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ACTION REPORT

COMMANDER WESTERN CAROLINES SUB AREA

SERIAL P-00701

15 AUGUST 1945

RESCUE AND SEARCH FOR SURVIVORS OF USS
INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35) AND RECOVERY - IDENTIFICATION
AND BURIAL OF BODIES

COVERS PERIOD 2-7 AUGUST
1945

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COMMANDER WESTERN CAROLINES SUB AREA

15 August 1945

From: Commander Western Carolines Sub Area.
To : Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet.
Via : (1) Commander Marianas.
(2) Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet and
Pacific Ocean Areas, Advance Headquarters.

Subject: Rescue and Search for Survivors of U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS
(CA 35) and Recovery, Identification, and Burial of Bodies.

Reference: (a) ComWesCarSubArea Secret Ser. 00697 of 3 Aug. 1945 di-
recting IsCom Peleliu to provide for hospitalization
and to comply with existing directives regarding the
submission of casualty and interrogation reports.
(b) IsCom Peleliu Secret Ltr. file A8:G-2:WWS-rtd of 6 Aug.
1945 with Encl.(A) Battle Casualty List - survivors.
— Encl.(B) - Summary of information available in regard
to the sinking of USS INDIANAPOLIS based on interroga-
tion of survivors.
(c) CinCPac serial 8194 of 4 Aug. 1945 - Travel Authority
for certain newspapermen and Lt. Comdr. H. REQUA, Jr.,
and Lt(jg) James LAHEY regarding gathering of news
material.
(d) CinCPac Secret Disp. 042351/August 1945 regarding Still
and Motion Picture coverage of survivors of USS INDIAN-
APOLIS.
(e) IsCom Peleliu Secret Ser. 001022 of 9 August 1945, re-
garding Still and Motion Picture coverage.

Enclosure: (A) CO, USS CECIL J. DOYLE Secret Memo Report on Rescue of
INDIANAPOLIS Survivors 2-4 August 1945.
(B) CO, USS CECIL J. DOYLE (DE 368) Secret Ser. 0062 of 9
August 1945 with Enclosure (B) thereto, giving list of
bodies recovered and buried at sea.
(C) CO, USS ALVIN C. COCKRELL (DE 366) Secret Ser. 0012-45
of 8 August - Report of Rescue Operations 3-6 August.
(D) CO, USS FRENCH (DE 367) Secret Ltr. file P6, Ser. 005
of 9 Aug. 1945 with Encl.(B) thereto, giving List of
bodies found.
(E) CO, USS MADISON (DD 425) Conf. Ltr. file A16-3, Ser. 034
of 6 Aug. 1945 with Enclosures (A), (C) and (D) thereto:
(A) Narrative of Search; (C) Record of Air Support and
(D) Copy of letter to C.O. USS INDIANAPOLIS regarding
bodies recovered.

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- (F) CO, USS RALPH TALBOT (DD 390) Conf. Ltr. file L11, Ser. 078 of 6 Aug. 1945 with Enclosures (B) and (C) thereto: (B) Log of Events during period of Search and (C) List of Survivors recovered.
- (G) CO, USS AYLWIN (DD 355) Conf. Ltr. file P6/A16, Ser. No. 040 of 9 August 1945.
- (H) CO, USS HELM (DD 388) Conf. Ltr. file A16, Ser. 0195 of 6 August 1945.
- (I) CO, USS REGISTER (APD-92) Conf. Ser. 047 of 8 Aug. 1945.
- (J) CO, USS DUFILHO (DE 423) Conf. Ser. 025-45 of 9 Aug. '45.
- (K) CO, VPB-152 Secret Ltr. file A16-3, Ser. No. 057 of 9 Aug. 1945 with Enclosure (A) thereto - Report of Participation in Rescue of INDIANAPOLIS Survivors.
- (L) Extracts from VPB-23 (Rescue Squadron) Log 2-6 August inclusive; with report of Army plane OA-10 No. 914, 4th ERS Squadron, temporarily working with VPB-23.
- (M) Extracts from ComWesCarSubArea Operations Watch Officer's Log 2-8 August inclusive.
- (N) Flight Operations record of planes launched in connection with subject search and rescue from 2 to 7 Aug. 1945 inclusive.
- (O) Plots of each day's surface searches by all surface vessels participating - prepared from individual ship plots.
- (P) Plots of each day's air searches by all aircraft participating.
- (Q) Plot of all sea areas searched by participating surface and air craft.
- (R) ComWesCarSubArea Secret Ltr. file Pl/L11-1, Ser. 00699 of 11 Aug. 1945, (without enclosures), to IsCom Peleliu submitting data on body identification.
- (S) ComWesCarSubArea Secret Ltr. file Pl/L11-1, Ser. P-00700 of 13 Aug. 1945, to IsCom Peleliu submitting data on body identification.
- (T) Press interviews - per reference (c).

1. At 1205 King on 2 August 1945, information was received by Commander Western Carolines Sub Area Watch Officer by telephone from Group Operations Watch Officer that a plane from VPB Squadron 152 on routine search and reconnaissance flight in search sector 19V258 had sighted survivors in water at Latitude 11°30' North, Longitude 133°30' East and that the plane had dropped a life raft and transmitter. At 1330 King VPB-152, Search and Recon-

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naissance Squadron, Duty Officer, telephoned Sub Area Operations Watch Officer that a message had been received from the same source in substance as follows: "Latitude 11-54N, Longitude 133-47E; send rescue ship. Survivors, 150 in number, in lifeboat and jackets. Dropped sono-buoy." Subsequently dispatches containing the above information were received through regular communication channels. Meanwhile however, and prior to receipt of official dispatches, airplanes were dispatched to the area reported as soon as possible after receipt of telephone information, and the U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE was diverted to the area reported from Latitude 8°34'N, Longitude 135°10'E where she was at the time of receiving Commander Western Carolines Sub Area dispatch to conduct Air-Sea Rescue Operations. U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE was returning to the PALAUS from the vicinity of Latitude 10°57'N, Longitude 136°23'E where she had been dispatched on 31 July to conduct a JASASA operation. U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE was dispatched to rescue area at 1245 King on 2 August and planes from VPB-23 (Dumbo Squadron) and VPB-152 were dispatched at 1242 King and 1245 King respectively. U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE was only (DE) available to Commander Western Carolines Sub Area at this time, the U.S.S. ALVIN C. COCKRELL (DE 366) having been dispatched on a JASASA mission to the southwest of Peleliu and U.S.S. FRENCH (DE 367) was returning from Hollandia where she had brought FS-151, which had been salvaged after grounding on Helen Reef. These DE's were dispatched to the rescue area as soon after they returned to Peleliu and completed fueling as possible.

2. In order to get as much survival equipment as possible to the area, all available planes including two transient Army B-17 planes and the flag plane were dispatched from Peleliu with all available life rafts and jackets, their times of takeoff from Peleliu, and return, together with rafts carried being submitted herewith as enclosure (N) which includes a record of subsequent flights through 8 August. During the afternoon and evening of 2 August survival equipment was dropped to survivors by planes, and at about 1605 King Lieutenant R. A. MARKS, USNR, pilot of Dumbo B-72 (Duno 46472) made an open sea landing to render direct assistance as possible in the absence of surface craft. Lieutenant MARKS and his crew performed an outstanding service to survivors while awaiting the arrival of the U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE which was to arrive about midnight, the plane taxiing around such as to rescue and take on board 53 survivors. First Lieut. R. C. ALCORN, Army Air Corp, 4th Emergency Rescue Squadron in OA-10 (Dumbo) made a successful open sea landing at 1940 King, though he succeeded in picking up only one survivor. An indication of the valuable services performed by Lieut. MARKS and crew of the Navy Dumbo; by Lt. (jg) W. C. GWINN, USNR, pilot of plane first sighting survivors, and by Lt. Comdr. G. C. ATTEBERRY, USNR, Commanding Officer, VPB-152, is indicated in press interviews, enclosure (T) and other enclosures

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herewith. Others, also performing outstanding services were not interviewed. The Army Dumbo successfully took off on the morning of 3 August but the Navy Dumbo had sustained such considerable damage that it was deemed advisable to destroy and sink it, which service U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE performed.

3. Meanwhile additional ships had been dispatched to the area by Commander Marianas, Commander Philippine Sea Frontier and Commander Western Carolines Sub Area, the latter involving destroyers under Commander Ulithi Patrol and Escort Unit. U.S.S. BASSETT (APD 73), and U.S.S. DUFILHO (DE 423) arrived in the area soon after U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE and all vessels proceeded to rescue survivors. U.S.S. RINGNESS (APD 100), U.S.S. REGISTER (APD 92), U.S.S. MADISON (DD 425), and U.S.S. RALPH TALBOT (DD 390) arrived later on the morning of 3 August and assisted in organized search and rescue work. These vessels were later augmented by U.S.S. HEIM (DD 388), U.S.S. AYLWIN (DD 355), U.S.S. FRENCH (DE 367), and U.S.S. ALVIN C. COCKRELL (DE 366). The reports of the above vessels except two of those attached to the Philippine Sea Frontier (U.S.S. RINGNESS and U.S.S. BASSETT) which have not reported to Commander Western Carolines Sub Area are submitted as enclosures (A) to (J) inclusive. These vessels, again excepting those attached to the Philippine Sea Frontier, have submitted to this Headquarters all available information on bodies recovered, disposition of such records by Commander Western Carolines Sub Area being indicated in enclosures (R) and (S) herewith. From these enclosures it will appear that a total of 91 bodies were examined in an attempt to effect identification.

4. Until after the arrival of U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE in the area this command had no knowledge of the ship to which the survivors were formerly attached. The possibility was even considered that the survivors might be from a Japanese submarine which was reported to have been attacked by convoy escorts in the vicinity a short time before. No distress or emergency signals were heard or recorded by Peleliu Communication facilities. However, from reports of searching vessels and a dispatch from the Philippine Sea Frontier on 2 August, stating that the U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS had not arrived at Leyte as scheduled, no doubt remained as to the identity of the survivors.

5. On 3 August Commander Western Carolines Sub Area advised searching vessels and Commander Philippine Sea Frontier that hospital facilities were available at Peleliu and instructed SOPA to dispatch vessels with survivors to Peleliu. However, SOPA advised that U.S.S. BASSETT was returning to Leyte with about 150 survivors and that U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE was returning to Peleliu with about 93. U.S.S. REGISTER and U.S.S. RINGNESS were also di-

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rected to discharge survivors at Peleliu. Attempt was made to have U.S.S. BASSETT also discharge survivors at Peleliu but effort proved unsuccessful. U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE, U.S.S. RINGNESS and U.S.S. REGISTER discharged a total of 189 survivors to Base Hospital No. 20 from 0300 King to 1300 King on 4 August. They had not been sent in earlier as their condition was such that further search, without jeopardizing survivors, was considered justified by circumstances. A report and list of survivors was submitted by Island Command, Peleliu, as noted in reference (b), copy of which with enclosures was furnished Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet, Commander Marianas, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Secretary of the Navy, and others, and which accordingly is not included with this report.

6. At 2100 King on 4 August 1945 U.S.S. TRANQUILLITY (AH 14) arrived at Peleliu and at 1300 King on 6 August departed for Guam with all rescued personnel brought to Peleliu except one who was retained for further hospitalization. Eighty (80) stretcher cases and 86 ambulatory patients were embarked in U.S.S. TRANQUILLITY. Except for 5 officers and 144 enlisted survivors understood to have been discharged to Fleet Hospital No. 114 per CNB Samar dispatch, this command knows of no other survivors. Still and Motion picture coverage of survivors of U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS was forwarded to Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet, Advance Headquarters, as per references (d) and (e).

7. Air and surface search continued until night of 7 August, some vessels returning to Peleliu for fuel as necessary and returning immediately to search area. When all possible survivors had been rescued, vessels complied with instructions to recover and bury dead bodies and attempt through every means possible to identify them.

8. A large air and surface search area was covered as will be indicated by enclosure (Q). Detailed daily composite surface search is indicated in enclosure (O) as taken from navigational tracks of searching vessels. Daily composite air search is indicated in enclosure (P) as much in detail as practicable.

9. Requests of Commander Philippine Sea Frontier and Commander Ulithi Patrol and Escort Unit for release of vessels was granted when results of further search appeared to be futile. U.S.S. FRENCH and U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE were, however, retained in the area to work with aircraft in a final effort to locate and identify as many bodies as possible. At 1825 King on the night of 7 August a search and reconnaissance plane reported fifty yellow and

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gray rafts between Latitude 11°25'N, Longitude 135°52'E, and Latitude 11°55'N, Longitude 136°04'E, which one of the searching DE's was ordered to investigate with air cover at daylight on 8 August. The SOPA was given authority to have both DE's leave the search area if he considered further search futile. Both DE's accordingly proceeded to investigate the new area which after careful search throughout the day of 8 August revealed nothing except orange boxes and other wreckage. The search in the former rescue area was not resumed thereafter.

10. When the tragic situation of U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS personnel became known, the problem of immediate rescue of survivors inspired the personnel of all participating air, surface and shore units to their utmost exertion. Through their efforts, and many individual and collective acts of heroism, it is believed that all personnel it was possible to rescue, were rescued; and that those whose privilege it was to perform rescue and other services for U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS personnel are deserving of the highest commendation.

M. A. Anderson
M. A. ANDERSON,
By direction.

Copy to:

BuPers (1)
Senior Surviving Officer,
U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS. (1)
ComPhilSeaFron (1)
ComFairwing 18 (1)
CTU 94.11 (1)
CTU 94.6.2 (1)
CTU 94.6.1 (1)
AtCom Ulithi (1)
CO, VPB-23 (1)
CO, VPB-152 (1)
IsCom Peloliu (1)
ComMarianas Legal Unit (6)