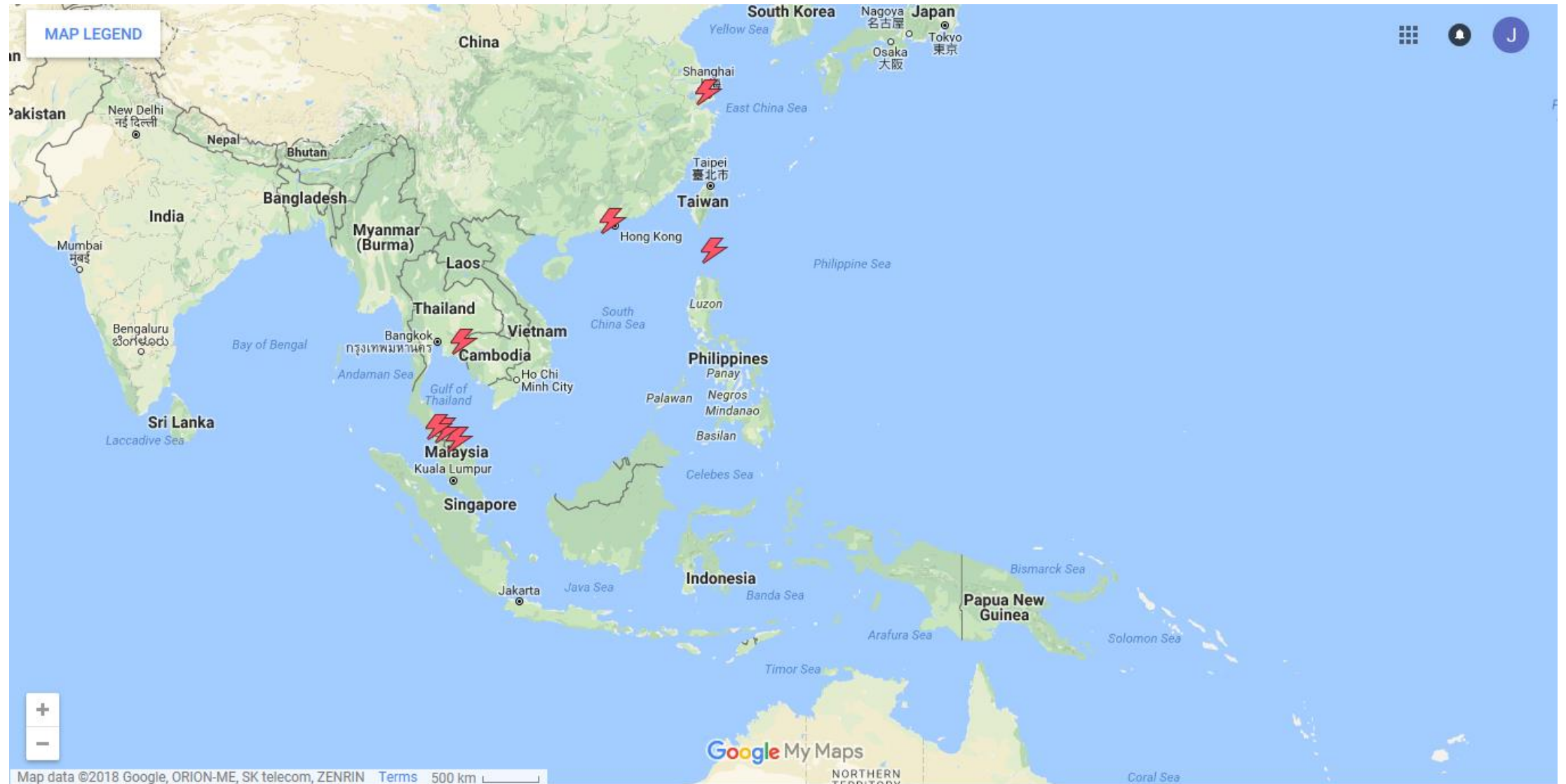


# The Battles of late October for the Solomons

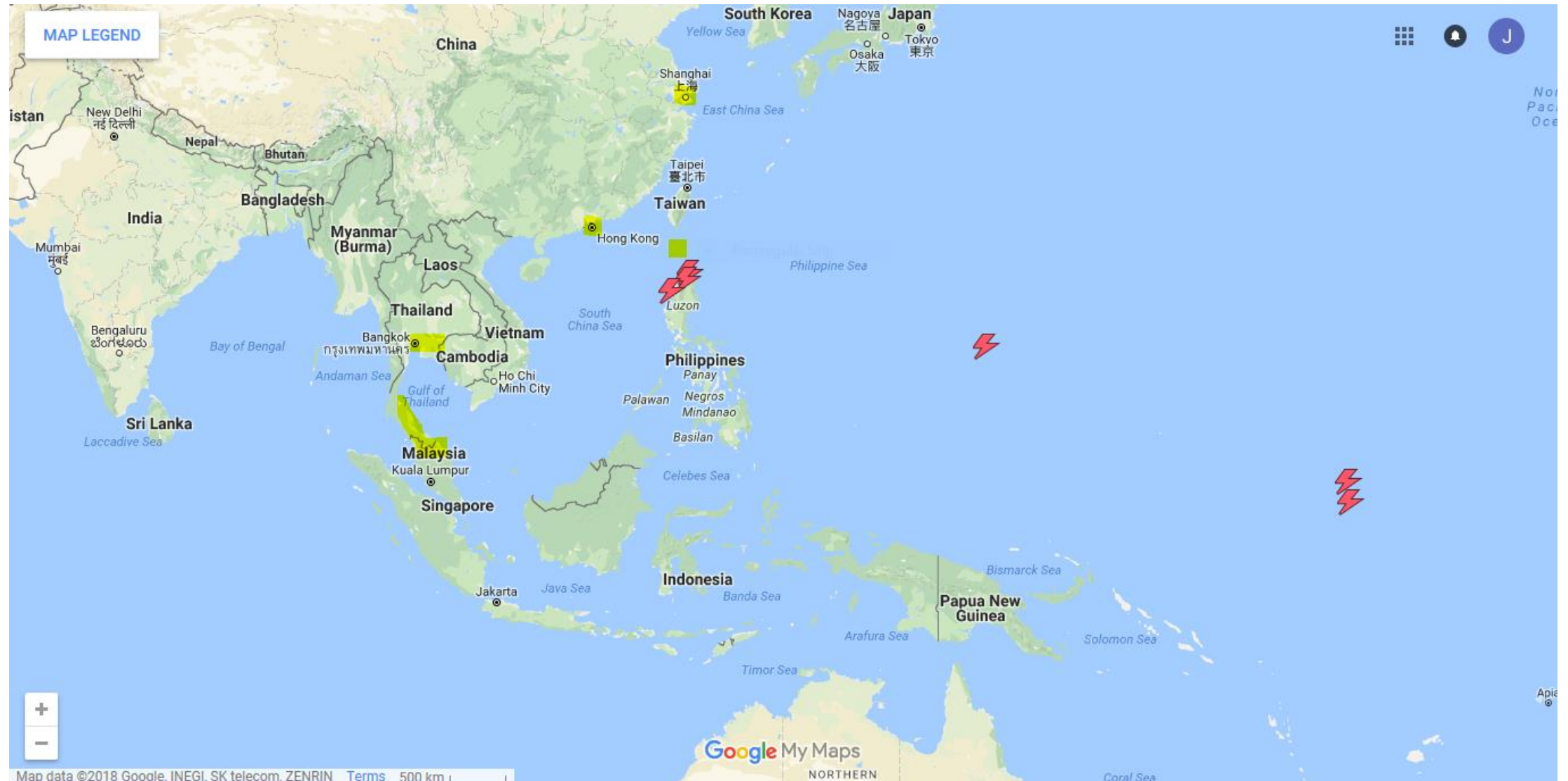
# Background to the War in the Pacific

- On 8<sup>th</sup> December 1942 (Australian time) the Empire of Japan attacked the US fleet at Pearl Harbour and invaded the Shanghai International Settlement, Hong Kong, The Philippines, Thailand and Malaya.
- With extraordinary energy and skill they overran all the western empires in Asia in five months.
- The Americans then won two naval victories which reestablished approximate naval parity in the Pacific.

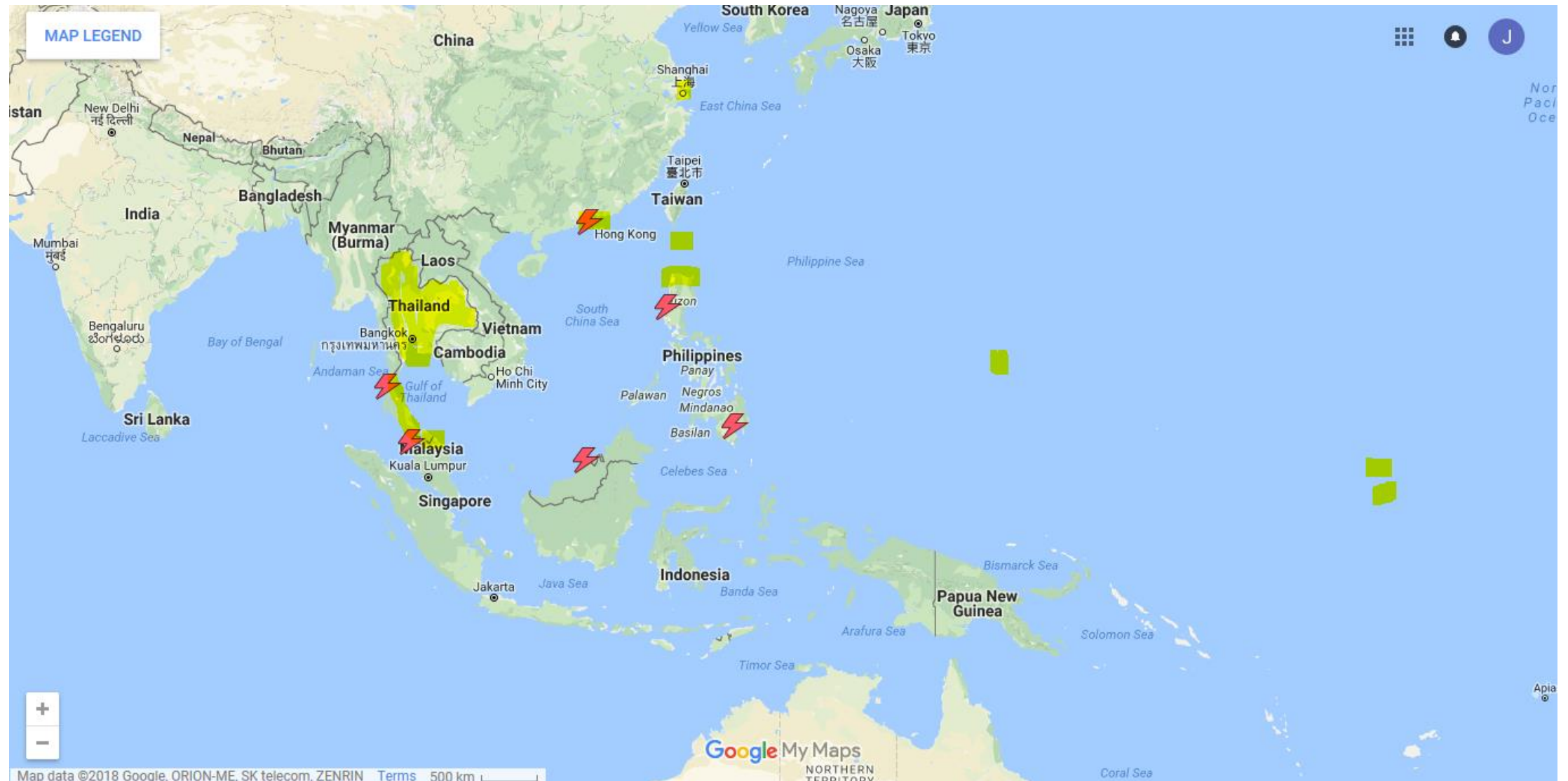
# 8 December 1941 – The Wave Breaks



# 9 to 13 December 1941



# 15 to 22 December 1941

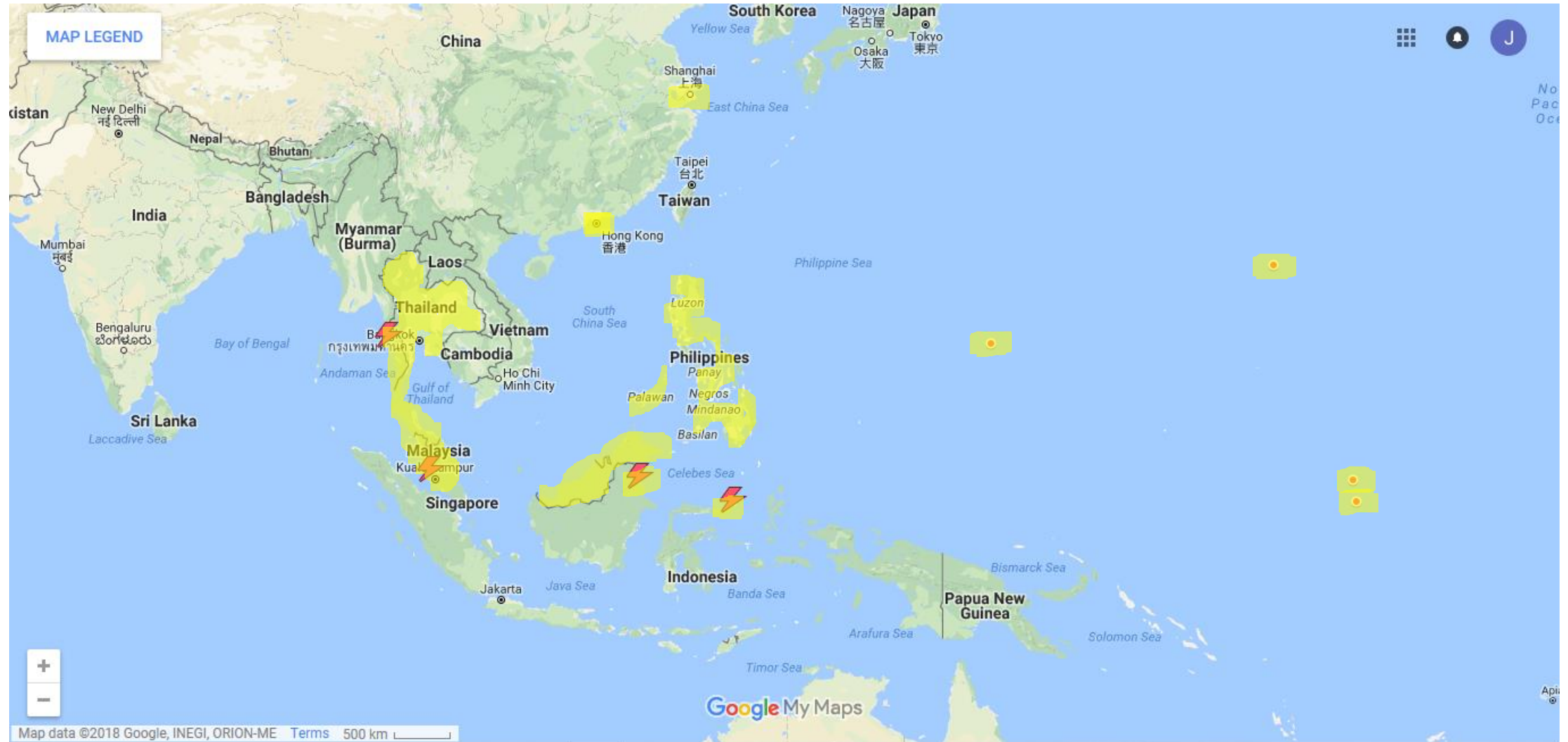




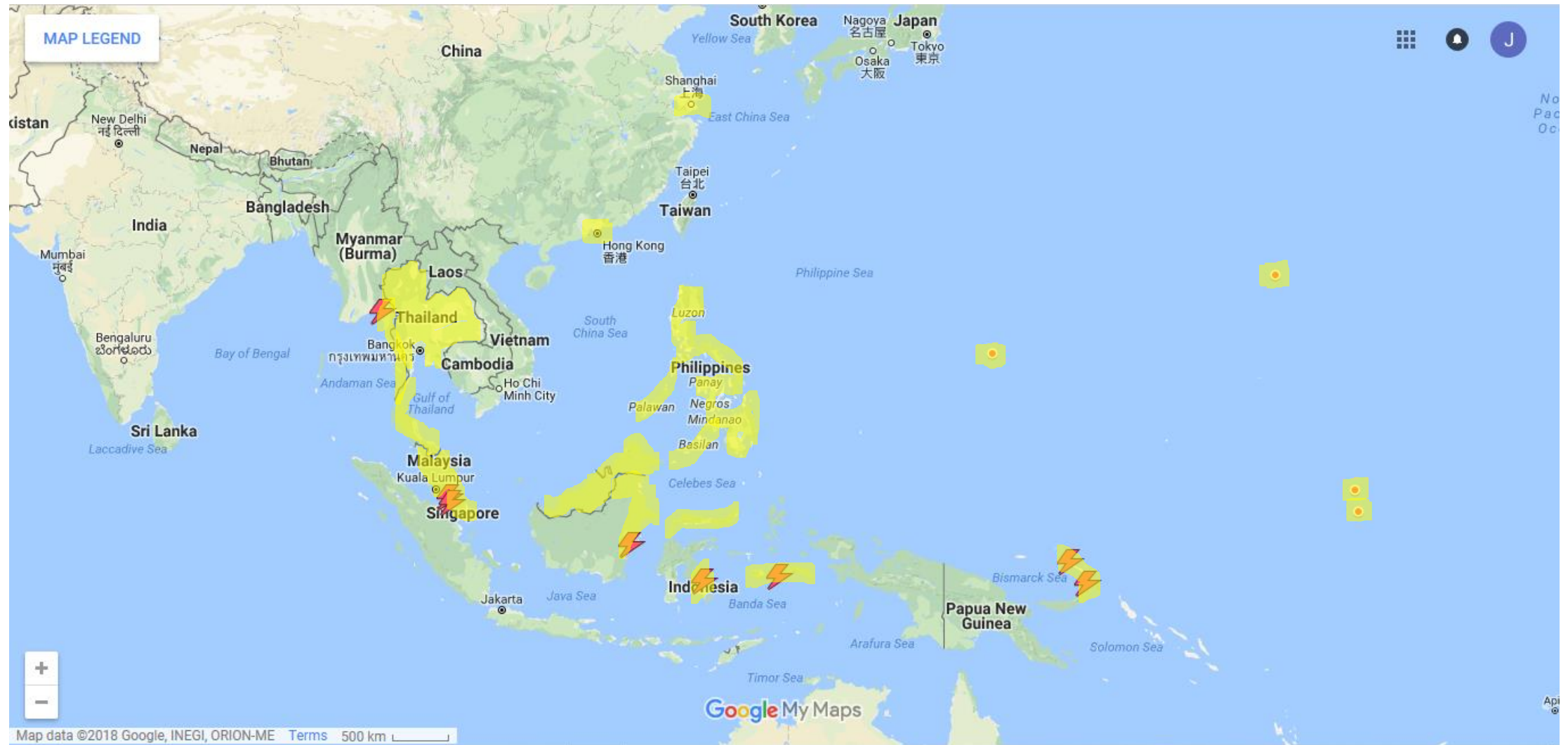
# 23 to 31 December 1941



# 1 to 15 January 1942

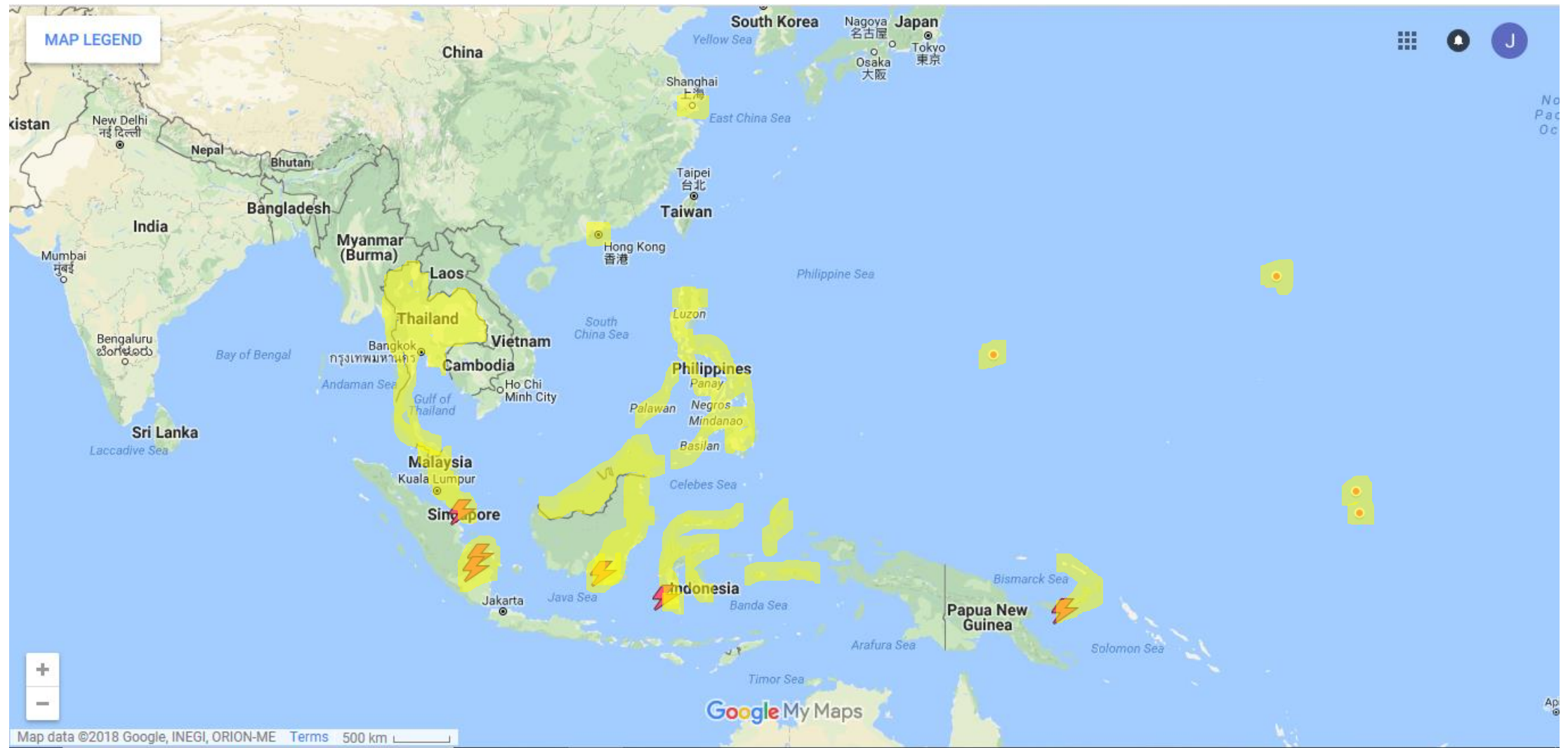


# 16 to 31 January 1942

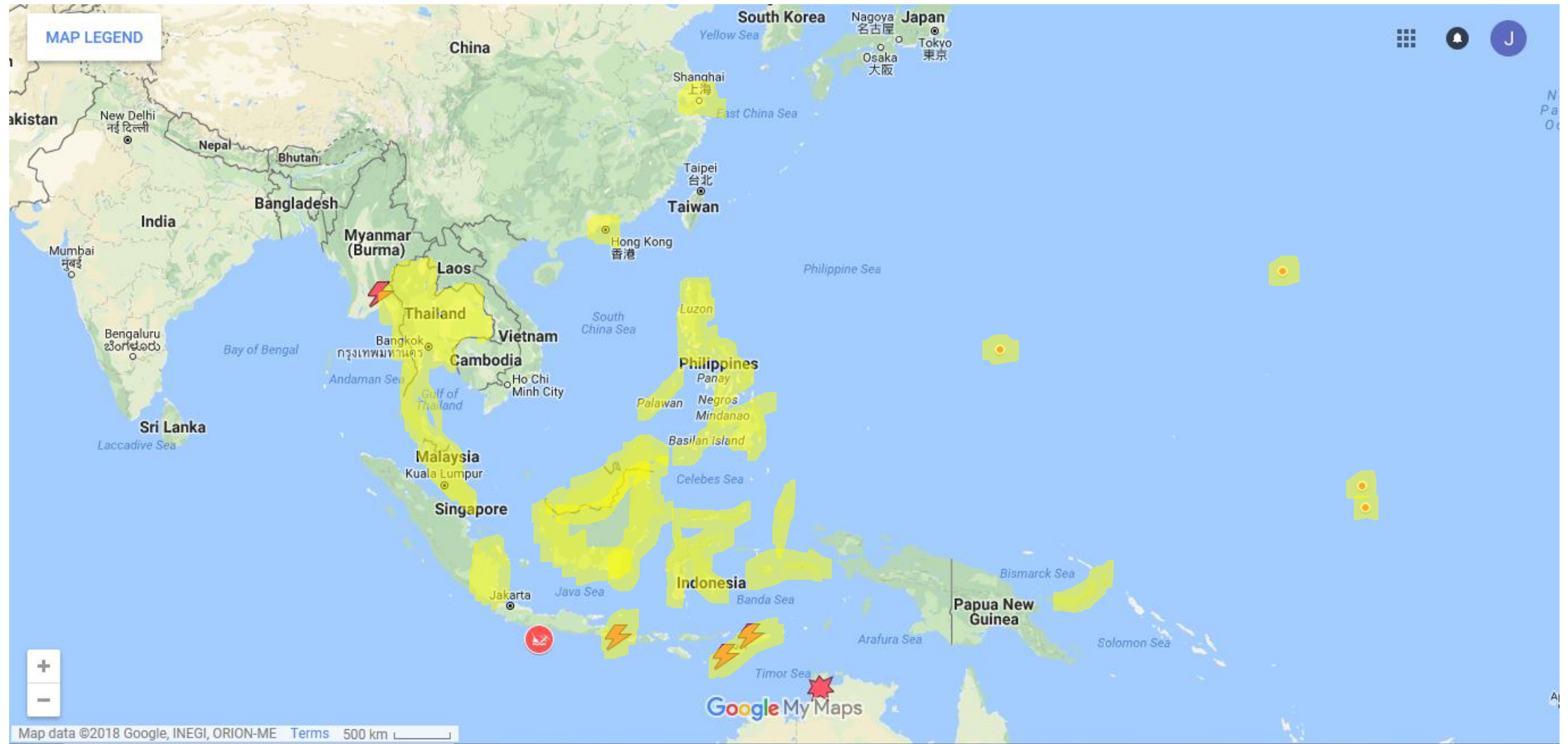




# 1 to 15 February 1942



16 to 28 February 1942



# 1 to 15 March 1942



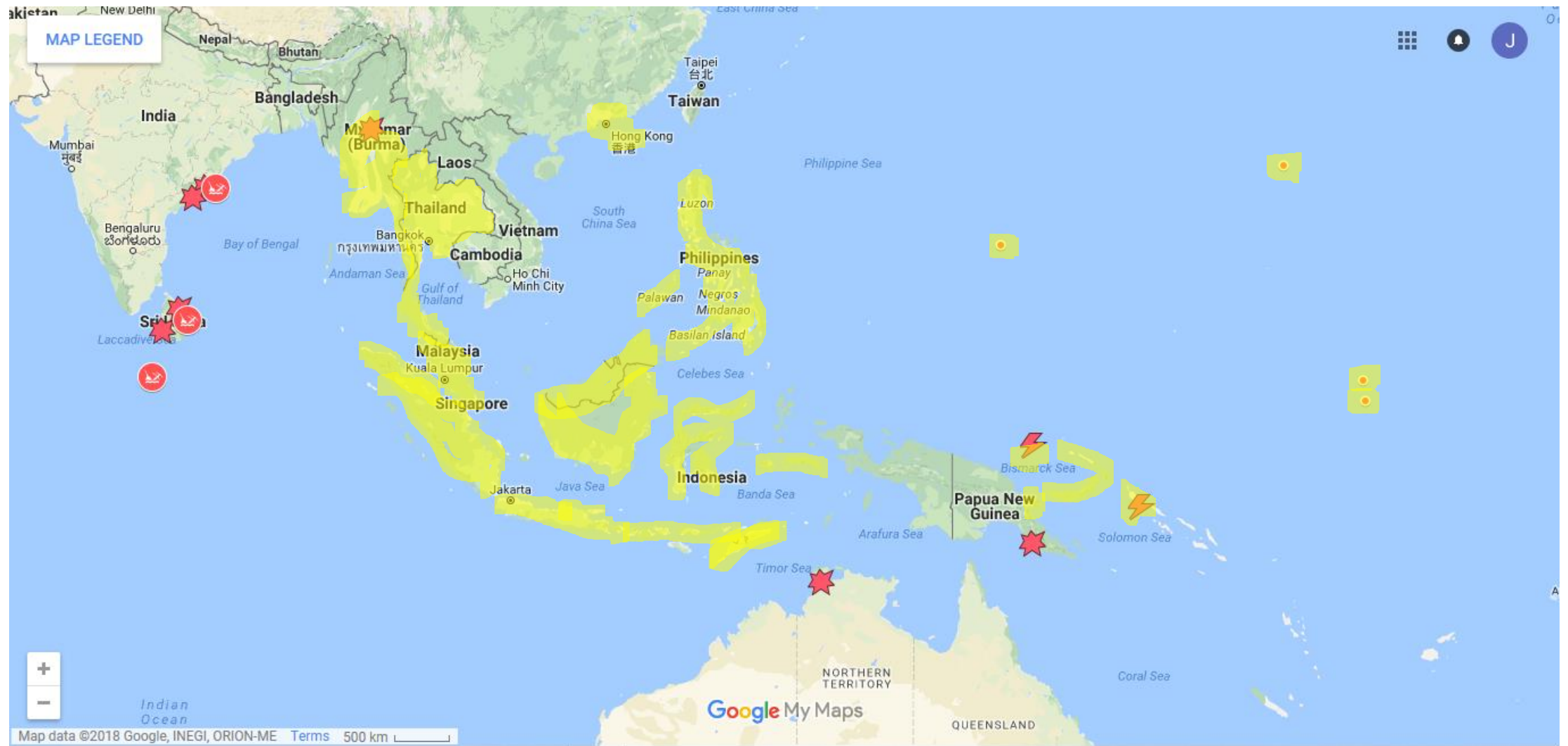


# 16 to 31 March 1942





# 1 to 15 April 1942



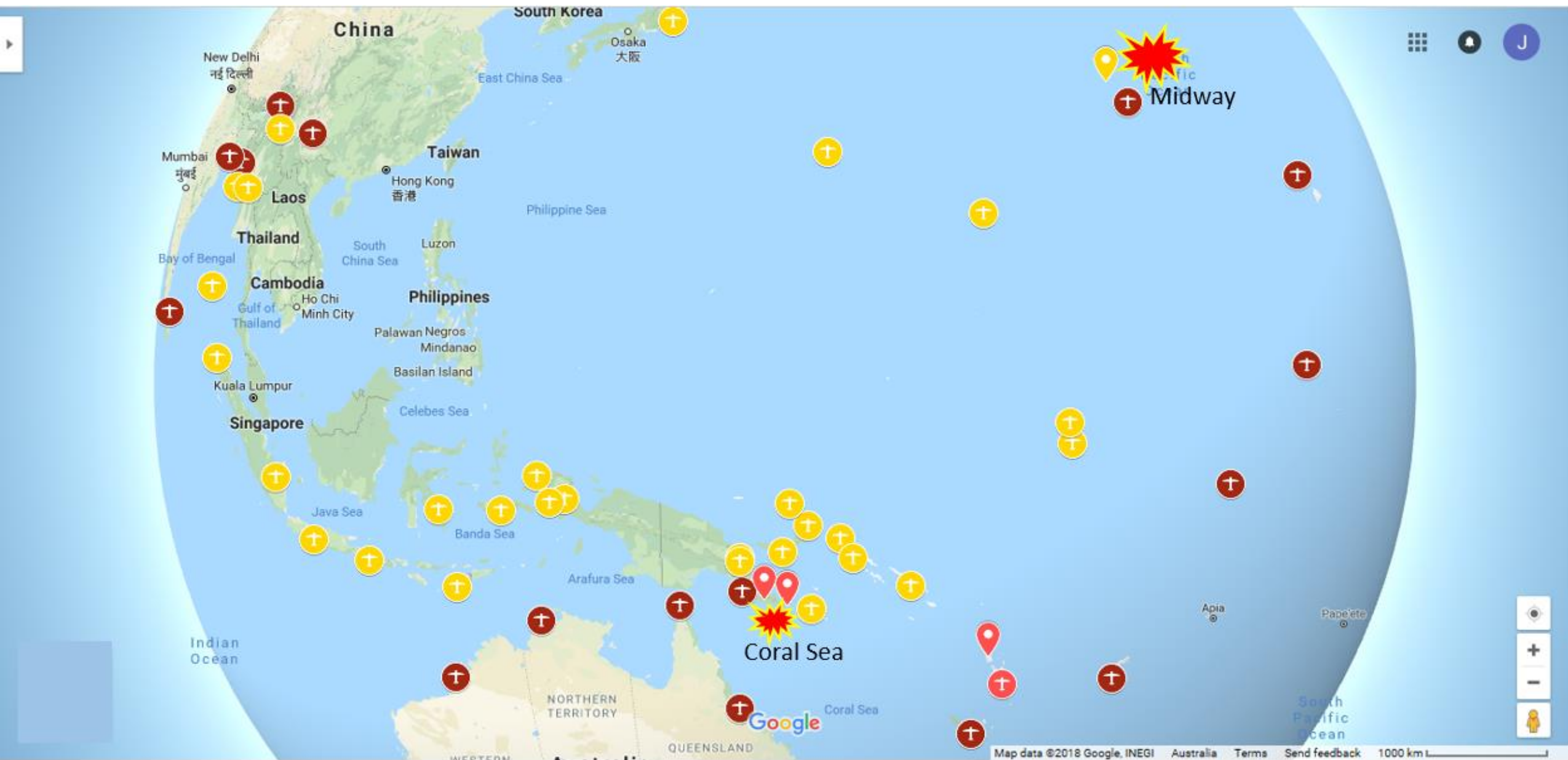
# 16 to 30 April



# 1 to 15 May 1942









# Background to Guadalcanal

- Tulagi, the administrative centre of the Solomon Islands, was the southernmost point reached by the Japanese avalanche.
- After Midway The Joint Staff ordered its recovery. Ghormley and MacArthur, the theatre commanders, objected that they didn't have sufficient forces and it was too risky. Admiral King overruled their objections and insisted that "the Japanese drive south must be Stopped Now".
- The need for airfields switched attention from Tulagi to Guadalcanal, codename Cactus, the nearest island with scope for an airfield. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division was landed there in early August.
- The US Navy has fought three battles in defence of Guadalcanal, Savo Island, The Eastern Solomons and Cape Esperance and the USS Wasp was sunk by a submarine while patrolling to defend the Island. They have held the line but they have lost a fleet carrier sunk and another severely damaged, four cruisers and two destroyers sunk and 1,500 men killed.
- The Cactus airforce is defending against Japanese bombers based at Rabaul, which are attacking the airfield, and against Japanese destroyers based in the Shortland Islands attempting to run reinforcements and supplies into Guadalcanal.

# Situation Report – Mid October

- **Pacific**

- Hornet is the only remaining battleworthy American Carrier in the Pacific.
- Japanese submarines are making the area south of Guadalcanal hazardous for the Pacific Fleet
- The ability to read Japanese codes and even to locate important Japanese ships has been lost following changes to the Japanese Navy's communications system.

- **Guadalcanal**

- The Marines have a functioning Airbase.
- Two Japanese ground attacks have been defeated.
- The perimeter is under attack from the sea and the air and there are indications of a new Japanese land force to the West.

# Situation Report – Mid October

- In daylight, when Cactus can fly cover, American ships come in from the south with reinforcements and supplies for the Marines.
- By nightfall the American ships depart to the south or withdrew to safety in the Tulagi anchorage. Until dawn the Japanese take over.
- The destroyers and cruisers of the Tokyo Express habitually lurk in the Shortland Islands below Bougainville Island until the afternoon when they start steaming south to be within 200 miles of Guadalcanal by about 1800.
- This is just inside the range of SBD'S and TBF's from Henderson Field, but maneuvering ships make difficult targets, and the late hour gives the American planes time for only one crack at them before dark.
- After that the Express is unopposed until daylight and is free to unload men and supplies or bombard the perimeter before turning for home.

# Situation Report – Mid October





# 13/14 October - Guadalcanal

- 13 October - The Americans Reinforce Cactus with the 164<sup>th</sup> Army Infantry Regiment.
- The afternoon search mission find a major convoy 200 miles up the slot. Six transports each carrying landing craft and armed with strong anti-aircraft batteries were steering for Guadalcanal escorted by eight destroyers.
- Night 13/14 October - Two battle ships bombard the perimeter with 973 14 inch shells, each weighing 1,500 lbs, over 700 tons of projectiles, in an hour.



The huge crater at the edge of the Henderson Field runway was made by a 14-inch shell fired by a Japanese battleship during the night of 13/14 October.

About a hundred of the shells were type 3 AA rounds which each burst to disburse 470 incendiary sub munitions over a wide swath.

# 14 October - Guadalcanal

- One near-miss had flung General Vandegrift to the floor in his vulnerable dugout in a heap “without hurt except in dignity”
- “A man comes close to himself at such times” the general later reflected,
  - ... and until someone has experienced naval or artillery shelling or aerial bombardment , he cannot easily grasp a sensation compounded of frustration, helplessness, fear and, in the case of close hits, shock ...
- The bombardment was a withering baptism of fire for the 164<sup>th</sup> infantry, who had only come ashore yesterday, but they only sustained three fatalities.



General Vandegrift

# 14 – 16 October

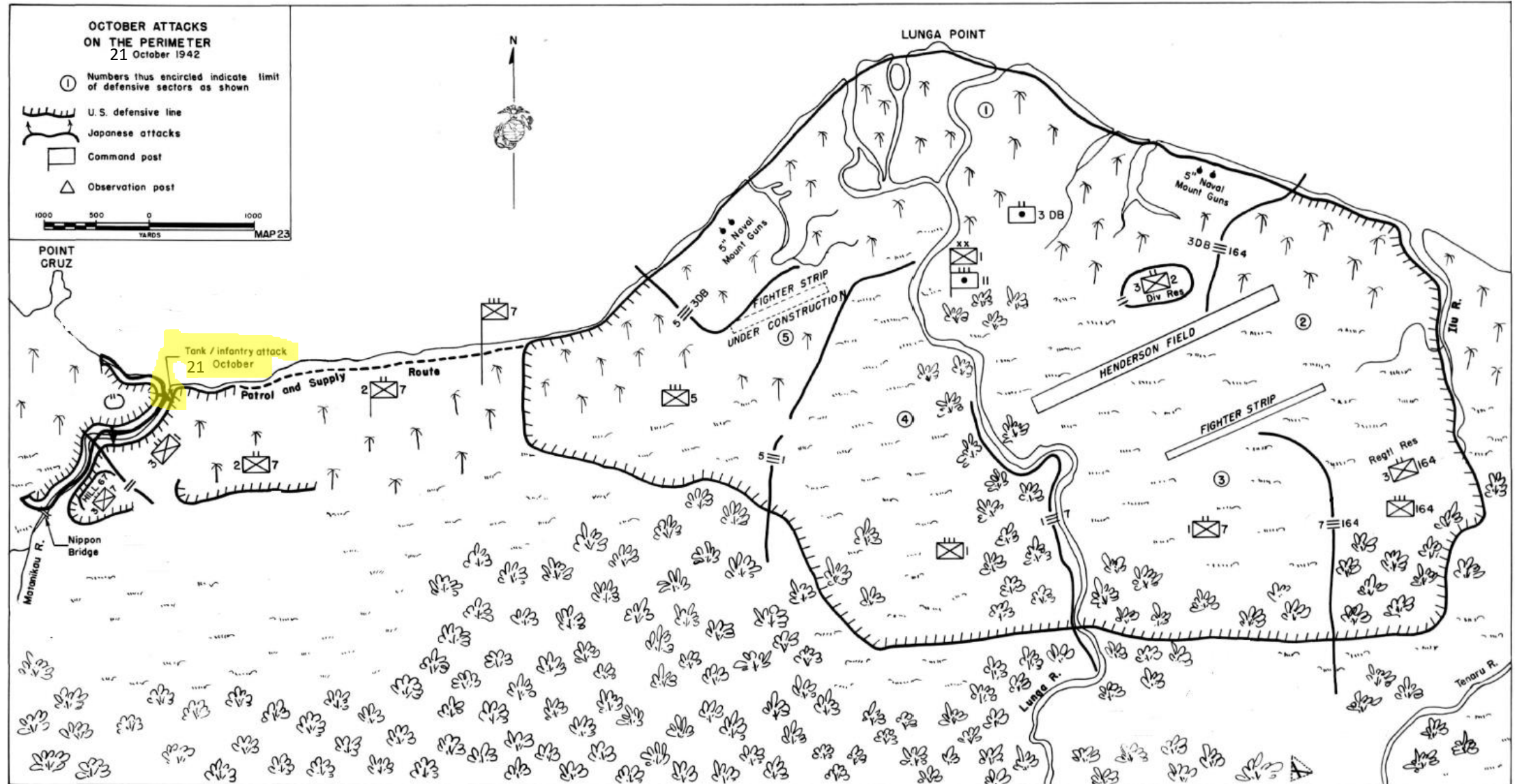
- 14 October - By dawn only 42 of the 90 planes, that had been operational 24 hours earlier, were flyable. Forty one men had been killed and many more wounded and the airfield was a complete shambles. Operations, restricted by the loss of gasoline in the fire, moved to Fighter 1, which was left in better condition than Henderson.
- By late afternoon all the remaining aircraft, using nearly all the remaining fuel, flew 52 strike sorties against the convoy, then east of Santa Isabel. The crews claimed a number of hits and near misses, but the convoy did not turn back.
- Night 14/15 October - two Japanese cruisers again bombarded Henderson Field while the Express brought the six transports to Tassafaronga.
- At daylight the Cactus Air Force scraped together all the planes and fuel they had and attacked the transports assisted later in the day by the B17s from Espiritu Santo. By day's end three bombed transports were beached and burning at Tassafaronga and the other two had fled back up the Slot but the Japanese had landed all the men and most of the supplies they were carrying.
- Night 15/16 two cruisers and escorting destroyers lobbed over a thousand eight and five inch shells towards Fighter 1.
- Repairs to *Enterprise* had been expedited so that she could return to the South Pacific as soon as possible. On the morning of 16<sup>th</sup> October Enterprise, with the damage from the Eastern Solomons repaired and its AA defences beefed up sailed from Pearl for the south Pacific. The Ship's Fighter Direction Officer and most of the aircrew had no combat experience.

# 20 – 23 October

- Reconnaissance to the east and south found no indications of a Japanese build-up. General Vandegrift and his staff were aware only of a build up along the coast from the west.
- On 20 October a Japanese patrol, augmented by two tanks, came into view on the west bank of the Matanikau. One tank was knocked out by 37mm fire. The Japanese turned back.
- At sunset 21/10 artillery fire intensified briefly, and nine infantry supported tanks debouched from the west bank jungle and drove eastward for the sandspit at the mouth of the river. Again the fire from a 37mm stopped one of the tanks, and the attack turned back without seriously threatening the Marine positions.
- In the face of the attacks at the Matanikau and with no patrol contacts to the south or east the 2d Battalion 7th Marines was moved out of the southern line east of the Lunga on 23 October and moved west to relieve the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines at the mouth of the Matanikau. This left the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (Puller) with a 2,500-yard line across the southern slopes of Bloody Ridge to defend.
- About 18.00 on 23rd October the Japanese intensified artillery and mortar fire to lay down an orthodox preparation pattern on the Marine east bank positions and along the coastal route from the Lunga Perimeter. As twilight faded the artillery fire ceased, and a column of nine tanks churned across the sandspit. 37mm anti-tank guns engaged the Japanese tanks while infantry mortars and the howitzers of the 11th Marines dumped prearranged concentrations farther west to break up any pending infantry assault. The enemy ground troops never got started, and the tank charge was stopped when eight of the vehicles were hammered to a standstill by the 37s.

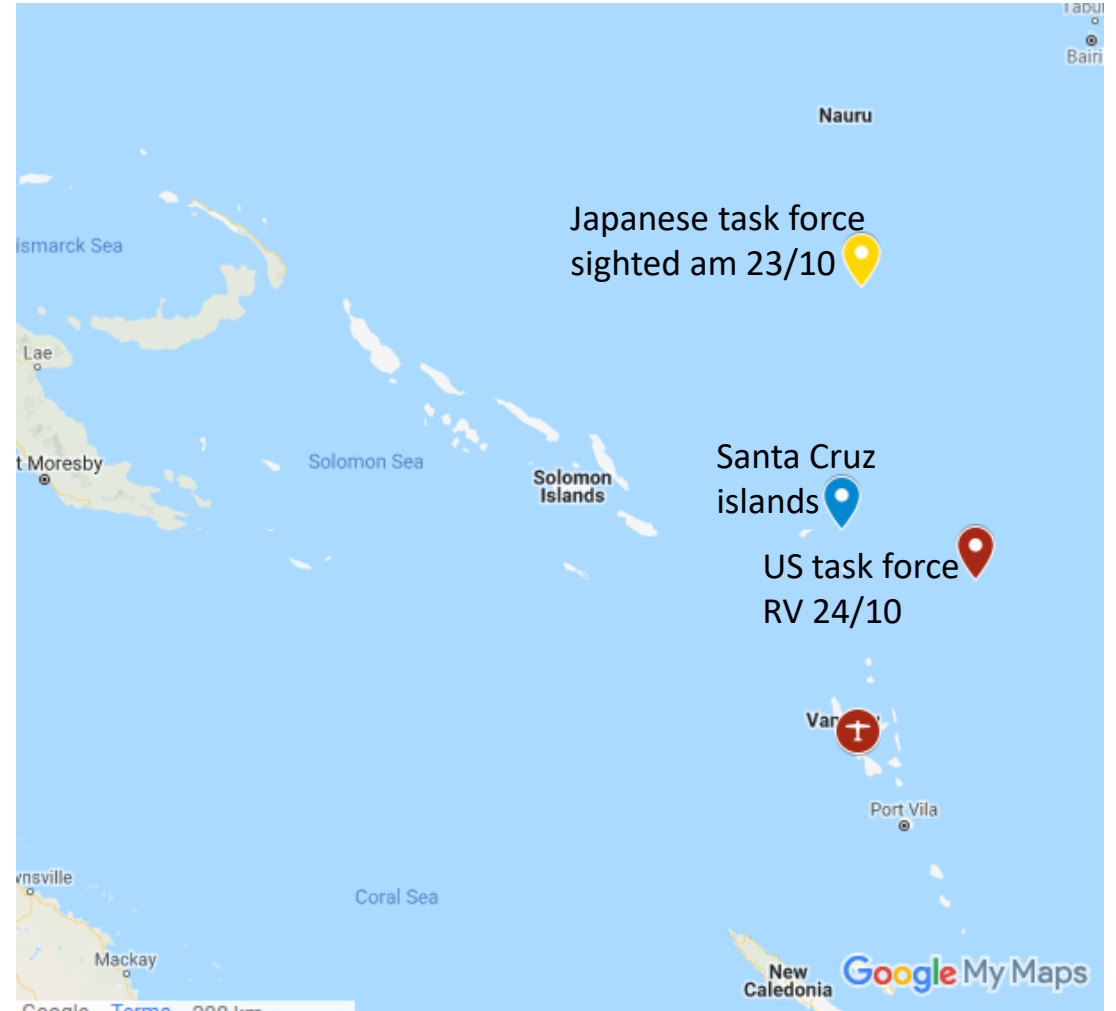


# 21 October - Guadalcanal



# 23 - 24 October - Sea

- On the morning of 23 October an AirSoPac PBY had encountered a large Japanese task force about 650 miles north of Espiritu Santo.
- The Enterprise task force rendezvoused with Hornet on 24 October, 273 miles northeast of Espiritu Santo.
- Halsey instructed them to sweep north of the Santa Cruz islands then change course to the south west to be in a position to intercept enemy forces approaching Guadalcanal.



# 24 October - Guadalcanal

- On the 24th the Marines of 3/7 on Hill 67 south of the Matanikau mouth spotted a Japanese column, moving east across Mount Austen's foothills. Artillery and air was called in but, the Japanese disappeared into the jungle 1,000 yards south of Hill 67 before they could be engaged.
- With this threat apparently headed for the 4,000-yard gap between the Matanikau outpost and the Lunga perimeter, 2/7 was assigned to plug this hole, and the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines stayed where they were.
- Late in the afternoon a Japanese officer was seen studying Bloody Ridge through field glasses by an observer in the 1/7 lines and
- a scout-sniper patrol reported seeing the smoke from "many rice fires" in the Lunga valley about two miles south of Puller's positions on the Ridge.

**OCTOBER ATTACKS  
ON THE PERIMETER**  
21-28 October 1942

① Numbers thus encircled indicate limit of defensive sectors as shown

U.S. defensive line

Japanese attacks

Command post

Observation post

1000 500 0 1000 YARDS MAP 23

**POINT CRUZ**

Enemy battalion buildup dispersed by 11th Marines' fire 22 October

Tank / infantry attack 21-22 October

Patrol and Supply Route

Nippon Bridge

Matanikau R.

Lunga R.

Tenaru R.

Ilu R.

LUNGA POINT

5" Naval Mount Guns

FIGHTER STRIP UNDER CONSTRUCTION

HENDERSON FIELD

Div Res

Regt Res

Smoke of rice fires

Japanese column



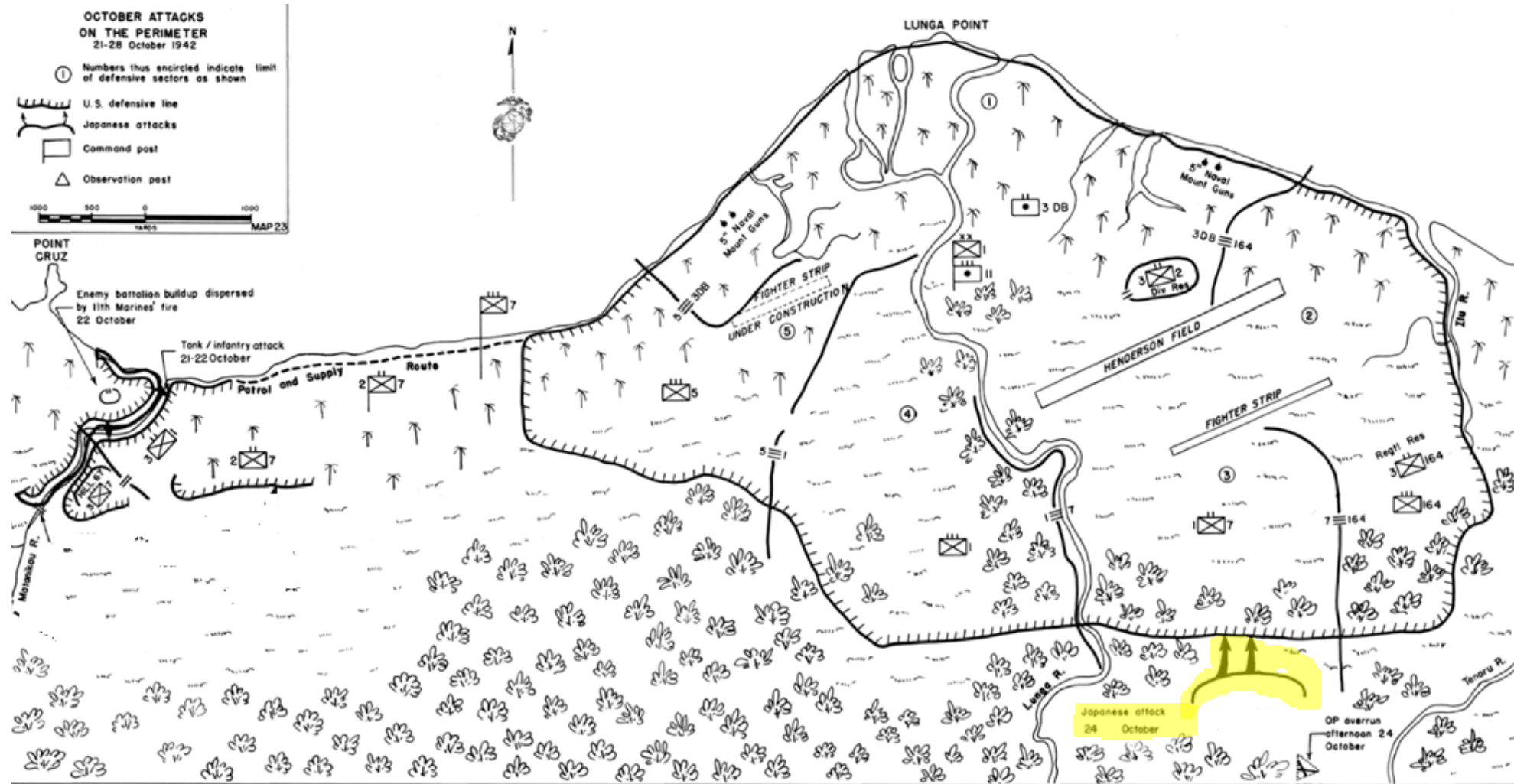
# 25 October - Guadalcanal

- Puller's men strained to hear the approaching enemy above the sound of drumming rain which lashed the night.
- At 00.30 the Japanese came out of the jungle screaming banzais, throwing grenades, and firing rifles and machine guns to strike the left center of 1/7's line with an assault in depth on a narrow front.
- Puller called in mortar and artillery concentrations, his riflemen took up a steady fire, and the machine guns rattled almost endless bursts down their final protective lines.
- From Puller's left, the 2d Battalion, 164th Infantry added their fire to that of the Marines, but still the Japanese assaulted, trying to rush across the fields of fire toward the Ridge. The attack kept up for 10 or 15 minutes, but finally ground itself to a halt against the combined arms of the US. force.
- Then there was a lull, the Japanese regrouped and came back again, trying to clear a penetration with their grenades and small arms.
- The Marine commander assessed that his men were standing off the main attack of Rabaul's big counteroffensive: and that the force in the jungle to his front obviously was strong enough to keep such attacks going most of the night.
- He called for reinforcements, and division ordered Lt Col Robert Hall to take his 3rd Battalion of the 164th Infantry down the Ridge to bolster Puller's thin line.

# 25 October - Guadalcanal

- But the reinforcements had a mile of muddy ridge to cover before they could be of any help, and in the meantime the Japanese continued to assault out of the jungle and up the slopes.
- A small group forced a salient in the Marine line to fall upon a mortar position, and farther to the front some Japanese worked close to a water-cooled machine gun and knocked out all but two of its crew. Marines near the mortar position won back the tube from the enemy, and in the machine-gun section Sergeant John Basilone who had been braving Japanese fire to bring up ammunition took rescue matters into his own hands.
- As these attacks continued, Col Hall's soldiers began to arrive in small detachments. Puller made no attempt to give this battalion a line of its own on his threatened front, but instead had his men lead these fresh troops into his line where they were most needed at the moment.
- The fighting was too brisk and the night too rainy for any reshuffling of lines. By 03.30 the reinforcement was complete, and the Japanese attacks were becoming less intense. Each new assault was made with fewer and fewer men.
- The Japanese struck at the Marines again and again throughout the night. The Bushido spirit was unswerving, but the flesh could not endure the concentrated fire from the combined US infantry battalions, the artillery, and 37mms from the neighbouring 2d Battalion, 164th infantry.
- By dawn the attacks ceased, and Puller and Hall began to reorganize their battalions and readjust their lines.

# 25 October - Guadalcanal



# 25 October - Sea

- The Hornet and Enterprise task groups commanded by Admiral Kinkaid, swept around the north of the Santa Cruz Islands searching for the Japanese forces.
- Admiral Fitch, ComAirSoPac, had ten PBYs and six B17s out on his dawn search covering the Northern semicircle from Espiritu Santo (Button) out 650 to 800 miles.
- Around 09.30 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Sesso's B17, flying the 325 degree line from Button found a force of battleships, cruisers, destroyers and one light carrier.
- Surviving a mauling by three Zeros which killed his bombardier, he reported the sighting at 09.48 placing the force on the 325 degree line from Button 525 miles out and steering due east.



*Enterprise and Hornet underway*



# 25 October - Sea

- At **09.58** Lt (jg) Matthew, searching the sector 332 to 338 degrees in a PBY Catalina, reported eight enemy ships at 7 South, 163 East. He was then attacked by two type 0 observation seaplanes. By the time he escaped them they had put 76 new holes in the flying boat including hits in the port engine.
- At **10.00** a PBY flown by Lt (jg) Lampshire found an “unidentified taskforce”. He then reported two battleships, two cruisers and destroyers at 8.05S, 164.20E before sighting a carrier. He then sighted two more Japanese carriers at **11:03**
- The Japanese carriers were about 355 miles from the US force, just beyond carrier aircraft range.
- Halsey, ComSoPac, also studying the sighting reports, signalled Kinkaid and Lee: “Strike, Repeat, Strike”.



# 25 October - Sea



A PBY Catalina was slow and vulnerable to fighters. You were lucky to survive if you found an aircraft carrier.

# 25 October - Sea

- Kinkaid, hoping to close the range to be able to make an attack that day, steamed towards the Japanese carriers at top speed and sent off 12 planes at 13.30 to search from 280 to 010 degrees out to 200 miles. He planned to follow up the search with a strike force of 35 aircraft on the median line of the search.
- The inexperienced Enterprise air group suffered a range of confusions and mishaps and only managed to dispatch 19 aircraft on the strike, which left at 14.25.
- About 14.30 a flight of six B17s despatched by Fitch caught up with the ships reported by Matthew, then heading north at 25 knots. At 15.10 they made a level bomb run on a battleship from 15,000 feet but scored no hits. They were then attacked by three zeros but returned safe.
- Enterprise's search and strike forces found nothing. Returning after dark one plane crashed on the flattop and the resulting delays forced six others to ditch, when they ran out of gas.
- With the full moon rising Kinkaid kept the Hornet at full readiness to launch a moonlight strike of 29 aircraft. Eventually when the radar PBYs didn't find any enemy within range the Hornet strike was stood down.

# 25 October – Guadalcanal

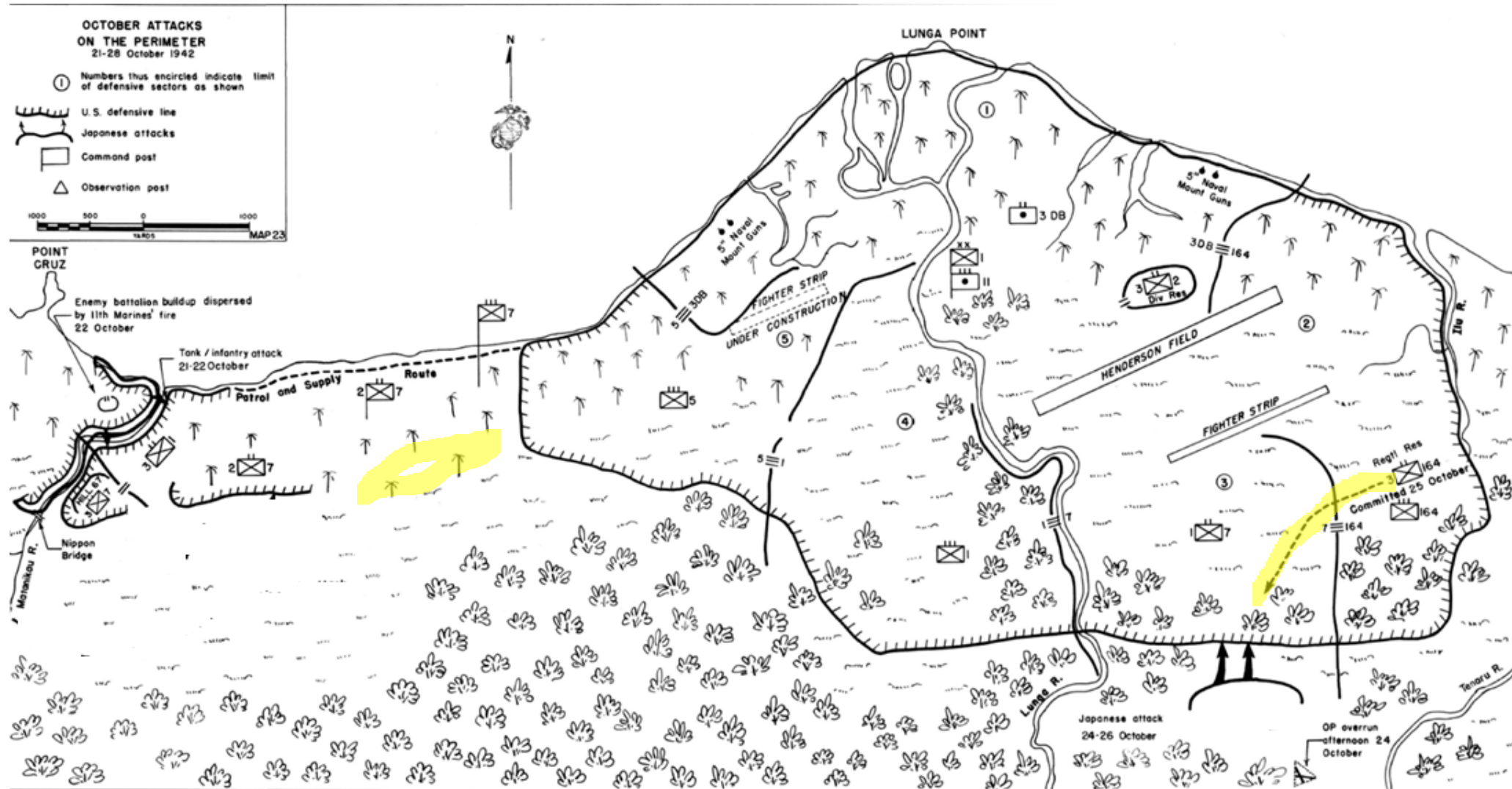
- In the reorganization of lines south of Bloody Ridge, Puller's 1st Battalion, 7th Marines held ground from the Lunga east and Lt Col Hall's 3/164 tied in at that point around four 37mm guns and extended to the right flank of the 2d Battalion, 164th.
- In the sector west of the Lunga the 5th Marines swung a line into the jungle about a half mile in from the beach and made visual contact with the left (east) flank of Colonel Hanneken's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines.



Lieutenant Colonel Lewis "Chesty" Puller, USMC,  
Commanding Officer of 1st Battalion, 7th  
Marine Regiment at Guadalcanal



# 25 October – Guadalcanal



# 25 October – Guadalcanal

- After dark (on 25 October), the Japanese repeated the pattern of attack from the previous night.
- With only machine guns to augment their hand-carried weapons, groups of from 20 to 200 soldiers shouted out of the darkness to assault the entire length of the Puller-Hall line.
- The strongest of these attacks sent two machine-gun companies with supporting riflemen against the junction of the Marine and Army battalions where a jungle trail led north to the airfield.
- Artillery, mortars, small arms, and the four cannister-firing 37s cut down the repeated Japanese assaults.
- The 37mm cannister round fired 122 steel balls with a total weight of 880 grams.



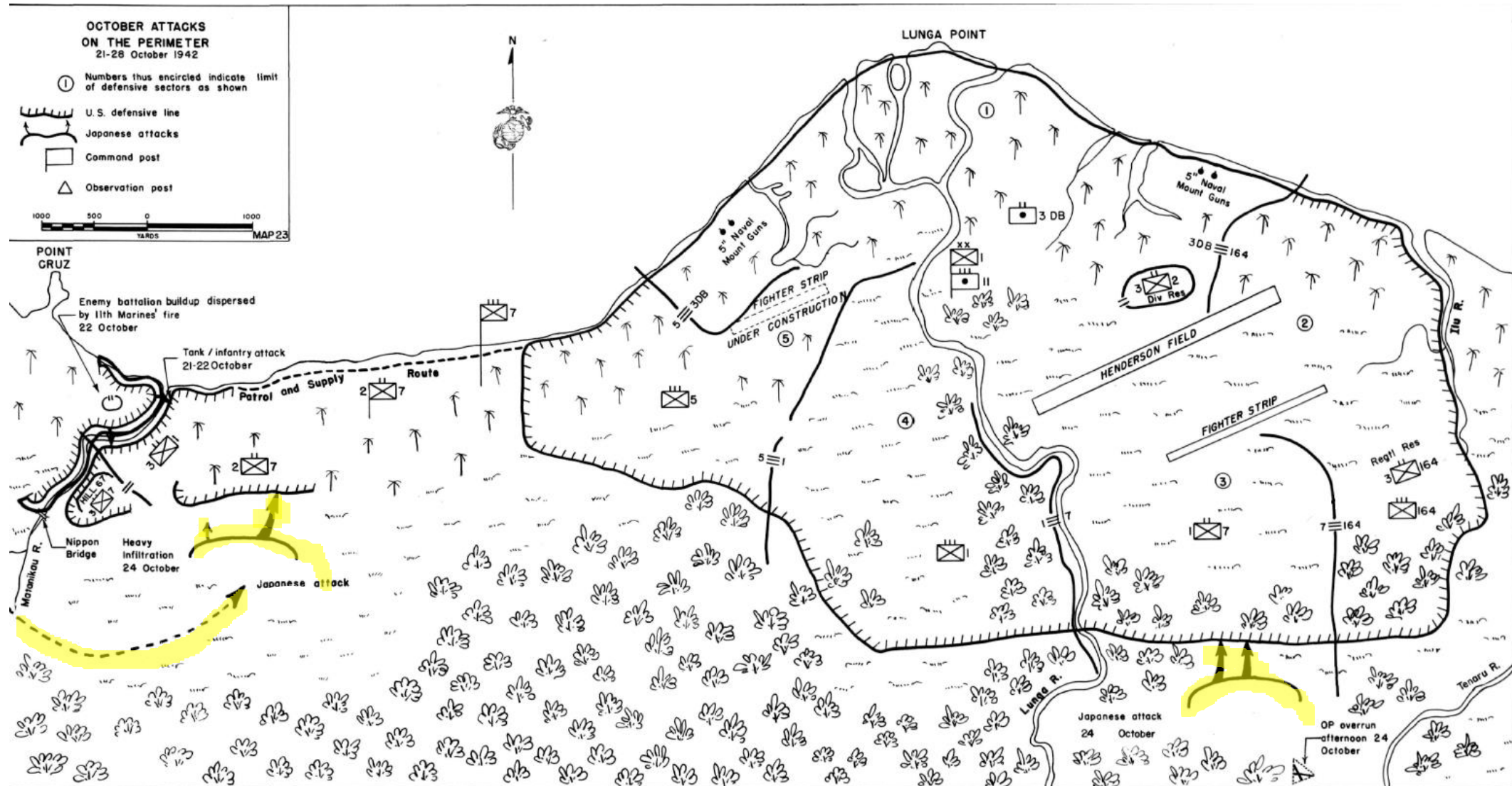
M-3 Antitank Gun 37mm

# 26 October – Guadalcanal

- Taking staggering losses, the Japanese continued hammering at the American lines throughout the night. Farther west the Japanese sent a force against the thin line of 2/7.
- This Marine battalion had been under artillery fire throughout the day, snipers also had scored some American casualties, and now from 2130 to 2300 it was jarred by three strong attacks in battalion strength.
- The weight of the attacks fell most heavily on Company F on the left flank of Hanneken's line.
- Until midnight these thrusts were thrown back, but at 03.00 (26 October) an assault swept over the Marine company.
- Enfilading fire from nearby foxholes of Company G failed to dislodge the Japanese, and they took over Company F's high ground. In the haze of morning some 150 Japanese could be observed in F/2/7 foxholes firing American machine guns at adjacent Marine emplacements.
- Major Odell Conoley, 2/7 executive officer, led a jury-rigged counterattack force of headquarters troops against these Japanese and he was joined by a platoon from Company C, 5th Marines and by personnel from the 7th Marines regimental CP.
- Surprising the Japanese, this force killed and drove off the enemy penetration, while a mortar barrage prevented the Japanese from reinforcing.



# 25/6 October – Guadalcanal



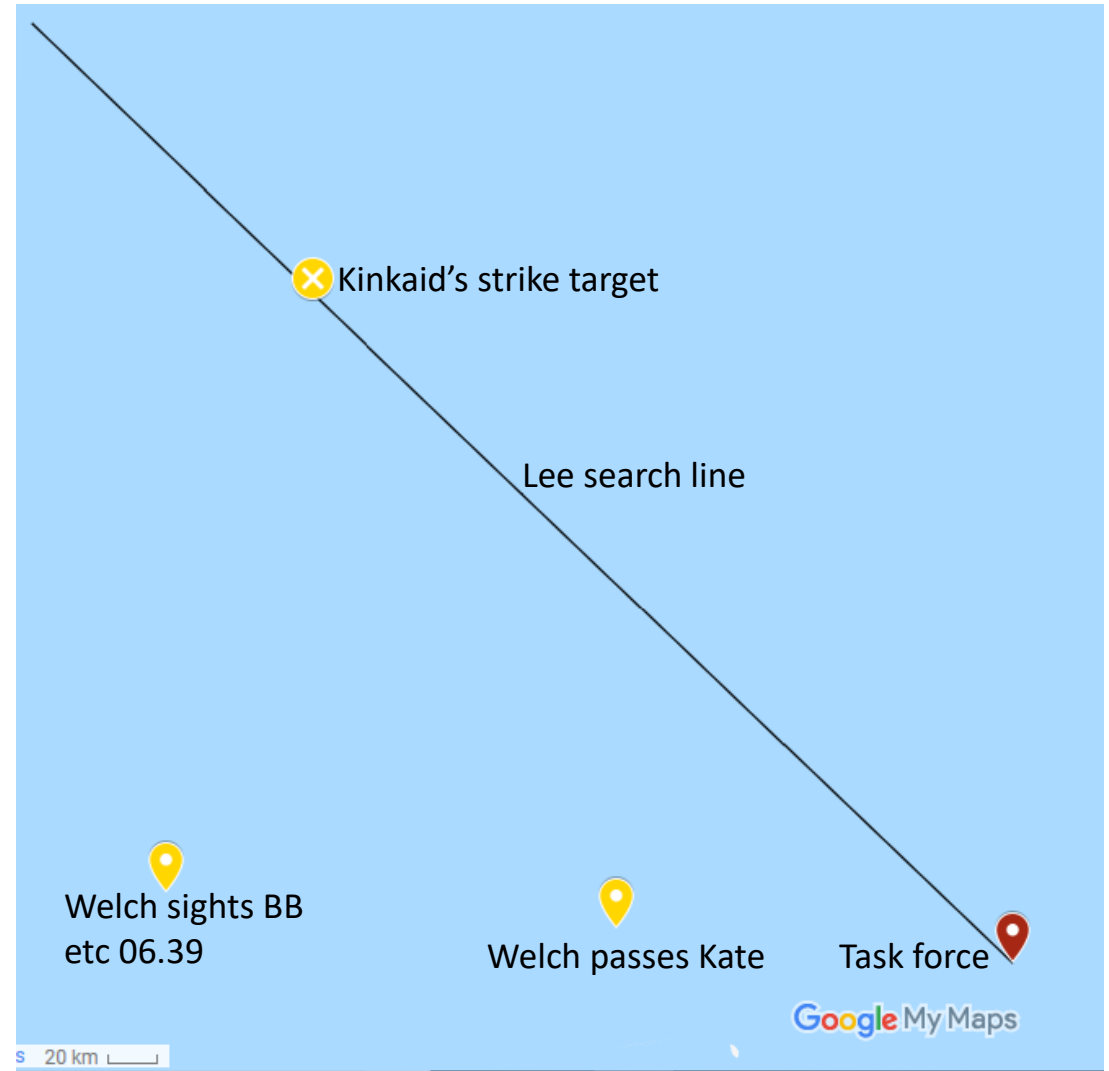


## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- A radar-equipped PBY Catalina sighted the Japanese carriers at 03:10, but the report did not reach Kinkaid until 05:12. Believing that the Japanese ships had probably changed position during the intervening two hours, he decided to withhold launching a strike force until he received more current information on the location of the enemy.
- Shortly after 05.00 Enterprise, doing duty carrier because the Hornet air group had been standing to all night, sent out eight pairs of SBDs to search the western quadrant from 235 to 000 degrees out to 200 miles. Each carried a 500 pound bomb.
- The sun rose at 0523 on a fair south sea day with a gentle swell and an eight knot breeze from the south east. Low broken cumulus clouds covering about half the sky offered cover to the dive bomber crews but alarmed the anti-aircraft gunners. No cloud has a silver lining for them.
- About 85 miles out, Lt Welch and Lt (jg) McGraw on the 266 to 282 sector encountered a Japanese Kate torpedo bomber coming towards them. Continuing on course the two SBDs found and reported 2 battleships, 1 cruiser and 7 destroyers bearing 275 degrees 170 miles out and headed north at 20 knots. Kinkaid received the report at 06.39.

# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- On the 298 to 314 sector Lt Cdr Lee and Lt (jg) Johnson at 06:45 sighted a carrier. Circling 15 miles out, he reported a carrier course 330 degrees speed 15knots.
- In the next quarter hour he found two more carriers but despite repeated messages he never heard a “Roger” from base. Lee and Johnson were then found by Zeros of the CAP and had to evade.
- Based on Lee’s 06.50 report Kinkaid ordered Enterprise and Hornet to strike at carriers bearing 300 degrees distant 185 to 200 miles and came round onto course 330 degrees to close the target until ready to launch the strike.



## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- From the sector north of Lee, Lts (jg) Ward and Carmody came south hoping to get into an attack position but they were also driven off by the CAP Zeros.
- Two other search SBDs flown by Lt Strong and Ens Irvine, responding to the sighting of the Japanese carriers, found the carriers and dove on what they identified as a Shokaku class carrier at 07:40 achieving complete surprise. They both claimed hits *on the carrier* with their 500-pound bombs, causing a big hole in the flight deck aft and setting her afire.
- As they pulled out the SBDs fell foul of the CAP which pursued them for 45 harrowing miles but both SBD radio men claimed a Zero shot down.
- Believing that an early attack was more important than a massed attack the U.S. aircraft departed to the target in small groups, rather than forming into a single large strike force.
- The first group from Hornet, consisting of 15 SBD Dauntless dive bombers, six TBF Avenger torpedo bombers, and eight F4F Wildcat fighters, led by Lt Cdr "Gus" Widhelm, skipper of scouting 8, was on its way by about 08:00.

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- A second group—consisting of three SBDs, nine TBFs and eight Wildcats from Enterprise—was off by **08:10**.
- A third group—which included nine SBDs, ten TBFs, armed with bombs not torpedoes, and seven F4Fs from Hornet—was on its way by **08:20**.



As a TBF prepares to take off from *Enterprise*, the signs held aloft give the last known location of the Japanese carriers and instructions to proceed without waiting for *Hornet's* aircraft.

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea



A TBF-1 Avenger dropping a torpedo.



Douglas SBD Dive bomber



# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea



Navy Grumman F4F-3 Wildcat fighter in early 1942.

- At 08:40, the USN strike formations passed within sight of a Japanese formation heading the other way.
- Lt Cdr Sanchez, leading the fighter escort in the leading group, radioed a warning to the task force but never heard an acknowledgement.
- Nine Zeros surprised and attacked the following Enterprise group, attacking the climbing aircraft from out of the sun.
- None of the group had heard Sanchez's warning, some of them had not turned on their radios or tested their guns.
- In the resulting encounter, three Wildcats, and two TBFs were shot down, with another two TBFs and a Wildcat forced by heavy damage to return to Enterprise.
- Six Zeros were claimed destroyed, three by the escort fighters and three by the TBF gunners.

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- At 08:50, Widhelm's leading attack formation spotted two cruisers and two destroyers but they were hunting bigger game and continued on course 300 degrees.
- 20 miles beyond the first sighting Widhelm sighted another group of ships including two battleships and some cruisers and destroyers. While Widhelm was climbing to get a better look at the ships three Zeros made a one pass surprise attack on the Wildcat escorts. Shooting one down and damaging two others so badly they had to turn back, leaving Sanchez as the sole remaining escort.
- Seeing the Zeros, Widhelm lead a right turn towards some sheltering clouds. Five minutes later, emerging from the clouds, he sighted more ship wakes. He identified one carrier with escorting destroyers and another smaller flattop billowing thick black smoke.
- The fifteen Hornet SBDs were intercepted by twelve Zeros. Widhelm lead them after the big carrier while maneuvering to evade each attack by the Zeros while the radiomen fought back with their .30 calibre machine guns.
- One Zero was seen to burn and disintegrate and another left a lasting impression on all who saw him pull up too sharply after an attack. Pulling too many gees the Zero shed its wings with no flame or smoke and knifed into the water.

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- The U.S. carrier forces received word from their outbound strike aircraft at 08:40 that a Japanese attack was headed their way.
- The FDOs expected their CXAM radars would detect attackers about 75 miles out. But at 08:55, when the carriers detected the approaching Japanese aircraft on radar they were only about 35 miles away.
- The FDOs vectored the 37 Wildcats of their CAP to engage the incoming aircraft but they had been caught with the defenders too low. They had held the CAP at 10,000 feet to save fuel and oxygen in the expectation the radars would give them time to climb and intercept.
- Communication problems, mistakes by the FDOs, primitive control and command systems and the fog of war aggravated the situation so that all but a few of the U.S. fighters failed to engage the Japanese aircraft before they began their attacks on Hornet.
- Although the U.S. CAP was able to shoot down several dive bombers, most of the Japanese aircraft commenced their attacks unmolested by U.S. fighters.

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- At 09:09, the anti-aircraft guns of Hornet and her escorts opened fire as 20 Japanese torpedo planes and 16 dive bombers commenced their attacks on the carrier.
- At 09:12, a dive bomber placed its bomb dead center on Hornet's flight deck, which penetrated three decks before exploding, killing 60 men.
- Moments later, another bomb struck the flight deck, detonating on impact to create an 11ft hole and kill 30 men.



A damaged Japanese dive bomber (upper left) dives towards *Hornet* at 09:14 ...

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- A minute or so later, a third bomb hit *Hornet* close to the first hit, penetrating three decks before exploding, causing severe damage but no loss of life.
- At 09:14, a dive bomber was set on fire by *Hornet's* anti-aircraft guns; the pilot deliberately crashed into *Hornet's* stack, killing seven men and spreading burning aviation fuel over the signal deck.



... and seconds later crashes into the carrier.



# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- At the same time as the dive bomber attack, 20 torpedo bombers were also approaching Hornet from two different directions. Despite heavy losses from anti-aircraft fire, the torpedo planes planted two torpedoes into Hornet's side between 09:13 and 09:17, knocking out her engines.
- As Hornet came to a stop, a damaged Japanese dive bomber approached and deliberately crashed into the carrier's side, starting a fire near the ship's main supply of aviation fuel.
- At 09:20, the surviving Japanese aircraft departed, leaving Hornet dead in the water and burning.
- The Hornet task force's AA guns had achieved some success. They shot down 12 attackers although two of those crashed into the carrier and most managed to drop their bomb or torpedo before going down.
- The defending fighters claimed six aircraft shot down and lost six themselves. Many of the surviving Japanese were probably damaged.

# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

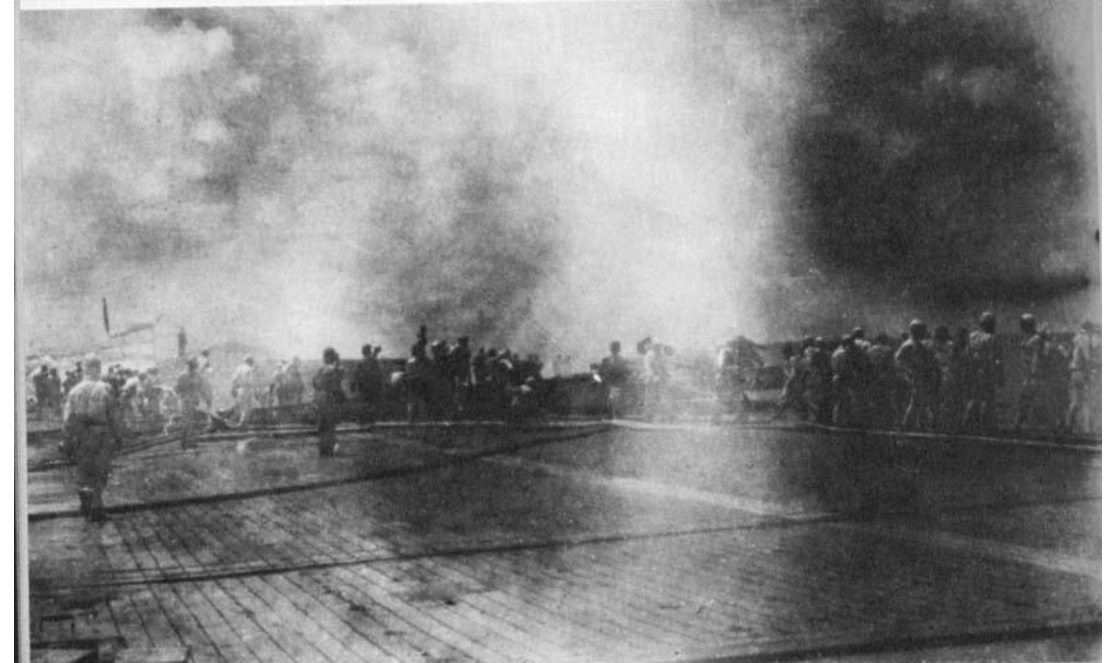
- Eventually one of the Zeros got Widhelm's SBD in the left wing, tail and engine.
- Oil pressure dropped and the engine streamed black smoke that trailed through the whole formation.
- About 09.25 and a few miles short of the pushover point Widhelm's engine froze.
- His wing man Lt Hovind saw Widhelm rage at not being able to lead the dive against the carrier.
- He vented his anger over the radio, letting all and sundry know what he thought of Sanchez and the lack of fighter support.
- Other Hornet aviators admired the broad range of his vocabulary.
- He ditched the SBD within a few miles of the carrier.
- One other SBD was also shot down and two were damaged so badly they had to withdraw.



Lt. Cdr. William "Gus" Widhelm, CO of VS-8, late 1942. (NA 80-G-33758)

# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- At 09.27 the remaining SBDs reached the push over point against a Shokaku class carrier, twisting below at over 30 knots.
- The carrier avoided the first three or four bombs but then several thousand-pounders hit, amidships and aft, shattering the flight deck and igniting furious fires.
- The extent of damage to the flight deck was demonstrated when a chunk of charred wooden deck fell into Bates' cockpit.
- Despite damage to the flight deck and the furious fire, the carrier was still steaming at high speed.



The crew of Shōkaku fights fires on the flight deck after the strike by U.S. dive bombers.

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- The SBDs were pursued by Zeros during their withdrawal. A number were damaged but no more were shot down. The SBDs claimed four to six hits on the carrier and fifteen Zeros shot down.
- The six torpedo armed Hornet TBFs did not see Widhelm turn right or copy any of his sighting reports. They continued on course at 300 degrees, never saw the carriers and eventually attacked a cruiser.



A TBF-1 Avenger

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- The Enterprise strike group also failed to find the carriers and attacked a cruiser, scoring two near misses.
- The second Hornet strike also failed to find the carriers and attacked a cruiser. Some hits were scored and the ship was left burning furiously but still steaming.



Japanese cruiser *Chikuma* under attack on 26 October. Smoke emerges from the center of the ship where a 1,000 lb (450 kg) bomb hit directly on the bridge.



# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

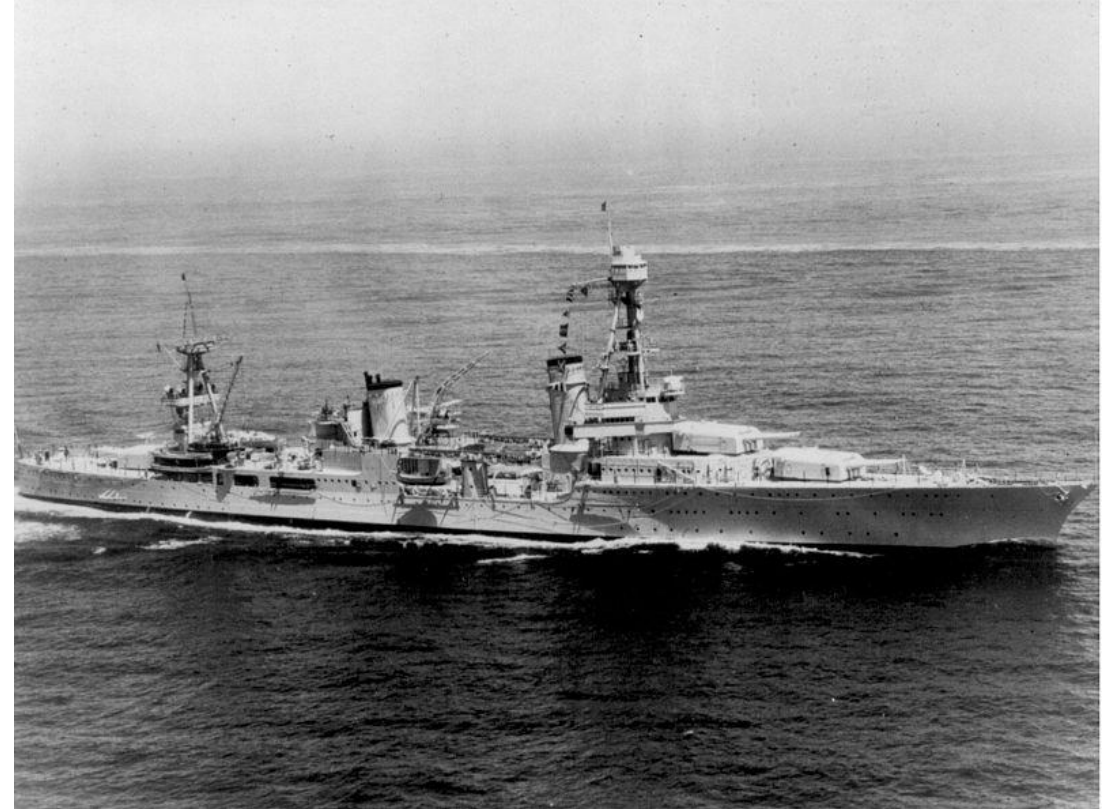
- Starting at 09:30, Enterprise landed many of the damaged and fuel-depleted CAP fighters and returning scout aircraft from both carriers. However, with her flight deck full, and the second wave of incoming Japanese aircraft detected on radar at 09:53, Enterprise ceased landing operations at 10:00.
- Fuel-depleted aircraft then had to ditch, and the escort destroyers rescued the aircrews.
- A damaged TBF from Enterprise's strike force, that had been attacked by Zeros, crashed into the water near the destroyer USS Porter.
- As Porter rescued the TBF's crew, at 10:04 she was struck by the torpedo from the TBF, causing heavy damage and killing 15 men.
- The task force commander ordered the destroyer scuttled, the crew was rescued by the destroyer USS Shaw which then sank Porter with gunfire.



USS Porter

# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- With the assistance of fire hoses from three escorting destroyers, the fires on Hornet were under control by 10:00.
- The wounded were evacuated and USS Northampton made an attempt to tow Hornet. However, rigging the towline took time.
- A second Japanese strike wave was detected by Northampton's radar at 76 miles and subsequently at 09.53 by Enterprise at 45 miles.



USS Northampton

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- This wave attacked the Enterprise task force, beginning at 10:08.
- Again, the US CAP had trouble intercepting the Japanese aircraft before they attacked Enterprise, shooting down only two of the 19 dive bombers as they began their dives on the carrier.
- Intense anti-aircraft fire was put up by Enterprise and her escorting warships.



Anti-aircraft shell bursts, fired at attacking Japanese aircraft, fill the sky above USS *Enterprise* (center left) and her screening ships during the battle.



# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- The bombers hit the carrier with two bombs and near missed with another.
- The bombs killed 44 men and wounded 75, and caused heavy damage to the carrier, including jamming her forward elevator in the "up" position.
- A number of aircraft were blown off the flight deck or caught fire and had to be pushed over the side.



A Japanese "Val" dive-bomber is shot down over "Enterprise". Enterprise is smoking from earlier bomb hits as another bomb near-misses the carrier. The battleship USS South Dakota is in the lower middle.

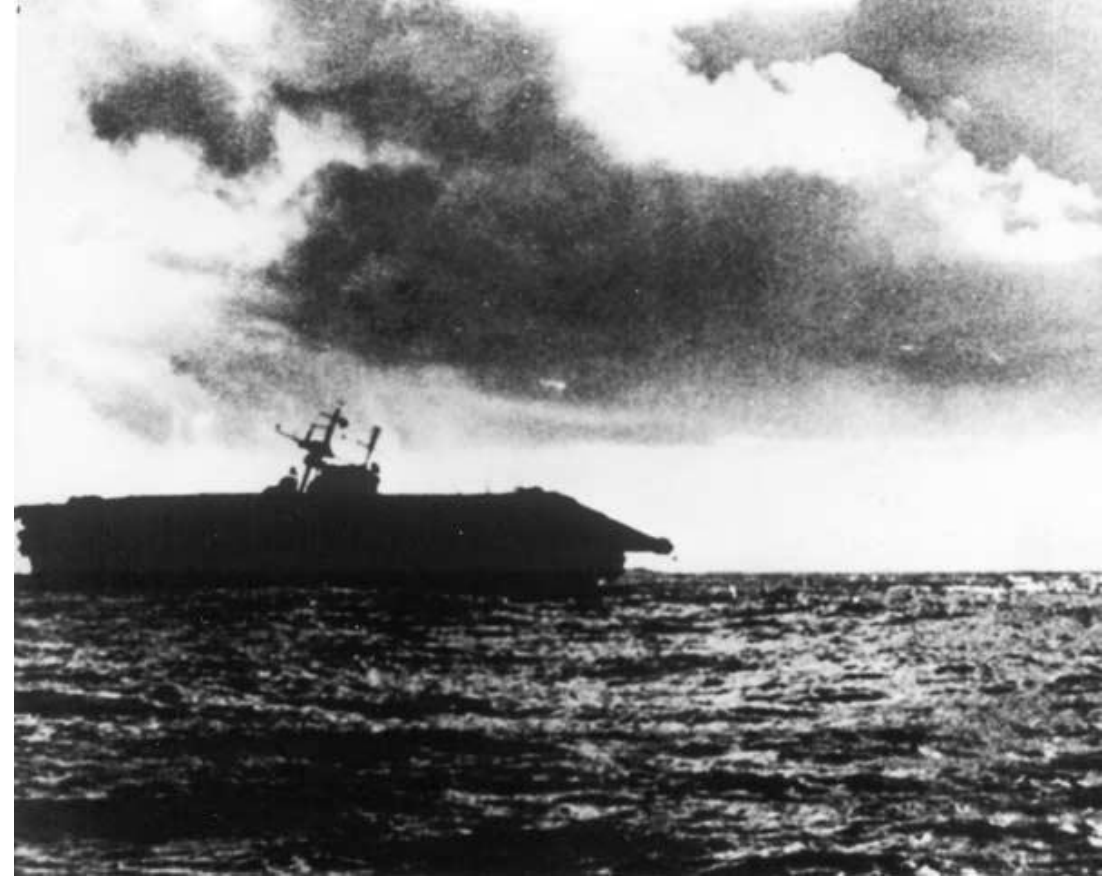
# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- An SBD bounced sideways off the flight deck and perched precariously in the starboard 20mm gun gallery. This surprised Howard Packard, a stranded Hornet fighter pilot, who was standing on its wing firing his Colt .45 pistol at recovering dive bombers.
- Once again the guns were effective with possibly as many as eight dive bombers shot down but once again most had already dropped their bombs.
- At 10.44, 16 more torpedo planes arrived and split up to attack Enterprise. One group of torpedo bombers was attacked by two CAP Wildcats which shot down three of them and damaged a fourth. On fire, the fourth damaged aircraft purposely crashed into the destroyer Smith, setting the ship on fire and killing 57 of her crew.
- The fires initially seemed out of control until Smith's commanding officer steered the destroyer into the large spraying wake of the battleship South Dakota, which helped put out the fires.
- The remaining torpedo planes attacked Enterprise, South Dakota, and cruiser Portland, but all of their torpedoes missed or failed, causing no damage.
- The engagement was over at 10:53. Once again the guns had been effective.
- In these two attacks on the Enterprise the fighters claimed 9 Japanese shot down and five probables.



## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

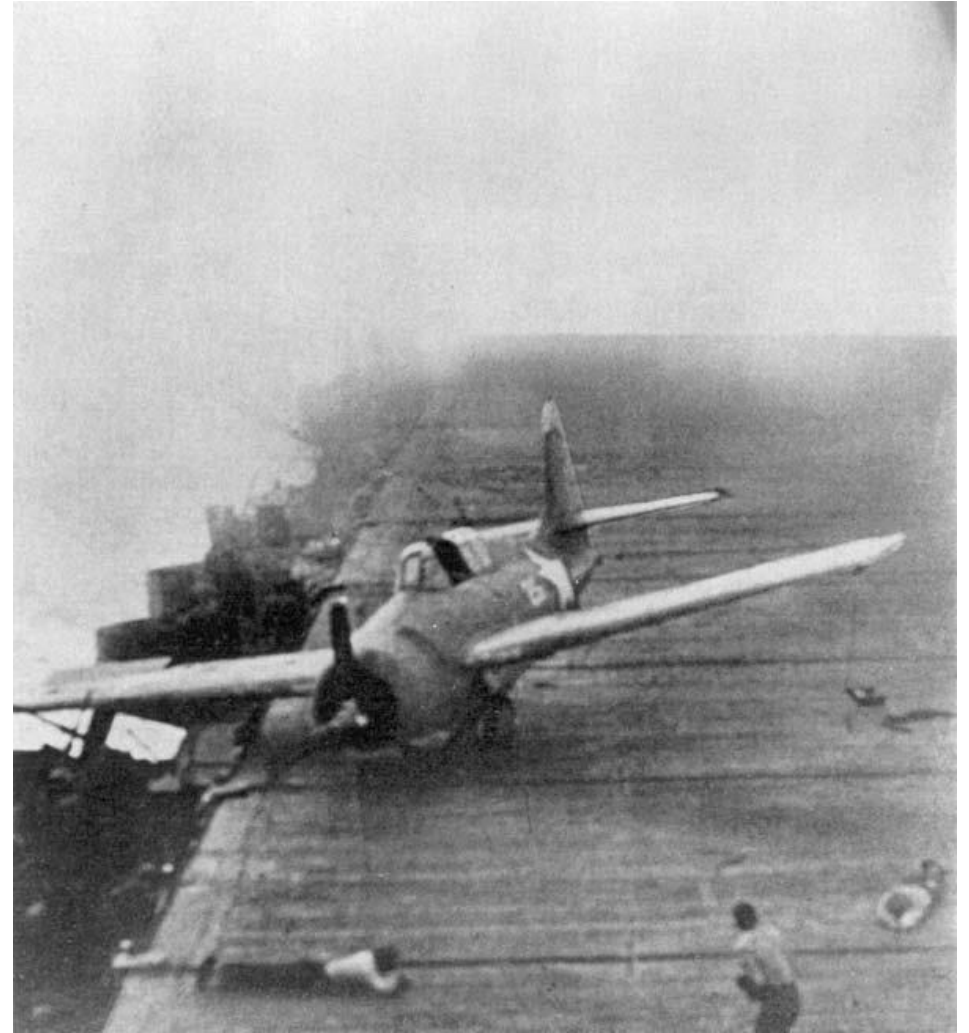
- At **11:21**, another wave of 17 Japanese aircraft arrived and dove on the Enterprise.
- The dive bombers scored one near miss on Enterprise, causing more damage, and one hit each on South Dakota and light cruiser San Juan, causing moderate damage to both ships.
- Three bombers were seen to splash near the Enterprise and the defenders claimed 12 shot down and 3 probable.



*Hornet, sinking and abandoned*

# 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- At 11:35, with Hornet out of action, Enterprise heavily damaged, and the Japanese assumed to have one or two undamaged carriers in the area, Kinkaid decided to withdraw Enterprise and her screening ships from the battle.
- Leaving Hornet behind, Kinkaid directed the carrier and her task force to retreat as soon as they were able.
- Between 11:39 and 13:22, Enterprise recovered 57 of the 73 airborne U.S. aircraft as she retreated.
- The remaining U.S. aircraft ditched in the ocean, and their aircrews were rescued by escorting warships.



A *Hornet* Wildcat that had just landed skids across *Enterprise*'s deck as the carrier maneuvers violently while under attack.

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

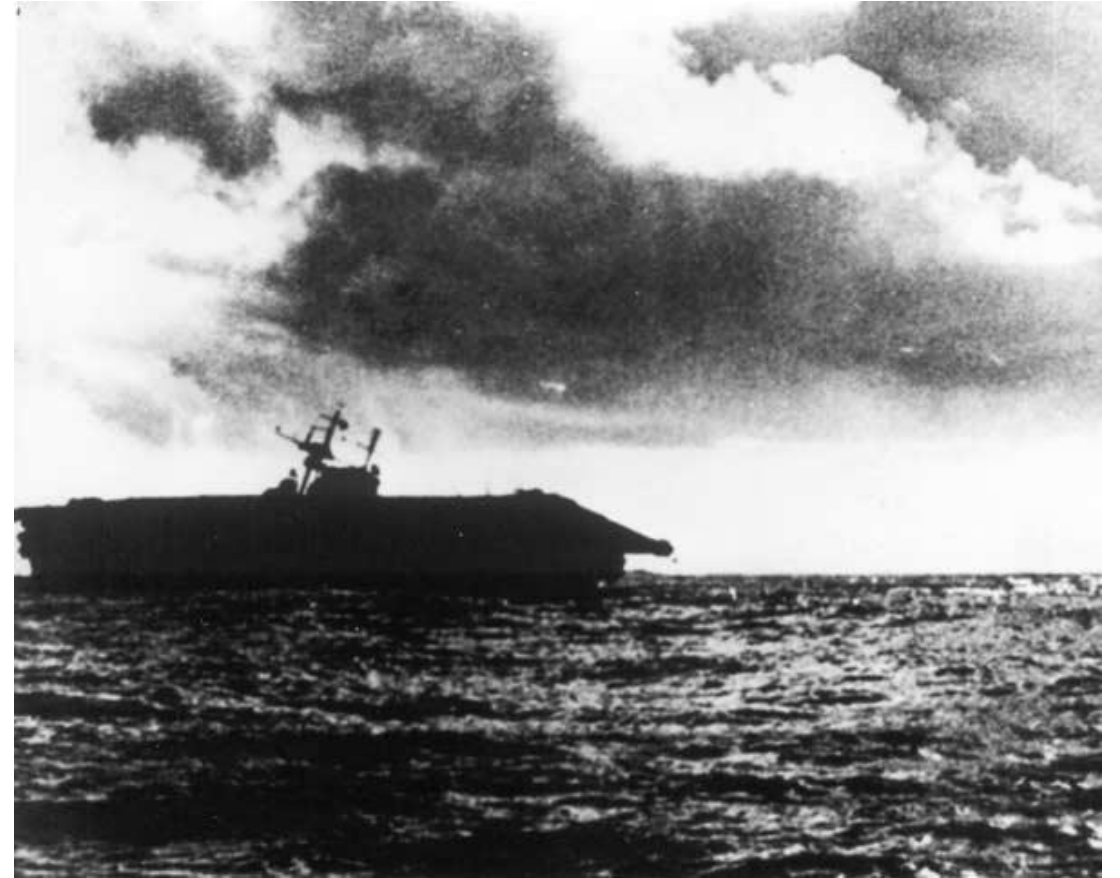
- Hornet's crew was on the verge of restoring some power but at 15:20, another Japanese strike arrived, and the seven torpedo planes attacked the almost stationary carrier.
- At 15:23, one torpedo struck Hornet mid-ship.
- The torpedo hit destroyed the repairs to the power system and caused heavy flooding and a 14° list.
- With no power to pump out the water, Hornet was given up for lost, and the crew abandoned ship.



JAPANESE TORPEDO PLANE ignores two American cruisers as it heads for the crippled carrier Hornet which was sunk during the Battle of Santa Cruz. (USN 20447)

## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- All of Hornet's crew were off by 16:27.
- Further strikes attacked Hornet hitting her with two more bombs the last at 17:20.
- Informed that Japanese surface forces were approaching and that further towing efforts weren't feasible, Halsey ordered the Hornet sunk.
- The rest of the U.S. warships retired to the southeast. Destroyers Mustin and Anderson attempted to scuttle Hornet with multiple torpedoes and over 400 shells, but she still remained afloat.
- With Japanese surface forces only 20 minutes away, the two destroyers abandoned Hornet's burning hulk at 20:40.



*Hornet, sinking and abandoned*

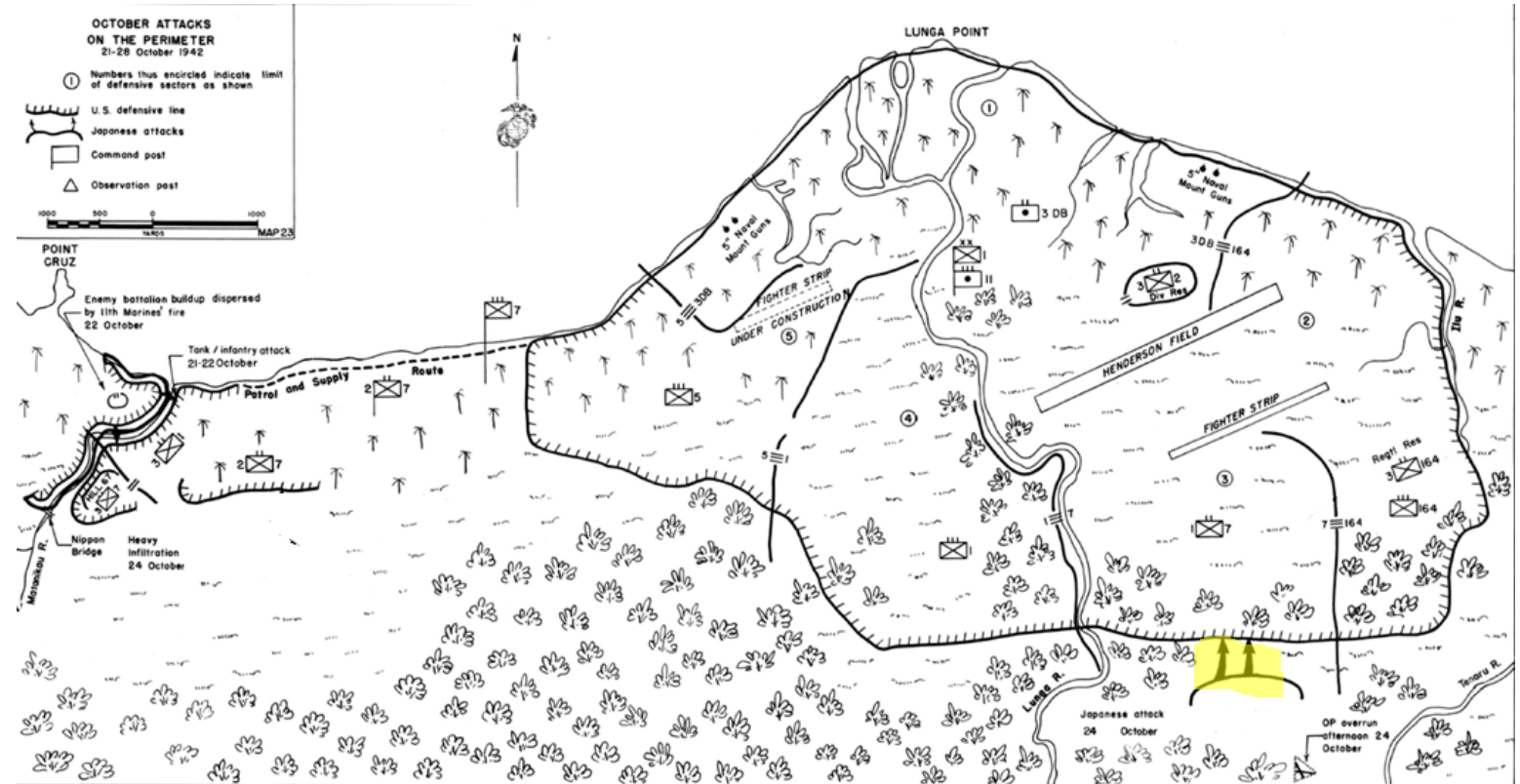
## 26<sup>th</sup> October - Sea

- By 22:20, Japanese surface forces reached Hornet and finished her off with four Japanese torpedoes. She finally sank at 01:35 on 27 October 1942.
- During the U.S. withdrawal towards the south, the battleship South Dakota, while taking evasive action from a Japanese submarine, collided with destroyer Mahan, heavily damaging the destroyer.
- After dark the radar equipped Black Cats of VP72 from Espiritu Santo took up the fight and made torpedo attacks on a carrier and a destroyer, scoring a hit on the destroyer.



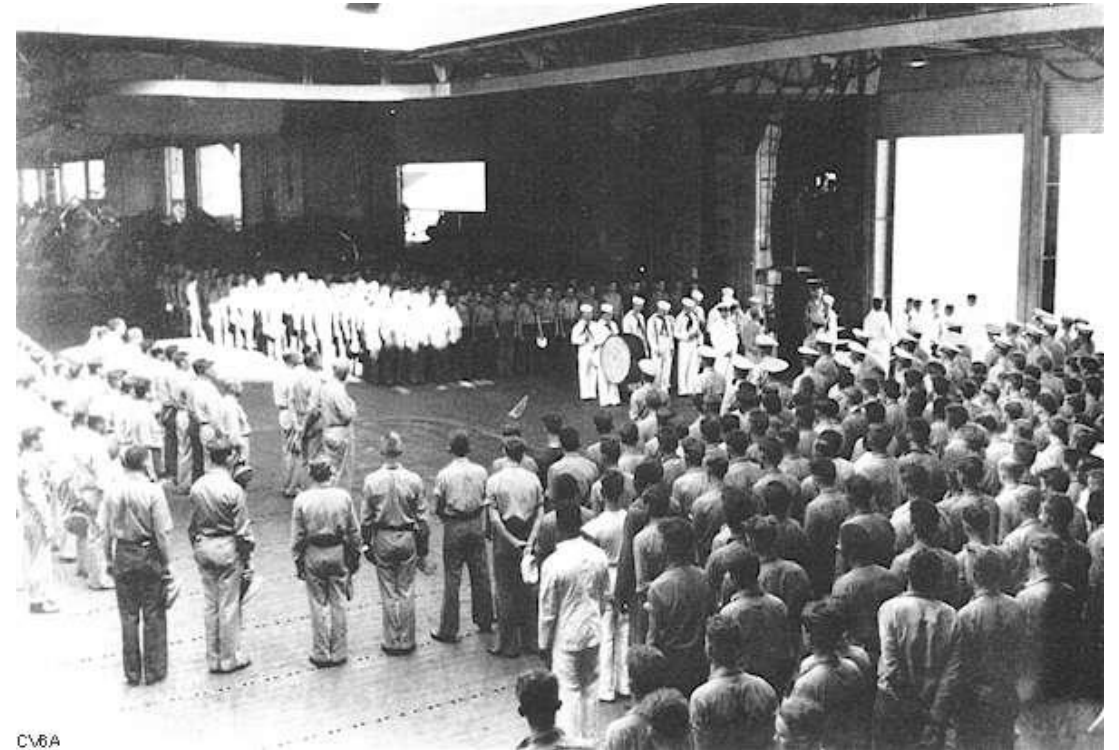
# 26 October - Guadalcanal

- American patrols mopped up inside the perimeter on the 26<sup>th</sup>.
- During the night of 26/27 the defenders readily repulsed several further jabs against the southern perimeter.



## 27 October - Sea

- Reconnaissance on the 27<sup>th</sup> October found that the Japanese were also retiring from the battle area.
- The crew of Enterprise buried 44 of their shipmates at sea.



CV6A

# 28 October - Guadalcanal

- American patrols continued mopping up inside and outside the perimeter on the 28<sup>th</sup>.
- American losses in the October battles were probably around 300 dead and wounded, including those hit by shelling and bombing.
- The 164<sup>th</sup> infantry buried 975 Japanese on its front, we don't have a count from the 1/7 marines burials but the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Marines counted 98 dead on their ridge and there must have been twice as many down in the gully below. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division estimated 2,200 Japanese killed in action.
- Col Furimiya, commanding the Japanese 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, evidently penetrated into the perimeter during the night of 25/6 and remained at large in the perimeter with a small group for several days. His diary was recovered when his body was found.
- Before the final entry, recording his decision to end his own life, he had noted
  - “The Imperial Staff must reconsider the matter of firepower”.

# Thanks for your attention

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