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U.S.S. BOXER (CV-21)
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

CV21/02-11w
A4-3
Ser [0329]
[294052]
329

[redacted]

From: Commanding Officer
To: Chief of Naval Operations
Via: (1) Commander Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN
(2) Commander Seventh Fleet
(3) Commander Naval Forces, Far East
(4) Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet

29 Aug 1952

Subj: Action Report for the period 1 August through 11 August 1952

Ref: (a) OpNav Instruction 3480.4

Encl: (1) CVG-2 conf ltr ser 010 dtd 14 August 1952 Action Report of Carrier Air Group TWO (1-11 August 1952) p.14

1. In compliance with OpNav Instruction 3480.4 the Action Report for the period 1 August through 11 August 1952 is hereby submitted.

PART I Composition of Own Forces and Mission

a. Composition

(1) In accordance with Task Element 77.01 confidential dispatch 010600I of August, the U.S.S. BOXER (CV-21), with Commander Carrier Division THREE embarked, got underway on the morning of 1 August 1952, from Yokosuka, Japan to the operating area and rendezvoused with Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN in the Sea of Japan on the morning of 4 August 1952. Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN was composed of the U.S.S. BOXER (CV-21), the U.S.S. ESSEX (CV-9), and heavy support and screen ships.

(2) RADM A. SOUCEK, USN Commander Carrier Division THREE relieved RADM REGAN, USN, Commander Carrier Division ONE, as OTC Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN. The U.S.S. BOXER (CV-21), upon rendezvousing with Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN relieved the U.S.S. BON HOMME RICHARD (CV-31) which departed TF-77 for Yokosuka, Japan.

MISSION

The mission of this force, as set forth by CTF-77 OpOrder No. 22-51, second revision, was to conduct a systematic program of air and surface interdiction, provide close air support of ground operations, assist in maintaining control of vital sea areas and operate as a fast carrier task force when directed, in order to support UN Forces in Korea and to support the policy of the United States in the Far East.

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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 August 1952

At 0640, the BOXER, escorted by the following ships, the U.S.S. SPROSTON (DDE-577), U.S.S. STEMBEL (DD-644), and the U.S.S. JENKINS (DDE-447), forming Task Element 77.01, departed Yokosuka, Japan, for the operating area.

Emergency drills and exercises were conducted throughout the day in preparation for the forthcoming change of command.

2 August 1952

En route to the operating area. During the morning, the destroyers U.S.S. TAYLOR (DDE-468) and the U.S.S. WALKER (DDE-517) joined TE 77.01. Departmental inspections were conducted as ordered, incident to the forthcoming change of command.

3 August 1952

Group Air Tactics were conducted.

4 August 1952

At 0640, the BOXER and TE 77.01 rendezvoused with Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN in the Sea of Japan.

At 0930 CAPTAIN MARSHALL B. GURNEY, USN, relieved CAPTAIN DENNIS J. SULLIVAN, USN, as Commanding Officer, U.S.S. BOXER (CV-21).

At 1324 ComCarDiv THREE relieved ComCarDiv ONE as CTF 77 and assumed tactical command of the Task Force.

The Task Force replenished.

5 August 1952

Commencing at 0300, a total of one hundred and six (106) combat sorties were launched.

6 August 1952

Eight combat sorties had been launched when the outbreak of a fire on the hangar deck precluded further flight operations. In a matter of seconds the hangar deck was a raging inferno as a result of the explosion of a gasoline tank on one airplane which quickly set off others. On deck there were some 58 aircraft loaded with ammunition including high explosive, frag-

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mentation, incendiaries, and 50 Cal. and 20MM ammunition. The ship was making 30 knots at the time. The decision to be made was "whether to launch what was on deck with a view of saving planes or to take a chance and taxi the planes forward, jettison the bombs and ammunition, reduce the ships speed and fight the fire." The latter, of course, was chosen. The first report received indicated it to be a port side fire, when actually the entire hangar deck was enveloped in flames even though the fire had broken out on the port side. Word was soon received that entry to the hangar deck could not be made on the starboard side and that the flames would have to be attacked from the Number TWO elevator, which was in the raised position. Accordingly, a turn was made to starboard so that the fire fighting crews could enter the hangar deck from up wind. There followed a grim fight on the part of the crew to control the fire in spite of 50 Cal. and 20MM shells exploding all over the hangar deck. The holocaust was added to by the exploding of a 500 pound bomb. Sixty-three men who were trapped, jumped over the side and were quickly rescued by attending helicopters, destroyers and cruisers. The smoke was terrific and enveloped the entire ship. Engineering spaces were almost untenable and two fire rooms had to be abandoned. It was at this point that considerable doubt existed as to our ability to control the fire. A further loss of power would have left us dead in the water and without water pressure for the fire hoses. Fortunately, tenacious men in the engineering department hung on to the point of exhaustion until the flames could be controlled. The Damage Control Central Station functioned throughout and was in constant communication with its four repair parties. Every man not trapped below unhesitatingly entered the inferno without regard to personal danger from exploding ammunition and bombs. The performance of the crew was magnificent and was a most impressive demonstration of a selflessness, determination and teamwork. While the fire fighting was progressing on the hangar deck, crews on the flight deck removed bombs and ammunition from aircraft and ready service lockers thus eliminating a terrible threat against the life of the ship. After having accomplished this herculean task in a matter of minutes, these men turned to the business of fighting the fire. It was from 4 to 5 hours later before we could be sure that there was no additional threat of fire, enter spaces, and determine who of those who had been trapped were safe and who of those who had been driven over the side had been rescued by accompanying ships. The final total was determined to be: 8 dead, 1 missing, 1 critically injured, 1 seriously burned and some 70 overcome by smoke. Of the 63 who had gone over the side, all were rescued and returned to the ship.

Work was immediately started to make repairs and restore the ship to operating condition after assessing the damage. By dint of whole hearted effort on the part of the crew, the ship

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was restored to a condition in which it could operate its aircraft. 18 aircraft were damaged or destroyed. It was decided by higher authority that the ship was to return to the Repair Base at Yokosuka to get rid of its duds, receive replacement aircraft, make minimum repairs and return to the operating line.

The follcwing dispatch was received by the BOXER from CTF 77:

MY ADMIRATION FOR YOU AND YOUR FINE CREW IS GREATER THAN EVER X PERFORMANCE WAS MAGNIFICENT X

7 August 1952

In compliance with CTF 77 confidential dispatch 061326Z plans were made to depart TF 77 on 8 July for repairs in Yokosuka, Japan.

No flight operations were conducted.

8 August 1952

At 1500I the BOXER, escorted by the U.S.S. PERKINS (DDR-877), departed TF 77 enroute to Yokosuka in accordance with CTF 77 confidential dispatch 080252Z.

9 August 1952

Enroute to Yokosuka, Japan for repairs.

10 August 1952

In the early morning the escort ship U.S.S. PERKINS (DDR-877) departed the BOXER to return to TF 77 in compliance with CTF 77 confidential dispatch 080252Z.

During the afternoon, Memorial Services were held to honor those who lost their lives during this tour of duty.

11 August 1952

Arrived Yokosuka, Japan in early morning for repairs.

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SUMMARY OF SORTIES

DATE	REMARKS	OFFENSIVE			DEFENSIVE			MISC		TOTAL
	First Launch / Last Recovery	DAY		NIGHT	DAY		NIGHT			
		Prop	Jet	Prop	Prop	Jet	Prop	Prop	Jet	
1 Aug										
2 Aug										
3 Aug	1500 1700							52	14	66
4 Aug	Replenished									
5 Aug	0330 1530	58	17	6	4	26	2	5		118
6 Aug	0300 0530			6	2		2			10
7 Aug										
8 Aug										
9 Aug										
10 Aug										
11 Aug										

Total Propeller Sorties . . 133

Total Jet Sorties 57

Total Sorties 190

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PART III Performance of Ordnance Equipment and Material

a. Anti-Aircraft Firing Exercises were conducted on 2 occasions; performance was considered satisfactory. The dates of firing are listed below:

(1) Enroute from Yokosuka, Japan to operating area, 2 August 1952 - BAKER, GEORGE and HOW runs.

(2) Replenishment Period 4 August 1952 - BAKER and OBOE runs.

b. See enclosure (1) for ammunition expended during anti-aircraft exercises and ammunition jettisoned during the fire.

PART IV Battle Damage

a. No battle damage was sustained by the ship as a result of enemy action. Included under Damage Control and Gunnery is a resume of damage resulting from the fire of 6 August 1952.

PART V Personnel

a. Casualties

(1) There were no combat casualties suffered by Ship's Company personnel as a result of enemy action. Air Group casualties are reported in enclosure (1) of this report.

(2) One officer and eight enlisted men were killed as a result of fire on the BOXER on 6 August. Two of the enlisted personnel were attached to the Marine Detachment of the BOXER:

KOSUKI, Arthur M. PFC, USMC
ROULSTON, Terrell R. CPL, USMC

The remainder of the casualties were Carrier Air Group TWO personnel and are reported in enclosure (1).

b. Performance

(1) Personnel performance and morale have been excellent during the period of this report. The average on-board count of enlisted personnel was 2012, which was satisfactory.

(2) Critical shortages continue in EM, IC, MM, BT, RM, SK, and QM rates. The on-board training program has been continued to train personnel of lower ratings to qualify for advancement. During the period of this report, there were no transfers or receipts of enlisted personnel.

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c. (1) The following activities were initiated for the welfare of officers and enlisted men:

(a) Issue of daily ship's newspaper.
(b) Daily newscast over P.A. System.
(c) Radio broadcasts and recordings.
(d) Hobby Shop opened for issue of material one hour on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
(e) Exercise rooms for physical conditioning of officers and enlisted men.
(f) Ship's library opened at regular hours for all hands.
(g) The Commissary Officer maintains a record of birthday anniversary dates for all enlisted personnel. Men are notified in the Plan of The Day to report to Commissary Office on their birthdays to receive free cake and ice cream.

(2) Movies are shown daily. During the operation, 16 different programs were shown a total of 48 times. A late night movie was shown in the Training Room for personnel unable to attend regular showings.

(3) The Hobby Shop was well patronized. Craft supplies were leather plastic, models, and paints. The space occupied by the shop is quite small and no work is actually done there. The space is used for sale of material only.

d. Religious Activities

(1) Divine Services were held as follows:

(a) Catholic Mass daily; Catholic Evening Devotions daily; Protestant Worship every Sunday; Latter Day Saints Services, Christian Science Services, and Jewish Services were held.

(b) The Ship's Chapel was open at all times to men of all faiths for spiritual reading and prayer.

(c) Memorial services were held on 10 August for seven pilots killed or missing in action since the BOXER left the continental United States last February and for the one officer and eight men who died as a result of a fire in the ship on 6 August 1952.

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PART VI Comments

a. Operations

(1) Aerology

The operating area was under the domination of a weak high pressure area during the period 4 through 8 August. Scattered to broken cumulus of fair weather with a minimum of middle and high clouds prevailed throughout period. Winds continued light with an average velocity of 9 knots and an average minimum velocity of 2.5 knots. Operations were not suspended because of weather during the period.

At 0645I on 6 August, the Aerological Office was secured because of heavy smoke from the fire on the hangar deck. Normal operations were resumed at 1115II. Investigation revealed that the only damage sustained in Aerology, outside of superficial damage from smoke and water, was to the anemometer repeater unit which short-circuited when the intense heat in the office caused condensation inside the unit.

(2) Photo Interpretation

The Photo Interpretation Section made a damage assessment and flak study of hydro-electric plants in the Navy area. A flak study touraid was also made up from the photo coverage of the one day operating period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Optical glass should be used in the camera ports in the F9F type photo aircraft in place of the plexiglass covers now in use. It is estimated through comparison that a 20 per cent increase in quality of photography could be anticipated. A large amount of distortion is obtained especially in low altitude oblique type photography from the plexiglas camera ports.

b. Damage Control

The fire of 6 August caused considerable damage to both the ships structure and to equipment. A list of damaged or destroyed gunnery equipment will be found in Gunnery Comments. Other damages are listed below:

STRUCTURAL DAMAGES:

Forward bulkhead beam of Arresting Gear 9 and 10 space buckled, Fr. 125. Athwartships beam (heavy) at frame 121 buckled.

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Bulkhead and athwartships beam at frame 117 (port and starboard) buckled.

Thirteen longitudinal girders buckled (port side) fr. 117 to 121.

Twel.. longitudinal girders buckled (port side) fr. 121 to 125.

Four longitudinal girders buckled (starboard) fr. 117 to 121.

Bulkheads at frs. 111 and 113 at athwartships passage buckled.

Seven longitudinal girders were buckled in Port Squadron Office.

Longitudinal girders, starboard, Fr. 113 to 117, four buckled.

Longitudinal girders, starboard, Fr. 107 to 111, one buckled.

Longitudinal girders in Flight Crew's Locker, fr. 107 to 111, four were buckled.

Longitudinal girders in Electronics Storeroom #3, Fr. 107 to 111, three buckled.

Fore and aft bulkhead, fr. 113 to 135 was buckled.

Approximately 50 feet of light metal athwartship catwalk and railings, fr. 111 to 113 were damaged or missing.

02 D.ck girders - some were buckled and decking was warped with blast and shrapnel holes, fibrous glass insulation burned off under decking and under Flight Deck in open areas.

DAMAGES TO SEVERAL SPACES:

Port Squadron Office - doors, escape scuttles, all furniture, fibrous glass insulation and ventilation ducts were damaged or destroyed.

Electronics storeroom #3 all bins damaged or destroyed.

Flight Crew's Locker, B-021lL, fr. 107 to 111, port - door, insulation, bunks and lockers were destroyed.

Aviation Radio Shop #1, starboard, fr. 100 to 105 had large blast hole in deck.

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Small shrapnel hit forward edge, port, of athwartships catwalk, 02 deck, fr. 77.

Rubber light excluder forming port side of expansion joint at frame 112 was entirely burned.

Four port roller curtains were badly damaged or demolished, fr. 108 - 111, fr. 114 - 117, fr. 122 - 125 and fr. 139 - 142.

Hangar Deck Sprinkler and Water Curtain piping was broken and damaged in numerous places from frame 100 to frame 125.

Heavy supporting frameworks between roller curtains port side of Hangar at frames 107, 111, were buckled, one at frame 117 was slightly buckled.

Expansion joint plating across Flight Deck at frame 112 was buckled, numerous holes were chopped in deck to allow fighting fire below.

Hard patches in Hangar Deck over Marine Compartment, fr. 107 to 111, have several leaky rivets.

Several joiner and fumetight doors need to be replaced or straightened and overhauled.

Joiner doors to Ready Room #4, Squadron Office, and fumetight door 2-100-2 are warped, and also the following:

Port joiner door to Gunnery Office.
Joiner door to Starboard Squadron Office.
FTD 02-131-1
Joiner door and escape scuttle to Port Squadron Office.
Joiner door to Flight Crew's Locker.
Armored doors to Electronics Storeroom #3.

Bulkhead, 2nd deck, fr. 111 in Compartment B-201-1L was buckled, heavy fore and aft longitudinal and one supporting stanchion, fr. 107 were bent and buckled.

Hydraulic board - Void flooding control to void tanks #3 port - all gauges were demolished to B-18V, B-20V, B-26V, B-28V, B-34V, B-36V, B-42V and B-44V. Air duct for Ready Room #1 had a hole at frame 107.

c. Gunnery

(1) On 6 August, as a direct result of the fire and the salt water to combat it, the following equipment was destroyed, partially destroyed or placed in an inoperative state:

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(a) The Mk 56 G.F.C.S. No. 49 was almost completely destroyed. Only the director unit remained undamaged.

(b) Mk 63 G.F.C.S. No. 47 was damaged by fire and salt water. Inspection made by representatives of Repair Facilities, Yokosuka indicated that most of the units of the Mk 63 G.F.C.S. could be salvaged.

(c) Two 40MM Quad Mounts, No's. 45 and 47 were inoperative in Local and Automatic. Power feeder cables supplying these Mounts were destroyed by fire.

(d) All remaining Ship's Ordnance Equipment was in a completely operative state.

(2) Most of Ship's Gun Ammunition stowed in ready service lockers topside magazines was jettisoned during the emergency created by fire. A list of the jettisoned ammunition is found in enclosure (1).

Deck Seamanship:

(1) In ten (10) days, a total of 13 destroyers engaged in underway transfers with the BOXER, involving one hundred fifty two (152) personnel transfers by highline, six (6) tons of cargo by highline, eight (8) destroyers being refueled. In such a relatively short time in the forward area, this is a very high rate of underway transfers. No casualties, losses, or injuries were sustained.

(2) The fire of 6 August caused considerable loss of deck gear. Due to excessive heat and smoke, numerous men were forced to abandon the ship. All possible aid was given the men in the water in the way of life preservers. Approximately four hundred fifty (450) life jackets were lost during this operation. Three (3) floater nets were lost, eight having been placed in the water, five being retrieved. Two life rafts were lost over the side, and two were severly burned. The number two Motor Whale Boat was badly scorched on the inboard hull, and the hoisting gear was lowered into the water by manila falls on 11 August for repairs. The port after accomodation ladder was badly damaged by fire and concussion. The bales and hand rails were salvaged, but were badly heated. The upper platform for the ladder was severly damaged, while the lower platform was undamaged. All the gangway falls and tackle were completely destroyed. Numerous cargo nets, cargo mats, and cane fenders were destroyed. One 1 5/8" s[illegible]ng lay mooring line was destroyed. Approximately 700 fathom of manila line was destroyed, along with 30 miscellaneous blocks. The majority of this gear belonged to the Second Division and was stowed on the uptakes on the starboard side of the hangar deck amidships. The incinerator was flooded, but not damaged by fire; some of the fire bricks will need replacing.

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(3) Due to quick action of the crew on the flight deck and fantail, many deaths were averted by life saving gear having been placed in the water.

ORDNANCE EXPENDED IN ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRING

5"/38
AAC (MTF) 43 Rounds

40MM
HEIT - 258 Rounds

JETTISONED ORDNANCE

TYPE	NUMBER	WEIGHT IN POUNDS
5"/38 Cal		
Powder (SPDN)	560 Rounds	20,160
Projectiles ACC	280 Rounds	15,120
Projectiles VT	280 Rounds	15,120
Projectiles Illum	4 Rounds	216
Short Charges	12 Rounds	336
40MM		
Heit (SD)	8460 Rounds	60,950
BI&T	240 Rounds	1,725
Nose Fuses AN-MK155	264 Rounds	1,694
AN-MK155	264 Rounds	1,694
AN-MK149	2335 Rounds	7,275
(UT) MK172	300 Rounds	2,475
Flares, Para, AN-M26	30 Rounds	2,925
Signals, Night, Drift AN-MK5	30 Rounds	280
Lights, Float, A/C AN-MK6	8 Rounds	160
Black Cannon Powder	300 Rounds	300
3 PDR, Saluting Charges	54 Rounds	300
Total (Weight in pounds).....		129,036

d. Medical

While enroute to the operating area, the entire ship's company and air group personnel were inoculated against Cholera and Typhus. The Medical Department carried out routine duties until 6 August 1952 at about 0630 when the fire occurred on the hangar deck resulting in the death of one Medical Officer and eight enlisted men. There were injuries to twenty three personnel requiring admission to the sick list, of which one was critical and one serious. Approximately fifty men were slightly injured or overcome by smoke. They were given first aid treatment and returned to duty. During the fire it was necessary to set up aid stations in the wardroom and on the flight deck, these stations were operated until the fire was brought under

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control at which time all patients requiring admission were removed to sick bay. Most of the patients admitted were suffering from smoke exhaustion and were discharged from the sick list within 1-3 days after admission. On arrival in Yokosuka 11 August 1952 the remains of eight personnel were transferred to USNH for preparation and shipment to ConUS. Two injured men were transferred to USNH for treatment and disposition.

M. B. GURNEY

AUTHENTICATED:

H. R. JENSEN
SCLK, USN
Ship's Secretary

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