

OUTLAW HUNTER

by
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Within the first few hours of the Desert Storm Allied Air Campaign, a specially configured P-3C Orion detected a group of Iraqi patrol boats. The P-3 immediately vectored in an aircraft strike force to destroy the target and later provided the battle damage assessment of what became the first Naval battle kill of the Gulf War. Almost a year later, the nameless Orion was identified as the little known Outlaw Hunter aircraft, which would earn the reputation as the Navy's key interdiction platform in the Gulf.

The prototype aircraft was designed as an over-the-horizon targeting platform through SPAWAR (Space and Naval Warfare Command) and Tiburon Systems of San Jose. Actually, there are roots reaching back to the mid-70s when a related concept named Outlaw Shark was developed by Lockheed Missiles and Space Company and was tested successfully in the Mediterranean. Its goal was to

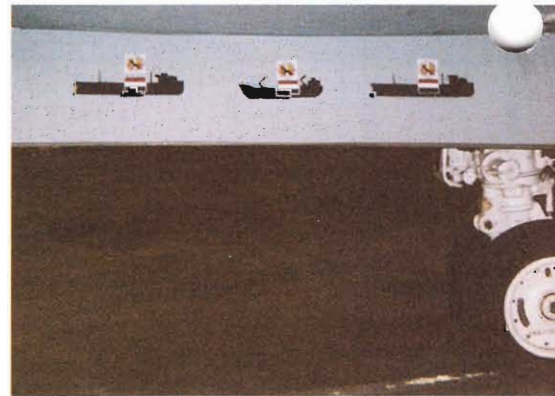


quickly modified to participate in the Gulf War; they were dubbed OASIS I and II. They are similarly equipped but since "Outlaw" is usually associated with prototypes, the name OASIS, short for Over-the-Horizon Airborne Sensor Information System, was used. Based on its success in the Gulf, Outlaw Hunter and Oasis will probably remain the communications jewels of the maritime patrol community. Both CINCPACFLT and COMSEVENTHFLT backed their use strongly after seeing them in action in fleet exercises and then for real.

The aircraft's electronics suite combines an Advanced Tactical Workstation, Inverse Synthetic Aperture Radar (ISAR), Officer in Tactical Command Information Exchange System (OTCIXS), Global Positioning System (GPS) and Satellite Communications (SATCOM). These systems are also conceptualized in Boeing's Update IV plans intended for Orion II (see next article).

The union of these systems yields accurate tactical plot and targeting data which can be transmitted immediately via SAT-

Fresh paint on Outlaw Hunter, now with VP-9 at NAS Moffett Field. Antennas visible on top are for GPS and SATCOM. Patrol Squadron 19 had the aircraft for most of the war until their disestablishment process, when VP-4 took over. Hits scored, attributable to the crew and system, were marked on the wheel well door (below) during the crisis.



Outlaw Hunter's Advanced Tactical Workstation.

provide improved positioning and tactical targeting information. Then, in 1988, Lockheed Aeronautical Systems Company demonstrated a similar system using a Navy VQ EP-3 in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Outlaw Hunter was the outgrowth of these programs and new technological advances, not to mention the interim research and experience of program personnel, some of whom formed the core of Tiburon. Two follow-on aircraft were

COM to the Battle Group and Command Center for utilization as intelligence or strike information. Outlaw Hunter can maintain a current over-all tactical plot of a battle area while continuously updating and passing information on for evaluation. It also can identify and keep tabs on the location of known friendly units.

Outlaw Hunter has led to other prototypes. One being worked is a system for the EP-3E called "Storyteller". Another is Outlaw Viking which will further enhance the carrier based S-3B.

