



A Nakajima-built Zero is attended by plane handlers on the *Junyo* during the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands. It has an ad hoc tail code 51, an abbreviated version of DII-151.

deck. One of the Vals sustained light damage from anti-aircraft fire but all returned safely to their carrier at 1820.

During these attacks the decision was made to abandon the *Hornet* as further enemy attacks appeared likely and it couldn't be defended. After the remaining crew were offloaded into destroyers, at 1805 the *Mustin* fired eight torpedoes at the hulk, but the carrier remained stubbornly afloat. The *Anderson* followed with another eight, but in a reflection of the dreadful quality of US torpedoes of the era, these too failed to strike a mortal blow. The destroyers then pumped 369 x 5-inch rounds into the carrier, which was left burning when they departed at 2040.

The advancing Japanese surface ships were close on their heels. Within hours the destroyers *Akigumo* and *Makigumo* had arrived on the scene, guided by the glow of the burning carrier. They learned of the *Hornet's* identity via the hull number "8" but seeing it at a 45-degree list it was obviously unsalvageable. Each destroyer then fired two torpedoes at the stricken carrier, which finally sank around 0130 on 27 October. Going down with the ship were one TBF, eight F4Fs and eight SBDs.

Generally, the Japanese shadowing of the carriers had been very good throughout the day. This was done by the various Kate and Val tracker aircraft, but also by cruiser-launched floatplanes from the Vanguard Force. For example, the *Northampton* noted the presence of a "single float monoplane" at the time of the final attack on the *Hornet* around 1700. Subsequently two more