

FLEET COMPOSITE SQUADRON EIGHT  
FPO NEW YORK 09551

VC-8  
1973  
C-

FF12/VC-8/104:waf  
5750 299  
Ser:

1 JUL 1974

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

Subj: Command History

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12B

Encl: (1) Command History 1973

(2) Annex

(a) Citation - Accident Free Aircraft Operations

(b) Letter of Citation

(c) CNO ltr Ser 508D1/57 of 4 SEP 73

(d) EP-2H BUNO 148338

(e) EP-2H BUNO 148338

(f) EP-2H BUNO 148354

(g) EP-2H BUNO 148354

(h) EP-2H BUNO 148354

1. In compliance with reference (a), enclosures (1) and (2) are hereby submitted.

  
S. B. SLOANE

## FLEET COMPOSITE SQUADRON EIGHT

### COMMAND HISTORY

Nineteen seventy-three proved to be a most challenging year for Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT. Our aging aircraft and this year's heavy operational commitments have been a good endurance test for the squadron. Much speculation has been made this year as to VC-8's future, with replacement aircraft for drone launches and expanded operations and services being major topics of interest. However, the immediate situation required VC-8 to provide "top-notch" services with its current assets. Expert coordination between the Maintenance and Operations Departments was required in order to achieve efficient utilization of assets.

### COMMAND ORGANIZATION

Commander Fred G. SPELLMAN, Commanding Officer in 1973, reported on board 18 June 1971 as Executive Officer. CDR SPELLMAN assumed command of the squadron on 24 May 1972, and was relieved by Commander Robert G. CARLSON on 13 July 1973. In attendance during the change of command ceremonies were Rear Admirals Norvel G. WARD and James D. RAMAGE. Commander SPELLMAN received orders to be the Assistant Technical Officer, Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, California. During CDR SPELLMAN's command, high quality services were provided for both U. S. and Allied Units utilizing the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range.

During 1973, VC-8 increased its range of services in the Caribbean. In September CNO approved the transfer of the Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads helicopter assets to VC-8 (CNO ltr 508 D1/57 of 4 SEP 1973). Two SH-3G helicopters were received in October, giving the squadron a total of five H-3's. With these additional assets, VC-8 helicopters were tasked with daily logistics flights and a continuous 24 hour medical evacuation standby, as well as normal drone recovery operations. VC-8 also contributed to the evaluation of several new weapons systems which could be employed by the fleet sometime in the future. The evaluation of a target scoring system, set up on the Cross Cay bomb site, was done with the help of VC-8 pilots and aircraft.

Operations at VC-8 during 1973 varied from very intense to very relaxed. A total of 5,237.7 hours were flown of which 1,943.1 were utilized for search and rescue missions, logistics support flights, medical evacuations, and pilot and aircrew training.

### SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

#### JANUARY

As usual, January proved to be a busy month for VC-8 as Operation Springboard got underway. Even though Springboard was relatively low key, the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range still relied heavily upon VC-8 to provide its normal spectrum of services. The success of Springboard depends a great deal upon the coordination between the ships and squadrons of the U. S. and allied services. In addition to fostering this coordination, VC-8 contributed

to its readiness and training by flying nearly all of the scheduled flights, as well as a great many additional commitments requested at the last minute. The flexibility of VC-8 aided tremendously in the smooth operation of this exercise.

Also during January, VC-8 deployed an EP-2H to Norfolk, Virginia, to act as an airborne data link aircraft for missile exercises off the VACAPES area. After the completion of an operational flight, upon return to NAS Norfolk on 31 January, the nosewheel departed this aircraft as a result of material failure. The actions of the crew of the aircraft, (BUNO 148338), contributed significantly to the prevention of an aircraft accident. No injuries were incurred and the aircraft only suffered minor damage. Through many long hours and much hard work put forth by the crew, the aircraft was ready to fly just a few weeks later.

#### FEBRUARY

February saw the completion of Springboard 1973. A-4 manned raids and tracking exercises were highlights as the operation came to a close. As operational commitments began slowing down, training began to play a larger role in everyday routine. Producing qualified aircraft commanders and enlisted crewmembers is a unique **challenge** for VC-8 due to the low availability of the aging P-2 aircraft. Because there are virtually no facilities available for the formal training of P-2 pilots and maintenance personnel, nearly all training was done on the squadron level.

#### MARCH

The Puerto Rico Air National Guard (PRANG) called on VC-8 to provide ground controlled intercepts (GCI's) in March. VC-8 A-4C SKYHAWKS sharpened the skills of the PRANG pilots and controllers by challenging their ability to detect and engage intruders. The HMS INTREPID and the HMS MINERVA employed VC-8 A-4's for tracking exercises and TDU's (target drone utility equipment).

#### APRIL

April was an average month for VC-8. Several ships utilized the weapons range giving VC-8 the opportunity to provide services. Tracking exercises and target services were available to the USS RICHARD E. BYRD, USS INGRAM, USS STRIBLING, USS W. J. SIMMS and the USS COONTZ. In addition to the above operations, PRANG required more GCI's. One of our US-2C aircraft (BUNO 133339) was ferried to the Naval Aircraft Rework Facility in Dothan, Alabama. This provided several VC-8 S-2 pilots some valuable instrument training while delivering and returning the aircraft to and from NARF.

#### MAY

May found several vessels of the Royal British Navy in the Caribbean for towed target and drone operations. These included the HMS DIOMEDE, HMS MINERVA, HMS ARK ROYAL and the HMS DEVONSHIRE. The USS PENSACOLA, USS BARNEY, and USS R. K. TURNER and worked the range this month and utilized VC-8 services.

## JUNE

A surface to air radar intercept missile firing exercise (RIMEX) commenced on 4 June 1973. This required around-the-clock service from VC-8, which kept everyone busy. Night operations are rare on the weapons range due to the nature of VC-8's work, however, the additional night flying and resultant increase in training and experience is always welcomed. VC-8 received a citation from the Commander, Naval Air Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, for meritorious achievement in aviation safety. VC-8 had operated free of major accidents during a four year period, commencing 15 May 1969 to 14 May 1973. The officers and men took great pride in achieving this goal.

## JULY

July was a very active month for VC-8. Numerous aircraft transactions occurred. An A-4C (BUNO 145132) was received from VC-2 at NAS Oceana, Virginia, and inducted into our aircraft inventory. Our US-2C (BUNO 133339) returned from PAR in Dothan, Alabama, and supplemented the onboard S-2 aircraft. On 17 July, a VC-8 EP-2H, (BUNO 148354) ditched in the water approximately 500 yards from the departure end of runway 6 at Roosevelt Roads. Fortunately, no fatalities or injuries resulted, even though the aircraft suffered strike damage. This suddenly concluded VC-8's four year accident-free period.

VC-8 had a new Commanding Officer in July when CDR R. G. CARLSON relieved CDR F. G. SPELLMAN. CDR S. B. SLOANE assumed the duties of Executive Officer of VC-8.

IANTRAEDEX 1-74 commenced on 16 July and was conducted through 19 July. BQM-E and BQM-A drones were presented along with tracking exercises, TDU's and AQM's.

## AUGUST

VC-8 was beginning to feel the effects of its aging P-2 aircraft in August, especially the older DP-2E's. Fuel cell deterioration and extensive corrosion in several aircraft required in-depth inspections and rework. Since there is no longer a PAR for the P-2, the Naval Air Rework Facility at Norfolk was tasked to do the work. Special arrangements were made for one-time flights for three aircraft to be flown to Norfolk. Plans for replacement aircraft were not firm yet, so it was determined that the P-2 assets at VC-8 were to be made airworthy for at least one more year. The difficulty in obtaining parts kept the aircraft out of service for several months, leaving VC-8 with almost no P-2 drone launch capability.

## SEPTEMBER

In September, the Chief of Naval Operations approved the transfer of the helicopter assets from the U. S. Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads, to VC-8. Two SH-3G helicopters (BUNO 149905 and 148966) were received in October. Along with the extra aircraft, VC-8 took on additional helicopter commitments, including all logistics support missions for the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range

and a 24 hour emergence medical evacuation standby.

#### OCTOBER

An SH-3G helicopter (BUNO 149736) was sent to the Naval Air Rework Facility in Pensacola, Florida for an aircraft condition evaluation (ACE). VC-8 supplied the ferry pilots for this mission. Also during October we saw many hours of Range Patrol flights when the USS R. A. OWENS, USS W. H. STANDLEY, and HMS BACCHANTE utilized the Culebra facilities for naval gun-fire practice.

#### NOVEMBER

November was another normal month for VC-8. The USS MCCARD, USS BRUMBY, USS PLYMOUTH, USS HART, USS ELLISON, and USS TRENTON appeared on the weapons range to train and sharpen their skills.

#### DECEMBER

LANTREADEX 2-74, the second Atlantic Fleet readiness exercise of the year, was undertaken from 5 to 7 December 1973. Again VC-8 was tasked with "around-the-clock" commitments.

Also during December SH-3G (BUNO 149725) was flown to NARF Pensacola for ACE.

#### SPECIAL TOPICS

A major problem the squadron has been faced with during 1973 has been the deteriorating material condition of P-2 aircraft. Corrosion, fuel cell deterioration, and a lack of readily available parts, caused VC-8 to take decisive steps in solving this problem. Special inspection teams from NARF Norfolk were utilized to determine which aircraft could continued in service and how much work would be required to make the P-2 serviceable for at least another year. The VC-8 airframes work center was enlarged and greater emphasis was placed on effective and workable corrosion control programs. Dates were arranged with NARF, Norfolk to send aircraft for inspection and repair, and the process of getting repairs accomplished was begun. The results of this work were realized as four of the six assigned P-2's were back at VC-8 at the close of 1973.

The activity of VC-8 in 1973 can be measured by the number of drones launched and recovered, the number of TDU's deployed, and the ordnance expended. During 1973, 181 BQM-34A's were launched of which 158 were recovered (88%) and 20 of 25 BQM-34E's launched were recovered (80%). VC-8 A-4 SKYHAWKS launched 52 AQM drones this year and flew 85 TDU flights. These figures represent only part of the effort put forth by the officers and men of FLECOMPRON EIGHT during 1973. The value and importance of the Roosevelt Roads complex as a fleet warfare training facility can be seen through the increased readiness and efficiency of units of the Atlantic Fleet and U. S. allies. VC-8 feels that through the services it has provided to the Atlantic Fleet, it has played a most important role in upgrading the combat capabilities of the naval units utilizing the facilities at Roosevelt Roads in 1973. VC-8 looks forward to and even more challenging year in 1974.



# CITATION

## ACCIDENT FREE AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS

*The* **COMMANDER NAVAL AIR FORCE  
U.S. ATLANTIC FLEET**

TAKES PLEASURE IN AWARDING THIS CERTIFICATE  
FOR MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT IN AVIATION SAFETY

TO

**VFC-8**

• DURING THE 4 YEAR PERIOD FROM •

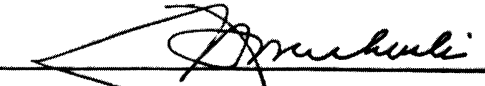
15 MAY 69 TO 14 MAY 73

**FLEET COMPOSITE SQUADRON EIGHT**

OPERATED FREE OF MAJOR ACCIDENTS

• TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN WHO ATTAINED THIS EXCELLENCE IN AVIATION SAFETY •  
I EXTEND MY HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS



  
VICE ADMIRAL  
U.S. NAVY



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS  
COMMANDER NAVAL AIR FORCE, U. S. ATLANTIC FLEET  
NAVAL AIR STATION  
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA 23511

CNAL 002  
S58-14  
Ser **3862**


12 JUN 1973

From: Commander Naval Air Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet  
To: Commanding Officer, Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT

Subj: Recognition for Achievement in Aviation Safety

Encl: (1) COMNAVAIRLANT Citation

1. The Commander Naval Air Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet takes great pleasure in according special recognition for meritorious achievement in aviation safety.
2. A COMNAVAIRLANT commendation for operations without a major aircraft accident for the four year period from 15 May 1969 to 14 May 1973 is hereby forwarded. The Commanding Officer, officers and men are congratulated for this fine achievement. They can take pride in such outstanding performance and in their contribution to the continuing reduction in losses of personnel and material assets within the Naval Air Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet and United States Navy.
3. The Commanding Officer is encouraged to reflect this achievement in the official evaluations of the officers and men contributing to the success of the unit in operational safety. Action to provide individual awards to personnel who made outstanding contributions is appropriate.

  
F. H. MICHAELIS



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350

IN REPLY REFER TO

Ser 508D1/57

4 SEP 1973

From: Chief of Naval Operations  
To: Commander Naval Air Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet  
Subj: Consolidation of SH-3 Assets at Roosevelt Roads  
and Elimination of US-28 Assets

Ref: (a) Your First Endorsement dtd 27 July 73 on  
COMFAIRCARIB ltr CFAL:30:va 3700 Ser 94 of  
18 Jun 1973

1. The request in paragraph 3 of reference (a) that the two SH-3G helos assigned NAVSTA Roosevelt Roads be permanently reassigned to VC-8 is approved. Since VC-8's past allowance was two SH-3Gs, it is hereby changed to four vice the five requested. The third SH-3G that was aboard VC-8 is a pipeline aircraft.

J. S. CHRISTIANSEN  
J. S. CHRISTIANSEN  
By direction

*Rec'd*  
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COMNAVSTA  
COMNAVAIRFOR