**VQ-2 Scheduled for Homeport Change**

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From Commander, Naval Forces Europe/Commander, U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs

ITALY (NNS) -- Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron (VQ) 2 will relocate from Rota, Spain, to Whidbey Island, Wash., effective Sept. 1.

The relocation of VQ-2's six aircraft and 450 Sailors to the United States is in keeping with the Navy's ongoing transformation of forces in Europe, and will help reduce costs and eliminate redundancies throughout its force structure worldwide.

The move will co-locate the squadron with VQ-1, already based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, and will realize efficiencies through the consolidation of personnel deployment practices, aircraft maintenance practices and air crew training for these unique Navy squadrons.

"This move is an essential element of our transformation in Europe, greatly enhancing our overall efficiency and, in the process, improving the operational capabilities of both VQ-1 and VQ-2," said Adm. Harry Ulrich, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe.

"Both squadrons will now be strategically located together, maximizing their training and readiness posture and their ability to surge worldwide as required," said Ulrich. "The officers and Sailors of VQ-2 are true professionals and have carried on a proud legacy here in Europe. Theirs is a tremendous record of success and excellence. I have no doubt they will continue that record in the future."

VQ-2, established in 1955, has been operating out of Rota since 1960, and was at the forefront of the Navy's reconnaissance operations for the majority of the Cold War. The squadron was instrumental in providing reconnaissance collection for NATO operations in the Balkans in the 1990s, and operated alongside VQ-1 to enforce no-fly zones with operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch during the same period. More recently, VQ-2 deployed to support both operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom in the Middle East.

The closure of VQ-2 facilities in Rota is being done in phases, with most of the Sailors and their family members being permitted to complete their tours in Spain, while new personnel report to facilities in Whidbey Island.

Additionally, two smaller associated units, Naval Security Group Activity Rota and Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Unit Rota, will be disestablished through the ongoing transformation efforts.

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