

11 September 1943

Bombing mission of eight B-24s and twelve B-25s resulted in the most disastrous mission of the 11th Air Force.

B-24D, 41-23891, 404 B. S., 2nd Lt. Roger K. Putnam proceeded to Petropavlovsk prior to reaching the target due to engine problem (unable to feather the propeller).

Seven B-24s bombed Kashiwabara Staging area, an unknown target on Shimushu, and shipping in Kashiwabara Harbor. Observed hits in Staging area and on one transport. B-24s were attacked by about 24 Oscars (reported as Zekes) and Rufes for fifty- two minutes. Nine Japanese planes were claimed shot down, three others - probable.

Twelve B-25s made deck level attacks on shipping in Paramushiro Strait. Observed hits on one AK. One AP on fire, one small AK blew up, possible hits on two other AK's. According to Japanese records, 2,742-ton Teisho Shima Maru (Masajima Maru?) and 4,000- ton Toei Maru sustained damage after being attacked by 12 Mitchells around 0915.

B-25s were attacked by about 20 Rufes and Oscars (reported as Hamps and Vals). One Rufe was claimed as shot down.

Two B-25s were seen to blow up and crash in Paramushiro Strait, additional B-25 was reported to have been shot down by Japanese fighters over Shimushu Strait. Witnessed by Soviet observers, it ditched near Cape Lopatka. When the bomber crew members attempted to launch a life raft, the fighters machine- gunned them.

US losses:

1 B-24 and 3 B-25 shot down:

B-24D, 41-23890, 36 B.S., F. T. Gash (was observed to hit the water and break up)

B-25C, 42-53345, 77 B.S., A. W. Berecz (ditched near Lopatka, crew in raft was strafed and killed by the Japanese fighters)

B-25C, 42-53349, 77 B.S., J. D. Huddleson

B-25C, 42-53354, 77 B.S., 1st Lt. Quinton D. Standiford. While making a bombing run at deck level (10-50 feet) at 265 MPH, the plane exploded and disintegrated in the air just west of Kataoka Naval Base. It is thought that the plane was hit by the AA fire as no enemy planes were encountered until after the run through the Strait. Sgt Francis L. McEowen, the gunner, miraculously survived the explosion, was picked up from the water by the Japanese, and spent the rest of the war in Omori/Ofuna POW camp.

Two B-24s and five B-25s landed in Petropavlovsk, crews were interned:

B-24D, 41-23891, 404 B. S., 2nd Lt. Roger K. Putnam (landed prior to reaching the target, engine problem, unable to feather the propeller. 23 Oct 1943 this plane was transferred to 890 БП 45 АД)

B-24D, 40-2355, 404 B.S., Major Carl G. Wagner (lost 2 engines battling the fighters near Shimushu)

B-25C, 41-13260, 77 B.S., 2nd Lt. Russell K. Hurst

B-25D, 41-30171, 77 B.S., 2nd Lt. Wayne A. Marrier (could not close bomb bay doors, with resulting drag it was impossible to return to base on remaining fuel)

B-25D, 41-30502, 77 B.S., Major Richard D. Salter (left engine damaged by the fighters)

B-25D, 41-30473, 77 B.S., 2nd Lt. Norman R. Savignac

B-25C, 42-53352, 77 B.S., 1st Lt. John T. Rodger (unable to taxi after landing due to landing gear damage)

B-25D, 41-29788, ... crash- landed in Amchitka after battle damage over Paramushiro, killing all aboard except Ken J. Harris and Art Olsen.

B-24D, "Little Buck," 41-23941, flown by the badly wounded Lt. Jerome J. Jones, and damaged in battle, made its first landing on Shemya. At the time, construction of the airfield had been proceeding at a 12 hour a day pace. (The Black Pearl, an informal history of Shemya, p. 3.)

Total US losses: 1 B-24 and 3 B-25 shot down. 22 men were killed, one taken prisoner and 51 interned in Kamchatka. Two pilots, one co- pilot and four other crew members of the returned planes were wounded.

Five B-24s were severely damaged

Five B-25s proceeded towards Petropavlovsk after the attack.

Three B-25s returned to base, all with minor battle damage.

One B-25 crash- landed in Amchitka, killing all aboard except two.

U.S. claimed 10 Japanese planes claimed as shot down and 3 as probable

Japanese losses: 1 Ki-43 destroyed in suicidal ramming of B-24 (pilot- Lt Jiro Yokosaki), 2 Ki-43s damaged (piloted by CO of the 54th Sentai Major Yasunari Shimada and by Corporal Kanji Kikuchi).

Japanese version:

September 12, 1943

The patrol unit led by Master Sergeant Watanabe Masahiko reported a group of B-24s at 6000 m altitude, closing from the Pacific side toward Paramushiru Strait, and a group of B-25s, approaching from Shimushu side. All aircraft of the 54th Sentai were airborne, along with ten "Rufes" and five "Petes" of 452nd Ku from Lake Bettobi hydroplane base. The B-24s bombed from high altitude on a track from northeast to southwest. Their bombs caused no damage.

CO of the 54th Sentai Major Yasunari Shimada with two wingmen, Capt. Chikashi Koshi-ishi and Corporal Masao Fukuda, attacked a formation of five B-25 aircraft approaching to the target at low altitude, coming from north to south. Major Shimada shot down the first bomber, but his plane was hit as he pressed an attack on the second B-25, so he withdrew from the battle. The B-25s severely damaged one transport and burned 500 drums of heavy oil on Shimushu. One B-25 was claimed shot down by ship's anti-aircraft fire.

Ten Hayabusa fighters under command of the 3rd Chutai leader Capt. Yaichiro Hayashi chased six Liberators as they were escaping at the altitude of 5-6,000 metres. 1st Lt Jiro Yokosaki rammed the lead bomber with his plane and was killed instantly. He was credited with aerial victory and posthumously awarded by two-rank promotion (a special advance).

Capt. Hayashi reported that in confusion caused by Lt. Yokosaki ramming, three more bombers were claimed as shot down with one uncertain. Other pilots claimed that all five remaining B-24s were shot down.

The third group:

First Lt Yukichi Kitakoga, 2nd Chutai leader

Corporal Kanji Kikuchi, was hit in the chest and withdrew from the battle, landing successfully.

Sergeant Usui Kenjiro made a firing pass on B-24 bomber, scored 4 hits

Master Sergeant Matsumoto Genjiro

54th Sentai claimed 5 B-24s (one by suicidal ramming), plus one uncertain, and two B-25 bombers (one uncertain)

452nd Ku claimed 3 B-24s (one as probable)

2 bombers were claimed by the AA.

Japanese claims weren't too exaggerated since three B-24s and eight B-25s failed to return to the base. All five B-24s that managed to return were severely damaged. One B-25 crash-landed in Amchitka