



Lieutenant Clyde Barnett in the cockpit of his P-40 named Smiley at the 27-Mile strip in 1942. On 25 April he was credited with shooting down two Betty bombers. (Bob Alford)

while others landed at Batchelor and Pine Creek, both to the south of Darwin. One other pilot, who must have been well and truly lost, landed at Pago Pago near Kalumburu Mission in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia.

Two days later, on 27 April, the Japanese reappeared over Darwin, commencing with a pre-strike reconnaissance of the Darwin area by a Babs of No. 3 *Ku*. Lieutenant Tanemasa Hirata then led 17 Bettys in an attack on the RAAF base, while 21 Zeros led by Lieutenant Takeo Kurusawa provided escort (more than double the strength of the escort provided two days earlier). At 1135 the bombers released 11,160 kilograms of bombs from 20,000 feet. The AA guns of the Darwin Oval, Fannie Bay and Berrimah batteries fired a total of 141 x 3.7-inch rounds against them. Three RAAF sergeants and a corporal were killed in the attack. Damage was received to the No. 1 Officers' accommodation block, the Airmens' Mess kitchen, the recreation hall, the main North-South Road and the water pipeline.

The 49th PG scrambled three squadrons and following a running battle lost four P-40s and two pilots killed in action. The CO of the 8th PS, Captain Allison W Strauss, a veteran of the Philippines campaign, was shot down and crashed into Fannie Bay while a fellow 8th PS pilot, Second Lieutenant Owen W Fish, was downed over the western side of the harbor. Observers suggested that:

...the pilot was still alive when he made a slow roll at 3,000 feet. A motor launch went out immediately and found portions of the plane, an identification card and fragments of a body. The ... card was that of Lt Fish.