

LEFT ON THEIR OWN

"This afternoon Admiral Ernest J. King, commander-in-chief of the United States fleet, announced that American forces have now landed on the Solomon islands, where heavy fighting is still raging. Adm King emphasized that this action in the Solomon islands is our first real offensive that we have launched; the first one in this war and that considerable losses must therefore be expected. And, now for more details on the Solomon Islands to CBS Washington, Eric Severaid reporting."

"We have lost at least one cruiser sunk, two cruisers, two destroyers, and one transport have been damaged. These are serious losses, but this is an important operation. And, these losses are only a small fraction of those the Japanese certainly have suffered. Contrary to Japanese claims, we made the first attack and not they. The Japanese were surprised. Adm King says planned landings were accomplished. He does not say that all the landings were accomplished....There are no details about casualties among the men. This is the first time we have taken away any territory from the Japanese."

CBS news *The World Today*
August 10, 1942, reporter Quincy
Howe and Eric Severaid

In the United States, chance had it that politics took precedence over national safety, and it was reported in numerous U.S. newspapers that the Japanese code called JN-25 had been penetrated by U.S. intelligence. This source of information grossly violated the law, but they did it anyway and printed the story for all to read. Those in Japan did read it and believed the story. They changed their JN-25 code. As of late August, the American cryptographers still had a devil of a time trying to break the new code, and when Admiral Mikawa conducted his advance, he had the advantage. An Australian patrol plane had actually spotted the enemy group bearing down the Slot, but using old fashioned observation mistook the ships as just a bunch of "probable seaplane tenders."

In the daylight, it was counted that Mikawa's bold forces of the Imperial Navy had left the heavy American cruisers *Quincy*, *Astoria*, *Vincennes*, and the Australian's *Canberra* sinking wretchedly in the waters. A U.S. destroyer *Talbot* was also sunk to the bottom. More than a thousand men died with seven hundred wounded. More would have survived had it not been that the waters off Guadalcanal—later dubbed Ironbottom Sound—were infested with man-eating sharks. The engagement only cost the Japanese 58 dead and 53 wounded.

The skipper of the *Chicago* later committed suicide, he was so psychologically hurt by the disastrous allied battle. Not one of Mikawa's forces was lost. [Oddly enough, the name of the American newspaper that leaked we were reading JN-25 was the *Chicago Tribune*.] It was a chastening start for the United States, but we weren't going to fold over.

In view of a follow-up, two things happened immediately. The U.S. submarine *S-22* sank a Japanese cruiser *Kako* off New Ireland. And, the commanders of Allied vessels Admirals Turner and Fletcher turned their force