

# Amphibian Patrol Squadrons (VP-AM) Histories

## VP-AM-1 to VP-AM-5

### VP-AM-1

#### *Lineage*

Established as Patrol Squadron FIFTY THREE (VP-53) on 1 May 1942.

Redesignated Patrol Bombing Squadron FIFTY THREE (VPB-53) on 1 October 1944.

Redesignated Patrol Squadron FIFTY THREE (VP-53) on 15 May 1946.

Redesignated Amphibious Patrol Squadron ONE (VP-AM-1) on 15 November 1946.

Disestablished on 5 May 1948.

#### *Squadron Insignia and Nickname*

None on record.

#### *Chronology of Significant Events*

**1 May 1942:** VP-53 was established at NAS Norfolk, Va., under the operational control of PatWing-5 and assigned a complement of 12 PBV-5 Catalinas. The squadron commenced training and equipping over the next two months, operating from a field at NAF Breezy Point, near Norfolk.

**1-24 Jul 1942:** VP-53 flew to NAS Banana River, Fla., to conduct night flight training and then to Quonset Point, R.I., for torpedo training.

**25 Jul 1942:** VP-53 returned to NAS Norfolk, departing the next day for NAS Key West, Fla. The squadron conducted operational combat patrols from this site off the coast of Florida, providing coverage for convoy routes.

**24 Sep 1942:** VP-53 departed Key West for its new base of operations via NAS Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and NAS San Juan, P.R. Upon arrival in Cuba the squadron came under the operational control of PatWing-11. The squadron left Guantanamo Bay the next day for NAS San Juan, P.R., then on to NAS Trinidad, B.W.I., arriving on 1 October 1942.

**1 Oct 1942:** NAS Trinidad was the base of operations for the squadron over the next seven months. During this time VP-53 conducted routine antisubmarine searches and convoy protection patrols.

**8 Mar 1943:** Lieutenant J. E. Dryden attacked and sank *U-156* east of Barbados with the loss of the entire crew of 52 officers and enlisted ratings aboard. The submarine, commanded by Korvettenkapitän Werner Hartenstein, had been responsible for the sinking of the Allied liner *Laconia* west of Africa on 12 September 1942, in what became known as the *Laconia* incident. After sinking the ship, Hartenstein discovered that it had been transporting 1,800 Italian prisoners of war and a large contingent of British military personnel. He radioed for assistance, which soon arrived on the scene in the form of *U-506*, *U-507* and the Italian submarine *Cappellini*. The four vessels were able to take on board or under tow the majority of the survivors. On 16 September 1942 a U.S. Army B-24 operating from Ascension Island spotted the assembly with Red Cross flags flying. The pilot requested instructions from base and was told to attack. The submarines cut loose their tows and escaped without damage. The survivors on the surface were picked up a few hours later by neutral French warships from Dakar. As a result of that incident Admiral Dönitz ordered his U-boat captains to take no part in future rescue operations.

**13 Jul 1943:** VP-53 was relieved from duty in the Caribbean. Immediately after returning to NAS Norfolk, Va., the squadron was given a brief period of leave, then transferred to NAS San Diego, Calif., under the operational control of FAW-14.

**30 Sep-Dec 1943:** VP-53 began the transpac to NAS Kaneohe, Hawaii. The last aircraft arrived on 5 October and the squadron came under the operational control of FAW-2. A six-week period of training followed, including operational patrols off the coasts of the islands. By 1 December VP-53 was en route to Funafuti.

**Jan-May 1944:** During the squadron's deployment to Funafuti, Gilbert and Marshall islands it scheduled

a minimum of two patrols a day. Although these search patrols produced negative results they provided the fleet with the knowledge that its flank and rear sections were free of enemy forces. Besides the routine patrols the squadron also flew Dumbo missions. While deployed the squadron maintained detachments at Noumea, Apanama, Tarawa, Majuro and Makin.

**May–Jun 1944:** The squadron operated a six-plane detachment from Kwajalein and engaged in night harassment bombing of Wotje, Mille, Maloelap and Jaluit. The bombing was designed to annoy the Japanese garrisons and keep them from repairing the airstrips.

**Jun–Jul 1944:** VPB-53 was relieved and returned to NAS Kaneohe, Hawaii, for a short rest period prior to embarking on aboard *Barnes* (CVE 20) on 2 July for the trip back to the U.S. and a period of home leave.

**15 Aug 1944:** VPB-53 was reformed at NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., under the operational control of FAW-6. Training of new personnel and refitting with new equipment and aircraft continued through the end of the year.

**27 Jan 1945:** VPB-53 began preparations for the transpac to NAS Kaneohe, arriving there and reporting to FAW-2 in early February. The squadron was given the customary period of combat training through the end of March.

**31 Mar 1945:** VPB-53 deployed in three-aircraft elements to Palmyra Island for duty with the 7th Fleet at Manus Island. The last element arrived on 14 April and the squadron was given orders to proceed to Green Island.

**Apr–Jun 1945:** VPB-53 arrived at Green Island, coming under the operational control of FAW-10. Squadron operations were primarily air-sea rescue missions in connection with the daily strikes on Bougainville and Rabaul, New Britain. The squadron also conducted some night harassment attacks on Rabaul, Buka and Bougainville.

**15 Jun–Sep 1945:** VPB-53 maintained a six-plane detachment at Samar for Dumbo missions and routine patrols. On 22 June the rest of the squadron joined the detachment at Samar, operating there through September 1945. On 1 August the squadron's primary mission became antisubmarine patrols both day and night.

**Oct 1945:** VPB-53 was relocated to Tinian under the operational control of FAW-18 and received new PBV-6A Catalinas.

**Feb 1946:** VPB-53 maintained detachments at Guam, Marcus, Iwo Jima, Peleliu (one plane each); Yokosuka, Japan (four planes); Saipan (two planes). The squadron still operated under the control of FAW-18.

**15 May 1946:** VPB-53 was redesignated VP-53, and remained under the operational control of FAW-18. At this time the squadron was maintaining detachments at: Shanghai, Truk, Iwo Jima, Majuro (one aircraft each); Yokosuka, Japan (three aircraft); and Saipan (two aircraft).

**6 Sep 1946:** VP-53 was relieved of its duties in the Pacific and ordered to report to NAS Whidbey Island, Wash. Upon arrival it came under the operational control of FAW-4 with an aircraft allowance of 9 PBV-6A aircraft.

**15 Nov 1946:** VP-53 was redesignated VP-AM-1. The squadron's aircraft allowance was reduced to 7 PBV-6A aircraft. The complement continued to be reduced and by June 1947 there were only two PBV-5As on hand.

**Nov 1947–Apr 1948:** VP-AM-1 relieved VP-AM-2 at NS Adak, Alaska. The squadron conducted operations with only three aircraft on hand. VP-AM-1 returned to NAS Whidbey Island by 22 April 1948.

**5 May 1948:** VP-AM-1 was disestablished during the postwar push by Congress to cut back on the military establishment.

### Home Port Assignments

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date of Assignment</i>
NAS Norfolk, Va.	1 May 1942
NAS Key West, Fla.	26 Jul 1942
NAS Trinidad, B.W.I.	1 Oct 1942
NAS San Diego, Calif.	Jul 1943
NAS Kaneohe, Hawaii	Oct 1943
NAS Whidbey Island, Wash.	Aug 1944
NAS Kaneohe, Hawaii	Feb 1945
NAS Whidbey Island, Wash.	Sep 1946

### Commanding Officers

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
LCDR F. M. Nichols	1 May 1942
LCDR David Perry, Jr.	Oct 1942
LCDR G. H. Duffy	15 Aug 1944
LCDR T. Shelly, Jr.	Jun 1946
LCDR J. W. Henderson	Mar 1947
LCDR M. R. Clard	19 Jun 1947
LT Charles R. Hines	29 Feb 1948

### Aircraft Assignment

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
PBV-5	May 1942
PBV-6A	Oct 1945
PBV-5A	Jun 1947

**Major Overseas Deployments**

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Wing</i>	<i>Base of Operations</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operations</i>
24 Sep 1942	13 Jul 1943	PatWing-11/ FAW-11	Trinidad	PBY-5	Carib
30 Sep 1943	*	FAW-2	Kaneohe	PBY-5	EastPac
1 Dec 1943	*	FAW-1	Funafuti	PBY-5	SoPac
29 Feb 1944	†	FAW-1	Noumea	PBY-5	SoPac
29 Feb 1944	†	FAW-1	Tarawa	PBY-5	SoPac
29 Feb 1944	†	FAW-1	Apanama	PBY-5	SoPac
30 Apr 1944	†	FAW-1	Makin	PBY-5	SoPac
30 Apr 1944†	30 Jun 1944	FAW-1	Majuro	PBY-5	SoPac
Feb 1945	*	FAW-2	Kaneohe	PBY-5	EastPac
31 Mar 1945	*	FAW-1	Palmyra Is.	PBY-5	SoPac
14 Apr 1945	*	FAW-10	Green Is.	PBY-5	SoPac
15 Jun 1945	*	FAW-10	Samar	PBY-5	SoPac
Oct 1945	*	FAW-18	Tinian	PBY-6A	SoPac
Feb 1946	†	FAW-18	Guam	PBY-6A	SoPac
Feb 1946	†	FAW-18	Marcus	PBY-6A	SoPac
Feb 1946	†	FAW-18	Iwo Jima	PBY-6A	WestPac
Feb 1946	†	FAW-18	Peleliu	PBY-6A	SoPac
Feb 1946	†	FAW-18	Yokosuka	PBY-6A	WestPac
Feb 1946	†	FAW-18	Saipan	PBY-6A	SoPac
15 May 1946†	6 Sep 1946	FAW-18	Shanghai	PBY-6A	SoPac
15 May 1946†	6 Sep 1946	FAW-18	Truk	PBY-6A	SoPac
15 May 1946†	6 Sep 1946	FAW-18	Iwo Jima	PBY-6A	WestPac
15 May 1946†	6 Sep 1946	FAW-18	Majuro	PBY-6A	SoPac
15 May 1946†	6 Sep 1946	FAW-18	Yokosuka	PBY-6A	WestPac
15 May 1946†	6 Sep 1946	FAW-18	Saipan	PBY-6A	SoPac
Nov 1947	22 Apr 1948	FAW-4	Adak	PBY-5A/6A	NorPac

\* Continued combat deployment in the South Pacific, moving from base to base.

**Wing Assignments**

<i>Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
PatWing-5		1 May 1942
PatWing-11/FAW-11 <sup>§</sup>		24 Sep 1942
FAW-14		Jul 1943
FAW-2		5 Oct 1943
FAW-6		Aug 1944
FAW-2		Feb 1944
FAW-10		14 Apr 1945
FAW-18		Oct 1945
FAW-4	DA**	Sep 1946

**Wing Assignments—Continued**

<i>Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
		<sup>§</sup> Patrol Wing 11 (PatWing-11) was redesignated Fleet Air Wing 11 (FAW-11) on 1 November 1942.
		<sup>**</sup> The squadron remained a part of FAW-4, but was assigned the tail code DA on 7 November 1946.

**Unit Awards Received**

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Date Covering Unit Award</i>
None on record.	

## VP-AM-5

### Lineage

Established as Amphibious Patrol Squadron FIVE (VP-AM-5) on 21 November 1946.

Disestablished on 31 December 1947.

### Squadron Insignia and Nickname

The squadron's insignia was approved by CNO on 2 July 1947. The mission of the squadron was to observe the weather and islands in the Aleutian chain. The design had a duck, wearing heavy winter clothing, flying in an "iced-up" condition over snow-covered volcanic mountains.



*The squadron's cartoon insignia.*



*A full version of the squadron's*

red; lettering, black; and Navy wings, gold.

Nicknames: None on record.

Colors: sky, light blue; water, green; clouds, white; mountains, black with white icecaps; duck, white (iced); bill and feet, orange; goggles, black; cap, brown with red top; ear muffs, red with black headband; flight jacket, brown with tan collar and cuffs; scarf,

### Chronology of Significant Events

**21 Nov 1946:** VP-AM-5 was established at NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., as a medium amphibious seaplane squadron equipped with the PBV-5A Catalina. During its brief existence, the squadron came under the operational control of FAW-4 with a mission of weather reconnaissance and surveillance.

**31 Dec 1947:** Due to the absence of any perceived threat from the northern Pacific (the Cold War had not yet "heated up") and congressional mandates to reduce force levels, the squadron was soon placed on the list of those scheduled for disestablishment. New, longer-range aircraft then coming into service, such as the P2V Neptune, negated the need for slower, more vulnerable seaplanes. VP-AM-5 was disestablished at NAS Whidbey Island, Wash., on 31 December 1947.

### Home Port Assignments

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date of Assignment</i>
NAS Whidbey Island, Wash.	21 Nov 1946

### Commanding Officers

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
LCDR A. J. Rush	25 Nov 1946
LCDR R. U. Nolen	26 Sep 1947

### Aircraft Assignment

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
PBY-5A	Nov 1946

### Major Overseas Deployments

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Wing</i>	<i>Base of Operations</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operations</i>
1947	1947	FAW-4	Adak	PBY-5A	NorPac

### Wing Assignments

<i>Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
FAW-4	DF	21 Nov 1946

### Unit Awards Received

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Date Covering Unit Award</i>
None on record.	