

VAW-120 PARTICIPATES IN FINAL FLIGHT OF C-2A GREYHOUND, SIGNIFIES END OF SQUADRON'S TRAINING MISSION FOR CARRIER ONBOARD DELIVERY



OUTER BANKS, N.C. (Oct. 31, 2023) Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 120 marks the end of their training role for the C-2A Greyhound aircraft's carrier onboard delivery mission with a final flight over the Wright Brothers First Flight memorial at Kill Devil Hills, N.C. The Greyhound aircraft will be replaced by the CMV-22 Osprey aircraft in the coming years. (U.S. Navy photo by Aircrew Survival Equipmentman 2nd Class Richard Warren)

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NORFOLK, Virginia – To mark the official end of the Airborne Command & Control Squadron (VAW) 120 Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) training role for the carrier onboard delivery (COD) mission, the squadron's last C-2 instructor pilot, VAW-120 executive officer, and aircrew flew the C-2A Greyhound aircraft during a ceremonial flight over the Outer Banks and Cape Hatteras operating area, Oct. 30.

Since September 1994, VAW-120 has served as the single FRS squadron to train all E-2C/D Hawkeye and C-2A aircrew. The last VAW-120 Greyhound flight provided an opportunity to recognize all of the previous aircrew who were trained at VAW-120 to operate the Greyhound.

Lt. Spencer Tack, who commanded the flight, flew the last VAW-120 Greyhound at the FRS. Tack discussed being afforded the opportunity to be part of the platform's storied history.

"It is surreal ... we all knew it was not going to be around forever," Tack added, who completed the training of the final two C-2A aircrew in late September 2023. "I didn't think I would get a spot at the FRS initially, but looking back now, being one among the last is a huge honor."

VAW-120's last two C-2 instructor pilots, Tack and Lt. Patrick Sopko have shared a similar path to arrive at this historical juncture together. Both received their commission in 2014, Tack in March and Sopko in May. After initial flight school, they reported to VAW-120 and qualified together in 2017. Soon after their FRS training, Sopko left for VRC-30 on the west coast and Tack to VRC-40 on the east coast. Once again, in April 2021, both aviators returned to VAW-120 to train the

remaining aircrew who will operate the C-2A until VRC-40 is decommissioned in 2026.

“I don’t think it really has hit me yet; I also attended the decommissioning ceremony at VRC-30,” Sopko said. “It is still an honor to represent the last instructors who have trained aircrew to operate the C-2.”

Over the last several years while assigned to VAW-120, Tack and Sopko trained up to 15 aircrew. While both checked aboard as instructors, they will check out together and report to VRC-40 where they will fly alongside the very same pilots they helped train over the past few years.

During the historical flight of VAW-120’s last C-2A, an E-2C Hawkeye, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and a second C-2A from VRC-40 participated in the ceremonial flight to recognize past aviation accomplishments both in civilian and military history. The flight plan included a flyover above the Wright Brothers First Flight memorial.

“A lot of history in aviation, proud to incorporate our flight above the Wright Brothers National Memorial to signify their contributions to aviation and honor that of all aircrew who have trained at VAW-120 to fly the C-2A,” said Lt. Joshua Reyes, a VAW-120 E-2 instructor pilot who conducted the flight planning for the historical flight. While that first flight lasted 12 seconds and covered a distance of 120 feet, it changed the aviation world.

Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Wing and the CMV-22B Osprey aircraft will be the replacement for the C-2A Greyhound for the COD mission. It provides the Navy with increases in capability and operational flexibility over the C-2A.