

**INDIVIDUAL HISTORY**

**LOCKHEED P2V-7S /SP-2H NEPTUNE 204**  
**MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 82/AF/995**

- 1961 Built by Lockheed at Burbank as a P2V-7B, the P2V-7 being the last Neptune variant produced, 311 being built by Lockheed, plus 48 under licence in Japan. The -7B was specific to the Dutch and initially had a solid nose mounting four 20mm cannon, plus ventral nose radar radome, underwing booster jets, five bomb racks under each wing and extended MAD tail. Constructor's number 7251. Operated by the air arm of the Netherlands Royal Navy – the Koninklijke or Marineluchtvaartdienst (MLD), who also operated a dozen P2V-5 aircraft from October 1953 to March 1962 with no. 320 Squadron.
- 15 Nov 61 Following ferry flight from Burbank, entered Dutch service in New Guinea (Dutch East Indies) replacing the Martin Mariner patrol flying boats grounded in 1959 and their Dakota temporary replacements; one of a batch of 15 of this variant acquired from Lockheed by the Dutch with serial numbers 200 - 214. One of eleven aircraft delivered direct from Burbank to Biak, Dutch New Guinea, in the white over Sea Blue patrol scheme, similar to that carried by US Navy aircraft. White MLD serials applied to upper port and lower starboard wing surfaces and forward fuselage.
- 1961-2 Based at Biak along with the other 11 Neptunes of No.321 Squadron, initially on Kampong (village) reconnaissance patrols. Carried large fin code 'B' for Biak, with small '04' code above from the aircraft serial number. Photo and article – Flightpath 2011, Vol. 22 No.4, p.22. The upper surfaces were later painted white to aid cooling in tropical conditions.
- Jan 62 Operating from Boeroekoe against insurgents backed by President Sukarno of Indonesia who had sent an invasion fleet of torpedo boats to take Dutch New Guinea. Brief anti-shipping strikes, bombing raids and strafing of Indonesian bridgeheads were undertaken by the Dutch before negotiations took place and a cease-fire was agreed on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1962.

Dec 62 Following the end of the Indonesian crisis and the disbandment of No. 321 Squadron, 204 flew to the Netherlands for the first time, joining the 14 other P2V-7Bs with No.320 Squadron at Valkenburg that month as replacements for Grumman Tracker aircraft, with whom it spent the rest of its operational life. No. 320 Squadron operated a detachment from Hato in the East Indies and participated in various NATO exercises and overseas visits and air displays. Served in NATO's Channel Command. The 320 Squadron Neptunes later received modifications for carrying the Nord AS-12 Air-Surface Missile underwing.

Given major up-date programme by Aviolanda, the Fokker affiliated overhaul centre at Woensdrecht, including rebuilding of the anti-submarine systems with improved ASW/ECM equipment and removal of the 20mm nose cannon, and their replacement with a clear nose cone, becoming a P2V-7S or SP-2H. Photo at Valkenburg in this condition, fin code 'V 04' nose code 204, with Kon. Marine titles on rear fuselage, circa 1969; – Aircraft Illustrated May 1970 p.173.

After the acquisition of four ex-French SP-2Hs in 1965, Dutch Neptunes were gradually withdrawn from service from 1969. From the 1970s Dutch Neptunes carried an overall dark sea grey colour scheme, with search and rescue and pollution surveillance amongst their tasks. From 1974 any three aircraft were based at the Hato airbase at Curacao in the Netherlands Antilles north of Venezuela in the Caribbean sea, mainly for SAR duties; other aircraft flew in the Caribbean on search missions in support of the US Coast Guard Station at Puerto Rico and others flew medium-range maritime patrols.

20 Apr 82 To British Aerospace, Woodford, making two flypasts over Manchester Airport en route; farewell lecture on the Neptune by its dozen crew to the Manchester Branch of Air Britain. Photo; Air Britain Digest July-August 1982 p.74. Returned to Valkenburg the following day. By this time only Neptunes 204 and 210 remained in service with 320 Squadron.

9 Jun 82 Very last formation flight by Neptunes in service with the Marine Luchtvaartdienst (MLD - Royal Netherlands Navy) with 204 and 210. Photo - Aircraft Illustrated November 1982 p.509.

21 Jul 82 Withdrawn from Koninklijke Marine (Royal Netherlands Navy) service at Valkenburg; the last Dutch Neptunes were withdrawn that year and replaced by new Lockheed P-3C Orions. 204 was the last serviceable SP-2H Neptune to fly with the RNeth Navy and on this date it set out to greet its replacements, the MLD's first Lockheed Orions off the Dutch coast and was joined by the lead Orion and a Breguet Atlantic for a formation fly-in

to Valkenburg followed by an individual last low pass. Photo - Aircraft Illustrated Nov 82 p.508.

22 Jul 82 Flown from Valkenburg to Aerospace Museum, RAF Cosford, escorted by crew ferry Breguet SP-13A Atlantic 258. Presented on permanent loan by the Dutch Ministry of Defence (Navy). Loan converted to donation 2007.

27 Jul 82 Certificate of airworthiness expired.

Photos newly arrived - Flypast Dec 82 p.54; Wrecks and Relics 9<sup>th</sup> Edition p.167. Photo on external display - Flypast April 1995 p.34.

Jun 2000 Rubbed down and repainted into later scheme by RAF Cosford Airframe Technical Trainees. Photos - Aeroplane August 2000 p.11; Aeroplane Museums Guide 2002.

Neptune 201 went to Kamp Van Zeist Museum, Netherlands; 210 is preserved at the Aviodome Museum, Lelystad after use by KLM airlines as a training airframe, and ex French SP-2H 216 is also preserved, at De Kooy Naval Base.

**TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON**

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