

DECLASSIFIED

U. S. AIRCRAFT—ACTION WITH ENEMY

INSTRUCTIONS

COMMANDER IN CHIEF
U. S. FLEET

- (a) To be filled out by unit commander immediately upon landing after each action operation in contact with the enemy.
- (b) Do not "gun deck" this report - if data can not be estimated with reasonable accuracy enter a dash in space for which no data is available.

1. Date June 4 1942 Lat 30-40N Long 172-35W Time 1220 Zn 10.
2. Weather Unlimited - Scattered Clouds 1500 - 2000 feet.
3. Unit Reporting Torpedo Squadron Six Type Planes TBD-1

4. Nature of Operation:

Torpedo Attack delivered against Japanese CV's accompanied by BB's, CA's, CL's and DD'S.

5. Specific Objective:

CV of the KAGA type.

6. Forces Engaged (include models and markings):

Own
14 TBD-1

Enemy
Numerous Type "O" Fighters.
Fighters painted a greenish brown with red circles on wings and fuselage. One plane was observed to have a red stripe around fuselage.

7. Type of Attack (~~OWN~~ Enemy) (scratch one):

All fighter attacks were from overhead and rear but were not pressed home in face of free gun fire.

8. Enemy Tactics: (ship's) CV's turned continuously to place VTB on quarter, other ships maneuvered independently, at times becoming widely separated.

9. Brief Description of Action (include altitudes and range of contact. Altitudes and directions of release and withdrawal).

See attached statement.

10. Weapons Employed:

Own
Torpedoes-free guns (twin .30 Cal.) Many fighter planes & concentrated light and heavy A.A. fire.

11. Evasive Action Employed:
Variations in altitude & direction of approach, variations in range for opposing "AA" guns seemed to be most effective avoiding action.

12. Ammunition Expended (include types and fuse settings. Indicate number of duds.)

14 Torpedoes - set at twelve (12) feet depth.
.30 Cal. AAMC. No known duds.

13. Results (certain):

None (Certain) Estimated two (2) torpedo hits.

DAMAGE TO OWN AIRCRAFT:

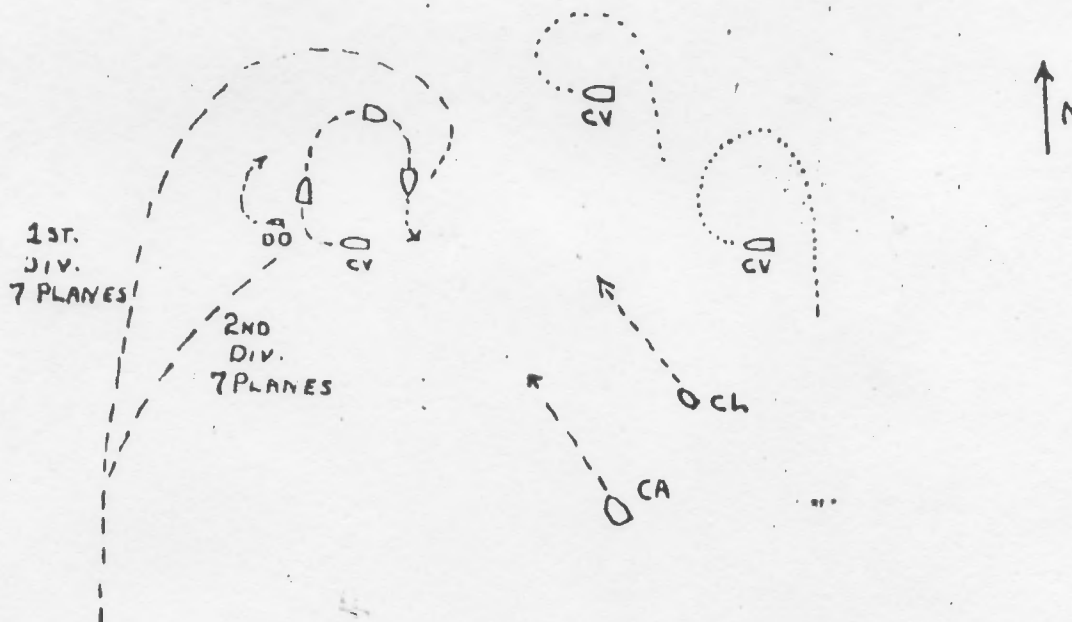
(Estimated): 10 planes shot down by either AA or fighter fire, probably the latter, no leak proofing, installed armor effective (against 7.7 hits) (no hits from 20 MM.)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTION

Contact was first made with enemy forces about 1200, zone 10 time at an altitude of 1500 feet and a distance of approximately 30 miles, bearing 320 from the attacking group. At the time of initial contact the enemy appeared to be on course 270° and in the subsequent approach their course changed from 270° to 000° and before dropping point was reached had been reversed to 180°. These changes in course enabled the carriers to keep the attacking torpedo planes continuously on their quarter necessitating a long period in which attacking planes were under A.A. fire from surface ships and attack by fighters. The maneuvering mentioned does not strictly apply to all types of ships in the task force but applies particularly to the carriers, other ships of the task force maneuvered independently and became widely separated.

Torpedo Squadron Six was the first to deliver its attack, attacking about 1220, and was subjected to the concentrated fire of all types of surface ships and numerous fighters of the "O" type. The torpedo attack had been completed and the remaining planes were clear of all screening vessels when the first bomb from the dive bombers hit the carriers of the task force. The loss of such a large number of torpedo planes (TEN) is attributed to the lack of coordination of fighter escort, as well as attack by numerous enemy fighters, approximately twenty-five. It is believed few, if any, planes were lost due to A.A. fire. Fighters attacked repeatedly but would not press home an attack in the face of accurate fire from the free gunners who were using the twin mount .30 cal. gun. On the whole, A.A. fire from surface ships was close but not effective and it is believed that A.A. bursts were used as a "fighter director" in that they appeared to "point out" the approximate position of attacking planes to their fighter patrol in this manner. ← True!

Approach to dropping positions and retirement after dropping were such that no accurate summary can be made of the individual directions of approach and withdrawal. The initial part of the approach from time of sighting up to the time when fighters attacked and A.A. fire became intense is shown below.



The turns were so timed that it was impossible to obtain an advantageous point from which to drop. Indication of ships positions is only approximate and incomplete as this squadron concentrated on the carrier indicated and accurate plotting of ships position was impossible due to the widely spread positions and distraction caused by fighters and A.A. fire. Retirement and return to the carrier were made by single plane units.

It is the belief of the writer that all pilots and men of this squadron, who participated in the attack described, should be very highly commended for their courageous action. Those pilots and men set an example of moral courage and devotion to duty that will be difficult to equal anywhere in the service. The attack was pressed home in the face of intense light and heavy calibre A.A. fire and fighter aircraft opposition of the Japanese "Zero" type. The Japanese fighter planes were not only superior in maneuverability and fire power but outnumbered our fourteen TBD-1 aircraft in the ratio of 2 to 1. It is not the desire of the writer to call attention to the action of any one individual but it is his sincere wish that some recognition be given those who paid with their lives for a magnificent victory.

R. E. Laub

R. E. LAUB,
Lieut. (jg), U.S.N.,
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