

GUNFIGHT AT MALACCA STRAIT

THE JAPANESE CRUISER HAGURO HAD CAUSED MAJOR DAMAGE TO ALLIED FORCES IN THE PACIFIC. HOWEVER, HER RECKONING WOULD COME DURING THE CLOSING DAYS OF WWII WHEN ROYAL NAVY DESTROYERS SENT HER TO THE BOTTOM AS THE LAST MAJOR JAPANESE WARSHIP TO BE SUNK IN SURFACE COMBAT

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Colorized view of IJN *Haguro* at sea.



Strait of Malacca where the decisive battle took place.



The cruiser under construction.

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On 9 May 1945, the crew of the Imperial Japanese Navy cruiser *Haguro* cast off lines and departed the port of Singapore. She was the third of the four-ship *Myoko*-class of heavy cruisers. Other ships in the class included *Myoko*, *Nachi*, and *Ashigara*. Ships of the class displayed 13,300 tons, were 659 feet in length, and capable of up to 36 knots of speed. *Haguro* was originally equipped with ten 7.9-inch naval guns in five twin turrets — three forward and two aft — making her the most powerful heavy cruiser in the world at time of commissioning. Her secondary battery consisted of six Type 10 4.7-inch dual purpose guns in six single mounts, a pair of 13.2mm machine guns, and a dozen 24-inch torpedo tubes in four triple mounts

with a pair on each side.

With world tensions rapidly escalating, *Haguro*'s offensive capabilities were drastically improved during the mid-1930s. Her 7.9-inch guns were removed and replaced by ten 8-inch weapons, improving rate of fire and penetration power. Her 4.7-inch dual guns were replaced by eight 5-inch dual purpose naval guns in four twin turrets, a pair on each side, and her triple torpedo tubes were replaced by quadruple torpedo mounts, giving the cruiser 16 torpedo tubes. An anti-aircraft battery of machine guns was scattered around the ship.

As built, her main belt armor was very thick for a cruiser — 4-inches. She also sported 1.4-inch deck armor, 3-inch barbettes, and 1-inch



The cruiser at anchor during July 1930. Her crane has been swung out to recover an aircraft. During the time of the photo, *Haguro* was one of the newest IJN ships, having been commissioned on 25 April 1929.

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