

1976



FLEET COMPOSITE SQUADRON EIGHT
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From: Commanding Officer, Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT
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1. In compliance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is hereby submitted.


K. A. BOATRIGHT

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COMTACSUPWING ONE
COMNAVAIRLANT
Director of Naval History

FLEET COMPOSITE SQUADRON EIGHT

COMMAND HISTORY 1976

COMMAND ORGANIZATION

Commander Paul H. MOLENDA, USN, Commanding Officer during the first half of 1976, reported to Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT (VC-8) as Executive Officer in April of 1974. Commander MOLENDA assumed command of the squadron on 3 July 1975, and was relieved by Commander Keith A. BOATRIGHT, USN, on 2 July 1976. In attendance during the change of command ceremonies were Rear Admiral Ronald J. HAYS, Director, Office of Program Appraisal, Department of the Navy, and Captain Gerard R. OLSON, Commander Fleet Tactical Support Wing ONE. Commander MOLENDA received orders to the staff of Commander Fleet Air Caribbean. Commander Ralph W. CHANDLER, USN, assumed duties as Executive Officer on 2 July 1976.

During 1976, VC-8 aircraft logged 2,521 flight hours in support of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility (AFWTF). The assigned missions included logistics, airborne data link, target tow, unmanned drone launch and recovery evolutions, medical evacuations and search and rescue flights. Additionally, VC-8 flew 1,125 hours conducting pilot and aircrew training, for a total of 3,646 flight hours for the year.

Among the significant events of 1976, VC-8 made squadron history by going to sea for the first time. Seven officers, ten enlisted men and two helicopters were detached aboard the USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC-20) to support the Mobile Sea Range (MSR). The exercise took place approximately 350 miles northeast of Puerto Rico in the Atlantic. VC-8's primary responsibility was drone recovery.

On 1 July 1976, VC-8's last A-4C was ferried to Arizona. This aircraft was the last operational Charlie model in the Atlantic Fleet and as far as we know, in the entire Navy.

Last year Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT acquired the NP-2H aircraft, which is used for pilot and crew training and search and rescue missions.

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

JANUARY

With Operation Springboard beginning this month, VC-8 provided a variety of services to the USS DANIEL BOONE, HMCS OTTOWA, HMCS SAGUENAY, HMCS ASSINIBOINE, HMS ZULU, USS WILSON, HNLMS ROTTERDAM and the HMCS OJIBWA.

In addition to the 211 flight hours flown in conjunction with Operation Springboard, the squadron flew 72 hours of pilot and aircrew training flights.

FEBRUARY

VC-8 provided a variety of services to the USS NIMITZ, USS BILLFISH, HMCS IROQUOIS, USS FURER, USS SPRUANCE and the USS CALIFORNIA. The squadron also hosted detachments from VMA-231 and VU-32 (Canadian). A total of 450 flight hours were flown in February.

MARCH

During March, VC-8 aircraft flew a total of 329 flight hours. The prop pilots dropped 16 drones and 16 drones were recovered by helo. Six TDU's were towed this month; no AQM's were launched.

The squadron had operational commitments with the USS CALIFORNIA, HMS ARK ROYAL, USS CAROLINA, USS PAGE, HCMS HURON, USS C. F. ADAMS, USS CORONADO, and the USS EL PASO.

Several VC-8 helo pilots logged shipboard landings and requalified for another year. As a part of the requalification training, twenty-nine landings were made aboard the USS CORONADO.

APRIL

A MEDEVAC was flown to the crash site of an American Airlines 727 jet on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. VC-8 assisted in removing bodies, searching for personal effects and transporting medical personnel and supplies.

While no major exercise was scheduled during this month, Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT flew a total of 222 flight hours. This month's schedule included operational commitments with the USS ADAMS, HMCS HURON, HMS ESKIMO and the HMS ARK ROYAL.

MAY

The squadron flew a total of 244 operational flight hours in support of the USS BLAKELY, USS ADAMS, USS CALIFORNIA, HNLMS TROMP and the HMS ARK ROYAL.

May marked the completion of over 8600 hours of accident free flying.

JUNE

VC-8 made squadron history by going to sea for the first time. Seventeen squadron members and two helicopters were detached aboard the USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC-20) to support the Mobile Sea Range. This exercise took place approximately 350 miles northeast of Puerto Rico in the Atlantic.

Also a first in VC-8 history, all five of our operational A-4's were launched simultaneously in simulated attacks on the Mobile Sea Range.

Flight time for June was 438 hours.

JULY

During the month, VC-8 flew a total of 295 operational flight hours in support of the USS BLUEFISH, USS J. F. KENNEDY and the USS BIDDLE.

VC-8's last A-4C departed for preservation at Davis Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. That same month we acquired a new helo from HC-2 (Fleet Angels) Jacksonville, Florida.

AUGUST

The squadron logged 138 hours of training flights and 154 operational hours in support of the USS WAINWRIGHT and the USS TRIPPE.

SEPTEMBER

September was another slow month for Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT. Flight time for the squadron was 302 hours; 134 of which were provided in service to the USS BYRD and the FGNS MOELDERS.

OCTOBER

VC-8 had the privilege of having the Inspector General of the Navy, RADM CARMODY on board. RADM CARMODY observed the status of readiness, morale, and management of the squadron.

October marked the completion of 10,000 accident free flight hours. VC-8 aircraft flew a total of 300 flight hours with operational commitments to the USS ADAMS, TATTNALL, and the USS WAINWRIGHT. A Letter of Commendation was received from Commander Fleet Air Caribbean for achieving a 100% mission success rate during the SM-2 missile OPEVAL with the WAINWRIGHT.

NOVEMBER

The squadron had operational commitments with the USS ADAMS, USS HART, USS MCDONOUGH and the USS WAINWRIGHT. VC-8 aircraft flew a total of 292 hours.

Another first in the squadron's history, during a one-month period, all three types of assigned aircraft (A4, H3, P2) were involved in MEDEVAC/SAR missions.

Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT had the honor of providing transportation for the Secretary of the Navy, J. W. MIDDENDORF during his visit to the Caribbean.

DECEMBER

VC-8 helicopters were involved in multiple MEDEVAC/SAR operations. Flight time was 223 hours; 137 of which were operational flight hours.

The annual Children's Christmas Party was held for orphanage children and squadron families. Santa was flown in by VC-8 helo; he and Mrs. Claus provided a variety of presents for the children.

SPECIAL TOPICS

VC-8 played a significant role in training and operational readiness exercises conducted by naval units deploying to the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility. In support of these exercises, VC-8 air-launched 98 BQM-34A/E drones and recovered 124. Eighteen AQM-37A drones were air-launched and 68 TDU-22 towed target flights were flown.

During the year, VC-8 launched more than 35 flights dedicated to MEDEVAC/SAR. Over 45 persons were assisted by this use of assets.

A total of 111 enlisted and officer personnel checked into VC-8 during the year, while 116 detached during that time. A great deal of training was required for the new personnel to achieve necessary qualifications.

The squadron retention rate for CY-76 was 35 percent first term and 99 percent career.

VC-8 sponsored many sports activities during the year. As a result of its fine showing in intramural sports, VC-8 was the winner of the Small Boy category of the Atlantic Fleet Sportsmanship Award competition. VC-8 sponsored teams for football, softball, volleyball, bowling, tennis, basketball, golf, and decathalon events, involving more than half of all squadron personnel. The Small Boy award is given to a command with less than 300 personnel assigned.