

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

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VAW123/ADMIN
5700
1 March 1976

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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) OPNAV INST 5750.12B
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 1975 is hereby submitted.



L. HEBERT

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

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COMMAND HISTORY

1975 ***** 1976

CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON
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CONTENTS

Chronological Summary

Annual Narrative

Basic History

Mission E-2C

Documentary Annexes

1. Periodic Operating Reports (CONFIDENTIAL)
2. Commanding Officer's Photo and Biography
3. Executive Officer's Photo and Biography
4. VAW-123 Officer's Roster
5. VAW-123 Enlisted Roster
6. Change of Command Program 1975 - 1976
7. Family Gram "Together We Sail."

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Enclosure (1)

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18 DEC - 5 JAN	INPORT PALMA
6 JAN	ENROUTE NAPLES
7 JAN	ANCHOR NAPLES/FLAG SHIFT/OFF LOAD 722
8 JAN - 13 JAN	OPERATIONS EASTERN MED
14 JAN - 17 JAN	INPORT IZMIR
18 JAN - 27 JAN	OPS MED
28 JAN - 31 JAN	INPORT ROTA
1 FEB - 6 FEB	EXERCISE LOCKED GATE
7 FEB - 12 FEB	INPORT LISBON
13 FEB - 14 FEB	ENROUTE MALAGA
15 FEB - 23 FEB	INPORT MALAGA (2E2C'S ROTA)
24 FEB - 25 FEB	ENROUTE CASABLANCA
26 FEB - 2 MAR	INPORT CASABLANCA
3 MAR	OPS EASTLANT
4 MAR - 8 MAR	INPORT ROTA
8 MAR - 19 MAR	ENROUTE N.S. MAYPORT FLA.
20 MAR - 27 MAY	SHORE BASED NAS NORFOLK
27 MAY - 2 JUN	EXERCISE SHOLID SHIELD
2 JUN - 9 AUG	SHORE BASED NAS NORFOLK
9 AUG - 24 AUG	CVW-3 WEAPONS DET. YUMA, AZ
25 AUG - 13 OCT	SHORE BASED NAS NORFOLK
14 OCT - 22 OCT	TYT-1 USS SARATOGA
23 OCT - 26 NOV	TYT-2 NAS NORFOLK
26 NOV - 18 DEC	TYT-3 ORE USS SARATOGA
15 DEC - 7 JAN	SHORE BASED NAS NORFOLK

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HISTORY OF VAW-123
1 January - 31 December 1975

(U) The year 1975 began with the "Screwtops" at mid-cruise in the beautiful haven of Palma de Mallorca, where the men of VAW-123 enjoyed relaxation after many skillful days of dedicated operations. This cruise was the first for the E2C, and VAW-123 took pride in exercising the capabilities available in this newest and most highly advanced AEW platform.

(C) After the Flag shift in Naples, Italy on the 7th of January 1975 the "Screwtops" moved into the Eastern Mediterranean Sea where experienced teams took the opportunity to expand their new system and expose our NATO Allies to the vast capabilities incorporated in the new E2C "HAWKEYE". During the course of VAW-123's deployment aboard USS SARATOGA, the squadron had been tasked to provide a myriad of missions, including AEW, ASW, SSC, AIC, ASMD, EMCON approach control, Link 11, Link 4A, ASW, and ESM. While it was obvious that all these missions could not be conducted simultaneously, it had nevertheless become quite apparent that the simultaneous mission capability of the E2C was far greater than that of it's predecessors. This is directly attributable to the greatly improved technology in the area of automatic detection, tracking, correlation, and digital communication, which have been incorporated into this aircraft.

(C) On 7 January AC 722 was off loaded to the USS INDEPENDENCE (CV-62) for transit back to CONUS for repairs after the aircraft was damaged when a jet blast deflector was raised into the turning starboard propeller. Flight operations then commenced in the Aegean Sea for the first really landlocked flight experience for most of the "Screwtop" aircrews, in a flying area that was confined to a 20 by 70 nautical mile box. In landlocked operations the major problem was not so much the excessive land return, but in finding an efficient station for the "Hummer" to work in, without interfering with other aircraft.

(U) The operating period was broken for four days in Izmir, Turkey where the "Screwtops" worked to get their aircraft well as the crew tuned up for the next operational period. Izmir proved to be an unusual but very enjoyable port due to the many tours of the city and country as well as all the shops, where squadron shipmates took advantage of the local products.

(C) During the 18 to 27 January at sea period emphasis was placed on SSSC and AI/ACM mission where the E2C was used as an AEW platform, as well as detecting and directing aircraft over surface contacts for identification, and the interception of airborne contact for identification. During Eastern Mediterranean operations increased emphasis was placed on CAP/Link 4A, and Link 11 coordination and FAN Net procedures on the LAAW Net with significant improvement in both areas. Utilization during this period of the Link 11 network control from E2C aircraft was shown to be a successful backup for a task force

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net control station. The E2C Passive Detection System again proved its worth during this period in that it provided early detection of Soviet Surface units and successfully fixed their position utilizing an integrated computer association system.

(C) After resting in Rota, Spain the Sara along with the "Screwtops" participated in the multi-nation NATO Operation Exercise Locked Gate in the Eastern Atlantic, near Gibraltar. The operation was designed to exercise the task group in sea lane control, and denial of passage through a choke point to enemy submarines. Due to the nature of the exercise, emphasis for the "Screwtops" was placed on the SSSC and the Anti-Submarine Warfare mission. Due to the loss of aircraft 722 in December's flight deck accident, the "hot spin" was again relied upon to meet the 35 sorties flown during this exercise, in which 20 sorties were covered by the same aircraft. During one phase of the exercise one aircraft flew six consecutive double cycle sorties for 18.4 hours continuous operating time.

(U) After Exercise Locked Gate, the sunny moderate weather of the Western Mediterranean provided an opportunity for VAW-123 to host several visits from commands interested in observing E2C operations. The representative of headquarters, U.S. Air Forces Europe was one of these visitors, followed later in February with four members of the Royal Air Force from the British Defense Ministry.

(U) On 12 February 1975 the Sara left Lisbon and sailed to Malaga, Spain where VAW-123 along with the SARATOGA Air Wing Flew aircraft to Rota, Spain for shorebased training operations off the coast of Spain. VAW-123 flew its two aircraft back aboard as the Sara was enroute to Casablanca, Morocco, 24 February 1975.

(U) Due to rough seas, VAW-123 spent little time ashore in Casablanca and on 2 March the Sara returned to Rota where on 8 March the ship and air wing began the long journey back to Naval Station, Mayport, Florida. This highly successful cruise, which witnessed the introduction of the worlds most advanced Airborne Early Warning Platform, concluded in mid-March with the return of the "Screwtops" to NAS Norfolk.

(U) April and May were devoted to the training of maintenance personnel and flight crews during shorebased operations off the Virginia Capes. On 4 April, 1975 CDR W. A. PUTNAM became the squadron's ninth Commanding Officer, relieving CDR C. K. HUTCHINSON in ceremonies on board NAS Norfolk, and CDR L. HEBERT became Executive Officer of the "Screwtops".

(U) FCLP's occupied the first half of May with Carrier refresher landings, followed by Exercise Solid Shield off the North Carolina Coast on May 27th.

(C) During Exercise Solid Shield VAW-123 provided seven days of Command and Control operation, utilizing ECM/ESM, Intercept Control, and coordinated task force operations. SARATOGA's TACAIR operations during the exercise required the squadron to provide a 12 hour AEW coverage and control of CAP and SSSC aircraft with the other 12 hours being devoted to

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supporting ASW operations. The interservice exercise was a complete success demonstrating again the vast capabilities of the E2C. The "Screwtops" successfully flew around the clock for six days with a loss of only three sorties.

(U) Beginning August 9th, VAW-123 operated for two weeks as primary controller for the CVW-3 Weapons Detachment, Yuma, Arizona. The E2C operated as primary strike intercept controller for the Wing's bombing and intercept exercises.

(U) October 14th, VAW-123 began Type Training work-ups for the 1976 deployment aboard USS SARATOGA. This training period was very effective in getting the new pilots and NFO's acquainted with shipboard life as well as accustomed to CV operations. This brought VAW-123's many experts together with their new counterparts, to enhance, and bring the navy expertise in air control/sea control to a head.

(U) At 1100, 3 November 1975, VAW-123 was the proud recipient of the 1975 Battle Efficiency "E" Award and the CNO Aviation Safety Award. In ceremonies held in Hangar SP1 NAS Norfolk, Virginia, Rear Admiral J. H. SCOTT, Commander Tactical Wings Atlantic delivered the awards to CDR W. A. PUTNAM, Commanding Officer.

(U) November 16, 1975 VAW-123 received the COMNAVAIRLANT Safety Citation from Vice Admiral H. E. GREER for seven years accident free operations for the period 17 October 1968 to 16 October 1975.

(U) Type Training Two was spent in NAS Norfolk, working with the CVW-3 aircraft out of NAS Oceana as well as many hours of presentations and discussions of the different areas of CV operations and control.

(U) In November, VAW-123 moved aboard USS SARATOGA for the final training phase and Operational Readiness Evaluation. During the ORE the squadron operated 24 hours a day providing AEW and receiving more practical experience in doing what the "Screwtops" do best. The ORE was very successful for SARATOGA and CVW-3 with VAW-123 receiving a grade of Outstanding.

(U) VAW-123 spent Christmas at home in Norfolk preparing for the upcoming deployment to the Mediterranean Sea scheduled for January 7, 1976.

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3

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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 CHAL Safety Award for fiscal year 1970. SARATOGA returned to Norfolk on the 9th of November. A final tribute to the squadron was the notification that VAW-123 received 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 squadrons 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 BARK, SILVER THROAT AND COMBATSEYSEX. On 26 April 1974, CDR C. R. 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 LAUNCHER DEK 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.

In April 1975 CDR W. A. PUTNAM became the Squadron's ninth Commanding Officer relieving CDR C. K. HUTCHINSON in ceremonies on board NAS Norfolk, VA., with CDR L. HEBERT reporting as the "Screwtops" Executive Officer.

In May, VAW 123 participated in the 10-day multi-service exercise SOLID SHIELD aboard USS SARATOGA in the Jacksonville OPAREA.

In August 1975 the "Screwtops" operated as primary controller for the CVW-3 Weapons Deployment at Yuma, Arizona, followed in October by commencement of Type Training on board USS SARATOGA in preparation for the January 1976 Mediterranean deployment.

On 3 November VAW 123 received the COMNAVAIRLANT Battle Efficiency Award (Battle "E") and CNO Aviation Safety Award's for fiscal year 1975. Followed later that month by the COMNAVAIRLANT Safety Citation for seven years accident free operations.

VAW 123 commenced a Mediterranean deployment 7 January 1976 after completing the final Type Training exercise and ORE with an Outstanding Grade.

After arriving in Rota, Spain USS SARATOGA along with VAW 123 relieved USS JOHN F. KENNEDY. The "Screwtops" provided strike support for a highly successful Combat Readiness Assessment Exercise flown on Avgo Nisi, target in early March. This exercise was followed by National Week XX in the Tyrrhenian Sea.