

All serviceable aircraft were placed on the usual alert condition but no further air raids were received. One false alarm was occasioned by 12 SBD's off the Hornet who were lost and short of fuel. They jettisoned their bombs (armed) near the reef as an additional proof of friendliness, but any explosions could not then be so interpreted.

At 1700 CO NAS received a report of enemy carriers on fire bearing 320 degrees, distance 180 miles, and asked that VMSB deliver an attack. Major Norris, then CO VMSB, was consulted and stated that he and his officers would prefer a night attack since the target would be illuminated by its own flames and since the Zero Fighters would not then be active. This was allowed. In an effort to get all possible VMSB armed and in the air the flight was delayed until 1905 at which time Norris, with 6 SB2U's and Tyler with 5 SBD's took off for the objective. The night was pitch black, the target could not be found, and only the six SBD's returned on schedule. SB2U's continued to return at intervals throughout the night with the assistance of blind luck, hosing, a Defense Battalion searchlight, and the oil fire on SAND ISLAND. At 0145 Whitten landed with 30 minutes gasoline aboard, but Norris did not return.

June 5th

At about 0545 orders were received from CO NAS to attack two enemy BB's on bearing 268, distance 140. Captain Tyler, with 6 SBD's and Captain Fleming, with 6 SB2U aircraft, loaded with 500# bombs executed this mission at about 0800. Two direct hits and several close misses were observed. Captain Richard E. Fleming's plane was hit and set afire by AA during his dive, but in spite of this, continued the dive and gained a direct hit. His plane continued on into the sea, and witnesses state that no parachutes were observed. AA fire from the two BB's was very heavy and accurate but except for this instance, caused only minor damage.

Conduct of Personnel: The conduct of personnel both officers and enlisted was of the highest possible order. Pilots cheerfully went to a combat in which the odds were certain to be greatly in favor of the enemy. Outnumbered, and sadly outclassed in material, they made repeated attacks, exacting a heavy toll of enemy aircraft and inflicting substantial damage to surface vessels. This applies to both squadrons and particularly to VMSB-241 since in some cases they pushed bombing attacks to within 500 feet of their objective.

Personnel on the ground did everything humanly possible before, during, and after the attack to contribute a share to the defeat of the enemy. Work never ceased and no relief personnel was available for servicing and rearming the heavy bombers and patrol aircraft operating from EASTERN ISLAND, and in feeding and housing the 100% additional personnel.

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LtCol., U.S. Marine Corps,
Commanding.

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