



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON 25
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From: Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron 25
To: Director, Naval Historical Center (OP-09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) VFA-25 ltr 5750 Ser 00/27 of 29 Jan 90
(b) OPNAVINST 5750.12D

Encl: (1) 1989 Command History

1. Command History submitted by reference (a) was not in the format prescribed by reference (b). Enclosure (1) is corrected command history and is forwarded in compliance with reference (b).


D. W. GABRIEL





COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

Mission

The mission of Strike Fighter Squadron 25 is to maintain maximum air combat readiness in the Carrier Striking 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 authority. The primary function of Strike Fighter Squadron 25 within that mission is to conduct offensive air-to-air and surface strike operations.

Organizational Structure

Strike Fighter Squadron 25 is one of seven FA-18 fleet squadrons in the U.S. Pacific Fleet and is based ashore at Naval Air Station, Lemoore, California. Operational and Administrative Control is provided by Commander, Carrier Air Wing 14 which deployed aboard USS CONSTELLATION from January to June 1989 to the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans and deployed to the Northern Pacific Ocean as a part of PACEX '89 during September and October.

Commanding Officer

Commander Daniel W. Gabriel assumed command in November 1988 just prior to the squadron's deployment to the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans. Commander Gabriel was commissioned and entered the Naval service in August 1970 upon graduation from Western Michigan University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Chemistry. After completing flight training at NAS Kingsville, Texas, he was designated a Naval Aviator and received his wings in April 1972. In May 1972, he reported to NAS Oceana as an FRS student with VF-101 flying the F-4 Phantom II. After training he reported to VF-102, completing two deployments to the Mediterranean as part of CVW-7 and USS INDEPENDENCE.

In June 1975, Commander Gabriel reported to VF-43 as an adversary instructor. He was a key element as the squadron added T-38 and F-5 aircraft to its inventory and developed the Fleet Fighter ACM Readiness Program (FFARP). In December 1977, he reported to VF-171 as an FRS student flying the F-4. In August 1978 he reported to VF-74, completing two deployments to the Mediterranean and one to the North Atlantic as part of CVW-17 onboard USS FORRESTAL.

Commander Gabriel changed warfare specialties in August 1980 when he joined the COMLATWINGPAC FA-18 Fleet Introduction Team as part of the initial pilot instructor cadre. A plank owner in VFA-125, he served as Fleet Project Team Chairman and was the ISD Officer during initial FA-18 syllabus creation. In September 1983, he reported to VFA-113 as they were undergoing FA-18 transition from the A-7E, serving as the Maintenance, Operations and Administrative Officer, completing a Western Pacific deployment as part of CVW-14 onboard USS CONSTELLATION.

In April 1986, Commander Gabriel reported to COMLATWINGPAC as Assistant Operations Officer. He reported to VFA-125 in April 1987 for FA-18 refresher training and assumed the duties as Executive Officer of VFA-25 in September 1987 while deployed to the Western Pacific onboard USS CONSTELLATION.

CHRONOLOGY 1989

January-June squadron deployed aboard USS CONSTELLATION to the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean.

January 12-14 participated in PASSEX with Thailand and January 15-17 participated in PASSEX with Malaysia.

February 5-12 was Weapons Week. Squadron pilot, LCDR Dave Mosca, successfully fired an AIM-7F (POP) missile. From 19-22 February, the squadron participated in both Beacon Flash 47 and Operation Busy Customer.

April 13-14 VFA-25 was a part of another PASSEX with Singapore. In April 1989 the squadron was the recipient of CNO 1988 Safety "S". In May 1989 the squadron was the recipient of the COMNAVAIRPAC Battle "E" for the second consecutive year. For the whole deployment, the squadron provided an unprecedented 99% sortie completion rate. The Squadron was awarded the CVW-14 Golden Tailhook Award for all three line periods and the overall landing competition for the 1988-1989 deployment with a GPA of 3.66 and boarding rate of 96%. On June 1 the squadron returned to NAS Lemoore. June was virtually a stand down month.

July 24. LT Lefon dropped a WALLEYE ERDL and LT Phelps guided it to a bullseye. In July 1989 the squadron was the recipient of the Captain Michael J. Estocin Award as the best FA-18 squadron in the U.S. Navy for 1988.

August 1. LT Phelps and LT Matheson successfully fired an AIM-9 and AIM-7F respectively. August 26 the squadron received its second consecutive discrepancy-free Navy Technical Proficiency Inspection (NTPI) recorded.

September 5-7 seventeen squadron pilots carrier qualified in preparation for PACEX '89. September 16 USS CONSTELLATION embarks for PACEX '89, the largest exercise of U.S. Naval warships since World War II. September 28 LCDR Henderson achieved a direct hit on drone with an AIM-7F. Squadron won CVW-14 Golden Tailhook for PACEX '89, marking eight consecutive periods that the Golden Tailhook has gone to VFA-25.

October 19 the squadron returns from PACEX '89 to NAS Lemoore. October 30 squadron finished Advanced Attack Readiness Program (AARP) at Strike Fighter Weapons School, COMLATWINGPAC.

November 6 the squadron began Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP) at NAS Fallon which continued through to 22 November. November 26 squadron began CVW-14 detachment at NAS Fallon. On 30 November squadron flew 33 sorties while deployed to NAS Fallon.

December 15 the squadron Executive Officer, CDR Gregory Peairs, led the planning and execution of a highly successful strike during the Advanced Tactical Phase of the Air Wing detachment. In December the squadron was notified that it was the recipient of the COMNAVAIRPAC LTJG Bruce Carrier Memorial Award for Excellence in Maintenance for FY 1989.

NARRATIVE

In January Battle Group Delta entered the North Arabian Sea to begin a sustained at-sea period that would last until mid-March. A successful port visit to Karachi, Pakistan, occurred during this period.

In March the squadron was awarded its second consecutive Battle Efficiency Award, an unprecedented achievement for a strike fighter squadron. Squadron pilots were also awarded the "Tail Hook" Award for the fourth consecutive line period, placing seven pilots in the top 10. The FIST remained atop the landing competition for the final line period of the cruise which clinched the top "Tail Hook" Award for the '88/'89 deployment.

Receiving the CNO Safety "S" Award was the next major plaudit received by VFA-25 during the deployment. This added to April's excitement which also marked the end of Battle Group Delta's operational commitment to the Indian Ocean. Several more port visits were included for the trip home — Perth, Western Australia; Pattaya Beach, Thailand; Hong Kong and Seattle, Washington.

June 1989 saw the return of VFA-25 to NAS Lemoore. In addition to their Battle "E" and Safety "S" Awards, the squadron also received the Captain Michael J. Estocin Award for 1988. Recognizing the best FA-18 squadron in the Navy, the Estocin award gave VFA-25 unprecedented acknowledgment as the first "Triple Crown" winner for the U.S. Navy Strike Fighter community. The months of June, July and August were spent preparing for PACEX '89, the largest exercise of U.S. Naval warships since World War II.

In September VFA-25 embarked again in USS CONSTELLATION enroute to the Northern Pacific, conducting flight operations in adverse weather off of Alaska. The "CONNIE" spent four days in a Near Land Operating Area (NLOA) among to the Aleutian Islands. During bad weather, sleet and pitching decks, the maintenance men and pilots adhered to the mission remarkably well. Highlights of PACEX included a successful AIM-7 SPARROW shoot and a 99% sortie completion rate. Over 200 sorties were flown and again VFA-25 came away from deployment as winners of the CVW-14 Golden Tailhook. After a visit to Vancouver, the FIST said goodbye to "CONNIE" for the last time.

In November VFA-25 transitioned to the USS INDEPENDENCE (CV 62) and began its Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program flying against the "Have a nice day" bogeys of VFA-127 at Fallon, Nevada. December found them again in Fallon, this time with the remainder of CVW-14 for an air wing detachment. Overland Air Superiority Training (OAST) and Fleet Integrated Suppression Training (FIST) led into the Advanced Tactical Phase (ATP) of training, providing very realistic combat scenarios. Debriefs on the TACTS range, with its omniscient perspective, showed the complexities of tactical aviation and significantly advanced pilot training through outstanding debriefs. Also during December, VFA-25 was again awarded the COMNAVAIRPAC LTJG Bruce Carrier Memorial Award for Excellence in Maintenance for FY 1989.