

The Naval Battle for Henderson Airfield, First Night

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I had not anticipated attempting to reconstruct the cruiser action of this naval battle to the same level I had done for the battleship action until I was able to see all the film of the wreck of *Hiei*. This forced me to recognize that the perception of what I thought I knew about this battle needed to be reassessed. My methodology in re-constructing a naval battle is to plot every ship position and then create their movements in one-minute intervals. In this way I can gain an understanding of where everyone was in relation to everyone else. For this battle, I never believed I could follow this methodology because most of the primary data for the Japanese side is lost. U.S.S. *Helena*'s action report was very good and gave me speeds, course changes, positions, for the entire battle.¹ The U.S. formation was a simple line ahead formation so very quickly it was rather easy to plot the entire U.S. line. However, for the Japanese, secondary sources had to be used and there is not a lot of data for all of the ships involved. The starting point would be at 0148 when the Japanese opened fire. Many of the ships lost in this action have now been found and filmed. The location of the wrecks and their observed damages also play a significant role in letting me know how they moved and who was shooting at who. I will start this story with what I wrote previously in my *Kirishima* article and will footnote where corrections to this story are necessary.

For eleven months the carrier fleets of the United States and Japan had fought each other to a draw in what had become a war of attrition. The stalemate at Guadalcanal had tied the great fleets to the South Pacific. By so doing the U.S. carriers broke one of the pre-war principles of aircraft carriers: Do not be attached to an invasion which would prevent their ability to roam and hide in the vastness of the Pacific Ocean. Attached to a specific geographical location, the carriers would be easy to locate and sink. In breaking this rule, the United States lost two fleet carriers in *Wasp* and *Hornet* and a Japanese submarine had crippled a third in *Saratoga*.² On the Japanese side they had suffered the loss of the light carrier *Ryujo* and severe losses to their carrier airwings.

Each side had one operational carrier remaining: *Junyo* for Japan and *Enterprise* for the United States. Captain Hara Tameichi spoke with Admiral Nagumo shortly after the battle of

¹ On the maps her pin is green, while the other U.S. ships are yellow because her track is not estimated but plotted directly from her action report.

² In 1937 Captain Richmond K. Turner as a faculty member of the Naval War College, gave a lecture entitled "The Strategic Employment of the Fleet." Turner gave three areas carriers could be decisive. The first was to conduct raids and this was the foundation of strike warfare. The second was based on the principle of security. Carriers could gain important information on the enemy and prevent them from doing the same for friendly forces. Recon or scouting missions were assigned to specific dive bomber squadrons on the carriers and not to surface ship float planes. This marked a significant difference in how the two opposing carrier fleets operated. The third was to carry a threat of permanency or future operations, so that an enemy would never feel safe in rear areas and would have to expend resources to defend these rear areas. Feint operations would be required as aircraft range increased. Aircraft could reach many adjacent islands even if they were geographically separated by hundreds of miles. Suppressing these airfields that were within range of an objective island would play important roles in keeping the enemy from ascertaining the true objective but also diminishing the enemy's mutual support from these airfields.

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Santa Cruz in October 1942. Nagumo told Hara [English Translation] *“Damage to our ships were minor at Santa Cruz, but we lost a number of our best pilots and flight leaders. Just between us, Hara, this battle was a tactical win, but a shattering strategic loss for Japan. As you know, I made special study of America’s war potential during my stay in the States. Considering the great superiority of our enemy’s industrial capacity, we must win every battle overwhelmingly. This last one, unfortunately, was not an overwhelming victory.”*³

For Japan, Admiral Yamamoto’s conviction that carrier warfare would be more efficient than the battle-fleet had been a colossal failure in that it produced a war of attrition, which was the type of war Japan could not afford to wage against an adversary with over ten times the industrial capacity of Japan. Yet, the question of who would control Guadalcanal remained. The Japanese Army had decided to commit the 38th Division and requested that Admiral Yamamoto give his full support in providing transportation. Yamamoto knew that all of his units were particularly tired after Santa Cruz, but he rationalized that the enemy must be equally exhausted.⁴

This would result in the Naval Battles of Guadalcanal, fought on November 13-15, 1942. The Japanese aims in these actions remained the same as in prior battles: To bring in Army reinforcements to Guadalcanal and to sweep any enemy naval units from the area. Yamamoto and his staff focused on Henderson field as the most important strategic asset to secure for victory, but this was not the most important geographical area. The most critical geographical area was the sea next the island, Iron Bottom Sound. Whoever controlled the sound could suppress the airfield and reinforce the army ashore while denying access to Guadalcanal to the enemy. This was what Mahan referred to as control of the sea.

For the U.S. Navy, the concept of seizing advanced bases in support of the Navy’s goals was a direct application of Mahan’s third principle in taking advantage of an island’s coastal vulnerability to sea power. To achieve this goal required both tactical and strategic levels of blockade which in turn required the forward deployment of the fleet. It was an exhausting goal and required a huge logistical support network in order to achieve efficiency. This type of operation was a joint operation between the Marines and the Navy. The beginning of what would become the U.S. Marine Corps amphibious doctrine was being born out of the need to capture advance bases to support the battle-fleet and its ability to maintain both tactical and strategic level blockades. Battleships were siege weapons, but these joint operations required three major elements; the Marines to seize the land, the naval combatants to secure the sea and a logistical train to supply both forces with supplies until the objective was met.

Operation Watchtower was conducted prior to the U.S. logistical arm being ready to support the Navy’s ability for forward deployment. After the victory at Midway, General Marshal wanted to immediately go on the offensive to take advantage of the U.S. victory. Such an operation at this time was premature and would have been conducted before everything that was needed for a successful offensive was ready. By August, the situation had improved to the

³ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 125.

⁴ Ibid.

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extent that an invasion in the Solomon Islands was just barely possible. The island of Guadalcanal, with its Japanese-built airfield, was selected as the target for the invasion.

With the invasion and the capture of Henderson field, the U.S. was able to dominate the air surrounding the island during the day. However, with the major defeat of the U.S. in the Battle of Savo Island on August 9, the U.S. fleet could no longer maintain a forward deployment and secure the seas surrounding Guadalcanal, thus hindering the resupply of the Marines on Guadalcanal. This lack allowed Japanese forces to reinforce their troops at night. Neither side had effective control of the sea as neither side was able to stay forward deployed. As both sides could reinforce their troops on the island, a stalemate resulted which devolved into a war of attrition.

During this time, Admiral Yamamoto largely viewed the recapture of the island as an Army issue and his naval forces were only responsible for transporting troops and supplies. However, in early October the battleships *Kongō* and *Haruna* made a successful bombardment of Henderson field which almost put the airfield out of action. It was the first time battleships had been committed to bombard the island airfield. With this limited success, Admiral Yamamoto planned to send a second force of two battleships with a large screen in early November to bombard Henderson field again. This time it would be Vice Admiral Abe's battleships *Hiei* and *Kirishima* with *Kongō* and *Haruna* serving as distant cover along with the carrier *Junyo*. However, the Japanese plan was not an attempt to blockade and cut off Guadalcanal from allied forces but instead was limited to using surface ships as quick-strike weapons and to retreat after only a 1–2 hour bombardment. This early retirement would allow the surface ships to be out of range of U.S. aircraft by daylight. This was a misapplication of how to conduct a joint operation.⁵

For joint invasion operations, elements of a battle fleet are always required to cover and support the transports that carry the invasion forces and to prevent their destruction at the hands of the defender. The attacker would normally sail the transports as a separate line and use evasion to avoid interference from a defending battle fleet, but in the age of airpower this tactic was obsolete as aircraft can bypass the covering force and attack the transports directly. Command of the sea was vital for such operations. In defense of an invasion, it is assumed that a defending battle fleet was present. If no defending fleet was present, then command of the sea automatically shifts to the attacker. In an un-commanded sea where both sides have elements of their battle fleet available to secure command, the attacker's position was extremely complex and he was at a disadvantage. This of course assumes that the defending fleet was forward deployed and located between the attacker and his objective to be invaded. In such cases the attacker must first secure command of the sea through battle before any attempt at invasion or bombardment was possible. This leads to the decisive battle between battle fleets where the victor will establish command of the seas over the vanquished. Yet, the Japanese admirals were not

⁵ When Admiral Nimitz conducted the U.S. Central Pacific offensive beginning in fall of 1943, the U.S. would invade dozens of Japanese held islands with most of them having an airfield. None of these island airfields slowed or even significantly helped the defense of these islands due to the forward deployment of the U.S. battlefleet which quickly rendered the airfields unusable. The Guadalcanal campaign for both sides is really a study of how not to conduct joint operations.

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thinking of controlling the sea in this manner but thought of bombarding or striking Henderson field only to gain control of the air during daylight hours.

This focus on airpower in my opinion reflected a bias of Admiral Yamamoto. *“The main strength of a decisive battle should be air arms, while its auxiliary should be built mostly by submarines. Carriers and destroyers will be employed as screens of carrier groups, while battleships will be put out of commission and tied up.”*⁶ Now that his carrier force airwings had been lost through attrition, Admiral Yamamoto was not using battleships to control the sea but as a strike weapon to replace his lost airwings.

Yamamoto was still on the offensive, choosing November 14-15 to reinforce the Japanese Army by using eleven transports of 77,606 tons with supplies for 30,000 men, 31,500 artillery shells and 7,000 troops. Admiral Tanaka would command the transport force with eleven destroyers as escorts. On November 9, 1942, Batdiv-11 *Hiei* (flagship) and *Kirishima* sailed from Truk, guarded by Desron-10 *Nagara* (flagship), Desdiv-16 *Amatsukaze*, *Yukikaze* and with Desdiv-61 *Teruzuki*. This escort was reinforced with Desdiv-6 *Akatsuki*, *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* along with Desdiv-9 *Asagumo* and Desdiv-2 *Murasame*, *Samidare*, *Yudachi* and *Harusame*.⁷ The fleet lingered north of Guadalcanal on November 10 and 11, awaiting final orders and a propitious moment to head south. A Japanese report prepared in late October observed:

*“It must be said that success or failure in recapturing Guadalcanal Island and the vital naval battle related to it, is the fork in the road which leads to victory for them or for us.”*⁸

According to Hara Tameichi, who was in command of the destroyer *Amatsukaze*, Vice Admiral Hiroaki Abe was not enthusiastic when he received Yamamoto's orders. He had doubts that the Americans would allow such a bombardment to succeed for a second time. He was also a friend of Rear Admiral Aritomo Goto who had recently been killed in the battle of Cape Esperance. Abe also knew that Goto believed he was a victim of friendly fire and the restricted waters off Guadalcanal were not the location for the employment of capital ships by Japanese naval doctrine.⁹ This doctrine stated that restricted waters like Iron Bottom Sound were the domain of the destroyers and light cruisers whose fast firing guns and torpedoes at close quarters could make short work of even a battleship.

Prior to the bombardment sortie the crews of *Hiei* and *Kirishima* had received orders to transfer all combustible materials including their personal items to compartments located below the waterline.¹⁰ On November 12, at 0830 in the morning with the Japanese fleet still 300 miles from Guadalcanal, a lone B-17 spotted the Japanese ships approaching. Three Zero fighters from

⁶ Genda, Minoru and Chihaya Masataka, *How the Japanese Task Force Idea Materialized, The Pearl Harbor Papers*, Goldstein M. Donald and Dillon V. Katherine, page 6.

⁷ Kimata Jiro, *Japanese Battleship History, Hiei*, page 1.

⁸ Franks, Richard B., *Guadalcanal*, Page 492.

⁹ Hara, Tameichi, *Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes*, page 126-127.

¹⁰ Kobayashi Michio. *Senkan “Kirishima” no Saigo (The Last of Battleship Kirishima)*. Saiaku no Senjô Gadarukanaru Senki 1987, pp. 350-361.

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the aircraft carrier *Junyo*, which was lurking far to the north, harassed the bombers, but the Japanese fleet had obviously been reported. Lt(jg) Michio Kobayashi on board *Kirishima* mentioned the B-17 sighting in his report. *Kirishima* opened fire at the bomber with her 127 mm and 25 mm anti-aircraft guns. According to Kobayashi, the B-17 dropped some bombs as well, which landed off starboard side of both battleships. This early warning increased Abe's apprehension about the battle and shortly afterwards he was also informed of the successful U.S. efforts to bring in reinforcements to Guadalcanal.

In the afternoon of November 12 Admiral Abe ordered a formation change at 1530 local hours. The formation was changed from a single column into a tight double half ring formation. Five destroyers spread out in an arc 8,000 meters ahead of the cruiser *Nagara*. Six other destroyers drew a half ring fanning out from *Nagara* with 2,000 meters between each ship. This formation was completed by 1600 with the fleet still 200 miles from Guadalcanal. They proceeded toward Guadalcanal at 18 knots. The *Hiei* launched a scout plane for reconnaissance of Guadalcanal, but an hour passed with no word heard from the plane. Nor did any U.S. aircraft show up and the skies grew dark as a tropical storm formed.

Admiral Abe's plan at this time was to bombard Henderson field on the night and early morning of November 12-13.¹¹ As transmitted to the ships under his command, the fleet was to set a course to the south-west at a speed of 26 knots and arrive at Savo Island at about midnight. They would then proceed into "Iron Bottom" Sound and open fire on Henderson field between 0130 and 0230.¹² Afterwards, the fleet would withdraw.¹³

Initially the fleet followed this plan but then the weather turned stormy. The storm unleashed a tremendous rain and driving downpour which made visibility difficult. Normally, a tropical storm only lasts a few minutes, but this storm lasted for hours. Abe's mood improved as he realized that the storm was moving at the same speed and same course as the Japanese ships and would hide the fleet from American eyes. His captains, however, expected an order to slow down in such weather, but Abe maintained speed to keep within the storm and he continued the complex formation during the approach. Then he received the first report from the scout plane which reported that at least a dozen enemy warships were off Henderson airfield. Abe felt that if the storm continued to cover his approach that he may not even have to deal with the U.S. forces.¹⁴

¹¹ All times for this paper are using local time, Japanese sources are typically using Tokyo time which was two hours behind.

¹² Kazuyoshi, Miyazaki, *Tragedy at Savo, The Hiei, under Concentrated Fire*, page 1.

¹³ When I look at these basic orders there was actually no plan to establish control of the sea or even entertain the possibility that U.S. forces might offer resistance. There was no scouting of the Sound other than by his one search plane.

¹⁴ In reading the various secondary sources on Admiral Abe, I get the impression that he wanted to avoid a fight. His orders were to bombard the airfield and he was hoping he can do this unopposed as *Kongō* and *Haruna* had done in early October. He was not thinking in terms of gaining control of the sea, which he must do in order to successfully bombard the airfield. He did not truly believe in this operation and his greatest fear was the U.S. would set a trap like they did at Cape Esperance. Despite this, he made no tactical plans to ensure control of the sea despite his own apprehension. This failure in my opinion was the core reason the Japanese lost the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal and emphasizes my point that the Japanese mistakenly believed that Henderson field and not Iron Bottom Sound was the most important geographical territory that the Japanese needed to control.

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As they began to approach Savo Island near midnight, Abe received a report from an Army observation post on Guadalcanal informing him that the weather was very bad. Knowing that a bombardment in such poor weather was impossible, he decided to reverse course 180° so that the storm would pass over the fleet. However, not all the ships of the formation acknowledged this order and Abe was forced to break radio silence which threatened to give their position away and take away the element of surprise. Still, the order was executed and miraculously no collisions within the force occurred. At 0013 Abe received a message from the shore observation post on Guadalcanal that the weather had cleared. By 0040 Abe ordered another 180° turn and headed back toward Lunga point and Henderson Field. By 0100 the formation sighted Savo Island as they passed south of this island. Guadalcanal could barely be seen in the darkness ahead. The two 180-degree turns had however thrown the complex formation into disarray. *Nagara* was no longer directly ahead but off to the *Hiei*'s port side by about 4,000 meters. She was followed in a loose line by *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki*, separated by about 2,000 meters each. This group was followed by another three destroyers about 6,000 meters on the port quarter of *Hiei*, *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare*. *Yudachi* and *Harusame* were also working their way to port having lost contact with the rest of the ships. *Kirishima* followed *Hiei* directly to her rear and three destroyers were off on that battleship's starboard side by about 2,000 meters and they were *Akatsuki*, *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi*. With the formation broken into basically three columns, there was no effective screen directly ahead for the two battleships. The Japanese course at this time was bearing 120° true at a speed of 18-20 knots.

On the U.S. side, Admiral Turner had recently resupplied the Marines but left a significant portion of his screening force behind to confront the Japanese forces known to be heading south. Under the command of Admiral Callaghan in the heavy cruiser *San Francisco* and Admiral Scott in the light cruiser *Atlanta*, Taskforce 67.4 was divided into three groups in one single column. Group 1 consisted of the destroyers *Cushing*, *Laffey*, *Sterett* and *O'Bannon*. Group 2 consisted of the cruisers *Atlanta*, *San Francisco*, *Portland*, *Helena* and *Juneau*. Group 3 consisted of the destroyers *Aaron Ward*, *Barton*, *Monssen* and *Fletcher*. In an effort to simplify the narrative of the coming battle, this sequence of ships will be followed in the minute-by-minute descriptions that follow.

At this stage in the war, U.S. tactical battle planning was left to the senior commanding officer. This was in hindsight a major pre-war mistake as shown in this battle as none of these officers had trained together prior to the battle. For a surface action group to truly be effective using this method would require significant prior training so that all of the officers could reasonably understand how to execute their commander's plans. Admiral Callaghan due to this lack of training had selected the most simplistic line ahead formation in an attempt to avoid confusion. He was also using tactics developed for a major daylight surface action between capital ships on an open ocean and not for a night battle in restricted waters. This too points to how the U.S. Navy had focused pre-war training on major "Jutland style" daylight naval battles instead of the type of fighting that actually materialized during the war, which were dominated by lighter forces in restricted waters at night.

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Admiral Callaghan also made the same error that Admiral Scott had made in the Battle of Cape Esperance by not placing his flag on the ship with the most advanced radar. As messages began to come in, they did more to confuse him than help him. I do not believe he ever fully understood the tactical situation. Primarily, this was due to USN secrecy being so severe that most officers had no idea of the capabilities of the new radar sets and of their limitations and advantages. Also, his lack of situational awareness was compounded by the lack of a CIC center. He was on the Admiral's Bridge under blackout conditions, basically trying to both see the enemy – a hopeless task in the darkness – and picture their dispositions in his mind based upon multiple ship reports. A finding after this battle was that all future sighting reports were to be made in true compass bearings, whereas previously they were either true or relative at the reporter's whim.

At 0124 *Helena* reported her first radar contact (made by SG Radar) bearing 312° T, distance 27,100 yards. Two minutes after this at 0126 her radar plot reported that three separate groups of targets were distinguishable, two at 27,000 yards and one at 32,000 yards.¹⁵

Admiral Callaghan continued to receive reports from his radar equipped ships. At 0132 he ordered a course change to 000° north. At about 0135 the range to the closest target group was 15,000 yards, bearing 324° T and tracking gave enemy course as 120°, speed 20 knots. At 0139 *Helena* reported four targets on port bow. *Cushing* in the lead led the column around to the new course. Shortly after steadying on this new course, *Cushing* sighted three ships crossing her bow from port to starboard and these ships were reported to Adm. Callaghan by voice radio.¹⁶ These three ships were *Yudachi*, *Harusame* and *Nagara*. The *San Francisco* replied to *Cushing* over the radio "What is range?"¹⁷

On *Yudachi* Commander Kiyoshi Kikkawa was searching for the other three ships with which they had originally formed the vanguard arc, never guessing that they were to his rear instead of his van. *Yudachi* with *Harusame* had set a course of 090° east when an enemy destroyer emerged from the darkness to the south. Commander Kikkawa radioed the discovery to *Hiei*, but he could not give a position because he did not know where he was relative to his own forces.¹⁸

On board *Hiei* at 0125 Abe was about 12 miles from Henderson Field, forty minutes behind schedule, His crew spotted the signal light at Tassafaronga and course was changed to 140° at a speed of 18 knots. Abe ordered the battleships to load Type 3 Incendiary ammunition for the bombardment. At 0142 he received the message from *Yudachi*, "Enemy sighted." "What is the range and bearing and where exactly is *Yudachi*?" Abe exclaimed. At 0143 *Hiei*'s own lookouts reported four black shapes five degrees to starboard, eight thousand meters unsure, visibility poor. Abe asked again to check range. *Yudachi* was somewhere out there and he did not want to fire on

¹⁵ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹⁶ U.S.S. *Cushing*, DD-376, Serial A16-3, November 16, 1942, Report of engagement off Savo Island on November 13, 1942 and destruction of the U.S.S. *Cushing*, E.H. Parker.

¹⁷ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

¹⁸ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 126-127.

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a friendly ship. His chief of staff Commander Masakane Suzuki shouted at the lookout to confirm the range. His reply was, “*It may be 9,000 meters, sir.*” Abe fell back into his chair his voice faltering as he instructed his gunners to replace the incendiary shells with armor piercing, but he knew it was too late.¹⁹

The Japanese did not open fire at this time. Hara Tameichi paints a picture in his book that the crews of the battleships were attempting to change ammunition, but this makes no sense to me.²⁰ When you load a 14-inch projectile into a gun and the driving bands engage the rifling of the barrel, it is not an easy process to pull that projectile back out. The fastest way to unload the gun is to fire it. The second reason this makes no sense to me was the secondary guns are loaded with armor piercing ammunition and each battleship has the firepower of a light cruiser if they should choose to use this battery. Lt. Ikeda on *Kirishima* even makes note of this. Lt. Ikeda wrote, “*Kirishima’s main battery was loaded with Type 3 ammunition. Incendiary rounds intended to place the airfield in flames. He also understood there was no time to switch ammunition to armor piercing so she would be forced to unload through the muzzle. The Type 3 shells looked beautiful, like firing a firework, but did no real harm to the enemy ships. Only armor piercing ammunition could defeat this enemy and his secondary battery was armed with this type of ammunition.*”²¹

On the *Kongō* class battleships, the projectiles were brought to the hoists by a rail system. Shells had to be lined up in front of the hoists prior to firing, usually six to ten shells per gun, so that the maximum rate of fire could be maintained. By utilizing continuous fire, they estimated a change could be made to armor piercing shells within three to five minutes. So, if Abe wanted to change the ammunition, he should open fire immediately and without delay, but this did not happen.

¹⁹ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 130.

²⁰ Kazuyoshi, Miyazaki also reported valuable time was wasted as the Captain and Artillery Chief discussed whether the Type 3 projectiles could be changed to armor piercing. At the time they were within range to fire without illumination. The Type 3 projectiles were lined up ahead of the armor piercing ones, making any quick change impossible, so it was decided to fire the Type 3 projectiles already in line. Kazuyoshi, Miyazaki, Tragedy at Savo, The *Hiei*, under Concentrated Fire, page 3. In the *Kongō* class all of the projectiles are brought to the hoists by a chain / rail system. The time needed to switch projectile types all depends on how many shells are lined up in advance. *Kirishima* in this battle changed ammo in 4-5 minutes if she fires at maximum rate of 2 rounds per minute. During the entire battle, *Kirishima* fired 27 Type 1 AP, 22 Type 3 incendiary and 8 Type 0 HE. She actually fires more AP than any other shell type during this battle. So, in *Kirishima’s* case, she had about 30 shells lined up but this is divided by 8 guns so she can make the switch away from AP after 4 salvos or about 2-3 minutes. *Hiei* on the other hand, continued to fire Type 3 and Type 0 for most of the surface battle. This tells me she had more Type 3 lined up in advance than did *Kirishima* and it also points out that bombardment mission was their top priority when control of the sea should have been their top priority. This was a huge failure of the Japanese in both this battle and the one two nights later. Even if no U.S. ships had been encountered, it would have made very little difference if Henderson field had been hit with AP ammo for the first few salvos, as it was not going anywhere. However, in a surface battle, life or death can be determined in minutes. Strategically, control of the sea is paramount and this is more important than bombarding Henderson field. If you do not have control of the sea, then you cannot bombard the island. This error leads to a Japanese defeat in both surface actions.

²¹ Shikikan-tachi no Taiheiyō Sensō [Pacific War as Described by the Senior Officers]. Kōjinsha NF Bunko, 2004, page 158.

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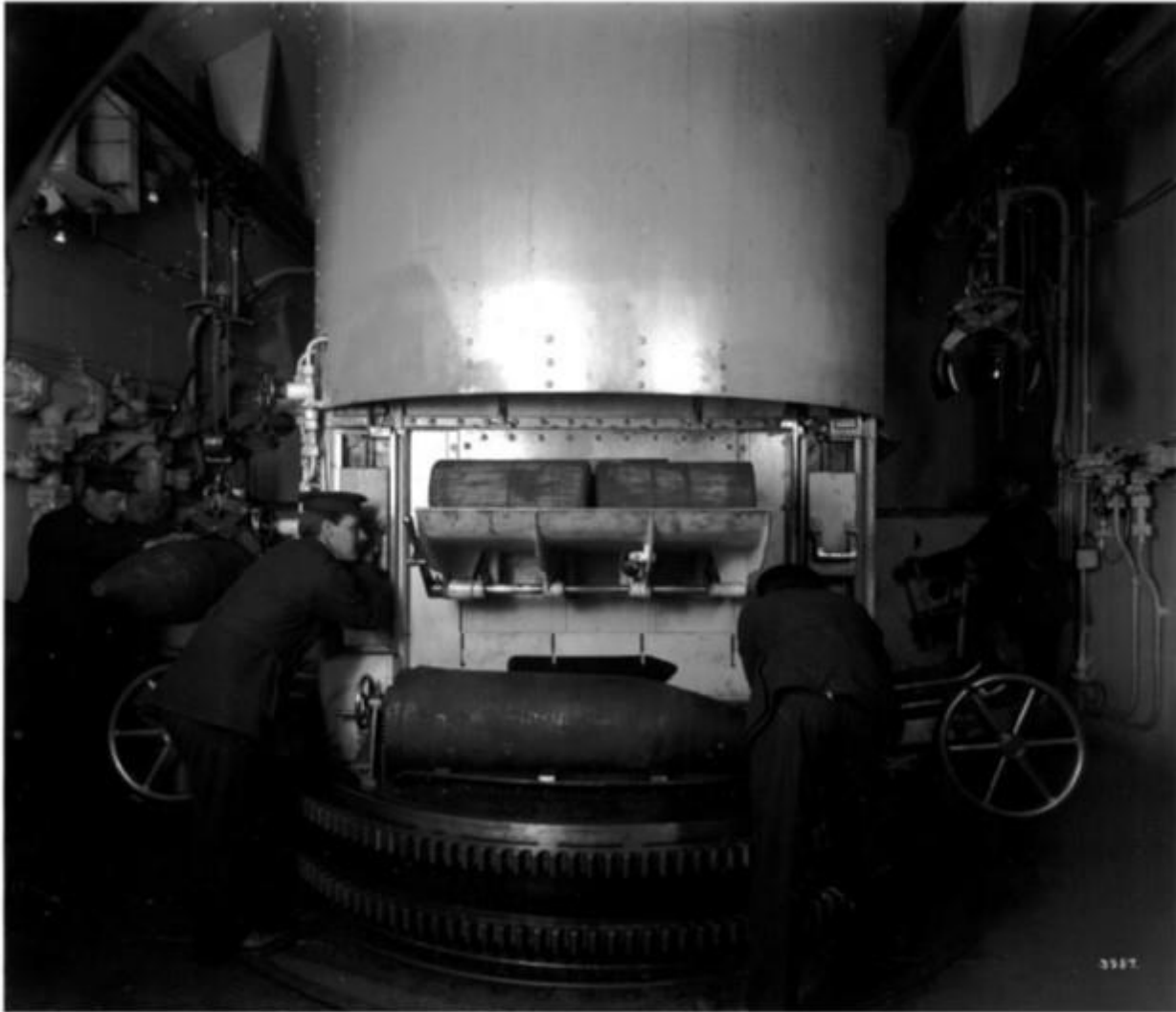


Figure 1 - Shell and powder hoists on Kongō
Photograph courtesy of The Dock Museum, North Road, Barro-In-Furness, Cumbria, U.K.

The above photo, taken of *Hiei*'s sister *Kongō* when she was being built in Great Britain and before delivery to Japan, shows how the powder and shells were loaded onto the hoists. Projectiles were transported by a rail system to the hoists which also shows how difficult it was for her crew to quickly change ammunition.

On board *Akatsuki*, peering through the 15 cm torpedo-aiming telescope on the bridge, Lt. Michiharu Shinya could make out the black silhouettes of several enemy warships on the starboard bow. As he watched, one of them turned towards his ship. It looked like one of the American new single-stack destroyers. “*Is it enemy or is it ours?*” asked Commander Osamu Takasuka. “*It’s an enemy one. No mistake, sir,*” Shinya quickly replied.²² This conversation implied again that they were initially attempting to identify the ships ahead of them that are mere shadows in the darkness. Not knowing exactly where your own forces are in this darkness would produce a possible

²² The Lost Ships of Guadalcanal by Robert Ballard pages 130-131.

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hesitation to open fire. When *Hiei* and *Akatsuki* illuminated the American line at 0148 it was partly to confirm their suspicions they were facing enemy warships, but the delay also allowed the U.S. and Japanese fleets to close from roughly 9,000 yards to 2,300 yards and in some cases even less depending on the exact location of the ships involved. Here, believing Admiral Goto had been killed by friendly fire and his natural instinct to be cautious along with the added confusion of not knowing exactly where friendly units were located due to the storm, may have been another reason which resulted in Abe's hesitation.

Admiral Callaghan also did not open fire and I also believe he had lost tactical awareness and was being confused by the many reports of the various Japanese ships as his force was in effect being surrounded. He was attempting to cross the "T" of the enemy formation when his own "T" was capped. TBS *San Francisco* from *Helena*. "Range 2,246." TBS *San Francisco* from *Cushing*. "Looks like dead ahead on port bow." TBS Van Unit from *San Francisco*. "What is their course?" TBS to *San Francisco* from *Cushing*. "There is a ship crossing bow from port to starboard, range 4,000 yards, maximum." TBS to *Cushing* from *San Francisco*. "What do you make of it now?" TBS *San Francisco* from *Helena*. "We have a total of about ten targets." TBS "Fletcher have you come around yet?" TBS "I have come 25 to left." TBS "Can you let them have a couple of fish?" "Wilco" "Do so." TBS *San Francisco* from *Helena*. "Appear to be in cruising disposition." TBS to *Cushing* from *San Francisco*. "What is bearing now?"²³

O'Bannon at 0143 changed course back to 310° true. *Cushing* as the leading destroyer was told at 0143.5 to fire torpedoes. By 0144 *O'Bannon's* torpedo battery and gun battery were ordered to stand by for action starboard. *O'Bannon* at 0145 reported three to five ships were visible on starboard beam, distance about 4000 yards. Three units were heading on an opposite and parallel course at slow speed.²⁴ At 0146 *Atlanta* began a hard left turn. Again, the TBS came life: TBS "Atlanta what are you doing?" TBS from *Atlanta*. "We----- destroyer." TBS Van Unit from *San Francisco*. "Come back to course as soon as you can. You are throwing whole column into disorder."²⁵ TBS Van Unit from *San Francisco*. "What do you have on starboard hand now?" TBS Van Unit from *San Francisco*. "Are you back?" TBS *San Francisco* from *Juneau*. "We have several ships on starboard." TBS "All hands hold your course."²⁶

Radar contacts reported more enemy ships, increasing from 3 to 10, then to 12. Bearing of these additional contacts were not received by *Cushing*. About this time, three vessels identified as enemy destroyers crossed ahead of the *Cushing* from port to starboard on a course

²³ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

²⁴ U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

²⁵ Admiral Callaghan appeared to not understand when he gave his order for the van destroyers to fire torpedoes at 0143.5 that they would swing to the left to bring these batteries to bear. *Atlanta* was simply following the van destroyers, but this threw Admiral Callaghan into confusion as he did not order any left turn and wanted the column to stay heading on 000° north. This tells me he was not fully aware of how the Japanese ships are closing on his formation and while he technically was capping the T of the central and southern Japanese columns his own T was in the process of being capped by the most northern Japanese column. This confusion resulted in another delay allowing both fleets to close even further.

²⁶ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

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estimated to be about 20-30° true, distance 3,000 yards.²⁷ These were reported to Commander Task Group 67.4 by voice with word that *Cushing* was changing course to the left. This change to left was made to bring torpedoes to bear, but torpedoes were not fired because the enemy destroyers were turning away and immediately thereafter *Cushing* was ordered by Adm. Cunningham to return course to 000° true. Simultaneously with this order a report was received that two large ships were on the port bow²⁸ (*Cushing* was then on 330° true, beginning the course change to the north). These two heavy ships were not sighted by *Cushing* at this time, but it was assumed that this was an accurate report as the initial radar contacts had placed them on that side and on a course (105° true) that would have kept them on that side. Shortly after this time *Cushing* was on course 000 true.²⁹

²⁷ This was *Yudachi*, *Harusame* and *Nagara*.

²⁸ These two large ships are *Hiei* and *Kirishima*.

²⁹ U.S.S. *Cushing*, DD-376, Serial A16-3, November 16, 1942, Report of engagement off Savo Island on November 13, 1942 and destruction of the U.S.S. *Cushing*, E.H. Parker.

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illuminated the *Atlanta*.³² *Akatsuki* was hit immediately from *Laffey*, *Atlanta* and *Helena*. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* prepared themselves to launch torpedoes and likely engaged *Helena* with guns, scoring a hit on her searchlight platform at 0148.

Nagara likely also illuminated the U.S. column. U.S. reports identified three ships using their search lights initially and up to five Japanese ships within the first few minutes. Upon this action *Nagara* turned to a course to the east bearing 090°. I do not have reliable data if she actually opened fire at this time.

Amatsukaze who was following *Yukikaze* by 2,000 meters noted that *Hiei*'s search lights illuminated *Atlanta* and that *Atlanta* responded instantly with a hastily aimed salvo that fell 2,000 meters short of *Hiei*.³³ *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* did not open fire at 0148. *Yukikaze*'s group was still on a course of 120° but will follow *Nagara* initially to the east.

Asagumo, *Murasame* and *Samidare* are approaching on a course of 120° but are too far back and do not open fire at this time.

Yudachi and *Harusame* were heading east on a course of 090° when the leading U.S. ships take *Harusame* under fire. Both Japanese destroyers turn to the north 000°. Neither destroyer opened fire at this time.

U.S. Ships

Cushing opened fire to starboard at what was believed to have been a destroyer, range 2,000 yards. This ship was very heavily hit by gunfire from *Cushing* and was not observed to return fire. This destroyer was likely *Harusame* in the rear of *Yudachi*, heading away to the east but immediately turned to the north once they were fired upon.³⁴ *Cushing* assumes a course of 000° true and increases speed to 25 knots.

The *Laffey* had gun and torpedo solutions on targets to starboard but shifted to port, according to orders from *San Francisco*. Lt. Ratcliff immediately picked up *Akatsuki*, identified her as a light cruiser and opened fire. One hundred rounds were fired at ranges from 1,800 to 1,000 yards. The targets search lights went out, came back on and then went out for good.³⁵

The *Sterett* received the order to commence fire, odd numbered ships to starboard, even to port. She had a complete fire control solution on a heavy unit on port bow (likely *Hiei*) but immediately ordered action starboard in order to avoid any confusion or undue concentration of targets. Her course was then 000 true, speed 18 knots. She had sight contact of three ships on our starboard bow and one to port. One of the ships to starboard appeared to be the size of a

³² The Lost Ships of Guadalcanal by Robert Ballard pages 130-131.

³³ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 132.

³⁴ I currently do not have any data on *Harusame* and if she received damage. However, I do feel it is likely she was hit as she withdraws from this battle rather rapidly only to return to the action very late in the engagement.

³⁵ Naval Battle of Guadalcanal by James Grace page 59.

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cruiser.³⁶ This was likely *Nagara* which was crossing the U.S. formation's T at this time and was directly ahead of *Sterett*. One enemy ship to port played a searchlight on the US formation and this was likely *Hiei*. The *Sterett* noted that some ships commenced fire immediately, but the *Sterett* did not open fire at 0148 due to shifting her target from port to starboard.

O'Bannon received the order over TBS from O.T.C., "*Odd ships fire to starboard, even ships to port*". At this time the column was jamming up due to the turn to 310° true. *O'Bannon* was making many rudder and engine changes to avoid collision with *Sterett*. The gun battery was given "*Action Port*". The enemy unit which had been visible on the starboard bow could not now be seen and the torpedo battery was ordered to stand by for action port. As a result, *O'Bannon* did not open fire at 0148.³⁷

Atlanta maneuvered to avoid the U.S. van destroyers and changes course to port when Japanese searchlights blaze out of the blackness. The port wing of her bridge was brilliantly lit as she begins turning to the north in compliance with Admiral Callaghan's latest course change. Almost immediately Leighton Spadone (BM1c) heard an order to take cover. Captain Jenkins called out "*Counter-illumination!*" His gunnery officer, Lieutenant Commander Nickelson, responded, "*Counter-illumination hell, Fire!*" and *Atlanta*'s main battery roared out. Her radar had been tracking the Japanese to the north. Then the bridge crew made visual contact with a target only three thousand yards away, the search lights appeared and the shooting started. *Atlanta* opened fire on the *Hiei* to port using sixteen hundred yards as her opening range.³⁸ After the initial salvo, the *Atlanta*'s forward mounts under Lt. G.L. McEntee shifted to the lead ship of a destroyer division seen crossing through the search light beams, port to starboard. Identified as an *Asashio* class destroyer, this target was hit by half of the forty shells fired at her. The darkness was lit by a blossoming orange-red glow as the target broke into flames, settled and sank. This was likely *Akatsuki*, but she did not sink at this time.³⁹ The after mounts under Lt. jg Edward D Corboy's control continued firing at *Hiei*. The opening salvo was short: splashes could be seen rising in line with the target. Accordingly, Corboy spotted out another four hundred yards and his next salvos began to hit the battleship. The cruiser's 1.1-inch antiaircraft battery also opened fire but appeared to be overshooting. The Japanese search lights were finally extinguished but not before they had accomplished their purpose. Japanese gunners had an excellent fix on the *Atlanta*'s position and if they needed any more help, there was the glow from her rapidly firing guns.⁴⁰

Admiral Callaghan on *San Francisco* gave the following order, now realizing the predicament he was in: "*Odd ships fire to starboard, even ships to port*". *San Francisco*

³⁶ U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

³⁷ U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

³⁸ Naval Battle of Guadalcanal by James Grace pages 58-59.

³⁹ In James Grace's book he wrote she fired on the last ship of the division, not the lead, which would be *Ikazuchi* not *Akatsuki* but during this time period it was *Akatsuki* that was taking multiple hits and it was *Akatsuki* that had illuminated *Atlanta*. I believe she fired on the lead ship because it was *Akatsuki* that was enveloped in flames at this time. At 0148 three ships will have engaged *Akatsuki*, they are *Laffey*, *Atlanta* and *Helena* and all claim seeing hits scored. *Akatsuki* reported being hit immediately and was so badly damaged that she never fired a shot in return.

⁴⁰ Naval Battle of Guadalcanal by James Grace pages 58-59.

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commenced firing on an enemy cruiser, then on the starboard beam and a member of the Japanese right group, with a range of 3,700 yards. Fire was maintained on this target which was likely *Nagara* until orders were received to cease fire.⁴¹

Just as *Portland* came up to the turn and put over her rudder, an enemy vessel on the port bow illuminated the leading destroyers. Several other enemy ships in this group illuminated immediately thereafter and ships at the head of our column counter illuminated. Fire was opened by both forces practically simultaneously. At the same time, another enemy ship further to the right also turned-on searchlights and this was likely *Nagara*. *Portland* did not open fire at this time.⁴²

Helena was illuminated by a searchlight bearing about 285° relative (this range and bearing matches *Akatsuki*) and exactly in line with the train of Director I. She commenced firing immediately with the opening range 4,300 yards. She fired on furthest target to left. Return fire hit her searchlight platform (the clock in the D/F shack stopped at 0148). Rapid continuous fire was maintained for about two minutes using a 200-yard rocking ladder. At almost the same time that she opened fire she also started a turn to the left following in column the ships ahead which had changed course to about 270° T. The searchlight on the target (which appeared too high and large to be on a destroyer)⁴³ was immediately turned off or shot away. Spot I reported that the target was visible to him, that tracers appeared to be perfect in deflection and that practically all of her shots appeared to hit and that before cease fire the target was afire forward and amidships and was sinking.⁴⁴

Juneau reported that the enemy was coming from the north. They were in a “V” shaped formation and the “V” was open at the narrow end; while the U.S. forces were in line of bearing 180°, that is, with each ship directly astern of the other. Her first contact was at 7,400 yards. *Juneau's* contact fell to 1,100 yards and her observers could see the silhouettes of the Japanese ships with a spotting glass.⁴⁵ The rear destroyers *Aaron Ward*, *Barton*, *Monssen* and *Fletcher* did not open fire at this time.

⁴¹ U.S.S. *San Francisco*, CA-38, War Damage Report No. 26 BuShips, 20 March, 1942, Gunfire Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

⁴² Within the U.S. Action reports they witnessed as many as five Japanese ships turning on their searchlights. I believe *Hiei*, *Akatsuki* and *Nagara* definitely illuminated the U.S. line and *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* may have been the other ships to briefly use their searchlights. U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W. Shanklin.

⁴³ This observation was likely *Helena* observing *Hiei's* use of her search lights, but her target was definitely *Akatsuki*.

⁴⁴ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

⁴⁵ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Battle of Guadalcanal, narrative by L.E. Zook, Signalman First Class U.S.N. recorded May 27, 1943.

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Japanese Ships

Approximately at 0149, *Hiei*, after she turned to port, brought her full main battery broadside to bear on *Atlanta*. She opened fire with eight 14-inch guns at point blank range loaded with Type 3 ammunition. All of the 14-inch shells from this salvo struck *Atlanta*. In the meantime, *Hiei*'s searchlights illuminated *Cushing* and *Hiei*'s secondary battery engaged the leading U.S. destroyer. *Hiei*'s pagoda superstructure also began taking hits from the American ships.

Kirishima had loaded Type 3s prior to battle. She was steaming 1,500 meters abaft the *Hiei* when the firing started. *Kirishima* fired at a port target, just after *Hiei* had illuminated her

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target and fired her first salvo.⁴⁶ Both battleships are targeting *Atlanta*.⁴⁷ Lt. Ikeada reported, “*The main guns started shooting. It's terribly close. It's not 6 kilometers. It's four cruisers. This is ok*”, he thought. He fired at the enemy fleet with the full power of his secondary armament.⁴⁸

Akatsuki received hits immediately from three ships, *Laffey*, *Atlanta* and *Helena*. On *Akatsuki*'s bridge there was an explosion and a blinding flash of light as the whole ship seemed to shake beneath Lt. Shinya's feet. Then the concussion blast hit and he was thrown onto the deck. “*So now it is my turn to die*” he thought. He felt distant and detached from the present. He then snapped back into awareness. *Akatsuki* had possibly lost helm control, continued to move straight into the U.S. line. According to Lt. Shinya, she never fired a shot or any torpedoes. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* are reported to fire six torpedoes each at *Atlanta* at this time. They may be engaging *Helena* with guns and may also have illuminated the U.S. column with their own searchlights.

Yudachi was in the process of turning 270° and will end up heading back south. Commander Kiyoshi Kikkawa explained, “*We ran for a few minutes and I saw gunfire. I was covered with confusion and shame. I ordered Yudachi about to head back toward the American column.*”⁴⁹ *Harusame* however went on to join *Nagara* and lost *Yudachi* in the darkness. *Harusame* set a course of 000° north separating from *Yudachi* who was now heading 180° south.

Yukikaze, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* will initially follow *Nagara*. They do not open fire with guns so as to not give away their position, with the goal of conducting a torpedo attack first. *Nagara* received one 5-inch shell hit which was likely from *Sterett* as she moved to the east. *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* headed southeast on a course of 120° but have not entered the battle.

U.S. Ships

Cushing was still engaging *Harusame* to her starboard at this time. It is very likely *Cushing* damaged *Harusame*, but I was not able to find a report from *Harusame* to confirm. This damage or fires may have distracted her crew and help explain why she separated from *Yudachi*.

⁴⁶ Kobayashi Michio. Senkan “*Kirishima*” no Saigo (The Last of Battleship *Kirishima*). Saiaku no Senjō Gadarukanaru Senki 1987, pp. 350-361.

⁴⁷ In my *Kirishima* article, I believed *Kirishima* hit *San Francisco* largely because in *San Francisco*'s report she states that the second battleship had hit her. I now feel that this assumption was an error and it was actually *Hiei* that hit *San Francisco*. From *Kirishima*'s action report; reel JT-1, she had sighted the U.S. fleet at an estimated range of about 6,000 meters. At this time *Kirishima* was facing *Atlanta* such that only her bow guns can bear, with *Atlanta* slightly to port. *Kirishima* reported that *Hiei* fired employing searchlight illumination and immediately afterwards *Kirishima* opened fire, scoring four direct hits with her main battery on one large enemy cruiser, sinking her. From this, I now believe that *Kirishima* actually hit *Atlanta* and that this was the cruiser she refers to in her action report.

⁴⁸ Shikikan-tachi no Taiheiyō Sensō [Pacific War as Described by the Senior Officers]. Kōjinsha NF Bunko, 2004, page 157.

⁴⁹ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 132.

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Laffey continued to engage *Akatsuki*. Her 5-inch gunfire blinds and renders deaf TM1 Frederick Sanderson in the torpedo director. *Laffey* also maintained three vertical white battle recognition lights on during the entire exchange with *Akatsuki*. With this success, Ratcliff turned back to starboard looking for his original targets, three light cruisers, when someone fired back at the *Laffey*. This was a near miss, but the fragments caused a few minor casualties. The most likely source of this gunfire was from the secondary batteries of either *Hiei* or *Kirishima*.

Sterett opened fire on largest vessel in the starboard group, range 4,000 yards, opening. This target was sharp on her bow and her silhouette was too vague for torpedo attack, The order for leading destroyer to resume column prevented *Sterett* from making a coordinated torpedo attack at this time. Shortly after *Sterett* opened fire to starboard, a large enemy ship on port side began firing at the cruisers and opened a searchlight. This made it more difficult, to see her target. Fire control radar was of great assistance at this time. Thirteen salvos were fired at this target. Fire broke out on target illuminating forecastle of a cruiser. Two turrets could be definitely seen: forward of several observers insist they saw three turrets forward. Only two stacks were sighted but there could have been three. Best estimate was that this was of the *Natori* class. This was likely *Nagara* which was hit by a single 5-inch shell.

O'Bannon reported that an enemy vessel on the port bow opened searchlights on *Cushing*. *O'Bannon* commenced firing, shooting at the searchlight on port bow. She reports that other U.S. ships commenced firing immediately thereafter. Her reports states that this searchlight was shot away by her fire and that several blazes were seen on the enemy vessel. Her tracers were definitely seen hitting the forward superstructure. The target's gunfire became sporadic. Although her reports states that this target was a heavy cruiser, it was almost certainly *Hiei*, as no Japanese heavy cruiser was present at this battle.⁵⁰

A 14-inch Type-3 shell exploded on the bridge of *Atlanta*, killing Admiral Scott, all but one of his staff and Lt. Arthur G W Thomas of the Royal Australian Navy. Captain Jenkins had just left the admiral when a shell exploded against the torpedo director. The blast killed the torpedo officer, Lieut.(jg) Henry P Jenks and slammed Jenkins against a watertight door. He quickly determined that the admiral was dead and resumed fighting against the Japanese ship. Hits continued to pour in on the bridge area and bodies were strewn everywhere. When Rob Roy Latta (CQM) was cut down at the wheel, steering control was shifted aft. Contact was lost with the engine rooms. Fatally wounded navigator Lt. Cdr. J S Smith jr. urged Jenkins to move to battle II, the secondary conning station. Smith himself remained on the bridge on the chance that control would be restored there. The wounded Lt. Moredock, sole survivor of Admiral Scotts' staff, tried to climb over the bridge railing but simply fell. A pile of corpses cushioned his fall. Because the bombardment was more incendiary and less explosive than the *Atlanta* crew would have expected from 14-inch ammunition, the men never realized that a battleship was hitting them. Twelve hits by 14-inch Type 3 ammunition turned her superstructure into a roaring inferno as the shells' pyrotechnics began burning.⁵¹ *Atlanta* slowed to avoid colliding with *Sterett* and *O'Bannon* but was currently headed 000° north.

⁵⁰ U.S.S. O'BANNON DD450/A16, 17 November 1942, Action Report, (C.O. D.J. MacDonald).

⁵¹ Naval Battle of Guadalcanal by James Grace pages 69.

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San Francisco was still engaging *Nagara* as she moved east and *San Francisco* separated from *Atlanta* by turning west. *Portland* remained silent and does not open fire and she was heading west attempting to keep station with *San Francisco* she also turns to port. *Helena* changed course to port and changed speed to flank. *Helena* maintained fire on *Akatsuki*.⁵²

Juneau maintained a heading of 000° north and does not follow *Helena* to the west and she has yet to open fire. *Aaron Ward* commenced firing on enemy vessel believed to be a battleship, bearing 310 relative, distant 7,000 yards. Observed many small fires and explosions, but it was not certain whether they were started by this vessel.⁵³ Almost certainly she opened fire on *Hiei*, *Aaron Ward* maintained a heading of 000° following *Juneau*.

The *Barton* reported without further notification and at approximately 0145 (Placing here because *Barton* was using an approximate time of 0145 and ships opened fire around 0148-0149) the leading ships of our column were observed to commence firing to port. Several batteries of searchlights on apparently large enemy ships were trained on our unit from that side.⁵⁴ The *Barton* has not yet opened fire. She followed *Aaron Ward* north.

The *Monssen* reported it appeared that head of own column was engaged to port. A few minutes previously a TBS report had been received that some enemy units had been observed crossing the head of the column from port to starboard. All torpedoes had been primed and tubes were ordered trained out to starboard and the Torpedo Officer was ordered to fire on any good enemy target to starboard giving preference to capital ships if any should be sighted.⁵⁵ *Monssen* does not open fire at this time. She was looking for targets to starboard.

The *Fletcher* reported an enemy ship was on the port bow, illuminated our cruisers by searchlight. Opening range on this ship was about 5,500 yards. *Fletcher*'s target was under fire from other vessels, so fire was shifted to a cruiser astern of her. This vessel had three stacks and two high masts and was identified as possibly of the *Tenryu* or *Natori* class. She burst into flames in many places. One Japanese destroyer in her vicinity blew up and one or two were on fire.⁵⁶ The initial destroyer she saw at 5,500 yards was *Akatsuki*. The cruiser she described may have been *Nagara* passing from port to starboard almost directly ahead of the U.S. column. *Nagara* was hit by *Sterett* and was also under fire from *San Francisco*, but it was *Hiei*'s bridge that was taking hits as well and *Fletcher* may also be describing hits on *Hiei*. I believe *Fletcher* engaged *Hiei* with her bow guns at this time.⁵⁷ *Fletcher* herself continued north on course 000°.

⁵² U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

⁵³ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

⁵⁴ U.S.S. *Barton* DD599, Serial 00554 A16-3/L11, November 26, 1942. Report of Action of November 12-13, 1942. Lieut. (jg) Harlowe M. White.

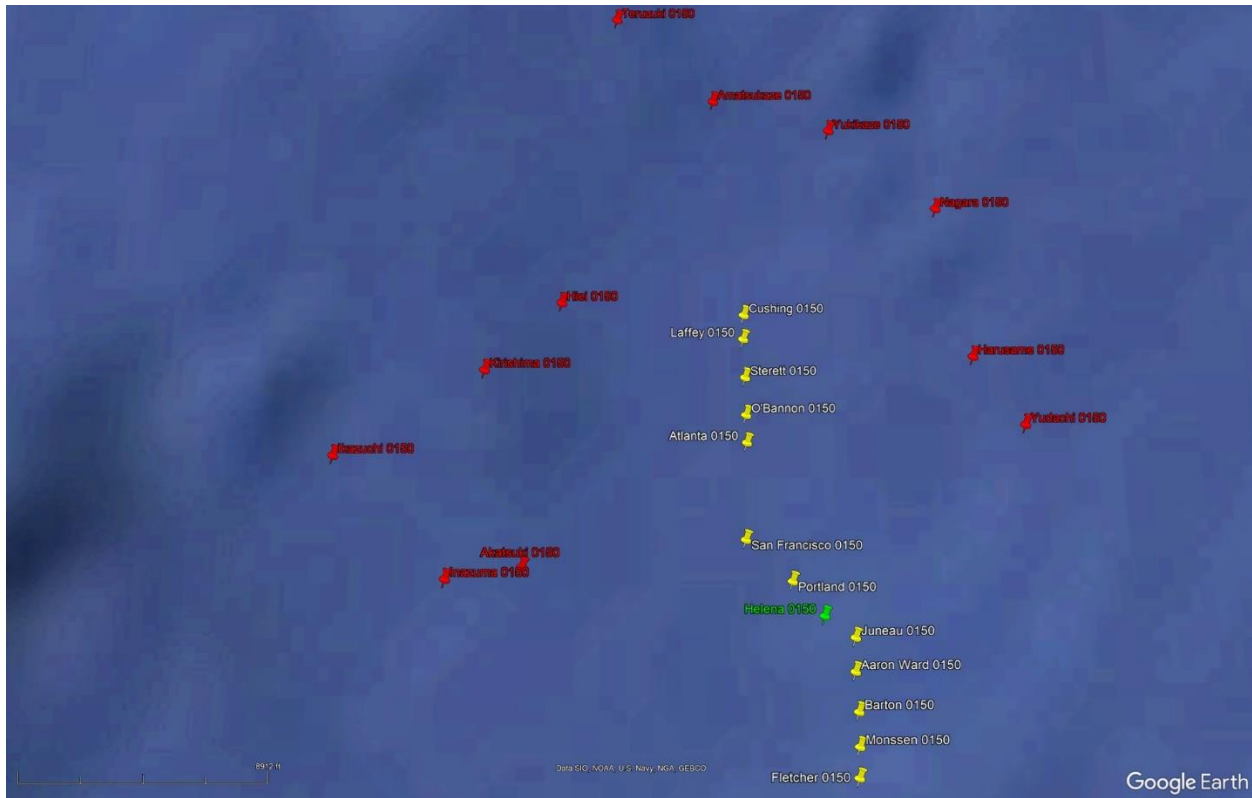
⁵⁵ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

⁵⁶ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, (C.O. W.M. Cole)

⁵⁷ *Fletcher* will check fire on this target at 0153 and shift fire to a cruiser astern of this target at this time and this description I believe indicates her initial target was *Hiei* and then she shifted to *Kirishima*.

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Map 4

Japanese Ships

On board the *Hiei* her pagoda superstructure was taking hits including the lookout's command post: Two shell hits killed the chief of the lookout department and five others. Both of these shells came from starboard. The secondary gun command post took two shell hits, one from both sides, killing the commander of the secondary guns. The electrical wiring room (Distribution of Electricity Room) in the "Pagoda" mast took four hits, all from starboard, causing fires to break out. Communications command post took three shells from starboard which exploded in the code room, also there was an explosion in No. 1 telephone room. Navigation branch, main storeroom hit by one shell from the starboard side which caused an outbreak of fire.⁵⁸ *Hiei* continued to engage *Cushing* with her secondary battery, however, her main battery gunfire slackened.

Kirishima's secondary battery likely engaged *Cushing* as well. Lt. Ikeda "*The distance was less than two kilometers. When I aimed at the head of the enemy and shot it, I hit it from the*

⁵⁸ Kimata Jiro, Japanese Battleship History, *Hiei*, page 4-6.

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*beginning. There were a number of strange flashes of hits mixed with white and red and even green. The searchlight went out in less than thirty seconds. The area returned to darkness.”*⁵⁹

Nagara continued east. *Akatsuki* continued to head directly for the U.S. line, silent and now burning, and she was still under heavy bombardment. *Inazuma* breaks away from *Akatsuki* with *Ikazuchi* following. *Ikazuchi* was likely hit by *Portland*. *Yudachi* now sets a southern course and was preparing to launch torpedoes at the U.S. line. *Harusame* headed north away from battle. *Yukikaze's* group of *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* headed east following *Nagara*. *Asagumo's* group of *Murasame* and *Samidare* continued southeast.

U.S. Ships

Cushing checked fire on *Harusame* and turns to port, putting her on a collision course with *Hiei*. She believed she had significantly damaged *Harusame* who never returned fire. At this moment a large ship was illuminated on her port side and taken under fire by the ships astern of the *Cushing*, it was seen to be a battleship of either the *Fuso* or *Kongō* class. When first sighted target angle on the battleship was about 020°, range inside of 1,000 yards. She observed that the battleship (this was *Hiei*) was being repeatedly hit by the U.S. ships and many shells were seen striking the towering foremast structure and superstructure. She opened fire on this battleship with her 20 mm machine guns and one torpedo was fired at it from number 2 mount. The crew of number two mount were then wounded so that no further torpedoes were fired. The torpedo was not observed to hit. The *Cushing* was likely hit at this time by either *Hiei's* or *Kirishima's* secondary battery. About two minutes after opening fire, the *Cushing* received one or two shell hits amidships resulting in gradual loss of power. The helmsman was assisted by shaded light to maintain course by magnetic compass and continued on a generally northward course as long as he had steering control.⁶⁰ For the other van destroyers, *Laffey* was still engaging *Akatsuki*, *Sterett* was engaging *Nagara* and *O'Bannon* was engaging *Hiei*.

On board *Atlanta* above the bridge, fire raged around the forward director. Lt McEntee and crew had to abandon the station by jumping overboard some forty feet to the water. Later on, they reboarded the ship. The main battery had been divided at the beginning of the battle so that the forward battery was controlled by the forward director and the after battery was under the after director. With the forward director out of commission, plot ordered collective fire under director two, but all the forward mounts had been hit or otherwise rendered useless by this time.⁶¹ The forward mounts and bow took 9 x 6-inch shell hits from the battleships.

San Francisco was engaging *Nagara* to starboard and continued on a westerly course. On the *Portland*, "Action Starboard" was given by the Commanding Officer, followed by orders to open fire on enemy vessels of the left group (Port). During the turn, the main battery was kept

⁵⁹ Shikikan-tachi no Taiheiyō Sensō [Pacific War as Described by the Senior Officers]. Kōjinsha NF Bunko, 2004, page 158.

⁶⁰ U.S.S. *Cushing*, DD-376, Serial A16-3, November 16, 1942, Report of engagement off Savo Island on November 13, 1942 and destruction of the U.S.S. *Cushing*, E.H. Parker.

⁶¹ Naval Battle of Guadalcanal by James Grace page 70.

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on the designated bearing by radar contact and the plotting room obtained an approximate solution on the target. As soon as the *Portland* swung sufficiently left to unmask the starboard A.A. battery, illumination by star shells was begun. By this time an enemy vessel on the designated bearing, which had just turned on her searchlights, was picked up optically by main battery director one. The plotting room solution was verified by Spot One and fire was opened at range 6,200 yards by Turrets I and II, Turret III not yet having had opportunity to match up. When the first salvo landed at least four bursts of flame leapt from the enemy vessel, which by this time was recognized as a destroyer.⁶² I think *Portland* fired two salvos (second salvo at 0151) to port and her target was *Ikazuchi* which was damaged in the battle by 8-inch gunfire. Firing at the rear destroyer matches the range as *Akatsuki* was closer than 6,200 yards. This also matches the target angle, so I think *Ikazuchi* is the best estimate for *Portland*'s first two salvos and they were directed to port not starboard. I believe her starboard AA attempted to fire star shells and illuminate the enemy ships to starboard.

Helena stopped all engines to avoid a collision. She was maintaining her fire on *Akatsuki* for two minutes. Spot I report that the target was visible to him, that tracers appeared to be perfect in deflection and that practically all of her shots appeared to hit and that before cease firing the target was afire forward and amidships and was sinking.⁶³ *Akatsuki* was pulverized by *Helena*.

Juneau witnessed *Hiei* bursting into flames and the fire lit up the whole night and by that time the other ships had opened fire. The Japanese seemed to be on both sides of her. A Japanese cruiser fired cutting some of the top work but most of the shots were over. *Juneau* opened fire to port, likely at *Hiei*, which she identified as a cruiser.⁶⁴ *Yudachi* was coming south on her starboard side at this time, so she was correct in determining that the Japanese were on both sides of her.

Aaron Ward continued to fire at *Hiei*. *Barton* immediately opened fire with her forward two 5" guns to port and continued firing rapidly, expending approximately 60 rounds. The after battery opened fire to port a few seconds later and fired approximately 10 per gun; then became silent and could not be brought to bear on enemy ships.⁶⁵ *Akatsuki* was the closest enemy ship to port from *Barton*. *Monssen* remains silent. *Fletcher* engaged *Hiei*.

⁶² U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

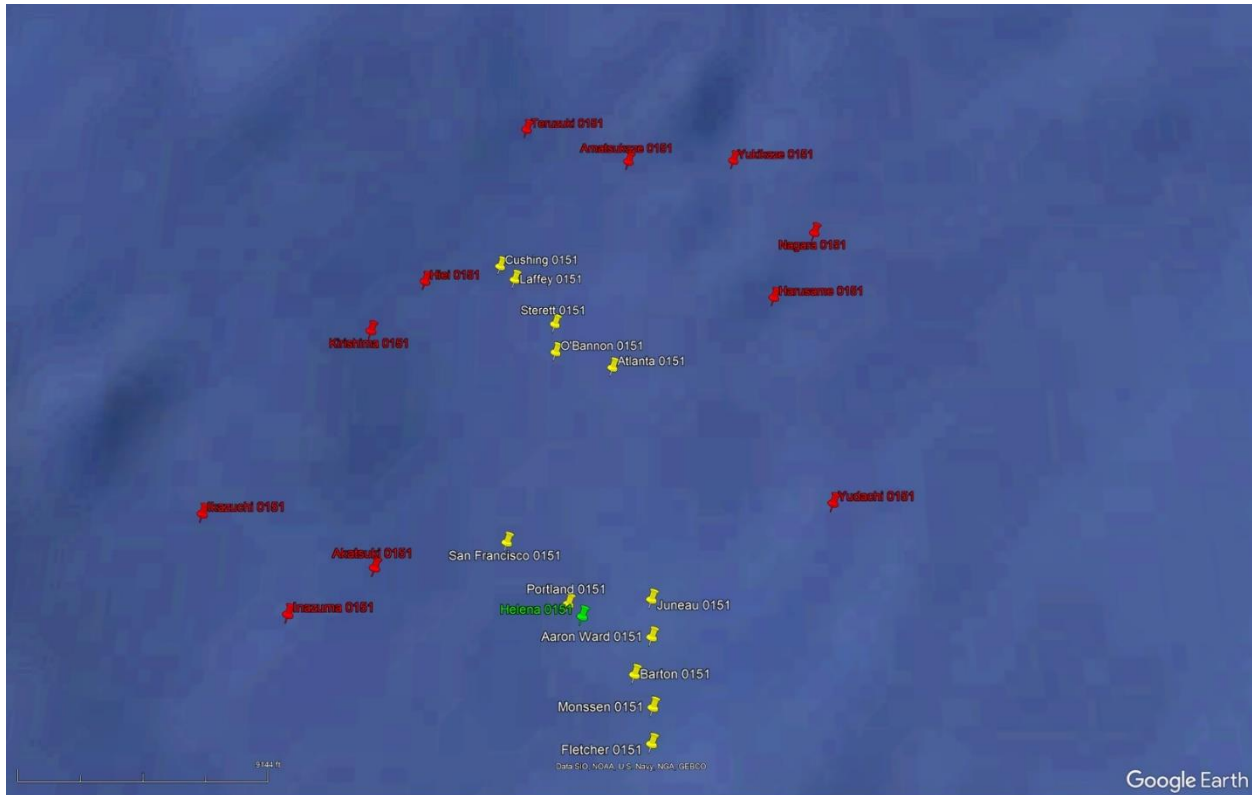
⁶³ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

⁶⁴ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Battle of Guadalcanal, narrative by L. E. Zook, Signalman First Class U.S.N. recorded May 27, 1943.

⁶⁵ U.S.S. *Barton* DD599, Serial 00554 A16-3/L11, November 26, 1942. Report of Action of November 12-13, 1942. Lieut.(jg) Harlowe M. White.

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Map 5

Japanese Ships

Hiei's secondary guns were firing at *Cushing* during this time. She continues to take hits from starboard from multiple U.S. ships which inflict damage: No. 10 crew room: One hit from starboard cracked outer plates and caused leakage into it. Starboard side chain locker: One shell hit broke the mechanism; it pierced the deck and exploded in the crew sick bay; the explosion caused small fires. No. 1 main turret: One shell burst on the turret canopy, however no internal damage was caused. No. 2 main turret: One shell hit caused damage to aiming equipment making it inoperable, also the rear part of its canopy hit but no damage caused. No. 3 Main turret: Two shells hits, one near the rear exhaust aperture, one at the rear of the canopy, only slight damage caused by these hits. No. 4 Main turret: One shell hit on its canopy, no internal damage caused. No. 1 high-angle gun: One shell pierced shield, killed many of its crew. One shell from starboard hit in gun powder chamber, an explosion there left many dead. No. 3 high-angle gun: A hit from the starboard side caused many casualties and wrecked the gun. No. 3 high-angle gun powder room: Pierced from starboard by a shell. There was an explosion in the vicinity of. A cabin for use by the captain on middle deck: hit by one shell, one meter diameter hole caused by explosion. Navigation Chief's cabin: One shell hit middle deck above, explosion left 30-centimetre hole. Communication Chief's cabin: One shell hit on the middle deck, 1.5 meters of bulkhead ripped open, also damaged the secondary gun chief's cabin. Captain's

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stateroom: One shell from starboard pierced the bulkhead and left through the portside, there was flooding through the holes. Lower deck No. 18: No. 290 frame: starboard side vicinity under, one meter diameter hole punched, explosion in vicinity.⁶⁶ Just below the starboard outboard propeller at approximately frame 281-282 there is a projectile impact below the waterline.⁶⁷



Figure 2

Figure 2

This may be the hits to either the secondary gun chief's cabin or the navigation chief's cabin. Note the main deck of Hiei is being supported above the mud and the only structure that could possibly support the weight of her stern is the gun house of turret four remaining in its barbette. I believe that Turrets 3 and 4 are still in their respective barbettes under the stern section. All wreck photos are Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

⁶⁶ Kimata Jiro, Japanese Battleship History, *Hiei*, page 4-6.

⁶⁷ This impact was discovered on the film of the wreck.

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Figure 3 - This is a shell impact on the starboard side of *Hiei* not reported by any source at approximately frame 281-282. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

Kirishima shifts her secondary battery to fire at *Sterett* and she hits *Sterett* with a 6-inch shell at this time. I believe this because the hit was from port and *Sterett* and *Kirishima* are almost abreast of each other. I think Lt. Ikeda would focus on the closest ships and at this moment in time *Sterett*, *O'Bannon* and *Atlanta* are the three closest targets for *Kirishima*'s secondary battery. Kobayashi saw what he believed was a destroyer receiving a torpedo hit and blowing up in a spectacular explosion. This was likely *Atlanta*. Kobayashi witnessed several hits to *Hiei*'s bridge. He also noted that there were no Japanese destroyers visible near his own ship. One of the bridge lookouts (a Leading Seaman, no name given) standing left of him received a bullet to his right eye and dies shortly after that occurs.⁶⁸

Nagara, which is now nearly in front of the U.S. formation, is using star shells to illuminate the U.S. line. *Akatsuki* has become a hulk but is still drifting slowly forward. *Inazuma* is in the process of turning around. *Ikazuchi* suffers a second salvo from *Portland*. *Yudachi* prepares to fire torpedoes and continues to head south. *Harusame* continues north. *Yukikaze* is following *Nagara*, with *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* following *Yukikaze*. *Asagumo* continues southeast with *Murasame* and *Samidare* following.

⁶⁸ Kobayashi Michio. *Senkan "Kirishima" no Saigo* (The Last of Battleship *Kirishima*). Saiaku no Senjô Gadarukanaru Senki 1987, pp. 350-361.

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U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* are now on a collision course with *Hiei*, with *Hiei* firing her secondary battery at *Cushing*. *Cushing* in return opened fire on *Hiei*. *Laffey* checked fire on *Akatsuki* and switched fire to *Hiei* with every gun available.

Sterett is following *Cushing* and *Laffey* when she witnesses the lead destroyers turning to port. She begins to follow when Admiral Callaghan orders ComDesDiv 10 to resume column formation. So *Sterett* resumes a course of 000° north and this splits the van destroyers. She takes a hit on the port quarter cutting the steering cable to the steering gear and her rudder is momentarily jammed. She switches to maneuvering using her engines until the rudder is freed. *O'Bannon* comes up on her starboard side, causing *Sterett* to check fire and swerve to avoid a collision.⁶⁹

Atlanta is still heading 000° north when a torpedo, probably from *Inazuma* or *Ikazuchi*, hits on the port side. The effect is stunning. Eleven hundred pounds of explosive rips the cruiser open. She is lifted from the water and sets down with a shudder, badly crippled. With the point of detonation at the forward engine room, cracks open down the length of the hull and buckles the armored deck upward. The bulkhead separating the forward engine room from the forward fire room is also cracked and seawater begins pouring into the latter compartment and adjacent compartment causing a ten-degree list to port. The rudder is jammed to port and *Atlanta* began to circle. She was hit by a ship bearing 240° relative (port quarter) about 3,500 yards away which was likely *San Francisco*.⁷⁰

Prior to 0151 *San Francisco* was firing at *Nagara* but she now switches fire to a much shorter range on a small cruiser (or large destroyer) on the starboard bow at a range of 3,300 yards. This was likely *Atlanta* and not a Japanese ship. After the first salvo, an enemy battleship is sighted bearing 30° relative and fire is immediately shifted to it using initial range of 2,200 yards. This was likely *Hiei*. Two main battery salvos were fired at this new target.⁷¹ No fire was returned by the battleship on *San Francisco*. Orders were then received from Admiral Callaghan to cease fire to starboard. This phrasing tells me that Admiral Callaghan has realized that the first salvo was at a friendly ship. *San Francisco* then checks fire and Admiral Callaghan attempts to contact the other ships to warn them that that *Atlanta* was not an enemy ship.⁷² This shows pre-war thinking, much like what was on display at First Savo and Cape Esperance where the American commanders repeatedly ordered cease fire in fear that they were firing on friendly ships.

⁶⁹ U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

⁷⁰ Naval Battle of Guadalcanal by James Grace pages 70.

⁷¹ These are the first two 8-inch salvos fired at *Hiei* and I believe they hit the *Hiei*'s stern causing the damage that will eventually flood aft steering. The main reason I believe this occurs now was *Hiei* will turn back west and then she exposed her port side to the U.S. cruisers. However, the damage came from starboard and this was the first and last opportunity for 8-inch shells to strike her from starboard. This may be that hole.

⁷² U.S.S. *San Francisco*, CA-38, War Damage Report No. 26 BuShips, 20 March, 1942, Gunfire Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

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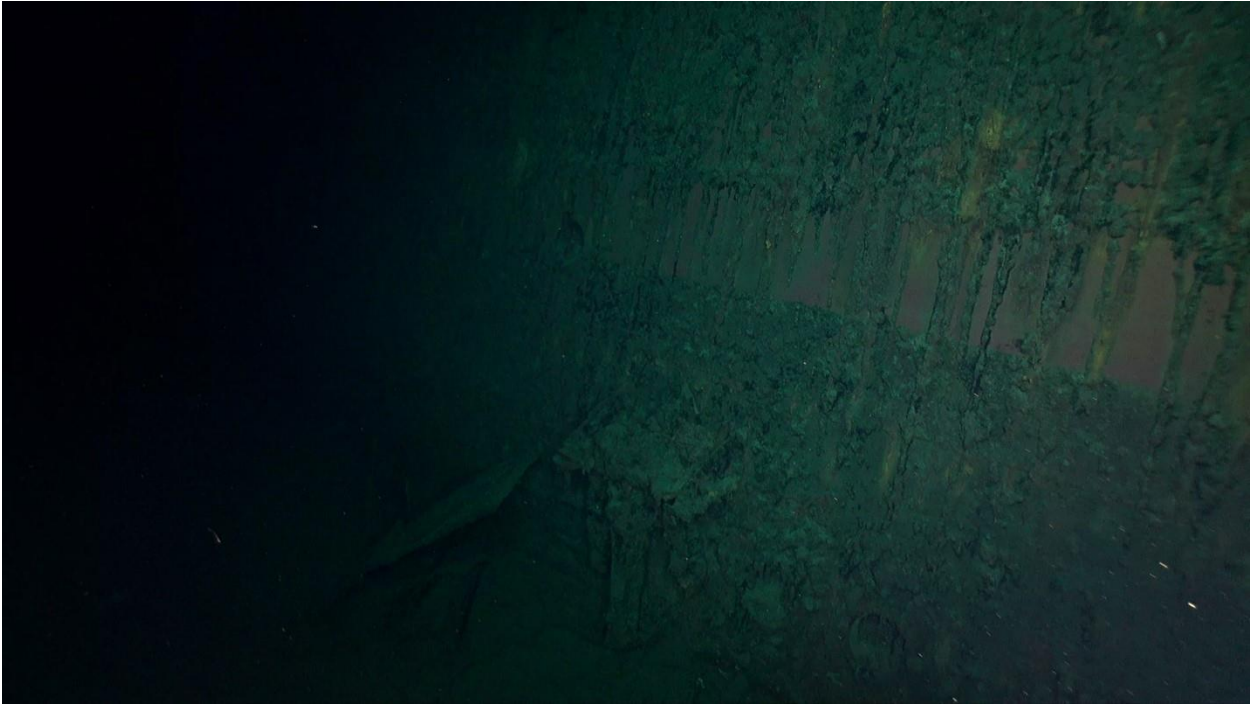


Figure 4

Figure 4

Hull of Hiei just above the water line shows a displaced hull plate stuffed with something. Senshi Soshō's entry on Hiei's loss in volume 83 (pp 372-375) reported that the crew used a rubber waterproof mat to plug the hole aft in an attempt to drain the flooding. This damage is located at frame 290 and is the damage listed as Lower deck No. 18:No. 290 frame: starboard side vicinity under, one meter diameter hole punched, explosion in vicinity. This may be the famous hit from San Francisco that eventually crippled her. Frame 290 is just outboard aft steering. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

Portland is still engaging *Ikazuchi* and fired a second salvo to port at this destroyer and witnessed it being hit. She believed that she had sunk this destroyer. *Ikazuchi* does take three 8-inch shell hits during the battle but would survive. Basically, from *Portland's* perspective, *Ikazuchi* was directly behind *Akatsuki* about 6,200 yards and *Akatsuki* was only 2,500-3,000 yards away at this time, but *Akatsuki* was silent, burning and drifting. I do think it may be possible that *Portland* was firing on *Ikazuchi*, but *Portland* was also witnessing *Akatsuki* being destroyed which was why she claimed the target was sunk.⁷³ This was the only time an 8-inch gunned cruiser fired her main battery at *Ikazuchi*.

Helena has increased speed to maximum, but has checked fire on *Akatsuki*. *Juneau* witnesses *Hiei* bursting into flames and the fire lit up the whole night. By that time the other U.S. ships had opened fire. Japanese ships were seen on both sides of the cruiser. A Japanese cruiser fires at her, cutting some of the top work but most of the shots are over.⁷⁴ It may be

⁷³ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

⁷⁴ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Battle of Guadalcanal, narrative by L. E. Zook, Signalman First Class U.S.N. recorded May 27, 1943.

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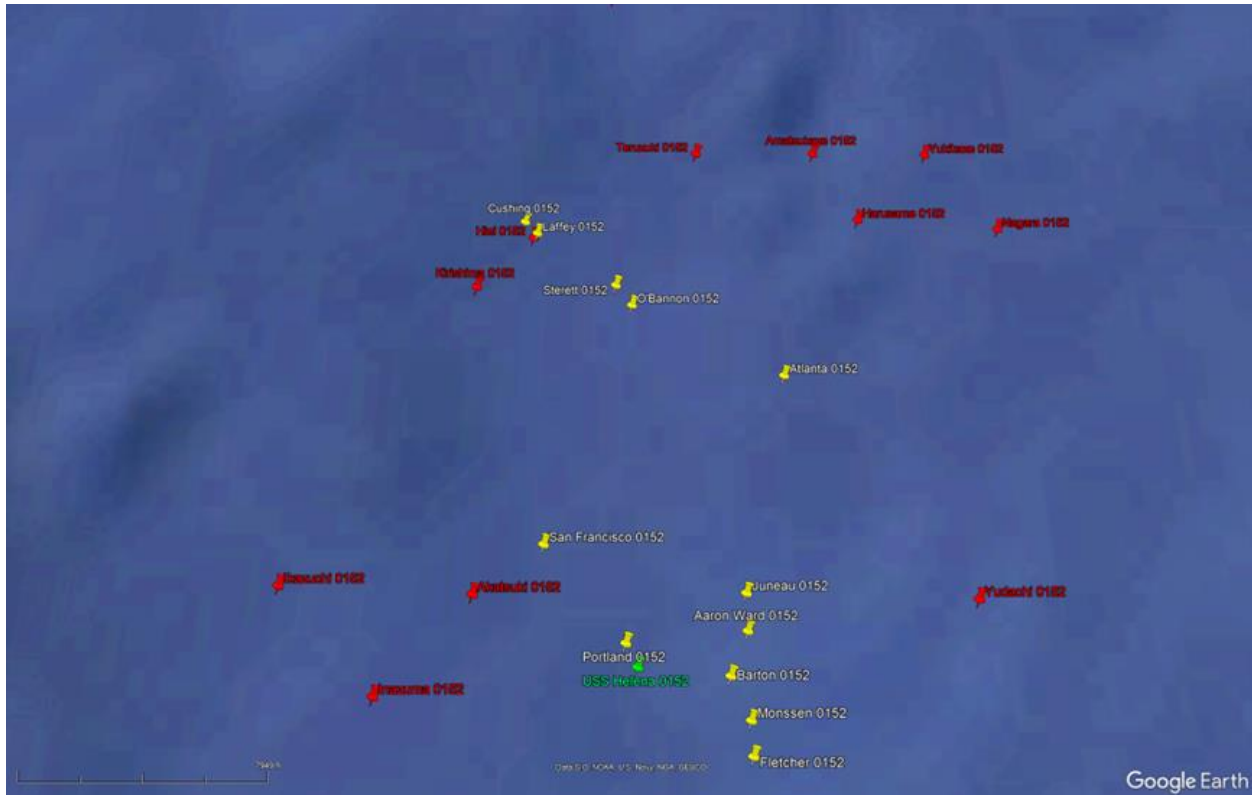
Nagara who was firing on the U.S. line, trying to illuminate *Juneau* and the rear destroyers for *Yudachi*, *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* to fire torpedoes. The Japanese destroyers to the best of my knowledge are not using guns so that their positions will not be revealed.

Aaron Ward continues to engage *Hiei*. *Barton* changes course to port, moving closer to the enemy column and launches one torpedo in the general direction of the leading enemy ship of the most southern enemy column, following a few seconds later by the other four.⁷⁵ I believe these torpedoes were fired at *Akatsuki*. *Monssen* remains silent looking for targets to starboard. *Fletcher* continues to engage *Hiei* with her forward guns.

⁷⁵ U.S.S. *Barton* DD599, Serial 00554 A16-3/L11, November 26, 1942. Report of Action of November 12-13, 1942. Lieut. (jg) Harlowe M. White.

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Map 6

Japanese Ships

Hiei shifted her secondary battery to fire on *Laffey* and used her 25mm AA guns to strafe her superstructure. Her main battery cannot depress low enough to engage at this time. Her 25 mm machine guns inflict casualties on *Laffey*, but her secondary shells fly over and miss. *Hiei* has now passed through the lead destroyer formation astern of *Laffey* and avoided ramming *Laffey* by only a few feet. Now the battleship's port side started to get hit. Telegraph (Radio) room, forward part: One hit from the portside destroyed the electrical distribution board. Communications battery room: Two shells from portside passed through the area fracturing pipes and causing general damage. Lower part of the lookout's position: Two shell hits from the portside received, three men killed. Bridge distribution of electricity room: Two shell hits came from the portside. Night Battle Bridge: Three shell hits from the portside inflicted numerous casualties. Secondary gun command post: One shell hit port side. No. 2 high-angle gun: One shell pierced the shield face destroying the gun and causing many casualties.⁷⁶ A number of senior officers had been killed or injured with her captain and Admiral Abe being wounded at this time on the night battle bridge. The fire on the bridge area was getting worse. Paint and everything made of wood was burning and the smoke was getting thicker, being funneled up the

⁷⁶ Kimata Jiro, Japanese Battleship History, *Hiei*, page 4-6.

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pagoda superstructure which was acting like a chimney. Her stern began to flood aft which shorted out the electric motors to her rudders. The crew switched to manual steering.⁷⁷

Kirishima probably fired her aft turrets at *Portland* and was swinging her forward turrets from starboard to port so as to fire on *Laffey* once she cleared *Hiei*.⁷⁸ *Portland* received two projectile hits in close succession, both on the starboard side. One projectile struck the double course shell plating just above the armor at frame 70. The other struck the hangar at frame 85. *Kirishima*'s secondary guns are probably engaging *Sterett*.

Yudachi fired eight torpedoes at *Juneau* at this time. *Yudachi*'s captain reported that just after she fired her torpedoes the cruiser answered with a powerful salvo, to which he could only respond with guns. That was bad. He felt he was pinned at last. A destroyer cannot outgun a cruiser.⁷⁹

Akatsuki still drifts toward the U.S. line but was a dead ship burning from bow to stern. *Inazuma* heads southeast. *Ikazuchi* follows *Inazuma*. *Asagumo* heads southeast. *Murasame* followed *Asagumo*. *Samidare* followed *Murasame*. *Harusame* heads north. *Nagara* turned to the southeast and I believe was firing star shells to illuminate the U.S. line for a torpedo attack by *Yudachi*, *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki*. *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* are headed southeast preparing to launch torpedoes at *Juneau* and the rear destroyers.

U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* passed ahead of *Hiei* firing into her superstructure. *Sterett* heads north at flank speed and *O'Bannon* will cut behind *Sterett* and head west in pursuit of *Cushing* and *Laffey* hoping to rejoin the division. *Sterett* was the only ship of the lead destroyers to follow Admiral Callaghan's orders to resume a course of 000°.

It seemed obvious to the *Atlanta*'s observers that her new attacker must have been using radar, for the shooting was cruelly accurate and no illumination was used. *San Francisco* had fired the first salvo at 0151, but *Portland* would fire two more salvos into *Atlanta* at 0152. The *Atlanta* was hit by an estimated nineteen 8-inch projectiles. Many failed to explode due to the short range but caused heavy personnel casualties. Seven from the same salvo hit her blazing superstructure and killed many still alive there. Mount 53 right in front of the bridge was hit and the muzzles of both guns were cut off. A second salvo slammed into the *Atlanta*'s after superstructure (likely from *Portland*) and went right on into mount 55 on the starboard side. A raging fire started there, the outboard side of the gun house was blown completely off and with one exception, the entire crew of the mount was killed. Mount 54 on the port side was hit by a couple of shells, its back and roof were blown off and again only one of thirteen men survived. Mount 56 was hit by three shells two penetrating and the third ricocheting off the rear. The hull

⁷⁷ Kazuyoshi, Miyazaki, Tragedy at Savo, The *Hiei*, under Concentrated Fire, page 3.

⁷⁸ *Kirishima* action report; From reel JT-1. Scored 1 direct hit with main battery on another cruiser, resulting in her catching fire. I think these were the hits on *Portland*. Both hits scored on *Portland* were 14-inch Type-3 projectiles.

⁷⁹ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 137.

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below the superstructure was also hit which caused additional leakage and casualties among the plot crew, who were escaping the flooding below. The firing ships silhouette was revealed by its own gun flashes. One officer insisted to Captain Jenkins that it was *San Francisco*. After several salvos the *Atlanta*'s attacker ceased fire and was seen to pass close aboard to port.⁸⁰ *Atlanta* now turned away in a port turn due to the jammed rudder but was able to free it and move to the southeast in an attempt to withdraw.

San Francisco had checked fire due to her realization she fired at *Atlanta* and Admiral Callaghan desperately tried to inform other ships not to fire over TBS "Cease firing" *Portland* responded, "What is the dope? Did you want to cease fire?" Admiral Callaghan replied, "Affirmative, all ships take course 000 true."⁸¹

Portland came round to 000° true, continuing to fire. At this time the 2nd target, definitely a cruiser and probably a 'CA' received two 9-gun salvos with many hits observed. This cruiser could not be positively identified because of the poor visibility. The target burst into flames. (Likely *Atlanta*) About this time the starboard battery was unmasked and the main and AA batteries commenced firing. Visibility was poor from this point, due to her own gun flashes, burning ships, flares and star shells. At about this time enemy searchlights illumination ceased. Own firing was continuous. An enemy destroyer was blown from the water on our second salvo.⁸² 0152-30 Received shell hit in starboard hanger. No fire, negligible damage. Executive Officer received a fragment wound in the right shoulder and about twelve men received fragment or shrapnel wounds or bruises.⁸³ These shell hits likely came from *Kirishima*.

The *Helena* swung past 250° true she was not engaging anyone at this time. *Juneau* notes that a Japanese battleship turned on his signal searchlight and pointed it toward our force and made a series of quick flashes meaning in naval procedure, "You are making an error" (This was likely *Atlanta*, not a Japanese ship). *Juneau*'s OTC saw this and then over the TBS came the words "Cease Fire, they are friendly."⁸⁴ *Juneau* sees *Yudachi* to starboard and immediately engaged her. *Aaron Ward* continued to engage *Hiei*. I believe that *Barton* was focused on *Akatsuki* and that *Monssen* was silent. *Fletcher* continues to fire at *Hiei*.

⁸⁰ Naval Battle of Guadalcanal by James Grace pages 71.

⁸¹ U.S.S. *San Francisco*, CA-38, War Damage Report No. 26 BuShips, 20 March, 1942, Gunfire Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

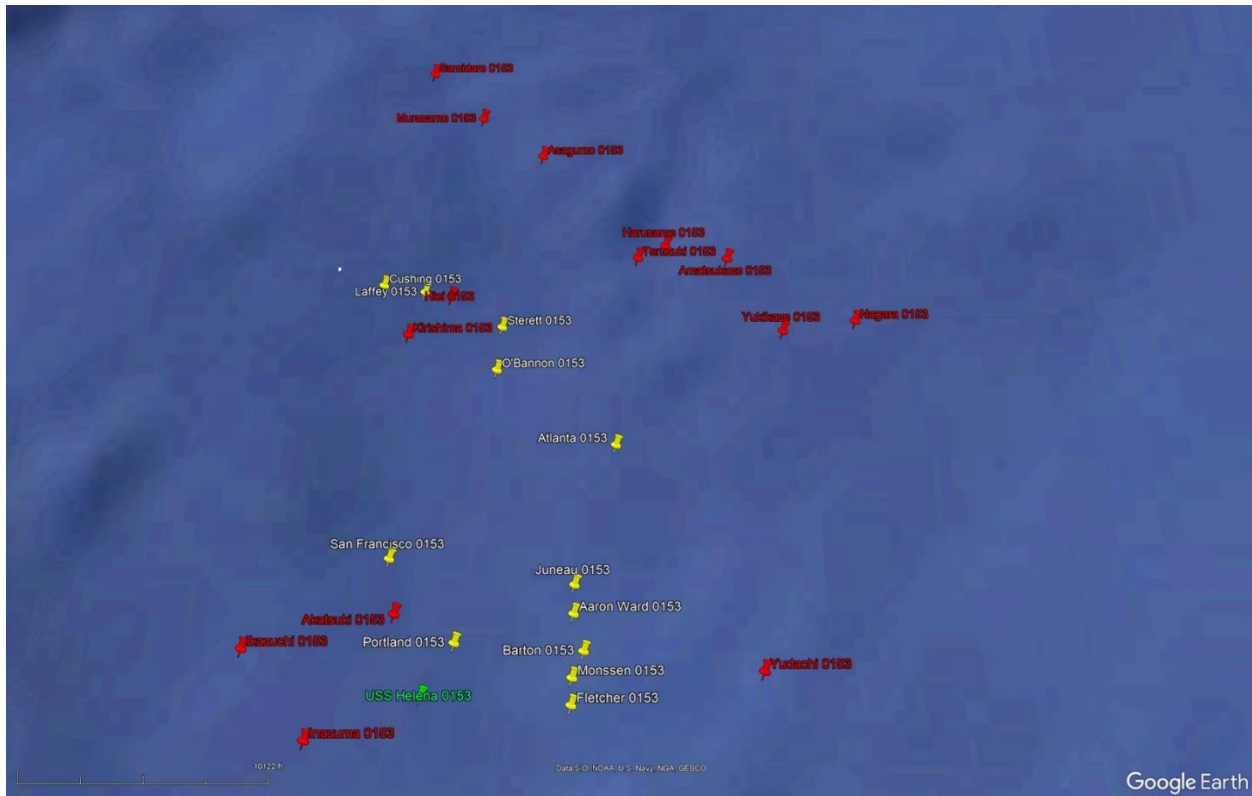
⁸² This is in reference to her second salvo fired at *Ikazuchi* at 0151. She was also witnessing *Akatsuki* sinking so her claim the destroyer was sunk may be due to witnessing *Akatsuki*'s destruction.

⁸³ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

⁸⁴ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Battle of Guadalcanal, narrative by L. E. Zook, Signalman First Class U.S.N. recorded May 27, 1943.

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Map 7

Japanese Ships

Hiei began to head west. She has not totally lost steering control at this time but may already be on manual steering. She was likely engaging either *Laffey* or *Cushing* at this time with her secondary battery.

Once *Laffey* cleared *Hiei*, *Kirishima* fired a main battery salvo into *Laffey* likely from her forward turrets and her port secondary battery engaged *Laffey* scoring multiple hits. She scored a 14-inch AP shell hit that passed through *Laffey*.⁸⁵ The fires on *Hiei* were illuminating *Kirishima*.

Nagara sailed southeast illuminating the U.S. line with flares. Captain Tameichi Hara on the *Amatsukaze* wrote, “All of a sudden, a couple of flares lit up ahead. Later I learned from Admiral Kimura that *Nagara* had fired them. Five or six enemy ships in a column emerged clearly. The nearest was 5,000 meters, 30° to starboard, approaching on roughly a parallel course. I gulped. My heart bubbled with excitement. This was the chance to prove my torpedo theory. Though adopted as doctrine by the Imperial Navy, it had remained unproved. This was

⁸⁵ Important as *Kirishima*'s crew has made the switch from bombardment rounds to armor piercing in roughly five minutes.

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*my chance. Lt. Masatoshi Miyoshi, my torpedo officer yelled impatiently, "Commander, lets fire the fish!" I answered, "Get ready fishermen" and barked instructions; "The target 30° starboard, is approaching. Adjust firing angle 15°. Navigators, turn right, close in and follow a hyperbola."*⁸⁶ I do not have good data for *Yukikaze* and *Teruzuki* at this time, but it is likely they too are preparing a torpedo attack.

Akatsuki drifted toward the U.S. line, on fire. *Inazuma* heads back to the northwest. *Ikazuchi* still heads southeast but will follow *Inazuma* and turn northwest soon. *Yudachi* continued to exchange gunfire with *Juneau*. Her crew was frantically reloading her torpedoes for a second salvo. *Harusame* headed north. *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* are heading southeast but have not yet entered the battle.

U.S. Ships

Cushing makes a hard turn to starboard and headed back to the east attempting to bring her torpedoes to bear on *Hiei*. *Laffey* reported number two, three and four 5-inch gun mounts out of commission by direct hits, shell hit in chart house, large caliber shell hit in electrical workshop which penetrated the forward engine room. Five-inch shell hits (likely 6-inch from *Kirishima*) hit in after fireroom. The *Laffey* began to lose power and headed off to the west.

Sterett headed north and *O'Bannon* headed west in pursuit of *Laffey* and *Cushing*. *O'Bannon* reported at 0153 she turned hard right and hard left to avoid collision with ship ahead which was *Sterett*, then resumed course approximately 270° true to rejoin column astern of *Laffey*. At this time, it was observed that *Cushing* and *Laffey* were receiving many hits from crossfire on port and starboard bows. Rejoined column shortly thereafter and continued fire on a target which now had been identified as a *Kongō* type of battleship. The identification was considered certain because at this time there was a flaming enemy unit on the opposite side along our line of fire which silhouetted this battleship sharply. *O'Bannon's* commanding officer D.J. MacDonald's impression at this time was that there were light enemy units drawing ahead to starboard. These light enemy units would be *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare*.⁸⁷

Six of the *Atlanta's* eight twin 5-inch mounts had been put out of action, leaving only mounts 57 and 58. Mount 57 was in manual power, attempting to return fire, but by the time it was trained on a target, the target was recognized as friendly. Mount 58 had power but had lost communication with plot and director two. Only number 4 x 1.1-inch mount and number 7 and 8 twenty-millimeter guns were left. *Atlanta's* most potent weapon, her torpedoes were never fired. She began a slow withdraw towards Lunga Point to the southeast.⁸⁸ *Atlanta* lost in action, 170 KIA and 103 WIA. Presidential Unit Citation. Rear Admiral Scott awarded posthumous Medal

⁸⁶ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 134.

⁸⁷ U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

⁸⁸ Grace, James, Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, page 71.

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of Honor. Captain Jenkins awarded Navy Cross. *Fletcher*-class DD-690 and *Kidd*-class DDG-995 named in honor of Scott.

San Francisco checked fire and tried to get other ships to not fire on *Atlanta* and get his other ships to head on 000° true.⁸⁹ *Portland* was positive she had sunk an enemy cruiser not realizing she had hit the *Atlanta*. She reported, “It is believed that our target was an eight-inch cruiser and that it was sunk.”⁹⁰ *Helena* checked fire and turned onto 000° true at 17 knots.⁹¹

Juneau was engaging *Yudachi*. Checked fire as sky was illuminated and it appeared that our cruisers had changed course to the left. The area was fairly well illuminated for a short while. Ship had fired approximately ten salvos at this time.⁹² *Barton* was still engaging *Akatsuki*. *Monssen* appeared to remain silent. At 0153 *Fletcher* received order by voice radio from OTC to cease fire. Complied with this order and selected a new target, a cruiser astern of the original target.⁹³ This was likely *Kirishima*, but she does not open fire until 0155.

⁸⁹ U.S.S. *San Francisco*, CA-38, War Damage Report No. 26 BuShips, 20 March, 1942, Gunfire Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

⁹⁰ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

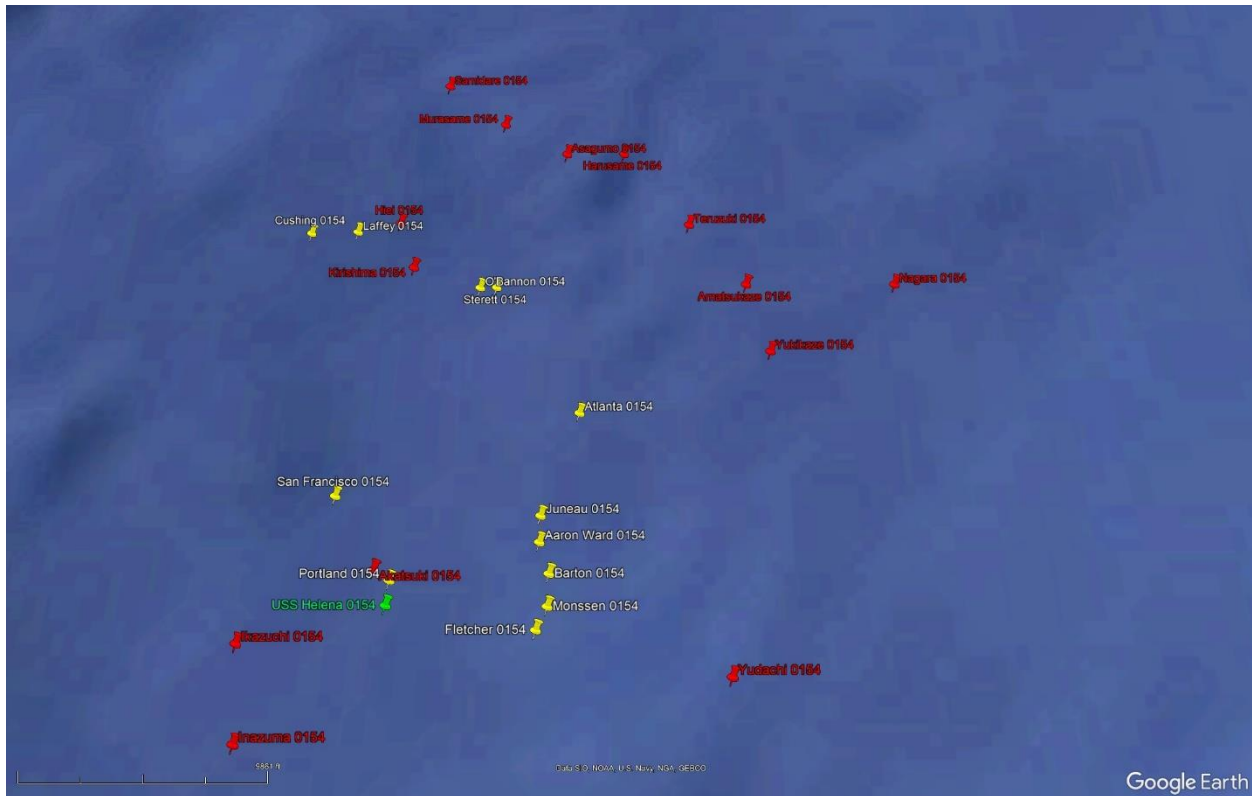
⁹¹ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

⁹² U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Battle of Guadalcanal, narrative by L. E. Zook, Signalman First Class U.S.N. recorded May 27, 1943.

⁹³ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, C.O. W.M. Cole.

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Map 8

Japanese Ships

Hiei was now heading west. *Kirishima* was beginning to turn and follow *Hiei* and engaging *Laffey* with her secondary guns. *Asagumo* turned east with *Murasame* and *Samidare* following and they may engage *Sterrett* and *O'Bannon*. *Harusame* continued north and away from the battle. *Yudachi* turned west to cut across the rear of the U.S. line. At this point she was probably still taking fire from *Juneau*. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* are turning to the northwest to rejoin *Hiei*. *Akatsuki* was dead drifting and in the process of capsizing. However, her presence was focusing U.S. attention to port and *Juneau* and group 3 destroyers behind her do not observe the threat posed by *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* which are not using their guns so as to not give their position away.

On board the *Amatsukaze*, Captain Tameichi Hara later wrote: “*The crew responded instantly. The distance closed steadily as the adversaries approached at a combined speed of 60 knots. Miyoshi glared at me eagerly, impatiently, but I ignored him. The enemy failed to open fire. Even if they did, they could not catch me in the hyperbola run, though we were separated*

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by only 3,000 meters. Ready torpedoes, fire, I yelled. Eight big fish jumped in rapid succession and sped on their way. I watched prayerfully. It was 0154."⁹⁴

Amatsukaze fired eight torpedoes at U.S. line. I do not have data on *Yukikaze* or *Teruzuki*, so I am not sure if they fired additional torpedoes at this time but believe it is very likely.

U.S. Ships

Cushing is in the process of turning back east, but *Laffey* at this time I believe is getting pummeled by *Kirishima*'s port side secondary battery at what would be point blank range. *Laffey* started to lose power but continued west. *O'Bannon* also may engage *Asagumo*'s column at this point, but she receives Adm. Callahan's order over TBS to cease fire. This order was not authenticated, but check fire was given. The commanding officer of *Sterett* gave the order "*pick up target on starboard bow*". This was likely *Asagumo*'s group. At about this time the two ships ahead of *O'Bannon*, *Cushing* and *Laffey*, were lost to sight to starboard, the *Laffey* apparently was sinking. *O'Bannon* is now about 1,800 yards from the battleship and in the lead of the U.S. column.⁹⁵

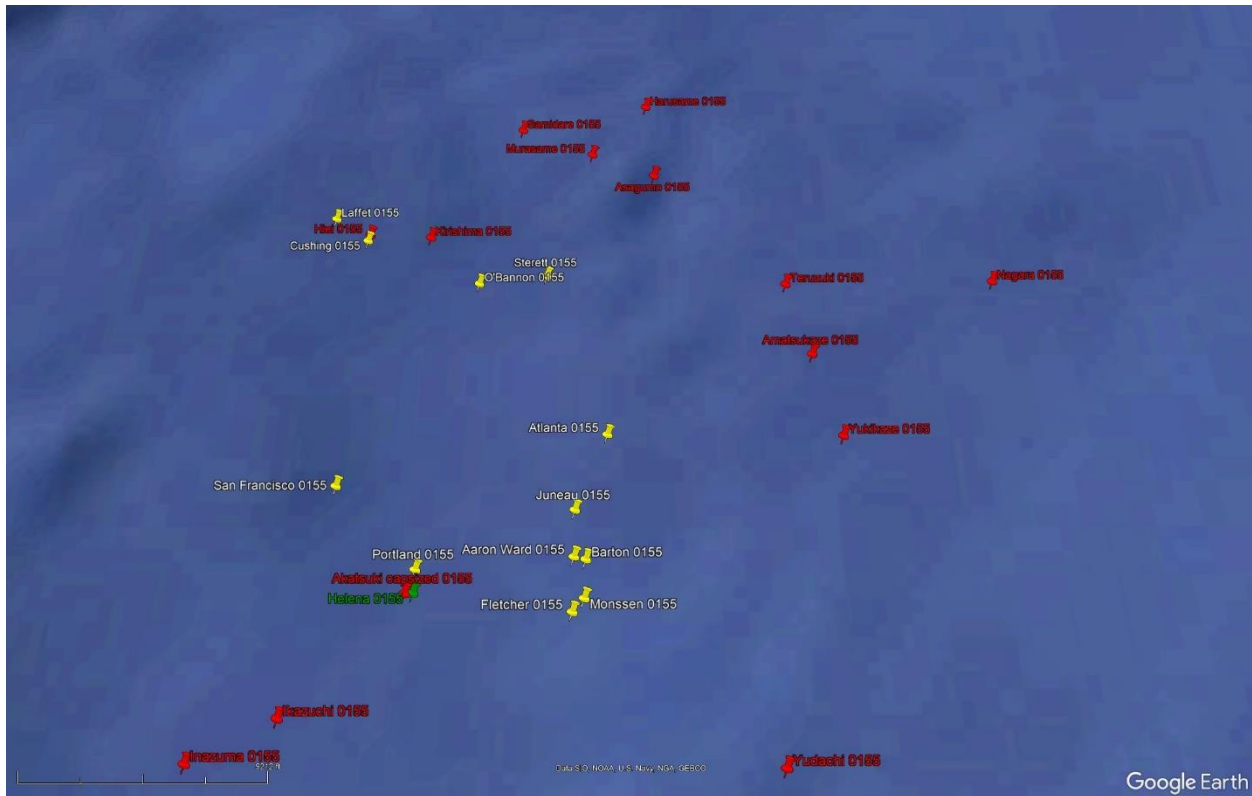
Atlanta was withdrawing toward Lunga Point. *San Francisco* is still heading west. I do not think she was firing on anyone at this time. *Portland* heads north and increases speed to 18 knots. *Helena* heads north and falls in behind *Portland*. *Juneau* and the Group 3 destroyers behind her are following the column to the north. *Aaron Ward* was not firing at anyone at this time. *Barton* was likely not firing at anyone at this time. *Monssen* was not firing and *Fletcher* has not yet opened fire on *Kirishima*.

⁹⁴ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 134.

⁹⁵ U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

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0155



Map 9

Japanese Ships

Hiei sees three destroyers crossing her bow; the first two were *Cushing* and *Laffey* and she believed the third was *Akatsuki*, but it was actually *Cushing* again who crossed her bow twice. However, at these point-blank ranges *Cushing* is to pay a price and *Hiei*'s secondary guns start taking a toll on her. *Hiei* takes three torpedo hits from *Cushing*, but all simply bounced off her hull resulting in no damage. *Kirishima* is turning to the west, following *Hiei* and likely still engaging *Laffey* with her secondary guns. *Nagara* is still using star-shells to illuminate *Juneau*, *Aaron Ward*, *Barton*, *Monssen* and *Fletcher*. *Yudachi* fires eight more torpedoes, this time at *Portland*.⁹⁶

Asagumo, *Murasame* and *Samidare* are engaged with *Sterett* and *O'Bannon*. *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* are likely launching torpedoes at the U.S. line of *Juneau*, *Aaron Ward*, *Barton*, *Monssen* and *Fletcher*.

Akatsuki, I believe, is hit by one of *Barton*'s torpedoes fired at 0151. The torpedo almost rips the stricken destroyer in half, but her port side shell plates stay attached and her bow folds

⁹⁶ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 137.

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aft and her hull jackknifes. She then quickly capsizes. *Inazuma* now heading back northwest. *Ikazuchi* begins to turn around.



Figure 5

Figure 5

This is Akatsuki's forward gun turret, but the bow has bent back so the guns now lay across her stern section. The wreck is literally folded in half. I believe this is due to one of Barton's torpedoes fired at 0151 striking her and almost cutting her in half. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 6

Figure 6

This is still Akatsuki's bow and you can see the rear of the forward gun turret. The damage to her hull showing almost skeletal remains is an indication this area suffered severely from fire. The fire removed the paint, so this area corrodes at a much faster rate than the rest of the ship. Her bow shows massive fire damage. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

U.S. Ships

Cushing is still making 10-12 knots ahead of an enemy battleship heading on a westerly course which at the time looked to be on a collision course. This battleship is firing her secondary battery at *Cushing*. Bridge steering has failed by this time, but hand steering was ordered and the *Cushing* fires six torpedoes by local control at this battleship at an estimated range of 1,000 yards. Three heavy detonations were heard nearby and it was believed that these were hits on the battleship from *Cushing's* torpedoes. However, *Cushing's* torpedoes did not explode as the range was too short for the torpedoes to properly arm. *Cushing* believed this enemy battleship was of the *Fuso* class observes her being heavily hit on superstructure by U.S. cruiser gun fire. *Cushing* is slowly losing power and is burning furiously forward, with the fire spreading aft. There was also fire below decks aft.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ U.S.S. *Cushing*, DD-376, Serial A16-3, November 16, 1942, Report of engagement off Savo Island on November 13, 1942 and destruction of the U.S.S. *Cushing*, E.H. Parker.

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Laffey heads west in a badly damaged condition. The *Sterett* receives Adm. Callahan's order over TBS to "Cease Fire". *O'Bannon* begins to engage the *Asagumo*'s group and observes heavy gun fire to starboard. No targets were visible to Conn, but control determined that there are several vessels to starboard on westerly course, one of which is identified as a three-funnel *Tenryu* class cruiser. Gun fire was opened on this cruiser (this was probably *Murasame*). *O'Bannon* and *Sterett* are likely under gunfire from *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare*. I believe either *Sterett* or *O'Bannon* hit *Murasame* at least once in her engine room.

Atlanta is attempting to withdraw southeast toward Lunga Point. *San Francisco* is not engaged with anyone at this time and is heading west. *Portland* was not engaged with anyone at this time and heads north. *Helena* sees a large explosion off her port bow. This I believe was *Akatsuki* getting hit by one of *Barton*'s torpedoes. The succeeding few minutes for her are mostly absorbed in avoiding damaged ships and identifying friendly vessels on most of which her batteries are trained before challenging. During this period, she almost rams but manages to avoid by about 100 yards a large, capsized vessel floating bottom up.⁹⁸ This is *Akatsuki*, whose jackknifed hull gave the appearance of a much larger ship as she sank.⁹⁹

Juneau may still be engaging *Yudachi*. *Aaron Ward* is heading north when she stops backs both engines to avoid colliding with *Atlanta*. Immediately after checking fire, her radar-equipped director is trained ahead in order to get ranges so as to avoid collisions.¹⁰⁰ *Barton* heads north. *Monssen* at about 0215 (0155)¹⁰¹ sees at least one enemy torpedo pass under the after-conning station, probably from starboard.¹⁰² No explosion of this torpedo was observed. At about the same time a large target is observed by the Torpedo Officer at about 30° forward of the starboard beam. It appears to be a battleship or large cruiser and is making little or no way, target angle about 320°, range about 4,000 yards.¹⁰³ A 20 mm gunner on the forward battery

⁹⁸ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover. This was the capsized hull of *Akatsuki*.

⁹⁹ *Akatsuki*'s wreck has been discovered and indeed she is folded so her bow now points aft. She is incredibly damaged and wrecked, making it extremely difficult to identify what you are looking at.

¹⁰⁰ *Yudachi* says that with guns blazing she had cut in front of *Aaron Ward* almost grazing the bow to which she made a violent turn to avoid her. I do not think this occurred. I do think *Yudachi* crosses the U.S. line from astern but not directly through it. I don't think she would have survived such a maneuver and no U.S. ship sees this occur. The ship *Aaron Ward* backs down on was *Atlanta* which was in the way of the U.S. column heading north as *Atlanta* attempts to withdraw southeast toward Lunga Point. Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 134.

¹⁰¹ *Monssen*'s times are all adjusted by minus 20 minutes for this analysis.

¹⁰² This torpedo would have come from *Yudachi*'s salvo fired at 0152. All eight of *Yudachi*'s torpedoes from her initial salvo missed. She then reported firing a second salvo at 0155 of eight more torpedoes at *Portland*. Hara writes (Once the first set of eight torpedoes was released, it usually took about 10 minutes to reload the tubes) Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 28. This makes me suspicious of *Yudachi*'s claim that she fired a second salvo of 8 torpedoes in three minutes. I believe this claim may be hindsight after *Yudachi*'s Captain read *Portland*'s account after the war.

¹⁰³ If *Monssen* was heading due north a target angle of 320 was to port not starboard and this does match *Hiei*'s position. Her times are off making an analysis difficult.

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claims to see a fair silhouette and later promptly and definitely identified it in the book of Japanese silhouettes as a battleship of the *Kongō* class.¹⁰⁴

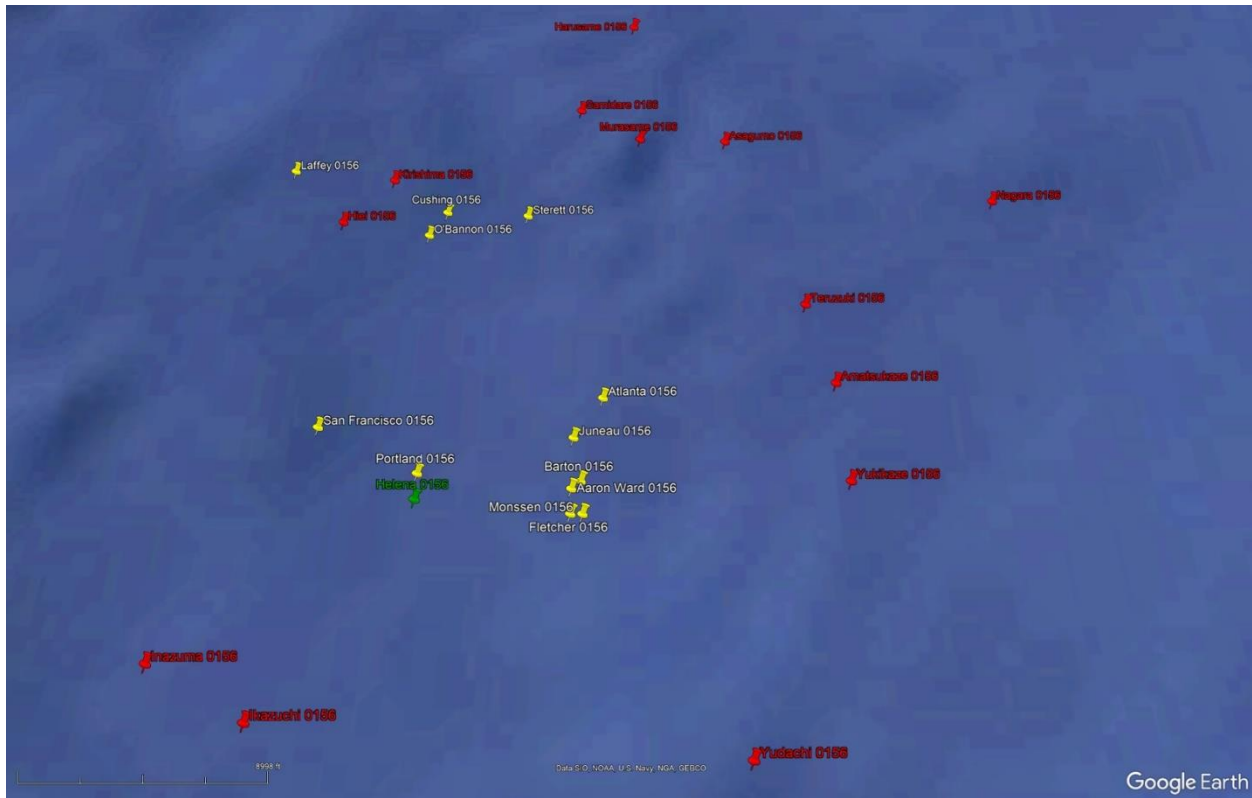
Fletcher also sees and opens fire on the battleship which was *Kirishima*. By this time the *Tenryu* type cruiser is seen by several observers to suffer several minor explosions and sink.¹⁰⁵ This was actually *Akatsuki*.

¹⁰⁴ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

¹⁰⁵ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, C.O. W.M. Cole.

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0156



Map 10

Japanese Ships

Hiei was likely having difficulty steering by this point in time. Communication with the bridge has been cut off with the crew in manual steering. They managed to place the rudders amidships so that she was moving southwest at this time.¹⁰⁶

Kirishima at this point breaks away from *Hiei* and turns north away from the battle. *Kirishima*'s secondary is likely still engaging *Cushing* and *Laffey*. *Kirishima* breaking formation at this time may be indicative of Admiral Abe cancelling the bombardment mission.¹⁰⁷ *Nagara* turned around and is headed back to the west. *Yukikaze* begins to turn back north. *Amatsukaze* follows *Yukikaze* and *Teruzuki* is following *Amatsukaze*. *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* are engaged with *Sterett* and *O'Bannon*. *Inazuma* is headed back toward *Hiei* with *Ikazuchi*

¹⁰⁶ Kazuyoshi, Miyazaki, *Tragedy at Savo, The Hiei, under Concentrated Fire*, page 3-4.

¹⁰⁷ I do not have an exact time Admiral Abe cancelled the bombardment mission and ordered his forces to withdraw. However, the movement of the Japanese forces would indicate this order was given at approximately this time. The majority of the Japanese forces start to head north between Savo and Florida Island and withdraw from the battle leaving *Hiei* behind who headed between Savo and Guadalcanal. This order to abandon the mission was likely due to Abe's fears being realized in his own mind that the Americans would never allow a second bombardment. In hindsight this order was pre-mature as the Japanese had superior surface forces to gain control of the sea. Yet the order was never questioned and the subordinate officers immediately followed it withdrawing from the battle.

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following. *Harusame* heads north and is effectively out of the battle but will return very late in the engagement. *Yudachi* is proceeding west.

U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* are both losing power and are heavily damaged. *Sterett* heads north but will turn to the west in an attempt to fire torpedoes at *Hiei*. *O'Bannon* notes that the range to the *Kongō* type battleship on the port bow has closed to 1,200 yards. There are numerous fires on this battleship and its gunfire has slackened. Its fire was all passing overhead. She fires two aimed torpedoes at this battleship. Each of these torpedoes were fired to hit, no spread.¹⁰⁸ *O'Bannon* fires her torpedoes, surely at *Hiei*.

Atlanta is withdrawing toward Lunga Point. *San Francisco* continues heading northwest while *Portland* and *Helena* are headed north. *Juneau* heads north.

Aaron Ward torpedo men see two torpedoes pass under this ship, from port to starboard. I think it is more likely they went starboard to port and are from *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* or *Teruzuki*.¹⁰⁹ *Barton* is headed north. *Monssen* fires all five torpedoes in mount No. 2 at *Hiei* singly, by percussion, using target speed zero, torpedo speed intermediate, average depth setting 10 feet.¹¹⁰ *Fletcher* is headed north, firing on *Kirishima*.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

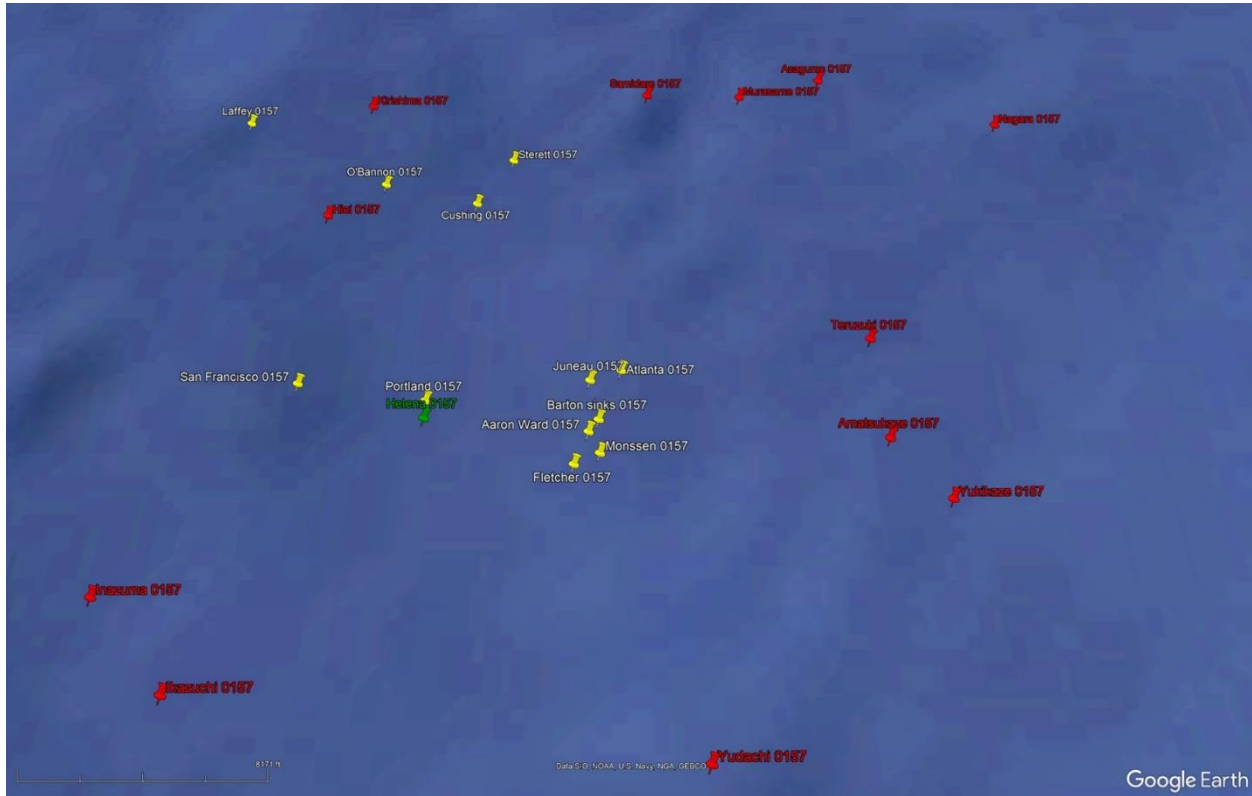
¹⁰⁹ At this time all Japanese ships that I am aware of firing torpedoes are to *Aaron Ward* starboard side. I have no record of *Inazuma* or *Ikazuchi* firing a second salvo but if this observation is correct torpedoes coming from port to starboard could only come from one of these two ships. In any case these torpedoes missed.

¹¹⁰ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

¹¹¹ In my *Kirishima* article I have one hit on *Kirishima*'s starboard side aft which I believed came from *Helena*. After this analysis I now believe that hit was from *Fletcher* as *Fletcher* was the only U.S. ship to engage *Kirishima*. *Helena* never fired on *Kirishima*.

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0157



Map 11

Japanese Ships

Hiei was likely hit by *O'Bannon*'s first two torpedoes at this time. I believe the torpedoes struck around frames 156 and 166 on her starboard side. *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* are likely engaged with either *Sterett* or *O'Bannon*.

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Figure 7

Figure 7

This is the torpedo damage at frame 166 just before the starboard side break around frame 156 and I believe this damage may be a result of one of O'Bannon's torpedoes. The damage could also come from Sterett who will hit Hiei with two more torpedoes later in the battle, but O'Bannon said her torpedoes struck amidships and Sterett said hers struck aft and I believe they hit under turret 3. This is just aft of the starboard hull break, so the second torpedo likely hit where she is broken at frame 156, but this evidence was destroyed when she ripped in half. These torpedo hits play a significant role in why the wreck of Hiei is no longer intact. You can see her main armor belt and her lower 3-inch belt have been exposed. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

Kirishima and Harusame are headed north. Nagara turned back to west. Yukikaze turned around and headed northwest. Captain Hara on the Amatsukaze wrote; "The second ship, Barton stopped short to avoid collision with Aaron Ward. At that moment, two minutes (actually 3 minutes) after the launching of my torpedoes, two pillars of fire shot high in the air from Barton. These fireworks subsided so quickly that I rubbed my eyes in disbelief. The ship, broken in two sank instantly. I heaved a deep sigh. It was a spectacular kill and there was a roaring ovation from my crew, but I didn't hear it. It was too easy. My own feeling was one of satisfaction rather than exultation. It was the first real war test of my theory, which was now a proven formula."¹¹²

Inazuma heads northwest with Ikazuchi following Inazuma. Yudachi were still exchanging gunfire with Juneau.

¹¹² Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 134.

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U.S. Ships

Cushing was losing power going dead in water and *Laffey* headed west also losing power. *Sterett* turned to the west chasing *Hiei*. On *O'Bannon* before firing the remainder of her torpedo salvo, it was intended to await the results of shots 1 and 2. It was then decided to fire the remainder of a torpedo salvo. Just as the third torpedo was fired, a tremendous explosion was noted and the battleship was enveloped from bow to stern in a great sheet of flame. Burning particles fell on this vessel's forecastle. It was decided not to fire more torpedoes at this time, it being considered killed by these torpedo hits. Torpedo fire was checked.¹¹³ *O'Bannon* likely describes not only her torpedo hits but a magazine explosion around casement guns No. 6 and No. 7 which occurs at 0158 from two shells fired from *Portland*.

Atlanta was withdrawing toward Lunga Point to the south. *San Francisco* not engaged with anyone at this time. *Portland* not engaged with anyone at this time. *Helena* was not engaging anyone at this time. *Juneau* and *Yudachi* were likely still exchanging gunfire.

Aaron Ward reported, a destroyer, apparently the *Barton*, blew up and sunk immediately. She was close on our starboard side, distance about 1,000 yards, bearing 130° relative.¹¹⁴

After about 7 minutes of continuous firing, *Barton* has stopped to avoid collision with an unidentified friendly ship (*Atlanta*) ahead when one torpedo, evidently from enemy column to the right, strikes the forward fire room on the starboard side. A few seconds later a second torpedo strikes the forward engine room. The ship breaks in two and sinks in approximately 10 seconds. Survivors from the *Barton* are few and the total number is not known at the time. It is estimated that 40 enlisted men and 2 officers were all that remained.¹¹⁵ The wreck of U.S.S. *Barton* was discovered by Bob Ballard in 1992. The bow section lays on its port side with both forward mounts pointing to port.¹¹⁶ This is an indication *Barton* never realized the threat coming from starboard. In all likelihood *Aaron Ward* slowing to avoid *Atlanta* allowed *Barton* to pull up alongside to starboard. Then *Barton* backed down to avoid *Atlanta* who was headed south, taking the hits that would have struck *Aaron Ward*. *Barton* suffered 165 KIA, 31 WIA. Lieutenant Commander Fox awarded a second Navy Cross, posthumously. The *Allen M. Sumner* class destroyer DD-779 was later named in honor of Fox.

Monssen was heading north. *Fletcher* at 0156 (0157) *Barton* (second ship ahead) exploded and simply disappeared in fragments. The *Monssen*, low in the water, had by this time

¹¹³ U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

¹¹⁴ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

¹¹⁵ U.S.S. *Barton* DD599, Serial 00554 A16-3/L11, November 26, 1942. Report of Action of November 12-13, 1942. Lieut. (jg) Harlowe M. White.

¹¹⁶ The Lost Ships of Guadalcanal by Robert Ballard pages 154-155.

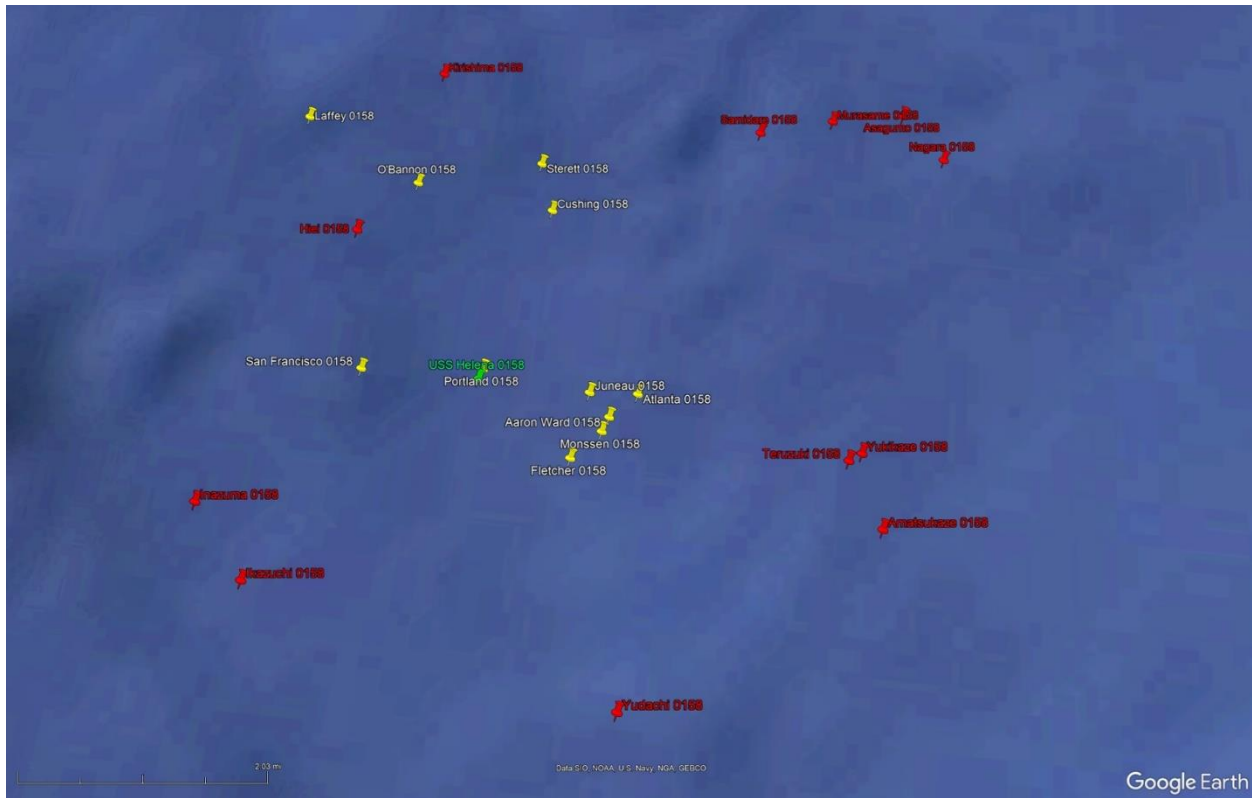
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dropped aft on *Fletcher's* starboard beam and the *Aaron Ward* pulled out on the port bow. At the same time (illuminated by *Barton's* flames) one torpedo was seen to broach and porpoise about 50 yards ahead, two were seen to pass under the ship from starboard to port and one passed astern making a surface run. (Likely torpedoes from *Amatsukaze* and possibly *Yukikaze* or *Teruzuki*.) Medium caliber shells were splashing on both sides of us. The situation at this time became very confused. Our column had disintegrated; the cruisers appeared to have turned left to course 270° and were engaging heavy units ahead. The *Juneau* was crossing our line of fire and necessitated shifted to a target farther aft. Fire from both sides was still heavy and sustained. Apparently, the northerly group of enemies had turned south down our starboard side and fired torpedoes at the starboard side of the rear of our column. One of the destroyers was observed to have a stack marking of white stripe over red strips. Own five-inch guns continued to fire all during the preceding events with unknown results. Two or three men are reasonably sure they saw a medium sized ship catch fire in several places, but, with all the chaos, there was no coherent information.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, C.O. W.M. Cole.

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0158



Map 12

Japanese Ships

Hiei was burning furiously but her course is headed back west towards the U.S. cruisers coming north. She is alone with absolutely no screen and now she has lost the support of her sister *Kirishima* as she is headed north. *Hiei* has taken at least two destroyer torpedoes and more are headed for her from *Monssen.*, approaching her port side. *Hiei* will soon be engaged by *Portland* who will fire four salvos at the battleship. She suffers at least three more hits all likely from *Portland*, the first in the vicinity of the special (reserve) officer's room, near No. 1 main turret. Two shells hits near the side of No. 6 gun pierced the ships side armor and caused an induced explosion at the rear, in a nearby power magazine, the shells exploded at the side of No. 7 gun.

Kirishima is headed away from battle to the north. Lt. Ikeda report states that she was firing for 10 minutes before she checked fire. During the battle, *Kirishima* fired 27 Type 1 AP, 22 Type 3 incendiary and 8 Type 0 HC 14-in shells, plus 313 secondary caliber shells. *Kirishima*'s role in this battle is now over as she will not open fire again. She heads north away from the battle leaving her sister behind. I believe she damaged *Atlanta*, *Portland*, *Cushing*,

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Sterett and *Laffey* in the engagement. In all, 7 sailors from her were killed and several wounded during this action.¹¹⁸

Asagumo, *Murasame* and *Samidare* are engaged with *O'Bannon* and *Murasame* is significantly damaged in this exchange. *Nagara* has stopped illuminating *Juneau* and the Group 3 destroyers. *Yudachi* was cutting across the U.S. line to the south and still may be engaged by *Juneau* stern mounts. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* are headed northwest and closing on *San Francisco*'s port side. *Harusame* is well to the north and continues to withdraw from the battle.

Yukikaze, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* are in the process of turning back to the northwest. Captain Hara on the *Amatsukaze* wrote; "*The flares burned down and out. In the renewed darkness, Amatsukaze looped out of her firing hyperbola and headed back west, while I determined what to do. In the distance I could see Hiei barely silhouetted by its own fires. We headed in her direction. A few minutes later we saw dim, intermittent flashes to port. The flashes outlined a sleek ship, with four masts, definitely an enemy, possibly a cruiser! Torpedoes ready, I ordered. Target 70° to port.*"¹¹⁹ The cruiser he saw was *Juneau*.

U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* have lost power and are now drifting. *Sterett* is now pursuing *Hiei* to the west at flank speed, hoping to fire her torpedoes. *O'Bannon* is engaged with *Asagumo*'s group.

Atlanta continues her withdraw towards Lunga Point and *San Francisco* is not engaged with any enemy ships at this time.

Portland is getting ready to fire her fifth salvo at *Hiei* when the ship receives a torpedo hit near the stern on the starboard side, shearing the inboard screws, flooding steering aft and bending out the shell plating on the starboard side to form an extensive right rudder. The explosion centered at frame 134.¹²⁰ Ship began circling to right and turning could not be counteracted by the two outboard screws. A four-degree list to starboard was promptly removed.

¹¹⁸ Kobayashi Michio. *Senkan "Kirishima" no Saigo* (The Last of Battleship *Kirishima*). Saiaku no Senjô Gadarukanaru Senki 1987, pp. 350-361.

¹¹⁹ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 134.

¹²⁰ *Yudachi* claimed this hit at 0158 but this may be a case of hindsight after reading *Portland*'s report after the war. *Helena* claimed *Portland* lost steering control at 0218. I have my doubts *Portland* suffered a crippling hit at this time and am more inclined to believe *Helena*'s report that *Portland* was torpedoed around 0218 and more likely 0222. If she took a torpedo at 0158, she was not crippled and can still steer. *Portland* will circle to the right and *Helena* will briefly separate from her but re-join her at 0214 and fall in behind her. They together headed 092° east at 15 knots and clearly *Portland* can still steer at this time. By 0216 speed was reduced to 10 knots and at 0220 increased to 18 knots. At 0218 *Helena* reported *Portland* lost steering control and she begins to circle at this time and by 0235 *Portland* requests help. U.S.S. *Fletcher* fired her torpedoes at what appears to be an *Augusta* class cruiser heading 090° at 15 knots but gives a time of 0222 and a second salvo at 0223 reported three hits aft six minutes after she fired. The times provided of 0222 and 0223 are actually when the torpedoes hit so she fired at

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As the first swing to the right was completed a *Haruna* type battleship became clearly visible. Fire was opened on the battleship and continued by the forward turrets throughout the swing, four hitting salvos being fired, range 4,000 yards. Sometime later the *Helena* drew forward along her starboard side and passes clear. At about the same time a friendly destroyer was about 1,000 yards to port. This may not have been a friendly destroyer and was either *Inazuma* or *Ikazuchi* which are about to fire into *San Francisco* from the port side. The four salvos fired at the battleship concluded *Portland*'s main battery firing.¹²¹ In the confused picture of burning and milling ships it became impossible to distinguish friend from foe. The action drew away from this vessel. Star shell illumination of the enemy was continued as long as they remained within range.

Helena and *Juneau* continued north. *Aaron Ward* sighted the badly damaged ship and believed she was sinking. "Another ship, forward of the starboard beam, apparently a cruiser, rolled over on her side and sank, distance about 1,500 yards."¹²² This observation was likely in reference to the sinking of *Barton* at 0157. *Monssen* continued north following *Aaron Ward* and *Fletcher* breaks formation turning to the southwest.

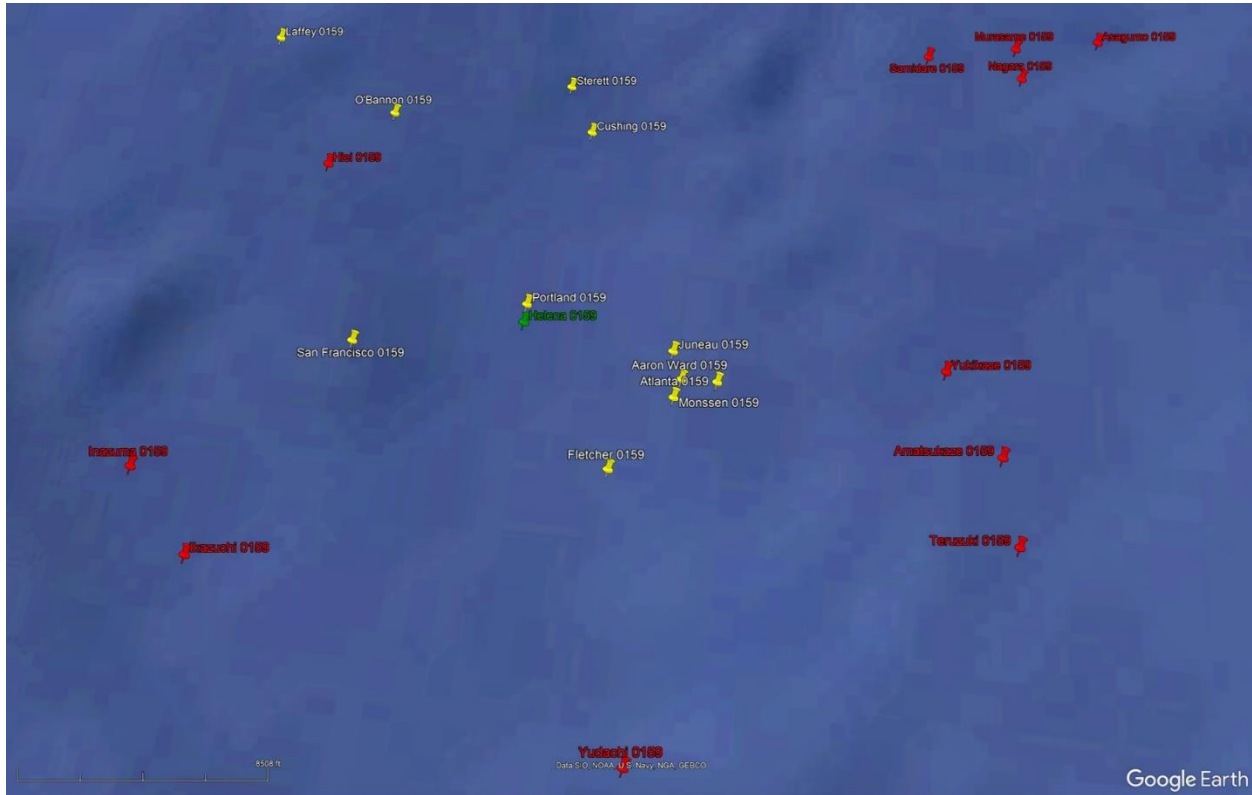
0216 and 0217. She described her targets as firing to the north and at 0215 *Helena* was firing at U.S.S. *Aaron Ward* to the north and I believe U.S.S. *Fletcher* fired at *Portland* at 0216 and hitting her at between 0222 and 0223 At 0235 *Portland* gave her position as Lat. 09-18 S., Long, 159-58 E. Still turning in tight circles. At 0158 *Portland* was at 9°16'0.45"S, 159°55'1.48"E and that is a difference of 8,246 yards. I am not sure *Yudachi* scored a hit at 0158 but if she did, she did not cripple *Portland*. I am more confident *Fletcher* accidentally torpedoed *Portland* around 0222-0223. This is further confirmed because at this time *Sterett* is illuminated by a ship to her south suffering a large explosion and *Sterett* begins to take gunfire from *Asagumo* at this time. If *Fletcher*'s torpedoes don't hit, then there is no illumination of *Sterett*. I note that at 0158 *Helena* directly behind *Portland* makes no mention of her getting hit.

¹²¹ This description of events actually occurs over several minutes between 0158 and 0202. She does not turn and separate from *Helena* until 0202 and then she heads south and *Helena* continued north. This turn may have been done to avoid gunfire from *Hiei*.

¹²² U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

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0159



Map 13

Japanese Ships

As *Hiei* moved to the southwest she was suddenly struck on the port side by two torpedoes in the vicinity of No. 6 and No. 9 boiler-rooms.¹²³ This caused flooding in the area but no loss of navigational ability. These torpedoes came from *Monssen* who had fired them at 0156. *Hiei* remained under fire from *Portland*.

¹²³ The film of the wreck of *Hiei* cannot absolutely confirm these hits as this was where she was broken on the port side, but I do believe that these hits took place and played a role in why *Hiei* broke where she did. The ROV did not film the port side nearly as well as it did the starboard side and these hits would have taken place roughly where she tore in half. In addition, she suffered a secondary magazine explosion at casemate gun No. 6 and No. 7. The wreck shows that in this approximate area there is a large gash with the two upper armored belts seem to be missing. I believe the combination of *Monssen*'s torpedoes and this magazine explosion weakened the hull girder at this point on the port side and this is why she broke up here after she capsized.

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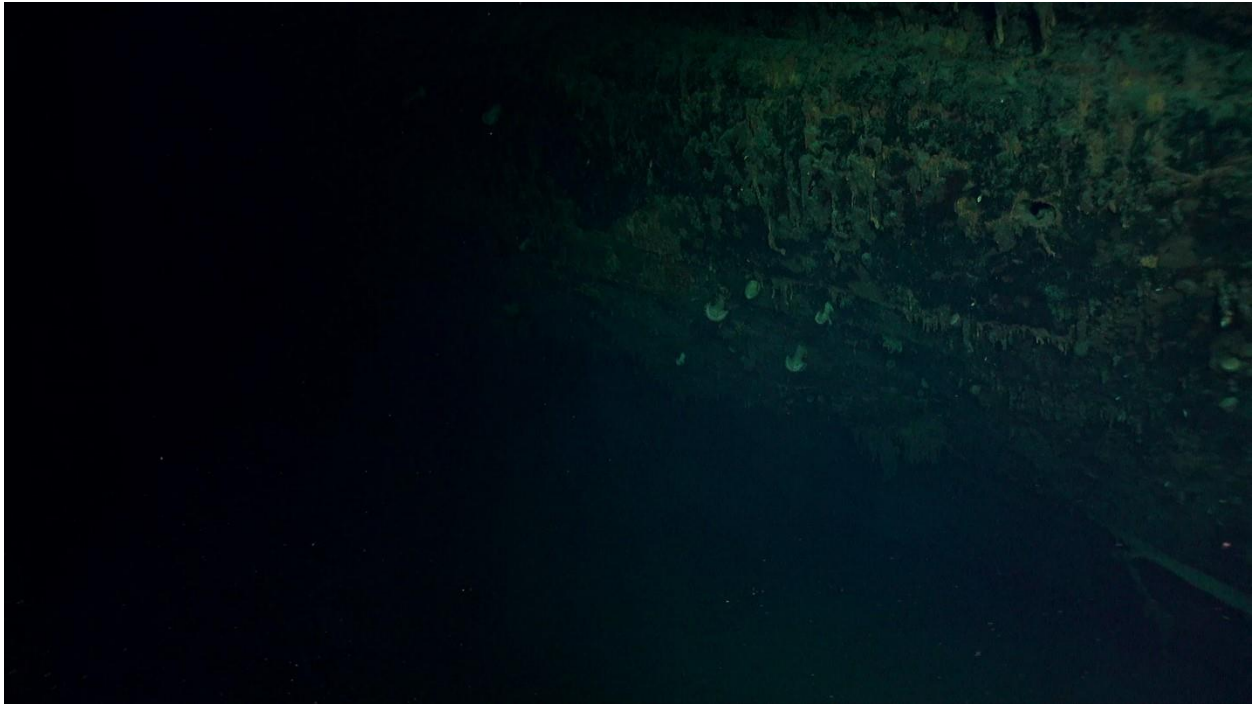


Figure 8

Figure 8

This is the area very close to the port side break up which shows massive damage and where I believe Monssen's torpedoes struck about frame 124, but absolute confirmation is impossible because I also believe these two torpedo hits play a role in why she broke in half. There is a possible 8-inch shell hit through the armor belt, but I also caution it may be a shadow. The massive hole below this is where the upper belts used to be. This may be where she suffered a secondary magazine explosion around casemate gun No. 6 and No. 7. If the smaller hole is indeed an 8-inch shell hit it was from the Portland. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 9

Figure 9

This is the port side hull break at approximately frame 116. I believe Hiei had rolled onto her starboard side and was sinking by the stern. As she settled aft, she attempted to lift her bow out of the water placing all the stress on her port side and she ripped where Monssen's torpedoes had struck her. This was also the area she suffered a secondary magazine explosion around casemate gun #6 and #7. Once she separated the stern section quickly sank but the bow section had enough reserve buoyancy to drift and has not been discovered. I do believe it is intact and likely close by. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

Harusame, Kirishima, Nagara, Asagumo, Murasame and Samidare are headed north and away from battle. Yudachi was headed west loosely following Inazuma and Ikazuchi who are closing on San Francisco's port side. Yukikaze, Amatsukaze and Teruzuki are headed back to the northwest.

On board Amatsukaze Hara wrote, "Torpedoes ready, sir Lt. Miyoshi called back like a student answering his professor, with no trace of his earlier impatience. All Right, hold it, hold it, hold it, the target is moving ahead. Easy, easy, easier target than the last. Miyoshi, use only four torpedoes this time, not eight, steady, steady, fire. In hushed silence, the four deadly fish left at 2359."¹²⁴ She fired four torpedoes at Juneau. Yukikaze, Amatsukaze and Teruzuki still do not open fire with guns so as to not reveal their positions.

¹²⁴ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 136.

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U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* are now both dead in the water, *Sterett* was pursuing *Hiei* to the west. *O'Bannon* reported that her gun targets were lost to starboard. Fire was ceased and ship was swung right to reverse course to about 090° true. At this time there were five burning and exploding vessels on the starboard quarter and one explosion was noted at a long range off forward of the port quarter. Control reported that no definite targets could be picked up, Conn could see nothing.¹²⁵

Atlanta continued her withdraw to the southeast. *San Francisco* headed west but was currently not engaging any ship. *Portland* was likely firing at *Hiei*. *Helena* was searching for targets and reported, "More gunfire reported, where?"¹²⁶ *Juneau* continued north I do not believe she is firing at anyone at this time.

Aaron Ward prepared to fire torpedo battery on a battleship or heavy cruiser to port, bearing about 265° relative, target angle 180° true, but did not fire due to sighting cruiser believed to be *San Francisco*, bearing 280° relative, target angle 270° distance about 1,500 yards.¹²⁷ This was fortunate because her target would have been *Fletcher* who had pulled out of the formation and was now headed southwest.

On the *Monssen* one of the 20 mm gunners reported the two torpedo hits on *Hiei* between forward superstructure and mainmast. Several other survivors reported two heavy underwater explosions on this target. These hits were observed at about three minutes after the torpedoes were launched. A few seconds before the hits on *Hiei* were observed, another target was observed broad on the starboard beam and was believed to be a cruiser or destroyer, more likely the latter. It appeared to be making no speed relative to the previous target, so another spread of five torpedoes were fired singly, by electricity from the forward tubes using the same set up and torpedo speed and depth setting as was used on the previous target. The range was again estimated at 4,000 yards.¹²⁸ These torpedoes were likely fired at the *Atlanta*, which was not moving very fast at this time and was attempting to withdraw toward Lunga Point, but luckily, they failed to hit.

The *Fletcher* then turned hard left (backing port engine) proceeded at maximum speed and threaded through the remainder of enemy disposition, firing at random. Commenced making smoke and retired to south-southwest about 6,000 yards. Started turn to right to return and

¹²⁵ U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

¹²⁶ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹²⁷ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

¹²⁸ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

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deliver torpedo attack when a large ship was seen emerging from the melee. She was northeast of *Fletcher* at this time and moving to the right on a southerly or southeasterly course. About this time the general firing became sporadic, seeming to consist of individual duels.¹²⁹ The ship *Fletcher* observes is *Portland* who is in a melee with *Hiei* and turns to right and will head south between 0202 and 0204.

¹²⁹ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, C.O. W.M. Cole.

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U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* are now drifting, *Sterett* was heading west in pursuit of *Hiei*. *O'Bannon* was not firing at anyone at this time. *Atlanta* was attempting to withdraw may briefly come under fire from *Monssen*.

San Francisco resumed firing at an enemy battleship, probably the second battleship of the center group on the starboard bow.¹³⁰ At about the same time the *San Francisco* was taken under fire by an enemy cruiser on her starboard side and a destroyer, which had crossed her bow and was passing down her port side. At this time *San Francisco* was making 17 knots.¹³¹

Portland likely fired her last salvos at *Hiei* between 0158 and 0202. *Portland* reported that she was adequately illuminated by the many flares and stars which were everywhere. *Hiei* was firing at *Portland*, but practically all of her salvos were passing overhead.¹³² *Helena* that the ship ahead of her was illuminating (this may have been *Hiei* using star shells and illuminating *Portland* and *San Francisco*). *Juneau* headed north not aware that torpedoes were racing toward her. *Aaron Ward* headed north.

Monssen saw a friendly destroyer at about 30° on port bow being heavily hit by an enemy cruiser or destroyer at close range, this was likely *Hiei* under fire from *Portland*. *Monssen* opened fire with her guns for the first time, reporting that the range to the enemy vessel was estimated to be about 6,000 yards, target angle 330° and a second target bearing 150°. The 5" battery was ordered to open fire on the port side target with all four guns. *Monssen* began firing in salvo, director controlled. There was no illumination at this time, but she believed that several hits were scored on this target. The target vessel ceased firing and *Monssen* ceased fire. This action was believed to have lasted 30-45 seconds. *Monssen* was still undamaged.¹³³ The target bearing 330° was *Hiei*. There is the possibility that *Hiei*'s shots that were overshooting *Portland* were falling close to *Monssen*.

The target bearing 150° was *Atlanta* attempting to withdraw. Before the last 5 torpedoes fired by *Monssen* at 0159 could reach the *Atlanta*, the 5" battery opened fire to port on *Hiei*. The Chief Torpedoman, who was missing in action, told a surviving torpedo striker at the time, that he thought that there was a possible hit resulting from the second spread.¹³⁴ During this period in

¹³⁰ This is where I believed *Kirishima* had hit *San Francisco* because *San Francisco* believed it was the second battleship that had hit her. This is incorrect. *Hiei* had turned around and was now heading west while *Kirishima* withdrew to the north separating the two battleships. By 0200 *Kirishima* had checked fire and was no longer engaged with any U.S. ship. So *Hiei* engaged *San Francisco* on her starboard side and *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* engaged her on her port side.

¹³¹ U.S.S. *San Francisco*, CA-38, War Damage Report U.S. No. 26 BuShips, 20 March, 1942, Gunfire Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

¹³² U.S.S. *Portland* CA-33, War Damage Report No. 35 BuShips, 1 March 1944, Gunfire and Torpedo Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

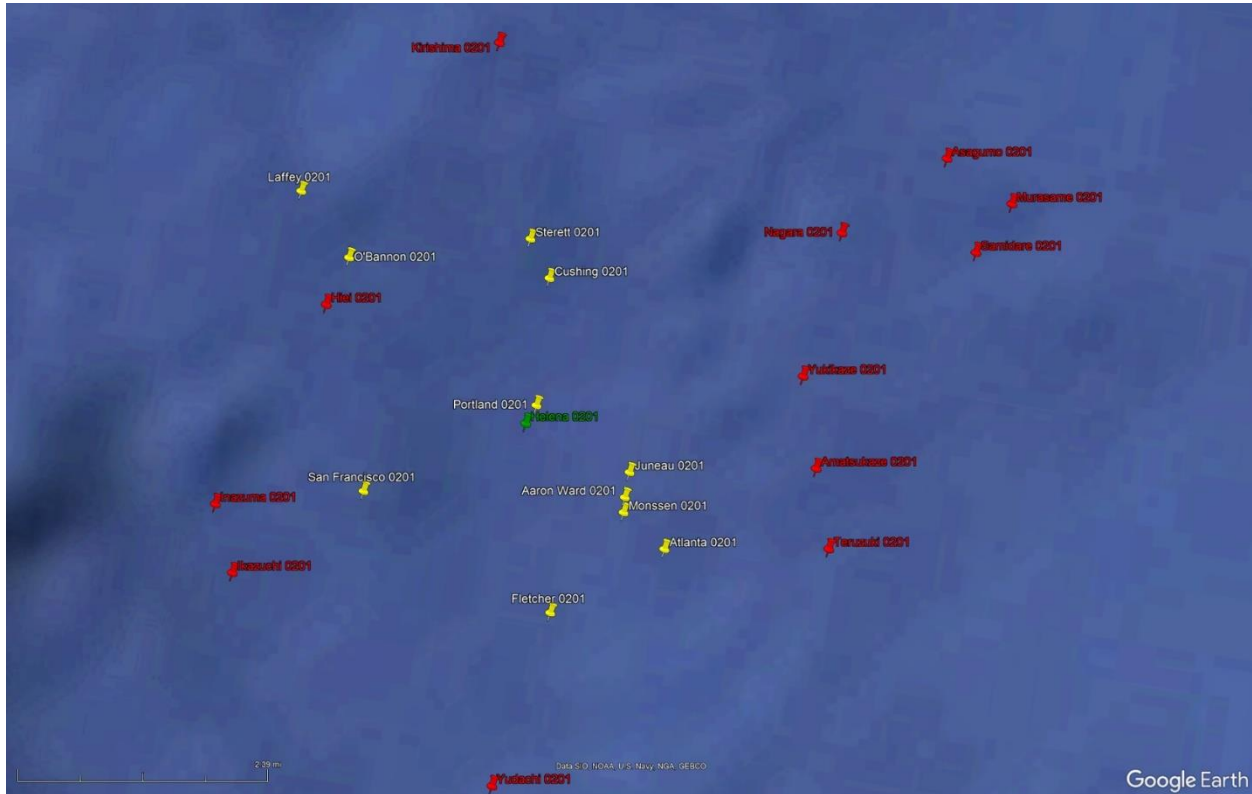
¹³³ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

¹³⁴ I do not believe any ship was hit by these torpedoes, all missed, or the range was too short for them to arm properly.

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which all torpedoes were fired, *Monssen* was not under fire but had been illuminated by star shells from port.¹³⁵ *Fletcher* was making a swing to the southwest and eventually southeast.

0201



Map 15

Japanese Ships

Hiei hits *San Francisco* with at least four 14-inch shells in her opening salvo from her forward guns. Her secondary battery also opens fire on *San Francisco*. *Hiei*'s aft main battery turrets fire on *Portland*.

Inazuma and *Ikazuchi* fired into *San Francisco*'s port side. *Ikazuchi* takes three 5-inch shell hits from *San Francisco*. *Yudachi* is headed west and was far to the south of the battle area.

¹³⁵ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

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Kirishima, *Nagara*, *Harusame*, *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* are all withdrawing from the battle to the north. *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* are headed northwest but are still looking for targets.

U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* are now dead in the water, *Sterett* headed west trying to gain a position to fire torpedoes at *Hiei*. *O'Bannon* at 0201 swung hard left to avoid the sinking bow of what was now believed to be the *Laffey*. Many personnel were sighted in the water and about 50 life jackets were thrown over from this ship. Shortly thereafter, torpedo wakes, at least two, were seen to pass ahead. This vessel swung hard left.¹³⁶ *Atlanta* is withdrawing toward Lunga point to the southeast and was taking fire from *Monssen*'s light machine guns and aft 5-inch gun. She is unable to reply.

Of the first four 14-inch shell hits from *Hiei* on *San Francisco*, I believe Hit No. 2, No. 5, No. 6 and No. 7 were all 14-inch shell hits from *Hiei* by either type 3 or type 0 projectiles. BuShips reported *San Francisco* was hit by 45 projectiles all likely struck her between 0200-0202. BuShips estimated *San Francisco* took two 14-inch, ten 8-inch, fifteen 6-inch, five 5.5-inch and thirteen 5-inch shells. I believe *San Francisco* took eight 14-inch, twenty-two 6-inch all from *Hiei* and fifteen 5-inch projectiles from *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* based on the ships I believe actually fired on her.¹³⁷

Before her port side secondary battery was silenced *San Francisco* hits *Ikazuchi* with three 5-inch shells in return. *San Francisco* began to turn south and away and eventually back east exposing her port side to *Hiei*. *San Francisco* was under enemy fire from three directions. The port 5" battery engaged the destroyer but was put out of action except for gun No 8. The starboard 5" battery was put out of action by the first or second salvo which hit from the battleship on the starboard side. At the time of these later hits *San Francisco* was swinging left. The main battery continued firing on the battleship as long as it could bear. The sequence of events from this point until the end of the engagement is uncertain. Many hits were received from both the battleship and cruiser on the starboard side and several from the destroyer on the port side before the latter was put out of action.¹³⁸

All officers including Admiral Callaghan on the navigation bridge except the communications officer were either killed or badly wounded by these hits, steering and engine control were lost and were shifted to battle II. Almost immediately battle II was put out of action

¹³⁶ I do not think this occurred at 0201. I think this will occur at around 0207. I believe *Laffey* was accidentally sunk by *Sterett* who fired a torpedo salvo of four torpedoes at 0205 and possibly two torpedoes hit *Laffey* around 0207 and the remaining two hit *Hiei* at 0208. So, I have no doubt that this event occurred just that the timing at 0201 was a bit early by about six minutes.

¹³⁷ U.S.S. *San Francisco*, CA-38, War Damage Report No. 26 BuShips, 20 March, 1942, Gunfire Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

¹³⁸ U.S.S. *San Francisco*, CA-38, War Damage Report No. 26 BuShips, 20 March, 1942, Gunfire Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

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by a direct hit from the port side and control was lost again. In the meantime, control had been established by the communications officer in the conning tower when it was found that this station was still operative. Shortly thereafter a shell hit the top of the conning tower from the starboard side and steering and engine control were again temporarily lost. This was due to the fact that power was deliberately cut to this station following the hit because it was uncertain how much damage had been done. However, the circuits were found to be in good order and power was restored. During the interval conning was continued by giving orders to central station over the LVJ phones (early walkie-talkie). By this time all exterior communications (TBS, radio, search lights, blinker guns and fighting lights) were out of commission and it was impossible to communicate with the other ships of the force.¹³⁹ Heavily damaged, *San Francisco* suffered 86 KIA (including 7 USMC) and 85 WIA in the surface battle. She received a Presidential Unit Citation and Rear Admiral Callaghan was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor. Captain Young was awarded a posthumous Navy Cross (he had previously been awarded the Medal of Honor at Pearl Harbor.)

Portland is swinging to starboard and will head south. *Helena* reported a heavy cruiser (believed to be *Portland*) turning to right.¹⁴⁰ *Helena* separated with *Portland* and continues north alone.¹⁴¹ *Juneau* and *Aaron Ward* continued north, unaware that torpedoes were closing on them.

Monssen was bringing up the rear. *Monssen* reported almost immediately star shells began bursting above and slightly ahead. These appeared to be coming from port quarter. Course was changed with full rudder at full speed to about 040° true. During this maneuver and at about 0221 (0201) a destroyer was sighted close aboard to starboard, range about 500 to 1,000 yards on course about 150° true and either stopped or making very slow speed. All starboard 20 mm guns (five) opened fire on this target and sprayed her entire upper works with 800 to 1,000 rounds. Gun #4 seeing this target opened fire and expended about 5 or 6 rounds at point blank range, local control. None of this fire was returned by this enemy vessel. It was definitely described as being a destroyer with low superstructure and having two stacks, each having two white bands near the top of each stack. Still *Monssen* had not been hit.¹⁴² The star shells likely came from *Hiei* illuminating *San Francisco* and *Portland*. Her crippled target bearing 150° true was *Atlanta*. *Fletcher* is headed south and will eventually head back east but is tracking *Portland* as if she was an enemy ship.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

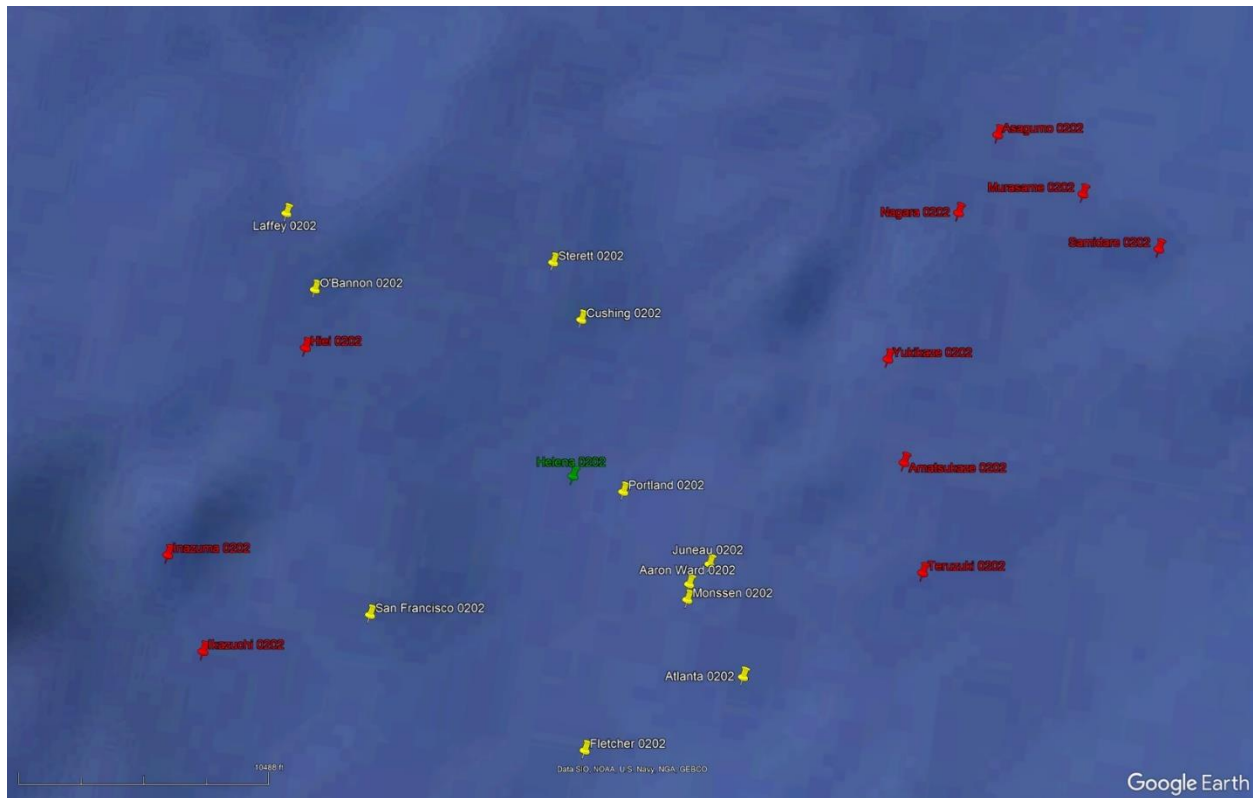
¹⁴⁰ This is when *Portland* begins to turn right not at 0158.

¹⁴¹ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹⁴² U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

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0202



Map 16

Japanese Ships

San Francisco turning around now, exposing her port side to *Hiei*. *Hiei* unleashes another salvo hitting *San Francisco* again with her forward guns. Her secondary guns are firing at *San Francisco*. Her aft main battery guns are still firing at *Portland*. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* are engaging *San Francisco*. *Yudachi* continued west but is not firing at anyone at this time.

Kirishima, *Nagara*, *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* headed north and withdrew from the battle. *Harusame* at this time had effectively withdrawn from the battle area but will return very late in the engagement. *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* are headed northwest and are about to engage *Aaron Ward* and *Monssen* but have not yet opened fire.

On *Amatsukaze* Hara wrote, “Three minutes and 40 seconds later, a large reddish flame rose from our target. It was the American cruiser *Juneau*, that had been exchanging gunfire with *Yudachi*. My crewmen roared with joy. Lt. Shimizu, the gunnery officer wanted to bombard the target and finish it off. I said no Shimizu, let’s leave the spoil for our friend *Yudachi*. Don’t

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be impatient. We'll have plenty of targets. Shelling at this stage would only expose our position to the enemy."¹⁴³

U.S. Ships

Cushing after losing power and going dead in the water. She continues to fire on enemy targets using illumination from other ships. When she could no longer identify friend from foe, fire was checked since she had been the leading ship but now the other U.S. ships were passing her. After being hit by the two ships from opposite sides, no guns were able to fire and ready ammunition in #2 Gun Shelter caught fire. As steam and diesel power had failed and the one remaining undamaged hand-billy was inadequate, this fire could not be put out. Her Repair parties had been practically wiped out by hits in the Machine Shop and near the Galley. The Commanding Officer ordered boats and rafts in the water. One boat had been shot away and the other holed. All life rafts except 2 (1 of these picked up after air attack on afternoon of November 12) were broken up by shell fire. Fires broke out aft in the living Compartments; in after Machine Gun Ammunition and the fires in #2 Gun Shelter was beyond control.¹⁴⁴

Laffey was crippled, *Sterett* was pursuing *Hiei* and headed west to gain a position to launch torpedoes. *O'Bannon* began to turn away from *Hiei* and passed *Laffey* as she withdrew. *Atlanta* was withdrawing toward Lunga point to the southeast.

Shots from *Hiei*'s second 14-inch salvo strike *San Francisco*. Hit No. 41, Hit No. 43, Hit No. 44 and Hit No. 45 are all likely 14-inch Type 3 or Type 0 projectiles. *San Francisco* withdraws to the east. *Portland* was now headed south and her starboard side faces *Hiei*. *Helena* reported large explosion to starboard. Likely this was *Juneau* getting hit by a torpedo. *Helena* continued north on course 000°.

I do not believe *Juneau* was still engaging *Yudachi* at this time, but this occurred earlier in the battle. *Juneau* was hit by a single torpedo. This torpedo hit on the portside in the forward fire room.¹⁴⁵ This hit killed nineteen men and was very devastating. It flooded out the plotting room, radio 3, the forward fire room and the bulkhead to the forward engine room gave way and it also flooded. All gunnery control and steering control was knocked out and she went dead in the water for a time. All gyros and all mechanical works of the ship were out of commission, so

¹⁴³ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 136.

¹⁴⁴ U.S.S. *Cushing*, DD-376, Serial A16-3, November 16, 1942, Report of engagement off Savo Island on November 13, 1942 and destruction of the U.S.S. *Cushing*, E.H. Parker.

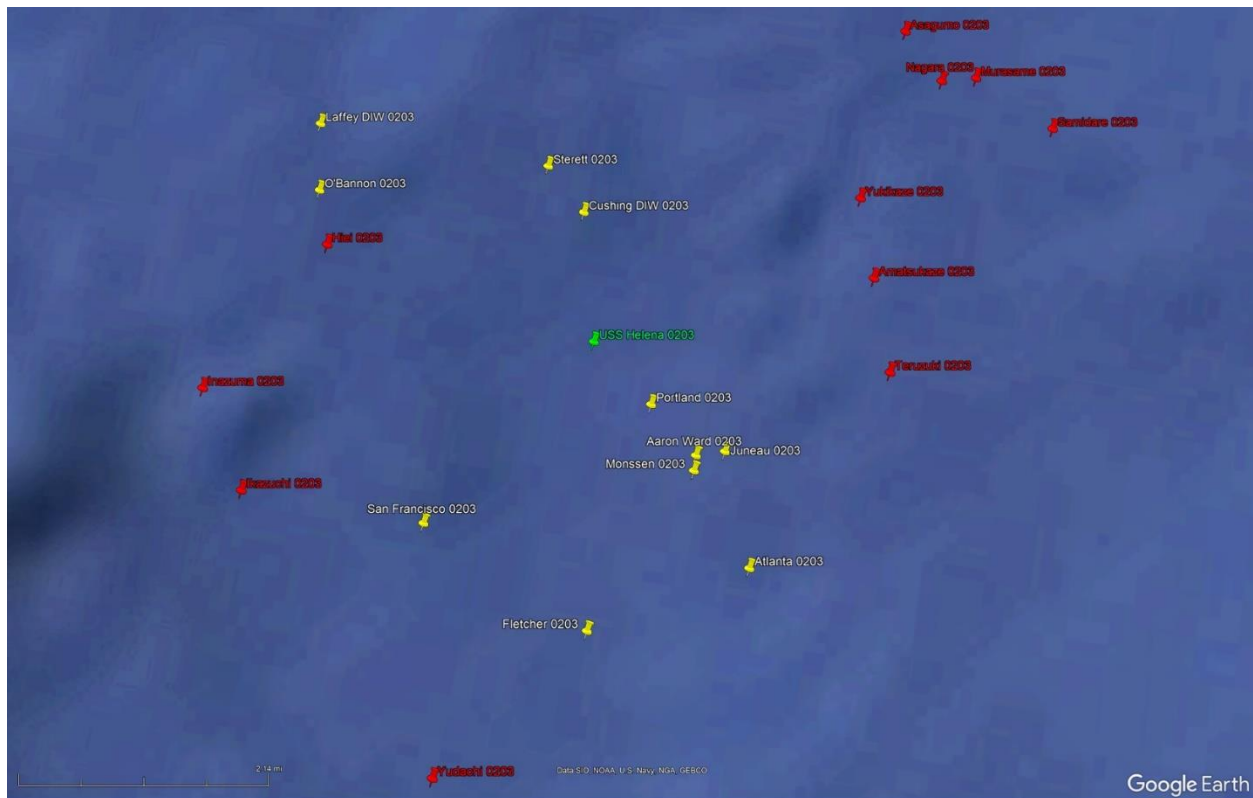
¹⁴⁵ I don't think the torpedo hit on the port side but on her starboard side, *Amatsukaze* was always on *Juneau*'s starboard side. Unfortunately, when *I-26* hits and sinks her the submarine torpedo hit in the same location and she was torn in half. I simply think this is an error in the primary documents based on memory. L.E. Zook recorded this May 27, 1943. I do not dispute that she was struck in the forward fire room or *Amatsukaze* scored the hit, simply the reported side seems incorrect to me.

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she had to steer from steering aft, following commands from the bridge. As gunnery control was knocked out as well, she left the battle.¹⁴⁶

Aaron Ward continued north followed by *Monssen*. *Fletcher* was looping to the south and will eventually turn east.

0203



Map 17

Japanese Ships

Hiei now engages both *Monssen* and *Aaron Ward* with her main battery hitting both destroyers. Her secondary battery likely engaged *Monssen*. I believe it is likely her forward guns engaged *Monssen* and her aft guns engaged *Aaron Ward*.

Inazuma and *Ikazuchi* likely check fire on *San Francisco*. This was their last combat role in the battle. Both destroyers now head west. *Inazuma* has escaped damage and *Ikazuchi*

¹⁴⁶ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Battle of Guadalcanal, narrative by L. E. Zook, Signalman First Class U.S.N. recorded May 27, 1943.

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suffered three 8-inch shell hits and three 5-inch shell hits. *Yudachi* continued west. *Kirishima*, *Nagara*, *Asagumo*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* all headed north. *Harusame* actually steered toward Savo Island looking for *Yudachi*.

Hara observed a closing ship or ships but was not able to identify their shape. Hara wrote, "*Lieutenant Miyoshi and Shimizu shouted their readiness but, at the crucial moment I wavered again, we must identify the ship for sure and not fire at a friend under any circumstances. In desperation I ordered searchlights. Our target appeared unmistakably to be an enemy cruiser. I ordered open fire with everything we had. Four torpedoes leaped out. They were the last of our full load, all six guns fired for the first time in this battle.*"¹⁴⁷ Her target was *Monssen*. It was very likely that *Yukikaze* and *Teruzuki* also opened fire on *Monssen* and *Aaron Ward* at this time.

U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* are both dead in water and *Sterett* were sailing west trying to get into position to fire torpedoes at *Hiei*. *O'Bannon* experiences a heavy underwater explosion which seemed to be close aboard on the port beam. It is likely that she felt the torpedo hit on *Juneau* as she was to *O'Bannon's* port side and it would take a minute for the sound to travel the distance. This may have been depth charges from *Laffey*, but since it was a single sharp explosion, it was believed that, rather than depth charges, it may have been a torpedo detonating at end of run. In any case, *O'Bannon* loses all light and power. These were regained very quickly but many electrical circuits had been ruptured. The gun and torpedo controls were reported available in local control.¹⁴⁸

Atlanta was withdrawing toward Lunga point to the southeast. *San Francisco* loops south and then back to the east in an attempt to withdraw. She was seriously damaged at this point. *Portland* is headed south.

Helena's radar plot at about this time reported that she had at least six enemy ships on her starboard side heading in northerly direction. (This was *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki*). While putting the main battery on one of these targets one was observed to be firing then on her starboard bow. She changed course left to 290° true and was making 16 knots.¹⁴⁹ *Juneau* was in a state of shock trying to regain power and steering after the torpedo hit.

Aaron Ward reported a hole approximately 30" x 30" was scored in the outboard bulkhead. Furnishings in the room were demolished and a fire had started. Shrapnel had pierced chart stowage, bulkhead of radar room, vent duct at frame 51, port and starboard bulkheads along passage A-0103-CL, transmitter trunks to Radio 1, TBK and TBL transmitters, RSB and crew's

¹⁴⁷ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 138.

¹⁴⁸ U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

¹⁴⁹ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

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broadcast receiver and caused many shrapnel holes in the deck of the bridge. This hit cut the major portion of OCL and OCJ power cables, fire control cables to main battery director, torpedo director, telephone circuits and steering control circuits in trunk line. It was estimated that this damage was caused by a 14" bombardment projectile likely from *Hiei*.¹⁵⁰

A second projectile produced a hole 30" in diameter between frames 57-60. Shrapnel holes in deck and all bulkheads of galley. Water lines were broken, causing plotting room to flood to 10". Shrapnel holes in galley sinks, galley lower half-door, inboard center-line galley bulkhead and through wardroom pantry door. Fire control cables to main battery director, telephone circuits, CCL and QCJ cables in trunks were broken. Damaged galley control and wiring circuits. Estimated size of shell - 14" bombardment likely from *Hiei*.¹⁵¹

Monssen is under fire from *Hiei* to port and *Yukikaze*'s group from starboard. At this same time two torpedoes were observed by torpedomen aft to pass under the *Monssen* but did not explode. Torpedoes on bow passed close ahead.¹⁵² The remaining 5" guns opened fire on the aftermost searchlight and it was soon extinguished. Numerous hits are believed to have been made on this target. This opinion was concurred in by the Commanding Officer of the *Shaw*, who observed what he believes to have been this engagement. A few shells from port were hitting and many hits were being received from starboard. There appeared to be some large caliber firing from the starboard bow, but the type of vessel firing was not determined. One early hit was received in CPO quarters which started a fire in No. 2 handling room, putting that gun out of action. Shortly thereafter the bridge and director were hit and local control was ordered for the two remaining after guns. From this point on hits were too numerous to account for in order. Guns No. 3 and 4 continued to fire to starboard until a shell exploded in the crew's head and killed the No. 3 handling room crew and putting the training mechanism out of commission. Gun No. 4 continued to fire a few more single shots, local control until train control was lost. Steering control power/being taken from the after board until that board was hit. It was then shifted to the forward board. This was also hit shortly thereafter and control was shifted to hand pump. When the after steering station was abandoned the rudder was 26° right.¹⁵³

Monssen reported, almost immediately after this action or at about 0223 (0203) *Monssen* was again illuminated by star shells from port. Thinking that stars from port were from a friendly vessel, recognition lights were flashed. Immediately *Monssen* was illuminated by two searchlights from starboard beam, lights being estimated to be 24" and range about 2,500 yards. (Likely *Yukikaze*'s group) Starboard 20 mm battery immediately opened fire on both searchlights. At this instant *Monssen* began to be hit by medium caliber shells from starboard

¹⁵⁰ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

¹⁵¹ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

¹⁵² These torpedoes likely came from *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* but I do not have data from *Yukikaze* or *Teruzuki* to confirm. Based on Hara's account *Amatsukaze* fired 4 torpedoes.

¹⁵³ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

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No. 1 gun shield was hit almost immediately killing the gun crew. Two torpedoes were observed approaching close on starboard bow, perpendicular to own track and running on the surface. Hard right rudder was used and course changed about 50° flank speed was ordered but could not be answered because forward steam line had been hit in No. 1 fire room and throttle manifold in after engine room had been ruptured.¹⁵⁴ *Fletcher* was looping back to the east.



Figure 10 - The No. 1 gun mount on Monssen was struck by a medium cal. from port on top of No. 1 gun shield killing gun crew. This damage likely came from Hiei's secondary battery. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

¹⁵⁴ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

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Figure 11

Figure 11

Just below the No. 1 gun is a massive hole on the port side where I believe she took a 14-inch Type 3 shell hit. Though her report states the shell came from starboard and passed through the ship, so we are looking at the exit hole made by the base plug. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 12

Figure 12

This is the starboard side of Monssen just below the No. 1 gun mount. Her report states that she received 1 major caliber hit in the starboard bow above water line at gun No. 1. This would indicate this hit struck her after she turned back south. I believe it was a 14-inch Type 3 projectile from Hiei due to the amount of fire damage seen underneath the main deck. This area suffered a massive fire which removed all the paint and the steel has now corroded away leaving skeletal remains of her structure. This type of shell would disintegrate on impact, but the heavy base plug would act as solid shot and this is what penetrated the ship. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 13

Figure 13

No. 2 gun has also been hit. Both forward and aft guns are pointed to starboard in response to Amatsukaze search lights. Her report states 1 medium caliber hit from port through No. 2 gun shield but did not burst. Likely from Hiei's secondary battery. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 14

Figure 14

Just aft of No. 2 gun where her bridge should be is a massive hole. I believe she was struck by a 14-inch Type 3 projectile in vicinity of captain's cabin, starting huge fires in vicinity of main radio. This spread quickly upward through her superstructure. The thermite fire weakened the structure of her superstructure so that this area ripped away as she sank. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 15 - What remains of her bridge lays beside her main hull. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.



Figure 16 - Monssen's No. 3 gun pointing to starboard has lost its roof plate. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

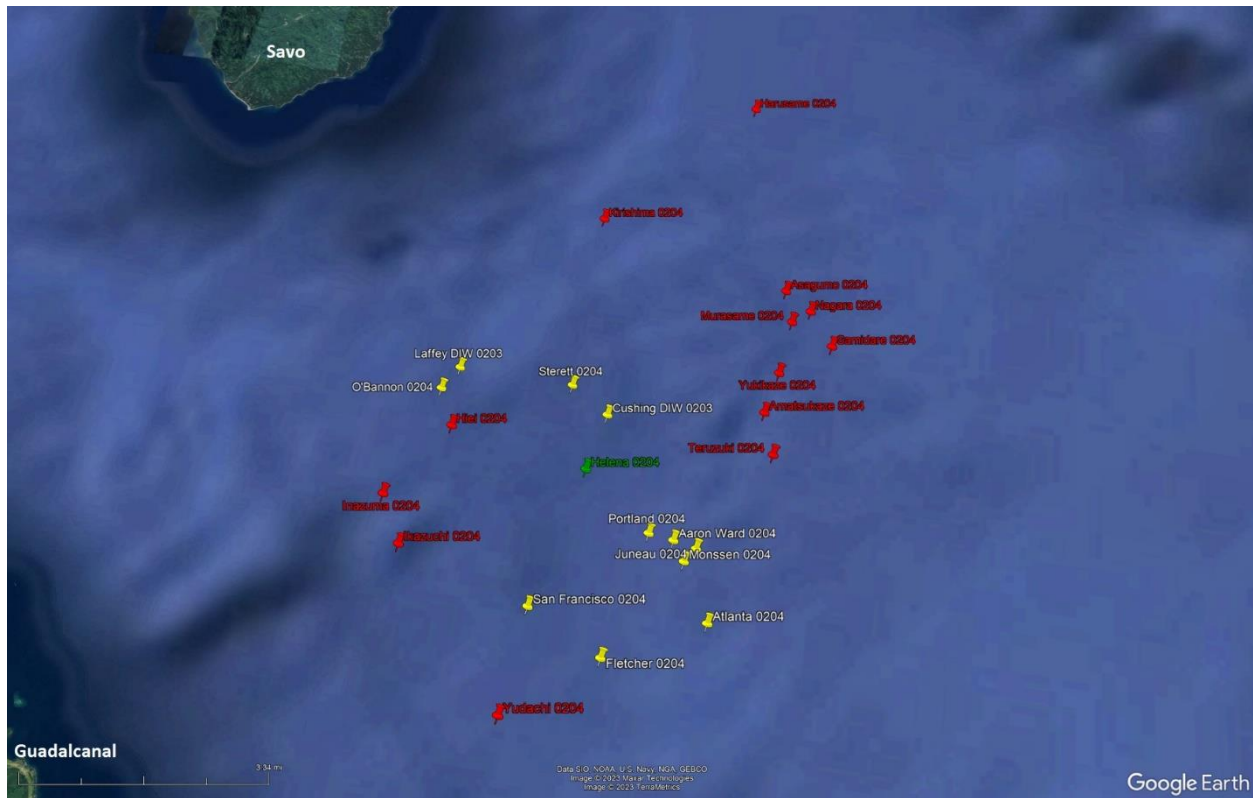
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Figure 17 - Monssen's No 4-gun pointing to starboard shows fire damage. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Map 18

Japanese Ships

Hiei opens fire on *Helena* and scores at least two main battery shell hits. *Inazuma* heads back to *Hiei* with *Ikazuchi* following. *Yudachi* headed west. To the north *Harusame*, *Kirishima*, *Nagara*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* all withdraw. *Asagumo* will break away from the rest of her division and head southeast looking for targets. *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* perform a 360-degree circle, this may have been to avoid collision with *Samidare* or to escape *Helena*'s gunfire.

Hara on board the *Amatsukaze* was continuing to fire at *Monssen* when all of a sudden, shells started to fall around his ship. Some shells hit his ship and he ordered, "Gunnery, don't budge an inch, Finish it off!" Thinking the shells came from the ship he was engaging. Then his warrant officer Iwata Shigeru shouted, "Commander, another cruiser is sniping at us from 70° to port!" Commander Hara looked in that direction and froze for a moment until he ordered, "Douse search light, stop shelling, spread smoke screen!" He had not finished the order when a third salvo from this cruiser he later identified post war as the *Helena* impacted his ship. Two shells landed close by almost throwing him off the bridge. He went into shock for a few seconds and sluggishly got back onto his feet. He was not wounded and the officers near him were still

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alive but then he saw Iwata slung over the range finding gear. He yelled to him, but he did not move. He had been hit in the head by fragments and was dead.¹⁵⁵

Commander Hara then tried to get in contact with Lt. Shimizu his chief engineer, but no reply came through the voice tubes. He tried a second voice tube but again no reply. A shell had hit the radio room killing all within. The ship began turning in a loop. Commander Hara ordered the helmsmen to turn the helm. He responded that he did but there was no response. Flames now rose from under the bridge from the radio room.¹⁵⁶

U.S. Ships

Cushing and *Laffey* are dead in water. *Sterett* has almost gained a position to fire torpedoes at *Hiei* which is still headed west. *O'Bannon* has broken off action and is headed east attempting to locate either definite targets or definite friends. *Atlanta* is headed towards Lunga Point to the southeast. *San Francisco* is now attempting to withdraw to the east heavily damaged. *Portland* takes 40 mm gun damage from *Helena* as she withdraws to the south to her stack and forward superstructure.

Helena fires on three ships at this time. *Helena* returned fire on *Hiei* at range 9,200 yards with the main battery in fully automatic using forward FC radar in train to port. She ceased firing at range of 9,400 yards. Approximately 125 rounds were expended in this phase and were believed to be very effective.¹⁵⁷ Certainly, *Helena* was firing her main battery at *Hiei*.

At the same time *Helena's* 5" battery was getting on the enemy ships to starboard, radar picked up a destroyer on her starboard quarter firing at her and she returned fire on at a range of 7,200 yards. About 40 rounds were fired before cease firing was ordered when *San Francisco* came into her line of fire, this fire was also most effective.¹⁵⁸ I believe that the secondary battery hit *Amatsukaze* as the second ship she engaged. Again, it was not *San Francisco* who was to her south that came into her line of sight but possibly *Portland* who she passed or *Cushing* who is dead in the water to her northeast.

The third ship *Helena* engages during this time was *Portland*. The automatic weapons control officer observed between the lines of fire of the batteries and at about 3,000 yards, a vessel with four stacks passing on diverging course. Fire was opened with the forward starboard 40mm mount on this vessel and 159 rounds expended. This firing was very effective being directly into the bridge area and at least 2/3rds of the rounds were seen to hit. Cease firing was ordered at the same time as the other batteries. The range of 3,000 yards and that the target was

¹⁵⁵ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 139.

¹⁵⁶ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 139-140.

¹⁵⁷ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹⁵⁸ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

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heading south or opposite of *Helena* I believe her target was *Portland* which took minor hits later identified as 40 mm in her stack and forward superstructure. During this phase of the action *Helena* suffered two hits by large-caliber projectiles, one on the face plate of turret four and one on the forecastle deck.^{159,160}

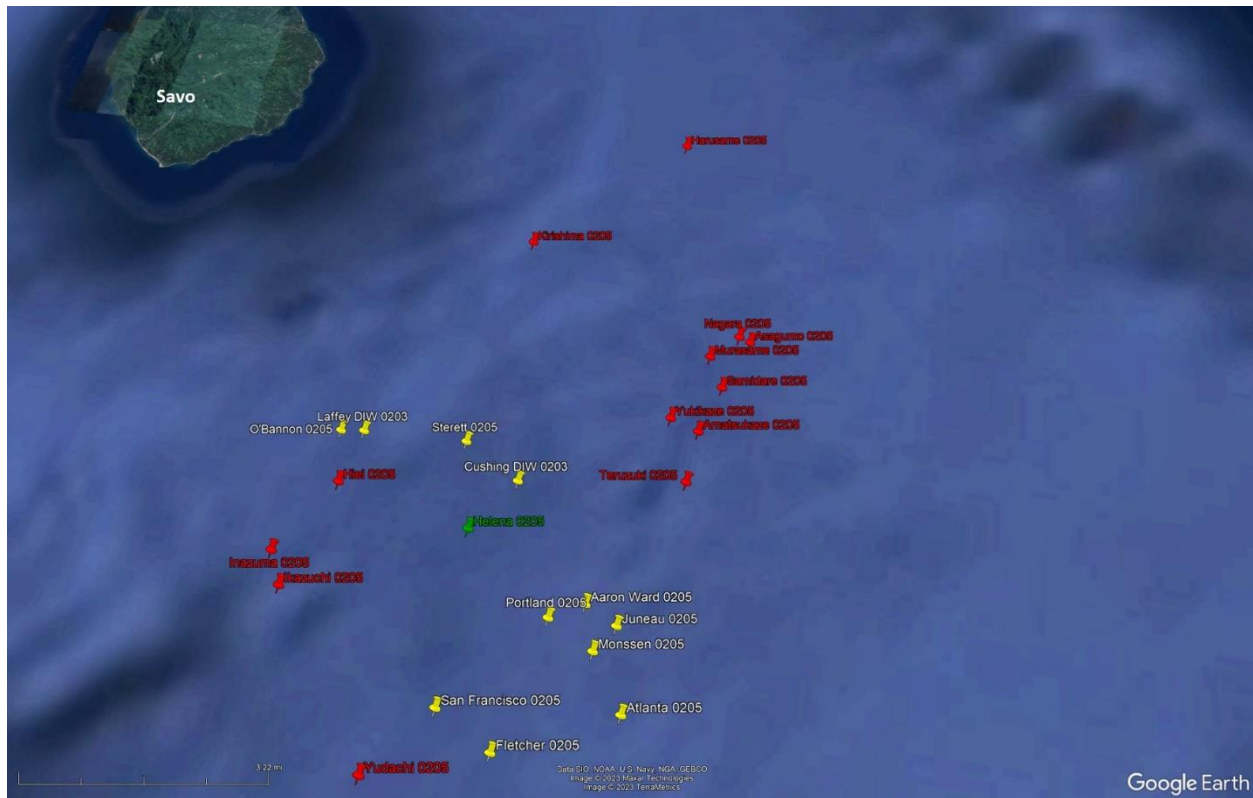
Juneau is attempting to withdraw to the east. *Aaron Ward* saw a destroyer, believed to be *Sterett*, directly toward her port side. She went ahead flank and applied hard left rudder to avoid being hit. When clear, she resumed course 000° true., speed 18 knots. *Aaron Ward* spotted *Monssen* withdrawing to the south not *Sterett*. *Monssen* likely pulled up even when she was under fire from *Hiei* at 0203 with *Aaron Ward* and then turned to the right almost colliding with *Aaron Ward*. *Monssen* separates from *Aaron Ward* who continues north alone and *Monssen* heads back south. *Fletcher* is headed back to the east and away from battle.

¹⁵⁹ Hit No. 4 – Hit on faceplate of turret four nine inches directly below center gun port. At the point of impact, the face plate was dished in 11/64 inch; area of dished surface 12 inches in diameter. On back of faceplate a crack 4 inches long has been noted 5.5 inches above the point of impact. Paint cracked and weld apparently broken around entire periphery of face plate both inside and out (water leaking through gives evidence of such a crack). Securing weld cracked on bolts holding down angle iron to face plate on inside under center gun. Rivets securing face plate to top of turret appear loose. The gas seal protector guard demolished throughout are subtended by face plate (about 5 feet). Gas seal itself twisted and torn. Three-gun bloomers demolished and retaining rims twisted and torn. Numerous deck fittings such as ventilator cowls and #3 20 mm gun shield pierced by fragments. Three fire hoses cut up by fragments. Other than damage to guns, no effect other than slight inconvenience caused by hit. Turret faceplate damage may, in time, be serious but does not impair militarily efficiency at present. This hit was likely a 14-inch Type 0 projectile from *Hiei*.

¹⁶⁰ Hit No. 1 one major caliber (assumed to be 14-inch) hit waterway lip at frame 29 and main deck over pyrotechnic locker and officer's suitcase room. The shell presumably exploded after hitting the deck, scattering fragments over face of No. 1 turret, which was pointing about 150° relative and various deck fittings. The wooden deck was splintered 8 feet x 4 feet across. The steel deck was torn and folded down 6 feet by 1.5 feet. Watertight bulkhead, frame 27, starboard, upper quarter torn out and cracked. The pyrotechnic locker sprinkler system broken. Number one turret gas seal punctured over an arc of about 60° (about 25 feet) by fragments. Although fragments punctured at intervals repairs should include entire arc of 60° rather than intermittent patching. Pointer's check sight port out and jammed by fragment. Check sight itself broken. Bloomer on left gun, turret one torn cut and torn. Steel bloomer securing rim broken. Many gouges on faceplate. This was likely a 14-inch Type 3 from *Hiei*.

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Japanese Ships

Hiei continued to fire her main battery and port side secondary battery at *Helena*, but her starboard secondary battery now engaged *Sterett*. *Kirishima*, *Nagara*, *Harusame*, *Murasame* and *Samidare* are all heading north away from battle. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* head toward *Hiei*. *Yudachi* continued west. *Asagumo* heads east looking for targets.

Yukikaze, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* were still in the process of making a 360-degree circle. Hara wrote, “*Flames rose from under the bridge, apparently from the radio room. More fires flared. Helena had really done a job on us. Damn it! Let’s return fire! A gunner struggled to the bridge, blood dripping from his shoulder wound. Sir, the turrets won’t move. The hydraulic system has failed. An orderly came from the engine room shouting, the rudder mechanism no longer works, sir. The hydraulics have failed. I talked to both men at once. What happened to Shimizu? How’s the engine? Any fuel fires? Lieutenant Shimizu was blasted from the ship, sir leaving behind only one of his legs. The engine works unimpaired sir. The fuel has*

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*not caught fire. All right you gunner go get first aid. Matsumoto go to the engine room and check. Send reports every three minutes.*¹⁶¹

U.S. Ships

Laffey and *Cushing* are both dead in water and crippled. *Sterett* is under heavy fire from port likely from *Hiei*'s secondary battery. Numerous near misses and many shells passed overhead. About this time, the foremast is hit which disables the S.C. radar, emergency identification lights, T.B.S. transmitting antenna and wounds an officer and two enlisted men in the gun director. Temporary emergency lights and antenna were rigged. Her captain orders action port and designates a *Kongō* class battleship as the target. This target was plainly visible, as it is illuminated by star shells and by light from a burning ship to the southward. *Sterett* closed the range to about 2,000 yards and fired full salvo of four torpedoes, normal spread shortly thereafter. She then opened fire with 5"/38 on the battleship's bridge structure.¹⁶² A number of direct 5" hits were observed. When *Sterett* fired this torpedo salvo at *Hiei* she does not realize that the crippled and drifting *Laffey* was in her line of fire between her and *Hiei*.

O'Bannon was heading northeast and attempting to withdraw. *Atlanta* is heading southeast toward Lunga Point. *San Francisco* and *Juneau* are withdrawing to the east while *Portland* heads south.

Helena is starting a turn to port and slowly heads back south to re-join *Portland*. She was still engaged with *Hiei*. She takes three more hits. A hit on port forward part of forward stack was likely made by *Hiei*'s secondary guns. The next is a major caliber hit in port after legs of searchlight platform. This was likely a 14-inch Type 3 projectile based on its fragmentation. The last hit a section of the starboard brace of aviation crane. This shell exploded after hitting and did no fragmentation damage, but did render the aviation crane useless.¹⁶³ This was likely a 6-inch shell from *Hiei*'s secondary battery.

Aaron Ward continued northwards with *Monssen* turning to the south and attempting to withdraw badly damaged. *Fletcher* turns south at 35 knots to get ahead of the enemy. The gun director matched with radar, found the target and plot commenced to track. The enemy was then northeast on a south or southeasterly course at speed 20 knots. *Fletcher* gradually drew ahead to a position about three miles on her target's starboard bow.¹⁶⁴ This is critically important because the ship she was tracking was *Portland* and *Fletcher* was tracking her as if she was an enemy

¹⁶¹ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 139-140.

¹⁶² U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, War Damage Report No. 30 BuShips, Gunfire Damage Battle of Guadalcanal 13 November 1942.

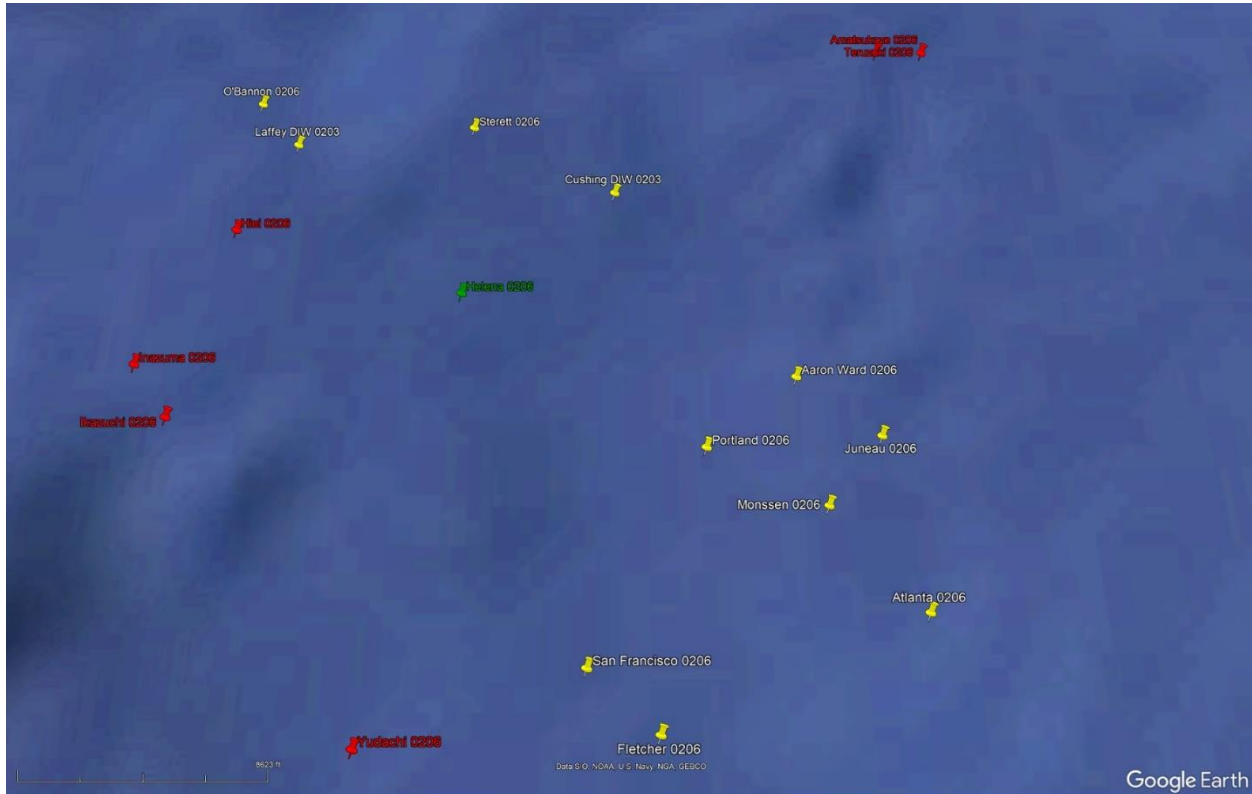
¹⁶³ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹⁶⁴ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, C.O. W.M. Cole.

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warship. There are no Japanese ships on a southerly course only *Portland* and *Monssen* are headed south.

0206



Map 20

Japanese Ships

Hiei is heading west was taking hits to her superstructure from *Helena's* main battery and possibly *Sterett*. She is returning fire with her own main and port secondary battery at *Helena*. Her starboard secondary battery continued to engage *Sterett*, scoring several hits. Four torpedoes from *Sterett* are now racing toward the battleship but the crippled *Laffey* lays within their line of fire. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* are closing on *Hiei*.

Yudachi attempts to close still heading northwest. *Kirishima*, *Nagara*, *Murasame*, *Samidare* all head north. *Harusame* was heading back west but was so far to the north she will not re-enter the battle. *Asagumo* heads southeast for a time looking for targets.

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Yukikaze, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* are in the process of a 360-degree turn. *Amatsukaze* is heavily damaged. All three have slowed significantly during this phase.

U.S. Ships

Laffey and *Cushing* are both crippled and dead in the water. *Sterett* is awaiting the results of her torpedo attack still headed west and under fire from *Hiei*'s starboard secondary battery while her own guns fire at *Hiei*.

O'Bannon was circling northeast in an attempt to withdraw. *Atlanta* is now well to the southeast heading toward Lunga Point. *San Francisco* was silent but heading east to withdraw. *Portland* was headed south.

Helena is turning to the south and ceases firing. Her SG radar reported six enemy ships over 5,000 yards on the starboard side. Results of the above firing between 0204 and 0206 are not definitely known but both spotters report that hits were being obtained and it is believed both the main and secondary battery's targets were on fire. *Helena* had inflicted damage to both *Hiei* and *Amatsukaze* during this phase.

The automatic weapons control officer reports observing about two thirds of all shots fired hitting in the area of the forward stack and bridge structure.¹⁶⁵ This automatic fire was unfortunately inflicted on *Portland*.

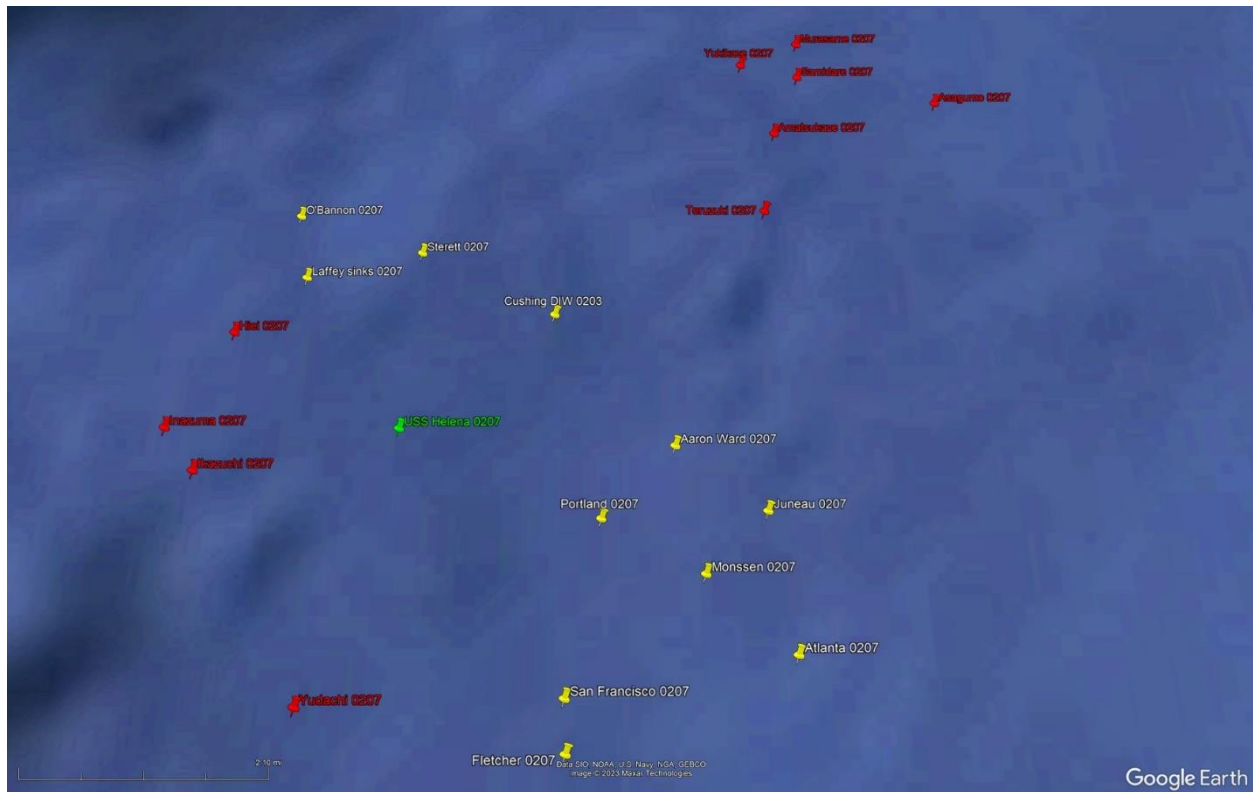
Juneau was heading east out of the battle. *Aaron Ward* now engaging the ships to starboard that are still heading north. She identifies and commences firing on a large destroyer or light cruiser, distance 3,000 yards. She believes that this ship is a cruiser of the "*Katori*" class. Ship was showing fighting lights of a single cluster, white over red over green. On "commence firing", the relative bearing was 010°. The course was changed to left to approximately 315° in order to bring the main battery to bear. She fires about 25 salvos before "checking fire" in order to shift to new target.¹⁶⁶ *Aaron Ward* engaged the *Yukikaze* group likely *Amatsukaze* which was on fire. *Monssen* was heading south and *Fletcher* was headed east.

¹⁶⁵ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹⁶⁶ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

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Map 21

Japanese Ships

Hiei was likely still firing her main battery at either *Helena* or possibly *Monssen* and her starboard secondary battery at *Sterett*. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* close the wounded *Hiei* with *Yudachi* heading northwest. *Asagumo* heads southeast looking for targets. *Kirishima*, *Nagara*, *Murasame*, *Samidare*, *Harusame* are all well to the north and withdrawing. *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* now also withdrew to the north but remain under fire from *Aaron Ward*.

U.S. Ships

Cushing remains dead in the water. *Laffey* is struck by at least one and possibly two of *Sterett*'s four torpedoes aimed at *Hiei* that blows off her stern. The order to abandon ship was given almost immediately after. Five minutes after this order, *Laffey* explodes and quickly sinks.¹⁶⁷ *Laffey* suffers; 57 KIA, 114 WIA. She was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. Lieutenant Commander Hank was awarded a posthumous Navy Cross. The *Allen M. Sumner* class DD-702 was named in his honor.

¹⁶⁷ U.S.S. *Laffey* DD-459, Serial A16-3, November 16, 1942, U.S.S. *Laffey*, report of loss, Lt E.A. Barham.

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Sterett now sights what she believes is a Japanese destroyer on the same bearing but actually opens fire with her guns on *Laffey*. Only two salvos of 5-inch had been fired and were hitting squarely when she sees two torpedoes hit the destroyer causing large explosions, lifting the ship out of the water and starting fires forward and aft. She reports that this destroyer positively sank almost immediately.¹⁶⁸ At a minimum, two torpedoes are still racing toward *Hiei*. *Sterett* herself may still be under fire from *Hiei*'s starboard secondary battery.

O'Bannon swung hard left to avoid the sinking bow of what was now believed to be the *Laffey*. Many personnel were sighted in the water and about 50 life jackets were thrown over from this ship. Shortly thereafter, torpedo wakes, at least two, were seen to pass ahead. This vessel swung hard left.¹⁶⁹

Atlanta is still withdrawing southeast. *San Francisco* heads east. *Portland* is heading south. *Helena* changes course to the left and is making 20 knots, trying to find *Portland*. *Juneau* heads east. *Aaron Ward* continued to fire at the *Yukikaze* group while heading north specifically *Amatsukaze*. *Monssen* withdraws to the south. *Fletcher* is racing to the east in hopes of gaining a position ahead of *Portland*, whom she believes is an enemy warship to fire her torpedoes.



Figure 18 - *Laffey*'s No. 1 gun mount pointing to port as if she was still engaging *Hiei*. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

¹⁶⁸ U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

¹⁶⁹ This is the time I believe this entry occurs not 0201. *O'Bannon* see's *Laffey* sunk but also the other two torpedoes still racing toward *Hiei* from *Sterett*.

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Figure 19 - Laffey's No.2-gun points to port well aft probably at its extreme rate of train. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.



Figure 20 - Laffey's main gun director on top of her bridge also points to port. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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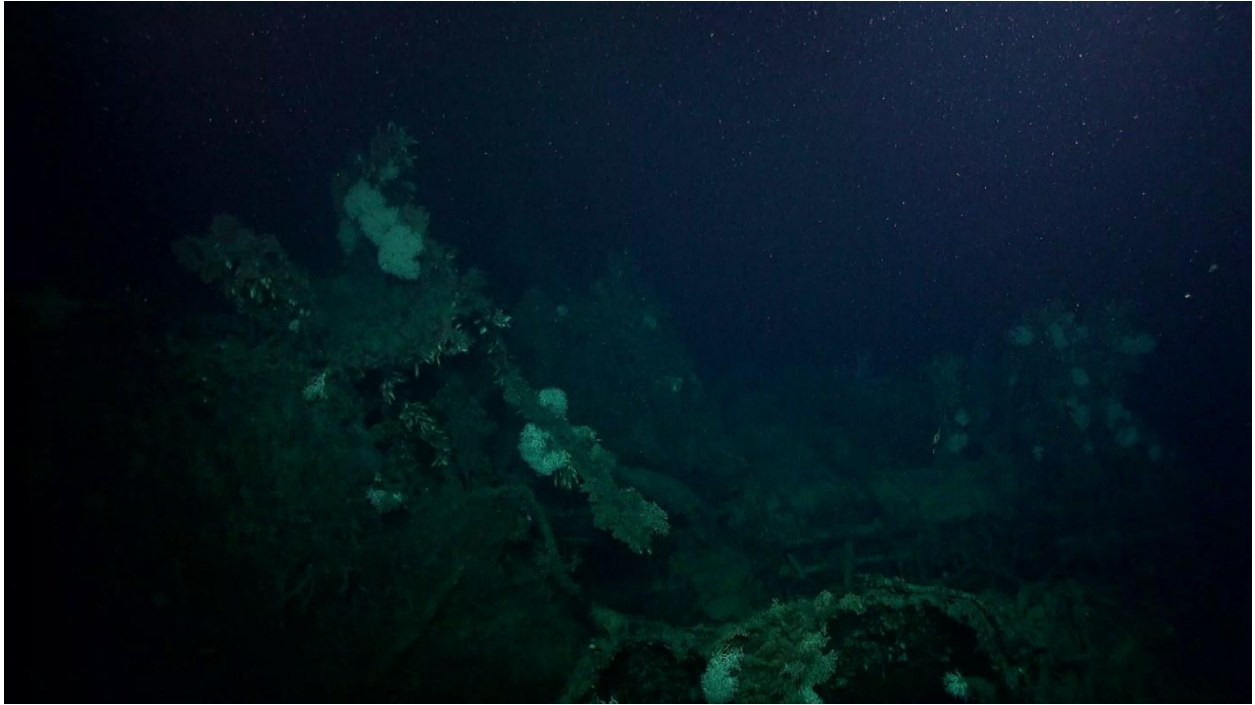


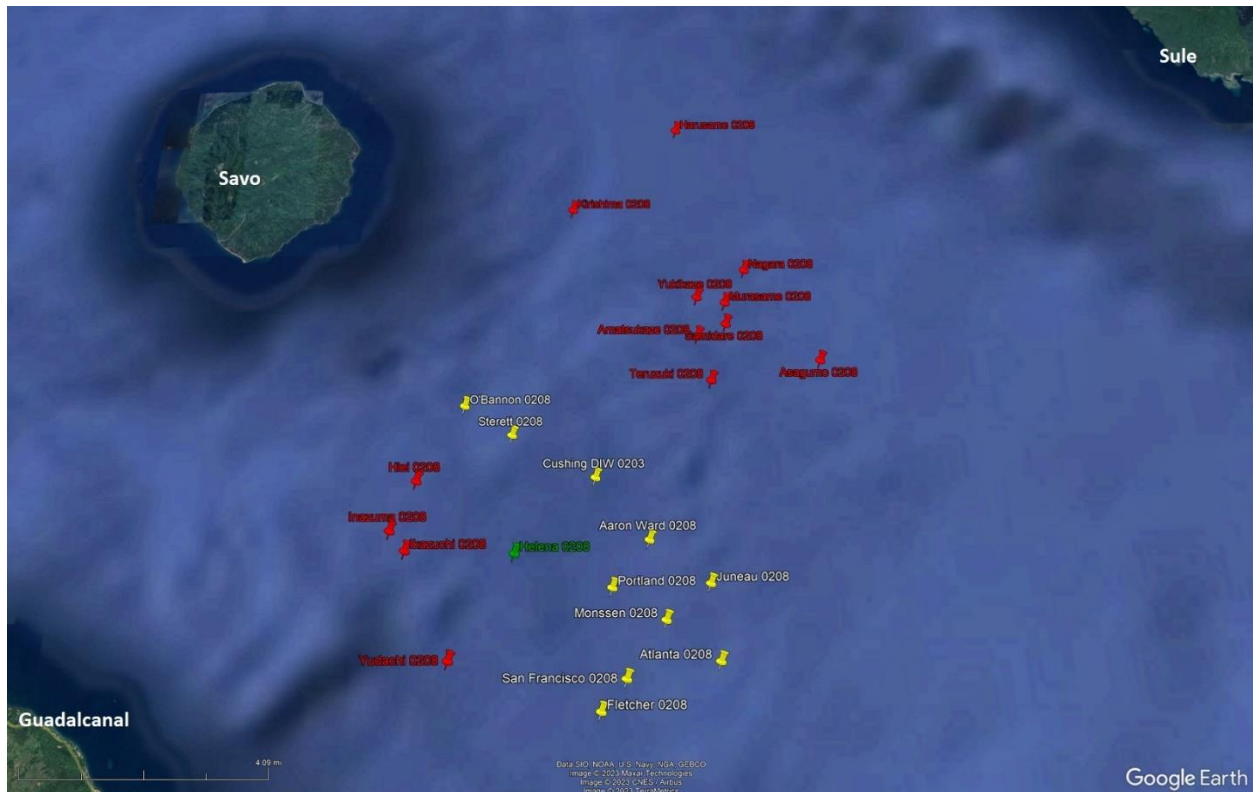
Figure 21 - Laffey's hull abruptly ends approximately where her aft engine room was located. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.



Figure 22 - The starboard propeller shaft is all that remains, broken and slanted to port. I believe Sterett hit Laffey with two torpedoes and then she suffered an explosion of the aft magazines that destroyed her stern section. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Map 22

Japanese Ships

Two torpedoes from *Sterett* detonate on *Hiei*'s starboard side underneath turret 3 approximately between frames 189-201. This was the last battle damage *Hiei* will receive in the surface engagement. No other U.S. ship will fire on *Hiei* after 0208. She was badly damaged and having difficulty steering. She will very slowly loop to the west of Savo Island so by morning she will be north of Savo. *Hiei* has suffered at least six torpedoes from destroyers that did detonate, four on the starboard side and two on the port side.

Kirishima, *Nagara*, *Murasame*, *Samidare*, *Harusame* are all well to the north and withdrawing. *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze* and *Teruzuki* remain under fire from *Aaron Ward*. *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi* close the wounded *Hiei* with *Yudachi* heading northwest. *Asagumo* heads southeast looking for targets.

Hara on board *Amatsukaze* wrote, "Near-misses shook the ship violently, more fires were starting, but crewmen were active with water hoses. Our guns were silent and we had no torpedoes. If the enemy closed, we would be as defenseless as a bull in a slaughterhouse."¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 140.

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Figure 23

Figure 23

This is where I believe two torpedoes struck Hiei under turret 3 from Sterett. The damage is far wider than the damage at frame 166. The more forward impact punched through the keel of the outer bulge. Yet her armor belts stopped most of the apparent damage. Likely a good study would be to look at the effects of Japanese torpedoes impacting the armor belt of West Virginia on December 7, 1941, to learn the effects behind the plates. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

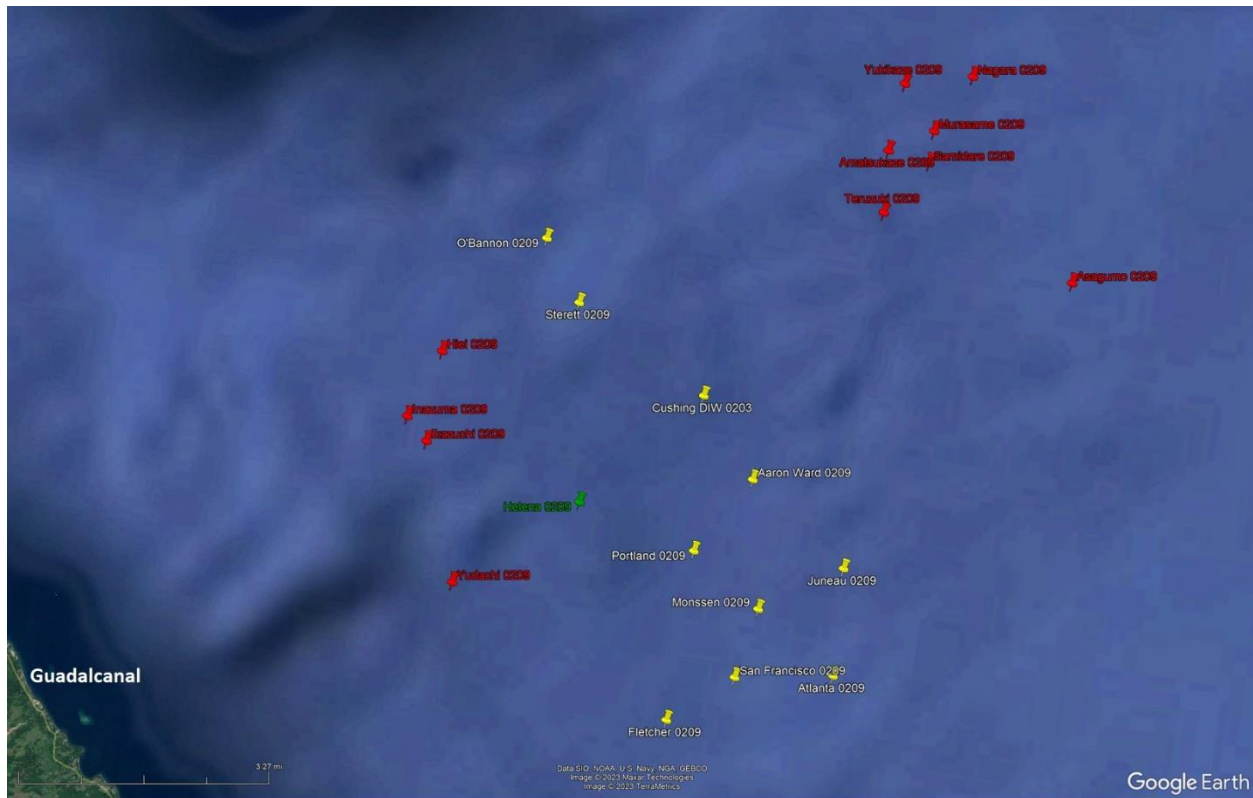
U.S. Ships

Cushing remains dead in the water. *Sterett* will soon turn around and withdraw away from *Hiei*, heading back east. *O'Bannon* is heading east.

Atlanta is attempting to withdraw toward Lunga Point. *San Francisco*, *Juneau* and *Fletcher* are all heading east in their individual attempts to withdraw. *Monssen* and *Portland* continue south and now *Helena* is moving toward *Portland* to rejoin her. *Aaron Ward* continues to fire at the *Yukikaze* group.

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0209 to 0214



Map 23

Japanese Ships

Between 0209 and 0214 there is a lull in the battle. No Japanese ships are involved in any combat during this time period. *Hiei Inazuma*, *Ikazuchi* and *Yudachi* are all slowly moving northwest, headed for the western straight between Savo and Guadalcanal. *Kirishima*, *Nagara*, *Harusame*, *Murasame*, *Samidare*, *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze*, *Teruzuki* all have withdrawn to the north. *Asagumo* is probing to the east, witnesses' gunfire from *Aaron Ward* and makes a port turn to come back to the west. Gunfire from *Aaron Ward* is falling around *Amatsukaze* but stops as *Aaron Ward* shifts to a new target.

Hara on board *Amatsukaze* wrote, "*Amatsukaze's* movements were getting more erratic and she started her second circle in dense smoke. The rain of shells diminished as the enemy ship at last began to move away. Good! He was not going to finish the job."¹⁷¹ *Amatsukaze* had

¹⁷¹ Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 140.

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suffered 32-37 hits and 43 men killed.¹⁷² She would now limp away and withdraw from the battle.

U.S. Ships

Cushing is attempting to use her searchlights to illuminate other ships but the use of her searchlights drew attention to herself. She takes hits from *Aaron Ward* at this time. *O'Bannon* and *Sterett* are withdrawing from their attacks on *Hiei* and move east.

Atlanta is still headed southeast for Lunga Point. *San Francisco* and *Juneau* are heading to the east. *Portland* and *Helena* initially headed south but *Helena* changes course to left to close on *Portland* and re-join her on a course of 120° at 15 knots. She saw *Atlanta* bearing 160° true and on fire. *Helena* spotters sight an "Enemy cruiser on starboard bow."¹⁷³ She did not open fire at this time. *Helena* rejoined *Portland* and fell in behind her at 0214.

Aaron Ward shifts fire to a searchlight bearing 340° relative. (*Cushing*) Course is changed to the right in order for her guns to bear and the destroyer opens fire. The searchlight had been trained on her for about two minutes and it appeared that it was about 3,000 yards distant. Four salvos were fired under director control, which was then hit. Guns continued to fire in local control, firing approximately seven additional salvos. Fires were started and small explosions were noted.¹⁷⁴ *Cushing* drifting without power, was unable to respond.

By 0213 *Aaron Ward* spotted another searchlight. Guns 2 and 4 then opened fire on this second searchlight bearing about 120° relative (120° relative would be *Juneau*), range about 3,000 yards. This searchlight had been trained on her for about three or four minutes. Small fires were observed to start. Guns 1 and 3 continued to fire on the first search light (this would be *Cushing*). At 0214 both searchlights are extinguished and guns ceased firing.¹⁷⁵

Monssen continues to withdraw to the south and *Fletcher* independently is heading to the east.

¹⁷² Hara, Tameichi, Japanese Destroyer Captain: Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Midway - The Great Naval Battles as Seen Through Japanese Eyes, page 147.

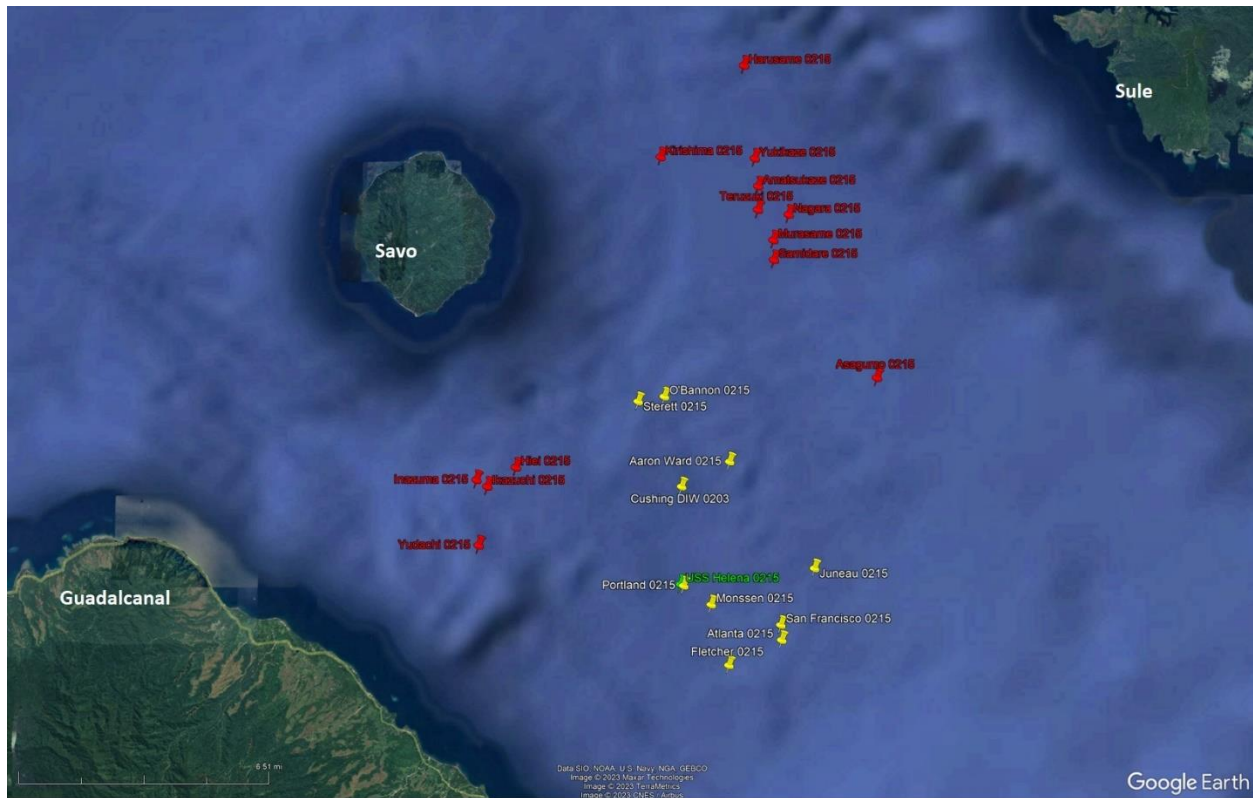
¹⁷³ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹⁷⁴ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

¹⁷⁵ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

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0215



Japanese ships

Hiei, *Inazuma*, *Ikazuchi* and *Yudachi* are all slowly moving northwest. *Kirishima*, *Nagara*, *Harusame*, *Murasame*, *Samidare*, *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze*, *Teruzuki* all withdraw to the north. *Asagumo* now heads back to the west still looking for possible targets. No Japanese ships are involved in combat at this time.

U.S. Ships

Cushing is drifting powerless. *Sterett* spots a Japanese destroyer of the *Fubuki* class was silhouetted, 1,000 yards on *Sterett*'s starboard bow, target angle 120°. In her report she gives an approximate time of 0220 but I believe the correct time was 0215. *Sterett* immediately orders the torpedo battery to fire two torpedoes and the 5-inch battery to opens fire on the destroyer.¹⁷⁶ Unfortunately, *Sterett* has opened fire on *Aaron Ward*.

¹⁷⁶ U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

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O'Bannon at about 0215 spots a smoking vessel on the port bow apparently drawing away to the northeast but is unable to identify. Her torpedo battery was ordered to stand by for action. (This was *Aaron Ward*) Although this vessel could not be identified, torpedo fire was withheld.¹⁷⁷ *Atlanta* is continuing towards Lunga Point. *San Francisco* moves to the east. *Portland* turned to the east and was moving at 17 knots on a course of 092°.

Helena, likewise, believing *Aaron Ward* is an enemy ship, now opens fire on her at 16,300 yards. She later reports that the enemy course was 330° true and her speed 17 knots. *Helena* is on course 115° true and orders "*Hard right rudder*". After clearing several friendly ships probably *Portland* the main battery opened fire on *Aaron Ward*, but *Helena* believed this target was her previous target of *Amatsukaze*. The opening range was 16,400 yards, target course 330, speed 17. It had been tracked out from about 10,000 yards by radar plot and the main battery and FC radars. Rapid continuous fire was maintained for about one minute at a very high rate of fire when the range was again fouled and ceased firing given. About 60 rounds were fired. The target appeared to be on fire.

At about the same time during this third phase, the 5" battery fired about 40 rounds at another target believed to be a destroyer just forward of starboard beam at a range of about 5,000 yards. Cease firing was ordered when the range was fouled by own vessel. This target also appeared to be in flames.¹⁷⁸ Her main battery target was likely *Aaron Ward* and her secondary battery target was likely *Monssen*. *Juneau* briefly takes fire from *Aaron Ward* as she withdraws to the east.

Aaron Ward was brilliantly illuminated by star shells at this time and by a searchlight on the port quarter. More shells start falling close around her. She could not identify if ships near her position were friendly or enemy, so she goes ahead to flank speed to clear the immediate area.¹⁷⁹

In the engine room of *Aaron Ward*, electric power was lost when the shell hit on top of the compartment (likely from *Helena*). During the firing before this, three pipe plugs were blown out, one on the main condenser injection line, one on the outlet line to generator oil cooler and one on suction line to evaporator feed pump. Salt water entered the forward engine room from these and flooded the engine room 3 feet above the floor plates. At the time of last hit before going dead in the water, the ship was making 30 knots.¹⁸⁰ *Aaron Ward* had been hit by nine direct hits.

Monssen withdraws to the south and is unable to respond to *Helena's* gunfire. *Fletcher* witnesses *Helena's* gunfire and believes *Helena* and *Portland* are enemy ships. This enemy ship

¹⁷⁷ U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

¹⁷⁸ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

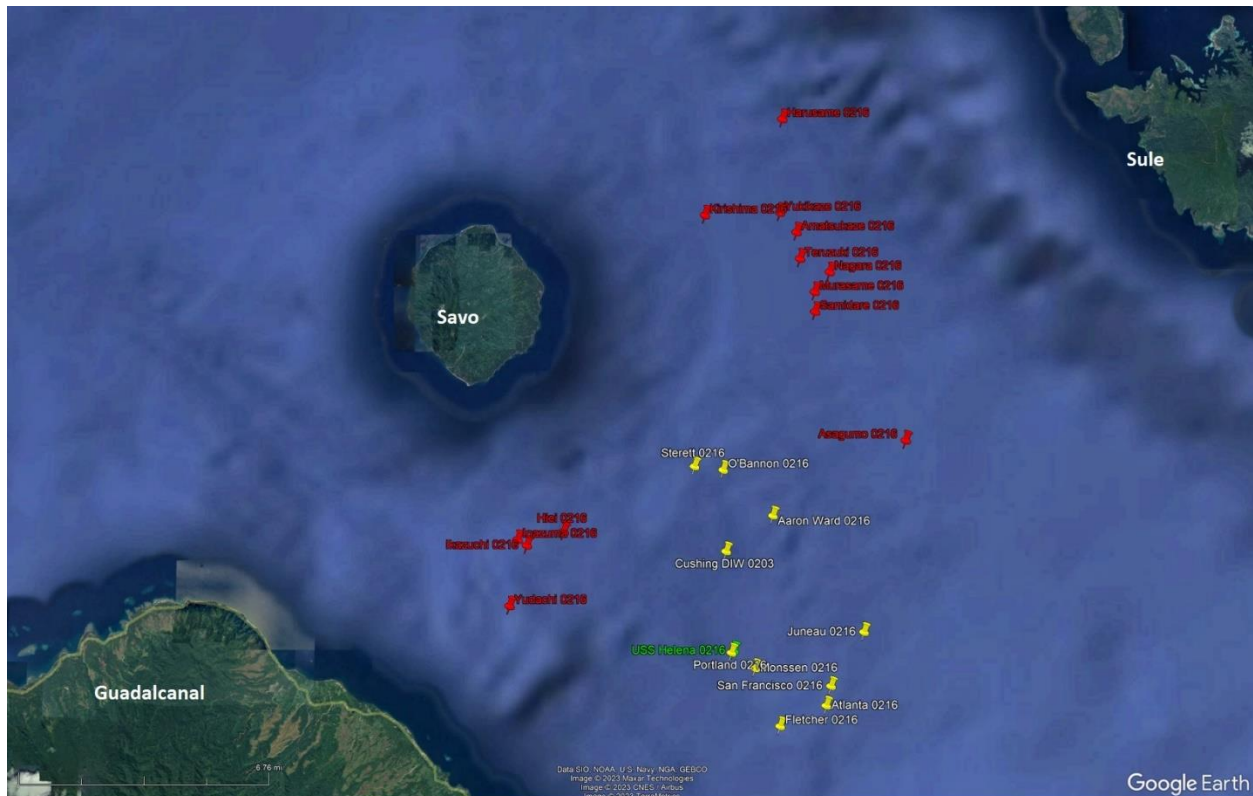
¹⁷⁹ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

¹⁸⁰ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

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was at this time firing major caliber guns with white tracers at a fairly long range to northward. This was about the only gun action then taking place.¹⁸¹ *Fletcher* herself prepared to fire torpedoes but does not use her guns so as not to reveal her position. *Fletcher* at 0221 (0215) the target had slowed to 17 knots and was on course 070°. *Fletcher* came left to course 030 to reach firing position.

0216



Map 25

Japanese Ships

Hiei, *Inazuma*, *Ikazuchi* and *Yudachi* all slowly moved northwest. *Kirishima*, *Nagara*, *Harusame*, *Murasame*, *Samidare*, *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze*, *Teruzuki* all withdraw to the north. *Asagumo* now heads back to the west. No Japanese ships are involved in combat.

¹⁸¹ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, C.O. W.M. Cole.

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U.S. Ships

Cushing is still drifting powerless. *Sterett* ceases fire on *Aaron Ward*. *O'Bannon* uses her radar and picks the U.S. cruisers to the south. She identifies a smoking vessel as *San Francisco* with *Helena* close by. She may have confused *Portland* and *Helena* as a potential Japanese transport. She reports, "From its size and indistinct outline, the vessel is believed to be a Japanese transport." Thinking that transports may have gotten in the Sound, *O'Bannon* turns to the south and investigates the coastline about two miles west of Lunga Point where a light is visible on the beach. No transports are seen. By moving southeast, she avoids *Asagumo* who was heading west.¹⁸²

Atlanta is continuing towards Lunga Point. *San Francisco* moves to the east. *Portland* and *Juneau* are moving to the east. *Helena* ceases firing; changes course to right to 230° T and is making 10 knots.¹⁸³ *Aaron Ward* observes a torpedo crossing about 50 feet ahead, passing from port to starboard.¹⁸⁴ This can only come from a U.S. ship and *Sterett* was the only one that may have fired two torpedoes around this time. *Monssen* is losing power and is heading south.

Fletcher at 0222 (0216) fires five torpedoes at *Portland*. Slowed to 15 knots and when target was bearing 273° true, distance 7,300 yards fired one half salvo of five torpedoes, previously set for 36 knots run.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² U.S.S. *O'Bannon*, DD-450, Serial A16, 17 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. D.J. MacDonald.

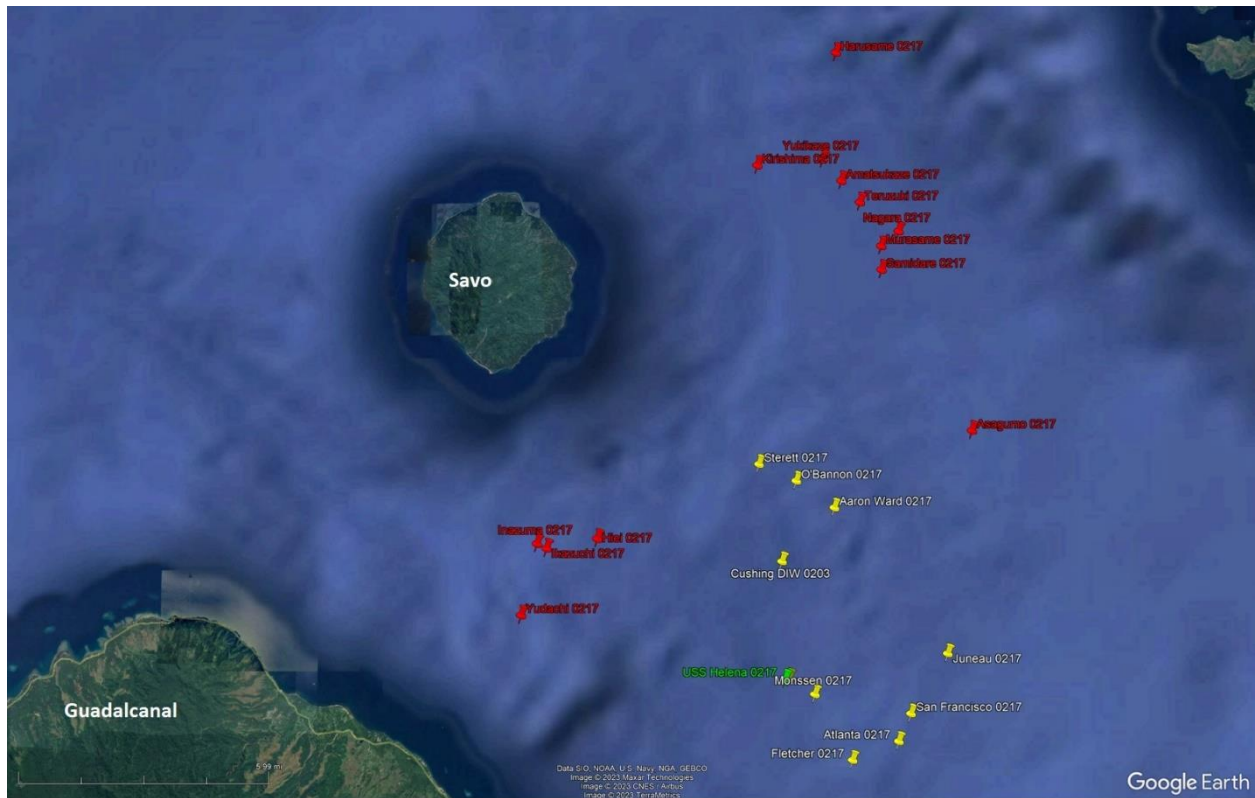
¹⁸³ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹⁸⁴ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

¹⁸⁵ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, C.O. W.M. Cole.

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0217 to 0220



Map 26

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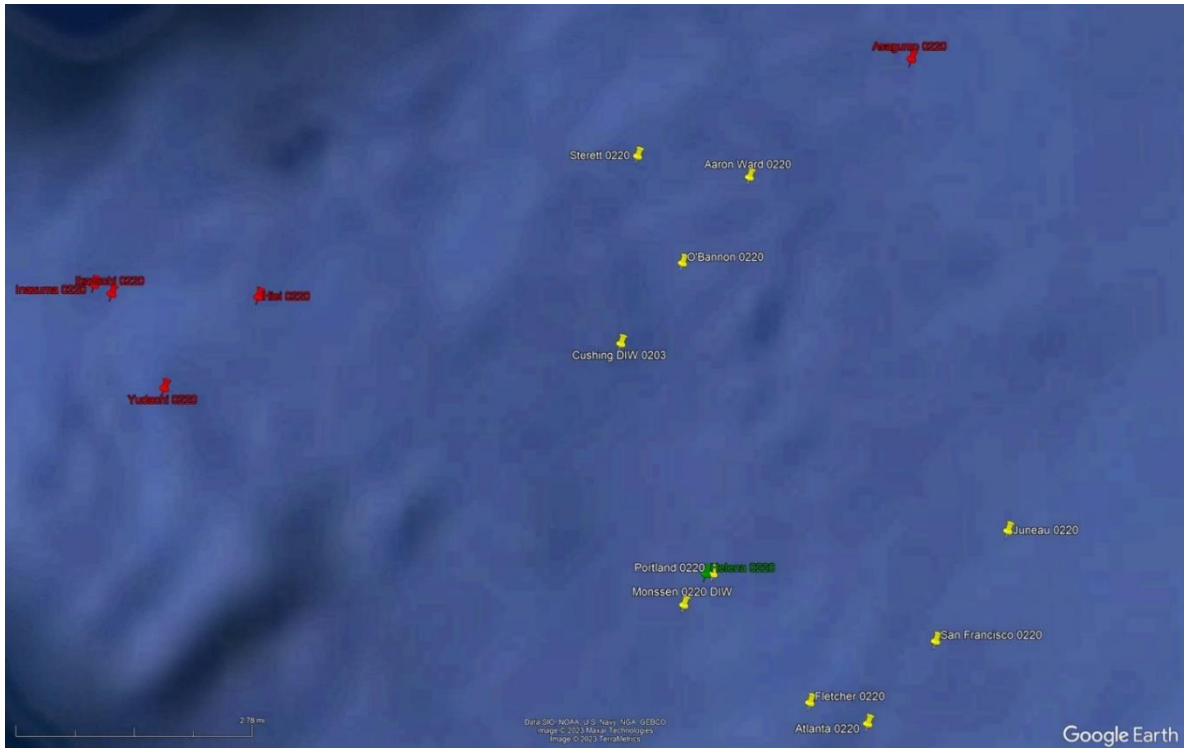


Figure 24

Japanese Ships

By 0217, there is no longer a reason for tracking *Yukikaze*, *Amatsukaze*, *Teruzuki*, *Nagara*, *Murasame*, *Samidare*, *Inazuma* and *Ikazuchi*. They have left the battlefield and no longer play any role in the surface battle. *Kirishima* around 0220 will turn south with orders to tow *Hiei*, *Harusame* turns south to escort *Kirishima* and proceeds down the eastern coast of Savo Island. *Yudachi* heads north toward the southern coast of Savo Island. *Asagumo* heads west and passes *Aaron Ward* who likely believed that she was already sinking.

U.S. Ships

Cushing is without power and drifting. *Sterett* is moving to the east. *O'Bannon* is heading southeast. *Atlanta* is still withdrawing southeast towards Lunga Point. *San Francisco* heads east. *Portland* heads east. *Helena* changes course left to 092° true and increases to full speed. *Juneau* withdraws to the east. *Aaron Ward* still moving north but was heavily damaged and will head toward Tulagi. *Monssen* later reported that by about 0240 (0220) the general conditions prevailing was as follows: All torpedoes fired. All 5" guns and director out of

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commission. All 20 mm guns or crews out of commission. All depth charges set on safe.¹⁸⁶ Entire officer's country, main radio, Captain's and Executive Officer's cabins and level above burning fiercely. This was later fed by pyrotechnics and 20 mm ammunition in forward clipping room. There were many hits on bridge and superstructure and main deck as far aft as Gun No. 3. There was no power on the ship, both engine rooms and fire rooms had been holed. There was no pressure on the fire main or flooding systems. The small gasoline handy billy was out of commission, the crank case having been holed. There was no telephone communication from the bridge. The proximity of other enemy ships was not known. Both battle dressing stations had received direct hits. *Monssen* was ordered abandoned at approximately 0240¹⁸⁷ (0220).¹⁸⁸

Fletcher at 0223 (0217) fires the second half salvo of five torpedoes using a new solution which was almost identical with previous data. This second salvo of five torpedoes is still directed at *Portland* and *Helena*.

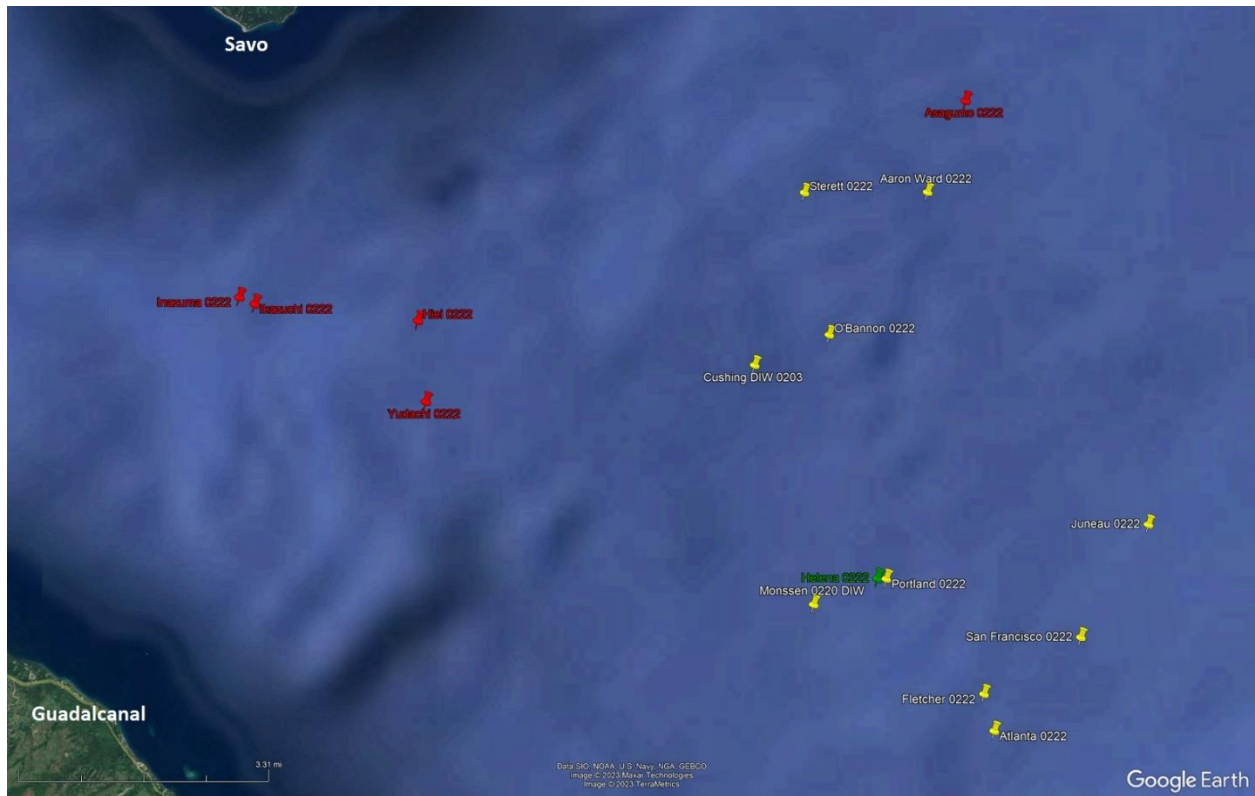
¹⁸⁶ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

¹⁸⁷ U.S.S. *Monssen*, DD-436, Serial TS/133, 16 November 1942, U.S.S. *Monssen*, Report of Battle of November 13, 1942. Report of loss in cruiser night action, Phase of battle of Guadalcanal. C.O. Charles E. McCombs.

¹⁸⁸ I firmly believe *Monssen*'s times in her report are incorrect by +20 minutes, so all of her entries have been adjusted by -20 minutes and I believe that these are the correct times.

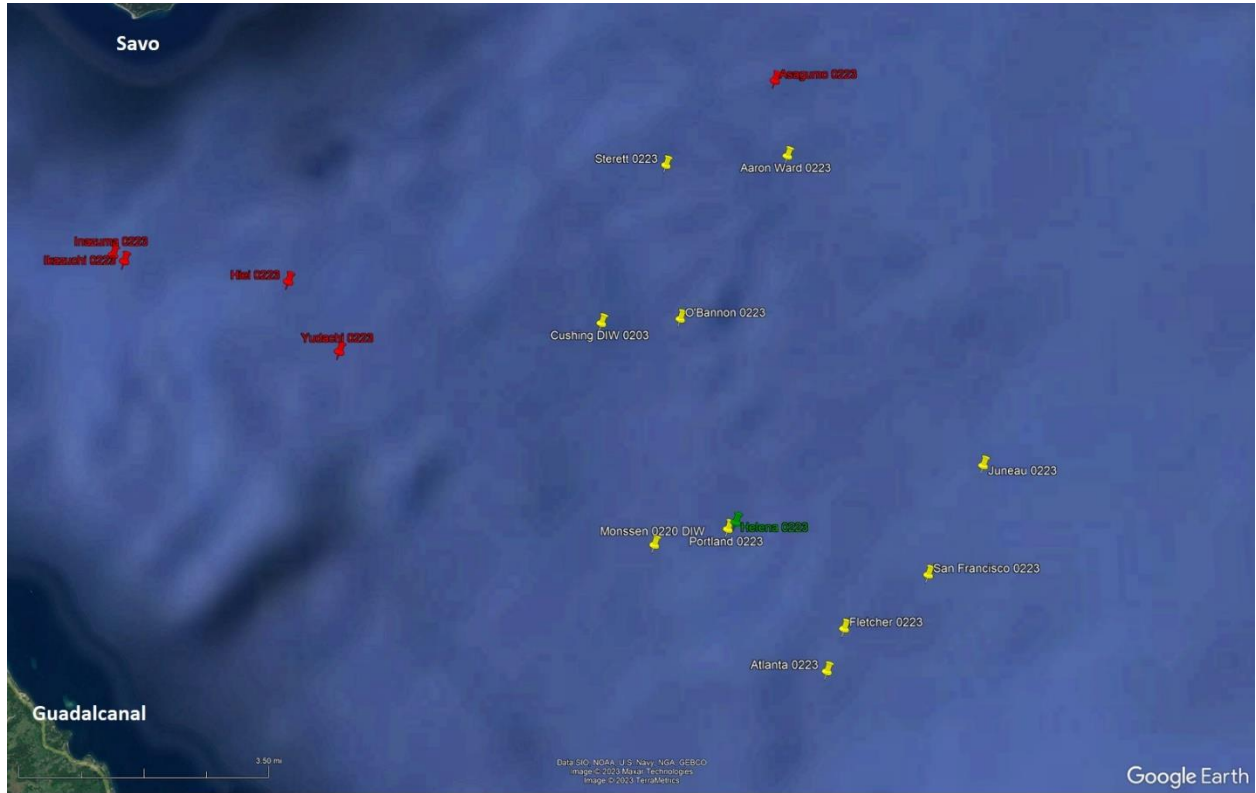
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0221 to 0230



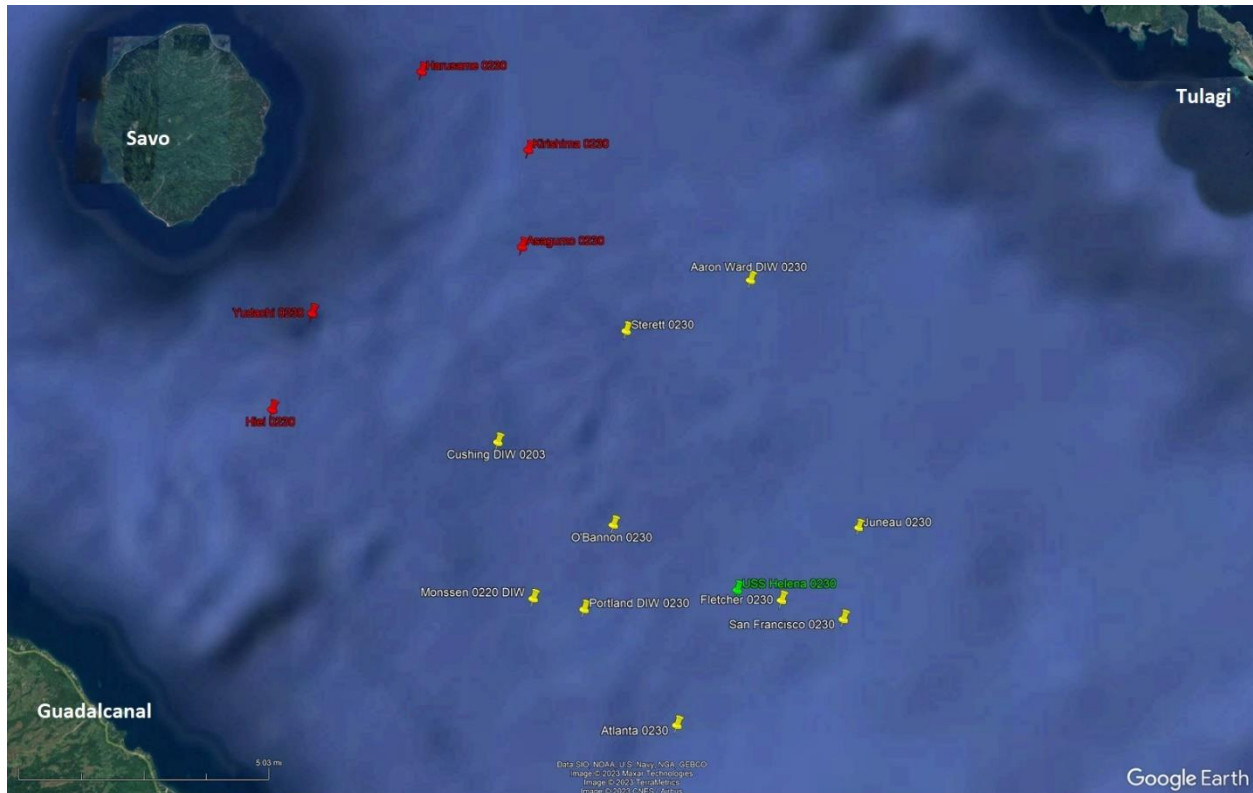
Map 27

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Map 28

The Naval Battle for Henderson Airfield, First Night



Japanese ships

Hiei slowly moves northwest. *Kirishima* now heads back south with *Harusame* as an escort. *Asagumo* heads northwest and spots *Sterett* after she is illuminated by a ship exploding to the south approximately around 0222-0223 and opens fire. There is a sharp exchange of gunfire and *Sterett* is hit several times. After this exchange of gunfire *Asagumo* withdraws to the north ending her participation in the battle. *Yudachi* heads for the southern coast of Savo Island. All other Japanese ships have withdrawn.

U.S. Ships

Cushing is drifting without power. *Sterett* is thoroughly illuminated when the enemy destroyer to starboard explodes (this was likely *Portland* getting hit by torpedoes from *Fletcher*¹⁸⁹). By 0227 *Sterett* receives numerous hits on port quarter. Enemy salvos from

¹⁸⁹ I believe *Fletcher*'s first torpedoes were fired at 0216 at *Portland* at 36 knots. 36 knots = 1,215.223 yd/min at a range of 7,300 yards means that the torpedoes would have hit at 0222 and her second salvo fired at approximately 0217 would have hit roughly at 0223.

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relative bearing 280° (approximate) struck port side of #3 handling room, gun shelter and #4 handling room. This would be *Asagumo*. Two shells strike her #4 handling room. One shell hit #3-gun shelter and three hits closely grouped in #3 handling room. A second salvo strikes the ship in the quarterdeck area, one pierced the corner of the port inboard torpedo tube, while the others passed through the midships clipping room, causing 6 personnel casualties. Word was passed immediately to guns #3 and #4 to flood both magazines and handling room and the repair party was dispatched to the scene of the fires.¹⁹⁰

Another hit pierced the port shell plating between frames 158 and 159 about two feet six inches below the main deck. Three shell hits were received on the port side of the after-deck house at about the same time and within a small area. Each projectile detonated upon impact and the resulting damage was confined mainly to compartment C-102-LM and structures immediately adjacent. Another projectile pierced the left after end of the shield of gun number 3 passing on through the right side without detonating.¹⁹¹

Three more shells struck the lower port corner of the 20 mm clipping room amidships on the main deck, the second apparently hit the officer of the deck's desk on the after bulkhead of the same clipping room and the third detonated at the after end of the left barrel of the port torpedo tubes. Completely separated from her own force. Colors and after part of ship were illuminated. Only two guns were serviceable. Two torpedoes were still in the starboard nest but one 5-inch hit had put this battery out of commission. When torpedo officer stated that it was impossible to fire this battery, *Sterett* retired at high speed, slowing from time to time to reduce draft when fire appeared to be getting out of control.¹⁹² *Atlanta* heading toward Lunga Point. *San Francisco* is heading east.

I believe *Portland* is struck by two closely grouped torpedoes that blow open her stern from the first salvo and a third hits the same area from the second salvo fired by *Fletcher*. This would account for *Fletcher* claiming three hits. This would account for *Sterett* being illuminated. This would account for *Portland*'s position that she gives at 0235 and her call for help at that time. This accounts for *Helena* reporting *Portland* losing steering closer to this time than 0158. Three U.S. torpedoes in 1942 have a 400 lb. warhead each which is very close to a single 1,100 lb. warhead of a Japanese torpedo. If the torpedoes all hit in close proximity to each other the damage inflicted may look like a single Japanese torpedo. This does not eliminate the possibility *Portland* was hit at 0158 and again around 0222-0223. However, I am suspicious that *Yudachi* could reload her torpedoes so quickly and if all four torpedoes hit, one from *Yudachi* and three from *Fletcher*, I do not think that *Portland* would have had any stern remaining. That leaves the possibility she was hit by one Japanese torpedo at 0158 but only one U.S. torpedo and not three at 0222-0223. My gut tells me that *Fletcher* was solely responsible

¹⁹⁰ U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

¹⁹¹ U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

¹⁹² U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

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and *Yudachi* never hit her at 0158. She turned south to avoid gunfire from *Hiei* and not because she was crippled, but this will have to remain speculation on my part.

TBS to all ships from *Helena*. "*Show fighting lights momentarily.*" This indicates to me Captain Hoover suspected friendly fire.¹⁹³

Portland receives "*All ships show fighting lights momentarily*" from *Helena*. *Portland* complied. Due to smoke and flares, it was impossible to tell whether any other ship complied, as no recognition lights could be distinguished by this ship.¹⁹⁴ As she continued to swing in a circle, the situation at this point became extremely confused and it was impossible in many instances for her to distinguish friend from foe. *Helena* came by close aboard with all guns blazing. No other ships could be identified by *Portland* at this time and the action began to draw away from her. *Portland* suffered; 16 KIA, 10 WIA. *Portland* later received a Meritorious Unit Commendation and Captain Du Bose was awarded his second Navy Cross.

By 0225 *Aaron Ward* had lost steering control and attempted to change course by steering with engines.¹⁹⁵ *Aaron Ward* suffered 15 KIA, 57 WIA. Commander Gregor (future rear admiral) was awarded a Navy Cross. U.S.S. *Aaron Ward* would later be bombed and sunk off Guadalcanal on 7 April 1943.

Monssen was being abandoned. *Monssen* suffered 145 KIA, 37 WIA. Lieutenant Commander McCombs was awarded a Navy Cross.

Fletcher reports that about six minutes after firing her torpedoes that a series of increasingly large explosions took place in her target followed by continuous burning. By means of the gun flashes and occasional flares overhead, the target was at times quite well lighted. All witness agree that it was a large cruiser or a battleship and that her general outline was somewhat comparable to our *Augusta* class. Her identity cannot, unfortunately, be stated with certainty. After this action *Fletcher* joins *San Francisco*, *Helena*, *Juneau*, *Sterett* and *O'Bannon* as they all head toward Indispensable Strait.¹⁹⁶ *Fletcher* did not suffer any casualties, 0 KIA, 0 WIA. Commander Cole awarded a Navy Cross.

¹⁹³ U.S.S. *Helena*, CL-50, Serial A16-3 008, November 15, 1942, Action off north coast Guadalcanal, early morning of November 13, 1942, report of. (3rd Savo Island Night Action.) C.O. Gilbert C Hoover.

¹⁹⁴ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

¹⁹⁵ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

¹⁹⁶ U.S.S. *Fletcher*, DD-445, Serial No (S)-1, 15 November 1942, Report of Action, C.O. W.M. Cole.

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0230 to 0240



Map 30

Japanese Ships

Hiei must have been making progress in her damage control because at 0230 she canceled her order for *Kirishima* to come to her aid and orders her to withdraw, which she does, abandoning her sister. *Hiei* would not recover steering control and would slowly loop along the west coast of Savo so by morning she was north of this island. *Harusame* escorting *Kirishima* suddenly saw a black shape along the southern coast of Savo and believed it was an American cruiser around 0235-0240. She open fire and believes that she cripples this target with gunfire and so does not fire any torpedoes. Her target was actually *Yudachi* and this is the final incident of friendly fire this night. As *Kirishima* turns north to withdraw, *Harusame* and *Asagumo* follow her and the surface battle ends. *Yudachi* is able to call for help and *Samidare* leaves *Murasame* and travels back south. She takes off *Yudachi*'s crew and fires two torpedoes to scuttle her, but they do not hit the ship and simply pass beneath her. Believing *Yudachi* was already sinking, *Samidare* leaves *Yudachi* drifting and departs. This ends the nighttime surface battle; however, the Japanese submarine *I-26* was waiting in the eastern approaches of the sound and *Helena*, *San Francisco*, *Juneau*, *Fletcher*, *Sterrett* and *O'Bannon* are all approaching her position.

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U.S. Ships

On board *Cushing* orders to abandon ship are given about 0230-0245. Wounded who are able to get off the ship and were helped to rafts. The Commanding Officer and a small salvage party remained on the ship to attempt saving her and to ensure depth charges were all set on safe. As the rafts cleared the side the ammunition in forward Gun Shelter began exploding and soon there was a combined oil and ammunition fire forward with the repeated explosion of both 5" and 20mm ammunition which could still be observed until survivors were picked up.¹⁹⁷ *Cushing* suffered; 72 KIA, 68 WIA. Lieutenant Commander Parker (future vice admiral) was awarded a third Navy Cross.

At 0230 *Sterett* was burning fiercely aft and was at this time completely separated from own force. Colors and the after part of the ship were illuminated in an effort to prevent friendly fire. Only two 5" guns were serviceable at this time. Two torpedoes were still in the starboard nest, but one 5-inch hit had put this battery out of commission. When the torpedo officer stated that it was impossible to fire this battery, *Sterett* retired at high speed, slowing from time to time to reduce wind 'draft' when the fires appear to be getting out of control. Ship was headed east to clear area then South until close to Guadalcanal shore.¹⁹⁸ *Sterett* suffered 29 KIA, 22 WIA. She was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation and Commander Coward was awarded the first of his two Navy Crosses.

At 0230 *Helena* changed course to left to 090° T. At 0231 she received a message from *Portland* requesting tow. 0235 *Portland* position Lat. 09-18 S., Long, 159-58 E. Still turning in tight circles. By this time most of the firing had ceased, with some firing to Northward.¹⁹⁹ About this time the SG radar observes three vessels retiring around Savo Island. One passes to Southward and two to Northward. Also, about this time or shortly afterwards, as senior surviving officer, *Helena's* C.O. ordered all ships to retire toward Sealark Channel. At the end of the night's firing, *Helena* sees about nine burning ships behind her.²⁰⁰ At 0310 *Helena* was on course 098° at 15 knots. *Helena* had 1 KIA and 13 WIA during the battle. She receives a Navy Unit Citation (combined with later actions in Solomons). Captain Hoover was awarded a third Navy Cross.

On board *Juneau*, Roger O'Neil reported, "*The chief engineer was quoted as having said that in his opinion the keel had been broken by the first torpedo hit. At dawn there was evidence the Juneau was 10 to 12 feet down by the bow with approximately 2° list. She had also lost*

¹⁹⁷ U.S.S. *Cushing*, DD-376, Serial A16-3, November 16, 1942, Report of engagement off Savo Island on November 13, 1942 and destruction of the U.S.S. *Cushing*, E.H. Parker.

¹⁹⁸ U.S.S. *Sterett*, DD-407, Serial A16-3(005), 20 November 1942, Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942. J. C. Coward.

¹⁹⁹ This observation was likely *Harusame* engaging *Yudachi*.

²⁰⁰ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

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suction in the main feed pump causing reduced pressure and the ship to go dead in the water several times about dawn.”²⁰¹

“Due to the excessive casualties on the San Francisco, the senior medical officer of the latter asked assistance and my senior medical officer, Lieutenant Commander James G. Neff, (MC), USN, who had struck his head at the time of the first torpedo hit, asked me if I would care to go over. The destroyer O'Bannon a short time later, sent over a boat and I took three of my corpsmen, namely Theodore D. Merchant, Orrel G. Cecil and William T. Sims, plus some medical supplies and proceeded to the San Francisco. I was in the Admiral's cabin just donning a mask prior to assisting Lieutenant Commander Lowe to operate on Captain Young of the San Francisco, when the Juneau was torpedoed the second time at approximately 1101, November 13th.”²⁰² This was by the Japanese submarine I-26 who fired her torpedoes at San Francisco but instead hit Juneau.

Roger O'Neil continued, *“In view of the fact that the admiral's cabin is located on the port side and the Juneau was on the starboard side when hit, I did not see the actual hit. However, the San Francisco swung to the starboard side and within 30 seconds of the hit I saw the spot where the Juneau had been. The only thing visible was tremendous clouds of gray and black smoke. I could not see any debris in the water, but I was at least two to three thousand yards distant. Later on, I questioned men on the San Francisco, who had been on watch on the starboard side and had witnessed the incident, from the gist of which I gathered that three torpedoes had been fired. The first crossed the San Francisco's bow and just missed astern of the Juneau. The second appeared to come from beneath the San Francisco and its wake was not visible immediately. The third came aft of both ships. It was the second torpedo that struck Juneau on its port side very close to the location of the first torpedo hit in the early morning. It was impossible for San Francisco to inform Juneau of its imminent attack and if the Juneau actually saw the torpedo wake, I am of the belief that it was impossible to heel hard starboard because of its broken keel and the possibility of breaking the ship in two. The men told me that the Juneau appeared to explode instantaneously and appeared to break in two, both segments of which sunk within 20 seconds. The debris from the explosion flew many feet in the air, one portion of which struck number 1 gun of the San Francisco, putting it out of commission. The signalmen on the bridge of the Helena were in the process of taking a message from the Juneau and had his glass trained on the signalman of that ship and reports that the signalman was blown at least 30 feet into the air.”²⁰³*

One of the survivors, Ensign Zook, later reported, *“We were down quite aways in the water and we had no way of pumping ballast, although we were on an even keel. Our decks*

²⁰¹ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Serial A16-3 007, November 17, 1942, Report of U.S.S. *Juneau* activity from November 11 to 13, 1942 inclusive. Lt. Rodger W. O'Neil.

²⁰² U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Serial A16-3 007, November 17, 1942, Report of U.S.S. *Juneau* activity from November 11 to 13, 1942 inclusive. Lt. Rodger W. O'Neil.

²⁰³ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Serial A16-3 007, November 17, 1942, Report of U.S.S. *Juneau* activity from November 11 to 13, 1942 inclusive. Lt. Rodger W. O'Neil.

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were almost awash. In view of our speed of 13 knots if our ship would been able to answer the rudder, why, we could have dodged the torpedo. But being that deep in the water, the rudder would not answer soon enough, the ship could not turn out of the path of the torpedo. I distinctly recall two violent explosions, that is why I assume that the Juneau was struck by two torpedoes on November 13. All in all, I believe that we received three torpedoes, one in the night battle and two the following morning by submarine. She sank within a minute so you can see that she was very violently hit."²⁰⁴

"My right knee was injured quite badly, enough to necessitate an operation. I was caught in the mast of the ship and as the ship went down, I was dragged under water with the mast of the ship and finally I worked myself loose and tried swimming to the top but there was so much suction that I just gave up, I didn't have a chance to get a full breath of air anyway on account of the sudden explosion and the oil and smoke in the air immediately after the explosion, so I just gave up swimming. All of a sudden, you know how it is when you get closer to the top of the water, how you start rising faster, there is not so much pressure, then I broke through the oil on the top and I was safe. I saw a lift raft over there and started swimming for it but couldn't use my right leg at all and had to dog paddle. I finally got to the life raft and immediately after the sinking the officer who was Lieut. Blodgett, got all the life rafts together, we collected them all and put wounded men in the life nets and put well men in the life rafts and we secured all the rafts and nets together and we had oars and we could see land so we started rowing toward land. None of us were afraid as there were five others with us at the time of the sinking and we all felt sure that help would come at any time."²⁰⁵

Approximately 100 to 120 men of the *Juneau* survived the explosion. For eight days the majority of the men drifted aimlessly while awaiting rescue. All but ten died from the elements and among those lost were the five Sullivan brothers. Three of the brothers survived the sinking, only to die in the water, while two went down with the ship. On November 20, 1942, U.S.S. *Ballard* recovered two men of the ten survivors, five more were rescued by a PBY seaplane and three officers made it to San Cristobal Island 55 miles from where *Juneau* went down. Total casualties on *Juneau* were 683 KIA and 4 WIA. Captain Swenson was awarded a posthumous Navy Cross and the *Allen M. Sumner* class destroyer DD-729 was later named in his honor. *Fletcher* class DD-537 and *Arleigh Burke* class DDG-68 were named in honor of the five Sullivan brothers.

Unfortunately, there is one more small tragic story to add to this. On board the *Juneau* was another family group of 4 brothers called the Rogers. Just a few weeks before the battle, the Navy tried to have the two families in harm's way split up with two of the Rogers (Joseph and Jimmy) doing so while the other two (Patrick and Louie) stayed aboard and ultimately did not survive. This would only marginally avoid the type of tragedy the USN had hoped to avoid. The

²⁰⁴ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Battle of Guadalcanal, narrative by L. E. Zook, Signalman First Class U.S.N. recorded May 27, 1943.

²⁰⁵ U.S.S. *Juneau*, CL-52, Battle of Guadalcanal, narrative by L. E. Zook, Signalman First Class U.S.N. recorded May 27, 1943.

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deaths of the Sullivan and Rogers brothers would result in a new Navy policy that restricted multiple family members being assigned to the same ship.



Figure 25 - Juneau's starboard side torpedo mounts still loaded with torpedoes and mount 54. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 26 - Juneau's port side torpedoes still loaded and mount 55. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.



Figure 27 - Juneau's aft main battery director. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 28 - The roof of mount 56. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Daylight on 13 November 1942



Map 31

Japanese Ships

Hiei spots *Aaron Ward* at 0607 and logs her as an enemy cruiser, range 24 km. There was no wind and the enemy ship appears to be motionless. Captain Nishida orders the main battery to open fire. After several salvos, the enemy is no longer in sight. In an effort to boost morale in the ship, the crew is told that the enemy was sunk.²⁰⁶

Hiei came under air attack around 0630 when five VMSB-142 SBDs and four VMSB-131 TBFs arrived from Henderson field on Guadalcanal.²⁰⁷ The first planes, five or six Dauntless dive-bombers, released their bombs from aft at an extremely low altitude, diving from 4,000 meters and pulling up at 400 meters. They were met by a limited amount of gunfire, as a number of *Hiei*'s high-angle cannons and machine-guns had been knocked out or damaged in the surface action. Also, as many gun crews had been killed or wounded, their replacements of course were not so skilled. The attack developed on the starboard side and there only No. 1 high-angle gun and a few machine-guns were able to respond. No. 3 gun could not rotate and was stuck at a 45-degree elevation. The destroyer *Yukikaze*, however, was stationed aft on the starboard side and claimed to have shot-down one of the attackers. *Hiei* took one hit amidships,

²⁰⁶ Kazuyoshi, Miyazaki, *Tragedy at Savo, The Hiei, under Concentrated Fire*, page 5.

²⁰⁷ Frank, Richard B, *Guadalcanal*, page 454.

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the bomb (estimated to be of 500 kilos) exploded on impact with her starboard boat deck, the ship's boats were destroyed and much splinter damage was inflicted; however, no major ship damage resulted.²⁰⁸

Between 0830 and 1005 seven more SBDs attacked but they did not score any hits. At 1010 a second attempt was made by the four VMSB-131 TBFs. They claim one hit. At 1015 nine TBFs of *Enterprise* VT-10 under Lt. Albert Coffin escorted by six Wildcats attack in the face of a stronger AA defense. They were to attack *Hiei* and then land at Henderson field reload and repeat attacks from there. For the first raid *Hiei* had not been able to use her main battery, but for this second raid she used a sighting telescope to determine the target and range and could engage the attackers with 14-inch Type 3 AA shells. The Type-3 shells exploded with fragments spreading out like a giant firework but despite this VT-10 claims no casualties and reported 3 hits on *Hiei*.²⁰⁹ Japanese sources combine these three separate attacks as the second major air attack on *Hiei*. The U.S. aircraft were approaching in groups of three. When the smoke cleared the planes were nowhere to be seen.²¹⁰ *Hiei* reported a single torpedo hit at this time under the forward superstructure on the starboard side which caused the ship to bounce but not much flooding occurred. At 1110 fourteen B-17s of the 11th Bomb Group drop fifty-six 500-lb bombs on *Hiei*, claiming one hit. *Hiei* reports they scored one hit and five near misses from an altitude of 14,000 feet.

At 1120 six SBDs attacked with half reporting bomb hits. Japanese sources claim two additional bomb hits by dive bombers at this time. However, Soshō adds the important fact that these enemy bombs were apparently fused for ground attack and because of their instantaneous detonation they killed only personnel but had almost no material effect.²¹¹ At 1220 six TBFs four from VT-10 again buzzed in low and scored one certain hit and one more likely hit.²¹² Low clouds spoiled an attack by 9 SBDs between 1340 and 1525 on *Hiei*'s escorts, but six VT-10 TBFs claimed two hits on the battleship at 1435. This brought to seventy the total number of aircraft that attacked *Hiei*.²¹³

1530 *Hiei*'s captain finally agreed with the view that the situation was hopeless and requested that the destroyers send over their launches and cutters to evacuate some 1,100 survivors. The crew over the following couple of hours proceeded to assemble at the stern where by divisions they clambered down ropes down into the waiting launches. *Hiei*'s captain,

²⁰⁸ Kimata Jiro, *Japanese Battleship History, Hiei*, page 6.

²⁰⁹ Frank, Richard B, *Guadalcanal*, page 454.

²¹⁰ VT-10 lists no casualties but of the 9 TBFs that initially attack *Hiei*, the subsequent attacks are by 4 TBF and six TBF aircraft. I highly suspect at a minimum 3 TBF landed at Henderson field but were so badly shot up that they were written off. Kazuyoshi, Miyazaki, *Tragedy at Savo, The Hiei*, under Concentrated Fire, page 5-6.

²¹¹ Soshi Soshō's entry on *Hiei*'s loss in volume 83 (pp 372-375).

²¹² Frank, Richard B, *Guadalcanal*, page 454. Japanese sources confirm two more torpedo hits from *Enterprise* but differ as to times. I highly suspect the correct time was the 1435 attack as Captain Nishida finally gave up attempt to save his ship late in the afternoon. The two torpedoes are reported to have struck one under turret one or two and the second under turret 3 or simply aft. Her wreck shows she suffered an under-keel detonation under turret 4 that sheared off the outboard port propeller shaft, resulted in the ship whipping and flooding the starboard engine room.

²¹³ Frank, Richard B, *Guadalcanal*, page 454.

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standing on the roof of No. 3 turret, supervised the movements. He was the last man to leave the ship and he went by launch to *Yukikaze*.²¹⁴

Kirishima was barreling north when she was sighted by U.S.S. *Trout* at 0739. With a 170-degree port track, *Trout* was unable to an attack. However, late that afternoon, *Trout* sees *Kirishima* again at 1504. *Kirishima* was now south bound after she had been ordered to go to *Hiei*'s aid. *Trout* made a fast setup as the battleship was moving fast - tracked at 21 knots with a turn count of 228 rpm. At 1518 *Trout* fires five "fish" at 1,800 yards on a 105-degree port track. No hits were made, even though no evasive taken by the battleship and the torpedoes appeared to miss astern. The sub skipper was perplexed about the failure, as he felt the setup was good. Post-war, it was discovered that *Trout*'s attack hadn't failed, as Japanese records say that two duds hit *Kirishima*. It was the torpedoes that failed, not the sub.²¹⁵

Hiei now lay smoking, silent and impassive with her list slowly increasing. At 1800 the Batdiv 11 commander gave orders to Desdiv 27 to sink the ship with torpedoes, at about the same time informing Combined Fleet Headquarters of this intention. Before this scuttling could be carried out a reply was received forbidding the move. However, there really was no hope of a tow as *Kirishima* had turned back many hours before because of the increasing danger from air attack. For the next few hours messages passed to and from concerning the disposal of the vessel. However, *Hiei*'s Kingston valves had been opened already and she was seen to be slowly sinking. Admiral Abe pointed out that the escorting destroyers were low in fuel, damaged by near misses and strafing and were incapable of towing the ship, also all four of *Hiei*'s shafts were damaged, the anchor windlass room flooded and rigging the ship for a tow was impossible.²¹⁶

At 2145 the Combined Fleet Headquarters replied that help was on its way and that the approaching Japanese transport convoy heading for Guadalcanal would be bound to absorb enemy aircraft attention the following day. Also, it was advised that the heavy-cruisers *Suzuya* and *Maya* were heading south to bombard Henderson Airfield that night and the destroyers should withdraw westward in case they were mistaken for the enemy by the oncoming warships. The five destroyers did so, but returned to the area at 2300, but by then *Hiei* had disappeared from the surface of the sea. The destroyers then departed northwards. In all, 188 men were killed and 152 wounded throughout the battle and the fight to save her, rather low casualties considering the punishment she had received. Because of the scuttling incident, later both Vice-Admiral Abe and *Hiei*'s commanding officer came in for censure.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Kimata Jiro, Japanese Battleship History, *Hiei*, page 6-8.

²¹⁵ Senshi Soshō's, Loss of *Hiei*, Volume 83, pp 372-375.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid

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U.S. Ships

Cushing was now burning and abandoned. *Monssen* is also burning. *Sterett*, *Helena*, *San Francisco*, *Fletcher* and *O'Bannon* have successfully withdrawn from the battle. At a cost of 1,429 men and six ships, Callaghan and TG 67.4 had bought one day's respite for Henderson Field from a major bombardment.

At about 1400 the Commanding Officer of *Atlanta* reports that he is unable to check flooding and would have to abandon and scuttle his ship. Authority was granted to do so by the Commanding Officer of *Portland* as S.O.P.A. The crew of the *Atlanta* was taken off by Higgins boats and the demolition party set to work. At 1432 the *Bobolink* and *YC236* came alongside *Portland's* starboard bow.

Portland reports at daylight, about 0530, that the following ships were in sight: *Atlanta*, lying to but not burning, 5,000 yards to southward. A *Shigure* class destroyer lying to, not burning 12,500 yards to westward, just south of Savo Island. *Cushing*, burning badly, 8,000 yards to northwest. *Monssen*, burning badly, 10,000 yards to northward. A *Haruna* class battleship and one unidentified Jap cruiser hull down,²¹⁸ 35,000 yards to northwest. *Aaron Ward*, 15,000 yards to northward. At 0630, after positively identifying the *Shigure* class destroyer, she opened fire on it, range 12,500 yards. Six six-gun salvos were fired. Although *Portland* was circling due to the loss of her rudder, she hit the destroyer several times and when the sixth salvo landed, the after magazines blew high in the air and she sank immediately. This was the *Yudachi*. It was noted that two small boats were standing by her at the time.²¹⁹

A tow was requested from Tulagi and while waiting the *Portland* put over a boat which picked up survivors. A Higgins boats from Cactus, which had been requested earlier by this vessel, arrived a short time later as several SOC's were engaged in rescue work, the *Portland* did not stop again for survivors. At 0953 the *Bobolink* arrived and was directed by the *Portland* as SOPA to take the *Atlanta* in tow. *Portland* attempted to work herself toward Kukum and with the aid of Higgins boats pushing against the starboard bow and the alternate backing and going ahead on the engines, she succeeded in maintaining a speed of about three knots and Tulagi was reached at about 0110.²²⁰

Aaron Ward reported 0600 - Sighted an enemy battleship between Savo and Florida Island, distant about 26,000 yards. This ship is slowly steaming in circles. Also sighted *Atlanta*, *Portland*, *Cushing* and *Monssen*. These ships were still afloat and were in the direction of Guadalcanal. *Monssen* and *Cushing* are burning. There is also an enemy destroyer near Cape Esperance which was burning and which is later sunk by *Portland*. At 0630 the enemy battleship fired a total of four 2-gun salvos at *Aaron Ward*. Enemy was using an up-ladder and third salvo straddled the ship. After fourth salvo, friendly planes started working on battleship and she fired no more at this ship. 0635 - Lost power again and *Bobolink* took us in tow. 0650 -

²¹⁸ The cruiser is actually the destroyer *Yukikaze*.

²¹⁹ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

²²⁰ U.S.S. *Portland*, CA-33, Serial SD/TS133, November 21, 1942, Night Action between Task Force 67.4 and Japanese Forces, November 13, 1942. Lieut.-Comdr. E.W Shanklin.

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Bobolink cast off and YP took us in tow. 0830 - Anchored in Tulagi Harbor near Makambo Island.²²¹

U.S.S. *Enterprise* launched 9 torpedo planes (8 armed with torpedoes and 1 with 500-lb bombs) and 6 fighters for Guadalcanal with instructions to search and to strike any suitable targets they might encounter. This flight also provided a search to considerable depth for much needed information. Enroute to CACTUS, this flight sighted a BB of the *Kongō* class with CA and DD escort 10 miles north of Savo Island, steaming into position for bombardment of the airfield. The TBFs attacked, scored 3 torpedo hits on the BB, landed at CACTUS for rearming, made a second attack three hours later scoring 3 more torpedo hits and left the BB practically dead in the water and listing heavily. These attacks probably prevented destructive bombardment of our only air base in the Solomons and probably prevented the sinking of the *Portland* then dead in the water 2 miles north of Lunga Point. Running shuttle trips from CACTUS during the next two days (14-15 November), this squadron made six additional attacks on Japanese vessels, expending a total of 26 torpedoes, 13 500-lb bombs and 29 incendiary bombs.²²² I believe *Enterprise* hit *Hiei* with three additional torpedoes, one under turret 1 or 2, one under her forward superstructure and one under turret 4 under her keel all on the starboard side.

²²¹ U.S.S. *Aaron Ward*, DD-483, Serial 003, 20 November 1942, Report of Action, Night of 12-13 November 1942, C.O. C.F. Gregor.

²²² U.S.S. *Enterprise*, CV-6, Serial 0019, November 19, 1942. Action against Japanese Forces Attempting the Recapture of Guadalcanal, November 13 - 14, 1942 - Report of. O. B. Hardison.

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Hiei wreck observations

Hiei's wreck cannot confirm due to its condition the bomb hits or the torpedo hits that struck forward. However, there is confirmation of the under-keel detonation under Turret 4.

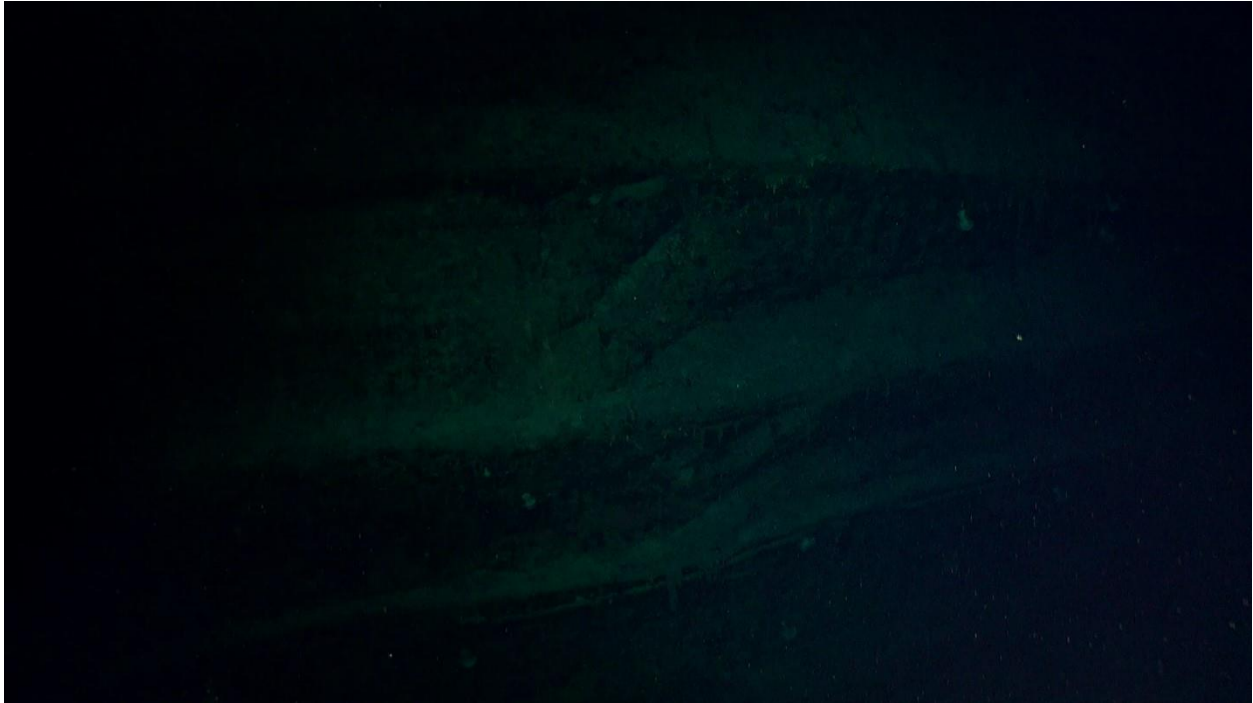


Figure 29

Figure 29

This is the port side hull at frame 258. This deformation of the side plates on both the port and starboard side I believe are from an under-keel detonation from U.S.S. Enterprise's torpedo which was reported to hit her stern on the starboard side. The damage appears on both sides of the ship as she hogged and sagged at this point. It is a combination of an under-keel detonation and then implosion after she sank. This makes analysis of the damage very difficult. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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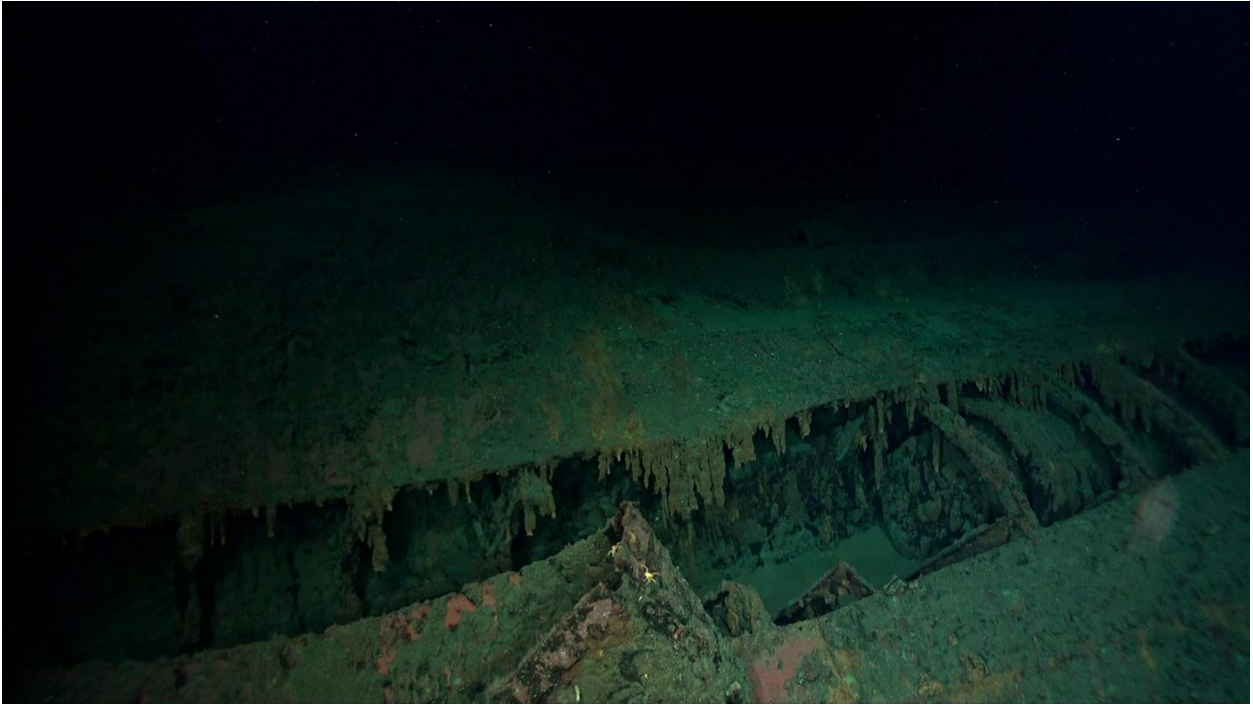


Figure 30 - This is the damage to her port side outboard propeller shaft where it normally enters the hull. What can also be seen is the keel plates have been crushed in this location. This damage is approximately at frame 258. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 31

Figure 31

This is Kirishima's outboard port propeller, the same propeller that is broken on Hiei. The shaft is bolted together as it enters the hull. These bolts are very susceptible to shock damage. Kirishima suffered I believe up to three under-keel detonations by 16-inch shells, but these explosions would be rather small compared to a torpedo from U.S.S. Enterprise. The explosive charge from a torpedo was far greater than that used in a 16-inch shell and the shock wave produced sheared the bolts that connect the shaft. In 1942 the MK13 torpedo had a warhead of 400 lbs. TNT. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 32 - The outboard port shaft has pulled out on Hiei only being stopped from falling out by the 'A' bracket. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.



Figure 33 - This is Hiei's starboard outboard shaft which I believe shows shock damage from U.S.S. Enterprise's torpedo. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 34

Figure 34

This is Hiei's starboard rudder which is pointing about 10° to starboard. Hiei's and Kirishima have almost identical rudder jams. Her rudder post is approximately at frame 293. Note how the forward section in front of the rudder post has been bent to port. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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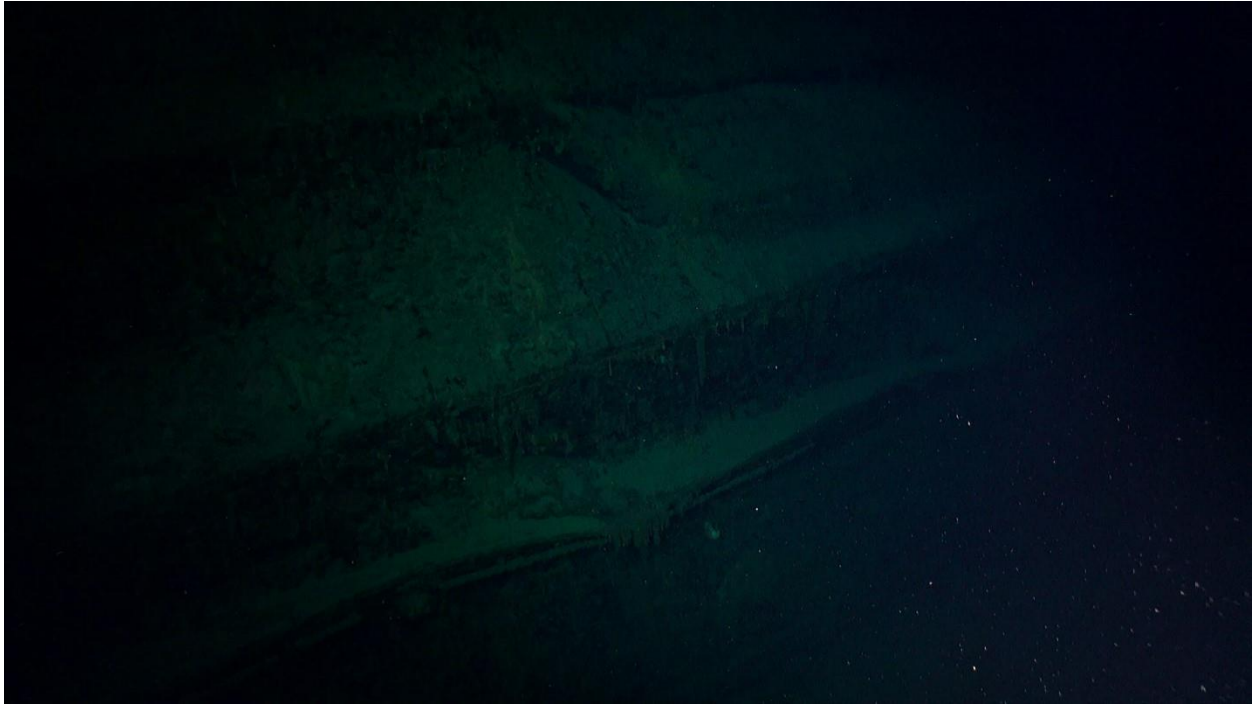


Figure 35

Figure 35

As the ROV heads back to the stern we see the starboard deformation of the side tanks that I believe were created by an under-keel torpedo detonation. Then as she sank the tanks also suffered implosion. This brings us back to frame 258. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 36 - The port rudders lower edge is actually cracked in half, so the port side of the rudder has broken free of the starboard side. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Figure 37

Figure 37

The port rudder is almost turned sideways to starboard in a position it should never be able to turn. In addition, the inboard port propeller is severely bent aft from forward. All of this is an indication of U.S.S. Enterprise's under-keel torpedo detonation. I stress again that this was Hiei's fatal blow. Copyrighted by Lone Wolf Media.

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Summary

Wars bring tragedy and the most egregious is to forget them all together. The Pacific War is well remembered for a few battles that still ring well in the annals of naval history. For the rest that most people can't even name to begin with, there is one who has never received a proper name of its own. In World War 2, there were 11 Friday the 13ths, while it was unlucky for the men who fought in Guadalcanal that night, it is by far more unfortunate that their fight was left in the dark. For 80 years there has been a 52-minute gap of history untold. Now we tell it.

The unusually close ranges and lack of communication and disorganized fashion in which everyone engaged produced the most cases of friendly fire in one battle. Yet, hidden beneath this revelation is another forgotten detail, American destroyer torpedoes are often mythologized as being a poor weapon, but again we see that they played a more successful role than ever appreciated.

The state of the war and the difficulty in relaying information to both family and the war weary at large most likely played a role in why understanding this battle has taken so long to decipher. The U.S. Navy did not want the Sullivan brothers on one ship, but they appealed to fight together. Their loss was due to Japanese weapons, but also the confusion and the difficult decision on the part of the last surviving commander of the last surviving ships trying to escape the carnage.

This was not incompetence; we must understand the chaos. Once is an accident but, in this battle, friendly fire occurred 9 or 10 times. The Navy's answer to this tragedy was to learn from this to the greatest extent possible. From what we can speculate, protecting morale at home is extremely important, especially after the losses at Savo Island.

The PAC10 directives were created as a measure to prevent this from happening again. Even when the mighty *Helena* would sink the following July in another night fight, most of her crew would be saved. Damage control lessons from Guadalcanal helped save entire fleets of individual ships over the rest of the war. The military in general, as made famous in Saving Private Ryan, would institute new policies for how family members served in combat.

For the Japanese, they now had Hara's new tactical principals that further USN forces would have to overcome with minds like Burke and Moosbrugger leading the charge and gaining us the advantage.

For 20 years the USN and IJN made their fleets and made their plans against them. Midway opened the door for them to be tested in Guadalcanal. The Naval Battle for Henderson Airfield would tragically challenge the resolve of two nations fighting in a place and now at a range neither had envisioned. Japan would suffer two Pyrrhic Victories at Santa Cruz for their Strike Fleet and Henderson for their Battle Fleet. With the *Enterprise* and the *Washington* now left holding the tip of the spear against a blunted IJN, the war in the Pacific had truly turned for good.

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Giving this very particular battle a much better and defining name, just as well as being able to put these pieces together, is far more important to help remember the men of this tragic event.

Everyone who died in this was at best remembered more so individually as per their ship, rank, or family. But this was a massive moment that was further compounded by more units involving themselves immediately after another group. And the saddest part is not even the blue on blue, but that this fight gets passed up because it's harder to understand and resides in the shadows of Midway and the Battleship Duel.

If not for the great work of multiple war wreck explorations and a dedicated battlefield forensics operation, we honorees of history today would never be able to better understand what really happened on that night. Now we know. Now we remember.