

and loaded with bombs are flown off—to get in the way of the guns, and derange the strike programme—or to keep them on and rely on full avoiding action. The course of action selected has been based on the two factors—estimated time available and number of loaded aircraft on deck.

12. *Friendly aircraft shot down by fire from the Fleet.* One Seafire was shot down during a day attack and for this I could see little justification.

A Hellcat was shot down at first light. For this, although there are complementary reasons, I must accept full responsibility because I misjudged the enemy's intention, and flew off the Hellcats to attack two aircraft which I estimated then to be snoopers, but had in fact hostile intent and were upon us before one of the Hellcats was clear.

13. *Performance of Carriers.* The carriers have, I think, stood up well to, what is for us, so extended a period of operational duty in the course of which 2,429 operational sorties have been flown. The maintenance crews, whom it has never been possible to stand down on any day throughout the operation, have done their work well: the carriers, but for shortage of pilots, bombs and stores, would be good to continue operating: that this should be so reflects credit on their Commanding Officers:

Captain M. M. Denny, C.B., C.B.E., R.N.
—H.M.S. VICTORIOUS,

Captain Q. D. Graham, C.B.E., D.S.O.,
R.N.—H.M.S. INDEFATIGABLE,

Captain C. E. Lambe, C.B., C.V.O.,
R.N.—H.M.S. ILLUSTRIOUS,

Captain J. A. S. Eccles, R.N.—H.M.S.
INDOMITABLE,

Captain P. Ruck-Keene, C.B.E., R.N.—
H.M.S. FORMIDABLE.*

(*This ship was brought forward from Leyte at short notice to relieve H.M.S. ILLUSTRIOUS and has operated in an admirable manner in spite of having joined the Fleet without previous experience of existing practice.)

14. *Extension of First Operating Period.* In view of their necessities at Okinawa, and of the fact that Task Force 58 was in the field before us, it is a matter of great regret to me to have been unable to offer to continue to operate after the 20th April: having regard to the conditions set out above and to the fact that no replenishment fighter pilots have been available throughout the operation I have not felt, having regard to the future, that it was justifiable to do so: there is the consideration also that the sooner we return to replenish and relieve, the sooner we come forward.

15. I should say in conclusion that the enemy flak positions on Myako are unsubdued and continue to inflict casualties on our aircraft: the high explosive bombs with which we are provided have proved unsuitable for their reduction: it is believed that the positions might be neutralised by an area bombardment. Any such effort would be warmly appreciated by all our aircrews.

(Signed) PHILIP L. VIAN.
Rear Admiral.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 10th July, 1945, by Admiral Sir Bruce A. Fraser, G.C.B., K.B.E., Commander-in-Chief, British Pacific Fleet.

Office of the Commander-in-Chief,
British Pacific Fleet.
10th July, 1945.

REPORT ON OPERATION "ICEBERG."

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships a report on the second and last phase of Operation "Iceberg".

2. This covers the period from the 23rd April to 25th May, 1945, and is in continuation of my letter of 7th June, 1945.

3. I entirely endorse the remarks of the Vice-Admiral in paragraph 10 of his covering letter. The manner in which the ships of the First Aircraft Carrier Squadron remained in action, despite the damage sustained from "suicide" attacks, reflects the greatest credit on Vice-Admiral Sir Philip Vian and on the Commanding Officers and ships' companies of the aircraft carriers.

(Signed) BRUCE FRASER,
Admiral.

Office of the Vice-Admiral,
Second-in-Command,
British Pacific Fleet.
6th June, 1945.

SIR,

I have the honour to forward for your information and in continuation of my letter of 9th May, 1945, the attached narrative and report of proceedings of Task Force 57 during the second phase of Operation "Iceberg"; in so far as the British Pacific Fleet is concerned it terminates their contribution thereto.

2. The object throughout was to prevent the enemy making use of the airfields in the Sakishima Gunto group.

3. Over the whole period TF 57 was at sea for 62 days, broken by 8 days re-storing at Leyte, maintaining an intermittent neutralisation of these airfields by day. During its absence an American Task Group took over this duty and, in the later stages, aircraft based on Okinawa also took part. Whilst the latter's contribution is not known in detail their work at night was particularly welcome.

During this time the Task Force flew 4,852 sorties, dropped 875 tons of bombs and rocket projectiles, destroyed 100 enemy aircraft and damaged 70 others; various other targets such as shipping, W/T stations, etc., were also attacked. Our own losses were 33 aircraft from enemy action; in addition 92 were lost operationally.

4. Throughout the first phase of the "Iceberg" operation and in the early part of the second phase, the position from which the Force operated was not greatly changed, except on the occasion of attacking Formosa. Since it seemed possible that the enemy might be fixing the force in daylight by shore radar on the CAP, it was decided after the attack on 9th May, 1945, that it would be wiser to move the striking position further to the eastward, accepting the greater flying distance to Ishigaki. In the event, the Fleet was not seriously attacked after this was done.