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VP-9 Transitions from Orion to Poseidon

By VP-9 Public Affairs

NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND, Wash.- With a new year comes unique challenges and pioneering opportunities. For the Golden Eagles of Patrol Squadron (VP) 9, 2018 brings a new aircraft, a new home, and a new beginning.

After 54 years of relentless dedication and service in the P-3 Orion, VP-9 starts their new year with the transition to the P-8 Poseidon.

The P-8 Poseidon will be the fourth distinguished aircraft flown by VP-9 since its commissioning in 1951. Preceding aircraft include the P4Y-2 Privateer, P2V Neptune, and all variants of the P-3 Orion (A/B/C/UII/UIII/ and AIP). Patrol Squadron Nine originated in Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island and has had four homeport changes on the West Coast, to NAS Alameda, California in 1952, NAS Moffett Field, California in 1963, NAS Barbers Point, Hawaii in 1992, and Marine Corps Base Hawaii (MCHB), Kaneohe, Hawaii in 1999. Now, after 66 years, the Golden Eagles have returned to their roots in NAS Whidbey Island, Washington.

VP-9 began its seven-month deployment to the 7th Fleet area of responsibility in March 2017. Upon returning in October, the Golden Eagles relocated back to the Pacific Northwest to Whidbey Island, Washington and began working tenaciously to excel in their transition to the P-8 Poseidon.

The transition is comprised of three phases. Phase one began November 2017 in Whidbey Island, and included classroom academics and simulator training. Phase two began January 2018 in Jacksonville, Florida, where the squadron is currently executing training flights, crew simulators, and extensive maintenance instruction. Phase three will send the squadron back to Whidbey Island for tactical aircraft employment and qualifying "safe-for-flight," signifying the completion of the training syllabus.

When asked how the command is handling the stresses of establishing themselves in their new home while dealing with the intense training requirements inherent in the transition to a new type/model/series aircraft, VP-9 Commanding Officer Cmdr. Jeff Bowman commented "the professionalism of the Golden Eagles is unmatched. We have planned, communicated and all levels of leadership have been actively engaged in the preparations so every Sailor and officer can execute this dynamic evolution with confidence."

Over their storied history operating the P-3 Orion, the Golden Eagles have been honored with nine Battle Efficiency Awards, four Meritorious Unit Commendations, five Coastal Command Trophies, and two Golden Wrench Awards for aviation maintenance excellence.