



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE
FPO NEW YORK 09601

3-22-85

DECLASSIFIED

IN REPLY REFER TO:
5753
Ser 10/ **C4**
11 MAR 1985

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ - Unclassified upon removal of enclosures (2) through (4)

From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 121
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)

Subj: SUBMISSION OF COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) Command History

- (2) Periodic Operating Reports 1 December 1983 - 19 July 1984
- (3) Periodic Operating Reports 20 July - 10 October 1984
- (4) Periodic Operating Reports 10 October 1984 - 1 January 1985

1. Enclosure (1) contains the Command History from 1 January to 31 December 1984 as required by reference (a), with the exception of the chronology and narrative.

2. Enclosures (2) through (4) are squadron Periodic Operating Reports for the period 1 January to 31 December 1984 and are submitted in accordance with reference (a) to reduce duplication of effort.

J. L. Roberts
J. L. ROBERTS

Copy to:
Director of Naval History

Reg # R 008029032
Layser

DECLASSIFIED

Classified by: COS, COMNAVAIRLANT (Code 01)
Declassify on: 1 JAN 91

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

VAW-121 BLUETAILS

Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE (VAW-121) traces its origin, along with all other VAW squadrons, to Project Cadillac which was initiated in 1942 as a method of providing airborne radar relay platforms. By June 1945 the first group of extensively modified Carrier Airborne Early Warning (AEW) TBM-3W AVENGERS was conducting trials onboard USS RANGER (CV 61). The war ended before the first AEW units could see action; however, Fleet Aviation Electronics Training Units (FAETU's) were established on both coasts and continued to train pilots, operators, and maintenance personnel on AEW equipment. VAW-1 on the West Coast and VAW-2 on the East Coast were formed to replace the FAETU's in July 1948. Barely a year later VAW-2 was redesignated VC-12 and relocated to Quonset Point, Rhode Island. The TBM-3W was replaced with the AD-3W SKYRAIDER, or "Guppy Spad", beginning in 1948. When the Korean War began in 1950 VC-12 was fully outfitted with the AD-3W's. During the course of the war VC-12 provided additional aid to VC-11 by sending detachments to deploy on West Coast carriers bound for Korea.

Following the Korean War, VC-12 continued to operate an improved version of the "Guppy Spad", the AD-5W, until 1960 when they were traded for the new WF-2 TRACER (Willy Fudd), later redesignated as the E-1B. The squadron was redesignated VAW-12 in 1960 and relocated from Quonset Point, Rhode Island, to NAS Norfolk, Virginia in April 1962.

In 1966 the first E-2A for the East Coast arrived and in 1967 the Chief of Naval Operations directed that separate squadrons be formed out of VAW-12 under the cognizance of a functional wing. On April 1, 1967 the simultaneous creation of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Wing TWELVE, RVAW-120, VAW-121, VAW-122, and VAW-123 occurred. VAW-121 continued to operate the E-1B in detachments on numerous carriers until the last detachment was disestablished in 1973. VAW-121 deployed exclusively on USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVA-42) as the sole remaining Fleet E-1B squadron from 1973 through 1975. When VAW-121 gave up E-1B's in 1975, the squadron made the transition from the oldest AEW aircraft in the Navy's inventory, to the newest, the E-2C HAWKEYE incorporating the new Advanced Radar Processing System (ARPS).

VAW-121 deployed aboard the newly commissioned USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69) in January 1978 and became the first E-2C ARPS squadron to operate from a carrier. From January through July 1979 VAW-121 made the first E-2C ARPS squadron overseas deployment where the Bluetails set records for the E-2C which established VAW-121's reputation for superior performance throughout the fleet. In recognition of this superior performance, VAW-121 was awarded the Fleet Battle Efficiency "E" for 1979, as well as the 1979 Airborne Early Warning Excellence Award and the CNO Aviation Safety "S". From April to December 1980 the Battle "E" Bluetails again deployed aboard IKE to the Indian Ocean. During the eight and one-half month deployment, the squadron set new monthly, quarterly and annual flight hour records for the E-2 community and was again recognized for outstanding performance with their second consecutive Battle Efficiency "E" for 1980 as well as the 1980 AEW Excellence Award and the 1980 CNO Aviation Safety "S".

Following a six week turnaround VAW-121 deployed to Keflavik, Iceland, from February to May 1981 operating in support of the Icelandic Defense Force to detect, track, and intercept unknown aircraft approaching Iceland.

Following their return from Iceland and workups that summer, VAW-121 and IKE deployed to the North Atlantic for the largest NATO exercise in over twenty years. During OCEAN VENTURE/MAGIC SWORD/OCEAN SAFARI, VAW-121 set new community records by flying over 630 hours in thirty days and keeping aircraft continuously aloft for 23 days during that period. The Bluetails returned to the Mediterranean Sea in January 1982 and garnered an unprecedented third

consecutive Battle "E" and AEW Excellence Award's, both firsts for a VAW squadron. Returning from the deployment, during which the Bluetails were involved in everything from joint NATO exercises to overseeing the evacuation of Americans from Beirut, Lebanon, the Bluetails enjoyed a short post deployment standdown before participating in Operation Thunderbolt, working with the U.S. Customs Service to stem the flow of drugs into the United States.

The 1983 Med deployment was one of the most rigorous in the squadron's history. It included contingency operations near Libya and several multinational exercises including BRIGHT STAR, DISTANT DRUM, and DISPLAY DETERMINATION. At one point, the Bluetails spent 95 consecutive days at sea off of the coast of Lebanon when conflicts in that small troubled nation were at a peak.

Following the squadron's return to Norfolk in December 1983 the Bluetails commenced a turnaround cycle punctuated with numerous operational commitments and training exercises. Refresher training commenced in early May to prepare the squadron for an extended Mediterranean deployment.

VAW-121 commenced the Mediterranean deployment October 10, 1984 which proved to be a return to the more traditional Mediterranean operating schedule. With relative peace throughout the region, the EISENHOWER Battle Group participated in several exercises including NATIONAL WEEK XXXIII, DASIX, and other Battle Group exercises. Operating periods for the deployment were relatively short with emphasis on maximum training while at sea. Throughout the period VAW-121 was able to continue a tradition of aviation excellence and safety by winning the CVW-7 Golden Tailhook twice and extending its safety record to 18 years, third best in carrier aviation.