1977 History

HISTORY OF VAW-126

Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX is a major element of the carrier airborne early warning (VAW) forces of the United States Navy. As such, its primary mission is to utilize long range airborne radar to provide the Carrier Task Force Commander with warning of impending air attack and to help defend the force by directing fighter aircraft to meet the threat. Moreover, the capabilities of its four Grumman E-2C Hawkeye aircraft have proven to be exceptionally versatile, enabling the squadron's flight crews to play important roles in other varied operations, among them strike control, surface surveillance, and search and rescue.

VAW-126, the youngest of the E-2 Squadrons in Carrier Airborne Early Warning Wing TWELVE, was commissioned on 1 April 1969 in Norfolk, Virginia. The new squadron with its four E-2A aircraft was made a component of Attack Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN and with its first deployment began a long association with CVW-17 and with USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59).

Upon return from its first Mediterranean cruise in July 1970, VAW-126 transitioned to the E-2B, the same basic aircraft equipped with a more modern and flexible computer system. With this new equipment, the squadron completed its second Mediterranean deployment in July 1971 and was awarded the NAVAIRLANT Battle Readiness Efficiency "E" and the CNO Safety Award for outstanding performance among all east coast VAW squadrons.

On 22 September 1972, VAW-126 embarked on its third and longest Mediterranean deployment, lasting nine and one half months, and terminating on 6 July 1973.

On 11 March 1974, VAW-126 again embarked in FORRESTAL for its fourth Mediterranean deployment. During the deployment, VAW-126 provided airborne surveillance in support of SIXTHFLT efforts to provide a stabilizing influence during the Cyprus conflict. The squadron also achieved several milestones including the squadron's 8000th hour of accident free flight operations since commissioning, its fifth consecutive accident free year, and for the second time in the squadron's short history, the coveted NAVAIRLANT Battle Readiness Efficiency "E".

On 9 September, while the FORRESTAL was homeward bound, the squadron was extended for one month, and performed the first mid-ocean transfer of an E-2 squadron. The "HUMMERS" cross-decked its men, E-2B aircraft, and 32,000 lbs. of equipment from USS FORRESTAL to the USS AMERICA in the Atlantic. The mid-ocean transfer of an E-2 squadron from ship-to-ship provided CVW-8 its assets for NATO exercise Northern Merger, and gave the squadron a taste of the violent North Atlantic.

After returning to Norfolk in October 1974, the squadron began its transition to the E-2C Hawkeye, an aircraft similar in appearance to its predecessors, but with a significantly more capable and reliable weapons system.

In August 1975, VAW-126 took a small detachment to Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico in support of CARIBEX 1-76.

The end of October 1975 saw the "HUMMERS" in Miramar, California for a brief working period with its future AIRWING, CVW-9 and with the F-14 Tomcat.

In February 1976 the squadron again returned to Roosevelt Roads to participate in CARIBEX 2-76.

In May 1976 the entire squadron began the first of a series of trips to the west coast to join CVW-9 and to prepare for its upcoming deployment on the USS CONSTELLATION (CV-64). The first deployment was to Fallon, Nevada where the E-2C/F-14 team worked together in Fleet Air Superiority Exercises. After a short return to Norfolk, the squadron proceeded to North Island, California and along with the other squadrons in CVW-9 and CONSTELLATION for the first time in order to participate in refresher training. VAW-126 again left Norfolk in September to join CVW-9 and CONSTELLATION to participate in READIEX 1-77, a major THIRDFLT exercise.

In December the squadron returned briefly to California for more work-ups and on 17 January 1977, VAW-126 made its longest deployment to the west coast. During several at-sea periods, VAW-126 participated in refresher training, an Operational Readiness Exercise, READIEX 2-77, and RIMPAC 77. The latter was the largest peace time exercise in the last five years and involved Naval and Air Forces from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. After a short stay in Hawaii, CONSTELLATION with AIRWING NINE departed for North Island. The squadron, upon arrival in California, returned to Norfolk to prepare for its upcoming overseas deployment of the E-2C to the Western Pacific.

In April, VAW-126 left San Diego for the Philippines, the first stop in the cruise. In the following months, the squadron visited such places as Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan. The Western Pacific operating area provided wide-open "Blue Water" operations which allowed the aircraft and aircrews to operate at their fullest potential. Arriving home in November, the squadron was able to spend the holidays with their families, and in January began to prepare for the next scheduled deployment.

The WESTPAC 77 deployment was a particularly significant evolution in that it concluded the highly successful Pacific Fleet introduction of the E-2C by VAW-126.

Since commissioning, the squadron has been deployed 44 months, flown over 15,000 accident free hours, and has logged over 3,400 carrier arrested landings.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

01 APR 69 - 05 APR 70 ..... CDR Albert W. OLDHAM

05 APR 70 - 01 APR 71 ..... CDR Robert M. HARP

01 APR 71 - 28 JAN 72 ..... CDR Floyd A. FRIESEN

28 JAN 72 - 03 JAN 73 ..... CDR George ORMOND, Jr.

03 JAN 73 - 07 FEB 74 ..... CDR Harold J. BERNSEN

07 FEB 74 - 16 JAN 75 ..... CDR David M. KLETTER

16 JAN 75 - 28 APR 76 ..... CDR Horace M. WALTERS, Jr.

28 APR 76 - 15 JUL 77 ..... CDR Robert E. KORDALSKI

15 JUL 77 - 8 SEP 78 ..... CDR Dennis M. KINNEY