



tified surface contacts were reported and observed on radar, CAPT Reichert said, "13 appeared to be in a horseshoe formation and all were closing *Sterett* and the departing formation. *Sterett* acted as a buffer between the formation and the enemy, ready to launch her missiles. *Sterett's* radar scope operators then observed a high-speed air target approaching from one of the surface craft and evaluated it as an enemy missile. *Sterett*, in turn, launched a salvo of missiles and destroyed the contact."

"Shortly thereafter, while still protecting *Higbee*, *Sterett* locked on two highspeed surface contacts closing the formation. Evaluated as enemy PT boats, both were destroyed by *Sterett's* 5"/54 before they could inflict any

damage. *Sterett* then retired without further incident."

The 5" gun crew performed superbly. Two third class petty officers, Nixon and Dooley, who controlled the gun battery were singled out for special commendation. The gun had been exercised every day, firing 10 to 15 rounds. "They practiced with our Condition III teams," said LCDR Cornforth. "We'd give them a mythical target at some varying range and they would start firing. It would always be a surprise drill. Very effective."

Visibility during the 2½-hour engagement was hazy at best and as evening drew into night the sky became cluttered with Navy and Air Force fighter aircraft that had flown in from Seventh Fleet carriers and land bases in Thailand. "There was little we could do at that point,"