



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE
FPO NEW YORK 09501

[REDACTED]

1976

DECLASSIFIED

VAW-123/ADMIN/tsw
5700
Ser: 05
02 May 1977

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From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE (VAW-123)

To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)

Subj: Command History; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12A

Encl: (1) Command History

1. In accordance with reference (a), Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE's Command History for calendar year 1976 is hereby submitted.

R. A. Allen
R. A. ALLEN

Copy to:
Director of Naval History (OP-09B9)

CLASSIFIED BY: VAW-123
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED ON 02 MAY 84

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CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON
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COMMAND HISTORY
1976

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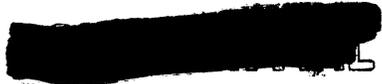
1. Periodic Operating Reports
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Enclosure (1)

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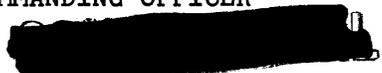
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SUMMARY OF EVENTS
1 JAN 76 - 31 DEC 76

1 JAN - 2 JAN - - - - - SHOREBASED NAS NORFOLK, VA
2 JAN - 6 JAN - - - - - ENROUTE NAVAL STATION, MAYPORT, FL
6 JAN - 16 JAN- - - - - EMBARKED USS SARATOGA ENROUTE
MEDITERRANEAN
17 JAN - 23 JAN - - - - - INPORT MALAGA, SPAIN
23 JAN - 28 JAN - - - - - CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN WESTERN
MEDITERRANEAN
28 JAN - 6 FEB- - - - - INPORT PALMA DE MALLORCA
6 FEB - 15 FEB- - - - - CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN WESTERN
MEDITERRANEAN
16 FEB - 22 FEB - - - - - INPORT TARANTO, ITALY
23 FEB - 25 FEB - - - - - CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN IONIAN SEA
26 FEB - 1 MAR- - - - - INPORT BRINDISI, ITALY
2 MAR - 5 MAR - - - - - CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN
6 MAR - 7 MAR - - - - - TRAINING ANCHORAGE KITHIRA
8 MAR - 9 MAR - - - - - CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN
10 MAR- - - - - TRAINING ANCHORAGE CASTLEAMARE
11 MAR - 15 MAR - - - - - CONDUCTED NATIONAL WEEK XX IN
TYRRHENIAN SEA
16 MAR- - - - - TRAINING ANCHORAGE GAETA
17 MAR - 25 MAR - - - - - PORT VISIT NAPLES, ITALY
26 MAR - 28 MAR - - - - - CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN
29 MAR - 2 APR- - - - - PORT VISIT SPLIT, YUGOSLAVIA
3 APR - 7 APR - - - - - CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN
7 APR - 8 APR - - - - - ENROUTE TO STATION SOUTH OF CRETE
8 APR - - - - - CDR L. HEBERT RELIEVED CDR W.A.
PUTNAM AS COMMANDING OFFICER

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COMMAND HISTORY

1. (C) During the period 3 January - 28 July 1976, VAW-123 was deployed aboard USS SARATOGA as a unit of Carrier Air Wing THREE. On 3 January 1976, VAW-123 departed Norfolk for Naval Station Mayport, four aircraft were hoisted aboard SARATOGA, and on 6 January 1976 SARATOGA/CVW-3 deployed for SIXTHFLT operations.

After arriving in Rota, Spain USS SARATOGA along with VAW-123 relieved USS JOHN KENNEDY and on 16 January 1976 the squadron launched two E-2C's to Naval Station Rota as part of CVW-3 detachment to conduct FCLP training and operational missions in the Eastern Atlantic. During this time SARATOGA was inport Malaga which permitted regular rotation of flight crews through the Rota Detachment.

February was an active flying month for the squadron, accumulating 238 hours of flight time. During February, the squadron flew sorties providing 100% of the scheduled AEW flight time coverage. Flight crews also controlled five Case II and one Case III EMCON recoveries. The E-2C also acted as the primary coordination and voice relay platform during a PASSEX with French and British units. Bird Dog and Anti-Ship Missile Defense tactics were commonly practiced, and surprise AAWEX's posed a constant AAW challenge for the SCREWTOP crews.

Major exercises scheduled during March for the ship and Air Wing included a CRAE, (Combat Readiness Assessment Exercise), in which the E-2C coordinated strikes to the target as well as providing range clearance and command and control. NATIONAL WEEK XX commenced 11 March as SARATOGA and INDEPENDENCE, with their respective Air Wings and surface units, carried the simulated battles to the enemy Orange forces. On 28 March, before an inport visit to Split, Yugoslavia, a Launch Sequence Plan was conducted with the squadron providing overall airborne coordination. VAW-123 for the month of March again flew 100% of scheduled AEW coverage provided.

On 3 April, SARATOGA sortied from Split, Yugoslavia for scheduled operations in the Ionian Sea. Following limited operations in the Adriatic Sea, SARATOGA was diverted in response to national tasking fostered by the Lebanon Crisis to a station southeast of Crete, and on 8 April 1976 CDR L. HEBERT relieved CDR W. A. PUTNAM to become VAW-123's tenth Commanding Officer. Ceremonies were held on board USS SARATOGA as she sailed to the station south of Crete. After a rendezvous with TF61 Amphibious Units, SARATOGA operated for 33 days in preparation for Operation FLUID DRIVE, the contingency plan for the evacuation of U.S. and other third country nationals from Lebanon. Special consideration during this period was placed on maintaining secure autocat link between CTF-60 and CTF-61. Additionally, tests were conducted to determine the ranges at which secure autocats could be maintained between portable USMC radios and Task Force Commander. In view of the heavy build-up of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron in the area, considerable emphasis was placed on maintaining accurate Surface, Subsurface Search Coordination as well as exercising fleet air defense.

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The entire airwing seemed to thrive on this extended operating period in that East Mediterranean operations afforded the opportunity to operate with relatively fewer restrictions in a realistic environment. During non-flying periods the squadron maintained around-the-clock 15 minute alerts.

During EMED operations CVW-3 participated in two CENTO exercises. SHABAZ '76' consisted of high level attacks flown to test the Turkish air defense system, while DON'T JOKE involved two days of structured jamming flights by EA-6B aircraft against various sites in Turkey. In view of severe time/distance constraints to the target areas, the SCREWTOPS provided flight following as well as tanker rendezvous control for inbound and outbound strike aircraft.

On 27 and 28 April the squadron participated in Exercise VIKING-SHAMROCK, the objectives of which included the surface/subsurface surveillance of FOXTROT submarines. Operations were conducted from sunset to sunrise with S-3 and SH-3 aircraft. On station the E-2C provided radar and ESM surveillance, control of participating aircraft, and liaison with the SARATOGA Tactical Support Center. A major outcome of the exercise was an increased interest in the potential role of the E-2C in the ASW problem and an effort to further develop coordinated tactics for the better utilization of the E-2C/S-3/SH-3/TSC team.

On 7 May a carrier vs carrier (PASSEX) exercise was conducted in the Ionian Sea as AMERICA steamed to relieve SARATOGA in the Eastern Mediterranean. One E-2C was launched with four S-3 aircraft to coordinate the SSSC evolutions. Shortly thereafter, AMERICA was visually identified after initial RF SINS emissions were detected by the E-2C. AMERICA's location was passed to the SARATOGA via Link 11 and S-3 aircraft were assigned to maintain surveillance until the attack phase of the exercise commenced. As a second E-2C was launched to provide AAW force defense and CAP control, the initial E-2C controlled a low altitude Alpha strike while positioning S-3's as decoys. The exercise terminated as SARATOGA's strike group penetrated undetected to execute its attack while AMERICA's F-14's were engaging the decoy S-3's. CVW-3 EA-6B's provided jamming against active F-14 aircraft.

Exercise DAWN PATROL was initially scheduled from 3 - 12 May but Eastern Mediterranean operations precluded full CTF 60 participation. Nonetheless, DAWN PATROL provided the opportunity to train in an intensive anti-air warfare environment. Multinational operations were conducted in the Ionian and Tyrrhenian Seas with the French Carrier CLEMENCEAU as well as several Italian and French escorts. Air opposition was supplied by USAFE aircraft, consisting of 10-15 strike aircraft (RF4, F-4 and F-111) with EB-66, EC-121 and KC-135 support assets assisting.

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LINK 11 proved exceptionally reliable throughout the exercise with the Italian and French NTDS units being particularly noteworthy. The EA-6B was used extensively in conjunction with airborne E-2C's to enhance long range surveillance by correlating passive and active sensors in detection of inbound raiders. These joint tactics were a major factor in the successful accomplishment of the fleet air defense mission.

During June and early July the squadron operated in the Western Mediterranean in four short, yet intensive, at-sea periods. Major exercises included Exercise DON'T JOKE (Phase II), a NATO live Electronic Counter Counter Measures Evaluation flown in Italian airspace; two SIXTHFLT SCREAMING EAGLE Exercises and a MISSILEX. Routine training consisted of AAW, War at Sea anti-ship strikes, combined VAW/VF/VAQ operations, two Alpha Strikes, and two EMCON recoveries.

On the evening of 4 June 1976 as the SARATOGA/CVW-3 team was completing a final night of air operations prior to a scheduled inport visit, SARATOGA suffered an engineering casualty which resulted in the complete loss of on-deck lighting, lens, radar control and communications. A total of 15 aircraft were airborne with recovery in progress. Limited tanker fuel was available. The available divert field as well as the weather was less than desirable, and the time delay to restore the ship's recovery capability was unknown. This complex emergency situation was responded to in a most professional and aggressive manner by all concerned both in the air and on the ship. The airborne E-2C reestablished the marshall pattern, effected the necessary tanker rendezvous for the low state aircraft, successfully vectored six airborne aircraft to the divert field while maintaining the remaining aircraft in the pattern until the ship had recovered full system capability. Communications between the ship, the airborne aircraft, and the divert field were maintained by using an on-deck E-2C.

After turnover with NIMITZ, SARATOGA headed west, and the squadron returned to NORVA on 26 July 1976 having completed the most successful E-2C deployment to date. The SCREWTOPS began their normal maintenance checks and inspections on 29 July and supported continuous scheduling, maintaining their readiness, as did the entire air wing of CVW-3 and USS SARATOGA.

August through October were very busy months for the SCREWTOPS providing range control for missile exercises off the Virginia coast as well as sustaining their operational readiness in intercept control. Throughout this period they completed 87% of their scheduled sorties.

On 8 November, VAW-123 departed NORVA for Roosevelt Roads, PR, where the squadron underwent 3 days of training with the E-2C PDS system at the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility. The purpose of this training was to evaluate the E-2C's ability to detect, identify and locate Soviet shipboard and anti-ship missile defense emitters. A total of thirteen sorties were flown by VAW-123, completing a highly successful deployment.

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VAW-123 left Puerto Rico on November 12th for a week of training with CVW-3 at NAS Cecil. The SCREWTOPS provided strike control for coordinated attacks against Pinecastle target range and USS INDEPENDENCE and its air wing. The week was completed with a mining exercise at Andros Island in which the E-2C's provided directional information and maintained separation between three sorties of aircraft.

The SCREWTOPS returned to NORVA on 20 November upon completion of exercises with CVW-3. They immediately entered a period of intensive Field Carrier Landing Practice in preparation for carrier qualifications in the beginning of December. The value of this training was proven from 6 to 8 December at NAS Jacksonville, where VAW-123 was able to qualify its pilots for carrier landings a day ahead of schedule.

The year was completed with a return to NORVA and final preparation for type training in 1977. The SCREWTOP aircraft and men were ready for another deployment aboard USS SARATOGA.

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