



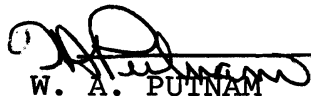
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON  
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE  
FPO NEW YORK 09501

*logged VAW-123*  
*1974*  
*1974*

VAW123/ADMIN/rlm  
5700  
Ser 125  
23 May 1975

From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning  
Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)  
Subj: Command History; submission of  
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12B  
Encl: (1) Command History

1. In accordance with reference (a), the Command History for  
Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY  
THREE for calendar year 1974 is hereby submitted.

  
W. A. PUTNAM

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

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

**COMMAND HISTORY  
1974**

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**CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS**  
**1 JAN 1974 - 31 DEC 1974**

**4-13 JAN-----HAVEGUN OPERATIONS, VIRGINIA CAPES**

**15-17 JAN-----EXERCISE BLACKHAWK, NAS CECIL  
FIELD, FLA.**

**28-31 JAN-----EXERCISE SILVERTHROAT, NAS CECIL  
FIELD, FLA.**

**31 JAN-1FEB-----COM SECOND FLEET SYSTEMS SUPPORT  
EXERCISE**

**4-8 FEB-----CARRIER QUALS ONBOARD USS J. F.  
KENNEDY**

**9 FEB-17 APR-----SHOREBASED NAS NORFOLK**

**18-21 APR-----CARRIER QUALS ONBOARD USS SARATOGA**

**26 APR-----CDR C K HUTCHINSON RELEIVED CDR  
R A SAGE AS COMMANDING OFFICER**

**30 APR-5 MAY-----LANTREDEX 3-74, NAS JACKSONVILLE,  
FLA.**

**24 MAY-----SQUADRON PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT  
AIRLIFTED TO NS MAYPORT FLA.**

**27 MAY-----SQUADRON AIRCRAFT FLEW ABOARD USS  
SARATOGA**

**1-3 JUN-----INPORT GUANTANOMO BAY, CUBA**

**4-7 JUN-----REFRESHER TRAINING, GTMO OPAREA**

**8-10 JUN-----INPORT GUANTANOMO BAY, CUBA**

**11-14 JUN-----REFRESHER TRAINING, GTMO OPAREA**

**15-17 JUN-----INPORT GUANTANOMO BAY, CUBA**

**19 JUN-----FLY-OFF TO NAS LEEWARD PT., GTMO  
BAY, CUBA**

**20 JUN-----RETURN TO NAS NORFOLK**

**21 JUN-9 JUL-----SHOREBASED NAS NORFOLK**

**10 JUL-----FLY ABOARD USS SARATOGA, JAX OPAREA**

**11-19 JUL-----TYT #1, JAX OPAREA**

**20-22 JUL-----INPORT MAYPORT, FLA**

**CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS  
1 JAN 1974 - 31 DEC 1974**

23 JUL-----TYT #2, SHOREBASED NS MAYPORT  
9-16 AUG-----TYT #3, JAX OPAREA  
17-18 AUG-----INPORT MAYPORT, FLA  
19-24 AUG-----TYT #4, JAX OPAREA  
25-28 AUG-----ORE, JAX OPAREA  
28 AUG-----FLY-OFF TO NAS NORFOLK, VA.  
29 AUG-26 SEP-----POM, SHOREBASED NAS NORFOLK  
27 SEP-----FLY ABOARD USS SARATOGA FOR MED  
DEPLOYMENT  
4-6 OCT-----INPORT ROTA, SPAIN  
7-15 OCT-----OPS WESTERN MED  
16-22 OCT-----INPORT NAPLES, ITALY  
23-29 OCT-----OPS TYRRHENIAN SEA  
30 OCT-6 NOV-----INPORT NAPLES, ITALY  
7-11 NOV-----OPS IONIAN SEA  
12-17 NOV-----INPORT NAPLES, ITALY  
18-23 NOV-----OPS EASTERN MED  
24-28 NOV-----TRNG ANCHORAGE, AUGUSTA BAY, SICILY  
29 NOV-2 DEC-----OPS IONIAN SEA-EXERCISE QUICK DRAW  
3-11 DEC-----INPORT NAPLES, ITALY  
12-15 DEC-----OPS TYRRHENIAN SEA-NATIONAL WEEK XVII  
16 DEC-----ANCHORAGE, GAETA BAY, ITALY  
17-18 DEC-----ENROUTE PALMA DE MAJORCA  
18 DEC-31 DEC 74-----INPORT PALMA DE MAJORCA

**NARRATIVE OF EVENTS**  
**1 JAN 1974 - 31 DEC 1974**

The year 1974 began with the "Screwtops" firmly in possession of the newest and most modern airborne early warning platform in the Navy's inventory, the E2C Hawkeye. Chosen as the first fleet squadron to be equipped with the E2C and having spent seven of the previous twelve months without aircraft, all hands were anxious to put their classroom and textbook training to practice in an actual operational environment.

The opportunity to test the new machine operationally was quickly forthcoming. In January, squadron aircraft and flight crews participated in four separate exercises, beginning with air intercept control training during "have gun" operations off the Virginia Capes early in the month. This was followed later in the month by Exercises Black Hawk and Silver Throat working with Attack Carrier Air Wing THREE involving the staging of two plane detachments at NAS Cecil Field, Florida. The first full month of fleet exposure to the E2C closed with VAW-123 heavily embroiled in the Commander, Second Fleet Combat Systems Support Exercise. COMBAT-SYSEX-1 was an inport fleet exercise culminating in a 24 hour active flying phase requiring continuous AEW coverage. January 1974 thus truly marked the beginning of a new era in tactical airborne command and control and proved to be the arena for documenting, in the early stages, the tremendous capabilities of the newest Hawkeye in the fleet.

February and March were dedicated to continuing the training of flight crews and maintenance personnel and afforded the opportunity to further explore the capabilities of the E2C during a shore-based training cycle. Early February was devoted primarily to the carrier requalification landings of squadron pilots aboard USS J.F. KENNEDY (CVA-67) operating in the Virginia Capes area. On 26 April 1974, CDR C. K. HUTCHINSON became the squadron's eighth Commanding Officer when he relieved CDR R. A. SAGE in ceremonies at NAS Norfolk. CDR HUTCHINSON was thus to become the first "skipper" to deploy with the E2C. One of the highlights of this ceremony was the presentation of the annual "LCDR James L. DELANEY Award" to ATC [REDACTED] in recognition of his outstanding performance and most significant contributions to the squadron during the previous year.

Early May again found the "Screwtops" staging out of the Jacksonville area and participating in Exercise LANTREDEK 3-74. In addition to valuable operational training and tactics development, this evolution provided further confirmation of the improvements in reliability and maintainability of the E2C, particularly on detachment operations away from the home base. By the end of May the "Screwtops" were back aboard USS SARATOGA (CV-60) after an absence of fifteen months. The purpose was carrier qualifications and refresher training which were successfully accomplished in the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba operating area. SARATOGA and Air Wing THREE's visit marked the first time an aircraft carrier had put into that port in several years.

July and August were devoted to type training aboard SARATOGA and was conducted primarily in the Jacksonville operating area but included a short period of shore-basing at Naval Station, Mayport.

Type training culminated in late August with the ORE and the squadron received a "high excellent" grade.

Final preparations for deployment were completed in September and on the 27th of that month four E2C's flew aboard SARATOGA as she steamed out of Mayport heading east for the Mediterranean. The premier E2C deployment was underway and the squadron quickly established its reputation for excellence throughout the Mediterranean and European theaters. Exercises, primarily in the Eastern Mediterranean, conducted jointly with NATO allies and other Sixth Fleet units confirmed that the SARATOGA/Air Wing THREE team, utilizing the enormous capabilities of the E2C, was the most potent and viable striking force in the Atlantic Fleet. Port visits, during this period to Rota, Spain and Naples, Italy gave squadron personnel the respite needed to insure maximum effectiveness when operating at-sea.

Christmas found the squadron at rest aboard SARATOGA in the beautiful haven of Palma de Majorca. This mid-cruise relaxation was to prove to be the most enjoyable for the "Screwtops" and one which will remain in their memories as their "Shangri-la of the Med." The year thus came to a close midway through the successful fleet introduction of an exciting and highly advanced new weapons system. The hardware was only the framework, however, for it was the skill, determination and dedication of each and every member that so significantly contributed to VAW-123's finest year ever.

THE MISSION AND THE AIRCRAFT  
OF  
CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE

"Early Warning is the key to survival and Early Warning is our job." This statement sums up the purpose of and reason for Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE (VAW-123). Our job is accomplished utilizing the airborne detection systems of the E-2C Hawkeye. Teamed with the F-4 Phantom II and the F-14 Tomcat, the Hawkeye provides a distant shield for the task force. Detection by the "Eyes of the Fleet" and destruction of hostile aircraft by the Phantom's guided missiles pack a powerful knockout punch for enemy intruders.

For the most part the days of colorful "dogfighting" are now left to the pages of history. In many cases the fighter/interceptor never sees his enemy with the naked eye. Today a threat to the task force is an evaluated blip on our radar, detected a safe distance from the force, and intercepted by fighters under our control. VAW-123 controllers are trained in the latest techniques of intercept control and are able to guide the interceptor into the most advantageous release point.

Strike Control is another mission performed by VAW-123. The controllers can vector the attack aircraft to any target, regardless of cloud cover or weather conditions, and can scan the target area for enemy air resistance. Amazingly accurate results have been amassed in attack operations by Hawkeye controllers. Then as aircraft return to the carrier, our detection systems can guide the strike to the electronically silent floating airfield, which would be difficult to find without VAW-123 assistance.

The E-2C Hawkeye with its computerized ATDS (Airborne Tactical Data System) works hand in hand with shipboard NTDS (Naval Tactical Data System). This sophisticated system can find, track, evaluate, report and carry out intercepts control without use of the human voice. Through its high speed radio data links, information is forwarded to fleet units instantly and without lag time. The Task Force Commander, on board the carrier, can likewise relay his commands to the E-2C, F-4 and F-14 without using his voice frequencies. Improved radar range and computerized speed give the E-2C an infinitely enormous edge over any would be attacker.

The E-2C is a high-wing aircraft distinguished by a rotating dish-shaped "rotodome" that contains the radar and IFF antennas. The rotodome can be lowered for hangar deck stowage. The plane with its 80 feet wing span, four vertical stabilizers and rotodome, is one of the largest on attack carriers; it has a launch weight of approximately 50,000 pounds. A crew of five (pilot, co-pilot, two Naval Flight Officers, and one radar operator) complement the aircraft. The cylindrical fuselage of the E-2C is divided into four main sections: cockpit, forward equipment compartment, CIC (Combat Information Center), and the aft equipment compartment. All compartments are pressurized. The aircraft is powered by two constant-speed gas turbine engines, each driving a four-bladed, full feathering reversible propeller.

## THE ODYSSEY

The history of VAW-123 begins with the commissioning of VAW-12, officially known as Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron TWELVE. VAW-12 was commissioned in 1948 at Norfolk, Virginia, moved to Quonset Point, Rhode Island, and then returned to Norfolk in 1962. During its history the organization of VAW-12 has changed internally many times, with the latest change being the reorganization of VAW-12 as Carrier Airborne Early Warning Wing TWELVE and the commissioning of all E-2A detachments as independent squadrons. As a Result of this reorganization VAW-12 Detachment 59 was commissioned VAW-123 on 1 April 1967 under the command of CDR L. W. HILL.

In June 1967, VAW-123, as part of CVW-17 aboard USS FORRESTAL, became the first East Coast E-2A squadron to deploy to WESTPAC. The FORRESTAL's tragic fire on July 29, 1967, forced an early return to the United States; however, the operational experience and knowledge gained proved invaluable in achieving a high state of readiness.

From September 1967 to July 1968, VAW-123 was primarily based at the Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia. On 16 April 1968, CDR K. G. SMITH relieved CDR HILL as Commanding Officer. VAW-123 then embarked aboard USS FORESTAL for a refresher training period with the Second Fleet which included a brief stop at Montego Bay, Jamaica.

On 22 July 1968, after a short Operational Readiness Inspection deployment earlier that month, VAW-123 and USS FORRESTAL deployed to the Sixth Fleet for highly successful operations marred only by a tragic accident which claimed the lives of three VAW-123 officers and an E-2A aircraft. In late April 1969, VAW-123 returned to NAS Norfolk and on 9 May CDR C. J. BERTHE, Jr., relieved CDR SMITH as Commanding Officer.

In March 1970, VAW-123 was presented the COMNAVAIRLANT Battle Efficiency Award for outstanding operations during the period 1 July 1968 to 31 December 1969.

Following eleven months ashore at NAS Norfolk, Virginia, VAW-123 joined CVW-3 aboard USS SARATOGA (CVA-60) for Second Fleet Operations during April of 1970.

On 12 May 1970 at NAS Norfolk, CDR W. R. EELS, Jr., relieved CDR C. J. BERTHE, Jr., to become the squadron's fourth commanding officer. The squadron returned to SARATOGA for the ORI in early June. On the 17th of June SARATOGA departed Mayport, Florida, for the Mediterranean.

The squadron enjoyed another successful deployment highlighted by a two-day visit by President Richard NIXON. During the cruise, VAW 123 received a CNAL Safety Award for fiscal year 1970. SARATOGA returned to Norfolk on the 9th of November. A final tribute to the success was the notification that VAW-123 recieved a Meritorious Unit Commendation for operations in the Eastern Mediterranean.



Between November 1970 and April 1971, VAW-123 transitioned to the new E-2B which has a highly advanced computer system. In April 1971, VAW-123 returned to USS SARATOGA for shakedown operations in the Jacksonville area. In early April, while at sea, CDR Glen G. DEBRODER relieved CDR W. R. EELS, Jr., as the squadron's fifth Commanding Officer.

In June Saratoga departed for the Mediterranean. The 1971 deployment was highly successful and, during this time, VAW-123 won CVW-3's golden tail hook award for two months and Saratoga's first Habitability Award. The squadron was the first VAW unit to participate in and evaluate ASW operations under the CV concept. Late in October VAW-123 returned to NAS Norfolk.

From November 1971 to February 1972 the squadron prepared for the type training deployment and the Operational Readiness Evaluation during the month of March aboard USS SARATOGA (CVA-60).

On 11 April 1972, with three days notice, VAW-123 conducted an emergency deployment to Southeast Asia in response to the massive North Vietnamese Easter offensive. Commencing combat operations on 18 May 1972 VAW-123 provided support for SARATOGA and Air Wing THREE for the next eight months during seven Gulf of Tonkin line periods. During the deployment, the squadron flew over 2500 accident free hours and was the recipient of the CNO and COMNAVAIRLANT Annual Safety Awards. VAW-123 returned to the United States on 12 February 1973 after a ten month absence from NAS Norfolk.

Upon completion of post deployment stand-down, CDR R. A. SAGE relieved CDR J. D. LARISON, Jr. as the squadron's seventh Commanding Officer on 9 April 1973. At these ceremonies the squadron was awarded the COMNAVAIRLANT Battle Efficiency "E" as the foremost VAW squadron in the Naval Air Force, Atlantic Fleet. On 19 October 1973, the squadron was presented the CNO Safety Award for the second consecutive year at ceremonies at NAS Norfolk.

The ensuing months were dedicated to E-2C transition training conducted at Grumman Aerospace Corporation, Bethpage, New York, the Bureau of Inspection and Survey trials at Patuxent River, Maryland and NAS Norfolk. VAW-123 officially became the first fleet E-2C squadron with the delivery of its first aircraft on 15 November 1973.

The year 1974 ushered in extensive training efforts with carrier qualifications aboard USS J. F. KENNEDY and participation in exercises BLACK HAWK, SILVER THROAT AND COMBATSEKEX. On 26 April 1974, CDR C. K. HUTCHINSON relieved CDR R. A. SAGE to become the squadron's eighth Commanding Officer.

In April and May of that year, VAW-123 participated in LANTREDEX 74 staging out of NAS Jacksonville, Florida. This was followed by carrier qualifications in June aboard USS SARATOGA in the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba operating area. During July and August the "Screwtops" completed their type training aboard SARATOGA in preparation for a September departure to the Mediterranean.

The premier E-2C deployment began on 27 September 1974 when four E-2C's flew aboard USS SARATOGA as she proceeded eastward from Mayport, Florida enroute to the Mediterranean. The squadron quickly exploited the enormous capabilities of the E-2C and, building upon its outstanding reputation, made its presence known throughout the European theater. This highly successful cruise which witnessed the introduction of the worlds most advanced airborne early warning platform was concluded in mid-March 1975 with the squadron's return to NAS Norfolk.