

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NWMDM-0994017

VMO-251
Aug 1944

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46607

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE OBSERVATION (FIGHTER) SQUADRON TWO FIVE ONE
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 24
FIRST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING, C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

COMBAT TOUR

OF

DUTY

OF

MARINE OBSERVATION (FIGHTER) SQUADRON TWO FIVE ONE

From

1 August, 1944

To

31 August, 1944.



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Wls 10/27

War Diary for August, 1944, of VMO-251.

Geographical Location of VMO-251:

PIVA NORTH AIRFIELD, BOUGAINVILLE.

Name of Commanding Officer:

WILLIAM C. HUMBERD, Major, USMC.(NA)

Name of Next Higher Echelon:

MARINE AIR GROUP TWO FOUR

Composition of Unit as of 1 August, 1944:

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Men</u>
U.S. Marine Corps Pilots	45	
U.S. Marine Corps Ground	9	239
U.S. Navy	<u>1</u>	<u>7</u>
	<u>55</u>	<u>246</u>

War Diary of August, 1944 for VMO-251.

Roster of Flight Echelon as of 1 August, 1944:

HUMBERD, William C., Major.	Commanding Officer.
BACHELER, William L., Major.	Executive Officer.
FURLOW, Thomas W., Captain.	Flight Officer.
GALLAGHER, John P., Lt.(USNR)(MC).	Flight Surgeon.
HART, Joseph P.	Captain.
TELLER, Robert W.	Captain.
WELCH, Henry B., 2ndLt.	Intelligence Officer.
JONES, Morelle W., StfSgt.	Intelligence and Flight Clerk.

BOWERS, Glenn	1stLt.
CORMAN, Ned "J"	"
CRUTCHER, Ernest R.	"
CUNNINGHAM, Russell E.	"
ERDMANN, William A.	"
ENDERS, Robert A.	"
FLICKINGER, Judson	"
FOLEY, James A. Jr.	"
FOWLER, Millard F.	"
GARRETT, James D.	"
HENLEY, Paul B.	"
INGLEHART, George G. Jr.	"
JENNINGS, Francis C.	"
JOHNSON, Alfred L.	"
JOHNSON, Harry C.	"
JOLINK, Albert	"
LORCH, Orville F.	"
MAC LACHLAN, Archibald W.	"
MC CABE, Earl W.	"
MC MASTERS, John J.	"
MOYNIHAN, Michael H.	"
NEILSON, Russell H.	"
PIRAGES, William J.	"
ROBINSON, Max K.	"
ROSELLEN, Robert R.	"
SCHOETZ, David J.	"
SCOVILLE, William H.	"
SIGAN, Nick A. Jr.	"
SMITH, Howard F. Jr.	"
SPINDLER, Thornton F.	"
SWICK, Orville R.	"
STURGIS, James B.	"
TANNER, Grover K.	"

BARTON, Wilson G.	2ndLt.
FRANK, Lewis C.	"

War Diary for August, 1944 for VMO-251.

1 August, 1944.

✓ Major HUMBERD led his own, and BACHELER's, FURLOW's, and JENNING's divisions minus one plane which did not get off, each with 1x1000 lb. instantaneous bomb in a bombing and strafing attack against AA target 450-D, a Jap AA position north of TOBERA AIRFIELD. No specific damage could be seen by the retiring planes, but all bombs exploded inside the target area. Other observations, such as enemy activity, were negative. The attacking planes drew meagre and inaccurate AA fire from unknown type of guns, on the NW side of TOBERA AIRFIELD runway, and also from a point between the target and TOBERA AIRFIELD. Landed: 1030.

Detached the following officers: BATE, Oscar M., Captain; CONDON, Joseph A., 1stLt.; HILDEBRAND, Richard W., 1stLt.; WILSON, Cecil M., 1stLt.

The following eleven officers left for Sydney, Australia for rest: TELLER, GALLAGHER, MAC LACHLAN, MOYNIHAN, NEILSON, ROBINSON, ROSELLEN, SMITH, TANNER, HART, and ERDMANN.

Received FG-1A aircraft. Bureau number 14065.

2 August, 1944.

Flying secured.

3 August, 1944.

✓ BACHELER's division on the DUKE OF YORK-CAPE LAMBERT fighter sweep scored one area hit and one dud on plantation buildings located on WATOM ISLAND. HENLEY's division on the PUT PUT-KERAVAT sweep chalked up one direct hit by CRUTCHER on a group of huts SE of TOBERA STRIP; 1 area hit and 1 miss on same huts; and 1 area hit on buildings near MALABUNGA. All planes took off at 0835, returned to base 1140. LORCH, Orville F., 1stLt.(026772), USMCR, did not return from this mission, and has been reported as "Mission in Action". His plane was hit by AA fire at approximately 1000 feet altitude while he was making a strafing run on gun positions 2 miles SE of TOBERA RUNWAY. LORCH headed out toward ST. GEORGE's CHANNEL, gained 3000 feet altitude, and had reached a point 1/3 the distance from the mouth of the WARANGOI RIVER to CAPE ST. GEORGE when his engine froze completely. He glided down, with the other planes of his division(HENLEY's) following him to the water, jettisoned his hood and appeared to be in good shape for a water landing. There were many whitecaps and swells on the water, however, the plane made one low bounce when it struck the water, and sank in less than 10 seconds, the pilot never getting out of the cockpit.

 War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

August 3, 1944.(Cont'd).

✓ The afternoon sweeps, PUT PUT-KERAVAT and DUKE OF YORK-CAPE LAMBERT, were taken by FOWLER's and JOLINK's divisions respectively, taking off at 1230 and landing at 1550. On the PUT PUT sweep, FOWLER and H. JOHNSON, scored direct hits on buildings along the KERAVAT RIVER, 3 to 4 miles from KERAVAT AIRFIELD. Noticed that the Japs have cleared out the underbrush in an area SE of the EXPERIMENTAL FARMS as if they are making a new supply or garden area. Also observed many good log structures inland to SE of KERAVAT. No strafing by this division. One plane did not takeoff.

In the DUKE OF YORK sweep, bombs were dropped on buildings in GAVIT PLANTATION which looked like a bivouac area. Observed fires near VUNAKANAU, and strafed huts along the shore of ATALIKLIKUN BAY, with unobserved results. No AA fire or enemy activity was seen. One plane returned to base after takeoff with hydraulic leak.

All planes in both morning and afternoon sweeps carried 1x500 lb. GP bomb, 4 to 5 second delay fuse.

F4U-1 bureau number 56151 stricken.

4 August, 1944.

✓ Major HUMBERD led the four plane fighter sweep of DUKE OF YORK to CAPE LAMBERT, taking off at 0835, returning at 1155. All planes dropped their 500 pounders on rows of huts on MAKADA ISLAND, DUKE OF YORK, which looked like a camp or bivouac area, scoring one hit in the area, 1 miss, and 2 unobserved. At 1010 observed a cloud of white smoke going up from the CAPE LIGUAN area to 3-400 feet, and lasting for several minutes. Not close enough to see what caused it.

JOLINK led the PUT PUT-KERAVAT sweep of four fighter bombers; Takeoff: 0835; landed: 1155. One plane dropped it's 500 pounder from 100 feet altitude for an area hit among shacks at MALABUNGA. Three dropped near PUT PUT HARBOR, ENDERS getting a direct hit on a little shack of some sort. Reconnaissance from 1000 feet along the whole sweep was negative.

✓ FURLOW's division took the afternoon sweep of DUKE OF YORK-CAPE LAMBERT, 3 planes, 1x500 lb. 4-5 second GP bombs. Took off at 1205 and returned to base at 1450. Dropped bombs on buildings located on the narrow peninsular on the south of the DUKE OF YORK ISLAND, but two were duds and the other missed.

JENNINGS' division took off same time as FURLOW's and with same bomb load, for the PUT PUT-KERAVAT sweep. Scored 3 area hits on huts at MALABUNGA, and 1 unobserved. JENNINGS is believed to have wrecked a truck by strafing; the truck was headed south on the road from VUNAKANAU to MALABUNGA, but crashed into the ditch when JENNINGS' tracers went into it.

Joined one Navy enlisted man.

Received F4U-1. Bureau number 56387.

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5 August, 1944.

✓ HENLEY's division took off at 0820 with 1x500 lb. 4-5 sec. GP bomb to sweep the line from PUT PUT to MALABUNGA to KERAVAT. Over target from 0940 to 1030, and returned at 1145. Observed two columns of smoke coming from trees two miles south of VUNAKANAU road. Noticed many new huts in vicinity of the MALABUNGA-VUNAKANAU road. The road from KERAVAT to VUNAKANAU to TOBERA appeared to be in excellent condition, but no traffic was seen on it. In the opinion of these pilots the WARANGOI RIVER would be very difficult to navigate with a boat or anything but the smallest size, because of the many logs and sand bars seen. No traffic seen on the river. Scored three area hits among buildings 3 miles SE of KERAVAT.

✓ Major BACHELER's and Lt. FOWLER's divisions took the PUT PUT and DUKE OF YORK sweeps of the afternoon, taking off at 1200. Neither flight reached it's target because of a solid front N to S this side of CAPE GAZELLE. All planes returned, bombed BUKA PASSAGE area. Four area hits, out of eight planes, with no observed damage or enemy activity. Landed: 1400.

6 August, 1944.

✓ FOWLER's division took off at 1530 to strafe Jap concentration gardens and huts located in a three mile long area north from EBERY's LEASE, on southern BOUGAINVILLE. Hit the target from 1610 to 1624 after an approach at 6,000 feet over water between KAHILI and BALLALE. Came in at tree top and scissored up the road from EBERY's LEASE. Target area was well covered with many bursts of 50 caliber. Observed results of much enemy garden activity. All gardens appeared well cultivated and the trails well worn.

JOLINK and FLICKINGER took off at 0930 to make the JABA RIVER KIETA sweep, but were turned back at MOTUPENA POINT by weather. Landed: 0955.

7 August, 1944.

✓ Major HUMBERD and Captain FURLOW led the PUT PUT and DUKE OF YORK fighter sweeps, 4 planes each, with 1x500 lb. GP 4-5 sec. bomb each. Took off at 0755, returned at 1100. Major HUMBERD while strafing a truck on a road south of TOBERA, struck the top of a tall tree with his right wing resulting in a wing change, but made it safely back to base. When first seen, the truck had stopped and 6 or 8 people were running away from it. The truck was riddled but did not flame or smoke. SIGAN, HUMBERD's wingman, sighted another truck going west on the same road, with a machine gun mounted on a rear platform, but when he came back to strafe,

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War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

7 August, 1944 (Cont'd).

the truck had disappeared. STURGIS thoroughly strafed a civilian-type automobile at TOMA, SE of VUNAKANAU, with unobserved results.

The DUKE OF YORK sweep was negative except for observing many houses on JAQUINOT POINT, DUKE OF YORK ISLAND. All four bombs dropped at ROKUNDA PLANTATION were duds.

✓ Major BACHELER's and Lt. JENNINGS' divisions flew the afternoon PUT PUT and DUKE OF YORK sweeps, a total of eight planes with 1x500 lb. 4-5 sec. bomb each. BACHELER's boys bombed buildings at NEINDUK PLANTATION, completely destroying one building with a direct hit by PIRAGES, and missing with the other three bombs. Tactics on the one direct hit: Pushover at 1500 feet; 10 degree glide; 240 knots indicated air speed; Released at 50 feet, about 50 yards before plane went over the target. PIRAGES' plane brought back a 30 or 50 cal. hole in the fuselage near the horizontal stabilizer. No AA was seen.

✓ JENNINGS' division got three area hits and one unobserved on a group of buildings 100 yards inland from a wharf on GARRERR BAY, east of CAPE LAMBERT. No damage observed from bombing or strafing.

JOHNSON, A. and JOHNSON, H. flew the MOTUPENA POINT, KIETA search, with negative observations.

Transferred F4U-1 bureau number 50050. Received F4U-1 bureau number 56099.

8 August, 1944.

✓ HENLEY's division took off at 0730 for the DUKE OF YORK sweep with 1x500 lb. inst. bomb, and dropped their four bombs on a group of buildings at ST. PAUL, CAPE LAMBERT. All four bombs hit well within the target, and two were believed to be damaging hits. All strafed with no observed damage. Observations negative. Landed: 1030.

1050: FURLOW's division with no bomb load took off to strafe EBERY's LEASE to TAKASAGO FARMS. Put 6,000 rounds of 50 caliber in the target area, but saw no Japs or enemy activity, except for one truck which pulled out onto KAHILI RUNWAY, Did not strafe because it looked too much like a trap. Drew intense inaccurate heavy AA fire from KAHILI AIRFIELD at 9,500 feet. 40 to 50 puffs came very close to planes. Landed: 1330.

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8 August, 1944 (Cont'd).

✓ 1215: Major BACHELER's division headed for the PUT PUT sweep with 1x500 lb. bomb each plane. Damaged one hut near MALABUNGA by bombing, but no damage seen from strafing. Observed 8-10 camp fires in various small clearings in a wide area three to six miles south of VUNAKANAU. Strafing huts at TOMA. Landed: 1450.

✓ 1145: FOWLER's division flew the DUKE OF YORK sweep with 1x500 pounder each plane, all four dropped on group of buildings and huts at VUNALAMA PLANTATION. FOWLER and FLICKINGER got direct hits, destroying two buildings. Other overshoot. Saw no trucks or other enemy activity, but saw a huge column of smoke inland from RALUANA POINT. Landed: 1515.

✓ 1300: JOLINK's division strafed the EBERY's LEASE-TAKASAGO FARMS area, with no observed damage. Saw many good gardens and huts, and saw a Jap near the beach on the east side of KAHILI run out of his hut and jump into a ditch. Unable to bring guns to bear on him. Landed: 1520.

9 August, 1944.

✓ 0830: Major HUMBERD's and Lt. JENNINGS' divisions took off with 1x500 lb. bomb each to bomb and strafe targets of opportunity from EAST CAPE to NAMATANAI, NEW IRELAND. Smoked five or six huts and started a grass fire in the area. Five planes bombed a bridge across the first river south of KANDAU, north of CAPE SENA, scoring 1 area hit but no visible damage. Three bombed buildings just south of CAPE SENA, destroying with one direct hit by MC MASTERS, one hut and damaging two nearby. All planes strafed native villages, with no visible damage. JENNINGS' plane, (Bureau No. 49766) was lost in the water thirty miles west of BUKA PASSAGE when the pilot was compelled to abandon it. His plane is believed to have been hit by small caliber AA fire from CAPE SENA, because while enroute back to base, JENNINGS saw his RPM's fluctuate down to between 500 and 800. He lost altitude at the rate of 300 feet per minute, until at 1800 feet he bailed out. He made a successful jump, but struck his foot on the vertical stabilizer as it went past him, disabling the foot for several days. He was rescued by Dumbo in two hours.

F4U-1 bureau number 49766 stricken.

10 August, 1944.

✓ 1240: FOWLER's division left on the PUT PUT sweep, bombed buildings 2 miles NW of MALABUNGA, scoring four hits believed to have been damaging. All planes strafed many huts and buildings, setting one ablaze at MALABUNGA. Saw much truck activity around the EXPERIMENTAL FARMS, and one truck parked on road halfway between MALABUNGA and VUNAKANAU. Pilot was past this truck before he could get his guns to bear. Landed: 1515.

Received F4U-1 bureau number 56265.

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11 August, 1944.

✓ 0800: JOLINK's division handled the PUT PUT sweep of the morning. Four planes, 1x500 lb. bomb each, hit warehouses between KERAVAT and the EXPERIMENTAL FARMS, but missed. No huts were smoked or fired, though many were strafed. No enemy activity sighted. Landed: 1030.

✓ 0800: HENLEY's division took the morning DUKE OF YORK sweep. At a point approximately 2 miles north of VUNAGALIP, which lies to the east of CAPE LAMBERT, the plane piloted by Lt. SCHOETZ, bureau No. 56417, was hit by AA fire believed to have come from the vicinity of a red-painted building. The sweep was immediately abandoned to accompany the crippled plane. SCHOETZ headed north, with smoke pouring from his engine. He reached a point 50 miles from RABAUL on course of 290 degrees magnetic where he abandoned the plane. He was rescued by an EMIRAU Dumbo soon after he parachuted out of his plane. However, in getting out of the cockpit he somehow caught his arm in the crook of the elbow, pulling ligaments and severely bruising the arm. He also suffered two broken fingers. He was taken to EMIRAU and hospitalized. All four bombs were jettisoned, and the flight landed at 1145.

Received two F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 55912 and 56353.

Transferred F4U-1 bureau number 50157. F4U-1 bureau number 56417 stricken.

1stLt. David J. SCHOETZ, detached to ACORN 7 hospital at EMIRAU.

Joined one Navy enlisted man.

12 August, 1944.

✓ 0800: Major HUMBERD's division, with no bombs, took off for the PUT PUT sweep. Very little strafing was done, for lack of a target, but STURGIS strafed a "lone, short and fat" Jap who was running along a road in LIVUAN PLANTATION. The flight did strafe huts west of VARZIN PLANTATION and huts SE of MT. VARZIN. INLEHART's plane, bureau number 55942, was hit by small caliber AA fire near MALABUNGA resulting in a bad oil leak. The pilot succeed, however, in making his way to GREEN ISLAND, where he landed with very little oil pressure. Examination of the plane showed three cylinders pierced. Pilot reported the plane is all right, the engine probably a survey. Landed: 1100.

✓ 1230: Captain FURLOW's division departed for the PUT PUT sweep, minus one plane which did not take off because of smoke in the cockpit. Strafing many huts, but observed nothing, in the way of enemy activity. Landed: 1500.

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War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

12 August, 1944 (Cont'd).

✓ 1215: Major BACHELER's division took over the DUKE OF YORK sweep, minus one plane which did not get off because of a flat tail wheel. Observations negative. Dropped bombs along north shore of CAPE LAMBERT and may have slightly damaged several huts. Strafed also with unobserved results. Landed: 1530.

Received two F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 56413 and 56410.

13 August, 1944.

✓ 0555: Pre-dawn takeoff with 500 lb. bombs. Major BACHELER's, JOLINK's, FURLOW's, and FOWLERS' divisions departed. Twenty minutes later the Japs, if any, in the bivouac and supply area along the BOVO RIVER, ARAWA BAY, BOUGAINVILLE, were awakened by the deposit of 32x500 lb. bombs in their vicinity, 16 of VMO-251 and a like number by VMF-223. Of our sixteen planes, 12 were positive that they put their bombs in the target, 2 were positively duds, and 2 were unobserved. 15 of the 16 planes strafed all the way down the area, to the sea. No enemy activity or actual damage was seen in the target area because of the dense jungle growth, but one pilot saw five thin wisps of smoke rising from an area about 10 miles up the coast. Landed: 0715.

✓ 0720: HENLEY's division swing the PUT PUT sweep, or rather, attempted to do it. This side of CAPE ST. GEORGE they struck a solid front and turned back for BOUGAINVILLE. Upon instructions from base they proceeded to ARAWA BAY and MANATEI MISSION on the east coast of BOUGAINVILLE where they strafed and took photographs with their gun cameras. Observed three small scattered fires up in the hills from ARAWA, but no damage from strafing. Landed: 0900.

✓ 1400: FOWLER's division took on the afternoon PUT PUT job, but it too was stopped by the front lying across ST. GEORGE CHANNEL. FOWLER took the division well up the east NEW IRELAND COAST, trying to get through, but found conditions such that he considered it inadvisable to continue. Returned to base, landing at 1600.

Transferred two F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 55942 and 49724.

14 August, 1944.

0745: Major HUMBERD's division took off for the PUT PUT sweep but the major was forced to return to base immediately after takeoff because of a hydraulic leak. Lt. INGLEHART took over the lead, but found the same front that stopped two flights yesterday, extending from the water up to 15,000 feet. Returned to base. Landed: 0945.

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War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

14 August, 1944 (Cont'd).

✓ 0905: Captain FURLOW, MC MASTERS, FOLEY and FRANK took off with 1x500 lb. bomb each to fly the DUKE OF YORK sweep. Dropped bombs on group of buildings at MANDRES SAWMILL for area hits. The flight leader reported, however, that these buildings were pretty well beaten up before they hit them. Strafed buildings on the NW side of WATOM ISLAND and on the DUKE OF YORK. Landed: 1200.

✓ 1300: JOLINK's division flew the afternoon PUT PUT sweep, with no bomb load, and minus one plane which returned to base immediately after takeoff because of a hydraulic leak. Saw a big fire just north of VUNAKANAU putting up 1000 feet of white smoke which spread over a large area. Observed six small fires smoking in the area MALABUNGA to VUNAKANAU to MT. VARZIN. Other observations negative. Landed: 1530.

✓ 1345: Major BACHELER's division took the PUT PUT sweep, each of the four planes carrying 1x500 lb. inst. fused bomb. All bombs missed their target. BACHELER smoked a hut east of CAPE LAMBERT. The flight strafed several tin-roofed huts in plantations along the coast which would not burn though pilots saw their tracers going into them. Landed: 1645.

FLICKINGER and BARTON flew the MOTUPENA POINT-KIETA sweep, then completed the ABLE-CHARLIE search, which continues around the islands of BOUGAINVILLE and BUKA. Other MOTUPENA-POINT-KIETA sweeps were flown today by HENLEY and CRUTCHER; JOHNSON, H. AND JOHNSON, A.; FOWLER and MC CABE.

15 August, 1944.

✓ 0730: Major HUMBERD's and Lt. FOWLER's divisions took part in a 39-plane fighter bomber attack on VUNAKANAN AA Targets "O" and "P", as well as the revetments surrounding the field. Our planes attacked the automatic AA positions to the east of the plantation and the 3 MG's at the west end of the runway, scoring 5 area hits, 2 unobserved, and 1 jettisoned because bomb did not release in the bombing run. Pilots reported the attack was well coordinated, but that because of the high-speed dive and pullout (380 knots plus) it was impossible to get a view of any damage that may have been caused. The dive was made from 10,000 feet in a 60 degree angle, with release at 1500-2000 feet, without dive brakes. All planes returned safely. Landed: 1015.

✓ 1015: Captain FURLOW's division handled the DUKE OF YORK sweep, dropping four 500 pounders on a group of buildings at KAKADA POINT, DUKE OF YORK ISLAND. Also strafed UTUAN and MICKO ISLANDS, adjacent to the DUKE OF YORK. No results of bombing or strafing were seen. Observations on sweep to CAPE LAMBERT were negative. Landed: 1230.

War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

15 August, 1944 (Cont'd).

✓ 0930: JOLINK's division flew the PUT PUT-KERAVAT sweep, with no bombs. Strafed many huts and buildings along the route, but observed no damage. Saw no smoke or other evidence of damage at VUNAKANAU, as a result of the 39-plane strike described above. Saw a cloud of dust on the NE end of TOBERA AIRFIELD, but couldn't see what was causing it. Landed: 1210.

✓ 1330: HENLEY's division went the PUT PUT-KERAVAT, was also flown with no bomb load. Observed 4-5 brush fires 2 miles north of MALABUNGA. No traffic on WARANGOI RIVER. Saw 25 or more separate thatched huts between MALABUNGA and KERAVAT, the roofs of which came right down to the ground as if the floor of the huts was dug out below the level of the ground. The huts were in little clearings. Results of strafing unobserved. Landed: 1545.

MC MASTERS and FRANK flew the MOTUPENA POINT-KIETA sweep. Likewise for SCOVILLE and MC MASTERS. FOWLER and MC CABE flew to STIRLING to stand local security alert.

16 August, 1944.

FOWLER and MC CABE returned from STIRLING. All other flying was weathered out.

17 August, 1944.

✓ 0840: Major BACHELER's, Captain FURLOW's, and Lt. FOLEY's division made up of FRANK, MC MASTERS, and BOWERS, were scheduled to hit VUNAKANAU, but because of weather, the target was changed to the Ration Dump on the HONGARAI RIVER, BOUGAINVILLE. Each plane carried 1x500 lb. inst. bomb, and the attack was delivered at 0900. The dive was from 10,000 feet, 50-60 degrees, with dive brakes, and speed of 300 to 340 knots indicated. Release was made at 2,000 feet, with 50 to 75 mils lead, and all 12 bombs hit and exploded in the target area. Because of the dense jungle, however, results were obscured from sight. Several planes strafed and the area was well covered by the bombing. Landed: 0930.

✓ 0820: Major HUMBERD's division put on the PUT PUT sweep, with only their 50 calibers to do the talking. Strafed wharf and buildings at VUNAPALDIG BAY. The buildings smoked momentarily as the tracers hit them, but none were fired. Observed a brush fire putting up 100 feet of white smoke, inland from VUNAPALDIG, and also a small fire at the EXPERIMENTAL GARDENS. Landed: 1050.

✓ 1315: FOWLER's division worked the PUT PUT sweep of the afternoon. No bombs, and very little strafing was done because the Jap was obviously in hiding. Saw the smoke of two small fires burning near MT. VARZIN and to the north of it. Landed: 1530.

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17 August, 1944 (Cont'd).

The eight following officers returned from SYDNEY: TELLER, MOYNIHAN, ROBINSON, TANNER, ROSELLEN, NEILSON, SMITH, and MAC LACHLAN.

18 August, 1944.

0725: Major BACHELER's, FOWLER's, JENNINGS', and JOLINK's divisions, plus ROSELLEN and MAC LACHLAN, participated in a 42-plane fighter bomber attack of the same VUNAKANAU targets struck on 15 August: AA Targets "O" and "P", plus the revetments. The attack came at 0845, but was seriously handicapped by a cloud layer directly over the target at 5-8000 feet. Major DRUKKER of VMF-223, leader of the entire flight took the planes down through a hole in the clouds, which hole rapidly filled up with AA fire as well as our planes. Plane, bureau number 56410 piloted by Lt. MC MASTERS was hit, and the pilot was forced to abandon it 15 miles NE of PRAED POINT. Plane, bureau number 49717, piloted by Lt. JENNINGS, was hit beneath the starboard wing just outboard the gull angle, knocking a six inch hole, plus about ten shrapnel holes in the topside of the wing. The plane was also struck beneath the cockpit by a 50 caliber bullet which went the length of the fuselage and emerged on the port side, just forward of the vertical stabilizer. This plane returned to base, and is a wing change. In addition to the usual type of AA fire, our planes encountered bursting white phosphorous at about 3000 feet. Our damage to the enemy could not be well observed. All 18 bombs appeared however, to be well placed on the assigned targets.

Lt. MC MASTERS, in bailing out, struck the horizontal stabilizer, and suffered a broken leg near the hip and was taken by Dumbo to EMIRAU. He stated that in getting out, he attempted to roll the plane over on it's back, but that the nose dropped off and the plane scooped out of the roll just as he was trying to leave it. Another thing which should be noted is that as JENNINGS and FOLEY were circling overhead, they noticed some object fall from McMASTERS' chute. At first they thought it was the pilot falling out of the chute, but actually it was his rubber boat with CO2 bottle attached, which fell out of the boat pack and was lost on the way down. Dumbo rescued him within thirty minutes after he hit the water.

The three following officers returned from SYDNEY: HART, ERDMANN, and GALLAGHER.

Captain Robert W. TELLER, USMCR, accepted appointment to rank of major.

Received F4U-1 bureau number 49724.

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War Diary for August, 1944.

19 August, 1944.

Flying secured because of bad weather.

The following seven officers left for SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA for rest:
HUMBERD, SIGAN, INGLEHART, STURGIS, FURLOW, SCOVILLE, and CUNNINGHAM.

20 August, 1944.

TELLER and CORMAN flew a weather hop to TONOLEI HARBOR, southern BOUGAINVILLE, in preparation for the strike which was to follow.

✓ 1125: Major TELLER's, SMITH's, and JOLINK's divisions off with 1x1000 lb. inst. GP bomb, together with 12 fighter-bombers of VMF-223, to bomb anti-aircraft and supply areas at TONOLEI HARBOR. One plane of this squadron did not take off because of flat tail wheel. Our planes scored 4 area hits on the supply area, west side of TONOLEI HARBOR; 3 area hits on the 2 autos also on the west side of the harbor; and 1 area hit, 1 miss and 2 duds on the autos located on the small rectangular island on the east side of the harbor. No damage was observed by our pilots, but the pilots of VMF-223 reported seeing two fires burning on the little rectangular island hit by Major TELLER's division. The only AA fire encountered was some meagre machine gin fire from a position on the east side of the harbor, just north of the South auto position, directed at planes of VMF-223. Plane # 912, piloted by Lt. FOLEY, had the fabric ripped off it's port wing tip, bottom and topside, over an area approximately 18"x"24, cause unknown. Did not appear to have been caused by AA fire.
Landed: 1225.

HENLEY and GARRETT left for SYDNEY.

1stLt. John J. MC MASTERS, detached to U. S. Fleet Hospital 108.

21 August, 1944.

Flying secured.

SPRENGER, Robert F., 1stLt.(026810), USMCR, transferred to "Prisoners of War and Missing Persons Det."

22 August, 1944.

✓ 0750: 12 fighter bombers, consisting of Major BACHELER's, Captain HART's, and Lt. FOWLER's divisions, together with a like number of planes from VMF-223 took off for GREEN ISLAND to load with 500 lb. magnesium clusters, and hit RATAVAL 124, a Jap bivouac and supply area southwest of RABAU TOWN, on TALILI BAY. The weather was so bad, however, toward RABAU, that the original strike was cancelled. Major BACHELER agreed with Major DRUKKER of VMF-223 that the entire flight, with Major BACHELER leading, should hit the Jap bivouac

 War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

22 August, 1944.(Cont'd).

area on the BOVO RIVER, ARAWA BAY, which lies thirty odd miles across the island of BOUGAINVILLE from PIVA NORTH AIRFIELD. The flight took off from GREEN ISLAND at 1125, but hit bad weather to the north of BOUGAINVILLE. VMF-223 turned back to GREEN, but VMO-251 continued to the agreed target, attacked at 1215, and returned to base. Observations were few because of poor visibility over the target, but all mag. clusters fell in the target area, and the pilots saw at least six fires burning after the attack. Two of our planes did not get off from GREEN ISLAND, because of starting trouble. Landed: 1245.

Transferred F4U-1 bureau number 56099. Received F4U-1 bureau number 55942.

23 August, 1944.

✓ 0710: Major TELLER led a fighter-bomber attack consisting of his own, Lt. SMITH's and Lt. JENNINGS' divisions, a total of twelve planes each with 1x500 mag. cluster. The operation was staged through GREEN ISLAND for the purpose of picking up the mag. cluster bombs, with VMF-223 also furnishing twelve planes for the strike. Takeoff from GREEN was at 0930, attack at 1030. All bombs of the 11 planes of VMO-251 over the target went into the target area, starting several small fires, and causing much smoke over target. Lt. ROBINSON took off late at GREEN because of starter trouble, attempted without success to overtake the flight, returned to base via HAPAN, BUKA ISLAND, where he dropped his bomb on a group of thatched huts, firing three of them. The remainder of the flight returned to base at 1040.

24 August, 1944.

Flying secured, for purposes of maintenance.

Transferred F4U-1 55912.

25 August, 1944.

✓ 0815: Major BACHELER led ten fighter-bombers, and Captain HART led eight strafing planes on a coordinated attack against AA positions and barges on the west side of SIMPSON HARBOR, RABAU. The attack including BACHELER's, JOLINK's, HART's, FOWLER's and one section made up of ROSELLEN and MAC LACHLAN. The entire flight consisted, in addition to these, of 17 SBD's of VMSB-236 and 10 fighter bombers and 8 strafing planes of VMF-223, making a grand total of 53 planes.

The writer went as an observer on this strike; hence, part of the information is first-hand. The attack was seriously handicapped by a solid bank of white clouds directly over the target with a base at about 4,000 feet and top at 10-11,000 feet. The dive bombing attack by VMO-251 was made from 10,500 feet, in 50-60 degree dives, with releases at 3,000 ft.

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War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

25 August, 1944 (Cont'd).

However, three planes could not locate their assigned targets in the first run, so returned and dropped from 1,800 feet in a very shallow glide beneath the cloud layer. Three other planes did not drop on their assigned targets for the following reasons, respectively: (1) One pilot's windshield became covered with oil so that he couldn't see; (2) One pilot did not turn on his master gun switch and so the bomb did not release in the run; and (3) One pilot was showered with urine which had collected in a clogged up relief tube just as he pushed over to make his run. These pilots selected other targets.

The two divisions of strafing VMO-251 fighters did not attempt to strafe because of the reduced visibility over the target, and the fact that they could not see whether all bombers were out of their way or not. Observation of results of the bombing was largely negative except for seeing one column of grayish brown smoke going up several hundred feet from a point just to the north of VULCAN CRATER; plus one fire burning near TONGOL, TALILI BAY, which was caused by the SBD's. One direct hit was scored by Lt. ROSELLEN on the 10 machine gun positions on the west side of the harbor. Flight landed: 1115.

1330: Division leader JENNINGS, with BARTON, MAC LACHLAN, and NEILSON, took off to strafe and bomb a coastal defense gun position at MOILO POINT, BOUGAINVILLE. Scored three damaging hits and destroyed three huts which were fired by strafing. The bombs were 500 pounders, with 4 to 5 second delay fuses, and were dropped from an altitude of 25 feet. Returning to base via BUKA ISLAND, the flight spotted a serviceable-looking barge lying just off the west coast, at KARSORILAO. The four planes landed at 1600, loaded up with one thousand pounder each, 4 to 5 second delay fuse, and took off again at 1645 to try to get the barge they had found. Locating it, they dropped their bombs in level flight at 25 feet altitude. However, all four bombs fell 15-20 yards short, skipped over the barge, and exploded on the beach. The four planes then strafed the barge thoroughly with 3200 rounds of ammunition. One plane struck a tree in one of these runs, necessitating a wing change. Landed: 1800.

26 August, 1944.

0815: Major TELLER, Captain HART, and Lts. SMITH and JENNINGS took their respective divisions on what was the second bombing attack in two days against the anti-aircraft guns and barges on the western side of SIMPSON HARBOR, RABAU. Once again the SBD's of VMSB-236 went in on AA positions to the NW and West of the harbor, and sixteen fighter bombers divided equally between VMO-251 and VMF-223 hit the positions farther south but also on the western side of SIMPSON HARBOR. Sixteen more fighters, also equally divided between the two fighter squadrons strafed barges and other targets along the shore.

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War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

26 August, 1944(Cont'd).

No damage was seen from the bombing, but JENNINGS and BARTON caused two barges near TOBOI WHARF to burst into flame, and HART's division riddled three other barges in the vicinity of the MARINE RAILWAY. JENNINGS also started a fire among some buildings on KABAKON ISLAND, DUKE OF YORK. Pilots saw a moderate amount of inaccurate light AA striking the water during their retirement. Fire may have come either from MATUPI ISLAND or from RALUANA POINT. Landed: 1035.

Transferred three F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 56037, 49895 and 56044. Received two F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 55912 and 56099.

27 August, 1944.

✓ 0700: Major BACHELER led his own, Major TELLER's, and Lts. JOLINK's and FOWLER's divisions in a bombing and strafing attack against RATAVAL 124, which is a Jap building and supply area inland from TALILI BAY and west of RABAU TOWN, NEW BRITAIN. The attack was staged through GREEN ISLAND, to pick up mag. cluster bombs, 1x500 lb. per plane. Takeoff from GREEN was at 0930, the attack was made at 1025. All bombs of the 13 planes which reached the target were seen to fall within the assigned target area. After the attack, many small fires were seen, including one that put up a 1500 foot column of brownish gray smoke. One fire was also started at a point in the coconut plantation 3/4 miles to the south of the target. Three planes did not reach the target, for the following reasons: One did not take off from GREEN ISLAND because of an elevator damaged slightly while taxiing; another did not takeoff because of starting trouble; and the third returned to GREEN after takeoff because of engine trouble. Flight returned safely to base at 1050.

28 August, 1944.

✓ 0915: Major TELLER led his, Captain HART's, and Lts. SMITH's and JENNINGS' divisions on a bombing and strafing attack against the truck park and one gun position, just east of CAPE LIGUAN, NEW BRITAIN. All 16 planes reached the target, with 1x1000 lb. GP bomb each, along with 16 other fighter-bombers of VMF-223. Of the truck park and storage buildings, the 12 planes attacking this target destroyed an unknown number of buildings. One division leader reported that when he looked back, the entire target appeared to have been completely obliterated. The 4 planes attacking the AA position just west of the truck park laid three bombs "right in the target", but the pilots could see no actual damage. Landed: 1155.

✓ NEILSON, MAC LACHLAN, JENNINGS, FOLEY, FRANK, and MC CABE flew fighter sweeps around the islands of BOUGAINVILLE and BUKA.

Received two F4U-1's. Bureaus numbers: 49717 and 49895.
Transferred F4U-1 bureau number 56099.

War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

29 August, 1944.

✓ 0905: 16 A/C ordered for a bombing attack of Jap bivouac areas located at the PONDO PLANTATION and TORIU RIVER, OPEN BAY, NEW BRITAIN, took off, consisting of Major BACHELER's and Lts. JENNINGS', JOLINK's, and FOWLER's divisions, and led by Major BACHELER. One plane did not go on this mission because the engine quit on takeoff. The pilot succeeded in keeping the plane under control, and landed it with only damage to the tires. Results of the bombing were totally obscured by jungle, but good coverage was had of the assigned target, with 15 out of 15 bombs "in the target area". One plane had a 4 inch hole knocked in the top of the cockpit hood, and the pilot, 1stLt. Orville R. SWICK, suffered laceration of the face, above and below the right eye. The cause of this damage and injury is unknown, as it could have been AA fire, a bomb fragment, or a 50 caliber ricochet. No AA fire was seen by any pilot. Flight returned to base at 1200.

30 August, 1944.

✓ 0930: Takeoff from GREEN ISLAND, 8 planes with 1x500 mag. cluster each, to attack RATAVAL 128, a Jap supply area inland from the eastern shore of TALILI BAY, and west of RABAU TOWN. Major BACHELER led his own and Captain HART's divisions in this attack, which resulted in at least 12 fires with flame and smoke, going in the target area when the last planes went in. 4 or 5 of these fires were putting up 1,000 foot columns of smoke. Five planes strafed the area on pullout, with 1000 rounds of 50 caliber. Flight landed: 1130.

✓ Ran three fighter sweeps of the RABAU AREA, consisting of four planes each, JENNINGS', SMITH's, and FOWLER's divisions, respectively taking off at 0815, 0850, and 1330. The first sweep bombed thatched huts on the road 2 miles SE of KERAVAL AIRFIELD, with unobserved results. The second sweep, with no bomb load, strafed many huts along the CAPE LAMBERT shore, smoking two; and the third was weathered out of the primary mission, and so dropped its bombs on buildings off the west end of the BUKA AIRSTRIP, BUKA ISLAND, with unobserved results. Landing times were: 1000, 1100, and 1400, respectively.

Detached Captain Edward R. YOUNG, USMC. Transferred 2 F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 56305 and 49717.

31 August, 1944.

✓ 1010: 16 planes took off to bomb and strafe RATAVAL 130, a Jap supply and possible bivouac area lying inland from the east shore of TALILI BAY, NEW BRITAIN. The flight leader was Captain HART, and the 16 planes were made up of HART's division, SMITH's, JOLINK's, and JENNINGS'. The attack was handicapped by cloudy weather over the target, and only two of our planes were able to find the target.

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War Diary for August, 1944 of VMO-251.

31 August, 1944 (Cont'd).

The rest selected other targets, such as buildings farther south along the bay. The only observed damage from this attack was one small fire putting up a small amount of gray smoke from huts on KURAKAKAUL ROAD. 1stLt. James Arthur FOLEY(025369), USMCR, did not return from this mission. His plane was hit by AA fire from TAWUI POINT, when he was at 1200 feet altitude over the point. The plane continued in a northerly direction, did a half roll, and plunged into the water in a vertical dive, about two miles off shore. FOLEY has been reported "Killed in Action". On this flight Captain HART had engine trouble so he and his wingman jettisoned their bombs and returned to base. Flight landed: 1250.

Strength as 31 August, 1944.

Officers:	<u>Pilots</u>	<u>Men:</u>
	40	
	<u>Ground</u>	<u>Ground</u>
	8	239
	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Navy</u>
	1	8
Total:	<u>49</u>	<u>247</u>

Prepared by: Henry B. Welch
HENRY B. WELCH,
2ndLt., USMCR,
A.C.I. Officer.

Approved by: William L. Bachelier
WILLIAM L. BACHELER,
Major, USMCR,
Actg. Commanding Officer.

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SQUADRON SUMMARY of MISSIONS, HOURS, and FRIENDLY and ENEMY LOSSES

31 August, 1944 VMO-251 17 14 F4U-1 3 FG-1A
 (DATE) (SQUADRON) (NUMBER of PLANES AVAILABLE) (TYPE)
 at END of MONTH

NAME	COMBAT MISSIONS			ALL MISSIONS						ENEMY PLANES DESTROYED						ENEMY SHIPPING		FRIENDLY LOSSES											
	STARTED	COMPLETED	TOTAL HOURS	NUMBER					TOTAL HOURS	THIS MONTH				DESTRUCTED	DAMAGED	PLANES													
				STARTED	COMPLETED	ENGAGED ENEMY	DAY	NIGHT		NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	BRGT FORWARD			NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	COMBAT	OPERATIONAL	BUREAU NUMBER	PILOT LOST?							
BACHELER	19	19	45.4	21	21	0	20	1	47.4																				
BARTON	18	18	41.9	20	20	0	19	1	43.3																				
BOWERS	17	16	37.1	17	16	0	17	0	37.1																				
CORMAN	12	11	26.1	13	12	0	12	0	27.1																				
CRUTCHER	18	17	41.5	18	17	0	17	1	41.5																				
CUNNINGHAM	9	9	17.9	10	10	0	9	1	18.4																				
ENDERS	14	13	34.1	17	16	0	16	1	39.8																				
EREMANN	6	6	16.4	6	6	0	6	0	16.4																				
FLICKINGER	20	19	41.7	20	19	0	20	0	41.7																				
FOLEY	20	19	49.2	23	22	0	22	1	54.2																				
FOWLER	21	21	42.8	22	22	0	22	0	44.8																				
FRANK	16	16	45.1	17	17	0	16	1	46.9																				
FURLOW	12	12	23.9	14	14	0	13	1	27.6																				
GARRETT	9	9	17.9	10	10	0	9	1	18.4																				
HART	7	7	18.4	7	7	0	7	0	18.4																				
HENLEY	11	10	22.4	12	11	0	11	1	25.1																				
SQUADRON TOTALS																													

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SQUADRON SUMMARY of MISSIONS, HOURS, and FRIENDLY and ENEMY LOSSES

31 August, 1944. VMO-251 17 14 F4U-1 3 FG-1A

 (DATE) (SQUADRON) (NUMBER of PLANES AVAILABLE) (TYPE)
 at END of MONTH

NAME	COMBAT MISSIONS			ALL MISSIONS					ENEMY PLANES DESTROYED					ENEMY SHIPPING		FRIENDLY LOSSES					
	STARTED	COMPLETED	TOTAL HOURS	STARTED	COMPLETED	ENGAGED ENEMY	DAY	NIGHT	TOTAL HOURS	THIS MONTH			TOTAL			DESTROYED	DAMAGED	PLANES			PILOT LOST?
										NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	BRPT FORWARD	NUMBER	TYPE			AIR OR GROUND	COMBAT	OPERAT'NL	
HUMBERD	10	10	248	11	11	0	10	1	25.8												
INGLEHART	10	10	25.6	11	11	0	10	1	26.8												
JENNINGS	13	13	37.1	17	17	0	17	0	47.6								1		49766	No.	
JOHNSON, A.	22	22	43.5	22	22	0	21	1	43.5												
JOHNSON, H.	19	19	43.3	19	19	0	18	1	43.3												
JOLINK	16	15	37.9	17	16	0	17	0	42.1												
LORCH	11	10	1.6	2	1	0	2	0	2.3								1		56151	Yes.	
MAC LACHLAN	10	10	22.6	15	15	0	15	0	37.1												
MC CABE	19	19	35.6	20	20	0	19	1	37.1												
MC MASTERS	11	10	38.8	12	11	0	12	0	30.1								1		56410	No.	
MOYNIHAN	6	6	16.3	6	6	0	6	0	16.3												
NEILSON	9	9	23.9	11	11	0	11	0	26.8												
PIRAGES	18	18	41.5	20	20	0	19	1	43.9												
ROBINSON	5	5	13.5	9	9	0	9	0	17.5												
ROSELLEN	7	7	20.8	8	8	0	8	0	21.8												
SCHOETZ	5	4	10.3	5	4	0	5	0	10.3								1		56417	No	
SQUADRON TOTALS																					

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SQUADRON SUMMARY of MISSIONS, HOURS, and FRIENDLY and ENEMY LOSSES

31 August, 1944 VMO-251 17 14 F4U-1 3 FG-1A
 (DATE) (SQUADRON) (NUMBER of PLANES AVAILABLE at END of MONTH) (TYPE)

NAME	COMBAT MISSIONS			ALL MISSIONS					ENEMY PLANES DESTROYED				ENEMY SHIPPING		FRIENDLY LOSSES						
	STARTED	COMPLETED	TOTAL HOURS	NUMBER				TOTAL HOURS	THIS MONTH				DESTROYED	DAMAGED	PLANES						
				STARTED	COMPLETED	ENGAGED ENEMY	DAY		NIGHT	NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND			PROT FORWARD	NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	COMBAT	OPERAT'NL	BUREAU NUMBER
SCOVILLE	11	11	22.5	12	12	0	11	1	23.8												
SIGAN	10	10	25.0	11	11	0	10	1	26.0												
SMITH	7	7	18.1	10	10	0	10	0	21.8												
SPINDLER	20	20	43.8	21	21	0	20	1	44.8												
STURGIS	10	10	25.6	11	11	0	10	1	26.8												
SWICK	17	17	42.0	20	20	0	19	0	44.8												
TANNER	6	6	13.5	6	6	0	6	0	14.5												
TELLER	6	6	14.5	10	10	0	10	0	19.0												
SQUADRON TOTALS																					
487 479 11640 553 512 0 531 20 1241.9 5 2																					

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