

= Guadalcanal Campaign =

The Guadalcanal Campaign , also known as the Battle of Guadalcanal and code @-@ named Operation Watchtower , originally applying only to an operation to take the island of Tulagi , by Allied forces , was a military campaign fought between 7 August 1942 and 9 February 1943 on and around the island of Guadalcanal in the Pacific theater of World War II . It was the first major offensive by Allied forces against the Empire of Japan .

On 7 August 1942 , Allied forces , predominantly United States (US) Marines , landed on the islands of Guadalcanal , Tulagi , and Florida in the southern Solomon Islands , with the objective of denying their use by the Japanese to threaten Allied supply and communication routes between the US , Australia , and New Zealand . The Allies also intended to use Guadalcanal and Tulagi as bases to support a campaign to eventually capture or neutralize the major Japanese base at Rabaul on New Britain . The Allies overwhelmed the outnumbered Japanese defenders , who had occupied the islands since May 1942 , and captured Tulagi and Florida , as well as an airfield (later named Henderson Field) that was under construction on Guadalcanal . Powerful American naval forces supported the landings .

Surprised by the Allied offensive , the Japanese made several attempts between August and November to retake Henderson Field . Three major land battles , seven large naval battles (five nighttime surface actions and two carrier battles) , and continual , almost daily , aerial battles culminated in the decisive Naval Battle of Guadalcanal in early November , in which the last Japanese attempt to bombard Henderson Field from the sea and land with enough troops to retake it , was defeated . In December , the Japanese abandoned their efforts to retake Guadalcanal and evacuated their remaining forces by 7 February 1943 , in the face of an offensive by the US Army 's XIV Corps .

The Guadalcanal campaign was a significant strategic combined arms Allied victory in the Pacific theater . The Japanese had reached the peak of their conquests in the Pacific . The victories at Milne Bay , Buna @-@ Gona , and Guadalcanal marked the Allied transition from defensive operations to the strategic initiative in the theater , leading to offensive operations such as the Solomon Islands , New Guinea , and Central Pacific campaigns , that eventually resulted in Japan 's eventual surrender and the end of World War II .

= = Background = =

= = = Strategic considerations = = =

On 7 December 1941 , Japanese forces attacked the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor , Hawaii . The attack crippled much of the U.S. battleship fleet and precipitated an open and formal state of war between the two nations . The initial goals of Japanese leaders were to neutralize the US Navy , seize possessions rich in natural resources , and establish strategic military bases to defend Japan 's empire in the Pacific Ocean and Asia . To further those goals , Japanese forces captured the Philippines , Thailand , Malaya , Singapore , Burma , the Dutch East Indies , Wake Island , Gilbert Islands , New Britain and Guam . Joining the U.S. in the war against Japan were the rest of the Allied powers , several of whom , including the United Kingdom , Australia and the Netherlands had also been attacked by Japan .

Two attempts by the Japanese to continue their strategic initiative and offensively extend their outer defensive perimeter in the south and central Pacific to where they could threaten Australia and Hawaii or the US West Coast were thwarted at the naval battles of Coral Sea and Midway respectively . Coral Sea was a tactical stalemate , but a strategic Allied victory which became clear only much later . Midway was not only the Allies ' first clear major victory against the Japanese , it significantly reduced the offensive capability of Japan 's carrier forces , but did not change their offensive mindset for several crucial months in which they compounded mistakes by moving ahead with brash , even brazen decisions , such as the attempt to assault Port Moresby over the Kokoda

trail . Up to this point , the Allies had been on the defensive in the Pacific but these strategic victories provided them an opportunity to seize the initiative from Japan .

The Allies chose the Solomon Islands (a protectorate of the United Kingdom) , specifically the southern Solomon Islands of Guadalcanal , Tulagi and Florida Island , as the first target , designated Task One , codenamed Pestilence , with three specific objectives . Originally the objectives were the occupation of the Santa Cruz Islands , codenamed Huddle , Tulagi , codenamed Watchtower , and " adjacent positions " . Guadalcanal (Code name Cactus) , eventually the focus of the operation , was not even mentioned in the early directive and only later took on the operation name Watchtower .

The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) had occupied Tulagi in May 1942 and had constructed a seaplane base nearby . Allied concern grew when , in early July 1942 , the IJN began constructing a large airfield at Lunga Point on nearby Guadalcanal ? from such a base Japanese long @-@ range bombers would threaten the sea lines of communication from the West Coast of the Americas to the populous East Coast of Australia . By August 1942 , the Japanese had about 900 naval troops on Tulagi and nearby islands and 2 @,@ 800 personnel (2 @,@ 200 being Korean forced laborers & trustees as well as Japanese construction specialists) on Guadalcanal . These bases would protect Japan 's major base at Rabaul , threaten Allied supply and communication lines and establish a staging area for a planned offensive against Fiji , New Caledonia and Samoa (Operation FS) . The Japanese planned to deploy 45 fighters and 60 bombers to Guadalcanal . In the overall strategy for 1942 these aircraft could provide air cover for Japanese naval forces advancing farther into the South Pacific .

The Allied plan to invade the southern Solomons was conceived by U.S. Admiral Ernest King , Commander in Chief , United States Fleet . He proposed the offensive to deny the use of the islands by the Japanese as bases to threaten the supply routes between the United States and Australia and to use them as starting points . With US President Franklin D. Roosevelt 's tacit consent , King also advocated the invasion of Guadalcanal . Because the United States supported Great Britain 's proposal that priority be given to defeating Germany before Japan , the Pacific theater had to compete for personnel and resources with the European theater .

An early obstacle was desire by both the Army and Roosevelt to initiate action in Europe . In addition there was an issue of command in which Tulagi lay in the area under command of General Douglas MacArthur while the Santa Cruz Islands lay in Admiral Chester W. Nimitz 's Pacific Ocean Area which would also supply almost all offensive forces that would prepare and be supplied and covered from that area . Both were overcome and Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army , General George C. Marshall gave the operation full support , even if MacArthur 's command could not lend support , and the Navy had to take full responsibility . As a result , and in order to preserve unity of command , the boundary between MacArthur 's Southwest Pacific Area and Nimitz 's Pacific Ocean Area was shifted 60 miles (97 km) to 360 miles (580 km) to the west effective 1 August 1942 .

The CJCS ordered for 1942 ? 43 Pacific objectives : that Guadalcanal would be carried out in conjunction with an Allied offensive in New Guinea under Douglas MacArthur , to capture the Admiralty Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago , including the major Japanese base at Rabaul . The directive held that the eventual goal was the American reconquest of the Philippines . The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff created the South Pacific theater , with Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley taking command on 19 June 1942 , to direct the offensive in the Solomons . Admiral Chester Nimitz , based at Pearl Harbor , was designated as overall Allied commander in chief for Pacific forces .

= = = Task force = = =

In preparation for the offensive in the Pacific in May 1942 , U.S. Marine Major General Alexander Vandegrift was ordered to move his 1st Marine Division from the United States to New Zealand . Other Allied land , naval and air force units were sent to establish or reinforce bases in Fiji , Samoa , New Hebrides and New Caledonia . Espiritu Santo , New Hebrides , was selected as the headquarters and main base for the offensive , codenamed Operation Watchtower , with the commencement date set for 7 August 1942 .

At first , the Allied offensive was planned just for Tulagi and the Santa Cruz Islands , omitting Guadalcanal . After Allied reconnaissance discovered the Japanese airfield construction efforts on Guadalcanal , its capture was added to the plan and the Santa Cruz operation was (eventually) dropped . The Japanese were aware , via signals intelligence , of the large @-@ scale movement of Allied forces in the South Pacific area but concluded that the Allies were reinforcing Australia and perhaps Port Moresby in New Guinea .

The Watchtower force , numbering 75 warships and transports (of vessels from the U.S. and Australia) , assembled near Fiji on 26 July 1942 and engaged in one rehearsal landing prior to leaving for Guadalcanal on 31 July . The commander of the Allied expeditionary force was U.S. Vice Admiral Frank Fletcher (whose flag was on the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga) . Commanding the amphibious forces was U.S. Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner . Vandegrift led the 16 @,@ 000 Allied (primarily U.S. Marine) infantry earmarked for the landings .

The troops sent to Guadalcanal were fresh from military training and armed with bolt action M1903 Springfield rifles and a meager 10 @-@ day supply of ammunition . Because of the need to get them into battle quickly , the operation planners had reduced their supplies from a 90 @-@ days to only 60 days . The men of the 1st Marine Division began referring to the coming battle as " Operation Shoestring " .

= = Events = =

= = = Landings = = =

Bad weather allowed the Allied expeditionary force to arrive unseen by the Japanese on the night of 6 August and the morning of 7 August , taking the defenders by surprise . This is sometimes called the Midnight Raid on Guadalcanal . Japanese patrol aircraft from Tulagi had searched the area the Allied invasion fleet was moving through , but missed seeing the Allied ships due to severe storms and heavy clouds . The landing force split into two groups , with one group assaulting Guadalcanal , and the other Tulagi , Florida , and nearby islands . Allied warships bombarded the invasion beaches while U.S. carrier aircraft bombed Japanese positions on the target islands and destroyed 15 Japanese seaplanes at their base near Tulagi .

Tulagi and two nearby small islands , Gavutu and Tanambogo , were assaulted by 3 @,@ 000 U.S. Marines . The 886 IJN personnel manning the naval and seaplane bases on the three islands fiercely resisted the Marine attacks . With some difficulty , the Marines secured all three islands ; Tulagi on 8 August , and Gavutu and Tanambogo by 9 August . The Japanese defenders were killed almost to the last man , while the Marines suffered 122 killed .

In contrast to Tulagi , Gavutu , and Tanambogo , the landings on Guadalcanal encountered much less resistance . At 09 : 10 on 7 August , Vandegrift and 11 @,@ 000 U.S. Marines came ashore on Guadalcanal between Koli Point and Lunga Point . Advancing towards Lunga Point , they encountered little resistance and secured the airfield by 16 : 00 on 8 August . The Japanese naval construction units and combat troops , under the command of Captain Kanae Monzen , panicked by the warship bombardment and aerial bombing , had abandoned the airfield area and fled about 3 miles (4 @.@ 8 km) west to the Matanikau River and Point Cruz area , leaving behind food , supplies , intact construction equipment and vehicles , and 13 dead .

During the landing operations on 7 and 8 August , Japanese naval aircraft based at Rabaul , under the command of Sadayoshi Yamada , attacked the Allied amphibious forces several times , setting afire the transport USS George F. Elliot (which sank two days later) and heavily damaging the destroyer USS Jarvis . In the air attacks over the two days , the Japanese lost 36 aircraft , while the U.S. lost 19 , both in combat and to accident , including 14 carrier fighters .

After these clashes , Fletcher was concerned about the losses to his carrier fighter aircraft strength , anxious about the threat to his carriers from further Japanese air attacks , and worried about his ships ' fuel levels . Fletcher withdrew from the Solomon Islands area with his carrier task forces the evening of 8 August . As a result of the loss of carrier @-@ based air cover , Turner decided to

withdraw his ships from Guadalcanal , even though less than half of the supplies and heavy equipment needed by the troops ashore had been unloaded . Turner planned , however , to unload as many supplies as possible on Guadalcanal and Tulagi throughout the night of 8 August and then depart with his ships early on 9 August .

== = Battle of Savo Island == =

That night , as the transports unloaded , two groups of screening Allied cruisers and destroyers , under the command of British Rear Admiral Victor Crutchley VC , were surprised and defeated by a Japanese force of seven cruisers and one destroyer from the 8th Fleet based at Rabaul and Kavieng and commanded by Japanese Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa . In the Battle of Savo Island one Australian and three American cruisers were sunk and one American cruiser and two destroyers were damaged . The Japanese suffered moderate damage to one cruiser . Mikawa , who was unaware Fletcher was preparing to withdraw with the U.S. carriers , immediately retired to Rabaul without attempting to attack the transports . Mikawa was concerned about daylight U.S. carrier air attacks if he remained in the area . Bereft of his carrier air cover , Turner decided to withdraw his remaining naval forces by the evening of 9 August and in so doing left the Marines ashore without much of the heavy equipment , provisions and troops still aboard the transports . Mikawa 's decision not to attempt to destroy the Allied transport ships when he had the opportunity proved to be a crucial strategic mistake .

== = Initial operations == =

The 11 @, @ 000 Marines on Guadalcanal initially concentrated on forming a loose defensive perimeter around Lunga Point and the airfield , moving the landed supplies within the perimeter and finishing the airfield . In four days of intense effort , the supplies were moved from the landing beach into dispersed dumps within the perimeter . Work began on the airfield immediately , mainly using captured Japanese equipment . On 12 August the airfield was named Henderson Field after Lofton R. Henderson , a Marine aviator who was killed during the Battle of Midway . By 18 August the airfield was ready for operation . Five days worth of food had been landed from the transports , which , along with captured Japanese provisions , gave the Marines a total of 14 days worth of food . To conserve supplies , the troops were limited to two meals per day .

Allied troops encountered a severe strain of dysentery soon after the landings , with one in five Marines afflicted by mid @- @ August . Tropical diseases would affect the fighting strengths of both sides throughout the campaign . Although some of the Korean construction workers surrendered to the Marines , most of the remaining Japanese and Korean personnel gathered just west of the Lunga perimeter on the west bank of the Matanikau River and subsisted mainly on coconuts . A Japanese naval outpost was also located at Taivu Point , about 35 kilometres (22 mi) east of the Lunga perimeter . On 8 August , a Japanese destroyer from Rabaul delivered 113 naval reinforcement troops to the Matanikau position .

== = The Goettge Patrol == =

On the evening of 12 August , a 25 @- @ man U.S. Marine patrol , led by Division D @- @ 2 Lieutenant Colonel Frank Goettge and primarily consisting of intelligence personnel , landed by boat west of the Lunga perimeter , between Point Cruz and the Matanikau River , on a reconnaissance mission with a secondary objective of contacting a group of Japanese troops that U.S. forces believed might be willing to surrender . Soon after the patrol landed , a nearby platoon of Japanese naval troops attacked and almost completely wiped out the Marine patrol .

In response , on 19 August , Vandegrift sent three companies of the U.S. 5th Marine Regiment to attack the Japanese troop concentration west of the Matanikau . One company attacked across the sandbar at the mouth of the Matanikau river while another crossed the river 1 @, @ 000 metres (1 @, @ 100 yd) inland and attacked the Japanese forces located in Matanikau village . The third

landed by boat further west and attacked Kokumbuna village . After briefly occupying the two villages , the three Marine companies returned to the Lunga perimeter , having killed about 65 Japanese soldiers while losing four Marines . This action , sometimes referred to as the " First Battle of the Matanikau " , was the first of several major actions around the Matanikau River during the campaign .

On 20 August , the escort carrier USS Long Island delivered two squadrons of Marine aircraft to Henderson Field , one a squadron of 19 Grumman F4F Wildcats and the other a squadron of 12 Douglas SBD Dauntlesses . The aircraft at Henderson became known as the " Cactus Air Force " (CAF) after the Allied codename for Guadalcanal . The Marine fighters went into action the next day on the first of the almost @-@ daily Japanese bomber air raids . On 22 August five U.S. Army Bell P @-@ 400 Airacobras and their pilots arrived at Henderson Field .

= = = Battle of the Tenaru = = =

In response to the Allied landings on Guadalcanal , the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters assigned the Imperial Japanese Army 's (IJA) 17th Army , a corps @-@ sized command based at Rabaul and under the command of Lieutenant General Harukichi Hyakutake , the task of retaking Guadalcanal . The army was to be supported by Japanese naval units , including the Combined Fleet under the command of Isoroku Yamamoto , which was headquartered at Truk . The 17th Army , at that time heavily involved in the Japanese campaign in New Guinea , had only a few units available . Of these , the 35th Infantry Brigade under Major General Kiyotake Kawaguchi was at Palau , the 4th (Aoba) Infantry Regiment was in the Philippines and the 28th (Ichiki) Infantry Regiment , under the command of Colonel Kiyonao Ichiki , was on board transport ships near Guam . The different units began to move towards Guadalcanal via Truk and Rabaul immediately , but Ichiki 's regiment , being the closest , arrived in the area first . A " First Element " of Ichiki 's unit , consisting of about 917 soldiers , landed from destroyers at Taivu Point , east of the Lunga perimeter , after midnight on 19 August , then made a 9 @-@ mile (14 km) night march west toward the Marine perimeter .

Underestimating the strength of Allied forces on Guadalcanal , Ichiki 's unit conducted a nighttime frontal assault on Marine positions at Alligator Creek (often called the " Ilu River " on U.S. Marine maps) on the east side of the Lunga perimeter in the early morning hours of 21 August . Ichiki 's assault was defeated with heavy Japanese losses in what became known as the Battle of the Tenaru . After daybreak , the Marine units counterattacked Ichiki 's surviving troops , killing many more of them . The dead included Ichiki , though it has been claimed that he committed seppuku after realizing the magnitude of his defeat , rather than dying in combat . In total , all but 128 of the original 917 members of the Ichiki Regiment 's First Element were killed in the battle . The survivors returned to Taivu Point , notified 17th Army headquarters of their defeat and awaited further reinforcements and orders from Rabaul .

= = = Battle of the Eastern Solomons = = =

As the Tenaru battle was ending , more Japanese reinforcements were already on their way . Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto put together a very powerful expeditionary force . Their aim was to destroy any American fleet units in the area , and then eliminate Henderson Field . This force sortied from Truk on 23 August . Simultaneously , several other reinforcement , support , and bombardment groups sortied from both Truk and Rabaul . Three slow transports departed from Truk on 16 August carrying the remaining 1 @, @ 400 soldiers from Ichiki 's (28th) Infantry Regiment plus 500 naval marines from the 5th Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force . The transports were guarded by 13 warships commanded by Japanese Rear Admiral Raizo Tanaka , who planned to land the troops on Guadalcanal on 24 August . To cover the landings of these troops and provide support for the operation to retake Henderson Field from Allied forces , Yamamoto directed Chuichi Nagumo to sortie with a carrier force from Truk on 21 August and head towards the southern Solomon Islands . Nagumo 's force included three carriers and 30 other warships .

Simultaneously , three U.S. carrier task forces under Fletcher approached Guadalcanal to counter the Japanese offensive efforts . The American forces only had two carriers , which were the Saratoga and Enterprise , and their 176 aircraft to meet the two Japanese fleet carriers Shokaku and Zuikaku and the light carrier Ryujo . The Japanese had 177 aircraft . On 24 and 25 August , the two carrier forces fought the Battle of the Eastern Solomons , which resulted in both fleets retreating from the area after taking some damage , with the Japanese losing one light aircraft carrier . Yamamoto next sent the light carrier named Ryujo on a bait role ahead of the rest of the fleet , and sending its planes to attack Guadalcanal . This drew attention from the American pilots . Meanwhile , the aircraft from the two fleet carriers would next charge in to attack the Americans . The bait carrier Ryujo was overwhelmed . It was hit by several 1 @, @ 000 pound bombs then subsequently was hit by an aerial torpedo . The ship was then abandoned and eventually sank that same night . Tanaka 's convoy , after suffering heavy damage during the battle from an air attack by CAF aircraft from Henderson Field , including the sinking of one of the transports , was forced to divert to the Shortland Islands in the northern Solomons in order to transfer the surviving troops to destroyers for later delivery to Guadalcanal . The Japanese had launched an air raid on Guadalcanal , causing chaos and havoc , while American Marine aircraft had engaged Tanaka 's convoy which was headed by the flagship Jintsu near Taivu Point . A Japanese transport was sunk . The older destroyer Mutsuki was so badly damaged that it had to be scuttled . Several other warships were damaged including Tanaka 's own Jintsu . At this point , Tanaka withdrew and rescheduled the supply run for the night of 28 August via the destroyers . Meanwhile , the American carrier Wasp positioned itself east of Guadalcanal expecting Japanese movement there . However , there was none to be found . Strategically , the Japanese had an opportunity here for a decisive victory . However , they failed to achieve it . They allowed the Americans to step away with a view of victory . In addition , the reinforcement of Henderson Field of Guadalcanal by Enterprise 's aircraft established a precedent . This made daylight supply runs to Guadalcanal impossible for Japanese shipments . Only weeks before this , the Japanese had total control of the sea in this particular region ; now they were forced to make supply runs only under the cover of darkness .

= = = Air battles over Henderson Field and strengthening of the Lunga defenses = = =

Throughout August , small numbers of U.S. aircraft and their crews continued to arrive at Guadalcanal . By the end of August , 64 aircraft of various types were stationed at Henderson Field . On 3 September , the commander of 1st Marine Aircraft Wing , U.S. Marine Brigadier General Roy S. Geiger , arrived with his staff and took command of all air operations at Henderson Field . Air battles between the Allied aircraft at Henderson and Japanese bombers and fighters from Rabaul continued almost daily . Between 26 August and 5 September , the U.S. lost about 15 aircraft while the Japanese lost approximately 19 aircraft . More than half of the downed U.S. aircrews were rescued while most of the Japanese aircrews were never recovered . The eight @-@ hour round trip flight from Rabaul to Guadalcanal , about 1 @, @ 120 miles (1 @, @ 800 km) total , seriously hampered Japanese efforts to establish air superiority over Henderson Field . Australian coastwatchers on Bougainville and New Georgia islands were often able to provide Allied forces on Guadalcanal with advance notice of inbound Japanese air strikes , allowing the U.S. fighters time to take off and position themselves to attack the Japanese bombers and fighters as they approached the island . Thus , the Japanese air forces were slowly losing a war of attrition in the skies above Guadalcanal .

During this time , Vandegrift continued to direct efforts to strengthen and improve the defenses of the Lunga perimeter . Between 21 August and 3 September , he relocated three Marine battalions , including the 1st Raider Battalion , under Merritt A. Edson (Edson 's Raiders) , and the 1st Parachute Battalion from Tulagi and Gavutu to Guadalcanal . These units added about 1 @, @ 500 troops to Vandegrift 's original 11 @, @ 000 men defending Henderson Field . The 1st Parachute Battalion , which had suffered heavy casualties in the Battle of Tulagi and Gavutu @-@ Tanambogo in August , was placed under Edson 's command .

The other relocated battalion , the 1st Battalion , 5th Marine Regiment (1 / 5) , was landed by boat

west of the Matanikau near Kokumbuna village on 27 August with the mission of attacking Japanese units in the area , much as in the first Matanikau action of 19 August . In this case , however , the Marines were impeded by difficult terrain , hot sun , and well @-@ emplaced Japanese defenses . The next morning , the Marines found that the Japanese defenders had departed during the night , so the Marines returned to the Lunga perimeter by boat . Losses in this action were 20 Japanese and 3 Marines killed .

Small Allied naval convoys arrived at Guadalcanal on 23 August , 29 August , 1 September , and 8 September to provide the Marines at Lunga with more food , ammunition , aircraft fuel , and aircraft technicians . The convoy on 1 September also brought 392 construction engineers to maintain and improve Henderson Field .

= = = Tokyo Express = = =

By 23 August , Kawaguchi 's 35th Infantry Brigade reached Truk and was loaded onto slow transport ships for the rest of the trip to Guadalcanal . The damage done to Tanaka 's convoy during the Battle of the Eastern Solomons caused the Japanese to reconsider trying to deliver more troops to Guadalcanal by slow transport . Instead , the ships carrying Kawaguchi 's soldiers were sent to Rabaul . From there , the Japanese planned to deliver Kawaguchi 's men to Guadalcanal by destroyers staging through a Japanese naval base in the Shortland Islands . The Japanese destroyers were usually able to make round trips down " The Slot " (New Georgia Sound) to Guadalcanal and back in a single night throughout the campaign , minimizing their exposure to Allied air attack . The runs became known as the " Tokyo Express " to Allied forces and were labeled " Rat Transportation " by the Japanese . Delivering the troops in this manner , however , prevented most of the heavy equipment and supplies , such as heavy artillery , vehicles , and much food and ammunition , from being transported to Guadalcanal with them . In addition , this activity tied up destroyers the IJN desperately needed for commerce defense . Either inability or unwillingness prevented Allied naval commanders from challenging Japanese naval forces at night , so the Japanese controlled the seas around the Solomon Islands during nighttime . However , any Japanese ship remaining during daylight hours within range of the aircraft at Henderson Field , about 200 miles (320 km) , was in great danger from air attack . This tactical situation existed for the next several months of the campaign .

Between 29 August and 4 September , various Japanese light cruisers , destroyers , and patrol boats were able to land almost 5 @,@ 000 troops at Taivu Point , including most of the 35th Infantry Brigade , much of the Aoba (4th) Regiment , and the rest of Ichiki 's regiment . General Kawaguchi , who landed at Taivu Point on 31 August Express run , was placed in command of all Japanese forces on Guadalcanal . A barge convoy took another 1 @,@ 000 soldiers of Kawaguchi 's brigade , under the command of Colonel Akinosuke Oka , to Kamimbo , west of the Lunga perimeter .

= = = Battle of Edson 's Ridge = = =

On 7 September , Kawaguchi issued his attack plan to " rout and annihilate the enemy in the vicinity of the Guadalcanal Island airfield . " Kawaguchi 's attack plan called for his forces , split into three divisions , to approach the Lunga perimeter inland , culminating with a surprise night attack . Oka 's forces would attack the perimeter from the west while Ichiki 's Second Echelon , now renamed the Kuma Battalion , would attack from the east . The main attack would be by Kawaguchi 's " Center Body " , numbering 3 @,@ 000 men in three battalions , from the jungle south of the Lunga perimeter . By 7 September , most of Kawaguchi 's troops had departed Taivu to begin marching towards Lunga Point along the coastline . About 250 Japanese troops remained behind to guard the brigade 's supply base at Taivu .

Meanwhile , native scouts under the direction of Martin Clemens , a coastwatcher officer in the Solomon Islands Protectorate Defense Force and the British district officer for Guadalcanal , brought reports to the U.S. Marines of Japanese troops at Taivu near the village of Tasimboko . Edson planned a raid on the Japanese troop concentration at Taivu . On 8 September , after being dropped

@-@ off near Taivu by boat , Edson 's men captured Tasimboko as the Japanese defenders retreated into the jungle . In Tasimboko , Edson 's troops discovered Kawaguchi 's main supply depot , including large stockpiles of food , ammunition , medical supplies , and a powerful shortwave radio . After destroying everything in sight , except for some documents and equipment carried back with them , the Marines returned to the Lunga perimeter . The mounds of supplies along with intelligence gathered from the captured documents informed the Marines that at least 3 @, @ 000 Japanese troops were on the island and apparently planning an attack .

Edson , along with Colonel Gerald C. Thomas , Vandegrift 's operations officer , correctly believed that the Japanese attack would come at a narrow , grassy , 1 @, @ 000 yards (910 m) -long , coral ridge that ran parallel to the Lunga River located just south of Henderson Field . The ridge , called Lunga Ridge , offered a natural avenue of approach to the airfield , commanded the surrounding area and , at that time , was almost undefended . On 11 September , the 840 men of Edson 's battalion were deployed onto and around the ridge .

On the night of 12 September , Kawaguchi 's 1st Battalion attacked the Raiders between the Lunga River and ridge , forcing one Marine company to fall back to the ridge before the Japanese halted their attack for the night . The next night Kawaguchi faced Edson 's 830 Raiders with 3 @, @ 000 troops of his brigade plus an assortment of light artillery . The Japanese attack began just after nightfall with Kawaguchi 's 1st battalion assaulting Edson 's right flank just to the west of the ridge . After breaking through the Marine lines the battalion 's assault was eventually stopped by Marine units guarding the northern part of the ridge .

Two companies from Kawaguchi 's 2nd Battalion charged up the southern edge of the ridge and pushed Edson 's troops back to Hill 123 on the center part of the ridge . Throughout the night Marines at this position supported by artillery defeated wave after wave of frontal Japanese attacks , some of which resulted in hand @-@ to @-@ hand fighting . Japanese units that infiltrated past the ridge to the edge of the airfield were also repulsed . Attacks by the Kuma battalion and Oka 's unit at other locations on the Lunga perimeter were also defeated . On 14 September Kawaguchi led the survivors of his shattered brigade on a five @-@ day march west to the Matanikau Valley to join with Oka 's unit . In total Kawaguchi 's forces lost about 850 killed and the Marines 104 .

On 15 September Hyakutake at Rabaul learned of Kawaguchi 's defeat and forwarded the news to Imperial General Headquarters in Japan . In an emergency session the top Japanese IJA and IJN command staffs concluded that , " Guadalcanal might develop into the decisive battle of the war . " The results of the battle now began to have a telling strategic impact on Japanese operations in other areas of the Pacific . Hyakutake realized that in order to send sufficient troops and matériel to defeat the Allied forces on Guadalcanal he could not at the same time support the major ongoing Japanese offensive on the Kokoda Track in New Guinea . Hyakutake , with the concurrence of General Headquarters , ordered his troops on New Guinea who were within 30 miles (48 km) of their objective of Port Moresby to withdraw until the " Guadalcanal matter " was resolved . Hyakutake prepared to send more troops to Guadalcanal for another attempt to recapture Henderson Field .

= = = Reinforcement = = =

As the Japanese regrouped west of the Matanikau , the U.S. forces concentrated on shoring up and strengthening their Lunga defenses . On 14 September Vandegrift moved another battalion , the 3rd Battalion , 2nd Marine Regiment (3 / 2) , from Tulagi to Guadalcanal . On 18 September an Allied naval convoy delivered 4 @, @ 157 men from the 3rd Provisional Marine Brigade (the 7th Marine Regiment plus a battalion from the 11th Marine Regiment and some additional support units) , 137 vehicles , tents , aviation fuel , ammunition , rations and engineering equipment to Guadalcanal . These crucial reinforcements allowed Vandegrift , beginning on 19 September , to establish an unbroken line of defense around the Lunga perimeter . While covering this convoy the aircraft carrier USS Wasp was sunk by the Japanese submarine I @-@ 19 southeast of Guadalcanal , temporarily leaving only one Allied aircraft carrier (USS Hornet) in operation in the South Pacific area . Vandegrift also made some changes in the senior leadership of his combat units , transferring off

the island several officers who did not meet his performance standards and promoting junior officers who had proven themselves to take their places . One of these was the recently promoted Colonel Merritt Edson who was placed in command of the 5th Marine Regiment .

A lull occurred in the air war over Guadalcanal , with no Japanese air raids occurring between 14 and 27 September due to bad weather , during which both sides reinforced their respective air units . The Japanese delivered 85 fighters and bombers to their air units at Rabaul while the U.S. brought 23 fighters and attack aircraft to Henderson Field . On 20 September the Japanese counted 117 total aircraft at Rabaul while the Allies tallied 71 aircraft at Henderson Field . The air war resumed with a Japanese air raid on Guadalcanal on 27 September which was contested by U.S. Navy and Marine fighters from Henderson Field .

The Japanese immediately began to prepare for their next attempt to recapture Henderson Field . The 3rd Battalion , 4th (Aoba) Infantry Regiment had landed at Kamimbo Bay on the western end of Guadalcanal on 11 September , too late to join Kawaguchi 's attack . By now , though , the battalion had joined Oka 's forces near the Matanikau . Tokyo Express runs by destroyers on 14 , 20 , 21 and 24 September brought food and ammunition as well as 280 men from the 1st Battalion , Aoba Regiment , to Kamimbo on Guadalcanal . Meanwhile , the Japanese 2nd and 38th Infantry Divisions were transported from the Dutch East Indies to Rabaul beginning on 13 September . The Japanese planned to transport a total of 17 @, @ 500 troops from these two divisions to Guadalcanal to take part in the next major attack on the Lunga Perimeter set for 20 October 1942 .

= = = Actions along the Matanikau = = =

Vandegrift and his staff were aware that Kawaguchi 's troops had retreated to the area west of the Matanikau and that numerous groups of Japanese stragglers were scattered throughout the area between the Lunga Perimeter and the Matanikau River . Vandegrift , therefore , decided to conduct another series of small unit operations around the Matanikau Valley . The purpose of these operations was to mop up the scattered groups of Japanese troops east of the Matanikau and to keep the main body of Japanese soldiers off @-@ balance to prevent them from consolidating their positions so close to the main Marine defenses at Lunga Point .

The first U.S. Marine operation conducted between 23 and 27 September by elements of three U.S. Marine battalions , an attack on Japanese forces west of the Matanikau , was repulsed by Kawaguchi 's troops under Akinosuke Oka 's local command . During the action three Marine companies were surrounded by Japanese forces near Point Cruz west of the Matanikau , took heavy losses , and barely escaped with assistance from the destroyer USS Monssen and landing craft manned by U.S. Coast Guard personnel .

In the second action between 6 and 9 October a larger force of Marines successfully crossed the Matanikau River , attacked newly landed Japanese forces from the 2nd Infantry Division under the command of generals Masao Maruyama and Yumio Nasu , and inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese 4th Infantry Regiment . The second action forced the Japanese to retreat from their positions east of the Matanikau and hindered Japanese preparations for their planned major offensive on the U.S. Lunga defenses .

Between 9 and 11 October the U.S. 1st Battalion 2nd Marines raided two small Japanese outposts about 30 miles (48 km) east of the Lunga perimeter at Gurabusu and Koilotumaria near Aola Bay . The raids killed 35 Japanese at a cost of 17 Marines and three U.S. Navy personnel killed .

= = = Battle of Cape Esperance = = =

Throughout the last week of September and the first week of October , Tokyo Express runs delivered troops from the Japanese 2nd Infantry Division to Guadalcanal . The Japanese Navy promised to support the Army 's planned offensive by not only delivering the necessary troops , equipment , and supplies to the island , but by stepping @-@ up air attacks on Henderson Field and sending warships to bombard the airfield .

In the meantime , Millard F. Harmon , commander of United States Army forces in the South Pacific

, convinced Ghormley that U.S. Marine forces on Guadalcanal needed to be reinforced immediately if the Allies were to successfully defend the island from the next , expected Japanese offensive . Thus , on 8 October , the 2 @, @ 837 men of the 164th Infantry Regiment from the U.S. Army 's Americal Division boarded ships at New Caledonia for the trip to Guadalcanal with a projected arrival date of 13 October . To protect the transports carrying the 164th to Guadalcanal , Ghormley ordered Task Force 64 , consisting of four cruisers and five destroyers under U.S. Rear Admiral Norman Scott , to intercept and combat any Japanese ships that approached Guadalcanal and threatened the arrival of the transport convoy .

Mikawa 's 8th Fleet staff scheduled a large and important Express run for the night of 11 October . Two seaplane tenders and six destroyers were to deliver 728 soldiers plus artillery and ammunition to Guadalcanal . At the same time but in a separate operation three heavy cruisers and two destroyers under the command of Rear Admiral Aritomo Got? were to bombard Henderson Field with special explosive shells with the object of destroying the CAF and the airfield 's facilities . Because U.S. Navy warships had yet to attempt to interdict any Tokyo Express missions to Guadalcanal , the Japanese were not expecting any opposition from Allied naval surface forces that night .

Just before midnight , Scott 's warships detected Got? 's force on radar near the entrance to the strait between Savo Island and Guadalcanal . Scott 's force was in a position to cross the T of Got? 's unsuspecting formation . Opening fire , Scott 's warships sank one of Got? 's cruisers and one of his destroyers , heavily damaged another cruiser , mortally wounded Got? , and forced the rest of Got? 's warships to abandon the bombardment mission and retreat . During the exchange of gunfire , one of Scott 's destroyers was sunk and one cruiser and another destroyer were heavily damaged . In the meantime , the Japanese supply convoy successfully completed unloading at Guadalcanal and began its return journey without being discovered by Scott 's force . Later on the morning of 12 October , four Japanese destroyers from the supply convoy turned back to assist Got? 's retreating , damaged warships . Air attacks by CAF aircraft from Henderson Field sank two of these destroyers later that day . The convoy of U.S. Army troops reached Guadalcanal as scheduled the next day and successfully delivered its cargo and passengers to the island .

= = = Henderson Field = = =

= = = = Battleship bombardment = = = =

Despite the U.S. victory off Cape Esperance , the Japanese continued with plans and preparations for their large offensive scheduled for later in October . The Japanese decided to risk a one @-@ time departure from their usual practice of only using fast warships to deliver their men and materiel to the island . On 13 October , a convoy comprising six cargo ships with eight screening destroyers departed the Shortland Islands for Guadalcanal . The convoy carried 4 @, @ 500 troops from the 16th and 230th Infantry Regiments , some naval marines , two batteries of heavy artillery , and one company of tanks .

To protect the approaching convoy from attack by CAF aircraft , Yamamoto sent two battleships from Truk to bombard Henderson Field . At 01 : 33 on 14 October , Kong? and Haruna , escorted by one light cruiser and nine destroyers , reached Guadalcanal and opened fire on Henderson Field from a distance of 16 @, @ 000 metres (17 @, @ 500 yd) . Over the next one hour and 23 minutes , the two battleships fired 973 14 @-@ inch (356 mm) shells into the Lunga perimeter , most of them falling in and around the 2 @, @ 200 metres (2 @, @ 400 yd) square area of the airfield . Many of the shells were fragmentation shells , specifically designed to destroy land targets . The bombardment heavily damaged both runways , burned almost all of the available aviation fuel , destroyed 48 of the CAF 's 90 aircraft , and killed 41 men , including six CAF pilots . The battleship force immediately returned to Truk .

In spite of the heavy damage , Henderson personnel were able to restore one of the runways to operational condition within a few hours . Seventeen SBDs and 20 Wildcats at Espiritu Santo were

quickly flown to Henderson and U.S. Army and Marine transport aircraft began to shuttle aviation gasoline from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal . Now aware of the approach of the large Japanese reinforcement convoy , the U.S. desperately sought some way to interdict the convoy before it could reach Guadalcanal . Using fuel drained from destroyed aircraft and from a cache in the nearby jungle , the CAF attacked the convoy twice on the 14th , but caused no damage .

The Japanese convoy reached Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal at midnight on 14 October and began unloading . Throughout the day of 15 October , a string of CAF aircraft from Henderson bombed and strafed the unloading convoy , destroying three of the cargo ships . The remainder of the convoy departed that night , having unloaded all of the troops and about two @-@ thirds of the supplies and equipment . Several Japanese heavy cruisers also bombarded Henderson on the nights of 14 and 15 October , destroying a few additional CAF aircraft , but failing to cause significant further damage to the airfield .

= = = Battle for Henderson Field = = =

Between 1 and 17 October , the Japanese delivered 15 @,@ 000 troops to Guadalcanal , giving Hyakutake 20 @,@ 000 total troops to employ for his planned offensive . Because of the loss of their positions on the east side of the Matanikau , the Japanese decided that an attack on the U.S. defenses along the coast would be prohibitively difficult . Therefore , Hyakutake decided that the main thrust of his planned attack would be from south of Henderson Field . His 2nd Division (augmented by troops from the 38th Division) , under Lieutenant General Masao Maruyama and comprising 7 @,@ 000 soldiers in three infantry regiments of three battalions each was ordered to march through the jungle and attack the American defences from the south near the east bank of the Lunga River . The date of the attack was set for 22 October , then changed to 23 October . To distract the Americans from the planned attack from the south , Hyakutake 's heavy artillery plus five battalions of infantry (about 2 @,@ 900 men) under Major General Tadashi Sumiyoshi were to attack the American defenses from the west along the coastal corridor . The Japanese estimated that there were 10 @,@ 000 American troops on the island , when in fact there were about 23 @,@ 000 .

On 12 October , a company of Japanese engineers began to break a trail , called the " Maruyama Road " , from the Matanikau towards the southern portion of the U.S. Lunga perimeter . The 15 miles (24 km) long trail traversed some of the most difficult terrain on Guadalcanal , including numerous rivers and streams , deep , muddy ravines , steep ridges , and dense jungle . Between 16 and 18 October , the 2nd Division began their march along the Maruyama Road .

By 23 October , Maruyama 's forces still struggled through the jungle to reach the American lines . That evening , after learning that his forces had yet to reach their attack positions , Hyakutake postponed the attack to 19 : 00 on 24 October . The Americans remained completely unaware of the approach of Maruyama 's forces .

Sumiyoshi was informed by Hyakutake 's staff of the postponement of the offensive to 24 October , but was unable to contact his troops to inform them of the delay . Thus , at dusk on 23 October , two battalions of the 4th Infantry Regiment and the nine tanks of the 1st Independent Tank Company launched attacks on the U.S. Marine defenses at the mouth of the Matanikau . U.S. Marine artillery , cannon , and small arms fire repulsed the attacks , destroying all the tanks and killing many of the Japanese soldiers while suffering only light casualties .

Finally , late on 24 October Maruyama 's forces reached the U.S. Lunga perimeter . Over two consecutive nights Maruyama 's forces conducted numerous , unsuccessful frontal assaults on positions defended by troops of the 1st Battalion , 7th Marines under Lieutenant Colonel Chesty Puller and the U.S. Army 's 3rd Battalion , 164th Infantry Regiment , commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hall . U.S. Marine and Army units armed with rifles , machine guns , mortars , artillery , including direct canister fire from 37 mm anti @-@ tank guns " wrought terrible carnage " on the Japanese . A few small groups of Japanese broke through the American defenses , but were all hunted down and killed over the next several days . More than 1 @,@ 500 of Maruyama 's troops were killed in the attacks while the Americans lost about 60 killed . Over the same two days

American aircraft from Henderson Field defended against attacks by Japanese aircraft and ships , destroying 14 aircraft and sinking a light cruiser .

Further Japanese attacks near the Matanikau on 26 October were also repulsed with heavy losses for the Japanese . As a result , by 08 : 00 on 26 October , Hyakutake called off any further attacks and ordered his forces to retreat . About half of Maruyama 's survivors were ordered to retreat back to the upper Matanikau Valley while the 230th Infantry Regiment under Colonel Toshinari Shoji was told to head for Koli Point , east of the Lunga perimeter . Leading elements of the 2nd Division reached the 17th Army headquarters area at Kokumbona , west of the Matanikau on 4 November . The same day , Shoji 's unit reached Koli Point and made camp . Decimated by battle deaths , combat injuries , malnutrition , and tropical diseases , the 2nd Division was incapable of further offensive action and fought as a defensive force along the coast for the rest of the campaign . In total the Japanese lost 2 @, @ 200 ? 3 @, @ 000 troops in the battle while the Americans lost around 80 killed .

= = = Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands = = =

At the same time that Hyakutake 's troops were attacking the Lunga perimeter , Japanese aircraft carriers and other large warships under the overall direction of Isoroku Yamamoto moved into a position near the southern Solomon Islands . From this location , the Japanese naval forces hoped to engage and decisively defeat any Allied (primarily U.S.) naval forces , especially carrier forces , that responded to Hyakutake 's ground offensive . Allied naval carrier forces in the area , now under the overall command of William Halsey , Jr . , also hoped to meet the Japanese naval forces in battle . Nimitz had replaced Ghormley with Halsey on 18 October after concluding that Ghormley had become too pessimistic and myopic to effectively continue leading Allied forces in the South Pacific area .

The two opposing carrier forces confronted each other on the morning of 26 October , in what became known as the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands . After an exchange of carrier air attacks , Allied surface ships were forced to retreat from the battle area with the loss of one carrier sunk (Hornet) and another (Enterprise) heavily damaged . The participating Japanese carrier forces , however , also retired because of high aircraft and aircrew losses and significant damage to two carriers . Although an apparent tactical victory for the Japanese in terms of ships sunk and damaged , the loss by the Japanese of many irreplaceable , veteran aircrews provided a long @-@ term strategic advantage for the Allies , whose aircrew losses in the battle were relatively low . The Japanese carriers played no further significant role in the campaign .

= = = November land actions = = =

In order to exploit the victory in the Battle for Henderson Field , Vandegrift sent six Marine battalions , later joined by one U.S. Army battalion , on an offensive west of the Matanikau . The operation was commanded by Merritt Edson and its goal was to capture Kokumbona , headquarters of the 17th Army , west of Point Cruz . Defending the Point Cruz area were Japanese army troops from the 4th Infantry Regiment commanded by Nomasu Nakaguma . The 4th Infantry was severely understrength because of battle damage , tropical disease , and malnutrition .

The American offensive began on 1 November and , after some difficulty , succeeded in destroying Japanese forces defending the Point Cruz area by 3 November , including rear echelon troops sent to reinforce Nakaguma 's battered regiment . The Americans appeared to be on the verge of breaking through the Japanese defenses and capturing Kokumbona . At this time , however , other American forces discovered and engaged newly landed Japanese troops near Koli Point on the eastern side of the Lunga perimeter . To counter this new threat , Vandegrift temporarily halted the Matanikau offensive on 4 November . The Americans suffered 71 and the Japanese around 400 killed in the offensive .

At Koli Point early in the morning 3 November , five Japanese destroyers delivered 300 army troops to support Shoji and his troops who were en route to Koli Point after the Battle for Henderson Field .

Having learned of the planned landing , Vandegrift sent a battalion of Marines under Herman H. Hanneken to intercept the Japanese at Koli . Soon after landing , the Japanese soldiers encountered and drove Hanneken 's battalion back towards the Lunga perimeter . In response , Vandegrift ordered Puller 's Marine battalion plus two of the 164th infantry battalions , along with Hanneken 's battalion , to move towards Koli Point to attack the Japanese forces there .

As the American troops began to move , Sh?ji and his soldiers began to arrive at Koli Point . Beginning on 8 November , the American troops attempted to encircle Sh?ji 's forces at Gavaga Creek near Koli Point . Meanwhile , Hyakutake ordered Sh?ji to abandon his positions at Koli and rejoin Japanese forces at Kokumbona in the Matanikau area . A gap existed by way of a swampy creek in the southern side of the American lines . Between 9 and 11 November , Sh?ji and between 2 @, @ 000 and 3 @, @ 000 of his men escaped into the jungle to the south . On 12 November , the Americans completely overran and killed all the remaining Japanese soldiers left in the pocket . The Americans counted the bodies of 450 ? 475 Japanese dead in the Koli Point area and captured most of Sh?ji 's heavy weapons and provisions . The American forces suffered 40 killed and 120 wounded in the operation .

Meanwhile , on 4 November , two companies from the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion , commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Evans Carlson landed by boat at Aola Bay , 40 miles (64 km) east of Lunga Point . Carlson 's raiders , along with troops from the U.S. Army 's 147th Infantry Regiment , were to provide security for 500 Seabees as they attempted to construct an airfield at that location . Halsey , acting on a recommendation by Turner , had approved the Aola Bay airfield construction effort . The Aola airfield construction effort was later abandoned at the end of November because of unsuitable terrain .

On 5 November , Vandegrift ordered Carlson to take his raiders , march overland from Aola , and attack any of Sh?ji 's forces that had escaped from Koli Point . With the rest of the companies from his battalion , which arrived a few days later , Carlson and his troops set off on a 29 @-@ day patrol from Aola to the Lunga perimeter . During the patrol , the raiders fought several battles with Sh?ji 's retreating forces , killing almost 500 of them , while suffering 16 killed themselves . In addition to the losses sustained from attacks by Carlson 's raiders , tropical diseases and a lack of food felled many more of Sh?ji 's men . By the time Sh?ji 's forces reached the Lunga River in mid @-@ November , about halfway to the Matanikau , only 1 @, @ 300 men remained with the main body . When Sh?ji reached the 17th Army positions west of the Matanikau , only 700 to 800 survivors were still with him . Most of the survivors from Sh?ji 's force joined other Japanese units defending the Mount Austen and upper Matanikau River area .

Tokyo Express runs on 5 , 7 and 9 November , delivered additional troops from the Japanese 38th Infantry Division , including most of the 228th Infantry Regiment to Guadalcanal . These fresh troops were quickly emplaced in the Point Cruz and Matanikau area and helped successfully resist further attacks by American forces on 10 and 18 November . The Americans and Japanese remained facing each other along a line just west of Point Cruz for the next six weeks .

= = = Naval Battle of Guadalcanal = = =

After the defeat in the Battle for Henderson Field , the IJA planned to try again to retake the airfield in November 1942 , but further reinforcements were needed before the operation could proceed . The IJA requested assistance from Yamamoto to deliver the needed reinforcements to the island and to support the next offensive . Yamamoto provided 11 large transport ships to carry the remaining 7 @, @ 000 troops from the 38th Infantry Division , their ammunition , food , and heavy equipment from Rabaul to Guadalcanal . He also provided a warship support force that included two battleships . The two battleships , Hiei and Kirishima , equipped with special fragmentation shells , were to bombard Henderson Field on the night of 12 ? 13 November and destroy it and the aircraft stationed there in order to allow the slow , heavy transports to reach Guadalcanal and unload safely the next day . The warship force was commanded from Hiei by recently promoted Vice Admiral Hiroaki Abe .

In early November , Allied intelligence learned that the Japanese were preparing again to try to

retake Henderson Field . Therefore , the U.S. sent Task Force 67 , a large reinforcement and resupply convoy carrying Marine replacements , two U.S. Army infantry battalions , and ammunition and food , commanded by Turner , to Guadalcanal on 11 November . The supply ships were protected by two task groups , commanded by Rear Admirals Daniel J. Callaghan and Norman Scott , and aircraft from Henderson Field . The ships were attacked several times on 11 and 12 November by Japanese aircraft from Rabaul staging through an air base at Buin , Bougainville , but most were unloaded without serious damage .

U.S. reconnaissance aircraft spotted the approach of Abe 's bombardment force and passed a warning to the Allied command . Thus warned , Turner detached all usable combat ships under Callaghan to protect the troops ashore from the expected Japanese naval attack and troop landing and ordered the supply ships at Guadalcanal to depart by early evening 12 November . Callaghan 's force comprised two heavy cruisers , three light cruisers , and eight destroyers .

Around 01 : 30 on 13 November , Callaghan 's force intercepted Abe 's bombardment group between Guadalcanal and Savo Island . In addition to the two battleships , Abe 's force included one light cruiser and 11 destroyers . In the pitch darkness , the two warship forces intermingled before opening fire at unusually close quarters . In the resulting mêlée , Abe 's warships sank or severely damaged all but one cruiser and one destroyer in Callaghan 's force and both Callaghan and Scott were killed . Two Japanese destroyers were sunk and another destroyer and Hiei heavily damaged . In spite of his defeat of Callaghan 's force , Abe ordered his warships to retire without bombarding Henderson Field . Hiei sank later that day after repeated air attacks by CAF aircraft and aircraft from the U.S. carrier Enterprise . Because of Abe 's failure to neutralize Henderson Field , Yamamoto ordered the troop transport convoy , under the command of Raizo Tanaka and located near the Shortland Islands , to wait an additional day before heading towards Guadalcanal . Yamamoto ordered Nobutake Kondo to assemble another bombardment force using warships from Truk and Abe 's force to attack Henderson Field on 15 November .

In the meantime , around 02 : 00 on 14 November , a cruiser and destroyer force under Gunichi Mikawa from Rabaul conducted an unopposed bombardment of Henderson Field . The bombardment caused some damage but failed to put the airfield or most of its aircraft out of operation . As Mikawa 's force retired towards Rabaul , Tanaka 's transport convoy , trusting that Henderson Field was now destroyed or heavily damaged , began its run down the slot towards Guadalcanal . Throughout the day of 14 November , aircraft from Henderson Field and Enterprise attacked Mikawa 's and Tanaka 's ships , sinking one heavy cruiser and seven of the transports . Most of the troops were rescued from the transports by Tanaka 's escorting destroyers and returned to the Shortlands . After dark , Tanaka and the remaining four transports continued towards Guadalcanal as Kondo 's force approached to bombard Henderson Field .

In order to intercept Kondo 's force , Halsey , who was low on undamaged ships , detached two battleships , Washington and South Dakota , and four destroyers from the Enterprise task force . The U.S. force , under the command of Willis A. Lee aboard Washington , reached Guadalcanal and Savo Island just before midnight on 14 November , shortly before Kondo 's bombardment force arrived . Kondo 's force consisted of Kirishima plus two heavy cruisers , two light cruisers , and nine destroyers . After the two forces made contact , Kondo 's force quickly sank three of the U.S. destroyers and heavily damaged the fourth . The Japanese warships then sighted , opened fire , and damaged South Dakota . As Kondo 's warships concentrated on South Dakota , Washington approached the Japanese ships unobserved and opened fire on Kirishima , smashing into the Japanese battleship repeatedly with both main and secondary battery shells , and causing fatal damage . After fruitlessly chasing Washington towards the Russell Islands , Kondo ordered his warships to retire without bombarding Henderson Field . One of Kondo 's destroyers was also sunk during the engagement .

As Kondo 's ships retired , the four Japanese transports beached themselves near Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal at 04 : 00 and quickly began unloading . At 05 : 55 , U.S. aircraft and artillery began attacking the beached transports , destroying all four transports along with most of the supplies that they carried . Only 2 @, @ 000 ? 3 @, @ 000 of the army troops made it ashore . Because of the failure to deliver most of the troops and supplies , the Japanese were forced to cancel their planned

November offensive on Henderson Field making the results of the battle a significant strategic victory for the Allies and marking the beginning of the end of Japanese attempts to retake Henderson Field .

On 26 November , Japanese Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura took command of the newly formed Eighth Area Army at Rabaul . The new command encompassed both Hyakutake 's 17th Army and the 18th Army in New Guinea . One of Imamura 's first priorities upon assuming command was the continuation of the attempts to retake Henderson Field and Guadalcanal . The Allied offensive at Buna in New Guinea , however , changed Imamura 's priorities . Because the Allied attempt to take Buna was considered a more severe threat to Rabaul , Imamura postponed further major reinforcement efforts to Guadalcanal to concentrate on the situation in New Guinea .

= = = Battle of Tassafaronga = = =

The Japanese continued to experience problems in delivering sufficient supplies to sustain their troops on Guadalcanal . Attempts to use only submarines the last two weeks in November failed to provide sufficient food for Hyakutake 's forces . A separate attempt to establish bases in the central Solomons to facilitate barge convoys to Guadalcanal also failed because of destructive Allied air attacks . On 26 November , the 17th Army notified Imamura that it faced a food crisis . Some front @-@ line units had not been resupplied for six days and even the rear @-@ area troops were on one @-@ third rations . The situation forced the Japanese to return to using destroyers to deliver the necessary supplies .

Eighth Fleet personnel devised a plan to help reduce the exposure of destroyers delivering supplies to Guadalcanal . Large oil or gas drums were cleaned and filled with medical supplies and food , with enough air space to provide buoyancy , and strung together with rope . When the destroyers arrived at Guadalcanal they would make a sharp turn and the drums would be cut loose and a swimmer or boat from shore could pick up the buoyed end of a rope and return it to the beach , where the soldiers could haul in the supplies .

The Eighth Fleet 's Guadalcanal Reinforcement Unit (the Tokyo Express) , then commanded by Raizo Tanaka , was tasked by Mikawa with making the first of five scheduled runs to Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal using the drum method on the night of 30 November . Tanaka 's unit was centered on eight destroyers , with six destroyers assigned to carry between 200 and 240 drums of supplies apiece . Notified by intelligence sources of the Japanese supply attempt , Halsey ordered the newly formed Task Force 67 , comprising four cruisers and four destroyers under the command of U.S. Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright , to intercept Tanaka 's force off Guadalcanal . Two additional destroyers joined Wright 's force en route to Guadalcanal from Espiritu Santo during the day of 30 November .

At 22 : 40 on 30 November , Tanaka 's force arrived off Guadalcanal and prepared to unload the supply barrels . Meanwhile , Wright 's warships were approaching through Ironbottom Sound from the opposite direction . Wright 's destroyers detected Tanaka 's force on radar and the destroyer commander requested permission to attack with torpedoes . Wright waited four minutes before giving permission , allowing Tanaka 's force to escape from an optimum firing setup . All of the American torpedoes missed their targets . At the same time , Wright 's cruisers opened fire , quickly hitting and destroying one of the Japanese guard destroyers . The rest of Tanaka 's warships abandoned the supply mission , increased speed , turned , and launched a total of 44 torpedoes in the direction of Wright 's cruisers .

The Japanese torpedoes hit and sank the U.S. cruiser Northampton and heavily damaged the cruisers Minneapolis , New Orleans , and Pensacola . The rest of Tanaka 's destroyers escaped without damage , but failed to deliver any of the provisions to Guadalcanal .

By 7 December 1942 , Hyakutake 's forces were losing about 50 men each day from malnutrition , disease , and Allied ground or air attacks . Further attempts by Tanaka 's destroyer forces to deliver provisions on 3 December 7 December , and 11 December , failed to alleviate the crisis , and one of Tanaka 's destroyers was sunk by a U.S. PT boat torpedo .

= = = Japanese decision to withdraw = = =

On 12 December , the Japanese Navy proposed that Guadalcanal be abandoned . At the same time , several army staff officers at the Imperial General Headquarters (IGH) also suggested that further efforts to retake Guadalcanal would be impossible . A delegation , led by IJA Colonel Joichiro Sanada , chief of the IGH 's operations section , visited Rabaul on 19 December and consulted Imamura and his staff . Upon the delegation 's return to Tokyo , Sanada recommended that Guadalcanal be abandoned . The IGH 's top leaders agreed with Sanada 's recommendation on 26 December and ordered their staffs to begin drafting plans for a withdrawal from Guadalcanal , establishment of a new defense line in the central Solomons , and a shifting of priorities and resources to the campaign in New Guinea .

On 28 December , General Hajime Sugiyama and Admiral Osami Nagano personally informed Emperor Hirohito of the decision to withdraw from Guadalcanal . On 31 December , the Emperor formally endorsed the decision . The Japanese secretly began to prepare for the evacuation , called Operation Ke , scheduled to begin during the latter part of January 1943 .

= = = Battle of Mount Austen , the Galloping Horse , and the Sea Horse = = =

By December , the weary 1st Marine Division was withdrawn for recuperation , and over the course of the next month the U.S. XIV Corps took over operations on the island . This corps consisted of the 2nd Marine Division and the U.S. Army 's 25th Infantry and 23rd " Americal " Divisions . U.S. Army Major General Alexander Patch replaced Vandegrift as commander of Allied forces on Guadalcanal , which by January totaled just over 50 @, @ 000 men .

On 18 December , Allied (mainly U.S. Army) forces began attacking Japanese positions on Mount Austen . A strong Japanese fortified position , called the Gifu , stymied the attacks and the Americans were forced to temporarily halt their offensive on 4 January .

The Allies renewed the offensive on 10 January , reattacking the Japanese on Mount Austen as well as on two nearby ridges called the Seahorse and the Galloping Horse . After some difficulty , the Allies captured all three by 23 January . At the same time , U.S. Marines advanced along the north coast of the island , making significant gains . The Americans lost about 250 killed in the operation while the Japanese suffered around 3 @, @ 000 killed ? about 12 to 1 in the Americans ' favor .

= = = Ke evacuation = = =

On 14 January , a Tokyo Express run delivered a battalion of troops to act as a rear guard for the Ke evacuation . A staff officer from Rabaul accompanied the troops to notify Hyakutake of the decision to withdraw . At the same time , Japanese warships and aircraft moved into position around the Rabaul and Bougainville areas in preparation to execute the withdrawal operation . Allied intelligence detected the Japanese movements , but misinterpreted them as preparations for another attempt to retake Henderson Field and Guadalcanal .

Patch , wary of what he thought to be an imminent Japanese offensive , committed only a relatively small portion of his troops to continue a slow @-@ moving offensive against Hyakutake 's forces . On 29 January , Halsey , acting on the same intelligence , sent a resupply convoy to Guadalcanal screened by a cruiser task force . Sighting the cruisers , Japanese naval torpedo bombers attacked that same evening and heavily damaged the cruiser Chicago . The next day , more torpedo aircraft attacked and sank Chicago . Halsey ordered the remainder of the task force to return to base and directed the rest of his naval forces to take station in the Coral Sea , south of Guadalcanal , to be ready to counter the perceived Japanese offensive .

In the meantime , the Japanese 17th Army withdrew to the west coast of Guadalcanal while rear guard units checked the American offensive . On the night of 1 February , a force of 20 destroyers from Mikawa 's 8th Fleet under Shintaro Hashimoto successfully extracted 4 @, @ 935 soldiers , mainly from the 38th Division , from the island . The Japanese and Americans each lost a destroyer

from air and naval attacks related to the evacuation mission .

On the nights of 4 and 7 February , Hashimoto and his destroyers completed the evacuation of most of the remaining Japanese forces from Guadalcanal . Apart from some air attacks , Allied forces , still anticipating a large Japanese offensive , did not attempt to interdict Hashimoto 's evacuation runs . In total , the Japanese successfully evacuated 10 @, @ 652 men from Guadalcanal . On 9 February , Patch realized that the Japanese were gone and declared Guadalcanal secure for Allied forces , ending the campaign .

= = Aftermath = =

After the Japanese withdrawal , Guadalcanal and Tulagi were developed into major bases supporting the Allied advance further up the Solomon Islands chain . In addition to Henderson Field , two additional fighter runways were constructed at Lunga Point and a bomber airfield was built at Koli Point . Extensive naval port and logistics facilities were established at Guadalcanal , Tulagi , and Florida . The anchorage around Tulagi became an important advanced base for Allied warships and transport ships supporting the Solomon Islands campaign . Major ground units were staged through large encampments and barracks on Guadalcanal before deployment further up the Solomons .

After Guadalcanal the Japanese were clearly on the defensive in the Pacific . The constant pressure to reinforce Guadalcanal had weakened Japanese efforts in other theaters , contributing to a successful Australian and American counteroffensive in New Guinea which culminated in the capture of the key bases of Buna and Gona in early 1943 . The Allies had gained a strategic initiative which they never relinquished . In June , the Allies launched Operation Cartwheel , which , after modification in August 1943 , formalized the strategy of isolating Rabaul and cutting its sea lines of communication . The subsequent successful neutralization of Rabaul and the forces centered there facilitated the South West Pacific campaign under General Douglas MacArthur and Central Pacific island hopping campaign under Admiral Chester Nimitz , with both efforts successfully advancing toward Japan . The remaining Japanese defenses in the South Pacific area were then either destroyed or bypassed by Allied forces as the war progressed to its ultimate conclusion .

= = Significance = =

= = = Resources = = =

The Battle of Guadalcanal was one of the first prolonged campaigns in the Pacific , alongside the related and concurrent Solomon Islands campaign . Both campaigns were battles that strained the logistical capabilities of the combatant nations involved . For the U.S. , this need prompted the development of effective combat air transport for the first time . A failure to achieve air superiority forced Japan to rely on reinforcement by barges , destroyers , and submarines , with very uneven results . Early in the campaign , the Americans were hindered by a lack of resources , as they suffered heavy losses in cruisers and carriers , with replacements from ramped @- @ up shipbuilding programs still months away from materializing .

The U.S. Navy suffered such high personnel losses during the campaign that it refused to publicly release total casualty figures for years . However , as the campaign continued , and the American public became more and more aware of the plight and perceived heroism of the American forces on Guadalcanal , more forces were dispatched to the area . This spelled trouble for Japan as its military @- @ industrial complex was unable to match the output of American industry and manpower . Thus , as the campaign wore on the Japanese were losing irreplaceable units while the Americans were rapidly replacing and even augmenting their forces .

The Guadalcanal campaign was costly to Japan strategically and in material losses and manpower . Roughly 30 @, @ 000 personnel , including 25 @, @ 000 experienced ground troops , died during

the campaign . As many as three @-@ quarters of the deaths were from non @-@ combat causes such as starvation and various tropical diseases . The drain on resources directly contributed to Japan 's failure to achieve its objectives in the New Guinea campaign . Japan also lost control of the southern Solomons and the ability to interdict Allied shipping to Australia . Japan 's major base at Rabaul was now further directly threatened by Allied air power . Most importantly , scarce Japanese land , air , and naval forces had disappeared forever into the Guadalcanal jungle and surrounding sea . The Japanese could not replace the aircraft and ships destroyed and sunk in this campaign , as well as their highly trained and veteran crews , especially the naval aircrews , nearly as quickly as the Allies .

= = = Strategic = = =

After the victory at the Battle of Midway , America was able to establish naval parity in the Pacific . However , this fact alone did not change the direction of the war . It was only after the Allied victories in Guadalcanal and New Guinea that the Japanese offensive thrust was ended and the strategic initiative passed to the Allies , as it proved , permanently . The Guadalcanal Campaign ended all Japanese expansion attempts and placed the Allies in a position of clear supremacy . It thus can be argued that this Allied victory was the first step in a long string of successes that eventually led to the surrender of Japan and the occupation of the Japanese home islands .

The " Europe first " policy of the United States had initially only allowed for defensive actions against Japanese expansion , in order to focus resources on defeating Germany . However , Admiral King 's argument for the Guadalcanal invasion , as well as its successful implementation , convinced President Franklin D. Roosevelt that the Pacific Theater could be pursued offensively as well . By the end of 1942 , it was clear that Japan had lost the Guadalcanal campaign , a serious blow to Japan 's strategic plans for defense of their empire and an unanticipated defeat at the hands of the Americans .

Perhaps as important as the military victory for the Allies was the psychological victory . On a level playing field , the Allies had beaten Japan 's best land , air , and naval forces . After Guadalcanal , Allied personnel regarded the Japanese military with much less fear and awe than previously . In addition , the Allies viewed the eventual outcome of the Pacific War with greatly increased optimism .

Beyond Kawaguchi , several Japanese political and military leaders , including Naoki Hoshino , Osami Nagano , and Torashir? Kawabe , stated shortly after the war that Guadalcanal was the decisive turning point in the conflict . Said Kawabe , " As for the turning point [of the war] , when the positive action ceased or even became negative , it was , I feel , at Guadalcanal . "

= = Media , accounts and film = =

The Guadalcanal Campaign was the subject of large amount of high quality news reporting , due to it being the first major US combat operation of the war news agencies sent some of their most talented writers . Richard Tregaskis who wrote for International News Service gained fame with the publication of his bestselling Guadalcanal Diary in 1943 . Hanson Baldwin , a Navy correspondent , filed stories for the New York Times and won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the early days of WWII . Tom Yarbrough wrote for the Associated Press , Bob Miller for the United Press , John Hersey for Time and Life , Ira Wolfert for the North American Newspaper Alliance (his series of articles about the November 1942 Naval Battle of Guadalcanal won him the Pulitzer Prize) , Sergeant James Hurlbut for the Marine Corps , and Mack Morriss for Yank magazine . Commander Vandegrift placed few restrictions on the reporters who were generally allowed to go wherever they wanted and write what they wanted .

Other books and films about the campaign include :

Tales of the South Pacific (book)

Guadalcanal Diary (film)

Pride of the Marines (film)

The Thin Red Line (novel)
The Pacific , Episode 1 , Guadalcanal / Leckie and Episode 2 , Basilone (TV miniseries)
The Gallant Hours (film)
Helmet for My Pillow (book)
The Thin Red Line (novel)
The Thin Red Line (1964 film)
The Thin Red Line (1998 film)
Dogfights Season 1 , Ep . No. 4 ? Guadalcanal (TV series)
Shootout ! Season 1 , Guadalcanal (TV series)
The Lost Evidence Episode 20 (TV series)
Battle 360 ° , Episodes 3 through 5 (TV series)

== = Books == =

== = Web == =

== Further information ==

== = Books == =

== = Web == =

== = Audio / visual == =