

Operation Forager

Phase III

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On July 24, 1944, the Naval Task Force landed Marines on Tinian. After victory in the Battle of Saipan from June 15 to July 9, Tinian, which was 3.5 miles south of Saipan, was the next logical step in the U.S. strategy of island hopping. Tinian was Phase III of Operation Forager, which began with the capture of Saipan (Phase I) and the battle for the liberation of Guam (II), which was raging even as the Marines were approaching Tinian. Submarines were used to destroy enemy forces approaching the islands, clearing the way for the beach landing. The following article, published in the August 1964 issue of *Proceedings*, gives an account of the submarines' success.



Japanese planes burning on the air strip on Tinian Island.

By May 1944, General Douglas MacArthur, U.S. Army, and his Southwest Pacific Forces had driven westward along the northern coast of New Guinea to the island of Wakde, in preparation for the next step, the invasion of Biak. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, U. S. Navy, in command of the Fifth Fleet, had completed Operation Desecrate on 30 March and, with a carrier air raid on the Palau Islands ended, plans were laid to thrust the sword of sea power deep into the underbelly of the Japanese Empire.

Meanwhile, Admiral Soemu Toyoda, Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, was preparing for quite a different type of operation. The Japanese Empire had been pushed back to a line joining Biak to the Carolines, Marianas, and home islands. Toyoda realized that an attack on this perimeter was imminent, but was determined to hold the line at all costs. A confrontation of enemy fleets was, therefore, unavoidable; it resulted in the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

Before this battle was concluded, 28 American submarines had been called into action in support of the Fifth Fleet. Could 28 submarines, responsible for more than 1,250,000 square miles of ocean area, support the Fifth Fleet with any significant contributions? They could, indeed, as the following account reveals.

Operation Forager called for a giant-step invasion across the Pacific from Majuro Atoll, where the Fifth Fleet was then based, to the islands of Saipan, Guam, and Tinian—a leap covering 1,800 miles of ocean.

During previous invasions—including the most recent, the Marshall and Gilbert operations—the assault forces had been supported by land-based aircraft. With no air bases close enough to the Marianas to provide such support, the Fifth Fleet would be required to provide pre-invasion air bombardment and to act as the covering force during the actual assault. Carrier task forces could not be spared for scouting missions, since their planes would be needed for strikes to consolidate positions at the Saipan beachhead.

Admiral Spruance, therefore, asked for submarines to act as the eyes of the Fleet. Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood, U.S. Navy, Commander, Submarines, Pacific, and Rear Admiral Ralph W. Christie, U. S. Navy, Commander, Submarines, Southwest Pacific, shifted their submarines from regular patrol areas to accomplish this special mission.

By 1944, experience with submarine support of Fleet operations had proved that submarines were capable of cutting the enemy's supply lines to the target areas; carrying out photographic reconnaissance of beachheads marked for amphibious landings and enemy military or naval installations marked for future reference; lifeguarding during air strikes; scouting in the target area and off enemy bases to report enemy forces which sortied to oppose the attacking U. S. forces; and intercepting and attacking fugitive shipping attempting to flee the target area. Forager submarines were assigned stations with these objectives in mind.

In March, while Forager was still in the planning stage, the USS *Greenling* (SS-213) successfully completed the photographic reconnaissance of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam.

During the month preceding the invasion, the Japanese supply line to Saipan was effectively interdicted by ComSubSoWesPac's wolf packs. A pack patrolled its area along the expected convoy course and maintained a distance between pack members of a little less than twice the range of visibility or radar range. This provided them with the broadest area of search, while maintaining an uninterrupted path of convoy detection. The first submarine to make contact informed the pack members by radio, then attacked the nearest flank of the convoy. The other pack members quickly took positions on each flank of the convoy. The original attacker then assumed the "trailer" position to the rear and matched the convoy's course. From this position she could transmit information to the "flankers" concerning the enemy's tactical maneuvers; attack escorts as they charged after her mates; or finish off stragglers or cripples. Meanwhile, the "flankers" were busy making repeated torpedo attacks.

Patrol areas were divided into appropriately named sectors, "Pentathlon" covering the Marianas Islands area. The most successful operation of this type along the Honshu-to-Saipan sector of the

Pentathlon area was conducted by a pack consisting of the USS *Pilotfish* (SS-386), Lieutenant Commander R. H. Close, the USS *Pintado* (SS-387), Lieutenant Commander B. A. “Chick” Clarey, and the USS *Shark* (SS-314), Commander E. N. Blakely. Captain L. N. Blair was the pack commander.

At 0500 on 21 May, the USS *Silversides* (SS-236), Commander J. S. Coye, operating in the vicinity, radioed the pack that a convoy was coming their way-contact was made at 0900. The *Shark* took up the port flanker position, the *Pintado* took the starboard flank, and the *Pilotfish* dropped back as trailer. This planned attack was foiled by a radical zig on the part of the convoy, as was a second approach made shortly after midnight on 1 June.

At this time, however, the *Silversides* made contact with a second convoy, and the *Pilotfish* was sent to intercept it. Finally, the Japanese merchant ships, or Marus, began to feel the bite of the wolf pack that surrounded them. An unfortunate zig for the convoy created a perfect attack position for the *Pintado*. She sank the 4,716-ton *Toho Maru* with five torpedo hits and damaged a second merchant ship with a single shot from her tubes.

When the *Shark* contacted a third convoy, the real action began. Japanese aircraft arrived and a chase to the northwest ensued from dawn, 1 June, until dusk, 2 June. Each time a submarine raised her periscope, a Japanese plane was there to force her below. At 2300, 2 June, however, their tenacity was rewarded; the *Shark* sank the *Chiyo Maru*, a 4,700-ton freighter.

The *Silversides* withdrew to refuel, but the pack continued to trail the Japan-bound convoy during the next day. That afternoon, the *Pintado* spotted a fully loaded convoy heading south, probably bound for Saipan. Since the first three convoys were returning to Japan in ballast, the pack about-faced for a crack at the loaded merchant ships.

When the submarines had attained attack position at 1400 on 4 June, they began a series of coordinated attacks that lasted two days and riddled the convoy with losses. The *Shark* was first to draw blood. The *Katsukawa Maru*, a freighter of 6,886 tons went down at 1430 on 5 June, followed by the 3,080-ton *Tamahime Maru* and, that same evening, the *Takaoka Maru*. The *Pintado* sank the 2,825-ton *Kashimasan Maru*, and the 5,652-ton *Havre Maru*, both heavily loaded with cargo.



USS Pintado

One pack had prevented nearly half a division of reinforcements from reaching Saipan. A Japanese officer's diary, recovered later at Saipan, stated that they were expecting 10,000 troops with arms, ammunition, and artillery. When the remaining ships of the convoy arrived at Saipan, 6,000 soldiers were missing and the reinforcements that did arrive were largely without arms.

Patrols in the other areas of the Pacific were meeting with similar successes. Vice Admiral Lockwood, based at Pearl Harbor, and Rear Admiral Christie at Fremantle, Australia, were busy reassigning patrol submarines to new scouting and lifeguard positions. Christie's area of command was located west of Guadalcanal, south of New Guinea, west of the mid-Philippine Sea and south of mid-Luzon Strait. ComSubPac controlled the rest of the Pacific.

SubPac's bases had advanced westward during the War, causing its area to be increased accordingly. Since Forager required scouting in both command areas, a more practical scouting boundary was worked out between ComSubPac and ComSubSoWesPac which moved SubPac's area south to include Luzon Strait and west to include the coast of the Philippines.

ComSubPac spelled out his strategy for Operation Forager:

Those in the immediate vicinity of the Marianas will be retired in order to clear the area for the advance of our surface forces. During Forager operation submarines as available will be placed in interception positions to the southwest of the Marianas and on the approaches to the Marianas from the Japanese empire to attack and destroy enemy forces approaching the Marianas and escaping therefrom and to furnish advance warning of the approach of the enemy Task Force.

Specific interception positions were not enumerated, since a long campaign was anticipated and the number of submarines on patrol would vary from week to week. The plan also provided for lifeguards to be assigned positions off the coast of Guam, Tinian, and Saipan for the air raids of 11 June which softened up the islands for the 15 June invasion.

Intelligence reports from Seventh Fleet Headquarters at New Guinea indicated that the main Japanese Fleet was now based at Tawitawi, the southernmost island in the Sulu Archipelago. The movement from Japan to Tawitawi was necessitated by the ever-decreasing supply of fuel oil arriving in Japan from the "Southern Resources Area." U. S. submarines had been at work. The South China Sea, Luzon Strait, and East China Sea formed a graveyard for Japanese tankers. Japanese warships were forced to come down to the source of supply-the oil-rich islands of Borneo and Java. Since Headquarters in Tokyo expected an attack in the Caroline or Mariana Islands, Tawitawi was chosen as an anchorage between the oil fields and the expected battle area.

ComSubSoWesPac assigned the USS *Harder* (SS-257), Commander Sam O. Dealey, the USS *Redfin* (SS-272), Commander M. H. Austin, and the USS *Bluefish* (SS-222), Commander C. M. Henderson, to the Tawitawi area, with the USS *Haddo* (SS-255), Commander C. W. Nimitz, Jr., as relief. The USS *Hake* (SS-256), Commander J. C. Broach, the USS *Bashaw* (SS-241),

Lieutenant Commander R. E. Nichols, and the USS *Paddle* (SS-263), Lieutenant Commander B. H. Nowell, were stationed between Mindanao and the Talaud Islands. The USS *Jack* (SS-259), Commander A. E. Krapf, and the USS *Flier* (SS-250), Commander J. D. Crowley, patrolled off the west coast of Luzon.

ComSubPac organized Submarine Task Force 17 to support Operation Forager. Admiral Lockwood stationed the ubiquitous *Pintado* and *Pilotfish* and the USS *Tunny* (SS-282), Commander J. A. Scott, southeast of Formosa in the Luzon Strait, but later reassigned them to the route between the Marianas and Ryukyus. The USS *Flying Fish* (SS-229), Lieutenant Commander R. D. Risser, was stationed at San Bernardino Strait; the USS *Growler* (SS-215), Commander T. B. Oakley, reported to Surigao Strait after lifeguarding at Saipan until 12 June. Watching for sorties from Japan and covering the Bonin Islands area were the USS *Plunger* (SS-179), Lieutenant Commander E. J. Fahy, the USS *Gar* (SS-206), Commander G. W. Lautrup, the USS *Archerfish* (SS-311), Commander W. H. Wright, the USS *Plaice* (SS-390), Commander C. B. Stevens, and the USS *Swordfish* (SS-193), Commander K. E. Montrose. Ulithi Islands to the Philippines was covered by the USS *Muskallunge* (SS-262), Commander M. R. Russillo, the USS *Seahorse* (SS-304), Lieutenant Commander Slade D. Cutter, and the USS *Pipefish* (SS-388), Lieutenant Commander W. N. Deragan. The area west of the Marianas, north of the Palau Islands, and south of the 20th parallel was patrolled by the USS *Albacore* (SS-218), Commander J. W. Blanchard, the USS *Seawolf* (SS-197), Lieutenant Commander R. R. Lynch, the USS *Bang* (SS-385), Commander A. R. Gallaher, the USS *Finback* (SS-230), Lieutenant Commander J. L. Jordan, and the USS *Stingray* (SS-186), Lieutenant Commander S. C. Loomis. Three unnamed submarines also covered the islands of Woleai, Palau, and Truk, scouting the area and availing themselves for lifeguard duty.

Thus, it was arranged that an enemy sortie to the Mariana Islands from any direction would be detected in all likelihood by one or more of these submarines.



USS Harder

The most productive scouting accomplished by a submarine in the Tawitawi area was that of the *Harder*. On 26 May, the *Harder* left Fremantle on her fifth war patrol with a twofold mission. She was ordered to pick up six British coast-watchers from the northeast coast of North Borneo, and then to scout the Tawitawi area.

By evening of 6 June, the *Harder* had arrived at the entrance to Sibutu Passage between North Borneo and Tawitawi. To transit this passage, Commander Sam Dealey had to pass the entire Japanese Combined Fleet. That evening, he commenced an end-around on an enemy convoy, but was discovered by an escort destroyer. As the destroyer charged toward him, Dealey turned his sub away, firing torpedoes from his stern tubes as he submerged. The payload struck home and down went the *Minatsuki* in a ball of flames. On 7 June, at 1200, another Japanese destroyer spotted the *Harder* and headed directly for her. There was no time to turn away, so Dealey fired torpedoes “down the throat” of the *Hayanami*, sending her to the bottom.

The *Harder* finally arrived off the coast of North Borneo the night of 8 June, and succeeded in rescuing the six British agents, aided by Major W. L. Jenkins, A.I.F., an Australian commando. The trip back through Sibutu was more hair-raising than the original transit. Japanese planes had sighted the *Harder* on the morning of 9 June, and had radioed ahead to warn Japanese destroyers. At 2101 that evening, Dealey spotted two destroyers patrolling the narrowest part of Sibutu Passage. He waited until the destroyers were close enough that they would be behind one another when his torpedoes arrived. Firing a four-torpedo spread, he observed the first one run wide and the second and third hit the bow and the bridge of the first destroyer, *Tanikaze*, which sank immediately. The fourth torpedo found the second destroyer’s keel; the ship sank but was never identified. On 10 June, Dealey spotted a large Japanese Task Force of three battleships, four cruisers, and six to eight destroyers. As a destroyer peeled off toward the *Harder*, Dealey waited until the range was only 1,500 yards, then fired three torpedoes, “down the throat” again. The first and second stopped the destroyer with tremendous explosions, as the *Harder* passed only 80 feet below.

Remaining in the area until 10 June, the *Harder* that afternoon observed the sortie of three battleships, four or more cruisers, and about six destroyers. She reported this important contact, and then retired from the scene, little realizing the forceful effect her devastation of the Japanese destroyers had had upon Admiral Toyoda.

Admiral Spruance, on board the USS *Lexington* (CV-16), received the 10 June *Harder* report, but realized that this was probably not a reaction to the presence of his fleet. His first air strikes were scheduled for 11 June, and he had no reason to believe that he had been detected as yet. Actually, this sortie was headed for a different target. Admiral Toyoda was anxious to come to the relief of Biak after MacArthur’s 27 May invasion. He ordered Operation KON into effect, sending Vice Admiral Matome V. Ugaki south with his Task Force of battleships to counter MacArthur’s movements.

Toyoda soon realized, however, that the decision to split his fleet was unwise. He was laboring under the misconception that his anchorage was the focal point of a great enemy submarine force. The *Harder* had single-handedly played the part of a “great enemy submarine force” by sinking three destroyers, with two probables to her credit. Badgered by the submarine threat,

Toyoda decided his fleet would be safer on the high seas. They could ill afford to lose another escort destroyer. As reports reached Tawitawi of the 11 June air raids by Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher's Task Force 58, Toyoda, already over-anxious, "jumped the gun." At 1830 on 12 June, Admiral Toyoda ordered Operation A-Go into effect.

A-Go was designed to counter any further moves by the Allied forces. Intelligence indicated to the Japanese that the Palau Islands would probably be invaded next. In this case, the Combined Fleet was to halt the invasion by steaming from Tawitawi to the Palaus to attack the Fifth Fleet. In the event that the Marianas were invaded first, aircraft from the Bonin Islands would attack the U.S. Fleet, land in the Marianas for refueling and rearming; then take off the next morning, bomb the Fleet again, and land on aircraft carriers of the Combined Fleet, which, by that time, would have reached the area. The Japanese Fleet could then complete the destruction of the Fifth Fleet. Such was the thinking of the Japanese Headquarters in Tokyo. This plan, however, required precise timing, an element that was sorely lacking.

At 1000, 13 June, Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, in command of the main body of the Combined Fleet, sortied with his Task Force from Tawitawi to implement A-Go. But Headquarters in Tokyo, believing the major invasion still would appear at Palau, did not put A-Go into effect until the morning of 15 June, when they finally realized that Lieutenant General Yoshitsugu Saito and Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo at Saipan had mistaken the preliminary bombardments for a hit-and-run raid. This two-day delay had a significant effect on the battle which ensued in the Philippine Sea.

No sooner had Ozawa's fleet put to sea than it was discovered. At 1100, 13 June, the *Redfin* was on hand at the northwest sector off Tawitawi when the impressive armada passed before her. Commander Austin quickly dispatched his message, reporting that a fleet of six aircraft carriers, four battleships, five heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, and only six destroyers were headed for the Sulu Sea.

Admiral Spruance received this report with some relief. He knew that the Main Body of the Japanese Fleet was now on the seas and had been detected. At least there would be no sneak attack this time.

At 0840 on 15 June, the *Flying Fish* was patrolling off San Bernardino Straits when Lieutenant Commander Risser observed several scouting planes in the area. As the aircraft patrols continued throughout the day, Risser related, "Something was apparently in the wind, and we figured we were right downwind." Sure enough, at 1635, he sighted masts emerging from the Straits, but, unfortunately, the *Flying Fish* was 11 miles north of the contact. His estimate was inaccurate due to the long range, but at 1925 Risser reported three carriers, three battleships, and various cruisers and destroyers on course 080 degrees, speed 20 knots.

Inaccuracy did not obscure the significance of this report from Nimitz and Lockwood at Pearl Harbor, or Spruance on board the *Lexington*. This was Ozawa's Main Body emerging into the Philippine Sea. Lockwood now put into motion his plan to intercept Ozawa's fleet. He and his operations officer, Captain Richard G. Voge, U. S. Navy, had plotted a square on the chart athwart the probable track of the onrushing enemy. The square, 60 miles to a side, was to be

patrolled by the submarines *Albacore*, *Bang*, *Stingray*, and *Finback*, one to each corner. The submarines would cover 270-degree arcs, around the outside of, and at a 30-mile radius from the four corners. This left the center of the square vacant for possible Fifth Fleet maneuvers.

Spruance now knew his principal adversary's location, but where was the southern battleship fleet that the *Harder* had reported five days earlier? The Admiral would soon have his answer.

Lieutenant Commander Cutter in the *Seahorse*, was heading his ship northwest en route to patrol station at Luzon. At 1945 on 15 June, while 200 miles east southeast of Surigao Strait, he reported, "TASK FORCE IN POSITION 10-11N, 129-3SE, ... COURSE NORTHEAST, SPEED 16.5 KNOTS ... SEAHORSE TRAILING." Engine trouble doomed her chase, however, and Japanese jamming of the *Seahorse* transmission prevented her report from reaching Admiral Spruance until 0400, 16 June.

These two enemy task forces, located and reported on converging courses, caused Admiral Spruance to alter his plans for the invasion of Guam, scheduled for 18 June. Faced with the prospect of covering a new invasion and simultaneously defending against a Japanese naval offensive, Spruance on the morning of 16 June postponed the invasion of Guam and prepared for battle.

The enemy tracks were plotted ahead, and a proposed rendezvous was located. Spruance figured they would have to refuel at this time, but the true location of the refueling area was anyone's guess.

The Philippine Sea at this time was almost crowded with submarines, either on station, proceeding to the relief of a patrol, or returning from being relieved. With all this activity going on, one submarine was bound to run into ships of the enemy fleet. At 2306 on 16 June, the USS *Cavalla* (SS-244), Lieutenant Commander H. J. Kassler, heading west to relieve the *Flying Fish* at San Bernardino, came upon a convoy of two tankers and three escorts on course 120 degrees at 15 knots. Kassler had found the Second Support Force, following Ozawa's Task Force from its anchorage at Guimaras in the Philippine Islands. By 0315, 17 June, he had brought his ship ahead of the convoy and was about to make an approach when, at 0402, he discovered an escort close abeam attempting to ram the *Cavalla*. Kassler quickly submerged and hid for an hour. At 0506, the *Cavalla* surfaced in an empty sea, and Kassler dispatched his contact report at 0545, informing Lockwood that he had lost contact and was proceeding to relieve the *Flying Fish*.

Lockwood received the message with alarm. If the *Cavalla* could find these tankers and sink them, he reasoned, the Combined Fleet could be partially immobilized for, obviously, they were running low on fuel. In this condition they would be sitting ducks for Task Force 58. If attack was not possible, at least by trailing the tankers, the *Cavalla* would probably be led to the Combined Fleet, itself. Therefore, he quickly replied to the *Cavalla*, "DESTRUCTION THOSE TANKERS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE ... TRAIL ... ATTACK ... REPORT ... KEEP YOUR CHIN UP." The last part of this transmission referred to the *Cavalla*'s reported engine trouble. She attempted to chase at four-engine speed, but Lockwood ordered two-thirds speed, aware that engine failure at such a moment would ruin a golden opportunity.

At this time, Lockwood was functioning as Commander, Task Force 17, as well as ComSubPac, which placed the tactical direction of Forager submarines in his experienced hands. He stationed his submarines to trap the enemy and destroy him. The *Seawolf* was ordered south 150 miles from her station on the 16th parallel, the *Seahorse*, the *Muskallunge*, and the *Pipefish* were shifted north from the Ulithi area. These four subs were ordered to locate and attack the tankers. The "square" was shifted southwest 100 miles to intercept the proposed refueling area. Lockwood's next order was most significant, for it granted the submarine skippers the freedom they had longed for—the freedom to attack the Combined Fleet at will, without first having to report the contact. The *Cavalla*, in the meantime, had been driving southwest, desperately trying to close the gap. At 1957, 17 June, a radar contact developed into 15 pips. Kassler had run into part of the Combined Fleet, zigzagging between 60 degrees and 100 degrees at a speed of 19 knots. Presented with such an array of targets, he was sorely tempted to drive in for the attack. But at 2029, he gave in and submerged to count the ships as they passed overhead. Unlike the group patrolling the square, the *Cavalla* had been ordered to continue reporting first and attack later. A similar ComSubPac instruction had stated: "The primary mission of all submarines is attack except in the case with a contact with a large enemy task force ... concerning which there has been no previous contact. In such a case, the primary mission of the first submarine making contact is to send out a contact report and then to attack." The *Cavalla* surfaced when she thought the Task Force had passed, but was discovered by two fast escorts in the rear of the group. After an hour of evasive tactics, she finally was free to transmit her report at 2245 of "15 or more large combatant ships." Kassler then proceeded east, trying to catch the enemy.

Spruance received the report on board the *Lexington* at 0345, 18 June. He was puzzled by the fact that only 15 ships were reported. Previous intelligence reports indicated Toyoda was capable of sending 40 combatants to sea. Also, since the *Flying Fish's* report at San Bernardino, Ozawa had advanced only 500 miles for an average speed of 8.8 knots. A strangely familiar Japanese fragrance was in the wind, and Spruance didn't like the smell of it. Possibly the Japanese were holding back part of their Fleet, waiting for the remainder to outflank the Fifth Fleet and isolate the beachhead at Saipan.

Ozawa, however, had no such intentions. He was waiting for the order from Tokyo that would send the A-Go aircraft down from the Bonin Islands to attack the American Fleet. When Toyoda prematurely set A-Go into motion from his end, he had caused Ozawa to arrive in the Philippine Sea 24 hours early. He was now forced to waste time and fuel by steaming on east-west legs, which allowed his ships to be discovered. Ozawa stated after the war that he had intended to run straight through the middle, since his Task Force did not have enough fuel for a flanking action.

The *Cavalla* continued east, unaware that Ozawa's Combined Fleet had turned on a northeasterly course. At 0545, 18 June, she informed Pearl Harbor that she had not regained contact. She then gave a more detailed description of the Japanese Task Force, and continued the search. The enemy was on the loose.

Toward evening of the same day, Spruance received further indications of a dual advance by the Japanese Fleet. At 1955, the *Stingray* attempted to transmit a routine report. A fire in her antenna wires, however, made her transmission unreadable. Spruance, believing the transmission to be a possible contact report, noted that the *Stingray's* estimated position at the time of her report

placed her 175 miles east southeast of a High Frequency Radio Direction Finder fix, which was received from Pearl Harbor at 2030.

Spruance was now more suspicious than at the time of the *Cavalla's* report that Ozawa was approaching with separate forces. He decided to remain on an easterly course throughout the night in order to protect Saipan. Informing Vice Admiral Mitscher, Commander, Task Force 58, of his decision, Admiral Spruance cautioned, "End run by carrier groups remains possibility and must not be overlooked."

The *Finback*, patrolling the northwest corner of the square, found yet another portion of the enemy's fleet. At 1910, 18 June, she sighted two searchlights over the horizon bearing 270 degrees at latitude 14° 19' North, longitude 137° 05' East. She headed west, but was unable to locate anything, and, at 2010, she reported the sighting.

The report was not received on board the *Lexington*, however, until 0150, 19 June, after Admiral Spruance, at 0038, already had made the decision to retire to the east.

Finally, Ozawa's Carrier Division I ran headlong into a "square" submarine. On the morning of 19 June, the *Albacore*, working the southwest corner, made contact with Carrier Division I which contained Ozawa's new flagship, the carrier *Taiho*. Commander J. W. Blanchard approached the carrier, whose speed was estimated at 27 knots, just as she was launching the second air raid against the Fifth Fleet. His position was perfect, but after waiting for the proper time to launch his six bow torpedoes, the Torpedo Data Computer failed to register a correct torpedo track. The carrier was approaching so fast that Blanchard had no time to recompute the track. Therefore, at 0909:32 he fired number one torpedo, observing its wake of steam, then correcting the lead angle on the second shot by compensating for errors in the first. He saw the first shots pass astern of the carrier so he led the sixth with a large angle. Number six did the job, exploding under the forward starboard elevator. The fifth shot might have been heading for the carrier, but Sakio Komatsu, piloting a Japanese bomber, exploded the torpedo with a suicide dive.

Blanchard was understandably disappointed with only one hit after waiting for such a beautiful setup. His report was listed as "probable damage" to the carrier.

Ozawa was not unduly disturbed by this single torpedo hit. The fire seemed to be under control, and his screening destroyers were making life miserable for the *Albacore*.

He continued to steam southeast and, at 1130, ordered the fourth raid of the morning to attack the Fifth Fleet. His planes had barely reached the horizon when disaster again struck Carrier Division I.

The ubiquitous *Cavalla* had been searching to the west for the Combined Fleet. After passing up two previous chances for shots at the convoy and Task Force, in order to make her contact reports, Kossler finally gave up the chase, and at 0055, on 19 June, reversed course and headed for San Bernardino. At 1148, she again stumbled upon her old friend, the Combined Fleet. It was Carrier Division I, and Kossler relates, "The picture was too good to be true! ... it was apparent that we were on the track of a large task force heading some place in a pretty big hurry." He

observed an aircraft carrier of the *Shokaku*-class, covered by two cruisers of the *Atago*-class, and one destroyer, and brought the *Cavalla* to a paralleling course to take a good look at the carrier. At a range of 1,000 yards, Kassler later said, "It looked like the Empire State Building." A periscope view of the mast confirmed its identity, ". . . there was the Rising Sun, big as hell." At this point, the *Cavallo* was abeam the destroyer, but remained undetected until 1220, when she fired four torpedoes. The fifth and sixth had to be fired on the way down, for by this time, the destroyer *Urakaze* was after her. The *Cavallo* fought for depth, heard the satisfying rumblings of her three torpedo hits, and then spent three hours dodging and absorbing 106 depth charges. About 1500, the *Cavallo*'s crew heard tremendous explosions-the *Shokaku*, the 30,000-ton monster had been blown apart by her own bomb magazines.

Things were not going well for Japan's pride of the fleet. During the afternoon of 19 June, Ozawa ordered a retiring course to the northwest. At 1532, an awesome internal explosion lifted the flight deck of his flagship, blew the sides out of the hangar deck, and crushed the crew members in the engine spaces below. The Admiral quickly rescued his flag, and picture of the Emperor, and transferred to the waiting destroyer *Wakatsuki*, closely followed by his staff. He arrived aboard the cruiser *Haguro* at 1706, in time to witness the capsizing of the *Taiho*, the death of 1,650 of his crewmen, and the loss of 13 aircraft-all victims of one torpedo.

How had the *Albacore*'s single torpedo managed to sink a 31,000-ton ship? As discovered after the war, a novice damage control officer had hoped to rid the ship of deadly vapors from a ruptured gasoline tank by opening the ventilation ducts throughout the carrier. Instead, the fumes permeated the ship, and, coupled with the unrefined fuel oil from Borneo that the *Taiho* was using, this created the explosive situation. The *Albacore* did not learn of her feat for many months, until a Japanese prisoner of war finally told the story.

The Combined Fleet's attack had withered and died. Ozawa's plan for destroying the enemy's planes as they passed over Vice Admiral Takeo V. Kurita's heavily screened Van Force, had backfired. Ozawa's Carrier Divisions 1 and 2 were not protected by this formidable advance guard. Instead they were left more vulnerable to the two crippling torpedo attacks. His four air raids had been systematically intercepted and chopped to pieces-victims of the "Marianas Turkey Shoot." Ozawa wisely retired to Okinawa.

Submarine Forces of the Pacific and Southwest Pacific Fleets could be proud of their contribution to Operation Forager. They had covered over a million square miles of sea, and covered them well. Their basic tasks of interdicting enemy supply lines to the target area, photo reconnaissance, life-guarding, patrolling, scouting, reporting enemy movements, intercepting, and attacking enemy fleets were carried out with skill and tenacity.

Theodore Roscoe wrote:

From the point of view of the submarine forces, the Marianas Campaign and the Battle of the Philippine Sea . . . were-so far as submarine support of fleet operations was concerned-the high point of the war. Some naval strategists consider the action history's outstanding example of the successful employment of submarines in a major fleet engagement. Effective scouting, efficient communications, intelligent handling and several smashing torpedo attacks combined to give the

Submarine Force a leading role in the victory which meant the beginning of the end for the Imperial Navy.

Sound strategic doctrines, a proven set of tactics, improved equipment, and experienced manpower stationed at Headquarters, Pearl Harbor; Headquarters, Fremantle; at each periscope; and throughout every submarine-all played their part in the culmination of a highly successful operation.

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