

EA-18G Growlers soar in PRTC while training at Ellsworth

By Airman 1st Class Sadie Colbert, 28th Bomb Wing Public Affairs / Published July 19, 2016

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE, S.D. – This summer, U.S. Navy EA-18G Growlers joined B-1 bombers in the skies around Ellsworth Air Force Base for electronic attack training in June, and now again July 11 through 22, 2016.

This marked the first time the Navy’s Electronic Attack Squadron 129, stationed at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Washington, traveled to Ellsworth to conduct training in its local airspace.

Navy pilots and electronic warfare officers utilized the unique components of the Powder River Training Complex airspace to help accomplish its role as the fleet replenishment squadron for the EA-18G.

“We are one of two aircraft in the U.S. military inventory that is capable of accomplishing the electronic attack role,” said Navy Lt. Matthew Galamison, an EA-18G Growler instructor. “It’s very important that our aircrew get the training and range that they need with the proper emitters in order to practice against threats that are out there.”

Part of the Growler’s mission in combat is to deny, degrade or delay the enemies’ ability to acquire and engage friendly air forces and also give bombers or fighters access to those targeted areas, said Matt. During the EA-18G’s time at Ellsworth, B-1 bombers will be able to join the Navy aircraft to train to these sort of mission sets.

The lethality of worldwide anti-access and area-denial capabilities and the need to operate in a contested electromagnetic spectrum shows the necessity for electronic warfare missions.

“This training is unique,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Allen Geist, 390th Electronic Combat Squadron commander. “The Growler community is the one community that strategically looks at using electronic warfare, an ability that allows our aircraft to access denied environments.”

VAQ-129 has the distinct role of providing airborne electronic attack training for both the Air Force and Navy. Its home station, NAS Whidbey Island, also hosts the 390th ECS, the Air Force’s sole AEA unit at NASWI, as part of the Joint Airborne Electronic Attack Program. The 390th ECS is a geographically separated unit of the 366th Operations Group out of Mountain Home AFB, Idaho.

Historically, the Air Force had its own dedicated electronic warfare aircraft that flew escort for large strike packages. They would crack open bristling networks of search-and-track radars, surface-to-air missiles, and anti-aircraft artillery batteries, collectively known as integrated air defenses.

In 1995, after the AF divested its AEA aircraft, the Office of the Secretary of Defense directed electronic warfare Airmen be embedded with the Navy’s EA-6B Prowlers, and now EA-18G Growlers. Under a memorandum of understanding between the Air Force and Navy, select Air Force EWOs and pilots continue to embed on Navy EW missions through a competitive exchange program.

“The Air Force has always been interested in maintaining a knowledge of airborne electronic attack,” Matt said. “There are more capable threats with new tactics emerging, which is why the exchange program

between the Air Force and Navy exist so both B-1 and F-15 aircrew can come to Whidbey for one to a couple of years to learn how airborne electronic attack operates.”

Matt added with the exchange program, Air Force aircrews can take the knowledge they have learned on AEA and bring it back to the Air Force to make integration of other aircrews easier during large force exercises, such as those held in the PRTC.

“The great thing about coming out to Ellsworth to use the Powder River Training Complex is its size and threat emitters that we can utilize,” said Geist, a former B-1 weapon systems officer himself. “It gives us a great training opportunity and definitely builds the foundation for the electronic weapons officers to have the expertise to take down enemy integrated air defense systems.”



[PHOTO DETAILS](#) / [DOWNLOAD HI-RES](#)

Navy maintenance personnel from Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 129, assigned to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash., conduct a preflight check on an EA-18G Growler before a training flight at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., July 15, 2016. Approximately 110 Sailors participated in the training, maintaining six EA-18G Growlers and focusing on airborne electronic attack tactics. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Sadie Colbert/Released)



[Air Force](#) [Air Force Global Strike Command](#) [B-1 Bomber](#) [bombers](#) [EA-18G Growler](#) [jets](#)
[military](#) [news story](#) [training](#) [U.S. Navy](#)