

The whole daring enterprise was under the tactical command of Admiral Halsey, still on the carrier ENTERPRISE. The task force steamed to within 700 miles of Japan's coast - a coast with which Admiral Halsey was to become very familiar - to launch the spectacular flight, even though the force had been sighted by radio-equipped Jap patrol boats.

Now switching to Batuan, with the exception of the spine-tingling activities of Lt. Bulkley and his PT boats, who performed miracles in knocking out Jap ships and effected the daring rescue of General MacArthur and President Quezon, little has been told of the part played by Navy personnel ashore during these catastrophic days.

More than 3,000 Navy and Marine Corps personnel were among the defense forces - all of them in their fighting, a strange and wonderful collection of sailors-turned-foot soldiers, whose wild and completely unorthodox jungle fighting perhaps kept the Japs from cutting the peninsula in two, an accomplishment which was probably one of the reasons why Batuan did not fall days or weeks earlier. Little has been said either of the handful of ships left behind to wait for the end and who performed great, though unnamed services, during those last days at Batuan and Corregidor.

It should be noted that on 10 December there were some 200,000 tons of allied shipping in Manila Bay, most of it good, and some of it with valuable cargoes. All but one of these ships got clear to the southward under cover of our surface forces. This was an important "save".

Our submarines, whose tremendous story of achievement in the Pacific is still to be told, together with our torpedo boats succeeded in slowing the enemy down to a point where it was possible for us to get organized for impending surface and air actions in the Java Sea.

It should be noted at this point that during the first five months of the war, nearly every engagement with the enemy had demonstrated the importance of airpower in modern naval warfare.

On the morning of 4 May about 100 miles southwest of Guadalcanal, planes launched by the YORKTOWN, supported by three cruisers and six destroyers sank and damaged a number of vessels at Tulagi, with the loss of only one of our aircraft.

The climax of the defensive phase of operations in the Pacific came in the now historic battle of the Coral Sea. On the morning of 7 May, our forces made contact with a Japanese carrier which was promptly attacked and sunk by planes from the LEX and YORKTOWN. We lost only one dive bomber in the attack but the same morning Jap carrier planes sank our tanker KINROSS and destroyer SHEP.

The following morning contact was made with two enemy carriers, four heavy cruisers and several destroyers. Our carrier aircraft attacked and severely damaged one enemy carrier but both the LEX and YORKTOWN were damaged during the counter-attack which followed.

Both carriers and their planes shot down a large number of enemy aircraft during the engagement and our plane losses were small by comparison, but early in the afternoon an explosion on board the LEXINGTON made her impossible to control. She was therefore abandoned and ordered sunk by our own destroyers. Nearly all of her personnel were saved.

Thus ended the first major engagement in naval history in which surface ships did not exchange a single shot. Although the loss of the LEX was keenly felt, the engagement in the Coral Sea effectively checked the Japanese in their advance to the southward. Our losses of one carrier, one tanker, one destroyer, 66 planes and 543 personnel casualties was considerably less than estimated Japanese losses.