

Battle of the Coral Sea was a naval battle between Japanese and United States forces during World War II (1939-1945). The five-day battle began on May 4, 1942, in the Coral Sea, northeast of Australia. It was the first naval battle in which the opposing warships never sighted or fired upon one another. The battle was fought almost entirely by warplanes launched from aircraft carriers.

Japan sought to capture Port Moresby, on the southern coast of New Guinea, and Tulagi, in the Solomon Islands. Japanese control of these positions would threaten Australia and support plans for further Japanese expansion in the South Pacific. Aware of these intentions, the United States sent a naval force to intercept the Japanese invasion fleet. Two Australian warships supported the American force.

The opening days of the battle were marked by confusion. Scout planes misidentified ships and ship locations. On May 4, American planes raided Japanese ships off Tulagi. Minor raids and air battles occurred on May 5 and 6, as the U.S. Navy positioned its aircraft carriers to attack the Japanese. On May 7, Japanese planes attacked an American oil tanker, mistaking it for an aircraft carrier. At about the same time, American warplanes attacked and sank the Japanese carrier *Shoho*.

On May 8, the main fleets located each other and began their attacks. American planes seriously damaged one Japanese carrier but missed a second one. At nearly the same time, Japanese bombers attacked the American force, scoring hits on the carriers USS *Lexington* and USS *Yorktown*. *Lexington* was abandoned and sunk. *Yorktown* returned to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for repairs. By the end of day, the opposing forces had run low on fuel and suffered heavy damage and loss of life. Each side withdrew, and the Japanese invasion force soon turned back.

Around 550 Americans died in the Battle of the Coral Sea. Japan lost close to 1,100 sailors and aviators. The battle halted the assault on Port Moresby and temporarily checked the threat to Australia.