

1976

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
FIGHTER SQUADRON TWO ZERO ONE
NAVAL AIR STATION
DALLAS, TEXAS 75211

IN REPLY REFER TO

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25 January 1977

From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron TWO ZERO ONE
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)

Subj: Command History; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAV INST 5750.12B
(b) CVWR-20 INST 5725.1A

Encl: (1) Command History of VF-201 with annexes

1. As required by references (a) and (b), enclosure (1) is hereby submitted for calendar 1976.



G. H. FREEBORN

Copy to:
Director of Naval History (OP-09B9)
COMNAVAIRESFOR
CVWR-20
NAS Dallas PAO

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COMMAND HISTORY
Fighter Squadron 201
Calendar Year 1976

1. Summary of Events:

- 1st Quarter (Jan - Mar) Commence transition to F-4N aircraft.
Won NAS Dallas volleyball championship
for fourth consecutive year.
- 2nd Quarter (Apr - Jun) Departure of last F-8H aircraft.
Arrival of first F-4N aircraft.
Won NAS Dallas bowling championship
for second consecutive year.
- 3rd Quarter (Jul - Sep) Received Letter of Commendation from
CNAVRES for "... superlative record
of achievement ..." during period 01
Oct '73 to 30 Nov '75.
Won NAS Dallas softball championship.
- 4th Quarter (Oct - Dec) First squadron deployment with six
F-4N aircraft was to NAS Key West,
Florida.
F-4N lost in accident.
Change of command.

2. Command Organization

Fighter Squadron TWO ZERO ONE was commanded by Commander P.R. Pitts until 14 Nov '76 at which time he was relieved by Commander G.H. Freeborn. Commander Freeborn is the first active duty officer (TAR) to command a naval air reserve fighter squadron.

Over the past year the total composition of the squadron increased due to the transition from F-8H aircraft to F-4N aircraft. At the close of calendar year 1976 the command numbered 33 officers and 206 enlisted men. The number of officers nearly doubled with the addition of 12 naval flight officers.

There has been no change in the overall function or mission of VF-201. The command continues to operate out of NAS Dallas, Texas and squadron spaces remain unchanged.

3. Summary of Operations

The major event of 1976 was the transition from F-8H Crusader aircraft to McDonnell F-4N Phantom II aircraft. The first Phantom arrived in April and, with some sadness, the last F-8H departed for storage in the Arizona desert. The departing Crusaders left behind quite a legacy of accomplishments. The command has established a reputation of being the

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most frequently deployed tactical reserve force squadron. With the Crusaders, VF-201 achieved unprecedented levels of combat readiness in all phases of carrier-based fighter operations. The transition to the more versatile and sophisticated F-4N has indeed presented a new challenge to the officers and men of VF-201.

The Phantom is an all-weather fighter-interceptor capable of speeds greater than Mach 2. Once the world's fastest fighter, the Phantom provides air superiority for strike warfare and fleet defense. The F-4N also has an excellent air-to-ground weapons delivery capability. A significant difference between the Crusader and the Phantom is an extra aircrewman in the Phantom. The naval flight officer assists the pilot as a radar intercept officer (RIO). More specifically, the RIO is responsible for acquiring and tracking potential targets during high-speed intercepts. The team concept, i.e. pilot/RIO, has played a major role in the transition to F-4's.

A familiarization phase for aircrew training has been pursued since May. For six months the pilots, RIO's and maintenance personnel participated in heavy flying schedules to improve their skills in operating and maintaining the new aircraft.

Finally, in October the squadron deployed as a unit to NAS Key West, Florida. The purpose of this deployment was to further develop the versatility and capability gained through the acquisition of the supersonic F-4. Above all, the two week cruise would serve as a measuring stick for determining the proficiency of the aircrews in air combat maneuvering (ACM) exercises with the Phantom.

Support services were provided by VC-12 of NAS Oceana, Virginia, VFP-206 from Andrews AFB, Washington, D.C., and VF-101, Det. Key West. VC-12 provided tanker aircraft which enabled VF-201 to more efficiently utilize the adversary services provided by the "Grim Reapers" of VF-101. A reserve photo reconnaissance bird from VFP-206 flew photo missions to capture the new look of VF-201.

The first week of operations was a huge success. 80 air combat training sorties were flown. The maintenance department demonstrated their superior skills in keeping all six aircraft flying. The second week was less successful. During disengagement from air combat maneuvering an F-4, piloted by LCDR [REDACTED], experienced a double engine failure. After passing through 10,000 feet, LCDR [REDACTED] commanded the RIO, LCDR [REDACTED], to eject both of them. The ejection was successful for the aircrewmen, however the aircraft was lost. The cause of the accident is undetermined pending further investigation.

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After a one day safety standdown the squadron resumed operations. By week's end VF-201 had flown some 150 air combat training sorties over a nine day flying period. The training included inflight refueling, 1v1, 2v1, 2v2 and 1v1v1.

A noteworthy event which reflects credit on the past performances and achievements of VF-201 occurred in August. The Commanding Officer received a Letter of Commendation from the Chief of Naval Reserve, Vice Admiral Charbonnet. The citation covers the period 01 Oct 73 to 30 Nov 75. The citation reads in part, "In conjunction with a continuing effort to achieve maximum readiness and an unparalleled degree of excellence in all phases of fighter tactics, Fighter Squadron TWO ZERO ONE provided operational services and training to units of the Atlantic Fleet Naval Forces, United States Air Force and Canadian Forces ... Ground crews as well as pilots exhibited the highest level of dedication and total disregard for personal hardship when faced with frequent short notice deployments. Their ... superlative record of achievement reflects great credit upon themselves and their squadron..."

Other prominent events during the year include visits by Commander Air Wing Twenty, Commander Tinker and Rear Admiral Rohletter. Each of these distinguished guests attended the change of command ceremony held in November.

In keeping with the Navy's physical fitness program, the men and officers of VF-201 participated in all of the sports sponsored by NAS Dallas. Besides maintaining personal physical fitness the men and officers teamed together to win championships in volleyball, bowling, and softball.

At year's end the squadron had flown 1265 total flight hours in the F-4N. The squadron has accomplished a tremendous amount of familiarization and training during this year of transition. Much of this has been accomplished with the adversities associated with the delivery of some very old aircraft. Material condition and support, especially radar equipment was not good for most of the year.

Plans are now being formulated to deploy more frequently in 1977. The goals of the command are to achieve a high degree of readiness and operational proficiency utilizing the highly versatile and supersonic F-4N. With the squadron's successful history as a guideline, the attainment of these goals will occur in a minimum amount of time.