

United States Navy

Carrier Air Group 12 (CVG-12)



History

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS..... 3
INTRODUCTION..... 3
 USS Saratoga Embarkation 4
OPERATION SHOESTRING 2 4
THE RABAUL RAIDS 5
 First Strike - 5 November 1943..... 5
 Second Strike - 11 November 1943 7
OPERATION GALVIN..... 7
OPERATION FLINTLOCK..... 7
NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION RIBBON..... 8
OPERATION COCKPIT - INDIAN OCEAN OFFENSIVE 9
OPERATION TRANSOM - INDIAN OCEAN OFFENSIVE..... 10
 USS Randolph Embarkation..... 11
TASK GROUP 58.4 - REAR ADMIRAL ARTHUR W. RADFORD..... 11
OPERATION JAMBOREE 12
TASK GROUP 58.2 - REAR ADMIRAL RALPH E. DAVISON 14
OPERATION ICEBERG 14
TASK GROUP 58.3 - VICE ADMIRAL WILLIS AUGUSTUS LEE 15

INTRODUCTION

1. Fighting Squadron 12 "stood up" at the San Diego Naval Air Station in October 1942 as the United States Navy's first Vought F4U-1A Corsair unit. By late January 1943 the VF-12 "Thunderbirds" had 22 combat-ready Corsairs and began carrier



landing practice. On March 3 1943 the squadron was bound for the Pacific aboard the *USS Sangamon* CVE-26.

2. Upon they're arrival in Noumea, New Caledonia VF-12 was ordered to turn over they're Corsairs to the United States Marine Corps on Espirito Santo and then began training in the Grumman F6F-3 Hellcat.
3. This History records the activity of CVG-12 whilst embarked in The USS Saratoga (CV-3) and the USS Randolph (CV-15).
4. CVG-12 would like to thank Lancer_35thCAG for the collation and writing of this history.

USS Saratoga Embarkation

OPERATION SHOESTRING 2

5. After participating in combined fleet exercises off Espiritu Santo between the 7th and 10th of October 1943, VF-12, now part of Carrier Air Group 12, departed Espiritu Santo aboard the *USS Saratoga* (CV-3) on October 31, 1943; along with Air Group 23 aboard the *USS Princeton* (CVL-23), to form backbone of Task Force 38. Here *USS Saratoga* is underway off Espiritu Santo in October 1943



Task Force 38 (Rear Admiral Frederic C. Sherman) (Carrier Unit)		
USS <i>Saratoga</i> CV-3	USS <i>Princeton</i> CVL-23	
CVG-12	CVG-23	
VF-12 33 x F6F-3	VF-23 19 x F6F-3	
VB-12 22 x SBD-5	---	
VT-12 16 x TBF	VT-23 7 x TBF	
Task Force 39 (Rear Admiral L. J. Wiltse) (Support Unit)		
Cruiser Division 11		
USS San Diego CL-53	USS San Juan CL-54	
(Screening Unit)		
<u>Destroyer Squadron 12</u>	<u>Destroyer Squadron 23</u>	<u>Destroyer Squadron 24</u>
USS Buchanan DD-131	USS Woodworth DD-460	USS Guest DD-472
USS Farenholt DD-332	USS Fullam DD-474	USS Bennett DD-473
USS Lansdowne DD-486	USS Lardner DD-487	USS Hudson DD-475

6. As part of Operation Shoestring 2, Task Force 38 was assigned to raid the Japanese airfields on Buka and Bonis Islands off the northern tip of Bougainville, in order to cover the landings being made at Cape Torokina and Empress Augusta Bay. For the first two days in November 1943, the *Saratoga*, and *Princeton* made vicious assaults on the Buka and Bonis Islands airfields, approaching so close to shore (13 miles south east of the islands (06° 25' S 154° 53' E) that the twin fields were almost visible from the ships.
7. After refueling on 3 November 1943 Admiral Halsey ordered Task Force 38 across the Solomon Islands, to a point north of Vella Lavella Island. Japanese heavy

cruisers and other IJN warships had been reported crowding into Rabaul's Simpson Harbor to counterattack the Allied landing forces on Bougainville.

THE RABAUL RAIDS

First Strike - 5 November 1943

8. The weather favored TF 38 when it arrived at its designated launching point, 57 miles southwest of Cape Tokorina and 230 miles southeast of Rabaul. The sea was smooth, allowing the destroyers to keep station, while overcast skies lessened the chances of being observed by Japanese patrol planes. Saratoga's Air Group 12, headed by Commander Henry H. Caldwell, sent every plane it had into the sky; 33 F6Fs, 16 TBFs and 22 SBDs. Princeton sent up 19 Hellcats and 7 Avengers. Lieutenant Commander "Jumping Joe" Joseph J. Clifton, leader of Saratoga's air group, later said, "The main idea of the orders was to cripple as many of them as we could rather than concentrate on sinking a few."

9. Two hours after launching, the 97 planes reached their targets, Simpson Harbor, the inner anchorage at Rabaul, and the outer roadstead at Blanche Bay. Again the Americans got a break from the weather, which was so clear over Rabaul that they could see for 50 miles. That was especially welcome under the circumstances, because although the aircrews had been rigorously trained to hit moving targets, there had not had time to prepare a detailed plan of attack for the Rabaul strike; much of which being worked out by group and squadron commanders over their radios while enroute. Here ENS Charles Miller, LTJG Henry Dearing, and LTJG "Bus" Alber walk to their Hellcats prior to raid on Rabaul



10. The strike force was met with a wall of anti-aircraft fire, and a total of 59 A6M3 Zeros. The Japanese had expected the Americans to break into small groups as they neared the targets, but instead, Lt. Commander Caldwell simply directed the large formation through the gantlet of AA fire, letting it split into smaller groups only at the last moment before making their attacks. Unwilling to go through their own flak, the Zeros milled around. VF-12's and VF-23's 52 Hellcats went after them with a vengeance.

11. Meanwhile, ignoring the curtain of AA shellfire, Lt. Commander Caldwell led the SBDs and TBFs across Crater Point in order to swing upwind of the enemy ships. Only then did he deploy his SBDs while the TBFs went down low to start their torpedo runs. By then, the Japanese ships were either steaming for the harbor entrance or taking evasive action. One heavy cruiser even fired its main 8-inch gun battery at the TBFs.

12. As they pulled up from their attacks, the SBD and TBF pilots found themselves dodging over or around ships for four or five miles. Miraculously, all but five

fighters and five bombers emerged from the wild melee, although almost all of the survivors suffered some damage.

13. Lt. Commander Caldwell, who had been directing the dive bombers from above, found himself and Lieutenant H.M. Crockett, one of Princeton's Hellcats, being chased by no less than eight Zeros. His rear turret was disabled and his navigator/radio operator was dead, but Lt. Commander Caldwell managed to fend off his attackers with his nose machine gun. Lieutenant Crockett took more than 200 hits in his Hellcat, yet he managed to land aboard Princeton later without flaps; while Caldwell brought his Avenger back to Saratoga "with one wheel, no flaps, no aileron and no radio."
14. Total American losses in the attack came to 13 aircraft, seven pilots and eight crewmen killed or missing in action. Task Force 38's Hellcat pilots however were credited with 21 victories and the TBFs and SBDs claimed another seven.
15. The attack did not sink any ships, but it accomplished its mission. The heavy cruiser Atago was damaged by two near misses and the heavy cruiser Takao took two hits under the waterline. VB-12's SBDs caught the heavy cruiser Maya refueling, and sent a bomb down her smokestack and into her engine room, causing damage that would keep her out of commission for five months. The heavy cruiser Mogami took some damaging bomb hits as well as the light cruisers Chikuma, Kumano and Agano. The light cruiser Noshiro took a torpedo hit, along with the destroyer Fujinami, while the destroyers Amagiri and Wakatsuki were holed by near misses.
16. 5 November 1943, was recorded as one of the most brilliant air strikes of the war.

17. Three days after the strike, Admiral Halsey came aboard as the Saratoga entered the harbor at Espiritu Santo. "Your strike was another shot heard 'round the world," he said. "The Saratoga, when given the chance can be deadly." He expressed his personal gratitude at the job accomplished and claimed the two carriers had saved thousands of lives by crippling the Japanese fleet before it could attack our Marines on Bougainville. Besides the personal appearance of



the Admiral, there were other glowing tributes to the Saratoga expressed in radio messages from Admiral King, and General MacArthur. A treasured dispatch is that of General Hap Arnold of the U.S. Army Air Forces; "Your flyers have set a record for damage per bomb and per torpedo that all other airmen will find hard to equal." VB-12 crewmen swarm over a Dauntless bomber, as a Hellcat taxis forward and another prepares to touch down.

Second Strike - 11 November 1943

18. Nine days after the first strike, and in preparation of the Gilbert Islands offensive, *Saratoga* and *Princeton* formed into Task Force 50's Task Group 50.4. Accompanied by the USS *Essex*, USS *Bunker Hill* and the light carrier USS *Independence* of Task Group 50.3, and two land-based Navy squadrons from New Georgia; VF-17 from Odonga and VF-33 from Segi Point, made another attack on Rabaul from a point near the Green Islands, 225 miles southeast of Rabaul.
19. In all, 148 F6F-3 Hellcats, 24 F4U-1 Corsairs, 58 SBD Dauntless, 33 SB2C Helldivers and 69 Avengers took part in the attack. Of special note was that this was the Curtiss SB2C Helldiver's combat debut. The pilots even speculated on how it would compare with the old Douglas Dauntless.
20. The strike succeeded in sinking the destroyer *Suzunami* and damaging light cruisers *Yubari* and *Agano*, and the destroyers *Jubari*, *Naganami*, *Urakaze*, and *Wakatsuki*, thus ending any remaining threat poised by the Imperial Japanese Fleet in the Solomon Islands.

OPERATION GALVIN

21. For Operation Galvin (Gilbert Islands offensive), the USS *Saratoga* and USS *Princeton* were designated as the Relief Carrier Group. After striking Nauru Island on 19 November 1943, they rendezvoused on 23 November 1943 with the transports carrying the post invasion garrison troops for Makin and Tarawa Atolls. The carriers covered the transports until they reached their destinations, then provided combat air patrols over Tarawa for the remainder of the operation. A rare photo of Sara's squared-off flight deck, shot by a TBD as it leaves the ship.



22. By this time, *Saratoga* had steamed for nineteen months without repairs, and she was detached on 30 November 1943 to return to the United States. She entered dry dock at Hunter's Point, San Francisco in early December 1943, and remained there until the 3rd of January, 1944.

OPERATION FLINTLOCK

23. Once she completed her refit in San Francisco, the *Saratoga* sailed for Pearl Harbor and arrived on 7 January 1944. After a brief period of training, she departed Pearl Harbor on 19 January 1943 with the light carriers, USS *Langley* and USS *Princeton* (CVL-23), to support Operation Flintlock in the Marshall Islands.

24. The *Saratoga*, *Langley* and *Princeton* struck Wotje, Taroa, Utirik and Rongelap Atolls for three straight days, from 29 January to 31 January 1944; then pounded Eniwetok Atoll's main island of Engebi in pre-invasion softening up attacks from 3 February to 6 February and then again from 10 February to 12 February 1944. During this period Air Group 12 again set a new record with a total of 25 strikes in 19 days!
25. The day before the scheduled 16 February 1944 landings, Air Group 12 along with *Langley's* and *Princeton's* Air Groups, delivered the final blows against the Japanese defenses along the invasion beaches; then provided close air support to the landing forces *and* a combat air patrol over the island until 28 February 1944.
26. On March 4th, 1944 The Secretary of the Navy presented the following:

NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION RIBBON

27. The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending TASK FORCE 38 consisting of the USS SARATOGA, USS PRINCETON, USS SAN DIEGO, USS SAN JUAN, USS LARDNER, USS FARENHOLT, USS WOODWORTH, USS BUCHANAN, USS LANSDOWNE, USS GRAYSON, USS STERETT, USS STACK, USS WILSON, USS EDWARDS, CVG12 (VF 12, VT 12, VB 12), and CVLG 23 (VF 23, VT 23) participating in the actions 1 November 1943 to 11 November 1943 at Buka-Bonis and Rabaul for service as set forth in the following:

CITATION

"For outstanding heroism, brilliant tactics and superlative performance in action against enemy Japanese forces in the Bougainville-Rabaul area from 1 November 1943 to 11 November 1943. Operating against heavy odds with the smallest force ever used for such an undertaking, TASK FORCE 38 struck heavily at the enemy airfields of Buka-Bonis on 1 and 2 November in support of our invasion forces on southwest Bougainville and completed making these airfields inoperative for the period of that invasion. A rapid developing and strong surface threat to our forces at Bougainville necessitated the sending of TASK FORCE 38 to intercept this force which was approaching from Truk. On November 5th TASK FORCE 38 struck heavily-defended Rabaul and crippled seven of the ten Japanese cruisers, and one destroyer, and shot down over twenty of the hundred intercepting planes which were in the air when TASK FORCE 38 planes arrived. Reinforced, TASK FORCE 38 struck Rabaul again on November 11th damaging enemy warships and aircraft still further. By their superb, bold and masterly executed attacks on the enemy in this critical period of our South Pacific operations, TASK FORCE 38 not only materially helped shorten the war and save our forces on Bougainville from a crushing blow, but inflicted a decisive defeat on the enemy that ended his plans for counter offensive fleet action in the Marshalls-Gilberts operations in the Central Pacific."

28. All personnel attached to Task Force 38 and embarked squadrons for the period 1 November 1943 to 11 November 1943 are hereby authorized to wear the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION RIBBON.
29. In addition to the Navy Unit Commendation, 127 awards were distributed to Air Group 12 and the *Saratoga's* crew for they're actions at Rabaul and during the Marshall Island campaign. In all, one Navy Cross, one Gold Star, two Legions of

Merit, two Purple Hearts, 20 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 50 Air Medals, and 51 commendation ribbons were issued.

OPERATION COCKPIT - Indian Ocean Offensive

30. As early as the 1943 Casablanca Conference British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had agreed that as soon as American resources would allow it, an American carrier would be dispatched to aid the British Far Eastern Fleet operating in the Indian Ocean. Here the allies were determined to "turn the tide" against the Japanese in the Far East. The main source of Japanese oil was in the occupied Dutch East Indies, and the allied



forces wanted to "cut the pipeline" at the source while the main Japanese fleet was occupied elsewhere. VF-12 prepare to strike down a Hellcat to the Hangar.

31. On 4 March 1944, USS *Saratoga* and three escorting destroyers, the USS *Dunlap*, USS *Fanning* and USS *Cummings* departed Majuro Atoll with orders to report to the British Far Eastern Fleet in Ceylon. The *Saratoga* sailed south over the equator to Espiritu Santo and then to Hobart, Tasmania; south of Australia. There they encountered a storm in the Tasman Sea with winds in excess of 60 knots and heavy seas which broke high over the ship's bridge, resulting in minor damage that was repaired aboard ship by the ship's company. The group continued to sail around Australia's south coast and across the Great Australian Bight, to Fremantle on the southwestern coast of Australia.

32. After a week's liberty in Perth, the group crossed into the Indian Ocean where they rendezvoused at sea on 27 March 1944 with the British Far Eastern Fleet. The force, composed of the British carrier, *Illustrious*, along with three battleships, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, *Valiant*, and *Renown*, along with several Australian and Dutch escorts, arrived at Trincomalee, Ceylon, on 31 March 1944. On 12 April 1944, the French battleship, *Richelieu* arrived, adding to the international flavor of the force. During the next two weeks the carriers conducted intensive training at sea during which *Saratoga's* fliers imparted some of their experiences while flying against the Japanese to the British pilots.

33. The British Far Eastern Fleet, with *Saratoga*, sailed from Trincomalee, on 16 April 1944, and on 19 April 1944 attacked the port of Sabang, on the northwestern tip of Sumatra in the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese were caught completely by surprise and the combined effort destroyed oil refineries, huge storage tanks and transportation facilities. In addition the minelayer *Hatsutaka*, and the transports *Kunitsu Maru* and *Haruno Maru* were sunk.

34. During the day and night several Nakajima B5N Kate torpedo bombers were shot down either by the combat air patrols or anti-aircraft fire. Although many aircraft had been shot down within sight of the ship by her protective aircraft since the war began, it was the first time the *Saratoga's* crew had directly fired at enemy raiders.

OPERATION TRANSOM - Indian Ocean Offensive

35. On 17 May 1944 the second strike of the offensive was launched against the former Dutch naval base at Soerabaja, Java. The principal targets were Japanese shipping, the harbor facilities, installations, and the refineries. Ten per cent of the Japanese high octane gasoline supply was destroyed in one hour. British planes sank transport *Shinrei Maru* while the *Saratoga's* damage Patrol Boat No.36, auxiliary submarine chasers *Cha 107* and *Cha 108*, the cargo ships *Ch_ka Maru* and *Tencho Maru*, and the tanker *Y_sei Maru*.
36. *Saratoga* was then detached the following day with orders to return to the United States. As her and her group passed down the columns of the British Far Eastern Fleet the Allied ships rendered honors and cheered each other.
37. The long cruise from the Indian Ocean to Puget Sound was broken up by stops at Fremantle and Sydney, Australia, Noumea, and Pearl Harbor. *Saratoga* arrived at Bremerton, Washington on 10 June 1944 where CVG-12 disembarked for some much needed R&R, having been in combat for nine months.

USS Randolph Embarkation

38. After training in Astoria, Oregon, Air Group 12 reported on board the USS *Randolph* in San Francisco on 31 December 1944. On 20 January 1945, *Randolph* departed San Francisco for Ulithi Atoll. Newly arrived to Ulithi, the *Randolph* is seen at anchor



on February 8, 1945. On 10 February 1945, *Randolph*, now part of Task Group 58.4, left Ulithi Atoll enroute to Japan.

Task Group 58.4 - Rear Admiral Arthur W. Radford

Task Unit 58.4.1			
USS <i>Yorktown</i> CV-10	USS <i>Randolph</i> CV-15	USS <i>Langley</i> CVL-27	USS <i>Cabot</i> CVL-28
CVG-9	CVG-12	CVG-23	CVG-29
VF-9 36 x F6F5	VF-12 36 x F6F5	VF-23 12 x F6F5	VF-29 12 x F6F5
VBF-9 36 x F6F5	VBF-12 36 x F6F5	VBF-23 12 x F6F5	VBF-29 12 x F6F5
VB-9 18 x SB2C	VB-12 18 x SB2C	---	---
VT-9 18 x TBM3	VT-12 18 x TBM3	VT-23 12 x TBM3	VT-29 12 x TBM3
Task Unit 58.4.2 (Support Unit)			
USS <i>Washington</i> BB-56	USS <i>North Carolina</i> BB-55	USS <i>Missouri</i> BB-63	
USS <i>Biloxi</i> CL-80	USS <i>Santa Fe</i> CL-60	USS <i>San Diego</i> CL-53	USS <i>San Francisco</i> CA-38
Task Unit 58.4.3 (Screening Unit)			
<u>Destroyer Squadron 47</u> USS <i>Halsey Powell</i> DD-686		<u>Destroyer Squadron 60</u> USS <i>Stephen Potter</i> DD-538	
<u>Destroyer Division 93</u>	<u>Destroyer Division 94</u>	<u>Destroyer Division 119</u>	<u>Destroyer Division 120</u>
USS <i>Trathen</i> DD-530	USS <i>Franks</i> DD-554	USS <i>Barton</i> DD-722	USS <i>Benham</i> DD-49
USS <i>Hazelwood</i> DD-531	USS <i>Haggard</i> DD-555	USS <i>Laffey</i> DD-724	USS <i>Colahan</i> DD-658
USS <i>Heerman</i> DD-532	USS <i>Hailey</i> DD-556	USS <i>O'Brien</i> DD-725	USS <i>Moale</i> DD-693
USS <i>McCord</i> DD-534	USS <i>Morrison</i> DD-560	USS <i>Porterfield</i> DD-682	USS <i>Ingraham</i> DD-694

OPERATION JAMBOREE

39. In the predawn hours of 16 February 1945, *Randolph* and the rest of Task Force 58 approached to within 60 miles of the Japanese main island of Honshu, and just 120 miles southeast of Tokyo itself. Poor weather concealed the ships as they prepared to launch the first carrier strike against Japan since the Doolittle raid three years earlier.

40. Their primary targets were the airframe and engine plants at Tachikawa, located northwest of Tokyo. Fighters and fighter-bombers would also sweep the airfields around Tokyo, Jokoham, Kasumigaura, Tateyama, Hachijo-Jima, Nii-Shima and the air and naval base at Yokosuka.

41. With the sun low on the horizon, carrier borne Helldiver and Avenger bombers proceeded to Tachikawa, while the fighters and fighter-bombers headed for



they're assigned targets. VF-12 and VBF-12 Hellcats skimmed low over the Chiba Peninsula to attack the Tateyama airfield south of Tokyo Bay. They then turned north-northeast and raced straight up Tokyo Bay to hit Yokosuka air and naval base just south of Tokyo itself. Here they encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire and fighters, which they endured while strafing and rocketing the aircraft parked on the airfield. In addition to the heavy damage they caused, several enemy fighters were shot down over the area.

42. On 17 February 1945 *Randolph* and the rest of Mitscher's carriers again launched fighter sweeps at dawn, and attacked three factories near Tokyo, before withdrawing shortly before noon.

43. Over 1,000 American carrier planes participated in the strikes, destroying over 500 enemy planes, sinking a number of ships and boats, and damaging a number of factories and other installations. Losses were unexpectedly high, due largely to the high percentage of inexperienced American airmen. Sixty planes were lost in combat, and another



28 were forced to ditch or were otherwise lost.

44. Retiring south from Kyushu *Randolph* and Task Force 58 headed for a refueling rendezvous southwest of Iwo Jima. On 19 February 1945 *Randolph* made a strike on the island of Chichi Jima. On 20 February 1945, she launched three aerial sweeps in support of ground forces invading Iwo Jima and two against Haha Jima. During the next four days further strikes hit Iwo Jima and combat air patrols were flown almost continuously.

45. After refueling again 200 miles east of Iwo Jima, *Randolph* and TF 58.4 departed for more strikes against the Tokyo area. On 24 and 25 February 1945 TF 58.4 made a series of sweeps against airfields in the Tokyo and Nagoja areas, followed by one against Hachijo-Jima on 26 February 1945 before she departing for Ulithi Atoll on 2 March 1945. Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter parked on the port catapult, March 1945. Note the plane's tail markings, unique to this ship



46. On 11 March 1945, while anchored at Ulithi Atoll, a Yokosuka P1Y Frances kamikaze hit the *Randolph* on the starboard side aft just below the flight deck, killing 25 men and wounding 106. She was repaired at Ulithi Atoll before joining Task Group 58.2 enroute to Okinawa on 13 March 1945. USS *Randolph* (CV-15) alongside repair ship *Uss Jason* (ARH-1) at Ulithi Atoll, Caroline Islands, 13 March 1945, showing damage to her after flight deck resulting from a kamikaze hit on 11 March.



47. Struck by a long range kamikaze on March 11, 1945, the hole in her flight deck is seen here.



Task Group 58.2 - Rear Admiral Ralph E. Davison

Task Unit 58.2.1 (Carrier Unit)			
USS Franklin CV-13		USS <i>Randolph</i> CV-15	
CVG-5		CVG-12	
VF-5 36 x F6F5		VF-12 36 x F6F5	
VBF-5 36 x F6F5		VBF-12 36 x F6F5	
VB-5 18 x SB2C		VB-12 18 x SB2C	
VT-5 18 x SB2C		VT-12 18 x TBM3	
Task Unit 58.2.2 (Support Unit)			
USS Wisconsin BB-			
Cruiser Division 16			
USS Alaska CB-1		USS Guam CB-2	
USS Pittsburgh CA-72		USS Santa Fe CL-60	
Task Unit 58.4.3 (Screening Unit)			
<u>Destroyer Squadron 52</u>		<u>Destroyer Squadron 60</u>	
USS Stephen Potter DD-538		USS English DD-696	
<u>Destroyer Division 103</u>	<u>Destroyer Division 104</u>	<u>Destroyer Division 105</u>	<u>Destroyer Division 1106</u>
USS Miller DD-535	USS Hunt DD-674	USS Tingey DD-272	USS Twining DD-540
USS Owen DD-536	USS Lewis Hancock DD-675	USS Halsey Powell DD-686	USS Hickox DD-673
USS The Sullivans DD-537	USS Marshall DD-676	USS Uhlmann DD-687	USS Wedderburn DD-684

OPERATION ICEBERG

48. On 17 March 1945, *Randolph* and the USS *Franklin* sent strikes against Okinawa, Ie-Shima, and Kakeroma Island. The following day, 18 March 1945 Air Group 12 and *Franklin's* Air Group 5 struck the Kobe, Kure and Osaka areas in southern Kyushu.
49. The fighters, fighter-bombers, dive bombers and torpedo planes of CVG-12 and CVG-5 succeeded in destroying the incomplete IJN submarine I-205 in dry dock. In addition they damaged six carriers (Ikoma, Katsuragi, Ryuho, Amagi, Hosho and Kaiya), three battleships (Yamato, Hyuga and Haruna), two cruisers (Tone and Oyodo), one destroyer-escort (DE-Kaki), one submarine (I-400), one oiler (RO-67) and one patrol craft (Cha-229).
50. Before dawn on 19 March 1945, 50 miles off the coast of Japan, a Yokosuka D4Y Judy dive bomber came in low undetected and drop two armor piercing bombs on the *Franklin*. One bomb struck the flight deck centerline, penetrating to the hangar deck, causing massive destruction and igniting fires throughout the second and third decks, knocking out the combat information center and the air plot. The second bomb hit aft, tearing through two decks and fanning fires which triggered ammunition, bombs and rockets.

51. *Randolph* and the rest of Task Force 58.2 covered *Franklin* until she departed for Ulithi Atoll on 20 March 1945. Afterwards *Randolph* joined Task Group 58.3 for continued strikes against Okinawa.

Task Group 58.3 - Vice Admiral Willis Augustus Lee

Task Unit 58.3.1 (Carrier Unit) USS <i>Enterprise</i> CV-6 CVG(N)-90 VF(N)-90 34 x F6F-5(N) VT(N)-90 21 x TBM-3D			
USS <i>Bunker Hill</i> CV-17	USS <i>Essex</i> CV-9	USS <i>Randolph</i> CV-15	USS <i>Hancock</i> CV-19
<u>CVG-84</u>	<u>CVG-83</u>	<u>CVG-12</u>	<u>CVG-80</u>
VF-84 36 x F4U-1D	VF-83 36 x F6F-5	VF-12 36 x F6F-5	VF-80 36 x F6F-5
VMF-221 36 x F4U-1D	VBF-83 36 x F4U-1D	VBF-12 36 x F6F-5	VBF-80 36 x F6F-5
VB-84 18 x SB2C4	VB-83 18 x SB2C4	VB- 18 x SB2C4	VB-80 18 x SB2C
VT-84 18 x TBM3	VT-83 18 x TBM3	VT- 18 x TBM3	VT-80 18 x TBM3
USS <i>Batann</i> CVL-47	USS <i>Langley</i> CVL-27	USS <i>Monterey</i> CVL-26	USS <i>Cabot</i> CVL-28
<u>CVG-47</u>	<u>CVG-44</u>	<u>CVG-28</u>	<u>CVG-29</u>
VF-47 18 x F6F-5	VF-44 18 x F6F-5	VF-28 18 x F6F-5	VF-29 18 x F6F-5
VT-47 18 x TBM3	VT-44 18 x TBM3	VT-28 18 x TBM3	VT-29 18 x TBM3

Task Unit 58.3.2 (Support Unit) USS <i>Astoria II</i> CL-90			
USS <i>New Jersey</i> BB-62		USS <i>Missouri</i> BB-63	
USS <i>South Dakota</i> BB-57	USS <i>Washington</i> BB-56	USS <i>North Carolina</i> BB-55	USS <i>Alabama</i> BB-60
USS <i>Wilkes-Barre</i> CL-103	USS <i>Springfield</i> CL-66	USS <i>Pasadena</i> CL-65	USS <i>Oakland</i> CL-95

Task Unit 58.3.3 (Screening Unit)					
<u>Destroyer Squadron 18</u>		<u>Destroyer Squadron 52</u>		<u>Destroyer Squadron 62</u>	
USS <i>Hickox</i> DD-673		USS <i>Stephen Potter</i> DD-538		USS <i>Haynsworth</i> DD-700	
Destroyer Division 95	Destroyer Division 96	Destroyer Division 103	Destroyer Division 104	Destroyer Division 123	Destroyer Division 124
USS <i>Erben</i> DD-631	USS <i>Kidd</i> DD-661	USS <i>Sullivans</i> DD-537	USS <i>Hunt</i> DD-674	USS <i>Ault</i> DD-698	USS <i>John W. Weeks</i> DD-701
USS <i>Hale</i> DD-642	USS <i>Black</i> DD-666	USS <i>Miller</i> DD-535	USS <i>Marshall</i> DD-676	USS <i>English</i> DD-696	USS <i>Wallace L. Lind</i> DD-703
USS <i>Stembel</i>	USS <i>Bullard</i>	USS <i>Owen</i>	USS <i>Lewis</i>	USS <i>Charles S.</i>	USS <i>Borie</i>

DD-644	DD-660	DD-536	Hancock DD-675	Sperry DD-697	DD-704
USS Tingey DD-272	USS Chauncey DD-269	USS Franks DD-554	USS Halsey Powell DD-686	USS Waldron DD-699	USS Hank DD-702

52. The following is a chronological list of air strikes for Task Force 58.3 from 10 April 1945 to 25 May 1945. All strikes occurred within 50 miles of target. Here we see the crew on the USS Randolph (CV-15) watch as the carrier USS Bunker Hill burns in the distance. The Bunker Hill was the victim of a kamikaze off of Okinawa on May 11, 1945.

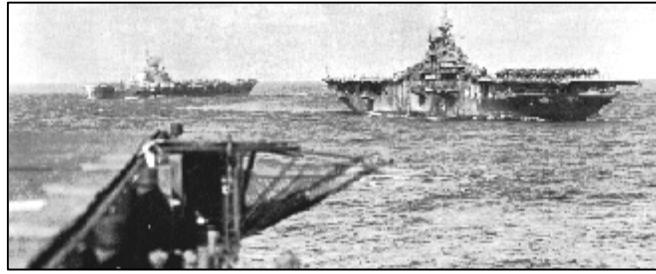


10-11 April 1945: Amami-Shima
 12 April 1945: Amami-Shima, Tokuno-Shima, Kikai-Shima
 13 April 1945: Amami-Shima, Tokuno-Shima
 14 April 1945: refuel 300 miles east of Okinawa (24° 14' N 133° 06' E)
 15-17 April 1945: southern Kyushu / attacked by kamikaze aircraft 15 April 1945
 18 April 1945: refuel 325 miles east of Okinawa (25° 39' N 128° 30' E)
 19-22 April 1945: Okinawa
 23 April 1945: refuel 225 miles east of Okinawa (24° 56' N 131° 30' E)
 24-26 April 1945: Okinawa
 24 April 1945: refuel 200 miles east of Okinawa (26° 29' N 130° 02' E)
 28-30 April 1945: Okinawa / attacked by kamikaze aircraft 29 April 1945 100 miles east of Okinawa.
 01 May 1945: refuel 250 miles east of Okinawa (23° 12' N 131° 24' E)
 02-05 May 1945: Okinawa
 05 May 1945: refuel 250 miles south east of Okinawa (23° 58' N 131° 29' E)
 07-08 May 1945: Okinawa
 10 May 1945: refuel 250 miles south east of Okinawa (23° 59' N 131° 34' E)
 11-12 May 1945: Okinawa
 15 May 1945 refuel 200 miles east of Okinawa (24° 03' N 130° 03' E)
 17-18 May 1945: Okinawa
 23 May 1945: refuel 150 miles east of Okinawa (24° 28' N 130° 48' E)
 24-26 May 1945: Okinawa
 27 May 1945: refuel 200 miles south of Okinawa (22° 49' N 129° 10' E)
 28 May 1945: Okinawa

53. During May 1945 planes from the carriers hit the Ryukyu Islands, Kikai-Amami Island naval base and airfields and southern Kyushu airfields. Becoming the flagship for TF 58 on 15 May 1945 the USS Randolph continued her support of the occupation of Okinawa until 29 May 1945, when she retired via Guam to the Philippines where CVG-12 was relieved by CVG-16 on 4 June 1945. Here USS Randolph (CV-15) is at anchor in the western Pacific, June 1945.



54. Still on alert in case the Japanese surrender was a deception, the Randolph and the other fleet carriers of TF-38 remained at sea while the battleships and some light carriers entered Sagami Bay and then Tokyo Bay for the official surrender. The Randolph and the British carrier HMS Indefatigable are on alert as seen from the USS Wasp (CV-18) on August 30, 1945 off the coast of Japan.



Commanding Officers

55. The following officers served as Commanding Officers of one of the Squadrons or of the Air Group.

55.1. Air Group 12 Commander Officer. Edward J Pawka USN.

55.2. VT-12 Commanding Officer. Thomas B. Ellison, USN. Born 28 July 1914 and Joined the Service on 08 January 1938 having attended the University of Texas As a Naval Aviator he flew TBF, TBD, SB2C, F9F, T-28 and fought in the Battles of The Coral Sea, at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. He also participated in the 1st carrier raids on the Japanese homeland. He Commanded VT-12, VS-32, the Naval Headquarters in Naples, Italy and the NATTC at Jacksonville Florida. He served aboard the USS Salerno Bay as Operations Officer, commanded Joint Task Force 7 in '56 and took OCmmand of COMSTRIKFORSOUTH on 01 Jan 1967. He retired on 01 July 1970 to Colorado Springs, Colorado. During his service his highest award was the Navy Cross.

