



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**  
**CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON**  
**ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEEN**  
UNIT 25416  
FPO AP 96601-6405

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 117  
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH), Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard,  
901 M Street SE, Bldg. 57, Washington, DC 20374-5060

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY SUBMISSION

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) VAW-117 Command History  
(2) Commanding Officer's Biography/Photograph

1. As directed by reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted:

  
R. T. TOKORO  
By direction

## VAW-117 COMMAND HISTORY

### 1. Command Composition and Organization

a. **Mission.** VAW-117 is a carrier based Airborne Early Warning (AEW) squadron operating the E-2C Group II Hawkeye aircraft. While the Grumman E-2C Hawkeye was originally designed for "blue-water" AEW, innovative Hawkeye crews have proven their platform to be extremely adaptive and effective in any environment including the littoral and overland environments, and while in the presence of jamming. Current mission capabilities include: Airborne Command, Control and Communications (ABCC); Battle Space Management; Strike Interdiction; Search and Rescue Control; Fighter Control; and Airborne Early Warning.

b. **Organizational Structure.** Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 117's operational change of command:

Commander, Carrier Air Wing 11  
Commander, Carrier Group THREE  
Numbered Fleet Commander

c. **Commanding Officer:** Commander Joseph A. Kupcha

d. **Permanent Duty Station:** Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, San Diego, California

e. **Number and Type Aircraft Assigned:** Four E-2C Group II Hawkeye

Buno 164108 - Side 601  
Buno 164354 - Side 602  
Buno 164483 - Side 603  
Buno 165294 - Side 604

### 2. Chronology

a. **Western Pacific '97 Deployment:** 11OCT96 - 11APR97

b. **OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH:** 04DEC96 - 09FEB97

c. **INSPIRED ALERT:** 19FEB97 - 22FEB97

d. **Counter Narcotics Operations, Puerto Rico:** 29JUN97 - 04AUG97

e. **All Services Combat Identification Evaluation Team (ASCIET), Biloxi, MS:** 25AUG97 - 12SEP97

**\*Embarked 118 days during CY-97.**

3. **Narrative.** January 1997 found the VAW-117 WALLBANGERS operating in the Arabian Gulf in support of the United Nations sanctioned OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH. Maintaining air superiority over Iraq and enforcing the No Fly Zone, the WALLBANGERS were literally the "eyes of

the Fleet". By acting as an extension to the Battle Groups' already existing sensors, the mighty Grumman E-2C Hawkeye was able to provide over one million cubic miles of radar coverage while at the same time provide vital Command, Control and Communication (C3) to both organic and non-organic airborne and surface assets.

In conjunction with OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH the WALLBANGERS had the unique opportunity to fly with the Pakistani Air Force in an exercise dubbed INSPIRED ALERT. INSPIRED ALERT was a series of overland power projection strikes coupled with joint air combat maneuvering scenarios in which the WALLBANGERS provided the essential link from strike planning and C3 to all fighter close control. In all, the WALLBANGERS presence in the Arabian Gulf from October 1996 through February 1997 played a major role in the United Nations plan for peace while at the same time providing a tremendous amount of training for the United States FIFTH Fleet and her allies.

Post cruise operations included two POM (post operational movement) periods over a two month period and then in July it was off to Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico in support of the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force-East (JIATF East) "war on drugs". The mission for the Hawkeye in Puerto Rico was the early detection and identification of unknown, unregistered aircraft or surface vessels and then alerting the United States Coast Guard or Customs Service of their presence. Although many unknown contacts were identified, no pursuit or "end game" resulted.

After Puerto Rico, the WALLBANGERS participated in the All Services Combat Identification and Evaluation Team (ASCIET) in Biloxi, Mississippi. This exercise was designed to bring the Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine Corps together in an attempt to evaluate the military's Joint Tactical Information Distribution System (JTIDS) in a real time environment over a period of several days. The evaluation incorporated land based PATRIOT/I-HAWK batteries and airborne Air Force F-15's and F-16's for over land engagements and F-14's, F-15's and the USS CAPE ST. GEORGE for the over water scenarios. Of course, the mighty Hawkeye was the glue that kept the entire exercise together combining her long range control with her communications relay abilities.

In October the WALLBANGERS bid the USS KITTY HAWK farewell and ushered in a new era for VAW-117 by joining the USS CARL VINSON (CVN 70). In all, during 1997 VAW-117 completed another post cruise abbreviated turnaround, flying 442 sorties for a total of 1,335.2 mishap free hours. In addition, in 1997 the WALLBANGERS were issued several awards including the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet Price Fighter award (third consecutive); Chief of Naval Operations Safety "S"; and the Commander, Airborne Early Warning Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet Quarterly Safety award. Lastly, in 1997 the WALLBANGERS dedication to safety allowed them to surpass a major milestone of over 20 years and 44,000 hours of mishap free flying.