



C-47s being prepared for their return to Port Moresby after unloading at Wau. This view looks southwest along the uphill approach. The closest C-47 is serial 41-18665 Queenie, recently assigned into the 374th TCG.

definite bearing of 30 degrees and gave it a third, long, effective burst. The pilot reported he had some difficulty in sighting due to the glare from his own guns.

One of the Bettys was indeed damaged in this combat but was able to return to base. Meanwhile a second flight of Bettys failed to get through to Port Moresby due to bad weather.

Just before 0500 on 27 January five No. 22 Squadron Bostons departed Wards for a pre-dawn attack on Lae's wharf and nearby areas. A total of ten 250- and ten 500-pound bombs were dropped, leaving a large fire burning. In the late morning seven 71st BS B-25s struck nearby Malahang airstrip with 56 x 300-pound bombs, while three 89th BS A-20As were busy strafing suspected troop positions in the Salamaua-Mubo area.

The morning also saw another barge sweep by three No. 30 Squadron Beaufighters, but only unserviceable barges were noted. Targets on land were strafed after several fuel drums were seen hidden under coconut trees near the mouth of the Markham River.

The following day, 28 January, saw only limited air activity over New Guinea with three 89th BS A-20As again attacking enemy positions in the Salamaua-Mubo area. Meanwhile Japanese ground activity had steadily intensified around Wau, and a preliminary attack was launched on an Australian position on this date.

The following morning, 29 January, saw the Battle of Wau commence as Okabe's troops closed in from their concealed positions around the airfield. The Australians would certainly have been overrun in the absence of the troops airlifted from Port Moresby in the last two weeks. Nevertheless, the situation remained precarious, although clear weather favoured the Allies. Early morning fighter patrols radioed to Port Moresby that the weather was good over Wau, and 30 C-47s were available for operations on this day.