COMMANDER AIR FORCE
UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION, NORTH ISLAND
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

IN REPLY REFER TO
FPA-A20
SERIAL NO.
80/

4/4

4-27

GS01

MAY 13 1955

FOURTH ENDORSEMENT on VMA-223 AAR ser 5-55 of 18 April 1955 concerning F9F-5, BuNo 125640, accident occurring 4 April 1955, Pilot HELLANT

From: Commander Air Force, Pacific Fleet
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-07)
Via: Director, U.S. Naval Aviation Safety Center

Subj: VMA-223 aircraft accident occurring 4 April 1955

1. Forwarded, concurring with the third endorsement.

(b) (6) [redacted]

Copy to:
BUAER (2)
CINCPACFLT
CNC
CG, FMFPAC
CG, AIRFMFPAC
CG, MCAS EL TORO
CG, MAG-15
CO, VMA-223
RAD, BETHPAGE

1

FPI3-5
G-3:[illegible]
A25-1

MAY 4 1955

THIRD ENDORSEMENT on VMA-223 ltr 5-55 concerning FMF-5, 125[illegible], accident occurring 4 April 1955, pilot BELLAMY

From: Commanding General, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-57)
Via: (1) Commander Air Force, U. S. Pacific Fleet
(2) U. S. Naval Aviation Safety Activity, Norfolk 11, Virginia

Subj: Major Aircraft Accident Report, case of Second Lieutenant Richard C. BELLAMY (b) (6) [redacted] [illegible] (A)

1. Forwarded.

2. This headquarters does not concur with the conclusions of the Aircraft Accident Board. Evidence presented is not conclusive enough for a flat statement that pilot error was the primary factor in causing this accident. The only conclusion that can be reached, based on present evidence, is that the cause or causes of this accident are unknown.

3. The most probable cause of the accident is as stated in paragraph 33.a.(1) of the report. Conclusions 2 and 3 of the report are concurred with as modified by the first and second endorsements.

4. The first recommendation of the board is concurred with. The second recommendation is not concurred with in that it constitutes a procedure which would tend to clutter the emergency frequency with unnecessary radio transmissions. It is felt that sufficient information is published concerning restricted areas. This coupled with policy of suspending runs when ordnance ranges become fouled, for any reason, should be sufficient.

5. It is further recommended that continued emphasis be placed on instruction for pilots in the understanding and application of Vn diagrams contained in "Pilot Handbooks".

C. F. Schilt

C. F. SCHILT

14723

Copy to:
Duker (2)
U. S. NavAvaSafActy NorVa (2)
CMC
CinCPacFlt
CG, FMFPac
CG, MCAS, El Toro
CG, MAG-15
CO, VMA-223
BAR, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corp. Bethpage, Long Island, N. Y.

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible] on VMA-223 [illegible] concerning [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], accident occurring 4 April 1955, pilot [illegible]

From: Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group-15
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-57)
Via: (1) Commanding General, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
(2) Commander Air Force, Pacific
(3) U.S. Naval Aviation Safety Activity, Norfolk 11, Virginia

Subj: Major Aircraft Accident Report, Case of Second Lieutenant Richard C. [illegible], (b) (6) [redacted], [illegible]

1. Forwarded, concurring with conclusion 1, and recommendations 1, and 2, of the basic report and the first endorsement thereto. Conclusion 3, is considered to be a possibility only.

2. In cases where ordnance ranges become fouled by other aircraft or for any reason the range should be closed and remain closed until the situation has been relieved.

[illegible]
[illegible], Jr.

Copy To:
[illegible] (2)
CinCPacFlt
CG, FMFPac
CNC
CG, NAAS, El Toro
[illegible], Grumman
Engineering Corp.
Bethpage, L. I., N.Y.
CO, VMA-223

3

VMA:jcj
[illegible]
1 APR 1955

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on VMA-223 AIR 5-55 concerning F9F-5, BuNo. 125840, accident occurring 4 April, 1955, pilot BELLAMY

From: Commanding Officer, Marine Attack Squadron-223
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-57)
Via: (1) Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group-15
(2) Commanding General, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific
(3) Commander, Air Force, Pacific Fleet
(4) U. S. Naval Aviation Safety Activity, Norfolk 11, Virginia

Subj: Major Aircraft Accident Report, case of Second Lieutenant Richard C. BELLAMY, (b) (6) [redacted], USMCR-A

1. Forwarded, concurring with conclusions 1. and 3. and the recommendations 1. and 2. of the board.

2. With regard to conclusion 2., it is believed to be mandatory that the Target Duty Officer take positive corrective action prior to a successive run when a pilot has made a low pull-out or has demonstrated other unsafe tendencies. In this case however, to expect him to make a corrective transmission after the pilot initiated his pull-out and before he struck the ground, however desirable, and for what ever unknown effect, in the opinion of the reviewing officer is beyond expectation.

R. B. LAING

4

(b) (6) [redacted]					
Richard Carroll [redacted], Ensign, Surveillance Group I	22	Pilot	Cockpit	A	

Pilot Experience	Total All Models	Total This Model	Last 90 Days All Models	Last 6 Months All Models	Last 6 Months This Model	Instrument Date
Total Hours	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	Pilot's Age
Instrument Hours			[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	22
Night Hours			[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	Date Designated
Co-Landings Day Night	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Course [illegible] — Bombing Practice — Code 117 — [illegible]

Critical-Inverted — Code 9 — Dive Bombing Run

[illegible] — [illegible] — Visibility [illegible] — [illegible] — Level VFR

[illegible] — [illegible] — [illegible] — [illegible] — 45 Knots — [illegible]

Aircraft	Serial No.	Months of Time Left	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Aircraft	1	21	0	0	[illegible]	Major	[illegible]	[illegible]
Engine	[illegible]	[illegible]						
Engine 1	[illegible]	[illegible]	2	[illegible]	[illegible]	Major	[illegible]	[illegible]
Engine 2								
Engine 3								
Engine 4								

Was this act been forwarded to Director, Aeronautics during Present Calendar Year? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Pilot Error

Material Failure or Malfunction

☐ Atmospheric Turbulence ☐ Pilot Error ☐ Communication ☐ Aircraft Failure ☐ Other ☐ Terrain Conditions

☐ Emergency Conditions Landing ☐ Intentional Landing ☐ Forced ☐ Pilot Convenience of Non-Conditions

☒ Parachute ☐ Ejection ☒ Shoulder Harness ☒ Safety Belt ☐ Crash Belt ☒ G-Suit ☒ Protective Helmet ☐ Other ☐ Life Preserver

Check	Enclosures	Check	No.	Distribution of Commanding Officer
	Pilot	X		[illegible]
	Log	X		Commanding Officer
11	Dive Gun	X		Dive Sheet
	Cat Gun			Check and list others as required
	[illegible]	X	Lon	CNO
	[illegible]	X	Lon	CO, AirWPac (w/3)
	[illegible]	X	Lon	CinCPacFlt
	[illegible]	X	Lon	CO, WPac (Direct)
	[illegible]	X	Lon	Comlatfor (Direct)
	[illegible]	X	Lon	CO, NOAC, El Toro
	[illegible]	X	Lon	CO, NAS-[illegible]
	[illegible]	X	Lon	Naval Ord. Inspector Long Island, N.Y.
		X	Lon	File

(b) (6) [redacted]
Flight Surgeon

(b) (6) [redacted]
Flight Officer

(b) (6) [redacted]
Ground Training Officer

(b) (6) [redacted]
Operations Officer

5

15 April 1944

29. THE ACCIDENT

On 4 April 1955 at approximately 1135, Lt. Richard C. BELLAMY was airborne from El Toro in F9F-5, Bureau Number 125640. Lt. BELLAMY was the third plane in a flight of three (3). Their mission was practice bombing using miniture on Target #35 (El Toro Danger Area D-293). At approximately 1200PST, the flight broke up over Target #35 to commence dive bombing runs. Lt. BELLAMY made one (1) normal dummy run. On his first live run Lt. BELLAMY called rolling in "hot" and received clearance from target #35. He was observed to make a 50 degree dive and commenced a normal pull-out but appeared to decrease his pull-out so that he crossed the target in a straight and level attitude at an altitude of approximately 70 feet. The plane continued on this flight path until it struck a ridge of ground about 1200 yards Southeast of Target #35. The aircraft struck the ground at an angle of approximately 50 degrees with an airspeed of about 400 knots. There was an immediate explosion and fire. The tower was notified at once. Target personnel arrived at the scene of the accident fifteen (15) minutes after the crash, and medical personnel arrived by helicopter shortly thereafter. The aircraft was scattered over an area about 1500 yards long and 1000 yards wide and caused numerous brush fires throughout the entire area.

30. DAMAGE TO AIRCRAFT

The aircraft exploded and disintegrated upon impact. It scattered over an area that extended from the point of impact to about 1500 yards Southeast in the direction of the run. The plane was so demolished that to this date certain parts of the aircraft have not been located. No part of this aircraft was left intact. The 20 MM cannons located in the nose were driven into the ground to a depth of 6½ feet and were the only part of the aircraft except for a part of the tail hook assembly and the aileron boost actuating cylinder that remained at the point of impact. The rest of the aircraft was in small pieces. The two largest pieces remaining were part of the left wing skin which was about 400 yards Southeast of the impact point and part of the vertical fin which was found about 1500 yards away. The two solid metal blocks, used for ballast in the F9F-5, were found 50 yards from the impact point broken into numerous pieces.

31. THE INVESTIGATION

a. Pilot's experience:

(1) Lt. BELLAMY completed flight training and was designated a Naval Aviator on 1 September 1954.

(2) Lt. BELLAMY flew nine (9) dive bombing flights at NOLAS, Mojave (Danger Area 306) between 14 March and 23 March 1955. He had flown one (1) other bombing flight using Target #35 on 29 March 1955 during which he made nine (9) runs and committed no fouls due to low pull-outs.

(3) Total Flight Time	391.3
(4) Total Flight Time in last 6 Months	50.4
(5) Total Flight Time in last 30 Days	34.7
(6) Total Flight Time in last 7 Days	5.0
(7) Total Flight Time on day of accident	0.5
(8) Total Jet Time	76.4
(9) Total Time in F9F-5	36.6

b. Lt. BELLAMY's flight performance for the period flown with VMA-223 was considered above average.

c. Lt. BELLAMY's flight the day of the accident was satisfactory in all respects. This included one dummy dive bombing run with a normal pull-out.

d. Investigation revealed Lt. BELLAMY's physical and mental condition to have been very good. He retired at a reasonable hour the night previous to the accident and reported to work promptly at 0800 Monday morning in good spirits. He reported to the pistol range at 0845 the same morning and fired a score of 330 with the 38 Cal. pistol. This score has a rating of expert.

e. The remainder of the altimeter which was found had the correct setting according to the altimeter setting given by El Toro Tower at 1200PST, 4 April 1955.

f. Lt. [redacted] flight [illegible] contained the following important factors:

(1) Transfer tip tank full before commencing run.
(2) Turnout direction is 800 feet.
(3) Your weight is such at 800 MPH, speed brake down from an initial minimum altitude of 10,500 feet not at a dive angle of about 50 degrees.
(4) Minimum release altitude was 1000 feet. Lt. [redacted] was observed working this on his base pad.

g. About three (3) minutes after the flight was airborne, the flight leader, Lt. [redacted], instructed the flight to begin full throttle.

h. The plane struck the side of the hill in a level attitude at an angle of impact of 50 degrees. It ground into the earth approximately 45 feet and exploded into flying pieces. The point of impact was approximately half way up a sloping hill that was approximately 200 feet above the target, the slope beginning 800 yards in a bearing of 139 degrees from the bulls eye on Target 800. The aircraft travelled approximately 200 yards up a ravine prior to contact with the left or bottom lip of the ravine. The first half of the slope is quite steep, approximately 50 degrees, followed by a gentle slope of about 30 degrees to the crest. The aircraft was contact with the ground at the crest of the initial 30 degree slope at a speed of approximately 400 knots in a slow condition.

i. The guns were found buried at the initial impact spot, 45 feet into the ground, the nitrogen bottle exploded and pieces of the tail fluid remotely were also at point of impact.

j. The remainder of the aircraft after disintegration, continued in the general initial flight path direction. The remains of the tail were found a half mile away. Between the initial point of impact and the tail, the area was littered with pieces of wreckage. Numerous brush fires were started due to the burning parts that were scattered over a large area, a half mile long and a quarter of a mile wide. (See enclosure).

k. The aircraft, [illegible] in its first overhaul tour with 21 months in an operating status. [illegible] Stay Integration was 800.4 hours. The aircraft flew a total of [illegible] hours during March with no Major discrepancies reported.

l. One (1) radio transmission was made after Lt. [redacted] entered his run. The transmission was made by Lt. [redacted], the number 2 man in the flight to be pulled off target from his first live run. The transmission went approximately as follows: "[illegible] this is [redacted], I am at 7000 feet above of the target". [redacted] then added: "This is [redacted], Roger, I have a Bogie south 5, south of the target." At the time the bogie was called, Lt. [redacted] is estimated to have been in his run between 9000 and 5000 feet.

m. Lt. (b) (6) the Target Duty Officer, stated that at 1-40 with [redacted] working was orbiting the scene of the crash to assess as the other members of the flight. He stated that when he first saw the aircraft, it was coming from the South.

n. Weather for the area in question was good. The target area clear with visibility of about 25 miles. Tl Dave Tower at the time of the crash reported 3500 feet scattered, 25 miles visibility, temperature 62 degrees, dew point 30, relative humidity 30 % with the wind from the West at 13 knots.

10. [redacted]

Due to extreme fragmentation of the aircraft on impact, it was impossible to determine for certain whether the aircraft experienced structural or equipment failure. However since there was no evidence of any type failure and no transmission to this effect was made by Lt. [redacted] and the aircraft was observed to make no erratic or unwarranted maneuvers, it is the opinion of this board that no such failure occurred. The pilot made a satisfactory run and began a normal pull-out at about 3000 feet actual altitude. He did not continue his pull-out and flew between the target and Bake Range No. 2 in a straight and level attitude at about 70 feet actual altitude. He struck the ridge in this attitude at an air speed of about 400 knots.

The board believes that the "Bogie transmission" made immediately after Lt. BELLAMY rolled into his run could possibly have a direct bearing on the accident, as related below:

(1) The bogie was reported "Angels 9" an altitude that Lt. BELLAMY had to make his pull-out through.

(2) "South of the target", the direction of the pull-out was Southeast rolling to the South on recovery.

(3) Lt. BELLAMY did not drop a bomb even though he had called for and received clearance for a "hot" run indicating that he did become distracted after his initial call that he was diving "hot."

(4) A strange aircraft in the bombing pattern becomes a very grave danger, until that aircraft has been sighted by each member of the flight and particularly dangerous to the pilot who is in the near vertical position at the time that the report is received. It becomes of primary importance to a pilot to sight the reported "stranger" as rapidly as possible.

(5) The Range Duty Officer was on duty as a Safety Officer. There was a period of approximately 6 seconds in which a radio transmission could have been made to Lt. BELLAMY telling him that he was low. This transmission could have been made by the Target Duty Officer who observed the run from the Target house. Although it is doubtful that a transmission of this nature would have averted the accident it is possible that it would have influenced Lt. BELLAMY's reactions to some extent.

33. <u>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u>

a. Conclusions:

(1) Pilot error was the primary factor in causing this accident in that the pilot did not pull-out of his bombing run with sufficient altitude to clear the hills South of the target.

(2) The Target Duty Officer was quite lax in his duties as Range Duty Officer in that he did not initiate a call to the offending aircraft that he was below the level off minimum.

(3) The pilot did recover from his dive bombing run, but, due to the report of the "bogie" which was called directly in his flight path, attempted to get below the reported altitude of the "bogie" in order to more readily sight him in silouette, and in so doing inadvertently flew into the ground.

b. Recommendations:

(1) It is recommended that all pilot's review of pull-out altitudes be stressed and restressed.

(2) It is recommended that El Toro Tower as well as all towers broadcast on guard channel frequently (every 5 minutes) when a bombing target is in use which is situated close to a traffic pattern. (i.e. Edward AFB Tower does this.)

At about 1000 PST on 4 April 1955, I briefed my division for a bombing flight to use miniature practice bombs on Target #35. The division was 1stLt. W. T. PORTER, 1stLt. V. W. CLARK, 2ndLt. R. F. WATSON and 2ndLt. R. C. MELLANY. All items on the equipment briefing list for air-to-ground tactics were discussed and the following specific points were covered:

a. The tip tank fuel would be transferred before commencing bombing runs.

b. The elevation of Target #35 is 800 feet.

c. The runs would be made at 300 MPH with speed brakes extended from an initial minimum altitude of 10,000 feet and at a dive angle of about 50 degrees.

d. The minimum release altitude would be an indicated 4000 feet.

e. The importance of using the altimeter as well as the sight pattern to maintain a constant release altitude for all practice runs was emphasized.

1Lt. MELLANY was observed to have marked the 4000 foot release altitude on his knee pad.

1Lt. CLARK did not fly airborne, and the flight shaped up in the air as follows:

Pilots	Helmet No.
1Lt. PORTER	VT-21
1Lt. WATSON	VT-3
1Lt. MELLANY	VT-4

The flight of three (3) took-off at 1130 PST. 1Lt. WATSON called that the flight was airborne with three (3) and I called the flight to switch to the tactical channel. Following a radio check on the tactical channel, I instructed the flight to start transferring tip tank fuel.

We climbed to 20,000 feet and performed one (1) break up and rendezvous. The air work of the flight on the climb-out and the rendezvous was satisfactory.

At 1200 PST the flight approached Target #35 on a heading of 130 degrees at 10,000 feet in a left echelon and break-up to commence dive bombing runs. Each pilot checked in with the target ground control radio giving pilot's name, tactical call and radio number. Each plane made one (1) dummy run and the flight was cleared to commence live runs. As I approached the dive position at about 8,000 feet following my first live run, I witnessed the final part of 1Lt. MELLANY's run.

The rapidity with which the aircraft and its shadow on the ground seemed to be closing frightened me and I realized that the plane was pulling out very low. The plane struck the ground in almost a straight and level attitude and burst into flame on impact.

The range guard instructed the flight to orbit the target and I reported to El Toro tower that there was a fatality -- that VT-4 had collided with the ground 2,000 yards south of Target #35. 1Lt. WATSON and I orbited the target until a helicopter arrived.

I have three and one half (3½) years experience as a military pilot, one thousand and twenty five (1025) total hours and five hundred eleven (511) hours in the F9F-6 aircraft.

(b) (6)

[redacted]

Enclosure (1) to VT-21 AIR S-01 dtd 15 APR 1955

(b) (6)

STATEMENT OF SSgt [redacted] CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF F9F-5, Bu.No. 125640

On Monday, 4 April 1955, being HCO in charge of the Rocket Range crew on Target #35, located on Trabuco Plane. The crew consisted of the Range Officer, Lt. R. T. CROUTE, SSgt. MERCHANT from Station Ordnance, four enlisted men from VMA-223 and a fire truck driver from Station Crash Crew.

At 1202 PST, the fifth flight of aircraft arrived over station. This flight consisted of three (3) F9F aircraft. They called in their lineup consisting of, WP-14, Lt. PORTER, WP-8, Lt. MATOCK and WP-4, Lt. HELLAMY. I then gave the flight the basic instructions for Target #35, which are; runs will be made on a 130 degree magnetic heading, use a right hand traffic pattern, keep a 30 second interval between aircraft, call "Afternoon" on entering the groove on each run and make the first run a dummy run to pick up interval. All aircraft acknowledged these instructions by giving me a "Roger."

At this time the personal of the Range Crew were at the following positions. Two men from VMA-223 were working on the angle recorder and the plotting board. SSgt. MERCHANT was recording dive angle and position of hits. The Range Officer was sitting nearby observing, the fire truck driver was either in or near his truck and I was in contact with the aircraft by radio.

The weather at this time was clear over the target, although a cloud cover was steadily forming between the target and Saddleback at about 5,000 feet. The wind at this time was estimated less than five (5) knots blowing from twelve o'clock on the target. I gave this information to one or two of the previous flights, but I don't remember if I did give it to this specific flight.

The aircraft completed their dummy runs and started their live runs. In the first live run I looked up just in time to see one aircraft failing to recover from his dive. I can not constantly keep sight of the aircraft throughout their dives as I have to read and relay the previous hits to the other aircraft. I caught sight of the aircraft as he was passing over the target, going lower and lower. It seemed as though he was partially recovering when he went out of sight behind a knoll on the hill southeast of the target and instantly there was an explosion and a ball of fire on impact. This all happened in a matter of seconds. I did not hear any sound over the radio nor did I have time to contact the pilot before the crash.

I did not have a watch but SSgt. MERCHANT recorded the time as 1207 PST.

I immediately contacted the flight leader, WP-14 and told him the target was closed, that an emergency existed, and we would get the fire truck to the scene of the crash as soon as possible. He said he would notify El Toro of the crash. The fire truck with two other men aboard immediately started to the site of the crash. SSgt. MERCHANT was sent to the Forestry Department at Trabuco for additional fire fighting equipment, as fires were burning over a wide area on the hillside. I then asked the Range Officer if he would stand by the radio and I ran over about 200 yards to see if the fire truck could find a road to get over there. I saw that they had cut a fence to get through and were going along the valley toward the crash. I then went back to the control house and tried to contact WP-14, but he was on Tower frequency. WP-19 was still in the air and answered.

I asked him if he knew vehicles would be coming up by way of the road. He could not say for sure but I said we could have a man at the gate to let anyone through from the base.

At approximately 1225 PST, TSgt. SCHOENLE and Pfc. [illegible] from Station Ordnance arrived on the show run. I then left Pfc. [illegible] to stand by the radio on VMA-223's frequency and TSgt. SCHOENLE, the Range Officer and myself started to the scene of the crash. When we arrived at the hill below the crash, we saw that the fire truck had not been able to make it up the hill, but the three men had gone up on foot to the point of impact. I then told the fire truck driver to follow TSgt. SCHOENLE and they could try to find a road up the hill to start fighting the brush fires which were by this time burning violently over scattered parts of two or three hills. The Range Officer and myself went up on foot to the point of impact. Would judge the time we arrived at the scene at about 1230 PST.

Enclosure (2) to VMA-223 ASR 5-55 dtd 15 APR 1955

10

The aircraft had hit almost at the top of a slight rise and wreckage was scattered for hundreds of yards ahead and to the sides. There was no sign of life. The rescue helicopter with doctor and corpsman arrived about five minutes later, approximately 1235 PST.

(b) (6) [redacted]

STATEMENT OF (b) (6) [redacted] CROUSE CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF F9F-5, BuNo. 1[illegible]

I was Range Duty Officer on Target #35 on 4 April 1955. At 1207 PST, WP-14 reported on target with three (3) aircraft. Lt. PURTEAR in WP-14, Lt. [illegible] in WP-8 and Lt. [illegible] in WP-4. All planes made one normal dummy run and began live runs. WP-4 had a dummy run of 45 degrees with a safe pull-out. WP-4 called in live run, had 50 degree dive with an apparently normal release point followed by a pull-out estimated at 2 to 3 G's, which resulted in his going out of sight behind a nose of land. There was an immediate explosion of fire at 1207 PST. Burning fragments were hurled over a wide area. The target was closed and a fire truck dispatched to the scene of the crash. At this time the wind in the target area was variable 0-7 knots. Cumulous type clouds were piled on the mountains east of the target and building west. The target area was clear. Few small cumulous clouds were west of the target.

I was designated a Naval Aviator on 21 January 1955, have 390 hours total flight time of which 27 hours have been in the F9F-5 aircraft.

(b) (6) [redacted]

1st Lt., USMC

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Enclosure (3) to VMA-223 AAR 5-55 dtd 15 APR 1955

STATEMENT OF Pfc. (b) (6) [redacted] CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF FWP-5, BuNo. 125940

On or about 1207 PST, 4 April 1955, I was standing by with a crash truck near Target 635, at the Trabuco Plane Rocket Range. Several aircraft were making training runs and dives on the target. One aircraft appeared to be making an exceptionally low dive and on trying to pull up out of the dive it crashed into a hill approximately 2000 yards South East of the target.

Immediately I started the crash truck and with two men from ordnance we proceeded to the scene of the crash. Due to terrain I was unable to get the crash truck all the way to the scene of the crash. I attempted to drive the truck up the hill where the crash occurred. The hill was to steep so I left the crash truck at the bottom of the hill and proceeded on foot with back pack water pumps. Arriving at the scene of the crash, all I could see was what appeared to be pieces of human flesh and pieces of aircraft scattered over a large area. Several small grass and brush fires were burning. It was apparent that they were started by flaming parts of the crashed aircraft. When I could see that there was nothing I could do for the pilot or the aircraft I turned to with the ordnance personnel and proceeded to fight the grass and brush fire. I was secured from this detail at approximately 1500 PST and returned to the Air Station at 1615 PST.

The above statement is true to the best of my knowledge.

(b) (6) [redacted]

13

Enclosure (4) to VMA-223 AAR 5-55 dtd 15 APR 1955

STATEMENT OF 1st Lt. (b) (6) [redacted] II CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF F9F-6, BuNo. 125640

1st Lt. Herbert B. PORTEAR, the flight leader briefed the flight for miniature bombing on Target #35. The briefing was completed prior to take-off. Each plane made individual take-offs and we flew approximately 25 minutes prior to entering the first dive. There was nothing unusual in the flying and Lt. HELLAMY answered all hand signals and radio calls promptly. He was flying position number three (3) and was the last plane in the formation.

Upon recovering from my dive I spotted a "Bogie" south of the target and transmitted the following: "WS-14, your position." The reply was "Abeam target, Angels 7." I then transmitted "Roger, I have a 'Bogie' south of the target, Angels 5." I then made a climbing right turn and spotted the explosion.

I have 20 months military flying experience and was designated a Naval Aviator on 1 September 1952 and have one hundred forty (140) hours jet time and five hundred (500) hours total flight time.

(b) (6) [redacted]

14

Enclosure (5) to VAL-223 ASR 5-55 dtd 15 APR 1955

STATEMENT OF Mgt. (b) (6) [redacted] CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF FSP-6, SubNo. 125640

I arrived at the scene of the accident in helicopter 122509 at approximately 1235 PST with the Doctor and Corpsman. There were already several people at the scene. I landed immediately to disembark the Doctor and Corpsman. There was scattered fire from the point of impact to the South and right and left to covered an area approximately 500 yards square. The aircraft was completely demolished and covered approximately the same area as the fire.

There were a few scattered clouds over the target area. Visibility was good. The wind was from the west from 8-10 knots.

I was designated a Naval Aviation Pilot 16 April 1947. I graduated from Flight School 4 April 1944 and have 2,396.7 hours total flight time.

(b) (6) [redacted]

15

Enclosure (6) to [illegible] AAR 5-55 dtd 15 APR 1955

STATEMENT OF Cpl. (b) (6) [redacted] CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF F9F-5, Bu.No. 125640

I was operating rake house #1 on 4 April 1955 when the crash occurred. I heard WP-4 come in to dive bomb. I watched for a bomb drop but none was observed. Then I saw the plane come across the target about 60 or 70 feet above the deck. He was flying flat and fast but was not settling from his dive. He had pulled out of his dive completely and was making a straight and level run across the target. Apparently he did not realize he was as close to the deck as he was because when he saw he was going to hit the side of the hill he tried to pull up and hit belly down. The plane exploded on impact.

(b) (6) [redacted]

16

Enclosure (7) to [illegible] AAR 5-55 dtd 15 APR 1955

STATEMENT OF Cpl. (b) (6) [redacted] CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF FPP-6, BuNo. 125840

I was operating the plotting board at Target #35 on the 4th of April 1955, when at 1907, I saw the plane in which Lt. HELLANY was pilot of come in on a normal dive at the target, start his pull out, leveled off and come straight across the target at about 70 feet and was pulling up when he passed out of my sight behind a hill. The next thing I saw was the flames as he hit

(b) (6) [redacted]

17

Enclosure (8) to [illegible] AAR 5-55 dtd 15 APR 1955

STATEMENT OF Cpl. (b) (6) [redacted] CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF F37-6, BuNo. 12564

I was on duty in rake house #2 on Target #35 4 April 1955. I was in the rake house calling the hits on the target. I was looking for the last hit when I saw a ball of fire to my right. I did not see any sign of a bomb going off before the plane hit.

(b) (6) [redacted]

18

Enclosure (9) to [illegible] 15 APR 1955

STATEMENT OF Cpl. (b) (6) [redacted] CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF F9F-6, BuNo. 125540

I was running the hard at Target #35 on the 4th of April 1955 when at 1207 PST, MF-4 came in at 50 degrees dive at the target, and then I was looking for the next plane to come in.

(b) (6) [redacted]

19

Enclosure (10) to VMA-223 AAR 5-55 dtd 15 APR 1955

STATEMENT OF 1stLt. (b) (6) [redacted] Jr., [illegible]

Aircraft F9F-5, BuNo. 125640 was in the first service tour with 21 Months in an operating status. Total flight hours since Navy acceptance was 824.4 hours. The aircraft operated a total of 51.1 flight hours during the month of March 1955, with no major discrepancies being reported.

The sixth Major Inspection was completed on 30 March 1955. At this inspection J48-P6A, Ser. No. P-415625, with 112.4 hours since overhaul, was installed to expedite availability of the aircraft.

The aircraft was test flown on 1 April 1955 for 1 hour. The discrepancy of throttle dragging at 96% was corrected by reversing the head of the bolt connecting the fuel control bell crank to the aircraft throttle linkage. Aircraft ground tested OK. Aircraft then scheduled for routine flight. A 1 hour local flight was flown with no discrepancies being reported. Next flight on 4 April was aborted due to hydraulic leak in tail skag actuator. Packing replaced in actuator. Ground tested OK.

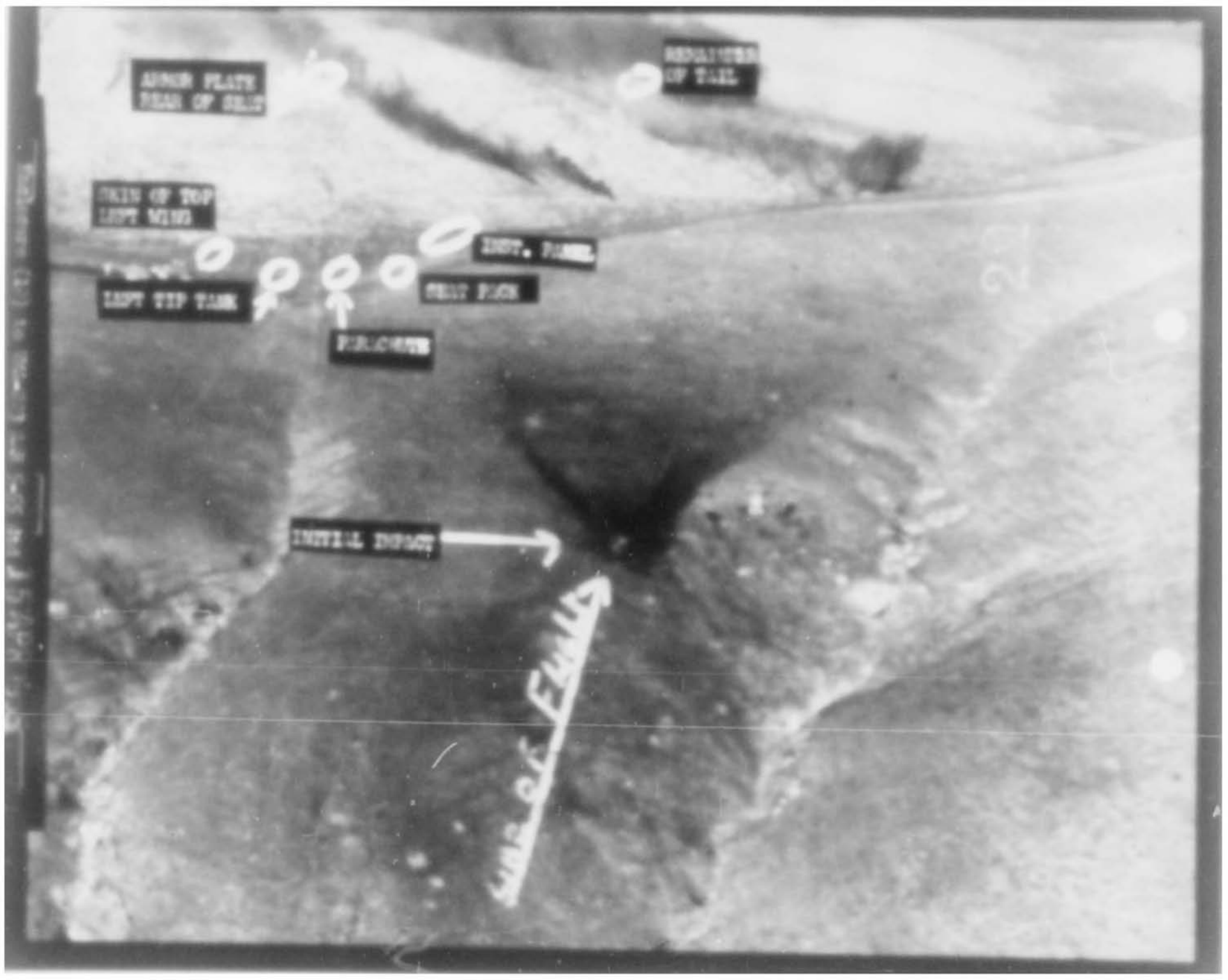
On last flight aircraft took off with approximately 6000 pounds of fuel aboard.

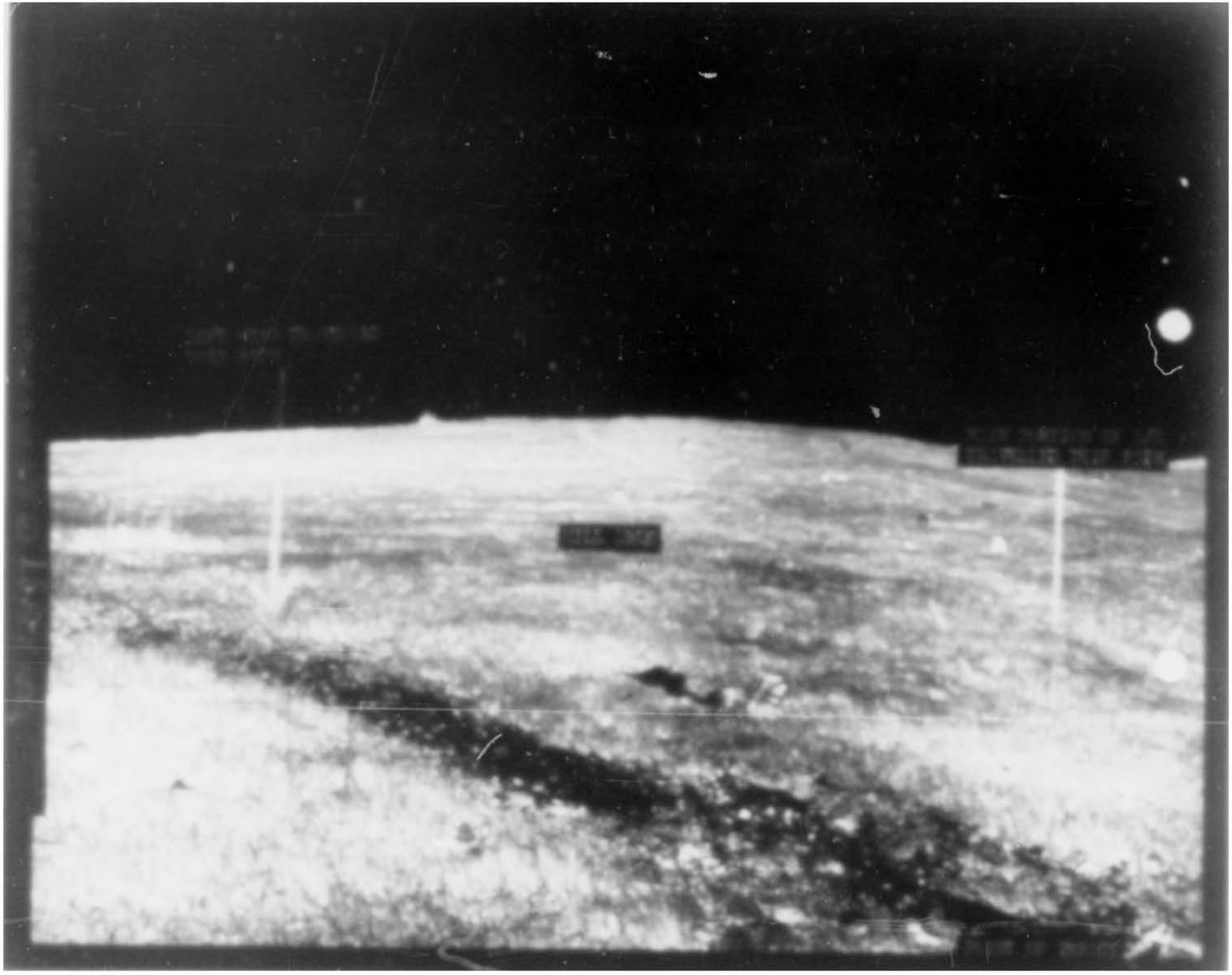
Inspection of the area of the crash revealed the aircraft struck the ground in a slight nose down attitude. Three 20MM guns were found buried muzzle-first in ground at point of impact. Aileron boost actuating cylinder was found buried at point of impact, with both ends of actuator missing. No engine instruments were found. The dive brakes and dive brake actuators were not found. Approximately ½ mile from impact the vertical fin was found with portion of upper rudder still attached. Rudder tab would operate freely. Approximately 1 foot of LH and RH stabilizer and elevators was still attached to vertical fin. Elevator spring tabs could be moved by hand.

Aircraft F9F-5, BuNo. 125640 was strike due to the crash and explosion.

(b) (6) [redacted]

20


ARMOR PLATE
REAR OF SELF
REPAIRED
OF TAIL
SKIN OF TOP
LEFT WING
LEFT TIP TANK
FUSELAGE
INITIAL IMPACT
DIRECTION OF FLIGHT



DIRECTION OF RUN