18 September 1974

MEMORANDUM

From: H-3 Type Leader
To: Commanding Officer
Via: Operations Officer
Executive Officer

Subj: Internal Squadron Operational Effectiveness; suggested improvements upon

Encl: (1) Compilation of VC-8 flight time by aircraft type for typical six-month period.
(2) Proposed new arrangement for the Ready Room/NAV Room complex

1. In the relatively short period of time I have been attached to VC-8, there has been a consistent, almost chronic, lack of detailed operational control and coordination on a day to day basis over this command's widely diversified missions. Although this situation has hindered our overall operational effectiveness very little in the long run, it has been an especially annoying problem on a daily basis, particularly in the area of helicopter operations.

2. Before attempting to further define the problem of VC-8's operational inefficiencies, it would be helpful to establish a few statistical facts. First, of the total number of pilots assigned to fly VC-8 aircraft, 31%, or 11 of 35, are helicopter pilots. In addition, there are 20 helicopter aircrewmen who take up 36% of VC-8's aircrew flight orders. In a typical six-month period, the five helicopters can be expected to fly roughly 1000 hours, or nearly one third of VC-8's total flight time (enclosure (1)). More significantly, this 1000 hours represents about 500 sorties (flights), by far the largest number of sorties flown per unit time than any other type of VC-8 aircraft. These facts are important only in that they show the relative size of the squadron helicopter operation vis-a-vis the total VC-8 commitment, and that the total number of flight evolutions (i.e. mission assignment, scheduling effort, briefing requirement, maintenance requirement, coordination effort, etc.) comprises a fairly high percentage of this command's operational effort. The combination of the large number of H-3 flight evolutions with the wide variety of missions assigned to the helicopters only accentuates the need for close operational coordination in successfully and efficiently completing the assigned tasks. It in no way lessens the need for all other VC-8 aircraft to be closely controlled and efficiently utilized and is equally important in their daily operations.

3. It is precisely that close operational coordination (more specifically, the daily command and control of VC-8's missions, aircrews and changing requirements) that is generally inadequate for the squadron as a whole and woefully inadequate for the widely diversified and ever-changing helicopter operations. The primary reasons for this inadequacy, in my opinion, are: (1) inefficient organization and (2) poor communication - both closely related, but nevertheless, separate and distinct problem areas.

4. Our present organizational set-up demands close coordination from the following three areas in order to effectively carry out the daily flight schedule: Operations, the Squadron Duty Officer and Maintenance Control. Operations receives messages and phone calls from our two operational bosses - COMFAIR and AFWR - assigning missions. The assigned missions are combined with our own training requirements and then carefully weighed against our aircraft availability, aircrew availability and proficiency, and to a lesser extent, our own "budgetary" (flight time) constraints. The result of this "careful weighing" is a flight schedule which effectively integrates our mission and training requirements with our available aircraft and crews. In accomplishing this, Operations (the schedules officer) must pay particular attention to which aircraft are "up", which pilots sniveled, which aircrewmen are on leave, which pilots are qualified for certain types of missions, what aircraft configuration is needed to accomplish the mission, the training status of all new pilots etc., etc. This is no easy, five-minute operation and it requires a great deal of concentration and attention to detail to come up with a workable, successful flight schedule. The above categories of information exclude all the more subtle ideas and alterations that go into each and every schedule, such as the pilot who forgot to snivel, the crewman who said he'd really like to get on this or that training hop, the call from the Maintenance Control chief who says he'd "really like" to get number 37 on the washrack in the morning if possible, and the call from the type leader saying that only he can fly this particular test hop - etc. In short the daily flight schedule is a "work of art", and by the time the Schedules Officer is done, he has become intimately familiar with the reason for every name and mission that appears on it.

5. After reviewing the schedule that afternoon, night check proceeds to do its best in getting the required number of aircraft up and properly configured, while the Duty Officer makes last minute adjustments to the flight schedule as required. The following day, the SDO becomes primarily responsible for carrying out the schedule so meticulously made out the previous day by the Schedules Officer. Although the SDO is usually somewhat aware of the day's commitments and our current ability to meet them, he is of course only dimly

aware of all the work and effort that went into making up the schedule the day before. If he is experienced or lucky, he may be fairly knowledgeable in which pilots are qualified for which flights, who the test pilots are, why number 37 is not on the morning lineup, when the VIP kit needs to be installed in the helicopter, how to combine a range patrol with a logistics run to St. Croix since there are no helicopters etc. - but chances are that he doesn't have the knowledge or the information readily at hand to make the decisions required by the ever-changing schedule. Of course, he has absolutely no knowledge of the subtlties written into the schedule the day before, which are often important for him to know. In most cases, he makes decisions based on his best information, his prior experience, the knowledge of those in the Ready Room at the time, possibly the advice of someone in Operations, or if he's really lucky, he may discover the actual author of the flight schedule and receive some expert advice on the best method of revising it. In short, we have a man carrying out and revising the flight schedule who has very sketchy information, limited resources and oftentimes, very little operational experience or perspective - and this is the same schedule we so painstakingly put together the day before! At best, the SDO receives changes or change requests, gets Ops advice, makes the changes and communicates the changes to Maintenance Control, who somehow or another lets them be known to the appropriate people; at worst, he does it all himself, using his best judgement and intuition. There is little or no standardization or continuity from day to day, and each individual Duty Officer's performance improves only on a sort of trial and error basis from one watch to the next. The SDO's inexperience and lack of knowledge are particularly acute and noticeable in the daily helicopter operations, but are also readily apparent in other areas requiring prompt, well-informed operational decisions.

6. Poor communication is another area in which VC-8 has a definite operational deficiency. Starting from the assignment of our missions from AWFR and COMFAIR, there is a consistent and pervasive attitude of "let the next guy take care of that". Helicopter missions are often assigned and accepted with inadequate information provided - VIP hops, with the total number of passengers or "on deck" time left unclear; VERTREP hops, with the exact location and definition of the load to be carried, undecided; shipboard operations, with call signs, TACAN channels, deck certification, frequencies, positions unclear or TBA; MEDEVAC missions, with the location and nature of the difficulty, undetermined; training hops, with nature of the training,

unspecified - etc., etc. In other words, information necessary for the professional and orderly conduct of the flight is left out or not communicated from AFWR to VC-8 and from the flight schedule to the participants. Although my experience is limited in other types of aircraft, on one occasion, I launched in an S-2 for a range patrol only to discover that the mission had been cancelled - the day before! The result of this lack of communication is that for each flight the aircraft/plane commander must determine the mission, dig up the pertinent information, reconfirm the times and reschedule as necessary. This is occasionally done with the assistance of the SDO or Operations during normal working hours, but is accomplished by the pilot himself after or before normal working hours. On another level, the communication is worse. The SDO receives schedule changes or change requests throughout the day from Operations, AFWR or COMFAIR and from crews, both on the ground and in the air. These changes are batted about the Ready Room and Operations until a decision is made. Generally speaking, the change is made on the master flight scheduling board and communicated by voice box to Maintenance Control. More often than not, the communication - crew change, configuration change, time change, aircraft change, cancellation etc., is either not called down properly or is not completely acted upon. In other words, the liaison between Ops (usually represented by the SDO) and Maintenance (usually represented by a cast of thousands in Maintenance Control) is faulty and inadequate. Result? Crews showing up at the wrong time or not at all; persons showing up for work at 0600 only to discover the flight's been scrubbed; aircraft not configured to perform the new mission; too few or unqualified persons assigned to flights - and so on. (The communication between Maintenance Control and maintenance shops/line is another story). Simply put, mission parameters and scheduling details are not being effectively communicated.

7. Proposed solutions/improvements

a. ELIMINATE THE DAYTIME SDO: Although an SDO would be designated for each day, he would perform only emergency or ceremonial functions during normal working hours. For the most part he would work at his job during the normal working day and would take over the command and control of the squadron at an appropriate time just prior to 1600. He would have no control of daily operations until after normal working hours and would receive a brief from the off-going Schedules Officer prior to taking charge.

b. BOLSTER THE "OPERATIONS" PART OF OPERATIONS

(1) Centralize Operations. Although the diagram shown in encl (2) is, in my opinion, the least traumatic and most desireable rearrangement for operational efficiency and ease, centralization could just as easily take place in the present Ops location. All telephones, hotlines, voice boxes, UHF radios, status boards and qualification boards would be located in one area - adjacent to the Schedules Officer's desk - as well as the daily flight schedule.

(2) Increase the number of Scheduling Officers and the scope of their responsibility. Two full-time Schedules Officers and a Flight Officer capable of writing the schedule is a possible combination; or possibly a Schedules Officer and two assistants. At least three officers capable of writing the schedule would be a neccessity. The general plan would be to give the "running of the schedules desk" to one officer for a specified period of time - probably one week or a certain number of days. For the period of time he was "on the desk", he would be responsible for writing the following day's schedule, revising the current schedule and taking down additional commitments as they come in. He would write the schedule and more importantly, defend it the next day. No one would have a better handle than he on the reasons for the schedule arrangement, the missions assigned, the mission parameters and the best ways to make the inevitable revisions and consolidations. He would have to become an expert on the mission capabilities and operational requirements for our five types of aircraft to insure proper mission standardization and assignment. He would provide the continuity and control we currently lack. Meanwhile, the other Schedules Officer(s) would be flying as much as possible awaiting their (one week) turn at the scheduling desk. The Schedules Officer would be on duty from 0730 until 1600 and would then be relieved by the SDO.

(3) Assign a helicopter pilot in the Scheduling/Flight/Asst Ops area. It has been far too long since a helicopter pilot has been actively involved with making up the schedule on a daily basis. The obvious advantages of having jet, prop and helo pilots as the three Scheduling Officers goes without saying. Still, however, VC-8's five types of aircraft are all basically flying machines with more similarities than meet the eye. They all have a finite number of capabilities and requirements which can be learned by anyone willing to try, and it is not necessary to be a

certain type of pilot to schedule effectively.

4. Add an enlisted aircrew scheduler. This person (a qualified airman or above) would be capable of assigning aircrewmen to the flight schedule after it has been made out. This would be the final addition to the schedule prior to its being typed, and it would relieve the Schedules Officer of that particular task. It is recommended that he be a helicopter aircrewman and that he also be given the responsibility of maintaining the qualifications and training status boards for VC-8 aircrewmen, under the direction of the Aircrew Officer. Without question, the Aircrew Training Officer has plenty of areas in aircrew training to worry about beside simply assigning aircrewmen to fly.

c. Establish a consistent, well-defined system for Ops - Maintenance communication.

P. J. LUMIANSKI

NAVSO 5216/5 (REV. 11-67)
S/N-0104-904-1752
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

Memorandum

DATE: 27 August 1974

FROM : Operations

TO: LCDR LUMIANSKI

SUBJ : Total Squadron Flight Hours

		P-2	S-2	H-3	A-4
JANUARY----	384.9	39.7	115.9	130.7	98.6
FEBRUARY---	591.6	91.8	211.2	156.0	132.6
MARCH------	389.2	74.6	80.7	157.3	76.6
APRIL------	421.9	87.1	88.2	115.1	131.5
MAY--------	520.5	71.5	181.9	153.2	113.9
JUNE-------	315.6	68.4	83.8	159.5	3.9
JULY-------	386.7	62.5	111.3	123.5	89.4
TOTAL	3010.4	505.6	873.0	985.3	646.5
PERCENTAGES		16.8%	29.2%	32.0%	21.5%/TOTAL 99.5%

ENCLOSURE (1)

PROPOSED NEW ARRANGEMENT FOR THE READY ROOM / NAV ROOM COMPLEX