



A Dauntless dives on the destroyer Murakumo during the attacks on 12 October.

scene of the battle which was within roughly 20 miles of Savo Island. These destroyers, together with the *Hatsuyuki* from Goto's force, picked up many of these men, although the Americans would find dozens of others in daylight.

From Henderson Field, distant gun flashes and explosions could be seen in the distance, indicating a major naval engagement had taken place. A large strike group was readied prior to dawn in order to hunt the retreating Japanese ships. Taking off at 0520 on 12 October, this comprised a mixed formation of seventeen SBDs led by Lieutenant Colonel Albert D Cooley (the commander of MAG-14), with an escort provided by sixteen VMF-121 F4Fs and eight 339th FS P-39s.

In conditions of scattered low cloud, initially no targets were sighted so Cooley detached a formation of five SBDs under Lieutenant Commander Eldridge to search further up The Slot. After turning back from New Georgia, Cooley's group found two destroyers north of the Russell Islands. These were the *Shirayuki* and *Murakumo* which had stayed near Savo Island as late as possible picking up survivors.

The remaining dozen SBDs made diving attacks with 1,000-pound bombs from 6,000 feet and claimed a hit on the forward deck of one destroyer, likely the *Murakumo*. The attackers were met with accurate and heavy anti-aircraft fire and one SBD was badly damaged.