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Ser VFA25 00/

From: Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron 25  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (N09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR CY-2003

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12H

Encl: (1) VFA 25 Command History

1. Per reference (a), enclosure (1) is forwarded.

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D. H. B. BRASWELL

Command History 2003  
Strike Fighter Squadron 25  
"FIST OF THE FLEET"

1. Command Composition and Organization

Short title: STRKFITRON TWO FIVE, UIC: 09637

a. The mission of Strike Fighter Squadron 25 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 VFA-25 within that mission is to conduct offensive air-to-air and air-to-surface strike operations as directed by national command authority.

b. Immediate Senior Command: Commander, Carrier Air Wing 14  
CAPT Scott H. Swift, USN  
Jun 2003 - Present

c. Commanding Officer: CDR Craig A. Kauber, USN

d. Executive Officer: CDR Donald H. B. Braswell, USN

e. 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. Commander, Carrier Air Wing FOURTEEN (CVW-14), provides operational command. VFA-25 maintained twelve F/A-18C Hornets, carrying the tail code "NK". 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	164664	XIV
404	164642	XIV
405	164639	XIV
406	164654	XIV
407	164660	XIV
410	164676	XIV
411	164645	XIV
412	164262	XIII
413	164266	XIII

2. Squadron chronology for CY 2003

a. January

(1) Blue Water operations.

(2) Class Alpha Mishap - 17 January NK 403 (Aircraft departed runway on landing rollout).

(3) WESTERN PACIFIC 2003 (Operations SOUTHERN WATCH and IRAQI FREEDOM) onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72).

b. February

(1) Blue Water operations.

(2) WESTERN PACIFIC 2003 (Operations SOUTHERN WATCH and IRAQI FREEDOM) onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72).

c. March

(1) Blue Water operations.

(2) WESTERN PACIFIC 2003 (Operations SOUTHERN WATCH and IRAQI FREEDOM) onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72). 19 March began combat sorties for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

d. April

(1) Blue Water operations.

(2) WESTERN PACIFIC 2003 (Operations SOUTHERN WATCH and IRAQI FREEDOM) onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72).

(3) Last combat sortie flown on 12 April in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

e. May

(1) Blue Water operations/Pacific Transit.

(2) VFA-25 returns from 10 month Western Pacific/Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf deployment onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72) 2 May.

(3) Local training.

f. June

(1) Local training.

g. July

(1) Local training.

h. August

(1) Local training.

(2) Air to Air Missilex. Expended two AIM-7 Sparrows and one AIM-120 AMRAAM utilizing the Pacific Missile Test Range.

i. September

(1) Local training.

(2) Class Alpha Mishap - 5 September NK 413 (Aircraft landed 150 feet short of runway causing Class A damage to the aircraft).

(3) Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP) Detachment to Naval Air Station Fallon, 17 September - 11 October.

j. October

(1) Return from SFARP Detachment.

(2) Local training.

(3) Comprehensive Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) Detachment onboard USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN 74), 21 October - 23 November.

k. November

(1) Air to Air Missilex. Expended two AIM-9 Sidewinders utilizing the Pacific Missile Test Range.

(2) HARMEX. Expended one ATM-88.

(3) Return from COMPTUEX.

(4) Local training.

1. December

(1) Local training.

4. Narrative

a. In the winter of 2002, as the United States moved closer to a decisive action against Iraq, the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72) was heading homeward, having completed a six months WESTERN PACIFIC deployment supporting Operations ENDURING FREEDOM AND SOUTHERN WATCH in the skies above Afghanistan and Iraq. On January 1, CVN 72's Battle Group Commander announced that President Bush directed the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN to resume a state of battle readiness and return to the Persian Gulf, as the diplomatic situation with Iraq continued to deteriorate. Several days later, USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN anchored outside of Fremantle, Australia to conduct a much needed resurfacing of her flight deck. The following two weeks afforded the FIST OF THE FLEET the opportunity to conduct a coordinated training detachment with the Australian military at Pearce, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base. Additionally, the FIST enjoyed several days of time off in Perth and Fremantle. On January 17, one of the FIST F/A-18C jets had a class "A" NK 403 aircraft mishap occurred during this training detachment. On January 20, the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN departed Australia arriving in the Persian Gulf one week later. As the prospect of hostilities with Iraq became ever more imminent, VFA-25 and the rest of the Air Wing FOURTEEN conducted daily activities in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH.

b. On March 20, during President Bush's 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein's regime, the FIST OF THE FLEET awoke to the knowledge that Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles had been dispatched to Baghdad and hostilities with Iraq had begun. Several aircrew of VFA-25 flew missions over Baghdad on the first night "Shock and Awe" of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, successfully striking targets of strategic and tactical importance. Throughout the duration of USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN participation in the effort to liberate Iraq from the Ba'ath Party, the FIST proved their unequalled skills and professionalism. Beginning of March 19 and ending April 12, VFA-25 averaged a daily combat sortie count of 20. These 272 combat sorties accounted for more than 850 hours flown and more than 300,000 pounds of ordnance dropped. On April 16, the FIST OF THE FLEET and the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN BATTLE GROUP departed the Persian Gulf for home. After a brief one-day stopover in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN continued homeward. As CVN 72 neared San Diego,

California, President Bush joined the crew on the flight deck to welcome Sailors home and to congratulate them on a "job well done." The FIST returned to their homeport at NAS Lemoore, California on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

c. During the next few months, the squadron received several new members and conducted local training at NAS Lemoore, California. On September 5, VFA-25 suffered its second Class "A" of the year when aircraft NK 413 was lost due to a material malfunction while on a routine training exercise onboard NAS Lemoore, California.

d. On September 17, the FIST OF THE FLEET detached to NAS Fallon, Nevada with 10 F/A-18C aircraft for three weeks of intensive training at Strike Fighter Advance Readiness Program (SFARP). On November 3, the FIST embarked on the USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN 74) as the carrier conducted Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPUTEX). After, completing a series of challenging battle scenarios, the FIST returned to their homeport on November 21, where the men and women of VFA-25 would complete an eventful and memorable year. During calendar year 2003, VFA-25 flew 2332 sorties totaling 3715.3 flight hours with 1232 carrier-arrested landings.