

**CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON 121
2002 HISTORY**

MISSION: To safely train professionals in order to provide Airborne Early Warning and Command/Control to the Battle Group Commander in support of National Command Directives.

COMMAND: VAW 121

UIC: 09467

ORGANIZATION: Commanded by Airborne Early Warning Wing Atlantic, attached to Carrier Air Wing Seven onboard the USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)

COMMANDERS: Commanding Officer CDR Thomas J. Quinn, USN
Executive Officer CDR Timothy J. Block, USN

LOCATION: NAS Norfolk, Virginia

AIRCRAFT: E-2C Hawkeye Group II

TAILCODE/BUNO: 600/163538
601/163694
602/163697
603/163539

CHRONOLOGY

January

07-18 FCLPs
20-23 JTFEX Phase I
24-28 FCLPs
29-30 CQ Det, USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73)

February

04 FCLP
04-06 Early Det to USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)
08 1st A/C to USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)
10 Last 3 A/C to USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)
11-15 JTFEX Phase II
15-22 Translant - No flying
23-28 Operation Enduring Freedom, USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)

March

01-31 Operation Enduring Freedom, USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)

April
01-30 Operation Enduring Freedom, USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)

May
01-31 Operation Enduring Freedom, USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)

June
01-30 Operation Enduring Freedom, USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)

July
01-31 Operation Enduring Freedom, USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)

August
01-14 Translant
15-31 Post-Cruise Stand-down

September
20-30 AIC Det Key West

October
01-31 JTFEX 03-1, Gomaine/Vacapes Linkex, AIC Det Key West

November
01-16 AIC Det Key West
21-26 FCLP Periods

December
03-13 CQ Det, USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67)

NARRATIVE

The VAW 121 Bluetails have proven themselves as Atlantic Fleet's most battle ready squadron. Preparing for their 2002 deployment, the Bluetails led the community in developing the most tactically challenging and up to date training program in the E-2C Hawkeye community. Although VAW 121 was challenged with supporting real world contingency operations during an already compressed Inter-Deployment Training Cycle (IDTC), they ensured flawless mission execution through creative scheduling, aggressive aircrew and aircraft management, and a "can do" attitude.

While on deployment, the Bluetails demonstrated flexibility and tactical prowess by executing long range Airborne Battlefield Command and Control (ABC2) coverage in Afghanistan. Through effective use of the E-2C's weapon system, VAW 121 proved the Hawkeye's ability to manage the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) theatre's Command and Control (C2) requirement. Furthermore, the Bluetails demonstrated to senior OEF leadership the E-2C's ability to support both the Combined Force Air Component Commander (CFACC) and the Combined Force Land Component Commander (CFLCC). As a result, the Hawkeye was fully integrated into OEF Airborne Early Warning (AEW) and ABC2 missions, reflecting the superior efforts of VAW 121 Bluetails.

1. Contributions to Weapons System Development:

a. VAW 121 led the fleet in research and utilization of the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) Time Of Day (TOD) for HAVEQUICK initialization. Modification and testing of this transition proved successful in the Hawkeye's ARC-182 Radios. Moreover, the Rapid Action Minor Engineering Change (RAMEC) proposal was initiated during the Bluetail's 2002 deployment and is currently awaiting approval at NAVAIR.

b. The Bluetails conducted the first Central Command (CENTCOM) Theater overland test and evaluation of the HOOK 112 Suitcase Interrogator System. This demonstrated the Hawkeye's effectiveness as the primary overland Airborne Mission Commander (AMC) for the Joint Search and Rescue Center (JSRC).

2. Contributions to Tactics Development and Training:

a. While onboard USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67) for Tailored Ships Training Availability (TSTA) III and COMPOSITE TRAINING UNIT EXERCISE (COMPTUEX), VAW 121 improved the standard for which GPS is used for integral strike planning. In a combined effort with US SPACECOM, the Bluetails ensured that the Battle Group utilized GPS to its utmost for more accurate overland precision strike planning.

b. VAW 121 executed a training program focused on timely academic and simulator training prior to specific training and operational evolutions. Specifically, the Bluetails conducted Tactics Stand-downs to give aircrew

dedicated time for tactical lectures and discussions during consecutive no-fly days.

c. As the Air Wing lead and Battle Group liaison for Battle Group Air Defense, the Bluetails lead five Air Defense (AD) planning teams comprised of members of the Air Wing. Each team was led by a cruise experienced Bluetail, responsible for Air Wing integration, planning, execution and debriefing of air defense. As predicted by the Bluetails, the benefits of this setup were improved Air Wing communication and overall AD effectiveness.

d. To enhance Battle Group Air Defense (BGAD) performance, the Bluetails instituted an Air Defense round table to facilitate Air Wing integration, Operations Specialist (OS) AIC currency and performance, data link configuration, and overall BGAD performance. The round table discussion resulted in significant improvements in Air Wing and Battle Group integration

e. Carrier Air Wing Seven (CVW 7) assigned Subject Matter Expert (SME) teams to work out standardization issues within the Battle Group. As the Air Wing Command and Control (C2) SME lead, the Bluetails standardized tactical employment of Link-4, HAVEQUICK, secure voice, and surveillance data link procedures.

f. In 2002, the Bluetails established a community standard by researching, planning, and executing dedicated Unit Level Training (ULT) flights. During VAW 121's Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP) detachment at NAS Fallon, Nevada, the Bluetails worked alongside Naval Air Warfare Center (NAWC) Lear Jets equipped with various pods and internal systems. Additionally, VAW 121 conducted dedicated overland detection/tracking and Combat Identification (CID) flights outside of its established training evolutions.

g. VAW 121 took charge of the Air Wing Communication Security Material Systems (CMS) program, to include the overall training of Air Wing CMS custodians and users. Moreover, the Bluetails acted as the direct liaison with USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67) communications and CMS personal for a smooth, timely and accurate transfer of codes from the carrier to air wing aircraft.

h. Throughout 2002, the Bluetails provided Airborne Early Warning (AEW) and range clearance for every USS JOHN F. KENNEDY Battle Group (JFKBATGRU) and CVW 7 missile exercise (Missilex). Bluetail support of these exercises maximized realistic training opportunities, thereby increasing Air Wing and Battle Group readiness.

i. VAW 121 provided CVW 7 five competent BRAVO PAPA (BP) watch standers throughout its IDTC and combat deployment in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. In this capacity, Bluetail tactical expertise contributed significantly to assisting the Strike Warfare Commander in executing time-sensitive targeting missions and airborne asset coordination during OEF.

j. The Bluetails were selected by CARRIER GROUP SIX (CCG 6) to provide five aviators and one intelligence officer to act as liaison to the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) in Saudi Arabia during OEF. Each of the officers provided coordination and expert advice in developing sound Air Tasking Orders (ATOs) and Special Instructions (SPINS). Thus, the Bluetails helped ensure effective execution of air operations over Afghanistan in support of the Joint Force Land Component Commander (JFLCC).

k. Bluetail Weapon System Trainer (WST) use was amongst the highest in the Atlantic Fleet, which led to higher T-ratings and aircrew proficiency. Additionally, VAW 121 has designed new Air Intercept Control (AIC) simulations that provide more realistic demonstration of fighter tactics and employment. Bluetail simulations and supporting documents were available for all Atlantic Fleet squadron use.

3. Contributions to the Airborne Early Warning (VAW) Community:

a. The Bluetails rewrote the Carrier Based AEW Training Syllabus (CBATS) to produce a curriculum that was relevant, current and based on standard Navy tactical publications and doctrines. The revised syllabus was adopted by the Bluetails during the early summer and was later adopted by AEWWINGLANT and AEWWINGPAC as the E-2C community standard (CBATS Version 3).

b. In support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, VAW 121 flew 525 combat sorties and more than 2100 hours, with a 97% sortie completion rate.

(1) VAW 121 was the first E-2C squadron to execute extended, long range AEW/ABC2 coverage in "AEW NORTH" from "RAVENS STATION" Afghanistan via forward air refueling post (FARP) Jacobabad, Pakistan.

(2) The Bluetails further demonstrated the Hawkeye's flexibility by establishing PANTHERS, an alternate E-2C station, thereby providing AEW/ABC2 coverage in central and western Afghanistan.

(3) VAW 121 helped to establish the E-2C as a significant resource for both the CFLCC and CFACC. Additionally, the Bluetails became a recognized ABC2 asset through effective inputs at theater Tactics Review Boards, C2, Link, and ABC2 conferences.

(4) In 2002, the Bluetails institutionalized E-2C ABC2 tactics and procedures as the required mission standard for all theater airborne C2 platforms.

(5) The Bluetails acted as AMC for the first two overland Joint Search and Rescue Coordinator (JSRC) Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) exercises during OEF.

(6) VAW 121 was the first squadron to coordinate and conduct fixed wing aircraft suitability evaluations of divert fields/FARPs in the OEF theater, specifically Pasni and Jacobabad, Pakistan.

(7) Bluetail aircrews coordinated two War-at-Sea Exercises (WASEX) in the North Arabian Sea with CARRIER GROUP SIX and other coalition warships.

c. Throughout 2002, VAW 121 executed an aggressive professional development exchange program for junior officers. Every Bluetail junior officer participated in an exchange with either VRC 40, JFKBATGRU units, or other coalition surface combatants. Other VAW 121 junior officers were liaisons to the Combined Air Operations Cell (CAOC), or participated in theater conferences/exercises. In all, Bluetails gained invaluable experience through more than 30 professional exchanges.

d. The Bluetails sent three experienced aircrew to the Training Advisory Group (TAG) to participate in the discussions on Air Combat Training Continuum (ACTC) implementation. VAW 121's aggressive training program and training philosophy provided valuable input to the Hawkeye community's execution of ACTC.

e. VAW 121 successfully promoted the E-2C community and the Navy when it scheduled a combat camera crew and USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67) photographers to document BLUETAILS IN ACTION. These photos are featured throughout the Navy's official Web Site (www.navy.mil) and in the E-2C Fact File (www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/factfile/aircraft/air-e2c.html).