

SECOND VA-85

Lineage

Attack Squadron EIGHT HUNDRED FIFTY NINE (VA-859) was a reserve squadron called to active duty on 1 February 1951.

Redesignated Attack Squadron EIGHTY FIVE (VA-85) on 4 February 1953.

Disestablished on 30 September 1994. The second squadron to be assigned the VA-85 designation.

Squadron Insignia and Nickname

The squadron's insignia was approved by CNO on 22 May 1951. Colors for the woodpecker astride a rocket were: a blue gray background outlined in black; brown woodpecker shaded with white and different tones of brown; the shoes, gloves and face of the bird were white; the beak and Mae West lifejacket were yellow; its eyes were green with black pupils and a red head; the bomb was dark blue with a red flame and the rocket was shaded light green on top and dark green on the bottom, outlined in black.



The squadron's first insignia.

Following the squadron's redesignation a new insignia was approved by CNO on 24 May 1954. Colors for the winged bomb insignia were: blue background outlined in red; the clouds and wings were silver with black markings; the lightning bolt was yellow, edged with red; and the bomb was black with silver shading.



The squadron's second insignia was a more stylized designed reflecting its attack mission.

The CNO approved a change in the squadron's insignia on 7 May 1958. Colors for the black falcon insignia are as follows: a white background outlined in black; the falcon is black with a white eye; the scroll has a white background outlined in black, with black lettering.

Nickname: Black Falcons, 1958–1994.



The stylized black falcon was used by the squadron for over 35 years before its disestablishment.

Chronology of Significant Events

May 1958: As part of an Atlantic Fleet training exercise (LANTRAEX 1-58), two of the squadron's AD-6 Skyraiders, flown by Lieutenant (jg)s Strang and Woods, flew nonstop from *Forrestal* (CVA 59), operating off the coast of Jacksonville, Florida, to NAS North Island. The flight was conducted below 1000 feet to demonstrate the low level and long range capability of the squadron. Two days later the aircraft returned, nonstop, to *Forrestal*.

5 Feb 1963: The squadron's commanding officer, Commander C. H. Mundt, was killed in an air crash.

22 Dec 1965: The squadron's commanding officer, Commander B. J. Cartwright, and his bombardier/navigator, Lieutenant Ed Gold, failed to return from a strike into North Vietnam and are listed as missing in action, presumed dead.

21 Apr 1966: The squadron's commanding officer, Commander J. E. Keller, and his bombardier/navigator, Lieutenant Commander E. E. Austin, were killed in action during a mission over North Vietnam.

27 Apr 1966: While serving with VA-85 as a bombardier/navigator in an A-6A, Lieutenant (jg) Brian E. Westin was awarded the Navy Cross for heroism during a combat mission over North Vietnam when he risked his own life to save that of his wounded pilot, Lieutenant W. R. Westerman.

6 Sep 1968: The squadron's commanding officer, Commander K. L. Coskey, was shot down over North Vietnam. His bombardier/navigator, Lieutenant Commander R. G. McKee, was rescued but Commander Coskey became a POW. He survived the internment at Hanoi and was released on 14 March 1973.

Jul 1974: Following a coup that overthrew the government of Cyprus, VA-85 operated from *Forrestal* in the vicinity of Cyprus and provided air cover for the evacuation of Americans and foreign nationals from the island.

May–Jun 1981: Following increased military action and Israeli reprisal raids against Syrian missile positions in southern Lebanon, *Forrestal* was ordered to the eastern Mediterranean. VA-85 operated from the carrier while on station off the coast of Lebanon.

Jul 1982: Following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June and the siege of west Beirut, *Forrestal* operated off

the coast of Lebanon with VA-85 prepared to provide air support for a possible evacuation of Americans.

Aug-Sep 1982: *Forrestal* and its embarked squadrons provided air cover for the landing of 800 U.S. Marines in Beirut, Lebanon. The Marines became part of the multi-national peacekeeping force in that country.

4 Dec 1983: During *Kennedy's* operations off the coast of Lebanon in support of the Multi-national Peacekeeping Force, several of the carrier's F-14 reconnaissance aircraft received hostile fire from Syrian surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft positions on 3 December. A retaliatory strike was flown by elements of CVW-3 and aircraft from *Independence* (CV 62) against the Syrian anti-aircraft positions near Hammana, Lebanon. One of the squadron's A-6Es was lost in the attack, its pilot, Lieutenant Mark Lange, was killed and the NFO, Lieutenant Robert Goodman, was captured by the Syrians. He was released 4 January 1985.

Jul 1984: The squadron operated in the Caribbean and off the coast of Central America to assist the Coast Guard with drug interdiction operations.

10 Oct 1985: The squadron's KA-6D tanker aircraft refueled F-14s from *Saratoga* (CV 60) enroute to their intercept of an Egyptian 737 airliner that was carrying Arab terrorists who had hijacked the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro on 7 October and murdered an American citizen. The F-14s forced the airliner to land at NAS Sigonella, Sicily, leading to the capture of the terrorists.

24 Mar 1986: Libyan missiles were fired at U.S. Naval forces operating in the Gulf of Sidra. This action precipitated a retaliation against Libya by squadrons

from *Saratoga* (CV 60), *America* (CV 66) and *Coral Sea* (CV 43). VA-85's A-6Es conducted a follow-up attack with Rockeye bombs on a Libyan Combattante II G-class fast attack missile craft that had been hit by a Harpoon missile fired by a VA-34 aircraft. The attack resulted in the sinking of the Combattante II. VA-85 aircraft also attacked a Nanuchka II class missile corvette with Rockeyes, damaging the corvette.

25 Mar 1986: VA-55 attacked a Nanuchka with Rockeyes, damaging but not stopping the corvette. A VA-85 aircraft then launched a Harpoon against the corvette which resulted in its sinking.

6 Sep 1989: Squadron aircraft flew missions in support of the evacuation of personnel from the American Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, due to the unstable situation in that country.

17 Jan-28 Feb 1991: The squadron participated in Operation Desert Storm, combat strikes against targets in Iraq and the Kuwaiti theater of operations. During this period of combat the squadron flew 585 combat sorties, consisting of 1,700 flight hours and expended over 850 tons of ordnance.

Aug 1993: Squadron aircraft flew missions over Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of U. N. Operation Deny Flight.

Nov 1993: Squadron aircraft flew sorties over Mogadishu, Somalia, in support of U. N. Operation Continue Hope.

Dec 1993: Squadron aircraft provided support for reconnaissance missions over southern Iraq, part of Operation Southern Watch.



A squadron AD-6 Skyraider during its deployment to the Med aboard Lake Champlain (CVA 39) in 1954-1955.

Home Port Assignments

<i>Location</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
NAS Niagara Falls	01 Feb 1951
NAS Jacksonville	05 Apr 1951
NAS Quonset Point	26 Sep 1951
NAS Oceana	11 Jun 1952

Commanding Officers

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
LCDR Richard E. Moot	01 Feb 1951
LCDR Joe W. Williams, Jr.	26 Sep 1952
CDR Adolph Mencin	Mar 1954
CDR Charles H. Jaep III	06 May 1955
CDR Jack C. Heishman	Sep 1956
CDR M. G. Bramilla, Jr.	Sep 1957
CDR E. M. Coppola	05 Sep 1958
CDR Howard C. Lee	25 Mar 1959
CDR William Carrier, Jr.	29 Nov 1960
CDR N. O. Scott, Jr.	Dec 1961
CDR Clinton H. Mundt	21 Dec 1962
CDR John C. McKee	05 Feb 1963
CDR A. H. Barie	Feb 1964
CDR Billie J. Cartwright	15 Apr 1964
CDR J. E. Keller	22 Dec 1965
CDR Ronald J. Hays	21 Apr 1966
CDR J. C. Patterson	20 Jun 1967
CDR Ken L. Coskey	28 Jun 1968
CDR Charles B. Hunter	06 Sep 1968
CDR Herbert A. Hope, Jr.	06 Jun 1969
CDR Donald H. Westbrook	05 Jun 1970
CDR David W. Timberlake	08 May 1971
CDR Michael R. Hall	30 May 1972
CDR Arthur M. Page	01 May 1973
CDR Donald V. Boecker	01 Jul 1974

Commanding Officers—Continued

	<i>Date Assumed Command</i>
CDR Richard C. Allen	07 Nov 1975
CDR Charles R. Bubeck	25 Feb 1977
CDR Bruce B. Bremner	May 1978
CDR Ronald J. Zlatoper	26 Jun 1979
CDR Daniel P. Wright	07 Aug 1980
CDR John I. Dow	10 Dec 1981
CDR Kirby E. Hughes II	18 Feb 1983
CDR Paul L. Bernard	17 Aug 1984
CDR Robert W. Day	01 Jul 1985
CDR Robert A. Tolhurst	16 Sep 1986
CDR James B. Stone, Jr.	11 Mar 1988
CDR Dean W. Ellerman, Jr.	05 Jun 1989
CDR Lewis W. Crenshaw, Jr.	16 Aug 1990
CDR Ralph C. Miko	01 Sep 1991
CDR Bruce A. Weber	22 Sep 1992
CDR John W. Scheffler	29 Sep 1993

Aircraft Assignment

<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Date Type First Received</i>
TBM-3E	*
AD-2	05 Mar 1951
AD-4	Jul 1952
AD-6/A-1H‡	Jan 1954†
A-6A	06 Mar 1964
KA-6D	18 Nov 1970
A-6E§	09 Dec 1971

* During its reserve duty prior to 1 February 1951, the squadron flew the TBM-3E.

† The full complement of AD-6s was not received until May 1954.

‡ The AD-6 designation was changed to A-1H in 1962.

§ VA-85 was the first fleet squadron to receive the A-6E.



A squadron Skyraider, circa 1963 or 1964.

Major Overseas Deployments

<i>Date of Departure</i>	<i>Date of Return</i>	<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Type of Aircraft</i>	<i>Area of Operation</i>
28 Nov 1951	11 Jun 1952	CVG-8	CV 40	AD-2	Med
26 Apr 1953	21 Oct 1953	CVG-8	CVA 43	AD-4	Med
27 Sep 1954	15 Apr 1955	CVG-8	CVA 39	AD-6	Med
12 Mar 1956	05 Sep 1956	CVG-8	CVA 11	AD-6	Med
28 Jan 1960	31 Aug 1960	CVG-8	CVA 59	AD-6	Med
09 Feb 1961	25 Aug 1961	CVG-8	CVA 59	AD-6	Med
03 Aug 1962	02 Mar 1963	CVG-8	CVA 59	AD-6/A-1H	Med
19 Oct 1965	13 Jun 1966	CVW-11	CVA 63	A-6A	WestPac/Vietnam
05 Nov 1966	19 Jun 1967	CVW-11	CVA 63	A-6A	WestPac/Vietnam
10 Apr 1968	16 Dec 1968	CVW-6	CVA 66	A-6A/B	WestPac/Vietnam
11 Aug 1969	08 May 1970	CVW-14	CVA 64	A-6A/B	WestPac/Vietnam
05 Jan 1971	02 Jul 1971	CVW-17	CVA 59	A-6A & KA-6D	Med
22 Sep 1972	06 Jul 1973	CVW-17	CVA 59	A-6E & KA-6D	Med
11 Mar 1974	11 Sep 1974	CVW-17	CVA 59	A-6E & KA-6D	Med
05 Mar 1975	22 Sep 1975	CVW-17	CV 59	A-6E & KA-6D	Med
04 Apr 1978	26 Oct 1978	CVW-17	CV 59	A-6E & KA-6D	Med/NorLant
27 Nov 1979	07 May 1980	CVW-17	CV 59	A-6E & KA-6D	Med
02 Mar 1981	15 Sep 1981	CVW-17	CV 59	A-6E & KA-6D	Med/NorLant
08 Jun 1982	16 Nov 1982	CVW-17	CV 59	A-6E & KA-6D	Med/IO
25 May 1983	01 Jul 1983	CVW-3	CV 67	A-6E	NorLant
27 Sep 1983	02 May 1984	CVW-3	CV 67	A-6E	SoLant/Med
25 Aug 1985	16 Apr 1986	CVW-17	CV 60	A-6E & KA-6D	Med/IO
05 Jun 1987	17 Nov 1987	CVW-17	CV 60	A-6E & KA-6D	Med
08 Feb 1989	03 Apr 1989	CVW-1	CV 66	A-6E & KA-6D	Carib/NorLant
11 May 1989	10 Nov 1989	CVW-1	CV 66	A-6E & KA-6D	Med/IO
28 Dec 1990	18 Apr 1991	CVW-1	CV 66	A-6E & KA-6D	Med/Red Sea/ Persian Gulf
21 Aug 1991	11 Oct 1991	CVW-1	CV 66	A-6E & KA-6D	NorLant
02 Dec 1991	06 Jun 1992	CVW-1	CV 66	A-6E & KA-6D	Med/Red Sea/ Persian Gulf
11 Aug 1993	05 Feb 1994	CVW-1	CV 66	A-6E	Med

Air Wing Assignments

<i>Air Wing</i>	<i>Tail Code</i>	<i>Assignment Date</i>
CVG-8	E/AJ*	05 Apr 1951
CVG-1	AB	19 May 1963
CVG-8/CVW-8†	AJ	25 May 1963
COMFAIRNORFOLK		06 Apr 1964
CVW-11	NH	23 Jul 1965
COMFAIRNORFOLK		12 Aug 1965
CVW-11	NH	23 Sep 1965
COMFAIRNORFOLK		10 Jun 1966
CVW-11	NH	25 Sep 1966
COMFAIRNORFOLK		Jun 1967
CVW-6	AE	01 Oct 1967
CVW-14	NK	01 Apr 1969
COMFAIRNORFOLK		May 1970
CVW-17	AA	01 Aug 1970
CVW-3	AC	01 Jan 1983
CVW-17	AA	31 Dec 1984
CVW-1	AB	01 Jan 1988

* The tail code was changed from E to AJ in 1957. The effective date for this change was most likely the beginning of FY 58 (1 July 1957).

† CVG-8 was redesignated CVW-8 when Carrier Air Group (CVG) designations were redesignated Carrier Air Wings (CVW) on 20 December 1963.

Unit Awards Received

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
NAVE	01 Jul 1963	30 Jun 1964
	01 Jan 1973	30 Jun 1974
	01 Jul 1975	30 Sep 1976
AFEM	16 Oct 1969	24 Oct 1969
	16 Mar 1970	23 Mar 1970
	06 Nov 1983	27 Nov 1983
	02 Dec 1983	21 Jan 1984
	31 Jan 1984	22 Feb 1984
	25 Feb 1984	29 Feb 1984
MUC	07 Sep 1969	30 Apr 1970

Unit Awards Received—Continued

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
	15 Jul 1982	22 Apr 1984
NEM	20 Jan 1986	29 Mar 1986
NUC	04 Dec 1966	28 Apr 1967
	12 May 1968	20 Nov 1968
	10 Oct 1985	11 Oct 1985
	23 Mar 1986	29 Mar 1986
	17 Jan 1991	07 Feb 1991
RVNGC	15 Jan 1966	19 Jan 1966
	23 Jan 1966	27 Jan 1966
	30 Jan 1966	
	03 Feb 1966	
	07 Mar 1966	
	10 Mar 1966	
	13 Mar 1966	
	22 Apr 1966	
VNSM	25 Nov 1965	23 Dec 1965
	15 Jan 1966	04 Feb 1966
	01 Apr 1966	29 Apr 1966

Unit Awards Received—Continued

<i>Unit Award</i>	<i>Inclusive Dates Covering Unit Award</i>	
	08 May 1966	26 May 1966
	08 Dec 1966	03 Jan 1967
	02 Mar 1967	28 Mar 1967
	12 Apr 1967	28 Apr 1967
	08 May 1967	23 May 1967
	29 May 1968	28 Jun 1968
	06 Jul 1968	03 Aug 1968
	17 Aug 1968	12 Sep 1968
	27 Sep 1968	30 Oct 1968
	11 Sep 1969	03 Oct 1969
	01 Nov 1969	23 Nov 1969
	07 Dec 1969	22 Dec 1969
	05 Jan 1970	30 Jan 1970
	12 Feb 1970	01 Mar 1970
	26 Mar 1970	17 Apr 1970
SASM	15 Jan 1991	03 Apr 1991
KLM	17 Jan 1991	28 Feb 1991



A squadron A-6E Intruder, with CAG markings, landing aboard America (CV 66) in 1993.