

## CHAPTER 8

### The initial discovery – and the first fight

On 2 May American B-17s, operating out of Australia, sighted Japanese shipping. But instead of making for Port Moresby, which was anticipated, they were headed for Tulagi – in fact they were the seaplane force. Fletcher sent *Yorktown* to attack.

Early in the morning of 3 May the Japanese arrived at Tulagi. Two assault barges brought in 188 men to no opposition, the defending Australians having fired demolition charges to destroy what they could. Five floatplanes flew in, while communications and medical detachments were landed.

On 4 May *Yorktown's* aircraft were sent in to strike. There were four separate waves. Parts of the following account of these four waves of attack are taken from the US Navy Combat Narratives, with the wording edited for brevity and readability. The use of the Dauntless as “scout planes” reflects the then-current US concept and use of them as a scout and bomber in separate squadrons.

Attacks 4 May	Launch time	Arrival time	Devastator Bombers	Dauntless Scout planes	Dauntless Dive Bombers	Wildcat fighters
<b>Armament – all attacks</b>			Mark 13 torpedoes depth setting 10 feet	1,000-pound bombs		Machine Guns
Wave 1 40 aircraft	0701	0845 SBD  0850 TBD	12 of Torpedo Squadron Five, under LCDR Joe Taylor	13 scout planes of Scouting Squadron Five, under LCDR William Burch	15 bombers of Bombing Squadron Five, under Lieutenant Wallace Short	Nil
Wave 2 38 aircraft	1106	1145	11	13	14	Nil
Wave 3 4 aircraft	1340		Nil	Nil		4
Wave 4 21 aircraft	1430		Nil	12	9	Nil

#### *Wave 1 (according to the USN Combat Narrative)*

The squadrons proceeded independently, the scouts arriving first and attacking at 0845. They found in Tulagi Harbor and adjacent Gavutu Harbor two large cargo ships or transports, a smaller cargo ship, four gunboats, two destroyers, one light cruiser of the Jintsu class, a large seaplane tender, numerous small patrol boats and launches and five seaplanes moored off Makambo Island.

The scouts selected for their target a light cruiser and two destroyers all moored together. Bombs were released at an altitude of 2,500 feet, after 70° dives. Four sure hits and one probable were claimed. Heavy but ineffectual anti-aircraft fire was encountered. There were no casualties. By 1001 the first plane had landed back aboard the carrier.