

Loss report

Operation: Offensive sweep - Rhodes Island

Date: 5th November 1943 (Friday)

Unit: 227 Squadron

Type: Bristol Beaufighter

Serial: JL 939

Coded: 9G

Location: North of Rhodes

Pilot: F/O. William Yurchison J/14697 RCAF Age 23. Killed (1)

Observer: F/O. Percival Morris Wroath 130310 RAFVR Age 22. Killed

Reason for loss:

At the time of this loss 227 Squadron had moved from Luqa in Malta to Cyprus from: 23rd September 1943 to 31st November 1943. They were based at Lakatamia south west of Nicosia.

Took off from Lakatamia, Cyprus at 07.30hrs, weather - fine. At 08.58 hrs at sea level, Castelrosso, set course for North of Rhodes. At 09.50hrs, 3550N, 280SE, sighted 4 X Me.109's approaching on a southerly course at 2000ft. Our aircraft turned East and opened throttles, taking violent evasive action, Me109's, upon seeing our aircraft, jettisoned long range fuel tanks and turned into attack. Following as seen by aircraft JP908P:- Aircraft JL900S was attacked by one Me109, port engine caught fire. Aircraft JL900S then seemed to ditch in position 3550N, 2820E - but then cloud of black smoke arose from the position.

Aircraft SL478F was attacked by 1 x Me109 several times and last seen with fuselage on fire under pilot. A large splash was seen as aircraft hit the water. Aircraft JL939G was attacked by 1 x Me109 several times and crashed into the sea (blaze and pall of smoke seen as aircraft hit the water. JM276C was attacked by 1 x Me109 and was last seen heading South, still being chased.

All the Me109's mentioned in this sortie closed to 50 yards. Aircraft JP908P was attacked twice from astern by 1 x Me109 which opened fire at 600 yards and closed to 400 yards. In each case breaking away on to Aircraft BL478F. Aircraft JP908P drew away and set course for base and landed safely. No strikes were sustained by Aircraft JP908P. Flying time for 2 of the aircraft 5 hours, 47 minutes.

Follow up sortie

A follow up sortie took place in order to try and recover any of the lost aircrews:

Date: 5th November 1943

Aircraft Serial No: JM268N

Crew:-

Pilot: F/Lt. W.R. Kemp

Observer: F/O. C. Wyles

Duty: Search for missing Aircrews

Take off time: 18.55hrs

Weather: Hazy. Visibility 15-20 miles

Details of Sortie:

Took off at 18.55 and returned at 22.45 after a search for the missing crews.

Commenced search of area bounded by 3530N, 2820E. 3550N, 2745E. 3610N, 2815E. 3610N, 2836E. In position 3604N, 2807E, a searchlight was switched on due east at deck level. Shortly afterwards a reddish orange glow was seen in the sky over the island. It was seen again half a dozen times during the search. (In different positions).

On two occasions 2 red glows were seen travelling on a similar course but too far apart to be from 1 aircraft. They were obviously airborne and from aircraft which seemed to be searching area and at one time chasing our aircraft. These glows could not possibly be confused with navigation lights. They became quite bright and then died out gradually. Aircraft landed safely.