

# U.S. Navy Cancels Blue Angels 2013 Performances

The Navy has cancelled the remaining 2013 performances of its Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels. The squadron will continue to train to maintain flying proficiency until further notice at its home station in Pensacola, Fla.

Recognizing budget realities, current Defense policy states that outreach events can only be supported with local assets at no cost to the government.

This is one of many steps the Navy is taking to ensure resources are in place to support forces operating forward now and those training to relieve them.

The Navy believes there is value in demonstrating the professionalism and capabilities of our Navy and Marine Corps Naval Aviation team, thus inspiring future generations of Sailors and Marines. The Navy intends to continue aerial demonstrations in the future as the budget situation permits.

## About the Blue Angels Aircraft & Team

The Blue Angels have flown over 10 different aircraft in the team's 65 year history. Originally, the team flew four aircraft in the signature "Diamond" formation and expanded to six aircraft to showcase both the diamond and solos high performance capability as well as the precision formation flying taught to all Naval Aviators. Today, the squadron flies the Boeing F/A-18 Hornet and the Lockheed Martin C-130 Hercules. When the squadron receives a F/A-18 Hornet from the fleet, which are at the end of their carrier arrestment functionality, we make a variety of modifications, including removing the nose cannon to install a smoke-fluid system, inverting a fuel pump, installing a stop watch and adjustable constant-tension stick spring, as well as the world-wide recognizable paint

scheme.

The first Jet-Assisted Take-Off (JATO) performance by the Blue Angels' C-130, affectionately known as "Fat Albert", took place at NAS Pensacola, FL in November of 1975. Eight solid fuel JATO rocket bottles, each producing 1,000 pounds of thrust, helped propel Fat Albert skyward and captivated millions of spectators each year. These JATO bottles were produced in the Vietnam era to help aircraft take off from short, unimproved runways at heavy weights. The last known stockpile of JATO bottles were expended during the Blue Angels' 2009 show season and ended with the last JATO performance for Fat Albert at the NAS Pensacola, FL Air Show in November of 2009.

A total of 16 officers voluntarily serve with the Blue Angels. Each year the team typically selects three tactical (fighter or fighter/attack) jet pilots, two support officers and one Marine Corps C-130 pilot to relieve departing members.

## The Last Show: Captured by MSA

Motorsport America was fortunate to witness the last show that took place at the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, FL before budget cuts were put in force. Photos by Fred Hanyon, MSA Publisher.



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