

AIRCRAFT ACTION REPORT

RESTRICTED
(Reclassify when filled out)

I. GENERAL

~~SECRET~~

(a) Unit Reporting VP-45 (b) Based on or at USS SAN JACINTO (c) Report No. 31
 (d) Take off: Date 16 February, 1945 Time (LZT) 1345 (K) (Zone); Lat. 34° 21'N Long. 142° 16'E
Escort strike on Nakajima Ota and Holmsund
 (e) Mission assembly plants, north of Tokyo (f) Time of Return 1745-1805 (Zone)

II. OWN AIRCRAFT OFFICIALLY COVERED BY THIS REPORT.

TYPE (a)	SQUADRON (b)	NUMBER			BOMBS AND TORPEDOES CARRIED (PER PLANE) (f)	FUZE, SETTING (g)
		TAKING OFF (c)	ENGAGING ENEMY A/C (d)	ATTACKING TARGET (e)		
P6F-5	VP-45	7	7	7	Each plane carried 6 x 5" rockets apiece	Mark 146 - non-delay

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

TYPE	SQUADRON	NUMBER	BASE	TYPE	SQUADRON	NUMBER	BASE
TB1-3	VP-45	9	USS SAN JACINTO	P6F-5	VP-9	App. 16	USS LEXINGTON
TB1-3	VP-9	App. 12	USS LEXINGTON				
SB2C	VP-9	App. 15	USS LEXINGTON				

IV. ENEMY AIRCRAFT OBSERVED OR ENGAGED (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
Tony	15	(at least) 15	1605	Over Nakajima Ota to east	(Standard 20 MM wing guns and 12.7 MM in nose)	(Some mottled brown & green, some silver)
Tojo	15	"	1635	(ZONE) west of Nakajima		(Possibly like P-51.)
Oscar	12	"	"	(ZONE) approximately		(Mottled brown & green.)
Zeko	6	"	"	(ZONE) 20 Mi. north of		(Mottled green & brown.)
Other				(ZONE) Coast Point		(Standard dirty brown camouflage type. Some had yellow stripes on wing. See photo for new wing paint design)
S.E. VP	15	"	15	(ZONE)		

(h) Apparent Enemy Mission(s) To intercept and destroy returning strike
 Did Any Part of new wing paint design
 (i) Encounter(s) Occur in Clouds? No If so, Describe Clouds Clear in vicinity of combat Photo #2
 (YES OR NO) (BASE IN FEET, TYPE AND TENTHS OF COVER)
 Time of Day and Brilliance Day
 (j) of Sun or Moon (NIGHT, BRIGHT MOON; DAY, OVERCAST; ETC.) (k) Visibility Unlimited (MILES)

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		
Oscar	P6F-5	VP-45	Cdr. G.R. Schuster	6 x .50 cal.	Variable	Destroyed
Tojo	P6F-5	VP-45	Cdr. G.R. Schuster	"	(See narrative)	Prob. Des.
Zeko	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. R.L. Taylor	"		Destroyed
Tojo	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. R.L. Taylor	"		Destroyed
Zeko	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. R.L. Taylor & Schultz	"		Damaged
Tojo	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. R.L. Taylor	"		Damaged
Tony	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. R.R. Kidwell	"		Destroyed
Tony	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. R.R. Kidwell	"		Destroyed
Tojo	P6F-5	VP-45	Lt. H. Knichelbine	"		Destroyed
Tojo	P6F-5	VP-45	Lt. H. Knichelbine	"		Prob. Des.
Oscar	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. T.R. Stapleton	"		Destroyed
Oscar	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. T.R. Stapleton	"		Prob. Des.
Oscar	P6F-5	VP-45	Lt(jg) J.R. Hall	"		Destroyed
Oscar	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. J.H. Schultz	"		Destroyed
Oscar	P6F-5	VP-45	Ens. J.H. Schultz	"		Destroyed

ENCLOSURE (E)

PARAGRAPH X

At high speeds the F6F-5 turned with or inside of any or all of the enemy fighters encountered. In one instance an otherwise effective attack by Jap VF was evaded by a steep high speed diving turn to the right and in several instances a Jap was prevented from closing to firing range astern by a steep dive straight ahead employing full throttle and War Emergency Power. In most cases the last mentioned successful maneuver was executed without dropping the belly tank.

In one other case a Tony was in firing range astern the VF Squadron Commander and was evaded by a sharp diving turn to the left. The Tony was firing throughout the turn but could not follow tightly enough to obtain any hits.

The defensive weave was the sole salvation of the entire flight on its return trip from Ota factory to the beach. Owing to the mission requirements of escorting the slower bombers and torpedo planes out of the danger area in the face of the enemy's numerical superiority, the fighters could not use their speed advantage to the greatest extent, but the high speed weave proved most effective in safely extricating all hands from the Jap fighter trap.

The Jap pilots showed no reluctance to press home their attacks from any quarter, including most aggressive (last second) head-on attacks. They particularly favored a stern approach with considerable altitude advantage, attempting to come in high from lead astern.

Several instances were observed of multiple, or "chain" engagements: a Jap on an F6F's tail, with another F6F on the Jap's tail, all followed by another Jap fighter shooting at the second Hellcat.

The belly-tank of the F6F-5 is most beneficial for recognition purposes in a wild melee such as occurred on this particular afternoon over Honshu, and it is therefore highly recommended that it be retained aboard the plane for this purpose under all but the most extreme combat conditions. The Japs, particularly over their own home land, have no occasion to require the use of a belly tank on their VF types.

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(OMIT THIS SHEET IF NO ATTACK WAS MADE)

VP-45 REPORT No. 31

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

(a) Target(s) and Location(s) Malajima Ota and Koizumi aircraft assembly plants, Tokyo Bay Area (b) Time Over Target(s) App. 1605(K) Zone

(c) Clouds Over Target Clear (BASE IN FEET, TYPE AND TENTHS OF COVER)

(d) Visibility of Target Clear (CLEAR, HAZY, PARTIALLY OBSCURED BY CLOUDS, ETC.) (e) Visibility Unlimited, 20 miles (MILES)

(f) Bombing Tactics: Type X (LEVEL, GLIDE OR DIVE) Bomb Sight Used X (TYPE)

Bombs Dropped per Run X (NUMBER) Spacing X (FEET) Altitude of Bomb Release X (FEET)

(g) Number of Enemy Aircraft Hit on Ground: Destroyed X Probably Destroyed X Damaged X

(h) AIMING POINT	(i) DIMENSIONS OR TONNAGE	(j) NO. A/C ATTACKING (k) SQUADRON	(l) BOMBS AND AMMUNITION EXPENDED, EACH AIMING POINT	(m) NO. HITS On Aiming Point	(n) DAMAGE (None, slight, serious, destroyed or sunk)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

(o) RESULTS: (For all hits claimed on ship targets and for land targets of special interest, 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, and identify by numbers above. Use additional sheets if necessary).

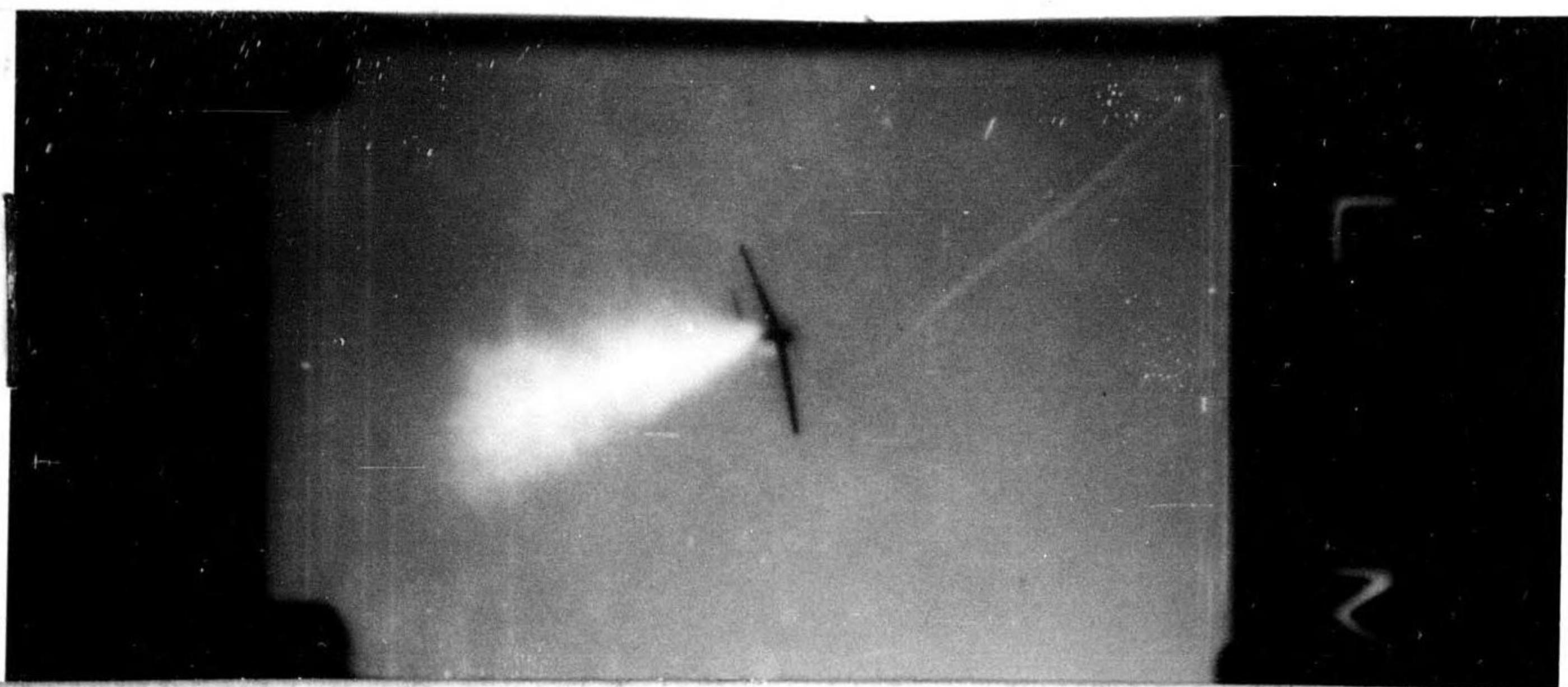


Photo #1

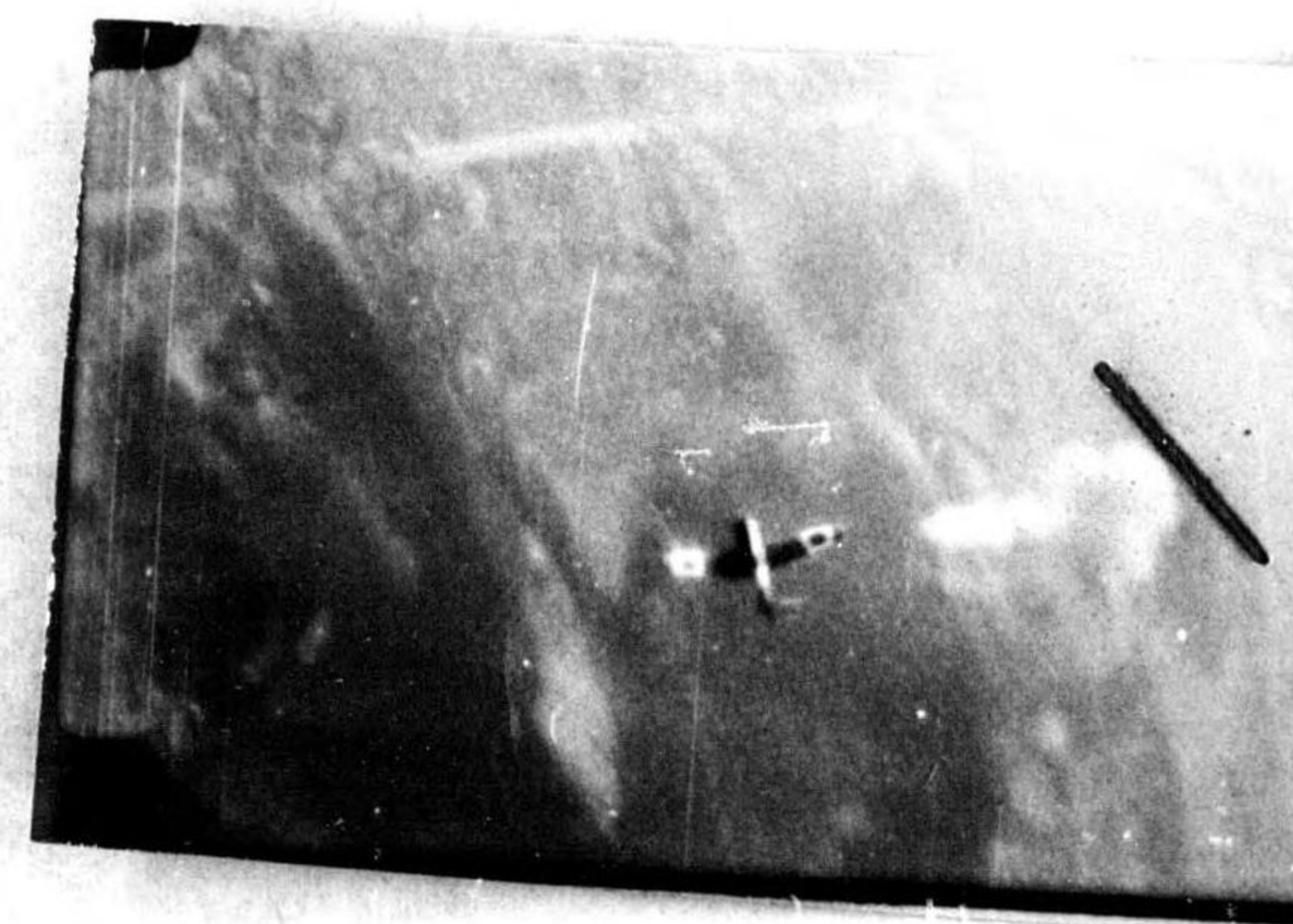


Photo #2

(p) Were Photographs Taken? Yes / Photographs of Damage, When Taken, Should Be Attached By Staple. of one kill by Ans. R.L. Taylor (See photo #1)

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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
 - Pull-Out
- Dive Angle
- Strafing
- Retirement
- Defensive Tactics
- Use of Jamming

DEFENSE, ENEMY

- Evasive Tactics, Ships
- Concealment
- Searchlights
- Night Fighter Tactics
- Use of Jamming

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

See attached sheets

Seven (7) F6F-5's of Fighting Squadron 45 took off at 1345 (K), 16 February, 1945 from the USS SAN JACINTO, to escort a strike by TBM's and SB2C's on the Nakajima Ota assembly plant 40 miles north of Tokyo.

It was to be the deepest penetration into the Japanese homeland ever attempted by Navy planes. The mission was successfully carried out, because of the coordination of tried and proven tactics, the ruggedness of the carrier planes, and a sizeable portion of good luck.

After rendezvousing, the planes under the leadership of VT-9 Squadron Commander, USS LEXINGTON, headed for the coast approximately 20 miles north of Inubo Saki Light, Honshu, and the seven SAN JACINTO planes split into two divisions, one of four (Lieutenant H. Knickelbine, Ensign T.R. Stapleton, Lt(jg) J.R. Hall and Ensign J.H. Schultz) and the other division of three (Comdr. G.E. Schechter, Ensign R.R. Taylor and Ensign R.R. Kidwell). The two elements flew as top cover, maintaining a beam defensive positions approximately 5000 feet above the bombers which were flying at 12,000 feet.

It was comparatively placid on the flight overland to the target. The weather was beautiful, the well cultivated land appeared peaceful, and the snow covered cone of Fujiyama far to the southwest could be seen in the distance. No AA disturbed the planes, and no interceptors rose to the attack.

The planes approached the Ota assembly plant from the east, and slightly to the north. Lieutenant Knickelbine's division was on the starboard beam of the bomber group and Comdr. Schechter's three planes were to the port. The bombers banked to the left and made their bombing runs on the Ota plant headed east, while Knickelbine's division followed shortly in individual rocket runs from 16,000 feet down to 8,000 feet in 60 degree dives. Comdr. Schechter, followed by the two planes in his "remnant" division in turn made similar rocket runs on the Nakajima Koizumi plant about three miles farther south. All seven planes were still too high when they pulled out to observe their rockets hits, but it is believed they were all (with the exception of 2 rockets of Ensign Taylor) squarely in the target areas. The heavy anti-aircraft was moderate and inaccurate.

As the planes pulled out of their rocket runs, literally all hell broke loose. The bombers and the escorting fighters were jumped by at least 50-60 Jap fighters of several types, and a short melee occurred of the target area, followed by a bitterly fought running battle all the way out of the homeland back to the ocean on the eastern shore of Honshu.

Inasmuch as the seven fighter pilots of the squadron all had separate encounters and a different version of the air battle, their individual narratives follow.

COMMANDER SCHECTER

"After the pull out from my rocket run at 8500 feet, I looked back and saw a Tony and about half dozen other Jap fighters of various types diving on my tail. I immediately executed a 180 degree turn and made a very short head on run on the Tony which broke off and dived out. I then looked for friendly planes in the immediate vicinity and saw several of our fighters with Japs on their tails. I made for the nearest friendly fighter and proceeded to give the Jap on his tail a burst causing him to break away.

Immediately afterwards, another Tony closed to firing position on my tail and it was necessary for me to go into a steep diving turn to the left in order to shake him. I was endeavoring to work toward our leading bomber group on their retirement course up ahead and below me. As I turned back toward the bombers after shaking the last Tony I observed still another Tony and several other Jap fighters about 500 feet higher, just out of range astern attempting to close. I pushed over in a steep dive and headed for the vicinity of the bombers ahead using full power and water injection. The Tony did not close, but apparently fired from long range as I received 2 or 3 12.7 MM hits in the tail and after part of my fuselage section at this time. Almost immediately, I observed a Tojo coming up from astern. I turned into him and made a determined head-on attack firing at about 600 feet until the Tojo passed below my plane clearing me with about 5 feet to spare. I saw pieces of the engine and cowling fly off as the guns from my starboard wing scored hits in his engine and fuselage section. When the Tojo was about 100 feet in front of me his starboard wing cannon was firing, and my plane received a shell hit in the starboard wing tip, tearing loose parts of the right wing tip section. The Tojo dived away to port smoking heavily.

Again I turned back in the direction of the beach and was making progress toward our bombers (about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile ahead) when I observed another F6F on the port beam. This was Ensign Kidwell, of my division. I gave him a join-up signal; and we started a weave which we continued until we were relatively free of enemy planes. We then joined up in a section formation.

Then, working as a section, we weaved with other friendlies, chasing Jap fighters off each others tails and from the SB2C's and TBM's which were about 4000 feet below, with an intervening layer in between of several Lexington fighters, a few of which eventually climbed to our high cover position.

At this time I noticed astern of us about 2 miles a second group of friendly bombers (VB and VT). We had escorted the first bomber group not far from the coast by that time, so Ensign Kidwell and I went back to escort the other bombers, discovering that they were all of our 9 SAN JACINTO VT plus about 6 SB2C's. As soon as we arrived in the vicinity of this second bomber group, we started making runs on the Jap fighters which had a few of our escorting SAN JACINTO VF plus the bombers under attack.

On our return course after joining this group of friendlies, Ensign Kidwell broke away to make a run on a Tony that was attacking the whole torpedo plane formation. He then rejoined, and as we neared the coast I observed an Oscar making a run on the VT formation which broke off at considerable range and pulled up to the left in my direction. I waited until he was in front, and in a full deflection shot at about 800 feet range I gave him approximately a five second burst, smoking him. The Oscar went down out of my sight as I turned back toward our torpedo planes. Ensign Kidwell broke off and followed him down. We proceeded toward base after leaving the coast, in company with the bomber group. Lt.(jg) Hall of my second division joined shortly after we were over water, accounting for all of the planes in Air Group 45. Shortly after this I heard a transmission over the radio to the effect that one of our torpedo planes, Ensign Laughlin, pilot, was badly damaged, had a wounded crewman aboard, was without any ZB or radio communications and wished to return to base direct. Upon learning this, I instructed Lt(jg) Hall and Ensign Kidwell to join on Lt. Knickelbine, had Ensign Laughlin join up with me, following which we returned to base at high speed by the most direct route.

I pancaked at 1745, grateful that on the most hazardous job yet undertaken by the Air Group, we had come back with all hands safely aboard.

ENSIGN TAYLOR

I was flying wing on Commander Schechter when we hit the Nakajima plants of Ota and Koizumi. In my rocket run on Koizumi I was unable to fire because I was in line with the Skipper, so I swung to north, fired a pair of rockets at installations on the airfield between the two plants, then came back to Koizumi in a SE direction. I then released my remaining four rockets at the plant, but in the meantime I had lost the Skipper when he pulled out at 8000 feet and I went on down to 4000.

After my last release I passed through 3 or 4 Zekes, and ran into 3 more Zekes after I pulled out. I burned one with a 30 degree deflection shot from its starboard quarter at about 900 feet range (see photo). I then headed north to join friendly planes, shooting enroute at a Zeke on the tail of an F6 and chasing him away. I soon got another shot at a Tojo on another 6's tail, shooting at the Jap from astern at about 1000 feet. He smoked: I then closed to about 300 feet dead astern, gave him another short burst and he blew up in a puff and went down all afire. While I was burning this Tojo an Oscar got on my tail and hit me hard, destroying my radio and shooting up my tail assembly, engine cowling and starboard wing root. Fortunately, he got shot off my tail by Ensign Schultz from our second division before he got in any more bursts. Schultz then joined on my wing and we joined up with our 9 torpedo planes and 6 Lexington dive bombers together with about 6 fighters from the Lexington. Schultz and I made passes at about 6 to 8 Japs without leaving the weave or shooting. We then saw a single F6 about a thousand yards astern catching hell from three Tojos. Schultz and I made a 180 degree turn, joined the 6, made one weave with him, at which time he went off and left Schultz and me with the three Tojos on our tails. One of the Tojos was in range and firing, so we pushed everything to the firewall and dove under our bombers from the port side, losing these particular Japs.

We then met a Zeke in a head on run, forcing him to break off from our bombers. Both of us exchanged shots with the Zeke, saw our bullets going in, but could observe no smoke. However, he shot off my left wing tip.

We continued on course with the formation, taking at least ten long range shots at Jap fighters, scaring them off. No hits were seen on these Japs.

Several minutes later I got a bow shot at a damaged Tojo, hit him only with the three port wing guns (all I had left), but could not knock him down.

We encountered heavy AA on the return trip which was accurate in range but not deflection. I threw out window until I was blue in the face, but I think it was useless so far as the AA guns were concerned. I saw no bursts in the vicinity of the window.

When we reached the beach we were joined by the Skipper and soon passed into more peaceful air space."

ENSIGN KIDWELL

"After arriving unmolested by enemy planes or anti-aircraft at the Ota and Koizumi plants the three planes of the first division - Commander Scheeter, Ensign Taylor and I - nosed over for a rocket run on the Koizumi plant from about 16,000 feet. I was the third man, and when I started to go into my run I glanced around and noticed three Tonys coming in at us from 6 o'clock. I discontinued my run, tallyhoed the planes, and made a sharp climbing turn to the left. Two of the Jap planes were firing but their bullets were short. I continued in my turn, and even though I still had my rockets left was able to keep the Tonys off my tail at an indicated air speed of about 200 knots, full RPM. I made two complete circles without getting a shot in, and finally both of them dove out of the circle. As I straightened out, I saw another Tony coming in at me from 9 o'clock slightly up. I turned into him and he broke off his run, going under me. I was unable to get in a burst. I turned to the right, got on his tail when he pulled up sharply, and let him have a long burst. He started smoking and dove with me following him firing until within about 600 feet range. He then caught fire in the engine cowling and wing roots, and never pulling up from his dive plunged into the ground. The pilot never parachuted out. After this, I climbed back up to around 8000 feet and saw the Skipper making a run head-on with a Tojo which broke off below the Skipper's plane just in time to avoid a collision. Smoke started from the Tojo and when I last saw the Jap he was in a steep dive trailing heavy smoke. I did not see him crash.

After joining up on the skipper we started a weave protecting our own tails against what I would estimate to be 25 to 30 enemy fighters which started coming in for single plane runs. We were covering the V^T and VB shortly after that and the Jap fighters still continued to attack us as we all headed for the beach. Near the coast I noticed a Tony making a dive from 6 o'clock on the formation. I was about 2000 feet above the Tony as I nosed over to get him. He evidently saw me as he broke off his run on our bombers and turned away to starboard. I came down and inside his turn and fired a good burst from 7 o'clock in about a 20 degree deflection shot. He immediately caught fire and went straight down enveloped in flames. All of these Jap fighters were brownish in color except for the two Tonys I shot which I noticed were all silver.

After we got to the beach the Skipper smoked an Oscar, which pulled up in front of him. I followed the Oscar, which was smoking and afire, down until I saw him splash about 50 yards off the east coast of Honshu."

LIEUTENANT KNICKELBINE

"After making my rocket run on Ota plant, I pulled out in a climbing turn to north to rendezvous at a point which had been given over the radio by the flight leader from the Lex. I had got to about 12,000 feet when I heard someone say "where are our fighters," and I could see our bombers headed east from the plant below me and to the right. I turned to starboard to join the bombers when I saw two F6's pulled away with a Tojo following them. The Tojo fired at both as the F6's pulled away to port from him, setting him up for a 50 mil lead deflection shot at about 600 feet range. I gave him a long burst and you could see the tracers cutting through the plane from cockpit to tail assembly. He started to smoke and then suddenly burst into a mass of flames, going down.

I continued down in my glide to join the bombers, when I noticed a couple of customers closing me from the port quarter. I nosed down in a steep dive noticing as I did so a Tojo below me and off to the right, on the starboard side of our bombers. I closed on him fast from his port quarter as he turned slightly to port in a shallow glide and gave him a short burst hitting the engine and fuselage. He smoked badly and went down steeply out of view.

The Japs on my tail were still coming so I pulled up sharply to port and started to weave over our bombers with several F6F's, mostly from the SAN JACINTO. After we constructed the weave we kept it up all the way to the Radar Picket Line, keeping about 2000-3000 feet above our bombers. The Jap fighters hung on our flanks, and sometime above, all the way back, waiting for a chance to catch someone straggling. They would then dart in for a quick shot. I got several snap shots during this trip but my mind was too occupied to think of whether I got any of the Japs or not.

After passing the picket line some one called about two bogeys trailing us, so we did a hundred and eighty and spread out in a sort of scouting line to catch them. I saw a Jap cross our bow below us and splash, and then the F6 which got him pulled from behind.

ENSIGN STAPLETON

I got separated from "Nick" (Lt. Knickelbine) in my rocket run on Ota plant. On my recovery, two Oscars (I believe that is what they were for they had the Oscars long slim tail) made a run on me from my port quarter. I had about 250 knots indicated and was at about 6000 feet at the time. The first Oscar turned away to starboard after he went over me, and the second banked to port in a diving left hand turn. I went after him, with plenty of speed. I could easily turn inside of the Jap. I caught him with three short bursts with about 90-100 mils lead from 800 feet, and I could see the tracers eating into his tail and the pieces flying off. He did not burn so I gave him three more short bursts with about 100-110 mils lead. I could see the tracers work forward from the tail up the fuselage to the engine, which started smoking. He did not flame, but as soon as I increased my lead he rolled over and went down in a spiral, pouring thick white smoke. I pulled up and watched him continue down in the aimless spiral, the plane obviously out of control and white smoke still billowing out of his engine. At that time he had less than a thousand feet. I did not see him crash, for my attention was diverted by an F6 being tagged at close range by an Oscar right in front of me. The Oscar pulled up on the starboard and slightly above the F6 and appeared to be planning to roll over the "6" to the left. I gave him two bursts hitting him in the engine and forward part of the fuselage. He rolled over on his back and went straight down smoking from his engine. I did not follow him down.

I then turned back and headed for the beach, joining Nick enroute, and weaved the rest of the way bluffing Japs with fakes and long range snap shots.

LEUTENANT (JG) HALL

"After firing the rocket I started to join on "Nick" who was climbing to the north. He then turned east toward our bombers when I saw a plane coming in from the north, high and it looked like he was headed for me. I fired a feeler burst out of range and he pulled away. I then had two fighters on my tail at that time. One was shooting at me in a standard rate turn when I first saw him to starboard. I kicked over in a flipper turn and went into a 50 degree glide for about 1500 to 2000 feet. I then started pulling up and looked around and they weren't behind me any more. I had lost the bombers by that time so I tried to work my way alone to the south so I could have the sun to my back on my return course, exchanging snap shots enroute with at least five Japs - I believe they were Oscars or Zekes. They were all high and would start to make a pass and would hardly get in range before they would break away. I don't know whether I hit any of them or not. When I got over Tateyama I saw four F4U's headed east, 2 of them in a 2 plane section and the other 2 strung out behind. I got in a weave position with the last one, when the first three turned off to north. The lone F4U and I did a couple of weaves together and then straightened out toward the coast. We flew along together for a while without weaving, then took turns shooting a Jap off each others tail in a couple of weaves. I don't think either of us shot the Japs down but we at least scared them off with a burst.

Near the coast, just west of Katori Airfield I saw an Oscar approach the tail of the other plane. I immediately turned into him, expecting the F4U to turn into me and draw the enemy in front of me. I started firing right away and noticed hits forward of the cockpit. The Jap went into a diving turn to the left and I followed for a short distance firing. I pulled up then to stay with the F4U, which was hit. As I pulled up I saw the Oscar going down out of control in flames, with only the tail visible. The F4U was also on fire and did a split-S on down toward the airfield. I left, and when I got out over the coast I looked back and saw two fires from crashes just starting up, with black smoke coming up a little later."

ENSIGN SCUITZ

"On the strike on the Jap aircraft plant at Ota with our dive bombers and torpedoes, I made the last rocket run on the plant in our division. Hall, my section leader, pulled out at 9000 and I pulled out at 6000. In my pull out and climb I saw an Oscar on a Hellcats' tail followed by another F6 which was being tailed by another Oscar. I joined the "chain gang" making five of us. I fired a long burst as I rolled over in a full deflection shot with about 120 mils lead, opening fire at about a thousand feet. The Oscar exploded and went down in flames out of control.

Then as I looked around for someone to join on I saw an Oscar on another Hellcats' tail. It was Ensign Taylor from the first division. I got on this Jap from slightly above and opened fire on his port quarter at 600 feet and continued until dead astern. The Oscar smoked first, then rolled over and caught fire going down in flames streaming a trail of heavy black smoke.

Then I joined up on Taylor and we formed a mutual protection society, flying all the way back to the coast fighting off Japs with fakes, snap shots and a continuous weave.

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VT-45

REPORT No. 031

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

All planes and equipment performed admirably under the severe stress of prolonged combat conditions.

REPORT PREPARED BY:

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RANK AND DUTY

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SIGNATURE

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2-21-45

DATE