

World War II  
75th Anniversary Commemorative Series

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COMBAT NARRATIVES

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# Battle of Tassafaronga

30 November 1942

# Japanese Evacuation of Guadalcanal

29 January – 8 February 1943



Naval History and Heritage Command

U.S. Navy



Official U.S. Navy Reprint Published 2017 by

Naval History and Heritage Command  
805 Kidder Breese Street SE  
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

[www.history.navy.mil](http://www.history.navy.mil)

**ISBN 978-1-943604-14-2**

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Cover: "Battle of Tassafaronga," oil on wood, Joseph Alan Hamilton, c.1960. *New Orleans* (CA-32), left, has just had her bow blown off by a Japanese Type 93 "Long Lance" torpedo and continues past its wreckage including the upward pointed guns of its fore 8-inch turret. *Pensacola* (CA-24), right, sheers to port to avoid the carnage but takes a torpedo hit abreast her mainmast. *Honolulu* (CL-48), center background behind *New Orleans*' bow, swings to starboard and avoided damage. (Naval History and Heritage Command Art Collection, #80-142-AK)

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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.

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



COMBAT NARRATIVES

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Solomon Islands Campaign

VII

Battle of Tassafaronga

30 November 1942

VIII

Japanese Evacuation  
of Guadalcanal

29 January – 8 February 1943



**Confidential**

Office of Naval Intelligence  
U. S. Navy



COMBAT NARRATIVES

Solomon Islands Campaign

VII

Battle of Tassafaronga

30 November 1942

VIII

Japanese Evacuation of  
Guadalcanal

Including loss of the *Chicago*  
29 January - 8 February 1943



PUBLICATIONS BRANCH

OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE • UNITED STATES NAVY

1944

## NAVY DEPARTMENT

Office of Naval Intelligence  
Washington, D.C.

*1 October, 1943.*

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Roscoe E. Schuirmann  
REAR ADMIRAL, U.S.N.,  
*Director of Naval Intelligence.*

## FOREWORD

*8 January, 1943.*

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

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

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

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

Thus, an effort has been made to provide accurate and, within the above-mentioned limitations, complete narrative 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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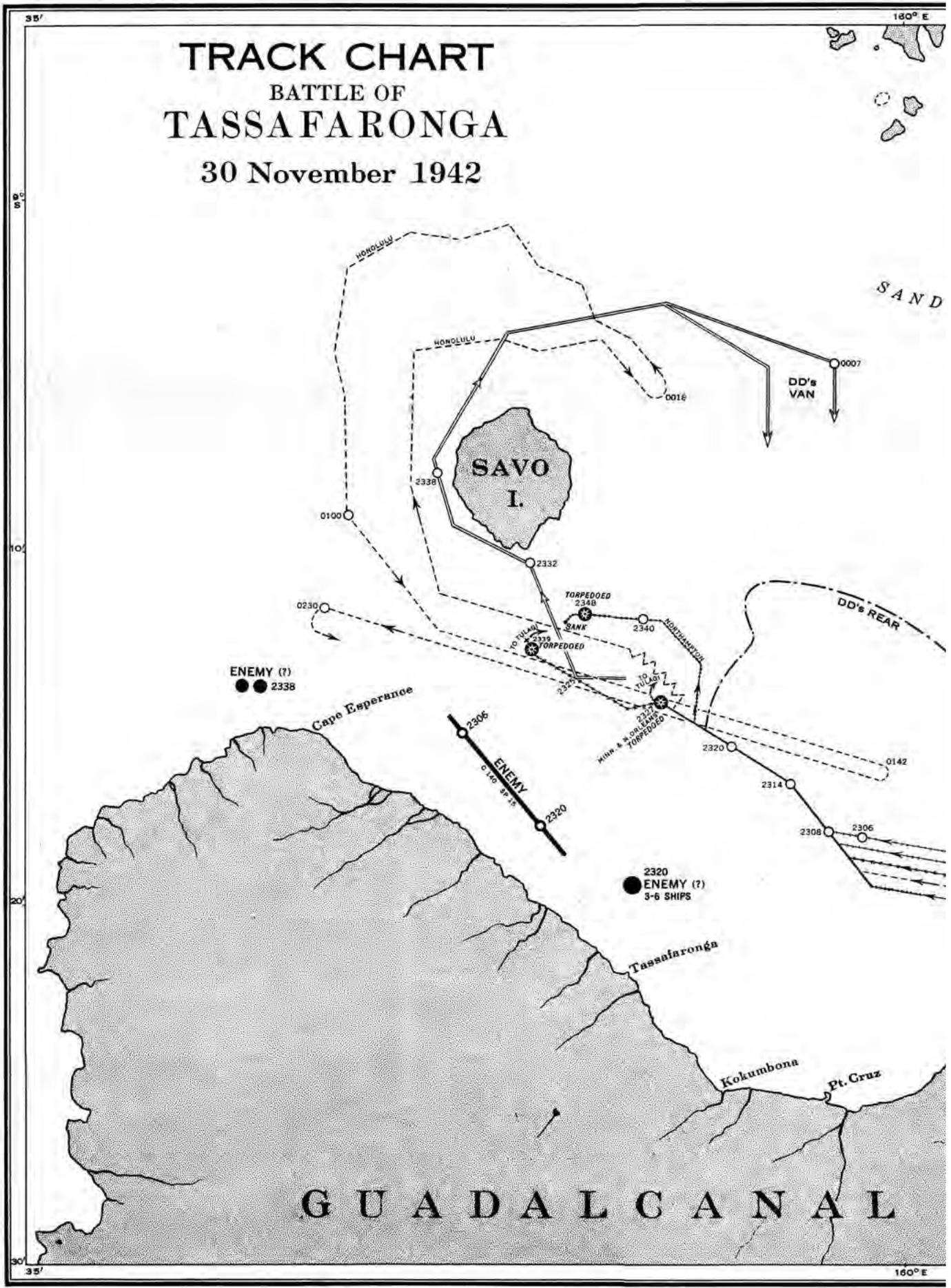


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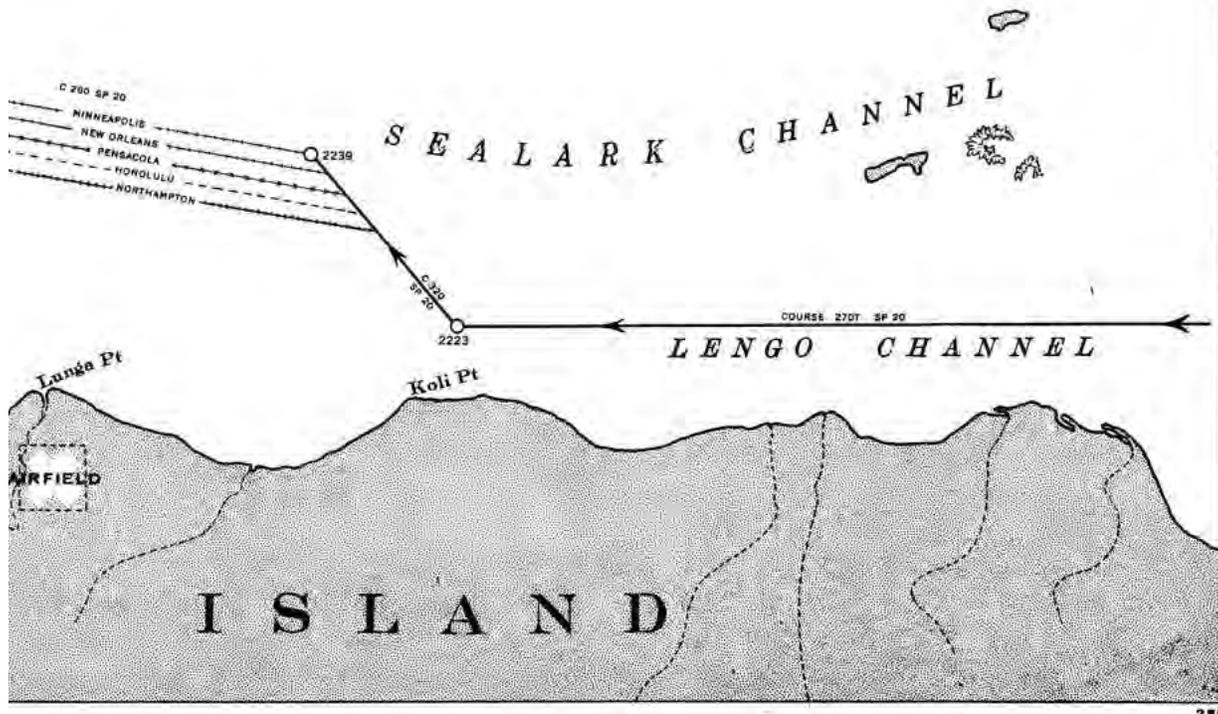
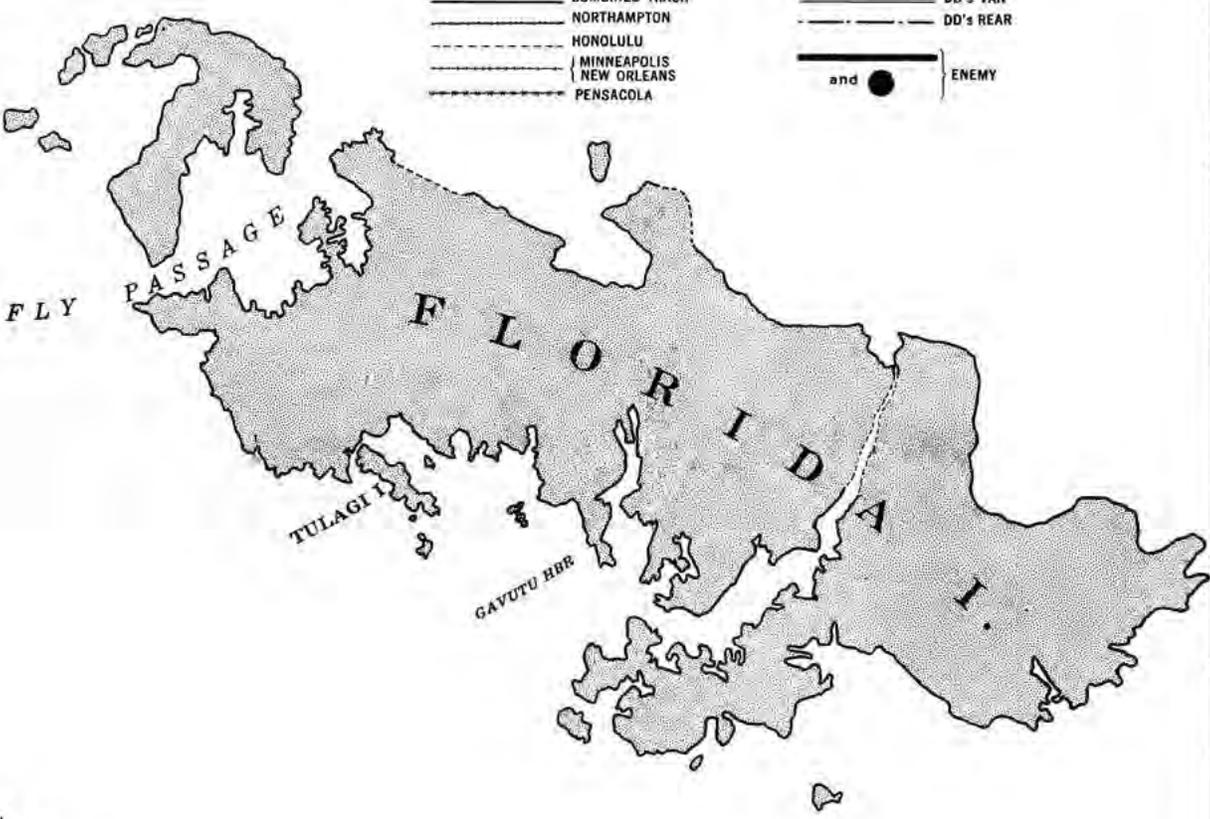
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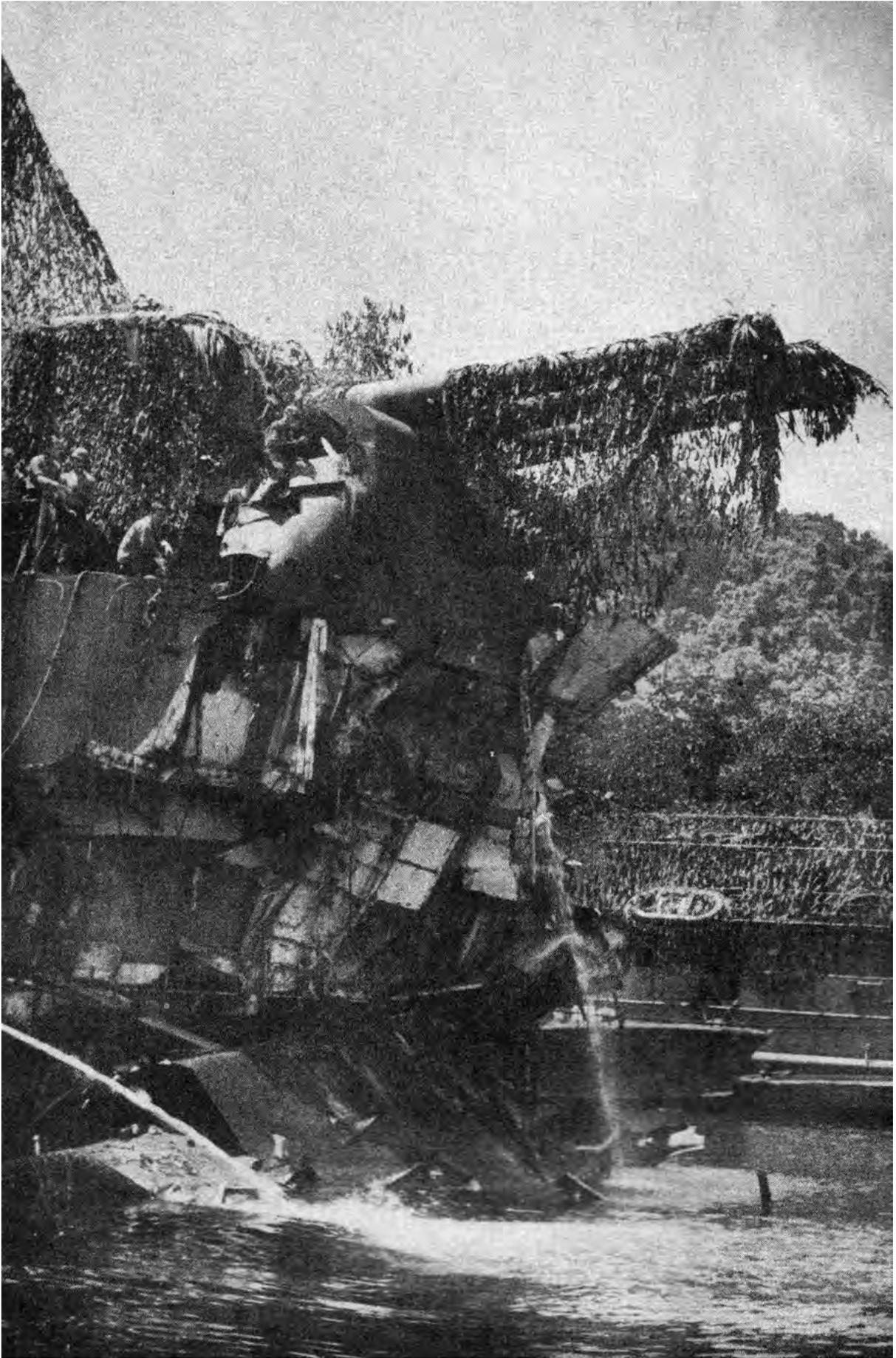
30 November 1942



### LEGEND

- COMBINED TRACK
- NORTHAMPTON
- HONOLULU
- MINNEAPOLIS
- NEW ORLEANS
- PENSACOLA
- DD's VAN
- DD's REAR
- and ● ENEMY





*New Orleans at Tulagi after Battle of Tassafaronga. Bow is missing forward of Turret II*

# Battle of Tassafaronga

30 November 1942

## INTRODUCTION

**I**N THE mid-November Battle of Guadalcanal,<sup>1</sup> the Japanese failed in their greatest effort to recapture the southern Solomons. Nevertheless, their troops fought on doggedly. The enemy air force frequently attacked Henderson Field, and hostile light surface craft and submarines continued to infest the waters bounded by Guadalcanal, Savo, and Florida Islands. Gradually, however, the increasing American land force on Guadalcanal began to thrust the Japanese back, maintaining a pressure which proved more and more effective.

COMSOPAC's War Diary for the latter part of November contains numerous reports from the Commanding General on Guadalcanal of minor encounters with Japanese troops. Day after day witnessed the dislodging of small enemy units from positions threatening Henderson Field. Toward the end of the month, the reports assumed a larger significance. East of the Tenaru River our forces dispersed the Japanese troops. The Marines crossed the Matanikau River (scene of much bloody fighting, 20-26 October) in force, and drove relentlessly westward under cover of naval bombardments until, as December approached, they passed well beyond Point Cruz.

Plans were formulated for a general attack to eliminate all Japanese resistance on the island. The final offensive was postponed, however, pending the Army's relief of the First Marine Division. During the change-over, which continued through December and most of January, active shore operations on Guadalcanal were confined to patrol probings of enemy lines.

For some time after the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Japanese appeared to have abandoned their troops to slow but inevitable extinction. The unfailing indicator of their intentions—the amount of shipping in the Buin-Faisi area—fell rapidly after the middle of November, and remained low for a week or 10 days.

On the 24th, however, Japanese shipping concentrations began to grow. Three days later the number of vessels in Buin and Shortland harbors was reported to have mounted from a mere dozen the previous week to 25-30, in addition to small craft. An enemy move in force to supply and reinforce his southern Solomons positions seemed imminent. If American troops were to continue their successes, this attempt had to be balked.

Our victory at the Battle of Guadalcanal, though overwhelming, had cost us 18 ships sunk or so

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1 See Combat Narrative: *Battle of Guadalcanal*.

badly damaged that extensive repairs were required. With the exception of destroyers, COMSOPAC's only available surface units were the carrier *Enterprise*, the battleship *Washington*, and the light cruiser *San Diego* at Noumea and the heavy cruisers *Northampton* and *Pensacola* at Espiritu Santo.

Several other ships were, however, en route to the South Pacific. By 25 November, as the enemy's aggressive plans became evident, we had assembled a force adequate to counter the expected offensive. At Nandi in the Fijis lay the carrier *Saratoga*, the battleships *North Carolina*, *Colorado*, and *Maryland*, and the light cruiser *San Juan*. The heavy cruisers *New Orleans*, *Northampton*, and *Pensacola*, and the light cruiser *Honolulu* were stationed at Espiritu Santo. These last two, together with the heavy cruiser *Minneapolis* which arrived on the 27th, had come from Pearl Harbor. Here also on the 27th were the destroyers *Drayton* (which had accompanied the *Minneapolis*), *Fletcher*,<sup>2</sup> *Maury*, and *Perkins*.

On 27 November, these 5 cruisers and 4 destroyers at Espiritu Santo were grouped in to a separate task force, under the command of Rear Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, with general instructions from COMSOPAC to intercept any Japanese surface forces approaching Guadalcanal. Admiral Kinkaid prepared a detailed set of operational orders for the Force, but, before he could go over them with his captains, he was ordered to other duty. He was replaced by Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright, who had just made port in the *Minneapolis*.

Task Force WILLIAM<sup>3</sup> was, therefore, constituted as follows:

Four heavy cruisers:

*Minneapolis* (FF), Capt. Charles K. Rosendahl  
*New Orleans*, Capt. Clifford H. Roper  
*Northampton*, Capt. Willard A. Kitts, III  
*Pensacola*, Capt. Frank L. Lowe

One light cruiser:

*Honolulu* (F), Rear Admiral Mahlon S. Tisdale, Capt. Robert W. Hayler

Four destroyers:

*Drayton*, Lt. Comdr. James E. Cooper  
*Fletcher* (F), Comdr. William M. Cole  
*Maury*, Lt. Comdr. Gelzer L. Sims  
*Perkins*, Lt. Comdr. Walter C. Ford

The destroyers *Lamson* (Lt. Comdr. Philip H. Fitz-Gerald) and *Lardner* (Lt. Comdr. William M. Sweetser), under the command of Comdr. Laurence A. Abercrombie in the *Lamson*, joined Task Force WILLIAM 2 hours before the action but took little part in the engagement.

On 29 November the Task Force was moored at Espiritu Santo on 12 hours notice. Admiral Wright held a conference, attended by Admiral Tisdale and the commanding officers of the 9 ships, at which the operation plan drawn up by Admiral Kinkaid was "briefly discussed."

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<sup>2</sup> The *Fletcher* was the only United States ship to emerge undamaged from the furious night action of 12–13 November.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers identifying task forces have been omitted from all Combat Narratives for reasons of security. In place of these numbers will be found the Navy FLAG name for the first letter of the surname of the commanding officer of a task force.

## THE OPERATION PLAN

The plan divided the Task Force into one destroyer and two cruiser units. Each unit included at least one ship equipped with SG radar and one ship with CXAM or SC-1 radar.<sup>4</sup> The *Minneapolis*, *New Orleans* and *Pensacola* formed one unit under Admiral Wright. Admiral Tisdale led the second cruise unit composed of the *Honolulu* and *Northampton*. The four destroyers comprised the third unit under the command of the Senior Officer Present, Comdr. Cole, in the *Fletcher*.

Much of the plan was general in nature, and not relevant to this Narrative. It contained, however, six Annexes, two of which are of particular interest: the communications plan (which included instructions for the use of radar) and the course of action prescribed for a night engagement.

Unit commanders were to assign radar guardships for continuous all-around search, and for surface search with SG equipment as practicable during the hours of darkness. Unidentified objects detected at night were to be reported by TBS<sup>5</sup> to the unit commander, who was instructed to acknowledge the report. Three conditions of radar operation were set: (1) unrestricted radar use; (2) search equipment to be used only by the flagship or the radar guardship—a restriction designed to lessen the likelihood of the enemy picking up emissions from CXAM and SC radars, but not affecting the free use of SG and FC<sup>6</sup> radars; (3) all CXAM, SC, and SG-1 radars to remain silent, responsibility for search falling to the SG's.

The tactical plan governing the movements of Task Force WILLIAM in a night engagement were set forth at length in Annex "F".<sup>7</sup> Its most important provisions were: (1) the cruisers were to form a line of bearing normal to the general bearing line and 4,000 yards astern of the destroyers, which were to stand 30° on the engaged bow of the cruiser line. (2) First contacts were expected to be made by radar. (3) The engagement was to open with a torpedo attack by the destroyers. Once their blow had been delivered, the smaller ships were to follow the cruisers in engaging enemy cruisers or destroyers, and to provide starshell illumination if so ordered. (4) It was hoped to keep the range greater than 12,000 yards until after the torpedo attack, when shellfire would commence at a range of from 10,000 to 12,000 yards. Fire was to be opened under radar control and to be maintained, if possible.<sup>8</sup> If not, individual ships were authorized to illuminate by starshells. Use of searchlights was specifically forbidden. (5) Fighting lights were to be employed only if our ships were fired upon by friendly vessels.

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4 A medium-range radar designated to detect both ships and aircraft. The SG radar, on the other hand, is used primarily for detection of surface craft. It is also useful for night navigation. Ships in Task Force WILLIAM lacking SG radar were the *Northampton*, *Pensacola*, *Maury*, *Lamson*, and *Lardner*.

5 High-frequency voice radio.

6 Fire control radars used primarily for detecting the fire of main batteries, but also employed for short-range search.

7 This Annex is fully reproduced in Appendix II.

8 The purpose of selecting this considerable range was, of course, to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by our excellent search and fire control radars.

## DEPARTURE FROM ESPIRITU SANTO

Task Force WILLIAM remained on 12 hours notice throughout most of 29 November. Positive information regarding Japanese intentions was meager. COMSOPAC could only anticipate another expedition to supply Guadalcanal, not when it might be made or in what force.

At 1940 Admiral Wright received orders to prepare to depart with his force at the earliest possible moment, and to proceed at the best possible speed to intercept an enemy group of 6 destroyers and 6 transports which was expected to arrive off Guadalcanal the next night. He directed Task Force WILLIAM to make all preparations necessary to get under way immediately, and advised COMSOPAC that his ships would be ready to sortie at midnight.

Three hours later COMSOPAC ordered Admiral Wright to proceed with all available units, pass through Lengo Channel (between Guadalcanal and Florida Islands), and intercept the Japanese off Tassafaronga on the northwestern shore of Guadalcanal. Later, Admiral Wright received information that enemy combatant ships might be substituted for the transports, or that the Japanese force might consist wholly of destroyers, and that a hostile landing might be attempted off Tassafaronga earlier than 2300, 30 November. He received no further advices respecting the size or composition of the opposing units.<sup>9</sup>

Admiral Wright promptly put into effect, with minor modifications, Admiral Kinkaid's operation plan, and set midnight as the zero hour for his ships to sortie. Actually the destroyers got under way at 2310, the cruisers at 2335. The whole Force cleared the well-mined, unlighted harbor of Espiritu Santo without incident and shaped its course to pass northeast of San Cristobal Island.

## THE APPROACH

Two planes were catapulted half an hour before sunrise on 30 November with orders to return to Espiritu Santo and report for temporary duty to COMSOPAC. At approximately 1700 the cruisers launched their remaining planes to proceed to Tulagi. These aircraft were furnished with parachute flares. Their pilots had instructions to search between Lunga Point and Cape Esperance, starting at 2200, to report all enemy ships sighted to Admiral Wright, but not to release flares unless so directed by him.<sup>10</sup>

During the morning of 30 November, Admiral Wright informed the Task Force of the reported composition of the enemy force. He also issued additional instructions for the anticipated night operations. These included the burning of screened wake lights, and the use of green and white for

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<sup>9</sup> The inadequacy of Admiral Wright's information contrasts with the more ample knowledge of enemy units received by Admiral Scott prior to the Battle of Cape Esperance, and by Admirals Turner and Lee before the Battle of Guadalcanal. Air search had revealed the number and characteristics of enemy forces with considerable accuracy in the days preceding those actions. But despite a report on the night of 29 November of the departure from Buin of 12 destroyers, steaming in a southeasterly direction, thorough air search under ideal conditions the next day failed to locate any Japanese vessels approaching Guadalcanal. CINCPAC noted that 12 destroyers was the maximum number sighted in the Buin area, and that there was no record of where they were on 30 November, but that they could have been outside our air-search radius to the east or west, or concealed in harbors along the route to Guadalcanal.

<sup>10</sup> Admiral Wright hoped by effective use of flares to compensate for the enemy's decided advantage of inshore operations near Guadalcanal, where radar detection would be difficult. Unfortunately light winds at Tulagi harbor prevented the planes from taking off as planned, and delayed their arrival over the combat site until action had terminated.

fighting lights. As communicated, the plan directed the destroyers to concentrate 2 miles ahead of the guide ship *Minneapolis* before entering Lengo Channel. In the interim between clearing the Channel and encountering the enemy, the destroyers were to steam on a bearing of 300° T. from the guide, maintaining the same 2-mile distance. The cruisers were to form on a line of bearing of 140°, and to maneuver by turn movements so as to pass about 6 miles from the Guadalcanal coast. The Admiral added that he expected gunfire to commence at a range of about 12,000 yards, and that the situation would probably permit withholding fire until the completion of a torpedo attack. He authorized any vessel having a known enemy target within 6,000 yards to open fire.

As the ships approached Lengo Channel, their order was: *Fletcher*, *Perkins*, *Maury*, *Drayton*, followed by the cruiser column, *Minneapolis*, *New Orleans*, *Pensacola*, *Honolulu*, and *Northampton*.

Just before Task Force WILLIAM entered the Channel, it encountered a friendly east-bound force consisting of 3 transports and 5 destroyers, including the destroyers *Lamson* and *Lardner*. Admiral Wright had known that these vessels were in the general area, but became aware of their actual location only at the time of meeting. "Collisions were narrowly avoided," and Task Force WILLIAM reduced speed, first to 20 knots, then to 15. At 1850 the *Lamson* and *Lardner* had received orders from COMSOPAC to join the Task Force at the entrance to Lengo Channel. The junction took place at about 2100. Comdr. Abercrombie, in the *Lamson*, now became Senior Destroyer Officer Present. As it was too late to communicate the details of the operation to him, and therefore impossible for him to assume command of all the destroyers, Admiral Wright directed the *Lamson* and *Lardner* to take up a position astern of the cruiser column.<sup>11</sup>

Task Force WILLIAM cleared Lengo Channel at 2225 at a speed of 20 knots. Its average speed made good from midnight, 29 November, until it entered the Channel at 2140, 30 November, was 28.2 knots. The cruisers steamed in column, 1,000 yards apart, while the destroyers in the van bore 300° T., 4,000 yards from the *Minneapolis*. The night was very dark, the sky completely overcast. Maximum surface visibility was not over 2 miles.

## THE ACTION: FIRST PHASE

- 2223 Cruisers change course to 320° T., destroyers taking parallel courses.
- 2239 All ships turn to 280° T.
- 2306 *Minneapolis*' SG radar picks up two objects off Cape Esperance.
- 2308 Simultaneous turn made to place cruisers and destroyers in columns.
- 2314 Course changed to 300° T. by head of column movement.
- 2316 Comdr. Cole asks permission to launch torpedo attack on enemy formation of 5 ships, distant 7,000 yards.
- 2320 Van destroyers deliver torpedo attack, followed by gunfire and starshells.
- 2321 *Minneapolis* opens fire and is joined by other cruisers as they locate targets.
- 2325 Van destroyers retire westward around Savo Island.

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11 "No information was obtained concerning the disposition of enemy forces, what might be encountered, no operation orders, no special instructions, no recognition signals, no reference or rendezvous points or anything pertaining to the night's operations."— Action Report of Comdr. Abercrombie.

At 2223 the cruisers changed course by head of column to 320° T., with the destroyers taking up parallel courses. About 15 minutes later, all ships formed on a line of bearing of 140°, on a course 280° T. At the same time SG radars began to search the Guadalcanal shoreline for indications of the enemy's presence.

The SG on the *Minneapolis*, which had played a large part in navigating the Task Force through Lengo Channel, picked up the first contact with the enemy. At 2306 what appeared to be "a small wart on Cape Esperance" became visible on the PPI screen. It grew larger until it finally detached itself from the outline of the land mass. It bore 284° T., at a distance of 26,000 yards. Admiral Wright immediately informed the rest of his Force of the radar contact. Gradually the number of ships on the *Minneapolis*' SG screen increased, until by 2315 seven were clearly perceptible. They were proceeding at 15 knots on a southeasterly course.<sup>12</sup>

Shortly after learning of the *Minneapolis*' contact, the *Fletcher* picked up two enemy vessels, bearing 285° T., 14,000 yards off her port bow. Tracking immediately commenced, revealing five ships, four about one mile and a quarter off Guadalcanal, the fifth half a mile outside and abreast of the second ship. A solution of 15 knots on a course of 140° T. was obtained. At 2316, as the enemy formation bore 243° T. at a range of 7,000 yards, Comdr. Cole in the *Fletcher* requested permission to launch torpedoes. Admiral Wright inquired if the targets were within range, and, upon receiving an affirmative answer, authorized the torpedo attack.

Two other van destroyers noted the presence of the enemy. The *Drayton*'s SG picked up five ships after the *Fletcher* reported contact, but for some reason the plot was erratic, giving a target speed of zero. No Japanese ships were visible from the *Perkins* until 2315, when the SC equipment revealed five vessels bearing 284° T., approximately 3,000 yards from Tassafaronga Point and 14,480 yards from the destroyer. Radar plot determined the course of this target as 125° T. and the speed 15 knots. Although the number of ships appearing on the *Perkins*' screen was the same as that on the *Fletcher*'s, the discrepancy in bearings was so great (*Perkins* 284°; *Fletcher*, 243°) that if the bearings were accurate the two groups of ships must have been widely separated. The *Maury* had no SG equipment and could not locate the enemy at this time.

Steaming 1,000 yards astern of the flagship was the *New Orleans*. Her SG also failed to discover the Japanese ships for several minutes after their appearance on the *Minneapolis*' screen at 2306. Eight minutes later, however, what appeared on the SG screen to be a reef close to Guadalcanal was identified as a column of ships, with a single vessel on the flank. This Japanese formation stood 14,000 yards from the *New Orleans*, and although the bearing was not recorded, it was doubtless the same formation as that observed by the *Fletcher*.

The experiences of the other cruisers in the column varied. The *Pensacola*, third in line, lacked SG equipment, and made no radar contacts until well after the *Minneapolis* had opened fire. Next came the *Honolulu*, which, despite constant SG search on the bearings and ranges reported by the *Minneapolis*

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12 Later it developed that at about the same time a cruiser-plane pilot had sighted another group of six Japanese vessels close inshore near Tassafaronga and approximately 4 miles from the ships located on the SG screen.

and *Fletcher*, observed no enemy ships for several minutes.<sup>13</sup> Last in the column was the *Northampton*, which had no SG radar, and had to depend on the reports of the other ships. Neither of the two rear destroyers, also lacking SG equipment, was able to locate the Japanese.

At approximately 2320, having received authority to launch a torpedo attack, the *Fletcher* fired 10 torpedoes in two half salvos by SG control. The center of the Japanese line bore 267° T., at a distance of 7,300 yards—a torpedo range of 9,600 yards from our leading destroyer and 8,200 yards from the *Drayton* in the rear. Simultaneously the *Perkins* launched eight torpedoes, recording the range as 5,000 yards. Because she still could not obtain a target speed of more than zero, the *Drayton* only fired two. The *Maury* had no positive contacts and did not fire at all.

Barely a minute after the torpedoes were launched, Admiral Wright ordered all ships to open gun fire, and the van destroyers began firing 5-inch shells and starshells. The *Fletcher* selected the selected the rear enemy ship as her target. It was 7,500 yards distant on a bearing of 188° T. After firing about 60 rounds in two minutes, the *Fletcher* lost her target from the FD radar. She therefore ceased firing and retired to the northwest around Savo Island, followed by the other three destroyers astern.<sup>14</sup>

At the time Comdr. Cole reported the target range from the *Fletcher* as satisfactory for a torpedo attack, seven enemy ships could be seen on the *Minneapolis*' radar screen, and their range had decreased to about 10,000 yards. The flagship selected a target 9,200 yards off her port bow on a bearing of 260° T. This vessel stood farthest right in the Japanese formation; the ship farthest left bore 239° T.

Assisted by starshells from the port 5-inch battery, the main battery of the *Minneapolis* fired four salvos at what was finally identified as a transport. The first salvo was somewhat over, but the next three were directly on. After the fourth salvo, the transport “violently disintegrated,” and the flagship momentarily checked fire.

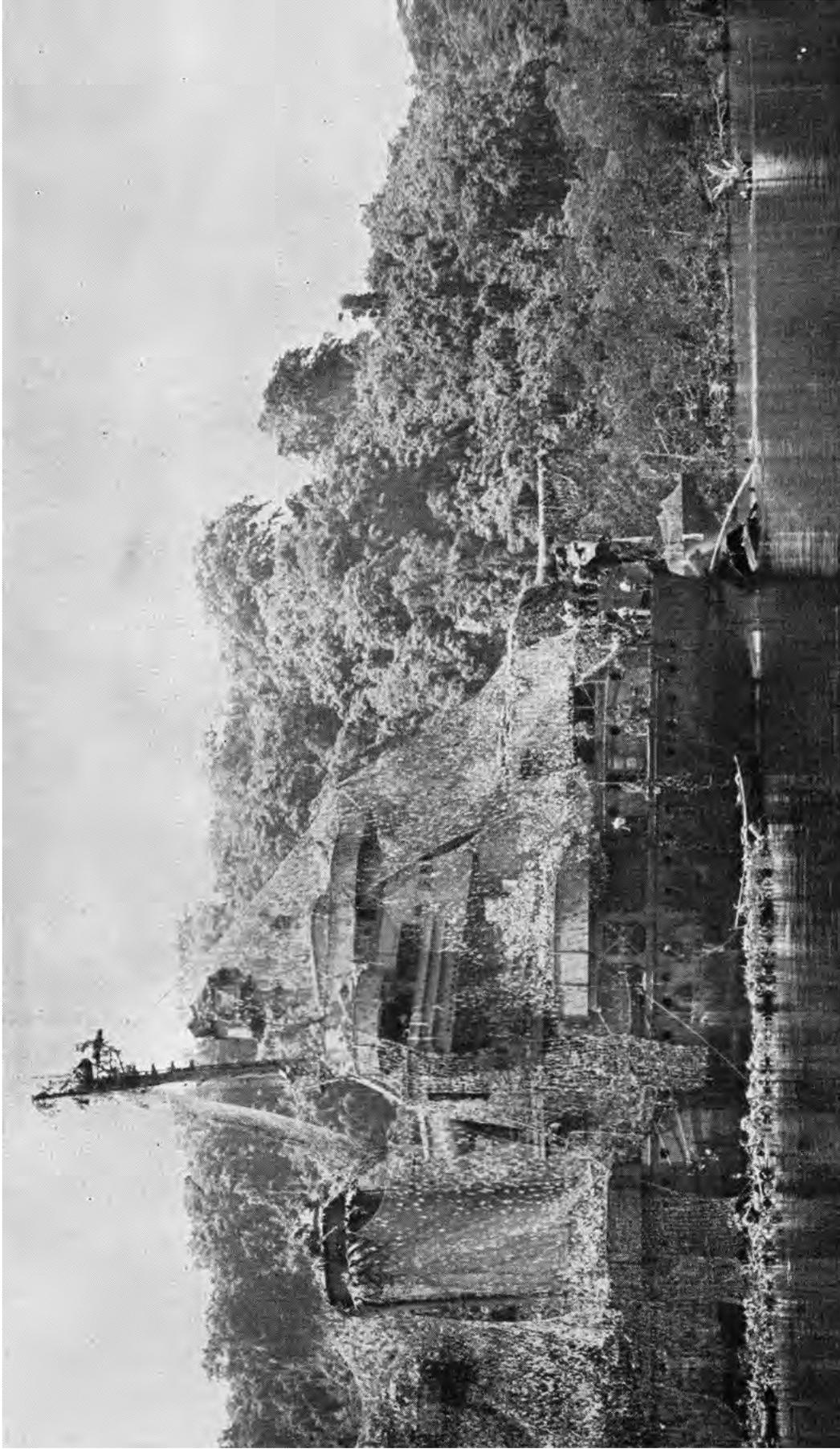
One minute after the *Minneapolis* opened, the *New Orleans* began firing her main battery, directed entirely by radar, at an enemy destroyer 8,700 yards distant on a bearing of 220° T. Personnel in the *New Orleans* noticed that this target, moderately illuminated by starshells from the van destroyers, was receiving fire from others of our cruisers. The destroyer apparently blew up after the *New Orleans*' fourth salvo.

The *Pensacola* had difficulty in locating a target without an SG radar. She searched with her FC on the bearing and at the range reported by the van destroyers and soon picked up an unidentified object. Tracking began just as Admiral Wright gave the order to fire. With the aid of FC, and starshell illumination from either the *Honolulu* or *Northampton*, the *Pensacola* opened fire on what her officers believed to be a light cruiser steaming at 17 knots 10,000 yards off the port bow. The target lay to the left of the ships under fire from the two forward cruisers. Because the first three salvos proved only near-hits, the *Pensacola* resorted to her own starshells for better illumination. Ships astern also fired

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13 This was the first action in which SG radars in various ships performed erratically. Prior to the opening of gunfire at the Battle of Cape Esperance, a gap of almost 20 minutes occurred between the detection of the enemy by the SG radar of the *Helena* and the first contact visible on the *Boise*'s screen. See Combat Narrative, *Battle of Cape Esperance*.

14 None of the van destroyers took further part in the action. Their only remaining roles consisted of rescuing survivors from the *Northampton* and helping the other cruisers fight fire and enter Tulagi Harbor.



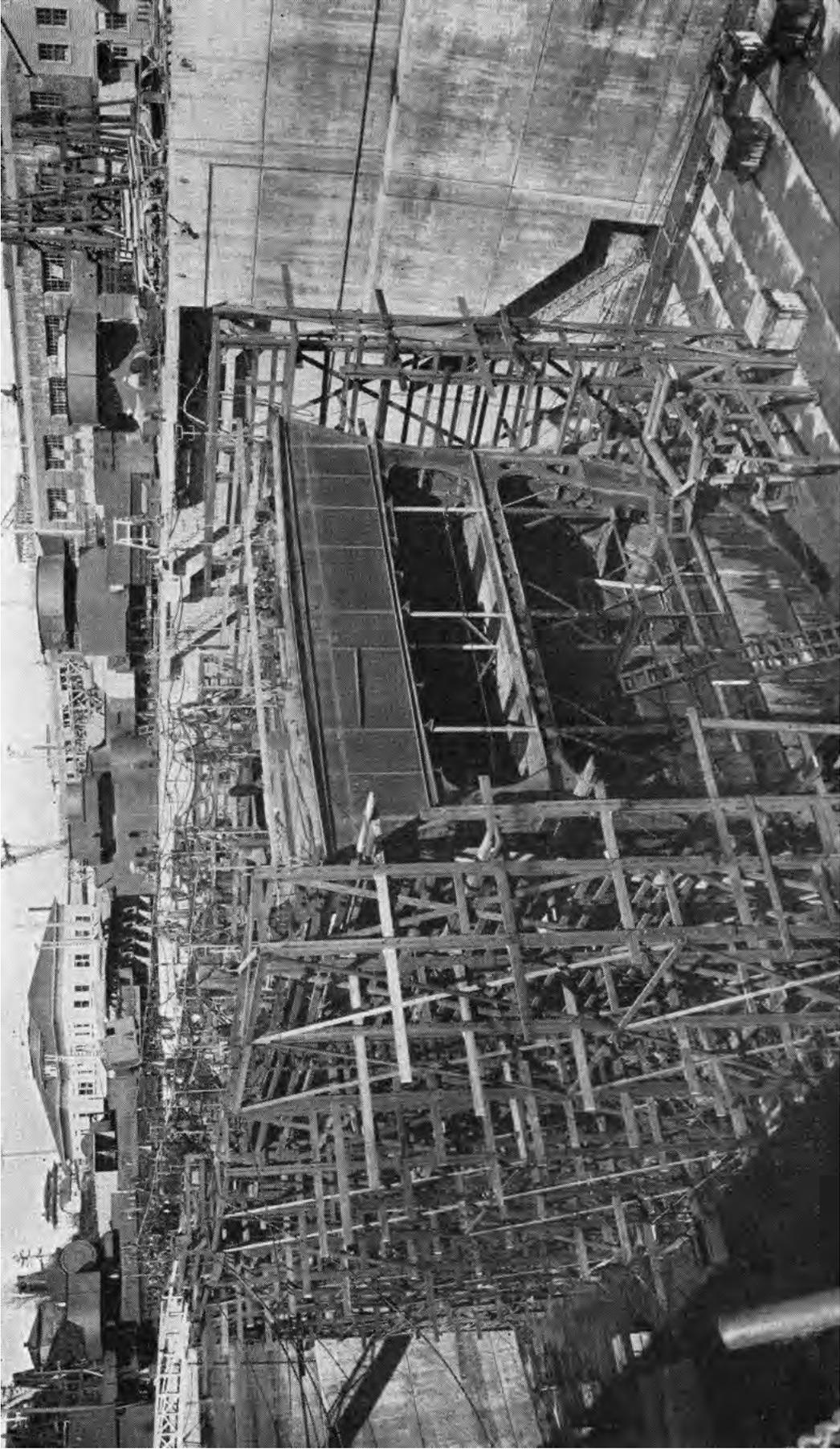
*Camouflaged New Orleans at Tulagi*



*New Orleans at Sydney, Australia, 3 January 1943*



*She arrives at Puget Sound Navy Yard*



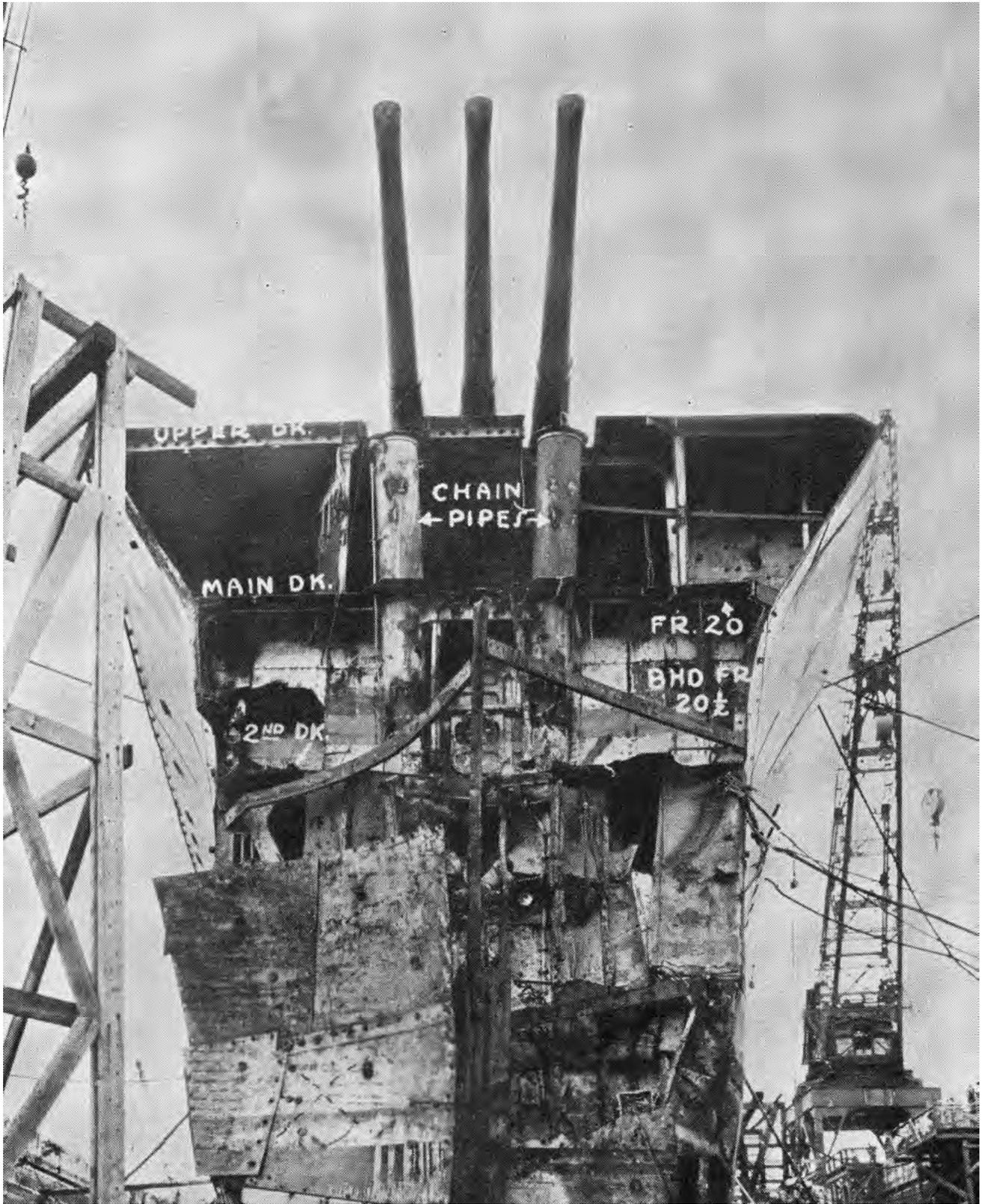
*Prefabricated bow for New Orleans at Puget Sound Navy Yard*



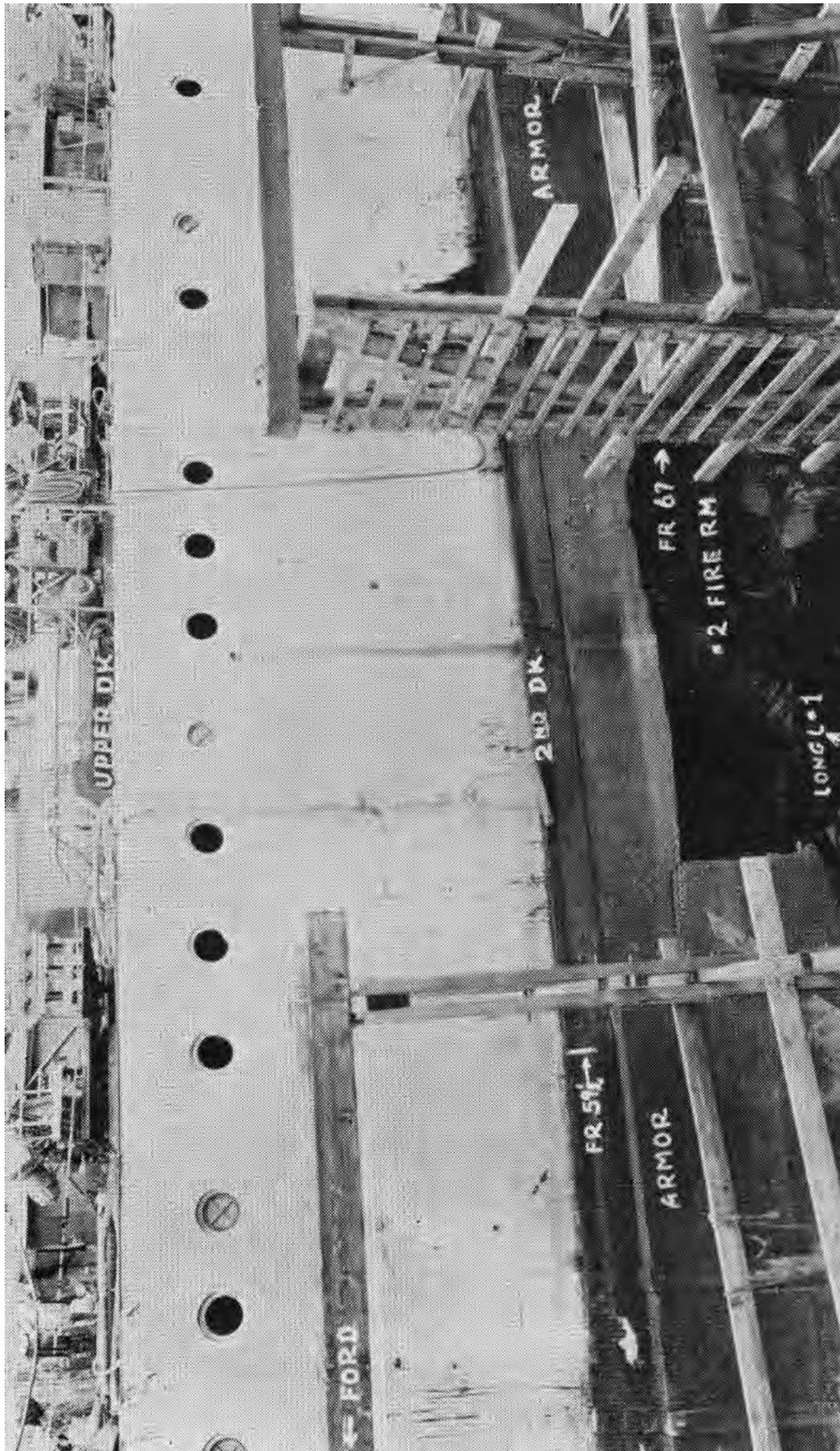
*Minneapolis at Tulagi, showing turret I*



*Minnesota at sea, en route to Pearl Harbor*



*The cruiser in dock at Pearl Harbor*



*Damage by second torpedo, port side looking inboard and aft*

at the same target which was seen to sink when the *Pensacola*'s fourth or fifth salvos landed. Shots from other ships and smoke in the target area made identification difficult, but no one in the *Pensacola* doubted that the Japanese ship was a cruiser. Fire ceased temporarily when the vessel sank.

The *Honolulu* could find no target until at least two minutes after the *Minneapolis* and *New Orleans* had begun to fire. At about 2224, starshells from our heavy cruisers lighted up a Japanese destroyer. The FC radar shortly picked it up and the *Honolulu* commenced firing on this target, which bore 250° T. at a mean radar range of 9,600 yards. Half a minute of rapid fire produced several hits, but fading illumination left the target scarcely visible through the smoke and splashes. Accordingly the port 5-inch battery fired several starshell spreads. Reports from the rangekeeper indicated a steady decrease in the vessel's speed. By 2327 it had ceased moving. After one more minute of concentrated fire, observers in the *Honolulu* saw the enemy destroyer break up and sink, and immediately checked their fire.

Without an SG radar, our fifth and last cruiser, the *Northampton*, experienced great difficulties in locating the enemy. The land background of Guadalcanal balked all efforts to pick up with the CXAM the contacts developed by the other ships. Finally the main and AA batteries were trained toward the fall of shot from the other cruisers, and the FC promptly located a destroyer target. Shortly thereafter, Plot reported a satisfactory solution on the rangekeeper and the main battery opened fire, using radar train. The target, on a relative bearing of 325° and at a range of 11,500 yards, could not be seen until the third salvo landed. Despite frequent hits, the enemy destroyer had not sunk before the danger of collision with cruisers ahead forced the *Northampton* to change course.

Neither of our rear destroyers could locate the Japanese at the time our cruisers began the action. Visibility was so bad that the *Lamson*'s personnel could see only two cruisers ahead. Neither the *Lamson* nor the *Lardner* succeeded in picking up radar contacts.

When the *Minneapolis* saw her transport target disintegrate under the impact of her fourth salvo, all the cruisers had engaged in a rapid fire of starshells and big gun salvos. Blinding flashes, smoke, and splashes in and around the enemy made it virtually impossible for observers to obtain a clear picture of the Japanese formation. They could scarcely determine whether or not the enemy had returned our fire. Some Japanese fire directed at the *Minneapolis* was noted, but no damage resulted.

As the action opened, the SG screen on the *Minneapolis* showed the Japanese proceeding on a southeasterly course, but shortly thereafter it indicated that the hostile column had made a 180° turn and that several ships had progressed well to the right of the original bearing.<sup>15</sup>

Our flagship's second target, reported as a destroyer with a single raked stack, lay to the right of her first target at a distance of 10,500 yards. Capt. Rosendahl of the *Minneapolis* observed that the *New Orleans* was also firing on this ship. When the fourth salvo from the *Minneapolis* struck the destroyer, the latter's bow and stern rose as though she had broken in two, and a few seconds later she disappeared.<sup>16</sup>

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15 The Action Report of the radar officer of the *New Orleans* also noted this apparent countermarch by enemy ships close inshore.

16 "Officers in the *New Orleans* reported their second target as lying somewhat to the right of the first, and that it appeared to be an *Atago*-class heavy cruiser which exploded after three or four salvos. The general direction of this target and its speedy destruction suggested that it sank from the combined fire of our two leading cruisers.

Gunfire by the *Pensacola* had been temporarily checked as her first target disappeared from view. Within a few minutes her FC radar detected another Japanese ship about 5° to the right of the first, scarcely 8,000 yards away. As our cruiser fired her first salvo, the vessel emerged from the smoke and became clearly visible. It had one large stack, like the *Yubari* or cruisers of the *Mogami* class. Moreover FC radar indicated a heavy ship. Smoke billowed from her stern, though whether it resulted from our fire or mechanical generation could not be determined. Virtually all the shells of the *Pensacola*'s second salvo landed abaft the stack. A great explosion followed, after which the ship disappeared both from sight and from the radar screens. Spot I and several officers confirmed its destruction. As no other Japanese ships were immediately visible, orders were issued to unload the *Pensacola*'s guns through the muzzle.

The *Honolulu* was still engaging her first target at this time. Poor visibility in the neighborhood of the Japanese destroyer frequently forced our light cruiser to check fire. At about 2328, however, the destroyer apparently went down. Meanwhile the *Northampton* was experiencing similar difficulties with her first target.

Our two rear destroyers now entered the battle. In the absence of a target, the *Lamson* fired starshells to help illuminate the enemy formation. The Guadalcanal land mass completely blanketed the search and fire control radars of both destroyers. As the *Lamson* changed course to 300° T., she sighted 3 enemy destroyers bearing about 260° T., just to the left of splashes from the salvos of the cruiser column ahead. At 2225 the *Lardner* commenced to fire on these ships at an estimated range of 9,000 yards (target angle 270°, speed zero). After three salvos from the forward guns, she lost the target and had no success in discovering another.<sup>17</sup>

The *Minneapolis* and *New Orleans* again shifted fire after completing the destruction of their second targets about 2326. The flagship chose a destroyer or light cruiser bearing 330° T., 9,000 yards distant, and fired two salvos. The ship disappeared, but no one saw it sink. The *New Orleans* picked out a cargo ship, which, after four salvos, exploded so violently that observers believed it must have carried gasoline or ammunition.

At this stage of the battle, the *Pensacola* apparently checked fire; the *Honolulu* and *Northampton* still engaged their destroyer targets; the *Lamson* and *Lardner* could not locate the enemy; and the four van destroyers withdrew around Savo Island. Thus far the engagement had proved entirely one-sided. Not a single Japanese shell had struck any ship in Task Force WILLIAM. On their retirement course, the van destroyers noticed shells dropping astern; some enemy gunfire was also directed at our cruisers. For a brief interval the third target of the *Minneapolis* had returned her fire, but in an inaccurate and desultory fashion.

Certain facts, however, must have produced considerable concern in the American ships. Foremost was the uncertainty regarding the composition of the Japanese forces. Advices prior to the battle led Admiral Wright to expect six enemy destroyers, plus combat vessels or cargo ships. The flagship's SG screen pictured only seven ships; the *Fletcher*'s revealed eight. No more vessels were seen or located by the radars. In most previous night actions the Japanese had divided their ships into two or more groups, and nothing indicated a reason for a change of formation on 30 November. The enemy

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<sup>17</sup> The parts played by the *Lamson* and *Lardner* during the remainder of the action are set forth in Appendix I.

profited by the presence of the land mass of Guadalcanal at his right, while Admiral Wright's device for revealing its position by means of parachute flares failed because the planes did not arrive on schedule. Moreover, the night was so dark, visibility so limited, and flashes and smoke in the target area so confusing that it was impossible to obtain a clear idea of what was taking place.

### THE ACTION: SECOND PHASE

2327 *Minneapolis* torpedoed.  
2328 *New Orleans* torpedoed.  
2339 *Pensacola* torpedoed.  
2348 *Northampton* torpedoed.

Up to 2327, the results of our gunfire furnished ample cause for optimism. There was reason to believe that several enemy ships had been sunk. Our radar search seemed most effective, except just before the van destroyer torpedo attack, which had been launched at an excessive range. We had apparently surprised the enemy—a prime advantage in any night action—and disrupted his retaliatory power. For a brief moment victory seemed to be ours.

At 2327, however, the Japanese struck the first of a series of crippling torpedo blows. Within one minute both the *Minneapolis* and the *New Orleans* had their bows blown off. Eleven minutes later, at 2339, the *Pensacola* was hit, and the resulting fire was not extinguished for 4 hours. Two torpedoes struck the *Northampton* at 2348, causing her to sink within the same space of time. In 20 minutes the fortunes of war shifted disastrously.

The *Minneapolis* received her first hit forward of turret I, abreast the aviation gasoline compartment. An instant later, another torpedo struck No. 2 fireroom. The second hit followed so closely that many personnel felt only one explosion. Fire immediately blazed up in the forecastle, sending long tongues of flame into the air. Huge sheets of water mounted so high around the port side of the ship that in falling they appreciably checked the forecastle fires, and flooded the navigating bridge. Clouds of smoke and acrid fumes billowed over the bridge, but did not penetrate the pilot house. Fumes and flames from burning gasoline and oil swept aft over the fantail, drenching personnel in Sky Aft with oil and water. Two men near the port 5-inch battery were blown overboard. As the flagship shuddered and rolled drunkenly from side to side, many other personnel suffered severe bruising against bulkheads. The entire bow section tore loose at frame 22, folded downward, and dangled from the rest of the hull. The water level flowed aft as far as No. 1 barrette. Soon firerooms 1, 2, and 3 were flooded and all personnel inside were drowned or suffocated.

Men less courageous than the crew of the *Minneapolis* would have considered their part in the engagement ended. Nevertheless the turrets quickly resumed fire on the third target. The flagship's speed had been greatly reduced, and her tenth salvo passed directly over the stacks of the *Pensacola*, racing by to port.

Unhappily, the machinery of the *Minneapolis* did not equal the heroism of her crew. After one more salvo, firing ceased as power failed in all turrets. The ship slowed rapidly, and steering control was momentarily lost. Partly because of the immersion of the bow, the fires in the forecastle soon subsided. A 4° list to port was almost halved by pumping oil overboard and jettisoning all available heavy

objects. Faced with the helplessness of the *Minneapolis* and her inability to remain in action, Admiral Wright now ordered Admiral Tisdale in the *Honolulu* to assume command of the Task Force.<sup>18</sup>

When the *Minneapolis* was torpedoed, the *New Orleans* had to come hard right to avoid ramming her. The burning flagship seemed to be done for. Rarely a minute passed before the *New Orleans* herself received a torpedo hit on her port bow. The gasoline stowage and magazine groups 1 and 3 exploded, and the entire bow as far aft at the barbette of turret II was blown away. All personnel in both forward turrets lost their lives. The bow floated aft along the port side, tearing gaping holes at frames 130 and 136 just above the waterline. With the rifles of turret I pointing skyward it soon sank off the port quarter.<sup>19</sup>

Steering and engine control from the *New Orleans*' pilot house failed, as did communications between the pilot house and Battle II. The ship swung right and steadied on an easterly course in the general direction of Tulagi. As far aft as frame 42, the main deck was wrecked. The second deck was missing forward of frame 31, and flooded aft to frame 42. The explosion had torn out everything below the second deck forward of frame 31. All forward magazines blew out.<sup>20</sup>

When the *Pensacola* sheered out of line to pass the two crippled cruisers, her search radar located a target 4,000 yards off the port bow. Starshell illumination proved unsatisfactory, partly because of insufficient ready ammunition, and the outline of the enemy ship could not be seen. After the seventh salvo, the target faded from the radar screen never to reappear.

As the *Pensacola* now came round 20° to her base course of 300° T., a radar search to the right of the previous target picked up an unidentified ship proceeding at high speed on a course of 295° T. at a distance of 12,000 yards. The *Pensacola* opened up again with radar-controlled fire, but the first salvo disabled the after FC. Because the forward radars could not spot, resort was had to ladder spotting. Firing ceased as the target disappeared following the third salvo. At this time observers noticed small splashes close aboard on the *Pensacola*'s port bow.

About 2 miles due south of Savo Island, the *Pensacola* steadied on a course of 300° T. at a speed of 20 knots. At 2339 without warning a torpedo struck the port side aft, outside the fuel tank forward of turret III. The oil ignited instantaneously, causing raging fires throughout the cruiser. Fuel was blown as high as the maintop, transforming the mainmast into a blazing torch and roasting all the personnel in Control Aft to death. Much of the hose on deck caught fire, and by the time the remaining lines were

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18 Capt. Rosendahl set his course for Lunga Point, hoping that if he had to beach the *Minneapolis*, it could be done on the American-held shore. At 0200, when it became evident that his ship could make 3 to 3 1/2 knots and might hold her own against further flooding, he decided to steer for Tulagi Harbor, 18 miles away. The tug *Bobolink* and several PT boats came out to meet the *Minneapolis* a few miles from Tulagi and assisted her into port. She came alongside the beach at Sasapi, port side to, secured mooring lines to coconut trees and stumps, and was camouflaged as effectively as possible with nets and foliage (see illustrations pp. 8 and 9).

19 The absence of any fire of consequence, despite the tremendous heat and volume of the explosion, is indisputable evidence of the thoroughness with which paint and inflammables had been removed and disposed of for fire prevention."—Action Report of Capt. Roper of the *New Orleans*.

20 Thus critically damaged, the *New Orleans* limped toward Tulagi at five knots. Since he feared that the forward transverse bulkhead might collapse from the excessive pressure of the sea, Capt. Roper tried to reverse the ship and back her into port. The vessel proved unmanageable going astern, but she reached Tulagi without further mishap and tied up alongside the *Mauray*.

connected the flames were so intense that they could not be extinguished. Time and again they seemed under control only to blaze up anew as more oil gushed from the fuel tanks.<sup>21</sup>

Just as her first target broke up, the *Honolulu* had to sheer out of column with hard right rudder to avoid colliding with the *Minneapolis* and the *New Orleans*. She kept right for three minutes. Zigzagging to avoid torpedoes, she opened fire under a starshell spread on a second target 7,000 yards to port.<sup>22</sup> Smoke from oil burning on the water near our damaged cruisers, as well as that in the area of the enemy, obscured the target. Several starshell spreads failed to reveal the presence of this or other Japanese ships.

The *Northampton*, still engaging her first destroyer target, apparently ceased fire about 2330 and sheered out of column astern of the *Honolulu*. She did not return to the base course as soon as the latter; instead she steamed north on a course of 350° until 2335. Next, she proceeded four minutes on a course of 320° T., firing desultorily at her target, on which she noted hits at 2337. About the time the *Pensacola* was torpedoed (2339), the *Northampton* began to come left, steadying on a course of 280° T. which she held for 9 minutes, without discovering any target. At 2348, two torpedoes were seen close aboard on the port bow, approaching from about 270° T., traveling very close together. One ran about 10 feet below the waterline, the other almost on the surface. Capt. Kitts barely had time to order hard left rudder before the torpedoes struck so close together that many in the *Northampton* felt only one explosion. Violent vibration followed for several seconds.

One torpedo hit frame 108 at the waterline, the other struck frame 98, 10 feet below. The resulting damage was similar to that on the other three cruisers. Fuel and diesel oil ignited and sprayed in flames over the mainmast structure and the boat deck, where it detonated the 5-inch ready ammunition. The explosion blew out the ship's port side between frames 105 and 113, leaving eight feet of skin plate protruding over the side. The main and second decks were torn away from frame 105 to frame 107, then aft to frame 112, and outboard along frame 117. At first the *Northampton* listed to port 10°, then, notwithstanding all efforts lessen it, the angle increased to 20°. Capt. Kitts stopped the ship in the hope that she would right herself, but when the list reached 23° he ordered the bridge abandoned, the firerooms secured and all personnel brought topside. At 0130 all hands except the salvage crew were ordered over the side.

Twenty minutes later, the *Fletcher* and *Drayton* (which had rounded Savo Island in company with the *Honolulu*) received orders to rescue the *Northampton*'s officers and crew, and shortly thereafter started picking them up. The cruiser's fires increased as steadily as her list and the water supply at the fire mains fell off ominously. At 0240, when the list reached 35°, Capt. Kitts and the salvage party abandoned ship. On the morning of 1 December, just after 0300, the *Northampton* turned on her beam

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21 The explosion immediately caused a list of 13°, which was corrected within an hour by pumping out the fuel tanks and throwing over the side everything that the crew could pry loose. The *Pensacola* lost all steering control when the torpedo struck. Central Control attempted unsuccessfully to take over. Both gyros were knocked out. Water flooded the engine room and the port shaft from the forward engine broke. The water level rose in the after fireroom, while flooded magazines and fires rendered turret III useless. Communication with Steering Aft was shortly restored by relay through Central Station. The steering room still remained in commission, although all leads from forward stations had failed, so the Executive Officer, Comdr. Harry Keeler, Jr., shifted control to Steering Aft and conned the ship by telephone. A speed of 8 knots was obtained from No. 1 shaft. Capt. Lowe confirmed Comdr. Keeler's decision to make for Tulagi, where the burning cruiser anchored at 0344. Not for some time could the fires be brought under control.

22 The *Honolulu* was the only cruiser to adopt zigzagging tactics. The *Pensacola*'s prompt return to her base course has been noted. It will be seen that the *Northampton* also proceeded steadily on her several courses.

ends, then rolled over and sank stern first. An hour later, the *Fletcher* and *Drayton* had completed their search for survivors, rescuing all 57 officers and 716 men.

## EVENTS AFTER THE ACTION

Not until 0001 on 1 December did Admiral Tisdale receive Admiral Wright's TBS message of 2333 placing him in command of Task Force WILLIAM. A tense situation confronted the new commander. The four van destroyers were far ahead, their fate unknown. Four of the 5 cruisers had been knocked out of action. Somewhere in the rear steamed two remaining destroyers with only the vaguest notion of what had taken place. In the *Honolulu* neither the radars nor the naked eye detected a single enemy ship. Yet in view of the multiple torpedoing, it seemed clear that a number of undamaged Japanese ships were still at large the sound.

SG radar search of the Guadalcanal shoreline revealed no targets of any kind, although it did pick up four ships off the northern coast of Savo Island. Admiral Tisdale accordingly ordered Capt. Robert W. Hayler, commanding the *Honolulu*, to pursue these vessels around the island.

The ships were soon identified as our van destroyers. Admiral Tisdale instructed them over TBS to begin a search for our crippled cruisers and then followed them around Savo. A searchlight beam was seen just over the horizon to the southeast at 0013, sweeping toward the *Honolulu*.<sup>23</sup> She promptly reversed course, placing Savo between herself and the searchlight. As she doubled around the northwest side of the island, friendly planes dropped flares over the beach near Tassafaronga and reported damaged vessels offshore. Admiral Tisdale ordered the *Honolulu* to stand down to bombard these ships, but the aircraft later notified him that the vessels sighted were only burnt-out hulks stranded in previous engagements. The *Honolulu* now shaped her course south and southeast from Savo toward Lengo Channel. At about 0133 Admiral Tisdale granted Capt. Hayler's request to reverse course and retire between Savo and Cape Esperance. Shortly thereafter the *Fletcher* and *Drayton*, complying with instructions to stand by the cruisers, joined the *Honolulu*.

The three ships soon encountered the battered, burning *Northampton*, surrounded by life rafts loaded with survivors. The *Honolulu* altered her course radically to avoid running them down, slowing briefly to 15 knots so as not to capsize the rafts. Admiral Tisdale directed the *Fletcher* and *Drayton* to make the rescues while the *Honolulu* continued on alone at 30 knots. She searched unsuccessfully for the Japanese throughout the area between Guadalcanal and Florida Islands. East of Savo, however, she was joined by the *Lamson* and *Lardner*, which had cruised north of Lengo Channel, ignorant of the whereabouts of our ships. At 0800 Admiral Tisdale established visual contact with Admiral Wright, who informed him that the *Northampton* had been sunk and that the *Minneapolis*, *Pensacola*, and *New Orleans* were in no condition to be towed away from Tulagi. Admiral Wright then ordered the *Honolulu* to return to Espiritu Santo, screened by the *Lamson* and *Lardner*.

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23 It was later learned that this searchlight was operated by Americans near Henderson Field.

## EXPERIENCES OF THE VAN DESTROYERS

After the van destroyers opened the action with their torpedo attack, they fired several rounds of starshells and from 50 to 100 rounds of service ammunition with no perceptible results. At 2327 they retired to the northwest to skirt Savo Island under orders from Comdr. Cole in the *Fletcher*. While steaming along the west coast of Savo, they made several radar contacts. At 2330<sup>24</sup> the *Fletcher*'s SG radar showed one Japanese ship bearing 190° T. at a distance of 12,500 yards, close by the beach at Cape Esperance. The FD radar was matched in train, but could not pick up the target which eventually disappeared from the screen. At 2337 the *Drayton*'s SG radar located three ships to the north of Cape Esperance heading on a course parallel to the *Drayton*'s at a distance of 12,000 yards. Four torpedoes were fired without observed result.

As the van destroyers rounded Savo, they noticed several splashes astern and the wakes of several torpedoes. Frequent zigzagging enabled them avoid the torpedoes, and none of the shells dropped very close. At 0004, when the destroyers reached the northern side of Savo Island, speed was reduced and recognition lights were flashed. A TBS message from Admiral Tisdale directed Comdr. Cole to dispatch two destroyers to stand by the *New Orleans*, then reported to be 10 miles east of Savo. At 0058 the *Maury* and *Perkins* left on this mission.<sup>25</sup> At 0120 the *Fletcher* [and] the *Drayton* sighted the *Honolulu* and fell in astern of her. As previously noted, these three ships very nearly ran into the *Northampton* and her survivors.

For three and one-half hours the *Fletcher* and *Drayton* engaged in rescue work. The *Fletcher*'s whaleboat was lowered, under the command of Ens. C. F. Gressard, and began to tow several rafts back to the destroyer. So many men on the first raft grabbed for the gunwale that they capsized it. Efforts to right the boat had to be abandoned in order to free men for other activities. A motor whaleboat from the *Northampton* now came alongside the *Fletcher*, which manned it with a crew consisting of L. C. Jenkins, Seaman Second Class; J. F. Gephardt, Machinist's Mate First Class; and J. W. Jarrell, Seaman Second Class. These men worked with "praiseworthy" zeal for two hours, towing rafts and boats to the side of the *Fletcher* from which hung four cargo nets, two floater nets, and all available sea ladders to aid the survivors in climbing to the deck.

Others of the *Fletcher*'s crew went over the side to rescue men so weak at they could not reach the nets. J. E. Howell, Fireman First Class, swam out over 100 yards several times to carry lines to struggling survivors. All told, the *Fletcher* picked up 42 officers and over 600 men from the *Northampton*.

Similar instances of cool courage marked the rescue operations conducted by the personnel of the *Drayton*, who took aboard 15 officers and 113 men—including four stretcher cases—without the aid

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<sup>24</sup> The *Minneapolis* and *New Orleans* were torpedoed at about 2328, the *Pensacola* at 2339, and the *Northampton* at 2348.

<sup>25</sup> The *New Orleans* turned out not to need immediate assistance, so the *Perkins* and *Maury* steamed to the aid of the *Pensacola*, which was blazing fiercely. The *Perkins* led the *Pensacola* into Tulagi by use of SG radar and once inside the harbor, at 0400, furnished her all available fire-fighting apparatus. The *Maury* stood by until, just outside Tulagi, she overheard a TBS request from the *New Orleans* that one destroyer join her. The *Maury* steamed toward the *New Orleans*, located her at 0235, and guided her into Tulagi, where she moored alongside because the cruiser had no anchor.

of a power boat. Time after time, Ens. J. F. Ryan swam back and forth to assist exhausted men into the *Drayton's* motor whaleboat. Once they gained the deck of the *Drayton*, the men of the *Northampton* received unsparing attention from Lieut. William M. Pope, medical officer, who went without sleep for over 30 hours to treat their many cases of bruises, burns, and shock.

By 0435 no more men could be found in the water, so the *Fletcher* and the *Drayton* stood east at 25 knots in the hope of meeting Admiral Tisdale. Since the *Honolulu* could not be raised by TRS, Comdr. Cole decided to make for Espiritu Santo. He sent a dispatch to Admiral Wright (for the information of COMSOPAC) stating the circumstances and advising that the two destroyers would proceed unless a rendezvous were ordered. COMSOPAC later designated a rendezvous with the *Honolulu* at 1700, 1 December. The *Fletcher* and *Drayton* could not locate the *Honolulu* at 1700, but did meet her accompanied by the *Lardner* at 0330, 2 December, as they proceeded on their course. The four ships arrived at Espiritu Santo at 1000, 2 December.

### SUMMARY

In the Tassafaronga action on the night of 30 November 1942, Task Force WILLIAM opposed the first important Japanese attempt to reinforce Guadalcanal after the decisive engagements of mid-November. The battle opened auspiciously. Task Force WILLIAM apparently possessed the initial advantage of surprise. This it implemented by excellent gunnery, which, so far as CINCPAC could determine, resulted in the sinking of the *Takanami* and three other Japanese destroyers and the damaging of two or more others.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, not a single enemy shell struck any of our ships.

This repulse of the Japanese, however, was only achieved at severe cost to the United States Navy. During the second phase of the battle, the enemy launched an amazingly effective and devastating torpedo attack which resulted in the sinking of one heavy cruiser (*Northampton*), and serious damage to three others (*Minneapolis*, *New Orleans*, and *Pensacola*).<sup>26</sup> Losses in personnel during the action consisted of 19 officers and 398 enlisted men.

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26 Our combatant losses in the South Pacific area from torpedo fire to 1 December 1942 were as follows:

Ships sunk by torpedoes	13
Ships sunk by combined torpedo and gunfire	10
Ships badly damaged by torpedo fire	5
Total	28

At the Battle of the Java Sea, our Dutch ally lost three ships, the British one to torpedoes. The Australians lost one ship by torpedo and gunfire at the Battle of Savo Island.

## APPENDIX I

### *The "Lamson" and the "Lardner"*

By reason of their recent addition to Task Force WILLIAM, the destroyers *Lamson* and *Lardner* had been ordered by Admiral Wright to take up a position astern of the cruiser column. At the outset of the action, neither ship possessed any information concerning the bearing of the targets, nor did either possess SG radar equipment. After the *Lardner* sighted and fired three salvos at three destroyers bearing 260° T., she lost all targets, and, at about 2329, shifted course to the left in an attempt to rejoin the other U. S. ships. As she came left to 350° T., the *Lardner* was fired upon by our own vessels. She immediately flashed fighting lights, identified herself over TBS as friendly, and gave the bearings of the ship firing on her as 350° to 320° T. The firing continued, however, until 2337, so Lt. Comdr. Sweetser turned right on an easterly course and withdrew out of range.

Meanwhile, the *Lamson* followed 600 yards astern of the *Northampton*. At 2339 the *Northampton* hauled out to starboard to avoid collision with the cruisers ahead. The *Lamson* also swung out, and as she turned 90° she, too, was fired upon for a period of 30 seconds by the 40-mm. or 1.1-inch guns of some ship astern. The destroyer now came left to join her guide, but no contact with the *Northampton* could be made.

Although neither destroyer had suffered damage, the situation confronting Comdr. Abercrombie was dangerous in the extreme. As already quoted in part from his Action Report: "No information was obtained concerning the disposition of enemy forces, what might be encountered, no recognition signals, no reference or rendezvous points or anything pertaining to the night's operations. As a result . . . I was completely perplexed throughout the operation and due to the incorrect recognition signals the two ships of this unit were fortunate in extricating themselves without damage from precarious positions." At 2352 he ordered the *Lardner* to join him in proceeding toward Lengo Channel where they would await further instructions.

Guadalcanal later radioed orders for the *Lamson* and the *Lardner* to stand by the *Minneapolis*, which was limping toward Lunga Point. When contact was made at 0254, the *Lardner* joined the *Minneapolis*, while the *Lamson* continued to search the Guadalcanal area for other ships. The *Lamson* rejoined the *Minneapolis* at 0441 and stood by with the *Lardner* until the three vessels arrived off Tulagi.

Admiral Wright thereupon ordered the two destroyers to proceed to the action area and search for survivors, and, upon contact with the *Honolulu*, to report to Admiral Tisdale for orders. The junction was effected at 0745, 1 December. The *Honolulu*, *Lamson*, and *Lardner* then received orders to return to the base at Espiritu Santo. About 2100 the *Lamson* was ordered by COMSOPAC to double back to Tulagi to assist the damaged cruisers. The *Honolulu* and *Lardner*, joined by the *Fletcher* and *Drayton* at 0330, continued on to the base at Espiritu Santo, which they reached at 1000, 2 December.

## APPENDIX II

### *The plan of battle*

The tactical plan governing Task Force WILLIAM in a night action was as follows:

1. Cruisers will form on line of bearing normal to the general bearing line, distance 1,000 yards. Destroyers will form at 4,000 yards 30° on the engaged bow of cruiser line.
2. Initial contact should be made by radar. One or more destroyer pickets will be stationed 10,000 yards in the direction of expected contact, in order to obtain early information of the enemy. When so stationed, destroyers will be ordered to take station as pickets on specified true bearings from the guide. Approach maneuvering will be ordered by TBS based upon radar tracking. All maneuvers after commencement of firing by our cruisers will be ordered by TBS and secondary warning net.
3. As soon as possible destroyers will be ordered to form and attack. It is expected that destroyer torpedo attacks will be made early in order to obtain the maximum benefits of surprise. All radar facilities may be used by destroyers, and the attack should be made on radar information insofar as possible. Results of radar tracking will be furnished the destroyer commander by TBS. Destroyers must clear expeditiously and in such a positive manner that there is the least possible chance for mistaken identity. All ships having IFF must ensure that it is turned on well before night action, particularly when destroyers are separated from the cruisers. On completion of torpedo attacks and after commencement of cruiser action, destroyers engage enemy destroyers or cruisers being engaged by our cruisers, and be prepared to provide starshell illumination if so ordered.
4. Insofar as practicable, the range will be maintained in excess of 12,000 yards until our destroyer attack has been completed. Commencement of fire will be ordered at a range of between 10,000 and 12,000 yards. Fire will be opened using fire control radars, and the distribution of fire will be normal insofar as can be determined with the radar equipment available. Intention is that cruiser planes will silhouette enemy force by flares. Visual point of aim should be used as soon as available. If fire cannot be maintained with fire control radar, and visual point is not available, individual ships may illuminate with starshells. Searchlights will not be used. Ships should be prepared to spot by radar.
5. In normal action the range will be controlled by ship turns. When action is broken off, the course may be reversed and the range closed in order to sink enemy cripples. In reverse action the range will be controlled by ship turns and head of column movements not in excess of 30°. The minimum range will depend upon the tactical situation and advantages gained in the early phases of the action, but in general will not be less than 6,000 yards.
6. Night fighting lights may only be used if under attack by a friendly vessel, and then only for the shortest possible time to ensure recognition.

# Japanese Evacuation of Guadalcanal

*30 November 1942*

Including Loss of the *Chicago*

*28 January–8 February 1943*

## INTRODUCTION

FOLLOWING the decisive Battle of Guadalcanal, 11-15 November 1942<sup>1</sup>, the Japanese had withdrawn their major sea and air strength from the Solomons and retired to lick their wounds in the security of Truk, Jaluit, and other distant bases. Efforts to supply and support their dwindling forces on Guadalcanal were limited to harassing air attacks on Henderson Field, interspersed with high-speed round trips by the “Tokio Express,” operating from Bougainville Island under cover of darkness.

It was one of these fly-by-night missions which was intercepted by a U. S. cruiser force in the Battle of Tassafaronga on 30 November. In the resulting action, Japanese losses were measured in destroyers, while we suffered the loss of the heavy cruiser *Northampton*, as well as serious damage to other heavy cruisers.

Doubtless the enemy compared this cheap success favorably with the costly defeats which had shattered his major task forces. Doubtless, also, many of his heavy units surviving those actions were still under repair. At all events, during the ensuing two months he placed his reliance on the Tokio Express, and it continued to dash in, unload, and dash home with apparent disregard for the substantial losses inflicted by our PT boats and planes.

Nevertheless, the use of fast, light craft to support Guadalcanal was foredoomed to failure. The Tokio Express had been thoroughly tried out in October and November, and its inability to transport heavy materiel and large-scale reinforcements had contributed to the Japanese decision to launch the disastrous Battle of Guadalcanal. Now it proved more inadequate than ever. Our land and air superiority on the island was developing at a rate which no stopgap system of supply could hope to counter. Indeed, as the end of January approached, the situation of the enemy’s ground establishment was becoming desperate.

Keeping in mind the demonstrated tenacity of the foe and the previous history of the campaign, it was a reasonable assumption that a supreme effort to retake the island would be initiated before Japanese resistance collapsed entirely. Such an operation seemed all the more likely because there had now been time for the enemy to repair and reconstitute his surface forces and replenish his carrier air groups. Consequently, when late January brought heavy increases in Japanese shipping at Buin and Rabaul and an intensification of air activity, Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr., Commander

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<sup>1</sup> See Combat Narrative, “Battle of Guadalcanal.”

South Pacific and South Pacific Force, surmised that the zero day might be close at hand.<sup>2</sup>

Poised to meet any thrust and to protect our continued troop movements into Guadalcanal was the greatest concentration of U. S. naval power yet assembled in the South Pacific. No less than six major task forces were available in the area. Ships on hand included seven battleships, two carriers, three auxiliary carriers, three heavy cruisers, seven 6-inch light cruisers, two 5-inch light cruisers and many destroyers. Two task forces were built around the carriers *Enterprise* and *Saratoga*. One included three new battleships, the *Washington* (F), *North Carolina*, and *Indiana*, and one the four old battleships *New Mexico* (F), *Colorado*, *Maryland*, and *Mississippi*. Another was composed of four light cruisers of the *Brooklyn* class with attendant destroyers. The sixth included three heavy cruisers, three auxiliary carriers, and three light cruisers. On duty at Guadalcanal itself was a task group comprising the destroyers *Fletcher*, *De Haven*, *Nicholas*, and *Radford*, as well as miscellaneous other combatant vessels.

## PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS OF UNITED STATES FORCES

On the morning of 27 January, a convoy composed of the transports *President Adams*, *President Hayes*, *President Jackson*, and *Crescent City*, screened by four destroyers, departed from Noumea, New Caledonia, with the 214th Coast Artillery and other Army units. This group was expected to arrive at Guadalcanal on the morning of the 30th. Its movement was to be covered by Task Force GEORGE, Rear Admiral Robert C. Giffen, which left Efate, New Hebrides, on the afternoon of the 27th. This force was constituted as follows:

*Task Force GEORGE*, Rear Admiral Giffen

Three heavy cruisers:

*Wichita* (FF), Capt. Francis S. Low

*Chicago*, Capt. Ralph O. Davis

*Louisville*, Capt. Charles T. Joy

Three light cruisers, Rear Admiral Aaron S. Merrill (ComCruDiv 12):

*Montpelier* (F), Capt. Leighton Wood

*Cleveland*, Capt. Edmund W. Burrough

*Columbia*, Capt. William A. Heard

Two auxiliary aircraft carriers,<sup>3</sup> Capt. Ben H. Wyatt:

*Chenango* (F), Capt. Ben H. Wyatt

*Suwannee*, Capt. Frederick W. McMahon

Eight destroyers, Capt. Harold F. Pullen:

*Conway* (F), Lt. Comdr. Nathaniel S. Prime

*Chevalier* (F, Comdr. Alvin D. Chandler, ComDesDiv 41), Comdr. Ephraim R. McLean, Jr.

*Edwards*, Lt. Comdr. Paul G. Osler

*Frazier*, Lt. Comdr. Frank Virden

*La Vallette*, Comdr. Harry H. Henderson

*Meade*, Comdr. Raymond S. Lamb

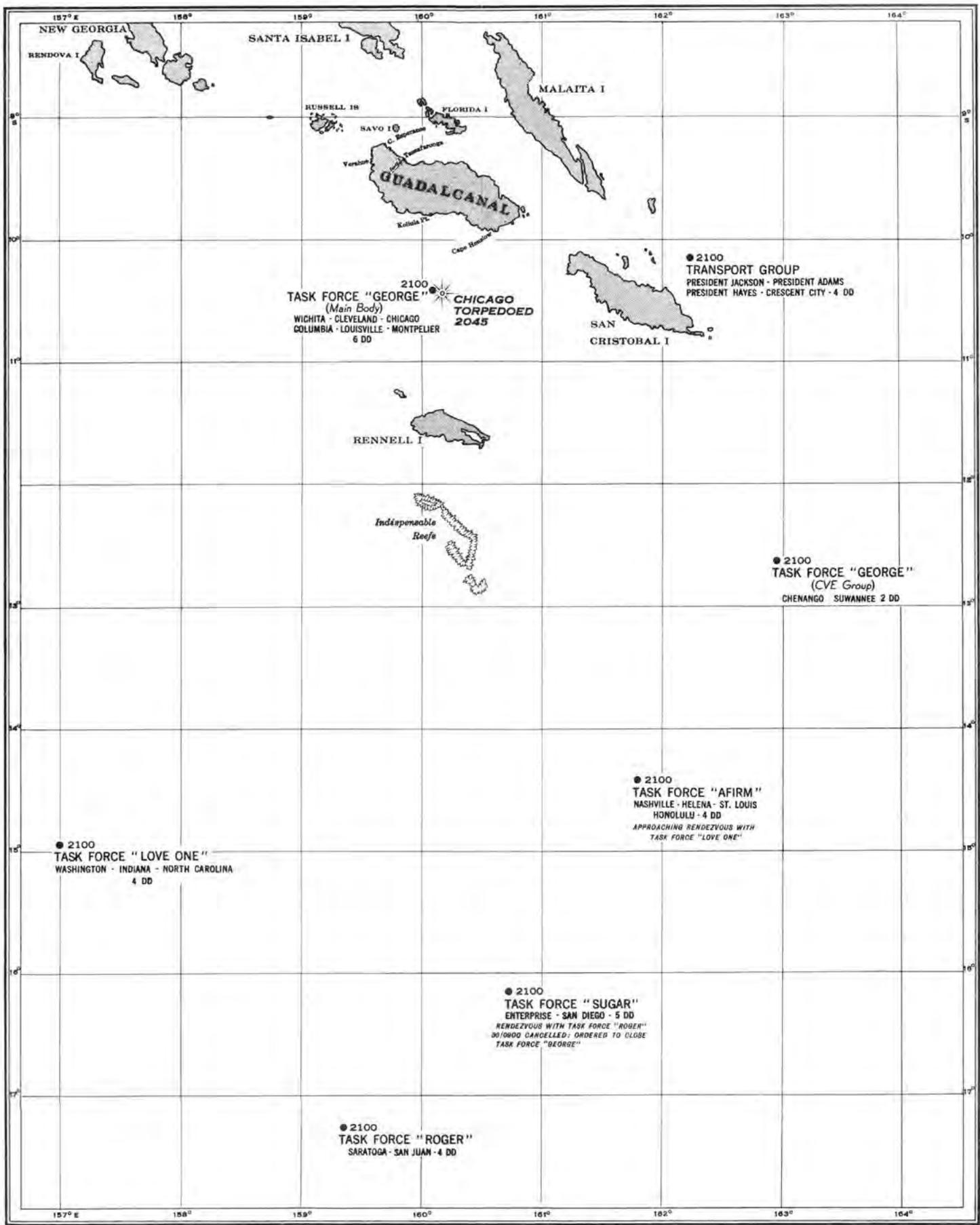
*Taylor*, Lt. Comdr. Benjamin Katz

*Waller*, Comdr. Laurence H. Frost

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<sup>2</sup> Another indication that the Japanese were planning to strike was their feverish effort to develop the offensive potentialities of their air bases in the central Solomons. In spite of constant bombing and surface bombardment by our forces, the air field at Munda, for example, was steadily being improved, while the new field at Vila-Stanmore was approaching completion. Troops at the latter point had been increased from 400 to 4,000, according to report.

<sup>3</sup> The *Sangamon*, technically a unit of the Force, remained in port.



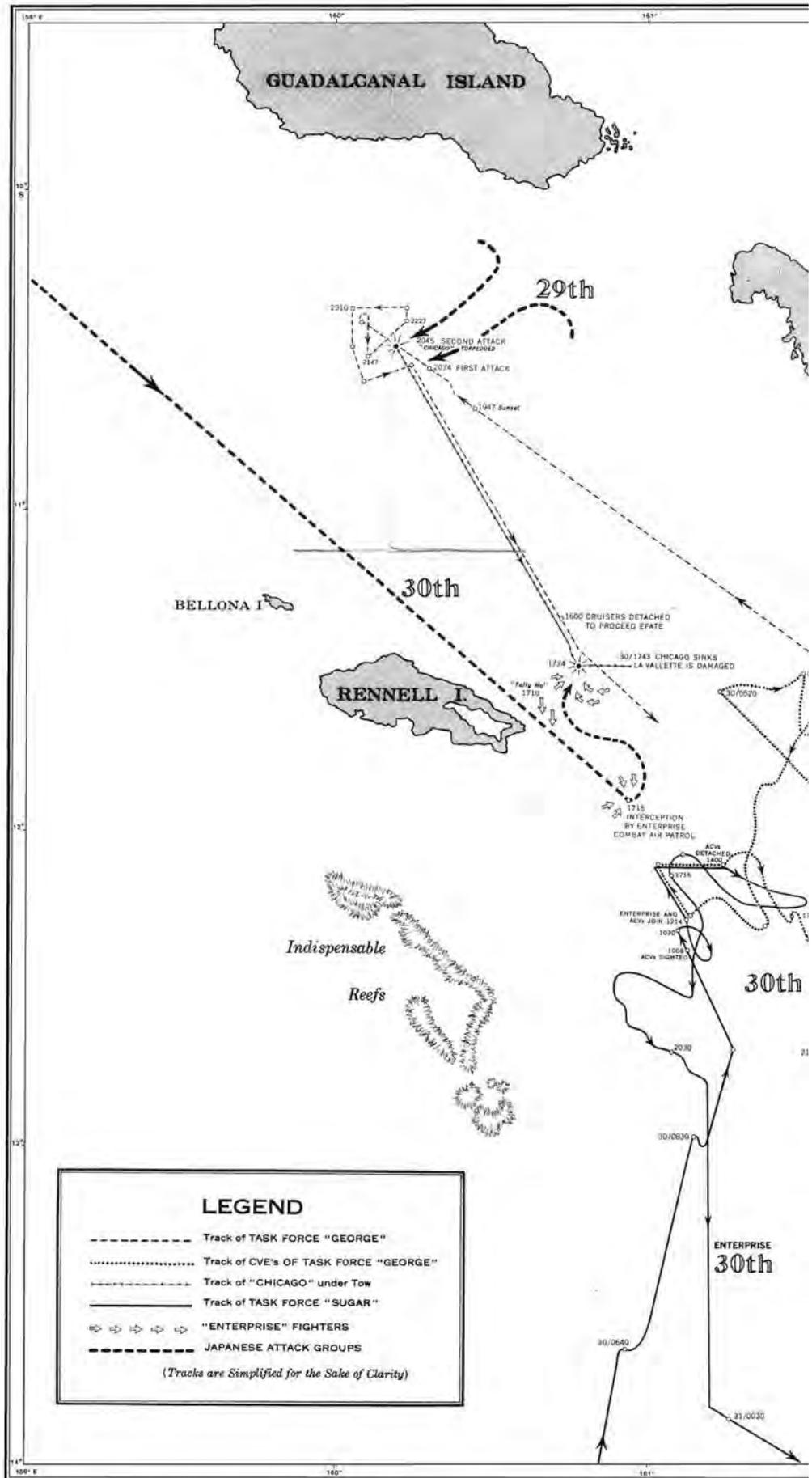
DISPOSITION OF U. S. FORCES SUPPORTING GUADALCANAL  
as of 2100 (Zone minus 12) 29 January, 1943



*Japanese torpedo plane crashes in flames astern of the Wichita night of 29 January*



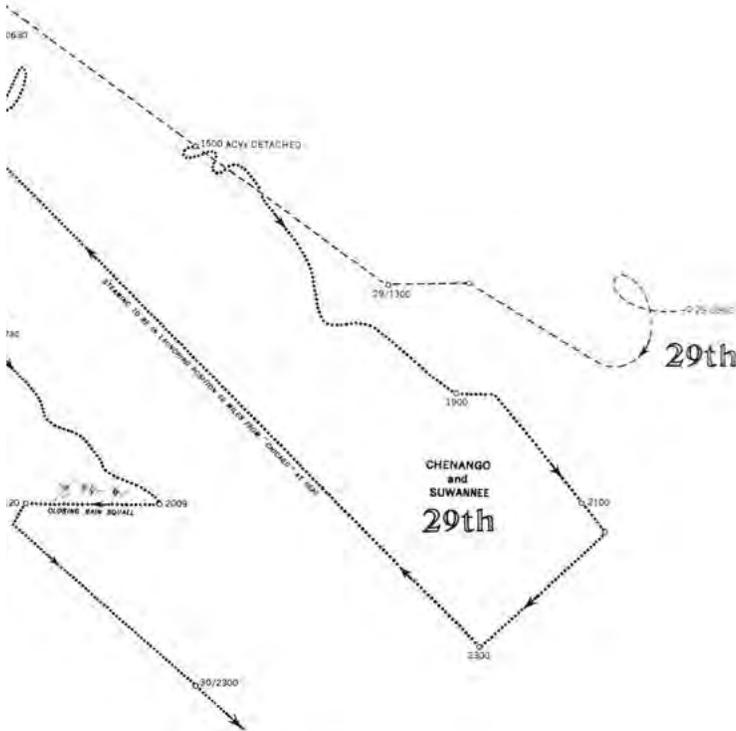
*The Chicago low in the water the next morning*

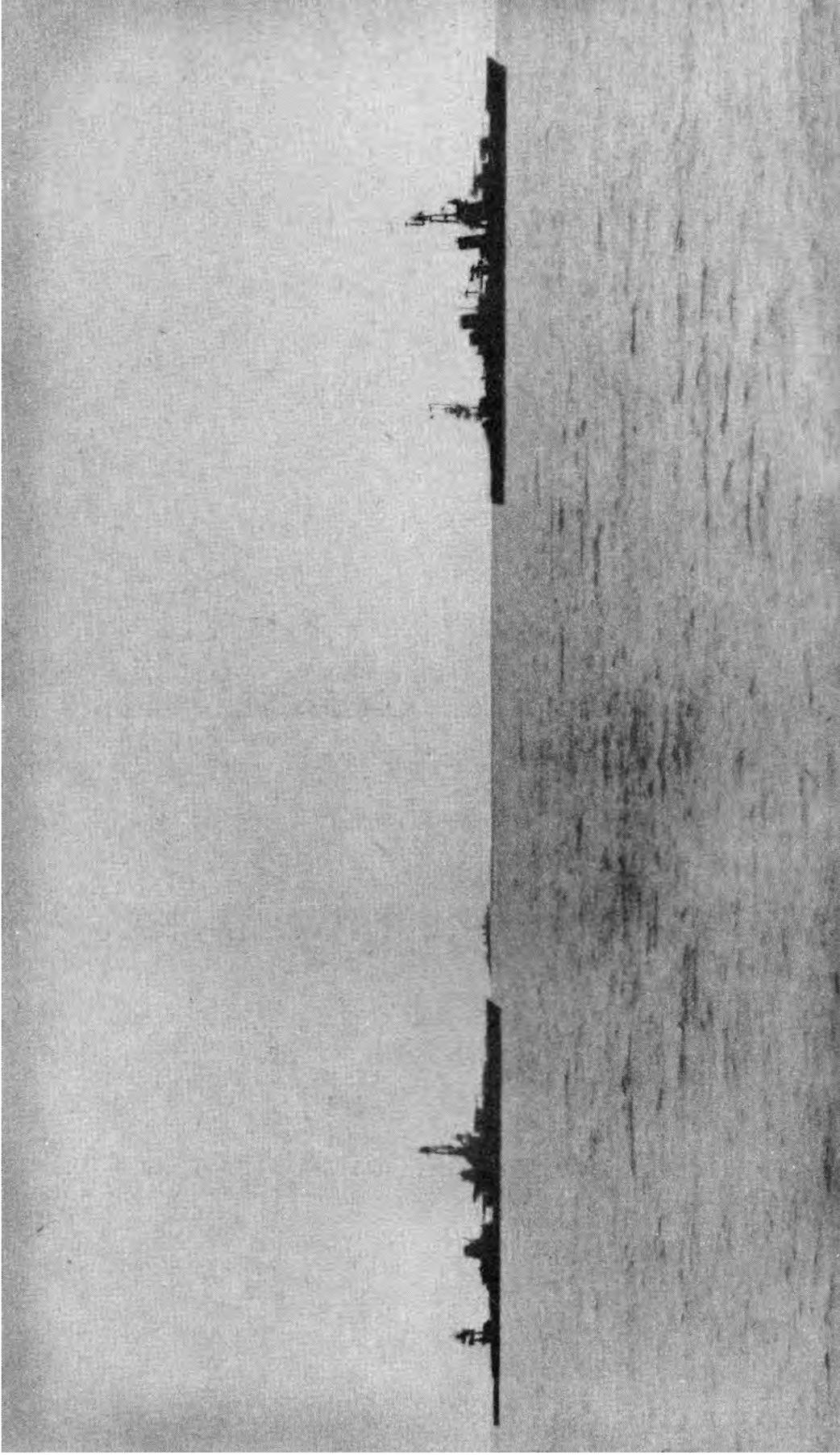


# SINKING OF U. S. S. CHICAGO

OPERATIONS OF TASK FORCES  
"GEORGE" AND "SUGAR"

29 and 30 January, 1943  
(All Times Zone minus 12)





*The Louisville towing Chicago morning of 30 January*

During the 28th, Task Force GEORGE and the transport group proceeded toward Guadalcanal without incident, while other units sortied from port in accordance with operation orders from COMSOPAC which noted a possible strong enemy movement into the southern Solomons and assigned all commanders the general duty of destroying any Japanese forces encountered. Task Force ROGER (Rear Admiral DeWitt C. Ramsey), composed of the *Saratoga* (F), *San Juan*, *Case*, *Maury*, *McCall*, and *Saufley*, departed from Noumea at 1100<sup>4</sup> under orders to reach latitude 16°30' S., longitude 157°00' by 0300 30 January. Task Force LOVE ONE (Rear Admiral Willis A. Lee, Jr.), including the *Washington* (F), *North Carolina*, *Indiana*, *Balch*, *Cummings*, *Dunlap*, and *Fanning*, left at the same time, headed for the same general area. At 1600 Task Force SUGAR (Rear Admiral Frederick C. Sherman), comprising the *Enterprise* (F) *San Diego*, *Ellet*, *Hughes*, *Morris*, *Mustin*, and *Russell*, sortied from Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, bound for a rendezvous with Task Force ROGER on the 30th. Lastly, at 1800, Task Force AFIRM (Rear Admiral Walden L. Ainsworth), with the *Nashville* (F), *Helena*, *Honolulu*, *St. Louis*, *Drayton*, *Lamson*, *O'Bannon*, and *Reid*, left Noumea for the rendezvous with Task Force LOVE ONE.

By the evening of 29 January, Task Forces ROGER, LOVE ONE, SUGAR, and AFIRM were operating in an area bounded by the parallels 14° and 17° 20' S. and the meridians 157° and 162° E., from 250 to 420 miles south and southwest of the main body of Task Force GEORGE as it closed the southeast coast of Guadalcanal (see chart, "Disposition of U.S. Forces Supporting Guadalcanal"). Task Force LOVE TWO (Vice Admiral Herbert F. Leary), with the *New Mexico* (F), *Colorado*, *Maryland*, *Mississippi*, *McCalla*, and *Woodworth*, remained in port at Nandi, Fiji Islands.

### MOVEMENTS OF TASK FORCE GEORGE DURING THE DAY OF THE 29TH

On the 29th Admiral Giffen's command had received the following general information from CINCPAC and COMSOPAC:<sup>5</sup>

- (a) From 3 to 10 Japanese submarines were disposed in the area in which the Task Force was operating.
- (b) A large number of Japanese fighters and bombers had appeared at Guadalcanal during the forenoon of the 28th, indicating that air attack could be expected.
- (c) A Japanese movement in strength toward the southern Solomons was anticipated.
- (d) Night air attack might be tried out.

At 1035, Task Force GEORGE passed within visual distance of the transport group on its way to Guadalcanal. At that time and continuing into the afternoon numerous aircraft were picked up by radar. Many planes did not show IFF,<sup>6</sup> but this did not cause particular anxiety on the part of the Task Force Commander. IFF was known not to be discernible a large part of the time. The equipment then employed was delicate and had a tendency to get out of order because personnel were unfamiliar with its use. Also pilots occasionally failed to energize the proper circuits.

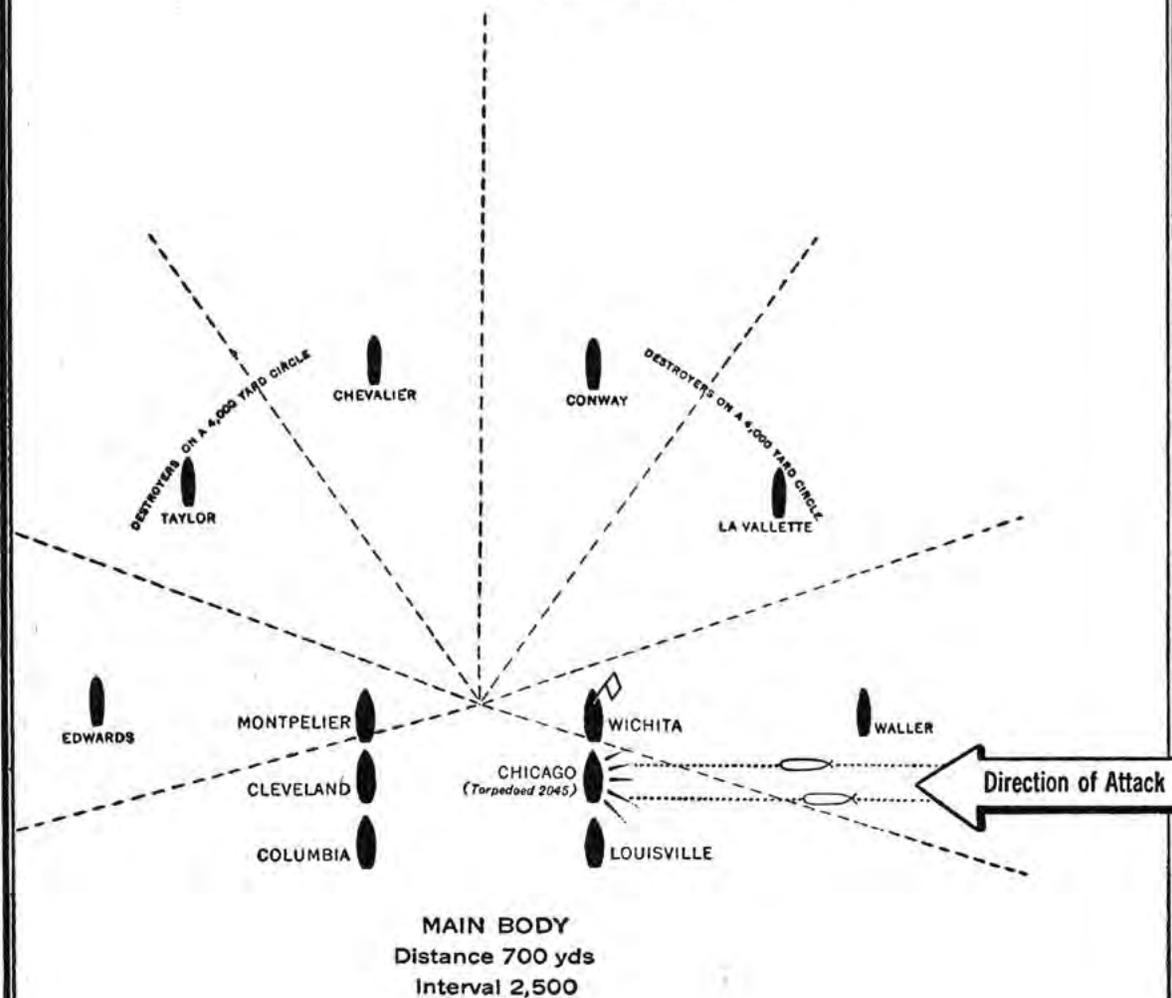
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<sup>4</sup> All times in this Narrative are Zone minus 12.

<sup>5</sup> Action Report, Commander Task Force GEORGE.

<sup>6</sup> Radar recognition signal.

Disposition of  
**TASK FORCE "GEORGE"**  
at time of  
**TORPEDO ATTACK OF THE 29<sup>TH</sup>**  
(Not to Scale)



At 1244 Capt. Wyatt, commanding the task group containing the auxiliary carriers *Chenango* and *Suwannee*, asked permission to launch search planes to locate possible “snoopers” in the Indispensable Reef—San Cristobal area.<sup>7</sup> Admiral Giffen authorized this flight for 1500, the time already set for the detachment and retirement of the carrier group.<sup>7</sup> Since wind was light and from the southeast, earlier launchings would have required the carriers to reverse course to head into it, thus delaying the entire group in its effort to reach the position assigned by COMSOPAC for 2200 (latitude 10° S., longitude 159° 40' E.). During the afternoon, the radars of the Force continued to pick up and report unidentified planes on various bearings. Some of these turned out to be units of the covering patrols in which IFF was not registering. At intervals of about half an hour, aircraft approached as close as 20 miles.<sup>8</sup>

At 1500 the *Chenango* and *Suwannee*, with the *Frazier* and *Meade* as screen, were directed to carry out their retirement to the southeast. The auxiliary carriers were, however, to continue to provide air cover for the cruisers during the remainder of the afternoon and on the following morning. A rendezvous was set for 0800 30 January in latitude 11° 37' S., longitude 161°23' E. about 90 miles southeast of Cape Henslow, Guadalcanal.

After clearing the Task Force, the carriers launched their patrols and search planes. A flight from the *Suwannee*, composed of four VF and three VT, then remained over the cruisers until about 1800, returning to land aboard before sunset. *Chenango* aircraft maintained patrols over the carrier group and also searched the Indispensable Reef—San Cristobal area.<sup>9</sup> After recovery of planes about nightfall, the two auxiliary carriers continued their retirement in a southeasterly direction.

Meanwhile the cruiser group had continued on northwesterly courses at 24 knots. The Force kept on making many radar contacts, but covering planes were not vectored out to investigate them by the *Wichita*, which was charged with fighter direction. The Task Force Commander felt that he had three alternatives:<sup>10</sup>

- (1) He could break radio silence and vector out his air patrols.
- (2) He could proceed on evasive courses which might confuse hostile aircraft but which would also prevent the arrival of the Task Force at the designated 2200 point.
- (3) He could steam directly for this point, relying on air cover, ships' armament, and future change-of-course maneuvers for protection.

The latter procedure was adopted. Admiral Giffen desired to reach the point specified by COMSOPAC for 2200. Widely evasive courses could not be steered if this was to be accomplished. Nor did the Task Force Commander think it advisable to assume an air defense formation. Such a step would increase the vulnerability of the Force to submarine attack at a time when CINCPAC was warning

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7 Action Report, *Chenango* and *Suwannee*.

8 CINCPAC, “Solomon Islands Campaign, 25 January–10 February 1943.”

9 Action Report, *Chenango* and *Suwannee*.

10 Action Report, Commander Task Force GEORGE

of an increased Japanese submarine concentration south and southeast of Guadalcanal, and when available destroyers had been reduced by the detachment of the auxiliary carrier group.<sup>11</sup>

### NIGHT ATTACK ON THE *CHICAGO*

As the afternoon waned, visibility remained excellent, although the sky was 80—90% overcast with the ceiling at about 2,000 feet. In the west there was a narrow belt of blue between the cumulus cloud mass and the horizon, so that after sunset the glow continued for a time. The sea was calm, and the wind was blowing from 120° T. with force of about 4 knots.

The sun set at 1947. Task Force GEORGE, minus its auxiliary carriers and their escort, was now in latitude 10° 42' S., longitude 160° 26' E., about 48 miles southwest of Cape Henslow, Guadalcanal. It was steaming in special approach formation, cruisers in line of divisions, interval 2,500 yards, distance 700 yards. Destroyers were ahead on the 4,000-yard circle. Course was 305° T., speed 24 knots, and the Force was zigzagging in accordance with Plan 10 of “Zigzag Diagrams for Single Ships and Convoys 1940.”

The heavy cruiser *Chicago* was the second ship in the right hand column, directly astern of the *Wichita*. She had not gone to General Quarters, but all ZEBRA fittings were closed except those needed for ventilation and immediate access. Condition of Readiness TWO was in effect, with antiaircraft guns manned, full boiler power maintained, and continuous CXAM and SG radar search being conducted. The Force was darkened.

As the sun went down, the combat air patrol passed overhead on its return to the *Suwannee*. A few minutes later the Edward's SC radar picked up a flight of unidentified aircraft approximately 30 miles away which closed and passed down the port side of the Force about 15 miles distant. Other ships also were recording the presence of these planes.

Soon after 2000 the rest of the Task Force began to make contact with various groups of aircraft between 25 and 50 miles distant. Some of these showed IFF. The *La Vallette* finally sighted a formation of planes, 12 to 18 in number, about 12 miles off the port bow on a southerly heading. Their character could not be ascertained, but they were probably friendly.

At 2009 the *Columbia* went to General Quarters. At the time her radar was recording two groups of friendly planes and several other aircraft. A minute later the *Chicago* picked up a large unidentified flight 25 miles to the westward. It was tracked and found to be drawing aft and closing slightly. It made a wide circle to the left and at 2020 was about 14 miles astern, a position which afforded the planes a measure of invisibility and also silhouetted the Task Force against the western horizon. The bogies closed rapidly. Radars began to make many contacts with low-flying aircraft which in general were within 10,000 yards.

The large group of planes astern continued its wide circle around the Task Force until it was slightly abaft the *Chicago*'s starboard beam. Search and FC radars aboard that vessel showed that the aircraft

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11 Statement by Comdr. (now Capt.) Howard E. Orem of Admiral Giffen's staff.

had divided into two groups at ranges of approximately 10,000 and 17,000 yards. The *Wichita* noted another flight which approached to within 8 miles on the port bow.

The action began between 2023 and 2024 when the *Waller* was strafed by an incoming plane and immediately opened fire. The *Chicago* joined in with her 40-mm. guns and followed with the starboard 5-inch battery in radar control. Simultaneously she went to General Quarters and set Material Condition ZEBRA. One plane was believed to have crashed between the *Chicago* and the *Waller*. Two others approached the cruiser from two points abaft the starboard beam, and one of them launched a torpedo at 500–600 yards. Both the torpedo planes crossed ahead of the *Chicago*, apparently undamaged, but another crashed off the port quarter under the fire of the cruiser's automatic weapons.

At about 2024 the *Wichita* also received a strafing attack. A Mitsubishi type I approached from abaft the starboard beam and passed low over the bow. Another plane of the same type dropped a torpedo on the starboard quarter at a distance of about 500 yards. It missed. About six more planes, some with running lights on, came from astern and passed close aboard to port. At 2025 speed was increased to 27 knots. Shortly thereafter the *Louisville* opened fire on a low-flying plane to starboard at a distance of 1,500 yards. A wake was soon sighted, and the *Louisville* heeled over in answer to hard left rudder. The torpedo passed 25 yards ahead.

All the ships of the formation were now in action. The attackers appeared to be concentrating on the heavy cruisers. The *Louisville* felt a heavy shock, probably a torpedo dud. At least some of the aircraft were thought to be carrying two torpedoes, although this is dubious in view of the distance they must have traveled. When the planes were to the eastward of the Task Force, they were hard to see except in the light of tracers.

At 2030 the first attack ended. It was now dark, and antisubmarine zigzag was discontinued in accordance with earlier orders. No evasive maneuvers were instituted in its stead since enemy planes now apparently surrounded the formation, and the Task Force Commander believed that any immediate change of course not only would be ineffective but would increase the phosphorescence of the wakes.<sup>12</sup>

About five miles on the starboard hand there were blinking float lights on the water and white flares in the air. Some of these were quite high and relatively dim. They drifted down very slowly. The float lights were evenly spaced and had the appearance of quick-flashing navigational lights. Other lights blinked to port and ahead. The enemy was apparently marking the course of the Task Force in the darkness.

A new wave of attacking aircraft came in. The *Wichita* saw a plane drop a torpedo abaft her starboard beam. The *Louisville* sighted at least two torpedo wakes, one from port and one from starboard. She turned left and successfully avoided both. An observer aboard reported that the port torpedo was "short and fat and ran near the surface about 25 yards from the ship."

All cruisers and destroyers were throwing up a heavy volume of fire. Several planes were seen to burst into orange flames and crash. Although no concerted evasive maneuvers were being employed, ships

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12 Statement by Comdr. (now Capt.) Howard E. Orem of Admiral Giffen's staff.

maneuvered individually when attacked, and some of the destroyers steered irregular courses without losing their positions in the screen.

At 2036 the *Columbia* fired on a plane coming in low and fast on the port bow. It crashed without burning. Two minutes later, the *Chicago*'s starboard 5-inch battery opened on aircraft approaching on the starboard beam, range 10,000. The fire was taken up by the automatic weapons as the planes came in. One crashed on the starboard quarter of the *Waller*. Another off the *Chicago*'s starboard bow was hit repeatedly by automatic fire and exploded close aboard on the port bow. It flared up brilliantly and silhouetted the *Chicago* for other planes to starboard, which took advantage of the situation to concentrate their attack on that cruiser. Two minutes later she was struck by a torpedo at frame 100 starboard. The wake had not been seen. All ship control was lost, three shafts were thrown out of commission, and a marked list to starboard set in. The after engine room and evaporator room were flooded, as well as No. 4 fireroom and the after gyro room.

The *Chicago*'s automatic weapons continued to fire, and two more planes crashed in flames, one on the port bow (also under fire by the *Wichita*) and one on the port quarter (also under fire by the *Louisville*), repeating the silhouette effect. There was another two-minute interval, and then a second torpedo hit was scored on the starboard side. This time the wake was seen, but the *Chicago* could not maneuver. The explosion occurred at about frame 30 and sent a column of water 200 feet into the air. All engines stopped, and turbo-generator power was lost. The list increased to 11°. The ship was reported to be settling aft. No. 3 fireroom was flooded, as well as other compartments. Auxiliary power from the diesel generators was cut into the emergency circuits to operate emergency lighting, fire pumps, and radio motor generators.

The *Louisville* swerved to starboard to avoid the *Chicago* and the burning aircraft in the water and increased her speed to 30 knots to close the *Wichita*. At about this time the *Columbia* noted a line of float lights which had been dropped directly across the path of the Task Force, probably as a directional guide for the attacking planes.

Until 2050 the radar plots of the Japanese planes looked like a "disturbed hornets' nest," in the words of Admiral Giffen. But after this time the aircraft began to circle to the westward. The main body of the Task Force, which had reduced speed to 15 knots to lessen phosphorescence of wakes, steamed on various courses in the neighborhood of the stricken *Chicago*.

Shortly before 2100 a change of course to 120° T. was begun. During the execution of this maneuver, the *Conway* found herself cutting across the bow of the *Wichita* from port to starboard, and the ships cleared by about fifty feet as the result of backing and turning maneuvers by both.

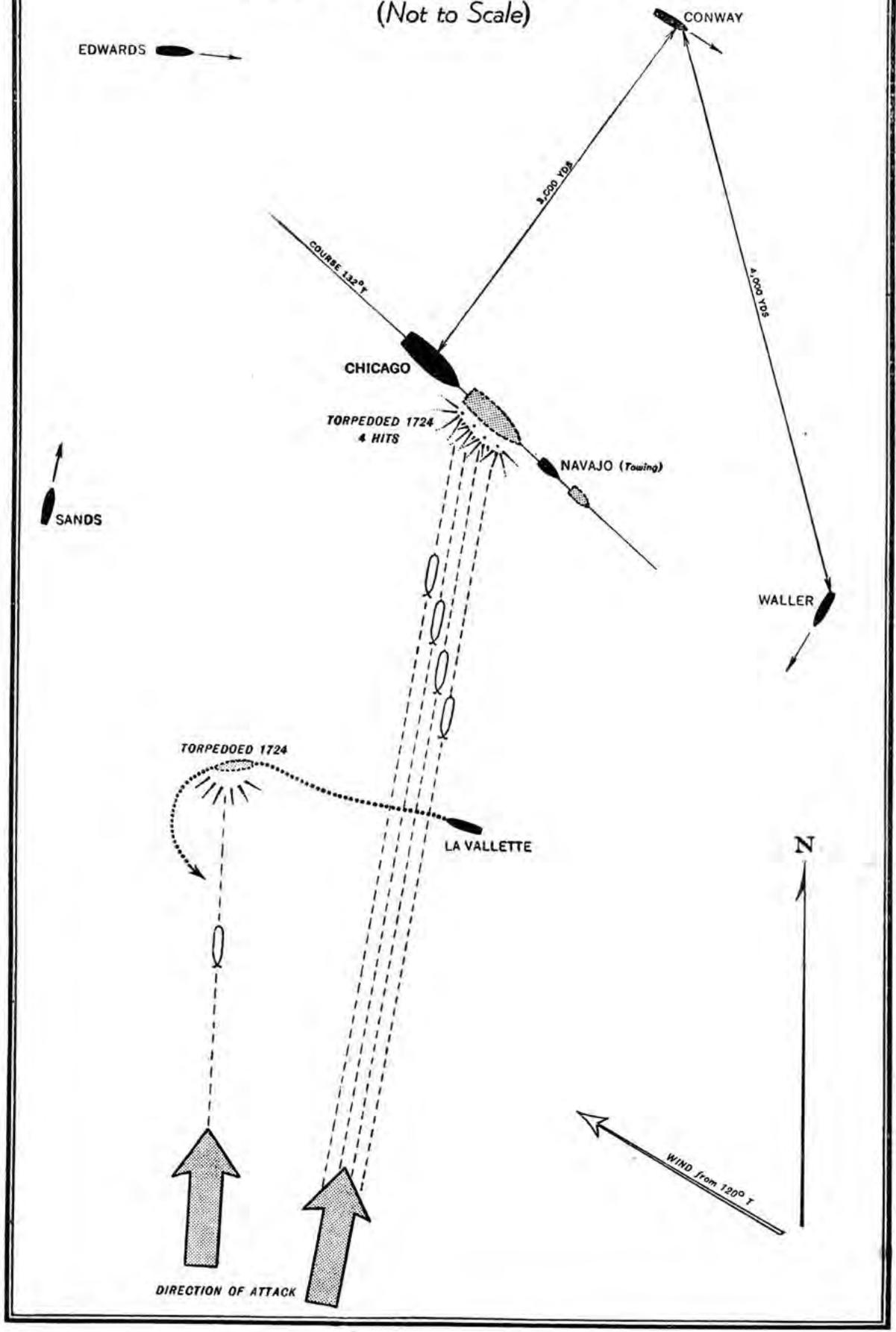
A lone Mitsubishi type I dropped two torpedoes about 200 yards off the *Wichita*'s starboard quarter. One broached and ran parallel to the ship to starboard. The other came directly for it. An underwater blow and scraping sounds were heard. Another abortive attack was then delivered from the port quarter. One plane was downed by the automatic weapons of the *Louisville*.

About 2115 the attack was over.

# Disposition of CHICAGO and Screen

## TORPEDO ATTACK OF 30 JANUARY

(Not to Scale)



By 2130 the *Chicago* had checked her list at 11°. About six feet of freeboard remained aft. The OTC had directed the *Louisville* to get ready to tow, and that vessel left the formation with the *La Vallette*, *Edwards*, and *Taylor* as screen. At 0055 the *Chicago* and *Louisville* had succeeded in passing and securing the towline in total darkness,<sup>13</sup> with personnel literally feeling their way.<sup>14</sup>

The decision to take the *Chicago* under tow while continued air attack was still possible was dictated by the increasing submarine hazard, since radio silence had been broken, and by the necessity of putting as much distance as possible between the damaged vessel and her present position because of the even greater likelihood of air attack by daylight next day. During the remainder of the night the *Wichita* and *Conway* maneuvered to the eastward of the *Chicago*, *Louisville* and their screen, which now consisted of the *Edwards*, *La Vallette*, and *Waller*. The *Chicago* group was making good a course of 130° T. and a speed of about 4 knots. The light cruisers of the Task Force with their screen maneuvered to the westward.

### JAPANESE LOSSES; ENEMY TACTICS DURING THE NIGHT ATTACK

CINCPAC estimated that 11 to 13 Japanese planes were destroyed by antiaircraft fire during the night torpedo attack of the 29th, the first of its kind ever launched by the enemy. There was no way of judging how many aircraft were involved, but the number must have been substantial. As usual, the participating ships made high claims of planes shot down, because of duplications and bad visibility. Total enemy losses as recorded by the Task Force were 17 destroyed, 12 possibles, and 2 damaged.

Presumably the Japanese planes came from bases on or near Bougainville Island. The enemy had selected a time for the attack when visual contact was impossible except at very close ranges. To the eastward, as has been noted, it was dark, while a narrow strip of light persisted in the west. Complete darkness set in after the first flight of planes had made its drops. Thereafter the enemy adopted several methods of overcoming the problem of visibility:

- (1) Self-disclosing fire was encouraged by strafing, by the use of running lights, and, after contact had finally been lost, by the dropping of isolated flares.
- (2) Many blinking float lights were laid (other flashing lights were perhaps aboard planes). These were visible both to port and to starboard, often coinciding with bogies observed on radar screens. Each flashed at regular intervals, but there was no synchronization between the individual lights. The float lights were probably rendezvous markers and beacons for attack runs. They also served the purpose of encouraging self-disclosure, for at least two ships took them under enthusiastic fire.
- (3) Surface flares of about 50,000 candlepower were employed, as well as red, green, and white parachute flares of much lower intensity, possibly to give the appearance of airplane running lights, thereby drawing fire. The white parachute flares were too dim to serve as illumination.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix I for description of this unusual feat of seamanship.

<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, at 0004, the *Chevalier* picked up a surface contact at 11,800 yards and proceeded to investigate by direction of ComCruDiv 12 in *Montpelier*. The contact, a probable submarine, attempted to escape on the surface. After three challenges by blinker at 3,000–2,000 yards, the *Chevalier* opened fire and forced the submarine to submerge. No depth charge attack was made, however, because the *Chevalier* was under the impression that her gunfire had destroyed the target.

The Japanese made many runs on our ships without taking offensive action. In spite of their elaborate efforts to mark the position of the vessels with lights and self-disclosing fire, they were probably unable to distinguish targets a good part of the time. It is noteworthy that both torpedoings of the *Chicago* occurred when she was not only illuminated by the fire of the entire anti-aircraft battery but silhouetted as well by blazing enemy aircraft. Conversely, the flashes of our 5-inch guns made it supremely difficult for the automatic weapons to locate the attacking planes.

## THE MORNING OF 30 JANUARY

Shortly after midnight Task Force SUGAR (the *Enterprise*) was directed by COMSOPAC to close Task Force GEORGE, conducting searches and providing air coverage at dawn.<sup>15</sup> A Black Cat plane from Guadalcanal arrived to cover the *Chicago* during the night. Meanwhile, the damaged cruiser took all possible steps to correct her list and to plug leaks. Bucket brigades and submersible pumps were used to keep the water down in mess compartments No. 1 and 3. Damage control parties extinguished small fires in the galley and Radio II. Bulkheads abaft the flooded engineering spaces were shored. It had been considered questionable whether the ship would remain afloat, but frequent checks indicated that buoyancy was being maintained.

After learning of the attack on the *Chicago*, the *Chenango* and *Suwannee* set their course for a point about 60 miles southeast of Task Force GEORGE's estimated daylight position. It was decided that after the first dawn launchings, the auxiliary carrier group would head to intercept Task Force SUGAR during the morning. This decision was confirmed by orders from COMSOPAC.

The *Chenango* was scheduled to launch at 0550. However, at the appointed time it was raining, the ceiling was low, and there was hardly any wind. It was still dark as well, and the pilots were not experienced in night flying. Nevertheless, it was thought that the *Chicago* group might be attacked at dawn, so the risk had to be taken. At 0600 the *Chenango* launched seven fighters as a combat air patrol and three search planes. These arrived over the *Wichita* about an hour later, when it was just light enough to pick up the ships. The *Suwannee* had been designated to provide air protection over the auxiliary carriers themselves, but weather conditions were so bad that she did not launch until dawn. At 0655, the *Enterprise* also launched a six-plane combat patrol to cover Task Force GEORGE.

Shortly after daybreak the tug *Navajo* (Lt. (jg) Frank Rigley), escorted by the flush-decker *Sands* (Lt. Comdr. John J. Branson), joined the *Chicago* group. By 0900 the tow had been transferred from the *Louisville* to the *Navajo*.

At about 0815 Task Force GEORGE was sighted by search planes from the *Enterprise*. It was then about 35 miles north of the eastern end of Rennell Island and heading southeast at about 4 knots. The *Chicago* was leaving a heavy oil slick. The three light cruisers were maneuvering in column to port, while the *Wichita* was patrolling the starboard side. Lt. (jg) R. D. Gibson, pilot of one of the search

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<sup>15</sup> The rendezvous of Task Force SUGAR with Task Force ROGER (the *Saratoga*), set for the morning of the 30th, was cancelled.

planes, transmitted the position of the Force to the fighters of the *Enterprise* combat air patrol which was to cover it and gave the fighter frequency to the *Louisville* by message drop. On the way back to the *Enterprise*, Lt. Gibson located the auxiliary carriers and asked for their fighter frequency by message drop. This information was given by blinker and was duly reported to the *Enterprise* on Lt. Gibson's return at 1100.

Admiral Giffen directed Capt. Davis of the *Chicago* to transfer wounded and excess personnel to destroyers while headway was lost during the passage of the towline to *Navajo*. Capt. Davis inquired if it would be possible to send the wounded to hospital in a special ship at high speed, but he was informed that no vessel could be spared because of the submarine menace. In view of the strong probability of another air attack and the precarious buoyancy of the *Chicago*, Capt. Davis decided to keep all uninjured personnel aboard to fight the ship and continue damage control measures.

## SECOND ATTACK ON THE *CHICAGO*

At noon the *Chenango* and *Suwannee* joined Task Force SUGAR and came under the command of Admiral Sherman in the *Enterprise*. About a half-hour later the course of the combined Force was changed to 140° T. Thereafter easterly and westerly courses were steered, with Task Force SUGAR remaining to the southeast of the *Chicago*, at a distance of about 50 miles.

The *Enterprise* attempted to maintain fighter direction of the planes covering the *Chicago*, but it was discovered that the distance was too great.<sup>16</sup> At 1235, however, fighters were vectored out from the *Enterprise* herself to chase a bogey which had been picked up to the southwest at a distance of 40 miles. The F4F-4's pursued the "snooper" 40 miles to the northeast but were unable to catch it at its estimated speed of 200–220 knots. This bogey then circled Task Force GEORGE. It was tracked until 1400, when it faded from the *Enterprise* screen. Presumably it provided the enemy with full information on the situation.

At 1400 Admiral Sherman directed the *Chenango* and *Suwannee* to operate independently of Task Force SUGAR. The auxiliary carriers continued to maintain patrols over themselves and over Task Force GEORGE. At a time variously stated to have been between one and two hours later,<sup>17</sup> the *Louisville* and the light cruisers of Task Force GEORGE formed on the *Wichita*, in obedience to orders from COMSOPAC, and with the *Chevalier* and *Taylor* departed for Efate at 25 knots, leaving the *Chicago* a circling screen composed of the *Conway*, *Edwards*, *La Vallette*, *Sands*, and *Waller*, with Capt. Davis of the *Chicago* in command. At 1534 Admiral Giffen had directed the *Chenango* and *Suwannee* to afford air cover for the *Chicago* into Espiritu Santo, but this dispatch was delayed in transmission and did not arrive until 1825, after the *Chicago* had again been attacked. The base course of the *Chicago* group was 131° T. The *Navajo* was towing at about four knots.

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<sup>16</sup> As stated in the report of the *Enterprise*. Technically the *Wichita* was still charged with fighter direction over her Task Force, but it is not clear that she knew what frequency to use when fighters from both the *Enterprise* and the auxiliary carrier group were concerned.

<sup>17</sup> Reports of CINCPAC and CTF, 1600; *Wichita*, 1550; *Waller*, *Montpelier*, *Edwards*, 1545; *Conway*, 1540; *Chicago*, 1500; *La Vallette*, 1500; *Cleveland*, 1442.

Shortly after Task Force GEORGE split up, Radio Guadalcanal broadcast a warning in plain language. This stated that 11 unidentified twin-engine aircraft had been sighted 130 miles from Guadalcanal at 1545 on a bearing of 268° T. The message was received by the *Chicago* group at 1643 and by the *Enterprise* at about the same time. From it the *Enterprise* was able correctly to gauge the time of arrival of the enemy planes. She launched additional fighters, but these did not make contact with the Japanese.

Because of the delay in receipt of Admiral Giffen's message, the *Chenango* and *Suwannee* received no orders to provide further air cover until too late. However, the auxiliary carrier group had recognized that late afternoon would be a likely time for an attack on the damaged cruiser, and a special flight of 19 fighters and four TBF's was launched at 1645. The planes reported sighting the main body of Task Force GEORGE about 30 miles from the *Chicago*. Receiving no directions from the *Wichita*, where it was assumed they were en route to cover the *Chicago*, they headed for the latter ship's group but arrived too late to take part in the ensuing action.

Soon after the warning from Guadalcanal, four aircraft of the six-plane combat air patrol being maintained over the *Chicago* by the *Enterprise* sighted an enemy reconnaissance plane and shot it down after a 40-mile chase.

At 1654 the *Enterprise*'s CXAM radar reported a group of bogies 67 miles away, bearing 300° T. The ship went to General Quarters and prepared to repel air attack. Ten additional fighters were launched<sup>18</sup> to augment the combat air patrol of four F4F-4's over Task Force SUGAR and six over the *Chicago*. The latter planes were vectored out 20 miles on course 190° T.<sup>19</sup> and intercepted a group of 12 twin-engine Mitsubishi type 1 torpedo bombers which were heading for the *Enterprise*. At this time they were only 17 miles from Task Force SUGAR. Upon being intercepted within sight of the *Enterprise*, they turned left and headed at high speed for the *Chicago*. The turn enabled the combat air patrol to close and shoot down one plane and possibly two more.

The four-plane patrol over the *Enterprise* sighted the enemy and joined in the chase. Up to four more planes were shot down by *Enterprise* fighters as they plunged into the antiaircraft fire of the *Chicago*'s screen.

The *La Vallette*'s SC radar had picked up the enemy planes at 1707 when they were 50 miles away, bearing 305° T. At 39 miles the FD radar made contact. When the aircraft were 28 miles away, radar plot reported that there were 11 of them. The *La Vallette* went to General Quarters.

At 1715 the *Waller* made contact with unidentified aircraft 12 miles away. The bearing was now 224° T. Five minutes later the *Chicago*, still under tow by the *Navajo*, saw 11 planes approaching from 7 miles away, in a flat V formation bearing about 215° T. She did not sight our combat air patrol, although it was reported to be attacking the enemy about this time. The *Chicago*'s starboard 5-inch commenced fire in local control, range 8,000. Automatic weapons opened at extreme ranges. Two planes approaching to starboard were seen to dive into the water when under *Chicago* fire. Another

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18 These were the reinforcements which did not make contact with the enemy.

19 Report of the *Enterprise*.

with one engine blazing tried to crash the cruiser but missed the stern and fell off the port quarter in flames. A fourth plane went down about 3,000 yards on the port quarter, under fire from the *Chicago's* port battery. One plane crashed on the port bow, probably shot down by the *Navajo*. The *Chicago* was now aware that our fighters were attacking the enemy, and some difficulty was experienced in keeping the anti-aircraft fire off them.

Meanwhile the *Chicago's* screen, 3,000 yards away, had also been engaged. The *La Vallette* swung to the right to bring the enemy formation on the beam but did not speed up as she would then have removed herself from the most likely track of the Japanese aircraft. Two enemy planes were seen destroyed by our fighters. At 1721 the *La Vallette* opened fire at 10,000 yards. It so happened that she was the only unit of the screen in the approximate line of the enemy's approach, while three of the screen were on the disengaged side. She reported shooting down two planes at 7,000 yards and others later. Though in less advantageous positions, all other vessels reported hitting and downing from one to five planes.

As the enemy aircraft crossed the *Chicago's* track, they were reengaged by the *Enterprise* fighters which, together with anti-aircraft fire, accounted for the remaining Japanese planes with the exception of two, one of which was damaged. After anti-aircraft fire had ceased, and all enemy aircraft were shot down or were being engaged by fighters, five torpedo wakes were observed approaching the *Chicago* from the starboard beam. The ship had three knots towing speed but could not be maneuvered. At 1724 the first torpedo exploded at frame 33 starboard, and a flood of water and debris fell on the forecastle. A few seconds later three more torpedoes exploded in rapid succession between frame 60 and 80 starboard. The fifth missed astern.

Immediately after the first torpedo hit, it was apparent that the *Chicago* would sink rapidly. The *Navajo*<sup>20</sup> cut the tow wire with an acetylene torch, and the *Chicago's* Commanding Officer ordered abandon ship. Most of the life rafts and floater nets had been cast loose and placed on deck during the previous night, but their launching was difficult because of the list to starboard. However, all survivors managed to leave the ship in time. At 1743 the *Chicago* rolled over on her side and settled by the stern, colors flying.

The *La Vallette*, exposed as her position was, had succeeded in avoiding several torpedoes. However, one finally struck her in the forward engine room. The ship's shell was badly damaged for 48 feet on the port side, centered at frame 94. The keel was hogged 14 inches and snapped at frame 93. The forward fire and engine rooms were flooded and the latter seriously wrecked. The forward bulkhead of the after fireroom was strained and cracked. One officer and 20 men were killed.

At 1915 the *Chenango* received a message from Guadalcanal warning of 11 twin-engine and 8 single-engine planes on a southeasterly course near Vella Lavella Island at 1809. The plotted track of these planes would bring them over the auxiliary carriers at 2030. It was probable that the Japanese were attempting to duplicate the success of their attack the night before. As darkness would have set in

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20 The *Navajo* had attempted to tow the *Chicago* to the right as the attack commenced, but without success.

by 2030, and it would be impossible to provide fighter cover over the carrier group at that hour, the *Chenango* and *Suwannee* recovered their aircraft and retired at full speed toward a rain squall which was then about 3 miles distant. At 2140, when it was evident that the enemy planes had not reached the vicinity, a night retirement course of 127° T. was taken.

The *La Vallette* had been directed to steam toward Espiritu Santo by COMSOPAC. Feed water was lost at 2100 and the *Navajo* commenced towing. The *Chenango* and *Suwannee* were not apprised of this turn of events, however, nor had any information been given them previously regarding the speed of the *La Vallette*. Consequently the auxiliary carriers did not know what course would enable them to reach the neighborhood of the damaged destroyer at daybreak and provide air coverage. Course was therefore set to intercept her at dawn if she was making 15 knots.

At 0700 on the 31st, fighters and torpedo planes were launched to search back along the estimated course of the *La Vallette*. Contact was established after flying 80 miles, and the *Chenango* and *Suwannee* closed at 15 knots. Two planes were sent over the *La Vallette* group to make message drops so that local fighter direction might be established. After giving proper recognition signals, the aircraft flew alongside the destroyers so that they could surely be identified before making their message drops. Wheels and flaps were lowered as an additional precaution, and each plane began an approach on a separate destroyer. At masthead height they were taken under fire. One plane was damaged and the pilot slightly wounded. The aircraft returned to the carriers, which approached to TBS range and made arrangements over the air for fighter direction.

At 1235 the *Cummings* (Comdr. George O. Cooper) from Task Force LOVE ONE<sup>21</sup> and the *O'Bannon* (Lt. Comdr. Donald J. MacDonald) from Task Force AFIRM21 joined the *La Vallette* group. In view of the large number of survivors and the slow rate of advance, authority was requested for the original screen to proceed to port. This was granted, and the *Conway*, *Edwards*, *Sands*, and *Waller* took all *Chicago* survivors aboard and left the formation. The *La Vallette*, under tow of the *Navajo* and with the *Cummings* and *O'Bannon* as screen, reached Espiritu Santo at 1590 on 1 February.

## ENEMY LOSSES IN THE ATTACK OF THE 30TH: SUMMARY

The combined score claimed by ships and the *Enterprise* combat patrols on the 30th amounted to 31 aircraft destroyed, four possibles, and six or more damaged. The *Enterprise* group alone reported that it had downed 10 planes and damaged another. The *La Vallette* claimed six kills, one possible, and one damaged. The *Edwards*' score was five shot down, and the *Chicago* reported three destroyed, one possible, and several damaged. Actually there were many duplications in the accounts given by participants in the action. Only 11 or 12 enemy planes conducted the attack. Of these, 10 were shot down, one was damaged, and one escaped.

As an interesting sidelight on the action, the report of the *Conway* suggested that the Japanese might have developed a "dead man safety" device to keep planes in normal flight after pilots had been killed

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21 See pages 26-27.

or severely wounded. It was noted that enemy aircraft advanced uniformly without change of course or altitude until about 2,000 yards after drops had been made. At this point at least five of them suddenly veered off to the left and crashed.

## EVENTS IN GUADALCANAL AREA

To bring succeeding occurrences into perspective, it will be helpful to backtrack briefly and examine developments in the Guadalcanal area proper from 27 January onward.

During the night of the 27th–28th, the destroyer group comprising the *Fletcher* (F, Capt. Robert P. Briscoe; Lt. Comdr. Frank L. Johnson), *De Haven* (Comdr. Charles E. Tolman), *Nicholas* (Lt. Comdr. Andrew J. Hill), and *Radford* (Lt. Comdr. William K. Romoser) was searching the area 6 miles off the northwest coast of Guadalcanal for submarines which were believed to be reinforcing Japanese ground forces. The New Zealand corvettes *Kiwi* and *Moa* were patrolling 2 miles off shore, and PT boats were covering the channels between Cape Esperance and Savo Island and between Savo and Sandfly Passage. Visibility was about 500 yards with intermittent heavy rain squalls.

At 0412 the *Radford* made a radar contact on the starboard quarter at a range of 6,000 yards. Although the location was not that assigned to the corvettes, it was possible that one of them had moved off station because of navigational or weather hazards. The *Radford* closed the range, and at 0515 sighted what appeared to be a small surface craft. At 400 yards it was identified as a submarine. It submerged before guns could be fired and two 600-lb. depth charges were dropped. The projectors were not used because of misinterpretation of orders. At 0602, after vain attempts had been made to reestablish contact, a heavy slick was noted in the vicinity of the attack. The destroyer group made a thorough search of the area until 1432. It is probable that the oil slick was an old one emanating from a sunken vessel northwest of Savo, and that the submarine escaped with possible damage.

On the 29th the destroyer *Anderson* (Lt. Comdr. Richard A. Guthrie), on detached duty from Task Force SUGAR (the *Enterprise*), conducted successful bombardments of Japanese positions on the Guadalcanal shore, and at night the destroyer task group mentioned above continued its search for the Tokio Express. Its operations on this night, as on others, were somewhat hampered by the curiosity of Black Cat planes which approached within dangerously close range without identifying themselves. On at least one occasion a Black Cat had to be fired on before it showed IFF.

At 1450 on the 31st the transport group which had been supported in such costly fashion by Task Force GEORGE successfully completed its debarkation and unloading operations. The Second Marines (Reinforced), a part of the Eighth Marines, and a small number of other troops were taken aboard, and course was set for Wellington, N.Z.

By this time U. S. ground forces had reached the Bonegi River,<sup>22</sup> near Tassafaronga<sup>22</sup> and 10 miles from Cape Esperance. Enemy troops as of this date were estimated to consist of 3,000 men. As most of them appeared to be concentrated in the Cape Esperance area, it was decided to initiate a pincer movement on both sides of the Cape. On the 1st the *Anderson* and *Wilson* (Lt. Comdr. Walter H. Price)

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<sup>22</sup> See chart p. 28.

bombarded Japanese positions to the west of the Bonegi River. At dawn the same day the attack force, including the fast transport *Stringham* (Lt. Comdr. Adolphe Wildner) and the four destroyers of the Guadalcanal task group as escort, sailed from Lunga and Tulagi. The troops landed without opposition at Verahue,<sup>22</sup> about 7 miles southwest of Cape Esperance, before 1600. En route the destroyers shot down one enemy bomber of an attack group which had been raiding Henderson Field.

### LOSS OF THE *DE HAVEN*

The *De Haven* and *Nicholas* were detailed to escort to Tulagi the first group of three LCT's which were unloaded. Before 1530 all ships were notified by Radio Guadalcanal that enemy planes were approaching, but this warning was soon cancelled. However, at 1543 when the first group of ships was near Savo Island, the *Nicholas* reported receiving a second warning. The *De Haven*, which was circling two of the LCT's on antisubmarine patrol at 15 knots, went to general quarters and lighted off two more boilers. Speed was increased to 20 knots but was soon dropped to 15 again.

At 1550 the *Nicholas* received a report of enemy planes over Florida Island. Two minutes later she sighted them at 5,000 feet. They were identified as carrier-type dive bombers and were probably from a carrier group known to have been based at Buin on Bougainville Island. The *De Haven* reported sighting nine of them, while the *Nicholas* stated that there were 14, six of which attacked the *De Haven* while the rest concentrated on the *Nicholas*.

The *De Haven* had laid her guns on the approaching aircraft as soon as they were identified as hostile. When the six planes went into their dives, fire was opened, but apparently in small volume. The ship was struck by three bombs in quick succession. The first landed amidships and blew out the port side. The next two demolished the bridge structure, killing the Commanding Officer. They also probably exploded the forward magazine, causing the ship to break up and sink in 5 minutes. Ten officers and 157 men were lost. The *De Haven* and the LCT's shot down three of the planes.

The *Nicholas* had gone to general quarters and increased speed to 25 knots as soon as she received the aircraft warning. Before any planes dived on her, she opened fire with her main battery and thereafter began maneuvering at 32 knots. Personnel estimated that all eight bombs dropped at their ship exploded between 20 and 200 feet from the vessel. Steering control was lost and two men were killed by fragments. Three planes were sent away smoking. The four friendly fighters which had been provided as cover for the unloading operation had not left the landing area and were therefore unable to engage.

### LAST TRIPS OF THE "TOKIO EXPRESS"; THE EVACUATION

At 1545 on 1 February an air striking group took off from Henderson Field to attack 20 destroyers which had been reported standing down New Georgia sound en route to Guadalcanal. It was intercepted by about 30 Zeros near Savo Island and shot down 12 at a cost of two SBD's. Presumably our planes then returned to base, though the reports are not clear on this point. At 1920, however, the enemy destroyers were attacked by 17 SBD's, seven TBF's and 17 F4F's at latitude 08° 15' S., longitude 158° 16' E. Three 1,000-lb. bomb hits were scored on one destroyer and three 1,000-lb. hits and one 500-lb. on another.

Thirty escorting Zeros shot down four of our planes and lost three of their own. The enemy ships continued toward Guadalcanal.

After taking *De Haven* survivors to Guadalcanal, the *Fletcher*, *Radford*, and *Nicholas* stood out for the Russell Islands west of Guadalcanal to intercept the oncoming Tokio Express. At 2100, when northwest of Cape Esperance, they picked up a group of six or more planes flying from the northwest. These divided into groups and commenced to harass the destroyers to divert them from their task. Every time the ships attempted to close Cape Esperance by steering evasive courses at slow speeds the planes would come in from as far as 15—20 miles away, suggesting the use of radar, and make the destroyers turn to unmask their batteries. The aircraft approached until they were fired on and then retired. One which closed to 2,400 yards was shot down. The planes dropped float lights to mark the course of the ships and red and green flares to show the port and starboard sides of the track. Thus the three destroyers were unable to carry out a surprise attack on the Tokio Express. However, other U.S. forces had slightly better luck. At 2200 the minelayers *Preble*, *Montgomery*, and *Tracy*, which had left Noumea on the 29th, arrived and laid a field of mines from Doma Reef half way to Cape Esperance. This was the first offensive field laid by our surface craft in the Pacific. Prior to the arrival of the minelayers, 11 PT boats had sortied from Tulagi to strike the expected Japanese destroyers. While awaiting the enemy, the PT boats were strafed and bombed several times by hostile aircraft without damage.

At 2340 two of the patrolling PT boats encountered three enemy destroyers and attacked them with torpedoes. The Japanese replied with such heavy gunfire that results of the torpedo attack could not be observed. One PT was sunk and the other ran aground on Savo. She was hauled clear next day. Two other boats got two torpedo hits on a destroyer which burned for three hours. One of these boats was destroyed by a bomb from an enemy plane, and the other escaped.

Twelve Japanese destroyers trapped three of the PT's close to Guadalcanal. The light craft fired eight torpedoes. One detonation was observed, but it is probable that this was a mine explosion. In any case, it damaged one enemy destroyer so seriously that it later had to be sunk. One of the PT's was also sunk, leaving one survivor. Another boat ran aground but made Tulagi the following day. The third was unharmed. The remaining four failed to make contact.

After midnight six SBD's took off from Henderson Field and attacked the two burning destroyers, claiming a 1,000-lb. hit on one of them and near-hits on the other. Next morning 10 SBD's and 11 TBF's contacted the retiring Tokio Express, which now appeared to consist of only 16 destroyers. One 500-lb. hit was scored without damage to our aircraft. Search planes later discovered that there had been three destroyers ahead of the main body, one under tow. The final score for the night's operations was therefore one destroyer sunk and one heavily damaged by the combined efforts of mines, PT boats, and aircraft.

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The size of the Japanese destroyer force, an increase in shipping at Buin to 35 vessels, the appearance of carrier air groups at Bougainville fields, and other manifestations of increased enemy air activity

gave COMSOPAC the impression that the expected major assault was again imminent. Consequently, having refueled his task forces, he disposed them south of Guadalcanal again, this time supported by Task Force LOVE TWO with the four old battleships.

New Georgia and Bougainville bases were bombed daily by South Pacific aircraft, while Southwest Pacific planes, although largely occupied in the New Guinea area and in dealing with Japanese convoys, attacked airfields and shipping in the Bismarcks and Solomons.

The troops which had been put ashore at Verahue on the 31st met little opposition. On 2 February the main American forces on the other side of Cape Esperance captured a large enemy base near Tassafaronga with a powerful radio station, an undamaged machine shop, and 10 pieces of artillery. Abandonment had apparently been hasty. Nevertheless, increased operations of landing barges between the Russell Islands and Guadalcanal made it seem likely that more enemy troops were being ferried in.

At 1406 on 4 February, 20 Japanese destroyers again departed from Buin and headed for Guadalcanal. They were attacked twice, at 1700 and 1830, by 33 bombers and torpedo planes escorted by 31 fighters. One destroyer was possibly sunk and three were damaged. Ten of our planes and 17 Zeros were shot down. At least 10 of the destroyers arrived and lay off the northwest coast of Guadalcanal for about 3 hours. The others probably remained near Savo and acted as screen for those being used as transports. One group of six destroyers was illuminated by a flare dropped from a Black Cat. Later five SBD's attacked without result. No PT boats made contact. The enemy dropped bombs and flares on Henderson Field at intervals during the night.

On the morning of the 5th a large number of 30-foot barges were adrift west of Cape Esperance. There was also an oil slick south of Savo near our mine field, where an explosion had been reported the night before. A search plane sighted 17 destroyers retiring to the northwest, but a striking group launched from Henderson Field at 0720 failed to find them.

On this day it appeared that our concentration of more than 50 U.S. warships in the area south of Guadalcanal was at last to meet worthy opposition. At latitude 03°20' S., longitude 156°30' E., search planes located an enemy force comprising two carriers, four battleships, six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 12 destroyers heading southeast.

On the 7th the third large Tokio Express ran to Guadalcanal. At 1835, south of Rendova Island, its 19 destroyers were attacked by a flight of 15 dive bombers from Guadalcanal. Hits on two ships were claimed. Rain squalls prevented launching further strikes, and surface forces made no attempt at an interception. Only part of this "Express" continued all the way to Guadalcanal. Some of the destroyers stopped at the Russell Islands, and others acted as screening units. Nineteen destroyers returned to Buin on the 8th, two of them showing signs of damage. On this morning, too, a number of landing barges were found off Cape Esperance and later a few were discovered off the Russells. COMSOPAC, still anticipating some major Japanese operation, directed most of Air Group TEN to proceed from the *Enterprise* to Henderson Field, as they had done during the Battle of Guadalcanal, and reinforce the planes already there.

However, it soon became apparent that the last three runs of the Tokio Express had been for the purpose of evacuating the remaining strength of the enemy on Guadalcanal, and that the other Japanese activities noted had been for the purpose of covering this movement. On the night of 7–8 February, exactly 6 months after our landing in the Solomons, the enemy had completed his withdrawal. On the 8th U.S. advance units encountered no resistance save from patrols, and large quantities of supplies were captured. The next day our main body of troops joined forces near Cape Esperance with the enveloping detachment from Verahue. The campaign in the southern Solomons, except for incidental mopping up, was at an end. Consequently, the *Enterprise* recovered her planes from Guadalcanal, and all our task forces began to leave the operating area to the south.<sup>23</sup>

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23 It may have occurred to the reader to wonder why the enemy required such a concentration of strength to support the rescue of the small forces still surviving on Guadalcanal. Perhaps COMSOPAC's original interpretation was the correct one, and the Japanese were indeed planning another large-scale descent on the island and were only deterred by the overwhelming armada which we gathered to oppose them. It is more likely, however, that they thought we were aware of the evacuation and were merely securing themselves against our interference and against the possibility that we would go on the offensive in the central or northern Solomons. The maneuvers of our task forces probably made this possibility seem more acute, thus serving to draw further enemy reinforcements and the strong fleet which was located by search planes on the 5th.

## APPENDIX I

### *The "Louisville" takes the "Chicago" in tow*

Capt. Joy of the *Louisville* thus described the exceedingly difficult feat of seamanship by which the *Chicago* was taken in tow during the night of 29 January:

"At about 2130 . . . the *Louisville* left the main body of Task Force [GEORGE] and headed in the direction of the *Chicago* . . . After about 15 minutes she was sighted ahead, dead in the water and well down by the stern . . . It was originally intended to range close alongside and pass the towing hawser messenger via line-throwing gun in the usual manner. However, after one unsuccessful attempt, during which the *Louisville* came dangerously close to the *Chicago* due to the difficulty of judging distance and heading in the intense darkness, it was decided instead to bring the *Louisville* to a stop as close as possible to the *Chicago* and pass the messenger via whaleboat. Another unsuccessful approach on the *Chicago* was made before the *Louisville* was finally stopped on the third attempt, dead in the water, in the desired position . . . close aboard the *Chicago*'s windward bow. The time consumed in arriving at this position was fully utilized in breaking out and preparing the towing gear on the fantail—a difficult task, since the correct placing of every bit of gear used had to be insured by feel.

"During the approach to the desired position, and while preparing and passing the towline, the darkness of the night was a major difficulty. Added to this was the lack of power on the *Chicago* and the concern felt over the presence of enemy planes, a number of which were heard overhead and tracked in the close vicinity. All batteries were ordered to cease firing and all stations to observe rigid blackout. Low intensity flares were observed within a few thousand yards at various times, as well as tracers of shells fired evidently by friendly destroyers. It was not until about one-half hour before the two ships were ready to proceed that the radar screen was finally reported as clear.

"The passing of the tow was accomplished without a hitch and exactly as planned, with no injury to personnel, or damage to material. The end of the heavy towing wire was brought aboard the *Chicago* entirely by her own manpower in a remarkably short time. After the towline was passed and secured to the *Chicago*'s anchor chain, strain had to be taken to pull 60 fathom of chain from her chain locker. The strain was taken gradually by going ahead one-third speed (standard 15 knots) on the *Louisville*'s starboard engine and stopping as necessary to prevent too great a surge. This was a particularly trying time. In the darkness, it was extremely difficult to judge the strain coming on the tow. Where the wire entered the water astern was a phosphorescent point upon which to base judgment, but the phosphorescent wake from the starboard screws obliterated this valuable reference point a great deal of the time. Chain could be heard as it payed out, however, as could the *Chicago*'s loudspeaker informing her bridge how much chain was out.

"When the tow was ready to proceed . . . the *Chicago* [was to windward on the *Louisville*'s port quarter, heading about 275° T. Since orders had been received to retire on course 150° T., strain was taken up on the towline by going ahead one-third speed on the starboard engine, and then

gradually increasing speed in five turn increments with standard left rudder in an endeavor to turn through 125° T. The ship however, refused to turn left even with full rudder. It was noticed also that the *Chicago* appeared to be turning left as the towing proceeded, instead of taking a position astern of the *Louisville*. This, of course, indicated that the *Chicago*'s rudder was jammed left, which proved correct. After her rudder was put amidships the *Chicago* fell into line, and the turn to 150° T. was made fairly quickly by using full left rudder with turns for 10 knots and 5 knots on the starboard and port engines respectively.

“The towing for the remainder of the night and until the *Chicago* was turned over to the *Navajo* the following morning, proceeded without incident.”

## APPENDIX II

### SYMBOLS OF U.S. NAVY SHIPS

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

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

## DESIGNATIONS OF U.S. NAVAL AIRCRAFT

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

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

## APPENDIX III

### *List of published Combat Narratives*

- THE JAVA SEA CAMPAIGN, January–February 1942.
- EARLY RAIDS IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN, 1 February–10 March 1942.
- THE BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA, 4–8 May 1942.
- THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY, 3–6 June 1942.
- THE LANDING IN THE SOLOMONS, 7–8 August 1942.
- THE BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND, 9 August 1942.
- THE BATTLE OF THE EASTERN SOLOMONS, 23–25 August 1942.
- BATTLE OF CAPE ESPERANCE, 11 October 1942.
- BATTLE OF SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS, 26 October 1942.
- THE LANDINGS IN NORTH AFRICA, November 1942.
- BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL, 11–15 November 1942.
- MISCELLANEOUS ACTIONS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC, 8 August 1942–22 January 1943.







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