



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
CARRIER AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SQUADRON  
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY FOUR  
FLEET POST OFFICE  
NEW YORK 09501

1981

VAW124 :18:goj  
5750  
Ser:

REGISTERED MAIL

From: Commanding Officer, Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron  
ONE HUNDRED TWENTY FOUR  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)  
Subj: Command History  
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C  
Encl: (1) Command History Narrative

1. In accordance with reference (a) enclosure (1) is submitted.

  
H. C. FORTENBERRY

Copy to:  
Director of Naval History (OP-09B4)

NAVAL AVIATION HISTORY

THE VAW-124 COMMAND HISTORY  
FOR 1981

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## VAW-124 Command History for Calendar Year 1981.

### I Command Organization

#### a. Commanding Officer

Commander L. N. ODEN (14 March 1980 to 09 May 1981)  
Commander H. C. FORTENBERRY (09 May 1981 to present)

#### b. Executive Officer

Commander H. C. FORTENBERRY (14 March 1980 to 09 May 1981)  
Commander T. F. HORNER (09 May 1981 to present)

#### c. Squadron Mission.

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

#### d. Command Composition.

Aircraft: Four (4) Grumman E-2C "Hawkeye" (ARPS)  
Personnel: Officer in Flight Status: 22  
(31 December 1980) Enlisted in Flight Status: 03  
Officers Maintenance/Intelligence: 04  
Enlisted onboard 132

#### e. Squadron Nickname: "Bear Aces"

#### f. Squadron Motto: "Bear Aces -- On the Road Again"

### II. Chronological Order of Events.

01 JAN - 19 Jan	Deployed Keflavik, Iceland
20 Jan - 22 Feb	Inport Norfolk
23 Feb - 12 Mar	REFTRA on USS NIMITZ (CVN-68)
13 Mar - 15 May	Inport Norfolk
16 Mar - 17 Mar	READEX 1-81
09 May	Change of Command
15 May - 27 May	TYT I VACAPES/JAX OPAREAS
28 May - 29 May	Inport Norfolk
30 May - 10 Jun	TYT II Puerto Rico OPAREA
11 Jun - 15 Jun	Inport St. Thomas, V.I.
16 Jun - 23 Jun	TYT III Puerto Rico OPAREA
24 Jun - 27 Jun	ORE
29 Jun - 30 Jun	TACEVAL 221 Western Atlantic
01 Jul - 27 Jul	POM Period
21 Jul	10 Years Accident Free Flying
27 Jul - 30 Jul	Refresher CO
31 Jul - 02 Aug	Inport Norfolk
03 Aug - 10 Aug	Atlantic Ocean Transit
11 Aug	Inchop 6TH Fleet

## II. Chronological Order of Events (CON'T)

11 Aug - 17 Aug	MED OPS
17 Aug - 19 Aug	OOM Gulf of Sidra
20 Aug - 23 Aug	Cent MED OPS/Transit to Naples
24 Aug - 03 Sep	Inport Naples, Italy
04 Sep - 13 Sep	OPS in Ionian and Western MED
14 Sep - 16 Sep	Port Visit/Tunis, Tunisia
17 Sep	Transit
18 Sep - 21 Sep	Port Visit/Naples, Italy
22 Sep - 04 Oct	"Display Determination" Eastern MED
05 Oct - 06 Oct	Port Visit/Venice, Italy
07 Oct - 28 Oct	Contingency OPS Eastern MED
29 Oct - 12 Nov	Port Visit/Naples, Italy
13 Nov	Transit
14 Nov	Operation "Bright Star"/Eastern MED
15 Nov	Transit
16 Nov - 25 Nov	Operation "IES D'OR"/Western MED
26 Nov	Transit
27 Nov - 03 Dec	Port Visit/Livorno, Italy
04 Dec - 12 Dec	OPS/Eastern MED
13 Dec - 15 Dec	Port Visit/Haifa, Israel
16 Dec - 20 Dec	OPS/Central MED
21 Dec - 04 Jan 82	Port Visit/Naples, Italy

## III. Operations.

The beginning of the new year 1981 found the Bear Aces of VAW-124 in NAVSTA Keflavik, Iceland temporarily replacing the 960th AWACS squadron. The squadron's assigned mission normally performed by the AWACS E-3A was to report any unidentified air contacts closing the Icelandic Military Adiz (MADIZ) and to vector fighter aircraft to intercept and escort Soviet Military Aircraft. VAW-124 maintained a continuous one hour alert throughout the 37 day period spent in Keflavik. During the deployment the squadron launched aircraft on nine occasions to meet alert requirements. VAW-124 aircrews detected, tracked and reported a total of six Soviet Aircraft approaching or penetrating of Icelandic airspace.

By Mid-January VAW-124 completed its turnover to the combined reserve E-2B squadrons VAW-78/88. Following a brief standdown period the Bear Aces were again working to prepare for refresher training aboard the USS NIMITZ (CVN-68). The three week "REFTRA" operations occurred in the waters off Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. There the squadron once again became part of the CVW-8/NIMITZ team. Upon returning to homeport, Norfolk, Va, VAW-124 participated in the interservice exercise "READEX 1-81". Flying a barrier off the coast of Beaufort, South Carolina, the Bear Aces were responsible for the defense of surface combatants using the Marine fighter assets from MCAS Beaufort. The designated aggressors in this situation were Marine A-6's stationed at MCAS, Cherry Point, North Carolina. The Marine F-4's were highly successful in intercepting inbound hostiles. Due to the exceptional intercept information provided, VAW-124 earned the kudos and respect from the Marine Fighter Airwing.

The beginning of May was highlighted by the Change of Command ceremonies in which CDR H. C. FORTENBERRY relieved CDR L. N. ODEN as CO. The squadron was given the opportunity to adjust to the new administration at sea aboard the USS NIMITZ for TYT I, TYT II, TYT III and ORE. The six week evaluation period, conducted in VACAPES and Puerto Rico OPAREA, provided the Bear Aces with one of the most demanding and successful flying schedules ever undertaken by an E-2 squadron. The Bear Aces established new fleet records for E-2 Monthly Flight Hours (457.5) and CV Landings (124), while topping previous ORE Sortie and Flight Hour Records by launching 30 Sorties for 118 Hours of coverage. Returning to Norfolk the squadron dedicated much of July to lengthy pre-Cruise preparations. While inport VAW-124 celebrated 10 years of accident free flying. Refresher Carrier Qualifications in the VACAPES capped off the month.

In August VAW-124 once again picked up the pace as the USS NIMITZ pulled away from Pier 12 Norfolk to begin the 1981-1982 Mediterranean Cruise. Soon after passing through the Straits of Gibraltar the Bear Aces were occupied with PASSEX a joint exercise involving USS FORRESTAL (CV-59). VAW-124 was tasked to coordinate and control a war-at-sea (WAS) or quick reaction strike (QRS) against the FORRESTAL battle group during one cycle, and then to provide AEW and CAP control in protection of the NIMITZ battle group on the next cycle. Taking full advantage of link communication, VAW-124 was able to routinely put an entire strike group on target, on time, with minimal voice transmission. During the later part of August the Bear Aces along with the VAW-125 "Tigertails" provided AEW, CAP and SSSC control for the first major OOM in the Gulf of Sidra in nearly two years. While conducting this exercise the Bear Aces controlled all F-14 intercepts of Libyan aircraft which penetrated the USS NIMITZ AAW area. It was during one of these routine E-2 controlled intercepts that two NIMITZ F-14's responding to an overt hostile act, shot down a pair of Libyan SU-22 Fitters.

Following a 10-day port visit to Naples, Italy, the USS NIMITZ returned to the Western Mediterranean. September was devoted primarily to refining SSSC/WAS skills working with the USS MISSISSIPPI, USS TEXAS and half a dozen other surface combatants. VAW-124 provided the necessary air control to conduct air-to-air and surface-to-air MISSILEX/GUNEX at the SALTO Range.

In late September the USS NIMITZ made two brief visits to Tunis and Naples and then set sail to the Eastern Mediterranean for exercise Display Determination. The basic aim of the exercise was to demonstrate NATO capability to defend and reinforce the southern region by exercising Naval ground, ground air and amphibious forces. Bear Ace controllers working with the armed forces of four NATO allies, provided the coordination necessary to complete amphibious assaults, antisubmarine warfare and close-air support.

The October port visit to Venice was cut short when USS NIMITZ was called to the North of Egypt in response to military and political tensions precipitated by the assassination of President Anwar Sadat. VAW-124 concentrated its attention on the airborne threat. The E-2 barrier was established to gain maximum detection and provide deterrence against any aggressive action.

In November the squadron enjoyed a well earned Mid-Cruise Standdown in Naples. Following the standdown, the USS NIMITZ returned to the Western Med

for operation "Bright Star" and "ILES D'OR". During "Bright Star" VAW-124 provided escort services for several Air Force transports containing the Rapid Deployment Force bound for the deserts of Egypt. Operation "ISLE D'OR", a French exercise involving ASW, air and surface forces of six different countries commenced 16 November. VAW-124 worked directly with CVW-8 aircraft and the French Carrier CLEMENCEAU based F-8's and Super Entendards. The Bear Aces earned the respect and recognition of the French Navy for the superior air control services provided during the exercise.

The tempo of operations slowed down for the Bear Aces in December. The first half of the month was spent visiting the ports of Livorno, Italy and Haifa, Israel. The highlight of the month occurred shortly after the Haifa, Israel port visit when VAW-124 played host to a group of officials from the Egyptian Ministry of Defense. A short E-2C capabilities briefing was followed by a "FAM Flight" for two Egyptian Flag Officers which terminated at Cairo West Airport. The NIMITZ then returned to Naples where the Bear Aces enjoyed the Christmas Holidays.

IV. Statistics/Awards.

a. Milestones:

Flight Hours for CY 81	<u>2504.7</u>
Highest Monthly Flight Hours for Cycle 81	<u>475.5</u>
Average Monthly Flight Hours for Cycle 81	<u>208.7</u>
21 July Tenth Consecutive Year, Accident Free Flying	
Highest E-2 ORE Sortie completion recorded to date 30/31 July	
Most E-2 CV Traps in one month	<u>124</u> (June)

b. Awards

Navy and Marine Corps Medal

AMH3 [REDACTED]  
 AN [REDACTED]

Navy Commendation Medal

CDR L. N. ODEN  
 LT [REDACTED]  
 AMSC [REDACTED]

Navy Achievement Medal

LCDR [REDACTED]  
 CWO3 [REDACTED]  
 AFCM [REDACTED]  
 ADCS [REDACTED]  
 ATC [REDACTED]  
 AMSC [REDACTED]  
 AMSC [REDACTED]  
 AT1 [REDACTED]  
 AMS1 [REDACTED]  
 AME2 [REDACTED]  
 AMH2 [REDACTED]  
 AK2 [REDACTED]  
 AT3 [REDACTED]

b. Awards (CON'T)

Navy Achievement Medal

AMSAN [REDACTED]

Commander Carrier Group FOUR (Letters of Commendation)

AECS	[REDACTED]	AD2	[REDACTED]
ATC	[REDACTED]	AMS3	[REDACTED]
AMH1	[REDACTED]	AD3	[REDACTED]
AMH1	[REDACTED]	AMS3	[REDACTED]
AT1	[REDACTED]	AT3	[REDACTED]
AT2	[REDACTED]	AE3	[REDACTED]
AT2	[REDACTED]	AE3	[REDACTED]
AE2	[REDACTED]	AKAA	[REDACTED]
AT2	[REDACTED]	ADAN	[REDACTED]
AE2	[REDACTED]		

Commanding Officer USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) (Letters of Commendation)

AT1	[REDACTED]	AMS3	[REDACTED]
AE1	[REDACTED]	AMS3	[REDACTED]
AZ1	[REDACTED]	AT3	[REDACTED]
AT2	[REDACTED]	AK3	[REDACTED]
AT2	[REDACTED]	AT3	[REDACTED]
AT2	[REDACTED]	AN	[REDACTED]
PR2	[REDACTED]	ADAN	[REDACTED]
AT2	[REDACTED]	AMSAN	[REDACTED]
AT2	[REDACTED]	AN	[REDACTED]
AMS2	[REDACTED]	AA	[REDACTED]

VAW-124 Sailor of the Quarter

AE3	[REDACTED]	AZ1	[REDACTED]
AT1	[REDACTED]	AK2	[REDACTED]

CVW-8 Sailor of the Quarter

AT1	[REDACTED]	AK2	[REDACTED]
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VAW-124 Sailor of the Year

AT1 [REDACTED]

CVW-8 "TAIL HOOK" Award

REFTRA (23 FEB - 12 MAR)

TYT/ORE (15 MAY - 30 JUN)

MED CRUISE (3 AUG - 10 OCT)

CVW-8 "TOP HOOK"

LCDR [REDACTED]