

Since 1959, only three typhoons have developed over the Western Pacific in March. Of these three, only Bess developed in the last decade with Typhoon Tess developing in 1961 and Typhoon Sally in 1967. Tropical cyclone development in March is usually inhibited by a southward adjustment in the subtropical ridge axis. Although not recognized in advance, Typhoon Bess' development paralleled Typhoon Tess, which developed in the eastern Caroline Islands and reached tropical depression strength near Woleai Atoll. Continuing northwestward between Guam and Yap, both recurved northward near 135E (Fig. 3-02-1) before dissipating north of 20N under the influence of a strong vertical shear.

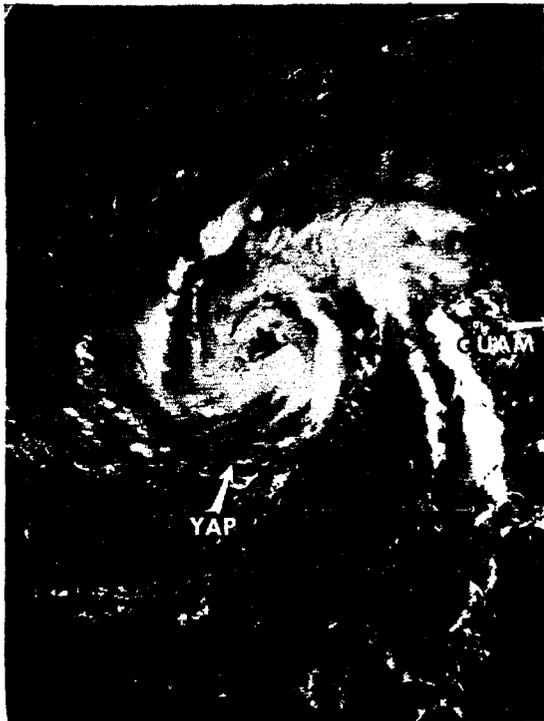


FIGURE 3-02-1. Typhoon Bess tracking northwestward between Guam and Yap at 8 kt (15 km/hr), 21 March 1979, 0103Z. Satellite imagery captured increased organization in the convective banding just prior to Bess reaching tropical storm intensity. (DMSP imagery)

Synoptic data at 160000Z suggested the existence of a weak surface circulation near 3.0N 152.5E at the base of a wave in the easterly flow. Satellite imagery at 160119Z indicated that an ill-defined area of convection existed near the surface circulation. By 161109Z, however, increased upper-level organization suggested development of a weak 200 mb anticyclone (Fig. 3-02-2). Increased curvature in the mid-level convective cloud pattern hinted at the possibility of tropical cyclone formation. As often observed in weak

developing systems, 162207Z satellite imagery showed a significant decrease in the mid- to upper-level convective organization, while the synoptic analysis continued to support a weak circulation southeast of Guam. Continuing to pulsate, the suspect area presented a curious, but intensified upper-level convective pattern on 172151Z and 172333Z satellite imagery. Synoptic analysis at 180000Z indicated that, in addition to the circulation near 3.5N 147.5E, a secondary low had developed on the slow moving wave axis near 7.1N 150.0E and that the earlier ill-defined convection had been associated with these two circulations. As this secondary low tracked northward up the wave axis, increased cyclon-



FIGURE 3-02-2. Infrared imagery of very early development stage of Bess, 16 March 1979, 1109Z. Streamline pattern indicates an upper-level anticyclone. A surface circulation had not yet developed. (DMSP imagery)

ic shear between strong easterly flow north of the wave and weak equatorial westerlies south of the wave caused the northern circulation to become the dominant center as the initial low weakened. Simultaneously, the upper-level anticyclone intensified, producing an excellent outflow signature on 182315Z satellite imagery (Fig. 3-02-3). Although a formation alert was issued based on 182315Z satellite imagery, continued rapid development did not occur as expected. Aircraft data at 200259Z found strong enhanced easterly flow of 20-30 kt (10-15 m/sec) to the northeast, but only weak cyclonic flow to the south and east. Aircraft reports finally confirmed tropical storm strength early on the 21st (Fig. 3-02-4), five days after Bess was initially observed.

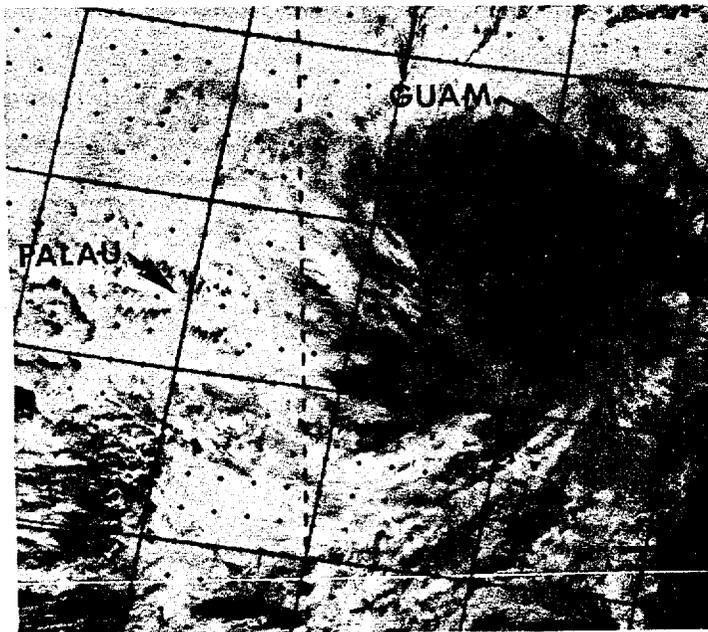


FIGURE 3-02-3. Infrared imagery of Typhoon Bess developing under good upper-level outflow which is visible from the southeast through the northwest, 18 March 1979, 2315Z. (DMSP imagery)

Sea Surface Temperature (SST) plays a vital role in the development and maintenance of tropical cyclones. A study by Charles P. Guard (1979) indicates that tropical cyclones which move over water cooler than 26C are less likely to intensify due to a reduction in latent heat. The study further states that tropical cyclones which develop prior to June intensify up to 10 kt (5 m/sec) after recurvature. This intensification, if experienced, will occur within the 12-24 hour period following recurvature. Typhoon Bess followed this recurvature pattern. The axis of recurvature was crossed at 230000Z. Slow intensification occurred over the next 18 hours with Bess reaching her maximum intensity of 90 kt (46 m/sec) at 231800Z. Bess maintained 90 kt (46 m/sec) for 18 hours and then rapidly weakened, dissipating by 250000Z. SST analyses during 24-27 March (Fig. 3-02-5) indicate that the area in which Bess weakened from 90-60 kt (46-31 m/sec) in a six-hour period corresponds closely to the location of water cooler than 26C. The reduction of latent heat input, coupled with increased vertical shear produced by strong westerlies aloft, literally sheared Bess apart during the final 12-18 hours.



FIGURE 3-02-4. Typhoon Bess just prior to reaching her maximum intensity of 90 kt (46 m/sec), 23 March 1979, 0235Z. Bess displays a large elliptical eye with strong radial cirrus outflow in all directions. (DMSP imagery)

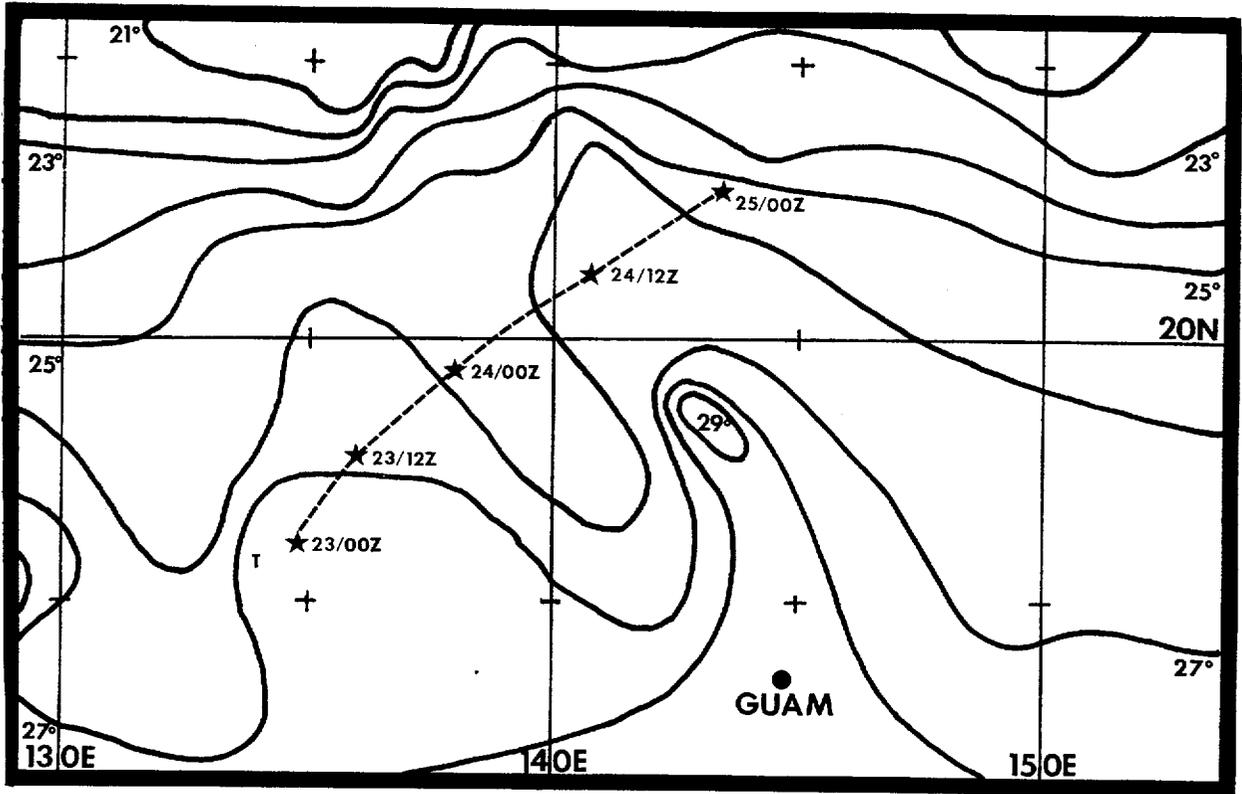


FIGURE 3-02-5. Composite of sea surface temperature analyses from 24-27 March 1979. Northeastward track of Typhoon Bess during dissipation stage is indicated by a dashed line with 12-hour positions.