

CONFIDENTIAL

COMMANDER ESCORT DIVISION 40

SERIAL 016

25 MAY 1945

ICEBERG OPERATION

REPORT OF KAMIKAZ ATTACK ON USS
WITTER. SHIP ATTACKED BY JAPANESE
AIRCRAFT WHILE ENROUTE SCREENING
STATIONS OFF OKINAWA .

CCD-40/A16-3
Serial NO. 016.

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.
25 May 1945.

1st Endorsement on USS WITTER (DE-636)
Anti-Aircraft Action Report, 6 April 1945.
(Attached as Enclosure (A)).

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) (ComDesRon 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.

Subject: Report of Anti-Aircraft Action, Afternoon of 6 April 1945.

References: (a) Arts. 712 and 874(6), U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920.
(b) Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter 1CL-45.

Enclosures: (A) Report of Anti-Aircraft Action, U.S.S. WITTER (DE-636).
(B) War Damage to U.S.S. WITTER (DE-636): Report of. (less Enclosure (A)).

1. Enclosure (A), which is the Action Report of the Commanding Officer of the USS WITTER (DE-636), is forwarded herewith. This account of the action is complete and accurate, especially when considered with Enclosure (B), which is attached to show the damage sustained and the measures taken to restore power and proceed to port. I concur with the "Lessons Learned and Recommendations" of the basic report.

2. I was on the bridge of the WITTER when the attacking planes were first sighted and I consider that the Commanding Officer of the WITTER fought his ship well and that being hit was unavoidable. One of the two attacking planes was shot down and the other was smoking well over two miles off. I myself saw numerous hits on this plane and I do not understand how it managed to hit the ship. My impression at the time was that the plane's controls were locked in place or that there was a robot pilot.

3. I have only the utmost admiration for the ability to control damage and to keep going displayed by the entire personnel of the WITTER. Smoke filled the entire superstructure and all communications were lost for a short time. An improvised messenger service was started immediately and communications were soon as good as could be expected. (The ship had way on again and steering control was regained in less than five minutes.) I alternated with the Commanding Officer in conning and in checking the damage and I was particularly impressed by the efficiency of the damage control and engineering personnel. They gave the decided impression (and results) of men who had been well trained and knew their business. This ability to "carry on" was based on a solid foundation for the WITTER had for several months previous to this action carried out a well organized and comprehensive program of training to prepare for all types of casualties.

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4. The ability of the WITTER's personnel to control their damage and to devise ways and means to keep moving resulted in her clearing the area in which she had been hit and in which a destroyer (USS MORRIS) (DD-417) was hit only an hour later. There seems little doubt but that another hit would have resulted in the WITTER's sinking nor that she would have been the target had she remained in the area. I consider that the ability and energy of her Commanding Officer in training his crew for action and for controlling damage resulted in saving a badly damaged ship (attention is invited to Enclosure (B)) and is deserving of special commendation. Recommendations as to such commendation are being made by separate correspondence.

Frederic W. Hawes
FREDERIC W. HAWES.

Copies: Cominch - One (1) adv. copy.
(Less CinCPac - Three (3) adv. copies.
Encl. ComDes_Pac - One (1) copy direct.
A). USS WITTER.
Files.

REVISED FORM FOR REPORTING A. A. ACTION BY SURFACE SHIPS

Location of ship (area) Okinawa Shima, Nansei Shoto
Lat. 26° 04' N. U. S. S. WITTER (DE636)
Long. 127° 52' E.

Zone Time 1618 (ITEM) Date 6 April 1945

NOTES

- REPEL ATTACK FIRST—then collect data for this report.
- Do not "Gun Deck" this report. If data cannot be estimated with reasonable accuracy, enter dash in space for which no data is available.
- These sheets are to be filled out immediately after action is completed with data available from ship's log, memory, and consultation with ship's officers. Information is essential in order that the effectiveness of our equipment can be determined. Where data are of doubtful accuracy, fill in with general terms.
- Forward under separate cover to Readiness Division, Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet.

- Surprise attack (yes or no) No Day or night Day
- Method picking plane up (Radar, binoculars, naked eye) Binoculars
- Range plane was picked up (50, 30, 10, less than 5 miles) 10 Miles
- Total number of planes observed 2 Type VAL
- Number of planes attacking own ship 2 Type VAL
- Number of planes taken under fire by own ship 2
 - Of those attacking own ship 2 Type VAL
 - Others None Type - - -
- Speed and altitude of approach in knots and feet #1 - 50 feet, 120 knots; #2 - 3000 feet, 160 knots.
- Number of guns firing—by caliber 3"50 -3; 1.10"/75 -4; 20mm - 10.
- Ammunition expended—by caliber 3"50 - 25; 1.10"/75 - 140; 20mm - 1320
- Percent service allowance expended 3"50 -3%; 1.10"/75 - 1%; 20mm - 2%.
- Method of control 3"50 - Mk. 51 Director Method of spotting None
 Method of ranging Rangefinder - Radar Method of firing Rapid
- Approximate time-tracking to first shot Two minutes; 1613 to 1615
- Approximate time of first hits Commence firing plus 30 seconds
- Approximate time first shot to last shot Three minutes
- Approximate position angle open fire #1 - 0°; #2 - 10°

(OVER)

16. Approximate position angle cease fire #1 - 0°; #2 - 15°
17. Approximate bearing first shot #1 - 170°T., 100° Relative; #2 - 100°T., 090° Relative.
18. Approximate bearing last shot #1 - 170°T., 090° Relative; #2 - 160°T., 350° Relative.
19. Approximate range first shot #1 - 4 miles; #2 - 4 1/2 miles Altitude of Plane #1 - 50'; #2 - 3000'
20. Approximate minimum range aircraft approached #1 - Hit ship; #2 - 1000'
- #1 - 100 yards
21. Approximate range last shot #2 - 3000 yards Altitude of Plane #1 - 20'; #2 - 1000'
22. Approximate altitude of bomb release Zero, suicide into ship Size of bomb Between 500 and 1000 lbs
23. Approximate range torpedo release None Size torpedo None
24. Number hits on ship by bombs One by torpedoes None Was ship strafed? No
- Size gun None
25. Number near bomb misses damaging ship None
26. Planes shot down:

	SURE (By own ship alone)	SURE (Assist)	PROBABLE	DAMAGED
(a) Those attacking own ship	2	None	None	None
(b) Other aircraft	None	None	None	None

(An aircraft is considered destroyed "Sure," when, as result of own ship's fire: 1. It is seen to crash. 2. It is seen to disintegrate in the air or be enveloped in flames. 3. It is seen to descend on friendly territory and be captured. 4. Pilot and entire crew are seen to bail out.)

(A "Sure-Assist" may be claimed when plane is destroyed as result of own ship's and assisting fire by friendly planes, shore batteries, or other ships.)

(An aircraft is considered probably destroyed when, as result of own ship's fire: It is so damaged as to have less than an even chance of reaching its own territory safely.)

(An aircraft is considered damaged when, as result of own ship's fire: It is so damaged as to require repair before beginning another mission, but has better than an even chance of reaching its own territory safely. Claims shall be based on careful interrogation by proper authority, and every effort shall be made to eliminate duplication of claims.)

27. Best estimate of size gun or guns responsible for each "Sure" #1 - 1.10"/75; #2 - 3"/50
28. Performance of ammunition (excellent, good, bad, poor) Excellent
29. What failures in material occurred in this action? None
30. Sketch: (a) Indicate direction of attack relative ship's head.
(b) Show relative position of sun.
(c) Indicate own maneuvers.

Note.—Add descriptive text on additional sheet if required to clarify report.

USS Dobbin—7-10-44—2M.

(See attached sheet)

George Hertzmann, III
GEORGE HERTZMANN, III,
Lieutenant, U.S.N.R.,
Commanding.

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PART I - All times ITEM.

ENCLOSURE (B)

At 1611 while enroute to Screening Station A6, steaming in condition I EASY, planes #1 and #2 were sighted. Speed was increased to flank 23 knots (385 RPM); and WITTER began fish tailing. Condition I was set.

At 1613 plane #2 appeared to be diving on this ship, so left 20 degrees rudder was ordered, to put plane #2 on the starboard beam and plane #1 on the starboard quarter.

At 1615 commenced firing on both planes.

At 1616 It became apparent plane #1 was the more persistent in his dive, so right full rudder was ordered, putting him on the starboard beam, and plane #2 on the bow. Plane #1 began trailing smoke; at same time rangefinder read range 4800.

At 1617 Plane number 2 was seen trailing a tail of smoke.

At 1617+ Plane #2 was seen to splash bearing 350° relative 160° True distance approximately 3000 yards.

At 1617+ Left full rudder was ordered, as it appeared plane #1 was going to hit the ship. It was hoped this maneuver would cause him to overshoot. From 4800 yards out numerous 3"/50 cal. bursts were seen in front of approaching plane along with 20mm and 1.10 hits.

At 1618 Plane hit frame 57 at the waterline. The 500 to 1000 pound bomb he was carrying exploded inside the fireroom tearing a hole in the shell extending from frame 50 to frame 69 and inboard above the keel to the portside. The Interior Communication Room flooded immediately, breaking communications with the Engine Room and Repair Parties.

At 1621 Communications were restored to all guns, and all guns were ready to fire. A lanyard was rigged to the trigger on 3"/50 caliber gun #2 when the firing linkage jammed on the impact.

At 1623 Communication with the Engine Room was reestablished on the XIJV circuit and full control was again on the bridge, with steering control aft.

At 1625 Communications with the Repair Parties was established through messengers and the IJY; IJQ circuits. The following compartments were reported flooded: IC Room, and adjacent storerooms; Forward fireroom; Forward Engine Room; Fuel tanks A2F, A3F, A4F, A8F, A9F, A10F, A11F; Compartment A206AL was reported open to the sea. Casualties reported were six known dead, six enlisted and one officer minor casualties.

At 1632 Speed was increased to 2/3 ahead on the port engine, and course set for Kerama Retto. Later word was received from the tug that our S.O.A. was 10 knots.

At 1632 Bridge notified man had gone overboard during action. Destroyers notified.

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PART II - All times ITEM.

About 1645 U.S.S. MORRIS (DD417); U.S.S. LEARY, R.P. (DD664); U.S.S. GREGORY (DD802), operating with U.S.S. ARKANSAS (BB33), and U.S.S. TUSCALOOSA about six miles to the North, closed this ship.

At 1715 U.S.S. MORRIS (DD417) departed to the Eastward.

At 1745 Enemy planes reported about 10 miles to the North, closing.

At 1754 U.S.S. ARIKARA (ATF98) closed from the East, offering assistance. WITTER Requested her to take station ahead, informing her that no assistance would be required until inside of the nets at Kerama Retto.

At 1816 Enemy plane reported splashed to the North.

At 1819 U.S.S. MORRIS (DD417) reported being hit by Suicide Plane and burning.

At 1819 U.S.S. LEARY, R.P. (DD664) ordered to close U.S.S. MORRIS to render assistance. U.S.S. GREGORY (DD802) stationed ahead of U.S.S. ARIKARA and U.S.S. WITTER.

At 1825 U.S.S. BATES (AFD47) reported enroute to assist U.S.S. MORRIS.

At 1830 U.S.S. ARKANSAS reported that U.S.S. TRACY (DM19) had recovered our man from the water.

At 1840 Enemy planes reported to the East, distance 10 miles.

At 2134 Arrived Kerama Retto, Nansei Shoto. Secured from General Quarters.

Commander Escort Division FORTY - Commander F.W. HAMES, USN, was on board during this action.

ENCLOSURE (B)

USS TUSCAGLOO (CA 37)
A RKA NSAS
(BB 33)

PART II - ACTION

Corbin



SUN OBSERVED
BY clouds

1615 RANGE BOSS
OPEN FIRE

1016 FIRST HTS
PLANE SMOKING
RANGE 4800

~~C 0300 T
5/60 KT.~~

10 MILES

VSS BAT
(APD 47)

2

21647ED
2 VALS

OPEN FIRE 8500

Began talking smoke

NOTE: Weather -
Gray overcast some white clouds
Wind 8 knots 030°.
Visibility good at least 10 m
Sea smooth with light ripples

(c) **THREATS**

U. S. S. WITTER (DE-636)



PART II - RETIREMENT Confidential

ENCLOSURE (D)

USS Bates (APD 47)

BATES ASSISTING MORRIS

1819 USS MORRIS HIT BY SUICIDE PLANE
 1819 USS GREGORY (DD 501)
 WITTER (DD 644)
 USS R. LEAHY (DD 664)
 ASSISTING
 USS MORRIS
 WITTER (DD 644)
 USS ARIKARA (ATF 98)
 WITTER
 ARIKARA
 GREGORY
 5 MILES
 WITTER TRACK
 2030
 USS GREGORY
 dropped back
 to cover entrance
 KERAMA
 REATO
 RUKAN
 SHO
 OKINAWA
 SHIMA

Confidential

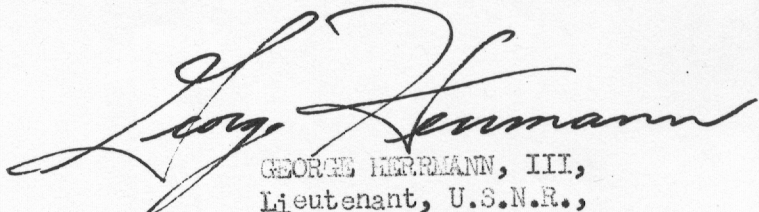
PART III - Lessons learned and Recommendations.

1. Communications - All sound powered circuits pass through the IC room on this ship. If the damage to this room were serious enough, all sound powered circuits throughout the ship would be out. Telephone communication would be reduced to direct leads from one station to another, or messenger. In this action, the following circuits remained intact, probably because the caps in the IC Room and other flooded compartments were secured on tight making them water tight, LJY; 15JY; LJP; LJQ; LJU; KLJV; JA. The JX; LJV; 2JV; KLJ were all dead. When contact with the After Engine and fireroom was broken on the 2JV, the LJV was tried, but that was out; so the KLJV was used. The LJV, our main line to the Repair Parties was dead. Communications was finally established between the bridge and the Repair Parties through LJY; LJQ and messenger. In light of the above experience, it is apparent that: (1) A thorough check should be made in all compartments to see that all sound powered outlets are maintained watertight - one circuit in time of emergency can make a world of difference; (2) Phone talkers should be instructed and drilled in shifting from one circuit to another; (3) Officers and Petty Officers should have a thorough knowledge of the different phone circuits, where the outlets are located and what stations are on each circuit; (4) A communication system based on messengers only should be set up and shifted to frequently during drill periods.

2. It was found that the location of the submersible pump outlets were inconvenient in controlling the flooding of this ship. Three double outlets, B-1, B-2, and A-206-AL, in the damaged area were useless because they were flooded or inaccessible due to wreckage. These could have been used to supply our five pumps had they been located on the main deck. When other outlets were used, water tight fittings had to be left open, which made the ship extremely vulnerable to attack.

All available pumps were needed but difficulty was experienced due to the lack of extension cables to reach the remote outlets. One extension had been made previously but additional ones were needed.

It is suggested that all submersible pump outlets be raised to the main deck, except those in A206AL and A203L, which should have additional outlets above on the main deck. Three extension cables should be added to the ship's allowance for damage control.


GEORGE HERRMANN, III,
Lieutenant, U.S.N.R.,
Commanding.

ENCLOSURE (B)