# The Main Battery Lives on in the Navy

***By Matt Thompson, Senior Analyst***

I had the rare opportunity to head to middle Georgia to attend the stand-up of Detachment 1 of the 350th Spectrum Warfare wing. As I was there, I pondered the last time I had attended the start up of a new military command. It had been a little while and it was an awesome opportunity, and I thank the entire 350th Wing for providing that chance. It occurred to me that another electronic attack command is moving closer to standing up as well. This one in the Navy.

Much like starting up Det 1 in middle Georgia, the standing up of VAQ-144 Main Battery has also been a multiyear effort. In September 2019, a significant shift occurred when the Navy transitioned a Carrier Air Wing (CVW) VAQ squadron from the carrier environment to meet the demands of an additional expeditionary unit. This move created a gap in the CVW's Electronic Attack coverage, highlighting the urgent need for a potential 15th operational VAQ Squadron. Enter VAQ-144, established on Oct. 1, 2021, with a clear mandate to meet

specific milestones and achieve full operational capability by fiscal year 2023.

The rebirth of the “Main Battery” is more than just a strategic move; it’s a nod to the Navy’s rich history and a tribute to the veterans who served before. The name “Main Battery” was meticulously chosen from a list of former Navy squadrons, emphasizing the connection between the origins of the Electronic Attack community and its present state. VA-196 “Main Battery” stands out in this regard, having played a pivotal role as the last and arguably one of the most significant A-6 Intruder squadrons on the west coast. With its commendable service record in Vietnam, Korea, and Desert Storm, the decision to revive this cherished squadron nickname was not only appropriate but also widely supported.




The insignia of the original “Main Battery” is iconic: an orange background bordered in black, featuring a black ace of spades overlaid with a devil face outlined in yellow. Conceived in 1967, this emblem symbolized the squadron’s role as “dealers of death in the dark.” The black ace of spades represented the stealth and strategy of nighttime attacks, a hallmark of A-6 squadrons. The devil, waiting to receive the squadron’s deadly payload, was a stark reminder of the enemy’s fate.

Today, as the Electronic Attack domain evolves, the primary weapon has diversified. Control over the electromagnetic spectrum will determine the victors in future conflicts. The

new VAQ-144 “Main Battery” has adapted its insignia to reflect its modern mission: “dealing deception in the dark.” The devil, once a symbol of the enemy’s doom, now represents the art of deception and misdirection. This figure, cloaked and mischievous, embodies the squadron’s ability to keep adversaries in the dark, both literally and figuratively. The updated insignia, with electricity emanating from the devil’s horns and eyes, signifies the blinding of enemies in the electromagnetic spectrum.

While the mission has evolved, the respect for the original “Main Battery” remains unwavering. The foundational colors and design elements of the insignia have been retained, ensuring continuity with the past. The bull-like horns, symbolizing endurance and power, and the devil’s playful mustache and beard, are reminiscent of the original design. These elements, which represented VA-196’s mission impact for nearly half a century, will now serve to reflect the “Main Battery’s” renewed purpose for years to come.

As VAQ-144 moves closer to Safe for Flight, the establishment of VAQ-144 and the revival of the “Main Battery” nickname is a testament to the Navy’s commitment to both innovation and tradition. As the squadron embarks on its renewed journey, it carries with it the legacy of its predecessors, ensuring that the spirit of the “Main Battery” lives on, adapting and thriving in the face of new challenges.

As both the Air Force and Navy establish a continued focus on Electromagnetic Warfare (EW) and we move closer to the AOC International Symposium in December, a natural transition will be to start analyzing key topics and questions that need to be asked for the future of EW. Looking forward to seeing you at the convention and having these conversations in person.