

## The Most Decorated Ship Of The Second World War

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## SCOUTING SQUADRON SIX ACTION REPORT - 4-6 June 1942

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### Battle of Midway - 4-6 June 1942

This is the after-action report submitted by LT Earl Gallaher, Commanding Officer of Enterprise Air Group's Scouting Squadron Six, detailing that squadron's operations during the Battle of Midway.

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SCOUTING SQUADRON SIX

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-  
A-L

June 20, 1942.

From: Commander, Scouting Squadron SIX.  
To: Commanding Officer, U.S.S. ENTERPRISE.  
Via: Commander, ENTERPRISE Air Group.  
Subject: Report of Action, June 4-6, 1942.  
Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, Art. 874, par. 6.  
Enclosure: (A) Scouting Squadron SIX Tactical Organization of June 2, 1942.

1. Scouting Squadron Six participated in four separate attacks against Japanese naval forces during the period June 4 through June 6, 1942, and in one photographic flight over Japanese naval forces on June 6, 1942. On June 4, 1942 there were nineteen pilots attached to the squadron, seven of whom had been in the squadron for more than seven months, two for more than three months, seven for two months and three for one month. There were eighteen SBD-3 planes assigned and all were in commission. Action was expected. The following is a chronological account of the part Scouting Squadron Six played in the actions:

A. Thursday June 4, 1942, forenoon and afternoon.

1. On Thursday, June 4, 1942, Scouting Squadron Six participated in an attack on a Japanese force consisting of four aircraft carriers, several battleships or heavy cruisers, and many destroyers, about 150 miles Northwest of Midway Island. The attack group was led by the Enterprise Air Group Commander and consisted of thirty-two SBD's, fifteen from VB-6, loaded with one 1,000 lb. bomb each, sixteen from VS-6, loaded with one 500. lb bomb and two 100. lb bombs each, and the EAGC plane loaded with one 500 lb. bomb and two 100 lb. bombs. The squadron tactical organization was as follows:

First Division

6-S-1 Lt. W.E. GALLAHER MERRITT, T.E. ACRM(AA)

6-S-2	Ens. R.W. STONE	BERGIN, W.H., RM1c
6-S-3	Ens. J.Q. ROBERTS	SWINDELL, T.R., AOM1c
6-S-7	Lt. (jg) N.J. KLEISS	SNOWDEN, J.W., RM3c
6-S-18	Ens. C.E. DEXTER	HOFF, D.L., RM3c

Second Division

6-S-10	Lt. C.E. DICKINSON Jr.	DE LUCA, J.F., ARM1c
6-S-15	Ens. J.R. MCCARTHY	HOWELL, E.E., RM2c
6-S-12	Ens. C.D. PEIFFER	JECK, F.C., RM3c
6-S-16	Lt (jg) J.N. WEST	STITZELBERGER, A.R., RM2c
6-S-17	Ens. V.L. MICHEEL	DANCE, J.D., RM3c
6-S-14	Ens. J.C. LOUGH	HANSEN, L.D., RM2c

Third Division

6-S-4	Lt. C.R. WARE	STAMBAUGH, W.H., ARM1c
6-S-5	Ens. F.W. O'FLAHERTY	GAIDO, B.P., AMM1c
6-S-6	Ens. J.A. SHELTON	CRAIG, D.W., RM3c
6-S-8	Ens. W.R. PITTMAN	ADKINS, F.D., AMM2c
6-S-11	Ens. R.A. JACCARD	PIXLEY, P.W., RM3c

2. The attack group departed at 0930 and climbed to 20,000 ft. enroute to the objective. Before reaching the objective, 6-S-9 was forced to return to the ship when the pilot was unable to shift to high blower. This airplane is not shown on the above tactical organization.
3.
  - a. At about 1205, the Japanese fleet was sighted and was seen to consist of 4 CV, 4 BB or CA and 8 to 10 DD. The weather was clear and visibility excellent. There were scattered cumulus clouds from 1,500 ft. to 2,500 ft. and the ceiling was unlimited. The surface wind was 5 to 8 knots from the southeast. The Enterprise Air Group Commander designated by voice radio one CV target for himself and VS-6 and another CV target for VB-6. Commander Scouting Six followed the three plane section led by CEAG on a CV of the Kaga or Akagi class and observed two of this sections bombs to be near misses - the impact of the third bomb was not observed. The CV at this time was undamaged. A clear view of the entire flight deck was obtained during the dive and any damage by previous bomb hits would have been noted. The bomb dropped by the Commanding Officer of Scouting Six was a direct hit in the center of the flight deck about 200 ft. from the stern. At least two more direct hits were scored by the first division and the CV was afire and smoking heavily. 6-S-2 joined up with 6-S-1 almost immediately after pull-out from the dive and a high speed low altitude retirement was made through an opening in the screening vessels. During retirement several more hits were observed on the CV attacked by Scouting Squadron Six and about five minutes after completion of the attack a terrific explosion was observed which completely enveloped the CV in flames. Although several Japanese fighters were observed overhead in position to attack, no attacks were pressed home against 6-S-1 and 6-S-2. A Messerschmitt type fighter was seen to attack 6-S-8 and the fighter was seen to crash into the water in flames. Retirement was continued in the direction of Midway for a short time and then an interception course was set for our own task

force. During retirement it was observed that three CV were on fire and smoking heavily.

- b. The second division leader followed immediately after the last plane of the first division on the designated target scoring a direct hit with his 500 lb. bomb. At least two other hits were scored by this division. The third division was seen to follow the second division on the designated target. None of the pilots of this division returned but the second division leader stated that the third division made at least one direct hit.

4.

- a. Four of the five planes of the first division returned. 6-S-3 was seen to enter his dive but has not been heard from since.
- b. Two planes of the second division returned. 6-S-10 was forced to land in the water just as he reached our task force. The personnel were picked up by the U.S.S. Phelps and were later transferred to the U.S.S. Enterprise. The personnel of 6-S-15 were rescued but are not available for the compilation of this report.
- c. None of the three planes of the third division returned and no information is available as to whether they were shot down or whether they had forced landings due to shortage of fuel.
- d. The two planes which accompanied CEAG returned.
- e. Summarizing, eight planes out of fifteen returned; the personnel of two other planes were rescued; the personnel of six planes are unaccounted for. One of the eight planes which returned, 6-S-8, was damaged by machine gun fire and could not be flown on subsequent attacks.

5. The twin mount free-gun in 6-S-8 came out of its mount in the dive. ADKINS, Floyd Delbert, 382-13-76, A.M.M.2c, U.S.N., held the gun in his lap during the dive and so effectively manhandled it after the dive that he shot down a Messerschmitt type fighter which attacked his plane immediately after the pull-out.
6. No fighter opposition was encountered prior to pull-outs from the dives and very little A-A fire was encountered as it seemed to be concentrated on the torpedo planes which were attacking at the same time. Some planes encountered both A-A fire and attacks by fighters on retirement.
7. The conduct of all pilots and gunners was magnificent. Although only seven of the sixteen pilots had previously dropped live bombs, all pilots pressed home their attacks and released at low altitude. A high percentage of hits was the result.

B. Thursday, afternoon and evening.

1. On Thursday afternoon and evening, June 4, 1942, Scouting Squadron Six participated in a second attack against Japanese surface ships. Only seven of the nine planes remaining after the first attack could be launched. One of these, 6-S-16, returned almost immediately due to engine trouble. The attack group was led by Commander Scouting Squadron Six, and consisted of six planes of VS-6, four planes of VB-6, and fourteen planes of VB-3. The VS-6 tactical organization for this flight was as follows:

6-S-1	Lt. W.E. GALLAHER	MERRITT, T.E., ACRM(AA)
6-S-2	Ens. R.W. STONE	BERGIN, W.H., RM1c
6-S-11	Ens. R.A. JACCARD	PIXLEY, P.W., RM3c

6-S-7	Lt(jg) N.J. KLEISS	SNOWDEN, J.W., RM3c
6-S-17	Ens. V.L. MICHEEL	DANCE, J.D., RM3c
6-S-18	Ens. C.E. DEXTER	HOFF, D.L., RM3c

- The objective was given as 1 CV, 2 BB, 3CA, and 4 DD at Lat. 31-40N, Long. 172-10W.
- The attack group departed at 1745 and climbed to 13,000 ft. while enroute to the objective. The objective was sighted at about 1845 to the Northwest and was seen to consist of 1 CV, 1 BB, 1 CA or Cl and 3 to 4 DD. The heavy ships were widely separated and each was accompanied by a destroyer. The weather was the same as described for the morning attack. The attack group climbed to 19,000 ft. while circling to a position up-sun from the enemy. The attack was started at about 1905 with a high-speed run-in. Four or five "Zero" fighters attacked before the push-over point was reached but no VS-6 planes were shot down. VS-6 dove first and the first two planes missed astern when the CV made a sharp 180° turn away from the direction of the dive. The third plane to dive scored a direct hit and at least one hit was scored by the second section. Three planes of VB-6 and most of the VB-3 planes attacked the CV and several more hits were made and the CV was afire from stem to stern. Some VB-3 planes attacked a BB and at least one direct hit was made. Retirement was made at high speed and at low altitude.
- Fairly heavy AA fire was encountered during the dive and after pull-out. "Zero" fighters also attacked after pull-out.
- All VS-6 planes returned safely from this attack.
- All pilots and gunners conducted themselves in the same exemplary manner as was done in the first attack. All the crews had flown on the first attack.

C. Friday, evening.

- On Friday, June 5, 1942, nine SBD planes of Scouting Squadron Six participated in an attack against a Japanese CL. The tactical organization was as follows:

6-S-13	Lt. PATRIARCA	BADGLEY, J.R., ACRM(AA)
6-S-16	Ens. PITTMAN	ADKINS, F.D., AMM2c
6-S-11	Ens. JACCARD	PIXLEY, P.W., RM3c
6-S-7	Lt(jg) KLEISS	SNOWDEN, J.W., RM3c
6-S-9	Ens. RODENBURG	BRUCE, T.J., Sea2c
6-S-18	Ens. DEXTER	HOFF, D.L., RM3c
6-S-2	Ens. STONE	BERGIN, W.H., RM1c
6-S-17	Ens. MICHEEL	DANCE, J.D., RM3c
6-S-1	Ens. VAMMEN	CLARK, M.W., AMM2c

The attack group was led by Lieutenant D.W. SHUMWAY, VB-3, and consisted of a total of 32 SBD's from VB-3, VB-5, VB-6, and VS-6. All planes were armed with one 500 lb. bomb.

- The objective was given as 1 CV (damaged), 2 BB, 3 CA and 4 DD which had been last reported at 1000 at Lat. 30-00N, Long. 179-32W, course 310° T., speed 12 knots.

3. The attack group departed at 1730. Half of the group formed a scouting line at low altitude while the remainder of the group climbed to 18,000 ft. enroute to the objectives. At 2030 contact was made with a Japanese CL at Lat. 33-00N., Long. 177-00E. It was then dusk. The CL was attacked and many near misses, but no direct hits were observed. During the attack, the CL maneuvered at high speed.
4. Heavy small calibre AA fire was encountered.
5. All VS-6 planes returned safely but 6-S-1 piloted by Ensign C.E. VAMMEN, Jr., landed aboard the HORNET.
6. Landing aboard was accomplished after dark. The pilots of 6-S-16, 6-S-11, 6-S-9, 6-S-18, 6-S-17 and 6-S-1, made their first night carrier landings. These pilots had had no previous night flying in SBD planes and had had no night field carrier landing instruction.

D. Saturday, forenoon.

1. Eighteen VSB planes, of which six were Scouting Six planes, were launched at about 0710 to search a relative sector 180°-360° (T) to a distance of 200 miles. All Scouting Six planes completed their search without making any contacts.
2. 6-S-1, piloted by Ensign C.E. VAMMEN, Jr., accompanied the Hornet group on an attack mission and failed to return.

E. Saturday, afternoon.

1. On Saturday, June 6, 1942, six SBD planes of Scouting Squadron Six participated in an attack against a Japanese force consisting of 1 CA, 1 CL and 2 DD. The tactical organization was as follows:

6-S-16	Lt. F.A. PATRIARCA	BADGLEY, J.R., ACRM(AA)
6-S-2	Ens. R.W. STONE	BERGIN, W.H., RM1c
6-S-11	Ens. R.A. JACCARD	PIXLEY, P.W., RM3c
6-S-7	Lt(jg) N.J. KLEISS	SNOWDEN, J.W., RM3c
6-S-17	Ens. V.L. MICHEEL	DANCE, J.D., RM3c
6-S-18	Ens. C.E. DEXTER	HOFF, D.L., RM3c

The attack group was led by Lieutenant SHORT, VS-5, and consisted of 31 SBD's from VB-3, VS-5, VB-6, VS-6; 3 TBD's from VT-6 and 12 F4F-4's from VF-6.

2. The objective was given as 2 BB, 2 CA and several DD at Lat. 29-33 N., Long. 175-35 E., course 270° T., speed 15 knots.
3. The attack group departed at 1315. The SBD's proceeded independently, climbing to about 19,000 ft. enroute to the objective. At 1400 1 CA, 1 CL and 2 DD were sighted. The SBD's continued thirty miles ahead of this force searching for the BB's, but no other ships were sighted. A high speed run-in was then made on the force contacted at 1400 and an attack delivered at about 1415. Most of the SBD's attacked the CA, which was very heavily damaged. Some pilots attacked the CL and at least one hit was observed. The VF planes strafed the 2 DD.
4. All Planes returned safely.
5. At 1750 one VS-6 airplane, piloted by Lt.(jg) C.J. DOBSON departed on a photographic mission in company with 3-B-10. The photographer in 6-S-18 was MIHALOVITCH, J.S., CP(PA).

6. At the conclusion of the three-day battle the status of pilots and gunners of Scouting Squadron Six is as indicated by Enclosure (A).

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