

VAQ-133 “Wizards” complete historic first Next Generation Jammer Deployment



An EA-18G Growler from VAQ-133 launches from USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). (U.S. Navy photo)

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VAQ-133 returns from a five-month deployment as the first Navy squadron to tactically employ the ALQ-249 Next Generation Jammer.

WHIDBEY ISLAND, Wash.- Electronic Attack Squadron 133 (VAQ-133), assigned to Carrier Air Wing Nine (CVW) 9, returned from the Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group's (ABECSG) five-month deployment to the Middle East and Eastern Pacific to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island in time for the holidays, Dec. 14, 2024.

The 153 Sailors, 18 aircrew, and seven EA-18G Growlers of the “Wizards” of VAQ 133 departed Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, July 13, 2024.

The Wizard's deployment marked a historic milestone, as the squadron became the first in the Navy to deploy with the ALQ-249 Next Generation Jammer (NGJ). Throughout their rigorous training and deployment, the Wizards demonstrated the future of Airborne Electronic Attack (AEA) by developing new tactics, achieving the first NGJ arrested landing, and tactically employing the system.

“This deployment showcased the cutting-edge capabilities of

the NGJ and reinforced the critical role of the Growler community in modern warfare,” said Cmdr. Erik Dente, commanding officer, VAQ-133. “More importantly, it demonstrated the skill, dedication, and perseverance of every VAQ-133 Sailor and the families, friends, and loved ones who supported them at home. I could not be more proud of the Sailors, aircrew, and support teams who made this deployment an overwhelming success.”

The Wizards began and concluded their deployment in U.S. 7th Fleet, executing key training missions in support of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and participating in a Multi-Large Deck Exercise (MLDE) with the Italian Navy’s ITS Cavour Carrier Strike Group and conducting operations in the South China Sea to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The strike group was ordered to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility to bolster U.S. military force posture in the Middle East, deter regional escalation, degrade Iranian-backed Houthi capabilities, defend U.S. forces to promote security, stability and prosperity.

While operating in the Middle East, the Wizards played a key role in supporting CENTCOM objectives, participating in dual-carrier operations with the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), flying critical combat missions to ensure the safety of deployed U.S. Forces, and aiding in strikes to degrade Iranian-backed Houthi weapons storage capabilities.

“This deployment will go down in history,” said Command Master Chief Frederick Tuiel command master chief, VAQ-133, summing up the deployment. “While it wasn’t filled with port visits, it was defined by impactful combat operations—experiences our Sailors will share for years to come. Bringing everyone home safely makes the accomplishment even sweeter.”

The squadron earned the Commander Electronic Attack Wing

Pacific (CVWP) Golden Wrench Award for maintenance excellence demonstrating the Wizard's dedication to excellence. Wizard maintainers sustained 100% Growler mission-readiness throughout the deployment enabling the successful completion of all assigned missions.

"The dedication of the sailors of VAQ-133 was second to none," said Dente. "Their hard work kept our Growlers fully mission capable and ensured every mission was a success. Whether from administration, operations, safety, maintenance, intelligence, or food service and support divisions – it took every sailor to build and maintain the combat power required during our operations."

In addition to operational accomplishments, the deployment included port calls to Guam in August and Kuala Lumpur in November, offering Sailors a chance to recharge and experience diverse cultures while supporting U.S. partner nations.

Returning home before the holidays, VAQ-133 is looking forward to reuniting with their families and friends, reflecting on their achievements and continuing to embody the squadron catch phrase to "Push it up!"

ABECSG completed more than 11,600 flight hours comprised of 5,500 sorties and over 4,400 fixed-wing aircraft launches and arrestments throughout its five-month deployment. The embarked CVW-9 is next-generation, multiplatform capable that enables advance mobile projection of naval air power and forward operational presence.

CVW 9 consists of nine squadrons flying the F-35C Lightning II, F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, EA-18G Growler, E-2D Hawkeye, C-2A Greyhound, and MH-60R/S Sea Hawk. The squadrons are the "Tophatters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 14, the "Black Aces" of VFA 41, the "Vigilantes" of VFA 151, the "Black Knights" of VMFA 314, the "Wallbangers" of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 117, the "Wizards" of Electronic

Attack Squadron (VAQ) 133, the "Raptors" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 71, the "Chargers" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 14, and the "Rawhides" of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40.

ABECSG consists of the flagship USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), embarked staffs of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) Three and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 21, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) Nine, integrated air and missile defense Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Frank E. Petersen Jr. (DDG 121), and DESRON 21's USS Spruance (DDG 111) and USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112).

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS O'Kane (DDG 77) and USS Stockdale (DDG 106) remain deployed in the 5th Fleet area of operations supporting global maritime security operations.