



## UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 214  
BOX 99240  
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

1650  
CO  
11 Dec 09

From: Commanding Officer, Marine Attack Squadron 214  
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (ASM)  
Via: (1) Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group 13  
(2) Commanding General, 3D Marine Aircraft Wing

Subj: NOMINATION OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 214 FOR THE LAWSON  
H. M. SANDERSON AWARD - MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON OF THE YEAR

Ref: (a) MARADMIN 691/09

Encl: (1) Comprehensive Summary of Action(s)  
(2) Unit Statistics VMA-214  
(3) Proposed Citation  
(4) VMA-214 Squadron History  
(5) Squadron Photos

1. Per the reference, Marine Attack Squadron 214 (VMA-214) requests consideration for the Lawson H. M. Sanderson Award as the Marine Attack Squadron of the Year. The following information is provided:

- a. Commanding Officer Work Address: VMA-214  
Box 99240  
Yuma, AZ 85369-9240
- b. Commanding Officer Home Address: [REDACTED]
- c. Commanding Officer Phone Number: Comm. [REDACTED]  
DSN [REDACTED]
- d. Commanding Officer email: [REDACTED]@usmc.mil

2. VMA-214's impacts on Marine Aircraft Group 13 (MAG-13) and Marine Aviation were accomplished by focusing on the individual Marines, Sailors, and families. By bringing out the very best every Marine and family member had to give, VMA-214 successfully prepared and executed simultaneous deployments ISO the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (13th MEU) and 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2d MEB). To this end, the Marines of VMA-214 flew 4,439.6 flight hours and 1,954 sorties without a single aviation mishap, only 2 ground mishaps, no friendly fire incidents, and no collateral damage reports. Despite such a high operational tempo, the squadron still managed to exceed USMC re-enlistment goals by over 35 percent. In VMA-214 the individual Marine was

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given the opportunity to take personal ownership of the organization and as a result, not only did the unit excel, it thrived, markedly improving MAG-13, MAG-40, 13th MEU, 2d MEB and Marine Aviation as a whole. I am confident that VMA-214 is highly deserving of recognition as Marine Attack Squadron of the Year.

3. Any questions pertaining to this nomination can be directed to Major [REDACTED], Executive Officer, VMA-214, DSN [REDACTED]; Comm. [REDACTED]; email, [REDACTED].mil.

[REDACTED]  
R. W. SCHRODER

**Summary of Action(s)**  
**Marine Attack Squadron 214**

From January 2009 to December 2009, VMA-214 successfully prepared and executed simultaneous deployments ISO the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (13th MEU) and 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2d MEB). On 9 January 2009, VMA-214 Detachment "A," comprised of 79 Marines and 6 Harriers, departed Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma and flew aboard the USS Boxer to become an integral part of the 13th MEU Air Combat Element (ACE). From January to July 2009, VMA-214 Det "A" flew missions supporting Combined Task Force-151 (CTF-151) conducting Counter-Piracy Operations providing Armed Reconnaissance, Maritime Air Support, and Long Range Aerial Reconnaissance of the Internationally Recognized Transit Corridor in the Gulf of Aden. With their LITENING Advanced Targeting Pods, the Harriers provided valuable recorded footage to CTF-151 to exploit piracy operations. During this time, VMA-214 Det "A" flew a total of 282.2 flight hours and 219 missions.

After successfully deploying Det "A," the squadron focused on pre-deployment training for Operation Enduring Freedom 09.1. The squadron ended April 2009 with 240 combat ready Marines and 14 Fully Mission Capable (FMC) aircraft. On 6 May 2009 the squadron left MCAS Yuma for Kandahar Air Field (KAF), Afghanistan. The unit successfully moved its assigned 10 aircraft and 180 Marines over 8000 miles to arrive in Afghanistan on 18 May 2009. From 18 May 2009 to 14 November 2009, VMA-214 operated from this austere desert environment ISO 2d MEB and Coalition Forces in RC-South.

Upon arrival at KAF, the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Eric Schaefer, established Marine Aircraft Group (MAG-40) Site Command KAF IOT unify MAG-40's remotely deployed aviation and ground support assets at KAF which was composed of Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 (MWSS-371), Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 40 (MALS-40), Detachment "B," Marine Wing Communications Squadron 28 (MWCS-28 Det "B"), Detachment, Marine Aerial Refueling Transportation Squadron 152, Detachment, Marine Aerial Refueling Transportation Squadron 352 (VMGR-352 Det "A"), and VMA-214. Lead by the Command Element of VMA-214, the Site Command contained over 500 Marines and flew over 5000 combat hours, delivered over 20,000 pounds of ordnance, covered over 1500 Joint Tactical Air Requests (JTARs), delivered over 600,000 pounds of cargo, and transported over 20,000 personnel, thereby increasing Marine Aviation's combat power capability to 2d MEB.

The unified efforts of the Site Command provided the opportunity for VMA-214 to have a far greater impact both at KAF and throughout the 2d MEB Area of Operations (AO). For 2d MEB,

three of VMA-214's female Marines created the core leadership for the Female Engagement Team. Aboard KAF, Messing facilities were established to serve over 1400 meals a day. A level 1 medical facility was established to treat over 5500 Joint and Coalition members, including an Afghan National Police recruit who required minor surgical care. Black Sheep Marines provided a 24-hour security detail to perform guard duty for 2d MEB's Enemy Prisoners of War during their in-patient care in the Role 3 hospital aboard Kandahar. They also provided security detail for the weekly on-base Bazaar and participated in escort duty of local national contractors transporting equipment on base. Marines participated in over 40 Fallen Angel repatriation ceremonies during the deployment. Six pall bearer teams and 3 color guards ensured 24-hour availability for ceremonies sending over 30 U.S. Marines, 2 Navy Corpsmen, 9 U.S. Army, and 15 Civilian Contractors home with honor.

In addition to the tasks of supporting the MAG-40 Site Command responsibilities, VMA-214 flew myriad missions ISO 2d MEB to include Offensive Air Support, Assault Support, Initial Terminal Guidance, Counter-Improvised Explosive Device, and Non-Traditional Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance. While in support of 2d MEB, VMA-214 flew over 1500 combat sorties totaling over 3100 combat hours. This flight hour rate exceeds 125 percent of the hours flown by AV-8B squadrons in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) which had a mature logistics system and well established facilities. Discounting weather aborts, the Maintenance Department met over 95 percent of their scheduled 2d MEB/Combined Forces Air Component vulnerability windows and assigned JTARs, which included numerous named operations to include Operation KHANJARI and Operation EASTERN RESOLVE II. While doing so, the squadron maintained an exceptionally high Full Mission Capable rate of over 78 percent and a Mission Capable rate of over 84 percent. This is over 10 percent higher than OIF Harrier squadron readiness rates. These readiness rates were obtained with an average aircraft utilization rate of 65, over 3 times the standard programmed rate and 15 percent over OIF Harrier squadron utilization rates.

VMA-214's Maintenance Department expended over 15,600 Direct Maintenance Man hours while performing over 11,850 maintenance actions for just 10 aircraft. This maintenance effort included over 1,000 Special Inspections, 17 Phase Inspections, and 9 engine replacements. As a result of this focused effort on mission accomplishment, VMA-214 exceeded the USMC readiness mission every month that it was deployed to Afghanistan, and was the only squadron in MAG-40 to do so. VMA-214 was also the only squadron in MAG-40 that always had more Non-Mission Capable for Supply time than Non-Mission Capable for

Maintenance time. The squadron averaged less than 4.7 Aircraft Direct Maintenance Man Hours per Flight Hour, 25 percent of the average AV-8B Harrier squadron. Despite sharing the flight line with Canadian Griffin helicopters and a US Army RC-12 Detachment, VMA-214 had only 1 Foreign Object Damaged (FODed) motor for over 3100 flight hours, far better than the AV-8B's average FOD rate of 1 FOD per 728 hours.

While conducting high-tempo operations from KAF, VMA-214 hosted over 20 aircraft from Carrier Air Wings (CVW) 11 and 14 that diverted to Kandahar Air Base with mechanical difficulties, to include assistance to CVW-14 during an aircraft fire on the MAG-40 flight line which consumed the aircraft resulting in Class-A damage. Assistance included mishap investigation, crash damage containment, and aircraft salvage that received official message traffic accolades from the Commander CVW-14.

VMA-214 was the first fixed wing squadron, either Joint or Coalition, that operated from Bastion Air Base. Located 90 miles from Kandahar, and in the middle of the 2d MEB AO, Forward Base Operations from Bastion increased time on station for supported units and pioneered the advantages of Vertical Short Takeoff and Landing aviation assets in the Afghanistan theatre. Another contributing factor was the innovative creation of "hot refueling" pits aboard KAF. After identifying maintenance requirements for hot refueling pits, VMA-214 became the only fixed wing squadron at KAF to be authorized the use of "hot" refueling, thus, nearly doubling the AV-8B sorties provided to 2d MEB.

From 1 January to 31 December 2009, VMA-214 Det "A" and VMA-214 deployed, simultaneously, for a combined total of 4,439.6 flight hours and 1,954 sorties with not a single aviation mishap, only 2 ground mishaps, no friendly fire incidents, and no collateral damage reports. While doing so, the Family Readiness Program diligently supported over 1000 family members while their loved ones deployed across the globe in support of contingency operations. Despite such a high operational tempo, the squadron still managed to exceed USMC re-enlistment goals by over 35 percent, achieving a first term re-enlistment rate of 92.3 percent. VMA-214 responded to a command climate that emphasized trust, courage, and leadership at the lowest level. The individual Marine was given the opportunity to take personal ownership of the organization and as a result, not only did the unit excel, it thrived, markedly improving MAG-13, MAG-40, 13th MEU, and 2d MEB.

STATISTICAL SUMMARIES

FIXED WING SQUADRON STATISTICAL SUMMARY

UNIT: MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 214 (VMA-214)  
 AWARD: LAWSON H. M. SANDERSON AWARD FOR MARINE ATTACK  
 SQUADRON OF THE YEAR

SAFETY: HAZREPS 4  
 PUBLISHED SAFETY ARTICLES 0  
 NATOPS RECOMMENDATIONS 2  
 CLASS "A" MISHAPS 0  
 CLASS "B/C" MISHAPS 0

FLIGHT DATA:	<u>LAST YEAR</u>	<u>CURRENT YEAR</u>
OPERATIONAL READINESS	83%	84.1%
FMC RATES	54.2%	72.1%
MC RATES	61.4%	79.5%
UTILIZATION RATES	22.1	38.1
TOTAL SORTIES	1611	1954
TOTAL HOURS	1857.6	4439.6
WEEKS DEPLOYED	32	47

PERSONNEL:

FIRST TERM REENLISTMENTS	14
RETENTION RATES	92% FTAP, 100% STAP
OFFICER AUGMENTATION	0
REQUESTED	0
APPROVED	0
NON-EAS ATTRITION	5
OFF DUTY EDUCATION	40
GED'S COMPLETED	0
MCI/EXTENSION COURSES COMPLETED	589
MCU DISTANCE EDUCATION (ENROLLED)	50
MEDICAL DENTAL READINESS	95.4%/98.1 %

PROPOSED CITATION FOR  
THE LAWSON H. M. SANDERSON AWARD MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON OF THE YEAR

**Marine Attack Squadron 214**

FOR SERVICE AS SET FORTH IN THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

For outstanding contributions to Marine Corps Aviation from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009. Marine Attack Squadron 214 prepared for and executed simultaneous deployments that supported the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit and the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade. Dedicating over 22,000 direct maintenance man-hours completing over 13,000 maintenance actions while flying over 1,500 missions worldwide in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Counter-Piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, the squadron flew over 4,500 mishap-free flight hours. While in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, VMA-214 exceeded all statistical records of flight hours, mission readiness, and aircraft utilization rates set by other Harrier squadrons to include those involved in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Blacksheep's focused dedication to the professional development and the personnel well-being of each Marine and Sailor resulted in the superlative care of over 1,000 family members through a robust and attentive Family Readiness program. Through their devotion and dedication, the Marines and Sailors of Marine Attack Squadron 214 reflected great credit upon themselves and upheld the highest traditions of Marine Corps Aviation.

## MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 214 HISTORY

Marine Fighter Squadron 214 was originally commissioned on 1 July 1942, at Ewa, on the Island of Oahu, in the Hawaiian group. Initially called the "Swashbucklers," they were disbanded following their combat tour and the Squadron designation was given to the Marine command on Espiritu Santo. In August 1943, a group of 27 young men under the leadership of Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington (who was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor) were joined together to form the original "Black Sheep" of VMF-214. Major Boyington had just returned from a year's tour in China as a member of the American Volunteer Group, "The Flying Tigers." In China, he had downed six enemy planes and became, through actual experience, one of the originators of American fighter tactics against the Japanese.

The call sign "Black Sheep" was chosen by the squadron to commemorate the unusual way in which the Squadron had been formed. The pilots ranged from experienced combat veterans, with several air-to-air victories to their credit, to new replacement pilots from the United States. Major Boyington and Major Stan Bailey were given permission to form the unassigned pilots into a squadron, with the understanding that they would have less than 4 weeks to have them fully trained and ready for combat. They were very successful.

They chose for their badge to carry into battle the black shield of illegitimacy, the bar sinister, a black sheep superimposed, surrounded by a circle of 12 stars, and crowned with the image of their aircraft, the F4U-1 Corsair. What these men accomplished has become Marine Corps history. The Black Sheep squadron fought their way to everlasting fame in just 84 days. They met the Japanese over their own fields and territories and piled up the smashing record of 203 planes destroyed or damaged, produced 8 aces with 97 confirmed air-to-air kills, sunk several troop transports and supply ships, destroyed many installations, in addition to numerous other victories. For their actions, the original Black Sheep were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism in action.

The Black Sheep ended their second combat tour on 8 January 1944, 5 days after Major Boyington was shot down and captured by the Japanese. The original Black Sheep were

disbanded and the pilots were placed in the pilot pool in MAG-11.

VMF-214 was reformed on 29 January 1944 at MCAS Goleta, near Santa Barbara, California. They deployed aboard the USS Franklin (CV-13) on 4 February 1945. Their mission was to join in operations against Japan and Okinawa. On 19 March, a Japanese bomber hit the USS Franklin. The explosion and resulting fire caused 772 deaths aboard the Franklin including 32 Black Sheep. Many Black Sheep aircraft were launching for a strike on mainland Japan at the time. One, First Lieutenant Ken Linder, was given half credit for shooting down the Japanese bomber that struck the Franklin. This ended VMF-214 involvement in WWII. In April 1945, the Black Sheep were relocated to El Centro, CA, and then to El Toro, CA in October of 1945. In the next few years, the Black Sheep deployed for operations on board the USS Rendova (CVE-114), the USS Baroko (CVE-115), the USS Badoeng Strait (CVE-116), and the USS Boxer (CV-21).

Flying F4U-4B Corsairs in August 1950, VMF-214 became the first Marine Squadron to see action in Korea. Flying from the USS Badoeng Strait (CVE-116) and the USS Boxer (CV-21), the Black Sheep completed two combat tours in Korea. They participated in key battles, to include the Inchon landing and the withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir. In these and others battles, they provided nearly continual air cover, interdicting supply and communication lines, and inflicting heavy damage on numerous ground emplacements, and enemy armor.

Shortly before the close of hostilities in Korea, VMF-214 returned to Marine Corps Air Station El Toro. Here they exchanged their gallant Corsairs for F9F Panther jets and began another training program. In the spring of 1953, the Black Sheep packed their bags, traded their F9s for the new F2H-4 all weather Banshee, and headed for the Hawaiian Islands. Upon arrival in the islands, they became part of Marine Aircraft Group 13 and the First Marine Brigade.

In January 1956, the Black Sheep again received the order to "get ready." This time, the circumstances were less demanding. In the ensuing 15 months, the Black Sheep covered all aspects of Marine Aviation. On 31 December 1956, the squadron was redesignated Marine All Weather Fighter Squadron 214 (VMF(AW)-214) flying the Banshee. The buildup included instrument flying, bombing, rocketry,

strafing, air-to-air gunnery, field carrier landing practice, high and low altitude special weapon drops, and carrier qualifications. VMF(AW)-214 became the first Marine Squadron to be qualified in special weapons delivery in February 1957.

The period between Korea and Vietnam saw several significant changes for the Black Sheep. VMF was changed to VMA on 9 July 1957, designating the Squadron as "attack" vice "fighter." In March 1958, the Black Sheep transitioned to the FJ-4 Fury. VMA-214 and VMF-212 became the first squadrons to deploy flying their aircraft across the Pacific. Another aircraft change occurred in January of 1959, when the Black Sheep changed over to the newer FJ-4B.

In the FJ-4B Fury jets, the squadron logged over 27,000 hours as an attack squadron. This included a stretch with over 20,000 accident-free flight hours. The Black Sheep were awarded, on 29 August 1961, the CMC safety award for the "most outstanding safety record" achieved among attack squadrons throughout the Marine Corps.

On 23 January 1962, the Black Sheep transitioned from the FJ-4B Fury to the A4B Skyhawk. This began a 27 year association between the Black Sheep and follow-on versions of the Skyhawk.

In May of 1965, the Black Sheep were reassigned to Marine Aircraft Group 12, First Marine Aircraft Wing, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, and relocated to Iwakuni, Japan. On 21 June 1965, the first Black Sheep division flew into Chu Lai Republic of Vietnam, landing on 4,000 feet of SATS runway. The Black Sheep rotated out of Vietnam in February 1966 to pick up new pilots and personnel. In April 1966, the Black Sheep deployed back to Chu Lai where combat missions were again flown in support of the Republic of Vietnam. The Black Sheep Squadron flew 14,000 hours in combat, 13,000 sorties, and dropped more than 10,000 tons of ordnance. For their service VMA-214 won the Navy Unit Commendation with Bronze Star.

VMA-214 returned from Vietnam in April 1967, relocated to El Toro, and was reassigned to Marine Aircraft Group 33, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. Once in El Toro, the unit became recognized as an operational training squadron for attack pilots, many of who were

replacement pilots bound for Vietnam.

During December of 1970, the Black Sheep were reassigned to Marine Aircraft Group 13. During the late 1970's and into the 1980's, the squadron participated in the Unit Deployment Program, rotating between Marine Aircraft Group 12 and Marine Aircraft Group 13. In October 1982, the Black Sheep were awarded the Lawson H. M. Sanderson Award for Attack Squadron of the Year. In September 1987, the Black Sheep squadron once again relocated, this time to MCAS Yuma, Arizona. On 17 October 1987, the Black Sheep made history by becoming the first squadron to win the prestigious Sanderson award for a second time.

Two significant events occurred in 1989. During the year, the Black Sheep completed 30,000 accident free hours and six years of accident-free flying. Also, in June 1989, the Black Sheep introduced single-seat fixed wing "Night Attack" aircraft to the Marine Corps with the first operational squadron of AV-8B Night Attack Harrier II's.

Marine Attack Squadron 214 became the first squadron to introduce the Night Attack capability into the Unit Deployment Program in October 1991, by deploying 20 Night Attack Harriers to Iwakuni, Japan, for 7 months. Continuing in their traditions as pioneers, in July 1993, the Black Sheep conducted a dedicated "Night Systems" deployment to 29 Palms, California. This deployment was designed to chase the moon and fly around the lunar schedule. Ultimately, sorties were conducted throughout the night until shortly before dawn over a period of 3 weeks. It also resulted in the gathering of original medical data on night flying and its effect on pilot performance.

From December 1993 to July 1994, Marines of VMA-214 deployed aboard the USS Peleliu (LHA-5) and participated in contingency Operation RESTORE HOPE and Operation QUICK DRAW off the coast of Somalia. Also during this deployment, VMA-214 Det "B" participated in Operation DISTANT RUNNER in Burundi and Rwanda.

In October 1994 a detachment from VMA-214 embarked aboard the USS Essex (LHD-2) to support the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit. While deployed, the detachment supported Operation SOUTHERN WATCH in Southwest Asia and Operation UNITED SHIELD off the coast of Somalia.

During April 1996, VMA-214 again deployed a detachment aboard the USS Tarawa (LHA-1) in support of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit. The detachment supported Operation SOUTHERN WATCH off the coast of Kuwait and Operation DESERT STRIKE in Northern Iraq.

In 1997, VMA-214 continued to support CONUS deployments while embarking another boat detachment aboard the USS Peleliu (LHA-5). During this time, VMA-214 provided fleet testing of the Automatic Targeting Hand Off System, a step toward revolutionizing the way the Marine Corps conducts close air support. In August 1997, the Black Sheep were recognized for the third time with the Lawson H. M. Sanderson Award for Attack Squadron of the Year.

In 1998 and 1999, the Black Sheep Squadron prepared for and deployed aboard the USS Boxer (LHD-4) heading directly to the North Arabian Gulf to take part in Operation DESERT FOX. It was on this deployment that the Harrier Community enjoyed its first operational use of Night Vision Devices for shipboard activities to include working with helicopters on a shared deck. Meanwhile, the Squadron (-) was busy standing up and training the first West Coast Radar Squadron. As usual, the Black Sheep were leading the charge.

2000 and 2001 were some of the most challenging if still rewarding years in recent history. Immediately following an extended fleet wide grounding of all Harrier Activities, the Black Sheep split the Squadron and deployed simultaneously in support of two separate MEU(SOC)s. The Squadron (-) deployed to Iwakuni, Japan, while Detachment Bravo sailed in support of the 13th MEU aboard USS Tarawa (LHA-1). During this deployed period, the Marines of VMA-214 participated in HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS - EAST TIMOR, INDONESIA. One month later, Det "B" was off the coast of Yemen with the 13th MEU(SOC) participating in Operation DETERMINED RESPONSE - recovery of the USS Cole. During this operation, Black Sheep Marines trained in the region and helped provide stability with a constant fixed wing presence. Det "B" also participated in the combined Exercise IRON MAGIC from 15-26 November, and shore based in Kuwait to conduct Joint training in support of JTF Kuwait. During the remainder of 2001 and during the early months of 2002, the Black Sheep dedicated themselves to training and taking care of their Marines, maintaining and improving

their planes, and to the maintenance and improvement of the grounds and spaces with which they had been entrusted.

During 2003, the Black Sheep deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF I) from February to July. During this time, the squadron supported the build up of troops in Iraq and the push for Fallujah in April. After the deployment, the Black Sheep returned to MCAS Yuma and did not deploy again until May of 2004. Supporting simultaneous deployments, VMA-214 Det "A" deployed a 6-plane detachment in support of the 11th MEU, and the remainder of the squadron deployed 10 jets in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF II). VMA-214 Det "A" returned in August 2004, with the remainder of the squadron returning in February 2005. While in Iraq, the Black Sheep supported contingency operations in Najaf, Fallujah, and provided air support for the first Iraqi elections.

The squadron returned in December 2006 and continued to train. This included supporting WTI Course 2-05 with all jets receiving the software upgrade OC 1.2. The Black Sheep, once again, supported simultaneous deployments with two 6-plane detachments. VMA-214 Det "A" deployed in support of the 31st MEU from December 2005 to July 2006 while VMA-214 Det "B" deployed in support of the 11th MEU from February to August 2006. VMA-214 provided humanitarian assistance in the Philippines during the 31st MEU's last operations out of Clark Air Force Base on Luzon Island. Both detachments deployed their aircraft with the software upgrade H2.0.

The squadron returned to MCAS Yuma until conducting a year-long deployment from January 2007 to December 2007 aboard The USS ESSEX (LHD-2). The Black Sheep deployed eight jets in support of the 31st MEU conducting forward deployed fleet activities out of Sasebo, Japan. After returning to Yuma, the squadron trained for the following year and VMA-214 Det "A" deployed six jets from January to July 2009 in support of the 13th MEU conducting Counter Piracy operations throughout the Gulf of Aden in support of Combined Task Force 151. From May to November 2009, the Black Sheep simultaneously deployed 10 jets to Kandahar, Afghanistan to assist with Counter Insurgency operations in southern Afghanistan. During this highly successful deployment, the squadron conducted Offensive Air Support, Assault Support, Initial Terminal Guidance, Counter-Improvised Explosive Device, and Non-Traditional

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance in support of 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade and Operation Enduring Freedom 09.1.

To this day, the Black Sheep of VMA-214 have continued in their tradition of true and faithful service to the Nation and to the Corps. They have continued to produce and maintain a highly skilled and tactically proficient cadre of pilots and maintainers. From the time of "Pappy Boyington" to the present day, the Black Sheep have demonstrated a standard of excellence and esprit de corps that has marked them as one of the finest military units of our Country and Corps.

1. Unit point of contact for this award is Major [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Comm: [REDACTED], DSN: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]@usmc.mil.
2. The following photos are included as a display of VMA-214 in action.
  - a. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] conduct refueling operations with a C-130J from Site Command sister squadron VMGR-352 Det "A" in support of Operation Khanjari. On 2 July 2009, VMA-214 flew a total of 56.6 hours in support of the two-battalion insert in Southern Afghanistan.
  - b. [REDACTED] lands at Bastion Air Base, located approximately 90 miles from Kandahar. Centered in the middle of the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade's Area of Operations, Bastion provided the Black Sheep with the opportunity to conduct Forward Base Operations and pioneer the capabilities of Vertical Short Take Off and Landing aviation assets.
  - c. Commanding Officer, [REDACTED] and squadron Sergeant Major, [REDACTED], stand before the entire squadron in the VMA-214 hangar spaces aboard Kandahar Air Field. This was one of numerous awards formations conducted in order to recognize the outstanding performance of Black Sheep Marines throughout the deployment.
  - d. Sergeant Major [REDACTED] cleans and lubricates a 240B while Corporal [REDACTED] stands at the ready during this off-base training evolution in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Such evolutions were internally scheduled, coordinated, and conducted in order to prepare VMA-214 and other Site Command Marines for numerous collateral duties such as security detail, Enemy Prisoner of War guard duty, and convoy patrols for 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade.
  - e. VMA-214 Flight Surgeon, [REDACTED], provides surgical care for an Afghan National Police recruit while Hospital Corpsman 2, Warren Graves, assists. The VMA-214 medical staff established and ran a level 1 medical facility aboard KAF and treated over 5500 Marines and Coalition Force members throughout the deployment.

f. Five VMA-214 aircraft take turns refueling during a transatlantic flight during the movement to Afghanistan in which 10 jets, 180 Marines, and over 80 tons of cargo completed the 8000 mile trip without a single delay due to maintenance.

g. 10 October 2009 - VMA-214 is given a short reprieve from high-tempo operations during Operation Enduring Freedom 09.1 to take a squadron photo on the Black Sheep flight line aboard Kandahar Air Field.