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SECRET

FIRST DAY

Headquarters, Commander Marianas, Guam,
Monday, August 13, 1945.

The court met at 10 a. m.
Present:
Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood, Junior, U. S. Navy,
Vice Admiral George D. Murray, U. S. Navy,
Rear Admiral Francis E. M. Whiting, U. S. Navy, members; and
Captain William E. Hilbert, U. S. Navy, judge advocate.

The judge advocate introduced Fred R. Wall, chief yeoman, U. S. Naval Reserve; Thomas E. Lawlor, chief yeoman, U. S. Naval Reserve; William A. Behrens, chief yeoman, U. S. Naval Reserve; and Kenneth R. Heller, yeoman first class, U. S. Naval Reserve, as reporters.

The court was cleared and the judge advocate read the precept, original prefixed hereto.

All matters preliminary to the inquiry having been determined and the court having decided to sit with closed doors, the court was opened.

Each member, the judge advocate, and reporters were duly sworn.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

The court announced that it would adjourn to the U. S. Navy Base Hospital #18, Guam.

All the members, the judge advocate, and reporter Fred R. Wall, chief yeoman, U. S. Naval Reserve, assembled in the Chapel of the Thirty-fourth Construction Battalion, adjacent to and temporarily used by the U.S. Navy Base Hospital #18, Guam, where the commanding officer, and such other surviving officers and crew of the U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS as could be assembled were collected.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

The commanding officer, Captain Charles B. McVay, III, U. S. Navy, read the official report and personal narrative of the loss of the U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS, copy appended marked "Exhibit 1."

The surviving officers and members of the crew were duly sworn as witnesses.

Examined by the court:

The following questions were addressed to the surviving commanding officer, Charles B. McVay, III, Captain, U. S. Navy:

1. Q. Is the narrative just read to the court a true statement of the loss of the United States ship INDIANAPOLIS?

A. Yes, sir.

2. Q. Have you any complaint to make against any of the surviving officers and crew of the said ship on that occasion?

A. No, sir.

The following question was addressed to the furviving officers and crew of the U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS:

3. Q. Have you any objections to make in regard to the narrative just read to the court, or anything to lay to the charge of any officer or man with regard to the loss of the United States ship INDIANAPOLIS?

A. No, sir.

All of the witnesses were duly warned and withdrew.

The court announced that it would adjourn to its regular place of meeting at Headquarters, Commander Marianas, Guam.

All the members, the judge advocate, and reporter Fred R. Wall, chief yeoman, U. S. Naval Reserve, returned to the regular place of meeting, where the court reassembled.

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No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

Captain Charles B. McVay, III, U. S. Navy, Commanding Officer, U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS, was called as a witness by the judge advocate, entered and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Captain Charles B. McVay, III, U. S. Navy, informed the court that he had an interest in the subject matter of the inquiry in that he was the commanding officer of the U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS. He requested that he be allowed to be present during the course of the inquiry, examine witnesses, and introduce new matter pertinent to the inquiry in the same manner as a defendant.

The request of Captain McVay was granted.

With the permission of the court Captain McVay introduced Lieutenant James Minicus, U. S. Naval Reserve, as his counsel, and Captain Thomas B. Klakring, U. S. Navy, as associate counsel.

The court warned the witness that his oath previously taken was still binding, and informed him of the provisions of article 60, Articles for the Government of the Navy. The witness stated he had no objections to testifying.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Charles B. McVay, III, Captain, U. S. Navy, surviving Commanding Officer, U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS.

2. Q. The court is inquiring into all the circumstances surrounding the causes for the loss of the U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS, the damages resulting therefrom, and loss incurred thereby, and responsibility therefor, and also matters pertaining to the rescue operations and the delay in connection with reporting the loss of that ship. Have you anything to state at the present time in addition to that made in your statement concerning the causes for the loss?

A. No.

3. Q. Have you anything further to add concerning the damages resulting therefrom?

A. I would like to stress the point that I believe it was underwater damages which caused the ship to sink. I do not believe it was other explosions.

4. Q. Do you mean by underwater damages, damages from outside rather than inside the ship?

A. Damages from outside.

5. Q. Where was your gasoline stored?

A. We have one gasoline tank forward at frame 15, the second tank was removed from the ship some time during battle by the damage repair party between May 3 and July 6. This tank holds approximately 3,500 gallons of gasoline.

6. Q. You mentioned two explosions, please elaborate on their locations.

A. I feel quite sure there were two underwater explosions. One, I believe, occurred approximately at frame 65, the other forward of this, the distance forward I am not able even to guess. The estimated time between the first and the second explosion was three to four seconds.

7. Q. Were you out in the open at the time of these explosions so that you could visually see them?

A. I was in my bunk the first explosion, on the deck of the emergency cabin for the second. I could see nothing.

8. Q. You refer in your statement to the ship being in a watertight condition YOKE modified. Please explain this condition.

A. The ship, except at General Quarters when she was at sea, was in material condition YOKE modified, continuously. It was a material condition which allowed sufficient ventilation so that people could sleep below decks. It refers more to a lessening in ventilation closures rather than other watertight closures. We are in condition ZED only at General Quarters or when air, or other attack, was imminent. This condition could be maintained only for

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short durations of time because of the antiquated ventilation system of the ship.

9. Q. Did you as commanding officer receive any report on the night in question that the ship was fully in modified YOKE condition?

A. That is a report always made at 2000 and is a part of the executive officer's report to me.

10. Q. Is there anything within your knowledge which precludes the possibility that at least one of the explosions you referred to may have had origin within the ship?

A. Past experience. The whip of the ship and the vibration was, to me, exactly similar to what occurred when a Kamikaze bomb exploded outside the skin of the ship on 30 March.

11. Q. To your knowledge, were any records of the ship or ship's papers saved?

A. None whatsoever.

12. Q. Could one of these explosions have been a mine rather than a torpedo?

A. I cannot answer that.

13. Q. You refer to giving instructions to the navigator. Were those instructions ever carried out?

A. It apparently was impossible to get a message off the ship.

14. Q. Who was on the bridge on duty at the time you arrived there?

A. Lieutenant Orr had the watch, Lieutenant Commander Moore had the supervisor watch, he is the Damage Control Officer, and immediately went below after the first explosion. Ensign Candalino was Junior Officer of the Watch, Ensign Malone, an aviator, Gentleman Officer of the Watch. I only actually saw Lieutenant Commander Moore and Lieutenant Orr.

The witness was duly warned.

The court then, at 12 noon, took a recess until 1:30 p. m., at which time it reconvened.

Present: All the members, the judge advocate, the party to the inquiry, and his counsel, and Thomas E. Lawlor, chief yeoman, U.S. Naval Reserve, reporter.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

Captain Charles B. McVay, III, U. S. Navy, the witness under examination when the recess was taken, was warned that the oath previously taken was still binding, and continued his testimony.

Examined by the judge advocate:

15. Q. Referring to USF 10 ABLE, what was the material condition of the INDIANAPOLIS at the time of the loss as specified in that book?

A. We were cruising and in condition of readiness THREE. Material condition YOKE modified was set. Condition YOKE as set down in FTP 170 BAKER was set with minor modifications regarding ventilation.

16. Q. Could any of these so-called minor modifications have radically affected the stability?

A. I do not believe so.

17. Q. Just before adjournment you mentioned four officers on the ship, are any of these officers survivors?

A. None of them are survivors to my knowledge.

18. Q. Please state as fully as you can remember the wording of the reports made to you as to the condition of the ship by the Officer of the Deck, Executive Officer, and the Damage Control Officer.

A. The Officer of the Deck said he had no information since all communications were out. Within two minutes of that time the Damage Control Officer came on to the bridge and said we were badly damaged forward, taking water rapidly. He asked, "Do you wish to abandon ship"? I replied, "Not yet, take another look. Give me any further information". Within two minutes of that

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report the Executive Officer came to the bridge and said, "The damage is serious, we are sinking rapidly. I recommend that we abandon ship." I said, "O.K., abandon ship." The word was passed orally, "All hands topside to abandon ship."

19. Q. Before the ship sank, what other reports were made to you, or what discussions did you have with any other personnel regarding the ship's condition?

A. Only that Lieutenant Orr was greatly concerned because he could not give the word to stop all engines, and I knew that with the damage forward we would be taking in a great deal of water while going ahead. I know what he had in mind because he mentioned backing the engines.

20. Q. Have you any further details to add to those made in your statement regarding efforts made to get off a report by radio concerning the ship's condition?

A. No.

21. Q. To your knowledge, were any emergency flares sent up by the ship before she sank?

A. I am quite sure that there were none.

22. Q. Describe to the court the location of the radio rooms.

A. Radio room One is on the communication deck, starboard side, directly below the bridge. Radio room Two is aft on the deck above the hangar deck, frame 95.

23. Q. What is the secondary source of power in the forward and after radio rooms?

A. The auxiliary generator is in radio room Two. I believe that also supplies our auxiliary power for radio One. I do not believe the main generators are in the radio rooms. They are below decks.

24. Q. Was there also a secondary source of power in either radio room in the form of storage batteries?

A. I do not believe so.

25. Q. What sailing or routing instructions did you receive before leaving Guam?

A. May I call attention to enclosure (A) of my official report of the loss of the INDIANAPOLIS. (At this point the witness read from his official report which is part of "Exhibit ~~A~~ 2").

26. Q. After leaving Guam, did you send any radio messages to Commander Philippine Sea Frontier or anyone else?

A. No, sir.

27. Q. Did the ship, at the time of loss, carry any special cargo which might have increased or decreased her stability?

A. No, sir.

28. Q. Was the ship at that time carrying any special dangerous cargo outside of her normal fuel, oil, and explosives?

A. No, sir.

29. Q. Have you anything further to add to your statement regarding the sighting of planes, or actions of planes before you were rescued?

A. I might add that all planes sighted, prior to 1300, Thursday, 2 August, appeared to be at such a high altitude that I believed them to be on transport duty and had little hope of them seeing us.

30. Q. Do you have anything further to add to your statement regarding defective rescue equipment?

A. I understand they put up, in tin containers under pressure, fresh water which would be highly desirable in place of the old fashion water breakers we now use.

Examined by the court:

31. Q. What was the routine prescribed for the ship during the night to insure watertight integrity of your YOKE modified condition?

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A. Regular damage control patrols. They made periodic inspections, at least once a watch, and the men reported if anything was found amiss.

32. Q. Were any officers, with whom you consulted before the ship was lost, recovered or rescued?

A. No, sir.

33. Q. How was the order to abandon ship passed?

A. Orally by the Boatswain Mate of the Watch. His name was Keyes. He went below and passed the word orally.

34. Q. Will you please give in more detail your exact route from the time you left the bridge to the time you actually were washed overboard. You have stated that you proceeded to the main radio to determine whether or not your SOS message had been sent.

A. I proceeded from the bridge to the chart house, where I picked up a Kapok life preserver, to the emergency cabin at the ~~forward~~ after end of the bridge where I met Captain Crouch, who said, "Have you a spare life preserver"? I said, "Yes", stepped back into the emergency cabin, picked up a pneumatic life preserver and gave it to Harrison, seaman second class, asking him to inflate it for Captain Crouch. I then stepped on to the ladder leading to the signal bridge, at which time the ship took a decided list to starboard of approximately 30 degrees. I reached the signal bridge and thence to the ladder leading down to the communication deck, port side, when the ship took another heavy list to starboard to about 65 degrees, thence to the life line at frame 55 where I held on for a few minutes when the ship rolled to 90 degrees, thence to the life line on the forecastle, thence to the ship's side where I stood upright and worked aft to frame 100 where I was washed off by a wave caused I believe by the ship's bow going under water.

35. Q. Did you have any standing orders for the Officer of the Deck to start zigzagging in case of clear weather and good visibility?

A. No, sir, not to my knowledge.

36. Q. In any case you were not zigzagging.

A. No, sir.

37. Q. Did you see any other personnel from the time you went into the water until you were picked up?

A. Two other rafts, one of which we paddled over to, I believe on the second day, containing one man, Koziara. Another raft with some personnel but too far away to reach.

38. Q. Other than concerning the actual rescue of yourself and the party you were with, have you any observations to make with regard to the rescue operations?

A. Nothing except that I wish to call attention to the interval of time which elapsed from the time the ship was due in Leyte to the apparent commencement of rescue operations. I know of nothing further to add at this time. From what I could see from the water once search operations were started they were exceptionally well carried out.

39. Q. Relative to Lieutenant Commander Moore, the Supervisory Watch Officer, where was he when the explosion occurred?

A. He was somewhere in the vicinity of the bridge.

40. Q. He left and then two minutes later returned and informed you that the damage was serious? How far could he have gotten from the bridge?

A. To the forecastle and back, I believe.

41. Q. The original explosion occurred in the boiler room?

A. I do not know.

42. Q. But you believe it to have occurred in the vicinity of the boiler room?

A. Yes, sir.

43. Q. Can we establish the fact that anyone saw a torpedo?

A. I have not questioned the officers or men taken to Leyte.

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44. Q. Is there the possibility of there having been a serious boiler explosion?

A. Not in my opinion. I think it was an underwater explosion.

45. Q. Was there any reason for a search to commence for the INDIANAPOLIS before 1400 ITEM, 31 July, three hours after you were due?

A. I had hoped that the tractor planes we had mapped to meet us at 0600 ITEM, 30 miles east of Homonohon Island, would report that they could not find us.

46. Q. It is apparent that you were sighted on the second?

A. It was apparent to me that we were sighted by search planes. Something to the south of us was sighted.

47. Q. How far were you from Leyte, Peleliu, and Ulithi?

A. We were about 480 miles from Leyte, 300 miles from Ulithi, and 300 miles from Peleliu.

48. Q. Were you required to make noon position reports during passage?

A. No, sir.

49. Q. Did the INDIANAPOLIS have underwater sound gear?

A. No, sir.

50. Q. What was your procedure regarding stationing overnight lookouts?

A. On each 20 mm. and 40 mm. we had one man whose specific duty was lookout; we had on the bridge level two lookouts on the starboard side with binoculars, two lookouts on the port side with regular stands and binoculars; two or four on sky amidships, port and starboard side, a total of about 12 lookouts with binoculars and stands, plus 10 at regular gun stations.

51. Q. Did these lookouts have any efficient means of communication with the bridge?

A. Yes, sir, by the JL circuit, manned by King, seaman first class, who is among the survivors.

52. Q. Was the INDIANAPOLIS completely darkened at this time?

A. Yes, sir.

53. Q. Referring to USF 10, will you tell the court what are the fleet instructions regarding zigzagging, condition of material readiness and speed, to be used while cruising at night in waters where danger from enemy torpedoes exists?

A. "Condition THREE Cruising. Day or night, high visibility. Danger of surprise air or submarine attack exists. Surprise attack by surface force improbable." We were in Condition THREE. Material condition YOKE; we were in YOKE modified. "Engineering condition 33. Ready for flank speed based on fleet speed as standard." Split plant was utilized as prescribed in Chapter 9, FTP 170 BAKER, Damage Control instructions, "3400 Zigzag (see war instructions, Chapter 7). Ships and dispositions should zigzag during good visibility, including bright moonlight, in areas where enemy submarines may be encountered unless the accomplishment of the task assigned will be jeopardized by the reduced speed of advancement, increased fuel consumption, or both. The officer in tactical command should signal the time to commence zigzagging and cease zigzagging. Zigzagging should normally cease after evening twilight and commence prior to morning twilight, unless the phases of the moon required that zigzagging be continued."

54. Q. Will you give to the court the reasons for not zigzagging in the night in question?

A. I believed that 17 knots was sufficient, also better protection than slowing my speed of advancement, during alternating conditions of darkness and occasional moonlight.

55. Q. What was the approximate phase of the moon on the night of the loss of the INDIANAPOLIS?

A. I believe between two-thirds and three-quarters, but the sky was overcast.

56. Q. You stated, I believe, that it was impossible to get a message off

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the ship, will you please explain why it was impossible?

A. I know from the survivor who tried to send out the contact report in radio One that he was not getting on the air: also, Chief Electrician Woods in radio Two sent Hart, radio technician second class, to radio One to get the ship's position because he knew radio One had no power. Radio Two were sure they were getting out an SOS with auxiliary power.

57. Q. Do you know whether or not anything had appeared on the radar screen between say 2300 and the time the explosion occurred?

A. I know of nothing whatsoever reported from CIC. There are standing orders that all radar contacts are reported to me, and further, it is specifically written in the night orders each night that all contacts, radar and otherwise, will be reported to me by voice tube.

58. Q. Do you know whether any of the survivors saw a submarine on the night in question?

A. I know of none.

59. Q. You spoke of being in material condition modified YOKE. Did this modification involve leaving bulkhead watertight doors open?

A. None below the second deck to my knowledge. In order to answer that question fully it must be noted that this ship proceeded at maximum speed in the forward area upon her RFS, 16 July. We were overhauling our damage control bills, were remarking certain closures, bringing bills up-to-date, but I know that it would take another week or so before I could consider the ship up-to-date in her damage control readiness. I felt that the personnel, both officers and men, were well versed in damage control. My Damage Control Officer had been in that billet for three years. I had a senior lieutenant by the name of Hurst, who was new at sea, but he had stood one in the damage control school. All officers had been through the damage control school. Most of the key men had also been to school. I was certain that within a very short period of time we would be in excellent condition in this department. I would also like to point out that there was no better training and no method of making a crew conscious of the necessity for good damage control and watertight integrity than having been hit by a Kamikaze a few months previously, at which time I had command of the ship. I took command November, 1944.

60. Q. Will you tell the court, Captain, what your service has been in this war; what campaigns you have taken part in?

A. On December 7, 1941, I had command of the U.S.S. KAWEAH, an oiler, and was in the North Atlantic. I kept this command until March, 1942, at which time I was ordered as Executive Officer of the U.S.S. CLEVELAND, (CL 55), which was building in Camden, New Jersey. This ship was commissioned in June, 1942, and was at Casablanca. I then went to the Pacific in December, 1942, and was in the Reynolds Island engagement; the bombardment of Kolombangara March 5-6, 1943; was detached from the CLEVELAND, April, 1943; was on shore until November, 1944, when I took command of the INDIANAPOLIS when we participated in the first and second Tokyo strikes, the Iwo Jima bombardment and the Okinawa pre-invasion bombardments.

61. Q. Is the INDIANAPOLIS class of cruisers reported as being a soft ship?

A. The Bureau of Ships is particularly concerned over their stability; they have a 1.56 foot GM in the light condition and a little over two feet plus in the fully loaded condition. They are not expected to right themselves when they list greater than 65 degrees. They are so tender there are strict orders not to add any weight that cannot be fully compensated for. I have heard high ranking officers state as their opinion that they feel certain this class of ship could hardly be expected to take more than one torpedo hit and remain afloat.

62. Q. Have you experienced any sabotage or evidence of sabotage in the INDIANAPOLIS to your knowledge?

A. No, sir.

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Reexamined by the judge advocate:

63. Q. Did you add any material topside weight during your recent overhaul?

A. Yes, we did, but I was told it had been fully compensated by the removal of the starboard catapult, one gasoline tank, some splinter shields, and some minor changes. We received three SC planes in place of our SOCs, which added quite a bit of weight. They did not give me an 8,000 gallon emergency distilling plant because I could not find sufficient compensating weight to be removed.

64. Q. Was there any evidence of the ship breaking in two?

A. I have none.

65. Q. Do you think there was time and adequate means for the order, "abandon ship", to have been passed throughout the ship?

A. Not so that everybody could have heard it.

66. Q. Why were you proceeding without escort?

A. Under my orders I was given no escort.

67. Q. Did you ask for one?

A. I do not specifically remember asking for one, but the policy of escorts is handed down by higher authority. It is not a prerogative of a captain of a ship.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness; he resumed his seat as interested party.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. John Corry, Commander, U. S. Navy, Staff, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, Advance Headquarters, Assistant Fleet Aerologist and Officer in Charge of the Fleet Weather Central.

2. Q. Please state the state of the moon on the night of July 29-30 in area 10° to 13° North and 130° to 135° East.

A. On 29 July the moon was in the last quarter with about a quarter of the brilliance of the full moon. Moonrise in the area 10° to 13° North and 130° to 135° East was at 2205 ITEM. Moonset was in daylight on the morning of 30 July.

3. Q. In the same area, please state the general status of the weather for the period July 29 to August 5.

A. According to the information available at Cincpac Fleet Weather Central, beginning July 29, 1945, the general pressure distribution showed a typhoon forming 22° North and 130° East, and the area 10° to 13° North and 130° to 135° East was under the influence of the Southwest monsoon. The equatorial front was discontinuous between the Marianas and the Philippines. The estimated weather conditions at 12° 02' North and 134° 48' East, at zero hours KING, 30 July, were three-tenths low clouds based at 2,000 feet, scattered high clouds, and visibility twelve miles, winds Southwest, force four, and low swell and moderate sea. From all reports available, indications were that the weather was, in general, excellent from 29 July through 2 August. Conditions were partly cloudy, three to five-tenths low clouds, bases averaging 2,000 feet, and three to five-tenths middle and high clouds. Visibilities, in general, were six to twelve miles, winds Southwest, Beaufort force two to four; sea and swell were slight and moderate. From 3 August to 5 August, the area was under the influence of the equatorial front, which had re-formed on an East-West line to the south of the area, and moved slowly north over the area. Conditions were generally showery, with frequent thundery showers, cloudiness varying from five to ten-tenths, visibilities six to twelve miles, except less than one mile in north portion. Winds were East-Northeast bearing to Southeast, Beaufort force two to four. Swell was generally low and sea slight to moderate.

Examined by Captain Charles B. McVay, III, U. S. Navy, an interested party: