



Situation report – 1 March 1943

- The long and bloody battles for the Kokoda trail, Guadalcanal and the Japanese beach heads at Gona, Buna and Sanananda have been won.
- The Japanese attack on Wau has been repelled but the Japanese remain in force at Salamaua and Mubo.
- The British Indian army is mounting a campaign to capture Akyab in North West Burma and the Chindits have crossed the Chindwin on their raid into Northern Burma.
- The Allied air forces have achieved a good deal of freedom of action. They are able to supply allied ground troops and reconnoitre Japanese bases with very few losses.
- The air force have been training and re-equipping to strengthen their anti shipping strike capability.
- The American submarine force is becoming very effective after fixing early technical problems but Japanese submarines have also been active off the Australian coast.
- The Casablanca Conference continued the beat Hitler first strategy decided by the UK and the US early in 1941. Operations in the Pacific were to continue with the object of maintaining pressure on Japan, retaining the initiative and attaining a position of readiness for a full-scale offensive by the United Nations as soon as Germany is defeated.

1 March - Government

- On 1st March Curtin expressed his appreciation to Churchill for the measures taken to ensure the 9th Division's safety while en route.
- Commencing in March 1943, the Department of Supply organised a campaign for the buying of second-hand typewriters through normal trade channels, at prices determined by the Prices Branch, resale being controlled by a permit system.
- Some 7,000 machines were thus obtained for the armed services and Commonwealth departments; the number distributed under the permit system to private enterprise was not recorded.



1 March - Sea

- A possible enemy submarine was located at 1625/1 approximately 20 miles W.N.W. Fremantle.
- The Allied Air Forces as a whole had available for combat on 1st March, 154 fighters, 34 light bombers, 41 medium bombers and 39 heavy bombers. These totals excluded all aircraft assigned for escort and reconnaissance. Alerted for action, Whitehead had under his immediate command, 95 fighters, 49 medium and light bombers, and 37 heavy bombers.
- The weather was generally stormy between 27 February and 1 March but on the 1st two B-24's patrolling the sea lanes off New Britain in the morning reported a break in the weather and a third B-24 was dispatched on patrol at 11.30.

1 March - Sea

- At 1600/1 this B24 sighted 6 destroyers, 2 medium cargo vessels and 6 small unidentified vessels (1500-2500 tons) escorted by three Zeros on a westerly course some forty miles northwest of Ubili.
- six RAAF Bostons on the afternoon of 1 March attacked the enemy's airfield at Lae to interdict air support for the convoy.
- At 2030/1 the same convoy was reported in a position approximately 25 miles SW of the previous position by another B-24 sent out to shadow the convoy. It then found the weather closing in, and contact was lost.
- eight B-17s on a late afternoon mission failed to locate the target.
- By now the Fifth Air Force ADVON at Port Moresby had been fully alerted.

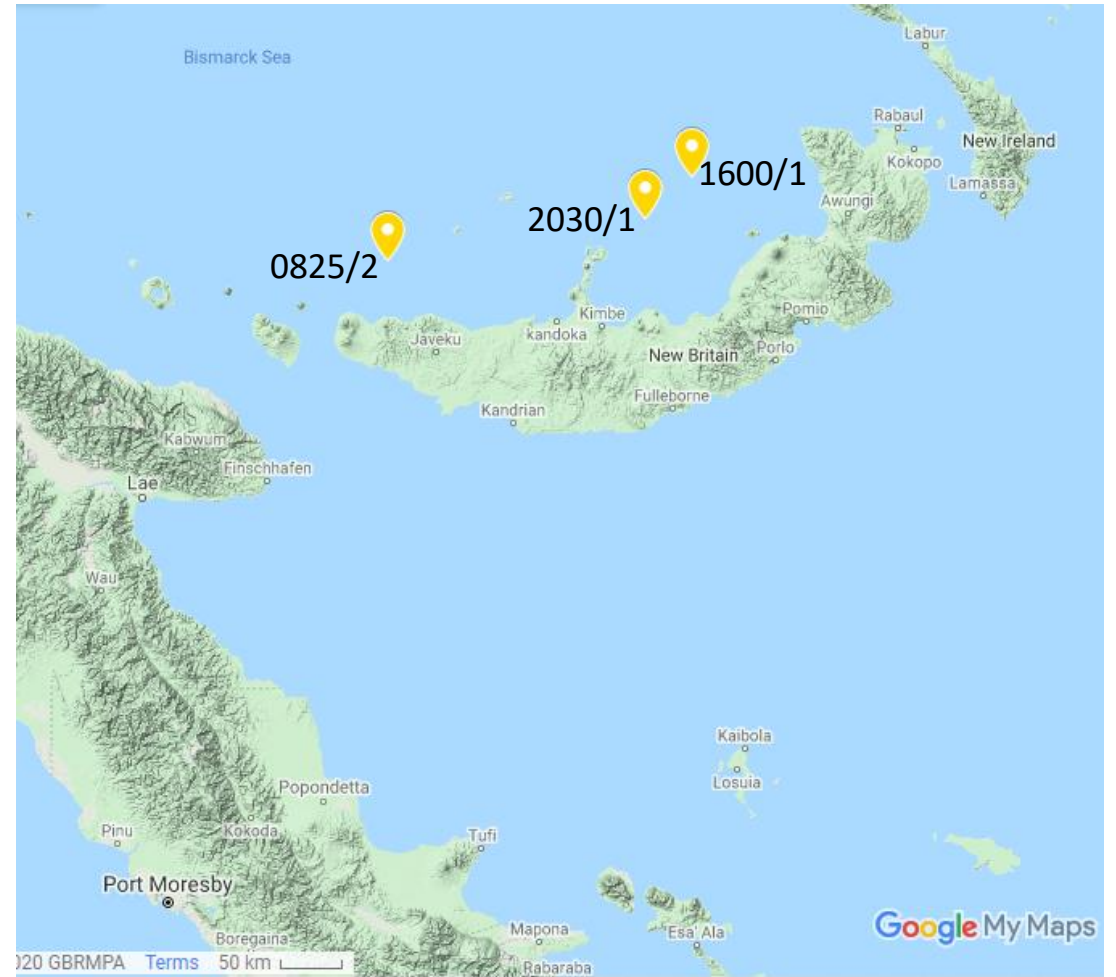


1 March - Air

- A-20's bomb and strafe forces at Guadagasal and along trails throughout Mubo, Komiatum, and Salamaua area.
- B-17's bomb runway at Gasmata.
- B-24's carry out single-plane attacks on shipping off Soemba and Soembawa, and in Solomon Sea.
- 17 dive bombers escorted by 9 fighters attacked Munda 1715/1.
- Before dawn 1/3 Ballale and Kahili aerodromes were each bombed by 2 Liberators. Co-ordinated with these attacks, 10 torpedo bombers attacked the same targets as they were unable to locate shipping which was their priority target.
- 46 P-40's hit T/Os in Nsopzup area and throughout Hukawng Valley.

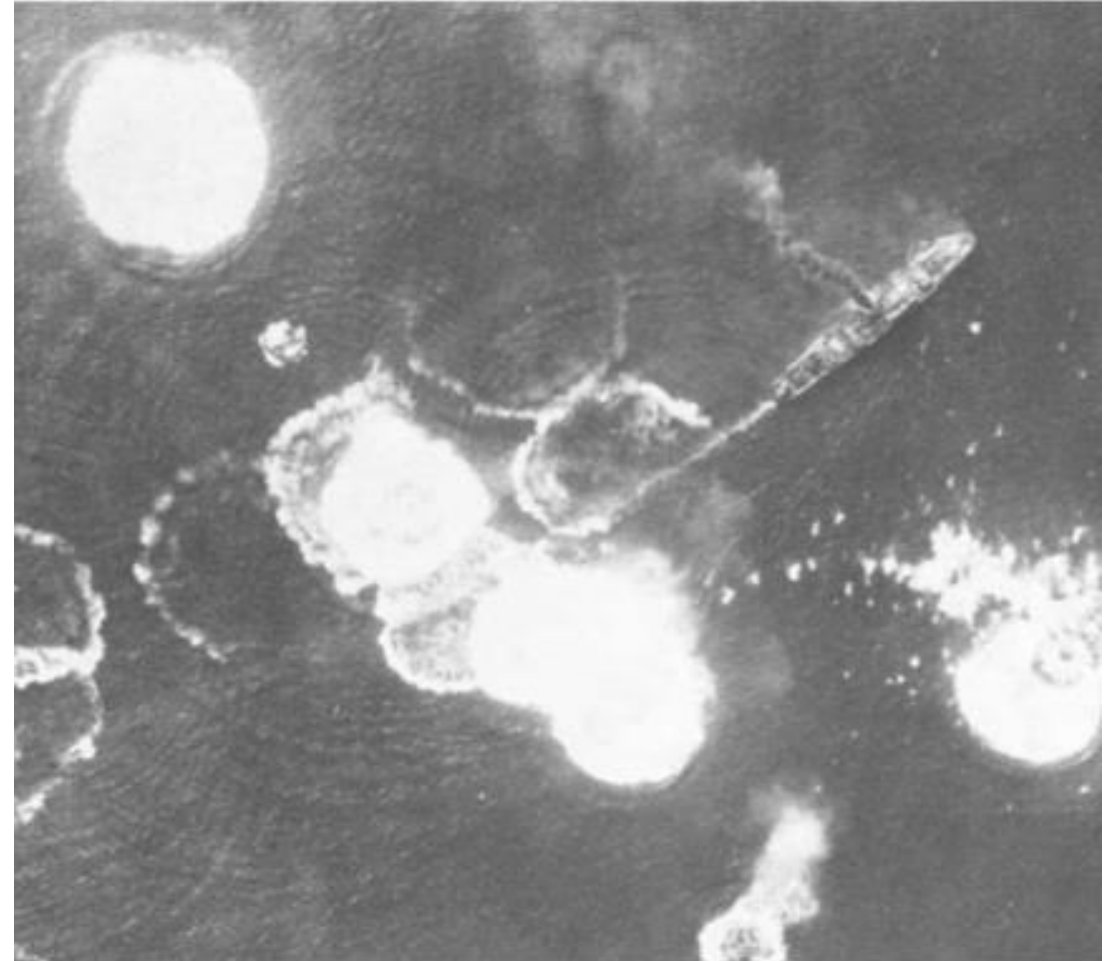
2 March - Sea

- At dawn on 2 March, six RAAF Bostons attacked Lae, bombing the runway and dispersal areas, to interdict its ability to provide air support to the convoy.
- At 0825/2 presumably the same convoy totalling 14 vessels including 3 cruisers and 4 destroyers was sighted 25 miles NNE of Cape Gloucester, course 300°.



2 March - Sea

- Eight B- 17's promptly took off for attack, to be followed shortly by twenty more.
- The P-38 fighter cover failed to make its rendezvous with the first flight, but the heavies dropped 1,000 pound demolition bombs from an altitude of 6,500 feet with apparently good effect.
- Two merchant vessels were claimed sunk, one being described as breaking in half and sinking in two minutes.



2 March - Sea

- The second flight, again without its fighter protection, was over the convoy (variously described by the bomber crews as containing fourteen or fifteen vessels) within the hour.
- Though claiming only two hits and four near misses, the returning crews reported, no doubt with some duplication, a 6,000-ton transport “burning and exploding,” a 5,000-ton ship “burning,” a large cargo vessel “smoking and burning amidships,” a 6,000- to 7,000-ton vessel “seen to explode,” and a somewhat larger one “in a sinking condition.”



2 March - Sea

- A B-17 clung to the contact until nightfall, reporting that two unidentified vessels had joined the convoy between 1530 and 1630 and later, at 1730, that “two possible CL’s left convoy.”
- As night drew on, eleven B-17’s made the final attack of the day at the entrance to Vitiaz Strait. Enemy fighters, though not very persistent, were numerous and one was shot down.



2 March - Sea

- A total of forty-three bombs were dropped with claims registered for two hits. One vessel “was left sinking.” There had been, according to report, sixteen vessels at the beginning of the attack.
- USS Thresher torpedoed and sank a Japanese tanker in the Makassar Strait (03°29'S 117°17'E)



2 March - Air

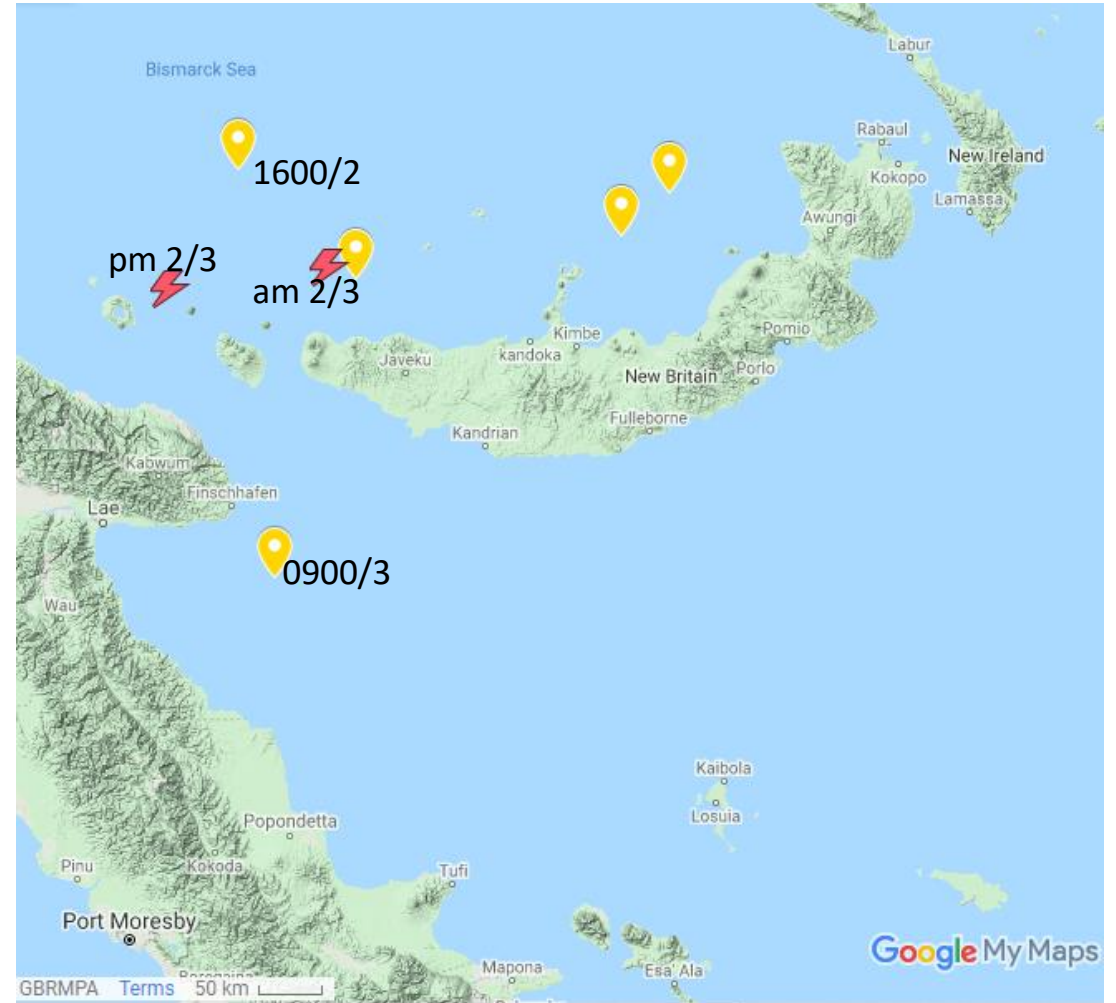
- On the 2nd (March), 16 Japanese aircraft attacked Coomalie, damaging some aircraft. Spitfires of No. 54, two of them piloted by Group Captain Walters and Wing Commander Caldwell intercepted. Caldwell was credited with bringing down one Zero and one Kate and Squadron Leader Gibbs one Zero.
- A Hudson attacked Munda early hours 2/3 . Results not observed.
- P-40's, P-38's, and a single PB4Y fly photo rcn over Munda A/F.
- More than 20 B-24's pound tgts in Burma. 7 splinter part of Ahlone docks and destroy a nearby warehouse, 6 hit Mahlwagon roundhouse, and 9 attack bridge at Pazundaung, tearing up its S approach. 6 B-25's, with P-40 escort, hit camp and storage area at Lamaing while 24 B-25's, also with ftr escort, pound Myitkyina.

3 March - COIC

(6) North New Guinea Coast - The convoy of 14 vessels, apparently comprising 7 warships and 7 merchant vessels which was sighted at 0825/2, 25 miles NNE Cape Gloucester was successfully attacked by three forces of Fortresses and Liberators off Cape Gloucester during the morning. ^(RESULTS NOT YET ASSESSED) A covering force of 30 to 40 enemy fighters unsuccessfully intercepted the attacking aircraft. At 1600/2, the convoy, then reported to comprise 15 vessels was sighted 70 miles WNW of Cape Gloucester course 280°. This indicates that the convoy was apparently joined by several additional units in the area to the north of Rooke Is. following the morning air attack. Later sightings before dusk indicate that the convoy then headed towards Vitiaz Strait with two of the warships preceding the then 13 vessels. At dawn this morning a minimum of 10 vessels were sighted 65 miles E. of Lae, and at 0835 6 ships were reported 38 miles E. of Salamaua apparently heading towards Lae.

3 March - Sea

- An RAAF PBV kept contact through the night and made its presence known by dropping an occasional disturbing bomb, turning over the job to a B-17 at 0545 on the following morning.
- 3 Bostons of No. 22 Squadron RAAF attacked the Japanese airfield at Lae, to interdict the convoy's air cover and at about noon 14 Kittyhawks covered by 9 Lightnings dive-bombed the waterfront and aerodrome. At least 9 Zeros were encountered by the Kittyhawks and 4 were claimed destroyed and 3 probable.
- Around 9 a.m. on the 3rd the convoy—by now numbering 15 ships—was about 30 miles south-east of Cape Cretin, and course was altered due west into Huon Gulf, with Lae only 90 miles distant. High overhead circled an air cover of some 40 Zero fighters.



3 March - Sea

- The convoy had now come within range of all the allied aircraft.
- Torpedo-carrying Beauforts of 100 squadron RAAF from Milne Bay made the first attack on the morning. Because of bad weather only two found the convoy, and neither scored any hits, but then the weather cleared.
- By 0930 the planes for a coordinated effort had assembled over Cape Ward Hunt.

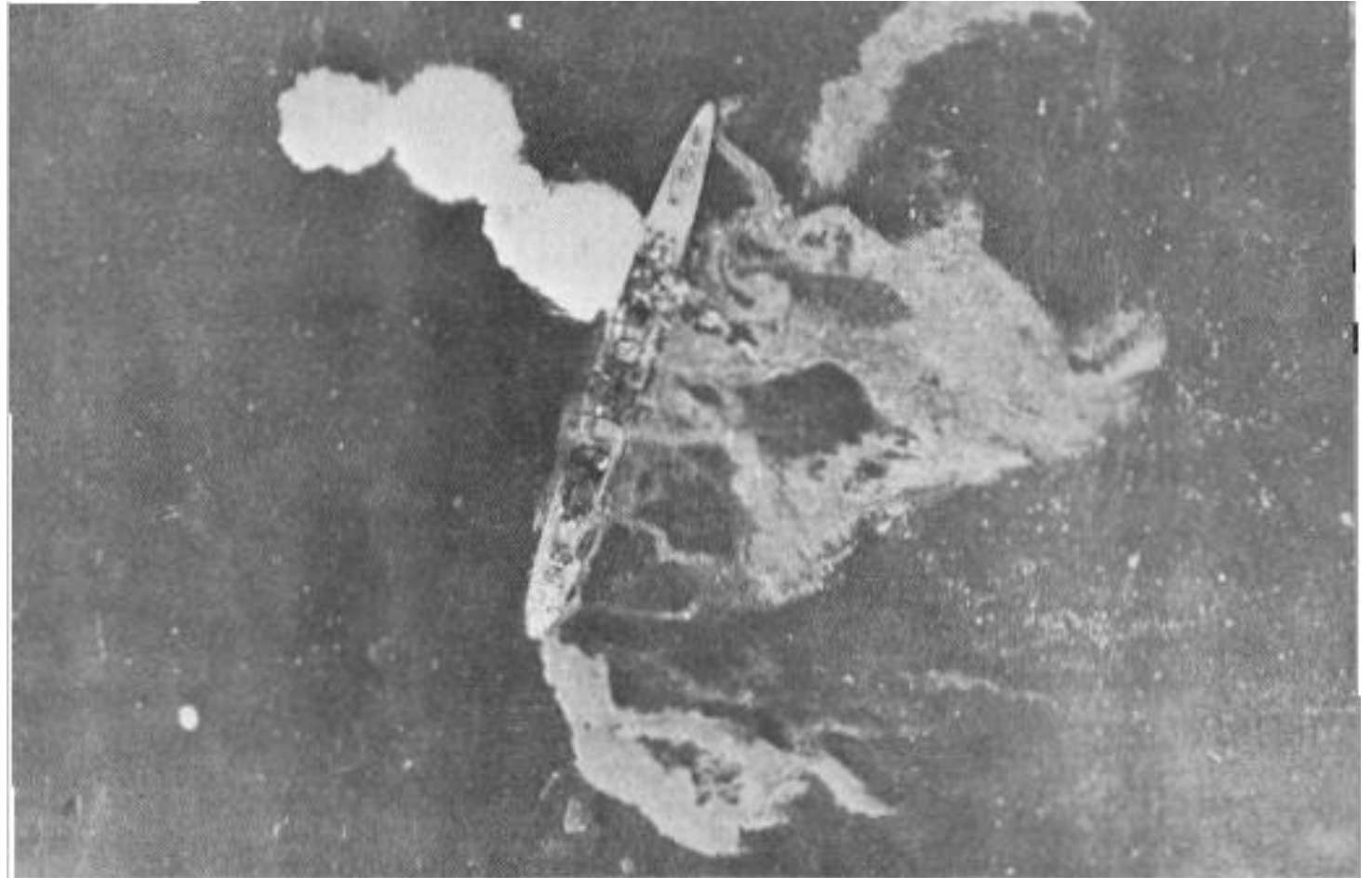


3 March - Sea

- Thirteen Beaufighters, each armed with four cannons and six machine guns, “went into the target with flights in line astern.” Flying at 500 feet when they came within the reach of anti-aircraft fire, they “then lost height rapidly and using rated power attacked in line abreast at a speed of 220 knots. On board one of the Beaufighters was cameraman Damien Parer, who shot dramatic footage of the battle.
- Thirteen B- 17’s attacked just as the Beaufighters began their sweep. The B-17s bombed from medium altitude of 7,000 feet, causing the ships to maneuver, which dispersed the convoy formation and reduced their concentrated anti-aircraft firepower.
- The B-17s attracted Zeros, which were in turn attacked by the P-38 Lightning escorts. A B-17 broke up in the air, and its crew took to their parachutes. Japanese fighter pilots machine-gunned some of the B-17 crew members as they descended and attacked others in the water after they landed.
- Five of the Japanese fighters strafing the B-17 aircrew were promptly engaged and shot down by three Lightnings, which were also lost. The Allied fighter pilots claimed 15 Zeros destroyed, while the B-17 crews claimed five more.

3 March - Sea

- Thirteen B-25's followed the Beaufighters in for a standard bombing attack from medium altitude.



Wounded Destroyer

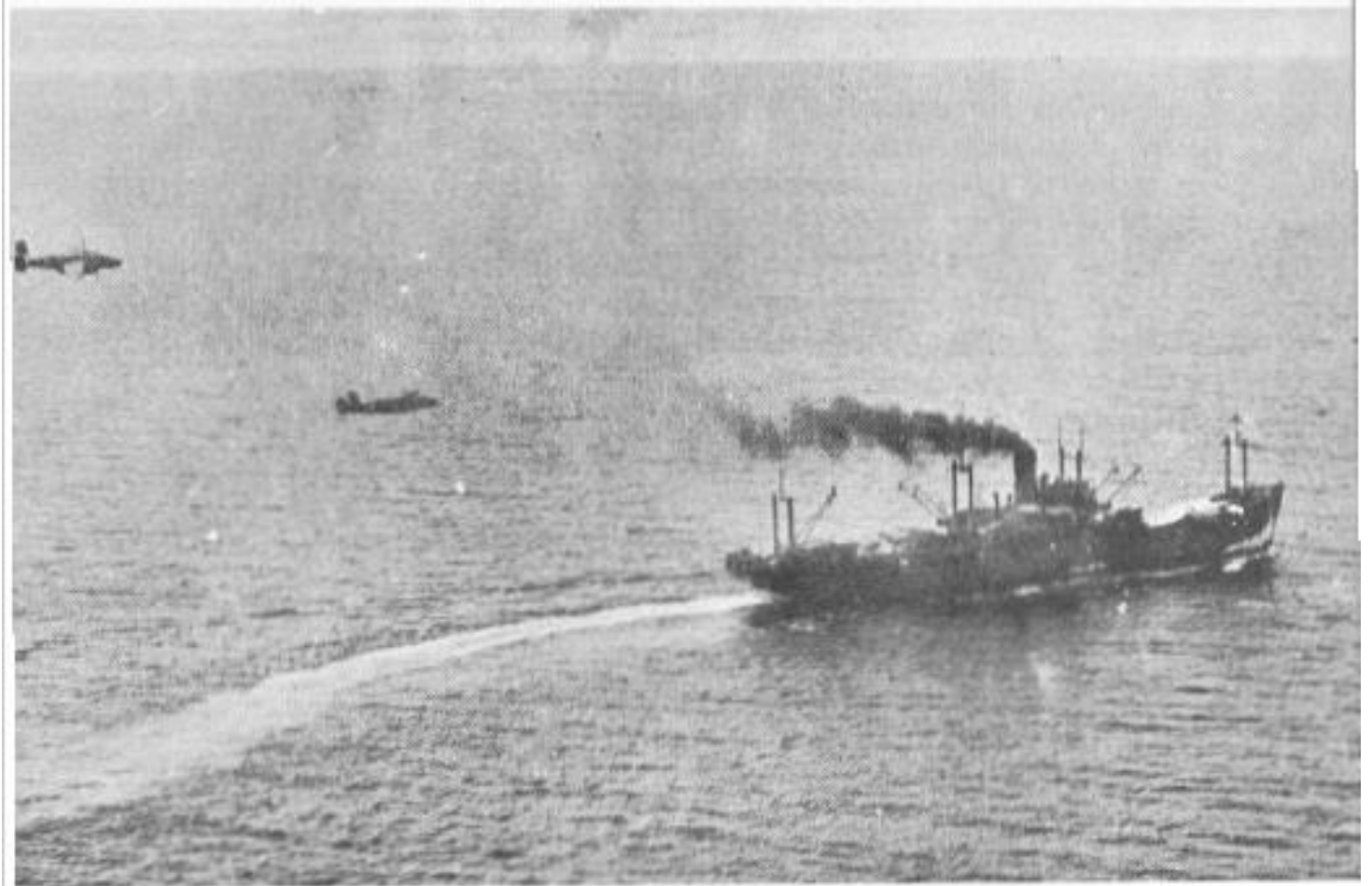
3 March - Sea

- Beaufighters of No. 30 Squadron strafe a transport which has already been bombed.



3 March - Sea

- Then came twelve of the 90ths B -25C1s. Coming down to 500 feet above the now widely dispersed and rapidly maneuvering vessels, the new strafers broke formation as each pilot sought his own targets.



Low Level Attack on Freighter

3 March - Sea

- The forward-firing .50's beat down opposing AA, and 500-pound bombs struck ship after ship.



B25s Attack a Japanese Corvette – First Pass

3 March - Sea

- Out of the thirty-seven bombs dropped, seventeen were claimed as direct hits.



Bullseye

3 March - Sea

- The returning pilots of the 90th Squadron reported one transport “badly damaged,” one left “burning violently,” and another “sinking,” that a cargo vessel “burst into flames and sank,” that another “stopped and began to settle,” that a third “appeared sinking,” and that a fourth had been left smoking and a fifth burning. One destroyer had been left smoking, while another “rolled on its side and sank.”
- The B-17’s claimed five direct hits, the sinking of one vessel, and the probable sinking of another. Twelve US. A20s joined the attack and claimed eleven direct hits, and six more B-25s coming in toward the end reported four additional hits.

3 March - Sea

- The cost had been four Allied aircraft shot down, three P-38's out of the twenty-eight providing cover and one B17. Enemy interception, which had been fierce, tended to concentrate on the B-17's.
- Other planes were damaged. Two Zeros dived on a Beaufighter, setting its port engine on fire and wounding both the pilot and observer—Sergeants Downing and Box—who, in the same aircraft, had been caught in the explosion at Leahy's Farm in the battle for Wau. Downing, with a shell splinter in his left shoulder and an engine on fire, was forced to withdraw. Though able to use only one arm he reached Popondetta and landed safely.
- The allied bombers claimed five enemy planes and returning P-38 pilots turned in claims of fifteen.

3 March - Sea

- Shortly after noon the planes were roaring off the Moresby fields again and heading for Lae. The afternoon strikes did not go entirely according to plan. The weather had turned bad over the ranges: none of the Beaufighters managed to cross the mountains, twelve A-20's "could not climb above or find [a] hole in the weather," and of the twenty-nine B-25's that set out, six failed to find the target.
- B- 17's, attacked at 15.12, one of the planes claiming two direct hits on a large destroyer which "stopped and burned."

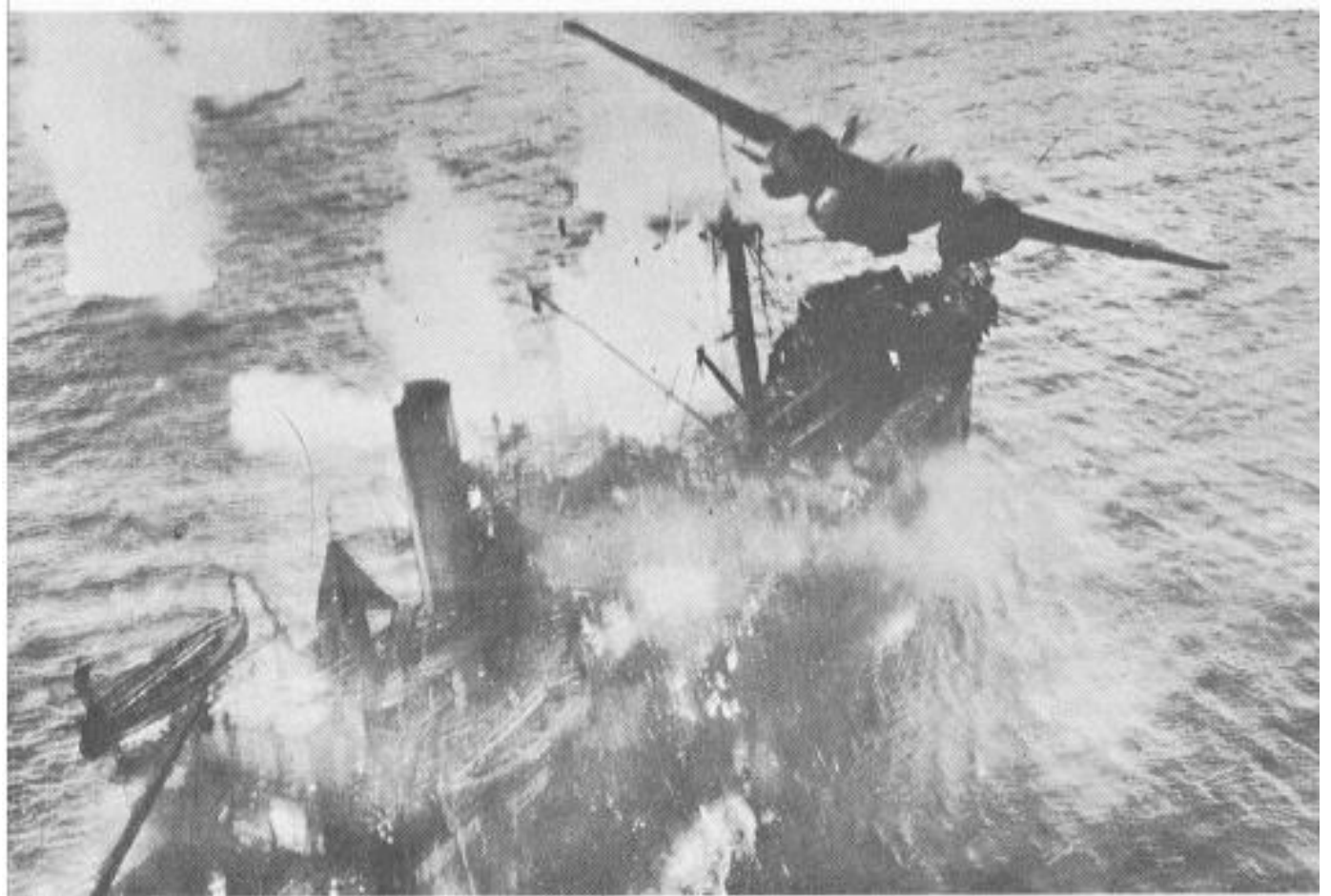
3 March - Sea

- Then eight B25C1s of the 90th Squadron struck in a low-level sweep.
- Within five minutes they had left a destroyer “definitely sinking” after four direct hits, another “probably sinking” after an equal number of hits, and two merchant vessels badly damaged.”
- In the next ten minutes, fifteen additional B-25s, some attacking from 200 feet but most of them from medium altitude, had completed their runs with claims of at least ten direct hits.



3 March - Sea

- Almost simultaneously with this attack, five RAAF Bostons concentrated on a destroyer, while B17's bombed from medium height through both the B-25's and the Bostons.
- The Bostons claimed at least two direct hits and numerous near misses, and they were credited with still another sinking.
- During the remaining daylight hours, planes sent on reconnaissance swept over the scene of action, strafing survivors and seeking assurance that none of the burning hulks were in condition to get away.



A20 at Mast Height

3 March - Air

- At 1030/3 Munda airfield was attacked by 10 dive bombers escorted by 16 fighters. 2 enemy aircraft were seen on the aerodrome.
- Vila Plantation was attacked before dawn 3/3 by two Liberators.
- Before dawn 3/3 Kahili aerodrome was attacked by 4 Liberators and Ballale by 1 Liberator as alternative targets to shipping.
- The township and other buildings in the vicinity of Dobo were bombed and strafed by 6 Hudsons at about 1000/3.
- 4 P-40's sweep Kiska dropping demolition and fragmentation bombs.
- Adm Kinkaid, CO Alaska Def Cmd tables Kiska invasion plan and substitutes an Attu invasion plan.
- 13 B-24's bomb Mahlwagon M/Y and dock area at Rangoon. 9 others attack Pazundaung railroad bridge but fail to knock it out.
- 6 B-25's bomb railroad sheds at Maymyo.

3 / 4 March - Sea

- That night, a force of ten U.S. Navy PT boats, from their base at Tufi, – under the command of Lt Cmdr Atkins – set out to attack the convoy. Two boats struck submerged debris and were forced to return.
- The other eight arrived off Lae in the early hours of 4 March. Atkins spotted a fire that turned out to be the transport Oigawa Maru. PT-143 and PT-150 torpedoed it, sinking the crippled vessel.
- During 4th March, Fifth Air Force bombers sank the only ships remaining there afloat, two crippled destroyers.
- And that ended it, except that Beaufighters, A20s, and B-25's continued for several days to search the general area and to strafe surviving enemy personnel.

4 March - COIC

(4) Vitiaz Straits - The convoy approaching Lae through Vitiaz Straits was successfully attacked throughout 2-3/3 by our aircraft. As reported yesterday 3/3 the convoy originally consisted of 14 vessels (apparently 7 warships, 7 merchant vessels) and it appears that 5 or 6 additional units joined the convoy in the area N. of Rooke Is. a.m. 2/3. Cdr. Advanced Echelon 5th Air Force reports that at dark 3/3 the following vessels remained afloat about 40 miles off Lae -

3 destroyers

1 gunboat

2 cargo vessels

Both cargo ships were burning, one destroyer was stationary with an oil slick behind and another destroyer had a large hole in its side. None of the ships was making any headway.

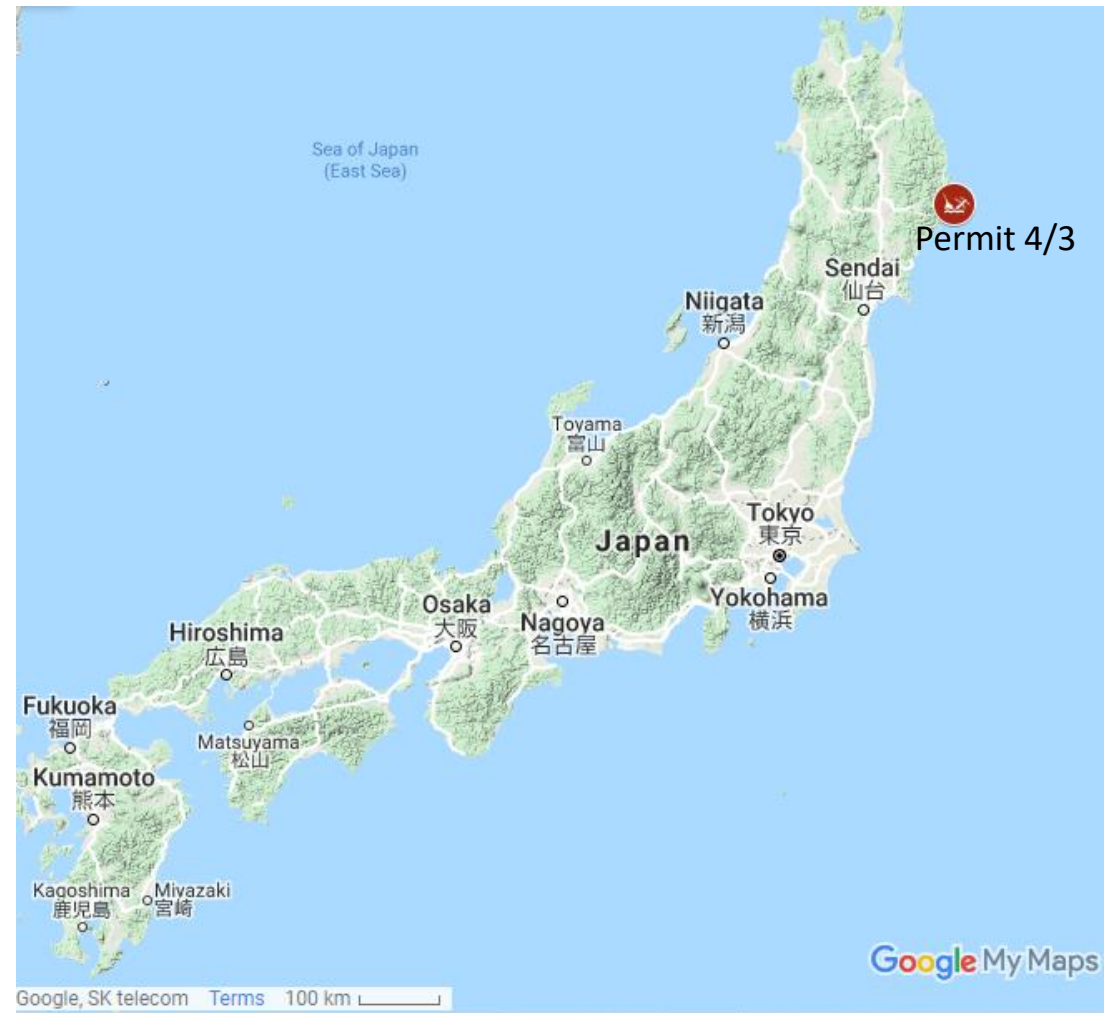
4 March - Government

- On 4 March Curtin announces:
 - Victory in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, quotes communiqué from General MacArthur and his response.
 - Presence of Spitfire squadrons in Australian battle areas.
 - Pending prosecutions for absenteeism in the textile industry.



4 March - Sea

- The submarine USS Permit torpedoed and sank a cargo ship in the Pacific Ocean southwest of Miyako (39°33'N 142°07'E).



4 March - Air

- On the morning of the 4th, eleven Beaufighters cooperated with twelve American Bostons in a heavy raid on Malahang airfield, at Lae, where they were met by heavy anti-aircraft fire and 12 enemy fighters.
- Engaged by Lightnings covering the attack, the Zero pilots refrained from serious interception.



4 March - Air

- A strafing attack by F-Lt Uren and F-O Roe.
- The fire power of the Beaufighters from four 20-mm cannon and six .303-inch machine-guns is illustrated by the fact that only a few seconds had elapsed between the taking of the last photo in which one of the Beaufighters is beginning a diving attack and of this one showing three Zeros in flames.



4 March - Air

- After the attackers had drenched the target area with gunfire and bombs, two Beaufighters, piloted by Flying Officer Roe and Flight Lieutenant Uren, returned to attack camouflaged grounded fighter aircraft they had detected on their initial runs.
- As they withdrew six of these aircraft and a refuelling waggon were in flames.
- The port engine of Roe's aircraft had been hit by an anti-aircraft shell but he was able to fly it back to base, while Uren, with his aircraft severely damaged by enemy ground fire, made a crash landing at Dobodura in which the Beaufighter was destroyed though the crew escaped unharmed.
- B17's attack Ubili and power launches off Lae and Cape Gloucester, and several B-25's and single B17's and B-24's hit harbor and A /F at Lae and barges off Finschhafen.
- Six B-24's hit A/F on Ballale I (2) and bomb Kahili (4).
- 4 P-40's fly over Kiska but drop no bombs due to weather.
- 3 B-25's bomb railroad facilities at Ywataung.

4 March – Report to the White House

2. The Services of Supply requested General MacArthur to procure and ship to the Persian Gulf Service Command every month beginning with March, 1,000 tons of unground wheat and 100 tons of sugar. This will be used to barter for native labor.

5 March - Sea

- “Possible offensive against eastern New Guinea area.” was deleted from the list of “Enemy’s Probable Next Moves” by COIC
- The Liberty ship Thomas Hooker started to break in two in the Atlantic Ocean (53°20’N 47°00’W). All 62 crew were rescued by HMS Pimpernel The drifting wreck was scuttled on 12 March by a U Boat.

5 March - Air

- At daybreak and soon after 5/3 , 5 Beaufighters shot up Malahang aerodrome while 9 Bostons attacked Lae aerodrome.
- HBs, operating individually, hit Lae, Alexishafen, Gasmata, and Saumlakki.
- The air strike for shipping in the Shortlands area dawn 5/3 was unable to locate the target although five Liberators dropped flares illuminating the area from Kahili westwards to Moila Point. Two other Liberators bombed Ballale as an alternative target.

6 March - Government

- On 6th March Churchill replied:
- I am glad your fine division got home safely.
- As I told General Morshead in a letter I gave him before his departure from Cairo this division has left behind it a record of energy, courage, enterprise and daring which will be an imperishable memory among all the nations of the British Empire who fought in true comradeship in the Western Desert.
- I wish their arms all success in their new sphere of operations.



6 March - Sea

- On the night of 5 March 1943, Task Force 68, consisting of three light cruisers (USS Montpelier, Cleveland, and Denver) and three destroyers (USS Conway, Cony, and Waller) commanded by Rear Admiral Aaron Merrill was en route to commence bombarding Japanese positions at Vila.
- Two submarines, Grayback and Grampus, had been assigned to support Merrill's force, and were stationed along likely Japanese withdrawal routes out of the Kula Gulf.
- Merrill's attack on Vila was timed to coincide with another attack on Munda by four destroyers under Captain Robert Briscoe.



CruDiv 12 in Havannah harbor, Éfate (New Hebrides) in 1943. *Cleveland* (CL-55), *Columbia* (CL-56), *Montpelier* (CL-57), flag, and *Denver* (CL-58).

6 March - Sea

- The U.S. force was proceeding in a southwesterly direction about 2 miles (3.2 km) off the New Georgia coast, cruising at about 20 knots (37 km/h; 23 mph).
- They encountered two Japanese destroyers sailing in the opposite direction along the east coast of Kolombangara, northeast from Sasamboki Island.
- First contact was established by the U.S. radar operators around 00:57 on 6 March and firing commenced at 01:01. The U.S. cruisers engaged to starboard with their 6-inch guns at a range of around 11,000 yards.

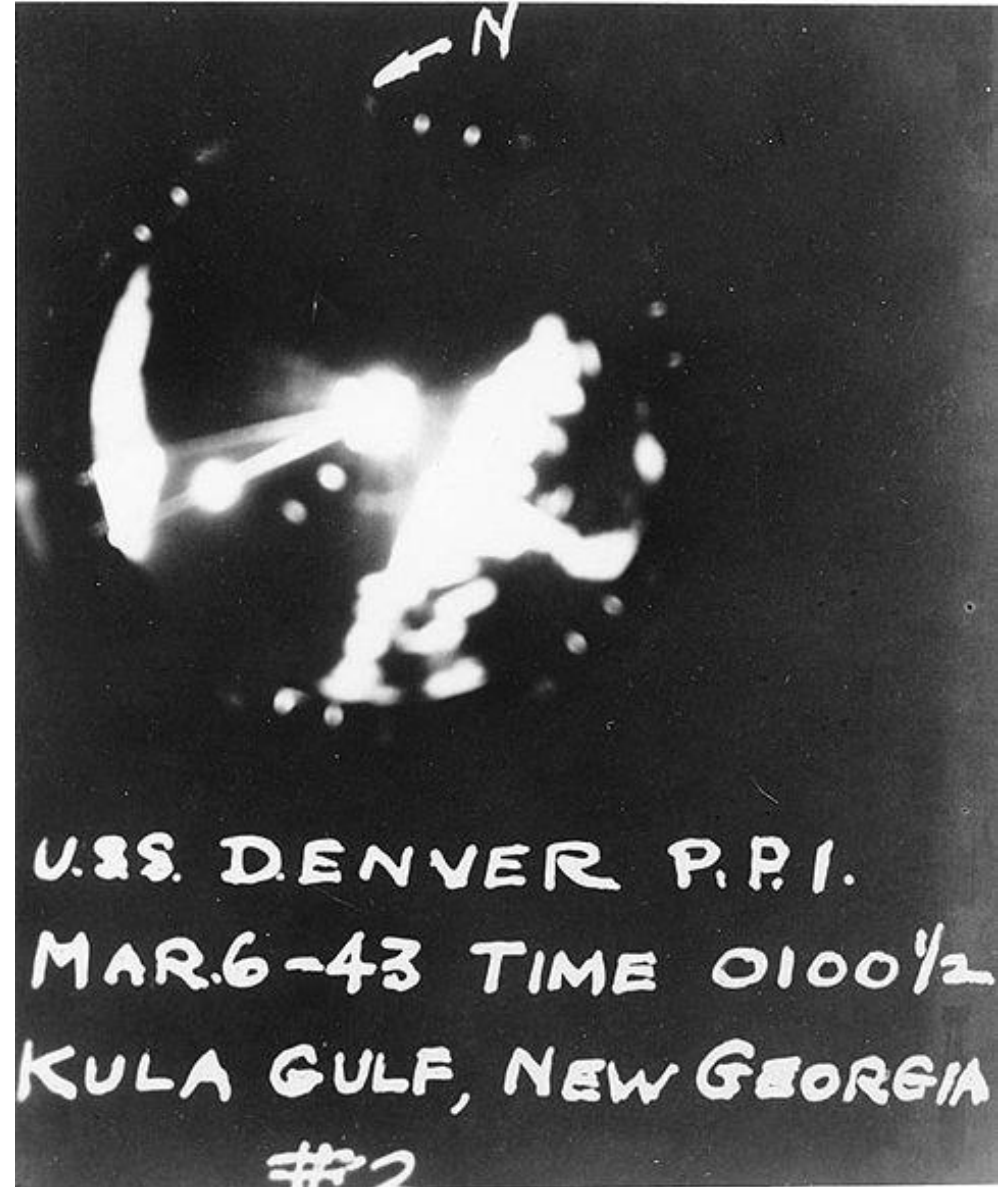


6 March - Sea

- The entire opening salvo straddled the leading destroyer, which was hit by the sixth salvo of American gunfire.
- The U.S. cruisers then rapidly shifted target, doing so before second destroyer could release any torpedoes.
- After a few minutes the second Japanese destroyer was also hit and began sinking in short order. Firing ceased at 01:14.
- A salvo of five torpedoes had been fired by the destroyer Waller. At around 01:15, one of these torpedoes hit one of the targets, which exploded, caught fire and sank.
- The explosion was reportedly heard by Briscoe's force about 25 miles (40 km) away around Munda.

Radarscope image from Denver at around 01:00, just before opening fire. The large spot just off the Kolombangara shore is the Japanese destroyers Minegumo and Murasame.

Photo # NH 100386 Action in Kula Gulf, 6 March 1943. Radarscope image at 0100½ Hrs



6 March - Sea

- After the engagement, the U.S. vessels completed a turn to starboard when they were roughly due east of the Blackett Strait and north of Tunguirili Point. At 01:24, they commenced a northerly bombardment run off the Kolombangara coast, having been delayed by only 16 minutes.
- Under the direction of a reconnaissance aircraft flying overhead, the U.S. gunners targeted "supply dumps, runways, bivouacs and dispersed aircraft".
- Several Japanese shore batteries responded, firing on the bombarding ships, but were knocked out quickly with counter battery fire.



6 March - Sea

- After completing their task at 01:40, Merrill's force withdrew through the New Georgia Sound.
- Captain Briscoe's destroyers also completed a successful bombardment of the Munda airfield.
- One of the submarines assigned to support the operation, *Grampus*, went missing and was not seen or heard from again.



6 March - Sea

- Radar controlled gunnery was in its infancy as a technique and there had been a tendency for the initial barrage to fall on the same, usually nearest, target. In earlier naval battles in the Pacific, this tactical deficiency had allowed the Japanese to successfully engage attacking U.S. ships with torpedoes and had resulted in severe losses for U.S. forces.
- The 6"/47 caliber Mark 16 gun was used in the main batteries of the Cleveland class cruisers mounted in four triple turrets for use against surface targets. They fired a 130 pound armor piercing shell out to an effective range of 20,000 yards at a rate of 8 to 10 rounds per minute.



Empty shell cases litter the deck near the forward 6"/47 gun turrets of USS Brooklyn (CL-40), after she had bombarded Licata, Sicily, during the early hours of the invasion, 10 July 1943. NB Cleveland class only had two forward turrets.

6 March - Sea

- Admiral Merrill had received reports of two cruisers or large destroyers of "TERUTSUKI" class reported to have left Faisi at 1910/5 and sighted west of Vella Lavella course 110° at about 2100/5.
- USS Triton torpedoed and sank a cargo ship in the Pacific between Bougainville and Rabaul.

6 March - Air

- A-20's hit Guadagasal area.
- The Waria River Mouth area was bombed and strafed by Bostons a.m. 6/3.
- Single B-24's attack shipping off Manus and off Talasea, and hit A/F at Gasmata.
- After daybreak, an aircraft carrier group of 69 planes including fighters and bombers, operating from Henderson Field, strongly attacked Munda. The airfield was reported absolutely unserviceable as a result of the shelling.
- Five B-24's heavily bomb Kahili and Ballale I A/Fs co-ordinated with the surface attack on Munda & Vila.
- During night 5-6/3 enemy aircraft raided Tulagi killing 2 and wounding 11.
- The enemy made their first raid on U.S. positions on Russell Is. at 1347/6 with 12 dive-bombers escorted by 25 Zeros. One man was killed and 12 injured and light material damage effected. A small fighter patrol shot down 4 enemy dive-bombers plus probably one more. Two of our patrol aircraft encountered *some* of the Zeros and shot one down.

6 March - Air

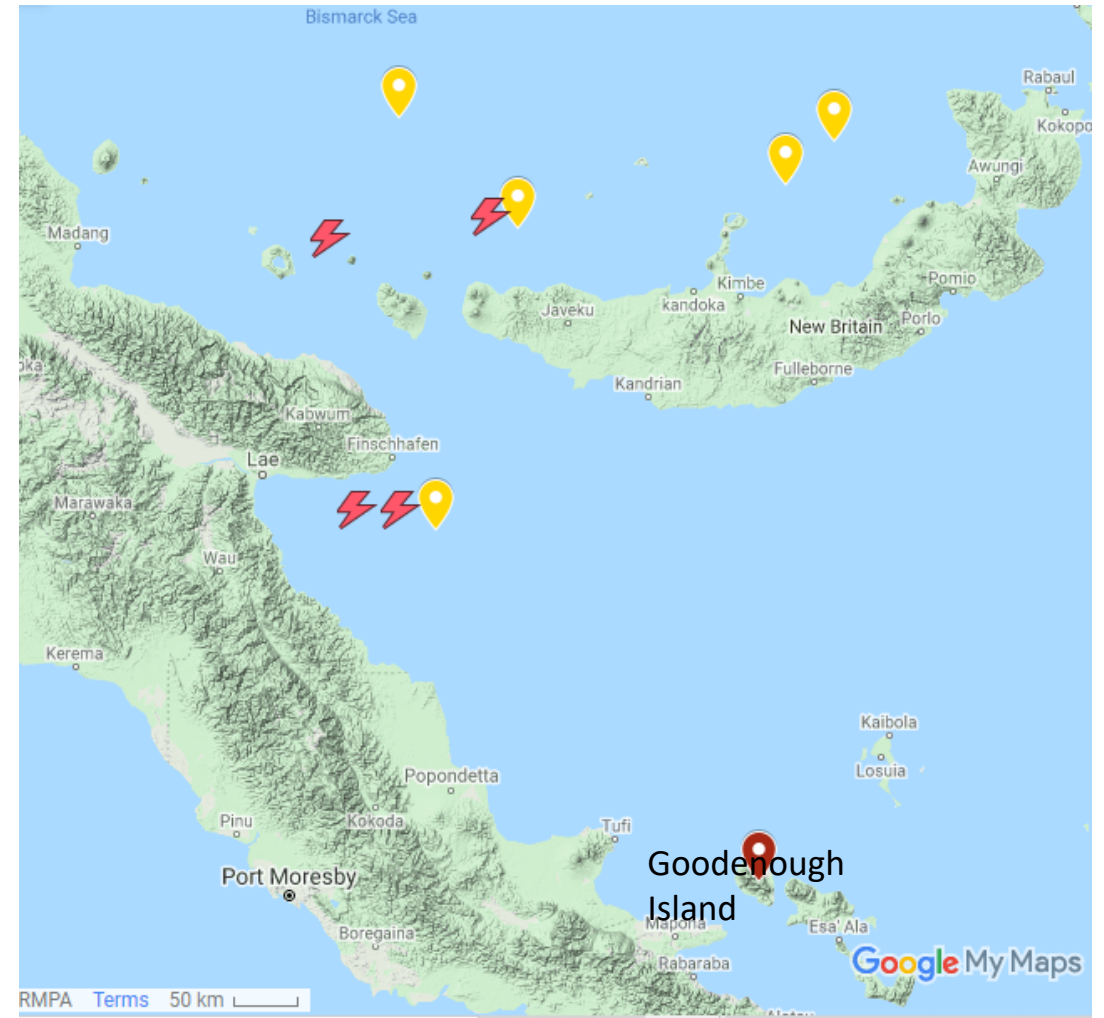
- 6 B-24's unsuccessfully attack Myitnge bridge.
- 4 B-24's over Burma bomb shipping near Pagoda Pt, scoring near misses. On return flight, they strafe lighthouse on Alguada Reef, a lightship off China Park, and a radio station at Diamond I.
- 3 B-24's intending to bomb Pazundaung bridge fail to reach tgt. 1 manages to bomb A/F at Pagoda Pt. The others return to base without bombing.

7 March - GHQ

- The official GHQ communique of 7 March 1943 put the size and composition of the enemy convoy at twelve transports, three cruisers, and seven destroyers, and claimed their total destruction.
- These figures were based on an evaluation of crews' reports. They reported fourteen ships sighted on the morning of 2 March and that perhaps as many as two of these vessels had been sunk.
- Reports of the afternoon missions that day showed a total of fifteen or even sixteen vessels in the convoy at that time. These and other differences in sightings reported during the course of a running battle over a large area over two days led to a conclusion that additional units had probably joined the original convoy.

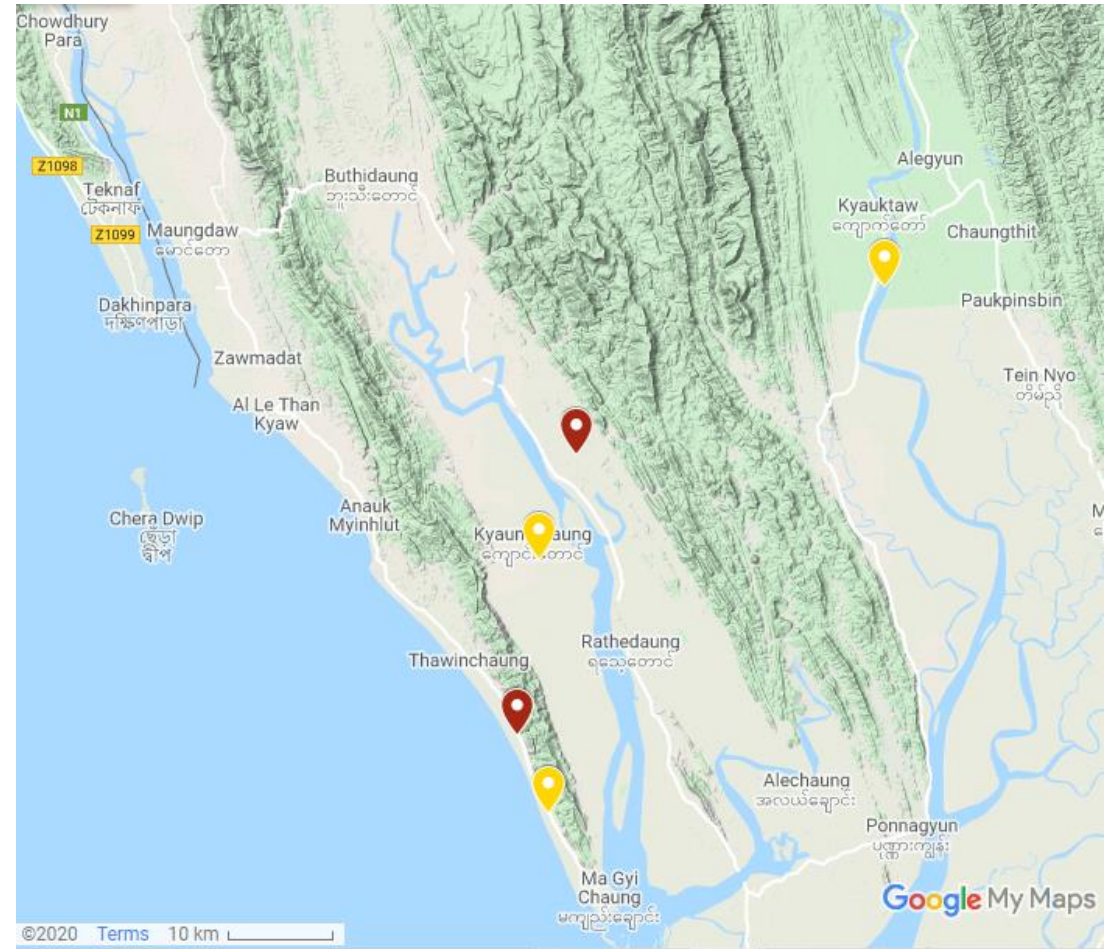
7 March – Goodenough Island

- The 47th Australian Battalion was garrisoning Goodenough Island.
- On 7th March and for the next few days groups of Japanese—survivors of the convoy dispersed or sunk in the Bismarck Sea landed on the island.
- One patrol, under Captain Pascoe, stalked a group of eight Japanese, who had landed in two flat-bottomed boats, killed them all, and found that the boats contained large quantities of documents in sealed tins.
- This important-looking discovery was hurried back to headquarters in Brisbane where the documents were found to include a complete Army List showing the names of all Japanese officers and their units.
- Examination and collation provided a complete and detailed picture of the Japanese Army and revealed the existence of many units hitherto unknown.



7 March - Burma

- During February, Japanese forces cleared detachments of the British irregular V Force from the valley of the Kaladan River, where they had been threatening the Japanese lines of communication. V Force warned the British of the large numbers of Japanese approaching the battlefield.
- Following their defeats at Donbaik, the Indian 47th and 55th Brigades had been moved east of the Mayu Range. In the first week of March, the Japanese crossed the Mayu River and attacked Indian 55th Brigade, forcing it to retreat. This left the Indian 47th Brigade isolated north of Rathedaung.
- In spite of this growing threat to the left flank of 14th Division, General Irwin demanded that another attack be made on the Donbaik position.



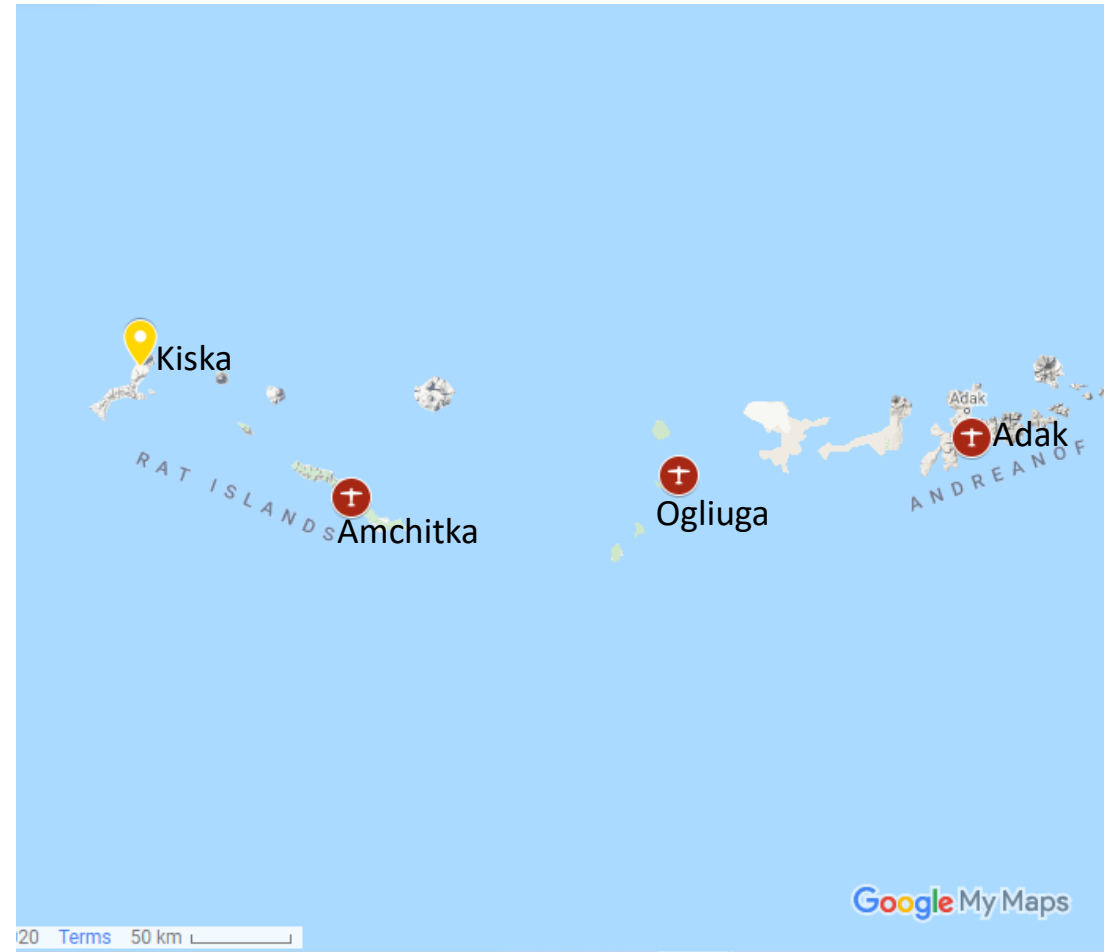
7 March - Air

- On the 7th (March) at 11 a.m. four 457 Squadron spitfires were scrambled to intercept Japanese aircraft reported to be over Bathurst Island.
- They were ordered to 15,000 feet and found a Dinah heading for home over the sea about 15 miles from Darwin.
- F Lt Maclean and F Sgt McDowell each made two attacks at close range and the enemy crashed into the sea burning.
- A-20's attack Guadagal area and barges offshore.
- Single B-24's attack ship NW of Madang and bomb Salamaua, Gasmata, and Cape Gloucester.
- Five B-25's and three Hudsons bomb Toeal.



7 March - Air

- 3 HBs bomb Munda A/F.
- No shipping could be found by air strike before dawn 7/3 and as alternative targets Kahili and Ballale were each bombed by a single B24.
- 343d Ftr Gp moves to Adak, and the first flight of MBs is brought up to Amchitka. This enables stepped-up raids on Kiska.
- 8 B-24's and 4 P-38's bomb and strafe Chichagof Harbor area and Holtz Bay installations. A ftr sweep, 6 B-24's, and 10 B25's hit North Head and Main Camp area.
- 12 B-25's attack Gokteik Viaduct, causing only minor damage.



8 March - Sea

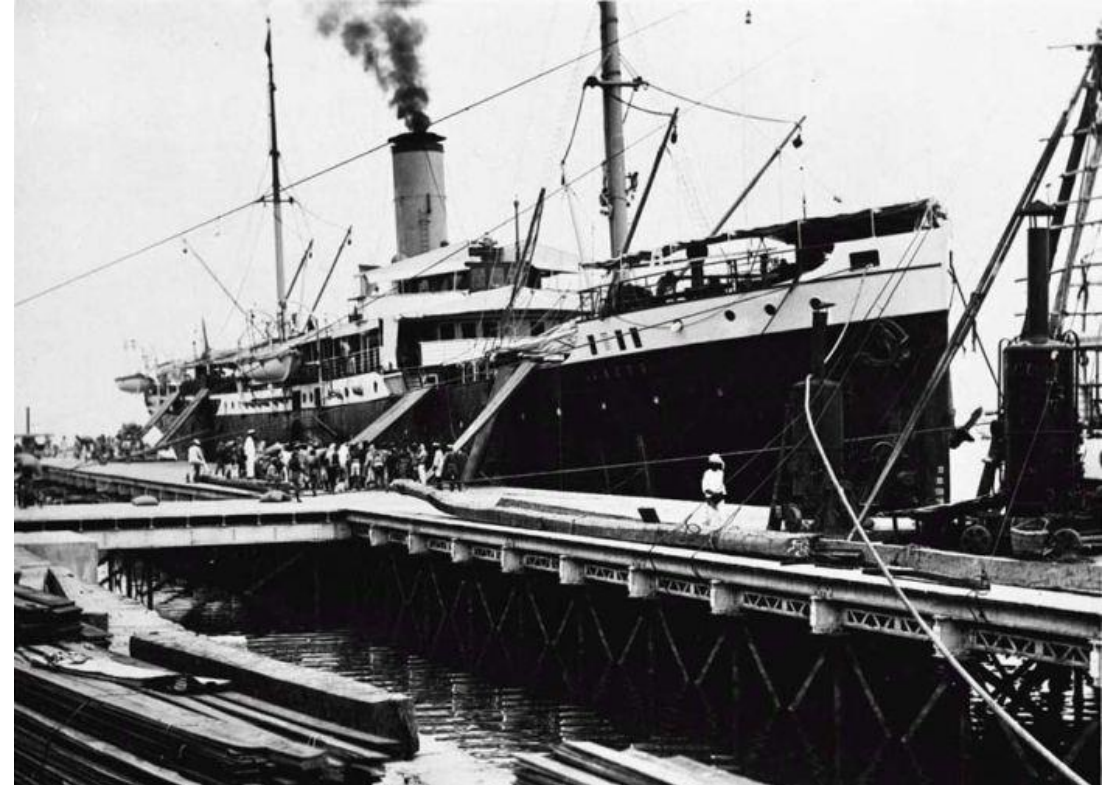
- On 8th March Bendigo, escorting 's Jacob to Oro Bay, passed Kapunda off Cape Nelson escorting Karsik to Milne Bay.
- At 1 p.m. nine Japanese bombers escorted by 12 fighters attacked 's Jacob. Bombs landed on and around the ship, and she caught fire and sank at 1.16 p.m. off Porlock Harbour.
- The Japanese went on a few minutes later and raided Oro Bay
- Allied fighters arrived five minutes after 's Jacob sank, and both enemy flights made off. Of the 16 Allied fighters which intercepted, three made contact with the enemy and destroyed one bomber and one fighter.
- Five of 's Jacob's company lost their lives. The 153 survivors were picked up by Bendigo. Of these, two, Captain Stokes, A.I.F., and an American Army private died on the passage back to Milne Bay.



HMAS Bendigo (out of picture) rescuing survivors of 's Jacob, 8th March 1943.

8 March - Sea

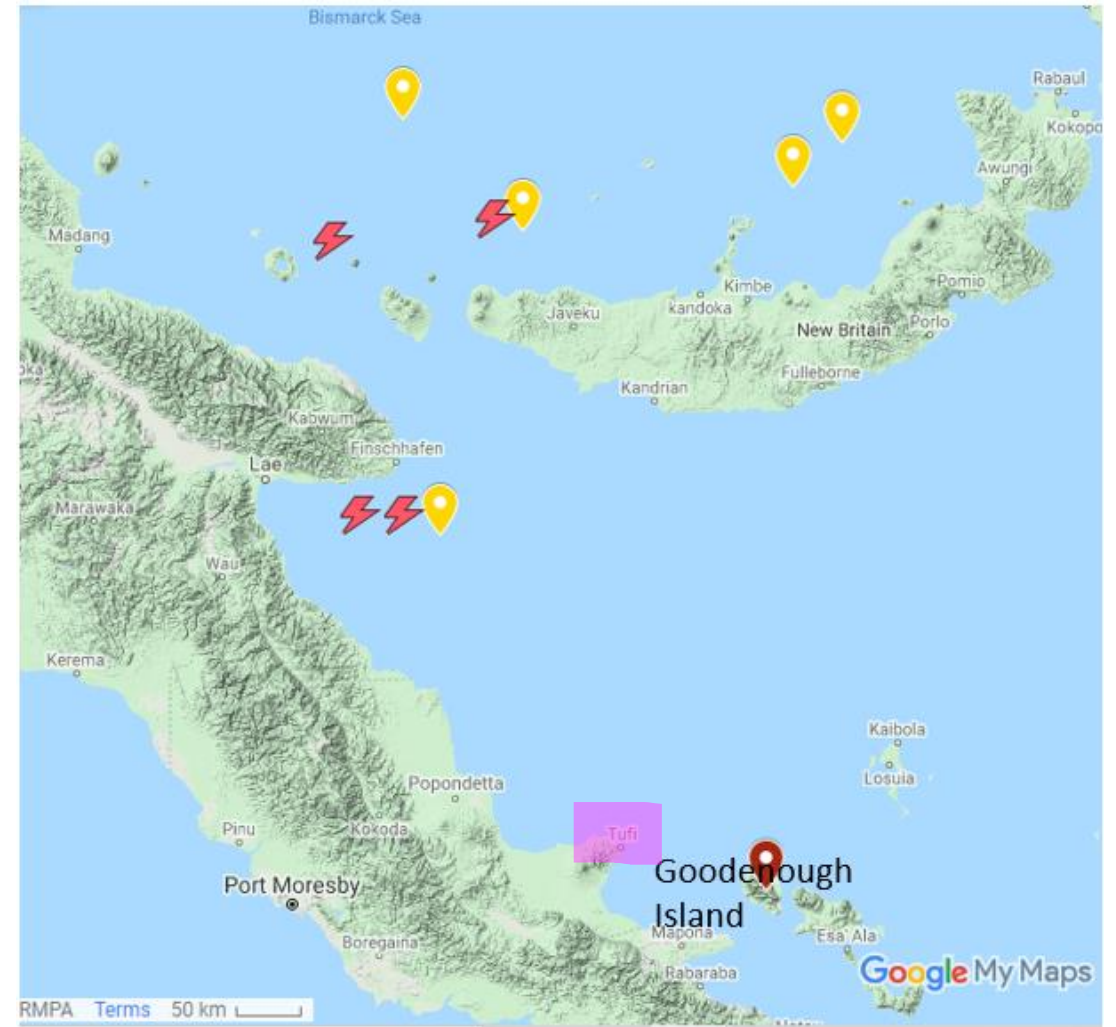
- Meanwhile another flight of enemy bombers unsuccessfully attacked Kapunda and Karsik.
- Kapunda and Karsik were returning from Oro Bay to Milne Bay after successfully completing the first stage of another operation.
- Its object was the transfer of the 162nd Regiment of the 41st U.S. Division from Australia to the Buna-Gona area.
- Four corvettes, Ballarat, Bendigo, Echuca and Kapunda, and three Dutch ships, Bontekoe, Karsik and Van Heemskerk, took part in the New Guinea section of the operation.



KPM 3,000 ton steamer "'s Jacob" in the harbour of Makassar, C 1907-1914

8 March - Sea

- The submarine USS Permit torpedoed and sank a cargo ship in the Pacific Ocean off Honshu.
- PT boats collected 16 prisoners during the night 8-9/3 off **Tufi** and killed those whom they were unable to pick up.
- The Liberty ship JLM Curry broke in two and sank in the Atlantic Ocean off Iceland.



8 March - Air

- HBs, operating individually, hit occupied areas in SE coastal region of NW New Guinea and also strike at Saumlakki and Babo.
- A/Fs at Munda and Vila are again hit by light B-24 raids
- 12 B-25's strike at Myitnge bridge and AA positions. Results are poor. 4 B-24's bomb Bassein docks. P-40's hit military tgs near Pebu and Wan-hat.

9 March - Air

- The reconnaissance Fortress was intercepted over Gasmata by 9 Zeros of which 4 were claimed shot down and one more probably.
- At 12.25 9th March Wau was attacked by about 26 Japanese bombers escorted by more than 20 fighters. The aerodrome was rendered temporarily unserviceable and some casualties were suffered.
- 3 B-24's bomb A/Fs at Munda, Kahili, and Ballale I.
- Munda airfield was attacked 1010/9 by 18 dive-bombers and 11 torpedo bombers escorted by 31 fighters. All A.A. positions seen to be firing at our aircraft were reported to have been hit by bombs.
- 6 B-24's, 10 B-25's, 12 P-38's and 4 P-40's attack Kiska. The P-40's and 6 of the MBs return to base due to bad weather; the other bombers bomb Main Camp area, North Head and submarine base.
- P-40's hit town area and bridge at Mogaung. Many fires are started and the bridge is severely damaged.

9/10 March - COIC

III. ENEMY'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

- (1) Strong consolidation advanced positions S.W.P.A. particularly Central & Northern Solomons - North coast New Guinea - S.W. coast Dutch New Guinea - Timor/Arafura Sea Islands.
- (2) Possible attempt to occupy Merauke.
- (3) Increased offensive submarine activity.


For DIRECTOR C.O.I.C.
G.H.Q., S.W.P.A.

9/3/43

III. ENEMY'S PROBABLE NEXT MOVE

- (1) Strong consolidation advanced positions S.W.P.A. particularly Central & Northern Solomons - North coast New Guinea - S.W. coast Dutch New Guinea - Timor/Arafura Sea Islands.
- (2) Possible offensive activity from East Indies area including further infiltration to the eastward along south coast Dutch New Guinea.
- (3) Increased offensive submarine activity.

- 4 -


For DIRECTOR C.O.I.C.

March - Sea

- An early form of magnetron was invented by Gerdien in 1910. However, the first truly successful example was developed by Aleksereff and Malearoff in USSR in 1936, which achieved 300 watts at 3 GHz (10 cm wavelength).
- The cavity magnetron was radically improved by John Randall and Harry Boot, under the direction of Mark Oliphant, at the University of Birmingham, England in 1940.
- They invented a valve that could produce multi-kilowatt pulses at 10 cm wavelength, an unprecedented achievement.
- The high power of pulses from the device made centimeter-band radar practical for the Allies of World War II, with shorter wavelength radars allowing detection of smaller objects from smaller antennas. The compact cavity magnetron tube drastically reduced the size of radar sets so that they could be more easily installed in night-fighter aircraft, anti-submarine aircraft and escort ships.

March - Sea

- An early 10 kW version, built in England was taken on the Tizard Mission to America in September 1940.
- As the discussion turned to radar, the US Navy representatives began to detail the problems with their short-wavelength systems, complaining that their klystrons could only produce 10 W. With a flourish, "Taffy" Bowen pulled out a magnetron and explained it produced 1000 times that.
- Bell Telephone Laboratories took the example and quickly began manufacturing copies, the first thirty in October 1940, and over a million by the end of the war.
- Before the end of 1940, the Radiation Laboratory had been set up on the campus of MIT to develop various types of radar using the magnetron.
- By early 1941, portable centimetric airborne radars were being tested in American and British aircraft.
- In late 1941, the Telecommunications Research Establishment in the United Kingdom used the magnetron to develop a revolutionary airborne, ground-mapping radar codenamed H2S.

March - Sea

- The first Air to Surface Vessel radar became operational in early 1940. A cleaned-up and repackaged version, ASV Mark II, replaced it at the end of the year, but the system was not widespread until late in 1941.
- These designs had a relatively long minimum range, meaning the submarine targets disappeared from the display just as the aircraft was readying for the attack. At night the display disappeared before the target was in visual range. U Boats then took to crossing the Bay of Biscay, patrolled by the RAF, at night.
- The antenna array of the Mark II was quite large and produced considerable drag.



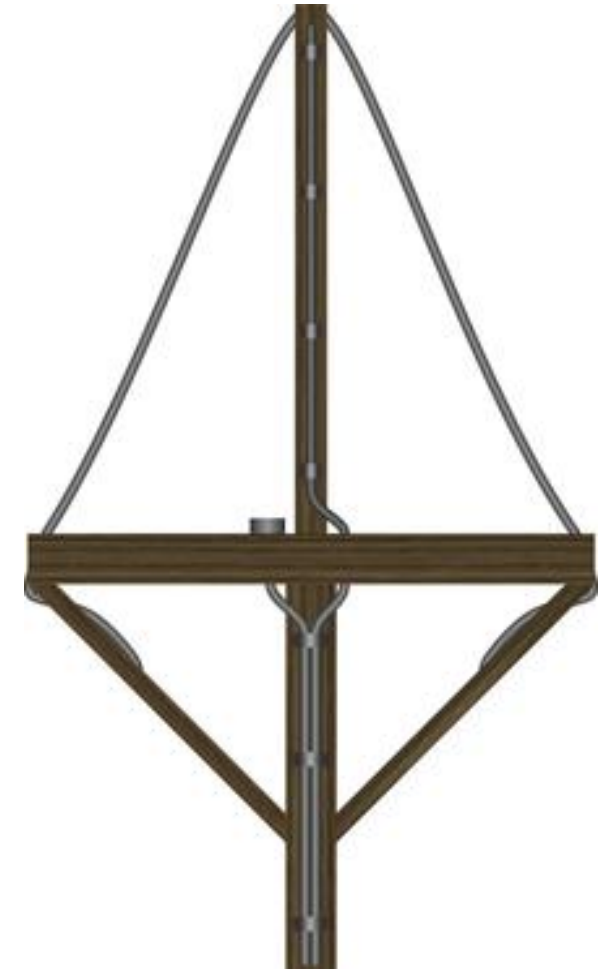
March - Sea

- This problem was addressed with the Leigh Light, a powerful 24 inch diameter carbon arc searchlight fitted to RAF Coastal Command patrol bombers (photo).
- By June 1942, aircraft equipped with ASV radar and the Leigh Light were operating over the Bay of Biscay intercepting U-boats moving to and from their home ports on the coast of France.
- The first submarine was successfully illuminated on the night of 3 June 1942, and the first confirmed kill was sunk on 5 July 1942 by a Vickers Wellington of 172 Squadron.
- In the previous five months not one submarine had been sunk, and six aircraft had been lost.
- As German U-boat losses shot up in the second half of 1942, they concluded the RAF was using radar to detect them and responded with the Metox radar detector.



March - Sea

- Metox sets received the transmitted pulses from the ASV and rendered them as audible beeps. The U-boat knew that they had been detected. By the time the aircraft was close enough to the U-boat's position to illuminate with the Leigh light, the U-boat was well under the water.
- The Metox set would also provide warning in excess of visual range in daylight.
- In the northern summer of 1942 Metox started to become effective, tilting the Battle of the Atlantic back in favour of the U Boats and setting off a desperate search for a more effective submarine detection system.



This rudimentary Metox antenna was installed into a bracket on the conning tower and periodically rotated by hand.

March - Sea

- In America The DMS-1000 was an experimental surface search radar developed by the MIT Radiation Laboratory and produced in limited numbers by Western Electric in late 1942.
- The first unit was sent to be used by RAF Coastal Command in a Liberator GR and entered service in January 1943 under the name ASV Mark IV.
- For reasons unknown, the US Army Air Corps then decided to cancel development of the DMS-1000 in favour of the Western Electric SCR-517, although it proved to be far less sensitive.
- The RAF learned of another unit intended for mounting in US Coast Guard blimps, the Philco ASG, that was comparable to the original DMS-1000. They asked that the ASG be used on their Liberator order instead, referring to it as ASV Mark V.
- In March, a shipment of seven Liberators with a mix of DMS-1000, SCR-517 and ASG arrived and were put into service in June.



Liberator GR V ASV

- These aircraft were invaluable because they were one of the very few aircraft with enough range to fly patrols over the Mid-Atlantic gap. They lacked the Leigh Light so were generally unable to press the attack at night but they could attack in daylight and call in the escorts at night.

March - Sea

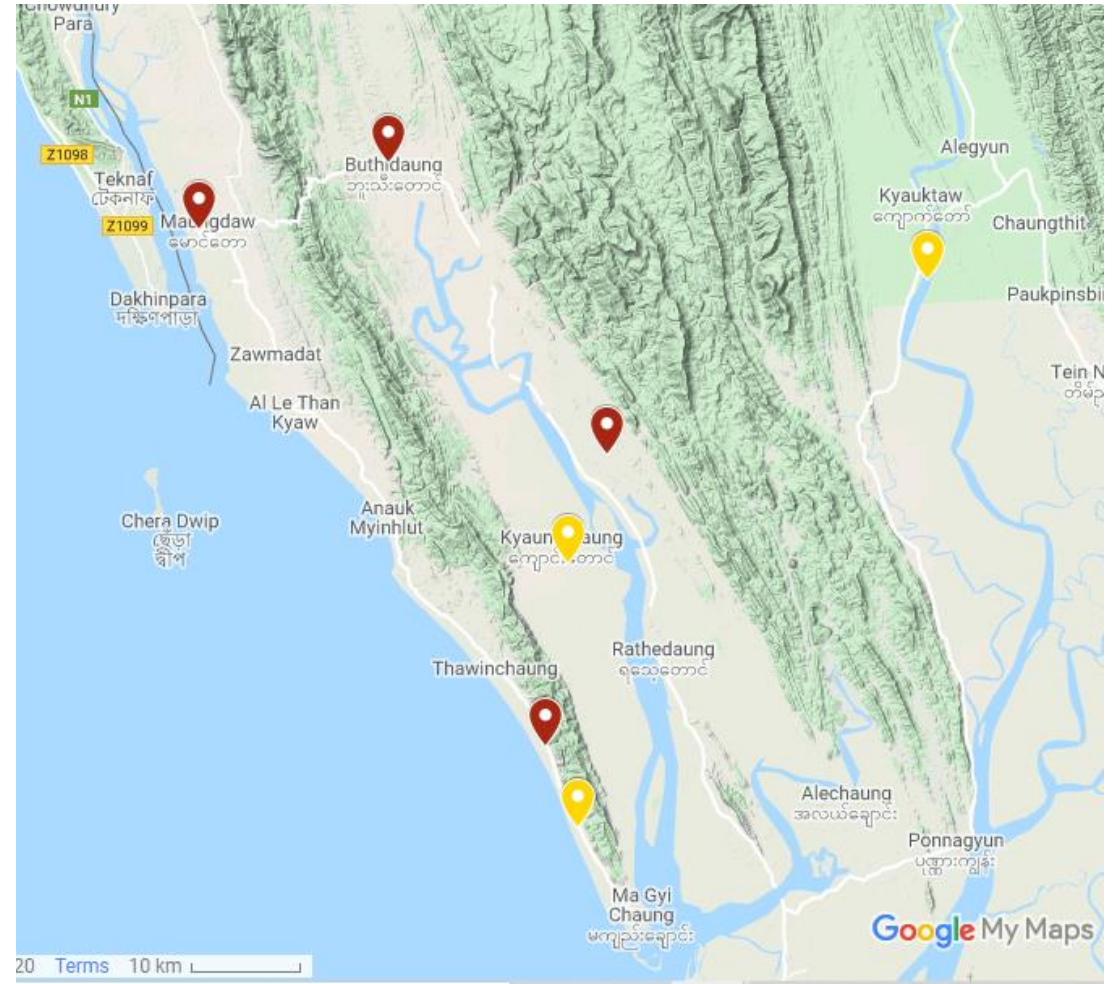
- In England it was suggested a new ASV set could be quickly introduced by making minor changes to the new H2S bomb aiming radar, mostly to the antenna.
- This started a futile and furious debate between Bomber and Coastal Commands, over priority for the small numbers of available magnetrons.
- After several changes in policy, the first ASV Mark III's began arriving in March 1943, and had largely replaced the Mark II in front-line units by the end of the northern summer.
- The Germans had no way to detect these very high-frequency signals, and their submarines were repeatedly attacked with no warning.
- The losses were so great they took to leaving port in daylight, but the RAF responded with strike aircraft and losses increased again.



The Mark III's small antenna was installed in a well-streamlined radome on the nose of the Wellington, forcing the removal of the nose guns.

10 March - Burma

- On 10 March, Lieutenant General Slim was ordered to report on the situation in Arakan, although it was not yet intended that XV Corps headquarters take charge of the front.
- Slim reported to Irwin that with so many brigades to command, 14th Indian Division was unable to control the front.
- Morale was low in some units, reflected in unnecessary panics. However, Irwin made no changes at this point.

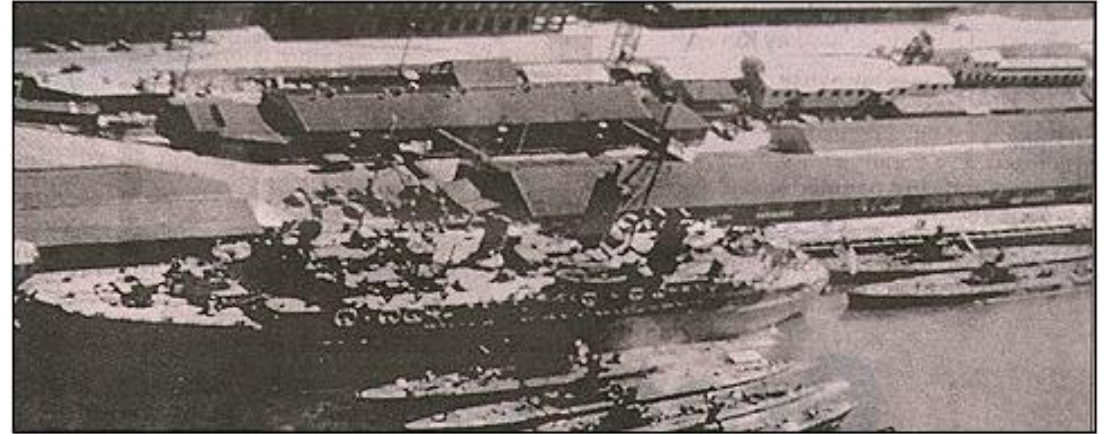


10 March - Air

- Four B-17's bomb A/F and shipping at Wewak. Single HBs attack shipping off New Guinea.
- Vila Plantation and airfield area were attacked at 0745/10 by 18 dive bombers, 12 torpedo bombers escorted by 31 fighters.
- At 1310/10, 10 enemy dive-bombers escorted by 12 fighters attempted an attack on our positions on the Russell Islands. Fighters intercepted and apparently prevented any attack shooting down 3 Zeros and one dive bomber without loss to themselves.
- Rcn airplane is attacked by 5 aircraft. Kiska attack mission is flown by 10 B-25's, 6 B-24's, 12 P-38's (4 of them flying top cover), and 1 F-5A. 8 of the P-38's strafe ground installations. The B-25's bomb radar site and pound North Head, silencing AA fire. The B-24's hit Main Camp area. 4 Amchitka-based P-40's bomb submarine base.
- HBs strike Rangoon area at 2 points. 5 B-24's hit Pazundaung bridge. 4 others bomb Mingaladon A/F. After the attack, several ftrs attack the flight. The HBs claim 3 shot down.

11 March - Sea

- On 16 February USS Triton left Brisbane on her sixth war patrol, hoping to destroy enemy shipping between the Shortland Basin and Rabaul.
- On 6 March, the submarine attacked a convoy of five destroyer-escorted ships, sinking a cargo ship and damaging another freighter. One of her torpedoes made a circular run, and Triton went deep to evade it.
- She attacked another convoy on the night of 8 March and claimed that five of the eight torpedoes she had fired scored hits. She could not observe the results or make a follow-up attack because gunfire from the escorts forced her down.
- On 11 March, Triton reported “Two groups of smokes, five or more ships each, plus escorts. . . Am chasing.”



Six submarines docked at Capricorn Wharf at New Farm in Brisbane beside their supply ship

via ozatwar.com

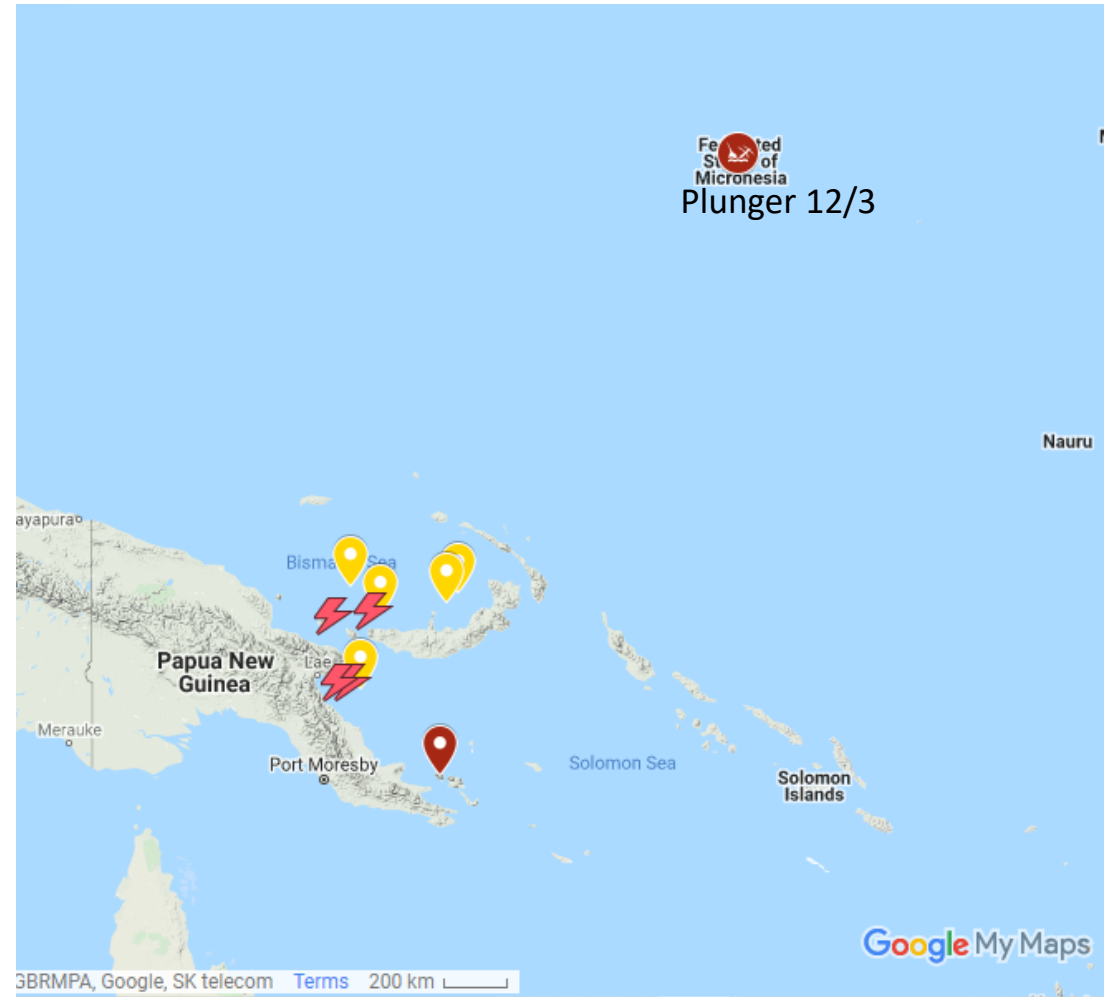
No further messages
from Triton were ever received.

11 March - Air

- On the 11th (March) a force of fifty odd Japanese aircraft struck at Dobodura. Two American ground staff were killed and three aircraft were destroyed on the ground. American fighter pilots claimed to have destroyed at least nine of the enemy's aircraft for the loss of one Kittyhawk.
- A-20's bomb and strafe Vickers Ridge and Guadagasal area. B-24's bomb A/F at Rabaul. Single HBs attack Finschhafen, Cape Gloucester, and shipping off Powell Pt.
- 7 B-25's bomb Myitnge bridge, causing little damage.

12 March - Sea

- A cargo ship was torpedoed and sunk in the Pacific Ocean south of Ponape (7°15'N 158°45'E) by USS Plunger.



12 March - Air

- A-20's attack Guadagasal Gap area and Salamaua A/F.
- Three B-24's and B-25's attack shipping at Amboina and bomb Fuiloro. A 6-7000 ton ship was hit.
- B-17's bomb Rabaul A/F while individual B-24's hit wreck of Talasea and bomb Cape Gloucester.
- 3 Liberators attacked Munda, Ballale and Kahili strips early morning 12th.
- 21 Avengers attacked Munda late 12/3 starting two fires. One Avenger missing,
- 6 B-24's attack Pazundaung bridge, causing negligible damage.

12 March - Washington

- A Pacific military conference commenced at Washington on 12th March attended by representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Cenpac, Soupac, Souwespac, and the American War and Navy Departments.
- MacArthur's headquarters produced a plan (Elkton) which stated that Task I of the July 1942 directive could be considered accomplished. In discussing Tasks II and III it analysed requirements and operations in more detail. The discussions at subsequent meetings of the conference hinged almost entirely on the question of forces which could be made available.
- When the Joint Chiefs announced the maximum reinforcements for the Pacific in 1943 it was obvious that the plan would have to be considerably modified. Two infantry divisions would be sent to MacArthur in the second and third quarters of the year; by December the aggregate number of American-manned aircraft in the South and South-West Pacific Areas would have been increased from 1,476 to 2,663 . Additional naval units requested would be supplied, if available, by the Pacific Fleet .
- Sufficient were not in sight to carry out Tasks II and III in their entirety. However, General Sutherland and Admiral Spruance—representing Souwespac and Soupac respectively— gave it as their opinion that the combined forces could, during 1943, execute Task II of the July 1942 directive to include Madang, the southeast portion of Bougainville, and to extend to Cape Gloucester, and Kiriwina and Woodlark Islands.

The Damien Parer Video of the Battle of the Bismark Sea is at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgone_pq1tc