

The radar pickets, H.M. Ships SWIFT-SURE with KEMPENFELT, and UGANDA with WESSEX, were stationed 12 miles 315° and 225° respectively from the Fleet centre.

Cruising Disposition was formed.

In overcast weather the Fleet and island CAPS and the first bomber strike were flown off at 0540, twelve minutes before sunrise, from a position 23° 40' N 126° 51' E.

Four bomber strikes were flown off during the day. One attacked Ishigaki and three Miyako; a second strike on Ishigaki had been planned but had to be cancelled owing to weather conditions. At Ishigaki, Miyara and Ishigaki runways, which were found to be serviceable, were again put out of action and A.A. and dispersal areas were strafed. No new aircraft nor activity were found. The squadron leader of 1844 Squadron was regrettably lost in his Hellcat to A.A. fire when bombing A.A. positions.

At Miyako, one runway at Hirara and both at Nobara were found to be serviceable. By the end of the first strike this position was reversed, and subsequent strikes attacked A.A. positions and installations. A large oil fire was started, a direct hit made on a 4 in. A.A. Battery, Hirara Barracks hit, and 3 aircraft found on the ground were probably damaged.

An Avenger with engine trouble ditched 75 miles west of the Fleet at 0805. The U.S.S. BLUEFISH proceeded to the position (in the Air Surface Zone), and at 1515 rescued the crew. A CAP of four Corsairs was sent to cover the submarine. The Dumbo aircraft, maintained in readiness at Keramo Retto, took off and also assisted in directing this rescue.

At 0937 another Avenger was forced to ditch, giving a position 100 miles in error from the actual position. The helio flashing of the crew at 1540 was fortunately seen by Fireflies returning to the Fleet, and H.M.S. KEMPENFELT was led to the spot by Dumbo aircraft and rescued them.

No enemy aircraft were airborne in the vicinity of the Fleet or islands during the day.

At 1915 the radar pickets rejoined. At 1930 the dusk CAP was landed on and the Fleet withdrew to the southward for the night.

CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 2010.

The score for the day was:—

3 enemy aircraft probably damaged on the ground.

65½ tons of bombs and 32 R/P directed at targets.

A 200 ton coaster damaged.

Own losses:—in combat 1 Hellcat, 1 Avenger; operationally 1 Avenger, 1 Corsair, 1 Seafire; total 5.

13th May.

At 0510 A.C.1 assumed tactical command.

Radar pickets and counter-Kamikaze destroyers were stationed, and at 0540 Fleet and Islands CAPS were flown off in position 24° 20' N 126° 55' E in fine weather.

The island CAPS reported that Ishigaki runways were again serviceable and a thin strip of Miyara runway had been repaired. At Miyako one runway at Hirara and both at Nobara had been made possibly serviceable.

Four bomber strikes were flown during the day, three to Miyako and one to Ishigaki.

At Miyako all runways were left unserviceable, a barracks was strafed, 8 barges were hit, and 3 major oil fires started.

The position of a new revetted dispersal area discovered at Hirara was reported to the Commander 5th Fleet and other interested U.S. authorities.

At Ishigaki camouflaged buildings and storage dumps were hit, as were two radio stations one of which was left in flames.

At 0948 a possible submarine contact was obtained close to the Fleet in position 24° 20' N 126° 48' E. Three destroyers were detached to hunt with a CAP of 4 Corsairs.

At 1203 a possible contact was attacked with depth charges, and 2 Avengers were flown off for Fleet ASP, and another armed with depth charges was sent to assist the hunt. The possible contact was later reported as stationary, and although the hunt was continued throughout the afternoon no S/M contact was found, nor is it now considered that a S/M was ever present.

An Avenger returning to land on H.M.S. FORMIDABLE was unable to lower flaps and one wheel. As it was undesirable to risk damage to the only remaining barrier in H.M.S. FORMIDABLE, the aircraft was ordered to land on H.M.S. INDOMITABLE. This the pilot did with skill and judgment and with very minor damage to his aircraft.

Again there was no enemy air activity near the Fleet or islands.

At 1920 the dusk CAP was landed on and the Fleet withdrew to fuel in area Cootie.

CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 1950.

The score for the day was:—

Enemy aircraft destroyed and damaged, nil.

62½ tons bombs plus 34 R/P directed at targets.

9 camouflaged barges and a few small craft damaged.

Own losses:—in combat nil; operationally 1 Seafire.

14th May.

At 0630 in area Cootie met H.M. Ships RULER, CRANE, WOODCOCK, PHEASANT, WEASEL and R.F.A.s ARNDALE and DINGLEDALE from whom fuelling commenced. The other and incoming Tanker Group were late at the rendezvous. They were found by search aircraft from the CAP and directed to the Fleet and consisted of H.M. Ships STRIKER, NIZAM and R.F.A.s WAVE KING and WAVE MONARCH. They were in station by 1100.

Forty tons of bombs were transferred by H.M.S. BLACK PRINCE from H.M.S. FORMIDABLE to H.M.S. INDEFATIGABLE. This was necessary because the dimensions of American bombs supplied to ships at Leyte had prevented the full number required being stowed in H.M.S. INDEFATIGABLE. This transfer was made expeditiously, rate of embarkation rising to about one a minute as experience was gained.