

CHARGE OF THE "IRISH" DESTROYERS

DURING THE DEADLY BATTLE OF THE KOMANDORSKI ISLANDS,
A TRIO OF DESTROYERS WOULD ATTACK A MUCH LARGER ENEMY FORCE
BY MARK EVANS

Bow being lowered into place on USS
Balley at Bethlehem Steel's Staten
Island Shipyard in New York.



USS Balley (DD-492) photographed on 12 December 1942 by an aircraft from USS Chenango (CVE-28). As a point of interest, note the extra high casting on #2 stack, a feature that appears to have been unique to this ship, which was of the Benson-class.

“Suggest for your consideration retiring action,” stated the message from R/Adm. Thomas Kinkaid, Commander of US Naval Forces in the Aleutian Islands, adding that US Army Air Force bombers would reach the scene of the battle in about five hours. The message provoked laughter on the bridge of the light cruiser USS

Richmond (CL-9), flagship of R/Adm. Charles H. “Soc” McMorris, CTF16.6, which isn’t the response one might normally expect from men facing annihilation, but was not atypical of American sailors in *extremis*. For over an hour and a half, TF16.6, centered on the heavy cruiser USS Salt Lake City (CA-25), had been engaged in a desperate

long-range daylight gunnery duel with a Japanese force in the middle of nowhere at the edge of the Bering Sea, 500 miles from the US base at Adak and 400 miles from the nearest Japanese base at Paramushiro in the Kuril Islands. Outgunned and outnumbered two-to-one by a faster Japanese force that was blocking the way