

Aircraft Action Reports

2-d (45) USS Marcus Island

13463

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
AIR FORCE, PACIFIC FLEET

RBG/hof

001363

SECRET

9 June 1945

From: Commander Air Force, Pacific Fleet.
To: Distribution List.

Subject: BRIEF of Action Report from U.S.S. MARCUS ISLAND (Capt. H.V. Hopkins) and from VC-87 and VOC-1 Covering Operations in Support of Okinawa Occupation 26 March - 28 April 1945, R/S 012653.

SHIP REPORT.

1. CIC Personnel: During the first two days at sea CIC enlisted personnel were in Condition Two Mike, with each of three sections standing approximately eight hours daily. On the third day, March 23, combat zone watch was set. This consisted of a day team of 18 men on duty from morning General Quarters until the end of flight operations and a night team of eight men taking over about one hour after sunset and continuing on watch until General Quarters the following morning. While it is felt that all radar operators should be capable of performing any job in CIC, the experience of the MARCUS ISLAND in this and previous operations has demonstrated the worth of night and day teams and of dividing the day team into SK and SG groups while in the combat zone. For readiness for prolonged operations, it is recommended that additional CIC personnel be allowed, at least on flagships. Radarmen are required to stand 12 to 14 hours daily during practically the whole period, in this case 38 days, and efficiency is lowered accordingly. In the combat area three ship's officers were on duty in CIC and another at the visual control station during flight operations. One officer was on watch from 2100 until morning General Quarters. This system was arrived at after much experimentation and with due consideration of the requirements to be met.

2. Need for Zenith Radar Coverage: There is an immediate and urgent need of a zenith watcher to cover the area not now covered by either SG or SK radars in order to combat current Jap suicide attacks. It is recommended that this equipment have the following characteristics: It should have an antenna coverage from 15 degrees above the horizon to the zenith; which could be accomplished by using a rotating parabolic antenna with a manual tilt control similar to that on the ASG radar. The equipment should have a PPI type of presentation for simplicity, giving relative bearings, which would be more useful in case of attack from overhead than true bearings. Such an arrangement would enable the operator to read bearing and range directly from the PPI and elevation from the tilt indicator, reporting promptly directly to gunnery control and the visual fighter director. IFF information should also be available for maximum value. The equipment should have as great a range as possible, preferably at least 15 to 20 miles, so as to provide an overlap with the coverage provided by the SK. It is suggested that some modification of either the SQ or ASG radars would supply this important need for added air search coverage.

Comment: Several radars have been tested for use as a stop-gap zenith search pending development of the shipboard model. Tests conducted in the Hawaiian area indicate that SCR-720A surpasses AN/APS6 which was first used. As an interim installation selected fast carriers and CVEs will be outfitted with SCR-720A as units become available, attempting to supply at least one zenith radar to each task group.

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3. More Training in Use of Emergency Equipment: The pre-dawn ditching experience of an FM-2 pilot emphasizes the importance of frequent instruction and practice in ditching procedure and in operation and use of emergency equipment carried in aircraft. This pilot had trouble in the dark locating the lock pin lanyard of the CO2 bottle in the one man raft and determining how to pull it. He had previously been instructed and checked in this procedure both during training and after reporting to the squadron. His situation became acute as his back pack became water soaked and, although his life vest was fully inflated, reduced his buoyancy to the extent that the seas broke over his head continually. He was dangerously near exhaustion before he succeeded in inflating the raft. The need for including blindfold practice in ditching instruction and check-outs is indicated by this experience. It should also be noted that the weight of a water-soaked backpack may dangerously reduce the buoyancy of an individual in rough water.

Comment: The importance of frequent instruction and practice in ditching and use of emergency equipment cannot be over emphasized; however, it is a problem which may only be satisfactorily solved through the initiative of the squadrons and pilots involved. Adequate facilities have been established for instruction of flying personnel in emergency doctrine and use of aviation equipment during combat training. Aviation equipment officers are available at units upon which air groups are based ashore to assist, wherever possible in necessary indoctrination. It is considered that squadron training should be sufficiently extensive to enable personnel to operate all aviation equipment items while blind-folded.

REPORT OF CVE-87.

4. Target Area Specialization Recommended: The support aircraft system functions well in the post-Love day operations for which it has been established, but there appears the opportunity for improvement during pre-Love day work. In the Okinawa as well as Lingayen operations, it seems that a more effective and more thorough job could have been accomplished in the period prior to Love Day if Air Groups could have been assigned particular areas in which to operate regularly. Such a system would have the advantages of detailed advance target assignment and briefing, of cumulative familiarity with the area involved and its targets, and above all a more systematic reduction of actual targets involved. It would obviate the delay currently involved in target assignments and would insure more effective coverages of the various target areas. The employment of specially trained aviators, selected from experienced squadron and group commanders to act as Air Coordinators is considered to have excellent possibilities. It is felt that the duties of Air Coordinator are highly specialized and should be regarded as such and adequate training given. Such an Air Coordinator should be familiar with the latest target information based upon his own observation and upon intelligence and photo interpretation. He should be able to utilize support groups and strike missions more economically and effectively, reduce collision hazards, relieve delays, better evaluate targets and better assess damage.

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Comment: The flight leaders of all VC squadrons are given Air Coordinator training both on the west coast and in the Hawaiian area. The scope of this training is being increased to provide more training in picking out various types of structures, installations, etc. which may be camouflaged or otherwise hidden.



C. E. Ekstrom
By direction.

(2 May 1945)

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CV 3,4,6,9,10,11,12,13,14, 15,16,17,18,19,20,31,36,38,39	lea.	CNO (Op-16-V)	3
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