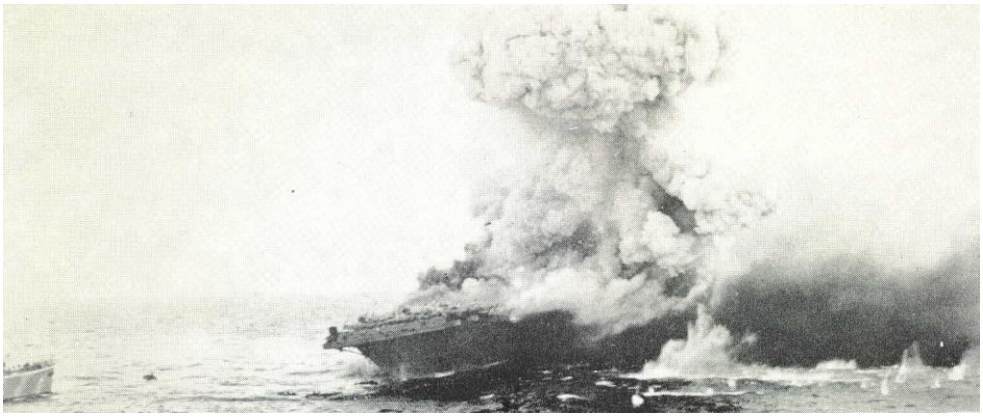
SIGINT SUCCESS AT THE BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA - FOR THE OTHER SIDE May 8



The USS Lexington*, which was struck by Japanese bombs on May 8, 1942*

HISTORIC QUOTATION: "In the Battle of the Coral Sea, plain-language communications which were used by the enemy (generally, scouting planes communicating the discovery of our ships) was frequently intercepted, and we obtained material of considerable value to the conduct of operations."

"In the case of same naval battle, the Australian and American Air Forces communicated to their base by plain language every movement made following discovery of Japanese units. We were able to forecast the attacks of enemy planes through their communications, and to deduce the movements of enemy task forces."

This quotation comes from a Japanese survey of operations from December 1941 to October 1943.

The Battle of the Coral Sea, fought near New Guinea from May 4 to May 8, 1942, was one of the early battles in which SIGINT had a major role. The battle occurred because the United States learned from decrypts of Japanese communications, enciphered in a high-grade system, that the Japanese were seeking to establish a major naval base at Port Moresby, New Guinea.

This was also an early example in which both sides had tactical SIGINT personnel on board combatant vessels during the battle who provided current intelligence from intercepts to the commanding officers. The Japanese were conducting intercept in the battle, not just the Americans.

SOURCE: This quotation was given in *The ASA Review* of January-February 1951. It quoted Japanese officers about several instances in which poor transmission security practices gave the Japanese insights into U.S. operations. The article was based on captured Japanese documents and interrogations of Japanese intelligence personnel after the war.

502 caption – the U.S. carrier Lexington suffering an explosion on deck, as seen from an aircraft.