At 00:14 on July 30, the USS Indianapolis was struck by three torpedoes on the starboard bow, resulting in her sinking in 12 minutes. The ship had been sunk by the Imperial Japanese submarine I-58. Only 317 sailors survived the ordeal.

Today, the shipwreck of the USS Indianapolis remains undiscovered in the Pacific Ocean. Potential sinking sites can be determined from the drift of bodies across the ocean in the days following the sinking and from a sighting of the cruiser by an American tank landing ship 11 hours before her sinking.

From this information, two potential search areas for the shipwreck of the USS Indianapolis will be determined.

The projection of USS Indianapolis’s intended route from her routing instructions provides a confirmation to Captain McVay’s reported position of the sinking.

For the bodies, the projected origins of the body clusters found on August 4, August 6, and August 7, 1945 landed within the August 3 body cluster, and not near the plotted historical positions. It can be surmised that the bodies then did not travel at the speed of the currents alone.

Finally, the position of the USS Indianapolis determined from the LST sighting at 1200, July 29, 1945 puts the sinking position slightly to the northeast of the position of Commander Hashimoto’s testimony of the position of I-58 at 2305, July 29, 1945 (McVay, 1945). This projected sinking site is considered to be the most accurate.

It is recommended that an expedition search in two distinct areas: a 150 nm² primary search area, centered on 11° 45’ 21” N, 134° 16’ 49” E, and a 234 nm² secondary search area, centered on 11° 58’ 21” N, 134° 48’ 36” E.

Finally, Figure 5 extrapolates the course and distance of the USS Indianapolis from her noon sighting of LST 779 on July 29, 1945.

• A final sinking position for the USS Indianapolis was determined to be at 11° 47’ 34” N, 134° 18’ 44” E.

• The plotted course of the LST and the Indianapolis match eyewitness accounts, which state that the Indianapolis overtook the transport as it traveled to the north of the cruiser (Newcomb 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

REFERENCES


LST 779, 1945, Deck Log of LST 779 for July 27-31, 1945

McVay III, C.B., 1945, Oral history – the sinking of the USS Indianapolis: Naval History and Heritage Command, Box 21 of World War II Interviews, Archives.


PDG 1849, Routing Instructions of the USS Indianapolis, issued on July 28, 1945 to the commanding officer of the USS Indianapolis.