

My signal informing Commander 5th Fleet that Task Force 57 would be available to strike again on 20th April was approved by him. The following signal from CINCPAC was also received:—

CTF 57 (R) 5th Fleet C.-in-C., B.P.F.
From: CINCPAC

It was gratifying to note your message of 16th to COM 5th Fleet. Your Force is always ready to make still greater efforts whenever there is an opportunity to hit the enemy. Appreciate your offer which is traditional of British Navy.

At 1945 CTF 57 assumed tactical command and the Fleet withdrew to fuel in area Mosquito.

18th April.

0630. Commenced fuelling from Tanker Group of 5 tankers in area Mosquito. Also met Captain D.7 in NAPIER with NORMAN and NEPAL, all of whom joined Task Force 57, and UNDAUNTED who rejoined her Flotilla. Mails, stores, and correspondence were transferred but no replenishment aircraft were available; owing to the extension of operation programme none had been expected. By dusk the Fleet had completed fuelling and disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

Three of the five tankers, with Captain Escort Forces in PHEASANT, were detached and sailed for Leyte.

19th April.

0730. The Fleet rejoined the remaining two tankers and destroyers topped up with fuel. This second day in replenishing area was necessary in order to rest aircrews and for maintenance work on aircraft.

At 1300 the Fleet disengaged and took departure for the Sakishima area, leaving Captain D.27 in KEMPENFELT in the fuelling area with 2 tankers, SPEAKER, WOODCOCK and FINDHORN, with orders to proceed to Leyte at dawn on 21st April.

20th April.

At 0520 A.C.1 assumed tactical command. CAP was flown off at 0555 in position 23° 33' N 125° 02' E. The plan for the day followed generally the pattern of previous strikes, namely to crater the runways on all Myako and Ishigaki airfields and to maintain a CAP over them to prevent repair work, destroying any enemy airborne, and to strafe any grounded planes. In addition, 2 strikes by rocket-firing Fireflies were ordered to attack coastal shipping and ground installations.

Four bomber strikes were sent in, and found that most craters had been filled in on runways at both islands. By the end of the day all airfield runways on both islands were left unserviceable, with the exception of those at Hirara (Myako) which were only partially cratered.

There was no enemy airborne opposition over the islands and none came near the Fleet. The several bogeys detected during the day were all found to be friendly search planes when intercepted. A lugger and some junks were rocketted and left burning, as were a possible radar station and barracks.

This was not a very fruitful day. One Avenger reported ditching 10 miles south of Ishigaki. The position was searched all the afternoon and evening without success, but the

survivors were fortunately rescued the following afternoon by U.S. Naval Mariner.

The score for the day was:

Enemy losses:

Damaged on ground 1.

Own losses:

In combat 1.

At 1910 the Fleet set course for Leyte, having completed 12 strike days out of 26 days between first and last strikes. CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 1930.

21st April.

H.M.S. CRANE was despatched to overtake the Tanker Group who were on their way to Leyte, to relieve H.M.S. KEMPENFELT, who was ordered to proceed at best speed to Leyte.

22nd April.

During the day, and taking advantage of the presence of Chief Staff Officer to C.-in-C., B.P.F. on board H.M.S. KING GEORGE V, Rear Admiral E. J. P. Brind, C.B., C.B.E. (Flag Officer Commanding, 4th Cruiser Squadron), and Captain J. P. Wright, D.S.O. (C.S.O. to A.C.1), were transferred by destroyer to the Fleet Flagship for conferences. C.S.4 in H.M.S. SWIFTSURE was detached at 2000 with H.M. Ships GAMBIA, UGANDA and EURYALUS to proceed ahead to Leyte. Paravanes were streamed at 1700.

23rd April.

At 0700 the Fleet formed into two groups for proceeding up Leyte Gulf.

1030. Entered the searched channel and recovered paravanes at 1115.

The Fleet was brought to anchor at 1245 in San Pedro Bay, reasonably close to the ships of the Fleet Train.

During the period under review the following aircraft losses were inflicted on the enemy and suffered by TF 57:—

Enemy aircraft:

Destroyed—in air 33, on ground 38.

(Includes 2 splashed by ships' guns and 3 suiciders.)

Damaged—in air 2, on ground 50.

Own aircraft:

Losses due to enemy action 19.

Action casualties:

Pilots 16, aircrews 13.

Office of Flag Officer Commanding,

1st Aircraft Carrier Squadron,

British Pacific Fleet.

26th April, 1945.

The operations now concluded have cost us 59 aircraft against which we have to set 30 enemy aircraft shot down by fighters, 3 Kamikases* self-destroyed, and 97 destroyed or damaged on the ground; of the latter total, some few may have been non-operational or dummies.

This is an unremunerative return, but the operation was one which offered little opportunity of effecting high losses on the enemy.

Airborne opposition in the target areas—there was none, whilst airborne attack was confined to small groups of Kamikase, who split up 30 or 40 miles from the Fleet and in their approach through cloud formed difficult targets, either for fighter interception or for gunfire.

Admiralty footnote:—

* Kamikase—Japanese "suicide" aircraft.