

informed by C.-in-C., B.P.F., that alternative employment for the Fleet in the immediate future was under consideration as follows:—

(a) Continuation of Operation "Iceberg" as already planned.

(b) Withdrawal from "Iceberg" and engagement on an operation in Borneo with target date of leaving Leyte approximately 15th May. C.-in-C. signals made the latter appear the most probable. On 27th April a signal was received from C.-in-C. making it clear that the Fleet would not participate in the Borneo operation and C.-in-C., Pacific in a signal informed me that we should continue with Operation "Iceberg." This was very satisfactory.

In my signal I had informed Commander 5th Fleet of my intention and ability, unless otherwise ordered, to proceed from Leyte with TF 57 on 1st May to continue the neutralisation of Sakishima Gunto for a period of from three to four weeks before requiring to withdraw for major replenishment. Operations were planned for a cycle of two days of strikes followed by two for replenishment, the first strikes to be carried out on 4th and 5th May.

By the evening of 30th April the replenishment of the Fleet was completed, thanks to the energy and foresight of the Rear Admiral Commanding Fleet Train, and those under him, the arrangements made by the Rear Admiral Commanding Destroyers greatly contributing. The Tanker Group, to top up the Fleet on their passage north, sailed from Leyte at 0700 on 30th April. H.M.S. QUILLIAM from Australia joined TF 57 on 28th April.

1st May.

Task Force 57 sailed from Leyte in groups at 0630 and consisted of the following ships:—

1st Battle Squadron

KING GEORGE V (Flag of CTF 57—B.S.1),
HOWE;

1st Carrier Squadron

INDOMITABLE (Flag of 2nd-in-Command TF 57—A.C.1),
VICTORIOUS,
FORMIDABLE,
INDEFATIGABLE;

4th Cruiser Squadron

SWIFTSURE (Flag of C.S.4),
UGANDA,
GAMBIA,
EURYALUS,
BLACK PRINCE;

25th Destroyer Flotilla

GRENVILLE (Capt. D.25),
URSA,
UNDINE,
URCHIN,
URANIA,
UNDAUNTED;

4th Destroyer Flotilla

QUILLIAM (Capt. D.4),
QUEENBOROUGH,
QUIBERON,
QUICKMATCH,
QUALITY;

27th Destroyer Flotilla

KEMPENFELT (Capt. D.27),
WHIRLWIND,
WESSEX.

The 7th Destroyer Flotilla, consisting of H.M. Ships NAPIER (Capt. D.7), NEPAL, NORMAN and NIZAM were, for the initial stages of the operation, assigned to Task Force 112 for duty as escorts with the Tanker Groups.

H.M. Ships ILLUSTRIOUS, ARGONAUT, WAGER and WHELP remained at Leyte to sail on 4th May for Sydney and refit. H.M.S. ARGONAUT was left with orders to put into Lae, New Guinea, on her way south.

H.M.S. ULSTER with bomb damage remained at Leyte having damage made good sufficient for her to proceed to another port for major repairs.

2nd May.

At 1730 CTF 57 assumed tactical command.

3rd May.

At 0600 made rendezvous in position Mosquito (1) with the Commander, Logistic Support Group in H.M.S. CRANE, H.M. Ships AVON and WHIMBREL and R.F.A.s SAN AMBROSIO, SAN ADOLPHO and CEDARDALE.

All cruisers and destroyers topped up with fuel.

UGANDA, whilst casting off from her tanker, inadvertently lay back on one oil hose, which parted and fouled a propeller. This she was able to clear by the use of shallow water divers. By 1530 fuelling was completed. The Fleet took departure for the operations area and the Tanker Group for area Cootie.

The plan for the opening of operations was:—

(a) To make airfields of the Sakishima Gunto unserviceable by bombing runways and air installations.

(b) To conduct an offensive against flak positions and to assist in cratering runways by ship bombardment.

(c) To maintain an offensive CAP over the islands.

The particular plan for the first day was for the bombarding force to bombard Miyako airfields and flak positions at about noon, from medium range, with the Carrier Force about 30 miles to the southward.

4th May.

At 0500 A.C.1 assumed tactical command. Clouds were about 9/10 at 6,000 feet when the CAP was flown off at 0540 in position 23° 44' N 125° 11' E.

Ten minutes later enemy air activity in the vicinity of Sakishima was detected, the general trend of traffic being to the eastward. One small group approached the Fleet and Hellcats shot down one Zeke before the others escaped in cloud.

Bomber strikes were flown off at 0605 for Miyako and at 0815 for Ishigaki.

At Miyako the weather was good, visibility excellent and 1/10 cloud at 3,000 feet. Repair work on the airfields had apparently been proceeding by night since the day strikes by TF 52. All A.A. batteries opened fire on our aircraft. Runways at Hirara were well bombed and a direct hit on an A.A. position observed. Conditions for bombardment appeared good.

At Ishigaki one runway of Miyara airfield was found serviceable and left well cratered.

At 0800 the Dumbo aircraft provided by CTF 51 arrived, and was stationed between the target and the Carrier Force until 1700.