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UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
AIR FORCE
COMMANDER ESCORT CARRIER FORCE
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mgd ✓

12 November 1945

From: Commander Escort Carrier Force, Pacific Fleet.
To : The Secretary of the Navy.
The Chief of Naval Operations, Att: Aviation History Unit,
Op-03-6.

Subject: History of Escort Carrier Force, Pacific Fleet - Forwarding of.

References: (a) Aviation C/L 74-44, serial 356533 of 25 July 1944.
(b) Manual for Historical Officers - NavAer 00-25Q-26.
(c) Aviation C/L 67-45, serial 67803 of 14 June 1945.
(d) CinCPac/POA despatch ALPAC 202 of 14 September 1945.

Enclosure: (A) History of Commander Escort Carrier Force, Pacific Fleet.

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded herewith in accordance with references (a) through (d).

J. L. Kane
J. L. KANE
By direction

Copy to:
CinCPac/POA
ComAirPac
BuAer
EsCarFor ComCarDivs

158251

HISTORY OF

ESCORT CARRIER FORCE, PACIFIC FLEET

I

An amphibious assault on enemy-held territory, more than any other type of offensive, requires control of the air. For early allied amphibious operations in the Pacific, aircraft carriers were not available in sufficient numbers to provide this control and it was necessary to rely almost entirely upon land-based aircraft. This circumstance gave rise to the unavoidably slow and costly strategy of island-to-island conquest. With initial support from airfields built on friendly islands, our forces pushed forward during 1942 and 1943 to Guadalcanal and Tulagi, to the Russell Islands, to New Georgia, and to Bougainville. Although CVE's had some part in these amphibious operations, their activities during this period were, in general, confined to anti-submarine or transport missions.

In 1944 sufficient carriers were available to provide full air cover for large-scale amphibious operations. It was then possible to by-pass stepping stones and to attack directly distant key strongholds. After the capture of desirable bases in the eastern Marshall Islands, our forces covered the 2000 miles to Saipan and Guam with but one intermediate stop at Eniwetok. Another long leap, this time to the southern Palaus, helped prepare the way for the converging assault on the Philippines. The capture of Iwo Jima and of Okinawa both far to the north, placed our forces within striking distance of the Japanese homeland. During the course of these operations the Escort Carrier Task Force firmly established itself as a primary element of the amphibious support group and may justly claim a considerable share of the credit for the spectacular advance of our forces.

II

In the major amphibious operations of 1944 and 1945, it was the function of the Escort Carrier units to provide air cover for bombardment ships and transports and close air support for landings and for operations ashore until such a time as adequate installations could be developed for land-based aircraft. Such missions obliged units to operate continuously for prolonged periods within 50 or 60 miles of enemy territory and regularly within short range of active enemy air bases. These extended periods of operation often were broken only by one-day withdrawals for refueling or replenishing, both at times being accomplished in a location no less liable to air attack than the operating area itself. The air schedule was at all times such as to maintain the heaviest pressure against the enemy. Support missions were relieved on station and struck at installations, material and personnel unremittingly throughout daylight hours. Combat air patrols were maintained at all times over the ships of the force and over the assault area, and anti-submarine patrols were provided for the protection of the force.

Escort carriers were the most practical ships for this type of work. Their use meant that the mission could be accomplished without immobilizing fast carrier task forces which were far better fitted for heavy strikes deep in enemy held territory; losses could be quickly and economically replaced; fuel consumption was comparatively low enabling these CVE's to provide air support over a long period. A force composed of a large number of small ships had the advantage of suffering only a slight decrease in operational strength when a unit retired for replenishment or was lost by enemy action.

CVE's had, however, certain distinct limitations. Of these, inadequate fire-power was unquestionably the chief. This shortcoming was keenly felt in the face of Japanese suicide attacks. Nor was full compensation to be found in the type of screening ships assigned, since throughout their major operations, CVE's were regularly in company only with DD's and DE's.

III

In the operations against the Gilbert Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Marianas, Palau and Leyte, escort carriers were commanded by the senior Escort Carrier division commander present. By December 1944, however, support carriers were employed in the Pacific in such numbers that a separate command was indicated. The "Escort Carrier Force, Pacific Fleet" was therefore created to operate under "Commander Escort Carrier Force, Pacific Fleet". Rear Admiral C. T. Durgin, then serving as Commander Carrier Division 29, was assigned to this command.

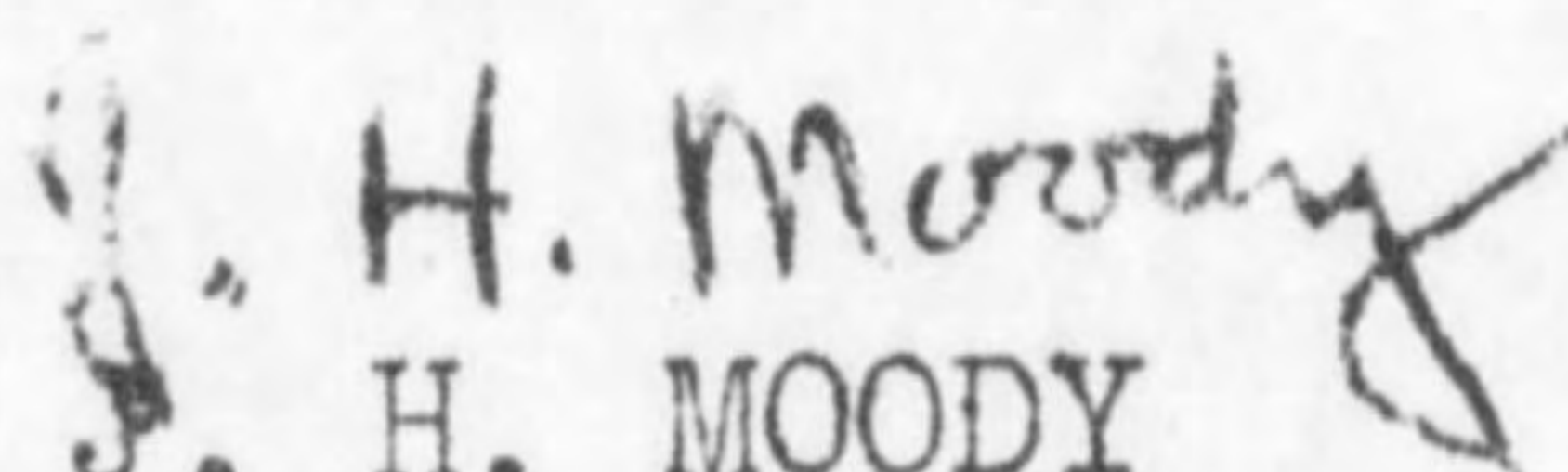
As Commander Escort Carrier Force, Rear Admiral Durgin directed the carrier support group during the invasion of Mindoro, during the three major amphibious operations at Lingayen Gulf, Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and during the subsequent shipping strikes in the East China Sea off Shanghai. CVE's likewise provided air support for the recovery of allied personnel from the U.S. Sixth Army area in Japan, for the landings of occupational forces in the Sasebo-Nagasaki, Kure, Wakayama and Nagoya districts, and evacuated all the ex-allied prisoners of war from Formosa. Two actions of smaller scope were directed by Escort Carrier Force Division Commanders. After the Lingayen operation, Rear Admiral Stump provided air cover and support at Zambales, where landings were made on 29 January 1945; Rear Admiral Sample supported the landings of Australian troops at Balikpapan on 28 July 1945.

On the missions in which the Escort Carrier Force took part, those at Lingayen, Iwo Jima and Okinawa were the most significant. During the period 15 December 1944 to 24 June 1945, Commander Escort Carrier Force and his staff were actively engaged in preparing and directing the air operations in support of the amphibious landings and the subsequent land campaigns at these objectives. Commander Escort Carrier Force and staff were embarked in the U.S.S. MAKIN ISLAND (CVE 93) during this period until 1 June, when the MAKIN ISLAND (CVE 93) departed from Okinawa and Commander Escort Carrier Force.

with about half of his staff transferred at sea to the NATOMA BAY (CVE 62) to remain in command of the escort carriers in the operating area. Except for ten days at Ulithi between the Iwo Jima and Okinawa operations, and several fractions of days spent in replenishing at Kerama Retto, the Command was continuously at sea from 10 February to 24 June. For seventeen days at Lingayen, twenty-one days at Iwo Jima and eighty-nine days at Okinawa Gunto, operations were conducted in close proximity to the objective. The force was under constant threat of air attack and on several occasions sustained severe damage when attacks materialized and could not be completely beaten off. In the course of these actions, aircraft of the Escort Carrier Force flew 51,298 sorties including all types of air support missions. In the Okinawa operation alone, 3,900 tons of bombs and 64,425 rockets were expended on enemy targets. Initial task organization involved eighteen CVE's plus screen at Lingayen, eleven CVE's plus screen at Iwo Jima and eighteen plus screen at Okinawa. The complexities of these three extensive operations, involving in all the employment of thirty-four different carriers and many escort vessels, made severe demands upon the judgment and skill of those concerned.

Statistical data on the staff, the Carrier Divisions, the ships and the squadrons of the Escort Carrier Force, Pacific Fleet, are attached as Enclosures "A" and "B".

C. T. DURGIN


J. H. MOODY
Lieutenant, USNR
Flag Secretary

COMESCARFOR AND STAFF DATA

Rear Admiral C. T. Durgin, U.S. Navy, Commander Carrier Division 29 (old designation) was ordered by despatch dated 6 December, 1944, by the Bureau of Naval Personnel, to report to Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet, as Commander Escort Carrier Force, The following day AlPac 316 (December 1944) was promulgated:

"Effective 10 December (WLD) Escort Carrier Force is established within Air Force, Pacific Fleet, under command of Rear Admiral C. T. Durgin, EsCarFor will comprise all PacFlt CVE's less those assigned ComCarTransRonPac and those employed as trainers. Revised organization PacFlt CVE's to be promulgated by later despatch".

On 13 December 1944, Rear Admiral Durgin reported to CinCPac as ComEsCarFor with additional duty as ComCarDiv 29 (old designation). He was at Manus at the time preparing his command for forthcoming operations against Luzon. Carrier Division 29 was attached to the Seventh Fleet operating in the Southwest Pacific Area.

The Staff

By despatch of 8 December Rear Admiral Durgin requested ComAirPac to assign Captain Joseph L. Kane, U.S. Navy as his Chief of Staff. Captain Kane, who had commanded the Escort Carrier, Petrof Bay, was then Commanding Officer, Naval Air Base, Eniwetok. He reported to ComEsCarFor 24 January, 1945, at Ulithi.

In the meantime BuPers on 7 December, 1944, informed CinCPac that Rear Admiral Durgin's Staff, Carrier Division 29, was being ordered intact to ComEsCarFor. On 13 January, 1945, CinCPac ordered ComAirPac to transfer Commander Edward J. O'Neill, U.S. Navy, to ComEsCarFor.

As originally constituted the staff was as follows:

Captain Joseph L. Kane, U.S. Navy	Chief of Staff and Aide
Commander Milton A. Nation, U.S. Navy	Operations Officer
Commander Edward J. O'Neill, U.S. Navy	Operations for Air
Commander Irwin L. Dew, U.S. Navy	Gunnery & Navigation Off.
Lt. Comdr. Price Gilbert A(L) USNR	Ship & Air Logistics
Lt. Comdr. Sherlock Hibbs (AD) USNR	Air Combat Intelligence
Lt. Comdr. Thomas S. Gates, Jr. (AD) USNR	Flag Lieutenant and Aide
Lt. Comdr. Ralph C. Draper, (AD) USNR	Flag Secretary and Aide
Lieutenant Jesse D. Allen, (CD) USNR	Communications Officer
Lieutenant W. H. Pierson, Jr. (F) USNR	Force Fighter Director
Lieutenant James B. Felton, (C) USNR	Ass't. Communication Off.
Bos'n Roland C. Beal, U.S. Navy	Ass't. Flag Lieutenant
Lieutenant Thomas Harding, (CD) USNR	Communication Watch Off.
Lieut.(jg) Alfred P. Best, (C) USNR	Communication Watch Off.
Lieut.(jg) B. P. Crittenden, (C) USNR	Communication Watch Off.
Lieut.(jg) Gordon R. Gould, (C)L USNR	Communication Watch Off.

In April Commander O'Neill returned to the States for leave and the duties of the Air Operations Officer were assumed by Commander Dew in addition to his other duties.

Commander Robert F. Jones, U.S. Navy, relieved Commander Nation as Operations Officer in June.

Lt. Comdr. Gates was detached in July. His relief, Lt. Hunter Wyatt-Brown (D) USNR reported in September.

Lt. Comdr. Carl Estes reported in February as Public Relations Officer and was detached the following month. He was relieved by Commander W. M. Galvin (S) USNR.

Lieutenant Albert H. Travis A(L) USNR reported in April for duty as Technical Ordnance Officer and in time qualified and took over duties as staff gunnery officer.

Lieutenant (jg) John H. Moody (C)L USNR, and Lieutenant (jg) Cambell P. Minor (C)L, USNR, reported as Communications Watch Officers in March. The former succeeded Lieutenant Commander Draper as Flag Secretary when he was detached in September.

Lt. Comdr. Daniel G. Cone (SC) USN reported to the staff in August as Supply Officer and succeeded to the duties of Ship and Air Logistics Officer when Commander Gilbert was relieved in September. Lieutenant Kerwin L. Foley SC(S), Assistant Supply Officer, reported in July as did Lieutenant (jg) Warren J. Young, Technical Radar Officer.

Lieutenant Pearson H. Stewart (A) USNR and Lieutenant (jg) Neil Barry (A)L USNR, Photo Intelligence Officers reported in August.

SHIPS AND SQUADRONS

The revised organization of Pacific Fleet Escort Carriers was given in ALPac 332 (December 1944) effective 1 January 1945. The carriers assigned to ComEsCarFor together with their Division Commanders, Commanding Officers and Air Groups or Squadrons follow:

Carrier Division Twenty-Two - Rear Admiral William D. Sample.

CVE 26	SANGAMON (F)	Captain M. E. Browder	CVEG 33
CVE 27	SUWANNEE (RF)	Captain D. S. Cornwell	CVEG 40
CVE 28	CHENANGO	Captain G. Van Deurs	CVEG 25
CVE 29	SANTEE	Captain J. V. Peterson	CVEG 24

Carrier Division Twenty-Three - Rear Admiral Ralph A. Ofstie

CVE 71	KITKUN BAY (F)	Captain A. Handly	VC 91
CVE 75	HOGGATT BAY (RF)	Captain W. V. Saunders	VC 88
CVE 65	WAKE ISLAND	Captain A. V. Magley	VOC 1
CVE 74	NEHENTA BAY	Captain E. O. McDonnell	VC 11
CVE 84	SHAMROCK BAY	Captain F. T. Ward, Jr.	VC 94
CVE 57	ANZIO (ASW)	Captain G. C. Montgomery	VC 82

Carrier Division Twenty-Four - Rear Admiral Felix B. Stump

CVE 77	MARCUS ISLAND (F)	Captain C. F. Greber	VC 21
CVE 85	SHIPLEY BAY (RF)	Captain A. W. Wheelock	VC 97
CVE 78	SAVO ISLAND	Captain C. E. Ekstrom	VC 27
CVE 79	OMMANEY BAY	Captain H. L. Young	VC 75
CVE 87	STEAMER BAY	Captain S. Teller	VC 90
CVE 58	CORREGIDOR (ASW)	Captain C. W. McClusky, Jr.	VC 42

Carrier Division Twenty-Five - Rear Admiral George R. Henderson

CVE 82	SAGINAW BAY (F)	Captain F. G. Sutton	VC 78
CVE 62	NATOMA BAY (RF)	Captain A. K. Morehouse	VC 81
CVE 80	PETROF BAY	Captain R. S. Clarke	VC 76
CVE 81	RUDYERD BAY	Captain C. S. Smiley	VC 77
CVE 83	SARGENT BAY	Captain W. T. Rassieur	VC 79
CVE 72	TULAGI (ASW)	Captain J. C. Cronin	VC 92

Carrier Division Twenty-Six - Rear Admiral C.A.F. Sprague

CVE 93	MAKIN ISLAND (F)*	Captain W. B. Whaley	VC 84
CVE 70	FANSHAW BAY (RF)*	Captain M. E. Arnold	VOC 2
CVE 61	MANILA BAY	Captain Fitzhugh Lee	VC 80
CVE 94	LUNGA POINT	Captain G.A.T. Washburn	VC 85
CVE 95	BISMARCK SEA	Captain J. L. Pratt	VC 86
CVE 96	SALAMAUA (ASW)	Captain J. I. Taylor	VC 70

* Rear Admiral Durgin retained his flag in MAKIN ISLAND. FANSHAW BAY was Rear Admiral Sprague's flagship.

Carrier Division Twenty-Seven - Rear Admiral D. Ketcham (July)

CVE 106	BLOCK ISLAND	Captain F. M. Hughes	(May)
CVE 107	GILBERT ISLANDS	Captain L. K. Rice	(May)
CVE 108	KULA GULF	Captain J. W. King	(Sept)
CVE 109	CAPE GLOUCESTER	Captain J. W. Harris	(June)
CVE 111	VELLA GULF	Captain R. W. Morse	(July)
CVE 112	SIBONEY	Captain S. C. Ring	(Sept)

It should be noted that CVE 76 - KADASHAN BAY although not listed in AlPac 332 (December 1944) as assigned to EsCarFor, operated as a support carrier along with ships of EsCarFor until disabled by a suicide plane in the Lingayen operation on 8 January, 1945. Also CVE 91 - MAKASSAR STRAIT, operated as a support carrier for a limited period at Okinawa.

CHANGES IN SHIPS OF ESCARFOR

Carrier Division Twenty-Three

CVE 65 - WAKE ISLAND, sustained damage from suicide bombers near Kerama Retto 3 April and was replaced by CVE 101 - MATANIKAU, in June.

Carrier Division Twenty-Four

CVE 79 - OMMANEY BAY was sunk by own forces after sustaining a suicide hit 4 January in the Sulu Sea.
CVE 58 - CORREGIDOR was replaced 1 June by CVE 69 - KASAAN BAY (ASW).
CVE 78 - SAVO ISLAND, was transferred to CarDiv 26 on 15 June leaving only four carriers in CarDiv 24.

Carrier Division Twenty-Six

CVE 95 - BISMARCK SEA, was sunk 21 February at Iwo Jima after a hit by a suicide plane. Replaced by CVE 78 - SAVO ISLAND, from CarDiv 24.

Carrier Division Twenty-Eight, consisting of the following carriers, was added to EsCarFor in Pacific Fleet Organization, 1 July, 1945:

CVE 114 - RENDOVA
CVE 110 - SALERNO BAY
CVE 113 - PUGET SOUND
CVE 115 - BAIROKO
CVE 116 - BADOENG STRAIT
CVE 117 - SAIDOR

As of 2 September only BLOCK ISLAND, GILBERT ISLANDS, CAPE GOUCESTER

and VELLA GULF of CarDiv 27, and none of CarDiv 28 had reported to EsCarFor-Pac.

CHANGES IN COMMAND

Carrier Division Twenty-Two (new designation)

Rear Admiral W. D. Sample was ComCarDiv 27 (old designation). He assumed command of Carrier Division 22, and remained in command through the date of this report. He was missing in an overdue plane which left Wakanoura Wan, Honshu, 2 October 1945.

Captain A. I. Malstrom relieved Captain M. E. Browder as CO, SANGAMON. Captain Charles C. McDonald relieved Captain D. S. Cornwell as CO, SUWANNEE, August, 1945. He was missing in same plane with Rear Admiral Sample. Captain H. D. Felt relieved Captain G. Van Deurs as CO, CHENANGO, 2 May.

Carrier Division Twenty-Three (new designation)

Rear Admiral Ralph A. Ofstie was ComCarDiv 26 (old designation) when EsCarFor was established. He reported as ComCarDiv 23 (new designation) 16 January, 1945. He was relieved by Rear Admiral H. M. Martin in May. Captain John F. Greenslade relieved Captain Albert Handly as CO, KITKUN BAY, 13 August, 1945.

Captain J. A. Briggs relieved Captain W. V. Saunders as CO, HOGGATT BAY. Captain J. E. Leeper relieved Captain F. T. Ward, Jr., as CO, SHAMROCK BAY 20 May. Captain F. B. Johnson was CO, MATANIKAU when it joined the division in June.

Carrier Division Twenty-Four (new designation)

Rear Admiral Felix B. Stump was ComCarDiv 24 (old designation). He took command of the reconstituted division with the same designation on 18 January. He was relieved by Rear Admiral Harry E. Kendall on 3 July.

Captain H. V. Hopkins relieved Captain C. F. Greber as CO, MARCUS ISLAND 4 March. Captain A. W. Wheelock relieved Captain E. T. Neale as CO, SHIPLEY BAY 1 February. Captain J. B. Paschal, Jr., relieved Captain S. Teller as CO, STEAMER BAY 21 January. Captain A. N. Perkins was CO, KASAAN BAY when it reported to division 1 June.

Carrier Division Twenty-Five (new designation)

Rear Admiral G. R. Henderson was ComCarDiv 28 (old designation). He assumed commander of CarDiv 25 on 21 January. He was relieved by Rear Admiral A. K. Doyle, 18 August.

Captain R. Goldthwaite relieved Captain F. G. Sutton as CO, SAGINAW BAY 15 March. Captain B. B. Nichol relieved Captain A. K. Morehouse as CO, NATOMA BAY 1 March. Captain R. S. Clark took command of PETROF BAY on 5 December 1944 from Captain J. L. Kane. Captain J. G. Foster, Jr., relieved Captain C. S. Smiley as CO, RUDYERD BAY 3 February. Captain R. M. Oliver relieved W. T. Rassieur as CO, SARGENT BAY 15 March. Captain W. V. Davis relieved Captain J. C. Cronin as CO, TULAGI 8 May.

Carrier Division Twenty-Six (new designation)

Rear Admiral C. A. F. Sprague was ComCarDiv 25 (old designation) when EsCarFor was established. He assumed command of the new division, 9 February, 1945. He was relieved by Rear Admiral E. W. Litch, 4 April.

Captain Ira E. Hobbs relieved Captain W. B. Whaley as CO, MAKIN ISLAND 16 June. Captain L. W. Johnson relieved Captain Fitzhugh Lee as CO, MANILA BAY 4 April. Captain W. R. Hollingsworth relieved Captain G.A.T. Washburn as CO, LUNGA POINT, 5 July. Captain J. H. Griffin relieved J. I. Taylor as CO, SALAMAUA, 5 August. Captain W. D. Anderson relieved Captain C. E. Ekstrom as CO, SAVO ISLAND, 19 January.

Carrier Division Twenty-Seven (new designation)

Rear Admiral D. Ketcham assumed command of the division on 15 June.

Captain W. H. Beakley relieved Captain F. M. Hughes as CO, BLOCK ISLAND 1 August.

CHANGES AND ASSIGNMENTS IN AIR GROUPS AND SQUADRONS

Carrier Division Twenty-Two

CVE 28	CHENANGO	CVEG 33	<u>EMBARKED</u>
			10 July

Carrier Division Twenty-Three

CVE 71	KITKUN BAY	VC 63	15 June
CVE 75	HOGGATT BAY	VC 99	30 April
CVE 101	MATANIKAU	VC 65	1 September
CVE 74	NEHENTA BAY	VC 8	20 April
CVE 84	SHAMROCK BAY	VC 96	11 March
CVE 57	ANZIO	VC 13	11 March

Carrier Division Twenty-Four

EMBARKED

CVE 77 MARCUS ISLAND VOC 1
CVE 87 STEAMER BAY VC 93
CVE 69 KASAM BAY VC 72

5 April to 4 May
11 March
(Kassan reported
1 June vice Corregidor)

Carrier Division Twenty-Five

CVE 62 NATOMA BAY VC 9
CVE 80 PETROF BAY VC 93
CVE 81 RUDYERD BAY VC 96
CVE 83 SARGENT BAY VC 83

11 March
11 March
11 March
1 February

Carrier Division Twenty-Six

CVE 93 MAKIN ISLAND VC 91
CVE 61 MANILA BAY VC 71
CVE 94 LUNGA POINT VC 98

28 April
27 May
12 May

Carrier Division Twenty-Seven

CVE 106 BLOCK ISLAND MCVG 1
CVE 107 GILBERT ISLANDS MCVG 2
CVE 109 CAPE GLOUCESTER MCVG 4
CVE 111 VELLA GULF MCVG 3

17 April
1 May
13 June
9 July