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UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET
AIR FORCE
FIGHTER SQUADRON FORTY THREE
CARE OF FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FORTY THREE
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Aviation History and Research Section)
Subj: Historical Report
Ref: (a) OPNAV Instruction 575.2 dtd 12 June 1951
Encl: (1) Subject report

1. In accordance with reference (a) the historical report for the period 1 January to 30 June 1951 is herewith submitted.


C. W. GUNNELS, Jr.

~~TOP SECRET~~

FIGHTER SQUADRON FORTY THREE
HISTORICAL REPORT 1 JANUARY - 30 JUNE 1951
ENS. R.J. CEREMSAK, USN - HISTORICAL OFFICER

UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE (1)

~~TOP SECRET~~

CHRONOLOGY

1. 1 January Commenced training Phase II.
2. 8-10 January Conducted carrier qualification exercises aboard USS ORISKANY, CV-34.
3. 10-17 February Conducted carrier refresher and CAP training exercises based aboard USS PALAU, CVE-122.
4. 23 February Administrative/Material inspection by ComFairJax and CVG-17.
5. 5-9 March Air support training.
6. 1 April Commenced training Phase III.
7. 18 April Glide bombing competition.
8. 21 April Transfer of Executive Officer to Fighter Squadron THIRTEEN.
9. 23 April Embarkation on board USS ORISKANY, CV-34, for Mediterranean Cruise.
10. 24-26-April Day and night carrier qualifications.
11. 15 May Departed Quonset Point, R.I., for Mediterranean.

NARRATIVE

The new year commenced for Fighter Squadron FORTY THREE with field carrier landing practise in preparation for carrier qualification exercises on board the newly commissioned USS ORISKANY, CV-34. On 8, 9 and 10 January eighteen pilots made a total of ninety carrier landings, one of which resulted in the squadron's first carrier landing accident - a barrier crash (Notes 1 and 2).

In February the squadron was ordered to the USS PALAU, CVE-122, for a week of carrier operations. Due to the efforts of the Personnel Officer, LTJG W.R. AUSTIN, USN, and Leading Chief J.M. YOUNG, ADC, the logistics of the movement of the entire crew from Jacksonville, Florida to the ship in Norfolk, Virginia with the necessary personal and squadron gear was accomplished in a most expeditious and efficient manner. With only thirteen aircraft available for the operation due to the temporary transfer of five to Fighter Squadron FORTY FOUR, (Note 3), the squadron made a fine record of flying eighty-six hours and making one hundred and thirty carrier landings, (Note 1). Of the nineteen pilots participating in the flight activities five were afforded the opportunity of making Napalm bomb drops on a towed sled.

Immediately following the return to Cecil Field, the squadron was given an Administrative/Material Inspection on 23 February by ComFairJax and CVG-17. Despite the very short notice given for this inspection, and the fact that the squadron had been commissioned only since the preceding September; an overall grade of Excellent was assigned, (Note 4). Just one day prior to this inspection

Note:

1. VF-43 Master Flight Time Log.
2. VF-43 Aircraft Accident Report 1-51.
3. VF-43 OpNav "X" Ser 3-51.
4. ComFairJax ltr. ser. 549 of 13 March 1951.

the printed Squadron Instructions, comprising Organization and Flight Doctrine, were completed and issued due to some heroic efforts by the squadron yeomen who labored long days and nights cutting and running off over one hundred and fifty stencils.

During the week of 5 March the Squadron worked on air support with the other squadrons of CVG-4. Bad weather and lack of time restricted the vital air support training to an average of two flights per pilot. The Korean War has shown that the mission of propeller aircraft has been mostly that of air support and interdiction; this points out the great need for a very intense and thorough training of propeller aircraft pilots in air support. It is felt that impact areas for live load runs should be available at least one week in four as a means of preparing pilots (especially propeller pilots) for combat missions. Only by more realistic training under conditions simulating those found in combatant areas will it be possible to bring pilots to the high degree of proficiency and familiarity with their work that is so vital in combat.

It was in March that we learned "unofficially" we were to go on a cruise to the Mediterranean in May. The Skipper thereupon decreed that all pilots would be qualified in air-to-air gunnery, glide bombing, rocket firing, type instruments, night flying, night FCLP, and in addition, all division and section leaders were to have a standard instrument card. These qualifications were all met prior to 15 April by working a seven day week. Only one section leader failed to get an instrument card, this was due to the lack of more SNB/JRB type aircraft, three of which were assigned to the Air Group and rotated between the squadrons. These planes were flown on four hour hops twice each day including Saturdays and Sundays, and on an occasional night flight during the week.

The experienced pilots in the squadron were of the opinion that the ver-

satility of the Mark 6 Fire Control system could be considerably improved by the redesign of the fixed reticle to include a mil sight graduated to one hundred twenty-five mils around 360 degrees. It was their opinion that glide bombing could be more accurate and that all types of gunnery runs could be made with the inclusion of this feature in the sight.

Atlantic Fleet Competitive Exercises were held in glide bombing on 18 April. Despite an extremely gusty and windy day the skipper, LCDR C. W. GUNNELS, Jr., USN, and LT H. E. MITCHELL, USNR, qualified for an "E" (Note 1). Several other pilots attained excellent scores and on a less turbulent day more "E's" would most certainly have been won. Embarkation orders with an advanced date forced cancellation of the rocket and gunnery competition that were scheduled before our cruise began.

The 21st of April brought the transfer of the squadron's very popular Executive Officer, LCDR C. V. PIERSON, USNR, to Fighter Squadron THIRTEEN, then embarked on the USS CORAL SEA, CVB-43, for a Mediterranean cruise. The departmental changes effected were: Executive Officer - LCDR Laughlin BARKER, USN; Operations Officer - LT W. G. HORTON, USN; Administrative Officer - LTJG W. R. AUSTIN, USN.

The squadron with all personnel, planes, and gear embarked in the USS ORISKANY, CV-34, at Mayport, Florida on 23 April for an extended cruise to the Mediterranean. By 25 April our pilot complement had been reduced to twenty-two and the aircraft to sixteen. (Notes 2 and 3) On 24, 25 and 26 April the squadron

Note:

1. ComFairJax ltr ser 859 of 27 April 1951.
2. ComFairJax dispatch 181415Z of April 1951.
3. ComAirLant restricted dispatch 201851Z of March 1951.

pilots became fully day and night qualified with one exception (this pilot was later qualified during the day). After qualification exercises the ship headed for Quonset Point, R.I. to embark the remaining units of the Air Group and to take on stores.

On 4 May the aircraft were flown ashore and the ship was docked the following day. It was during the period 5-15 May that all the planes were grounded for inspection by O and R of the oil pumps in accordance with AFAF FlU ATB-48. The Maintenance crews turned to and the job of removing, inspecting and re-installing the oil pumps was completed just before we departed for European waters on 15 May as a unit of Carrier Air Group FOUR.

Standard fleet aircraft operating procedures were stressed during the time we were crossing the Atlantic. Pilots were organized into five flight divisions with two spare pilots, and all flights were scheduled and flown in strict accordance with this tactical organization. Launching and recovery techniques were the subject of many discussions and lectures; as a result of which the squadron showed continual improvement. These exercises with Combat Air Patrols and division tactics were continued after 24 May when the ORISKANY entered the Mediterranean Sea via the Straits of Gibraltar. During May the squadron flew 332 hours making 104 carrier landings, (Note 1).

In the month of June the greatest portion of our flights were employed in squadron and group tactics and in coordinated attacks. Operations were as heavy as possible between the many ports visited (Appendix I).

Note:

1. VF-43 Master Flight Time Log.

Support of an amphibious assault on Crete and joint air operations with the CORAL SEA, CVB-43, added to our training and combat efficiency. Night tactics and attack hops were conducted several times during the month. During June the squadron flew 506 hours for 171 carrier landings, (Note 1).

Recognition training has been hampered a great deal by the unavailability of adequate slides and information concerning Soviet type aircraft. It is believed that a name system, as was used to distinguish Japanese aircraft, would aid greatly in simplifying the recognition problem as the letter and number system now used is most confusing to the majority of pilots.

During this reporting period the Maintenance Department showed a great improvement in their ability to be able to meet our scheduled flights. It is felt that the transfer of G. S. MASON, Jr., ADC, from Material Chief to Maintenance Chief contributed greatly to this improvement in aircraft availability.

In general it can be said that Fighter Squadron FORTY THREE started this six month period still suffering the growing pains of a new squadron and finished up by being ready for duty anywhere. The change has been most noticeable since the middle of March when the training program finally hit its stride, and the squadron has benefited greatly by being an active part of the fleet afloat. During the latter part of this period a competitive spirit has grown between the flight divisions and everyone feels the increase in confidence in our ability that only carrier operations can give.

Note:

1. VF-43 Master Flight Time Log.

APPENDIX I

Cruise Itinerary

15 May	departed Quonset Point, R.I.
24 May	entered Mediterranean Sea.
27-29 May	Augusta Bay, Sicily.
1-4 June	Phaleron Bay, Greece.
5-8 June	Iraklion, Crete.
14-18 June	Tripoli, Libya.
22-29 June	Naples, Italy.
30 June	enroute La Spezia, Italy.

APPENDIX II

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	Total
F4U-5 Flt. Hrs.	753.6	445.7	986.6	552.0	332.3	505.8	3,576.0
SNB/JRB Inst. Hrs.	16.5	17.7	107.3	36.4	---	---	177.9
CV Landings	90	118	---	331	104	171	814
Accident Rate/1000 Hrs.	1.32	0.0	2.02	0.0	3.01	1.97	1.39

UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET
AIR FORCE
FIGHTER SQUADRON FORTY THREE
CARE OF FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

VF-43/A12/
SERIAL: 140-52
WRA:ln

From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron FORTY THREE
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Aviation History and Research Section)

Subj: Historical Report

Ref: (a) OPNAV Instruction 5750.2

Encl: (1) Subject Report

1. In accordance with reference (a) the historical report for the period 1 July to 31 December 1951 is herewith submitted.


C.W. GUNNELS, Jr.

CC:
ComFairJax
CVG-4
File (2)

FIGHTER SQUADRON FORTY THREE
1951 HISTORICAL REPORT 1 JULY - 31 DECEMBER
LTJG P.E. LUCAS USNR HISTORICAL OFFICER

CHRONOLOGY

1. 1 July 1951 Based aboard U.S.S. ORISKANY (CV-34) in Mediterranean area.
2. 9-23 July 1951 Service-wide competitive examinations conducted.
3. 19 July 1951 LTJG R.L. SCOTT, 485568/1310, made water landing due to engine failure. Pilot recovered by U.S.S. SALEM.
4. 20 July 1951 CDR. C.W. GUNNELS, Jr. 100125/1310, tail hook broke on landing and nosed up.
5. 1 August 1951 ENS. J.W. SMITH, 507562/1310, made 8,000th landing aboard U.S.S. ORISKANY (CV-34).
6. 2-3 August 1951 Participated in extensive search for two ditch aircraft from U.S.S. CORAL SEA (CVB-43).
7. 14 August 1951 F4U-5 Bureau Number 121938 sustained strike damage when dropped down elevator.
8. 11-16 August 1951 Operation BEEHIVE.
9. September Operated with relief ships.
10. 3 October 1951 Launched aircraft to return to NAAS, Cecil Field, Jacksonville, Florida.
11. 4 October 1951 Disembarked U.S.S. ORISKANY (CV-34).
12. 18 October 1951 ENS. J.W. SMITH, 507562/1310, made wheels-up landing.
13. 28 October 1951 LTJG. A.E. NASTOS, 382646/1315, crashed in trees after take-off.
14. 2-13 November 1951 LANTFLEX 52.
15. 28 November 1951 CVG-4 inspected CVG-1.
16. 19-21 December 1951 Search for two VF-33 aircraft.
17. 14-15 December 1951 Gunnery competition.

NARRATIVE

As Fighter Squadron FORTY THREE entered the second half of 1951, the squadron was still based aboard the U.S.S. ORISKANY (CV-34), continuing the Mediterranean cruise with the SIXTH Fleet. Flight operations between ports continued to be heavy, the majority of the flights being simulated search and attack exercises involving the entire air group.

On these long exercises, many of which were of over four hours duration, our role was primarily that of escorting the attack aircraft (AD's) of VA-45. In this capacity we had many opportunities to practice and improve on defensive tactics against jet and conventional fighter interception. The performance of our aircraft was reduced to a marked degree by the external fuel loads carried. However, it was found that fair counters could be made, even against the jet aircraft.

During July, August, and September continuous competition was conducted in the squadron between the various tactical divisions. Charts were kept which showed the landing interval of each pilot. Competitive scores were based on landing interval, "no-wave-off" passes, and "O.K." passes as judged by the L.S.O.'s. Bonuses were given to pilots who made ten "no-wave-off" passes consecutively and to the pilot who established the record number of "no-wave-off" passes. The competitive spirit engendered in all pilots and the improvements in overall squadron carrier performance were more than sufficient to justify the squadron continuing this type competition whenever ship-based.

On the 19th of July, while engaged in a simulated group search and strike, LTJG. R.L. SCOTT, piloting Bureau Number 121965, experienced loss of power in his aircraft. The difficulty occurred above 20,000 feet and about 200 miles from the ship. He and his wingman reversed course and started a let down but he was finally forced to ditch about 150 miles from the task force. ENS. C.B.

RITCHEY, his wingman, circled his position until relieved by AD-4n type aircraft from the ORISKANY. These aircraft then gave the distance and bearing from the task force. The U.S.S. SALEM, being much closer than the other ships, was despatched to pick up the downed pilot, and the next day he was returned, without injuries, to the ORISKANY via high-line.

On 20 July, CDR. C.W. GUNNELS, Jr. experienced a rough running engine on a night flight. He came in for an emergency landing, broke the tail hook and nosed up with minor damage to the plane and none to the pilot.

The second and third of August the squadron participated in an extensive search for two Jet pilots from Fighter Squadron TWELVE on the U.S.S. CORAL SEA, who ditched their aircraft due to fuel exhaustion. Their position was unknown, and the ORISKANY Air Group was assigned a search area southwest of the Island of Crete. After approximately 24 hours of searching the two pilots were found by aircraft from the U.S.S. CORAL SEA.

On 11 to 16 August this squadron took part, along with nearly all units of the Mediterranean, in "Operation Beehive". It began for us with a long range pre-dawn strike on Malta, which was occupied by the "enemy". We also made strikes on units in southern Italy, on a French field at Bizerte, North Africa, and we flew CAP over our forces. This was an interesting operation and provided valuable contact in the air with British type aircraft.

On August 14 F4U-5, side number 306, Bureau Number 121938, suffered strike damage in a deck accident, through no fault of the squadron.

In early September, the SIXTH Fleet was joined by its relief components, and for ten days the task group consisted of four carriers with their supporting cruisers and destroyers. For many of the pilots, it was their first experience with large scale, simultaneous carrier operations, and the opportunity to engage in and become

acquainted with the problems of such an operation was welcomed by all concerned.

After an uneventful Atlantic Crossing, during which the only activity was aircraft maintenance and squadron administrative matters, it was decided to launch the Air Group on the 3rd of October, one day early, in order to avoid a tropical hurricane which was off Cape Hatteras moving north.

LCDR. E.J. BECKER led the Jacksonville bound detachment of 12 planes and, skirting the bad weather, made Cecil Field on the evening of October 3. CDR. GUNNELS with two other planes filed for Quonset Point, but was forced by instrument weather to land at Marthas' Vineyard, where they were stranded for four days by rain and low visibility.

After all planes arrived back at Cecil Field the remainder of October was spent enjoying well earned leave periods, sprucing up the aircraft, and logging 356 F4U-5 hours.

In October our accident rate soared to 5.67/1000 hours due to two engine failures. ENS. J.W. SMITH, in F4U-5 Bureau Number 121968, made a wheels-up landing on 18 October when he experienced complete engine failure because of fuel starvation of undetermined cause. The plane suffered class "C" damage. Then on 24 October, LTJG. A.E. NASTOS, in F4U-5 Bureau Number 121937, experienced complete power failure immediately after becoming airborne. The plane suffered class "A" damage after hitting several trees. Both pilots were uninjured.

Our main objective upon returning to Cecil Field was to requalify all pilots in gunnery, in preparation for the forthcoming fleet competition in December. Also, the SNB instrument training program was placed back in operation. Gunnery practice was delayed for a short while, however, due to our participation in LANTFLEX 52 from 2 November to 13 November.

For this operation, CDR. GUNNELS took eight planes, ten pilots, and a detachment of maintenance personnel, headed by ADC J.A. UBER, to Masters Field, NAS, Miami, Florida. Working out of this field from sunrise to sunset the Air Group FOUR detachment made numerous long distance strikes against the "enemy". These strikes went out to the plane's limit of endurance and on one occasion most of the Corsairs were forced to land at Oakes Field on Nassau. On this occasion ENS. T.E. HADDOCK crept into Nassau, with only eleven gallons of fuel remaining, after flying over four hours over water.

That part of the squadron which remained at Cecil Field engaged in limited training operations, and also was required to maintain aircraft and pilots in a three hour readiness condition throughout the daylight hours of the LANTFLEX operation.

On the 28th of November the squadron participated in the Administrative/ Material Inspection of CVG-1, VF-43 inspected VF-13.

Fleet gunnery competition at 15,000 feet was held on the 14th and 15th of December. The squadron received a grade of "satisfactory". This grade was made with all pilots using the Mark VI, Fire Control System. The computing sight of the Mark VI system is considered more difficult to use than the old fixed sight, and it was with gratification that we learned we had qualified in this competitive firing. LCDR. E.J. BECKER made a score of 33%, for which Commander Fleet Air Jacksonville awarded him an "E". It is felt that all pilots have benefited by our use of this fire control system.

From the 19th to the 21st of December, Fighter Squadron FORTY THREE joined in the search for two F4U-4's from Fighter Squadron THIRTY THREE, which had been lost enroute from Norfolk to NAAS, Sanford, Florida. The search was initiated

under adverse weather conditions, which hampered our efforts greatly the first day. The next two days were good and on the 21st the search was ended by the discovery of the wreckage of the two aircraft by a Navy blimp.

This six month period brought additional improvements in the squadron. With the successful conclusion of Fighter Squadron FORTY THREE's first extended cruise, and with our return to shore base, we were ready and anxious for further activity. The officers and men were all pleased with our record of safety and aircraft availability while on board ship, a record which compared more than favorably with the other F4U-5 squadrons in the Mediterranean area.

During the period of this report forty-three men took the service-wide competitive examinations for advancement in rating and twenty-four received passing marks. The number of men advanced in October was thirty-seven. The squadron's standing in the AirLant Educational Training has been high with a ninety-three percent in October, ninety-five percent in November, and eighty-six percent in December. A total of forty-two men were recommended for the service-wide examinations to be held in January 1952, and it is hoped that a representative number will receive passing marks.

The end of this period comes with the squadron looking forward to new experiences and cruises. During 1952 Fighter Squadron FORTY THREE expects to make further strides in its goal of being 100 percent battle ready.

APPENDIX I

ITINERARY USS ORISKANY MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE 1951

VF-43 EMBARKED

1 - 4 July 1951	La Spezia, Italy
7 - 15 July 1951	Cannes, France
23 - 27 July 1951	Izmir, Turkey
2 - 6 August 1951	Suda Bay, Crete
9 - 12 August 1951	Iraklion, Crete
18 - 23 August 1951	Genoa, Italy
25 - 31 August 1951	Golfe deJuan, Cannes, France
8 - 11 September 1951	Genoa, Italy
12 - 26 September 1951	Gibraltar, B.C.P.
4 October 1951	Quonset Point, Rhode Island

APPENDIX II

	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
F4U-5	519.2	722.1	349.1	356.0	665.6	501.6	3113.6
SNB/JRB	- - -	- - -	- - -	2.8	99.0	91.2	193.0
CV LANDINGS	172	195	125	- - -	- - -	- - -	492
ACCIDENT RATE 1000 HOURS	3.85	0.0	0.0	5.67	0.0	0.0	1.58*

* Average /1000/month