

112 will be ready to sail from Manus at 1200, 17th March and will join the United States forces under your command with feelings of great pride and pleasure.

6. The factors referred to above were:—

(a) Fuelling, embarkation of aircraft, stores, etc. The timetable for these was in some measure dependent upon the lack of boats and the sport of the swell.

(b) Final preparation of operation orders and arrangements for replenishing in the forward areas over a period of up to three weeks' continuous operations.

(c) The speed (9 knots in fine weather) at which the tankers could move to the first fuelling area.

(d) Adjustment of aircraft between the Fleet Carriers, and UNICORN, SPEAKER and SLINGER, so that the Fleet might leave fully equipped.

16th March.

7. The Fleet continued making ready.

The following signal was received from C.-in-C., Pacific:—

The British Carrier Task Force and attached units will greatly increase our striking power and demonstrate our unity of purpose against Japan. The U.S. Pacific Fleet welcomes you.

17th March.

8. In order to have the Tanker Group in position for the Fleet to top up with fuel at the last prudent moment, Task Unit 112.2.1 and Task Unit 112.2.5* were sailed on 17th March. The former consisted of H.M. Ships STRIKER (with replacement aircraft), CRANE, FINDHORN, WHIRLWIND and the Tankers SAN AMBROSIO, CEDARDALE and SAN ADOLPHO; the latter consisted of H.M. Ships PHEASANT, SPEAKER (for CAP† duties) and KEMPENFELT.

18th March.

9. Task Force 57 sailed from Manus a.m. on 18th March, and carrying out exercises on passage, arrived a.m. on 20th March at Ulithi where the Fleet fuelled from U.S. resources.

10. During the period 21st to 23rd March, final drafts of operation orders were completed and distributed, intelligence material streaming in continuously. The date of sailing to commence operations, as that of sailing from Manus, was dictated by the arrival of the tankers in the fuelling area.

11. (a) On 22nd March the following signal was despatched:—

COM 5th Fleet‡ From CTF 113

Intend assume designation TF 57 after clearing Ulithi at 0715, 23rd March at which time Force is ready for duty under your orders. Intend TF 57 follow directions of C IN C POA unless you direct otherwise.

(b) The following reply was received:—

CTF 57 From COM 5th Fleet

Welcome TF 57. Good hunting. Your message 22nd affirmative.

Admiralty footnotes:—

* Task Units 112.2.1 and 112.2.5—units of the Fleet Train.

† CAP—Combat Air Patrol.

‡ COM 5th Fleet—Admiral Spruance, U.S.N.

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12. The British Pacific Fleet, until then Task Force 113, sailed from Ulithi at 0630 on 23rd March, 1945, as Task Force 57.

Composition of TF 57 on sailing from Ulithi on 23rd March, 1945.

1st Battle Squadron TU* 1

KING GEORGE V (Flag of CTF 57),
HOWE;

1st Aircraft Carrier Squadron TU 2

INDOMITABLE (Flag of A.C.1 and
Second-in-Command TF 57),
VICTORIOUS,
ILLUSTRIOUS,
INDEFATIGABLE;

4th Cruiser Squadron TU 5

SWIFTSURE (Flag of C.S.4),
GAMBIA,
BLACK PRINCE,
ARGONAUT;

Destroyers—TU 8

25th Destroyer Flotilla

EURYALUS (Flag of R.A.(D)
temporarily),
GRENVILLE (Capt. D.25),
ULSTER,
UNDINE,
URANIA,
UNDAUNTED;

(Note:—URSA was docking at Manus.)

4th Destroyer Flotilla

QUICKMATCH (Capt. D.4),
QUIBERON,
QUEENBOROUGH,
QUALITY;

27th Destroyer Flotilla

WHELP,
WAGER.

(Note:—KEMPENFELT (Capt. D.27) was attached to TU 112.2.5, the group remaining in the replenishing area.)

WHIRLWIND and WESSEX were attached to TU 112.2.1 and TU 112.2.2 respectively, the Tanker Groups proceeding between Leyte and the replenishing area.)

NARRATIVE.

23rd March.

Task Force 57 sailed from Ulithi at 0715 and set course for position Ant (18° 30' N 129° 08' E), forming into cruising disposition 5D to carry out long range throw off and close range sleeve firings. Sleeve targets were towed by United States Utility Squadrons. Bombardment communication exercises were carried out by H.M. Ships KING GEORGE V, HOWE and SWIFTSURE. On completion, the Fleet formed up in Cruising Disposition 5A and proceeded at 18 knots. CAPS and ASPS† were flown during daylight hours.

25th March.

At 0310 with H.M. Ships EURYALUS, BLACK PRINCE and ARGONAUT spread 8 miles apart, 8 miles ahead of the Fleet, radar contact was made with Task Group 112.2.5 and Task Group 112.2.1. Rendezvous was made by 0600 and the above ships with

Admiralty footnotes:—

* TU—Task Unit.

† ASPS—anti-submarine patrols.