

1992 ✓

## COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

The **BLUETAILS** of VAW-121, under the command of CDR Lawrence E. Tant, continued a long and proud tradition with Carrier Air Wing SEVEN (CVN-7). Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron One Hundred Twenty One operates and maintains 4 Grumman E-2C Hawkeye aircraft. It is the primary surveillance aircraft of the fleet and uses extended range radar and detection systems to protect the joint battle space from hostile air and surface threats while exercising command, control and coordination for all warfare areas. Other missions include surface surveillance, search and rescue, strike control and communications relay.

This year found the **BLUETAILS** and CVW-7 operating first on the USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69) as one of the five original squadrons embarked in IKE, and then shifting with the air wing to its new home in USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73).

VAW-121 has over one hundred and sixty men assigned. This includes aircrew, administration, and maintenance personnel who support and fly four aircraft (BUNO 162800, 162802, 161547, and 159111). The **BLUETAILS** have one of the finest maintenance departments in the Hawkeye community and the best carrier-based safety record in the Atlantic Fleet with over 26 years and 50,000 hours of mishap free flight operations.

VAW-121 is based at NAS Norfolk, VA and proudly calls Carrier Air Wing SEVEN and the USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73) their home away from home.

*Looper*

## VAW-121 1992 CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

### JANUARY

Deployed to the Arabian Gulf / Indian Ocean embarked in  
USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69)  
01-02 In port - Dubai, U.A.E.  
05-11 Exercise RED REEF III (Royal Saudi Navy)  
21-25 In port - Dubai, U.A.E.  
27-28 Qatar Passex

### FEBRUARY

01-02 JFACC (USS EISENHOWER, USAF 4044th Composite Wing, Royal  
Saudi Air Force)  
08-12 Exercise Beacon Flash (USS EISENHOWER, Omani Air Force)  
16-19 Exercise Indigo Anvil (USS EISENHOWER, USAF, RSAF, Royal  
Saudi Air Defense Force)  
20-24 In port - Jeddah, Saudi Arabia  
22-24 Saudi Air/Surface Exercise  
24 CTG 152.1 Passex  
25-26 Egyptian Air Exercise  
27 Libyan FIR Ops

### MARCH

01-06 In port - Palma de Mallorca, Spain  
10-21 Exercise Teamwork '92 (USS EISENHOWER, NATO Forces)

### APRIL

01 Fly off  
02 Homecoming, USS EISENHOWER returns to Norfolk  
13-17 QA post deployment audit  
21-28 ADMAT inspection  
21-30 Aircraft Material Condition inspection

### MAY

01-04 Aircraft Material condition inspection  
22 Aircraft BUNO 162615 sent to St. Petersburg, FL for  
rework (four aircraft remained with squadron)  
27-28 German Fleet Passex (CVW-7)  
24-31 CD Operations Key West, FL

## JUNE

01-10 CD Operations Key West, FL  
09 Aegis support  
15-17 GOMEX (CG-68)  
18 MISSILEX (USS EISENHOWER)  
22-26 MISSILEX (CVW-7 3 AIM-7, 10 AIM-9, 2 AIM-54)  
30 CSSQT (CG-68)

## JULY

01-03 CSSQT (CG-68)  
14-16 MISSILEX (MAG-31, 6 AIM-7, 6 AIM-9)  
16-17 MISSILEX (CLAW-1)  
20-23 GOMEX (CG-69, 1 SM-2 BLK II)  
21-22 MISSILEX (CVW-7 None shot - foul range)  
27-31 FCLPs  
30 Change of Command, CDR M.F. Klauss relieved by CDR L.E. Tant

## AUGUST

02-05 GOMEX (CG-69)  
03-07 FCLPs  
05-06 MISSILEX (CVW-7, VF-143, 2 AIM-7)  
12-15 Carrier qualifications (USS GEORGE WASHINGTON CVN-73)  
19-21 FCLPs  
24-29 Hawkeye Week  
29 Hawkeye Ball

## SEPTEMBER

02-30 Independent steaming exercises, Puerto Rican op area aboard (USS GEORGE WASHINGTON CVN-73)  
15-20 MISSILEX (CVW-1, 10 AIM-7, 4 AIM-9)  
27-28 MISSILEX (CVW-7, 11 AIM-9, 2 AGM-88)

## OCTOBER

01-09 Independent steaming exercises, Puerto Rican op area aboard (USS GEORGE WASHINGTON CVN-73)  
10-13 In port - Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
13-19 Exercise FREEDOM HUNT (USS GEORGE WASHINGTON, CVW-7, 9AF, MAG-14, 32)  
19-23 Independent steaming exercises (USS GEORGE WASHINGTON)

NOVEMBER

06-20 Counter Drug Operations - Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

DECEMBER

03-10 Orange Air operations - Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico  
(CVW-7)

14-17 MAG-31 TOPGUN, Dissimilar Aircraft Combat Training  
16 Safety Milestone - 26 years and over 50,000 hours of  
mishap free flight.

**VAW-121**  
**A NARRATIVE OF EVENTS FOR 1992**

JANUARY:

The new year found VAW-121 on deployment embarked in USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN-69). The holidays were spent in port at Dubai, U.A.E.

From 5-11 January, VAW-121 as a component of CVW-7 embarked in USS EISENHOWER departed the Persian Gulf for operations in the North Arabian Sea where we participated in Operation RED REEF III with the Royal Saudi Navy. This was primarily a surface ship exercise with limited air wing involvement. However, the E-2C's were called on to provide range surveillance and safety for a series of Saudi Otomat and Penguin live missile firings at a target hulk.

In addition, a CVW-7 Missile Exercise dovetailed into this exercise. It included the first ever Harpoon warhead shot from an S-3B Viking.

FEBRUARY:

February found the battle group back in the Persian Gulf. Throughout the time in the Gulf, the air wing provided a strike planning cell to the Air Force's ATO planning organization in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Rotating senior strike leaders and support personnel through, they planned real joint exercise strikes.

From February 1-2, the air wing participated in its first Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) training. During this JFACC exercise, the Air Tasking Order (ATO) process originated from the carrier, planning and executing joint strikes into the Saudi target ranges. Of particular interest was the development and deployment of the Air Force 4404th Composite Wing to Dhahran. This air wing consisted of F-15, F-16, A-10, EF-111, E-3, KC-135, and HH-53 aircraft and is comparable in structure and capabilities to a carrier based airwing. It was determined through this exercise, the mix of aircraft between a composite wing and a Navy air wing was highly complementary. Their Command, Communications, and Control element and tanking operations are more capable, while our SEAD abilities filled their shortfalls.

On February 8-12, the BLUETAILS along with the carrier air wing participated in operation BEACON FLASH with Omani forces while enroute to the Red Sea. The air wing exercised low-level routes, and the bombers were able to drop live ordnance at the target ranges. The E-2C's controlled dissimilar aircraft combat training (DACT) events between our fighters and the Omani Jaguar and Hunter aircraft. We also conducted two opposed strikes on Thumrait and Masirah, plus, the Omanis staged a mini war-at-sea exercise against a two ship strike attack group. VAW-121 aircrew served as the air wing's representative ashore, operating out of the Omani ATC, coordinating all overland clearances and range times.

The next event was the INDIGO ANVIL exercise from 16-19

February. It was a joint U.S. Navy and Saudi Air Defense operation centered around the Khamis Mushait air base southwest of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. INGIGO ANVIL was designed to test Western Saudi Air Force tactics against coordinated strikes. The air wing conducted four joint strikes against defended targets. BLUETAIL E-2C's in conjunction with Saudi AWACS provided standard Command, Control and AEW. In addition, VAW-121 employed an orange E-2C to conduct communications jamming and intrusion against the AWACS and Saudi GCI sites. The BLUETAILS controlled Saudi F-15's and Tornados against our fighters for DACT. Of interest are the intentions of the Saudis to establish a Fallon-type TACTS range for the coastal area south of Jeddah.

#### MARCH:

From March 10-21 the IKE battle group participated in Exercise TEAMWORK '92 with NATO forces. Teamwork '92 was a major NATO maritime exercise originally planned to demonstrate Norway's ability to defend against the former Soviet threat. Although the Commonwealth of Independent States appears to present no threat to Norway today, the exercise still had great value from the standpoint of practicing the logistics and command and control requirements faced when conducting a large maritime reinforcement.

Teamwork '92 was divided into three phases. The first was the freeplay phase conducted in an operating area north of Scotland. The IKE battle group opposed the green forces composed largely of British land-based strike aircraft. The E-2C's

provided coordination of low level flights and strikes into targets in northern Scotland. The Teamwork air war started slowly with section size raids of British Tornados and Buccaneers attacking the carrier.

Phase Two, off the coast of southern Norway, centered around a rehearsal amphibious landing into Thronheim. Poor weather caused cancellation of most sea based operations. Periodic land based strikes were conducted against the battle group and other allied units. The E-2C's provided AEW and controlled an air wing long range strike against the opposing forces strike group operating northeast of Scotland.

The northern Norway phase took place in Vestfjord. Air operations included missions supporting AAW, ASW, ASUW and Close Air Support (CAS) in association with an amphibious landing into Tromso, in northern Norway.

NATO AWACS participation included 18 hours a day in direct or associated support of our forces. The E-3's conducted battle management and AAW, with the BLUETAILS primary mission as ASUW. When AWACS was not available both the AAW and ASUW missions, coordinating strikes and managing Link-11 were accomplished by the BLUETAILS.

VAW-121 finished TEAMWORK '92 with an impressive 100% sortie completion rate. The overall sortie completion rate for deployment was superb as well, with our E-2C's rising to the occasion 98.4% of the time. Thanks to our great maintenance department.



#### APRIL:

April found the BLUETAILS returning from deployment and conducting a series of post deployment inspections. These included: QA post deployment audit, ADMAT inspection, and an Aircraft Material Condition Inspection.

#### MAY:

The Aircraft Material Condition Inspection continued into the first week of May. This was followed by preparing aircraft BUNO 162615 for transfer and rework. On 22 May, the aircraft was sent to St. Petersburg, FL for rework modification. This reduced the number of aircraft in the squadron to four for the rest of the year.

On the 24th of May, the squadron detached for operations in Key West, FL. The BLUETAILS spent the rest of the month providing radar surveillance in support of CJTF-4 Counter Drug Operations.

#### JUNE:

The first part of June was spent in Key West, FL doing counter drug operations.

On the 15th of June, the BLUETAILS provided radar coverage and Link-11 for USS ANZIO (CG-68) to test its Aegis and Digital Data Link systems.

VAW-121 provided range surveillance and acted as primary air intercept controller for two MISSILEX operations, on the 18th and the 22-26th. The E-2C's command and control suite was used for

the missile live firing exercises launched from the USS EISENHOWER (CVN-69) and air wing aircraft.

JULY:

The month opened with operations involving USS ANZIO (CG-68). The BLUETAIL E-2C's again provided radar coverage and Link-11 for system testing. During a three day exercise.

The first of three MISSILEX operations this month were conducted with MAG-31 on the 14-16th. The BLUETAILS provided range surveillance and command and control for the firing of six AIM-7, and six AIM-9 missiles. Immediately following this exercise a MISSILEX with CLAW-1 was conducted and a third MISSILEX with CVW-7, was cancelled for safety considerations due to a foul range.

July 20-23 was spent lending radar surveillance and Link-11 communications to USS VICKSBURG (CG-69) for a test firing of one SM-2 BLK III missile.

Five days were dedicated to field carrier landing practice for the pilots in the command.

On July 30th, the squadron held a change of command ceremony. Commander Lawrence E. Tant relieved Commander Mark F. Klauss. CDR Klauss left to become the Assistant Air Boss aboard USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CVN-67).

AUGUST:

August 2-5 the squadron was again sent south to the Gulf of Mexico to help test the Link-11 and Aegis systems on board USS

VICKSBURG (CG-69).

From the 3rd to the 7th of the month, the pilots honed their carrier landing skills in preparation for the upcoming carrier qualifications.

On the 5th, the BLUETAILS participated in a MISSILEX with CVW-7. The squadron provided range control for the firing of two AIM-7 missiles from VF-143 aircraft.

Carrier qualifications aboard the USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN-73) were held for three days starting on the 12th. This was followed by another FCLP period lasting until the 21st.

The 24th of August commenced Hawkeye Week. This annual celebration included competition in various sporting events, taken quite seriously by all command's and at the end of the week The Hawkeye Ball, a formal dinner party for all the type wing officers, wives and guests was held at the Norfolk Marriott.

#### SEPTEMBER:

September was spent conducting independent steaming exercises on board USS George Washington (CVN-73).

The squadron's 7th MISSILEX was held from September 15-20. The E-2C's provided AIC and range control for live missile firing activities with CVW-1 at NAVSTA Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico.

The 8th MISSILEX took place on the 27th as the BLUETAILS provided range safety and acted as primary air intercept control for CVW-7. The participating units were VA-34, VAQ-140, and VS-31 who launched AIM-9, and AGM-88 ordnance against simulated real world air and surface threats.

## OCTOBER:

Most of October was spent aboard CVN 73 performing independent steaming exercises, with a four day port call in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

From the 13th-19th, CVW-7, MAG-14,32, and the 9th Air Force participated in exercise FREEDOM HUNT. It was a joint composite strike force operation including CVW-7 aircraft, along with USMC AV-8B's, plus USAF F-16C, F-15E, B-1B, KC-135, KC-10 and B-52 aircraft. The BLUETAIL E-2C's provided strike vectoring and air intercept control for the operation.

## NOVEMBER:

On the 6th of November, a detachment was sent to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for Counter Drug operations supporting the JTF-4 mission. VAW-121 worked with Customs and Coast Guard agents to provide radar surveillance in the Carribean to disrupt narcotics trafficking.

## DECEMBER:

December 3rd-10th was spent performing ORANGE AIR OPERATIONS out of Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. VAW-121 flew continuous coverage from 0745-2200 on the 4th and 5th December as Orange Air in support of COMPTUEX 2-93 against CVW-8 and the CVN 71 battle group. On 6 Dec, after briefing with the Roosevelt Roads ASWOC, CTG-4.1 and VP-8, VAW-121 flew two flights in support of counter drug operations. The squadron then provided primary range control and AIC with voice and Link-4 for a CVW-7 MISSILEX. All

phases of this detachment were a resounding success with the air wing receiving recognition for its performance as Orange Air and for its successful missile firings.

On the 14th through the 17th, the BLUETAILS provided close intercept control for MAG-31 TOPGUN exercises. VAW-121 provided control for VMFA-251, VMFA-451, and VMFA-533 during their combat fighter maneuvers.

The VAW-121 BLUETAILS set yet another safety milestone on 16 December 1992. The squadron passed the mark of 26 years, and over 50,000 mishap free flight hours.