

FLEET COMPOSITE SQUADRON EIGHT
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From: Commanding Officer, Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT
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Subj: Command History

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Encl: (1) Command History 1972

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


F. G. SPELLMAN

Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT located at Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads, P.R.

COMMAND HISTORY 1972

In 1972, Fleet Composite Squadron EIGHT logged another successful year, fulfilling its mission of providing aerial and target services in support of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range (AFWR).

The year began with CDR. R.C. NICHOLSON in command, and CDR. F.G. SPELLMAN as the Executive Officer. From its Hanger 200 home, the squadron continued to provide high quality services for U.S. and Allied units utilizing the Weapons Range. A total of 4,952.2 flight hours were logged. 1078 operational sorties were flown totaling 2,786.7 hours. The remaining 2165.5 hours were accumulated in training, search and rescue missions, transportation and logistics flights, and medical evacuations, which illustrates the versatility of VC-8.

The squadron's complement of aircraft was depleted by 2 to bring our total to 19. 3 RH-3A's were transferred to the Pacific Missile Range at Pt. Mugu, California. Replacing them were 3 SH-3G's from the NATC in Patuxent River, Maryland. The last DF-8F was disposed of in May as its service life had terminated. One A-4C was also sent to the boneyard after all its useful hours had expired. This left VC-8's inventory on board at 6 A-4C's, 2 DP-2E's, 2 EP-2H's, 3 US-2C's, and 3 SH-3G's. In addition, 2 P-2's remain in PAR and 1 at the Naval Air Rework Facility in Norfolk, Virginia.

In athletics, VC-8's excellence was shown as the squadron once again received the Ofstie Trophy, symbolic of athletic dominance in the Roosevelt Roads complex. First place finishes were recorded in basketball, football, and volleyball; a runner-up in softball; and a third place in golf. A highlight of the year occurred when the Redtail football team won

the Tenth Naval District Tournament and represented COMTEN in the Navy's East Coast Championships at Norfolk.

The annual Springboard exercises during January and February were busy periods for AFWR and VC-8. Two T-33 aircraft from the Royal Canadian Navy, and two S-2's from VC-2 arrived to assist the squadron in peak periods of Springboard 72. The first participants were the USS SKEENA and AYLWIN, and HMS BERWICK. The AFWR Support Facility and the Puerto Rican Air National Guard (PRANG) received the benefit of many GCI exercises. Tracking services were provided for the USS TRIPPE, ADAMS, McDONOUGH, ALBANY, and DEALEY, and HMS GLAMORGAN. Drone drops were provided for the TRIPPE, ADAMS, McDONOUGH, and DEALEY. The squadron also towed banners for Brazilian Destroyer Divisions 1 and 2. The 132.1 flying hours that were logged in 3 days during Readex 3-72 only reflect too well the pace set in these busy months. VC-8 ended the exercises with several manned raids on the British carrier ARK ROYAL.

In March a series of raids was flown for Standing Naval Forces Atlantic Fleet (STANFORLANT). Tows and trackex's were the highlights of this month with services provided to the USS CHARLESTON, NEWPORT, LAWRENCE, and HMS PHOEBE. The month ended with operations assisting the USS WAINWRIGHT.

April and May continued as active months for the Redtails. The squadron detached one S-2C to Caracas for ten days to tow for Venezuelan Navy ships that were unable to attend the Springboard exercises. From April 3rd to the 21st the A-4's were employed in GCI exercises with the 140th ACW squadron of PRANG. At the end of April the USS DALE received several drops and an AQM launch, the NASHVILLE and SHREVEPORT were

towed banners by the S-2's, and the BOWEN and LUCE were provided with trackex's, drones, GCI's and tows. The beginning of May saw Task Group 27.4 down in the range and marked the end of the DF-8F as a VC-8 aircraft.

On 24 May 1972, CDR. SPELLMAN relieved CDR. NICHOLSON as Commanding Officer of VC-8. CDR. R.G. CARLSON assumed the post of Executive Officer. The Change of Command ceremony was held in Hanger 200. In attendance were RADM N.G. WARD, COMMANDER CARIBBEAN SEA FRONTIER; and CAPT W.A. MACKEY, COMMANDER FLEET AIR CARIBBEAN.

June and July were slower months as U.S. and NATO Alliance ships found operations in northern waters tolerable again. But tracking exercises were provided for the USS PUTNAM, SAMPSON, CORRY, and HMS BERWICK. The FGS ROMMEL, USS BLAKELY, and FARRAGUT also received the full spectrum of VC-8's aerial services. Marine Air Group-41 came down in July to work with our jets, as did VF-201 in August. 25, 26, and 27 July were spent working with the 182nd Tactical Air Support Group in exercise "Sentry Cane Cutter". The A-4's saw 20.7 hours of flight time, during which they were employed as strike aircraft, and also as bogies and interceptors; again illustrating the versatility of VC-8's service capability. The end of the summer saw the Redtails working for the USS COONTZ, PAUL, AYLWIN, and HMS GURKHA.

September and October were similiar to the previous few months. A few tracking exercises were performed for the USS R.K. TURNER, SELLERS, and HMS PLYMOUTH. Drones were employed for the TURNER and SELLERS, with the PLYMOUTH also getting a TDU. Task Group 22.1 and VMFA 312 were serviced with various operations.

There was a marked increase in activity in November. Tracking services were extended to the USS SEMMES, TALBOT, and HMS GURKHA. The SEMMES and FARRAGUT received drone drops and banners were towed for TG 22.1, SEMMES, and GURKHA. A BQM drop for the USS YARNELL started the month of December. It was followed by drops and trackex's for the COLUMBUS, DALE, and DEWEY. SAR and MEDEVAC operations ended the year as several accidents including the Roberto Clemente crash marred the holiday season in the Puerto Rico area.

The 4,952.2 hours logged brought the total of accident free hours to 22,238.1 over almost 4 years of providing services for the Atlantic Fleet. In spite of reductions in men, money, and material, VC-8 has fused dedication, hard work, and a fine sense of professionalism and continued to be a vital asset to the Navy.