

Impacts of the uss indianapolis (ca 35) sinking



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USS INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35) Sinking

Why did the Navy establish the Movement Reporting System (MOVREP), update the escorting procedures, and life saving devices after July 30, 1945? Senior Enlisted Leaders must make future's leaders aware of military history so they know U. S. Military heritage and don't repeat past mistakes. This paper will examine the history of the USS INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35) tragedy and the overall effects it had on future operations in the Navy, Military Sealift Command (MSC), and the Coast Guard.

History

The USS INDIANAPOLIS (CL/CA 35) was a Portland-class heavy Cruiser, named for the city of Indianapolis, Indiana. She was commissioned on November 15, 1932. INDIANAPOLIS nickname was "INDY" and it had a complement of 95 officers, 857 enlisted, and during wartime was manned by 1,269 officers and enlisted men. During her service in the Navy she served as a Flagship in battles across the Central Pacific in World War II. On July 15, 1945, Indy's Captain, Charles B. McVay III was asked to deliver a top-secret cargo to Tinian Island. CAPT McVay nor his men aboard knew that the highly classified cargo was actually the atomic bomb. On July 26, 1945 the Indy successfully delivered the components for the atomic bomb to Tinian Island. After the offload of the shipment, Indy had a brief stopover in Guam, before being routed to Leyte, Philippines. When CAPT McVay inquired about the tactical situation and training for his crew before they moved closer to the fighting, he was told by Commodore James Carter, Commander of Pacific Fleet's advance headquarters that "things are very quiet", The Japanese "

are on their last legs, and there's nothing to worry about" (VINCENT & VLADIC, 2018). After hearing this CAPT McVay decided to opt for a lower speed transit to Leyte. " Unbeknownst to him, this decision would place his ship directly in the path of Japanese submarine I-58" (Hulver, 2016). On the morning of July 28, 1945, the Indy got underway for Leyte, Philippines, and during her transit she conducted zigzags, a method that is used by the Navy to confuse submarines by changing course and speed. CAPT McVay ordered Indy to seize with night time zigzags, to make up time loss during the day time zigzags. The night of 29 - 30 July 1945 the Japanese's Submarine I-58 Fired two torpedoes at the Indy. " The first torpedo slammed into Indy's starboard bow, killing dozens of men in an instant. Another shattering concussion rocked Indy amidships. Her aviation fuel stores ignited, and a maelstrom of flame and explosions ripped through the ship" (VINCENT & VLADIC, 2018). The INDIANAPOLIS sank in just 12 minutes, she was 280 miles from the nearest land, of the 1, 200 officers and sailors onboard 300 went down with the ship. The 900 remaining survivors that made it into the water found themselves swimming in a vast gooey slab of fuel oil from the ship. They also faced exposure from the sun, dehydration, saltwater poisoning, and shark attacks while stranded in the open ocean. The Navy did not find out about the sinking until four days later, when survivors were spotted by the crew of a PV-1 Ventura on routine patrol. Only 316 of 900 survived. The importance of understanding the history of the USS INDIANAPOLIS, and how it led to the overall effects it had on future operations.

Effect

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USS INDIANAPOLIS “tragedy is a blemish in U. S. Naval history, but it in turned sparked changes in reporting procedures, escort requirements, lifesaving equipment, and operational awareness” (Hulver, 2016). The first change was with reporting procedures, “Indianapolis’ non-arrival at Leyte was incorrectly interpreted in the same light as an arrival and not reported. The non-reporting unfortunately resulted in Indianapolis never being missed in Leyte” (Hulver, 2016). After the INDIANAPOLIS disaster the Navy established the MOVREP, to establish status on location and movement of flag commands, commissioned fleet units, and ships under operational control (OPCON) of the U. S. Navy, Military Sealift Command (MSC) and the U. S. Coast Guard. The MOVREP help in identifying ships that are lost or missing. Second change was with escorting requirements, the Indy did not have sonar, so usually they would have been escorted by a Destroyer to protect them from submarine attacks. With war wrapping up with the Japanese the Navy did not see any reason to escort the Indy to the Philippines. After the sinking, the Navy made it a requirement that any U. S. Ship with a crew over 500 be escorted. The third change was to lifesaving equipment. “The lifesaving equipment available to the crew was inadequate for their situation and U. S. patrol planes flew at too high of an altitude to spot survivors in the water. Most of the men in the water had either pneumatic life belts or kapok life jackets. Pneumatic lifebelts were the less desirable flotation devise because they could slip down the body and cause the wearer to be flipped under and stuck” (Hulver, 2016). After the Indy tragedy the Navy adopted self-releasing life rafts that were bright in color, parachute flares in the emergency kits that could signal aircrafts, life preservers with a pocket containing fresh water, and replaced wooden water

breakers in life rafts with metal ones. “ Current Sailors and Marines can look to the final crew of Indianapolis as a model of the sacrifice and bravery that their service sometimes requires” (Hulver, 2016).

In summary this paper covered the *history* of the USS INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35) tragedy and the overall effects it had on future operations in the Navy, MSC, and Coast Guard. Senior Enlisted Leaders must make future’s leaders aware of military history so they know U. S. Military heritage and don’t repeat past mistakes. In closing, what if the CAPT kept up zigzag pattern and did not get hit by Japanese’s torpedoes, would the U. S. Military know about the inadequate life saving devices, or even make the Movement Report System (MOVREP) that is required by all commissioned fleet units today?

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