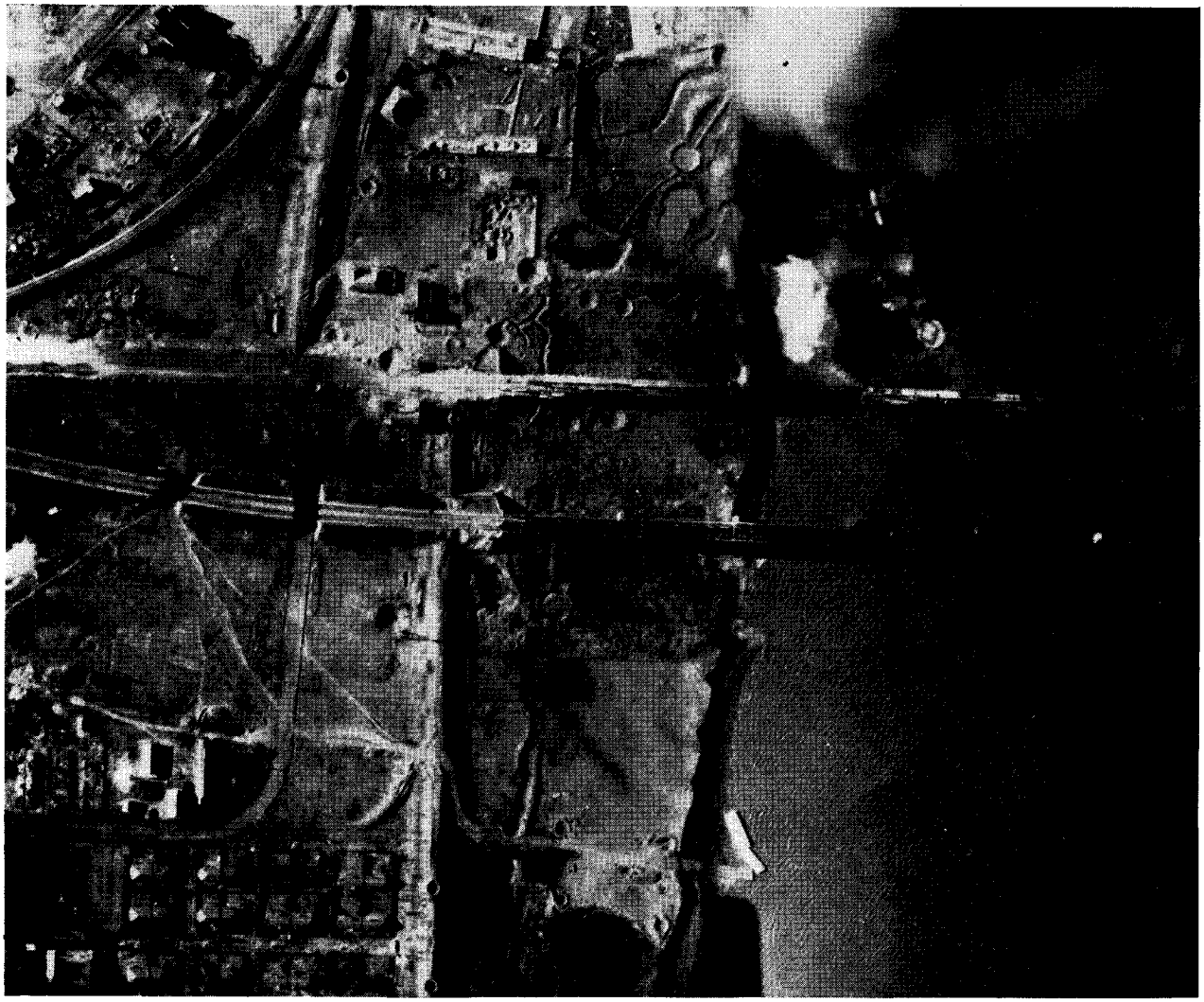

YALU RIVER *bridges offered Navy one of its infrequent opportunities to employ the coordinated strike made famous in World War II actions. Majority of the Navy's air war in Korea has been taken up with "armed reconnaissance"*

NAVY FIGHTS NEW TYPE WAR

THE LESSONS learned in any war are of untold value in the next, but there is no end of learning, nor to new situations, in the Navy's air war in Korea.

Officers and pilots of Air Group 5 from the *Valley Forge* and Air Group 3 from the *Leyte* in Washington for briefings illustrated this in telling how naval aviation in adapting itself to an air war fought mostly over land and against a relatively primitive enemy.

Just back from the war zone, these airmen point out that over half of the offensive sorties flown were in what is called "armed reconnaissance"—a term picked up from the Air Force who previously had picked it up from the Army ground forces.

The main purpose of "armed reconnaissance" is to deny lines of supply and communications to the enemy. This was done by sweeping the highways and railroads with flights usually of two to four planes. Such a group would cover from 20 to 70 miles of supply lines, and in the manner of a hunter, seek out targets and destroy them.

As some pilots put it, they often thought it beneath their dignity to nose over a $400,000 airplane to wipe

out a North Korean ox cart. But after some of these ox carts "disappeared" when their loads of ammunition blew up, the game became more interesting.

The large-scale strike, brought to a high degree of perfection and effectiveness in World War II, was not often used except in strikes against the Yalu River bridges.

The armed reconnaissances accounted for about half of sorties flown. Air support missions took up another 40 percent while only about 10 percent of the work went into coordinated strikes.

Value of the Jets.—The great value of the jet plane was pointed up by the reports of a high degree of success in almost every phase of operations. The edge was given the prop type planes in some phases, particularly close support missions, but most of the speakers were jet enthusiasts.

Grumman's F9F was rated by one speaker as the best fighter the Navy has in the war zone. But as with the first of almost anything, other airmen reported numerous bugs to be worked out in this, the Navy's first jet fighter to be used operationally from carriers.

By the same token, most of the problems encountered by naval fliers dealt with the use of jet aircraft. Additional radar control for jets was a major point of discussion.

Cdr. Harvey P. Lanham, CO Air Group 5 of the *Valley Forge* pointed out that of the 3,444 missions flown, over half of these were in armed reconnaissance, resulting in the destruction of over 2,000 enemy vehicles including 161 locomotives.

Sharing honors with the jets (there were two jet squadrons in Lanham's air group) were the "Blue Airplanes" (*Skyraiders*), so named by UN ground forces and enemy North Koreans. The UN ground forces always welcomed the hard-hitting *Skyraiders,* and one North Korean prisoner was quoted as saying the "Blue Airplane" was the most feared weapon of our forces.

Navigation Important.—Navigation, so important in keeping up with the fluid battle line on the Korean peninsula, was the subject of much comment.

Accurate navigation and positioning was of utmost importance to the jets which often flew over bad weather for long distances before letting themselves down over the target area. A shortage of accurate, up-to-date maps of the land areas also was reported.

Effectiveness of Air Power.—In discussing the alleged ineffectiveness of air power in the Korean campaign, Cdr. Lanham discussed several factors which entered into the air war problem.

He pointed out that the enemy is not highly motorized, moves by night, and lives off the land. While the Communist forces felt most the air blows against their lines of communications, their lines of supply were not as vulnerable as they would be if motorized.

Lanham also pointed out that there was a misuse of types of aircraft during the first part of the war. This was explained by the fact that the air power based in Japan had as its primary mission defense of Japan. When heavier-attack-type aircraft were brought into play in Korea, there was a very evident increase in general effectiveness of air power.

The lessons and problems of naval aviation in Korea are evolving around the facts that Navy fliers are doing much of their flying over land, and are fighting a different kind of air war, owing to the nature of the enemy and the absence of any major air opposition.

Brickbats and Bouquets.—Need was expressed for better intelligence and interpretation in the field, longer-range radar control for jets, better navigational arrangements and communications. A need for more experienced fighter-director officers and use of Navy tacrons were pointed out as highly desirable.

Coming in for praise were the 20-mm gun, the F9F, and the high degree of training given pilots before arrival in the war zone.

The individual points on both sides of the ledger are too numerous to discuss here, but the general attitude apparently was summed up by one speaker who said:

"We ran into a lot of things that make us think there is plenty of room for improvement in almost every field of naval operations."

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