

Original Ad 43
U.S.S. SICILY (CVE-118)
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

CVE118/416-13
VAE/20/jns
Ser 001

13 NOV 1952

DECLASSIFIED

DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS
DOD DIR 5200.10

[REDACTED]

From: Commanding Officer, U.S.S. SICILY (CVE-118)
To: Chief of Naval Operations
Via: (1) Commander Task Group 95.1
(2) Commander Task Force 95
(3) Commander SEVENTH FLEET
(4) Commander Naval Forces, FAR EAST
(5) Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet

Subj: Action Report for the period of 4 September through 13 September 1952

Ref: (a) OPNAV Instruction 3480.4
(b) CINCPACFLT Instruction 3480.1A

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b) the Action Report of the U. S.S. SICILY (CVE-118), VMA-312 embarked, for the period 4 September through 13 September 1952 is hereby submitted.

2. The report is divided into six parts as listed below:

- PART I - General Narrative
 - PART II - Chronological Order of Events
 - PART III - Remarks on Performance of Ordnance Material and Equipment, including Ammunition Expenditure
 - PART IV - Summary of Own and Enemy Battle Damage
 - PART V - Personnel Performance and Casualties
 - PART VI - Comments and Recommendations
- [REDACTED]

DECLASSIFIED

PART I

GENERAL NARRATIVE

A. During the period of this report the U.S.S. SICILY (CVE-118), under the command of Captain Almon E. LOOMIS, 62535/1310, USN, with Marine Attack Squadron Three Hundred Twelve (VMA-312), under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George C. AXTELL, 06857/7302, USMC, embarked, operated as a part of Task Force 95, in the U. S. SEVENTH FLEET, under the operational control of Commander West Coast Blockading and Patrol Group (CTG 95.1).

B. The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. SICILY (CVE-118), acted as CTE 95.11 from 2100I 4 September until 2100I 13 September when he was relieved by the Commanding Officer, HMS OCEAN. During the subject period TE 95.11 consisted of the SICILY and its screen, HMS COSSACK (D-57), HMCS NOOTKA (DDE-213) and U.S.S. MARSH (DE-699).

C. The Task Element operated in the vicinity of latitude 37° - 30' N, longitude 124° - 30' E. Its mission was to provide air support for the following tasks which were assigned to the West Coast Blockading and Patrol Group.

(1) Enforce blockade of the West Coast of Korea south of latitude 39° - 35' N to prevent ingress or egress, mining, or supply and reenforcement by sea.

(2) Occupy, control, and defend the following West Coast Islands: SOKTO, CHODO, PAENGYONGDO, TAECHONGDO, YONGPYONGDO, TOKCHOKTO. Protect our sea communications therewith.

(3) Provide escort and air support to own naval forces.

(4) Support minesweeping operations.

(5) Support troops ashore with naval gunfire.

(6) Conduct aerial reconnaissance of the enemy-held West Coast of Korea.

(7) Support friendly guerrilla activities and maintain liaison therewith.

(8) Destroy military installations and other worthwhile targets of opportunity.

This mission included the following specific tasks:

1. Provision of a two aircraft TARGAP by day for Task Unit 95.12.1 in the CHODO-SOKTO area. The tasks of this TARGAP in order of priority were:

(a) Strike enemy artillery activities against own forces.

(b) Give cover against enemy propeller driven aircraft attack.

DECLASSIFIED

PART I (Cont'd)

- (c) Keep under regular surveillance coastal area AMGAK to SAGR-RI.
- (d) Airspot in the same area if required.

2. Daily armed reconnaissance of the coastal area between the HAN River and the TAEDONG Estuary and reconnaissance of the coast north of the TAEDONG up to HANCHON at least every other day, to detect and destroy enemy personnel, artillery, vessels, and equipment threatening friendly islands; to keep coastal airfields in the area under surveillance and to detect any mining activity or blockade running. (Important sightings requiring action by surface forces were passed to the appropriate Surface Blockade and Patrol Units.)

3. Provision of strikes as requested by Elements and Units of TO 95.1, guerrilla organizations, and J.O.C. Korea.

4. Conduct of armed reconnaissance, strikes, and interdiction throughout the area west of the following line: HANCHOW - CHUNGNA, thence south down main supply route through HWANGJU to SARIWON, thence along main supply route through SINMAK to the Peace Conference Restricted Area, thence along the western perimeter of the Restricted Area to the HAN River Estuary.

5. Provision of AIRSPOT as requested by Surface Blockade and Patrol Group.

6. Provision of close air support as requested by J.O.C. Korea.

7. Provision of convoy cover as requested by CTF 9A.

D. The enemy forces were the North Korean Peoples Army and "Volunteer" Chinese Communist Forces in enemy held North Korea.

E. Regular coastal reconnaissance indicated that enemy blockade running and coastal shipping continued to be at a standstill. However, enemy small craft were found operating in the rivers and estuaries and were attacked.

Air support for the defense of friendly islands and military installations was continued. This was accomplished by strikes on gun positions threatening these islands and by spotting on coastal targets for patrol vessels in the area. An enemy build-up appeared to be in progress in the HAEJU and WOLSARI coastal areas. Both of these build-ups threatened friendly installations and as a result extra strike effort was placed on them. A considerable number of heavily reinforced positions had recently been built on the WOLSARI peninsula and tunnels were being dug as positions for heavy guns. Efforts were made to knock out as many of these positions as possible but it was found that general purpose bombs, which were the only ones available, were not very effective.

TARCAP was provided in the CHODO-SOKTO area. In the early part of the period only a two plane section was provided but an increase in MIG activity

DECLASSIFIED

PART I (Cont'd)

made it necessary to change to a four plane unit. Since this required an inordinate percentage of the ship's total effort, these aircraft were sent on prebriefed strikes prior to reporting in as TARCAP.

The program of interdiction and harassment which has been in effect for some time was continued. Strikes were made on many targets which were provided by local intelligence forces. These targets were troop concentrations, gun positions and supply dumps. In addition, numerous transportation facilities such as bridges and junks located by reconnaissance were attacked.

During this operating period MIG-15's were encountered on two occasions. On 9 September, in the vicinity of 38°-45'N, 124°-45'E, four MIG's were sighted by six F4U's. The F4U's were in the process of attacking several junks and sighted the MIG's as they entered an attack from six o'clock. They immediately turned into the MIG's who broke off the attack prior to entering firing range. The MIG's, at an altitude of about 10,000 feet and flying at approximately the same speed as the F4U's, boxed in the F4U's for about 5 minutes. Following this the MIG's broke off and departed to the north without making any further attack.

On 10 September in the vicinity of 38°-39'N, 124°-50'E, two F4U's, which were flying at approximately 8,000 feet, suddenly sighted four (4) MIG-15's coming down on their tails from above. The F4U's immediately entered a weave and were successful in meeting the enemy almost head on. On the second weave one (1) MIG-15 was shot down by the F4U's and was seen to go down in flames. The MIG pilot bailed out and was also aflame. Soon thereafter the F4U's attempted to break off the action by heading for CHODO Island losing altitude. The MIG's continued their attacks. One F4U was hit by 37mm fire in the port wing and the pilot bailed out. After this the MIG's departed to the North. Four additional MIG's were sighted at approximately 15,000 feet during the action. The F4U pilot was recovered in approximately ten (10) minutes by a "DUMBO" from POENGYANG-DO but neither the MIG-15 nor the pilot was located. For further details see VMA-312 Air Crew Survival Report No. 15, dtd 8/10/52; VMA-312 Aircraft Action Report No. 74, dtd 8/10/52; VMA-312 Air Combat Report No. 1 dtd 8/10/52.

The total number of sorties for the period was 318 with a total of 597 hours flown. The overall daily average was 63.0 hours flown in 35.3 sorties. The daily average of assigned aircraft was 21.5 and the average daily availability was 15.2.

DECLASSIFIED

PART II

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS

9/4/52: At 2100I the Commanding Officer of the SICILY assumed command of Task Element 95.11 and OTC West Coast relieving the Commanding Officer of the HMS OCEAN. The night was spent proceeding to the operating area with the U.S.S. MARSH in company.

9/5/52: Flight Operations commenced at dawn and continued throughout the day. A total of 43 sorties were flown of which 12 were CAP, 12 TARCAP and 19 pre-briefed strikes and reconnaissance. One aircraft was lost on catapult launch and the pilot recovered, uninjured, by helicopter. Details are provided in Part IV below. The Task Element was joined by HMCS NOOTKA during the morning and by HMS COSSACK in the late afternoon. Shortly after arrival of the COSSACK, the NOOTKA was detached for night patrol.

9/6/52: Commencing on schedule, 39 sorties were flown throughout the day. These flights consisted of 12 CAP, 12 TARCAP and 15 prebriefed strike and reconnaissance. One aircraft was lost on catapult launch and the pilot recovered, uninjured, by helicopter. The NOOTKA rejoined at 0900 and at 1730 the COSSACK was detached for night patrol.

9/7/52: Thirty-eight sorties were flown during the day consisting of 12 CAP, 12 TARCAP and 14 strike and reconnaissance flights. One aircraft was lost by ditching while returning from a mission. The cause was engine failure evaluated as probable flak damage. The pilot was recovered by helicopter and taken to friendly territory. The COSSACK rejoined at 0900 and the NOOTKA was detached at 1730 for patrol.

9/8/52: Thirty-three sorties were flown consisting of 12 CAP, 10 TARCAP and 11 strike and reconnaissance. The NOOTKA rejoined at 0900 and the MARSH was detached for night patrol at 1730.

9/9/52: A total of 38 sorties were flown consisting of 12 CAP, 12 TARCAP and 14 strike and reconnaissance. During the afternoon four MIG-15's made a non-firing run on one of this Task Element's strikes. At 0900 the MARSH returned and at 1700 the COSSACK departed for the nightly patrol.

9/10/52: Thirty-three sorties were flown consisting of 10 CAP, 10 TARCAP and 13 strike and reconnaissance. During the afternoon, four MIG-15's attacked a two plane section of TARCAP in the general vicinity of CHODO and in a dog-fight which followed one MIG was shot down in flames and one F4U was damaged. The COSSACK rejoined the Task Element at 1000 and at 1750 the NOOTKA was again detached for patrol.

9/11/52: A total of 35 sorties were flown this date consisting of 10 CAP, 20 TARCAP and 5 strike and reconnaissance. All TARCAP aircraft hit pre-assigned targets prior to carrying out TARCAP duties. During the morning one aircraft was damaged by enemy ground fire but was landed successfully in friendly territory with no injury to the pilot. The NOOTKA rejoined at 1000 and at 1720 the MARSH was detached for assigned patrol.

DECLASSIFIED

PART II (Cont'd)

9/12/52: Due to heavy aircraft damage only 28 sorties were flown this date. Of these, 10 were CAP and 18 were TARGAP, with the latter again hitting pre-briefed targets at the beginning of their flight. The MARSH rejoined at 0945 and the COSSACK was again assigned the night patrol, departing at 1720.

9/13/52: Thirty sorties were launched on this final day of operations. These consisted of 10 CAP and 20 TARGAP with pre-assigned targets. At 0915 the COSSACK rejoined and at 1600 the MARSH was detached for night patrol. At 2100, HMS OCEAN assumed the duties of CTE 95.11. At 2310, as the OCEAN and SICILY passed, the NOOTKA was detached and the SICILY, with the COSSACK as escort, continued south enroute to Sasebo, Japan.

DECLASSIFIED

PART III

PERFORMANCE OF ORDNANCE MATERIAL
AND EQUIPMENT INCLUDING AMMUNITION EXPENDITURE

A. Thirty-six (8.1%) 5" rockets failed to ignite for reasons as listed below:

<u>Number</u>	<u>Cause</u>
13	Pigtails broken in flight.
7	Faulty igniter receptacles.
2	Pigtails disengaged from receptacles due to locking pin failure.
8	Faulty wiring in rocket electrical system.
6	Rockets failed to ignite.

B. Two rockets fell off launcher during arrested landings. The latch pins sheared in Aero 14A combination bomb and rocket launcher.

C. Ammunition Expenditures.

1. During the operating period covered by this report the following ordnance was expended:

By VMA-312 Aircraft:

1000 pound GP bombs	23
500 pound GP bombs	147
260 pound Fragmentation bombs	277
100 pound GP bombs	358
NaPALM Fire bombs	48
20mm rounds	23,600
50 Caliber rounds	61,500

By U.S.S. SICILY (CVE-118)

40mm	None
------	------

DECLASSIFIED

PART IV

SUMMARY OF OWN AND ENEMY BATTLE DAMAGE

A. Own Battle Damage.

1. Battle Damage to the U.S.S. SICILY (CVE-118) - None.
2. For damage sustained by VMA-312 aircraft see Naval Air Warfare reports submitted for this operating period.
3. For operational damage suffered by VMA-312 aircraft see Operational Damage Report for September submitted by U.S.S. SICILY (CVE-118).

B. Battle Damage Inflicted on the Enemy.

1. By the U.S.S. SICILY (CVE-118) - None.
2. By Marine Attack Squadron Three Hundred Twelve as listed below:

<u>TARGETS</u>	<u>DAMAGED</u>	<u>DESTROYED</u>
MIG-15		1
Railroad Cars	4	
Transformer	1	
Junks	23	25
Trucks		2
Billoting Areas	4	
Radio Positions	2	
Command Posts	4	2
Troop Concentrations	16	
Power Sub-Station	1	
Rail Bridges	1	2
Road Bridges	25	9
Bunkers	8	6
Trenches	4	3
Supply Dumps	19	1

[REDACTED]

DECLASSIFIED

PART IV (Cont'd)

<u>TARGETS</u>	<u>DAMAGED</u>	<u>DESTROYED</u>
Buildings (Barracks & Warehouses)	41	106
Gun Positions	37	14
WIA	321	
KIA		659

3. The following damage was confirmed by friendly agents. This damage was the result of one CAS and seven strike missions and is included as a part of the estimated damaged listed in section 2 above.

<u>TARGETS</u>	<u>DAMAGED</u>	<u>DESTROYED</u>
Command Post		1
"SCR 300" Radio		1
Oxen		7
Ox Carts		2
Trucks		2
105mm Gun		1
60mm Gun		1
Barracks		3
Truck	1	
KIA		476
WIA	271	

PERSONNEL PERFORMANCE AND CASUALTIESA. Personnel Performance.

The overall performance of personnel was in accord with the highest standards of the Navy and Marine Corps. Entry into combat was accompanied by a fine show of enthusiasm and aggressive spirit by all hands.

B. Casualties.

On 10 September 1952 Captain J. G. FOLMAR, USMC, was forced to bail out over water after his aircraft was hit by an attacking MIG-15. He was recovered by helicopter. He suffered a sprain of the left shoulder.

C. The recommended wartime complement as submitted by this command to COM-AIRPAC dated 22 March 1952 (Conf Ser 074) reflects the personnel requirements of the ship for this type operation.

(1) Air Department: Total numbers adequate. The ship needs one ABC and one AB1, who are graduates of Catapult and Arresting gear school.

(2) Navigation Department: Adequate.

(3) Supply Department: Adequate.

(4) Gunnery Department: 10 to 15 more non-rated men are needed to maintain condition 3 watches and continue necessary upkeep.

(5) Operations Department: All but one rated radioman have received orders to shore duty. In order to maintain the radio crew at an operating level, it has been necessary to request that these orders be held in abeyance until completion of this combat cruise. Cooperation has been received in this matter and is much appreciated. However, it is considered important to note that even with the granted delays in execution of orders, the shortage of petty officers is so acute in relation to commitments that their entire effort must be devoted to operational traffic. This has severely handicapped the training program and it now appears that little substantial progress in training replacements aboard can be expected during the combat period.

(6) Engineering Department: There is an overall shortage of petty officers in the EM, BT and MM ratings. However, the critical stage of training has passed and the total of petty officers is now approaching the allowance list.

~~SECRET~~
DECLASSIFIED
PART VI

SPECIAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. As may be noted from Section E of Part I the operations reported require close liaison with a number of heterogeneous units. Also, CTE 95.11 is given wide latitude in acting upon the intelligence and requests for aid received from these units. It is therefore highly important that commands become thoroughly familiar with the area and its numerous "ground rules" before taking over as CTE 95.11. The SICILY had a face-to-face turn-over from the U.S.S. BATAAN (CVL-29). This included the transfer of various working files and chart overlays as well as background information. An excellent briefing was received from CTG 95.1 staff. In addition, LCDR JOY, RN, who is thoroughly familiar with the operations, accompanied the ship on the first few days of its first patrol. It is considered that the above represents the absolute minimum of preparation required by a command to prepare it for assuming the duties of CTE 95.11.

Several additional things can be done. The Commanding Officer of HMS OCEAN kindly offered to send his Operations Officer LCDR Manley COOPER along for the early phase of the first patrol. This offer was gratefully accepted and the ship benefited greatly from this officer's long experience in the area. Prior to reporting for duty the ship sent the Intelligence Officer on a tour of shore installations in the area and later the Operations and Air Operations Officer visited Joint Operational Command Headquarters, Korea. It is considered highly desirable for officers who can be spared from among the Operations Officer, Air Operations Officer, Air Intelligence Officer and CIC Officer to make a tour of the area before the ship takes over its duties. This tour should consist as much as possible of the following: a visit to J.O.C. Korea, visits to the principal intelligence and other military units in the various friendly coastal islands, a day aboard one of the patrol ships and from two to three days aboard the operating carrier. Early receipt of the applicable operations orders is also highly desirable in order that personnel may make a thorough study of them before the turnover is begun.

B. It is interesting to note that the two attacks by MIG aircraft on F4U's were not as damaging as might have been expected. Low altitude, 9,000 feet and below, and the distance of the MIGs from their bases, 100 to 120 miles, were undoubtedly contributing factors to this. It does appear, however, that the aggressive defense - turning into the attack and setting up a defensive weave was very effective protection.

C. As stated in paragraph I, E above, general purpose bombs were found to be relatively ineffective against the heavily reinforced gun positions on the WOLSARI Peninsula. Tiny Tim rockets and armor piercing bombs will be obtained for use against these positions.

D. A number of attacks were made on areas where intelligence reports indicated that enemy troops were billeted. Troops were very seldom sighted during these attacks and as a result estimates of WIA and KIA were very low. Ground Intelligence, however confirmed 476 KIA and 271 WIA after a series of strikes

PART VI (Cont'd)

which had resulted in an estimate of no enemy casualties by the pilots. It appears that the enemy is continuing his tactic of concealing his troops on approach of aircraft and that strikes against troops billeting areas are generally more effective than pilot estimates indicate.

E. Hidden gun emplacements and other types of camouflaged targets were found to be extremely difficult to locate. Very low level reconnaissance had been fairly effective for this work in the past, but had proved too costly in planes and pilots to be continued. Photographic coverage was available through J.O.C. Korea by special request but when honored required two to five days to process exclusive of interpretation. Since the enemy makes a practice of moving his guns and other equipment at frequent intervals the above service was not fast enough to be fully effective. It has been recommended by separate correspondence that a two plane photo team in addition to the marine squadron be assigned to the carrier which is on the Yellow Sea Patrol.

F. Approximately one-half of VMA-312 aircraft were equipped with ADF receivers. In order to utilize this equipment, assignment of a frequency was obtained. A TDE transmitter was used and a transmitter key was relocated to be within reach of the air controller. The following procedure was set up. In event of failure of other homing equipment or in an emergency the pilot requested "SISTER". If the operational situation permitted, the Air Controller then sent a ten second dash, followed by a letter identifier and another 10 second dash. With a power of 100 watts good results were obtained up to 50 miles. Even though this equipment must be used with caution in the combat area it is considered well worth-while to make the above arrangements when the ADF is already installed in the aircraft.

G. Early warning and SAR in Korea were coordinated by the 5th Air Force at Seoul. The following circuits were used for this purpose:

(1) West Coast 5th Air Force Navy Liaison Net (voice). This net was used for early warning and SAR in Korea. The most important stations on this net were the 5th Air Force at Seoul, Carrier Task Element 95.11 (SICILY), ADCC at Chodo and Paengyong-Do Islands. Upon occasion Commander Task Element 95.12 also entered the net.

(2) West Coast 5th Air Force Navy Liaison Net (CW). This net paralleled the previously mentioned net with the exception that stations were limited to Commander Task Element 95.11 and 5th Air Force. Upon occasion the Commander Surface Patrol Element (CTE 95.12) also entered this net to file OP and flash traffic to 5th Air Force.

(3) Carrier Task Group 95.1 Task Group Commanders Net. The stations on this net were Commander Task Element 95.12, Commander Task Element 95.11, and most of the ships and task units of Task Element 95.12. This net served to pass traffic between 95.11 and units of Task Element 95.12.

Originally both East and West Coast Navy were on the same Liaison Nets. This was changed just before this ship reached the area and communications on the new liaison nets were very poor during most of the operating period. How-

DECLASSIFIED

PART VI (Cont'd)

ever, it improved toward the end of the period leveling off at about as follows:

<u>VOICE</u>	<u>RELIABILITY AT END OF PERIOD</u>
Chodo	20%
Paengyong-Do	40%
5th Air Force	50%
<u>CW</u>	
5th Air Force	60%

The improvement was the result of the combined efforts of all commands involved. These efforts included tightening down on circuit discipline, better control of frequency shifts, frequency assignment changes, and, it is believed, equipment changes by the 5th Air Force.

One of the most serious aspects of the situation was that Chodo, which was the northernmost station and almost always detected bogies first, was also the one least often received. This was partially overcome by the alertness of the surface patrol in the Chodo area. This patrol passed Chodo flash reports on the West Coast Navy Command Net (CW). The SICILY CAP was also usually able to pick up this information on guard channel and pass it to the ship via VHF. Carriers on the Yellow Sea Patrol should always brief their CAP to be alert to perform this duty. All commands were still studying the situation and making efforts to improve it when the SICILY left the area.

ALMON E. LOOMIS

Copy to:

- CNO (2) Advance
- CINCPACFLT (2) Advance
- CINCPACFLT EVALUATION GROUP (1)
- COMNAVFE (1) Advance
- COMNAVFE EVALUATION GROUP (1)
- COMSEVENTHFLT (1) Advance
- CTF 95 (1) Advance
- CTG 95.1 (2)
- COMAIRPAC (5)
- COMSERVPAC (1)
- COMFAIRJAPAN (1)
- NAVAL WAR COLLEGE (1)
- COMCARDIV 17 (1)
- COMCARDIV 15 (1)
- CO, FAIRBETUPAC (2)
- COMMARCORPS (1)

Copy to:

- CG AIRFMFPAC (1)
- CG FMFPAC (1)
- CG 1st MAW (1)
- CO, MAG-12 (1)
- CO, VMA-312 (1)
- U.S.S. BATAAN (CVL-29) (1)
- U.S.S. RENDOVA (CVE-114) (1)
- U.S.S. BAIROKO (CVE-115) (1)
- U.S.S. BADJENG STRAIT (CVE-116) (1)
- U.S.S. POINT CRUZ (CVE-119) (1)