

By VMSB-241: Initial reports were confusing but indicated that one carrier and one BB had each received at least one direct hit. This has later been revised to 2 hits on a carrier, or one hit on each of 2 carriers, and 1 hit on one BB. During the attack VMCB was engaged by numerous Zero Fighters, but the 16 SBD's (Henderson) drove home glide bombing runs on two carriers. Major Henderson was hit and his plane set on fire just prior to commencing the final approach - Captain Glidden then led the attack. Each surviving gunner claims at least one Zero Fighter, so the enemy suffered considerable aircraft losses as well as damage to surface vessels. Smoke was observed at the stern of the carrier when the attack was over. Several close misses were also observed. Major Morris (12 SB2U), directed a dive bombing attack against a BB in view of the number of Zero Fighters present, and the fact that he had to cross the major portion of the enemy fleet in a hail of AA fire in order to reach a carrier. One direct hit on the stern and several close misses were observed. His gunners also claim several Zero Fighters.

Comments

VAF-221: No local pilot has yet observed a fighter type aircraft with such versatility. It appears to have at least a 25% advantage in speed, climb, maneuverability, and fire power over the F2A or F4F. The only way our pilots could shake them off was to dive at speeds better than 400 knots, or to use cloud cover. An illustration - Captain Carl, the #1 fighter pilot of 221, dove in a F4F3, at three fighters from about 14,000 feet above them using high blower and full throttle. As he passed by and zoomed to gain altitude, two of the Zero's peeled off from level flight and soon closed the range.

By VMSB-241: Zero Fighters were exceedingly numerous and aggressive and could be eluded only by using cloud cover. The number of casualties and bullet holes testifies to the truth of this statement. AA fire was a minor importance compared to fighter opposition.

Repairs to Facilities

Major Scollin surveyed the condition of the runways, repaired two bomb holes, scraped the remains of a Zero Fighter off of #3 runway, cleaned some debris off #2 and reported #2 runway and the facilities in general ready for operation. The gasoline driven fuel pump was cut in to the 50,000 gallon emergency storage systems and this plus both gasoline trucks, plus drums and hand fuel pumps were organized into a fueling system for the emergency. A 1,000# bomb had broken the lines from our 100,000 gallon main storage tanks and isolated some 70,000 gallons we were depending on.

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