

CONFIDENTIAL

ACTION REPORT

COMMANDER ESCORT DIVISION 40

SERIAL 019

7 JUNE 1945

GENERAL ACTION REPORT - ASSAULT ON OKINAWA -
20 MARCH 1945 THROUGH 27 MAY 1945

COVERS SCREENING ACTIVITIES
UNTIL CONTROL OF FLEET UNITS
IN AREA PASSED FROM 5TH TO
3RD FLEET

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CCD-40/A16-3
Serial No. 019

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

Commander Escort Division FORTY.
USS WITTER (DE-636), Flagship
c/o Fleet Postoffice
San Francisco, California.
7 June 1945.

From: Commander Escort Division FORTY.
To: *→* The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet.

Via: (1) The Commander, Transport Screen, Joint Expeditionary Force,
FIFTH Fleet. (CTG 51.5) (ComExRon 63).
(2) The Commander, Joint Expeditionary Force, FIFTH Fleet.
(CTF 51) (ComPhibsPac).
(3) The Commander, FIFTH Fleet.
(4) The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

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Reference: (a) PacFlt Conf. Ltr. MCL-45.

1. Commander Escort Division FORTY exercised operational control only over the ships used as the Division Flagship during the period of this report, and exercised only administrative control over the ships of the Division as a whole. It is believed that the general and special action reports submitted by the various ships concerned will adequately cover the activities of this command and, to reduce duplication, only matters not likely to be covered by the individual ships, or of unusual interest, are included herein.

PART I. BRIEF SUMMARY.

2. Commander Escort Division FORTY was aboard the USS FOREMAN (DE-633) from 20 March 1945 until 5 April 1945; aboard the USS WITTER (DE-636) from 5 April 1945 until 7 April 1945; aboard the USS WILLMARTH (DE-638) from 7 April 1945 until 11 May 1945; enroute the USS WITTER from 11 May 1945 until 15 May 1945; and aboard the USS WITTER from 15 May through 27 May 1945.

PART II. PRELIMINARIES.

3. On 17 March 1945, Commander Forward Area (CTF 94) ordered Commander Western Carolines Surface Patrol and Escort Group (CTF 94.6) to direct Escort Division FORTY to report to CTF 54 at ULITHI for duty not later than 20 March 1945. At this time, the WHITEHURST was enroute ENIWETOK with a convoy; the WILLMARTH and the FOREMAN (Division Flagship) were stationed at KOSSOL ROADS; and the ENGLAND, WITTER, and BOWERS were stationed at or near ULITHI with CTU 94.6.2. On 19 March 1945, having as yet received no instructions from CTG 94.6, Commander Escort Division FORTY ordered the WILLMARTH to proceed to ULITHI and turned over command of TU 94.6.1 to the Commanding Officer of the USS LARDNER (DD-487). The FOREMAN then proceeded to ULITHI. The FOREMAN and the WILLMARTH arrived at ULITHI on the morning of 20 March 1945 and Commander Escort Division FORTY reported to CTF 54 aboard the TENNESSEE. Part of the Operations Plans were drawn there. Others were drawn from the ESTES, still

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others from the OCELOT, and still others from the BARTON and the LAFFEY. Inasmuch as the BOWERS and the WITTER were still on patrol duty off ULITHI when the Division Commander arrived, and they, as well as the FOREMAN and the WILLMARTH, were badly in need of fuel and provisions, the Division Commander arranged for fuel and provisions for them with the Service Squadron TEN Personnel aboard the OCELOT. The WITTER and the BOWERS were released about noon and proceeded in. Considerable difficulty was encountered in getting word to the ships of the Division as to the logistic arrangements which the Division Commander had made for them, and they did not complete their logistics until long after dark. Only the ENGLAND, which was just completing a short availability period, had her provisions, and she still required fuel. Meantime, the Division Commander had managed to acquire all the required Operations Plans (CTF 51, 52, and 54) and the corrections thereto, the necessary special charts, and the screening and sortie plans, and was in a position to start issuing them just before dusk. Strenuous attempts to draw Addendum 8 to SOP-1 were totally unsuccessful. The last Operations Plans were issued at 0230 the next morning when the Captain of the WITTER arrived in a small boat from the Northern Anchorage where his ship was provisioning. Since the ships of this Division were to get underway at 0600 for the sortie, he was barely able to get back to his ship in time to get underway. The Operations Plans, as issued, required numerous pen-and-ink corrections, and it was a matter of several days before they were corrected and properly studied.

4. At 1916(K) on 20 March 1945, the BOWERS damaged her propellers when she passed over a shoal while proceeding to her assigned anchorage after having drawn her Operations Plans, and she was unable to sortie with the Task Force. The ENGLAND was instructed to remain at ULITHI and, with the WHITEHIST, to escort the NEW YORK to OKINAWA. Therefore, only the FOREMAN, the WITTER, and the WILLMARTH sortied on the morning of 21 March 1945 as a part of the screen of Task Force 54, Gunfire and Covering Force. The Commander Task Force 54 was Rear Admiral M.L. DEYOE, USN, Combatron ONE, in the USS TENNESSEE (BB-43).

PART III. CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF THE ACTION.

5. The operations of the ships of this Division during the trip to OKINAWA and during their stay in that area are covered by their individual general action reports, only one of which (that of the WITTER) is as yet available to this command. After arrival at OKINAWA, the ships were assigned to TF 52 (Fire Support and Shore Bombardment Force) during the day, and to TF 54 during the night.

6. During the early morning of 26 March 1945, the FOREMAN while (with the NEWCOMB) escorting the INDIANAPOLIS in the vicinity of TONACHI SHIMA, was sent to attack a midget submarine reported by the observing plane of the INDIANAPOLIS. A shallow depth charge pattern was fired visually just as it was discovered that the "midget submarine" was, in fact, two large blackfish. The Division

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Commander wishes to state positively that the object(s) reported and strafed by the INDIANAPOLIS plane were blackfish and nothing else.

7. At 0623(I) on 27 March 1945, three Japanese aircraft attacked a formation consisting of the INDIANAPOLIS, WITTER, and FOREMAN about five miles north of KERAMA RETTO. All three planes were shot down. One crashed about 500 yards ahead of the INDIANAPOLIS, one grazed the starboard side of the FOREMAN, and one crashed about 600 yards broad on the port bow of the INDIANAPOLIS (between the INDIANAPOLIS and the FOREMAN). One man was injured aboard the FOREMAN. This action is covered by CCD-40 Serial 011 dated 22 April 1945.

8. On the afternoon of 28 March 1945, the FOREMAN, while screening a bombardment group consisting of the IDAHO, WEST VIRGINIA, BILOXI, and NEW YORK, rescued the pilot of a BILOXI plane and transferred him to his ship. Upon orders of the BILOXI, the FOREMAN sank the plane.

9. On 1 April 1945, Vice Admiral TURNER, USN, ComphibPac, acting as Commander Joint Expeditionary Force, FIFTH Fleet (CTF 51), arrived to take charge of the operation, and the ships present of this Division were assigned to Task Group 51.5 (Transport Screen, Joint Expeditionary Force, FIFTH Fleet). Thereafter, they screened and patrolled as directed by CTF 51.5 (ComDesRon 63). Our troops began landing on OKINAWA at 0830(I) this date.

10. On the evening of 1 April 1945, the Division Commander witnessed the most awe-inspiring display of fire power he ever hopes to see. There appeared to be a solid wall of tracer fire to the north of the transport anchorage off HAGUSHI. Nevertheless, a suicide plane slipped through or around this wall of fire and hit the WEST VIRGINIA.

11. At 0120(I) on the morning of 3 April 1945, a Japanese aircraft (VAL) dropped a bomb (about 100 pounds) on the FOREMAN while she was making a turn at the southern end of patrol station A-26 about three miles west of KERAMA RETTO. The bomb hit the starboard light lock about frame 59, passed through the starboard side of Boiler #1, passed through the bottom of the ship just forward of the Forward Engine Room, and exploded well under the ship. The ship lost lighting and power for fourteen (14) minutes, and all main propulsion power for 39 minutes. Four men were injured, none seriously. This action is covered by CCD-40 Serial 014 dated 9 May 1945.

12. On 5 April 1945, Commander Escort Division FORTY and Staff shifted to the WITTER, as the FOREMAN was no longer suitable for use as a flagship.

13. On the afternoon of 6 April 1945, the WILLMARTH shot down a VAL. Later this same afternoon, she attempted to go alongside the LST-447, which had been struck by a suicide plane, to fight fires and rescue personnel. Fifteen survivors were taken off, but the dense smoke made firefighting extremely difficult and the WILLMARTH withdrew when it became known that the LST was loaded with ammunition. The WILLMARTH had two small holes punched in one of her fuel tanks while maneuvering alongside the LST.

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14. At 1618(I) on 6 April 1945, the WITTER was attacked by two VALS. One was shot down about 3000 yards broad on the starboard bow; the other, despite numerous hits, crashed the starboard side of the WITTER at frame 57. The crash of the plane, and the explosion of the bomb it carried, flooded the Forward Fireroom and the I.C. Room and adjacent spaces immediately. The bulkhead between the Forward Fireroom and the Forward Engine Room was badly ruptured and the Forward Engine Room quickly flooded. Smoke and flame filled the entire superstructure, the ship took a five degree list, and all communications were lost for a short time. The Officers and men of the WITTER proceeded to carry out all necessary and proper damage control measures immediately, reestablished communications almost at once, shifted steering control aft, and made all necessary reports to the bridge. In five minutes the ship had way on again (one shaft). Shoring as necessary was started, the wounded were attended, and preparations were made to carry out the Jettison Bill if necessary. It was found that the ship could make ten knots without strain and she steamed to port at that speed. The Division Commander considers this action to have been properly conducted throughout and that the personnel of the WITTER did a magnificent job of damage control. Six men were killed and six men and one Officer were burned - none seriously. This action is covered by CCD-40 Serial 016 dated 25 May 1945. Recommendations as to awards for meritorious conduct during and subsequent to this action were forwarded by CCD-40 Serial 017 dated 27 May 1945 and initiated by CCD-40 Serial 018 dated 27 May 1945.

15. At 0600(I), on 7 April 1945 the BOWERS shot down a KATE.

16. On 7 April 1945, Commander Escort Division FORTY and part of his Staff shifted to the WILLMARTH. A Japanese Task Force was reported to be heading for OKINAWA and the Division Commander was anxious to be in what was then shaping up to be the last big surface engagement of the war. Task Force 58, however, turned back the Japanese Force before it arrived in the OKINAWA area.

17. On 9 April 1945, the FOREMAN was sent to ULITHI for repairs.

18. On 10 April 1945, the WILLMARTH, with Commander Escort Division FORTY aboard, departed for GUAM as part of the screen of Task Unit 51.29.12.

19. At 1905(I), the WILLMARTH made a sonar contact at Lat. 20-45(N), Long. 132-21(E). Two hedgehog attacks were made. One attack was a failure, as the hedgehogs failed to fire (mechanical difficulties). The other attack was a poor one and produced no results. Since the contact was made in a "Joint Zone", the Screen Commander, who had previously granted permission to attack when the WILLMARTH's sound challenges were not answered, instructed the WILLMARTH not to reattack, as the convoy had been maneuvered clear by then. The fact that this area was a "Joint" zone and was not merely the locus of a "Moving Haven" was not known to the Commanding Officer of the WILLMARTH at that time nor to the Division Commander. The WILLMARTH was keeping careful track of the friendly submarines reported to be in the area and had no record of any friendly submarines nearby. A subsequent check with the Staff

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of Commander Submarines, Pacific Fleet, at GUAM, established that this contact, if it was actually a submarine, which is doubtful, was not friendly. This action is covered by WILLMARTH Serial 09 dated 10 May 1945. During the progress of this action, there was some confusion caused by the use of a certain "Q" signal which is also listed in the General Signal Book for which the wrong meaning was taken by at least two of the ships of the screen. The Commanding Officer of the USS GOSSELIN (APD-126), which was the flagship of the Screen Commander, has written a letter (GOSSELIN Serial 010 dated 12 April 1945) to the Chief of Naval Operations relative to the confusion which occurred, and listing this and other instances where such confusion is possible.

20. At 1455(I) on 12 April 1945, the WHITEHURST was attacked by three suicide planes and shot down two of them. The third, carrying a bomb, crashed into her C.I.C. and demolished her bridge structure. She suffered major damage and heavy personnel casualties. This action is covered by WHITEHURST Serial 0087 dated 21 April 1945.

21. On the evening of 14 April 1945, the WILLMARTH arrived at GUAM and was granted availability for battle damage repairs. The repairs necessitated by battle damage were minor, consisting mainly of a couple of holes punched in her side while she was attempting rescue work alongside the flaming LST-447 near KERAMA RETTO on 6 April 1945. However, she had no tender availability for almost a year and required an extensive overhaul.

22. On 15 April 1945, Commander Escort Division FORTY visited the Staff of Commander Submarines, Pacific Fleet, and drew copies of Addendum 8 to SOP-1 for the ships of this Division. Strenuous attempts to draw this Addendum from all available sources of supply at ULITHI on 20 March 1945 had proved unsuccessful and the ships were struggling to keep Addendum 4 and/or Addendum 6 as up-to-date as possible.

23. At 0955(I) on 16 April 1945, the BOWERS was hit by a suicide plane which crashed into her Asdic Hut. Flames enveloped the superstructure and the plane's bomb exploded alongside the port side of the ship and riddled her topside. Reports so far received by this command are not complete though it is known that she suffered major damage and that her casualties were heavy. The Commanding Officer and Executive Officer were both disabled and the First Lieutenant, (Lt(jg) Truman B. HINKLE, USNR), took command and brought her back to port. This action is partially covered by BOWERS Serial 001 dated 29 April 1945.

24. On 21 April 1945, the port main generator bearings of the WILLMARTH were found to be wiped. This condition had occurred several times when the WILLMARTH was first put into commission and special double oil filters had been installed at that time. The Repair Base at Guam attempted the job of pouring new bearings but considerable delay was encountered while the proper formula was ascertained (from PEARL HARBOR). At least one set of bearings was ruined by poor workman ship and

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proper repairs were still not in sight well over two weeks later.

25. On 26 April 1945, the **ENGLAND** shot down a **BETTY**. Every ship in the Division thus shot down at least one plane during the **30-day** period 27 March - 26 April 1945.

26. On 28 April 1945, the **ENGLAND** shot down a suicide plane, thus becoming the first ship of the Division to come through two air attacks at OKINAWA without damage to herself.

27. On 30 April 1945, the **BOWERS** was detached from duty with the **FIFTH** fleet and was ordered to **PEARL HARBOR**.

28. On 2 May 1945, the **WILLMARTH** made a trial run off **GUAM**. She was unable to make her full speed and her superheat was found to be excessive. Upon return to port, it was found that her port main generator bearings had wiped again. The next day it was found that her superheater tube nests were filled with clinker which the Ship's Force and the Repair Base personnel were unable to remove. A dispatch from ComDesPac suggested flushing out the clinker with hot water but a sample boiled for over an hour was barely softened and, on the advice of the Repair Base, this method was not attempted.

29. Received word on 9 May 1945 of V-Day in Europe.

30. At 1900(I) on 9 May 1945, the **ENGLAND** was struck by a suicide plane carrying a bomb. Her superstructure was demolished and her casualties were heavy. This action is partially covered by **ENGLAND** Serial 002 dated 24 May 1945.

31. On 11 May 1945, Commander Escort Division **FORTY** secured passage aboard the **PONAGANSET** (AC-86) which was leaving **GUAM** that day for the **OKINAWA** area. This shift was considered necessary because of the paucity of information available concerning the damaged ships of this Division; because it was thought that a great deal could be learned on the spot; and because it was believed that advice and counsel to the Commanding Officers of the damaged ships could be more readily and more intelligently given directly rather than by mail, which was almost sure to be delayed beyond the point of any usefulness. Further, the condition of the **WILLMARTH**'s boilers and bearings, and the progress being made towards getting her properly repaired, were such as to indicate that she would be unable to participate in the war for several weeks.

32. On 15 May 1945, the **PONAGANSET** arrived at **KERAMA RETTO** and Commander Escort Division **FORTY** shifted to the **WITTER**. The **ENGLAND** was still in port but the **BOWERS** and the **WHIGHURST** had already been sent to **PEARL HARBOR** for major repairs. The Division Commander found that the **WITTER** had been kept clean and that her "paper work" was substantially up-to-date, but that little progress had been

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made towards repairing her as this would have entailed tying up a dry dock for at least two weeks and there were many shorter and even more urgent jobs scheduled ahead of her. The Captain of the WITTER was able to give the Division Commander considerable information regarding the damage suffered by the POWERS and the WHITE-HURST and as to the Officer *personnel* casualties of the two ships.

33. On 16 May 1945, the Division Commander visited the ENGLAND. She had been badly hit but her personnel *were* carrying on and had her pretty well cleaned up. The Division Commander made several suggestions as to salvaging equipment and recommended that certain reports (notably a report as to the status of her registered publications) be made at once.

34. On 16 May 1945, the Division Commander called on ComDesRon TWO (RepCom DesPac KERAMA RETTO) to volunteer his services and learned that the FOREMAN had been repaired at ULITHI. The Division Commander also called on Commander HOLM, the Salvage Officer, to request assistance in plugging the bulkhead between the Forward Engine Room of the WITTER in order that the Forward Engine Room might be pumped out and work commenced on salvaging the equipment in that space.

35. At 0900(I) on 17 May 1945, Vice Admiral HILL relieved Vice Admiral TURNER as CTF 51 (Joint Expeditionary Force, FIFTH Fleet).

36. On the morning of 20 May 1945, Rear Admiral AINSWORTH, Commander Destroyers Pacific Fleet, visited the WITTER and the ENGLAND, so well as all the other damaged Destroyers and Destroyer Escorts in the KERAMA RETTO anchorage.

37. On 21 May 1945, the ENGLAND departed for LEYTE for repairs, with orders to join an Escort Pool upon their completion. It is believed, however, that her damage is of so major a nature that she will probably have to be sent back at least as far as PEARL HARBOR for proper repairs.

38. On 27 May 1945, the SHACKLE (ARS-9) came alongside the WITTER to begin plugging the bulkhead between the Forward Fireroom and the Forward Engine room.

39. At 2400(I) on 27 May 1945, the ships of Escort Division FORTY were shifted to the operational control of Commander THIRD Fleet.

PART IV. ORDNANCE.

40. Ordnance in general performed well. It is believed that replacing the torpedo tubes of these ships with two or more twin 40mm mounts should be expedited, that the present quad 1.1 mounts should be replaced by quad 40mm mounts, and that the 20mm mounts on the forward end of the Signal Bridge should be replaced by a single or twin 40mm mount.

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PART V. DAMAGE.

41. The ships of Escort Division FORTY suffered damage as follows during the period covered by this report:

- (a) FOREMAN (DE-633). Minor damage on 27 March 1945. Major engineering damage (flooded fireman, starboard shaft out of line, etc) on 3 April 1945. Personnel casualties slight on both occasions.
- (b) WHITEHURST (DE-634). Major damage and heavy personnel casualties on 12 April 1945.
- (c) ENGLAND (DE-635). Major damage and heavy personnel casualties on 9 May 1945.
- (d) WITTER (DE-636). Major damage and light personnel casualties on 6 April 1945.
- (e) BOWERS (DE-637). Propellers damaged on 20 March 1945. Major damage and heavy personnel casualties on 16 April 1945.
- (f) WILLMARTH (DE-638). Minor damage on 6 April 1945. She has also had considerable trouble with her boilers and port main generator bearings. The reasons for her bearing trouble were not determined through a check established that the supply of lubricating oil had been adequate at all times and that no excessive temperatures had been noted. This was also the case on 2 May when a spare set of bearings were wiped during a post repair trial. Her boiler troubles are due to the formation of clinker deposits within the superheater tube nests. Clinker deposits (believed due to poor oil) have been encountered before in this Division. The FOREMAN discovered large chunks of clinkers in her fire box during December 1944, and an inspection of the WITTER's superheater in the middle of May revealed clinker deposits on her tube nest, believed due to baking funnel smoke. The WITTER's clinker, however, was not baked on as hard as the WILLMARTH's and it was found possible for the Ship's Force to remove it.

42. At least thirteen (13) Japanese planes were destroyed by the ships of Escort Division FORTY during the period of this report:

- (a) FOREMAN - Two on 27 March 1945.
- (b) WHITEHURST - Three on 12 April 1945.
- (c) ENGLAND - One on 26 April 1945, one on 28 April 1945, and one on 9 May 1945.
- (d) WITTER - Two on 6 April 1945.

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- (e) BOWERS - One on 7 April 1945 and One (perhaps two) on 16 April 1945.
- (f) WILLMARTH - One on 6 April 1945.

PART VI SPECIAL COMMENTS.

43. Voice circuit discipline appeared to be better than on most previous operations, but there is still plenty of room for improvement. A notable example of a properly monitored circuit was the Inter Fighter Director Net (2096 Kcs.). It has been a positive pleasure to listen to "Delegate" and his companions on that circuit.

44. The brilliance and persistence of the flares used by the Japanese night flyers was striking. This Officer has never seen their equal used by our forces.

PART VII PERSONNEL PERFORMANCE AND CASUALTIES.

45. Personnel performance, wherever noted by this Officer, was excellent throughout the period of this report. For many months prior to the start of this action, the ships of this Division had been assigned to isolated and monotonous "ping line" and escort duties. All the ships welcomed a chance to meet the enemy and most of them were entirely ready for it. Adverse and commendatory comments as considered justified have been made in separate correspondence.

46. All casualties suffered have been reported by the individual ships concerned.

PART VIII LESSONS LEARNED, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

47. The difficulties encountered by the ships of this Division in obtaining the Operations Plans which they were to use, and in obtaining logistics, are set forth in paragraph 3 above. It is realized that the exigencies of the service often require last minute changes of Plans, but it seems that requiring ships to fuel, provision, and draw Operations Plans in less than a day, especially under the conditions prevailing in ULITHI with several Task Forces preparing to sortie, is cutting it pretty fine. The ships of this Division had never operated with a Fleet or large Task Force before and a period during which questions could have been asked of ships which knew the answers would have been desirable. Most of this Division's ships had been on isolated duty for a month and badly required fuel, provisions, and spare parts for their radar and sound gear. An opportunity to correct and study the Operations Plans in less than frenzied haste would have been greatly appreciated. It is realized that the convenience of ships is not and should not be a major consideration, but it is believed that requiring ships to prepare on such short notice for extended operations is conducive to misunderstanding and possible disaster. It is recommended:

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- (a) That, so far as possible, the ships assigned to a Task Force be assembled at least four or five days in advance.
- (b) That the Operations Plans to be used be issued to the ships at least four or five days in advance of the sortie date.
- (c) That, so far as possible, corrections and changes to Operations Plans be held to a minimum, and that such changes as are made be issued as new pages rather than as pen-and-ink corrections. Some of the changes to the Operations Plans for this operation were almost as thick as the Original Operation Plan itself and several days elapsed before all the Plans were corrected.
- (d) That changes to Operation Plans which are promulgated by dispatch be sent at least twice. It is realized that the circuits are already overloaded but dispatch changes which are garbled are of no particular benefit.

48. At the time this operation commenced, only one ship of this Division (the flagship) had as yet acquired Addendum 6 to SOP-1, although it was known that Addendum 8 had been in effect for some time. This was not the fault of the ships as they had each made strenuous efforts, whenever near an issuing office, to draw either of these Addenda. The Division Commander himself attempted on 20 March 1945 to draw either Addendum 8 or Addendum 6 from the Staffs of CTF 52 and CTF 54, from the COMLOT, from the JICPOA Office on the Mail LST, and from the Mobile Issuing Office in the PRAIRIE, but none of them had copies for issue. Attempts to keep the Addendum held up-to-date by means of the Zone Notices Broadcast on the Fox schedules were and are hampered because a large percentage of the time these messages come in partly garbled or part of the message is lost due to fading or static. Sometimes requests for "repeats" between ships on company clear up the garbles, but portions lost due to fading or static are generally lost to all ships in company, and ships on isolated duty have no one with whom to compare messages to clear garbles. It is recommended:

- (a) That all Task Force Commanders and Issuing Offices keep on hand for issue an adequate supply of the latest Submarine Operating Zones Addendum and all Zone Notices in effect.
- (b) That Zone Notices be broadcast at least twice. It is realized that the Fox schedules are already overloaded but the present situation is not satisfactory.

49. The mail service before and during this operation has been poor at best. This Command has received official mail as much as five months after the date it was postmarked and registered mail almost two months after it had been mailed. Personal mail is as bad or worse. An especially glaring case of poor mail service was reported by CCD-40 Serial 004 dated 9 May 1945. This letter was addressed to the Commander, Marianas Area, and copies were sent to CNO (RPS Section), CINCPac, and ComDesPac. This Officer does not profess to know the cure for the mail situation, but feels that there ought to be some way of improving it.

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50. While enroute to OKINAWA and while on patrol and screening duty after arrival, daily fuel reports were required. Assembling these reports from ships scattered all around the screen and having them relayed to the Screen Commander was a thoroughly exasperating and time-consuming task. The same applies to the daily ammunition reports. It is believed possible that this requirement may have been inserted in order to keep the signal forces busy enroute and the radio traffic load at a peak after arrival at OKINAWA. If so, it was more than successful. It was frequently noted that other commands gave such reports "OP" priority, apparently in a desperate effort to get them in on time. This tended to delay traffic which really rated an "OP". This Command refused to put an "OP" on such traffic unless the ships being reported on had less than seventy percent (70%) of fuel. It is believed that the elimination of fuel and ammunition reports, except when the amount on hand has dropped below certain specified limits, would remove a source of considerable vexation. It is suggested that limits of seventy percent (70%) fuel for black oil ships and fifty percent (50%) for diesel ships, and seventy-five percent (75%) for ammunition, would keep most of this traffic off the air, thereby clearing the circuits for traffic of real importance.

51. The Disbursing Officers of the WHITEHURST, the ENGLAND, and the BOWERS were killed in action during the period of this report. The Communication Officers of these ships were also killed. The difficulties their deaths caused their Commanding Officers were of considerable magnitude, especially since they were already engaged with numerous other tasks resulting from their damage. The ships of this Division have therefore been ordered to prepare bills listing the necessary steps in case of the demise of either of these Officers, where the necessary records are to be found, what is to be done with them, etc., and prescribing methods of stowage, etc., on the part of these Officers which are designed to facilitate the work of the "clean up" boards.

52. Mention has been made (paragraph 19) of a misunderstanding due to a "Q" signal also listed in the General Signal Book with a different meaning. It is recommended that sources of possible misunderstanding due to duplication of the "Q" signals by signals in the General Signal Book be removed.

53. The facts that three ships of this Division were hit in the bridge structure and that numerous casualties were due to the resulting fires indicate that an escape scuttle or door in the after part of C.I.C. would be very desirable; and that a grab rail ladder on each side of the Flying Bridge and down the front of the Asdic Hut would be extremely handy in case of emergency.

54. Stationing the Executive Officer in C.I.C., just one deck below the Commanding Officer, appears to be questionable policy in the light of the Japanese fondness for the bridge structure as a target. This is particularly so since, in many ships, one or more of the Junior Officers is actually better qualified to properly manage C.I.C. than is the Executive Officer. It is suggested that the

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talents of the Executive Officer might better be utilized as the Damage Control Officer of the ship or even as the Officer-in-Charge at the After Gun Director.

55. The manner in which the Division has been whittled down by suicide planes during the period of this Operation indicates that the fire power of these ships is not at present adequate to fight off determined suicide attacks, particularly if these attacks are coordinated. These ships are good gunnery ships and their training has been adequate and thorough. They are able to properly use the guns they have. In most cases, the ships splashed at least one plane before being hit but could not get the last one in time. Removal of the torpedo tubes from these ships, and replacing them with two or more 40mm mounts, has already been authorized. It is urgently recommended that the accomplishment of this alteration be expedited, that the present quad 141 mounts be replaced by quad 40mm mounts, and that the 20mm mounts on the forward end of the Signal Bridge be replaced by a single or twin 40mm mount.

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