

Page 123029

VAW-123  
1972

CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON  
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE  
FPO NEW YORK 09501

VAW-123/ADMIN/bah  
5700  
Ser: 98  
11 FEB 1973

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[REDACTED] (Unclassified upon removal of annex (1) of enclosure (1).)

From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE  
HUNDRED TWENTY THREE (VAW-123)

To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)

Subj: Command History; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAV INST 5750.12A

Encl: (1) Command History

1. In accordance with reference (a), Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE's Command History for calendar year 1972 is hereby submitted.

*J. D. Larison, Jr.*  
J. D. LARISON, JR.

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

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**DECLASSIFIED** CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON  
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE  
FPO NEW YORK 09501

**COMMAND HISTORY  
1972**

**CONTENTS**

**CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS**

**BASIC NARRATIVE**

**DOCUMENTARY ANNEXES**

1. Periodic Operating Reports
2. Commanding Officer's Photo and Biography
3. Executive Officer's Photo and Biography
4. Officer Roster
5. Enlisted Roster
6. Familygrams

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**Enclosure (1)**

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SUMMARY OF EVENTS  
1 JAN 72 - 31 DEC 72

1 JAN - 2 MAR - - - - - SHORE-BASED NAS NORFOLK, VA.

3 JAN - 7 JAN - - - - - PROVIDED ATDS SUPPORT FOR  
EXERCISE "BLUE AX".

22 FEB - 2 MAR- - - - - SARATOGA/CVW-3 CONDUCTED TYT-1 IN  
JAX OPAREA. SQUADRON REMAINED  
ASHORE DUE TO LACK OF AIRCRAFT.

3 MAR - 6 MAR - - - - - ENROUTE NAVAL STATION, MAYPORT, FLA.

7 MAR - 16 MAR- - - - - EMBARKED IN SARATOGA FOR TYT-2  
CONDUCTING CYCLIC OPERATIONS IN  
JAX OPAREA.

17 MAR- - - - - DEPENDENT'S DAY CRUISE FROM NAVAL  
STATION MAYPORT.

18 MAR - 20 MAR - - - - - INPORT NAVAL STATION MAYPORT.

21 MAR - 30 MAR - - - - - CONDUCTED TYT-3/ORE IN JAX OPAREA.

31 MAR- - - - - DISEMBARKED SARATOGA/RETURNED NORVA  
FOR PRE-DEPLOYMENT POM.

1 APR - 10 APR- - - - - SHORE-BASED NAS NORFOLK, VIRGINIA.

8 APR - - - - - ALL AIRCRAFT GROUNDED FOR PROP  
CHANGE/EMERGENCY RECALL.

10 APR- - - - - CDR J. D. LARISON, JR. RELIEVED CDR  
G. G. DEBRODER AS COMMANDING OFFICER.

11 APR - 7 MAY- - - - - EMBARKED SARATOGA ENROUTE WESTPAC  
(CONDUCTING EXTENSIVE GROUND TRAIN-  
ING/PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE).

18 APR- - - - - CROSSED EQUATOR LAT 000:00 LONG 34.40W.

3 MAY - 14 MAY- - - - - FLEW ALL AIRCRAFT ASHORE NAS CUBI PT.,  
R. P. FOR FCLP/SYSTEMS READINESS.

15 MAY - 17 MAY - - - - - CONDUCTED TYPE TRAINING IN PHILIPPINE  
OPAREA.

18 MAY - 30 MAY - - - - - CONDUCTED COMBAT OPERATIONS IN SOUTH  
CHINA SEA SUPPORTING RVN IN SEIGE OF  
AN LOC AND KONTUM.

1 JUN - - - - - ENROUTE GULF OF TONKIN.

2 JUN - 21 JUN- - - - - CONDUCTED SPECIAL OPS YANKEE STATION.

7 JUN - - - - - COORDINATED RECOVERY OF RA5 CREW.  
 22 JUN- - - - - ENROUTE SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 23 JUN - 30 JUN - - - - - INPORT SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 30 JUN- - - - - ENROUTE YANKEE STATION.  
 1 JUL - 17 JUL- - - - - CONDUCTED SPECIAL OPS YANKEE STATION.  
 17 JUL- - - - - ENROUTE SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 18 JUL- - - - - INPORT SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 19 JUL- - - - - ENROUTE HONG KONG, B. C.  
 20 JUL - 26 JUL - - - - - INPORT HONG KONG/DEPENDENT'S VISIT.  
 27 JUL- - - - - ENROUTE YANKEE STATION.  
 28 JUL - 23 AUG - - - - - CONDUCTED SPECIAL OPS YANKEE STATION.  
 6 AUG - - - - - COORDINATED INLAND RESCUE OF A7 PILOT.  
 24 AUG- - - - - ENROUTE SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 25 AUG - 31 AUG - - - - - INPORT SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 1 SEP - 4 SEP - - - - - ENROUTE YANKEE STATION AVOIDING  
 TYPHOON ELSIE/MINIMAL CYCLIC OPS.  
 5 SEP - 20 SEP- - - - - CONDUCTED SPECIAL OPS YANKEE STATION.  
 20 SEP- - - - - ENROUTE SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 21 SEP - 27 SEP - - - - - INPORT SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 28 SEP- - - - - ENROUTE YANKEE STATION.  
 29 SEP - 21 OCT - - - - - CONDUCTED SPECIAL OPS YANKEE STATION.  
 3 OCT - 4 OCT - - - - - TYPHOON EVASION.  
 21 OCT- - - - - ENROUTE SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 22 OCT - 24 OCT - - - - - INPORT SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
 25 OCT - 27 OCT - - - - - ENROUTE SINGAPORE.  
 27 OCT - 3 NOV- - - - - INPORT SINGAPORE.  
 3 NOV - 4 NOV - - - - - ENROUTE YANKEE STATION.  
 5 NOV - 9 DEC - - - - - CONDUCTED SPECIAL OPS YANKEE STATION.  
 10 DEC- - - - - ENROUTE SUBIC BAY, R. P.

11 DEC - 16 DEC - - - - - INPORT SUBIC BAY, R. P.  
17 DEC- - - - - ENROUTE YANKEE STATION.  
18 DEC - 31 DEC - - - - - CONDUCTED SPECIAL OPS YANKEE  
STATION/SUPPORTED LINEBACKER II.

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS  
1 JAN 72 - 31 DEC 72

As the new year, 1972, arrived, VAW-123 found itself shore based at NAS NORFOLK. Time was dedicated to flight crew and personnel training in preparation for the upcoming embarked Typed Training scheduled for February. Also, from 3 January to 7 January, VAW-123 provided AEW coverage and LINK 11 coordination for exercise BLUE AX, a Marine Corps amphibious exercise held at Cherry Point, North Carolina. This joint exercise enabled the squadron to participate in ATDS, MTDS, and NTDS LINK 11 net operationally. As a result of late PAR deliveries and aircraft parts shortages the squadron was unable to participate in TYT-I.

On 7 March VAW-123 joined USS SARATOGA (CV60) and Carrier Air Wing THREE for pre-deployment work-up and Type Training II in preparation for the annual Operational Readiness Evaluation (ORE). VAW-123 was called upon to function in diverse missions. In addition to the primary missions of early warning and interceptor control, VAW-123 acted as primary control for air-to-air missile shoots, conducted "Hummer" controlled approaches, and coordinated a SINKEX involving a surveyed DD hull. Also, with the successful evaluation of the CV concept the previous year, the squadron was again responsible for SSSC and the control of CVW-3's S-2 and H-3 anti-submarine warfare assets. The capability and versatility of the E-2B weapons system - in the hands of experienced controllers - was again demonstrated, further embellishing VAW-123's reputation among her sister squadrons in the air wing and gaining her a grade of SATISFACTORY for the ORE. VAW-123 returned home to Norfolk on 31 March planning for a scheduled Mediterranean deployment in May. This was not to be, as world events were already changing USS SARATOGA's planned deployment and her ultimate involvement in the Vietnam conflict.

On 8 April VAW-123 received simultaneous E-2B grounding notice and emergency embarkation orders, but by 11 April was aboard USS SARATOGA intoto and enroute to WESTPAC. In a hastily arranged ceremony on the morning of 10 April, CDR J. D. LARISON, JR., relieved CDR GLEN G. DEBRODER as the squadron's sixth commanding officer. Between recovered shock and growing wonder, VAW-123 and USS SARATOGA headed southeast, and two weeks later rounded the tip of South Africa. Appropriate ceremonies were held in the domain of Neptunus Rex on 18 April wherein squadron members achieved the noble status of Shellback.

Throughout the ship activity quickened as the squadron increased their maintenance and training efforts. Mornings were spent in individual squadron training, while afternoons were occupied with air wing briefs over closed-circuit television. The latest operating procedures and Rules of Engagement for LINEBACKER I operations against North Vietnam were among the topics covered. VAW-123 flight crews reviewed the latest information on "Nighthawk" operations, PIRAZ procedures, bandit warnings, and "Waterloo" calls. Squadron personnel were utilized to brief the air wing on E-2 coordination during search and rescue missions for downed pilots. Attack squadrons were given the latest information from VAW-123 on what they could expect in navigation assistance and flight coordination to their coast-in-points and targets during armed reconnaissance missions. Updated information was given to the fighter squadrons on the LINK 4A command data link capability of the E-2B and F-4 team. Also, reciprocating briefs were exchanged between VAW-123 and the ship's Combat Information Center team on coordination between CIC and the airborne E-2. During this period VAW-123 devoted over 900 man-hours to training in

preparation for the months ahead. On 7 May USS SARATOGA arrived in the Philippine staging area for replenishment and refresher flight operations, and on the 18th of May VAW-123 entered into the Vietnam conflict for the second time since her commissioning.

During the arduous months that followed VAW-123 and USS SARATOGA spent 175 days on the line covering 7 different periods. The tempo of operations fluctuated dramatically throughout the cruise. From the break-neck pace of night cyclic armed recce and daytime ALPHA strikes, operations diminished to the "sit-and-wait" for a weather hold caused by the SEASIA monsoon season. Initially, while operating off of RVN during May, USS SARATOGA and CVW-3 were called upon to provide air support during the battle for An Loc. VAW-123 provided much-needed assistance in eliminating the confusing communications tangle with 7th AF and vectored strike aircraft directly to and from the Forward Air Controllers where they were most needed.

As USS SARATOGA moved north into the more hostile environment of NVN emphasis shifted to Alpha strikes, merchant ship surveillance, seeding operations, and route reconnaissance missions. As the missions became more hazardous, the air wing relied more-and-more on E-2 assistance during "tight" situations. Debriefings and reconnaissance photographs reinforced the highly accurate bombing capabilities of Air Wing THREE under combat conditions.

VAW-123 controllers were instrumental in the coordination of the successful rescue of an A-7 pilot who was downed by a SAM in the vicinity of Vinh. After more than five dramatic hours on the ground the pilot was plucked unscathed from 17 miles inside hostile territory and returned to USS SARATOGA.

The month of July was highlighted by USS SARATOGA's visit to Hong Kong, B. C. The worldly, cosmopolitan atmosphere of Hong Kong contrasted greatly to the routine liberty in Olongapo City, R. P. Several of the officers and men took advantage of the opportunity to bring their wives half-way around the world for a memorable vacation. Later, in October, USS SARATOGA visited Singapore. The exciting visit was marred by the loss of three men in a machinery room aboard ship in Singapore harbor.

In mid-December, SARATOGA arrived back on Yankee Station for what was to be her last line period. Coincident with her arrival strikes were again directed against the Hanoi-Haiphong area, after nearly two months of a bombing halt above the Twentieth Parallel. The LINEBACKER II phase of the Vietnam conflict was in effect. Marked by massive B-52 raids, multiple Alpha strikes and regular A-6 night attacks, the renewed bombing was devastating. VAW-123 was tasked with a myriad of support missions involving the coordination and control of MIGCAP, Ironhand, RESCAP elements and A6 strikes, as well as the recovery of a downed B-52 crew.

In all, 1972 was a hallmark year in VAW-123 history. It was meaningful and rewarding to employ the squadron in an actual combat environment as a true test of her training and readiness. Especially gratifying, after her aborted maiden cruise in 1967 aboard FORRESTAL, was the squadron's ability to furnish ninety-seven per cent of assigned AEW coverage to CTF Seventy-Seven during the height of accelerated LINEBACKER I and II operations. During the year the squadron flew over 2500 accident-free hours and received both the COMNAVIRLANT Safety Achievement Award and CNO Aviation Safety Award for 1972. Among the personal achievements, LT [REDACTED] was recognized as the recipient of the CVW-3 Golden Tailhook Award for the best CVW-3 carrier landing performance during the cruise. Seven pilots qualified as SARATOGA Centurions, while

LT [REDACTED] LT [REDACTED] LT [REDACTED] LT [REDACTED] LTJG [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] and AT1 [REDACTED] passed the 1000 hour mark in E-2 flight  
time and CDR J. D. LARISON, JR. and LCDR [REDACTED] both passed the  
2000 hour mark.