

Reg. No.

O.M. 2166

R.S. No.

S-E-C-R-E-T

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 July, 1944

to

31 July, 1944

Distribution:

Original - Commandant, U.S.M.C.  
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 War Diary of Marine Fighter Squadron VMO-251, for July, 1944.  
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ROSTER OF FLIGHT ECHELON, as of 1 July, 1944.

HUMBERD, William C., Major.	Commanding Officer.
TELLER, Robert W., Captain.	Executive Officer.
FURLOW, Thomas W., Captain.	Flight Officer.
GALLAGHER, John P., Lt. (USNR) (MC),	Flight Surgeon.
BATE, Oscar M.	Captain.
HART, Joseph P.	Captain.
WELCH, Henry B., 2ndLt.	Intelligence Officer.
JONES, Morelle W., StfsGt.	Intelligence and Flight Clerk.
CONDON, Joseph A.	1stLt.
CRUTCHER, Ernest R.	"
CUNNINGHAM, Russell F.	"
ERDMANN, William A.	"
FOLEY, James A.	"
GARRETT, James A.	"
GREY, Edward J.	"
HENLEY, Paul B.	"
HILDEBRAND, Richard W.	"
INGLEHART, George G.	"
JENNINGS, Francis C.	"
KANE, John R.	"
LORCH, Orville F.	"
MAC LACHLAN, Archibald W.	"
MAYA, Waldemar D.	"
MC MASTERS, John J.	"
MOYNIHAN, Michael H.	"
NEAL, Laurence L.	"
NEILSON, Russell H.	"
PIRAGES, William J.	"
ROBINSON, Max K.	"
ROSELLEN, Robert R.	"
SCHOETZ, David J.	"
SCOVILLE, William H.	"
SIGAN, Nick A.	"
SPRENGER, Robert F.	"
SMITH, Howard F.	"
STURGIS, James B.	"
TANNER, Grover K.	"
THORNTON, Powell D.	"
WEBBER, William G.	"
WILSON, Cecil M.	"
HOLIDAY, Robert C.	2ndLt.
WUBBEN, Hazlett H.	"



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AT PIVA NORTH BOMBER STRIP, BOUGAINVILLE:

1 July, 1944.

Strength of Squadron as of 1 July, 1944.

	Officers	Men
Pilots	40	
Ground	9	246
Naval	1	7
	<hr/> 50	<hr/> 253

The following pilots accepted advancement in rank to 1st Lieutenant:

CONDON, Joseph A.	NEILSON, Russell H.
CRUTCHER, Ernest R.	PIRAGES, William J.
ERDMANN, William A.	ROSELLEN, Robert R.
HILDEBRAND, Richard W.	SCOVILLE, William H.
LORCH, Orville F.	SIGAN, Nick A.
MAC LACHLAN, Archibald W.	SPRENGER, Robert F.
MC MASTERS, John J.	STURGIS, James B.
MOYNIHAN, Michael H.	WEBBER, William G.
NEAL, Laurence L.	

TELLER's flight of 16 planes took off at 1350, unloaded 11x1000 lb. bombs on RABAU supply areas, RALUM 41 and 42, results unobserved. PIRAGES was forced by engine trouble to return to base immediately after take off. HILDEBRAND also had engine trouble farther out and returned to base accompanied by KANE. Flight returned at 1545.

HUMBERD's flight of 16 planes with 1x1000 lb. bomb each took off at 0825, bombed Jap AA guns in Target GEORGE, which lies to the east of TOBERA AIRFIELD. Confirmed damaging hits were scored by FURLOW, SCOVILLE, CUNNINGHAM, GARRETT, WUBBEN, ROSELLEN and WEBBER. A total of 13x1000 lb. bombs were dropped on target. HUMBERD got a direct hit on a thatched hut on KULON PLANTATION. MC MASTERS returned to base with engine trouble, accompanied by MAC LACHLAN. Landed: 1040.

Two officers joined from SS-11, MAC-11, 2nd MAW:

YOUNG, Edward R., Captain, USMC(03682).  
WIART, Andy J., C.W.O. USMC(033274).

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2 July, 1944.

TELLER's flight of 16 planes (minus CRUTCHER, who did not take off because his bomb fell off the plane onto the taxiway), took off at 0840 for RABAU to hit AA target GEORGE, NW of TOBERA AIRFIELD. Results: 7 confirmed damaging hits on the East Heavies; 2 confirmed damaging hits on West Heavies; 3 area hits on West Heavies; 1 unobserved; 2 jettisoned. NEILSON saw two bomb bursts, then a series of small explosions accompanied by much fire and black smoke, all just to NE of the East Heavies. Looked like an ammunition dump burning. Flight landed at 1100. Each of these planes carried 1x1000 lb. bomb.

HUMBERD led a flight of 13 planes, each carrying 1x1000 lb. bomb, to RABAU to bomb RAINW 47 supply area located inland from BLANCHE BAY. Plane number 56112 crashed and burned on take-off. The pilot 1stLt. Laurence L. NEAL got out of the plane without help, but had suffered severe burns, and was taken immediately to the 52nd Army Field Hospital. Results of bombing attack: 10 area hits: 1 dud; 1 miss. No smoke, fire, or other evidence of damage was seen by pilots. Plane number 163, piloted by Lt. SIGAN, was hit by two .50 cal. bullets, one going through the right horizontal stabilizer and the other glancing off the vertical stabilizer and entering the fuselage just behind the cock-pit. This second shot wrecked the radio transmitter and was heard by SIGAN to strike his armor plate. Some planes strafed in the dive, others after pull out. No AA fire encountered. Flight landed 1545.

Received two F4U-1 planes. Bureau numbers: 55942 and 49691.

3 July, 1944.

HUMBERD's flight of 12 F4U-1's each with 1x1000 lb. G.P. bomb took off at 0825 to bomb AA Target JIG, which consists of medium and light anti-aircraft guns situated northwest of TOBERA AIRFIELD. Results: 2 direct hits, by FOLEY and CONDON; 1 damaging hit by MC MASTERS; 6 hits in area of target; 3 misses. Received moderate inaccurate heavy AA in general vicinity of target at 11,000 ft. Landed: 1045.

Lt. Laurence L. NEAL died at 1400 today, in the 52nd Army Field Hospital.

Transferred one enlisted man. Transferred two F4U-1 planes, bureau numbers: 56129 and 56241.

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4 July, 1944.

No flying. Lt. NEAL was buried today in the BOUGAINVILLE CEMETARY, with all members of the Flight Echelon in attendance.

Received F4u-1. Bureau number 49717.

5 July, 1944.

TELLER led a flight of 16 F4U-1's, each with 1x1000 pounder, took off at 0840, hit AA Target JIG. Results: 7 damaging hits; 6 area hits; 1 unobserved; 1 returned to base. Meagre inaccurate light and medium AA from target. Most planes strafed building and piers on way out with no observed damage. Flight returned at 1100.

6 July, 1944.

No flying today.

Transferred 2ndLt. Mortimer D. HATHAWAY to "Prisoners of War and Missing Persons Det.", U.S.M.C., Washington, D.C.

Transferred F4U-1. Bureau number 56086.

7 July, 1944.

FURLOW led 15 planes, with 1x1000 lb. bomb each, took off at 0900, to bomb AA Target DOG, consisting of Heavies, mediums and lights, in an area three miles SW of RAPOPO AIRFIELD. Result: 5 damaging hits; 7 area hits; 2 misses; 1 returned to base. No observed damage. Planes strafed in dives and on pull out. Intense but inaccurate light AA received from CREDNER ISLAND. Guns also seen flashing at north end of RAPOPO AIRFIELD and north of the target. Flight returned safely at 1135.

BATE led 16 planes with 1x1000 pounders each to bomb buildings in LIGUAN BAY area. Took off 1330. Flight scored 2 confirmed direct hits, 10 area hits, 1 miss, 1 unobserved; 1 jettisoned, and 1 bomb was returned to base. A great cloud of black smoke was seen to rise from ERDMANN's direct hit. THORNTON saw KANE's direct hit; saw the buildings and the huts blow up, with debris flying into the air. Several pilots strafed buildings and the beaches, saw fire and smoke in target area. Light moderate inaccurate fire was received from KABAGADA POINT; during retirement pilots saw bullets striking the water beyond them. Flight returned at 1550.

Transferred six enlisted men.

Transferred F4U-1. Bureau number 56151.



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8 July, 1944.

HUMBERD took 15 planes with 1x1000 lb. bombs to bomb and strafe buildings in the LIGUAN BAY area of NEW BRITIAN. Took off at 0730. Score: 3 damaging hits; 5 area hits; 4 unobserved; 2 duds; 1 miss. No observed damage. Pilots strafed huts and roads on retirement. Saw fires and smoke up to 100 ft. in LIGUAN BAY area, and small fires at TOUKANDUM PLANTATION, all of which were already burning when our planes reached the target area. Received meagre inaccurate light AA from south of KABAGADA POINT. Returned: 1000.

TELLER led 16 planes with 1x1000 lb. bombs to bomb and strafe buildings in area of LIGUAN BAY. Take-off: 1305. Score: 10 area hits; 1 direct hit on a building at KABAGADA POINT by LORCH; 1 unobserved; 2 jettisoned; 1 returned to base. Received intense but inaccurate light AA from KABAGADA POINT. Meagre inaccurate light and medium from CAPE TAWUI. Moderate inaccurate light along shore from TOROKINANDRI PLANTATION to KABAGADA POINT. Landed 1545.

Transferred two F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 56108 and 56405.

9 July, 1944.

16 planes, with 1x1000 lb. bombs, led by Capt. TELLER, took off at 0955 for the same target as yesterday, i.e., to bomb and strafe buildings in LIGUAN BAY area. Score: 1 damaging hit; 9 area hits; 4 misses; 1 jettisoned; 1 returned to base. Visibility very poor over target. LORCH got the one damaging hit, which caused smoke and flame from a building, lasting two or three minutes. Much strafing was done, except in restricted areas, of houses, barges, roads, piers and beaches. No observed damage, except that NEILSON saw a chunk of something fly off a truck he strafed. Landed 1230.

10 July, 1944.

HUMBERD's flight took off at 0800 to bomb RALUANA POINT gun positions. 15 planes over target with 1x1000 pounder each. Score: 1 direct hit on ammunition dump by STURGIS, causing a large explosion; 1 damaging hit on gun position west of RALUANA POINT; 3 hits in area of the three medium guns east of RALUANA; 4 misses; 6 unobserved. Much strafing was done on roads, barges, beaches, with no observed damage. MC MASTERS silenced light AA coming at him from a high cliff along shore of KERA VIA BAY, and observed what appeared to be steel doors leading into the base of the cliff. Most bombs were dropped on barges tied up and off shore of KERA VIA BAY. CONDON obtained the only damaging hit, his bomb exploding very close to two barges tied together. Pilots reported that barges make an exceedingly poor target



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10 July, 1944. (Cont'd)

for a fighter bomber, and they would prefer to strafe targets of this type with incendiary ammunition. On this mission, planes received intense and accurate AA of all types from KERA VIA BAY, RALUANA POINT, PRAED POINT, and the DUKE OF YORK ISLAND. Plane No. 305, piloted by Lt. GERTY, was hit and lost 1/4 of its ring cowl, 4/5 of its right aileron, plus its radio antenna. All planes returned, landed at 1030.

TELLER's wing, consisting of 16 planes each carrying 1x1000 pounder, took off at 1250, to hit AA guns at VULCAN CRATER. Score: 1 direct hit by THORNTON on the trench system along NW shore of KERA VIA BAY; 1 damaging hit; 4 hits in target area; 8 misses; and 2 jettisoned. THORNTON's direct hit caused fire to race down the entire length of the trenches. Received inaccurate moderate and intense light and medium from VULCAN CRATER and the NW shore of KERA VIA BAY. Landed: 1530.

Received two F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 49739 and 56394.

11 July, 1944.

16 F4U-1's with 1x1000 pounders, led by TELLER, took off at 0820 for RABAUL, but the flight ran into a solid front 100 miles out from base and so turned back and attacked SOHANA ISLAND and BONIS AIRFIELD gun positions. Capt. HART got the only direct hit, which threw up big curling orange flames and smoke from the vicinity of a gun position SW of BONIS AIRFIELD, believed to have been a hit on a fuel or ammunition dump. On SOHANA ISLAND gun positions there were 10 hits in the area, 2 misses; on BONIS there were 1 direct hit and 3 area hits. The flight drew intense medium inaccurate fire from BONIS, accurate intense light from SOHANA; and moderate inaccurate medium and heavy from the west end of HUKA STRIP. Plane No. 221, piloted by Lt. MOYNIHAN, received a hole in the leading edge of the left wing. Landed 0945.

12 July, 1944.

HUMBERD with 16 planes, each with 1x1000 and 1/100 second delayed fuse, took off at 0800 to bomb and strafe AA Target KING, which consists of a concentrated group of light and medium anti-aircraft guns 2000 yards due north of TOBERA AIRFIELD. GERTY got the one direct hit of the morning on the three West Mediums. OTHER RESULTS: 2 damaging hits; 5 area hits; 3 unobserved; 3 misses; 1 returned to base; and 1 dud. The one bomb returned to base was brought back by CONDON shortly after take-off because he could not get his landing gear to retract. WEBBERS plane received one 7.7mm hole in the left elevator. Landed 1050.

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12 July, 1944. (Cont'd)

JENNINGS led a three plane low-level bombing attack to RABAU to try to locate a concrete block house NE of RAPOPO AIRFIELD which he had spotted on a previous mission. Took off at 1230 with 1x1000 pounders fused for 8 seconds delay. Was unable to locate the primary target though they searched for it at a very low level for 53 minutes. Finally bombed a group of thatched huts and concrete underground shelter, getting 1 area hit, 1 unobserved, and one a dud. Made some interesting observations during their 53 minutes over the RABAU area. Observed extensive gardening underneath the coconut trees in the ULAVEO PLANTATION directly east of RAPOPO and also found that all heavy gun emplacements which they saw in an area RAPOPO to TOBERA to CAPE GAZELLE were empty. No AA encountered. Landed 1515.

13 July, 1944.

No flying today.

14 July, 1944.

BATE led 16 planes with 1x1000 lb. bombs with inst. fuses to bomb and strafe AA Target KING, which consists of gun positions north of TOBERA AIRFIELD. Took off at 0820, over target 0925. Primary target was obscured by a cloud layer, so the flight hit buildings in the VUNAPOPE, TIMBUR, TULARN PLANTATION, and BITAGALIP areas, scoring 1 direct hit, 1 damaging hit, 4 area hits, 2 misses, 6 unobserved and 2 were duds. NEILSON got the direct hit on a block-roofed building near the beach west of VUNAPOPE. Most pilots strafed on way out, with no observed damage. Landed 1035.

Ground Echelon embarked from ESPIRITU SANTOS aboard the USS ALNITAH.

Transferred one enlisted man.

15 July, 1944.

All available F4U-1's were ordered to bomb and strafe VUNAPOPE SUPPLY AREAS 57 and 58. 17 planes led by HUMBERD and armed with 1x1000 pounders each took off at 0900. ROBINSON was forced by engine trouble to return to base, accompanied by WUBBEN, his wingman. GERETY got a direct hit on what was believed to be a fuel storage area, causing a violent upheaval of orange colored flame. HUMBERD and his wingman SIGAN got damaging hits on buildings in Area 57. There were also 11 area hits, 1 unobserved, and 2 returned to base. MAC LACHLAN reported he saw four guns flashing on the smaller of the two CREDNER ISLANDS, that he dived on them strafing and silenced 3 of the 4 guns



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15 July, 1944. (Cont'd)

Colonel NEEFUS, who accompanied this strike flying the fifth plane in HUMBERD's division, observed two bombs explode in area 57 which put up two columns of smoke app. 600 ft. high, one black and the other a brown color. The flight received inaccurate meagre light and medium AA from the target area; and intense inaccurate light from CREDNER ISLANDS. Landed 1100.

BATE, HILDEBRAND, SCHOETZ, MC MASTERS, CONDON, FOLEY, WILSON, and JENNINGS departed via SCAT for SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, on a week's leave for rest and recreation.

16 July, 1944.

16 planes took off at 0815, with 1x1000 lb. bomb each, led by TELLER, to attack gun positions on VULCAN CRATOR. HART was forced to return to base because of engine trouble, accompanied by his wingman, ERDMANN. Secured 11 area hits; 1 unobserved; 2 misses; 2 jettisoned; and 2 returned to base. The flight encountered intense inaccurate heavy AA from VULCAN CRATOR; moderate inaccurate heavy from ridge SW of KERA VIA BAY; and meagre inaccurate light from other points. No damage to our planes. During rendezvous after the attack, HOLIDAY saw a thin column of gray smoke from the target area going up to 5,000 ft. Landed 1050.

16 planes ordered to bomb and strafe TOBERA 35, a building and supply area located 3,000 yards to NE of TOBERA AIRFIELD. 11 planes reached the target, each with 1x1000 pounders, led by FURLOW. Take-off was at 1250. Three planes did not take off. GARRETT's engine was not functioning properly enroute to target so he returned to base, accompanied by SCOVILLE. WEBBER got the one direct hit, inside the rubber trees at the crook of the road running through target, causing a large explosion putting up much flame and smoke. There were also 9 area hits, and 1 miss. Several planes strafed at 50 ft. a square concrete block house located 2 1/2 miles east of target. GERETY strafed and silenced a gun firing at him from a point east of the target. Landed 1500.

17 July, 1944.

HUMBERD's and HART's divisions undertook a low-level bombing attack on the KERA VIA BAY UNDERGROUND STORAGE DUMPS. The planes, armed with 1x1000 lb. bomb each, 8 to 11 second delay, took off at 0805, hit the target at 0935. The target was several large doors leading into the base of a 100 foot cliff. The attack followed by a few seconds a dive bombing attack by GREEN ISLAND SBD's on the



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17 July, 1944. (Cont'd)

surrounding gun positions. Coordination of the attack was described as "perfect". Our planes approached the target at less than 100 feet altitude, racked off their bombs directly into the target, and retired at a speed of 330 to 360 knots over a thousand foot ridge a little more than one mile west of the target. One of the seven bombs, dropped by Lt. ROBINSON, was seen to fall directly onto the target for a reported direct hit. None of the bombs were seen to explode, because of the 8 second delay fusing. Capt. HART's bomb was later jettisoned in the vicinity of the DUKE of YORK ISLAND because it would not release in the run on the target. Landed 1100.

Received one F4U-1. Bureau number 50032.

18 July, 1944.

Eight plane Fighter Sweep of the NEW IRELAND coasts led by TELLER took off at 0800, each plane carrying 1x1000 lb. bomb with 8 to 11 second delay fuse. TELLER's division started up the east coast of NEW IRELAND but found rain squalls down to the ground and visibility extremely reduced. They turned back and bombed gun positions on SOHANA ISLAND, scoring 2 misses, 1 unobserved, and one dud. HENLEY's division found better weather up the west coast of NEW IRELAND. HENLEY got a direct hit on a camouflaged hut, causing an unusual amount of smoke and dust. CRUTCHER scored a damaging hit on a group of huts; LORCH's bomb was a dud; and MAYA missed. No AA. No interesting observations were made. Flight landed at 1040.

19 July, 1944.

NEW IRELAND FIGHTER SWEEP this morning, HUMBERD leading. 16 planes with 1x1000 lb. bombs, 4 to 5 second delay fusing, took off at 0930, were over the target from 1030 to 1300. Score: 3 direct hits on bridges; 1 damaging hit; 9 misses; 1 dud. On gun positions: 2 direct hits on MG's at CAPE NAMARODA. 4 horses and 5 cows killed by strafing by FURLOW's and GERETY's division in the vicinity of LANGOBUT PLANTATION. The three direct hits on bridges were: SIGAN on bridge over SAE RIVER. Blew out most of eastern half of bridge. GERETY on bridge next up from SAW RIVER. Blew out west anchor of bridge. SCOVILLE on bridge believed to be across the SELIK RIVER. Completely destroyed this bridge. ROSLLEN got the damaging hit on a bridge across the river at CAPE LEMERIS. INGLEHART and STURGIS each got direct hits on machine guns that were firing at them from CAPE NAMARODA. Many huts were strafed and some fired. Many small but serviceable bridges were sighted along the West Coast Road. Saw a rusty mine up on the beach at a point 40 miles up the west coast

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from CAPE ST. GEORGE. The road north of KOLAMO PLANTATION appeared to be grass-covered and unused. Five barges were sighted by HART's division  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the coast up the river at KANAM PLANTATION, and were strafed by them.

20 July, 1944.

Morning strike against RABAUL was weathered out.

Twelve planes ordered for afternoon strike against bridges along east coast of BOUGAINVILLE, and against a Jap bivouac area near KIETA. HART's division with instantaneous fused 1x1000 pounders accompanied 12 TBF's of RNZAF Squadron 31, to bomb the Jap bivouac area. HART got the one direct hit of the afternoon in a group of huts near RUMBA PLANTATION, starting a large fire. The other three planes in his division missed. TELLER took eight planes (His own and HENLEY's division) against two bridges located at TOBEREI PLANTATION and at the base of KIETA PENINSULAR. It was close but no cigar. Seven misses and one dud. All planes did much strafing on some good looking huts in and around CHINATOWN and around KIETA HARBOR, and some old huts down the east coast to KIETA AIRFIELD. Several huts were fired. Landed: 1555.

21 July, 1944.

NEW IRELAND FIGHTER SWEEP this morning. Take off: 0845. Planes and loadings: 16 F4U-1's with 1x1000 lb. bomb, 4-5 second delay fuse. Flight Leader: Major HUMBERD. Results: NEILSON got a direct hit on a bridge just south of BORPOP, completely demolishing it. KANE got a direct hit on a large building near NAMATANAI. Pilots strafed and killed approximately 30 cattle and horses. Strafing known gun positions at NAMATANAI AIRFIELD and on CAPE NAMARODA. Landed: 1300.

22 July, 1944.

NEW IRELAND FIGHTER SWEEP. Take off: 0855. 15 planes, 1x1000 lb. bomb with inst. fuse. Flight Leader: TELLER. ERDMANN scored a direct hit on a bridge near LAGOON BAY, east coast of N.I., almost to MEDINA. HART's division found the barges they had seen previously, hidden up a river at what they believe is at PUTUMBU BAY. They made five or six runs strafing these barges, and though the barges did not flame or smoke, pilots believed the barges were rendered unserviceable. Numerous huts were strafed, all along the east coast.

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22 July, 1944.(Cont'd)

SPRENGER, Robert F., 1st Lt., flying plane(Bureau No. 50014; Engine No. P-15755) did not return from this mission. He was last seen by his division when they made a strafing run on gun positions on CAPE NAMARODA, just east of NAMATANAI AIRFIELD. He was missed immediately after this run, whereupon his division leader turned back to find him. All they could see was a column of black smoke rising from the jungle, at a point about 400 yards inland from the Cape. SPRENGER was reported as "Missing In Action". HOLIDAY's plane was also hit by NAMATANAI guns as he started to make a run on them. His oil pressure began to drop, and the engine quit when he had reached a point north of FENI ISLAND. A water landing ensued, in which HOLIDAY received not a scratch and was rescued by Dumbo within an hour. TELLER's plane, bureau No. 49717, was hit in the left wing, causing the ammunition pans to explode and blow a large hole in the wing.

Transferred two F4U-1's. Bureau numbers: 55994 and 56200.

23 July, 1944.

CAPE GAZELLE to RALUM. Fighter Sweep. 12 planes with 1x000 lb. inst. bombs each. Took off at 0630, led by HUMBERD. The usual dive bombing tactics were employed, approaching the target at app. 10,000 feet, pushover in a 60-70 degree dive, and releases varying from 2-3000 feet. Put 11 bombs in a supply area west of RAPOPO, and one dud. No observed damage. Planes strafed on way out firing a group of buildings 1 to 2 miles west of RAPOPO AIRFIELD, which put up a 100 foot column of smoke. Landed 0900. SMITH and NEILSON flew the Able-Charlie Search, which is a search of the complete shore line of the island of BOUGAINVILLE and BUKA. Saw no signs of enemy activity. Strafed miscellaneous huts. Took off at 0830. Landed 1045.

Ground Echelon arrived from ESPIRITU SANTOS. Flight Echelon from T.A.D.

Received three aircraft. F4U-1, bureau number 56044. FG-1A's bureau numbers: 14119 and 14036.

24 July, 1944.

Fighter Sweep, CAPE GAZELLE to RALDANA POINT. TELLER's, HART's and HENLEY's divisions took off at 0635, with 1x500 inst. bomb each, scored 3 direct hits on main coastal road west of RAPOPO; 3 area hits in VUNAPOPE SUPPLY DUMPS; 1 damaging hit on buildings near coast; 3 hits in supply area 2 miles west of RAPOPO AIRFIELD; and 1 hit inland from large derelict ship near VUNAPOPE. No observed damage. Landed 0855.

SMITH and NEILSON flew the Able-Charlie Search.



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25 July, 1944.

TELLER's, SMITH's and HART's divisions took off 1315 with only six of the twelve planes carrying 1x500 lb. magnesium cluster each, to bomb and strafe buildings from TAVUI POINT to RATAVAL, northwest of RABAU TOWN. Of the six planes carrying bombs, all were reported as having gotten hits in the area. At least 12 fires were started, of which two smoked up to 500 feet. This was our first experience with dropping magnesium clusters, and the pilots found they had a tendency to drop short of the target. Our planes received intense accurate medium and light AA from TAVUI POINT; intense accurate medium from intersection of TUNNEL HILL ROAD and the Coast Road; intense accurate light and medium from 3 mediums SW of TAVUI POINT; intense accurate light AA from a point inland from the three mediums; and intense accurate light from the eastern shore of TALILI BAY. Plane # 157, piloted by Lt. THORNTON, received the following damage: 1/3 of port flap (outboard section) shot away; 3 to 4 holes just aft the cock-pit, port side; 3x4 inch hole in vertical stabilizer. Observed a large new building with a tower on its roof on the extreme tip of CAPE ST. GEORGE. Landed at 1540. ROBINSON and WUBBEN flew the Able-Charlie Search. LORCH and MAYA flew test hops.

26 July, 1944.

12 A/C ordered to bomb and strafe RALUM 202, supply area inland from KRAVIA BAY. TELLER's, SMITH's and HENLEY's divisions took off at 0800, scored 8 area hits; 1 unobserved; 1 miss; and 1 dud. No damage observed. At pull out, planes were indicating plus 400 MPH. None strafed. No AA. Returned: 1030. HOLIDAY and PIRAGES flew the Able-Charlie Search. MAC LACHLAN and ERDMANN flew test hops.

27 July, 1944.

16 A/C ordered for bombing and strafing attack on TOBERA 35, buildings and supply area located 3,000 yards NE of TOBERA AIRFIELD. HUMBERD's, FURLOW's, GERETY's and SMITH's divisions, less two planes, took off at 0655, landed at GREEN ISLAND to be loaded with 1x500 lb. magnesium clusters, hit target at 1015. All mag. clusters reported within the target area, some pilots giving as much as 200 miles lead with a release at 2800 ft. Retirement was made before results could be ascertained. GERETY strafed concrete blockhouse 2 1/2 miles east of TOBERA AIRFIELD with unobserved results. No AA fire. Landed: 1115. Photos taken next day showed 16 of 32 buildings destroyed. NEILSON and GARRETT flew the Able-Charlie Search.

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28 July, 1944.

16 planes ordered for bombing and strafing attack on TOBERA 36, buildings and supply area located near yesterdays target. Most divisions selected targets of opportunity because the low ceiling of 6,000 t. over primary target did not permit a good dive-bombing run. HENLEY's, SMITH's, TELLER's and HART's divisions made the trip, taking off at 0805, over target at 0915. Results: TOBERA 36; 3 area hits. TOBERA 35: 3 area hits, 1 miss. NORDUP 76 (buildings north of PRAED POINT) 3 area hits, 1 jettisoned. Buildings west of RAPOPO AIRFIELD: 3 area hits, 1 jettisoned. Buildings NE of TOBERA: 1 area hit. Observed three fires among the buildings west of RAPOPO that were hit, putting up white smoke to 500 ft. The planes which hit NORDUP 76 received intense inaccurate light AA from known positions on HOSPITAL RIDGE. Landed 1025. Aerial photos taken immediately after this strike of TOBERA 36 show that three of the 20 buildings were destroyed. STURGIS and INGLEHART flew the Able-Charlie Search, strafed and killed at least one of three Japs in swimming on NE shore of BUKA ISLAND. STURGIS flew test hop.

Transferred the following 7 officers.

GERETY, Edward J.	1stLt.	WEBBER, William G.	1stLt.
MAYA, Waldemar D.	1stLt.	HOLIDAY, Robert C.	2ndLt.
KANE, John R.	1stLt.	WUBBEN, Hazlett	2ndLt.
THORNTON, Powell D.	1stLt.		

Joined the following 11 officers.

BACHELER, William L.	Major	ENDERS, Robert A.	1stLt.
BOWERS, Glenn L.	1stLt.	FOWLER, Millard F.	1stLt.
CORMAN, Ned J.	1stLt.	JOLINK, Albert	1stLt.
JOHNSON, Alfred L.	1stLt.	SWICK, Orville R.	1stLt.
JOHNSON, Harry C.	1stLt.	SPINDLER, Thornton F.	1stLt.
MC CABE, Earl W.	1stLt.		

29 July, 1944.

HUMBERD's, HART's, FURLOW's, and SMITH's divisions took off at 0815 with 1x100 bl. inst. bomb each to hit gun positions on PRAED POINT. They hit a front running from BUKA to WIDE BAY and so had to turn back and hit SOHANA ISLAND guns instead. All bombs hit on the NE tip of the island, where the guns are located, but could not see any results on their retirement. No damage to our planes, though PIRAGES saw three gun flashes on the ground. Other observations negative.



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29 July, 1944. (Cont'd)

16 planes ordered for afternoon bombing and strafing attack on huts on SW BOUGAINVILLE. HUMBERD's, FURLOW's, HART's, and HENLEY's divisions took off at 1305, found ceiling over target down to 2000 ft. with numerous rain squalls about. It was necessary to do level bombing from 1800 ft; bombs were dropped on miscellaneous huts east of MOTUPENA POINT, with unobserved results. The flight observed absolutely nothing except a few deserted huts that were wet and would not burn. Landed: 1450. MAC LACHLAN and ROSELLEN flew the Able-Charlie Search. Observations negative. Strafed huts.

30 July, 1944.

16 planes ordered to bomb and strafe RATAVAL 127. FURLOW's, BACHELER's, HENLEY's, and SPINDLER's divisions took off at 0815, ran into a solid front extending from north of BUKA to WIDE BAY, NEW BRITAIN. Flight Leader FURLOW turned back and attacked SOHANA ISLAND gun positions, obtaining 15 area hits and one bomb jettisoned. No results observed. SOHANA ISLAND appeared to be deserted. None strared. Landed: 1045.

Joined the three following officers.

FLICKENGER, Judson	1stLt.
BARTON, Wilson G.	2ndLt.
FRANK, Lewis C.	2ndLt.

31 July, 1944.

No flying today. Pilots attended a three hour lecture entitled "The Birds and Bees; the Flowers and Trees", a survival lecture by two Australian army officers. FURLOW and HENLEY left for GUADALCANAL in an SBD to get a plane.

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PERSONNEL STRENGTH as of 31 July, 1944:

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Enlisted Men</u>
Pilots . . . . .	45	
Ground . . . . .	9	239
Naval . . . . .	1	7
	<u>55</u>	<u>246</u>

PERSONNEL LOST DURING MONTH:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Serial No.</u>	<u>Cause</u>
NEAL, Laurence L.	1st Lt.	028777	Plane crashed and burned on take off. Pilot died following day from burns. Reported as "Killed in Action"
SPRENGER, Robert F.	1st Lt.	026810	Believed shot down by enemy AA fire over CAPE NAMARODA, NEW IRELAND. Reported as "Missing in Action".

AIRCRAFT LOST DURING MONTH:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Bureau No.</u>	<u>Engine Bu. No.</u>	<u>Cause</u>
F4U-1	56112	P-12798	Crashed and burned.
F4U-1	50014	P-15755	Shot down by enemy AA.
F4U-1	56163	H.P.-201313	Shot down by enemy AA.

OPERATIONS FOR MONTH:

Total hours flown-1,368.2

Total number individual flights-530.

Total number individual flights on combat missions-517.

Total number individual flights on which enemy opposition was encountered. None.

Enemy aircraft destroyed- None.

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War Diary of Marine Fighter Squadron VMO-251, for July, 1944.  
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APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
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Major, USMC,  
Commanding Officer.

Prepared by:

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HENRY B. WELCH,  
2ndLt., USMCR,  
Intelligence Officer.

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