

FIGHTING SQUADRON THIRTY-TWO HISTORY

The VF-32 Swordsmen originated on 1 February 1945 as VBF-3, when VF-3 was split to form two sister squadrons. VBF-3 was assigned to Carrier Air Group THREE onboard USS YORKTOWN (CV 10) operating in the Pacific theater. Flying F6F-5 "HELLCATS", VBF-3 pilots became the first Navy carrier-based pilots to strike the homeland of the Japanese Empire on 16 February. During the heavy action on that day, the squadron totaled 24 airborne kills of Japanese aircraft for which the Swordsmen were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. In 1946 VBF-3 transitioned to F8F-1 "BEARCATS" and was redesignated VF-4A. Finally, in August 1948 the squadron was redesignated VF-32, the designation that it still bears today.

At the outbreak of the Korean conflict, pilots of VF-32 were flying F4U-4 "CORSAIRS" aboard USS LEYTE (CV 32). From October 1950 to January 1951, VF-32 participated in strikes against Korean targets including Wonsan Harbor, Puckchong, Chonjin, and Chosin Reservoir. Noteworthy during this period was an incident that occurred during a strike against the Chosin Reservoir on 4 December. ENS Jesse L. Brown, the first black Navy fighter pilot, was hit by anti-aircraft fire and forced down in North Korean territory. A squadron mate, LTJG Hudner, landed his aircraft alongside ENS Brown and attempted to rescue him. His efforts were in vain. For his heroic effort, LTJG Hudner was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and ENS Brown was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. After operations in Korea, the squadron returned to the East Coast where they became the first operational unit to fly the Grumman F9F-6 "COUGAR", the Navy's first swept wing jet fighter. VF-32 made subsequent deployments aboard USS TARAWA (CV 40) in 1953 and the USS TICONDEROGA (CV 14) in 1955.

In 1956 VF-32 became the first Navy squadron to transition to the new F8U-1 "CRUSADER" supersonic fighter. While deployed aboard USS SARATOGA (CVA 60) as a unit of Carrier Air Group THREE, VF-32 participated in the Lebanese conflict of 1958. During the Cuban missile crisis in late 1962, VF-32 flew 96 sorties in support of photoreconnaissance flights and intelligence gathering missions. After returning from cruise in 1965, the squadron changed homeport from Naval Air Station Cecil Field, Florida to Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia, and transitioned to the F-4B "PHANTOM II". VF-32 detached from

Carrier Air Group THREE, ending a relationship that had lasted continuously since the squadron's establishment.

VF-32 embarked in USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVA 42) in June 1966 as a component of Carrier Air Group ONE and sailed for Southeast Asia. The squadron flew 940 combat sorties during three line periods in five months, building a highly successful combat record, losing no aircraft or aircrew. In May 1968, VF-32 deployed in USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67) for her maiden voyage. In 1971, the squadron received the Meritorious Unit Commendation for actions in support of SIXTH FLEET operations during the Middle East Crisis.

In 1974 VF-32 introduced the F-14A "TOMCAT" to the East Coast and made the first Atlantic Fleet F-14 deployment in June 1975. On that cruise, VF-32 was awarded the Admiral Joseph Clifton Award as the Navy's top fighter squadron. In October 1977, VF-32 became the first fleet squadron to fly against the Air Force F-15, setting the stage for regularly scheduled dissimilar air combat training between the Air Force and Navy.

The Gypsies of VF-32 again embarked for the Mediterranean in USS JOHN F. KENNEDY in June 1978. During this deployment VF-32 conducted the first fleet test and evaluation of the new and highly successful Television Camera System. The Swordsmen also deployed with AIM-9L missiles for the first fleet captive-carry evaluation. A mid-cruise missile exercise, "BUZZARDEX", was an unqualified success with firings of AIM-54A PHOENIX and AIM-7F SPARROW missiles at five Mach 2.5 targets.

In October 1979, VF-32 completed an unprecedented 10 years of accident-free flying. In those 10 years the squadron flew over 33,000 hours with 17,000 of those in the F-14A "TOMCAT". In 1980 the Swordsmen were again presented with the Admiral Clifton Award. The Swordsmen enjoyed an accident-free Mediterranean cruise aboard JOHN F. KENNEDY in 1980 and 1981.

In 1982 the squadron completed another accident-free Mediterranean deployment aboard USS INDEPENDENCE (CV 62) and was awarded the 1982 COMNAVAILANT Battle "E" and CNO Safety "S". In 1983, VF-32 incorporated the Tactical Air Reconnaissance Pod System (TARPS) into the squadron aircraft. In 1983-84, the Swordsmen completed the Navy's first combat deployment since the Vietnam era with CVW-6 aboard USS INDEPENDENCE. Fighter Squadron 32 flew combat air patrol missions and provided TARPS imagery for the 4 December 1983 CVW-6/CVW-3 air strikes on Syrian positions in Lebanon and flew missions in support of American forces

in Grenada. The deployment concluded with participation in NATO exercise "TEAMWORK 84" in the Norwegian Sea. After a quick turnaround, the Swordsmen made a third deployment aboard USS INDEPENDENCE from October 1984 through February 1985 to the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean.

The Swordsmen rejoined CVW-3 in February 1985, and embarked aboard JOHN F. KENNEDY in August of 1986 for another Mediterranean deployment. This cruise saw the Swordsmen Class "A" safety record extended yet another year, but also included the first night F-14 barricade.

VF-32 participated in a variety of NATO and combined exercises, and extended their major mishap-free safety record to 9 years during a 1988-89 Mediterranean deployment, again aboard KENNEDY.

On January 4, 1989, a section of "GYPSY" Tomcats, while conducting routine operations north of Libya, were vectored on two approaching Libyan Fighters. After attempts at a peaceful intercept, and with hostile intent evident, the section of Swordsmen met the threat and fired AIM-7 and AIM-9 missiles, downing two Libyan MIG-23 Floggers. The combat proven Swordsmen returned to Oceana in February of 1989.

In August of 1990, the Swordsmen joined Carrier Air Wing THREE and USS JOHN F. KENNEDY on her rapid deployment to the Red Sea in support of Operation DESERT SHIELD. Combat operations over Iraq from 16 January to 28 February 1991 marked the sixth decade of Swordsmen participation in armed conflict.

Throughout Operation DESERT STORM, VF-32 aircrew logged 1,445 combat flight hours on 403 missions, including 38 combat TARPS missions. The Gypsies returned from the Red Sea 28 March 1991 to a hearty "Welcome Home". Later that year, the Swordsmen won the 1991 AIRLANT Grand Slam missile firing competition with an unprecedented 17 of 17 scored kills.

Fighting 32 and the KENNEDY again deployed in October 1992. The Gypsies conducted a great deal of air-to-ground operations while on cruise, marking the beginning of the TOMCAT STRIKE/FIGHTER mission. The Swordsmen returned home to NAS Oceana in April 1993 and throughout the summer conducted joint ACM exercises with the Air Force. The year was highlighted with presentations of the Golden Wrench, Battle "E", and Clifton Awards to VF-32.

In May 1994, VF-32 and CVW-3 embarked aboard USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69). This four-week deployment marked the first extensive at-sea period where women worked alongside men on a fleet aircraft carrier. In September a

small detachment provided crucial TARPS photography and air support for Operation RESTORE DEMOCRACY in Haiti.

In November 1994, VF-32 deployed onboard USS EISENHOWER for another tour in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. The Gypsies flew missions over Iraq in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH and over Bosnia/Herzegovina in support of Operation DENY FLIGHT. 1995 marked fifty years of service from the men and women of VF-32.

In November 1996, VF-32 and CVW-3 deployed onboard the USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) for another tour in support of Operation DENY FLIGHT and Operation SOUTHERN WATCH over Bosnia and Iraq. The cruise proved to be yet another milestone as the Gypsies brought digital imagery to the TARPS mission. The squadron received the Meritorious Unit Commendation for its cutting edge work with Digital TARPS.

In August 1997, the Swordsmen of VF-32 began transitioning from the F-14A to F-14B. In February 1998, the Swordsmen once again found themselves improving upon their stable of aircraft by transitioning to F-14B Upgrade.

In November 1998, VF-32 and CVW-3 deployed onboard USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65) to the Arabian Gulf and Mediterranean Sea to support Operations SOUTHERN WATCH and DELIBERATE FORGE. From 16-19 December 1998, Carrier Air Wing THREE participated in combat operation against Iraqi targets in Operation DESERT FOX. The Gypsies expended over 111,000 pounds of precision guided munitions while participating in 16 strike missions and 38 sorties. Many Tomcat firsts were achieved including, the first GBU-24's to be dropped by the Navy in combat, the first multiple ("consecutive miracles") GBU-24 drop by any platform in combat, the first combat use of the LANTIRN targeting pod, the first autonomous F-14 delivery of a GBU-10/16/24, and the first use of Night Vision Devices (NVD) in combat. The combat proven Swordsmen completed this historic deployment and returned to NAS Oceana in May 1999.

The Swordsmen deployed again in November 2000, for the maiden voyage of USS HARRY S. TRUMAN. This time they spent four months in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH as the only deployed Tomcat squadron in the world. Swordsmen Maintenance also won the coveted CVW-3 Golden Wrench award in two back to back line periods as well as for the entire cruise by having a sortie completion rate of over 99.7%. VF-32 returned home to Oceana on 23 May 2001.

In December of 2002, the Swordsmen deployed once again on board USS HARRY S. TRUMAN to the Mediterranean Sea in support of Operations NOBLE EAGLE, NORTHERN WATCH, and IRAQI FREEDOM. Employing the digital image capabilities of

TARPS, VF-32 flew numerous reconnaissance missions over the former Republic of Yugoslavia during Operation NOBLE EAGLE. Participating in liberation efforts, the Swordsmen released over 402,000 pounds of ordnance on targets in Northern Iraq during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Once again, VF-32 set a Tomcat benchmark being the first fighter squadron to release multiple JDAM. Having contributed significantly to the liberation of Iraq, the battle hardened Swordsmen returned to Oceana in May of 2003.

January 2003 marked another historic first for the Tomcat community. VF-32 became the first operational squadron to attempt the launch of six AIM-54 Phoenix missiles from one aircraft. A launch such as this had not been attempted since 1972. The Swordsmen succeeded, launching 5 of the 6 active radar missiles.

Since their inception, the Swordsmen have carried the fight to the enemy in seven consecutive decades. In every instance, they have responded with pride, professionalism and deadly accuracy. The Swordsmen have a proud tradition of service with honor, an unrivaled spirit and unmatched dedication. The Swordsmen will continue to meet all challenges head-on. Committed to excellence, we are proud to go where duty calls.