

Photo # 80-G-64831 LtCdr John S. Thach, Commanding Officer of Fighting Squadron Three



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VF42/A9-4/P16-2/))  
(42-dam)  
(48)

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET  
AIRCRAFT BATTLE FORCE  
FIGHTING SQUADRON FORTY-TWO

Embarked in  
U.S.S. YORKTOWN  
at Sea,  
April 30, 1942.

From: Commander, Fighting Squadron Forty-Two.  
To : Commander, Carriers, PACIFIC FLEET.  
Subject: Pilot Complement - reports concerning.  
Reference: (a) CABF ltr P16-1/00(2024) of 28 July 1941

1. In accordance with reference (a), the following report is submitted for the month ending APRIL 30, 1942.

NAME	RANK	DATE REPORTED	TOTAL FLIGHT TIME N. qual. for
U.S.N			
FENTON, Charles R.	:LtCdr	: 6-24-41	: 3002.2
FLATLEY, James H.	:LtCdr	: 4-24-42	: 3019.3
MC CORMACK, Vincent F.	:Lieut	: 3-15-41	: 908.4
LEONARD, William N.	:Lt(jg)	: 3-15-41	: 635.3
CROMMELIN, Richard G.	:Lt(jg)	: 3-15-41	: 570.1
PLOTT, Roy M.	:Lt(jg)	: 3-15-41	: 1402.8
BRASSFIELD, Arthur J.	:Lt(jg)	: 3-15-41	: 1457.3
MATTSON, Edward D.	:Lt(jg)	: 12-8-41	: 371.0
A-V(N)			
MACOMBER, Brainard T.	:Lt(jg)	: 3-15-41	: 1122.4
MC CUSKEY, Elbert S.	:Lt(jg)	: 3-15-41	: 1114.9
WOOLLEN, William S.	:Lt(jg)	: 3-15-41	: 1097.4
KNCX, Leslie L.B.	:Ensign	: 3-15-41	: 811.6
BARNES, William W. jr	:Ensign	: 3-15-41	: 663.4
HAAS, Walter A.	:Ensign	: 3-15-41	: 651.3
BASSETT, Edgar R.	:Ensign	: 6-9-41	: 494.3
WRIGHT, Richard L.	:Ensign	: 5-7-41	: 465.7
ADAMS, John P.	:Ensign	: 12-6-41	: 396.0
BAKER, John D.	:Ensign	: 12-8-41	: 340.3
GIBBS, Harry B.	:Ensign	: 12-8-41	: 274.4

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FIGHTING SQUADRON THREE  
TACTICAL ORGANIZATION

MAY 31, 1942.

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL PILOTS, FIGHTING SQUADRON THREE:

1. The following is the Tactical Organization of this squadron as of this date:

1ST DIVISION

3-F-1 Lt.Cdr. J.S. Thach }-(Red)  
2 Ensign R.A.M. Dibb }  
3 Lt(jg) B.T. Macomber }-(Green)  
4 Ensign E.R. Bassett }  
5 Mach't T.F. Cheek }-(Orange)  
6 Ensign D.C. Sheedy }

3RD DIVISION

3-F-13 Lt(jg) W.N. Leonard }-(Blue)  
14 Ensign J.P. Adams }  
15 Lt(jg) W.A. Haas }-(Black)  
16 Ensign G.F. Hopper }  
17 Mach't D.C. Barnes }-Purple  
18 Ensign M. Tootle }

2ND DIVISION

3-F-7 Lt(jg) R.G. Crommelin }-(White)  
8 Ensign J.B. Bain }  
9 Ensign R.L. Wright }-(Yellow)  
10 Ensign G.F. Markham }  
11 Lt(jg) E.S. McCuskey }-(Silver)  
12 Ensign M.K. Bright }

4TH DIVISION

19 Lt(jg) A.J. Brasfield }-(Brown)  
20 Ensign H.B. Gibbs }  
21 Lt(jg) E.D. Mattson }-Scarlet  
22 Ensign H.A. Bass }  
23 Lt(jg) W.S. Woollen }  
24 Lt(jg) W.W. Barnes }-Lavender

Supernumerary Pilots: Ensign H.J. Eppler  
Ensign V.H. Morris  
Ensign R.C. Evans

Spare Plane: 3-F-25

W.N. LEONARD,  
Lieutenant(jg), U.S.N.,  
Flight Officer, VF Squadron 3.

(BUSH)

~~DECLASSIFIED~~

Subject: Report of Action - period 4 June 1942 to  
6 June 1942, inclusive.

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Upon taking departure from the U.S.S. YORKTOWN the squadron climbed to 18,000 ft, enroute to the reported enemy position, remaining above VT-3 and VF-3, proceeding at low altitude and utilizing clouds for screening purposes. Due to faulty electrical bomb release connections, four planes ~~3-B-1~~, ~~3-B-8~~, ~~3-B-11~~, and ~~3-B-17~~, inadvertently dropped their bombs soon after departure.

~~MERRILL~~ ~~NATHAN~~ ~~LESLIE~~ ~~ISAMAN~~ ~~LANE~~  
At about 1200 the enemy was sighted about 35 miles to the southwest steaming on an easterly course, speed about 20 knots. Their forces were estimated to consist of four carriers, two battleships, at least four heavy cruisers, one or more light cruisers, and numerous destroyers. The formation appeared scattered; apparently the carriers had just previously taken aboard their planes that had participated in the attack on Midway Island earlier that morning.

Our combined mission was to attack and destroy by coordinated torpedo and dive bombing action any Japanese carrier encountered.

The squadron swung to the northward as the torpedo planes had not yet reported ready for the attack. At about 1220 Commander, Bombing Squadron Three called Commander, Torpedo Squadron Three and asked if he were ready to commence the attack. ComTorpron Three replied in the affirmative. Almost immediately thereafter ComTorpron Three called ComFitron Three and frantically informed him that there were fighters attacking his squadron.

Meanwhile Bombing Squadron Three commenced its approach from the north with the objective a very large carrier of about 25,000 tons believed to be the AKAOI. Its flight deck was covered with planes spotted aft. Upon sighting our aircraft, the objective turned left 90 degrees to the north in order to launch planes and the sides of the carrier turned into a veritable ring of flame as the enemy commenced firing small calibre and anti-aircraft guns. There was no fighter opposition at altitude. The attack signal was executed and individual planes of VB-3 took interval for diving as the first enemy plane was being launched. Diving from the north, all pilots had a steady dive along the fore and aft line of the target. Lt(jg) Holmberg, 3-B-2, was the first to drop, and his bomb exploded directly in the midst of the spotted planes, turning the after part of the flight deck into sheets of flame. A fighter was blown over the side as it was being launched. Five direct hits and three very near misses were scored immediately thereafter. 3-B-14 and 3-B-15 upon seeing the carrier so heavily hit and burning furiously, shifted their dives

ELDER

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Subject: Report of Action - period 4 June 1942 to  
6 June 1942, inclusive.

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to the light cruiser plane guard, scoring a near miss and a hit on the fantail. 3-B-13 and 3-B-16 likewise shifted to a nearby battleship and scored a direct hit on the stern and a near miss.

BUTLER WISEMAN

Release altitudes averaged 2,500 feet and withdrawal was made to the northeast with radical maneuvering at high speed close to the water amidst heavy anti-aircraft fire. On retirement, 3-B-8 reported being attacked by a twin-float bi-plane, possibly a Kawanishi 95 with no damage resulting.

Thirteen <sup>ISAMA</sup> Mk.13, 1,000 lb. bombs with Mk.21 nose and Mk. 23 tail fuze were dropped, the remaining four having been lost as previously explained.

The carrier was an inferno of flame and undoubtedly a total loss, the battleship was smoking from the stern, the light cruiser attacked was stopped and had settled slightly by the stern, but was not afire.

All Bombing Squadron Three aircraft returned undamaged to U.S.S. YORKTOWN by 1315. Two of our torpedo planes were also observed returning. At 1407 while in the landing circle the YORKTOWN directed over voice radio that all planes get clear as she was about to be attacked. As the squadron had broken up into sections for landing, section leaders took their sections eastward into the area midway between Task Force 17 and Task Force 16 to await the completion of the attack. Jettisoned enemy bombs were observed falling well clear of surface vessels and several Japanese planes fell in flames. One direct hit was observed aft and one amidships on the YORKTOWN. There were several near misses.

While maneuvering in the clear, our planes were mistaken for Japanese, and several sections reported that our fighters fired at them.

When the attack on the YORKTOWN was completed, all section leaders took their sections over to Task Force 16 and landed aboard the U.S.S. ENTERPRISE except 3-B-1, Lt-Cdr. M.F. Leslie, USN, pilot; GALLAGHER, W.E., ARM10, USN, passenger, and 3-B-8, Lt(jg) P.A. Holmberg, USN, pilot; LA PLANT, G.A., ALM20, USN, passenger, which planes have not been seen since they were together in the YORKTOWN landing circle.

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KSDC

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B. First day, 4 June 1942. Second phase: At 1730 LYT (Plus 10) Bombing Squadron THREE, now composed of fourteen SB2C-3 and -3A type airplanes, was launched from the U.S.S. ENTERPRISE in company with six Scouting Squadron Six planes and four Bombing Squadron Six planes as a result of a new contact with the enemy fleet by Scouting Squadron Five scout planes. The enemy was reported to consist of one carrier, two battleships, three heavy cruisers, and four destroyers in position, Lat. 31-40 N, Long. 179-10 W. The attack group was under the command of Commander, Scouting Squadron Six. Bombing Squadron Three's tactical organization was as follows:

3-B-13 ✓ Lt. D.W. Shumway ✓	✓ COONS, R.E., ARM1c
3-B-15 ✓ Ens. B.R. Cooner ✓	✓ BASSETT, C.R., AOM2c
3-B-3 ✓ Ens. P.W. Schlegel ✓	✓ SHROPSHIRE, J.A., ARM3c
3-B-16 ✓ Lt (jg) O.B. Wiseman ✓	✓ DAWN, G.U., ARM3c
3-B-17 ✓ Ens. M.A. Merrill ✓	✓ BERGERON, D.J., ARM3c
6-B-12 ✓ Ens. S.C. Hogan, jr. (VBS)	✓ BRAUN, E.K., Seale
3-B-7 ✓ Lt (jg) G.A. Sherwood ✓	✓ BENNETT, H.D., ARM2c
3-B-8 ✓ Ens. R.M. Isaman ✓	✓ WEAVER, B.K., ARM3c
3-B-2 ✓ Ens. P.W. Cobb ✓	✓ ZIMMERSHEAD, C.E., ARM2c
3-B-10 ✓ Lt. H.S. Bottaaley, jr. ✓	✓ JOHNSON, D.F., ARM2c
3-B-11 ✓ Ens. C.S. Lane ✓	✓ HENNING, J.C., ARM2c
3-B-12 ✓ Ens. J.C. Butler ✓	✓ BERG, D.D., ARM3c
3-B-4 ✓ Ens. R.K. Campbell ✓	✓ CRAIG, H.H., ARM1c
3-B-5 ✓ Ens. A.W. Hanson ✓	✓ GODFREY, J.V., ARM3c
<del>3-B-6 ✓ Ens. R.H. Benson ✓</del>	✓ BERGERON, F.P., ARM3c

At 1750 the group took departure from Task Force 16 and commenced climbing for attack position. The enemy was first sighted to the northwest about 30 miles distant at 1845 from 13,000 ft. on a westerly course, speed 20 knots. Their formation was again widely spaced, as in the previous attack, with little or no screening. The air group immediately swung wide to the southwest in order to approach from the direction of the sun. Weather conditions were ideal with excellent visibility unlimited ceiling, low scattered clouds at 8,500 ft, and smooth sea.

By 1858 the group was in attack position, altitude 19,000 ft. approaching the enemy at high speed from the sun; divisions and sections were stacked down. Commander Scouting Squadron Six

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6 June 1942, inclusive.

-----SHUMWAY

directed by voice radio the ENTERPRISE planes to attack the lone carrier, believed to be of the HOSYO class, and Bombing Squadron Three to attack the nearer battleship. At the same time it was announced that enemy fighters were ahead and above. These were believed to consist of at least twelve of the "Zero" type. At 1905 amidst heavy anti-aircraft fire, Scouting Squadron Six broke off to commence the attack. While these planes were in the dive, COONER the enemy carrier swung sharply to a southerly heading. Observing BOTTOMLEY no direct hits by the Scouting Squadron Six planes, Bombing Squadron Three changed the objective from the battleship to the carrier, which was the specific objective ordered, and commenced the attack. BURRIS Bombing Squadron Six dove last. 3-B-13, 3-B-15, 3-B-10, and 3-B-17. MERRILL were attacked in the dive by the enemy fighters. 3-B-12 and 3-B-16 WISEMAN were reported to have been attacked by fighters and are believed shot down. It is further believed that these casualties occurred after releasing their bombs. 3-B-4 and 3-B-6 attacked the battleship as previously directed, scoring a near miss and a direct hit which started fires. There were four direct hits by Bombing Squadron Three alone on the carrier and it was burning furiously.

CAMPBELL BENSEN  
Retirement was effected by radically maneuvering at high speed near the water both to the east and southwest through heavy anti-aircraft fire and fighter attacks.

3-B-13, Lt Shumway, USN, was attacked by three fighters, both during the dive and retirement, which made sweeping passes from the rear. Two of these were lost in clouds, the other continuing the attack during retirement in the clouds, firing small calibre sighting shots with intermittent 20 mm cannon. The plane was hit by several 20 mm shells damaging right diving and landing flap, right main gas tank (resulting in loss of all fuel remaining in that tank), right elevator and stabilizer, and baggage compartment, exploding therein and throwing fragments into the rear cockpit which resulted in injuring the gunner, COONS, R.E., ARMLa, slightly in the left arm. Several small calibre holes were later discovered about the fuselage and nose section.

PH  
3-B-15, Ensign B.R. Cooner, USNR, was similarly attacked by three fighters which used the same tactics. The pilots also believe some of the fighters to have been Me 109's. One 20 mm shell passed through the rear cockpit exploding in the radio transmitter, thereby seriously wounding the gunner, BASSETT, C.R., AOM2c, in the right knee. The pilot received a slight leg wound.

VF3/CV8/A16-3(1)

FIGHTING SQUADRON THREE

OF10/a

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Postmaster,  
San Francisco, Cal.  
June 12, 1942.

From: Commander, Fighting Squadron THREE.  
To : The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. YORKTOWN.  
Subject: The Battle of Midway - Combat report.

1. NARRATIVE OF EVENTS - FIGHTING SQUADRON THREE:

(a) At 1105, a division of six (6) F4F-4 airplanes, led by LtCdr. Thach, departed from the U.S.S. YORKTOWN as escort for VT-3 in an attack on enemy carriers reported bearing 233° T., distance 141 miles. Prior to take-off, the leader was informed that the enemy carrier had changed course to 270° T., but that this change of course should be used with caution, as it was probably for the purpose of launching planes, and not a change in base course. VT-3 had departed fifteen minutes earlier, but the visibility was excellent, both above and below the broken clouds and they were joined by the fighters at 1130. At 1200, VT-3, flying just below the clouds, changed course to ~~270~~° T. At 1210, three enemy carriers in formation about four miles apart, supported by heavy cruisers and destroyers, were sighted heading south-east. Four VF took a position up-sun about 6,000 feet from VT-3, who were at this time, flying at about 2,000 feet altitude just above large, scattered clouds. The remaining two VF were closer over the VT squadron. At 1220, two bursts of A.A., near our VF, directed a squadron of about twenty (20) type Zero fighters toward us. They were coming in from above and immediately attacked the VF escort. VT-3 dropped into a cloud and disappeared from view, headed toward the port bow of the leading enemy carrier. I saw three torpedo hits on the leading carrier and one or two torpedo hits on the second carrier. Several bomb hits and near misses were seen on each of the three carriers. At this time, we were directly over heavy ships of the inner screen, but were not able to see any of the VT planes retiring. Each time an attempt was made to straighten out and look for VT planes, the Zero fighters would be able to press home an attack from astern and one of the F4F-4's would be heavily hit and fall out of the fight. One was seen going straight down, leaving a smoke trail. Soon there were only three F4F-4's remaining in this aerial battle, but we continued to fight as a team, shooting Japs off of each others tail, and taking "pot" shots at them as they recovered from an attack. Cloud cover was available below, but was not taken due, partially to the desire to stick to-gether for mutual support, and in order to join the retirement and rendezvous of the VT. However, no VT could be located, and it is doubtful if we could have assisted them in any event, due to the continual attacks made upon us by the enemy fighters. Many Zero fighters were kept engaged throughout the torpedo and dive-bombing attacks. Later, as the fight continued, it appeared that our tactics were beginning to be successful - purely as a defensive measure, however. There were so many Japanese fighters always above us, that they had to circle around and await their turn to come in for an attack. Most of them used the same form of attack. They would attempt to approach from above-rear at

VF-3



C O - N - F - I - D - E - N - T - I - A - L FIGHTING SQUADRON THREE

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high speed, shoot and recover by climbing vertically until they were out of reach. As each attacker approached, a turn was commenced and when the enemy came within gun-range, the turn was increased sharply by each plane in the formation. This appeared to keep the Japs bullets astern of the cockpit and if the Jap flew on past after shooting (as they usually did), the leader could, by reversing his turn, get a shot at the enemy head-on, or as he was climbing in his recovery. The performance of the Zero fighter is so far superior to our own that the Japanese pilots did not bother to drop their 100 gallon belly tanks while dog fighting. These tanks were heavy, as evidenced by large quantities of gasoline streaming out when they were hit. At about 1240, there were only two Japanese VF remaining in the vicinity, the others having been shot down or returned to their burning carriers. These two had no more inclination to fight. When we departed at about 1245, three (3) enemy carriers were burning. The leading carrier was afire from stem to stern, and was shooting bright red and pink flames up higher than the length of the ship. The second carrier was flaming and the third was covered with a large column of smoke, but no flame could be seen. Apparently, these six fighters were the only VF to make contact with enemy fighters during the combined and nearly simultaneous attack of the three carrier air groups from the Yorktown, Hornet and Enterprise. The enemy carriers were apparently untouched when this group arrived and it is believed the three VF were the last of the carrier attack group to leave the vicinity of the enemy carriers.

Three of the pilots of the VF escort are not now available to make reports. Based on reports of the other three pilots, five, and probably six, Zero fighters were shot down and an additional four damaged.

The loyalty, teamwork and courage displayed by the pilots supporting the leader of this division of fighters who fought continuously for a period of twenty minutes over the enemy fleet against a force overwhelmingly superior in numbers and aircraft performance, was nothing short of magnificent.

(b) At about 1345, two six-plane divisions led by Lt.(jg) R.G. Crommelin and Lt.(jg) A.J. Brassfield were launched and vectored out on course 250° T. At about 1405, contact was made with an enemy formation of eighteen (18) dive-bombers protected by many Zero fighters. The exact number of fighters has not been definitely established, although the Japanese usually provide a fighter escort of 16 to 20 VF with their attack groups. The enemy dive-bombers and fighters were immediately attacked. This enemy dive-bombing attack was disrupted and practically broken up. It is believed that only four and possibly five dive-bombers were able to release their bombs at the target. Many of the enemy jettisoned their bombs and attempted to fight back. Each time our VF attacked the enemy VB, they in turn were exposed to attack by the escorting Zero fighters. The results indicate, however, that our VF pilots concentrated on the dive-bombers. In this engagement, ten (10) dive-bombers were shot down and seven (7) additional dive-bombers damaged or shot down. Two Zero fighters shot down and three (3) additional VF damaged or shot down. The pilots who survived this engagement were landed on the Enterprise and Hornet.

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FIGHTING SQUADRON THREE

June 12, 1942.

CONTINUED:

Subject: The Battle of Midway - Combat report.

(c) At about 1630, the Yorktown, having gotten underway again, and able to make 15 knots, launched two divisions of four (4) VF each led by LtCdr. J.S. Thach and Lt(jg) W.N. Leonard. An enemy torpedo plane attack developed during this take-off. The enemy VT were within A.A. range and the carrier was firing when the last few VF rolled down the deck. These pilots had time only to turn off the bow and fire at the enemy planes through a heavy barrage of our own anti-aircraft fire. Several of our own VF were hit by A.A. fire from vessels of the screen and two of them were possibly shot down by A.A. This VF patrol could not be gassed before take-off and some of the planes had as little as 30 gallons of gasoline. The Yorktown, having been stopped since the previous bombing attack, had no combat-air patrol in the air at the time the attack developed. Evidently, the combat-air patrol from other ships made no contact with the enemy VT at any time. The known results of the attack on enemy planes, made by the eight VF of this squadron who were launched while the attack was coming in, are as follows: Six (6) enemy VT, shot down and two VT damaged or probably shot down. Two (2) enemy VF shot down and two additional VF damaged or shot down.

2. STATISTICS:

(a) Enemy Losses.

Combat reports have not been received from eight (8) pilots. The following is based on reports from the remaining pilots of this squadron:

Enemy planes SHOT DOWN:	VF - 9
(verified)	VB - 10
	VT - 6
TOTAL --	<u>25</u>
Enemy planes damaged	VF - 6
or probably shot down	VB - 7
	VT - 2
TOTAL --	<u>15</u>
GRAND TOTAL ----	<u>40</u>

(b) Own Losses.

Five (5) pilots are missing in action. One (1) pilot was wounded in action. Five (5) pilots left on Yorktown (assumed are now in ships of T.F. 17). Six (6) planes were lost due to enemy action. One (1) plane on Yorktown, will have to be stricken due to crash on deck. One (1) plane, on Enterprise, needs minor repair. One (1) plane, on Enterprise, needs major repair. Four (4) planes, left on Yorktown, require major repair due to enemy action. Fourteen (14) planes now operating.

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FIGHTING SQUADRON THREE

CONTINUED:

June 12, 1942.

Subject: The Battle of Midway - Combat report.  
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3.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- (a) Pilots in action against Japanese VF must stick together and fight as a team or else they will not survive.
- (b) The Japanese fighter pilots usually attack from above rear at high speed and recover by climbing vertically until they have lost some speed and then pull on through to complete a small loop or high wing-over which places them out of reach and in position to attack again. By reversing the turn sharply after each attack the leader may get a shot at the enemy while he is climbing away or head on in a scissors if the Jap turns to meet it.
- (c) Two hundred and forty (240) rounds of ammunition per gun is not enough. We should have 500 but would be satisfied with 400. In the F4F-4 airplane it would be better to reduce the number of guns to four in order to increase the amount of rounds carried per gun.
- (d) Any success our fighter pilots may have against the Japanese zero fighter is not due to the performance of the airplane we fly but is the result of the comparatively poor marksmanship of the Japanese, stupid mistakes made by their pilots and superior marksmanship and team work of some of our pilots. The only way we can ever bring our guns to bear on the zero fighter is to trick them into recovering in front of an F4F or shoot them when they are preoccupied in firing at one of our own planes. The F4F airplane is pitifully inferior in climb, maneuverability and speed. The writer has flown the F4F airplane without armor and leak proof tanks. Removal of their vital protection does not increase the performance of the F4F sufficiently to come anywhere near the performance of the zero fighter. This serious deficiency not only prevents our fighters from properly carrying out an assigned mission but it has had a definite and alarming effect on the morale of most of our carrier based VF pilots. If we expect to keep our carriers afloat we must provide a VF airplane superior to the Japanese zero in at least climb and speed, if not maneuverability.
- (e) VF pilots must be expert with their fixed guns. They have such a short time to do their work that they cannot afford to make a run on an enemy plane and miss. Opportunity must be afforded VF squadrons to practice

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FIGHTING SQUADRON THREE

CONTINUED:

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on a target sleeve both ashore and at sea. The should not be required to stand alerts when temporarily based ashore but should use all of their time in perfecting VF tactics, team-work and practice on a sleeve.

(f) Fighter directing in general was far from satisfactory. Many interceptions were missed. If one fighter director is to control aircraft from two or more carriers the facilities aboard ship must be reorganized and expanded to fit the needs. Above all each carrier should actually practice interceptions at sea. The maintenance of radio silence while in the vicinity of a Fleet Base is certainly of less importance. We must be able to send fighters out in sufficient numbers to meet enemy attack groups at least forty miles away. A pilot cannot navigate on the way out to an interception. He must be required to fly a compass course only.

(g) The pilots of VF-42 who participated in the Coral Sea engagement and the Battle of Midway have under gone a long and strenuous period of war operations at sea without rest or relaxation. It became necessary to ground some of these pilots before return to port. They are all without exception suffering from combat fatigue which a few days rest will not cure. It is recommended that they be returned to the United States for a period of leave and then be used at advanced training centers or to fit out a new carrier groups.

*J. S. Thach*  
J. S. THACH.

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U.S.S. HORNET

FIGHTING THREE ACCOUNT OF AIRCRAFT

Plane	Disposition	Total	Final Disp.
3F-13	Landing crash 29 May.) ?	2	Left on YK'TN
3F-14	" " " " " ) 0		" " "
3F-6	Shot up while on Torpedo escort to Jap.CV).		" " "
3F-24	" " " " " " " )		Hornet pushed over side.
3F-9	Shot down while on Torpedo escort to Jap.CV. 1		Lost
3F-2	Shot down during Torpedo attack on Yorktown.		Lost
3F-7	" " " " " " "		Lost
3F-18	" " " " " " "		Lost
3F-8	" " " " " " "		Lost
3F-10	Shot up & crash on YK'TN. after Torpedo Escort.		Left on YK'TN.
3F-23	Left on YK'TN. because very low on gas.		" " "
3F-17	Crash on Enterprise by VF-6 pilot.		Left on ENT.
3F-3	Left on Enterprise for minor repairs.		" " "

TOTALS:	Available Hornet	Thrown over side Hornet	Lost	Left on Yorktown	Left on Enterprise	Grand Total
	14	1	5	5	2	27

J. S. TEACH,  
Lieut. Comdr., U.S.N.,  
Commanding, VF-3.

Enclosure (D)

VF-3

U.S.S. HORNET

Fighting Squadron Three Partial Bag For Battle of Midway

(Reports of action have not been received from eight pilots)

NAME	Enemy Shot Down-Certain	Probably shot Down or Damaged
F-1 Lt. Comdr. J.S. Thach (VF-3)	3VF, 1VT	1VT
F-13 Lt(jg) W.N. Leonard (VF-42)	1VT	1VT
F-7 Lt(jg) R.G. Crommelin (VF-42)	1VF	1VF
F-19 Lt(jg) A.J. Brassfield (VF-42)	4VB	2VB
F-2 Lt(jg) E.D. Mattson (VF-42)	1VB	-
F-11 Lt(jg) E.S. McCuskey (VF-42)	3VB, 2VF	3VB
F-24 Lt(jg) W.W. Barnes (VF-42)	1VB	2VB, 1VF
F-15 Lt(jg) W.A. Haas (VF-42)	1VT	-
F-14 Ens. J.P. Adams (VF-42)	1VT	1VT
F-8 Ens. J.B. Bain (VF-42)	1VF	-
F-6 Ens. D.C. Sheedy (VF-3)	1VF	-
F-7 Ens. R.A.M. Dibb (VF-3)	1VF	-
F-22 Ens. H.A. Bass (VF-3)	1VB	1VF
F-17 Mech. D.C. Barnes (VF-3)	2VT	2VF

Total Certain Bag: Enemy VF - 9  
 " VB - 10  
 " VT - 6  
 Grand Total 25

Total Probable Bag (Damaged or Shot Down):  
 Enemy VF - 6  
 " VB - 7  
 " VT - 2  
 Grand Total 15

*Pilots switched planes. Difficult to say who flew which one.*

~~DISB A~~  
 GIBBS OR DISB FLEW F-20 ip 396

EPPLER, EVANS, MICKY DID NOT FLY AT MIDWAY

Enclosure (D)

U.S.S. HORNET

REPORT ON **VF-3** PILOTS NOT ABOARD U.S.S. HORNET

NAME	REMARKS	ACTION
Lt(jg) B.T. Macomber (VF-42)	Left on Yorktown	VT escort for attack on enemy carriers.
Lt(jg) E.S. McCuskey (VF-42)	Left on Enterprise	VB & VT attacks on Yorktown.
<del>Lt(jg) W.S. Woollen (VF-42)</del>	<del>Missing in Action</del>	<del>VT &amp; VB attack on York'tn</del>
F-4 Ens. E.R. Bassett(VF-42)	" " "	VT escort for attack on enemy carriers. Probably shot down.
Ens. R.L. Wright(VF-42)	Left on Enterprise	VB attack on York'tn.
Ens. H.B. Gibbs (VF-42) <i>Hughes</i>	Missing in Action	VB & VT attacks on Yorktown.
Ens. G.F. Hopper (VF-42)	Missing in Action	VT attack on Yorktown:
Ens. H.J. Eppler (VF-3)	Left on Yorktown	OK Did not fly.
Ens. R.C. Evans (VF-3)	" " "	OK Did not fly.
Ens. V.H. Morris (VF-3)	" " "	OK Did not fly.
Ens. M. Tootle (VF-3)	Landed in water after VT attack on Yorktown by DD.	Believed picked up
Mach. T.F. Cheek (VF-3)	Left on Yorktown	VT escort for attack on enemy carriers.

*15*

**DECLASSIFIED**

U. S. AIRCRAFT - ACTION WITH ENEMY

INSTRUCTIONS

**ESCORT REPORT -**

- (a) TO BE FILLED OUT BY UNIT COMMANDER IMMEDIATELY UPON LANDING AFTER EACH ACTION OR OPERATION IN CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY.
- (b) DO NOT "GUESS" THIS REPORT - IF DATA CAN NOT BE ESTIMATED WITH REASONABLE ACCURACY ENTER A DASH IN SPACE FOR WHICH NO DATA IS AVAILABLE.

1. DATE June 4 1942 LAT 30-00N LONG 179-00W TIME 1220 ZN plus 10  
 2. WEATHER Large scattered clouds at 1500-2000 Ft., Visibility - Excellent  
 3. UNIT REPORTING Fighting Squadron THREE TYPE PLANES F4F-4

4. NATURE OF OPERATION  
Six-plane escort for torpedo and dive bombing attacks on three (3) Japanese aircraft carriers.

5. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE  
Enemy aircraft threatening own air group.

6. FORCES ENGAGED (include models and markings)

Own	Enemy
Six (6) Model F4F-4	Twenty (20) Model "00" Japanese VF Dull clay color with standard markings

7. TYPE OF ATTACK (~~own~~/Enemy) (Scratch one)  
Japanese usually attacked from above rear at fairly high speed and recovered by climbing vertically until out of reach.

8. ENEMY TACTICS Japanese VF attack own VF escort first with overwhelming numbers in an effort to keep us occupied while smaller units attack own VT or VB. They attack by single planes in quick succession.

9. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTION (include altitudes and range of contact. Altitudes and directions of release and withdrawal.) Upon arrival over enemy seven Jap combat air patrol of 20 VF attacked own 6-plane escort at 4,500 ft. VT dropped into a cloud on port bow of leading carrier and dispersed for torpedo run. 2 VF as close escort became separated from remaining four and were severely damaged by enemy VF. One of remaining four shot down immediately. Three remaining VF continued to engage enemy for 15 minutes over enemy fleet.

10. WEAPONS EMPLOYED

Own	Enemy
Six (6) .50 Cal.	Two (2) cannon and 2 to 4 .7.7 mm. machine guns.

11. EVASIVE ACTION EMPLOYED (own) 4-plane divisions remain in formation and fight as a team. When enemy VF attack make sharp turn and as enemy passes by reverse the turn and attempt to shoot him during his recovery.

12. AMMUNITION EXPENDED (include types and fuse settings. Indicate number of duds.)  
The leader expended about 1200 rounds, others averaged 1,000 rounds .50 caliber.

*Handwritten initials and date: 11/16*

ENCLOSURE "C"



13. RESULTS (Certain)

Six (6) Japanese model "OO" VF shot down.

13a. RESULTS (Estimated)

Seven (7) model "OO" VF estimated shot down.

14. DAMAGE TO OWN AIRCRAFT

One (1) F4F-4 shot down.  
Three (3) F4F-4 damaged beyond repair.

EFFECTIVENESS OF  
LEAK-PROOFING AND ARMOR  
Highly effective

15. FOR ATTACK ON SUBMARINE

- (a) Submarine was (on surface) (submerged) when sighted. \_\_\_\_\_  
(b) Direction of attack relative to submarine was \_\_\_\_\_  
(c) Elapsed time between first sight of sub and first bomb explosion \_\_\_\_\_  
(d) Was any part of sub in sight when bomb released. \_\_\_\_\_  
(e) ELAPSED time between last sight of sub and explosion of bomb \_\_\_\_\_  
(f) Estimated distance between sub or last surface indication of sub and explosions \_\_\_\_\_

16. REMARKS (Use additional sheet if necessary. Make rough sketch if practicable.) Six (6) F4F-4 airplanes cannot prevent 20 or 30 Japanese VF from shooting our slow torpedo planes. It is indeed surprising that any of our pilots returned alive. Any success our fighter pilots may have against the Japanese zero fighter is not due to the performance of the airplane we fly but is the result of the comparatively poor marksmanship of the Japanese, stupid mistakes made by a few of their pilots and superior marksmanship and team work of some of our pilots. The only way we can ever bring our guns to bear on the zero fighter is to trick them into recovering in front of an F4F or shoot them when they are preoccupied in firing at one of our own planes. The F4F airplane is pitifully inferior in climb, maneuverability and speed. The writer has flown the F4F airplane without armor and leak proof tanks. Removal of their vital protection does not increase the performance of the F4F sufficiently to come anywhere near the performance of the zero fighter. This serious deficiency not only prevents our fighters from properly carrying out an assigned mission but it has had a definite and alarming effect on the morale of most of our carrier based VF pilots. If we expect to keep our carriers afloat we must provide a VF airplane superior to the Japanese zero in at least climb and speed, if not maneuverability.

*J. S. Thach*  
J. S. THACH, Lieut-Comdr., U.S. NAVY.  
(Signature)

10-17

DECLASSIFIED

U. S. AIRCRAFT - ACTION WITH ENEMY

DECLASSIFIED - DOD DIR. of 27 SEP 58 BY 0809891C DATE

VF-5 CAP. AFTER YORKTOWN INSTRUCTIONS

- (a) TO BE FILLED OUT BY UNIT COMMANDER IMMEDIATELY UPON EACH ACTION OR OPERATION IN CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY. DO NOT "GUN DECK" THIS REPORT - IF DATA CAN NOT BE ESTIMATED WITH REASONABLE ACCURACY ENTER A DASH IN SPACE FOR WHICH NO DATA IS AVAILABLE.
- RECEIVED  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
U.S. FLEET  
1942 JUL 10 12 39

1. DATE June 4 1942 LAT. -- LONG. -- TIME 1630 ZN 10

2. WEATHER Broken clouds 500 ft. to 1000 ft. about 7/10 overcast.

3. UNIT REPORTING Fighting Squadron THREE TYPE PLANES F4F-4

4. NATURE OF OPERATION  
Combat air patrol against enemy torpedo plane attack directed against U.S.S. Yorktown.

5. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

Enemy VT

6. FORCES ENGAGED (include models and markings)

Own	Enemy
Eight (8) F4F-4	12 to 15 model "97" VT supported by 10 to 18 Zero fighters.

7. TYPE OF ATTACK (Own/Enemy) (Scratch one)  
Opposite approach, side approach and tail chase.

8. ENEMY TACTICS Enemy VT dove down through the clouds at high speed and released torpedoes at a speed of 200 knots at 250 to 300 ft. altitude. Enemy VF escort flew above and astern of VT and attacked own VF.

9. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTION (include altitudes and range of contact. Altitudes and directions of release and withdrawal.) Yorktown had been stopped due to damage from bombs. As soon as ship could get underway 8 V were launched (ships speed 15 knots). Before the last few VF were airborne enemy VT were within AA range. All VF turned off the bow into own AA fire to meet enemy VT.

10. WEAPONS EMPLOYED

Own	Enemy
Six (6) .50 cal.	VT torpedoes and 7.7 mm fixed and free. VF two cannon and two to four 7.7

11. EVASIVE ACTION EMPLOYED (Enemy) Sharp "S" turns.

12. AMMUNITION EXPENDED (include types and fuse settings. Indicate number of duds.)

Average 600 rounds.

ENCLOSURE "C"

13. RESULTS (Certain) Eight (8) VT  
Two (2) VF

13a. RESULTS (Estimated)

Ten (10) VT  
Four (4) VF

14. DAMAGE TO OWN AIRCRAFT  
Four (4) F4F-4 airplanes  
shot down.  
Others severely damaged.

EFFECTIVENESS OF  
LEAK-PROOFING AND ARMOR  
Highly effective. Only two  
F4F-4's were seen burning.

15. FOR ATTACK ON SUBMARINE

- (a) Submarine was (on surface)(submerged) when sighted.  
(b) Direction of attack relative to submarine was \_\_\_\_\_  
(c) Elapsed time between first sight of sub and  
first bomb explosion \_\_\_\_\_  
(d) Was any part of sub in sight when bomb released \_\_\_\_\_  
  
(e) ELAPSED time between last sight of sub and explosion  
of bomb \_\_\_\_\_  
(f) Estimated distance between sub or last surface indication of  
sub and explosions \_\_\_\_\_

16. REMARKS (Use additional sheet if necessary. Make rough sketch  
if practicable.)

The VF combat air patrol from other carriers in the  
vicinity should have intercepted the enemy VT. Apparently  
a few of them intercepted the enemy VF escort only and that  
was done very close in.

*J. S. Thach*  
J. S. THACH,  
(Signature)

-19-12-

VF-3

U.S.S. HORNET

Fighting Squadron Three Partial Bag For Battle of Midway "

(Reports of action have not been received from eight pilots)

NAME	Enemy Shot Down-Certain	Probably shot Down or Damaged
F-1 Lt. Comdr. J.S. Thach (VF-3)	3VF, 1VT	1VT
F-13 Lt(jg) W.N. Leonard (VF-42)	1VT	1VT
F-7 Lt(jg) R.G. Crommelin (VF-42)	1VF	1VF
F-19 Lt(jg) A.J. Brassfield (VF-42)	1VB	2VB
F-21 Lt(jg) E.D. Mattson (VF-42)	1VB	-
F-11 Lt(jg) E.S. McGuskey (VF-42)	3VB, 2VF	3VB
F-24 Lt(jg) W.W. Barnes (VF-42)	1VB	2VB, 1VF
F-15 Lt(jg) W.A. Haas (VF-42)	1VT	-
F-14 Ens. J.P. Adams (VF-42)	1VT	1VT
F-8 Ens. J.B. Bain (VF-42)	1VF	-
F-6 Ens. D.C. Sheedy (VF-3)	1VF	-
F-7 Ens. R.A.M. Dibb (VF-3)	1VF	-
F-22 Ens. H.A. Bass (VF-3)	1VB	1VF
F-17 Mach. D.C. Barnes (VF-3)	2VT	2VF

Total Certain Bag: Enemy VF - 9  
 " VB - 10  
 " VT - 6

Grand Total 25

Total Probable Bag (Damaged or Shot Down):

Enemy VF - 6  
 " VB - 7  
 " VT - 2

Grand Total 15

*Pilots switched planes. Difficult to say who flew which one.*

~~DIBB~~  
GIBBS OR DIBB FLEW F-20 ip 396

EPPLER, EVANS, MORVIO DID NOT FLY AT MIDWAY

Enclosure (D)

20

117

*Lovelace  
Swans 319*

U.S.S. HORNET

**FIGHTING THREE ACCOUNT OF AIRCRAFT**

LEONARD  
HAAS

Plane	Disposition	Total	Final Disp.
3F-13	Landing crash 29 May. ) ?	2	Left on YK <sup>W</sup>
3F-14	" " " " " " ) 0		" " "
MACOMBER 3F-6	Shot up while on Torpedo escort to Jap. CV)		" " "
Sheedy 3F-24	" " " " " " " " )		Hornet pushed over side.
Bassett 3F-9	Shot down while on Torpedo escort to Jap. CV. 1	1	Lost
Woolen 3F-2	Shot down during Torpedo attack on Yorktown.		Lost
HOPPER 3F-7	" " " " " " " " )		Lost
TOOTLE 3F-18	" " " " " " " " )		Lost
GIBBS 3F-8	" " " " " " " " )		Lost
Cheek 3F-10	Shot up & crash on YK <sup>W</sup> . after Torpedo Escort.		Left on YK <sup>W</sup> .
THACH 3F-23	Left on YK <sup>W</sup> , because very low on gas.		" " "
T. BARNES 3F-17	Crash on Enterprise by VF-6 pilot.		Left on ENT.
WRIGHT 3F-3	Left on Enterprise for minor repairs.		" " "

TOTALS:	Available Hornet	Thrown over side Hornet	Lost	Left on Yorktown	Left on Enterprise	Grand Total
	14	1	5	5	2	27

J. S. TEACH,  
Lieut. Comdr., U.S.N.,  
Commanding, VF-3.

*70  
15-  
-21-*

Enclosure (D)