



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX
APO NEW YORK 09501-6412

1988

IN REPLY REFER TO:
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From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington, D.C. 20374

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY (U)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.1

Encls: (1) VAW 126 Command History for CY-88 (U)
(2) Operation Reports from 1988 exercises (C)

1. (U) In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) and (2) are forwarded.

E. C. Geiger

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Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)

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VAW 126 COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1988

COMMAND MISSION, COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

VAW-126 is one of eight Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadrons based in Norfolk. Equipped with four E-2C "Hawkeye" aircraft, the squadron's primary mission is long range airborne early warning in defense of the Carrier Battle Group. In addition, the squadron plays a vital role in such diverse operations as fighter intercept and air strike control, ocean surveillance and search and rescue coordination. Approximately 119 Enlisted and 30 Officers man the squadron in four departments: Maintenance, Operations, Administration and Safety. The squadron's chain of command is as follows:

ADMINISTRATIVE: COMCAEWING 12

Commodore

CAPT Ray L. Bunton, USN, 1310

OPERATIONAL: COMCARAIRWING 3

Commodore

CAPT James D. Norris, USN, 1320

Aircraft Assigned: Grumman E-2C "Hawkeye"

<u>Bureau #'s</u>	A/C 600 - 162614
	A/C 601 - 162616
	A/C 602 - 162617
	A/C 603 - 162618

VAW-126
COMMANDING OFFICERS

01 APR 69 - 01 APR 70	.....	CDR Albert W. OLDHAM
05 APR 70 - 01 APR 71	.....	CDR Robert M. HARP
01 APR 71 - 28 JAN 72	.....	CDR Floyd A. FRIESEN
28 JAN 72 - 03 JAN 73	.....	CDR George ORMOND, JR.
03 JAN 73 - 07 FEB 74	.....	CDR Harold J. BERNSEN
07 FEB 74 - 16 JAN 75	.....	CDR David M. KLETTER
16 JAN 75 - 28 APR 76	.....	CDR Horace M. WALTER, JR.
28 APR 76 - 15 JUL 77	.....	CDR Robert E. KORDALSKI
15 JUL 77 - 08 SEP 78	.....	CDR Dennis M. KINNEY
08 SEP 78 - 05 SEP 79	.....	CDR Vady R. CLARK
05 SEP 79 - 08 DEC 80	.....	CDR Herman J. LONG, JR.
08 DEC 80 - 01 FEB 82	.....	CDR Gary M. WITZENBURG
01 FEB 82 - 10 MAY 83	.....	CDR John W. BOOKHULTZ
10 MAY 83 - 18 OCT 84	.....	CDR Robert L. JOHNSON, JR.
18 OCT 84 - 25 APR 86	.....	CDR Daniel P. WHALEN
25 APR 86 - 24 SEP 87	.....	CDR Daniel M. PARKER
24 SEP 87 - PRESENT	.....	CDR Gordon C. REIF, JR.

1988 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS FOR VAW 126

15-20 JAN.....FCLP.....NAF FENTRESS, VIRGINIA
21-25 JAN.....ISE.....VACAPES OPAREA
31 JAN-07 FEB.....MISSILEX.....ROOSEVELT ROADS, PUERTO RICO
20 FEB-11 MAR.....WEAPON TRAINING.....NAS FALLON, NEVADA
21-25 MAR.....FAST.....NAS NORVA
23-28 MAR.....CNO PROJECT 251.....EGLIN AFB, FLORIDA
07-11 APR.....JFK ISE.....VACAPES OPAREA
12-13 APR.....VANALEX SUPPORT.....USS JFK, JAX OPAREA
19-30 APR.....REFTRA.....VACAPES/JAX OPAREA
18 APR-20 MAY.....ADVANCE PHASE.....USS JFK, JAX OPAREA
24-25 MAY.....COROLINA COMBAT.....VACAPES OPAREA
02 JUN.....AEGIS SUPPORT, CNO.....BRUNSWICK OPAREA
08-22 JUN.....FLEETEX 2-88.....USS JFK, PR OPAREA
29 JUN.....VF-101 MISSILE SHOOT...VACAPES OPAREA
02 AUG-02 FEB 89...MED DEPLOYMENT.....MEDITERRANEAN SEA
18-19 AUG.....NATIONAL WEEK 88.....CENT MED
04-08 SEP.....SEAWIND.....EAST MED/EGYPT
21 SEP-09 OCT.....DISPLAY DETERMINATION..CENT MED/AGEAN SEA
24-26 OCT.....TUNISIAN PASSEX.....CENT MED
12-13 NOV.....SNAKE PIT.....CENT MED
21-22 NOV.....FOCH PASSEX.....WEST MED
01-10 DEC.....AFRICAN EAGLE.....MOROCCO/WEST MED
14 DEC.....DASIX.....FRANCE/WEST MED

HISTORY OF THE VAW 126 SEAHAWKS
1988 OVERVIEW

1988 was an outstanding one for the SEAHAWKS. What started out as a typical year with a variety of shore-based operations and a "routine" Mediterranean deployment, ended as one with a multitude of accomplishments. The SEAHAWKS, under the leadership of Cdr Gordon C. Reif, Jr., showed their outstanding abilities in all endeavors and were subsequently awarded the COMNAVAIRLANT Battle Readiness "E" Award and were nominated for the Department of Defense Maintenance Award by CVW 3 and CAEWING 12. While deployed aboard the (CV-67) USS JOHN F. KENNEDY during the latter part of the year, the SEAHAWKS also received recognition from CAPT Wisely, Commanding Officer of the KENNEDY, as the best squadron onboard. This recognition was the result of the squadron's aggressiveness, maintenance program, support for the ship and dedication to duty.

In February, the SEAHAWKS attended three weeks of weapons training at NAS Fallon, Nevada during which time they made innovative breakthroughs in overland tracking. Workups for deployment continued in April and May with the squadron participating in REFTRA and ADVANCED PHASE aboard the KENNEDY. In June, the battle group assembled for FLEETEX 2-88 and the SEAHAWKS departed with the KENNEDY Battle Group on August 2nd for its six month deployment.

Throughout the deployment the SEAHAWKS proved that they were a vital factor in the defense of the battle group. From National Week 88 through all exercises during the deployment the SEAHAWKS set new standards of excellence. The aircraft were always ready and the crews knowledgeable and aggressive. The squadron contributed greatly to the success of all exercises, coordinating with the participating nations, clearing any discrepancies and providing pertinent information as needed. Innovative overland tracking tactics were experimented with during exercise AFRICAN EAGLE with Morocco, and proved that with proper training and a "tweeked" system, the "Hawkeye" can be successfully utilized in the overland arena.

Amplifying details of the operations mentioned above can be found in Enclosure (2).

The SEAHAWKS professionalism and devotion to doing their best is evident in its continuing safety record, now approaching twenty years of mishap free operations with over 38,000 flight hours logged for the squadron.

The year was extremely successful and all SEAHAWKS are proud of the contributions they are making in the Airborne Early Warning community.

HISTORY OF THE VAW-126 SEAHAWKS

The "SEAHAWKS" of VAW-126 were commissioned in Norfolk, VA. on 1 April 1969. Originally nicknamed, "CLOSEOUT," the new squadron, with its four E-2A aircraft, was made part of Attack Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN, assigned to the (CVA-59) USS FORRESTAL. Thus began a long, five year association with the CVW-17/FORRESTAL team. Following completion of their their first deployment in July 1970, the squadron transitioned to the E-2B. This was a newer version of the same aircraft, equipped with a more flexible, digital computer weapons system. The command won notoriety early in its life, winning the highly coveted NAVAIRLANT Battle Readiness Efficiency "E" and the CNO Safety Award in 1971. The squadron won the Battle "E" a second time in 1974.

By winning three major competitive awards so early in its history, VAW-126 became recognized as the premier east coast VAW squadron. This, along with the squadron's ever growing accident-free record clearly established VAW-126 as one of the Navy's finest carrier squadrons.

While homeward bound, following their final deployment with FORRESTAL in September 1974, the squadron transferred to the USS AMERICA (CVA-66). This first mid-ocean transfer of an entire E-2 squadron provided their new airwing, CVW-8 with vital VAW assets for an extensive NATO exercise in the North Atlantic. The NATO deployment also marked VAW-126's final E-2B flying as well. Following their return to Norfolk in October 1974, the squadron began its transition to the E-2C Hawkeye, an aircraft similar in appearance to its predecessor, but with a significantly more capable and reliable weapons system.

By August 1975, the squadron had commenced a whirlwind series of short operations in the Caribbean, with their future airwing CVW-9, based in Miramar, California. This unusual cross-country airwing assignment was done to ensure the availability of E-2C assets on both coasts until phase out of the E-2B. In May 1976, they began the first of many trips, moving the entire squadron back and forth between Norfolk and Miramar to operate with CVW-9, and prepare for their upcoming deployment on the (CV-64) USS CONSTELLATION. The first detachment was to NAS Fallon, Nevada, where the new E-2C/F-14 Tomcat team worked together in fleet anti-air warfare exercises.

Following several short periods of refresher training operations, the squadron returned to California in January 1977 for a major deployment which included several at-sea periods for further training. In April 1977, VAW-126 left San Diego for the Philippines, and in the following months, the squadron visited such places as Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan. The Western operating area provided wide-open "Blue Water" operation which allowed the aircraft and aircrews to operate at their fullest potential. In May 1978, VAW-126 returned to the West Coast and rejoined CVW-9 for the squadron's second and final Western Pacific deployment.

The CLOSEOUTS departed San Diego aboard CONSTELLATION on 26 September 1978, and sailed to the Philippines with a brief stop in Hawaii. This deployment ultimately lasted nearly eight months and covered over 52,000 miles ranging over three-fourths of the earth's longitudes. This took CONSTELLATION and VAW-126 to Korea, Japan, Singapore, Philippines and the Indian Ocean, while spending over 70% of the deployment steaming in support of national objectives. Upon the squadron's homecoming at NAS Norfolk on 17 May 1979, VAW-126 began transitioning to the new ARPS version of the E-2C, and following the tragic death of the Commanding Officer, Cdr. Vady Clark, changed their name to the "SEAHAWKS".

The SEAHAWKS joined the (CV-67) USS JOHN F. KENNEDY/CVW-1 team in late 1979. Training continued through April and May 1980, with missions conducted off the coast of Virginia and Florida. Prior to the final phases of training leading up to the Operational Readiness Evaluation (ORE), the KENNEDY steamed into Boston harbor for OPSAIL '80. The SEAHAWKS, along with a host of sailing ships from around the world, received a warm welcome from the citizens of Boston during the city's 350th birthday celebration.

On 4 August 1981, VAW-126 joined CVW-3 which replaced CVW-1 as the Air Wing attached to the KENNEDY. The squadron began work-ups for their upcoming Indian Ocean Deployment with refresher training commencing in late August. Workups continued in October and November, during which time the SEAHAWKS set a new squadron record of 462 flight hours during one month.

The SEAHAWKS departed Norfolk on the 4th of January 1982 for the Indian Ocean and a six month deployment that took the squadron to such port cities as Malaga, Spain; Perth, Australia; Mombassa, Kenya and Toulon, France. Upon returning from deployment, VAW-126 participated in numerous shorebased exercises and again commenced refresher training in February 1983.

The '83-'84 deployment (September-May) was a record breaking, Battle "E" winning one for VAW-126 and many monthly and quarterly records were set. Toward the end of the deployment, the SEAHAWKS celebrated their 15th accident-free year at the end of a grueling 32 straight days of around the clock flying off Beirut, Lebanon. By March, 772 hours had been flown--an all time VAW record. During the deployment the squadron visited Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Haifa, Israel and Naples, Italy. In addition to receiving the 1983 Battle "E" the squadron also won the COMNAVAILANT "Silver Anchor" award for superior retention (won in 1982-1985).

In 1985, while the KENNEDY underwent a major shipyard overhaul, the SEAHAWKS remained shore based. Their status as the VAW "Air National Guard" didn't slow them down however. Early in the year, the squadron joined a mixture of U.S. International Forces in Operation Green Flag at Nellis AFB, Nevada. In May, the squadron participated in "AMALGAM BRAVE," a two week NORAD exercise in Goose Bay, Canada. This was closely followed by READEX 2-85 with CVW 3 at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. In September, the airwing proceeded to Fallon, Nevada for CVW-3 weapons training.

In addition to their other tasking, the SEAHAWKS participated throughout the year in Operation THUNDERBOLT, a Vice-Presidential tasking in America's continuing war on the illegal drug trade. These missions took the squadron

all across the Southeastern U.S., as well as Puerto Rico and Cuba.

In October 1985, the SEAHAWKS returned aboard the KENNEDY with the four newest E-2C Hawkeye in the U.S. Navy. During short deployments through November the squadron logged hundreds of carrier landings and made port visits to Fort Lauderdale and Nassau, Bahamas.

The SEAHAWKS departed for the Mediterranean aboard the KENNEDY in August 1986. With operational money at a premium and all available funds diverted to contingency operations in the Persian Gulf, this deployment was the first of the Mediterranean "Love Boat," cruises which would plague the east coast deploying CV's for years to come. Over 70 days were spent at anchor, visiting such ports as Benidorm, Palma and Rota, Spain; Toulon and Cannes, France; Trieste and Naples, Italy and Haifa, Israel.

Upon their return in March 1987, VAW-126 kept active participating in a variety of exercises including missile shoots off Brunswick, Maine and the VACAPES OPAREA, AEGIS support and drug interdiction. By November, the squadron was back aboard the KENNEDY in preparation for their next deployment, one in which they would close out the new year.

A final note: Most unique throughout VAW-126's history and by far their proudest overall achievement is the squadron's continuing history of accident-free operations. Since its commissioning on 1 April 1969, the squadron has completed many months of intensive deployed carrier operations, and logged almost 40,000 accident-free hours. Through their professionalism on the ground and in the air, and by the constant and total dedication to safety, VAW-126 personnel have maintained this enviable record throughout the years. Each new accident-free moment now sets a new standard for excellence in Naval Aviation.