

PEACE AND THE COLD WAR

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The period between the Korean War (July 1953) and the Tonkin Gulf incident (August 1964) saw a major change in carrier operations with the angled-deck carrier and the resulting improvement in safety. This is not to say that accidents stopped. Indeed, some were horrific, including one aboard *USS ANTIETAM (CVS-36)* in 1954 when a VC-33 SPAD made a RIGHT turn after a night wave-off and flew into the island. However, those terrible multi-plane (and people) accidents when an aircraft missed the barrier disappeared, without regrets.

On the down side, the Essex-Class angled-deck conversion (SCB-27C/125) also brought nuclear weapons and night carrier landings to the embarked squadrons. On straight-decks, night operations were conducted by detachments from specially trained night-flying flight crews from six VC squadrons.

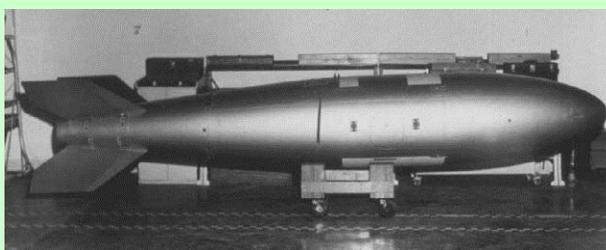
Of course, the ASW community had been night flying since World War II, often from the diminutive escort carriers (CVE). After the Korean War, these squadrons gradually shifted to Essex-Class carriers. While fighter squadrons were transitioning from the F4U to jets, the ASW squadrons moved from the TBM Avenger to the AF Guardian, and then to the twin-engine S2F Tracker (S-2). Some of these latter aircraft continued making straight-deck landings aboard *USS LAKE CHAMPLAIN (CVS-39)* until 1966. Eventually, even the ASW community got jets.

The 27A and 27C/125 modifications to the Essex-Class carrier were intended for jet operations. However, some jets of the early 1950s were not even compatible with runways. Some had 'strange' flight characteristics and not all pilots were well trained – there were no replacement pilot training squadrons in those days. Despite these early teething problems, the future of angled-deck carrier operations was clear. By 1955, aircraft and engine designs began to catch up, producing several 'classic' jet aircraft that remained in the fleet for over twenty years.

One change in this period was grim reality of the Cold War. The VA and VAH squadrons trained hard for nuclear weapon delivery, but something in the training cycle had to give. Usually, that 'something' was conventional weapon delivery. The lessons of Korea were gradually lost in the quest for good bombing scores and safety, regardless of how vulnerable these tactics made the aircraft in combat. Fighter pilots faced a similar challenge with Air Combat Maneuvering curtailed as the Navy sought to improve safety and even bought fighter aircraft without guns. Some training problems were addressed in 1958 by the new Replacement Training Squadrons.

In the early 1950s, AD-4Bs could carry the Mk-7 and Mk-8 nuclear (fission) weapons. The Mk-8 (25-40 Kt) was a 3,280-lb lay-down weapon with a long time-delay fuse. The 1,700-lb Mk-7 (8-61 Kt) required a 70°-dive after an agonizingly climb to 20,000-feet, but with marginal escape distance. The pilots flying the F2H-2B Banshee could also deliver these weapons.

The "Idiot Loop" delivery was introduced in mid-1953 for the Mk-7, but still with questionable escape distance. In 1956, the BOAR was the weapon of choice for the new AD-6 squadrons. The BOAR had the Mk-7 warhead with a rocket motor in the tail to provide more escape distance.



The BOAR rocket-powered nuclear weapon

In 1958, jet squadrons began training to deliver the Mk-28, the first tactical thermo-nuclear weapon (70 Kt to 1.45 Mt). In 1961, SPAD squadrons began training to deliver the thermo-nuclear Mk-43 (70 Kt to 1 Mt) using only a lay-down delivery (with a 60-second delay). Fortunately, none of these weapons were ever used, accidentally or on purpose.

Of course, delivering nuclear weapons involved a lot of low-level flying, trying to get an ant's perspective of overland navigation. To make things more interesting, the SPAD's engine often quit at four-hour intervals as fuel turned to fumes in the external tanks without a fuel gage. The wise pilot soon learned to switch to the main tank while climbing a hill.

Ten years after Korea, the bottom line said we were ready to fight the Soviet Union with or without nuclear weapons. However, neither our flight crews nor carrier aircraft were ready for a war in Vietnam. That is hindsight talking. Maybe the 1964 view of the future was not so clear. Certainly nobody thought we would ever fight another war with restrictions that prevented winning.

CHRONOLOGY

1954

Commander in Chief = Dwight D. Eisenhower

- 3 March *YORKTOWN* and Air Group Two returned to Alameda.
- 12 March **LCDR J. A. RAPP** relieved LCDR H. M. THOMPSON as commanding officer.
- CDR RICHARD W. PARKER relieved CDR P. C. LOVELACE as CAG-Two
- 26 July Aircraft from *USS PHILIPPINE SEA (CVA-47)* searched for a downed Cathy Pacific airliner in the South China Sea. Search planes were attacked by two Chinese communist LA-7 piston-engine fighters. The searching SPADs from VA-55 promptly shot them down.
- 2 November The squadron's fifth Westpac deployment, with CVG-2, was aboard *USS ESSEX (CVA-9)*. The squadron participated in exercises off the Philippine Islands. Highlights of this cruise included visits to Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Japan as well as ports in the Hawaiian and Philippine Islands.

YORKTOWN and *ESSEX* had completed SCB-27A at this time. These straight deck carriers had H-8 catapults and jet blast deflectors installed, flight deck gun mounts removed and steel fire doors on the hanger deck. (See SHIPS for further details.)

The composition of CVG-2 remained the same, except VF-24 flew F9F-6 Cougars, VF-63 flew F9F-6 Cougars, and VF-64 flew the older straight-wing F9F-5 Panthers.



USS ESSEX, circa 1954, with unknown Air Group

- 27 December The straight-deck *USS MIDWAY (CVA-41)* departed Norfolk for an around-the-world cruise and her first Westpac deployment. She departed Yokosuka on 28 June and entered Puget Sound Shipyard on 8 August for an angled-deck conversion.

1955

Commander in Chief = Dwight D. Eisenhower

- 22 January CVG-2 and VA-65 guarded the evacuation of the Tachen Islands off Taiwan.
- 3 June CDR JOHN H. "Rocky" ROCKWELL relieved CDR R. W. PARKER as CAG-Two.
- 21 June VA-65 and Air Group Two returned to NAS Alameda.
- 15 July **CDR John R. BOWEN II** relieved CDR J. A. Rapp as commanding officer.
- VA-65 received AD-6 (later A-1H) aircraft and began an extended training period for nuclear weapons delivery and night carrier qualifications.
- 22 November The Soviet Union detonated a 1.6-megaton thermo-nuclear weapon.

1956

Commander in Chief = Dwight D. Eisenhower

- February CDR JOHN H. ROCKWELL, CAG-2, was killed in a flight accident near Fallon.
- CDR JOHN M. BOYUM became CAG-2.

- 22 May **CDR W. C. BATES** relieved CDR J.R. BOWEN as commanding officer.
- 11 November The squadron's sixth Westpac deployment, with CVG-2, was aboard *USS SHANGRI-LA* (CVA-38). This was the squadron's first angled-deck home. The ship visited ports in Hawaii, Japan, Okinawa, the Philippine Islands, and Hong Kong. VA-65 flew in numerous exercises as part of Task Force 77. The largest of which was Operation BEACON Hill, a simulated invasion of the Philippine Islands.

SHANGRI-LA had SCB-27C and SCB-125 completed at this time. Improvements included a hurricane bow, angled deck and steam catapults. The squadron's missions included nuclear weapons delivery. (See SHIPS for further details.)

The composition of CVG-2 remained the same, except VF-24 flew FJ-3 Furies, VA-63 flew F9F-8 Cougars, and VF-64 flew F2H-3 Banshees. VF-63 became VA-63 in March 1956.



USS Shangri-La, circa 1956

The squadron's primary mission during this cruise was special weapons delivery. Thirty-eight long range, low level sorties were flown while accumulating a total of 2,593 hours for all type missions.

1957 **Commander in Chief = Dwight D. Eisenhower**

- 17 March VA-65 participated in the search for Philippine President Magsaysay's missing aircraft. A week later, Air Group Two participated in a flyover during the deceased President's funeral ceremonies.
- 22 May CVG-2 Two and VA-65 returned to NAS Alameda.
- May CDR JOHN R. BOWEN relieved CDR J. M. BOYUM as CAG-2. CDR BOWEN was a previous CO of VA-65.
- 1 July CVG-2 aircraft changed their tail-feathers from "M" to "NE", which sounds like "NI", the Japanese word for two.
- 17 July VA-65 commenced its training cycle with seven second tour pilots.
- 30 September Angled-deck *MIDWAY* departed the shipyard 17,000-tons heavier. She arrived at Alameda in mid-December for shakedown training and began operating aircraft again on 27 February.
- 6 October The Soviet Union detonated a 2.9-megaton thermo-nuclear weapon.
- 15 November Phase I training included one Fallon conventional weapons training deployment and one China Lake special weapons period. Phase II continued until 15 May 1958 with major emphasis on conventional weapons delivery techniques, instrument flying, medium angle loft delivers, navigation, night flying and FCLP/MLP. The squadron made two more Fallon deployments (February and May 1958), with an additional China Lake deployment in December 1958.

1958 **Commander in Chief = Dwight D. Eisenhower**

- March The majority of squadron pilots were night carrier qualified aboard *MIDWAY*.

MIDWAY was an angled-deck carrier at this time, but with three steam catapults. (See SHIPS for further details.)

- 7 May VA-65 commenced refitting all its AD-6 aircraft with the more reliable R-3350-26WC engine. Aircraft availability dropped to approximately one-half while the other half was undergoing engine changes. This program continued until 24 July 1958 when the last WC engine was installed.

- 8/9 May COMFAIRALAMEDA conducted the Administrative/Material Inspection, assigning a grade of 89.51 - Good.
- 15 May **CDR Edward V. IZAC, Jr.** relieved CDR W.C. BATES as commanding officer. VA-65 commenced phase III training.
- 16 May VA-65 embarked in *USS KEARSARGE* (CVA-33) for two weeks of day-carrier qualification and refresher landings.
- 13 June VA-65 embarked in *KEARSARGE* for night carrier landing qualifications. Twenty-one of the pilots were night-qualified.
- 26 June VA-65 participated in Operation BLUE COAT, a STRIKEX.
- 7-11 July VA-65 received orders to load all aircraft and gear aboard *MIDWAY* due to the international situation precipitated by the United Arab Republic - Iraq coup. However, the ship remained in the Alameda area with the squadron aboard.
- July *MIDWAY* was ordered to Hunters Point for shaft repairs and the squadron off-loaded at Alameda.
- 26-31 July VA-65 participated in the ORTA, exhibiting a successful display of potential power resulting from the previous long months of training.
- 16 August The seventh Westpac deployment, with CVG-2, was aboard *MIDWAY*. After three days in Hawaii, the Formosa crisis erupted with a threatened invasion of the little Quemoy Islands, Matsu Island, the Pescadores and Taiwan by the Chinese Communist.



USS MIDWAY and Air Wing 2 with four VA-25 SPADs on the bow, circa 1963

- 24 August *MIDWAY* was ordered to proceed immediately to the area, where it operated on the line as an alert carrier within Task Force 77. Port calls were sacrificed for the purpose of an effective alert.
- 1 November *MIDWAY* established a record for a prolonged period at sea, having only a single 7-day visit at Subic Bay, Philippines since leaving Hawaii. The Quemoy crisis slowly slipped out of the limelight and tension in the Far East eased, while the ship returned to a "normal" cruise schedule. This included in-port periods in such well-known places as Yokosuka, Manila, Buckner Bay and Hong Kong.
- 14 November President Chiang Kai-Chek and Secretary of Defense McELROY visited *MIDWAY*.

CAG-2 staged an air show for the two VIPs with the jets displaying their flashy best and the Skyraiders exhibiting their very effective close air support capabilities.

1959

Commander in Chief = Dwight D. Eisenhower

- Feb/March *MIDWAY* participating in a world-wide operation called DICE CUP.
- 12 March A few hours after termination of DICECUP *MIDWAY* was relieved on station by *USS RANGER* (CVA-61) and *MIDWAY* returned to Alameda.

- 18 March CDR EDWARD B. HOLLEY Jr. relieved CDR J. R. BOWEN as CAG-Two.
- 3 April **CDR John W. FAIRBANKS** relieved E. V. IZAC, Jr. as commanding officer. Without delay, the Air Group began an intensive turn around training program in order to be ready for the next deployment.
- 1 July VA-65 was redesignated ATKRON TWENTY-FIVE (VA-25), conforming to the Air Group TWO squadron numbering sequence.

VA-65 was part of Air Group Six in 1948. The squadron was transferred to the West Coast in 1950 to join Air Group Two during the Korean War. At that time, another SPAD squadron (VA-25) joined Air Group Six on the east coast. This renumbering affected several squadrons in all Air Groups. The East Coast VA-25 became VA-65 and later transitioned to the A-6.



- 15 August After five short months at NAS Alameda, including one three-week Fallon deployment, VA-25 again loaded her planes, personnel and gear aboard *MIDWAY* for the squadron's eighth deployment in Westpac.
- September Two weeks in Hawaii included a successful OPTA (Operational Training) and more liberty than could be afforded.
- MIDWAY* sailed for Guam and the Philippines while the Laos crisis was prominent in the news and kept all hands on their toes. However, this crisis soon subsided and *MIDWAY* enjoyed such ports as Yokosuka and Buckner Bay.
- November As a result of a serious fire onboard *MIDWAY* while at Subic Bay, she was ordered back to Yokosuka for repairs and VA-25 conducted flight operations from NAS Atsugi, Japan. After two-weeks in the yard, *MIDWAY* operated off the coast of Japan before proceeding to celebrate Christmas in Kobe, Japan.
- 1960** **Commander in Chief = Dwight D. Eisenhower**
- 2 January *MIDWAY* was back at sea, before returning again to Yokosuka, Japan for ten days. VA-25 off-loaded and flew out of NAS Atsugi for the third and last time this cruise.
- 13 January The Air Group flew aboard *MIDWAY* as she sailed for Okinawa and a month of intensive air operations.
- February After a five-day visit to Sasebo, Japan, *Midway* participated in Operation BLUE SKY, an exercise with the Chinese Nationalist Air Force, during which VA-25 flew many simulated strikes against Taiwan.
- During this period the 1,000th landing by VA-25 for this cruise was made by Commander FAIRBANKS.
- 13 February France tested a nuclear device.
- 19 February *MIDWAY* visited Hong Kong. After a week of trying to buy out Hong Kong, the ship got underway for a last look at Yokosuka.
- 3 March LTJG A.D. WILSON made the last landing of the deployment. The squadron had flown a total of 4,047.4 hours with 1,132 landings since leaving CONUS. All but one of VA-25 pilots became members of the *MIDWAY* Centurion Club.

- 10 March After a five day stay in Yokosuka, Japan, *MIDWAY* got underway for CONUS with a short two-day stop in Pearl Harbor.
- 23 March VA-25 flew ashore, conducting simulated offensive training strikes against CONUS with the USAF defending. Two days later *MIDWAY* sailed under the Golden Gate and VA-25 off-loaded at NAS Alameda for a welcome eleven-month training cycle.
- 8 April CDR ROBERT B. SELMER relieved CDR E. B. HOLLY Jr. as CAG-Two.
- June Deployed to NAAS Fallon for conventional bombing and close air support training.



Grungy flight-suits in the summer at Fallon!

- July The Joint Strategic Planning Staff (JSTPS) was formed at Offutt AFB outside of Omaha, Nebraska. This joint-services staff prepared the first Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP) the following spring, which included carrier-based aircraft.

Previously, each service did their own targeting and strike planning, under a General Operational Plan. Naturally, there was some targeting overlap and the possibility that an airplane from one service could be flying through the nuclear blast from another service. It also meant each service gathered intelligence to support its own targeting effort.

- 7 August **CDR WILLIAM S. HERTIG** relieved CDR J. W. FAIRBANKS as Commanding Officer
- 29 August After a one-week deployment aboard *USS LEXINGTON (CVA-16)*, VA-25 flew aboard *KEARSARGE* to complete night carrier qualifications and build-ups. All pilots qualified in one day.
- September Deployed to NAAS Fallon for conventional bombing and close air support training.
- Oct/Nov Deployed to NAF China Lake for three weeks practicing low-angle loft and lay down delivery methods.
- December The squadron conducted operations with *MIDWAY* off the California coast.

1961 **Commander in Chief = John F. Kennedy**

- 20 January John F. Kennedy was sworn in as President and Commander in Chief.

Kennedy served in PT-boats during WW-II (Read PT-109), served in congress from 1949 to 1960. At age 43, he was the second youngest president and the first one born in the 20th century. His administration inherited the Bay of Pigs Invasion (Cuba) and the early stages of the Vietnam War. In October, he announced a naval blockade that forced the USSR to remove the offensive missiles based in Cuba.

- 16 February *MIDWAY* with CVG-2 embarked, departed Alameda for the squadron's ninth Westpac deployment.

- 23 February COMFAIRHAWAII conducted an ORI and NORM for *MIDWAY* and her Air Group. VA-25 came through with a tentative score of 91.00, the second best score achieved by an AD squadron in the Pacific.
- 24 February LCDR J. "L" BRADY made the 89,000 landing aboard *MIDWAY*.
- March A Marine F8U squadron embarked in *MIDWAY* at Subic Bay and operated in the South China Sea through the end of the month.
- 23 March *MIDWAY* departed Hong Kong after three of a scheduled seven-day visit to stand alert during the Laotian crisis.
- April/June *MIDWAY* visited Kobe, Iwakuni, Sasebo and Yokosuka. Over sixty percent of the at sea time between visits was spent conducting routine training including participation in Operation BIG SHOT.
- 1 May CDR ALAN B. SHEPPARD, Jr. splashed down in the Atlantic off Florida after a 115-mile suborbital flight. The Freedom Seven capsule was recovered by USS *LAKE CHAMPLAIN*.
- LT J. F. FRANCIS made the 91,000 landing aboard *MIDWAY*.
- 26 May LT D. L. CLARKE making the 92,000 landing aboard *MIDWAY*.
- 19 July LT J. E. JONES became the sixth member of *MIDWAY*'s exclusive Double Centurion Club.
- 3 August **CDR C. R. BRADFORD** relieved CDR W.S. HERTIG as commanding officer
- 7 August LTJG A. D. WILSON became the seventh member of *MIDWAY*'s Double Centurion Club.
- 13 August East Germans (GDR) began construction of the Berlin Wall, separating West Berlin from East Berlin and East Germany. Previously, some 3.5-million people defected the GDR to the West.
- 4 September LCDR J. "L" BRADY became the eighth member of *MIDWAY*'s Double Centurion Club. LCDR BRADY also had the distinction of making his second 1,000th landing, the 94,000th on *MIDWAY*.
- 28 September *MIDWAY* and VA-25 safely returned to Alameda. The squadron logged a total of 3,641 flight hours during this seven-month deployment. This was done with a minimum of shore basing involved.
- VA-25 changed homeport to NAS Moffett Field. Our SPADs looked like small model airplanes inside the huge airship hangar.
- 6/15 November During a *MIDWAY* carqual period, LT D. L. CLARKE became the eleventh double centurion aboard *MIDWAY*. During this same period LCDR H. F. GRIFFITH, made the 96,000th landing aboard *MIDWAY*.
- 30 October The Soviet Union detonated a 50-megaton thermo-nuclear weapon. Our largest weapon at the time was 43-megatons.
- 26 November VA-25 moved into the cold climate of NAAS Fallon, Nevada for three weeks of weapons training. This was the first cold weather operations for many pilots but All Hands "turned to" and made it a successful deployment. The first week was limited to perfecting our low angle loft capabilities and curing some cases of "SWITCHITIS". The second week found us practicing glide bombing runs and strafing. The third and final week was spent COMPEXING with VA-165 observing and grading.
- December LT L. D. HUGHES crash landed his crippled aircraft. The landing was so well executed, thus reducing damage, that it was classified as an incident.
- 15 December VA-25 returned to NAS Moffett Field with 28 E's which proved their excellence in ordnance delivery.
- 20 December CDR BILLY D. HOLDER relieved CDR R. J. SELMER as CAG-2.

1962

Commander in Chief = John F. Kennedy



This is the year that everything in Naval Aviation changed.

The AD-6/7 became the A-1H/J, but it was still the SPAD. The USAF designation system became the DOD standard. All other operational aircraft similarly changed their designation.

- 1 February VA-25 was back aboard *MIDWAY* for group ops. This cruise was uneventful as well as short.
- 7 February VA-25 returned to NAS Moffett with another *MIDWAY* Centurion - LT G. M. GALES.
- 22 February VA-25 received its annual Administrative/Material Inspection by COMFAIRALAMEDA.
- 22 February VA-25 once again called *MIDWAY* home, participating in a WEPTRAEX.
- 24 February LTJG T. W. RANDALL experienced complete engine failure at 18,500 feet. After trying to restart the engine, LTJG RANDALL bailed out at 9,500 feet and was picked up by helo about five minutes later.
- 27 February LCDR H. F. GRIFFITH and LT G. T. McGRUTHER made their 100th landings aboard *MIDWAY*.
- 28 February LTJG T. W. RANDALL, back from NAAS Fallon, made his 100th landing aboard *MIDWAY*.
- 1 March LT. L. D. HUGHES made his 100th landing aboard *MIDWAY*.
- 2 March VA-25 returned to NAS Moffett.
- 11 March VA-25 was again embarked in *MIDWAY* for a STRIKEX exercise named "POT SHOT". The squadron's intensive training paid dividends and all went smoothly.
- 23 March VA-25 returned to NAS Moffett for preparations for deployment. During these last fourteen days, the A-20-R COMPEX was completed and the squadron earned additional E's.
- 6 April *MIDWAY*, with VA-25 embarked, sailed westward under the Golden Gate for the squadron's tenth deployment to the Western Pacific.
- 16 April *MIDWAY* and CVG-2 underwent an Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) at Pearl Harbor.
- May/June *MIDWAY* visited Yokosuka, Sasebo, Hong Kong, and Subic Bay.
- May LT Bruce M. WOODWORTH became a *MIDWAY* Centurion.
- 4/7 June *MIDWAY* conducted exercise COUNTERTHRUST. The squadron logged an impressive 1,031 hours from the deck of *MIDWAY* during the month of June.
- July CDR BRADFORD became a Centurion and also made the 102,000th landing aboard *MIDWAY*.
- 11 August **CDR JOHN A. OVERN** relieved CDR C. R. BRADFORD as commanding officer
- 9 October With the cruise nearing completion, *MIDWAY* visited Beppu and Yokosuka before departing for CONUS.
- 20 October VA-25 returned to Moffett Field.
- 21 October President Kennedy announced a quarantine of Cuba, with 483 ships stationed 500 miles northeast of Cuba put the quarantine into effect in just three days. After 26 days, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev 'blinked' and removed the missiles. WW-III was averted again.
- December CDR H. SPENCER MATHEWS Jr. relieved CDR Billy D. HOLDER as CAG-Two.

1963 **Commander in Chief = John F. Kennedy**

1 January **The squadron's 20th birthday**

7 January VA-25 became the first SPAD squadron at NAS Lemoore. Our previously unused hanger spaces had two years of dust and one coat of paint. Our sister squadrons (VA-22 and VA-23) had been at Lemoore since it was commissioned in 1961.

27 January VA-25 deployed to Fallon for two weeks of weapons training.

In the boys will be boys department; VA-25 found itself in possession of the Lemoore O'CLUB's A-4 painting just before leaving for Fallon. Two unnamed VA-25 pilots had removed the painting and transported it to the hanger atop a sports car. It got away from them and the frame shattered. Our Spook matched the molding and had a new frame made by our return from Fallon two weeks later. On the next foggy evening, our two now sober pilots smuggled the painting back into the O'Club, minus a small nick of paint on the nose where a propeller was intended. In the meantime, every car leaving the base had been searched without results. (See FIND THAT PICTURE in C-STORIES.)

24 February VA-25 embarked in *USS HORNET* (CVS-12) for carrier qualifications.

4 March VA-25 returned to NAS Lemoore.

24 April NAAS Fallon again saw the squadron working on the targets. During this period pilots competed in both conventional and nuclear weapons delivery methods. The squadron collected 32 E's in the COMPEX.

8 May VA-25 returned to NAS Lemoore.

The USAF announced that two squadrons of A-1E Skyraiders would be added to the 1st Commando Group at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Seventy-five "Fat SPADs" would be sent to Vietnam as replacements for B-26 (A-26 Invader) and modified T-28 aircraft.

25 June **CDR Herman W. PRESSON** relieved CDR J. A. OVERN as commanding officer.

July The tempo of operations began to increase with the deployment of the entire Air Wing to NAAS Fallon for two weeks of weapons work.

3/16 August CVG-2 embarked in *MIDWAY* for the WEPTRAEX.

6 August LCDR Scott SMITH joined the *MIDWAY* Centurion Club (including 53 landings aboard the straight-deck *MIDWAY*).

16/26 Sept CVG-2 embarked in *MIDWAY* in preparation for the STRIKEX.

8/25 October CVG-2 again embarked in *MIDWAY* for the official with the official STRIKEX, for which VA-25 received the highest grade of all the squadrons.

8 November *MIDWAY* with VA-25 embarked, sailed west under the Golden Gate for the squadron's eleventh Westpac deployment.



USS MIDWAY, circa 1963

13/25 Nov Liberty and the ORI in Hawaii. Again VA-25 led the ship and the embarked squadrons with an overall grade of 93.51. Two individual grades were particularly noteworthy. The weapons loading teams received a grade of 99.25, and the Maintenance Department received a grade of 95.35 for the outstanding condition of the aircraft. This is one of the highest Maintenance graded ever received by a SPAD squadron on an ORI.

22 November **President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.** *MIDWAY* was moored in Pearl Harbor at the time. Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as President and Commander in Chief.

Kennedy was assassinated by the former Marine, Lee Harvey Oswald, who was later killed by Jack Ruby, a Dallas night-club operator. Ruby was convicted and died in January 1967.

The 55-year old Johnson served in Congress from 1937 until 1961, with a short stint in the Navy during WW-II and six years as Senate Majority Leader. After being reelected in 1964, his popularity declined as public opposition to the Vietnam war increased. He withdrew from the 1968 presidential election and imposed a bombing halt on North Vietnam. Johnson died from his third heart attack on 22 January 1973.

12 December CDR CHARLES F. DEMMLER relieved CDR H. S. MATHEWS Jr. at CAG-Two.

7/13 December Liberty in Subic Bay.

23 December Attack Carrier Air Groups (CVG) were renamed Carrier Air Wings (CVW). Anti-Submarine Air Groups continued to be CVGs. However, Air Wing Commanders continued to be called "CAG" because "CAW" was unacceptable.

21/27 Dec Liberty in Hong Kong.

1964 **Commander in Chief = Lyndon B. Johnson**

6/15 January Liberty in Subic Bay again.

24/30 January Liberty in Sasebo, Japan



KITTYHAWK and MIDWAY steaming side-by-side.

7/8 February At-sea competition between *MIDWAY* and USS *KITTY HAWK* (CVA-63) was a high-light of the cruise. VA-25 tipped the scales for *MIDWAY*'s victory by defeating VA-115 at both bombing and rocket firing. (See "MIDWAY VS KITTYHAWK" in C-STORIES.)

12/14 February Liberty in Beppu, Japan

15/17 February Liberty in Iwakuni, Japan

27/11 March Liberty in Yokosuka, Japan.

21/30 March Liberty in Yokosuka, Japan again

April Liberty in Sasebo, Japan again.

30 April LCDR Scott SMITH became a *MIDWAY* Double-Centurion,

May Liberty in Subic Bay, for the last time. VA-25 transferred eleven SPADs to the South Vietnam Air Force. These aircraft were modified with extra air-to-ground communications equipment at NAS Atsugi during the deployment.

In the boys will be boys department; Midway took the northern route going home, often steaming through fog off the Aleutian Islands. Ready Room Five held one long movie marathon. Meanwhile, certain unnamed individuals eyed the neatly painted lances on the VA-23 Black Knight drop tanks. Several of these aircraft were parked near the hatch to the Wardroom, with the newly painted green-weenies impaled prominently on each of the lances. Perturbed would be an understatement, but VA-25's single aircraft was easily defended.

Originally, VA-23 was a Reserve Squadron at Akron when it was recalled in 1951. In February 1953, the squadron became VF-151, then changed to VA-151 in 1956. The squadron became VA-23 and joined CVG-2 in 1959, then traded their FJ-4 Fury's for Skyhawks in September 1960. VA-23 was disestablished in 1970.

26 May VA-25 returned to NAS Lemoore with a single aircraft and prepared for regrouping and training for the next deployment.

29 May **CDR RALPH F. SMITH** relieved CDR H. W. PRESSON as Commanding Officer.

June The squadron then settled down to a one-month post cruise leave period.

8/17 July The squadron commenced its training cycle by going aboard USS *MIDWAY* (CVA-41) to participate in the *USS RANGER*'s STRIKEX which was conducted off the coast of California. Air Wing 2 had the dubious honor of being the invading enemy for this exercise.

2/5 August North Vietnamese motor torpedo boats attacked the destroyer *MADDOX*, operating in international waters of the Gulf of Tonkin. The boats were damaged and driven off by ship gunfire and attacks by aircraft from *USS TICONDEROGA* (CVA-14). President Johnson ordered air strikes against torpedo boats and support facilities at along the North Vietnamese coast.

August The squadron prepared for its Administrative and Material Inspection and received a grade of 92.98, which is an adjective grade of excellent.

September VA-25 proved itself to be the number one prop Attack Squadron in the Pacific Fleet by placing first in READY STRIKE TWO SIXTY-FOUR competition which was conducted at the Naval Air Facility China Lake, California. ADMIRAL T. O. MOORE (CINCPACFLT) presented CDR R. F. SMITH with a plaque for the squadron's outstanding performance in this exercise.

8/24 September Targets at Fallon, Nevada was again the site of the squadron's weapons deployment. The pilots competed in both conventional and nuclear weapons competitive exercises.

6 October *USS MIDWAY* was again called home when the squadron deployed for five weeks of air operations in the Hawaiian area and a STRIKEX off the coast of California. The squadron acquired four more Centurions on this deployment: CDR R. F. SMITH, CDR H. E. ETTINGER, LT E. A. GREATHOUSE, and LT O. R. FORD.

16 October China tested a nuclear device.

6 November The squadron returned to NAS Lemoore, California

November CDR ROBERT E. MOORE relieved CDR C. F. DEMMLER as CVW-Two.

As it turned out, this was the squadron's last peacetime deployment for many years. The squadron made six combat deployments over the next nine years. At the time, it seemed illogical for anyone to even DARE question the United States military might and resolve to maintain peace in the Western Pacific. After all, a single carrier had kept the Nationalist and Communist Chinese from crossing the Formosa Straits. Yet, the tiny North Vietnamese Navy challenged our presence in the Tonkin Gulf on August 2, 1964. It soon became clear we were thinking on totally different wavelengths.

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