

The Ishigaki strikes took off at 0855 and 1440. Both runways at Ishigaki field were left unserviceable and Miyara airfield was hit.

Low cloud varying between 7/10 and 9/10 made bombing difficult at both islands.

At 1423 a high snooper was detected approaching the Fleet from the westward. Fighters were ordered to 30,000 feet and at 1442 intercepted 36 miles to the south westward at 26,000 feet. The enemy, a Myrt, was shot down 4 minutes later by Hellcats from H.M.S. *INDOMITABLE*.

One airborne enemy aircraft was shot down. Several barges were damaged.

55½ tons of bombs plus 95 R/P were dropped on targets.

Own losses:—in combat nil; operationally 1 Avenger and 2 Seafires.

During the day Commander Third Fleet's signal was received. This indicated the nature of future operations for the British Pacific Fleet. In the light of this, and after consulting A.C.I., it was decided to release H.M.S. *FORMIDABLE* early for repair of battle damage. It was felt that this was necessary to ensure that 4 carriers would be available for operations on completion of the forthcoming storing period. This decision was communicated to Commander Fifth Fleet.

At 1930 the dusk CAP were landed on, radar pickets were recalled, and the Fleet withdrew to area Cootie. CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 1930.

22nd May.

At 0700 in position Cootie (1) the following were met:—

(a) H.M. Tug *WEASEL* towing H.M.S. *QUILLIAM* escorted by H.M. Ships *BLACK PRINCE*, *GRENVILLE*, *NORMAN* and *RULER*.

(b) Ships of the Fleet Train consisting of H.M. and H.M.A. Ships *CRANE*, *CHASER*, *SPEAKER*, *NAPIER*, *AVON* and *FINDHORN*, and R.F.A.s *WAVE KING*, *WAVE MONARCH*, *AASE MAERSK*, *SAN AMADO*, *ROBERT MAERSK*.

(c) Reinforcements H.M. Ships *QUADRANT* and *TERMAGENT* who joined TF 57.

Captain D. 25 in H.M.S. *GRENVILLE* rejoined TF 57 as Senior Officer Destroyers, and H.M.S. *WESSEX* took her place as escort to TU 112.2.5.

Fuelling, and exchange of aircraft and stores and bombs, were carried out throughout the day.

After receiving mails and discharging excess complement the damaged H.M.S. *QUILLIAM* proceeded in tow of H.M. Tug *WEASEL* to Leyte, H.M.A.S. *NORMAN* acting as escort. CTF 112 was requested to arrange for a larger tug to meet and relieve H.M.S. *WEASEL*. (The American tug *TURKEY* was kindly sent out from Leyte, where the tow arrived safely on 28th May.)

At 1800 H.M.S. *FORMIDABLE* was detached with orders to proceed to Manus and then Sydney to expedite repair of battle damage. She was escorted by H.M. Ships *KEMPENFELT* and *WHIRLWIND*, both of whom were due for refit.

American Task Unit 52.1.3 covered Saki-shima on this day.

At 1915 the Fleet disengaged from the Tanker Group for the night.

23rd May.

At 0745 the Fleet reformed on the Tanker Group, and fuelling and exchange of stores were continued.

H.M.N.Z.S. *ACHILLES* joined TF 57.

During the day 2 Hellcats from H.M.S. *CHASER* crashed into the sea: neither pilot was recovered.

Owing to the plummer block on the centre shaft overheating and wiping in H.M.S. *INDOMITABLE*, her speed had to be limited to 22 knots.

Sakishima was covered by American Task Unit 52.1.3.

At 1800 H.M. and H.M.A. Ships *CHASER*, *SPEAKER* and *NAPIER* were detached for Manus.

At 1815 the Fleet detached from the Tanker Group taking departure for the operations area with only 3 carriers in company. It had been hoped to bombard Miyako on the morrow, but with the reduced number of aircraft available it was judged wiser to forego this plan in favour of an entire air effort.

24th May.

At 0510 A.C.I. assumed tactical command.

In view of the absence of H.M.S. *FORMIDABLE*, it was planned to send in only 4 strikes each day, the first to be flown off 2 hours later than normal so as to provide late afternoon strikes as desired by CTF 51.

At dawn visibility was low, the sky overcast with rain and drizzle. Flying-off was postponed. At 0900 four fighters flown off reported weather improving slowly in the vicinity, and at 1000 it was decided to make 3 strikes during the day, the flying-off position being 23° 40' N 126° 52' E.

Strikes on Miyako were flown off at 1045 and 1515. Cloud over the target was 10/10 at 6,000 to 9,000 feet. Nobara runways were left unserviceable and Hirara runways were hit. Hirara town and Nishibara were hit by 12 and 4 bombs respectively. A radio station was rocketted, as were camouflaged buildings in the wooded area near Hirara where one large explosion was observed.

The Ishigaki strike took off at 1245. All runways at Ishigaki airfield were left unserviceable. Three hits with 1,600 lb. bombs were observed on a suspected aircraft storage in a low cliff on the north side of Ishigaki east-west runway. The CAP over Ishigaki found on the ground and probably damaged 2 aircraft believed to be operational.

After a day with no enemy air activity in the vicinity the last CAP was landed on at 1907 and radar pickets were recalled. The Fleet withdrew to the southward for the night, and CTF 57 assumed tactical command at 1940.

2 enemy aircraft were probably damaged on the ground. 31 tons of bombs plus 40 R/P were dropped on targets. Own losses nil.