

# Topic 4: Australia under attack

## Source Sheet 4D: Midget Submarine Attack on Sydney Harbour – Text

This source sheet contains the text from the *Flash* animation of the midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour. You can use it to help you answer the questions on the time line of the attack in *Worksheet 4E*.

### Friday 29 May

During the day the five large Japanese submarines arrive in position 35 nautical miles (65km) north-east of Sydney Heads: I-22 carrying Lieutenant Keiu Matsuo's midget, I-24 carrying Sub-Lieutenant Katsuhisa Ban's midget, I-27 carrying Lieutenant Kenshi Chuman's midget, I-29 and I-21.

### Saturday 30 May

In the early hours of Saturday morning, the I-21 prepares to send a floatplane on a reconnaissance flight over Sydney Harbour to confirm if there are Allied warships in the harbour.

**3.45 am:** Warrant Flying Officer Susumo Ito's floatplane is catapulted from the forward deck of submarine I-21. Ito's plane proceeds to the Heads.

**4.30 am:** Ito comes in over South Head at 500m. He descends to 300m to allow his observer to sketch the anti-submarine boom just inside the harbour.

Continuing up the harbour at 300m Ito finds USS *Chicago* lying at anchor. He climbs into the clouds to avoid searchlights then descends to 30m before proceeding towards the Harbour Bridge and Cockatoo Island dockyard.

On the return leg Ito flies over Kirribilli, Cremorne, Taronga Zoo and North Head.

Flying out to sea, Ito is unable to locate the submarine. He retraces his route and makes another approach. This time he is successful but his plane capsizes in heavy seas. Ito and his observer are dragged to safety. The floatplane is sunk.

### Sunday 31 May

During the day the submarine moves to between six and eight nautical miles (11–15 km) east of Sydney Heads.

**4.54 pm:** The sun is set. A full moon will rise at 6.13 pm, its light obscured as the weather is heavily overcast.

**5.00 pm:** Matsuo and Tsuzuku board their midget submarine from the I-22.

**5.21 pm:** The phone line is cut, the last clamp removed and compressed air is released lifting Matsuo's midget away from the submerged I-22.

**5.25 pm:** Matsuo turns on his electric motor and sets off at four knots (2.5 km/h).

**5.28 pm:** Chuman and Omori lift off the I-27, seven miles (13 km) east-south-east of Sydney Heads.

**5.40 pm:** Ban and his navigator, Ashibe, set off from the I-24, seven miles (13 km) north-east of Sydney Heads. Their plan is for Chuman to enter the harbour first, at 6.33 pm, 20 minutes after moonrise. Matsuo and then Ban are to follow at 20 minute intervals.

**8.01 pm:** Chuman's midget having passed undetected into the harbour mouth turns hard to port, heading for the main anchorages, and begins to follow a Manly ferry through the eastern gate in the boom.

**8.05 pm:** After having changed direction (for reasons unclear) and heading for the western gate, Chuman runs into the steel-mesh anti-torpedo boom. Ten minutes later, at 8.15 pm, a Maritime Services watchman reports it. A patrol boat drops three depth charges.

**9.48 pm:** Running two hours behind time, Ban follows a Manly ferry into the harbour undetected while Chuman is attracting attention.

**10.35 pm:** After two and a half hours of trying to get free of the boom net, Chuman self-destructs. The explosion brings people into the streets around the harbour. During this time Ban continues into the harbour still undetected. At 10.27 pm a few minutes before Chuman's I-27 blows up, and again at 10.35 pm, a general alarm is given. The 10.27 pm warning instructs all ships in the harbour to take anti-submarine precautions and the port is closed to outward shipping.

**10.52 pm:** Watchmen on the USS *Chicago* see Ban's submarine and start firing on it but apparently not hitting it. Ban had been continuing up the harbour but had kept accidentally bobbing to the surface, with the submarine's conning tower visible. Also at 10.52 pm, while entering the harbour, Matsuo's (I-22) submarine is spotted by the patrol boat HMAS *Lauriana* as it also has trouble staying submerged.

**11.00 pm:** After having been spotted by HMAS *Lauriana*, Matsuo's midget is attacked by HMAS *Yandra* which drops a full pattern of six depth charges on the submarine set to go off at 30 metres, the detonations breaking the windows of nearby houses.

**11.14 pm:** An 'all ships to be darkened' signal is given. Ban continues towards the Harbour Bridge and is 200 metres off Garden Island. HMAS *Geelong* starts firing on the sub, but like the USS *Chicago* it also fails to hit it.

## Monday 1 June

**12.25 am:** After the 'all ships to be darkened' signal has been given at 11.14 pm, Garden Island floodlights are now turned off. Having finally submerged his sub, Ban has moved to Bradley's Head near Taronga Zoo. By this time Ban has lined up his torpedoes at the USS *Chicago* 800 metres away. He is carrying two 450 mm (18 inch) diameter topedoes with 350 kg of explosive each. Ban has set them to run at 2.5 metres depth. The USS *Chicago* has a seven metre draught.

**12.30 am:** The torpedo is fired, aimed slightly ahead of the USS *Chicago*. Reaching a top speed of 80 km per hour, it takes about 40 seconds to travel the distance to the USS *Chicago*. The torpedo passes in front of the USS *Chicago*, under the Dutch submarine K9, and under HMAS *Kuttabul* moored against Garden Island. It hits the Garden Island retaining wall and explodes, blowing HMAS *Kuttabul* out of the water and killing 21 naval ratings. A second torpedo is fired, also missing the US *Chicago* by four metres. it hits rocks at Garden Island.

Ban sets out to meet the submarines waiting at Port Hacking, 18 miles (29 km) south of Sydney Heads, waiting for them to rendezvous. Although he must have escaped from the harbour, his batteries would probably have failed before he reached Port Hacking. His submarine has never been found.

Lookouts on the USS *Chicago* sight Matsuo's sub. It had recovered from the attack by HMAS *Yandra* four hours earlier.

**3.50 am:** Having been sighted a number of times, Matsuo's sub is fired on by the merchant cruiser HMAS *Kanimbla* from Neutral Bay.

**5.00 am:** The HMAS *Sea Mist* spots Matsuo's sub off Taylors Bay and drops a depth charge set to go off at 15 metres. The sub is blown to the surface. The captain, Lieutenant Andrew, drops a second one, disabling his vessel. Matsuo's sub is disabled and lying on the bottom. Matsuo and his crewmate, Chief Petty Officer Masao Tsuzuku shoot themselves.