eg. No. Hand
R. S. No.

MARINE OBSERVATION SQUADRON TWO FIVE ONE,
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP FOURTEEN, FIRST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING, FMF,
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

COMBAT TOUR
OF
DUTY
OF
MARINE OBSERVATION SQUADRON TWO FIVE ONE

From

1 December, 1944,

to

31 December, 1944.

DISTRIBUTION:

Original - Commandant, U.S. MARINE CORPS.
1 - The Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet. ✓
1 - The Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.
1 - The Commanding General, Aircraft, F.M.F., Pacific.
1 - The Commanding General, F.M.A.W.
1 - The Commanding Officer, M.A.G. - 14.
1 - File.

106915

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Geographical location of VMO-251:

PIVA NORTH AIRFIELD, BOUGAINVILLE

Name of The Commanding Officer:

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

Name of Next Higher Echelon:

MARINE AIR GROUP FOURTEEN.

Composition of Unit as of 1 December, 1944:

	Officers	Men
U.S. Marine Corps Pilots	46	
U.S. Marine Corps Ground	8	247
U.S. Navy	1	8
	55	255

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PILOTS ROSTER

HUMBERD, William C.	Major	Commanding Officer.
BACHELER, William L.	Major	Executive Officer.
FURLOW, Thomas W.	Major	Flight Officer.
SCHROEDER, Frank A.	Capt.	
WALLACE, Harold C.	Capt.	
CRUTCHER, Ernest R.	1stLt.	
CUNNINGHAM, Russell F.	1stLt.	
ERDMANN, William A.	1stLt.	
FLICKINGER, Judson	1stLt.	
GARRETT, James D.	1stLt.	
GRAY, Roy C.	1stLt.	
HEISEL, Thomas B.	1stLt.	
HENLEY, Paul B.	1stLt.	
HOLDERER, George M.	1stLt.	
INGLEHART, George G.	1stLt.	
JENNINGS, Francis C.	1stLt.	
JONES, Ollie O.	1stLt.	
KENNICOTT, John A.	1stLt.	
MAC LACHLAN, Archibald W.	1stLt.	
MOYNIHAN, Michael H.	1stLt.	
MUSSMAN, William E.	1stLt.	
NEILSON, Russell H.	1stLt.	
POEHLMAN, Arthur W.	1stLt.	
ROSELLEN, Robert R.	1stLt.	
SCHOETZ, David J.	1stLt.	
SIGAN, Nick A.	1stLt.	
SCOVILLE, William H.	1stLt.	
SMITH, Howard F.	1stLt.	
STURGIS, James B.	1stLt.	
TANNER, Grover K.	1stLt.	
WARREN, Arthur J.	1stLt.	
PIRAGES, William J.	1stLt.	
BARTON, Wilson G.	2ndLt.	
BEATTIE, Alexander D.	2ndLt.	
DAIGLE, Bernadin J.	2ndLt.	
EVANS, Arthur C.	2ndLt.	
FRANK, Lewis C.	2ndLt.	
GORMAN, James M.	2ndLt.	
HARRIS, Archibald "A"	2ndLt.	
IRWIN, Hugh E.	2ndLt.	
JERNIGAN, Curtis D.	2ndLt.	
KAMMEYER, Preston L.	2ndLt.	
LINDSEY, Robert E.	2ndLt.	
LINGENFELTER, Virgil A.	2ndLt.	
WARD, Ray G.	2ndLt.	
WOLF, John C.	2ndLt.	

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1 December, 1944.

Flying secured for purposes of maintenance.

2 December, 1944.

0900. A sixteen-plane strike, minus JONES who did not take off, departed to attack RALUANA POINT anti-aircraft gun positions. The flight was led by Major BACHELER, and consisted of his division, with PIRAGES, KENNICOTT, and IRWIN; HENLEY's division, with BEATTIE, SCHOETZ, and LINGENFELTER; SMITH's division, with NEILSON, ROSELLEN, and MAC LACHLAN; and JONES' division of GORMAN, HEISEL, and POEHLMAN.

When these Corsairs reached the target, armed with one 500 pounder each, they found a cloud layer at 4,000 feet altitude, which practically obscured what they were trying to hit. The attack was delivered anyhow, at 1020. The first division, thrown off by poor visibility, bombed well south of their assigned gun position at a road fork similar to the one where the target was located. The other three divisions attacked their assigned targets but scored no hits. No visible damage was caused, and the flight returned to base at 1155.

WALLACE and TANNER flew to GREEN ISLAND, on business, and returned today.

Major Thomas W. FURLOW sick U. S. Naval Base Hospital 10, Navy 135, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, as of 27 November, 1944.

3 December, 1944.

GRAY's division, with WARREN, MUSSMAN, and POEHLMAN, flew the dawn patrol over BOUGAINVILLE, observations negative. ERDMANN's division, with DAIGLE, MOYNIHAN, and WOLF, handled the dusk patrol, with equal results. Each division stood scramble alert for a half day.

0615. SCOVILLE and JERNIGAN took off at 0615 to fly the SOUTH BOUGAINVILLE patrol. Things were very quiet. The only sign of activity was two cooking fires at MONUITO MISSION and KARA AIRFIELD, respectively; these were strafed. Landed: 0815.

0815. FRANK and WARD were next, on the same patrol, except that they completed the circuit of BOUGAINVILLE and BUKA ISLANDS. At HANPAN they strafed and fired three huts. At RIGU MISSION, atop a hill which rises abruptly from the water's edge, they observed a small camouflaged building, with a 70-foot pole standing beside it. They couldn't figure out what this installation might be. At a

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3 December, 1944(Cont'd).

point just south of TEOP ISLAND they spotted a lone Jap on the beach, but were over him before they could get a shot. This hop did some strafing along the PURIATA RIVER, SW BOUGAINVILLE, where, according to reports of natives coming inside our limits, Japs are living. Landed: 1020.

1000: CUNNINGHAM and BARTON off on patrol, strafed various points along the beach from MOTUPENA POINT to KAHILI AIRFIELD, thence up to KIETA HARBOR on the east coast. Strafing at KOROMIRA MISSION started a brush fire. Observations negative. Landed: 1155.

1245. INGLEHART and STURGIS departed for the south end of the island but found the weather bad and returned to base at 1345.

1430. Delayed by weather, SCHROEDER and EVANS took off. It was raining and covered solid over the SW portion of the island. Skirting this, they observed one of our own gunboats one mile offshore of NW CHOISEUL ISLAND. They strafed many huts between the LEIUAI RIVER and KOROMIRA. Landed: 1625.

HUMBERD and GARRETT returned from SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA.

4 December, 1944.

0715. Sixteen F4U-1D's led by Major BACHELER, and carrying a thousand pounder each, left the deck to hit HARI VILLAGE, a reported Japanese concentration on SW BOUGAINVILLE. This flight was made up of BACHELER's division (PIRAGES, KENNICOTT, and IRWIN); HENLEY's division (BEATTIE, SCHOETZ, and WARD; SMITH's division (NEILSON, ROSELLEN, and MAC LACHLAN); and JONES' division consisting of himself, GORMAN, MEISEL, and POEHLMAN. They found the target covered by 6/10 cumulus cloud from 1500 to 4,000 feet. So, no attack was made and the flight returned their bombs to base at 0800.

1015. The above strike, this time led by Captain WALLACE, was again dispatched. The attack was directed at the same target and delivered at 1040, followed by two strafing runs by all planes. Immediately after the bombing, two 100-foot columns of black smoke were seen to rise from the target area. SMITH observed two flashes of light along the road west of HARI, which he stated could have been sunlight reflected from the windshield of a truck. Flight landed at 1115. No AA fire was encountered.

5 December, 1944.

0900. SCHROEDER's division, with EVANS, FRANK, and LINDSEY, took off with one quarter tonner each, for the CAPE ARCHWAY to DUKE OF YORK Fighter Sweep. SCHROEDER scored a direct hit on a village on NW DUKE OF YORK ISLAND and FRANK a direct hit on URUKUK VILLAGE, also on the DUKE OF YORK. These two bombs accounted

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5 December, 1944(Cont'd).

for at least four buildings, and possibly more. EVANS bombed a village at MALAPOA PLANTATION, and LINDSEY a village south of TOBERA each with unobserved results. EVANS drew machine gun fire from a point near the coast and north of the WARANGOI RIVER, was hit in the starboard wing, four feet from the fuselage, by one 50 caliber bullet. Flight landed: 1210.

0905. GRAY led WARREN, MUSSMAN, and KAMMEYER on the WATOM ISLAND to PONDO PLANTATION sweep. Three quarter tonners were dropped one mile SE of KERAVAT AIRFIELD, while MUSSMAN saved his for a truck parked under the trees and inland from the intersection of the COAST ROAD and the TUNNEL HILL ROAD. This truck was found, strafed, and fired by GRAY, though all four planes participated in the attack. The truck burned fiercely. Flight returned at 1225.

1300. CUNNINGHAM, SIGAN, SCOVILLE, and JERNIGAN took off to handle the CAPE ARCHWAY-DUKE OF YORK sweep, found the GAZELLE PENINSULAR east coast covered, attacked a village on the NE coast of the DUKE OF YORK. The flight leader and his wingman each scored a direct hit, destroying an undetermined number of buildings. Landed: 1530. Observation of enemy activity was, always reported in this diary, negative, unless otherwise specified.

1330. JENNINGS, ERDMANN, MOYNIHAN, and WOLF, on the CAPE LAMBERT sweep, bombed LANGINDA PLANTATION building scoring three misses; MOYNIHAN, however, scored a direct hit on KAMANAKAM VILLAGE, south of CAPE LAMBERT, on the west coast of the GAZELLE PENINSULAR. This started a fire, and at least one building was burning. Landed: 1645.

6 December, 1944.

0610. JONES' division took off on the dawn patrol, landed at 0730; patrol negative. WALLACE, LINGENFELTER, GARRETT, and HARRIS flew the dusk patrol, likewise negative. Scramble alert was stood by each division for a half day.

This squadron flew the SOUTH BOUGAINVILLE patrol, with results hereinafter enumerated:

0715. SMITH and NEILSON led off, found a ground fog obscuring the land from the KAHILI STRIP east to TONOLEI HARBOR. Their guns smoked three huts at MORONE, one at KAKURAI and one at MORO. In a garden 100 yards south of the KARA AIRFIELD they saw at least three AA guns of about 20 MM caliber, in dugouts and covered with canvas. In another garden 50 yards NE of these guns there were three possible guns. The positions appeared to be shell holes or dugouts covered with wicker matting. The guns were not visible. They

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6 December, 1944(Cont'd).

strafed and killed a Jap who lay flat in the road 50 yards east of the guns. In addition, they found and strafed a barge which was pulled up on the shore and underneath some trees near wooden pier in the first small inlet west of EAST POINT, TONOLEI HARBOR. On pulling out of the strafing run they saw a revetted gun position with one 20 MM gun in it, covered with a multi-colored poncho. They made three passes at this gun, causing puffs of white smoke each time. Probably damaged the gun. They also saw a small rowboat floating empty in TONOLEI HARBOR, and gave it a short burst. Landed: 0815.

0800. JENNINGS and CRUTCHER departed. Flying at masthead level over the large derelict nearest and to the east of the KAHILI AIRFIELD they saw one 20 MM and two 12.7 MM guns aboard this vessel. The barrels appeared to be in tact, but the mounts were rusty and beaten. Their strafing smoked three huts in the vicinity of KAHILI, but observations were negative as far as any enemy activity was concerned. They did see two Japs walking along the road three miles north of KAHILI, but couldn't get their guns to bear on them. While strafing at low level, CRUTCHER hit a tree with his port wing, but returned safely to base. The wing was replaced with another. Landed: 1030.

1025. MOYNIHAN and PIRAGES saw a camp fire at TINPUTD MISSION and a Jap soldier with back pack two miles south of TSIMBA MISSION, but did not strafe either, because both were within restricted zone. Rain squalls along east coast and weather getting worse. Their fifties started a fire among huts half way up the west coast of BUKA. Landed: 1245.

1255. KENNICOTT and IRWIN caught, strafed, and probably killed one Jap at MUGAI MISSION, and three near MOISURU. Observed another Jap on the beach at AITAPA, wearing a "T" shirt; saw smoke rising from the woods in the center of POPATALA ISLAND, off KAHILI. Line squalls over coastline prevented further patrolling. Landed: 1455.

1510. HENLEY and BARTON, accompanied by Captain HART, formerly of this squadron and now with the First Marine Air Wing, took off with quarter-tonners to bomb the gun position at TONOLEI HARBOR found this morning by SMITH and NEILSON. Each bomb hit close, within fifty feet; but no damage to the gun was observed. Each bomb blast appeared to start a small fire. Two strafing runs were then made on the gun position. These three planes next strafed various huts in the KARA AIRFIELD-PIANO MISSION-MT. SENFFT area, smoking three. They strafed also along the MONJITO MISSION-KAHILI road, with unobserved results. Landed: 1700.

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6 December, 1944(Cont'd).

The following Officers were detached to ComAir Admiralties to await transportation home: FLICKINGER, HOLDERER, and TANNER.

Transferred one enlisted man.

7 December, 1944.

0730. Takeoff by sixteen Corsairs, led by Major BACHELER, to deliver another attack on HARI VILLAGE. Flying with BACHELER were PIRAGES, GARRETT, and IRWIN; SCHROEDER, EVANS, FRANK, and LINDSEY; GRAY, WARREN, MUSSMAN, and KAMMEYER; and CUNNINGHAM, BEATTIE, SCOVILLE, and JERNIGAN. Sixty minutes after takeoff, four tons of bombs were deposited neatly within the target area, but no evidence of damage appeared. Landed: 0900.

Test hops flown by JERNIGAN, PIRAGES, and POEHLAMN.

8 December, 1944.

0820. JONES, GORMAN, POEHLAMN, and DAIGLE took off to fly the PONDO to WATOM sweep, bombed some broken-down huts at PONDO PLANTATION with no damage claimed, except for cratering a Jap's potato patch. GORMAN's bomb was a dud. The flight hit a front lying across the GAZELLE PENINSULAR south of CAPE LAMBERT, and returned to base at 1105.

0600. HENLEY, BARTON, SCHOETZ, and WARD departed on the CAPE ARCHEAY-DUKE OF YORK sweep found that the front described above extended to NEW IRELAND ad to GREEN ISLAND. They went through, dropped their bombs through the only open spot they could find, near TOBERA AIRFIELD. Results unobserved. Landed: 0830.

9 December, 1944.

Flying secured.

10 December, 1944.

Flying secured.

11 December, 1944.

Flying secured. The following officers were transferred to ComAir Admiralties to await transportation home: HEISEL, KENNICOTT, and GORMAN.

12 December, 1944.

Flying secured.

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13 December, 1944.

WELCH, Squadron Intelligence Officer, briefed pilots on the various methods of authenticating messages, now in use in the Philippines.

14 December, 1944.

A two-hour squadron tactics hop was flown by HUMBERD's, SCHROEDER's, HENLEY's, JENNINGS', and SMITH's divisions, plus CRUTCHER and IRWIN.

Squadron was alerted today, for move to Philippines.

15 December, 1944.

Test hops by JENNINGS, WARD, and SCHOETZ.

16 December, 1944.

Lecture for all pilots of the squadron by Captain PHILBIN of the 1st M.A.W. Intelligence Section, on the guerilla situation in the Philippines.

17 December, 1944.

Major HUMBERD flew to GREEN ISLAND and return, on business.

18 December, 1944.

Test hops by WOLF and WARREN.

19 December, 1944.

One and a half hour squadron tactics hop flown by BACHELER's, SCHROEDER's, HENLEY's, WALLACE's, SMITH's, and ERDMANN's divisions.

20 December, 1944.

Another lecture today by Captain PHILBIN, on the subject of "Survival in the Philippines".

POOR and WYATT flew a familiarization hop.

21 December, 1944.

Another familiarization hop by WYATT and POOR.

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22 December, 1944.

Flying secured in view of impending move.

23 December, 1944.

Flying secured in view of impending move.

24 December, 1944.

Flying secured in view of impending move.

25 December, 1944.

BACHELER, PIRAGES, and NEILSON flew to GREEN ISLAND and return on squadron business.

26 December, 1944.

SCHOETZ, BEATTIE, and IRWIN to GREEN ISLAND and return.

27 December, 1944.

Division tactics flown by HUMBERD's, HENLEY's, BACHELER's, CUNNINGHAM's, and JENNINGS' divisions.

Lecture on "Recognition of Jap Aircraft" given pilots by Flt. Lt. LUND, Intelligence Officer from the 1st. M.A.W.

2ndLts. John W. IRWIN and Lewis P. THOMAS, Ground Officers, accepted the appointment to the rank of 1stLt.

28 December, 1944.

Squadron received orders to depart for SAMAR, PHILIPPINES, time of departure to be 0600, 30 December, 1944. Air transportation for all hands and all gear that can be gotten into an R4D.

29 December, 1944.

Details of the flight were given the twenty-five pilots flying our planes to SAMAR, by Major HUMBERD.

30 December, 1944.

Exactly six months to the day, from the date this squadron began operating on BOUGAINVILLE, all pilots and the necessary ground complement departed by air for SAMAR, the R4D's taking off, despite bad weather, at 0620, followed by our twenty-five Corsairs and their PBJ escorts at 0730.

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31 December, 1944.

A message received today through Army Air Force Communication System stated that our 25 Corsairs with their PBJ escorts returned to Emirau at 1030 O'clock. The reason for their turning back was not stated. A later dispatch stated that 13 of our planes were staying overnight, tonight in Hollandia; and that 12 planes were remaining overnight at Momote.

(A) Strength as of 31 December, 1944:

	Officers	Men
U. S. Marine Corps Pilots	42	
U. S. Marine Corps Ground	8	209
U. S. Navy	1	8
	51	217

(B) AIRCRAFT

1. 25 F4U-1D's at the end ofthe month.
2. Operational losses: None.
3. Combat losses: None.

(C) OPERATIONS

1. Total hours flown for month: 378.2
2. Total number of individual flights: 221
3. Total number of individual flights on combat missions: 124
4. Total number of flights where enemy opposition was encountered: None.

(D) ENEMY PLANES DESTROYED

1. None.

(E) ENEMY SHIPPING DESTROYED

1. None.

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PREPARED BY:

HENRY B. WELCH,
Second Lieutenant, U. S. Marine Corps Reserve,
A. C. I. Officer.

APPROVED BY:

WILLIAM C. HUMBERD,
Major, U. S. Marine Corps,
Commanding Officer.

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

31 December, 1944. VMC-251 35 F4U-1D's

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

NAME	COMBAT MISSIONS			ALL MISSIONS						ENEMY PLANES DESTROYED							ENEMY SHIPPING		FRIENDLY LOSSES			
				NUMBER						THIS MONTH				TOTAL					PLANES			
	STARTED	COMPLETED	TOTAL HOURS	STARTED	COMPLETED	ENGAGED ENEMY	DAY	NIGHT	TOTAL HOURS	NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	BROT FORWARD	NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	DESTROYED	DAMAGED	COMBAT	OPERAT'NL	BUREAU NUMBER	PILOT LOST?
Bachelor	3	3	5.5	7	7	0	7	0	11.8													
Burton	3	3	6.5	6	6	0	6	0	11.5													
Beattie	4	4	7.0	5	5	0	5	0	8.5													
Crutcher	1	1	2.5	4	4	0	4	0	8.0													
Cunningham	3	3	6.0	4	4	0	4	0	7.5													
Daigle	4	4	5.5	5	5	0	5	0	7.0													
Erdmann	2	2	4.3	5	5	0	5	0	9.3													
Fenn	3	3	6.5	5	5	0	5	0	10.0													
Frank	3	3	6.5	5	5	0	5	0	10.0													
Gorman	2	2	2.0	2	2	0	2	0	2.0													
Garrett	3	3	3.5	4	4	0	4	0	5.0													
Gray	3	3	5.8	3	3	0	3	0	5.8													
Harris	2	2	2.0	3	3	0	3	0	4.5													
Heisel	2	2	2.0	2	2	0	2	0	2.0													
Henley	5	5	10.0	13	13	0	13	0	15.0													
Hubard	0	0	0	4	4	0	4	0	7.5													
SQUADRON TOTALS																						

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

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

NAME	COMBAT MISSIONS			ALL MISSIONS						ENEMY PLANES DESTROYED							ENEMY SHIPPING		FRIENDLY LOSSES			
				NUMBER						THIS MONTH				TOTAL					PLANES			
	STARTED	COMPLETED	TOTAL HOURS	STARTED	COMPLETED	ENGAGED ENEMY	DAY	NIGHT	TOTAL HOURS	NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	BROT FORWARD	NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	DESTROYED	DAMAGED	COMBAT	OPERAT'NL	BUREAU NUMBER	PILOT LOST?
Inglebert	1	1	1.5	3	3	0	3	0	5.0													
Irvin	5	5	10.0	9	9	0	9	0	16.8													
Jennings	2	2	5.3	7	7	0	7	0	11.9													
Jernigan	4	4	7.5	5	5	0	5	0	8.5													
Jones	6	6	10.0	6	6	0	6	0	10.0													
Kammeyer	2	2	4.8	3	3	0	3	0	6.3													
Lindsey	2	2	4.5	4	4	0	4	0	8.0													
Lingenfelter	3	3	5.0	4	4	0	4	0	6.5													
Mac Leghlen	3	3	5.5	5	5	0	5	0	9.0													
Morrison	3	3	6.8	6	6	0	6	0	11.8													
Morgan	3	3	5.8	3	3	0	3	0	5.8													
Nelson	4	4	7.5	7	7	0	7	0	12.5													
Pirogue	5	5	9.5	10	10	0	10	0	17.3													
Rochman	7	7	13.0	8	8	0	8	0	14.0													
Rose	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	3.0													
Rosellen	2	2	4.0	4	4	0	4	0	7.5													
SQUADRON TOTALS																						

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

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

NAME	COMBAT MISSIONS			ALL MISSIONS						ENEMY PLANES DESTROYED							ENEMY SHIPPING		FRIENDLY LOSSES			
				NUMBER						THIS MONTH			BROT FORWARD	TOTAL					PLANES			
	STARTED	COMPLETED	TOTAL HOURS	STARTED	COMPLETED	ENGAGED ENEMY	DAY	NIGHT	TOTAL HOURS	NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND		NUMBER	TYPE	AIR OR GROUND	DESTROYED	DAMAGED	COMBAT	OPERAT'NL	BUREAU NUMBER	PILOT LOST?
[redacted]	4	4	8.0	9	9	0	9	0	15.5													
[redacted]	3	3	6.5	5	5	0	5	0	10.3													
[redacted]	3	3	6.0	4	4	0	4	0	7.5													
[redacted]	2	2	4.5	4	4	0	4	0	8.0													
[redacted]	4	4	7.5	7	7	0	7	0	11.5													
[redacted]	1	1	1.5	3	3	0	3	0	5.0													
[redacted]	3	3	3.5	5	5	0	5	0	7.0													
[redacted]	4	4	7.0	8	8	0	8	0	13.0													
[redacted]	3	3	5.8	6	6	0	6	0	9.8													
[redacted]	2	2	4.3	5	5	0	5	0	8.3													
[redacted]	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	3.0													
SQUADRON TOTALS	124	124	230.9	221	221	0	221	0	378.1													

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