

1977



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

DECLASSIFIED

ADMIN/can
5700
Ser C02
28 FEB 1978

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ (Unclassified upon removal of annex (1) of enclosure (1))

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), Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THREE's Command History for calendar year 1977 is hereby submitted.

R. A. Allen
R. A. ALLEN

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

DECLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ (Unclassified upon removal of annex (1))

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

DECLASSIFIED

COMMAND HISTORY
1977

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

DECLASSIFIED

Enclosure (1)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Summary of Events

1 Jan-13 Jan	Shore based NAS Norfolk, VA
14 Jan-16 Jan	Refresher Training, USS SARATOGA (CV-60)
17 Jan- 9 Feb	Shore based NAS Norfolk, VA
10 Feb-21 Feb	Type Training I aboard USS SARATOGA in JAXOPAREA
22 Feb-28 Feb	Inport NS Mayport, FL
28 Feb-19 Mar	Type Training II aboard USS SARATOGA in ROOSRDSOPAREA
19 Mar-19 Mar	Inport St. Thomas, V.I.
20 Mar-21 Mar	Inport NS Mayport, FL
22 Mar-28 Mar	Type Training III aboard USS SARATOGA in JAXOPAREA
29 Mar	Inport NS Mayport, FL
30 Mar- 2 Apr	Operational Readiness Evaluation in JAXOPAREA
3 Apr- 9 Apr	Inport NS Mayport, FL
10 Apr-15 Apr	Second Fleet Operations aboard USS SARATOGA
16 Apr-22 Jun	Shore based NAS Norfolk, VA
29 Apr	CDR R. A. ALLEN relieved CDR L. HERBERT as Commanding Officer
5 Jun-14 Jun	Conducted Forward Bases Alert Operations aboard USS SARATOGA
15 Jun-29 Jun	Refresher Training aboard USS SARATOGA in JAXOPAREA
29 Jun-10 Jul	Inport NS Mayport, FL
11 Jul-20 Jul	Embarked USS SARATOGA enroute to Mediterranean
21 Jul-28 Jul	Inport NS Rota, Spain
29 Jul-10 Aug	Operations Western Mediterranean
11 Aug-14 Aug	Inport Pozzuoli, Italy
15 Aug-24 Aug	Operations Ionian, National Week XXIII
24 Aug- 7 Sep	Inport Naples, Italy
8 Sep-19 Sep	Operations Eastern Mediterranean

20 Sep-23 Sep	Inport Naples, Italy
24 Sep- 7 Oct	Operations Eastern Mediterranean, Display Determination 77
8 Oct-10 Oct	Inport Naples, Italy
11 Oct-14 Oct	Operations Western Mediterranean
15 Oct-26 Oct	Inport Naples, Italy
27 Oct- 2 Nov	Operations Western Mediterranean
3 Nov-16 Nov	Inport Palma de Mallorca
17 Nov-27 Nov	Operations Western Mediterranean
28 Nov- 4 Dec	Inport Malaga, Spain
5 Dec- 8 Dec	Operations Western Mediterranean
9 Dec-11 Dec	Inport Rota, Spain
12 Dec-22 Dec	Transit Atlantic
23 Dec-31 Dec	Shore based NAS Norfolk, VA

The commencement of 1977 found VAW-123 preparing for an active year. On 3 January the squadron commenced an intense period of Field Carrier Landing Practice, which lasted until 13 January. From 14 to 16 January the Screwtops took part in refresher training aboard USS SARATOGA (CV-60). A return to NAS Norfolk followed, where preparations were completed for the squadron's upcoming Type Training evolution, which commenced on 10 February.

Type Training consisted of three separate periods of operations followed by an Operational Readiness Evaluation. The first and third of these periods were in the Jacksonville Operating Area, while the middle period was spent near Roosevelt Roads, allowing the squadron to visit the port of St. Thomas, V.I.

The primary emphasis during these exercises was on Airborne Early Warning and Surface, Subsurface Surveillance Control; two missions of vital importance in Sixth Fleet operations. The squadron completed 100% of its scheduled sorties during these at-sea times and was awarded the CVW-3 Commander's Cup during Type Training II for its superior boarding rate while in competition with other squadrons of the Air Wing.

From 29 March to 2 April Commander Carrier Group FOUR conducted an Operational Readiness Evaluation of USS SARATOGA and CVW-3. After three days of intense simulated warfare, VAW-123 was awarded an adjective grade of OUTSTANDING for its performance. This was the highest grade of any squadron in CVW-3, thus earning the Commander's Cup once again.

This evolution was followed by a COMPTUEX from 10 to 16 April. The Screwtops then returned to NAS Norfolk to begin preparation for deployment to the Mediterranean. Shortly after their return, on 29 April, CDR Robert A. ALLEN relieved CDR L. HEBERT, becoming the Screwtop's eleventh Commanding Officer.

Despite being land-based during May and June of 1977, VAW-123 maintained an active operational schedule. The Screwtops provided extensive support for Operation Aloud Gulf, an exercise which provided communications support for Operation Solid Shield. Alert aircraft were provided to USS SARATOGA while she conducted carrier qualifications off the Virginia coast. Numerous flights provided an opportunity for the Screwtops' air controllers to polish their skills as they conducted Air Intercept Control with various types of Naval and Air Force aircraft in the VACAPES area. On 22 June, refresher training commenced aboard USS SARATOGA. As a result VAW-123 flew 323 hours during these two months, as well as completing final preparations for the upcoming cruise.

With the arrival of July the squadron completed its final maintenance checks and, following a tearful farewell to families and friends, the Screwtops departed NS Mayport on 10 July for deployment to the Mediterranean. Turnover from USS KENNEDY occurred at Rota, Spain on 21 July and the squadron began operations in the Eastern Atlantic.

The Screwtops' first exercise in the Mediterranean began on 25 July. One aircraft was detached to Zaragoza, Spain to participate in the Air Force's

Operation Creek Star. This aircraft provided airborne attack and intercept control for Air Force units simulating a hostile airborne attack against Zaragoza, and was the sole Naval unit to take part in the exercise.

After additional operations in the Western Mediterranean, and a short visit to Pozzuoli, Italy, VAW-123 began its participation in National Week XXIII. The squadron was tasked with providing early warning of both air and surface "hostile" units, as well as control of strike and interceptor aircraft against those units. By providing early detection of incoming "enemy" aircraft and constant surveillance of "hostile" combatants, the Screwtops greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the Task Force's sea control role. The Screwtops maintained a 100% sortie completion rate during National Week, even though a substantial portion of the exercise was spent in around-the-clock operations.

Upon completion of National Week, and a visit to Naples, the Screwtops commenced operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. These operations were in preparation for Display Determination 1977; a NATO exercise involving units from several European nations participating in maneuvers which swept the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Turkey. The Screwtops' involvement began on 26 September and was concentrated primarily in the Aegean Sea. The myriad of islands and land masses presented the squadron with an additional problem, that of controlling attack and ASW aircraft through a maze of flight corridors which constantly changed direction as they wound their way around restricted airspace. The success of their efforts is demonstrated by the fact that CVW-3's operations in the Aegean were completed without incident.

On 12-13 October VAW-123 took part in a CVW-3 missile exercise which took place at the Salto Di Quirra missile range near Sardinia. The Screwtops not only provided range surveillance during this evolution, they also controlled the A-7 and F-4 aircraft used to intercept the drone targets. The exercise was highly successful despite the range's proximity to land, earning a "Well Done" from the Officer in Charge of the Exercise (OCE).

Several honored guests visited the squadron during September and October of 1977. The first of these was the Honorable W. Graham Claytor Jr., Secretary of the Navy, who was given a familiarization flight in the squadron's E-2C aircraft on 15 September. On 7 October Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Harold Brown, also was provided with an E-2C flight. Admiral R. L. Long, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, was a guest of the Screwtops on 20 October, and Vice Admiral J. P. Moorer, CINCUSNAVEUR, followed on 2 November.

After a short stop in Naples and a port visit to Palma de Mallorca, the squadron began flight operations in support of exercise ILES D' OR, a bilateral US/French operation. Surface surveillance and anti-ship strikes were again emphasized. During the exercise VAW-123 participated in several Electronic Surveillance Measures Exercises, to help coordinate the use of airborne and surface passive detection systems.

VAW-123 visited Malaga, Spain from 28 November to 4 December, giving the squadron's personnel a chance to visit the famous Spanish "Costa del Sol."

Following this the Screwtops entered their last exercise of the year, Operation POOPDECK, from 6 to 7 December. This was a brief Anti-Air Warfare exercise held in conjunction with Spain.

On 9 December the Screwtops arrived at Rota, Spain. Turnover with VAW-112 and the USS NIMITZ (CV-68) was finished on 12 December and the squadron commenced a 10 day transit of the Atlantic.

The squadron maintained a round-the-clock alert during transit. The value of this alert was shown on 19 December when two Russian TU-95 Bear aircraft were reported in the vicinity of the Task Group. Two E-2C's were launched and the Screwtop crews detected and reported the Bears forty minutes after takeoff. Two F-4 Phantoms were vectored to the Bears and their position was monitored and reported until they left the area.

On 17 December VAW-123 was awarded the CVW-3 Commander's Cup for their outstanding performance during the cruise. This marked the third time that the Screwtops had won the award in 1977. Closely following this the Screwtops received the Atlantic Fleet Battle "E" Award for 1976-1977.

The squadron returned to NAS Norfolk on 23 December, just in time for Christmas, and the end of 1977 found the Screwtops at home, but already preparing for the upcoming year.