

2. On the other hand, attacks on airfields and dispersed aircraft are difficult and costly; the management of a group of airfields which are daily attacked from dawn to dusk do not display their wares. The bombers are exposed to flak concentrated in the area of attack throughout their bombing runs, whilst Ramrod sweeps are faced with dummy or unserviceable aircraft dispersed in revetments and other conspicuous places in centres of flak, whilst those serviceable are well camouflaged or concealed in woods.

The Japanese largely use smokeless, traceless and flashless ammunition; aircraft do not know they are being fired at until they are hit.

It has been a disability that cluster or fragmentation and incendiary bombs have not been available, as these would appear to be the type of missile required to destroy aircraft dispersed in the manner stated.

3. *Fighter Direction.* Whilst the number of aircraft shot down by the fighters is small, it represents, I think, a high proportion of those available for this treatment. Fighter direction, under the control and inspiration of Acting Commander E. D. G. Lewin, D.S.O., D.S.C., Royal Navy, making use of experienced teams in H.M. Ships *INDOMITABLE* and *VICTORIOUS*, has been of the highest order; the Staff Fighter Direction Officer, Fifth Fleet, Lieutenant-Commander H. A. Rowe, United States Navy, loaned for the operation, informs me that it has been as good as or better than the Fifth Fleet standard.

4. *Hellcats.* The operational efficiency of No. 5 Wing, trained and led by Acting Lieutenant-Commander (A) T. W. Harrington, R.N., has, throughout the whole course of the operation, been remarkable. Flying by day in all weathers and sometimes by night, I can recollect but one barrier crash, whilst their break-up from the landing circuit and speed of landing-on has been exceptional; whilst not so fast in the air as Corsairs, their tactical eminence has enabled them to account for their full share of what enemy aircraft have been available.

5. *Corsairs.* The Corsair Squadrons have done all that was asked of them and more, but they have not the same proved all-weather propositions for landing-on purposes as have Hellcats, and it is a grave disability that it is dangerous to land on unless their long-range tanks have been dropped or emptied. Nor can they be used for night flying.

In leading their squadrons the work of Temporary Acting Lieutenant-Commander (A) A. M. Tritton, R.N.V.R., No. 1830 Squadron, H.M.S. *ILLUSTRIOUS*, and Temporary Acting Lieutenant-Commander (A) C. C. Tomkinson, R.N.V.R. (since killed), No. 1836 Squadron, H.M.S. *VICTORIOUS*, has been outstanding.

6. *Seafires.* The Seafires have been used for CAP over the Fleet. Owing to their short endurance they have not been suitable for accompanying offensive strikes to the range at which these operations have been carried out.

7. *Fireflies.* It had been intended to use Fireflies against enemy coasters and coastal

vessels, but these have been painfully few; thus with the exception of occasional rocket sorties against particular targets, such as radar stations and junks, it has been necessary to relegate them to escort duties with Lifeguard submarines and Dumbo aircraft, and to flying Jack patrols. On the only occasion on which the chance of air combat presented itself, they lost no time at all; four Sonias out of five to the guns of two Fireflies.

Acting Major V. B. G. Cheesman, D.S.O., M.B.E., D.S.C., R.M., continues to lead this Squadron with distinction and address.

8. *Avengers.* Avengers have been employed throughout as bombers and have executed this task with success; their losses to flak have been relatively high; this I attribute firstly to the determination of their leaders in coming through cloud, which has frequently been at 2,000 feet, to discharge their load, and secondly to the invisibility of the enemy flak. Four hundred tons of high explosive bombs have been unloaded on enemy airfields and installations.

The service of Acting Lieutenant-Commander (A) D. R. Foster, R.N.V.R., H.M.S. *VICTORIOUS*, No. 849 Squadron, has been outstanding.

9. *Air Group Leaders.* The duties have been carried out by Commander N. S. Luard, D.S.C., R.N., H.M.S. *INDOMITABLE*, and Acting Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Hay, D.S.C., R.M., H.M.S. *VICTORIOUS*, in an able manner, particularly by the latter, and the appointments are, I think, justified. It has been their primary task to so direct the strike and fighter leaders that their offensive effort is aimed at the most profitable sections of the ordered target areas; and to redirect their effort if, for any reason, an alternative target of better value has been presented; it has been their secondary duty to make a reconnaissance each morning of the airfields and report the position of dispersed aircraft, advising me whether fighters should be sent to strafe or not.

10. *Air attack on the Fleet.* On those occasions on which hostile aircraft have penetrated the fighter defences of the Fleet the sky has been in general overcast, whilst there has been a longstop CAP essentially maintained over the Fleet under the cloud base.

There has never been a group at which to fire, not more in fact than a single aircraft; thus there has been little opportunity to use heavy artillery: gunfire has been in the main restricted to flak, and, as this is little deterred by alterations of course, and because the time between the enemy descending through the cloud base and his arrival onboard is small, it has been my practice, unless necessary to operate aircraft, to keep the Fleet almost continuously under rudder during such attacks. The U.S. Fleet, I understand, do the same.

11. *Operation of Aircraft under impending attack.* In face of the near certainty that if a hostile aircraft gets through it will hit a carrier, it has been a nice matter to decide on the chances of interception: if assessed as unfavourable, the choice has to be made between accepting the Fleet on a steady course in wind while aircraft on deck with full tanks