

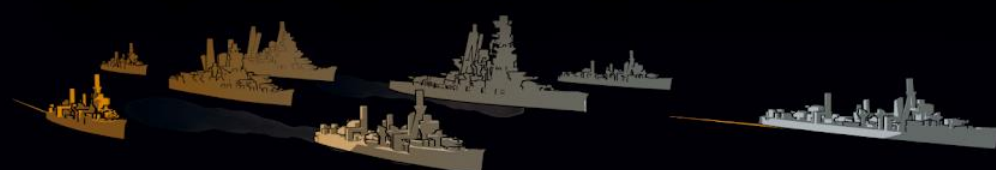
An illustration of three soldiers in a jungle setting. One soldier in the foreground is wearing a yellow uniform and helmet, holding a rifle. Behind him, another soldier in a grey uniform and helmet is visible. A third soldier is partially visible in the background. The scene is set against a backdrop of dense tropical foliage, including palm trees and other plants, rendered in a dark, stylized manner.

**THE BATTLE
FOR HENDERSON FIELD**

OCTOBER 23-26 1942

ヘンダーソン飛行場の戦い

GUADALCANAL



COMPANION BOOK

INTRODUCTION

The Battle for Henderson Field, fought on the island of Guadalcanal between 23-26 October, 1942, is often regarded as being the pivotal land battle in the Pacific War. Thereafter the Imperial Japanese Army was never able to mount a serious offensive against US forces in the Pacific and instead was forced to shift into a defensive strategy in which every island was to be defended – literally – to the last man in an effort to make the war so costly that the American public would demand a negotiated settlement. Instead, the obstinate, costly guarding of every piece of land led to the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August, 1945 and an unconditional surrender.

The Japanese Army's response to the arrival of the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal in early August, 1942, was one of arrogance from the start. While it was true that the Japanese soldiers were the veterans, that combat experience had been gained against a Chinese foe that possessed neither sufficient heavy weapons nor artillery support. In anticipation of facing an American enemy that would have access to heavy weapons and artillery, Japanese combat doctrine emphasized night attacks and the use of the bayonet in order to close with the enemy and offset the heavier fire power. There was also the assumption that American forces would break when faced with the fighting spirit and reckless courage of their Japanese counterparts. The engagements on Guadalcanal – and battle after battle thereafter throughout the Pacific – demonstrated that none of this was necessarily true. And here enters the consideration of the counter point to the discipline, obedience and *Yamato Damashii* (Japanese Spirit) of the Japanese soldier: when faced with a plan that had been thwarted, Japanese officers again and again found it extraordinarily difficult to modify their tactics. Making a failed plan succeed became a point of honor and, if impossible, then one's self-sacrifice, following comrades who had died, was seen as a virtue.

It was clear from the first clash at the Battle of Alligator Creek (also called the Battle of the Tenaru after confusion as to which river bank the engagement was fought on) that the Japanese would struggle to achieve victory against a prepared Marine defensive position supported by artillery.

Other factors contributed to the failure of the Japanese to achieve victory in October 1942. The Sendai division was forced to make its way through heavy jungle, along the 'Maruyama Road', to reach a position south of the Lunga perimeter. This was a slow, energy-sapping march that left the division in poor shape to fight all night when the attack was finally ordered. Delays led to confused orders to the point that the feints along the Matanikau River were executed a day earlier than necessary, wasting the chance and the lives of many. The massive expenditure of calories and the loss of vital minerals through excessive sweat, it is also speculated, caused foginess in the minds of Japanese officers whose units became separated, lost, disoriented and unable to attack when called upon to do so. The result was that what should have been an overwhelming charge against the Marine line became something more like a series of uncoordinated attacks in which the Japanese were never able to summon quite enough men at the point of contact to overcome the problem of automatic weapons and howitzers. The sheer volume of bodies needed to absorb the bullets and shells required so that a

sufficient number of survivors was able to penetrate the firing line and move onto Henderson Field was never available. Finally, during the tiring trek along the Maruyama Road many of the disassembled pieces of Japanese artillery, along with the single shell each man was carrying, were discarded. The Japanese did not enjoy adequate artillery support.

The origins of this significant defeat lie many years in the past.



Marines on Edson's Ridge probably September, 1942. Photo courtesy of *Guadalcanal – Walking a Battlefield* (Facebook and YouTube).

ORIGINS OF THE PACIFIC WAR

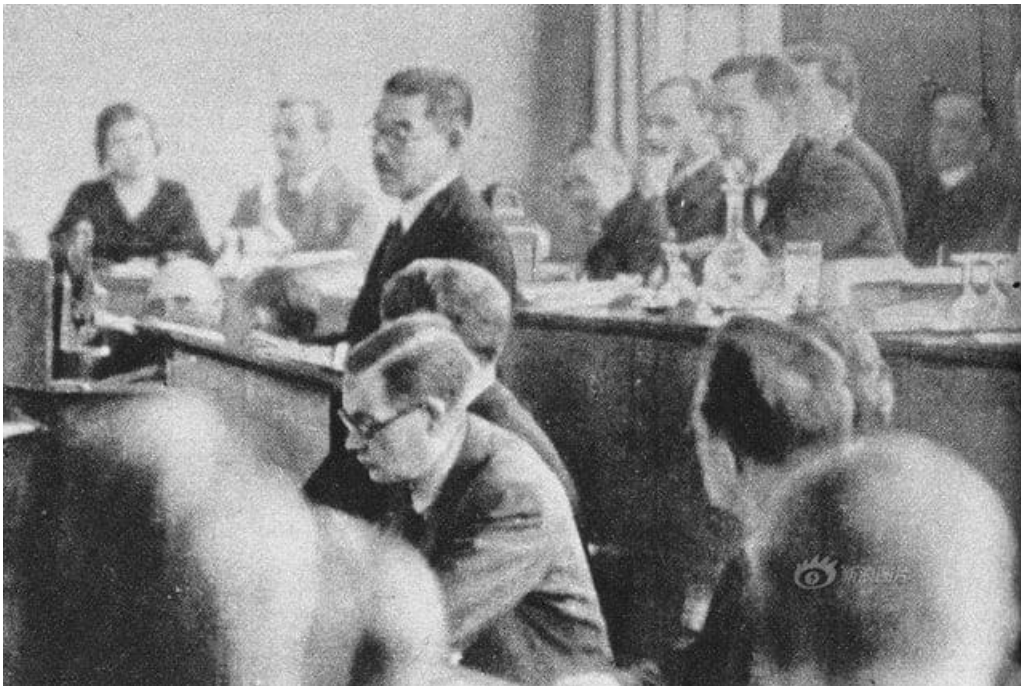
November 11, 1918. World War One ends.

1922. Negotiations for the Washington Naval Treaty are concluded. Battleships are to be limited to 5:5:3 for Great Britain, the United States and Japan (France and Italy would have 1.67). Crucially Cruisers, Destroyers and Submarines are excluded. In addition, the United States and Britain agree to not build any more bases in the Pacific. This agreement would shape the development of the respective navies for the next 20 years and, with the lack of Pacific bases, leave the way open for easier Japanese expansion in the Pacific.

1930. London Naval Treaty. This attempts to impose limits on the classes of ship not covered by the Washington Naval Treaty but largely fails. Japan later withdraws from the Second London Naval Treaty in 1936.

1931. Mukden Incident leads to the invasion of Manchuria by Japan. A puppet government is installed and the area is renamed Manchukuo.

24 February 1933. Japan leaves the League of Nations after criticism over the occupation of Manchuria.



At the League of Nations assembly in Geneva, Japanese diplomat Yōsuke Matsuoka defends his country's invasion of Manchuria and establishment of its puppet state there. Members of the League of Nations ruled by an overwhelming majority of 42-1 (with only Japan voting in against) that the occupation of Manchuria and creation of Manchukuo was illegal and did not reflect the will of the people.

25 November 1936. Anti-Comintern Pact. Signed between Japan and Germany, the countries agree to oppose the Soviet-controlled Communist International.

7 July 1937. Marco Polo Bridge Incident. A small skirmish develops into the Second Sino-Japanese war. World opinion, led by the US, is highly critical of Japan.



Marco Polo Bridge.

1939. Soviet-Japanese Border Conflicts. From May increasingly severe conflicts occur between Soviet and Japanese forces along the Manchukuo border. In August General Zhukov wins a decisive victory in the Nomonhan Incident. A peace treaty is signed in April 1941 and Stalin agrees to stop supplying China. A key lesson is missed here by the Japanese: Fighting spirit and discipline are no match for heavy firepower.

September 1940. Indochina. Following the surrender of France to Germany on 22 June, 1940, Japan occupies Tonkin and Haiphong in French Indochina. Foreign aid to China is cut off. This leads to a trade embargo in July, 1941.

27 September, 1940. Tripartite Pact. Japan, Germany and Italy agree to come to the defense of one another if one country is attacked by another country not currently involved in the war (which effectively and primarily meant the United States).

1 August 1940. Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japan announces it wishes to establish, and head, a union of Asian nations to be free from interference by Western powers.

August 1940. "Three Alls". After Chinese successes on the battlefield, Japan opts to *Kill All, Burn All, Loot All* to defeat the Communists. Despite the brutality of the policy, China has become a quagmire by the end of the year. Japanese control is limited and Chinese forces are safe in the interior.

24 July 1941. Oil Embargo. Roosevelt demands Japan withdraw its forces from Indochina. Japan refuses. Over the following days America, Britain, and the Dutch government in exile place an embargo on supplying oil, steel and iron ore to Japan. Along with the Chinese, this became known as the ABCD (American, Britain, Chinese and Dutch) Encirclement. Japan relied on up to 90% of its domestic oil consumption to come from foreign countries. The situation was untenable as the Japanese Armed Forces (in particular the Navy) would soon become unable to function without oil. Japan accelerates its plans to spread the war. The clock is now ticking.

November 1941. Preparations are complete and the final decision for war is made. Japan will seize vital economic resources in the Dutch East Indies and Malaya (along with Borneo and Burma), and the key deep water naval base at Rabaul on New Britain, while US assets in the Philippines, Guam and Wake would be overrun. Future targets include New Guinea, New Britain, Fiji, Samoa and Midway. Critical to Japanese planning is the execution of a surprise attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbor which would keep the American warships in harbor for several months allowing the Japanese to expand its territory and become ready to fight an expected war of attrition across the Pacific with the intention of forcing a favorable negotiated peace in the future.

PEARL HARBOR TO THE BATTLE FOR HENDERSON FIELD

7 December 1941. Day of Infamy. Japanese carrier-based aircraft attack the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor along with simultaneous attacks on targets in the Philippines, Wake, Guam, Malaya, Hong Kong and Singapore. Japanese forces move into Thailand. Over the following weeks, into 1942, territories are seized and the Japanese empire expands enormously.

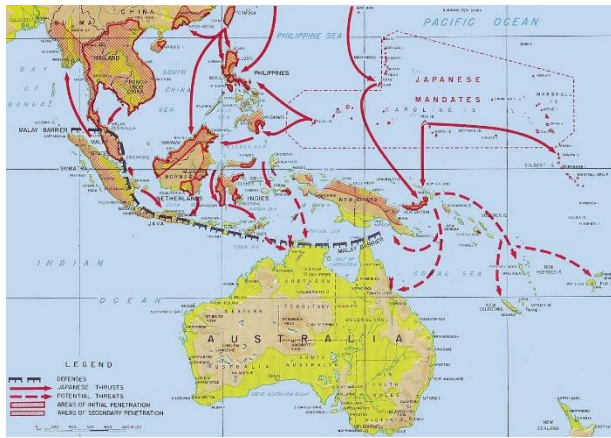


Pearl Harbor.



In the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese succeeded in crippling the US Navy's battleships. Even as late as 1941 many naval experts around the world – including those in the US and Japan – believed the battleship to be the dominant naval force. The attack itself proved how potent aircraft carriers would be, and the US Navy was, by default, forced to rely on carriers and submarines, thus ushering in a new era of naval warfare.

March 1942. Second Operational Phase. After unprecedented successes, Japan looks to expand further south to threaten Australia and provide buffers to protect Rabaul.



Japanese expansion in the first months of the Pacific War.



Japanese soldiers marching in the Philippines. Japan invaded the Philippine Islands on December 8, 24 hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The main attack started on December 22, and US and Filipino forces were overwhelmed and forced to retreat to the Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor Island.

2-5 April. Planning Midway. Admiral Yamamoto is adamant about the need to destroy the US carrier forces and plans a daring attack on Midway Island to lure the enemy flat tops into a decisive battle. The Naval high command is not convinced and demands a carrier division to support operations against Port Moresby and that other assets lend support to an attack in the Aleutian Islands. Yamamoto is forced to compromise and, crucially, loses what would otherwise have been a potentially decisive numerical advantage at Midway.

18 April 1942. Doolittle Raid. 16 bombers take off from the carrier *Hornet* and attack Tokyo. Morale takes a boost, even if no damage was done. In the minds of the Japanese, the need to eliminate the US carrier threat is reinforced.

4-8 May 1942. Battle of the Coral Sea. For the first time in history two enemy fleets engage with one another without ever sighting or firing directly upon one another. The first carrier battle of the Pacific War sees Japan emerge victorious, but at great cost. *Shōhō* is sunk, *Shōkaku* is badly damaged and the *Zuikaku* loses so many

planes and pilots that it, and the *Shōkaku*, are unable to participate in the forthcoming Midway engagement. Furthermore, the invasion of Port Moresby has to be called off owing to the lack of sufficient air cover. The US Navy loses the *Lexington* and the *Yorktown* suffers minor damage.

May 1942. The 3rd Special Naval Landing Force (Japanese) takes control of Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo islands, all lying directly north of Lunga Point on Guadalcanal. Japanese sea planes are stationed there. The first US plans to take back control of Tulagi in particular are made.

4-7 June 1942. Battle of Midway. Despite the weakened state of Japan's carrier forces, Yamamoto nevertheless goes ahead with what he plans to be a surprise attack on and occupation of Midway Island. In May US Intelligence is able to read coded messages and knows of the coming attack. As a result, US carriers lie in wait. Over the coming days the Imperial Japanese Navy loses four carriers, losses that it will never recover from. With hindsight, Midway comes to be regarded as the turning point in the naval battle for control of the Pacific.



Battle of Midway.

July 1942. Unbeknown to the Imperial Japanese Army, the Navy begin construction of an airfield at Lunga Point. Completed construction would threaten the shipping lines between the West Coast of America and Australia. Martin Clemens, a British coast watcher on Guadalcanal, advises his superiors of what is happening. Swift plans are made to occupy the island and seize the airfield. General Vandegrift, commanding officer of the 1st Marine Division, is put on alert. Currently in Wellington, New Zealand, the general is shocked as he was not expecting to enter combat until 1943. The initial landing date of 1 August is postponed due to insufficient time to make suitable arrangements. The Solomon Islands, so named by a Spanish explorer searching there for King Solomon's treasure in 1568, will become an unlikely battleground.

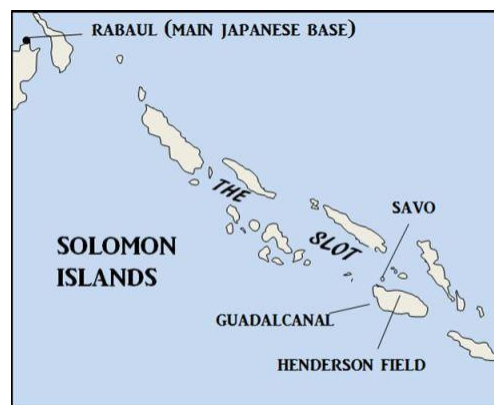
7 August 1942. 1st Marine Division invades Guadalcanal along with the nearby islands of Tulagi, Florida, Gavutu and Tanambogo. These are the first beach assaults by the US military of the war. Many would follow.

"Our sailor friends came by, and shook our hands as if we would all be dead before the day was over."

- Private Sid Phillips

8 August. Marines, with an average age of 20, seize control of the airfield. In response, Japanese planes of the 25th Air Flotilla bomb their positions. A Japanese counter attack is immediately planned. Admiral Yamamoto calls in naval vessels to rendezvous around Rabaul while the Tainan Air Group, including such aces as Saburo Sakai, Hiroyoshi Nishizawa and Toshio Ota, makes its way to the new theater. The 2nd Battalion of the 28th Infantry Regiment (Ichiki Detachment), at full strength over 2000 strong, will soon depart Truk and be the first to engage the Marines, numbering around 11,000 men at that time. The contempt shown for the bravery and skill of the Marines is clearly demonstrated – and will be highlighted again during the first attack – by the underwhelming preparation and commitment of numbers made by the 17th Army.

8-9 August. Battle of Savo Island. Admiral Fletcher, Operational commander of the invasion and commander of the US Navy carrier force (Task Force 61), was unnerved by the threat of Japanese air attacks to his carriers. From the inception of the plan, he had never been happy about exposing his ships and now, citing concern over the lack of fuel, he announced the withdrawal of his vessels despite having agreed to provide air cover for up to 5 days. The move is executed on the night of August 8. Admiral Turner, commander of the amphibious element (Task Force 62), believed Fletcher understood his carriers were to remain in the vicinity to provide air cover for the transports landing supplies until this mission was complete on August 9.



Unknown to the US Navy a hastily prepared task force of Japanese warships commanded by Vice Admiral Mikawa was sailing down New Georgia Sound, the area of sea that would become known as 'The Slot'. Timing his advance to arrive under cover of darkness, Mikawa achieved complete surprise. Highly trained at night fighting and utilizing deadly 'Long Lance' torpedoes, in the resulting Battle of Savo Island the US Navy suffered what some describe as its worst defeat ever or, at the very least, one of its worst defeats. Fortunately for the Marines, Mikawa did not realize Fletcher's aircraft carriers had withdrawn and that there was no threat of air attack come sunrise, so he retreated under the stars unmolested, leaving the transports untouched.

The results were manifold. While the US Navy had been lucky to escape the destruction of the transports, cognizant of the danger and with Fletcher out of the picture, Turner withdraws Task Force 62 at 06:30 on 9 August. Henceforth supplies are landed by small convoys at a slow pace during daylight hours, which also put them at risk of air attack. The Marines, already underequipped, were to suffer the effects of this in the coming months. Morale plummets and a 'we are on our own' fatalism begins to take root.

Furthermore, the loss of so many warships and the begrudged acceptance of Japanese naval night fighting skills led to caution during the dark hours, which allowed the Imperial Japanese Navy to land their own reinforcements and supplies unhindered after sunset (The Tokyo Express), safe from air attack from Henderson Field.

*“As the sun set behind the mountains no friendly ships hovered offshore
and no friendly planes patrolled the skies. We were on our own.”*

– Lieutenant Herbert Merillat

12 August. Goettge mission. Landed behind enemy lines, a small patrol is almost wiped out slightly west of the Matanikau River Mouth. The Intelligence Officer (D-2) leading the mission, Frank Goettge, is killed and replaced by Edmond Buckley. Buckley would faithfully serve Vandegrift through the Battle of Henderson Field.

12 August. Henderson Field is named after Lofton R. Henderson, a Marine pilot who died at the Battle of Midway.

13 August. Japanese high command orders Harukichi Hyakutake, commander of the 17th Army, to capture Port Moresby and to send some troops to recapture the airfield on Guadalcanal, drive off the Marines, rescue the construction workers and get the airfield operational. High command does not have reliable intelligence on the number of Marines, doubts their combat efficiency and believes they are there to do nothing more than destroy the airfield. Japanese commanders do not understand this as a full invasion and occupation. Hyakutake sends the Ichiki Detachment, comprising 2300 men of the 28th Infantry Regiment, divided into two echelons that will arrive on Guadalcanal at different times. This is an experienced and ably commanded shock unit.

“We should not let the enemy consolidate its position. The most urgent thing for us is to destroy these aircraft immediately and render the airstrip unavailable by launching air raids and night bombardments.”

– Vice Admiral Ugaki

August 17. First Japanese troops land (113 Special Naval Landing Force) at Tassafaronga on the western tip of Guadalcanal before making their way east towards the airfield.

19 August. Ichiki along with 917 men land at Taivu Point (to the east of Henderson Field). The 1st echelon is undetected but armed with only light weapons and two 70mm howitzers. The 2nd echelon, due to arrive later, is comprised of 1300 soldiers carrying heavy weapons. Ichiki decides not to wait and brashly marches towards the Marine lines.

19 August. First Battle of the Matanikau. Marines cross the Matanikau (to the west of Henderson Field) and successfully engage Japanese troops on the opposite bank.

19 August. US and Japanese patrols encounter one another to the east during the day. Jacob Vouza, a native Melanesian is captured, tortured, bayoneted and left for dead, but summons his strength and makes his way to the Marine lines, giving warning to Pollock, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, that an attack would come at Alligator Creek. Vandegrift is alerted and the 11th Regiment arrange their howitzers to bombard the Alligator Creek area. Despite contact with Marines, Ichiki still doesn't scout the area ahead.



Jacob Vouza.

20 August. The first F4F Wildcat and SBD Dauntless aircraft become operational at Henderson Field. The Cactus Air Force is born.



F4F Wildcat



SBD Dauntless

21 August. Battle of Alligator Creek. At 03:10 the first Japanese soldiers of Ichiki's Detachment (which is still understrength with only the 1st echelon present) try to cross Alligator Creek. 75mm howitzers of the 11th Regiment, along with rifle and machine gun fire, drive back successive attacks. Ichiki is defeated and commits suicide. Surviving wounded Japanese soldiers, when offered help, shoot at medics or use grenades. Due to a map error, this battle was originally called the Battle of the Tenaru.

"I no longer heard the sound of our attack. I could only hear the roar of the enemies' guns."

– Sergeant Sadanobu Okada

24-25 August. Battle of the Eastern Solomons. The second carrier battle of the campaign sees both sides inflict damage on one another, with the Japanese coming off worst, losing the light carrier *Ryūjō* along with more aircraft and their precious pilots. The *Enterprise* takes heavy damage. Japanese supply to Guadalcanal is also disrupted.

End of August. By the end of August three US carriers are out of action (*Enterprise*, *Wasp*, and *Saratoga*). The *Hornet* is the only remaining carrier in the vicinity. The situation is dire despite the losses also suffered by the Imperial Japanese Navy. The 1st Marine Division remains undersupplied, there are limited aircraft operating out of Henderson Field and surviving pilots are still comparatively inexperienced and face a steep learning curve. Going into September, US pilots face a 20% chance of being killed in action. One pilot, Lt. George Hallowell, had only 47 hours flight experience with a Wildcat prior to his arrival on 30 August. Within two weeks however, he had shot down 5 enemy planes, becoming an ace. The poor diet can cause serious medical problems for pilots flying at altitude, nightly bombing prevents sleep and malaria and diarrhea, among other ailments, are common.

9 September. Fighter One becomes operational adjacent to Henderson Field.

"You must put the enemy to rout and crush them by daybreak.

The time has come for you to give your lives for your Emperor."

- General Kawaguchi

12-14 September. General Kawaguchi leads the 35th Infantry Brigade in a desperate but unsuccessful attack against Hill 123 and Hill 80 which, together with an unnamed hill, comprise the ridge that comes to be known as Edson's Ridge or Bloody Ridge.

"The word is nobody moves, just die in your holes"

- Platoon Sergeant Joe Buntin

*Flies swarm to the scabs
No strength to brush them away
Fall down and cannot move
How many times I've thought of suicide.
- Sergeant Kashichi*

Mid- September. Plan X. After defeat on Edson's Ridge the Japanese high command begins planning a combined land, sea and air operation to finally break through to Henderson Field and take control of the area. It is scheduled for mid-October.

*"Whatever happens, we must succeed in the coming operation of recapturing Guadalcanal at any cost."
- Vice Admiral Ugaki*

18 September. 7th Marine Regiment arrives along with much needed supplies. The total number of personnel is now over 20,000 on Guadalcanal under Vandegrift. The increased number of troops allows Vandegrift to start planning to expand the perimeter. His first target is the Matanikau River mouth and the river bank extending about 1 mile south to the so-called log bridge. Occupation of the west bank would prevent Japanese artillery being brought up from further west to bombard Henderson Field from a distance, while also providing a jump off point for further patrols.

*"Their faces were still heavy with flesh, their ribs padded, their eyes innocent. They were older than we, an average twenty-five to our average twenty; yet we treated them like children."
- Private Robert Leckie describing the newly arrived 7th Marine Regiment*

23 September. 7th Marine Regiment starts moving west beyond the Matanikau. Their final objective is Kokumbona. The Second Battle of the Matanikau ends poorly for the Marines with no objectives taken. One of the issues was poor reconnaissance and a lack of intelligence. To help remedy this the Scout-Snipers unit is created by William J. Whaling.

29 September. Fighter Sweep. The Japanese air force adopts new tactics: when Wildcats approach, the Bettys turn back leaving the Zeros to engage in dog fights without the need to worry about protecting the bombers.

Early October. The Cactus Air Force is so depleted that pilots are assigned planes and wingmen on a mission-by-mission basis. The Japanese are in a similar position with an ever-increasing number of veteran pilots now dead or missing.

Early October. Vandegrift plans a new offensive west of the Matanikau River. At the same time, General Masao Maruyama is preparing an offensive to seize control of the eastern bank of the same river to be able to threaten Henderson Field according to Plan X. The forces clash between 6-9 October in the Third Battle of the

Matanikau. The 2nd Battalion of Nasu's 4th Regiment is almost wiped out. Japanese plans to seize control of the eastern bank are aborted. This results in what will become a calamitous decision: in order to move into position for the coming attack on Henderson Field, Japanese forces will be forced to undertake an exhausting, circuitous march through dense jungle to get into position – south of Henderson Field – for the final surge.

October 11-12. Battle of Cape Esperance. In a reversal of Savo Island, the US Navy surprises encroaching Japanese warships and inflicts greater damage, claiming victory.

13 October. 164th Americal Regiment lands on Guadalcanal, becoming the first US Army unit to fight on the island. The Americal Regiment is a National Guard unit, originally stationed on New Caledonia (American – Caledonia Regiment: Americal).

13 October. 'Pistol Pete', a pair (despite the singular name) of 150mm howitzers, is brought ashore and fires its first shells on Henderson Field. The 105mm howitzers of the 11th Regiment do not have the range to respond. By this time an additional 10,000 Japanese troops have been transported onto Guadalcanal by the Tokyo Express. The numbers stand at slightly over 23,000 US personnel, dug in against around 20,000 Japanese.



One of the 'Pistol Pete' 150mm howitzers still on Guadalcanal.

Photo courtesy of *Guadalcanal – Walking a Battlefield* (Facebook and YouTube).

14 October. At 01:30 the most severe bombardment of Henderson Field of the campaign begins. The battleships *Kongo* and *Haruna* open fire with massive 14-inch guns from 18 miles away and well beyond the range of shore-based artillery. For around two hours the incoming fire leaves those who survive terrified, deafened and gasping for air. Henderson Field is left in a shambles and most of the planes are destroyed, along with vast reserves of fuel and supplies. Many describe it as the worst night on Guadalcanal.

"The outlook for Guadalcanal was pretty bleak that day. We began to see a hopeless, losing fight."

– Lieutenant Frederick Mears

15 October. Shortly before 02:00, cruisers *Chokai* and *Kinugasa* bombard Henderson Field for 30 minutes. Dawn reveals a massive troop landing operation underway, covered by Zeros. The balance is shifting. For weeks the Imperial Japanese Navy has been forced to operate at night; now, owing to the almost complete destruction of the Cactus Air Force and Henderson Field, the Japanese are braving the daylight hours. Admiral Nimitz recognizes that the US armed forces are no longer in control of the sea in the Guadalcanal area and concludes that the situation is critical.

16 October. Japanese destroyers and cruisers return to bombard Henderson Field through the night.

16 October. The Sendai Division of the Imperial Japanese Army, commanded by Lt. General Masao Maruyama, along with remnants of the Kawaguchi Brigade, begin making their way to the south and west of the Marine perimeter. They expect to attack on October 22. Engineers begin hacking their way through the jungle, creating what comes to be known as the 'Maruyama Road', a track which is never more than 24 inches wide. The march is exhausting and the disassembled artillery is, piece by piece, discarded, along with shells. Even so, the pace slows. Maruyama postpones the attack until October 23.

16 October. Nimitz's intention to replace Ghormley with Halsey is approved by Admiral Ernest King. Up until now the Marines, all the way up to Vandegrift, had felt abandoned by the Navy, going back to the initial incident regarded Admiral Fletcher withdrawing his carrier protection of Turner's Task Force 62 as it unloaded supplies. Halsey is seen as aggressive, a reputation he will more than live up to in the coming years.

17 October. Destroyers *Aaron Ward* and *Lardner*, along with B-17 bombers, shell Japanese positions near Kokumbona. Crucially, as time will tell over the coming weeks, huge amounts of food supplies are destroyed. One Japanese captain comments that this was "the most fatal reason for further failures."

18 October. Admiral Halsey learns that he will take command of South Pacific Forces upon arriving in Nouméa. On the same day, Nimitz orders overwhelming support be sent to Guadalcanal, including the 25th Army Division and the carrier *Enterprise*.

23 October. Lt. Col. Bauer, commanding all remaining fighter pilots of the Cactus Air Force, orders his men to dogfight the Zeros. Though the Cactus Air Force remains severely depleted, and after days of daily air attacks, this marks a turning point in that it recognizes the cream of the Japanese air crews were now dead. The advantage lies with the American aviators.

On the eve of battle the Japanese count approximately 22,000 soldiers of various units compared to 23,000 Marines supported by the Americal Regiment.

23 October. Meeting in person at Nouméa on New Caledonia Halsey asks Vandegrift if he can hold Henderson Field. The General replies that yes, he can hold but he needs much more support than he has been getting. With Vandegrift gone, his assistant, General Rupertus, is in command on Guadalcanal.

23 October. Maruyama is still not in position and there is a further delay until 17:00 the following day. The order to postpone does not reach General Sumiyoshi, commanding the forces that are to attack across the Matanikau River. Therefore, at 18:00 as scheduled, two battalions of the 4th Infantry Regiment supported by the tanks of the 1st Independent Tank Company attack across the Matanikau River, with the tanks attacking across the sandbar at the river mouth. The Battle for Henderson Field begins.

24 October. The Sendai division finally reaches its starting points in the afternoon. The Japanese soldiers are exhausted. Cooking fires are detected and any element of surprise is lost. A particularly dark night causes confusion and the attack is delayed beyond 19:00. At 22:00 fighting begins. During the fighting John Basilone's heroic actions win him the Medal of Honor. After repeated assaults throughout the night, the Marines hold the line.

25 October (Day). After a false report that Henderson Field had been captured, Japanese planes commence all day strikes in what will come to be known as 'Dugout Sunday'. As a result of the misinformation, naval vessels and transports sail closer to Guadalcanal, supposedly to provide the reinforcements needed to fully take control of the airfield. The light cruiser *Yura* is hit and later scuttled. Still, the Cactus Air Force holds on and by the end of the day the Japanese bombers have been driven off. This effectively ends the air offensive against Henderson Field for the rest of the campaign.

25 October (Night). A fresh attack begins at 20:00. The 164th Americal Regiment plays a crucial role in beating back the attacks. To the west Sergeant Mitchell Paige wins the Medal of Honor. Maruyama has been beaten. Poor coordination, a lack of reconnaissance, exhaustion after a grueling march which cost the units their discarded artillery support, and a stubborn, if outnumbered defending force (as much as 9:1 at the point of attack), are all factors that collectively contribute to the victory for the 1st Marine Division and the 164th 'Americal' Regiment. Henderson Field and the Cactus Air Force will remain operational. Defeated and dispirited the Japanese retreat to face the specter of a lack of vital food rations that were destroyed on October 17. Wounded are left in the jungle and others, simply too weak to continue, fall to the ground and never rise.

26 October. Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands. Nagumo's Main Body, comprising the carrier force, is first detected on 25 October, but at a range too great to attack. At first light on 26 October search planes take to the air again with both sides locating one another shortly before 07:00. Attacks are launched throughout the day. In the final reckoning the Japanese can claim a tactical victory, after sinking the *Hornet* and damaging the *Enterprise*, without suffering any carrier losses. However, Admiral Kondō is forced to withdraw owing to huge losses of pilots and planes. In the final analysis, the Japanese Navy has failed to achieve a sufficiently high ratio

of damage done to damage suffered. Had Hyakutake taken Henderson Field and Japanese land-based planes had been able to fly combat missions from Guadalcanal, the result may have been different.

“The enemy’s replacement rate is three times ours; the gap between our strengths is increasing every day; and to be honest things are looking black for us now.”

– Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto

November 1942 – February 9, 1943. In December the battle-weary 1st Marine Division is withdrawn from Guadalcanal and replaced by the US XIV Corps. Heavy fighting continues as the Japanese are slowly driven back in bloody fighting. With little food and medicine, the real killers are starvation and debilitation. Halsey concludes that *‘Before Guadalcanal the enemy advanced at his pleasure – after Guadalcanal he retreated at ours.’*



Wounded US Army soldier is helped back to an aid station while fighting west of the Matanikau River in January, 1943.





BATTLE FOR HENDERSON FIELD

"This is the decisive battle between Japan and the United States in which the rise or fall of the Japanese Empire will be decided. If we do not succeed in the occupation of these islands, no one should expect to return alive to Japan....Hit the proud enemy with an iron fist so he will not be able to rise again."

– General Maruyama

As the air war raged over Henderson Field on 23 October, Japanese soldiers to the south were slowly making their way through heavy jungle to their final positions. By now each man was exhausted. Captain Jiro Katsumata barely had the strength to write *'...I cannot any longer think of anything, the enemy, food, home or even myself... [I am] only a spirit drifting toward an undefined, unknowable world.'*

Kawaguchi, commanding the 35th Brigade on the right wing of the attack, became convinced his planned thrust would bring him into direct contact with a heavily defended area. Thus, he discussed a plan to drive further east to a more favorable decision. Anticipating approval from higher command, he issued corresponding orders and began to make slow progress, realizing later that he would not be in position by nightfall to make an attack. His request for a delay to Maruyama, who was only learning now of the deviation from the original plan, was unacceptable. Command began to break down and Kawaguchi was relieved of command, with Colonel Shoji of the 230th Infantry Regiment, 38th Infantry Division subsequently hesitant to replace his senior.

To the left, Nasu, commanding various units of the 2nd Sendai Infantry Division was, if not lost, certainly misplaced, and, in thick jungle, a long, slow 2 miles or more from the Marine line. With units out of position and while stragglers were still catching up, Hyakutake approved Maruyama's request for a delay until 19:00 the following evening (24 October).

At this moment, the Sendai Division to the south was undetected. Along the Matanikau River, Sumiyoshi was successfully drawing the attention of Vandegrift. The general shifted artillery and battalions of Marines to the west in anticipation of the expected attack, leaving only Puller's 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment to protect the approximately 2,500-yard perimeter to the south.

For several days, Oka, under the command of Sumiyoshi, had been slow to cross the Matanikau and move into position towards Mount Austen, and had become confused as to where two of his three battalions were. He remained confident he would be able to attack in the afternoon of 23 October as part of what should have been a feint to the west.

Nakaguma, commanding the depleted 4th Infantry Regiment and also under Sumiyoshi, was expected to attack across the Matanikau River Mouth, along with the 1st Independent Tank Company, at 1500 but delays ensued.

The tanks moved into position, their noise muted by artillery, but the infantry was slow to deploy. While these movements were going on, the decision to postpone the attack until the following day (24 October) was being made. Sumiyoshi was informed, but poor communications meant both Oka and Nakaguma were unaware of the delay. As such, as night approached, the intensity of the Japanese bombardment increased and the tanks rumbled across the river mouth. The exposed, thinly armored fighting vehicles were quickly put out of action. 105mm howitzers next fired on preplanned ranges. Accompanied by mortar fire Nakaguma's massed infantry, intending to cross at the river mouth and the log bridge, were devastated and their own attack never gained any momentum. Oka, it turned out, had been overly optimistic in his report, and was unable to make any attack, though he remained a potential threat.



37mm Anti-tank gun dug in at the Matanikau River Mouth.



Aftermath of the attack on 23 October.



Site of the Log Bridge spanning the Matanikau River.

Photo courtesy of Guadalcanal – Walking a Battlefield (Facebook and YouTube).

In the early months of the campaign (and beyond the Battle for Henderson Field), there were only two ways for large numbers of troops to cross the Matanikau River. One was at the river mouth where a sandbar had formed and the other was at the One Log or Nippon Bridge which was – literally – a single log stretching from one bank to the next. Once the US Army had secured control of the western bank in the latter stages of the campaign a more substantial wooden bridge was built.

During 24 October one of Oka's missing battalions was sighted, resulting in redeployment along the Marine lines. Puller organized his companies, deploying further west (in the direction of Oka) to east, in the order of a composite company made up of a single platoon drawn from each other company, then B, C and A companies. The perimeter was stretched and razor thin. Ridge lines were occupied whenever possible and the defenders sought to find the best fields of fire. As the sun began to set the first alarming reports of Japanese activity to the south came in. By this time Puller was unable to order any changes to the Marine deployment.

"Son, if you dig that hole any deeper, I'll have to charge you with desertion."

– "Chesty" Puller

The composite Company was located to the west of Bloody Ridge, towards the Lunga River, and took no effective part in the fighting. The heaviest fighting was to the east of Bloody Ridge where Company C then Company A were located. Company B was able to occupy higher ground on the southern area of Bloody Ridge.

During the day the Sendai Division had been making slow progress again. Heavy rain began to fall and then darkness arrived, causing a further delay to the 19:00 planned time of attack. With rain clouds obscuring the moon, both unit commanders and individual soldiers became disoriented. Finally, at 21:00 the rain halted and the skies began to clear, the moon light revealing, as best it could, a scene of complete confusion. Shoji (who had reluctantly taken command over Kawaguchi) on the right flank was completely out of position and one

Battalion had somehow managed to mistakenly blunder (not attack) into the Marine positions at 22:00. Perhaps as a result of this, incredibly a message was received by Hyakutake from the Sendai Division that Henderson Field had been captured. The first part of Plan X appeared to have succeeded. The other Battalions on the right were so misplaced and disorganized they were not able to participate in the coming attack.



Lt. Col. 'Chesty' Puller.

'Chesty' Puller is a legend in the United States Marine Corp, being the more decorated Marine in its rich history. During the Guadalcanal campaign he commanded the 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, which arrived on 18 September. It was this battalion, along with the 3rd Battalion, 164th Army Regiment that bore the brunt of the fighting along the Southern Lunga Perimeter.



The Left Wing commanded by Nasu had been able to make forward progress, led by the 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry (Sendai), which drifted to the right, while the 3rd Battalion moved forward on the left.

“Forget about the dying business; you can’t live forever. Think instead about killing, squeezing off those shots, making every round land in one of the little yellow bastards. If die we must, we’ll do it with our boots on and our face to the Japs.”

– Major Robert Balance

The Left Wing made its first contact with the defensive perimeter at 00:30 (25 October) when a scout party accompanied by the headquarters of the 3rd Battalion encountered barbed wire in dense jungle. A brief exploration followed and more wire was found. This advanced party was now drawing fire and a hasty order to attack at this point was made before artillery fire could target the area. Attempts to cut the wire silently were detected and rapid machine gun and mortar fire put paid to the first wave.

The next attack came at 01:15 when the 9th Company moved against Puller’s Company C. Heavy machine gun fire, soon accompanied by artillery, cut the brave Japanese soldiers down in a matter of minutes, with John Basilone participating in the engagement.



The yellow tape in the background indicates John Basilone’s firing position. The picture is taken approximately 30 feet / 10 meters away, where the barbed wire was positioned.
Photo courtesy of Guadalcanal – Walking a Battlefield (Facebook and YouTube).



Picture taken from John Basilone's firing position.
Photo courtesy of Guadalcanal – Walking a Battlefield (Facebook and YouTube).



A similar view that John Basilone and his comrades in Company C had during the 7 hours of action on 24-25 October 1942. This was taken from a Marine bunker along the line that Basilone and the other members of Company C 1/7 had. Note the limited field of fire in that thick flat jungle swamp.
Photo courtesy of Guadalcanal – Walking a Battlefield (Facebook and YouTube).

In response, Puller began to push reserves from the 164th Americal Regiment forward. It would be a brutal christening for the National Guardsmen. Squads and Platoons were deployed where needed, the untested soldiers fighting for the first-time shoulder to shoulder with Marines.

*“The noise was terrific and I could see Japs jumping as they were smacked by our bullets.
Screaming, yelling, and dying all at the same time.”*

– Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone

Next, Colonel Furimiya, the commander of the 29th Infantry Regiment organized the previously lost 3rd Company to join his 7th (‘Colors’) Company to make another attack. Supported by heavy weapons, the riflemen surged forward through a barrage of shells until barbed wire stopped their progress. Furimiya, alert to the situation, changed the angle of attack and shifted to the right, leading the 7th Company into the American lines. The 2nd Company soon lent some support, but it was slow to organize itself and as dawn came, Nasu ordered a withdrawal. Some Japanese soldiers who had managed to drive a wedge into the Marine lines approximately 100 yards wide and 150 yards deep fought to keep the ground, but were eventually killed. Some did however escape and individually or in small groups infiltrated onwards to Henderson Field, though they were also hunted down during the day. In various other places groups of Japanese soldiers had penetrated the perimeter before being cut down. Most though lay dead beyond the Marine line, victims of machine guns, mortars and artillery.

Owing to the miscommunication between the Sendai Division and Hyakutake, the Imperial Japanese Navy had been informed late on 24 October that Henderson Field had been captured. In theory this would mean the Cactus Air Force was no longer operational, which in turn would mean there was little to no threat of approaching Japanese naval vessels even being spotted and, if they were, there was no immediate danger to them from air attacks from land-based planes on Guadalcanal. Therefore, just past midnight on 25 October, Vice Admiral Mikawa ordered the seaborne element of Plan X to proceed. Mikawa learned the truth later, and recalled his assets, only to order another reversal a few hours later when a final report stated that it was unknown if the Army had taken control and that a bombardment was requested. Believing that naval support may give the Army the advantage it needed, Mikawa finally advanced.

SBD Dauntless aviators were able to take off early on the 25th and immediately spotted the mass of gathering Japanese naval vessels, some now less than 100 miles away. The No. 1 Assault Unit of three destroyers, and soon after the No. 2 Assault Unit of five destroyers and the light cruiser *Yura* sped towards the shore. Small US Navy vessels caught in the open water were mercilessly dealt with. The bombardment began west of the Lunga River but the Marines were able to respond with their own artillery and scored a successful hit on the *Akatsuki*. Shortly thereafter Wildcats strafed the same ship, which was enough to force the destroyers of No. 1 Assault Unit to withdraw behind a smoke screen, before being spotted by Zeros, which raced to help. Thus began a day of almost continuous air combat. For the next few hours, the pilots of the Cactus Air Force did nothing other than take off, dogfight, land, rearm, refuel and take off again. Japanese planes arriving from Rabaul, along with other carrier-based aircraft, pounded Henderson Field, leading those helplessly seeking

protection at the bottom of trenches to wryly christen the day 'Dugout Sunday'.

"One of them turned back into me from above, and it seemed to me that I could feel the bullets from all six of my guns smashing into him. He exploded; I flew through the smoke and flames and bits of shattered plane."

– Lieutenant Lawrence "Cloudy" Faulkner

The biggest threat was the *Yura*. Already in Indispensable Strait and closing fast, five SBDs led by Lieutenant Commander John Eldridge made their attack. Two hits were scored; enough for Mikawa to order the *Yura* withdrawn. Other attacks were made, though not anywhere near as devastating as the pass made by Eldridge and his fellow pilots of VS-71. The damage had already been done however. The *Yura* was flooding and a later attack as evening approached reignited fires that could not be extinguished. Other destroyers were also taking damage in defense of the light cruiser. Takama ordered the crew abandon ship and at 21:00 the *Yura* was scuttled.



Lieutenant Commander John Eldridge.

Away from the bombing, Puller and Hall, who commanded the Americal Regiment, took stock of the situation. Confident that another attack would come at nightfall, Puller's Marines concentrated to the west of the firing line, south of Edson's Ridge; the Army redeployed to the east of the front. Companies I, K and L would soon be in the thick of fighting. Only the 3rd Battalion 2nd Marines was available as a reserve. The 2,500-yard line was thinly held and a concentrated attack at any one point could overwhelm the defenders.

"You've got bayonets, haven't you? Hold at all costs."

– "Chesty" Puller

Maruyama similarly considered his predicament. Many had fallen, but others had managed to penetrate the perimeter. Despite the heavy losses and exhaustion, he ordered another night attack. Without any chance of surprising the American line, Japanese artillery opened fire at 20:00 and continued to bombard the southern perimeter for the next hour. Following that the majority of attacks went in against the Army to the east. Then, after midnight, the main thrust was made. Under cover of heavy weapons, the Japanese surged forward, only to be met by canister rounds from two 37mm guns that protected the gap between Company L and Company

E, further to the east. The assault was halted in the jungle, with only a few individuals here and there being able to infiltrate the defensive line. They were quickly hunted down.



Marines on Guadalcanal.

To the west Nasu was mortally wounded leading the Left Wing. Again, the Right Wing (effectively in the center between Nasu's Left Wing and the main attack being made to the east against the Americal Regiment) under Shoji was confused and out of position, with two battalions having pivoted to meet an imaginary threat. Assaults to the west, these against Puller's Marines, also failed. With no reserves, Hyakutake ordered a retreat at 08:00 26 October.



Machine Gun position on Guadalcanal.

Further west, close to the Matanikau, Oka had finally been able to marshal his forces and advance towards their objective: a ridge line held by Hanneken's 2nd Battalion 7th Regiment. After a bombardment earlier in the evening, Oka made his attack at 03:00 on the morning of 26 October. During the firefight Platoon Sergeant Mitchell Paige watched one after another of his comrades fall, 33 in total, requiring him to fend off the attackers by himself before leading a bayonet charge. He was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions. The Japanese though were tenacious and they finally reached the summit of the ridge. A quick and successful counter-attack followed and by day break the position had been regained.



Platoon Sergeant Mitchell Paige.

"In front of me was a large pile of dead bodies. I ran around the ridge from gun to gun trying to keep them firing, but at each emplacement I found only dead bodies. I knew then I must be all alone."

– Platoon Sergeant Mitchell Paige

With that, the Battle for Henderson Field concluded. A clear victory for the defenders, the remnants of the Imperial Japanese Army that had survived faced a grueling march to get back across the Matanikau River. Already heavily fatigued, and bereft of any food, the hike would see many more fall or simply be unable to rise after sleeping. It is estimated that over 2,000 Japanese soldiers lost their lives in the attack on Henderson Field. Furimiya survived beyond the perimeter for a few days before taking his own life. He left a note for Maruyama, which read *'I am going to return my borrowed life today with little interest.'*

"We haven't eaten for three days and even walking is difficult. On the uphill my body swayed around unable to walk. I must take a rest every two meters. It is quite disheartening to have only one tiny teaspoon of salt per day and a palmful of rice porridge."

– Lieutenant Keijiro Minegishi

The Cactus Air Force was intact, if severely battered. But the bruised aviators were now more than matching their Japanese adversaries. Over the previous month, until the conclusion of the Battle for Henderson Field, US pilots had inflicted more than the number of losses they suffered by a factor of approximately 30 planes.

The Imperial Japanese Army had suffered a devastating defeat that left the vital airfield in the hands of the Americans, allowing the successful prosecution of the longer Solomons campaign, while also endangering Rabaul. The shooting down and death of Isoroku Yamamoto in April 1943 while flying from Rabaul to a small island near Bougainville could not have been achieved had Henderson Field not been held. The failure of the Imperial Japanese Navy to win a decisive victory in the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands from 25-27 October exacerbated the Army's failure. The next time opposing carrier forces would meet in the Pacific would be in 1944 in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, and by then America's industry had more than made up for losses suffered in earlier engagements, while the Japanese had not. The high point of the Japanese Empire had been reached. Now, the sun would set.

"The officers and men of the First Marines salute you for a most wonderful piece of work. We are honored to serve with a unit such as yours."

– Colonel Clifton Gates (1st Marine Division) to Lieutenant Colonel Bryant Moore (164th 'Americal' Regiment)



Guadalcanal American Memorial Park.

Located in the grounds of the Heritage Park Hotel, close to the site of Henderson Field



Japanese Memorial Park near Mount Austin

THE DEFENDERS

MAJOR GENERAL ALEXANDER VANDEGRIFT



Vandegrift had been fascinated by military history from his childhood and joined the Marines immediately after leaving university. His early poor performance as a junior officer quickly improved and he gained his first combat experience in Haiti. As for many in the US armed services, the interwar years were quiet and he rose steadily through the ranks without exposure to hostile fire or the stresses and chaos of commanding men in combat. Growing from the 1st Marine Brigade, the 1st Marine Division was activated on 1 February, 1941. It was initially

commanded by Holland 'Howlin' Mad' Smith, who is widely credited with being the driving force behind the development of US amphibious warfare. Command of the division soon passed to General Torrey but unfortunately his shortcomings were revealed during an exercise in August, 1941. Other issues emerged and thus General Vandegrift assumed command of the 1st Marine Division in November, 1941. The following month came the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.



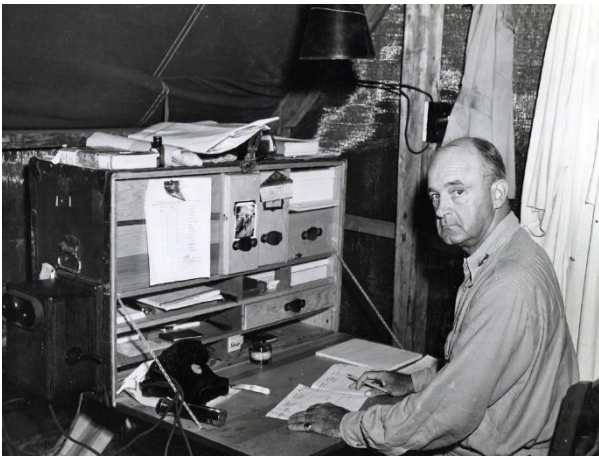
As 1942 commenced Vandegrift's division was widely dispersed and there was no immediate plan for his command to be sent into harm's way. He did not expect to lead his division into combat until sometime in 1943. The Marines at that time were poorly trained and poorly equipped, suffering from the lethargy and a low budget that the interwar years had engendered. Upon learning of the attempt by the Japanese to establish an airfield on Guadalcanal however, the division was given new orders: to proceed to the Solomons and engage the enemy. A wave of energy washed over the Marines as those stationed at Wellington, New Zealand, were ordered to depart with haste. Exacerbated by a strike by Kiwi dock workers, the undermanned division never had a chance to fully load the supplies they expected to be needed. This led the expedition to be nicknamed Operation Shoestring.

Nevertheless, Vandegrift made the best of a bad situation and successfully led the occupation and subsequent defense of Henderson Field from 7 August to 9 December, after which the US Army took over and eventually drove the surviving Japanese from the island. More as recognition for the performance of the 1st Marine Division in these vital months than any personal bravery, Vandegrift was awarded the Navy Cross and later the Medal of Honor.

*"We're going to defend this airfield until we no longer can.
If that happens, we'll take what's left to the hills and fight guerrilla warfare."*
– Major General Alexander Vandegrift

Though Vandegrift commanded the 1st Marine Division throughout the Guadalcanal campaign, he was actually absent at a meeting with Admiral Halsey at the start of the Battle for Henderson Field. Direct command was turned over to his assistant, Brigadier General Rupertus.

In the final years of the war and thereafter, Vandegrift became the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Vandegrift died on 8 May, 1973 and is buried in Arlington.



Vandegrift working in his command tent on Guadalcanal.



Vandegrift and Turner planning 'Operation Shoestring'.

BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM H. RUPERTUS



Rupertus was the assistant to Vandegrift. On 23 October, when Vandegrift left Guadalcanal to meet with Halsey at Nouméa on New Caledonia, Rupertus assumed executive command of the 1st Marine Division. Rupertus was an expert marksman and following the attack on Pearl Harbor he composed the Rifleman's Creed. In part this reads as follows:

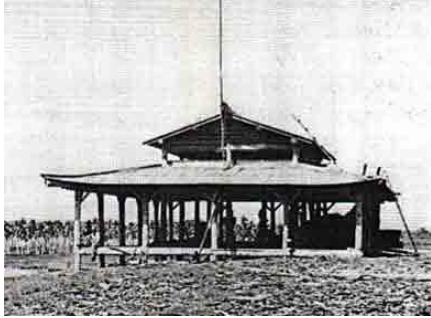
This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine.

My rifle is my best friend. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life.

Without me, my rifle is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than my enemy who is trying to kill

me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will.

He was assigned to the 1st Marine Division in March, 1942 and assumed full command in 1943, leading the division in the attack on Peleliu. He died naturally in 1945 and is buried in Arlington. He was awarded the Navy Cross for his part in the capture of Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo in the first few days of the campaign.



The original Pagoda



The improved Pagoda

The Pagoda was built by the Japanese in July 1942, prior to the 1st Marine Division landing on August 7. Its basic structure was modified and improved and it served as the Division HQ until October. It was purposefully destroyed on October 14 due to the suspicion that the roof was reflecting flares fired from naval ships during the heavy bombardment of October 13-14 and thereby making it easier for Japanese gunners to aim.



Tunnel below the Pagoda for communications.

Photo courtesy of Guadalcanal – Walking a Battlefield (Facebook and YouTube).

ADMIRAL RICHMOND KELLY TURNER

TASK FORCE 62

3

LAND SUPPLIESX 6.....

REPAIR ONE OF ABOVE

Described by Nimitz as “brilliant, caustic, arrogant, and tactless” and, therefore, “just the man for the job” of commanding US amphibious landings throughout the Pacific Theater, Admiral Kelly Turner nevertheless had to overcome two potentially career-ending blights on his service record. The first was in relation to the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Turner, increasingly aware of the threat of Japanese hostilities, ultimately failed to forward information pertaining to an

intercepted message sent between Japanese diplomats on November 27, 1941 to his senior, Admiral Kimmel. The message talked of an imminent Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.



His second failure was the Battle of Savo Island, certainly one of the worst Naval defeats suffered by the US Navy in its history. Despite this, Turner remained in command of Task Force 62 and oversaw the resupply of the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal and the landing of reinforcements.

Turner served throughout the rest of the war, including command of the amphibious landings at Tarawa, Saipan, Iwo Jima and Okinawa.



HMAS Canberra cruising in the vicinity of Tulagi on 7 August, 1942.



HMAS Canberra being evacuated following the Battle of Savo Island (8-9 August, 1942). After evacuation the Canberra was scuttled.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL EDMOND J. BUCKLEY (INTELLIGENCE D-2)



Buckley replaced Lt. Col. Frank Goettge, who was killed leading the disastrous Goettge Patrol, on 12 August as Divisional Intelligence Officer (D-2). His role was to gather intelligence on the movements, strength and fighting prowess of his Japanese adversaries and disseminate that information among the division, allowing Vandegrift to make better informed decisions. As the campaign continued, much of this information came from local islanders, such as Jacob Vouza, who were able to act as the 'eyes on the ground' and report back to Henderson Field.

Captain Martin Clemens, a British coast watcher living on the island, also provided invaluable assistance. Air reconnaissance played some part, but in the main, the Japanese were moving through dense jungle and/or at night. Combat patrols were undertaken by the Marines themselves, sometimes with local guides, but these were risky endeavors and the American defenders never really had enough troops to further weaken the defensive line with consistent scouting.

A famous notable exception to this was the Scout-Sniper unit created by William J. Whaling. Whaling organized around 100 volunteers with hunting skills to, among other things, go on aggressive combat and recon patrols into the Japanese controlled area west of the Matanikau River. In early October, as the Japanese prepared for the coming assault on Henderson Field, Whaling's Scout-Snipers helped inflict huge losses on the 4th Infantry Regiment, which hindered its combat ability on October 23 when trying to cross the Matanikau. That unit was finally annihilated a month later as the Marines began their own counter-attacks in early November. The experiences of the Scout-Snipers on Guadalcanal would play a part in establishing Marine Recon in the future with Whaling becoming recognized as an expert in jungle warfare.



Malaria was rife on the island and many combatants, US and Japanese alike, suffered from its effects. Buckley was so infected and never fully recovered. Serving for the remainder of the war, in the post war years his condition deteriorated and he died at the age of 50 in 1950. He is buried in Arlington.



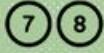
Establishing communication. US Marine Comm Team.

Photo courtesy of Guadalcanal

– Walking a Battlefield (Facebook and YouTube).

11TH REGIMENT (ARTILLERY)

11TH MARINE REGIMENT



READY ARTILLERY

REPAIR ONE OF ABOVE

The 11th Marine Regiment was formed during World War One and saw brief and uneventful action in Europe in the closing months of the conflict. Upon return to the United States, it was promptly disbanded. The Regiment was again activated and just as swiftly deactivated in the late twenties until 1 March, 1941 when, with rising tensions in the Pacific, the Regiment once again came into existence. The following year it set sail to New Zealand along with elements of the 1st Marine Division, eventually ending up on Guadalcanal.



11th Regiment operating a 155mm howitzer on Guadalcanal sometime after the Battle for Henderson Field.

During the months of fighting the 11th Regiment played a crucial role in ensuring the protection of Henderson Field while providing heavy artillery support that helped bring victory at the Battle of the Tenaru (Battle of Alligator's Creek) and the Battle of Edson's Ridge (Battle of Bloody Ridge). It was the Japanese who in these early exchanges had the experience and the confidence of veterans. The higher caliber guns played a critical role in compensating for the lack of combat experiences the green Marines suffered from, while overcoming other material disadvantages the defenders had to contend with owing to the poor state of preparedness and subsequent supply issues.



Of particular note during the Guadalcanal campaign was the forceful commanding officer, Colonel Pedro del Valle, who went on to become the first Hispanic to achieve the rank of Lieutenant General. Upon graduation from Annapolis, del Valle joined the Marine Corps and served in the Banana Wars. Upon the reformation of the 11th Regiment in March, 1941, del Valle became the commanding officer. Vandegrift respected the opinions, competency and fighting ability of del Valle and, a few weeks prior to the Battle for Henderson Field, del Valle was promoted to Brigadier General, though he remained a regimental commander. The newly appointed general served with distinction throughout the remainder of the Pacific War.



Unfortunately, his outspoken nature and his antisemitic views were simultaneously creating a poor image of himself in some quarters, a fact overlooked in the war years, but which couldn't be ignored as peace settled over the world. After retirement from the Marine Corps in 1948 he became convinced that the United States was under threat from Jewish-backed communism and eventually formed the Defenders of the American Constitution, which sought to mobilize otherwise normal citizens throughout the country to resist both overt and subversive attempts to destroy the United States. He continued to lead a bizarre, paranoid life until he died in 1978.

3RD DEFENSE BATTALION

3RD DEFENSE BATTALION

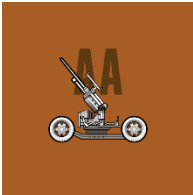
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READY ANTI-AIRCRAFT

REPAIR ONE OF ABOVE

The 3rd Defense Battalion landed with the 1st Marine Division on 7 August, 1942 and was instrumental in protecting Henderson Field on an almost daily basis from Japanese air attacks. Colonel Robert H. Pepper commanded the 3rd Defense Battalion after seeing extensive service abroad in the inter-war years. Pepper, along with Lt. Col. Barrett, began to discuss and conceptualize the idea of Defense Battalions in the second half of the 1930s, after recognizing the potential need to defend Pacific islands from air and coastal attacks. Pepper continued to serve in the

post-war years, and briefly commanded the 1st Marine Division while it was stationed in Korea, defending the recently established demilitarized zone between north and south.



The defense batteries were equipped and trained to combat air and coastal attacks in often isolated areas. The soldiers were also to form a last line of defense should any beach assault succeed. The battalions played an important role – a vital role in the case of the 3rd Defense Battalion on Guadalcanal – in the early period of the Pacific War, but as the ability of the Japanese to conduct any offensive air or coastal attacks was blunted and then

became effectively non-existent, the defense battalions were slowly deactivated. Those Marines so affected tended to be reassigned into Marine Divisions as replacements. A disproportionate number of African-Americans served in defense battalions.

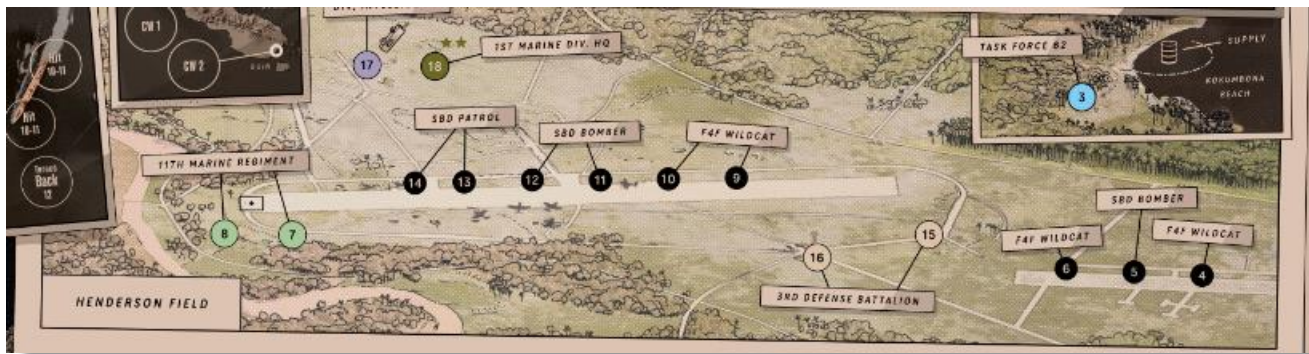


3rd Defense Battalion
operating a 90mm Anti-
Aircraft gun on Guadalcanal.



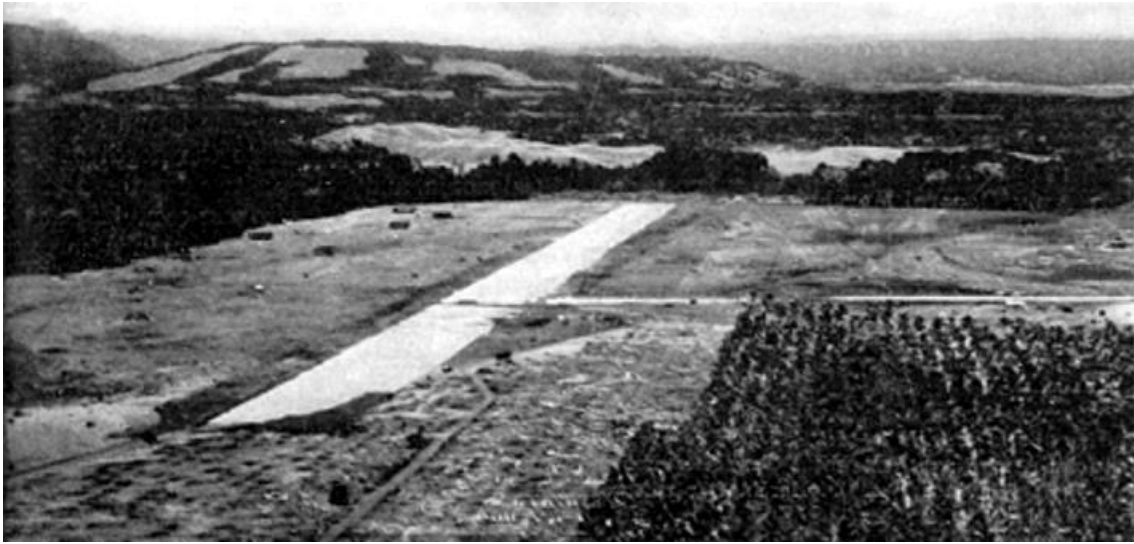
3rd Defense Battalion at Henderson Field.
Photo courtesy of Guadalcanal
– Walking a Battlefield (Facebook and YouTube).

HENDERSON FIELD



The Japanese began construction of what would come to be named Henderson Field in early July, 1942. Now renamed Honiara Airport, it is located at Lunga Point, between the Lunga River immediately to the west, and Alligator Creek immediately to the east, with the Tenaru River further to the east. Immediately to the north was the beach, which allowed easy supply (but also offered the threat of a seaborne attack, which General Vandegrift had to always consider). To the south lay hills, ridges and jungle, forming the Lunga Perimeter and including Edson's Ridge.

In the summer of 1942 Guadalcanal represented the extremity of Japanese expansion to the south and an airfield would provide the first line of defense for all that had been acquired. A second strategic aim was to provide closer air support for a future attack on Port Moresby in south west Papua New Guinea. This in turn would threaten Australia. Finally, the ability to launch air attacks against ships sailing to Australia from across the Pacific would weaken the defenses there. In short, an airfield on Guadalcanal was an important step to removing Australia from the war.



The early construction of Henderson Field by the Japanese in July, 1942.

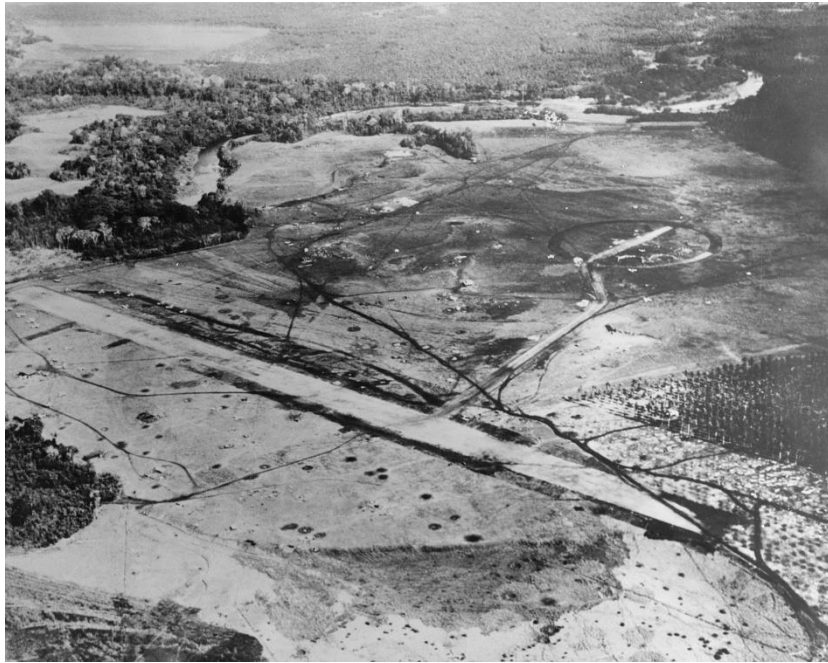
The Allies understood the threat such an airbase represented and could not wait for it to be completed and become operational, which would have made any future attack on Guadalcanal a difficult, and perhaps impossible, endeavor. Thus, the Marines of the 1st Division were rushed into combat as quickly as possible, despite the lack of suitable training, equipment, supplies, support or overall readiness for combat. From the American point of view, while denying the use of the airfield to the Japanese was the priority, seizing the land and being able to use it for their own purposes made it a highly attractive prize.

Thus, on 7 August, 1942 the Marines landed. At that time most of the Japanese on the island were construction workers and they fled, leaving their intact equipment and large supplies of rice, both of which became valuable in the following months. Also notable was 'The Pagoda', a Japanese style building that served as the initial command post for Vandegrift and his staff, before it was destroyed in a Japanese bombing attack.

On 12 August, the airfield was unofficially named after Lofton R. Henderson, a Marine pilot who died leading his dive bomber squadron against the aircraft carrier *Hiryū* at the Battle of Midway just two months earlier. The hastily chosen name stuck and it was in widespread use by Marine aviators by the end of August.

The capture of the airfield caused a predicament for the Japanese who now faced the threat of air attacks against their possessions in the area, including the vital base at Rabaul, New Britain.

The airfield was under constant construction, reconstruction and expansion throughout the campaign and its poor condition often inflicted damage of one kind or another to the planes using it. Japanese bombs from both land and sea tore up the ground and the Marston Mat, with holes having to be constantly refilled to allow safe take offs and landings. The climate tended to vary between very hot and dry, which caused massive clouds of dust to clog the engines, or very humid and wet, which turned the ground into wet, slippery mud.



Henderson Field in late August, 1942. The winding river is the Lunga River.

There was no protection for the planes, no repair workshop, no hangars, no permanent fuel tanks and very few spare parts. All munitions had to be hand loaded and fuel hand pumped from massive drums. On 9 September, Fighter 1 was completed and thereafter the fighter planes of the Cactus Air Force tended to use this airstrip. As well as the poor diet, the living conditions for the pilots and ground crew were challenging to say the least. They were 'housed' in tents in a nearby coconut plantation referred to as Mosquito Grove where, unsurprisingly, many contracted malaria among other diseases. There was no hard cover for the pilots and the only shelter from bombardment was that provided by deep trenches.



A later picture of Henderson Field. Note the proximity to the sea. This area of ocean was named Iron Bottom Sound by the Marines owing to the number of ships sunk there during the campaign.



Mosquito Grove.

CACTUS AIR FORCE



Guadalcanal carried the code name 'Cactus' and the Cactus Air Force takes its title from that. At the time of the Battle for Henderson Field, the Cactus Air Force was commanded by Brigadier General Roy Geiger, a man who worked tirelessly – and detrimentally to his health – to reverse the performance and morale of the pilots on Guadalcanal. Although a detailed account is outside the scope of this book, it should be noted that while the Imperial Japanese Army had been unable to defeat the Marines on Guadalcanal up to the point of the action detailed in the game, the Imperial Japanese Navy and the Air Force were still enjoying successes. Geiger was crucial in encouraging the pilots to keep flying and fighting despite a long list of impediments, not least of which was the superiority of the Zero in a one-to-one dogfight with a Wildcat.

ADMIRAL JOHN S. McCAIN SN.



McCain graduated from the Naval Academy as a very poor candidate for greatness in the early years of the twentieth century. The turning point in his career came in 1935 when he undertook flight training, becoming one of the oldest people to become a Navy pilot. This key move however opened up the emerging world of aircraft carrier operations and, over the years, he became an expert in this newly decisive form of warfare. His next key appointment came in May, 1942 when he was appointed Commander, Aircraft, South Pacific (COMAIRSOPAC).

Naturally Guadalcanal came under his stewardship and so did the Cactus Air Force. Though never exercising tactical command, McCain was crucial in ensuring the aviators on Guadalcanal were never forgotten or neglected and that they received as much support in its various forms as possible.



After proving himself in the Solomons McCain continued to serve in combat for the remainder of the war and played a vital role in correcting a potentially fatal mistake made by Halsey in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Owing to miscommunication Halsey's forces were out of position and the considerably weaker Taffy 3, which was overseeing the landings at Leyte, and whose commander believed were protected by Halsey's screen of warships, was attacked by Admiral Kurita. Without orders, McCain raced his Task Group 58.1 to assist Taffy 3. Without taking anything away from the bravery of Sprague's destroyers and destroyer escorts (which faced no less

a foe than the *Yamato* super battleship), McCain's planes brought to the attention of Kurita the danger of future air attacks and thus, at a momentous stage in the battle for control of the Philippines, the Imperial Japanese Navy turned away to seek safety.

"Cactus can be a sinkhole for enemy air power and can be consolidated, expanded and exploited to the enemy's mortal hurt."

– Admiral John S. McCain, Sr.

McCain died just days after witnessing the surrender of the Japanese in 1945 and is buried at Arlington. His is one of the great Naval families in US history. His grandson, the late John S. McCain III, was captured during the Vietnam war and spent five years imprisoned in the notorious Hanoi Hilton prison. Later he ran against Barack Obama as the Republican nominee, losing in the general election.

ADMIRAL AUBREY FITCH



After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1908, Fitch rose steadily through the ranks until, like McCain, he qualified as a naval aviator, though at the earlier date of 1930. He became the Commanding Officer of the USS *Langley*, America's first aircraft carrier, before taking command of the USS *Lexington* in 1936. He later took command of Carrier Force 1 with the USS *Saratoga* as his flagship. Upon commencement of the Pacific war, Fitch was one of the most experienced carrier commanders in the US Navy. He saw early action but missed the Battle of Midway, arriving too late.

On 20 September, 1942 Fitch took over from McCain, gaining control of Aircraft, South Pacific Force. He made sure to fly over combat zones in order to fully understand the geography of Guadalcanal. He served throughout the rest of the war and in the post-war years headed the Naval Academy, bringing more emphasis there to the role of aircraft and their carriers.

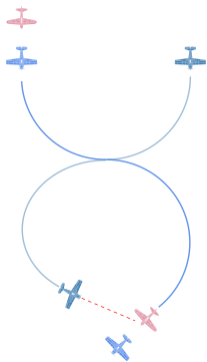


GRUMMAN F4F WILDCAT



In the early period of the Pacific War the battle for control of the skies was fought primarily by two contrasting planes: The Grumman F4F Wildcat of the US Navy and the Mitsubishi A6M 'Zero' of the Imperial Japanese Navy. The Wildcat was slower and much less maneuverable than the Zero, and in the early months, its pilots were far less experienced with poorer tactical awareness. On the other hand, the Wildcat enjoyed more armor and self-sealing fuel tanks. With regard to firepower, things were more or less evenly matched: the F4F-4 Wildcat (the

version used by the Cactus Air Force) sported six 0.50 inch / 12.7 mm Browning machine guns versus the two 7.7 mm machine guns and two 20 mm cannons of the Zero. The six machine guns the F4F-4 carried compared to the four on previous models did not however carry extra ammunition. So, while the firepower was greater, the pilots had less firing time per gun.



In the early months of the Guadalcanal campaign the Japanese Zero pilots undoubtedly enjoyed greater success in dog fights. To counter this the 'Thach Weave', named after its originator Admiral "Jimmy" Thach, was introduced. In simple terms, this tactic called for two or more Wildcats to fly continuous, interweaving figure of 8s. As one Wildcat turned back into the arc of the second Wildcat, any trailing Zero would be exposed to a broadside attack.

Wildcat pilots would also take advantage of early warnings issued by coast watchers on Bougainville Island, who could observe Japanese aircraft flying along The Slot from Rabaul.

Getting into the air quickly gave the slow climbing Wildcats enough time to gain an altitude advantage, from which an attack could be made. Flying at such high altitudes caused internal problems for the pilots given the poor diet on Guadalcanal, and dealing with sudden changes in air pressure, could cause the pilots to black out, suffer dizziness, shortness of breath and extreme abdominal pain. To attempt to counter this, the pilots were given the best of what little food was available, leaving the Marines on the ground to eat not much else but captured rice for several months.

"At night they attempted to sleep in their mud-floored tents next to the airfield – "in the middle of the bullseye," as they described it.

It was true: they lived on the front lines, something that pilots rarely, if ever, had done."

– Joseph Wheelan (Midnight in the Pacific)



Another crucial advantage that swung the air war in favor of the US Navy pilots was that if they were forced to bail out or otherwise survived a crash, they could be rescued by Navy vessels or local inhabitants who were invariably pro-American. Most Japanese pilots who failed to make it back to base were lost. That said, the mechanics at Henderson Field never enjoyed a surplus of replacement parts and were forced to cannibalize aircraft to keep those in better repair airborne whereas their Japanese counterparts were better supplied.



DOUGLAS SBD (SCOUT BOMBER DOUBLAS) DAUNTLESS



While the F4F Wildcat was already suboptimal at the commencement of the Pacific war, the Dauntless was, if not state of the art, an excellent plane for the dual purpose of patrolling and dive bombing. The plane proved its worth during the Battle of Midway and remained the primary aircraft of its type until late into the war. Two crew members flew the plane, the pilot and the navigator/rear gunner. The navigator would spend much of the flight making sure the pilot stayed on course.

Once the final dive onto the target began, he would call out the rapidly falling altitude, allowing the pilot to concentrate fully on the difficult job of aiming the payload. If and when necessary, the same navigator would pivot his seat and take aim with the rear twin 0.30 inch / 7.62mm machine guns. The pilot could dog fight with twin 0.50 inch / 12.7mm machine guns found on the SBD-3 (the most widely produced version and that primarily used on Guadalcanal). The SBD-3 also incorporated heavier armor and self-sealing fuel tanks. These modifications, along with up to 1,600 pounds of bombs under the body of the aircraft, gave rise to the nickname Slow But Deadly.

Typically, the same plane would carry a 1,000-pound bomb for dive bombing missions and a 500-pound bomb when patrolling, giving the plane greater range and maximum ceiling. Pilots were comfortable flying both types of missions.

"We were a sorry-looking group. Thin almost to emaciation, in faded, patched, but clean khaki uniforms, bearded with a certain gleam in the eye that would not go away."

– Ensign Harold Buell



While the Dauntless' flying directly from Henderson Field scored successes against the Imperial Japanese Navy, their presence and the threat they posed was far more potent over the months of the campaign as it forced the Japanese to limit their supply runs to nights only. This, combined with the distances the transport and supply ships had to sail to get close to Guadalcanal, severely limited the ability of the Japanese Navy to keep the Army at full strength. It certainly caused a delay in preparing attacks and, after the Battle for Henderson Field, the lack of sufficient food and medical supplies crippled an already defeated enemy.

Later in the campaign – from late November, 1942 – much of the patrolling was taken over by the pilots of No. 3 Squadron, Royal New Zealand Air Force, who flew the Lockheed Hudson. The Lockheed Hudson was a light bomber that doubled as a search and patrol aircraft, being particularly used to conduct coastal reconnaissance. It was a successful design and was adopted by various Allied powers, owing to its ability to fulfil a wide range of roles. In particular, it was highly maneuverable.

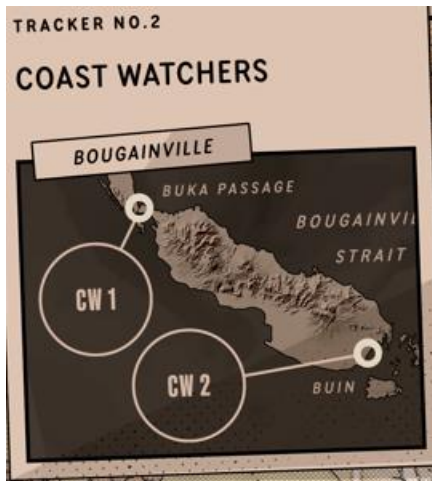


No.3 Squadron, Royal New Zealand Air Force.

During the remainder of the campaign on Guadalcanal the Hudson bombers were successful in spotting and attacking two submarines, while also locating several supply convoys which were subsequently attacked. The Hudson was also able to make use of its more advanced navigational equipment to act as a lead plane for a flotilla of attack aircraft, leading them precisely to their target. As the Solomon Islands campaign continued, No. 14, 15 and 16 squadrons, RNZAF, also joined the fighting.



COAST WATCHERS



An early form of the Coast Watchers was established in 1922 when Australia recruited local people in territories in the north of, and on islands to the north of, the mainland. These recruits were to take note of any unusual activity occurring along the coast lines and report it. Upon the commencement of the Pacific War, and Japan's speedy expansion south, the network was enlarged. One such location deemed important for intelligence reasons was Bougainville Island, which lies to the north west of Guadalcanal, and is the most northerly main island of the Solomons archipelago. It was the home for Lieutenants Jack Read and Paul Mason, both of the Royal Australian Naval Volunteer Reserve. Flying and sailing from Rabaul on New Britain, directly to the north west of Bougainville, Japanese assets had to make their way immediately south

of the island. From there they would enter New Georgia Sound (known as 'The Slot') and go onto what became known as Iron Bottom Sound and Henderson Field. Aided by friendly locals, on many occasions the two coast watchers were able to give advanced warning of incoming aircraft, warships and supply and transport ships making their way down The Slot. This intelligence proved invaluable as an early warning as it allowed the pilots of the Cactus Air Force to scramble and attain sufficient altitude (codename: Angels 20, referring to the preferential altitude of 20,000 feet) to be able to attack from a greater height, which helped to even the odds in the early months of the campaign when the American pilots were up against more experienced Japanese pilots flying more versatile planes.

Though Bougainville was outside of the operational area for the planes and ships of the defenders in and around Henderson Field during the campaign, other, closer, coast watchers were able to organize the rescue of pilots and ship crews as and when necessary. Over the months, the ability of the US forces to get men with increasing experience back into the fight played an ever more important role in swinging the balance in favor of the Cactus Air Force in particular. Japanese pilots had little chance of being picked up by their navy and, in

any case, many simply refused to bail out of damaged aircraft. Japanese survivors of naval battles for the most part also fought against attempts by US naval personnel to pull them from the water.

Bougainville itself would become caught up in the fighting from November 1943 to November 1944.



Jack Read

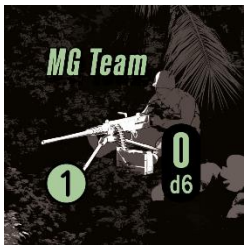


Paul Mason

GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN BASILONE (MEDAL OF HONOR, NAVY CROSS)

A wargame on the subject of Guadalcanal, and the Battle for Henderson Field in particular, cannot neglect John Basilone.

Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone was, and remains, an iconic figure in the history of the Marine Corps and of the United States military itself. He was the first combatant to earn the Medal of Honor on Guadalcanal and, in addition, he has the distinction of having also been awarded the Navy Cross (for fighting on Iwo Jima, where he was killed in action).



On 24 October, 1942, Basilone, along with his comrades, found himself in the thick of fighting as the Sendai Division launched its first night attack against the firing line in the southern area of the Lunga Perimeter that protected Henderson Field. Fighting was at close quarters and continued until dawn. Basilone commanded two machine gun sections which were dug in but had no other protection. Though able to fire rapidly, the machine guns were not able to take advantage of their superior range and, like heavy weapons everywhere, were a magnet for enemy fire. As casualties began to mount, the ammunition also began to dwindle, as it did all along the Marine line. By this point the battle lines had become confused and

indistinct. Japanese soldiers, individually or in small groups, had penetrated into the rear, cutting off an easy route to a supply point. Nevertheless, Basilone made the dangerous journey back, picked up as much ammunition as he could carry and returned to the front. Through the night he successfully commanded the defense of his section of the perimeter and at one point single handedly operated a machine gun causing burns from the hot barrel which lay across his supporting arm.

On the second night the available ammunition ran out but Basilone refused to leave his post and turned to his pistol and machete to engage the attacking Japanese soldiers.

Marriage and a return to the United States for a war bond tour followed. He reenlisted into the Marine Corps and joined the 5th Marine Division and went ashore on the first day of the invasion of Iwo Jima on 19 February, 1945. He was killed in combat for actions that earned him the Navy Cross. He is buried in Arlington.



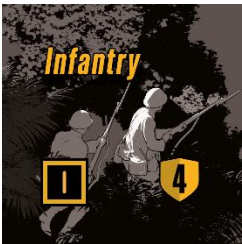
Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone.

THE ATTACKERS

*Across the sea,
Corpses in the water.
Across the mountain,
Corpses heaped upon the field.
I shall die solely for the Emperor.
I will never look back.*

– The poem Umi Yukaba

17TH ARMY



The 17th Army had no rich history of battles fought and won, though the main units that comprised the army were experienced. It was created on 18 May, 1942 precisely to protect Japanese possessions in the Solomons Islands. It was commanded throughout almost the entirety of the war by General Harukichi Hyakutake, a life long career soldier. Surprisingly, given Japan's aggression in the 1930s, Hyakutake did not see any serious combat. He was not a 'fighting' general.

"From now on, the occupying of Guadalcanal Island is under the observation of the whole world. Do not expect to return, not even one man, if the occupation is not successful. Everyone must remember the honor of the Emperor, fear no enemy, yield to no material matters, show the strong points of steel or of rocks, and advance valiantly and ferociously."

– Official order addressed to all Japanese soldiers



After defeat at Henderson Field the 17th Army, or what remained, was evacuated from Guadalcanal to Bougainville, where it again faced heavy losses. The familiar problems of lack of reinforcements and supplies reduced the combat effectiveness of the army further until it was finally cut off and trapped on Bougainville for the remainder of the war, unable to fulfil any useful function. While on Bougainville Hyakutake suffered a stroke, the effects of which he had to endure with little to no medical aid. Weakened, shortly after the surrender of Japan, the general died in 1947.



The premier division in the 17th Army was the **2nd Infantry Division**, better known as the **Sendai Division**, after its birth place in Sendai, approximately halfway between Tokyo and the northern island of Hokkaido. It was one of the first modern units created in Japan, birthing in 1871. That is, 3 years after the *Meiji Ishin* (the revolution or restoration – depending on your point of view – that ended the rule of military Shogun and saw the Emperor regain power). The Division was blooded in the First Sino-Japanese war and later in the Russo-Japanese war, followed by action in Manchuria and the Second Sino-Japanese war. Under its commander, Maruyama, it occupied the Dutch East Indies and was intended to be used in the New Guinea campaign before the situation on Guadalcanal became critical. After defeat in the Battle for Henderson Field and the calamitous withdrawal, the Sendai Division was never able to again become a crack combat unit. It saw heavy fighting later in Burma and was almost wiped out. Maruyama returned to Japan in the summer of 1943 and died in 1957.



Japanese soldiers 'sparring' to train in the use of the bayonet. Close quarters fighting was heavily drilled in the Japanese Army as a core doctrine was to close with the enemy and negate artillery fire power.

The **38th Division**, commanded by Sano, was formed in 1939 in response to the immediate and expected future need for more soldiers. The division helped capture Hong Kong before suffering heavy losses on Guadalcanal. After evacuation the 38th Division was assigned to static defense positions on various islands, in particular New Georgia. Sano served throughout almost the entirety of the war before dying in Japan a few weeks before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.





The **35th Infantry Brigade**, commanded until the eve of battle by **Kawaguchi**, acted independently of its parent 18th Infantry Division. The Brigade fought in Burma and the Philippines before shipping to Guadalcanal. Kawaguchi led his Brigade against Edson's Marines on 13 September. After fierce fighting, the Brigade was defeated and forced to retreat. After regrouping a month later Kawaguchi marched along the Maruyama Road. Upon closing with the defensive perimeter, he took it upon himself to re-orient his attack, causing a delay and resulting in his relief from command. He made it back to Japan and was eventually placed in charge of the defenses of Tsushima Island, close to southern Korea and somewhat famous for the role it played in the Mongol invasions of Japan 700 years or so earlier and for the decisive Battle of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese war. By Japanese standards, Kawaguchi was a bit of a maverick. He died in 1961.



Japanese soldiers on Guadalcanal.

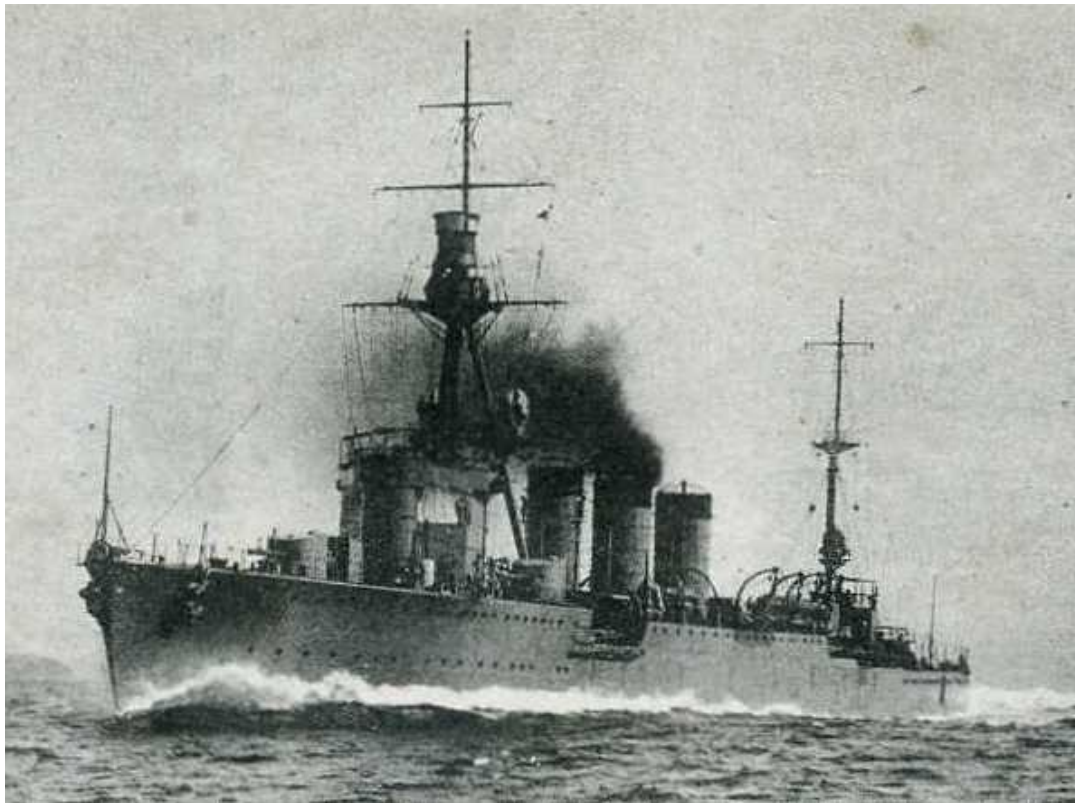


No. 2 ATTACK UNIT



The No. 2 Attack Unit was commanded by Rear Admiral Tamotsu Takama (who normally commanded Destroyer Squadron 4 in the Guadalcanal campaign) and comprised the light cruiser *Yura* and support destroyers. Takama was charged with sailing close enough to Guadalcanal to be able to bombard Henderson Field and any revealed American positions from the sea in daylight hours, in what was planned to have been the final hours of a successful attack carried out by the Army. The force set sail on 24 October and arrived at the northern entrance to Indispensable Strait on 25 October where it was detected and attacked by SBD Dauntless aircraft. The dive bombers scored hits on the *Yura* and the mission was called off, with the Japanese ships ordered to withdraw. More dive bombers inflicted further damage until a final bomb run made by B-17 Flying Fortresses out of Espiritu Santo left the *Yura* blazing. The crew were evacuated and attending destroyers used torpedoes and gunfire to send her below the waves.

Takama fought in almost all of the naval battles during the Guadalcanal campaign, as well as after in the broader Solomons campaign. He survived the war and died peacefully at the age of 86.



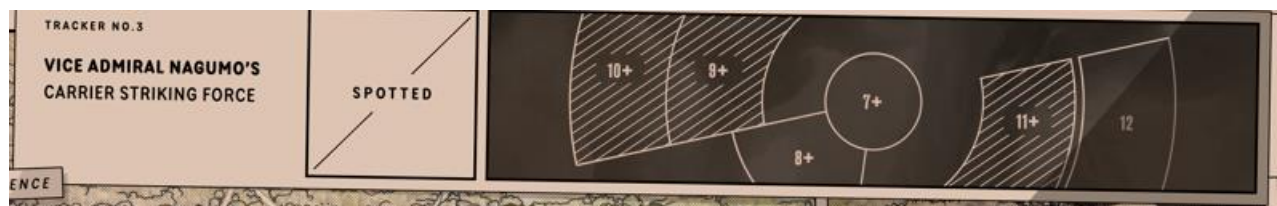
Light Cruiser *Yura*.

ADMIRAL CHUICHI NAGUMO & THE MAIN BODY






A primary strategic aim for the Japanese Navy was to emerge victorious from a decisive battle with the US Navy, as early in the war as possible, so as to gain control of the Pacific before the massive industrial might of America quickly outpaced that of Japan. The ground offensive by General Hyakutake to capture Henderson Field, if successful, would remove the threat of the Cactus Air Force and perhaps even allow Japanese aircraft to quickly land, refuel and be ready to support the Imperial Japanese Navy in a daylight engagement that could well put paid to the US carrier force. Under the direction of Isoroku Yamamoto, the Imperial Japanese Navy had four carriers and attending warships ready in the north west area of the Solomons.

The Japanese naval vessels were divided into three groups: the Advance force, the Main Body and the Vanguard. Vice Admiral Kondō was in overall command, but it was the Main Body that comprised the aircraft carriers *Shōkaku*, *Zuikaku* and *Zuihō*, and commanded by Vice Admiral Nagumo that presented the greatest threat to the *Enterprise* and the *Hornet*. The carrier *Jun'yō* was also present but part of Kondo's Advance Force. Throughout 25 October, search planes from both sides sought to find the location of the opposing carriers. A US PBY Catalina got lucky and found the Main Body at 11:03. Nagumo was at this time at extreme range so Kinkaid, aboard the *Enterprise*, was unable to launch a strike and instead closed the distance. The Japanese, aware their carriers had been spotted, turned away and disappeared.



As the sun came up on 26 October, search planes again took to the skies. By this time the carrier forces were approximately 200 miles/370 kms apart. The Americans got lucky again shortly before 7am, but just minutes later the Japanese discovered the *Hornet*. Thus began the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands. Throughout the day numerous air attacks were launched. As night fell both forces withdrew from the area. The carrier *Hornet* had been sunk (allowing the Japanese to claim a victory), while the *Enterprise* was damaged but still operational. The carriers *Zuihō* and *Shōkaku* were out of action until early 1943. *Zuikaku* suffered no significant damage, but it retired to home waters with its combat effectiveness limited by pilot losses, leaving only the *Jun'yō* in the area. This was enough to effectively end the naval threat to Guadalcanal. In addition, the Japanese lost scores of air crew and planes, with the pilots in particular being impossible to replace in the near future. Nagumo was relieved of command. For the Japanese it was a case of won the battle, lost the campaign.

MEDALS

	<p>Medal of Honor. This is the highest award for servicemen who have distinguished themselves conspicuously by acts of valor at the risk life and which go above and beyond the call of duty. There are three designs, for the Army, Navy and Air Force. Depicted is the version presented to Navy personnel. The medal is normally presented by the President of the United States of America.</p>
	<p>Navy Cross. Presented to sailors and marines of the United States Navy who have distinguished themselves for extraordinary heroism at great personal risk in combat with an armed enemy force. The Navy Cross was introduced in 1919 in response to similar medals in the Army (Distinguished Service Cross and the Distinguished Service Medal). It is the second highest military decoration available to Navy personnel and is normally presented by the Secretary of the Navy.</p>
	<p>Navy Distinguished Service Medal. Awarded to sailors and marines for distinguished and exceptionally meritorious service to the United States while serving in a duty or position of great authority. This medal was also introduced in 1919 in response to similar medals being awarded by the Army. It was originally senior to the Navy Cross, until 1942, when the positions were reversed.</p>
	<p>Silver Star Medal. Presented to all members of the United States Armed Forces for gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States.</p>
	<p>Legion of Merit. Given to all members of the United States Armed Forces in recognition of exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievements.</p>
	<p>Bronze Star Medal. Awarded to all members of the United States Armed Forces for heroic achievement, heroic service, meritorious achievement, or meritorious service in a combat zone.</p>

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A special mention and very special thanks to the Facebook page and YouTube channel *Guadalcanal – Walking a Battlefield*.