1995

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 15
FPO AA 34099-6201

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From: Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron FIFTEEN
To: Director, Naval Aviation History and Publication Division, Naval Historical Center

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY REPORT

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E
(b) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1990
(c) OPNAVINST 3120.32 series

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronological History
(3) VFA-15 Narrative History of 1995
(4) Commanding Officer's biography and picture
(5) Strike Fighter Squadron FIFTEEN History
(6) Squadron Aircraft Photograph
(7) Battle Efficiency Award Summary
(8) VFA-15 "Ready Seven" Program
(9) Joint Task Group 95-2 Deployment Summary

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) through (9) are submitted.

T. N. BRANCH

COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

1. The mission of Strike Fighter Squadron 15 is to maintain a maximum state of air combat readiness in the Carrier Strike Forces and to utilize that readiness as a deterrent or striking capability against any and all enemies of the United States of America, as may be directed by higher command authority. The primary function of Strike Fighter Squadron 15 within that mission is to conduct offensive air superiority and air-to-surface attack operations.

2. Strike Fighter Squadron 15 is organized in two primary levels; command and department. The organizational structure has been established within the framework of primary billets authorized by the Chief of Naval Personnel and within the guidelines established in references (b) and (c). In this particular application, the organizational structure and billet descriptions depicted in reference (c) have been tailored, as necessary, to fit the structure of a deployable aviation command.

3. Strike Fighter Squadron 15 based at NAS Cecil Field, FL and commanded by CDR Ted N. Branch, USN, for calendar year 1995 and has an immediate external command relationship as outlined below:

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL

a. Command/Operational Control		Commander, Carrier Air Wing EIGHT NAS Norfolk, Va
b. Administrative Control	(embarked)	Commander, Carrier Air Wing EIGHT
	(ashore)	Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, ATLANTIC NAS Cecil Field, FL
c. Technical Material		Commander, Naval Air Force ATLANTIC/Naval Air Systems Command Control NAS Norfolk, Va

d. Support Control — Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, ATLANTIC

4. The twelve (12) FA-18C HORNET aircraft assigned to the squadron have AJ tail code markings. The bureau number breakdown is as follows:

AIRCRAFT	BUREAU NUMBER
300	164627
301	164629
302	164643
303	164646
304	164655
305	164661
306	164666
307	164669
310	164673
311	164680
312	164631
314	164678

5. Strike Fighter Squadron 15 consists of 213 enlisted members and 22 officers.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

CHANGE OF COMMAND	6 JAN 95
FLEET EXERCISE VACAPES OPERATING AREA	28 JAN-10 FEB
DEPLOYED IN USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) FOR JTG 95-2 DEPLOYMENT	22 MAR
PORT CALL HAIFA, ISRAEL	10-12 APR
DETACHMENT TO EGYPT, EXERCISE EAGLE ARENA	13-20 APR
DETACHMENT TO JORDAN, EXERCISE INFINITE ACCLAIM	20-29 APR
RED SEA OPS, OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH	17 APR-2 MAY
PORT CALL JABEL ALI, UAE	2-7 MAY
ARABIAN GULF OPERATIONS	8-12 MAY
DETACHMENT TO AL JABER, KUWAIT	13-18 MAY
PORT CALL CORFU, GREECE	5-8 JUN
OPERATION DENY FLIGHT/SHARP GUARD IN ADRIATIC SEA, UNITED NATIONS COALITON	8 JUN-2 JUL
PORT CALL RHODES, GREECE	2-6 JUL
PORT CALL TRIESTE, ITALY	24-28 JUL
EXERCISE COILED COBRA, IONIAN SEA	30 JUL-16 AUG
PORT CALL HAIFA, ISRAEL	16-21 AUG
OPERATION INFINITE MOONLIGHT, EASTERN MED	22 AUG-5 SEP
OPERATION DELIBERATE FORCE, ADRIATIC SEA	6-15 SEP
FLY-OFF TO NAS CECIL FIELD	21 SEP
CVN-71 ARRIVES NORFOLK, VA	22 SEP
NATOPS UNIT EVAL	22 NOV
CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY INSPECTION	4-7 DEC

VFA-15 NARRATIVE HISTORY OF 1995

1995 was exceptionally busy, challenging, and tremendously successful for VFA-15. The squadron took its place at the "Tip of the Spear" during the Joint Task Group 95-2 deployment. VFA-15's operations were characterized by professional excellence, superior teamwork, and decisive action in the international arena while deployed for the majority of the year. Our participation spanned a broad spectrum of real world training opportunities and operations. Deploying in two theaters of operations, the VALIONS were instrumental in the success of United Nations and NATO operations, culminating in the first extensive carrier based air strikes since the Persian Gulf War of 1991 over Bosnia-Herzegovina during DELIBERATE FORCE. Due to the exceptional dedication and unwavering perseverance which has been the hallmark of VALION EXCELLENCE, the officers and men of VFA-15 continuously demonstrated superb professional competence and operational effectiveness.

Strike Fighter Squadron FIFTEEN had an exceptional year for SAFETY with zero Aviation or Ground mishaps. Through this strong emphasis on safety, the VALIONS reached the milestone of 15,000 hours class "A" mishap free. In addition, VFA-15 promulgated safety concerns throughout the fleet by submitting one change to the FA-18C Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures (NATOPS) Manual, two Hazard Reports, and five professional articles to Approach, Aimpoint, and Topgun Journal.

Operationally during calendar year '95 the squadron pilots flew 5192.8 hours with 3718.8 hours flown while embarked in USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71). A total of 1956 arrested landings were made. 119 missions were flown in both the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH enforcing the "No Fly Zone" south of the 32nd parallel in Iraq. 268 missions were flown over Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation DENY FLIGHT. During Operation DELIBERATE FORCE, the VALIONS flew 56 strike missions against Bosnian Serb ammunition storage areas and critical lines of communication. VFA -15 pilots delivered 47 Laser Guided Bombs (LGBs), nine High Speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARMs), and two Stand-Off Land Attack Missiles (SLAMs), totaling 70,000 pounds of ordnance. VFA-15 became the first carrier based U.S. Navy Squadron to employ the GBU-24 Hard target penetrator in combat, delivering three 2000+ pound GBU-24s against Bosnian Serb command and control bunkers.

The squadron developed and validated buddy lasing tactics for air wing F-14 GBU delivery during operation DELIBERATE FORCE. The VALIONS had a 98% sortie completion rate during demanding deployed operations and were awarded the CVW-8 TOP HOOK award for

excellence in landing grades during JTG 95-2. In addition to this accolade, VFA-15 was recognized by the Commanding Officer, USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) as the squadron best exemplifying the CVW-CV Team by winning the coveted "Spirit of Professionalism" award. This prestigious accomplishment is evidence of the superb professional reputation of the VALIONS while deployed.

In November. the squadron underwent Conventional Weapons Technical Proficiency Inspection (CWTPI) and passed with outstanding results.

Strike Fighter Squadron FIFTEEN placed great emphasis on the professional development of its personnel. This was demonstrated by the grade of "OUTSTANDING" for the Retention Program Assessment conducted by USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71). Through an extensive advancement education program, the VALIONS were able to advance its members at a 43 percent rate, one of the highest in the Navy. In addition, the overall retention rate was an impressive 70 percent.

As one of the oldest squadron's in the Navy, the VALIONS have historically been one of the premiere squadrons in Naval Aviation and 1995 was no exception. VFA-15 excelled as a result of a professional mind set which pervades throughout the command to motivate every member to strive towards "Valion Excellence".

*VFA-15 JOINT TASK GROUP 95-2 DEPLOYMENT MEDITERRANEAN SEA*RED SEA*ARABIAN GULF*ADRIATIC SEA*

SQUADRON: STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON FIFTEEN (VFA-15)
NICKNAME: THE "VALIONS"

DEPLOYED: 22 MARCH - 21 SEPTEMBER 1995
EMBARKED: USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN-71)

COMMANDING OFFICER: CDR TED N. BRANCH
COs WIFE'S NAME: MRS. JODI BRANCH

KEY FACTS OF DEPLOYMENT:

FLEW 55 MISSIONS IN OPERATION "DELIBERATE FORCE" STRIKING BOSNIAN SERB TARGETS, DELIVERING OVER 15 TONS OF PRECISION GUIDANCE ORDNANCE

119 MISSIONS FLOWN IN SUPPORT OF UNITED NATIONS' OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH ENFORCING THE NO FLY ZONE IN IRAQ

292 MISSIONS FLOWN OVER BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA IN SUPPORT OF UNITED NATIONS' OPERATION DENY FLIGHT

156 DAYS UNDERWAY DURING DEPLOYMENT

98% SORTIE COMPLETION RATE

CRUISE SUMMARY

Joint Task Group 95-2 deployment has been an extremely successful for Strike Fighter Squadron FIFTEEN. Embarked in USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) as part of Carrier Air Wing EIGHT (CVW-8), the VALIONS savored the opportunity to take their turn at the "Tip of the Spear" and show the world just how professionally this squadron does business. The cruise began in March with the initial pains of separation from family and friends, but the squadron quickly adapted to life on cruise. The pilots endured countless hours of contingency planning on the Atlantic transit, while the maintainers did a tremendous job ensuring all 12 FA-18C Strike Fighter aircraft were Fully Mission Capable (FMC) and combat ready.

After a rapid transit across the Mediterranean Sea and a quick stop in Haifa, Israel, the T.R. and the VALIONS steamed south through the Suez Canal to begin operations under U.S. Central Command. The cruise progressed on schedule with operations in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf flying over Iraq in support of United Nations' operation SOUTHERN WATCH. During their time in the Gulf, the VALIONS were able to enjoy a port call in

Jebel Ali, UAE. By the end of May, the T.R. was back in the Mediterranean working for the U.S. European Command and U.S. Sixth Fleet where they participated in a training exercise near Sicily with the Italian and British Navies. However, as activity in Bosnia-Herzegovnia intensified, exercise TRIDENTE was cut short and the battle group conducted a high speed transit to the Adriatic Sea. The CVW-8 - ROOSEVELT Team was in position and ready to respond within 24 hours. With an unstable situation ashore, the VALIONS remained on call in the Adriatic throughout the summer supporting United Nations' operation DENY FLIGHT. While in the Adriatic, the squadron did manage to find some excellent liberty in the great ports of Corfu and Rhodes, Greece, and Trieste, Italy.

In August the Roosevelt responded to a possible crisis in the Eastern Med after members of Saddam Hussein's family defected to Jordan. The squadron flew missions into Jordan to demonstrate U.S. resolve and conduct operations with the Royal Jordanian Air Force. VFA-15 was once again the cornerstone supporting interests of the United States.

The day before a second well-earned port visit in Rhodes, Greece, the ROOSEVELT was ordered back to the Adriatic to conduct operations. On the morning of 30 August 1995, the VALIONS flew strike missions against Bosnian Serb targets in the former Republic of Yugoslavia during United Nations operation DELIBERATE FORCE. The VALIONS flew 55 missions and delivered over 15 tons of precision guidance ordnance in the first three days. Once again the "World Famous VALIONS" have responded to a world crisis and made a marked impact supporting national policy.

World events made our Med-Red Sea-Arabian Gulf-Adriatic Sea deployment an extremely challenging and exciting experience. The high operational tempo kept all 200 VALIONS busy nearly all the time. The flying was great and the support of the VALION maintenance professionals was incredible!! Congratulations to the maintainers who provided nothing but first rate Hornets for the VALION pilots to fly. The VALIONS have spent the last six months on the "Tip of the Spear" and will look back on our time here with pride of a job well done. Best of luck to VFA-82/86 and the USS AMERICA! The VALIONS are coming home!

NUMBER OF SORTIES: 1660

TOTAL FLIGHT HOURS: 3145

TOTAL TRAPS: 1614

PORTS VISITED:		
	HAIFA, ISRAEL	10-12 APRIL/16-21AUGUST
	JABEL ALI, UAE	2-7 MAY
	CORFU, GREECE	5-8 JUNE
	RHODES, GREECE	2-6 JULY
	TRIESTE, ITALY	24-28 JULY

EXERCISES:

EAGLE ARENA	EGYPT	EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE

INFINITE ACCLAIM	JORDAN	ROYAL JORDANIAN AF
OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH	RED SEA/ ARABIAN GULF	
EXERCISE TRIDENTE	WESTERN MED	ITALIAN AF/NAVY ROYAL NAVY
OPERATION DENY FLIGHT/ SHARP GUARD/DELIBERATE FORCE	ADRIATIC SEA	UNITED NATIONS' COALITION
COILED COBRA	IONIAN SEA	
INFINITE MOONLIGHT	EASTERN MED	ROYAL JORDANIAN AF/ 11TH MEU

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS:

CARRIER AIR WING EIGHT "TOP HOOK" AWARD

"SPIRIT OF PROFESSIONALISM" OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT, THE MAN, AWARD (Awarded to the squadron in the CVW-8/TR Team most exemplifying the spirit embodied in President Theodore Roosevelt)

QUOTES:

COMMANDING OFFICER

"The officers and men of VFA-15 have done an outstanding job for the entire cruise; meeting every challenge and exceeding every goal. I feel extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to lead such a fine group of professionals and I'm very proud of them.

I also want to express my appreciation to the families and loved-ones at home. They, too, performed superbly throughout the deployment. Without their encouragement and support, our success would not have been possible."

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

"It's been a superb cruise for the VALIONS. Our men met every challenge head-on, and routinely achieved outstanding results. Always going the extra mile, the VALION TEAM set the standard for excellence in Air Wing EIGHT. We are particularly proud of winning the coveted Theodore Roosevelt, the man, award for the squadron most exhibiting the "Spirit of Professionalism" in the CVW-8/ROOSEVELT Team.

We long for our loved ones, and look forward to a joyous homecoming! This squadron would not have enjoyed it's many successes on this deployment without the 100% support of our families at home."

OPERATIONS OFFICER

"The VALIONS have once again displayed the flexibility and capability inherent in the deployed CV Battle Group. Our pilots and maintainers excelled in carrying out, without a hitch, national policy in three separate theaters of operation. The performance of all of the VALIONS is indicative of the pride and professionalism inherent in the Strike Fighter Community."

MAINTENANCE OFFICER

"The effort put forth to keep all twelve jets in a Full Mission Capable status was fantastic. Despite working at the far end of a long supply chain, we were able to meet every commitment - every contingency - sometimes on very short notice. That speaks volumes for the technical ability of our maintenance personnel."

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

"We've had some great days and a few really bad days, it's always hard to lose a shipmate, but on the whole it's been a good deployment. I'm looking forward to a great homecoming."