



moments and then flashed apart a thousand feet in the air. Low on fuel, Vraicu returned to the *Lexington*. For some reason the gunners began shooting at him and Vraicu voiced his views on the ship's gunners as he circled and came in again for a landing. When his plane stopped, Vraicu stood up in the cockpit and held up six fingers. In eight minutes he had brought his total score up to nineteen."

Almost an hour later the second attack approached with 119 aircraft. This second wave was repulsed, and by noon it was over. The enemy planes had inflicted damage on the carriers *Bunker Hill*, and *Wasp*. Eighty-five were wounded and three were killed on board both carriers. By late afternoon two more enemy carrier raids were launched; making it a total of four for the day, but like the others proved unsuccessful for the Japanese.

In the last wave eighty-seven aircraft took off from the veteran *Zuikaku* and from the carriers *Hiyu*, *Junyu*, and *Ryuiba*. They misdirected their course and flew too south of the U.S. forces. They were instructed to fly on to Guam after the attack; Guam's fields were more or less wrecked by bomb holes and incapable of air support or of taking landings in that damaged state, but the Japanese lack of communication prevented the pilots from knowing. The 87 planes ran into the Hellcats of the *Bunker Hill*, *Cabot*, *Hornet*, *Monterey*, and *Wasp*; the decimation of the enemy continued. Forty-nine escaped out and pressed on to Guam. However, over Guam, 29 Hellcats from the baby flattops met them and flared up thirty. Only 19 managed to land, but many crashed and/or were strafed by more Hellcats. Of the 87, only 9 survived the night.

Moreover, during the course of the day twin-engined Japanese medium bombers from the inland fields swooped over the U.S. carriers, but the tenacity and braveness of the gunners—many were quite young, and not over 25—picked up all the raiders and prevented any major destruction. In over eight hours of wild fighting, the Americans had stopped the Japanese aircraft from jumping on the prized carriers. Aided by superior radar, American training shone through. Literally, three hundred and fifty planes out of 473 were wiped out in one June day. The Japanese planes fell like turkeys. The battling was called a Turkey Shoot, reminiscent of turkey-hunting, and was actually first called that by the participating naval airmen themselves; it doesn't look as though the actual origin will ever be designated. The Fifth Fleet lost 60 men, inclusive of 27 naval pilots. The battleship *Indiana* received substantial damage. The Japanese kept sending in occasional raiders all afternoon



5th Air Force
S.W. Pacific



Gen. MacArthur's air forces bombed Yap and the Palaus air bases to prevent reinforcement.



7th Air Force
S.W. Pacific