

complement kept patrolling and unloading materials and men. On the first day of landing, some Japanese bombers attacked the ships. One bomber scored a direct hit on the destroyer *Mugford*. A suicide pilot slammed into the transport *George F. Elliot* and sank it. Fortunately, the U.S. was alerted beforehand by Australian coast-watchers from nearby isles and further losses were averted. These people became friends who would distinguish themselves over the entire course of the war. Before the month of August terminated, the famous and disastrous sea-battle of Savo Island and the Ichiki nightmarish land-fighting took place.

As news had emanated to Tokyo of the reported landings—which were by no means a light and small operation as was first believed by them—Tokyo ordered sending of troops and any nearby naval contingents.

Admiral Mikawa, commanding a cruiser force, proceeded from Rabaul to the southern Solomons to make a direct attack on the menacing allied navy. With undue haste, and under the cover of perfect "terrible and nebulous" weather conditions, Mikawa's armada moved into Allied lines, closing without being detected.

At 1:38 in the morning of August 9, unspotted by allied patrols, the Japanese Navy "knocked the hell out of the unsuspecting ships." This was the Battle of Savo Island which lasted about an hour and a half. It was known as the Five Sitting Ducks to the U.S. participants. It could have been worse if Mikawa had gone after the transports, which were some 18 nautical miles away. But, he didn't, because it is said he was unsure how close he was at sea to U.S. aircraft carriers which in the morning, could have sent their airplanes pursuing Mikawa.

The Japanese were able to punish the "sitting duck" to a chance episode in history thousands of miles away.