

# Marine Attack Squadron 231 completes its final Harrier flight at Cherry Point



U.S. Marines Corps AV-8B Harrier II with Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 231 taxis during the squadron's final flight ceremony at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, May 29, 2025. VMA-231 conducted a ceremony to celebrate its last Harrier flight before its deactivation in September. In 2026, the squadron will reactivate as Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 231 and prepare to operate the F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Bryan Giraldo)

From 2d Marine Aircraft Wing Strategic Communications

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. – Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 231, known as the “Ace of Spades,” marked the end of an era with its final AV-8B Harrier II flight on Thursday, culminating decades of rich history and

distinguished service with the iconic vertical takeoff and landing aircraft.

First commissioned in 1919, VMA-231 is the Marine Corps' oldest flying squadron and has served with distinction in multiple conflicts worldwide over the last century. After adopting the Harrier II in 1985, VMA-231 supported major overseas operations to include Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Allied Force, Odyssey Dawn, Inherent Resolve, and most recently, Prosperity Guardian.

The squadron's final flight and colors casing ceremony took place at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point and represented a significant milestone in the Marine Corps' ongoing fifth-generation tactical aircraft transition. Attendees of the ceremony included active-duty Marines and Sailors with VMA-231, their families, and veterans who had previously served with the squadron. Maj. Gen. William Swan, commanding general of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), and Maj. Gen. James Wellons, commanding general of 3rd MAW, as well as several distinguished guests, community leaders and former commanding officers of the squadron were also in attendance.

"Today is not a sad day," stated Lt. Col. Paul Truog, current commanding officer of VMA-231, during the ceremony, "This is a momentous day for Marine aviation. It's a day that we're going to celebrate."

Truog, alongside Sgt. Maj. Christianna Wolford, will oversee VMA-231's official deactivation in September 2025. The squadron will then reactivate as Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 231 in fiscal year 2026. As VMFA-231, the squadron will continue the unit's storied legacy with fifth-generation capabilities as an F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter squadron.

"Everybody knows that VMA-231 is transitioning to F-35s. The Wing, the [Marine Aircraft Group], and the squadron are going

to be more capable of responding to any crisis. But that capability is not just because it's our most technically advanced weapons system," Truog said in his remarks. "That capability is because of the Marines and the pilots that, in record amounts, raise their hands saying, 'I want to continue on, I want to keep moving forward.'"

Truog's comments referred to the many Marines who will continue the squadron's earned legacy as future members of VMFA-231 and who will continue their service by piloting, maintaining and supporting F-35 aircraft in squadrons across the Marine Corps.

"They're going to take that, they're going to go forward in Marine aviation, and they're going to make Marine aviation better," he added.

The squadron's transition from the legacy AV-8B Harrier II to the F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter is representative of 2nd MAW's ongoing modernization efforts to meet the needs of the future fight. As the aviation combat element for the service-retained Marine Expeditionary Force, 2nd MAW continues to balance modernization efforts with providing combat-ready aviation forces to the Marine Corps and joint force.