

Navy Opens Second Triton UAV Forward Deployment Site



Caption: NAVAL AIR STATION SIGONELLA, Italy (March 2, 2024) – Capt. Ronald H. Rumfelt, Jr., commanding officer, Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19 “Big Red” (left), Vice Adm. Daniel “Undra” Cheever, commander, Naval Air Forces (center), and Capt. Aaron Shoemaker, commanding officer, Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella (right), participate in a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the inaugural deployment of VUP- 19’s second forward-deployed detachment, and the opening of a new MQ-4C Triton hangar at NAS Sigonella, Italy, March 2, 2024 (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication 2nd Class Jacquelin Frost)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy squadron that operates the MQ-4C Triton high-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle has opened its second deployment site, with this one located at Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, Sicily.

During March 2 ceremonies at Sigonella, the commanding officer of Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 (VUP-19), Capt. Ronald H. Rumfelt Jr., was joined by Vice Adm. Daniel “Undra” Cheever, commander, Naval Air Forces, and Capt. Aaron Shoemaker, commanding officer, of NAS Sigonella in a ribbon cutting for the new hangar on the station that will support the Triton aircraft operating from the station, according to an NAS Sigonella release.

Home-based at NAS Jacksonville, Florida, Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 (VUP-19) brought the Triton to its Initial Operational Capability status last summer with the establishment of an orbit at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam. The squadron had maintained two Tritons – equipped with the baseline Integrated Functional Capability (IFC) 3

configuration – on an Early Operational Capability deployment in Guam from May 2020 until March 2023. The Tritons provided MISR&T (maritime intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and tracking) for the U.S. 7th Fleet while developing the concept of operations and the tactics to refine the Triton's operations. The detachment operated from Guam; Naval Air Facility Misawa, Japan; and Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

VUP-19 since has received newer versions in the IFC 4 configuration, which are equipped with a more capable sensor suite that will allow them to replace the Navy's fleet of EP-3E Orion electronic reconnaissance aircraft.

From Sigonella, also a rotational site for squadrons of the Navy's P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, the Tritons will provide the U.S. Sixth Fleet with MISR&T support.