

1998



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE
UNIT 60136, FPO AE 09507-8406

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From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 121
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH), Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, 901 M Street SE, Bldg. 57, Washington, DC 23074-5060

Subj: CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON 121 COMMAND HISTORY 1998

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) VAW-121 (BLUETAIL) 1998 Command History Input

1. Per reference (a), enclosure (1) is forwarded for appropriate action.


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VAW-121 BLUETAIL 1998 HISTORY

Mission: Provide Airborne Early Warning (AEW) and tactical Command, Control, and Communications (C3) for the force commander in support of national policy. Squadron aircraft, personnel, and material are maintained in the highest possible readiness condition to safely execute this task.

Organization: Commanded by Airborne Early Warning Wing Atlantic and attached to Carrier Air Wing Seven onboard the USS JOHN C STENNIS (CVN-74)

Duty Station: Naval Air Station Norfolk, VA

Type A/C: Four E-2C Hawkeye Group II (600,601,603,604)

CHRONOLOGY

JANUARY

12-25 JAN JOINT TASK FORCE EXERCISES, PUERTO RICO AND JACKSONVILLE OPERATION AREAS

FEBRUARY

15-18 FEB CARRIER QUALIFICATIONS
17-18 FEB VF-11 MISSILE EXERCISE
26 FEB USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN-74) DEPLOYMENT

MARCH

13-31 MAR OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH (IRAQ)

APRIL

01-30 APR OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH (IRAQ)

MAY

01-31 MAY OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH (IRAQ)
16-20 MAY EXERCISE INITIAL LINK (BAHRAIN)
18-25 MAY EXERCISE BEACON FLASH (OMAN)

JUNE

01-30 JUN OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH (IRAQ)

JULY

01-22 JUL OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH (IRAQ)
23 JUL CROSSING THE LINE CEREMONY

AUGUST

25 AUG VAW-121 AIRCRAFT ARRIVE IN NORFOLK
26 AUG VAW-121 AIRCRAFT HURRICANE EVACUATE TO KEY WEST
26 AUG USS JOHN C. STENNIS ARRIVES IN SAN DIEGO

28 AUG	VAW-121 PERSONNEL RETURN TO NORFOLK
<u>SEPTEMBER</u>	
25-30 SEP	FIELD CARRIER LANDING PRACTICE
<u>OCTOBER</u>	
02-09 OCT	USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN-75) FLIGHT DECK CERTIFICATION AND CARRIER QUALIFICATIONS
28-31 OCT	COUNTER NARCOTICS OPERATIONS (NAVAL STATION ROOSEVELT ROADS)
<u>NOVEMBER</u>	
01-30 NOV	COUNTER NARCOTICS OPERATIONS (NAVAL STATION ROOSEVELT ROADS)
<u>DECEMBER</u>	
01-20 DEC	COUNTER NARCOTICS OPERATIONS (NAVAL STATION ROOSEVELT ROADS)
12-14 DEC	ORANGE AIR EXERCISES (NAVAL STATION ROOSEVELT ROADS)

NARRATIVE

The BLUETAILS commenced this year performing exercises off the coast of Puerto Rico and Jacksonville, Fl with CVW-7 onboard USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN-74). These exercises were in support of the Stennis Battlegroup's Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX). Upon completion of JTFEX the battlegroup was proven self-sufficient and deployment ready. The BLUETAILS continued their training cycle to include Carrier Qualifications on CVN-74 and a live fire missile exercise with the VF-11 Red Rippers in February.

On the 26th of February 1998 the Stennis Battlegroup departed Norfolk for it's six-month deployment. Due to situations in the Middle East the battlegroup was

immediately sent to the Arabian Gulf to support Operation Southern Watch patrolling the no-fly zones of southern Iraq. During the squadron's operations in the region, they provided the airwing with fighter intercept control, strike control, search and rescue operations and ocean surveillance. The squadron coordinated multi-service operations with the United States Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps in support of Joint Task Force Southwest Asia. In addition, the Bluetails controlled many multi-national exercises involving air and naval forces of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, France, Great Britain, and Australia. Additionally, the flight deck personnel performance was exceptional despite the daily 100-degree plus temperatures. Squadron spirit remained high throughout an op-tempo unsurpassed in recent history. During this deployment the Bluetail pilots won the CVW-7 Top Hook Award three of four line periods establishing themselves as the best at "flying the ball" of all airwing pilots. The consistently high grades by all squadron pilots combined with an exceptional boarding rate resulted in the Bluetails winning the annual CVW-7 Top Hook Award for the 1998 deployment.

The Bluetails concluded the maiden around the world voyage of the Stennis in late August of 1998. The next carrier to call on the mighty Bluetails was the USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN-75). The newest carrier in the fleet needed the best aviators to establish experience among its raw flight deck crew. This didn't give the squadron much time with families before commencing Field Carrier Landing Practice in September followed by Carrier Qualifications and Flight Deck Certification on board the Truman during the first two weeks of October.

On the 28th of October the squadron once again departed family and friends in Norfolk to provide support for counter-narcotic operations in the Caribbean Sea. Operating from Naval Station Roosevelt Roads Puerto Rico, the squadron became a key member of the Joint Interagency Task Force. Patrolling the skies and waters of the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the squadron's daily flights were an active part of the United States' "war on drugs". The airborne surveillance provided by the Bluetails became a crucial detection and communication link, fusing the efforts of the U. S. Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Customs, Drug Enforcement and other agencies in the interdiction of numerous air and surface narcotic shipments.

December 1998 marked the 32nd anniversary of mishap-free operational flying, a carrier aviation record! This unique record encompasses over 62,000 flight hours and 16,413 carrier arrested landings. This is directly attributed to the unwavering dedication of each and every Bluetail and exemplifies the squadron motto: "Bluetails take care of Bluetails."

Throughout the year the Bluetail commitment to excellence provided the Navy with aircraft and aircrews capable of meeting all challenges it faced. The Bluetails operated at a demanding high tempo for the entire year being deployed 293 days and serving on station in the Arabian Gulf for over 130 consecutive days. A 32 year safety record and winning the CVW-7 Top Hook Award prove that time and again they can complete the mission and return to catch the three wire in style. It is this continued success, constant excellence, and sustained community leadership that has achieved these unparalleled flight statistics and an outstanding reputation within Carrier Airwing Seven, John C. Stennis Battle Group, and the Hawkeye community. Their dedication to job and country displays a pride and commitment beyond any expectation.

The Bluetails were the recipient of the Chief of Naval Operations 1998 National Safety Award, identifying them as the safest Hawkeye aviators in the Atlantic Fleet. In addition, the Bluetails earned the Carrier Airborne Early Warning Wing Atlantic Fleet Battle Efficiency Award, marking them as the best E-2C squadron in the wing. Finally, the Bluetails were awarded the coveted Admiral Akers Award for Airborne Early Warning Excellence. This award is presented annually to the top Hawkeye squadron in the US inventory.

Clearly, the Bluetails demonstrated unsurpassed performance in 1998. They set the standard for which all aviators will strive to match. The Bluetails are a model of excellence not only for the Hawkeye community, but for all of U.S. Naval Aviation as well.