

10 April 1945

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.

Via: (1) The Commander Task Group 51.5 (The Commander Destroyer Squadron 63).
(2) The Commander Task Force 51 (The Commander Amphibious Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet).
(3) The Commander FIFTH FLEET.
(4) The Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Special Action Report (Anti-Aircraft Action by Surface Ship), on 6 April 1945, submission of.

Reference: (a) CTF 51 Operation Order A1-45.
(b) PacFlt Confidential Letter 1CL-45.

Enclosure: (A) Anti-Aircraft Action by Surface Ship (Nos. 1 to 7).
(B) Ship Track Chart showing relative position of ship and indicating movement during progress of raid.
(C) Plane track chart showing relative position of raids when attacking.
(D) Report of Damage.
(E) List of Personnel Casualties.

1. In accordance with reference (a) and (b), enclosures listed above are forwarded herewith.

2. The USS HOWORTH (DD592) was steaming independently in approximate latitude 26-32 North, 127-40 East, on 6 April 1945, proceeding to anti-submarine patrol station #148 in accordance with verbal orders from the Commander Task Group 51.5 (Screen Commander) in water north and west from the Hagushi beach head, Okinawa Island. The sky was overcast with a ceiling estimated at about 5500 feet. Visibility was good and seas fairly smooth. There were other destroyers on patrol stations plus several minesweepers (AM and YMS) and two light cruisers in the vicinity, one of which was observed to be the USS ST. LOUIS. These were far enough away to allow sufficient maneuvering room at high speed but no mutual fire support except in one or two cases. A very heavy air raid was approaching the beach head from the north and east. The center of activity was slowly closing from about eighty miles out where our friendly combat air patrol had been downing Japanese planes with constant regularity. Several destroyers on the northern-most radar picket stations were providing fighter direction support, and relaying reports to the Task Force Commander. From the trend of the battle reports it was soon obvious that the combat air patrol was putting up a great fight, but that the enemy was beginning to sift through because of overwhelming numbers in spite of the losses being administered to him. At 1510 Item the ship went to general quarters.

3. At 1555 picked up reported bogey on the SC-3 radar at 14,000 yards. Visual contact was later obtained and the plane was observed to be dodging from cloud to cloud. About 1600 one Oscar came out of the clouds

10 April 1945

Subject: Special Action Report (Anti-Aircraft by Surface Ship), on
6 April 1945, submission of.

directly overhead and shortly thereafter commenced a steep dive without maneuvers. The ship commenced firing immediately with 5"/38 and 40 MM batteries, range about 6000 yards. The USS ST. LOUIS also had this plane under fire. Many hits were observed and the plane fell in flames 25 yards short of the USS ST. LOUIS, about 1800 yards from the USS HOWORTH.

(a) At about 1623 another bogey was picked up at 16000 yards and was later seen to be dodging from cloud to cloud looking for targets of opportunity. The two light cruisers were leaving the scene and heading toward the transport area at moderate speed. At about 1625 one Val commenced a gliding dive at 195 knots and attempted to "mush" in on the ship. Fire was opened immediately, range about 6500 yards, with 5"/38 and 40 MM batteries. The volume of fire was terrific. In one minute and ten seconds the battery expended 76 rounds of 5"/38 (60% Mark 40). 400 rounds of 40 MM and about 500 rounds of 20 MM ammunition. Hits were observed immediately and the plane started smoking. Whether it was out of control is questionable. It kept right on coming and passed between the stacks in a roll which caused the left wing to sever all radio antennas and the main mast after guy wire.

(b) The USS HOWORTH at 1700 was on station #148 about three miles farther north from the position of the first attack. It was obvious now that the combat air patrol had well more than it could handle as the radar screen showed several groups of bogies approaching. The USS HYMAN had reported being hit and this ship was proceeding westward across the bow of a minesweeper to lend assistance to the HYMAN. Visual contact was obtained on four Zekes flying formation on the starboard bow. They passed to the starboard quarter at about 8000 yards range, altitude 5000 feet, divided into two groups and commenced a coordinated attack. The ship increased speed to full power on two boilers (27 to 29 knots), maneuvering to keep planes forward of beam. At 1701 commenced firing on plane #3, range about 6500 yards, with 5"/38 joined by the 40 MM battery at 4000 yards. The ship was maneuvered to bring the full battery to bear and about 130 rounds of 5"/38 (60% Mark 40), 500 rounds of 40 MM and 700 rounds of 20 MM were expended. This Zeke was knocked down out of control in flames about 200 yards short on the starboard quarter. It was observed to "fishtail" at the start of its run. It now appeared that the gun crews had come out of their "kick-off" nervousness, and had settled down as they appeared to be getting more hits. Zeke #4 followed close behind and the battery was shifted to him. It is estimated that 50 rounds of 5"/38 (60% Mark 40), 310 rounds of 40 MM and 400 rounds of 20 MM were fired at this plane with an opening range of 5000 yards. Instead of a glide like Zeke #3, this one came in somewhat steeper. Several hits were observed and it began smoking. It is also questionable whether the plane was out of control, however, as it continued on in and passed between #5 five inch gun and the fantail 20 MM sponson. If #5 gun had been trained fore and aft, the barrel would have been hit. As it was, the

10 April 1945

Subject: Special Action Report (Anti-Aircraft by Surface Ship), on
6 April 1945, submission of.

wing scraped the deck and clipped the port lifelines with no other damage to the ship.

(c) While the ship was working over this flight of four Zekes, another group of four approached from the starboard bow. One plane of this flight broke off and commenced a gliding dive hoping to sneak in while the battery had #4 under fire. The ship was maneuvered in time, however, to bring the automatic weapons to bear. No 5"/38 rounds were expended. At 3000 yards the 40 MM battery followed by the 20 MM battery opened fire and expended 98 rounds of 40 MM and about 200 rounds of 20 MM. The plane went out of control and crashed 250 yards bearing 150 degrees relative after paralleling but opposite to the ship's course and attempting to crash a minesweeper some distance on the starboard quarter.

(d) It was now obvious that the ship had its hands full. Enemy planes were all around. The USS NEWCOMB and several minesweepers were in the area. Each time the USS HOWORTH opened fire first, a Zeke or two would commence an attack. Out of two flights of four planes each, six planes made runs on this ship.

(e) While concentrating on Zeke #5, run #6 got into position on the disengaged bow and commenced a high, fast glide and attempted to come in dead ahead. The main battery director was "ontarget" early and the forward 5"/38 battery opened fire at 6000 yards. The ship was boxed in by minesweepers so the after battery and automatic weapons could not be brought to bear. About 43 rounds of 5"/38 (50% Mark 40), and only five or six rounds of 40 MM were expended. Several hits were obtained by the 5"/38 and the plane commenced smoking. The ship had been swinging to starboard when #5 was attacking. It was extremely unfortunate that the ship could not be turned farther to starboard because of the minesweepers. The rudder was reversed but direction was shifted very little. This plane flew directly into the main battery director from about 030 degrees relative. The rangefinder operator ranged from 6000 yards right down to minimum range. The last words heard from the Gunnery Officer were "target angle zero". Nine men were killed or are missing while fourteen men were wounded. The director itself was knocked off on the bridge in shambles and a gasoline fire was started. The repair parties had this under control almost immediately. Steering control was lost but was quickly taken over by steering aft getting orders from secondary conn and the bridge. Course was changed to 180° true to keep the wind relative on the quarter and blow flames over the side. The ship did not slow as fire was quickly controlled and bogies were still in the area.

(f) Plane #7 on the port beam was starting a run, but the alert 40 MM director crew of gun #44 pumped out 100 rounds of 40 MM and brought him down directly astern of the ship about 500 yards.

(g) The USS NEWCOMB saw smoke and fire and asked if it might lend assistance. None was needed as the ship was quickly brought "back to battery". The 5"/38 guns

10 April 1945

Subject: Special Action Report (Anti-Aircraft by Surface Ship) on
6 April 1945, submission of.

shifted over to the Mark 51 directors, the repair party put out the fires, steering control was shifted back to the bridge, and the ship continued to maneuver at 27 to 29 knots. The Commander Task Group 51.5 dispatched a destroyer escort to assist as soon as it was reported that the HOWORTH was hit. The destroyer escort captain reported back that he couldn't catch the HOWORTH because it was going somewhat faster than his flank speed.

4. The performance of the battery and ordnance material was excellent. During the last five-plane attack the rapidity of events prevented taking extensive data from the computer. The greater part of this information was obtained from interviewing over fifty individuals and reconstructing the situation. Until the ship was hit by Zeke #6 at 1708, all firing and control was by director using optical ranges with the exception of runs #1 and #2 which were initially begun with radar. After being informed of the damage, the 5 inch director being knocked from foundation, the plotting room officer left one firecontrolman in plot, sent the chief firecontrolman and two assistants to restore communications, and assist in control of the forward main and machine gun batteries. The plotting room officer took over the after battery. There were no casualties to the five inch guns. The machine gun batteries had the following casualties: (1) The Mark 14-8 sight on 40 MM director #1 was damaged internally by shock of plane crash. (2) The left barrel of 40 MM gun #1 jammed on run #6 due to its firing selector having been pushed past its detent (this was not cleared until after action). (3) One misfire occurred in the right barrel of 40MM gun #1, which was cleared. (4) Another misfire occurred in the left barrel of 40MM gun #4, which was cleared. (5) The Mark 14-6 gun sight on 20 MM gun #3 was damaged internally by the blast from five inch gun #3. (6) The Mark 14-6 sight on 20 MM gun #27 was internally damaged by the blast from five inch gun #5. (7) 20 MM gun #6 had a short blow back which was immediately cleared. The total number of rounds expended on these seven planes was as follows: 332 rounds 5"/38, 1714 rounds of 40 MM and 1930 rounds of 20 MM. Nameplates recovered in the vicinity of the damage were submitted to the Joint Intelligence Officer, USS ELDORADO, and were identified as those coming from carrier-type Zekes. The remnants of a Japanese 20 MM gun were recovered and it was found to be loaded with armor piercing and tracer ammunition. There was no evidence of strafing. It is not believed that planes carried bombs. Gasoline from plane hitting director caused fire but it was quickly controlled.

5. The damage done to the ship is listed in enclosure (D).

6. Personnel casualties are listed under enclosure (E).

7. Once again "Lady Luck" was on board ship. The plane that crashed could have caused considerably more damage. The contributing factors in stopping these suicide planes proved to be high speed, a large volume of accurate fire, good battery discipline, and radical maneuvers. It is believed that this hit could have been prevented if plane had been detected slightly earlier and if the minesweepers

10 April 1945

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Special Action Report (Anti-Aircraft by Surface Ship) on
6 April 1945, submission of.

on the starboard bow had not prevented a sharp turn so that the full battery could be brought to bear. Total elapsed time to eliminate the last five planes was seven minutes, 40 seconds. Total elapsed time for the entire action was 68 minutes, 40 seconds.

8. The performance of all hands was excellent and morale remained good in spite of the casualties suffered. The Damage Control party functioned perfectly and quickly had the fire under control and wounded delivered to the Wardroom.

E. S. BURNS

cc: Cominch - Readiness Div (Adv. copy and all enclosures)
CTG 51.5
CTF 51
Com5thFlt
Cincpac
ComDesPac (all enclosures)
ComDesDiv 90
ComDesRon 45

U.S.S. HOWORTH (DD592)

REPORT OF DAMAGE

(EXCERPT FROM DEFERRED DISPATCH 081125 OF APRIL 1945, FROM HOWORTH TO CTF 51).

Main Battery Director was holed and knocked from foundation by plane flying directly into Control Officers telescope. Rear of director was separated from director evidently by force of plane engine passing through. All instruments inside the director were destroyed or missing. Mark Twelve and Mark twenty Two Radar Antennas were thrown clear and demolished. Director rested on the port quarter of it's foundation at a ninety degree angle for several hours being held by the center column cables and several four inch lines. These eventually parted and the director fell clear of the ship in forty fathoms of water, striking the port Torpedo Director, Lookouts Seat, and Bridge Windshield, all on the port side. The Port Torpedo Director and Lookout Seat require replacement and the windshield needs repairs. Air defense control panel including range and bearing indicators destroyed and require replacement. Foundation is distorted and depressed aft and to port from one to one and one half inches. This resulted in severe strains to the entire superstructure down to the main deck between frames 57 and 72. In this area on the main, superstructure and bridge decks, frames, beams and stanchions are warped and some bulkheads are torn. Watertight bulkhead at frame 72, superstructure deck is torn at the top and is buckled and door frame to watertight door 0172 is warped preventing closure. Two stanchions port and at frame 61 on main deck are severed at the top. Port wing of plane struck starboard bridge windshield and pilot house. Mark 14 Mod 8 sight to starboard Mk 51 director damaged but has been replaced from spare. Port 36" searchlight has lens broken and frame warped and will possibly require replacement. About 15 feet of wave guide for the SG radar is distorted and requires replacing. Port Flag Bag requires replacement. Three stays supporting mast were severed but have been temporarily repaired. Resulting fire caused minor damage but was quickly controlled. Other minor damage includes severing Main Radio Antennas amidships and lifelines on port side aft by two additional planes that crossed ship and crashed close aboard. Ship is seaworthy but has only local control for gun battery.

U.S.S. HOWORTH (DD592)

LIST OF PERSONNEL CASUALTIES

Following casualties sustained in action on 6 April 1945.

Killed in Action

Lieutenant Henry Rawlings HAMNER, 165597, USN
LECREN, Morris Earl, 837 86 67, FC3c, USNR
NOLAN, George Francis, 223 94 89, FC2c, USN

Died of Wounds Received in Action

STRIBLING, "J" "W", 896 79 50, FCR3c, USNR

Missing in Action

Ensign Horace Lomax BAYLESS, 389350, USN
BRAMBLE, Russell Alonzo, 961 50 69, Slc, USNR
GRIMM, Jay Vaughn, 957 39 79, Slc, USNR
RAINES, James Orvill, 645 47 19, Y2c, USNR
SANCHEZ, Julius Cesar, 382 76 89, FC1c USN

Wounded in Action

Lieutenant (jg) Amory O Moore, Jr., CD, USNR
Lieutenant (jg) James M. Ellis, D, USNR
MURPHY, Bernard John, FC2c, USNR
MILLER, Jerome Anglim, Slc, USNR
NORDIEWICZ, Arthur A., Slc, USNR
LYONS, Robert B., Slc, USNR
DEASON, Henry Thomas, Slc, USNR
PAXTON, Elden J., SoM2c, USNR
DAY, Curtis H., Slc, USNR
RUIZ, Secorro (n), Slc, USNR
SMILINICH, Milan (n), Cox., USNR
SALEM, Earl A., CCS, USN
DE GIGLIO, Peter P., SM2c, USNR
LYNCH, George W., SM1c, USN