



**CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON
ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN
FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96601**

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N. K. Matheson
N. K. MATHESON

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CINCPACFLT
Director of Naval History (Op-09B9)

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THE SQUADRON AND ITS MISSIONS

Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN (VAW-116) is a four plane, airborne early warning (AEW) squadron under the operational control of Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN. Commissioned on 20 April 1967, VAW-116 reports also to the functional wing commander, Commander Fighter Airborne Early Warning Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMFITAEEWWINGPAC), and is within the fleet structure of Commander Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMNAVAIRPAC).

VAW-116 operates the five-place, twin turboprop E-2B "Hawkeye" which is capable of both shore and carrier based operations. The E-2B is 56 feet long, has an 81 foot wing span, and weighs 51,000 pounds when operationally loaded. Its most distinguishable physical characteristics are four vertical stabilizers and a 24 foot diameter, dish-shaped rotodome mounted 6 feet above the fuselage. This rotodome contains the high powered search radar and IFF antennas. The interior of the aircraft is fully pressurized and is divided into four sections; the cockpit, forward equipment compartment, CIC (Combat Information Center) compartment and the aft equipment compartment.

Accounting for most of the 20,000,000 plus cost of the E-2B is the Airborne Tactical Data System (ATDS). Containing the majority of the Hawkeye's electronics, this system includes the long range, million watt radar, IFF detection equipment, data processing and display systems, and an in-flight performance monitor. This highly integrated system, when coupled with a skilled crew, becomes in effect a complete airborne CIC capable of controlling an entire carrier launched strike--under all weather conditions, day or night.

The crew consists of five members--four officers and one highly trained enlisted flight technician. Two pilots are tasked with the safe and orderly conduct of the flight, which includes the launching and recovery of one of the Navy's largest carrier based aircraft and radio monitoring responsibilities. The three remaining crewmen occupy the CIC compartment in three distinct positions arranged fore and aft. The Mission Commander is the CICO (Combat Information Center Officer), whose primary duty is to direct and monitor the ATDS system while being responsible for the success of the assigned missions. He is assisted by the ACO (Air Control Officer), a Naval Flight Officer like himself whose duty is the control of assigned tactical aircraft. The final crewmember, the flight technician, is an Aviation Electronics Technician responsible for in-flight operation and maintenance of the more than six tons of electronic equipment onboard the E-2B. He has the secondary task of assisting the CICO with the tactical problem since the flight technician's display console is fully operational.

This highly skilled crew, when working as a coordinated team, can perform the following missions:

- a. Airborne early warning, the detection of unknown air contacts closing the Task Force.
- b. Tactical aircraft intercept control (AIC)

- c. Strike control
- d. Surface/subsurface surveillance coordination (SSSC)
- e. Helicopter control/ASW supportive command and control
- f. Aerial mining control
- g. Tactical reconnaissance aircraft control
- h. Secondary approach control for carrier recoveries
- i. Communications relay (automatic and manual)
- j. Airborne search and rescue coordination (SAR).

1977 NARRATIVE

New Year's Day saw VAW-116 deployed to the Mediterranean aboard USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) with Carrier Air Wing EIGHT. NIMITZ was entering the final month of her maiden, seven month Mediterranean cruise and was conducting a port visit at Naples, Italy. Underway 4 January NIMITZ operated for five days in the Tyrrhenian Sea before returning to Naples January 10th. The highlight of this at sea period was a fourty eight hour "flex deck" operation during which the SUN KINGS flew continuously in primarily AEW, SSSC and strike control roles. VAW-116 coordinated an intensive (unfortunately unsuccessful), 16.8 hour search for a missing pilot and aircraft from VA-82 during the night of the eighth and day of the ninth.

NIMITZ' port visit at Naples January 10 was but the second of the year; however it was a port seen seven times previously during the cruise and had long lost its appeal to most SUN KINGS. Weighing anchor on the morning of January 20, VAW-116 bade farewell to its "home away from home" during the cruise and flew four days before reaching Rota, Spain on the 24th for turn-over briefings with NIMITZ' relief, USS JOHN F. KENNEDY. Representatives of KENNEDY's VAW-125 were briefed aboard NIMITZ by VAW-116 on January 25. Current operational, administrative, maintenance and safety conditions entailed in SIXTH Fleet operations were discussed by respective SUN KING department heads.

An air wing party at the Rota Officers Club on the 26th concluded the Rota visit and the following day NIMITZ set sail for her homeport of Norfolk. The transit back to the states was an active time for VAW-116 despite the lack of flying which was in marked contrast to the East bound crossing. Department heads were preparing their portions of the squadron's end of cruise debrief to be given COMFITAEEWINGPAC. All hands were readying for the long awaited and soon to come E-2 fly-off to NAS Miramar and transport of squadron personnel and material by C-9 after the pierside offload at Norfolk.

On February 5th, three SUN KING E-2Bs launched at sea two hundred and fifty miles East of North Carolina, arriving at NAS Miramar on February 6 after a refueling stop at MCAS Beaufort, South Carolina and a nights' rest at NAS Dallas. The reception at Miramar was a gala affair as the E-2s taxied to base operations amidst bands, smiling families and representatives of the local media and VAW squadrons. The fourth SUN KING E-2B launched near Norfolk on the 6th and arrived in San Diego that evening.

NIMITZ reached Norfolk on the 7th and the squadron offload and boarding of transport aircraft went smoothly. Due to arrive at Miramar that night, heavy fog precluded landing at San Diego and the aircraft were diverted to Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino, California. NAS North Island provided bus transportation in the middle of the night as one hundred twenty exhausted but happy SUN KINGS met their anxious friends and families at Miramar on the morning of February 9.

The cruise was over. It was by all measures a successful endeavor as VAW-116 amassed 1246 flight hours and 377 carrier landings while flying from the world's largest combatent.

The first muster after the cruise was held February 10th. The end of deployment debrief was given to COMFITAEEWINGPAC on February 15. On

February 23rd YN1 Alan Malmquist was selected Sailor of the Year for 1976. VAW-116 held the customary post deployment standdown and leave period throughout February. However, one aircraft flew to NAS New Orleans on a cross country training mission on the 24th and returned to Miramar on the 28th.

March 1st marked the start of VAW-116's turnaround training plan and a safety standdown was held the following day. On March 3 a satisfactory grade was received in the post deployment corrosion control inspection. On March 9 and 10, several SUN KING sorties launched in support of Marine air strikes in the Chocolate Mountain training area of Southern California. During the week of March 14 twenty seven SUN KINGS attended a Human Resources Analysis seminar at Naval Training Center, San Diego. This led to the formation of the squadron's Affirmative Action Plan which was to guide several administrative actions in the interest of human goals throughout 1977.

By late March, through both official and unofficial channels it was learned that VAW-116 would join CVW-17 aboard USS FORRESTAL in the fall. Thus began preparations for the SUN KINGS' third successive cruise aboard a different carrier from a new homeport. (CONSTELLATION, San Diego 1974 - NIMITZ, Norfolk 1975 to 1977 - FORRESTAL, Mayport 1977 to 1978).

The flight schedule became more active during April as aircrews sought to regain and maintain proficiency and new pilots, NFOs and flight technicians reported aboard. AT1 Steve Rock was commissioned as Ensign, United States Navy on April 6 under the Limited Duty Officer program and received orders to USS EISENHOWER. The unit NATOPS evaluation was held in mid-April and yielded outstanding results. Aircrewmembers were briefed by VS-30 on the new S-3A aircraft 25 April and a two aircraft flight to NAS Whidbey Island for VAQ-130's change of command launched on April 28.

On May 2, Commander Fred J. Metz, Commander Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN, toured the squadron spaces and welcomed VAW-116 to the CVW-17/USS FORRESTAL team. May 4 through 7 was an active flying period as aircraft sortied in support of the NORAD Air Defense exercise Vigilant Overview and conducted Link 11 training with USS TRUXTON. During the week of 9 May intensive pilot training detailed procedures to be used with the heretofore unencountered Hamilton Standard propellers which were due to arrive on new squadron aircraft received from repair at NAS North Island. An awards ceremony and personnel inspection was held May 13. The following week, many SUN KINGS worked to prepare the new VAW-116 spaces in the recently constructed AEW Hangar Six at the Northwest end of the Miramar flight line. The first Hamilton Standard equipped aircraft arrived May 18 and the following two days SUN KINGS flew missions in support of TOPGUN Alfa strikes at Edwards AFB ranges.

On May 25, the majority of the squadron departed by air transport for Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico to participate in VAW-116's first operations as part of CVW-17. This seventeen day deployment was undoubtedly the operational high point in the months February through August, 1977, as VAW-116 ended its NIMITZ/CVW-8 association and became part of FORRESTAL/CVW-17.

The three SUN KING aircraft which were to operate during the deployment left Miramar May 26 and arrived in Puerto Rico on the 27th after remaining overnight at Homestead AFB in Florida. Flight operations began May 30 and continued daily until June 9th, excepting June 5th when squadrons stood down and held beach parties. The deployment was judged highly beneficial as VAW-116 became integrated into CVW-17 planning and tactics while squadron members met their counterparts with which they were to deploy aboard FORRESTAL. Over one hundred mission hours were flown and new aircrewmembers got their needed first operational experience.

Returning to Miramar June 9th and 10th, electronic warfare training was conducted on the 13th. June 16 saw a personnel inspection and large scale advancement ceremony during which thirty SUN KINGS were promoted. During June 20 through 22, six sorties were flown in support of a broad ranged Marine infantry and air exercise North of Yuma, Arizona.

The remainder of June was devoted to pilot training flights and to the squadron's move to its new hangar. The new hangar, a large facility for housing the West coast E-2B training squadron (RVAW-110) and four fleet squadrons, marked a major improvement in the AEW community's training, maintenance, operational and administrative stance.

July was a period of intensive aircrew training as over 170 hours were flown; pilot and NFO simulators received much usage. In mid month two aircraft flew to Norfolk for planning meetings with CVW-17 staff members and a view of squadron spaces aboard FORRESTAL. An operational flight was conducted with VS-30 and VA-85 off the coast of Virginia and the SUN KINGS were praised for their location of the simulated target ship and accurate strike vectors. On July 21 another tactics board meeting was held at NAS Cecil Field, Florida and SUN KINGS participated. A safety standdown on the 29th completed July's events.

During August the first VAW-116 arrested landings were recorded aboard FORRESTAL as the squadron held carrier qualifications off Norfolk. The evolution was productive--55 day landings and 46 night. Overall, 215 flight hours were recorded during the month and VAW-116 pilots established an excellent reputation for their airmanship about the carrier. The rehabilitation of squadron workshop and living spaces began in earnest and was to continue throughout the year -- the FORRESTAL had recently completed an extended yard period and some areas were in need of refurbishment.

On September 5, the SUN KINGS sent an aircraft to NAS Pensacola in response to informal requests from VT-10. In an effort to attract to the E-2 community the higher qualified student NFOs of VT-10, briefings were held and generated a good deal of interest in the aircraft and its mission. VAW-116 recommended to COMFITAEEWINGPAC that similar flights to VT-10 be conducted throughout the year. The squadron sent a CICO to CVW-17 briefings on the Red Flag operations and facilities at Nellis AFB, Nevada in mid September. On September 15, Commander N.K. "Matt" MATHESON relieved Commander Don GINGLES to become VAW-116's 11th Commanding Officer in ceremonies overseen by Commander Ken DENBOW, the newly reported Executive Officer. During the last week of the month the SUN KINGS flew East to

Mayport, Florida, the FORRESTAL's new homeport, to commence REFTRA off the Florida coast and to the Caribbean. Squadron flights consisted primarily of AIC and pilot training with more sophisticated command and control missions to look forward to in October.

REFTRA lasted nearly a month and included port visits at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Port au Prince, Haiti. REFTRA was an evolution devoted more to damage control and shipboard general quarters drills than to air operations as the low flight hours for the month (124) attest. VAW-116 fully participated in the wide variety of drills and gained in knowledge of shipboard organization and procedures. Successful Link 11 with the S-3A aircraft was the operational highlight of this at sea period. During REFTRA, VAW-116 initiated the policy of assigning a NFO to the shipboard Combat Information Center during flight operations to enhance ship to air coordination.

Significant maintenance problems were experienced during this first at sea period aboard FORRESTAL, particularly in the areas of engine and propeller support received from FORRESTAL's AIMD. As a result, one aircraft had to be craned off upon returning to Mayport in late October and a crew with maintenance personnel remained behind to effect repair while the rest of the squadron returned to Miramar.

After less than two weeks at home VAW-116 returned to Mayport and the FORRESTAL for Type Training 1 and 2 which commenced 10 November and ended 12 December. During November, VAW-116 flew over 230 hours in a wide variety of missions. One highly visible MINEX control mission brought personal congratulations from the Air Wing Commander. On two successive nights, an E-2 conducted carrier recoveries when shipboard control facilities became inoperative. During the last two days of TYT-1, the air wing operated out of NAS Cecil Field. Before the Thanksgiving break starting November 24, the squadron passed its second accident free year. The holiday was spent in Mayport and several SUN KINGS were able to visit East coast relatives for the festivities.

Type Training 2I commenced November 29 and lasted until December 12. VAW-116 continued its excellent performance demonstrated throughout two earlier at sea periods aboard FORRESTAL. Another well coordinated MINEX was conducted and an E-2 controlled a combined LSP/fly-off to highlight the months operations. One aircraft diverted to NAS Cecil Field December 6 due to a flap problem but continued to fly beach based missions for the next four days until it was able to recover aboard. The squadron returned to NAS Miramar for a much deserved rest on December 12. The standdown period did not last long, however, for the next at sea period (TYT III and ORE) aboard FORRESTAL was scheduled for January 10th and was considered to be the most important of all for the squadron.

Christmas leave was granted to large numbers of the squadron. As 1978 dawned, VAW-116 was preparing to return to FORRESTAL for the final operations before the April 1978 deployment to the Mediterranean.

1977 FLIGHT DATA

1977 FLIGHT STATISTICS

HOURS FLOWN	1358.4 DAY
	406.4 NIGHT
	1764.8 TOTAL

CARRIER LANDINGS	215 DAY
	118 NIGHT
	333 TOTAL