

1968

Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY FOUR
1968 Command History

Chronology of Events

JANUARY

- 5 Departed NAS Norfolk, Virginia for REFTRA in Caribbean (Guantanamo, Cuba Operating Area) aboard the USS INDEPENDENCE (CVA-62).
- 8 Commenced REFTRA in Caribbean.

FEBRUARY

- 4 Completed REFTRA in Caribbean/enroute to Jacksonville, Florida Operating Area for participation in USS INDEPENDENCE's ORI.
- 9-11 USS INDEPENDENCE ORI.
- 11 4 aircraft fly off for NAS Norfolk.
- 12 Remainder of squadron airlifted home after docking at Naval Station, Mayport, Florida.

MARCH

- 5 First fully designated flight crew formed - CDR T. R. OVERDORF; LTJG [REDACTED]; LTJG [REDACTED]; LTJG [REDACTED]; AT1 [REDACTED]
- 21 Departed NAS Norfolk for REFTRA/ORI in Jacksonville Operating Area aboard USS INDEPENDENCE.

APRIL

- 9-11 Participated in ORI in Jacksonville, Florida Operating Area.
- 12 Returned to NAS Norfolk.
- 13 Dependents' Day Cruise aboard the USS INDEPENDENCE.
- 14-15 Off loaded at NAS Norfolk.
- 30 Departed NAS NORVA for Mediterranean Cruise aboard the USS INDEPENDENCE.

MAY

- 4 Participated in exercise with "Small Boys" while between Bermuda and the Azore Islands.
- 8 In-chop SIXTH Fleet.
- 9 Relieved USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVA-42) at Polensa Bay, Majorca. VAW-124 relieved VAW-121 Detachment 42.
- 10-26 Commenced SIXTH Fleet Operations.
- 27 Inport Athens, Greece - first liberty port.

JUNE

- 5 Departed Athens, Greece for operations in the Mediterranean.
- 5-10 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
- 8 Detected 2 Badger Aircraft.
- 10-14 Inport Messina, Italy.
- 10-27 Co-pilots conduct FCLP's at NAF Sigonella.
- 15-27 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
- 25 Exercise FLAPEX - 20th Anniversary of SIXTH Fleet. E-2A led a flight of 2 F-4's and 2 F-8's to start the massive Air Show of 100 U. S. Aircraft.
- 29 Inport Valletta, Malta.

JULY

9 Departed Valletta, Malta.
10-15 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
10 Exercise AAWEX-40T.
15-23 Inport Istanbul, Turkey.
20 Change of Command - CDR T. R. OVERDORF, Squadron's First Commanding Officer, relieved by CDR R. A. SPARGO.
24-27 Enroute Thessaloniki, Greece.
27-29 Inport Thessaloniki, Greece.
30-31 Enroute Toulon, France.

AUGUST

1-5 Enroute Toulon, France.
6-12 Inport Toulon, France.
13-15 Inport Naples, Italy.
14 Change of Command - Commander SIXTH Fleet, VADM MARTIN, relieved by VADM RICHARDSON aboard USS INDEPENDENCE.
16-29 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
17-23 Exercise DEEP FURROW 68.
27-28 Exercise SEEP (SIXTH Fleet Escort Evaluation Program).
29 Inport Golfe Juan, France.

SEPTEMBER

8 Departed Golfe Juan, France.
9-13 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
10-12 Exercise POOPDECK.
13-23 Inport Palma, Majorca.
13 2 pilots, 6 copilots, and 13 maintenance crews depart for Naval Station Rota, Spain for FCLP's.
24-25 Detachment returns from NS Rota, Spain and commences carrier quals.
25-30 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
29-30 Exercise CAAWEX III and competitive operations with USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59).

OCTOBER

1-2 Annual Commanding Officer's Conference in Argostoli Bay, aboard USS INDEPENDENCE.
2-6 SIXTH Fleet Operations/enroute Genoa, Italy.
7-16 Inport Genoa, Italy.
16-31 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
Exercise PHIBLEX I (5/69) with USS FORRESTAL.

NOVEMBER

1 2 aircraft fly to NAF Sigonella for FCLP's.
1-3 SIXTH Fleet Operations/enroute Livorno, Italy.
4-12 Inport Livorno, Italy.
12-25 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
12-16 Exercise EDEN APPLE.
19-23 Exercise NATIONAL WEEK.
26-30 Inport Taranto, Italy.

DECEMBER

1-2 Departed Taranto, Italy.
3-6 SIXTH Fleet Operations.
7-9 Anchored St Paul's Bay, Malta.
10-15 Inport Valletta, Malta.

Narrative

Four months after commissioning, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY FOUR (VAW-124) made its initial cruise on 5 January 1968. As a member of Attack Carrier Air Wing SEVEN (CVW-7), the squadron commenced refresher training in the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Operating Area aboard the USS INDEPENDENCE (CVA-62). Upon completion of the training period and participation in the ship's Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) from 9 thru 11 February, the squadron airlifted back to NAS Norfolk from the Naval Station, Mayport, Florida.

For the next month, VAW-124 readied itself for the next short cruise and its first ORI. On 21 March 1968, VAW-124 departed NAS Norfolk for refresher training and ORI in the Jacksonville, Florida, Operating Area aboard the USS INDEPENDENCE. Completing REFTRA and ORI on 11 April, the squadron returned to NAS Norfolk and participated in a Dependents' Day Cruise the very next day.

After two weeks of rest, VAW-124 departed NAS Norfolk for the Mediterranean and the SIXTH Fleet on 30 April, aboard the USS INDEPENDENCE. After transiting the Atlantic Ocean, the ship and air group inchooped to the SIXTH Fleet relieving the USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVA-42) at Polensa Bay, Majorca on 9 May. The first air operations were commenced passing Sardinia proceeding into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

The first operational period was to have ended with liberty in Taranto, Italy, but, unfortunately, a change in operational schedule necessitated cancellation of the port call. Then, after two weeks of operations around Italy and Greece, INDEPENDENCE proceeded through the Sea of Crete anchoring in Athens, Greece on the evening of 27 May. Departing Athens after a week inport, flight operations were conducted for a group of distinguished guests that were aboard, including the Prince of Iran (brother-in-law to the Shah) and members of the Iranian War College. After returning the guests to Athens, the ship headed for sea, conducting air operations while transiting between Greece and Italy.

On the 10th of July, the ship arrived at Messina, Sicily. During the inport period some of the pilots, co-pilots, and maintenance personnel proceeded to NAF Sigonella, Sicily to conduct Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP's) for subsequent carrier qualification. The training continued for the next two weeks as crews were rotated between INDEPENDENCE and NAF Sigonella. After five days inport, the ship departed Messina to begin preparations for the 20th Anniversary of the Sixth Fleet on the 25th of June. The theme of the ceremony was "Power For Peace", and, as a part of the celebration, one VAW-124 EF-2A led a flight of 2F-4's and 2F-8's to start a massive air show of 100 U. S. aircraft from INDEPENDENCE and the USS SHANGRI-LA (CVA-38). The celebration was designed to demonstrate that United States forces were present in this large land-locked sea to assist allies in the preservation of peace and freedom.

When the air show was over, normal operations continued until the 29th of June when INDEPENDENCE dropped anchor at Valletta, Malta. On the 9th of July, the ship departed Malta for Istanbul, Turkey minus two squadron officers. LTJG [REDACTED] and LTJG [REDACTED] were aboard the USS SELLERS (DDG-11) and the USS MACDOUNGH (DLG-8), respectively, for four days to observe fleet operations in the "Blackshoe" Navy. On 14 July, INDEPENDENCE steamed through the Dardanelles into the Sea of Marmara and on to the Bosphorus, the straits which lead to the Black Sea, arriving in Istanbul, Turkey on the 15th.

While in port Istanbul, Commander T. R. OVERDORF was relieved by Commander R. A. SPARGO. Commander OVERDORF, who faced the monumental task of commissioning and organizing the squadron and making it ready for its first operational deployment, had a very successful year as Commanding Officer. Guest speaker for the change of command was Captain C. A. HILL, Jr., Commanding Officer of the USS INDEPENDENCE.

After a difficult week in Istanbul, because of student demonstrations, the ship departed and headed out into the Aegean Sea where flight operations continued enroute to Thessaloniki (Salonika), Greece. Unlike the reception in Istanbul, Salonika was a very quiet port. After three days, the ship departed for at sea operations, but, due to a ship's equipment failure, had to set course for Toulon, France for necessary repairs. On the 6th of August, the ship anchored at the French Naval Base at Toulon. Repairs completed, the ship departed on the 12th enroute for Naples, Italy and the SIXTH Fleet Change of Command. INDEPENDENCE had the honor of hosting the Change of Command ceremony for the Commander U. S. SIXTH Fleet. The next day the ship departed Naples for several weeks of intensive NATO exercises with the Royal Hellenic Armed Forces, and a SIXTH Fleet Anti-air Warfare Exercise. On the 28th, upon completion of exercises, INDEPENDENCE headed for Golfe Juan, France.

While enroute to Golfe Juan, Commander Attack Carrier Air Wing SEVEN (CVW-7), Commander MORIN, called an air wing meeting in the wardroom. The purpose of the meeting was the presentation of the Golden Tail Hook Award to that squadron which had the best carrier landings during the August operating period. The Golden Tail Hook was awarded to VAW-124.

Arriving in Golfe Juan, France on the 29th of August, everyone enjoyed a week reconnoitering this most exclusive part of the French Riviera. On 10 September, the ship reluctantly returned to sea and began operating again, participating in an exercise with the Spanish forces, which was completed on the 12th. All of the co-pilots, two pilots, and 13 maintenance men departed on 13 September for Naval Station, Rota, Spain for Field Carrier Landing Practice. On the 14th, INDEPENDENCE arrived at Pollensa Bay, Majorca for a day inport. On the 16th, the ship departed and proceeded to Palma, Majorca. Departing on the 23rd, normal air operations were conducted with the returned detachment from Rota and carrier qualifications commenced. Air operations continued at a normal pace until 29 September when a series of exercises with the USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) were conducted.

Upon completion of the exercises, FORRESTAL steamed in company to Argostoli Bay, Greece. There, on the 1st and 2nd of October, INDEPENDENCE was host to the annual SIXTH Fleet Commanders' Conference. At the conclusion of the conference,

INDEPENDENCE departed Argostoli and began cyclic air operations; these continued until our arrival in Genoa, Italy. Leaving after 9 days in port, normal operations were resumed.

On 17 October, the squadron was the recipient of another award from the Air Wing Commander. This was the "World War I Flying Ace Award for Airmanship." This may sound frivolous, but the award is serious and is given to that squadron which displays the best "esprit de corps" and airmanship in the air wing. This award resulted primarily from the success achieved during the exercise with FORRESTAL during late September. The ship concluded the month with another exercise with FORRESTAL.

On 2-3 November, the ship anchored in Aranci Bay, Sardina to catch up on our administrative paperwork prior to proceeding to Livorno, Italy. Livorno is situated very near to Rome, providing everyone with an opportunity to go to Pisa, Florence and the Eternal City.

Departing on the 12th, the ship conducted operations until 25 November. During this time, prior to INDEPENDENCE arriving in Toranto, Italy, the ship participated in two NATO exercises. The inport period provided the opportunity to relax and celebrate Thanksgiving Day away from the hustle and bustle of at sea operations. Leaving on the 2nd of December, the ship commenced the next operational period, conducting Carrier Qualifications for F-4 and RA-5C replacement pilots. To reduce the deck loading during this time, VAW-124 operated two aircraft from NAF Sigonella. Recovering the two aircraft on the 4th of December, the ship continued normal flight operations until the 7th when INDEPENDENCE anchored in St Paul's Bay, Malta. On the morning of 10 December, the ship arrived at Valletta, Malta.

After 6 days rest in Valletta and a week of air operations, which included two exercises, the ship returned to Athens on the 23rd for Christmas. Needless to say, it wasn't anything like Christmas and New Years at home. With 1968 drawing to a close, the squadron looked back on a very successful year and hoped that the subsequent years would be as successful.

Command Organization

Commanding Officers:

- 01 September 1967 to 20 July 1968
Commander Thomas R. OVERDORF, U. S. Navy, [REDACTED]/1310
- 20 July 1968 to Present
Commander Richard A. SPARGO, U. S. Navy, [REDACTED]/1310

Executive Officers:

- 01 September 1967 to 17 April 1968
Lieutenant Commander Monroe J. AHRENSTEIN, U. S. Navy, [REDACTED]/1320
- 17 April 1968 to 20 July 1968
Commander Richard A. SPARGO, U. S. Navy, [REDACTED]/1310
- 20 July 1968 to 27 September 1968
Lieutenant Commander Monroe J. AHRENSTEIN, U. S. Navy, [REDACTED]/1320
- 27 September 1968 to Present
Commander Charles C. ROSE, U. S. Navy, [REDACTED]/1310

Location of Command:

- 01 September 1967 to 05 January 1968: NAS Norfolk; OPCON CAEWW TWELVE
- 05 January 1968 to 12 February 1968: Caribbean (Guantanamo, Cuba, Operating Area); REFTRA CVW SEVEN
- 12 February 1968 to 21 March 1968: NAS Norfolk; OPCON CAEWW TWELVE
- 21 March 1968 to 12 April 1968: Jacksonville, Florida, Operating Area; REFTRA/ORI CVW SEVEN
- 12 April 1968 to 30 April 1968: NAS Norfolk; OPCON CAEWW TWELVE
- 30 April 1968 to Present: Mediterranean; SIXTH Fleet CVW SEVEN

Mission of Command:

To act as an airborne tactical command and control center for offensive and defensive fleet operations by providing airborne early warning and aircraft services through data link and voice communications.

Composition of Command:

Four (4) Grumman E-2A "Hawkeye" aircraft; Bureau Numbers 152476, 152477, 152478, and 152479.

Personnel on board 31 December 1968:

25 Officers - 24 are in a flight status
114 Enlisted - 6 are in a flight status

Squadron Nickname:

"The BULLSEYE HUMMERS"

Squadron Motto:

"The BULLSEYE Squadron - Center of Fleet Defense"

SQUADRON MAINTENANCE HISTORY

1968

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1968

The squadron embarked aboard USS INDEPENDENCE (CVA-62) on 4 January for a short "shakedown" cruise in the Caribbean area culminating in a Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) for the ship from the 6th through the 10th of February. During this period of operations, two handovers via Link 11 were completed successfully using the FJ-108-A/OS-301 program. These handovers were the first such handovers accomplished in the Atlantic Fleet.

During this time, in order to facilitate maintenance efforts and establish a "normal" routine for personnel while afloat, two twelve-hour shifts were established (0700 - 1900, and 1900 - 0700). A major problem concerning these shifts was the conflict with the numerous ship's drills being held. It was further determined that in order to coordinate and manage the two shifts with efficiency and continuity, two Maintenance Control Petty Officers were necessary.

A major problem arose during this period with the occurrence of a series (four) of propeller decoupling incidents. This resulted in an engine and propeller change on aircraft BUONO 152478. The problem was believed to have been a faulty propeller feathering reservoir.

Furthermore, supply became a problem as NORS(G) and NORS(W) items increased during this period due to non-availability of essential parts. A major effort was required to maintain one "up" status system aircraft as the ship's IOL was incomplete with regard to ARA's for the AN/ASA-27 Computer Detector system.

MARCH - APRIL 1968

During this period, aircraft readiness was adversely affected by wholesale hydraulic system contamination on all squadron aircraft. During the at-sea period (21 March - 13 April), fly-aboard flights were made by three of the aircraft. The fourth aircraft, BUONO 152477, did not join the squadron during the month of March due to tail modifications (begun 20 March) and the aforementioned hydraulic contamination problem. Many hours were expended in flushing hydraulic systems and subsequent analysis of contaminated fluid.

MAY 1968

Maintenance efforts became based upon an operational schedule to two "up" aircraft, each flying a triple cycle of 4.5 to 5.0 hours to cover a daily commitment of 15 to 16 flight hours. All major maintenance was planned and performed during the non-flight operational periods. The remaining two aircraft were used as "spare parts" bins due to supply system deficiencies and malfunctions in the SACE bench. Ninety-five items were cannibalized.

The most serious problems were: (1) non-availability of spark gap tubes for the APS-96 Radar System (two were burned out) resulting in two down systems for a two week interval; (2) failure of three rudder tab hinges (UR 0014 and UR 0015 of 30 MAY 1968) (frozen bearings); and (3) flap problems caused by corrosion in the droop actuator worm gear assembly, and a slipping flap gear box (UR 0010 of 3 MAY and UR 0012 of 11 MAY 1968).

Sierra reports, first devised and used by the squadron during the aforementioned ORI, were used regularly to report system status and defective equipment. The report consists of a matrix of letters and numbers with combination for a specific piece of gear or mission capability. This allowed maintenance to have technicians and parts available upon aircraft recovery.

JUNE 1968

From 9 to 26 June, two aircraft (BUNO 152477 and BUNO 152478) were based ashore at NAF Sigonella, Sicily, to provide FCLP practice for squadron co-pilots. While ashore both aircraft were extensively treated for corrosion, and painted. A third aircraft aboard ship also received this treatment.

The maintenance effort was greatly vexed by an increasing multitude of CI difficulties. Within the latter half of the month, extensive avionics maintenance was required on the CI systems of all aircraft. These reoccurring problems prompted the squadron to request an engineering field representative for technical assistance on the CI.

JULY 1968

A personal "Well Done" was received from RADM Geis, COMCARDIV FOUR and CAPT Hill, Commanding Officer, USS INDEPENDENCE, for the successful efforts of the squadron in the initial detection and resulting interception of two "Badger" overflights at maximum distance in June.

The squadron also received a COMNAVAIRLANT Safety Award in July in recognition of an accident-free year of flying during fiscal year 1968.

With regard to maintenance efforts, installation of AFC #106, C-2 /E-2 lateral feel cams, was completed in all aircraft. KY-364/APX Video Decoders were installed in all aircraft during the month. The installation of the KY-364's permits the Air Control Officer (ACO) to decode IFF independently of the Combat Information Center Officer (CICO).

AUGUST 1968

August was a time of many difficulties. Parts cannibalized amounted to an all time high of 109 items. Parts were slow in being received - and some were in a non-RFI condition upon receipt (UR 0018 of 10 SEP 68). Maintenance was faced with many difficulties.

The best systems aircraft, BUNO 152477, was severely crunched on 5 August by a fork-lift (Ground Accident Report 1-69-6 of 11 AUG refers). It sustained structural damage necessitating the assignment of depot-level maintenance personnel for repair purposes. BUNO 152476 was constantly plagued with surging and hunting RPM. After changing sync boxes, governors, and propeller regulators the fault was found to be the propeller alternator. BUNO 152478 experienced several discrepancies which resulted in three no-flap landings. After the third failure, having gotten 4.0 checks on deck following two extensive examinations after each of the first two landings, the system was almost completely overhauled. Interim AFB #35 was also complied with. Extensive corrosion was found in four droop actuators installed on the aircraft. The same condition was found on four other actuators cannibalized from BUNO 152477. Approximately 1/2 cup of water was found in the corroded actuators - none of these actuators had the specified 1/8th inch drain hole drilled in the gear box base. Additionally, three load limiters were discovered to have discrepancies sufficiently degrading to have caused the poor radar detection and acquisition experienced by the squadron during the SEEP exercises on 27 and 28 August.

SEPTEMBER 1968

The maintenance effort for September was invariably handicapped by parts shortages. As examples, two flap gear boxes and two CNI blower motors remained AOCF for the entire month. Pilot's VGI's continued to fail at the rate of three per month. The major avionics problem for September was the loss of ground stabilization in BUNO 152476.

The CONFIRMED Corrosion Control Inspection was performed during this period. All aircraft were thoroughly cleaned inside and out. This no doubt helped in that three aircraft of the four attained a grade of "GOOD."

The crunch damage repair of BUNO 152477 was completed on 25 September by the FRAMA Team from Naples. BUNO 152477 also underwent Calendar-Odd Inspection at this time, but was unable to be completed due to the need for a flap gear box still NORS(G).

OCTOBER 1968

October was a good month for maintenance. With the assistance of Mr. Ron Severs, the CI Tech Rep assigned to VAW-123, the squadron was able to correct several long standing "gripes." Three aircraft were maintained in an "up" status for the greater part of the month giving the squadron a 98.7% mission availability.

On BUNO 152477, with the installation of certain flap hydraulics components, a complete test of flight and combined hydraulic systems including numerous wing spreads was necessitated. Flight operations precluded the availability of the necessary flight deck area for these tests. As a result, the Calendar - Odd Inspection initiated in August on the aircraft was further delayed.

A "freak" accident resulted in a propeller change. During a launch a propeller sustained a rather large nick in a blade when it picked up and cut a nylon bridle. The nick was discovered after the normal recovery. No vibration was felt during the flight.

NOVEMBER 1968

November was a period in which several problems arose but maintenance was able to remedy them.

Near the end of the operating period, a series of radar antenna pressurization leaks occurred. Two aircraft were discovered to have loose fittings in their antenna assemblies and one aircraft required a rotary joint change. With the onset of colder weather, hydraulic leaks became much more frequent and more severe. In the last six weeks, it was necessary to change six flight control actuators, whereas in the previous six months none had been needed. Fortunately, spare actuators were available through the supply system.

An MPC discrepancy on BUNO 152479 was finally localized and corrected with the aid of Mr. Curt Riley, a member of a Tech Rep team visiting the squadron at this time. As a result of team efforts, three aircraft with operable data links were available for the NATIONAL WEEK exercises (19 - 23 NOV).

DECEMBER 1968

After a period of few troubles at the beginning of the month, a series of major material failures occurred which greatly reduced aircraft availability.

On the first day of the second line period in December, a propeller regulator leak occurred on BUNO 152479. Cannibalization of a propeller from BUNO 152476 was necessary since no spare propellers were aboard ship. On turn-up, this propeller was found to be defective also. A considerable time loss ensued before one good propeller could be built up from the two defective ones. Meanwhile, BUNO 152478, which had been inducted into Calendar Inspection on 7 December, was delayed primarily due to the need to cannibalize its propeller. Work stoppage resulted and the inspection was carried over into the following month.

On the third day of this same line period, failure of a vapor cycle drive motor in BUNO 152478 resulted in the loss and partial contamination of the combined hydraulic system. This "downed" the aircraft until the beginning of January and resulted in a net availability of 1.5 airplanes for the month.