

**CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON 121
2003 HISTORY**

MISSION: To conduct prompt, sustained combat operations at sea and in the air in defense of our nation's interests.

COMMAND: VAW 121

UIC: 09467

ORGANIZATION: Commanded by Carrier Airborne Early Warning Wing Atlantic, attached to Carrier Air Wing SEVEN onboard USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73)

COMMANDERS: Commanding Officer, CDR Timothy J. Block, USN
Executive Officer, CDR Jeffrey Bay, USN

LOCATION: NS Norfolk, Virginia

AIRCRAFT: E-2C Hawkeye Group II

TAILCODE/BUNO: **600/163538**
601/163694 31 Jul exchanged for 601/164488
602/164497
603/163539

4 E-2C Group II from 01 Jan - 31 Apr 03
5 E-2C Group II from 01 May - 31 Jul 03
4 E-2C Group II from 01 Aug - Current

CHRONOLOGY

January

14-16 Gulf of Mexico Exercise
21-31 Orange Air vs. USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71)

February

01-06 Orange Air vs. USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71)
28 Change of Command

March

13 Composite Squadron Six (VC-6) Drone Exercise
17-20 Carrier Air Wing SEVEN (CVW 7) Surface Warfare Exercise (VACAPES)

April

03-04 Carrier Air Wing ONE (CVW 1) Air Defense
Exercise (VACAPES)
10 War-at-Sea Exercises (WASEX) VS-31
15-16 CVW 7 Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR)
Exercise (Pope AFB)

May

05-09 Hawkeye Advanced Readiness Program
13-15 USS VELLA GULF Underway Exercise (VACAPES)
19-22 Fighter Squadron One Hundred and Forty Three
(VF 143) MISSILE Exercise (VACAPES)
27-30 Strike Fighter Advance Readiness Program
(SFARP) Academics

June

02-26 Air to Air SFARP (VACAPES)

July

13-31 Air to Ground SFARP (Fallon, NV)

August

11-13 Fire Support Inter Operability II (Camp
Lejeune, NC)
25-31 CVW 7 WEAPONS DETACHMENT (Fallon, NV)

September

01-19 CVW 7 WEAPONS DETACHMENT (Fallon, NV)
24-25 Fighter and Attack Squadron One Hundred
Thirty Six (VFA 136) HARM Missile Exercise
(VACAPES)

October

06-10 CVW-7 Missile Exercise
16-31 Tailored Ship Training Availability
(TSTA) I&II onboard USS GEORGE WASHINGTON
(CVN 73)

November

09-30 TSTA III & Composite Training Unit Exercise
(COMPTUEX), onboard USS GEORGE WASHINGTON
(CVN 73)

December

01-19 COMPTUEX, onboard USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN
73)

NARRATIVE

VAW 121 "Bluetails" main focus of 2003 was preparing for deployment in 2004. During 2003, the Bluetails led the community in developing a tactically challenging and relevant training program. During a compressed Interim Deployment Readiness Cycle (IDRC), the Bluetails aggressively managed money, aircraft and aircrew commitments and ensured flawless execution in every endeavor. When the Bluetails were not participating in the IDRC they worked with other squadrons in CVW 7 to maintain and develop training and readiness. The culmination of the IDRC period was in November and December, with the Bluetails deployed on board USS GEORGE WASHINGTON for TSTA III and COMPTUEX. Whether ashore or afloat, in peace or at war, Bluetail spirit and professionalism are in everything we do!

1. The Bluetails began the year by conducting Orange Air against USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT Carrier Striking Group. This event had the Bluetails playing the role of enemy forces as "Orange Air." The main focus of training was to give other Naval units a chance to work on tactics in a real world environment.
2. CDR Timothy J. Block, USN relieved CDR Thomas J. Quinn, USN on February 28.
3. During Fallon Weapons Detachment in August and September, the Bluetails set an active duty exercise record for the highest detection rate of non-cooperative targets (91 percent) ever recorded, with 100 percent detection during the advanced detachment phase. E-2C Radar Rules of Thumb were the standard employed, and Bluetail performance validated the system configurations and tactics behind them, which served as a significant benefit to the Hawkeye community.
4. In 2003, the Bluetails led the E-2C community in creating Unit Level Training Flights (ULT), some highlights were:
 - In April, the Bluetails coordinated Air Wing War-at-Sea Exercises (WASEX) in the VACAPES, which provided needed training and readiness for VAW, VF, VFA and VS squadrons.

- During SFARP in May, the Bluetails worked with Strike Fighter Weapons School Atlantic (SFWSL) and the Hawkeye Weapons Training Unit (WTU), integrating the Hawkeye into the Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP). A main focus was in "kill box" scenarios, which provide basic Airborne Battlefield Command and Control (ABC2) procedures for E-2C aircrew. The result was to lay groundwork for future E-2C integration in training Air Wings for modern combat operations.
- In 2003, the Bluetails flew numerous dedicated radar over-land detection/tracking flights and conducted Combat Identification (CID) training, which improved and set the standard for the future.

5. The Bluetails were the first squadron to invite surface air defense units to participate in Hawkeye Advanced Readiness Program (HARP) academics and observe simulator training events. The Bluetails coordinated with every surface combatant in the Carrier Striking Group to facilitate Air Wing integration, Operations Specialist (OS) Air Intercept Controller (AIC) integration, data link configuration, and overall Striking Group Air Defense performance. Round table discussions resulted in significant improvement in Air Wing integration and surface unit understanding of aviation employment in Strike Group Air Defense.

6. Air-to-Air SFARP. The Bluetails were the cryptologic representative for the Air Wing. VAW-121 achieved nearly 100 percent success on Mode IV, secure voice, link connectivity and HAVEQUICK utilization during Fallon Air to Air and Fallon Air to Ground detachments. Capitalizing on this strength, VAW 121 and the CVW 7 staff stressed procedural compliance throughout the Striking Group. The Bluetails assisted with troubleshooting and education, and ensured successful Striking Group HAVEQUICK communications implementation for COMPTUEX. Our efforts paid off; greatly enhanced Air Wing and Striking Group war-fighting capabilities allowed for a more potent combat force. During COMPTUEX, HAVEQUICK, secure voice, and Mode IV success rates were recorded in the 90th percentile.

7. Studying lessons learned from Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, conducted during CY2002, the Bluetails found a gap in airborne leadership and training

in supporting time sensitive targets and the Ground Component Commander. On this premise, the Bluetail staff developed the Dynamic Strike Mission Commander (DSMC) program, focused on airborne leadership and timely target prosecution. The concept was briefed to, and accepted by, CVW 7 and forwarded to the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center (NSAWC) for review. Based on the VAW 121 DSMC program, NSAWC has upgraded its training for future Air Wings to include E-2C aircrew as DSMC candidates.

8. VAW 121 led the Fleet in research and implementation of direct Global Positioning System (GPS) Time Of Day (TOD) synchronization signals into the ARC 182 radio. VAW 121's initiative, during CY2002, to integrate GPS TOD directly into the V/UHF 6 ARC 182 radio became an official aircraft modification during CY 2003. VAW 121 maintained the push to integrate all V/UHF ARC 182 radios with a proposed Rapid Action Minor Engineering Change (RAMEC), which became an official NAVAIR aircraft change at the time of this publication.

9. Throughout the year, Bluetail members augmented numerous Expeditionary and Carrier Striking Groups and North American Treaty Organization staffs with dedicated liaison officers, to include Destroyer Squadron Twenty Eight (DESRON 28), Command Carrier Group Eight (CCG 8), Twenty Second Marine Expeditionary Unit (22 MEU), Air Defense Commander and British AWACS. Bluetail liaisons supported multiple exercises: Battle Group In-Port Training (BGIT), TSTA I/II/III, COMPTUEX and Close Air Support Training Exercises (CASTEX).