

1970



**CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON
ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN
FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96601**

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From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-05D2)
Subj: Command History for Calendar Year 1976 (OPNAV REPORT 5750-1)
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12 (series)
Encl: (1) VAW-116 Command History for 1976

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.


D. D. GINGLES

Copy to:
CINCPACFLT
Director of Naval History (Op-09B9)

Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN (VAW-116) is a four plane, Airborne Early Warning (AEW) Squadron under the operational control of Commander Carrier Air Wing EIGHT. VAW-116 reports also to the functional wing commander, Commander Fighter Airborne Early Warning Wing, U. S. Pacific Fleet (COMFITAEEWWINGPAC), and is within the fleet structure of Commander Naval Air Force, U. S. Pacific Fleet (COMNAVAIRPAC).

VAW-116 operates the five-place, twin turboprop E-2B "Hawkeye" which is capable of both shore and carrier based operations. The E-2B is 56 feet long, has an 81 foot wing span, and weighs 51,000 pounds when operationally loaded. Its most distinguished physical characteristics are four vertical stabilizers and a 24 foot diameter, dish-shaped rotodome mounted 6 feet above the fuselage. This rotodome contains the high powered search radar antenna. The interior of the aircraft is fully pressurized and is divided into four sections: the cockpit, the forward equipment compartment, the CIC (Combat Information Center) compartment, and the aft equipment compartment.

Accounting for most of the \$20,000,000 + cost of the E-2B is the Airborne Tactical Data System. Containing the majority of the "Hawkeye's" electronics, this system includes the long range, million watt radar, IFF detection equipment, data processing and display systems, and an in-flight performance monitor. This highly integrated system, when coupled with a skilled crew, becomes in effect a complete airborne CIC capable of controlling an entire carrier launched strike -- under all weather conditions, day or night.

The crew consists of five members -- four officers and one highly trained enlisted flight technician. Two pilots are tasked with ensuring the safe and orderly conduct of the flight, which includes the launching and recovery of one of the navy's largest carrier based aircraft. The three remaining crewmen occupy the CIC compartment in three distinct stations arranged fore and aft. The Mission Commander is the CICO (Combat Information Center Officer) whose primary duty is to direct and monitor the ATDS system while being responsible for the success of assigned missions. He is assisted by the ACO (Air Control Officer), a Naval Flight Officer like himself, whose duty is the control of assigned tactical aircraft. The final crewmember, the flight technician, is an Aviation Electronics Technician responsible for in-flight maintenance and operation of the more than six tons of electronic equipment onboard the E-2B. He has a secondary task of assisting the CICO with the tactical

problem since his position has a fully operational display console.

This highly skilled crew, when working as a coordinated team, can perform the following missions:

1. Airborne Early Warning (AEW), the detection of unknown air contacts closing the Task Force.
2. Tactical aircraft intercept control (AIC).
3. Strike flight following/control.
4. Surface/subsurface surveillance coordination (SSSC).
5. Helicopter control.
6. Aerial mining control
7. Tactical reconnaissance aircraft control.
8. Secondary approach control for carrier aircraft.
9. Communications relay (automatic and manual).
10. Airborne search and rescue coordination (SAR).

1976 NARRATIVE

After the Christmas/New Year holiday season and its opportunities for leave and relaxation, VAW-116 resumed its preparation for deployment to the Mediterranean in July aboard the USS NIMITZ. The entire year's activity was to be concerned with increasing squadron proficiency and aircraft readiness both in the pre-deployment months and during the cruise itself. The year proved to be active indeed. The Sun Kings spent less than three months at their home base of NAS Miramar and flew more than 2,000 hours.

After heavy FCLP periods at NAS Miramar, VAW-116's four E-2Bs left for Norfolk and a NIMITZ carrier qualification period on 14 January. The CQ period was marked by adverse cold weather conditions not normally experienced by the squadron yet aircraft availability and landing grades were of high caliber. Returning to NAS Miramar on 21 January, the aircrews continued their extensive ground training before leaving San Diego for another cross country flight to NAS Norfolk and the NIMITZ on 26 January 1976.

The fly aboard the NIMITZ took place on 28 January and marked the start of Attack Carrier Air Wing EIGHT's and NIMITZ' formal training cycle for the upcoming deployment. The Refresher Training period lasted sixteen days during which VAW-116's missions were varied. In addition to participating in several AAWEXES, conducting AIC and SSSC, Sun Kings controlled a successful MISSILEX while operations took NIMITZ to the Caribbean. As the maintenance effort continued to keep aircraft airborne when required, aircrewmen were schooled in aircraft recognition, NATOPS procedures and CVW-8 TACNOTES when not flying.

NIMITZ returned to Norfolk Naval Station 13 February. The squadron remained at NAS Norfolk until the TYT-1 at sea period which commenced 23 February. Lasting until 4 March, the operations were an opportunity to continue the already significant aircrew training progress made during the earlier REFTRA period. Training was accomplished in all areas of Command and Control such as SSSC, MISSILEX/SHRIKEX and NIMITZ/CVW-8 AAWEX coordination. Sun King NFOs proved their AIC proficiency as they completed 108 manual and 50 Link 4A intercepts. Link 11 performance was improved and enhanced overall Sun King SSSC execution.

Returning to Norfolk on 4 March, the NIMITZ and her air wing put back to sea for TYT period 2 on 8 March. VAW-116 spent the in port interval at its increasingly familiar home away from home, NAS Norfolk. TYT2 lasted until 18 March and was noteworthy for its high paced tempo. VAW-116, in addition to the normal AIC and SSSC missions, conducted several SAREXES

and E-2 controlled CCAs during this period. The squadron had established a good rapport with NIMITZ CIC and continued to stress the importance of AAWEX coordination. All areas of squadron performance were tested during the ORE/TYT3 which started on 18 March as the NIMITZ stayed at sea. Sun Kings flew 29 sorties during the operations which ended 24 March and took the NIMITZ to the Virginia Capes and Jacksonville operating areas. Achieving an 82% two way Link 11 success rate, the round the clock maintenance effort proved fruitful despite parts availability problems and three flight deck crunches. The FSC rate remained high and was directly attributable to the "can do" attitude and leadership to be found in the Sun King maintenance department. The squadron returned to NAS Miramar 26 March after a two month absence filled with heavy flying. The ORE had been an exacting test with changing missions, rapid turnarounds and a four day around the clock flying phase. March was to be the highest month of the year for flight time as the squadron recorded 277.7 hours.

April was a time of emphasis on ground training, safety and human relations training. From 5 to 16 April the entire squadron was involved with Phase II Human Relations courses and devoted 2,060 man hours to this end. Flying received attention late in the month with an FCLP period from the 26th to 30th. NFOs studied tactics and utilized the E-2B Weapons System Trainer (WST) while the pilots were concerned with airmanship. During April the squadron had a full day safety standdown and a NATOPS unit evaluation by the Replacement Training Squadron (RVAW-110). Although only a grade of satisfactory/unsatisfactory is presented for a unit evaluation, RVAW-110 was very favorably impressed with the Sun King performance.

The 5th of May saw VAW-116 returning to NAS Norfolk for two days of Carrier Qualifications aboard NIMITZ prior to the start of exercise "Solid Shield." The exercise was a large scale concern with surface, subsurface, amphibious and air participants. Culminating with a Marine amphibious assault on the beaches of North Carolina, the operations simulated a multi-threat environment. VAW-116 was tasked primarily with SSSC missions in which the Sun Kings demonstrated their proficiency in detecting, reporting, birdogging, and prosecuting surface targets. With the upcoming Atlantic transit "in sight" the squadron pressed for more AAWEX/BEAREX scheduling. The squadron's E-2 safety awareness program paid dividends as potential "crunch" situations were avoided by V-1 and V-3 personnel. Another NIMITZ offload and trip back to San Diego took place on 20 May; the Sun Kings returned home for the last time in 1976.

Late May and early June were filled with preparations for the soon to take place Mediterranean deployment -- the first major cruise of the Nuclear powered NIMITZ. On 8 June at ceremonies aboard NAS Miramar, Commander Donald D. GINGLES relieved Commander Richard H. MARTIN to become the Sun King's tenth Commanding Officer. 14 through 22 June was spent in intensive FCLP activity as all squadron personnel made ready for the final trip eastward to Norfolk and ultimately, the Mediterranean. A squadron open house was held on 19 June and was most successful in explaining VAW-116's mission and the need for its deployment aboard NIMITZ.

The Sun Kings left for Norfolk on 23 June. From 28 June to 1 July VAW-116 participated in Nuclear Task Group operations aboard NIMITZ in conjunction with USS CALIFORNIA (CGN-35) and USS SOUTH CAROLINA (CGN-37). Missions included AEW, AIC, MISSILEX, SSSC and ALPHA STRIKES as NIMITZ worked closely with the two cruisers which were to accompany her throughout the Mediterranean cruise.

Following a squadron party and softball game on 4 July, VAW-116 set sail aboard NIMITZ 7 July. Flight operations began the afternoon of departure and continued every day and most of the nights of the eleven day Atlantic transit. Flying in a "blue water," no divert situation, the Sun Kings logged more than 130 hours prior to reaching Tangier, Morocco on the 17th. Much of the activity was spurred by the possibility of overflights by Russian "Bear" reconnaissance aircraft. VAW-116 was instrumental in detecting, reporting and controlling the intercept of 2 Bear aircraft on 15 July. The Russian planes had been in the NIMITZ' area for two days prior to the overflight on the 15th but had been unsuccessful in locating the carrier. Extensive EMCON operations increased NIMITZ' reliance upon the airborne E-2B.

The three day port call at Tangier marked the first carrier visit of the African city in over a decade. Representatives of VAW-123 from USS SARATOGA came aboard NIMITZ for briefings with VAW-116 as part of NIMITZ' relief of SARATOGA. Sun Kings took advantage of sunny weather by exploring the streets and shops of Tangier and taking tours to the Moroccan countryside.

Underway on 20 July, NIMITZ glided past the Rock of Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean. Originally scheduled for operations in the Western Mediterranean, on 22 July NIMITZ was directed to take station in the Eastern Mediterranean as American lives and property were threatened by the civil strife in Lebanon. NIMITZ arrived in Naples, Italy on 29 July, marking the first of many in port periods there during the cruise. The 20 to 28 July line period tasking for VAW-116 was primarily in areas

of SSSC and AIC. Several newly arrived NFOs and pilots sharpened their flight skills as they flew in the daily cyclic operations. SSSC tactics were improved by the Sun Kings demonstrating to NIMITZ that assigned search sectors could be more effectively sanitized with fewer, rather than more, assigned aircraft.

NIMITZ left Naples on 1 August for eight days of operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. VAW-116 provided range surveillance for a MISSILEX on the NAMFI range north of Crete on 5 and 6 August and took part in the ship wide safety standdown on the 7th and 8th. NIMITZ held a three day port call at Taranto, Italy, commencing on 9 August.

Taranto provided interesting liberty for the men of VAW-116 before they departed on 12 August for 16 days of operations. Lieutenant Commander "Matt" MATHESON reported for duty on 15 August as the new Sun King Executive Officer. In addition to normal cyclic operations, VAW-116 took part in an airshow for the King and Queen of Spain on 19 August. NIMITZ received uncommon attention from the European press and public throughout the cruise and the Sun King ready room became the scene of tours and briefings at all ports of call.

During a two day training anchorage at Souda Bay, Crete, Captain Richard T. GASKILL relieved Captain Bryan W. COMPTON of command of the NIMITZ on 21 August. 22 August was concerned with briefings for the upcoming National Week XXI Exercise, which took place 24 through 26 August east of Sicily. During the three days of intense activity, Sun Kings logged 52.6 hours with mission tasking being mostly SSSC. The SIXTH Fleet exercise involved more than 20 ships, including NIMITZ and AMERICA. August ended as NIMITZ and the Sun Kings returned to Naples on the 28th for a 7 day in port period. A most successful Sun King party was held 1 September at Carney Park on the outskirts of Naples.

Underway on 4 September, one Sun King aircraft and four pilots flew to NAF Sigonella, Sicily for FCLP and subsequent carrier qualification aboard NIMITZ on 7 September. During cyclic operations on the night of 6 September a squadron E-2B made a successful single engine divert to Sigonella, returning back aboard in an up status on 8 September. AAWEXES were conducted on 10 and 11 September and complimented aircrew training while proving that the E-2 is an essential asset in the detection of low flying raids.

Returning to Naples on 14 September, the men of VAW-116 enjoyed the diverse shopping, sightseeing and beachcombing opportunities in the Naples area as many of them visited the nearby islands of Capri and Ischia or the ruins of Pompeii. NIMITZ left port on 27 September and conducted 4 days of flight operations while transiting the Western Mediterranean enroute to Gibraltar. Arriving at the British Crown Colony on 1 October, VAW-116 spent the two best liberty days of the cruise in splendid weather by visiting Gibraltar's crowded pubs, climbing the fabled Rock and swapping stories with the English speaking citizenry.

When NIMITZ left Gibraltar on 3 October she commenced her participation in Exercise Display Determination. The exercise was the most dramatic and expansive of the cruise as a 80 ship, multi-national force made a sweep of the Mediterranean from the Straits of Gibraltar to Eastern Turkey. The force included 4 aircraft carriers; in addition to the NIMITZ and AMERICA, HMS ARK ROYAL and the French Navy's CLEMENCEAU conducted air operations. Display Determination was the operational high point of the cruise for VAW-116. Sun Kings flew 79.5 mission hours in 8 days with a Fully Mission Capable rate of 96.4%. Two-way Link 11 was achieved during 84.6% of the scheduled Link hours. The squadron was commended by the Air Wing Commander and gained pride in knowing it had ably responded to the many challenges of the exercise. Results of the August advancement in rate exams arrived and further enhanced the squadron's reputation by indicating that every Sun King participant had passed his test.

NIMITZ anchored in Tunis, Tunisia on 14 October for a 5 day visit. Many Sun Kings took guided tours of the city or nearby villages where they found the shopping excellent and Arabic culture to be different and worthy of a different tour on the following day.

NIMITZ left Tunis on 19 October for 12 days at sea before returning to its Mediterranean "home port" of Naples on 1 November. October's 204.7 flight hours were a cruise high for the Sun Kings. The at sea period between Tunis and Naples was highlighted by a MISSILEX at the Salto De Quirra Range held on 27 October. The squadron continued the reliable performance it had provided to the NIMITZ/CVW-8 team earlier in the month.

1 through 16 November was the longest in port period of the cruise. At this juncture, Naples and its environs were fairly familiar to most of the squadron. Fortunately, the

lengthy time in port permitted many Sun Kings to travel throughout Italy and much of Europe. Photographs of Rome, Munich, and Paris graced many a scrapbook.

The in port period was not without operational flying. On 6 November a VAW-116 E-2B launched from NIMITZ at anchor in Naples Bay. Its destination was Royal Air Force Station Lossiemouth, Scotland. Part of a four plane CVW-8 contingent, the Sun Kings were to play a leading role in North Sea operations off the Northern and Eastern coasts of Scotland. Entitled Joint Maritime Course 764, the operational training included units of the British, American, West German, Canadian and Norwegian Air Forces in addition to air and surface units from the British, American, Norwegian and Dutch Navies. VAW-116 recorded 27.7 flight hours in five days of operations. Providing AEW and interceptor control, the Sun Kings proved to be an essential element of fleet defense for the NATO naval units as they resisted simulated attacks from shore based tactical aircraft.

The trip to Lossiemouth was a chance to see some old friends for many Sun Kings. The squadron's aircrew and supporting maintenance detachment were hosted by Squadron 849 of the British Royal Navy. Several 849 officers had been in the ongoing exchange program between their squadron and RVAW-110 at NAS Miramar and therefore knew most of the Sun Kings. The British were able hosts and made the visit a memorable one.

In Naples on 13 November, the NIMITZ put to sea as part of an open house for hundreds of NATO and civilian guests. A Sun King E-2B was first to launch in a CVW-8 air show held prior to returning to port that afternoon.

NIMITZ was underway again on 17 November for eight days of flight operations in the Western Mediterranean. The Sun King aircraft which had been in Scotland trapped back aboard on 21 November. The following day marked the start of a continuous 48 hour flying period for the air wing before returning to Naples on 25 November. After spending Thanksgiving in port, the squadron left Naples aboard NIMITZ on 29 November for operations in the Western Mediterranean.

Exercise "Lafayette-76" took place on 2 and 3 December. VAW-116 provided strike control as CVW-8 aircraft probed the air defense system of Southeastern France. NIMITZ returned once again to Naples on 5 December for a ten day port call.

The in port period was an active time for VAW-116. An in depth Administrative Inspection of the squadron was conducted by VAQ-130 from 8 through 11 December. The results were most satisfactory, indicating strict adherence to established procedures and instructions in all phases of squadron activity.

On 10 December one Sun King aircraft and four pilots flew to NAF Sigonella for FCLP work and returned to NIMITZ during her next at sea period on 16 December.

Word was received 14 December that VAW-116 had placed first in its category in the 1976 San Diego Combined Federal Campaign. A plaque from the Commander Fighter Airborne Early Warning Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet was received and placed in the ready room in recognition of the Sun Kings leading their division of twelve San Diego based squadrons.

NIMITZ left Naples on 15 December. Flight operations began that afternoon as the carrier reached an operating area Southeast of Sicily. From 0700 on 19 December to 1900 on the 20th, CVW-8 conducted continuous air operations. VAW-116 logged 43.8 hours in this 36 hour span. Mission tasking consisted of primarily AIC and SSSC. Coordination between Sun King E-2s and the NIMITZ CIC continued to produce solid results.

The squadron returned to Naples for the last time in 1976 on 23 December. A video tape from squadron families in San Diego was seen in the ready room that night and helped make the Christmas away from loved ones bearable. Christmas day was a time for opening gifts and sharing thoughts of home.

A safety standdown was held 29 December. VAW-116 observed the ending of 1976 aboard NIMITZ in Naples Bay. As fireworks and horns ushered in 1977, the squadron prepared for the next line period and looked forward to the end of the cruise and return to San Diego in February.

1976 FLIGHT DATA

COMMAND HISTORY FLIGHT DATA

LAND

<u>AIRCRAFT HRS</u>	<u>PILOT HRS</u>	<u>LAND FLIGHTS</u>	<u>FIELD LANDINGS</u>	<u>FCLPS</u>
DAY 364.4	DAY 728.8	DAY 110	DAY 219	DAY 452
NIGHT 75.6	NIGHT 171.2	NIGHT 34	NIGHT 75	NIGHT 344
TOTAL 440.0	TOTAL 880.0	TOTAL 144	TOTAL 294	TOTAL 796

SHIP

<u>AIRCRAFT HRS</u>	<u>PILOT HRS</u>	<u>FLIGHTS</u>	<u>ARRESTMENTS</u>	<u>BOLTERS</u>	<u>TOUCH & GOS</u>
DAY 1114.5	DAY 2229.0	DAY 338	DAY 396	DAY 33	DAY 27
NIGHT 498.0	NIGHT 996.0	NIGHT 198	NIGHT 215	NIGHT 30	NIGHT 0
TOTAL 1612.5	TOTAL 3225.0	TOTAL 536	TOTAL 611	TOTAL 63	TOTAL 27

SHIP AND LAND

<u>FLIGHTS</u>	<u>LANDINGS</u>	<u>AIRCRAFT HRS</u>
DAY 448	DAY 615	DAY 1478.9
NIGHT 232	NIGHT 290	NIGHT 573.6
TOTAL 680	TOTAL 905	TOTAL 2052.5

1976 was a year filled with achievement for VAW-116. The squadron spent nine months at sea, flying over two thousand hours. The many cross country moves between San Diego and Norfolk were executed without incident. The maiden cruise of the NIMITZ to the Mediterranean provided a multitude of operational challenges and the opportunity for Sun Kings to visit much of Europe. The Sun King tradition of excellence was reaffirmed and enriched throughout the squadron's ninth year of existence.

