



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron  
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE  
FPO New York 09501-6406

1985

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

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From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 121  
To: Office of Information (ATTN: 01-211)  
Department of the Navy  
Washington, DC 20350

Subj: SUBMISSION OF COMMAND HISTORY

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Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

- Encl: (1) Command History  
(2) ~~End of Deployment Report, JANUARY-MAY~~  
(3) ~~Periodic Operating Report, MAY-JUNE~~  
(4) ~~Monthly Operating Report, JULY~~  
(5) ~~Monthly Operating Report, AUGUST~~  
(6) ~~Monthly Operating Report, SEPTEMBER~~  
(7) ~~Monthly Operating Report, OCTOBER~~  
(8) ~~Monthly Operating Report, NOVEMBER~~  
(9) ~~Monthly Operating Report, DECEMBER~~

1. Enclosure (1) contains the Command History narrative and chronology, including the period from 1 January to 31 December 1985.
2. Enclosures (2) through (9) contain the Monthly Operating Reports for the period of 1 January to 31 December 1985 and are submitted in accordance with reference (a).

*J. P. Vena*  
J. P. VENA  
By direction

Copy to:  
Director of Naval History (w/o encls)

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Classified by: COS, COMNAVAIRLANT (Code 01)  
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## VAW-121 BLUETAILS

Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE (VAW-121) traces its origin, along with all other VAW squadrons, to Project Cadillac which was initiated in 1942 as a method of providing airborne radar relay platforms. By June 1945 the first group of extensively modified Carrier Airborne Early Warning (AEW) TBM-3W AVENGERS was conducting trials in USS RANGER (CV 4) the war ended before the first AEW units could see action. Fleet Aviation Electronics Training Units (FAETU's) were subsequently established on both coasts and continued to train pilots, operators, and maintenance personnel on AEW equipment. VAW-1 on the West Coast and VAW-2 on the East Coast were formed to replace the FAETU's in July 1948. Barely a year later VAW-2 was redesignated VC-12 and relocated to Quonset Point, Rhode Island. The TBM-3W was replaced in 1948 with the AD-3W SKYRAIDER, or "Guppy Spad". When the Korean War, began in 1950 VC-12 was fully outfitted with the AD-3W's. During the course of the war, VC-12 provided additional aid to VC-11 by sending detachments to deploy in West Coast carriers bound for Korea.

Following the Korean War, VC-12 continued to operate an improved version of the "Guppy Spad", the AD-5W, until 1960 when they were replaced by the new WF-2 TRACER "Willy Fudd", later redesignated as the E-1B. The squadron was redesignated VAW-12 in 1960 and relocated from Quonset Point, Rhode Island, to NAS Norfolk, Virginia in April 1962. In 1966 the first E-2A for the East Coast arrived and in 1967 the Chief of Naval Operations directed that separate squadrons be formed out of VAW-12 under the cognizance of a functional wing. On April 1, 1967 the simultaneous creation of Carrier Airborne Early Warning Wing TWELVE, VAW-120, VAW-121, VAW-122, and VAW-123 occurred. VAW-121 continued to operate the E-1B in detachments on numerous carriers until the last detachment was disestablished in 1973. VAW-121 deployed exclusively in USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVA 42) as the sole remaining Fleet E-1B squadron from 1973 through 1975. When VAW-121 gave up E-1B's in 1975, the squadron made the transition from the oldest AEW aircraft in the Navy's inventory to the newest, the E-2C HAWKEYE incorporating the new Advanced Radar Processing System (ARPS).

Carrier Air Wing Seven (CVW-7) with VAW-121 joined the newly commissioned USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69) in January 1978 and became the first E-2C ARPS to operate from a carrier. From January through July 1979 VAW-121 made the first E-2C ARPS overseas deployment where the Bluetails set records which established VAW-121's reputation for superior performance throughout the fleet. In recognition of this superior performance, VAW-121 was awarded the Battle Efficiency "E" for 1979, as well as the 1979 CNO Airborne Early Warning Excellence and Aviation Safety "S" Awards. From April to December 1980 the Battle "E" Bluetails again deployed in IKE to the Indian Ocean. During the eight and one-half month deployment, the squadron set new monthly, quarterly and annual flight hour records for the E-2 community and was again recognized for outstanding performance with their second consecutive Battle Efficiency "E" and CNO Aviation Safety "S" for 1980.

Enclosure (1)

After a six week turnaround VAW-121 deployed to Keflavik, Iceland, from February to May 1981 operating in support of the Icelandic Defense Force to detect, track, and intercept unknown aircraft approaching Iceland. Following their return from Iceland and workups that summer, VAW-121 and "IKE" deployed to the North Atlantic for the largest NATO exercise in twenty years and set a community record, by keeping an E-2C airborne continuously for 23 days. The Bluetails returned to the Mediterranean Sea in January 1982 and garnered an unprecedented third consecutive Battle "E", and a second CNO AEW Excellence Award. Returning from deployment, during which the Bluetails were involved in everything from joint NATO exercises to overseeing the evacuation of Americans from Beirut, Lebanon, the Bluetails enjoyed a short post-deployment standdown before participating in Operation Thunderbolt, working with the U.S. Customs Service to stem the flow of drugs into the United States.

The 1983 Med deployment was one of the most rigorous in the squadron's history. It included contingency operations near Libya and several multi-national exercises. At one point, the Bluetails spent 95 consecutive days in support of the Multi-national Forces in the Eastern Mediterranean. Following the squadron's return to Norfolk in December 1983 the Bluetails commenced a turnaround cycle punctuated with numerous operational commitments and training exercises. Refresher training commenced in early May to prepare the squadron for an extended Mediterranean deployment that commenced on October 10, 1984. The Bluetails continued to build on their tradition of aviation excellence, winning the CVW-7 Golden Tailhook twice. Returning to Norfolk in May 1985, the squadron deployed July 8th in "IKE" for a two month Caribbean Sea deployment and READEX 2-85.

The Bluetails, commanded by Commander William D. Vance are presently involved in a long turnaround training cycle while "IKE" undergoes extensive overhaul. Deployed or operating ashore, the squadron emphasizes safety in every evolution as evidenced by their outstanding safety record of 19 years accident free operations, the best in Atlantic Fleet carrier aviation and number two in the Navy.