

On 25 February the entire Force again struck at Tokyo, but this time the weather over the target area was very bad, and the big bomber strikes scheduled for the afternoon had to be cancelled. The following day a strike planned for the airfields in the Nagoya-Osaka-Kobe areas were completely rained out. The ship then headed toward the Nansai Shotos. There, on 1 March, our planes hit Okinawa. Considerable medium sized shipping was attacked in the vicinity of Naha, and the Jap army ground installations were bombed, rocketed and strafed. One of our strikes went as far west as the Miyako Shima. Meanwhile our pilots photographed the beaches at Okinawa and the islands of Korama Ketto in order to determine what beaches offered the best invasion points.

A broad summary of the score run up by Air Group 82 during the foregoing period shows: 19 Jap planes shot out of the air; 67 definitely destroyed on the ground; 20 surface craft sunk and 22 damaged; more than a dozen airfields were bombed, hangars rocketed, and gun emplacements blasted; three of the fields being visited a second time.

From 4 March to 14 March 1945, the ship was again anchored at Ulithi Atoll. Our stay this time was the scene of tragedy when one night, while we were in the middle of a movie on the hangar deck, our pleasure was broken by a hurried CG. Hastening to our battle stations, we saw pillars of fire shooting into the night not far away from our anchorage berth. In a few minutes we had the word that a Kamikaze had sneaked in low and rammed the fantail of the USS Randolph causing death and damage.

The Bennington headed north again on 14 March, and the 16th ~~xxxx~~ found us again playing left-end for the entire Force, closest carrier to land, and only 80