

C O P Y

File No. Pl/L11-1
Serial No. 00699
30/ech

Return Address:
Navy #3254
%Flt Post Office
San Fran., Calif.

COMMANDER WESTERN CAROLINES SUB AREA

11 August 1945

S E C R E T

From: Commander Western Carolines Sub Area.
To: Island Commander, Peleliu.

Subject: Identification and Disposal of Bodies and Personal Effects found on Bodies by U. S. Naval Vessels Engaging in Search for Survivors from U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35).

- Reference:
- (a) ComWesCarSubArea Secret Dispatch 040720/August 1945.
 - (b) ComWesCarSubArea Sec. Ltr. Ser. 00697 of 3 Aug. 1945.
 - (c) CO, USS MADISON (DD 425) Conf. Ser. 034 of 6 Aug. 1945.
 - (d) CO, USS HELM (DD 388) Conf. Ser. 0195 of 6 Aug. 1945.
 - (e) CO, USS RALPH TALBOT (DD 390) Conf. Ser. 078 of 6 Aug. 1945.
 - (f) CO, USS ALVIN C. COCKRELL (DE 366) Sec. Ser. 0012-45 of 8 August 1945.
 - (g) CO, USS CECIL J. DOYLE (DE 368) Sec. Ser. 0062 of 9 Aug. 45.
 - (h) CO, USS FRENCH (DE 367) Sec. Ser. 005 of 9 Aug. 1945.

- Enclosure:
- (A) Report of identification of three (3) bodies recovered - addressed to the CO, USS INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35) by CO, USS MADISON (DD 425) Conf. Ser. 036 of 7 August 1945. Copy thereof included as enclosure (D) to reference (c).
 - (B) Copy of reference (d) with twenty-eight (28) envelopes containing identification data submitted by USS HELM (DD 388). Enclosures (A) and (B) to reference (d) not included.
 - (C) Copy of reference (e) without enclosures.
 - (D) Enclosure (B) of reference (f) - seven envelopes containing all identification of bodies disposed of by USS ALVIN C. COCKRELL (DE 366) on 4 August 1945.
 - (E) Enclosure (B) of reference (g) and twenty-one (21) envelopes containing identification data.
 - (F) Enclosure (E) of reference (h) - List of bodies found by USS FRENCH (DE 367) and twenty-nine (29) envelopes containing identification data.

1. In reference (a) Commander Western Carolines Sub Area directed the following vessels, which participated in the search for survivors from U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35), to recover and bury at sea all dead bodies in the area searched, and to make every effort to identify them, obtaining finger prints where possible.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| U.S.S. MADISON (DD 425) | U.S.S. FRENCH (DE 367) |
| U.S.S. RALPH TALBOT (DD 390) | U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE (DE 368) |
| U.S.S. HELM (DD 388) | U.S.S. DUFILHO (DE 423) |
| U.S.S. AYLWIN (DD 355) | U.S.S. RINGNESS (APD 100) |
| U.S.S. COCKRELL (DE 366) | U.S.S. REGISTER (APD 92) |
| | U.S.S. BASSETT (APD 73) |

C O P Y

ENCLOSURE (R)

C O P Y

File No. P1/L11-1
Serial No. 00699
30/cch

S E C R E T

11 August 1945

Subject: Identification and Disposal of Bodies and Personal Effects
found on Bodies by U. S. Naval Vessels Engaging in Search
for Survivors from U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35).

2. In reference (b) Island Commander, Peleliu, was directed by
Commander Western Carolines Sub Area to provide for the immediate hospitaliza-
tion of U. S. S. INDIANAPOLIS survivors and to comply with existing directives
regarding the submission of casualty and interrogation reports for personnel
from that vessel.

3. In accordance with reference (b), enclosures (A) to (F) in-
clusive are forwarded herewith for information and for disposition in accord-
ance with existing directives. This data applies only to bodies recovered
and includes all identification information submitted by vessels participating
in search, except U.S.S. AYLWIN (DD 355), U.S.S. DUFILHO (DE 423), U.S.S.
RINGNESS (APD 100), and U.S.S. REGISTER (APD 92), and U.S.S. BASSETT (APD 73),
from which vessels no reports have been received to date.

4. No identification data or medical forms were received by this
office from U.S.S. MADISON, which recovered three (3) bodies - see enclosure
(A). As will be noted from enclosure (B), identification data is submitted
for 28 bodies recovered by U.S.S. HELM (DD 388). It will be noted from en-
closure (C) that U.S.S. RALPH TALBOT (DD 390), recovered no bodies. U.S.S.
ALVIN C. COCKRELL (DE 366) submitted identification data on seven (7) bodies,
as per enclosure (D). U.S.S. CECIL J. DOYLE (DE 368), and U.S.S. FRENCH
(DE 367) recovered and submitted identification data on 21 and 29 bodies, re-
spectively, as indicated in enclosures (E) and (F). A total of 88 bodies were
recovered by vessels which have reported to date to Commander Western Carolines
Sub Area.

5. Such personal effects as were found on bodies and which are of
use for identification or other purposes, are forwarded with above enclosures.

M. A. ANDERSON,
By direction.

Copy (without enclosures) to:

BuPers
CO, USS INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35)
CinCPac Adv Hq
ComMarianas
ComPhilSeaFron
Personal Effects Distribution Center,
Farragut, Idaho.

C O P Y

File No. PL/L11-1
Serial No. P-00700
30/cch

Return Address:
Navy #3254
% Flt Post Office
San Fran., Calif.

COMMANDER WESTERN CAROLINES SUB AREA

S E C R E T

13 August 1945

From: Commander Western Carolines Sub Area.
To : Island Commander, Peleliu.
Subject: Identification and Disposal of Bodies and Personal Effects
found on Bodies by U. S. Naval Vessels Engaging in Search
for Survivors from U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35).
Reference: (a) ComWesCarSubArea Sec. Ser. 00699 of 11 Aug. 1945.
(b) CO, USS AYLWIN (DD 355) Conf. Ser. 039 of 6 Aug. 1945.
Enclosure: (A) Copy of Ref.(b) and Encl. (A), (B), and (C) submitted
therewith.

1. Enclosure (A) containing identification data for three (3) bodies recovered by U.S.S. AYLWIN (DD 355) on 4 August 1945 is forwarded herewith for disposition in accordance with existing directives.

2. Attention is directed to reference (a) which, with enclosures, furnished information on eighty-eight (88) other bodies recovered by searching vessels.

/s/ M. A. ANDERSON,
M. A. ANDERSON,
By direction.

Copy (without enclosures) to:
BuPers
CO, USS INDIANAPOLIS (CA 35)
CinCPac Adv Hq
ComMarianas
ComPhilSeaFron
Personal Effects Distribution Center,
Farragut, Idaho.

C O P Y

C O P Y

U.S.S. AYLWIN (DD355)

6 August 1945.

DD355/Pl/P6
Serial 039

CONFIDENTIAL

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commander Western Carolines Sub Area.
Subject: Bodies investigated by U.S.S. AYLWIN - Identification of.
Reference: (a) Commander Western Carolines Sub Area secret dispatch
of 4 August, 1945.
Enclosure: (A) Death certificate, burial certificate, and identi-
fication data on RUSSELL, William Bruce, [REDACTED].
(B) Death certificate, burial certificate, and identi-
fication data on SCHEIB, Eddie.
(C) Death certificate, burial certificate, and identi-
fication data on person unknown.

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (A) to (C)
are forwarded herewith covering bodies investigated and buried by this
vessel on 4 August, 1945.

K. F. NEUPERT.

Copy to:
BuPers
Senior Surviving Officer
U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS.
C.T.U. 94.6.2.

C O P Y

Enclosure (A)

6 August 1945

Questions asked by Correspondents of Lieut. (jg) W.G.Gwinn, USNR., Lieut. R.A.Marks, USNR., and Lt.Commander G.C.Atteberry.

Questioning and narrative of Lt.(jg) Gwinn:

Q: Was you the first person to sight the survivors?

A: Yes I was.

Q: Will you describe how it happened?

A: I took off at 0910 on my regular sector search, carrying a crew of five men. While flying at 3000 feet I noticed an oil slick on the water, and went down to 900', following the oil slick to a group of survivors in the water. We estimated the first group seen as totaling about 30.

Q: How long did it take you to reach the first group of survivors, by following the oil slick?

A: The oil slick covered a radius of about 30 miles.

Q: What time did you spot the oil slick?

A: We spotted the survivors at 11:18 and got dispatch off at 11:25.

Q: Could you see the survivors waving?

A: Yes, very easily. At 900' we could see them waving.

From that time on until about 12:45, we investigated the whole area, finding up to 150 personnel in the water. We dropped emergency rations and equipment.

Q: Did you drop the equipment to the first groups of to ~~another~~ group?

A: We dropped them to the men who seemed to be swimming free of any rafts.

Q: Were the first 30 you spotted on a raft?

A: They were hanging on the side of a raft.

Q: What was your first impression when you saw these first survivors?

A: I don't know - it was a funny feeling. The oil slick was large, seemir to indicate a large vessel having been sunk, but I didn't know of any larg craft being lost or going down, and didn't know just what kind of a vessel it was.

Q: Was there any doubt in your mind as their being our people?

A: No.

- 2 -

Q: What information was in the message that you sent back?

A: 30 survivors sighted - position - send assistance.

Q: What was the position?

A: About 280 miles north.

Q: After 12:45 what happened?

A: After that we circled surfaced survivors until first assistance came, which was at 14:15. First plane to the scene was a Ventura piloted by Lt. Commander George C. Atteberry.

Q: Were there any PBV's there at the same time as Commander Atteberry?

A: Lt. Marks arrived shortly afterwards in a PBV.

Q: Your job was to stay around the survivors until rescue came?

A: Yes, the idea was to have someone there at all times.

Q: Did they wave when you went over?

A: Yes, they hit the water with their hands, so that they could easily be seen clearly. They were pretty well covered with oil and difficult to see otherwise.

Q: Did you go back to the scene at any time?

A: I was scheduled to go back, but didn't have the the aircraft available. I went back on the 4th, but didn't pick up any more survivors.

Q: The first word they had from you was at 12:05 is that right?

A: Transmission went on the air at 11:25 and another one at 12:45. Both messages were "Rogered".

* Commander Atteberry explained that it takes considerable time to decode and process these messages through the regular communications center, and therefore they had decoded the message themselves and had taken action immediately as they deemed necessary.

Q: What time did you get to the area?

A: At 12:15 and Gwinn left immediately.

-3-

Questioning and narrative of Lt. Marks:

Q: Were you in the stand-by plane at the field?

A: The stand-by plane was already out on another strike - I happened to be around at the time is all.

Q: Were you on duty?

A: Yes, I was on duty. As soon as Commander Atteberry got the message, he saved several minutes by by-passing the official word and saving time in getting out. First word that we had was a PV circling a life raft. I presumed that a plane had been ditched and I took off at 12:42. Commander Atteberry took off about a minute after I did, but his plane was capable of greater speed and he arrived at the scene ahead of myself. I was to go up and relieve the PV on station and keep the survivors in sight, and drop emergency equipment.

Q: What kind of plane did you have?

A: PBV - amphibious aircraft.

Q: You got there at what time?

A: After take off at, 14:10 I received second message from the PV about the report of 150 survivors - I at first thought the message was garbled up, but thought it would be a good idea to get to the scene as quickly as possible. At 15:03 I began picking up signals from the PV; at 15:50 I made visual contact with Commander Atteberry and established voice communication with him via voice radio. I sighted the survivors at once and the Commander advised me that there were a great number of survivors scattered around, and asked me not to drop any equipment until I was shown the whole area. Otherwise I might have dropped the whole lot to the first group, not realizing there were any more. So I followed him on a tour of the area and looked over the situation.

Q: How long did it take you to patrol this area?

A: About a half an hour. Scattered small groups were everywhere, without any help except life jackets, and I thought that they needed the assistance more than the ones on the rafts. I knew that no ship would be on the scene until midnight, so after looking the area over, at 16:05 I commenced dropping survival equipment with the end in view of getting assistance to the small groups who had nothing but life jackets.

Q: Did you have any extra survival equipment?

A: Yes, I dropped all extra equipment and also dropped all of my planes equipment, except one life raft, necessary for emergency.

Q: Did you make up your mind to go down at that time?

A: I figured that the only way we could save the single groups would be to land near them if possible.

-4-

At 16:25 I sent a message to the base advising of the number of survivors, asking for survival equipment, etc., about 16:30 I decided a landing would be necessary to gather in the single ones. This decision was based partly on the number of single survivors and the fact that they were bothered by sharks. We did observe bodies being eaten by sharks.

Q: At this time you did not know how long they had been in the water?

A: No. So accordingly, at 16:30 I notified Commander Atteberry that I was going to attempt an open sea landing. I made all necessary preparations for landing.

Q: Was this your first open sea landing?

A: Yes - an area for landing was selected with the purpose of picking up the most survivors and Commander Atteberry was to fly above me to assist in this. At 17:05 a power stall was made into the wind. The wind was due North, swells about 12 feet high. The plane landed in three bounces, the first bounce being about 15 feet high.

Commander Atteberry explained here how dangerous it is to make an open sea landing in this kind of a plane.

Immediately after landing a survey of damage done to the plane exposed rivets pulled loose and some seams ripped open. My plane captain and navigator effected emergency repairs, plugging rivet holes with pencils and stuffing the seams with cotton. The radio compartment took on water slowly and would have to be bailed out during the night - 10 to 12 buckets of water per hour. The hull of the ship survived very well. While the Navigator was inspecting the damage, my Co-Pilot went aft to organize the rescue party. We proceeded to locate survivors, the single ones, being aided by Commander Atteberry advising me via voice radio just where to go. It was very difficult to see good because of the high swells and without a doubt we would have missed many if it hadn't of been for Commander Atteberry directing our actions. We tried to bring the survivors close to the port side and throw a life raft to them. Considerable difficulty was had because of the speed of the plane taxiing and the survivors were dragged through the water. We had to cut the planes motors quite a few times and considerable time was lost in starting and stopping. We got better at picking the people up as time went by. We had the ladder out and I had a man on the ladder to grab any men who drifted by. The survivors could not help themselves very much, as most of them were weakened terribly and could not grab the ladder and climb up by themselves. Further difficulties were caused by the fact that the men were burned and every time we grabbed them it caused extreme pain. Some of the had broken arms, legs, etc., and extreme care had to be used in handling them. Every effort was made to pick up the single ones, and it was necessary to avoid passing near the ones on life rafts because they would jump on the plane. Between the time of our landing and darkness, we picked up over 30 single survivors, most of them were in critical condition and would probably not have survived the night. Men brought aboard were issued water and given limited first aid treatment by our first aid group. Just before ~~total~~ darkness we headed for group of men on life rafts, which had been dropped to them. We were told later by the Doctor from the

- 5 -

Indianapolis that it was very fortunate that we had headed for this particular group of survivors, as they were the ones who were in the worst shape, and had been put on life rafts by the Doctor because of their serious condition. We brought the plane alongside of the rafts and took the men aboard. They were put on the wing and issued water and covered by parachutes. There were about 25 men on the wing. During the process of bringing the men up on the wing, the fabric was broken in many places. After dark, several shouts for help were heard near by and my radioman and another crew man volunteered to go out in a rubber boat to pick them up. I wished them good luck and they cast off. It wasn't long until they were back with two additional men. It was very difficult for them to locate the plane after they had shoved off because of the fact that the auxiliary unit had gone out and we had no lights on the plane. We did have some carbide lights that worked to a good advantage. About 23:15 we sighted the search light of the Destroyer Escort Doyle. There was a plane circling us at the same time dropping parachute flares near us so that the Doyle could locate us. We tossed the carbide lights out to help location. The ship came up to us immediately upon arriving on the scene, which was about 0015. They dispatched a motor whale boat with a Doctor and first aid party and commenced transferring survivors. From 0045 to 0330 this transfer in progress. Due to the heavy swells, the process was difficult. A number of cases were stretcher cases and most of them were only able to stand with assistance. The men from the Doyle displayed high skill and seamanship in the entire job. We counted 56 survivors in all who were transferred to the Doyle. In order to execute the transfer of the survivors, it was necessary for the Doyle's boat to lay next to the plane, and the boat did considerable damage to the plane. I inspected the plane and decided that a take off was extremely hazardous and was not justified. I requested that all salvageable gear be removed and ordered that the aircraft be destroyed. At 0600 the crew and myself were picked up and at 0800 the plane was destroyed by 40mm gun fire from the Doyle.

Q: Who was it that first identified and advised the base that the survivors were from the Indianapolis?

A: I think the Doyle sent the first message. I was too busy to code a message of this nature.

Q: This word did not get back here until Friday morning then?

A: That is right.

Q: Did you get much time to talk to the men?

A: Yes, we talked to a large number of them.

Q: What was their first reaction?

A: Their first one was to ask for water. Every man in the wafer would be yelling for water as we went past them. The details of the ship's sinking were varied, because the men were off their head and gave various stories

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-6-

such as: An LCI had picked up 30 men on the day after the sinking and had left the rest of them: A PBV had landed and picked up several men, and then took off without offering any assistance at all to the rest of the survivors. Such stories as these were listened to all night long.

Q: Were there any deaths on your plane?

A: No, all of the survivors on my plane survived. I think two of them died since, but at the time we put into port with the DE they were all living.

Q: Were you pretty crowded on the DE coming back?

A: The crew had to give up their quarters, but they were pretty well organized. It was very fortunate that the Doyle carried a Doctor - most DE's do not, but he surely saved a lot of lives by being aboard.

Q: The Doyle had other survivors besides yours didn't she?

A: Yes, she picked up over 30 more - I don't know the exact number.

Q: Did you see many dead in the water as you patrolled around?

A: We saw some dead in life jackets - most of them that died had slipped their life jackets and sunk. We were only looking for live ones of course.

Q: Was this when you saw the sharks?

A: Yes, we saw them when we first arrived.

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Authority NND 917001

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UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
COMMANDER MARIANAS

SECRET

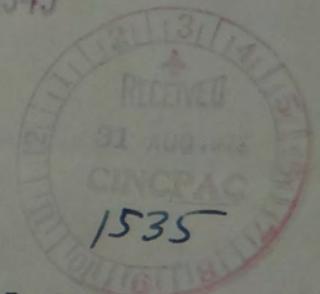
H2-10/FF12/11-pac
Serial: **002659**

A43/02

31 AUG 1945

SECRET

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on:
ComWesCarSubArea file
P1/L11-1 Secret Serial
P-00701 dated
15 August 1945.



From: Commander Marianas.
To: Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.
Via: Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific
Ocean Areas, Advance Headquarters.
Subject: Rescue and Search for Survivors of USS INDIANAPOLIS
(CA 35) and Recovery, Identification and Burial of Bodies.
1. Forwarded.

A. N. McGeoch, Jr.
A. N. McGEACH, JR.
By direction

Copy to:
ComWesCarSubArea

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 917001

Cincpac File

A4-3/VV

Serial: 006601

Reg. No. om 56976
S. No. 9 538

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
AND PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS
HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

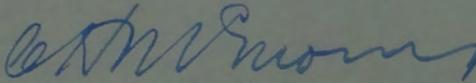
8 SEP 1945

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Second Endorsement to:
ComWesCarSubArea file
PL/ILL-1 Secret Serial
P-00701 dated
15 August 1945.

From: Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet and
Pacific Ocean Areas.
To: Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.
Subject: Rescue and Search for Survivors of U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS
(CA 35) and Recovery, Identification and Burial of
Bodies.

1. Forwarded.



C. H. McMORRIS
Chief of Staff

Copy to:
ComMarianas
ComWesCarSubArea

1945 SEP 13
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