

Navy EA-18G Squadron Home from Emergency EUCOM Deployment



A U.S. Navy EA-18G Growlers assigned to the “Garudas” Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 134, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, waits to receive air-to-air refueling from a Royal Air Force Voyager tanker assigned to 101 Squadron, RAF Brize Norton, United Kingdom, during a Red Flag-Nellis 22-1 mission Feb. 3, 2022, at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. *U.S. AIR FORCE / Airman 1st Class Zachary Rufus ARLINGTON, Va.* – A squadron of U.S. Navy EA-18G Growler electronic warfare aircraft has returned to its home base after more than six months deployed to the European Command as part of the build-up of forces in support NATO’s eastern flank.

Electronic Attack Squadron 134 (VAQ-134) has returned home to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, from U.S. European Command, according to a source. The squadron had deployed to Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany in late March 2022.

“The purpose of this deployment is to bolster readiness, enhance NATO’s collective defense posture and further increase air integration capabilities with our allied and partner nations,” said then- Defense Department spokesman John Kirby said in a release that month. “They are not being deployed to be used against Russian forces in Ukraine. They are being deployed completely in keeping with our efforts to bolster NATO’s deterrence and defense capabilities along that eastern flank. The deployment is not in response to a perceived threat or incident.”

The Navy has five-land-based expeditionary VAQ squadrons in

addition to nine carrier-based VAQ squadrons, all equipped with EA-18Gs. For many years they deployed to bases in Southwest Asia to support combat in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, and currently deploy to Misawa, Japan. The Navy's Growlers provide electronic attack support for all of the armed services. The aircraft can jam enemy radars and communications and fire anti-radiation missiles at radar sites.

It has not been announced if VAQ-134 was replaced in Europe by another VAQ squadron. A carrier-based squadron, VAQ-140, currently is deployed to the region on board the USS George H.W. Bush.

In its 2023 budget proposal, the Navy proposed de-activating the five expeditionary VAQ squadrons. While the budget has yet to be passed, the proposal has met heavy opposition in Congress.