

WAR and PEACE in the CORSAIR II

Revised 06/27/2016

After the SPAD Retirement Ceremony and Change of Command, most of the officers and men of VA-25 executed orders to other units. This event marked the passing of a unique era in Naval Aviation. The last operational piston-engine carrier aircraft, designed for WW-II, but which fought alongside jets in two wars and was prepared to deliver nuclear weapons in WW-III, was officially retired, but still used by VNAF and USAF from shore bases.

The VA-122 A-7 training program and tight deployment schedule left a lot to be desired. Besides the usual replacement pilots, VA-122 was training two squadrons more or less together, with VA-215 only four weeks ahead of VA-25. However, the Corsair II was an easy transition for the ten nuggets. Six of the new pilots were ex-instructors from VA-122. Four were ex-SPAD pilots. Only Ltjg Ted HILL made the third (A-1) and fourth (A-7) combat deployments – he was our friendly LSO.

The squadron's "marriage" with the CORSAIR II lasted just 15-years before transitioning to the F/A-18 Hornet. Besides being the second Navy Hornet squadron (VMFA-314 was the first and VA-113 became the first Navy Hornet squadron by a few days), as of 2010, the squadron has flown the Hornet longer than any other assigned aircraft (only 21 years in the SPAD).

CHRONOLOGY

1968

Commander in Chief - Lyndon B. Johnson

- 5 February CDR CHARLES W. CATES relieved CDR B. H. SHEPPARD as CVW-16.
- 10 April Following the A-1 retirement ceremony, **CDR Scott L. SMITH** relieved CDR Clifford E. CHURCH as Commanding Officer,
- For six months, the squadron existed only on paper, administratively assigned to COMFAIRALEMEDA while undergoing A-7 training with VA-122. (See PEOPLE and EVENTS – SPADs to CORSAIRs.)
- 11 April **Ltjg Ted HILL** ferried the Navy's last A-1H (BuNo 135300) to the Pensacola Naval Air Museum, and then returned to Lemoore for an expedited jet transition course with VA-127.
- September VA-122 and the prospective VA-25 pilots deployed to MCAS Yuma, Arizona for most of the month.
- 24 September Ltjg Leroy (Butch) Bates (NA 1966) was killed at MCAS Yuma when a wing on his A-7 folded during takeoff – a mechanical failure. He was on a VA-122 weapons deployment and a prospective VA-25 pilot.



- October Prospective VA-25 pilots practiced field carrier landings, and then day/night qualified aboard *USS KITTY HAWK (CVA-63)*.



- 1 November Thirteen new A-7Bs were parked on the line and the squadron officially became part of CVW-16. The skipper flew the first A-7B (BuNo 154436). Some pilots had not yet completed training in VA-122, but reported aboard anyway.

President Johnson imposed a bombing halt on North Vietnam.

12 November The squadron deployed to Fallon with Carrier Air Wing 16 for an intensive weapons deployment. During this deployment, the Squadron logged over 936 hours in 16 flying days, with the loan of three aircraft from VA-122. This effort at Fallon contributed greatly to pilot experience. Another milestone of the deployment was a single day's effort of 84.5 flight hours.

Besides VA-25, CVW-16 consisted of VF-111 (F-8s), VF-162 (F-8s), VA-112 (A-4s), VA-87 (East Coast A-7s), and detachments from VFP-63, VAW-11, and VAQ-130.

9 December The squadron deployed to NAS Miramar to escape Lemoore's fog and get some night carrier landing practice. Fog crept over the field from the ocean and two aircraft collided while rolling out on the runway in pea-soup fog. Neither pilot was injured.

Shortly after returning from Fallon, VA-25 aircraft sported green radomes - resulting from correcting routine nose-cone erosion and a convenient shortage of white epoxy paint in supply.

The undamaged tail of one aircraft and the undamaged nose of the other aircraft were later merged into a single aircraft at the Alameda Overhaul Facility.

10/20 Dec The squadron deployed aboard *USS TICONDEROGA (CVA-14)*.

Ltjg Mike Coinman died in a crash of unknown causes after a night catapult launch. He climbed steeply through the overcast, apparently stalled and came down nearly vertically into the water. Ltjg Duane STARR reported aboard as Mike's replacement.

William Michael Coinman was from Clayton, New Mexico and earned a Mechanical Engineering degree from New Mexico State University in 1966. He married Nancy Arvidson that same year.

The exact cause of LTJG COINMAN's accident is unknown, but probably resulted from the air conditioning system going full-cold in the high humidity and fogging the cockpit during a catapult launch. A later incident had a happy ending, after which maintenance personnel installed cork-gasket washers under the A/C temperature control knob for more friction.



Green-nose A-7 aboard Ticonderoga

1969 **Commander in Chief - Lyndon B. Johnson**

7/13 January The squadron again deployed aboard *TICONDEROGA*.

14 January *USS ENTERPRISE (CVN-65)* had a catastrophic flight deck fire while operating off Hawaii. She lost 28 men, 15 aircraft and suffered large holes in her landing area. Repairs delayed her departure, but she finally arrived on Yankee Station on 31 March.

20 January Richard M. Nixon was sworn in as President and Commander in Chief.

Nixon was raised in a Quaker family in California and graduated Duke University School of Law in 1937 and joined the Navy after Pearl Harbor. He served as Naval Passenger Control officer and later as Admin Officer at NAS Alameda. He resigned from the Navy in 1946 as a LCDR.

He was elected to the House in 1946, to the Senate in 1950, and as Eisenhower's VP in 1952. He made an unsuccessful bid for president in 1960 and an unsuccessful bid for Governor of California in 1962. His bid for president in 1967 was successful and he was reelected in 1972. Nixon died of a stroke on 22 April 1994 at age 81.

1 February VA-25 boarded *TICONDEROGA* for its fourth combat deployment to Yankee Station, its fifteenth WestPac deployment, but the first with CVW-16. After the ORI and some liberty in Pearl Harbor, the *TICONDEROGA* again headed west.



CAG and the two A-7 commanding officers flew ahead to NAS Cubi Point. There, they boarded a C-2A bound for the *USS Kitty Hawk* to explore the new war – bombing Laos during the bombing halt.

After a few days of killing trees, the group returned to Cubi Point in time for Ticonderoga's arrival.

- 20/21 Feb *TICONDEROGA* visited Yokosuka, Japan.
- 26/27 Feb *TICONDEROGA* visited Subic Bay, P.I.
- 28 February After a brief stop at Cubi Point, VA-25 began combat operations, mostly bombing targets in Laos under direction of an airborne forward air controller.
- 9 March **LCDR Jim SCOGGIN**, executing a day CCA, experienced an Approach Power Control (APC) malfunction and was forced to eject. The engine finally wound up to full power just as the aircraft hit the water.
- 22/27 March *TICONDEROGA* visited Subic Bay, P.I.
- 14 April North Korean fighters shot down a VQ-1 EC-121 over international waters in the Sea of Japan.
- 20 April *TICONDEROGA*, *USS ENTERPRISE (CVAN-65)*, and *USS YORKTOWN (CVS-10)* arrived in the Sea of Japan and commenced flight operations. Fighters “played tag” with Soviet bombers for two weeks while the A-7s flew tanker missions in heavy clouds, encased in bulky exposure suits.

TICONDEROGA “borrowed” four F-8s from *USS HANCOCK (CVA-19)* which remained on Yankee Station. These aircraft were kept on TICO's hangar deck except when launched to intercept a Soviet bomber. After each such intercept, the *HANCOCK* birds were recovered and promptly spotted below. The Soviets planes then returned to count carriers again trying to find *HANCOCK*.

- 30 April/9 May *TICONDEROGA* visited Subic Bay, P.I.



- 8 May TICO celebrated her 25th anniversary since commissioning.
- 10 May *TICONDEROGA* returned to Yankee Station for renewed combat operations on 10 May.
- 13 May **ENS Chuck ANTONIO**, on a night tanker mission, experienced an unsafe landing-gear during recover. He made several low passes and then had several bolters before being sent to the tanker. He couldn't get plugged-in before running out of fuel.
- 5 June Air strikes were launched into North Vietnam in retaliation for the downing of an RF-8 photo-reconnaissance aircraft.
- 8 June President Nixon announced a troop withdrawal from South Vietnam. Over 100,000 troops were brought home during the following year.
- During the first five months on Yankee Station and in the Sea of Japan, VA-25 dropped 2,200,000-pounds of ordnance and flew 1,115 sorties against the enemy.
- 9 June **CDR Fredrick J. ORRIK** relieved CDR Scott L. SMITH as commanding officer. CDR Smith left with orders to *USS CORAL SEA* as Air Ops Officer.
- 9/15 June *TICONDEROGA* visited Sasebo, Japan

- 19/24 June *TICONDEROGA* visited Hong Kong.
- August The North Vietnamese released three POWs that only confirmed the brutal treatment of POWs.
- 5/15 August *TICONDEROGA* visited Sasebo, Japan.
- 18 August **Captain Charles W. CATES**, CAW-16, died while attempting an emergency landing at Naha, but ejected at too low an altitude. CAG flew with VA-25 at Fallon and during the first half of the deployment. CDR F. J. ORRICK (CO of VA-25) became acting CVW-16.



The final line period on Yankee station saw unparalleled availability and reliability of the A-7B weapons system when VA-25 pilots, in 33 flying days, established a mark of 1,650 flight hours in sorties against the enemy. Pilots averaged better than 92 hours in the air during that period.

- 25/29 August *TICONDEROGA* visited Sasebo, Japan.
- 2/3 September *TICONDEROGA* visited Subic Bay, P.I.
- 18 September The squadron returned to NAS Lemoore.
- October After a month stand-down, the Squadron started its transition to the newest version of the Corsair II - the A-7 "Echo", with the most advanced avionics system in the Navy to date. The computer and inertial measuring set are similar to equipment installed in the Apollo moon flights.
- December VA-25 relinquished its last A-7B as pilots flew the transition syllabus. Most completed training by Christmas.

1970 **Commander in Chief - Richard M. Nixon.**

- 31 January *MIDWAY* was recommissioned following a four-year modernization at Hunters Point Shipyard.
- February **CDR Fred ORRIK** flew to Dallas and received VA-25's first "Echo". In the following weeks the other aircraft were delivered from the LTV factory. The Squadron commenced its pre-deployment training cycle.
- CDR Bill WHEAT**, former CO of the Blue Angels, joined the Squadron as the prospective new XO.
- May "Fist of the Fleet" flew to NAAS Fallon for a 2-week weapons deployment. After working the bugs out of the radars and computers, VA-25 proved the ECHO's bombing superiority by placing the majority of the bombs within 50 feet of the target.

Manual bombing qualification required a CEP under 125-feet. Only a few SPAD pilots could achieve less-than 100-ft CEP. The A-7B's CP-741 weapons system was a great improvement over manual bombing and the ECHO's bombing system even improved on that.

- 16 May CAPTAIN JESSE E. McKNIGHT relieved CAPTAIN A. E. HILL as CVW-2.
- 26 June **CDR Felton M. HUMPHREYS** relieved CDR Fred J. ORRICK as COMMANDING OFFICER. CDR ORRIK left to join CARDIVNINE staff in San Diego. The men and pilots under CDR HUMPHREY's tutelage became known as "HUMP's HACKERS".
- July VA-25 showed its readiness with a 93 ADMAT grade. Afterwards job changes were made and LCDR Ed STEWART took over as Operations Officer and LCDR Bob CASTLE moved over to Maintenance.
- August It was during the Squadron's Fallon deployment that **LT Duane STARR** ejected from his aircraft in a steep bombing run. The high speed (600 kts,) ejection was successful, but LT STARR received multiple leg and shoulder fractures as a result. He was rescued and sent to Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego to recuperate. Being so close to deployment, LT STARR was transferred from the Squadron and replaced by LCDR Bill CATLETT from VA-122.

September

VA-25 completed its shakedown cruise on the *USS RANGER (CVA-61)* off Southern California. The Squadron received the highest ORI grade of the Air Wing - a 93.



USS Ranger, circa 1971

- 5 October The ship pulled into San Francisco for a 3-week stand-down before deployment.
- 27 October Attack Squadron 25 was back again with CVW-2 and left on its first *RANGER* deployment, but its fifth combat deployment to Vietnam and sixteenth WestPac deployment.
- 1/4 November *RANGER*'s ORE was conducted south of Hawaii between 1 and 4 November. Only one accident occurred during this period. **LT Don ROESH** had a night ramp strike after coming back from the beach. The aircraft impacted the ramp with port wing down. It fortunately was arrested in the wires before LT ROESH could eject. He climbed out safely and the fire was put out. This accident left the squadron with 12 useable aircraft.
- 6/16 Nov *RANGER* departed Honolulu, after two days in port, and headed west for Subic Bay, P.I.
- 16 November **Ensign Carl DIXON** reported aboard as replacement for LT Dave RANDOLPH, VA-25's Air Intelligence Officer. That night a farewell dinner was thrown for LT RANDOLPH at the Subic Bay Officer's Club.
- 17/19 Nov *RANGER* steamed out of Subic Bay, headed for Yankee Station.
- 20 November CDR HUMPHREYS, LCDR Ed STEWART, LT Bill SKINNER and LT Jim LEFFEW flew a RESCAP mission off the coast of Haiphong Harbor while A-6s and A-7s from *ORISKANY* and *RANGER* made a diversionary strike on Haiphong and Hanoi.
- Navy planes dropped flares along the North Vietnam coast to divert attention from a rescue effort at Son Tay POW compound 20-miles west of Hanoi. The prisoners had been moved, so the mission in itself was a failure. However, we were all very proud to be a part of the attempt.
- 21 November Three Alpha strikes were conducted against North Vietnam in Route Package I. The Executive Officer, CDR Bill WHEAT, and his flight cut a railroad yard in two and destroyed a freight train. Later that day LCDR Bill CATLETT and his wingman, LT Bill BEATY took out a steel bridge on Hwy 1 running along the eastern coast of North Vietnam. On that same strike LT Bill WALLACE destroyed four trucks with several Rockeye bombs.
- 6 December **Ltjg Lee THOMSEN** reported aboard to be the new Material Control Officer. That afternoon LT Marshal SHERMAN with LT Bill BEATY on his wing attacked two trucks with his 20mm gun destroying one and damaging the other. In addition, two POL storage fires were started. It was a good contribution to the interdiction effort.
- After returning from NAS Cubi Point in NE 400, **LT Bill WALLACE** was binged to Danang with low fuel. With no navigation aids or radar LT WALLACE became lost and declared an emergency. His engine flamed out half an hour later, and he successfully ejected near Chu Lai, South Vietnam. The HC-7 Big Mother fished him out of swelling seas and took him to Danang. No injuries were incurred and only our air force number was hurt.
- 19/26 Dec *RANGER* arrived in Subic Bay for a 7-day liberty call. Christmas was pretty dull, but everyone tried to make the best of it.
- 28 December **LCDR Bob CASTLE** was hit by AAA, and he lost his engine. He flew towards Nakhon Phonom, Thailand, as far as he could before he ejected. The Air Force Pedros plucked him out of the Laotian jungle most expeditiously and treated him and his wingman, LT Bill BEATY, to a gala time that night.
- 19 December **CDR Bill WHEAT**, Executive Officer of VA-25, left for duty at COMFAIRLEMOORE. No one will forget this truly great officer and gentleman. LCDR Ed STEWART assumed duties as Executive Officer.

1971

Commander in Chief - Richard M. Nixon.

- 1 January Everyone celebrated Attack Squadron TWENTY-FIVE's 28th birthday with cake and ice cream on the forecastle. It just happened to be **LT Larry WAHL**'s birthday too, so it was a double celebration.
- 14/21 January The rest of the line period went uneventfully as everyone looked forward to Hong Kong. Many of the squadron's wives were on hand to greet the Fist of the Fleet. A good time was had by all and we departed Hong Kong with many lingering memories.
- RANGER* sailed to Subic Bay, Philippines for 8 days of overhaul and repair.
- 1 February **Ltjg Stu BUGG** joined the squadron just prior to departure. The 3rd line period was spent making runs on the many trucks coming down from North Vietnam through Laos on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
- 10 February LCDR Bob CASTLE and LT Tim STONE scored hits on 15 trucks and got many secondary explosions.



Bomb craters from years of bombing the Ho Chi Minh trail near Mugia Pass. North Vietnam is in the upper right corner of this picture.

The squadron continued through several more line periods, steaming to Subic Bay for a short but welcome period of R&R between each period. Strike sorties flown during these remaining line periods were mostly routine interdiction flights over Laos, but one at least bears mentioning.

The CAG at that time, CAPT McKNIGHT, LT STONE, LT SHERMAN, and LT LINCH were part of a flight called in to support a friendly fire base being overrun by NVA ground forces. Between them, in their efforts in close air support, they accounted for 3 confirmed tank kills and numerous KBA, CAPT McKNIGHT scored his tank kill through the use of the A-7E's 20mm cannon.

- 24 February The Navy disclosed that an electronic eaves-dropper had been used in Southeast Asia since June 1967. Called the Acoubuoy, it was dropped along trails and broadcast sounds to aircraft up to 20 miles away.
- April **LT Huey L'HERAULT** joined the squadron during one of the in-port periods at Cubi, as did Ltjg HILAND. LCDR CASTLE left the squadron in the latter part of April followed a month later by LT Doug BELL.
- 4 May The Navy's first night carrier landing trainer was unveiled at NAS Lemoore.



- 18 May The final day of the squadron's fifth combat deployment to Vietnam. ATKRON 25 had flown a total of 2632 combat sorties for 5609.1 hours, and had delivered over 14,000,000 pounds of ordnance on enemy targets.
- 24 May A farewell party was held in Subic Bay for the outgoing CO, CDR HUMPHREYS.
- 26 May **CDR J. H. CARCABA** relieved CDR HUMPHREYS as the new "El Commandante" of VA-25.
- 27 May *RANGER* departed Subic Bay bound for a week's stay in Yokosuka, Japan.
- 16 June VA-25 flew to NAS Lemoore, California, officially ending its latest deployment. The first order of business for almost everyone was a long leave period, one equally enjoyed by those who had returned and those who had been left behind.
- With *RANGER* due for major overhaul, the squadron had a long turnaround period to look forward to. Because of this, the turnover of personnel was more pronounced than usual with many 'old hands' departing for new assignments and many new faces appearing in the squadron ready room.
- One of the more notable of the new arrivals was **CDR E. A. GREATHOUSE**, one of the SPAD-flying MiG-killers, who returned to VA-25 as the new XO. CDR GREATHOUSE relieved LCDR E. STEWART, who had orders to NAAS Chase Field.
- 2 July CDR WILLIAM H. ALBERTSON relieved CAPT. J. E. McKNIGHT as CVW-Two.
- 29 September An awards ceremony covering the period of the squadron's last deployment was held. Among the officers receiving awards were LCDR CATLETT, LTs BUCK, BEATY, GILLESPIE, L'HERAULT and ROESH, and Ltjgs BUGG and HILAND. Many of the squadron's enlisted men were also presented awards for their outstanding performance while serving at sea aboard *RANGER*.
- 12 November VA-25 had the distinction of becoming, in a manner of speaking, an inter-service, traveling RAG. Eight squadron aircraft and a transport aircraft carried the squadron to Davis-Monthan AFB in Tucson, Arizona. Here the squadron took part in an exchange of information program with our hosts for the weekend, the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing. The weekend got off to a dousing start; as CDR CARCABA taxied into their line and shut down the aircraft, The Air Force (literally!) rolled out the red carpet for him. As "El Commandante" climbed out of the cockpit, he was thoroughly and thoughtfully wiped out with a stream of water from a fire hose (no doubt the Air Force method of cooling down Sierra Hotel naval aviators). The remainder of the squadron was met with cases of cold Coors which, to say the least, were received with warm welcome.
- There was, of course, a serious object to the trip, namely, to brief the 355th on effective combat utilization of the A-7E/D aircraft. Briefings were given on such topics as ACM, air-to-ground and air-to-air weapons, etc., and numerous films taken on past combat cruises were shown. As the 355th was then in the process of upgrading their A-7D squadron to a combat-ready status, all of the information passed on in the briefings was received with interest and attention. Following the afternoon schedule of lectures, briefings and films, the group retired to the "O" Club, where the exchange of view on various matters continued long into the night. The trip to Davis-Monthan was a novel one, and one that will be remembered by all those who took part in it.
- The remainder of the year was spent in routine training flights, with many flights to the practice bombing ranges at NAAS Fallon. At the same time, the squadron was looking forward to the Christmas Holidays which, as the squadron was now at home, were assured to being happier than the year before.
- Shortly after Christmas the squadron left Lemoore for a two-week weapons deployment at Marine Corps Auxiliary Air Station, Yuma, Arizona, arriving there to be greeted by a message grounding all A-7E aircraft for potential engine problems. After 4 days of "fun in the sun" the squadron was granted permission for a "one time" flight on all aircraft and the squadron returned to Lemoore.

1972 **Commander in Chief - Richard M. Nixon**

- January While a full complement of TF-41 engines were undergoing individual disassembly & inspection, training continued with the assistance of VA-122, the A-7E Training Squadron, who loaned us 6 TF-30-P408 powered A-7C aircraft for 5 weeks.
- 3 May CDR CHARLES J. CELLAR relieved CDR W. H. ALBERTSON as CVW-2.

- 19 May **CDR E. A. GREATHOUSE** relieved CDR J. H. CARCABA as commanding officer in impressive ceremonies at Naval Air Station, Lemoore, followed by a weekend-long reception and continuing party.
- June The squadron moved to Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Fallon, Nevada for 3 weeks of concentrated weapons delivery training. We were joined the last 2 weeks by the remainder of Air Wing Two for training in coordinated air wing strikes, rescue training, and to meet the rest of Air Wing Two personnel.
- July The squadron again boarded *RANGER*, our home away from home, for day carrier qualification landings. The scheduled night qualification landings were canceled as *RANGER* returned to Hunters Point Naval Shipyard for repairs to a reduction gear.
- 5 August A Navy test pilot made the first fully automated landing aboard *RANGER* in an F-4J.
- 1 August The Air Wing was back aboard *RANGER* to complete day/night carrier qualifications and to go through 4 weeks of pre-cruise training exercises and drills.
- 29 August LTV test pilot, John Konrad, made the first flight in a two-place version of the A-7E.
- September At the invitation of the Kansas City Chiefs professional football team, VA-25 performed a four-plane flyover as a tribute to the nation's POW-MIAs before a home crowd of 82,000 and an national television audience.
- 23 October A bombing halt above the 20th parallel in NVN lasted until December 17.
- 16 November *RANGER* and CVW-2 departed Alameda for the squadron's sixth combat deployment to Yankee Station amid rumors of a possible peace settlement. This was also the squadron's seventeenth WestPac deployment (in 23 years) and the fifteenth deployment with CVW-2.
- 1/5 December *RANGER* arrived in Subic Bay, P.I. before departing for a few days of "build-up" operations off the Philippines, then on to Dixie Station. During this period, air strikes were restricted to below 20° North Latitude in North Vietnam while the peace talks were in progress in Paris
- 17 December With peace talks going badly, *RANGER* reported for duty on Yankee Station ready for whatever we were called on to do.



That night we received the news; back to Hanoi/Haiphong, and we commenced the "12-day war" flying night "iron hand" missions in support of the B-52s over Hanoi and Haiphong - a real introduction for the 14 "nugget" aviators in the squadron! This period involved Air Wing strikes, day and night mining, "Iron Hand" missions and search and patrol for several "Osa" class missile launching patrol boats known to be in the waters around North Vietnam.

Iron Hand missions carried air-to-ground anti-radiation missiles to destroy SAM radar vans in the target vicinity.

1973

Commander in Chief = Richard M. Nixon.

- 1 January **The Squadron's 30th birthday.**
- 5/12 January *RANGER* was back in Subic Bay for an eight day R&R period.
- 15 January *RANGER* returned to Yankee Station just in time to participant in the last Navy strikes in North Vietnam. The squadron participated in a coordinated A-6/A-7E Air Wing effort that destroyed 15 bridges with 17 Laser Guided Bombs in less than two hours.

With the restrictions against going into North Vietnam imposed again, and while peace talks resumed in Paris, we turned our attention elsewhere and launched daily strikes into South Vietnam and Laos under FAC control.

- 18 January Truce agreements went into effect in North & South Vietnam; and all our efforts were directed against the greatly increasing traffic along the "Ho Chi Minh" trails in Laos.
- 27 January The Vietnam cease-fire, announced four days earlier, came into effect on Yankee Station. Air strikes continued against greatly increased traffic along the "Ho Chi Minh" trails.
- The Navy had lost 526 fixed-wing aircraft and 13 helicopters to hostile action since 1961. The Marines lost 193 fixed-wing aircraft and 270 helicopters during this period. Operational losses are not included. Operation Homecoming brought 591 POWs home, of which 145 were Navy personnel.
- 9 February *RANGER* visited Hong Kong for seven-days of R&R with 18 squadron officer's wives and several of the enlisted men's wives joining us for an unforgettable respite from combat operations.
- 17/22 Feb *RANGER* returned to the line for continued attacks against supplies moving South in Laos until the truce was implemented there.
- After the truce, routine training hops were the order of the day - interspersed with trips to Subic Bay and a 7-day period in Singapore.
- With the decision to drop to a 3-carrier force in the Gulf (vice 4 carriers), *RANGER* received a welcomed change to her previous schedule - orders to out-chop in mid-June and arrive in Alameda in late June.
- 27 February Airborne mine countermeasures began off Haiphong, but were abruptly halted because of delays in releasing POWs.
- 8-14 May Singapore visit, followed by "crossing the line" ceremonies enroute back to Yankee Station.
- 1 June **CDR P. M. MOORE** relieved CDR E. A. GREATHOUSE as commanding officer in ceremonies held at sea, headed for home.
- 4-8 June Yokosuka, Japan, visit.
- 11 June CAPTAIN ROGER A. MASSEY Jr. relieved CDR C. J. CELLAR as CVW-Two.
- 21 June The squadron flew off to NAS Lemoore.
- 15 August After intensive bombing for more than six months, the U.S. ended its combat involvement in Cambodia.
- 5 October *MIDWAY*, with CVW-5 embarked, put into Yokosuka, Japan marking the first home porting of a complete carrier task group in a Japanese port.
- 10 October Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned after pleading guilty to a single charge of failing to declare as income \$29,000 while governor of Maryland. Agnew paid the State of Maryland \$270,000 to settle a civil suit in 1983. Gerald R. Ford, then minority leader in the House, was appointed Vice President.
- 1974** **Commander in Chief - Richard M. Nixon**
- 22 February **Ltjg Barbara Ann ALLEN** became the first designated female Naval Aviator.
- 5 May **CDR George R. VEZINA** relieved CDR P. M. MOORE as commanding officer.
- 7 May The squadron, again embarked in *RANGER*, sailed west.
- 19 June -28 Sept. After 13 days in Subic Bay, *RANGER* and CVW-2 trained in the South China Sea.
- 8 August **Richard Nixon** resigned as President in the wake of the Watergate scandal. **Gerald Ford** was sworn in a President and Commander in Chief. One month later, Ford pardoned Nixon. Nixon died of a stroke in 1994.

Ford served in the Navy during WW-II, mostly in non-combat areas as coach and PE instructor. He reported to USS Monterey in May 1943 and served until the light carrier was damaged by a hurricane in 1944. He then returned to coach and PE duties at training bases. After the war he served 25 years in the House. Ford died in 2006 at age 93.

- 10 August The *RANGER* sailed into the Gulf of Tonkin, due to increased tension in SE Asia, and then headed for Hong Kong.
- 28 August CNO released a formal VFAX operational requirement that eventually resulted in development of the F/A-18 Hornet.
- 16 October The squadron returned to NAS Lemoore. During the cruise, the squadron flew a total of 1027 sorties, logged 1683 hours, and made 1156 carrier landings.
- 1975** **Commander in Chief = Gerald R. Ford.**
- 23 March *HANCOCK*, headed for Subic Bay, loaded HMH-463 at Pearl Harbor to support Vietnam evacuation operations for Americans and other nationals, if necessary.
- 19 April *MIDWAY*, *CORAL SEA*, *HANCOCK*, *ENTERPRISE*, and *OKINAWA* responded to possible evacuation contingencies by deploying to waters off Vietnam.
- 28 April On 28 April, VA-25 had its only aircraft accident of the year, when NE407, BUNO 159266, suffered a catastrophic engine failure due to material failure of the turbine inlet guide vanes. LT Gary L. Kerans was forced to eject from the aircraft near Owens Dry Lake, California. LT Kerans was not injured and was picked up shortly after the accident by a SAR helicopter from Naval Air Station China Lake. The engine wreckage was recovered in this accident and subsequent investigation led to the discovery of the cause of the failure and engineering investigation and proposals to correct the problem in other fleet aircraft.
- 29 April In a period of three hours, Navy and Marine helicopters evacuated most of the 900 Americans in Saigon. The last helicopter lifted off the Embassy roof at 1952 (local), carrying Marine guards.
- 9-30 June The Squadron was embarked aboard *RANGER* for the Refresher Training Exercise (REFTRAEX). One week of this period was devoted to carrier refresher landings, during which F1st pilots completed 109 day arrested carrier landings.
- Late June/Early July The squadron competed in LATWINGPAC Bombing Derby IX, placing second (Silver Bomb Award) of 12 squadrons competing. The Squadron placed second in the best A-7C/E Day Visual Attack (Golden Bomb Award) event and third in the Black Bomb (Radar Bombing) event. Squadron pilots placed first and third in the individual, Best Day Visual Dive Bomb event.
- 1 July Aircraft carrier designations CVA or CVAN were replaced with CV or CVN.
- 8 July **CDR Peter W. OGLE** relieved CDR George R. VEZINA as commanding officer.
- 14-29 August The Squadron deployed aboard *RANGER* from 14 - 29 August for carrier refresher and cyclic operations. The F1st tallied 178 day and 71 night arrested landings and over 400 flight hours.
- 21 Sept – 15 Oct The Squadron once again deployed aboard *RANGER* for the Ship/Air Wing WEPTRAEX and ORE/ORI. The WEPTRAEX included extensive training in Surface Search, Surveillance, and Control (SSSC) and War-at-Sea tactics, day and night bombing, and Air Wing Coordinated Strikes. VA-25 took the lead in the development of new tactics for use in the War-at-Sea environment against high speed patrol boats and larger surface combatants. The WEPTRAEX climaxed with a 54 hour ENDUREX, ending with a Nuclear Operational Readiness Exercise (NOREX).
- Following a weekend in San Diego, the *RANGER*/Air Wing TWO team plunged into an extended ORE/ORI, which included Coordinated Strikes, SAREX, MINEX, War-at-Sea, and a NOREX. VA-25 received a grade of EXCELLENT during this inspection.
- 24 October A new Shrike (anti-radiation missile) training program began operation at the Air Combat Maneuvering Range at Yuma.
- 8 November On 8 November a new trophy, "The LTJG William F. SCHOLTEN Memorial Award," was presented for excellence in weapons delivery. The recipients of this year's awards were: LT Ron Schilling for Laydown delivery; LT John Pettitt and LT Carter Chapman, who tied for first place in n Loft delivery; LT Carter Chapman for Dive delivery; LT Phil

Carson for 20MM strafing; and LT John Pettitt for Overall Excellence.

These awards were conceived and presented by Mr. Robert McAuley of South Lake Tahoe, CA, in memory of LTJG William F. Scholten, an outstanding pilot and Naval Officer who was due to report to VA-25, but lost his life on a training mission in VA-122.

1976 **Commander in Chief - Gerald R. Ford.**

30 January *RANGER* departed San Diego with CVW-2 and VA-25 for their Bi-Centennial cruise, the 18th WestPac deployment since 1950.



USS RANGER, circa 1975

5 March VA-25 successfully launched the first Extended Range Data-Link Walleye. Many hours were spent perfecting ERDL tactics over the next few months.

2 June While holding overhead for recovery after *RANGER* departed Subic Bay, CDR OGLE's aircraft experienced severe compressor stalls. After attempting several relights, CDR OGLE ejected without injury.

While orbiting the scene, Ltjg JOHNSON also experienced compressor stalls, but was able to limp back to Cubi Point for a safe landing. All A-7s were grounded until contaminated fuel was determined to be the cause.

30 June **A Naval Aviation tradition came to an end when brown-shoes were stricken from officer and CPO uniforms.**

6 September The squadron returned to NAS Lemoore, having won the CVW-2 Golden Tailhook award for the cruise.

30 September USS *ORISKANY*, the last Essex-Class attack carrier was decommissioned and placed in the mothball fleet.

29 October **CDR J. B. HAMILTON** relieved CDR P. W. OGLE as commanding officer.

23 November The squadron competed in the LATWINGPAC Bombing Derby at NAS Fallon, taking first-place in day dive bombing and third-place overall.

1977 **Commander in Chief - Gerald R. Ford.**

20 January James E. (Jimmy) Carter was sworn in as President and Commander in Chief.

Carter (NA 48), served in surface ships and submarines. However, he resigned his commission in 1953 after his father died. Carter ran his family's peanut farm in Georgia, and lost his run for governor in 1960 to Lester Maddox. He was elected governor in 1970.

During the year, the squadron participated in three weapons deployments to NAS Fallon, close air support training at MCAS El Toro and Twenty Nine Palms, carrier qualifications aboard *USS LEXINGTON (ATV-16)* in April and *CORAL SEA* in December, several mining exercises at NAS Whidbey Island and Santa Rosa Island, and FLEETEX 2-77 off of San Clemente.

1978 **Commander in Chief - Jimmy Carter**

31 January **CDR Warner L. BUTLER** relieved CDR J. B. HAMILTON as commanding officer.

Another year of intensive training, starting with a weapons deployment to NAS Fallon, followed

by deployments to MCAS Yuma for Shrike shoots in the Air Combat Maneuvering Range. This was followed by further testing of Walleye II tactics plus several sea periods aboard *RANGER*.

The TA-7C, a two-seat Corsair II, was delivered to training squadrons at NAS Cecil Field and NAS Lemoore.

November The highlight for the year was the *RANGER* and CVW-2 Operational Readiness Evaluation in which VA-25 led the Air Wing in 5 of 7 graded categories, including sorties and hours flown, and night boarding rates.

18 November The Navy's new strike fighter, the F/A-18 Hornet, made its first flight at Saint Louis.

December The squadron ended the year by participating in FLEETEX 1-79, flying close air support, war-at-sea mining, search and rescue, and conventional and exotic weapon strike missions.

1979 **Commander in Chief - Jimmy Carter.**

January The squadron started off the year by winning the CVW-2 Bombing Derby.

16 January The first F/A-18 arrived at NATC Patuxent River for evaluation tests.

After 2,500 year of continuous monarchy, the Shah of Iran was ousted and Iran became an Islamic Republic.

21 February *RANGER* deployed to Westpac with CVW-2 and VA-25, the squadron's 19th WestPac deployment.

27 February The Navy took delivery of the last Skyhawk, an A-4M built for the Marines. A total of 2,960 Skyhawks were built.

20 March *RANGER* arrived at Subic Bay.

26 March **CDR D. J. WRIGHT** relieved CDR W. L. BUTLER as commanding officer.

While in Westpac, the squadron participated in three Cope Thunder exercises in the Philippines and three Multiplex exercises out of Okinawa. The squadron was also providing data on the effectiveness of the ALE-41 decoy dispenser for missile defense.



USS RANGER damage after 5 April collision with Liberian tanker *FORTUNE* near the eastern approaches to the Straits of Malacca.

20 June Lt. Donna L. SPRUILL became the first Navy woman aviator to carrier qualify in a C-1A Trader aboard the *USS INDEPENDENCE* (CV-66).

3 July President Carter authorized the CIA to provide covert assistance to the Afghan rebels. This assistance increased after Soviet troops entered Afghanistan.

30 October The F/A-18 Hornet made its first carrier landing aboard *USS AMERICA* (CV-68).

4 November One Naval Aviator and 14 Marines were among the 60 Americans taken hostage at the Embassy in Tehran.

24 December Soviet troops began entering Afghanistan in support of the local communist government battling Afghan rebels.

1980

Commander in Chief = Jimmy Carter.

The squadron again won the CVW-2 Bombing Derby at NAS Fallon before going back to sea for Air-to Air and Air-to-Ground tactics.

The squadron participated in several exercises, such as War-at-Sea strikes with CVW-2, NORAD exercises with the Air Force, photo recon and Shrike employment as part of the Operational Readiness Exercise.

- 29 July **CDR J. A. LOCKARD** relieved CDR D.J. WRIGHT as commanding officer.
- 10 September *RANGER*, with CVW-2 and VA-25, deployed to Westpac and the Indian Ocean, the Squadron's twentieth WestPac deployment since 1950. Operational exercises included a Cope Rainbow exercise out of Pearl Harbor where the Air Force defended the islands against Navy Strikes, followed by a mining exercise in Binanga Bay and "blue water" cyclic operations while transiting the Straits of Malacca to prove the Battle Group's ability to defend itself in a confined area.
- October The *RANGER* spent 66-days on Gonzo Station, near Diego Garcia during the Iranian Hostage Crisis. During this period, the squadron participated in exercise Rawhide, which included flying support for B-52s and tanking from Air Force KC-135s.
- 13 November VFA-125, the Navy's first F/A-18 Hornet training squadron, was established at NAS Lemoore.
- December The squadron finished the year being nominated by CVW-2 for both CNO's Safety Award and RADM McCluskey Award, presented to the top attack squadrons in the Navy.

1981

Commander in Chief = Jimmy Carter.

- 20 January Ronald W. Reagan was sworn in as President and Commander in Chief.
- The 444-day hostage crisis ended with *RANGER* still on Gonzo station. The 52 American hostages, held since February 4, 1979 were released.

Reagan had joined the Army Reserve in 1937 and his unit activated in April 1942. A month later he requested a transfer to the Army Air Force and was assigned to the 1st Motion Picture Unit that made some 400 training films during the war.

He switch to the Republican Party in 1962 and served two terms as California Governor before running for President. He suffered from Alzheimer's the last ten years of his life and died in 2004 at the age of 93.

- 21 January **Ltjg Al CHERRY** experienced a nose gear emergency. He later received a Navy Commendation Medal for the professional manner in which he solved the problem after hours of gyrations to get the gear to finally come down and locked.
- 19 February VFA-125 became the first squadron to receive the new F/A-18 Hornet.
- MIDWAY* arrived on Gonzo station as *RANGER* departed for Colombo, Sri Lanka and four days of R&R before heading home, via Pattaya Beach, Thailand, Subic Bay, Hong Kong, and Pearl Harbor.
- 4 May The squadron returned to NAS Lemoore, with another golden Tailhook Award for the eight month cruise.
- 29 June The Secretary of Defense approved full production of the F/A-18 Hornet.
- July The squadron participated in Orange Air Exercise 1-81, a maritime air superiority exercise consisting of simulated air strikes into Southern California and a MINEX at NAS Whidbey.
- 7 October **CDR R. W. LEONE** relieved CDR J. A. LOCKARD as commanding officer.
- October The squadron moved aboard *RANGER* for refresher training and a port call in Vancouver, B. C., which quickly became the new standard of excellence in liberty ports for all concerned.
- November The squadron changed from the green tail insignia to the more subdued gray paint scheme for increased camouflage.

1982

Commander in Chief = Ronald Reagan.

- 8 January The F/A-18 Hornet made its first fully automatic landing on a simulated carrier flight deck at NAS Patuxent River.
- January The squadron moved aboard *RANGER* for a six-week "Pineapple Cruise" in preparation for the upcoming Westpac cruise.
- 7 April The squadron again moved aboard *RANGER* for its 25rd deployment in 40-years, participating in Operation RimPac while enroute. This international exercise included ships from Canada, Australia, and Japan, culminating in an amphibious assault on the Big Island against Air Force defenses.
- 18 April The 40th anniversary of the 1942 Doolittle raid on Tokyo is celebrated by a fly-over Washington, D.C. of four rebuilt B-25s. Sixteen of these aircraft were launched from the *USS HORNET (CV-8)*, each with four 500-lb bombs.
- 11 May The squadron flew off to NAS Cubi Point as the CVW-2 Beach Detachment. During the next four months, the squadron participated in two Cope Thunder Exercises and two Cope Strike Exercises in South Korea. Locally, the squadron flew a MINEX at Binanga Bay and a SINKEX near Scarborough Shoals, delivering a wide assortment of weapons against an old LCU towed to sea for the purpose.
- 23 September The squadron flew back aboard *RANGER* and headed home.
- 17 October The squadron flew off to NAS Lemoore. The squadron won the Bruce Carter Carrier Memorial Award for consistent excellence in aircraft maintenance.
- 1983** **Commander in Chief = Ronald Reagan.**
- 1 January** **The Squadron's 40th birthday.**
- January The squadron participated in exercises, despite a reduced number of aircraft.
- 25 March Fighter Attack Squadrons were redesignated Strike Fighter Squadron, but the VFA designation remained unchanged.
- 25 April **CDR S. L. WEBB** relieved CDR R. W. LEONE as commanding officer.
- May The squadron participated in an F-15 Fighter Weapons School exercise at Nellis AFB, acting as Red or Blue force depending on the scenario.
- The first contingent of VA-25 pilots reported to VFA-125 for six months of training in the new F/A-18 Hornet.
- 1 July VA-25 was redesignated Strike Fighter Squadron Twenty-Five (VFA-25).
- November CDR WEBB ferried the squadron's first F/A-18 from Saint Louis.

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