

Taranto 1940: The Fleet Air Arm's precursor to Pearl Harbor

Osprey Campaign series No. 288 (2015)

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Comments:

This book is standard fare for the series, so no surprises in terms of structure. The book is nicely written and very clear; you will have no trouble at all following the narrative. Several things struck me: the raid on Taranto (a carrier-borne air raid on a heavily defended Italian naval harbour, crowded with most of the Italian fleet) was part of a much larger operation involving almost all of the British Mediterranean fleet and several convoys. I had only ever thought of it as a stand-alone mission. I was also surprised at the scale ó only 20 planes were involved in the attack. Also surprising was the lack of casualties ó only two planes lost, despite really intense AA fire (why this should be is explained in the text). Also interesting was the strike rate of torpedoes launched from the air ó at Taranto 5/11 scored a hit against stationary targets. Bombs by contrast were a dead loss. Compare this to an attack two months later on HMS Illustrious by 63 German planes where only 5 hits were scored against a moving target ó that's less than 10% as opposed to the 50% strike rate at Taranto.

So, there's plenty of food for thought in this book ó effectiveness of torpedo runs against stationary/moving targets, effectiveness of AA fire and comparative effectiveness of torpedoes and bombs.

--Paul Le Long



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