War in the Pacific
Defending Australia
The First Six Months

Chapter 23
7 May 1942...
Carriers Battle in the Coral Sea
Situation report – 7 May 1942

• After 5 months of war the Japanese avalanche has swept away the Western Empires in South East Asia and the forces defending them.

• The last remnants of those forces are melting away. Corregidor surrendered yesterday and Burmacorps are evacuating Burma as fast as they can.

• The Japanese have reached out beyond South East Asia to Hawaii and Ceylon and destroyed major units of American and British naval and air forces.

• Japanese forces have everywhere been tactically superior to the defenders, on land, sea and in the air.

• After the Allied losses the Japanese now also have numerical superiority of naval and air forces in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

• The only remaining areas where Japanese and Allied forces are close enough to continue effective operations is on the line Timor - Darwin - Horn Island - Moresby/Lae – Rabaul - Tulagi.
(ii) SOLOMONS - NEW GUINEA AREA - Enemy forces sighted in the Solomons - New Guinea area by air reconnaissance on 6/5 indicate a total force including:

- 1 possibly 2 aircraft carriers
- 8 cruisers
- 16 destroyers or gunboats
- 2 submarines
- 1 submarine tender
- 17 or 18 merchant ships
- 1 converted seaplane carrier

Preliminary reports from our aircraft detailed to attack enemy shipping in the vicinity of Woodlark Island 7/5 indicate the following enemy concentrations:

(a) At 0648/7 12 miles north of Misima Island - one aircraft carrier, 10 transports, 16 warships - course 285°.
(b) At 0700/7 10 miles S.W. of Misima Island - 4 destroyers - 3 large transports - course 285°.

(iii) GENERAL - There are indications that Carrier Division 5 ("ZUIKAKU" & "SHOKAKU") intend carrying out heavy raids against the Moresby area today 7/5 and tomorrow 8/5 from the S.W.
Situation report – 7 May 1942 – Port Moresby

• Port Moresby is defended by:
• Two six inch coast defence guns of the kind destroyed in one raid by dive bombers at Rabaul,
• One Australian Militia Brigade some of whose units have questionable morale and training,
• Two squadrons of the US Army’s 8th Pursuit group flying P39s and
• The US Navy.
Situation report – 7 May 1942

- **Coral Sea**
  - Two US aircraft carrier task forces, Yorktown and Lexington, are in the Coral Sea.
  - Admirals King and Nimitz met in San Francisco last week to review Pacific strategy.
  - They have ordered two more carrier taskforces, Enterprise and Hornet, to the Coral Sea. They left Pearl a week ago but cannot reach the Coral Sea by the 8th.
  - All the operational US carriers in the Pacific are in or on their way to the Coral Sea. The Admirals have no carriers left to defend Hawaii or the west coast of the United States.
Situation report – 7 May 1942

• Admiral Fletcher has been briefed to expect a landing at Port Moresby on 10 May and an attack on it by carrier aircraft on 7 or 8 May.

• He expected the enemy to have three carriers, two of which, Shokaku and Zuikaku, were among the best the Japanese had.

• His task force 17 consists of:
  • the carriers Yorktown and Lexington,
  • six heavy cruisers,
  • one light cruiser
  • eleven destroyers and
  • the oiler Neosho.

• Fletcher fuelled his taskforce from Neosho until dark on the sixth then detached the oiler, escorted by the destroyer Sims, to head south, out of the way, to the next fuelling rendezvous at 16 south 158 east.

• He then turned north west to be within striking distance of a Port Moresby invasion force by first light on May 7.

Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher
Admirals Frank Fletcher

Both Admirals Frank Fletcher, who were uncle and nephew, won the Medal of Honor at the Battle of Veracruz against Mexico in 1914. Another uncle of Frank Jack’s was Captain Frank Pat Fletcher.
Deboyne islands seaplane base established 3/5
Catalina attacked by fighters and FTR 6/5
B17s attack Carrier 10:30 on 6/5
Tulagi seaplane base occupied 3/5
Next rendezvous with Neosho
7 May – Coral Sea

• **Morning**

• At 06.19 Yorktown launched 10 SBDs on single plane searches out 250 miles covering the north to north east quadrant.

• Fletcher altered course to north from north-westerly at 7 a.m. to come to grips with the aircraft carriers.

• At 8.15 am an American scout sighted a force reported as 2 carriers and 4 cruisers 225 miles to the north-west.
  • This was where Fletcher and Fitch expected the Japanese carriers to be.
  • Fletcher decided to commit his full strike force to attack the carriers.

• At the same time (8.15 am) he detached Crace and his support group comprising Australia, Chicago, Hobart, and destroyers Perkins, Walke and Farragut to continue north-westerly and “destroy enemy ships reported passing through Jomard Passage”.

The War in the Pacific - The First Six Months ©Jerry McBrien
7 May – Coral Sea

• **Morning**
  • Sims and Neosho were found by a Japanese aircraft about 09.00, it dropped a bomb and disappeared.
  • At 9.26 am Lexington launched 28 SBDs, 12 TBDs and ten Wildcats. Twenty minutes later the Yorktown launched 23 SBDs, 10 TBDs and 8 Wildcats. The two air groups set out separately to attack the carriers reported by the morning search.
  • Sims and Neosho were unsuccessfully attacked by level bombing at 09.30
  • At 10.00, when he was not far over the horizon from Fletcher, Crace was sighted by a Japanese reconnaissance aircraft which shadowed him.
  • At 10.12 Fletcher received a search report from army search planes, which had sighted a carrier, ten transports and sixteen other warships only 30 miles from the target that the strike force was heading for.
  • After the morning search planes had landed at about 10.30 it became apparent that the search report of two carriers had been a coding error and the searchers had actually only found two cruisers.
  • Sims and Neosho were unsuccessfully attacked by level bombing at 10.38
  • At 10.53 Yorktown radioed the strike group redirecting them to the targets located by the army.
7 May – Coral Sea

• **Strike Force**
  - The strike aircraft sighted a light carrier about 11.00 approximately 20 miles northeast of Misima and attacked it.
    - A couple of Zeros attempted to intercept the bombers but could make no impression on a force of 63 bombers.
    - After two 1,000 pound bomb hits she burst into flames and went dead in the water.
    - More hits followed and she sank at 11.35.
    - Three of the attacking aircraft were lost.
  - The radio rooms of task Force 17 were packed with anxious audiences.
    - This was the first ever attack by American carrier planes on an enemy carrier.
    - Static was bad and the snatches of pilots’ conversation that came over did not tell much.
    - Suddenly the squawking ceased and the voice of Bob Dixon, the skipper of Scouting Two, came over loud and clear.
  - “Scratch one flattop! Dixon to carrier, scratch one flattop.”

Shōhō bombed and torpedoed by U.S. carrier aircraft.
7 May – Coral Sea

- Neosho and Sims
  - Neosho and Sims were attacked by 36 dive bombers at noon.
  - The Sims was hit by three bombs and within a few minutes she buckled amidships and sank stern first.
    - All hands began to abandon ship.
    - As the sea reached the top of the stack a tremendous explosion lifted the remains of the ship ten or fifteen feet out of the water.
    - Chief Signalman Dicken began picking up survivors in a damaged whaleboat but he found only 15 men alive.
  - 20 dive-bombers concentrated on the Neosho.
    - Within a few minutes they scored 7 direct hits and 8 near misses.
    - The captain ordered “prepare to abandon ship, and stand by”.
    - A lot of sailors, who had just seen Sims blow up and sink, jumped overboard without waiting for further orders.
    - Two boats and some rafts were lowered or thrown overboard and a number of premature evacuees were brought back on board, but many were drowned and others, who had climbed onto rafts, drifted away as night fell.

Neosho, left burning after the Japanese dive bombing attack, drifted westerly before the trades with no power or communications and all hands frantically trying to keep her afloat.
7 May – Coral Sea

• **Crace**

• At 10.00 Crace altered course to W. by N. so as not too rapidly to close the air menace to the north, and to proceed to a position about 40 miles south of Jomard Passage.

• At 14.27, about 70 miles due south of Deboyne Island, eleven aircraft were sighted at long range to the south and were engaged by Chicago, Hobart, and destroyers.
  • Observers described them variously as "Dauntless", B-26, Zeros and "twin-engined aircraft".

• At 15.06 Crace was attacked by twelve twin-engined bombers.
  • Torpedoes were dropped at 1,000 to 1,500 yards, then the aircraft fired on the ships with machine-guns and cannon.
  • Skilful ship handling enabled Australia to avoid two torpedoes and Chicago also avoided three.
  • Five of the aircraft were shot down.

HMAS Australia (center) and Task Force under air attack on 7 May
7 May – Coral Sea

• **Crace**
  
  • A few minutes after this attack, at 15.16, 19 heavy bombers attacked Australia from astern and up sun at a height of about 18,000 feet.
    • Twenty large bombs, and several smaller, were dropped in a pattern with a spread of 500 yards, and the flagship was straddled in all directions, with her upper decks drenched with spray, though only superficial damage was suffered from bomb fragments.
  
  • Casualties in the task force from these attacks were two fatally wounded in Chicago, and seven others slightly injured.
  
  • These aircraft had only just gone when three more, flying at 25,000 feet, dropped bombs close to Perkins.
    • Crace later reported these aircraft were U.S. Army B-26s, and they were good enough to photograph the task force a few seconds after "bomb release", proving beyond all doubt that they had attacked their own ships.

![HMAS Australia (center) and Task Force under air attack on 7 May](image)
7 May – Coral Sea

- **Task Force 17**
  - The strike force had returned and been refuelled and rearmed and Yorktown and Lexington were ready to launch a second strike by 14.50 but Fletcher had not yet located the other Japanese carriers and visibility and flying conditions were deteriorating.
    - He steamed westward, expecting the invasion force to come through the Jomard Pass in the morning and relying on shore based aircraft to find the enemy carriers.
  - At 17.47 Lexington’s radar detected a Bogey bearing 144 degrees distant 48 miles. The operator thought a formation of aircraft at low altitude, perhaps 1,500 feet moving in the general direction of the task force at high speed.
    - Red Gill vectored Ramsey’s four Wildcats from the CAP after them and scrambled all the remaining fighters, giving thirty to defend the force, as it was suspected that this was the long awaited counter attack.
    - Ramsey’s section were already on instruments the visibility was so poor.
    - About 30 miles out Ramsey sighted a formation of nine Japanese torpedo bombers below him.
    - Diving in from 5,000 feet he singled out one of the trailing Bandits and motioned his second section led by Paul Baker to take the other.
    - Three Bandits went down in flames and one was damaged on the first pass.
    - Baker charged after another Bandit.
    - Bill Wileman his wingman saw a sudden brilliant flash reflected in the clouds. Baker was never seen again.
    - Ramsey added another Bandit to his tally then Gill recalled his division as their fuel was getting critically low.
  - Gill now sent out seven of the newly launched Wildcats led by Flatley, selecting IFF equipped aircraft for distant interception to keep the plot as simple as possible.
    - At 18.08 about thirty miles south of the ships six aircraft briefly exited the clouds, slid below Flatley on an opposite heading and disappeared to the north.
    - Flatley’s third section got the best look at them and recognised them as Japanese.
    - Without orders Les Knox dropped out and attacked, sending one spinning towards the water.
    - He then renewed his attack.
    - Knox, a native of Brisbane, Australia, who had enlisted as a seaman recruit in April 1939, was never heard from again.
7 May – Coral Sea

• Flatley then flushed a group of enemy dive bombers and attacked with the rest of his division.
  • They scattered but he cornered one and the division attacked in line astern.
  • Fourth to dive was Macomber who fired a two second burst which blew the Bandit’s tail off in spectacular fashion.

• Many of the Wildcats had not been recovered before dark.
  • The pilots inexperience at night landings caused an inordinate number of wave offs, so the landings took a long time.
  • In the middle of this complicated situation a number of formations of Japanese aircraft appeared had a look and flew on.
  • Macomber was the only pilot to get a good enough identification of one to open fire on it.
  • It took a while for the AA to start shooting and when they did it made life difficult for the Wildcats and further delayed the landings. The last aircraft being recovered by Yorktown at 19.30.
  • John Baker failed to return having apparently lost sight of the ships during the confusion with the Japanese aircraft and having lost radio contact.

• That night the American carriers moved south to find better weather for the next day's operations.
7 May – Coral Sea

• Next day (7th May) eight Fortresses returned to the assault. When they reached the target area the crews found the enemy ships withdrawing towards Rabaul.
  • A direct hit on a large transport which they reported had been set on fire was the only claim made by the American crews.

• Crace had no air support, anticipated further attacks and “had received no information from the Commander, Task Force 17 regarding his position, his intentions, or what had been achieved during the day”
  • Since reconnaissance reports indicated that the Moresby invasion group was now moving to the northward,
  • he decided to retire south and proceed during the night so as to be about 220 miles south-east of Port Moresby at daylight next morning,
  • in a position to intercept any enemy ships coming south-west through Jomard Passage or China Strait.
7 May

• **Sea**
  - **New Caledonia**
    - On 7th May, off New Caledonia, the Greek Chloe (4,641 tons) was sunk by gunfire from a submarine.

• **Air**
  - **Port Moresby**
    - At 10.00 about a dozen Zeros strafed 7 Mile field, destroying two B25s waiting on the runway and killing and wounding their crews.
    - Ten P39s scrambled amid the gunfire and engaged a flight of four zeros.
    - 2Lt Egan shot down a Zero, which was seen to crash into the jungle.
    - The defenders all returned safe.
7 May

• **Land**
  
  • On 7\textsuperscript{th} May the Commanding General, US Army Air Forces, was directed to:
    
    • prepare and submit a plan for the reinforcement of the Western Defence Command with air combat units . . . in order to meet effectively a possible Japanese attack on the West Coast of the United States.

  • On 7\textsuperscript{th} May General Brereton reports from New Delhi
    
    • that the entire country of Burma is now under enemy control and the present Japanese thrust at Myitkyina is aimed at destroying US communication with China and will undoubtedly succeed.
    
    • He states further that the occupation of Madagascar lessens the possibility of Japanese attempt on the Persian Gulf and that Calcutta is in immediate danger with an enemy attack by sea, land and air entirely possible.

  • For Efate, in the New Hebrides, the Army furnished a reinforced infantry regiment, the 24th, numbering about 5,000 men, and the Navy the aircraft and artillery (both Marine). This force arrived early in May to relieve the small detachment Patch had sent up from New Caledonia.
8 May - COIC

B) CENTRAL PACIFIC AREA
British and Allied Forces (See Appendix)

Enemy Forces

There are indications that the heavy cruisers "TAKAO" & "ATAGO" and one destroyer division, aircraft carrier "KAGA" and possibly "SORU" are at present en route Truk from Japan. In addition there are indications the aircraft carrier "HIRYU" and Battleship Division 3 (3 battleships) may also proceed to the Truk area shortly.

The C in C Second Fleet is believed to be on board "TAKAO".

Comment - C in C Second Fleet has been in control of all major southward Japanese naval operations to date and it would seem likely that he is proceeding south to control present operations from the Truk - Rabaul area.
(ii) U.S. Oilier "NEOSHO" reported at 1500/7 that she had been heavily bombed and was sinking approx 600 miles N.E. of Rockhampton.

(iii) LOUISIADEN ARCHIPELAGO - Allied aircraft attacked enemy shipping in the Misima - Deboyne Is. area yesterday 7/5, three times, with the following results - a direct hit on one merchant vessel, a hit or near miss on another, near misses on a third and fourth and a probable near miss on a fifth.

A.A. Fire was encountered in all three attacks but all our aircraft returned.

3. ENEMY’S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

(i) Attack on Port Moresby area.

(ii) Consolidation and further occupation of strategic points in the Solomon Islands.

(iii) Heavy air attacks on the Darwin area.

(iv) Carrier-borne air raids against N.E. Australian air bases including Horn Island, Townsville and possibly Brisbane or Sydney.

(v) Possible attack on New Caledonia or Fiji Islands.

(vi) Increased submarine and possibly surface raider activity in the Central and South-West Pacific area.
8 May – Coral Sea

• **Crace**
  
  At dawn on 8th May Crace was, as he had planned, about 220 miles south-east of Port Moresby, still lacking any information from Fletcher, and becoming concerned at the fuel situation in Hobart and the destroyers.

• **Taskforce 17**
  
  At 06.25 Lexington flew off 18 planes for a 360 degree search.
  
  At 08.15 Lt Smith got the first sight of the Japanese carriers and by 08.38 he had reported the composition, course and speed of the force, 175 miles north east of Fletcher.
  
  Just before this message was received Lexington had intercepted a message from a Japanese search plane giving her own position course and speed quite accurately.
  
  Task force 17 was now in an area of high visibility but the enemy were under a protective cover of squall clouds.
  
  Within minutes of receiving Smith’s 08.38 report Fletcher ordered both carriers to launch air strikes.
  
  The Yorktown group of 39 planes took departure at 09.15.
  
  The Lexington Air Group departed ten minutes later. The carriers then headed north to reduce the Air Groups’ return legs.

Yorktown (foreground) and Lexington turn to launch under clear skies on 8 May.
8 May – Coral Sea

• **Search**
  - Lt Cdr Dixon flying a sector adjacent to Smith’s picked up and verified the contact at 09.30 but found the position 45 miles north of the 09.00 position calculated from Smith’s report.

• **Taskforce 17**
  - At 10.08 Yorktown lookouts reported a large flying boat on the horizon bearing 40 degrees.
    - Within a minute of the report McCormack, flying CAP, had sighted it.
    - The Wildcats quickly overtook the Kawanishi and McCormack and his wing man Haas attacked.
    - The first pass started the flying boat smoking and it literally exploded in Haas’ face as he finished his third pass.

• **Strikeforce**
  - The Yorktown dive bombers found the carriers at 10.35 but then had to wait impatiently, circling at the edge of the clouds, for the torpedo squadron to arrive, so the attacks could be coordinated for maximum shock value and mutual protection.
    - The two Japanese carriers, each screened by two heavy cruisers and two or three destroyers, were steering south-westerly, eight to ten miles apart.
8 May – Coral Sea

• **Task Force 17**
  
  At 10.55 both carriers radar detected a large group of Bogeys bearing 020 degrees distant 68 miles and closing. Red Gill, the FDO for the Task Force, had eight Wildcats on CAP. There were eighteen SBDs up on anti torpedo plane patrol but these did not come under Gill’s control.

• **Strikeforce**
  
  The torpedo squadron arrived and the attack by Yorktown’s aircraft began at 10.57 with attacks by 9 torpedo bombers and 24 dive bombers on Shokaku. Zuikaku and her group disappeared into a rain squall just before the attack began.

  The seven SBDs of Scouting Five pushed over immediately from 17,000 feet and plummeted down towards the carrier in a 70 degree dive. As they passed 8,000 feet they encountered the old bugbear of fogged sights and wind screens. At 2,000 feet each of the pilots released his 1,000 pound bomb, aiming from memory according to Burch, the squadron commander, and flattened out low over the water. The heavy bombs struck the sea throwing up huge water geysers far higher than the carrier’s bridge. Seawater showered the flight deck but the carrier suffered no harm from the nearly blind attack.

  While recovering from his dive Jorgenson’s SBD was hit in the left wing by a heavy AA shell. It passed through without detonating but the impact nearly flipped the plane on its back. As Jorgensen righted his mutilated plane he was attacked by three zeros which peppered his wings and cockpit and wounded him in the leg.

  Scouting Five encountered four more zeros as they withdrew and exchanged brief machine gun bursts but presumably the Zeros were intent on aircraft that had not yet bombed.

  Wally Short, leading Bombing Five’s seventeen SBDs, found himself in a poor position for a diving attack on the only carrier still visible and took his squadron around in a wide circle to realign for a proper dive.

• **Taskforce 17**
  
  At 10.58 Gill got approval to scramble the nine Wildcats on Standby and at 11.00 Lexington turned south east into the wind to launch them.

  At 10.59 Gill ordered all the fighters in the air to return to station over their respective carriers.

  At 11.01 Gill ordered Ramsey, just taking off with five Wildcats of Fighting 2, out along the 020(M) heading for 30 miles climbing to 10,000 feet on the way. Two minutes later he added “Buster”, maximum speed.
8 May – Coral Sea

• **Strikeforce**

  • Short began his dive at 11.03 and went after Shokaku.
    • His pilots also suffered fogged sights.
    • Several bombs exploded near the carrier.
    • Then around 11.05 one 1,000 pound bomb hit Shokaku on the port side forward, crumpling the flight deck and causing an intense fire.

  • The third division of Bombing Five were pursued by Zeros on their dive. Lt Powers’ SBD was hit by the fighters in the dive and was on fire as he went well below 1,000 feet before dropping his bomb. His bomb hit Shokaku on her starboard side abaft the island, igniting an intense blaze, but he failed to pull out and splashed nearby.

  • Bombing 5 encountered more fighters as they headed for the clouds. A number of the SBDs were hit but only Ens Chaffee’s was shot down.

Shōkaku, at high speed and turning hard, has suffered bomb strikes and is afire.
8 May – Coral Sea

• About the time that Short opened his attack Lt Cdr Taylor turned towards Shokaku, whose screen looked looser than the other carrier’s, came down to fifty feet increased speed to 110 knots and fanned out the nine Devastators of Torpedo 5, to make their individual torpedo runs. The Devastators were escorted by four Wildcats of Fighting 42.

• As they straightened up for their attack runs, Torpedo 5 encountered four Zeros.
  • The Wildcats which were flying close escort turned into the Zeros and kept them so busy that the Devastators only had to worry about the anti aircraft while making their low and slow attacks.
  • The Wildcats kept the Zeros off the TBDs and shot down two Zeros without any loss to themselves.

• The TBDs released torpedoes, around 11.08, at ranges between 1,000 and 2,000 yards.
  • The torpedo crews saw both the bomb hits but they didn’t score any hits themselves,
  • three torpedoes were seen to run erratically.
  • Anti-aircraft was heavy and accurate, badly damaging one TBD, but they all escaped into a squall whose concealment saved them.

US Navy TBD-1 Devastator, Torpedo Bomber

By 11.15 when the last Yorktown aircraft departed, Shokaku appeared in bad shape with her crew battling fierce fires.
8 May – Coral Sea

- Taskforce 17
- At 11.07 Gill separated Ramsey’s division sending the two fighters of Ens Eders section down low to chase torpedo planes, while Ramsey’s three continued towards 10,000 feet.
- At 11.08 Gill also sent Flatley’s division of Fighting 42, which had just taken off from Yorktown, out on Vector 020, Angels 1, Buster.
- At 11.09, just over 20 miles out, Sellstrom, one of Ramsey’s wingmen, radioed: “Skipper! Eleven o’clock right up from you. Ramsey picked out two massive formations, one above and behind the other with the lead still 4,000 or 5,000 feet above him. He felt that he was in no position to intercept the planes above him so he led his three Wildcats underneath the enemy formations turned and started climbing in pursuit.
- All the fighters and the FDO were communicating on a single radio circuit, which caused frequent interference and confusion about who was speaking. In the confusion Gill never got information on the height of the formations that Ramsey was pursuing.
- The other two fighter elements vectored out for distant interception never saw the enemy at all because of low altitude and cloud cover. Gill had directed them to 1,000 feet, assuming that Japanese torpedo bombers would cruise at low altitude as the American TBDs did.
- Ramsey was still climbing after, but failing to catch, the high altitude Japanese.
  - Sellstrom, one of his two wingmen, saw torpedo planes far below.
  - He attempted to attract Ramsey’s attention to them but Ramsey was intent on the dive bombers.
  - Sellstrom dived away without orders, built up speed and at 11.16 sent a torpedo plane spinning in flames towards the water.
  - Sellstrom was then set upon by three zeros and became involved in a wild dog fight.
- Eight SBDs of Scouting Five, on anti torpedo plane patrol covering Yorktown, then encountered two groups of Japanese torpedo planes at 11.17.
  - The SBDs weren’t high enough or fast enough to intercept them.
  - They were then also set upon by the zero escort and four of the eight were shot down.
- Some of Lexington’s 15 SBD defenders were in a good intercept position and had the height and speed advantage when the torpedo planes came in and succeeded in shooting down three.
8 May – Coral Sea

- **Taskforce 17**

- Four groups of torpedo bombers headed for Lexington.
  - Three charged in on the port bow and dropped torpedoes at 11.18 and
  - two attacked from the other side just afterwards.
  - Sherman turned away from those on the port side.
  - Lexington and Saratoga were the longest warships in the world and were tantalisingly slow in answering the helm.
  - But all five torpedoes missed, one to starboard, two to port and two astern.

- A third group of two attacked the cruiser Minneapolis instead of Lexington but missed.

- The fourth group of three planes pressed into around 700 yards and dropped from 250 feet.
  - One torpedo ran too deep and was seen to pass under the keel but
  - at 11.20 one torpedo hit Lexington forward and
  - a second hit opposite the island
  - causing tremendous explosions and shudders throughout the ship.
8 May – Coral Sea

- **Taskforce 17**

- At 11.18 Yorktown’s lookouts spotted four torpedo bombers off the port bow 7,000 yards out, setting her dual purpose five inchers blasting away. Captain Buckmaster rang up emergency flank speed and ordered full right rudder to get the carriers stern pointed towards the attackers.
  - One of the planes flamed, spun out and splashed between the Yorktown and the heavy cruiser Chester.
  - The other three pressed within 500 yards of the swiftly turning carrier and launched their torpedoes at 11.19.
  - The Yorktown, smaller and handier than Lexington, evaded all three fish, whose wakes streaked past the port side.
  - Just after release another attacker trailed smoke, banked and flew into the water off the Yorktown’s port quarter.

Nakajima B5N2 Allied reporting name "Kate"
8 May – Coral Sea

• **Taskforce 17**

• The six Wildcats positioned over Lexington were at 8,000 feet when they found the dive bombers coming in well above them.
  • They were climbing through 12,000 feet still well below the bombers when they were attacked by six Zeros.
  • A dog fight ensued with the Wildcats eventually compelled to dive away.

• Nineteen dive bombers pushed over into their attack on Lexington at 11.21.
  • They weren’t spotted until they were well into their dives, then a storm of anti aircraft erupted.
  • The Japanese held their dives down to 1,500 feet before dropping their bombs and pulling out.
  • One of the first bombs hit Lexington on the front port side corner of the flight deck, penetrated and exploded in a five inch ammunition ready locker. The blast killed the entire crew of No. 6 five inch gun and started fires on deck and below.
  • Only one other bomb hit the ship, high on the port side of the smoke stack. Fragments caused havoc with AA gun crews on both sides of the stack.
  • The ship’s AA shot down one bomber.

Lexington (center right), afire and under attack.
8 May – Coral Sea

• Taskforce 17
  • At 11.24 fourteen dive bombers pushed over to attack the Yorktown.
    • The two Wildcats of McCormack and Haas intercepted the bombers just as they pushed over and harried them all the way down.
    • They scored no victories but disrupted the attack.
    • The bombers pressed their dives at 70 degrees or more, not pulling out until below 1,000 feet.
  • Yorktown was hidden by the huge geysers of water thrown up by near misses, but,
    • protected by the fighters’ interference, a storm of AA and Buckmaster’s ship handling, she only suffered one hit.
    • At 11.27 a bomb struck the centre of her flight deck forward of the middle elevator.
    • The bomb penetrated four more decks and exploded in an aviation store room. Doing damage and starting fires below decks but not effecting the operation of the flight deck.

A surprising amount of damage was done by near misses.
  • Fragments holed the ship in four places from a near miss 50 feet from the ship.
  • A miss close in on the port side caved in a seam, opening a fuel bunker to the sea.
8 May – Coral Sea

**Strikeforce**

- Only 21 of Lexington's aircraft, out of the 49 dispatched to attack the Japanese carriers, found the target in the decreasing visibility.
  - The eleven torpedo and four dive bombers attacked Shokaku from 11.42 to 11.50.
  - Again the torpedoes failed to score, but the dive bombers added another direct hit on Shokaku.
  - The six Wildcats of the escort again distracted the Zeros from the TBDs but this time at the cost of three Wildcats shot down.

- As the four Dive Bombers withdrew they were intercepted by Zeros and they scattered into the clouds.
  - Commander Ault, Commander, Lexington Air Group (CLAG), who had orbited over the Owen Stanley Range on 10 March to guide the attacks on Lae and Salamaua, took heavy damage and both he and his gunner were wounded.
  - He didn’t find his way back to the ship.
  - Only one of the four dive bombers did.
8 May – Coral Sea

- **Taskforce 17**
- Throughout the attacks on the carriers and for perhaps 15 minutes afterwards
  - several wild free for alls raged between the defending Wildcats and SBDs and the Japanese attackers.
  - There were also a number of encounters between the two returning strike forces.
  - In all these encounters the Americans lost 5 planes but destroyed 9 enemy aircraft.
  - Many others on both sides were damaged
- At 12.26 when Buckmaster reported to Fitch on Yorktown’s condition,
  - the ship was limited to 25 knots because of three boilers temporarily out of service but
  - flight operations were unimpaired and
  - her radar and FD plot was operational.
  - By 12.40 the returning strike group was coming on board.
- When the attacks ended Lexington
  - was listing seven degrees
  - with three boiler rooms partially flooded,
  - plane elevators inoperative and
  - three fires burning
  - but she was still able to launch and recover aircraft.

View of the flight deck of Lexington, at about 15:00 on 8 May. The ship's air group is spotted aft. Smoke is rising around the aft elevator from fires burning in the hangar.
8 May – Coral Sea

• **Taskforce 17**

• About an hour after the attacks ended Cdr Healy, the Lexington’s damage control officer, was able to report
  • the torpedo damage temporarily shored up,
  • the fires out and
  • the ship on an even keel.
  • But he suggested that if the Captain had to take any more torpedoes, he take them on the starboard side.

• No sooner were these words out of Healy’s mouth than at 12.47 a devastating internal explosion shook the carrier from stem to stern.
  • Gasoline vapours released from a tank damaged by a torpedo had been ignited by a spark from a motor.
  • More eruptions followed, each more violent than the last.
  • Central Station the nerve centre of damage control suffered major damage and casualties, Commander Healy among them.

A mushroom cloud rises from a heavy explosion on Lexington, 8 May 1942. Note Yorktown on the horizon left center, and destroyer Hammann at extreme left.
8 May – Coral Sea

• **Taskforce 17**

• Flight operations continued and the strike group was recovered but the fire was beyond control.
  • At 15.15 flight operations were abandoned and Yorktown was asked to recover all airborne planes.
  • At 1630 the engine rooms were untenable, the steam valves were lifted and the ship wallowed to a stop.
  • All hands prepared to abandon ship.
  • At 17.07 Fitch called down from his bridge to the Captain, “Well, Ted, Lets get the men off.” Sherman gave the order.
  • Abandonment was deliberate, methodical and very reluctant. Nobody who went overboard was drowned. Even the Captain’s dog was saved.

• Fletcher ordered the destroyer Phelps to sink her with torpedoes,
  • about 20.00, after five more torpedoes, she slipped under.
  • The bodies of 216 men, and the remains of 36 aircraft, went down with her.
  • As she disappeared from view there was one final awful detonation underwater. The Phelps was so shaken her captain thought she had been torpedoed.
8 May – Coral Sea

• The Americans believed that they had sunk Shokaku.

• At Pearl Harbour Admiral Nimitz instructed Fletcher to withdraw from the Coral Sea.
  • Fletcher with Yorktown and part of his cruiser and destroyer force headed for Tongatabu; and
  • Kinkaid, with three cruisers and four destroyers, headed towards Noumea.
8 May – Coral Sea

- **Land Based Air**
- Again on 8th May eight Fortresses attacked the enemy ships, but only two near misses were claimed.
- Eight Marauders, operating from the Townsville area and flying almost to the limit of their range, failed to find the target.
- Nineteen Dauntless dive bombers of No. 8 Squadron, of No. 3 Bombardment Group, which had moved to Port Moresby at the end of March, had been placed on stand-by ready to attack if the enemy ships came within range but they never did.

- **Crace**
- Away to the westward faint and distorted echoes of the action reached Task Group 17.3, but left Crace still in the dark as to Fletcher's position, condition, and intentions.
  - The carriers' aircraft could be heard conversing with their parent ships; but the situation was far from clear.
  - In this fog of war, and with his force, being "fairly continuously shadowed", Crace considered the situation unsafe for fuelling.
  - But during the afternoon Hobart (herself short of fuel) gave Perkins 200 tons and,
  - after sunset, was detached with Walke (who had engine trouble) to Brisbane.
  - The rest of the force remained in the area, available to contest any enemy attempt to approach Port Moresby.
8 May – Coral Sea

• **Port Moresby**
  • 13 P39s intercepted about 8 Zeros that were coming over 7 Mile field at about 14.30.
    • Captain Green claimed one when he got on the tail of a zero before it could climb away and shot its whole tail off with his 37mm cannon.
    • Four other zeros were claimed damaged.
    • After damaging a Zero 2Lt Jacobs was badly wounded and his plane was damaged but he managed to land without further injury to himself or the plane.

• **Australia**
  • 58 officers and 606 enlisted men of the 68th Pursuit Squadron sailed from Brisbane on 8 May to provide the air defence for Tongatabu.

• **Burma**
  • On 8th May General Brereton reports that control of Burma by the Japanese is now an accomplished fact and
    • that five Japanese divisions are known to be in Burma with aircraft in excess of requirements within that country.
    • He states that there is particular enemy concentration of medium and heavy bombers.
Air defences moved to Tongatabu
8 May

- **Aircraft Supply**

- The Australian aircraft supply position for operational types at 8th May 1942, is shown in the accompanying table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. on Order</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Delivery details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beaufort</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Dept of Aircraft Production</td>
<td>80 by end July, 20 a month, then 40 a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalina</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>27 received, 6 allocated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>All received or en route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittyhawk</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>50 received, 69 en route, 6 allocated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaufighter</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>54 received or shipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vultee Vengeance</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Possibly 12 en route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>27 received from NEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-11 (bomber)</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Dept of Aircraft Production</td>
<td>To begin Jan 1943; planned production rate 20 a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-12 (interceptor-fighter)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>To begin June 1942 at 10 a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transports (type not specified)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flying Fortress</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>19 received or shipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vought Sikorsky</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>34 received from NEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dornier</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6 received from NEI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
JAPANESE LOSE 10 SHIPS IN SEA FIGHT

Mr: Curtin Stresses Pacific Battle Is Crucial

AIR-NAVAL ACTION STILL RAGING

Ten Japanese vessels, including nine warships, have been sunk, and five—four of them warships—seriously damaged in a great naval and air action being fought in the South-West Pacific area.

Vessels sunk are an aircraft carrier, a heavy cruiser, a light cruiser, two destroyers, four gunboats, and a supply ship.

Damaged ships are an aircraft carrier—which it is thought will be lost—a seaplane tender, two cruisers, and a cargo vessel.

Giving news of the battle to the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister (Mr. Curtin) emphasised its crucial importance.

First communiqué issued from Allied General Headquarters in the South-west Pacific area yesterday, dealing with the initial phases of the battle, said that Allied losses were light. In a later communiqué Allied losses were not reported.

Headquarters yesterday stated:

“A great naval and air action is now taking place in the South-west Pacific area.

“In the initial phase our forces inflicted heavy damage on the enemy, and his losses then reported consisted of:

*SUNK—One light cruiser, two destroyers, four gunboats, and one supply vessel.

NEW PAPUA: Air raid in which a transport was destroyed. This group of islands is approximately 150 miles east of the south-eastern tip of New Guinea.

Section of the communiqué dealing with New Guinea activities read:

LOUISIANA ISLANDS—Allied bombers carried out light attacks on enemy shipping concentrations. One transport destroyed.

PORT MORESBY—Eight two Zero.
2. NAVAL INCIDENTS

(1) 1 enemy aircraft carrier (probably "RYUKAKU") and one heavy or light cruiser were destroyed by allied naval aircraft off Misima Island on 7/5. Later another enemy aircraft carrier (probably "SHOKAKU" or "ZUKAKU") received at least four torpedo hits, was hit by three 1000-lb bombs and was observed burning fiercely. 23 enemy planes, as well as those on the carrier which was sunk were destroyed.

(iii) Enemy losses reported in addition to aircraft carriers include:

- 1 heavy and 1 light cruiser
- 2 destroyers
- 4 gunboats
- 1 supply ship
- 1 seaplane tender
- 1 heavy cruiser
- 1 light cruiser
- 1 cargo vessel
9 May

- **Sea**
  Throughout 9th May Crace (after fuelling Farragut from Australia during the forenoon about 300 miles S.S.W. of China Strait) kept to the northward in a favourable position for intercepting enemy ships approaching Port Moresby. He was still completely in the dark as to events.

- **Air**
  - **New Guinea**
    During 8/9 May, 8 B26s and a single B17 attack shipping and seaplanes at Deboyne I.
    16 Zeros attacked 7 Mile at 07.30 destroying a P39 and two B25s on the ground. Six P39s took off in time to engage and claimed two Zeros destroyed. 2Lt McGee was shot at by his own AA over 7 mile and forced to crash land on Fisherman’s Island.
  - **Burma**
    During 8/9 May, 6 B17s bomb the docks at Rangoon.
2. NAVAL INCIDENTS

(1) GENERAL. There are indications from Most Secret Sources that -

a. The Moreby invasion operation has been postponed.
b. The main enemy convoy is to proceed back to Rabaul.
c. The Aircraft Carrier striking force is to proceed eastward after refuelling to carry out an operation probably against Nauru.
d. Damaged Aircraft Carrier "SHOKAKU" is operating aircraft from its flight deck and is proceeding back to Japan.

(ii) Deboynes Island. A Seaplane Tender (or Freighter) South of Deboynes Island was attacked by Allied aircraft between 1050 and 1400/9. The vessel was probably damaged but not sunk. Fifteen seaplanes were observed taking off one of which was sunk and 3 damaged.

(iii) Woodlark Island. Two transports (possibly destroyers) were bombed by Allied aircraft 100 miles N.E. of Woodlark Island. No results were observed.
2. NAVAL INCIDENTS (Contd.)

(iv) Solomon Islands. An unconfirmed report states that 200 Japanese landed at Tulagi and that other landings took place at Gavutu and Makambo Island (off N.E. Coast of Tulagi Island). Dates of these occupations are not given.

(v) Further to the report of a submarine attack on "JOHN ADAMS", it is now reported that the vessel was sighted abandoned and burning on 6/5 and exploded 1930/6. Two boatloads of survivors were located by aircraft on 9/5 and help is being sent.

The crew of "CHLOE" which was sunk 7/5 are reported safe.
Tulagi occupied for a seaplane base.
10 May

- **Sea**
  - It seemed probable to Crace, from the absence of reports of vessels in the Louisiades area, that the enemy’s advance had now been checked. He therefore decided to hold on to the northward until 1 a.m. on 10th May, and if no further information regarding Japanese forces moving south was received by then, to retire to Australia.
  - This he did, and reached the Barrier Reef at Grafton Passage before sunset on the 10th.
  - Task Force 16, Enterprise and Hornet, were sighted by an RNZAF reconnaissance Hudson flying out of Fiji.

- **Air**
  - **New Guinea**
    - At 07.30 five P39s intercepted about 10 Zeros. 1Lt Marks claimed one Zero destroyed which was seen to hit the water. 1Lt McGovern also claimed a Zero destroyed.
    - B25s bomb seaplane base at Deboyne Island.
10 May - Burma

• On 10 May the Japanese finally caught Burma Corps at Shwegyin, where the road crossed the Chindwin river by ferry.
  • The ferry steamers were not built for vehicles and the process of getting transport, guns and tanks across the river was a struggle.
  • After two days of airstrikes on the force still trapped on the east bank, the Japanese mounted a strong attack on the perimeter, reaching high ground overlooking the jetty and preventing further operation of the ferries.
  • After desperate efforts to counterattack and dislodge them from the high ground had failed, the British withdrew along a jungle track with only what a mule or a man could carry.
  • Burma Corps lost two thirds of its artillery, all its tanks and the majority of its transport although most of the four wheel drive trucks had been saved.
  • They still had 200 kilometres to go to reach Imphal in India, some of it over steep mountain tracks.
Burma Corps trapped at the Chindwin crossing
11 May - Washington

• **Strategy**

• At a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 11th May Admiral King pointed out that
  • until the end of June there would be only two serviceable American aircraft carriers in the Pacific,
  • whereas the Japanese had from seven to ten, and
  • radio intercepts indicated that a large naval force was due to leave Japan on 20th May and could be at some point on the line joining Alaska, Hawaii and Australia between 1st and 5th June.

Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting. From left to right: Gen. Henry H. Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Forces; Adm. William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy; Adm. Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations; and Gen. George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army.
11 May

• Sea
  • Neosho drifted westerly for four days before she was found by an American flying-boat which directed the destroyer Henley to her in the afternoon of 11th May.
    • Henley took off the 123 still on board, sank the wreck, and
    • searched for some fruitless hours for other survivors on rafts.
  • Neosho might have been found sooner but her navigator had taken a fix on the sun and Venus during a lull in the air attacks but had plotted it wrong.
    • As a result the ship’s last radio messages gave the wrong position so
    • the search had started in the wrong place.
  • Crace reached home at Cid Harbour at noon on the 11th.
  • Lt Cdr Kirk took S-42 up to the Bismark Archipelago and on 11 May fired four torpedoes at a large minelayer which had been part of the Tulagi occupation fleet.
    • He saw three hits which started fatal fires amidships.
    • The ensuing counter attack brought everyone to the point of heat exhaustion.
    • One man threw a fit and others collapsed in their tracks when the strain was over.
Task Force 44 base at Cid Harbour
11 May

• Sea
  • On May 11th a signal to the second fleet was decoded directing a force to
    • “proceed to the Saipan-Guam area and wait for forthcoming operation”
    • followed by another sending air groups and transport to the same area.
  • Task Force 16 had brought Marine Fighter Squadron 212 with its Wildcats to
    garrison Efate. Inspection of the field on Efate found it, as yet, “not suitable for
    fighters”, so the Marines flew off to Noumea.

• Air
  • B17s attack shipping at Kessa in N Solomons and B26s hit seaplane base at
    Deboyne I.
  • 18 to 20 Japanese bombers attacked 7 Mile around noon. Six P39s were damaged
    to a greater or lesser extent. Sergeant Hutchins was the first member of the 8th
    Pursuit Group ground staff to be killed in action.
  • Japanese bombers and fighters twice attacked Horn Island airfield. No serious
    damage was done.
12 May - Melbourne

• **Strategy**

  • In Australia on 12th May MacArthur sent Curtin a gloomy appreciation in the course of which he said that he believed the enemy could strike
    • "a new blow of the most dangerous potentialities against the S.W.P.A. or against India", and
    • that a Japanese offensive against the S.W.P.A. should precede a movement against India.

  • He urged haste in developing the Australian "defensive bastion".
    • "We have . . . in this theatre at the present time all the elements that have produced disaster in the Western Pacific since the beginning of the war."

  • He informed Curtin that he had cabled to General Marshall a request for
    • two aircraft carriers,
    • a corps of three divisions, and
    • a first-line strength of 1,000 aircraft.

12 May

• **Sea**
  • Halsey in Task Force 16 received intelligence from CinCPac that a Japanese invasion of Nauru and Ocean Islands was expected on the 17th. He planned to head north and attack the invasion convoy.

• **Land**

• **New Guinea**
  • When the Battle of the Coral Sea was over Blamey and MacArthur agreed that the "limited offensive" they had planned could be got under way.
    • On 12th May Major Fleay was appointed to command Kanga Force and was ordered to concentrate his force in the Markham Valley "for operation in that area",
    • his task, "the attack of Lae and of Salamaua, making the most use of the factor of surprise".

• **Burma**
  • On 12 May the monsoon broke in Burma, it made the British retreat sheer misery, but it stopped the Japanese pursuit dead.
12 May - Air

• **New Guinea**
  • The 35th Pursuit Squadron had transferred to the new 12 Mile strip to relieve the crowding at 7 Mile.
  • They put up 5 P39s just as about a dozen zeros attacked (raid 46).
    • 2Lt Wilde was seen to shoot down two zeros but was then seen to dive away trailing smoke and plummet into the jungle.
    • He was listed MIA.
  • 2 Lt Hawkins’ P39 was also badly damaged and he crash landed at Vari Island north west of Moresby, but he returned uninjured two days later.

• **Ambon**
  • Nine Australian Hudsons attacked shipping at Amboina on 12 May.
    • A 3,000 ton ship was sunk and direct hits were scored on two others.
    • Near misses were scored on a 5,000 ton ship and fires were started along the waterfront.

• **Burma**
  • Heavy Bombers fly their first mission in defence of the air cargo line to China when 4 B17s from Dum Dum A/F heavily damage runways and set fire to several parked aircraft at Myitkyina.
    • Myitkyina, which fell to the Japanese on 8 May, poses a serious fighter threat to the Allied base at Dinjan.
13 May - Melbourne

• **Government**

• At the Advisory War Council meeting on 13th May, there was some criticism of the Allied conduct of the Coral Sea operation, the result of which was felt to be

• “rather disappointing, the more so as we had ample warning of the enemy's intentions, the prospective date of attack and the strength of his forces. With the advantage of this information we should have been able to concentrate the superior strength necessary to have ensured a complete victory. As it was, an opportunity to inflict losses on the enemy was lost.”
Advisory War Council

MacArthur meets the Advisory War Council, March 1942. Left to right: MacArthur, Curtin, Fadden & Chifley.

The Advisory War Council included both war cabinet ministers and senior opposition leaders.
13 May

• **Strategy**
  
  General Marshall proposed a solution which would meet the need for stronger forces in the Fijis without requiring additional troops.
  
  • The 37th Division, which had been promised to New Zealand in return for the retention of the Dominion's troops in the Middle East, could be sent instead to the Fijis, Marshall suggested, thus releasing almost 10,000 New Zealand troops for the defense of the Dominion.
  
  • Admiral King raised no objections to this proposal and it was quickly adopted by the Joint Chiefs and approved by the President by 13\textsuperscript{th} May.
  
  • The New Zealand Government accepted this arrangement, too, in return for an agreement that the United States would assume strategic responsibility for the defence of the Fijis.

• **Air**
  
  • B17s and B26s attacked shipping and an airfield at Rabaul.
  
  • Eight P39s intercepted six Zeros over 7 Mile just after noon (raid 48).
    
    • Two Zeros were claimed destroyed.
    
    • One P39 crash landed but the pilot survived.
On May 14th Nimitz signalled King for permission to rescind the directive keeping Task Force 16 at Noumea.

Halsey sailed north from Noumea with task force 16, Enterprise and Hornet, to head off a Japanese invasion of Nauru and Ocean islands.

Halsey received two signals that day:

One from Cominch passed on by CinCPac:
  - “Operations of Task Force 16 inadvisable in forward areas beyond own shore based air cover.”

The second, personal from Nimitz, not logged or copied to Cominch,
  - instructed Halsey to make sure Task Force 16 was sighted by the Japanese before he withdrew.
14 May

• **Land**

• The US 32\textsuperscript{nd} division, plus the remainder of the 41\textsuperscript{st} division arrived in Australia, on 14th May.

• On 14th May MacArthur wrote to Blamey
  
  • that he had decided to establish airfields on the south-east coast of Papua for use against Lae, Salamaua and Rabaul,
  
  • that there appeared to be suitable sites between Abau and Samarai,
  
  • and he wished to know whether Blamey had troops to protect these bases.
MacArthur’s proposed airfield sites
14 May

- **Air**
- **New Guinea**
  - B17s, B26s, and B25s attack Rabaul and Lae.
  - RAAF planes attacked Deboyne Island on 14\textsuperscript{th}.
- The Japanese made a series of raids on Moresby.
  - In the first raid 11 P39s met 15 Zeros attacking 7 Mile.
    - 1 Lt Brown collided with a zero he was attacking.
    - He survived but he had severed part of the Zero’s right elevator and its vertical fin and it fell away into the jungle.
    - Three Zeros were claimed all together for no loss (raid 49).
  - Our fighters were refuelling, however, when the main attack came and couldn't intercept a force of 26 heavy bombers and nine fighters, which bombed harbour and shipping from 21,000 feet unsuccessfully (raid 50).
- **Burma**
  - Heavy Bombers attack Myitkyina for a second time, scoring direct hits on runways and several buildings.
JIC – 14 May

Japanese Navy. The present lull in Japanese naval activity is thought to presage offensive operations which may be directed into the Eastern PACIFIC before the end of May.
15 May

• Air

• One week after the battle (Coral Sea), (15 May) General MacArthur reported that complete co-ordination with naval forces had been attained.
  • Prior to the May battle, bombardment commanders were unaware either of the Navy's presence or of its plans.
  • They knew only that occasionally they would be requested on short notice to cooperate in a naval operation.
  • Because the striking force was widely scattered along the rail line between Townsville and Cloncurry, it was necessary to fly the aircraft some 600 to 800 miles to Port Moresby, where they were refuelled in preparation for missions at dawn on the following day.

• Terminology

• Interceptor and Pursuit units of the USAAF are all redesignated “Fighter”. 
15 May

- **Sea**
- **South Pacific**
  - English language broadcasts from Tokyo report the sighting of two US aircraft carriers 500 miles east of the Solomon islands.
  - At 14.24 Halsey turned task force 16 back towards Noumea.
  - The damaged Yorktown reached Nukualofa anchorage at Tongatabu.
- **Land**
- **New Guinea**
  - Blamey had already ordered the 14th Brigade to Port Moresby and it embarked at Townsville on the 15th.
    - The 14th Brigade, with only about five months of continuous training behind it (although most of the individual men had had more than that),
    - was the first substantial infantry reinforcement to reach Moresby since General Sturdee had sent two battalions there, making a total of three, on 3rd January.
- **China**
  - The Japanese advanced upon Chuchow from the Hangchow area on 15 May. Within a short time the airfields at Chuchow, Yushan, and Lishui had fallen into enemy hands.
2. NAVAL INCIDENTS

(1) Allied aircraft attacked shipping at Rabaul at 0930/14, scoring one near miss possibly damaging one transport.

(11) During an enemy air raid on Port Moresby at 1244/14, approx 180 to 200 high explosive and fragmentation bombs were dropped around S.S. "KARSIK" (Dutch transport). So far as is known, no damage was caused.

(iii) A small ship approx 150 tons, camouflaged and with "No.80" painted on the bow was sighted by air reconnaissance at 1710 yesterday 14/5, stationary in a position 24 miles NNE of Darwin. The ship is so far unidentified.

(iv) Air patrols from Darwin yesterday 14/5 failed to locate "MAROUBRA" (60 ton cutter) which is now 6 days overdue at Darwin from Thursday Island.

3. ENEMY'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

(1) Occupation of Nauru and/or Ocean Island.

(ii) Carrier-borne air raids against N.E. Australian air bases including Horn Is., Townsville and possibly Brisbane or Sydney.