

bombers to get off the Franklin's deck. The magnitude of her tragedy became known. Task Group 58.2 was attracting more Kamikazes than our 58.1 Two which did come our way tried for the Wasp, 2500 yards off our port quarter at the time. One of the suiciders put a bomb through the Wasp's hangar deck armor plate, though she resumed air operations almost immediately.

Retirement to the south on 20-21 March was allowed because of the limping Franklin. The Japs were out in force on both days, trying to add something to their earlier successes. Thirteen separate raids were tracked by CIC, the most serious occurring early in the afternoon of the 21st. Twenty-five Betty's with fighter cover of better than 1 for 1 were known to be approaching our formation at a distance of 72 miles. All of our available fighter planes, mostly Marine F4U's were launched from our flight deck. By the time they reached the Jap formation, the fun was over, since the already air-borne CAP from another carrier of our Group had practically cleared the sky. Our fighters found only two Jap "Jacks" left, and very quickly shot them down. When it was all added up, the final score against the day's ambitious Jap offensive was 24 Betties and 24 miscellaneous Jap fighters downed. Eight of the nips escaped. On 22 March 1945, we took fuel oil and aviation gasoline from a tanker, and re-filled our ammunition magazines from an ammunition ship. During this day, by breeches buoy from a destroyer, the USS Maddox, ComCarDiv THREE, Rear Admiral T.L. Sprague and staff, came aboard, filling for the first time, the numerous flag spaces aboard the ship. Then, on 23 March, we began an intensive week of blasting Okinawa and adjacent small islands to the west, in preparation for the Okinawa invasion of Love Bay soon to come.

During this time, our planes destroyed or damaged airfields, runways, and hangars, coastal defense installations, barracks, shops and radar stations,