, Canada, and Australia during at Sea Dragon 2021.

"The COVID environment will be challenging for all our participants, but I know we will come together to adapt and overcome while executing our goal of anti-submarine warfare interoperability," he said.

A P-8A Poseidon from Patrol Squadron (VP) 5 is prepared for its first training event of Sea Dragon 21. It involved tracking several Expendable Mobile Anti-Submarine Warfare Training Target's (EMATT), which simulate the characteristics of a submarine. U.S. Navy / Lt. Cmdr. Kyle Hooker

VP-5 pilot Lt. Reed Arce said his squadron viewed Sea Dragon 2021 as an opportunity for both learning and competition.

"VP-5 was certainly looking forward to the opportunity to flex our ASW muscles and enjoy some friendly competition with our allied partners during Exercise Sea Dragon. We learned so much when comparing tactics between aircrews, and the ability to constantly improve our warfighting skills. We hope to leave Guam with all participants being at their peak performance in prosecuting sub-surface threats anywhere in the world," he said.

VP-8 pilot Lt. Joseph Moralesvargas  said Sea Dragon 2021 gave his squadron the chance to coordinate and be on station with

other crews and other countries.

"The opportunity to speak with other operators and hear their philosophy and insight on ASW has given me new perspective," he said. "I can't think of any other exercise that would give us this chance," he said.

Sea Dragon culminated with live tracking exercises with the nuclear-powered fast attack submarine, USS Providence (SSN-719) acting as the adversary.

The Sea Dragon events are graded, and the nation with the highest overall score wins the Dragon Belt award. The belt was awarded to the Royal New Zealand Air Force last year. This year, Royal Canadian Air Force 407 Long Range Patrol Squadron, which operates the CP-140 Aurora, had the highest total point score, and will bring the coveted Dragon Belt home with them to Canadian Forces Base Comox in British Columbia.

The importance of ASW in the Indo-Pacific region cannot be understated, with growing numbers of Chinese, Russian and North Korean submarines. The ability for allies and partners to work together with capable MPA aircraft and crews to successfully conduct ASW is vital to counter this threat.