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AR231/CV

U.S.S. BOXER (CV-21)
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From: Commanding Officer
To: Chief of Naval Operations
Via: (1) Commander Carrier Division THREE
(2) Commander Carrier Division FIVE
(3) Commander SEVENTH Fleet
(4) Commander Naval Forces, Far East
(5) Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: Action Report for the period 17 March through 21 April 1951

Ref: (a) CNO restr ltr Op-345 ser 1196P34 dtd 3 Aug 1950

Encl: (1) CVG-101 conf ltr ser 06 dtd 27 Apr 1951: Action Report of Carrier Air Group 101 (17 Mar 1951 - 21 Apr 1951) p. 11

1. In compliance with reference (a), the action report for the period 17 March through 21 April 1951 is hereby submitted.

PART I Composition of Own Forces and Missions

a. Composition

In accordance with CinCPacFlt Movement Order 1-51 and ComCarDiv THREE confidential dispatch 162328Z, the U.S.S. BOXER (CV-21), with Commander Carrier Division THREE and Carrier Air Group ONE HUNDRED ONE embarked, departed Pearl Harbor, T.H., 17 March 1951. OTC was Commander Carrier Division THREE, RADM W. G. TOMLINSON, USN. The ship proceeded to Van Dieman Straits where, on 25 March, a rendezvous was made with the U.S.S. RUSH (DD-714) and the U.S.S. THOMASON (DD-760). The ship then proceeded into the Sea of Japan, where on 26 March, a rendezvous with Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN and the replenishment group was effected. With the departure of the U.S.S. VALLEY FORGE (CV-45) on 26 March, TF-77 consisted of two carriers, one cruiser, and 13 destroyers. OTC was RADM R. A. OFSTIE, USN, Commander Carrier Division FIVE and CTF-77, embarked in the U.S.S. PRINCETON (CV-37). RADM W. G. TOMLINSON, USN, Commander Carrier Division THREE, was second in command.

b. Missions

(1) The Task Force was operating in accordance with CTF-77's Operation Order 1-51.

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(2) The missions of the Task Force were to provide close and deep air support, reconnaissance, interdiction, and air bombardment in order to destroy enemy forces, communications, and installations in support of United Nations Forces, and to protect the force against enemy air, surface and subsurface attacks.

PART II Chronological Order of Events

a. The following is an outline of the BOXER's employment during the period of this action report:

(1) Period 17 through 26 March: At 1005 on 17 March the BOXER sortied from Pearl Harbor. On 25 March, while proceeding through Van Dieman Straits, a rendezvous was made with the U.S.S. RUSH (DD-714) and the U.S.S. THOMASON (DD-760) who acted as a screen for the BOXER as she proceeded on to the rendezvous with Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN in the Sea of Japan. On the afternoon of 25 March a briefing team composed of officers from the Staff of Commander Carrier Division ONE, and the acting Commander of Carrier Air Group TWO, along with pertinent operation orders and briefing materials were received aboard from the U.S.S. RUSH. On 26 March, Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN was joined while replenishing at sea, at which time the BOXER, too, was replenished. The briefing team was returned to the U.S.S. VALLEY FORGE at the same time via helicopter. That night the Task Force steamed North in anticipation of the strikes scheduled for the following day.

(2) Period 27 March to 8 April: Because the weather was unfavorable on the 27th, only two missions of eight planes each were sent off, both for close air support, and on the 28th and 29th no missions at all were flown. On the 30th, however, the weather lifted and the BOXER then commenced flying the type of missions which filled her schedules during this period. These were composed of: (1) Close Air Support missions in which two VA and two VF were usually combined as a unit and reported for control to a TACP; (2) Armed Reconnaissance, which were jet or VF missions designed to sweep roads, observe movements of personnel and vehicles and attack worthwhile targets of opportunity; (3) Bridge Strikes, both rail and highway key bridges; (4) "Railroad Breakers" and "Railroad Seeders", designed to break the lines several miles apart and discourage repairs, (the "seeds" being delayed action bombs); (5) Naval Gunfire Spotting, for the bombardment ships off Wonsan and Songjin; (6) Hecklers, to disrupt the enemy by attacking during darkness and to spot targets for succeeding early morning strikes; (7) RESCAPS; (8) TARCAPS; (9) Photo Missions; and (10) Strikes against cities or other specific targets. In addition, the usual defensive missions were flown. On the 31st of March, and on the 1st and 2nd of April offensive operations continued. On the 3rd the ship replenished and

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the PRINCETON, with Commander Carrier Division FIVE embarked, departed for Yokosuka. On the 4th, with RADM TOMLINSON, USN, OTC and CTF-77, operations were resumed. On the 5th a total of 81 offensive missions were conducted. On one of the close air support missions an attempt was apparently made by the enemy to simulate a friendly TACP. This bogus attempted to direct BOXER planes to bomb a position where friendly troops were located, but the pilots recognized the fact that they were being misdirected and requested authentication, whereupon the enemy went off the air. Offensive missions were continued on the 6th. On the 7th a heavy day was also scheduled to provide air support for an amphibious landing south of Songjin of HMS Royal Commandos, who landed and blew up a section of rail tracks near the beach; however, fog forced cancellations for all but 40 offensive sorties. It was on one of these that the BOXER lost her first pilot. LTJG H. T. WALKER, USNR, flying an F4U, experienced engine failure as a result of enemy aircraft fire. He glided into a fog bank in an attempt to make a forced landing near shore in the vicinity of Tanch-on. Fog prevented an aerial search; a surface search yielded negative results. On 8 April the ship replenished and then continued steaming South. At 1600 a new phase of operations was commenced.

(3) Period of 8 April through 15 April: During this period the BOXER was operating in the Formosa Straits area as part of Task Force 77 under Com7thFlt's Secret Operation Order 75-51. Enroute to and from this area training flights were conducted. On completion of these operations, the Task Force returned to the East Coast of Korea where it replenished on 15 April.

(4) Period 16 April through 19 April: This period commenced with 112 offensive and defensive missions on 16 April. Jamming of the VHF channels by the enemy was encountered by aircraft sent out for close air support. On the 17th, operations continued. On the 18th, deck load strikes, coordinated with those of the PHILIPPINE SEA and the PRINCETON (which arrived late in the day), were launched against the road junction city of Hamhung. Of the BOXER's 95 offensive missions, 71 were against Hamhung and 24 were regular armed recco and photo hops. As a result of these concentrated strikes on this important key communication center, it is estimated that the primary targets in the city will be more or less useless to the enemy for some time. LT A. W. C. THOMAS, USNR, lost his life in this attack when his F4U was seen to explode while in

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a strafing run. It is believed that the aircraft hit a high tension wire or a wire trap, as the pilot broadcast," Lookout for the wires!" shortly before his plane exploded and disintegrated. On the 19th another heavy day of deck load strikes was scheduled, this time against the city of Wonsan; however, because of adverse weather, only 16 offensive sorties were launched. This day completed the subject tour of combat operations during which a total of 571 offensive sorties had been flown plus 261 sorties classified as defensive or otherwise, not including helicopter flights.

(5) Period 19 through 21 April: On the afternoon of the 19th, the ship replenished. The remainder of the period was spent enroute to Yokosuka for limited availability, arriving Yokosuka at 1400 on 21 April 1951.

PART III Performance of Ordnance Material and Equipment

See enclosure (1).

PART IV Battle Damage

No battle damage was sustained by the ship. See enclosure (1) for damage inflicted on the enemy and for that suffered by BOXER aircraft.

PART V Personnel

a. Casualties:

(1) There were no combat personnel casualties during this period except those of the Air Group (see enclosure (1).

b. Performance:

(1) A large number of personnel transfers and receipts had been effected while the ship was in the shipyard at San Francisco. By the time this operation commenced the new men had been welded into a smooth running team and personnel performance presented no problem.

PART VI Comments

a. Operations

(1) Although one copy of CTF-77's Operation Order 1-51 was available prior to departure Pearl Harbor, current air plans and other necessary briefing material were not re-

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ceived until the arrival of the ComCarDivONE briefing team late in the evening on 25 March, the BOXER's first air operation being scheduled for the morning of 27 March. Although this briefing interval was greater than that experienced by the BOXER in September 1950, it was still insufficient to enable all personnel concerned to digest thoroughly the required information.

(2) The PRINCETON performed invaluable indoctrination services to the BOXER during the first few days of operations. PRINCETON squadron and unit commanders or qualified representatives came aboard the BOXER personally to brief contemporary units in the details of operations and operational procedures. In addition, the newly arrived pilots were indoctrinated with the terrain and CAS procedure. An AD and an F4U from the PRINCETON accompanied each BOXER CAS mission in the roll of "Bird Dogs", flushing and pointing out targets. This procedure, highly recommended for newly reporting air groups, greatly expedited the effectiveness of BOXER missions.

b. Communications

(1) General

(a) Communications in general were excellent and much improved over the conditions experienced in October 1950. The pattern of messages and the means of delivery thereof particularly from the Army and the Air Force were markedly improved. The importance of this in the receipt of such messages as the bombline and TACP reports cannot be overemphasized.

(b) The volume of traffic, particularly encrypted was very heavy and taxed to the limit operating personnel. The need for more seasoned rated men, both signal and radio, was very apparent.

(2) CW

(a) The direct CW circuit (4135 KC CW) to JOC Korea proved most helpful in the exchange of vital information. This frequency coupled with 6690 KC (V) was invaluable in the processing of operational traffic.

(3) RATT circuits

(a) The Commander Naval Forces Far East RATT broadcast continued to handle a large volume of traffic. Reception, as a whole, was excellent and it was very occasional that missing messages had to be serviced.

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(b) The Ultra High Frequency RATT circuit among the heavy ships proved most successful in the handling of messages, particularly high precedence flash reports.

(4) UHF Voice

(a) UHF Voice Communications were considered very good. Some maintenance problems with the TDZ/RDZ equipment were encountered in the early stages. Most of the trouble was traced to short circuits in the antenna leads following shipyard overhaul.

(5) VHF

(a) VHF communications were generally considered excellent. The TBS was used exclusively for the primary tactical circuit and proved quite reliable.

(b) At times it was noted that unnecessary traffic other than operational was sent over the primary tactical. The OTC quite rightly corrected this situation.

(6) Visual

(a) Visual communications including Nancy were excellent. The limiting of messages for delivery by Nancy to 25 groups was sound.

(7) Cryptoboard

(a) The load of traffic on the cryptoboard was very heavy. A temporary emergency extension of the cryptoroom helped considerably. However, permanent enlarged facilities for the cryptoroom and communication office are definitely indicated.

(b) An increase in allowance of officers assigned to communications is required for cryptoboard duty. At present, nine officers are allowed and an increase of at least three is indicated. These officers should have had a course of instruction in crypto procedure and at least three months' experience before they are considered eligible to fill a billet. The use of officers from other departments to fill the gap is not satisfactory due to lack of time to devote to these duties because of conflict with their primary military and departmental duties.

(8) Recommendations

(a) Enlarge the present cryptoroom and communication office. A reallocation of spaces seems indicated.

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(b) Increase the allowance of officers permanently assigned to communications for cryptoboard duties by three for all CV's operating under emergency conditions. A minimum of three months training should be allowed prior to their being considered as filling the billet.

(c) Increase the allowance of rated radiomen in view of the requirement to intercept three Fox schedules and the increased number of functional circuits.

c. CIC

(1) Aircraft detection ranges were very limited. Air targets were seldom picked up in excess of 40 miles and, if at altitudes above 10,000 feet, detection ranges were frequently less than 40 miles. These limited ranges on air targets were undoubtedly due to the existence of a marked temperature inversion as surface targets (DD) were picked up frequently at ranges in excess of 40 miles and land at 150 miles.

(2) Jet aircraft were seldom detected at any range if at altitudes above 15,000 - 18,000 feet.

(3) The foregoing results were obtained with the SX and SPS-6B radars. It is believed, however, that were the SPS-6B antenna stabilized and in a less obstructed location the results would have improved. The use of MK III ("G" band) IFF, coupled with identification turns and approach sectors, proved invaluable in detecting returning strikes at ranges beyond radar detection ranges and in obtaining an indication of the friendly nature of aircraft.

(4) The URD-2 VHF/DF equipment again proved its usefulness, both as a direction finder and as a standby VHF receiver Excellent results were obtained with Mark 5/10 IFF currently installed in jet aircraft. Ranges of 90-100 miles were consistently obtained with this equipment.

d. Air Intelligence

(1) Every possible attempt was made by the ship to obtain all charts, maps, and other data necessary prior to sailing from San Diego, but the material was not available. While at Pearl Harbor many deficiencies were supplied by CinCPacFlt; nevertheless, many of the deficiencies still could not be filled in Pearl Harbor. It is felt that ships destined for employment in the forward area should be issued a complete "packet" of maps and charts prior to departure from the West Coast.

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(2) It is believed that prior to departure from Pearl Harbor a complete and detailed theater indoctrination of pilots and operations personnel should be conducted by an officer recently familiar through personal experience with operations in the forward area. Up to date information of flak, airfields, close air support techniques, etc., should be furnished at this time rather than the night before operations commence.

(3) Maps should be folded and fitted together, covered with thin adhesive cellulose acetate, bound in heavy file folders, and issued in sets of WAC, Pilotage and Approach Series to all pilots with 3" expanding, accordian type manila envelopes to hold them. The necessary material for this project should be obtained prior to departure from the West Coast and the cutting and the binding the maps by pilots should be accomplished on the trip out.

(4) The storage facilities for Air Intelligence material should be expanded. This is also true of facilities available in Squadron Ready Rooms for stowage of Air Intelligence material. The material required for adequate coverage in a peninsular or coastal campaign of this nature vastly exceeds the amount of material required for the "island hopping" operations of the last war. Storage facilities which were adequate then are grossly inadequate now.

(5) It is also desired to call attention to the problems encountered by Squadron AIO's in debriefing in a crowded and often disturbed Ready Room. In the design of future carriers it would be highly desirable to provide the Squadron AI Officer with a small office directly off the Ready Room for this purpose, and in which his gear could be stowed.

(6) A qualified Photo Interpretation Officer is sorely needed in the ship's Air Intelligence Organization. The work load of tactical prints in the Photo Lab has run on an average of over 1,000 per day. The need for a PI Officer is obvious.

(7) A room for the Photo pilots to annotate their films is needed and has been provided. It is being equipped with a complete set of maps, as it has been discovered that without easy access to them it is difficult for the Photo pilot to annotate their films correctly in grid coordinates.

(8) It is recommended that a special rate be established for enlisted personnel, e.g., "Air Intelligence Mate", and that a special training program be set up to qualify them in the following categories: Yeoman, Quartermaster and Photo Interpreter. The present system necessitates training on the job, a difficult procedure in the course of operations and one which hampers efficiency. It is also felt that such a rate would boost morale among enlisted personnel assigned these duties.

e. Air Department

(1) Rockets

(a) Rockets failing to fire and returned to the ship by F4U aircraft average about seven percent. Mark 5 Mod 4 launchers initially installed will not hold hung rockets during an arrested landing and the vast majority come off, endangering aircraft and personnel as well as delaying air operations. These launchers are being replaced by AERO-14 Able launchers, ten installations having been completed to date. This launcher has greatly reduced the above-mentioned hazards by its ability to retain hung rockets upon arrested landing. However, little, if any, improvement has been noted in the number of rockets returned. Most failures to fire from the AERO-14 Able launchers appear to be due to the pig-tails being severed by hot brass and links when strafing is commenced prior to firing rockets. Various measures have been employed in an effort to preclude this severing of pig-tails with some improvement noted. When a solution is reached, it is believed that the AERO-14 Able launcher will constitute a considerable improvement over the Mark 5 Mod 4 launcher.

(b) An unusual accident occurred recently when the propellant grain of a 5" HVAR burned on the flight deck. This rocket, dropped from its launcher on an arrested landing, bounced into the path of the propeller. Subsequently, it came to rest with flame erupting from a gash in the motor tube, burning out without incident. Disposal was by jettisoning and no attempt was made to determine the condition of the fuzes; however, the pressure arming base fuze probably was not armed.

(2) Jet Blast Deflectors

(a) Jet blast deflectors as presently installed have proved unsatisfactory. The usefulness and advantages of such a device are readily apparent; however, their use is precluded by lack of dependability in the mechanical operation of raising and lowering. After heating, they tend to expand and remain in an "up" position until they have cooled sufficiently to permit lowering. Obviously, such devices cannot be used when there is danger of their becoming stuck in the "up" position, with an immobilized flight deck resulting. Since the installation of the jet blast deflectors and after tests of the equipment were made, clearances between switches were adjusted. As a result of tests it has been noted that the present hoisting motor (¼ ton capacity) and the hoisting cable (5,000 lbs. breaking strength) are inadequate, that the sheaves require provision for lubrication, and that possibly the vanes of the deflector are constructed of metal of insufficient gauge inasmuch

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as a number have broken or cracked. It is recommended that the blast deflectors be constructed with sufficient precision and strength to insure operating dependability.

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