WINGS

WINTER 2021
VOLUME 73 NO.2

SHOOTING STAR
AMERICA'S FIRST SUCCESSFUL JET

PHANTOMS IN VIETNAM
AN AUSSIE PILOT'S EXPERIENCE

MASTERY OF THE AIR
THE RAAF IN WORLD WAR II



SECRET FLIGHTS
CATALINAS ON THE DANGEROUS 'DOUBLE SUNRISE' ROUTE

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE





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ON THE COVER
Consolidated PBY Catalina Flying boat VH-PBZ wearing the famous RAAF World War II Black Cat livery.
Photo: Ryan Fletcher / Shutterstock.com

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MAJOR GROWLER UPGRADE

BOEING HAS COMMENCED a mission system upgrade for the US Navy's fleet of EA-18G Growler electronic warfare aircraft. Growlers play a major role in jamming radar and communications signals of threat forces, disabling the enemy forces' ability to detect and track opposing military forces.

Boeing said the upgraded aircraft would be designated Growler Block II and include features such as the advanced cockpit system and conformal fuel tanks, as well as improved sensors and an upgraded electronic attack package. The upgrade will enhance the Growler's ability to transfer data more rapidly to other aircraft and platforms.

Overall, 160 Growlers are expected to be upgraded over five years, with full rate work to commence in June 2021. The RAAF is the only Growler operator outside the US with 11 aircraft – a 12th was lost in a January 2021 engine failure related fire.

Source: Flight Global



RAAF EA-18G Growler

$1.8m raised for suicide prevention

SOLDIER ON'S MARCH ON CHALLENGE has raised more than $1.8 million to prevent veteran suicide.

During the month of March, the March On Challenge called on Australians to walk 96km, the length of the Kokoda Track, to raise money to help prevent veteran suicide. The challenge attracted more than 6,200 participants, 862 teams and 27 schools – with a combined total of more than 434,000km walked.

Soldier On CEO Ivan Slavich said he was astonished by the support. "We have seen participants around the world completing their challenge through day-to-day activities, group walks, one-day challenges, mountain hikes, and even walks across the ocean floor," he said.

March On Patron, 102-year-old retired Sergeant Bert Le-Merton, said the success of the campaign was extraordinary. "The funds raised through March On will allow Soldier On to provide serving and ex-serving veterans and their families with the assistance they need to build better futures following their service," Sergeant Bert said.

Australian Defence Force extends satellite agreement with Inmarsat

THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE has renewed a contract with British satellite provider Inmarsat, broadening the agreement's scope to include managed services. The deal extension to 2027, totalling $291 million came a month after the United Kingdom and Australia decided to boost technology sharing and investment in their respective space industries.

"Inmarsat has sponsored ADF satellite communications needs at home and abroad for over 30 years," said Brigadier Gregory Novak, commander of the ADF's Defence Strategic Communications Division. According to Inmarsat, the partnership has expanded to cover the company's whole portfolio of controlled services. ADF will use its Operational Monitoring and Control System to digitally map and distribute bandwidth throughout the fleet in real time.

The agreement follows the signing of a 'space bridge' arrangement between the UK and Australia to increase connections to commerce, investment and academic study opportunities. The "world's first" space bridge alliance, according to UK Science Minister Amanda Solloway, is another move toward the nation's goal of being a "worldwide efficient space power". By 2030, the UK expects the industry to produce 30,000 new workers and Australia plans to recruit 20,000 additional workers in the space industry over the next five years.

Source: Test & Measurement News



EDITED BY John Kindler

SMARTFORCE FOR MULTI-ROLE TANKER

AIRBUS HAS SIGNED a contract to provide a digital services focus for the maintenance of the Air Refueling Boom System (ARBS) on the RAAF KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (A330 MRTT) fleet. Airbus' suite of digital services, SmartForce, is expected to reduce maintenance costs and improve fleet availability through data analytics applications enhancing the fault diagnosis and troubleshooting tasks.

The firm noted that the Central Data System would allow operators to draw on flight data captured by the Mission Recording System and recommend maintenance actions to resolve issues identified.The Central Data System is a joint development, with Northrop Grumman – the Australian KC-30A Through Life Support provider.

Group Captain Scott Parry, Officer Commanding Heavy Air Lift Systems Program Office, said: "The Central Data System delivers a significant capability benefit for the KC-30A aircraft and demonstrates the strong commitment within the KC-30A enterprise to innovation and improvement." The capability is expected to evolve to allow users to extend the ARBS analytics to entire aircraft level diagnostics.

Source: defenceconnect.com.au



RAAF KC-30A MRTT.

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