

VFA-25 "THE FIST OF THE FLEET" COMMAND HISTORY, 1997

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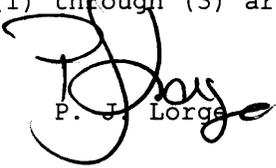
From: Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron TWO FIVE
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH)

Subj: ANNUAL COMMAND HISTORY, CY 1997

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) Command history
(2) Photograph, aircraft 400
(3) Photograph, CDR Patrick J. Lorge

1. In accordance with ref (a), encl (1) through (3) are submitted.


P. J. Lorge

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1. Command Composition and Organization.

a. The mission of Strike Fighter Squadron Two Five is to maintain a maximum state of air combat readiness, originating "from the sea" aboard a carrier battle group, serving as a deterrent against all potential enemies of the United States of America. The primary function of Strike Fighter Squadron Two Five within that mission is to conduct offensive air to air and air to surface strike operations as directed by national command authority.

2. Organizational Structure.

a. VFA-25 is home based at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, under the functional command of the Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet. Operational command is provided by Commander, Carrier Air Wing Fourteen (CVW 14). Commanding officers during calendar year 1997 were CDR Barry J. Brocato (29 July 96 - 7 November 97) and CDR Patrick J. Lorge (7 November 97 - present). VFA-25 maintains twelve FA-18C Hornets, carrying the tail code "NK". Current bureau numbers are as follows:

<u>Side #</u>	<u>Bureau #</u>	<u>Build Lot</u>
400	164633	XIV
401	164635	XIV
402	164637	XIV
403	164639	XIV
404	164642	XIV
405	164645	XIV
406	164654	XIV
407	164660	XIV
410	164676	XIV
411	164681	XIV
412	164262	XIII
413	164266	XIII

b. All aircraft are night vision goggle compatible and are capable of delivering the latest self designated precision laser guided weapons. Additionally, they carry the AIM-120 AMRAAM missile in the air to air role.

3. Chronology, 1997.

01-24 Jan: NAS Lemoore, local training
24Jan-6Feb: Tuscon AZ, Fighter tactics training and employment Det.
07-10 Feb: NAS Lemoore, A/C POD configuration change
11 Feb: Command PRT
12-18 Feb: JTFX Support
19Feb-5Mar: NAS Lemoore, FCLP
6-9 Mar: USS Abraham Lincoln CV-72 Carrier Quals
10-30 Mar: NAS Lemoore, local training
31Mar-4Apr: 3 Aircraft Detachment to Pt. Mugu for AGM-84E SLAM training and weapon employment.
05-08 Apr: NAS Lemoore, local area training
09-11 Apr: NAS Lemoore, NATOPS unit eval
10-14 Apr: NAS Lemoore, local area training
14-27 Apr: Roswell NM, Roving Sands detachment
28Apr-13May: NAS Lemoore, local area training
14 May: NAS Lemoore, Maintenance and Pilot training

VFA-25 "THE FIST OF THE FLEET" COMMAND HISTORY, 1997

Chronology cont.

15-25 May: NAS Lemoore, local area training
26May-4Jun: SFWP Strike/Fighter weapons derby competition
01-13 June: NAS Lemoore, local area training
05-08 Jun: NAS Lemoore air show participation
09 Jun: No fly Day, Base FOD walk down
10 Jun: NAS Lemoore, local area training
11 Jun: No fly day, Base wide safety stand down.
12 Jun: NAS Lemoore, local area training
13 Jun: Command picnic
14-22 Jun: NAS Lemoore, local area training
23-30 Jun: NAS Lemoore, FCLP
01-02 Jul: ADM Putnam visits with squadron and receives Hornet
brief on capabilities and a back seat ride.
03 Jul: NAS Lemoore, FCLP
04 Jul: Day off, Independence Day
05-07 Jul: NAS Lemoore, FCLP
08 Jul: One aircraft to NAS Miramar to launch an AIM-7 Sparrow
during the CVW-9 missile shoot exercise
09-16 Jul: NAS Lemoore, FCLP
14 Jul: TSTA 1 Detachment begins in Everett WA aboard USS Abraham
Lincoln CV-72
17-21 Jul: TSTA 1 onboard CV-72, pilot CQ
19-24 Jul: Ten pilots crossdeck to the USS Nimitz in support of the
CVW-9 surge-ex operation.
25-27 Jul: Pilots return from surge-ex
28 Jul: SFARP Ground school begins
28Jul-7Aug: NAS Lemoore, local area training in preparation for SFARP
8 Aug: Squadron departs for Fallon NV
11-29 Aug: SFARP, Fallon NV
30Aug-9Sept: FCLP, NAS Lemoore
10-27 Sept: TSTA II/III onboard USS Abraham Lincoln
28Sept-30Oct: Local area training
4-7 Oct: 4 A/C to Hill AFB ACM DET
8-11 Oct: Airwing ground school at NAS Lemoore
12-31 Oct: Airwing Det NAS Fallon NV
1-21 Nov: FCLP NAS Lemoore
7 Nov: Change of Command, CDR Lorge takes command from CDR Brocato
in ceremony held at NAS Lemoore Hangar 2.
13 Nov: ATC Sweet Retirement
22 Nov: Underway onboard CVN-72
23-25 Nov: CQ on CVN-72 in preparation for COMPTUEX
26-28 Nov: Liberty for Thanksgiving
29Nov-17Dec: COMPTUEX/ITA onboard CVN-72
18-31 Dec: Local area training and Leave Begins

4. Narrative.

The squadron spent the month of January at NAS Lemoore, brushing up on air to air skills in preparation for the upcoming Detachment to Tuscon, AZ. During the last week of January and first week of February, VFA-25 sent eight A/C and 16 Aviators to Tuscon AZ. The clear Arizona skies allowed the squadron to escape Lemoore's winter fog, while accomplishing vital non-similar air to air training versus Air Force F-16's.

After spending the first week of February in Tuscon the squadron returned to Lemoore for an Aircraft FLIR POD configuration change. This new software allowed the squadron to better utilize its sensors and

VFA-25 "THE FIST OF THE FLEET" COMMAND HISTORY, 1997

Narrative cont.

deliver precision weapons on target. VFA-25 then spent a week supporting Air Wing 9 off the coast of Southern CA during their JTFX deployment. The last week in February was spent doing FCLP in Lemoore in preparation for the first carrier qualifications since West-Pac '96. Fist pilots had the chance to brush up on carrier procedures and landing techniques that had not been used during the previous four months.

The month of March began with the excitement of Carrier qualifications on the USS Abraham Lincoln, CVN-72. This was the squadron and Air Wing's first visit to the recently refurbished carrier. Twenty pilots were qualified in minimal time and the Air Wing and ship worked together well during their first coordinated exercise. The last week of March was spent preparing for the upcoming Natops Unit Eval.

April began with three pilots and aircraft travelling to Pt. Mugu for AGM-84E slam training. The training allows the squadron the ability to employ the long range weapon with only squadron assets. The April Natops Unit evaluation was a complete success with the squadron scoring its highest rating in years. The last two weeks of April were spent in Roswell, NM for the Roving Sands Operation. This support of Air Force training and tactics, as the "RED" force, gave the Air Wing its first opportunity to act together as a tactical unit during this turn around cycle.

May and June were spent in Lemoore practicing both air to air and air to ground tactics with only brief respites for the Lemoore Air Show/Hornet Ball and a Strike derby that pitted all the Hornet squadrons in Lemoore against each other.

July started with a visit from VFA-25's Battle Group Commander, Admiral Putnam. He was in Lemoore for a Hornet ride and briefings on the capabilities of his Air Wing Strike/Fighter aircraft. After a relaxing Independence Day VFA-25 sent one aircraft to NAS Miramar for a very successful AIM-7 Sparrow shoot, where a drone was acquired by radar and destroyed. The second week of July was spent in preparation for Carrier Quals on the Lincoln again. 18 Pilots qualified after four days of rough weather. Ten pilots then crossdecked to the USS Nimitz in support of the CVW-9 surge-ex.

The last week of July and first week of August were spent in Lemoore at SFWP SFARP ground school in preparation for the upcoming Det to Fallon. The rest of August was spent at NAS Fallon, NV for SFARP. SFARP was very successful for the "Fisties" completing more than 300 tactical sorties in 14 days of operations.

Operations during the first week of September were at break neck pace. With 20 pilots preparing to deploy on the Lincoln, and 8 of those pilots also participated in an AIM-9 sidewinder shoot, maintenance was tasked to its limits. With typical "Fistie pride" and hard work, maintenance not only completed the required scheduled maintenance and launches but also set an Air Wing record with 517 continuous sorties without a cancellation. The 47 days with 100% FMC sortie rate was a testament to what long hours and exact planning can do for a tactical Hornet squadron. The last three weeks of September were spent onboard the Lincoln for TSTA II/III. This at sea period allowed the Air Wing to work together in the ship board environment for the first time during the turn around cycle.

VFA-25 "THE FIST OF THE FLEET" COMMAND HISTORY, 1997

Narrative cont.

Upon the return of the squadron to Lemoore in October four jets detached to Hill AFB for vital dissimilar air to air training. The second week of October found the "Fists" back in ground school, this time for the upcoming Air Wing Detachment to NAS Fallon. Air Wing Det finished off the whole of October and provided the Air Wing and squadron the chance to polish its large force tactics. The large strikes also provided the Wing the chance to upgrade six strike leads under training.

November 7th was a very big day for the squadron as CDR Lorge took command of VFA-25 from CDR Brocato at a ceremony held at NAS Lemoore. Skipper Lorge vowed to bring the squadron up to speed in this computer age with full integration of all shops and divisions throughout the command. The bulk of flying done during the first three weeks of November were FCLPs for the boat Det in December. The final days of November were spent qualifying on the Lincoln, then a few well deserved days for Thanksgiving before the month long separation from home.

The final detachment for the year was onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln for COMPTUEX. COMPTUEX gave the whole Abraham Lincoln Carrier Battle Group a chance to work together integrating both air and surface assets. The squadron's mission does not change during exercises of this type. The scope of what the unit as a whole is doing is the only thing that changes. The end of COMPTUEX marked the completion of the first line period, with pilots averaging 20 traps apiece. The final weeks of the year were spent returning from the ship and beginning leave for the holiday season.

5. Commanding Officer. (29 July 1996-7 November 1997)- Commander Barry J. Brocato is a native of Coronado, California and graduated from the Naval Academy in 1979. After earning his Naval Aviator's wings in 1981, he reported to NAS Lemoore to begin flying the A-7E Corsair II. Following tours with VA-192 and VA-27, CDR Brocato reported to VFA-125 for transition to the FA-18 Hornet. In 1988 he transferred to CVW-5 as airwing LSO aboard USS MIDWAY, forward deployed in the Western Pacific. Following this tour, he returned to Lemoore for instructor duty at Strike Fighter Weapons School Pacific (SFWSF). In 1991, he returned to VFA-27 for a department head tour. CDR Brocato earned a master's degree in Strategic Studies and National Security from the Naval War College prior to reporting to VFA-25 in May of 1995.

6. Commanding Officer. (7 November 1997-PRESENT)- Commander Patrick J. Lorge was born in Pensacola, Florida and graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1981. After earning his wings in 1983 he remained in Beeville, TX as an instructor in the T-2C. After transitioning to the F-14A he served his first fleet tour with VF-143. In 1988 he served as an adversary with the "Challengers" of VF-43, flying the F-16N, F-5E, and A-4E/F. In 1991 he returned to VF-101 the "Grim Reapers" for refresher training enroute to VF-14 for a Mediterranean deployment. He was then selected as the Maintenance officer for the East Coast F-14 FRS. In 1996 he reported to NAS Lemoore to transition to the F/A-18 Hornet. He met "The Fist of the Fleet" on their '96 WestPac, and took over as Commanding Officer in November 1997.