

While the normal practice of the American air-sea rescue aircraft is to remain at call, it was felt that should aircraft ditch late in the proceedings, so much time would be required to get the aircraft from its base 265 miles away that it might entail the Fleet being delayed unnecessarily whilst destroyers were searching somewhat blindly in unhealthy waters for the casualties. This request was at once agreed to and although Dumbo was only asked to be in attendance from 0830 to 1130 the reply was received that he was at our disposal until 1430.

It should be noted that air-sea rescue arrangements whether carried out by an aircraft or surface ship, again reduce the fighter strength of the Fleet since a small CAP must be provided for the ship or aircraft.

At 1203 in position $20^{\circ} 35' N$ $125^{\circ} 55' E$ the final signals were transmitted to Guam W/T for various authorities giving final details. At 1700 with the Fleet steering for its flying-off position I handed over tactical command to A.C.I. The operation was named "Iceberg Oolong."

11th April.

The Fleet arrived in flying-off position 30 miles 202 degrees from Yonakuni Shima at 0600. There was a fresh N.N.E. wind, a moderate sea and short swell. Cloud base was about 1,000 feet with intermittent rain and drizzle.

Course was reversed and in daylight it was soon apparent that conditions were unlikely to improve in the flying area during the day while weather reports showed that conditions over Matsuyama precluded any hope of attack. It was considered that a small fighter sweep coasting round North Formosa might find Shinchiku, but that their return journey would be a considerable gamble and surprise lost. Conditions were most unsuitable also for air-sea rescue. Operations were accordingly postponed 24 hours, and the Fleet continued to the south eastward.

At 1813 received Commander 5th Fleet's order to all Task Group Commanders to prepare for heavy enemy air attacks on 12th April. CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 2000. Course was reversed during the night to bring the Fleet to the flying-off position at dawn.

Task Force 58 reported being under heavy air attack all the afternoon, with the enemy showing a preference to commit suicide on the decks of radar pickets.

During the night I had informed Commander 5th Fleet of the postponement and that we strike Formosa on 12th and 13th April.

12th April.

The weather had improved considerably during the night. At 0530 A.C.I. assumed tactical command.

Enemy reconnaissance aircraft possibly detected the Fleet at 0555 and soon afterwards enemy air activity was detected to the northward. CAP was flown off at 0615 and at 0704 Seafires had an inconclusive encounter with four eastbound Zekes, one of which was shot down. The main strikes, each of 24 bombers and 20 fighters, were flown off at 0715

from position $23^{\circ} 58\frac{1}{2}' N$ $122^{\circ} 46' E$ and proceeded in company around the coast. Cloud prevented either strike going over the mountains.

One strike bombed Shinchiku airfields with delay fuzed bombs and attacked dispersals. There was flak but no airborne opposition. Due to cloud conditions over Matsuyama airfield the other strike attacked their alternative target Kiirun harbour where hits were observed on the chemical plant, dock area and shipping.

One flight investigated Matsuyama and found little activity. A nearby railway station and factory were attacked and one Tess was destroyed on the ground. A bridge over the river south of Matsuyama was destroyed and shipping at Tansui shot up.

Two Fireflies which had been sent to rendezvous with Dumbo aircraft at Yonakuni Shima shot down four out of five eastbound Sonias* at 0920 and damaged the other. As these aircraft had not been detected by radar, fighters were thereafter maintained over the island.

Corsairs attacked aircraft which had forced landed on Yonakuni Shima and set fire to a Sally.†

At 1135 a shadowing Dinah was chased by Corsairs, which, after releasing their drop tanks, caught and destroyed it.

At 1410 a Dinah escorted by two Oscars‡ escaped our fighters in cloud.

At 1530 Hellcats to the north westward of the Fleet shot down a Zeke.

In the evening the enemy made a sortie from Ishigaki, which was intercepted by fighters, no enemy getting within sight of the Fleet. Hellcats splashed four Oscars and two Tonies§ and damaged two. The Corsairs splashed one Val|| and one Oscar, and damaged one. One Hellcat was badly damaged in this engagement, the pilot being killed when making a forced landing.

During the day, except for the evening sortie and one shadower, all enemy air traffic appeared to have been between Formosa and Sakishima. Fighter Direction of our fighters during the day was well carried out, and some excellent interceptions were made. CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 2100.

The score for the day was:—

Enemy losses:

Destroyed—airborne 16, on ground 1; total 17.

Probably destroyed—on ground 1; total 1.

Damaged—airborne 2; total 2.

Own losses:

In combat 3, other causes 1; total 4.

After dark an enemy plane carried out an apparently unsuccessful box search for the Fleet, which had disengaged to the south eastward for the night.

It was evident from signals received that the enemy were engaging in very heavy air attacks on American forces in the Okinawa area, and

Admiralty footnotes:—

* Sonias—Japanese army light bombers.

† Sally—Japanese army bomber.

‡ Oscar—Japanese army fighter.

§ Tonies—Japanese army fighters.

|| Val—Japanese navy dive bomber.