

Aircraft Action Reports

2-d (60) USS Saratoga

2908

050595

VF-53/A2-11/A12
Serial 6

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
AIR FORCE, PACIFIC FLEET
FIGHTING SQUADRON FIFTY-THREE
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California



CONFIDENTIAL

17 February 1945

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Commander in Chief, PACIFIC FLEET

Subject: Aircraft Action Report - Forwarding of Advance Copy Direct.

Reference: (a) CinCPac Conf. Ltr. 1CL-45, date 1 January 1945.

Enclosure: (A) Aircraft Action Report #1 for VF-53, three (3) copies of.

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (A) is forwarded direct herewith.

Robert W. Conrad
ROBERT W. CONRAD.
Lieut. Comdr., USN

AIRCRAFT ACTION REPORT

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I. GENERAL

(a) Unit Reporting **Fighting Squadron FIFTY-THREE** (b) Based on **USS SARATOGA at sea** (c) Report No. **1**
 (d) Take off: Date **16 Feb. 1945** Time (LZT) **1200 K** (Zone); Lat. **34° 11' N** Long. **142° 16.8' E**
 (e) Mission **Task Group combat air patrol (Tokyo strike)** (f) Time of Return **1513 K** (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)		
F6F-5	VF-53	4	2	-	-	-

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

TYPE	SQUADRON	NUMBER	BASE	TYPE	SQUADRON	NUMBER	BASE
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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
Single Engine Fighter	1	1	1415 K (ZONE)	34° 20' N 142° 10' E or 32 miles 035° T from carrier.	-	Olive-drab color. No standard red discs observed.

Apparent Enemy Mission(s) **Reconnaissance or attack.**

Did Any Part of
 (i) Encounter **/** Occur in Clouds? **Yes** If so, Describe Clouds **Stratus clouds in layers at different**
(BASE IN FEET, TYPE AND TENTHS OF COVER)
altitudes; base 2800 ft. top 8000 ft. Overcast.
 Time of Day and Brilliance
 (j) of Sun or Moon **Overcast, scattered showers.** (k) Visibility **3 - 7 miles below**
(NIGHT, BRIGHT MOON; DAY, OVERCAST; ETC.) (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		
Single Engine Fighter	F6F-5	VF-53	Ens. H.B. Murphy, USNR	6 - .50	Port wing stub 8 o'clock level	Destroyed
	F6F-5	VF-53	Ens. R.L. Currier, USNR	6 - .50	Cockpit 6 o'clock level	

Note: Both pilots assume 50% responsibility for destroying enemy plane.

AIRCRAFT ACTION REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL

REPORT No. 1

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 (List armor, self-sealing tanks, equipment hit)	(e) EXTENT OF LOSS OR DAMAGE, (Give Bureau serial number of planes destroyed)
1				
2				
3				
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

VIII. RANGE, FUEL, AND AMMUNITION DATA FOR PLANES RETURNING

(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				(h) NO. OF PLANES RETURNING
						.30	.50	20MM	MM	
F6F-5	-	-	3	200 gals.	200 gals.	-	4170	-	-	4

IX. ENEMY ANTI-AIRCRAFT ENCOUNTERED (Check one block on each line).

CALIBER	NONE	MEAGER	MODERATE	INTENSE
HEAVY — Time-fused shells, 75mm and over	-	-	-	-
MEDIUM — Impact-fused shells, 20mm-50mm	-	-	-	-
LIGHT — Machine gun bullets, 6.5mm-13.2mm	-	-	-	-

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

- SPEED, CLIMB,
at various altitudes
- URNS
- DIVES
- CEILINGS
- RANGE
- PROTECTION
- ARMAMENT

Since elapsed time between 'tally-ho' and 'splash' was only 3 minutes little opportunity was given to compare performances of enemy and own aircraft. However, the ability of the enemy airplane to turn inside the pursuing aircraft was particularly noted. Also, both F6F-5's used water injection for approximately 45 seconds in level flight and closed with the enemy very rapidly - so much so, that throttling down was necessary. In regard to protection of enemy planes, none was noted; and the only comment was that it absorbed a seemingly unusual amount of hits before beginning to burn at port wing stub.

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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

Division #5 of Fighting Squadron FIFTY-THREE, composed of Lieutenant E.D. Roma, USNR (Division leader), Ensign V.N. Williams, USNR, Ensign R.L. Currier, USNR (Section leader), and Ensign M.B. Murphy, USNR, took off on Task Group combat air patrol from the USS SARATOGA at 1200 K, 16 February, 1945. After one unsuccessful search, the division was vectored out by the SARATOGA FDO to intercept a "bogey" at 1411 K. At 1415, the second section "tally-hoed" at 3 o'clock, 1,000 ft. above an enemy fighter which was skimming through the base of the overcast at an altitude of 2800 ft. on a bearing of 035° 32 miles from the parent carrier. This enemy airplane, portrayed in photographs taken from gun camera film of Ensign Murphy, show it to be a single radial-engine plane. From its one man cockpit (attested emphatically by both pilots), and its maneuverability, the pilots concur that it was definitely a fighter. The speed of the enemy and the interceptors was about the same - 220 knots indicated.

The F6F-5's immediately used water injection (for approximately 45 seconds duration) to close the distance to the enemy fighter. Because of slightly diverging courses and altitudes, the friendly fighters had to maneuver for firing position, thereby permitting the enemy to get as far as 5,000 ft. ahead before they began to close. However, by using water injection, the F6F-5's closed to 1,800 ft. in one minute, indicating 260 knots, with the enemy pilot apparently unaware of the section's presence.

Currier commenced firing with 6 .50's with no hits being scored. The enemy, now alerted, immediately pulled up into a low cloud and emerged on top still pursued by Currier, Murphy having remained below the cloud because gyro-horizon was non-functioning. The Jap fighter winged over and dove back down through the same cloud, trying to elude Currier, only to be met by Murphy who was circling and waiting below. Currier, on the Jap's tail, made a slight starboard jag to avoid Murphy, and opened fire again observing his bullets hit about the cockpit section with a level no-deflection shot. At the same time, Murphy with a 40° - deflection shot commenced firing long bursts with 6 .50's, bullets hitting the port wing stub with telling effect. In a few seconds there appeared a red glow which then developed into a sizeable puff which began to emit streamers of flame. The enemy disappeared momentarily into the clouds while doing a 270-degree climbing turn, still followed by Currier, and was met by Roma and Williams (the latter had reversed course to join the attack) when the "tally-ho" was made. Roma and Williams were within 100 yards, and were on the verge of opening fire, now out of control, did a split-S and crashed. The crash was witnessed by the entire

...the enemy concurred on the strange manner of the enemy's evasive tactics, insofar as the enemy remained in the presence of superior forces, while at the same time showing aggressiveness. In the words of Murphy, "I don't know what man, afraid to fly in clouds, or a darn little bit of apparent difficulty or weakness was failure to take advantage of a difficult situation - a thing he might have done, had he remained in cloud cover.

Communications were excellent, as was coordination with the FDO.

Note: Enemy fighter referred to in this action report can't be recognized at this source. It may possibly be a new type.

Search and Tracking
Base Operations
Maintenance

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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
Fuzeing
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

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Both pilots who engaged the enemy concurred on the strange manner of the Jap pilot's defensive tactics, insofar as the enemy remained in the vicinity in the face of superior forces, while at the same time not showing any particular aggressiveness. In the words of Murphy, "that Jap was either a brave man, afraid to fly in clouds, or a darn fool." Thus, the enemy's apparent difficulty or weakness was failure to extricate himself from a difficult situation - a thing he might easily have done, had he remained in cloud cover.

Communications were excellent, as was coordination with the FDO.

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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

Except for slight instrument failure, in the form of one of the planes' gyro-horizon being non-functional, all equipment seemingly performed in a satisfactory manner.

The pilots were especially commendatory of the 10-channel ARC-1 radio equipment which permitted excellent communications.

REPORT PREPARED BY:

J. R. Branch
SIGNATURE

RANK AND DUTY

J. R. Branch, Lieut., A, USNR.

APPROVED BY:

Robert W. Conrad
SIGNATURE

ROBERT W. CONRAD, Lieut. Comdr., USN.

RANK AND DUTY

Commanding Officer

VF-53

17 Feb. 1945
DATE