

Typhoon Ellen developed in an active, near-equatorial trough west of the Truk Islands on 11 May 1980. Strong upper-level divergence over the Caroline Islands and a weak 500 mb steering currents, produced by a northward adjustment of the 500 mb ridge axis to 25N, provided an excellent environment for tropical cyclone development. Ellen was an interesting tropical cyclone from several viewpoints. During her existence, Ellen underwent rapid initial development, abruptly changed track at a low latitude, and followed a slow oscillatory motion for an 18 hour period.

Ellen's initial tropical disturbance became evident on satellite imagery between 111200Z and 120000Z. However, a Tropical Cyclone Formation Alert (TCFA) was not issued at that time because 120000Z synoptic data did not indicate a well-defined surface circulation with lowering surface pressures. A weakening of the satellite signature during the next 12 hours supported this decision. Between 121200Z and 121600Z, Ellen's satel-

lite signature improved markedly and a TCFA was issued. Aircraft reconnaissance at 130422Z confirmed Ellen's rapid development and estimated 45-50 kt (23-26 m/sec) maximum surface winds. The first warning was issued at 130600Z. Post-analysis indicates that Ellen reached tropical storm strength at 121800Z.

Ellen appeared to be following TY Dom's track across the Philippine Sea as she tracked initially west over Woleai Atoll and then west-northwestward toward Ulithi Atoll. On 15 May, Ellen abruptly turned to the north and was headed for Japan. By 150000Z, she was tracking north-northwestward at approximately 8 kt (15 km/hr) and had intensified to 65 kt (33 m/sec). At 170000Z, Ellen passed 220 nm (407 km) west of Guam with maximum sustained surface winds of 110 kt (57 m/sec). Figure 3-04-1 is satellite imagery during this period of Ellen's track.

After her abrupt turn, Typhoon Ellen's surface circulation followed a pronounced



FIGURE 3-04-1. Typhoon Ellen shortly after reaching typhoon intensity, 15 May 1980, 0054Z. (DMSP imagery)

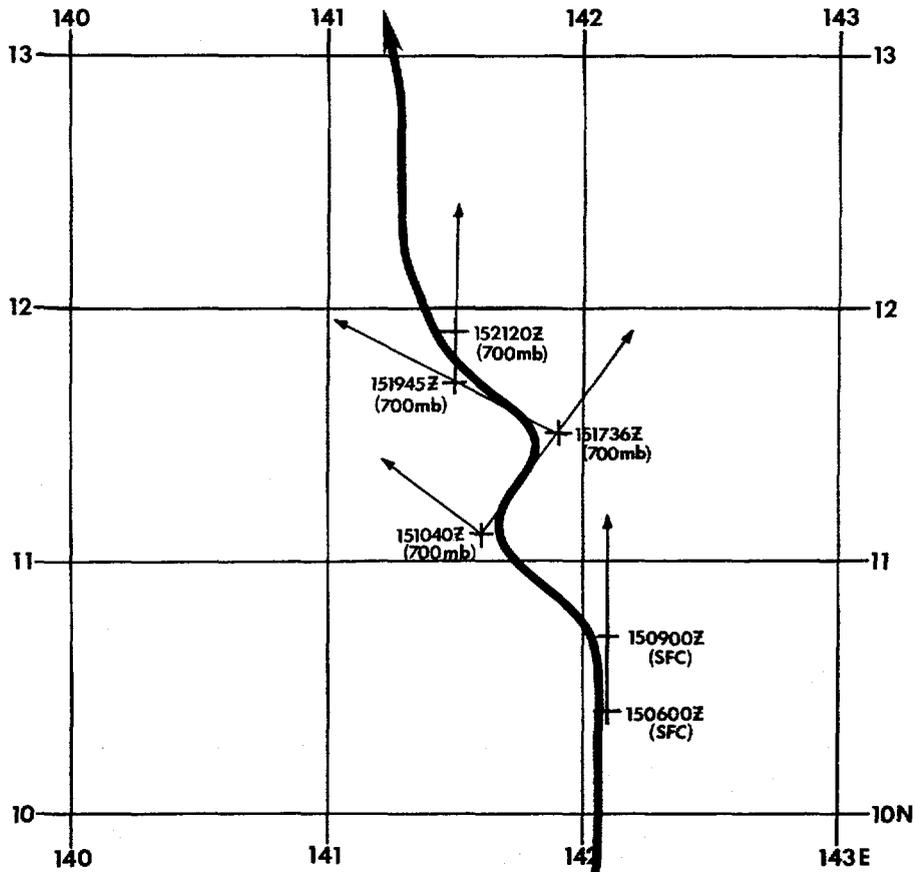


FIGURE 3-04-2. Typhoon Ellen's best track between 141800Z and 160600Z May 1980. Surface and 700 mb. positions observed by aircraft reconnaissance, and vectors between successive aircraft fixes, are shown.

oscillatory motion about a basic north-northwest track. Surface positions observed by aircraft reconnaissance and vectors between successive aircraft fixes during this period are illustrated in Figure 3-04-2. These short term oscillations were difficult to interpret and thus made forecasting Ellen's movement very difficult.

As Ellen was undergoing this oscillatory motion, aircraft reconnaissance also observed that the location of minimum sea level pressure appeared to rotate close to the wall cloud in a highly elliptical eye. During the same period, Ellen deepened to her lowest minimum sea level pressure of 931 mb and intensified an additional 45 kt (23 m/sec), reaching her maximum intensity of 110 kt (57 m/sec).

This oscillatory motion and uncertainty in the position and strength of the 500 mb subtropical ridge axis created a significant forecast problem. Forecasts of early recurvature to the northeast did not materialize as Ellen continued on a north-northwest track toward Japan. Once north of the ridge axis, Ellen recurved between 25N and 30N and accelerated northeastward at forward speeds in excess of 30 kt (56 km/hr). Following recurvature, Ellen weakened rapidly and merged with an extratropical low pressure system south of Honshu.

Ellen's actual track passed closer to Japan than originally forecast due to rapid deepening of a mid-latitude trough over Japan and rapid intensification of the subtropical ridge east of Japan. In response,

500 mb winds south of Japan backed in direction and strengthened, causing Ellen to accelerate northeastward and pass 120 nm (222 km) east of Yokosuka Naval Station, Japan (Fig. 3-04-3). Department of Defense resources in Japan reported no major damage, and Yokosuka only reported 20-25 kt (10-13 m/sec) sustained winds during the passage of Ellen. Flooding reported in Kyushu and Shikoku resulted from heavy rain produced by the extratropical low pressure system which eventually merged with Ellen south of Honshu.

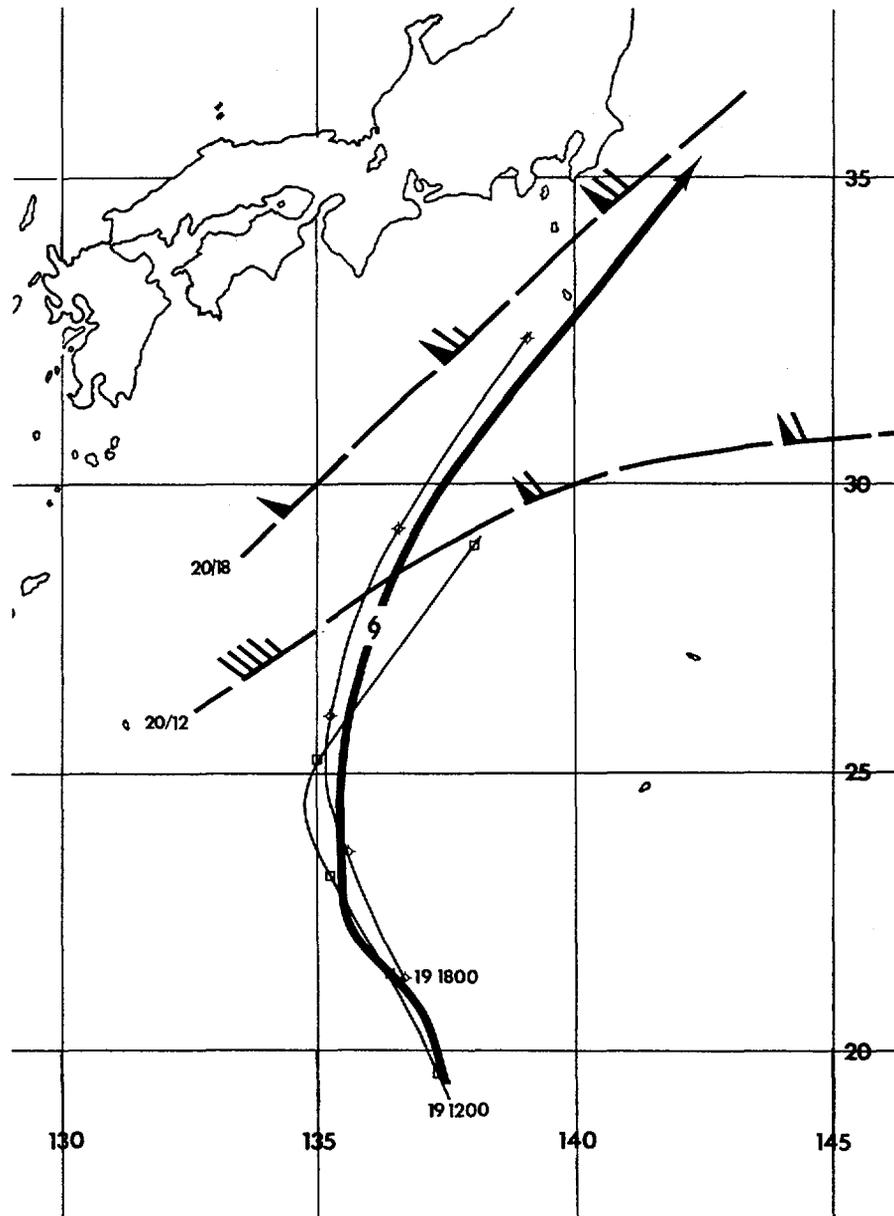


FIGURE 3-04-3. Forecast tracks for Typhoon Ellen from 191200Z and 191800Z data bases. Selected 24-hr forecast wind vectors at 500 mb for each data base are also illustrated, along with the final best track (—) for that period.