

18. A summary of the aircraft attacks on Force Z follows:—

(1) *Preliminary.*

Force Z course 095° speed 20 knots, destroyers in S.D.3 * Ships in first degree of A-A readiness

Aircraft detected by R.D.F.,† sighted 1100, Blue 135°‡ executed.

Speed increased to 25 knots during first attack.

(ii) *Attack A. (1118)*

9 H.L. § Bombers at 10,000 feet in tight line abreast formation attacked REPULSE from ahead, dropping one bomb each simultaneously. One hit on port hangar (entry hole 15in. diameter), bursting on armoured deck below Marines' mess deck, one near miss starboard side abreast B turret, remainder close on port side.

No serious damage.

(iii) *Attack B. (1144)*

9 T/Bs|| attacked PRINCE OF WALES on port side. Ship turned towards but was hit by one torpedo¶ abreast P.3 and 4 turrets.

Ship listed 13° to port and speed dropped to 15 knots. Both port shafts out of action, steering gear failed and ship was never again under complete control.

Five 5.25 inch turrets out of action temporarily owing to power failure and/or list.

Two aircraft shot down, falling on disengaged side, one other possibly damaged.

(iv) *Attack C. (1156)*

8 or 9 T/Bs attacked REPULSE on port side. Ship turned towards and was successful in combing the tracks.

(v) *Attack D (1158)*

H.L.B.** attack on REPULSE.

No hits, but near.

REPULSE made emergency report of the attack.

(vi) *Attack E. (1222)*

T/B attack by 9 aircraft, in two groups. 6 came in slightly first on the starboard side and fired at PRINCE OF WALES who was incapable of taking avoiding action and was hit three times on starboard side:—

(a) Near stem.

(b) Abreast B turret.

(c) Aft.

List was reduced to 3° and speed dropped to 8 knots.

One aircraft was shot down.

REPULSE was committed to turning to starboard when three aircraft attacked her from the port side, scoring one hit amidships. The ship stood this hit well, continuing to manoeuvre at 25 knots.

(vii) *Attack F. (1225)*

9 T/Bs attacked REPULSE from various directions First hit abreast gunroom (port

side) jammed rudder, putting ship out of control. Three further hits, one port side aft (wardroom bathroom), one abreast port engine room and one starboard side of E boiler room.

Ship listed to port, capsizing and sinking at 1235, position 3° 45' N. 104° 24' E

Two aircraft shot down.

ELECTRA and VAMPIRE picked up survivors.

(viii) *Attack G. (1246)*

9 H.L. Bombers attacked PRINCE OF WALES. One hit near S 3 turret, bursting on Main Deck, and near misses both sides aft. Speed 6 knots. EXPRESS went alongside starboard side at 1305 and got clear as PRINCE OF WALES capsized to port and sank at 1320 in position 3° 36' N. 104° 28' E.

(ix) *Summary*

PRINCE OF WALES hit by four (possibly five) torpedoes and one bomb.

REPULSE hit by 5 torpedoes and one bomb.

Aircraft shot down—about 8.

19. When information was received at Singapore at 1204 that Force Z was being attacked by aircraft, the fighter squadron which was standing by at Kallang was immediately despatched. Six Buffaloes took off at 1215 and arrived on the scene of action just as the PRINCE OF WALES was sinking and when all enemy aircraft had taken their departure.

Destroyers, having made a thorough search for survivors, returned to Singapore, arriving between 2310 and 2400.

20. *Japanese aircraft.*

(a) The T/Bs were twin engined monoplanes (Naval type 96) and it is probable that H.L.B.s were the same, viz. shore-based aircraft.

(b) Four T/B squadrons each of 9 aircraft were used. Three H.L.B. attacks were made, possibly all by the same squadron.

(c) Torpedoes were dropped at ranges between 1,000 and 2,000 yards and at a height noticeably greater than we do. Torpedoes ran very straight and the tracks were readily visible. There is no indication that the pistols were other than contact.

(d) The get-aways appeared clumsy, doubtless partly due to the heavy aircraft. In many cases they continued across the line of advance quite close to their targets. Some opened fire with their machine guns.

(e) No attempt was made to interfere with the rescue of survivors.

INITIAL REPORT BY CAPTAIN
W. G. TENNANT, C.B., M.V.O., R.N.

To:—Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet.

From:—Captain W. Tennant (late of H.M.S. REPULSE).

Date:—11th December, 1941.

1. In the sinking of H.M.S. REPULSE I deeply regret to report the loss of 27 officers and 486 men. The survivors number 42 officers and 754 men.

Admiralty footnotes —

* S D 3—an anti-submarine screen formation

† R D F—radar

‡ Blue 135°—ships ordered to turn together to course 135°

§ H L—high level

|| T/Bs—torpedo bombers

¶ Subsequent investigation has established the fact that PRINCE OF WALES was struck at this time by two torpedoes simultaneously

** H.L.B.—high level bombing.