Form ACA-1
Sheet 1 of 2

AIRCRAFT ACTION REPORT

RESTRICTED
(Reclassify when filled out)

CONFIDENTIAL

I. GENERAL

(a) Unit Reporting VP34 (b) Based on or at Samarai, N.G. (c) Report No. 23

(d) Date of Action 27 Jan. 1944 (e) Take off: Time 0700 (GCT); Lat. 10° 37' S Long 150° 40' E

(f) Mission Search and attack (g) Time of Return 2000 (GCT)

II. OWN AIRCRAFT OFFICIALLY COVERED BY THIS REPORT.

(a) TYPE	(b) SQUADRON	(c) NO. OF SORTIES	(d) NO. ENGAGING ENEMY A/C	(e) NO. ATTACKING TARGET	(f) BOMBS AND TORPEDOES CARRIED (PER PLANE)	(g) FUZE, SETTING
PBY-5	VP34	4	-	3	2x500 lb. GP Mk. 43 2x1000 lb. GP Mk. 44	Tail; 4-5" delay

III. OTHER U. S. OR ALLIED AIRCRAFT EMPLOYED IN THIS OPERATION.

TYPE	SQUADRON	NUMBER	BASE	TYPE	SQUADRON	NUMBER	BASE

IV. ENEMY AIRCRAFT ENCOUNTERED (By Own Aircraft Listed in II Only).

(a) TYPE	(b) NO. OBSERVED	(c) NO ENGAGING OWN A/C	(d) TIME ENCOUNTERED	(e) LOCATION OF ENCOUNTER	(f) BOMBS, TORPEDOES CARRIED; GUNS OBSERVED	(g) CAMOUFLAGE AND MARKING
			(GCT)			
			(GCT)			
			(GCT)			
			(GCT)			

(h) Apparent Enemy Mission(s)

(i) Weather and Clouds at Location of Encounter(s)

(j) Sun or Moon (k) Visibility

V. ENEMY AIRCRAFT DESTROYED OR DAMAGED IN AIR (By Own Aircraft Listed in II Only).

(a) TYPE ENEMY A/C	(b) DESTROYED OR DAMAGED BY:				(c) WHERE HIT, ANGLE	(d) DAMAGE CLAIMED
	TYPE A/C	SQUADRON	PILOT OR GUNNER	GUNS USED		

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VI. LOSS OR DAMAGE, COMBAT OR OPERATIONAL, OF OWN AIRCRAFT (of those listed in II only).

	(a) TYPE OWN A/C	(b) SQUADRON	(c) CAUSE: TYPE ENEMY A/C, TYPE GUN, OR OPERATIONAL CAUSE	(d) WHERE HIT, ANGLE	(e) EXTENT OF LOSS OR DAMAGE, REMARKS
1	PBY-5	VP34	.50 cal AA	Through bow, from ahead.	Bombsight stabilizer hit.
2					
3	PBY-5	VP34	.50 or .30 cal AA	Through hull, from below.	Two bullet holes.
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

VII. PERSONNEL CASUALTIES (in aircraft listed in II only; identify with planes listed in VI by Nos. at left).

(a) NO.	(b) SQUADRON	(c) NAME, RANK OR RATING	(d) CAUSE	(e) CONDITION OR STATUS
1	VP34	Lt.J.F. Merritt, Jr.,USNR	Shrapnel	Slight abrasions on chest and arms.

VIII. RANGE, FUEL, AND AMMUNITION DATA

(a) TYPE A/C	(b) MILES OUT	(c) MILES RETURN	(d) AV. HOURS IN AIR	(e) AV. FUEL LOADED	(f) AV. FUEL CONSUMED	(g) TOTAL AMMUNITION EXPENDED, PLANES RETURNING				
						NO. OF PLANES	.30	.50	20MM	MM.
PBY-5	950	450	13	1450	1050					

IX. COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE, OWN AND ENEMY AIRCRAFT (use check list at left).

SPEED, CLIMB,
at various altitudes

TURNS
DIVES
CEILINGS
RANGE
PROTECTION
ARMAMENT

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AIRCRAFT ACTION REPORT

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(OMIT THIS SHEET IF NO ATTACK WAS MADE)

X. ATTACK ON ENEMY SHIPS OR GROUND OBJECTIVES (By Own Aircraft Listed in II Only).

(a) Location of Target(s) 03° 49' S, 150° 31' E (b) Time Over Target(s) 1115-1600 GCT

(c) Weather and Clouds Over Target Weather good; bright starlight; 1/10 cumulus

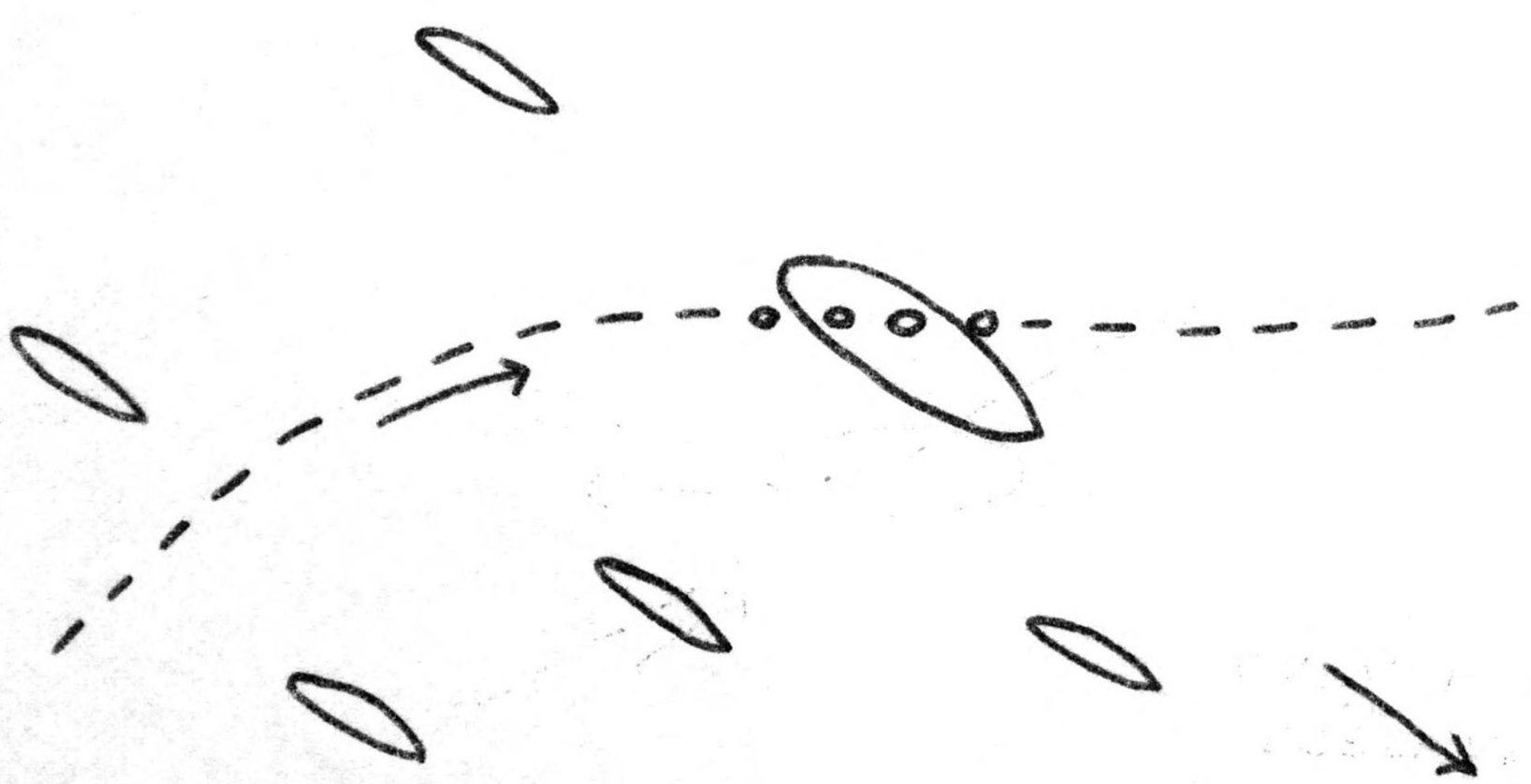
(d) Sun or Moon None (e) Visibility 10 to 20 miles

XI. TARGETS, RESULTS OF ATTACK.

	(a) DESCRIPTION OF TARGET (List All Ships in Group, Whether or Not Individually Attacked)	(b) A/C ATTACKING / (c) SQUADRON	(d) BOMBS AND AMMUNITION EXPENDED, EACH TARGET	(e) ALTITUDE OF RELEASE	(f) HITS
1	Large transport (JMST Class: Tare Able). 8000 tons minimum	PBY-5 / VP34	2x500 lb GP Mk 43 2x1000 lb GP Mk 44	100'	2
2	Destroyer or escort vessel	do / do	do	100'	1 possible
3	U/i medium merchant vessel	do / do	do	200'	None
4	Convoy in two groups 3-8 miles apart. Total of 12-15 ships. Probable composition: 5 MV, 7-10 EV, including one or more DD.				
5					
6					
7					
8					

(g) **RESULTS:** (FOR SHIP TARGETS DRAW DIAGRAM, TOP OR SIDE VIEW OR BOTH, AS APPROPRIATE, SHOWING TYPE AND LOCATION OF HITS. FOR ALL TARGETS GIVE LOCATION AND EFFECT OF HITS, WITH DIAGRAMS OR CHARTS WHERE DESIRABLE. DESCRIBE TARGETS FULLY IN (a), AND IN REPORTING DAMAGE OR DESTRUCTION, IDENTIFY BY NUMBERS AT LEFT. USE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY).

ATTACK II 1



(h) Were Photographs Taken? No Photographs of Damage, When Taken, Should Be Attached.

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AIRCRAFT ACTION REPORT

XII. TACTICAL AND OPERATIONAL DATA. (Narrative and comment. Describe action fully and comment freely, following applicable items in check list at left. Use additional sheets if necessary.)

ENGAGEMENT WITH ENEMY

OWN AIRCRAFT
- Disposition
- Altitudes
- Speeds
- Approach Tactics
- Use of Cover, Deception
- Angles of Attack and Their Effectiveness
- Distance of Opening Fire
- Defense Tactics and Their Effectiveness

ENEMY AIRCRAFT
- Method of Locating, Distance
- Disposition
- Altitudes
- Speeds
- Approach Tactics
- Use of Cover, Deception
- Angles of Attack
- Distance of Opening Fire
- Defensive Tactics

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- Own Weaknesses
- Enemy Weaknesses
- Offensive Tactics, Own
- " " , Enemy
- Defensive Tactics, Own
- " " , Enemy
- Flexible Gunnery, Own
- Escort Tactics
- Fighter Direction
- Use of Radar
- Night Fighting
- Recognition, Aircraft

ATTACK

OWN TACTICS
- Method of Locating Target
- Approach to Target
- Altitudes, Speeds
  - Approach
  - Dive
  - Release
  - Pull-Out
- Dive Angle
- Strafing
- Retirement
- Defensive Tactics

DEFENSE, ENEMY
- Evasive Tactics, Ships
- Concealment
- Anti-aircraft
- Searchlights
- Night Fighter Tactics

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
- Bombing Tactics
- Torpedo Tactics
- Effectiveness of Bombs, Torpedoes
- Selection of Targets
- Fuzing
- Strafing Tactics
- Defensive Tactics
- Use of Radar
- Reconnaissance
- Photography
- Briefing

OPERATIONAL
- Navigation
- Homing
- Rendezvous
- Recognition, Ships
- Communications
- Flight Operations
- Search and Tracking
- Base Operations
- Maintenance

On 27 January 1944 this squadron dispatched 4 Black Cats to intercept a convoy reported to be headed for Rabaul. A special attack and communication plan was devised, similar to the one successfully employed on 15 January (see Patrol Squadron 34 Action Report #15). The planes took off from base at 1800 L, proceeded to the north coast of New Britain, and there formed a scouting line at intervals of 15 miles and commenced to sweep to the northwest. At 2215 L, in position 03° 49' S, 150° 31' E, the convoy was contacted on radar by the plane which had been placed in command of the operation. Upon visual sighting it was seen to consist of two groups of ships about 8 miles apart, on a course of 120°, speed 10 knots. The first force consisted of from 5 to 7 ships - two merchantmen and 3 to 5 escorts. The second group contained 7 or 8 vessels - 3 merchant ships and 4 or 5 escorts. At least one of the escorts in the first group is believed to have been a destroyer. The ships could be seen plainly at close range in the bright starlight, although there was no moon.

The Catalina immediately called in the other 3 planes and began to circle the convoy to plan an attack. At about 2400 L, when two of the three planes had arrived, the signal for attack was given. Three aircraft attacked, The command plane scored two hits with 1000 pound bombs on a large transport; another made near misses and a possible hit on a destroyer; and the third overshot a medium-sized unidentified merchant vessel. The transport was seen to sink several hours later by an Army B-24 which also attacked the convoy.

Individual attacks are described below. The planes are lettered in the order in which they made their attacks.

Plane A
(PPC: Lieut. J. F. Merritt, Jr., USNR)

This aircraft was designated as the command plane for the operation, and was the one first to sight the enemy force. It inspected the first group of ships and then circled the second, which was seen to contain more vessels. As it did so, it was taken under fire by several ships, tracers passing a short distance aft of the plane. One ship appeared to be sending up mortar-type shells; large muzzle flashes were observed, followed by white bursts at 300 to 500 feet directly over the ship. The plane continued circling over both groups of ships, and it was noted that they converged until they were about 3 miles apart. Throughoutthis period the plane was subjected to generally inaccurate fire of all types from 3 or more vessels. At 2400 L the pilot gave the attack signal and immediately proceeded to make his own run on the largest ship he could find.

The approach was commended at a distance of 1½ miles, altitude 1700 feet, from starboard quarter to port beam. As soon as the Catalina began its glide it was fired upon by the target vessel and one escort; a moment later it was receiving machine gun fire from 5 escorts and from 3 gun positions on the merchantman. The latter also fired the mortar-type shells previously referred to. The pilot estimates that at least 15 to 20 guns were directing their fire at the plane as it approached. When about ½ mile from the ship the plane was hit in the bow by an explosive .50 caliber bullet which struck the bombsight stabilizer and sprayed shrapnel into the cockpit, scratching the co-pilot's leg and stinging the pilot about the chest and arms.

In a 130 knot glide the aircraft passed over the ship at less than 100 feet altitude and dropped all four bombs with the intervalometer set for 60 feet, 160 knots. The two center 1000 pound bombs hit aft of amidships. There was a small explosion, followed by a larger one that reached 300 feet in the air. Pieces of the long center superstructure could be seen flying upward. In a short while the whole center and after portion of the ship was ablaze, and the fire crept forward until the ship was aflame from end to end. As a matter of interest - the pilot told a crew member in the after station to count the number of explosions, which were occuring every few seconds, evidently caused by some highly volatile deck cargo such as gasoline. An hour later the man in the after station requested permission to secure - he had already counted 113 separate explosions.

The plane remained in the area until 0300, circling the stricken ship. She was still afloat at that time but sank later in the day.

The crew had an excellent opportunity to identify the vessel. It was a Fare Able, with a long superstructure occupying over half of its total length. The minimum tonnage estimate made by any member of the crew of this or the other planes which saw the ship burning was 8000 tons.

Plane B

(PPC: Lieut.(jg) N. G. Cordon, USNR)

This plane saw the burning vessel hit by Plane A from a distance of 50 miles, and proceeded directly to the spot arriving at about 0030 L. After circling the ships for a half-hour, and being fired upon by all types of AA whenever he approached within range, the pilot made his attack upon a ship identified as a destroyer, which was steaming at slow speed with two smaller escort craft a half-mile off its starboard bow and starboard quarter respectively. The plane was taken under intense fire as it commenced its run from an altitude of 1200 feet, distance 3/4 of a mile. It glided to masthead height, passing between the two small escorts, and dropped all four bombs in a run on the starboard beam of the destroyer. The intervalometer was set for 40 feet, 150 knots, and actual speed of the plane was 160 knots. No bomb was seen to hit, but three bombs were observed to explode in the water, the nearest being from 50 to 75 feet over the ship. At the same time heavy white smoke was seen rising from aft of amidships, and the ship's guns were momentarily silenced.

The plane remained in the area for a short while but was unable to make visual contact again with its target to observe results of the attack. It returned to base with two bullet holes through the hull, one in the navigator's compartment and one in the after station.

Plane C

(PPC: Lieut. G. Simonelli, USNR)

Plane C arrived over the convoy at 2315 L and circled in the area until 0125 L before attacking. A radar run was commenced from a distance of 5 miles on the largest of a group of 5 ships, all of which opened intense fire of all types as the plane came within 2 miles. The Catalina sheered off and started a second run from an altitude of 1200 feet on the same ship, encountering the same heavy fire. The pilot homed in on the MA, and dropped his bombs from 200 feet in a run from starboard quarter to port bow, sighting the ship visually a moment before releasing the bombs. The closest fell 75 feet over the ship, which appeared to be a medium-sized merchantman. The plane was followed during its retirement by intense fire from all five ships.

Squadron assessment: One 8000 ton (or larger) transport sunk; one destroyer possibly hit and damaged by 500 pound bomb.

AIRCRAFT ACTION REPORT

XIII. MATERIAL DATA. (Comment freely on performance or suitability, following check list at left. Use additional sheets if necessary).

ARMAMENT
- Guns, Gunsights
- Turrets
- Ammunition
- Bombs, Torpedoes
- Bomb Sights
- Bomb Releases

COMMUNICATIONS
- Radio, Radar
- Homing Devices
- Visual Signals
- Codes, Ciphers

RECOGNITION
- IFF
- Signals
- Battle Lights
- Procedures

PROTECTION
- Armor; Points and Angles of Fire Needing Further Protection
- Leak Proofing

EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT
- Parachutes
- Life Belts, Life Rafts
- Safety Belts
- Emergency Kits
- Rations, First Aid

NAVIGATIONAL EQUIPMENT
- Compasses
- Driftsights
- Octants
- Automatic Pilots
- Charts
- Field Lighting

INSTRUMENTS
- Flight
- Power Plant

OXYGEN SYSTEM

CAMOUFLAGE AND DECEPTION DEVICES

STRUCTURE
- Airframe
- Control Surfaces
- Control System
- Dive Flaps
- Landing Gear
- Heating System
- Flight Characteristics At Various Loadings

POWER PLANT
- Engines
- Engine Accessories
- Propellers
- Lubricating System
- Starters
- Exhaust Dampers

HYDRAULIC SYSTEM

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM
- Auxiliary Plant
- Lights

FUEL SYSTEM

FLIGHT CLOTHING

MAINTENANCE

BASE FACILITIES
- Plane Servicing Equipment
- Personnel Facilities

REPORT PREPARED BY:

J. S. KEMPER, Jr.,
Lieut.,AVS,USNR, ACI Officer.
SIGNATURE — RANK AND DUTY

APPROVED BY:

T. A. CHRISTOPHER,
LtComdr., USN, Commanding. 27 Jan. 1944
SIGNATURE — RANK AND DUTY — DATE

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