

Allied Planes Deal Damaging Blow To Jap Navy In 2-Day Battle

Won In Bearing Sea Encounter Major Victory

GEN. MACARTHUR'S HEADQUARTERS, Australia, Thursday—Allied planes, in the most resounding victory over Japanese naval units ever accomplished in Gen. Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific command, have shattered a huge enemy convoy bound for New Guinea, leaving 10 warships and 12 transports sunk or sinking and almost 15,000 enemy troops drowned or killed.

At least 55 Japanese planes were shot out of action in the running air-surface battle fought Tuesday and Wednesday in the Bismarck sea, north of New Britain island. The allied losses were one bomber and three fighters.

The Japanese warships were described as "cruisers or destroyers." The Bismarck sea battle, results of which were announced by the united nations command in today's communique, was out-ranked in its destructiveness to Japanese sea power only by the battles of the Coral sea and Midway and some of the hard-fought convoy engagements of the Solomon islands.

"The battle of Bismarck sea now is decided," the communique said. "We have achieved a complete victory. The complete success was such as to assume the proportions of a major disaster for the enemy. His entire force was practically destroyed."

MacArthur himself, commenting on the success said: "Merciful Providence has guided us to this victory."

Observers were of the opinion, however, that prudent planning had as much to do with the victory as Providence.

"One of the greatest factors contributing to our success," a headquarters spokesman said, "was the fact that the Japanese convoy was anticipated and its intentions diagnosed."

Allies Prepared For Attack
For several weeks air reconnaissance reports have shown that the enemy was reinforcing his strength in the island perimeter bounding Northern Australia from Timor to the Solomons.

"Our air force had been conditioned and prepared for the attack during recent lulls in our aerial activity," the spokesman continued. "They were all too ready to meet the enemy with over 100 tons of bombs and many thousand pounds of ammunition."

Yap's "Eye" communique had reported that American Flying Fortress and B-25 bombers of the marine expeditionary force, which had sunk two large transports and seven B-25s and two smaller ships Tuesday morning.

Later Tuesday morning, Fortresses scored a direct hit on one cargo ship and nearly hit another. In the afternoon a 6,000-ton enemy vessel was sunk and near misses scored on two others.

By yesterday morning, the convoy had entered Suva gulf off Lae, the big Japanese base, and was joined by eight vessels, bringing the strength to 22 ships. The Bismarck sea was strewn with wreckage of Japanese ships and planes.

Douglas (A-20) Bostons opened the attack yesterday morning, skimming over the enemy ships at mast-height and inflicting "considerable damage," the spokesman said.

The Bostons bombed a 6,000-ton cargo vessel and two other medium ships, all of which were left burning. Other A-20's scored hits on three smaller ships. In all, the small attack planes scored a total of 12 direct hits on six ships and encountered three Japanese fighter

planes that did not attempt battle. North American (B-25) Mitchell bombers then took over the attack, bombing and strafing 10 ships later yesterday. One of these was a destroyer which capsized and sank. Another was a 5,000-ton vessel that

sank within two minutes after a direct hit was scored on it.

Two other destroyers were hit and set afire and several other medium cargo ships were struck.

When the Mitchells left the scene, four big columns of smoke towered

from the oil-slicked waters and were visible for 40 miles.

Three waves of Boeing Fortresses also blasted the convoy yesterday morning. The first wave scored a direct hit and a near miss on one cargo vessel and fought off

between 15 and 18 Japanese fighters, destroying seven and damaging one.

The second wave hit and near-missed a 4,000-ton cargo vessel that exploded and sank. This wave of the big bombers was engaged

by 8 to 10 Japanese fighters. One was destroyed and two were damaged.

Allied Planes Win Fierce Dogfight

The third flight hit a medium-sized ship and met 15 Japanese fighters, destroying two and damaging three.

fighters, destroying two and damaging three. Yesterday's big air battle occurred when Lockheed P-39 fighters engaged in a dogfight with 25 Japanese fighters, shooting down 10 and damaging three.



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