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SECRET

BEING THE LIVES, DEEDS AND HEROIC SAYINGS OF 10 426

FLEET AIR WING SEVENTEEN

AND HER SONS

15 SEPTEMBER 1943

30 SEPTEMBER 1945.

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SECRET



P R E A M B L E

This history of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen of Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, admittedly is not a complete and detailed glossary of the Wing's war effort. It was compiled under adverse conditions usually accompanying forward-area endeavors. Handicapped by a lack of personnel to devote full energy to the job of recording its history, the Wing also suffered from the disadvantage of not having been apprised early enough in the war that such a responsibility would fall to it. Many records, necessary for a minute recitation of the Wing's work, were lost or destroyed in the hustle-and-bustle of keeping pace with the fast-moving and farflung Pacific war. However, a bonafide effort to retrace Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's operations has been made, and this history is the result. It is hoped it might prove of some value to future historians and students of the recent hostilities.

Carroll B. Jones,  
Captain, U. S. Navy.

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SECRET

CHRONOLOGY

SECRET



FLEET AIR WING SEVENTEEN

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1943

15 September Fleet Air Wing Seventeen of Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, commissioned at Brisbane, Australia, with Commodore Thomas S. Combs, USN, Commanding. (Commodore Combs also was Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET).

Squadrons Attached

15 September Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Headquarters Squadron commissioned at Palm Island, Australia, with Lieutenant Commander G. S. Hodges, USNR, Commanding.

20 October Captain E. R. Peck, USN, reported at Samarai Island, New Guinea, as Deputy Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen.

3 December Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, transferred headquarters to Samarai.

1944

7 May Captain C. B. Jones, USN, relieved Captain Peck as Deputy Commander of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen.

3 July Captain Jones relieved Commodore Combs as Commander of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen.

9 July Rear Admiral Frank D. Wagner, USN, relieved Commodore Combs as Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET.

24 July Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Administration departed Naval Air Facility, Samarai.

27 July Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Administration arrived Seaplane Base, Lumbrum Point, Manus Island, The Admiralties.

7 September Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Administration departed Seaplane Base, Lumbrum Point, Manus and established headquarters at Seaplane Repair Base #2 at Woendi Island, Schouten Islands.

26 September Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Headquarters Squadron departed Seaplane Base, Lumbrum Point, Manus.

29 September Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Headquarters Squadron arrived Seaplane Repair Base #2, Woendi Island, Schouten Islands.

14 October Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen arrived Morotai Island, N. E. I.

19 October Heavy and medium landplanes commence operations from Morotai.

3 January Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen flew from Morotai to Leyte Gulf and based aboard the U.S.S. TANGIER.

4 January Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen assigned administrative functions of Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET.



20 January Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Headquarters Squadron dissolved at Woendi.

23 January Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen flew from Leyte to Lingayen Gulf and based aboard the U.S.S. CURRITUCK.

24 January Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, reassumed administrative functions taken over by Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen earlier in month.

27 January Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Staff arrived Lingayen and based aboard the U.S.S. TANGIER.

27 January Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen moves from U.S.S. CURRITUCK to U.S.S. TANGIER.

31 January Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen placed in command of all Naval Air Operations in Philippines north of 12=00 N.

5 February Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen and Staff based at Mangalden, Luzon, P.I.

8 February ACORN THIRTY FOUR arrived Dagupan, Lingayen Gulf, from the United States.

26 February Commander Fleet Air Wing Seventeen and Staff arrived Clark Field, Luzon, P.I.

2 March Aircraft under Fleet Air Wing Seventeen began flying searches from Clark Field.

1 May Commander H. M. Drake, USN, (70026), Fleet Air Wing Seventeen Operations Officer, missing in action on flight over Hainan Island.

30 August Fleet Air Wing Seventeen, with Captain Jones still commanding, became a unit under Commander Aircraft, Philippine Sea Frontier.

2 September Japanese Empire surrenders subject to provisions of Potsdam Declaration. Fleet Air Wing Seventeen continues regular searches.

30 September Fleet Air Wing Seventeen commissioned as a unit of the Fifth Fleet. Organization summarized above becomes Northern Group, Fleet Air Wing Ten. Captain C. B. Jones, USN, detached and Rear Admiral H. M. Martin, USN, assumes command Fleet Air Wing Seventeen in Tokyo area.



N-A-R-R-A-T-I-V-E

Fleet Air Wing Seventeen of Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, destroyed more than one-tenth of the Japanese merchant shipping blasted into oblivion during the 44 months of warfare in the Pacific.

The Japanese, themselves, admitted at the end of hostilities that 7,000,000-ton merchant fleet had been sent to the bottom, and Fleet Air Wing Seventeen claims destruction of 717,025 tons of that total.

Aircraft operating under Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's guidance sank or damaged 1,914 enemy merchant ships totaling 1,168,160 tons, helping cut the Jap's supply lines to the south and assisting in blockade operations in the waning days of the war.

Of these vessels, 966 totaling 717,025 tons were sunk definitely and 948 totaling 451,135 tons were damaged.

The Wing's aircraft also destroyed 173 enemy aircraft, sank 151 barges and destroyed a host of enemy targets such as blockhouses, warehouses, railroad yards and rolling stock and various military installations along the Jap-held China coast and outlying islands of the empire.

Commissioned 15 September 1943 in Brisbane, Australia, the Wing ated primarily to handle administrative duties for Aircraft H FLEET, and its first commander was Commodore Thomas S , USN, who at the same time was Commander Aircraft,



SEVENTH FLEET. But as the war wore on, Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's responsibilities increased and it assumed operational as well as administrative control of various patrol and bombing squadrons.

In keeping pace with General MacArthur's advance to the Philippines, the Wing moved its headquarters seven times, going from Brisbane to Samarai Island off the eastern tip of New Guinea; then to Lumbrum Point, Manus Island; Woendi Island near Biak; Morotai Island just north of Halmahera; Leyte Gulf, Mangalden in Lingayen Gulf, and finally Clark Field, Luzon.

The first operations demonstrated the astonishing effectiveness of the old-fashioned Catalinas in night attacks against enemy shipping. At the time the Japanese threat was very real. Strong forces were reported at the enemy naval bastion of Truk and at Rabaul. Over a one-month stretch in the waning days of 1943, the Cats damaged a Jap cruiser, three destroyers and a submarine, and probably sank two subs. They also sank or probably sank 35,000 tons of merchant shipping and damaged 19,000 more tons.

Besides this, they flew air alert and rescue missions, convoy coverage, night supply drops, special administrative and Army courier missions, radar counter-measure flights and evacuation flights. On five evacuation flights in the Sepik River, New Guinea area for example, the Cats carried out 219 Australian officers and men and 25,000 pounds of machine guns, radio equipment, and miscellaneous gear.

Group command of the Black Cats was started by Commander W. O. Gallery, USN, who personally conducted tactical experiments for improving night bombing, and helping to isolate Rabaul.

A plan to improve air-sea rescue was inaugurated during these days and proved popular with Army airmen operating in and around the Bismarck Sea area. Air-sea rescue procedure then was very simple. The Cats only left their base when a call for help was sounded. This plan was soon discarded, however, and two to four Catalinas were sent out to patrol areas where the Army was striking, and rescued Army pilots soon were singing the praises of the Black Cats.

Two weeks before the scheduled invasion of Finschhafen (30 October 1943), Commodore Combs and his chief staff officer, Captain Edwin L. Peck, USN, arrived at Samarai Island where a seaplane base designed to facilitate the Bismarck Sea searches had been under construction since July 1943. Captain Peck stayed at Samarai as Deputy Commander of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen.

The Japanese on their drive south never reached Samarai except when they passed by on their abortive attempt to capture Milne Bay, but the Australians had applied the "scorched earth" policy when they pulled out of there early in 1942. Hence when Company "A" of the 84th Naval Construction Battalion moved in, its four officers and 129 men practically had to start from scratch in building up the base. They patched up a wharf, built a sea-



plane ramp, and Samarai was a going concern by late October.

At this period Captain Peck established his headquarters on Samarai Island and placed the squadrons under the skippers of the two tenders at nearby Namoia Bay. Plans were being formulated to improve the methods of striking the enemy's vital supply line in the Bismarck Sea. The famous battle of the Bismarck Sea where the Army annihilated a convoy in those waters took place in November. The enemy then realized the impossibility of supplying their outposts by vulnerable daylight convoys and accordingly played into the hands of the Black Cats by making all their runs across the Bismarck Sea at night. The advantage of Samarai as a base then became apparent. The foresightedness of Commodore Combs and his staff resulted in a base, relatively close to the enemy, being ready at exactly the right time.

The way that the old, slow and obsolete Catalina was turned into an effective fighting machine deserves mention at this time.

All its disadvantages such as slow speed, lack of maneuverability, and altitude limitations were turned to advantages by using the Cat for masthead attacks at night.

Flame dampeners were installed and the hulls were painted a dull black.

The weight carrying ability of the old Cat was stretched to the limit here. Technical orders and other restrictions were jettisoned in favor of striking the enemy with maximum effort.

A good thumb rule for determining whether or not a plane would take off with the load imposed upon it was whether or not it would float after launching. If the planes floated with their heavy load, they could get into the air.

Various methods of attack on active enemy targets in the Bismarck Sea were experimented with at this time in order to develop the methods most acceptable to the pilots and most effective in destroying enemy shipping. Flares were used on several attacks, but were discarded on the unanimous recommendation of the pilots as they were blinding the pilots and bombers. Flares were used occasionally upon retirement after the attack to blind the gunners on the target ship. This did not prove very effective and often lighted the attacking plane and was eventually discarded all together. The method of attack eventually decided upon as most effective was to come in at low altitude with no illumination, pick up the target visually and attempt to pass over the target from bow to quarter or quarter to bow. Various loadings of bombs were used, and for the most part the pilots preferred four 500-pound bombs dropped in train with a spacing of about forty feet. All drops were made visually by seaman's eye from altitudes usually ranging from 150 to 50 feet. It was found advantageous to carry a load of parafrags which were tossed out through the tunnel hatch for the purpose of harassing the enemy gunners. This procedure was very effective in reducing the volume of fire from the enemy ships upon retirement. During the first attacks, the enemy made no attempts



to maneuver or change speed, apparently relying upon the cover of darkness to hide them completely. This made it very easy for the Cats since the wakes of the ships were plainly visible on the darkest nights. Soon, however, the enemy realized that darkness alone was not sufficient for them to avoid detection and attack. They then resorted to maneuvers, or, if the attacking planes were detected early enough, they stopped dead in the water in order to hide their wake. This ruse was also a failure since the Cats could make their original detection and the first part of their approach by use of radar. The antiquated radar in use at that time was not directionally accurate enough to make a bombing approach. However, the crews were able to maintain and direct the approach sufficiently accurate to require minor changes of course when the target was picked up visually. Also the enemy held their fire in order to avoid detection. Soon however, they learned by bitter experience that this was almost totally ineffective, so accordingly began firing at the attacking planes if they came close enough to become a menace. However, their fire except on bright moonlight nights was directed mostly by guess, since the Cats remained invisible to them, and was generally ineffective. Ordinarily the Cats strictly avoided using machine guns for strafing the targets since their best protection was their relative invisibility. However, strafing was resorted to on occasions where a ship was badly crippled and it was helped on its way to the bottom by pouring armor piercing and incendiary fifty calibers. It was found, however, that fixed

forward fire power would be of tremendous advantage under the many circumstances and was used against most enemy targets which were not worthy and profitable bombing targets. Lieutenant Lehodney of VP-52 got to work and designed an installation of four fixed .50 caliber in the bow. The muzzles projected through a steel plate which was situated forward of the bomb window. This installation worked exceedingly well and was very popular with the pilots.

Proof that the Cats were really hunting the enemy was evidenced by their attempts to stop the Cats before they could get into the Bismarck Sea. The Nips established lines of flak ships across the entrances to the Bismarck Sea at Dampier Strait and St. George's Channel as well as reinforcing the anti-aircraft batteries along the shore lines. It then became routine for the pilots making passage through those straits to fly through a flak barrage every night.

Also the Nips began to patrol their convoys with night fighters. These were annoying, but generally ineffective.

So far material and equipment have been discussed. However, it is obvious that material could not be effectively used against the enemy without the skill, bravery and determination of the flying personnel. Bad weather was always encountered during some part of every flight. Dampier Strait, St. George's Channel and New Britain Island were usually covered by low clouds. Rain prevailed in the Straits which were usually negotiated entirely by use of radar. It was not unusual for pilots to spend three-fourths of their over-night flights on instruments.



At that time Captain Peck had under his administrative command two patrol squadrons (representing 12 PBY-5 aircraft and about 60 officers and 250 enlisted men), two small seaplane tenders and Headquarters Squadron 17, stationed at Palm Island, where major overhaul and maintenance work was handled.

In mid-November, Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, USN, relieved Vice Admiral Arthur S. Carpenter, USN, as Commander, SEVENTH FLEET, and Captain Peck flew to headquarters at Brisbane to confer on future operations, especially in connection with projected landings at Arawe and Cape Gloucester, scheduled for December 15th and 26th. These landings would secure the eastern defenses of the gateway to the Bismarck Sea.

Commodore Combs transferred Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, headquarters to Samarai, and Captain Peck relieved Commander Gallery from operational control of all squadrons.

The seat of operations of the Black Cat Task Group was changed from the tenders, U.S.S. HALF MOON, U.S.S. HERON and U.S.S. SAN PABLO, to Samarai Island the last of December. The Naval Air Facility at Namoai Bay, New Guinea, was employed as an auxiliary base and to accomodate excess personnel from Samarai.

The recreation problem for men cooped up on Samarai was solved by handball and softball. The squadrons put into effect their own rotation program, sending tired crews to Perth, Australia for rest and training. Captain Peck also approved a similar plan which allowed two per cent of Headquarters Squadron 17 to be at Brisbane for week-long rest periods.

Air-sea rescue and armed reconnaissance patrols continued throughout January, Squadron 52 flying the rescue patrols and Squadron 34, fresh from a rest at Perth, dealing out the punishment. Meanwhile VP-11's officers and men relaxed and trained at Palm Island.

At least 11 officers and men from Army bombers and transports were snatched out of the sea from under the very noses of the Japs during January, and 43,500 tons of shipping were destroyed in low-level night attacks.

Late in January, the tender, U.S.S. SAN PABLO, ran into some spirited action in the Langemak Bay, New Guinea, area. The U.S.S. SAN PABLO was sent into the area for refueling duty and at the request of the Advanced Echelon, Fifth Air Force, which was operating a new air base at Nadzab.

The tender underwent 20 alerts. Enemy aircraft dropped bombs in the vicinity on two occasions, but though nearby activities suffered, the U.S.S. SAN PABLO came through unscathed.

Although three Cat squadrons and three tenders were operating under Fleet Air Wing Seventeen, the deputy commander's staff at the time consisted only of three officers. These were : Captain Peck, the deputy commander; Lieutenant Robert Z. Collings, MC, USN, the medical officer, and Lieutenant Commander F. M. Nichols, USN, the operations officer; additional personnel being borrowed from Headquarters Squadron as necessary. "Captain Nick", as the operations officer was familiarly known, was one of the most colorful figures to appear in the Wing's history. He came to the



Wing after a tour of duty as squadron commander of VP-52.

Already ready to meet all comers in any game known to man, "Captain Nick" was a favorite with the personnel of the Samarai base.

Early in 1944, the Army had completed plans for occupying the Admiralty Islands, beginning with seizure of Los Negros late in February. The enemy had two air strips there which could be utilized for Army strikes against Palau and Dutch New Guinea and for expanding Naval land-based searches. Consequently, the Catalina night reconnaissances of the Bismarck Sea and the Admiralties grew in importance.

Squadron 34 handled this assignment until mid-February when relieved by Patrol Squadron 33, recently transferred from Perth. Enemy barge traffic was most hard hit during this period, but two attacks are especially illustrative of the great work the Cats were doing.

One pilot sighted an enemy merchant vessel, a midget sub and five small boats laden with troops and proceeding under cover of darkness. He went roaring in to attack at masthead-level with four 500-pound general purpose bombs, 30 fragmentation bombs and 1700 rounds of strafing. All the vessels were sunk excepting the submarine which disappeared.

Another pilot spotted a 10,000-ton tanker escorted by two destroyers. Two 100-pound bombs hit square on the tanker. It burst into flames, beached and was listed as destroyed.

After being relieved in mid-February, Squadron 34 remained based at the tender in Langemak Bay, flying mostly air-sea rescue patrols. Although the sleep of pilots and men of the squadron was interrupted nearly every night by the call to general quarters, the squadron carried on, turning in some remarkable rescue efforts.

Braving continuous fire from enemy shore batteries, Lt. (jg) Nathan G. Gordon, USNR, made four landings near the beach at North Cape in Kavieng Harbor and rescued 15 Army airmen shot down by Nip anti-aircraft. The War Diary of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen described this action of 15 February 1944 as one of the most outstanding operations ever carried out by Catalinas.

But rescue work wasn't all the Black Cat pilots were doing. Lieutenant J. F. Merritt, USNR, landed six Army Rangers at the south end of Momote strip on Los Negros on 27 February. The following day another Cat piloted by Lieutenant (jg) W. O. Pierce, USNR, swooped down, picked them up and roared away in a safe getaway from under the noses of the Nips.

Meanwhile, Commodore Combs and Captain Peck held forth in the "Governor's Mansion", a big white house at the top of a hill on Samarai. As Naval Task Force and Naval Task Group Commanders, respectively, they were in charge of Catalina operations. But Captain Peck directed much of his efforts toward keeping the squadrons at a high maintenance standard, ironing out especially administrative kinks in the maintenance setup.



The occupation of the Admiralties didn't alter, to a material degree, the Cat squadron assignments until late March. All then, Squadron 34 continued to fly mostly air-sea rescue missions from Langemak Bay with Squadron 33 handling the Black Catting out of Samarai.

Landing at Talasea, New Britain, late in the evening of 9 March, Lieutenant Commander T. A. Christopher, USN, picked up 14 wounded Marines less than a mile from Jap lines and returned them to Langemak Bay for hospitalization and treatment. He had to take off at night in the open sea to accomplish the mission.

Two nights later, Lieutenant Commander Christopher landed near Wakeo Island in the Schouten Group to rescue one officer and four men from a PT boat (No. 337) lost in action at Hansa Bay, New Guinea, 6 March.

Squadron 33's principal job was conducting night searches for enemy task forces that might jeopardize our forces recently landed in the Admiralty Islands, but it also got in some hard hits against barges on the Rabaul run, and at the end of March Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's records showed 151 Jap barges destroyed (See destruction figures in appendix).

Shore targets were not neglected either. One Cat dropped a pair of 1000-pounders on an ammunition and fuel dump at Tadjil and set a blaze visible for 60 miles.

Early in March, Lieutenant Commander Isaac J. Heizer, USNR, took command of Headquarters Squadron 17, thereby relieving Lieutenant Commander Hodges who had been selected to supervise setting up

a new seaplane repair base at Lumbrum Point, on the south shore of Seeadler Harbor in the Admiralties.

As our troops went ashore on Manus Island 15 March, Captain Peck journeyed to Nadzab for three days of conferences with officers of the Advanced Echelon, Fifth Air Force, regarding future operations of Navy search planes.

Among the topics of conversation was the scheduled operation of a Navy Liberator squadron at Nadzab, and Liberators of Patrol Bombing Squadron 106, the first Navy land-based patrol bombers to operate in the Southwest Pacific area, began flying from there March 25th.

By that time the pacification of Seeadler Harbor was far enough along to allow Commodore Combs to start working under a new operations plan. At Seeadler, the Commodore transferred his flag to the U.S.S. SAN PABLO and assumed direct operational control of all seaplanes. At the same time Captain Peck was relieved from operational control at Samarai, and ordered to Nadzab on temporary duty as Naval Liaison Officer with General George C. Kenney, Commander Allied Forces, who had operational control of Squadron 106's Liberators.

Squadron 52, resting at Palm Island, joined Squadron 33 at Seeadler to help fill the new Naval Air commitment -- flying 500-mile daylight sector searches between 320 and 030 degrees. Besides this, the Cats also supported Task Force 58's attacks on Palau with four consecutive diversionary strikes on Woleai in the



Carolines during the final week of March. Adding to the hazards presented under such a program were enemy snipers at Seeadler who blazed away at the Cats as they came in for landings and while they were secured to their moorings.

At this time the U.S.S. TANGIER, a large seaplane tender, reported at Milne Bay, New Guinea, and was placed under the Wing's administrative control before moving forward to Seeadler Harbor at the month's end, becoming Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, flagship.

In April, Commodore Combs again assumed active duties as Task Group Commander and guided the searches from the Admiralties, under operational control then of the 13th Air Force. Squadron 34 came forward from Langemak Bay to fly rescue missions for Army strikes in the Biak area. The Cats also conducted special searches in conjunction with the simultaneous landings at Hollandia, Aitape and Tanahmura Bay on the 22nd of April.

When Squadron 106's Liberators left Nadzab for Los Negros 11 April, Captain Peck was relieved from temporary duty at Nadzab and returned to the Wing's Samarai base. Ten days later Commander Carroll B. Jones, USN, (soon to be promoted to Captain) reported as relief for the Deputy Commander of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen.

Captain Peck and Captain Jones flew to Seeadler Harbor to report to Commodore Combs preparatory to the change of command. During five days there and at Hollandia, Captain Jones studied the operations of Navy search planes and inspected the seaplane base at Lumbrum Point to which Fleet Air Wing Seventeen was to be transferred in a few months.



Both officers returned to Samarai 7 May and Captain Jones, who won the Navy Cross and the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary heroism in leading his squadron against the enemy in the Aleutians campaign, relieved Captain Peck as Deputy Commander of the Wing.

During March, April and May, the Wing's toll of enemy shipping had declined as the Cats were occupied mostly with rescue work and special missions. However, with the advent of the Liberator daylight searches, the bag of enemy aircraft leaped considerably. In April, Squadrons under the Wing destroyed 14 Jap planes; they added 11 more in May.

Search operations from the Admiralties were expanded meanwhile. Liberators of Squadron 106 began flying from Momote strip, Los Negros, 12 April, and sectors ranging as far as Palau and Ulithi were flown with machine-like regularity until June. It was during this period that the bag of enemy planes soared upward.

Catalinas during May still were out front in the advance westward along the coast of New Guinea. By mid-month, the Cats were operating from the tenders, U.S.S. HALF MOON and U.S.S. ORCA, at Hollandia, doing air-sea rescue work and searching for Jap shipping.

Besides their nightly prowling, the Cats also spotted for friendly Task Forces supporting the Wakde Island landing 17 May and the Biak invasion 10 days later.

With Wakde secured, a strip soon was ready for the Navy Liberators, and on the 26th of May, six Libs of Squadron 106 flew



in from Los Negros and started flying three daily searches deep into enemy-held territory to the west. The searches reached to Halmahera, passed the northern shore of Morotai Island and touched as far as the Talaud Islands.

Replacing the six planes of Squadron 106, which had moved to Wakde, half a dozen Liberators of Squadron 115 flew to Los Negros from Green Island. Other elements of Squadron 115 soon went forward to Wakde to aid in the long-distance searching, and by the month's end, Squadron 115 was handling all searches from there.

From Wakde, Squadron 115 sent the first Allied plane to fly over the Philippines since the islands' complete occupation by the Nips in 1942.

Meanwhile, Liberator Squadron 101 had relieved Squadron 106 at Los Negros, and Squadron 106's officers and men went back to the United States for a well-earned rest.

At Samarai, Captain Jones moved to increase the efficiency of the scattered units under his administrative control. Importance of efficient communications and maintenance was stressed. Patsus 17-1, 17-2, and 17-3 were formed from the maintenance personnel of Hedron for greater flexibility and more efficient administration.

The Allied leap-frogging had progressed so far in May it was decided to abandon a plan to set up an intermediate seaplane repair base at Hollandia, and instead to create Seaplane Repair Base #2 further forward in the Biak area at Woendi Island. The tender, U.S.S. HERON, began "rolling up" the seaplane base at Palm Island

and prepared to move to Woendi.

Personnel and equipment of Headquarters Squadron 17 were put ashore temporarily at Samarai, and a skeleton force was left behind to finish the "roll up". Headquarters Squadron 17 expanded facilities at Samarai to permit maintenance and repair of the Wing's Catalinas.

During June, the number of units under the administrative orbit of the Wing continued to increase. PATSU 1-12 reported 5 June to service seaplanes aboard the U.S.S. TANGIER at Seeadler Harbor. Nine days later the first contingent of Venturas, Patrol Bombing Squadron 146, arrived with its service unit, PATSU 1-8. They were based at Pityilu Island, one of the islands forming Seeadler Harbor. Soon afterward the tender, U.S.S. WRIGHT, anchored in Seeadler.

Squadron 146 immediately went to work, flying anti-submarine reconnaissance and daylight sector searches.

With Commodore Combs due to return to the United States under the rotation program, Captain Jones flew from Samarai to Seeadler for conferences and an inspection of the base nearing completion of Lumbrum Point.

On 3 July, Captain Jones relieved Commodore Combs as Commander of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen.

Six days later, Rear Admiral Frank D. Wagner, USN, relieved Commodore Combs as Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, with flag aboard the U.S.S. TANGIER.



When Admiral Wagner assumed command, Search Plan BAKER (see appendix) was in effect. Another sector had been added to the original three being flown from Wakde. The program of four Liberator searches out of Los Negros remained constant, but a sixth sector was added to the 500-mile Catalina searches fanning out northward from Seeadler. These sectors' right flank was protected by four Ventura searches out of Emirau Island, and the Cat searches north from Green Island were reduced to two. Besides these patrols, Cats of Squadrons 52 and 33 flew Black Cat and air-sea rescue missions out of Hollandia.

Samarai, in the meantime, was becoming far removed from the scenes of operations, and the Wing prepared to move up.

Under the Wing at this time were: Squadrons VP-101 at Los Negros, 115 at Wakde, 146 at Pityilu, 11 at Samarai, 33 at Hollandia, 34 at Seeadler, 52 at Hollandia and VP-101 (seaplanes) at Samarai, Green and Emirau Islands; the tenders, U.S.S. TANGIER at Seeadler, U.S.S. WRIGHT at Hollandia, U.S.S. SAN PABLO at Sydney, Australia, U.S.S. HALF MOON, U.S.S. ORCA and U.S.S. HERON all at Hollandia; PATSU's 1-2 at Los Negros, 1-8 at Pityilu, PATSU 1-12 at Seeadler, 17-1, 17-2 and 17-3 aboard the tenders; Naval Air Facilities at Palm Island, Samarai, Lumbrum Point and Woendi; two Landing Craft Tanks and five AVR's.

The Army had overrun Biak and was engaged in mopping up operations on Noemfoor Island, west of Biak. Owi, a small island just off the east coast of Biak was found suitable for a heavy bomber strip, and on the 15th of July, Navy Liberators of Squadron

115 discontinued operating from Wakde, and began flying from Owí. These missions were carried out under Search Plan CHARLIE under the Fifth Air Force.

The move to Owí represented a long step forward. Liberators now skirted the eastern approaches to Halmahera, Morotai and the northeastern tip of the Celebes, patrolling the straits between Halmahera and the Celebes. They also covered Davao Gulf and the eastern approaches to Mindanao in the Philippines.

There was little alteration meantime in the search programs from the Admiralties, Emirau and Green Islands. Squadron 52 moved to Woendi 17 July to fly air-sea rescue for the Fifth Air Force's planes operating from Owí. The Naval Air Facility at Woendi had not been completed then so Squadron 52 based aboard the U.S.S. WRIGHT.

Admiral Wagner effected a new operations plan on the 20th of July, and Captain Jones assumed operational as well as administrative control of all Naval aircraft in the Admiralties, under direction of the 13th Air Force.

The Wing Staff, now grown to nine officers, left Samarai 24 July and went ashore three days later at Lumbrum Point. Headquarters Squadron 17 joined the staff soon after.

Taking advantage of comparative "summer lull" in action during June, July and August, the Wing staff was built up for the more important operations in the not too distant future. By the end of July, the Wing had 16 officers listed on its roster. The chief problem was keeping in the air the old Catalinas which had been paying such amazing dividends.



But when General MacArthur's forces occupied Sansapor, Dutch New Guinea, on the 30th of July, Fleet Air Wing Seventeen was ready for the more important work it might be called upon to perform in the narrowing drive on the Philippines.

The "lull" continued through the first half of August. The two Cat squadrons at Lumbrum Point found the pickings rather slim, and most sectors covered by land-based planes were uniformly negative in keeping with the transfer of the fighting westward. From Biak, however, both land-based aircraft and the Black Cats found some good hunting and helped boost the total of ships sunk during the month to 19, totaling 19,015 tons.

Search Plan EASY became effective 19 August, necessitating a further rearrangement of Naval aircraft. Liberator searches from Los Negros were discontinued, and Squadron 101's Libs moved 750 miles west to Owi to join Squadron 115. Owi searches were increased from five to ten daily.

Black Cats of Squadrons 34 and 11 continued to lead the forward drive, flying night search and attack missions off tenders anchored at Middleburg Island near Sansapor -- the most exposed position in the Southwest Pacific at the time.

Sectors from Green Island were discontinued, but one Ventura search a day was inaugurated to safeguard Hollandia area shipping from submarine attack. Four 500-mile sectors continued to be flown from the Admiralties by Venturas of VPB-146.

The 10 Liberator searches from Owi now covered a quadrant from the north coast of the Celebes to the waters east of Palau, including within an 800-mile radius northern Halmahera, Talaud Islands, Davao Gulf and Palau.

The Wing Staff departed the Admiralties for Woendi, taking up quarters at Seaplane Repair Base No. 2, September 7th.

Captain Jones preceded his staff by several days to confer with Admiral Wagner, whose flagship was anchored at Woendi, regarding changes in plans brought about as a result of the scheduled landings on Morotai and the Palau group. These invasions were set for 15 September.

Headquarters Squadron 17 followed the Wing to Woendi at the end of the month.

Woendi was a much more comfortable spot than Lumbrum Point, thanks to a plentitude of shade trees and an obliging breeze from the sea. It rained frequently, but there was no mud. It was uninhabited by natives reportedly because of an ancient burial ground there. On the island were a seaplane base, a PT boat base, a hospital, a Naval Operating Base, three officer's clubs, two movies, tennis courts and baseball diamonds.

The comparative "lull" which had prevailed during June, July and August was over, and the Navy patrol-bomber pilots carved out a record-breaking month for themselves during September. They sank 117 ships totaling 111,040 tons and damaged 55 totaling 56,370 tons.



Dealing out most of the destruction were the Liberator Squadrons 101 and 115 flying from Owi, and the Black Cats of VP-33 operating from tenders off Morotai.

After the Morotai landings, Admiral Wagner sailed his flagship to Morotai to be closer to the scene of operations. Captain Jones, with headquarters at Woendi, assumed operational control of the Liberator squadrons at Owi.

Most of the Japanese shipping destroyed during the banner month of September was blasted out of existence by masthead-level tactics at which the pilots of the big four-engined Liberators and the ponderous Catalinas were becoming so adept.

But some of the pilots were becoming a little too "eager". Lieutenant Merritt, executive officer of Squadron 33, returned from a mission with a section of the mast of a ship he had sunk still imbedded in the Cats wing.

This prompted Captain Jones to pen a jovial warning (see appendix) to the Lieutenant, advising against "ramming of ships by aircraft".

However, this didn't deter the Cats of Squadron 33, and they continued to exact an unbelievable toll of enemy shipping. On 33 consecutive nights, beginning on the 19th of September, they sank 103,500 tons of Nip shipping.

High spot of the period occurred October 3rd when Lieutenant (jg) W. B. Sumpter, ignoring heavy anti-aircraft fire from escorting vessels, dropped his entire bomb load on a Katori class light cruiser and watched it sink.

As operations moved closer and closer to the Philippines, the seaplane maintenance and repair bases at Palm Island and Samarai were decommissioned, and by September most of the minor overhaul work on the seaplanes was being handled at Woendi. Lumbrum Point took over major overhaul duties.

In October, detachments of PATSU's 1-8 and 1-2 moved into Morotai and began building a camp for the Navy search units which were scheduled to start operating from the Pitoe strip nearing completion.

After the unopposed landing on Morotai, the invading troops fenced off the south end of the island with a line of bunkers and allotted that space to the 13th Air Force and Navy search planes. The spot given to the Navy was less than 500 yards from the perimeter. Personnel lived in tents, and roads were practically impassable until main bodies of the PATSU units arrived from Owi October 10th and began setting up a more permanent camp.

The invasion of the Philippines was set for 20 October. Captain Jones insisted that the place for a Wing Commander was with the most forward and most important search group. He accordingly departed for Morotai on 12 October to prepare for the arrival of the land based squadrons and to assume direct operational control on commencement of operations.

Search Plan FOX became effective 19 October, calling for the Navy to fly from Morotai nine sectors covering Palawan and the Sulu Sea from the northern tip of Borneo to about 60 miles from Mindoro; one sector east of the Philippines to 15 degrees north, and



a dog-leg sector along the northern coast of the Celebes and south in Makassar Strait as far as Balikpapan. Four intervening sectors fell to the Venturas. However, Search Plan FOX was revised immediately upon its commencement. The Owi searches were reduced and the Morotai searches increased to provide two new sectors covering the Philippines to Mindoro Strait and the Sibyan Sea.

On the 21st sections 1, 2 and 3 were extended to 1000 miles and sector 3 was flown by two planes. In spite of these precautions early contacts with the Japanese fleet on its way to the battles of Surigao Strait and Leyte Gulf were missed.

Sector 1 was shot down by fighters on the 22nd in the vicinity of Balbac Straits, the day that the Japanese Fleet sortied from Brunei Bay.

The "San Bernardino Force" transited the areas covered by sectors 2 and 3 during the night and should have been contacted the next morning by sector Xray. Contact was prevented by the Japs combat air patrol over this force which intercepted sector Xray, shot out one engine and drove him to cloud cover.

The doubled up sector 3 contacted the "Surigao Force" (which had transited Balabac Straits in the afternoon of the 22nd and run across the Sulu Sea toward Mindanao Straits during the night) but was unable to get his contact through due to a congested circuit. He accordingly tracked this force until forced to return due to low fuel. Before leaving he had the pleasure of seeing the enemy being attacked by our carrier aircraft. It was later discovered that the contact and amplifying reports sent by sector 3 had been intercepted

by some station and rebroadcast on another circuit. Whether this report resulted in the carrier plane attack is not known. The other plane in sector 3 contacted a force of cruisers and destroyers in the north Sulu Sea. He too was unable to get his contact through. This force was probably a part of the "San Bernardino Force".

Numerous contacts with the remnants of the Japanese fleet were made in the next two days and they were eventually tracked to Brunei Bay where they were abortively attacked by B-24's of the 13th Air Force. It was considered highly probable that the retreating Japanese fleet would stop at Coron Bay in the Calamian Group for refueling. However, day and night observation of Coron Bay failed to reveal more than two destroyers there at any time. The war in the air, like sea and ground fighting, produces weird experiences that usually are hard to believe. An incident of this nature occurred in Wing history on 19 October, the first day of searching from Morotai.

Commander J. A. Miller, USN, Commanding Officer of Squadron 101, failed to return from a patrol over Palawan. The following day, the pilot in Commander Miller's sector couldn't find any trace of the Commander or his crew, but he did shoot down a twin-engined Jap bomber which crashed in flames on the shore of tiny Ramesamey Island. Not until weeks later when Commander Miller and crew had been rescued did the amazing facts come to light.

With characteristic daring, Commander Miller had destroyed shipping and planes in a raid over Puerto Princessa, Palawan, but was shot down by automatic weapon fire.

Three enlisted men lost their lives in the crash. After



several hours in the water, the survivors made their way to the beach on Ramesamey.

Next day they tried vainly to signal to a patrolling Navy Liberator, and watched the Lib shoot down the twin-engine Nip bomber. The Jap bomber crashed near Commander Miller and party on the beach, killing another man and wounding other survivors.

One of the Jap bomber's motors rolled up the beach and over the leg of Lieutenant Read of Commander Miller's crew. A lone Nip survivor came out of the bomber wreckage, apparently unhurt. Brandishing a knife in either hand, the Nip started for the helpless crew, all now disabled, but changed his mind when the Lieutenant rose and threatened him with a coconut in each hand. When last seen, the Nip survivor was out at sea clinging to some wreckage.

After more adventures with Palawan guerrillas lending valuable assistance, Commander Miller and crew were rescued and returned to Morotai by submarine shortly before Christmas.

When Captain Jones moved up to Morotai, the only Wing officer to accompany him was Lieutenant B. L. Davis, USNR, whose job it was to ~~go~~ as communication liaison officer with Army Air Forces present, the Army being responsible for Navy communications at Morotai. Transportation difficulties and other commitments prevented moving the Wing communication equipment to Morotai and its absence was sorely felt. Captain Jones sent out the first daily summary of operations from Morotai on 19 October. Except for these daily dispatches the

18 other officers of the Wing at Woendi knew nothing of the constant strain of enemy bombing and night ground attacks.

Back at Woendi, Commander Nichols acted as head of Wing administration until an attack of gall stones forced him to relinquish the command. He was relieved by Commander Allan W. Ames, USNR, a Navy pilot in World War I.

The U.S.S. SAN PABLO left Woendi for Morotai early in October to continue anti-submarine operations. Anti-sub flights also were flown from Woendi under direction of the Wing.

In mid-October, planes of Squadrons 33 and 34 began arriving at Woendi to await the call forward to the Philippines. Night and day PATSU mechanics worked over the seaplanes on the ramp. Experts briefed pilots on survival in the Philippines, and at dawn 23 October, elements of both squadrons flew to Leyte Gulf where they were transferred to the jurisdiction of Fleet Air Wing Ten.

Two days later, the officers and men of Squadrons 33 and 34 witnessed the Naval engagement in Surigayo Strait from a tender anchored almost directly in the line of fire.

Four days later the Battle of Leyte Gulf, four escort aircraft carriers of Rear Admiral Sprague's original group of six limped into Woendi Lagoon after having stood off the Jap fleet off Leyte Gulf. All beer in Woendi's three clubs was free to the carrier personnel that night.

From time to time Catalinas flew down to Woendi for repair, or flew from Woendi to replace many Cats destroyed by a typhoon in Leyte Gulf 28 October. A week later, the first Mariners of Patrol



Bombing Squadron 30 stopped at Woendi on their way to Leyte to start flying searches east of Luzon November 5th.

Although their primary mission was to sight and report shipping, the Navy Liberators, operating in new territory, accounted for a fair share of enemy shipping. In the last 12 days of October, they sank 30,400 tons of shipping and damaged 11,900 tons. They also shot down 26 enemy aircraft to boost the Wing's total for October to 38.

The cost was heavy, however. Three Venturas and six Liberators were lost on patrols, while four other Liberators were destroyed on the Morotai strip by enemy bombing raids.

In these days, the Japs bombed Morotai regularly. Throughout the night alerts sounded, and pilots and ground personnel ducked into fox holes. Wing officers, arriving by two's and three's from Woendi, caught the share of these alerts. The Japs were usually expert enough not to miss their target -- the bomber strip, a quarter of a mile from the Navy camp. But continued lack of sleep bothered both squadron and wing personnel.

Another source of anxiety and danger was the proximity of Japanese ground forces. Almost continuously bursts of rifle, machine gun and mortar fire could be heard on the perimeter. One night the Japs infiltrated as far as the ammunition dump just west of and adjoining the Navy camp. The Seaman Guard was doubled and jeeps were parked with headlights ready to shine on the jungle's edge.

Nothing of a serious nature happened. But the danger was ever present. The Japs frequently broke into supply stores and as

late as December it became necessary again to double the guard around the camp. Souvenirs and trophies in the hands of visiting infantrymen indicated not all the firing heard on the perimeter had been designed to frighten off the enemy.

Snakes of the python variety were another unpleasantness. It was too often common practice to dispute ownership of a foxhole with a snake during an air-raid. Falling trees were a constant menace. Many tents were flattened by them and one evening a tall mahogany tree crushed the Wing administration tent, narrowly missing two enlisted men and reducing the home-made office furniture to kindling.

Soon after the Navy had insured control of Leyte Gulf, Search Plan FOX was again revised 5 November. Five sectors now could be covered by Fleet Air Wing Ten's Mariners flying north from Leyte 600 miles to Batan Islands between Luzon and Formosa, thereby allowing our sector covering the Philippines' east coast to be cancelled. Liberator searches from Owi were discontinued. That area could be covered more readily from a new strip at Pelilieu Island, Palau.

Under this plan Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's land-based squadrons at Morotai sank during November 28,800 tons of shipping, damaged 46,350 tons and destroyed 16 Nip aircraft. This was a tremendous let-down from the record-breaking months of September and October, but the occupation of Leyte had constricted enemy shipping to an extent that left the targets fewer and not so fat.



Late in November Squadrons 115 and 146 went home for well-earned rests. Patrol Bombing Squadron 104, relieved Squadron 115, and Squadron 137 relieved Squadron 146.

Patrol Bombing Squadron 71, consisting of 10 PBY-5A's, arrived on Thanksgiving for Black Cat work. Their missions carried them to well-defended Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelego, Borneo and the Celebes. In addition, two planes and crews were loaned to the Army Second Emergency Rescue Squadron, flying rescue missions, covering strikes over the Philippines, evacuating survivors and reconnoitering parties from the enemy-held coastal area and searching for survivors at sea.

These flights were unique inasmuch as one Army and one Navy pilots were at the controls and the remainder of the crews was equally divided with Army and Navy personnel. The experiment worked with scarcely a hitch.

This was the typical of the close cooperation and harmony the Army and Navy achieved on Morotai.

The Commander of the Fleet Air Wing Seventeen held daily conferences with the Commanding General of the Thirteenth Air Force, and sat in on the daily briefing in order to obtain a complete overall picture of developments and to discuss any possible changes in the next day's Navy search operations. This information Captain Jones passed on to his division officers at Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's daily sessions.

Wing headquarters was moved from a tent to a building almost large enough to house the staff. The building seemed always crowded, but the work was done despite the hub-bub of personnel. In one end of the administration building, pilots off duty perused intelligence reports, studied charts and other information posted on the wall. In-flight sighting reports droned into operations continually. The aerology division carried on as best it could on a small table in the corner. In another room some 20 radiomen and six communications officers struggled with the traffic, no longer dependent upon the Army for anything except daily news reports.

All responsibility for operations at Woendi was turned over in November to Headquarters Squadron 17. The principal duty was anti-submarine patrol handled by two planes daily, one flying daylight and the other night patrols.

An air strip at Tacloban, Leyte, was ready to accommodate Liberators at the beginning of December so Search Plan FOX was modified again by the inauguration of six searches fanning out westward into the China Sea and north along western Luzon to Lingayen Gulf and on to 19-00 North. This called for some reduction of Morotai-based searches, but a new and important sector was added: a dog-leg taking in the northwest coast of Borneo to Brunei Bay. To handle the Tacloban searches, Squadron 104 moved up to Leyte. Squadrons 101 and 137 covered the Morotai sectors. At the end of the month, Squadron 130 relieved 137.

The hunt for enemy shipping from Morotai became less rewarding. The Japs were forsaking the old trade routes and staying



closer to the Asiatic coast, moving mostly at night and hiding under camouflage during the day. But the stories of returning pilots were packed with action. So much so that to repeat them all here would become monotonous. A couple picked at random will serve, however, to show the varied experiences and the depth of Navy air penetration into Jap territory in December of 1944.

On December 3rd, Lieutenant Commander Whitney Wright, USN, skipper of Squadron 104, spotted a 400-ton SUGAR CHARLIE just outside the harbor at Balikpapan. He zoomed in at less than 50 feet and dropped three 100-pound bombs under the vessel's stern. Then he turned to make a strafing run, but didn't have time. The bombs exploded and the ship sank before he could get another pass at her. A little later he spotted a 1500-ton SUGAR BAKER. Roaring in at masthead-level, Lieutenant Commander Wright scored a straddle with a pair of centuries. On a second run on the vessel he scored a direct hit with a 500-pounder and she exploded, the blast sending flames 1500 feet into the air.

Later on, he encountered an armed Patrol Craft and went in after her at low level. He aimed his last bomb, a 500-pounder, at her, but anti-aircraft fire from the Patrol Craft forced Lieutenant Commander Wright to jink and the bomb over-shot the target about 50 feet. Turning quickly, the Liberator made a strafing pass over the enemy vessel and started a fire around the deck house. It was soon extinguished, but some damage was inflicted.

A few days later, Lieutenant (jg) Joseph D. Shea, USNR,

of Squadron 104, bombed and strafed numerous targets around Brunei Bay. He destroyed a steamroller and an airstrip being near Brunei town and also damaged a truck. Circling south, he came upon a motor convoy loaded with troops and gave them a sound strafing. Results were unobserved as the trucks ducked under some trees. Flying over the harbor, he made three bombing and strafing runs on shipping, setting a 1500-ton SUGAR CHARLIE afire and damaging a 300-ton SUGAR DOG and six 50-foot luggers. One lugger and river boat were sunk, and a large warehouse along shore was left burning furiously.

Ack-ack from ships and shore batteries put a lot of holes in the Liberator during these actions, and one burst punctured the gas line from the main wing cell. Dangerous fumes filled the plane and bomb bays were opened to freshen the air. Two crewmen, Otto A. Adams, Aviation Machinist's Mate, third class, and William E. Abbott, Aviation Machinist's Mate, third class, scurried to the bomb bay to check damage.

They found gasoline pouring from a severed hose connection between the No. 2 tank and the No.2 selector valve. Abbott attempted to transfer gas from the No. 2 to the No. 3 tank by holding the hose together with his hands. A third enlisted man tried to help out but was nearly overcome by fumes. But Abbott and Adams stuck to it, transferring fuel until Abbott was overcome and slipped off the cat walk.

Adams grabbed Abbott's legs and held on for a minute of agony, then slipping into unconsciousness, himself, and Abbott fell through the bomb bay doors to his death. Adams was dragged to safety by a fellow crew member.



It was discovered later that these two men had managed to save 100 gallons of fuel. And when the plane landed at Morotai, it had but 90 gallons of fuel left.

Another occasion demonstrates what tough adversaries the Liberators were becoming for intercepting Jap fighter planes. Lieutenant Henry S. Noon, USNR, also of Squadron 104, spotted three Nip destroyers in Balikpapan harbor and was going in for a look and maybe a raid. Suddenly, however, he found five Jap fighters on his tail and six more dead ahead of him.

Lieutenant Noon whirled his big four-engine bomber around quickly, heading straight for the Nips on his tail. This maneuver bewildered the enemy temporarily and helped the Liberator out of a tight spot. But the battle wasn't over yet. It ensued for 55 more minutes with the Liberator shooting down one enemy plane and probably getting two more. The Nips ran out of gas and had to break off the attack, but not before they'd put holes in all four of the Liberator's propellers, the No. 2 engine, the bombardier's compartment and the tail and after station. Lieutenant Noon brought his ship back safely, though, and only one man was slightly wounded in the affray.

In December, the Wing got a new operations officer, Commander H. M. Drake, USN, relieving Commander Ames, the Wing Executive Officer.

Search Plan GEORGE became effective 23 December, transferring the focal point of searches from Morotai to Leyte. Liberators and Venturas still flew from Morotai, but the Libs covered only two sectors reaching to north Borneo and the Venturas flew three including a dog-leg down Makassar Strait. Liberators under Fleet Air Wing Ten

flow 10 sectors out of Tacloban, covering the South China Sea from the region of Saigon, Indo-China, on the south all the way to Kiirun, northern Formosa's greatest port.

For the first time there were no wholly search-free shipping routes between the Indies and the enemy's homeland.

Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's toll of destroyed shipping fell off during January and February, but this was because the Wing was in a transitory status most of the time, making the moves that sent it from Leyte to Luzon and finally Clark Field where it wound up the war.

Late in December Admiral Wagner ordered Captain Jones to base aboard the U.S.S. TANGIER at Tacloban and to prepare to move his staff there by January 10th.

On January 4th Captain Jones assumed the administrative functions of Admiral Wagner, including the escort carrier pool at Samar Island, to permit the Admiral to take his flagship, the U.S.S. CURRITUCK, in on the Lingayen Gulf invasion.

Commander Ames as Wing Executive Officer turned over to the Commanding Officer of Squadron 101 the Wing's responsibilities for searches out of Morotai. This allowed the Wing time to move to Leyte.

The Wing left behind all but four elements of Squadron 101 and 130 to fly sectors set forth in Search Plan HOW which was effective from 31 December to 31 January 1945.

Fleet Air Wing Ten at Leyte had administrative and operational control of Liberators and Venturas searching from Tacloban



and administrative control over Mariners operating from Leyte and Mindoro.

Squadron 104, flying out of Tacloban, got its first lessons in patrolling the China coast, Formosa and Nansei Shoto, lessons which stood it in good stead when Clark Field searches were begun three months later.

During its transitory status, Fleet Air Wing Seventeen retained administrative control of two Catalina squadrons and one tender. Squadron 33 continued to fly rescue missions from Green Island, the Admiralties and Woendi until called forward to Leyte on 15 January. Throughout the rest of the month, the Cats of Squadron 33 flew anti-sub patrols out of Leyte and Mindoro.

Getting ready for another move forward, Captain Jones flew from Leyte to Lingayen Gulf in January and based aboard Admiral Wagner's flagship until the arrival a few days later of the U.S.S. TANGIER carrying Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's staff.

The Captain turned the administrative duties of Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, back to the Admiral who took his flagship back to Leyte.

The Wing's trip from Leyte to Lingayen had not been uneventful. At dusk off Negros Island, the convoy beat off an enemy air attack, but not before one ship was damaged so badly it had to return to Leyte.

On 31 January Fleet Air Wing Seventeen was charged with control of all aircraft SEVENTH FLEET operations north of 12 degrees latitude, the area to the south going to Fleet Air Wing Ten.

A new Task Group was formed operating from Mindoro and was labeled Fleet Air Wing Seventeen, Group One, Commander H. W. MacDonald, USN, former skipper of VPB-117, was given the command. Making up Group One were Squadron 117, elements of Squadron 111 and Combat Air Service Unit (F) 56, (CASU(F) 56). (This group has submitted a separate history and its detailed operations are not included herein.

Operating under Search Plan HOW and under tactical control of the Fifth Air Force, the Mindoro-based Liberators flew five sectors ranging as far as Indo-China and the northeast coast of Hainan Island.

The Wing moved off the U.S.S. TANGIER and took up quarters at Mangalden strip on 5 February. The enemy still was in this territory and frequent bombings were experienced. Mangalden strip, from which Marine SBD's were flying ground support for General MacArthur's forces advancing toward Manila, was planned as the temporary base from which to operate a task group of Privateers, Liberators and Ventures during the dry season, and until a new all weather base could be established.

Hence it was decided to transplant the Leyte-based Liberators and a detachment of Ventures to Mangalden as soon as possible.

The field at Mangalden was made by filling in the irrigation ditches and dried-out rice paddies. Weather statistics indicated there would be little rain during February, and for a while the dust which whirled into the Wing quarters confirmed the forecast.



But then it rained --- for two days. As a result, the strip was unserviceable.

Captain Jones immediately informed Admiral Wagner that it was not practicable to operate from Mangalden. It was a difficult report to make, for on the strength of it Search Plan JIG, opening up new hunting grounds, had to be launched from Leyte, and Fleet Air Wing Seventeen faced three more weeks of reduced operational activity.

The Liberators and Venturas at Mindoro and VPB-71 conducting Black Cat operations from the Tangier and Mangalden carried the ball for the Wing during February. Mariners that were tender-based at Mindoro flew four sectors reaching nearly to Hainan Island augmenting Group One's operations from there.

During February, the Wing's search planes began cooperating with submarines in destroying enemy shipping along Indo-China.

These so-called "pro-submarine" operations were highly successful.

During the month Squadron 117 alone destroyed 12 ships aggregating 10,575 tons. It also bagged 11 enemy aircraft. Another 22 vessels totaling 20,025 tons were damaged or probably sunk.

The administrative responsibility of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen was extremely flexible during February. For every time a squadron, tender or service unit crossed the demarcation line of 12 degrees North, it came under the Wing's control.



To Mangalden came Acorn Thirty Four with Commander H. J. Murray, USNR, commanding; CASU 57; CASU 9.1; Aircraft Emergency Units 1, 2 and 3, which supported the Cat Squadron 71, and Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit 606. In Lingayen Gulf were two tenders serving Squadron 17's Mariners for rescue duty for the Fifth Air Force and Squadron 71 engaged in Black Catting since mid-January. Besides the Liberators and CASU 56, at Mindoro was a small tender servicing Mariner Squadron 28 which flew Plan JIG sectors until the Liberators took over.

The Black Cats prowled from Lingayen Gulf to Formosa, the Pescadores and the China coast during February, and Squadron 71 claimed destruction of eight ships totaling 14,740 tons and damage to nine totaling 29,180. These Cats went back to Leyte at the month's end.

With the Mangalden strip unserviceable, it was decided to handle Search Plan JIG commitments from Clark Field. Wing officers had visited the field still under fire, and reported favorably.

The move to Clark Field got underway, and by 25 February, the Wing Staff was situated in its camp area of no trees and ankle-deep dust between the village of Dau and the Army's Fort Stotsenburg.

CBMU 606 pitched tents supplied by Acorn 34 while tanks rumbled up the road toward Fort Stotsenburg where just beyond in the Zambales hills the infantry battling could be observed day and night.

Still remembering the Morotai bombings, all hands hastily dug foxholes in the sandy, dusty soil. There were but two air raids,



however, and the rapid American advance soon pushed the enemy more or less out of range.

Some Nips infiltrated at night, but the Navy camp area came through unscathed. Nearby Army outfits suffered, though, and the enemy succeeded in blowing up some transport aircraft parked within a hundred yards of Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's camp.

The Liberator Squadron (104) and a squadron (119) of the Navy's newest four-engine patrol-bombers--the Privateer--moved into Clark Field, 1 March, and the Wing had everything set for immediate operations.

Pilots were briefed that evening by Wing Intelligence Officers. And the next day at dawn, the Liberators and Privateers were off on the long sectors as laid down in Search Plan JIG.

The first day's searches brought bounty. Lieutenant John W. Holt, USN, bagged the day's top prize--a FOX TARE BAKER off northeast Okinawa. Sighting a convoy of three destroyer escorts and three FOX TARE BAKERS, Lieutenant Hold, ignoring the fierce ack-ack from the destroyer escorts, sent his Privateer diving in at masthead-level strafing and bombing as he went. His bombs missed, but his tracers started a fire on the fan-tail of the 5000 to 7000-ton freighter-transport. The blaze set off an explosion which touched off additional blasts that crept along the FOX TARE BAKER's hull until she keeled over on her side and sank.

Not content, Lieutenant Hold trained his guns on one of the destroyer escorts and set it ablaze and started a fire in the superstructure of another FOX TARE BAKER. He had to break off the attack 49



finally for lack of ammunition. The Privateer came through undamaged, (two months later on May 1st, Lieutenant Hold failed to return from a mission over Hainan, with him on that fateful trip was the Wing's Operations Officer, Commander Drake).

Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's pilots started blasting enemy shipping in a fashion reminiscent of the record months of September and October of 1944, and by the end of the first month of operations from Clark Field, they had sunk 132 ships totaling 90,375 tons and damaged 132 vessels aggregating 101,315.

In an effort to quell this tide, the Nips started sending interceptors out after the Navy patrol-bombers. But this didn't stop them, and before April 1st Fleet Air Wing Seventeen pilots had marked up a new Wing record of 99 enemy aircraft destroyed--the best month they had in 23 months of fighting.

The Wing reached a high peak of operating efficiency at Clark Field, and close cooperation between Naval Air and the Army's Fifth Air Force was enjoyed.

Intelligence information and photographs were pooled by the two services, and the air strip used by Navy Liberators and Privateers was operated by the Fifth Air Force.

Daily conferences attended by all commanding officers and department heads soon developed into a routine that left little chance for any problem to escape prompt attention. They opened with a summary of the preceding days searches and the Army Air Forces' strikes as well as the intents for the current day. Then followed a roundup report of war developments throughout the world. Maintenance officers reported on fuel supplies and consumption and bombs



and ammunition used and on hand.

Then followed a general discussion in which the Captain ranged from air combat tactics to policing of the camp and even the "sour" notes the base bugler was blowing every now and then. Many difficulties and problems were solved with dispatch in this open forum.

The most pressing problem in these early days at Clark was fuel. At Mangalden arrangements had been made with the Army to allow the Wing to draw gasoline from a pipe line to be laid from Lingayen Gulf to Clark Field.

The pipe line encountered difficulty after difficulty, including sabotage by infiltrating Japanese, and it wasn't ready for use until 1 April. Before that all gasoline was flown from Lingayen Gulf or Subic Bay by the Army Air Force, and the margin of reserve never was sufficient to eliminate that cause of worry.

By early May, CBMU 606 had made a good start toward transferring the Clark Field camp from a tent-city into a community of Quonset huts capable of housing 2500. The camp, carefully planned and neatly laid out, became one of the best in the Pacific war theatre.

It boasted an open air theater, a barber shop, a library, a Ship's Store, a chapel, two galleys for enlisted men and one officer's mess.

Unfortunately, the opening of the officer's club had to be postponed when wind blew over the bamboo palace that was abuilding. The club later held forth in an edifice of Quonset huts.



For recreation there were several baseball diamonds, tennis courts, badminton and table tennis. The Wing had teams representing the officers and enlisted personnel in two softball leagues.

With Fleet Air Wing Ten operating from a new base at Puerto Princessa, Palawan, from which Liberators could range as far as Singapore, Search Plan JIG was revised 4 March. The base at Palawan made superfluous all but one of the Morotai sectors. But there was little alteration in operations from Clark Field, the only change being a slight extension to the north just beyond 30 degrees North latitude.

A detachment of six planes from Ventura Squadron 137 arrived at Clark from Leyte 11 March and the following day took over coverage of the shorter sectors to the China coast. The Venturas had little success in the way of ship sinkings their first two months at Clark Field.

However, a plan was inaugurated that brought the Venturas into their own. On May 10th, four Venturas, armed heavily with rockets and bombs and led by the squadron commander, Lieutenant Commander John A. Porter, USNR, staged the first of a series of special sorties against selected targets. This first strike hit a Butanol Plant at Mato, Formosa. The Venturas scored 23 direct rocket hits on the plant, inflicting serious damage. After that the Venturas left the searching to the four-engined bombers, and finished up their tour of duty by conducting strikes through mid-May. During that time they destroyed eight land targets and inflicted serious damage on seven different Butanol plants on Formosa and 38 other assorted targets. Their most effective loads were rockets and 250 pound parademos.



During April, May and June Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's patrol-bombers continued to sink numerous ships, but the big freighters and transports were disappearing from the scene. They sank 101 vessels during April but the total tonnage was estimated at only 56,865; in May they sank 114 and the tonnage dropped to 38,485. It was even worse in June when 110 sunken Nip vessels were assessed at 20,760 tons. In July, they tallied 82 sinkings totaling 11,000 tons, and in August -- in the two weeks before the Japanese surrendered -- they bagged 20 totaling 1,215 tons.

Statistics on tonnage damaged during these months fell far below the tonnage sunk, indicating that the pilots were not letting crippled small craft get away.

During these months, as the searching patrol-bombers were finding similar pickings on the sea, they started looking overland for targets, blasting at blockhouses, warehouses, railroad yards and rolling stock and various military installations along Jap-held China coast and outlying islands of the empire.

The Japs didn't take this licking lying down, however. As Fleet Air Wing Seventeen's planes started ranging overland they found Nip anti-aircraft gunners becoming more accurate, and from time to time the Wing's planes either failed to return or were forced down in places like China, Luichow Peninsula and Hainan Island.

Operation casualties grew especially severe in May. From the 13th to the 19th, inclusive, six four-engine aircraft were lost. One plane vanished without word. Another left scattered wreckage after ditching, indicating it had exploded on hitting the water.



Another ditched off Lingayen after running out of fuel as a result of having a wing tank punctured by ack-ack over Haiphong, China. The pilot and an enlisted man were lost. The remainder of the crew was rescued by a destroyer (U.S.S. CONWAY) after 19 hours in the water. On the same day and in the same vicinity, another pilot was forced to ditch because his fuel ran out. The ditching was carried out successfully. Another plane had to be surveyed the same day because of an unusual accident. The No. 2 propellor flew off and cartwheeled through the pilot's compartment, breaking the pilot's arm and injuring the co-pilot slightly. A forced landing was made at Mangaldon strip, but the plane was too badly damaged to be saved.

The following day another Liberator was shot up by ack-ack from a small Jap freighter and had to make a forced landing at Changting, China. This incident served to emphasize the work of the Wing Intelligence Division in briefing pilots on emergency airfields in China. The Changting strip was reportedly a hazardous one, but the pilot, Lieutenant Ira B. West, USNR, set his plane down safely with one engine gone. The plane was in no condition to take off again, and the crew was flown to Kunming where they were treated royally for a week prior to their return to Clark Field.

Another plane shot down over Luichow Peninsula in June didn't make out so well, however. Lieutenant Frank D. Murphy, USNR, was blinded by small caliber rifle fire while attacking a convoy of five trucks, and his plane crashed. Lieutenant Murphy and four members of his crew survived.



The following day special search planes located the wreckage of his Privateer, and established there were some surviving crew members. Fleet Air Wing Seventeen, Squadrons 119 and 28, the Commander U. S. Naval Group China, the Fifth Air Force and AGAS China pitched into a concentrated rescue effort, and finally managed to get Lieutenant Murphy and the surviving crew members out alive. A detailed report of this incident is contained in the appendix.

The dissemination of all types of information to Fleet Air Wing Seventeen left much to be desired. Charts of the China coast, for example, were unsatisfactory. A pilot in bad weather was confused when his radar indicated a 20-mile long island which didn't appear on his chart.

The oversimplified charts of China's coast failed to indicate the many hideouts available for enemy shipping which sailed by night and hid by day.

Different sets of charts varied so greatly that positions on latitude and longitude were subject to misunderstanding.

Apart from charts, more than one-half of the intelligence matter unloaded on the Wing had nothing to do with the Wing's area or prospective area.

And much information, especially that on escape and survival procedure, often arrived too late. In this connection, MIS-X (Army Escape Unit) was contacted suggesting prompter delivery of information, and conditions improved somewhat. But for a while afterwards vital information passed through channels of command, from MIS-X in Manila to SEVENTH FLEET Intelligence Center at Leyte, then



back to Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, in Manila Bay, and finally to Clark Field. Much information was obtained by our pilots from direct observation and by returning survivors.

The Wing was fortunate, however, in having a submarine officer from the SEVENTH FLEET on temporary duty with the Fifth Air Force at nearby Fort Stotsenburg when it inaugurated in mid-April a pro-submarine program comparable to the one which had worked out so well with Group One at Mindoro.

This officer furnished Fleet Air Wing Seventeen the positions, calls and frequencies to be used the following day by patrolling American submarines and those on "Lifeguard" duty. Pilots, thereafter, began communicating with the subs in hope they might be able to lead them to a fat convoy. But the days of fat convoys were over.

During May, squadrons under the Wing were faced with problems arising from the abandonment of the policy of relieving entire squadrons by complete squadrons, and the substitution of a crew-by-crew relief program. This was found to lower squadron esprit de corps and to foster less efficient operation. In this connection the Wing Commander conferred with the Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, who dispatched a letter to COMINCH and CNO suggesting a review of the practice. (See appendix).

To single out every pilot and every department which cooperated to give Fleet Air Wing Seventeen such a proud record of its 23 months of combat would make a treatise of this sort much too bulky.

It should be noted, however, that the Wing's aerologists,



whose weather predictions and advice on storm evasion saved countless lives and kept the planes in the air without interruption, wrote a great and contributing chapter in the Wing's history.

The war's end didn't mean termination of the Wing's services. It continued operating after V-J Day under Search Plan LOVE, which had become effective 12 August, and MIKE, effective 21 September.

These post-war missions were concerned chiefly with reporting movements of shipping, dropping medical and food supplies to prisoner of war camp survivors, and flying weather recco to assist in the occupation of Japan.

COMMENTS BY

WING COMMANDER



It is believed appropriate in connection with the Wing History to comment briefly on various phases of and conditions pertinent to the operations conducted by units attached to the Wing. The opinion and conclusions are those of an individual but affected by those of others concerned.

#### General

The Wing, like many other good things in this world, was born of necessity. When the war, centered in the Solomons, began to creep westward, advance information on enemy forces and supply convoys moving toward enemy bases was vital.

The few squadrons available in the Southwest Pacific area were concentrated in Western Australia. Australia itself was too far removed from the enemy supply lines to provide a suitable base for searches in the Bismarck Sea area, that area being the most desirable as it was the route of the main enemy supply line.

Accordingly advance bases within enemy range were established, Fleet Air Wing Seventeen was formed, and operations commenced with such forces as could be spared from Western Australia.

The decision to make these searches at night was based on the fact that the obsolete Catalinas (the only planes available) could not penetrate the then strongly defended area without extremely heavy losses. The decision to make the searches offensive was based on the fact that most of the enemy movement took place at night and could not be attacked by the Army Air Forces who were unprepared for night anti-shipping strikes. The day shipping almost ceased to

exist after the Battle of the Bismarck Sea and interruption to the enemy supply was vital. The great success achieved by the "Black Cats" made it profitable to continue night offensive missions for the remainder of the war.

When the Southwest Pacific area became more important and more aircraft were available, Liberators and later Privateers were introduced for day searches.

The low level bombing tactics used so successfully by the Black Cats were also employed by the heavily armed and well protected PB4Y's when the tactical situation permitted. The primary mission of the day searches was, of course, enemy intelligence. When the necessity for gaining that intelligence was paramount the searchers were prohibited from engaging in any offensive missions.

#### Effect of Operations

The effect of the operations conducted by the planes of the Wing on the enemy must be obvious when one looks at the figures of shipping sunk, and damaged. An idea of its effectiveness can be gained by imagining ourselves attempting to conduct offensive operations on a large scale at great distances and suffering proportionate losses. Further attempt to visualize being harried day and night in waters supposedly so far removed from enemy bases that they should normally be considered safe. The effectiveness of the Black Cat searches was clearly demonstrated by the enemy's use of their shipping in Western New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies before the long range day searches were initiated in force. The enemy actually chose



to move in the daytime and to hide in harbors or anchor close to shorelines at night to escape detection and damage. This was proved by the observations of the Black Cats themselves who after finding the sea lanes vacant at night were forced to find and destroy their shipping targets in protected anchorages. When the day searches came into the picture the Nips shifted their shipping routes further away and discontinued any attempt to supply their beleaguered garrisons.

Credit for the havoc wrought to enemy shipping must, of course, be shared with the Army Air Forces, who conducted shipping strikes when the targets were numerous and planes could be diverted from their other missions. But nevertheless the main burden of disrupting enemy supply lines by sea fell upon the Navy Patrol Bomber.

#### Organization

The general organization in the Southwest Pacific area was complex and at sometimes confusing. The Wing for instance being affected directly or indirectly by orders from the Supreme Commander, Commander Far Eastern Air Forces; Commander Allied Air Forces; Commander Seventh Fleet; Commander Aircraft, Seventh Fleet and the Commanding Generals of the Fifth and Thirteenth Air Forces. The chains of command where the Army was concerned were nebulous, but when direct control was attempted confusion usually resulted.

That the organization worked is a tribute to the diplomacy and patience of the various commanders; the trust and latitude-of-action given subordinates; and, the fact that no one forgot for a moment that all hands were engaged in the same mission; that of seeking out and destroying the enemy wherever he might be. The organi-

zation of Aircraft SEVENTH FLEET was flexible and sound. The units of the Wing changed rapidly as they were shifted from Wing to Wing as necessary to meet the ever changing situation. Wing Commanders were Task Group Commanders and exercised operational control over the task units under them, but mainly those in the immediate vicinity. Emphasis was placed on "the man on the spot" and only supervisory control of outlying task units was usually necessary.

The Wing organization was normal and it became the sound practice of landbasing the Wing headquarters in the most forward area with direct control of the most important operations.

Navy organization in the area was entirely satisfactory. The only criticism considered appropriate is the occasional failure of the Service Force to realize its responsibilities for the landbased Naval air organizations.

With the complex Army organization, however, constant personal contact was necessary to keep the operations running smoothly. Misunderstandings often resulted when separated from a close liaison with the Army Air Forces, but everything was remarkably smooth when in direct contact with them.

#### Tactics

The tactics employed in attacking shipping:

Attacks were made at the lowest possible altitude and maximum speed.

Surprise was attempted whenever possible.

Bombs were dropped in a string with a maximum of forty feet spacing.



To obtain the maximum number of hits a run from bow to quarter or quarter to bow was attempted.

Strafing with all guns that could be brought to bear was the rule for day attacks. At night strafing was resorted to only when detected or the targets were lightly defended.

Generally, it was inadvisable to make more than one attack on an armed target. It became generally known among the pilots that "You may get one free pass". After that anything could be expected but usually the worst.

Heavily defended convoys in daytime were usually not attacked unless the escorts could be maneuvered out of position. Escorts were, as a rule, avoided and few successful attacks on them in daylight were experienced.

Teamwork was resorted to whenever possible to divide fire of defended or armed ships.

Cooperation with submarines was introduced by Group One of this Wing operating from Mindoro. It was worked out and began operating successfully just in time for the last big convoys.

Search planes were given daily positions of our submarines and both submarines and planes were briefed on methods, times and ability to communicate on both CW and VHF. When a worthwhile target was sighted by our planes it was immediately transmitted on the submarine frequency or by VHF to the nearest submarine. He in turn would pass the word on and if in favorable position would close in to attack after being coached on by a plane. The cooperation resulted in the sinking of much shipping that otherwise would have escaped.

On one occasion by coordination between the search planes, submarines and Army aircraft, an entire large convoy and its escorts was totally destroyed.

#### Weapons and Armament

The armament and weapons of the Black Cats has been discussed elsewhere in the history. No mention was made of torpedoes which were used with no success on one occasion against a convoy in the Bismarck Sea. The torpedo was rejected as a weapon for Black Cats because of its weight and "one shot" feature combined with the difficulty of making a good approach run on a target. The targets would outmaneuver the Cats on an approach with a torpedo. Also, of necessity, the first part of an approach to the target was made on radar, then alterations in course effected when the target was picked up visually. The radar was not directionally accurate enough to ensure a proper position for dropping when visual contact was made.

The great fire power of the PB4Y's was the major factor in the success of that type. It was possible with well directed fire to smother enemy gun positions on ships. The great volume of fire that the Liberators and Privateers could pour out gave the crews confidence that enabled them to attack and destroy.

The substitution of the APS radar in place of the belly turret on the PB4Y-1 was not popular with the pilots at first but they became reconciled to it after experiencing the great advantage of this type radar. The advent of the Privateer left nothing to be desired in the way of fire power.

The fire power on the PBM was good and its bomb-carrying



capacity adequate. Two PBM's on a daylight search could be expected to take care of themselves very well.

The selection of bombs depended upon the size of the targets to be encountered. Four to five second delay fuses were used in all cases. Against large shipping the 500 lb. bomb was preferred due to its greater penetrating and destructive powers. However, a compromise was generally accepted by the PB4Y's by using 250 lb. bombs since a greater number of these could be carried. When the big shipping could no longer be found 100 lb. bombs exclusively or a mixture with 250 lb. and 100 lb. was preferred. Considerable success was achieved against small wooden ships with incendiary clusters.

Napalm was a disappointment against shipping targets. The Venturas used it to very good effect against land targets and were quite enthusiastic about it.

Rockets were not used extensively against shipping because of the limited range of the Ventura (the only plane equipped for use of rockets). The extra drag of the rockets cut down the range of the Ventura just enough to keep them out of the fruitful shipping lanes. It was disappointing that whenever good targets appeared that could have been handled by the rocket carrying Venturas, the Venturas were not immediately available. The few occasions in which rockets were used against shipping were disappointing. Accuracy was not good and the destructive capacity of the 5" rocket was far less than bombs.

When the Venturas were sent against land targets within their range they were devastating. They used a combination of strafing, rockets, napalm and 250 lb. parademos. The latter became their

favorite weapon. The strafing accuracy of the fixed guns and their volume of fire was excellent on the Venturas. Remarkable success was achieved against small shipping by strafing alone.

SWOD was never available to this Wing, and was only available for a short time in the Southwest Pacific area. The potentialities of this weapon appear to be enormous. It is considered that SWOD is the ideal weapon for long range search planes and it is extremely regrettable that it was not available in March and early April of 1945, when heavily defended convoys were making their last runs from the south to the Empire.

#### Communications

As long as the Wing had its own communication personnel and equipment communications were entirely satisfactory. Difficulties arose when the Wing communication department was not able to come forward with the Wing and communications were dependent on the Army.

Particularly bad was the situation wherein the Army controlled the frequencies assigned to the search planes and did not allow transmission to those planes except by their organization. The circuits assigned lacked any semblance of circuit discipline and powerful land stations, in violation of the Army's own instructions, used the circuits to clear any kind of traffic. All transient aircraft were also assigned to the search frequencies.

Numerous letter and verbal protests against this situation were submitted and finally got results. The Navy was allowed two way communication on the alternate search frequency. Except for units such as tenders and bases not in direct landline communication with



the Army, two way communication on the primary frequency was not allowed. The circuits were cleared up and properly monitored also, but all this took place quite late and after the urgency for a clear circuit was at its lowest.

In depending upon the Army communications for other traffic the results were also disappointing. Practically all Army traffic was "Urgent". The lowest priority on the Army circuits was "OP". The Army further complicated things by assigning a new precedence to despatches originated by the various commanding generals. This precedence was higher than "Urgent" and was called "Arrow" with the generals name attached. Assigning a "P" precedence or lower to any despatch filed with the Army was tantamount to sending the message by carabou cart. The same situation of assigning too high a precedence to Navy communications existed, but to a lesser degree and could be kept within the bounds of reason.

Enemy jamming and attempted deception on the primary search frequency was common, but not very effective. The alternate frequency was resorted to when jamming occurred. The Nips never seemed to realize that we could use an alternate frequency. Deception consisted of sending out messages using the call of one of our search planes, usually in plain language or with commonly used code groups from the current issue of CSP 1270. Use of authenticators prevented this method from being effective. On one occasion a Jap station in Mindanao had obtained a CSP 1270 in current use, and sent messages using it until it was superceded. Although the Jap operator used the authenticator table he seemed unable to get the hang of it as he never used it correctly.



Another method of detecting "phony" messages was by comparing the position of a false contact report with the probable position of the plane purported to have originated it. In every case the position of the contact was hundreds of miles from the position of the plane.

It stands as a tribute to the operators that not once were they deceived.

### Training

At the beginning of operations from Clark Field it was found that the newly arrived squadron and subsequent replacement and relief crews were deficient in the following phases of training:

- (a) Cruise control.
- (b) Engine operation.
- (c) Radar navigation.
- (d) Strafing.
- (e) Masthead bombing.
- (f) Recognition.
- (g) Photography.
- (h) Contact and amplifying reports.

The above deficiencies were surprising since squadrons and crews arriving prior to February 1945 had been very well trained.

The difficulties encountered and remedial measures will be discussed briefly:

- (a) On the first day of operation the new planes (Privateers) returned from patrols extremely short of fuel although they took off with 300 gallons more fuel than the Liberators covering equal dist-



ance. One plane ran out of fuel on final approach (at night) and barely made the strip. Two others had their engines cutting out on final approach and ran their tanks dry while taxiing to the parking area. Other planes of the same squadron were generally dangerously low on fuel. A discussion with the squadron commander and pilots revealed that the majority of pilots had little or no knowledge of the principle of cruise control. They excused their use of high speed on patrol by claiming that the Privateer cruised over 20 knots faster than the Liberator and that the higher weight of the Privateer made it necessary to use exceedingly higher speeds. Both the above contentions were later proved to be mainly false. Examination of the settings used of manifold pressure and revolutions revealed that both were too high for economical cruising and that instead of using progressively lower revolutions with an almost constant manifold pressure the pilots were progressively lowering their manifold pressures and maintaining almost constant high revolutions. Lectures were started immediately, covering the rudimentary principles of cruise control and a rough cruise control chart was drafted and mimeographed for the use of all pilots. This project was handicapped by the lack of accurate cruise control data on the Privateer. Consolidated figures were found but did not help much because the data was obviously collected from tests on a new airplane cleaned up and stripped for the occasion. Furthermore, the highest weight used in the tables was 66,000 pounds which is designated as the maximum gross overload for the airplane. The normal weight for the Privateer necessary to accomplish its mission, was in the neighborhood of 70,000 pounds. (The Bureau of



Aeronautics to this date still refuses to accept any figure above 66,000 pounds although Commander Air Force Pacific Fleet readily admitted that higher weights must be used and issued valuable information in the premises). It was understood that accurate information on performance of the Privateer was gained by flight tests conducted at Patuxent but these figures were not available. Eventually it was found that the Privateer could be cruised as economically as the Liberator.

(B) Numerous engine failures caused by burnt pistons and valves, and valves with stretched necks were experienced at the beginning of the operations with the Privateers. These failures were found to be caused entirely by lack of knowledge on the part of the pilots of engine operation. Excessive power was being drawn from the engine in automatic lean and maximum allowable BMEP was often exceeded. Education of the pilots eliminated these failures entirely. Many cases of broken connecting rods were also encountered. These were found to be caused by the practice of failing to leave the mixture control in idle cut-off after stopping the engines. Subsequent operation of the fuel booster pumps would cause raw fuel to be drawn into the cylinders and hydrauling would result in the broken rods. Education also eliminated this fault. It was further found that none of the pilots ever exercised the engines in high blower. Consequently all the blower motors became inoperative from sludging and were so far gone that they could not be de-sludged. The condition of the blower motor was discovered through attempts to intercept and shoot down enemy aircraft making overnight runs between Shanghai and north-



ern Formosa. Planes were placed on station north of Formosa at dawn and evening twilight. The Liberators obtained notable success, shooting down three enemy aircraft within about four days. But the Privateers failed to catch any plane at 10,000 or over feet even when they had slight altitude advantage. Needless to say this impressed the pilots with the necessity to keep their high blower operative and after routine engine changes little trouble was experienced in that line thereafter.

(C) Two planes were ditched at night because of failure to use the radio navigational aids available or refusal to believe the information obtained. Training in this phase was necessary.

(D) Photographs of strafing enemy ships or targets gave conclusive proof that the safest place for the enemy was on the target. This was due to lack of knowledge of the gunners in droop and trail. They almost consistently aimed directly at or even led stationary targets instead of selecting a point of aim behind the target. Instruction resulted in immediate improvement.

(E) In spite of previous training received in anti-submarine bombing the bombing of enemy shipping targets from masthead height or higher was not good. Beside the inaccuracy, beam instead of quartering runs were attempted, attempts were made to hit by dropping single bombs, and when bombs were dropped in train, the spacing was too great.

(F) Apparently too much emphasis was placed on recognition of ships like the HARUNA, ATAGO, SKOKAKU, etc., at the expense of the JMST system, because the new pilots were very inaccurate in their



recognition of merchant types and small escorts, which, with rare exceptions were all they encountered. It was usually necessary to scale down the sightings one or two sizes when photos were not taken.

(G) No doctrine existed in the new crews regarding photographs. It seemed that the K-20 would be used by someone who happened to think of it at the time, if it happened to be at hand. Many valuable action photos were missed before this situation was rectified. The Privateer pilots complained that it was extremely difficult to take good pictures from the Privateer with the K-20, which was true. But when asked about the K-25 the astounding information was forthcoming that the K-25's were on hand but not installed. The above situation was rectified.

(H) The new squadrons and crews were woefully lacking in instruction on the elements of a contact report. Inaccurate and incomplete reports were numerous. The pilots felt no responsibility for checking the reports for accuracy, and no system of decoding the encoded report for accuracy existed. A form was made similar to that of the old contact pad where the complete report was constructed by filling in labeled items in windows of a cardboard cover. This remedial measure helped, but the complete solution depended upon indoctrination and instruction.

To improve all the foregoing, courses of instruction and checks were instituted and new crews were not released for patrol until checks in all phases had been passed.

One good quality that all crews seemed to have was their ability and confidence in flying on instruments.



The foregoing criticisms are not intended to detract from the bravery and aggressiveness of the new crews. Those qualities existed in all and good results were eventually attained. Some crews arrived with experience gained on previous tours and left nothing to be desired. Rather it is a criticism of the training they received before arriving in the combat areas. There is no doubt that the training activities had good intentions and an inclusive curriculum; but in the cases of the relief and replacement crews the system is believed to be mainly at fault. (See Commander Aircraft SEVENTH FLEET letter on this subject in the appendix).

A-N-N-E-X A



S-E-C-R-E-TS-E-C-R-E-TFLEET AIR WING SEVENTEEN - COMBAT RECORD(As Compiled by Intelligence Section of  
Commander Aircraft, Seventh Fleet)

|                        | <u>SHIPS DESTROYED<br/>&amp; GROSS TONNAGE:</u> | <u>SHIPS DAMAGED<br/>&amp; GROSS TONNAGE:</u> | <u>AIRCRAFT<br/>DESTROYED</u> |
|------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
| September (15-30) 1943 | 2 - 1,700                                       | 1 - 500                                       | -                             |
| October 1943           | -   | 1 - 4,000                                     | -                             |
| November 1943          | 3 - 26,000                                      | 2 - 19,000                                    | -                             |
| December 1943          | 6 - 41,000                                      | 2 - 18,000                                    | -                             |
| January 1944           | 9 - 43,500                                      | 2 - 5,500                                     | -                             |
| February 1944          | 4 - 15,500                                      | 3 - 12,250                                    | -                             |
| March 1944*            | 5 - 7,800                                       | 4 - 12,500                                    | -                             |
| April 1944             | 16 - 5,705                                      | 25 - 17,600                                   | 14                            |
| May 1944               | 5 - 505   | 2 - 250                                       | 11                            |
| June 1944              | 9 - 5,875                                       | 5 - 7,165                                     | 10                            |
| July 1944              | 16 - 25,065                                     | 15 - 8,010                                    | 5                             |
| August 1944            | 19 - 19,015                                     | 20 - 10,180                                   | -                             |
| September 1944         | 117 - 111,040                                   | 55 - 56,370                                   | 1                             |
| October 1944           | 78 - 102,050                                    | 36 - 17,245                                   | 38                            |
| November 1944          | 47 - 36,885                                     | 35 - 28,035                                   | 8                             |
| December 1944          | 41 - 35,705                                     | 45 - 23,000                                   | 16                            |
| January 1945           | 5 - 5,050                                       | 27 - 13,100                                   | -                             |
| February 1945          | 25 - 15,930                                     | 23 - 13,050                                   | 15                            |
| March 1945             | 132 - 90,375                                    | 132 - 101,315                                 | 39                            |
| April 1945             | 101 - 56,865                                    | 67 - 28,280                                   | 9                             |
| May 1945               | 114 - 38,485                                    | 90 - 15,225                                   | 2                             |
| June 1945              | 110 - 20,760                                    | 139 - 14,270                                  | 4                             |
| July 1945              | 82 - 11,000                                     | 168 - 23,780                                  | 1                             |

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

Fleet Air Wing Seventeen - Combat Record - Continued.

|             | <u>SHIPS DESTROYED</u><br><u>&amp; GROSS TONNAGE</u> | <u>SHIPS DAMAGED</u><br><u>&amp; GROSS TONNAGE</u> | <u>AIRCRAFT</u><br><u>DEST.:</u> |
|-------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| August 1945 | 20 - 1,215   | 49 - 2,515   | ..                               |
| Totals:     | 966 - 717,025  | 948 - 451,140                                      | 173                              |

\* In the months September 1943 through March 1944,  
151 barges were also destroyed.



A-N-N-E-X B

UNITED STATES FLEET  
FLEET AIR WING SEVENTEEN

S-E-C-R-E-T-

SQUADRON COMMANDERS

CATALINAS

VPB-11 Lieutenant Commander C. M. CAMPBELL, U. S. N.  
VPB-29 Lieutenant Commander Lauren E. JOHNSON, U. S. N.  
VPB-33 Lieutenant Commander Fernald P. ANDERSON, U. S. N.  
VPB-34 Lieutenant Commander T. A. CHRISTOPHER, U. S. N.  
VPB-44 Lieutenant Commander G. S. BOGART, U. S. N.  
VPB-52 Lieutenant Commander H. A. SOMMER, U. S. N. (relieved  
September 1944)  
Lieutenant Commander Rannix JONES, Jr., U.S.N.R.  
VPB-54 Commander K. J. SANGER, U. S. N.  
VPB-71 Commander Norman C. GILLETTE, Jr., U. S. N.

MARTINERS

VPB-17 Lieutenant Commander Kennety A. KUEHNER, USNR  
(relieved June 1945)  
Lieutenant Commander Leeds C. CUTTER, USNR.  
VPB-20 Lieutenant Commander Robert M. HARPER, USNR  
(relieved June 1945)  
Lieutenant Commander James M. BRANDT, USNR.  
VPB-25 Lieutenant Commander J. C. SKORCZ, USNR.  
VPB-28 Lieutenant Commander John L. ELWELL, U. S. N.

VENTURAS

VPB-128 Lieutenant Commander Jay B. YAKELEY, Jr., USNR.  
VPB-130 Lieutenant Commander Charles R. DODDS, USN (relieved  
May 1945)  
Lieutenant Commander Donald G. WHITE, U.S.N.  
VPB-137 Lieutenant Commander John A. PORTER, USNR.  
VPB-146 Commander J. P. ROBINSON, USN.

LIBERATORS

VPB-101 Commander Justin A. MILLER, U.S.N.  
Lieutenant Commander Marvin T. SMITH, USN  
(Latter was acting CO during November, December  
1944 when MILLER in MIA status - himself lost  
January 1945)  
VPB-104 Lieutenant Commander Whitney WRIGHT, U.S.N. (relieved  
July 1945)  
Lieutenant Commander William COLE, U.S.N.  
VPB-106 Commander John T. HAYWARD, U.S.N. (squadron released June  
1944)



Squadrons Commanders (Continued)

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VPB-111 Lieutenant Commander James V. BARRY, U.S.N. (relieved May 1945)

Lieutenant Commander Gordon R. EGBERT, U.S.N.

VPB-115 Commander James R. COMPTON, U.S.N.

VPB-117 Commander E. O. RIGSBEE, U.S.N. (relieved Dec 1944)

Commander H. W. McDONALD, U.S.N. (relieved Jan 1945)

Lieutenant Commander T. P. MULVIHILL, USNR (relieved April 1945)

Lieutenant Commander R. J. CROWLEY, USNR.

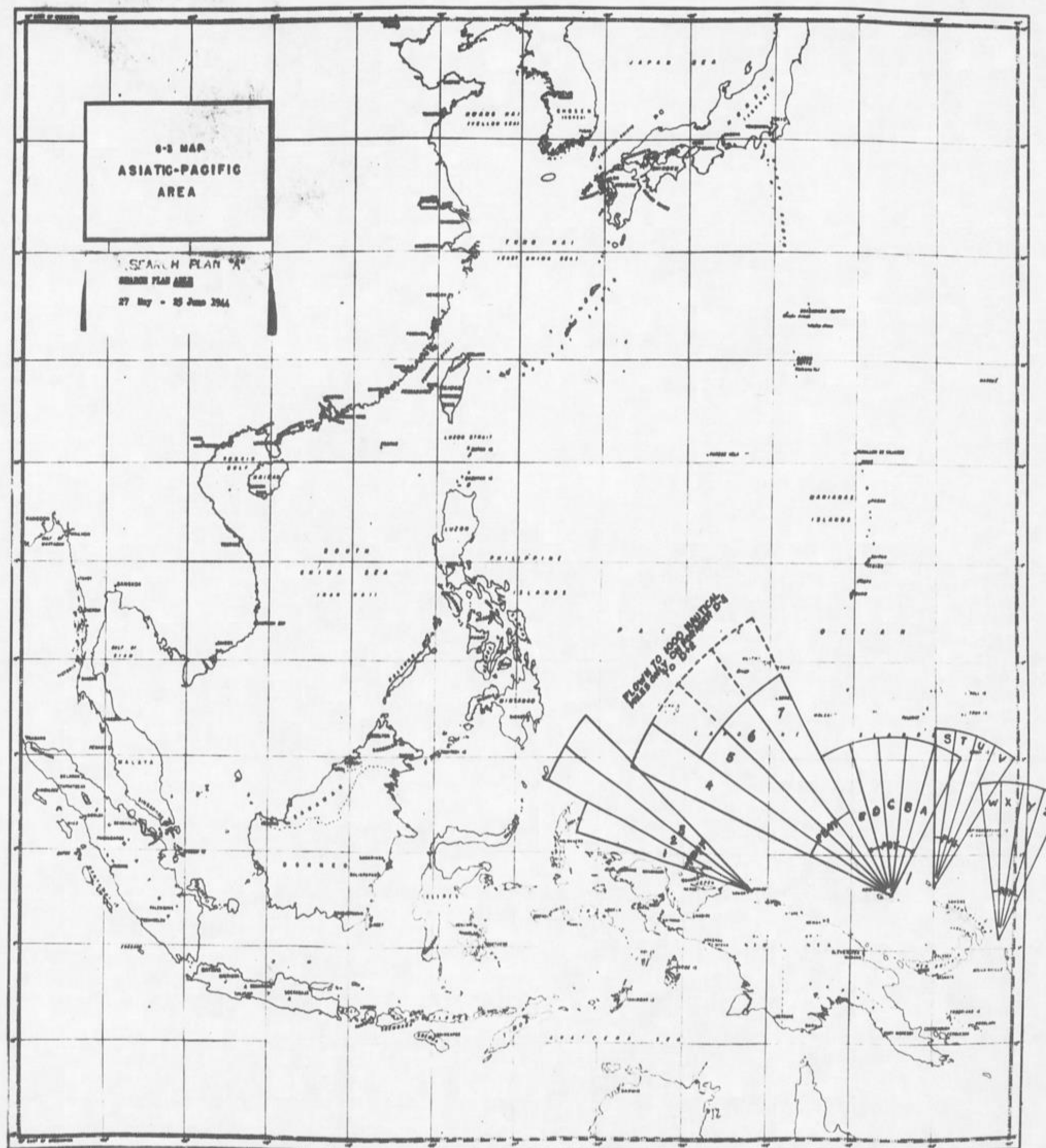
PRIVATEERS

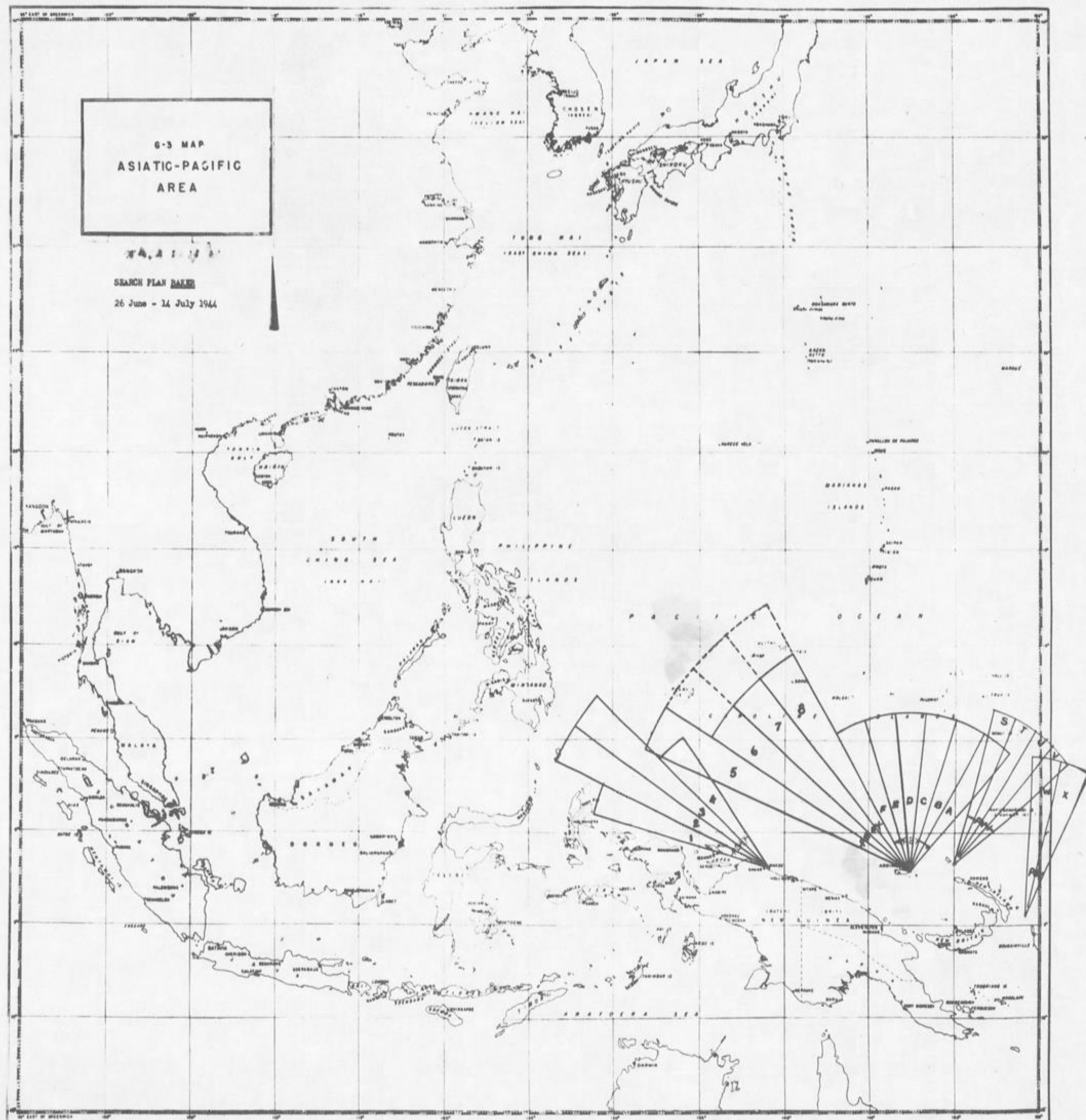
VPB-119 Lieutenant Commander R. C. BALES, U.S.N. (MIA April 1945)

Lieutenant Commander Malcolm S. RAGAN, USNR.

A-N-N-E-X   C



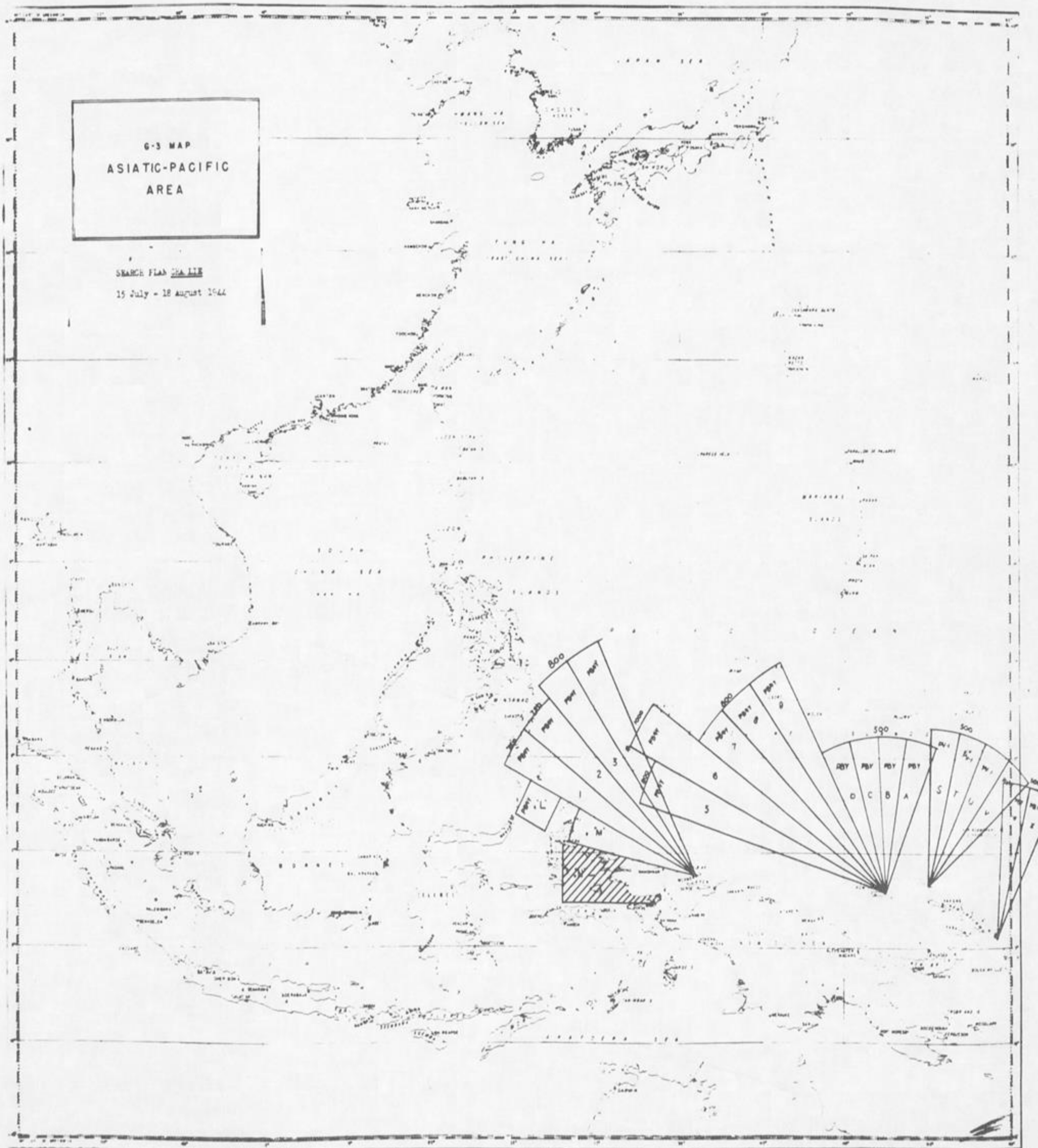


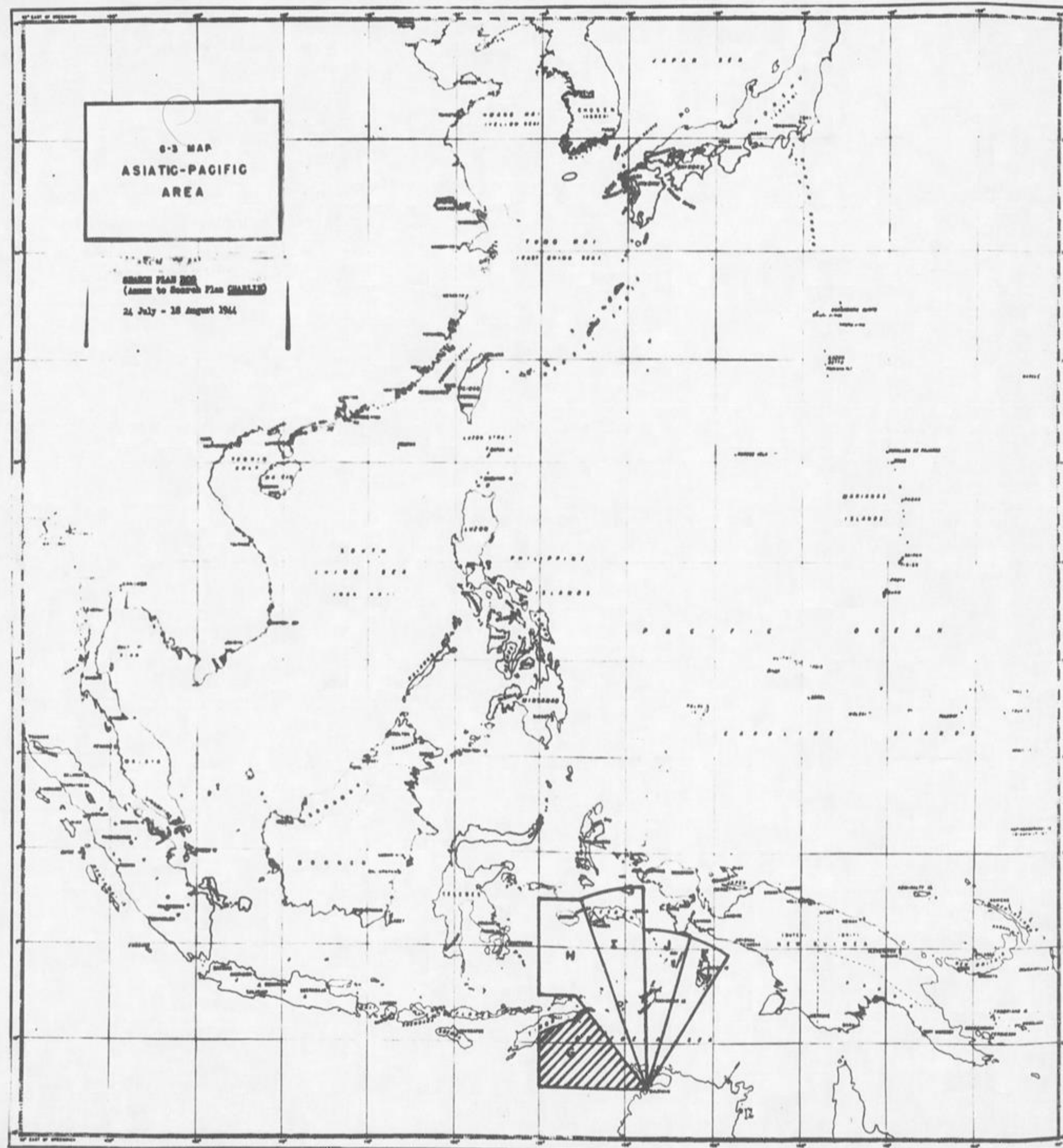




G-3 MAP  
ASIATIC-PACIFIC  
AREA

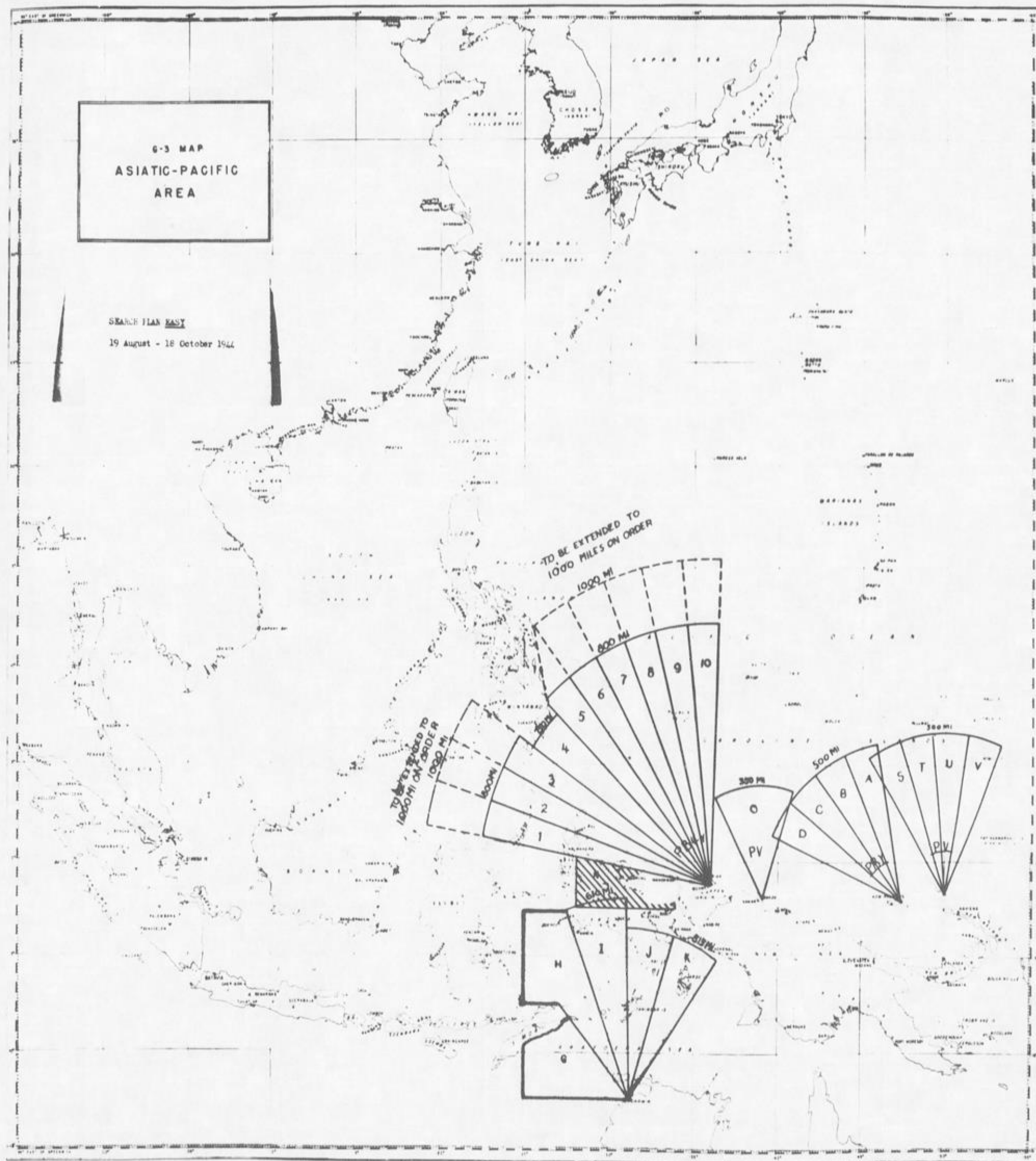
SEARCH PLAN CH-118  
15 July - 18 August 1944

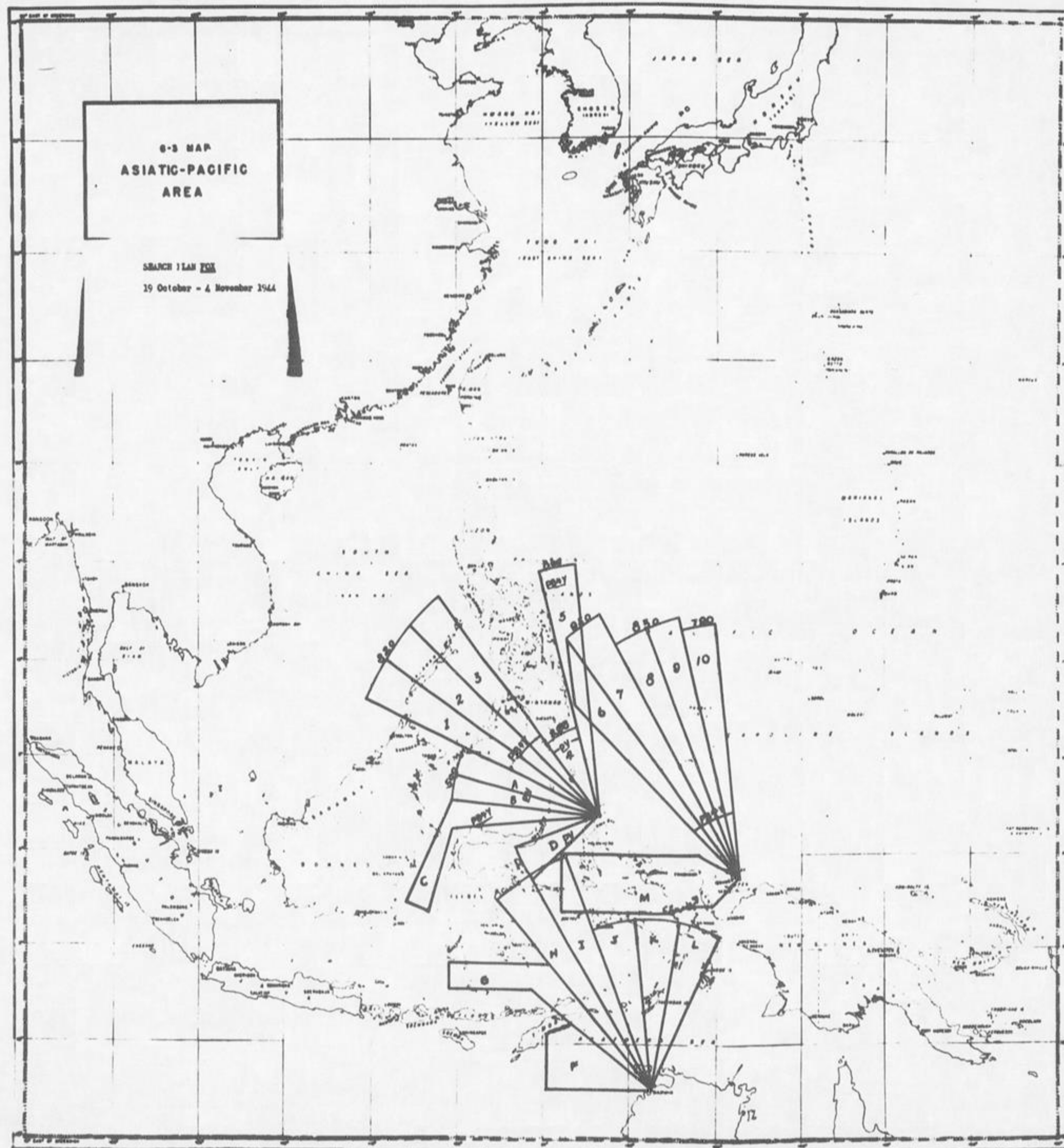




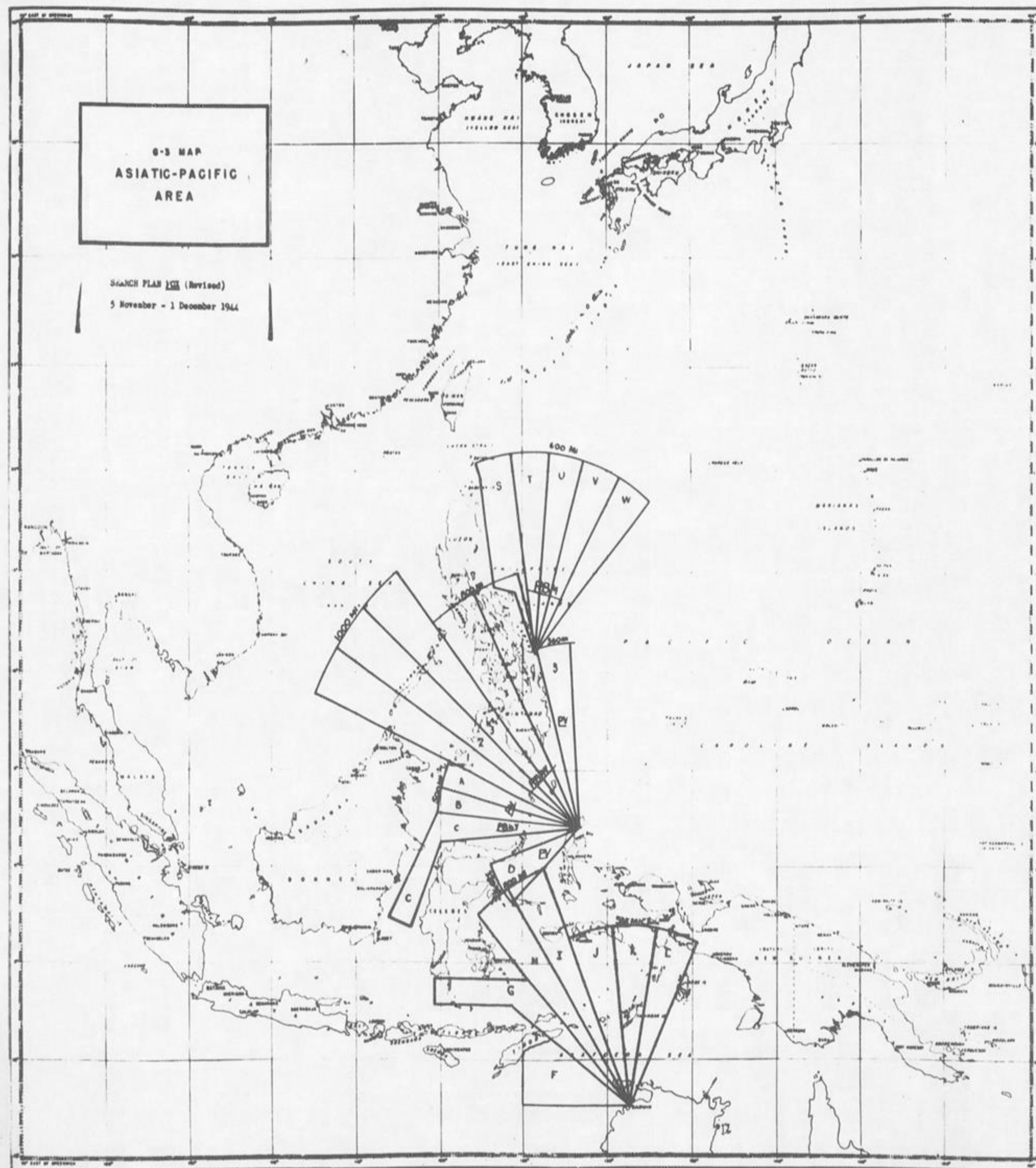


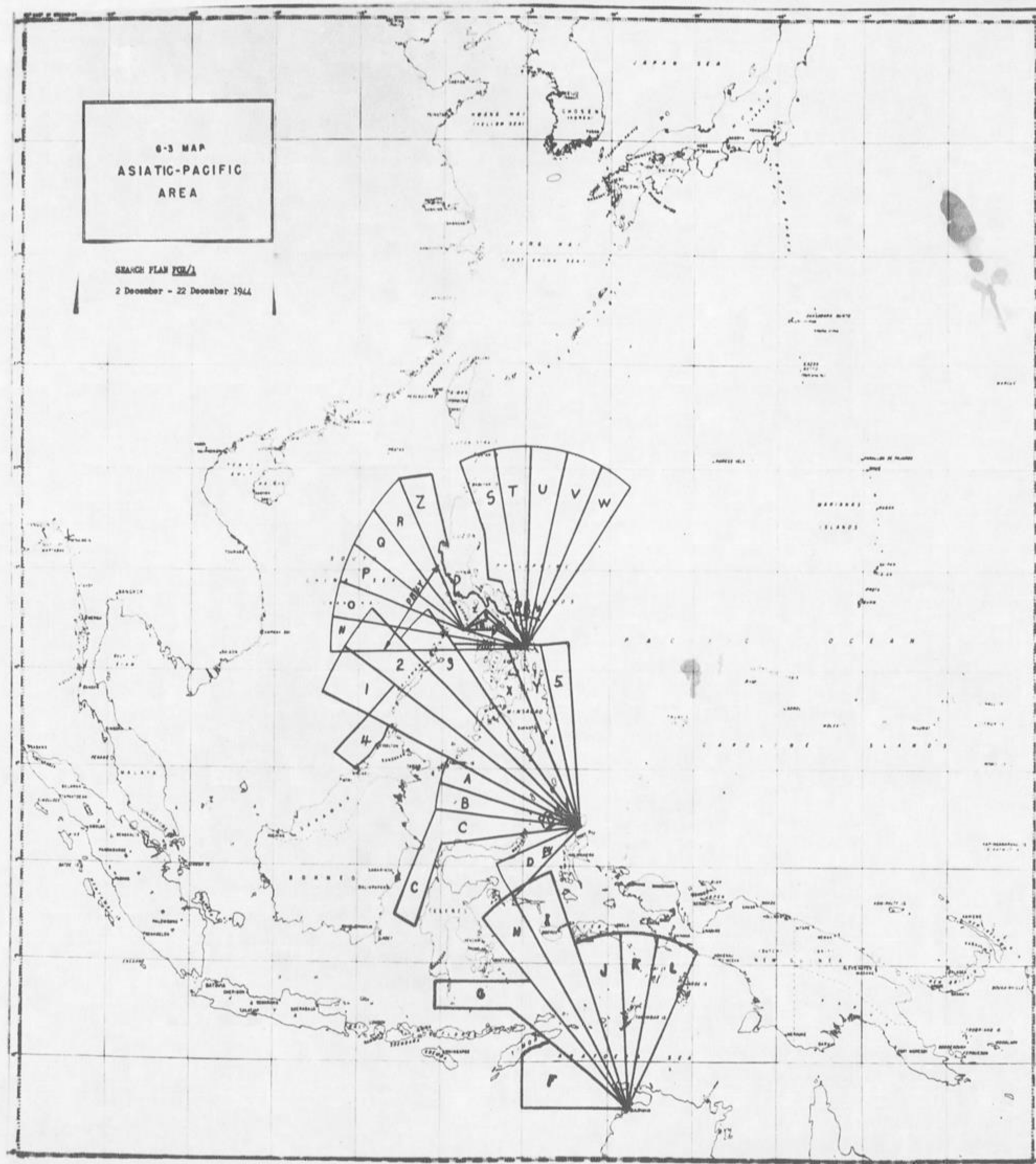
SEARCH PLAN EASY  
19 August - 18 October 1944



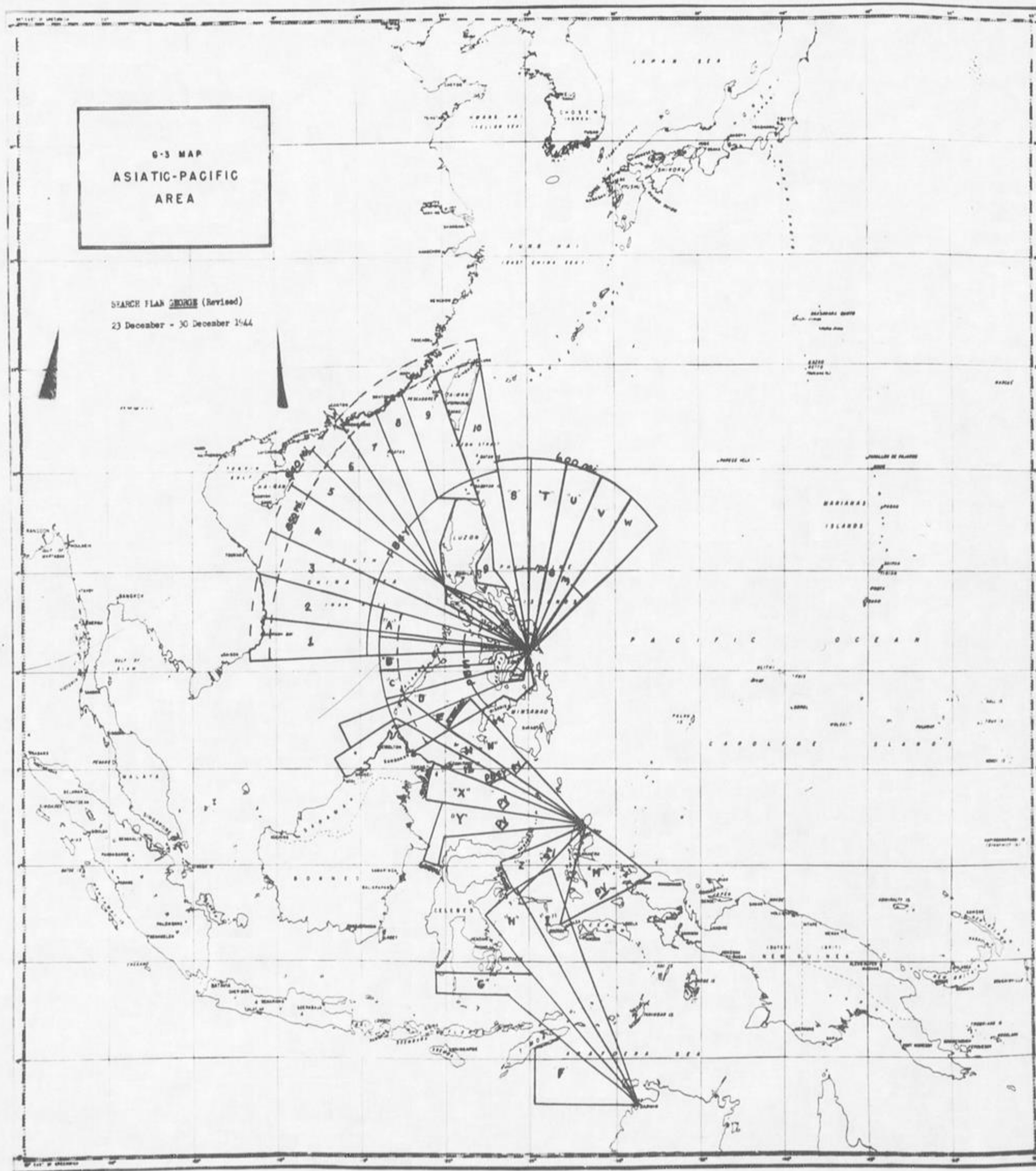


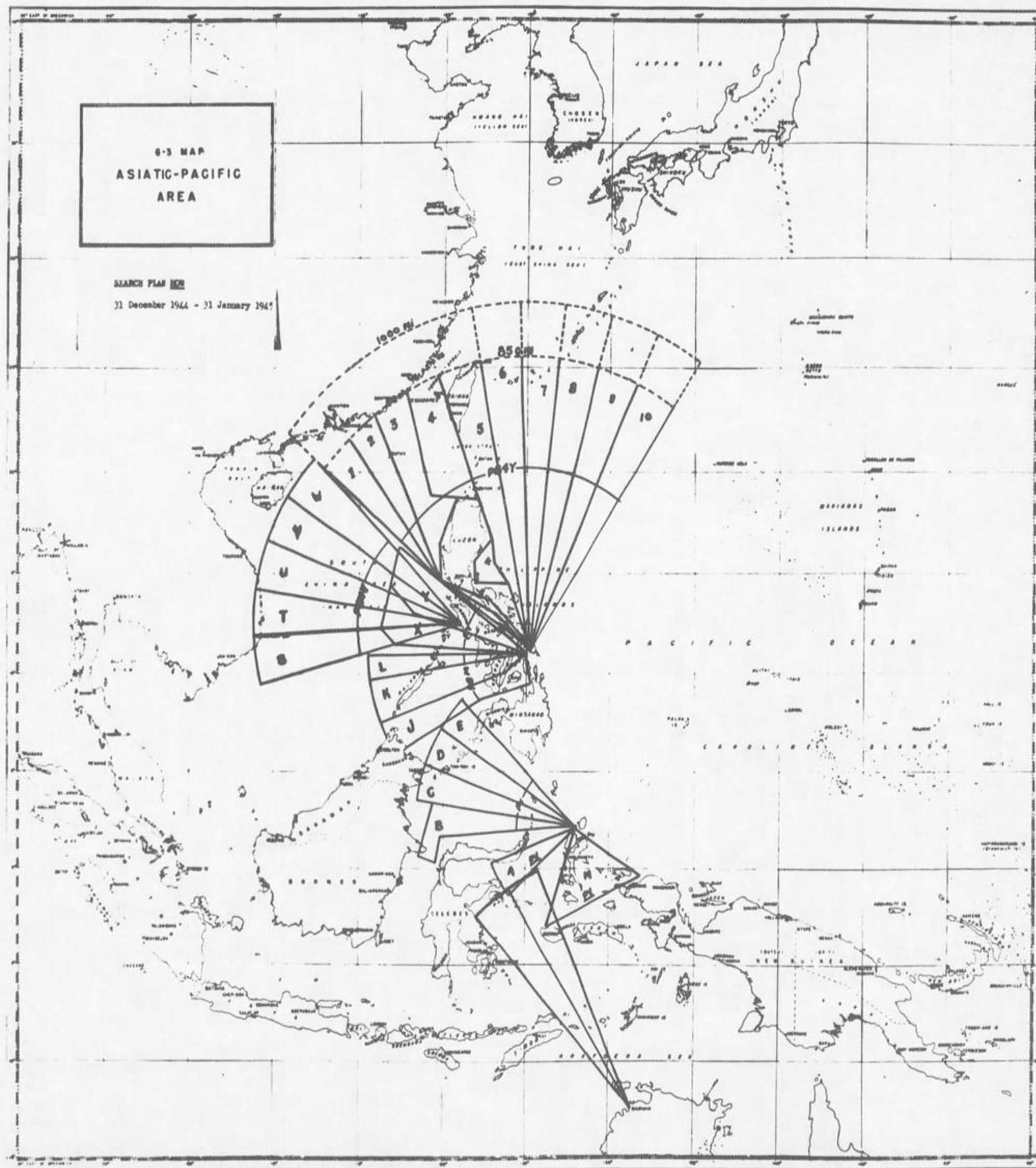




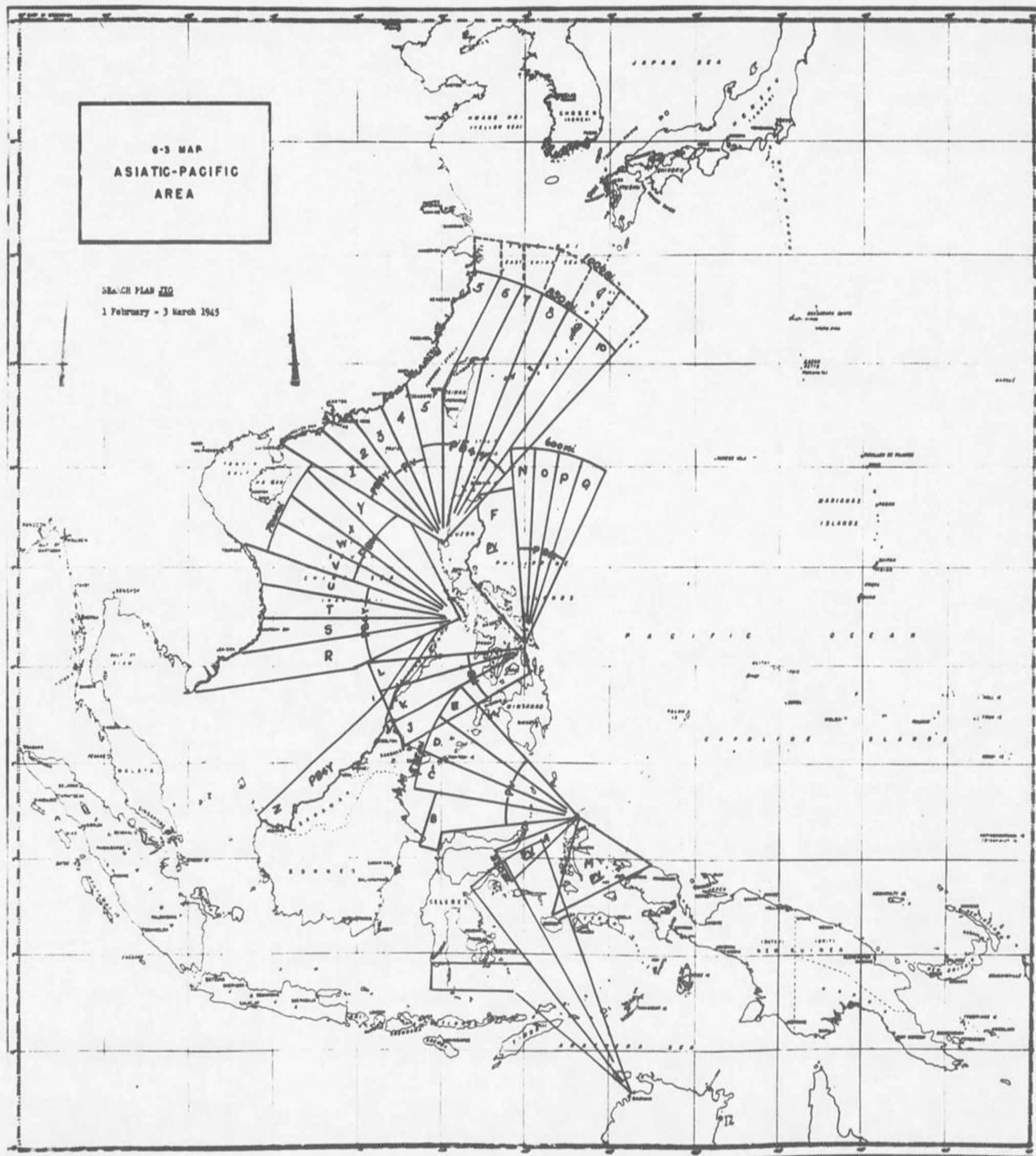


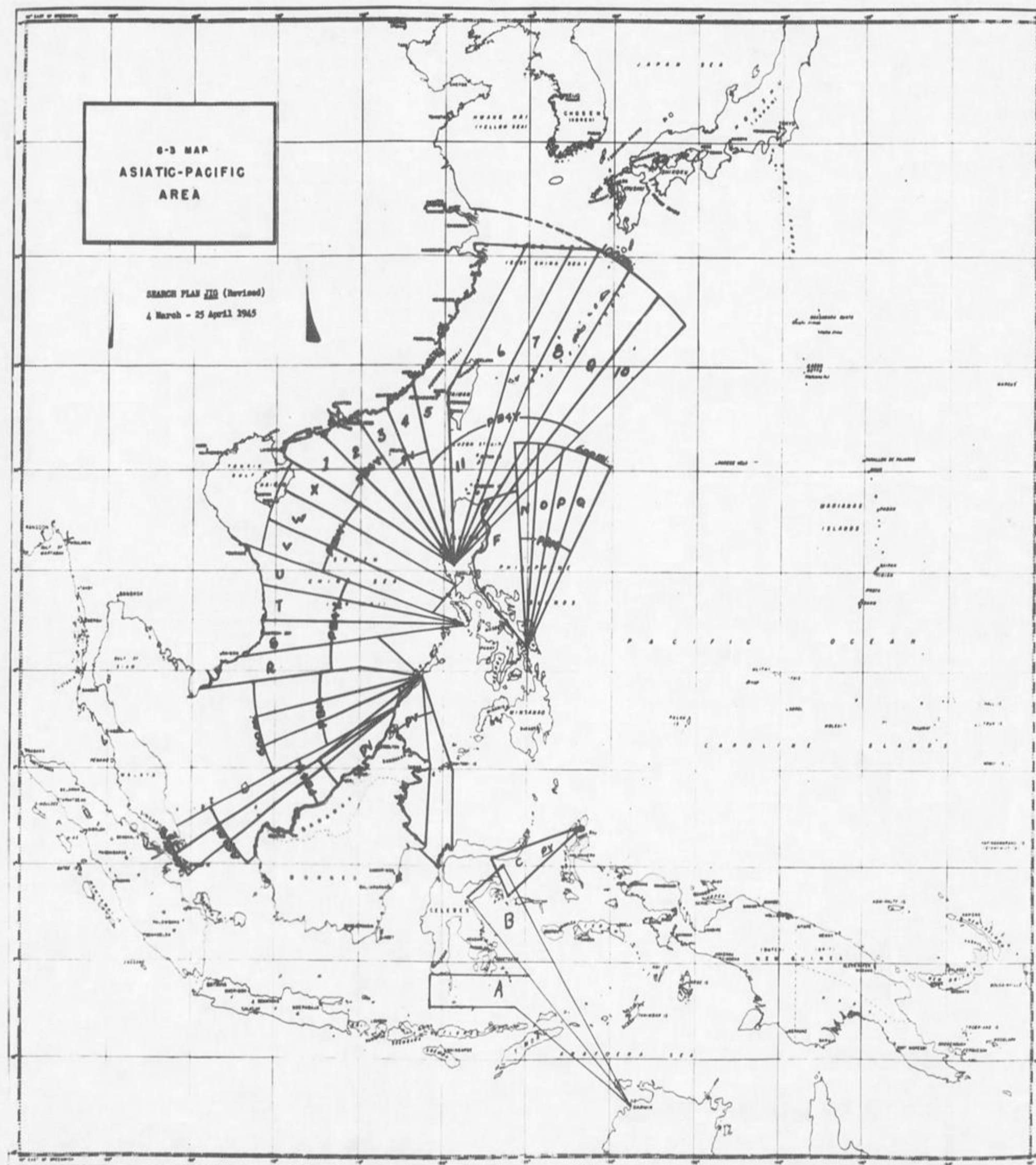




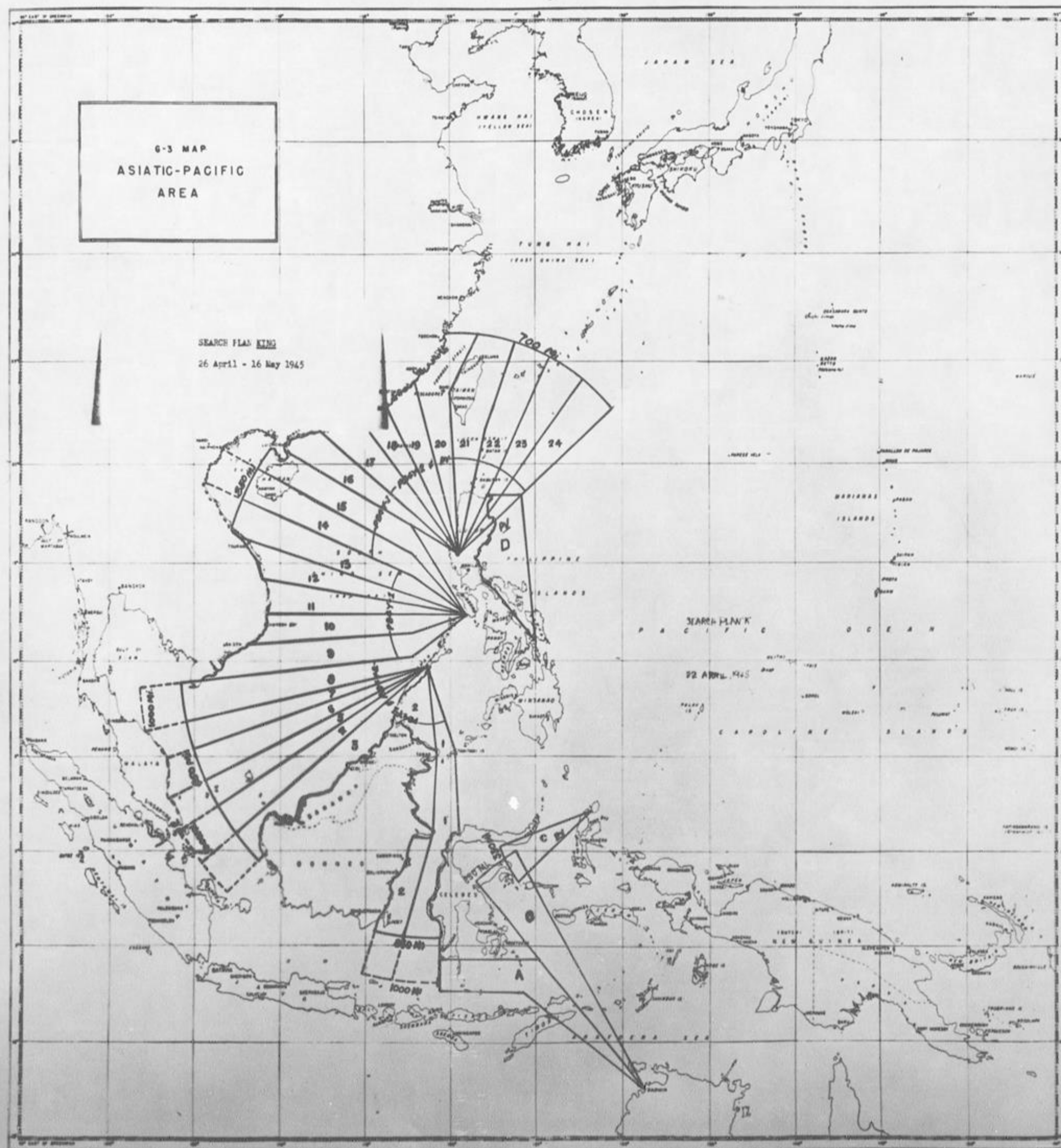


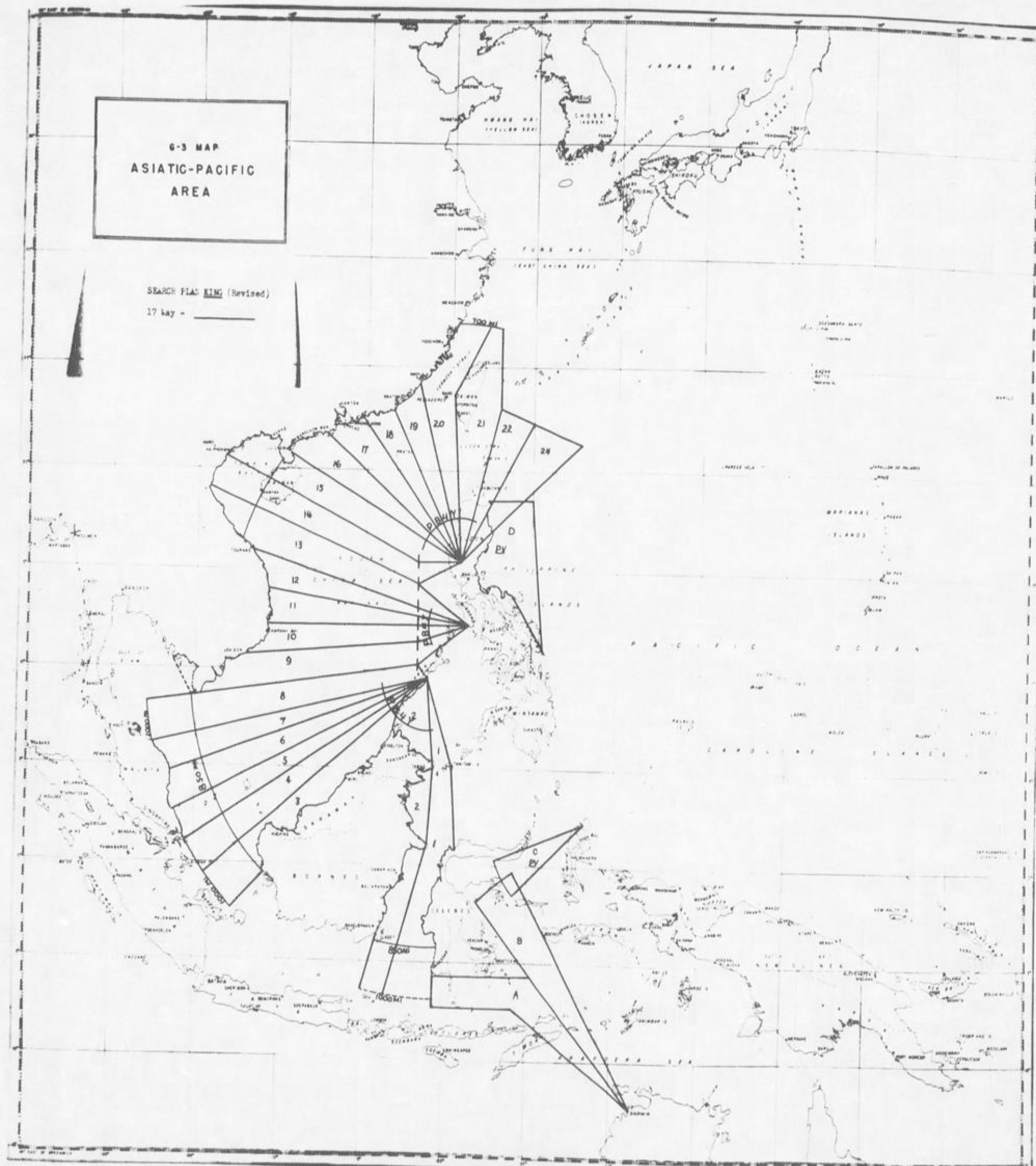














A-N-N-E-X   D

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

Pl6-1/(05-jf)

25 June 1945

Serial: 00137

From: The Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET.  
To : The Commander in Chief United States Fleet  
and Chief of Naval Operations.

Via : (1) The Commander, SEVENTH FLEET.  
(2) The Commander Air Force, United States  
PACIFIC FLEET.

Subject: Rotation of VPB Squadrons.

1. Until 31 July 1944 VPB Squadrons in the forward areas were relieved as squadrons. On that date relief of squadrons by new squadrons terminated and subsequently the crews of squadrons have been relieved by fresh crews according to a rotation program.

2. Initially an unexpected advantage accrued from the relieving crews, for the reason that within the squadrons there were set up factors and scores to determine which crews should go home first. The resultant intra-squadron competition had a healthy effect. That advantage now has disappeared because the old crews who had been in the combat area the same automatically dictates that the crew on station longest is the first to go home.

3. The plan to relieve individual crews rather than squadrons has been in effect long enough to warrant comment and specific recommendation. It has become very apparent that for a squadron operating in a forward area the disadvantages of the crew relief system far outweigh its advantages.

The disadvantages are:

- (a) The squadron never is entirely fresh.
- (b) The squadron is in a constant state of flux. The crews do not know each other and squadron spirit largely disappears.



P16-1/(05-jf)

25 June 1945.

Serial: 00137

Subject: Rotation of VPB Squadrons.  
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- (c) The squadron commander learns the capabilities of his squadron only from the reports of the actions of the individual crews. He receives the incoming crews in the war zone and is required to send them on war time missions without sufficient opportunity to judge their capabilities.
- (d) The squadron commander never becomes the veteran of the squadron until he and his crew are about to leave for home. Actually he commands each crew for an average of three (3) months.
- (e) The steady induction of new crews requires that constant effort be placed on instruction in fundamentals. This is undesirable for a squadron in combat areas where the instruction efforts of experienced personnel should be devoted to improving combat techniques or tactics to meet changing conditions or new enemy tactics.

The doubtful advantages of the new system are:

- (a) A part of the squadron always is fresh.
- (b) A part of the squadron is familiar with the area of operations.

4. Under the old system of relieving the VPB Squadrons with other squadrons, the squadron was formed in the United States. The squadron commander organized his squadron, trained it and brought it into the war zone at the culmination of his training and with intimate knowledge of its strength and weakness. The squadron fought with high morale, with a unified spirit arising from close association, and with high efficiency.

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

Pl6-1/(05-jf)

25 June 1945.

Serial: 00137

Subject: Rotation of VPB Squadrons.  
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The squadron then left as a group for home.

5. This entire command has watched the working of the new system and having had complete experience with the old system is unanimous in recommending a return to relief by squadrons at the earliest possible moment. This unanimity of opinion is expressed by Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH FLEET, Commander Fleet Air Wing SEVENTEEN, Commander Fleet Air Wing TEN and each squadron commander in the area.

/s/ F. D. WAGNER.



UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET  
AIR FORCE PACIFIC FLEET

FF12-5 (A4-1(1))  
(RJS-30-Bt)

25 July 1945

Serial: 001778

2nd Endorsement to  
ComAir7thFlt secret ser.  
00137 dated 25 June 1945.

From: ComAirPac.  
To : CominCh and CNO.  
Via : CinCPac Adv. Hqtrs.

Subject: Rotation of VPB Squadrons.

1. Rehabilitation of multi-engine squadrons by a system of combat aircrew replacement in lieu of returning full squadrons to the continental U.S. for reforming was instituted only after careful deliberation of all the factors involved and with full cognizance and appreciation of advantages and disadvantages of each system.
2. To support the present multi-engine squadron flight crew replacement system, a very extensive training organization was established.
3. The disadvantages of the present system enumerated in the basic correspondence as (b), (c) and (d) are counterbalanced to an extent by the fact that operations of multi-engine squadrons are, in the main, sorties of single aircraft. Squadron tactics are not involved to the same extent as that required for single-engine squadrons.
4. The question of squadron "morale" and "spirit" is irrevocably bound to leadership and loyalty. A resolute leader is irrevocably bound to leadership and loyalty. A resolute leader or combination of leaders will instill "morale" and "squadron spirit" under any system, while the opposite may prevail when leadership is weak.
5. The statement that replacement crews require "instruction in fundamentals" cannot be literally accepted. The initial crew training given by the continental training command plus the specialized training given by fleet commands are geared to produce combat ready flight crews. It is felt that these agencies are doing creditable work. There is no way for these agencies to teach experience, which can only be gained in contact with the enemy.
6. It may be pointed out that the following advantages, in addition to those listed in the basic correspondence, must be considered:
  - (a) Combat experienced personnel are returned to the forward area, in flight crews, in approximately 5 months. The former reforming interval for squadrons totalled 7-8 months.

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET  
AIR FORCE PACIFIC FLEET

FF12-5(A4-1(1))

Serial: 001778

25 July 1945

Subject: Rotation of VPB-Squadrons.  
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- (b) Individual combat crews are trained by a single agency to bring them to a uniform level of combat proficiency.
- (c) Variations inherent in a system whereby the proficiency of a squadron is a measure of the experience and ability of an individual squadron commander as a training officer are thereby eliminated.

7. A system of rotation by full squadrons requires that there be in commission at all times more squadrons than the number actually deployed for combat operations, the exact number being dependent upon the established rotational policy. Previously, this requirement had been one squadron rehabilitating and reforming for every squadron deployed for combat. Approximately half of the authorized combatant units are consequently deployed in rear rehabilitation and reforming areas. The overhead in aviation billets required for squadrons rotation exceeds by far that necessary to support rotation by combat aircrews. It would be most difficult at this time to revert to a system of rotation by squadrons.

8. ComAirPac recommends against changing the present combat aircrew replacement program for multi-engine squadrons.

/s/ A. E. MONTGOMERY.

Copy to:  
ComAir7thFlt  
Com7thFlt.



A-N-N-E-X E

UNITED STATES FLEET  
FLEET AIR WING SEVENTEEN

Al6-3/(OO-en)

Serial: 545

27 Sep 1944

From: The Commander Fleet Air Wing SEVENTEEN.  
To : Lieutenant James F. MERRITT, A-V(N), USNR.  
Via : The Commanding Officer, Patrol Bombing Squadron  
THIRTY THREE.

Subject: Ramming Tactics, Plane versus Surface Ship -  
Disapproval of.

1. The history of naval warfare is replete with incidents of ramming as an effective method of destroying opposing ships. Students of history will recall such battles as Salamis, Actium, Lepanto and Lissa wherein ramming was the primary method of sinking. Formidable pointed rams were provided by the naval constructors of those days on the underwater part of the bow. Even in modern times, underwater rams were built into the bows of battleships with the expectancy that ramming tactics might be employed. However, except for anti-submarine tactics, ramming has not been effectively employed since the days of our own Civil War. Even in the times of Nelson and J. P. Jones ramming tactics assumed a secondary role in ship to ship contact. The placing of a ship alongside an enemy for the purpose of boarding being preferred.

2. Except for isolated instances by the Japanese, the ramming of ships by aircraft is without precedent. A cursory comparison of the construction of aircraft and surface ships will readily reveal that in a case of contact between the two the plane will come out second best because of its lighter construction. Furthermore, a careful inspection will reveal the complete absence of a ram device on aircraft.

3. In consideration of the foregoing, that part of your action on the night of 16-17 September 1944, wherein you deliberately rammed the ship you were attacking, is disapproved. It is considered that factors contributing to the destruction of the ship can be assessed as follows: bombs, 98 %, machine gun fire, 2%, and ramming 0%.

4. The official report covering your action has not yet been received but it is assumed that being so imbued with naval tradition you issued the proper commands to your gallant crew when the decision to ram was made and that your boarding party was properly equipped and indoctrinated.



A16-3/(00-cn)

27 Sept 1945.

Serial 545

Subject: Ramming Tactics, Plane Versus Surface Ship -  
Disapproval of.

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5. It is entirely possible, due to shortage of critical materials in the Japanese Empire, that Japanese surface Ships may eventually be lightly enough constructed to make ramming tactics by aircraft profitable. At such time your experience may prove invaluable in the indoctrination and training of crews in these revolutionary tactics.

C. B. JONES

Copy to:  
ComAir7thFlt  
CFAW-10

A-N-N-E-X F



Detailed report on rescue of Lieutenant Frank D. MURPHY and other survivors from Luichow Peninsula crash:

On 17 June 1945 Lieutenant F. D. Murphy (157527), USNR, VPB-119, flying Navy Privateer Bu. No. 59427 failed to return from search patrol of sector 16, Search Plan KING. He reported that Fort Bayard was empty at 1055 Item, but no further communication was received. At 1700 Item ComFAirWing 17 made numerous attempts to contact Lieutenant Murphy without success. At the request of ComFAirWing 17, the 5th Bomber Command joined in the attempt using the facilities of 309 Bomb Wing and 310 Bomb Wing as well as their own. The radio logs of search planes in other sectors were checked to see if any of such planes had been in contact with sector 16 after 1055 Item but no contact had been made. ComFAirWing 17 notified ComNavGroup China by urgent secret dispatch at 1942 Item that sector 16 had failed to return from Patrol, gave the last message received from him, and asked for all possible assistance. Less than an hour later complete information was sent by urgent dispatch to ComAF 5 Air Sea Rescue.

Following is a day by day account of the action taken by ComFAirWing 17 and Commanding Officer, VPB-119 to effectuate the rescue of the five (5) survivors of the crash:

18 June 1945 - Two (2) search planes were assigned to cover sector 16, flown by Lieutenant W. P. Comstock, USNR, and Lieutenant T.R. Alkire, USNR, both of VPB-119. The sector was divided between the two pilots in order to insure complete coverage of the area in which Lieutenant Murphy might have gone down. The two adjoining sectors, Lieutenant(jg) J.H. Wolf in sector 15 and Lieutenant(jg) A.L. Lindsell sector 17, both of VPB-119, were to make thorough searches in their respective sectors and then use any fuel remaining to search in sector 16. All pilots were thoroughly briefed on their missions.

Lieutenant(jg) Wolf was successful in locating the wreckage of a plane on Luichow Peninsula and positively identified it as a Privateer. This identification was later confirmed by photographs taken by Lieutenant Alkire. Lieutenant (jg) Wolfe contacted Lieutenant Alkire and called him over to the scene of the wreckage. They both made several runs over the wreckage at low altitude but found no sign of life. The wreckage appeared to be old and it was thought it might be the wreckage of one of two planes previously lost in the area. Lieutenant (jg) Wolfe proceeded on his search. Shortly thereafter Lieutenant Alkire caught the flash of a signal mirror from a position about one mile east of the wreckage, an examination of the position disclosed at least one survivor. Lieutenant Alkire immediately notified



base radio and gave the position of the wreckage as 20-29N; 110-50E. This position was later revised to 20-26N, 110-50E. ComFAirWing 17 advised Lieutenant Alkire to remain in the area as long as possible. He did so until relieved by Lieutenant (jg) Wolfe. Lieutenant (jg) Wolfe dropped emergency rations and medical supplies, then being of the opinion that his presence might attract the enemy, returned to base. The information sent by Lieutenant Alkire was passed to ComAF 5 Air Sea Rescue, ComNavGroup, China, and ComAF 14 for action and to other interested commands for information.

- 19 June 1945 - After thorough discussion of the information at hand, ComFAirWing 17 and Commanding Officer VPB-119 determined that no attempts at rescue should be made until advices had been received from ComNavGroup China, and because of the possibility of attracting enemy attention to the position of the survivors, all search planes were briefed to stay clear of the immediate area and to hunt elsewhere for Lieutenant Murphy as the wreckage might not be his. The same day ComFAirWing 17 was advised by ComNavU 14 that a parachute jump was planned to escort Lieutenant Murphy from the area.
- 20 June 1945 - ComNavGroup China advised ComFAirWing 17 that they had contacted Lieutenant Murphy, that all twelve members of the crew were in safe hands, and that four of these were injured. The information as to the number of survivors later proved to be inaccurate as five were eventually rescued. This information was passed to ComAir7thFlt and ComAF 5 Air Sea Rescue.
- 21 June 1945 - ComFAirWing 17 received a dispatch from ComNavGroup China advising that Lieutenant R. C. Scott and an unidentified army officer (2nd Lieutenant Naylor-Foote) had parachuted at 20-50N, 109-50E to assist Lieutenant Murphy and would move toward the survivors. The dispatch requested that a patrol plane contact Lieutenant Scott the following day and also arranged for a system of parachute signals.
- 22 June 1945 - Lieutenant T. R. Alkire was assigned to special search and briefed to contact Lieutenant Scott, while Lieutenant Commander M. S. Ragan was to search sector 16. Lieutenant Alkire had little difficulty in finding the parachute signals. Lieutenant Scott wrote out a message on the ground, using a parachute, requesting that a radio be dropped to him the following day. Lieutenant Alkire dropped emergency medical supplies and continued his sector search, advising base radio of the information received.



23 June 1945 - Lieutenant (jg) Wolf flew sector 16 this day. The pilots who were most familiar with the area were assigned to this sector daily in order to minimize the possibility of missing contact. Lieutenant (jg) Wolf dropped a Handy-Talkie radio and within a few minutes was in voice communication with Lieutenant Scott at 20-41N, 109-55E. Lieutenant Scott advised that he had broken his ankle on parachuting in and would be unable to move for a time. He requested various medical supplies, arms and ammunition. At 1300 Item Lieutenant (jg) Wolfe made contact with Lieutenant Murphy at 20-20N, 110-23E, his attention be attracted by the flash of a signal mirror and a flare. One of the co-pilots positively identified one of the men as Lieutenant Murphy. Lieutenant (jg) Wolfe dropped a note telling Lieutenant Murphy that Lieutenant Scott had parachuted to the north and would attempt to contact him. Lieutenant (jg) Wolf reported that there were three or four survivors in addition to Lieutenant Murphy.

In view of the fact that the survivors had worked their way to within a short distance of the coast and of the fact that the search plane pilots reported that the area appeared feasible for seaplane landing, ComFAirWing 17 and Commanding Officer VPB-119 determined that a rescue attempt should be made the following day. Plans were laid that evening at a meeting of representatives of FAV-17, VPB-119, and ComAF 5 Air Sea Rescue. A PBY-5A was directed to take off from Florida Blanca at daybreak to reach the rendezvous point on the southeastern coast of Luichow Peninsula at 1230 Item. Lieutenant W. P. Comstock, VPB-119, was to arrive over Lieutenant Murphy's position at 1100 Item, drop a radio and give Lieutenant Murphy instructions. Thereafter he would cover pickup operations and then drop additional supplies to Lieutenant Scott. Lieutenant (jg) Wolfe was to fly in the PBY-5A because of his familiarity with the area. ComNavU 14, 14th Air Force and ComNavGroup China were advised of these plans. Lieutenant Comstock was successful in dropping the Handy-Talkie to Lieutenant Murphy and in establishing voice communications. He instructed the survivors that the PBY-5A would arrive in an hour and a half and that he would zoom their position in the direction he wanted them to proceed. He crashed as he was in his final turn. An eye witness account of this crash is contained in Annexes A through E. The cause of the crash has not and can not be determined. Three of the survivors went to the crash scene and reported that the Privateer had blown up in a mass of flames, that there was nothing left other than charred wreckage, and that there were no survivors.



The PBY-5A proceeded to the rendezvous point, piloted by 1st Lieutenant Honeck, COMAF 5 Air Sea Rescue. Lieutenant Honeck, not being able to contact Lieutenant Comstock called Lieutenant R. N. Atzenweiler, USNR, VPB-119, who was flying sector 15, and asked for cover. Lieutenant Atzenweiler came over and flew cover while Lieutenant Honeck set the PBY down on the water. A rubber life raft was put ashore, manned by Lieutenant (jg) Wolfe and the navigator of the PBY-5A. In two trips the five survivors were safely put aboard the PBY-5A and were flown back to Clark Field. Lieutenant Murphy advised Lieutenant Atzenweiler that Lieutenant Comstock had crashed, so Lieutenant Atzenweiler flew over the wreckage and advised base radio of the events that had transpired. A report of the rescue was contained in FAW-17 Summary that evening.

25 June 1945 - ComFAirWing 17 sent a dispatch to ComNavGroup China and to all interested commands advising them of the information which Lieutenant Murphy had obtained during his week on Luichow Peninsula. This information is summarized in paragraph 4 of this report.

Lieutenant H. L. Gossage, USNR, VPB-119, flew sector 16 and dropped additional supplies to Lieutenant Scott, informing him of the rescue of Lieutenant Murphy and other interested commands were notified that a plane would be sent the following day to arrange for the evacuation.

26 June 1945 - Lieutenant Atzenweiler flew sector 16 but was unable to contact Lieutenant Scott. 1st Lieutenant Hanna, ComAF 5 Air Sea Rescue, accompanied Lieutenant Atzenweiler to examine the area for a feasible landing sight.

27 June 1945 - Lieutenant T. R. Alkire, USNR, VPB-119, flew sector 16 and established voice communications with Lieutenant Scott. Lieutenant Scott requested that arrangements be made to pick him up, together with 2nd Lieutenant Naylor-Foote, on 29 June 1945. He stated that he would proceed to the west coast of Luichow Peninsula and would be in a Chinese junk off shore on 29 June at 1200 Item. A rendezvous point and a system of identification signals were agreed upon. All arrangements were to be confirmed by sector 16 the following day. ComAF 5 Air Sea Rescue was again contacted and arrangements made for a PBY-5A to pick up Lieutenant Scott and 2nd Lieutenant Naylor-Foote on 29 June. Lieutenant Hanna accompanied Lieutenant Alkire on this flight. ComNavU 14 and ComNavGroup China were notified that arrangements had been made to evacuate Lieutenant Scott and 2nd Lieutenant Naylor-Foote to the Philippines on 29 June.



- 28 June 1945 - Lieutenant Gossage flew sector 16, dropping additional supplies to Lieutenant Scott and confirmed the arrangements for the rescue the following day.
- 29 June 1945 - Lieutenant Atzenweiler again flew sector 16 and located the junk carrying Lieutenant Scott and 2nd Lieutenant Naylor-Foote, establishing voice communications. Lieutenant Scott still was carrying the Handy-Talkie radio which had been dropped to him previously. Playmate 17 (PBY-5A) arrived at the rendezvous point but after examination of the water determined that it was too rough to land. Lieutenant Scott and Lieutenant Atzenweiler then made arrangements for a pickup the following day at the same time and place. Playmate 17 advised Lieutenant Atzenweiler that he would proceed to Nanning, remain overnight and return to the scene the following morning -- then proceed in a northerly direction. Lieutenant Atzenweiler advised base radio of the developments and recommended that arrangements be made for a PBM-3C to make the pick-up the following day. He then continued on patrol.

During the afternoon Playmate 17 sent three dispatches to V BomCom Air Ground that he was ditching. The first, at 1725 Item stated that he was "ditching at rendezvous." The second, 1755 Item, read "An landing at point of rendezvous forced landing." All rescue facilities were advised including FAW-17 search planes in adjacent sectors. That evening arrangements were made by ComFAirWing 17 and Commanding Officer VPB-119 for a PBM-3C of VPB-28 to make the pick-up the following day, and Lieutenant Alkire was again assigned to cover the operation.

- 30 June 1945 - When Lieutenant Alkire arrived at the scene he found Playmate 17 riding on the water, out of gasoline with Lieutenant Scott and 2nd Lieutenant Naylor-Foote aboard, and immediately advised base radio. Lieutenant (jg) A. L. Lindsell, USNR, VPB-119, flying sector 15 was also in the area. The PBM-3C, piloted by Lieutenant Hermanson, VPB-28, arrived shortly thereafter and landed safely, taking Lieutenant Scott, 2nd Lieutenant Naylor-Foote and the crew of Playmate 17 aboard. The advisability of sinking the PBY was considered, but Lieutenant Scott and the pilot of the PBY left the Chinese guerillas in charge with instructions to strip the plane of the guns they could use and to sink the plane if it was not picked up within two days. Lieutenant Alkire advised base radio that the rescue was successful and the PBM-3C was returning to base. It landed at Lingayen, and on July 1, 1945 Lieutenant Scott and 2nd Lieutenant



Naylor-Boote were flown to Clark Field. ComFAirWing 17 advised ComNavU 14 of this fact on 1 July 1945. The PBY-5A was picked up by Army authorities on 2 July 1945, flown to Nanning for fuel and returned to base.

During this time that he was on Luichow Peninsula, particularly while spending two days with Dr. Kam Stan, Lieutenant Murphy was given a considerable amount of information concerning guerrilla and enemy activities. This information was forwarded by secret dispatch to ComNavGroup China in 25 June 1945, with ComNavU 14, ComAAF SWPA, COMAF 5, COMAF 14, ComAir7thFlt, Com7thFlt and ComAirPac as information addressees. On 26 June 1945 the Commanding Officer, VPB-119 and the ACI Officer, VPB-119, passed this information orally to MIS-X, Manila, P. I. The following information was given to Lieutenant Murphy by the guerrillas with whom he was in contact.

The guerrillas, both Chinese and Hainanese, are in control of a substantial portion of southeast Luichow Peninsula. The perimeter of this friendly area is difficult of definition, but generally speaking it includes the area south of 20-35N, and east of 110-12E. The outer limits of the area on the west and north are subject to constant change by reason of periodic attacks by enemy forces. In addition, the guerrillas hold the southwest tip of the peninsula to approximately 20-18N. The guerrilla controlled area in the southeast includes the towns CHINNAOYU, CHUICHISHSLH and CHIENSHANYU. On the north it extends almost to CHOUFENGSHIH. On the west it follows an irregular line to the east of the roadway running north from HSUNEN. The Japs have been evacuating troops by junk from HOI HOW BAY across HAINAN STRAIT to the vicinity of HSUNEN and then north by truck. The roadway running north from HSUNEN is constantly patrolled by enemy forces. It was on this roadway that Lieutenant Murphy was strafing trucks at the time he crash landed. The coast line of this southeastern area was included in the area pointed out to Lieutenant Murphy as friendly, and the Chinese are operating motorized junks along the coast. The junks are operated by sail most of the time and only use motors at times of emergency.

The guerrillas are both Chinese and Hainanese and are well organized. Dr. Kam Stan is the number one man and is completely in charge of all guerrilla operations in the area. The name of the town where he makes his headquarter is not known. They maintain constant patrols and in many places have telephone communications. Dr. Kam Stan stated that there are three or four thousand guerrillas in the area and that they are badly in need of arms, ammunition and medical supplies. They carry old rifles and pistols of varying types. They have at least one radio station and appear to be in touch with some point in China. As a rule guerrillas wear the ordinary peasant type of clothing, including a large hat, and can be identified by a red band worn on the left arm. Without question they are extremely friendly.



Dr. Kam Stan estimated that there are 5,000 Jap troops remaining on Hainan Island and stated that Pakhoi is completely friendly. It was to Pakhoi that he intended to evacuate Lieutenant Murphy.

Comment on the recommendations of Lieutenant Murphy and his air crewmen with regard to evasion and escape equipment seems desirable. We again have a case where the survivors escaped with only such gear as they had on their persons, which was very little. The importance of wearing this gear can not be over-emphasized. In most cases, particularly where a plane goes down on land, there is no time to look for gear. All personnel must leave the plane as quickly as possible -- ammunition and bombs are likely to go off at any moment. This raises a problem with turret men as they are cramped for space and any excess gear impedes the operation of their guns, but at least they should carry as much equipment in their pockets as possible. A signal mirror, small compass, blood chits, and the medicinal packets from the E-17 emergency kit will readily fit into the pockets of a flight suit, and they should be so carried where a gun belt is too cumbersome.

One of the most valuable pieces of equipment, in the experience of these men, was the Emergency Signalling Mirror (ESM/1) from the E-17 kit. On at least two separate occasions the attention of the search planes was attracted from considerable distance away. The pilots of these search planes reported that the flash of the mirror was responsible for their locating the survivors.

The use of the Handy-Talkie radio in establishing air to ground communications was highly successful. The first of these radios was dropped to Lieutenant Scott and within a few minutes he was in voice communications with the search plane. From then on there was no difficulty in ascertaining his needs and working out plans for his evacuation. The difficulty of communication without voice contact is apparent. Again, on 24 June 1945, a Handy-Talkie was dropped to Lieutenant Murphy with highly successful results -- within a very few minutes Lieutenant Comstock was able to give range of these radios far exceeded expectations, one pilot reporting that he believes he had Lieutenant Scott for a distance of 10 miles, and on several occasions he was contacted by voice before any visual contact was made. An adequate supply of batteries must be provided for they last only a short time. Replacement batteries were dropped to Lieutenant Scott almost daily. It is strongly recommended that a Handy-Talkie radio be carried as standard equipment in every search plane and that it be rigged for parachute drop on first contact with survivors; it is believed that valuable time will be saved.



S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

The lack of medical supplies seriously hampered and endangered Lieutenant Murphy and his men. While each man was provided with a E-17 kit, and standard medical equipment was carried in the plane, the five survivors had only one kit with them when they escaped from the plane. There was a complete lack of medical supplies in the area in which they landed. Again the importance of keeping such essential gear on your person is emphasized. Goodwin, K. A. AMMF1c, points out he was unable to reach his gear even though it was hanging directly over his head. Lieutenant Murphy strongly recommends that all air crewmen wear protective clothing at all times, particularly a flight jacket. His flight jacket was slashed in many places and he believes it save him from serious flesh wounds.

Finally, the old adage "truet the Chinese" bears repeating. It has been repeated time and time again, but can not be over-emphasized. The Guerrillas on Luichow Peninsula were 100 per-cent friendly and did all in their power to get these men to safety. Their help was invaluable.



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A-N-N-E-X G



OPERATIONS OF BOMBING SQUADRON 115, JULY, 1944.

VB 115 carried out four long-distance searches on every day of July, with the exception of a single sector on three different days, making a total of one hundred twenty one searches during the month. For the first sixteen days the searches radiated to distances from five to eight hundred miles from Wakde Island and during the remainder of the month to seven-fifty and eight-hundred miles from Owi Island. During the first two weeks bombs were dropped on seven targets consisting of enemy supply and camp areas and machine-gun positions, with damage observed in five cases, but after July 19, owing to a shortage of bombs at Wakde, it was forbidden to use them on ground targets. The paragraphs which follow also record the destruction of two Japanese aircraft and the damage brought to a total of fifteen shipping targets on nine separate occasions.

1/7/44 Ensign J. D. GREGORY extended his 500-mile sector to investigate installations on Sonsorol Island. One run over the island was made, gliding from 1500 to 1000 feet. The pilot released three bombs by pickle from the cockpit which were observed to fall on a group of fifteen warehouses with metal roofs in a settlement on the west shore of the island, but no specific results were observed. 1000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition were expended in strafing. No A/A fire received.

2/7/44 Returning from the far end of an eight hundred mile search from Wakde, Lieutenant S. ATWOOD was cruising at 10,000 feet, threading his way through towering cumulus clouds, on a course of 060. The co-pilot, Ensign R. C. SNODDY, sighted an EMILY coming around a cloud at a distance of five miles, at 9500 feet, approaching on a 270 course at a speed of approximately 160 knots. Military power of 45 inches of mercury and 2500 RPM was at once applied to the PB4Y which gained a speed of 200 knots. After making a climbing turn, the pilot made a first run over the EMILY from its port quarter. The enemy plane was overrun on this pass, but the bow, top and tail turrets and the starboard waist gun got in good bursts, knocked out the EMILY's top and tail guns, and raked the fuselage. Flame and smoke immediately broke out just above the step in the fuselage, suggesting hits on fuel cells in that area. During the rest of the action the fire spread throughout the fuselage. The port engines also were set smoking.

A 90-degree turn brought the PB4Y again over the EMILY which meanwhile went into a straight glide. By cutting the throttles, the pilot kept our plane directly on the EMILY's port quarter, and all guns and an excellent target at line of sight range. By this time the EMILY was burning furiously. Twice it was pulled up to a stall, and fell off again. The second time it plunged into the water from about 2000 feet altitude. During its last dive, the EMILY exploded and its wings and tail assembly fell off. Only an oil fire remained on the water.



OPERATIONS OF BOMBING SQUADRON 115, JULY, 1944 (CONTINUED)

Possible 7.7 MM fire from the EMILY's starboard was the only return fire received. ATWOOD's plane was hit.

The EMILY gave every appearance of being completely surprised. Its waist hatches were closed until it had already been crippled by our first pass. Had its pilot been alert, he should certainly have been able to see the PB4Y during its approach.

5/7/44 Ensign T. R. BARKER was flying the cross leg at the end of a 640-mile sector from Wakde Island at 8000 foot altitude when a 300-foot AK(SB) and a 100-foot escort gunboat (the target ships) were sighted one mile off Cape Lolai, Halmahera Island, on a course of 260 degrees true heading into Kaoe Bay. Weather conditions were favorable; with scattered 4/10 cumulus clouds in the immediate area, and a front lying 30 miles to the northeast.

Six 100# bombs only were available for an attack, as 2 X 500# bombs had already been expended on gun positions and buildings at Merir Island, with good results. Two of the 100# bombs could not be fused because of dirt in the threads.

On the first of two runs over the ships at 500 feet, three bombs were pickled by the pilot with minimum interval, one hitting amidships and the others falling near. Fire broke out on the bridge after the first strafing burst by the bow turret. On the second run three more 100# bombs (two duds) were dropped but fell short. Both ships were strafed on both runs.

A large explosion was seen and felt from the direct hit, and the ship began to burn fiercely. For forty minutes the fire increased, and the crew were seen to abandon ship by boats and by jumping overboard. The escort vessel also left the scene and headed into Kaoe Bay.

A/A fire, mostly 20mm, from the escort vessel was intense but inaccurate, falling far short. No A/A was received from the AK, and no guns seen. No hits were received by the Y.

On the same day, Lieutenant W. LINDGREN bombed and strafed enemy machine-gun positions and the camp area on Merir Island. 3 X 500# GP bombs, 4-5 second delay fuse, and 2 X 100# bombs, also 4-5 second delay were dropped from low-level and 4000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition were expended in four runs. Slight machine-gun A/A was observed.



- 6/7/44 Lieutenant J. J. COONAN reported one 350-foot Fox Taro Charlie, one destroyer, (probably DE), and one plane (probably a Rufe) at 1245K, three miles off Cape I, the entrance to Kae Bay, Halmahera, course 160 degrees. The PB4Y attempted a low-level attack on the FTC but was driven off by intense A/A from the destroyer. The plane circled, climbed to 12,000 feet and dropped 3 X 500# GP bombs which missed by 300 feet. The Rufe appeared from the direction of Kae Bay during the climb but did not intercept.
- 12/7/44 Lieutenant R. L. WHITE dropped 2 X 500# GP bombs on boathouse area at Sonsorol Island from 8000 feet. Hits were observed in the target area but results were not known.
- 16/7/44 Lieutenant J. E. LITTLE sighted a 300-400-foot freighter transport (Fox Taro Charlie) accompanied by 100-150-foot escort gunboat 15 miles northeast of Morotai Island on course from Halmahera to Palau. After maneuvering the escort out of position, the PB4Y made a low-level attack. Violent change of course by the ship caused the plane to side-slip in order to compensate for the turn of the ship. 2 X 500# GP, 4-5 second delay bombs were dropped but fell 50 feet astern because of the side-slip. Strafing by all turrets (1100 rounds) scored many hits and fires were observed on the after deck of the ship. The ship came to a stop indicating probable damage. Lieutenant R. L. WHITE dropped 2 X 500# GP bombs on Tobi Island from 9000 feet obtaining hits on warehouse area.
- 18/7/44 Ensign P. R. BARKER sighted a 100-foot lugger and a 100 foot steel coastal vessel at 03-10N, 127-34E, course 250, speed 12 knots. Four bombing runs were made at 150 feet. On the first two runs no bombs were dropped. On the third run a 500# GP bomb fell 100 feet short and damaged the steel ship so that it stopped dead in the water and did not again get underway. The fourth run was made on the lugger. A 500# GP, 4-5 second delay bomb exploded 20 feet off the port quarter and scattered wreckage over a wide area. As 2200 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition were poured into the ships on three more strafing runs, fires were observed.
- 21/7/44 Lieutenant W. LINDGREN sighted a BETTY at 07-10N, 127-34E, 1430K at 8000 feet, course 240, 1½ miles distant. The plane was on course 150 degrees and closed distance rapidly when military power was applied. The plane opened fire at 1000 yards, at which time evasive action had not been taken by the BETTY. Fire from the belly, bow and top turrets hit the cockpit and starboard engine immediately. 500 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition caused the Jap plane to go out of control in a steep spiral until it crashed into the sea. Evidently the pilot was killed instantly, for at no time did the BETTY burst into flame although the starboard engine was smoking.



S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

OPERATIONS OF BOMBING SQUADRON 115, JULY, 1944. (CONTINUED)

Lieutenant LINDGREN sighted two destroyers of the T-class at 07-00N, 130-00E, course 090 degrees, speed 20 knots. No attack was pressed as the plane was low on gasoline. The anti-aircraft fire from heavy guns was moderate and accurate. On the same day, Lieutenant Commander H. E. ROBINSON sighted a Toss over Talaud Island an attack was pressed for twenty minutes until the loss of one engine and considerable cloud cover caused the attack to be broken off.

- 22/7/44 Lieutenant M. WENNER sighted a 100-foot lugger at 09-00N, 127-25E at 1230K, course 180 degrees. As no bombs had been carried, the pilot made six low-level strafing runs. Many large fires were started as 1500 rounds of .50 caliber were expended. A heavy cloud of black smoke was observed over the ship and oil was burning on the water alongside. Personnel were noticed jumping overboard and the ship was considered sunk.
- 23/7/44 Lieutenant P. J. BRUNEAU attacked a 100-foot lugger tied up at a pier in Boo Bay, Talaud Island. Two low-level runs were made and 2 X 500# GP, 4-5 second delay bombs were dropped but missed by 100 feet. 1 X 100# bomb was dropped on the second run but, because of a defective tail vane, fell erratically, skipped and demolished a warehouse near the pier. Seven more strafing runs were made and two explosions were observed rocking the ship badly. Many small fires were started as 2500 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition were expended. The bow gunner was slightly wounded by A/A machine-gun fire.
- 24/7/44 Ensign P. R. BARKER sighted a 100-foot lugger and an 80-foot trawler tied up to the pier in Boo Bay, Talaud Island, and a 50-foot boat in the Harbor. Three low-level bombing and strafing runs were made. On the first run 3 X 300# GP, 4-5 second delay bombs were dropped, falling on the beach 50 feet short of the target. On the second run no bombs were dropped. On the third run 2 X 300# GP, 4-5 second delay bombs were dropped close to the ships. The concussion capsized the trawler and fire broke out on the lugger, causing the side to fall off and a heavy fire to start. 1100 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition were expended in all, damaging seriously foot boat in the harbor.
- 25/7/44 Lieutenant M. WENNER attacked the same ships at the pier in Boo Bay, Talaud Island, dropping 5 X 100# and 3 X 300# 4-5 second delay bombs from low altitude. No hits were observed, although strafing runs caused damage.
- 29/7/44 Lieutenant H. M. DAWES found a 60-foot power boat in Boo Bay, Talaud Island, and after making one bombing and strafing run at low-level, blew it out of the water with a direct hit from 2 X 100# GP bombs with 4-5 second delay fuses.



OPERATIONS OF BOMBING SQUADRON 115, JULY 1944 (CONTINUED)

30/7/44 Lieutenant R. L. WHITE found in Boe Bay, Talaud Isl. a 100-foot steel lugger and a 70-foot wooden vessel tied to the pier. Six bombing and strafing runs were made at medium head height. No bombs were dropped on the first two runs, but on the third run 3 X 300# and 2 X 100# GP bombs were dropped and made direct hits on the wooden vessel, which exploded and was demolished. Two more strafing runs were made on the steel vessel and 1 X 300# GP bomb was dropped, causing damage. 48 holes in the plane were observed when it returned to base, mostly between stations 4.0 and 6.0, but none of the damage was serious.



PATROL SQUADRON FIFTY-TWO OPERATIONS DURING JULY 1944.

1. From 1 July through 16 July Patrol Squadron Fifty-two was based on the U.S.S. ORCA at HUMBOLDT BAY, HOLLANDIA, and after 15 July at WOENDI LAGOON, BIAK, engaging in night operations. These flights were of three types: scouting on behalf of friendly surface forces, anti-shipping missions, and PT cooperation.
2. Four scouting or Tomcat missions were flown, two each on the nights of 1-2 and 2-3 July. By arrangement with Commander Task Force Seventy Five, two sectors covering the sea approach to Noemfoor Island were searched the night before the night after the landing there. The primary mission of the planes was to warn the cruiser task forces of the approach of enemy surface units. However, 4 X 325# depth charges were carried for use against submarines. These missions were all uneventful.
3. Eleven Blackcat missions were flown on which the planes were armed with 4 X 500# GP bombs, fused, for a  $4\frac{1}{2}$  second delay. On these missions the planes operated alone, their primary target being surface vessels of 1000 tons or larger. Nine of these flights searched the VOGELKOP area, concentrating on the north coast. On 6 July Lieutenant (Junior Grade) H. McPIKE strafed a barge just after it had sought the shelter of the beach at 00-22S, 113-13E (west of MANOKWARI). The results were unobserved. The next night Lieutenant (junior grade) H. S. GRAHAM found a 100-foot barge off CAPE SINSAPOR and heavily strafed it. It was left down by the bow and dead in the water. The Blackcat missions were otherwise unproductive. A few strafing runs were made on the jetty at MIDDLEBURG ISLAND, with no hits, but these attacks were made largely for practice. The other two Blackcat missions went to CERAM and HALLIERA, but no sightings were made on either.
4. Eleven PT cooperation flights were made. On these the planes carried 4 X 500# GP bombs with daisy cutter fuses. The primary mission on these flights was to find targets for the PT boats, illuminating, strafing and bombing them as appeared practicable. On the night of 5 July Lieutenant W. J. PATTERSON had left the PT's with which he had been working and proceeded to JOP Island in lower GEELVINK BAY, when he found a 50-ton lugger just off the southern tip of the island. By the time he climbed to bombing altitude the lugger had reached the shore of KORLA BAY, but he straddled it with his bombs, then made strafing runs on it using his four bow .50's. The lugger was probably left unserviceable. This was the only target located on any of these flights. They all covered the area from a few miles west of MANOKWARI to WANDERMAN BAY, except for one submarine search along the north coast of BIAK.



PATROL SQUADRON FIFTY-TWO OPERATIONS DURING JULY, 1944 (CONTINUED)

5. Beginning 17 July, the squadron flew air-sea-rescue missions from U.S.S. WRIGHT, completing a total of 41. During this period, about one-third of the squadron's personnel were on rest camp, so most of these flights were made with only two pilots, four crew members and a pharmacist's mate aboard. They covered strikes in the CERAM, HALMAHERA and VEWAK areas, these last missions being used on several occasions to transport personnel and mail between the base and HOLLAND and TADJI. On 29 July Lieutenant (junior grade) E. L. LADD effected the only rescue made during this period. He was orbiting at ROON ISLAND when he heard that a B-25 was down off the south coast of MACGILLER GULF, at 02-44S, 132-00E. After getting fighter cover he proceeded to the spot, picked up the pilot and two crew members, the only survivors. The landing and take off were without incident. The three survivors were treated by the Pharmacist's mate while the plane was returning to base. On 30 July, Lieutenant (junior grade) H. McPIKE picked up a U. S. enlisted man at the air-warning station on LAE ROMBERAI, back of CAPE D'URVILLE, and brought him back to the WRIGHT for hospitalization. Lieutenant (junior grade) McPIKE was directed to make the landing while he was orbiting as a rescue plane at NOEMFOOR ISLAND. Lieutenant (junior grade) R. A. OLSON made a special search for a missing B-24 (searching in cooperation with B-24's) just south of YAP ISLAND on 21 July. Several times during the day an unknown station called on voice radio saying it was Carnation 10 (a call used by rescue planes at one time) and that it had picked up the survivors of the crash. The station was obviously Japanese. Float lights which Lieutenant (junior grade) OLSON and the B-24's investigated, were believed to have been an enemy decoy. No sign of survivors was ever found. On the night of 21-22 July a special search was made investigating a submarine report north of MINOKWARI. This was the only operational flight other than the rescue missions made during the period.



S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

VP 33 OPERATIONS DURING JULY, 1944.

During the first two weeks of July VP 33 aircraft were based at Samarai while crews completed their rest period and at Humboldt Bay where 45 air-sea rescue missions were flown. On 16 July the group moved to Los Negros and flew 35 negative patrols and six more rescue missions.

The rescue missions saved a B-25 crew and two A-20 crews. About 1300K 14 July a Catalina flown by Lieutenant (junior grade) G. U. FAVORITE and co-piloted by Lieutenant (junior grade) C. D. REEVES, II, landed only eight miles from Cape Lili, Halmahera, and picked up all six members of the B-25 crew. On the way home from another rescue mission the same Catalina crew sighted approximately ten Japanese attempting to escape by boat from Cape D'Urville, Dutch New Guinea, strafed the boat and killed 3-4 of the enemy.

Lieutenant (junior grade) J. R. ZUBLER, also flying a rescue mission, spotted two small enemy ships off the west coast of Bika. He called in his fighter cover, U. S. Army P-38's, who destroyed the vessels by low-altitude strafing.

VP 34 OPERATIONS FOR JULY, 1944.

During the month of July, VP 34's planes flew 81 day searches (all negative) from Seeadler Harbor, totaling 705.8 hours, and 26 Blackout patrols from Woendi, totaling 338.3 hours. The first night patrol began 17 July.

Four of the patrols during July engaged the enemy in action:

21/7/44

1. A Catalina, commanded by Lieutenant N. L. PAXTON, was on a search mission in North Halmahera on 21 July 1944. About 0100K it entered Kase Bay from the east side and, after investigating radar indications which proved to be small islands, proceeded along the shore in a northeasterly direction. The night was clear, but there was no moon. As the plane passed Wasile Town (01° 06' N, 127° 53' E), the waist lookouts saw a ship anchored 1/8 mile off shore, facing east. The plane immediately circled toward the target and made a bow-to-stern run, commencing at an altitude of 600 feet and passing 200 feet over the ship. The intervalometer failed to function and no bombs were dropped. A second run of the same character was made from port quarter to starboard bow, dropping four 500-pound bombs by emergency release. The first two fell 150 feet off the port quarter and the second two landed 150 feet off the starboard bow.



VP 34 OPERATIONS FOR JULY, 1944 (CONTINUED).

No anti-aircraft fire was received from ship or shore installations during these attacks, although lights were observed blinking from Wasile Town nearby. The darkness prevented an accurate estimate of the size and class of this ship, but the pilot states that it appeared to be about 300 feet long. It is believed to have been a medium freighter-transport of about 2000 tons. No damage was noted.

23/7/44

2. On the night of 23 July Lieutenant (junior grade) R. W. BALL's PBY sent in a contact report from Cape Loleo in Kaeo Bay, North Halmahera, indicating that he was attacking a target. Garbled radio transmissions, weak in volume, were picked up from this plane as long as an hour and a quarter later by another Blackcat, then ceased. There has been no further clue as the fate of this missing plane.

30/7/44

3. Lieutenant (junior grade) J. F. BALL was flying a patrol of the Amboina - Ceram area on the night of 30 July 1944. Entering Piroo Bay from the north at 0200K, the plane sighted and strafed a three-masted schooner, with unobserved results. It then proceeded toward Amboina and took up a southwesterly course five miles off the north coast. A small lugger was sighted at 0250K, in position 03° 30' S, 128° 06' E, and the pilot put the aircraft into a glide preparatory to a strafing attack. At that moment the radar operator reported three indications at two to three miles off the port beam. The attack on the lugger was immediately discontinued, and the pilot circled to approach the ships into the moon, which was setting along the western horizon. At one mile a large ship with a long superstructure could be seen in the moon-path, travelling slowly on course 070 degrees. An escort was seen a mile astern, with two more located ½ mile and one mile off its starboard bow. At the same time the escort closest to the merchantman opened up with a few rounds of inaccurate machine-gun fire which soon ceased.

Commencing its run from an altitude of 600 feet, the plane passed over the large ship from bow to stern and dropped four 500-pound bombs from 200 feet at a speed of 120 knots, with the intervalometer set for 40 feet, 120 knots. The lookouts in the waist clearly observed all four bombs hit the ship on or near the superstructure, followed in a few seconds, by a huge explosion which reached high over the ship. Throughout the attack no fire was directed at the plane.



VP 34 OPERATIONS FOR JULY, 1944. (CONTINUED)

The pilot made a wide circle and returned to the scene arriving at the exact spot in which the attack had been about five minutes ago. The only sign of the ship was a frothing circle on the sea, with large bubbles erupting from the surface. The radar operator at this time picked up three small indications located relatively in the previous positions of the three escorts. The plane then left the area, receiving further light inaccurate machine-gun fire from one of the escorts as it departed.

Several crew members, including the pilot and co-pilot, were able to observe the salient features of the target vessel in the moonlight, and positively identify it as a 4000 - 6000 - ton transport (Tare Baker Two Stacks). The transport was considered sunk.

31/7/44

4. On the night of July 1944, Lieutenant N. L. PAXTON, USNR, was in command of a Catalina searching the north coast of Mangrove Island, one of the Soala Group located in the south Molucca Sea. The night was clear, with a 3/4 moon, no clouds, and visibility in excess of ten miles. At approximately 0200K while proceeding on a westerly course and carefully searching the shoreline, the pilot saw an escort vessel, believed to be of the DE type, lying in a small cove, at position  $01^{\circ} 49' S$ ,  $125^{\circ} 30' E$ . The pilot made a complete right-hand circle to put the plane in position for a run into the moon-path, the moon at the time being about  $40^{\circ}$  above the western horizon. While circling, the crew sighted two additional vessels in the cove, a large freighter-transport and a second escort. The ships were spaced at intervals of  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, with the merchantman in the center, approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile off shore.

The plane commenced its run at an altitude of 500 feet, distance  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, gliding to 200 feet and dropping four 500 pound bombs with 4-5 second delay fuses at a speed of 110 knots, with the intervalometer set for 40 feet, 100 knots. The run was perpendicular to the port beam. All three vessels opened fire a few seconds prior to the drop with machine guns and 20 or 40mm cannon - an estimated ten guns in all. This fire continued as the plane retired over a neck of land to the west, and ceased at a distance of one mile.

The bomb drops were plainly observed by members of the crew in the waist tower. One hit about 30-40 feet short of the port beam; two bombs struck the superstructure and exploded; and the fourth landed a few feet off the starboard beam. As the plane made a wide circle and headed east, two large fires could be seen in the superstructure.



S-E-C-R-E-T

VP 34 OPERATIONS FOR JULY, 1944. (CONTINUED)

Heavy damage was received from the anti-aircraft fire: A shell exploded in the leading edge of the starboard wing; the starboard aileron control cable was severed; the propeller, and both wing panels were holed; and the fuselage was dented by shrapnel. Because the condition of the aircraft it was not deemed advisable to remain in the area to observe further effects of the attack. The state of the fires which were blazing amidships when the plane left the scene indicates, however, that the ship probably sank.

The bright moonlight provided an excellent opportunity for estimating the class and size of the vessel attacked. It is believed to have been a 7000-8500-ton freighter or transport (Fox Tar Able), having the characteristics of that class: Large superstructure and four sets of goalposts.

S-E-C-R-E-T

OPERATIONS OF VB-115 FOR AUGUST, 1944

Bombing Squadron 115's PB4Ys flew 136 patrols from Owi Island during the month of August. On 19 August Southwest Pacific Search Plan "Easy" was put into operation. The old plan "Charlie" had called for four PB4Y searches out of Owi each day; two sectors for a distance of 750 miles from Owi and two for 800 miles; and a special Sector Love, included in the search made by the plane assigned to Sector 1 and covering the area to the northwest of Halmahera. Plan "Easy" increased the number of PB4Y searches to ten, all originating from Owi. To search this expanded area, VB-101 was shifted to Owi and shared the new search sectors with VB-115.

The bomb load on the 750 and 800 mile sectors was three 300-pound and five 100-pound GP 4-to-5 second delay bombs. On the 1000 mile sector, the search plane loaded only the five 100-pound bombs. For the shorter sectors, 2800 gallons of gasoline were carried; for the 1000-mile searches, 3200 gallons.

VB-115 planes reported sightings on 18 of the 31 days covered in this summary.

- 1/8/44 ENSIGN P.R. BARKER, USN, and his PB4Y crew sighted three unidentified single-engine planes off Davao Gulf, Mindanao, at 06-00N and 126-50E at 1205/K on a course of 150 degrees true. Later, at 1245/K, the airmen sighted another unidentified plane at 05-10N and 128-00E on a course of 090 degrees true.
- 2/8/44 LIEUTENANT R.L. WHITE, USNR, attacked two small coastal vessels at Tobi Island at 1245/K. The bombing was from 9000 feet, as a power-supply failure made the turrets inoperative and thus prevented an attack from lower altitude. On the second of eight runs two 100-pound bombs missed only 10 to 15 feet. During the seventh run one 300-pound and two 100-pound bombs were released and a direct hit blasted a probable warehouse on the beach about 50 feet from the vessels. A 300-pound bomb dropped on the first run and a 300-pound bomb and a 100-pound bomb dropped on the eighth run were all misses.
- 4/8/44 ENSIGN P.R. BARKER, USN, flying a scheduled 800-mile search from Owi Island, sighted an enemy convoy at 1032/K at 07-10N, 131-40E, moving on a course of 070 degrees true at an estimated speed of 15 knots. The convoy consisted of one 5000-ton freighter (Fox Baker), two 80-foot stack-aft vessels (Sugar Charlies), and three gunboats, two about 125 feet long and one about 175 feet long. The PB4Y made one bombing and strafing run on the freighter from 400 feet and dumped the entire load of five 100-pound bombs and three 300-pound bombs at the target. The bombs picked by the pilot at



S-E-C-R-E-T-

minimum spacing, fell into the water just aft of the freighter's stern. No damage was seen.

Under operational instructions from the 308th Bomb Wing, Fifth Air Force, to shadow the convoy as long as fuel would permit, the PB4Y circled the enemy ships until 1215/K, then made five more strafing runs. The first two attacks were on the Fox Baker and third and fourth on the two Sugar Charlies and the fifth on both the Fox Baker and the Sugar Charlies. Two Sugar Charlies were fired and one of them blazed fiercely. They were still burning when the plane left the area at 1235/K.

A total of 2700 rounds of .50 caliber machine-gun fire was expended in strafing. Light and medium anti-aircraft fire was intense and fairly accurate, mostly from the escorting gunboats. Shrapnel from a close 40mm burst hit the port horizontal stabilizer just aft of the forward main spar and damaged seven ribs, put one hole in the leading edge of the stabilizer, and another hole in the cowl of the Number 4 engine. The Patsy Unit, however, was able to repair all damage.

8/8/44 LIEUTENANT H.M. DAWES, USNR, searching a 1000-mile sector from Owi Island, sighted at 1132/K an enemy destroyer at 08-00N, 129-05E, sailing on a course of 060 degrees true at an estimated 15 knots. Intense heavy anti-aircraft fire prevented the plane from attacking the warship.

9/8/44 At 1345/K from 8000 feet a PB4Y piloted by LIEUTENANT W. LINDGREN, USNR, spotted a 150-foot freighter transport tied up at a small pier in Beo Bay, Talaud Islands, during the return leg of a 750-mile search from Owi Island.

The bomber made two horizontal runs at 7000 feet with the Norden sight. On the first run a 100-pound bomb and a 300-pound bomb overshot without damage. In the second attack one of the three 100-pound bombs dropped was a near miss. Then the PB4Y let down to 200 feet and made two bombing and strafing runs, using the Gale sight. The two 300-pound bombs released on the first of these runs and the 100-pound bomb released on the second run all fell long, did no damage. Strafing during the two low-level attacks used up 2000 rounds of .50 caliber machine-gun ammunition.

The plane drew moderate light machine-gun fire from the ship during the first of the low-level runs, but this fire was silenced by the time the second run was made. There was no damage to the aircraft.



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11/8/44 LIEUTENANT J.J. COONAN, USNR, in command of a PB4Y on a 1000-mile search, sighted a 100-foot armed steel trawler at 1220/K at 08-00N, 129-40E, heading on a course of 120 degrees true. The trawler was believed to be on anti-submarine patrol, as it carried several depth charges aft on the deck. A shielded gun on the bow, two more at the bridge amidships, and fourth on the stern also were noted. Eight bombs were dropped in six low-level attacks but all missed. Strafing damage, however, caused the trawler to lose speed and trail oil. Light anti-aircraft fire was moderate but inaccurate, and the PB4Y was not hit.

12/8/44 LIEUTENANT (Junior grade) G.M. MONROE, USNR, strafed a 100 foot coastal vessel off Boo Village, Talaud, but the bombs failed to release. The PB4Y drew moderate light anti-aircraft fire from two positions near the village pier but was not damaged. Two derelicts were seen north of the Pier.

On a 1000-mile search from Owi Island, LIEUTENANT R.H. FAGERLAND, USNR, and his PB4Y crew sighted a Betty at 1250/K, 15 miles away from the PB4Y and flying toward Davao from 07-40N, 128-30E, at an altitude of 5000 feet. A 3000-foot altitude advantage enabled the PB4Y to overtake the Betty during a 15 minute chase. When the range was closed to two miles, the enemy plane came about in a tight circle, fired a few inaccurate bursts with its bow 20mm gun, and passed immediately under the PB4Y. The PB4Y's belly turret, which had been left retracted to gain speed during the pursuit, could not be lowered in time to fire, but the bow, port waist, and tail guns got in short bursts. Many tracers were seen to enter the enemy plane but apparently the Betty was not seriously damaged. After passing under the PB4Y, the Betty entered a cloud in a climbing turn. The PB4Y pursued but was unable to gain, and the action was broken off.

14/8/44 LIEUTENANT (Junior grade) G. M. MONROE, USNR, took off from Owi at 1230/K on a special search of the area west and south of Halmahera Island for a VP-34 Blackcat missing from night patrol. Visibility was good, but a search west to 126-06E along the Equator and around the southern tip of Halmahera at an altitude of 700 feet revealed no sign of the missing plane. Many enemy barges, however, were sighted among the islands west of Halmahera.

15/8/44 A PB4Y commanded by LIEUTENANT J.E. LITTLE, USNR, at 1035/K sighted an unidentified two-engine aircraft 15 miles away at 03-27N, 130-32E, at an altitude of 6500 feet. The plane entered clouds and contact was broken.



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- 17/8/44 At 1415/K during a 750-mile search out of Owi, LIEUTENANT M. WENNER, USNR, and the crew of his PB4Y sighted one Natori Class light cruiser and two modern destroyers at 09-50N, 130-50E, advancing at 25 knots on a course of 060 degrees true. The warships swung at once into violent evasive maneuvers, with the destroyers keeping formation on the cruiser. The PB4Y shadowed the enemy force for 45 minutes at a distance of three to four miles and an altitude of 5000 feet, despite intense heavy anti-aircraft fire, mainly from the light cruiser, which appeared enveloped in flame at each salvo. The shells burst short, below, and behind the PB4Y.
- 19/8/44 LIEUTENANT R.H. FAGERLAND, USNR, flying at 8000 feet in Sector 9, sighted an unidentified fighter at 1300/K, 3 miles away on opposite course at 07-00N, 133-55E. No attack was pressed.

COMMANDER J.R. COMPTON, USN, squadron commanding officer, searched Sector 1 over Halmahera and Celebes and observed many enemy ships in the area as well as barges concentrated among the islands in the vicinity of Makian Island. After crossing the Molucca Passage, Commander Compton saw a 1000-ton auxiliary schooner in the Belang Bay area of Celebes. In a level run at 8000 feet, one 300-pound bomb and four 100-pound bombs missed the vessel by 150 feet. The PB4Y then flew on to Amoerang Bay, Celebes, and made a low level attack on a group of small AKs at the Amoerang Pier and in the inner harbor. One of two 300-pound bombs dropped from 150 feet on a beam run, landed close astern of a 3500-ton freighter transport anchored near the pier and damaged the ship. Strafing caused more damage to the freighter transport and started small fires aboard one of two Sugar Charlies nearby. A second freighter transport, not seen before the attack, sent up meager, inaccurate 20mm fire. Another 100-pound bomb dropped in a low-level attack on a third Sugar Charlie underway near the mouth of the harbor was a close miss astern, but damage was not observed. This ship was strafed in four more runs, and when the PB4Y pulled away, the Sugar Charlie's gunwales were awash. A moment later the tail gunner reported that the Sugar Charlie had sunk. The PB4Y drew meager, inaccurate fire from one machine-gun amidships on the Sugar Charlie.

- 20/8/44 LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER H.E. ROBINSON, USNR, sighted two 80-foot schooners at the southeast tip of Siaoe, Sangihe Islands, at 1140/K and dropped two 100-pound bombs on each schooner. One ship blazed brightly and was beached. An unidentified two-engined aircraft, probably a transport, was seen flying at 3000 feet over Siaoe on a northwest course but disappeared in the clouds shortly afterward. Possible Ship-building ways were observed at Hoeloesiaoe.



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21/8/44 LIEUTENANT E.F.K. JENNINGS, USNR, and his crew sighted three 200-foot AKs and 16 smaller vessels in Amoerang Bay, Celebes; a 250-foot escort ship at 01-15N, 124-10E on a course of 270 degrees; a 200-foot AK and several smaller vessels in Menado Harbor, Celebes; a 300-foot AK, a 200-foot AK, 3 stack-aft vessels and 3 barges in Lembeh Strait, Celebes; and many small craft scattered along the north coast of Celebes. The men also observed a new 5000-foot airstrip with construction of the runway, taxiways, and dispersal areas nearly complete, at Sidate, Celebes, but saw no aircraft.

ENSIGN P.R. BARKER, USN, spotted three stack-aft-vessels -- two 150-foot Sugar Bakers and one Sugar Charlie -- off the southwest end of Siargao Island, Philippine Islands, on a course of 300 degrees. Because the PB4Y's gasoline was running low, no attack was made.

LIEUTENANT H.M. DAWES, USNR, sighted two small AKs near the roadstead west of Garreru Island, Palau, and one 3000-ton AK beached on the east side of Ngauangl Reef, Palau.

22/8/44 Two silver fighters, probably Tojos, attacked the PB4Y flown by LIEUTENANT W.B. GARRISON, USNR, at 1000/K 40 miles west of Balau. The two fighters were first sighted at 9000 feet two miles away on a course of 90 degrees true, while the PB4Y was heading 345 degrees true at 8000 feet. The PB4Y made diving turns and headed for cloud cover, but with a 1000-foot altitude advantage the enemy fighters quickly closed on the PB4Y from two o'clock above. The fighters then pressed five attacks, mainly from ten to two o'clock above, passed under the PB4Y to either side, and rolled away without observed firing. The PB4Y's deck turret could fire only a few brief hand-fed bursts because the ammunition belting was defective. The belly, tail, and port waist guns appeared to hit one of the fighters as it rolled and passed below. Black smoke streamed briefly from its engine. One of the fighters then stayed at 2500 to 3000 feet at four o'clock while the other made a level attack from six o'clock but fired inaccurately. Both fighters scored a 20mm hit in the after station before the PB4Y reached cloud cover. Elevator and rudder control cables on the side were shot away by the burst, and both pilots had to struggle hard to keep the plane from whipping into an uncontrolled spin until AMMLc A.J. PRYBAL, USNR, ingeniously improvised straps and fittings for the cables from emergency stowage fixtures. When the PB4Y emerged from the cloud a few minutes later, the crew glimpsed one of the fighters astern, but no further attacks were made.



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LIEUTENANT (Junior grade) G.M. MONROE, USNR, made low-level bombing and strafing runs on three 100-foot schooners anchored off the west shore of Siaoe Island, but damage was undetermined despite several near misses. The PB4Y returned to Owi on three engines after the propeller governor of Number 2 engine stuck.

23/8/44 Two nearly black Oscars intercepted the PB4Y under command of LIEUTENANT W. LINDGREN, USNR, at 1345/K at 06-00N, 135-00E, approximately 90 miles south of Palau. One Oscar remained out of range at four o'clock above, while the other Oscar made two passes out of the sun. The fighter started its attack from twelve o'clock high above, passed on the port quarter, then swung up to make a second overhead run from six o'clock high above. On the first run a 20mm explosion knocked out the Number 1 engine and caused a small fire that burned an 8-inch hole in the lower flap surface. On the second run a 20mm shell burst in the after station and several 7.7mm bullets holed the fuselage at the wing roots. The PB4Y slipped into cloud cover shortly thereafter and the attack was broken off. As the Number 1 engine's propeller could not be feathered, fuel consumption was excessive. Although bombs, ammunition, waist guns, and miscellaneous loose gear were jettisoned, there were only 80 gallons of gasoline left when the plane finally landed at Owi.

On a 1000-mile search across Celebes, LIEUTENANT J.J. COONAN, USNR, and his crew found five stack-aft ships, two freighter transports, and 20 barges in Amoerang Harbor. From 8000 feet the PB4Y aimed two 100-pound bombs at the dock freighter transport. The bombs fell 30 feet wide without observed damage. Meager, inaccurate medium antiaircraft fire was received from the ship. In Lembeh Strait the patrol noted one Fox Tare Able, five Fox Tare Charlies, ten Sugar Charlies and many barges, and off Lembeh Island, a Fox Tare Baker escorted on a course of 240 degrees true by a DE and a Zeke. The Zeke did not attack. One large unidentified ship and four smaller ones were reported passing through Bangka Strait. An unidentified plane was seen at Langoan Field and considerable activity noted at the Sidate airstrip. The PB4Y found no convoy in this area.

24/8/44 LIEUTENANT A.P. ANDERSON, USNR, made a special search of Sector 2, from 0305/K to 1347/K; for a convoy reported moving from Zamboanga, Mindanao, to Menado, Celebes.



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27/8/44 Returning at 8000 feet from a 1000-mile search to the Celebes Sea, LIEUTENANT R.L. WHITE, USNR, and his PB4Y crew let down at 290 knots Ias from a low-level attack on a 120-foot Sugar Charlie seen entering Amoerang Bay. During the approach the PB4Y drew 40mm fire from the bow of the Sugar Charlie and 12.7mm from amidships. Twelve to fifteen 40mm bursts followed the plane by 100-150 feet, but one 12.7mm slug set fire to the ammunition box in the bow turret and another holed the port wing outboard of the Number 1 engine before strafing knocked out the ship's machine guns. Failure of the creep lock on the bomb bay door prevented release of the bombs by the pilot's pickle. After the lock had been adjusted, one 100-pound GP bomb was released from 150 feet in a test run on a 60-foot schooner nearby. The bomb overshot 20 feet and did no visible damage. The PB4Y then strafed and riddled the schooner and three 30-foot sailboats in the vicinity.

The attack then shifted to a 150-foot freighter Transport heading into Amoerang Bay at 5 knots. On the first of two beam-on bombing and strafing runs from 150 feet, two 100-pound GP bombs, pickled by the pilot at minimum interval, straddled the ship. On the second run the first 100-pound GP bomb hit amidships at the waterline, and the second 100-pound bomb fell long. The ship was thoroughly strafed on both runs. The freighter's after hatch was covered with canvas and the forward section thatched with palm branches. No antiaircraft fire was received and there was no sign of life on deck. As the PB4Y finally pulled away, the ship was dead in the water and burning.

27/8/44 ENSIGN J.D. GREGORY, USN, sighted an enemy destroyer speeding at 20 knots at 10-15N, 130-17E, on a course of 285 degrees true. At 8000 feet and three miles away the PB4Y drew fairly accurate heavy antiaircraft fire but was not damaged.

28/8/44 LIEUTENANT H.M. DAWES, USNR, and his crew observed one destroyer and one small freighter transport aground at Ngaruangel Reef, Palau, and one gunboat and one Sugar Baker anchored off the east shore of Kayangel Island, Palau. An Asaahip Class destroyer was seen heading at 20 knots on a course of 160 degrees true in Kossol Passage.

Two olive-brown Oscars approached a PB4Y flown by LIEUTENANT P.J. BRUNEAU, USNR, as it crossed at 8000 feet over the line of the lower Sangihe Islands on the outbound leg of a 1000 mile search sector. As there was no cloud cover, Lieutenant Bruneau pushed his plane into a fast glide, but the Oscars easily overtook the PB4Y at 10-15N, 130-17E. One fighter started a high overhead run from ten o'clock and the other



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began a similar run from one o'clock. Before the fighters had closed to effective range, the PB4Y's top turret fired short bursts and the fighters turned aside. The Oscars stunted out of range for a few minutes, then left.

29/8/44 LIEUTENANT W. LINDGREN, USNR, and his PB4Y crewmen were intercepted at 8000 feet by three dark, olive-brown Oscars west of Lembeh Strait, Celebes, at 100/K. The Oscars, approaching from the direction of Mapanget Airfield with an altitude advantage of 2000 feet, made several half-hearted runs. Lieutenant Lindgren dived the plane toward the water at the first contact to counter possible overhead attacks. Fire from the PB4Y's turrets effectively discouraged the fighters' gunnery runs. Each Oscar, however, apparently carried four phosphorus bombs and the enemy fighters seemed more interested in dropping these bombs than in shooting. The bombs were released from 500- to 1000 feet above, mainly during overtaking runs from astern or from either quarter, though two or three were dropped in runs from ten o'clock to two o'clock. At least two of the dozen bombs would have hit the PB4Y had it not been skidded violently. For the most part, the Oscar pilots seemed inexperienced and lacking in coordinated tactics. After about ten minutes' contact with the PB4Y, one of the Oscars suddenly disappeared. PB4Y crewmen in the after stations reported seeing a large splash and smoke, possibly accounting for the missing Oscar. The other two fighters did not break off from the PB4Y for half an hour. The PB4Y escaped untouched from the combat.

The only ship observed in Lembeh Strait during this search was an Itsukushima Class Minelayer, which threw up a few rounds of inaccurate heavy antiaircraft fire.

29/8/44 Flying North along the eastern coast of Mindanao at 1145/K LIEUTENANT COMMANDER H.E. ROBINSON, USNR, and his PB4Y crew sighted from 7000 feet 11 small vessels (Sugar Charlies and Sugar Dogs) six miles away at 08-10N, 126-30E, at 1145/K. The convoy was heading south a half-mile off shore at a speed of five knots. Nine ships were in line astern and two maneuvered individually. Two level bombing runs with the Norden sight were made at 7000 feet. Three 100-pound GP bombs, armed in the plane with instantaneous fuses, were salvoed on the lead ship, a Sugar Charlie. All three bombs were near misses at the bow. On the second run, the two remaining 100-pound bombs were aimed in salvo at the fourth and fifth ship in the line. Both bombs straddled the fourth ship but caused no visible damage.



The PB4Y let down on the first ship which had lost headway, and strafed in four runs. Fire broke out, and the ship regained some headway and turned toward the beach. When last seen, it was still smoking. Meanwhile, the other ships had changed course and swung in toward the shore.

Fourteen miles farther north, the PB4Y crew sighted an 80-foot lugger and strafed it six times. Some of the cargo on deck burned readily during the strafing. When the PB4Y finally broke off the attack, the lugger was burning fiercely and sinking, and bodies of the crew could be seen in the water.

The only antiaircraft fire encountered during the mission were meager light machinegun bursts from the forward side of the lead ship in the convoy.

#### VB-101 OPERATIONS DURING AUGUST, 1944

PB4Y's from Bombing Squadron 101 covered fully five search sectors of 800 to 1000 miles from Mokerang Airfield, Los Negros, each day from 1 August through 18 August. For the most part the sectors were quiet, but bombing and strafing of Jap installations in the sectors occasionally relieved the monotony of negative searches. Fais Island was bombed seven times and strafed four, and Ngulu was attacked twice.

On 19 August, after completing five search missions from Los Negros the day before, VB-101 began operating from Owi Island and sharing the new Plan "Easy" searches with VB-115. During these searches VB-101 planes sighted 22 enemy warships, 1 hospital ship, 38 freighter transports, 67 Sugar Charlies and Sugar Dogs, 8 luggers, and three large sailing vessels. From 19 August to 31 August VB-101 aircraft flew 65 search missions from Owi. Twenty-seven of these searches covered 800-mile sectors, 22 were from 1000 miles, 11 for 850 miles, and 5 for 750 miles. Among the 22 enemy warships spotted were nine destroyers or DEs, 1 minelayer, 3 gunboats, 1 Toshima Class minelayer, and 8 armed launches. The hospital ship Fuso Maru was sighted proceeding into Palau on 25 August.

As a result of VB-101 attacks during this Owi period, one Sugar Charlie was sunk and five luggers, one barge, and two large sailing vessels were seriously damaged. Three times enemy fighters intercepted the PB4Ys. On two occasions the interceptors were two Zekes and on the third occasion, two Zekes plus two Hamps. None of the fighters showed any desire to punch home its attacks. An Emily was chased for 20 minutes before it escaped into cloud cover. Three Vals and six Rufes also were sighted but only at a distance.

Here is the narrative of the squadron's action during August:

1/8/44 The PB4Y flown by LIEUTENANT A.Y. BELLSEY, USNR, unloaded five 100-pound bombs on Angaur Island, Palau, with unreported results. Four Hamps chased the PB4Y but would not press an attack. This unwillingness to close and kill also marked Jap interception in subsequent strikes. When LIEUTENANT



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COMMANDER M. T. SMITH USNR, ran into a lone Tojo off Palau, the Tojo fled into cloud cover and on 16 August when LIEUTENANT H. S. PARKER, USNR, and three Zekes and four Hamps escorting two Ellies into Polokan Island, Palau. The enemy fighters made only a few half-hearted runs, all breaking away at 1200 feet.

- 10/8/44 LIEUTENANT (Junior grade) G. FORBES, USNR, and his PB4Y crew attacked the phosphate plant on Fais Island. Three 250-pound bombs were dropped on the buildings, which also were strafed several times from low level. During these strafing runs seven 40-foot wooden barges were seen under a shed on the beach.
- 11/8/44 LIEUTENANT R.C. OETWIN, USNR, bombed the seven 40-foot wooden barges sighted the day before on the beach at Fais Island with 500-pound bombs, but results were not known.
- 14/8/44 LIEUTENANT (Junior grade) H.H. LEWIS, JR., USNR, dropped incendiaries on buildings near the barge shed at Fais Island and started several fires.

COMMANDER J.A. MILLER, USN, squadron commanding officer, made a thorough reconnaissance of the perimeter of Babelthuap Island, Palau, and dropped five 100-pound bombs on the bauxite plant near Ngardmau, without reported results. The PB4Y also heavily strafed buildings around the strip at Airai on the southeastern side of Babelthuap. Heavy and light antiaircraft fire was inaccurate and caused no damage to the plane.

- 16/8/44 LIEUTENANT (junior grade) G. FORBES, USNR, and his PB4Y crew returned to the barge shed on the beach at Fais Island and dropped five 250-pound bombs that blew the roof off the target. Four barges were reported destroyed and three badly damaged.
- 19/8/44 LIEUTENANT (junior grade) G. FORBES, USNR, and his PB4Y crew, flying out of VB-191's new Owi base, made the first daylight reconnaissance over the inner Davao Gulf and Davao Town but saw no action.
- 20/8/44 COMMANDER J.A. MILLER, USN, squadron commandin officer, bombed and strafed two luggers off Pisok Point, Manado Bay, Celebes. The attack drove both luggers ashore.
- 21/8/44 The PB4Y under command of LIEUTENANT R.E. BOWEN, USNR, made three runs at 8000 feet on a 125-foot Sugar Charlie



VPB-11 RETURNS TO STATES

After 19 months outside the continental limits of the United States, Patrol Bombing Squadron 11 completed its tour of duty in this area 23 November.

The current phase of this tour got underway 22 July when VPB-11 returned from Western Australia to the New Guinea area, where its PBYS were assigned to anti-sub duty. Two weeks later, it was decided by CTG 73.2 that in order adequately to cover the sealanes and coastlines of the Molucca Passage, Celebes Sea, Banda and Arafura Seas and the approaches to the Philippines, it would be necessary to increase the number of nightly Black Cat missions from three (being conducted by VPB-34) to five.

VPB-11 was ordered to furnish the two planes and crews nightly, in addition to its anti-sub operations, and on 6 August the squadron began Black Cat strikes, operating from Woendi Lagoon. The duty was not new to the squadron or its veteran patrol plane commanders. In ten weeks of operation, extending from 12 September 1943 to 22 November 1943, the squadron had been among the pioneers in changing the primary mission of the night flying Catalinas from reconnaissance to offensive strikes.

The first phase of VPB-11's 1944 tour of Black-Catting kept its planes operating from Woendi until 22 August. Handicapped by little or no moonlight and the distances to be covered before there was any chance of contacting enemy shipping, the Cats found little opportunity to exercise their talents during this period. Then came the move 22 August to Middleburg Island where the crews were based aboard the U.S.S. ORCA and the U.S.S. HALF MOON. From that time to 17 September, with enemy shipping lanes and ports more accessible, VPB-11 poured it on. Operations were suspended 17 September at Middleburg and resumed at Morotai 19 September.

In addition to Black Cat operations, the squadron during August and September assigned three planes and four crews, to anti-sub work and averaged one patrol a day. A total of 1,400 hours of this type of duty was flown in September. Crews not engaged in anti-sub work were assigned to air-sea rescue after the move to Morotai.

- 7 Sept - Lieutenant Covey seriously damaged a 700/800-ton camouflaged loaded with lumber in Amoerang Bay.
- 8 Sept - Lieutenant (jg) James D. Dyer, USN, sank a 10,000-ton tanker in Malusan Bay, Basilan Island. Medium anti-aircraft fire was encountered.
- 10 Sept - Lieutenant (jg) Hand's Cat beached a FOX TARE CHARLIE off Kasa Island, and damaged a large barge and a SUGAR CHARLIE on the south side of Babi Island.



- 26 Oct - Tawitawi Island was the target as a PV flown by Lieutenant Clark strafed trucks, boats, launches, personnel and supplies, with unobserved results. He went in at 50 feet and was hit with heavy, light automatic fire. The Vega Venture was hit six times by small caliber fire, the oil cooler and rear main gas line being punctured. The gas line hit rendered a 120-gallon tank useless. By conserving fuel, Lieutenant Clark managed to return to Morotai with 70 gallons of gasoline, besides the unused tank.
- 27 Oct - Lieutenant Bradshaw encountered three PETES 20 miles east of Loyte. His crew made four passes at the enemy aircraft but the guns jammed and results were negative.
- 28 Oct - Lieutenant William J. Decker, USNR; Lieutenant (jg) Theodore R. Thornburg, USNR; Porter; Hazel; Brockman, Robert G.; Garcia, Elmer; and Andrews, John E., failed to return from a 600-mile sector search east of the Philippines in PV bureau 48810, and subsequently were declared missing in action. Several search planes were flown in this sector for three days following, but no trace was found of the missing crew.
- 31 Oct - Lieutenant Richard G. Johnston, USNR, and crew dropped two bombs on enemy installations on Tawitawi Island, the Philippines.

The squadron is regularly flying five patrols. "A" and "B" go to 575 miles, "D" to 330 miles and "5" and "6" to 600 miles. The plane load is comprised of 1130 gallons of gas, a crew of six, 2150 rounds of .50 caliber, 2400 rounds of .30 caliber and six 100-pound 4-5 second delay bombs.

#### VPB-34 OPERATIONS FOR SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER

After its tour of Black Cat duty aboard the U.S.S. ORCA at Middleburg Island in August, Patrol Bombing Squadron 34 was relieved in September by Patrol Bombing Squadron 33. The former outfit reported to Fleet Air Wing 10, based at Los Negros, and its crews were sent on rehabilitation leave, in increments of five crews at a time. Crews remaining at Los Negros were trained in anti-submarine warfare, consisting of lectures by personnel of CTG 70.2 and flights. A few negative searches were flown.

During the first week in October, four crews were sent to Woendi for anti-submarine operation under Fleet Air Wing 17. These operations consisted of one day and one night sector searches to the northwest of Biak. On 15 October, the squadron commenced moving to Woendi, awaiting a call to the Philippines. Meanwhile, anti-submarine flights were continued.



- 19 Oct - Lieutenant Herbert W. George, USNR, destroyed a bridge on Mindanao by dropping three 100-pound bombs, causing a second delay.
- 20 Oct - Lieutenant (jg) Gordon L. Pool, USNR; Lieutenant (jg) Benjamin L. Lyford, USNR; Johnson, Floyd W.; Denson, Carl H.; Stewart, Wayne H.; and Berdani, Joseph B., in plane number 34885 crashed out of control, presumably as a result of anti-aircraft fire at Labo, Mindanao, burning and killing all hands. This plane was with two other PV's piloted by Lieutenant Dudley C. Walton, USNR. Lieutenant (jg) Pool evidently spotted a RUFE on the water. He was seen to pull up in a steep turn at 800 feet, fall off one wing, crash and burn. Lieutenant Bradshaw then torched the RUFE with .50 caliber fire.
- 20 Oct - Lieutenant (jg) William B. Taylor, USNR; Ensign Robert A. Delop, USNR; Ensign Kenneth R. Ambulo, USNR; Robinson, George V.; Harris, Francis R.; Layton, Earl A.; Kendall, John R.; failed to return from combat area patrol toward North Borneo in plane number 34799, and subsequently were declared missing in action.
- 20 Oct - Lieutenant William T. Sorensen, USN, and his PV crew struck at Sanga Sanga Island where they blew up a dock; sank two loaded barges and strafed living quarters. Return fire put eight hits in the PV, slightly wounding the radioman, Augie L. Montgomery.
- 21 Oct - One SUGAR CHARLIE was fired and another was left dead in the water near Sang Sanga Island as a result of bombing and strafing attacks by Lieutenant Hadley M. Lewis, USNR, and his crew.
- 21 Oct - Lieutenant Enil B. Hanson, USNR, was the plane commander of a PV which strafed five barges off the northwest tip of Jolo, the Philippines, sinking two and blowing up a like number.
- 22 Oct - Lieutenant Erling G. Olson, USNR, and Lieutenant Charlie Hanley, USNR, dropped eleven 100-pound bombs on warehouses at Gorontalo, Celebes, torching one warehouse and blowing up part of another.
- 23 Oct - Lieutenant Sorensen scored near misses with three bombs on warehouses at Gorontalo Bay, Celebes.
- 23 Oct - Three small wooden craft were strafed off north Borneo by the crew of a PV flown by Lieutenant (jg) John P. Barber, USNR.
- 25 Oct - Lieutenant James E. Clark, USNR, strafed and sank two barges and bombed SUGAR CHARLIE under camouflage at Sanga Sanga Island. Bombing results were not observed.



VPB-146 SWINGS INTO ACTION.

After four months of search duty, operating out of Pitylan, Admiralty Islands, Patrol Bombing Squadron 146, with 16 planes and 19 crews, moved to Morotai 18 October and the next day its PV's began offensive operations in the Philippines-Borneo-Celebes area. With Lieutenant Commander Jesse P. Robinson, USN, Commanding Officer, the outfit cut its battle-teeth early. And it took some punishment. By the end of the month, one of its PVs had been shot down, burning and killing all hands; two others failed to return from bombing strikes and their crews were subsequently declared missing in action. In addition, four planes were holed by enemy fire. A summary of some of the missions follows:

19 Oct.--- Lieutenant Commander Robinson and the crew of his PV sighted an airport under construction, a seaplane base and three JAKES and one PETE on the water at Sanga Sanga Island, Sulu Archipelago, the Philippines. One JAKE was moored alongside a wooden seaplane ramp. On the first run, two 100 pound, 4-5 second delay bombs were dropped on the ramp from an altitude of 30 feet, with the results on the JAKE unobserved. A loaded personnel barge was strafed, hit and run aground on a reef by the second run. Living quarters on the island were strafed heavily with .30 caliber and .50 caliber on the third run. One of the JAKES was strafed on the next run and on the fifth three 100 pound bombs scored on a fuel dump, causing an explosion and large fire which destroyed the PETE. On the sixth and final run, the third JAKE was strafed and set on fire. The bombing runs were made at extremely low altitude and the strafing done from 1,000 down to 50 feet. On the three final runs, 13.7 anti-aircraft from approximately six guns was encountered, beginning light and inaccurate and becoming intense and accurate on the last run. The ack-ack caught the port engine, cutting the hydraulic line and severing one engine mount at the firewall. Upon his return to Morotai, Lieutenant Commander Robinson found that the wheel emergency extension gear would only allow the port wheel to trip from the uplocks. He circled over the base for 45 minutes trying to lower the starboard wheel and then brought his PV in on the port wheel. He made a full stall landing at 75 knots and kept the starboard wing up until he lost aileron control at 58 knots. All switches were cut and the throttles put at idle cut-off as soon as the plane touched the ground. The PV ground-looped, but no one was injured. (On a visit over the strike area the next day, another pilot of VPB-146 observed the second JAKE turned over near the beach, while the third was burned out.)

and sunk by strafing. The attack was continued for two hours. Intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire from the deck and beach hit the plane 30 times, cutting away the control cables and severing the auxiliary power unit oil line. The crew was credited with the destruction of the 4000-ton ship, three of 1500 tons and the six barges - 20 tons each. The fire could be seen 75 miles away.

29 Sept. -- A 10000-ton tanker and a 300-ton cargo ship were attacked in San Rafael Bay, Basilan Island, Sulu Archipelago, by a PBV commanded by Lieutenant (jg) William J. Brown, jr., USNR. On the first run, a 500-pound bomb landed 20 yards short of the tanker. On the second, a 500-pounder landed on the after-deck house. A third run put a 500-pounder just off the port beam. A near miss was scored on the smaller ship. In addition, 1300 rounds of .30 and .50 caliber were used in strafing. When the plane left because of low gasoline supply, the tanker had settled six or seven feet by the stern..... second PBV harassed enemy airfields on Malindang with four cases of empty beer bottles.

30 Sept. -- Lieutenant (jg) Cummings harassed Malindang air fields. A 500-pound bomb landed on Kape strip just in front of a landing aircraft, probably damaging it; another 500-pounder was dropped alongside the strip at Oba. Two 500-pound bombs were let go on Lolobato airfield. The remaining bomb load of two 100-pounders and seven 25-pound fragmentations was dropped on enemy gun positions. Although caught in numerous searchlights and subjected to intense, heavy ack-ack, the plane was not hit.



About 0845/I, 9 October, Lieutenant (jg) Hall, pilot of one of the three Catalinas, made radio contact with Lieutenant Gardner, a close friend and squadron mate. He immediately requested Lieutenant Gardner to send MO's on 500 kilocycles so that he could communicate on the downed Cat. The signals, at first, came in weak and hesitant on a bearing of 255° true, but grew stronger steadily as the rescue plane flew along this bearing. After going on the 255° heading for 80 miles, Lieutenant Hall sighted the stricken Cat a half mile off his port side.

At 0935/I, Lieutenant (jg) Hall made a smooth landing in rough sea. After the IFF equipment had been torn out and stowed, and all confidential matter removed, the crew was transferred in a rubber raft to the rescue plane. It headed into the heavy swells and by 0955 had bounced clear of the waves. Lieutenant (jg) Hall circled the derelict Cat and had his gunners strafe and sink her. Five hundred rounds of .50 caliber and 300 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition were expended in the strafing. At the take-off, Lieutenant (jg) Hall estimated his arrival time at the USS TANGIER to be 1330. One minute ahead of schedule, he set his plane down on the water off the seaplane tender.

Said Lieutenant Gardner: "When I get to Frisco, I'm going to throw a party in honor of my best girl --- that beautiful "Gibson Girl".

#### VPB-29 SWITCHES TO BLACK-CATTING

After completing its tour of rescue duty, VPB-101 moved to Morotai and on 1 October changed its designation to VPB-29. Based aboard the USS HALF MOON, its PBYS began conducting nightly Black Cat missions against Jap shipping in the Philippines-Borneo-Celebes area. Some of these included:

23 Sept. ---Two planes operated - with Lieutenant (jg) Joseph G. Cullings, USNR, and Lieutenant (jg) Gardner L. Burt, USNR, as patrol plane commanders. The former, on a sweep southwest of Mindanao, strafed a convoy of seven, small, cargo ships off Panabutan Bay with 1600 rounds of .30 and .50 caliber. A 300-ton cargo ship was set on fire. The second PBY missed a 1500-ton freighter-transport with five bombs at 03-25 N, 122-00 E, but strafed ships with 900 rounds of .30 and .50 caliber, and secured hits with two 23-pound parafrags. Results unobserved.



Five minutes after the forced landing, the "putt-putt", the auxiliary power unit usually so rugged and reliable, failed. All efforts to repair it were in vain. To get enough power to transmit a distress call on the plane's radio, the pilot had to taxi on the port engine. This, Lieutenant Gardner found, slammed the waves violently against the hull, opened the seams, threatened to split the hull.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant (jg) William H. Simon, Jr., USNR, who was on a mission to northeast Borneo, received word from the task unit Commander to search for the plane. At about 0115/I, 8 October, Lieutenant Simon located the PB4Y and provided cover until daylight. Three times, Lieutenant (jg) Simon attempted to hit his plane down, but each time hit a wave and bounced off. He continued to orbit, waiting for daylight to try again. Dawn, however, brought a frontal storm, forcing him to return to the USS TONGER without completing the rescue.

At 1900/I, 8 October, Lieutenant Gardner started his port engine again and sent the following message in code over the reconnaissance frequency: "Request daylight rendezvous tomorrow 05-45 N 123-00 E. Will transmit MO's (on) 500 kilocycles. Continuing listening watch on reconnaissance (frequency)." The message was relayed to the USS TONGER by the Army Air Force Station at Owi Is.

The following morning, Lieutenant Gardner had the "Gibson Girl" brought out on the wing, but the wind had subsided with the storm and the kite that was to carry the antenna aloft would not fly. He took the kite and ran from one wing tip to the other several times, but still was unable to make it stay airborne. The balloon that came with the "Gibson Girl" was then inflated with hydrogen and was sent aloft bearing the antenna. The men spelled each other cranking the generator in order to maintain a continuous flow of current for transmission. The morning dragged on, but with improving weather the men's hopes were still high.

In the meantime, two rescue Catalinas in addition to Lieutenant Simon's Black Cat had been sent out from the USS TONGER the morning the plane had been forced down. One Catalina ran low on fuel and was forced to return to base before reaching the estimated position of the downed crew. The other searched in the area with negative results until chased by a Zeko, painted in a mottled zigzag brown. A PB4Y had also searched, but found nothing. The second morning, three rescue Catalinas took off between 0100 and 0325/I, to seek to rendezvous at daybreak with the crew of the crippled plane.



"GIBSON GIRL" AGAIN PROVES WORTH

The rescue experiences of Patrol Bombing Squadron 29 during their tour of duty outlined above stood that outfit in good stand early in October, when a Catalin flown by Lieutenant Joseph T. Gardner, USNR, Executive Officer, was forced down only 30 miles from enemy territory in the Philippines. The squadron sent several planes to the assistance of Lieutenant Gardner and his crew of nine, and the downed plane was finally located by another Catalina flown by Lieutenant (jg) Jack S. Hall, USNR, who "homed" to radio signals transmitted by a "Gibson Girl". Lieutenant (jg) Hall managed the open-sea landing perfectly, picked up the 10 fellow members of his squadron, and brought them safely back to their base, aboard the USS TANGIER, at Morotai.

Here's a story of the rescue in more detailed form:

At 2215/I, 7 October, during a Black Cat anti-shipping mission in the Sulu Archipelago, Lieutenant Gardner, patrol plane commander of a PBV-5 (squadron aircraft number 4 and Bureau of Aeronautics number 08143), and his crew of nine were forced down in enemy waters approximately 30 miles in a bearing of 160° true from Karangdate Point, Jolo Island, after failure of the starboard engine.

Lieutenant Gardner's Black Cat was flying toward Jolo Island at an altitude of 1000 feet on 05-25N 120-28E when suddenly the plane's starboard engine dropped to 500 R. P. M., then cut out without even a cough. The pilot pushed the manifold pressure on the port engine up to 50 inches of mercury and increased the R.P.M. to 2800, but the Catalina slowed to 65 knots and lost altitude rapidly. He ordered the crew to "get everything off" to lighten the aircraft. The crew began jettisoning bombs, waist guns, ammunition, and loose equipment, which in the rush accidentally included the plane's two sea anchors. The Catalina, however, continued to drop. All the bombs were put on "safe" and released from only 200 feet. Two of these, apparently a 500-pounder and a 100-pounder, exploded when they hit the water, but luckily did not damage the Black Cat as it slipped down for a forced night landing. From an estimated altitude of 100 feet, Lieutenant Gardner could make out whitecaps in the dark below and found he was swinging around to the right and heading downwind. It appeared to be as good an approach to the rough sea as any. Even if he had wished another, it was too late.

The plane struck the water without too sharp a blow, bounced high, then dropped hard against the waves. Streams spurted through three holes in the bow and two or three more in the aviation mechanic's compartment where the sudden impact of the sea against the thin Catalina hull had shorn off rivets.



of a violent explosion. Intense, medium anti-aircraft fire bracketed the Cat as it went over Monado Bay, but did no damage.

30 Aug. -- Lieutenant Paxton flew over Ambon Bay, Ambon Island, 600 feet, just below a 9/10 cloud cover. Inside the entrance to the bay, a surface contact was indicated six miles away on the radar scope, but faded off at four miles. As the Black Cat continued on along the coast, at 1130/K, Lieutenant Paxton saw a medium freighter-transport. It was identified as a Fox Taro Charlie and was on a course of 240° true about 200 to 300 yards from shore. The Black Cat started a stern-to-bow attack, but veered off when it became apparent the approach was poor. It swung around, came in on a bow-to-stern run, and released four 500-pound bombs and one parafrag from 150 feet. The 500-pounders overshot, but the closest bomb burst was within a few feet of the ship's stern. Then two 100-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bombs and two more parafrags were dropped in a second run along the ship's track. The parafrags fell wide, but the 100-pounders burst close off the freighter-transport's port beam. As the Black Cat came low over the ship in several strafing attacks, the plane crew saw that the ship was listing sharply, had a large hole in its stern, and was drifting broadside toward the shore. It ran aground 45 minutes after the first attack and was still there the following night. During the attack, 500 rounds of .30 caliber ammunition and 500 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition were expended. There was no return fire.

31 Aug. -- Over the northern shore of the Celebes at 0130/K on a clear, moonlit night, Lieutenant Commander Utgoff sighted a 300-ton stack-aft vessel heading west and hugging the coast at 00-55 N 124-00 E. He made six bombing attacks from 75 feet. On each of the first four runs, one 500-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bomb was let go, and on each of the last two runs, two 100-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bombs. The hilly shoreline hampered a good approach and the closest burst was a near miss aft of the ship in a stern-to-bow run. The vessel listed, lost way and began to settle by the stern. Several of the eight 23-pound instantaneous parafrags, dropped from the waist-gun blisters, fell close aboard and possibly increased the damage to the vessel. The vessel probably sank. After all the bombs had been expended, the crew fired 300 rounds each of .30 caliber and .50 caliber ammunition at the vessel and at a nearby barge and at six other barges scattered along the coast near Amcrang and Monado. Strafing results were not observed. There was no return fire.



- 26 Aug. -- Lieutenant (jg) Melvin S. Wssary, USNR, and his plane bombed and sank a 500-ton tanker off Monado Bay. The plane also dodged, light anti-aircraft fire from the shore and escaped damage.
- 28 Aug. -- A Black Cat commanded by Lieutenant (jg) Joe F. Ball, USNR, bombed a 5500/8500-ton freighter-transport in Monado Bay and scored a hit or a very near miss with a 500-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bomb and a direct hit with a 23-pound instantaneous parafrag. When the plane left the area, the ship was listing sharply. Intense anti-aircraft fire was encountered from shore batteries as well as from the ship.
- 29 Aug. -- Lieutenant (jg) Garrett, searching the north side of Monado Bay, Colobes, on a moonlit night while flying east a short distance behind the coastline, found a cluster of small craft near the north shore. The Cat dropped a 500-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bomb and a 23-pound instantaneous parafrag on this concentration with unobserved results.....The crew then sighted a Sugar Charlie about half a mile off the beach. A wide circle over the shoreline put the Cat in position to make a run into the moon, which was shining 45° above the western horizon through a high 6/10 cloud cover. A mile and a half from the target, the pilot started a glide from 1000 feet and released the 500-pounder and one parafrag from 100 feet as the plane swept over the ship's starboard beam. The 500-pound bomb landed amidships. The Sugar Charlie blew up and sank.....Other targets along the Bay's shore came next. Two 100-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bombs were dumped in the center of a group of nested barges; two parafrags hit barracks on Cape Pisok, and 100 rounds of .50-caliber ammunition were fired at a two-masted schooner.....The Black Cat now began a hunt for bigger game and flew low over the coast toward the heavily defended dock area at Monado Town, in the near center of the bay. The crew found several Sugar Charlies at anchor off the docks. The Cat circled inland behind the town and climbed to 1500 feet. Pushing down in a steep glide, the plane passed directly over the town and, at 170 knots, approached the starboard beam of a ship 100 yards off shore and dropped the 500-pounder and a parafrag from an altitude of 100 feet; the 500-pound bomb burst under the ship's keel. The ship disintegrated into a cloud of debris on the beach.



dropped from 40 feet without causing damage. The 500-pound instantaneous parafrags were dropped from the waist-gun blisters, but failed to explode because of the low altitude at which they were released. The plane then climbed to 600 feet and again aimed two 500-pound bombs, two 100-pound bombs and two parafrags, but all overshot. The nearest miss, a 100-pound bomb, exploded 30 feet from the ship. Both ships appeared to be dead in the water at all times. No return fire was encountered.

- 22 Aug. -- Lieutenant Commander Utgoff and Lieutenant Patten flew the tow Catalinas that were the first to penetrate the Philippine Islands since the evacuation of Patrol Wing Ten early in 1942. As they searched the southern Philippines, they saw many lights and several planes airborne in the Davao area. None of the planes, however, attacked. Several radar runs were made on a dozen ships scattered along the east shore and the entrance to Sarangani Bay and at the mouth of Davao Gulf, but poor visibility prevented completion of the attacks. Moderate, inaccurate, light anti-aircraft fire from one escorting vessel caused no damage. At 0300/K, a hospital ship was sighted at 05-34N, 125-04E, sailing on a course of 090° true.
- 26 Aug. -- Lieutenant Commander Utgoff flew into Manado Bay, Celebes, at 0425/K, to search for reported enemy shipping and found five small vessels anchored along the north shore. The Black Cat singled out a 1000-1500-ton freighter-transprot anchored a quarter mile from the beach and closed overland to attack from an altitude of 100 feet. The bombardier released two 100-pound and two 500-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bombs while the Cat was making a steep right turn to correct the heading on the target. The first 100-pounder fell short on the stern quarter; the first 500-pounder scored a direct hit amidships, and the remaining two bombs overshot. Two 23-pound instantaneous parafrags, dropped from the waist-gun blisters, were short. On two more, similar runs, the racked bomb hung, then dropped off the wing seconds after the bomb release was pressed. Three of the four parafrags missed, but on the fourth run one parafrag exploded on the super-structure. Fuel shortage and approaching daylight forced the Black Cat to leave the area immediately after the third attack. The ship had been severely damaged by the 500-pound bomb hit and probably sank. No anti-aircraft fire from ship or shore installations was noted.



- 4 Aug. --- Lieutenant (jg) Darwin R. Day, USNR, and his Black Cat crew, searching southern Halmahera, bombed and strafed and sank a 300 ton cargo vessel in the harbor of Djoronga Island. After a 500 pound GP, 4-5 second delay bomb, released in a low-level attack, had struck the vessel, the Cat finished off the sinking ship with several strafing runs.
- 4 Aug. --- Lieutenant (jg) William L. Garrett, jr., USNR, and his PBY crew at 0250/K damaged a 75 foot schooner in Boana Strait, Ceram, by parafrags and strafing. Two hours later at 01-50 S 128-00 E, south of Obimajor Island, they sank another sailing vessel of approximately the same size, with a 500 pound GP, 4-5 second delay bomb.
- 5 Aug. --- At 0115/K, during a search of the south coast of Ceram, Lieutenant (jg) Lloyd D. Hayes, USNR, bombed and missed a small tanker heading southwest at 03-26 S 127-09 E. No damage was seen and there was no anti-aircraft fire.
- 10 Aug. --- Lieutenant Paxton and his crew, at 0030/K, dropped four 500 pound GP, 4-5 second delay bombs spaced at 40 feet and two 23 pound instantaneous parafrags at a 500/1000 ton tanker in Kaoe Bay, Halmahera Island, about mid-way between Kaoe Town and Lolobata Airdrome. The bombs were released at 200 feet as the Black Cat was making a sharp turn. All missed and caused no observed damage.
- 11 Aug. --- Lieutenant Commander Utgoff was hunting in Kaoe Bay, Halmahera Island, at 600 feet on a dark moonless night, and circling clockwise around the entire area, when his Black Cat drew meager, inaccurate, light anti-aircraft fire from one or two unidentified vessels beached near Kaoe Town. As the plane headed for the entrance to Kaoe Bay, radar showed a surface contact five miles dead ahead. Guided by radar to within half a mile of the target, the pilot sighted a dark object on the water, then another near by, apparently two medium-sized merchant vessels. The plane circled, made its run from the northeast on one of the ships and went into a steep glide from 600 feet. Darkness caused the heading into the ship to be misjudged, and the Cat passed 50 feet astern of its target. Two 100 pound and two 500 pound GP, 4-5 second delay bombs were



1 Aug. --- A Black Cat flown by Lieutenant Commander V. V. Utgoff, USN, Commanding Officer, sighted a 75/100-ton lugger underway off the northwest coast of Ambon at 0130/K. One of the two 23-pound instantaneously-fired parafrags, dropped in salvo from 100 feet in a gliding run, scored a direct hit. Although the night was clear and moonlit, specific damage could not be determined. .... Continuing on patrol in the Ambon-Coran-Bocree area, Lieutenant Commander Utgoff's Cat got a radar pip at 0300/K, indicating a vessel seven miles away at 02-51N, 127-10E, 22 miles north of Namela, Bocree Is. As the moon was setting, the Cat circled to get down moon. The PBY crew sighted the ship, identified as a 250/300-foot destroyer escort, heading on a course of 150° true at 20 knots. Gliding down from 1,000 feet to 100 feet in a run on the warship's port beam, the Black Cat dropped four 500-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bombs, spaced at 30 feet from the wing racks, and two 23-pound instantaneous parafrags out of the waist gun blisters. The starboard 500-pound bombs fell aft of the ship, but the first part bomb burst against the port stern of the ship at the waterline, lifted the stern clear of the water and skidded it to starboard. The second part bomb overshot. One of the two parafrags exploded close to the warship's port side, but damage from this explosion was not observed. The destroyer escort emitted a heavy cloud of black smoke and began circling to port. The ship was still circling slowly, apparently seriously damaged, when the Black Cat left the area. There was no anti-aircraft fire.

4 Aug. --- Lieutenant Norman L. Paxton, USNR, and his Black Cat crew were searching off Ambon Bay, Ambon Island, just below an 800-foot overcast when three 500-ton tankers were sighted at 0230/K about a quarter of a mile off shore, proceeding slowly from 03-45 S, 128-11 E, toward the entrance of Ambon Bay. The PBY made a shallow, mile long glide from 400 feet down to 150 feet and in a low-on attack aimed four 500-pound GP, 4-5 second-delay bombs, spaced at 30 feet on the intervalometer, and one 23-pound instantaneous parafrag at one of the vessels. The first bomb hit amidships and caused an explosion, followed by fires on deck. The ship sank in 10 minutes and left an oil slick about a mile long. All the destruction, apparently, was done by the first bomb. The three other 500-pound bombs overshot and the parafrag fell without observed results. Lieutenant Paxton then made seven low-altitude runs on the two surviving tankers. Three of five more parafrags, hurled from the waist-gun blisters, resulted in near misses. Three hundred rounds of .50-caliber ammunition were fired at



The marksmanship of the gunners was notable. The bow gun, as usual proved very effective. It was manned by Lieutenant William A. Road, Jr., A-V(S), USNR, squadron gunnery officer, whose performance was exceptional. It was estimated by the squadron that at least 900 of the 1000 rounds which he fired found their target.

#### VPB-34 SINKS 28000 TONS

The squadron operated out of Woonai Lagoon, New Guinea, until its tender, the USS ORCA, sailed for Middelburg Island, New Guinea, 21 August 1944. VPB-34 shifted operations to this new location 22 August and continued Black Cat missions from the Middelburg area until the squadron's second tour of duty ended 1 September 1944.

During this six-week period, VPB-34 cost the Japanese 28000 tons of merchant shipping sunk or destroyed and a destroyer escort and 1500 tons of shipping seriously damaged. With the January-February duty included, the squadron's Black Cats have sunk or destroyed a total of 98000 tons of cargo ships, seriously damaged four destroyers and an escort vessel, and destroyed or damaged more than 75 barges and small craft.

The day-to-day sinking of Jap shipping since January, 1944, the decline of convoys, the use of fewer and smaller ships closer along shore under the protection of rugged coasts or anchored at night in well-defended harbors, the greater distance necessary to fly during the second tour to find enemy shipping, and the natural deterioration of both aircraft and equipment, account of the difference in score between the first tour and the second. The hunt has been harder, but once the target has been found the Black Cat has struck with a sureness and a power that refute a statistical comparison of the first tour's 70000-ton total with the second tour's leaner 28000 tons.

The squadron flew 914 hours in the course of 86 operational flights, 111.8 hours in utility flights, and 59.7 hours in test flights, during the period covered by this resume. Radar, instrument or engine trouble prevented completion of, or curtailed, 25 of the 86 operational flights. The only aircraft lost was squadron Black Cat no. 62, Bureau No. 08494, which hit a floating object when it was landing in the dark at Woonai Lagoon after returning because of radar failure. Despite efforts to keep the plane afloat until it could be hoisted aboard ship for repair, the aircraft sank, but none of the crew was injured.



"Accurate strafing fire on three Bettys warming up on Wolf Field caused one to explode and the other two to catch fire. A return visit, a few minutes later, caused one already burning to explode and the second to burn even more fiercely."

Thus, in an Aircraft Action Report, Patrol Bombing Squadron 101 sums up an action by a PB4Y piloted by Commander Austin A. Miller, USN, Commanding Officer.

The PB4Y, loaded with twenty 100-pound bombs, took off from Owi at 2335L, 30 September 1944, on a 1000-mile search. After completing the outward leg of the sector, five miles north east of Caldera Point, Mindanao, Commander Miller dropped down to 100 feet for an attack on a concentration of seaplanes which had been photographed three days before.

Fifteen seaplanes were moored off the point. The PB4Y, with a setting of 45 inches and 2500 RPM, indicated 200 knots on the run. All 20 of the AN MK 30 bombs, with MK 112A1A fuses set for four-five seconds delay, were released with 30 foot spacing at 0745/I. Two Jakes were blown up by direct hits. One Emily was straddled by bomb bursts, heavily strafed and left burning fiercely. At least five other Jakes were damaged by near misses and heavy strafing.

At 0748, a 125-foot lugger was strafed five miles southeast of Caldera Point. Apparently laden with gasoline, she exploded in an inferno of flame. At 0751, three Bettys turning up caught fire. Fifty Japs near the planes were strafed.

At 0753, from 400 feet, Commander Miller's crew dropped 20,000 leaflets over Zamboanga. These leaflets, written in Japanese, gave factual accounts of the progress of the war in the Pacific.

At 0755, on a return visit at Wolf Field, the second of the three Bettys was seen to explode. More bullets were pumped into the third, until she was gutted by flames. On leaving the target area, the Aircraft, Seventh Fleet, crew noticed that one seaplane, probably a Kufe, had managed to take off. However, the enemy plane did not close.

Careful planning of the attack, and favorable cloud cover enabled complete surprise to be achieved. The PB4Y returned to base untouched by enemy fire. Over Zamboanga, the plane encountered some heavy anti-aircraft fire, but the shells were bursting at 5000 foot while the plane was at only 400.



- 7 Sept. --- A PB4Y commanded by Lieutenant (jg) Harold [redacted] USNR, encountered three Sagar Charleys at 05:30, 124-50E. Five 100-pound bombs were dropped in a low-level attack, but failed to produce hits. Six strafing runs were then made and all targets were left burning and listing badly. Two thousand rounds of .50 caliber were expended from the bow, belly, and crown and tail turrets.
- 19 Sept. -- Lieutenant (jg) Neal A. Tyler and his crew sighted an unidentified sub at 06 N, 122-20 E. Five minutes later, at 06-10 N., 122-20E., they saw a [redacted] 200 feet off the water. The patrol plane was at 8000 feet. Nosing over in a dive indicating 260 knots, the plane attacked from out of the sun, approaching from high over the tail. The nose turret gunner opened fire at 800 feet - the first burst being short and the second slightly over. The Kate jinked slightly, but was unable to avoid an accurate third burst which raked fuselage and engine. Flames burst from the wing roots, the plane exploded, and disintegrated into the sea. The Kate was reddish-brown, with meatballs on the wing tips.
- 27 Sept. -- On routine search of a 1000-mile sector, a PB4Y, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Marvin T. Smith, USNR, Executive Officer, was over Lombok Straits, northern Celebes, at 1335/T. A 6000-ton Box Taro Baker was sighted, listing and possibly aground in the center of the Straits. Five 100-pound GP bombs were dropped from 9000 feet, scoring one near miss..... Another vessel was sighted near the west shore - partly obscured over and thought to be a mine craft which previously had been under attack there. The vessel was underway, but slowly. Five 100-pound GPs were dropped from 9500 feet, resulting in one direct hit on the stern.

COMMANDER MILLER DESTROYS SIX PLANES

"Direct hits were scored on two Jakes which were blown to bits, A close straddle was scored on an Emily. This, plus heavy strafing caused it to catch fire and burn fiercely.

"Strafing fire on a lugger caused it to catch fire [redacted] ly. Apparently laden with gasoline, it was immediately enveloped in flames."

VPB-101 CONTINUES REMARKABLE PERFORMANCE

**Patrol** Bombing Squadron 101 with Commander Justin A. Miller, USN, Commanding Officer, conducted long range searches from Cwi, Schouten Islands, during September. The squadron, which flies PB4Y's, was based with ACORN 8 and plane maintenance was furnished by PATSU 1-2.

During the month, VPB-101 flew 139 search missions ranging from 750 miles to 1100 miles. Serious damage was inflicted on nine merchant ships and one warship. In addition, a Kate was shot down.

The squadron lost no personnel or planes during September.

Enemy warships were sighted as follows: 1 September, one destroyer off Palau, one destroyer off Lombok Straits, one destroyer and one gunboat in Manado Bay; 3 September, one destroyer off Palau; 5 September, convoy of six ships, possibly including one battleship, entering Manado Bay; 6 September, one destroyer tanker at Zamboanga; 9 September, one destroyer and one destroyer escort at San Rafael. A Jap hospital ship was soon on route to Palau on 3 September and another in Manado Bay on 9 September.

- 2 Sept. --- Lieutenant John O. Adams, USNR, sighted a 700/1300-ton freighter at 05-10N 123-00E, and made six strafing runs from masthead level, silencing a .20 mm. on the bridge on the second run. A total of 3000 rounds was fired from the planes's .50 calibers, and the vessel was left listing and leaking oil.
- 2 Sept. --- Lieutenant Russell E. Bowen, USNR, made three low-level strafing runs on two luggers at 06-20N, 126-25 E. Following the attack, both vessels were run up on the beach.
- 3 Sept. --- Lieutenant Griswold Forbes, USNR, made three strafing runs on a 70/150-ton cargo vessel in Parangani Bay. Leaking oil and listing, the vessel was run up on the beach.
- 3 Sept. --- At 09-35N., 136E, Lieutenant (jg) Robert L. [unclear] dropped five 100-pound bombs from 300 feet on a 150-ton freighter - two landing about 40 feet from target. The crew followed with three strafing runs at masthead level, leaving the vessel burning and low in the water.



S-E-C-R-E-T

enemy's total losses to his total damage is caused by the fact that 13 out of 15 successful attacks were made in harbors, at docks, or close ashore where near misses in shallow water sometimes did more damage by concussion than direct hits. Most of the ships attacked were seen to sink. Among the Blackcats with the sharpest claws were those flown by crews under Commander Utgoff, Lieutenant Paxton, and LIEUTENANT (junior grade) J. F. BALL, USRN. Since VP-34's Blackcats started stalking the Japs in the Netherlands Indies six weeks ago, Commander Utgoff's crew has blasted a destroyer or destroyer escort, and hit, and probably sunk, a 1000/1500-ton freighter transport. In the same period Lieutenant Paxton and his crew have sunk a 7000-8500-ton freighter transport and a 500/1000-ton tanker, wrecked a small merchant vessel, and damaged two more small tankers. Lieutenant Ball and his men accounted for fewer ships in number but probably more in tonnage: One large freighter transport sunk and another destroyed.

Recent experience has convinced VP-34 of the positive value of parafrags in low-altitude bombing attacks. Where parafrags have been dropped, antiaircraft fire has been noticeably less than normal. For example, when Lieutenant Ball bombed and wrecked a 5500-8500-ton freighter transport in the Menado area on 29 August, the crew dropped parafrags on each of five runs. No fire at all was received on the first four runs and only a small amount of inaccurate machine-gun fire on the last run. This is an unusually meager return of fire from an enemy ship of such size, and parafrags apparently were the main cause for that meagerness.



S-E-C-R-E-T

- 24/8/44 LIEUTENANT (junior grade) M. D. MILLER, USNR, landed off Seroei, a village on the south coast of Japen Island, recovered three Army officers from a scouting mission and returned them to Woendi.
- 28/8/44 LIEUTENANT (junior grade) H. M. KALSTAD, USNR, covering strikes on Utarem, Western New Guinea, and Ambon, Ceram area, strafed a 90-foot Sugar Charlie stranded on a sandbar south of Pandjang Island, Ceram, at 04-04S, 131-11E. Tracers penetrated the hull, but no fire started and no life was seen aboard.

VP-34 OPERATIONS, AUGUST, 1944.

Patrol Squadron 34, operating from the Middeburg Island area, Vogelkop, since 22 August when its tender the Orca arrived there from Woendi Lagoon, has added another chapter to its story of "firsts". A PBV from VP-34 was the first Allied aircraft to "land" at Kavieng when a remarkable rescue of 15 Army airmen was effected under the enemy's guns; a VP-34 PBV on another rescue mission was the first to land at Hansa Bay; and a VP-34 PBV on a ferry hop was the first plane to land on Lake Sentani at Hollandia. This past month two of the squadron's planes were the first PBVs to enter the Philippines since the old Patwing 10 retreated south at the outset of the war.

The night of 22 August LIEUTENANT COMMANDER V. V. UTGOFF, USN, squadron commanding officer, and LIEUTENANT N. L. FAXTON, USNR, executive officer, commanded the two PBVs that made the initial return sweep into the Philippines. Both planes made antishipping searches in Davao Gulf and around the south end of Mindanao. The crews noted many lights and several planes airborne in the Davao area, but none intercepted. At 0300/K a hospital ship was sighted at 05-34N, 125-04E, heading on a course of 090 degrees true. Several radar runs were made on approximately a dozen ships scattered along the east shore and the entrance to Sarangani Bay and at the mouth of Davao Gulf, but poor visibility prevented completion of the attacks. Moderate, inaccurate light antiaircraft fire from one escorting vessel did no damage.

Before initiating the first of what may become for the Japs a long, sad series of Blackcat prowls in the Philippines, the crews of both PBVs had an excellent battle record in the Netherlands Indies as well as in the Bismarck Sea, where Commander Utgoff and Lieutenant Paxton won Distinguished Flying Crosses for their attacks.

In the six weeks ending 31 August, VP-34 Blackcats have sunk or destroyed some 28,000 tons of enemy shipping and damaged one destroyer escort and another 1500 tons of shipping. The high ratio of the



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attacks the PB4Y drew inaccurate 20mm and 3-inch antiaircraft fire from the minelayer and fairly accurate, moderate heavy fire from the grounded destroyer.

OPERATIONS OF VP-52 DURING AUGUST, 1944

Catalinas of Patrol Squadron 52 picked up personnel on four occasions in August during a total of 95 rescue patrols. All operations were from Woendi Lagoon, but on 3 August VP-52 transferred its tender base from the USS Wright to the USS Tangier, the flagship of Commander Aircraft, Seventh Fleet. Usually two to four rescue patrols a day covered strikes on the Halmaheras and Ceram. Toward the end of the month VP-52 rescue planes also supported raids on Celebes and Mindanao as the air war roared into the Philippines. Near the hotter targets Army P-38's provided fighter escort. None of the Catalina crews was lost, and no one was hurt during the month's operations.

The squadron's "rescue of the month" took place on a remote Jungle-draped river in Southwest Vogelkop, Dutch New Guinea, and involved not only plane personnel but Javanese women and children black, spear-hurling natives and frenzied, vengeful Japs.

On 13 August, 1944, LIEUTENANT C.J. SCHAUFFLER, USNR, and his crew rescued 13 Javanese women and children, including the wife of the former Dutch Administrator, from Kampongbaroe, an enemy-harassed native village 20 miles inland from the coast northwest of MacCluer Gulf, Vogelkop.

9/8/44 Returning at 1700/K from a Halmahera rescue patrol, LIEUTENANT COMMANDER H. A. SOMMER, USN, squadron commanding officer, strafed and badly riddled a 35-foot wooden barge moored close to shore at Cape Boropen, Vogelkop. There was no return fire and no personnel was noted.

LIEUTENANT (junior grade) H. W. IRWIN, USNR, sighted a man in a raft 3 miles east of the strong Jap base at Manokwari, Vogelkop, landed in the water nearby, and picked him up. The rescued man had crashed without injury when his P-39 engine suddenly failed after a strafing attack on Manokwari. He was brought back to Woendi, then returned to his Army base at Biak.

13/8/44 LIEUTENANT C. J. SCHAUFFLER, USNR, on his way to evacuate the Javanese women and children from Kampongbaroe, answered a distress call from Army P-40 pilots and sighted a crashed P-40 at 01-31S, 135-45E. He water-landed and searched among the aircraft wreckage, picked up the raft, but found no survivor.



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anchored in Mahona Bay, Sangihe Islands. One bomb exploded close alongside and lifted the bow of the Sugar Charlie clear off the water. Two more near misses contributed to the ship's trouble. Three hours after the attack when the PB4Y returned to the area, the crew saw a large oil slick and only the masts and the top of the ship's superstructure projecting above the water.

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER M.T. SMITH, USNR, squadron executive officer, piloting a PB4Y on a daylight search over Davao, dropped two 300-pound GP bombs from 11,000 feet on seven fighters and two transports parked on the airstrip at Madaun, but results of the bombing were obscured by clouds. Moderate heavy antiaircraft fire from the vicinity of the airfield was inaccurate. The crew also observed 27 fighters parked wing tip to wing tip at Likanan Airfield.

Off Davao Town the PB4Y straddled a Fox Tare Baker with a string of five 100-pound bombs. One bomb bursts within twenty feet of the ship's bow, but no damage was observed. Two Zekes approached to intercept, then turned away when the PB4Y headed toward them.

22/8/44 LIEUTENANT H.S. BARBER, USNR, and his crewman spotted an eighty-foot lugger at 00-23N, 124-18 E, started a small fire, drove the vessel aground on the beach with three strafing runs.

In another attack on a lugger on the same day, LIEUTENANT (junior grade) G. FORBESS, USNR, made a masthead run on a lugger heading west at 10-00N, 125-50E. One of the two 100-pound bombs dropped blew off twenty feet of the lugger's stern. The plane then made three strafing attacks on the lugger and set it afire. Slugs from a 7.7mm machine gun on the vessel's superstructure holed the PB4Y twice. One bullet pierced the center of the bombardier's window. The bombardier AOMlc W.T. VAN METER, was hit in the throat and killed.

Again on the same day LIEUTENANT A.Y. BELLSEY, USNR, attacked a Toshima Class minelayer off Ngaruangel Reef, Palau Islands but the plane's bombs hung. The minelayer was strafed in three low-level passes. When the PB4Y returned from the end of its search sector, the crew found the warship dead in the water and leaking oil. This time three 250-pound GP bombs were dropped from 8000 feet and one burst within forty feet of the ship's beam. A small barge, apparently working at salvage of a destroyer aground on the reef nearby, was strafed, but damage was not observed. During the



- 13 Sept - Lieutenant Shinn attacked a FOX TARE CHARLIE in Menado Harbor with unobserved results.
- 15 Sept - Lieutenant Covey and crew damaged and beached a FOX TARE DOG five miles north of Cape Sial, Piroo Bay, Ceram.
- 19 Sept - Operating out of Morotai; a PBY commanded by Lieutenant Wesley B. Van Benschoten, USNR, bombed and strafed a SUGAR CHARLIE southeast of Tagbilaran Bohol Island. The ship was believed to be seriously damaged.
- 20 Sept - Lieutenant (jg) Hand hit a FOX TARE CHARLIE with two 100-pound bombs, leaving it on a reef near Ormoc, Leyte Island, the Philippines.
- 30 Sept - Lieutenant Van Benschoten and his Cat crew were supporting an Army strike on Iangoan airbase when they were attacked by four ZEKES. The pilot began evasive action which was so successful that, although the Japs made runs for 25 minutes and dropped phosphorous bombs, only slight damage was inflicted on the PBY. The Cat's gunners hit two of the ZEKES, possibly destroying one.
- 12 Oct - Squadron moved from U.S.S. TANGIER to U.S.S. ORCA, both anchored at Morotai.
- 12 Oct - Lieutenant Hine landed his PBY-5 off Togian Island, near Celebes Island, and rescued 10 members of an Army B-24 which had been shot up in a strike on Balikpapan, Borneo, and had crash-landed on Togian. The Army pilot had done an extremely skillful job of landing, and none of the 10 was hurt. He had written "10 OK" on a parachute which he had draped over the wing of his downed plane. Lieutenant Hine taxied in as close to land as possible and the survivors came out to the Catalina in native canoes. "The Army boys had been down for two days and had made friends with the natives," said Lieutenant Hine. "The natives insisted on doing all the paddling; they told the Army boys to sit back and take it easy."
- 12 Oct - Lieutenant Shinn and crew landed a Navy commander and an Army Lieutenant-colonel in Leyte Gulf, the Philippines, to confer with loyal Filipinos on the forthcoming invasion. This flight was made eight days prior to "A" day.
- 16 Oct - Lieutenant Penfold and his crew rescued an Army P-38 pilot from Mae Bay, near Halmahera. The Army Second Lieutenant Lawrence E. Hyde, of the 36th Fighter Squadron, bailed out when his plane was damaged following a bombing run on a Jap barge. He hit the water about a mile from Jap territory and almost drowned when he became entangled in his parachute. He fought free, however, and stayed afloat with the help of his Mae West.



- 29 Oct - Lieutenant ( ) Dyer was patrol pl ( ) commander of a Catalina which landed off Cape Sopi, Morotai, and picked up seven survivors from an Army B-24 which had crashed.
- 30 Oct - Lieutenant William A. Mason, USNR, and crew, covering an Army strike, picked up four survivors of a B-25 off Zamboanga Town. Two other members of the Mitchell's crew went down with the plane. The Cat made the rescue in the face of accurate anti-aircraft fire from the beach and was hit twice. No one was injured. The survivors were attached to the 823rd Squadron, 308th Bomb Group.
- 16 Nov - Lieutenant Van Benschoten and crew landed off Hinunangan, Leyte, and picked up three Army P-38 pilots who had crash-landed after they ran out of gas, in bad weather. They were attached to the 9th Fighter Squadron, 49th Group.
- 18 Nov - Lieutenant Hine landed off Calagnaan Island, 11-29 N, 123-12 E, and rescued the three-man crew of a TBF, attached to Torpedo Squadron 7 and stationed aboard the U.S.S. HANCOCK. Several weeks before, the TBF had been hit by AA from a Jap battleship, and the survivors had been royally entertained by Filipinos since 26 October. In fact, they were in a boat, coming from a native dance, when Lieutenant Hine and his crew arrived.
- 18 Nov - Ensign Edward B. Morris, USN, and crew landed off Cape Borongan, Samar, 11-15 N, 125-38 E, and picked up three Filipino soldiers, two of whom were severely wounded.
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#### VPB-101 CONTINUES REMARKABLE RECORD

Patrol Bombing Squadron 101, which had been based at Owi, Schouten Islands, moved its Liberators to Morotai 18 October. Personnel consisted of 55 pilots, four A-V(S) officers and 18 flight crews.

Commander Justin A. Miller, USN, Commanding Officer, who destroyed an average of a Jap plane a day during the first 19 days of October, crashed on 19 October, and Lieutenant Commander Marvin T. Smith, USNR was ordered to command from 23 October. (See article below for Commander Miller's record).

During the month, 121 PB4Y missions were flown, totaling 1,611 hours, bringing the total for five months of combat to 9,160.

Three enemy planes were destroyed in the air during October, 27 were destroyed on land or sea, and eight were severely damaged. Twenty-two ships and two barges, totaling 52,700 tons, were sunk or destroyed, and 13 ships and four barges, totaling 5,950 tons were damaged. All large buildings at the seaplane base at Lalos, northern Celebes, were destroyed.



- 23 Oct - Lieutenant (jg) Harold H. Lewis, USNR, and crew to return after an attack by fighters,
- 25 Oct - Ensign Allen and crew crashed after take-off. No survivors
- 26 Oct - Lieutenant Seiber attacked a tanker in Balabac Straits, between Palawan and Borneo, making two strafing and bombing runs. Explosions were observed on the tanker. The plane was severely damaged and had to be ditched. (See article below).
- 26 Oct - Lieutenant Bowen crashed and was rescued by a ~~PBY-5 piloted~~ Lieutenant Commander Vadyn V. Utter, USN, Commanding Officer of Patrol Bombing Squadron 34.
- 29 Oct - Lieutenant Forbes attacked and probably sank a 10,000 ton tanker at 02-40N, 116-45 E, Celebes Sea. His Liberator came in at masthead level, dropping three bombs which scored direct hits on the ship's after section. Large fires started, and the bridge blew up. A medium tanker was strafed and damaged.
- 30 Oct - Lieutenant Stanley Ryder, USNR, sighted a concentration of SUGAR DOGS anchored at 10-35 N, 122-50 E, in Guimaras Strait between Negros and Panay. Strafing damaged four of the SD's.
- 31 Oct - Lieutenant (jg) Tyler destroyed a FOX TARE CHARLIE anchored at 11-58 N, 120-05 E, off Culian Island, in the Palawan Group. Four bombs hit the stern, causing it to break away. Ensign Joseph W. Shepard, USNR, second pilot, was mortally wounded by a 12.7 mm hit in the cockpit.
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#### COMMANDER MILLER AND CREW DESTROY 19 PLANES

Within a 19-day period in October, Commander Justin A. Miller, USN, Commanding Officer of Patrol Bombing Squadron 101, and his PBY crew chalked up this remarkable score.

DESTROYED - Nineteen planes, one oil barge, one gasoline-laden lugger and four small cargo ships.

DAMAGED - Ten planes, one 4,000-ton freighter, two luggers and two small cargo ships.

DISTRIBUTED - Forty thousand propaganda leaflets, printed in Japanese, giving the Nips the true word on the progress of the war.

The squadron commander and his crew, following a crash, are now in friendly hands.



During the month, five aircraft did not return from patrol. Five officers and 12 men were killed in action; two officers and 10 men are missing, and four officers and three men (Commander Miller and crew) are in friendly hands. One officer and five men have been rescued, but not returned to base (as of November). Two enlisted men, injured in a landing at Woa, were evacuated.

A brief summary of important actions:

- 1 Oct.- Lieutenant Griswold Forbes, USNR, sighted a 100-foot tanker anchored off the northeastern tip of Malakui Island, north of Basilan Island and made a masthead run. Twelve 100-pound AN MK 300 4-5 second delay bombs were released by the pilot at 100 feet. Two direct hits near the stern caused large explosions, flying debris, flame and black smoke rising to 500 feet. Two other bombs burst within 30 feet of the vessel. The ship also was strafed from all gun positions. Because of the proximity of enemy air bases - particularly the seaplane base at Caldera Point and Wolfe Field on Basilan Strait - Lieutenant Forbes and his PD4Y crew didn't remain to watch the tanker sink, but she was burning and settling when they headed for home.
- 4 Oct.- Commander Miller destroyed a FOX TIRE CHARLIE and other shipping off Jolo Town. (See article below.)
- 5 Oct.- Lieutenant Albert R. Seiber, USNR, bombed and strafed a FOX TIRE DOG and a SUGAR CHARLIE along the south coast of Celebes Island at 00-30N, 121-40E. The SUGAR CHARLIE exploded and the FOX TIRE DOG was completely enveloped in flames and turned on its side.
- 7 Oct.- Commander Miller returned to Caldera Point Seaplane Base. (See article below.)
- 7 Oct.- Lieutenant Albert Y. Bellsoy, USNR, damaged a SUGAR DOG by bombing and strafing in Malusan Bay, Basilan.
- 11 Oct.- Commander Miller attacked ships in Loyte Gulf. (see article below.)
- 13 Oct.- Lieutenant Morris returned to Lalos. (See article below.)
- 15 Oct.- Lieutenant Forbes attacked Lalos. (see article below.)
- 19 Oct.- Lieutenant (jg) David M. Carroll and crew scored three direct bomb hits on a 6,000-ton FOX TIRE CHARLIE at 11-27 N, 119-10 E. Two strafing runs were also made. Subsequent reconnaissance by Patrol Bombing Squadron 115 found the ship aground on a reef.



- 19 Oct - Commander Miller crashed near Puerto Princesa, Palawan.  
(See article below).
- 19 Oct - Lieutenant (jg) Neal A. Tyler, USNR, and his crew sighted seven DAVES, one RUFEE, and two SUGAR CHARLIES moored in Mangarin Bay, Mindoro, 12-20 N, 121-06 E. A strafing attack from 50 feet left two DAVES burning and sinking. A five-bomb straddle caused a SUGAR CHARLIE to break amidships and sink.
- 20 Oct - Lieutenant Bellsey shot down a BETTY southeast of Luzon, at 13-36 N, 124-15 E, with two passes. He also attacked two SUGAR DOG's at Batulaki, east of Panay in the Visayan Sea, leaving one burning fiercely and the other on a reef and smoking, as a result of near misses and strafing.
- 21 Oct - Lieutenant Forbes and Ensign Robert W. Allen, USN, each made a strafing run on a SUGAR DOG and a SUGAR CHARLIE at 09-30 N, 118-40 E, on the east coast of Palawan, damaging both vessels.
- 22 Oct - Lieutenant Morris strafed four SUGAR CHARLIES at 01-20 N, 119-10 E, in Makassar Strait, destroying one and damaging the others.
- 22 Oct - Lieutenant Bellsey attacked a SUGAR DOG and a tug at 07-25 N, 117-10 E, north of Borneo. After six strafing runs the SUGAR DOG was left dead in the water and sinking, with its personnel over the side and swimming. The tug, severely damaged, was sinking.
- 22 Oct - Lieutenant (jg) Kenneth H. Dunn, USNR, and crew shot down a TESS 30 miles west of Puerto Princesa, Palawan. The Jap plane exploded in midair.
- 22 Oct - Lieutenant Russell E. Bowen, USNR, made a strafing run on La Carlota airstrip, Negros, torching a KATE on the runway. He also sighted a SUGAR CHARLIE and a 50-foot power boat anchored off Aistre De Campe Island. On the second run the SUGAR CHARLIE, which was loaded with gasoline, caught fire and exploded, causing the power boat to explode also. Later, the PB4Y made a strafing run on two luggers west of Verde Island, between Mindoro and Luzon. One burned to the waterline and the other was destroyed.
- 23 Oct - Lieutenant Forbes sank a lugger by bombing and strafing off Donso Town, Luzon, 12-54 N, 123-35 E. He then sank a SUGAR DOG at 06-55 N, 126-13 E, southern Mindoro, by a direct bomb hit and strafing.
- 23 Oct - Ensign John B. Copeland, USN, shot down a BETTY at 11-10 N, 114-50 E, South China Sea.



- 23 Oct. --- Lieutenant (jg) Harold H. Lewis, USNR, and crew failed to return after an attack by fighters.
- 25 Oct. --- Ensign Allen and crew crashed after take-off. No survivors.
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Commander Miller's first offensive strike of this 19-day period was 1 October when he took off from Owi, Schouten Islands, and made surprise visits to the seaplane base at Caldera Point, Mindanao, the nearby Wolfe Field and to adjacent waters. His bag for this mission was six planes destroyed on the land and water, five others heavily damaged and a gasoline-laden lugger sunk. Before returning home, he dropped 20,000 propaganda leaflets over Zamboanga.

On 4 October, again taking off from Owi, he and his crew flew what started to be a routine search of a 1,000-mile sector. The plane was armed with twenty 100-pound AN MK 30 bombs, with MK 112 AIA 4-5 second delay fuses. At the outer limits of the sector, at 1145/I, Commander Miller made a low-level run on Zettle Field, Jolo Island; Sulu Archipelago. His crew heavily strafed a ZEKE in a revetment, gun emplacements and personnel.

A FOX TARE CHARLIE, with an oiler moored alongside, was observed in the harbor and ten 100-pound bombs were dropped on them from 100 feet, with 30-foot spacing. Three direct hits were scored and the vessels also were strafed heavily. The oiler was set on fire and the FTC emitted smoke. Meager, light, inaccurate AA was encountered from the FTC.

Ten more centuries were dropped on the second run, scoring four direct hits, and four additional strafing runs were made. The oiler was destroyed and the FTC seriously damaged. Four strafing runs were made on a SUGAR CHARLIE, which burst into flames and was left sinking. A return strafing run was made on Zettle Field, with the same targets receiving attention. Meager, light, inaccurate AA was encountered. The PB4Y then completed the base leg of its sector.

After landing, the crew discovered a small hole - 7.7 - in the leading edge of the wing. The squadron's damage assessment was that the ZEKE, AA emplacements and 4,000-ton FTC had been seriously damaged and the oil barge and 150-foot SUGAR CHARLIE had been sunk.

At 2330/I, 6 October, the Commanding Officer and his crew again took off from Owi to search a 1,000-mile sector, with a secondary mission of releasing 20,000 more leaflets over Zamboanga. At 0620/I, 7 October, the leaflets were dropped from 100 feet over the center of the city and Wolfe Field. About 300 rounds of .50 caliber were fired on buildings, a hanger and a BETTY at Wolfe Field. Light, inaccurate AA fire was encountered.

Then Commander Miller returned to the Caldera Point seaplane base, where he strafed and destroyed two DAVES, one PETE and one JAKE. All four planes burned completely. A total of six strafing runs was made at low altitude from 0630 to 0700. The hanger and AA emplacements were strafed. The EMILY which had been attacked on 1 October was observed to be a mass of wreckage. Light, inaccurate AA fire was encountered. The squadron assessment of damage was four planes destroyed, one damaged.



On 11 October, Commander Miller and his crew again took off from Owi on a search of a 1,000-mile sector. The PB4Y was armed with 100 100-pound bombs. Just beyond the limits of the sector, a concentration of small ships was observed in Leyte Gulf. At 1315, a masthead attack was made on a SUGAR DOG and all five bombs (with 4-5 second delay fuses) were dropped. Straddled by the bombs, the SUGAR DOG capsized and sank. A strafing run was continued on two luggers and on a SUGAR CHARLIE anchored nearby, and the same run was continued over Tacloban Air Strip, with the Navy Liberator indicating 180 knots. Two badly damaged, single-seat fighters on the strip were strafed. No other planes were seen on the field and the strip was bomb-pocked and appeared unserviceable. A second, similar run was made on the luggers and SUGAR CHARLIE and on over the field. Light, extremely accurate AA was sent up from the SC, the airdrome and a ridge overlooking the harbor. The plane was holed 14 times, but no one was injured.

The squadron assessment of damaged was a SUGAR DOG sunk and one SUGAR CHARLIE and two luggers seriously damaged. (Since the single seat fighters were already damaged prior to Commander Miller's attack, they are not included in the totals listed above).

On 19 October, Commander Miller and his crew made a low-level attack on the harbor and strip at Puerto Princesa, Palawan. Full details are not yet available, but it is known that six planes were destroyed and three damaged on the strip; three seaplanes destroyed; a SUGAR CHARLIE and a SUGAR DOG destroyed, and a SUGAR DOG damaged.

The Liberator crashed 12 miles from the strip. At first, it was thought that all hands were missing, but it is now known that Commander Miller, three other officers and three men are safe.

#### JAP SEAPLANE BASE DESTROYED

A PB4Y crew from Patrol Bombing Squadron 101 totally crashed a Jap seaplane base at Lalos, Colobos, and most of its planes in two raids - the first, 11 October; the second, 13 October.

At 1200/I, 11 October, Lieutenant Fred H. Morris, USNR, operating from Owi, Schouten Islands, had completed the outward leg of a 1,000-mile search when he observed the base at 01-08 N, 120-50 E. Six PETES were moored near the beach and a seventh was attempting to take off.

The PB4Y came in on a low-level strafing run, setting fire to a plane on the beach and to the one attempting to take off. Five other PETES quickly took to the air and chased the Navy Liberator, but none closed within gun range. Instead, they remained overhead, dropping phosphorous bombs. Seven bombs were dropped during an hour-long chase, but all missed the PB4Y.



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At 1400/I, Lieutenant Morris and his crew sighted a 150-foot SUGAR CHARLIE at 00-55, N 123-35 E and strafed it with 2,500 rounds of .50 caliber. The ship burned fiercely and probably sunk.

After careful planning, Lieutenant Morris returned to the seaplane base two days later, carrying five 100-pound incendiaries and five 100-pound AN MK 30 GP's, with 4-5 second delay fuses. At 0700/I, with the sun rising behind the hills, he made an overland approach, streaking in at 1,000 feet and dropping to 500 feet over the base, where the incendiaries were released. Meanwhile, his crew was pouring lead into four PETES along the beach and another which was taxing.

A second run was made at 600 feet and the five 4-5 second delay incendiaries were released on the buildings. Again the planes were strafed heavily. The plane which had been taxing burned for a while and then sank.

Two more strafing runs were made; two more PETES caught fire; buildings and AA emplacements were hit. The base was now a mass of flames, with smoke mounting a mile into the sky. Lieutenant Morris and his crew continued on the base leg of their 1,000-mile "routine" search. A lone PETE finally got into the air and made a half-hearted attempt to chase the PB4Y, but he never came closer than three miles.

Twenty-four hours later, a plane from Patrol Bombing Squadron 115 flew near the base and found it still burning and buildings gutted and leveled. (See article on VPB-115). Estimate of damage: All buildings wrecked; Three PETES destroyed.

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#### LIEUTENANT FORBES FINISHES JOB

Lieutenant Morris kept his eyes open throughout the action described above and spotted some seaplanes hidden under foliage in coves south of the base. Lieutenant Griswold Forbes, USNR, on the regular 1,000-mile sector from Owi 15 October, flew over the base for reconnaissance (the buildings were still smoldering) and found three PETES, well hidden and close together. A reflection of sunlight on the windshields gave the hiding-place away.

Lieutenant Forbes's PB4Y was carrying 12 MK 30 incendiaries, with 4-5 second delay fuses, in double suspension. He released two of these bombs over the PETES, scoring a direct hit. One plane blew up, a second caught fire, and the third was riddled with bomb fragments. The squadron's assessment was that all three were destroyed.

Total score for the three missions of 11, 13 and 15 October: One seaplane base destroyed; one SUGAR CHARLIE probably sunk; eight PETES destroyed.



LIEUTENANT SEIBER GIVES WORD ON DITCHING

Lieutenant Albert R. Seiber, USNR, and his Patrol Bombing Squadron 101 crew were forced to ditch their PB4Y 26 October, after a successful attack on a tanker. The Liberator made its first masthead strafing run on the 5,000-ton tanker at 1400/I, 08-10 N, 116-59 E. Heavy, black smoke poured from the ship. On a second strafing run, large explosions sent balls of fire soaring into the air. However, intense and accurate 20 mm. anti-aircraft set fire to the plane's No. 4 engine and severed the fuel line from the No. 4 tank.

Here are Lieutenant Seiber's comments;

"At about 1600 on 26 October we had definitely determined that we would have to ditch our Liberator. The armor plate and guns had all been taken out previously; all other loose gear was thrown out now. Our belly turret had been jettisoned before we knew that we would have to ditch. Otherwise, I think it would have been better to have left it in.

"We wanted to ditch with enough daylight remaining so all hands could be in the life rafts before dark. The earliest we could manage and still be far enough from the Japs was 1830. This would leave us approximately 30 minutes of daylight. A suggestion here; if at all possible, give yourself an hour of daylight. That much time is needed to assemble all your men and rafts and to dress wounds.

"By assuming a particular time of ditching we were enabled to send a message to base giving them our exact position. This message was sent at 1810. As soon as it was receipted for, our radioman went aft. Our positions and preparations were as follows:

"Pilots' cockpit: Myself and co-pilot were strapped in with shoulder harness. In the pockets of our flight suits and jackets we had first aid kits, candy, gum, flashlight, morphine, knives, etc. Our side windows were out and the escape hatch open. All ready here.

"Flight deck cleared and all loose gear out. Command deck: Here five men were sitting, braced against and padded with parachutes (none of these men were injured). Just aft of the command deck the other two men and the navigator were braced against the bulkhead. (All three of these men were injured). The navigator reported that all were ready and we turned into the very light wind at 1825.

"Since our No. 4 was out, we reduced the power on No. 1 to fifteen inches, then retrimmed the plane using No. 2 and No. 3. only. We lowered the flaps and used a normal glide approach. At about 10 feet off the water, we slowed our speed to 100 knots. Then we increased our power and slowly let down to within a foot or two of the surface. Holding it here, we increased our power until our speed had slowed to 75 knots. Here we felt the rear section touch so we cut power and crash bar simultaneously. The plane skidded on for about one or two seconds and then stopped quite suddenly. The nose went



S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

under and buckled to the right. My co-pilot and I both escaped from the side windows. When we got out we saw the plane had broken right at the belly turret aft of the wing, forming an inverted V in the water. One of the men from the command deck climbed out of the break and released the wing rafts.

"The plane had also broken at the waist hatch. Here one of the men had become entangled and had to be cut loose. Also, the tail turret had broken loose, so two of the men went out this hole. It took about 10 minutes for us to get all of the men in life rafts and paddle away from the plane. The plane sank in 15 minutes. In about 20 minutes it was so dark that we had to dress our wounds by flashlight. Our emergency rations had become entangled in the plane, so they had to be cut loose and were lost. But the "Gibson Girl" was tied on the raft and was saved.

"Here is a must: Check all hands out in the use of mirrors. Two P-61's flying at 15,000 feet were attracted by our mirrors and sent a P-Boat to pick us up. The PBY was also attracted by the mirrors rather than by the dye marker or the "Gibson Girl".

"We were picked up at 1030 following the day of our crash-landing.

"Suggestions: Take out all oxygen bottles; take out Radar partition, hang curtains in place, and have all hands at all times carry a dozen or two condoms to wrap matches, cigarettes, watches, etc., prior to ditching.

"Just before ditching; throw out all guns, ammunition, armor plate, radio gear, radar gear and table, and then put all the men in the command deck. Also, take the waist hatches completely off, because they slammed shut on impact."

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OCTOBER OPERATIONS OF VPB-29

Patrol Bombing Squadron 29, with Lieutenant Commander Lauren E. Johnson, USN, in command, was based aboard the U.S.S. TANGIER (AV 8) at Morotai during October, and flew mostly Black Cat missions and armed night patrols. The squadron had 12 PBY-5 planes and 12 flight crews. A log of the more important missions follows:

- 1 Oct -- A Black Cat commanded by Lieutenant Commander Johnson strafed a lugger south of Boeroe Island, with unobserved results. Later, this plane was subjected to intense, and accurate anti-aircraft fire from Ambon Town, Laha and Halong, on Ambonia Island. The fire was returned at Ambon and one gun position was silenced. The plane was not hit.
- 1 Oct -- A Black Cat commanded by Lieutenant (jg) John P. Schneck, USNR, failed to return from a mission to Kondari, Celebes Island. At 0115/I the following message was received: "One man wounded; control cable shot. I am returning to base from Tur (Kondari)". No other messages were received and all searches were negative. In addition to Lieutenant (jg) Schneck, there were two officers and eight men aboard.



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The bureau number of the plane was 08233. Lieutenant (jg) Schonek and his crew had an outstanding record of successful attacks.

- 2 Oct -- Lieutenant (jg) Jack S. Hall, USNR, flew his Black Cat over Celebes Island, where he spotted a 2,000-ton freighter-transport five miles south of Matewo, Boctoeng Island. A stick of three 500-pound bombs was dropped across the vessel's stern, with unobserved results. Medium, intense anti-aircraft fire was encountered and the plane was holed once in the hull, the projectile ranging upward between the pilot's seats. The Black Cat also strafed a two-masted schooner off Tikong, Taliabee, Soela Island, leaving the ship on its side.
- 2 Oct -- Lieutenant Joseph T. Gardner, USNR, Executive Officer, and his crew dropped two 500-pounders and two 100-pounders alongside a 700-ton cargo ship in Manado Bay, Celebes Island. The vessel turned on its side. They also blasted the stern of another 700-ton ship with one 500-pounder in Amcerang Bay, Celebes Island, leaving this vessel aground on a reef, with its stern under water. Medium, intense anti-aircraft fire scored four hits on the PBY-5, but no one was injured.
- 3 Oct -- A Black Cat commanded by Lieutenant (jg) Joseph A. Cummings, USNR, missed three luggers off Sankar Island, Darvel Bay, North Borneo, with four 100-pound bombs. The luggers were also strafed, with unobserved results.
- 7 Oct -- Lieutenant Gardner's Black Cat made a forced landing off Jolo Island, Sulu Archipelago, when the starboard failed at 1,000 feet. He and his crew were rescued 9 October by a Catalina flown by Lieutenant (jg) Hall.
- 14 Oct -- On a Black Cat mission to Borneo, Lieutenant (jg) Gardner L. Burt dropped four 500-pound bombs and three 100-pounders on docks and stores at Sandakan, starting a large fire visible 65 miles away. A small ship, possibly a tanker, was alongside the docks and may have been destroyed.
- 15 Oct -- Lieutenant (jg) Cummings and crew drove a 1,000-ton cargo ship ashore at Dent Haven, North Borneo, with a near-miss by a 500-pound bomb. Three 500-pounders, dropped alongside another 1,000-ton ship, left it listing. Lieutenant (jg) Cummings' crew also strafed six barges in the vicinity.



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- 22 Oct -- A Catalina on armed night patrol piloted by Lieutenant Cummings, found seven small cargo ships of about 300-ton each at Sandakan, North Borneo, and scored two hits with 500-pound bombs on one of the vessels. The plane was driven off by intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire. Later, the Catalina strafed for 45 minutes six small cargo ships at Tangusu Bay, North Borneo, but none of them caught fire. A shore-based anti-aircraft battery also was silenced.
- 25 Oct -- Off Great Santa Cruz Island, southwest Mindanao, a PBV on armed night patrol, piloted by Lieutenant (jg) Cummings, missed a 1,000-ton freighter-transport with a stick of two 500-pound and two 100-pound bombs. The Catalina was driven off by moderate and accurate medium anti-aircraft fire from the beach. Later, the plane also spotted an enemy CA, MOGAMI Class, and a DD at 10-10 N, 120-50 E, and tracked it for half an hour. The enemy warships did not fire. All bombs on the plane had been dropped during the unsuccessful attack on the freighter-transport.
- 27 Oct -- Lieutenant (jg) Burt and crew, on a Black Cat mission, missed a 7,000-ton enemy transport with three 500-pound and four 100-pound bombs off Usang Point, North Borneo. A 20 mm. shell from the transport exploded in the mechanic's compartment and the port wing also was holed, but no one was hurt. A NATORI Class CL, escorting the transport, did not open fire.
- 29 Oct -- Lieutenant (jg) Arthur W. Stanwood, USNR, piloted a Catalina on armed night patrol. Four 500-pounders were dropped over a 500-ton cargo ship at Zamboanga, but missed. The plane escaped damage from medium and accurate anti-aircraft fire from the beach.
- 31 Oct -- A 7,000-ton tanker, anchored on the south side of Tawitawi Island, Sulu Archipelago, was destroyed by a Catalina on armed night patrol, piloted by Lieutenant (jg) William H. Simon, Jr., USNR. On the first run, the PBV-5 missed the ship with two 500-pounders and two 100-pounders. On the second attack, two more 500's and two more 100's were dropped in salvo and hit the tanker squarely amidships. The ship exploded in a burst of flame, throwing parts 300 feet into the air. When the Catalina turned and headed for home, only smoldering debris remained. The anti-aircraft fire from the beach was light and inaccurate and did not hole the plane.