

many of the events and remarks made in the enclosures but is designed to present an overall and brief picture.

2. The successful capture of Okinawa, as a stepping stone on the way to the overthrow of the Japanese Empire, was appreciated as of paramount importance, and it was in consequence a matter of great satisfaction to all in the two Forces, 57 and 112, that the former was able, in however small a degree, to draw a little of the enemy fire from those American Forces destined to bear the brunt of the attack in these initial stages of the operation. It is hoped that, by their efforts in this area, any major staging of Japanese aircraft to the critical scene of operations was impeded. The resources of the Rear-Admiral, Fleet Train Task Force 112 on which we depend for logistic support are in some matters still somewhat embryonic: I have reason to believe that he stretched them considerably to keep my Force operating.

3. Although the period under review was quiet and the enemy hard to find, those attacks which did develop gave us valuable experience and revealed several flaws in our organisation which diligence, time and additional resources will remedy. Accurate assessments of the damage inflicted by our strikes was often difficult to determine: this was in part due to the enemy's skilful use of dummy aircraft, camouflage and dispersal.

4. The difficulty of aircraft recognition when friendly and enemy planes are in the vicinity of the Fleet is an ever present problem: several proposals to obviate this confusion have been discussed, and, as remarked in the narrative, a solution to this appears of first importance. I trust we shall find one.

5. The attack by suicide aircraft on the Fleet demonstrates once again the importance of fighter interception being carried out at the maximum possible range.

6. It has been unusual, during my generation, for a British Fleet of this size to remain at sea for the length of time covered by this report and I had beforehand found myself wondering at times what shortcomings in personnel and material it would discover. Over the latter the necessary steps are in hand; as regards the former, whilst certain adjustments and additions to complement will be asked for, I am satisfied with the way in which the Fleet adapted itself to the new conditions.

7. This report, dealing as it does with an unfinished operation, is of an interim nature only. It will not, however, be out of place to remark on the helpfulness of the American authorities both at Manus and Ulithi; I trust we did not ask for their assistance until we were faced with problems which frankly seemed beyond us, but whenever we did so appeal it was responded to with the utmost vigour. I would further add that the Communication Liaison Teams in all ships have lived up to their name in its best sense, and I am very conscious both of the specialist help given me personally by the Senior Communication Officer in my Flagship, Lieutenant Commander R. F. Morris, U.S.N.R., as also in general by Captain E. C. Ewen, U.S.N. His knowledge and views have been most valuable.

8. I have yet to find a more helpful and responsive attitude than that accorded to me by

these American authorities responsible for the provision and movements of Lifeguard Submarines* and aircraft: I know too that what their units have accomplished is no less a source of pleasure to them than it is to us. I am very grateful for their work.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) BERNARD RAWLINGS,

Vice-Admiral.

*The Commander,
United States Fifth Fleet.*

INTRODUCTION TO NARRATIVE.

Allied Object.

1. The first objective of Operation "Iceberg" was to capture Okinawa Gunto and, gaining control of the Nansei Shoto area, use them to attack the main islands of Japan with their sea and air approaches.

B.P.F. Object.

2. The particular object assigned to the British Pacific Fleet was to neutralise the airfields in the Sakishima Gunto as continuously, and for as long as possible.

Assignment of B.P.F.

3. On 14th March, 1945, the British Pacific Fleet was situated as follows:—

Most of Task Force 113 (consisting of the 1st Battle Squadron, 1st Aircraft Carrier Squadron, 4th Cruiser Squadron, 25th, 4th and 27th Destroyer Flotillas) was at sea exercising from Manus, Admiralty Islands.

Task Force 112 (ships of the Fleet Train and Escort Vessels) was in harbour at Manus.

4. On the forenoon of 15th March, whilst 1st Battle Squadron and 1st Aircraft Carrier Squadron were exercising, the following signals were received:—

CTF 113 (R) CTF 112

From C.-in-C., B.P.F.

COMINCH† directs you to report Task Force 113 for duty "Iceberg" operations together with Task Force 112 to C.-in-C., Pacific.‡

TF 113 (R) TF 112

From C.-in-C., B.P.F.

TF 113 and 112 must be employed in such manner that they can be reallocated on 7 days' notice from COMINCH.

5. On receipt of these signals all exercises were cancelled and Task Force 113 ordered into harbour to top up with fuel, ammunition, stores, and to embark the aircraft squadrons which had been landed for training ashore. After considering all factors the following signal was despatched:—

C IN C PAC CTF 112 C.-in-C., B.P.F.

From CTF 113

Have recalled ships and am embarking air squadrons from sea and shore training exercises.

TF 113 and 112, in accordance with orders from C.-in-C., British Pacific Fleet, are hereby reported for duty. TF 113 with units of

Admiralty footnotes:—

* Lifeguard Submarines—submarines employed for rescue of crews of aircraft.

† COMINCH—C.-in-C., U.S. Fleets (Admiral King, U.S.N.).

‡ C.-in-C., Pacific—Admiral Nimitz, U.S.N.