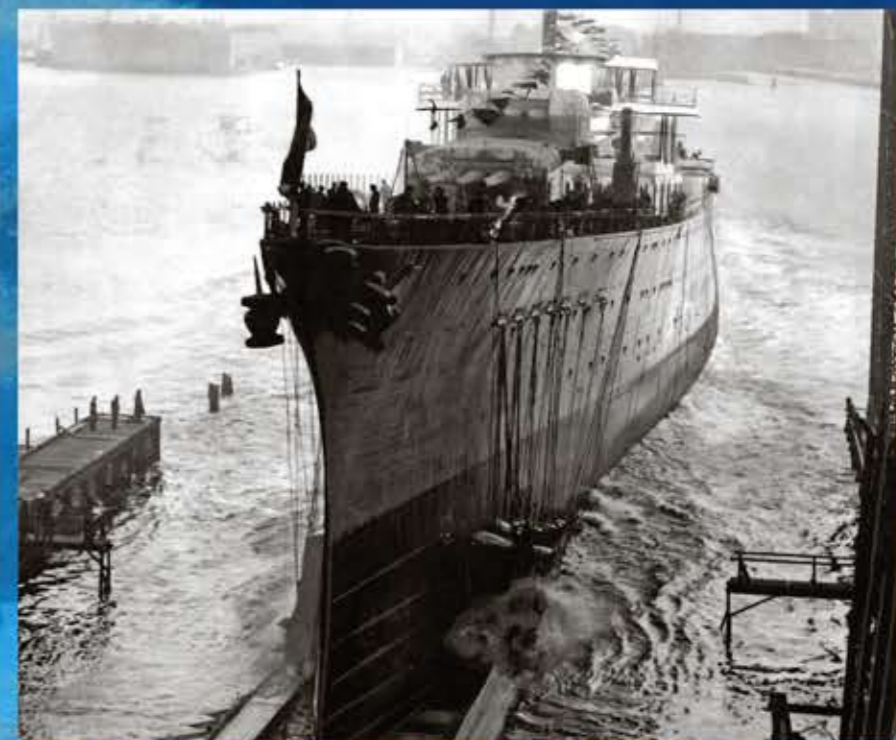


FINAL VOYAGE

AFTER DELIVERING VITAL COMPONENTS FOR THE "FAT BOY" ATOMIC WEAPON THAT WOULD DESTROY HIROSHIMA, THE USS INDIANAPOLIS WOULD MEET A TRAGIC FATE — A FATE THAT IS STILL HOTLY DEBATED TODAY

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USS *Indianapolis* going down the ways during her launching on 7 November 1931. The cruiser was commissioned on 15 November 1932.

Dramatic painting of *I-58* departing the scene after torpedoing USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35).

On 14 July 1945, Fleet Radio Unit Pacific (FRUPAC) decoded Japanese message traffic revealing the departure of submarine *I-53* on that day. *I-53* would sink destroyer escort USS *Underhill* (DE-682) with a *Kaiten* manned suicide torpedo on 24 July. The "Ultra" message also revealed that another sub, *I-58*, would depart on 18 July for an operating area 500 nautical miles north of what was assessed to be Palau. According to the intercept, *I-47* and *I-367* would depart on 19 July to operate on the Okinawa-Marianas transit route. An additional intercept on 19 July confirmed *I-58*'s departure.

On 16 July, with her repairs complete following the *kamikaze* hit off Okinawa on 31 March 1945, the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35) departed Mare Island, California, on a mission with top secret cargo and with orders to proceed to Tinian via Pearl Harbor at fastest possible speed. Neither the commanding officer nor any of the crew knew what the cargo was — components of the first atomic bomb, which would be dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. By this time in the war, *Indianapolis* had earned ten Battle Stars and, for much of the war, had served as the

flagship for Adm. Raymond Spruance for the US Navy's advance across the Central Pacific — Gilberts, Marshalls, Marianas, Western Carolines, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa — with credit for downing nine Japanese aircraft, destroying the supply ship *Akagane Maru* in the Aleutians, and for numerous bombardments in support of US Marines and Army troops fighting ashore.

The commanding officer of *Indianapolis*, Capt. Charles Butler McVay III was a highly-regarded, fast-track officer, and son of a four-star admiral, Charles B. McVay Jr., who

had been commander of the Asiatic Fleet in the early 1930s. Although many of *Indianapolis*' crewmen were battle-hardened veterans, 250 of her crew were going to sea for the first time and the special mission prevented *Indianapolis* from conducting a planned two-month training period.

As predicted by US Pacific Fleet Intelligence, Japanese submarine *I-58*, commanded by L/Commander Mochitsura Hashimoto, sortied from Japan on 18 July as part of the *Tamon Kaiten* group. *I-58* was a relatively new submarine, commissioned on 7 September 1944, with the capability to

carry and launch a seaplane, although she never did. She was originally modified to carry four *Kaiten* manned suicide torpedoes, but in May 1945 had been further modified to carry six. The submarine had conducted three *Kaiten* missions with no luck, although Japanese

Interesting view taken on 7 November 1931 at the New York Shipbuilding Corporation showing USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35) prior to launching. Note the anchors, one of which was discovered by Paul G. Allen decades later.

