

World War II  
75th Anniversary Commemorative Series

COMBAT NARRATIVES

# Battle of Guadalcanal

11–15 November 1942

*Including the  
Enemy Air Attacks of 11 and 12 November;  
Cruiser Night Action of 12–13 November;  
Air Operations of 13, 14, and 15 November;  
and the Battleship Night Action of 14–15 November*



Naval History and Heritage Command

U.S. Navy



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## **Foreword to the Naval History and Heritage Command 75th Anniversary Edition**

In recognition of the sacrifices made 75 years ago during World War II, the Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) has chosen to republish select volumes from a series, *Combat Narratives*, produced by the Publications Branch of the Office of Naval Intelligence during the early days of World War II. Twenty-five years ago, a similar set was produced by NHHC's predecessor Naval Historical Center.

This set differs from the original and 50th anniversary issues only in that these volumes will be published solely as free distributable PDFs available from the NHHC website at [www.history.mil](http://www.history.mil).



# Foreword to the Naval Historical Center 50th Anniversary Edition

*The Battle of Guadalcanal* is one of a series of twenty-one published and thirteen unpublished Combat Narratives of specific naval campaigns produced by the Publications Branch of the Office of Naval Intelligence during World War II. Selected volumes in this series are being republished by the Naval Historical Center [Naval History and Heritage Command] as part of the Navy's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of World War II.

The Combat Narratives were superseded long ago by accounts such as Samuel Eliot Morison's *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II* that could be more comprehensive and accurate because of the abundance of American, Allied, and enemy source materials that became available after 1945. But the Combat Narratives continue to be of interest and value since they demonstrate the perceptions of naval operations during the war itself. Because of the contemporary, immediate view offered by these studies, they are well suited for republication in the 1990s as veterans, historians, and the American public turn their attention once again to a war that engulfed much of the world a half century ago.

The Combat Narrative program originated in a directive issued in February 1942 by Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, that instructed the Office of Naval Intelligence to prepare and disseminate these studies. A small team composed primarily of professionally trained writers and historians produced the narratives. The authors based their accounts on research and analysis of the available primary source material, including action reports and war diaries, augmented by interviews with individual participants. Since the narratives were classified Confidential during the war, only a few thousand copies were published at the time, and their distribution was primarily restricted to commissioned officers in the Navy.

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal was the most complex naval engagement of the arduous Guadalcanal Campaign. Commencing on 11 November 1942, it lasted for five days and consisted of three phases: a cruiser night action, a carrier action, and a battleship night action. The Japanese precipitated the battle by launching a determined effort to land reinforcements in order to seize Henderson Field on Guadalcanal, the key American facility on the island. The U.S. Navy countered that effort and, in the ensuing action, both navies suffered heavy losses. But the Japanese failed to seize control of the seas around Guadalcanal or to significantly increase the strength of their force ashore. This action marked the last time that the Imperial Japanese Navy would launch a major offensive in the Guadalcanal area.

The Office of Naval Intelligence originally published this narrative in 1944 without attribution. Administrative records from the period indicate that Lieutenant Colin G. Jameson, USNR, authored

the account. Prior to entering the Navy in 1942, Jameson was a free-lance, short-story writer who had published about 40 stories.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable editorial and publication assistance offered in undertaking this project by Mrs. Sandra K. Russell, Managing Editor, *Naval Aviation News* magazine; Commander Roger Zeimet, USNR, Naval Historical Center Reserve Detachment 206; and Dr. William S. Dudley, Senior Historian, Naval Historical Center. We also are grateful to Rear Admiral Kendell M. Pease, Jr., Chief of Information, and Captain Jack Gallant, USNR, Executive Director, U.S. Navy and Marine Corps WW II 50th Anniversary Commemorative Committee, who generously allocated the funds from the Department of the Navy's World War II commemoration program that made this publication possible.

Dean C. Allard  
Director of Naval History

23-7

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COMBAT NARRATIVES

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Solomon Islands Campaign: VI

# Battle of Guadalcanal

11-15 November 1942

*Including the Enemy Air Attacks of 11 and  
12 November; the Cruiser Night Action of 12-  
13 November; the Air Operations of 13, 14,  
and 15 November; and the Battleship Night  
Action of 14-15 November*



Confidential

Office of Naval Intelligence  
U. S. Navy



*COMBAT NARRATIVES*

Solomon Islands Campaign  
VI

# Battle of Guadalcanal

11–15 November 1942



~~Confidential~~

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OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE • UNITED STATES NAVY

1944

## NAVY DEPARTMENT

Office of Naval Intelligence  
Washington, D.C.

*1 October, 1943.*

Combat Narratives are confidential publications issued under a directive of the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, for the information of commissioned officers of the U.S. Navy only.

Information printed herein should be guarded (a) in circulation and by custody measures for confidential publications as set forth in Articles 75½ and 76 of Naval Regulations and (b) in avoiding discussion of this material within the hearing of any but commissioned officers. Combat Narratives are not to be removed from the ship or station for which they are provided. Reproduction of this material in any form is not authorized except by specific approval of the Director of Naval Intelligence.

Officers who have participated in the operations recounted herein are invited to forward to the Director of Naval Intelligence, via their commanding officers, accounts of personal experiences and observations which they esteem to have value for historical and instructional purposes. It is hoped that such contributions will increase the value and render ever more authoritative such new editions of these publications as may be promulgated to the service in the future.

When the copies provided have served their purpose, they may be destroyed by burning. However, reports acknowledging receipt or destruction of these publications need not be made.

/s/ R.E. Schuirmann  
Rear Admiral, U.S.N.,  
*Director of Naval Intelligence.*

## FOREWORD

8 January 1943.

Combat Narratives have been prepared by the Publications Branch of the Office of Naval Intelligence for the information of the officers of the United States Navy.

The data on which these studies are based are those official documents which are suitable for a *confidential* publication. This material has been collated and presented in chronological order.

In perusing these narratives, the reader should bear in mind that while they recount in considerable detail the engagements in which our forces participated, certain underlying aspects of these operations must be kept in a secret category until after the end of the war.

It should be remembered also that the observations of men in battle are sometimes at variance. As a result, the reports of commanding officers may differ although they participated in the same action and shared a common purpose. In general, Combat Narratives represent a reasoned interpretation of these discrepancies. In those instances where views cannot be reconciled, extracts from the conflicting evidence are reprinted.

Thus, an effort has been made to provide accurate and, within the above-mentioned limitations, complete narratives with charts covering raids, combats, joint operations, and battles in which our Fleets have engaged in the current war. It is hoped that these narratives will afford a clear view of what has occurred, and form a basis for a broader understanding which will result in ever more successful operations.

/s/ E.J. King  
Admiral, U.S.N.,  
*Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet,  
and Chief of Naval Operations.*

## Charts and Illustrations

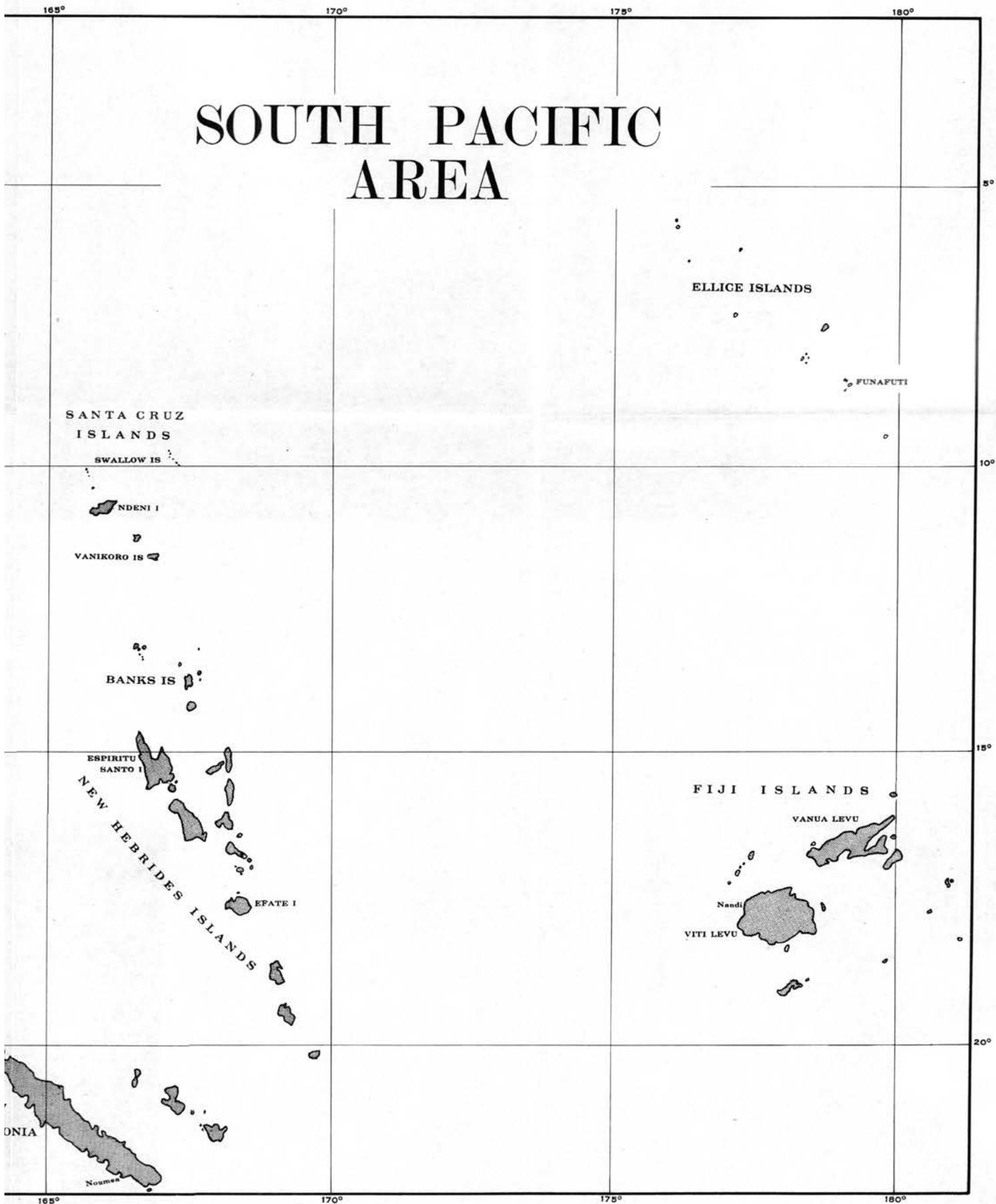
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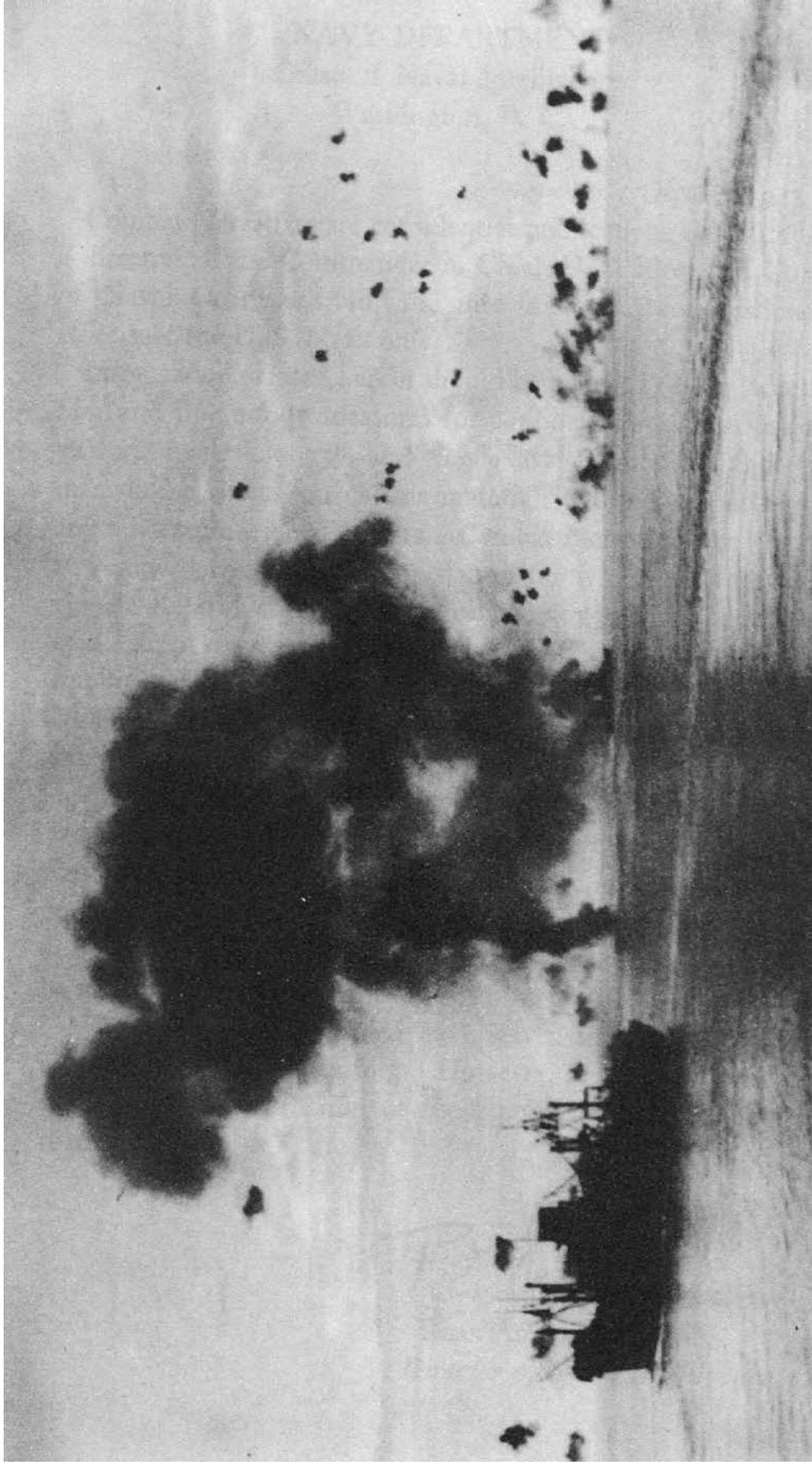
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# SOUTH PACIFIC AREA





*Air attack of 12 November. Burning torpedo plane (left center) has crashed into San Francisco (right center). Left foreground, President Jackson*

# BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL

*11–5 November 1942*

*PART ONE—Enemy Air Attacks of 11–12 November and  
Cruiser Night Action of 12–13 November*

## INTRODUCTION

**P**ERHAPS the entire period between 7 August 1942, when the first Marines landed in the Solomons<sup>1</sup>, and the final evacuation of Guadalcanal by the Japanese should be labeled “The Battle of Guadalcanal.” Hardly a day went by during that 6 months which did not see action on land, in the air, or on the sea. Nevertheless, the climax and turning point of the campaign came with the shattering of the enemy’s supreme effort to overwhelm the island between 11 and 15 November. During the desperate sea and air battles of those 5 days, Japanese losses as estimated by CINCPAC were 2 battleships sunk and 2 damaged, 4 cruisers sunk and 6 damaged, 8 destroyers sunk and 4 damaged, and 12 transports sunk or destroyed. Our losses consisted of 1 battleship damaged, 2 cruisers sunk and 3 damaged, 7 destroyers sunk and 4 damaged, and 3 cargo vessels damaged, 2 of these negligibly.

Beginning the first day of the Solomons operation, the Japanese had offered vigorous opposition to the consolidation and extension of our positions on Guadalcanal. During the remainder of August, they made many air attacks and attempted several landings, all of which were successfully driven off<sup>2</sup> or mopped up.

With the coming of September they redoubled their efforts to bomb us off the island and to put reinforcements ashore. Small night landings by cruisers and destroyers—the so-called “Tokio Express”—became increasingly prevalent throughout the month and in early October. This method of reinforcement proved unsatisfactory, however, because few men and no heavy matériel could be carried. Consequently the enemy found it necessary to bring in large transports. Before this could be done, our air power on Guadalcanal had to be crippled, at least temporarily.

A surface force of cruisers and destroyers, which probably intended to put Henderson Field out of commission, was thrown back in the Battle of Cape Esperance on the night of 11–12 October.<sup>3</sup> Japanese losses were heavy, but 2 nights later they came back and succeeded in shelling the field for an hour and 20 minutes. By the morning of the 15th only 1 of our bombers and 10 fighters were in a condition to take to the air, and they were unable to prevent a convoy of 6 transports from coming in. Our lone bomber sank one of these ships. Other SBD’s were flown in by noon, and with the help of Army B-17’s they set 4 beached transports afire and badly damaged the remaining one. But an enemy force estimated by General Vandegrift to number 16,000 men had already reached shore.

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1 See Combat Narrative, “The Landing in the Solomons.”

2 See Combat Narrative, “The Battle of the Eastern Solomons.”

3 See Combat Narrative, “The Battle of Cape Esperance.”

Frequent shelling of Henderson Field continued, as well as daily air attacks. On 23, 24, and 25 October there were strong Japanese land assaults. At sea a major carrier engagement took place on the 26th—the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands.<sup>4</sup> In this action a strong enemy carrier and battleship force which was covering transports and auxiliaries was intercepted about 350 miles northeast of Guadalcanal. Although we suffered the sinking of the *Hornet* and the damaging of the *Enterprise*, the enemy lost many of the planes comprising the air groups of four carriers, two of which were damaged.

Thereafter the Japanese intensified their efforts to interrupt our communications, achieving considerable success. But they in turn were forced to rely on the “Tokio Express” for reinforcements. An American Task Force of 24 submarines which had begun to operate in the Solomons made this makeshift even less satisfactory. During the first half of November the submarines inflicted the following damage on Japanese communications: sunk, 1 and probably 2 destroyers, 1 light minelayer, 1 oiler, 3 cargo vessels; damaged, 1 seaplane tender (Chiyoda class), 1 heavy cruiser, 1 light cruiser (Natori class), 1 destroyer, 3 or more cargo ships. During the same period surface craft probably destroyed 2 hostile submarines, while Guadalcanal planes probably sank 2 midget submarines.

The Navy and the Marines were cooperating to push the Japanese back on land. Beginning at 0030 on 30 October, the light cruiser *Atlanta* and four destroyers bombarded enemy positions back of Point Cruz for 8 hours. Next morning the Fifth Marines struck across the Matanikau River, supported by such ships as were available. On 3 November our troops had advanced beyond Point Cruz.

During the preceding night Japanese cruisers and destroyers landed 1,500 men and some artillery east of Koli Point. Our offensive to the west was checked to counter this new threat. But because of the heavy damage Japanese supply lines had been receiving at the hands of the Navy, the enemy failed to reinforce this new landing and was unable to launch a general attack from all sides as he had planned.

On 4 November the *San Francisco*, *Helena*, and *Sterett* bombarded the new force east of Koli Point, setting fires and destroying stores and ammunition. By the 11th only an estimated 700 Japanese remained alive. They escaped to the jungle, where they were exterminated during the ensuing month by the Second Marine Raider Battalion and by disease.

By November our air defenses on the island had been greatly improved. The development of landing facilities in the Lunga area was proceeding rapidly, and the striking power of Marine and Army aircraft was beginning to make itself felt. On 7 November, Guadalcanal planes attacked an enemy light cruiser and 10 destroyers. They scored 1 bomb and 2 torpedo hits on the cruiser, damaged 2 destroyers, and shot down 16 planes.

Under cover of darkness the Japanese continued doggedly to put ashore troops and supplies from cruisers and destroyers and by means of landing boats from neighboring islands. Our PT boats from Tulagi attacked repeatedly. On the night of 6–7 November they sank a destroyer. On other nights they damaged two more. Many landing craft were destroyed by planes and surface guns.

The Japanese were not succeeding in improving their position, and it became apparent that they had decided to strike another blow of major proportions. Enemy surface forces were concentrating in the Rabaul-Buin area. By 12 November these were estimated to include 2 carriers, 4 battleships, 5 heavy cruisers, about 30 destroyers, and the transports necessary for a decisive invasion attempt. Our

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<sup>4</sup> See Combat Narrative, “The Battle of Santa Cruz Islands.”

aircraft noted at least 60 ships in the Buin-Faisi-Tonolei anchorages, including 4 probable battleships, 6 cruisers, and 33 destroyers.

To ward off the impending attack, Vice Admiral William F. Halsey Jr., Commander South Pacific Force and South Pacific area, had no such imposing strength available. Only one carrier, the *Enterprise*, was on hand at Noumea, and she was damaged and would not be fully ready for action until 21 November.<sup>5</sup> We were inferior in land-based aircraft as well.

Guadalcanal had received some reinforcements from Efate on 6 November. Seven more United States transports were scheduled to sail from other ports with supplies and reinforcements which were even more vitally important. If Admiral Halsey's combatant forces could not protect them and simultaneously counter the new enemy offensive, we would be obliged to retire from the Solomons, thus jeopardizing the entire Allied position in the South Pacific.

The Guadalcanal supply operation had been assigned to Task Force TARE<sup>6</sup>, Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner, based on Noumea, New Caledonia and Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides. This force was organized as follows:

Task Force TARE, Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner:

Noumea Group, Admiral Turner:

One heavy cruiser:

*Portland*, Capt. Laurance T. DuBose.

One light cruiser (antiaircraft):

*Juneau*, Capt. Lyman K. Swenson.

Four destroyers:

*Barton*, Lt. Comdr. Douglas H. Fox.

*Monssen*, Lt. Comdr. Charles E. McCombs.

*O'Bannon*, Comdr. Edwin R. Wilkinson.

*Shaw*, Comdr. Wilber G. Jones.

Four transports, Capt. Ingolf N. Kiland:

*McCawley* (FF), Capt. Charlie P. McFeaters.

*Crescent City*, Capt. John R. Sullivan.

*President Adams*, Comdr. Frank H. Dean.

*President Jackson*, Comdr. Charles W. Weitzel.

Espiritu Santo Group, Section One, Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan:

Two heavy cruisers, Rear Admiral Mahlon S. Tisdale

*Pensacola* (F), Capt. Frank L. Lowe.

*San Francisco* (FF), Capt. Cassin Young.

One light cruiser:

*Helena*, Capt. Gilbert C. Hoover.

Six destroyers, Capt. Thomas M. Stokes (ComDesDiv TEN):

*Buchanan*, Comdr. Ralph E. Wilson.

*Cushing* (F), Lt. Comdr. Edward N. Parker.

*Gwin*, Lt. Comdr. John B. Fellows, Jr.

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<sup>5</sup> The *Saratoga* was just leaving Pearl Harbor after extensive antiaircraft improvements, and repairs made necessary by a torpedo hit received from a submarine on 31 August.

<sup>6</sup> Official designations of Task Forces have been omitted from all Combat Narratives in the interest of security. The flag names for the first letters of surnames of commanding officers have been substituted.

*Laffey*, Lt. Comdr. William E. Hank.  
*Preston*, Comdr. Max C. Stormes.  
*Sterett*, Comdr. Jesse G. Coward.

Espiritu Santo Group, Section Two, Rear Admiral Norman Scott:

One light cruiser (antiaircraft):

*Atlanta* (FF), Capt. Samuel P. Jenkins.

Four destroyers, Capt. Robert G. Tobin (ComDesRon TWELVE):

*Aaron Ward* (F), Comdr. Orville F. Gregor.

*Fletcher*, Comdr. William M. Cole.

*Lardner*, Lt. Comdr. Willard M. Sweetser.

*McCalla*, Lt. Comdr. William G. Cooper.

Three cargo vessels:

*Betelgeuse*, Comdr. Harry D. Power.

*Libra*, Comdr. William B. Fletcher, Jr.

*Zeilin*, Capt. Pat Buchanan.

Embarked on board the Noumea Group of Task Force TARE were the Army One Hundred Eighty-Second Reinforced Regiment (less Third Infantry Battalion); Battery "L," Eleventh Marines (155-mm. howitzer); the Two Hundred Forty-Fifth Field Artillery Battalion (USA); the One Hundred First Medical Regiment; 1,300 officers and men of the Fourth Marine Replacement Battalion; Co. "A," Fifty-Seventh Engineers (USA); 1 quartermaster company; 1 ordnance company; and 372 naval personnel as reinforcements for the Naval Local Defense Force, as well as considerable ammunition reserves.

The Espiritu Santo Group carried the First Marine Aviation Engineer Battalion, Marine replacements, ground personnel of Marine Air Wing ONE, aviation engineering and operating material, ammunition and food.

In all, about 6,000 men were to be put ashore on Guadalcanal. To protect the landing, Admiral Turner had a total of 3 heavy cruisers, 1 light cruiser, 2 light cruisers (antiaircraft), and 14 destroyers—20 combatant ships. He was also to employ this force to seek out and destroy such enemy surface forces as might be found in the Guadalcanal area.

Available as support at Noumea was Task Force KING, Rear Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid. This group was organized as follows:

Task Force KING, Admiral Kinkaid:

One aircraft carrier:

*Enterprise* (FF), Capt. Osborne B. Hardison.

Two battleships, Rear Admiral Willis A. Lee, Jr., (ComBatDiv SIX):

*South Dakota*, Capt. Thomas L. Gatch.

*Washington* (F), Capt. Glenn B. Davis.

One heavy cruiser, Rear Admiral Howard H. Good:

*Northampton* (F), Capt. Willard A. Kitts III.

One light cruiser (antiaircraft):

*San Diego*, Capt. Benjamin F. Perry.

Eight destroyers, Comdr. Harold R. Holcomb (ComDesRon TWO):

*Anderson*, Lt. Comdr. Richard A. Guthrie.

*Benham*, Lt. Comdr. John B. Taylor.

*Clark* (F), Lt. Comdr. Lawrence H. Martin.

*Hughes*, Comdr. Donald I. Ramsey.  
*Morris*, (Comdr. Arnold E. True, ComDesDiv FOUR), Lt. Comdr. Randolph B. Boyer.  
*Mustin*, Comdr. Wallis F. Petersen.  
*Russell*, Comdr. Glenn R. Hartwig.  
*Walke*, Comdr. Thomas E. Fraser.

Starting Tuesday, 10 November, planes stationed at Espiritu Santo, the Fijis, and Henderson Field were to scout north and west against surface craft and submarines, and to provide fighters, bombers, and antisubmarine patrol in the Guadalcanal area proper. On 11, 12, and 13 November, enemy air fields in range of Guadalcanal were to be bombed.<sup>7</sup>

#### APPROACH TO GUADALCANAL—THE PLAN

*Sunday, 8 November*

1500 Noumea group of Task Force TARE sails.

*Monday, 9 November*

0830 Section Two of Espiritu Santo group departs.

*Tuesday, 10 November*

0500 Section One of Espiritu Santo group gets under way.

0915 Southard probably destroys Japanese SS off San Cristobal.

1500 Shaw joins Noumea group of Task Force TARE.

1700 *Pensacola*, *Gwin*, and *Preston* detached from TARE to reinforce Task Force KING.

*Wednesday, 11 November*

0500 Task Force TARE'S rendezvous southeast of San Cristobal.

The four transports of Task Force TARE'S Noumea group with the *Portland*, *Juneau*, *Barton*, *Monssen*, and *O'Bannon* sortied on Sunday, 8 November, at 1500.<sup>8</sup> The Shaw left on the 9th, joining the rest of the group on the 10th. Admiral Scott's section of the Espiritu Santo group sailed on Monday, 9 November, and passed north of San Cristobal Island to avoid a group of submarines and to escape discovery by the enemy's long range air scouts based in the Buin region. However, these vessels were sighted by a large twin-float Japanese seaplane on Tuesday morning. The aircraft apparently was one of two or three of its type which the enemy had started basing on a tender in a location believed at the time to be the Swallow Islands. Its report was possibly responsible for the air attack on the transports at Guadalcanal the next day.

Admiral Callaghan's section of Task Force TARE departed from Espiritu Santo on Tuesday, 10 November. At 1700, the *Pensacola*, *Gwin*, and *Preston* were detached by COMSOPAC as reinforcements for Task Force KING, which was still at Noumea, but which was preparing to sail to support Admiral Turner.<sup>9</sup> The remainder of Admiral Callaghan's vessels rendezvoused with the Noumea transport group near the eastern end of San Cristobal on Wednesday morning. To prevent air discovery by the Swallow Islands seaplanes, and because a submarine was reported sunk to the west of San Cristobal by

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7 On 10 November COMSOWESPAC (Gen. Douglas MacArthur) was requested to attack shipping in the Buin-Falsi-Tonolei area from the 11th to the 14th. The shortage of aviation gasoline at Guadalcanal unfortunately prevented staging B-17's from Espiritu Santo through Henderson Field in order to reach this sector.

8 All times in Part I are Zone minus 11.

9 On 9 November COMSOPAC had placed the damaged *Enterprise* at Noumea on 24-hour notice, and on the 10th Task Force KING was ordered to assume readiness to get under way within one hour, effective at 2200.

the fast minesweeper Southard (on her way to Aola Bay with troops), a new route south of the island was selected. For the rest of the day the transports and their four escorting destroyers operated about 20 miles in advance of our main fighting strength.

By the afternoon of Monday, 9 November, there was no longer any doubt that the Japanese had set in motion a vast amphibious offensive against Guadalcanal, probably with strong air support.<sup>10</sup> Admiral Turner's considered judgment, together with the reconnaissance reports already mentioned, led him to estimate that the enemy planned to employ 2 to 4 carriers, possibly 2 to 4 fast battleships, as well as cruisers and destroyers, to the northward of Guadalcanal. As protection for at least 1 division of troops in 8 to 12 transports, 2 heavy cruisers, 2 to 4 light cruisers, 12 to 16 destroyers, and several light minelayers would probably operate eastward from Buin. It was anticipated that land-based planes would start bombing Guadalcanal on Tuesday, and that the airfield would perhaps be bombarded by surface craft Wednesday night. A continuous and concentrated carrier air attack on Henderson Field would probably take place on Thursday, with further naval bombardment and landings, perhaps after midnight, on Thursday night, near Cape Esperance or Koli Point. As the narrative progresses, it will be seen that many of these hypotheses were accurate, although no Japanese carriers were directly involved.

Since the enemy invasion force was expected in the Guadalcanal area by Friday, 13 November, it was most important that our transports finish landing their reinforcements and supplies on Thursday and make good their escape. Divorced from responsibility for protecting the transports, the combatant units would be in a better position to carry the fight to the Japanese. If Task Force TARE, with its exceptional anti-aircraft strength, managed to turn back the enemy's initial onslaught, cost what it might, then our land-based aircraft on Guadalcanal, plus the planes of the *Enterprise* and the battleships of Task Force KING, might dash in and destroy or cripple the main Japanese surface forces.

According to the original plan, Admiral Scott's cargo vessels from Espiritu Santo were due off Lunga Point, Guadalcanal, at 0530 on Wednesday, 11 November. Admirals Turner and Callaghan were to reach Indispensable Strait that night, after which the Noumea transports would pass through Lengo Channel, if favorable reports were received from minesweepers, and anchor at the unloading point Thursday morning. Admiral Callaghan was to precede the transport group and arrive at the east end of Sealark Channel about 2200. There he was to be joined by Admiral Scott's fighting vessels, except for three destroyers detached as anti-aircraft and antisubmarine protection for the three Espiritu Santo transports. During the night he was to pass through Sealark Channel to Savo Sound and strike any enemy forces he might find, with particular attention to possible transports in their rear. Retiring eastward to Indispensable Strait at daybreak, he was to take up a support position until about 1800, when he would return to cover the final unloading and departure. This was tentatively scheduled for 2200, unless it was found necessary to return the next day to complete the operation, or the expected attack failed to take place. If the Japanese bombarded Guadalcanal or Florida Island during Thursday night, or attempted to land troops, Admiral Callaghan was to be on hand to oppose them.

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<sup>10</sup> Further evidence of the enemy operation was provided on Tuesday when our aircraft discovered 5 Japanese destroyers 210 miles northwest of Guadalcanal. Eight SBD's and 15 F4F-4's attacked the ships, and 3 near-hits were scored on each of 2 destroyers. One SBD was lost, but the pilot and gunner were saved.

Later, this plan was changed slightly. On Thursday Admiral Callaghan was to return from Indispensable Strait, as soon as he made sure no enemy vessels were present, and cover the unloading, which was to proceed at top speed all day. If the enemy attacked, he was to form a circular screen at a distance of 1,000 yards from the nearest transports. As far as the landing proper was concerned, all troops were to be put ashore first, carrying 2 days' rations, water, barracks bags, and one unit of fire, so that they would be ready for action in case the Japanese did succeed in making a landing. Those who were on the beach were to work continuously at unloading the boats. None of the Marines already present on Guadalcanal would be available, since they were dealing with the Japanese land forces.

Admiral Turner stated emphatically to all officers concerned that the safety of our position on the island depended entirely on the rapidity with which the ships were emptied.

#### FIRST PHASE—ENEMY AIR ATTACKS OF 11 AND 12 NOVEMBER

*Wednesday, 11 November*

0530	Admiral Scott arrives at Guadalcanal.
0905	Planes reported.
0935	Nine dive bombers sighted; all destroyed. Unloading resumed.
1127	Twenty-seven bombers attack shore installations.
1800	Admiral Scott retires to Indispensable Strait for night.
2200	His combatant forces join Admiral Callaghan.
2330	Admiral Callaghan arrives in Savo Sound for a search.

Admiral Scott reached Guadalcanal at 0530 on Wednesday, as expected, and began unloading supplies on Lunga Point. The sea was calm, with the wind about force two. Surface visibility was unlimited; cloud ceiling was 10,000, with formations low over the mountains on Guadalcanal. At 0905 Radio Guadalcanal reported that 10 bombers and 15 fighters were approaching from the northwest and should arrive at about 0930. At 0910 they were located on a bearing of 300° T., distance 80 miles. Seven minutes later the bearing was 280° T., distance 43. At 0920 Admiral Scott got under way and formed anti-aircraft disposition as follows: The *Betelgeuse*, *Libra*, and *Zeilinwere* in column. The *Atlanta* was several hundred yards ahead of them. The *Aaron Ward*, *Fletcher*, *Lardner*, and *McCalla* were stationed on the flanks of the column at a distance of 1,500 yards from it. The formation was steaming on course 000° T., speed 15.

At 0930 "bandits" were reported approaching from 230° T., distance 20, and coming in fast. Five minutes later, 9 dive bombers of the Aichi 99 type emerged from the clouds over Henderson Field at about 10,000 feet. The planes were in a rough **T** formation and peeled off from the right side. Shortly before the first one started its dive, about 0938, the *Atlanta* and the other ships opened fire. There were bursts close to the leading plane, which sheered away and jettisoned its bombs. Several other aircraft were set afire and downed in the sea. Marine land-based fighters had begun to take a hand, and a single F4F-4 accounted for 4 of the 5 kills scored against the 15 Zero fighters which were protecting the bombers. The latter chose the transports as targets. The *Zeilin* received 3 near-hits and 1 hold was flooded. The *Libra* and *Betelgeuse* were slightly damaged by other near-hits. Personnel casualties were considerable. About half the bombers escaped destruction by anti-aircraft fire but were downed by fighter planes during their withdrawal. Six of our planes and 4 pilots were lost, principally because of the inexperience of the personnel.

Unloading operations were resumed. At 1127 a flight of 25 medium and heavy level bombers, protected by 5 Zeros, came in at 27,000 feet and began attacking ground installations on the island. The transports received no attention, but antiaircraft fire was opened. Most bursts were short, but 1 bomber was believed destroyed. The landplanes downed 6 aircraft for certain and probably 2 others. Henderson Field antiaircraft accounted for 1 additional bomber. One Grumman fighter was lost.

As dusk approached (about 1800), Admiral Scott retired to Indispensable Strait for the night. It was found necessary to send the *Zeilin* back to Espiritu Santo with the *Lardner* as escort. The damaged ship proceeded under her own power at 10 knots and arrived safely on 14 November.

Meanwhile Admiral Turner's and Admiral Callaghan's combined force was approaching on schedule. On the morning of the 11th the *Portland's* four seaplanes had been sent back to Espiritu Santo, because the Battle of Savo Island, when the *Canberra*, *Astoria*, *Quincy*, and *Vincennes* were lost, had demonstrated that during action the presence of cruiser planes on board is a serious fire hazard. The evening air search from Guadalcanal showed no enemy planes or ships in the vicinity, but this was not considered conclusive, so Admiral Callaghan proceeded at high speed in advance of the transports. After reinforcement by Admiral Scott's combatant ships in Indispensable Strait, he entered Savo Sound at 2330 and made two thorough sweeps east and west of Savo Island. Nothing was found. The entire group remained in the sound and joined Admiral Turner and the transports when they appeared at dawn on Thursday.

*Thursday, 12 November*

0530	Transports arrive at Guadalcanal.
0718	Enemy shore battery opens up and is silenced.
1010	Friendly aircraft fired on.
1035	Enemy BB's sighted, 335 miles
1045	Enemy DD's, 195 miles.
1317	Guadalcanal reports enemy bombers and fighters which could arrive at 1330.
1405	Torpedo planes attack.
1419	Action terminated.
1450	"Two CV and two DD" sighted, 150 miles. Never confirmed.
1525	Transports anchor again.

Admiral Turner's four transports anchored off Kukum Beach at 0530 on Thursday, and the *Betelgeuse* and *Libra* anchored 2 miles east of Lunga Point. Combatant vessels were disposed about the transports in two protective semicircles. The *San Francisco*, *Portland*, and *Helena* lay 3,000 yards away. The *Atlanta*, *Juneau*, 11 destroyers, and the fast minesweepers *Hovey* (Lt. Comdr. Edwin A. McDonald) and *Southard* (Lt. Comdr. John G. Tennent III),<sup>11</sup> which had been sweeping Lengo Channel and the transport area, were stationed 6,000 yards away. The screen had orders to close to 1,000 yards if an air attack eventuated and the transports had to get underway. One submarine contact north of Lunga Point was reported that morning, but depth charge attacks produced no results.

At 0718 a Japanese 6-inch shore battery opened up on the *Betelgeuse* and *Libra*. Counter-battery work by our shore guns and shellfire from the *Helena*, *Barton*, and *Shaw* soon caused it to cease firing. Neither of

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<sup>11</sup> The *Hovey* had arrived from Espiritu Santo with aviation gasoline on Tuesday. The *Southard* had reached Tulagi the same day after disembarking her troops at Aola Bay.

the cargo vessels was hit, and debarkation continued. Subsequently, the *Buchanan* and *Cushing* attacked enemy shore installations farther to the west. Many large fires and explosions were observed. When the range closed to about 1,500 yards, the destroyers used 1.1-inch and 20-mm. machine guns on a number of large Japanese landing boats which had been previously riddled by the fire of ships and aircraft, and further destruction was caused among them. The attack was facilitated by an unidentified but friendly cruiser-type plane which dived on useful targets.

The expected air attack did not take place, but at 1010 twelve of our aircraft, which were being ferried from Espiritu Santo, were fired on by mistake, fortunately without serious damage. From their low approach it was thought that they were torpedo planes.

At 1317 Admiral Turner received from Radio Guadalcanal a dispatch saying that a flight of enemy bombers and fighters was passing Tonolei and heading southeastward. These planes could reach Guadalcanal by 1330, so orders were immediately given to get underway and form in the previously designated antiaircraft disposition (Left column: *McCawley*, *Crescent City*, and *Libra*. Right column: *President Jackson*, *President Adams*, *Betelgeuse*. Screen as noted above). This was completed by 1340, and a course of 340° T. had been set, when another dispatch was received. Shore radar had picked up the planes, and the scheduled arrival time was now 1415. The aircraft actually appeared at 1405, after approaching low behind Florida Island so as to remain out of sight as long as possible. There were 20-25 torpedo bombers (Mitsubishi Type 1) and 8 Zero fighters. Only the bombers were immediately sighted by our vessels. They headed toward the transport anchorage in a long line abreast, skimming so close to the water that they occasionally dipped below the horizon. Their speed was approximately 200 knots. As they came within range, the screening ships to the north and east, which were not masked by our own vessels, opened up. Their fire was so devastating that several enemy planes were immediately blasted from the air and others were set ablaze. The survivors, in a desperate attempt to avoid the holocaust, split into two groups, one swerving across the bows of our ships, and the other swinging around astern of them to escape westward along the coast. So violent were their maneuvers that their torpedoes seemed to spill into the water haphazardly, as if impelled by centrifugal force alone.

All attempts to get away were unavailing, however. Our land-based fighters (20 F4F-4's and 8 P-39's), which had been attacking the covering flight of Zeros, dived on the remnants of the bombers which were fleeing westward and sent one after another flaming into the sea.

The fighters had already accounted for five Zeros and now they eliminated every remaining bomber but one. Kills claimed by ships and aircraft are conflicting, but only one bomber was later reported passing over New Georgia Island. In addition to those destroyed by fighters and antiaircraft, one was downed by .50-caliber fire from the landing boats scattered off Lunga Point. Our plane losses were three F4F-4's and one P-39.<sup>12</sup>

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12 In the fever of repelling air attack it is practically impossible for individual ships and aircraft to make accurate estimates of the number of planes shot down and damaged by their own guns. In this action, for example, 25 bombers at most were employed. One was credited to the landing 12 boats, and 1 escaped, leaving only 23 which could possibly have been downed by fighters and surface craft. Nevertheless, 59 sure kills were reported. The fighters claimed 16 and the ships 43, as well as 18 possibles and 10 damaged. The *Fletcher* alone maintained that she had positively downed 5 planes and assisted in the destruction of 3. *Juneau* personnel reported that she had blasted 6 bombers out of the air, while the *Betelgeuse* claimed 5. The *Southard* claimed 3 shot down, 3 possibles and 2 damaged. The *Sterett* stated that she had destroyed 4 planes and scored 2 possibles. The *Helena's* record was 4 kills.

One aircraft which dropped its torpedo on the starboard side of the *McCawley* was set on fire by that ship's guns. The pilot headed to crash the *San Francisco*. Although he was practically parallel to her, he managed to strike Battle II and the after control structure with one wing. The plane then sideswiped the ship and fell into the water. Several fires broke out on the *San Francisco*. They were soon extinguished, but a total of 30 lives had been taken, and many other men had been badly burned. The after antiaircraft director and the FC radar had been put out of commission, and the three 20-mm. guns on the after superstructure were demolished. The crews of these guns stayed at their stations and maintained fire until they were killed by the plane crashing into them.

During the course of the attack the enemy torpedo planes flew so close to the water that several of our ships were struck by antiaircraft fire. The *Buchanan* received a direct hit on No. 2 stack by a 5-inch shell, which caused 13 casualties, including 5 dead, and considerable material damage.

The transports anchored again at about 1525, after losing 2 hours' unloading time.

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Earlier in the day, reports from our scouting aircraft revealed that strong enemy surface forces were bearing down on Guadalcanal and were close enough to arrive during the night. Three separate groups were sighted:

1. Two battleships or heavy cruisers, one heavy or light cruiser, and six destroyers sighted at 1035 bearing 008° T. from Guadalcanal (practically due north of the northwest tip of Malaita Island), distance 335 miles. This group was later identified as two *Kongo*-class battleships,<sup>13</sup> one *Tenryu*-class light cruiser, and six destroyers.
2. Five destroyers sighted at 1045 bearing 347° T., about 100 miles due north of Santa Isabel Island (distance from Guadalcanal, 195 miles). This was more likely one or two *Natori*-class light cruisers and three or four destroyers.
3. Two small carriers and two destroyers sighted at 1450 bearing 264° T. (south of New Georgia Island), distance 150. These "carriers" were never confirmed as such because of exceptionally heavy cloud cover and rain squalls and were perhaps seaplane tenders taking float planes to Rennell Island. A Marine attack group sent out to destroy them was forced to turn back by the weather and approaching darkness.

No transports were discovered heading for Guadalcanal, so it was thought that the enemy's intent was to attack our own transports that night in Indispensable Strait or to bombard our Guadalcanal positions. Considering the Japanese strength previously reported at Buin, it was possible that additional cruisers and destroyers might be on the way, and the presence of heavy cruisers in the ensuing action proved that this was the case. The first two groups mentioned above were probably from Truk.

To meet this gathering armada, Rear Admiral Turner now had at his disposal 2 heavy cruisers, 1 light cruiser, 2 antiaircraft light cruisers, 11 destroyers, and 2 fast minesweepers, besides his transports. He decided to assign to Admiral Callaghan all the cruisers and 8 destroyers, thus leaving 1 damaged destroyer, 2 low-fuel destroyers, and 2 minesweepers for the protection of the transports.

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13 It is possible that one of these was a *Fuso*, though not likely in view of the Japanese habit of operating their *Kongo* battleships in company. The other was definitely a *Kongo*—the *Hiyei*.

By late afternoon it was seen that the transports could be 90 percent unloaded before night, but that it would be several days before the cargo vessels (*Betelgeuse* and *Libra*) were emptied. In view of the enemy's approach in force it was determined that all the transports should be withdrawn, after which Admiral Callaghan would strike the Japanese in Indispensable Strait or Savo Sound and damage them as much as possible. This delaying action might make it possible for Task Force KING to blast the major enemy landing attempt with the help of the planes from Henderson Field. Admiral Kinkaid's force had not sailed from Noumea till Wednesday noon and was not close enough to help during the coming night. It was now steaming to get the *Enterprise* in fly-off position south of Guadalcanal on the morning of Friday, the 13th.

#### SECOND PHASE—CRUISER NIGHT ACTION OF 12–13 NOVEMBER<sup>14</sup>

*“This desperately fought action...has few parallels in naval history. We have come to expect, and to count on, complete courage in battle from officers and men of the United States Navy. But here, in this engagement, we had displayed for our lasting respect and admiration, a cool but eager gallantry that is above praise. These splendid ships and determined men won a great victory against heavy odds. Had this battle not been fought and won, our hold on Guadalcanal would have been gravely endangered.”* — R. K. TURNER.

##### 12–13 November

1815 Task Force TARE leaves Savo Sound.  
 0000 Admiral Callaghan returns via Lengo Channel for a sweep of Savo Sound.  
 0124 *Helena's* SG radar picks up three enemy groups—nearest 27,100 yards.  
 0148 “Odd ships fire to starboard, even ships to port.”  
 0149 *Natori* CL blows up, *Natori* or *Tenryu* CL on fire. Enemy CL or CA also on fire. Sinks a few minutes later. Enemy DD blows up. Two others on fire.  
 0150 *Atlanta* sinks a DD and is torpedoed.  
 0151–2 *Atlanta* on fire. *San Francisco* attacks BB *Hiyei*. *Portland* sinks a *Hibiki* DD. *Laffey* shells *Hiyei* and is knocked out and torpedoed.  
 0154 “Cease firing, our ships.”  
 0155–6 *Cushing* and *O'Bannon* torpedo *Hiyei*. *Barton* blows up. *Portland* and *Juneau* have been torpedoed.  
 0200–0204 *Laffey* blows up. *San Francisco* and *Portland* attack *Hiyei*. *San Francisco* seriously damaged. *Helena* silences cruiser.  
 0205 *Monssen* torpedoes *Hiyei*.  
 0210 *Sterett* torpedoes *Hiyei*.  
 0212 *Helena* tries to reassemble our forces.  
 0220 *Sterett* sinks a *Fubuki* DD.  
 0240 *Monssen* abandoning ship.  
 0630 *Portland* sinks *Shiguri* DD.  
 1101 *Juneau* again torpedoed and blows up.  
 1700 *Cushing* sinks.  
 2015 *Atlanta* sinks. During the night *Hiyei* also sinks, after having been bombed by planes all day.

At 1815 Task Force TARE proceeded eastward out of Savo Sound. The transport group and its screen (*McCawley* (Admiral Turner), *Betelgeuse*, *Crescent City*, *Libra*, *President Adams*, *President Jackson*, *Buchanan*, *Hovey*, *McCalla*, *Shaw*, *Southard*) left via Lengo Channel. The combatant group,

<sup>14</sup> Action in this battle was confused from the start, and the reports are sometimes conflicting as to detail and timing. The divergences have been reconciled as far as possible, but it is probable that inaccuracies persist in the story as here given.

commanded by Admiral Callaghan in *San Francisco* and Admiral Scott in *Atlanta*, used Sealark Channel and preceded the transports into Indispensable Strait, which it swept before they arrived. Admiral Turner then headed for Espiritu Santo, where he arrived on Sunday. Admiral Callaghan reversed his course and proceeded toward Lengo Channel. His ships were in Battle Disposition “Baker ONE”—the single column being led by the *Cushing*, followed by the *Laffey*, *Sterett*, *O’Bannon*, *Atlanta*, *San Francisco*, *Portland*, *Helena*, *Juneau*, *Aaron Ward*, *Barton*, *Monssen*, and *Fletcher*, in that order. The distance maintained between the destroyers was about 500 yards. Between cruisers and between divisions it was 700-800 yards. Signals were made by voice code over TBS.<sup>15</sup>

At 0000 Friday the 13th, the 13 ships entered Lengo Channel at 18 knots for a search of the Savo Island area, which since 7 August, 1942 has witnessed the destruction of as mighty an array of naval power as was sunk at the Battle of Jutland. The moon had set, the sky was overcast, the night was very dark. The sea was calm, and a slight breeze—9 to 10 knots—was blowing from south southeast.

The first sign of the enemy’s presence was a probable torpedo wake which was sighted by the *O’Bannon* at 0036. About half an hour later the same ship observed a bright light on the port bow, apparently on the Guadalcanal beach. The *San Francisco* saw two white lights, with the eastern one sending long flashes. The same phenomenon had been noted on the night of 11–12 October just before the Battle of Cape Esperance. Now a red air raid warning as well (“planes overhead”) was received from Guadalcanal Control. Look-outs saw unidentified aircraft above with running lights on.

Near Lunga Point at 0124, while on course 280° T., the *Helena*’s SG radar picked up three groups of enemy vessels, the first bearing 312° T. at 27,100 yards, the second 310° T. at 28,000 yards, and the third 310° T. at 32,000 yards. This information was relayed to Admiral Callaghan by TBS,<sup>16</sup> because the flagship was not provided with SG radar. Only the *Portland*, *Helena*, *Juneau*, *O’Bannon*, and *Fletcher* possessed this invaluable equipment.

From the strength of the signals received by the *Helena* it was believed that the two nearer groups constituted part of the screen for the more distant one. At 0130 the *Helena*’s radar plot reported target course was approximately 134° T., speed 20 (later altered to 120° T., speed 20-23). Other radar contacts confirmed the fact that there were 3 groups rapidly closing our column, which was now on course 000° T., 1 being ahead and 2 to port. Course was changed to 310° T. to steam directly for the enemy, but at 0137 it was shifted back to 000° T. At 0140 the *O’Bannon* made SG radar contacts as follows: one group bearing 287° T., distant 11,000 yards, and containing 3 or more units; a second group bearing 318° T., distant 8,500 yards, and composed of 2 or 3 units; and a third group bearing 042° T., distant 6,000 yards, and containing 3 units. From the earlier air reports and later observations it seems clear that the left-hand group consisted of 2 heavy cruisers (1 being a *Maya*-class) and 2 or 3 destroyers. The center group included 1 battleship of the *Kongo* class (the *Hiyei*) with a *Tenryu*-class light cruiser and several destroyers. The right-hand group probably contained 2 *Natori*-class light cruisers and 3 or 4 destroyers. To the north was another battleship with escorting vessels.<sup>17</sup> All told, there were between 18 and 20 ships.

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15 Super frequency radio.

16 But the delay in transmission amounted to 6 minutes, during which time the opposing forces moved approximately 4 miles closer together.

17 This group was not discovered till 0145. See p. 13.

Our squadron was not only outnumbered but heavily outclassed.

The picture at the time, however, was not clear to Admiral Callaghan, who had apparently received radar information from the *Helena* alone. At 0139 that ship reported four targets in line but gave no bearing or range. The OTC requested the distance. Just as this was being received, ComDesDiv TEN in the *Cushing* announced that ships were crossing from port to starboard at 4,000 yards. Later the *Helena* reported a total of 10 targets.

The TBS, in the words of Admiral Spruance, “became chaotic with queries and incomplete information.”<sup>18</sup> At 0142 the *Cushing* informed the OTC that she was turning left to get in position to fire torpedoes at the ships crossing and asked leave to do so. This permission was granted by Admiral Callaghan, and course was changed to 310° T. The *Cushing* turned to port but did not fire because she recognized the targets as destroyers which were sheering away. Also, the OTC had ordered all ships back to course 000° T. again.

With this latest shift our column became disorganized. The *Atlanta* was forced to turn left to miss the *O'Bannon* which was making many rudder changes to avoid ramming the *Sterett*. The OTC ordered the *Atlanta* to return to course. Several other times he requested the column to maintain 000° T., but the order did not get through to all vessels. Some steered 315° T. The cruisers turned as far left as 270° T. The *San Francisco* maintained this course and went between the left and center enemy groups, 2,000 and 3,000 yards away respectively, leaving the *Atlanta* on her starboard hand. Meanwhile the van mingled with the Japanese ships and a melee existed even before firing began.

At 0145 Admiral Callaghan ordered the Task Force to stand by to open fire, range 3,000. At the same time the *O'Bannon's* radar picked up a fourth set of signals from the north, but there is no evidence that the OTC received this information. The new enemy group was in two sections, one distant 9,000 yards and the other 13,500 yards. The existence of these ships and the presence in the formation of at least one battleship is confirmed by the fact that heavy firing was reported from this area during the action, and by the fact that the *San Francisco* took a 14-inch shell (a dud) at an angle of 20° with the horizontal. Most of the Japanese vessels were so close to our flagship that all her other damage was caused by shells with very flat trajectories.

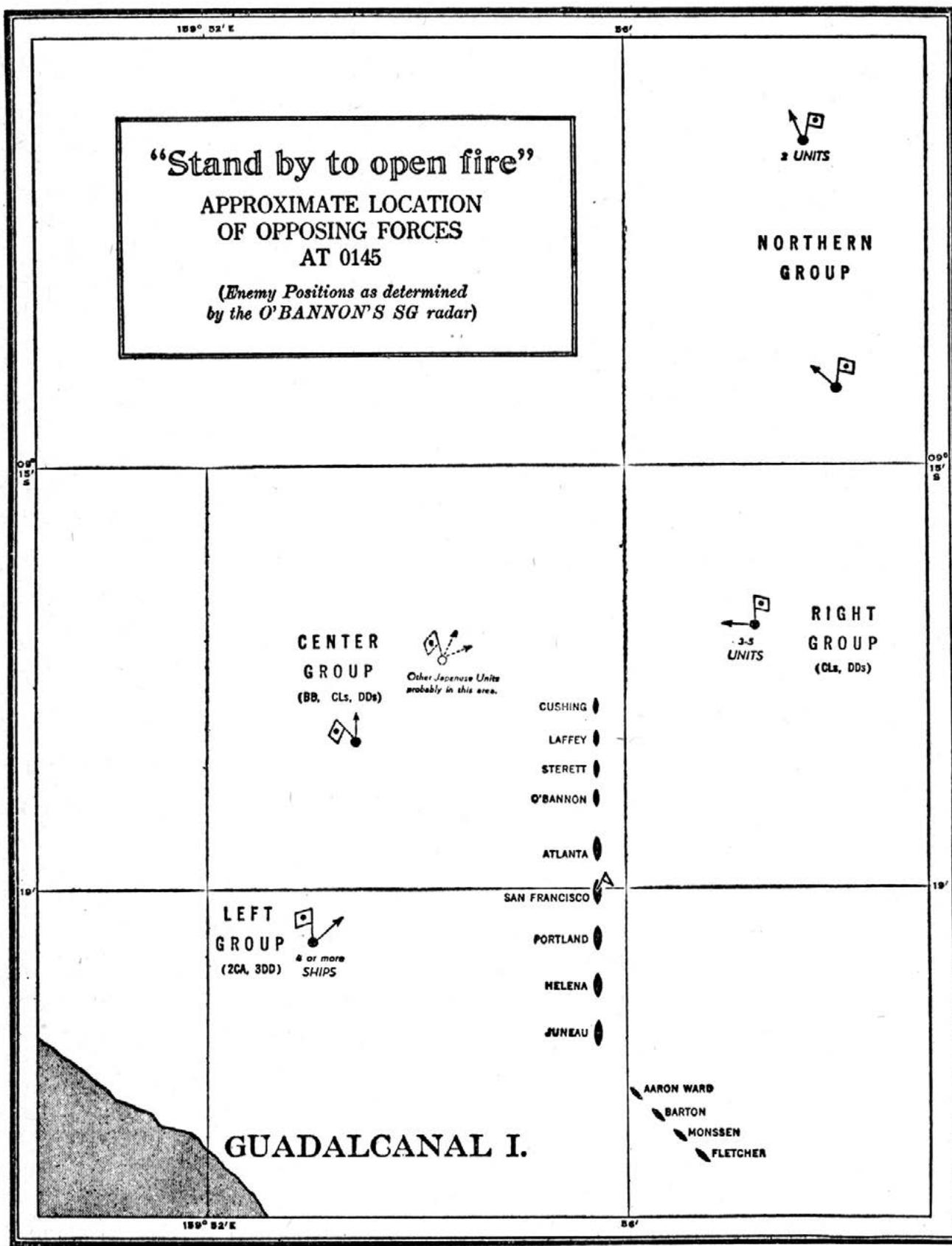
At this point enemy ships were on both sides of our column, which was in the path of the group containing the first battleship. Suddenly the Japanese illuminated from both right and left and commenced firing. The time was 0148. The OTC immediately gave the command, “Odd ships fire to starboard, even to port.”<sup>19</sup> The guns of the Task Force opened up, and a free-for-all fight began with little semblance of coordination on either side.

At a conservative estimate, the Japanese could throw three times as much metal per broadside as the American units. They were also in a position to pound our ships from both sides and from ahead. Yet

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18 See appendix, giving the TBS log as kept by the *Helena* and *Portland*. There was some evidence of enemy use of TBS for purposes of deception. For example, several operators heard the *Pensacola* being called. As we have seen, this vessel was not even in the vicinity.

19 This order was not literally followed by all ships. The flagship herself, an even-numbered vessel, opened fire to starboard instead of to port.



**"Stand by to open fire"**

**APPROXIMATE LOCATION  
OF OPPOSING FORCES  
AT 0145**

*(Enemy Positions as determined  
by the O'BANNON'S SG radar)*

  
2 UNITS

**NORTHERN  
GROUP**



**CENTER  
GROUP**  
(BB, CLs, DDs)

  
*Other Japanese Units  
probably in this area.*



- CUSHING ●
- LAFFEY ●
- STERETT ●
- O'BANNON ●
- ATLANTA ●

  
3-5 UNITS

**RIGHT  
GROUP**  
(CLs, DDs)

**LEFT  
GROUP**  
(2CA, 3DD)   
4 or more SHIPS

- SAN FRANCISCO ●
- PORTLAND ●
- HELENA ●
- JUNEAU ●

- AARON WARD ●
- BARTON ●
- MONSSEN ●
- FLETCHER ●

**GUADALCANAL I.**

despite initial accuracy of fire, the amount of damage they did was restricted by the fact that they were using bombardment ammunition. They had obviously been expecting to shell our Guadalcanal installations, not to fight an engagement.

The gunfire of the American ships was most effective. Immediately after the illumination by the enemy, which was accompanied, according to some reports, by the dropping of flares from planes, one of the illuminating ships to starboard, probably a *Natori* light cruiser, came under fire from the *San Francisco*, *Sterett*, and other ships. This cruiser was 3,700 yards off the *San Francisco's* beam. Our flagship illuminated it with her starboard 5-inch battery and fired seven main battery salvos. The Japanese ship blew up within a minute, and other light units to starboard reversed course and fell back toward the central main body, which still had not been sighted by the majority of our force.<sup>20</sup>

On the port side the *Atlanta*, *Juneau*, *Helena*, *Aaron Ward*, *Barton*, *Fletcher*, *Laffey*, and *O'Bannon* opened on illuminating vessels.<sup>21</sup> The fire of the three light cruisers and the *Barton* and *Fletcher* apparently was concentrated on two targets in line. The *Atlanta* and *Juneau* blasted a light cruiser, while the *Helena*, *Barton* and *Fletcher* attacked a vessel which was either a heavy or a light cruiser.<sup>22</sup> Both ships burst into flames. Seeing that her target was out of action, the *Fletcher* shifted fire to the next ship in line (possibly the target of the *Atlanta* and *Juneau*), which she reported as "either a *Natori*- or *Tenryu*-class light cruiser." She was joined by the *Sterett*, which fired 13 salvos. Both the Japanese vessels were seen to sink almost immediately. In the same area "an enemy destroyer exploded" (this may have been one of the cruisers), and two others were seen to be on fire.

The *Atlanta*, an odd-numbered ship, had been unable to open fire to starboard as ordered because our destroyers were in the way. While she was shooting at the cruiser to port, a division of Japanese destroyers crossed 1,200 yards ahead of her. The forward group of guns was shifted and put 20 shells into the last in line, possibly a *Shiguri*. It "erupted into flame and disappeared." The after group of guns continued to fire at the enemy cruiser until it ceased firing and sank. A destroyer astern of the latter vessel, which had opened up on the *Atlanta*, also stopped shooting. At this point the *Atlanta* had received thirteen 5.5-inch hits and some 3-inch from the light cruiser, mostly in the bridge section, and twelve 5-inch from the destroyers. There were fires forward. As the enemy ceased fire, our cruiser was struck by one or two torpedoes forward on the port side, perhaps from the destroyer to port. All power was lost, except the auxiliary Diesel, and the rudder was jammed left. The ship began to circle back toward the south.

Meanwhile the *San Francisco*, which had altered course to 280° T., shifted fire from her stricken enemy ship to a "small cruiser or large destroyer further ahead on the starboard bow. [This vessel] was hit with

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20 The *Cushing*, number one in the column, had opened fire on a destroyer to starboard which may have been one of the "light units."

21 Immediately after illumination and before the enemy commenced firing, the *Atlanta* opened on an illuminating light cruiser to port, range 1,900 yards, bearing 270° T. Many hits were scored. The *Helena* opened at 4,200 yards, using radar range and train, and continued fire for 2 minutes, expending 175 rounds. Spot No. 1 reported that almost all shots hit. The port 5-inch battery was on a target slightly to the left of the main battery target at a range of 6,200 yards. Twenty rounds were fired. The *Barton*, besides using her 5-inch battery, fired 5 torpedoes with unascertained results.

22 The fact that the *Helena* received two hits at this time, one of which was definitely 8-inch, led that ship to believe that she was engaging a heavy cruiser.

two full main battery salvos and set afire throughout her length.<sup>23</sup> The range was 3,300 yards. At about the same time, as nearly as can be judged, a heavy cruiser came up on the *Atlanta*'s port quarter and opened fire at a range of about 3,500 yards, bearing 240° R. The *Atlanta* reported that 19 hits were scored on her with 8-inch armor-piercing ammunition. Although many of the projectiles failed to explode, her hull was holed several times, and her damaged bridge was shattered. The shells were loaded with green dye, the *San Francisco*'s color. As the first shot struck, Capt. S. P. Jenkins of the *Atlanta* rushed to the port side to get off torpedoes. When he returned to starboard, Admiral Scott and three officers of his staff had been killed, as well as a large number of other personnel. The foremast collapsed, fires were blazing everywhere, and the *Atlanta* was dead in the water.

The illuminating ship to port on which the *O'Bannon* and *Aaron Ward* opened fire was a *Kongo* battleship, later identified as the *Hiyei*. The *O'Bannon*'s guns shot out the searchlight, and several blazes were noted on the enemy vessel, probably the result of the combined efforts of the two destroyers.<sup>24</sup>

The *San Francisco*, still heading in a westerly direction, took the *Hiyei* under fire 2 or 3 minutes later. Range was 2,200 yards and the bearing was about 300° T. Target heading was northeasterly. Many hits were scored at the water line with two salvos. The battleship was seen to be under fire from our van (presumably the *O'Bannon*) and was burning intensely at the mast. She did not return the flagship's fire. The *Cushing* was about 1,000 yards to starboard of the *Hiyei* and saw her "repeatedly hit by ships astern," illuminated as she was by a burning enemy light cruiser. Many shells were seen to strike the foremast and superstructure. The *Cushing* opened fire with her 20-mm. guns (this also may have been noted aboard the *San Francisco*) and fired one torpedo from No. 2 mount with unobserved results. Personnel manning this mount were then wounded, so no more torpedoes were launched.

At this time the OTC gave the command over TBS, "Cease firing, our ships." The order did not get through to all vessels, but the *San Francisco* stopped shooting at the *Hiyei*.<sup>25</sup>

The enemy battleship continued on her course and bore down on our second destroyer, the *Laffey*. Only by speeding up did the *Laffey* manage to cross the enemy's bows with a few feet to spare. Two torpedoes were fired, but the range was so short that there was not time enough for them to arm. The *Laffey* then shelled the battleship's bridge with all guns that would bear, damaging it severely before she was silenced by a heavy caliber salvo which smashed her own bridge, as well as No. 2 turret, the after fireroom, and the electrical workshop.

Furthermore, it is possible that the *Hiyei* believed that she had illuminated a friendly ship. A captured enemy document dated at Rabaul, 24 April 1942, bears out this thesis. To quote in part: "In the event

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23 Action Report of the *San Francisco*.

24 *Aaron Ward*, one of the rear destroyers, was firing at a range of 7,000 yards.

25 Zook, L. E., Chief Signalman, one of the 10 survivors of the *Juneau*, made an interesting suggestion as to the origin of this first cease-fire order. From his station in Battle II, Zook observed that one of the illuminating ships at the outset of the action was a battleship. This vessel began sending short flashes with her searchlight—the Morse error signal—which Zook interpreted as a ruse to convince our ships that she was friendly. While it is conceivable that the OTC might have been momentarily taken in by such a trick, he doubtless would have immediately realized his mistake (the searchlight was much too large to be one of ours) and countermanded his order. Since he did not do so, it seems more likely that he first directed "cease firing" because the *Atlanta* was reported to be under the fire of friendly guns and later repeated his order because it had not been acted upon.

of any vessel illuminating a friendly vessel the searchlight will immediately be turned off and the following procedure will be carried out: (a) Either with searchlight or signal lamp a series of short flashes will be sent together with the code signal giving the vessel's name..."

Meanwhile, at 0152, the *Portland's* second salvo to starboard blew up a *Hibiki* destroyer. At this time other enemy ships in the same location began firing torpedoes, one of which struck the damaged *Laffey* in the fantail as she sheered in a westerly direction.<sup>26</sup>

At 0153 the *O'Bannon* turned hard right to avoid ramming the *Sterett*, which had stopped because of a hit on her port quarter which had jammed her rudder. The *Sterett* began steering with her engines, while the *O'Bannon* circled left to rejoin the column astern of the wavering *Laffey*. The *Cushing* and *Laffey* were seen to be receiving many hits from port and starboard. The *O'Bannon* continued to fire on the *Hiyei*, which apparently doubled back to the left after passing through our column astern of the *Laffey*, so that she was bearing down on the *Cushing's* starboard quarter on a westerly course.

At 0154 the OTC again directed "cease firing." Some ships still did not receive the command.<sup>27</sup> Some continued firing, perhaps because they were sure of their targets. Others obeyed, including the *Helena*, *Fletcher*, *O'Bannon*, and the *Portland*, which verified the order over TBS. When the *O'Bannon* opened fire again, she selected a *Tenryu* cruiser to starboard. The *Cushing*, having observed the *Hiyei* coming in on her starboard quarter, had turned to the right to get in position to fire torpedoes, although hard hit and losing headway. Six torpedoes were launched at a range of about 1,200 yards. Shortly thereafter three explosions were heard, and at least one large column of water rose on the starboard side of the battleship, which was seen to be under heavy shellfire. The *Cushing* was then hit by destroyer and cruiser salvos port and starboard which put all her guns out of commission except the 20-mm.

The *O'Bannon* was now in the lead of our scattered "column," since both the *Cushing* and *Laffey* had disappeared to starboard. She was on course 280° T., about 1,800 yards from the *Hiyei* and coming up on the battleship's starboard quarter. The *O'Bannon's* radar showed that the three nearby enemy groups had become intermingled, while the two sections of the fourth group were respectively 8,000 and 12,500 yards away. Light enemy units to starboard appeared to be drawing ahead. Our formation had ceased to function as a force. Each ship had become an independent entity faced with the problem of not firing on friendly vessels.

At about this time a large enemy ship rolled over and sank 1,500 yards from the *Aaron Ward*, which was leading our rear destroyers into the melee. This occurrence was also noted by the *Helena*, which had to stop to keep from colliding with the wreck. The *Helena's* guns remained silent for several minutes after the OTC's cease firing order, as she had not received permission to open up again.

At 0155 the *Barton* stopped to avoid collision with a friendly ship and was struck by one and then another torpedo. She broke in two and sank in 10 seconds. Shortly afterward, one of our destroyers passed through

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<sup>26</sup> Torpedoes also struck the *Juneau* and the *Portland*, as will be seen. Possibly all were fired by the destroyers which had crossed ahead of the *Cushing* and the *Atlanta*.

<sup>27</sup> TBS reception in the destroyers was faulty throughout the engagement.

the survivors at high speed. Others were injured by depth charges exploding in the vicinity. At about the same time the *Fletcher* reopened fire on a cruiser astern of her original target to port.

By 0156 the *O'Bannon* had closed to within 1,200 yards of the *Hiyei*. There were numerous fires on the battleship, and gunfire had slackened. The *O'Bannon* fired three torpedoes. There was a tremendous explosion on the enemy ship, which was enveloped in a sheet of flame from bow to stern. Burning particles fell on the destroyer. She fired no more torpedoes and soon swung north, because her course was converging with the *Hiyei*'s. Five burning ships were astern.

At this juncture planes were overhead, but it was impossible to identify them. Torpedoes passed under the *Monssen* and the *Aaron Ward*. The *Cushing* had been heavily hit again, and propulsion was failing. The *Portland* had been torpedoed, as had the *Juneau*. The latter ship had been struck on the port side of the forward fireroom after firing only about 25 rounds of 5-inch. Nineteen men were killed. The chief engineer believed that the keel had been snapped. The vessel settled and listed to port, and since all fire control was gone, she began to limp from the scene of action, having shifted steering to aft.

The torpedo that struck the *Portland* sheered off the inboard screws, flooding Steering Aft and bending out the shell plating on the starboard side to form an extensive right rudder. The ship began circling, and it was found impossible to counteract this with the outboard screws.

After the lull created by the OTC's order to cease fire, the *San Francisco* again had the *Hiyei* on her starboard bow, but this time the battleship was steaming on approximately the same heading as our flagship. The *Hiyei* was illuminating with three lights, two over one. On the *San Francisco*'s starboard quarter was an enemy cruiser which was getting the range. A Japanese destroyer, which had cut across the bow, was passing down the port side with all guns blazing.

On hearing of the *San Francisco*'s predicament over TBS, about 0200, the *Portland* asked the bearing of the battleship. At the same time the *Helena* requested permission to open fire on targets of her own. The Task Force Commander asked what type of target she had, saying he "wanted the big ones." He then told the *Portland* to take the battleship along with the *San Francisco*. The *Portland*, after completing the first circle to starboard resulting from the torpedo, fired 4 main battery salvos at a range of 4,000 yards, making 10 to 14 hits. The *San Francisco* also gave the *Hiyei* everything she had. The American flagship, however, was struck by the enemy cruiser's second salvo, and the *Hiyei*'s third salvo smashed her bridge, killing Admiral Callaghan and mortally wounding Capt. Young and others. Steering and engine control were shifted to Battle II, which was immediately destroyed, and Conn took over.

The *San Francisco* kept firing at the *Hiyei* as long as the main battery would bear. Before she was completely knocked out by the battleship, the last remaining gun of her secondary battery set off the depth charges on the stern of the enemy destroyer on the port side. It blew up and was thought to have sunk.

While the *San Francisco* was dueling with the Japanese battleship, the *O'Bannon* barely managed to avoid the sinking *Laffey* and was unable to keep from passing through some of the crew in the water. Life belts were thrown overside. Shortly thereafter the *Laffey* blew up, and numerous casualties were caused by descending debris.<sup>28</sup>

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28 Strenuous measures had failed to save the *Laffey*. She had incurred most serious damage from shellfire and the torpedo which struck

At this time the *Helena's* radar plot reported 6 ships to starboard which were retiring to the northward. One of them was the light cruiser which was firing on the *San Francisco*. The *Helena's* main battery opened on this vessel at 8,800 yards, silencing it with 125 rounds before the *San Francisco* came into the line of fire on the starboard hand. The secondary battery had simultaneously fired 40 rounds at a destroyer 7,200 yards away.

The *Hiyei* ceased firing on our flagship after 5 or 6 salvos. The *San Francisco* had received 15 major caliber hits, as well as numerous others, and 25 separate fires were burning. What had saved her from complete destruction was the enemy's use of bombardment ammunition.<sup>29</sup> She was still between 2 Japanese groups, but apparently they were now shooting at each other. The officer of the deck, Lt. Comdr. Bruce McCandless, was conning the damaged ship, while Lt. Comdr. Schonland, who had succeeded to command, continued fighting the fires below. Lt. Comdr. McCandless decided to make his escape around Cape Esperance, but as he continued to head west a large vessel opened up on him,<sup>30</sup> and he circled to the eastward, astern of the enemy forces.

After a quarter-hour of battle most of our ships were seriously shot up. The *Cushing* had received up to 20 hits from cruisers and destroyers and lay helpless. The *Laffey* had sunk; the *Sterett* had just been hit in the foremast and had lost SC radar, identification lights, and TBS transmitting antenna; the *O'Bannon* was slightly damaged. The *Atlanta* was burning, and the *San Francisco* and *Portland* were badly holed. The *Helena* had suffered minor injury. The *Juneau* had left the scene of action. The *Barton* had blown up. Only the *Aaron Ward*, *Monssen*, and *Fletcher* were untouched.

The *Aaron Ward* did not have long to wait for her share. She passed through what was apparently the entire enemy formation, if such a term could still be used, receiving three 14-inch, two 8-inch, and five smaller hits. However, her officers believed that she sank or helped to sink a *Katori*-class light cruiser or large destroyer at a range of 3,000 yards. The target was showing fighting lights, white over red over green.

At about 0205 the *Monssen* launched five torpedoes at the *Hiyei*, 4,000 yards to the northwest of her. Soon there were two explosions at the target. Five minutes later the *Sterett* located the *Hiyei* to port, illuminated by star shells and by a burning vessel to the south. She was seen to be considerably damaged. A full salvo of four torpedoes was fired at a range of 2,000 yards, and the 5-inch battery opened on the battleship's bridge structure. Two of the torpedoes hit and exploded. A few minutes later men were seen going over the side of the *Hiyei* fore and aft, as if abandoning ship. The *Sterett* at this time was under heavy cross-fire, and several 5-inch shells struck her bridge.

At 0212 the *Helena* had been unable for some minutes to raise the OTC on the TBS, so she tried to

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her in the fantail. According to her action report, guns No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4 had been put out of commission, engine spaces were rendered untenable by escaping steam, and the stern had been blown off up to No. 4 turret, destroying propulsion and steering control. Oil was burning, and there was no power or water pressure. Nevertheless, a bucket brigade using empty powder cans, assisted later by a portable gasoline pump, nearly succeeded in bringing fires under control. Eventually the flames blazed up more strongly than ever, and it became necessary to abandon ship. All but a few officers and men were in the water when the after part of the vessel blew up. Among the casualties caused by fragments was her captain, Lt. Comdr. William B. Hank, who was last seen in the water near the bow just before the explosion.

29 The projectiles were loaded with small cylinders, some solid and some hollow. The hollow ones contained incendiary materials.

30 Could this have been the *Hiyei* again?

reassemble our scattered units. At 0215 her radar showed that the major portion of the Japanese force was in disorderly retirement. Several reports state that the remaining enemy vessels of the center and left-hand groups were now firing at each other. The *Sterett*, despite her serious damage, closed a belated *Fubuki* destroyer and sank her with two torpedoes and two 5-inch salvos at 1,000 yards. The target did not get a chance to fire a single shot. When the Japanese destroyer blew up, the entire area was illuminated, and heavy cross-fire began. Eleven direct hits were received by the *Sterett* and many near-hits. Ready service powder was set afire, and severe casualties were caused. Only two guns were still serviceable, and the remaining two torpedoes were jammed in their tubes. The engines were still delivering full power, however, and the *Sterett* managed to retire at flank speed (later reduced to 23 knots.)

Star shells began to burst slightly ahead of the *Monssen*, apparently coming from the port quarter. The destroyer changed course to about 040° T. at full speed. Another destroyer was sighted close aboard to starboard at a range of 500 to 1,000 yards on course 150° T., either stopped or moving very slowly. The *Monssen's* starboard 20-mm. guns sprayed the other ship's upper works and were joined by No. 4 gun, firing point blank. Fire was not returned. (This may have been one of our own destroyers.)

Soon the *Monssen* was again illuminated by star shells to port. She believed them to have been fired by a friendly vessel and flashed recognition lights. Immediately searchlights 2,500 yards away illuminated her and she was hard hit by medium caliber shells. Number 1 gun was put out of action, but the rest of the battery eliminated the searchlight and continued firing until silenced. Steering was lost next, and the destroyer's upper works became a mass of flames. As she had no more guns, torpedoes, or power, abandon ship was ordered. The commanding officer and several others were trapped on the bridge but jumped from the rail to the water, suffering more or less serious injury.

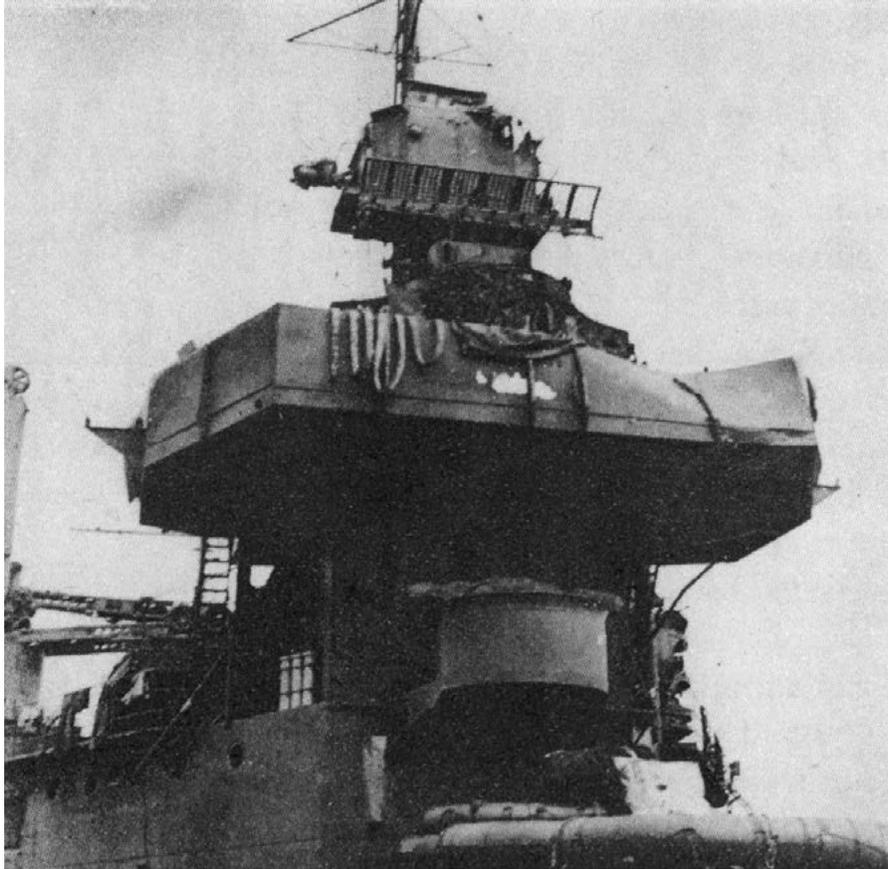
At 0205 the *Fletcher* had turned south at 35 knots to round up ahead of a *Maya* cruiser which was proceeding on a southerly course at 20 knots. The *Fletcher* gradually drew ahead to a position about 6,000 yards on the target's starboard bow. At 0221 the *Maya* had slowed to 17 knots and was on course 070° T. The *Fletcher* came left to course 030° T. At this time the enemy ship was firing at vessels to the northward which may well have been Japanese. No other action was going on. The *Fletcher* slowed to 15 knots and fired five torpedoes set for 36 knots. Six minutes later there were two or three explosions at the target. Increasingly heavy detonations were followed by flames. Twenty or 30 minutes later the *Maya* blew up and "completely disintegrated."

This was the last episode of the action proper.

At 0226 the *Helena* ordered all ships to form on her and take an easterly course. By 0230 the *Cushing* was abandoning ship, since her fires were totally out of control.<sup>31</sup> The *Portland*, which was still turning in tight circles at speeds up to 20 knots, asked the *Helena* for a tow, but this was

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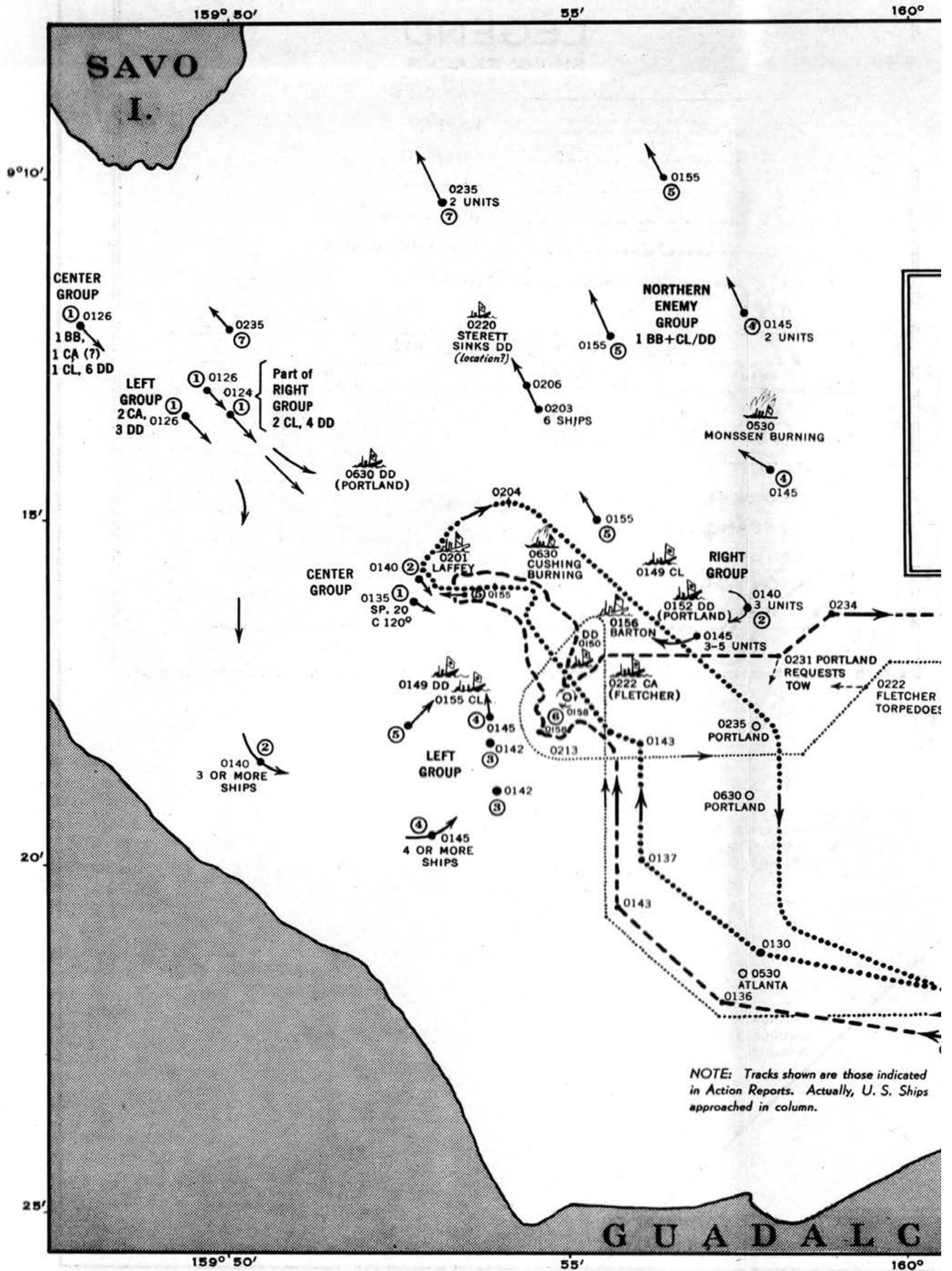
31 The commanding officer and a small salvage party remained on the ship to make a final attempt to save her and to ascertain that all depth charges were set on safe. As the rafts cleared the side, ammunition began exploding forward, feeding the oil fire burning there, and the salvage effort had to be given up. Survivors observed continuing explosions on the ship until they were picked up next morning. The *Cushing* continued to burn most of the next day and finally sank about 1700, 3,500 yards southeast of Savo Island.



*Damage to Battle II and Sky Aft of San Francisco as result of actions of 12 and 13 November*



*Close-up of Battle II, showing fire damage caused by enemy suicide plane. Upper left, shell hit received during night action, 13 November*



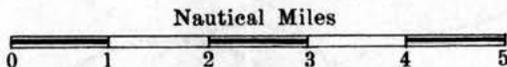
05'

10'

# BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL CRUISER NIGHT ACTION

November 12-13, 1942

O 0530  
AARON  
WARD



## LEGEND

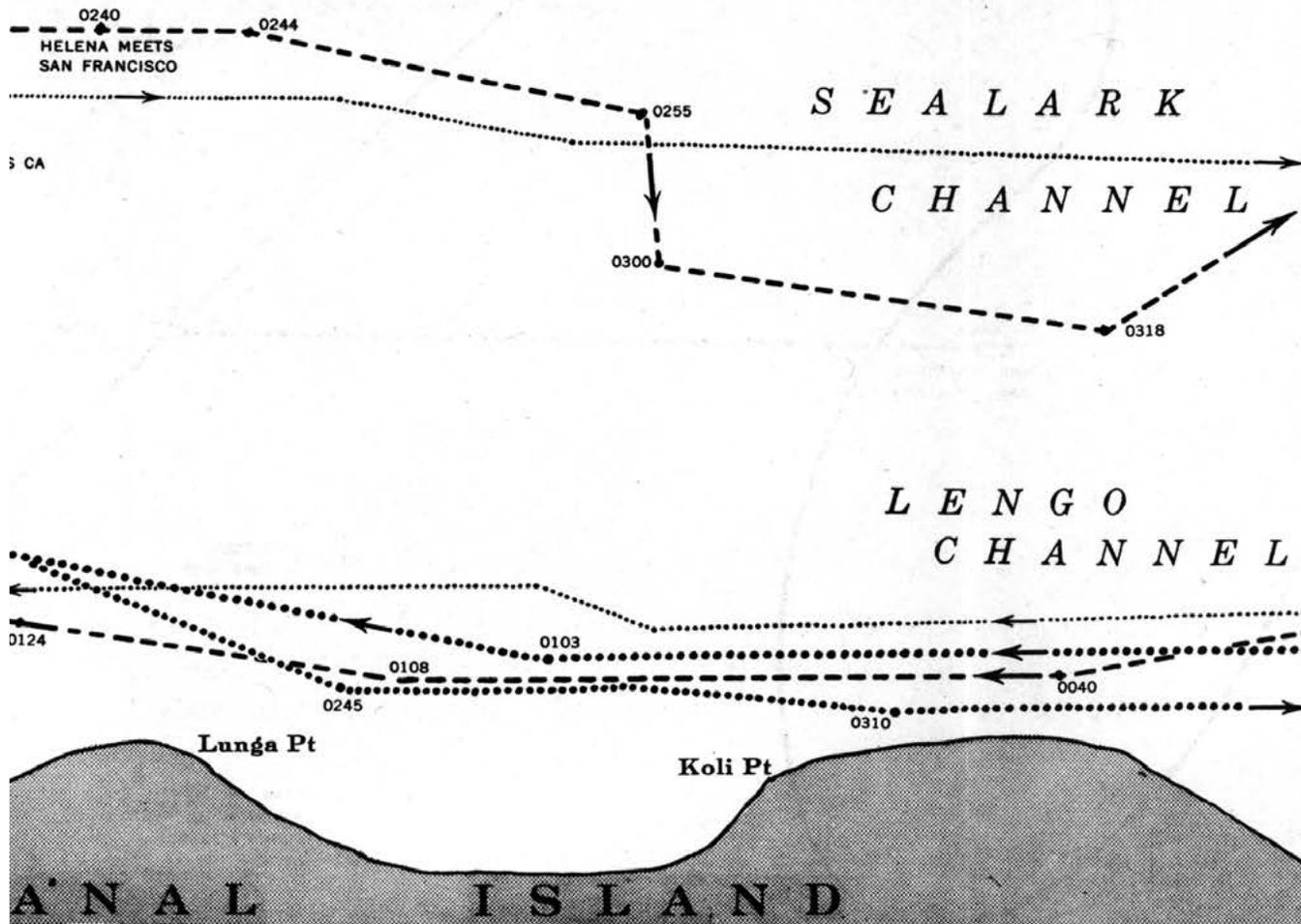
- ..... TRACK OF U. S. S. O'BANNON (Van DD's)
- TRACK OF U. S. S. HELENA (Cruisers)
- ..... TRACK OF U. S. S. FLETCHER (Rear DD's)

- ENEMY SHIP SUNK
- U. S. SHIP SUNK
- ENEMY SHIP
- U. S. SHIP

### TASK FORCE "TARE"

- 2 CA: SAN FRANCISCO, PORTLAND
- 1 CL: HELENA
- 2 CLAA: ATLANTA, JUNEAU
- 8 DD: AARON WARD, BARTON, CUSHING, FLETCHER, LAFFEY, MONSSEN, O'BANNON, STERETT

- ① Radar Contacts: HELENA
- ② Radar Contacts: O'BANNON 0140
- ③ Radar Contacts: PORTLAND 0142
- ④ Radar Contacts: O'BANNON 0145
- ⑤ Radar Contacts: O'BANNON 0155
- ⑥ PORTLAND turning in circles
- ⑦ Observed by PORTLAND



18°10'

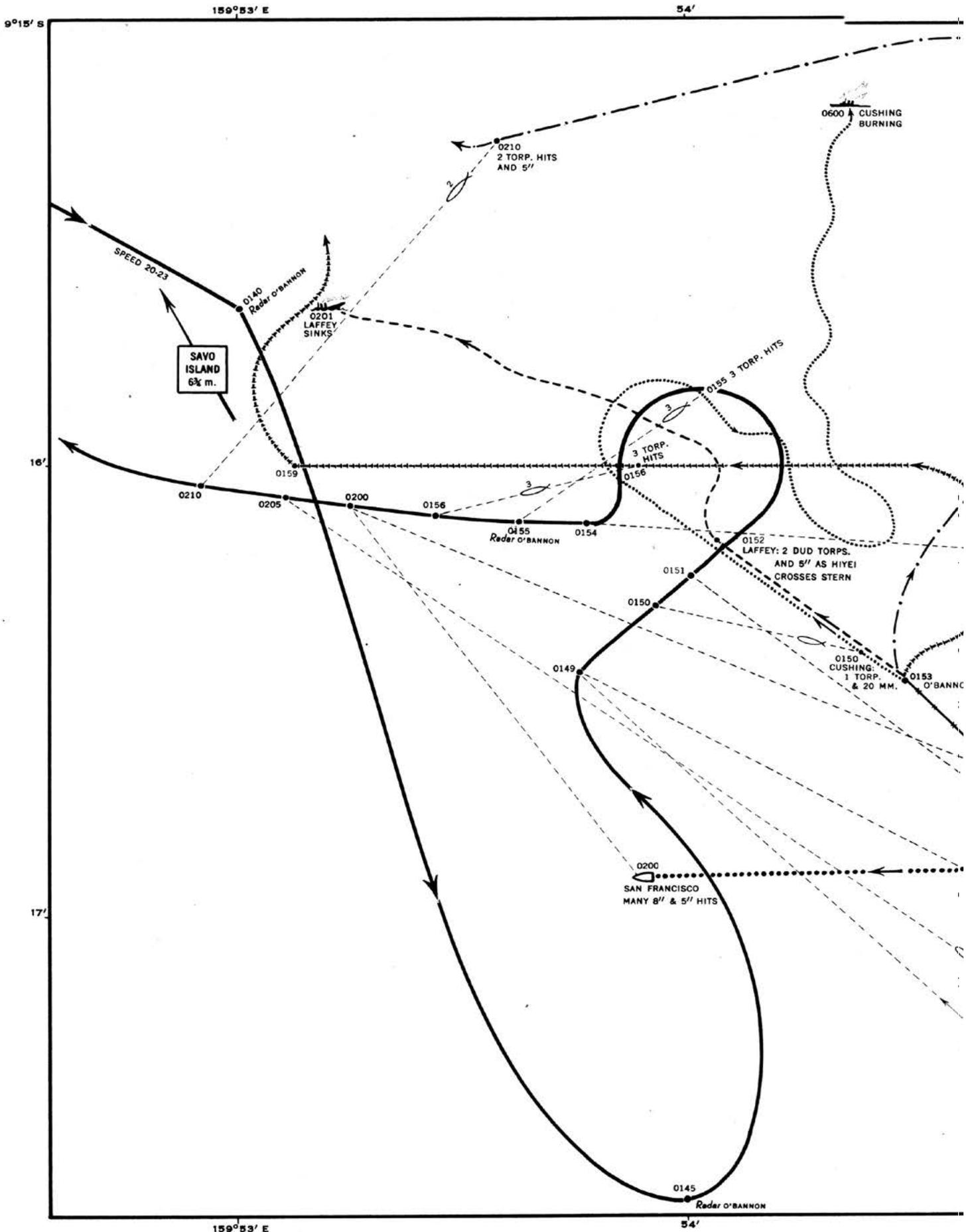
15'

20'

25'

05'

10'



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

# TASK FORCE "TARE" vs. BATTLESHIP "HIYEI"

(Positions and Courses are Approximations)

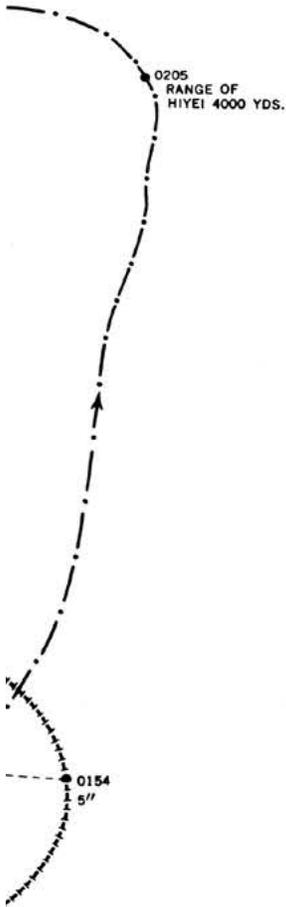
### LEGEND

**SHIPS' TRACKS**

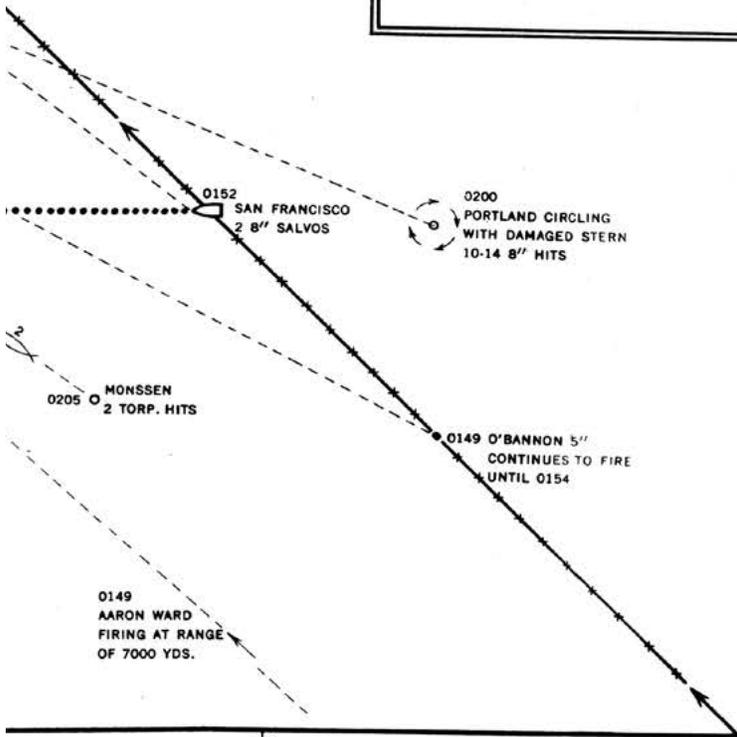
- x----- VAN DD'S
- LAFFEY
- CUSHING
- STERETT
- x----- O'BANNON
- SAN FRANCISCO
- HIYEI

SUMMARY OF HITS MADE				
SHIP	TORPEDOES	8 INCH	5 INCH	MISC.
CUSHING	3			X
LAFFEY	2 (DUDS)		X	
STERETT	2		X	
O'BANNON	3		X	
SAN FRANCISCO		X	X	
PORTLAND		10-14		
AARON WARD			X	
MONSSEN	2			



IN SWINGS TO AVOID  
STERETT (STOPPED)





*Sister ship of the Hiei, HIJMS Kirishima, sunk by USS Washington in action of 14-15 November*

not considered safe due to the danger of torpedoes. At 0235 the *Helena* instructed all ships to turn on their fighting lights briefly. Five minutes later she located the *San Francisco*, although the latter was unable to show lights because they had been shot away. The flagship signaled the news of Admiral Callaghan's death by flashlight, the only means of communication left. The *Fletcher* joined, and the three ships stood out Sealark Channel. Later they fell in with the *Juneau* in Indispensable Strait. The *O'Bannon* and *Sterett* retired through Lengo Channel.

When the firing ceased, the *Portland* observed nine ships burning, only three of these being ours (the *Atlanta*, *Cushing*, and *Monssen*). At 0330 she saw what was thought to be a *Nachi*-class heavy cruiser blow up.<sup>32</sup> A *Tenryu* light cruiser or large destroyer also exploded.

At daybreak she could see the *Hiyei* steaming slowly in circles northwest of Savo Island, with a cruiser or destroyer nearby. The *Atlanta* lay 5,000 yards to the south, not burning any longer. The *Cushing* and the *Monssen* were burning to the northwest and the north, and the *Aaron Ward* was 15,000 yards north. At 12,500 yards, south of Savo Island, lay a *Shiguri*-class destroyer with two small boats alongside. After checking identification by signaling the *Atlanta*, the *Portland* fired six 6-gun salvos at this ship. The last one exploded the after magazine and the destroyer sank. This destruction of an enemy vessel while steering was still out of control was "one of the highlights of the action," according to Admiral Nimitz.

Half an hour later the Japanese battleship began firing two-gun salvos at the *Aaron Ward*, which was about to be taken under tow by the tug *Bobolink* (Lieut. James L. Foley), from Tulagi. The third salvo straddled. The *Hiyei* gave up firing after the fourth because planes from Guadalcanal had started to attack her.<sup>33</sup>

At 1000 the *Atlanta* and the *Portland* were still in waters off the enemy-held shore. Eventually the *Bobolink* returned from taking the *Aaron Ward* to Tulagi and towed the *Atlanta* to Lunga Point. During this operation efforts were made to jettison heavy weights to port, but it was found impossible to cut away the foremast which was hanging over that side. The cutting equipment proved inadequate to deal with aluminum. The list to port continued, and the ship settled lower in the water. At 1400 the *Atlanta*, now lying off Lunga, informed the *Portland* that she could no longer check flooding conditions. The *Portland's* commanding officer communicated with COMSOPAC and relayed his permission to scuttle. The *Atlanta's* crew was taken off by Higgins boats from Tulagi, and the demolition party, headed by Capt. Jenkins, went to work. A charge was set in the Diesel engine room, and there was a small explosion. Patrol was maintained around the ship till she sank at 2015.

At 1432 the *Bobolink* came back for the *Portland*, but the latter did not reach Tulagi till 0108. Only 2 or 3 knots could be made because of the difficulty in overcoming the rudder effect produced by her damaged stern.

At daylight the *Monssen* was boarded by members of her crew, who removed the eight remaining wounded men. At 0800 survivors were picked up from the water by landing boats and taken to Guadalcanal. At 0900 more fires broke out, and some hours later the ship blew up and sank. The *Barton's* survivors were picked up by Higgins boats from Guadalcanal and by rescue parties from the *Portland*.

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32 This might have been the *Maya* cruiser torpedoed by the *Fletcher*, although there is a disparity in time.

33 The *Hiyei* was bombed and torpedoed heavily that day and sank sometime during the night. See Part II—Air Attacks of the 13th and 14th.

Meanwhile the rest of our Force was proceeding through Indispensable Strait in its retirement to Espiritu Santo. San Cristobal Island was about 20 miles to port. Heavy ships present were the *San Francisco* (severely damaged) and the *Helena* (slightly damaged), with the torpedoed *Juneau* maintaining a station 800 yards on the *San Francisco*'s starboard quarter because only one screw was operating and she could not turn quickly except to the right. She was down 10 to 12 feet by the bow, but was able to maintain 13 knots. The *Sterett* was on the port bow and the *Fletcher* on the starboard.<sup>34</sup>

At 1101 a *Helena* talker reported a disturbance in the water like that made by a porpoise. This proved to be one of three torpedoes, apparently aimed at the *San Francisco*. The first crossed that ship's bow and just missed the *Juneau*'s stern, while the third passed astern of both ships. The second, however, which seemed to come from beneath the *San Francisco*, struck the *Juneau* on the port side, at about the same point where the hit had been made the night before. There was a terrific explosion, and the ship broke in two and disappeared in 20 seconds in a cloud of black, yellow, and brown smoke. Debris showered down among the vessels of the formation to such an extent that some observers thought that a high-altitude bombing attack was going on.

No sight or sound contact with the submarine was made.<sup>35</sup> It was not feasible to stop and search for survivors due to the crippled condition of the ships and the weakness of the antisubmarine screen. Furthermore it seemed unlikely that any of the personnel could have survived the force of the explosion. Actually, however, about 120 men were left struggling in the water, two-thirds of them wounded. Sixty were still alive when sighted by a search plane at 1100 the next day. They had three rafts and several life nets. The plane dropped a rubber boat but air contact was not maintained, and no effective attempt at a rescue was made. The destroyer *Meade* conducted a search on Monday, 16 November, but found nothing, nor was she sighted by the survivors. Three men in the rubber boat reached Santa Catalina Island on the night of the 18th and were picked up by a PBY on the 21st. On the 19th, 3 rafts with 10 men were sighted. Seven of these were later rescued.

At 1121 on the 13th a B-17 appeared over the Task Force and the loss of the *Juneau* was signaled for relay to COMSOPAC. For reasons as yet unexplained, the message never arrived. The surviving vessels proceeded to Espiritu Santo, arriving at 1600 the next day.

In the 34-minute Cruiser Night Action of 12–13 November, one of the most furious sea battles ever fought, our ship losses admittedly were large. The enemy, however, suffered more severely, and his bombardment of Guadalcanal was frustrated with results which became impressively apparent during the next two days. United States losses were as follows:

	<i>Sunk</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
CA	0	2 ( <i>Portland</i> , <i>San Francisco</i> )
CL	0	1 ( <i>Helena</i> ) <sup>36</sup>

34 The *O'Bannon*, which had joined the *San Francisco* and the *Helena* at 0415, had been dispatched to a distance of 50 miles to open radio communications and ask for "maximum air coverage." She rejoined at 1530. One PBY was sent from Espiritu Santo, and Task Force KING was ordered north to cover the withdrawal of the damaged units. Admiral Kinkaid was to stay south of latitude 11°40'S, unless further orders were received.

35 Earlier in the morning the *Sterett* had made a submarine contact and had dropped several depth charges without results.

36 The *Helena* suffered five hits.

CLAA	2 ( <i>Atlanta, Juneau</i> )	0
DD	4 ( <i>Barton, Cushing, Laffey, Monssen</i> )	3 ( <i>Aaron Ward, O'Bannon, Sterett</i> )

“Sober hindsight” caused CINCPAC in the final report on this engagement to limit claimed Japanese losses to the following ships:

	<i>Sunk</i> <sup>37</sup>	<i>Damaged</i>
BB	1 <sup>38</sup>	1 <sup>39</sup>
CA	1	1
CL	1	1
DD	4	0

Casualties on both sides were heavy, with the American force having the serious misfortune to lose both its commander, Admiral Callaghan, and its second in command, Admiral Scott.

☆☆☆

As has been pointed out, the enemy undoubtedly expected to bombard Guadalcanal in preparation for a landing. The appearance of our fleet was a surprise. It is conceivable that the Japanese knew from aerial observation on the previous day just what strength we had available and did not believe that we would dare to oppose their greatly superior forces.

At all events, the only ammunition they had readily available was bombardment type, which caused great damage to upper works but did not produce as many sinkings as AP shells might have done. Most of the hull injuries were due to torpedoes, which, as usual, the enemy used most effectively. Our destroyers also fired numerous torpedoes, but the results were not commensurate with the number of hits obtained.<sup>40</sup> American shellfire was more accurate and more destructive than the enemy's and was responsible for the greater part of the damage inflicted by our ships. The radar ranges used by United States vessels proved highly reliable, while Japanese use of searchlights was outstanding. Often one ship would illuminate while others joined in firing at the target. However, the reports indicated that our ships concentrated on and immediately destroyed three of the enemy vessels which first illuminated. If we had stayed out of range of searchlights and had opened fire first, our superior radar equipment would have given us a distinct advantage.

It is not clear whether Admiral Callaghan knew that he was about to engage a battleship when he swung his column between the two groups of lighter enemy forces, unless he was informed of the *O'Bannon's* radar contacts and drew such a conclusion from them. (There is no evidence that he was so informed. See Appendix I.) When a battleship did appear, there was, as Admiral Nimitz pointed out, “nothing he could do but fight his way out, as he did.”

37 Subsequent information made the following minimum Japanese losses seem certain: sunk, 1 BB, 4 DD.

38 The *Hiyei*. Sunk next day as a result of air attacks.

39 It is questionable whether a second battleship was damaged. Some reports suggest that another *Kongo* was present in the battle proper (in addition to the one in the northern group which was not directly involved). Close study shows that in each instance this battleship was almost certainly the *Hiyei* on a new course or in an unexpected position. (Cf. Chart, “Task Force TARE vs. the battleship *Hiyei*,” page 24–25.) Furthermore, sightings during the 12th had revealed only two battleships in the area. One of these was probably the *Hiyei* and the other the vessel noted in the northern group. Nothing indicates that the latter ship was damaged.

40 The Japanese torpedoes contained at least 900 pounds of high explosive, while ours held only 485 pounds.

In summing up the battle CINCPAC wrote: “This action in which a brave and gallant leader ...took in brave men against superior forces, was a turning point in the Solomons Islands campaign. Had the powerful enemy fleet succeeded in its mission of bombarding our airfield on Guadalcanal, the task of preventing a major enemy attack and landing of large-scale reinforcements would have been much more difficult if not impossible. The calculated decision of Admiral Turner to send in the cruiser force, the resolution with which Rear Admirals Callaghan and Scott led the ships in, the well-directed fire and courage of our personnel, merit the highest praise.”

## *PART TWO—Air Attacks on the 13th and 14th*

### PRELIMINARY—THE *ENTERPRISE* DEPARTS FROM NOUMEA

*Wednesday, 11 November*

1200 Task Force KING, including *Enterprise, Washington, South Dakota*, leaves Noumea.

*Thursday, 12 November*

1200 Task Force KING reaches latitude 19°48.4' S., longitude 163°35.1' E.

At 0902<sup>41</sup> Tuesday, 10 November, Admiral Halsey ordered Task Force KING to sortie from Noumea with all available units at such time after 2300 as the Task Force Commander (Admiral Kinkaid) might indicate. The *Enterprise, Washington, South Dakota*, and supporting ships were to proceed westward from New Caledonia, reaching the vicinity of latitude 14° S., longitude 161°30' E. (250 miles south of Guadalcanal Island) about 2100 on the 12th, when they were to be ready to strike targets in the Guadalcanal area.

A dawn search north and west on the 10th was conducted by six B-17's, seven PBY's, and four PBO's<sup>42</sup> from Espiritu Santo and by three PBY's from Vanikoro.<sup>43</sup> The arc covered extended to 800 miles. PBO's from the Fijis ranged 280 miles northeast at dawn and 400 miles at dusk. The PBO's, which belonged to the Royal New Zealand Air Force, were not employed from Guadalcanal because they were not fitted with recognition equipment.

The sole contact made by these search planes was at 1255, when a PBY found a Kawanishi four-motored flying boat in latitude 12°15' S., longitude 161°30' E. Marine planes from Guadalcanal located 5 destroyers 210 miles northwest at 1610 and 170 miles northwest at 1900. These were attacked with slight success (see footnote p. 5). The large concentration of warships and transports in the Buin area was again observed by Army flyers under General MacArthur's command. However, because of the gasoline shortage at Guadalcanal and the impossibility of refueling Flying Fortresses at Henderson Field, the 28 B-17's which were being maintained at normal alert<sup>44</sup> at Espiritu Santo were offered no feasible targets during the day.

On Wednesday dawn searches were negative, except that Marine planes from Henderson Field again located the five destroyers to the northwest. At 0740 these ships were reported to be 155 miles from Guadalcanal.<sup>45</sup>

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41 All times in Part Two are Zone minus 12. Occasionally the original reports are not clear as to the zone used. In such instances events have been placed with reference to approximately concurrent happenings the zone designation of which is known.

42 Lockheed patrol bombers ("Hudsons").

43 Vanikoro is just south of Santa Cruz Island.

44 "Normal alert": Twenty-eight B-17's on half-hour alert for 1 hour before daylight; 20 planes on half-hour alert 2½ hours after daylight and then on 1-hour alert till 1330; 6 planes on 1-hour alert after 1330.

45 It is possible that they took part in the surface action the next night.

The apparent lack of activity on the part of the enemy did not diminish Admiral Halsey's efforts to build up our land-based air power in the potential combat area. At Espiritu Santo 20 SBD-3's, 12 TBF-1's, and 6 F4F-4's of Marine Aircraft Group EIGHT, destined for Guadalcanal, were flown ashore from the auxiliary aircraft carrier *Nassau*, which had arrived at 1700 from Noumea. One SBD was forced down at sea, but the crew was rescued. The *Jane Addams* also unloaded 5 TBF-1's. All available B-26's in the Fijis were ordered equipped with torpedoes and held ready to proceed to Espiritu Santo on an hour's notice. COMGENSOPAC was requested to send 15 P-38's and 11 B-26's (loaded with torpedoes) to Espiritu Santo on the 12th.

Task Force KING did not get underway from Noumea till Wednesday noon. After the channel was cleared, Air Group TEN, composed of 38 fighters (F4F-4), 16 scouts (SBD-3), 15 dive bombers (SBD-3), and 9 torpedo planes (TBF-1), flew out from Tontouta Field and landed aboard the *Enterprise*.

The damage inflicted on the carrier at the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands had not yet been fully repaired. The forward elevator was out of commission, and watertight integrity in the area between frames No. 35 and No. 54 was still dubious. The ship's repair force, aided by 59 officers and men from the repair ship *Vestal* and a construction battalion, worked continuously, watch and watch, preparing the carrier for battle. They reported that the elevator would be in working order by the following day. The Task Force proceeded at 14.5 knots and by 1200 on Thursday had reached latitude 19°48.4' S., longitude 163°35.1' E.

Dawn searches that day located three groups of enemy combatant vessels to the northwest, including battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, which were in a position to arrive at Guadalcanal that night (Cf. p.11). Two probable seaplane tenders were erroneously identified as aircraft carriers. This report, received aboard the *Enterprise* at 1804, was a source of concern to the Task Force Commander, since the "carriers" were only 150 miles from Guadalcanal and might soon menace his partly crippled ship to the southeast.

Minor contacts of the day included a twin-float enemy seaplane at latitude 04°00' S., longitude 165°10' E., which was shot down by the PBY which discovered it.

During Thursday COMSOPAC strengthened Henderson Field by dispatching from Espiritu Santo 6 F4F-4's of VMF 122, 10 SBD-3's of VMSB 142, and 6 TBF-1's of VMSB 131. Already available at Guadalcanal were 34 F4F-4's, 20 SBD-3's, 13 TBF-1's, and 1 F4F-7 (all Marine planes except 3 Navy VT-8 bombers, which were turned over to VMSB 131 on 14 November), and 13 P-39's and 2 P-400's belonging to the Army. General MacArthur was asked to send 8 P-38's from Milne Bay, New Guinea, to Guadalcanal on Friday and to alert 18 B-24's preparatory to a flight to Espiritu Santo or Efate in the New Hebrides, or to New Caledonia, as designated later. Many planes were flown to Efate from the bomber field at Espiritu Santo to make room for the B-26's and Army fighters which had already been requisitioned from the Fijis, and which were to be staged to Henderson Field if necessary.

## ACTION ON FRIDAY, THE 13TH—FATE OF THE *HIYEI*

*Friday, 13 November*

- 0810 *Enterprise* launches attack group to proceed to Guadalcanal.
- 0838 *Pensacola, Gwin, Preston* join Task Force KING.
- 1100 En route, attack group torpedoes BB *Hiyei*. *Hiyei* also bombed by B-17's.
- 1110 Task Force KING ordered north to cover damaged ships of Task Force TARE.
- 1430 *Hiyei* attacked by *Enterprise* group based on Guadalcanal and by Marine planes.
- 1653 *Washington, South Dakota*, four DD's are constituted separate striking force under Admiral Lee.
- 1830 *Hiyei* still afloat. Sinks during night.

At 0615 on Friday, the *Enterprise*, which was now at latitude 14°44' S., longitude 161°28' E. (about 270 miles south of Guadalcanal), began launching the dawn search. An arc from 270° to 030° T. was to be covered to a depth of 200 miles by single aircraft. If the supposed carriers actually existed and were steaming to the attack, the search planes would discover them. An attack group was to be held in readiness while the area was being combed.

No contacts were made, however. The enemy units which survived the action of the night before were not within range.<sup>46</sup> At 0810, when the reports were in, it was decided to reduce the number of planes aboard. The damaged No. 1 elevator was still out of commission, and if fewer aircraft were on hand flight operations would be facilitated in case of attack. Also Henderson Field could readily use reinforcements. Consequently nine torpedo planes with a six-plane fighter escort were ordered to proceed to Guadalcanal and place themselves temporarily under General Vandegrift's command. Eight TBF-1's were armed with torpedoes and one with three 500-pound bombs. Lieut. Albert P. Coffin, squadron commander, was advised to approach from the west, as there was a better possibility of making a contact by this route.

As has been mentioned (p. 27), dawn found the damaged Japanese battleship *Hiyei* lying northwest of Savo Island. Her forward turrets were smoking; the after turrets were dangling. A destroyer with a fire amidships was limping around the battleship in a circle.

The *Hiyei* was first attacked by Marine torpedo planes from Guadalcanal. Later (0800) she was reported as heading toward Guadalcanal from a position 30 miles northeast of Savo in company with a cruiser<sup>47</sup> and four destroyers. At 0923 she was located north of Savo, heading west, with a light cruiser which was apparently out of control.

When Lieut. Coffin's squadron approached Cape Esperance at 1100, the *Hiyei*, a light cruiser, and four destroyers were sighted heading for Guadalcanal at 12–15 knots. The enemy's intention may have been to bombard Henderson Field or to finish off the *Portland*, which was still lying helpless off Lunga Point. The torpedo planes spiraled up from 500 to about 5,000 feet and launched an attack on

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46 Those which could do so had been hastily putting blue water between themselves and Guadalcanal because of possible attack by land-based aircraft. At 0900 a B-17 search plane from Espiritu Santo sighted an enemy force identified as three heavy cruisers and two destroyers at latitude 06°10' S., longitude 160°30' E. (about 170 miles north of Florida Island). Course was due north and speed was 25. If, as is possible, this location was spotted somewhat too far north, and if the Japanese ships had maintained high speed continuously during the night, it is conceivable that they were retiring from the Cruiser Night Action, or from a support position to the north of the vessels involved.

47 Some reports suggest that this was the other battleship involved the night before.

both bows of the battleship. Two hits were scored on the port side, one on the bow and one on the stern. Another hit was registered on the starboard side amidships. The *Hiyei* circled north and seemed dead in the water. The torpedo planes proceeded to Henderson Field.

At 0500, 17 B-17's, carrying four 500-pound bombs apiece, were dispatched from Espiritu Santo to attack enemy shipping in the Guadalcanal area. At 0850 an Army search plane sighted an enemy carrier, resembling the *Saratoga*, with an *Ise*-class battleship and three destroyers at latitude 05°45' S., longitude 161°20' E., on course 000° T.<sup>48</sup> The B-17's were ordered to bomb this target, but because it was out of range they proceeded to the Guadalcanal area, arriving either just before or just after the torpedo plane attack.<sup>49</sup> They discovered what was probably the *Hiyei* (although she was identified by some observers, including the B-17's, as of the *Fuso* class) about 10 miles east of Savo. The fact that the battleship was apparently closer to Guadalcanal at this time would indicate that the B-17's followed the torpedo planes. All sixty-eight 500-pound bombs were dropped from 14,000 feet. One sure hit was made and possibly up to five others. Pilots noted that the ship had previously been damaged. Heavy antiaircraft fire was encountered.

At 1430 the *Hiyei* was again attacked by six torpedo bombers, eight dive bombers, and eight fighters belonging to the Marines and to the *Enterprise* group now based on Guadalcanal. They climbed to about 5,000 feet and attacked on both beams of the battleship, which lay about 10 miles north of Savo and was practically dead in the water with her bow headed north. One torpedo hit was made amidships on the starboard side and another on the stern. One was also scored on the port side. Two torpedoes were duds which struck the ship and bounced off.

In other sorties, three planes of VT-8 and two Marine torpedo bombers made two more torpedo hits, while Marine dive bombers made three direct 1,000-pound bomb hits and two near-hits. All told, the *Hiyei* was subjected to seven torpedo, five dive bombing, and two strafing attacks (including those made by Marines) on Friday. In addition to torpedo damage, she received at least four 1,000-pound bomb hits. But at 1830 she was still afloat and making slow headway, escorted by five destroyers.<sup>50</sup> During the late evening it was noted that some of the crew were being removed from the battleship. Nevertheless, it is possible that she was towed into position for the bombardment of Henderson Field which occurred that night. Next day she had disappeared, and an oil slick 2 to 3 miles across was observed in the Savo area. It is probable that she was scuttled or sank from the shock of her own gunfire.<sup>51</sup>

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48 This force was reported to be only 27 miles from the one noted in the footnote on page 29. The number of ships was the same, the course was the same and the time difference was only 10 minutes. Presumably the two groups were identical. If so, the probability of an aircraft carrier, or even a battleship, being present is somewhat diluted.

49 Five PBV's from Espiritu Santo and Vanikoro were also sent out with torpedoes to attack the reported carrier. Weather forced them to return to base without completing the mission.

50 At 1745 a Marine dive bomber scored a near-hit on a light cruiser which was circling her. Presumably one of these destroyers was the "light cruiser."

51 Analysis of the reports of the Cruiser Night Action shows that the *Hiyei* had probably suffered severely from gunfire and received 10 torpedo hits. During the 13th she was struck by 11 torpedoes, at least four 1,000-pound bombs and 1 to 6 500-pound bombs. Yet she was still afloat. One factor which contributed to her apparent invulnerability was the setting of many of the torpedoes. A depth of 10 feet was considered sufficient for most operations in this area, and, since the ship was low in the water, it is likely that several warheads exploded against the armor. (The *Hiyei* was comparable in age and armament to our *Nevada* and of the same displacement. She was, however, 120 feet longer, had 26 knots as against the *Nevada*'s 20, and had been rearmed since being decommissioned under the London Naval Treaty of 1930. Her main belt armor was only 8 inches thick, while the *Nevada*'s is 13½. The *Hiyei* and the other three *Kongo*-

At 0838 Task Force KING sighted the *Pensacola*, *Gwin*, and *Preston*, which had been detached from Task Force TARE (Cf. p. 5), and which now joined as reinforcements. After this the speed of advance of the *Enterprise* and her escort was reduced by submarine contacts, which necessitated zigzagging, and by occasional turns into a light breeze on the starboard quarter in order to conduct flight operations. At 1045 the *Benham* sighted a torpedo. A few minutes afterward Lieut. Stanley W. Vejtasa's combat patrol, which had been vectored out on course 025° T., shot down a Kawanishi type 97 flying boat which had been shadowing the fleet from 40 miles ahead.

At 1110 COMSOPAC directed Admiral Kinkaid to proceed to a northerly position to support the damaged ships of Task Force TARE. He was to stay south of latitude 1140, unless circumstances required, and to guard against observation from Rennell Island and Indispensable Reef. At 1358 a report was received from Guadalcanal which indicated that an enemy carrier was operating east of Malaita Island. Later reports suggested that this vessel may have been a seaplane tender.

About 3 hours later COMSOPAC directed that the battleships and four destroyers of Task Force KING be constituted a separate striking unit under Rear Admiral Willis A. Lee, Jr., to operate east of Savo Island and intercept enemy bombardment forces which might arrive that night.

Task Force KING increased speed to 23 knots and set course 000° T. At 1929, a few minutes after Admiral Lee's command had left the formation, Admiral Halsey designated it as a separate task force<sup>52</sup> and ordered it to clear the Guadalcanal area by daylight. Task Force KING had remained too far south for Admiral Lee to be able to arrive at Guadalcanal before 0800 the next morning, so the destroyer *Mustin* was detached to proceed 50 miles east and inform COMSOPAC of this fact by radio.<sup>53</sup> Later Admiral Halsey ordered Task Force KIN to reach an approximate daylight position of latitude 11°30' S., longitude 158°30' E. (about 125 miles southwest of Guadalcanal). Course was altered to 300° T., and speed was increased to 25 knots.

#### ENEMY TRANSPORT FLEET SHATTERED

*Saturday, 14 November*

0220 Henderson Field bombarded.  
0340 Bombardment cut short by PT boat attack.

After Task Force TARE broke up the Japanese attempt to bombard Henderson Field on the night of 12–13 November, the enemy transport group which had originally been scheduled to make a landing the next night retired toward Buin. On Friday morning a B-17 search plane from Espiritu Santo located 12 transports escorted by 4 light cruisers and 6 destroyers still withdrawing slowly on course 330° T. in latitude 07°30' S., longitude 156°30' E. (off the northwestern tip of Vella Lavella Island). That night a strong force of cruisers and destroyers, perhaps assisted by the damaged *Hiyei*, finally accomplished the bombardment, shelling Henderson Field from about 0220 to 0340. An attack by the Tulagi-based MTB

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class battleships were designed by Sir George Thurston.)

52 Hereafter referred to as "Task Force LOVE."

53 It was perhaps fortunate that Admiral Lee could not reach Guadalcanal in time to prevent the bombardment which occurred that night. If he had been able to do so, the enemy transport fleet which was destroyed by our planes next day might have remained in the safety of the Buin-Faisi anchorages.

unit cut this operation short. Six boats fired 17 torpedoes with one or more hits. Next morning, 5 enemy ships were sighted retiring to the northeast, one of them trailing oil. At Guadalcanal 1 SBD-3 and 2 F4F-4's had been destroyed and 17 F4F-4's damaged. The field was not seriously injured. Other Japanese vessels which had perhaps participated in the bombardment retired to the northwest, skirting the southern shore of New Georgia.<sup>54</sup> The transports reversed course and again steamed toward Guadalcanal.

At 0518 on the 14th COMSOPAC directed Task Force KING (the *Enterprise*), which was then about 200 miles southwest of Guadalcanal, to proceed northwest to attack the convoy, remaining about 100 miles from the Solomon chain. Task Force LOVE (the *Washington* and *South Dakota*) was ordered to operate along the same general northwesterly course, staying about 50 miles from the islands. Shortly thereafter, COMGENSOPAC was ordered to dispatch available B-26's with torpedoes from New Caledonia and Nandi (Fiji Islands) to Espiritu Santo, where they were to be staged to Guadalcanal, and to send P-39's and P-40's to Efate immediately.

#### *Attacks on Bombardment Group*

*Saturday, 14 November*

- 0712 Dawn search launched by *Enterprise*.
- 0715 Henderson Field launches attack group to intercept bombardment force retiring from Guadalcanal.
- 0810 (Approximately.) Guadalcanal group attacks. Two cruisers hit.
- 0850 Two *Enterprise* search planes contact bombardment group.
- 0856 *Enterprise* launches attack group.
- 1014 Search planes score 2 hits on *Nachi CA*.
- 1023 Other search planes hit CL.
- 1115 *Enterprise* attack group intercepts enemy. Two hits registered on a CL. Vessel in location of *Nachi CA* is seen to sink.

At dawn on Saturday the situation was obscure to the *Enterprise*. No further contact reports dealing with the supposed enemy carriers had been received. Guadalcanal had imparted no information as to the presence or absence of other Japanese forces. There had been no report of Henderson Field's condition or indeed of the bombardment the night before. If these facts had been available, the *Enterprise*, with orders to exploit targets in the Guadalcanal area, might have been able to launch a pre-dawn attack group which could have made an early strike at the retiring enemy bombardment group after having been refueled at Henderson Field.

Being so completely uninformed, the *Enterprise* found it necessary to launch 10 scout bombers for a dawn search at 0712.<sup>55</sup> About an hour later, Lieut. William I. Martin, leading the 2 planes which were covering sector 000°–015° to a distance of 250 miles, reported 10 unidentified aircraft 140 miles to the

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54 As will be noted later, this force was first intercepted by our planes about 0800, in latitude 08°45' S., longitude 157°10' E. (south of Rendova Island). Allowing for possible errors in time and location, these ships could have comprised part of the bombardment group if they took their departure early. The *Portland*, then lying at Tulagi, advised that a Japanese battleship (the *Hiyei*?) shelled Henderson Field at 0315, but other reports indicated that the bombardment had been going on for nearly an hour at that time. Perhaps the later phase of the operation involved only the battleship and the units which retired to the northeast after the PT boat attack.

55 This launching was delayed by heavy rain squalls. Farther north, however, the weather was good. Ceiling was about 17,000 feet or above, with a few scattered clouds at 3,000–4,000 feet. Winds were light.

north and heading in the direction of our carrier. On receipt of the message, 12 fighters were launched to augment the regular combat air patrol. It was also decided to clear the flight deck further by sending off the attack group, consisting of 17 scout bombers with 1,000-pound bombs, and 10 fighters, to bomb the targets which probably would be found in the Guadalcanal area. The group was dispatched on a northerly course after being instructed to listen for contact reports and to be guided by them.

The flight of unidentified planes was never picked up by radar, and nothing more was heard about it; but at 0855 Lieut. Martin located a large number of planes over the Russell Islands. They were too far away for identification, and since they were not headed for the *Enterprise*, no report was made.

Meanwhile, at 0715, six torpedo bombers, seven scout bombers, and seven fighters (all Marine planes except three of the torpedo bombers, which belonged to VT-10) were launched from Henderson Field to intercept the enemy ships south of New Georgia which have been mentioned as possibly taking part in the bombardment of the night before. After flying 170 miles on course 280° T., a group of Japanese vessels, identified as five heavy cruisers and four destroyers, was sighted on the same course, speed 16.<sup>56</sup> The VT-10 planes made three torpedo hits on the starboard side of the leading cruiser, which was thought to be a *Mogami*,<sup>57</sup> but which in the light of later events may have been a *Nachi*. The Marine torpedo planes attacked from port, getting one hit. The scout bombers made two 1,000-pound bomb hits on another cruiser, identified as a *Maya* but possibly a *Nachi*. The leading vessel began burning, and the other gave off smoke. Antiaircraft fire was moderate. One plane had to be grounded on return to base because of wing damage.

At 0850 Lt. (jg) R. D. Gibson and Ens. R. M. Buchanan of the *Enterprise* dawn search located what was apparently the same group in latitude 8°45' S., longitude 157°10' E. (south of Rendova Island). Parts of the force were occasionally obscured by clouds. At 0915 Lt. Gibson began transmitting contact reports, the first of which stated that there were nine enemy ships, including one possible XCV. The final report identified the force as two battleships, two heavy cruisers, one converted carrier, and four destroyers.<sup>58</sup>

The two scout bombers shadowed the Japanese for some time from 17,000 feet. At 1015 Lt. Gibson, followed by Ens. Buchanan, dived down-sun on a Japanese *Nachi*-class cruiser which was leaving an oil slick in her wake.<sup>59</sup> The pilots each released their 500-pound, 1/100 second delayed action bombs at about 2,000 feet and pulled out at about 1,000. Lt. Gibson's bomb hit on the starboard side forward of the superstructure. Ens. Buchanan's struck on the port side amidships. The ship burst into flames. Lt. Gibson reported to the *Enterprise* that the two planes did not have enough fuel to return to the ship and would land at Guadalcanal.

Antiaircraft fire, which had been heavy for 20 minutes prior to the attack, ceased during the dives. Ens. Buchanan's plane was discovered to have an 8-inch hole in the fuselage when he landed at Henderson Field at 1220.

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56 Later contacts indicated that this force probably consisted of three heavy and three light cruisers, with five destroyers.

57 Another report from the attacking planes states that it was a light cruiser.

58 Ships in this area (09°00' S., 157°15' E.) were also reported by a B-17 from Espiritu Santo at 0905 and identified as two battleships or heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, and six destroyers.

59 The fact that she was trailing oil is evidence that she was the "*Mogami*" previously torpedoed, or the "*Maya*" which had been damaged by bombs.

156°E

VELLA LAVELLA I

8°S

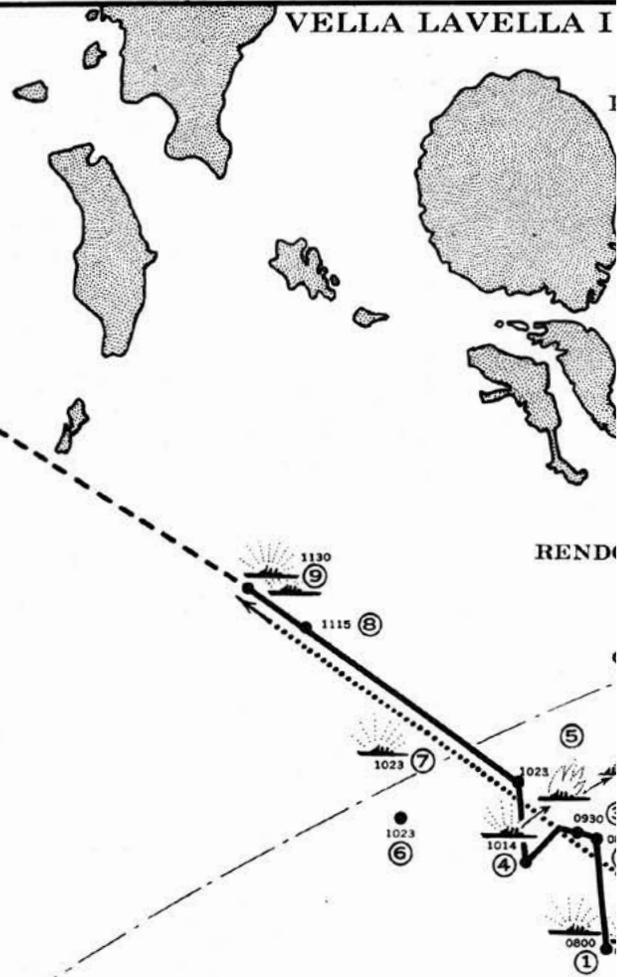
Limit of ESPIRITU SANTO 800-Mile Dawn Search

# AIR ATTACKS ON ENEMY BOMBARDMENT GROUP

Morning of November 14, 1942

All Times are Zone minus 12

Limit of ENTERPRISE 250-Mile Dawn Search



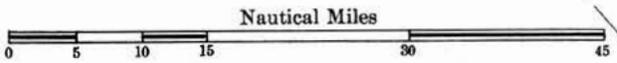
### LEGEND

APPROXIMATE ENEMY COURSE  
 Course followed by MARI...  
 Course followed by ENTE...

ENEMY SHIP HIT      ENEMY SHIP BURNING

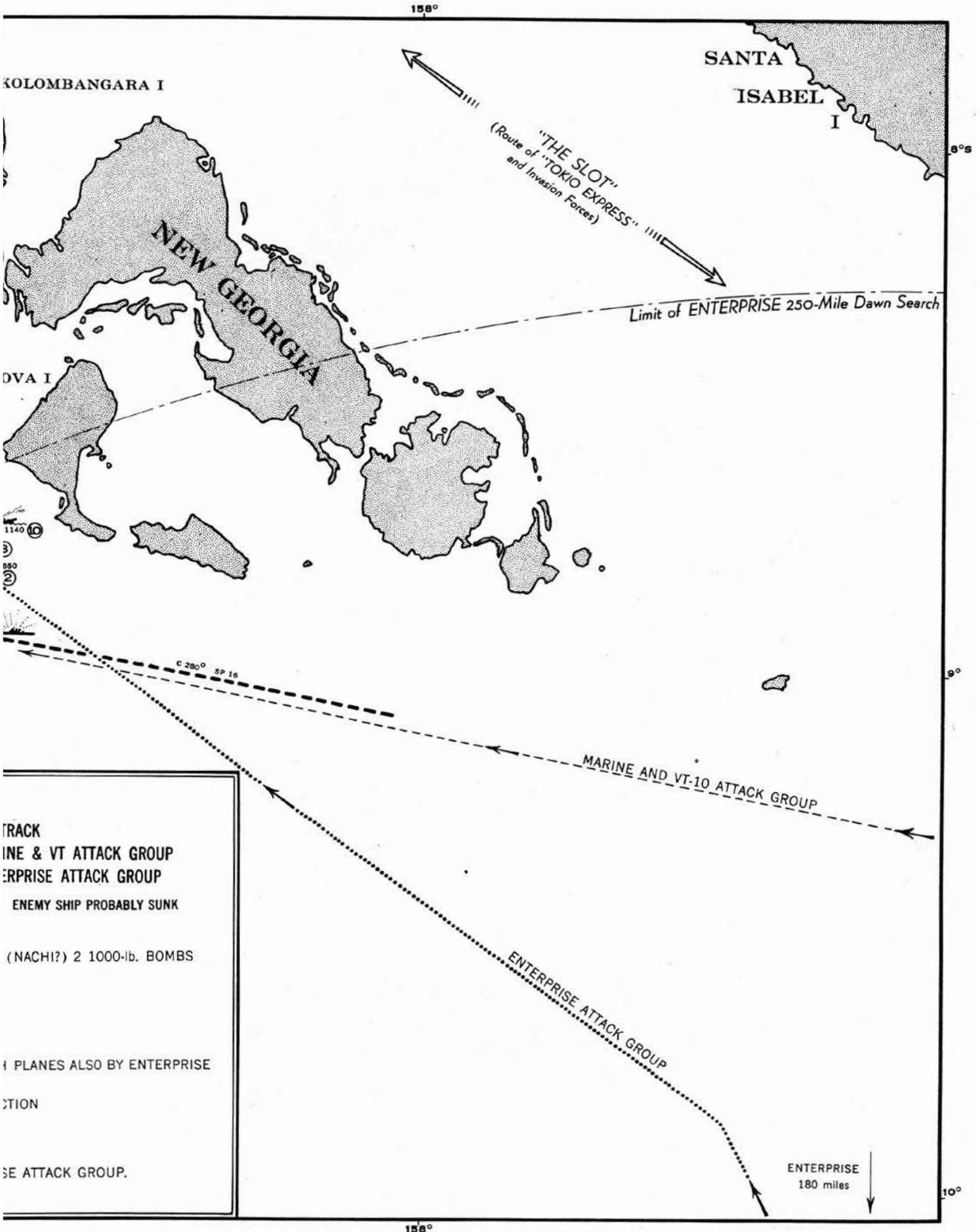
#### KEY

- ① VT-10 AND MARINES. 4 TORPEDO HITS ON "MOGAMI" CA ON ANOTHER CA (MAYA or NACHI).
- ② "3 CA, 3 CL, 5 DD" (ENTERPRISE SEARCH)
- ③ "2 BB, 2 CA, 1 CV, 4 DD" (ENTERPRISE SEARCH)
- ④ 2 500-lb. BOMBS ON NACHI CA (ENTERPRISE SEARCH)
- ⑤ NACHI SEEN BURNING AND EXPLODING BY OTHER SEARCH ATTACK GROUP (1050)
- ⑥ 1 CA, 1 DD SIGHTED BY SECOND ENTERPRISE SEARCH SECTION
- ⑦ 1 CL, 1 DD BY SAME PLANES. 1 500-lb. HIT ON CL
- ⑧ "6 CA, 4 DD"
- ⑨ "2 CA, 4 CL, 4 DD." 1000-lb. HITS ON 2 CL BY ENTERPRISE
- ⑩ ATTACK PILOT SEES NACHI SINK

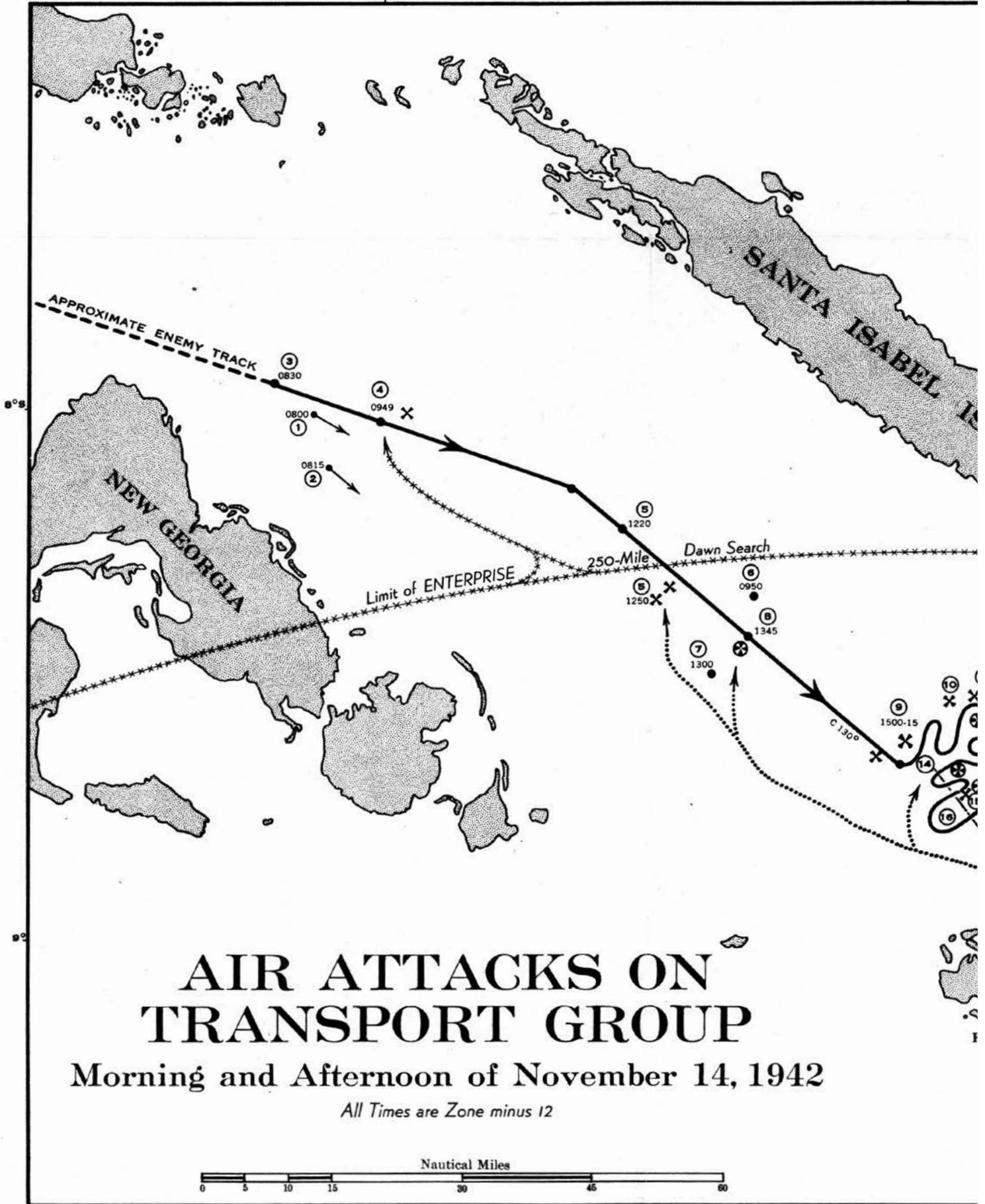


156°E

10°S



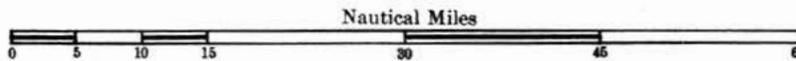
TRACK  
 LINE & VT ATTACK GROUP  
 ENTERPRISE ATTACK GROUP  
 ENEMY SHIP PROBABLY SUNK  
 (NACHI?) 2 1000-lb. BOMBS  
 PLANES ALSO BY ENTERPRISE  
 TION  
 SE ATTACK GROUP.



# AIR ATTACKS ON TRANSPORT GROUP

Morning and Afternoon of November 14, 1942

*All Times are Zone minus 12*

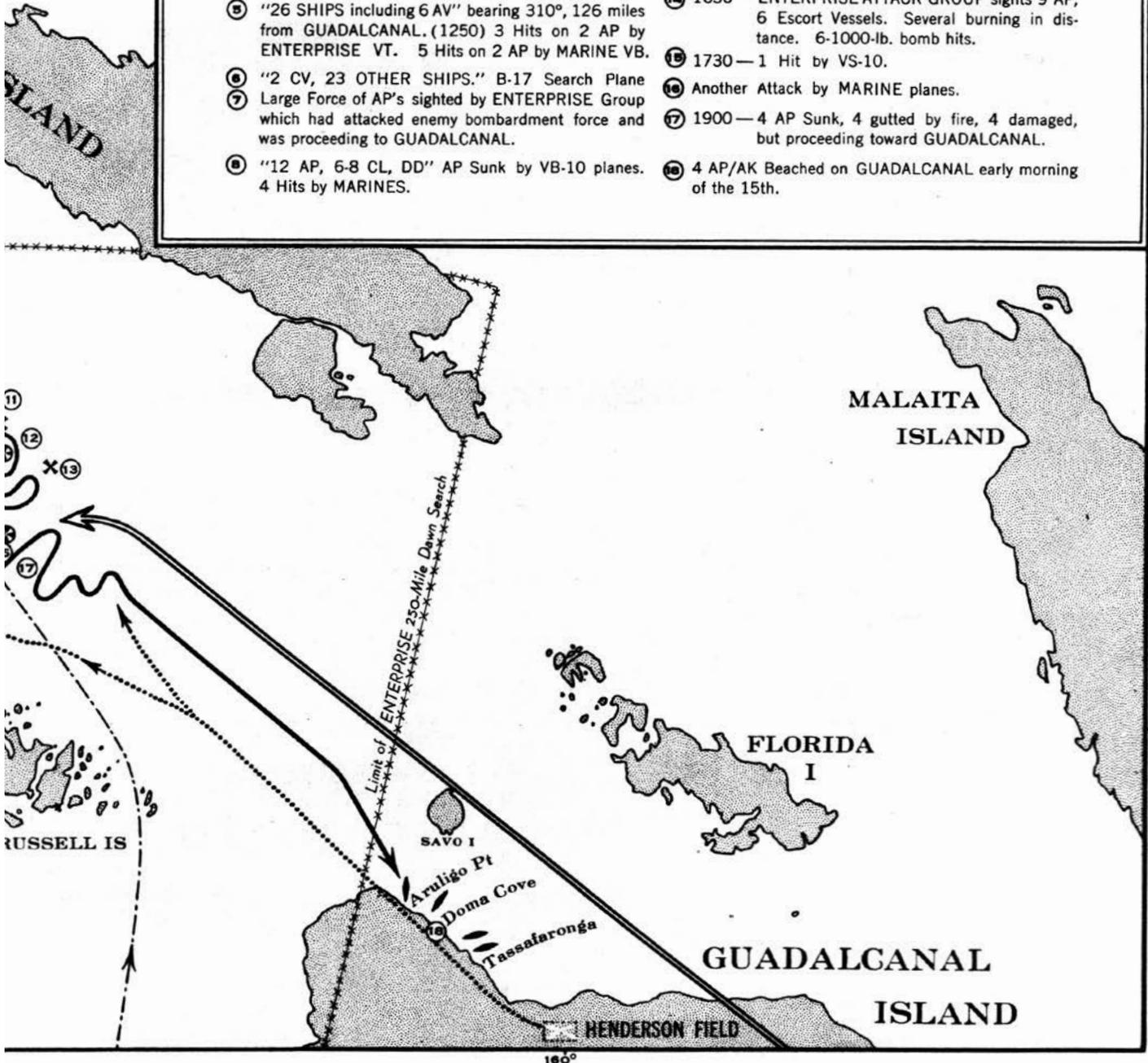


# LEGEND

- APPROXIMATE ENEMY TRACK
- - - - - Course followed by ENTERPRISE ATTACK GROUP
- \*\*\*\*\* Limit of ENTERPRISE SEARCH and Course of SEARCH PLANES ATTACKING CONVOY
- ..... Course of GUADALCANAL ATTACKS
- ===== Course of B-17's from ESPIRITU SANTO
- ✕ ENEMY SHIPS HIT
- ⊗ ENEMY SHIPS PROBABLY SUNK

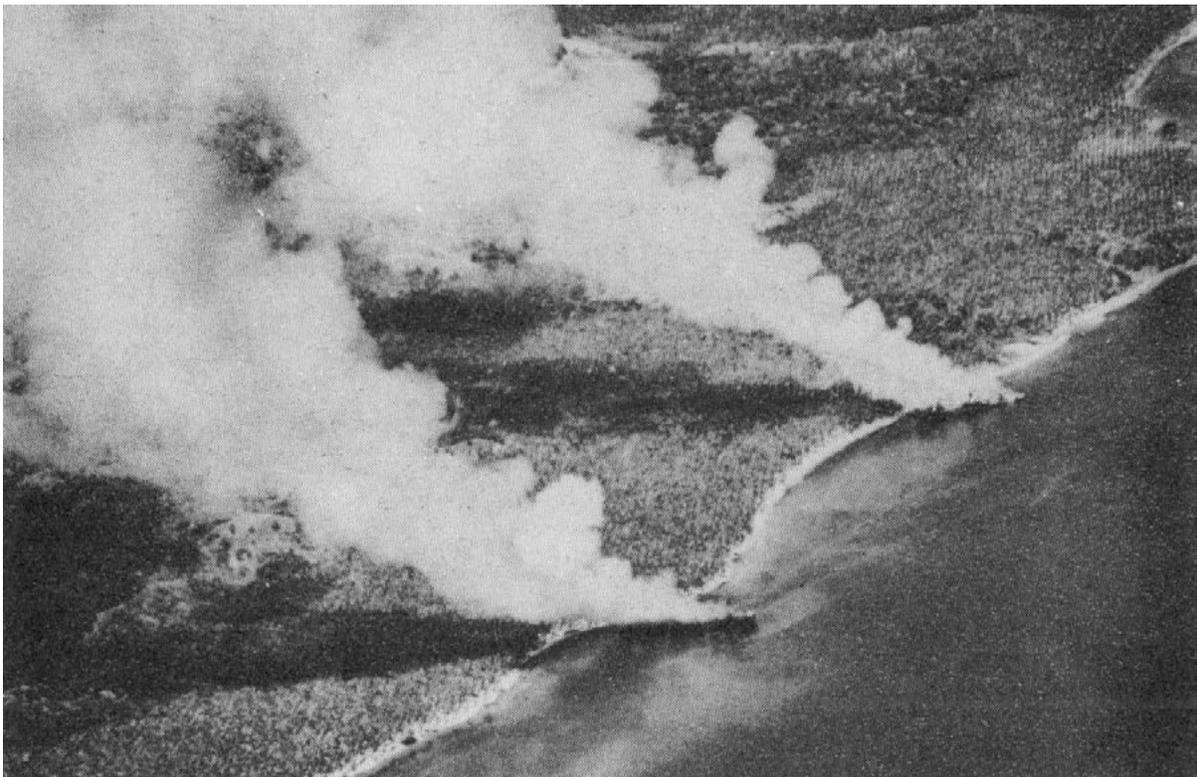
## KEY

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① "1 BB, 1 CV, 2 CA, 4 DD, C 120°, S 15."</li> <li>② "2 BB, 1 CL, 11 DD, C 130°, S. 25."</li> <li>③ "12 AP. C 110°"</li> <li>④ "Many AP, 6 DD, 3 CL, 2 CA, C 130° S 14." (ENTERPRISE DAWN SEARCH)<br/>1 Probable Hit on AP.</li> <li>⑤ "26 SHIPS including 6 AV" bearing 310°, 126 miles from GUADALCANAL. (1250) 3 Hits on 2 AP by ENTERPRISE VT. 5 Hits on 2 AP by MARINE VB.</li> <li>⑥ "2 CV, 23 OTHER SHIPS." B-17 Search Plane</li> <li>⑦ Large Force of AP's sighted by ENTERPRISE Group which had attacked enemy bombardment force and was proceeding to GUADALCANAL.</li> <li>⑧ "12 AP, 6-8 CL, DD" AP Sunk by VB-10 planes. 4 Hits by MARINES.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑨ 2 Waves of B-17's. 1 Hit and several Near Hits.</li> <li>⑩ 1500 — Hit by VS-10 from GUADALCANAL.</li> <li>⑪ 1530 — Another Hit on AP.</li> <li>⑫ 1600 — 4 Hits.</li> <li>⑬ 1515 — Hit by single VS-10 plane.</li> <li>⑭ 1630 — ENTERPRISE ATTACK GROUP sights 9 AP, 6 Escort Vessels. Several burning in distance. 6-1000-lb. bomb hits.</li> <li>⑮ 1730 — 1 Hit by VS-10.</li> <li>⑯ Another Attack by MARINE planes.</li> <li>⑰ 1900 — 4 AP Sunk, 4 gutted by fire, 4 damaged, but proceeding toward GUADALCANAL.</li> <li>⑱ 4 AP/AK Beached on GUADALCANAL early morning of the 15th.</li> </ul> |
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*Four Japanese AP/AK beached and burning on Guadalcanal, 15 November*



*A closer view of two of the fire-gutted vessels*



*Beached on Guadalcanal: the Yamazuki Maru*



*Battered afterdeck of the burned-out Kinugawa Maru*

About 1023 Ens. R. A. Hoogerwerf and Ens. P. M. Halloran, also of the *Enterprise* dawn search, located part of the same force, now scattered and apparently composed of two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser, and four destroyers. The damaged *Nachi* cruiser was burning badly and lay low in the water. Two destroyers were circling her as if preparing to take off personnel. The light cruiser and one destroyer were 10 miles west. Five miles south the other heavy cruiser and one destroyer were proceeding on a westerly course.

The search planes climbed to 17,500 feet and circled the force twice to pick the best targets. Ens. Hoogerwerf dived downwind on the heavy cruiser which was apparently undamaged, released at 3,000 feet, and pulled out to the south, maneuvering to low altitude in his withdrawal. His bomb fell about 15 feet astern. Ens. Halloran dived on the light cruiser and scored a direct hit. Heavy black smoke arose. Antiaircraft fire ceased during the retirement of the planes.

On his withdrawal, Ens. Hoogerwerf noted a heavy explosion aboard the damaged *Nachi* cruiser. He had no further contact with Ens. Halloran, although he called him several times.

The *Enterprise* attack group had intercepted one of Lt. Gibson's contact reports and had altered course so as to cut off the enemy force if it headed for Guadalcanal.<sup>60</sup> When the planes reached latitude 09°10' S., longitude 157°50' E. (southeast of the eastern end of New Georgia), they changed course again so as to intercept the Japanese if they were headed for Shortland Island. At about 1000 the *Enterprise* transmitted the location of the enemy and ordered the group to attack and then proceed to Guadalcanal. Eight of the fighters became separated from the main body, however, and after a vain search returned to the ship, not having received the order to go to Guadalcanal.<sup>61</sup> The other two landed there when their fuel began to give out. One bomber also headed for Henderson Field before the attack because of incipient fuel trouble.

After having shot down one of two float-type Zeros, the group sighted the damaged *Nachi* cruiser, burning and listing, with two light cruisers or destroyers standing by. The ships were about 10 miles southwest of Rendova Island. Nearby was a heavy oil slick about a mile long. Accurate antiaircraft fire from the escorting ships was encountered.

At 1115 the attack group found an enemy force "of about six cruisers and four destroyers" 25 miles to the northwest. After searching for the possible carrier reported by Lt. Gibson, Lt. Comdr. James R. Lee, commanding VS-10 and the attack group, directed the five VB-10 pilots to bomb the heavy cruisers. At 1130 Lt. Comdr. John A. Thomas dived on one of them and missed, as did Lieut. Vivien W. Welch and Lt. (jg) J. D. Wakeham. Ens. J. H. Carroum and Ens. E. J. Stevens scored near-hits on the same ship. At about 1140 Lt. Comdr. Thomas saw a ship sink in the vicinity where the *Nachi* cruiser had been. The two cruisers or destroyers which had been standing by got underway.

Meanwhile the 11 VS-10 pilots had attacked the light cruisers. Two direct hits and one near-hit with 1,000-pound bombs were made on one of them. It was left listing and burning. Four near-hits were registered on another light cruiser. Two bombs failed to release.

At 1300 on the way to Henderson Field the attack group sighted a large force of transports in about latitude 08°30' S., longitude 158°40' E. Presumably this was the convoy descending on Guadalcanal.

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<sup>60</sup> Apparently the group did not receive the course data sent by Lt. Gibson.

<sup>61</sup> The fighter planes were not on the same radio frequency as the bombers, so it was impossible to transmit to them information on prospective changes of course, etc.

### *Attacks on the Transports*

*Saturday, 14 November*

- 0518 Task Forces KING and LOVE, 200 miles south of Guadalcanal, directed to attack approaching Japanese convoy.
- 0830 COMSOWESPAC reports 12 AP's "in the slot" north of New Georgia, approaching Guadalcanal.
- 0949 Two *Enterprise* search planes locate transports and score 1 probable hit.
- 1250 Marine and *Enterprise* planes from Guadalcanal attack convoy and make 3 torpedo and 5 bomb hits.
- 1345 Another Henderson Field group attacks. Two hits by *Enterprise* planes, four by Marines.
- 1348 *Enterprise* retires to the south.
- 1500 B-17's attack, scoring 1 hit.
- 1530-45 *Enterprise* planes from Guadalcanal score 7 more direct hits.
- 1630 Second attack group from *Enterprise* makes six 1,000-pound bomb hits on 5 ships. Four Zeros shot down. Group launched from Henderson Field scores two 1,000-pound bomb hits on each of 2 AP's without having fighter protection.
- 1730 *Enterprise* plane makes another hit.
- 1900 Fifteen miles north of Russell Islands 4 AP/AK's are dead in water and burning. Four AP/AK's, damaged and smoking, are proceeding slowly northwest with several DD's. The other 4 AP/AK's have probably sunk.

At 0830 COMSOWESPAC reported that 12 transports had been sighted at latitude 07°55' S., longitude 157°45' E., about 20 miles north of the central portion of New Georgia. Analysis of captured Japanese documents later enabled COMSOPAC's Combat Intelligence center to estimate that most of these ships were carrying supplies. Two battalions of the Japanese Two Hundred Twenty-ninth Infantry Regiment and 2 battalions of the Two Hundred Thirtieth Infantry Regiment (4,600 men all told) were aboard, as well as the Two Hundred Twenty-ninth Regiment Artillery, the Two Hundred Thirtieth Regiment Artillery, and the Thirty-eighth Division Engineer Battalion. General Vandegrift, however, stated that captured documents proved that the enemy had 30,000 to 35,000 men aboard, including a division, some corps troops, a full headquarters staff, and some extra regiments.<sup>62</sup>

The transports were convoyed by a force which was identified by search planes at various times as (a) 2 heavy cruisers, 3 light cruisers, and 6 destroyers; (b) 1 heavy cruiser, 1 light cruiser, and 6 destroyers; (c) 6 to 8 light cruisers and destroyers; (d) 2 carriers and other ships; (e) 6 seaplane tenders and other ships. The convoy was preceded by a separate group of combatant vessels, which were reported as (a) 2 battleships, 1 light cruiser, and 11 destroyers, and as (b) 1 battleship, 1 carrier, 2 heavy cruisers, and 4 destroyers.

At 0949 Lt. (jg) M.D. Carmody and Lt. (jg) W. E. Johnson of the *Enterprise* search group located "many transports, six DD, three CL, and two CA" in latitude 08°45' S., 158°00' E. (between New Georgia and the northwest tip of Santa Isabel), on course 130° T., speed 14; A contact report was sent, and the planes then climbed for an attack. The pilots had been directed to consider the transports as the primary target and so dived on a large one. Lt. Carmody's bomb was a near-hit, and Lt. Johnson's was a probable hit on the stern. After the pull-out Lt. Carmody strafed a destroyer which was in his path.

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<sup>62</sup> Interview given Intelligence Service. U.S.A.A.F., 3 February 1943. General Vandegrift also said at that time that the transports were unusually large, some of them displacing from 18,500 to 22,000 tons.

At this time the planes were attacked by about seven Zeros. While maneuvering to reach a cloud layer they became separated, and it is probable that Lt. Johnson was shot down. Liska, J., Aviation Radioman Second Class, Lt. Carmody's rear seat gunner, saw a plane plunge into the sea, and Lt. Carmody himself saw Zeros strafing the water in this vicinity.

Meanwhile, at 0950, a B-17 search plane had reported 2 carriers and 23 other ships in this area, and at 1018 sixteen B-17's were ordered off from Espiritu Santo in 2 flights to attack the carriers.<sup>63</sup>

The transports apparently were not molested again until 1220, when 7 torpedo planes of VT-10, now operating from Guadalcanal, 18 Marine scout bombers, and 12 Marine fighters took off on a contact report of 26 ships, including 6 seaplane tenders, 126 miles away on a bearing of 310° T. At 1250 a large convoy was sighted, but it did not include any seaplane tenders. Marine SBD's made two direct hits on one transport and three on another. The torpedo planes followed the bombers in and picked two transports which were not under attack. Two hits were made on the port side of one of them and one hit on the starboard side of the other. Six Zeros attempted interception. One of them was damaged by a torpedo plane and possibly finished off by a fighter. Two were damaged by SBD's. Antiaircraft was moderate.

At 1255 seventeen scout bombers, including 2 VB-10 and fifteen Marine planes, 8 Marine torpedo bombers, and 8 fighters, left Guadalcanal to attack the transports.<sup>64</sup> The bombers reached the convoy at 1345 and reported it as 12 transports and 6 to 8 light cruisers in the channel between New Georgia and Santa Isabel Islands, distant about 100 miles from Guadalcanal. The first section of the VF-10 Marine bombers dived on one transport, securing 2 direct hits, and the second section of 6 planes on another, scoring 2 more direct hits. Lt. (jg) R. D. Gibson and Ens. L. Robinson, both of VB-10. and Sgt. Beneke, USMC, formed the third section and dived from 12,000 feet on another transport. Lt. Gibson made a 70° dive. Because Zeros were present, Ens. Robinson dived on the same ship with flaps up until he overtook Lt. Gibson. Both pilots released their 1,000-pound bombs at 2,000 feet and pulled out at 1,200, going away low over the water as their rear gunners strafed the decks. Both bombs hit amidships. Lt. Gibson's was instantaneous, while Ens. Robinson's was delayed action. Sgt. Beneke, who made a near-hit, saw the ship break in two. Antiaircraft fire was very heavy below 6,000 feet and during the withdrawals. A Zero got on Ens. Robinson's tail and shot away his antenna, but Lt Gibson's rear seat gunner drove off the attacker with a short burst. Marine SBD's shot down 2 Zeros.

At 1348 the *Enterprise* retired to the south to avoid possible air attacks. At 1400 she entered a weather front about 300 miles from Guadalcanal. It is probable that just prior to this an enemy plane reported the location of the Task Force. As the afternoon wore on, Task Force LOVE in its position southwest of Guadalcanal established radar contact with 20 to 30 planes heading south. These aircraft returned north at a later time after missing Task Force KING. They did not observe Task Force LOVE either, due to the squally weather.<sup>65</sup>

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63 At about this time also, six TBF-1's of VMSB 131 were dispatched from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal with a supply of torpedoes.

64 Half an hour later a flight of VF-10 took off from Henderson Field "to cover dive bombers." The reports are not clear as to whether these planes are the same as those here mentioned as accompanying the bombers. The VF-10 fighters encountered Zeros over the transports and shot one of them down.

65 Admiral Kinkaid feared submarine interception. Consequently, he made a wide jog during the night to avoid any submarines which might have been stationed with reference to the meridian on which his Force had been located.

At 1500 the first flight of B-17's which had been dispatched from Espiritu Santo in the morning, and which had failed to find the carriers they were looking for,<sup>66</sup> attacked the enemy transports, followed in 15 minutes by the second flight. One direct hit and one near-hit were scored on one ship, and several near-hits on others. The B-17's were intercepted by enemy fighters of which they shot down six, plus one probable, with no losses to themselves.

At 1505 ten B-26's of the Seventieth Bombardment Squadron (USAAF), which had arrived at Espiritu Santo from the Fijis, were loaded with torpedoes and 1,000-pound bombs (six with the former and four with the latter). They took off with four P-38's as escort, intending to attack the convoy and then land at Guadalcanal. The P-38's turned back because of bad weather, and the B-26's landed without making an attack, for reasons which do not appear.

At 1445 two scout bombers of VS-10 and seven Marine bombers took off from Guadalcanal to attack the transports. They dived through antiaircraft fire, and Lt. Comdr. J. R. Lee obtained a direct hit. Lt. (jg) J. F. Richey also took off about 1445, leading three Marine planes, and scored a direct hit. Both these attacks were completed about 1545. A third attack group composed of eight VS-10 planes left Guadalcanal at the same time as the others. They scouted to the northwest for a possible enemy carrier and then attacked from 16,000 feet, obtaining four hits and one near-hit. They completed their attack about 1600. All planes returned.

A single plane of VS-10, piloted by Ens. C. B. Irvine, took off at 1455 and encountered both antiaircraft fire and enemy fighters. Nevertheless, Ens. Irvine managed to register a direct hit.

The *Enterprise* had launched a second attack group at 1412, consisting of 8 scout bombers and 12 fighters, which left 18 fighters aboard for the protection of the ship. The group had orders to hit undamaged transports with only one 1,000-pound bomb each. At 1630 the disordered enemy group was sighted northwest of the Russell Islands. There were about 9 transports and 7 escort vessels—light cruisers and destroyers. Seven transports appeared undamaged. Three or four others were seen to be burning in the distance. Five Zeros attacked Lt. (jg) W. C. Edwards (the squadron leader), Lt. (jg) M. D. Carmody, and Lt. (jg) R. F. Edmondson. Colley, W. C., Aviation Radioman Second Class, Lt. Edwards' rear seat gunner, shot down 2 of them with his free guns. Reames, R. E., Aviation Radioman Second Class, Lt. Edmondson's rear seat gunner, accounted for another. Each of the planes then scored a direct hit on a separate transport.

Ens. N.E. Wiggins scored a near-hit, 5 to 10 feet from the starboard side of a transport. Ens. D. H. Frissell dived down sun across the beam of another ship and released at 1,900 feet, pulling out gradually at 1,000. His 1,000-pound delayed action bomb (1/100 second) struck the extreme port side of the well deck, probably passing through the side of the ship before it exploded. There was a geyser of water with large pieces of debris.

Lt. (jg) B. A. McGraw dived on a vessel to the southwest, releasing at 2,500 feet and pulling out low over the water. His bomb hit on the port side amidships, blowing out the side of the ship, which thereafter lay dead in the water, although no fire was observed.

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<sup>66</sup> These were probably camouflaged transports. Some of the enemy vessels were painted with black and white dazzle stripes which tended to give them the lines of converted carriers when observed from the air.

Lt. (jg) F. R. West chose a transport which had been missed by another pilot and released at 1,800 feet. His bomb struck directly amidships, and a serious fire broke out. During the plane's withdrawal, the rear seat gunner fired about 150 rounds at the antiaircraft battery of a light cruiser which had the range. Its fire was mostly 3-inch and smaller and was heavy but ineffectual.

A Zero made a run on Ens. Wiggins as he went away at 300 feet, but he turned into the attacking plane, forcing it to pass by on his starboard side, and enabling Mayer, C. V., Aviation Radioman Third Class, rear seat gunner, to register some hits.

The last three transports bombed were reported to be among the largest in the force at this time—from 12,000 to 15,000 tons—and “crowded with soldiers.”

The fighters went down directly after the dive bombers and strafed the two remaining undamaged transports, which were large and heavily loaded. They were left burning. Lt. Comdr. James H. Flatley's flight then strafed a destroyer, all shots seeming to enter the target. One of the planes in the other attacking flight, piloted by Ens. E. B. Coalson, became separated and was jumped by four Zeros, one of which was shot down. The high-altitude covering planes were also attacked by enemy fighters. One Zero was sent away smoking. Thereafter the whole force proceeded to Guadalcanal, arriving at about 1700, when they placed themselves under the orders of General Vandegrift. According to the reports, six 1,000-pound bomb hits had been scored on five transports, and two other ships had been set on fire. Four Zeros had been shot down and possibly one more. None of our aircraft was lost or damaged in this highly successful action.

At 1630 an attack group was launched from Henderson Field which included 7 VB-10 pilots. Fighter protection, so effective in the engagement just described, had been promised but did not put in an appearance. The group proceeded without it. About 10 miles northeast of the Russell Islands an estimated 10 transports and 3 destroyers were sighted. Two of these transports were burning to the northwest. Four or five were still proceeding toward Guadalcanal. One or two were headed west. Three or four were dead in the water.

The planes approached from the southwest at 12,000 feet and were immediately attacked by Zeros. Gardner, G. C., Aviation Chief Radioman, rear seat gunner in Lt. Comdr. J. A. Thomas' plane, shot down one of them with his two free guns. Lt. Comdr. Thomas then dived and let go his 1,000-pound bomb at 2,000 feet, pulling out at 800. The bomb struck the target amidships, but no fire was observed. Gardner strafed the ship during the withdrawal. Lt. Gibson's rear-seat gunner, Schindele, C. E., Aviation Radioman Second Class, saw about 10 Zeros come in on the port side of the formation. Two of them attacked, and Schindele hit one of them and saw smoke coming out of its engine. Lt. Gibson's plane was badly shot up, with about 27 or 28 holes in it, and he went into a spin, but he recovered and managed to get back to Henderson Field without cracking up.

Several covering Zeros attacked Ens. E. J. Stevens, but he pushed over into a dive following Lt. Comdr. Thomas. He released at 2,500 feet and pulled out low over the water. The bomb hit amidships in about the same location as Lt. Comdr. Thomas' and at almost the same instant. During his withdrawal Ens. Stevens and his rear-seat gunner, Nelson, I. W., Aviation Radioman Third Class, strafed the bows of two transports.

A Zero got on the tail of Lt. Wakeham's and Ens. Robinson's planes, and another made a head-on run. Ens. Robinson found the range of this last plane with his fixed guns, but the Zero astern began hitting the wings of both American aircraft, which were very close together. Ens. Robinson pulled slightly away to avoid a collision with Lt. Wakeham. At that moment a 20-mm. shot hit his engine, and it cut out and burst into flames. Ens. Robinson side slipped, putting out the blaze in the engine and one which had started in the rear cockpit. Then he pushed over into a steep, no-flap dive. The engine started up again. The Zero followed and kept on firing. Ens. Robinson made an aileron roll to the right. The Zero started hitting, so he turned to the left and then to the right, continuing his dive with his 1,000-pound bomb still in place to give him speed. When he pulled out at 2,500 feet, he had 320 knots in level flight, but the Zero came up astern again. Ens. Robinson made a split-S from 2,500 feet to 3,000 and recovered at a speed of about 240 knots. The Zero got on his tail once more, so he flew low among the coconut trees on one of the Russell Islands till he got to the hills and had to go up to clear them. The Zero continued to fire. Ens. Robinson dived at an angle of 30° to gain speed and zoomed up toward some clouds. As he neared them, the Zero rocked its wings and sheered away toward the ships. Ens. Robinson returned to Henderson Field about 1630 with 68 holes in his plane.

Lieut. Welch hit a transport amidships from 2,000 feet and withdrew to the north. He was not seen again. Ens. Carroum's bomb, dropped at 1,500 feet, landed slightly aft of Lieut. Welch's. His plane was then struck by antiaircraft fire, which damaged the engine, and he was forced down into the water. The impact knocked Ens. Carroum unconscious for a moment, but he and Hynson, R. C., Aviation Radioman Third Class, rear seat gunner, finally succeeded in getting their rubber boat into the water. They did not inflate it for fear of being strafed, and the tail of the plane fouled the boat and took it under. Ens. Carroum's gun belt was also caught, and he was pulled down to a depth of 10 feet before he could free himself. Before he again lost consciousness, he popped the CO 2 cartridges on his life preserver which carried him to the surface. After reviving, he and Hynson swam around together all night. In the morning, however, they lost contact. Hynson was never heard from again. Ens. Carroum swam and floated 73 hours till he made one of the Russell Islands. There natives cared for him till he was picked up by a PBY on 26 November and brought to Tulagi.

At 1645 one VS-10 plane, piloted by Lt. (ig) C. G. Estes, took off with three Marine dive bombers to attack the transports. The mission was completed about 1745, one direct hit having been scored by the Navy plane.

By 1800 the transports were milling around about 60 miles northwest of Savo Island. At this time one or more were sunk, and six were seriously damaged. Another successful attack was then launched from Guadalcanal by Marine planes. All told, according to the reports, four transports and cargo vessels were damaged so badly that they sank, four were set on fire and completely burned out (their smoking hulks were discovered next day), and four ships (three AK's and one AP), which had received more or less damage, were beached near Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal early the next morning.

During the day the pilots of Air Group TEN had scored six torpedo hits, twenty 1,000-pound bomb hits, and six 500-pound bomb hits.

In his final report CINCPAC noted these enemy losses as a result of the air operations of the 14th:

	<i>Sunk</i> <sup>67</sup>	<i>Damaged</i>
CL.....	0	2
DD.....	2	1
AP/AK.....	8	4
	—	—
Totals	10	7

Air Group TEN shot down 17 planes and probably 7 more. It lost only 5 aircraft, 4 officers and 2 men, and 2 officers wounded.

### OBSERVATIONS

As Admiral Halsey pointed out, the operations of Air Group TEN on 14 November offered “an excellent example of the effective employment of carrier aircraft from an intermediate staging point.” With her planes landing and operating at Guadalcanal, the *Enterprise* was able to retire from the area where she was the most vulnerable to air attack. Furthermore, her aircraft were thereafter located at a fixed advance base where a maximum number of strikes could be made against targets which were comparatively accessible.<sup>68</sup> After the operations of the 15th it was possible for the planes to rejoin their carrier, 800 airline miles away, because we possessed a chain of friendly bases between Guadalcanal and Noumea. Had it not been for the night surface action of the 12th and 13th, however, Henderson Field might not have been available to Air Group TEN, and the story might have been quite different. Another controlling factor was the enemy’s lack of carrier support, probably due to the damage to carriers and the destruction of planes wrought in the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands on 26 October. By playing a major part in that engagement, the *Enterprise* had, in effect, paved the way for the success achieved by her planes on 14 and 15 November.<sup>69</sup>

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67 Subsequent information made the following minimum Japanese losses seem certain: sunk or destroyed, one CA, six AP/AK; four AP/AK damaged (destroyed next day).

68 The continuous and relentless attacks made on the 14th and 15th by the planes based on Guadalcanal are all more remarkable when it is considered that servicing crews and handling equipment at Henderson Field were most inadequate. Rearming time was excessive, so much so that on one occasion only three out of eight planes of VT-10 were able to take off, and two of these were only partially loaded.

69 For air action on the 15th, see p. 67.

*PART THREE—Battleship Night Action of 14–15 November*

APPROACH OF TASK FORCE LOVE

*Saturday, 14 November*

1200	Task Force LOVE has reached point about 50 miles southwest of Guadalcanal.
2120	Enemy cruiser and destroyer reported in cove on Savo Island.
2130	Course changed to 090° T. to round Savo, 11 miles to starboard.
2249	Course changed to 150° T. to pass between Savo and Florida Island.
2317	Task Force reported as enemy by PT boats.
2352	Course changed to 270° T.

Task Force LOVE, consisting of the *Washington* (F), *South Dakota*, *Benham*, *Gwin*, *Preston*, and *Walke*, reached a point about 50 miles southwest of Guadalcanal before noon on Saturday, 14 November. Most of the day was spent in this area avoiding contact with enemy planes. One Japanese aircraft did sight the force, however.

As has been noted (p. 45), an enemy force of 2 battleships, 1 light cruiser, and 11 destroyers had been sighted early that morning (latitude 08°09' S., longitude 157°55' E., course 130°, speed 25) preceding the transport group. Among the numerous other contacts made on the 13th and 14th was a group identified as 1 carrier, 1 *Ise* battleship, and 3 destroyers (or 3 heavy cruisers and 2 destroyers) sighted on the 13th about 170 miles north of Florida Island. If not a part of the enemy force defeated off Savo Island the previous night, as suggested on p. 33, these ships may have been covering the north flank of the convoy, just outside the limits of our air search. On Saturday afternoon 4 heavy cruisers, 1 large destroyer, and 10 ordinary destroyers were sighted about 130 miles north of Florida Island, course 165° T., speed 17, closing Indispensable Strait.

It was probable that some of these vessels would bombard Guadalcanal during the night in preparation for the arrival of the transports. Consequently, COMSOPAC communicated with Admiral Lee at 1542<sup>70</sup> and ordered him to retire in time to be in position southeast of Savo Island by midnight that night, unless he was “profitably engaged.”<sup>71</sup>

Late in the afternoon Admiral Lee commenced an approach designed to intercept the enemy bombardment group and such cargo ships and transports as might have survived the aerial pounding which the convoy had been receiving that day. In the early evening Task Force LOVE, having rounded the western end of Guadalcanal, passed between Savo and the Russell Islands. Course was 020° T., speed was 23 knots, and zigzag tactics were being employed. Savo was about 18 miles on the starboard beam.

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70 All times in this section are Zone minus 12.

71 Admiral Halsey envisaged the possibility that Task Force LOVE had already made or would make contact with the enemy transports or their support group.

No contacts were made in this area, and at 2110 zigzagging was abandoned. A flash of light over the horizon on the port bow was tentatively ascribed to gunfire or to the explosion of one of the burning transports near the Russell Islands. Glows and explosions continued in this neighborhood throughout the next 2 hours.

At 2120 a message from a friendly plane was intercepted which reported an enemy cruiser and destroyer hiding in a cove on Savo. The Task Force temporarily slowed to 20 knots and formed single column (*Walke, Benham, Preston, Gwin, Washington, South Dakota*, in that order), the destroyers keeping station 300 yards apart, with the heavy ships about 5,000 yards astern. The sole experience of the 2 battleships in division formation had been the 30 hours of high speed run in submarine infested waters which had just been completed. All ships were at general quarters. Personnel was at battle stations for 29 hours before and after the ensuing action.

At 2130 Japanese voice transmissions were picked up on the radio. Soon afterward the Force commenced a change of course in succession from the van to 090° T. Savo was now 11 miles to the south. The sky was partly covered with cirro-cumulus clouds, mostly at about 10,000 feet, with the overcast gradually increasing. The temperature was 83°. The sea was calm, with a 7-knot breeze blowing from 170° T. A quarter moon was shining, and prominent landmarks were visible as far as 25 miles. As the northernmost point of Savo was passed, a sharp lookout was kept for the hidden cruiser and destroyer.

At 2245 the enemy voice transmissions, now heard from three stations, became very excited. Shortly thereafter, the Task Force changed course to 150° T. to pass between Savo and Florida Islands, and speed was reduced to 17 knots. A glow was sighted near the beach on Savo which momentarily was thought to come from the lurking cruiser and destroyer, but it was finally identified as moonlight on a white rock.

PT boats based on Tulagi now reported the Force as Japanese. Admiral Lee informed Guadalcanal Control that "friendly PT boats are believed to be after us." The shore station replied that it had no information as to his identity. The Task Force Commander found it necessary to clear up this misunderstanding by voice radio in plain language. There is no way of knowing whether his report of his course, code name, and location reached the enemy. The Task Force began to change course to 270° T. to cut across the sound south of Savo.

#### FIRST PHASE OF THE ACTION—0000–0024

*Sunday, 15 November*

- 0001 *Washington* makes radar contact with enemy east of Savo.
- 0016 *Washington* opens fire, *South Dakota* soon thereafter.
- 0019 *Washington's* target apparently sinks.
- 0024 *South Dakota* sinks a cruiser.

By 0000 Task Force LOVE was 13.5 miles southeast of the southernmost point of Savo, in the location set for midnight by Admiral Halsey. At that moment a PT boat reported that three ships had "just rounded north of Savo heading west." An eyewitness on the Guadalcanal shore later identified these vessels as destroyers which were dashing back to cover after discovering the United States force. Almost simultaneously the *Washington's* SG and FC radars made contact with other ships on a bearing of 340° T., range 18,000 yards, about 6 miles east of Savo in the same waters through which our Task Force had

recently passed. The main battery director tracked for 2 minutes and then lost the target because of land interference. Echoes were received not only from Savo Island but from Santa Isabel, 50 miles away.

A few tense moments passed before the *Washington* made another contact bearing 340° T. at 19,600 yards. About the same time the *South Dakota* made visual contact on three ships bearing 330° T., course southwesterly, which were dimly illuminated by the setting moon. Radar range was 18,300. Presumably this was the same enemy group. The leading vessel was very large—either a battleship or a heavy cruiser. The other two were light or possibly heavy cruisers. This force was probably the easternmost of several enemy columns in a disposition similar to that employed 2 nights before in the Cruiser Night Action. It very likely included elements of the northern groups sighted on the 13th and 14th (see p. 51).

As radar contacts by our battleships multiplied, Admiral Lee ordered course changed to 300° T. and informed the *South Dakota* that she might open fire when ready. The *Gwin*, keeping station 5,000 yards ahead of the flagship, observed two ships in the target area. Bearing was 355° T., range about 14,000. They were thought to be of the *Mogami* type.

At 0016, before being fired upon or illuminated by the enemy, the *Washington* opened on the leading Japanese ship with her main battery at 18,500 yards, using radar ranges and optical train. In 3 minutes, 42 rounds of 16-inch armor-piercing ammunition were fired. At the time the first salvo landed, the secondary battery began firing on targets about 15,000 yards away, possibly three destroyers, and the main battery spotters were blinded by the flashes of the 5-inch guns. However, radar officers reported that the first salvo straddled and that the big guns were on target with the second or third. The signal of the enemy vessel, which had been coming in strong on the radar screens, flickered and became faint and fuzzy.

A minute or so after the *Washington* went into action, the *South Dakota* opened fire on the nearest ship of the main group at a range of 15,700 yards, using radar control. This vessel was not far from the targets of the *Washington*'s secondary battery and was overlapping in deflection the more distant vessel astern of the battleship or heavy cruiser which our flagship's main battery was pounding. It seemed likely that the Japanese were not in battle formation and therefore that they had been surprised. The *South Dakota*'s first or second salvo hit the mark. Tremendous fires blazed up both on this ship and on the *Washington*'s main battery target. The *South Dakota* spotted up 100 and right 02 to get on the ship which was following the leader. This time also the first salvos crashed home.

At 0019, after the *Washington*'s seventh or eighth salvo, her flaming target disappeared and was presumed to have sunk. The main battery stopped firing, while the secondary continued with undetermined results until it had expended 100 rounds.

At 0019 the flagship changed course to 300° T., and at 0020 speed was increased from 17 to 23 knots. Reports were received that our destroyers were opening fire. The *Gwin* picked one of the enemy cruisers as a target for her torpedoes. One of the tubes fired prematurely as a result of a short circuit. The ships proved to be beyond effective range for high-speed setting. Next the destroyer fired two star-shell spreads to illuminate the battleships' targets and followed with two salvos of anti-aircraft common. The range was excessive, so fire was checked.

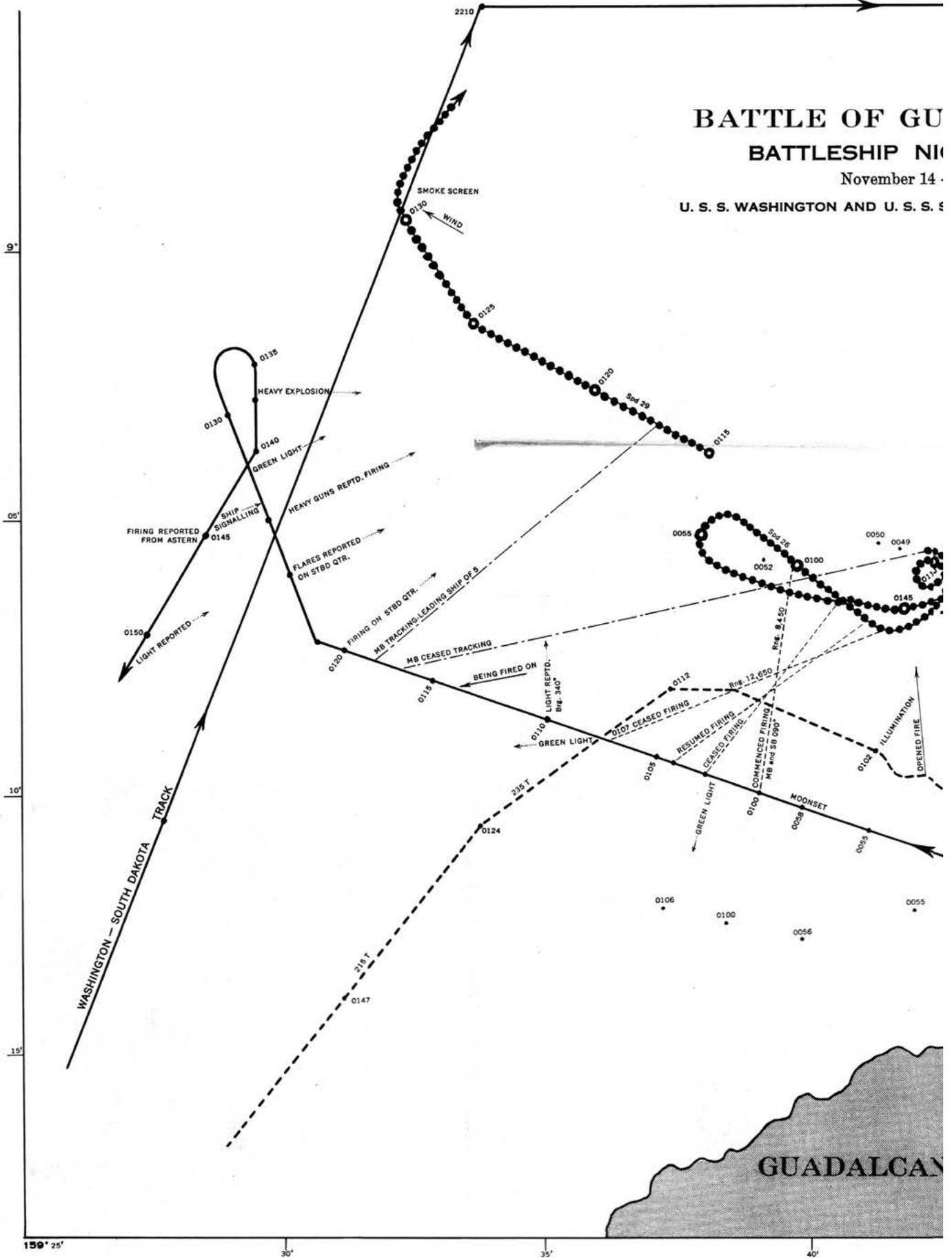
The *Benham* had been unable to see the targets at first but finally distinguished two of them. They were not observed to be firing, and indeed the Japanese were slow to reply to our battleships and did no damage

# BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL

## BATTLESHIP NIGHT

November 14

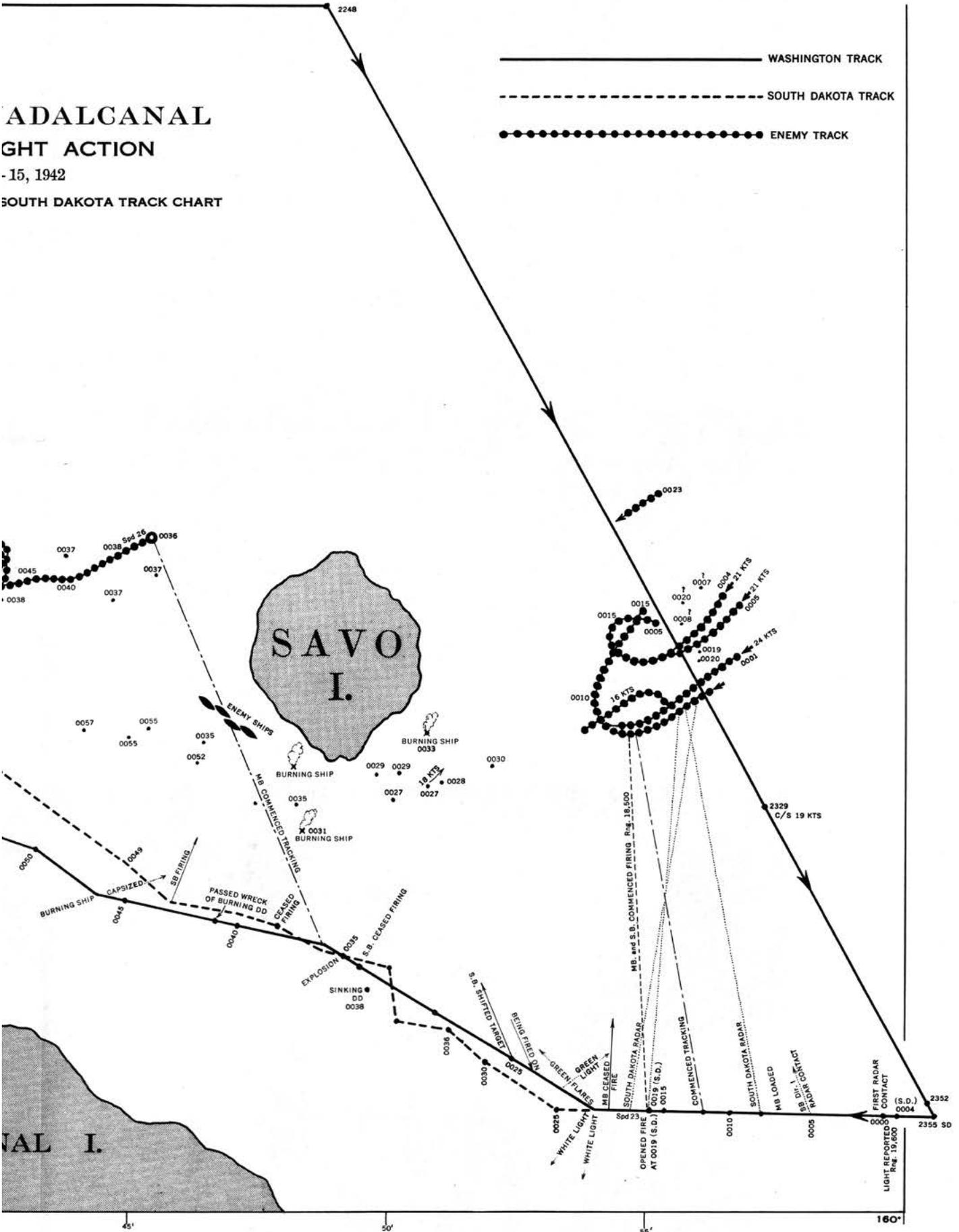
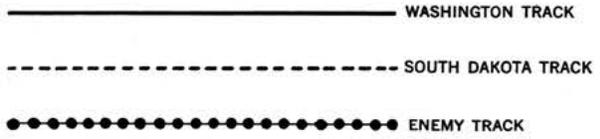
U. S. S. WASHINGTON AND U. S. S. SOUTH DAKOTA



# ADALCANAL GH T ACTION

-15, 1942

SOUTH DAKOTA TRACK CHART





*Repair ship Prometheus alongside USS South Dakota to effect temporary repairs following action of 14-15 November*

whatever in this first phase of the action. The *Benham* did not fire torpedoes because it was determined that the enemy vessels would be behind the protection of Savo by the time they arrived.

At 0024, after the *South Dakota*'s eighth salvo, her target was seen to sink. The other cruiser, on which she had opened originally, was now only a doubtful pip on the radar screen. Several Japanese voice transmissions had ceased abruptly. Only the weaker ones continued.

#### SECOND PHASE—0020–0045

*Sunday, 15 November*

- 0022 *Walke* opens fire.
- 0025 *Washington*'s secondary opens fire on "shore batteries" (DD's).
- 0025–35 Several enemy DD's set on fire.
- 0032 *Preston* sinks as a result of enemy cruiser fire. *Gwin* hit. *Walke* and *Benham* torpedoed.
- 0033 *South Dakota* loses all power because of shorts in secondary director and locked circuit breaker.
- 0042 *South Dakota* sinks *Kuma* cruiser astern and in so doing blows two of her own planes overboard.

As has been noted, the van destroyers of our Force opened fire about 0020. The *Gwin* was apparently the only one of them which actually fired at the targets being pounded by the *Washington* and the *South Dakota*, and her salvos were short. Excessive range and difficulty of distinguishing targets prevented the effective use of torpedo batteries against ships in this area. However, a group estimated to include 6 to 10 Japanese ships (destroyers and probably light cruisers) began rounding the southwestern corner of Savo. No doubt their purpose was to launch a torpedo attack against our capital ships, but their attention was soon fully engaged by our lighter craft, which thus saved Task Force LOVE from potential disaster.

At 0022 the *Walke*, which was leading the column, opened on a target 20° on the starboard bow. Eight salvos were fired at this ship, which emerged from the shadow of Savo on a westerly course. A *Walke* survivor identified it as a cruiser, but it might have been a destroyer, as suggested by observers in the *Benham*, the next ship in line. It came about and went into action. The *Benham* also opened fire on it, using radar ranges and gun flashes as points of aim.<sup>72</sup> The target's silhouette merged with Savo again, but it soon burst into flames. Other ships to the left started shooting, and the *Walke* and *Benham* checked fire and shifted to them. The *Walke* straddled its new target several times at 7,500 yards. Hits followed which produced clouds of black smoke, and the enemy ship disappeared behind the northwest corner of Savo.

At 0026 the *Gwin* opened fire on the leading ship of the enemy group hugging the shore of Savo, range 10,000 yards. The target appeared to be a light cruiser, but was probably a heavy destroyer. Four minutes later, consecutive salvos struck the Japanese ship, which was now 8,500 yards away. Only one gun replied. Soon afterward the *Gwin* reported that she was being fired on by a *Kuma*-type light cruiser on her port quarter.

A moment earlier the *Preston* sighted a ship off the southern shore of Savo on her starboard bow and opened fire with all four guns. The target, which seemed to be a destroyer-leader or light cruiser,

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<sup>72</sup> The *Benham* was our only destroyer equipped with fire control radar.

was plainly visible in the moonlight, distant about 9,000 yards. The *Preston* scored hits after a few salvos, and her fire was soon returned. The Japanese vessel began to burn fiercely, and the *Preston* shifted to another ship in the shadow of Savo, range 8,000 yards. As she did so, she was struck by two projectiles, probably 6-inch, on the starboard side. One landed between the two firerooms, killing all personnel. Several fires broke out, including one in the TNT of warheads cracked open by the shock. The second stack fell onto the searchlight.

Meanwhile an enemy heavy cruiser came in on the port side of the column “virtually undetected,” and the *Preston* was hit on the port side by part of an 8-inch salvo (probably three shells). One shell penetrated to the engine room, one landed between the secondary control station and No. 3 gun, and one on No. 4 gun. Guns No. 1 and No. 2 were jammed in train. The whole after part of the ship soon became a mass of flaming wreckage. The *Preston* listed to starboard and settled by the stern. The commanding officer, Comdr. Max C. Stormes, gave the order to abandon ship. In half a minute the destroyer rolled over on her side and began to sink. The bow rose vertically and remained in that position about 10 minutes before the vessel slid beneath the surface.

Shortly after the *Benham* shifted from the initial target which she and the *Walke* had set on fire, and at the same time that the *Preston* was being hit by the heavy cruiser, the *Benham* was struck by a torpedo on the starboard side, about frame No. 6. The ship rose forward, heeled about 5° to port, then rolled to starboard about 30°, settling by the head and righting herself slowly. The explosion threw up a great volume of water which rose about 20 feet higher than the director and came down with considerable force. Plates and longitudinals at frame No. 75 buckled somewhat as the ship quickly decelerated from 27 knots to 5. The stern settled momentarily so that the crew of No. 4 gun were waist deep in water.

At this instant there was a heavy explosion on the *Preston*, and debris, oil, and water fell on the after part of the *Benham*. This water and that heaved up by the torpedo explosion caused some injuries to personnel, who were not otherwise harmed.

The *Benham* was nearly dead in the water. She made a circle to the right and got clear of damaged ships and Japanese gunfire and then headed for the survivors of the *Preston*, intending to rescue them. Vessels close to Savo opened fire, however. In view of her damaged condition, the *Benham* changed course and steered toward Guadalcanal. As she did so, there was a terrific explosion which shook her violently. This was probably depth charges detonating. The destroyer worked her way to seaward, hugging the shore to avoid observation, and took no further part in the action.<sup>73</sup>

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73 The *Benham*'s own battle had just begun. Below her main deck the bow had been carried away from frame No. 14 forward. All compartments forward of frame No. 25 and below the water-line were flooded. The shell and main deck plating, as well as the longitudinals were buckled at frame No. 75. The ship was almost broken in two.

After gunfire ceased, Lt. Comdr. John B. Taylor, the commanding officer, considered coming about and heading for Tulagi, but the flashing of unknown recognition lights deterred him. Course was set to seaward, and communication was established with the *Gwin*, which remained nearby in case of need. At about 0300, the *Benham* shifted Conn and control to Battle II and evacuated everyone except necessary personnel from forward of the buckle in the deck. All possible weight was thrown overboard or moved aft.

At daybreak, about 0400, a destroyer was sighted on an opposite course near the south end of Guadalcanal. Batteries were manned, but as the light improved the ship was identified as the *Gwin*, which had lost contact with the *Benham* in the dark and was returning to pick her up. Both destroyers set their course for Espiritu Santo, making various speeds, 5 to 15 knots, to find the least motion. Backing was tried but did not improve matters. The *Gwin* later suggested forming an antisubmarine scouting line to deceive enemy air patrols.

After the *Walke*'s second target disappeared behind Savo, our leading destroyer shifted fire to gun flashes on the port hand of Guadalcanal. As she did so, the *Preston* blew up astern. Two minutes later the *Walke* was shifting her torpedo battery from curved fire ahead to broadside to starboard when she was struck by a torpedo in frame No. 45 on the starboard side.<sup>74</sup> Immediately thereafter she was hit by what appeared to be a cruiser salvo. There were explosions in the radio room, near the foremast, and in the vicinity of gun No. 3. The forecastle and superstructure deck were blown off as far aft as the bridge. Fire broke out in the forward section, and the 20-mm. magazine exploded. The bulkhead of the forward fireroom buckled, as did the deck amidships. All engines were stopped, and the commanding officer, Comdr. Thomas E. Fraser, gave the order to abandon the ship, which was sinking fast by the head. Only two life rafts were in a condition to be launched. Before the crew went over the side, depth charges were double-checked and reported set on safe. At 0042 the ship disappeared stern last. The bow, detached, remained afloat. A minute later an unknown number of depth charges exploded,<sup>75</sup> killing and injuring many of the men in the water.<sup>76</sup>

As the *Preston* was sinking about 0032, the *Gwin* received a 4.7-inch hit which entered No. 2 engine room on the starboard side about 4 feet above the waterline. It exploded in the vicinity of the control station, killing all the personnel on the upper level. All torpedo safety links failed. Three torpedoes slid out of No. 1 mount and over the side. The *Gwin* came hard right to avoid the vanishing *Preston* and then back to course 300° T. Just after she passed, the *Preston*'s depth charges exploded and gave the *Gwin* "quite a shaking up." Next the destroyer was struck by an unknown caliber shell on the starboard side at the break of the deck near frame No. 188. It left a jagged hole about 2 feet square and was evidently a ricochet. Two 600-pound depth charges were knocked open and their contents spilled on the deck.

The *Gwin* continued firing at the flashes in the lee of Savo with three guns. A torpedo crossed her stern, missing by about 30 yards. At 0036 she ceased firing, having lost all targets.<sup>77</sup>

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At the start of the day the weather was quite calm. Every means was taken to strengthen the ship's weak points. Stiffeners, composed of turbine lifting bars and torpedo handling tracks, were bolted to the deck directly over the damaged longitudinals. But they could not be drawn up tight enough to prevent the ship from working. As she worked, the cracks at frame No. 75 grew wider.

About noon the sea began to rise, and pitching increased. Speed was reduced to 8 and then to 6 knots, but 11 knots proved best. After 4 hours it became clear that the cracks were spreading in spite of everything that could be done. At 1615 the *Benham* stopped and requested the *Gwin* to approach. The sea was too rough for direct transfer of personnel, but by 1824 all hands had reached the escort ship. Rafts, lines, and the *Benham*'s whaleboat (for the injured) were used, and many men swam.

The *Gwin* then attempted to sink the *Benham* with torpedoes. The first one exploded prematurely, the second missed ahead, the third had an erratic run, and the fourth missed astern. Finally it was necessary to use the 5-inch battery. The *Benham*'s magazine exploded, and she broke in two amidships and sank.

74 The appearance of our destroyers forced the Japanese to fire their torpedoes prematurely, before our battleships were within range. It is probable that the enemy thought that the targets were light cruisers.

75 These explosions were those noted aboard the *Benham*.

76 Further experiences of the survivors of the *Walke* were as follows (quotation from Action Report, U. S. S. *Walke*): "The crew was organized in the water, the most seriously injured being placed on rafts. At approximately 0200 an enemy submarine surfaced close aboard the rafts and illuminated all survivors for several minutes, but proceeded without incident. An enemy destroyer later illuminated survivors on the detached bow. There was much shouting from this vessel, but she also proceeded without taking action. Survivors were sighted and signaled at dawn by friendly planes...U. S. S. *Meade* commenced picking up survivors with the aid of boats and cruiser aircraft at 1400. 151...were landed at Tulagi, where 6 died of wounds received in action."

77 Later adventures of the *Gwin* follow (quotation from Action Report, U. S. S. *Gwin*):

"0050 Ship is acting very tender. Took a 15° roll to port and was very slow in recovering. Repair party has not been able to determine water-tight integrity status of No. 2 engine room because of escaping steam. Boilers 3 and 4 have been secured and after

While our destroyers had been engaging the enemy light forces, the battleships had not been idle. At 0024 the *Washington* believed she was being fired on by enemy guns on Savo Island. Group No. 3 of the secondary battery hammered about 6 of these “shore batteries” in turn until each was silenced. As action continued, it was realized that the guns were those of between 6 and 10 ships rimming the southern shore of Savo. The main battery directors were so blinded by the flashes of the 5-inch fire that at first they could not find a point of aim. But by 0029 main battery director No. I was on target, bearing 356° T. Optical ranges were soon obtained on a burning ship on the beach, range 10,200 yards, but the main battery did not fire, possibly because all cruiser targets seemed to have withdrawn behind Savo. At about this time our destroyers were hit.

At 0034 the *Washington*'s secondary battery ceased fire. Mount No. 3 had fired wild as a result of the training motor kicking out, and it was feared that our destroyers would be damaged. Explosions, probably of depth charges, were noted aboard the ship. All secondary targets had been lost. Speed was increased to 26 knots, and course was changed to 282° T. to place one of the burning destroyers between the flagship and the enemy.

At 0035 SG radar contact was made with four enemy vessels, bearing 330° T., which had been obscured by Savo up to this time.<sup>78</sup> Radar Plot coached the main battery onto one which was reported to be bigger than the others, and tracking was commenced by radar ranges and bearing.

Shortly thereafter the *Preston* was passed abeam with her stack still showing, and at 0041 the *Washington* steamed by the wreckage of the *Walke* and launched two life rafts.

The *South Dakota* had continued firing her main battery with unobserved results at targets in the area where the two heavy Japanese ships had been sunk in the first phase of the action. After five salvos she checked fire. At this moment (0033) she began to suffer a series of electrical failures. Gunfire had caused a short circuit on the feeder cable to No. 4 secondary director. The circuit breaker was locked in, so the overload resulting from the short was transmitted to the main circuit supplying half the power to the after part of the ship. The breaker on this line tripped, and power was lost. A switch was made to the alternate power supply. The original circuit breaker was still locked in, so the same thing happened again. All power was lost aft. Gyros and electric fire-control installations went out, and from 0033 to 0036 power was reported off in all turrets. The main battery shifted to auxiliary but did not fire. The trouble was isolated in little more than 2 minutes, and power came back on again, with the exception of mounts 6 and 8. However, isolated electrical failures continued to occur during this phase of the action, though not to the extent which was later caused by enemy hits.

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bulkhead stops closed. Ammunition is being removed from No. 4 upper handling room, shell room, and jettisoned. A fire hose is playing on the 20-mm. ammunition in the after clipping room.

“0100 Ordered jettison bill placed in effect.

“0115 *Gwin* retiring, steaming on various courses at 15 knots to keep about 10 miles off Guadalcanal.

“0140 Repair party reported that No. 2 engine room was not making water. Ceased jettison operations. Five depth charges in port rack had been dropped, set on safe, and provisions located in FD radar compartment (vacant) had been thrown over.

“0300 *Benham* reported her position as 9-30 S, 159-30 E, course 160, speed 10. *Gwin* closed to sight contact with *Benham* and then took her course and speed.

“0330 Have lost sight of *Benham*. Called on TBS and learned that she had slowed to 8 knots. Reversed course to reestablish contact.

“0415 Took station 1,000 yards on *Benham*'s port quarter and retired in company.”

78 The Radar Plot officer described their appearance as that of “part of the island being pulled out and then separating into drops similar to the effect of planes taking off from a carrier.”

The *South Dakota* started to turn left to clear our stricken destroyers, and then came back to starboard and steadied on base course of 300° T. She passed one of the destroyers abeam to port, and a lull in the firing enabled the cries of the crew to be heard. Course was changed to 290° T. and shortly thereafter to 285° T., speed 26. The main battery had joined the secondary battery in firing on targets close to Savo, range 14,100 yards, eight separate ships being located by gun flashes.

At 0041 the SC radar went out and did not operate again for 5 minutes, a fact which was to have important repercussions. The ships at the extreme left and right of the enemy line had caught fire. The left-hand one now blew up and was believed sunk. Presumably these ships had also been hit by our destroyers and by the *Washington*'s 5-inch.

At about this time the *South Dakota* took under fire a target astern which the reports of our destroyers indicate was the *Kuma* cruiser which had been firing on them. The range was 15,500 yards. The blast of the first salvo from turret III set fire to the *South Dakota*'s own aircraft. The next salvo blew two of the three planes overboard and extinguished most of the fires. The main battery ceased firing after the fourth salvo, because the target broke in two and was lost from the radar screen.

Station keeping by the *South Dakota* had been complicated by the break-down of her SG radar. As the battleship passed the wreckage of the *Walke*, about 0045, she sheered to the right and worked her way out on the starboard quarter of the *Washington*. Thereafter she was only intermittently visible on the flagship's SC radar screen because she was often in the 60 blind arc astern caused by the foremast structure. The *South Dakota* could not be sure of her own position, nor could she detect the four ships located at 0035 by the *Washington* (p. 60).

### THIRD PHASE—0045–0250

*Sunday, 15 November*

- 0036        *Washington* tracking new targets northwest of Savo.
- 0047        *South Dakota* picks up these vessels, range 5,800.
- 0100        Enemy illuminates and *Washington* opens fire on *Kongo* BB (*Kirishima*), range 8,400.
- 0102½      *Washington* ceases fire on erroneous report that target has sunk. *South Dakota* under triple or quadruple concentration from enemy. Main battery sinks cruiser in conjunction with *Washington* 5-inch.
- 0104        *Washington* resumes firing at BB and fatally damages it.
- 0107        Flagship ceases fire. BB and two CA/CL silenced and turning away.
- 0110        Damage causes *South Dakota* to decide on retirement.
- 0117        *Washington* tracking new targets, probably DD's.
- 0133        *Washington* retires to avoid torpedo trap.
- 0148–0219    *Washington* reports 17 torpedoes—4 or 5 close calls.
- 0155        Fires on *South Dakota* are all out.
- 0250        Task Force Commander in radar contact with *Gwin* and *Benham*.

A brief lull followed the sinking of the supposed *Kuma* cruiser astern of the *South Dakota*. Our second battleship was no longer under enemy fire, and only a few shorts were noticed in the vicinity of the *Washington*. Gun flashes had temporarily blinded most of the personnel in the *South Dakota*'s conning tower and at other stations, and it was difficult to see the guide.

The *Washington* was still tracking the new enemy targets northwest of Savo. They were heading west on a course which converged with that of the United States flagship at an angle of about 15°. At

0046 the *Washington* noted that a ship bearing 072° T. had sunk. It was reported by two sources as a cruiser but was probably a destroyer. At this time the OTC ordered our own destroyers to retire. Only the *Gwin* receipted. Thereafter the battleships were entirely without screen.

The *South Dakota*'s SG radar was now back in operation. At 0047 it reported four ships bearing 070° R., range 5,800 yards. As already pointed out, this vessel's temporary lack of SG radar had prevented her from contacting these ships as the *Washington* had done. She had unwittingly approached within the 7,000-yard range prescribed by the Task Force Commander, while the *Washington* had not.<sup>79</sup> The comparative experience of the two ships in the next few minutes was dramatic evidence of the wisdom of remaining beyond effective searchlight illumination in order to capitalize on the advantage afforded by our fire-control radar.

Our battleships were 11 miles west of Savo, with the *South Dakota* on the flagship's starboard quarter, bearing about 150° R. There were at least four enemy ships in column, the first being the largest. At about 0055 the Japanese circled to the right, reversing their course and heading toward the channel between Savo and Cape Esperance at 26 knots. Again they began slowly to narrow the lateral distance between the two forces.

At 0100<sup>80</sup> the second enemy ship illuminated the *South Dakota* with searchlights slightly forward of the beam. There were four lights in pairs, two over two. The *Washington*'s main battery and mounts No. 1 and 3 of her 5-inch immediately fired on the leading Japanese vessel, a *Kongo* battleship, at a range of 8,400 yards. The target bore 008° T.

Mounts No. 5 and 7 concentrated on the illuminating ship, a probable heavy cruiser, range 7,500, while mount No. 9 illuminated for the main battery. About 30 seconds after the enemy searchlights came on, the Japanese and the *South Dakota* opened fire almost simultaneously. The lights on the illuminating ship were extinguished, and the third vessel in line took over its task. The lights on this ship and those on the next one to attempt illumination were successively darkened by the secondary batteries of our battleships. The *South Dakota*'s main battery fired two or three salvos at the second vessel in line after its lights had been shot out, and it apparently broke in two. The *South Dakota* was now under triple or quadruple concentration of enemy fire, and hits were soon received, the first ones probably in the 1.1-inch clipping room. Speed was increased to 27 knots. More hits were felt. The main battery shifted to the third ship in the enemy column, which was being fired on by the *Washington*'s 5-inch.

The flagship's main battery had hit the *Kongo* battleship with at least three salvos, all shells exploding. Large clouds of black smoke and steam poured forth, followed by flames. At 0102½ "cease firing" was ordered on an erroneous report that the target had sunk.

The *South Dakota* was hit many times by battleship and cruiser shells (14-, 8-, 6-, and 5.5-inch), but only about 3 of the explosions were of a high order.<sup>81</sup> The enemy was shooting high, which resulted

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79 The flagship did not know of the failure of the *South Dakota*'s radar, nor was she aware of that ship's exact location. Admiral Lee was under the impression that the *Washington*'s consort was farther south than she actually was.

80 The moon had set at 0058. Only very prominent landmarks were visible at more than 5 miles.

81 According to the action report of the *South Dakota*, the fragmentation of most of the projectiles was due to impact rather than to detonation. Many 8- and 6-inch shells entered the ship without exploding.

in many overs, but there was also a great deal of damage to the foremast structure. Radars, directors, fire-control instruments, and other valuable installations, including TBS, were put out of action. A 6-inch shell smashed into Radar Plot, demolishing it. Another shell immediately followed and landed in almost the identical spot. There were other hits and some fires in the Battle II area. Five fuel oil compartments were ruptured. Thirty men were killed and 60 wounded.

The *Washington* observed that the *Kongo* battleship was still firing with three of her four twin turrets, so the main battery resumed after ceasing fire for a minute and a half. More hits were obtained. The enemy vessel continued to fire with one turret. At 0107 the *Washington*, which was still undamaged, ceased fire because the *Kongo* had been silenced and was heading away.<sup>82</sup> The main battery continued to track this vessel for 10 minutes while it performed a 500° turn. She had received about eight 16-inch hits and many 5-inch and was burning badly. Later information definitely identified her as the *Kirishima*, and it is known that she later sank.<sup>83</sup>

The rest of the enemy force was retiring in various stages of damage. The second ship, probably a heavy cruiser, had been seen to sink, as noted. The third was seriously injured and on fire. The fourth had suffered moderate damage from 5-inch fire.

At 0110 the Japanese had not been firing for 2 or 3 minutes. Turret III on the *South Dakota* had reported difficulty in training due to a 14-inch hit somewhere near the gas seal. The ship was badly cut up topside by 6- and 5.5-inch shells, although her armor had withstood two 14-inch hits. Repair parties were fighting fires, which were reported as not serious. Damage control observed that some water was being shipped on high-speed turns. Both batteries had lost all targets and had ceased firing. The *Washington* could not be seen, and communication with her was impossible, due to radio damage. In view of the injured condition of his ship, Capt. Gatch decided to retire, feeling that he was more of a liability to the Task Force Commander than anything else.

At 0117 the *Washington* shifted her main battery from the stricken *Kirishima*, which was steadying on a westerly course at a speed of 18 knots, to track a new target. This was the leading vessel of a group of five (probably destroyers) heading northwest at 29 knots. The United States flagship continued on course 340° T., looking for transports or other suitable targets. At 0121 what appeared to be the *South Dakota* was located at a considerable distance to the southeast, pursuing a southerly course. Soon afterwards targets were reported at 048° T. (the destroyers), 147° T., and 326° T. Four more were then observed on a bearing of 240° T., possibly in the vicinity of the Russell Islands.<sup>84</sup> The leading ship of those being tracked by the main battery began laying a smoke screen, perhaps to hide damaged units. Smoke was also sighted ahead and fairly close aboard.

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82 All in all, the *Washington* fired 75 rounds of 16-inch and 107 rounds of 5-inch at the battleship, which meanwhile was firing at the *South Dakota*. Sixty-two rounds of star shells were also used. When the main battery resumed fire, star shells fell short after the second salvo and blinded the main battery spotters. Apparently this made no difference, as the big guns were on target both before and afterward. The enemy caused no damage to the *Washington* during the entire action. She was not illuminated and was fired on only sporadically.

83 The 5 ½ minutes of 16-inch shell fire required to destroy the battleship *Kirishima* contrasts significantly with the extraordinary aerial and torpedo pounding absorbed by her sister ship, the *Hiyei*, 2 days before.

84 These may have been the four transports which reached Guadalcanal just before daylight.

At 0133 Admiral Lee reversed course to 180° T. to avoid a possible torpedo trap and slowed to 20 knots. The Task Force Commander thought that the enemy transports had been sufficiently delayed to prevent them from reaching the beaches and unloading before daylight.

During her retirement the *Washington*'s course was held well to the west of the probable tracks of our damaged ships so as not to lead enemy destroyers. At 0137 a heavy explosion was noted at 095° T., followed in a few minutes by an outburst of firing dead astern. There was a splash 150 to 200 feet high about 200 yards short. The bridge reported targets ahead and also dull flashes. The Task Force Commander was still unable to raise the *South Dakota* on the TBS. Speed was now 25 knots.

A few minutes later a torpedo was observed on the port quarter. From this time until 0219 the flagship was subjected to torpedo attacks by a single ship on the starboard bow and by several destroyers on the port quarter. Seventeen separate torpedoes were noted, some of these observations being duplications. Other "torpedo wakes" were probably light streaks from stars. But four or five real "fish" came too close for comfort. There were also reports of torpedo boats which were later believed to have been false, although there was considerable evidence that light craft had been present in Savo Sound during the action just concluded.

By 0155 the *South Dakota* had managed to extinguish all her fires. A few minutes later communication with the flagship was restored. The *South Dakota* acknowledged an order directing her to retire at her best speed, after which radio silence was maintained.

At 0220 the *Washington* made a radar contact with a vessel 16,000 yards off the starboard quarter. The main battery stopped tracking the five destroyers and shifted to the larger target. This was later reported to be the *South Dakota*. It may have been the *Gwin*, however.

After clearing the Russell Islands, radar contact was established with the *Benham* and the *Gwin*, and communication took place over TBS. The destroyers were ordered to retire in company to Espiritu Santo. The commanding officer of the *Benham* was told to use his discretion as to the abandonment of his ship.

At 0649 the *Washington* secured from general quarters. Orders were received from COMSOPAC to proceed toward Espiritu Santo and rendezvous with fully fueled destroyers. Admiral Lee was then to operate so as to reach the Savo Island area by 2200 that night. However, the hasty retreat of the Japanese units from the southeastern Solomons during the day later caused this order to be countermanded.

At 0951 the *South Dakota* was sighted at the rendezvous set for 1000. A visual was received from her as follows: "We are not effective. Turret III out. Fire control badly damaged. Only one radar operative. Fuel tank holed." The two ships joined and proceeded eastward. Contacts were limited to eight unidentified planes at 1105 and five more 15 minutes later. At 2240 the destroyers *Dale*, *Lardner*, and *Stack* joined and formed antisubmarine screen. Two days later the Force reached Noumea, whence the *South Dakota* was dispatched to the United States for repairs.

United States losses as a result of the Battleship Night Action were as follows:

	<i>Sunk</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
BB	0	1 ( <i>South Dakota</i> )
DD	3 ( <i>Benham, Preston, Walke</i> )	1 ( <i>Gwin</i> )

Enemy losses as reported by CINCPAC:

	<i>Sunk</i> <sup>85</sup>	<i>Damaged</i>
BB	1	1
CA	1	1
CL	1	1
DD	2	3

### OBSERVATIONS

The *Washington* identified the first group of enemy ships as probably 1 battleship, 2 or 3 cruisers, and 3 or 4 destroyers—6 to 8 ships in all. The *South Dakota* reported that there were at least 3 ships, the first being a battleship or heavy cruiser and the other 2 light cruisers or possibly heavy cruisers. In the second phase of the action, the *Washington* estimated that 6 to 10 light craft were involved, destroyers and perhaps large MTB's. The *South Dakota* identified these ships as 8 destroyers. According to our destroyers, 1 heavy cruiser and 1 or more light cruisers were also present during part of this phase. They agreed that the *South Dakota* had sunk one of them, possibly the destroyer leader.

In the third phase both of our battleships reported that one battleship and three cruisers were involved. The *Washington* suggested that part of this force might have been east of Savo during Phase I. Later the United States flagship tracked five probable destroyers which may have been close by during the final part of the engagement. (Some observers on the *South Dakota* thought they saw three ships rounding Savo.)

In any event, it is obvious that the American force was greatly outnumbered, as in the Cruiser Night Action. The firepower of our battleships, however, was overwhelming, and our destroyers clinched this advantage for us by absorbing the enemy's vastly superior torpedo strength.

It is probable that the Japanese were surprised, or if they were not, that they did not open fire first because their radar equipment was inferior, or because their disposition in groups, similar to the formation employed two nights previously, made them afraid of firing on their own forces. Admiral Lee believed that the enemy expected to meet opposition but intended to arrive on the scene before Task Force LOVE. "The long range at which we opened fire," he wrote, "and the accuracy of our initial salvos, fired without artificial illumination, must have been a distinct and unpleasant surprise. On the other hand the celerity with which the enemy fell away from our attack was a distinct surprise to us."

SG radar was of great importance in permitting our forces to approach the enemy undetected. According to Admiral Lee, it also "permitted us to navigate with some confidence at high speed in

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85 Subsequent information made the following minimum Japanese losses seem certain: sunk, 1 BB, 1 DD.

restricted and unfamiliar waters, when visual ranges and optical bearings were unobtainable.” The results of the loss of SG radar by the *South Dakota* demonstrated how invaluable this instrument had become.

On the *Washington*’s first main battery target, radar ranges and optical train were used. On the second target, the *Kirishima*, radar was used for both purposes until the target was in view, after which optical train was employed. The secondary battery used radar ranges throughout and radar train in Phase I. During this same period the fall of shot from the main battery was observed by both fire control and SG radars, but during Phase III no splashes were picked up by the FC operators. It was thought possible that the *Kirishima*’s signal was so strong that receiver sensitivity had been cut too low to see the splashes, or that nearby targets might have confused the signals.

The *South Dakota* used radar fire control throughout the engagement. Splash identification was most successful. According to Capt. Gatch, “on the opening salvo the radar operator identified three targets, our splashes, and the splashes made by the *Washington*.”<sup>86</sup>

After the action many complaints were recorded of directors and other stations being blinded by gun flashes, particularly from the 5-inch batteries. The enemy gun flashes, on the other hand, were comparatively small and dim. It was thought by observers that the Japanese were employing flashless powder or some form of flash retardant or hider. This comment was also made by officers on ships involved in the action of two nights before. In some instances our gun flashes were said to have provided almost continuous illumination of the firing vessel.

The Battleship Night Action of 14–15 November had immediate and conclusive results. Although COMSOPAC envisaged the possibility that the enemy would return the next night and attempt another bombardment and was providing against such a contingency (see p. 64), the following day found the Japanese in full retreat. On the morning of the 15th only 9 ships were sighted in the Shortland Island harbors, as against the 44 which were there on the 12th. About noon 17 ships entered, including 2 cruisers and 4 destroyers. These later moved north. Other damaged vessels had undoubtedly preceded them to Rabaul and Truk. The Japanese also withdrew their submarines from their usual advanced positions south of Guadalcanal toward Buin-Faisi, probably to protect Buka and Rabaul. A captured aviator reported that the heavy bombardment squadrons at Rabaul had been reduced by more than half. It is obvious that the enemy expected us to follow up our victory, though this would have been difficult, in view of the damage we had suffered, even if full information as to these moves had been speedily available. As it was, 15 November was devoted to the final destruction of the menace still offered by surviving Japanese transports.

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86 Action Report, U.S.S. *South Dakota*.

## EPILOGUE—Last of the Transports

Sunday, 15 November

Dawn	Four AP/AK's observed by <i>Walke</i> survivors.
0630–0930	Five attacks on transports by <i>Enterprise</i> aircraft launched from Henderson Field.
1000	<i>Meade</i> begins bombardment of transports.
1054	<i>Meade</i> breaks off action.
1100	Torpedo planes attack. B-17's bomb burning vessel near Russell Islands.
1145	Landing parties bombed.
1400	VT-10 takes off for Espiritu Santo.
1450	Enemy ammunition dump blown up.
1550	Enemy aircraft reported. Driven off with heavy loss.

Early Sunday morning three enemy cargo vessels and one transport, which had survived the air assaults of the previous day, beached themselves on Guadalcanal near Tassafaronga, about 7½ miles west of the Marine positions. Survivors of the destroyer *Walke*, who were floating in the water south of Savo Island, saw the last ship come in and send up an antiaircraft barrage when it was strafed by two P-39's from Henderson Field. The three other vessels were already beached, and there was a large stack of crates on shore near one of them.

The presence of these ships was reported to COMSOPAC by General Vandegrift, and 14 B-17's were dispatched from Espiritu Santo to attack them. At 0630<sup>87</sup> Lieut. A. P. Coffin, of the *Enterprise* group now operating from Guadalcanal, made a solitary attack with four 500-pound bombs on a transport which was unloading 3 miles west of Point Cruz. He dived from 4,500 feet, because there were 8 float Zeros at 8,000 feet, and scored one hit on the stern, but his other bombs did not release. There was moderate antiaircraft fire from four shore guns.

An hour later three more scout bombers with 1,000-pound bombs attacked the beached ships. They were intercepted by the eight float Zeros and had to take evasive action. Later they returned and dived on a transport, registering two hits and one near-hit. Again there was slight antiaircraft fire.

At 0740 a B-17 search plane from Espiritu Santo located three burning and abandoned transports northwest of the Russell Islands. These same ships plus another one were sighted at various later times by Henderson Field search planes. Torpedo bombers and fighters were sent to make sure they were not towed away, but the vessels were abandoned and seemingly a complete loss. Two SBD-3's, which left Guadalcanal at 0800 to search the beaches of that island and those of the others nearby, sighted the gutted transports and then returned to make a 1,000-pound hit on one of the beached ships and another on a pile of stores. This last hit was observed by the survivors of the *Walke*. A column of smoke and flame arose 300 feet into the air, indicating that the target had been ammunition. A single scout bomber attacked the ships later on, and at about 0930 four others made three direct hits, causing fires and explosions.

Two Marine attack groups operating during the morning made five direct hits on the transports and thoroughly strafed enemy personnel in the vicinity.

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87 All times in this section are Zone minus 11.

One of the beached vessels was also in range of Marine 155-mm. batteries on Guadalcanal, which damaged it considerably, while at about 1000 the U.S.S. *Meade* arrived from Tulagi to conduct a bombardment.<sup>88</sup> All four ships were seen to be on fire, particularly a cargo vessel near Aruligo Point, which was burning so badly that it was considered destroyed without further attention. The primary target designated by Guadalcanal Control was a transport of about 10,000<sup>89</sup> tons which was beached in Doma Cove. Firing commenced at 1012, range 12,500 yards. In 10 minutes the target was blazing so fiercely that the *Meade* shifted to a 6,000-ton ship off Tassafaronga. Soon thereafter a spotting plane reported that the Doma Cove vessel was only slightly damaged despite the fires on board. The battery was trained on this target again, and more fires were started.

The *Meade* pounded a 12,000-ton ship nearby for 10 minutes and set new fires, and then strafed the beach with her 40-mm. guns. The air spotter now reported that both Tassafaronga vessels were burning with many internal explosions, but that the Doma Cove ship still required further bombardment. While steaming toward this target, the destroyer strafed the beach thoroughly. At 1054 the Doma Cove transport broke in two longitudinally. The air spotter reported no further targets and said there was no evidence of personnel in the vicinity, so the *Meade* broke off the action. Six hundred rounds had been expended without enemy opposition. A single United States destroyer had exercised complete control of the sea in an area which but a few hours before had swarmed with powerful enemy warships.

The *Meade* then proceeded to pick up 6 officers and 129 men belonging to the *Walke*, 10 officers and 121 men from the *Preston*, and one man lost overboard from the *Benham*. The rescue was facilitated by a YP boat, an MTB, several Higgins boats, and some scout planes from Tulagi, as well as an SBD-3 of VB-10 which was flying inner air patrol for the destroyer. More than 100 survivors were spotted by this plane, which zoomed them to show their location. Meanwhile 8 fighters of VF-10 flew combat patrol over the area. The rescue work was completed by 1430.

The *Meade's* bombardment was observed by the first group of nine B-17's which arrived from Espiritu Santo to bomb the transports. Since the latter appeared to be well taken care of, the Flying Fortresses made no drops. Soon afterward four torpedo planes from Henderson Field scored one hit amidships on one of the beached vessels and a dud hit on the stern of another. This attack was seen by the second group of eight B-17's. One of the latter landed at Henderson Field with engine trouble, and the others made one hit on a burning cargo vessel off the Russell Islands.

At 1145 four more torpedo bombers were launched to attack landing parties and equipment at all 4 beachheads. Three planes were loaded with 10 Molotov breadbaskets each, and 1 with three 500-pound bombs. Approach was made from the land side, with the aircraft diving from 4,000 feet to the tops of the trees and dropping incendiaries on men and equipment concealed beneath them. Two of the 500-pound bombs were dropped near the burning transports, and 1 would not release.

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88 The destroyer *Meade*, with the auxiliary *Kopara* and the YT130, had arrived at Aola Bay on the morning of 13 November. Due to the tactical situation, Admiral Turner, Commander Task Force TARE, then directed the *Meade* to retire with the *Kopara* along the south coast of Guadalcanal. COMSOPAC later directed retirement toward Espiritu Santo, but revoked this order when Admiral Turner reported that the time seemed favorable for pushing the *Kopara* through to Tulagi. The two vessels arrived there on the afternoon of the 14th, the commanding officer of the *Meade*, Lt. Comdr. Raymond S. Lamb, having fortunately interpreted his orders so as not to put too much distance between him and Guadalcanal.

89 Survivors of the *Preston*, floating south of Savo, saw the four ships at 0530 and estimated that they were of 3,000–5,000 tons.

At 1400 the eight serviceable planes of VT-10 departed for Espiritu Santo. The engine of one plane failed, forcing the pilot to land in the water. He and his crew were rescued, however. The other seven aircraft arrived safely at Espiritu Santo at 1830. On 17 November all but two returned to the *Enterprise* at Noumea, to be rejoined later by other elements of Air Group TEN.<sup>90</sup>

About an hour after these planes left Guadalcanal, Lt. (jg) R. D. Gibson and two other pilots of VB-10 took off from Henderson Field to bomb the transports. Lt. Gibson approached his target at 10,000 feet and dived cross-wind at about a 70° angle. He strafed as he came down, because men were unloading the ship. He released his 1,000-pound bomb below 1,800 feet and pulled out low over the water to the north. The missile struck the ship 30 feet from the bow, causing explosions. Ens. E. J. Stevens attempted to attack the same vessel, but his bomb failed to release.

Lt. (jg) R. H. Goddard, whose objective was an anti-aircraft battery supposed to be located near Tassafaronga, could not find his target, but about 2 miles south he noticed a road leading up from the beach. It ended in a circular clearing among the coconut palms. Lt. Goddard dropped his 1,000-pound bomb on the open space and was rewarded with an explosion of gratifying proportions. Columns of black smoke rose to an altitude of about 2,000 feet. Radio Guadalcanal reported that it was the “greatest sight ever seen on the island.” Lt. Goddard had apparently stumbled on a large supply dump which included much oil and ammunition. It was still burning 16 hours later. Following the attack, Lt. Goddard strafed the neighboring woods.

At 1550 “bogies”<sup>91</sup> were reported approaching Guadalcanal from the northwest, distant 65 miles, altitude about 20,000 feet. A projected search for missing pilots was immediately postponed until the next day, and 8 more fighters were launched to reinforce Lt. Comdr. I.H. Flatley’s combat patrol of 8 planes which had been protecting the rescue work near Savo. During the approach of what were recognized to be enemy planes, Lt. Comdr. Flatley climbed to 20,000 feet between Henderson Field and Savo, staying within gliding distance of the field because of low fuel. Interception took place over Savo. There were 11 Zeros, which were presumed to be the advance guard of a force of bombers. Six of the Japanese fighters were downed, and 4 were damaged. If bombers were following, they turned tail and fled when their escort was so seriously chopped up. None of our pilots was lost, although one was forced down in the water.

Before the end of the day, all four beached ships were burned out and completely destroyed. It was believed unlikely that any substantial number of men or quantity of supplies reached the Japanese forces on Guadalcanal. The four hulks observed off the Russell Islands had also been battered into apparent uselessness. One of them was observed to sink off the coast of Malaita on the 19th.

With the aerial tapering-off here recorded, the Battle of Guadalcanal may be said to have ended. Never again in the 3 months before their final evacuation of the island did the Japanese attempt to launch such an impressive threat to our vital positions in the eastern Solomons. Much hard fighting on both sea and land remained to be done before Guadalcanal was ours, but the decisive action had been fought—and won.

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90 Eleven planes of VB-10 were left on Guadalcanal with the Marines.

91 “Bogies” are unidentified aircraft.

A captured Japanese combat report covering the last 3 weeks of October throws further light on the extent of the United States victory. In this document the following statement occurs: "It must be said that success or failure in recapturing Guadalcanal, and the results of the final naval battle related to it, is the fork in the road which leads to victory for them or us." That the enemy's failure was complete is well shown by a summary of comparative naval losses during the 5-day battle:

*U.S. Losses*

	<i>Sunk</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
BB .....		1
CA .....		2
CL .....		1
CLAA .....	2	...
DD .....	7	4
AK .....		1

Total ships sunk, 9; damaged, 9; sunk or damaged, 18.

*Japanese Losses (as recorded by CINCPAC)*

	<i>Sunk<sup>92</sup></i>	<i>Damaged</i>
BB .....	2	2
CA .....	2	2
CL .....	2	4
DD .....	8	4
AP/AK .....	12	...

Total ships sunk, 26; damaged, 12; sunk or damaged, 38.

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92 Subsequent information made the following minimum Japanese losses during the Battle of Guadalcanal seem certain: sunk, 2 BB, 1 CA, 5 DD, 10 AP/AK.

## APPENDIX I

The difficulties confronting Admiral Callaghan during the night action of 12–13 November are well illustrated by the TBS logs of the *Helena* and the *Portland*, which are here reproduced in paraphrased form:

*Helena:*

- 0140 *CTF from Helena:* Four ships in line in fan-like cruising formation.  
0141 *CTF from Helena:* Range 3,400.  
*CTF from Cushing:* Ships ahead on port bow.  
*CTF from Helena:* Ten targets in all.  
*CTF from Cushing:* Shall I fire torpedoes at them?  
0143 *Cushing from CTF:* Go ahead.  
*Helena from CTF:* How about targets to port?  
*CTF from Helena:* Affirmative.  
0145 *Task Force from CTF:* Enemy to port and on starboard bow. Stand by to open fire.  
*Atlanta from CTF:* What are you doing?  
*CTF from Atlanta:* Trying to avoid our DD.  
*Cushing from CTF:* What have you got now? Have you come back on course?<sup>93</sup>  
*Cushing from Juneau:* Two ships starboard, a number to port.  
*CTF from Cushing:* Coming back.

(There is a gap in the *Helena*'s TBS log from 0145 to 0154)

*Portland:*

- 0146 *CTF to Atlanta:* Come back to course. Whole column being thrown into disorder.  
0148 *Task Force from CTF:* Odd ships fire to starboard, even to port.  
0151 (About this time the CTF first gave the command, "cease firing, our ships," but it did not get through to the *Portland* or the *Helena*.)

*Helena:*

- 0154 *All ships from CTF:* Hold course 000.  
*All ships from CTF:* Cease firing, our ships.  
*CTF from Portland:* Authenticate.  
*All ships from CTF:* Take 000.  
0158 *All ships from CTF:* Commence firing when ordered. Enemy all sides. BB on starboard bow with DD's. Also other targets.  
*CTF from Portland:* What is bearing of BB?  
*CTF from Portland:* We're all set.  
*Portland from CTF:* Give him hell. Acknowledge. (Apparently the *Portland* didn't hear this.)  
0200 *CTF from Helena:* Four ships 060.  
*Helena from CTF:* Range?  
*All ships from Sterett:* Our rudder jammed. Want recognition signals.  
*Sterett from Laffey:* Turn on lights 3 seconds.  
*Portland from CTF:* How about BB? Have you got him?  
0200 *CTF from Helena:* We've got targets. Can we fire?  
*Helena from CTF:* What kind of targets? We want the big fellows.  
*Portland from CTF:* Have you got the BB? We have too. Go ahead.  
*Helena from CTF:* Fire away.  
0207 *CTF from Helena:* Your course, please.

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93 Apparently CTF had ordered *Cushing* back to 000°, but this was not recorded aboard the *Helena*.

0212 *CTF from Helena:* Would like your course.  
*Portland from Helena:* Request your course.  
*Any ship from Helena:* Can you hear?  
*Helena from Monssen:* Affirmative.

0214 *Portland, CTF, Juneau, Atlanta from Helena:* Course, please.

0217 *Portland from Helena:* Please answer.

0224 *Portland, CTF, Juneau, Atlanta from Helena:* Please answer.

0226 *All ships from Helena:* Form on me, heading for Sealark.

0228 *Helena from O'Bannon:* Repeat please.  
(*Helena repeated*)

0232 *CTF or Helena from Fletcher:* Am ahead on your starboard bow.  
*Fletcher from Helena:* Please show lights.

## APPENDIX 2

### SYMBOLS OF U.S. NAVY SHIPS

AB	Crane ship.	BB	Battleship.
AD	Destroyer tender.	CA	Heavy cruiser.
AE	Ammunition ship.	CE	Large cruiser.
AF	Provision store ship.	CL	Light cruiser.
AG	Miscellaneous auxiliary.	CM	Mine layer.
AGC	Combined operations communications headquarters ship.	CMc	Coastal mine layer.
AGP	Motor torpedo boat tender.	CV	Aircraft carrier.
AGS	Surveying ship.	CVB	Large aircraft carrier.
AH	Hospital ship.	CVE	Aircraft carrier escort.
AK	Cargo vessel.	CVL	Small aircraft carrier.
AKA	Cargo vessel, attack.	DD	Destroyer.
AKF	Refrigerated cargo vessel.	DE	Destroyer escort.
AKS	General Stores issue ship.	DM	Light minelayer (high speed).
AM	Large minesweeper.	DMS	Minesweeper (high speed).
AMb	Base minesweeper.	IX	Unclassified.
AMc	Coastal minesweeper.	LOC	Landing craft, control.
AN	Net layer.	LCI(L)	Landing craft, infantry (large).
AO	Oiler.	LCM(2)	45' landing craft, mechanized, Mk. II.
AOG	Gasoline tanker.	LCM(3)	50' landing craft, mechanized, Mk. III.
AP	Transport.	LCP(L)	36' landing craft, personnel (large).
APA	Transport, attack.	LCP(R)	36' landing craft, personnel (with ramp).
APc	Coastal transport.	LCP(N)	Landing craft, personnel (nested).
APD	Troop transport (high speed).	LCR(L)	Landing craft, rubber (large).
APH	Transport for wounded.	LCR(S)	Landing craft, rubber (small).
APM	Mechanized artillery transport.	LCS(S)	Landing craft, support (small).
APR	Rescue transport.	LCT(5)	Landing craft, tank, Mk. V.
APS	Auxiliary cargo submarine.	LCT(6)	Landing craft, tank, Mk. VI.
APV	Aircraft transport.	LCV	Landing craft, vehicle.
AR	Repair ship.	LCVP	Landing craft, vehicle and personnel.
ARB	Repair ship, battle damage.	LSD	Landing ship, dock.
ARD	Floating drydock.	LST	Landing ship, tank.
ARG	Internal combustion engine tender.	LVT(1)	Landing vehicle, tracked (unarmored).
ARH	Heavy hull repair ship.	LVT(A1)	Landing vehicle, tracked (armored).
ARL	Repair ship, landing craft.	LVT(2)	Landing vehicle, tracked (new design—unarmored).
ARS	Salvage vessel.	LVT(A2)	Landing vehicle, tracked (new design—armored).
AS	Submarine tender.	PC	173' submarine chaser.
ASR	Submarine rescue vessel.	PCE	180' patrol craft escort vessel.
AT	Oceangoing tug.	PCE(R)	180' patrol craft escort vessel, rescue.
ATR	Rescue tug.	PCS	136' submarine chaser.
AV	Seaplane tender (large).	PE	Eagle boat
AVC	Catapult lighter.	PP	Frigate.
AVD	Seaplane tender (converted DD).	PG	Gunboat.
AVP	Seaplane tender (small).	PR	River gunboat.
AX	Auxiliary tender, large.	PT	Motor torpedo boat.
AY	Auxiliary tender, small.		

PTC	Motorboat submarine chaser.	YM	Dredge.
PY	Yacht.	YMS	Motor mine sweeper.
PYc	Coastal yacht.	YMT	Motor tug.
SC	110' submarine chaser.	YN	Net tender.
SM	Mine laying submarine.	YNg	Gate vessel.
SS	Submarine.	YNT	Net tender (tug class).
YA	Ash lighter.	YO	Fuel oil barge.
YAG	District auxiliary, miscellaneous.	YOG	Gasoline barge.
YC	Open lighter.	YOS	Oil storage barge.
YCP	Car float.	YP	District patrol vessel.
YCK	Open cargo lighter.	YPD	Floating pile driver.
YCV	Aircraft transportation lighter.	YPK	Pontoon stowage barge.
YD	Floating derrick.	YR	Floating workshop.
YDG	Degaussing vessel.	YRC	Submarine rescue chamber.
YDT	Diving tender.	YRD(H)	Floating workshop, drydock (hull).
YF	Covered lighter; range tender; provision store lighter.	YRD(M)	Floating workshop, drydock (machinery).
YFB	Ferryboat and launch.	YS	Stevedore barge.
YFD	Floating drydock	YSD	Seaplane wrecking derrick.
YFT	Torpedo transportation lighter.	YSP	Salvage pontoon.
YG	Garbage lighter.	YSR	Sludge removal barge.
YHB	Ambulance boat.	YT	Harbor tug.
YH	Houseboat.	YTT	Torpedo testing barge.
YHT	Heating scow.	YW	Water barge.

## DESIGNATIONS OF U.S. NAVAL AIRCRAFT

Model Designation		Class	Manufacturer	U.S. name	British name
(Navy)	(Army)				
BD .....	A-2 .....	Bomber .....	Douglas .....	Havoc .....	Boston III, Havoc.
XBTC .....	.....	.....do.....	Curtiss .....	.....	
F2A .....	.....	Fighter .....	Brewster .....	Buffalo .....	Buffalo.
F3A .....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Corsair .....	Corsair.
F4F .....	.....	.....do.....	Grumman .....	Wildcat .....	Martlet.
F6F .....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Hellcat .....	Hellcat.
F7F .....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	.....	
FG .....	.....	.....do.....	Goodyear .....	Corsair .....	Corsair.
FM .....	.....	.....do.....	Eastern Aircraft	Wildcat .....	Martlet V.
F4U .....	.....	.....do.....	Chance-Vought	Corsair .....	Corsair.
GB .....	C-43 .....	Transport .....	Beech .....	Traveler .....	
GH .....	.....	.....do.....	Howard .....	.....	
GK .....	C-61 .....	.....do.....	Fairchild .....	Forwarder .....	
HE .....	L-4 .....	Ambulance .....	Piper .....	Grasshopper ...	
J2F .....	OA-12 .....	Utility .....	Grumman .....	Duck .....	
J4F .....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Widgeon .....	
JRB .....	C-45 .....	Utility, multi-engine .....	Beech .....	Voyager .....	
JRC-1 .....	C-78 .....	.....do.....	Cessna .....	.....	
JRF .....	OA-9 .....	.....do.....	Grumman .....	.....	Goose I.
XJRM-1 .....	.....	.....do.....	Martin .....	Mars .....	
JRS .....	.....	.....do.....	V o u g h t - Sikorsky .....	.....	
JR2S .....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Excaliber .....	
JRY-1 .....	.....	Utility (cargo), multi-engine ...	Consolidated ...	.....	
NE .....	O-59 .....	Trainer, primary .....	Piper .....	Grasshopper ...	
NH .....	.....	Trainer, advanced .....	Howard .....	.....	
NP .....	.....	Trainer, primary .....	Spartan .....	.....	
NR .....	PT-21	.....do.....	Ryan .....	Recruit .....	
N2S .....	PT-17 .....	.....do.....	S t e a r m a n (Boeing) .....	Caydet .....	
N2T .....	.....	.....do.....	Timm .....	Tutor .....	
N3N .....	.....	.....do.....	Naval Aircraft Factory .....	.....	
OS2N .....	.....	Observation scout .....	.....do.....	Kingfisher .....	
OS2U .....	.....	.....do.....	V o u g h t - Sikorsky .....	.....do.....	Kingfisher.
XPBB .....	.....	Patrol bomber, 2 engine, boat	Boeing .....	Sea Ranger .....	
PB2B .....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Catalina .....	Catalina.
PBJ .....	B-25 .....	Patrol bomber, 2 engine, landplane .....	North American	Mitchell .....	
PBM .....	.....	Patrol bomber, 2 engine, boat ..	Martin .....	Mariner .....	Mariner.

Model Designation		Class	Manufacturer	U.S. name	British name
(Navy)	(Army)				
PBN.....	.....	.....do.....	Naval Aircraft Factory .....	Catalina .....	
PBO.....	A-29 .....	Patrol bomber, 2 engine, landplane.....	Lockheed.....	Hudson .....	Hudson III.
PBV.....	.....	Patrol bomber, 2 engine, boat ..	Vickers .....	Catalina .....	Catalina
PBY-5.....	OA-10 .....	.....do.....	Consolidated ...	.....do.....	.....do.....
P4Y.....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	.....	
PB2Y-3.....	.....	Patrol bomber, 4 engine, boat ..	.....do.....	Coronado.....	Coronado
PB4Y.....	B-24.....	Patrol bomber, 4 engine, landplane.....	Consolidated ...	Liberator.....	Liberator
PV .....	B-34.....	Patrol bomber, 2 engine, landplane.....	Vega.....	Ventura .....	Ventura
R5C .....	C-46.....	Transport, multi-engine.....	Curtis.....	Commando.....	
R4D-1, 5.....	C-47, 47A...	.....do.....	Douglas .....	Skytrain.....	
R4D-2, 4.....	C-49, 49A...	.....do.....	.....do.....	.....	
R4D-3.....	C-53.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Skytrooper.....	
R5D.....	C-54.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Skymaster.....	
R50.....	C-60.....	.....do.....	Lockheed.....	Lodestar.....	Lodestar.
RB-1 .....	C-93.....	Transport (cargo), multi-engine	Budd.....	.....	
SB2A.....	A-34 .....	Scout bomber .....	Brewster .....	Buccaneer.....	Bermuda.
SBC.....	77-A.....	.....do.....	Curtiss .....	Helldiver .....	Cleveland.
SB2C.....	A-25 .....	.....do.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Helldiver.
SBD.....	A-24 .....	.....do.....	Douglas .....	Dauntless.....	
SB2D.....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	.....	
SBF .....	A-25 .....	.....do.....	Fairchild .....	Helldiver .....	
SBN.....	.....	.....do.....	Naval Aircraft Factory .....	.....	
SB2U.....	.....	.....do.....	V o u g h t - Sikorsky .....	Vindicator.....	Chesapeake.
SBW .....	A-25 .....	.....do.....	Canadian Car & Foundry.....	Helldiver .....	Helldiver.
SC-1 .....	.....	Scout Observation.....	Curtiss .....	.....	
SNB-1 .....	AT-11.....	Trainer, advanced.....	Beech.....	Kansas.....	
SNB-2 .....	AT-7.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Navigator.....	
SNC.....	.....	.....do.....	Curtiss .....	Falcon.....	
SNJ.....	AT-6.....	.....do.....	North American	Texan.....	Harvard I, II
SNV.....	BT-13, 15 ...	.....do.....	Vultee .....	Valiant .....	
SOC.....	.....	Scout observation.....	Curtiss .....	Seagull.....	
SO3C.....	.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	.....do.....	Seamew.
TBD.....	.....	Torpedo bomber .....	Douglas .....	Devastator .....	
TBF .....	.....	.....do.....	Grumman .....	Avenger .....	Tarpon
TBM.....	.....	.....do.....	Eastern Aircraft	.....do.....	Do.
TBV.....	.....	.....do.....	Vultee .....	.....	





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