

Images from the 1998–1999 Cruise – A Photo Essay

Depending on your role aboard Enterprise, out at sea there could be a multitude of sensory experiences conjured, or a routine that could become tedious. For those down below the monotone bulkheads and deck plates made the ship a kind of “Enterprison.” Crew topside on the flight deck and in the island were treated to a feast of continual changing conditions of nature mixed with the unnatural drama of the oceanic airstrip, constantly active and evolving.

During the 1990s Big E’s air wings – CVW-17 and CVW-3 – were at the watershed between the Cold War air wings of the 1960s–1980s, that had operated variegated aircraft each with specific roles. As the 2000s approached many airframe roles coalesced, leading to an air wing with only a couple of aircraft types. The various roles were progressively absorbed toward a single type of airframe. During JTG-99.1, CVW-3 had some elements of a 1970s–1980s air wing. The F-14 Tomcat led the fighter pack, but instead of the two squadrons

there was just one, with 10 aircraft and an expanded set of duties. The attack and fighter had already followed the footsteps of USS *Midway* (CV-41) and USS *Coral Sea* (CV-43) in the 1980s, where the future was sealed with a homogenous attachment of F/A-18 Hornets replacing the A-6 Intruders and A-7 Corsairs of old. Of course, the radar-toting E-2 Hawkeyes and radar-jamming EA-6B Prowlers remained part of CVW-3, and for the last time electronic intelligence aircraft were represented by the ES-3A Shadow. The S-3B Viking was still ASW capable, but this was starting to evolve, with more of a surface strike and tanking role adapted. In fact, at this time the squadron designation VS came to mean Sea Control, rather than Anti-submarine Squadron. Finally, the HS squadrons were made up of the SH-60 Seahawks, replacing the venerable SH-3 Sea King from the 1970s and 1980s.

Following is a visual history of CVW-3 out at sea on Big E during the 1998–1999 Med/Mid East cruise.

Big E and CVW-3 steaming in the Middle East, Northern Arabian Gulf, December 1, 1998.

Dave McKay

PREPARE FOR FLIGHT OPS



The first FOD walk-down of Big E's flight deck for the 1998–1999 deployment – a twice-daily ritual. The crew are searching the recently laid and painted non-skid deck for debris that could become ingested by and damage aircraft engines. Centurion status on *Enterprise* was awarded not only to pilots for landing 100 times, but also to those who regularly attend the FOD walk-down.

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A “blue shirt” carefully maneuvers a Hornet using the ubiquitous MD-3A, GPCX flight deck “mule.”

Dave McKay





Fly 3, AKA the “junkyard,” between cycles. The after portion of Big E’s flight deck, from the island to the round-down, or ramp, served CVW-3 in various ways. Here we see the landing area with the typical VLA white outline and yellow-/white-dashed centerline, angled 10 degrees to port. Not visible are, one deck below, five arresting gear engines for the barricade and four arrester cables for recovery of aircraft; two aircraft elevators that moved planes between hangar bay 2 and fly 3; and an ordnance elevator near the island that allowed direct provision to the main flight deck ordnance staging area, known as the “bomb farm,” directly behind and under the island. Lastly fly 3 was a parking lot for aircraft and yellow and white gear.

Dave McKay



Hornets and a lone Tomcat are spotted on fly 1. Spots over cats 1 and 2 were referred to as “rows.” Aircraft parked at the “crotch,” where the forward deck meets with the angled deck – seen here with VF-32’s Gypsy 132 (Bu. No. 163409) and those parked on the portside known as 4 Row – had to be parked ahead of other “birds” to prevent clipping from aircraft flying off the angled deck area. The Crash and Salvage crew’s Rapid Response Fire Equipment tender sits at the bow, ever vigilant as B-B stackers load ordnance, squadron crew on-load LOX and Purple Shirt “grapes” refuel aircraft. The prominent mast to starboard was *Enterprise’s* Belknap pole – an anti-collision aide to adjacent vessels, which could determine Big E’s relative motion in the dark by fixing on the navigation lights on this pole and the masthead atop the island. Belknap poles were fitted to all carriers following the collision between USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV-67) and USS *Belknap* (CG-26) in the Mediterranean on November 22, 1975.

Dave McKay



An MD-3D “mule” sits amid ordnance, drop tanks, an ALQ-99 jamming pod, and a VMFA-312 Hornet in the “bomb farm” area aft of the superstructure. Note that mule 13 had the standard turbine attached, making it a “Huffer cart.” In the right foreground is an ordnance elevator hatch, outlined in the usual yellow- and red-dashed line.

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Painted brilliant yellow in 1998 the aircraft crash crane sits as out of the way as possible behind the island. In the event of mishap resulting in a stricken aircraft blocking the deck, Tilly would lift the crippled bird away. In the foreground is one of the two antennas for the AN/SPN-46 used in the PALS by CATCC-65 to assist pilots aboard.

Dave McKay





Looking upward to the aft island from 03 level through a flight deck hatch. During flight ops this hatch was kept open for quick access to the emergency aircraft barricade net for arrestment of a damaged aircraft. The nylon barricade was stored in this space. In the event of an emergency recovery of a crippled plane, deck crew rigged the barricade to two arms in the flight deck and to cables of a fifth arrester engine. The arms were raised out of the deck to erect the net. It was required only around eight times in Big E's entire history.

Dave McKay



During JTG-99.1 Big E steamed 50,234 nautical miles in six months, almost twice the normal distance navigated during a Med cruise. She transited the Suez Canal four times to support operations Southern Watch and Desert Fox in the Gulf and Operation Deliberate Forge in the Adriatic Sea as well as taking part in Exercise Juniper Stallion in the Med. Big E's Navigation department guided her safely through JTG-99.1, utilizing SINS, Celestial Navigation, and GPS, the latter utilizing 24 satellites, four of which were always in view. Other tools available to the "gator" were the Electronic Chart Display Information System, Flight Panel Display, FURUNO radar, fathometer for depth sounding, and WRN-6 for tracking and display.

Dave McKay