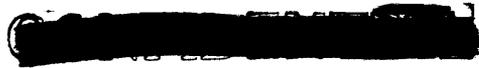


1966

ATTACK SQUADRON TWENTY FIVE

FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO 96601



ADMIN (RMP) 20
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15 FEB 1967

OPNAV REPORT 5750-1

REGISTERED AIR MAIL

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Reg. 2514
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From: Commanding Officer, Attack Squadron TWENTY FIVE

To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05A5G)

Subj: Command History 1966; forwarding of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12

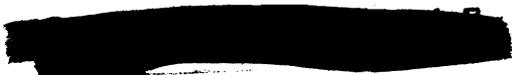
Encl: (1) Command History 1966

1. In compliance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is forwarded.

J. D. Burden
J. D. BURDEN

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GROUP-4
Downgraded at 3-year intervals;
Declassified after 12 years.

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A. CHRONOLOGICAL HIGHLIGHTS 1966

1. 10 JANUARY 1966. AFTER AN EXTENDED HOLIDAY LEAVE PERIOD FOLLOWING THE 1965 MIDWAY CRUISE TO SOUTHEAST ASIA, VA-25 GOT DOWN TO SERIOUS BUSINESS AND BEGAN IT'S 1966 TRAINING CYCLE ON 10 JANUARY 1966.

2. 1-11 FEBRUARY. SQUADRON PILOTS CARRIER QUALIFIED ON THE USS CONSTELLATION.

3. 15-16 FEBRUARY. COMFAIRALAMEDA HELD AN ADMINISTRATION/MATERIAL INSPECTION ON VA-25, WHICH RECEIVED A 92.54, OR EXCELLENT.

4. 21 FEBRUARY. AN ALL HANDS PARTY WAS HELD AT THE LEMOORE CPO CLUB, IN WHICH NEARLY ALL THE OFFICERS, MEN AND THEIR WIVES PARTICIPATED.

5. 5 MARCH. VA-25 HELD AN AWARDS CEREMONY, FOR AWARDS EARNED DURING THE PAST CRUISE, AND AN OPEN HOUSE IN THE HANGAR AT LEMOORE.

6. 25 MARCH. A SPECIAL AWARDS CEREMONY WAS HELD, IN WHICH MRS. CAROLINE GRAY, WIDOW OF LCDR HAROLD E. GRAY, WAS PRESENTED WITH AWARDS POSTHUMOUSLY AWARDED LCDR GRAY.

7. 2 APRIL. ENSIGN JAMES A. SINGLETERRY WAS INVOLVED IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT IN WHICH HE RECEIVED FATAL INJURIES.

8. 12 APRIL. CAPTAIN BOYDSTUN, COMMANDING OFFICER OF NAS LEMOORE, PRESENTED CDR ETTINGER, COMMANDING OFFICER OF VA-25, THE "GOLDEN MULE" THE "GOLDEN MULE" IS A GOLD PAINTED TOW TRACTOR AWARDED EACH QUARTER TO THE UNIT WITH THE BEST GROUND SAFETY RECORD.

9. 13 APRIL. IN A CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY CDR "BILL" STODDARD RELIEVED CDR HARRY ETTINGER AS COMMANDING OFFICER.

10. 15 APRIL -22 APRIL. VA-25 AND AIR WING TWO PARTICIPATED IN "OPERATION GRAY GHOST."

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11. 23 APRIL - 14 MAY. VA-25 DEPLOYED TO NAAS FALLON FOR WEAPONS DELIVERY TRAINING.
12. 29-30 MAY. SQUADRON PILOTS QUALIFIED FOR CARRIER LANDINGS ABOARD THE USS CORAL SEA.
13. 16 JUN - 1 JUL. CARRIER AIR WING TWO HELD A WEAPONS TRAINING EXERCISE WHILE EMBARKED ABOARD THE CORAL SEA.
14. 2 JULY. CORAL SEA HELD A DEPENDENTS DAY CRUISE, SAILING FROM ALAMEDA. VA-25 PARTICIPATED IN CVW-2 AIRPOWER DEMONSTRATION.
15. 8 JULY. CORAL SEA, CVW-2 AND VA-25 HELD ITS OPERATIONAL READINESS EXERCISE, OPERATION "BELAYING PIN."
16. 29 JULY. EMBARKED IN USS CORAL SEA, THE SQUADRON GOT UNDERWAY FOR WESTPAC 1966-1967 CRUISE.
17. 2 AUGUST. OPERATIONAL READINESS INSPECTION BEGAN, WITH VA-25 RECEIVING HIGHEST GRADE OF ANY UNIT ON THE SHIP WITH 94.49.
18. 2-5 AUGUST. LIBERTY IN HONOLULU!
19. 14 AUGUST. STOP AT YOKOSUKA, JAPAN FOR DEBRIEF WITH CVW-14 OF USS RANGER.
20. 22 AUGUST. STOP AT NAS CUBI PT, PHILIPPINES FOR MORE DEBRIEFINGS, DEPARTING 26 AUGUST FOR YANKEE STATION.
21. 26 AUGUST. USS CORAL SEA SUFFERS ENGINEERING CASUALTY, FORCING HER RETURN TO CUBI, AND THEN BACK TO YOKOSUKA.
22. 31 AUGUST. THE SHIP UNDERGOES REPAIRS, AT NS YOKOSUKA WHILE THE AIR WING FLIES OUT OF NAS ATSUGI.
23. 8 SEPTEMBER. SQUADRON AGAIN DEPARTS FOR YANKEE TEAM OPERATIONS ABOARD CORAL SEA.

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24. 13 SEPTEMBER. THE SQUADRON'S FIRST DAY OF OPERATIONS ON YANKEE STATION. LCDR R. M. RAUSA AND LT C. W. HARTMAN PARTICIPATED IN A SUCCESSFUL RESCUE OF A DOWNED USAF F-105 PILOT IN LAOS BY ACTING AS BACK-UP SAR UNIT ON THE SCENE.

25. 14 SEPTEMBER. SECOND DAY OF COMBAT. VA-25'S COMMANDING OFFICER, CDR "BILL" STODDARD SHOT DOWN AND LOST AT SEA. CDR JAMES BURDEN, THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER ASSUMED COMMAND.

26. 12 OCTOBER. CDR BURDEN LOGGED CORAL SEA'S 159,000 LANDING.

27. 12 OCTOBER. LT DEANE WOODS SHOT DOWN BY ENEMY GROUND FIRE IN CENTRAL NORTH VIETNAM, AND SUBSEQUENTLY CAPTURED.

28. 19 OCTOBER. DEPARTED FOR NAS CUBI PT, AFTER 36 DAYS ON YANKEE STATION.

29. 31 OCTOBER. DEPARTED CUBI FOR YANKEE STATION.

30. 6 NOVEMBER. LCDR RALPH SMITH AND ENSIGN (LTJG) LARRY GARDINER ENGAGED IN A SUCCESSFUL RESCUE OF DOWNED AIR FORCE PILOT ESCORTING RESCUE HELO INTO AND OUT OF ENEMY TERRITORY.

31. 8 NOVEMBER. CDR JIM BURDEN LOGGED HIS 100TH CORAL SEA LANDING TO BECOME VA-25'S FIRST CORAL SEA "CENTURION."

32. 18 NOVEMBER. LTJG BRUCE MARCUS NARROWLY ESCAPED BEING SHOT DOWN BY RUSSIAN BUILT SURFACE TO AIR MISSILES.

33. 26 NOVEMBER. PETTY OFFICER RUSSELL WAS CRUSHED TO DEATH IN A FLIGHT DECK ACCIDENT WHEN A ROCKET POD FELL FROM A FOLDED A-1H WING DURING MAINTENANCE WORK.

34. 11 NOVEMBER. LTJG JIM LYNNE AND LTJG LARRY GARDINER LOCATED A CORAL SEA A-4 PILOT DOWN IN THE WATER AT NIGHT AND EFFECTED HIS RESCUE.

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35. 4 DECEMBER. THE SHIP AGAIN DEPARTED FOR NAS CUBI PT. WITH THE SQUADRON EMBARKED. AN AWARDS CEREMONY WAS HELD ABOARD SHIP FOR AIR WING OFFICERS, IN WHICH THEY WERE PRESENTED WITH AIR MEDALS EARNED DURING THE LAST AT-SEA PERIOD.

36. 20 DECEMBER. THE UNIT ARRIVED IN HONG KONG FOR A SIX DAY STAY OVER THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

37. 28 DECEMBER. THE SQUADRON EMBARKED IN CORAL SEA ONCE AGAIN ARRIVED ON YANKEE STATION FOR OPERATIONS.

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B. BASIC NARRATIVE

1. COMMAND ORGANIZATION AND RELATIONS:

A. COMMANDING OFFICERS AND DATES OF COMMAND. COMMANDER HARRY E. ETTINGER, USN, 504133, COMMANDED ATTACK SQUADRON TWENTY FIVE THROUGH MOST OF ITS FIRST COMBAT CRUISE, WHICH ENDED ON 22 NOVEMBER 1965, AND WAS RELIEVED ON 13 APRIL 1966 BY COMMANDER C. W. "BILL" STODDARD, USN, 521996, IN A SPECIAL CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY HELD AT NAS LEMOORE, CALIFORNIA. COMMANDER STODDARD COMMANDED THE SQUADRON THROUGH THE REMAINDER OF THE TRAINING CYCLE AND OPERATIONAL READINESS INSPECTION. ON 14 SEPTEMBER 1966, DURING THE SECOND DAY OF COMBAT OPERATIONS CDR STODDARD WAS KILLED IN ACTION IN NORTH VIETNAM. THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER, COMMANDER "JIM" BURDEN, USN, 506760, ASSUMED COMMAND IMMEDIATELY, AND SINCE THEN HAS REMAINED IN COMMAND. VA-25'S PRESENT EXECUTIVE OFFICER IS COMMANDER "CLIFF" CHURCH, USN, 532711.

B. LOCATION OF HEADQUARTERS OR HOMEPORT. VA-25 IS BASED AT NAS LEMOORE, CALIFORNIA, THE HOME OF MANY LIGHT ATTACK SQUADRONS. UPON RETURN IN NOVEMBER FROM ITS 1965 WESTPAC COMBAT CRUISE, VA-25 RETURNED TO LEMOORE, AND REMAINED THERE UNTIL DEPLOYED TO NAAS FALLON, NEVADA, FOR A WEAPONS TRAINING EXERCISE AND COMPETITIVE EXERCISE FROM 23 APRIL TO 14 MAY. THE SQUADRON REMAINED AT LEMOORE EXCEPT FOR SHORT DEPLOYMENTS ABOARD THE USS CORAL SEA UNTIL 13 JUNE, WHEN THE COMMAND WAS EMBARKED IN THE CORAL SEA FOR THE REMAINING PRE-DEPLOYMENT TRAINING EXERCISES. ON 29 JULY, THE CORAL SEA SAILED FOR HAWAII, THE FIRST LEG OF ITS 1966-1967 WESTPAC CRUISE.

C. MISSION AND FUNCTION OF COMMAND; CHANGES DURING THE YEAR AND AUTHORITY FOR THEM. THE MISSION OF ATTACK SQUADRON TWENTY FIVE IS THAT OF A CARRIER ATTACK SQUADRON WHICH IS TO CONDUCT OFFENSIVE AIR-TO-SURFACE ATTACK

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(U) OPERATIONS WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS DELIVERY. VA-25

IS ASSIGNED THE FOLLOWING OPERATIONAL TASKS:

(1)(U) DESTROY ENEMY NAVAL UNITS AND SHIPPING.

(2)(U) DEMOLISH ENEMY INSTALLATIONS INCLUDING AIRCRAFT AND SUBMARINES AT THEIR BASES.

(3)(U) SUPPORT AMPHIBIOUS OR LAND COMBAT OPERATIONS.

(C) IT IS FITTING TO NOTE THAT DUE TO THE UNIQUE NATURE OF THE VIETNAM CONFLICT VA-25 HAS EMPLOYED SEVERAL SUBSIDIARY TECHNIQUES THAT FALL UNDER THE GENERAL CATEGORY OF SUPPORT OF AMPHIBIOUS OR LAND COMBAT OPERATIONS. THESE ARE WELL SUITED TO THE CAPABILITIES OF THE A-1 AIRCRAFT, AND INCLUDE RESCUE COMBAT AIR PATROL (RESCAP) AND NAVAL GUNFIRE SUPPORT. THE "SPAD" IS ABLE TO SEARCH FOR DOWNED PILOTS FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME AND THEN REMAIN OVERHEAD FOR EXTENDED PERIODS AND PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR HIM WITH ITS ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF FIREPOWER AND THE CAPABILITY OF ACCURATE DELIVERY. FURTHER, THE A-1 CAN ESCORT RESCUE HELICOPTERS WITH COMPARATIVELY SLOW SPEEDS TO THE SCENE, WHILE CONTINUALLY PROVIDING PROTECTION FOR THE HELICOPTER AND CREW. IN ADDITION TO THIS CAPABILITY, THE "SPAD" CAN ACT AS SPOTTERS FOR NAVAL GUNFIRE, DIRECTING FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF ALTITUDE, ACCURATE GUNFIRE AGAINST HOSTILE TARGETS. THE SPADS ARE ALSO ABLE TO PROVIDE INSTANT RETALIATION AGAINST SHORE BATTERIES ENGAGED IN COUNTERFIRE AGAINST PARTICIPATING SHIPS.

D.(U) COMPOSITION OF COMMAND.¹ VA-25 HAS BEEN FLYING FOR MANY YEARS THE RELIABLE DOUGLAS A-1H SKYRAIDER,² NICKNAMED BY PILOTS, THE "SPAD."

1 VA-25's complement of officers and men as of 31 December 1966 can be found in the documentary annex of this report. 2 see documentary annex for a photograph of the A-1H "SKYRAIDER."

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CURRENTLY VA-25 IS ASSIGNED TWELVE (12) AIRCRAFT, NE 571 THROUGH 582,

BUREAU NUMBERS ARE:

NE 571	135 356	NE 577	135 286
NE 572	137 593	NE 578	139 803
NE 573	139 713	NE 579	139 821
NE 574	139 779	NE 580	139 734
NE 575	137 517	NE 581	139 680
NE 576	139 780	NE 582	135 275

2. OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES.

A. AFTER APPROXIMATELY ONE MONTH'S LEAVE FOLLOWING THE 1965 WESTPAC COMBAT CRUISE, VA-25 BEGAN ITS TRAINING CYCLE IN EARNEST ON 10 JANUARY 1966. IN FEBRUARY 1966, VA-25 SPADS ENGAGED IN CARRIER QUALIFICATIONS ABOARD USS CONSTELLATION, ONE OF THE NAVY'S NEWEST AND LARGEST FLATTOPS. THE CONSTELLATION WAS ON HER SHAKEDOWN CRUISE FOLLOWING AN EXTENSIVE SIX MONTH OVERHAUL PERIOD.

ON 15 AND 16 FEBRUARY, COMFAIRALAMEDA CONDUCTED THE SQUADRON'S ANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE/MATERIAL INSPECTION. A VERY RESPECTABLE GRADE OF 92.54, OR EXCELLENT, WAS ASSIGNED, AS ALL HANDS WORKED VERY HARD IN MAINTAINING VA-25'S TRADITIONALLY HIGH STANDARDS. DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS VA-25 FLEW NIGHT AND DAY TO TRAIN FOR THE FORTHCOMING WESTPAC CRUISE, AND ON 13 APRIL 1966, CDR BILL STODDARD BECAME COMMANDING OFFICER.

FROM 15 APRIL TO 22 APRIL, AIR WING TWO AND VA-25 PARTICIPATED IN OPERATION "GRAY GHOST," AN EXERCISE VERY SIMILAR TO THE OPERATION, "BELAYING PIN," MENTIONED LATER IN THIS REPORT. AIR WING AIRCRAFT ACTED AS "AGGRESSOR FORCES" DURING THE WEEK-LONG EXERCISE, SIMULATING ATTACKS AGAINST SHIPS OFF SHORE, AND AGAINST AIRCRAFT ATTEMPTING TO PENETRATE INLAND OFF THE COAST OF CALIFORNIA.

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ON 23 APRIL, VA-25 MOVED ITS OPERATIONS TO NAAS FALLON, NEVADA, FOR AN INTENSIFIED THREE WEEKS OF TRAINING IN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS DELIVERY TECHNIQUES. HIGH WINDS AT THE TIME PLAYED HAVOC WITH THE EFFORTS OF THE PILOTS TO ACHIEVE THEIR "E's" DURING THE GRADED COMPETITIVE EXERCISE.

ON 28 MAY THE SQUADRON GOT ITS FIRST LOOK AT ITS NEW HOME, THE USS CORAL SEA. DAY AND NIGHT CARRIER QUALIFICATIONS WERE CONDUCTED ABOARD THE CARRIER, WHILE THE NUCLEUS OF THE SQUADRON REMAINED AT LEMOORE. THIS ARRANGEMENT WAS SHORTLIVED, HOWEVER, AND THE SQUADRON DEPARTED NAS LEMOORE AND EMBARKED IN CORAL SEA ON 13 JUNE TO REMAIN ABOARD UNTIL FEBRUARY 23, 1967. OPERATING OUT OF ALAMEDA WITH ATTACK CARRIER AIR WING TWO EMBARKED, CORAL SEA PARTICIPATED IN A WEAPONS TRAINING EXERCISE OFF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COAST UNTIL THE END OF JUNE. AT THIS TIME, CORAL SEA RETURNED TO ALAMEDA AND MANY OF THE SQUADRON PERSONNEL WENT ON WELL EARNED LEAVE AND LIBERTY OVER A LONG INDEPENDENCE DAY WEEKEND.

THE CORAL SEA CONDUCTED VARIOUS EXERCISES IN JULY INCLUDING OPERATION "BELAYING PIN," WHICH SIMULATED THE TACTICAL ENVIRONMENT ANTICIPATED IN VIETNAM COMBAT OPERATIONS. THE CHOCOLATE MOUNTAIN AND TWENTY NINE PALMS TARGET COMPLEXES WERE UTILIZED FOR THIS EVOLUTION. VA-25'S GRADE FOR THIS OPERATIONAL READINESS EXERCISE WAS 94, WHILE THE AIR WING RECEIVED A 93.5 AND A "WELL DONE" FROM ADM WALKER IN HIS CRITIQUE.

AT 0800 ON THE TWENTY-NINTH OF JULY THE SHIP GOT UNDERWAY FOR ITS WESTPAC COMMITMENT. A GOOD PART OF THE CREW TOOK A FINAL LOOK AT THE SAN FRANCISCO SKYLINE AS CORAL SEA PASSED BENEATH THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE. A COURSE WAS SET FOR HAWAIIAN WATERS, AND ALL HANDS MADE FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE FORTHCOMING OPERATIONAL READINESS INSPECTION.

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THE ORI BEGAN ON 2 AUGUST AND CONTINUED FOR FIVE DAYS DURING WHICH VA-25 SCORED 94.49 POINTS, THE HIGHEST GRADE ASSIGNED TO AN AIR WING TWO SQUADRON. TWO DAYS OF LIBERTY, INTERSPERSED DURING THIS PERIOD, PROVIDED TIME FOR VISITS TO HONOLULU AND WAIKIKI AND ON 6 AUGUST THE SHIP BEGAN ITS LAST LEG ON ITS JOURNEY TO THE FAR EAST. STOPS WERE MADE AT NAVAL STATION YOKOSUKA WHERE AN EXCHANGE OF BRIEFINGS WITH THE USS RANGER WAS HELD PRIOR TO RANGER'S RETURN TO CONUS. CORAL SEA THEN MOVED SOUTH TO NAS CUBI POINT, PHILIPPINES, FOR MORE BRIEFINGS AND ON 26 AUGUST THE SHIP DEPARTED FOR YANKEE STATION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

THAT SAME DAY, HOWEVER, DURING NIGHT FLYING OPERATIONS, THE CORAL SEA SUFFERED AN ENGINEERING CASUALTY. A BLADE FROM ONE OF THE SHIP'S SCREWS FAILED AND IMPACTED ON THE SHAFT OF THE ADJACENT PROPELLER. MAJOR REPAIRS WERE REQUIRED, AND AFTER AN ABBREVIATED STOP THAT NIGHT AT CUBI POINT, CORAL SEA LIMPED BACK TO YOKOSUKA.

THE AIR WING DEPLOYED ITS AIRCRAFT TO NAS ATSUGI WHILE YARD WORKERS PERFORMED THE DEMANDING TASK OF REPLACING THE DAMAGED SHAFT AND ALL FOUR SCREWS IN A RECORD EIGHT DAYS. CORAL SEA DEPARTED YOKOSUKA ON 8 SEPTEMBER, ARRIVED ON YANKEE STATION FIVE DAYS LATER, AND LAUNCHED THE FIRST COMBAT SORTIES OF THE DEPLOYMENT ON THE MORNING OF THE THIRTEENTH.

ON THIS FIRST DAY OF OPERATIONS A USAF F-105 PILOT EJECTED OVER EASTERN LAOS, LT CHARLIE HARTMAN AND LT (NOW LCDR) R. M. RAUSA, ESCORTED A NAVY HELICOPTER ACROSS NORTH VIETNAM NEAR CAPE MUI RON. LT HARTMAN, A VIETNAM VETERAN, GAVE THE LEAD TO LCDR RAUSA, WHO WAS ON HIS FIRST COMBAT FLIGHT, WHEN LT HARTMAN'S RADIO BEGAN MALFUNCTIONING. THEY ESCORTED THE HELO TO THE SCENE, BUT REMAINED OUT OF THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE DOWNED PILOT WHILE AN AIR FORCE RESCUE UNIT EFFECTED THE ACTUAL RESCUE. THE VA-25 PILOTS THEN ESCORTED THEIR HELICOPTER BACK TO THE GULF OF TONKIN.³

³ see documentary annex for the congratulating message.

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(C) HOWEVER, TRAGEDY STRUCK VA-25 ON THE VERY NEXT DAY WHEN THE COMMANDING OFFICER, COMMANDER STODDARD, WAS SHOT DOWN BY A RUSSIAN BUILT SAM MISSILE AND LOST AT SEA A FEW MILES OFF THE COAST AT VINH, A HEAVILY DEFENDED CITY IN CENTRAL NORTH VIETNAM. HE HAD BEEN ON AN ARMED RECONNAISSANCE MISSION. HIS WINGMAN, LCDR RALPH SMITH SUCCESSFULLY EVADED SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES BECAUSE OF CDR STODDARD'S TIMELY WARNING. THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER, COMMANDER JAMES BURDEN IMMEDIATELY TOOK COMMAND WITH NO LETUP IN THE PACE OF OPERATIONS.

(C) SQUADRON PILOTS WERE ASSIGNED TWO PRIMARY MISSIONS IN OPERATIONS AGAINST THE NORTH VIETNAMESE - RESCUE AIR PATROL (RESCAP) AND ARMED RECONNAISSANCE (RECCE). ON RECCE MISSIONS VA-25'S A-1'S ATTACKED HIGHWAY AND RAILROAD BRIDGES, SUPPLY AREAS, BARGES, AND FLEETING TARGETS SUCH AS TRUCK CONVOYS. EXCEPT FOR INFREQUENT WEATHER DIVERT FLIGHTS INTO LAOS, PILOTS WERE PRIMARILY ASSIGNED STRIKES IN CENTRAL NORTH VIETNAM IN THE AREAS ENCOMPASSING HIGHWAYS 1A, 15 AND 116. SUPPLY-CARRYING BARGES AND MOTORIZED JUNKS SPOTTED ALONG THE COASTAL WATERWAYS WERE ESSENTIAL TARGETS AND WERE HIT ON AN ALMOST DAILY BASIS.

(U) DURING THIS FIRST PERIOD ON YANKEE STATION COMMANDER BURDEN LOGGED CORAL SEA'S 159,000TH LANDING.⁴ TRAGEDY AGAIN STRUCK WHEN, ON 12 OCTOBER, LT DEANE WOODS WAS HIT BY ENEMY GROUND FIRE DURING A RECCE MISSION ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE (25) MILES INLAND FROM THE COAST FROM HON ME ISLAND. HE BAILED OUT OF HIS STRICKEN AIRCRAFT AND LANDED ON A HILL BENEATH A TALL THICK JUNGLE CANOPY. CONCENTRATED RESCUE EFFORTS DURING THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS FAILED AS ENEMY TROOPS CLOSED IN ON THE DOWNED PILOT AND HELICOPTERS WERE UNABLE TO PLUCK LT WOODS FROM DANGER. AT ONE POINT, JUST AS THE HELO WAS WITHIN A

⁴ see documentary annex for a photograph of the cake cutting ceremony of the 159,000th landing.

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FEW YARDS OF HIS POSITION FOR PICKUP, LT WOODS VALIANTLY ORDERED THE RESCUE HELICOPTER AND A-1'S TO DEPART THE SCENE IMMEDIATELY BECAUSE OF THE PROXIMITY OF WELL-ARMED ENEMY TROOPS WHO COULD HAVE ENDANGERED THE AIRCRAFT. WITH HIS EMERGENCY RADIO DEAD AND HIS SIGNAL FLARES DEPLETED, THE SAR (SEARCH AND RESCUE) EFFORT WAS RELUCTANTLY BUT NECESSARILY TERMINATED. (IT HAS SINCE BEEN LEARNED THAT LT WOODS IS NOW A CAPTIVE OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE. HE HAS WRITTEN AT LEAST ONE LETTER HOME TO LET HIS FAMILY KNOW HE IS IN GOOD HEALTH AND BEING WELL TREATED)

ON 16 OCTOBER, LTJG NICHOLS, ACTING AS WINGMAN FOR LCDR SMITH IN ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO RESCUE LT WOODS, TOOK THE LEAD WHEN LCDR SMITH LOST HIS NAVIGATIONAL AIDS. WHEN OTHER A-1 AIRCRAFT WERE FORCED TO LEAVE THE SAR SCENE, HE ESCORTED A NAVY RESCUE HELICOPTER IN OVER AN OVERCAST CLOUD LAYER, AND MADE A CLOUD PENETRATION INTO UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY USING AUTOMATIC DIRECTION FINDING EQUIPMENT AS AN AID. ON ARRIVAL HE MADE REPEATED ROCKET AND STRAFING RUNS WITH 700-1000 FEET BETWEEN THE TERRAIN AND THE BASE OF THE CLOUD LAYER, SUCCESSFULLY PREVENTING ACCURATE GROUND FIRE ON THE HELICOPTER. ALTHOUGH THE RESCUE ATTEMPT WAS UNSUCCESSFUL, HE SUBSEQUENTLY ESCORTED THE HELO SAFELY TO SEA. LTJG NICHOLS EXPERIENCED A SEVERELY ROUGH RUNNING ENGINE SHORTLY AFTER DEPARTING THE SAR SCENE, BUT WAS ABLE TO MAKE IT SAFELY BACK TO THE SHIP. AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION, HE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS.

ON 19 OCTOBER, AFTER 36 DAYS ON STATION AND OVER 40 AT SEA, CORAL SEA, WITH VA-25 EMBARKED, DEPARTED THE COMBAT ZONE FOR A REST PERIOD IN SUBIC BAY, PHILIPPINES. THE WELCOME CHANGE OF PACE THERE WAS CONCLUDED AFTER NINE DAYS AT WHICH TIME CORAL SEA AGAIN DEPARTED FOR YANKEE TEAM OPERATIONS.

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ALTHOUGH VA-25 "SPADS" WERE NOT ASSIGNED SPECIAL STRIKE MISSIONS DUE TO THE VULNERABILITY OF THE AIRCRAFT IN HIGHLY DEFENDED AREAS, THE SQUADRON'S ROLE IN DELAYING MOVEMENT OF ENEMY TRAFFIC TOWARD SOUTH VIETNAM WAS INSTRUMENTAL TO THE WAR EFFORT. THE "SPAD" PILOTS WERE HIT BY ENEMY FIRE NEARLY TEN TIMES IN THE FIRST OPERATING PERIOD, BUT MAINTENANCE CREWS, WORKING AROUND THE CLOCK, PATCHED UP HOLES AND REPAIRED DAMAGE WITH A SPEED AND EFFECTIVENESS WHICH KEPT AIRCRAFT AVAILABILITY AT A STEADY HIGH.

VA-25'S SECOND ON-THE-LINE PERIOD BEGAN ON 31 OCTOBER AND CARRIED ON MUCH THE SAME AS THE FIRST. ON 6 NOVEMBER, LCDR SMITH AND ENS (NOW LTJG) GARDINER WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN THE RESCUE OF AN AIR FORCE PILOT BROUGHT DOWN INLAND BY HOSTILE GROUND FIRE. WEATHER CONDITIONS WERE UNFAVORABLE AND THE RESCUE WAS CARRIED OUT IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN. LCDR SMITH SUCCESSFULLY EVADED ENEMY GROUND FIRE DURING TRANSIT TO THE SAR AREA. RACING DAYLIGHT HE OBTAINED A SUCCESSFUL PICKUP IN THE TWILIGHT. ALTHOUGH FIRED UPON HE SUCCESSFULLY ESCORTED THE HELICOPTER BACK TO THE RESCUE DESTROYER DURING DARKNESS. THE PILOT WAS EVENTUALLY RETURNED SAFE AND UNINJURED TO HIS BASE.

COMMANDER BURDEN, COMMANDING OFFICER OF VA-25, RECORDED HIS 100TH CORAL SEA LANDING, BECOMING VA-25'S FIRST CORAL SEA "CENTURION," ON 8 NOVEMBER 1966.

LTJG J. S. LYNNE (NOW LT) AND LTJG L. E. GARDINER, WHILE ON A NIGHT FLIGHT ON 11 NOVEMBER, DIVERTED TO SEARCH FOR A CORAL SEA A-4 PILOT WHO EJECTED FROM HIS STRICKEN AIRCRAFT NEAR THE COAST AT NIGHT. THE TWO AVIATORS SOON LOCATED THE PILOT AND DIRECTED A NAVY HELICOPTER TO THE SCENE. A PROMPT AND PROFESSIONAL RESCUE WAS SOON EFFECTED.

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[REDACTED]

(C) A MAJOR TURNING POINT IN THE CRUISE FOR VA-25 CAME ON 18 NOVEMBER WHEN LCDR J. D. EHRET AND LTJG B. G. MARCUS WERE FIRED UPON BY THREE RUSSIAN BUILT SAM'S (SURFACE TO AIR MISSILES) JUST WEST OF HON ME ISLAND, AND FIVE (5) MILES INLAND. TWO MISSILES EXPLODED VERY NEAR LTJG MARCUS'S AIRCRAFT, BUT HE WAS ABLE TO AVOID DAMAGE TO HIS AIRCRAFT THROUGH A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONAL EXECUTION OF TACTICS WHICH ENABLED HIM TO ESCAPE FROM THE SUPER-SONIC MISSILES. AT THIS SAME TIME, THE WEATHER IN THE GULF OF TONKIN AND OVER VIETNAM BEGAN TO WORSEN, SERIOUSLY HAMPERING ACTIVITIES. ALSO, IN THIS PERIOD SEVERAL SPADS FROM OTHER SQUADRONS WERE SHOT DOWN. THIS COMBINATION OF BAD WEATHER AND RAPIDLY DEVELOPING ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENSES IN NORTH VIETNAM LED TO THE RESTRICTION OF ALL A-1 AIRCRAFT TO RESCAP DUTIES, COASTAL RECCE'S, WEATHER DIVERTS TO LAOS, AND CONTROLLED BOMBING IN THE VICINITY OF THE DMZ (DEMILITARIZED ZONE). THIS MEANT TO THE PILOTS OF VA-25, THE "FIST OF THE FLEET," THAT THEY WERE NO LONGER ALLOWED OVER ANY PART OF NORTH VIETNAM, EXCEPT IN CASE OF AN ACTUAL RESCAP OPERATION. TO FILL IN THE GAP DUE TO BAD WEATHER AND THE NEW RESTRICTIONS, VA-25 ASSUMED THE NEW ROLE OF NAVAL GUNFIRE SUPPORT. THIS INCLUDED ACTING AS AERIAL SPOTTERS FOR NAVAL GUNFIRE FROM DESTROYERS STATIONED OFF-SHORE JUST NORTH OF THE DMZ. THIS INCLUDED DIRECTING FIRE AGAINST COASTAL SHIPPING ATTEMPTING TO RUN SUPPLIES INTO SOUTH VIETNAM BY SEA. THIS MISSION WAS IMPLEMENTED AT THE START OF THE THIRD AT-SEA PERIOD.

(U) ONCE MORE TRAGEDY STRUCK WHEN ON 26 NOVEMBER, PETTY OFFICER HOLLIE B. RUSSELL, USN, 2905991, WAS CRUSHED TO DEATH ON THE FLIGHT DECK WHEN A 500LB LAU 3A ROCKET POD FELL ON HIM AS HE WAS WORKING ON VA-25 AIRCRAFT NUMBER 580.

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[REDACTED]

ENCLOSURE (1)

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(U) THE SECOND AT-SEA PERIOD ENDED ON 4 DECEMBER, AND CORAL SEA AGAIN HEADED FOR SUBIC BAY FOR A WELL EARNED REST. AFTER MORE THAN A WEEK IN SUBIC BAY CORAL SEA BEGAN A VOYAGE THAT TO MOST OF THE OFFICERS AND MEN WAS TO BECOME A HIGHLIGHT OF THE CRUISE. ON 20 DECEMBER CORAL SEA DROPPED ANCHOR IN HONG KONG HARBOR FOR SIX (6) MEMORABLE DAYS IN ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CITIES. AFTER SPENDING CHRISTMAS DAY THERE AND AFTER VALIANT ATTEMPTS TO "BUY OUT" THE MERCHANTS OF HONG KONG AND KOWLOON, CORAL SEA AND VA-25 WERE AGAIN UNDERWAY ON 26 DECEMBER FOR HER THIRD AND LAST TIME ON YANKEE STATION DURING THIS CRUISE.

(U) BY 28 DECEMBER CARRIER AIR WING TWO AND VA-25 WERE AGAIN CARRYING OUT OPERATIONS AGAINST NORTH VIETNAM, AND THE PACE OF OPERATIONS WAS ROUTINE TO THE LAST WORKING DAY OF 1966.

3. (C) SPECIAL TOPICS.

A. OPERATIONAL STATISTICS. FROM THE FIRST DAY ON YANKEE TEAM OPERATIONS TO 31 DECEMBER 1966, VA-25 "SPAD'S" EXPENDED A TOTAL OF 2,239,791 POUNDS OF ORDNANCE.

DURING THE ENTIRE YEAR VA-25 FLEW 3331 FLIGHTS AND AMASSED 7596.5 FLIGHT HOURS. TOTAL CARRIER LANDINGS CAME TO 1355. FLIGHT HOURS BY MONTH ARE LISTED BELOW.

JAN	367.7	MAY	697.3	SEP	1021.7
FEB	372.4	JUN	557.7	OCT	704.8
MAR	714.1	JUL	515.4	NOV	1087.8
APR	723.1	AUG	407.7	DEC	426.8

NEARLY 100% OF THE HOURS FLOWN AFTER SEPTEMBER WERE LOGGED AS COMBAT TIME.

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B. CASUALTIES OF MEN AND EQUIPMENT. THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS AND MEN OF VA-25 GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY:

ENS JAMES A. SINGLETERRY, USN, 685960

AMH3 HOLLIE B. RUSSELL, USN, 2905991

CDR C. W. STODDARD, USN, 521996

CDR STODDARD WAS AN ABLE AND COURAGEOUS LEADER, WHO ENTERED INTO BATTLE WITHOUT FEAR FOR HIS OWN SAFETY. ON MANY OCCASIONS HE PRESSED ON WITH HIS ATTACKS EVEN THOUGH THE TARGET WAS HEAVILY DEFENDED BY THE ENEMY. CDR STODDARD WAS NOT SATISFIED UNTIL HIS MEN WERE COMPLETELY QUALIFIED IN EVERY RESPECT TO GO INTO BATTLE WITH THE FOES OF THE UNITED STATES. FOR HIS COURAGE AND LEADERSHIP IN BATTLE, THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF VA-25 ARE PROUD TO HAVE SERVED UNDER HIS COMMAND.

AIRCRAFT LOST FROM ENEMY ACTION.

A-1H BUREAU NUMBER 139756, PILOTED BY CDR STODDARD, SHOT DOWN AND LOST AT SEA BY RUSSIAN BUILT SAM MISSILES ON 14 SEPTEMBER 1966 NEAR VINH.

A-1H BUREAU NUMBER 135323, PILOTED BY LT WOODS, SHOT DOWN BY 37MM ANTLAIRCRAFT GUNS ON 12 OCTOBER 1966, ABOUT 25 MILES INLAND FROM HON ME ISLAND.

MAJOR AIRCRAFT COMBAT DAMAGE.

A-1H BUREAU NUMBER 135323, VERY EARLY IN THE CRUISE WAS HIT BY A 37MM ANTLAIRCRAFT SHELL IN THE PORT OUTBOARD WING. EIGHT SQUARE FEET OF UPPER AND LOWER WING SKIN WAS REPLACED, AND THE AFT SHEAR WEB CAP WAS REPAIRED IN 260 MAN HOURS.

C. PERSONNEL, INCLUDING ADEQUACY OF MANNING LEVEL, REENLISTMENT RATES, ETC. REENLISTMENT RATES IN 1966 SHOWED FOUR (4) MEN ON FIRST TERM REENLISTING

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AND TWO CAREER MEN "SHIPPING OVER." BELOW IS A LISTING OF PAY GRADE ADVANCEMENTS DURING 1966.

E-3	12	E-7	1
E-4	21	E-8	0
E-5	4	E-9	1
E-6	1		

15 MEN, OUT OF 20 WHO TOOK THE TEST, HAVE PASSED THE HIGH SCHOOL GED EXAMINATIONS DURING THE PAST YEAR.

D. AWARDS, COMMENDATIONS, OR SPECIAL CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES RECEIVED.

SQUADRON PILOTS RECEIVED NUMEROUS AIR MEDALS FOR "MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT IN AERIAL FLIGHT AS PILOTS ATTACHED TO ATTACK SQUADRON TWENTY FIVE," AND LT C. W. HARTMAN, USN, 660843 RECEIVED THE SILVER STAR FOR HIS PART IN THE MIG KILL OF THE PREVIOUS CRUISE.

SEE THE DOCUMENTARY ANNEXES FOR A SPECIAL CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE ON A RESCUE OPERATION LT (NOW LCDR) R. M. RAUSA AND LT C. W. HARTMAN PARTICIPATED IN ON VA-25'S FIRST DAY ON YANKEE TEAM OPERATIONS. SEE ALSO THE DOCUMENTARY ANNEXES FOR A COPY OF THE CITATION AWARDED TO VA-25 BY THE U.S. NAVY OFFICE OF INFORMATION FOR ONE OF 30 EXEMPLARY MILITARY PERIODICALS IN A FIELD OF 500. ALSO INCLUDED IN THE ANNEX IS A COPY OF THAT PERIODICAL, A NEWSLETTER, OR WHAT VA-25 CALLS, A "FAMILYGRAM."

VA-25 IS ESPECIALLY PROUD TO HAVE WORN, PAINTED ON THE SIDE OF EACH AIRCRAFT⁵ IN THE SQUADRON, A LARGE "E" FOR EXCELLENCE, DURING THE ENTIRE YEAR 1966, AS A RESULT OF WINNING THE BATTLE EFFICIENCY AWARD IN 1965, AWARDED TO THE MOST OUTSTANDING SQUADRON OF ITS TYPE IN THE NAVY. THE COMPETITION FOR THE "E" IS KEEN AND CAREFULLY GRADED IN EACH AND EVERY AREA OF ENDEAVOR.

⁵ see photograph of a VA-25 "SPAD" in the documentary annex

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E. SPECIAL CEREMONIES. ON 5 MARCH, THE SQUADRON HELD AN AWARDS CEREMONY AND OPEN HOUSE. INCLUDED WAS A PERSONNEL INSPECTION. MANY OF THE OFFICERS AND MEN RECEIVED FINAL DECORATIONS FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES DURING THE 1965 CRUISE. FIFTEEN OFFICERS AND TWELVE ENLISTED MEN RECEIVED AWARDS. AMONG THEM WERE TWO DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSSES, TWELVE AIR MEDALS, THIRTEEN NAVY COMMENDATION MEDALS, TWO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY COMMENDATIONS FOR ACHIEVEMENT, AND ONE PURPLE HEART. THE ENLISTED MEN RECEIVED NINE GOOD CONDUCT MEDALS AND ONE NAVY COMMENDATION FOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD.

ON 25 MARCH THE SQUADRON CONDUCTED A SPECIAL AWARDS CEREMONY IN TRIBUTE TO A FORMER SQUADRON MATE, LCDR HAROLD E. GRAY, JR., WHO LOST HIS LIFE ON A COMBAT MISSION OVER NORTH VIETNAM ON 7 JULY 1965. HIS WIDOW, MRS. CAROLINE GRAY OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, ALONG WITH LCDR GRAY'S PARENTS AND MEMBERS OF HIS IMMEDIATE FAMILY ATTENDED THE CEREMONY. COMMANDER H. E. ETTINGER MADE POSTHUMOUS PRESENTATIONS TO MRS. GRAY OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS WITH A GOLD STAR IN LIEU OF A SECOND AWARD, AN AIR MEDAL WITH GOLD STARS IN LIEU OF SECOND, THIRD AND FOURTH AWARDS, AND THE PURPLE HEART.

IN EARLY APRIL VA-25 HELD A MEMORIAL SERVICE IN REMEMBRANCE OF ENSIGN JAMES A. SINGLETERRY, KILLED IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT EARLIER IN THE MONTH. THIS SERVICE WAS HELD AT THE NAS LEMOORE CHAPEL.

CAPTAIN BOYDSTUN, COMMANDING OFFICER OF NAS LEMOORE, PRESENTED THE "GOLDEN MULE" TO THE SQUADRON ON APRIL 12. THE "GOLDEN MULE" IS SYMBOLIC OF EXCELLENCE IN SAFETY CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF GROUND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT (YELLOW-VEHICLES) AT NAS LEMOORE. SELDOM IS THE AWARD ACHIEVED BY ANY OF THE FLEET UNITS AT NAS LEMOORE, AS THE RAG SQUADRONS USUALLY WIN THE AWARD.

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AN IMPRESSIVE CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY OCCURRED IN THE SQUADRON ON 13 APRIL AS COMMANDER C. W. STODDARD "FLEETED UP" TO RELIEVE COMMANDER H. E. ETTINGER AS COMMANDING OFFICER OF ATTACK SQUADRON TWENTY FIVE.

THE NEXT CEREMONY TO BE HELD IN THE SQUADRON WAS ON 20 SEPTEMBER WHEN ALL OF THE OFFICERS AND MEN GATHERED ON THE FLIGHT DECK OF USS CORAL SEA⁶ TO SAY A LAST FAREWELL TO THEIR COMMANDING OFFICER, COMMANDER C. W. STODDARD, WHO WAS SHOT DOWN AND KILLED ON THE SECOND DAY OF OPERATIONS.

THE AIR WING AIRCREWS GATHERED ON THE HANGAR DECK ON 4 DECEMBER TO RECEIVE AIR MEDALS AWARDED FOR THE FIRST AT-SEA PERIOD OPERATIONS. ALL OF THE PILOTS WHO FLEW IN THAT PERIOD RECEIVED ONE AIR MEDAL.

ON 5 DECEMBER A MEMORIAL SERVICE WAS HELD ON THE FLIGHT DECK FOR PETTY OFFICER HOLLIE B. RUSSELL WHO WAS KILLED ON 26 NOVEMBER IN A FLIGHT DECK ACCIDENT.

F. SOCIAL FUNCTIONS. THE SQUADRON HELD AN ALL HANDS PARTY ON 21 FEBRUARY IN ORDER TO CELEBRATE A SUCCESSFUL CRUISE WITH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS. IT WAS TRULY AN OUTSTANDING PARTY, HELD AT THE AIR STATION CPO CLUB AND FEATURING A DELICIOUS BUFFET SUPPER WITH LIVE MUSIC FOR DANCING AND PLENTY OF LIQUID REFRESHMENTS.

MOST OF THE SQUADRON OFFICERS ATTENDED A PARTY SPONSORED BY THE AIR WING, WITH SHIP'S COMPANY OFFICERS AS THE GUESTS, AT THE ALAMEDA OFFICERS CLUB IN JUNE.

DURING THE WESTPAC CRUISE, THE SQUADRON HELD SEVERAL "REST AND RELAXATION" PARTIES, THE MOST NOTABLE BEING THE "ALL HANDS BEACH PICNIC PARTY" AFTER THE SECOND AT SEA PERIOD. THIS WAS HELD AT A BEACH AT NAS CUBI POINT.

6 see documentary annex for two 18
photographs of the memorial service

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C. LESSONS LEARNED, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

HERE FOLLOWS COPIES OF VA-25 CRUISE REPORTS FOR THE FIRST TWO AT SEA PERIODS OF THE 1966-1967 WESTPAC CRUISE, WHICH CONTAIN A THOROUGH STUDY OF LESSONS LEARNED, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS.

ATTACK SQUADRON TWENTY FIVE CRUISE REPORT 13 SEPTEMBER - 19 OCTOBER 1966.

1. GENERAL COMMENTS:

IT IS CONSIDERED THAT A GREAT DEAL WOULD BE GAINED IN INITIAL SQUADRON FAMILIARIZATION WITH THE COMBAT AREA, IF TWO SENIOR PILOTS SUCH AS THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER/OPERATIONS OFFICER CAME TO YANKEE STATION DIRECT FROM THE ORI. BY FLYING 3 OR 4 FLIGHTS WITH SISTER SQUADRONS THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO ORIENT AND UPDATE THEIR SQUADRON ON THE CURRENT YANKEE TEAM SITUATION. THE COSTS OF SUCH A LIAISON TRIP WOULD BE SMALL IN RELATION TO THE BENEFITS GAINED. THE NORTH VIETNAM ENVIRONMENT HAS CHANGED SO MUCH AND IS CHANGING SO RAPIDLY THAT THIS APPROACH APPEARS MORE VALID THAN EVER.

2. OPERATIONS:

A. LESSONS LEARNED:

A1 AIRCRAFT SHOULD NOT FLY INTO THE SAM ENVELOPE ON ARRECCE MISSIONS WITHOUT SUPPORT.

COMMENT:

CURRENTLY A1 AIRCRAFT ARE RESTRICTED FROM OPERATION WITHIN HIGH THREAT ENVELOPES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF RESCAP.

RECOMMENDATION:

A1'S CAN SUCCESSFULLY FLY INTO SAM ENVELOPE, IF PROPERLY SUPPORTED BY ECM AND IRON HAND AIRCRAFT, ON RESCAP, PREPLANNED STRIKE AND INTERDICTION MISSIONS.

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B. LESSONS LEARNED:

CURRENT HIGH THREAT MISSILE SITES AND HEAVY CONCENTRATIONS OF AAA MUST BE KNOWN AT ALL TIMES.

COMMENT:

MISSILE SITE NEAR HA TINH DESIGNATED HIGH THREAT ABOUT 15 SEPTEMBER. NO FURTHER ACTIVITY NOTED UNTIL TWO MISSILES FIRED ON 29 SEPTEMBER. CURRENT INTELLIGENCE IS REQUIRED AT ALL TIMES IN ORDER TO PERMIT EFFECTIVE OPERATIONS.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

PROVIDE MORE ELINT AND PHOTO COVERAGE OF THE SOUTHERN PANHANDLE. AWARENESS OF THE THREAT AND GOOD HEAD WORK WOULD ALLOW MORE SUCCESSFUL RECCE AND INTERDICTION AROUND THIS AREA. ONCE MISSILE SITES HAVE BEEN LOCATED, LAUNCH IRON HAND MISSIONS TO DESTROY THE EQUIPMENT.

C. LESSONS LEARNED:

ACCURATE RADAR ASSISTANCE FROM E2/E1 AIRCRAFT OR SHIPS IS NECESSARY WHEN WORKING AT NIGHT OR UNDER LOW VISIBILITY (5NM) CONDITIONS.

COMMENT:

PIRAZ SHIP "ON" STATION WITH GOOD TACAN IS HIGHLY BENEFICIAL. A1'S HAVE BEEN GIVEN STEER'S FROM E2'S THAT HAVE BEEN AS MUCH AS TWENTY (20) MILES IN ERROR. E2 RADAR IS EXCELLENT FOR EW AND CONTROL OF AIRBORNE AIRCRAFT. BECAUSE OF ITS DESIGN, LAND MASSES ARE NOT WELL DEFINED MAKING IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR E2 CONTROLLERS TO GIVE OTHER AIRCRAFT (LOW FLYERS) ACCURATE VECTORS TO LAND POINTS.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

ALL CODED NAVIGATION POINTS BE STANDARDIZED AMONG OPERATIONS YANKEE TEAM RADAR STATIONS: EA1F, E1B, E2A, PIRAZ, SAR DD'S. THE SAR DD'S

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COULD PROVIDE ACCURATE RADAR ASSISTANCE TO RECCE AIRCRAFT IF AN APPROPRIATE RADIO FREQUENCY WAS DESIGNATED FOR THIS USE.

D. LESSONS LEARNED:

OVI NIGHT HAWK AIRCRAFT ARE VERY ADVANTAGEOUS IN LOCATING TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY BUT OVI PILOTS ARE NOT AWARE OF THE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS IN NVN.

COMMENT:

DECISION TO ATTACK DESIGNATED TARGETS MUST BE MADE BY FLIGHT LEADERS.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. OVI PILOTS BECOME MORE FAMILIAR WITH NVN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS (SAM/AAA).
2. E2'S DO NOT GIVE VECTORS TO TARGETS UNTIL REQUESTED BY ATTACKING AIRCRAFT.
3. NIGHT HAWK OPERATIONS BE EXTENDED TO PROVIDE DAYTIME COVERAGE. DAYTIME BACK COUNTRY USE MAY PROVE INTERESTING.

E. LESSONS LEARNED:

TO AVOID MISUSE OF AVAILABLE ORDNANCE, ORDNANCE LOADS MUST BE MADE MORE COMPATIBLE WITH MISSIONS ASSIGNED.

COMMENT:

ORDNANCE HAS BEEN WASTEFULLY JETTISONED BECAUSE EXCESSIVE FUEL AND ORDNANCE LOADS HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED WITH NO MISSIONS AVAILABLE.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. ARRECCE MISSIONS SHOULD CARRY APPROPRIATE ORDNANCE AND FUEL FOR THE MISSION - - NOT DOUBLE CYCLE FUEL ON A SINGLE MISSION WHEN AERIAL RESPOT IS UTILIZED SINCE MORE OFTEN THAN NOT ORDNANCE WILL HAVE TO BE JETTISONED.

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2. INTERDICTION MISSIONS: I.E., BRIDGE BUSTING, ROAD CRATERING, ETC., SHOULD CARRY 2 MK83 AND 8 MK82 GP BOMBS, SOME OF THESE BOMBS SHOULD CARRY TIME DELAYED FUSES. AIRCRAFT SHOULD BE SCHEDULED FOR SINGLE CYCLE OPERATIONS WITH 100 GALLONS EXTERNAL FUEL.

3. RESCAP MISSIONS SHOULD CARRY FULL EXTERNAL FUEL, BE SCHEDULED TRIPLE CYCLE CARRYING EITHER 4 LAU 32'S, 2 LAU3'S, OR 2 LAU 10'S (PREFERRED) WITH VT FUSED HEADS. THIS WOULD PERMIT THREE (3) HOUR ON STATION TIME FOR EACH SECTION LAUNCHED. THEREFORE, ONLY 2 SECTIONS PER DAY COULD COVER THE SHIPS RESCAP COMMITMENT.

4. SPECIAL/STRIKE RESCAP SECTION SHOULD BE LAUNCHED EARLY ENOUGH TO BE ON STATION (1/2 HOUR PRIOR TO JET LAUNCH), THEY SHOULD BE LOADED WITH 2 LAU 10 WITH VT FUSED MK32 WARHEADS AND 4 LAU 32 OR 2 LAU 3. FUEL LOAD SHOULD BE 100 GALLONS EXTERNAL, SCHEDULED FOR SINGLE CYCLE. THIS SECTION WOULD GO IN FIRST TO LOCATE THE DOWNED AVIATOR OVER LAND AND PROTECT HIM. THE HU-16, RESCAP, ALREADY AIRBORNE, WOULD ESCORT THE RESCUE VEHICLE TO THE SCENE, PROTECTING IT.

F. LESSONS LEARNED:

A1'S COULD BE EFFECTIVELY UTILIZED IN A CLOSE AIR SUPPORT ROLE.

COMMENT:

DUE TO THE HIGH VULNERABILITY OF A1'S IN A SAM ENVIRONMENT, IT IS FEASIBLE TO UTILIZE THEM TO THEIR UTMOST CAPABILITY; I.E., HEAVY ORDNANCE LOADS, LONG STAYING POWER, ACCURATE TARGET ACQUISITION AND DESTRUCTION.

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RECOMMENDATION:

SORTIE COMPETITION BETWEEN SERVICES SHOULD BE DISPENSED WITH AND THE ASSIGNED UNITS SHOULD UTILIZE THEIR AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO THEIR DESIGNED COMBINED CAPABILITIES, THEREBY ACCOMPLISHING THE ASSIGNED GOALS AS A TEAM RATHER THAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL SERVICE.

G. LESSONS LEARNED:

SAR COORDINATION BETWEEN SURFACE UNITS AND AIRBORNE UNITS IS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN OPTIMUM.

COMMENT:

SURFACE SAR UNITS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO STATION RESCAP/SAR AIRCRAFT INSIDE THE KNOWN SAM ENVELOPES AND CONTROL THEM ON RADIO FREQUENCIES OTHER THAN SAR PRIMARY OR SAR SECONDARY.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. CONTROL ALL RESCAP/SAR AIRCRAFT ON THE SAME FREQUENCY, PREFERABLY SAR PRIMARY.
2. ALLOW RESCAP/SAR AIRCRAFT TO STATION THEMSELVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH KNOWN REQUIREMENTS.
3. SURFACE SAR UNITS SHOULD BE COGNIZANT OF ENEMY AIR AND SURFACE DEFENSES.
4. RESCAP AIRCRAFT SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO MONITOR ATTACK PRIMARY FREQUENCY DURING STRIKES.
5. SENIOR RESCAP PILOT ON STATION SHOULD HAVE A UNIVERSAL CALL SIGN; I.E., "GUARDIAN."

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H. LESSONS LEARNED:

A1'S HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO AERIAL RESPOT.

COMMENT:

THIS IS BAD FOR CREW AND PILOT MORALE. IT IS ALSO FATIGUING TO PILOTS INVOLVED.

RECOMMENDATION:

THIS MISSION SHOULD BE DELETED FROM A1 CAPABILITIES. IF DECK LOADING REQUIRES AERIAL RESPOTS, A REVIEW OF AVAILABLE DECK SPACE SHOULD BE MADE WITH AIRCRAFT REASSIGNED AS NECESSARY TO PERMIT MORE FAVORABLE OPERATING CONDITIONS.

I. LESSONS LEARNED:

COORDINATION BETWEEN THE CARRIER'S STRIKE, APPROACH, TOWER AND PADDLES IS LESS THAN DESIRABLE.

COMMENT:

AIRCRAFT SHOULD NOT BE REQUIRED TO REPORT ORDNANCE AND EMERGENCIES TO ALL AGENCIES.

RECOMMENDATION:

CARRIER CONTROLLING AGENCIES RELAY THIS INFORMATION TO ALL PERSONS CONCERNED. WHEN PILOTS REPORT "MEATBALL," THEY SHOULD NOT BE REQUIRED TO REPORT HUNG/UNEXPENDED ORDNANCE.

J. LESSONS LEARNED:

EALF'S HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED TO FLY SINGLY.

COMMENT:

ONE AIRCRAFT WAS LOST WHEN ALL ELECTRICAL POWER FAILED FORCING THE PILOT TO DITCH.

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RECOMMENDATION:

ONE ALH FLY ESCORT WITH 2 LAU 3/32 AND SAME FUEL AS EALF WHEN POSSIBLE.

K. LESSONS LEARNED:

SPECIAL RESCAP FLIGHTS MUST BE PROVIDED WITH THE MOST SUITED HELO.

COMMENT:

ONE KNOWN RESCUE ATTEMPT PROBABLY FAILED BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF A HELO SUITED TO THE MISSION WHILE THE PROPER HELO WAS AVAILABLE BUT NOT FUELED TO ENTER THE SAR AREA AT THE NECESSARY TIME.

RECOMMENDATION:

PRE-PLANNING AND COORDINATION MUST BE EFFECTED BETWEEN ALL SAR UNITS. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, UTILIZE THE PILOTS WHO ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE SAR SCENE IF REPEATED ATTEMPTS ARE REQUIRED.

3. MAINTENANCE: NO COMMENT.
4. ORDNANCE: NO COMMENT.
5. ADMINISTRATION: NO COMMENT.
6. SAFETY: NO COMMENT.

ATTACK SQUADRON TWENTY FIVE CRUISE REPORT 31 OCTOBER - 3 DECEMBER 1966.

1. GENERAL COMMENTS:

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THOSE ITEMS LISTED IN 2 BELOW, THIS ON-LINE PERIOD PROGRESSED IN A RELATIVELY SMOOTH MANNER. GENERAL SAFETY PRACTICES REQUIRED THE POSITIVE ATTENTION OF ALL HANDS, PARTICULARLY IN FLIGHT DECK AND HANGAR DECK OPERATIONS.

2. OPERATIONS:

A. LESSONS LEARNED:

CONDITION I RESCAP REGARDLESS OF AIRCRAFT SPEED IS NOT SATISFACTORY

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IF THE AREA TO BE COVERED IS UNPROTECTED AT THE MOMENT OF NEED.

COMMENT:

PILOT EJECTED OVER WATER BUT NEAR SHORE AND THE WINGMAN WAS UNABLE TO PROVIDE PROTECTION. JUST MOMENTS PRIOR TO THE CONDITION I AIRCRAFT ARRIVING ON THE SCENE, THE PILOT WAS PICKED UP BY JUNKS AND TAKEN ASHORE.

RECOMMENDATION:

UTILIZE ANY APPROPRIATELY ARMED AIRCRAFT IN THE AREA (EVEN IRON HAND IF NECESSARY) TO HOLD THE JUNKS AT BAY UNTIL THE RESCAP AIRCRAFT ARRIVE ON SCENE.

B. LESSONS LEARNED:

SPECIAL SAR EFFORTS FOR COMBINED AIR WING ALPHA STRIKES (ONE, TWO OR MORE AIR WINGS PARTICIPATING) MUST BE HIGHLY COORDINATED.

COMMENT:

AS A ~~RESULT~~^{RESULT} OF DIRECTION RECEIVED FROM THE SAR COORDINATOR (HARBOR MASTER) A MULTIPLE AIR WING STRIKE HAD AIR WING A'S SPECIAL RESCAP COVERING AIR WING B'S STRIKE AND VICE VERSA.

RECOMMENDATION:

EACH AIR WING BRIEF AND POSITION ITS RESPECTIVE SPECIAL SAR UNITS, WITH CROSS BRIEFING AS NECESSARY FOR OTHER STRIKES. DO NOT COMMIT TOO MANY SAR AIRCRAFT. HIGH POWER SETTINGS CAN CUT A SPAD'S ENDURANCE DRASTICALLY. WITH SPADS ON STATION, CONDITION II OR III WILL BE SATISFACTORY FOR THE RESCAP RESERVES.

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C. LESSONS LEARNED:

OCCASIONALLY STRIKES ARE CANCELLED WHERE SPECIAL RESCAP HAS BEEN PRE-POSTED.

COMMENT:

LOW FLYING SAR UNITS ARE UNABLE TO HEAR A RECALL OR CANCELLATION. IN SEVERAL INSTANCES THE SAR AIRCRAFT WERE JUST PLAIN FORGOTTEN

RECOMMENDATION:

CONTACT THE SAR DD NEAREST THE SPECIAL RESCAP ON MHF FOR RELAY OF INFORMATION ON UHF. PLEASE DON'T FORGET US.

- 3. MAINTENANCE: NO COMMENT.
- 4. ORDNANCE: NO COMMENT.
- 5. ADMINISTRATION: NO COMMENT.
- 6. SAFETY:

A. LESSONS LEARNED:⁷

THE UNNECESSARY DEATH OF A YOUNG MAINTENANCE PETTY OFFICER WAS THE RESULT OF THE INADVERTENT RELEASE OF A 431 POUND ROCKET POD OFF AN AERO 14 E BOMB RACK ON AN A1H AIRCRAFT.

COMMENT:

- 1. THE FACT EXISTS THAT THE TWENTY YEAR OLD A1 AIRCRAFT HAS AN AERO 14 E BOMB RACK MANUAL RELEASE SETUP WHICH HAS NOT BEEN PROPERLY REGARDED AS AN ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN. THIS IS EVIDENCED BY THE NON-EXISTENCE OF A REQUIREMENT FOR A SAFETY GUARD OR WARNING ON SUBJECT LEVERS.

7 see documentary annex for photographs of the subject lever and adjacent area on the wing butt

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2. WHENEVER THERE IS ORDNANCE LOADED ON THE AERO 14 E RACKS AND THE WINGS ARE FOLDED, THE MANUAL RELEASE LEVER IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE. ABOARD SHIP THIS MEANS THAT ANY INDIVIDUAL COULD WALK UP TO A LOADED A1 AND THROUGH MALICIOUS INTENT, IGNORANT CURIOSITY OR AN UNPLANNED ACTION CAUSE THE RELEASE OF A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF ORDNANCE.

RECOMMENDATION: (WHICH HAVE BEEN OR ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED)

1. ALL SUBJECT MANUAL RELEASE LEVERS BE PAINTED RED AND STENCILED "DANGER - MANUAL RELEASE."
2. ADVERTISE THE DANGEROUS CONDITION THROUGHOUT THE SQUADRON VIA LECTURES AND PICTURES.
3. USE THE ACCIDENT AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING A HIGHER REGARD FOR SAFETY THROUGHOUT THE SHIP UTILIZING THE SHIP'S PLAN-OF-THE-DAY.
4. INFORM ALL OTHER A1 AIRCRAFT CUSTODIANS OF THE DANGEROUS CONDITION WHICH PREVAILS.
5. SQUADRON MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL ATTEMPT TO DEVISE A SAFETY GUARD FOR SUBJECT MANUAL RELEASE LEVERS WHICH WOULD BE SATISFACTORY FOR USE DURING THE FAST TEMPO OF COMBAT OPERATIONS.

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