

# Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251



**Reactivation**  
*Ceremony*

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**Dec 05 2024**

**1251  
IN THE  
AFTERNOON**

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**MCAS Cherry Point**

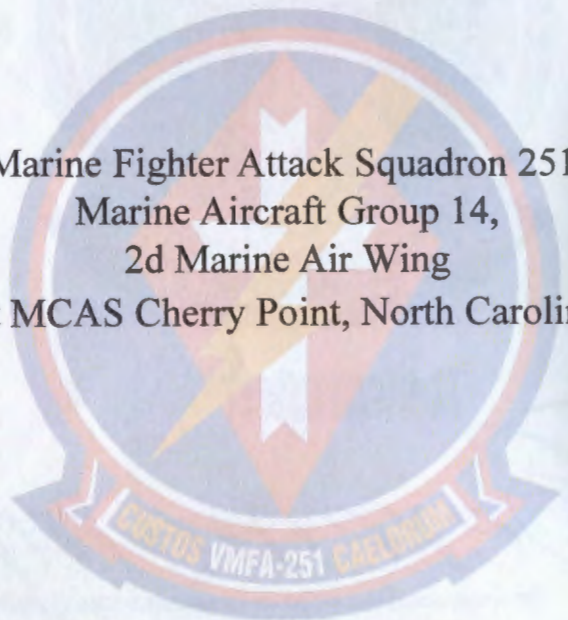
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# *Welcome*

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to the  
Reactivation  
Ceremony  
For

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251,  
Marine Aircraft Group 14,  
2d Marine Air Wing  
at MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina



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# *Sequence of Events*

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Audience seated 5 minutes prior to ceremony

Official Party Arrives

Invocation

Ceremony

\*National Anthem

Colonel Ben W. Grant Remarks

Lieutenant Colonel Evan L. Shockley Remarks

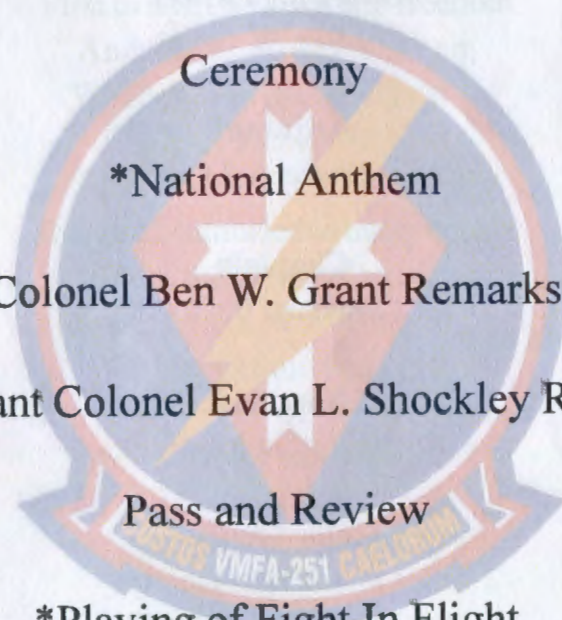
Pass and Review

\*Playing of Fight In Flight

\*Playing of Anchors Aweigh

\*Singing of the Marines' Hymn

(\* *Audience Please Stand*)



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## *Key Personnel*

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**Commander of Troops Maj**  
Vince M. Murray

**Reviewing Officer**  
Col Ben W. Grant

**Adjutant**  
2ndLt Bryce A. DeBoard

**Chaplain**  
Lt Jonathan E. Hood

**Narrator**  
SSgt Cynthia Martinez

**Color Guard**  
Sgt Shane M. Flaherty  
Sgt Miguelangel Castillo  
LCpl Alexis Jimenez-Jimenez  
LCpl John A. Reynolds

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## *Marine Corps Hymn*

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“From the Halls of Montezuma  
To the shores of Tripoli;  
We fight our country’s battles  
In the air, on land, and sea;  
First to fight for right and freedom  
And to keep our honor clean;  
We are proud to claim the title  
Of United States Marine.

Our flag’s unfurled to every breeze  
From dawn to setting sun;  
We have fought in ev’ry clime and place  
Where we could take a gun;  
In the snow of far-off Northern lands  
And in sunny tropic scenes;  
You will find us always on the job  
The United States Marines

Here’s health to you and to our Corps  
Which we are proud to serve;  
In many a strife we’ve fought for life  
And never lost our nerve;  
If the Army and the Navy  
Ever look on Heaven’s scenes;  
They will find the streets are guarded  
By United States Marines.”

# *Thunderbolts Squadron History*

Marine Observation Squadron 251 (VMO-251) was commissioned 1 December 1941 at Naval Air Station North Island, California and assigned to Marine Aircraft Group 21, 2D Marine Aircraft Wing, Fleet Marine Force.

The squadron was reassigned to Marine Aircraft Group 14 in October 1944. It was re-designated Marine Fighter Squadron 251 (VMF-251) in February 1945. On 1 June 1945, VMF-251 was deactivated at Samar, Philippines Island. Thirteen months later on 1 July 1946, VMF-251 was reactivated at Grosse Ile, Michigan as a ready-reserve squadron.

VMF-251 was recalled to active service and directed to transition to the AD-4 Skyraider. In late April 1951 the squadron was transferred to Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, California. The squadron was re-designated Marine Attack Squadron 251 (VMA-251) on April 20, 1951. In April 1958 VMF-251 was moved to Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, California to receive its first supersonic fighter, the F8U Crusader. The Thunderbolts departed MCAS El Toro for NAS Atsugi, Japan, in October of 1959. They also participated in operations in Formosa, the Philippines, and Okinawa.

In 1961, VMF-251 was assigned to Marine Aircraft Group 31 (MAG-31) at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, South Carolina. In August and September 1961 the squadron was deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and to Jamaica during the time between the Bay of Pigs Invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

On 31 October 1964, the Thunderbolts transitioned to the F-4 Phantom II and receive its current designation as Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251 (VMFA-251). Further deployments in support of NATO were made to Cigli Air Base, Turkey in 1973 and to Rota, Spain in 1975 and the Thunderbolts participated in a Western Pacific deployment to Japan, Korea, and the Philippines during 1977-1978.

In September 1980 the Thunderbolts deployed to Trondheim in the Kingdom of Norway in support of NATO Exercises. In April 1982, the Thunderbolts again deployed to Keflavik in Iceland where the squadron intercepted six Soviet Bear Bombers while on "hot pad" alert.

In January of 1986, the Thunderbolts transitioned to the F/A-18 Hornet. The squadron stood up as the sixth Marine F/A-18A squadron the following August and reported full combat ready in March 1987. The squadron transitioned from the aging F/A-18A to the F/A-18C during the early 1990s. From January to April 1994, the Thunderbolts flew close air support missions while deployed to Aviano, Italy supporting Operation Deny Flight in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

VMFA-251 boarded the USS Enterprise in 2011 in support of OEF. On 2 May 2011, the squadron was tasked with the alert aircraft to escort the body of slain Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden back to the USS Vinson. From March to November 2015, VMFA-251 embarked on the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) to conduct combat operations. Aircraft launched from the carrier to perform strikes against ISIS infrastructure, logistics, and combatants, directly impacting the operational capabilities of the terrorist group.

On 23 April 2020, VMFA-251 deactivated in MCAS Beaufort, South Carolina. The squadron is being activated in MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina today, 19 November 2024.

## Colonel Ben W. Grant United States Marine Corps



Colonel Ben W. Grant enlisted in the United States Marine Corps Reserves and reported to MCRD Parris Island in June 1990. He was activated during the first Gulf War to complete training as a field military police officer with 1st MP Platoon, 4th FSSG, Dayton, Ohio. He subsequently augmented to active duty and selected for recruiting duty. He returned to the reserves in summer 1996 and attended college. He completed Officer's Candidate School, PLC Combined, Quantico, in the summer of 1998. He graduated Miami University of Ohio in 1999 with a BA in History and commissioned a 2ndLt in November of 2000. Upon graduation from The Basic School in October 2001, he reported to NAS Pensacola for flight training with VT-2 at NAS Whiting and VT-31 at NAS Corpus Christi. He was designated a Naval Aviator in May of 2003 and reported to VMGR-253 for training as a KC-130F/R/T copilot. In May 2004, he reported to VMGR-252 where he underwent conversion training to the KC-130J.

In February 2005, he deployed for six months to Al Asad, Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and promoted to the rank of Captain in July of 2005. Immediately upon returning from Iraq, he participated in Hurricane Katrina relief operations. In July 2006, he deployed to RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus, and aboard the USS Iwo Jima as the 24th MEU KC-130 Liaison Officer during the Lebanon-Israel War. In February 2007 he deployed again for six months to Al Asad, Iraq, in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Upon returning from Iraq, he was heavily involved with the development of KC-130J and MV-22 long-range aerial refueling teamed mission operations. During this four-year tour with VMGR-252, he held the billets of Adjutant, S-1 Officer, Flight Duty Officer, Powerline Division Officer, Quality Assurance Officer, and Assistant Maintenance Officer.

In August 2008, he reported to Quantico for Expeditionary Warfare School. In June 2009, he reported to VMGR-152, Okinawa, Japan, where he assumed the duties of Flight Officer and, after completing Weapons and Tactics Instructor training in the spring of 2010, as the Pilot Training Officer. In November 2010, he deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan for seven months in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM as the VMGR-152 Detachment Officer-in-Charge, combining first with VMGR-352 as the combined detachment Operations Officer, then with VMGR-252 as the combined detachment Executive Officer. Promoted to Major on 1 June 2011, he then returned to Okinawa where assumed the duties of 1st MAW ATCO on the Wing G-3 staff.

Summer of 2012, he reported to Quantico for Command and Staff College, earning a Master's Degree in Military Science. He returned to VMGR-252 in the summer of 2013 where he assumed the duties as the Director of Safety and Standardization. He deployed in December 2013 as the Officer-in-Charge of the SPMAGTF-CR KC-130J detachment and conducted the response to Djibouti and Uganda in support of Operation OAKEN SONNET during the South Sudan civil war. Returning in February of 2014, he assumed the duties as the Squadron Aviation Maintenance Officer. In January of 2015, he deployed again for six months as the Officer-in-Charge of the now larger SPMAGTF-CR-AF 15.1 KC-130J detachment. He assumed the duties as Squadron Executive Officer upon his return. In June 2016, he reported to Headquarters Marine Corps Aviation, Pentagon, where he served as a requirements officer in the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Cell supporting RQ-7 sunset and RQ-21 requirements for a year, and then in Aviation Plans and Policy. Additionally, he was Senator John Glenn's Official Military Escort when Senator Glenn was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery in April of 2017. He promoted Lieutenant Colonel on 1 October 2017. He assumed command of VMGR-252 in Oct of 2018. Highlighting this tour were the continued operations in support of II MEF and SPMAGTF-CR-AF, support to the joint force, and the induction of the Harvest HAWK Plus weaponized KC-130J. He relinquished command in May 2020 and attended National Defense University, Eisenhower School, earning a Master's of Science in National Resource Strategy. He was selected into the American Fellows program mentoring NDU's international students during the academic year. He reported to HQ USCENTCOM J7 in July 2021 as the joint exercise lead planner for exercise EAGER LION in Jordan. In April of 2022, he assumed the duties as USCENTCOM Exercises Division Chief, responsible for the Combatant Command's CJCS directed exercise portfolio. He promoted to Colonel in April of 2023. He reported to 1st Marine Aircraft Wing in July of 2023 assuming the duties of Assistant Chief of Staff G-5 Plans. During this tour he was heavily focused on the refinement and validation of numerous regional and theater level plans in support of III MEF, INDOPACOM, and national strategic interests. He reported to MAG-14 in July of 2024. His personal awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (two gold stars in lieu of third award), Air Medal with Strike/Flight numeral 20, Navy Marine Corps Commendation Medal (with gold star) and the Navy Achievement Medal (with two gold stars). He is a Weapons and Tactics Instructor and Fleet Replacement Standardization Instructor Pilot with over 3,300 pilot-hours in the KC-130J of which 925 are combat hours, and over 5,000 total hours. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Air Assault Course and Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE) School.

**Lieutenant Colonel  
Evan E. Shockley  
United States Marine Corps**



LtCol Shockley graduated with distinction from the US Naval Academy in 2006, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science with a Minor in Russian Language. Upon graduation, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps and reported to the University of Virginia where he earned a Master of the Arts in Foreign Affairs. After graduate school, LtCol Shockley reported to The Basic School in Quantico, VA and finished as the Honor Graduate of BOC 3-08, additionally earning the Academic Award and Military Skills Award. Following TBS he reported to MATSG-21 in Pensacola, Florida to begin Naval Aviation Flight training.

Upon completion of Aviation Preflight Indoctrination at NAS Pensacola, LtCol Shockley received orders to the VT-3 "Red Knights" at NAS Whiting Field, FL for Primary Naval Flight Training, followed by advanced jet training with the VT-7 "Eagles" at NAS Meridian, MS where he received the "Golden Stick" award. After receiving his Naval Aviator Wings in March 2011 he reported to the VMFAT-101 "Sharpshooters" at MCAS Miramar, CA, for initial CAT I training in the F/A-18 Hornet. Upon completion of the FRS, LtCol Shockley reported to Marine Aircraft Group 11 and was subsequently assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314, the "Black Knights," in January 2013.

While with VMFA-314 LtCol Shockley served as the Schedules Officer and Flight Officer. In 2013 he deployed with the Black Knights to Bahrain in support of RFF-1200. In 2014 LtCol Shockley deployed again to Bahrain in support of RFF-1200. Three months into the deployment VMFA-314 was re-tasked to be the first US Marine Corps Fighter Attack Squadron in support of Operation Inherent Resolve for which they would subsequently be selected for the Robert M. Hanson Award as the Fighter/Attack Squadron of the Year.

In April 2015 LtCol Shockley reported to the VMFAT-501 "Warlords" for assignment as an F-35B Transition Student. After finishing transition training, LtCol Shockley reported to the VMFA-121 "Green Knights" at MCAS Yuma, AZ. While in Yuma, LtCol Shockley served as both the S-1 and S-4 Officer for the squadron's transition from MCAS Yuma, AZ to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan. While in Japan, LtCol Shockley attended WTI 2-17, graduating in April 2017. Upon returning from WTI he served as the DOSS from May 2017 until May 2018 and the Operations Officer from May 2018 until May 2019. In April 2019 he deployed with the 31st MEU in support of Exercise Balikatan. In 2019 the squadron was awarded the Commandants Aviation Trophy.

In May of 2019 LtCol Shockley reported to MAWTS-1 aboard MCAS Yuma, AZ where he served as an F-35 Instructor Pilot (2019-2021), F-35 Division Head (2021-2022), and Executive Officer (2022-2023). His Subject Matter Expert (SME) topics included RADAR, F-35 Combat Systems, AIM-9X, GAU-22 Gun, Strike Fighter Missions, and Mission Commanding.

In August 2023 LtCol Shockley report to MCAS Cherry Point where he served as the MAG-14 WTI until March 2024. He currently serves as the VMFA-251 Officer in Charge.

The service schools and courses that he has attended include The Basic School, Aviation Preflight Indoctrination, Primary Naval Flight Training, Advanced Naval Jet Training, F/A-18 Fleet Replacement Squadron Course, F-35B Fleet Replacement Squadron Course, F-35C Fleet Replacement Squadron Course, Legal Officer Course (Honor Graduate), Expeditionary Warfare School (Distance Learning Program, with distinction), Command and Staff (Distance Education Program), and the Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course. LtCol Shockley's personal awards include Air Medal with numeral one, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with gold star in lieu of second award, and the Navy Achievement Medal.

**Sergeant Major  
Ashley C. Harrod  
United States Marine Corps**



Sergeant Major Harrod is from Lexington, Kentucky, and enlisted in the Marine Corps in June of 1998. He attended recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina. He was meritoriously promoted to Private First Class upon graduation. In August of 1998 he attended the School of Infantry and Machine Gunners Course at Camp Geiger, North Carolina where he received the MOS of 0331, Infantry Machine Gunner.

From November 1998 to June 2002, Sergeant Major Harrod served with 1st Battalion 3d Marines in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. He served initially as a Machine Gunner and worked his way to 1st Section Leader. During this period he attended Corporals Course and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in June of 2002. He then returned to home of record Lexington, Kentucky as a member of the inactive ready reserve.

In December of 2003, Sergeant Major Harrod joined the 125th Transportation Army Reserve Command in Lexington, Kentucky. He served initially as a Bulk Fuel Transportation Team Leader. He was then activated and transferred to 655th Transportation Company in Millington, Tennessee where the Company deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom I and II. He was meritoriously promoted to Staff Sergeant in the Army. In June of 2005 he was honorably discharged from service and returned to his civilian employment.

In February of 2009, Sergeant Major Harrod returned to active duty in the Marine Corps and received orders to Marine Light Attack Squadron 467 in Cherry Point, North Carolina where he served as an H-1 Airframes Mechanic until August 2012. He attended Airframes Basic School in Pensacola, Florida and H-1 Airframes Mechanic School in Camp Pendleton, California. During this period he attained his Quality Assurance Qualifications on both type model series.

From September 2012 to August 2015 Sergeant Major Harrod volunteered for recruiting duty and was given orders to Sixth Marine Corps District, Recruiting Station Columbia South Carolina, Recruiting Sub Station Augusta, Georgia where he served as a Canvassing Recruiter at Permanent Contact Station Aiken, South Carolina. In April of 2014 he was promoted to Staff Sergeant. From September 2015 to June 2021 Sergeant Major Harrod served with Marine Light Attack Squadron 167 at Marine Corps Air Station New River in North Carolina. During this period he served in the billets of Airframes Division Chief, Quality Assurance Representative, and Squadron Gunnery Sergeant. He was promoted to Gunnery Sergeant in December of 2017.

Sergeant Major Harrod was frocked to First Sergeant in May of 2021 and reported to 3d Battalion 23d Marines for assignment as India Company Inspector-Instructor First Sergeant. In June of 2024 Sergeant Major Harrod was frocked and awarded the opportunity to serve at VMFA-251 as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader. Sergeant Major Harrod's personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Gold Star.

*"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated."*

*-Thomas Paine*

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*Thank you*

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**SEMPER FIDELIS**



