JET F9F PHOTO UNIT MAPS NORTH KOREA

LT. HOOPER, HEAD OF 'EASY', SMITH AND ELMIES FIRST JET PHOTO UNIT TO REACH KOREA

FIRST unit to fly jet photo planes in combat for the Navy, Detachment Easy of VC-61, is back in the U. S. again after six months on the carrier *Princeton,* photographing North Korea in 160 combat sorties.

The detachment's three F9F-2P planes carried two K-17 aerial cameras in the nose where Alameda's O&R had removed the 20 mm cannon. Six hundred pounds of ballast had to be added to make up the weight differential.

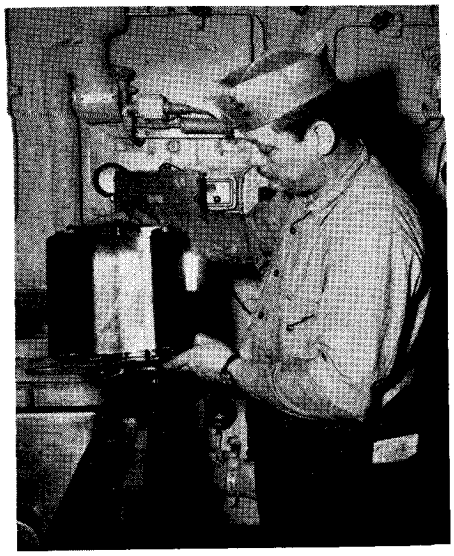
The carrier's photo unit was composed of three officers: Lt. C. A. Hooper, and Lts. (jg) John E. Smith and George Elmies and a crew of 13 men. Before it had completed its six months tour of duty, it had taken 14,000 pictures of North Korea showing cities, bridges, troop concentrations, airfields, gun emplacements and supply dumps.

In addition, they mapped countless sections of Korea, including the east coast from the 37th parallel to the Russian border. Their work was an invaluable source of intelligence information for the entire fleet.

Detachment Easy went into combat during the Chosin reservoir evacuation. The successful bridge and tunnel interdiction program against the enemy was largely made possible through photos taken by jet photo planes. More than 300 bridges were photographed, some five or six times. As soon as the bridges were repaired, photos showed it and new strikes were launched against them.

Part of the interdiction program was by surface bombardment from battleships, cruisers and destroyers. Here low oblique photos were needed, simulating a coxswain's view. The jets delivered pictures to the ships to assist in locating targets and pinpointing their gunfire.

Jet photo planes can shoot pictures at all altitudes from 100′ to 40,000′ and at speeds ranging from 150 knots to 500 knots or more. Besides the K-17 cameras with 6″ and 12″ lenses, the jets carried Sonne continuous strip cameras on some hops. Jets are usually thought of as high speed aircraft, but photo pilots usually slow them down and fly low on assignments. Most of Detachment Easy's missions were under 5,000′ and from 150 to 200 knots.



COLLIER, AFC, DEVELOPS FILMS OF RED AREA

The plane performs well at low power settings and fuel consumption is economical. The average photo hop is about two hours long. During that time the plane will cover as much as 600 miles. Conventional planes remain in the air about twice as long, but seldom cover more than half the distance. Photo pilots use their speed and altitude going to and from the target and drop down, working low and slow at their assigned target area.

Each photo plane is accompanied on his mission by one jet fighter, which acts as a body guard in case of enemy air opposition, or in the event he is hit by ground fire. The photo pilot has no guns and needs his speed and his escort for protection. Enemy ground fire is becoming more a menace to all of the aircraft. The Communists installed modern antiaircraft batteries at all important centers and photo planes worked a great deal on flak coverage. Photo interpreters studied their pictures to locate flak installations. Lt. Hooper had several years experience as a photo interpretation expert.

The jet photo plane is easy for photo mates to work on. The sliding nose permits easy access to all cameras and equipment. An excellent workhorse, the F9F's missed 100% availability on only one occasion. Later models of the F9F *Panther* are in production designed specifically for camera installations of the latest design.

LANE, COLLIER TAKE CAMERA FROM F9F'S NOSE

• NAF ANNAPOLIS—Striking an underwater obstacle while taking off, a JRF tore a big hole in its hull and sank. The four crew members were not hurt. The pilot was Lieutenant Jack S. Laney.