

World War II
75th Anniversary Commemorative Series

COMBAT NARRATIVES

Solomon Islands Campaign: I
**The Landing in the
Solomons**

7–8 August 1942



Naval History and Heritage Command

U.S. Navy



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Cover: "Guadalcanal-Tulagi" a colorized version of an August 1942 photograph, catalog number NH 69116. The original caption: A Japanese aircraft burns on the water after it was shot down by anti-aircraft fire during an attack on U.S. transports between Guadalcanal and Tulagi, 7-8 August 1942. Guadalcanal is in the background, with the heights above Cape Esperance at the right. Collection of Admiral Richmond K. Turner, USN. (Naval History and Heritage Command)

**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 freely distributable PDFs available from the NHHC website at www.history.navy.mil.

Foreword to the Naval Historical Center 50th Anniversary Edition

The Landing in the Solomons is one of a series of 21 published and 13 unpublished Combat Narratives of specific naval campaigns produced by the Publications Branch of the Office of Naval Intelligence during World War II.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 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The Combat Narratives were superseded long ago by accounts such as Samuel Eliot Morrison's *History of the United States Navy Operations in World War II* that could be more comprehensive and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.

Operation Watchtower was the official code name for the landings at Guadalcanal and other nearby islands in August 1942. This was the first major American amphibious operation of World War II. The campaign was a direct outgrowth of the Navy's success in the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway, which halted the Japanese momentum in the Pacific and created an opportunity for the Allies to commence offensive operations in the Pacific theater much sooner than strategists originally had anticipated. Attention was directed to the eastern Solomons because of the recent Japanese occupation of positions in this area. In addition, strategists recognized that the islands provided a natural avenue of approach towards the mighty Japanese naval base of Rabaul on the island of New Britain to the west. An operation in the Solomons also would serve to cover the flank of a concurrent drive being orchestrated in New Guinea by General Douglas MacArthur.

Within the Solomons, the Allied planners first focused their attention on the islands of Tulagi, Gavatu, and Tanambogo. They initially overlooked the much larger island to the south of those three, Guadalcanal, which gave the ensuing campaign its historical name. The decision to land there was an afterthought, resulting from radio intelligence information in early July that the Japanese were constructing an air base on that island.

As detailed in this narrative, the Marines who landed on Tulagi, Gavatu, and Tanambogo met stiff resistance from the Japanese defenders in those islands. But enemy forces on Guadalcanal fled into the jungle, enabling the Marines to quickly capture the uncompleted airfield that soon became known as Henderson Field. The only serious opposition encountered was Japanese air attacks, which damaged some of the vessels of the invasion fleet and destroyed a number of American warplanes.

The Office of Naval Intelligence originally published this narrative in 1943 without attribution. Administrative records from the period indicate that Lieutenant Leonard Ware, a Naval Reserve intelligence officer, was the author. In civilian life, Ware was a journalist. Following World War II he worked for the *Boston Herald* and later served as a public affairs officer for the U.S. government.

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 WWII 50th Anniversary commemoration program that made this publication possible.

Dean C. Allard
Director of Naval History

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7-8 August 1942



~~Confidential~~

**Office of Naval Intelligence
U. S. Navy**

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PUBLICATIONS BRANCH
OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE • UNITED STATES NAVY

1943

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 secrete 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.*

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Navy Department

Office of Naval Intelligence
Washington, D.C.

1 October 1943.

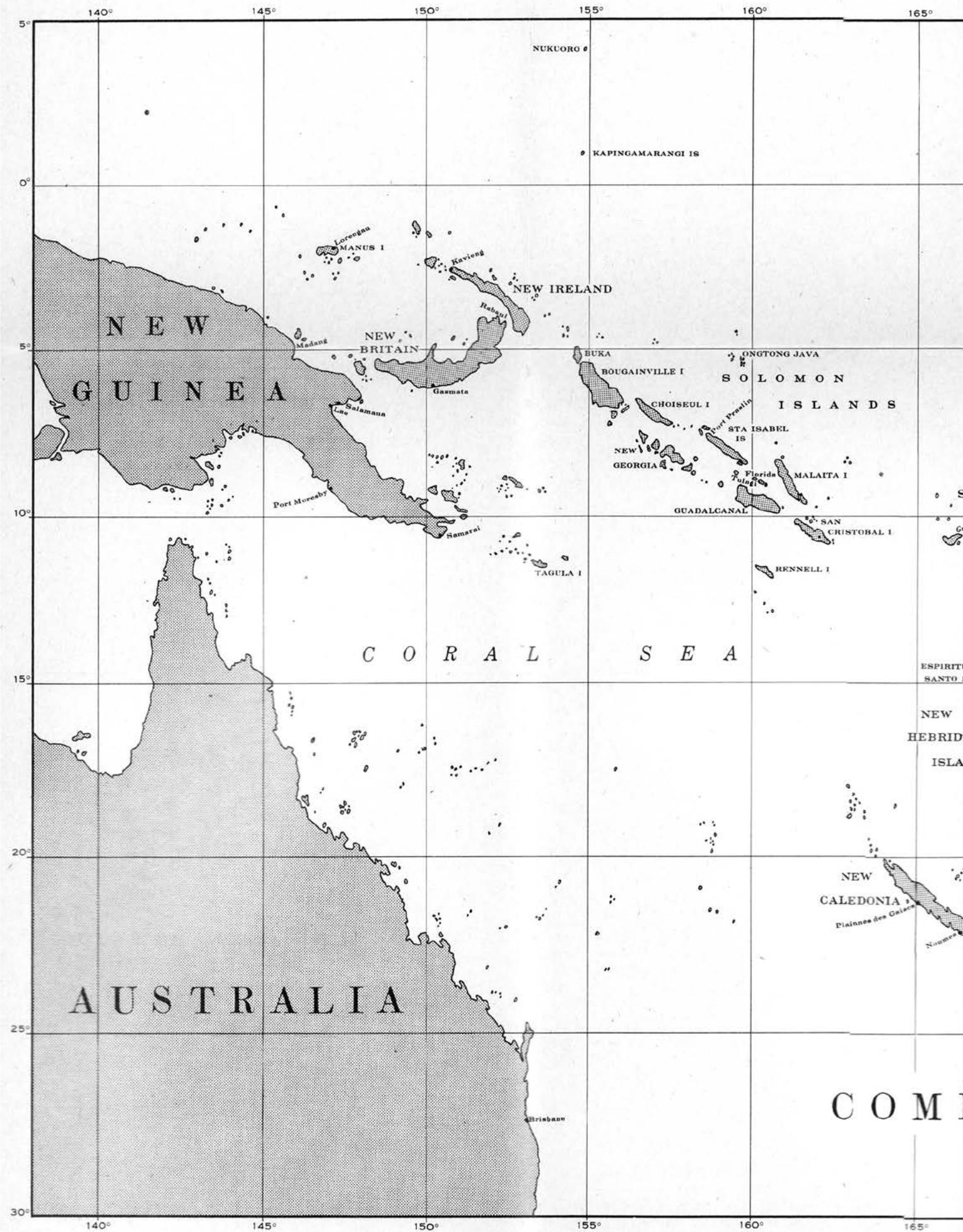
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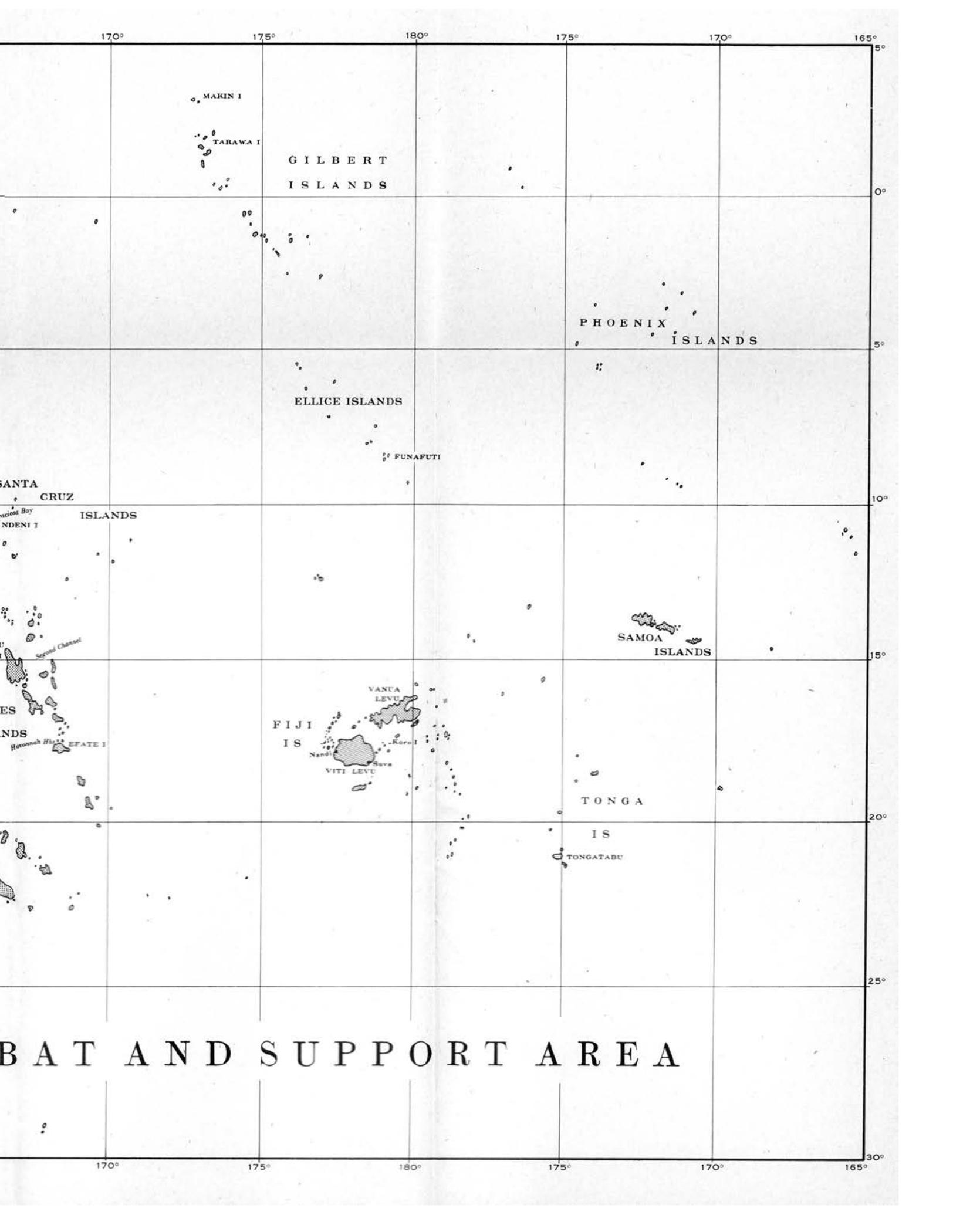
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Officers who have participated in the operations recounted herein are invited to forward to the Director of Naval Intelligence, via their commanding officers, accounts of personal experiences and observations which they esteem to have value for historical and instructional purposes. It is hoped that such contributions will increase the value of 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.



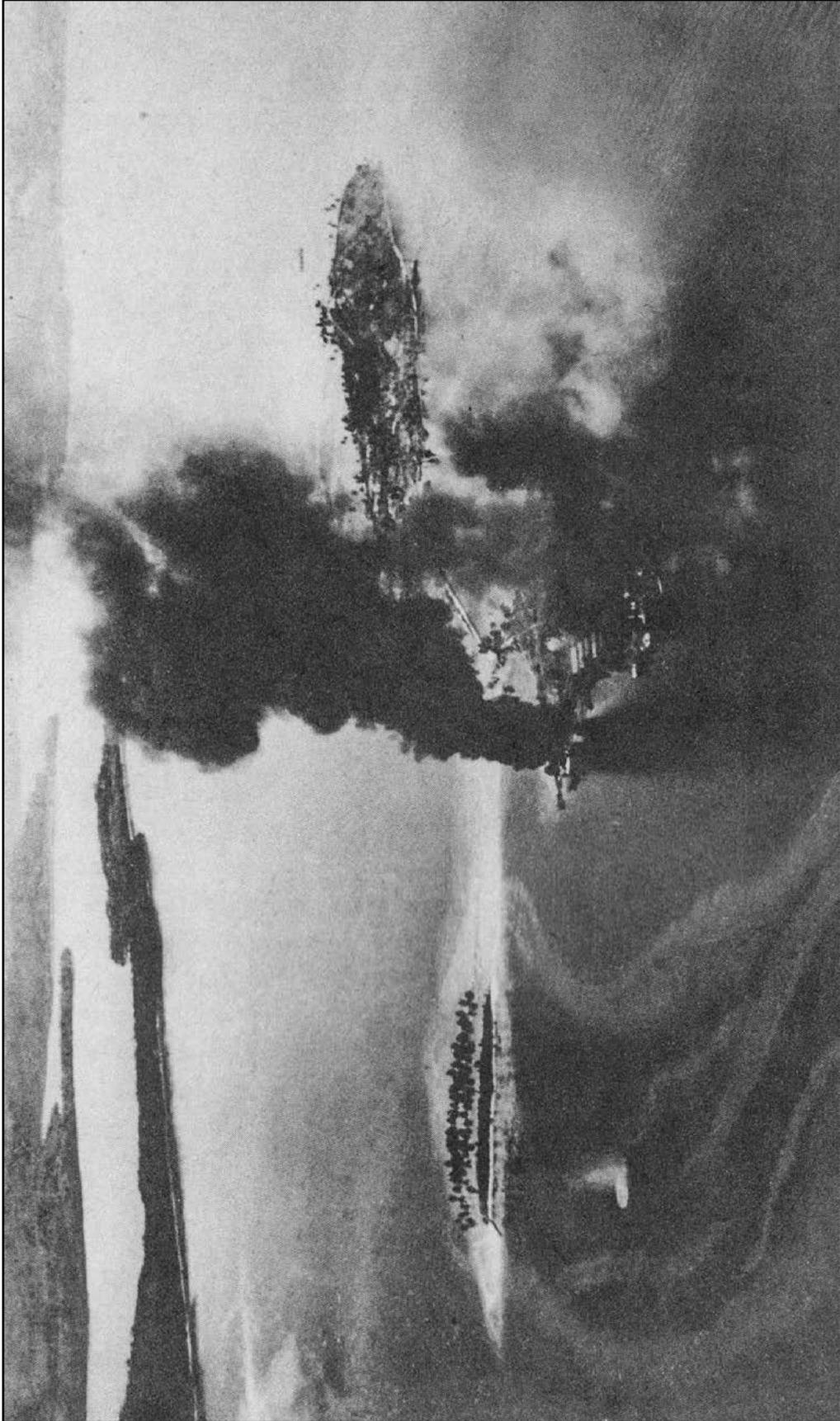


170° 175° 180° 175° 170° 165°

5°
0°
5°
10°
15°
20°
25°
30°

BAT AND SUPPORT AREA

170° 175° 180° 175° 170° 165°



Tanabogo after our bombardment of 7 August.

Landing in the Solomons

East of the two major islands of New Guinea and Australia lies a barrier of smaller islands which extends from the Bismarck Archipelago to New Caledonia. As a series of potential air and sea bases, these islands offered the Japanese in the spring of 1942 the attractive possibility of cutting deep into the South Pacific and of severing Australia's and New Zealand's life line to America's west coast. Conversely, the islands provided a ladder by which we might climb northward to the enemy bases in the Carolines, bypassing the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, and possibly extend our sway west to the southern Philippines. Here, also, lay the opportunity for waging a punishing war of attrition on our economically inferior enemy.

Japan, however, was the first to attempt to exploit this strategic route. As early as January her fleet invaded and established bases in New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago and in the northern Solomons, both then under Australian mandate. In April she moved farther south to Tulagi in the southern Solomons, a British possession, where a month later our fleet fought the first phase of the Battle of the Coral Sea. Although that encounter may have halted an immediate, large-scale Japanese attack on New Zealand or Australia, it did not prevent a slower, piecemeal advance by the enemy in the same direction.

A campaign to rid Australia and New Zealand of the menace of Japanese invasion and to shield our tenuous lines of communication to those all-important bases was envisaged as early as April 1942 by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. For some time it amounted to little more than paper strategy. But with the gradual repair of the ravages done to our fleet by the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and with the consolidation and reinforcement of United Nations forces in the Southwest Pacific, the project began to attain feasibility.

The decision to make Tulagi our principal objective in the Solomons was reached in April. Tulagi had been the seat of the resident commissioner of the British Solomon Islands. In addition to his residence, it contained several public buildings, including a hospital and prison, and was also the location of a radio station, a golf course, and several other accessories of western civilization. The nearby island of Gavutu served as the headquarters of Lever Pacific Plantations, Ltd., which had extensive coconut groves throughout the islands. On Gavutu were the company's offices and stores and also machine shops for the repair and upkeep of its small fleet of schooners and motorboats.

The Japanese overran Tulagi and its environs early in April and soon put its various facilities to use.

On May 4th our carrier-borne planes bombed the harbor. An appraisal¹ indicates that one enemy destroyer, one cargo ship, and two minesweepers were sunk.

On July 4th the enemy landed a considerable force of soldiers and laborers on Guadalcanal Island, just south of Tulagi and Florida Islands, and a few days later our reconnaissance planes observed that a landing field was being built on the north coast of the island not far from Lunga Point. As the operation of land-based planes from Guadalcanal would immediately imperil our control of the New Hebrides and New Caledonia area, the necessity of our regaining that island became increasingly apparent.

In order to activate what was to become our first major offensive in the Pacific, a new command was created in April under Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, with the approval of the United Nations concerned. The Admiral, who had recently returned from London, where he had served as special naval observer, left Washington on the first of May, passed through Pearl Harbor, where he saw Admiral Chester A. Nimitz, and arrived in New Zealand on the 8th. It was an auspicious occasion, for the last phase of the Battle of the Coral Sea was fought to a victorious conclusion on that day.

Soon Admiral Ghormley had established his headquarters in the U.S.S. *Rigel* at Auckland. He then proceeded to Wellington, where he conferred with the civil and military leaders of the Dominion. Subsequently, he was recognized as the commander of all the United Nations' land, sea, and air forces in the South Pacific Area, with the exception of the land forces specifically assigned to the defense of New Zealand. He also held frequent conferences with Maj. Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift, who was to lead our occupation force as commander of the First Marine Division. The first echelon of the division (consisting chiefly of the Fifth Marines) reached New Zealand on June 14th. The second echelon (First Marines and Eleventh Marines) did not arrive until July 11th.

Our victory in the Coral Sea and our greater success off Midway during the first week of June accelerated preparations. On June 25th, Admiral Ghormley received orders to initiate the attack as soon as practicable. On the next day he informed General Vandegrift of the operation, for which the First Marine Division would be reinforced by the Second Marines, the First Raider Battalion, and the Third Defense Battalion.

D-Day was set for August 1st. The brevity of the period allowed for plans and logistical preparations was appreciated by all, but everyone turned to in the realization that the national interest required quick action. Strictest secrecy was enforced, the Marines making their preparations under the guise of getting ready for a period of amphibious training.

Planning proceeded in close association with the Supreme Commander of the Southwest Area. On July 7th Admiral Ghormley flew to Australia for a 2-day meeting with General Douglas MacArthur, during which time a close working agreement was reached for the effective cooperative use of all forces available to the two commanders. On his return to Auckland, the Admiral received orders to proceed, with instructions that the first phase of the operation, the capture of Florida and Guadalcanal Islands, be undertaken, if not on August 1st, as near that date as possible.

1 Made since publication of Combat Narrative, "The Battle of the Coral Sea."

STRATEGICAL SITUATION

As has already been noted, the enemy on July 4th occupied the north central shore of Guadalcanal Island, and immediately began construction of an airport, wharves, and other installations. Simultaneously, he commenced a parallel movement down the east coast of New Guinea, on July 21st-22d putting troops ashore at Ambasi, 120 miles southeast of Salamaua, and at Buna. Both of these operations, particularly that at Guadalcanal, were supported by considerable numbers of sea and land-based planes.

These developments also increased the desirability of prompt action on our part, for it was becoming apparent that if we did not act soon the enemy would be so firmly entrenched in the area that it would be extremely difficult to dislodge him. Moreover, the prospect of his seizing the Solomons-New Hebrides-New Caledonia line was potentially more menacing to us than a similar move by us was to the Japanese. While the latter would pave the way for a most damaging blow to the enemy, his successful occupation of that vital series of islands would immediately imperil our convoys to Australia.

Because of the enemy's losses in the Midway and Coral Sea Battles and also because of intelligence reports which regularly omitted any reference to the presence of large enemy ships in waters near the southern Solomons, it was reasonably believed that his forces there consisted almost exclusively of planes, submarines, and small surface craft. He was known to have seaplane bases in the Solomons at Gavutu (near Tulagi), and at Gizo, Rekata Bay, Kieta and Buka Passage. The planes operating from these bases might easily be overcome. What most concerned our commanders—assuming the absence of carriers—was the major land-plane base which the Japanese had established at Rabaul in New Britain, 675 miles from Guadalcanal, and the bases which they were building at Kieta, on Bougainville Island only about 300 miles from Guadalcanal, and on Guadalcanal itself. The possibility of our expeditionary forces being exposed to torpedo or bombing attacks by swift, numerous, land-based planes was a serious consideration.

ENEMY LAND FORCES

Intelligence received up to July 30th indicated that the enemy had 1,850 men in the Tulagi area. These consisted of 1 battalion reinforced (750 men), 1 antiaircraft battalion reinforced (600 men), and naval and air personnel (500 men). The bulk of these forces was concentrated in the islands of Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, Makambo and along the southern shore of Florida Island. Installations were believed to consist of a radio station on Makambo, a seaplane base at Gavutu, and fuel dumps on several of the islands. There were evidences of heavy antiaircraft gun emplacements on Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo, and also 2 to 4 coast defense guns on Tulagi and one each on Gavutu and on Bungana. Dugouts were reported on the southeast coast of Tulagi and on Tanambogo.

On Guadalcanal the enemy was believed to have 5,275 troops divided as follows: 1 regiment reinforced (2,300 men), 1 antiaircraft regiment (500 men), 1 heavy machine-gun battalion (325 men), 2 engineer units (1,050 men), air personnel and service squadrons (200 men), and a labor unit (900). The major

part of these troops was believed to be concentrated between Kukum, just west of Lunga Point, and the mouth of the Tenaru River, with a small garrison at Tetera and other small detachments elsewhere. Installations consisted of docks at Kukum and Lunga Point, and stores, motor transport, and a radio station at Lunga. The airfield southeast of Lunga was believed to have been completed, with another at Tetera and possibly a third at Tenaru under construction. Artillery was believed to be confined to 8 heavy antiaircraft guns between Kukum and the Lunga River, 4 on the hill in the rear of Kukum, and a few light guns at other points.

PLAN OF ATTACK

On July 16th Admiral Ghormley issued the basic operation plan for the expedition. The immediate operation, he said, was the first part, or Task ONE, of a large offensive which United Nations forces were to conduct in the South Pacific and Southwest Pacific Areas. These two areas would, as of August 1st, be regarded as being divided by the one hundred fifty-ninth meridian, and from the equator southward. For Task ONE the Supreme Commander, Southwest Pacific Area, would provide for the interdiction of enemy air and naval activities west of the operating area, and his submarines would operate in the Rabaul area. For further assistance and protection, five submarines of the Pacific fleet would operate in the vicinity of Truk between about July 22d and August 20th. "Dog-Day," or the day for attacking Tulagi-Guadalcanal, was tentatively set for August 7th, the week's delay being necessitated by the late arrival of some of the transports and cargo ships at Wellington.

The forces under his command, Admiral Ghormley continued, would successively seize, occupy, and defend (1) Tulagi and adjacent positions, and (2) the Santa Cruz Islands (Ndeni), for the purpose of denying these areas to the enemy and in preparation for further offensive action. Prior to the actual attack in the Solomons, a rehearsal would be held in the Fijis about July 27th.

TASK FORCE ORGANIZATION

The plan provided, in the main, for three major Task Forces. Two were placed under the command of Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher. The first of these, Task Force NEGAT², commanded by Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes, was to provide aircraft carrier support for the attack. The second, Task Force TARE, under Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner, was known as the Amphibious Force, and was to make the principle attack, transporting and landing the occupying force of Marines and defending the transport convoys against surface attack. The third Force, Task Force MIKE, under Rear Admiral John S. McCain, was to supply aerial scouting and advance bombing of the operations area by land-based planes and seaplanes. Admiral Fletcher commanded both Task Forces NEGAT and TARE and flew his flag in the *Saratoga*. Admiral McCain of Task Force MIKE was directly responsible to the Commander South Pacific Force.

The composition of these Forces was as follows:

² In the interest of security the official designations of Task Forces are omitted from Combat Narratives. In their stead the flag names of the first letter of the commanding officers' names are used.

Task Force NEGAT (Air Support Force), Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes in immediate command:

Group 1—

Carrier:

Saratoga, Capt. DeWitt C. Ramsey

Cruisers:

Minneapolis (CA), Capt. Frank J. Lowry

New Orleans (CA), Capt. Walter S. DeLany

Destroyers:

Phelps, Lt. Comdr. Edward L. Beck

Farragut, Lt. Comdr. Henry D. Rozendal

Worden, Lt. Comdr. William G. Pogue

MacDonough, Lt. Comdr. Erle V. Dennett

Dale, Lt. Comdr. Anthony L. Rorschach

Group 2—

Carrier:

Enterprise Rear Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid

Capt. Arthur C. Davis

Battleship:

North Carolina, Capt. George H. Fort

Cruisers:

Portland (CA), Capt. Laurence T. DuBose

Atlanta (CLAA), Capt. Samuel P. Jenkins

Destroyers:

Balch, Lt. Comdr. Harold H. Tiemroth

Maury, Lt. Comdr. Gilzer L. Sims

Gwin, Comdr. John M. Higgins

Benham, Lt. Comdr. Joseph M. Worthington

Grayson, Lt. Comdr. Frederick J. Bell

Group 3—

Carrier:

Wasp Rear Admiral Noyes

Capt. Forrest P. Sherman

Cruisers:

San Francisco (CA), Capt. Charles H. McMorris

Salt Lake City (CA), Capt. Ernest G. Small

Destroyers:

Lang, Comdr. James C. Pollock

Sterett, Comdr. Jesse G. Coward

Aaron Ward, Lt. Comdr. Orville F. Gregor

Stack, Lt. Comdr. Alvord J. Greenacre

Laffey, Lt. Comdr. William E. Hank
Farenholt, Lt. Comdr. Eugene T. Seaward

Oilers:

Platte, Capt. Ralph H. Henkle
Cimarron, Comdr. Russell M. Ihrig
Kaskaskia, Comdr. Walter L. Taylor
Sabine, Capt. Houston I. Maples
Kanawha, Comdr. Kendall S. Reed

Task Force TARE (Amphibious Force), Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner

Transport Group XRAY, Capt. Lawrence F. Reifsnider

Transdiv AFIRM, Capt. Paul S. Theiss

Transports:

Fuller, Capt. Paul S. Theiss
American Legion, Capt. Thomas D. Warner
Bellatrix, Comdr. William F. Dieterich

Transdiv BAKER, Capt. Charlie P. McFeaters

Transports:

McCawley, Capt. Charlie P. McFeaters
Barnett, Capt. Henry E. Thornhill
George F. Elliott, Capt. Watson O. Bailey
Libra, Comdr. William B. Fletcher, Jr.

Transdiv CAST, Capt. Lawrence F. Reifsnider

Transports:

Hunter Liggett, Comdr. Louis W. Perkins (USCG)
Alchiba, Comdr. James S. Freman
Fomalhaut, Comdr. Henry C. Flanagan
Betelgeuse, Comdr. Harry D. Power

Transdiv DOG, Capt. Ingolf N. Kiland

Transports:

Crescent City, Capt. Ingolf N. Kiland
President Hayes, Comdr. Francis W. Benson
President Adams, Comdr. Frank H. Dean
Alhena, Comdr. Charles B. Hunt

Transport Group YOKE, Capt. George B. Ashe

Transdiv EASY, Capt. George B. Ashe

Transports:

Neville, Capt. Carlos A. Bailey
Zeilin, Capt. Pat Buchanan
Heywood, Capt. Herbert B. Knowles
President Jackson, Comdr. Charles W. Weitzel

Transdiv TWELVE, Comdr. Hugh W. Hadley

Destroyer Transports

Colhoun, Lt. George B. Madden

Little, Lt. Comdr. Gus B. Lofberg, Jr.

McKean, Lt. Comdr. John D. Sweeney

Gregory, Lt. Comdr. Harry F. Bauer

Fire Support Group LOVE (with Transport Group XRAY), Capt. Frederick L. Riefkohl

Fire Section ONE

Cruiser:

Quincy (CA), (2 VOS planes), Capt. Samuel N. Moore

Fire Section TWO:

Cruiser:

Vincennes (CA) (2 VOS planes), Capt. Frederick L. Riefkohl

Fire Section THREE:

Cruiser:

Astoria (CA) (2 VOS planes), Capt. William G. Greenman

Fire Section FOUR: Comdr. Walfrid Nyquist

Destroyers:

Hull, Lt. Comdr. Richard F. Stout

Dewey, Lt. Comdr. Charles F. Chillingworth, Jr.

Fire Section FIVE, Lt. Comdr. Francis H. Gardner

Destroyers:

Ellet, Lt. Comdr. Francis H. Gardner

Wilson, Lt. Comdr. Walter H. Price

Fire Support Group MIKE (with Transport Group YOKE), Rear Admiral Norman Scott

Cruiser:

San Juan (CLAA), Capt. James E. Maher

Destroyers:

Monssen, Comdr. Roland N. Smoot

Buchanan, Comdr. Ralph E. Wilson

Minesweeper Group, Comdr. William H. Hartt, Jr.

Hopkins, Lt. Comdr. Benjamin Coe

Trever, Lt. Comdr. Dwight M. Agnew

Zane, Lt. Comdr. Peyton L. Wirtz

Southard, Lt. Comdr. Joe B. Cochran

Hovey, Lt. Comdr. Wilton S. Heald

Screening group: Rear Admiral V.A.C. Crutchley, R.N.

Cruisers

Australia (HMAS) (CA), Capt. H.B. Farncomb, R.A.N.

Canberra (HMAS) (CA), Capt. F.E. Getting, R.A.N.

Hobart (HMAS) (CL), Capt. H.A. Showers, R.A.N.
Chicago, Capt. Howard D. Bode
Desron FOUR, Capt. Cornelius W. Flynn
Selfridge, Lt. Comdr. Carroll D. Reynolds
Patterson, Comdr. Frank R. Walker
Ralph Talbot, Lt. Comdr. Joseph W. Callahan
Mugford, Lt. Comdr. Edward W. Young
Jarvis, Lt. Comdr. William W. Graham
Blue, Comdr. Harold N. Williams
Helm, Lt. Comdr. Chester E. Carroll
Henley, Comdr. Robert Hall Smith
Bagley, Lt. Comdr. George A. Sinclair
2 VF Squadrons, 8 VOS seaplanes (5 from *Chicago*, 1 each from *Australia*,
Canberra, and *Vincennes*)

Air Support Group:

1 VF Squadron, plus 1 additional VF Squadron for initial mission

3 VSB Squadrons, plus 1 additional VSB Squadron for initial mission

Landing Force—Maj. Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift

(1)

Guadalcanal Group; Maj. Gen. Vandegrift

6 VOS seaplanes, 3 each from *Astoria* and *Quincy*

(2)

Tulagi Group; Brig. Gen. William H. Rupertus

2 VOS Seaplanes, from *Vincennes*

Task Force MIKE, Rear Admiral McCain (for composition, see page 13).

MOBILIZATION

Mobilization of these forces was well under way by the last of June, with the major group of ships assembling at Wellington, New Zealand, and the rest at San Diego and Pearl Harbor. The little time available created a most difficult logistical problem for the First Marine Division. The division's First Echelon, the Fifth Marines, was already in New Zealand, had unloaded and was ready to reembark immediately. But the Second Echelon, the First Marines, had not yet arrived, and it was evident that it would be all but impossible for the two echelons to reload simultaneously at the few docks available at Wellington. Accordingly, it was decided to combat-load the First Echelon at once. This work began July 2d, with the equipment of the Fifth Marines, reorganized as Combat Group A, being put aboard the transports *American Legion*, *Fuller*; and *Neville* and the cargo ship *Bellatrix* in the next few days. The loading proceeded smoothly for the most part.

Departure from Wellington had been set for July 18th, but when it became apparent that because of bad weather the Second Echelon would not arrive until the 11th or later, permission was obtained to delay

departure until the 22d. Even this postponement did not relieve the situation greatly, as little more than a week was left to unload and completely reload 8 ships for combat service. Matters were made worse by the weather, which was cold and extremely rainy, a “southerly” blowing almost constantly from the Antarctic. The rain soaked thousands of cardboard containers, causing them to disintegrate and spill out their contents.

Loading operations were centralized at a single large wharf, Aotea Quay, which could accommodate five ships at once. All the stevedoring was done by the Marines themselves, except that skilled civilians operated some special loading machinery. The Marines, who had just arrived from a long voyage in crowded transports, were not in the best of physical condition, and the cold, rainy weather was not beneficial. They were organized into working teams of 300 men for each vessel and kept an around-the-clock schedule of 8-hour reliefs. The division’s own transportation was increased by trucks of the First Base Depot and by a daily detail of 30 flat-topped New Zealand Army lorries. Ammunition, organizational equipment, and gasoline dumps were established in open areas on the wharf, while rations and perishables were checked and classified in a large warehouse at one end of the wharf.

The ships were loaded on the general principle that each transport would carry one combat team and all the equipment and supplies needed to put that team ashore and keep it in action for 30 days. For every 3 combat teams (or a combat group) there was loaded a cargo ship with supplies sufficient to maintain the 3 teams in action for 30 additional days. In this way, with a cargo ship for every 3 transports, the division was prepared for 60 days of action if necessary, without further support.

To utilize to the utmost the troop-carrying capacity of the ships available, all excess supplies and equipment were eliminated and even normal supplies were radically curtailed. Divided into 13 classifications, equipment and supplies were taken aboard in varying quantities as follows:

Group 1, individual equipment (all the weapons, mess gear, clothes, etc., which an officer or enlisted man could carry on his person).—All of this was taken.

Group 2, baggage.—Officers were limited to one clothing roll, one bedding roll or one handbag. Enlisted men were permitted to take aboard only what they could carry in their knapsacks.

Group 3, office equipment (typewriters, pencils, paper, etc.)—All these were taken. Included in this category were medical supplies, of which enough were taken for 60 days.

Group 4, combat equipment (weapons of all types).—All these were taken. Included in this category were medical supplies, of which enough were taken for 60 days.

Group 5, supplementary equipment.—This was reduced to necessary cleaning materials for weapons only.

Group 6, mess equipment.—This was restricted to a very few field kitchens and water bags, vacuum food carriers, camp kettles, and coffee mills.

Group 7, camp equipment (tents, etc.).—Tents were provided only for the sick bay.

Group 8, transportation (motor vehicles).—Only 50 percent of the available vehicles were taken, except amphibious tractors, all of which were taken.

Group 9, special equipment (camouflage, chemical warfare, etc.).—This category was reduced materially.

Group 10, ammunition.—Ten units of fire, one unit of fire being the ammunition necessary to operate a weapon in one day of fighting.

Group 11, automatic supplies (rations for men, gas and oil for vehicles, etc.).—Enough for 60 days.

Group 12, replacement supplies (spare parts for guns, vehicles, etc.).—All available were taken.

Group 13, post exchange articles.—Only necessary items like soap, matches, razor blades and cigarettes were taken. No candy.

Despite the haste, inadequate dock facilities, and unfavorable weather, the ships were combat-loaded. That is, things which would be needed first on arrival in the target area were loaded last, so that they would be on top of the piles in the ships' hold or on deck. First priority was given to combat equipment, including vehicles and gasoline, and ammunition which would be needed immediately. Second came food, medical supplies, and more gasoline. Other articles were loaded in reverse order to their degree of essentiality, so that they might be unloaded with the utmost facility. "We have in each ship everything that is needed should it be necessary to detach a team (combat team) on independent duty," General Vandegrift wrote just before the ships' departure from Wellington. "I believe they (the ships) are really combat-loaded, for we have taken infinite pains and have disembarked in practice to see that things needed first come out that way."

Task Force CHARLIE, commanded by Rear Admiral V.A.C. Crutchley, R.N., which was to escort the transports from Wellington to the expeditionary force's rendezvous, sailed from Brisbane, Australia, July 14th. It arrived at Port Nicholson, North Island, New Zealand, on the 19th. Three days later on the 22d, when the transports had hurriedly completed their loading, the combined force of transports and combatant ships departed from Wellington under the command of Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner, with Admiral Crutchley second in command. The transport and cargo ships, 12 in number, consisted of the following: *McCawley* (F), *Neville*, *Heywood*, *Libra*, *Hunter Liggett*, *Alchiba*, *Fomalhaut*, *Barnett*, *G.F. Elliott*, *Fuller*, *American Legion*, and *Bellatrix*. Their escort consisted of: *Australia* (F), *Canberra*, *Hobart*, *Chicago*, *Salt Lake City*, *Patterson*, *Blue*, *Jarvis*, *Ralph Talbot*, *Selfridge*, *Henley*, and *Mugford*. Steaming in a cruising position and zigzagging, the force proceeded in an easterly direction toward the rendezvous.

Meanwhile the aircraft carriers and the seven remaining transports and cargo ships were moving west

for the rendezvous. On July 1st Group THREE (the *Wasp* and her screen) of Task Force NEGAT left San Diego, resuming its passage to the South Pacific from the Atlantic. On this leg of her long voyage the *Wasp* and her escorts served as convoy to five transports, the *Crescent City*, *President Adams*, *President Hayes*, *President Jackson*, and *Alhena*, which had the Second Marines on board. A few days before the convoy's arrival at Nukualofa Harbor, Tongatabu, on the 18th the *Wasp* developed serious engine trouble and fell behind the rest of the ships. On arrival at Tongatabu repairs were speedily completed. This was no small task as it involved lifting, repairing, and replacing the *Wasp's* starboard H.P. turbine, and much of the preliminary work had to be done at sea. The first day after this group reached Tongatabu it was hit by a 67-knot gale, but suffered no serious damage.

Task Group ONE of Task Force NEGAT, of which the *Saratoga* was the principal ship, had left Pearl Harbor July 7th. Task Group TWO, of which the *Enterprise* and *North Carolina* were the major ships, departed a few days later. On July 21st Admiral Fletcher notified all commanders concerned that the 3 carrier groups and Task Force TARE (the amphibious force) would rendezvous at 1400, Zone minus 12 time, July 26th, in position latitude 23°15' S., longitude 180°00', and that a conference of commanding officers, including General Vandegrift, would be held aboard the *Saratoga*. this position was about 400 miles southeast of the Fiji Islands. The entire force would then proceed to Koro Island in the Fijis for rehearsal exercises.

Meanwhile, the destroyer-transport *Colhoun*, *Little*, *McKean*, and *Gregory* had left Task Group ONE, which they had been serving a antisubmarine screen, and were steaming for Noumea, New Caledonia. They arrived there July 20th and two days later proceeded to Bulari Bay, where they embarked the First Raider Battalion which had been in training there. After some landing exercises, they departed in time to meet the rest of the expeditionary force on the one hundred and eightieth meridian on July 26th. The minesweepers, which had convoyed auxiliary ships from Pearl Harbor to Tongatabu, also joined the force that afternoon. The next day, following the study and completion of plans, the combined fleets, numbering nearly 80 ships, moved north toward Koro Island for rehearsal exercises. The force was now complete except for the *Zeilin* and *Betelgeuse*, which, not having left Pearl Harbor until July 22d with the Third Defense Battalion aboard, did not join the expeditionary force until August 3d.

Throughout July the planes and men of Task Force MIKE were arriving at newly constructed airfields in the New Hebrides, New Caledonia, and the Fijis, and squadrons of Navy, Army, and Royal New Zealand Air Force fighters, scouts, and bombers were poising themselves for a week of intensive reconnaissance before our ships moved into the Solomons. Where possible, jungles had been flattened and the ground hardened for the landing of heavy planes. Where time or the terrain did not permit this, Marston mats³ were sometimes laid. In addition to the assembly or relocation of the hundreds of planes involved, there was the equally important work of organizing a system of communications by which the intelligence they collected and news of the progress of our attack could be quickly and safely disseminated.

3 Flexible steel grids.

PRELIMINARY AIR PLANS

The understanding reached by Admiral Ghormley and General MacArthur for the cooperation of the two air forces of their respective areas developed with the situation. The basic agreement was that during the Tulagi-Guadalcanal action the Supreme Commander, Southwest Pacific Area, would provide for the interdiction of enemy air activities westward of the operating area, the dividing line between the South Pacific Area and the Southwest Pacific Area to be the one hundred fifty-ninth meridian from the equator southward. Admiral Ghormley further directed Admiral McCain, commander of the South Pacific Air Forces, (Task Force MIKE) to arrange with General MacArthur for the coordination of aircraft scouting by the land-based forces of the two areas.

General MacArthur further agreed that until 5 days before the attack his forces would maintain a 48-hour surveillance of the Port Moresby-Lorengau-Kavieng-Bulka-Ontong Java-Tulagi-Samurai area. Thereafter all Southwest Pacific air operations to the eastward would be limited by longitude 158° 15' E. between the equator and latitude 15° S., unless special missions were requested. The Commander Southwest Pacific also agreed to provide the following surveillance: from 5 days before the attack to 4 days afterwards, four daily reconnaissance flights over the area Port Moresby-Madang-Kavieng-Ontong Java-Port Praslin (northwest end of Santa Isabel Island)—easternmost point of New Georgia-Tagula Island. Further planes would be prepared to strike hostile naval targets discovered in this area within a 550-mile range of Port Moresby. On the day of attack and for 4 days thereafter planes under the General's command would interdict hostile air operations in the Rabaul-Kavieng area and deny hostile refueling operations from Buka Island if used; in the same period shorter range planes would attack Lae and Salamaua periodically to prevent reinforcement of Rabaul from that area. He further advised: "All available aviation in this area subject to actual limitations of range will operate in your support on request to COMSOWESPAC," and that "naval support will be given as previously arranged." This last presumably referred to the inclusion of the Australian cruisers in Task Force TARE.

On July 22d Admiral McCain reported to Admiral Ghormley that his planes would begin a search 2 days before attack day so as to insure the detection of any enemy entering the Coral Sea east of 158° E., and to cover the target area to the north as far as the range of the aircraft permitted. As scout planes moved to successive advanced bases, he said, the coverage would increase in extent. He suggested that SOWESPAC aircraft be requested to cover approaches to Coral Sea and target area by search west of 158° E. to the maximum extent of their ability. His scouted area, he said, overlapped an average of 120 miles west of that meridian for the sake of increased effectiveness.

This suggestion proved satisfactory to General MacArthur, and he agreed that for 2 days preceding the attack and for 4 days afterward the SOWESPAC air forces would search water areas to the limit of range southeast of line Madang-Kapingamarangi Islands and northwest of the line of Tagula Island-easternmost point of New Georgia Island, thence along 158° E., paying particular attention to entrances to the Coral Sea from the north and east. His aircraft, he said, would be prohibited, beginning

2 days before the attack, from operating east of 158° E.

Admiral McCain, in concurring in this plan, reported to Admiral Ghormley that his B-17s would cover the southeast side of Tagula Island-New Georgia. This joint search proved completely successful, at least through the approach to and landing on Tulagi and Guadalcanal, since at no time during this period were our ships subjected to attack by enemy ships or planes. It is interesting to note that through this final exchange of dispatches between the two area commanders, the dividing line between their two areas was in effect changed from 159° E. to 158° E.

As the result of the arrangements, the air attack on Tulagi and Guadalcanal actually began a week before our ships sighted the two islands. On July 25th Admiral McCain issued his operation order for the shore-based Navy and Army planes within his command. Task Force MIKE consisted of the following:

<i>At Efate</i>		<i>In Fijis</i>	
6	Scouts	9	Patrol Planes (PBY-5)
18	Fighters	3	Patrol Planes (Singapore, RNZAF)
<i>At Noumea</i>		12	Bombers (Hudsons, RNZAF)
21	Patrol Planes (PBY-5)	9	Bombers (Vincents, RNZAF)
1	Patrol Plane (PBY-5A)	17	Fighters
3	Scouts	12	Medium Bombers (B-26)
38	Pursuit Planes (P-39)	8	Heavy Bombers (B-17)
6	Bombers (Hudsons, Royal New Zealand Air Force) ⁴	<i>In Samoa</i>	
27	Heavy Bombers (B-17) ⁵	10	Scouts
10	Medium Bombers (B-26)	17	Scout-Bombers
16	Fighters (F4F-3P) ⁶	18	Fighters
<i>At Tongatabu</i>			
6	Scouts		
24	Fighters		

This force had the responsibility of, first, conducting normal scouting operations and, second, covering the ships' approach to the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area. For these purposes Admiral McCain organized it in the following manner:

Task Group MIKE-ONE - Col. Clyde Rich (AC), USA, Sixty-ninth Bombardment Squadron, New

4 Additional 12 Hudsons expected from New Zealand.

5 Noumea-Espiritu Santo-Efate area.

6 To Espiritu Santo when landing strip completed.

Zealand Hudson Squadron, Sixty-seventh Pursuit Squadron, and two PBY planes. This group was directed to search sectors northwest from Plaine Des Gaiacs, in central New Caledonia, to a depth of 400 miles, to conduct antisubmarine patrols and provide antisubmarine protection to incoming and outgoing vessels as might be required.

Task Group MIKE-TWO - Col. L.G. Saunders (AC), USA, Eleventh Bombardment Group. This group was directed to maintain daily search of the southern Solomons and their western waters, track important enemy contacts, and execute air attacks on enemy objectives as directed. This group was to base initially one squadron at Plaine Des Gaiacs, two squadrons in the Efate-Espiritu Santo area, and one squadron in reserve at Nandi in the Fijis. It was to establish group headquarters in the *Curtiss*.

Task Group MIKE-THREE - Comdr. Maurice E. Browder, USN, U.S.S. *Curtiss* (flagship) with attached patrol planes. This group was ordered to proceed with the *Curtiss* to Segond Channel, Espiritu Santo, escorted by the *McFarland*, to arrive 3 days before the attack on the Solomons. In the several days preceding Dog-Day, planes from this group were to operate from Espiritu Santo, Noumea, and Havannah Harbor (Efate), searching sectors south and east of the Solomons.

Task Group MIKE-FOUR - Comdr. Joseph L. Kane, USN, the *McFarland*, with attached patrol planes. This group was directed to proceed with the *Curtiss* as far as Espiritu Santo, and then move to Ndeni in the Santa Cruz Islands, whence it would search a sector north and east of Guadalcanal.

Task Group MIKE-FIVE - Comdr. Norman R. Hitchcock, USN, the *Mackinac*, with attached patrol planes. This group was directed to proceed 3 days before the attack to Maramasike Estuary on the east coast of Malaita and search a sector to the northeast.

Task Group MIKE-SIX - Maj. Harold W. Bauer, USMC, VMF squadron 212, VS Squadron D-14. This group was directed to provide three observation planes for inshore antisubmarine patrol in the vicinity of Segond Channel, Espiritu Santo. It was further ordered to operate with Task Group MIKE-SEVEN in defense of Efate and Espiritu Santo under the commanding general at Efate.

Task Group MIKE-SEVEN - Lt. Col. John N. Hart, USMC, VMO Squadron 251. This group was ordered to provide all possible service to bombardment aviation temporarily based at Espiritu Santo, and to cooperate with Task Group MIKE-SIX in the defense of the New Hebrides generally.

Patrol planes were ordered to carry a full allowance of machine-gun ammunition and four depth bombs, while bombardment aircraft on reconnaissance flights were to carry full allowances of machine-gun ammunition and such delay fused bombs as were practicable. All planes were ordered to track enemy surface forces discovered, using radar when available, in accord with rules explained in an annex. Army-Navy joint communication procedure was declared effective, and aircraft were instructed to maintain radio silence except (a) in emergency, (b) to transmit information of the enemy, (c) for tactical purposes over the target area. Aviation gasoline and ammunition were made available in all tenders and at all land plane bases, and by arrangement with the Commander Naval Unit at Efate, about 25,000 gallons of aviation gasoline would be delivered in drums at Graciosa Bay, Ndeni, for

Task Group MIKE-FOUR prior to 2 days before the attack, and additional gasoline and provision would be provided later.

AIR SUPPORT FORCE

The air support force, consisting of the carriers *Saratoga*, *Enterprise*, and *Wasp*, and their screening ships, was ordered by Admiral Fletcher to proceed to the Guadalcanal area to cooperate with Admiral Turner's amphibious force by supplying air offense and defense, while also protecting itself from enemy air attacks and making such air searches as were ordered or might seem advisable. From this most general directive Admiral Noyes developed an operation plan which, in its minute attention to the time of departure of the squadrons from the carriers and their return, read like a railroad timetable.

For example, the "flight sequence" provided for the *Wasp's* air group directed that Flight No. 101 take off at 0530 on D-Day, that it should consist of 16 VF, that it should "proceed to Tulagi-Gavutu area of Florida Island arriving 15 minutes before sunrise (0630); destroy enemy fighter planes and patrol bombers, motor torpedo boats, and submarines in Tulagi and Gavutu Harbors; destroy enemy land-based planes on beach at Halavo; attack antiaircraft installations on Gavutu and Tanambogo Islands with remaining ammunition; and return to carrier on completion of mission, or expenditure of fuel and ammunition," that the planes should carry armaments of six 50-caliber guns with a full load including incendiary, that their estimated fuel consumption would be 143 gallons each, and that they should use certain specified frequencies for radio communication.

When it is considered that the flight sequence for the *Wasp* contained 23 such entries and that those for the air groups of the *Saratoga* and *Enterprise* were worked out with like precision, the excellence of the staff work becomes apparent.

Synchronizing the flights with the attacks of our sea and land forces was only one side of the problem. The other, almost equally important, was the maintenance of smooth operations aboard the carriers, so that decks would not become congested with planes taking off or landing, and so that at least one squadron of fighters would always be alert and in readiness in the event the carriers were themselves attacked.

Admiral Noyes' orders provided, in addition to the detailed flight schedules, for the following general procedure:

The carriers and their escorts were to operate southwest of Guadalcanal with the *Saratoga* in the center lane, the *Wasp* to the west and south, and the *Enterprise* to the north and east at distances of 8,000 to 12,000 yards. As primary Fighter Control Ship, the *Enterprise* was to furnish the combat patrol for all three carriers. Combat patrol for the transports and their screens was to be directed from the *Chicago*, which would have a fighter control unit provided by the *Saratoga*. Air support flights were to be tactically commanded by two Air Group Commanders in the air, one over Tulagi, the other over Guadalcanal. These were to be directed by voice radio by the Commander Amphibious Force of Commander Landing Force in the *McCawley* or the *Neville*. The *Saratoga* Air Group Commander

was to be in command over Guadalcanal until 3 hours after sunrise when he would be relieved by the *Enterprise's* AGC. The *Wasp's* AGC was to command at Tulagi for most of the morning, being relieved by the *Saratoga's* AGC not later than 7 1/2 hours after sunrise. Torpedo squadrons, some equipped with belly tanks and bombs, were to be held in reserve for search and attack missions.

The pilots of the *Wasp* had had considerable intensive training for this engagement. This, in part, had been necessitated by the acquisition at San Diego of newer types of aircraft and by the change-over from the Atlantic to the Pacific. They had also benefited by the work of the Air Intelligence organization, which had recently been strengthened by the arrival on board of specially trained officers. These officers gathered all available information on the Solomons and condensed it for study by the flight personnel. After arrival in the South Pacific, excellent photographs were obtained of objectives in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area. From these, large-scale mosaic maps were prepared. "Supplementary intelligence and the results of the photographic reconnaissance on August 2d," wrote Capt. Forrest Sherman of the *Wasp* in his report, "made the familiarity of pilots with the area as complete as may normally be expected in the case of a position held by the enemy."

The Marines, according to General Vandegrift, were not so fortunate. "We had no maps of the theater of operation, and the charts we had were inaccurate," he has commented in an oral report. "The commander SOWESPAC had an aerial strip picture made of Guadalcanal's north shore, about 2,000 yards deep. This helped, but as the photo mission was made in cloudy weather there were spots in the mosaic which were most confusing. A group of our senior officers⁷ also made an aerial survey trip to Guadalcanal and Tulagi, but as that district is on the fringe of B-17 radius from Australia, they could remain over the area only a few minutes and arrived at Australia with only 5 minutes' supply of gasoline left."

ORGANIZATION OF MARINES

Against enemy forces and installations in the whole target area General Vandegrift planned to use approximately 15,000 men, with 5,000 more (the Second Marines) as a reserve. The landing force elements embarked comprised the following:

First Marine Division	12,900
Less:	
Fifth Battalion, Eleventh Marines.	
First Tank Battalion (less 2 companies.)	
Detachments.	
Second Marines (reinforced)	4,846
First Raider Battalion	828
Third Defense Battalion	972
	19,546

⁷ Lt. Col. Merrill B. Twinning and Maj. William B. McKeon, USMC.

He organized them and assigned initial mission to them in the following manner:

(a) Combat Group A (less Combat Team No. 2, less Battery E Eleventh Marines), Col. LeRoy P. Hunt, USMC, commanding. Command afloat in *American Legion*. These troops, comprising the Fifth Marines reinforced, were ordered to land on Beach RED (about half-way between Lunga and Koli Points, north coast of Guadalcanal) at H-hour and to seize the beachhead.

(b) Combat Group B, Col. Clifton B. Cates, USMC, commanding. Command post afloat in *Barnett*. These troops, comprising the First Marines reinforced, were ordered to land on Beach RED at H-Hour plus 50 minutes and pass through the right of Combat Group A, attack on magnetic azimuth 260° and seize the grassy knoll 4 miles south of Lunga Point.

(c) Tulagi Group (First Raider Battalion, Combat Team No. 2, less Battery E Eleventh Marines), Lt. Col. Merritt A. Edson, USMC, commanding. Command post afloat in APDs. These troops were ordered to land on Beach BLUE (on the southwest coast of Tulagi) at H-hour and seize the northwest section of the island.

(d) Gavutu Group (First Parachute Battalion), Maj. Robert H. Williams, USMC, commanding. Command post afloat in *Heywood*. This group was ordered to land on the east coast of Gavutu Island at H plus 4 hours and seize that island, later pressing on to Tanambogo.

(e) Support Group (First Engineer Battalion, less Companies A, B, and C; Eleventh Marines, less First, Second, Third, and Fourth Battalions; First Special Weapons Battalion, less First and Third Platoon, Battery A; First Pioneer Battalion, less Companies A and C; First Amphibious Tractor Battalion, less Companies A and B), Col. Pedro A.M. DelValle, USMC, commanding. Command post afloat in *Hunter Liggett*. This group was ordered to land on Beach RED (Guadalcanal), assume control of Second and Third Battalions, Eleventh Marines, provide artillery support for the attack, and coordinate antiaircraft and close-in ground defense of beachhead area.

(f) Division Reserve (Second Marines, reinforced, less Combat Team A), Col. John M. Arthur, USMC, commanding. Command post afloat in *Crescent City*. This group was ordered to be prepared to land Combat Team B, less all reinforcing units, on Gavutu Island, at H plus 4 hours, and also to be prepared to attach Combat Team C, less all reinforcing units, to the Tulagi Group.

(g) Florida Group (Combat Team A), Maj. Robert E. Hill, USMC, commanding. Command post afloat in *President Jackson*. This group was ordered to land on Florida Island near Halavo at H-hour plus 30 minutes and seize that village.⁸

(h) Third Defense Battalion, Col. Robert H. Pepper, USMC, commanding. Command post afloat in *Zeilin*. This group was directed to be prepared to land detachments (principally antiaircraft units) on Beach RED and on Tulagi and Gavutu on the receipt of orders.

⁸ This order was modified, after the Task Force's departure from the Fijis, to provide that reinforced Company B of Combat Team A, would land at H-hour minus 20 minutes on Florida near Haleta and seize that village.

Commanding officers of troops were made responsible for the complete unloading of their ships, and they were ordered to leave sufficient men on board to ensure that all holds were worked on a 24-hour basis. Basic priorities for landing supplies and material were established in this order: 1, ammunition; 2, water; 3, combat transportation; 4, rations; 5, medical supplies; 6, gasoline; 7, transportation other than combat; 8, miscellaneous.

Traffic in beach areas was to be controlled by Shore Party Commanders; inland traffic by units of military police. Shore Party Commanders were directed to call upon troop commanders in their immediate vicinity for assistance in handling supplies from landing beaches to dumps. Shore parties were to be organized in accord with Standard Operating Procedure for Shore Parties as set forth in Force General Order No. 7-42, dated February 25, 1942.

REHEARSAL EXERCISES, JULY 28–31

The rehearsal for the attack, noted on page 11, was as accurate and complete a simulation of the prospective landings on the Solomons as could be provided. Orders for the approach to Koro, for the preliminary bombing and bombardment and for the landing of troops were prepared with as much thoroughness as for the real operation. The rehearsal extended from July 28th to 31st, and included provision for two complete landing exercises—a training which the commanders agreed was critically needed by both Naval personnel and Marines. On July 30th the air carrier groups participated in the exercises, with a full schedule of attacks beginning at 0530 when 16 VF simulated the destruction of enemy planes.

Necessarily there were limitations which prevented the attainment of genuine battle conditions. On July 28th, for instance, the weather was such as to endanger the ships' boats and tank lighters, and the exercise had to be canceled for the day.⁹ Also, care had to be taken to avoid damage to buildings in populated areas of the island. The most serious disadvantage, however, was that, for reasons of security, radio silence had to be observed throughout the rehearsal. This necessity prevented practice in land-to-air communications, which would have helped greatly in the coordination of plane attack with land operations. Their inability to obtain adequate practice in radio communications because of the strict silence enforced in the Pacific has been, incidentally, a frequent cause of regret by Naval aviators.

In spite of these limitations, however, much valuable experience was gained. At the close of the rehearsal, on the afternoon of July 31st, Admiral Turner convened in the *Australia* a meeting of Task Group Commanders at which he reviewed his operation plans in detail. Similarly, General Vandegrift explained his plan for the capture of land positions. Since the rehearsal had demonstrated that a large percentage of the boats would probably be rendered useless by mechanical failure, a boat pool system was worked out for the Tulagi-Guadalcanal operation.

⁹ One Marine officer has since observed: "We all proceeded to Koro Island, in the center of the Fijis, for a 2-day exercise. This island fortunately had many of the physical characteristics of Tulagi. Well, our dress rehearsal stunk. Everything went wrong. But like most bad dress rehearsals it seemed to augur for a good performance. Fortunately there was time for several useful conferences aboard ship between Navy and Marine Officers."

reconnaissance and patrols. Task Force TARE, on leaving the Fijis, assumed a circular formation, with the 19 transports and cargo ships proceeding in 5 columns in the center. The *Hunter Liggett*, the first ship in the middle column, acted as guide for the entire formation. The screen was disposed in 3 concentric circles about the *Hunter Liggett*, the first circle having a radius of 1 mile from the *Hunter Liggett*, the second a radius of 2, and the third a radius of 3.

At noon on August 1st the position of the *McCawley*, the flagship of Task Force TARE, was latitude 19°03' S., longitude 179°09' E. The speed of the fleet was then only about 7 knots. Between 1630 and 1700 it sighted and exchanged signals with Task Force NEGAT. Proceeding almost due west, the *McCawley*'s position was 18°58' S., 174°00' E. at noon the next day. The average speed was now up to 11.5 knots, and the weather continued good. At least once American B-17s, part of Task Force MIKE and operating from shore bases, swept low over the ships so that the personnel aboard might learn to recognize them. On August 3d the fleet passed through the southern New Hebrides. Several of the ships left and later rejoined the fleet after refueling at Efate and other nearby points. The course changed slightly to the northwest until on August 5th the one hundred fifty-ninth meridian was reached.¹⁰ Thereafter the fleet moved almost due north to its destination.

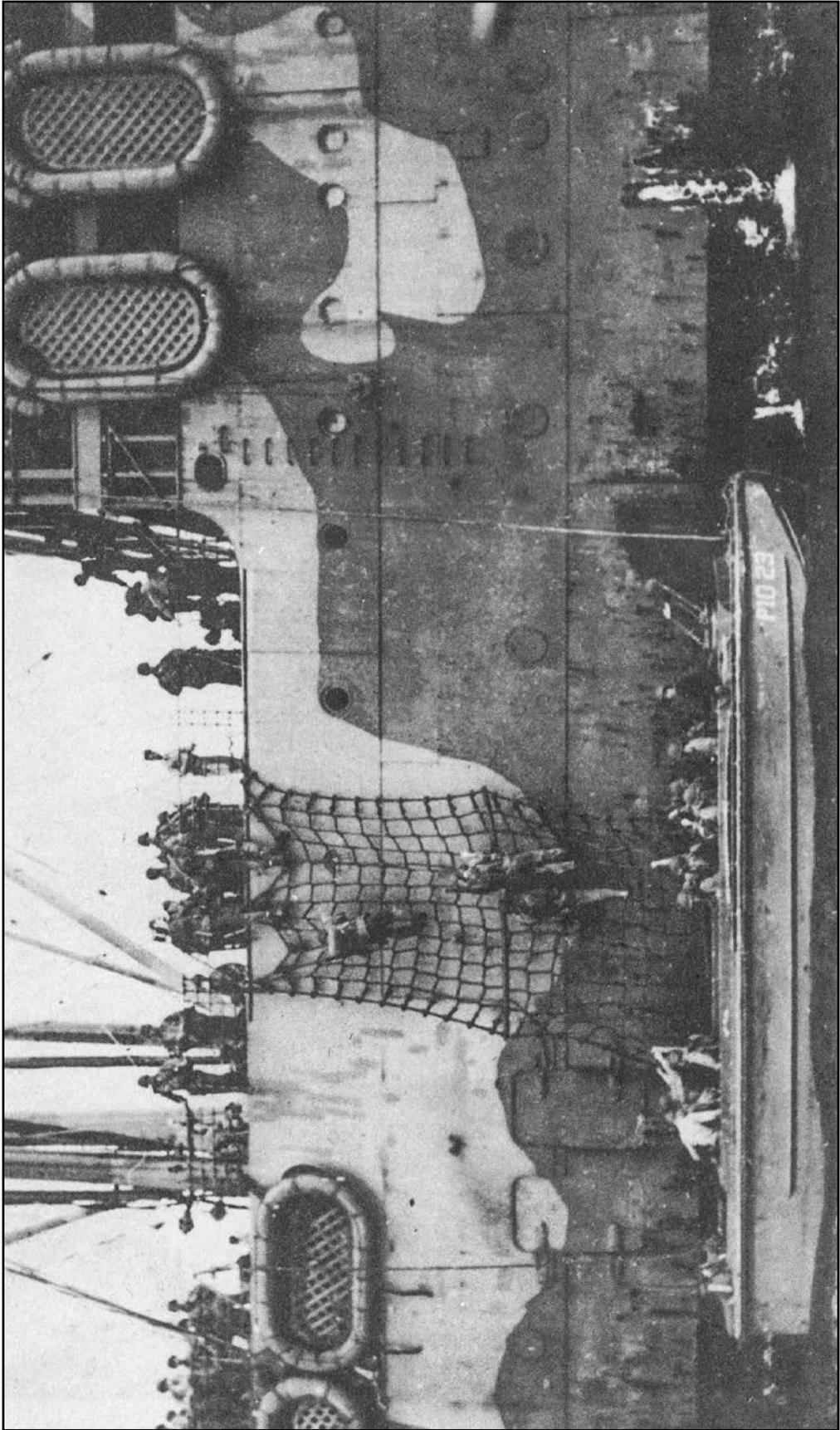
As it did so, the weather changed to a complete overcast, with a fresh wind and moderate sea. On August 5th the average course and speed was 296° T., 12.31 knots, with occasional zigzagging for submarine protection. Planes from Task Force NEGAT passed over the formation from time to time.

During the approach of the expeditionary force our land and tender based planes had been effectively carrying out their assignments. On August 1st, 10 B-17s of the Eleventh Bombardment Group bombed Japanese bases near Tulagi, destroying one patrol plane and damaging another, starting fires in the Golf Club building and dropping four 500-pound bombs on Lunga airport. Two of the Zero fighters which attempted to intercept were shot down. On the following day B-17s again bombed installations at Lunga Point and, although they encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire, they suffered no damage. Similar attacks on the target area were made almost daily through August 6th. Meanwhile, the *McFarland*, with five patrol bombers (PBYs) had arrived at Ndeni, and extensive searches of the operations area and toward enemy bases in the north were carried out energetically but with consistently negative results.

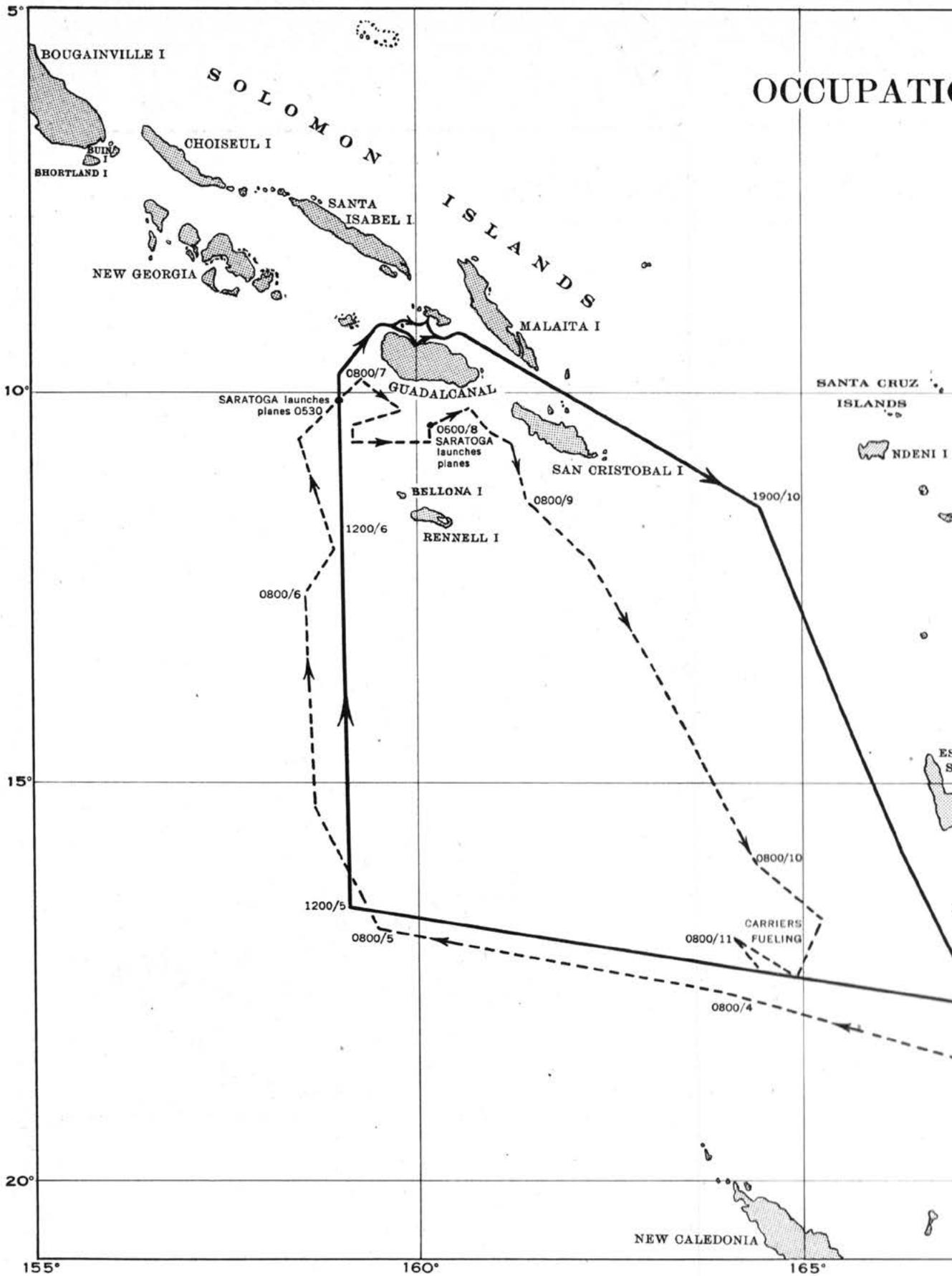
On Dog-Day, August 7th, nine PBYs were transferred from Espiritu Santo to the Maramasike Estuary in Malaita to operate from the *Mackinac* in providing an eastern outer patrol for our ship and land force in Tulagi-Guadalcanal.

On the eve of the attack, from his headquarters in the *Argonne* at Noumea, Admiral Ghormley sent a message of encouragement to the three task force commanders. The nation, he said, looked to the officers and men of the Allied expeditionary forces to electrify the world with a major offensive. He urged them to carry on in the spirit of Midway and to "sock 'em in the Solomons!"

¹⁰ There was an unverified report that the task force intentionally pursued, until August 5th, a course toward New Guinea in order to throw following enemy submarines or planes off the scent.



Raiders entering landing boat.



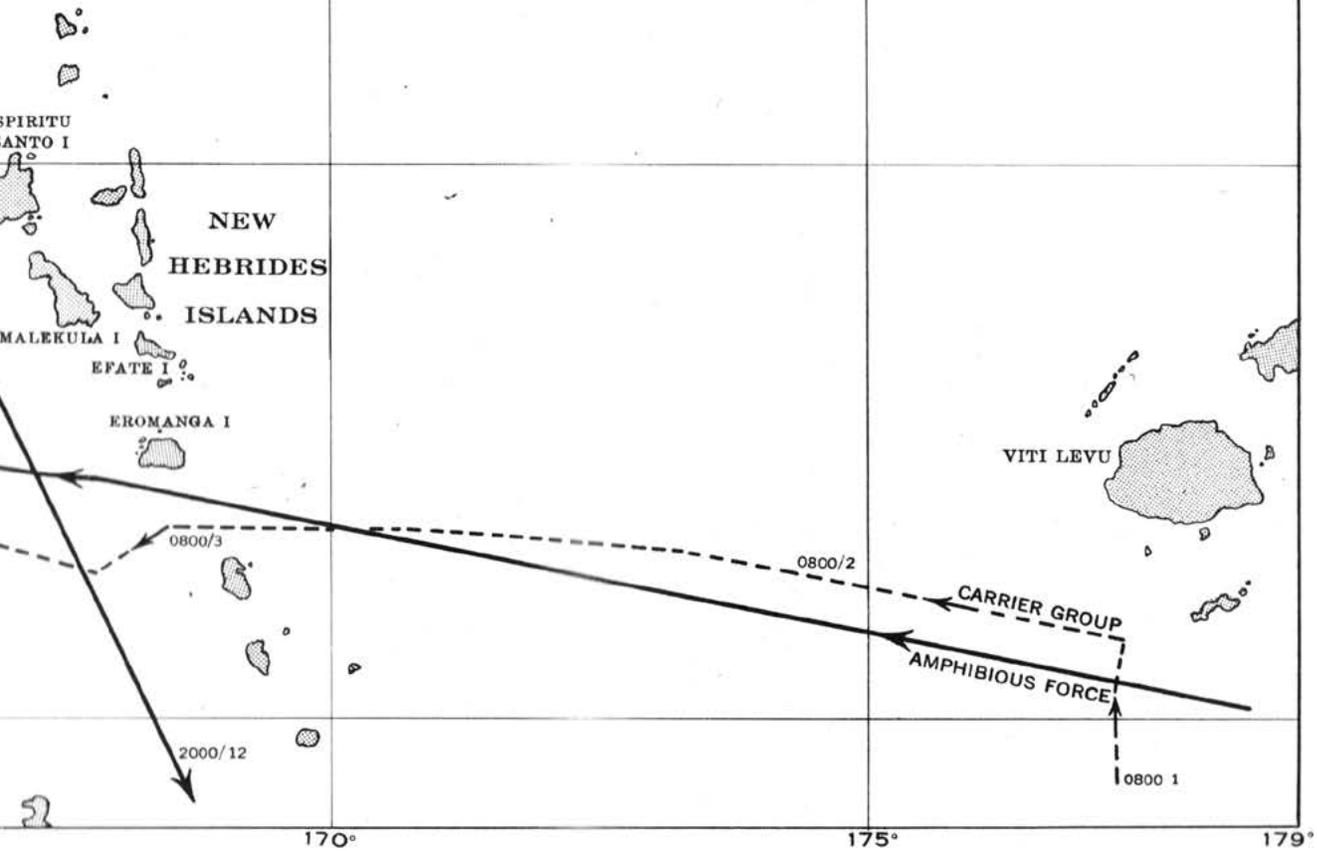
OPERATION OF GUADALCANAL AND TULAGI

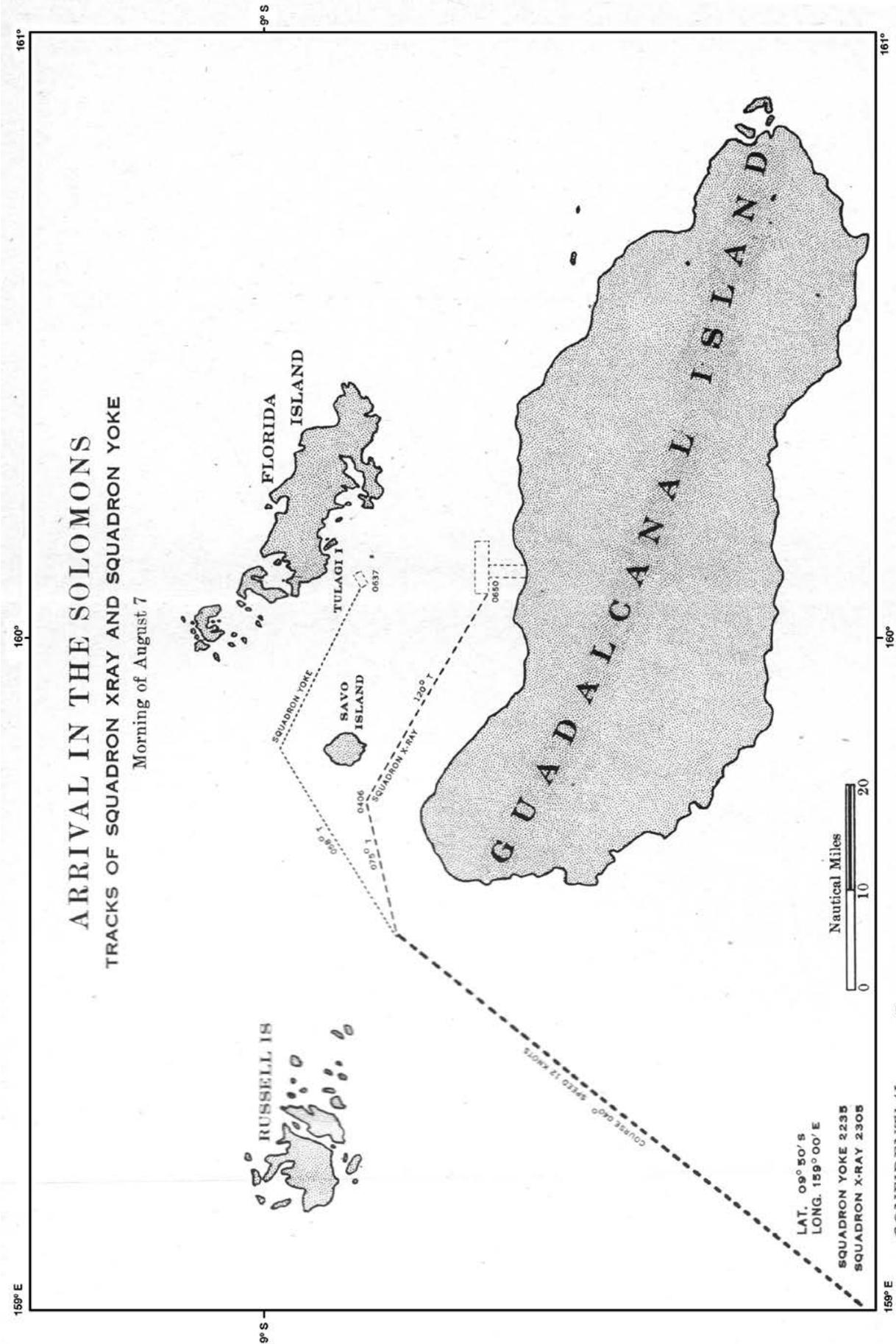
Approach and Retirement of Amphibious Force and Carrier Group

August 1 - 12, 1942

NOTE

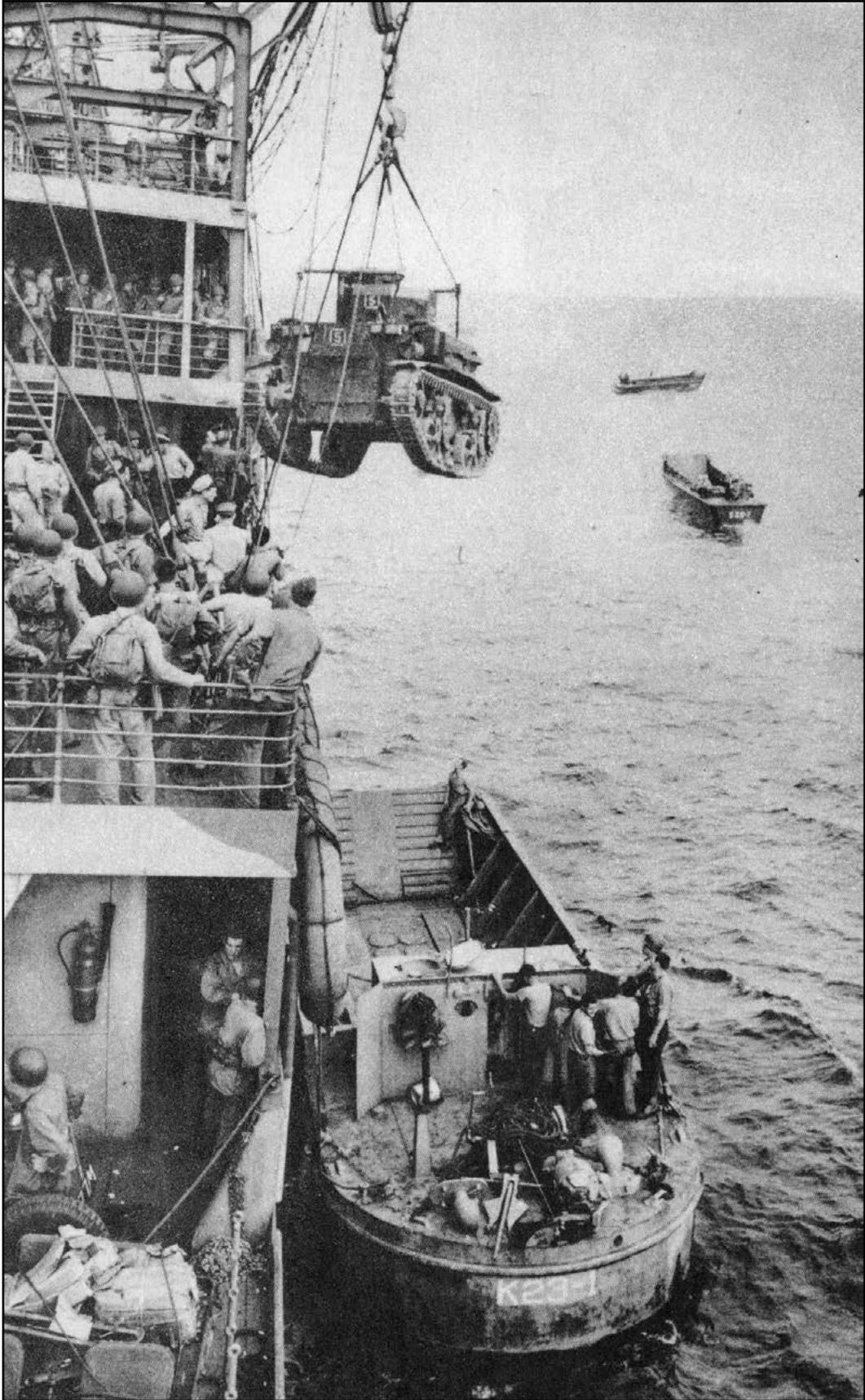
Ships' positions are approximate only,
being based generally on 8:00 AM, Noon,
and 8:00 PM positions, Local Time. ($-11\frac{1}{2}$)





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Unloading tank for Guadalcanal.

ARRIVAL IN THE SOLOMONS

6 August	1615	Task Force assumes “Approach Disposition.”
	2400	Aircraft carriers arrive south of Guadalcanal.
7 August	0133	Guadalcanal sighted by Squadron YOKE.
	0300	Squadrons YOKE and XRAY separate.
	0430	Some transports go to general quarters
	0530	Aircraft carriers launch first flights.
	0613	<i>Quincy</i> opens fire on Kukum.
	0615	Planes begin bombing Guadalcanal and Tulagi areas.
	0633	Sunrise.
	0637	Signal “Land the landing force” Tulagi area.
	0650	Signal “Land the landing force” Guadalcanal.
	0709	<i>Enterprise</i> launches search group.

The weather of August 6th was ideal for our approach to the Solomons. An overcast sky and a mist which limited even surface visibility rendered enemy reconnaissance hopeless. At noon the destroyer *Selfridge* was sent ahead to make a landfall on Bellona Island, so that upon her return before nightfall she was able to provide our squadron commanders with an accurate navigational position.

At 1615¹¹ our force assumed “Approach Disposition” for entering the area of operations. This was a column of squadrons, with Squadron YOKE, destined for Tulagi, in the lead, and Squadron XRAY, which was to carry out the landing on Guadalcanal, 6 miles astern.

Our men were solemn as they approached their objective. Maj. Justice Chambers, who commanded one of the companies scheduled to make the original landing on Tulagi, relates, “I don’t think that any of us will forget that last night before we landed. Officers and men realized that all their training for the last few months was finally going to be put to the test. I personally was worried to death and kept going over my notes for fear that I had forgotten some detail in the orders. As we headed up for Tulagi in the darkness of the night the men wrote their last letters home and I collected them knowing that for some of them it would probably be the last letters they would write.”

At 2235, while about 40 miles southwest of Guadalcanal, Squadron YOKE changed from the northerly course on which it was approaching, to 040° T., and half an hour later Squadron XRAY followed onto the same course. At 0133 Guadalcanal could be made out, broad on the starboard bow of the *Neville* in Squadron YOKE. At 0224 the thin crescent of the waning moon rose and the dark shadow of the shore line could be clearly seen. A little later Savo Island was visible by its pale light.

About 0300, when they were off the northwest tip of Guadalcanal, our two squadrons separated. The

11 This and all times mentioned hereafter are Zone minus 11.

Russell Islands were broad on the port bow as Squadron YOKE turned onto course 058° to pass to the north of Savo and so on to the Tulagi area, while Squadron XRAY turned more sharply to the east to pass south of Savo and along the north shore of Guadalcanal.

It had been anticipated that the Japanese might have patrols in the passages on either side of Savo Island, and our naval escorts were fully alert in the first degree of readiness. However, the surprise was complete. Although the Japanese had radar equipment ashore, our arrival was seemingly undetected. There was no challenge and our ships slid through the darkness with no sound except the wash of their own propellers and the breaking of the waves from their wakes upon the shore.

Meanwhile our three aircraft carrier groups comprising Task Force NEGAT were also approaching the target area. At midnight they were southwest of Guadalcanal, about 75 miles from Tulagi. At 0530, an hour before sunrise, the carriers launched their first flights. The weather had cleared save for a few scattered cumulus clouds. The planes showed only a dim white light on their tails until they were at least 5 miles clear of the carriers, when they were allowed to turn on their running lights in order to expedite the rendezvous. But due to the closeness of the carrier groups and the inexperience of some of the pilots, considerable confusion ensued, planes from one carrier joining up with those from another. To make matters worse, a brilliant explosion suddenly occurred in the vicinity of the rendezvous. It was later learned that a scout bomber had inadvertently dropped a bomb, which exploded on hitting the water.¹² However, by the time the planes were over Guadalcanal, the first rays of light were showing in the east, and nearly all planes had found their correct places in the formation.

As our two squadrons drew near to their respective objectives, our transports made ready. Some ships in both groups went to general quarters as early as 0430, while others did not follow this example until an hour later.

For fully 20 minutes Squadron XRAY, led by the *Chicago*, steamed along the silent shore of Guadalcanal. Its 15 transports were in 2 columns of 7 and 8 ships, respectively, arranged in the same order in which they would lie for the initial debarkation. The men on board were at first oppressed by the dark silence. Tense with the strain of impending battle, they did not know whether the enemy's apparent somnolence was real or feigned. No guns fired at their approach. No planes appeared to bomb or strafe. The surprise was so complete as even to surprise the surprisers.

As the squadron would pass within 6,000 yards of Lunga Point, where there were known to be anti-aircraft batteries, Admiral Crutchley had arranged for the *Quincy* to come forward from her position in the rear of the squadron and take responsibility for silencing any enemy fire from that area.

While our other cruisers were launching their spotting and liaison planes, the morning silence was shattered at 0613 by the guns of the *Quincy*. That cruiser was responsible for the bombardment of the area from Lunga Point west, and had started firing upon the coast in the vicinity of Kukum, where a large oil fire was seen very shortly. About the same time a small schooner, which was crossing ahead

12 Report of Lieut. Louis H. Bauer, Commander *Enterprise*'s fighter squadron.

stores, and the *Vincennes* was bombarding the area from Lengo Village east to Tetera.

Immediately after the ships began their bombardment our planes put in their appearance, precisely on schedule. At 0652 what appeared to observers on the *President Adams* to be an enemy plane was seen over the *President Hayes*, which was just ahead in the column. Evidently our fighters saw it at the same time, for a moment later it was going down in flames. The 24 dive bombers were meanwhile attacking enemy shore batteries, vehicle concentration, and supply dumps.

Before the naval air bombardment had closed, our transports were approaching the debarkation area, 9,000 yards off Beach RED. The signal "Stop" was executed, and, as our ships lost headway, the signal came to back. Our ships came to a halt in their assigned positions at 0647. At 0650 the signal was given to "land the landing force," the transports remaining underway but stopped. Our men on the transports had been in debarkation positions for some minutes. Boats were hoisted out and lowered, and debarkation commenced. A favorable sea permitted the use of cargo net gangways on both sides of the vessels simultaneously, and the operation was rapid, smooth, and efficient.

While our transports were lying hove to, our cruisers and destroyers not designated to provide fire support for the landings formed a double protective arc about them, cruisers on the inner arc and destroyers on the outer. This gave excellent protection against both planes and submarines, as our cruisers could maneuver within the destroyer screen and yet remain close to the transport group.

Meanwhile, across the bay near Tulagi there was similar activity. At 0507, when Squadron YOKE was north of Savo, the *Neville* at the head of the transport group had changed course to 115° to head directly for Tulagi. According to her report, "No shots were fired, no patrol boats encountered, no signs of life were evident until Group XRAY opened fire on Guadalcanal objectives across the channel about 20 miles away, then a cluster of red rockets went off from the direction of Tulagi."

If the rockets were intended as a warning, the enemy had no opportunity to act upon it, for the bombardment of the Tulagi area began almost simultaneously with that of Guadalcanal. Our plans had provided that planes from our carriers were to strafe and bomb enemy installations 15 minutes before sunrise, which was at 0633. Promptly at 0614, while our ships were drawing close to the debarkation area, the drone of planes could be heard overhead and our fighters began strafing. Four minutes later our dive bombers started their work. The enemy replied with antiaircraft fire, but it was ineffective. The planes themselves could not be seen through the overcast, but the explosions of their bombs could be both seen and heard. Fires sprang up on and near the islands. The morning twilight was not yet clear enough to permit the distinguishing of the burning objects, but it was thought that they were aircraft. It was subsequently learned that we had destroyed 18 enemy planes on the water.¹⁴ One officer remarked that "after dropping their bombs, our planes strafed the beaches and pounded the daylights out of every building which looked as if it might be hiding some Japs."

14 The *Neville* diary said that we destroyed 8 Zero fighters with floats and 8 VPB. General Vandegrift, in an oral record, said 18 float planes and 2 four-engine bombers, while Admiral Crutchley's report gives the figure as 18.

After this preliminary bombing, half a squadron of dive bombers was maintained over the transport group during daylight to attack targets as directed by the Air Support Director Group.

The sun's first rays were coming over the horizon when our ships arrived in the transport area. This was about half an hour behind schedule, due to the failure of the transports to keep closed up. Capt. George B. Ashe, Commander of Transport Division EIGHT, immediately (0637) gave the signal to land the landing force, and at the same time set "H-hour" at 0800, which was strictly on schedule. This was done in order to avoid keeping the transports standing unnecessarily idle before landing their troops. Only the *Jackson*, which had to send off the preliminary landing force to Haleta, and later to send a force to Halavo at a considerable distance, had no time to spare, but she was able to make her first landing on time.



Our air attack was carried out by 85 carrier planes, 44 assaulting enemy positions on Guadalcanal, 41 those on Tulagi. The *Wasp* provided 16 VF, 15 VSB, and the Air Group Commander over Tulagi; the *Saratoga*, 12 VF, 23 VSB, and the Air Group Commander over Guadalcanal; and the *Enterprise*, 8 VF for strafing at Guadalcanal and 9 VSB for bombing at Tulagi. The *Wasp* also sent out early in the morning 7 VT to bomb enemy installations on the eastern end of Florida Island and on Malaita. In addition to bombing flights which continued throughout the day, the carriers maintained combat patrols over both the carrier and the transport areas and vectored out many search flights.

The first flights from the *Wasp*, Admiral Noyes' flagship, were 16 fighters led by Lt. Comdr. Courtney Shands and 15 scout bombers led by Lt. Comdr. John Eldridge, Jr. These flights had been assigned specific targets and areas in Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, Halavo, Port Purvis, Haleta, and Bungana. They arrived over their targets just as day was breaking. The *Wasp* fighters headed first for enemy aircraft on the ground or water, destroying 15 patrol craft and 7 seaplane fighters. The bombers concentrated their attention on antiaircraft and shore batteries, putting many of them immediately out of action. Except for 1 fighter, all planes of the first flights returned to the *Wasp* at 0715 and landed on board. The missing VF made an emergency landing on the *Enterprise*, refueled and returned home later.

At 0700 9 TBFs, loaded with four 500-pound bombs each, left the *Wasp* to bomb Japanese resistance centers on Makambo Island and in the prison on Tulagi Island. These centers were silenced. Thereafter planes were launched as scheduled throughout the day, while a continuous attack group of four fighters and nine scout bombers was maintained over the transports in the Tulagi sector. These planes received orders as to targets from the Air Group Commander, Lt. Comdr. Wallace M. Beakley, above the island, or through him, from the Air Support Director Group aboard the *McCawley*. The *Enterprise* furnished the personnel for the Air Support Director. On August 2d, Lt. Comdr. William E. Townsend, Lt. (jg) G.E. Douglas, Ens. P.L. Rose and three radio men had been transferred with equipment to the staff of Admiral Turner in the *McCawley*. These officers set up the communications necessary for direct control of the Air Support Force assigned to Group XRAY off Guadalcanal, and were given the radio call "Orange Base One." Being in touch with the Senior Carrier Group Commander in the air over

Guadalcanal, "Orange Base One" soon came to control and handle radio traffic between all the ground forces and all supporting aircraft overhead. The Air Support Director Group of "Orange Base Two" in the *Neville*, which was stationed off Tulagi, acted only as a stand-by unit. The Fighter Director for the entire force was stationed in the *Chicago* and was called "Black Base."

The commander of the *Saratoga* Air Group, Comdr. Harry D. Felt, was assigned tactical command of the air units operating over the Guadalcanal area in the first few hours of the attack. His force consisted of 12 VF, led by Lt. Comdr. Leroy C. Simpler, and 23 VSB, led by Lt. Comdr. Louis J. Kirn. According to Comdr. Felt's report, the dawn attacks appeared to proceed in accord with previous instructions. Apparently all opposition was quickly silenced. A schooner type vessel, possibly a small seaplane tender, was set afire by VF strafing. Large fires were lighted at Kukum. Soon after his arrival over Guadalcanal, Comdr. Felt made a continuous reconnaissance of the area, determining that opposition did not exist in some places where it had been expected and that existing installations often varied considerably from descriptions in intelligence reports. For example, a radio station at Lunga Field which had been consistently reported as an antiaircraft battery appeared on close inspection to be a radar. The only enemy personnel he sighted were traveling in 2 armored cars and were apparently trying to reach the cover of thick woods on the edge of Lunga Field. He made one short strafing dive on the leading car before they reached cover. Just before leaving his station at 0955 to be relieved by the commander of the *Enterprise* Air Group, he noticed an enemy tent bivouac in the woods and directed a strafing attack against this area.

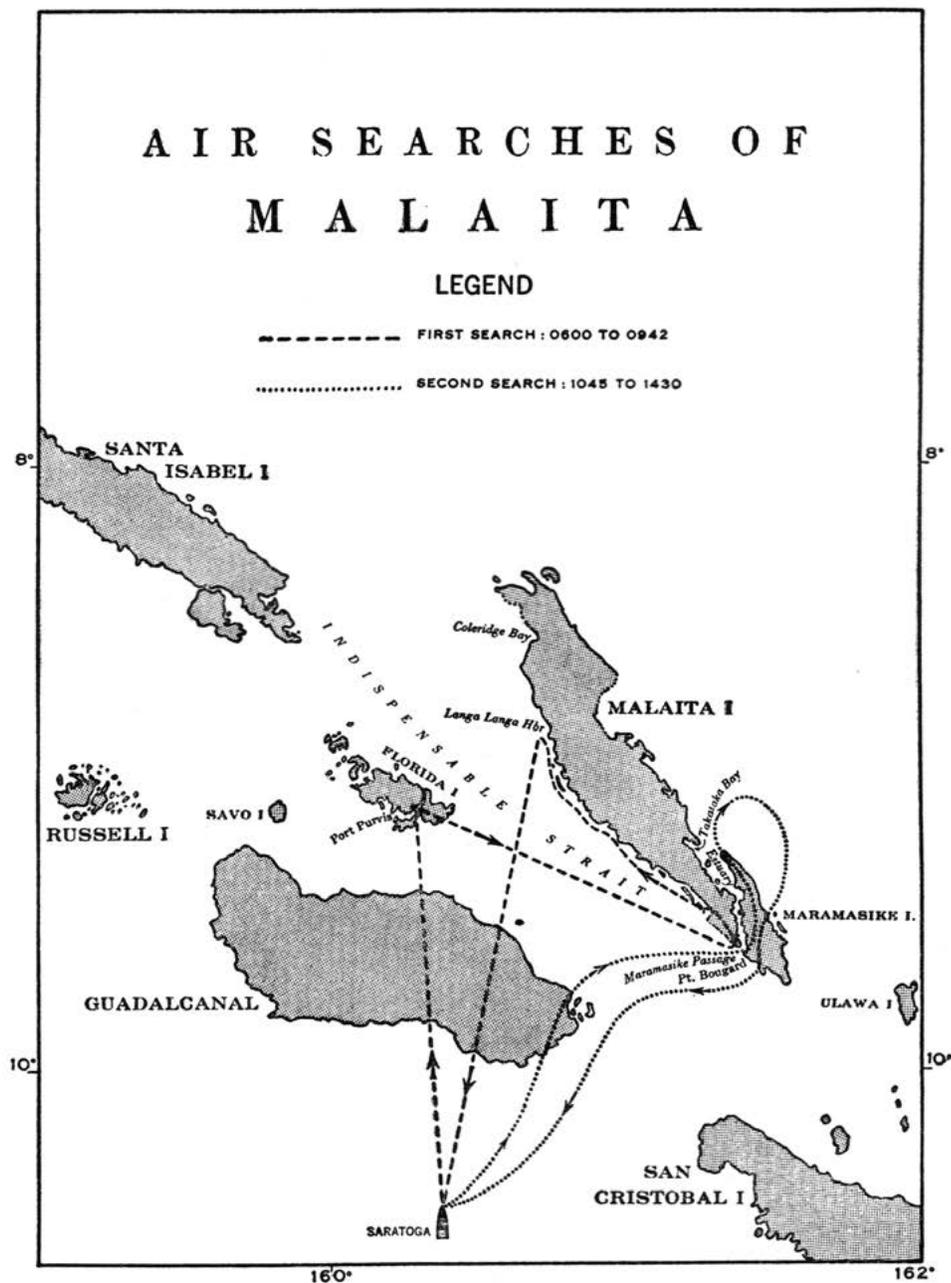
Following the *Saratoga's* fighters over Guadalcanal, 8 planes of VF-6 from the *Enterprise* strafed antiaircraft emplacements and buildings on Lunga Field, and small boats and supplies along the beach from Tenaru to Kukum. They encountered little opposition and observed no aircraft or patrol boats.

As the *Enterprise* had been designated Fighter Control Ship for the three carriers and was primarily responsible for the protection of the carriers against enemy attack, her support of the land forces in Guadalcanal and Tulagi was less extensive than that of the other two carriers. By the same token, her activities in attempting to repel Japanese raids on our transport groups, which will be described later, were more formidable.

At 0709 the *Enterprise* launched 8 torpedo planes to conduct a search of section 270-030° to a depth of 200 miles. The only enemy contact encountered on this search to the northwest was a small tanker which Ens. G. R. Stabelin, pilot, observed at 0740. He released a 500-pound bomb, scoring a near hit, and reserved 3 bombs for the remainder of the search. On radio instruction Ens. F. Mears, pilot, made an unsuccessful torpedo run and 2 strafing runs on the same ship. On the return flight the ship could not be located. Similarly 14 VTBs were sent out at 1347, with Lt. Comdr. Charles M. Jett as leader, to conduct a 200-mile search of section 270-015° from point XRAY (latitude 09°32' S., longitude 195°30' E.) and a 200-mile search of sector 345-090° from point YOKE (latitude 09°50' S., longitude 160°56' E.). All planes returned but reported sighting nothing.

On August 6th Admiral Noyes had amplified his operation plan by directing the *Saratoga* to send four

torpedo planes to search Maramasike Passage and Takataka Bay, Malaita Island, as support for the seaplane tender *Mackinac*. This mission was in addition to assigned tasks in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area. The planes, TBF-1s, carried eight 100-pound bombs and four incendiary clusters per plane. Torpedo Squadron EIGHT attached to the *Saratoga* made two flight over Malaita. The first, consisting of seven planes, took off at 0600 and, after bombing buildings at Port Purvis on Florida Island headed in the direction of Malaita. The passage through Maramasike Estuary was abandoned because of extremely bad weather. An approach was attempted over the mountains to the eastern side of the island but this also was impossible due to instrument conditions. The planes then flew north along the western coast of Malaita to Langa Langa Harbor, which they mistook for Coleridge Bay. After bombing a cluster of native huts there they returned to the carrier.



A later flight of torpedo planes from the *Saratoga* was, however, successful in crossing Malaita and in surveying Maramasike Passage and Estuary from end to end. No enemy ships or planes were sighted. About 2 miles south of Point Bougard on Maramasike Island the fliers noticed four substantial houses situated on a small bay. Eight white people were seen in this area, and they all waved white objects as the planes passed overhead. The flight departed from Malaita at 1350 after calling the *Mackinac* and informing her that the area had been searched and was apparently clear.

THE LANDINGS IN THE TULAGI AREA, AUGUST 7

0637	Signal "Land the landing force."
0706	Boats leave <i>Jackson</i> for Haleta.
0740	Landing at Haleta.
0740-55	<i>San Juan</i> , <i>Monssen</i> , and <i>Buchanan</i> bombard Tulagi.
0800	Raiders land on Beach BLUE, Tulagi.
0800	<i>San Juan</i> sights submarine.
0800-35	Mine sweepers bombard Gavutu and Bungana Island.
0845	Landing at Halavo.
1000-30	<i>San Juan</i> shells Gavutu twice.
1026	Landing boats for Gavutu leave assembly area.
1141	First wave leaves line of departure for Gavutu.
1200	Landing on Gavutu.
1200-1400	Right flank of landing held to beach by enemy fire.

Our plans contemplated roughly simultaneous landings by Squadron YOKE in the Tulagi area and by Squadron XRAY on Guadalcanal. The debarkation schedule had been carefully worked out to utilize all the boats and landing craft carried by the transports and cargo ships. The boats available included 303 Diesel-driven "T" boats (Higgins Eureka), 116 gasoline-driven "TR" boats, and 48 "WLs."¹⁵ In addition there was a number of amphibious tractors. The operation of these craft appears to have proceeded smoothly throughout the morning. Only when supplies brought by the boats began to pile up on the beaches did difficulties arise.

Although a smaller number of vessels and of troops was involved in the Tulagi area, the operations there were considerably more complex than on Guadalcanal. On the latter it was merely a matter of pouring first troops and then supplies onto a single beach. In the Tulagi region several landings were to be made, necessitating a more elaborate schedule for both landing boats and for fire support.

15	Designation	Length	Breadth	Draft	Weight	Engine	Speed	Armament	Troop capacity
				tons	h.p.	knots			
	LCP(L)	36'	10'8"	3'	6 ¹ / ₄	1-225	10	2-.30 mg	30-36
	LCV	36'4"	10'9 ¹ / ₂ "	3'	6 ¹ / ₂	1-225	10	None	36 or 1-ton truck
	LCM(2)	45'	14'	3'	29	2-100	8 ¹ / ₂	2-.50 mg	100 or 13 ¹ / ₂ -ton tank or 15 tons of cargo

The main landing in this area was to be made at Beach BLUE on the southwest shore of Tulagi, which of all the islands bore the most marks of civilization. On its southeastern end were grouped the physical appurtenances of the white man's rule, including a cricket ground which was soon to see a grimmer game. The approach to Beach BLUE, however, was dominated from the west by a promontory jutting south from Florida Island, near which lay the village of Haleta.¹⁶ In order to insure that the enemy would not use this position to enfilade our boats during their landing on Beach BLUE, we had to make a preliminary landing on this promontory.

Our second principal landing in the Florida area was to be made on the island of Gavutu. Coral reefs almost surrounded that island, and the only practicable beach lay on the northeast side. During their approach to this beach our boats would be dangerously exposed to fire from the island, from another Florida peninsula to the east, and, in the final stage of their approach, from Tanambogo. In order to reduce this danger as much as possible, other troops had first to be put ashore at Halavo, on the Florida peninsula, whence they could provide a certain amount of support for our boats.

Our program for the Tulagi area therefore ran somewhat as follows:

At 0740 (H-20 min.) one rifle company and one machine-gun platoon (from Combat Team A, Second Marines) were to land at a cove¹⁷ near Haleta and hold the point to the southeast.

At 0800 (H-hour) the First Raider Battalion was to be landed at Beach BLUE on Tulagi. After occupying the western end of the island, our men were to fire a green star shell cluster as a signal for a naval bombardment of the eastern end of the island, which they were then to occupy. The Raiders were to be supported in taking Tulagi by the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines. From Hill 281 at the southeastern end of the island they were expected to support, by howitzer fire, our troops in their assault on Gavutu. It was anticipated that most of the Raiders could then be reembarked for an assault upon Makambo Island. The entire latter part of this schedule proved impossible, as will be seen.

At 0830 (H plus 30 min.) one rifle company and one machine-gun platoon (the rest of Combat Team A, Second Marines) were to land at Halavo. They were to support by their fire the attack of the First Parachute Battalion on Gavutu.

At 1200 (H plus 4 hrs.) the First Parachute Battalion was to be landed on Gavutu. After seizing that island they were to signal for a naval bombardment of Tanambogo, after which they were expected to rush the causeway connecting the two islands and establish control.

A schedule had been worked out to provide preliminary bombardment and fire support for all these operations.

With the signal to land the landing force, the transports sprang into orderly activity. The order "Away all boats" was passed, and within a few minutes most of the boats except the tank lighters had been

16 See chart, pages 60-61.

17 W7744 on gridded chart, page 60.

lowered. At the same time the fire support group was relieved of its screening duties and the various ships moved off to take their assigned positions to provide fire support for the landings.

The Haleta landing

The first landing, scheduled to be made at 0740 immediately east of Haleta, was to be carried out by Company B, Combat Team A (Second Marines) from the *President Jackson*. This company was under the command of Capt. E.J. Crane. The boats were put over and lowered and the troops embarked without incident. At 0706, well on schedule, they left the *Jackson* for the line of departure, which was marked by the *Monssen* and *Buchanan*.

At 0730 they left the line of departure and started in, guided by Pilot Officer C.E. Spencer, RAAF. At the same time the *San Juan* began her bombardment of a small island to the south of Haleta, firing 100 rounds while the boats were moving in from 2,700 yards to 1,300 yards of the beach (W7744). This had been marked by our cruiser planes with colored smoke bombs. During the same interval the *Buchanan* was providing close fire support by pouring 100 rounds onto the promontory to the west of the beach (W7443) and the *Monssen* was bombarding a hill (W8341) on the promontory to the east which overlooks the western end of Tulagi. Fire lifted as the Marines approached the beach, our boats touched at 0740 and our men went ashore without opposition.

The landing on Beach Blue

As soon as they ceased fire the supporting vessels shifted their position to provide fire support for our principle landing at Beach BLUE. This was not the best beach on the island, but this was precisely its merit. According to Maj. Justice Chambers, U.S.M.C.,¹⁸ it “was probably the last place that the Japs thought we would land. It was completely surrounded by coral reefs, and this made it necessary to halt the boats on the edge of the reef. Then everybody had to plunge into the water and wade to shore. This is no fun, as we had found out during our training in Samoa, because coral reefs are dotted with holes and at any moment you are likely to step into water that is over your head. The best beach on Tulagi was at the other end of the island and the Japanese had clearly expected that any hostile landing would be made there. So they had very lightly fortified the beach where we landed.” The beach, however, proved awkward and inconvenient for the unloading of supplies when failure to capture the eastern end of the island the first day prevented immediate use of the facilities there as had been planned.

While the first landing at Haleta was taking place, our transports were making ready for the assault on Beach BLUE. At 0717 the one hundred-odd men of the First Raider Battalion carried by the *Neville* started clambering down the sides of the ship into the landing boats and then left for the line of departure, while the *Heywood* embarked about 100 of the Raiders in boats provided by the *Zeilin*.

Meanwhile the main body of the battalion had mustered in the embarking areas of the four destroyer transports, *Little*, *Colhoun*, *Gregory*, and *McKean*. As the men were waiting to enter the boats a message

18 Oral statement recorded in Office of Naval Records.

was read them from Lt. Col. Merritt A. Edson, who commanded the battalion. It contained the news that on August 6th we had intercepted a propaganda broadcast from Tokyo in which the speaker kept saying, "Where are the United States Marines hiding? The Marines are supposed to be the finest soldiers in the world, but no one has seen them yet."

As soon as the men were in the boats, the destroyer transports stood in toward the line of departure, which they were to mark. Presently they were in position, the *Little* acting as control vessel.

Shortly after 0740 the *San Juan* began a preliminary bombardment of Hill 208 in about the center of Tulagi's southwest coast—a position which was to cause us a great deal of trouble. She fired 560 rounds from a position bearing 210° from the hill. At 0750 the *Monssen* and *Buchanan* moved in to give 5 minutes of close fire support while the boats were moving in from 2,700 to 1,300 yards from the beach. They expended 200 rounds each. While our ships were bombarding the southwestern slopes of the island a scout-bombing squadron bombed the northeastern side from 0750 to 0800. Other planes from our cruiser had meanwhile marked the limits of the beach with smoke bombs.

Five minutes before the hour our naval fire ceased. While our boats were closing the thousand yards which separated them from the shore a young Marine was heard to mutter, "Here's where the Japs find out where the U.S. Marines have been hiding!" Soon the boats were grinding on the reef; the Raiders leaped overboard and waded ashore. This was at 0800, exactly on schedule. The enemy was taken completely by surprise and there was no opposition. Only one man was hit by a sniper's fire as the Marines splashed ashore, climbed the steep rise of the beach on a 500-yard front and plunged into the thick jungle growth behind it.

This first wave was composed of Company B under Maj. Lloyd Nickerson and Company D under Major Chambers, who was later, upon being wounded, relieved by his executive officer, Capt. W. Sperling. Avoiding the nearby trails, which were dominated by cliffs, these two companies headed directly across the island before turning southeast along the far shore where Company B quickly secured the village of Sasapi. The second wave, which consisted of Companies A and C, commanded by Capt. L.W. Walt and Maj. Kenneth Bailey, respectively, landed shortly afterwards and began the advance southeast along the near shore.

Our ships had just ceased their bombardment when, almost at H-hour, the *San Juan* sighted a "submarine submerged" standing out of Gavutu Harbor. She at once increased speed to the maximum available to attack. Four minutes later the *San Juan*, proceeding at 25 knots, dropped a pattern of six 300-pound depth charges and one 600-pound charge. She then maneuvered to pass through the area again and to take position for the next scheduled firing. A large oil slick was noted on the surface, but although several screening destroyers searched the area, no further evidence of the submarine or of its possible destruction was seen. Similar reports of enemy submarine activity continued throughout the next 2 days without confirmation.

The *San Juan*'s next scheduled firing was to give further support to the two companies advancing along the south shore of the island by another 5-minute bombardment of Hill 208. Her shells failed, however, to dislodge the Japanese, who were well dug in, so that when Companies A and C reached that point they

found their advance held up by heavy machine-gun fire from the hill. Meanwhile, the *Buchanan* was shelling the Tulagi radio station, while the *Monssen* poured a hundred shells into Japanese anti-aircraft positions south of the hospital. A little later the *San Juan* moved down and shelled the prison.

Fire support MIKE's only casualties during the morning occurred at 1135 when the *San Juan's* Gun Mount No. 1 exploded, killing 5 men and injuring 13. A fire which followed the explosion was quickly extinguished, and the *San Juan*, the *Buchanan*, and the *Monssen*, continued to provide fire support on Tulagi and Gavutu as requested by the shore fire control parties.

At 0830 Combat Team Two of the Fifth Marines under Col. H.E. Rosecrans landed from the *Neville*, and advanced rapidly behind the Raiders. At 0900 two tanks were put ashore from the *President Jackson*. The *Heywood* had started unloading combat and medical gear at the same time she had debarked the first Raiders, and the A-2 Medical Company soon followed the others ashore. By 1012 all assigned waves had landed on the beach and the *Little* left her station at the line of departure to fuel from the *Neville*. Between 1004 and 1239 the *President Jackson* fueled the destroyer-transport *McKean* and, after interruptions because of the enemy air attacks, the *Colhoun*.

Throughout the day the Screening Group, under the command of Admiral Crutchley, engaged in patrolling the waters around Transport Groups XRAY and YOKE to protect them against enemy surface, air, or submarine attack. The screen consisted of the cruisers *Australia* (F), *Canberra*, *Hobart*, and *Chicago*, and the destroyers *Selfridge*, *Blue*, *Helm*, *Henley*, *Bagley*, *Mugford*, *Ralph Talbot*, *Jarvis* and *Patterson*. The destroyer-transports, the *Colhoun*, *Little*, *McKean*, and *Gregory*, joined in the antisubmarine patrol of the transports of Group YOKE.

The Halavo landing

After Beach BLUE, our next landing was scheduled for 0830 at Halavo. This was to be made by the remainder of Combat Team A of the Second Marines from the *Jackson* (the other part of the team had landed at Haleta.) These troops had left the transport as promptly as possible, but it was some 7 miles to their line of departure and they were somewhat late in arrival.

Fire support for this landing was to be provided by Mine Squadron TWO, under the command of Comdr. W.H. Hartt, Jr. For this task the squadron was divided into two groups: the *Hovey*, *Hopkins*, and *Trever* were to bombard Gavutu Island, while Bungana Island was the target of the *Southard* and *Zane*. These two groups moved off in column, endeavoring to provide some protection to the boats by remaining between them and these two islands, from which enemy fire was to be expected.

A little before 0800 the boats were sighted standing east toward the line of departure, and the *Hovey*, *Hopkins*, and *Trever* turned to form on a line of bearing 270° on a northwesterly course to close their target. As they did so, a battery on Gavutu opened fire at a range of about 4,000 yards. Comdr. Hartt on the *Hopkins* immediately hoisted the emergency signal to commence fire. At about the same time the *Southard* and *Zane* met fire from a gun on Bungana Island. While our two minesweeper groups were returning the enemy fire, the first wave of landing boats from the *Jackson* passed between



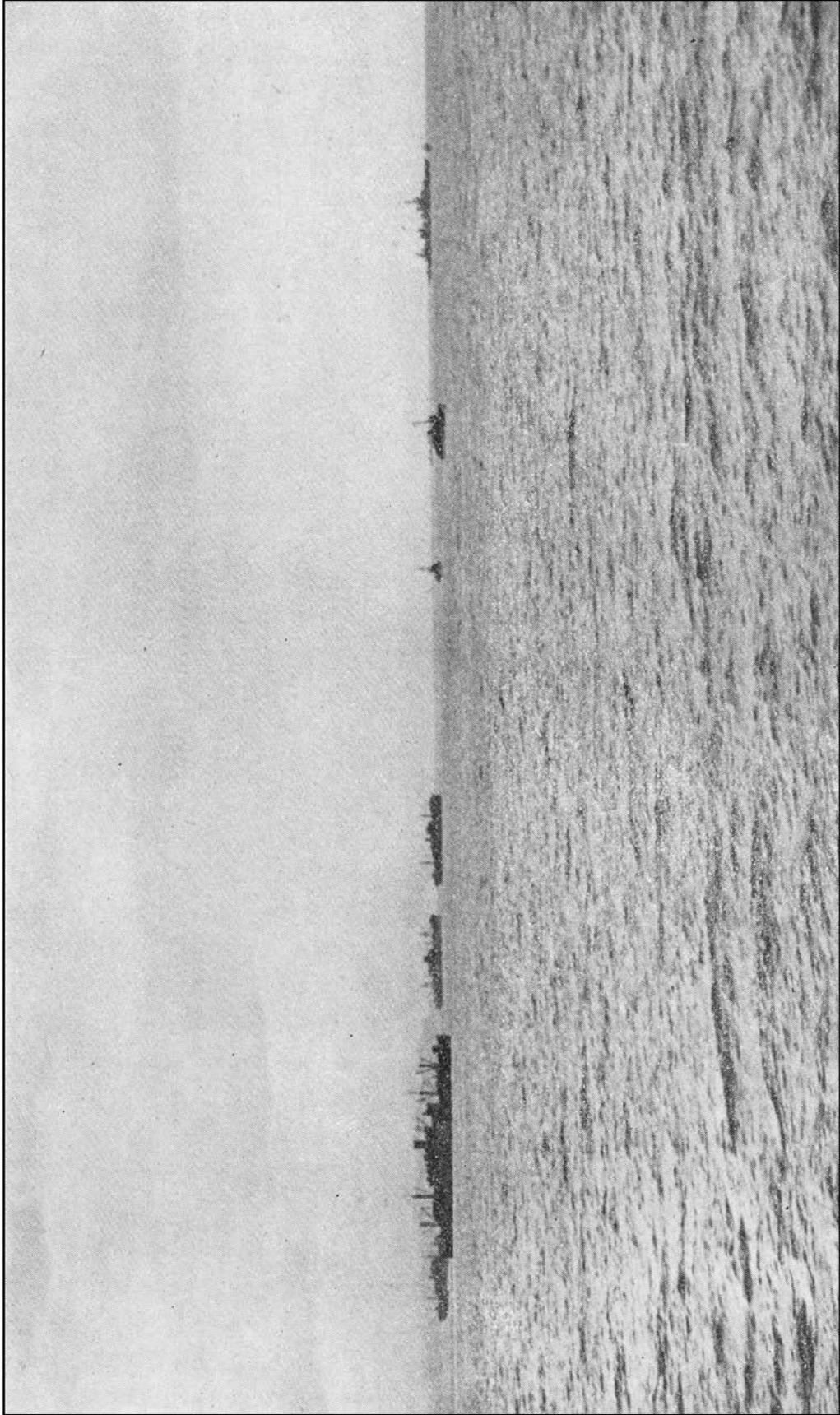
Landing at Haletta, Florida Island.



Reinforcements wading ashore at Beach Blue.



Congestion on Beach Red.



Transports and screen lying off Tulagi.



Boats landing at Beach Red.

them on their way to the line of departure. The *Hopkins*, *Trever*, and *Hovey* turned right 90° into column to cross 200 yards to the north of the line of departure and to offer our boats what protection they could. The enemy guns found the range of our ships and their fire crossed them several times, but without scoring any hits. There were numerous very close misses, but the shells were of small caliber and their light bursting charge did no damage at a few yards distance. our own 3-inch and 20-mm. shells were landing on the islands. The *Hopkins* was firing at the beach line of Gavutu, and also landed several near-hits on top of Gavutu hill near an enemy gun. At about 0830 the *Trever* landed a salvo very close to the battery on the hill, which then ceased fire. Meanwhile Comdr. Hartt had received a message from Capt. Ashe, Commander Transport Group YOKE, asking the position of the enemy gun, so that he could have it bombed. At 0835 our squadron ceased fire and withdrew to the southwest to begin its assigned sweeping operations. At about the same time one of our scout bombers scored a hit near the battery and demolished a building on the hilltop.

Our landing boats had meanwhile left their line of departure, and by 0845 (15 minutes behind schedule, due to the long distance from their transport) the Marines were going ashore at Halavo without opposition. Soon they were in position to give what fire support they could when our troops should land on Gavutu.

After ceasing fire our minesweepers moved off to begin their sweeping. Their schedule called for two groups to sweep the area south of Gavutu for moored mines, beginning at about 0930. In the early afternoon they were to sweep off Guadalcanal. Before 0900 they were streaming their sweeping gear, and operations started a little later. The channel between Gavutu and Bungana was swept, then the rest of the area, without finding a single mine. Soon after our ships started sweeping, the *San Juan* came up and fired over 800 rounds onto Gavutu to protect them from any interference from the island.¹⁹

The Gavutu landing

The landing on Gavutu was planned for about 1200 (H plus 4 hours) and was to be made by the First Parachute Battalion (Maj. Robert H. Williams, USMC, commanding) from the *Heywood*. At about 1000 that transport began disembarking 394 officers and men of the battalion into 12 *Heywood* boats and 1 ramp boat from the *Neville*. These were formed into 3 waves:

First wave—Lieut. R.E. Bennink:

4 TP²⁰ boats, carrying 130 Marines.

Second wave—Ens. G.C. Brown:

4 TR boats, carrying 130 Marines.

19 Admiral Scott, reporting as Commander Fire Support Group MIKE, says, "Upon request from the mine sweeping division the *San Juan* between 1004 and 1028 silenced an enemy gun on Gavutu Island which had interfered with sweeping operations." However, the Executive Officer of the *Hopkins*, Lieut. W.T. Dutton, says specifically that no enemy opposition was encountered during the sweeping operations, although he mentions the *San Juan*'s bombardment of Gavutu. It seems that the *San Juan* was silencing the battery which had previously fired on our minesweepers, not knowing that it had been dive-bombed, or else that the bombardment was at the request of the fire control party on Tulagi. At the request of Rear Admiral Scott, Admiral Crutchley detailed the *Henley* to assist in silencing the guns on Gavutu and Bungana.

20 Landing craft, personnel (with ramp), LCP(R)—same as "T" boat, or LCP(L), except that it has a ramp 42 inches wide for debarkation of personnel. Sometimes known as "Modified Higgins Eureka."

Third wave—Lieut. D.W. Ellis, Jr.:

4 T boats and 1 TP boat, carrying 140 Marines

About an hour later the *Heywood* completed unloading “the Tulagi gear” and got underway at 15 knots for Guadalcanal, where she was to land the Special Weapons Battalion and other troops and supplies.

About 1026 the first wave of the landing boats left the assembly area and started the 7-mile run to the line of departure. It was followed at 5-minute intervals by the other two waves. During this hour’s run the boats bucked choppy seas and by the time they arrived at the line of departure all personnel and equipment were completely drenched. Many Marines were seasick, and some of the equipment was in poor condition.

Our planes had bombed Gavutu-Tanambogo at dawn, and Gavutu had been shelled several times during the forenoon. In the half hour between 1000 and 1030 the *San Juan* had shelled it twice, firing a total of 815 rounds. Now, while our boats were making their long run to the line of departure, our planes repeated their bombing and strafing. All this bombardment, however, failed to drive the enemy from his dugouts near the beach and on the hill. Furthermore, the resistance encountered by our troops on Tulagi prevented their supporting the landing with howitzer fire from Hill 281, as planned.

The boats gathered at the line of departure for their difficult run to the beach. Because the island is almost surrounded by coral shoals, the landing had to be made on the northeastern side of Gavutu, not far from the causeway connecting it with Tanambogo. Consequently our boats had to pass along the eastern shore of the island, between it and the promontory of Florida on which Halavo lay, then turn sharply in toward the beach. During this turn they would be exposed to fire from Tanambogo.

Lieut. Bennink’s first wave left the line of departure at 1141. At 1152, while our boats were running north, the *San Juan* opened fire for 4 minutes from bearing 100° from the island, placing 280 rounds on the northeastern side of Gavutu, while the *Monssen* and the *Buchanan* also joined in giving fire support.²¹

The wreck of a 4-motored Japanese bomber lay on the coral reef just south of Gavutu, and from it came sniper fire as our boats passed. (This nuisance persisted for 2 days, until we eliminated it by mortar fire from the island.) As our boats turned west about 200 yards from the beach they found it littered with debris and small fires and very difficult to distinguish. At the same time they were greeted by scattered gunfire. When our boats were only 100 yards from the beach the supporting fire from our vessels lifted and the fire from shore grew heavier.

“These boats intended to land at the concrete seaplane ramps,” says General Vandegrift,²² “but because the heavy naval gunfire and bombing preparation had tumbled huge blocks of cement in the path of

21 The reports of the boat wave commanders say that the destroyers gave fire support at this time, but the report of the Commanding Officer Fire Support Group MIKE, does not list them as firing. It does not appear to have been part of the plan, according to which they were to open fire on Tanambogo upon a signal from the landing party.

22 First Marine Division Commander’s Report.

the leading waves, several of the boats were forced to land along the concrete dock to the right.” The boats of the first wave came into the beach at 3 points about 25 yards apart, all near the dock. They touched shore at exactly 1200 plus 15 seconds. The Japanese let them land, but as our men started to cross the beach many were cut down by heavy fire. The boats meanwhile retracted without casualties and stood out.

The second wave, at the request of the senior Marine officer, came in closely behind the first and touched the beach only a minute and a half later. Three Marines were hit before they could leave the boat and others were shot down in the water as they splashed ashore. While the boats were backing off one was hit and sunk, apparently by a hand grenade thrown from shore, and two of its crew were killed.

Because of the opposition our men were encountering, the third wave followed in closely and landed at 1206, 8 minutes ahead of the scheduled time. Again several Marines were hit in the boats and the rest rushed ashore in the face of heavy fire. One out of every 10 men who landed on this beach became a casualty. A hill on Gavutu 148 feet high and another 120 feet high on Tanambogo commanded the beach. These hills were honeycombed with dugout fortresses like those which our Raiders had encountered on Tulagi. The Japanese manning them were well armed with machine guns, rifles, and automatic rifles. Their fire was particularly heavy on those boats which landed along the concrete dock to the right of the beach and our men there were held up for almost 2 hours. Those on the left flank, however, advanced slowly inland against bitter opposition.

Because of the heavy sniper fire, our boats had withdrawn some 1,000 yards before making rendezvous. They then administered first aid to the wounded and stood by to await any call from the beach. When Lieut. Bennink came through the fire to land at about 1300 he found one platoon of Marines under cover of debris along the dock, held up by the heavy fire. Major Williams, who had been in charge of the landing force, had been wounded, and Lieut. Bennink had to wait half an hour before he was able to contact Maj. C.A. Miller, now in command, in regard to the disposal of boats and supplies. Meanwhile Lieut. Ellis had also brought his boat in, and was instructed to transfer the wounded to a damaged boat and send them to the *Neville*. While his boat was withdrawing, two of his crew were wounded. During this time enemy fire from both Florida and Gavutu had become so heavy that our boats at the rendezvous had been forced to withdraw farther down the channel.

THE LANDING ON GUADALCANAL, AUGUST 7²³

0903-0909	Naval bombardment of shore
0913	First troops land on Beach RED.
1100	Ships move in closer to beach.
1200	<i>Heywood</i> arrives at Beach RED
1320	Japanese high level bombers attack.
1500	Japanese dive bombers attack.

23 See chart, page 28..

In contrast to the fighting in Tulagi-Gavutu, the occupation of Guadalcanal proceeded with almost amazing smoothness. There were two reasons for this. First, we had expected that we should encounter the greater resistance on Guadalcanal and had concentrated the major part of our landing forces there.²⁴ Second, the enemy retired to the hills of Guadalcanal and allowed us to establish ourselves along the northern shore; whereas in Tulagi and the other small islands off Florida the enemy was trapped and, refusing to surrender, fought almost literally to the last man.

Zero hour had been set by Admiral Turner at 0910, and some minutes before that time our boats had gathered at the line of departure, marked since 0840 by 2 destroyers. Our cruiser planes had dropped smoke bombs indicating the limits of the beach. Fire support for the landing was to begin 10 minutes before zero hour and was to last 5 minutes, while our boats were moving in from 2,700 to 1,300 yards from the beach. Soon after 0900 it began. The *Quincy* covered the area west of Beach RED to a depth of 200 yards and assisted the *Astoria* in covering the western third of the beach. The *Dewey* and *Hull* bombarded the eastern third of the beach and *Ellet* and *Wilson* the center. Immediately after our troops landed, the two destroyer sections were to take positions, respectively east and west of the 1,000-yard-wide boat lane, to provide 5 minutes of close fire support, while the *Astoria* was to follow the westward progress of our troops along the beach and provide whatever support should be necessary. This latter part of the program proved unnecessary, but while our boats were landing, each cruiser expended 45 rounds of 8-inch and 200 5-inch and each destroyer fired 200 rounds.

The fire-support ships had received instructions not to fire on wharves, pontoons, jetties, bridges, or lighters which were offering no threat to our operations. They were ordered to use illuminating projectiles for incendiary purposes against inflammable targets such as fuel dumps. In order not to endanger our boats, only the percussion feature of all projectiles was to be used. This order was given despite the acknowledgment that 5-inch 25-caliber projectiles without base fuses do not detonate satisfactorily on impact.

The barrage ceased at 0909, and at 0913, 3 minutes after zero hour, the first troops landed without opposition on Beach RED between Lunga and Koli Points. Within an hour a beachmaster was established and was in communication with Admiral Turner in the *McCawley*. Shortly thereafter a despatch was received reporting that submarines were en route to attack our ships and that 18 enemy heavy bombers were also on their way. The latter part of this warning proved correct.

General Vandegrift, who had his division headquarters while afloat in the *McCawley*, took command on Guadalcanal soon after the landing. The Assistant Division Commander, General William H. Rupertus, coordinated operations in the Tulagi-Gavutu-Florida area, first from the *Neville* and later from Beach BLUE in Tulagi.

By the time all troops were ashore, the minesweepers had made considerable progress in sweeping the

²⁴ "The attack on Guadalcanal was premised on an estimate of defensive strength which proved entirely erroneous."—First Marine Division Commander's Report.

Tulagi area without finding any mines. Since it appeared that the enemy had not mined the waters around the islands, it was decided to facilitate the unloading of cargo by moving our transports closer to the beach without waiting for the area to be swept. Accordingly our ships came in and anchored in about 30 fathoms of water, some 2,000 yards off Beach RED, about 1100. Later (1315) our minesweepers began sweeping Lengo Channel and were only well started when the first air raid occurred.

The *Heywood*, having completed unloading equipment at Tulagi, came up at 1200 and began disembarking troops and unloading stores in boats provided by ships of the XRAY Squadron. This task proceeded smoothly except for interruption by two air attacks at about 1320 and 1500.

Despite the interruptions to unloading caused by the enemy's air attacks, occupation of the Guadalcanal shore front proceeded expeditiously. During the day about 11,000 Marines were shuttled ashore. Indeed, supplies were piling up on Beach RED faster than could be moved away, and by dark there were about 100 loaded boats and 50 more waiting off shore. Although work continued during the night under lights, it finally became necessary to call off the unloading because of the congestion. "In view of subsequent events this delay was of serious import," Capt. L.F. Reifsnider, commanding Transport Group XRAY, reported. Aside from this self-imposed obstruction, operations at Guadalcanal proceeded according to plan with no effective opposition by the enemy.

ENEMY COUNTERATTACKS BY AIR, AUGUST 7

- 1045 Coastwatcher's warning of enemy air attack.
- 1300 *Enterprise* fighters sight enemy.
- 1315 *Chicago*'s radar picks up enemy planes.
- 1320 22 Japanese high-level bombers attack transports.
- 1430 *Enterprise* fighters sight second formation of raiders.
- 1500 *Saratoga* fighters sight enemy.
- 1500 10 Japanese dive bombers attack transports.

At 1045 our ships had received a report that a flight of enemy twin-engine bombers had passed Bougainville Island on a southeast course, evidently heading for Guadalcanal. At once the signal was hoisted, "Repel air attack."

At 1315 the *Chicago*'s radar picked up the attacking planes at a distance of 43 miles, bearing 315° T. Five minutes later 20 to 25 high level, twin-engine bombers were sighted coming over Savo Island at 10,000 to 14,000 feet. On the *President Adams* it was remarked that they resembled DC-3 Douglas transports and that there were finished in a bright silver color, exactly like commercial air liners. The planes were sighted by our ships off Florida, but they were out of range. Apparently the enemy was interested only in the larger targets presented by our array of transports of Guadalcanal.

As the planes approached this group, screening ships and transports opened fire. One enemy bomber staggered, then crashed into the sea. Then a second crashed in flames, and third commenced to lose altitude and was last seen gliding downward over the hills of Guadalcanal trailing smoke. The

remaining planes, attempting a pattern bombing, showed very poor marksmanship. At the same time, scattered clouds at 10,000 feet made it extremely difficult for our ships to appraise the effectiveness of the anti-aircraft fire. Within 10 minutes the enemy raiders had disappeared behind Guadalcanal's mountain peaks, and the ships ceased fire. No ship had been hit, but the *Dewey* shortly afterwards picked up the pilot of one of our carrier fighters which had been knocked down in the battle overhead. It was estimated that the ships' anti-aircraft fire had accounted for two Japanese planes destroyed and two more damaged.

A little over an hour later, at approximately 1445, 7 to 10 Japanese single-engined, dive-bombers suddenly attacked the ships. From Guadalcanal it appeared that they approached from the direction of Tulagi. Flying high above Squadron YOKE off Florida, they dived steeply on Squadron XRAY off Guadalcanal. One scored a hit on the *Mugford*, damaging her superstructure deck just forward and to starboard of No. 3 5-inch gun. Although considerable damage was done and a fire was started, repairs were effected in a few hours. Personnel casualties were 8 men killed, 14 missing, and 17 wounded. The plane which bombed the *Mugford* almost immediately fell a victim to the anti-aircraft fire of our other ships.

It is apparent from some of the ships' reports that they felt they had not been adequately protected by our own aircraft during these raids. The reports from the carrier groups do not support that contention. Aside from one instance of incorrect vectoring noted below, the record shows that our fighters engaged enemy planes almost continuously during the afternoon of the 7th. If their activity was not seen by our ships, it was possibly because much of it occurred high in the sky and many miles beyond the ships' range of observation.

The *Enterprise*, as primary Fighter Control Ship, was responsible for directing the combat patrol over all three carriers. The combat patrol over the transports, however, was directed from the cruiser *Chicago* which had been provided with a control unit of several officers and men by the *Saratoga*. Fighter planes for the two patrols were supplied by these two carriers, while the *Wasp's* fighters mostly patrolled the carriers. This division of control and operation of the combat patrols apparently created some confusion, because the fighters when over the carriers were directed to take orders from the *Enterprise*, but when they proceeded relatively few miles to positions over the transports they were to obey the director on the *Chicago*. This confusion was not relieved by the fact that the *Chicago's* radar, operating in a landlocked area, did not function dependably.

At 1200 on August 7th, about an hour before the first counterattack by the enemy, the *Enterprise* launched six fighters, Lieut. Louis H. Bauer leading, for patrol over the transports. According to the *Enterprise* report, this flight passed above the transports either just before or during the first enemy raid but received a vector of 205° which took them directly away from the attack.

Meanwhile, the *Enterprise* had launched another flight of eight fighters at 1212, with Lt. (jg) Theodore S. Gay as leader, to maintain combat patrol over the carriers. At 1300 when they were patrolling at 18,000 feet four of the planes were vectored to Tulagi, where they sighted an enemy formation of

“about 30” twin-engined bombers protected by an unknown number of Zeros at 12,000 feet going north from the south tip of Florida Island. Interception was made. One bomber was shot down by Lieut. V.P. DePoix and four others were probably damaged before the Zeros forced our fighters to take refuge in nearby clouds. Although several of our F4F-4s were badly shot up, all returned to the carrier except Machinist J.A. Achten, who was reported missing in action. He was later picked up in the water off Tulagi.

At about the same time eight scout bombers from the *Enterprise*, Lieut. Carl H. Horenburger leading, were attacked by two Zeros. The free gunners shot down one of the enemy planes in flames. The second Zero was lost to view when the SBDs went into a cloud.

Another of the *Enterprise*'s flights was not so successful. That led by Lt. (jg) Gordon E. Firebaugh for combat patrol over the transports sighted about 22 enemy bombers and 10 Zeros to the southeast tip of Santa Isabel island. The Zeros immediately attacked three of our fighters, while the remaining three got through to attack the enemy bombers. Ens. Robert M. Disque shot down one bomber and Radio Electrician Thomas W. Rhodes destroyed a Zero. Of our six fighters, three, Lt. Firebaugh, Machinist William H. Warden, and William J. Stephenson, Jr., Aviation Pilot First Class, did not return. Lt. Firebaugh and Machinist Warden made forced landings and were subsequently recovered.

A flight launched at 1354, led by Machinist Donald E. Runyon, succeeded, however, in cutting deeply into the enemy's second formation of raiders. About 1430 these four fighters saw a dive-bomber attack developing near Lunga Point. They attacked the enemy, Machinist Runyon shooting down two bombers and Ens. Harry A. March, Jr., and Howard S. Packard, Aviation Pilot First Class, netting one each. This flight, which included two other fighters which had been serving as escorts to the Air Group Commander, returned to the carriers and later that afternoon took off again for patrol over the transport screen group. Ens. Earl W. Cook and Machinist Patrick L. Nagle remained too long over the ships and ran out of gas while trying to find the *Enterprise* in the semidarkness. The manner in which these two pilots were lost is told in Lieut. Bauer's report for VF-6:

“At about 1830 (August 7th) Ens. Earl Walter Cook reported that Machinist Patrick Leo Nagle was making a water landing about 20 miles south and slightly east of the southeast tip of Guadalcanal. Ens. Cook reported that he could see Machinist Nagle's plane land in the water but that it was too dark to determine if he had been able to get out his rubber boat. Ens. Cook then requested a vector and was instructed to fly course 260. This was later changed to 250 and he was instructed to climb to 7,000 feet and link up the ship by YE.²⁵ Ens. Cook reported no success with his YE and he was informed that the ship's lights were being turned on and to reduce altitude below the cloud layer in order to see them. The signal searchlight was also directed upward. Ens. Cook reported that he had reduced altitude below the cloud layer but that no lights were visible. At 1915 Ens. Cook reported that he had run out of fuel and was turning on his landing light to make a water landing. His landing was not seen by the lookouts and nothing further was heard by radio. An intensive search the next day failed to reveal any

25 Homing radio beacon.

sign of either Machinist Nagle or Ens. Cook.”

The action of the *Saratoga*'s fighters included a flight of 8 F4F-4s, which took off from the carrier at 1203 for patrol over the transports. Lieut. James J. Southerland, leading his division, which consisted of Ens. R.L. Price, Lt. (jg) C.A. Tabberer and Ens. D.A. Innis, contacted the enemy over Savo Island, while being vectored at 12,000 feet to investigate a reported approach of enemy aircraft. Just as our fighters sighted a large flight of Japanese twin-engine bombers close in at the same altitude, they were attacked by enemy escort fighters who had an altitude advantage. Unhappily, Lieut. Southerland had no time to gain altitude. Lieut. Southerland, Lt. (jg) Tabberer and Ens. Price did not return from the fight. Ens. Innis got home with his plane badly shot up and reported that he damaged one Zero.

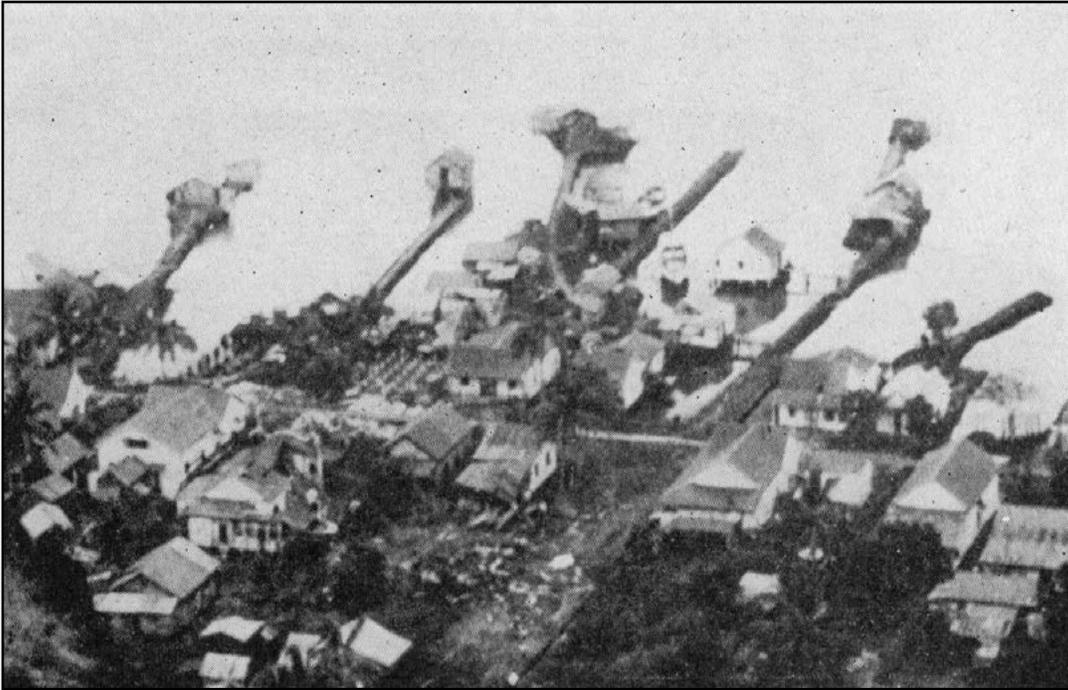
The other division of this flight from the *Saratoga* was led by Lieut. Herbert S. Brown and consisted of Ens. F.J. Blair, Lt. (jg) W.M. Holt and Ens. J.R. Daly. It was vectored onto the same suspected enemy aircraft at 12,000 feet. It also simultaneously sighted the enemy bombers and was attacked by Zeros. Lieut. Brown was seriously wounded by gunfire but managed to bring his plane back to the carrier, reporting that he had damaged at least one of the five Zeros which had attacked him. Ens. Blair, Lieut. Brown's wingman, eluded the Zeros by taking cloud cover and then attacked the enemy bombers. He reported that either Lt. (jg) Holt or Ens. Daly, who failed to return, shot down two of the bombers, and Ens. Blair saw flame in the bomb bay of one of the bombers he attacked. Ens. Daly was rescued from the water by the *Chicago*. The enemy bombers, it was said, flew in a very tight formation and dropped a good pattern, but distant from their target.

During the second counterattack that afternoon, the *Saratoga*'s fighters fared much better. At about 1500 Lieut. Richard Gray, leading, with Ens. M.K. Bright, Lieut. Hayden M. Jensen, Lt. (jg) C.B. Starkes, Lieut. Marion W. Dufilho, Lt. (jg) F.O. Breen, Lieut. David C. Richardson, and Ens. C.D. Davy sighted 11 enemy dive bombers, type Aichi 99, which were flying unescorted. No warning of this enemy attack had been received. Lieut. Jensen, the first to sight the enemy and to give the alarm by radio, attacked and followed the enemy down through the antiaircraft fire from the ships, destroying 2 of the raiders. Lieut. Dufilho followed him, and also nailed 2 of the enemy planes while damaging a third. Lt. (jg) Starkes and Ens. Bright each accounted for 3 more, or a total of 10 shot down. Another flight of from 7 to 12 enemy dive bombers, however, attacked our ships unobserved by our own fighters or radar. They were reported by one of our scout bombers as they approached from another direction. Two of these planes were destroyed during their retirement. None of the dive bombers of the group intercepted succeeded in getting a hit on their targets, according to Lt. Comdr. Simpler. The hits were made by the unopposed attack.

Six of eight SBD-3s which took off from the *Wasp* at 1223 had just been ordered to bomb a target in the Tulagi area when a ship's radio was heard saying, "Bombers above." This was about 1330. Immediately our scouts were attacked by four or five Japanese Zero fighters at 7,500 feet. Fire from our twin .30-caliber free guns appeared to be well directed and probably scored some hits. No opportunity was afforded for use of our fixed guns. Enemy attacks were not pressed to close range except on the last two runs. Large muzzle flashes on both sides of enemy planes near the wing roots appeared to be



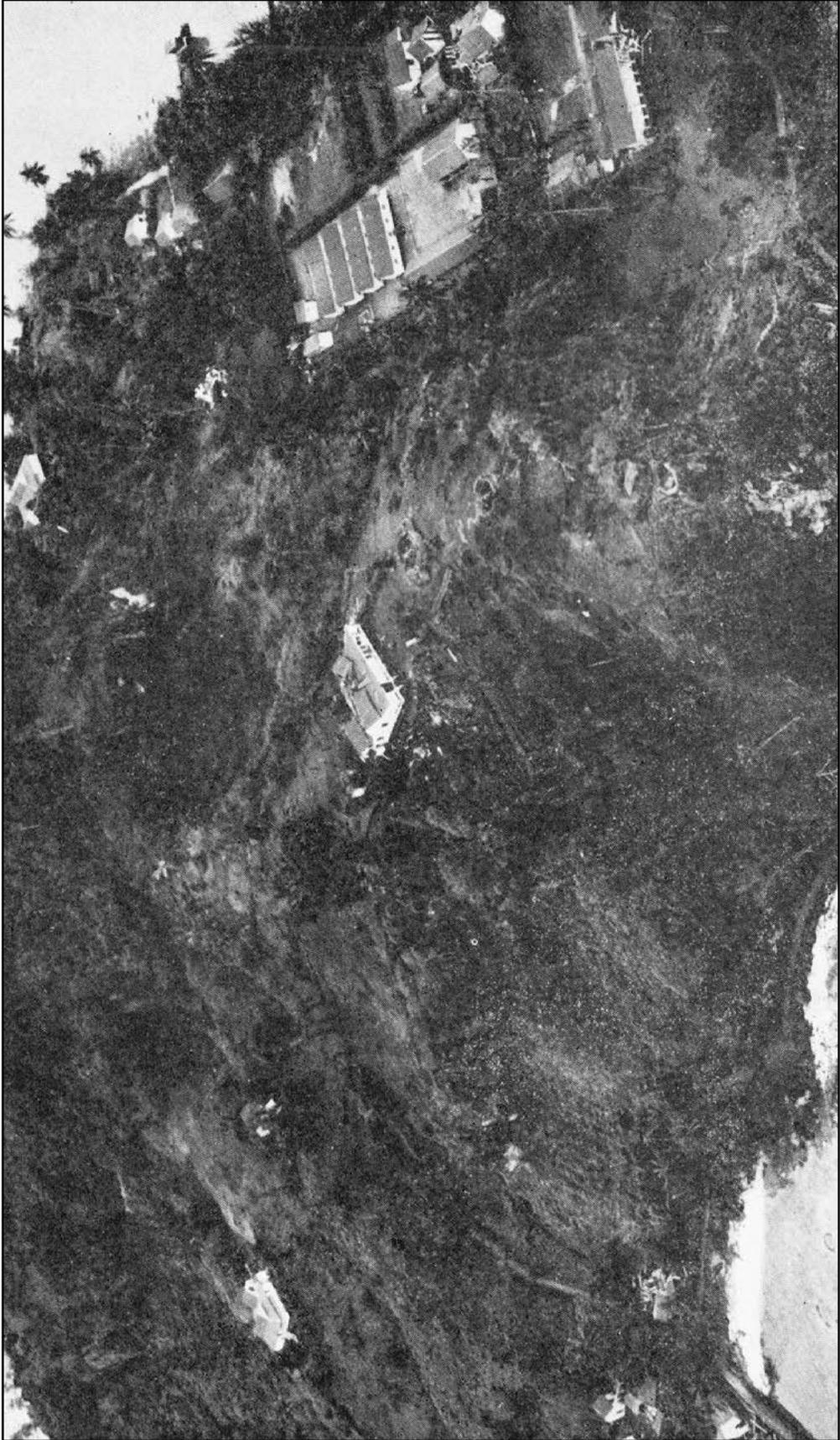
Makambo Island under bombardment, Gavutu and Tanambogo in background.



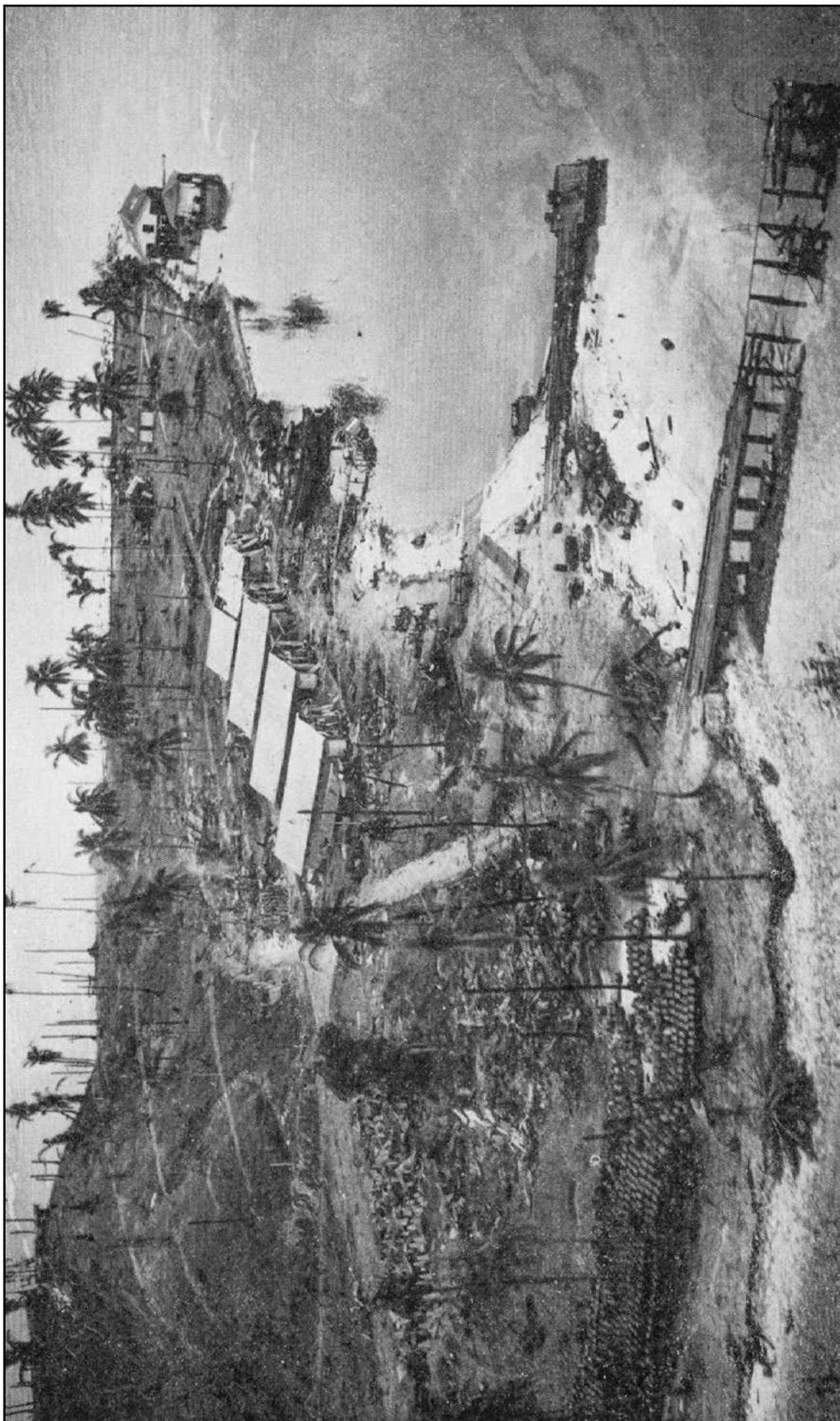
Tulagi docks before bombardment.



The same area after bombardment.



Southeast end of Tulagi, showing prison.



Tanambogo after bombardment. Farther dock was scene of oil fire.

from cannon. The Zeros retired quickly into the sun but failed to repeat the attack. The fourth plane was piloted by Ens. J.S. Paretsky of Scouting Squadron 72, who reported that the sixth plane in the flight, piloted by Lieut. Dudley H. Adams, had crashed into the sea. Lieut. Adams, wounded, was later picked up by the *Dewey*. His companion, Harry E. Elliott, Aviation Radioman Third Class, was not recovered and was reported to have been killed before the crash.

At 1520 the *Wasp* sent up a flight of four fighters for combat patrol over the carriers, Lieut. Hawley Russell leading. They were vectored to fly over Guadalcanal at 12,000 feet. They soon sighted nine planes above Tulagi which they took to be Japanese. They dived on these planes but discovered they were some of our SBDs. Ens. Thaddeus J. Capowski became separated from the formation at this time (about 1600) and failed to return to the carrier. He was listed as missing in action, but was later rescued.

The *President Adams* reported that she saw 7 enemy planes shot down during the attacks on the afternoon of the 7th. As it seems clear that ships' antiaircraft fire accounted for at least 2 and the carrier planes claimed 20, the total was probably a score or more. Against this we lost 11 F4F-4s and one SBD-3, and suffered damage to the *Mugford*. Also the precious time lost to our transports and cargo ships for unloading must be taken into account.

During the night, from dusk to broad daylight, the Screening Group, Admiral Crutchley commanding, patrolled the transport areas to protect them against enemy surface or submarine attack. The *San Juan*, *Hobart*, *Buchanan*, and *Monssen* patrolled in column eastward of longitude 160°04' E., with the mission of covering the YOKE transports and cargo ships against enemy light forces approaching from the eastward (see chart, pages 62–63). Other vessels of the Screening Group patrolled as follows: the *Australia*, *Canberra*, and the *Chicago*, screened by the *Patterson* and *Bagley*, south of a line drawn 125° T. from the center of Savo Island and west of longitude 160°04' E.; the *Vincennes*, *Astoria*, and *Quincy* screened by the *Jarvis* and *Helm*, north of the above line and west of longitude 160°04' E.; antisubmarine patrols and radar guards as follows:

Between	09-50 S, 155-55 E	and	09-01 S, 159-49 E	<i>Ralph Talbot</i>
Between	09-05 S, 195-42 E	and	09-09 S, 159-37 E	<i>Blue</i>

LAND FIGHTING, AFTERNOON AND NIGHT OF AUGUST 7

Tulagi

Tulagi is shaped somewhat like an hourglass. (See chart, pages 60–61.) The Raiders, meeting almost no opposition easily occupied the western wide area, and then pressed on through the jungle to the narrow midsection. At 1135, according to Maj. Chambers, his company reached “line A” in the island’s center and then, in accordance with orders, fired a cluster of green star shells to notify the ships to bombard the eastern and more populous end of the island. This fire support was not received until 2 hours

later. It is possible that the request for fire support by the ships was delayed by Col. Edson because he thought that some of our men were probably then in the projected line of fire.²⁶

The Raiders found the going exceedingly rough at the eastern end of the island. The air and ship bombardment had killed few of the enemy, due to the fact that they had sought shelter in dozens of long-tunneled caves deep in the limestone cliffs. When the Marines entered the area, the Japanese emerged from their holes and fought furiously from machine-gun nests and from sniping posts in the trees. Cornered and forced back into their caves, many escaped through other holes, or, refusing to surrender, fought until killed by grenades or Molotov cocktails.²⁷ This meant that, although the Marines were able to go forward at a reasonable pace, they repeatedly found it necessary to retrace their steps in order to hunt down snipers whom they had passed. "Every building that we met had its quota of Japs and we had to drive them out or kill them with hand grenades," Maj. Chambers reported. "We had thought that coconut trees would not have enough branches to conceal snipers. But we found that the Japs were small enough to hid in them easily and so we had to examine every tree before we went by. If they had been good shots, few of us would have survived, but, happily, there was no comparison in marksmanship between the Marines and the Japs."

At Hill 208 Company C of the Raiders was delayed for an hour by enemy machine-guns which it finally reduced with small arms fire and hand grenades. A and C Companies then moved on to the hill west of the cricket ground. There Major Bailey of Company C was wounded and Capt. Robert H. Thomas took over command. So vigorous was the enemy's resistance that only one platoon of C Company could advance farther, but it managed to edge along the southern shore to the eastern tip of the island.

On the north side of the ridge, D Company advanced slowly and by nightfall was on the north side of Hill 281, about parallel to A Company to the south. Company B established itself for the night near the government wharf to the north, while C Company protected A Company's right flank to the southern shore. E Company (Weapons) of the Raiders, commanded by Capt. George Herring, was in support along the ridge to the west.

Meanwhile, two companies of Combat Team 2 (Fifth Marines) had been active in cleaning out snipers in the western end and center of the island. These were Companies E and F, commanded by Capt. Harry S. Connor and Capt. Charles R. Baker, respectively. Company G, commanded by Capt. Harold T.A. Richmond, however, followed the Raiders to the Government House area in the eastern end where it reported to Colonel Edson. He ordered it to mop up a ravine north of the cricket ground where there was a break in our line between Companies A and D of the Raiders. Although three attacks failed to drive out the enemy, contact was established and maintained along our line.

The enemy had concentrated his forces on the steep slopes of Hill 281 and in the shovel-shaped ravine

26 The *San Juan's* War Diary states that at 1256 she fired on Hill 281, Tulagi Island, and that this target of opportunity was designated by Commander Squadron YOKE as requested by shore fire control party.

27 Bottles containing explosives and incendiary materials.

west of the hill and to the north of the cricket ground. During the night he sortied and counterattacked. He succeeded in driving a wedge between C and A Companies of the Raiders and in isolating Company C along the beach. Then he turned on Company A in the hope of sweeping up the ridge toward the residency. In this he failed, Company A halting the attack and killing 26 Japanese within 20 yards of its defense line. Later the enemy, “at his best in a savage all-night fight,” succeeded in infiltrating almost to the command post in the residency, making five separate attacks between 0030 and 0530.

According to Major Chambers, who had been wounded in the afternoon fighting, “it was a pretty bad night. The Japs tried every trick on us that we had been told they would but that we really never imagined they would. They shouted, whistled, and sniped at us all night. In fact, you might say that they slept with us. At first there was considerable promiscuous night firing, the Japs trying to locate our units by firing at us at random. But our men eventually learned to hold their fire and not to give away their position unless attacked in hand-to-hand assault.”

Gavutu

By 1400 the men on the left flank of our landing had made sufficient progress to be able to relieve by mortar fire the pressure on our right flank. A command post and dressing station was set up in the Lever Brothers store at the head of the slip, and the paratroops rapidly extended their control over the island. In driving out the Japanese from the dugouts and tunnels in Hill 148, however, they were greatly hampered by sniper and machine-gun fire from Tanambogo. Therefore at 1430 Maj. Miller asked for the bombing of Tanambogo to silence this fire, and for land reinforcements. During the afternoon that island was hit by both our planes and our destroyers so that “hardly a tree was left standing on the island.”

By evening we had substantial control of Gavutu and the paratroops raised the American flag on Hill 148 at 1800. But they were utterly unable to advance across the causeway, raked by machine-gun fire, to take Tanambogo. Before dark five boats from the *Jackson* arrived with reinforcements for a landing on Tanambogo. These were the men (Company B, Combat Team A, Second Marines) who had landed earlier that day at Haleta. At 1500 the *Jackson* had sent six boats to retrieve them, but instead of returning to the transport they were ordered to land at Gavutu. There three boats were directed to proceed to northeastern Tanambogo and attempt to take the Japanese from the rear. While they were approaching, at about 1500, the *Monssen* and *Buchanan* began bombarding the wharves and jetty on Tanambogo’s eastern shore in preparation for the attack. Sunset was at 1820 and the Marines hoped to make their landing about 1845 under cover of darkness, but this design was shattered when one of the last shells from our fire support ships²⁸ exploded a gasoline tank and brightly illuminated the shore.

Flight Officer Cecil E. Spencer, one of the Australian officer-guides accompanying the expedition, gives this story of the attack²⁹ which evidently occurred at about 1900. “We reached Gavutu about

28 The *Monssen* reported that at 1830 she fired 200 rounds of 5” on Tanambogo Island on instruction received from Commanding Officer Marines on Gavutu. This started heavy fires. The *Monssen* remained in the vicinity of Gavutu the remainder of the night.

29 Tregaskis’ *Guadalcanal Diary*.

dusk. But by that time Gavutu was under control. The Marines, however, had been unable to cross the narrow causeway leading to Tanambogo. We had about 5 minutes of naval gunfire support prior to landing. As we were coming in, the last shell hit a fuel dump on the beach, lighting up the beach like day, and the Japs opened fire from their dugout on Tanambogo Hill.³⁰

“Only two boat loads of our men got ashore. The coxswain of the third boat had been hit in the head by a bullet and killed, and there had been some confusion as to who was to take over the wheel. In the confusion the boat got turned around. We on shore were jammed between two piers. The only cover we could get was afforded by the side of the pier. As soon as we opened fire the Japs spotted our tracers, and in addition we were silhouetted against the flaming oil of the fuel dump.”

One of the two boats retired, taking the wounded, and Flight Officer Spencer went with it. Shortly after he returned with the boat to Tanambogo to evacuate the others. “We found only six men in the boat which had been left at Tanambogo,” he said. “They said that the Japs had raided our positions along the piers, and that they believed Capt. Crane and the other Marines had been wiped out. But Capt. Crane arrived with 6 of his men. They had escaped from the Japs by hiding in the bushes. By 9 or 10 o’clock two more Marines returned, swimming naked toward our boats. Our people fired. But the Marines in the water yelled and were saved.”



A good example of the air support given our landing forces by the carrier groups is provided in the report by Lt. Comdr. Wallace M. Beakley of the *Wasp*, who served as air support commander in the Tulagi area. He reports that at 1315 on August 7th he made a close inspection of our troops in the vicinity of their landing beaches at Tulagi and Halavo Peninsula and reported his observations to the Air Support Director in the *McCawley*. No opposition could be discovered although inspection was made at altitudes of 50 to 150 feet. At Halavo Beach the troops had pulled the one remaining boat up under the bushes, and it was necessary to make several turns over this area to make sure that they were our men in the boat and that they were all right. No distress signals were received from troops at either Tulagi or Halavo. While circling close above Gavutu and Tanambogo at about 1340, he saw three Japanese run into a dugout on the northeast side of the hill at Tanambogo. Shortly thereafter the Marines at Gavutu laid out panel strips in the form of the letter “H,” which was interpreted to mean that aircraft support was needed. This was reported to the Air Support Director in the *McCawley*, and flights 320 and 121 were ordered to bomb and strafe Tanambogo and the point of land of Florida Island closest to Gavutu.

At 1410 Comdr. Harry D. Felt relieved the commander of the *Wasp* Air Group in the Tulagi area. Shortly after his arrival he received a request for immediate bombing of Tanambogo. Five 1,000-pound bombs and machine guns were used, setting fire to fuel and ammunition dumps which exploded and burned

30 An account (oral statement recorded in the Office of Naval Records) by Lieut. Herbert L. Merrillat, USMCR, states that the Marines landing at Tanambogo found themselves caught between 2 jetties, one of which had been built only recently and was unknown to their Australian guide.

spectacularly for a couple of hours. During this period he made a reconnaissance flight over Tanambogo, sighting no Japanese troops but noticing dugouts and trenches on the small hill. He observed an enemy flag flying from a staff on a house on Makambo and requested permission to shoot it down. Within a few minutes 15 dive bombers arrived on the station, and he received word that on sighting a green rocket signal on Gavutu he was to order bombing of Tanambogo. He also received permission to put 2 dive bombers on the flag. At 1625 the signal was sighted and the attacks were launched. At the same time Tanambogo and Makambo were being bombarded by 1 destroyer each. More fires were set on Tanambogo, and the house harboring the Japanese flag was burned to the ground.

From all accounts it is evident that our ships and planes demolished virtually all military installations above ground on these small islands and drove the Japanese defenders underground. This, in most cases, effectively neutralized enemy activity in the critical period when our landing boats were approaching the shore. Shelling and bombing could obviously not continue to any great degree after our men had landed, and the infantry had to reduce the surviving centers of enemy resistance virtually unaided.

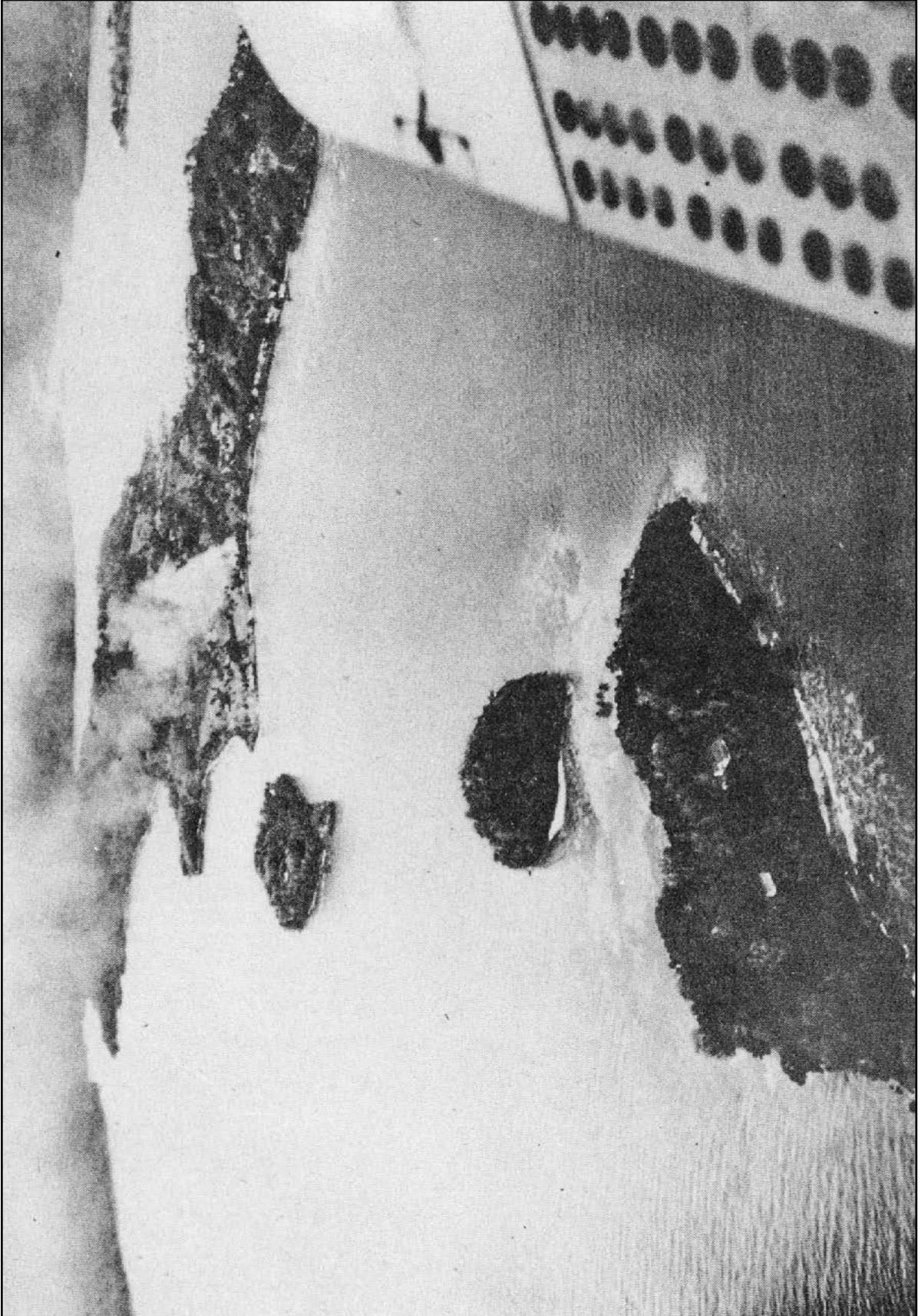
Fighting for our objectives on Tulagi and Gavutu continued throughout the night. Shortly after dark the *Neville*, *President Jackson*, and *Zeilin* anchored in the swept area off Tulagi, and landing boats were almost continuously moving back and forth between the ships and the shore, carrying supplies to the Marines and bringing back the wounded. At 1635 survivors of a *Neville* ramp boat, which had been sunk by Japanese gunfire, were brought on board the ship. One member of its crew, Robert D. Russell, Fireman Second Class, was killed and his body was recovered, while other members of the boat crew returned uninjured. The *Neville* had previously been designated to accommodate all hospital cases resulting from the fighting in the Tulagi-Gavutu area.

In this connection an item from the War Diary of the *Ellet* which was serving as part of Fire Support Group LOVE in the Guadalcanal area is pertinent. It is dated 0730, the following morning, August 8th: "Sighted amphibious tractor bearing 300° T. Proceeded to investigate and found it to be from the U.S.S. *Neville* manned by Corporal Doran, Privates Kimball and Macielo. They had run out of fuel the night before while returning to the *Neville* with six men aboard.

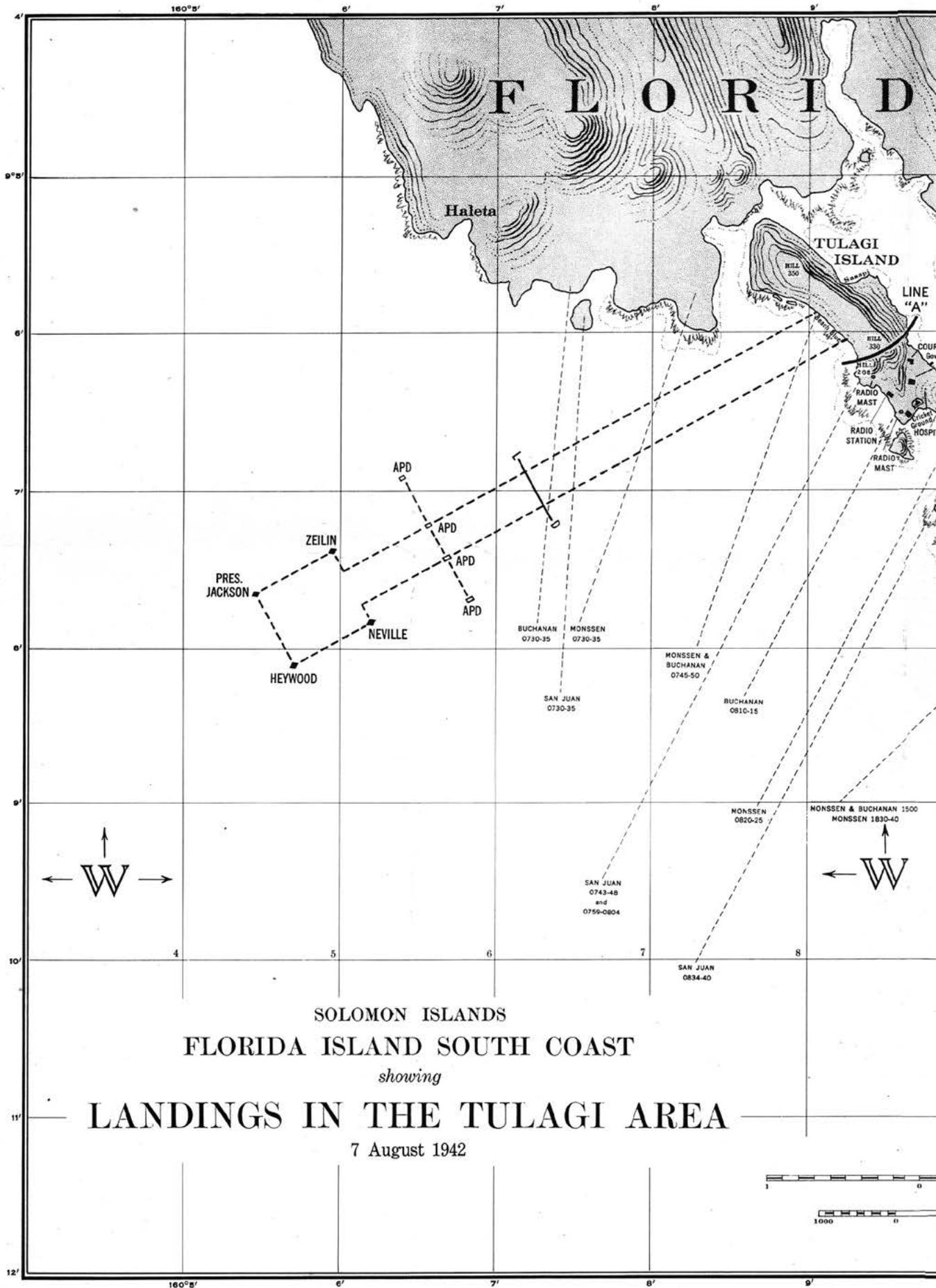
"Personnel were taken aboard and the wounded treated. The tractor was towed into the Tulagi transport area and turned over to a tank lighter for delivery to *Neville*. Proceeded toward *Neville* and transferred injured men and corpse to *Neville* via *Neville* boat."

The paratroops held their hard-won positions on Gavutu during the night at considerable cost from snipers' fire. The Japanese endeavored to land reinforcements on Gavutu from Tanambogo by floating men across the water on logs, but most of them were beaten off. However, a strong group of enemy snipers held out in a cave on the south side of Hill 148. Heavy rain added to the troubles of our men.

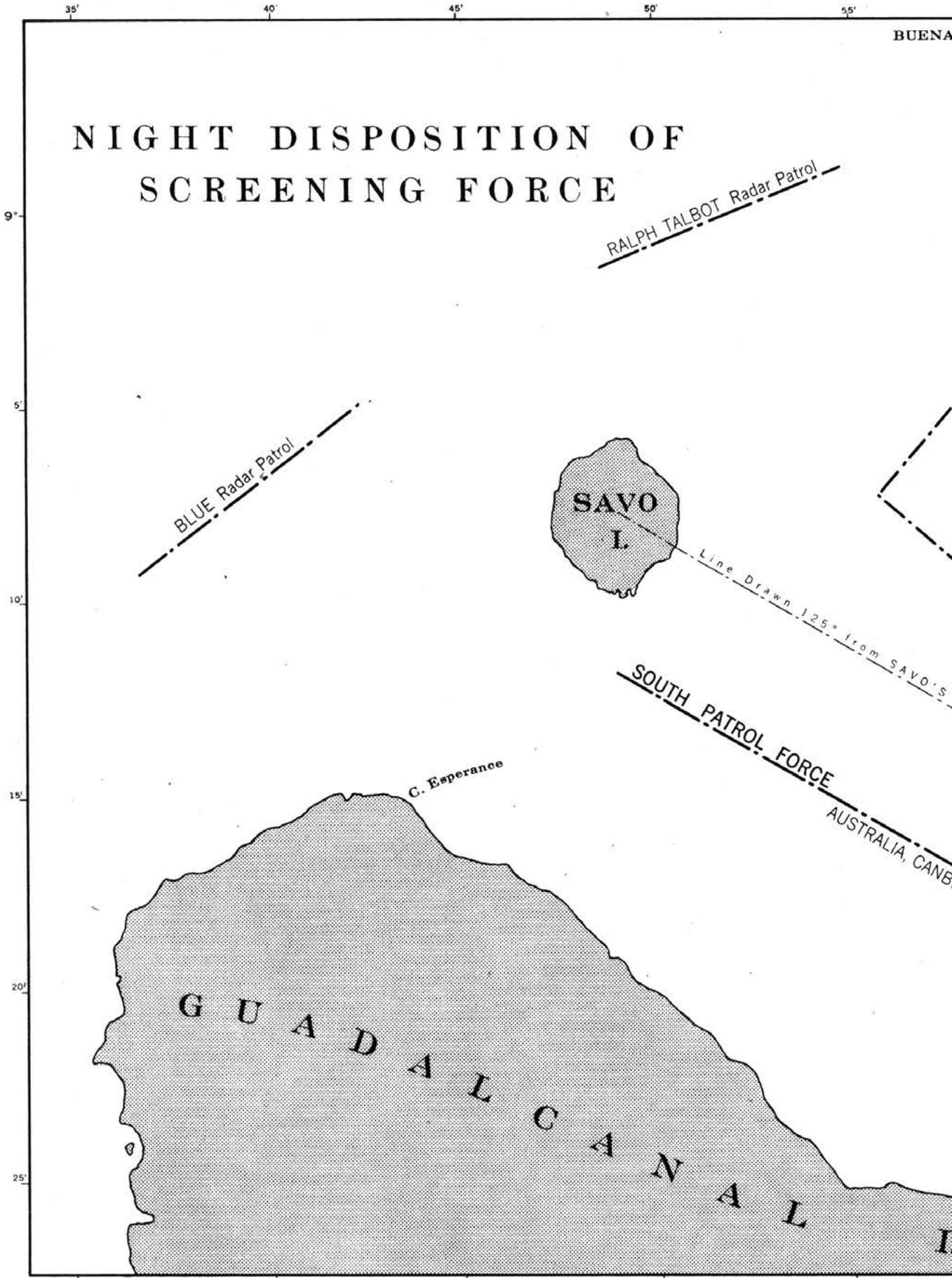
Although Beach BLUE, the only beach open to us on Tulagi, was also subjected to heavy sniper fire, The *Neville's* beach party under Lieut. Hermann B. Jorgensen managed to keep boats moving in and out. About midnight General Vandegrift reported that he had been informed by General Rupertus, the assistant division commander at Tulagi, that the Raider Battalion had suffered 22 percent casualties



The Tulagi Area.

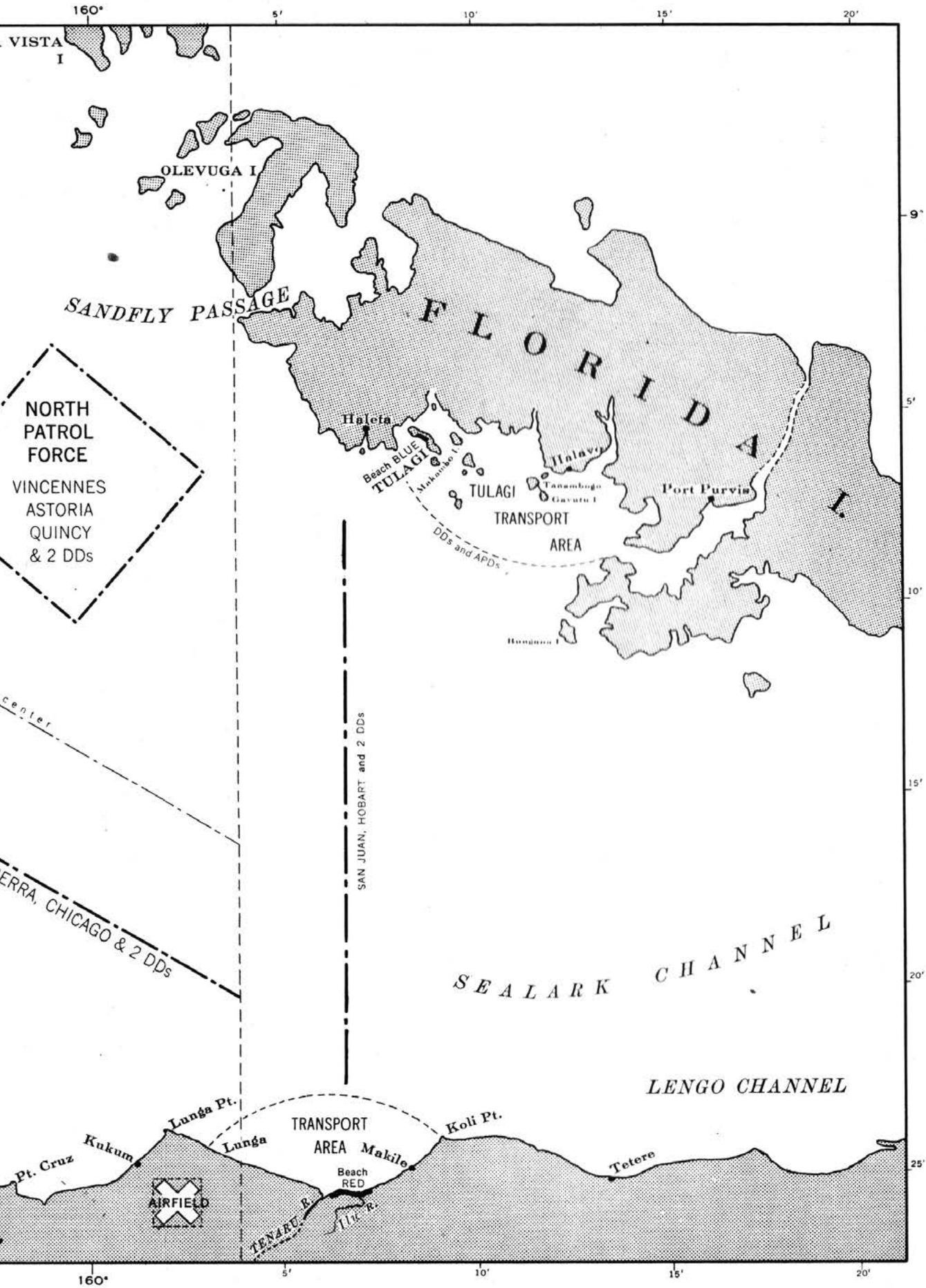


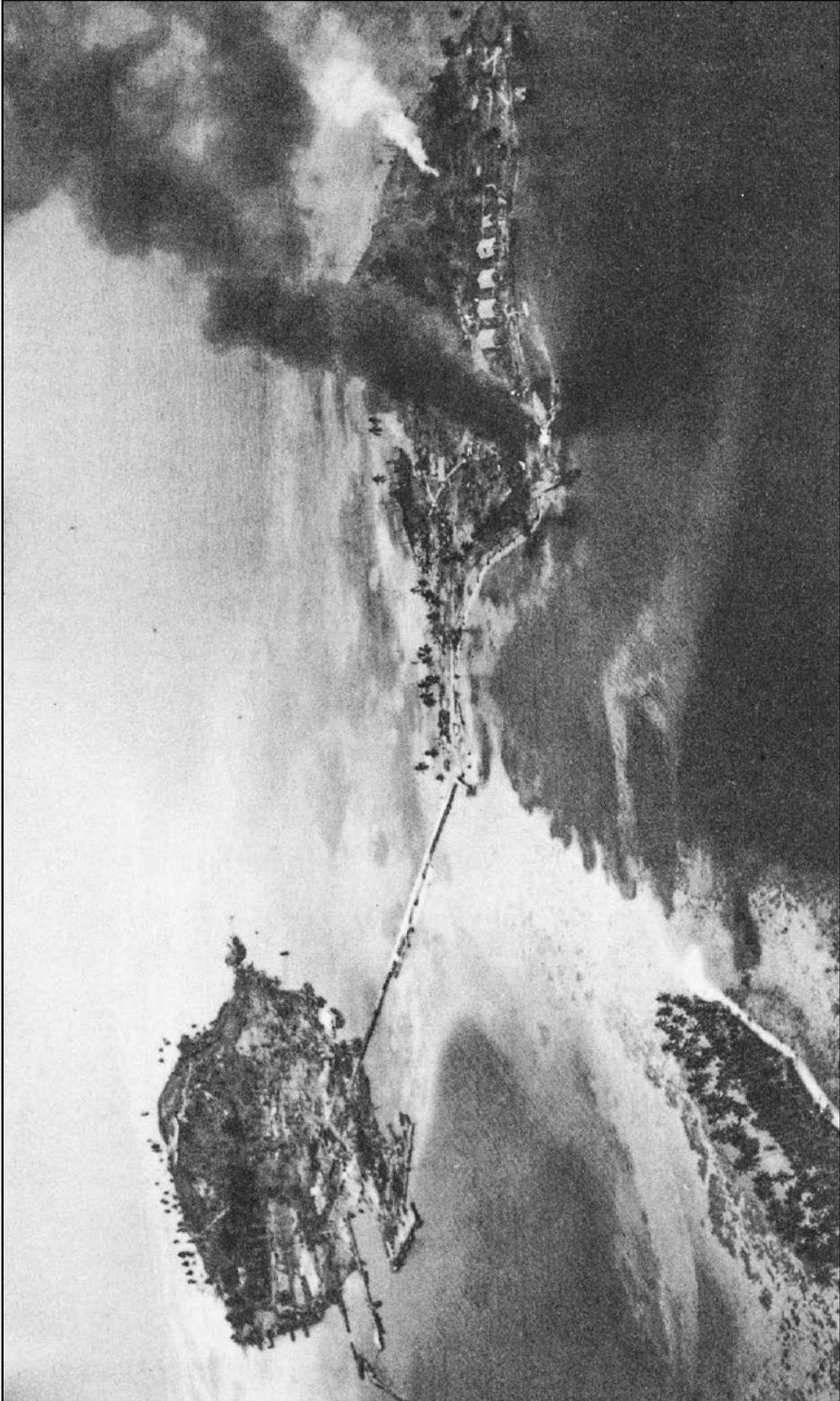
NIGHT DISPOSITION OF SCREENING FORCE



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Gavutu and Tanambogo Islands.

and the paratroops 50 to 60 percent casualties,³¹ and that reinforcements were needed. General Rupertus requested that one combat team of the Second Marines be assigned to secure Tanambogo. Early the next morning the two remaining teams of the Second Marines were released for mopping up Tanambogo and Tulagi.

Guadalcanal.

The first Marines to land on Guadalcanal were Combat Group A (Fifth Marines), less Second Battalion, commanded by Col. LeRoy P. Hunt. They advanced inland at once, occupying a shallow beachhead bounded by the east branch of the Ilu, which runs generally parallel to the beach and 600 yards inland from it, and on the west by the mouth of the Ilu, which runs northward into the sea.

Combat Group B (First Marines), commanded by Col. Clifton B. Cates, landed shortly afterwards on Beach RED and, passing through Combat Group A, began an advance southwest into the interior. About the same time the First Battalion of Group A crossed the Ilu, and moved directly west along the shore with its objective the mouth of the Tenaru River. Combat Group B, with its three battalions echeloned to the left rear, advanced on magnetic azimuth 260° toward an objective loosely defined as a “grassy knoll.” Unfortunately, information obtained and maps provided failed to identify the objective accurately. The rear and eastern flank of the force was covered by the Third Battalion of Combat Group A, which remained in position along the Tenavatu. It was hoped that Combat Group B, by immediately moving into the interior of the island, could get in behind the Japanese and stop them from escaping to the mountains.

The advance proceeded slowly during the afternoon. The Ilu River and its east branch formed a half-ring around the beachhead, and, although these crossings had been anticipated and materials for temporary bridges had been brought along, our progress was delayed during their construction. Then, the dense jungle on the other side of the river provided another obstacle. “Some units advanced with unnecessary and time-consuming caution,” General Vandegrift wrote,³² “others pushed ahead aggressively and lost contact with their neighbors.” Therefore, the advance was halted at dusk in order to organize our lines and reorient the advance for the next day. By nightfall, however, the First Battalion of Combat Group A had reached the mouth of the Tenaru about 2 miles west of Beach RED, and established our right flank there. No contact with the enemy had been made anywhere.

As General Vandegrift has written in a personal letter, our easy success at Guadalcanal in the first few hours of the attack was doubtless due to the enemy’s surprise and his hasty surmise that we did not intend to occupy the islands. “The Japs thought it was an air and surface ship raid,” he wrote, “and with the first salvo they beat it to the hills, intending to come back after we had departed . . . I wish they had stayed put!”

31 It was later learned that this estimate was exaggerated.

32 First Marine Division Commander’s Report.

ACTION OF AUGUST 8

- 0630 *President Hayes* and *President Adams* arrive at Tulagi with reinforcements.
- 0900 Combat Team C lands on Gavutu
- 0910 VT-8 bombs Tanambogo.
- 1038 Warning received of 40 enemy planes over Bougainville proceeding southeast.
- 1140 *Saratoga* fighters launched to intercept.
- 1157 Enemy dive-bombers and torpedo planes attack from northeast. *George F. Elliott* and *Jarvis* hit.
- 1345 *Buchanan* and *Monssen* requested by land forces to provide close fire support on Tanambogo.
- 1400 Another warning of enemy air attack. Unfulfilled.
- 1645 Destroyers still firing on Tanambogo.
- 1807 Admiral Fletcher recommends withdrawal of carriers. Approved by COMSOPAC.
- 1821 News received of 3 enemy cruisers, 2 destroyers, and 2 gunboats or seaplane tenders sighted at 1127 at 5°49'S., 156°07' E., course 120° T, speed 15 knots.
- 2345 Conference aboard *McCawley* decides to move out transports the next morning.

At 0500 on the morning of the 8th Admiral Crutchley ordered the outer patrol groups and units to return to the transport areas and to resume day screen. As enemy submarines might be expected to intrude during the day, he directed the minesweepers to form an antisubmarine patrol westward of Sealark and Lengo Channels. He also established an antisubmarine air patrol with at least three cruiser planes in the air all the time.

Air Patrols

At 0630 the *President Hayes* and *President Adams* arrived in transport area YOKE with the reinforcements for Tulagi and Gavutu. Soon afterwards dive bombers from our carriers appeared in the sky above and began hammering the enemy's remaining hideaways in Tulagi and Tanambogo.

The *Wasp*, in company with her sister carriers, had retired a short distance to the south for the night. On returning in the morning to her previous position southwest of Guadalcanal, the *Wasp* maintained a continuous combat patrol of eight fighters over the Tulagi transport area until 1200. Shortly before dawn she launched 12 scouts to search sector 280° to 040° to a radius of 220 miles and extended to include all of Santa Isabel Island and the New Georgia group. No contact was made except for a Japanese fighter seaplane which was encountered about 40 miles off Rekata Bay and which was shot down by Lt. Comdr. E.M. Snowden. Meanwhile bombers were supplied to Commander Amphibious Force for action against designated objectives. Fighters were recalled and refueled at noon in anticipation of an

enemy attack which, as on the previous day, proved to be directed at the ships in the transport areas.

In forwarding the reports of the *Saratoga*'s air group, Capt. DeWitt C. Ramsey stated that on August 7th the *Saratoga* had been designated by Admiral Noyes to hold herself in readiness as a striking force the next day, in the event that it should prove advisable to make an attack on an enemy carrier believed to be in the vicinity. Later in the evening of the 7th, Capt. Ramsey wrote, the *Saratoga* Group Commander returned from Tulagi and reported that Commander Amphibious Force (Admiral Turner) had specifically requested him to provide a bombing flight in support of a coordinated land offensive against Tanambogo about dawn on August 8th. Security considerations did not permit transmission of this request to Admiral Noyes, who was in the *Wasp*, before launching the flight. The *Saratoga* furnished the service requested, Capt. Ramsey stated, and informed Commander Task Group NEGAT of the action taken.

Comdr. Felt of the *Saratoga* commanded bombers and torpedo planes in the Tulagi area the morning of the 8th. The Air Support Director in the *McCawley* informed him at 0755 that he was attempting to obtain suitable targets for the bombers but that the situation on shore was not clear. "I reported that early in the morning I had seen a few persons moving on the eastward beach of Tanambogo but thereafter had seen no signs of activity on this island and that Gavutu seemed to be fully occupied with our own troops who were exposing themselves in an unconcerned manner," Comdr. Felt wrote. "At about 0820 the dive bomber squadron departed for its ship without having been given a target for attack. At 0910 Orange Base One (Air Support Director in the *McCawley*) informed me that the Japanese dug in on Tanambogo were still putting up a stiff counterfire and I was ordered to attack with the remaining bombers on station (VT-8) . . . Just prior to the bombing a garbled message was received from Orange Base 'Three'³³ attempting to cancel my orders to attack. Orange Base and myself attempted to get repeats, the former ordering an authentication and it was decided that the Orange Base 'Three' message should be disregarded. I strafed at the completion of the bombing attack and then left station at about 1005 to return to my ship."

The Enemy Air Attack of August 8

At 1038 Admiral Turner received a dispatch announcing that 40 enemy twin-engine bombers were passing Bougainville Island, north of Tulagi-Guadalcanal, and proceeding southeast. He immediately ordered all ships to move out of the transport areas and assume a cruising disposition. By the time the planes appeared, almost precisely at noon, the transport groups and screens were in formation and maneuvering at top speed.

Reports differ as to the exact number of enemy planes, some putting the figure at 25, others at 40. But it is agreed that most of them were large, twin-engine bombers and that they approached our ships from the east, rounding the southeast point of Florida Island at an extremely low altitude, possibly only 50 feet above the water. Apparently they did not drop any torpedoes or bombs in the Tulagi area, but proceeded in a southwesterly direction toward their major target, the ships off Guadalcanal. But

33 There was no Orange Base "Three."

both transports and screening ships at Tulagi opened an intense and effective antiaircraft fire as the planes passed them. In five minutes, from 1200 to 1205, the *Chicago* expended 142 rounds of 5"/25 cal. antiaircraft common, 288 rounds of 1.1-inch service, 634 rounds of 20-mm. HE tracer, 633 rounds of 20-mm. HE, and 500 rounds of .30 caliber tracer and AP.³⁴ Nine to fifteen planes were believed to have been shot down. The bombers were protected by Zero fighters and these were seen to be engaged by our carrier planes at high altitudes. One observer said that the Japanese planes came in from astern on a parallel course with the formation of the ships in the Tulagi area, apparently maneuvering to draw fire and cause the ships to fire on one another.

The attack was directed at our ships off Guadalcanal, which put up a punishing barrage of fire. The vessels of Transport Group XRAY at this time were proceeding north in a line of four division columns of three or four ships each (with the *Heywood* alone on the left flank), interval 1,500 yards, distance between ships 1,000, speed 13 knots. The sea was smooth and calm, the sky cloudy, and the ceiling was about 1,500 to 2,000 feet. At 1157 the enemy planes were seen approaching from the northeast, coming in over the hills on the eastern part of Florida Island, rapidly losing altitude and heading directly for the transports in a long line. The transport formation was promptly and effectively maneuvered by the Task Force Commander (Admiral Turner) by two 30° "turn" signals in a direction away from the approaching planes.

Meanwhile the screening vessels, cruisers and destroyers had opened fire and several planes were observed to fall. When the transports let loose with their antiaircraft guns, the enemy formation began to break up, some planes passing over the transports, some between the columns, and some ahead and astern. In a few seconds many glided into the sea in flames, while others crashed precipitously. Only three aircraft were seen to pass entirely through or around the transport formation. Two of these were shot down by the screening vessels to the westward and only one plane apparently escaped.

One of the falling aircraft barely missed hitting the *Vincennes*' stern, while another crashed on the deck of the *George F. Elliott* setting the ship afire. The plane struck the heavy steel strongback of the starboard forward boat davit, "driving one engine down on deck, spreading parts of plane and parts of bodies of Japanese on deck, exploding and throwing gasoline and lubricating oil all over the topside and down into C.P.O. quarters and the engineroom and fireroom."³⁵ Within a few minutes the *Elliott* hauled out of formation, and other ships observed that a large part of her crew were going overboard or floating in her wake.

At about the same time it was seen that the destroyer *Jarvis* had been hit by a torpedo and was seriously injured but still able to operate under her own power. As will be seen, these proved to be our only ship losses, while at least 14 enemy planes were known to have been shot down. The "ack-ack" must have been intense, with over 50 ships delivering the most concentrated fire of which they were capable for about 10 minutes. One destroyer complained that her range was intermittently fouled by transports

34 Contrary to the report of another ship, the *Chicago* did not fire any of her 8-inch guns. Her report states: "The main battery did not engage because of the high bearing rate of the unfavorable target angles existing, and of the proximity of friendly surface craft."

35 Commanding Officer's report.

and that most of her firing took place sharp on the bow with guns 3 and 4 masked. The enemy retired to the northwest, pursued by our fighters.



At 1002 the *Enterprise* had launched three fighters for patrol over the transports. Shortly before noon Fighter Control in the *Chicago* warned them of an impending enemy attack. In a few minutes from an altitude of 17,000 feet they sighted several Japanese torpedo planes flying low over the water from Tulagi to Guadalcanal. Our fighters dived steeply to attack. Ens. W.M. Rouse made a stern run on one enemy plane and set it afire. He then pulled up, made a run on another and sent it slithering down to the sea in flames. He headed for a third, but Machinist D.E. Runyon, who had previously shot down another in a head-on run, beat him to it. Ens. J.D. Shoemaker made a beam approach on a fifth and shot it down. The sixth and remaining Japanese plane escaped. Four of the enemy losses were twin-engine torpedo planes similar to the horizontal bombers and the fifth was either a single-engine torpedo plane or a Zero or new type of escort fighter. All U.S. pilots returned aboard the *Enterprise* at 1340.

Fighting Squadron Five of the *Saratoga*, much to its chagrin, missed the action at noon on the 8th. Taking off at 0700, Lt. Comdr. Simpler led a combat patrol of four planes over the transports. After searching for missing pilots along the northwest coast of Guadalcanal, his planes returned to the carrier at 1000. "Upon landing," wrote Lt. Comdr. Simpler, "I was informed by other pilots of the squadron that an enemy bombing attack was en route to the transport area. Knowing that similar information had been correct on the previous day, I went immediately to the Air Plot. Lieut. D.A. Sooy, Lt. Comdr. C.E. Wakeman and myself estimated that the attack would arrive at about noon, 2 hours from the time of the report. This estimate was correct. I was launched at 1140, as leader of eight VF, to intercept this attack at Guadalcanal about 70 miles away, with a climb of 16,000 feet rendered necessary to get above the weather. I arrived in time to see the antiaircraft bursts still in the air, but no enemy aircraft in sight."

As on the previous day, a squadron of bombers from the *Wasp*, VS-71, Lt. Comdr. John Eldridge, Jr., leading, accidentally intercepted the enemy attack on August 8th. While this flight of 11 SBD-3s was retiring from a bombing of Mbangi Island off Tulagi, the rear gunner of the squadron leader's plane observed a formation of planes approaching from the northeast. At first the newcomers were thought to be a relief arriving from another carrier, and our planes continued on their retirement course. They were soon seen to be enemy bomber or torpedo planes traveling at 3,000 feet. At about the same time six Zero fighters suddenly appeared and attacked the first section of 3 planes in our squadron. They made 12 firing runs, but without effect. One was observed to have a belly tank. Meanwhile the leader of the squadron's last section, Lt. (jg) Robert L. Howard, who was retiring after dropping his last bomb, had sighted twin-engine bombers (tentatively identified as T-97 heavy bombers) approaching our transports.

Lt. Howard began making runs on the enemy bombers but his guns failed to fire. He repeated after recharging his guns but still could not fire, discovering a few moments later that his armament switch was off. Eventually he had to abandon the chase because of the antiaircraft fire from our ships. Just at

that moment he was attacked by four Zeros. His rear gunner, Lawrence P. Lupo, Seaman Second Class, kept the Zeros from getting too close, scoring several hits on them. After about eight passes, one Zero veered up sharply and made a head-on run which Lieut. Howard met with simultaneous fire from his fixed guns. The enemy plane burst into flames, passed close under his left wing, and crashed among the boats from the transports. While the pilot was engaging the plane ahead, Lupo, the rear gunner, was firing on a fighter directly astern, shooting numerous holes through the tip of the vertical stabilizer of his own plane. This and the rest of our SBDs returned safely to the *Wasp*. Together with the 14 enemy planes claimed by the ships' gunners, the total "shoot-downs" appeared to have been 20. We suffered no plane losses.

After the attack the transports in Squadron XRAY returned to Beach RED to resume unloading. En route Capt. Reifsnider, commanding the transports, boarded the *George F. Elliott*. The oil fire was still burning fiercely in the fireroom, and while the conflagration in the lower decks amidships appeared to be under control it was in reality smoldering and spreading. The *Hull* was alongside pumping water through five or six fire hoses. The *Elliott* had lost power soon after the plane struck.³⁶ The *Hull* undertook to tow the *Elliott* to Beach RED, about 10 miles away, in the hope of unloading some of the cargo and equipment which remained undamaged. But she could make no progress with a tow-line, and her commanding officer "was reluctant to try to tow the vessel from alongside." Abandoning this effort, the *Hull* continued to supply water to fight the fire.

When at 1400 an unfulfilled report of another air attack was received, the *Elliott's* gun crews were recalled from the destroyer and from boats in the vicinity to man her antiaircraft batteries. Later, the main passageways of the ship were closed in the hope that the fire, if partly smothered, would burn itself out. This proved a false hope, for soon it was noted that the bulkheads were rapidly heating deck by deck. The paint on the side of the ship opposite the destroyer caught fire and the hull plating was red hot. Shortly after dark the whole midsection became enveloped in flames which rapidly spread toward the bridge. The fire was also spreading aft, and word was received, via the destroyer alongside, that personnel there were being removed. The fire finally broke into No. 3 hold forward, and any further attempt to save the ship or salvage the cargo was deemed futile. The few remaining people on board were taken off in boats to the *Hull* and *Dewey*. Admiral Turner ordered her sunk by torpedo fire. It was later learned, wrote Capt. Reifsnider, that the *Hull* fired four torpedoes at close range without effect, and the vessel was still afloat and on fire when the transports retired from the scene the following evening. Three officers and seven enlisted men on the *Elliott* were killed. Fifteen Marines were reported missing, but the majority of these were believed to have reached shore safely.

As for the *Jarvis*, she had previously been towed into shallow water by the *Dewey*. The bottom of her

36 In describing the air attack, the *Betelgeuse's* war diary states: "It is interesting to note . . . that during the sortie from the anchorage a TR type boat (a tank lighter with ramp) was observed in formation maneuvering with it and attempting to keep up with it. It later developed that this was the *Betelgeuse's* TR-9, manned by Sam Willard McCoy, Seaman Second Class, and Edward George Canham, Fireman Third Class. They had been asked by some Marine major on Beach RED to put him on some ship before it got underway. McCoy volunteered and was attempting to catch that ship when the *Elliott* was hit. McCoy then went to the *Elliott* and stood by to help. He helped transfer the wounded, picked up survivors, transfer records, valuables, etc."

hull was open from frame 30 to about 55, but her boilers and machinery remained intact. Fourteen of her crew were missing and seven had to be sent to the *McCawley* for hospitalization. Upon her reporting that she was able to proceed under her own power, Admiral Turner directed her to steam to Noumea via Lengo Channel under escort of the *Hovey*. When, however, in the early evening the *Hovey* attempted to join the *Jarvis* she could not find her. The last seen or heard of the destroyer was early in the morning of the 9th, when the *Blue* sighted her rounding Cape Esperance, presumably bound for Noumea.

During the afternoon, when there were several alerts for enemy air attacks which did not materialize, some of the ships picked up fallen Japanese fliers from the water. The *Selfridge* made two of them prisoners and turned them over to the *Barnett*. The *Blue* rescued four more and planned to deliver them to the *Astoria* next morning. The *Neville* reported receiving six from an unnamed ship; of these, three were injured, two uninjured, and one was dead. When the *Bagley* approached a group of Japanese fliers who were perched on a half-sunken plane, they opened fire on our destroyer, and when the *Bagley* continued to near them, turned their guns on themselves.

Cleaning up Tulagi

Soon after 0700 on the 8th the *President Jackson* landed the First Battalion Second Marines (less Company B) on Beach BLUE, and the *President Hayes* landed the Second Battalion. The First Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. R.E. Hill, was ordered to sweep Tulagi clean of Japanese from the beach to the western end of the island, and the Second Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. B.W. Atkinson, was directed to perform the same operation from the beach to the island's eastern end.

No serious breaks had been made in our lines during the night, and at dawn the Marines had resumed the offensive. Companies E and F of Combat Team 2, who had been mopping up the western part of the island, led the second day's attack. From a line northeast of Hill 281, with F on the right and E on the left, they advanced over the top of the hill to the southwest side of the island. This maneuver gave the Marines mortar and machine-gun positions on three sides of the main enemy concentration. That afternoon Company G of Combat Team 2 and the Raiders rushed the ravine and blasted the Japanese out of their many hiding places. At about 1500 physical occupation of the island was complete.

“The tenacity of the individual [Japanese] soldier was astonishing,” General Vandegrift wrote.³⁷ “Each Jap fought until he was killed, each machine-gun crew to the last man, who almost invariably killed himself rather than surrender.” Of the 500 Japanese estimated to be on Tulagi only 3 surrendered. According to the prisoners, about 40 attempted to escape by swimming to Florida. The Raider Battalion suffered 90 casualties, of whom 3 officers and 33 enlisted men were killed or died of wounds on the island.

The Taking of Tanambogo

The Third Battalion of the Second Marines (Combat Team C), commanded by Lt. Col. R.G. Hunt,

37 First Marine Division Commander's report.

was at first ordered to land from the *President Adams* on Beach BLUE, but at 0705 the order was changed and the battalion was directed to proceed in boats to Gavutu. The *Adams* steamed part of the way toward Gavutu in order to reduce the distance the boats would have to proceed after launching. Meanwhile the *Monssen* and *Buchanan* had stood toward Tanambogo to provide close fire support for the imminent reattack on that island.

Shortly before 0900 the first wave of boats left the *Adams* for Gavutu and landed on the beach there an hour later. The rest of Combat Team C followed in six more waves of boats. Companies I (Capt. M.P. Hajan) and K (Capt. H.A. Courtney) joined the Parachute Battalion in exterminating the few remaining Japanese. Their operations were hampered by persistent sniper fire from Tanambogo, and so preparations were hastened to launch a new attack on that island. The enemy air attack at noon and several false alarms which kept our fire support groups on antiaircraft alert for an hour or more at a time, handicapped the organization work, however.

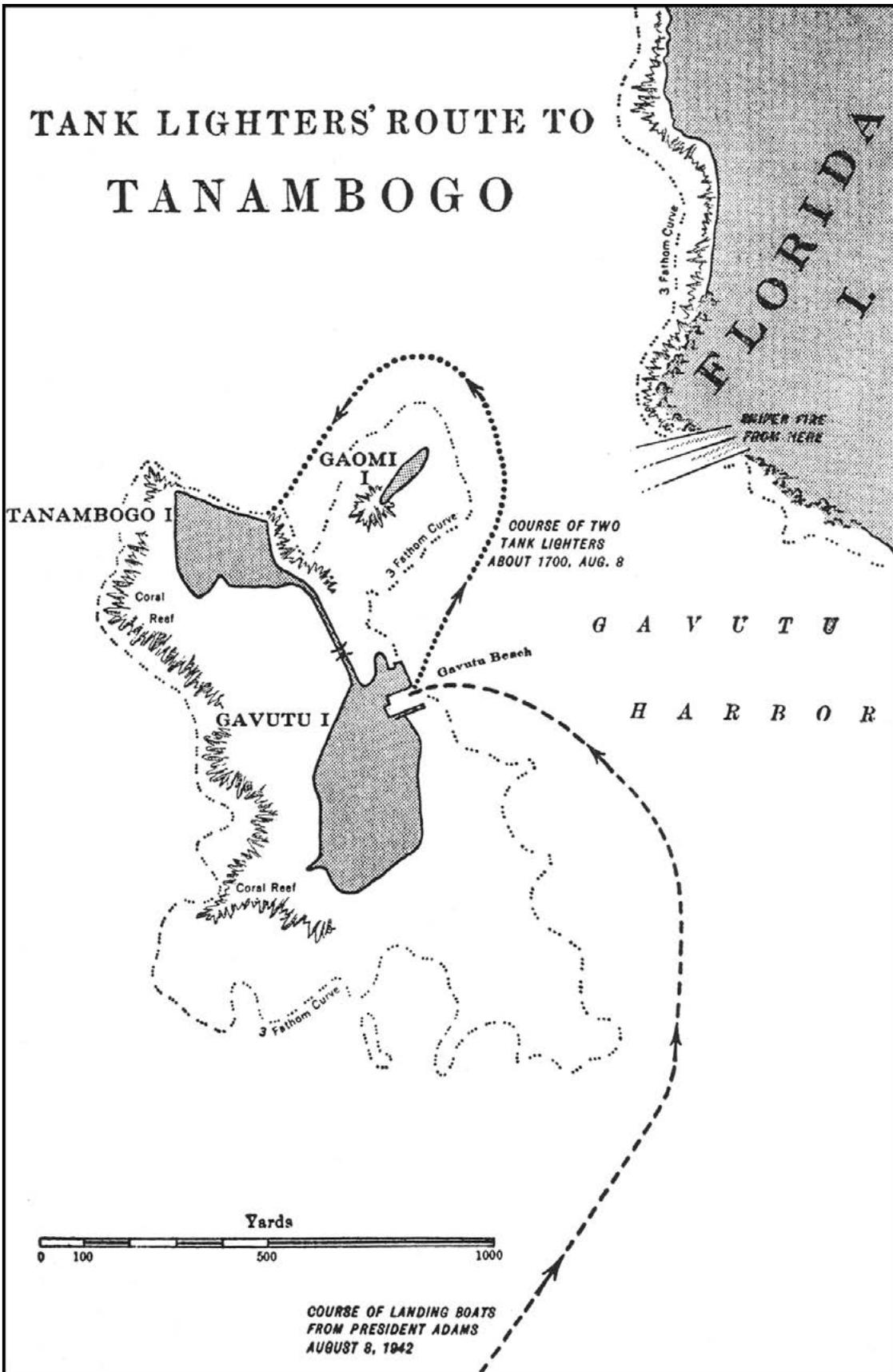
The *Buchanan* and *Monssen* shelled targets on Gavutu and Tanambogo frequently during the day as requested by fire control parties ashore. In this they were assisted by the air support, which also bombed Gaomi, Makambo and other nearby islands from which scattered groups of Japanese maintained a sniping fire. So severe was our shelling and bombing of Tanambogo that one observer said the island was changed from “green to red.”

At 1600 the *Buchanan* stood into Gavutu Harbor on the island’s east coast, slowed to steerageway, and opened fire with her 5-inch battery on Tanambogo hill at a range of 1,100 yards. She then moved out of Gavutu Harbor toward Gaomi, shifting her fire to the flat area on the southeast side of Tanambogo Islands. At 1615 two tanks of the Third Platoon, C Company, Second Tank Battalion, commanded by Lieut. R.J. Sweeney, embarked from Gavutu in two assault boats. About an hour later they arrived near the *Buchanan* and semaphored that they were about to land on Tanambogo and requested the destroyer to cease fire. The *Buchanan* then retired to open water south-southeast of Gavutu, and later joined the *San Juan*, *Hobart*, and *Monssen* for night patrol between Florida and Guadalcanal.

The two Marine assault boats were the *President Adams*³⁸ Landing Tank Lighter No. 1, G.L.D. Sporhase, Boatswain’s Mate, Second Class, and Landing Tank Lighter No. 2, B.W. Hensen, Boatswain’s Mate, Second Class. The lighters had proceeded with other landing craft to Gavutu earlier in the afternoon, where they were ordered to prepare for a landing on Tanambogo. At about 1700 Lighter No. 1 left for Tanambogo with one tank and a detachment of several Marines. Sand bags left by the enemy on the Gavutu beach had been loaded on the lighter for the protection of the Marines. As the lighter got under way from Gavutu those aboard it saw the *Buchanan* “pouring salvo after salvo” into the beach at Tanambogo and “Japs flying through the air from the trees.” Smoke and fire were mounting from oil

38 An account of the reinforcement of Gavutu and the second attack on Tanambogo is contained in the action of the *President Adams*, Comdr. Frank H. Dean. The boat division Officers and coxswains of the *Adams* were suddenly required to land their Marines on a beach at Gavutu, about which they had almost no advance information, under frequent sniping fire from enemy troops on Tanambogo. The crew were either at Battle Stations or unloading stations (condition ONE-AFIRM) for approximately 70 hours. As the allowed complement (393 men) did not permit adequate manning of the ship’s battery during unloading operations, many men had to double on winch details, hatch parties, gun stations, mess duties and sea watches.

TANK LIGHTERS' ROUTE TO TANAMBOGO



drums set afire by the destroyer's shells. After the *Buchanan* had ceased fire, the tank commander gave orders for the lighters to proceed to the beach. As it passed the destroyer, it is reported, the Captain waved to the men in the lighter and shouted, "Give 'em hell!" The naval crew began firing their machine guns at Japanese on the shore, and the tank crew opened fire with their 37-mm. guns. Enemy snipers were active on Gavutu, Tanambogo, and Florida Islands as the lighter circled Gaomi Island and headed into the eastern shore of Tanambogo. It scratched bottom on several coral reefs but kept going.

On reaching the beach, the lighter dropped its ramp and the tank rolled off. The enemy's fire was heavy, and a Marine sergeant who was standing forward of the lighter's engine room was killed instantly. The other Marines followed the tank ashore, a few falling as their small line was raked by enemy fire. The naval crew had to get out, stand in the line of fire, and raise the ramp by hand, as it had no motor. After the ramp was raised, the crew backed the lighter away from the shore as far as they could in order to keep the ramp between them and the enemy's fire. Soon after heading back for Gavutu, the boat passed a point of land which was covered with trees. Japanese snipers opened fire. "We spotted the flash from a gun up in one of these trees," Boatswain Sporhase reported, "and I picked up the Marine's Reising gun and blasted the flash. The Jap fired again and I got a better bead on him, and fired again and he come tumbling down like a bird."

On its return to Gavutu, Lighter No. 1 was ordered to ferry about 20 Marines to Tanambogo. This time, because of the protection it provided, the ramp was not lowered, and the Marines "bailed out over the sides." Although the fire was almost continuous as the boat approached and departed from the beach, the naval crew again escaped injury.

Tank Lighter No. 2 had a similar experience. On approaching Tanambogo beach on its first trip, the craft ran aground on the coral a few yards from shore. "When we couldn't get any nearer the beach," Boatswain Hensen reported, "I signalled the tank to run off, rather than stop to lower the ramp. I had told Lieut. Sweeney (the Marine tank commander) to run right into the ramp and knock it down with the tank when I gave the signal that the stops were off. So the tank knocked the ramp down and started up the beach with the fourteen Marines right behind it. Lieut. Sweeney had his head sticking out the top of the tank, trying to fire the machine gun, and that is the last I saw of him alive. They shot the top of his head off."³⁹

This tragedy resulted from the fact that Lieut. Sweeney's tank, while delivering effective fire into the enemy positions, had got ahead of its supporting troops. The Japanese rushed from their dugouts and caves and stalled the tank by poking a large iron bar into the track. In trying to rid itself of the bar, the tank backed onto the stump of a coconut tree and became caught. It was then powerless to move either forward or backward, and the Japanese threw "Molotov cocktails" and other inflammables into it, killing all of the crew except one man who escaped through the turret. The other tank executed its mission perfectly, keeping well within support of the advancing infantry.

Company I of Combat Team C, commanded by Capt. W.G. Tinsley, followed the two tanks ashore.

39 From action report of *President Adams*.

About half of the company pushed up the southern slope of Tanambogo hill, while the rest worked around the east and north sides and along the shore. The fighting was close and savage.⁴⁰ At about this time the first platoon of Company K (Lieut. J.J. Donahue), assisted by a few paratroops, crossed the causeway from Gavutu and established themselves on the south side of the island. Meanwhile, the enemy-held cave on the south side of Hill 148 on Gavutu had been reduced by an amphibious tractor.

By 2200 Tulagi and both Gavutu and Tanambogo were completely in our hands, except for a few isolated nests of snipers. During the evening and night an almost constant procession of boats moved between the transports and the islands, bringing supplies to the Marines and evacuating the wounded. It was estimated that on all 3 islands there had been 1,400 Japanese, of whom 1,000 had been on Gavutu and Tanambogo. The Tulagi force was entirely naval, believed to be part of the Special Landing Force (Marines) with headquarters at Rabaul. On the other 2 islands about 400 were naval troops (Marines and naval aviation personnel) and the remaining 600 were believed to have been laborers. Although no accurate count could be made of bodies, as many were left in blasted caves and dugouts, it was believed that a reasonable estimate was: 1,500 Japanese killed, less 23 captured and 70 escaped to Florida. Despite the rugged fighting, our casualties were comparatively small. In taking the 3 islands we lost 8 officers and 100 enlisted men killed, missing, or died of wounds; and 7 officers and 133 men wounded; or a total of 248 casualties.

Guadalcanal, August 8

Meanwhile, except for the congestion of boats and supplies on Beach RED,⁴¹ satisfactory progress was being made on Guadalcanal. The advance to the west had been resumed early in the morning. The First Battalion of Combat Team A continued along the shore through the comparatively favorable terrain of flat coconut plantations. Combat Group B encountered much more difficulty going in the thick jungle several miles inland. A few prisoners were picked up during the morning. Interrogation revealed that no large enemy force was in the vicinity and that the only regularly organized garrison had retreated to the west. Thus at midday it was decided that Combat Team A (Fifth Marines) should move rapidly astride the road leading to Kukum and seize the village and enemy installations there.

40 The first Marine Division Commander's report states that "sniper fire from nearby Gaomi (Palm) Island harassed the landing party until about 1700, when U.S.S. *Gridley* silenced the enemy on the islet." As the *Gridley* was not in the expeditionary force, it is probable that reference was made to the *Henley*, which reported that she was engaged in silencing snipers and machine-gun nests on Gaomi (Palm) Island (Florida-Tulagi Group) at 1720, August 8, 1942. After 210 rounds of 5-inch AA common ammunition was expended at 1,500 to 1,700 yards "Marines on Gavutu Island reported all opposition was destroyed."

41 In view of some criticism that Marines standing apparently idle in the vicinity of Beach RED were not used to help unload the boats, the following remarks in the First Division Commander's Report may be of interest: "The shore party organization was functioning efficiently and all concerned were doing their utmost, but, as had so often been pointed out in peacetime maneuvers, the manpower available at the beach was physically inadequate to cope with the tremendous volume of incoming supply. In theory the conditions might have been alleviated by the assignment of combat troops to unloading operations, but at the time in question (the afternoon of August 7th), the Division Commander was constrained to dispose all his forces tactically. In the situation as it then existed, he occupied the most dangerous of all positions for any commander of a naval or military force: i.e., being in close proximity to a large enemy force which possessed complete knowledge of his dispositions and movements, while he, the Division Commander, was unable to make contact with the enemy or to gain information as to the direction from which he might appear . . . (Thus) it was incumbent upon him to employ all his forces toward seizure of the objective and protection of rear area installations against assault from the flank or the rear."

They crossed the Lunga River at the main bridge and encountered no opposition until their advance elements entered Kukum at 1500. This, however, amounted only to light fire from low knolls near the village and was quickly silenced. In the meantime Company Group B (First Marines) had been able to make faster progress in the plains east of the airfield and by 1600 they were in possession of the airdrome, having encountered only one small enemy patrol. For the night they were ordered to occupy the line of the Lunga.

It was found that the Japanese had done a remarkable piece of work in developing their Lunga Point positions since occupation of July 4th. In 5 weeks they had constructed large, semipermanent camps; finger wharves; bridges; machine shops; two large radio stations; ice plants; two large and permanent electric power plants; an elaborate air compressor plant for torpedoes, and a nearly completed airdrome with hangars, blast pens, and a 3,600-foot runway. Defenses consisted of three antiaircraft batteries and machine-gun emplacements.

The military garrison, excluding labor troops, was believed to have consisted of 200 naval personnel and about 400 naval landing force troops (Marines). The latter, according to General Vandegrift, were well trained and equipped and “the reason for their precipitous flight toward Kokumbona must remain an enigma.” There was no organized defense of the Lunga Point area. Camp sites had evidently been abandoned “in a state of utter confusion.” Arms and personal equipment were left behind in large quantities, and no effort had been made at demolition. “Few dead were found as a result of the aerial and naval bombardment,” wrote General Vandegrift, “but upon examination of prisoners it appeared that the daybreak bombardment caught the garrison completely by surprise and that a state of panic ensued which was followed by a precipitate and disorderly flight to the west.”

THE AIR SUPPORT RETIRES

At 1807 on the 8th, Admiral Fletcher, commanding Task Forces NEGAT and TARE, sent a dispatch to Admiral Ghormley at Noumea, stating that the carrier fighter strength had been reduced from 99 to 78 planes, that fuel for the carriers was running low, and that because of the large number of enemy torpedo and bombing planes in the vicinity he recommended immediate withdrawal of the air support group. This recommendation was approved by Admiral Ghormley late that night and early the following morning the *Wasp*, *Saratoga*, and *Enterprise* and their escorts began retiring to the south.

This decision precipitated a conference just before midnight aboard Admiral Turner’s flagship, the *McCawley*, which was attended by Admiral Crutchley and General Vandegrift. In view of the carriers’ withdrawal, which left the amphibious force dangerously exposed to air attack, it was decided to move out all the other ships at 0600 the next day. This decision to retire the transport and cargo ships so disturbed General Vandegrift that he at once went aboard the *Southard* to go to Tulagi to confer with General Rupertus.⁴²

42 “As the operation had been planned with the expectation that the transport force would remain in the area until D plus 4 days, and in view of the unsatisfactory progress of unloading supplies, the decision to withdraw the surface vessels was most alarming, as its execution would profoundly affect the entire future course of operations in the Solomons.” First Marine Division Commander’s Report.

Previously, the *McCawley* had received a warning that two Japanese destroyers, three cruisers and two gunboats or seaplane tenders had been sighted at 1127 (Zone minus 11) at latitude 5°45' S., longitude 156°07' E., course 120° T., speed 15 knots. This message was sent out by the Melbourne radio at 1821. Information is not available to explain the long delay between the sighting of the enemy surface force and its subsequent reporting to our forces at Guadalcanal. Possibly the bad weather reported on August 8th by our search planes northwest of Guadalcanal explains the failure of our reconnaissance to sight and track this hostile group.⁴³ At any rate, Admiral Turner evidently believed that the most likely attack on our forces would come, as it had on the previous 2 days, through the air, because shortly before midnight he sent a message to the Commander Aircraft, South Pacific Force (Admiral McCain), estimating that the enemy force reported by Melbourne might operate torpedo planes from Rekata Bay, Santa Isabel Island, and recommending that strong air detachments strike there on the morning of the 9th.

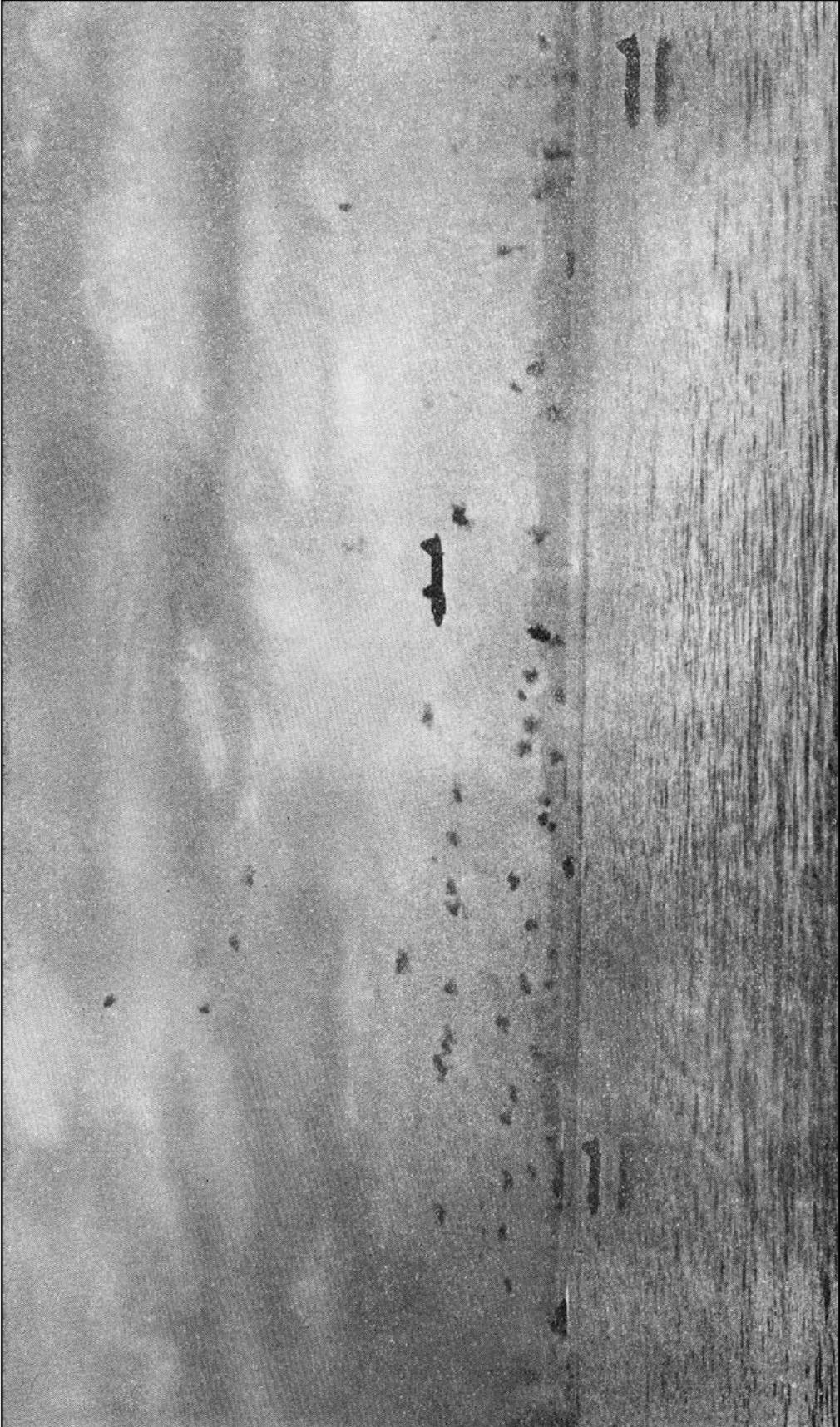
CONCLUSIONS

The situation at 2400 on August 8th may be summarized as follows: The Marines held Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo, although several nests of enemy snipers remained on the last island. We had put about 7,500 men ashore in that area at a cost of 248 casualties. Japanese casualties, however, were virtually 100 percent, or about 1500. At Guadalcanal we had about 11,000 men ashore, with a fairly firm hold on the northern shore from Kukum to Koli Point. The airfield we had captured was ready for almost immediate use by fighters and dive bombers. With few tools and no barbed wire, our troops were busily digging in to defend their valuable beachhead. The enemy forces on Guadalcanal had all withdrawn to the bush.

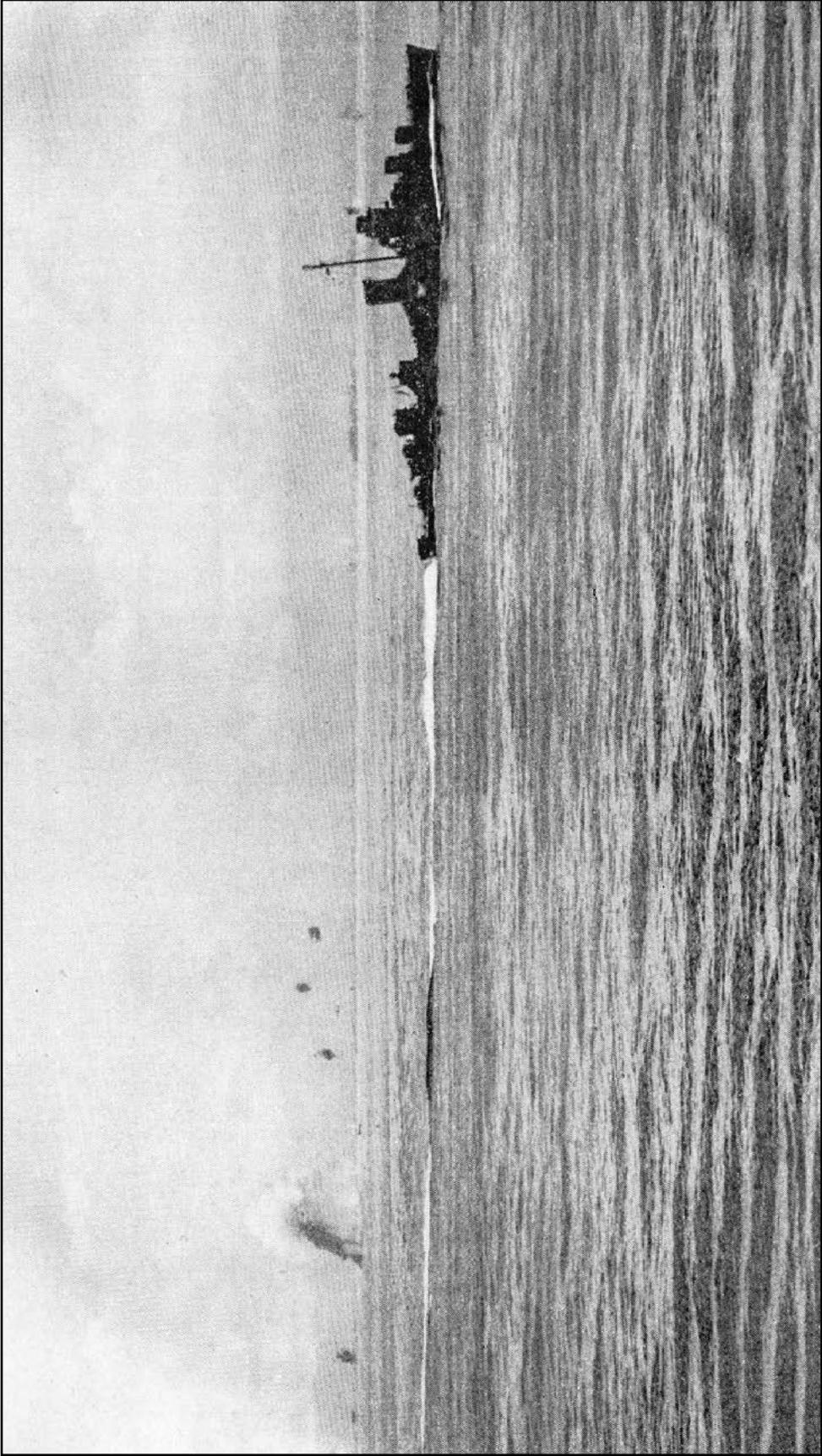
The immediate objectives of the expedition had been obtained, although the operation had taken 2 days instead of one and the occupation of Ndeni in the Santa Cruz Islands had had to be postponed indefinitely because of the use of the Second Marines in finishing the fight in the Tulagi area. Our ship losses had been slight: 1 transport, the *George F. Elliott*, sunk; 1 destroyer, the *Jarvis*, subsequently sunk as a result of battle damage; 1 destroyer, the *Mugford*, slightly damaged. Plane losses, 21 out of 99 fighters on the 3 carriers, had been considerable but not excessive in view of the enemy's heavy counterattacks by air. The 2 days' accomplishment amply justified Admiral Ghormley's dispatch on the morning of the 8th in which he stated that the results so far achieved made every officer and man in the South Pacific area proud of the task forces.

Two tactical developments had arisen that evening, however, which seriously endangered the success of the entire operation. The significance of one—the unexpectedly early retirement of the aircraft carriers—was appreciated at once. The significance of the other—the report of the approach of a large enemy surface force—does not appear to have been realized until its costly consequences had been felt.

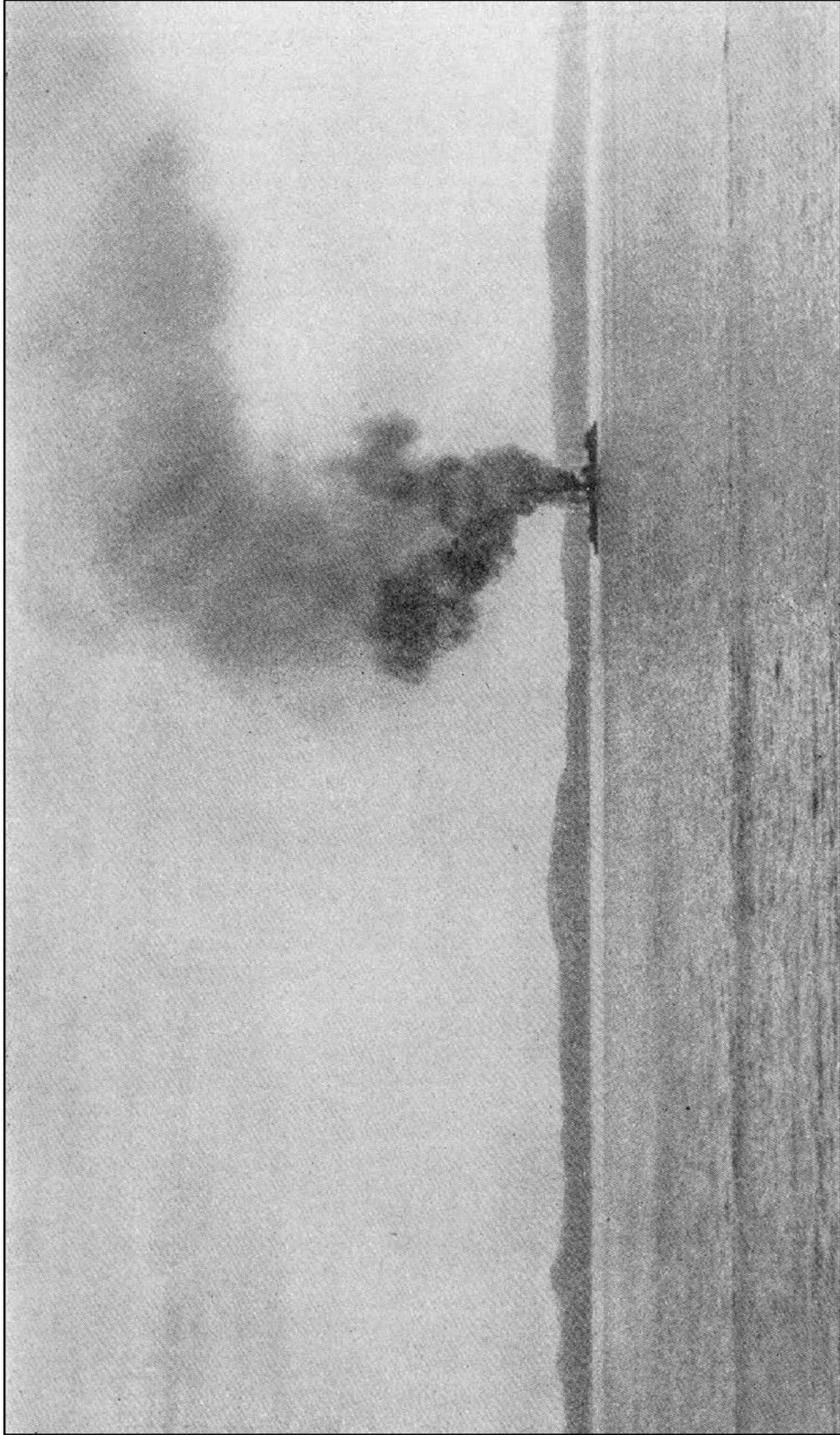
43 Admiral McCain's operation plan for land-and water-based planes provided for a comprehensive search of the Solomons region before, during, and after the Tulagi-Guadalcanal landings. On August 8th the schedule for "D-plus-1 day to end of operations" was in force. This comprised 650- and 800-mile searches to the northwest from Plaine des Gaiacs, Espiritu Santo, Malaita, and Ndeni by VBs and VPs. It may be significant that the two sectors covering the enemy's line of approach to Guadalcanal from Buka and Bougainville via New Georgia and Isabel Islands were only partly covered by our search planes on August 8th because of bad weather in that vicinity.



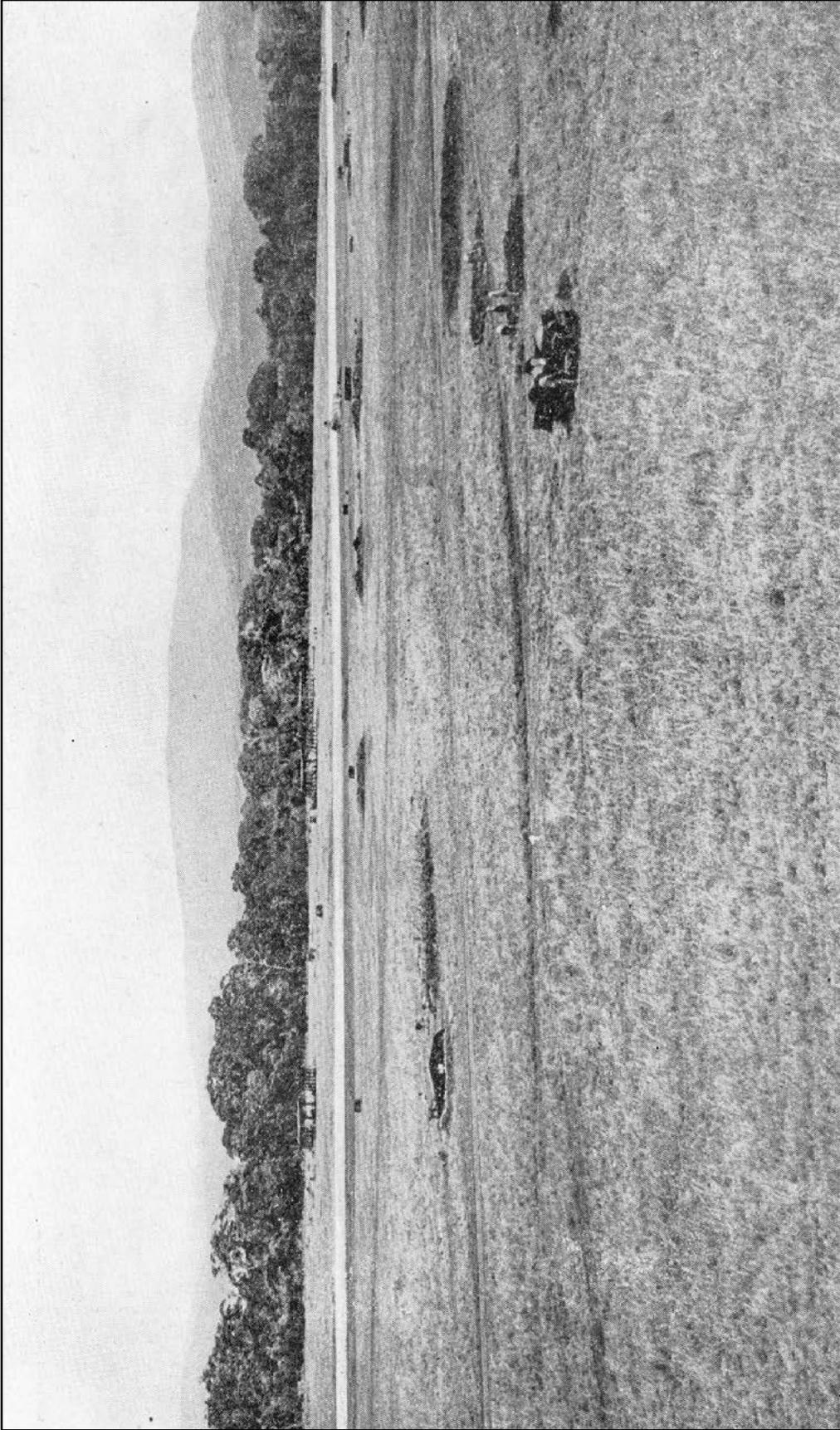
Torpedo planes attacking our transports 8 August.



Destroyer maneuvering during Japanese air attack.



The George F. Elliott, after Japanese plane had crashed into her, 8 August.



Henderson Field, September 1942.

APPENDIX I

Summary of Carrier Air Groups' Operations

*Wasp.*⁴⁴

According to Capt. Forrest Sherman, aircraft recovery, respotting, refueling, rearming, replacement of oxygen, and minor repairs were conducted rapidly and without incident. Replenishment of oxygen, however, proved to be the slowest operation. Although in some instances planes were late in returning to the ship, in no case was a scheduled launching late in leaving. Indeed, in most instances aircraft could have been flown off 5 to 15 minutes in advance of schedule. On D-Day a total of 223 launchings and 221 landings were made, and on D-plus-one-Day 89 launchings and 86 landings.

The *Wasp* aircraft expended sixty-seven 1,000-pound bombs, fifty 500-pound bombs, and sixteen 325-pound bombs, which all functioned as intended. Only one case of a jammed machine gun occurred in 309 flights. Three hundred twenty-five pound depth bombs with instantaneous fuses were used effectively against shore objectives, their advantage being that an SBD-3 could carry three as against only one 500-pound or 1,000-pound bomb.

The *Wasp's* casualties for the entire action were:

(a) One fighter pilot, Ens. T.J. Capowski, missing in action.

(b) One scout bomber shot down; pilot Lieut. Dudley H. Adams wounded by explosive bullets and recovered by the Dewey; Radioman-gunner Harry E. Elliott, ARM3c, missing, reported to have been killed before the crash.

(c) One fighter landed in the water due to propeller trouble; pilot recovered.

(d) One fighter crashed on deck; pilot injured; plane jettisoned overboard.

(e) One fighter crashed into barrier first day; repaired and flown second day.

*Saratoga.*⁴⁵

The *Saratoga* had 240 take-offs August 7th and 233 landings. On the 8th, 114 planes took off and 113 landed.

44 The *Wasp's* air group consisted of:
VS-72, Lt. Comdr. Ernest M. Snowden.
VT-7, Lieut. H.A. Romberg.
VS-71, Lt. Comdr. John Eldridge, Jr.
VF-71, Lt. Comdr. Courtney Shands.

45 The *Saratoga's* air group consisted of:
VB-3, Lt. Comdr. Dewitt W. Shumway.
VS-3, Lt. Comdr. Louis J. Kirn.
VF-5, Lt. Comdr. Leroy C. Simpler.
VT-8, Lieut. Harold H. Larsen.

As a result of the action August 7-8th, the *Saratoga* lost 7 fighters and 1 scout bomber. At the outset of action August 7th the *Saratoga* had 34 SBD-3s on board, 34 F4F-4s, and 15 TBFs; at the end of August 8th she had 33 SBD-3s, 27 F4F-4s, and 15 TBFs. Against this the *Saratoga* air group could count the destruction of at least 12 enemy planes.

The *Saratoga*'s casualties for the entire action were:

(a) Lieut. James J. Southerland, Lieut. (jg) C.A. Tabberer, Lieut. (jg) W. Holt, Ens. J.R. Daly, who was later recovered by the *Chicago*, and Ens. R.L. Price were reported missing in action.

(b) One fighter, Ens. C.E. Eichenberger, crashed into the sea while taking off on one of the early morning flights August 7th; he was picked up by a destroyer.

(c) A scout bomber carrying Ens. W.R. Bell and R.K. Cameron, Seaman Second Class, also fell into the sea while taking off; neither the pilot nor his passenger was saved.

(d) On August 8th a seventh fighter, Ens. F. Blair, landed in the sea, having run out of gasoline; he was recovered by the *Phelps*.

Enterprise.⁴⁶

The *Enterprise* launched 237 aircraft on August 7th and recovered 230. The corresponding figures for August 8th were 135 and 136. The operations on August 7th were the most extensive that the veteran carrier had ever conducted in a single day. According to Capt. Davis, personnel carried out their duties in a highly satisfactory manner, the plane-handling crews' performance being «magnificent.» These men did all their duties involving respotting of the deck “on the double,” and “the stamina of these crews, who have been hardened by continuous service in the war, is worthy of mention.”

Enemy aircraft destroyed by the *Enterprise* air group on August 7th-8th were listed as follows:

(a) Shot down by fighters: 5 dive bombers, type 99; 6 twin-engine horizontal bombers, type 97 Mitsubishi (4 used as torpedo planes); and 2 fighters, type Zero Zero. Shot down by scout-bomber: 1 fighter, type Zero Zero. This makes a total of 14 enemy planes destroyed.

(b) In the same period the *Enterprise* air group lost six planes, all fighters (F4F-4s), four being reported as missing in action and two having made night water-landings while returning from operations.

(c) Of the six pilots who went down with the fighters, three, Lt. (jg) Gordon E. Firebaugh, Machinist William H. Warden, and Machinist Julius A. Achten, made forced landings and were eventually picked up by friendly personnel. The three others, Ens. Earl W. Cook, Machinist Patrick

46 The *Enterprise*'s air group consisted of:
VF-6, Lieut. Louis H. Bauer.
VS-5, Lieut. Turner F. Caldwell, Jr.
VT-3, Lt. Comdr. Charles M. Jett.
VB-6, Lieut. Ray Davis.

L. Nagle, and William J. Stephenson, Jr., Aviation Pilot First Class, had not been heard from at the time the action reports were written.

These summaries would indicate that our carrier-borne plane losses for the 2 days' operations were slightly smaller than those reported to Admiral Ghormley. The action reports state that the *Wasp* lost 3 fighters and 1 scout-bomber, the *Enterprise* 6 fighters, and the *Saratoga* 7 fighters and 1 scout bomber, or a total of 16 fighters and 2 scout bombers. They also show that Japanese plane losses, including those destroyed on the ground or water during the dawn attack of August 7th, were more than double our own, amounting to exactly 50, the *Wasp* accounting for 24 enemy planes of various types, the *Enterprise* 14, and the *Saratoga* 12. When it is also considered that the enemy in 3 air attacks on the transport area was unable to hit and damage more than 3 of the 51 vessels assembled there, it cannot reasonably be said that the protection provided by the carrier air groups was as deficient as some of the fliers, in their more self-critical moments, seemed to believe it was.

Appendix II: Symbols of U.S. Navy Ships

AB	Crane Ship	CA	Heavy Cruiser
ACM	Auxiliary Mine Layer	CAZ	(Planned Auxiliary, Conversion)
AD	Destroyer Tender	CB	Large Cruiser
AE	Ammunition Ship	CL	Light Cruiser
AF	Provision Storeship	CM	Mine Layer
AG	Miscellaneous Auxiliary	CMc	Coastal Mine Layer
AGC	Amphibious Force Flagship	CV	Aircraft Carrier
AGP	Motor Torpedo Boat Tender	CVB	Aircraft Carrier, Large
AGS	Surveying Ship	CVE	Aircraft Carrier, Escort
AH	Hospital Ship	CVL	Aircraft Carrier, Light
AK	Cargo Ship	DD	Destroyer
AKA	Cargo Ship, Attack	DE	Destroyer Escort
AKN	Net Cargo Ship	DM	Light Mine Layer
AKS	General Stores Issue Ship	IX	Miscellaneous Unclassified
AKV	Cargo Ship and Aircraft Ferry	LCC(1)	Landing Craft, Control (Mk. 1)
AM	Mine Sweeper	LCC(2)	Landing Craft, Control (Mk. 2)
AMb	Base Mine Sweeper	LCI(F)	Landing Craft, Infantry (flotilla flagship)
AMc	Coastal Mine Sweeper	LCI(G)	Landing Craft, Infantry (gunboat)
AN	Net Layer	LCI(L)	Landing Craft, Infantry (large)
AO	Oiler	LCM(2)	Landing Craft Mechanized (Mk. II)
AOG	Gasoline Tanker	LCM(3)	Landing Craft, Mechanized (Mk. III)
AP	Transport	LCM(6)	Landing Craft, Mechanized (Mk. VI)
APA	Transport, Attack	LCP(L)	Landing Craft, Personnel (large)
APB	Barracks Ship (self-propelled)	LCP(N)	Landing Craft, Personnel (nested)
APc	Coastal Transport	LCP(R)	Landing Craft, Personnel (with ramp)
APD	Transport, High Speed	LCR(L)	Landing Craft, Rubber (large)
APH	Transport for Wounded	LCR(S)	Landing Craft, Rubber (small)
APL	Barracks Ship (non-self-propelled)	LCS(L)(3)	Landing Craft, Support (large) (Mk. III)
APV	Transport and Aircraft Ferry	LCS(S)(1)	Landing Craft, Support (small) (Mk. I)
AR	Repair Ship	LCS(S)(2)	Landing Craft, Support (small) (Mk. II)
ARG	Repair Ship, Internal Combustion Engine	LCT(5)	Landing Craft, Tank (Mk. V)
ARH	Repair Ship, Heavy Hull	LCT(6)	Landing Craft, Tank (Mk. VI)
ARL	Repair Ship, Landing Craft	LCV	Landing Craft, Vehicle
ARS	Salvage Vessel	LCVP	Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel
ARS(T)	Salvage Craft Tender	LSD	Landing Ship, Dock
ARV	Aircraft Repair Ship	LSM	Landing Ship, Medium
ARV(A)	Aircraft Repair Ship (aircraft)	LSM(R)	Landing Ship, Medium (rocket)
ARV(E)	Aircraft Repair Ship (engine)	LST	Landing Ship, Tank
AS	Submarine Tender	LSV	Landing Ship, Vehicle
ASR	Submarine Rescue Vessel	LSX	(Planned Landing Ship)
ATA	Ocean Tug, Auxiliary	LVT(1)	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Mk. I)
ATF	Ocean Tug, Fleet	LVT(A)(1)	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (armored) (Mk. I)
ATO	Ocean Tug, Old	LVT(2)	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Mk. II)
ATR	Ocean Tug, Rescue	LVT(A)(2)	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (armored) (Mk. II)
AV	Seaplane Tender, Large	LVT(3)	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Mk. III)
AVC	Catapult Lighter	LVT(4)	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (Mk. IV)
AVD	Seaplane Tender (high speed)	LVT(A)(4)	Landing Vehicle, Tracked (armored) (Mk. IV)
AVP	Seaplane Tender, Small	PC	Submarine Chaser (173')
AW	Distilling Ship	PCE	Patrol Craft Escort
AX	(Planned Auxiliary, New Construction)	PCE(R)	Patrol Craft Escort (rescue)
BB	Battleship	PCS	Submarine Chaser (173')

PE	Eagle Boat	YHT	Heating Scow
PF	Frigate	YMS	Motor Mine Sweeper
PG	Gunboat	YN	Net Tender
PGM	Motor Gunboat	YNg	Gate Vessel
PR	River Gunboat	YNT	Net Tender, Tug Class
PT	Motor Torpedo Boat	YO	Fuel Oil Barge
PY	Yacht	YOG	Gasoline Barge
PYc	Coastal Yacht	YP	District Patrol Vessel
SC	Submarine Chaser (110')	YPK	Pontoon Stowage Barge
SS	Submarine	YR	Floating Workshop
YA	Ash Lighter	YRD(H)	Floating Workshop, Dry Dock (hull)
YAG	Miscellaneous District Auxiliary	YRD(M)	Floating Workshop, Dry Dock (machinery)
YC	Open Lighter	YS	Stevedore Barge
YCF	Car Float	YSD	Seaplane Wrecking Derrick
YCK	Open Cargo Lighter	YSP	Salvage Pontoon
YCV	Aircraft Transportation Lighter	YSR	Sludge Removal Barge
YDG	Degaussing Vessel	YTB	Harbor Tug, Big
YDT	Diving Tender	YTL	Harbor Tug, Little
YF	Covered Lighter; Range Tender; Provision Store Lighter	YTM	Harbor Tug, Medium
YFB	Ferryboat and Launch	YTT	Torpedo Testing Barge
YFT	Torpedo Transportation Lighter	YTX	(Planned District Craft)
YG	Garbage Lighter	YW	Water Barge
YHB	Houseboat	AT, YT	Tugs (Ocean, Harbor)

Appendix III: Designations of U.S. Naval Aircraft

Model designation		Class	Manufacturer	U.S. name	British name
(Navy)	(Army)				
BD	A-20	Bomber	Douglas	Havoc	Boston III, Havoc
XBTC		<i>ditto</i>	Curtiss		
F2A		Fighter	Brewster	Buffalo	Buffalo
F3A		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Corsair	Corsair
F4F		<i>ditto</i>	Grumman	Wildcat	Martlet
F6F		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Hellcat	Hellcat
F7F		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>		
FG		<i>ditto</i>	Goodyear	Corsair	Corsair
FM		<i>ditto</i>	Eastern Aircraft	Wildcat	Martlet V
F4U		<i>ditto</i>	Chance-Vaught	Corsair	Corsair
GB	C-43	Transport	Beech	Traveler	
GH		<i>ditto</i>	Howard		
GK	C-61	<i>ditto</i>	Fairchild	Forwarder	
HE	L-4	Ambulance	Piper	Grasshopper	
J2F	OA-12	Utility	Grumman	Duck	
J4F		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Widgeon	
JRB	C-45	Utility, multi-engine	Beech	Voyager	
JRC-1	C78	<i>ditto</i>	Cessna		
JRF	OA-9	<i>ditto</i>	Grumman		Goose I.
XJRM-1		<i>ditto</i>	Martin	Mars	
JRS		<i>ditto</i>	Vought-Sikorsky		
JRS2		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Excalibur	
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	<i>ditto</i>	Ryan	Recruit	
N2S	PT-17	<i>ditto</i>	Stearman (Boeing)	Caydet	
N2T		<i>ditto</i>	Timm	Tutor	
N3N		<i>ditto</i>	Naval Aircraft Factory		
OS2N		Observation scout	<i>ditto</i>	Kingfisher	

OS2U		<i>ditto</i>	Vought-Sikorsky	<i>ditto</i>	Kingfisher
XPBB		Patrol bomber, 2-engine, boat	Boeing	Sea Ranger	
PB2B		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Catalina	Catalina
PBJ	B-25	Patrol bomber, 2-engine, landplane	North American	Mitchell	
PBM		Patrol bomber, 2-engine, boat	Martin	Mariner	Mariner
PBN		<i>ditto</i>	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	<i>ditto</i>	Consolidated	<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>
P4Y		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	
PB2Y-3		Patrol bomber, 4-engine, boat	<i>ditto</i>	Coronado	Coronado
PB4Y	B-24	Patrol bomber, 4-engine, landplane	<i>ditto</i>	Liberator	Liberator
PV	B-34	Patrol bomber, 2-engine, landplane	Vega	Ventura	Ventura
R5C	C-46	Transport, multi- engine	Curtiss	Commando	
R4D-1,5	C-47, 47A	<i>ditto</i>	Douglas	Skytrain	
R4D-2,4	C-49, 49A	<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>		
R4D-3	C-53	<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Skytrooper	
R5D	C-54	<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Skymaster	
R50	C-60	<i>ditto</i>	Lockheed	Lodestar	Lodestar
RB-1	C-93	Transport (cargo), multi- engine	Budd		
SB2A	A-34	Scout bomber	Brewster	Buccaneer	Bermuda
SBC	77-A	<i>ditto</i>	Curtiss	Helldiver	
SB2C	A-24	<i>ditto</i>	Douglas	Dauntless	
SBD		<i>ditto</i>	Douglas		
SB2D		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>		
SBF	A-25	<i>ditto</i>	Fairchild	Helldiver	
SBN		<i>ditto</i>	Naval Aircraft Factory		

SB2U		<i>ditto</i>	Vought-Sikorsky	Vindicator	Chesapeake
SBW	A-25	<i>ditto</i>	Canadian Car & Foundry	Helldiver	Helldiver
SC-1		Scout observation	Curtiss		
SNB-1	AT-11	Trainer, advanced	Beech	Kansas	
SNB-2	AT-7	<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Navigator	
SNC		<i>ditto</i>	Curtiss	Falcon	
SNJ	AT-6	<i>ditto</i>	North American	Texan	Harvard I, II
SNV	BT-13, 15	<i>ditto</i>	Vultee	Valiant	
SOC		Scout observation	Curtiss	Seagull	
SO3C		<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>	Seamew
TBD		Torpedo bomber	Douglas	Devastator	
TBF		<i>ditto</i>	Grumman	Avenger	Tarpon
TBM		<i>ditto</i>	Eastern Aircraft	<i>ditto</i>	<i>ditto</i>
TBV		<i>ditto</i>	Vultee		



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