

This matter of differentiating between our own aircraft and the enemy becomes daily of more importance. With the suicide attack and, as is inevitable, with our own fighters pursuing the enemy right on to the Fleet's guns there is only a matter of seconds in which to act. Presented at certain angles there is very little difference between the suicide-equipped Japanese single-engined aircraft and some of our own fighters. On the other hand the means of controlling, particularly of stopping, the fire of the innumerable small guns that are now scattered about ships, often with poor communications, makes the problem difficult.

At dusk the Fleet disengaged to the south eastward and CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

2nd April.

It was evident from experience the day before that the Japanese had started staging into the Sakishima airfields and it was therefore decided to cancel the planned bombardment in favour of air operations.

The absence of enemy activity noticed by the first fighter sweep the previous day made it appear likely that the enemy might be leaving the airfields at first light. In consequence two aircraft from H.M.S. *INDOMITABLE*, having been flown off by moonlight, were sent to Ishigaki at 0510. Two other aircraft flown off at the same time and destined for Miyako were unable to proceed owing to radio failures. No activity was reported from Ishigaki.

At 0630 from a flying-off position 23° 12' N 126° 02' E a fighter *Ramrod* left to attack all airfields before the Fleet withdrew. Little activity was noticed, but one airborne *Zeke** was shot down over Ishigaki by *Hellcats*.

After landing on the fighter *Ramrod* at 1045 the Fleet withdrew to fuelling area Midge, maintaining a CAP of 12 aircraft until dark.

It was very disappointing to have to cancel the bombardment again, for although in so far as cratering, etc., is concerned, the large bombs of the aircraft are the more effective, I particularly wished to bombard for the sake of the personnel concerned: many of these are very young and untried.

Once however enemy aircraft begin staging through or operating from an aerodrome the most profitable means of destroying them is by air and not by guns.

At 1450 H.M.S. *ILLUSTRIOUS* reported man overboard. Fighters of the CAP and destroyers were sent to search and the Fleet was turned 360° for a period. Unfortunately the man was not recovered.

CTF 57 resumed tactical command.

During the period 23rd March to 2nd April inclusive our losses of aircraft were 25, compared to 47 enemy destroyed or probably destroyed and 38 damaged on the ground. Enemy vessels sunk and damaged were—1 lugger sunk, 13 other small vessels probably sunk, and over 40 small craft damaged.

3rd April

0630. There was no sign of the Tanker Group in rendezvous position Midge One 19° 12' N. 128° 00' E. Weather: heavy N.E. swell, wind

north force 5.* Spread H.M. Ships *SWIFT-SURE*, *ARGONAUT* and *EURYALUS* to carry out search.

0900. Made W/T contact with Tanker Group.

1320. Met Task Units 112.2.5 and 112.2.2.

Weather and cross swell were too heavy to attempt fuelling. The Fleet remained in the area throughout the day, but towards the evening meteorological information suggesting more suitable weather to the westward, the Fleet with the tankers turned west to area Mosquito.

An American Task Group of TF 58 was ordered to cover Sakishima Gunto during 3rd April.

4th April.

0630. Task Unit 112.2.3 from Leyte joined the Tanker Group making 5 tankers from which to fuel.

0730. Commenced refuelling the Fleet and transferring stores and aircraft in a heavy N.N.E. swell in position Mosquito One 19° 37' N 124° 42' E.

1920. The Fleet disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

An American Task Group of TF 58 was ordered to cover Sakishima Gunto during the 4th April.

5th April.

0630. Recommenced refuelling the Fleet in position Mosquito One, the weather conditions for fuelling having considerably improved. Transferred Captain E. C. Ewen, U.S.N., Senior U.S.N. Liaison Officer, from H.M.S. *INDOMITABLE* to H.M.S. *KING GEORGE V*.

1930. The Fleet having disengaged from the Tanker Group, set course at 20 knots for the operational area. Owing to the numerous delays in fuelling, the two battleships had to proceed nearly 50 per cent. short of their full stowage and aircraft carriers had been able to embark only sufficient Avgas for the forthcoming two days' operation.

I judged it essential to leave with these shortages in order to be back at the time promised. I do not like battleships steaming about short of fuel for although they should have enough oil for the operation as planned, it leaves little in hand to meet any change of programme, and if a ship short of fuel received underwater damage her position might become embarrassing.

A.C.I assumed tactical command.

An American Task Group of TF 58 was ordered to cover Sakishima Gunto during 5th April, 1945.

6th April.

0450. Four fighters were flown off H.M.S. *INDOMITABLE*, two each to Miyako and Ishigaki airfields to attack any enemy aircraft taking off at dawn but early reports from these planes indicated little or no activity in the islands. Heavy low cloud over the islands impeded operations, but eight aircraft not previously noticed at Ishigaki were attacked with apparent result.

0530. H.M. Ships *ARGONAUT* and *URANIA* with a CAP were detached to act as picket to the north westward.

Admiralty footnote:—

* *Zeke*—Japanese naval fighter.

Admiralty footnote:—

* Wind force 5—fresh breeze, 16–20 knots.