

# EXACT COPY

June 23, 1942

From: Albert K. Earnest, Ensign, A.V.(N) USNR, Torpedo Squadron EIGHT Detachment.  
To: Commander Carriers Pacific.  
Subject: Report on attack on Japanese Force by Six TBF-1 Airplanes.

1. Our detachment took off from Luke Field, Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, T. H. at 0730 June 1, 1942, for Midway Island in six TBF-1 Airplanes. The detachment was commanded by Lt. L. K. Fieberling U.S.N., and the other pilots were: Ensigns O. J. Gaynier; V. A. Lewis; C. E. Brannon; A. K. Earnest USNR, and D. D. Woodside, (NAP), U. S. Navy. Two navigators, Ensigns J. W. Wilkie and J. Hissem, U.S.N.R. were with us. Each plane carried a pilot and a crew of two. The trip was without incident and we arrived at Midway at 1530, Hawaiian time. We immediately loaded the planes with torpedoes and prepared them for action.

2. On the morning of June 4th, 1942, we manned our planes as usual at 0400, warmed them up, cut the engines, and prepared to stand by during the morning alert. At 0545 I was told by a Marine Officer to start my engine, as unknown planes had been sighted by a patrol plane 100 miles from Midway. At 0600 we taxied out, took off, and joined up in two three-planes sections, planes and sections stepped down. We set out on a course of 320° T., at an airspeed 160 knots indicated, at an altitude of 2000 feet. Approximately five minutes after take off we were attacked by two or three enemy planes, one of which I tentatively identified as a Messerschmitt 109 fighter. We evaded these planes, climbed to 4000 feet, and continued on our course. At approximately 0700 we sighted the enemy force about 15 miles away and headed for Midway Island. It was a force of about 10 ships; destroyers, cruisers, and at least one battleship forming a screen around two long carriers. There may also have been transports in the force. Just as we sighted the enemy fleet we were attacked by a large force of enemy fighters. We immediately started in a dive at full throttle through clouds to within 150 feet of the water and headed directly for the carriers. The enemy fighters, which seemed to out-number us at least three to one, were Zero fighters and Messerschmitts. They continued to attack us and on the second burst hit my turret gunner, J. D. Manning, AMM3c, USN., putting him out of action and eventually killing him. At the same time my hydraulic system was shot away, thus causing my tailwheel to drop down and blank out my tunnel gun. Soon after this my tunnel gunner, H. H. Ferrier, RM3c, was hit on the head and although dazed and bleeding, was not seriously injured. I received a small cut on the right cheek, apparently by shrapnel from an explosive shell. When we were still several miles from the Japanese carriers, my elevator wires were shot away. I released my torpedo at the nearest ships, a light cruiser, as I thought I was out of control, but regained control with the elevator tab, before hitting the water. I could not see whether or not my torpedo hit the cruiser. Two enemy fighters chased me for about ten

minutes after this, and although they made runs on me as well, no vital parts of the plane were hit it continued to perform very well. After the enemy planes left me I looked back at the enemy fleet and could see no signs of any ships having been hit. I saw nothing of the other TBF-1's after my elevator wires were hit. I then returned to Midway and was forced to make a crash landing, since both of my wheels would not come down. None of the other TBF-1 airplanes returned to the base.

Respectfully Submitted

A. K. EARNEST