

1978



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

VAW-116/00/KDD
5750
5 March 1979

From: Commanding Officer
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-05D2)
Subj: Command History for Callendar Year 1978 (OPNAV Report 5750-1)
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12 (series)
Encl: (1) VAW-116 Command History for 1978
1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.


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CINCPACFLT
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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 for the majority of 1978. Commissioned on 20 April 1967, VAW-116 reports also to the functional wing commander, Commander Fighter Airborne Early Warning Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMFITAEW-WINGPAC), 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)

1978 NARRATIVE

As 1978 began, the SUN KINGS of VAW-116 were at their home base of NAS Miramar, San Diego, California; the squadron having returned 12 December 1977 from an at sea period aboard the Mayport, Florida based USS FORRESTAL. Many personnel were on leave over the holidays, however flight activity began in earnest on 3 January as pilots sharpened their carrier landing techniques during FCLP periods.

As part of CVW-17, the squadron was scheduled for deployment to the Mediterranean in early April and pre-deployment training was yet to be completed. The more immediate challenge of Type Training III and the Operational Readiness Evaluation (ORE) began 10 January when VAW-116's four E-2Bs launched for NAS Cecil, Florida. Previous cross country flights to the Jacksonville area had been without incident, but on this occasion two aircraft encountered oil cooling difficulties and marginal weather enroute. All aircraft were at Cecil Field in an up status by 12 January. The majority of the squadron left Miramar 11 January and flew to Naval Station Mayport in C-9 aircraft.

The FORRESTAL set sail 14 January and the SUN KINGS' complement of E-2Bs trapped aboard that afternoon as TYT III commenced. Near Jacksonville on 15 January, an A7E of VA-81 crashed at night on a crowded flight deck causing several deaths and major injuries. The airborne E-2B was tasked with providing control of MEDEVAC assets and coordinating with medical facilities ashore. No VAW-116 personnel were injured in the mishap. The accident, ensuing investigation and transit to the Caribbean curtailed flying until 21 January. SUN KING aircrews spent the interim period studying tactics and aircraft recognition.

TYT III was an extensive six day period to prepare the FORRESTAL/ CVW-17 team for the upcoming ORE. The area south of Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico provided a useful environment, however FORRESTAL Link 11 Difficulties and a paucity of surface combatants hindered a full exercise of VAW-116's command and control capabilities.

The ORE began 27 January and the SUN KINGS made all scheduled and alert launches during the four day exercise with fully mission capable aircraft. Squadron morale was at a high point as it recorded the highest ORE score of the fixed wing squadrons aboard, and displayed an aggressive, spirited attitude. On two separate instances the FORRESTAL unexpectedly suffered engineering casualties which eliminated nearly all her radar and communication capabilities. In both instances, the airborne SUN KING assumed CIC functions and continued the scheduled launch activities.

The squadron's success was not without difficulty, however. Many aircrew were affected by influenza and the flight deck was the scene of three crunches and two prop changes during the month.

While in transit to Mayport on 1 and 2 February, three E-2 HAWKEYE sorties launched when the possibility of Soviet Bear overflight became apparent. The reconnaissance threat never developed but an interesting mission mix of Bear watch and Air Wing Flyoff coordination did occur. VAW-116's final return to Miramar prior to deployment went smoothly as aircraft and support personnel were home by the evening of 2 February.

Numerous ground schools were scheduled and completed in February. The squadron's third TAO school graduate and second TOPSCOPE graduate returned to duty. The month presented the first opportunity to send officers to schools since early September. With minimum flight crews aboard and required maintenance inspections, flight hours were well below normal. On 10 February, COMFITAEWINGPAC conducted VAW-116's pre-deployment Material Condition Inspection. The overall grade received was Satisfactory. Corrosion Control efforts were viewed as Outstanding and it was noted that the tool control program was not being run in accordance with the current directives. A well attended Open House was held on 26 February as squadron families were briefed on the SUN KINGS' mission, viewed static displays and tried their skills at making a simulated arrested landing in a soap box derby styled Hawkeye.

An all hands dinner and dance was held at the Miramar CPO Club 7 March. On 9 March a SUN KING crew participated in a CINTEX at FCDSTCPAC and pilots began Field Carrier Landing Practice.

Early March was a period of final preparations for the Mediterranean deployment. The Forrestal was scheduled to deploy on 4 April, however a final predeployment at sea period, TYT IV, was scheduled for 22-28 March. Squadron aircraft left Miramar for the final trek eastward on 19 March for a Dependents Day Cruise. One SUN KING E-2B aided in the coordination of CVW-17's airshow for the over 4,000 guests aboard while the other three aircraft were involved in FLCP at NAS Cecil. Not having any dependents in the Jacksonville area, VAW-116 played host to six National Airline pilots and their families during the day at sea. FORRESTAL returned to Mayport the evening of the 21st and returned to the Jacksonville Operating Area the morning of the 22nd of March. The first three days at sea were devoted to Carrier Qualification and paid high dividends as all SUN KING Pilots became day and night qualified. LTJG Steve Cole's initial night qualification brought personal congratulations from the FORRESTAL's Commanding Officer, Captain Peter Booth. Through careful planning and cooperation of FORRESTAL all ten pilots retained their night and day currency throughout the seven month cruise which was to follow. The emphasis on achievement by junior aircrew extended throughout the cruise. All pilots earned CAPC designations and all NFOs who were to complete the entire cruise reached CICO.

TYT IV, conducted 25 through 28 March, saw the E-2Bs involved with task force defense as several surface combatants joined FORRESTAL in AAW exercises. EW training was enhanced by the participation of VAQ-33s' NKC-135 and A-3 aircraft. Link 11 with FORRESTAL continued to be a

problem however percentage of two way link was improving. Link 4A was utilized on a regular basis as the SUN KINGS had an excellent rapport with CVW-17's F-4J Fighter squadrons, VF-11 and VF-74.

FORRESTAL returned to Mayport 28 March and maximum liberty was allowed SUN KING personnel prior to the 4 April departure for the Mediterranean and Sixth Fleet operations. AZ2 Bruce Fraser was selected Sailor of the Quarter for the period 1 January through 31 March 1978. Eight SUN KING joggers, led by Commanding Officer Cdr. Matt Matheson, participated in a 15,000 meter run held in Jacksonville 1 April.

FORRESTAL departed Mayport on schedule and, spurred by possible Bear overflight, flight operations began 5 April with two Bears being detected by a SUN KING E-2B. The Soviets were not intercepted due to their long range from FORRESTAL. FORRESTAL, DEWEY and YARNELL attempted to conduct an open ocean MISSILEX on 6 and 7 April, however SUN KING range surveillance showed firing areas fouled with numerous small ships. On 8 April SUN KINGS detected and controlled the interception of two BEARS which had launched from Cuba. Bears were encountered and intercepted once again on 12 April. With FORRESTAL in EMCON, the SUN KING E-2 had eight interceptors under control. Nearing Rota, Spain on 13 April a PASSEX was held with USS AMERICA. The SUN KINGS gained valuable AAW training as AMERICA's aircraft simulated attacks on FORRESTAL.

FORRESTAL was in port at Rota from 14 through 18 April. The VAW-124 Bullseyes from AMERICA gave the SUN KINGS a thorough briefing on current conditions in the Mediterranean. Since USS NIMITZ was also in port, SUN KINGS also exchanged information with the VAW-112 GOLDEN HAWKS. Due to the large number of ships present, liberty for E-4 and below was severely restricted in Rota. VAW-116 was scheduled to send one aircraft (as part of a four plane CVW-17 detachment) to Scotland on 22 April and eight support personnel and equipment were offloaded 16 April in Rota to await transportation.

FORRESTAL left Rota 19 April and flight operations began on the 20th. The first two days of cyclic operations in the Mediterranean were flown in its narrow western end. Airspace was severely limited by territorial boundaries, restricted areas and terminal control areas. SUN KINGS got their first taste of what was to be a major task through the cruise - assisting CVW-17 aircraft in avoiding these prohibited areas. On 22 April, SUN KING 013 launched for Lossiemouth Scotland with a refueling stop at Bitburg, West Germany enroute. That aircraft was not to return to FORRESTAL until 9 May, near Naples, after logging over 60 flight hours in transit and in operations with Allied Forces in the North Sea as a part of NATO's Joint Maritime Operational Training. Daily cyclic operations, with emphasis on SSSC, continued in the Western Mediterranean until FORRESTAL reached Naples, Italy on 30 April. All hands were afforded ample liberty and a squadron party was held at Carney Park, on the northern edge of Naples, on 4 May. AT2 Tom Dugan was named April's Sailor of the Month.

FORRESTAL concluded her Naples visit on 9 May as she departed for the NAMFI missile range north of Crete. Missile exercises were conducted on 11 and 12 May with SUN KINGS providing range surveillance and control of F-4 aircraft during air to air missile firings. FORRESTAL held training anchorages at Souda Bay, Crete on 13-14 May and 17-18 May during which VAW-116 held safety standowns. Dawn Patrol, a major exercise in which 61 allied units including three aircraft carriers participated, began 19 May and continued until 29 May. VAW-116 was tasked primarily in a SSSC role as the Forrestal transited from Crete to Sicily. Two highly successful EMCON recoverys were controlled by SUN KINGS during the exercise. May concluded with a port visit to Catania, Sicily on the 30th. The highest monthly flight hours for the year were recorded during the month: 308.7. VAW-116's maintenance effort allowed the squadron to meet or exceed all requirements. AMS3 Jack WALSH was chosen May's outstanding sailor.

FORRESTAL left Catania 3 June for four (4) days of operations enroute to a two week pierside yard period in Marseille, France commencing 7 June. Marseille was to prove for many to be the best liberty of the cruise. Corrosion Control procedures dominated the SUN KING effort in port. Leaving France and beginning flight operations on 21 June, VAW-116 felt the impact of two weeks of not flying as aircraft availability was below normal during the first two days of operations in the central Mediterranean as part of ASW Week. Forrestal flew around the clock for several days, however operations past 2200 consisted normally of ASW aircraft (S-3s and H-3s) and controlling E-2s only. Naples was visited again on 27 June and in a ready room ceremony, the Commanding Officer named AMH2 Arthur DOWNS Sailor of the Month.

In July VAW-116 held its second all hands party of the cruise at Carney Park. The Mid-Cruise corrosion inspection, held 2 July, was debriefed on 3 July with the squadron receiving a grade of satisfactory.

FORRESTAL left Naples 5 July for operations in the Ionian Sea. Exercise TRIDENTE, 6-7 July, was an Italian American operation of 48 hours duration in which SUN KINGS provided continuous AEW and SSSC support to the Task Group Commanders. The E-2B's ability to detect high speed patrol boats, control SUCAP and provide HARPOON targeting information was highlighted. An engine failure during a foul deck wave off posed a potentially serious situation for LT Barry ALLEN and co-pilot LTJG Steve COLE on 11 July. Superb airmanship resulted in a safe single engine recovery.

Naples was visited for the third and final time of the cruise between 12 and 16 July. A training anchorage took place at Augusta Bay, Sicily on 19 July after two days of operations in the Ionian. A BUZZARDEX was held in the Gulf of Sidra north of LIBYA on 20 July in which the E-2 provided range surveillance while F-4 aircraft countered TALOS Missiles fired by USS ALBANY.

A training anchorage was held at Augusta Bay on 23 July in preparation for the second major exercise (after May's DAWN PATROL) of the cruise, NATIONAL WEEK XXV. Commencing 24 July, the operation saw SUN KINGS flying

continuously for the first 44 hours; the first 12 hours of which the Forrestal had set EMCON and the E-2Bs were responsible for six SUCAP, two CAP stations, four SSSC aircraft plus EMCON recoveries and the total SSSC/AEW picture. The heavy tasking was beneficial to aircrew training and kept morale high as the importance of the squadron's capabilities was most evident. On 28 July, a SUN KING E-2B piloted by Commanding Officer CDR Matt Matheson experienced a flameout of its starboard engine during a bolter. The engine was successfully restarted and a safe landing made.

National week debrief was conducted 29 July during the deployment's last training anchorage, at Augusta Bay. On 30 July, SUN KING plane commander LT Barry Allen was awarded first place in periodic landing competition amongst CVW-17 pilots. VAW-116 landing proficiency was on a steadily improving trend and night currency was maintained on all pilots. July's sailor of the month was ATAN Bobby Morris. LCDR John Gomez, AT1 Ray Hamilton and AT2 Tom Dugan became the first SUN KING Forrestal Centurions during the month of 280.5 flight hours.

After two days of transit operations starting 30 July, Forrestal was moored pierside in Valencia, Spain on 1 August. The two week port of call allowed for maximum liberty and the third squadron party of the cruise took place on a beach near Forrestal on 9 August. Forrestal left Valencia on schedule 15 August and conducted eight days of operations prior to reaching Palma de Mallorca for a visit on 24 August.

ASW Week, 16 to 23 August, tasked VAW-116 primarily with control of S-3 and H-3 assets. Covert search techniques utilizing the S-3's passive sensors and secure communications proved fruitful for the S-3/E-2 team. DASIX 2-78 was held 22 August; SUN KINGS provided bandit calls for airwing strike groups flying against simulated targets in Southern France.

Palma lived up to its fine liberty reputation and Forrestal set sail 29 August for three days of operations prior to reaching Rota for staff turnover 1 September. VAW-116 had continued its emphasis on junior aircrew performance. LTJG Rich Strickland, a July arrival, had already accumulated over 100 mission hours and 40 hours of air control. August's Sailor of the Month was AD3 Keith McDonald. The SUN KINGS were ready to move out of the MED and encounter Operation NORTHERN WEDDING.

Forrestal departed Rota 2 Sept for the North Atlantic. Cyclic operations were conducted that day and two unscheduled Bear alert launches took place on 3 Sept. SUN KINGS detected two sections of Bear "Ds" at long range and controlled interceptions utilizing F-4s. Northern Wedding commenced 4 Sept and ended 17 Sept. A major NATO exercise in the North Sea, VAW-116 operated during Northern Wedding in a primarily AEW role. Records indicate that over 300 closing bogeys were reported by VAW-116 during the exercise. The areas west of Ireland and south of Iceland proved to be ideal operating areas for the E-2B while the oil derricks near the Shetland Islands and in the North Sea between Scotland and Norway posed problems for the E-2's APS-96 radar and aircrew target discrimination. Weather played a major role in the exercise's conduct; VAW-116 experienced its only diversions of the cruise when two aircraft diverted to Lossiemouth,

Scotland and a pair to Sola, Norway as part of major air wing diverts. SUN KINGS transported VADM McDONALD, COMSECONDFLT, from the Shetland Islands to Boda, Norway on 12 September.

18 through 20 September were passed in transit to Rota. Malaga, Spain was visited between 22 and 27 September. PNI Joseph Fernandez was cited as September's Sailor of the Month and on 1 October VAW-116 became officially designated as an E-2C transition squadron. Upon return from deployment in late October the squadron would transfer it's E-2Bs and begin aircrew and maintenance training for receipt of E-2C aircraft in early 1979.

Operation DISPLAY DETERMINATION, the last major exercise of the cruise began 28 September when Forrestal departed Malaga. During this operation Forrestal escorted a friendly convoy to Genoa, Italy in the face of simulated enemy air, surface and subsurface attacks SUN KINGS flew primarily in a defensive AEW posture and were most succesful in detecting British Jaguar and Buccaneer aircraft raids launching from Corsica and Sardinia. VAW-116 utilized low altitide stationing in many situations when proximity to land created radar smear problems.

Forrestal returned to Rota for two days on 11 September. A PASSEX was conducted with Forrestal's relief, USS SARATOGA, west of Rota on 13 September. Turnover was conducted on 14 October in Rota and VAW-116 briefed SARATOGA's VAW-123 Screwtops on conditions they would encounter on their deployment.

Forrestal departed Rota 15 October, however the return to the states was not to be routine. In an effort to conceal the carriers position and intentions, Forrestal steamed northward near Iceland, encountering heavy seas, prior to setting a direct course for Mayport. Flight operations were scheduled when within divert range of Iceland but were canceled due to poor weather. Nearing the Atlantic seabord, VAW-116 launched its four E-2Bs bound for NAS Miramar on 25 October. Refueling and customs were obtained at NAS Memphis; one aircraft had a downing hydraulic leak repaired on short notice by Memphis personnel. After remaining overnight at El Paso, Texas for crew rest, the Sun King aircraft returned to a gala reception at NAS Miramar at 1000, 26 October 1978. The C-9 aircraft with the squadrons maintenance and support personnel arrived that evening.

Amidst families, friends and representatives from other VAW squadrons the cruise had concluded for VAW-116. It was by all measures a highly succesfull endeavor in which 1479.9 hours were flown and 436 carrier landings recorded in operations from the Western Atlantic and North Sea to offshore Libya. VAW-116 had continued its excellent operational record begun in the Western Pacific aboard CORAL SEA in 1967 and first demonstrated in the Mediterranean in 1976 aboard NIMITZ.

At the first quarters for muster in November, AD1 Robert Randolph was named Octobers Sailor of the Month. Post deployment standown was in effect the month of November but the squadron was not idle. Several VAW-

116 pilot training flights took place and SUN KINGS assisted RVAW-110 by providing aircraft and pilots for RVAW-110 NFO and Flight Tech Training. The SUN KING Administrative Department was kept occupied by the large number of personnel being received and transferred. Maintenance activities centered on preparing aircraft for transfer. The post cruise corrosion inspection resulted in a satisfactory grade. AZ2 Dennis Golden became November's Sailor of the Month and E-2C transition training commenced with a series of lectures given by Grumman Representatives.

An all hands dinner and dance was held at the Miramar CPO Club on 5 December. On 8 December, Commander Matheson was relieved of his duties as Commanding Officer, by Commander Kenneth D. Denbow, the squadrons Executive Officer for the previous 15 months. Commander Denbow, VAW-116's twelfth Commanding Officer, was believed to be the first NESEP graduate to command an aviation squadron. LCDR Marty P. Morgen became the new SUN KING Executive Officer.

Transition training increased its pace during the final month of the year. E-2B support was provided to the FLEETEX 1-79 MSR with area surveillance, Link 11 and Autocat services provided for three days. AT2 Tom Dugan completed the Air Intercept Control course at Fleet Combat Direction Systems Training Center and thus became the first VAW-116 AIC qualified Flight Technician.

On 18 December, SUN KING LSO LT Pat Madison was named by RADM Fellowes, COMFITAEWINGPAC, first recipient of the Grumman Hawkeye of the Year Award for his contributions to the Pacific Fleet VAW community. AD2 Harold Wallace was December's Sailor of the Month. As 1978 ended VAW-116 was in earnest preparation for receipt of E-2C aircraft and eventual deployment to the Pacific as part of CVW-9 aboard CONSTELLATION in early 1980.

1978 FLIGHT DATA

1978 FLIGHT STATISTICS

Hours Flown	1593.2	DAY
	<u>509.6</u>	NIGHT
	2102.8	TOTAL
Carrier Landings	399	DAY
	<u>191</u>	NIGHT
	508	TOTAL