

Mitscher Memo

The wiry, soft-spoken commander of Task Force 58, Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, is not the man to admit that even a Jap bent on self-destruction is a match for an American. Last week he returned to Washington and reported that Jap suicide-plane attacks against shipping off Okinawa have been cut to the point where they are "not



While Navy Secretary Forrestal listens, Admiral Mitscher defies the Kamikazes too serious." The Japanese themselves had been forced to admit that their Kamikaze raids have been "effectively . . . checked." Only 10 per cent of attacking Jap planes now get through a "picket line" of destroyers and smaller craft to the battleships and carriers, Admiral Mitscher said. Only 1 per cent now hit American vessels.

But Mitscher, whose fast task force had suffered less damage than the ships standing guard off Okinawa, underscored a statement made earlier by President Truman and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal: The Kamikazes have been and still are a menace. Mitscher himself had two narrow escapes when enemy pilots smashed into his flagships—and destroyed all his clothes except for one uniform.

Last week, American carrier planes still had to bomb and strafe Jap suicide bases in Southern Japan. And as they swept over Kamikaze fields on Kyushu, Navy pilots ran into a speedy new Jap fighter plane which seemed much faster than the American craft. One officer said: "The Japs thumbed their noses at us." One antidote for the enemy plane may be a powerful fighter-bomber, the Grumman F7F Tigercat, that is now coming off the assembly lines for shipment to the Pacific. The F7F has more than twice the horsepower and greater fire power than its predecessor, the Hellcat. It has a speed of more than 425 miles an hour and can climb a mile a minute.

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