

No damage or casualties were sustained in either of these two attacks, apart from that caused to the radar arrays.

Meanwhile the fires in H.M.S. FORMIDABLE were soon under control, and by 1254 the ship was capable of 24 knots. It was estimated that one barrier would be in action by 1600, and that the flight deck hole would be patched by then.

At 1215 it became necessary to turn into the wind and land on fighters, although enemy aircraft were known to be still in the vicinity. Aircraft from H.M.S. FORMIDABLE were landed on the other carriers.

At 1220 a Jill* was shot down by fighters from H.M.S. INDOMITABLE and half an hour later a Val met the same fate by Seafires from H.M.S. INDEFATIGABLE. By 1420 the Bombarding Force was being manoeuvred close to the Carrier Force, and the Fleet reformed in Cruising Disposition at 1450.

As the strike programme planned for the day had been completed, and as considerable reorganisation was necessary with the flight deck of H.M.S. FORMIDABLE out of action, the Fleet commenced withdrawing to the south eastward. By 1700 H.M.S. FORMIDABLE was able to receive 13 of her Corsairs—a fine recovery.

At about 1515 Corsairs from H.M.S. VICTORIOUS intercepted and shot down a Judy to the northward.

Although at various times during the afternoon there were enemy aircraft in the vicinity, it was not until 1720 that the development of another attack became evident. This was however broken up very satisfactorily by our fighters. At 1721 a Judy, believed to be the Gestapo of the Group, was shot down from 24,000 feet to the eastward by fighters. A few minutes later Seafires from H.M.S. INDEFATIGABLE intercepted 4 Zekes to the southward and shot down 3 before the other escaped to the northward.

At 1732 a Hellcat returning for an emergency landing was fired on by H.M.S. FORMIDABLE and hit. The aircraft crashed but the pilot was rescued unhurt by H.M.S. UNDAUNTED.

At 1820 Corsairs from H.M.S. VICTORIOUS were sent to intercept a bogey to the northward. They found and shot down the Zeke.

At 1945 CTF 57 assumed tactical command. A total of 14 enemy aircraft, all airborne, were destroyed during the day, 11 by fighters, 2 shot down by gunfire including one which bounded off the deck of H.M.S. INDOMITABLE, and 1 originally damaged by gunfire but which completed its suicide dive on H.M.S. FORMIDABLE. Several small vessels around the islands were damaged. Our losses totalled 15. In combat 1 Avenger. Other causes: 11 Avengers, 1 Seafire, 1 Hellcat, 1 Corsair, including 1 Corsair and 10 Avengers by bomb damage in H.M.S. FORMIDABLE.

Tonnage of bombs dropped on targets—43½ tons plus 50 rocket projectiles.

5th May.

As the state of affairs in H.M.S. FORMIDABLE was not clear, the programme for the

day was arranged on the basis that the ship would keep 8 fighters at readiness to reinforce the CAP if required. At 0420 the ship reported that repairs to her centre boiler room were complete and that full speed was available.

A.C.1 assumed tactical command at 0500, and at 0545 the first CAP was flown off in position 23° 10' N 125° 29' E.

Runways on Miyako and Ishigaki were well bombed again, and all of them left unserviceable by the end of the day. A CAP was maintained over each island.

Three operational aircraft were found on the ground and destroyed, and a petrol dump was left blazing. It was noteworthy that no flak at all was encountered over Miyako, and it is hoped that the previous day's bombardment was responsible for this at least temporary change for the airmen.

The American Dumbo rescue aircraft was again maintained by CTF 51 between the Fleet and the target from 0830 till 1700.

A high snooper was detected at about 0730 and a long chase of 300 miles followed. This eventually finished at 0920 when Corsairs of H.M.S. FORMIDABLE, but operating from H.M.S. VICTORIOUS, splashed the Zeke 80 miles from the Fleet and from 30,000 feet—a good result.

During the day 2 Avengers escorted by fighters were sent to Keramo Retto with press material and Comdr. A. Kimmins, Royal Navy.

Enemy losses:

Destroyed—airborne 1, on ground 3; total 4.

Probably damaged—on ground 2.

Own losses:

In combat nil, operational 1 Corsair, 2 Seafires; total 3.

Tonnage of bombs dropped on targets—31 tons plus 56 R/P.

At 1905 the Fleet withdrew and set course for area Cootie. CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 1945.

6th May.

At 0630 met in area Cootie, H.M. and H.M.A. Ships CRANE, RULER, STRIKER, NAPIER, NORMAN, NEPAL, AVON, WHIMBREL, PHEASANT, and R.F.A.s WAVE KING, WAVE MONARCH, SAN AMBROSIO, SAN ADOLPHO, CEDARDALE.

H.M.A.S. NAPIER joined TF 57 vice H.M.S. KEMPENFELT with defects.

Fuelling from the tankers and exchange of aircraft with H.M.S. STRIKER continued throughout the day.

Casualties from H.M.S. FORMIDABLE were transferred to H.M.S. STRIKER, who in company with H.M.S. KEMPENFELT, took departure at 1915 for Leyte. The need for a hospital ship in the vicinity was considered and CTF 112 was requested to sail one as soon as ready if Admiralty instructions could by now be complied with. At 1534 CAP aircraft were sent to investigate a surface radar contact to the north eastward and identified a northbound U.S. armed merchant vessel in company with a U.S. hospital ship.

At 1845 the Fleet detached from the Tanker Group for the night.

U.S. Task Group 52.1 covered Sakishima.

Admiralty footnote :—

* Jill—Japanese naval torpedo-aircraft.