



EXPEDITIONARY LOGISTICS UNIT

Van Operational Detachment

In 1995, with the retirement of the Air Force's EF-111 Raven, the responsibility for electronic warfare and force protection fell into the hands of the Navy and the EA-6B. In early 1996 under a Chief of Naval Operations directive, the concept of establishing Mobile Maintenance Facility (MMF) sites was developed as a means to provide Intermediate Level Maintenance support to EA-6B's operating from remote land-based locations. EA-6B Van Operation Detachment (VANOPDET) was born.



In May 1996, VANOPDET made its first deployment to Iwakuni, Japan, using Marine Corps MMF's to support VAQ-134. The following June VANOPDET began setting up its first site consisting of 82 vans and 63 personnel in Aviano, Italy. Given the name, Expanded Mission/Mobile Maintenance Facility-One (EM/MMF-1), it became fully operational on 5 August 1997, supporting a Marine Corps EA-6B squadron. Later that same month EM/MMF-1 began supporting a second Marine Corps squadron based in Incirlik, Turkey. VANOPDET opened its second site in March 1998. EM/MMF-2 began operations at Prince Sultan Air Base in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Site surveys began in September 1998 around the Ramstein, Germany area in an effort to identify a site to relocate EM/MMF-1 from Aviano. Relocation would enable EM/MMF-1 to provide greater support to Incirlik, Turkey while still allowing full support of Aviano, Italy and back up support to EM/MMF-2 in Saudi Arabia. Eventually, a site in Sembach, Germany was decided upon and EM/MMF-1 began relocating in July 1999. The new site became fully operational on 1 September 1999. At the same time, EM/MMF-1 and -2 were re-designated as Expeditionary Logistics Unit (ELU)-1 and -2 respectively.



Personnel assigned to VANOPDET perform Type 2 Sea Duty at forward deployed ELU sites. ELU manages all functions of a shore-based Intermediate Maintenance Activity or Fleet Readiness Center to include administrative, legal, maintenance, logistics/supply, budget facility management as well as planning and liaison functions with squadron personnel. When not deployed they are integrated into COMNAVAIRFOR, Fleet Readiness Center Northwest. Dependant upon current CJCS tasking, typical deployed assignment is 180 days in Sembach, Germany; Iwakuni, Japan; or other designated remote location. Leave and formal training is accomplished at NAS Whidbey Island between deployments.



I-TEMPO consideration concept ideally is a 1:1 rotation; six months deployed followed by six months in homeport. Historically, more than 85% of VANOPDET personnel have routinely deployed in excess of 180 days per year in support of combat and contingency operations.



VANOPDET personnel have supported such operations as Southern Watch, Northern Watch, Joint Guard, Deliberate Forge, and Desert Fox as well as played a major role in Operations Allied Force, Noble Anvil, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The Expeditionary Logistics Units are prepared to carry out their primary mission of providing Intermediate Level EA-6B maintenance support to shore based Navy and Marine Corps Expeditionary Squadrons well into the 21st century.



Currently, VANOPDET is made up of approximately 190 personnel in the following ratings: Aviation Machinist's Mate (AD), Aviation Electrician's Mate (AE), Aviation Structural Mechanic (AM), Aviation Ordnanceman (AO), Aviation Support Equipment Technician (AS), Aviation Electronics Technician (AT), Aviation Maintenance Administrationman (AZ), Information Systems Technician (IT), Aircrew Survival Equipmentman (PR), Personnel Specialist (PS), and Storekeeper (SK).