

UNITED STATES NAVAL OPERATIONS

KOREA

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Page 434 - 435

TWO MORE YEARS

Since the Navy, like it or not, appeared to be committed, steps were taken to improve the position at Wonsan. Island fortifications were strengthened; a clear statement from CTF 95 defined the primary mission of ships at Wonsan, as at Yang Do and Nan Do, as the defense of those positions; construction of an emergency airstrip on Yo Do was undertaken. This enterprise had been suggested the previous autumn, when the increased effectiveness of Communist antiaircraft had forced a number of damaged planes to ditch in Wonsan harbor. In the absence of a regular naval construction unit in the area the proposition had been put up to the Army and Air Force, in whose custody, in view of the continuing hopes of an armistice, it had languished for six months. In May 1952, however, permission was secured for the employment of Task Force 90's Amphibious Construction Battalion, and ComNavFE obtained the approval of CincFE. On 9 June a detachment of 3 officers and 75 men from ACB I was landed by LST, and began work under intermittent bombardment from Hodo Pando and Umi Do. The planned 2,400-foot runway had been estimated to be a 45-day project, but the Seabees did better than the planners, and in 16 days the strip was finished. The commanding officer of the construction battalion had predicted that salvage of one plane would more than offset the expense of the project, and if his cost accounting was correct the dividends were enormous: eight Corsairs from Task Force 77, damaged or low

on fuel, were brought in safely in July, and in time twin-engined transports would arrive bringing the sinews of war and lady war correspondents. This success stimulated jealousy in the West, where the condition of the emergency beach strip on Paengnyong Do was such as to cause frequent damage in landing, and from the commanding officer of Badoeng Strait came a request for the provision of separate but equal facilities.