

that Formosa-based planes were taking part. I came to the conclusion during the evening that we must contrive to remain for a further period; even if we could do little more than occasionally strike at the Sakishima Gunto we should anyhow provide an alternative target to take some of the weight. A.C.I. had evidently come to the same conclusion, for at 2113 he informed me that, in view of the very heavy air attacks being launched against American forces on and around Okinawa, he felt that our remaining aircraft and aircrews could manage a fifth operating period provided that our losses tomorrow should remain small. In the event, and as he points out in his report, the Formosa attack days acted as tonic. I therefore made the following signal:—

COM 5th Fleet (R) CTG 52.1 C.-in-C.,
B.P.F. C IN C PAC CTF 112 From CTF 57

In view of current situation expect to be ready further operations 16th-17th April. If Formosa weather bad tomorrow intend deal with Ishigaki and significant intercepted traffic between Sakishima and Formosa both ways.

13th April.

Task Force 51 covered Sakishima Gunto.

0530. A.C.I. assumed tactical command.

At 0550 four fighters were flown off. A bogey originally detected at 0540 developed into an ineffective raid by four Vals accompanied by a radar-fitted search plane probably performing the dual role of pilot plane and Gestapo. One Val dive bombed, but missed, H.M.S. *INDOMITABLE*. This aircraft switched on navigation lights and fired an incorrect recognition cartridge. It was engaged but probably not hit. A second was shot down by gunfire of the Fleet.

Unfortunately, gunfire also shot down one Hellcat which failed to clear the Fleet during the attack, and the pilot was killed.

At 0615 the CAP proper was flown off in position 23° 58.5' N 122° 46' E.

At 0640 a small group of bogeys was intercepted 25 miles to the north west of the Fleet; two Zekes were splashed by Corsairs and the remainder retired to the northward.

At 0645 Avenger strikes were flown to attack Matsuyama and Shinchiku airfields.

The weather over Matsuyama was fair, runways, barracks and dispersal points were successfully bombed, and a petrol or ammunition dump blown up. Few aircraft were seen on the airfield. Fighters shot up about 12 aircraft on Giran airfield without apparent result.

The other Avenger force bombed Shinchiku airfield through low cloud, hitting runway intersections and installations. No aircraft were lost in either of these strikes and there was no airborne opposition.

The Firefly CAP for the Dumbo attacked the suspected radar station on Yonakuni Shima with rockets and apparently destroyed it. When relieved, they also shot up luggers and small craft in the harbour close to Iriizaki.

After these bomber strikes were flown on, the Fleet disengaged to the south eastward to refuel.

At 1300 Hellcats intercepted 3 Zekes about 40 miles north of the Fleet, and Corsairs inter-

cepted a Dinah escorted by Tojos.* All the enemy aircraft escaped in cloud.

CTF assumed tactical command at 1945.

Enemy losses:

Destroyed—airborne 3.

Probably destroyed—on ground 5.

Probably damaged—on ground 1.

Own losses:

In combat 1.

It was with profound grief that Task Force 57 learned of the death of the President of the United States. A signal of sympathy was sent to CINCPAC on behalf of Task Forces 57 and 112.

At 1840 the following signal was received, and plans for a fifth operating period were made accordingly:—

CTF 57 From COM 5th Fleet

Cover Sakishima 16th and 17th unless other orders received in interim. Affirmative your message of 12th. Appreciate your co-operation and initiative.

14th April.

0630. Made contact with Task Unit 112.2.5 and Tanker Group consisting of 5 tankers in position Cootie One 21° 12' N 128° 44' E.

H.M. Ships *FORMIDABLE*, *KEMPENFELT* and *WESSEX* were also met and joined Task Force 57.

Fuelling was commenced in fine weather and proceeded with less delays than usual.

H.M.S. *ILLUSTRIOUS* was sailed for Leyte at 1755 screened by H.M. Ships *URANIA* and *QUALITY*.

As from today the United States Fleet was ordered to half mast colours, and I gave orders that British ships in harbour, or near thereto, should conform. Since United States ships do not, I understand, fly their colours in the operation areas and the half masting of our colours at sea in war is I believe only done when convoying or burying the deceased, the position was not clear as regards TF 57. I felt it fitting, however, and in keeping with what I knew to be the feeling of the Fleet for this great leader and sincere friend of the British Empire, to mark the occasion irrespective of precedent; therefore I ordered colours to be half masted for the last hour before sunset today.

The Fleet disengaged from the Tanker Force for the night.

15th April.

0730. The Fleet joined the Tanker Group, now consisting of three tankers; fuelling and general replenishing was completed by 1400, when TF 57 disengaged and took departure to cover the Sakishima area again. No supply of aircraft was available during this replenishment period.

16th April.

0530. A.C.I. assumed tactical command.

No picket cruiser was stationed owing to the shortage of fighter aircraft.

0600. The Fleet CAP was flown off in position 23° 28' N 125° 18' E, 17 minutes before sunrise and in excellent operating weather.

At 0622 an enemy snoopers at 20,000 feet escaped before the CAP had time to gain height.

Admiralty footnote:—

* Tojos—Japanese army fighters.