



Torpedo 8: The Story of Swede Larsen's Bomber Squadron

Ira Wolfert

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Torpedo 8, first published in 1943, recounts the combat actions of Torpedo Squadron 8 (VT-8), a United States Navy squadron of World War II torpedo bombers. VT-8 was first assigned to aircraft carrier *USS Hornet*, joining Hornet shortly after her commissioning in October 1941. The Squadron's first combat mission was during the Battle of Midway on June 4, 1942. The group, under Commander John C. Waldron, and composed of 15 planes of the obsolete Douglas TBD Devastator, were all shot down in a matter of minutes during their unescorted torpedo attack on Japanese aircraft carriers. The squadron did not destroy any enemy aircraft with their defensive, rear-facing, .30-caliber machine guns, nor did they damage any of the Japanese carriers.

Following the demoralizing destruction of the Squadron at Midway, Torpedo 8 was the first squadron to be equipped with Grumman's new TBF-1 Avenger, a bigger and faster replacement for the TBD. When Hornet sailed to the Pacific, a detachment of the squadron under the command of Lt. Harold "Swede" Larson remained in Norfolk, Virginia to receive the first shipment of the new aircraft. Larson's detachment arrived at Pearl Harbor the day after Hornet sailed for Midway. Six of the squadron's Avengers were flown to Midway under the command of Lt. Langdon Fieberling to participate in the battle. These planes were the first Navy aircraft to attack the Japanese fleet that day, but they attacked without fighter cover, and five of the new Avengers were shot down. The book follows the squadron to Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands, where the unit served with distinction, but as the book was published during the War, does not cover some of the group's later actions in the western Pacific.

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