

1977

FLEET COMPOSITE SQUADRON EIGHT
FPO NEW YORK 09551

FE12/VC-8/104:mmm

5750
Ser **110**
5 MAR 1978

From: Commanding Officer, Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)

Subj: Command History

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.1B

Encl: (1) Command History 1977

1. In compliance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is hereby submitted.


R. W. CHANDLER

Copy to:
COMNAVAIRLANT
COMTACSUPWING ONE
Director of Naval History

FLEET COMPOSITE SQUADRON EIGHT

COMMAND HISTORY

COMMAND ORGANIZATION

Commander Keith A. BOATRIGHT, USN, Commanding Officer during the first half of 1977, reported to Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT (VC-8) in August 1974 and became Executive Officer in July, 1975. Commander BOATRIGHT relieved Commander Paul H. MOLENDIA on 2 July 1976 as Commanding Officer. Commander BOATRIGHT was relieved at change of command ceremonies by Commander Ralph W. CHANDLER on 15 July 1977. Attending the change of command ceremonies were Rear Admiral William R. FLANAGAN, Commander, U. S. Naval Forces, Caribbean and Captain Gerard R. OLSON, Commander, Fleet Tactical Support Wing ONE. Commander BOATRIGHT received orders to COMIBERLANT, Lisbon, Portugal. Commander Daniel M. DUDA assumed duties as Executive Officer on 1 August 1977.

From an aircraft standpoint, VC-8 currently has six TA-4J Skyhawks, five P-2 Neptunes and five H-3 Sea Kings in its inventory.

During 1977, aircraft logged 3472.2 flight hours. 2465.0 of those flight hours were used for operational flights while the remaining 1007.2 hours were utilized for training missions. Operational missions included logistics, airborne data link, target tow, unmanned drone launch and recovery evolutions, medical evacuations and search and rescue flights.

Also, during 1977, 132 enlisted and officer personnel checked aboard VC-8, while 87 persons departed from the squadron.

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

JANUARY

With CARIBREX 1-77 in "full swing", VC-8 aircraft flew a total of 215 flight hours. The H-3's flew 88.6 hours, A-4's flew 70.8 and the P-2's had a total of 55.8 flight hours. For those on the line and in the shops, this resulted in 108 launches with pre-flights, discrepancies, and post flight all completed and worked off.

The final critique of VC-8's Command Inspection (ADMAT) was most satisfying for our squadron personnel. The COMTACSUPWING ONE Command Inspection was held 10-13 January with Captain G. R. OLSON conducting a Personnel Inspection on 13 January.

During January, one officer and eleven enlisted personnel checked aboard. One officer and four enlisted personnel checked out.

FEBRUARY

Four-hundred hours were flown in February, of which 317 were operational. . . (A-4's - 186.3; H-3's - 126.8; P-2's - 87.3). VC-8 provided assistance to ARV MORAN, USS SARATOGA, USS VREELAND, USS BOWEN, USS INDEPENDENCE, HMCS ATHABASCAN, USS GUADALCANAL, USS MAHAN, USS DAHLGREN, USS TATTNALL, USS BYRD, USS BIDDLE, USS WAINWRIGHT, USS JOHN KING, CVW 7, CVW 17, VP 49, VF 33, VF 102, VA 12, VA 66, HMCS HURON, HMCS FRASER, HMCS SAGUENAY, USS BIGELOW, HMCS PROTECTEUR and USS COONTZ.

Nine enlisted personnel checked aboard and twelve departed in February.

MARCH

This month concluded the 1977 SPRINGBOARD exercise; the biggest ever for VC-8. The squadron provided services to no fewer than 31 ships of five nations, three carrier air wings and 11 individual squadrons.

In March the squadron logged 371 hours of which 242 were operational.

VC-8 provided operational assistance to the USS VIRGINIA, USS LAWRENCE, HNLMS FREISLAND, HMS JUPITER, HMS ARIADNE, HMS DANAE, HMS TIGER, HMS AURORA, VA 37, VA 75, VA 105, VF 31, VF 103, CVW 3, HMS EURYALUS, HMS ANTELOPE and HMS TIDEPOOL.

VC-8 "WIN" MAKES NAVAL HISTORY

A first not only for Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT, but for the entire Navy occurred when AD2 Jeanette M. HALL was designated the first female P-2 plane captain in Naval Aviation.

A new era in Naval Aviation also took place on 10 March 1977, when CDR K. A. BOATRIGHT, USN, Commanding Officer, Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT, successfully dropped one BQM-34 drone from a DP-2H aircraft. DP-2H BUNO 148352 is the first DP-2H aircraft to be modified for the launch and control of drones in support of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility. Co-pilot for this flight was LTJG C. JONKERS while AT3 Kay SCHWALLIE, ADAN Jim SUMPTION and ADAN Roger JONES completed the aircraft crew.

Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT was the winner of the 1976 U. S. Atlantic Fleet Sportsmanship Award for the Naval Air Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet. VC-8 was chosen from commands with less than 300 total personnel; selection was based on participation and performance in intramural sports. More than half of all squadron personnel participated on VC-8 football, fast and slow pitch softball, volleyball, golf, tennis, bowling and basketball teams.

During March, nine enlisted personnel checked aboard; two officers and six enlisted personnel departed.

APRIL

April was a moderately heavy month with 326 operational hours being flown. The individual hours were: A-4's - 127.2; H-3's - 104.7; P-2's - 95.0.

The ships that VC-8 aircraft assisted in April were: USS VIRGINIA, USS SAMPSON, USS LAWRENCE, USS SPRUANCE, USS BARRY, USS LOS ANGELES, USS CALIFORNIA AND USNS HARKNESS.

Two officers and eight enlisted reported to VC-8 in April. One officer and ten enlisted personnel departed the squadron.

MAY

In May, the A-4's flew 94.4 hours, H-3's flew 122.0 hours and P-2's flew 40.7 flight hours for a total of 257.1 hours. VC-8 assisted the USS LOS ANGELES, USS JOSEPH HEWES, USS CALIFORNIA, USNS HARKNESS, CVW 17 and VC-10.

On 23 May 1977, VC-8 completed three years of flying without an accident. During this three year period, more than 12,250 flight hours were logged in support of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility as well as training flights to keep aircrews in a constant state of readiness. VC-8 received congratulatory messages from both Commander, Tactical Support Wing ONE and from the Commanding Officer, U. S. Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads.

Checking into VC-8 were five enlisted. Checking out during May were three officers and nine enlisted men.

JUNE

A total of 321.7 flight hours were logged during June, with A-4's flying 120.2 hours, H-3's - 141.2 and P-2's adding 60.3 hours. VC-8 provided assistance to CVW 17, USS BARRY, CVW 8, USS CALIFORNIA, USS CLAUDE V. RICKETTS, HNLMS AMSTERDAM, USS CONE, USS RADFORD and SNS EXTREMADURA.

Fifteen enlisted reported to VC-8 while four officers and sixteen enlisted personnel departed.

JULY

Commander Keith A. BOATRIGHT was relieved by Commander Ralph W. CHANDLER as Commanding Officer of Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT. Among the honored guests in attendance during the change of command ceremonies were Rear Admiral William R. FLANAGAN, Commander U. S. Naval Forces, Caribbean and Captain Gerard R. OLSON, Commander Fleet Tactical Support Wing ONE. Commander BOATRIGHT received orders to the COMIBERLANT Staff.

VC-8 made a fine showing in the Roosevelt Roads County Fair and Independence Day celebration. In addition to winning the first place prize for floats, VC-8 also won the first place position in the COMNAV-FORCARIB sailing regatta.

Operationally, the pace for VC-8 was relatively slow. VC-8 aircraft flew 256.9 operational hours. The squadron provided operational assistance to the USS MACDONOUGH, USS CORONADO, USS RICH, USS FISKE, USS STEINAKER, PNS COUTINHO, USS CLAUDE V. RICKETTS, SNS EXTREMADORA and HMS AMCUSCADE.

During the month of July, seven enlisted personnel and two officers departed. Nine enlisted personnel reported aboard.

AUGUST

On 1 August, VC-8 had the pleasure of welcoming aboard Commander Daniel M. DUDA, the new Executive Officer. Also received aboard were three officers and eleven enlisted personnel. Departing were two officers and four enlisted,

Operationally, the A-4's flew 86.6 flight hours, the P-2's flew 68.5 and H-3's had 151.3; totalling 306.3 flight hours for the month of August. To compile this flight time we provided operational assistance to the USS YARNELL, USS ROBERT H. MCCARD, USS SPRUANCE, USS BARRY, USS GLOVER, USS MEREDITH and USS AMERICA.

For the second time in squadron history, VC-8 went to sea in support of the Mobile Sea Range (MSR). Twenty-two squadron members and two helicopters were assigned to the USS TRENTON in support of the MSR. The exercise, which lasted five days, took place approximately 250 miles north of Puerto Rico.

On 23 August, (and with our helicopter crews just returning from the MSR) VC-8 was called upon to Medevac Congressman Bowlings, from Missouri, who was visiting St. Barthelemy, to Roosevelt Roads Naval Hospital. Mr. Bowling suffered a minor heart attack.

SEPTEMBER

In September, VC-8 flew a total of 221.7 hours. A-4's flew 76.9 operational hours, P-2's - 65.0 hours and H-3's - 79.8 hours for the month. Assisted by VC-8 were USS MAHAN, USS PETERSON, USS CALIFORNIA and HNLMS AMSTERDAM.

Checking in during the month of September were one officer and four enlisted personnel. Departing the squadron were one officer and five enlisted men.

OCTOBER

October was another moderately light month for VC-8 aircraft with a total of 283.3 operational hours being flown. A-4's flew 94.4 hours, P-2's - 63.3 hours and H-3's - 125.6 hours. Ships assisted by squadron aircraft were the HMS SCYLLA, HNLMS AMSTERDAM, USS NIMITZ, USS DAMATO, USS MEREDITH, USS CHARLES P. CECIL and CVW 8.

On 12 October 1977, VC-8 was tasked with a Medevac involving a Puerto Rican child. The child, suffering from severe lacerations of both hands was flown from Mayaguez to San Juan.

During October two officers and nine enlisted checked in, while ten enlisted checked out.

NOVEMBER

Three hundred and twenty-eight hours were flown during the month of November. Of these, 111.8 were flown by A-4's, 84.8 by P-2's and 132.1 by H-3's. VC-8 aircraft assisted the USS MEREDITH, USS CHARLES P. CECIL, USS RUSH, USS BIGELOW, USS DEWEY, USS PRATT, USS PHARRIS, USS LAWE and FGS ROMMEL.

VC-8 was involved in a Medevac of an international nature on 8 November. A German freighter, the FONTANE, requested our services to help transport a sailor with severe abdominal pains from the ship to St. Croix. With the transfer successfully executed, VC-8 completed another Medevac.

One officer and seven enlisted men checked in during November. Seven enlisted departed.

DECEMBER

VC-8 flew a total of 283.0 hours this month, with A-4's flying 67.7 hours, P-2's - 62.9 and H-3's - 152.4. The squadron assisted the following ships and embarked unit: USS DALE, USS VIRGINIA, USS EISENHOWER, USS CARON, HMS ESKIMO, HMS PRENTHE and CVW 9.

The annual children's Christmas party was held for orphanage children and squadron families. Santa was flown in by a VC-8 helo. Santa provided gifts for each child.

VC-8 helicopter crews were responsible for saving the lives of six civilians during December. On 5 December, quick action taken by our helicopter crew members saved the life of a man after his boat sank off the northern coast of Vieques. One person died while two others swam safely to shore in the same incident.

Two weeks later, on 19 December, an H-3 was flown to the site of an Islander plane which crashed claiming the lives of five of the ten passengers on board. The helicopter crew was able to hoist five survivors aboard.

On 7 December 1977, VC-8 ferried NP-2H, GF-9 to Arizona. This transaction reduced to five the number of P-2 Neptunes that are operational in the U. S. Navy; all of which are based at VC-8, aboard U. S. Naval Station Roosevelt Roads.

One officer and twenty-five enlisted personnel checked into the squadron in December, with one officer checking out.

SPECIAL TOPICS

VC-8 played a significant role in training and operational readiness exercises conducted by Naval units utilizing the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility. VC-8 launched and recovered more than 105 drones in support of these exercises.

During the year, VC-8 launched more than 20 flights dedicated to SAR/MEDEVAC. As a result, thirty persons were assisted by VC-8 through these flights.

The retention rate for CY-78 was 26 percent first term and 83 percent career.

VC-8 was quite active in intramural sports during the year. We fielded teams in every sport including softball, football, volleyball, bowling, tennis, basketball and golf. Many team members in the various sports mentioned were selected to represent the Naval Station in post season tournaments sponsored by the Navy.