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THE BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

AUGUST 9, 1942

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STRATEGICAL AND TACTICAL ANALYSIS

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OF

SAVO ISLAND

AUGUST 9th, 1942

STRATEGICAL

AND

TACTICAL ANALYSIS

Prepared By

Department of Analysis

Naval War College

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FOREWORD

This analysis of the Battle of Savo Island was prepared by the Naval War College. It is based on information from both Allied and Japanese sources which is wider and more complete than that available to writers on this subject up to this time. It endeavors to maintain, at all times, the viewpoint of the Commanders of the units involved on both sides.

Complete information from all sources was not available to this analysis. This was especially true concerning Japanese information. Unfortunately, sufficient translators were not available to provide all of the additional translations which the progress of the analysis indicated were desirable. New facts and circumstances, therefore, may come to light, from time to time, which may change some of the analyses produced herein.

In view of the critical nature of this analysis an effort has been made in certain important situations to place the critic in the position of the Commander in order to obtain the latter's point of view. In employing this system it is realized that although the critic can often succeed in placing himself sufficiently near the position of the Commander for any practical purposes, in many instances he may not succeed in doing so.

Because of the nature of this Allied defeat and the numerous controversies which have arisen concerning it, a complete background has been provided. In addition, when the time comes to analyze the other battles in the struggle for Guadalcanal, this material will be available.

The Battle of Savo Island was a real test of existing Allied and Japanese night tactical concepts as well as of the combat ability in night action of the various Commanders on both sides. The pages of history have invariably revealed defects in command in similar situations, and it would have been surprising had such defects not appeared in this action.

As a result of battle lessons learned, and as quickly applied, the ability of the Navy to conduct warfare steadily improved during the course of the war. As time went on the lesson so often forgotten -- that the test of battle is the only test which proves the combat ability of Commanders -- was relearned. The ability or the lack of ability of the various Commanders in the art of war became apparent. Valor alone was shown to be insufficient, for valor is not an attribute of only one race, but is an attribute and a heritage of many races. The indispensable qualification for command, the art of war, was shown to be the ability in combat to apply the science of war to active military situations.

The present senior officers of the Navy are well aware of the reasons for changes in established doctrines and in the development of new ones. But this cannot necessarily be said of the Commanders of the future, who very probably will be inexperienced in command in war.

Finally, all comments and criticisms are designed to be constructive. By indicating what appear to be sound and unsound decisions, and the apparent reasons for arriving at them, it is hoped to provoke earnest thought among prospective commanders and thus to improve professional judgment in command.

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ALL TIMES IN THIS ANALYSIS, EXCEPT DISPATCH TIMES

ARE ZONE TIME (- 11)

DISPATCH TIMES ARE GREENWICH CIVIL TIME

PRINCIPAL COMMANDERS

American

Commander Screening Group, CTG 62.6	Rear Admiral V.A.C. Crutchley, RN
Commander AUSTRALIA (CHICAGO) Group	Captain Howard D. Bode, USN
Commander VINCENNES Group	Captain Frederick Reifkohl, USN
Commander SAN JUAN Group, CTG 62.4	Rear Admiral Norman Scott, USN

**

Commander Amphibious Force, CTF 61.2 or CTF 62	Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner, USN
Commander Allied Expeditionary Force, CTF 61; also CTG 61.1.1	Vice Admiral Frank J. Fletcher, USN
Commander Aircraft South Pacific Force (COMAIRSOPAC), CTF 63	Rear Admiral John S. McCain, USN
Commander Southern Pacific Area (COMSOPAC) and Commander Southern Pacific Naval Forces (COMSOPACFOR)	Vice Admiral Robert Ghormley, USN
Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CINCPAC) and Pacific Ocean Areas (CINCPOA)	Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN

***

Commander Allied Air Forces Southwest Pacific Area (COMAIRSOWESPAC)	Major General George C. Kenny, (Air Corps) USA

Commanding General South Pacific Area (COMGENSOPAC)	Major General Millard F. Harmon, (Air Corps) USA
Commander Allied Naval Forces Pacific Area (COMNAVSOWESPAC)	Vice Admiral Fairfax Leary, USN
Supreme Commander Southwest Pacific Area (COMSOWESPAC)	General Douglas McArthur, USA

Japanese

Commander Cruiser Force	Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, IJN
Commander Cruiser Division SIX	Rear Admiral Aritomo Goto, IJN
Commander Cruiser Division EIGHTEEN	Rear Admiral Mitsuharu Matsuyama, IJN
Commander 25th Air Flotilla	Rear Admiral Sadayoshi Yamada, IJN
Commander Southeast Area, Commander 11th Air Fleet and Commander Outer South Seas Force	Vice Admiral Nishizo Tsukuhara, IJN
Commander in Chief, Combined Fleet	Admiral Isoruku Yamamoto, IJN

INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Savo Island is an action of singular interest to students of naval history for several reasons: It was the first occasion in which Japanese and Allied naval forces had engaged in night battle since the Allies had assumed the offensive; it was a serious tactical defeat to the Allied forces, and finally it was a classic example of a powerful night raid by surface forces with the attendant features of surprise and withdrawal. During the early operations of 1942 Japanese and Allied surface forces had clashed in several minor night actions but no night surface actions had occurred between cruiser forces of approximately equal strength.

This battle resulted from the seizure by the Allies of the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area of the lower Solomon Islands in order to protect the Allied lines of communications to Australia and New Zealand. These lines were being menaced by the expansion of the Japanese in that direction.*

In order to check this expansion and to contain the Japanese within the already occupied area, limited countering moves had been undertaken by the Allies. In the Battle of the Coral Sea, May 7th, the Allies had prevented entirely by carrier air action, the capture of Port Moresby by sea. In the Battle of Midway, June 3rd-6th, the Allies had inflicted, almost entirely by air action, such losses on the Japanese in aircraft carriers as to force the abandonment by them of planned advances into New Caledonia and the Fijis. However, within the Solomon Islands, the Japanese had continued to advance.**

On May 2nd they had overrun the island of Tulagi where they were attacked by an Allied carrier task force on May 4th, just before the Battle of the Coral Sea. On July 4th they had commenced building an airfield at Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island. Actually, they were building this airfield, as well as others in the Solomon Islands chain, primarily for the protection of Rabaul which was to be one of the strong points of the Japanese southern perimeter.**

With the Allied seizure of Tulagi-Guadalcanal, the Japanese realized that failure to dislodge the Allies might seriously affect Japanese strategy in that area. They, therefore, put into force energetic counter-measures designed to dislodge the Allies from their precarious foothold. These counter-measures which began on August 7th were highlighted on the early morning of August 9th, by the night action known as the Battle of Savo Island.

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* U.S. Navy at War 1941-1945 Official Report by Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, USN, page 49.

** Campaigns of the Pacific War, USSBS 1946, page 105.

A BRIEF NARRATIVE OF THE BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

The directive of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued by COMINCH to CINCPAC on July 2nd, 1942, put into effect the Allied plan of denying the New Britain-New Guinea-New Ireland Area to the Japanese. This plan assembled an Allied force in the South Pacific area under COMSOPACFOR for the purpose of seizing, in its first phase, the Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi and adjacent positions.

The Allies planned the above operations with the utmost secrecy. However, the Japanese Commander in the area knew that the Allies were reconnoitering frequently the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, and that during August, the intensity of this reconnaissance had increased. He correctly assumed that the Allies would counterattack Japanese positions in the Solomons in the near future, though not as early as August 7th. However, he had not taken any special precautions, either of air search or of reinforcing outlying bases.

Meanwhile, COMSOPACFOR had organized an Expeditionary Force consisting of an Amphibious Force and an Air Support Force, the latter composed of three single carrier task groups, to seize Tulagi and Guadalcanal. This force was to be supported by land-based aircraft operating from islands in the SOPAC Area, as well as from SOWESPAC air bases.

The Allied Expeditionary Force successfully landed on Tulagi and Guadalcanal Island at daybreak on August 7th, having achieved complete surprise.

The Japanese immediately decided that it was necessary to drive the Allies out and employed their land-based air forces and their limited surface forces for this purpose. They conducted air attacks on the Allied transports and cargo ships at Guadalcanal during two successive days. On August 7th they launched two air attacks; on August 8th they launched one air attack. All of these attacks seriously interfered with the unloading operations but they were otherwise ineffective.

Meanwhile, on August 7th, the Japanese Commander at Rabaul decided to attack the Allied shipping at Guadalcanal with surface ships as well as with aircraft. He therefore assembled a cruiser force consisting of five heavy cruisers, the CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA and FURUTAKA; of two light cruisers, the TENRYU and YUBARI; and of one destroyer, the YUNAGI, and at 1628 dispatched it, commanded in person by himself, to the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area to destroy the Allied transports and cargo ships there. While this cruiser force was assembling off Rabaul, it was sighted at 1231 by Allied bombers from SOWESPAC. This contact report reached COMSOPAC at 2400.

As this cruiser force moved south toward Guadalcanal, it was first sighted at about 1930, August 7th by the Allied submarine S-38 stationed off Cape St. George, New Ireland. The submarine was forced to submerge.

Upon surfacing at about 2010 the submarine incorrectly reported the composition of the force as two small and three larger vessels. This report was received by COMSOPAC at 0738, August 8th.

Some three hours later or at 1025, August 8th, the cruiser force was sighted by an R.A.A.F. plane operating from Milne Bay, and was incorrectly reported as three heavy cruisers, two destroyers and two seaplane tenders or gunboats. Later on the same day, it was sighted at 1101 by another R.A.A.F. plane which reported it as two heavy or light cruisers and one unidentified vessel. The first report was received by COMSOPAC at 1845; the second report at 2136. The long delay in transmitting these reports denied COMSOPAC the opportunity of requesting an immediate attack by COMSOWESPAC planes. The Allied high command at Tulagi-Guadalcanal, incorrectly, decided that these ships were bound for Rekata Bay, there to set up an air base from which to bomb the Allied shipping in Iron Bottom Sound, commencing on August 9th.

Commencing at sunset each evening the transports and cargo ships of the Allied Amphibious Force were covered by a night screening disposition designed to meet Japanese surface ship attacks from all entrances to Iron Bottom Sound. The disposition was composed of an Eastern and Western Screening Group. The Western Screening Group which fought the Battle of Savo Island consisted of two anti-submarine and radar pickets, the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT, stationed west and north, respectively of Savo Island, and of two cruiser-destroyer support groups. One support group, the AUSTRALIA Group, consisting of the AUSTRALIA, CHICAGO, CANBERRA, PATTERSON and BAGLEY guarded the passage south of Savo Island; the other, the VINCENNES Group consisting of the VINCENNES, QUINCY, ASTORIA, HELM and WILSON guarded the passage northeast of Savo Island.

During the night of August 8th at about 2055, the Commander of the Western Screening Group, in the AUSTRALIA, left his group under the tactical command of the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO and stood into the Guadalcanal Area to attend a conference with Commander Amphibious Force and the Commanding General, First Marine Division.

At this conference which was held at 2325, August 8th, Commander Amphibious Force decided to retire his force the following morning, because the carrier Commander had decided to retire. This would leave the amphibious forces without air cover or air support.

However, as many necessary supplies had not been landed, the Commander Amphibious Force decided to unload as much of the supplies as was possible throughout the night, and an effort was made to accomplish this.

After this conference, the Commander Western Screening Group remained in the Guadalcanal Area with the AUSTRALIA, thus reducing the AUSTRALIA Group by one heavy cruiser.

The Japanese Cruiser Force entered Iron Bottom Sound at about 0132, August 9th, having passed the Allied destroyer BLUE without being discovered. At 0136 this force surprised the AUSTRALIA Group and aided by aircraft flares dropped by its own cruiser planes, opened fire with both guns and torpedoes. Within a matter of minutes, the CANBERRA had been heavily hit and was out of action (it was finally sunk by Allied destroyer torpedoes at 0800); the CHICAGO had been torpedoed in the bow and had had her speed considerably reduced; the BAGLEY had fired four torpedoes ineffectively, and the PATTERSON had broadcasted the contact before engaging the two Japanese light cruisers. The PATTERSON was lightly damaged in this action. None of the ships of the CHICAGO Group inflicted any important damage on the Japanese ships.

During this phase of the action the Japanese Cruiser Force broke up into three groups. One consisting of the CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO and KINUGASA continued on towards the VINCENNES Group at twenty-six knots. It caught the VINCENNES Group at 0150 by surprise, and, employing both guns and torpedoes, succeeded in heavily damaging the three cruisers of that group. In accomplishing this the CHOKAI Group passed under the stern of and along the starboard side of the VINCENNES Group. Another group, consisting of the TENRYU, YUBARI and FURUTAKA passed along the port side of the VINCENNES Group and employing guns and torpedoes increased the heavy damage caused by the first group. Both of these Japanese groups intermittently employed searchlights rather than star shells for illumination. As a result of the above damage, the QUINCY sank at 0238, the VINCENNES at 0250 and the ASTORIA at 1215. The third Japanese group consisting of the destroyer YUNAGI turned away from the cruiser action and ineffectively engaged in a gun battle with the retiring Allied destroyer, JARVIS. The JARVIS was sunk later in the day by air attack at about 1300, August 9th.

After this action, Commander Cruiser Force, because of a fear of Allied carrier-based planes, decided to retire rather than to remain for the purpose of destroying the Allied shipping at Tulagi and Guadalcanal. As he retired he engaged the Allied destroyer RALPH TALBOT with the TENRYU, YUBARI and FURUTAKA and seriously damaged her without receiving any commensurate damage in return.

The Japanese Cruiser Force, except for several hits, escaped from the entire action almost entirely unscathed. In its retirement, it succeeded in avoiding Allied search planes so that it received no damage from Allied air attacks. However, it was discovered by the Allied submarine, S-38, on August 10th as a result of which the KAKO was torpedoed and sunk.

The effects of this battle were serious insofar as the Allies were concerned. There was a shortage of heavy escort and bombardment ships in all sea areas and as the Allies were preparing to conduct the North African Invasion, as well as to conduct offensive operations in the Aleutians and to continue those already underway in the Solomons, the

loss of four heavy cruisers and one destroyer was immediately felt in all areas.

The Japanese on the other hand grossly exaggerated the Allied losses in surface ships and informed the world and the Japanese people by press and radio of their claims.

CHAPTER I

THE STRATEGIC AREA

(a) GENERAL DISCUSSION

The strategic area involved in the combat and support operations of the Solomon Islands offensive extended from the Equator southward to the Tropic of Capricorn and from the 180th Meridian westward to the coasts of Australia and New Guinea. This over-all area, besides being entirely tropical, was oceanic. The total land mass of the small islands east of Australia and New Guinea is no greater than the area of Celebes - or to use a more familiar example, no greater than the area of any one of the states of Washington, Missouri or Oklahoma.

The outstanding characteristic of this area is the chain of small islands extending from New Guinea to New Caledonia through the Bismarck Archipelago, the Solomon Islands, Santa Cruz Islands, New Hebrides and Loyalty Islands. These islands define the eastern boundary of the Coral Sea, including the Solomon Sea north of the Louisiade Archipelago. As a series of potential air and sea bases, they constitute a barrier to direct overseas communications between Australia and North America.

This strategic area was adaptable to limited offensive operations. On the one hand, the Japanese could slowly extend themselves deep into the South Pacific through the island chain to threaten the life-line from Australia and New Zealand to the United States. On the other hand, the Allies were provided with a route of advance toward Japanese strong points in the Western Pacific. They were also provided with an extremely advanced position from which to effect attrition upon the limited war potential of Japan. Consequently the strategic area became a theater of combat.

The strategic area was divided into two approximately equal areas by the boundary between the Southwest Pacific area and the South Pacific area along meridian 159 degrees East Longitude. This boundary passed through the middle of Santa Isabel Island in the Solomons, and passed about 35 miles west of Guadalcanal Island. Thus the Guadalcanal-Tulagi target area, wherein was fought the battle of Savo Island, lay wholly within the South Pacific area.

The threat of a large-scale overseas attack by the Japanese upon Australia and New Zealand through this area had been temporarily removed by the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942 and the Battle of Midway in June of that year. However, the Japanese had continued to advance slowly thereafter by piecemeal penetration overland southward along the coast of New Guinea and by sea southward through the Solomons.

The relative positions of the Japanese and the Allies within this strategic area in August 1942 provided the Japanese with the more favorable military situation. The Allied positions in the South Pacific Area

were but lightly held, and consisted chiefly of airfields under construction which had been hurried to a degree of readiness for limited use in the days just prior to August 7th, 1942. These airfields were located on New Caledonia, Efate, Espiritu Santo, and in the Fijis. The Japanese positions in the Bismarck Archipelago, with their principal advanced base at Rabaul, were firmly held. Their positions at Kavieng, Rabaul, Lae, Salamaua, and Buka were less firmly held and were being strengthened by a major effort in the development of airfields.* In improving these positions the Japanese had extended their occupation of New Guinea as far south as Buna; had occupied Florida Island in the Solomons; and had moved into the north-central shore of Guadalcanal Island on July 4th where they had immediately begun the construction of an airfield, harbor facilities, and other installations at Lunga Point.

It was apparent to the Allied High Command that the firm establishment of the Japanese at Tulagi on Florida Island and in airfields at Guadalcanal would seriously hamper, if not prevent, the Allies from establishing themselves in Espiritu Santo and Santa Cruz,** and that therefore the Japanese positions in the Solomons were a threat to vital links in the Allied communications. It was also apparent that the Allied positions relative to the Japanese were potentially less menacing.

The positions of the Japanese and the Allies, relative to the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area, are given below in air miles.

Maramasike Estuary, Malaita (A)***	90	miles
Rekata Bay, Santa Isabel (J)	120	"
Kieta, Bougainville (J)	340	"
Ndeni, Santa Cruz Islands (A)	365	"
Buka Island (J)	392	"
Rabaul, New Britain (J)	540	"
Milne Bay, New Guinea (A)	565	"
Espiritu Santo (A)	580	"
Kavieng, New Ireland (J)	665	"
Efate (A)	715	"
Port Moresby, New Guinea (A)	745	"
Plaines des Gaiac, New Caledonia (A)	790	"
Noumea, New Caledonia (A)	875	"
Townsville, Australia (A)	970	"
Nandi, Fiji Islands (A)	1155	"

There were no Allied harbors in the area suitably equipped to effect major repairs to damaged ships. The docking facilities at Pearl Harbor were about 4000 miles away via Fiji. At Sydney, which was about 2000 miles away from Savo Island via Noumea, there were repair facilities for

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* ComSoWesPac Dispatch 081018 which is Part Five of Dispatch 081012, July 1942.

** COMINCH Dispatch 102100, July 1942

*** (A) means Allied - (J) means Japanese

cruisers and smaller craft. In an emergency, smaller harbors in the area could be used for repairs, although they were not equipped with supporting activities or base facilities. In particular, these were Saint James Bay, Espiritu Santo Island, and Noumea, New Caledonia. The best harbor site in the Solomons was at Tulagi on Florida Island, but this position was exposed to enemy attack and was, prior to the landing on August 7th, in Japanese hands.

(b) THE TULAGI-GUADALCANAL AREA

The Battle of Savo Island was fought in the body of water lying between Guadalcanal and Florida Island which became known among Allied Forces as Iron Bottom Sound. This Sound is the southeastern extremity of the Slot (New Georgia Sound). The 100 fathom curves off Guadalcanal and Florida Islands are 20 miles apart at the western end of this Sound and close on each other to a distance of one mile to form the Sealark Channel at the eastern end of the Sound.

Savo Island lies between the western extremities of Florida and Guadalcanal Islands, and is an approximately round volcanic island with a diameter of four miles and with its highest peak at 1673 feet. The 100-fathom curve is nowhere more than 1200 yards distant from the shore of Savo Island, allowing unrestricted navigation close to its shores. Savo Island divides the western approaches to Iron Bottom Sound into two wide passages. The southerly passage between Savo Island and Cape Esperance on Guadalcanal is seven miles wide. The northerly passage between Savo and Florida Islands is about ten miles wide.

At its eastern end, Florida Island is thirteen miles north of Guadalcanal Island and numerous shoal patches and reefs lie within the 100-fathom curves of each island on either side of Sealark Channel. Through the foul ground off Florida Island runs the Nggela Channel. Through the shoals off Guadalcanal runs the Lengo Channel which is three or four miles wide with depths of eighteen to thirty fathoms.

Strong tide rips are caused by the numerous shoals and irregularities in the bottom between the eastern end of Florida and Guadalcanal Islands. The tidal currents set to the westward and to the eastward along the coasts of Florida and Guadalcanal Islands, following the trend of the coast line and attaining a velocity of two knots at springs.

The general depth of water in Iron Bottom Sound is 200 to 400 fathoms between Lunga Point on Guadalcanal and Tulagi Harbor. Tulagi Harbor is situated midway along the southern coast of Florida Island and is the principal port of the Solomon Islands. Westward of Tulagi Harbor there are no off-lying dangers, and the 100-fathom curve runs parallel with the coast about three miles offshore.

(c) WEATHER

In the Solomon Islands area there are two marked climatic seasons.

The northwest monsoon prevails from November to March. The southeast trade wind usually establishes itself by April and lasts until October. Winds are strongest during the season of the southeast trades, averaging 10-20mph. Average wind velocities are only rarely interrupted by the passage of a tropical cyclone.

It is hot throughout the year. Average monthly temperatures range from 81°(F) to 84°(F). Highest temperatures are recorded from November to April.

Throughout the year, average cloudiness amounts to about five tenths cloud cover. The cloudiest months are January, February and March. Apart from rare cyclones, other tropical depressions cause overcast skies of intermediate and high clouds. Lower type clouds prevail with local thunderstorms and rain squalls.

Thunderstorms normally occur over land during the afternoon and over the water in the early morning. Rain squalls may occur during any season of the year. Rainfall is abundant. The months of January, February and March are the wettest. At Lunga Point, Guadalcanal, the average rainfall for July is 2.70 inches. At Tulagi, average rainfall is slightly greater.

Fogs at sea level are unknown. Reduced visibility is due only to heavy downpours of rain, haze or low clouds. A particularly heavy rain squall may reduce visibility to 100 yards over a limited area. Haze is prevalent during the season of the southeast monsoon. It may render objects indistinct in visibility of 15-20 miles.*

On a cloudy night in Iron Bottom Sound, visibility has been observed to be extremely low. Rain squalls seem to form over Savo Island almost every night of the year, causing heavy rain about 2330 and clearing about 0200 as they drift slowly southeastward.** On the night of August 8th-9th, this type of bad weather did not clear up. This will be shown in the discussion of the battle itself.

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*All of the above is from War Department publication S30-677, Survey of the Solomon Islands, March 15, 1943, Confidential.

**CTF 62 personal letter to Captain R.C. Parker, USN(Ret), Office of Naval History, Navy Department, Washington, D.C. dated 1948.

CHAPTER II

JAPANESE ARRANGEMENTS

(a) JAPANESE COMMAND RELATIONS (Plate I)

All of the Japanese Fleets, including the Naval Air Fleets, excepting the China Seas Fleet, were under the Command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet. The Combined Fleet consisted of the mobile (mission) fleet which could operate anywhere in any area, and of the localized (area) fleets which were responsible for and restricted to certain geographical areas. The mobile fleet constituted the main striking force of the Combined Fleet. The area fleets were normally defensive in character and were generally unable to take any strong offensive action without assistance from the mobile fleet.* The mobile fleet consisted of the Main Body (First Division FIRST Fleet), the Advance Force (SECOND Fleet), and the Striking Force (THIRD Fleet).** The area fleets consisted of the Northern Force, later called Northeast Area Force (FIFTH Fleet) based at Horomushiro; the Inner South Seas Force (FOURTH Fleet) based at Truk, the Outer South Seas Force (EIGHTH Fleet) based at Rabaul and the Southwest Area Force (Combined Expeditionary Fleet) based at Surabaya.** In addition to the mobile fleet and the area fleets the Combined Fleet consisted of the Base Air Force (ELEVENTH Air Fleet) based on Tinian and the Advanced Expeditionary Force (SIXTH Fleet) which was composed of submarines and was based at Kwajalein.** All tactical titles employ the term "Force" (BUTAI) whereas all administrative titles employ the term "Fleet" with the single exception that the title "Combined Fleet" was both administrative and tactical (Plate I)***

Prior to July 14th, 1942 the South Seas Force was responsible for the defense of the entire Central and Southeastern Pacific Area, including the Marshalls, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. However, due to the increasing importance of the Central and Southeastern Pacific areas and to the fact that there was an ever-increasing threat of an attack on the Solomons by the Allies, the Japanese High Command decided to split the South Seas Area into two areas; one, an Outer South Seas Area, the other, an Inner South Seas Area. This split became effective on July 14th, 1942.****

The dividing line between the two areas thus formed was established as the line bearing 280°(T) from the juncture of the equator and Long.

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* Japanese Naval Organization, Change No. 11 to ONI 49, page 5.

** Enclosure, Submitted October 26th, 1945 by Rear Admiral K. Nakamura, IJN, in answer to USSBS Memorandum No. NAV-1, October 10th, 1945.

*** Japanese Naval Organization, Change No. 11 to ONI 49, page 33.

**** War Diary, 8th Fleet, August 7th, 1942, WDC Document 161259.

150°E. Commander Inner South Seas Force was assigned the responsibility for the defense of the area north of this line and Commander Outer South Seas Force for the defense of the area south of this line. In order to provide for unity of command, it was directed that in the event of an enemy attack in the above areas, the Commander ELEVENTH Air Fleet would, in case of necessity, exercise command over the FOURTH, SIXTH, and EIGHTH Fleets.*

Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa activated the EIGHTH Fleet on July 14th. On July 16th he hoisted his flag in the CHOKAI. On July 23rd he was assigned the CHOKAI and Cruiser Division SIX and became Commander Outer South Seas Force. On July 27th he formally assumed responsibility for the New Guinea and Solomon Islands operations.*

All land based air forces in this operation were naval and were assigned to the FIFTH Air Attack Force** (25th Air Flotilla), which was based at Rabaul and was a subdivision of the ELEVENTH Air Fleet. The Commander of this attack force retained operational control over his component units and cooperated with the Commander Outer South Seas Force. He remained at Rabaul to direct its activities. No Army air forces were assigned at this time.***

Vice Admiral Mikawa was in command of the Outer South Sea Force until about 1415, August 7th when he was relieved by Vice Admiral Nishizo Tsukahara, who was the Commander Base Air Force and the Commander ELEVENTH Air Fleet. The latter admiral acted as Commander Outer South Seas Force until the next day, August 8th, when he fleeted up to become Commander Southeast Area and Commander Southeast Area Force which included the Base Air Force, the Inner and Outer South Seas Forces, and a portion of the Advanced Expeditionary Force.*** In this latter capacity he was the Immediate-Superior-in-Command of Commander EIGHTH Fleet.

It therefore happened that at the time of the Allied landings on Guadalcanal and Tulagi on August 7th, Vice Admiral Mikawa was both Commander Outer South Seas Force and Commander EIGHTH Fleet.** After he had been relieved by Vice Admiral Tsukahara he had the primary responsibility of securing a victory with his surface force.

From the above, it is evident that, although the Japanese command structure had room for confusion, there was no confusion in command in the Battle of Savo Island. All forces engaged were naval forces, and all were under the direct command of naval officers in a clearly defined chain-of-command.

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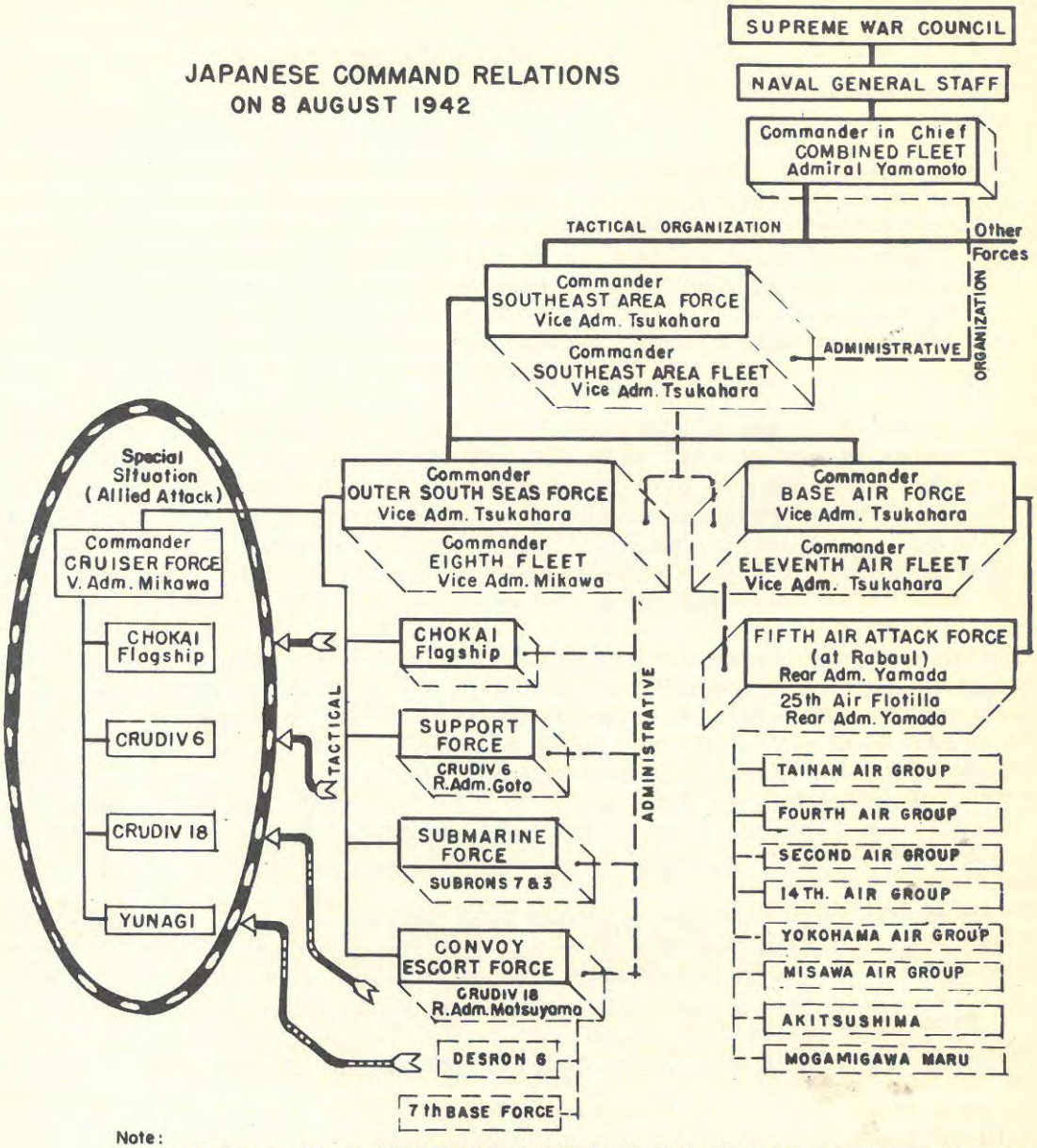
* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th, 1942, WDC Document 161259.
** Records 25th Air Flotilla, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947.
*** War Diary 25th Air Flotilla, August 1942, WDC Document 161730.



Note:

Except in the case of the Combined Fleet, which was both a Tactical and Administrative Command, the title of a Tactical Command was "FORCE" (BUTAI). The title of an Administrative Command was "FLEET".

Special Situation: If a strong Allied Force attacked, Commander Eleventh Air Fleet could, in case of necessity, assume the tactical command over the Eighth Fleet while the latter commander, as a tactical commander executed his tactical operations against the enemy.

On August 7th: Commander Eleventh Air Fleet relieved Commander Eighth Fleet of his operational functions and the latter, as Commander Cruiser Force, set out in person to command the cruiser attack which is known as the BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND.

On August 8th: Commander Eleventh Air Fleet became Commander Southeast Area Fleet and Commander Southeast Area Force. As such he was the immediate superior in command to Commander Outer South Seas Force and Commander Base Air Force. Since he already exercised the latter 2 commands, this insured unity of Command of both surface & air forces during the operations in the Solomons.

PLATE "I"

(b) INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO JAPANESE COMMANDER

Just prior to the Allied landing in the Solomons, Commander Outer South Seas Force had considerable general information concerning the strength of the Allied forces in the South Pacific area, and was generally aware of their capabilities.

He knew that there had been considerable Allied air and naval activity in the general area of the Coral Sea and that there was a possibility of an early engagement with a powerful enemy force.*

He was aware of the Allied construction of and build-up of bases in New Caledonia and New Hebrides. Interpreting this activity as a preparation for a counterattack upon Japanese advanced positions, he correctly assumed that the most likely area of Allied counterattack would be the southern Solomons.**

He knew that the Allied forces had reconnoitered the new base at Guadalcanal-Tulagi frequently by air and that the number of planes raiding that area had suddenly increased during August.***

Informed by his intelligence that a powerful Allied force had sortied from Hawaii on August 2nd, he suspected that this force together with other Allied forces already in the Southwest Pacific Area, would attempt to attack the Outer South Seas Area in the near future. He understood that this combined force would include three carriers (including converted carriers), and a number of cruisers.**** This Japanese intelligence was reasonably correct, except that the "powerful Allied force" had sortied from Fiji on August 1st rather than from Hawaii on August 2nd, and was at that date much closer to the Solomons than the Japanese expected.

Regardless of how powerful this Allied force, he believed that he might be able to intercept and destroy it by decoying it within range of his land-based naval air power.**** He felt that he might accomplish this even without carrier task force assistance from the Combined Fleet.**** This concept of destroying American surface forces by land-based planes was not new. The Japanese had held the same concept at the Battle of Midway when they endeavored to lure the American carrier force within

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* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th 1942, WDC Document 161259.

** War Diary 5th Air Attack Force, August 1942, WDC Document 161730, and CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947, page 2.

*** Southeast Area Naval Operations, Part I, Document 40427, page 10, Historical Division, U.S. Army, July 31st, 1947.

**** War Diary 5th Air Attack Force, August 1942, WDC Document 161730 and Commander 8th Fleet Estimate of Situation, August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 73845, May 7th, 1947, page 1.

range of Japanese land-based air power at Wake. It showed a confidence that their land-based air power was more effective than American carrier-based air power -- a confidence that was not borne out throughout the war.

He knew that the enemy had recently assembled great air strength in the New Hebrides area and he considered that the enemy was planning to invest Guadalcanal before the Japanese air strength moved up.*

In anticipation of this latter possibility, he had recommended, in his capacity of Commander EIGHTH Fleet, that a planned withdrawal of a cruiser division from Rabaul to Truk be modified, and that it should be sent to Kavieng or to Queen Carola Harbor.* This action was taken, and CRUDIV SIX was held in the Kavieng Area as a support force of the Outer South Seas Force.**

He knew that larger numbers of enemy submarines were beginning to infest the waters of the Japanese Southeast Area, necessitating the diversion of additional escort forces to this area. He considered it probable that this enemy submarine activity would become increasingly intense.*

He knew that CINCPAC was in the Hawaiian Area and that COMSOWESPAC was located in Brisbane. There is, however, no indication that he was aware of the formation of SOPAC which was soon to undertake and direct an assault in the Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area.***

Finally, it is highly probable, in view of his visit to Truk (July 25th-26th) and his discussion there with the CinC Combined Fleet concerning the operations in the Outer South Seas Area,* that he was familiar with and generally concurred with the Imperial Headquarters' opinion that from the extent of enemy preparations particularly in carriers, that any enemy counterattack would probably be no more than a reconnaissance landing.****

(c) JAPANESE LAND AND TENDER-BASED AIRCRAFT

All Japanese aircraft employed in the operations in the Solomons, incident to the Battle of Savo Island, were naval aircraft of the 25th Air Flotilla. The Commander of this air flotilla, with headquarters at Rabaul, was directing activities of the FIFTH Air Attack Force, Base Air

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* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 1942, WDC Document 161259.

** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

*** War Diary 5th Air Attack Force, August 1942, WDC Document 161730.

**** Southeast Area Naval Operations, Part I, Document 40427, page 10, Historical Division, U.S. Army, July 31st, 1947.

Force.* The 25th Air Flotilla constituted that part of the Base Air Force which was located in the Southeast Area. Its composition on August 6th is shown in Table 1, and totalled 113 planes of various types. The units involved in this organization were the TAINAN Air Group, the SECOND Air Group, the YOKOHAMA Air Group, the FOURTEENTH Air Group, and the FOURTH Air Group.* Two special duty units (surface ships capable of serving as tenders for reconnaissance and fighter seaplanes) were attached to the 25th Air Flotilla. These were the seaplane carrier AKITSUSHIMA, Special Duty Unit ONE, and the aircraft transport MOGAMIGAWA MARU, Special Duty Unit TWO.* On August 7th and 8th, the 25th Air Flotilla was expanded by the addition of planes of the MISAWA Air Group.**

The land-based planes of this flotilla, as yet unequipped with radar, were disposed between the Vunakanau and Lukanai Airdromes at Rabaul. The seaplanes were disposed at both Rabaul and Tulagi. The Tulagi planes were stationed there to protect the Guadalcanal Air Base while it was under construction.**

Additional airfields throughout the Solomons were needed by the Japanese; and for the purpose of building them Naval Construction Battalions were placed under the command of the Base Air Force.** Two airfields had been rushed to completion, the Guadalcanal Air Base which was finished on August 6th and an airfield at Buka Passage, which was ready to operate as a base on August 8th. Neither of these two air bases had been assigned air groups at the time of the Battle of Savo Island. The Commander ELEVENTH Air Fleet and Commander 25th Air Flotilla had dissuaded Commander Outer South Seas Force from his desire to move up land attack units immediately on completion of the Guadalcanal Air Base for the reason that there was inadequate air strength, as yet, at Rabaul to permit such disposition.***

Until land air bases were available, suitable harbors for basing patrol and fighter seaplanes were needed. The Japanese had selected harbors for seaplane bases at Faisi, Shortland Island, Buka Passage, Gizo Island, Kieta (Bougainville Island), and at Rekata Bay (Santa Isabel Island). No air activity was noted in these harbors by COMSOWESPAC air reconnaissance on August 5th, 6th, 7th, or 8th.

The employment of Navy land-based aircraft, rather than Army aircraft, in the Southeast Area was in accordance with Japanese practice. It was necessary, in part, because Japanese Army air groups were not trained in the conduct of Joint Operations with naval air forces.****

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* Strength and Disposition of 25th Air Flotilla on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947, and War Diary of 25th Air Flotilla, August 1st-31st, 1942, WDC Document 161730.

** Records 25th Air Flotilla, Item 21D, Section 3, June 25th to August 6th, 1942, WDC Document 160155.

*** Southeast Area Naval Operations, Part I, Document 40427, page 10, Historical Division, U.S. Army, July 31st, 1947.

**** Japanese answers to USSBS Military Division Questionnaire #1.

Since the commencement of the war, naval aircraft had been highly successful in spear-heading Japanese naval attacks. The Japanese now expected their naval aircraft to be equally successful in the Solomon operations.*

(d) JAPANESE SEARCH AND RECONNAISSANCE

The Japanese did not detect the Allied Expeditionary Force as it was advancing northward along the meridan of 159° E. Longitude toward Tulagi and Guadalcanal on August 5th and August 6th. No searches through the Solomons sector were flown on those two days from Rabaul, reportedly because of bad weather.** COMCRUDIV SIX reported that weather also prevented the Japanese reconnaissance seaplanes based at Tulagi from locating the Allied Force.*** There is reason to believe this statement since the area the Allied Force traversed in its approach to the objective was not searched by the Allied B-17s either on August 5th and August 6th.**** (The movement of the Allied Force is shown on Diagram "B" and passed through SOPAC Search Sector I). However, weather did not prevent the Allied carriers in the Air Support Force from conducting routine local security patrols during the approach on those same two days.*****

The Japanese were caught by complete surprise on August 7th by the Allied Expeditionary Force, even though the High Command had directed their units in the South Pacific on August 5th to exercise strict caution.****** Although he had been advised by his air commanders that his air strength at Rabaul was inadequate,** he nevertheless gave considerably less attention to the Solomons sector than he did to the New Guinea sector. This resulted in inadequate searches in the Solomons sector prior to the Allied landing on August 7th.

The land attack planes at Rabaul were heavily engaged in almost daily bombing attacks on the Allied air bases at Port Moresby. Additionally, Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force was employing a few land attack planes for reconnaissance in connection with the New Guinea offensive operations******* and for reconnaissance flights to locate possible base sites in

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* War Diary, 8th Fleet, August 1942, WDC Document 161259.

** Southeast Area Naval Operations, Part I, Document 40427, page 10, Historical Division, U.S. Army, July 31st, 1947.

*** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

**** War Diary COMAIRSOPAC (CTF 63), August 1942.

***** War Diary SARATOGA, August 1942.

****** War Diary 1, "A Brief History of World War II(B) No. 1 December 1941 to March 1943", page 12, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. ATIS Document WW 16268.

******* Records 25th Air Flotilla, Group 21, Item 21D, Section 3, June 25th to August 6th, 1942, WDC Document 160155.

the Louisiades and D'Entrecastraux Islands.* He relied largely on the seaplanes of the YOKOHAMA Air Group, based at Rabaul and Tulagi, for reconnaissance of the Solomons sector and of the approaches to Tulagi from the southeast.* His search planes at Tulagi, as was pointed out in the previous section of this analysis, were sent there to conduct reconnaissance for the protection of the Guadalcanal Air Base.* It is probable, therefore, that his reliance on the search planes operating out of Tulagi gave the Commander Outer South Seas Force a confidence not warranted by the situation, and that this confidence contributed greatly to the surprise achieved by the Allies.

The routine Japanese air searches scheduled for August 7th were to be conducted by seaplanes only. Those at Rabaul were to cover a sector between bearings 100°(T) to 130°(T) to a radius of 700 miles**; those at Tulagi were to cover an unidentified sector to the southward of the Solomons. The latter seaplanes were caught on the water at dawn by Allied carrier planes and were destroyed before they could take off.***

The contact report of the Allied Expeditionary Force received from Tulagi Air Base at 0652, August 7th, precipitated an immediate change in the Japanese search plans. As will be shown later, Commander Outer South Seas Force requested the FIFTH Air Attack Force to augment the seaplane searches by the employment of land attack planes based at Rabaul. The Japanese thereby demonstrated a capability of increasing very considerably the number of aircraft employed for searching the Solomons. It is unfortunate for them that these augmented searches were not initiated on August 5th when the warning came from the High Command.

(e) JAPANESE DISPOSITION NAVAL FORCES

Just prior to the surprise Allied invasion of the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area the Japanese forces of the Southeast Area were disposed in accordance with the strategical situation as it appeared to the Japanese commanders at that particular time. The EIGHTH Fleet was operating from Rabaul as its principal naval base. Since Rabaul was at this time under the constant harassment and surveillance of Allied air power based in Australia and staging through Port Moresby, Commander EIGHTH Fleet was inclined to favor the more northerly harbor of the area, Kavieng, as an anchorage for his surface forces. As a consequence, on August 1st, he despatched the heavy cruisers CHOKAI, the flagship of the EIGHTH Fleet, and Cruiser Division SIX, consisting of the AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA and FURUTAKA from Rabaul to Kavieng, there to remain until the morning of August 7th.****

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* Records 25th Air Flotilla, Group 21, Item 21D, Section 3, June 25th to August 6th, 1942, WDC Document 160155.

** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632 May 12th, 1947.

*** Strength and Disposition of 25th Air Flotilla on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74629 May 12th, 1947.

**** War Diary CRUDIV 6, August 1942, WDC Document 160997.

TABLE 1

DISPOSITION OF USABLE JAPANESE SHORE & TENDER BASED AIRCRAFT*

as of 2400 August 6th

BASE	TAINAN AIR GROUP		2nd AIR GROUP		YOKOHAMA AIR GROUP		14th AIR GR.	4th AIR GR.	MISAWA AIR GR.	TOTAL
	Type Zero Shipboard Fighter (ZEKE 11)	Type 2 Land Recco Plane	Type Zero Shipboard Fighter (ZEKE 11)	Type 99 Carrier Bomber	Type 97 Flying Boat (MAVIS 11)	Seaplane Fighter	Type 2 Large Flying Boat	Type 1 Land Attack Plane (BETTY 11)	Type 1 Land Attack Plane (BETTY 11)	
RABAUL	24**	2	15**	16	6		2			65
VUNAKANAU (Rabaul)								32	***	32
TULAGI					7	9				16
TOTAL	24	2	15	16	13	9	2	32	0	113

Total number of Usable Planes Between 0000 August 7th and 2400 August 9th

	Type Zero Shipboard Fighter	Type 2 Land Recco Plane	Type 99 Carrier Bomber	Type 97 Flying Boat	Seaplane Fighter	Type 2 Large Flying Boat	Type 1 Land Attack Plane
0000 Aug. 7	39	2	16	13	9	2	32
0000 Aug. 8	37	2	7	6	0	2	36
0000 Aug. 9	34	2	7	6	0	2	27
0000 Aug. 10	34	1	7	6	0	2	24

* None of these aircraft were equipped with radar.

** Based at Rabaul and assigned to Lae and Buna, New Guinea and Tsu Rumi, New Britain areas as fighting progressed.

*** Nine land attack planes of this air group reported on August 7th and eight on August 8th, making a total of seventeen additional planes.

NOTE: The above tables are based on CIG Intelligence Report 74629 of 12 May 1947 "Strength and Disposition of Air Flot. 25 on 7 August 1942" and on WDC 160140 "Detailed Battle Report No. 8 of the Fifth Air Attack Force."

He himself remained at his headquarters in Rabaul.

(a) The disposition and composition of the principal units of the EIGHTH Fleet at 0652, August 7th, the time Commander EIGHTH Fleet received the report of the initial sighting of the Allied Amphibious Force (TF 62) by the Japanese at Tulagi, is summarized as follows:

(1) Support Force and CHOKAI

The heavy cruisers CHOKAI, AOBA, and KAKO were en route to Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island, Admiralty Islands. The heavy cruisers KINUGASA and FURUTAKA were en route to Rabaul. All five cruisers had just cleared the southern entrance to Steffen Strait on routine passage from Silver Sound.*

(2) Escort Force

(a) The light cruisers TENRYU and YUBARI and the destroyer YUNAGI of DESDIV TWENTY-NINE were at Rabaul.*

(b) The destroyers OITE, ASAKAZE, YŪZUKI of DESDIV TWENTY-NINE and the destroyers MUTSUKI, UZUKI, YAYOI and MOCHISUKI of DESDIV THIRTY were engaged in escort duties. DESDIV SEVENTEEN was ordered to report to Commander Outer South Seas Force on August 5th but had not yet arrived at Rabaul. As these destroyers did not partake in the battle of Savo Island, they are dropped from further discussion.

(3) Auxiliaries of 25th Air Flotilla.

The seaplane carrier AKITSUSHIMA and the aircraft transport MOGAMIGAWA MARU were at Rabaul.**

(4) Submarines

(a) SUBRON SEVEN was located about as follows: RO-33 in Gulf of Papua, RO-34 off Australian East Coast, I-121 and 122 at Rabaul and I-123 at Truk.***

(b) SUBRON THREE, which reported from the SIXTH Fleet to the EIGHTH Fleet on August 7th, were on station as follows: I-11 off the

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

** Strength and Disposition 25th Air Flotilla, August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947.

*** War Diary 8th Fleet "Movements of Naval Forces under this Command", August, 1942, WDC Document 161259.

southeast coast of Australia; I-171, I-174, and I-175 off the east coast of Australia; I-169 off the New Hebrides, and the I-168 which had remained at Sasebo, Japan.* SUBRON THREE is dismissed from further discussion, since all boats were ordered on August 7th to return to Japan for rest and refitting. None of them were employed in the Japanese counterattack at Tulagi.

(f) TASKS ASSIGNED

The tasks assigned the EIGHTH Fleet by the Japanese were, in general:

(a) To support the Japanese program of consolidating the network of outposts protecting the Rabaul position, which often required invasion operations.

(b) To counter successfully the generally anticipated Allied Offensive move against the area.**

The first of these assigned tasks has significance only because the consolidation of Japanese outposts protecting Rabaul had precipitated the Allied amphibious operations against Tulagi and Guadalcanal. Since the Battle of Savo Island resulted directly from the second of the assigned tasks, it is that task with which this discussion is concerned.

Commander Outer South Seas Force knew that his objective was protective in nature. He also knew that the principal offensive weapon in his area was the land-based air power of the FIFTH Air Attack Force (Base Air Force) at Rabaul. This weapon would be most useful to him during high visibility. He considered that its full capabilities could only be exploited against strong enemy sea forces if the latter were within striking distance; and concluded that he might best accomplish this by employing some of his surface forces as decoys to lure the enemy forces within range of such air power.***

He knew that his own offensive power lay primarily in his heavy cruiser strength -- the CHOKAI and CRUDIV SIX -- plus any light cruisers and destroyers which could be made immediately available from the convoy escort force. He felt that during high visibility this surface force would be a secondary weapon to the Base Air Force units at Rabaul, and would be vulnerable to Allied carrier-based bombers. But, during night or

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* Reports of Meritorious Action SUBRONS 3 and 7, August 10th, 1942. CIG Document 74834, May 12th, 1947.

** Records CRUDIV 6, WDC Document 160997, August 1942; War Diary 8th Fleet, WDC Document 161259, July-August, 1942; Southeast Area Naval Operations, Part I, Document 40427, page 3 and the Campaigns of the Pacific War, USSBS 1946, page 105.

*** War Diary 8th Fleet, WDC Document 161259.

low visibility, he felt that his cruiser force became his principal weapon. The smallness of his force gave him little concern, for he was confident of his ability to defeat Allied surface forces in night action.

In addition to his surface forces, Commander Outer South Seas Force had four submarines of SUBRON SEVEN, three of which were available in his area. These sub-surface units might provide some assistance in attacking enemy ships.

The above Japanese capabilities, when considered in comparison with the strong Allied carrier and amphibious support forces sent to Tulagi and Guadalcanal, were limited indeed. The confidence expressed by Commander Outer South Seas Force therefore seems to have been somewhat optimistic. The discrepancy between his appreciation of the assigned objective and his actual degree of involvements lay in his underestimation of the Allied strength. The Japanese commanders on various echelons estimated that the expected Allied attack on Tulagi and Guadalcanal would be no more than a reconnaissance landing.*

(g) JAPANESE GENERAL CONCEPT

From the preceding discussion, it is apparent that the conception of Commander Outer South Seas Force as to the measures he would probably pursue, should Allied forces attempt to penetrate his area, were:

(a) During daylight, to employ his land-based aircraft as a principal weapon and to employ his surface forces as a secondary weapon possibly as decoys to lure the Allied forces into range of the above aircraft.

(b) During night or low visibility, to employ his surface forces as the principal weapon.

(c) As opportunity presented, to employ his submarines in support of both air and surface attacks.

This concept for the defense of the Outer South Seas Area would have been sound, if adequate air and surface forces as well as adequate bases, more particularly air bases, had been provided, especially in the Solomons. Commander South Seas Force might then have operated his surface ships under the protection of land-based air power. However, as has been pointed out, such adequacy of forces and bases was not available at this time, with the result that any surface ship attack launched by Commander Outer South Seas Force would necessarily be forced to operate in areas under dispute without adequate air cover. In addition, the shortage of planes and bases from which to operate them, combined with bad weather and some overconfidence, permitted an American landing at Guadalcanal-Tulagi to be achieved by surprise.

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* Japanese Southeast Area Naval Operations, Part I, U.S. Army Historical Division, Document 40427, July 31st, 1947.

CHAPTER III

ALLIED ARRANGEMENTS

(a) ALLIED COMMAND RELATIONS (Plate II)

The entire Pacific area had been designated as an area of U.S. strategic responsibility. This area had been divided into three large areas: the Southwest Pacific, the Southeast Pacific and the Pacific Ocean; the latter being further subdivided into the North, Central and South Pacific areas.

The boundaries of the Southwest Pacific area and those of the South Pacific area are of importance in the study of the Battle of Savo Island as it was within these areas that the operations in connection with this action were conducted. The pertinent portions of the northern and eastern boundaries of the Southwest Pacific area were from Long. 130° East along the Equator to 159° East, thence South.* The South Pacific area was bounded on the west by the Southwest Pacific area and on the north by the Equator.

The Pacific Ocean Area was under the command of a Commander-in-Chief (CINCPOA) who had been directed, among other tasks, to--

(a) Protect essential sea and air communications.
(b) Prepare for execution of major amphibious offensives against positions held by Japanese initially to be launched from South Pacific and Southwest Pacific areas.*

CINCPOA was charged with the direct exercise of command of combined armed forces in the North and Central Pacific area. Under his authority and general direction was the Commander South Pacific Area (COMSOPAC) who exercised command of combined armed forces which were at any time assigned to that area. The Commander South Pacific Area was also Commander South Pacific Force, (COMSOPACFOR). Under COMSOPACFOR were all of the naval forces of the Allied nations in the South Pacific Area.

The tasks listed above for CINCPOA were assigned, somewhat modified by that commander, to COMSOPAC for execution. These modifications more specifically delineated COMSOPAC's responsibilities. The tasks were:

(a) Protect the essential sea and air communications.
(b) Prepare to launch amphibious offensives against positions held by Japan.**

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* Joint Directive, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, War Diary COMSOPACFOR July 1942 (COMINCH to CINCPAC 022100 July 1942).

** Organization of South Pacific Area, Lecture by Capt. T.H. Robbins, Jr., USN, Army-Navy Staff College, January 13th, 1944.

The Southwest Pacific Area was under the command of a Supreme Commander who had been directed, among other tasks, to:

(a) Check enemy advance toward Australia and its essential lines of communication by destruction of enemy combatant troop and supply ships, aircraft and bases in.....the New Guinea, Bismarck-Solomon Island region.

(b) Support the operations of friendly forces in the Pacific Ocean Areas and in the Indian Theater.

(c) Prepare to take offensive.*

The Supreme Commander Southwest Pacific Area (COMSOWESPAC) had as his naval commander a United States naval officer who was designated Commander Southwest Pacific Force (COMSOWESPACFOR) and who was vested with all powers customarily granted to the Commanders-in-Chief of Fleets. Under this commander were all of the naval forces of the Allied Nations in the Southwest Pacific Area.** It is of interest that when task forces of the Southwest Pacific Area operated outside that area, coordination with forces in the new operating area was to be effected by the Joint Chiefs of Staff or by the Combined Chiefs of Staff as appropriate.***

CINCPOA was Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who on May 8th had assumed command of all land, sea and air forces in the Pacific Ocean Area except the land defenses of New Zealand. His headquarters were at Pearl Harbor. COMSOPAC was Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, who on June 19th had assumed command of the South Pacific Area and the South Pacific Force. His administrative headquarters were at Auckland, New Zealand; his operational headquarters were established on board the ARGONNE at Noumea on August 1st. COMSOPAC was empowered to appoint commanders of task forces in his area. COMSOWESPAC was General Douglas MacArthur, who had assumed command of that area on April 18th. His headquarters were at Brisbane, Australia.

Thus it is evident that unity of command for military operations in the South Pacific Area existed at this time. COMSOPAC was in command of all operations within his area. This was a marked improvement over the command organization which had been in existence at the Battle of the Coral Sea just three months earlier wherein COMSOWESPAC had not been in command of the naval forces operating within this area. Unity of command for this operation was effected by moving the boundary between the Southwest Pacific and the South Pacific areas from 165° E. Longitude to 159° E. Longitude--a change which placed Tulagi, Guadalcanal and other islands

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* SecNav Secret Letter (SC) A16-3(28) April 20th, 1942, Encl. (A).
** SecNav Secret Letter (SC) A16-3(28) April 20th, 1942, page 1.
*** Ibid Enclosure (A).

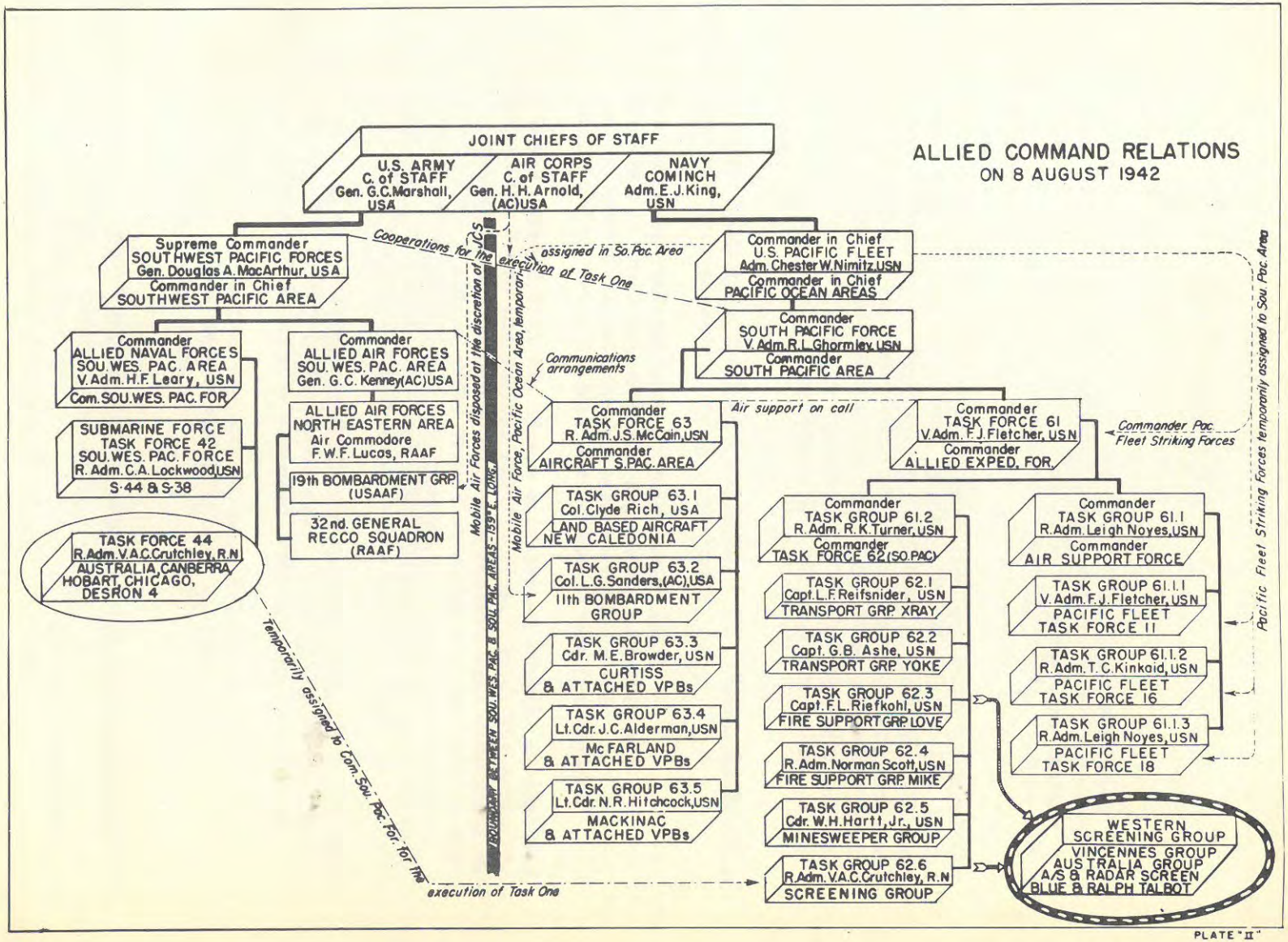
ALLIED COMMAND RELATIONS
ON 8 AUGUST 1942
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
U.S. ARMY C. of STAFF Gen. G.C.Marshall, USA
AIR CORPS C. of STAFF Gen. H. H. Arnold, (AC)USA
NAVY COMINCH Adm. E. J. King, USN
Supreme Commander SOUTHWEST PACIFIC FORCES Gen. Douglas A. MacArthur, USA
Commander in Chief SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA
Cooperations for the execution of Task One
Commander in Chief U.S. PACIFIC FLEET Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, USN
Commander in Chief PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS
Commander ALLIED NAVAL FORCES SOU. WES. PAC. AREA V. Adm. H.F. Leary, USN
Com. SOU. WES. PAC. FOR
Commander ALLIED AIR FORCES SOU. WES. PAC. AREA Gen. G. C. Kenney (AC) USA
SUBMARINE FORCE TASK FORCE 42 SOU. WES. PAC. FORCE R. Adm. C.A. Lockwood, USN
S-44 & S-38
ALLIED AIR FORCES NORTH EASTERN AREA Air Commodore F.W.F. Lucas, RAAF
19th BOMBARDMENT GRP. (USAAF)
32nd. GENERAL RECCO SQUADRON (RAAF)
TASK FORCE 44 R. Adm. V.A.C. Crutchley, R.N
AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, HOBART, CHICAGO, DESRON 4
Temporarily assigned to Com. Sou. Pac. For. for the execution of Task One
Mobile Air Forces disposed at the discretion of JCS
BOUNDARY BETWEEN SOU. WES. PAC. & SOU. PAC. AREAS - 159° E. LONG.
Mobile Air Force, Pacific Ocean Area, temporarily assigned in So. Pac. Area
Communications arrangements
Commander SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE V. Adm. R.L. Ghormley, USN
Commander SOUTH PACIFIC AREA
Air support on call
Commander TASK FORCE 63 R. Adm. J.S. McCain, USN
Commander AIRCRAFT S. PAC. AREA
TASK GROUP 63.1 Col. Clyde Rich, USA
LAND BASED AIRCRAFT NEW CALEDONIA
TASK GROUP 63.2 Col. L.G. Sanders, (AC), USA
11th BOMBARDMENT GROUP
TASK GROUP 63.3 Cdr. M.E. Browder, USN
CURTISS & ATTACHED VPBs
TASK GROUP 63.4 Lt. Cdr. J.C. Alderman, USN
Mc FARLAND & ATTACHED VPBs
TASK GROUP 63.5 Lt. Cdr. N.R. Hitchcock, USN
MACKINAC & ATTACHED VPBs
Commander TASK FORCE 61 V. Adm. F.J. Fletcher, USN
Commander ALLIED EXPED. FOR.
Commander Pac. Fleet Striking Forces
Commander TASK GROUP 61.2 R. Adm. R.K. Turner, USN
Commander TASK FORCE 62 (SO. PAC)
TASK GROUP 62.1 Capt. L.F. Reifsnider, USN
TRANSPORT GRP. XRAY
TASK GROUP 62.2 Capt. G.B. Ashe, USN
TRANSPORT GRP. YOKE
TASK GROUP 62.3 Capt. F.L. Riefkohl, USN
FIRE SUPPORT GRP. LOVE
TASK GROUP 62.4 R. Adm. Norman Scott, USN
FIRE SUPPORT GRP. MIKE
TASK GROUP 62.5 Cdr. W.H. Hartt, Jr., USN
MINESWEEPER GROUP
TASK GROUP 62.6 R. Adm. V.A.C. Crutchley, R.N
SCREENING GROUP
Commander TASK GROUP 61.1 R. Adm. Leigh Noyes, USN
Commander AIR SUPPORT FORCE
TASK GROUP 61.1.1 V. Adm. F.J. Fletcher, USN
PACIFIC FLEET TASK FORCE 11
TASK GROUP 61.1.2 R. Adm. T.C. Kinkaid, USN
PACIFIC FLEET TASK FORCE 16
TASK GROUP 61.1.3 R. Adm. Leigh Noyes, USN
PACIFIC FLEET TASK FORCE 18
Pacific Fleet Striking Forces temporarily assigned to Sou. Pac. Area
WESTERN SCREENING GROUP
VINCENNES GROUP
AUSTRALIA GROUP
A/S & RADAR SCREEN
BLUE & RALPH TALBOT

PLATE "II"

east of 159° E. within the South Pacific Area.* Since these islands were the areas in which the Battle of Savo Island was fought, all operations within these areas were under COMSOPAC.

Any support rendered to COMSOPAC by COMSOWESPAC or vice versa was to be by cooperation.

The command of combined operations with Australian forces was as follows: If carrier units were involved, the senior American naval officer would be in command because of the nature of carrier operations; otherwise when the naval forces of the two powers were operating together and no carrier operations were involved, the senior officer of either power would be in command.**

Such were the command organizations for the Pacific, South Pacific and Southwest Pacific areas. However, in order to understand more clearly the various factors which culminated in the Battle of Savo Island it appears wise at this time to explain the command situation which obtained in the South Pacific Area with relation to its newly assigned mission--to seize and occupy Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi and adjacent positions in order to assist in seizing and occupying the New Britain-New Ireland Area.* This mission was designated as Task ONE.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed CINCPAC to designate the task force commander for this task. However, COMINCH gave CINCPAC little discretion in the matter, for he stated to CINCPAC, "It is assumed Ghormley will be made task force commander at least for Task ONE which he should command in person in the operating area." He stated in the same dispatch that the commander for Task ONE "should also have a conference with MacArthur."* As a consequence CINCPAC on July 9th designated COMSOPACFOR as the Task Force Commander for Task ONE and directed him to exercise strategic command in person in the operating area which was interpreted to be initially the New Caledonia-New Hebrides Area. CINCPAC at Pearl Harbor retained over-all command.***

The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed that direct command of the tactical operations of the Amphibious Forces was to remain with the naval task force commander; that COMSOWESPAC was to support the operations of Task ONE by providing for the interdiction of enemy air and naval activities westward of the operating area, which was evidently interpreted as westward of the South Pacific Area; and that COMSOWESPAC was to attach the necessary naval reinforcements and land-based air support.* CINCPAC advised COMSOPACFOR that as a consequence, COMSOWESPAC was making available

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* Joint Directive, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, War Diary COMSOPACFOR July 1942, (COMINCH to CINCPAC, 022100 July 1942).

** War Diary CINCPAC, April 16th, 1942.

*** Letter of Instructions CINCPAC, Serial 0151W July 9th, 1942.

certain surface and air forces and authorized COMSOPACFOR to apply directly to COMSOWESPAC for any additional forces required.*

In accordance with his designation as Commander for Task ONE, COMSOPACFOR issued an Operation Plan wherein he formed two task forces to carry out his mission. One of these task forces he designated as TF 61, the Expeditionary Force; the other as TF 63, the Shore Based Aircraft. TF 61 was composed of three lesser task forces; one, the Air Support Force consisting of three Pacific Fleet carrier task forces, TFs 11, 16 and 18; one, the naval forces transferred by COMSOWESPAC for this operation and termed TF 44; and one, the South Pacific Amphibious Force, TF 62. TF 63 was composed of all land-based and tender-based aircraft attached to the South Pacific Force, and of the aircraft temporarily attached and basing on islands in the South Pacific Area. He designated Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, USN, CTF 11, who was commander of the Pacific Fleet Striking Force, a force consisting entirely of carrier task forces, as CTF 61 and Rear Admiral John Sidney McCain as CTF 63. He directed that coordination between these two forces was to be through cooperation, although he directed CTF 63 to supply aircraft support to CTF 61 on call.**

CTF 61 then issued an Operation Plan in which he assigned command of the Air Support Force (61.1) to CTF 18 as CTG 61.1 in the WASP, and command of the Amphibious Force (61.2) to the Commander South Pacific Amphibious Force, CTF 62 in the MCCAWLEY. He retained command of TF 11 which for this operation became TG 61.1.1 and continued to fly his flag in the SARATOGA. TG 61.2 was composed of the following: TF 62; three heavy cruisers, one light cruiser and six destroyers from the South Pacific Command; and TF 44 less one heavy cruiser.*** CTG 61.2 thereafter employed the designation CTF 62 and organized his command accordingly.

This designation of CTF 11 as the Commander Expeditionary Force with the title CTF 61 was a necessary requirement for this operation. This was because CTF 61 was the only combat trained carrier task force commander within the command, and it was felt that it was more important to retain him within the carriers than to give him freedom of action to go where he desired. This kept him far away from the scene of action.

In this connection, experience has shown that it is generally wiser for the Supreme Tactical Commander to place himself within the amphibious force during landing operations and within the covering force if action with enemy surface forces is imminent. This enables him to keep himself continuously informed of the constantly changing situation and permits him to employ his communications freely once contact with the enemy has been made. This was the practice in later operations such as OKINAWA where the fleet commander was in one of the older cruisers. He was thus

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* Letter of Instructions CINCPAC, Serial 0151W July 9th, 1942.
** COMSOPACFOR Operation Plan 1-42 Serial 0017, July 16th, 1942.
*** CTF 61 Operation Order 1-42, July 28th, 1942.

able to move freely to the position of paramount interest without appreciably weakening the strength of the force to which he was nominally assigned.*

It will be noted from the above that CTF 61 was also CTG 61.1.1 as well as Commander Striking Forces Pacific Fleet and CTF 11; that CTF 62 was also CTG 61.2 and that many of the other commanders bore several designations, most of which had no connection with the assigned operation. Such a multiplicity of diverse titles could not have but been confusing to the commanders concerned, as well as to the subordinate commanders throughout whatever echelon.

(b) INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO ALLIED COMMANDER

COMSOPAC realized from indications that the Japanese were planning to extend, to the South and Southeast, the control then held on most of the New Guinea-New Britain-Northern Solomons Area, and were therefore consolidating and improving their positions there.**

He knew the location of most, if not all, of the Japanese airfields and seaplane bases in the theater of operations and had daily reconnaissance information of their employment. He knew that the Japanese were developing three airfields, one at Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island; one at Kieta, Bougainville Island, and one at Buka Passage, Buka Island. He further knew that the Japanese based seaplanes at Rabaul; Rekata Bay, Santa Isabel Island; Faisi, Shortland Islands; Kieta, Bougainville Island; Gizo Island; Tulagi Harbor, Florida Island; and Buka Passage.**

He believed that all three airfields were in satisfactory operating condition and that Kieta, in particular, was receiving personnel and equipment.** Actually the Buka airfield was in an advanced state of construction, being completed on August 8th; the construction of the Kieta airfield had been stopped, presumably in July, and the airfield at Lunga Point was well advanced, being completed on August 6th.

He believed that there were four heavy cruisers of Cruiser Division 6 and three light cruisers of Cruiser Division 18 in the Rabaul-Kavieng Area.*** This was approximately correct. However, there were but two light cruisers there--the additional cruiser was a large heavy cruiser, the CHOKAI.

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* Statement by Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, USN, CINCPAC's Chief of Staff at the time to Commodore Richard W. Bates, USN(Ret), Head of Dept. of Analysis, Naval War College on June 1st, 1949.

** COMSOPAC Serial 0017 July 16th, 1942 Appendix III and CTF 62 Operation Plan A3-42-Ser.0010 Annex EASY, July 30th, 1942, Part (1).

*** CINCPAC Serial 0151W to COMSOPAC, July 9th, 1942, Reference "C" Information on Enemy Forces and Positions in SOWESPAC Area up to July 10th, 1942.

He believed that there were thirteen destroyers of DESRON's SIX and THIRTY-FOUR in the area.* This was partially correct in that there were eight rather than thirteen destroyers. All eight destroyers were from DESRON SIX and all appear to have been assigned to escort duty.

He believed that there were about fifteen submarines in the Bismarck-New Guinea-Solomons Area.* This was markedly incorrect as there were but ten submarines in the entire Outer South Seas Area at the time of landing. Of these, but two, from SUBRON SEVEN, appear to have been in the Bismarck-New Guinea-Solomon Area.

He knew quite correctly that there were two AV's and three or four XAV's in the Rabaul area.

He knew that the Japanese air strength in the Bismarck-New Guinea-Solomons Area was about sixty VF, sixty VB and thirty VP planes -- a total of 150 on July 30th.** This estimate, at least for August 6th, was about 30% too high, due perhaps in part to losses suffered from Allied air strikes on Rabaul and on operational losses. Actually there were present on August 6th about forty-eight VF, forty-eight VB and fifteen VP. He believed that about eight of the above fighters, equipped with pontoons as float planes, and about seven to ten of the patrol planes were operating in the Tulagi area.** His estimate of the planes in the Tulagi area was reasonably correct.

He realized that the Japanese capability of striking with land-based air power at Allied Forces in the Guadalcanal Area was real and that attacks could be expected.*

He knew that the strength of the striking forces which the Japanese could bring to bear against his operations in the Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area had been greatly decreased by the Japanese losses during the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway.*** However, he realized that there could well be still strong Japanese forces in or near the area.

He was aware of the air strength in the Marshall-Gilbert Islands Area and in the Truk-Ponape Island Area, and the Japanese capability resulting therefrom, of quick reinforcement of the Bismarck-New Guinea-Solomons Area.**** It eventuated that this reinforcement was not accomplished until after the Battle of Savo Island.

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* CTF 62 Op. Plan A3-42, Serial 0010, Annex EASY, July 30th, Part (1), para. (c).

** Ibid para. (d).

*** CINCPAC Serial 0151W to COMSOPAC, July 9th, 1942, para. 2.

**** CINCPAC Serial 0151W to COMSOPAC, July 9th, 1942, Reference "C". Information on Enemy Forces and Positions in SOWESPAC Area up to July 10th, 1942.

He realized that despite the Midway and Coral Sea losses, a definite Japanese capability existed of supporting Japanese land-based air with carrier-based air operating from carrier task groups. His air searches were therefore designed to discover such carrier forces before they could reach effective striking positions.* This latter concept seems to have been the greatest motivating consideration in all of the planning in the conduct of searches in both SOPAC and SOWESPAC and in the deployment of forces. Actually there were no Japanese carrier task groups within the area and none appeared until the Allied beachheads had been reasonably well secured.

Finally, he knew that the existing Japanese reconnaissance operated in depth. He therefore felt that surprise was improbable.** Actually, although Japanese searches and reconnaissance did in fact operate in depth, there appear to have been no Japanese searches or reconnaissance on the day of the Allied approach, so that the Allies did, in fact, achieve surprise.

(c) ALLIED LAND AND TENDER-BASED AIRCRAFT

(1) South Pacific (SOPAC)

The land and tender-based aircraft in the South Pacific Area had been organized as has been pointed out earlier into a command under Rear Admiral John Sidney McCain, U.S.N., (COMAIRSOPAC). The units of this force were employed chiefly for the protection of SOPAC bases and the essential sea and air communications. AIRSOPAC included Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Royal New Zealand Air Force units.

The administrative organization of these units was divided. As regards training in particular, COMAIRSOPAC was charged with the training of Navy and Marine Corps aviation, whereas the Commanding General of U.S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area (COMGENSOPAC) - a command assumed by General Millard F. Harmon, U.S. Army Air Corps on July 26th, 1942 - was charged with the training of all Army Air Corps units. The Royal New Zealand Air Force units present in SOPAC Area were under the unity of command structure for the particular base at which they were located, and this placed them under a U.S. Army officer in every case.

The tactical operations of all SOPAC aircraft for the support of the Allied amphibious offensive which led to the Battle of Savo Island were placed under the command of COMAIRSOPAC whose tactical title was Commander Task Force 63 (CTF 63). CTF 63 availed himself of the advice of COMGENSOPAC and, owing to the wide dispersion and dissimilar composition

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* CTF 61 Dispatch 290857, July, to CTF 63.

** COMSOPAC-COMSOWESPAC Joint Dispatch 081017, July 1942, which is Part Four of Dispatch 081012, July 1942.

of the air organization, allowed the latter a certain amount of operational discretion.

Table 2 shows a tabulation (by numbers and locations) of the planes available to CTF 63 on August 6th - the day prior to the initial American landings in the Solomons, and the day that the Allied Expeditionary Force approached within range of the Japanese landbased aircraft. Of all the planes listed in Table 1, the only ones suitable for search and attack missions over and beyond the objective area were the Army B-17s and the Navy PBY-5s. The limiting ranges of the other aircraft restricted their roles to defense of bases, air coverage for surface units within range of those bases, and routine anti-submarine patrols. For this reason these aircraft did not participate in operations directly involved in the Battle of Savo Island, and are dropped from further discussion.

In the Solomons offensive, the B-17 was the better search plane over Japanese held positions in the islands where enemy fighters might be encountered. The B-17 had a speed advantage over the PBY-5 -- 30 knots faster cruising and 45 knots faster maximum speed. The B-17 had better combat qualities as a result of its self-sealing tanks and its 8 flexible 50-calibre gun mounts. As a bomber, the B-17 was effective only to about 600 miles radius. This short range made it necessary to operate it from the furthest advanced airfield, and placed an urgency upon CTF 63 to complete the airfield at Espiritu Santo by August 1st.

The PBY-5 was better suited to cover the wide ocean areas through which Japanese surface units could approach the target area, and in which Japanese fighters were not likely to be encountered. The advantage of the PBY-5 over the B-17 in these areas was due to its greater range - in the ratio of 3500 miles to 2000 miles for economical cruising, and in the ratio of 800 miles to 600 miles radius as a bomber.*

Both the PBY-5 and the B-17 were equipped with radars of the ASE model; but little advantage was gained from these early radars other than navigational assistance. These radars provided a search beam of about 15 degrees spread normal to the line of flight on both sides of the plane, designed to be effective to about 25 miles range. A homing beam was also provided, ahead of the plane to an effective range of about 15 miles. Since the pilots did not consider the lateral search beams reliable but placed their faith in the homing beam ahead, these early radars provided little more than the equivalent of the reliable limits of human vision in clear weather. They did, however, make it possible to conduct night searches in clear weather as effectively as day visual searches. Since rain squalls showed up on the radar scopes much like "sea return", these radars were about 50% effective in bad weather, day or night.** Their

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* Airplane characteristics, Naval War College, June 1942.

** Tactical use of Radar in Aircraft, Radar Bulletin No. 2., COMINCH July 29th, 1942.

TABLE 2
DISPOSITION OF ALLIED SHORE AND TENDER-BASED AIRCRAFT
AS OF 2400, AUGUST 6, 1942

BASE	11th Bombardment Group	69th 70th Bombardment Sqdns	67th 68th 70th Pursuit Sqdns	VP Sqdns 11, 14 & 23	R.N.Z.A.F. Units			Marine Corps Squadrons		Navy Inshore Patrol Sqdns	TOTAL PLANES
								VMF 111 & 212 VMO 251	VMO 151	VS1 D14	
	B-17	B-26	P-39	PBY-5's	Hudsons	Singapores	Vincents	F4F	SBC	OS2U	
ESPIRITU	5*			10**				3***		3	21
EFATE	**** 5			4				13		3	25
NEW CALEDONIA	10	10	38	2	6			16		3	85
NANDI	12	12	17	6	12	3	9				71
NDENI				***** 6							6
SAMOA								18	17	10	45
TONGATABU			24							6	30
TOTAL	32	22	79	28	30			50	17	25	283

* 1 of 6 B-17s of 98th Squadron lost east of Espiritu Santo due navigational error.
** 1 of 11 PBYs failed to return from search Sector III.
*** 1 of 4 F4F-3A of VMF-212 crashed at sea August 6th. Replaced from EFATE.
**** 2 of 7 B-17s of 26th Squadron lost previously, one August 4th, one, August 5th.
***** 1 of 7 PBYs lost at sea August 6th.

chief value to pilots was derived from their ability to pick up land at about sixty miles at sea, depending upon the altitude of the terrain, and assisted greatly in fixing their navigational positions.

The total of thirty-two B-17s in the South Pacific Area on August 6th were assigned to the four squadrons (the Twenty-Sixth, Forty-Second, Ninety-Eighth and Four Hundred and Thirty-First Bombardment Squadrons) of the ELEVENTH Bombardment Group.* The ELEVENTH Bombardment Group had been formed in Hawaii in mid-July and designated as the Mobile Air Force, Pacific Ocean Area. As such, its disposition anywhere within the Pacific Ocean Area rested with the discretion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who determined upon its employment in the South Pacific Area in support of the Allied offensive in the Solomons.**

The disposition of these aircraft on August 6th (Table 1) was the deployment ordered for Task ONE in the Solomons by CTF 63 Operation Order 1-42 as follows: five B-17s of the Twenty-Sixth Bombardment Squadron at Efate and five B-17s of the Ninety-Eighth Bombardment Squadron at Espiritu Santo; ten B-17s of the Forty-Second Bombardment Squadron on New Caledonia at Koumac and Plaines Des Gaiacs airfields; and a reserve of twelve B-17s of the Four Hundred and Thirty-First Squadron at Nandi, Fijis. This disposition was not hard and fast, and heterogeneous groupings of planes resulted from the rotation forward of reserve aircraft as replacements for damaged and lost B-17s, and the flexibility with which airfields could be employed in case of bad weather or emergencies.

The twenty-eight PBY-5s in the South Pacific were disposed on August 6th (Table 1) as follows: six planes shore-based at Nandi, Fijis; four planes shore-based at Havannah Harbor Efate; two planes shore-based at Ile Nou, Noumea; ten planes based on the tender CURTISS in Segond Channel, Espiritu Santo; and six planes based on the McFARLAND at Graciosa Bay, Ndeni. The aircraft tender, MACKINAC was en route on August 6th from Noumea to Maramasike Estuary to establish an advanced seaplane base to which nine PBY-5s would be moved up on August 7th.

(2) Southwest Pacific (SOWESPAC)

The land-based aircraft in the Southwest Pacific Area included units of both the U.S. Army Air Corps and the Royal Australian Air Force. This combined organization was called Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific. Its headquarters were in Brisbane, Australia, in the same building as the headquarters of the Supreme Commander, Southwest Pacific. Major General George C. Kenny, Air Corps, U.S. Army assumed command of the Allied Air Forces on August 4th - only three days before the Allied amphibious landings in the Solomons.***

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* COMAIRSOPAC War Diary, July 1942 also U.S. Army in World War II, Guadalcanal the First Offensive.

** U.S. Army in World War II, Guadalcanal the First Offensive, page 27.

*** Army Air Forces in the War Against Japan 1941-1942, page 134.

This air command was divided into four sub-area commands, but only those units of the Allied-Air Forces, North Eastern Area with headquarters at Townsville, Australia,* were involved in operations in New Guinea and in the Bismarcks designed to check the advance of the Japanese.

The 19th Bombardment Group, based at Townsville had been designated as a Mobile Air Force in July - a Southwest Pacific counterpart to the 11th Bombardment Group in the Pacific Ocean Area. These two Mobile Air Forces in the Pacific Theater were disposed on August 6th against the Japanese advance south of the Equator. The 19th Group, with approximately the same strength as the 11th Group in SOPAC but with rarely more than twenty B-17s in commission,** was the chief offensive weapon against the Japanese base at Rabaul. His attack groups suffered an attrition rate over Rabaul of about 20% per month.***

In order to reach Rabaul with B-17s from Townsville, Commander North Eastern Area had to stage through the advanced air base at Port Moresby. His bombers usually avoided Japanese air attacks on Port Moresby by arriving after dark, and preparing for the next day's mission during the night. They took off in the early morning for Rabaul, and followed a route along the New Guinea coast for 40 or 50 miles to gain sufficient altitude to cross the Owen Stanley mountain range at approximately 7000 feet. They discovered in these operations that the equatorial weather frequently proved to be as dangerous as enemy fighters.****

Commander North Eastern Area had pushed the construction of additional fields in the vicinity of Port Moresby in order to obtain dispersal of his bombers and to base defending fighters in the vicinity to ward off Japanese air attacks. By August 6th, he was able to base his B-17s at Port Moresby, under the protective cover of about forty P-39s of the 35th Pursuit Group.

He had also pushed the construction of the Fall River field at Milne Bay, New Guinea. This field would not take heavy bombers but was useful for reconnaissance planes. On August 6th, he moved a detachment of five Hudsons from the 32nd General Reconnaissance Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force to the Fall River field from Port Moresby. This detachment was to reconnoiter the Northwestern Solomons thereafter. ***** He provided for the air defense of Fall River by basing there the 75th and 76th R.A.A.F. Fighter Squadrons equipped with P-40 aircraft.

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* Headquarters, Allied Air Forces - Operations-Instruction No. 18, July 31st, 1942.

** Army Air Forces in the War Against Japan 1941-1942, Page 124.

*** Army Air Forces in World War II, Plans and Early Operations, Note 27, page 723.

**** Ibid, page 480.

***** Letter from Major-General Harry J. Maloney, U.S.A., Chief, Historical Division to President Naval War College, October 11th, 1948.

Other air groups in the North Eastern Area were: the 3rd Bombardment Group (17 B-25s), and the 22nd Bombardment Group (about 54 B-26s total, but only 26 planes available). Since these groups were employed on shorter range attack missions incident to the SOWESPAC operations and did not contribute directly to the support of the SOPAC offensive operations, they will receive no further attention.*

(d) ALLIED SEARCH AND RECONNAISSANCE

(1) South Pacific (SOPAC)

CTF 63 planned the Allied searches from South Pacific bases to detect any enemy interference in that portion of the Coral Sea which lay east of Longitude 158° East. He designed his air searches to cover both the Allied operations within the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area and the Japanese approaches thereto from the northward as far as the range of his search aircraft would permit. A primary objective of these air searches was the detection of any Japanese carrier striking group which might enter the South Pacific from the direction of Truk or the Marshall Islands.**

In order to extend the range of his searches to the north as the Allied Expeditionary Force moved forward to its objective, he deployed his seaplane tenders progressively forward to establish more advanced bases for his seaplanes. This deployment consisted of moving the CURTISS with ten patrol planes of VP-23 from Noumea to Segond Channel, Espiritu Santo, where search operations were commenced on August 5th; then of advancing the MCFARLAND with seven patrol planes (five PBY-5s of VP-11 and twoof VP-14) from Noumea to Graciosa Bay, Ndeni, where search operations were commenced on August 6th; and finally, after the landings at Tulagi and Guadalcanal, of advancing the MACKINAC from Noumea to Marmasike Estuary, Malaita Island. The MACKINAC provided CTF 63 with a seaplane base in the southern Solomons as far north as Tulagi. Search operations were commenced from Marmasike Estuary on August 8th, employing the nine remaining patrol planes of VP-23 (one of the original ten had been lost on August 6th) which had been operating from the CURTISS in Espiritu Santo. The CURTISS, in turn, received two patrol planes advanced from Havannah Harbor, Efate, and placed in commission one plane of VP-11 which had been undergoing repairs in the CURTISS, and thereafter supported three search planes.

CTF 63 had deployed his seaplane tenders in such manner that the rear-most one, the CURTISS, was anchored at Espiritu Santo where his most advanced airfield was located. The CURTISS served as a centrally located command center for Task Force 63. It provided headquarters for CTF 63, COMGENSOPAC, the 11th Bombardment Group (CTG 63.2), and the CURTISS search detachment (CTG 63.3). It also served as a communications ship for the air operations of the field at Espiritu Santo.

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* Army Air Forces in World War II - Plans and Early Operations, pages 478, 479, 480.

** CTF 61 Dispatch 290857, July 1942.

CTF 63's land-based searches were flown by seaplanes based ashore at Nandi, Fiji, and by B-17s located at the airfields of Espiritu Santo, Efate, and Koumac (New Caledonia). The B-17s were employed in Sectors I and II. As can be seen from Diagrams "B", "C", and "D" these sectors extended over the southern Solomons where Japanese fighter aircraft were to be expected. CTF 63's employment of the B-17s over the islands and the PBY-5s over the open ocean exploited the advantages of each type, as analyzed in the previous section.

On August 6th, the day before the Allied Expeditionary Force reached the Tulagi-Guadalcanal target area, CTF 63 conducted the searches shown on Diagram "B". At sunrise, planes took off to search to the following ranges: Sector II, 750 miles from Espiritu Santo; Sector IV, 630 miles from Efate; Sector VI, 700 miles from Nandi. Sector I, the range of which was to be 800 miles from Koumac, was not searched, probably because of bad weather. All other sectors were reported searched with negative results.*

At about noon, August 6th additional patrol planes took off to search Sector III to 700 miles range from Espiritu Santo and Sector V to a range of 650 miles from Ndeni. CTF 63 was complying with the request of CTF 61 that the planes searching Sectors III and V on August 6th arrive at the outer limit of search at sunset, and search the return leg by radar.** These searches were so timed as to prevent the possibility of Japanese striking groups approaching undetected from Truk to the outer limits of Sector V, or from the Marshalls to the outer limit of Sector III by sunset August 6th, from which positions they could advance during darkness to launch an air attack on the Allied Amphibious Force just as it reached its objective at sunrise on August 7th.

The searches in Sectors III and V were reported searched with negative results, with the exception that no report was received from the plane searching the western-most subsector of Sector III, which plane failed to return.***

The basic problem of the Solomons offensive as visualized and enunciated by COMSOPAC was: "the protection of surface ships against land-based aircraft during the approach, the landing attack and the unloading" at the target area.**** He had assigned to CTF 63 the task: "cover the approach to, and operations within the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area by search. Execute air attacks on enemy objectives as arranged with Commander Expeditionary Force (CTF 61). Render aircraft support on call".***** Consequently, CTF 63's searches quite properly were made to support CTF 61, and to permit the concurrent employment of South Pacific aircraft for

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* War Diary CTF 63 August 6th, 1942.
** CTF 61 Dispatch 290857, July 1942.
*** War Diary CTF 63, August 6th, 1942.
**** COMSOPACFOR Dispatch 112000, July 1942 addressed to COMINCH, CINCPAC and COMSOWESPAC.
***** COMSOPAC Operation Plan No. 1-42, July 16th, 1942.

attack missions against the Japanese. With this double support role, CTF 63 conducted but one search of his sectors daily.

CTF 63's searches were not fully effective in providing the protection to the Expeditionary Force which COMSOPACFOR considered so paramount, and the cooperation of SOWESPAC land-based air units was necessary. For this reason the Joint Chiefs of Staff had directed that COMSOWESPAC would interdict enemy air and naval activities westward of the operating area, and CINCPAC had authorized COMSOPACFOR to discuss such operations* directly with COMSOWESPAC. As a consequence, COMSOPACFOR directed CTF 63 to make the arrangements with COMSOWESPAC relative to the coordination of aircraft scouting.**

(2) Southwest Pacific (SOWESPAC)

SOWESPAC search and reconnaissance missions conducted in the North Eastern Area prior to August 5th were all flown from Port Moresby. The searches covered the approaches to Milne Bay and to Buna. The reconnaissance missions took in the Japanese installations at Lae, New Guinea, and those around New Britain and New Ireland. These search and reconnaissance flights were chiefly in support of the operations of SOWESPAC forces in New Guinea.*** Commander Allied Air Forces, North Eastern Area had conducted but one reconnaissance flight in the Solomons during this prior period - he reconnoitered the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area on August 1st,*** the day the Allied Expeditionary Force departed from the Fiji Islands.

It was on August 5th that SOWESPAC air units began their operations to support the South Pacific offensive. COMSOWESPAC had previously arranged with COMSOPACFOR that his air forces in the North Eastern Area would coordinate their operations to assist the offensive in the South Pacific by searches commencing on August 5th (D-2 Day) and extending through August 11th (D+4 Day). SOWESPAC searches would extend to the limits of range of the aircraft employed. They would cover the water areas which lay to the southeast of a limiting line drawn from Madang (New Guinea) to the Kapingamarangi Islands and northwest of another limiting line extending from Tagula Island to the easternmost point of New Georgia. The eastern limit of his searches was the 158th meridian of East Longitude, extending northward from New Georgia. Commencing on August 5th, SOWESPAC aircraft were prohibited from operating east of 158°-15'(E) between the Equator and Latitude 15°(S) unless missions were requested by COMSOPACFOR.****

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* CINCPAC ltr. of Instructions to COMSOPAC, July 9th, 1942, Serial 0151W, page 3.

** COMSOPAC Operation Plan No. 1-42, July 16th, 1942.

*** Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific, Reconnaissance Reports for August 1st - August 5th, 1942, inclusive.

**** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 191034, July 1942.

By referring to Diagram "B", it can be seen that the area of SOWESPAC air searches covered the Bismarck and Solomon Seas and the Pacific Ocean approaches to these waters. COMSOWESPAC gave instructions that the entrances to the Coral Sea, from the north and from the east, were to be given particular attention by his search planes.

The eastern limit of SOWESPAC searches was determined by mutual agreement between COMSOPACFOR and COMSOWESPAC. CTF 63 had suggested to COMSOPACFOR that SOWESPAC aircraft be requested to search west of 158° East Longitude.* It is presumed that CTF 63 preferred to extend his own searches as far as possible to support the operations of the Allied Expeditionary Force, since he had been charged by COMSOPACFOR with the responsibility of providing (and arranging with SOWESPAC) for adequate coverage. Certainly he could be more assured of receiving contact reports from planes under his own control than from SOWESPAC planes which were merely cooperating. CTF 63 informed COMSOPAC that his own searches were disposed to isolate the Coral Sea east of Longitude 158°(E),* and that for increased effectiveness his searches overlapped that meridian to the westward by an average of 120 miles.* COMSOPACFOR informed COMSOWESPAC of CTF 63's plans for air searches and suggested the eastern limit of 158° East for SOWESPAC searches.** COMSOWESPAC concurred in this suggestion.*** The reason for his acquiescence to the penetration of the Southwest Pacific Area (the eastern boundary of which was 159° East Longitude) seems to have been revealed in his dispatch to COMSOPAC a week earlier, wherein he had pointed out that: "all available aviation in this area is subject to actual limitations of range...."****

On August 5th, five Hudsons of the R.A.A.F. 32nd General Reconnaissance Squadron, based at Port Moresby, reconnoitered Buka, Kieta and Bougainville Strait, and then returned to base thereafter on the recently constructed field at Fall River in Milne Bay.***** On succeeding days, the Hudsons searched an area extending through the northern Solomons as far south as the easternmost tip of New Georgia Island, which area was referred to as Reconnaissance Area B.

Commander Allied Air Forces, North Eastern Area, also initiated Reconnaissance Areas C, D, and E on August 5th. Each of these areas were searched on August 5th and subsequent days by one B-17 (or one LB-30, an armed air transport version of the B-24) operating from Port Moresby.***** The geographic boundaries of these reconnaissance areas are not known definitely, but by plotting the time and position of each contact reported, it has been possible to approximate the tracks of the searching planes on Diagrams "B", "C", "D", and "E". Reconnaissance Area C appears to have

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* COMAIRSOPAC (CTF 63) Dispatch 220737, July 1942, addressed to COMSOPAC.

** COMSOPAC Dispatch 230250, July 1942, addressed to COMSOWESPAC.

*** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 260955, July 1942, addressed to COMSOPAC.

**** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 191034, July 1942, addressed to COMSOPAC.

***** Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific, Reconnaissance Report for August 5th, 1942.

extended from Vitiaz Strait along the south coast of New Britain past St. George's Channel to the Feni Islands, thence on the return it included Green Island and the Solomon Sea. Reconnaissance Area D conformed approximately to the line between Madang and the Kapingamarangi Islands and cut across the western portion of the Bismarck Sea in a north-south direction. Reconnaissance Area E was a photographic coverage of the ports of Rabaul and Kavieng and a search of the sea areas enroute.

COMSOWESPAC's search and reconnaissance operations were superimposed upon his offensive air attack missions in support of the SOPAC forces. His air offensive was directed, commencing on D-Day, primarily at interdicting Japanese air operations in the Rabaul Area, denying refueling of Japanese planes at Buka enroute to Tulagi, and smothering the Japanese air power based at Lae and Salamaua by periodic attacks in order to prevent it from reinforcing the Japanese air strength at Rabaul.

COMSOWESPAC had directed his aircraft to be prepared to strike hostile naval targets discovered in the North Eastern Area.* This directive "to be prepared to strike" (rather than "to strike") naval targets is of significance in this study, since it so happened later that the Japanese Cruiser Force (which attacked the Allied Forces at Savo Island) passed with impunity southward through the Solomons on August 8th and northward through the Solomons on August 9th, within a 600 miles radius of Port Moresby during twelve hours of daylight on each day.

COMSOWESPAC's directive is here analyzed, since he had been directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to interdict hostile naval targets as well as hostile air operations as a part of his supporting role for Task ONE. On August 10th, the day after the Battle of Savo Island, the Army Chief of Staff queried COMSOWESPAC as to "the degree of success you are obtaining....in locating and attacking Japanese surface craft."** COMSOWESPAC replied: "Had arranged with Ghormley for missions if called, but have had no requests".*** It is revealed in the light of this statement, that the basis for COMSOWESPAC's directive merely "to be prepared to strike" hostile naval targets was the agreement reached between himself and COMSOPACFOR.

The arrangements made between these two commanders were: (a) that Southwest Pacific air units would concentrate primarily upon interdicting Japanese air operations against the Allied forces in the Tulagi area, and (b) that SOWESPAC aircraft would operate against hostile naval targets only if COMSOPACFOR made specific requests for such attacks direct to COMSOWESPAC Area.****

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* COMSOWESPAC Operation Instructions No. 14, July 26th, 1942, and Annexure (A) to Allied Air Forces Operation Instruction No. 18, July 31st, 1942.

** Radio No. 658, CM-OUT 2793, C of St. to CINC, SWPA, August 9th 1942 (August 10th (-) 11 Zone Time).

*** Radio No. C-245, CM-IN 3795, CINC, SWPA to C of St., August 11th, 1942.

**** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 191034, July 1942, addressed to COMSOPACFOR.

The reasons why COMSOPACFOR, the designated commander whom the Joint Chiefs of Staff had charged with the responsibility for the execution of Task ONE, would enter into such an agreement are nowhere set down. It is known, however, that he was convinced that COMSOWESPAC did not have adequate air strength, for he stated to COMINCH: "I consider means now prospectively available SOPAC sufficient for accomplishment Task ONE provided SOWESPAC Area be furnished sufficient means for interdiction hostile aircraft activities based on New Britain-New Guinea-Northern Solomons Area."* In the same message he quoted a previous dispatch to the effect that: "The air forces in sight for the Southwest Pacific Area are not adequate to interdict hostile air or naval operations against the Tulagi area."*

However, despite this inadequacy, the above agreement is not believed to have been sound in all particulars. COMSOPACFOR was in the position of having to rely upon the cooperation and support of SOWESPAC air units to locate and interdict Japanese surface forces in the approaches to Tulagi from Rabaul, since this area lay almost wholly within the SOWESPAC Area. Should not SOWESPAC aircraft have attacked automatically a strong surface ship formation, such as the Japanese Cruiser Force, heading in the direction of Tulagi? The Allied Air Forces North Eastern Area, significantly enough, had launched promptly and automatically a flight of B-17s from Port Moresby on August 2nd to attack an aircraft carrier falsely reported to be in Rabaul Harbor.** Is it not logical therefore to consider that COMSOPACFOR should have insisted that COMSOWESPAC direct his air forces to interdict large and powerful naval forces located in his area which were obviously making advances southward through the Solomons?

It is clearly evident that the planning and the operation of the Allied forces were concerned chiefly with the enemy capability of attacking by air, either from land bases, seaplane tenders, or from aircraft carriers. COMSOPACFOR had expressed this concern to COMINCH when he stated: "I wish to emphasize that the basic problem of this operation is the protection of surface ships against land-based aircraft....".* Had COMSOPACFOR considered more fully the enemy capability of attacking with surface ships which could approach through the SOWESPAC Area under low visibility conditions, he might have exercised his own responsibility, rather than to have depended upon the cooperation of SOWESPAC forces, and taken measures to insure that the threat of an enemy surface ship attack was met before it reached Savo Island. Perhaps then he would have been alerted to the need for late afternoon searches in addition to the early morning searches in Sectors II and IV.

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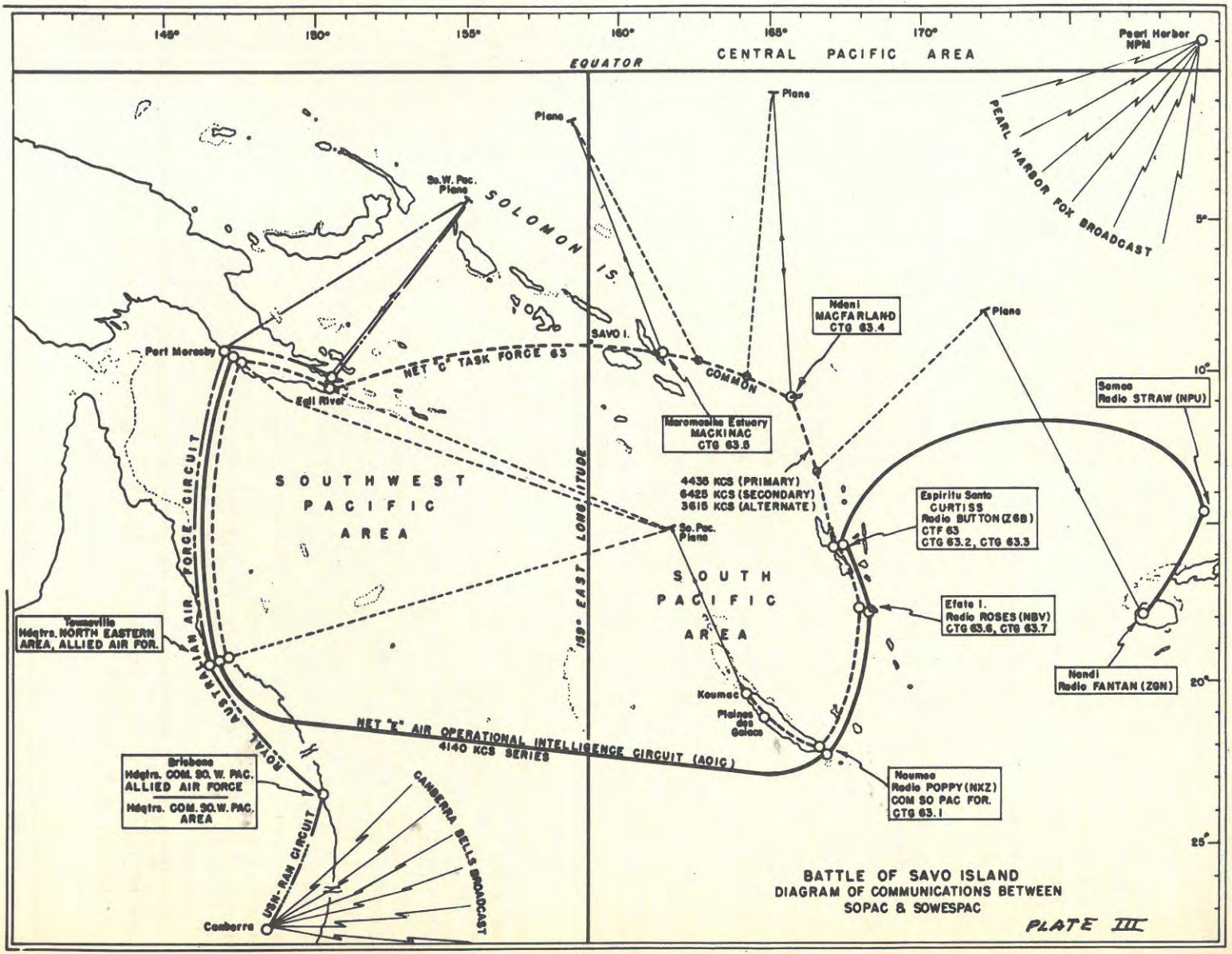
* COMSOPAC Dispatch 112000, July 1942, to COMINCH.

** Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific, Operations Report for August 2nd, 1942.



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND
DIAGRAM OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN
SOPAC & SOWESPAC

PLATE III

Perhaps also he would have provided for the air coverage of the approaches from Rabaul and thus have precluded the necessity for CTF 62 later to request a special search of this area.*

(e) COMMUNICATION ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN COMSOPAC AND COMSOWESPAC (Plate III)

The Communication Plan 1-42 (Annex "D" to CTF 63's Operation Plan 1-42) provided, among other circuits, a communications Net "E" established between those air bases from which both long range air searches and heavy bomber strikes could originate. This included Espiritu Santo, Efate, and Noumea in SOPAC and Townsville and Port Moresby in the North Eastern Area of SOWESPAC. This circuit was a rapid and positive means for the wide dissemination of operational information and intelligence, and was in effect an Air Operational Intelligence Circuit (AOIC) as now employed in the naval communication service.

This Communication Plan provided an additional radio circuit known as Net "C" between the air bases ashore, the tenders, the task group commanders and all reconnaissance and bombardment aircraft in the SOPAC Area. It did not provide an arrangement whereby SOPAC air bases, or task group or force commanders, would receive messages or contact reports from SOWESPAC aircraft in flight. This circuit was in effect a task force common, although it was not so designated.

COMSOWESPAC Area's air communication plan was promulgated by the Allied Air Forces in Signal Instructions, Annexure "B" to Operation Instruction No. 18. These instructions provided for the establishment of special point-to-point watches at Port Moresby and Townsville to listen on the AIRSOPAC (TF 63) Net "E". These instructions further provided in paragraph 3(e):

"All signals originated in North Eastern Area and addressed to South Pacific Forces are to be routed via Headquarters Allied Air Force (Brisbane). Additionally, when urgency demands, they may be routed via Port Moresby or Townsville on the above point-to-point series."

Net "C" also was guarded by the three Allied Air Force base stations in the North Eastern Area - Fall River, Port Moresby and Townsville - for the purpose of being able to communicate with aircraft (in flight) of the South Pacific Force, should such aircraft desire to communicate. Listening watches were maintained and transmitters were ready to reply, but no provision was made for the initiation over Net "C" of messages from SOWESPAC bases to SOPAC bases.

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* CTF 62 Dispatch 070642, August 1942, addressed to CTF 63.

The procedure governing SOWESPAC Air Force reconnaissance missions was set forth in the Signal Annex to Operations Instruction No. 2, dated May 23, 1942. Contacts made at sea were to be reported immediately by transmission at the target. The reconnaissance plane making contact was to remain in the vicinity of the sighted target until recalled or forced to retire, sending MO's and the plane's identifying call. The Air Force ground station to which the contact report was transmitted was to repeat the entire message in acknowledgement.

The contact codes and ciphers to be used by reconnaissance and bombardment aircraft of the South Pacific Area were issued to the Air Command Headquarters, Townsville and to the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Port Moresby. Arrangements were made with the latter that North Eastern Area air units have access to the codes.

A study of the above communication plans for the air forces in both the SOPAC and SOWESPAC Areas reveals that adequate means were provided for the prompt transmittal of any contact report to the commands concerned so that immediate and positive action might be taken. CTF 63 made arrangements with COMSOWESPAC that all search reports would be immediately rebroadcast on the respective circuits of the air command in each area.* However, the employment of the means in SOWESPAC in practice, did not exploit the full capabilities of rapid and effective communications, thus causing long delays in the transmittal of vital information. It will be shown later that contact reports made in the SOWESPAC Area followed the echelon of command before being broadcast to SOPAC forces.

Fleet broadcast schedules were the primary means of delivering contacts made in SOWESPAC Area to naval units in the SOPAC Area. The two primary fleet broadcast schedules that were available to deliver vital information to forces in the area of operations were the CANBERRA (VHC) "BELLS" broadcast, which was copied by the SOWESPAC naval units that were involved in the operation (old Task Force 44), and the Pearl Harbor (NPM) "HOW" Fox broadcast, which was copied by the SOPAC naval units.

(f) ALLIED DEPLOYMENT OF NAVAL FORCES

(1) Approach to Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area.

A large concentration of naval forces was first assembled under the command of COMSOPACFOR in the Fiji Islands in late July 1942. CINCPAC had made available for the execution of Task ONE three Striking Forces of the Pacific Fleet: (1) Task Force 11, flagship SARATOGA; (2) Task Force 16,

* Letter to President, Naval War College, from Rear Admiral M.B. Gardiner, USN (Chief of Staff to COMAIRSOPAC, CTF 63, in August 1942), October 20th, 1948.

flagship ENTERPRISE; and (3) Task Force 18, flagship WASP. COMSOWESPAC had transferred the cruisers and destroyers of Task Force 44 to COMSOPACFOR. These joined at Koro Island, Fiji's with South Pacific Area Amphibious Force (Task Force 62) in which the First Marine Division was embarked, to form the Expeditionary Force, TF 61.

After conducting rehearsals at Koro Island from July 28th to July 31st, the Expeditionary Force (TF 61) sortied on July 31st for Tulagi. CTF 61 headed to the westward for Longitude 159°-00'(E) Latitude 16°-30' (S), passing south of Efate through the New Hebrides en route. At 1200, August 5th, he headed his Expeditionary Force northward along the meridian of 159° East Longitude and remained in cruising disposition until 1600, August 6th. This track is shown on Diagram "B".

The Allied approach commenced at this latter time. CTG 61.2 (CTF 62) placed in effect his Operation Plan A3-42 and directed the Amphibious Force (TG 61.2) to take the Attack Force Approach Disposition AR-3 and to proceed to the assigned transport areas (Area XRAY at Lunga Roads and Area YOKE at Tulagi), complying with the courses and times specified in Attack Force Approach Plan AR-11. According to this plan, the Amphibious Force continued north to reach position Latitude 09°-50'(S), Longitude 159°-00' (E) at 2235, August 6th, at which time course was to be changed at 040° (T) to close Savo Island at a speed of twelve knots. In the execution of this plan, this change actually was made at 2250.

The Air Support Force, TG 61.1, broke off from its cruising position (relative to TG 61.2) at 1830 by changing course to 305°(T) and increasing speed to twenty-two knots to pass through Point ABLE and Point BAKER (shown on Diagram B) seventy-five miles to the west of the meridian 159° East Longitude. Point BAKER was to be reached by 0030, August 7th at which time TG 61.1 was to change course to 090°(T) to reach Point VICTOR at dawn, the dawn aircraft launching position.

At 0300, the Amphibious Force (TG 61.2), in a position fifteen miles southwest of Savo Island, deployed into two groups: Group XRAY which proceeded to Lunga Roads off Guadalcanal, and Group YOKE which proceeded to Tulagi. Both Groups were in Iron Bottom Sound at dawn and arrived at their objectives shortly after sunrise, August 7th.

This deployment at dawn - with the Amphibious Force (TG 61.2) in Iron Bottom Sound and the Air Support Force (TG 61.1) operating in its support in the area south of Guadalcanal Island - established the strategic disposition of Allied forces with which this study of the Battle of Savo Island is concerned, for it was this disposition that the Japanese Cruiser Force had to meet on the 8th and 9th of August. In conjunction with this disposition of surface ships of TF 61, COMSOPACFOR had the land and tender-based aircraft of Task Force 63 deployed, and COMSOWESPAC had his land-based air disposed, in the manner already described. In addition, COMSOWESPAC had deployed two submarines in the Bismarck Area for

reconnaissance and attack patrols.

(2) CTG 61.1 Operates His Carriers

CTG 61.1 operated each of his three carrier striking forces as a separate group, rather than as a single task force of three carriers as was done in later operations. He formed them into a disposition approximating an equilateral triangle with the SARATOGA in TG 61.1.1 (TF 11) at the apex as guide, followed five miles on his starboard quarter by TF 61.1.2 (TF 16), and five miles on his port quarter by TF 61.1.3 (TF 18).* In this manner these groups remained within mutual supporting distance and visual signal distance of one another.

CTG 61.1's reasons for not combining his task groups into one Task Force of three carriers were:

(a) His belief that protection of a carrier task force under air attack could best be accomplished by the separation of the carriers into groups containing only one carrier each, as was done at the Battle of Midway. At this early date, maneuverability was given almost equal importance with anti-aircraft fire in defense of a task force. It was felt that separation would reduce the risk of collision which would otherwise exist in a tight formation when the carriers were taking independent evasion action. In August 1942, the lesson derived from both the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway - namely, that an independent single carrier task force could be readily penetrated by Japanese attacking planes - had not as yet been adequately evaluated. In later actions, as the volume of anti-aircraft fire of a task force increased in proportion to the increased number of anti-aircraft guns and improved fire control, the importance of maneuverability decreased and the necessity for independent freedom of action for each carrier obtained to a far less degree.

(b) The necessity for obtaining air space for rendezvous and break-up of carrier air groups. At this time the realization had not yet evolved that fighter defense is made easier and more economical by concentrating ships and by controlling a spot defense rather than a dispersal of fighter strength in defense of separated targets.

While TG 61.2 was heading for its anchorages off Tulagi and Guadalcanal, TG 61.1 was operating about seventy miles to the southwest of Tulagi and was generally steaming on a southeasterly course at thirty knots while launching aircraft, since the wind was from that direction and was very light. This task group, commencing at 0530, had been providing air cover for TG 61.2 and air strikes for assaulting enemy positions

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* War Diary ENTERPRISE August 1942.

at Guadalcanal and Tulagi. At about 0625 sixteen fighters (launched by the WASP) destroyed all of the Japanese aircraft based at Tulagi - seven Type-97 flying boats and nine seaplane fighters - without suffering any losses whatsoever.

(3) Approach of TG 61.2 (Amphibious Force)

The approach of TG 61.2 was blanketed by very favorable weather conditions, in that there were clouds and sufficient light rain to cloak the advance of the force. At the same time there was sufficient moonlight to facilitate taking bearings and making the necessary and prescribed changes of courses.* At 0406, Amphibious Group XRAY changed course to 120°(T) to proceed south of Savo Island directly to Lunga Roads. At 0500, Amphibious Group YOKE, in position four miles north of Savo Island, changed course to 120°(T) to make the final approach to Tulagi. At 0614, Fire Support Group MIKE commenced shelling designated targets at Tulagi and at 0617 Fire Support Group LOVE opened fire on Japanese positions at Guadalcanal. Group YOKE arrived at the transport area off Tulagi at 0637 and Group XRAY arrived off Guadalcanal Beach at 0650. As a consequence of these weather conditions, and of the failure of the Japanese to locate TF 61 on August 6th, the advances of the Amphibious Groups on Tulagi and Guadalcanal were effected with complete surprise, and were first reported by the Japanese at Tulagi at 0645. This message was received by Commander Outer South Seas Force at 0652, which time has been accepted in this analysis as the initial contact between Allied and Japanese forces. At this time CTG 61.2 set the hour for landing on Guadalcanal as 0910, August 7th.*

(4) Deployment of SOWESPAC Submarines.

COMSOWESPAC deployed two submarines in the New Britain, New Ireland area during this operation. These were the S-38 and the S-44 which operated independently.

(a) Deployment of S-44.

The S-44 departed Brisbane at 0930, July 24th and headed for a patrol station off Bougainville Island on the assumed Japanese traffic route between Rabaul and Tulagi where she arrived at 0830, July 30th. Sea conditions were poor, so the Commanding Officer headed for a patrol station off Cape St. George. He arrived on station at about 0350, August 1st where he noted some merchant shipping. He remained off Cape St. George until morning when he headed up the east coast of New Ireland arriving off North Cape at about 0800, August 4th. Here he encountered considerable merchant shipping, but was unable to close it. At 1845,

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* War Diary CTF 62, August 1942, page 5.

August 6th he headed around the west end of Hanover Island and commenced cruising eastward along the south shore to the entrances of Steffen and Byron Straits where he arrived at about 0700, August 7th.*

(b) Deployment of S-38

The S-38 departed Brisbane, Australia at 0930, July 28th and headed for her patrol station off the entrance to Wide Bay, New Britain where she was directed to cover the assumed Japanese traffic lane between Rabaul and Gona, New Guinea. She arrived on station at 1817, August 4th; and at 0300, August 5th penetrated Wide Bay, but discovered no evidence of Japanese activity. The Commanding Officer then headed for a patrol station off Cape St. George, the southern tip of New Ireland, where he arrived at 0610, August 6th and commenced patrolling again.**

The decisions of the Commanding Officers of the S-38 and S-44 to change these patrol stations on their own initiative indicated a correct appreciation of their objective, which was the destruction of Japanese shipping; and their positions at 0652, August 7th, were just short of being very fruitful against the Japanese Cruiser Force enroute to Tulagi which passed out the south entrance of Steffen Strait at 0650, August 7th and later passed very close aboard the S-38 at 1945, August 7th.

(5) Deployment of Allied Forces at 0652, August 7th.

At 0652, August 7th - the time at which Commander Outer South Seas Force received the initial contact report from Tulagi - the various Allied forces deployed in his area were located in the following positions:

(a) TG 61.1, Air Support Force

This force was located sixty-eight miles on bearing 240°(T) from Tulagi, heading southeast.

(b) TG 61.2 (TF 62) Amphibious Force

(1) Amphibious Group YOKE was in the vicinity of Tulagi. Fire Support Group MIKE had commenced shelling the Japanese positions at Tulagi at 0614, and Transport Squadron YOKE had anchored at 0637. The screening group at Tulagi remained underway, the CHICAGO and CANBERRA operating with the BAGLEY, and the HENLEY, HELM and BLUE providing an anti-submarine screen for the transports.

(2) Amphibious Group XRAY was in the vicinity of Guadalcanal Beach. Fire Support Group LOVE had opened fire at 0617, and Transport

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*Third War Patrol Report, S-44, July 24th, 1942 to August 23rd, 1942.
**Seventh War Patrol Report S-38, July 28th, 1942 to August 22nd, 1942.

Squadron XRAY had anchored at 0650. The underway anti-submarine screen for the transports consisted of the SELFRIDGE, JARVIS, MUGFORD and RALPH TALBOT. The AUSTRALIA and HOBART, screened by the PATTERSON, remained underway.

(c) Submarines

(1) The S-38 was patrolling an eighteen mile line parallel to SW Coast of New Ireland in the vicinity of Cape St. George and eight miles off shore.

(2) The S-44 was cruising submerged about three miles south of the coast of New Hanover en route to Steffen Strait.

(g) COMPOSITION OF FORCES AND TASKS ASSIGNED

(1) Composition of Forces

The Expeditionary Force, TF 61, was a very powerful force consisting of two almost entirely separate forces; one, the Air Support Force, and the other an Amphibious Force. The composition of these forces are set forth below.

(a) TG 61.1 - Air Support Force

(1) TG 61.1.1 (Pacific Fleet Task Force 11)

SARATOGA (36 VF, 36 VB, 18 VT)	1 CV
MINNEAPOLIS, NEW ORLEANS	2 CA
PHELPS, FARRAGUT, WORDEN, MCDONOUGH, DALE	5 DD

(2) TG 61.1.2 (Pacific Fleet Task Force 16)

ENTERPRISE (36 VF, 36 VB, 16 VT)	1 CV
NORTH CAROLINA	1 BB
PORTLAND	1 CA
ATLANTA	1 CL(AA)
BALCH, MAURY, GWIN, BENHAM, GRAYSON	5 DD

(3) TG 61.1.3 (Pacific Fleet Task Force 18)

WASP (27 VF, 28 VB, 6 VT)	1 CV
SAN FRANCISCO, SALT LAKE CITY	2 CA
LANG, STERRETT, AARON WARD, STACK, LAFFEY, FARENHOLT	6 DD

(b) TG 61.2, Amphibious Force (TF 62 plus SW Pac TF 44)

(1) TG 62.1, Transport Group XRAY

FULLER, AMERICAN LEGION, BELLATRIX, MCCAWLEY(F) BARNETT, GEO. F. ELLIOTT, LIBRA, HUNTER LIGGETT, ALCHIBA, FOMALHAUT, BETELGEUSE, CRESENT CITY PRESIDENT HAYES, PRESIDENT ADAMS, ALHENA	15 AP

(2) TG 62.2, Transport Group YOKE

NEVILLE, ZEILIN, HEYWOOD, PRESIDENT JACKSON	4 AP
COLHOUN, GREGORY, LITTLE, MCKEAN	4 APD

(3) TG 62.3 Fire Support Group LOVE

QUINCY, VINCENNES, ASTORIA	3 CA
HULL, DEWEY, ELLET, WILSON	4 DD

(4) TG 62.4 Fire Support Group MIKE

SAN JUAN	1 CL(AA)
MONSSEN, BUCHANAN	2 DD

(5) TG 62.5, Minesweeper Group

HOPKINS, TREVER, ZANE SOUTHARD, HOVEY	5 DMS

(6) TG 62.6 Screening Group

HMAS AUSTRALIA, HMAS CANBERRA, USS CHICAGO	3 CA
HMAS HOBART	1 CL
DESRON FOUR	
SELFRIDGE, PATTERSON, BAGLEY, BLUE, RALPH	
TALBOT, HENLEY, HELM, JARVIS, MUGFORD	9 DD

(7) TG 62.7 Air Support Control Group
Fighter Director Group in CHICAGO
Air Support Director Group in MCCAWLEY
Air Support Director Group (Standby) in NEVILLE

(8) TG 62.8, Landing Force (1st Marine Division)
Guadalcanal Landing Group
Tulagi Landing Group

(2) Tasks Assigned

The tasks assigned the Allied naval forces were, in part:

(a) TF 61, Allied Expeditionary Force.

(1) On Dog Day to capture and occupy Tulagi and adjacent positions, including an adjoining portion of Guadalcanal suitable for the construction of landing fields.

(2) To defend seized areas until relieved by forces to be designated later.

(3) To call on TF 63 for special aircraft missions.*

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* COMSOPAC Operation Plan 1-42, July 16th, 1942.

(b) TG 61.1 Air Support Force.

(1) On Dog Day and subsequently, to cooperate with Commander Amphibious Force by supplying air support.

(2) To protect own carriers from enemy air attacks.

(3) To make air searches as seem advisable or as ordered.*

(c) TG 61.2 (TF 62 plus TF 44) Amphibious Force

(1) To proceed to Tulagi in tactical support of Amphibious Force. On Dog Day to seize and occupy Tulagi and adjacent positions including an adjoining portion of Guadalcanal suitable for the construction of landing fields.

(2) To defend seized areas until relieved by forces to be designated later.

(3) On departure of carriers, to call on TF 63 for special aircraft missions.*

The Amphibious Force was composed of eight separate task groups, but since only the Screening Group and the Fire Support Groups LOVE and MIKE were involved in the Battle of Savo Island, the tasks assigned to these three groups only are pertinent. These tasks were, in part:

(a) Screening Group - TG 62.6**

(1) To screen the transport groups against enemy surface, air and submarine attack.

(b) Fire Support Group LOVE - TG 62.3**

(1) In case of air attack to defend transports and troops at Guadalcanal with anti-aircraft fire, acting under the directions of CTG 62.6.

(2) To support TG 62.6 in case of surface attack.

(c) Fire Support Group MIKE - TG 62.4.

Same as for Fire Support Group LOVE, except that it operated in the Tulagi Area rather than at Guadalcanal.

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* CTF 61 Operation Order 1-42, July 28th, 1942.
** CTF 62 Operation Plan A3-42, July 1942.

The composition of TG 61.1, as shown above, combined extreme mobility and offensive striking power. This Air Support Force was relied upon to meet any air or surface threat that the Japanese might be able to bring against the Amphibious Force, in addition to its role of air strikes in support of the landing operations. Allied intelligence did not indicate that there were any powerful Japanese carrier striking forces in the vicinity of Tulagi; but the responsible commanders realized that, despite the Japanese carrier losses at Midway, strong Japanese forces might well be brought to bear in or near the Tulagi area. Serious opposition could be expected, not only from land-based aircraft at present within the Bismarck-New Guinea-Solomons area but also from reinforcement aircraft which could be rapidly flown in from the Truk-Ponape Area. A combination of attacks from both land-based and carrier-based aircraft was considered to be the most dangerous opposition the enemy could bring to bear. However, the Allied carrier planes were considered to be sufficient to counter such opposition. In addition Allied intelligence disclosed the relatively limited extent of Japanese surface strength within the area. Consequently, Japanese surface forces so far reported were scarcely a match for the Allied surface ships within TG 61.1.

TG 61.2 was, as the above listed composition shows, an extremely powerful amphibious force which possessed the capability of defeating the strongest surface forces that might be employed by the Japanese at this time. With the support of TG 61.1, it also had the means of defeating any land-based and carrier-based aircraft which might be employed against it. The Battles of the Coral Sea and of Midway had seriously decreased the carrier striking power of the Japanese Combined Fleet, and the limited number of airfields within the Solomon Islands restricted the striking power of the Japanese land-based aircraft.

The Screening Group, plus the Fire Support Groups LOVE and MIKE, had sufficient strength to carry out the tasks assigned it. Its primary role was to defend the transport groups against enemy surface, air and submarine attack during the amphibious operation. During daylight hours, when covered by the air power of TG 61.1, it was capable of defending itself against any probable attack. During the night, when it was without the support of TG 61.1, its preponderance of power against possible Japanese surface attack was considerably lessened. However, it was capable, provided its strength was properly concentrated, of defeating Japanese surface forces known to be in the area, should such forces attempt to interfere with the landing operations during night or low visibility.

(h) THE ALLIED PLAN

This study is concerned merely with those aspects of planning for the execution of Task ONE which culminated in the clash between Japanese and Allied surface forces in the night action near Savo Island. Consequently the entire plan for the Allied landings and occupation of positions in the southern Solomonshas not been included. The Allied plan for

offensive action in the South Pacific originated with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was officially made known by COMINCH to CINCPAC on July 2nd, 1942. Operations were to commence on August 1st for the accomplishment of the objective in three stages, with the task for each stage set forth as follows:

(a) Task ONE: Seize and occupy Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi and adjacent positions.

(b) Task TWO: Seize and occupy the remainder of the Solomon Islands, Lae, Salamaua, and the northeast coast of New Guinea.

(c) Task THREE: Seize and occupy Rabaul and adjacent positions in the New Guinea-New Ireland Area.*

As a consequence of this directive, COMSOPAC and COMSOWESPAC held consultations and recommended that the operation not be initiated until adequate air strength was built up in SOPAC and SOWESPAC Areas. They stated that, in view of (1) the recently developed strength of the enemy positions, (2) the shortage of airplanes for the continued maintenance of strong air support throughout the operation, and (3) the shortage of transports and the lack of sufficient shipping that would make possible the continued movement of troops and supplies, the successful accomplishment of the operation was open to the gravest doubts. They therefore jointly recommended that Task ONE be deferred, pending further development of forces in the South Pacific and Southwest Pacific Areas. They offered an alternate plan that the Allies proceed with an infiltration process through the New Hebrides and Santa Cruz Island groups until such time as bases could be developed for the support of the three stages of the operation as one continuous movement.**

The Joint Chiefs of Staff refused to defer the operations already underway for Task ONE for two reasons: (a) that it was necessary to stop without delay the enemy's southward advance that would be effected by his firm establishment at Tulagi, and (b) that enemy airfields established at Guadalcanal would seriously hamper, if not prevent, Allied establishment of bases both at Santa Cruz and Espiritu Santo. They agreed to provide additional shipborne aircraft and additional surface forces; to increase the rate of flow of replacement aircraft and to make available for the South Pacific Area one heavy bombardment group of thirty-five planes.***

COMSOPAC and COMSOWESPAC then went ahead with the planned operation. COMSOPAC planned to accomplish Task ONE by seizing the Tulagi-Guadalcanal

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*Joint Directive U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, War Diary, COMSOPAC for July 1942--COMINCH to CINCPAC 022100, July 1942.

**COMSOPAC and COMSOWESPAC to Joint Chiefs of Staff (COMINCH) Dispatch 081012 July 1942.

***COMINCH to COMSOPAC Dispatch 102100, July 1942.

area on Dog day and, after it had been secured, by seizing Ndeni in the Santa Cruz Islands. The purpose of these operations was to deny these positions to enemy forces and to prepare bases for Allied future offensive operations.*

The plan was simple and direct. An amphibious force of suitable strength was to seize the Tulagi and Guadalcanal Area under the air support of land-based aircraft flying from land and seaplane bases within both the SOPAC and SOWESPAC Areas and from carrier-based aircraft within the Expeditionary Force. It was also to be supported against naval attack (both surface ship and submarine) by the cruiser and destroyer escorts and screening ships attached to the amphibious force.

Based on the intelligence available concerning the enemy forces within the objective area and those capable of being moved into the area in time to interfere with the landings, the plan was sound. This was particularly true, providing the factor of surprise could be achieved at the objective area. However, the Allied Commander did not expect to achieve surprise,** and relied on the coverage of his land and carrier-based aircraft and on the gunpower of his ships to defeat expected enemy counter-attacks.

(i) GENERAL SUMMARY

The preceding discussion of the background for the Battle of Savo Island shows, in a general way, that:

(a) The Japanese effort south of the Equator was designed to expand Japanese power in the South Seas Area and to counter any Allied attack that might be made in that area. This effort was spearheaded by that portion of the land-based air power of the Base Air Force (ELEVENTH Air Fleet) which was based at Rabaul. It was supported by limited naval forces based primarily at Rabaul and Kavieng, and by submarines, all under the command of Commander Outer South Seas Force (Commander EIGHTH Fleet) whose headquarters were at Rabaul. It was supported also by reconnaissance seaplanes of the Base Air Force based at Rabaul and Tulagi.

(b) The Allied effort in the South Pacific was designed to stop the advance of the Japanese in that area and to seize advanced bases in the Solomons from which to continue further operations against the Japanese. This effort was spearheaded by an Expeditionary Force, strong in naval and air power. It was supported by land-based air power operating both from SOPAC and SOWESPAC bases. In strategic command of all forces within the SOPAC Area, including the Expeditionary Force, was COMSOPACFOR with operational headquarters at Noumea.

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* COMSOPAC OpPlan 1-42 Serial 0017 of July 16th, 1942.

** COMSOPAC and COMSOWESPAC to Joint Chiefs of Staff (COMINCH) Dispatch 081017, July 1942.

CHAPTER IV

JAPANESE REACTION

0652, August 7th to 2400, August 7th

(a) OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE

The Japanese cruisers CHOKAI and CRUDIV SIX had sortied at 0615 from Silver Sound, where they had been basing since August 1st, and had cleared the southern entrance to Steffen Strait at 0650. At that time the CHOKAI and Section One of CRUDIV SIX (AOBA and KAKO) had set the course for Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island; and Section Two (KINUGASA and FURUTAKA) had headed for Rabaul. At 0652 each of the five cruisers intercepted the urgent dispatch from Commander Air Base, Tulagi that reported: "Enemy task force sighted!"*

The reaction of the Japanese unit commanders concerned was instantaneous and correct. The Commanding Officer, CHOKAI immediately reversed course toward Rabaul. COMCRUDIV SIX, in the AOBA cancelled the orders of Section One to proceed to Manus, and ordered the AOBA and KAKO to proceed to Rabaul** at twenty-four knots, notifying Commander EIGHTH Fleet at Rabaul of his action.*** He reformed CRUDIV SIX in column and joined in behind the CHOKAI.

Meanwhile Commander Outer South Seas Force, who was at Rabaul, was studying the situation. He had been expecting some form of Allied attack in the Solomons Area, but not at this time. The Japanese records available to this study do not divulge his mental processes at the time, but there can be no doubt as to his serious concern over the nature of the Allied effort at Tulagi.

In the meantime, the routine air searches scheduled for August 7th were commenced. At 0700, two Type-97 seaplanes departed Rabaul to search the sector between bearings 100°(T) and 130°(T) from Rabaul to a radius of 700 miles.****

At 0725, Commander Outer South Seas Force received the amplifying report from Tulagi that he had been anxiously awaiting. This urgent dispatch had been released by Commander Tulagi Air Base twenty minutes before, and reported: "Enemy task force of twenty ships attacking Tulagi;

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927 June 27th, 1947, pages 2 and 6.

** CRUDIV 6 Signal Order 289.

*** COMCRUDIV 6 Classified Dispatch #246, August 7th, 1942.

**** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th to 9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947, page 2.

undergoing severe bombings; landing preparations underway; help re-requested."*

This dispatch provided Commander Outer South Seas Force with an accurate estimate of ships attacking Tulagi, since in fact there were twenty-two ships of all classes at Tulagi.** He knew, of course, from this dispatch that there must be a supporting force of Allied carriers somewhere in the vicinity of Tulagi to have carried out the bombing attacks reported. No reports were received from Guadalcanal and it is possible that Commander Outer South Seas Force based his initial estimate of the total strength of the Allied effort upon the report from Tulagi.

He shortly was handed a dispatch, sent at 0725 by Commander YOKOHAMA Air Group at Tulagi addressed to Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force, which reported: "All large flying boats burned as a result of the 0630 air attack."

The situation confronting Commander Outer South Seas Force was somewhat as follows: The Allied attack on Tulagi was a complete surprise, since the Japanese had made no contact whatsoever on the Allied force until it struck. It was in strength, and constituted a serious menace to the Japanese positions in the Solomon Islands. If these positions were to be held by the Japanese, the defending forces at Tulagi must be given immediate help. Continuous air attacks on the Allied transports and cargo ships might destroy many of them, and would have a serious delaying effect on the unloading schedule of the remainder. Anchored transports were excellent targets for Japanese submarines. But air and submarine attacks were not enough in the face of Allied screening ships and carrier-based aircraft. He concluded that a bold offensive by surface ships also was needed, and decided "to put the fleet into action immediately to destroy the enemy."***

He therefore prepared his counterattack. He had been informed by dispatch of the initiative of the Commanding Officer, CHOKAI and of COMCRUDIV SIX in proceeding to Rabaul. At 0749 he directed the YUNAGI to make full speed and escort the CHOKAI into Rabaul Harbor. He also directed the TENRYU, YUBARI and the YUNAGI to be prepared at 1300 to depart from Rabaul to attack the Allied ships in the Tulagi area.***

He continued to receive reports from Tulagi of fierce naval bombardment, air bombing attacks, and of the initial landings until 0805 when communications ceased.*** The last dispatch received at that time reported:

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947, pages 3 and 6.

** War Diary CTF 62, July 18th to August 31st, 1942; and Annex I to CTF 62 Operation Plan A3-42.

*** Commander 8th Fleet's Estimate of the Situation regarding American Landings on August 7th, 1942, on Guadalcanal and Tulagi, CIG Document 73845, May 7th, 1947.

"The enemy was in great force; but that no matter what the odds, the garrison would fight bravely to the last man, praying for everlasting victory."* This report certainly indicated that Tulagi was in danger of falling.

The disruption of communications from Tulagi denied Commander Outer South Seas Force the further information he desired of the enemy. Accurate intelligence of the strength, disposition and activities of Allied forces was of primary importance in the promotion of his freedom of action. Seaplanes had already commenced search operations at 0700 in the Tulagi sector. Undoubtedly he knew, as the Allies had discovered at the Battle of Midway, that seaplanes are generally unsuitable for reconnaissance in an area where air opposition would be encountered. At any rate, additional searches were commenced at 0900, employing land attack planes rather than seaplanes.** Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force DESOPORD No. 195, ordering his search, was timed at 0910,** ten minutes later than the actual time of takeoff of the search planes.** The indications are that preliminary orders were given by Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force either by telephone or in conference, to his subordinate commander, Commander SECOND Air Group (who conducted the search) and were followed up with confirmation by dispatch operation orders. The urgency of the searches by land attack planes on August 7th is accented by the fact that the directives for searches on subsequent days were each given on the day preceding.

Three land-attack planes from the SECOND Air Group conducted reconnaissance missions to a radius of 700 miles from Rabaul over courses and lateral distances as follows:

Plane	Course Out	Lateral Distance
No. 1	170°(T)	60 miles to the left
No. 2	117°(T)	60 miles to the left
No. 3	127°(T)	60 miles to the right

A study of these searches, as depicted on Diagram "C", indicates that searches by planes number two and three were well designed to cover the area in the vicinity of the Tulagi landing. The search of plane number one covered an isolated sector interposed between Tulagi and the Australian mainland from where, as far as Commander Outer South Seas Force knew, the Allied landing forces may have been mounted.

The offensive of Commander Outer South Seas Force included the immediate launching of air attacks on the Allied naval forces at Tulagi. At 0900, simultaneous to the departure of the search planes, Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force sent off an air attack group composed of twenty-seven

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* Commander 8th Fleet's Estimate of the Situation regarding American Landings on August 7th, 1942 on Guadalcanal and Tulagi, CIG Document 73845, May 7th, 1947.

** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

land attack planes of the FOURTH Air Group and eighteen Zero fighters of the TAINAN Air Group.* At about 1045 a second air attack group, composed of sixteen Type-99 land-based carrier bombers of the SECOND Air Group, was launched to attack the Allied forces at Tulagi.** This latter attack group undoubtedly staged through the Japanese airfield at Buka Passage, since the range capability of the carrier bombers would otherwise have been inadequate for this operation.***

Commander Outer South Seas Force "decided, depending on the results of the reconnaissance and counterattacks of our air force to the south, to strike the anchored enemy convoys at night and destroy them."*

With this plan in mind, he organized a naval force (hereinafter referred to as the Japanese Cruiser Force) composed of the CHOKAI as flagship, the four heavy cruisers of CRUDIV SIX, the light cruisers TENRYU and YUBARI of CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and the only available destroyer, the YUNAGI.

This plan depended upon the reports from his reconnaissance planes launched at 0700 and again at 0900. It also called for accurate information on the results of the two bombing attacks launched against the enemy, one at 0900 and the other at 1045. By 1110 the two search seaplanes had reached the 700 miles radius from Rabaul on tracks 107°(T) and 117°(T), then proceeded on their sixty miles lateral legs, and at 1131 headed back to Rabaul. Their reconnaissance had been restricted, as can be seen by referring to Diagram "C", to the area northeast of the southern Solomons. The weather southeast of Tulagi was reported to be bad, making reconnaissance impossible.**** The enemy was not sighted.****

Commander Outer South Seas Force requested that a reconnaissance plane be sent to Tulagi to make direct observation of the results of the Japanese bombing attacks on the Allied ships there. At 1120, Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force ordered one land attack plane from the SECOND Air Force to proceed from Rabaul at 1145 to carry out this reconnaissance mission at Tulagi and Guadalcanal.**** This plane actually took off at 1202.****

At 1203, the CHOKAI and CRUDIV SIX enroute from the Kavieng Area to Rabaul, sighted the YUNAGI approaching the formation from a position fifteen and one-half miles away on bearing 193°(T).***** The YUNAGI

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* Commander 8th Fleet's Estimate of the Situation on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 73845, May 7th, 1947.

** Strength and Disposition of 25th Air Flotilla on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947.

*** "Japanese Aircraft Performance Characteristics", Technical Air Intelligence Center (TAIC) Manual No. 1, OpNav 16-VT #301.

**** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

***** CRUDIV 6, Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27, 1947.

effected rendezvous with the CHOKAI at 1224, and escorted her into Rabaul. CRUDIV SIX continued on to Rabaul separated from the CHOKAI and YUNAGI.*

At 1239, these Japanese cruisers had reached a position about twenty-five miles north of Rabaul and sighted thirteen Allied B-17s attacking Rabaul.* The cruisers prepared to repel air attacks, and maneuvered to the westward until 1243 when the B-17s disappeared.* Although this cruiser force was sighted and reported by the B-17s, it was not attacked. So far as the Japanese cruiser commanders could surmise, the airfields at Rabaul were more profitable targets for the B-17s than were the cruisers.

The Japanese air units at Rabaul endeavored to repel the B-17 attack group, employing the twenty-one Zero fighters at Rabaul.** They succeeded in destroying one B-17,*** but suffered damage to seven fighters of the TAINAN Air Group and to one fighter of the SECOND Air Group.**

By 1307 the three Japanese land attack planes on search missions arrived at the outer limit of their sectors. They proceeded along their respective cross-legs, and at 1328 turned back toward Rabaul (where they landed at 1735). The combined reconnaissance of both land and seaplane searches detected one Allied seaplane in Task Force 63 Sector IV and the Allied ships at anchor in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area.**** Perhaps the Japanese search plane on leg 127°(T) from Rabaul was discouraged by bad weather (reported by the Japanese in the southern Solomons and reported by Allied search planes in Sector I and II) and had turned back before he reached the Allied Air Support Force (TG 61.1) which was operating in his search sector. The Allied carriers reported a heavy overcast sky, but conducted flight operations below this overcast in good visibility.*****

At 1325, the first Japanese air attack struck at the Allied ships at Guadalcanal. This attack group encountered the opposition of Allied carrier-based fighters and anti-aircraft fire from the Allied ships. It suffered the following casualties: three attack planes and two fighters shot down, two attack planes made emergency landings, and nineteen attack planes and two fighters were damaged.** The Japanese in turn succeeded in shooting down nine Allied fighters and in dropping all bombs. No hits were made on the Allied ships, however, since the bombs fell well clear of the surface targets, landing between the transports and the cruisers.******

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

** Strength and Disposition of 25th Air Flotilla on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947.

*** Operation Report, Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area for August 7th, 1942.

**** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

***** War Diary, ENTERPRISE, August 1942.

****** War Diary, AMERICAN LEGION, August 1942, Report of Action off Guadalcanal, August 7th, 1942.

At 1330, the CHOKAI and YUNAGI arrived and anchored inside Rabaul Harbor. CRUDIV SIX arrived outside Rabaul at 1401 where these four cruisers conducted anti-submarine search patrols with their scouting planes until 1450 in accordance with orders from Commander EIGHTH Fleet.* Thereafter the cruisers' scouting planes were recovered and CRUDIV SIX remained underway, awaiting the CHOKAI's departure from Rabaul.

At 1440, Commander EIGHTH Fleet decided to command the cruiser force in person. He therefore hoisted his flag in the CHOKAI,** and made preparations to get underway.

He realized that as Commander Cruiser Force, he would be denied the full freedom of action that he exercised at Rabaul as Commander Outer South Seas Force and Commander EIGHTH Fleet. He also realized that he would be especially limited in communications, since the CHOKAI would probably have to operate under radio silence. In making his decision to command the cruiser force in person, his reasoning therefore is assumed to have been that as the Japanese attack on the Allied forces at Tulagi must be gotten underway immediately under a competent commander, and as he was the senior and most experienced flag officer in the area, who was fully familiar with the planned operations, he should properly command it. He knew of course that Commander ELEVENTH Air Fleet was en route to Rabaul to relieve him that day and that his own status as Commander Outer South Seas Force would terminate in a matter of hours, in any event. This reasoning is considered correct.

The second Japanese air attack group, composed of sixteen carrier-type bombers, made its attack on the Allied ships at about 1500. This group had no fighter escort, for the twenty-one fighters remaining in Rabaul (after the first air attack group took off for Tulagi) were retained there for local air defense against B-17 raids. Consequently, the flight commander of the carrier bombers employed the tactic of dividing his force into two attack groups, one of which attracted the Allied fighters thereby allowing the other to make its attack unopposed. The unopposed attack group made one hit on the MUGFORD. The opposed attack group made no hits, but suffered the loss of six bombers and damage to three which made emergency landings.***

At 1521 the land attack plane (sent out from Rabaul at noon) reached the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, conducted his reconnaissance and made his report to Rabaul by radio. By 1530 Commander Outer South Seas Force had an intelligence summary**** compiled jointly from his reconnaissance and

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74623, May 12th, 1947.

*** Strength and Disposition of 25th Air Flotilla on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947.

**** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

attacking planes, which is quoted as follows:

"(a) Enemy making landings on Guadalcanal air base; three fires on the airfield.

(b) One fire in the area of the Tulagi seaplane base.

(c) Three heavy cruisers, several destroyers, and about thirteen transports off Tulagi.

(d) Several destroyers and twenty-seven transports off Guadalcanal air base.

(e) From 1320 to 1440 there were sixty to seventy enemy planes over the anchored transports.

(f) At about 1530 no enemy planes were sighted over the anchorage."*

This intelligence summary was somewhat in error as regards the composition of the Allied forces in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area. The number of transports reported was twice the actual. The number of cruisers and destroyers reported was far less than the number present. The reason for the errors stems from the short time spent over the target area by the reconnaissance plane at 1521. The time of takeoff, time of landing, and cruising speed of this plane** indicate that it proceeded directly to the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area and returned promptly to Rabaul with no more than a single sweep past Tulagi and Guadalcanal. This intelligence summary reported the presence of Allied carrier-based aircraft at Tulagi but gave no information as to the location of the carriers. It did constitute, however, the results of the reconnaissance and air attack missions, upon which the plan of Commander Outer South Seas Force depended.

It is obvious that Commander Outer South Seas Force decided tentatively that his plan for a night surface attack upon the Allied forces at Tulagi and Guadalcanal was feasible, since he embarked upon it within the hour. He still would have the benefit of air reconnaissance and air attacks on the Allied forces on August 8th while he was en route to his objective.

Commander Outer South Seas Force then organized his command to function during his absence from Rabaul. The weight of evidence***

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* Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

** Technical Air Intelligence Center (TAIC) Manual No. 1, OpNav 16-VT-#01 "Japanese Aircraft - performance characteristic."

*** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947, and Composition of 8th Fleet on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74835, May 12th, 1947.

indicates that the command of the Outer South Seas Force was turned over to Commander ELEVENTH Air Fleet, that the operational control of various units and the administration of EIGHTH Fleet affairs was kept ashore at Rabaul, temporarily under the cognizance of Commander ELEVENTH Air Fleet, and that Commander EIGHTH Fleet, himself, retained full command over that part of the EIGHTH Fleet which constituted the Japanese Cruiser Force. For the purpose of this analysis and to indicate the specialized nature of this specific operation, Commander EIGHTH Fleet will be known hereinafter as Commander Cruiser Force.

At 1628 Commander Cruiser Force departed Rabaul in his flagship the CHOKAI accompanied by the TENRYU, YUBARI and YUNAGI to conduct a night surface attack on the Allied ships at Tulagi and Guadalcanal.* By 1710 he had cleared the harbor and its approaches sufficiently to order a line formation, steaming in Condition of Readiness ONE.* At 1755, he ordered a zigzag plan with all ships making simultaneous turns.*

At 1805, he radioed Commander CRUDIV SIX, who had been underway outside Rabaul, waiting to join up, the following message: "The CRUDIV SIX will place itself to the rear of the CHOKAI."**

CRUDIV SIX then executed a change of course and joined in column astern of the CHOKAI in an alert cruising disposition,** heading southeast through St. George's Channel. This cruising disposition is judged to have been the same as that ordered by Commander Cruiser Force on August 8th,*** with the CHOKAI and CRUDIV SIX in column screened against submarines by the YUBARI on the starboard bow and the TENRYU (followed in column by the YUNAGI) on the port bow. Zigzagging was not continued after the join-up of CRUDIV SIX, because of sunset and the approach of darkness.

At 1945, the Japanese Cruiser Force was detected by the Allied submarine S-38 in such a cruising disposition, headed on course 140°(T) at high speed, passing through a point eight miles west of Cape St. George.**** The Japanese ships were unaware of this contact, and were not attacked because the S-38 was too close to them.****

At 2030, Commander Cruiser Force reached a position twenty miles due south of Cape St. George and ordered course 080°(T) to pass north of Buka Island during the night. His 2400 position was twenty miles distant on bearing 285°(T) from Cape Henpan, Buka Island.

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* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

*** COMEIGHTH Fleet Signal Order 25.

**** War Diary S-38, August 1942.

(b) MOVEMENTS OF JAPANESE SUBMARINES

Commander Outer South Seas Force ordered four submarines of SUBRON SEVEN to proceed on August 7th to Tulagi for observation, reconnaissance and attacks on Allied surface ships. The movements of the five units of SUBRON SEVEN on August 7th were:

(a) RO-33: En route to Tulagi from its station in the Papua Sea, where it had sunk a small freighter on August 7th.

(b) RO-34: En route from east coast of Australia to the vicinity of Port Moresby.

(c) I-121: Departed Rabaul about sunset August 7th for Tulagi.

(d) I-122: At Rabaul. (Departure for Tulagi was delayed twenty-four hours)

(e) I-123: Departed Truk for Tulagi.

The contact made on the I-121 in St. George's Channel by the Allied submarine S-38 fixes the 2400 position of the I-121 as about thirty miles due south of Cape St. George. The midnight position of the RO-33, RO-34 and I-123 are not known.

CHAPTER V

ALLIED OPERATIONS

0652, August 7th to 2400, August 7th

(a) OPERATIONS OF CTF 62 (Commander Amphibious Force)

At 0652, August 7th, the entire Amphibious Force had arrived on station at the objective area. As has been pointed out earlier, Transport Squadron YOKE had anchored off Tulagi at 0637, about one-half hour behind schedule, and Transport Squadron XRAY had reached the berths assigned to it off Guadalcanal Beach at 0650.

At 0652, CTF 62 signalled to all interested commanders and ships of TF 62 the ZERO hour (the time of the first landing in the Guadalcanal Area) would be 0910.*

At 0715 Commander Transport Group YOKE likewise signalled that H hour (the time of the initial landing at Tulagi) would be 0800.* The Marines of the Tulagi Landing Group landed unopposed at 0800 and the Marines of the Guadalcanal Landing Group landed unopposed at 0913.* This landing without opposition was an interesting and unexpected phenomenon which set a pattern for Japanese operations in defense of their islands in the Pacific war although it was not recognized at the time. Whenever the Japanese could retire as at Guadalcanal and Tulagi they did so in order to avoid the destructive effect of Allied bombardment. Whenever they could not retire as at Gavutu and Tanambogo, they stood and fought courageously and fiercely.

For the initial and subsequent landing operations, gunfire support was provided by Fire Support Groups LOVE (at Tulagi) and MIKE (at Guadalcanal) against beach emplacements and enemy installations. The planes of the Air Support Force (TG 61.1) provided air cover and facilitated the landings by strafing and bombing enemy positions. The operations of the Amphibious Force proceeded without interruption throughout the morning. After completion of minesweeping operations at 1100, CTF 62 moved the transports of Squadron XRAY closer to the shore, and anchored within 2000 yards of the beach to expedite unloading.

At about 1130, CTF 62 received a warning from CINCPAC that the Japanese air command at Rabaul had seventeen fighters and eighteen long-range bombers available which were being sent to attack TF 62.** Shortly thereafter CINCPAC warned the SOPAC forces: "Enemy submarines enroute to attack

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* War Diary CTF 62, August 1942.

** CINCPAC Dispatch 062325, August 1942 to COMSOPACFOR, CTF 61, CTF 62, COMSOWESPAC.

Allied occupation forces at Tulagi.*

At about 1200 the Marines landed at Gavutu and encountered serious opposition which continued throughout the day. An air raid alert was broadcast which interrupted the unloading operations. Transport Squadron XRAY at Guadalcanal remained at anchor, but Squadron YOKE at Tulagi got underway. At 1325, the first Japanese air attack group, consisting of twenty-seven bombers and eighteen fighters, arrived and concentrated their full attack on the anchored transports at Guadalcanal. This attack was made by high level bombing from 8,000 to 10,000 feet and effected no damage to any ship of TF 62.** It was driven off with the loss to the Japanese of two bombers and two fighters, and damage to nineteen bombers. At about 1500 the second Japanese air attack group, consisting of sixteen carrier-type bombers tactically operating in two divisions of eight planes, attacked. The Allied fighters opposed one group and shot down six bombers and damaged the rest. The other Japanese bomber group closed the surface ships at Guadalcanal unopposed by Allied fighters, but succeeded only in attaining a hit on the destroyer MUGFORD. This hit did not prevent the MUGFORD from performing her assigned duties.**

The unloading of equipment and supplies from the transports and cargo ships had been delayed in all areas because of the nuisance effect of the Japanese air attacks which otherwise had delivered but slight damage to TF 62. The unloading at Tulagi and Gavutu had been delayed additionally by the severe fighting ashore.** Consequently, CTF 62 pressed the urgency of unloading operations throughout the night, using necessary lights.**

During the operations of August 7th, CTF 62 had been confronted with several enemy capabilities. His force had been attacked by land-based aircraft from Rabaul; it had been attacked by carrier-type bombers which withdrew to the westward; and it could expect to be harassed by Japanese submarines. He became aware of the danger threatening to his command from Japanese forces including carriers that might approach from Rabaul. He became concerned over the extent of the Allied land-based searches in that direction. He knew that the seaplane searches of CTF 63 would be extended on the next day, August 8th, in Sector IV to 650 miles northwest of Marmasike Estuary but would reach no further west than 318°(T) from that point of origin. He knew that in the direction of Rabaul, the northern limit of CTF 63's Sector II reached no further than the southern tip of Choiseul Island and that beyond that point search and reconnaissance depended upon the cooperation of SOWESPAC aircraft. He therefore sent a dispatch to CTF 63 at 1742 stating: "The plan of search for D plus One Day (August 8th) does not cover sector 290 to 318 degrees from Malaita. Southwest Pacific is responsible for this sector, but I consider a morning search by you is necessary for adequate cover."** CTF 62, in making this

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* CINCPAC Dispatch 062336, August 1942 to COMSOPACFOR, CTF 61, CTF 62, COMSOWESPAC.

** War Diary CTF 62, August 1942.

*** CTF 62 dispatch 070642, August 1942, to CTF 63.

request, demonstrated a keen appreciation of the ever-changing situation, for it was through this area that the Japanese Cruiser Force passed on August 8th without detection by the search planes of CTF 63.

Sunset was at 1816; and the screening group took stations at 1830 to protect the transports in the disposition described in detail in the next section.

At 2242, CTF 62 was informed by COMSOPACFOR that an enemy submarine had been reported in Latitude 10°-(S), Longitude 162°(E). This position was that of Lark Shoal, sixty miles east of Guadalcanal Island. This was an erroneous report, for no Japanese submarines were in the area. It is mentioned here as the reported presence of Japanese submarines probably influenced CTF 62's concept of his freedom of action.

At 2400, CTF 62 received a message from COMSOWESPAC reporting (a) the contact made by SOWESPAC B-17's at 1231, August 7th on four cruisers and one destroyer on a westerly course in a position twenty-five miles north of Rabaul, and (b) the contact made also by COMSOWESPAC B-17s on six unidentified ships in St. George's Channel on course southeast.* This dispatch was delayed in the SOWESPAC Area for almost eleven hours, as the difference between the time of contact and the time group of the message well shows. Because of the extensive surface ship traffic in the Rabaul Area, the two reports in this message may not have indicated to CTF 62 the southward movement of the Japanese Cruiser Force. But it should have served to remind him of an additional Japanese capability - that of attacking TF 62 with a force of cruisers and destroyers.

(b) OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SCREENING GROUP

Since the Battle of Savo Island was directly concerned with the Screening Group, including Fire Support Groups LOVE and MIKE, a discussion of the disposition assumed by these groups for the night defense of the landing areas is herewith presented.

The disposition assumed is that shown in Plate IV. The night screen was composed of three main groups and of two anti-submarine and radar pickets. The three main groups were to destroy or beat off hostile surface forces which attempted to enter Iron Bottom Sound.** The anti-submarine and radar pickets were to give warning of the approach of hostile surface forces and of submarines.*** CTG 62.6 instructed the anti-submarine and radar pickets as follows: In the event of an enemy surface force being detected, immediate report was to be made. The force was to be shadowed

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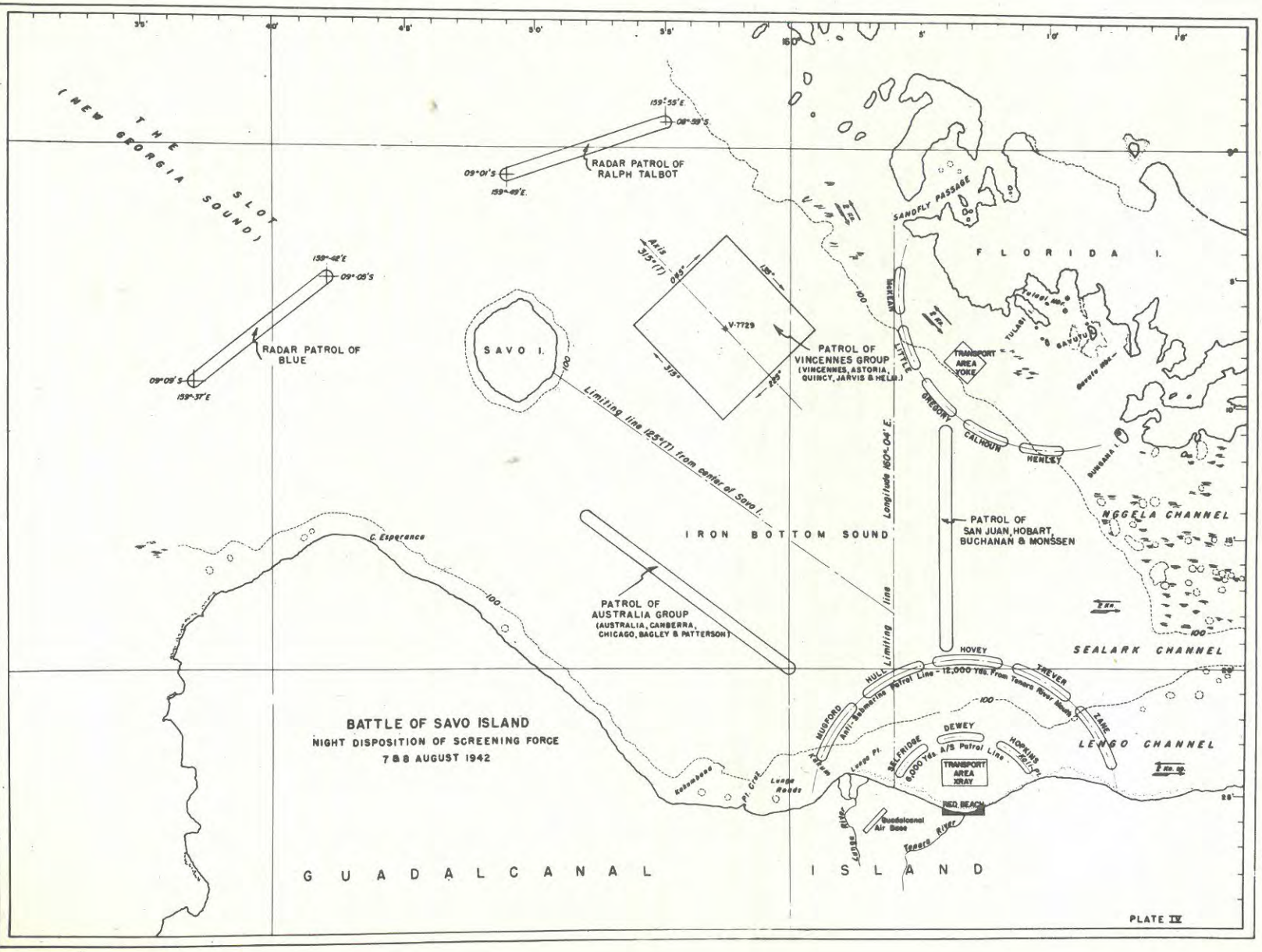
* COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 071219, August 1942, to all TFC's, Pacific.
** CTG 62.6 Special Instructions to Screening Group and Vessels Temporarily assigned August 1942, para. 3(b).
*** Ibid, para. 6.


THE SLOT (NEW GEORGIA SOUND)
RADAR PATROL OF RALPH TALBOT
RADAR PATROL OF BLUE
SAVO I.
Limiting line 125°(T) from center of Savo I.
PATROL OF VINCENNES GROUP (VINCENNES, ASTORIA, QUINCY, JARVIS & HELM.)
V-7729
Axis 315°(T)
PATROL OF AUSTRALIA GROUP (AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, CHICAGO, BAGLEY & PATTERSON)
IRON BOTTOM SOUND
Longitude 160°-04' E.
Limiting line
PATROL OF SAN JUAN, HOBART, BUCHANAN & MONSSEN
SANDFLY PASSAGE
FLORIDA I.
TRANSPORT AREA YOKE
NGGELA CHANNEL
SEALARK CHANNEL
LENGO CHANNEL
HOVEY
TREVER
ZANE
HULL
MUGFORD
DEWEY
SELFRIDGE
HOPKINS
TRANSPORT AREA XRAY
RED BEACH
Guadalcanal Air Base
Tenaro River
Lunga River
Lunga Roads
Pt. Cruz
Kakumbona
C. Esperance
GUADALCANAL ISLAND
BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND
NIGHT DISPOSITION OF SCREENING FORCE
7 & 8 AUGUST 1942
PLATE IV

and frequently reported; and when about to be engaged by cruisers, the destroyers in contact might be ordered to illuminate the enemy force with searchlights.*

(1) Night Disposition

The stations taken by the Screening Groups at 1830 were as follows:

(a) The "AUSTRALIA" Group, commanded by CTG 62.6, was composed of the three cruisers AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA and CHICAGO in column, distance 600 yards, and the anti-submarine screening destroyers PATTERSON and BAGLEY, which were on station about 2000 yards on either bow of the AUSTRALIA. This Group was patrolling back and forth at twelve knots in its assigned area south of a line drawn 125°(T) from the center of Savo Island and west of Longitude 160°-04'E. Its courses averaged 125°(T) in an easterly direction and 303°(T) in a westerly direction. Its patrol length averaged about twelve miles. Its western limit bore 148°(T) distant five miles from the southern tip of Savo Island; and its eastern limit bore about 345°(T) distant five miles from Lunga Point. The PATTERSON always remained on the western flank, and the BAGLEY on the eastern flank, regardless of courses in or out.

(b) The "VINCENNES" Group, commanded by the Commanding Officer of the Vincennes, was composed of VINCENNES, ASTORIA, QUINCY, in column and screened by JARVIS and HELM. This Group was underway at ten knots north of the 125°(T) limiting line from Savo Island and west of Longitude 160°-04'E. This group was steaming clockwise around the perimeter of a square five miles on each side, the center of which was in Lat. 09°-07'S., Long. 159°-57'-12"E.** Each trip around the square covered twenty miles. The corners of the square were on the north-south and east-west diagonals from the center, which was the reference point. Plate IV shows that the west corner of the square was about three miles from Savo Island, and the north corner was about five miles from the eastern limit of the RALPH TALBOT's patrol. The eastern limit of the VINCENNES patrol was the 100-fathom curve. The VINCENNES Group commenced the patrol of the perimeter of this square by passing through the west corner of this square at 2000 on course 045°(T). It changed course 90° to the right every thirty minutes with such adjustments of speed as were necessary to pass through each corner on schedule.**

(c) The "SAN JUAN" Group, commanded by CTG 62.4, was composed of the SAN JUAN, HOBART screened by MONSSEN and BUCHANAN. It was underway at fifteen knots in its assigned area east of Longitude 160°-04'E. It patrolled on a north-south line, the length of which was about ten miles.

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* CTG 62.6 Special Instructions to Screening Group and Vessels Temporarily Assigned, August 1942, para. 6.

** Action Report ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942.

(d) The anti-submarine and radar pickets were on station to the westward and northward of Savo Island. The RALPH TALBOT was on patrol on a line between position Lat. 08°-59'S., Long. 159°-55'E. and position Lat. 09°-01'S., Long. 159°-49'E. Her courses were on 072°(T) and 252°(T). The BLUE was on patrol on a line between position Lat. 09°-05'S., Long. 159°-42'E. and position Lat. 09°-09' S., Long. 159°-37' E. Her courses were 051°(T) and 231°(T). The patrol speed for both destroyers was twelve knots; the length of each patrol was six and one-half miles.

(e) The remaining destroyers of TG 62.6, notably the SELFRIDGE, HENLEY and MUGFORD, remained with the transports on anti-submarine screening stations.

(2) CTG 62.6's Instructions

The night disposition was drawn up in its broad aspects by CTG 62.6, but the manner in which each of the main groups accomplished its mission within its own area was left to the discretion of its group commander. For their guidance, CTG 62.6 set forth two principles: (a) that it was essential that an enemy force be beaten off before it sighted or reached the convoy and that Allied naval forces be concentrated so as to avoid confusion in night action, and (b) that it was his aim to meet the enemy to seaward of the area between Savo Island and Sealark Channel, and the Allied force which engaged should remain interposed between the enemy and that area. He expected that the extensive Allied air reconnaissance would give warning of the approach of enemy surface units.* CTG 62.6 stated further that:

(a) If both the AUSTRALIA and VINCENNES Groups were ordered to attack the enemy, it was his intention that the VINCENNES Group should act independently of the movements of the AUSTRALIA Group so as to give greatest mutual support.

(b) It was his intention that the destroyers of each group engaged should concentrate under their particular senior officer (COMDESRON Four or COMDESDIV Seven) and attack the enemy with torpedoes and gunfire as soon as the enemy was being effectively engaged by Allied cruisers.

(c) If ordered to form a striking force, all destroyers of DESRON Four, less the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT, should concentrate under COMDESRON Four, in SELFRIDGE, five miles northwest of Savo Island. In the event of contact with enemy surface units, this striking force would at once attack with full outfit of torpedoes and then maintain touch from the westward. The striking force would engage the enemy in gun action when own cruisers

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* CTG 62.6 Special Instructions to Screening Groups and Vessels Temporarily Assigned, August 1942.

engaged, provided it was quite clear that own forces were not in the line of fire, and the destroyers must be prepared to illuminate the enemy targets for own cruiser gunfire.*

These instructions were written with the conviction that the enemy would be located by aircraft at such distance that the destroyers would have time to concentrate into a squadron organization and to rendezvous five miles northwest of Savo Island. No provision can be found in CTG 62.6's instructions for night action in the event of a surprise raid by enemy surface ships detected only after they had gotten within gun range. This was the actual situation which resulted in the Battle of Savo Island.

Each screening group commander operated independently of the other group commanders. Commander VINCENNES Group notified the other group commanders of his planned operations, but he was not in turn advised by them as to their planned operations.**

CTG 62.6 stated that the consideration that the cruisers VINCENNES, QUINCY and ASTORIA had not operated under his command before they joined him just prior to the rehearsals at Koro Island, July 28th, led him to decide to employ them as a separate tactical group. He stated that he had never had an opportunity to confer with, or even meet, the Commanding Officers of the above ships nor to issue them the standing instructions which he had issued his own task force.*** It seems somewhat dubious that no opportunity had presented itself to issue these instructions or to exercise tactically for drill purposes the forces he would have under his command at Tulagi.**** Could not the instructions have been delivered by destroyer, with explanations by both visual and voice means? It appears that ample time was available for appropriate tactical exercises while in the vicinity of Koro Island and while enroute to the objective.

(3) Discussion of Night Disposition

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* CTG 62.6 Special Instructions to Screening Groups and Vessels Temporarily Assigned, August 1942.

** Personal Interview by Captain Frederick L. Reifkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

*** Report of Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN(Ret) to CINCPAC, May 13th, 1943 on Informal Inquiry into the Circumstances Attending the Loss of the VINCENNES, etc. on August 9th, 1942, para. 92, page 41.

**** Memorandum February 10th, 1943 by Comdr. H.B. Heneberger, USN, QUINCY to Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN(Ret) relative to "Additional Information in regard to the ex-U.S.S. QUINCY" at the Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, para. 4, page 2.

There is considerable doubt as to the soundness of the above disposition and plan* for the following reasons:

(a) The radar and anti-submarine screen consisting only of the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT was entirely inadequate. The two destroyers could have been as far as twenty miles apart when at the opposite ends of their patrol lines. They could have been as close together as six and one-half miles at the nearest points of their patrols. This was possible because the timing of their course changes was not coordinated so as to maintain a uniform distance between them. Actually at 0110, August 8th, when the Japanese Cruiser Force passed between them on its way into Iron Bottom Sound, they were about fourteen miles apart.

The two destroyer pickets were equipped with S C radars which gave a reliable range of from four to ten miles.** It was thought likely at the time that a destroyer-type ship could not approach closer to a radar-equipped ship than eight or nine miles without being detected.** Unfortunately, the effectiveness of the radar equipment of the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT on their assigned stations near Savo Island was adversely affected by the closeness of land, and this situation necessitated the usual standard of alertness on the part of lookouts.

The anti-submarine detection range of the sonic devices of the two destroyers varied from a few hundred to about two thousand yards, depending upon the sonic characteristics of the water at the time.

It would have been wiser had at least two additional destroyers been assigned to the outer screen so that their stations would have been no more than five miles apart. In that case, any two adjacent destroyers would have been no further apart than ten miles at any time, which distance was considered within reliable radar limits. As a further refinement, had their patrols been properly coordinated, they would always have remained approximately five miles apart. Despite the threat of submarine attack on the transports, against which CTF 62 took positive defensive measures, two additional destroyers could well have been spared from the inner anti-submarine screens in the transport areas without having seriously reduced their effectiveness.

The radius from the cruiser screening groups on which the radar picket destroyers operated was insufficient. The RALPH TALBOT was not sufficiently distant from the VINCENNES Group to give adequate warning of enemy approach. With the RALPH TALBOT at the easternmost extremity of its patrol line simultaneously with the VINCENNES Group at the northern point of its square, there was only five miles distance between them. Five miles was no more

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* A similar conclusion was arrived at by COMINCH in his Battle Experience Bulletin No. 2 on Solomon Islands Actions August and September, 1942.

** Radar Bulletin No. 1, The Tactical Use of Radar, United States Fleet Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, March 1942.

than the limit of night visibility in the existent weather conditions. Had the optimum of radar effectiveness been obtainable, the RALPH TALBOT might possibly have given a warning about fifteen minutes before an enemy could close to within gun range of the VINCENNES Group from the northward; but "land interference" denied this degree of radar effectiveness. This analysis is equally applicable to the BLUE's radius of patrol from the AUSTRALIA Group but to a considerably less degree, since the patrol of the BLUE was approximately normal to that of the AUSTRALIA Group. COMSOPAC commented on this formation as follows:* "The orders to the Radar Guard were faulty in requiring them to 'shadow' an enemy force and report them frequently. Time and space did not permit the employment of tactics of this nature. A high speed enemy force would have arrived dangerously close to the objective before our destroyers could have instituted tracking or 'shadowing' tactics. The implied restriction on, and lack of definite instructions covering the use of searchlights by the Radar Guard was unfortunate. In the restricted waters in which the Screening Group was stationed, the underlying concept of instructions issued should have been to reveal the presence of enemy vessels in the quickest most positive manner, and this called for the use of searchlights for that purpose, if contact were made."

(b) The disposition of the heavy cruisers of the Amphibious Force in two main screening groups - the AUSTRALIA Group and the VINCENNES Group - to defend the approaches to the transport areas precluded the proper concentration of their total strength against Japanese forces threatening from the west. In addition to the lack of coordination of the planned operations of these two groups, as already pointed out, there was but little exchange of information between them. It was possible for these two groups to be as much as seventeen miles apart when the VINCENNES Group was at the northern extremity of its square and the AUSTRALIA Group was at the eastern extremity of its patrol line. It was also possible, because of unknown currents, for these two groups to be so close together when the VINCENNES Group was at the southern extremity of its square and the AUSTRALIA Group was near the western end of its patrol line as to seriously interfere with one another.

Commander VINCENNES Group had objected to this disposition by dispatch to CTG 62.6 pointing out the defect whereby the two groups could become foul of one another. He informed CTG 62.6 of his plan of patrolling clockwise so that when the two groups were near each other he would always be heading out on course 315°(T) in order to reduce this danger to a minimum.**

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* Report of Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN(Ret) to CINCPAC May 13th, 1943 on Informal Inquiry into the Circumstances Attending the Loss of the VINCENNES, etc. on August 9th, 1942, para. 80(6), page 35.

** Personal Interview by Captain Frederick L. Reifkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945, by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

At the same time he requested CTG 62.6 to give him the plan of operation of the AUSTRALIA Group for the night. CTG 62.6 failed to do so, and the result was that Commander VINCENNES Group never knew for one moment where the AUSTRALIA Group was during the night.* This objection of the Commander VINCENNES Group to the night disposition ordered provides a clue as to the reason why the Commander VINCENNES Group, as well as the Commanding Officers of the ASTORIA and QUINCY, felt that the Japanese ships which later attacked them were probably friendly.

In establishing this night disposition, CTG 62.6 had created a situation in which his forces were divided into two equal screening groups composed of three heavy cruisers and two destroyers. Each group possessed less fighting strength than the reported Japanese cruiser concentration of four heavy cruisers and three light cruisers in the Bismarck Sea area. By this division of his force, CTG 62.6 made possible the chances for a Japanese surface force of approximately equal strength to concentrate its full force on each of his screening groups and knock them out in succession. It cannot be determined why he deemed it necessary or desirable to divide his forces. It would be interesting to discover how he expected to obtain mutual support between these two groups, since he had made it almost impossible in an emergency to concentrate his forces into one large group, should he have the occasion to do so.

Would it not have been wiser for CTG 62.6 to have combined the strength of his six heavy cruisers in one formation? For example, one of several possible dispositions could have been a column of six cruisers operating on a patrol line about five miles southeast of Savo Island normal to the bearing line of 125°(T) from the center of that island, screened against submarines by two destroyers in the van and two in the rear. Changes of course could have been either by column movement or by simultaneous turn. The resulting formation would have provided the following strength factors:

(a) A probable gunfire advantage with the possible crossing of the "Tee".

(b) A possibility of avoiding enemy torpedo attack by a simple ships turn of approximately 90° to the right or left to comb the enemy torpedo tracks by paralleling their most probable tracks.

(c) A reduction of confusion which might have resulted from a more complex formation in which the Commanding Officers of the American and Australian ships were maneuvered together for the first time.

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* Personal Interview by Captain Frederick L. Reifkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945, by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

(d) In view of the interior lines a maximum concentration in minimum time might be brought against any enemy surface forces attacking from the west.

Since but one flag officer was assigned to the western screening groups, this formation would have placed all ships under a flag officer and would have allowed the commanding officers to give their full attention to fighting their respective ships, which in a night action is of transcending importance.*

(c) OPERATIONS OF CTF 61 (Commander Expeditionary Force)

Commander Expeditionary Force, CTF 61 who was responsible for the tactical operations incident to the execution of Task ONE, remained in his flagship SARATOGA throughout the operations. While so doing he served as CTG 61.1.1 under CTG 61.1 who functioned as Officer-in-Tactical Command of the Air Support Force throughout August 7th. Accordingly, he took a more active part in the operations of the Air Support Force than he did in the operations of the Amphibious Force. So far as he knew the Air Support Force had not been located by the Japanese, and he therefore restricted radio communications to the voice transmissions necessary for the conduct of the carrier-based aircraft.

Since his position in the SARATOGA was far removed from the landing areas, he allowed CTG 61.2 (CTF 62) to conduct the amphibious operations according to plan, and to exercise individual initiative to meet the changing situation as it developed in Iron Bottom Sound and ashore with the landing force. Perhaps if radio silence in the carriers had been of less importance, he might have taken more positive control over the amphibious operations within Iron Bottom Sound. However, the fact that he did not do so shows that he felt that he had established a state of mutual understanding with CTF 62 and that within the limits of responsibility and resultant authority CTF 62 would act in accordance with his expressed desires. This is one of the fundamental requirements of command.

The communications for the air operations were handled by the Air Support Director Group in the transport MCCAWLEY at Guadalcanal, by which CTF 62 controlled the air strike groups reporting to him from TG 61.1. This Director Group had the voice call "ORANGE BASE". A standby Air Support Director Group was set up with radio communications in the transport NEVILLE at Tulagi, and a fighter director unit with voice call "BLACK BASE" was located in the CHICAGO to control the fighter cover for the entire Amphib-Force. CTF 61 kept himself informed of the general conduct of the operations of his principal task groups by radio interception, voice radio,

* A similar disposition was later employed at the Battle of Surigao Strait in the Battle for Leyte Gulf October 25th, 1944.

visual signals or message drops. The carrier planes served to receive messages from CTF 62 via "ORANGE BASE" and to deliver them to their own ships or to CTG 61.1, who in turn relayed them by visual means to CTF 61. CTF 61 could communicate with CTF 62 in similar fashion.

By the means of radio intercept CTF 61 received CINCPAC's message* at about 1030 warning him of the seventeen fighters and eighteen bombers proceeding from Rabaul to attack his forces. Within fifteen minutes he received another warning from CINCPAC that Japanese submarines had been ordered to proceed to Tulagi to attack Allied forces.**

He became immediately aware of the attacks of carrier-type bombers over Guadalcanal a few minutes before 1500, and promptly sent a visual message to CTG 61.1 (which the latter received at 1645) suggesting a morning air search on August 8th toward Rabaul, in view of the enemy carrier reported there.***

Within the next hour he re-estimated the situation presented by the possible additional threat of a Japanese carrier in the Solomon Sea, superimposed on the already existent threat of land-based aircraft. He became very much concerned over the safety of his own carriers, and decided to retire them more to the eastward. At 1600 he released a visual message containing orders to CTG 61.1 as follows: "In view of carrier dive bombers encountered this afternoon, revise night operations to arrive at launching position south of Cape Henslow in the morning. Make early search. Bombers last seen leaving Tulagi on westerly course."**** Within ten minutes CTF 61 (or CTG 61.1.1) had received CTG 61.1's orders for flight operations on August 8th, including a planned search toward Rabaul by WASP planes.***** At 1627 he had an acknowledgment from CTG 61.1 that the latter had already ordered the search.****** In this same message CTG 61.1 advised CTF 61 that his own information indicated that the dive bombers were probably land-based planes from Rabaul which had staged through Buka or Kieta. This information was well reasoned for the Japanese dive bombers had actually come from Rabaul, staging through the airfield at Buka Passge. After receipt of this evaluation, CTF 61 did not alter his orders to CTG 61.1 to operate the carriers farther to the eastward on August 8th.

The dawn launching position for August 8th south of Cape Henslow was not well chosen for the search toward Rabaul. It was 110 miles eastsoutheast of the dawn launching position on August 7th. The search conducted by ENTERPRISE planes on the morning of August 7th (shown on Diagram C) had not

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* CINCPAC Dispatch 062325, August 1942, to CTF 61, 63, COMSOPAC.
** CINCPAC Dispatch 062336, August 1942, to CTF 61, 63, COMSOPAC.
*** CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 070357, August 1942 to CTG 61.1.
**** CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 070500, August 1942 to CTG 61.1.
***** CTG 61.1 Visual Dispatch 070510, August 1942 to WASP, SARATOGA, ENTERPRISE.
****** CTG 61.1 Visual Dispatch 070527, August 1942 to CTF 61.

revealed the presence of a Japanese carrier within a 200 miles radius of the more western launching position of TG 61.1. If an enemy carrier were to be located to the westward, or in the direction of Rabaul, should not the search at dawn, August 8th have reached even farther and should not its point of origin have been moved farther to the west rather than to the east? A dawn search from a position about 100 miles due west of Tulagi would have reached as far north as Kieta and well to the westward into the Solomon Sea, beyond the range of CTF 63's land-based search planes. Diagram D shows that the search from the position south of Cape Henslow would merely duplicate, both in time and area, the land-based searches already planned by CTF 63.

CTF 61 had received no contact reports from the planes of TF 63 during August 7th and could therefore feel reasonably confident that there was no Japanese carrier in the areas searched by the land-based airplanes. He would not know for sure, however, until CTF 63's summary came through which was usually about midnight.

Why then did CTF 61 not choose the more western position? He had already lost a number of fighters to Japanese planes. The western position would place him within range of Japanese land-based attack planes and fighters from Rabaul. He appears to have considered that possible damage or loss of one or more of his carriers was not an acceptable risk, and chose not to face attacks from land-based aircraft. Perhaps he was affected by his experiences at the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway, wherein he had lost two carriers - the LEXINGTON and YORKTOWN - to the air attacks of Japanese carrier-based planes. This probably made him circumspect about the possibilities of further reduction in the already weakened strength of his carrier forces. But was it necessary to face such an attack? Could not he have moved into the western position during the night, launched his search planes at dawn, then retired along a Point Option line toward the southeast, and recovered his search planes in a more secure position?

The need for protecting TF 62 from air attacks became even more pressing with the possible presence of a Japanese carrier. It became of primary importance to CTF 61 to discover and to destroy this carrier. He solved this problem about as follows: His primary means of search for covering the operations in progress were the land and tender-based planes of CTF 63, which commander had orders to provide him with additional support on call. He was thoroughly familiar with the extent of coverage of CTF 63's search plan for August 8th. He knew that the land-based planes in Sectors II and IV (See Diagram D) were to be abreast of Tulagi at sunrise. Since he did not make any request to CTF 63 for modified or extended searches on August 8th, but instead ordered CTG 61.1 to make the dawn search for the Japanese carrier, it is presumed that he decided to augment the inadequate extent of the land-based searches with carrier-based searches. This decision was sound. It is unfortunate that he did not implement his decision with specific orders to CTG 61.1 as to the area to be searched. For how could he effectively cover the locus of a Japanese

carrier's most probable launching position, as well as the probable direction of approach of an enemy surface force, unless his carrier searches extended into new and vital areas of the Solomon Sea and New Georgia Sound ("the Slot")?

At about 1745 he intercepted CTF 62's request to CTF 63 for a search on August 8th of an additional sector between 290°(T) and 318°(T) from Malaita Island. He could see from this that CTF 62 had arrived at a somewhat similar analysis of the land-based searches and had confirmed his own reasoning that they were inadequate. He noted however that CTF 62 had arrived at a different solution in that he desired to cover the blank sea area to the northwest of Tulagi. This request of CTF 62 undoubtedly met with his reasoned and silent approval.

At 2130 he received CTF 62's summary of the situation in Iron Bottom Sound and of the results of the day's operations. In this summary which was addressed to COMSOPACFOR but which was intended also for himself by intercept, he noted that CTF 62 (a) requested maximum fighter cover and two scout bomber squadrons continuously over Iron Bottom Sound on August 8th, (b) requested scouting against the approach of enemy forces from the westward* which confirmed his own previous decision, and (c) reported operations on shore proceeding satisfactorily with little opposition at Guadalcanal but with the capture of Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo proceeding slowly but surely.

He weighed the information thus given, and decided his search plan and operating area for the carriers on August 8th were correct and that he would abide by the decision he had already made. It is unlucky that he did so, for hindsight shows that a search made from the western position, arrived at in this analysis, would have discovered the Japanese Cruiser Force off Bougainville Island at about 0830, August 8th.

(d) OPERATIONS OF CTG 61.1 (Commander Air Support Force)

During the day's operations, CTG 61.1 operated his force about sixty to eighty miles south of Tulagi. He was generally on a southeasterly course in order to head into the prevailing wind. Diagram "C" shows his mean track on August 7th. He had chosen his dawn launching position, Point VICTOR, because his tight flight schedule necessitated that he be near enough to his objective to insure that the air support was carried out adequately, and yet far enough away to insure that his carriers obtained reasonable security from land-based air attack during these operations.

The weather conditions in the vicinity of TG 61.1 were: sky overcast, occasional squalls, sea rough, wind at dawn 18 knots from 125°(T) reducing later in the day to 5 knots, visibility poor with no horizon at dawn, flying conditions poor.

* CTG 61.2 (CTF 62) Dispatch 071030, August 1942, to COMSOPACFOR.

He provided air support and reconnaissance for the landing operations from all three carriers from dawn until darkness. This air support consisted in general of dive bomber attacks and fighter strafing runs on enemy positions. The same planes provided reconnaissance for the ground forces and for the location of new targets for themselves. The sixteen fighters of the WASP air support group at Tulagi at dawn destroyed seven Type-97 flying boats and seven Zero-type seaplane fighters on the water before they could take off. They also destroyed all the other Japanese seaplanes of the YOKOHAMA Air Group on the beaches and in the bushes, bringing the total to a claimed fifteen reconnaissance and nine fighters.*

Throughout the seventh, CTG 61.1 provided combat air patrol over both the transport groups and the carrier force. The patrol over the transport groups consisted of a total of sixteen fighters, continuously. These fighters were in addition to those of the air support groups over Tulagi and Guadalcanal mentioned above. The patrol over the carrier force consisted of a minimum of thirteen fighters at dawn. He increased this patrol to nineteen fighters at about 0800 after the initial dawn assault, and to twenty-four fighters at about 1100. He also maintained an anti-submarine patrol around TG 61.1 employing dive bombers as necessary in a manner similar to that employed by the Allied task force in the Battle of the Coral Sea.

He provided air search and special reconnaissance as follows:

(a) At 0600 he launched a flight of seven torpedo planes of VT Squadron EIGHT from the SARATOGA to search the northeast coast of Florida Island and to reconnoiter Marmasike Estuary. This flight succeeded in strafing Port Purvis and in bombing a village at Langa Langa Harbor, Malaita Island. Bad weather obstructed its attempt to reconnoiter Marmasike Estuary. It returned to the SARATOGA at 0942.

(b) At 0620 he launched three torpedo planes, and at 0707 five more torpedo planes from the ENTERPRISE to search a sector between bearings 270° and 030°(T) to a radius of 200 miles. The delay in launching the last five planes was occasioned by the mechanics of carrier operation. The point of origin of this search was Lat. 09°-44'S., Long. 159°-16'E., which bore 232°(T) distant seventy miles from Tulagi. He appears to have ordered this search purely for the security of the Air Support Force. The search made a contact on a small Japanese ship about seventy-five miles northnorthwest of the point of origin. The pilot of the contacting plane reported this small ship as an oiler, but it is not impossible that it was the schooner which was frequently sighted by various ships of both sides during the Battle of Savo Island and which at that time was repeatedly

* Action Report, WASP, August 14th, 1942, "Capture of the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, August 7th-8th, 1942".

mistaken for a destroyer. These search planes returned on board the ENTERPRISE at 1039 and 1141, respectively.

(c) At 1049 he launched a second flight of eight torpedo planes of VT Squadron EIGHT from the SARATOGA. This flight succeeded in searching Marmasike Estuary, found it clear, and so reported to the MACKINAC as that seaplane tender was approaching to establish a seadrome in the Estuary. This flight returned to the SARATOGA at 1430.

At about 1030, CTG 61.1 received CINCPAC's warning of an impending air attack by seventeen fighters and eighteen bombers of the FIFTH Air Attack Force from Rabaul.* He immediately increased the combat air patrol over the carriers from nineteen to twenty-four fighters, and that over the transports to twenty-four fighters. When the Japanese aircraft attacked at 1325, the Allied fighters prevented this attack group from delivering any damage to the ships of TF 62,** and shot down three bombers and two fighters and damaged nineteen additional Japanese bombers and two fighters.***

At about 1500, CTG 61.1 received word from the Air Support Control Group (ORANGE BASE) that the fighter patrol was engaging Japanese carrier-type bombers. Of the total of sixteen Japanese dive bombers that attacked, the Allied fighters accounted for six planes shot down and three damaged.

The presence of carrier-type bombers over TF 62 naturally posed the question to CTG 61.1 as to whether or not a Japanese carrier were present in the area. If it were, his own carrier force contained the primary means of dealing with it. He noted that the Japanese dive bombers had last been seen retiring to the westward of Savo Island. He also noted that there had as yet been no contact reports from the search planes of CTF 63. It was therefore probable that the enemy carrier, if present in the area, would be operating in the area searched by COMSOWESPAC planes. While he was re-estimating the situation at 1555, he received a visual message from CTG 61.1.2 in the ENTERPRISE which stated: "Presence dive bombers indicates possibility enemy CV this vicinity. Suggest search."**** The same suggestion had been made also by CTF 61 in the SARATOGA;***** but this latter visual message was not received by CTG 61.1 until 1645, some thirty-five minutes after he had already promulgated his operation orders for the next day, August 8th.****** These orders included a morning search by the WASP and an afternoon search by the ENTERPRISE toward Rabaul primarily for a reported Japanese carrier.******

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* CINCPAC Dispatch 062325, August 1942, to CTF 61, CTF 63, and COMSOPACFOR.

** War Diary, CTF 62, August 1942.

*** Strength and Disposition 25th Air Flotilla, August 7th, 1942 CIG Document 74629 May 12th, 1947.

**** CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16) Visual Dispatch 070414, August 1942 to CTG 61.1.

***** CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 070357, August 1942 to CTG 61.1.

****** CTG 61.1 Visual Dispatch 070510, August 1942 to SARATOGA, WASP and ENTERPRISE.

How he evaluated this situation was revealed in his message sent to CTF 61 at 1627 in which he stated: "My information dive bombers probably land-based from Rabaul via Buka or Kieta." He was correct. His order to search for a possible carrier, even though he considered the probability that there was none in the area, indicates that he was using sound judgment to cover enemy capabilities.

At 1705 he received an order from CTF 61 to revise his night operations to arrive at a dawn launching position on August 8th south of Cape Henslow.* He had previously established Point ROGER, located twenty miles south of Cape Henslow, as the position where the carrier task groups would rendezvous at sunset on the completion of flight operations on August 7th. He had already promulgated his plan for the night to retire to the westward to pass at 2330 through Point EASY, located at 100 miles southsouthwest of Tulagi. These points are shown on Diagram "C".

At 1711, he modified his night operations as follows: to cease the westerly retirement at 2330; to turn south for an hour and then to return to the eastward arriving at Point ROGER at 0600 August 8th; to commence the dawn launching at that time.**

The plot shows that Point ROGER, the dawn launching position he would use for August 8th was 110 miles farther east than Point VICTOR, the dawn launching position he had used on the previous day. He certainly realized at this time therefore that the searches he had ordered for August 8th would now fall far short of reaching into new areas. The possibility of locating a Japanese carrier to the westward was thereby considerably reduced. It was apparent that his searches would now serve no further purpose than to provide security for his own carrier force. Since he did not make a recommendation thereafter to CTF 61 to the contrary, it is presumed that he considered this to be acceptable.

His operations throughout the day cost him aircraft as follows: SARATOGA: Five fighters missing in action, one fighter and one dive bomber crashed; WASP: One fighter, one dive bomber missing in action, two fighters crashed; ENTERPRISE: Four fighters missing in action and two crashed.

His total aircraft losses August 7th were therefore:

Fighters	10 MIA (Missing in Action) 5 crashed
Dive Bombers	1 MIA 1 crashed

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* CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 070500, August 1942, to CTG 61.1.
** CTG 61.1 Visual Dispatch 070611, August 1942 to TG 61.1.

At 2400, TG 61.1's position was bearing 165°(T), distant 125 miles from Tulagi as shown on Diagram "C".

(e) OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SUBMARINES

(1) Operations of S-38

The Commanding Officer of the submarine S-38 on August 7th was patrolling off Cape St. George, New Ireland. At 1017 he noted that the traffic of the Japanese line of communication was about eight miles off the New Ireland coast. He therefore shifted his patrol station to that area* for the remainder of the day. At 1930 (about sunset) he set course 320°(T); and seven minutes later sighted what he thought were two destroyers, one bearing five degrees to the left and the other fifteen degrees to the right of dead ahead.* He immediately submerged and then turned right to assume the course 050°(T), normal to his patrol line of 320°(T).* Five minutes later (at 1942) the two "destroyers" (possibly the light cruisers TENRYU and YUBARI which were disposed on either bow of the CHOKAI) passed very close aboard, ahead and astern of the S-38.* About three minutes later, at 1945, at least three larger unidentified ships passed directly ahead of the S-38, one of which was so close that its wash caused the submarine to roll seven degrees.* This formation was traveling at a "very high speed", and all ships were too close to the S-38 for her to fire torpedoes.*

At 2000, as the last of these ships had passed in column, the Commanding Officer, S-38 changed course to 140°(T) to trail and track them.* At 2010, all sound had faded.*

The Commanding Officer, S-38 did not know the identity or types of these ships. He had a fair idea of the cruising formation, the course and speed; but he had mistaken light cruisers for destroyers and had counted only three heavier ships when in fact there were five. He considered this contact of sufficient importance that he surfaced and reported it by radio to COMSOWESPACFOR. The latter broadcast it at 0730, August 8th, and it was received by the responsible commanders in the SOPAC Area at 0738, August 8th** - eleven hours and thirty-eight minutes after the contact was made, but in plenty of time for consideration and evaluation by those commanders.

At 2037, the Commanding Officer, S-38 steadied on course 180°(T)*; and at 2222 he sighted a large submarine on bearing 250°(T), distant about five miles, heading on a southeasterly course at high speed.* He was unable to close the enemy submarine for attack, because the latter passed ahead rapidly and disappeared to the south.* This contact was reported and reached CTF 62 at 0700 August 8th, who in turn alerted his force to

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* War Diary, S-38, August 1942.
** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 071930, August 1942.

TABLE 3
DISPOSITION OF ALLIED SHORE AND TENDER-BASED AIRCRAFT SOPAC
AS OF 2400, AUGUST 7, 1942

BASE	11th Bombardment Group	69th 70th Bombardment Sqdns	67th 68th 70th Pursuit Sqdns	VP Sqdns 11, 14 & 23	R.N.Z.A.F. Units			Marine Corps Squadrons		Navy Inshore Patrol Sqdns	TOTAL PLANES
								VMF 111 & 212 VMO 251	VMO 151	VS1 D14	
	B-17	B-26	P-39	PBY-5s	Hudsons	Singapores	Vincents	F4F	SBC	OS2U	
ESPIRITU	5			3*				4**		3	15
EFATE	*** 5			2				12		3	22
NEW CALEDONIA	**** 9	10	38	2	6			***** 16		3	84
NANDI	*** 12	12	17	6	12	3	9				71
NDENI				6							6
MARMASIKE ESTUARY				****** 9							9
SAMOA								18	17	10	45
TONGATABU			24							6	30
TOTALS	31	22	79	28		30		50	17	25	282

* 2 PBY-5's of VP-23 transferred forward from EFATE.
** 4 F4F-3a's of VMF-212 rotated forward from EFATE.
*** Rotated up from EFATE and NANDI to ESPIRITU SANTO.
**** 1 B-17 from KOUMAC failed to return from search.
***** 16 F4F-3P's of VMO-251 transferred from TONTOUTA, NEW CALEDONIA on August 7th.
****** 9 PBY-5's of VP-23 transferred after completing search from ESPIRITU SANTO, on August 7th.

	B-17	B-25	P-39	P-40	P-47	P-51	A-20	A-24	A-26	A-36	C-47	TOTAL
REPAIRED	5			4*					44**		3***	
WRECKED	5****			2					12		6	
NEW CALEDONIA	3	10	58	2					5***** 15		3	96
NANDI	12	12	17	6		12	4	4				71
MDENI				6								
MARGARITE ESTUARY				6******								
SAMOA						5			10	17	10	42
TONGATABU			24								6	30
TOTALS	34	22	79	20		30			80	17	25	232

* 2 P8Y-5's of VP-23 transferred Espiritu Santo, 2 from SAMOA.
** 4 PAF-5's of VMF-212 rotated "Orsons" from ESPIRITU SANTO.
*** Rotated up from ESPIRITU and NANDI to ESPIRITU SANTO.
**** 4 B-17 from KUNMAO failed to return from "Tokyo".
***** 15 P8Y-3's of VP3-31 transferred from "TIMOTIA", NEW CALEDONIA on August 24th.
****** 3 P8Y-5's of VP-23 transferred after completing search from ESPIRITU SANTO, on August 7th.

the possibility that a submarine might enter the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area on the eighth.* The S-38 had sighted the Japanese submarine I-121, en route from Rabaul to Tulagi to attack the Allied transports.**

(2) Operations of S-44

The S-44 was proceeding eastward along the southern coast of New Hanover Island en route to the entrance to Steffen Strait until about 0700.*** It arrived there too late to intercept the five Japanese cruisers which had sortied from Steffen Strait at 0650. It remained on this station throughout the day, guarding the exit of Byron Strait as well as Steffen Strait, but made no contacts.***

(f) OPERATIONS OF CTF 63 (Commander Aircraft, South Pacific Force)

CTF 63 conducted air searches in support of SOPAC Operations, employing a plan somewhat similar to that flown the preceding day; but modified somewhat, as shown in Diagram "C". The principal change was that Sector IV was flown from Espiritu Santo rather than from Efate. In addition, the fan of searches flown from Espiritu Santo was re-aligned by minor changes in the limiting bearings of Sectors II, III, IV and V.

Sector I, which was not changed, was not searched on this day because of bad weather. However, a search was made from Koumac to the area to the southwest of Sector I, as a consequence of which one B-17 failed to return.

Sector II was to be searched by two B-17's. The search in the right half was reported negative; the search in the left half was unreported and the plane assigned to it failed to return. Both of these planes were directed to be abreast of Tulagi at sunrise **** in accordance with CTF 61's request for such action.***** However, it is possible that the missing plane failed to arrive there, since it was not heard from. CTF 61 desired these planes abreast of Tulagi at sunrise in order to provide increased security for the Allied Expeditionary Force, TF 62, which was to arrive in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area by dawn.

Sectors III, V and VI were searched, as shown on Diagram "C", with negative results.

Sector IV was also searched, as shown on Diagram "C", with negative results.****** The search planes in this sector, in addition to those in

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* CTF 62 Dispatch 072000, August 1942, to TF 62.

** Japanese Report of Meritorious Action, SUBRONS 3 and 7 CIG Intelligence Report 74834 distributed May 12th, 1947.

*** War Diary, S-44, August 1942.

**** CTF 63 Dispatch 300820, July 1942 to CTF 61.

***** CTF 61 Dispatch 290857, July 1942 to CTF 63.

****** War Diary, CTF 63, August 1942.

Sector II, were directed to be abreast Tulagi at sunrise, and presumably complied. These six planes in Sector IV, as well as the three search planes in Sector III, proceeded late in the afternoon to base at Maramasike Estuary rather than at Espiritu Santo on completion of their search mission.* The tender MACKINAC, which served as the base for these planes, had arrived there from Noumea shortly after 1400.**

Table 3 indicates the disposition of Allied land and tender-based aircraft in the SOPAC Area as of 2400, August 7th.

(g) OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER ALLIED AIR FORCES SOWESPAC

Commander Allied Air Forces North Eastern Area, SOWESPAC, conducted air searches in support of the Allied invasion of the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area on August 7th as follows:***

(a) Five Hudsons from the Fall River Field at Milne Bay reconnoitered the Solomon Islands in Reconnaissance Area "B".

(b) One B-17 from Port Moresby searched Reconnaissance Area "C"; another reconnoitered Reconnaissance Area "D"; and a third B-17 departed on a photographic intelligence mission in Reconnaissance Area "E"; but turned back just beyond the Lusancay Islands in the Solomon Sea, probably because of mechanical difficulties, and did not complete this mission.

None of the above reconnaissance revealed any significant movement of Japanese forces.

Commander Allied Air Forces North Eastern Area also conducted routine bombing attacks on the air fields at Rabaul. The first striking group, composed of thirteen B-17's from Port Moresby, sighted a Japanese cruiser force about twenty-five miles north of Rabaul. This contact was reported as one heavy cruiser, three light cruisers and one destroyer in position Latitude 03°-45'S, Longitude 151°-56'E, on course 270°(T) at speed thirty knots.*** These Japanese ships were in fact, the CHOKAI and the four cruisers of CRUDIV SIX. The B-17's did not attack the cruisers, but concentrated on their assigned objective, Vunakanau airdrome at Rabaul.

This act indicates that Japanese naval vessels were not primary targets for the bombers of the SOWESPAC command at this time. The matter had been thoroughly discussed in conference by COMSOWESPAC and COMSOPAC. They had agreed that attacks on naval targets, with the possible exception of aircraft carriers, would be made by SOWESPAC aircraft only upon specific request from COMSOPAC.

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* War Diary, CURTISS, August 1942.
** War Diary, CTF 63, August 1942.
*** Operations Report, Allied Air Forces, SOWESPAC Area, August 7th, 1942.

The report of the contact on the Japanese cruisers at 1231 was not broadcast by COMSOWESPAC until 2319,* and was not received by COMSOPAC until 2400. This delay of eleven hours and twenty-nine minutes denied COMSOPAC the opportunity of requesting an immediate air attack, should he have desired it.

On the afternoon of August 7th, the Allied Air Forces, SOWESPAC, also sighted six unidentified ships in St. George's Channel, heading out on a southeasterly course.** The report of this contact was made in the same dispatch* that reported the Japanese Cruiser Force north of Rabaul.

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* COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 071219, August 1942, to CINCPAC, all CTF's Pacific and all CTF's SOWESPAC.

** Operations Report, Allied Air Forces, SOWESPAC Area, August 7th, 1942.

CHAPTER VI

JAPANESE REACTION

0000 August 8th to 2400 August 8th

(a) OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER CRUISER FORCE

Commander Cruiser Force continued onward after 0000, August 8th along the track 080°(T) as shown on Diagram "D". He realized that during the 8th he would be called upon to make some important decisions for which he required additional intelligence. Among these decisions was the vital one whether or not to make the planned night attack. There is no documentary evidence to indicate that Commander Cruiser Force at any time entertained doubts as to his chances for ultimate success in the forthcoming night action. However, he apparently considered that the intelligence which he had received on August 7th from the Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force, although considerable, was not fully adequate for the purposes of his planned night action. He knew that he would receive more information from Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force on August 8th. In addition to this he could obtain information more directly applicable to his own planned operations by employing his own cruiser scouting planes.

To obtain first-hand intelligence it was necessary for him to close the enemy so that his ship-based planes might be within proper range to make suitable reconnaissance of Tulagi and to search for the Allied carrier forces. He determined to close the Tulagi area to a distance as would not seriously endanger his command to Allied counteraction by air, and as would be close enough to permit him to reach his objective under the cover of darkness to execute his attack that night with an expectancy of success. Mindful of the fact that he had been sighted the preceding day off Rabaul, he desired an operating area wherein his presence, if again discovered, would not necessarily divulge his particular course of action. He hoped to confuse any Allied reconnaissance planes as to his projected plans for a night action. He therefore decided to operate in an area due east of Bougainville throughout the morning of August 8th while his cruiser planes scouted. This area was three hundred miles from Tulagi and appeared to be well beyond the range of carrier aircraft.

At 0100, he passed the northern tip of Buka Island ten miles abeam to starboard and changed course to the southeastward to parallel the east coast of Bougainville Island and to arrive at his selected dawn launching position. At 0600, about a half-hour before sunrise, as Commander Cruiser Force neared his selected operating area, he directed that one plane from each of the heavy cruisers be catapaulted at 0625 to search fanwise from the point of origin as follows: the CHOKAI plane 070°(T), the FURUTAKA plane 085°(T), the KINUGASA plane 100°(T); the KAKO plane 115°(T) and AOBA plane 130°(T). The latter plane was to reconnoiter the Tulagi area. Each of the above planes was to search for the enemy to a radius of 250 miles, fly a cross-leg to the left for

thirty miles, and return to the parent ship.* The point of origin for the search and for rendezvous on return, was Lat. 05°- 34'S., Long. 156°-20'E.

At about 0625, just a few minutes before sunrise which occurred at 0632, each of the heavy cruisers except the FURUTAKA launched one plane as directed. The latter plane was cancelled, probably because the extensive atoll and reefs of Ongtong Java on bearing 085°(T) obstructed the approach of any enemy surface force through that sector and made a search of it unnecessary. The weather at this time was satisfactory for flying and the visibility, except for a partly cloudy sky, was excellent in the vicinity of the Cruiser Force.

After launching planes, the Cruiser Force operated in two groups. The heavy cruisers operated together in a somewhat dispersed manner to facilitate the recovery of aircraft. The light cruisers and the destroyer YUNAGI remained within visual signal distance of the heavy cruisers. There were no destroyers to screen the heavy cruisers against submarines, so Commander Cruiser Force employed an inner air patrol for this purpose, flown by the cruiser planes that were not used on the search and reconnaissance mission. These tactics were employed presumably to assist in deceiving any Allied plane or submarine as to his intention, and to allow complete freedom of action for individual ships to avoid submarines located by the inner air patrol. Certainly a number of single ships maneuvering independently afforded much smaller and less vulnerable targets, and the multiplicity of their wakes presented a much more confused underwater sound condition to submarines than would the entire formation.

At 1020 one or more ships of CRUDIV SIX, while operating in the vicinity of Lat. 05°-56'S., Long. 156°-30'E., sighted a single Lockheed bomber;** and six minutes later the CHOKAI sighted this plane on bearing 116°(T).***

At 1030 the KAKO received information that another Lockheed bomber was about forty-five minutes away.* The source of the information was possibly the AOBA's plane which might have observed the R.A.A.F. Hudson which was then to the northeast in the vicinity of Tauu Islands.

At 1036 the CHOKAI lost contact with the Hudson that had been shadowing her. This plane, which was operating from Fall River, had not remained to trail the Japanese ships but instead had continued on towards its base. In view of this contact, the ships of CRUDIV SIX changed course

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* War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th 1942, "Solomons Sea Battle", WDC Document 160143.

** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

*** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

from time to time in an endeavor to confuse the enemy plane believing that they were still being trailed.

Between 1036 and 1050 every cruiser except the AOBA recovered her planes.* The AOBA plane, which had gone to the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area did not return until later because of the greater flight distance involved in its mission.

After all planes except the AOBA's had been recovered, Commander Cruiser Force directed the cruisers to reform on his flagship. As the ships were closing at about 1100, the CHOKAI observed an enemy plane bearing 330°(T),** and at 1105 COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN observed the same plane, which he identified as a B-25*** but which was actually a second Australian Hudson operating out of Fall River. Commander Cruiser Force seems to have been convinced that his command had been shadowed by the same plane since 1020.

Some few minutes later, the CHOKAI observed that the trailing plane was closing, apparently to obtain more information. At 1110 the CHOKAI opened fire and succeeded in discouraging the Hudson, for it retired and disappeared from view at 1113.**

Sometime around 1200 the AOBA plane which had been reconnoitering the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area was recovered and the entire formation was reformed. The pilot of the AOBA plane gave a most detailed account of the Allied activities in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area. He reported:

(a) In the Lunga Point area, one battleship, four cruisers and seven destroyers, one ship resembling an escort carrier, and fifteen transports. He also reported that the cruisers and destroyers were conducting a roving patrol and that the transports were at anchor.

(b) In the Tulagi area, two heavy cruisers, twelve destroyers and three transports all underway in the vicinity of the Tulagi lighthouse.****

The above intelligence was surprisingly accurate. There were, of course, neither the battleship nor the escort carrier present. There

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* War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th 1942, "Solomons Sea Battle", WDC Document 160143.

** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12, 1947.

*** Records CRUDIV 18, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

**** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

were in fact eight cruisers, rather than six; twenty-four destroyers, destroyer transports and minesweepers, rather than nineteen; and nineteen large transports or supply ships rather than eighteen.

Commander Cruiser Force now re-estimated the situation. He had information making it apparent that the strength of the Allied surface forces in Iron Bottom Sound was greater than that of his own force if concentrated against him, but their division between Tulagi and Guadalcanal was a factor in his favor. He had just been located, and he presumed that the Allied reconnaissance plane had immediately reported his position. He hoped that his deceptive tactics, principally of heading northwest while the Allied plane was in the vicinity, would confuse the Allied commanders on receipt of the contact report as to his intentions. He knew the FIFTH Air Attack Force would deliver a strong air attack against the Allied forces at about noon. He could expect a summary of the results of this attack and of the land-based reconnaissance for the day at about 1530, since that was the time he had received it on the 7th. He decided to carry out his planned night attack, and at 1300 headed south at twenty-four knots to pass through Bougainville Strait at 1537.

His decision was bold; for if he had underestimated the intelligence or aggressiveness of the Allied carrier force commander, he could well have been placing his force in a position to be bombed by Allied carrier-based aircraft before sunset. Actually Commander Cruiser Force had made a correct decision and, to use the words of COMCRUDIV SIX, "The Commander's decision to attack at night and his direction of the operation offered an opportunity of great success."*

At 1600, he had traversed Bougainville Strait and turned into "The Slot." He had not as yet received the air attack and reconnaissance summary from Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force. He had committed his force, and only two and a half hours remained before sunset. He desired more information as to the Allied strength and disposition late in the afternoon; and wished to ascertain the extent of damage done by the Japanese bombers on August 8th. He therefore for a second time, dispatched a cruiser scouting plane from the AOBA at 1612 to reconnoiter Tulagi. The pilot was briefed to cruise at two hundred and sixteen knots, to proceed on course 140°(T) to pass between Choiseul and Vella Lavella Islands, and thence to proceed to Tulagi. Commander Cruiser Force expected that this pilot would arrive over Tulagi by 1725, would obtain detailed reconnaissance information by 1750 and would return to the AOBA before the end of evening twilight at 1910.

At 1640 Commander Cruiser Force issued his Signal Order No. 25 which contained his instructions to his command for the night action. These instructions have been translated as follows:

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

"1. During the night the cruising disposition will consist of a main body and a vanguard. The main body will be composed of the CHOKAI, followed by CRUDIV SIX, with 1000 meters between ships. The vanguard will be stationed 3000 meters ahead of the CHOKAI; and will consist of the TENRYU and YUNAGI to port, and the YUBARI to starboard, separated by an interval of 6000 meters.

"2. Before the rush in (approach), if enemy small craft are encountered, the vanguard will check them strongly while the main body heads southward.

"3. At the time of the rush in (approach), all ships will form battle column. Order of ships: CHOKAI, CRUDIV SIX, TENRYU, YUBARI, and YUNAGI with a distance of 1200 meters between ships.

"4. In the approach the Cruiser Force will first pass south of Savo Island and will torpedo the main enemy force in the Guadalcanal anchorage; after which it will head towards the Tulagi anchorage to shell and torpedo the enemy. The Cruiser Force will then withdraw north of Savo Island. Each commanding officer will operate independently as regards gun and torpedo firings.

"5. As a means of recognition each ship will display white sleeves on each side of the bridge. Each sleeve will be one meter in diameter and seven meters long.

"6. Speed will be twenty-four knots at the time of the rush in (approach)."*

This order was simple. It appears to have been based on gaining the factor of surprise, although surprise is not mentioned. Whether surprise were achieved or not, the attack was to be carried out. The objective of this attack was the destruction of any Allied forces encountered, but particularly the transports, as stated in Commander Cruiser Force's Estimate of the Situation made on the previous day wherein he planned "to strike the anchored enemy convoys at night and destroy them."** COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN also stated that the targets were the transports.***

Commander Cruiser Force had chosen a column formation for battle, led by his strongest ship, the CHOKAI, tapering off in strength with the heavy cruisers of CRUDIV SIX next in column, followed by the light cruisers of

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* Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** Commander 8th Fleet's Estimate of the Situation regarding American landings on Guadalcanal and Tulagi on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 73845, May 7th, 1942.

*** U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey Interrogation Nav. #61, Vol. I. Interrogation of Japanese Officials. Interrogation of Rear Admiral Matsuyama, IJN, page 255.

CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and the destroyer YUNAGI bringing up the rear. Japanese officials stated later that he employed this "single file" night battle formation because this occasion was the first that the CHOKAI, CRUDIV SIX and CRUDIV EIGHTEEN had joined forces and, up to this time, they had never engaged in maneuvers together.*

At 1654, the Cruiser Force turned to a southeasterly heading to pass between Santa Isabel and New Georgia Islands on course 120°(T), speed twenty-four knots. At this time Commander Cruiser Force directed that Condition TWO be set in all ships and that at 1930 Condition ONE be set. What these Japanese conditions of readiness were is not known, but it is probable that they corresponded closely to the American Conditions TWO and ONE Easy. For, as will be shown later, the Japanese appear to have merely alerted the gun crews as battle appeared imminent.

At 1715 the seaplane carrier AKITSUSHIMA was sighted "hull down" in the vicinity of Gizo Island bearing about 140°(T).

At 1816 sunset occurred.

At 1840 Commander Cruiser Force exhorted his command: "Let us attack with certain victory in the traditional night attack of the Imperial Navy! May each one calmly do his utmost!"

At this time each ship properly disposed of all combustible materials, depth charges, and all light oil stored above the water line. All battle preparations were made, and course was set for Tulagi Strait.

At 1910 evening twilight ended.

At 1915 Commander Cruiser Force shot off signal flares to guide the AOBA plane back to the cruisers; but the plane failed to return, having been shot down over Tulagi.**

At 2100 Commander Cruiser Force received a dispatch from Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force, stating that his bombers had attacked the Allied Forces in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area about noon and had sunk two heavy cruisers, one large cruiser, two destroyers and nine transports; and had badly damaged one heavy cruiser and two transports, all three of which were left burning.*** This was most heartening news to Commander Cruiser

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* GHQ, SCAP, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section WDC Document 15685, March 28th, 1946, Night Engagement Track Chart for Report of Sea Battle off Savo Island, August 8th, 1942.

** Track Chart #1 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th 1942, CIG Document 86927, August 27th, 1947.

*** Records CRUDIV 18, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

Force for his own reconnaissance plane was now two hours overdue and failed to return from Tulagi with the information he desired. It then became clear to him that his chances of making a successful night attack had been greatly increased. According to his best estimate the Allied force then numbered but one battleship, three cruisers (one of which was badly damaged) seventeen destroyers, and nine transports (two of which were burning).

The Japanese had placed great stress in their fleet training on night attack procedures, and all ships were expected to operate under night attack doctrines. One of the Japanese doctrines for dark nights was to dispatch from the attack force an illuminating unit, composed generally of two planes, to illuminate the targets when the attack force was within striking distance. Pursuant to this doctrine, Commander Cruiser Force dispatched two planes at 2313, one from the AOBA and one from the KAKO with instructions to lay a course marker to guide the cruiser force into the target area, to reconnoiter and report the disposition of Allied forces, and to illuminate the transports when the CHOKAI was twenty miles away.

At 2335, CRUDIV EIGHTEEN sighted on bearing 140°(T) a marker lamp dropped by one of the planes. This marker had been dropped with Cape Esperence bearing 140°(T), distance about thirty miles. This distance seems to have been chosen to insure that the marker was not seen by the Allied forces so that the factor of surprise might not thereby be lost. It is assumed that this marker was employed by the Japanese in their navigation, which navigation was very accurate indeed.

At 2342, Commander Cruiser Force observed a light on bearing 125°(T) in the Tulagi area. Three minutes later, at 2345, the KAKO also sighted fires of land installations in the direction of Tulagi; and finally at 2355, COMCRUDIV SIX reported a reflection of a large fire in the sky over Tulagi.

At 2400 the Cruiser Force was in Lat. 08°-43.5'S., Long. 159°-23.5'E. This position bore 320°(T), distant about thirty-seven miles from the southwesterly entrance to Iron Bottom Sound.

(b) OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER FIFTH AIR ATTACK FORCE

During the 8th, Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force was heavily engaged in attacking the Allied forces at Tulagi-Guadalcanal and in searching the most probable areas in the direction of Tulagi and beyond, primarily for the Allied Air Support Force (TF 61.1).

The search operations of this command were:*

* Japanese Search Plans August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

(a) At 0540 one large flying boat from the FOURTEENTH Air Group departed Rabaul on course 130°(T), flew to a distance of 700 miles, then searched sixty miles to the left, and finally returned to Rabaul where it landed at 1645 without having located TF 61.1 or any other Allied contacts. The subsector flown by this plane was that in which the Allied carrier force, TG 61.1, was operating on August 8th, as shown on Diagram "D". This plane reached its outer limit at 1003 and turned back at the end of sixty miles lateral leg at 1025. It should have passed within visual distance of the Allied carrier force at 1050. The weather conditions in the vicinity of TG 61.1 were partly cloudy .5, surface visibility unrestricted, wind ENE seventeen knots, scattered showers. Since the Japanese reports indicate their search planes flew between 6000 and 12,000 feet altitude,* it is assumed that the pilot flew above the clouds and failed to detect TG 61.1 between them.

(b) At 0636 one large flying boat from the YOKOHAMA Air Group proceeded from Rabaul on course 100°(T) to a distance of 600 miles, covered a sixty miles lateral distance to the left, and returned to Rabaul at 1600 without having made any contacts on the Allied forces.

(c) At 0700 two search groups departed Rabaul as follows:

(1) Three land attack planes from the FOURTH Air Group departed on courses 110°(T), 140°(T) and 120°(T) from Rabaul to search to a radius of 700 miles. At the outer end of their search all planes flew laterally sixty miles to the left, then returned to land at Rabaul at 1615. No contact was made with TF 61.1. The plane flying course 120°(T) reported that the Tulagi Area was covered with clouds and reconnaissance there was impossible. Confirmation of this weather condition is found in CTF 62's statement that throughout the day the sky in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area was partly cloudy becoming increasingly overcast during the night.** It is probable then that the pilot on the 120°(T) subsector had encountered heavy clouds that made his search ineffective. The plane on course 140°(T) turned left at 600 miles radius, possibly because of cloudy weather also.

(2) One land reconnaissance plane from the TAINAN Air Group departed Rabaul to reconnoiter the Allied forces in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area. At 0915, when thirty miles to the northwest of Tulagi, it was pursued by three Allied fighters. It landed at Rabaul at 1400 without having observed any unusual occurrences. This time of landing at Rabaul indicates the pilot remained in the Tulagi area for about two hours. He

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* Japanese Search Plans August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

** War Diary CTF 62, August 8th, 1942.

reported "enemy ships near Tulagi, several destroyers mostly anchored near the Guadalcanal Air Base, and about fifteen enemy fighters and bombers aloft."* This incomplete report provided little information of the Allied surface units, though it was more specific as to the Allied air cover. It is probable that the Japanese reconnaissance pilot had great difficulty in reconnoitering the area, and was forced repeatedly to take cover in the clouds.

(d) At 1445 one land reconnaissance plane left Rabaul to observe the condition of the Buka Island fighter landing strip which had just been rushed to completion. This reconnaissance plane returned to Rabaul at 1715.

The above searches were designed by Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force to cover the entire Solomons sector and the sea areas to the eastward. This search plan covered the areas wherein the Allied carriers would probably be operating to provide adequate air cover for the landing operations at Tulagi-Guadalcanal. The searches, as laid out, should have been reasonably effective; although a denser search would have been more effective in the existing weather conditions for locating the Allied carriers.

The failure of his pilots to locate the carriers must have been highly confusing to Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force. His pilots reportedly had searched the areas and discovered nothing and yet the Allied carriers were present somewhere because their fighters and bombers were seen over the target area. He determined to increase the area of his search on the following day.

The only air attack on August 8th was carried out as follows: At about 0740 Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force launched a torpedo attack group composed of approximately twenty-three land attack planes of both the MISAWA Air Group and the FOURTH Air Group to attack the Allied surface forces off Tulagi and Guadalcanal. These planes were escorted by fifteen fighters of the TAINAN Air Group. At the same time he launched another attack group, consisting of four carrier-type bombers escorted by about twenty-two fighters of both the TAINAN Air Group and the SECOND Air Group.** This attack group, although intercepted by three ENTERPRISE fighters from TG 61.1, struck its target at about 1200. As a result of the air attack, Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force reported sinking two heavy cruisers, one large cruiser, two destroyers and nine transports; and damaging and setting fire to one large cruiser and two transports. This report was greatly exaggerated. The actual damage delivered to the Allied ships was solely to one destroyer, the JARVIS torpedoed but afloat,

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* Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

** Records 25th Air Flotilla, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 161730.

and to one transport, the GEORGE F. ELLIOTT hit and set afire by a torpedo bomber which crashed into it. The cost of this attack to the FIFTH Air Attack Force was the loss of eleven land-attack planes from the FOURTH Air Group and six from the MISAWA Air Group, all shot down; one plane made an emergency landing; and five planes were damaged. One fighter from the TAINAN Air Group also was shot down, one was missing and one was damaged. The total losses were nineteen planes, shot down or missing.* This Japanese report of losses checks reasonably well with the Allied claims of destroying at least fourteen Japanese planes.

At some time during the day, the MISAWA Air Group was reinforced with eight land attack planes. (See Table 1).

The operations of the FIFTH Air Attack Force on August 8th contributed little of direct value to the Japanese overall effort against the Allied forces at Tulagi and Guadalcanal, except to delay unloading operations of the transports. Of indirect value was the attrition of Allied fighter planes, since the loss of Allied fighters in opposing Japanese air attacks finally contributed in some measure to the reasons of CTF 61 for the retirement of TG 61.1 on August 9th.

The inaccuracy of the Japanese reports of damage inflicted by the FIFTH Air Attack Force could well have led Commander Cruiser Force into a trap, had he relied exclusively upon them. Fortunately for this Japanese commander, he employed the cruiser scouting planes of his own force for reconnaissance of the target area on three different occasions on August 8th and obtained more reliable information.

(c) OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE SUBMARINES**

The exact movements of the Japanese submarines on August 8th are not available but can be discussed in a general way.

(a) The RO-33 was en route to Tulagi area from the Gulf of Papua, but was presumably several days from Tulagi.

(b) The RO-34 was on station off Port Moresby where it was reconnoitering Allied movements in that area.

(c) The I-121 was en route from Rabaul to Tulagi. While operating on the surface she was attacked at 1127 by an Australian Hudson which dropped two bombs, but both missed. Her 2400 position was approximately 250 miles due west of Tulagi.

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* Strength and Disposition 25th Air Flotilla on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947.

** War Diary 4th Fleet, August 1942, "Movements of Naval Forces Under This Command", WDC Document 160336.

(d) The I-122 was en route from Rabaul to Tulagi. She evidently departed Rabaul in the early evening, for at 2155 she was sighted passing through St. George's Channel on a southerly course at high speed by the Allied submarine S-38. Her 2400 position was bearing approximately 170°(T), distant thirty-five miles from Cape St. George.

(e) The I-123 was en route from Truk to Tulagi.

CHAPTER VII

ALLIED OPERATIONS

0000 August 8th to 2400 August 8th

(a) OPERATIONS OF CTF 62 (Commander Amphibious Force)

The Amphibious Force continued operations throughout the night in support of the landing forces ashore. By 0135 the Raider Battalion at Tulagi reported that it had suffered twenty-two per cent casualties and the Parachute Battalion fifty to sixty per cent casualties. Reinforcements were requested.* The unloading of Squadron XRAY was discontinued from 0230 to 0730 because of the congestion of stores on Guadalcanal Beach. The unloading of Squadron YOKE was delayed by the opposition ashore at Tulagi. The night passed without any form of interference with the Allied surface forces from the enemy.**

At 0500, the beginning of morning twilight, CTG 62.6 ordered the outer screening groups and units to return to the transport areas and to resume the day screening operations. By sunrise, at 0632, the day screening dispositions had been assumed.

During this day the sea in Iron Bottom Sound was calm, there was a light breeze from the southeast, and the sky was partly cloudy becoming increasingly overcast toward night.

At 0710 CTF 62 received the report of the contact made by the S-38 of a large enemy submarine headed southeasterly at high speed in St. George's Channel at 2222, August 7th. He immediately notified TF 62 that an enemy submarine was reported near and might enter the area that day.*** CTG 62.6 in turn, ordered the destroyer minesweepers to form an anti-submarine patrol westward of the Sealark and Lengo Channels,** and established anti-submarine air patrols, employing a minimum of three cruiser planes in the air throughout the day.**

At 0738, CTF 62 received word from COMSOWESPAC that one destroyer and two unknown ships passed through Lat. 04°-58'S., Long. 152°-50'E. at 1100 the preceding day on course 140°(T) at high speed; and that, at 2000 the same day, two destroyers and three larger unknown ships also had passed through the same point on the same course at high speed.**** This latter

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* War Diary CTF 62, August 8th, 1942.
** Remarks of CTG 62.6 to CTF 62, August 10th, 1942.
*** CTF 62 Dispatch 072000, August 1942, to TF 62.
**** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 071930, August 1942, to all CTFs Pacific Fleet.

contact was the Japanese Cruiser Force en route to attack TF 62, though its composition, destination and objective could not be determined by CTF 62 from this report. He probably decided to await further reports from air reconnaissance during the day to determine whether Japanese combatant ships, or merely auxiliary ships under escort, were moving toward the Solomons.

At 0945, CTF 62 had delivered the reinforcements needed ashore at Tulagi, and the Second Marines began their landings there.*

At 1027, CTG 62.6 passed to CTF 62 the message he received from an Australian coast watcher on Bougainville Island, reporting forty heavy bombers proceeding southeast. Shortly thereafter CTF 62 ordered the transports to get underway. Both Squadrons XRAY and YOKE were formed independently and maneuvered between Guadalcanal and Florida Islands awaiting the expected air attacks.** All destroyers and minesweepers formed an anti-submarine screen for the transports, maneuvering extensively to maintain sea room for themselves while at the same time acting as anti-submarine and anti-aircraft screen.**

At 1200 TF 62 was attacked by about twenty-three torpedo planes, and by four dive bombers, escorted by fighters, which approached around the southeast end of Florida Island.* The transport GEORGE F. ELLIOTT, in Transport Group XRAY, was hit amidships and set afire by a torpedo bomber which crashed, Kamikaze style. The destroyer JARVIS was hit in the forward part of the ship by a torpedo,* which opened up a hole on her starboard side abreast gun Number Two from frame thirty to frame fifty-five.***

At 1207 CTF 62 notified his command to be alert for possibly one or more enemy submarines in the transport area.

At 1300 the JARVIS was towed by the DEWEY on the orders of CTG 62.6, into shoal water near Guadalcanal where she reported that, although her hull was badly ruptured, she was able to proceed under her own power.* At this time the transports were returning to their anchorages.

At 1355 CTF 62 received word that another flight of enemy planes was en route to the Guadalcanal area. He again directed that the transports remain underway and form the anti-aircraft disposition.* This air attack did not develop, so he finally directed the transports and cargo ships to return to their anchorages where they resumed unloading operations at about 1650.*

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* War Diary CTF 62, August 8th, 1942.

** Remarks of CTG 62.6 to CTF 62, August 10th, 1942.

*** JARVIS Dispatch 080620, August 1942, Enclosure (G) to COMDESRON 4, Serial 005 of September 9th, 1942, COMDESRON 4 War Diary, August, 1942.

A little after 1500 he received word of the capture of Guadalcanal Air Base. This was gratifying news to him, since it was planned with the departure of the carriers, to provide air cover for his force by carrier fighters based ashore and operating from the captured Japanese airfield at Guadalcanal.

In the meantime, the destroyer HULL had been assisting the transport GEORGE F. ELLIOTT in fighting fire, pursuant to orders from CTG 62.6. The fires eventually reached the engineering spaces and gained in intensity, so that she had to be abandoned. At 1730, CTG 62 ordered the DEWEY to sink her. After the DEWEY had fired three torpedoes into her, she settled in shoal water off Florida Island and continued to burn, illuminating the overcast after dark.

At 1807, CTG 62 intercepted the dispatch wherein CTF 61 recommended to COMSOPACFOR the immediate withdrawal of the carriers.* Of course he had known all along that CTF 61 had planned to withdraw the carriers prior to August 10th, and the matter of air support for the forces in Iron Bottom Sound had been discussed by COMSOPACFOR by dispatch** to CTF 61 and CTF 63 on August 2nd in which he proposed that, with the departure of the carriers, air cover was to be provided by carrier fighter planes from TG 61.1 operating from the captured Guadalcanal airfield. But now, CTF 61 indicated his desire to retire the carriers at least one day earlier than anticipated. Also, the Guadalcanal airfield had been captured scarcely three hours before, and would not be immediately ready for operation of Allied carrier aircraft.

CTF 62 therefore became seriously concerned, for he clearly recognized the serious effect the loss of his carrier air cover would have on his operations. His transports and cargo ships had not been able to carry out the unloading operations according to plan because of the long interruptions caused by Japanese air raids. As yet, very little unloading had been accomplished at Tulagi because of the strong Japanese resistance ashore there. He realized that delays in unloading probably would be added to by the hasty manner in which the cargoes had been loaded, the lack of preparation, and the lack of experience in logistics work down to the lowest unit.*** CTF 62 was, therefore, concerned for the safety of his transports and cargo ships, for which strong air cover was needed.

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* CTF 61 Dispatch 080707, August 1942, to COMSOPACFOR.

** COMSOPACFOR Dispatch 020240, August 1942, to CTF 61 and CTF 63.

*** Lecture Army-Navy Staff College, Washington, D.C., by Brigadier General C.C. Thomas, USMC, Chief of Staff, 1st Marine Division during this operation; Subject: Analyses of the Plans and Operations for the Assault and Seizure of Tulagi-Guadalcanal, January 13th, 1944, page 6.

Sunset occurred at 1816, and at 1830 CTG 62.6 ordered the Screening Group, including Fire Support Groups LOVE and MIKE, to assume the Night Screening Disposition employed on the previous night. These groups took station and commenced patrolling at about 1850. After dark, the weather was overcast with occasional rain squalls and electrical storms in Iron Bottom Sound, light winds, and calm sea.*

At about 1900 CTF 62 received a dispatch over the Pearl Harbor HOW Fox broadcast schedule that two enemy destroyers, three cruisers and two seaplane tenders or gunboats had been contacted by SOWESPAC aircraft at 1025 that day in Lat. 05°-49'S., Long. 159°-07'E., on course 120°(T), speed fifteen knots. Here, at last, was further information on the reported surface ships which had stood out of St. George's Channel the preceding evening on a southeasterly course at high speed.

This report was in error, for there were no seaplane tenders or gunboats. The surface force east of Bougainville Island actually consisted of five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and one destroyer of the Japanese Cruiser Force. The pilot of the Australian reconnaissance plane who had made this report had erred in identification, probably because in the early days of the war sufficient emphasis was not given to proper recognition of forces. He had also erred in the number of ships present, because he had not remained over his target to properly develop the contact.

CTF 62 received word in the same dispatch that two submarines had been noted at 1127 in Lat. 07°-35'S., Long. 154°-07'E., on course 150°(T).** This report placed in his hands further information of the movements of Japanese submarines toward his area, as previously reported at 2222, August 7th, by the S-38 patrolling in St. George's Channel. This report was in error also since there actually was but one submarine, the I-121 en route to Tulagi.

These contact reports served to present a picture of continuing enemy action against him and had reached CTF 62 at the time he had been cogitating over the seriousness of the prospective situation with no carrier air support. He evaluated the report of the surface force of enemy cruisers, destroyers and seaplane tenders or gunboats off Bougainville at 1025 and decided that it constituted a seaplane base group, under cruiser and destroyer escort, headed for a suitable harbor in the Solomons. He received an evaluation by dispatch from COMSOWESPAC that the cruisers and tenders reported were probably engaged in establishing a base in the

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* Action Report QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942, off Guadalcanal Island, by LCdr. H.B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16, 1942 and Action Report CHICAGO, Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 080717 to COMSOPAC.

Shortlands.* From his own information, he knew that a WASP scout had shot down a seaplane north of Rekata Bay that very morning and had strafed a small surface ship in the same area. This fact, taken together with the reported enemy course of 120°(T), probably influenced him to arrive at the conclusion that the destination of the Japanese force was Rekata Bay.

The presence of a Japanese seaplane group in Rekata Bay, just one hundred and thirty miles away, constituted an additional air threat to CTF 62's transports and cargo ships. His considered opinion was that this force had the intention of operating seaplanes that would deliver torpedo attacks against his own force. Such a possibility would increase, by one or two torpedo attacks, the air raids which TF 62 would have to face commencing on August 9th. This conviction prompted him to request CTF 63 to immediately attack the seaplane tenders basing at Rekata Bay.**

The extent to which he considered the possibility of a Japanese night surface attack does not show up in any of the documents available for this study, but it is clear that he contemplated no such attack. The reported Japanese force was much weaker than the Allied combatant forces at present in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area, and he assumed that this force would not attack the stronger Allied force, even though in night action, success does not always favor the strong. It appears that in estimating the situation, he studied the enemy commander's intentions rather than his capabilities. This was unfortunate; for a study of the forces, the operating area and relative positions, and the courses of action open to the enemy should have shown that one of the most dangerous enemy capabilities, from the viewpoint of CTF 62, would have been to attack the Allied forces at Tulagi-Guadalcanal that night.

As a consequence of the situation confronting him, CTF 62 at 2045 called a conference of the Commanding General, First Marine Division and CTG 62.6 to be held on board his flagship the MCCAWLEY, anchored in Transport Area XRAY.** He wished to know (a) whether or not sufficient stores were ashore to support the Marines in the event he retired his cargo ships and transports early, and (b) whether CTG 62.6 considered the screening ships could stick it out for one or two more days without carrier air support.* Meanwhile, he made a tentative decision to withdraw his transports and cargo ships at 0600, August 9th, the earliest hour that morning light would permit.

Upon receipt of this message, CTG 62.6 decided to close Transport Group XRAY in the AUSTRALIA. He, at 2055, directed the Commanding Officer of the CHICAGO to take charge of the AUSTRALIA Group and carry

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* CTF 62 Personal letter to Captain R.C. Parker, USN, Office of Naval History, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., 1948, and again on June 1st, 1949 in oral statement to Commodore R.W. Bates, USN(Ret), Head of Department of Analysis, U.S. Naval War College.

** Action Report CTG 62.6, August 13, 1942, para. 91.

out the basic plan while he proceeded to close the MCCAWLEY. He advised the Commanding Officer of the CHICAGO that he did not know whether or not he would return to the formation that night.* Unfortunately, he did not at the same time notify the Commanding Officer of the VINCENNES of his impending departure nor did he direct that officer to assume command during his absence.** Instead, he retained command within the AUSTRALIA even though he knew that he would soon be some distance away in the transport area. Apparently the possibility of night action did not seem pressing to him. This was a serious mistake, for it intensified an already loose command situation and not only left the Night Screening Groups without any overall commander in the screening areas but also left the major portion of these groups without any knowledge of his absence whatsoever.

At 2123, the Commanding Officer of the CHICAGO, which was the last ship in column prior to the departure of the AUSTRALIA, directed the formation to remain as it was with the CANBERRA leading the patrol in the manner previously ordered by CTG 62.6. The changes of course were made approximately on every even hour by the CANBERRA, employing column movements.

There seem to be several reasons why the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO did not lead the group - hereinafter referred to as the "CHICAGO Group". There was a possibility that the AUSTRALIA might return earlier than expected, and he did not choose to shift positions twice in the darkness and mist. He had no personal staff to assist him, and his ships officers, like himself, were very tired from two days constant vigil and attack. It appears that he expected no enemy action that night despite the fact that he had received the dispatch at about 1900 reporting the enemy surface force east of Bougainville. His action of remaining in the rear position of his group is therefore understandable, but it was not sound. A commander must always be alert to insure for his command every possible advantage that can be obtained.

At 2136 SOPAC forces received another dispatch from COMSOWESPAC, addressed to all task force commanders Pacific Fleet, reporting an air sighting at 1101 in Lat. 05°-42'S., Long. 156°-05'E. of two heavy or light cruisers and one small unidentified ship. One cruiser was reported as similar to the SOUTHHAMPTON Class.*** No mention of this second surface contact report appears to have been made in the discussion of CTF 62's conference. It was, however, mentioned in the report of at least one of the subordinate commanders.**** If it were received by CTF 62 and

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* Action Report CTG 62.6, August 13th, 1942, para. 91.

** Personal Interview of Captain Frederick Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945, by The Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

*** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 080847, August 8th, 1942.

**** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area, Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

CTG 62.6 it was not considered as a serious threat. Perhaps CTF 62 and CTG 62.6 considered that the force reported was either a part of the cruiser force bound for Rekata Bay, the intentions of which they had already discerned, or perhaps they felt that it was merely another small force which was retiring to the north and therefore unimportant. The reported position was about seven miles to the north of the 1025 enemy cruiser position and was given by a second Australian pilot who obviously had only reported the two light cruisers of CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and the destroyer YUNAGI.

At 2200 CTF 62 received word that Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo were completely in Allied hands except for a few isolated sniper positions.* At last, the unloading operations there might proceed without the tie-up from Japanese forces ashore.

At 2300 the WILSON, which had been directed by COMDESDIV SEVEN at 2015 to replace the damaged JARVIS, joined the VINCENNES Group in its night cruiser station.**

At about this time also CTF 62 directed the HOVEY to escort the damaged destroyer JARVIS through Lengo Channel back to the New Hebrides. He directed the Commanding Officer, HOVEY to pass these orders to the JARVIS.

At 2325 CTF 62 held the conference on the MCCAWLEY with the Commanding General, First Marine Division, and with CTF 62.6,*** and advised them of the situation and of his tentative decision. This conference was of extreme importance to the three commanders. In the case of the Commanding General, First Marine Division, it was important because the unloading of supplies in the Tulagi Area had not been proceeding in a satisfactory manner, and the withdrawal of the transports and cargo ships for both Tulagi and Guadalcanal two days ahead of time had serious implications for the Marines ashore. He felt that the necessity for retiring these transports and cargo ships was most alarming, as their retirement before being completely unloaded would profoundly affect the entire future course of operations in the Solomon Islands.****

In the case of CTG 62.6 the conference was important because it familiarized him with the thoughts of CTF 62 and clarified the military situation. CTG 62.6 at this time was told by CTF 62 that, in his opinion, the enemy surface force reported off Bougainville was destined for Rekata Bay, possibly to operate torpedo-carrying seaplanes against the Allied

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* ONI Combat Narrative, The Landing in the Solomons, page 70.

** Action Report WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942.

*** War Diary CTF 62, August 8th, 1942.

**** Commanding General First Marine Division's Final Report on Guadalcanal Operational Phase II (from H-hour to Evening, August 9th), Serial 00204-108/333.

forces. CTF 62 also stated that he had requested for the next day, full-scale bombing of this force, which he felt sure would be in Rekata Bay.*

It was important to CTF 62 because he desired to discuss the situation with his senior subordinate commanders, and in particular with CTG 62.6 who at 0911 that morning had requested a rough outline of the present situation and future intentions.** Although he had already made an estimate of the situation and had arrived at a tentative decision, he nevertheless thought it not only wise but of paramount importance that the senior commanders should be allowed to comment. This action of CTF 62 in calling this conference was sound. For after the retirement of CTF 61 in the SARATOGA, he would be the senior commander in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area and his was the responsibility for the decisions that had to be made as a result of the withdrawal of the carrier air support.

At this conference all commanders agreed with CTF 62's opinion as to the projected operations of the Japanese surface force and the probability of increased air attacks from Rekata Bay. They also agreed, however reluctantly, on the necessity of withdrawing the transports and cargo ships at first light (0600), provided sufficient supplies for the Marine operations ashore could be landed before departure. In accordance with this agreement the Commanding General, First Marine Division, went ashore immediately after the conference at 2345 to ascertain the situation as regards supplies at Tulagi. Until this information had been received, CTF 62 could make no final decision nor make any recommendation to CTF 61 or to COMSOPACFOR concerning the situation. He did not realize, of course, that the Commanding General, First Marine Division, would not return to the MCCAWLEY until about 0800 the following morning.***

At 2345 the RALPH TALBOT, which was on the northern radar picket station, observed an unidentified cruiser scouting plane flying low over Savo Island and heading east towards Tulagi. The RALPH TALBOT broadcast on TBS and TBO (the latter, a portable voice radio) the following message: "Warning! Warning! Plane over Savo Island heading east." Her Commanding Officer attempted to get this report to CTF 62 and to COMDESRON FOUR, but failed to get the message through. The report was heard by the BLUE, PATTERSON, VINCENNES, QUINCY and others. COMDESDIV EIGHT then accepted the message for delivery to CTF 62, but was not able to deliver it.

The 2400 positions of the ships of CTG 62.6 and Fire Support Groups LOVE and MIKE with relation to the center of Savo Island were:

(a) Screen -

RALPH TALBOT bearing 010°(T), distant seven miles.
BLUE bearing 270°(T), distant ten and seven-tenths miles.

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* Action Report CTG 62.6, Night of Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, August 13, 1942, para. 91.
** CTG 62.6 Dispatch 072211, August 1942, to CTF 62.
*** War Diary SOUTHARD, August 1942.

(b) VINCENNES Group bearing 080°(T), distant four and one-half miles.

(c) CHICAGO Group bearing 145°(T), distant ten miles.

(d) SAN JUAN Group bearing 090°(T), distant eleven miles.

(e) AUSTRALIA bearing 140°(T), distant twenty miles.

(b) OPERATIONS OF CTF 61 (Commander Expeditionary Force)

CTF 61 on August 8th appears to have been satisfied that the forenoon operations were proceeding according to plan, for he issued no important directives during that time to either of his task force commanders. He was deeply interested in any reports concerning the enemy carrier, both in his status as Commander Expeditionary Force (CTF 61) and as CTG 61.1.1. In the latter role, it was his assigned task until noon to maintain fighters and a ready attack group of bombers in the SARATOGA, which could be launched immediately to attack the enemy carrier, if it were reported by the search planes. He followed the progress of the morning search, which the WASP launched at 0606, with interest. After the last of the WASP search planes had landed at 1024, he learned that no enemy surface forces had been discovered, but that an enemy twin-float seaplane had been shot down north of Rekata Bay and that a small Japanese vessel had been strafed in the same area.* This gave him an indication that perhaps Rekata Bay was being employed by the Japanese as a base for seaplanes.

He did not have to accept as final the results of the WASP search; for at 1354 CTG 61.1 had launched the scheduled afternoon search from the ENTERPRISE to cover more or less the same area. At about 1510, when this search was at its outer limit, CTF 61 received reports from the ENTERPRISE that the fighter pilots over Tulagi-Guadalcanal had encountered Japanese twin-engined torpedo planes and twin-engined horizontal bombers, some of which were carrying torpedoes.**

As a consequence of these reports, CTF 61 re-estimated the situation. Without awaiting reports from the afternoon search he made a tentative decision; and at 1630 referred it to CTG 61.1 by visual signal, stating: "In view of possibility of torpedo plane attack and reduction in our present fighter strength, I intend to recommend immediate withdrawal of carriers. Do you agree?"*** To this, CTG 61.1 replied in the affirmative.****

CTF 61 also included in the same message the following: "In case we

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* WASP Visual Dispatch 072358, August 1942, to TG 61.1.
** CTG 61.1.2 Visual Dispatch 080236, August 1942, to CTG 61.1.
*** CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 080425, August 1942, to CTF 61.1.
**** CTF 61.1 Visual Dispatch 080515, August 1942, to CTF 61.

continue present operation, I believe same area should be used tomorrow as today. What do you think?"* To this query CTF 61.1 also replied in the affirmative.**

CTF 61 then after about two hours further consideration decided to recommend the retirement of TG 61.1. He therefore sent the following dispatch at 1807 to COMSOPACFOR: "Total fighter strength reduced from ninety-nine to seventy-eight. In view of large number of enemy torpedo and bomber planes in area, recommend immediate withdrawal of carriers. Request you send tankers immediately to rendezvous decided by you as fuel running low."***

Despite the reasons advanced in this dispatch for the immediate retirement of the carrier force, analysis reveals that the situation did not justify his making such recommendation at this time for the following reasons:

(a) He knew that his basic seizure objectives were far from accomplishment. The operations at Guadalcanal of course were progressing favorably, but those at Tulagi and Tanambogo had been slowed down because of serious enemy opposition.

(b) His information of the situation in Iron Bottom Sound and ashore was insufficient to make this decision. He had little, if any, information of the logistics and other difficulties that were delaying the unloading of the transports even longer than the estimate of four days which CTF 62 had given him before August 1st. Although he was fully authorized to take any action he deemed necessary without reference to his subordinate commanders, his failure to consult CTF 62 is made conspicuous by the fact that he did consult CTG 61.1. It should have been apparent to him that the withdrawal of the carrier air support would seriously embarrass the conduct of the landing operations. Why he did not consult CTF 62, who was even more vitally concerned - although plenty of time was available to do so - is nowhere explained. Significantly enough, he had not even made CTF 62 an information addressee for the message he sent COMSOPACFOR requesting approval for retiring the carriers.

(c) He knew that the success of his seizure operations and the defense of the areas captured, would depend in a large part on local air superiority. Such local air superiority could only be gained and held by the forces afloat, since the captured Japanese airfield at Lunga Point was not as yet in operating condition. (It was not finally ready for use until about 2015, August 10th). It would necessarily remain a function of the forces afloat to maintain air superiority until the airfield was provided with sufficient aircraft and facilities.

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* CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 080425, August 1942, to CTF 61.1.
** CTF 61.1 Visual Dispatch 080515, August 1942, to CTF 61.
*** CTF 61 Dispatch 080707, August 1942, to COMSOPACFOR.

(d) He knew that success in battle can rarely be accomplished without some losses, and that it was necessary for him to maintain a running estimate of the situation and to weigh any possible course of action on the basis of acceptability as to costs. For some reason he believed that he had lost twenty-one fighter planes (twenty-one per cent of his original complement of ninety-nine fighters). He considered this as an unacceptable loss which deprived him of sufficient defenses against Japanese air attacks. Actually, he had lost but sixteen fighters. His remaining fighter strength totalled eighty-three in the three carriers, which was four fighters more than carriers had had when they entered the Battle of Midway. Therefore, it seems extremely doubtful if his losses in fighter strength were sufficiently great to justify his classifying them as unacceptable.

(e) The shortage of fuel, although not advanced by CTF 61 as a primary reason for withdrawal of the carriers, seems to have been incorporated into his request to COMSOPACFOR in such a manner as to infer it as an additional important reason. Two days of flight operations in the vicinity of Guadalcanal Island, without enemy detection or attack, had entailed steaming at speeds influenced only by the wind velocity over the flight decks; and should have affected fuel consumption no differently than routine flight operations anywhere. His screening destroyers and cruisers, unlike those in Iron Bottom Sound, had not been required to steam at high speeds under enemy attacks but had merely cruised with the carriers.

It is always incumbent upon a commander to take every opportunity afforded to conserve the fuel in his force, and the night retirements of TG 61.1 to the southward provided the occasion for steaming at economical cruising speed at least half the time. Apparently, in consideration of this fact, CTG 61.1 steamed throughout each night at fifteen knots.

A study of the war diaries of these carrier task groups during July 1942 reveals they were repeatedly refueled en route from Pearl Harbor to Fijis, and that all ships were eventually "topped off" to ninety-five per cent capacity on July 28th and 29th at sea 300 miles south of Suva. The oilers PLATTE, CIMARRON, TIPPECANOE and KANAWHA had all been busily engaged in these fueling operations and replenished their own supply from chartered tankers at Noumea.

While the Expeditionary Force was en route to Tulagi, the CIMARRON effected rendezvous with the carrier force in a position sixty miles southwest of Efate Island in the New Hebrides at 1000 on August 3rd. This position and the track of the CIMARRON for the next two days of fueling operations is shown on Diagram "B". The CIMARRON "topped off" the SARATOGA and eight destroyers on August 3rd. On August 4th, she refueled four more destroyers of TG 61.1; and was released at noon to refuel the destroyers of TF 62.* After this the destroyers were refueled as necessary from the heavy ships of the various task groups.

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* War Diary CIMARRON, August 1942.

A check of the logs of the ships of TG 61.1 for August 8th indicates the destroyers of TG 61.1.1 averaged about seventy-five per cent of capacity; those of TG 61.1.2 about forty-two per cent and those of TG 61.1.3 about forty-four per cent of capacity; the cruisers of all groups were about fifty per cent of capacity or better, and of the carriers, only the ENTERPRISE was running low and had fuel for three more days of operations.* Despite the statement of CTG 61.1.2 that "Fuel situation in this force becoming critical. It is estimated that the destroyers have fuel for about three days at fifteen knots and the heavy ships have little more",* the facts seem to be that although the fuel in the command was diminishing daily it was not at this time so critically low as to force retirement from the area. In fact CTG 61.1 does not appear to have originated any dispatches concerning an urgent need for refueling, and his affirmative reply to CTF 61 made no mention of fuel at all.

CTF 61's reason for wanting to retire does not appear therefore to have been the low fuel in his ships. This is borne out by his suggestion to CTG 61.1 to continue to operate on August 9th in the same area as on August 8th if the retirement request was disapproved.** Does this not indicate that he was fully prepared to operate with the fuel on hand? Does it not also indicate that he was not too sure that his contemplated request would be approved?

From the above it seems clear that CTF 61's desire to retire TG 61.1 was motivated by his feeling that it was unwise to expose his carriers to possible enemy air attack - especially by torpedo planes - and by no other consideration.*** He appears to have felt that this consideration was so important that it transcended the objectives assigned to him, including the air support that CTG 61.1 was required to provide TF 62. The fact that such a precipitous departure might seriously jeopardize the success of the entire operation at Tulagi-Guadalcanal, for which he was responsible as Commander Expeditionary Force, and might prevent the inauguration of Task TWO which the Joint Chiefs had indicated a desire to expedite**** does not appear to have been given the serious consideration it deserved.

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* War Diary, CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16), August 1942.

** CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 080425 to CTF 61.1, August 8th, 1942.

*** A similar conclusion was arrived at by Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN, in his report of Informal Inquiry into the Circumstances Attending the Loss of the VINCENNES, etc., on August 9th, 1942, submitted to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet, May 13th, 1943, wherein he stated "The Japanese Commander deemed it wise to retire at high speed to avoid, if possible, the air attack to be expected from our forces at dawn. Ironically enough, the only part of our force capable of making such an attack were at the same time retiring in the opposite direction because of the same apprehension."

**** War Diary WASP, July 28th, 1942.

It is unfortunate that CTF 61, in making his recommendation, failed to inform COMSOPACFOR fully of the delicate nature of the situation at Tulagi-Guadalcanal. Perhaps COMSOPACFOR's approval might have been delayed.

At about 1845, CTF 61 received COMSOWESPAC's dispatch reporting three cruisers, three destroyers, and two seaplane tenders or gunboats in Lat. 05°-49'S., Long. 156°-07'E.* No information is available as to his reactions at this time. Since he did not make any changes in his plans, he seems to have felt that his recommendation to COMSOPACFOR for the retirement of Task Force 61.1, and especially so in the face of an additional threat of torpedo attacks from seaplanes based in the Southern Solomon Islands, was correct.

At about 2333, he received a message from CTF 63 reporting the results of the searches made by his command on the 8th. All sectors searched were reported as negative except Sector I and the left half of Sector II which had not been searched because of bad weather.** These areas had been covered by the WASP search planes in the morning, and again by the ENTERPRISE search planes in the afternoon so that the threat of an enemy carrier was eliminated from his considerations for the time being.

(c) OPERATIONS OF CTG 61.1 (Commander Air Support Force)

Commencing at midnight, CTG 61.1 began his return to the eastward and proceeded at fifteen knots to arrive at his designated launching position at 0600 on August 8th.***

The daylight weather conditions in the vicinity of the task force had improved considerably over the preceding day. Flying conditions were now excellent. The sky was reported as 0.5 cloudy, surface visibility unrestricted, wind ENE seventeen knots, scattered showers, sea calm.

Throughout the 8th, he continued his operations: (a) in support of the Allied landing operations and the Allied surface forces in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area; (b) in providing air cover for his own task force, and (c) in providing air searches to augment the search operations of CTF 63 as requested by CTF 61.

At 0606 the WASP launched a search of twelve scout bombers from her position bearing 167 (T) distant eighty-seven miles from Tulagi and thirty-four miles from Cape Henslow, to search the sector 280°(T)-040°(T) to a radius of 220 miles. She evidently extended this search to include all of Santa Isabel Island and the New Georgia Group. The planes from this search returned on board the WASP between 0958 and 1024.****

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* COMSOWESPAC Dispatch 080717, August 8th, 1942, to COMSOPAC.
** CTF 63 Dispatch 081233, August 8th, 1942, to CTF 61.
*** CTF 61.1 Visual Dispatch 070611, August 1942, to TG 61.1.
**** Report on Capture of Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area August 7th-8th, 1942. WASP Serial 0194 of August 24th, 1942.

During the progress of the morning's search CTG 61.1 maintained fighters and a ready attack group on the flight deck of the SARATOGA which he desired to launch immediately in case a Japanese carrier were located. That he was insistent that this group be ready for instant offensive action, on the receipt of a contact report from one of the WASP search planes, is divulged in the text of three dispatches sent to CTG 61.1.1 in the SARATOGA alerting him at 0820,* again at 0925,** and finally at 1029*** to the necessity of keeping fighters and the attack group ready at all times until noon in case an enemy carrier was located and a bombing attack was carried out.

At 1030, CTG 61.1 learned from the WASP that the morning search had been completed with negative results, except for the shooting down of an enemy twin-float seaplane north of Rekata Bay and for the strafing of a small craft flying Japanese colors in the same area. The WASP reported the results of this search to TG 61.1 in a visual message sent out at 1058.****

CTG 61.1 commenced retiring to the southeastward at 1200 at a Point Option speed of five knots. His retirement courses were apparently the result of his own analysis of the need for sea room for the carriers as affected by the direction of the wind, and not as the result of any directive from CTF 61.

At about 1203 a Japanese air strike came in to attack the transports. At this time, CTG 61.1 had a combat air patrol over the transports of three fighters from the ENTERPRISE and eight from the SARATOGA, a total of eleven. An additional combat air patrol of four fighters from the SARATOGA was en route to the transport area but it arrived too late. These Allied fighters succeeded in shooting down four Japanese land attack planes and one Zero fighter but did not succeed in breaking up the attack.

Between 1347 and 1354, he launched an additional air search group of fourteen torpedo planes from the ENTERPRISE to conduct a 200 miles search of sector 270°-015° from a point of origin Lat. 09°-32'S., Long. 159°-30'E., and a 200 mile search of sector 345°(T) - 090°(T) from another point of origin 09°-50'S., Long. 160°-56'E. These searches had been designated to cover adjacent areas. At 1749 twelve of these fourteen torpedo planes returned and landed on the ENTERPRISE. The remaining two landed at 1839.***** Evidently this search had been extended by the pilots while in the air, for the ENTERPRISE reported to CTF 61 that two planes had searched to a radius

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* CTG 61.1 Visual Dispatch 072120, August 1942, to CTG 61.1.1.
** CTG 61.1 Visual Dispatch 072225, August 1942, to SARATOGA.
*** CTG 61.1 Visual Dispatch 072315, August 1942, to CTG 61.1.1.
**** WASP Dispatch 072358, August 1942, to CTG 61.1.
***** Letter August 24th, 1942, from Commanding Officer, ENTERPRISE, Concerning Operations in Support of Occupation of Tulagi-Gudalcanal, August 7th-8th, 1942, Serial 0194, August 24th, 1942.

of 260 miles in the western sector and twelve planes had searched to a radius of 220 miles in the northern and eastern sectors, all with negative results.* A study of Diagram "D" shows that the twelve planes which searched to 220 miles reached the extremities of their search at about 1550, and the two planes which searched to 260 miles reached the extremities of their search at about 1610. The ENTERPRISE also reported that her planes had encountered heavy squalls 100 miles to the eastward and 140 miles to the northeastward, but that the area to the westward was clear.*

As a matter of hindsight, it is of interest to analyse the extent of this search in relation to the position of the Japanese Cruiser Force. That force had completed its passage southward through Bougainville Strait at 1600, had entered "The Slot", and at 1612 had changed course to 120°(T). Thus, it had come well within the radius of the ENTERPRISE search planes in the western sector. It is unfortunate, from the Allied viewpoint, that the third search plane from the west had not also searched to 260 miles radius rather than to 220 miles; for had it done so its search would have covered Bougainville Strait. This plane then should have passed over the Japanese Cruiser Force which was present at that time. As it was, by searching to but 220 miles this plane missed a probable contact by a mere thirty miles.

Throughout the afternoon, CTG 61.1 continued to provide air cover for TF 62 which consisted of approximately twelve fighters; and to provide air cover for his own force which consisted of forty-two fighters until 1300, gradually reducing in number to six fighters at 1800.** Dive bombers were employed as necessary for anti-submarine patrol.

CTG 61.1 also continued to provide from dawn until sunset the air support and the reconnaissance for the landing operations. This consisted, in large part, of attacks by dive bombers which delivered both bombing and strafing attacks on enemy positions.

After the completion of the sunset recovery of all aircraft at 1857, CTG 61.1 set the retirement course for the night as 140°(T) at speed fifteen knots. At 2330 he changed course to 230°(T).***

Total aircraft losses August 8th: Fighters, one crashed; Bombers, none.

His 2400 position on the 8th was Lat. 11°-30'S., Long. 161°-47'E.

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* ENTERPRISE Visual Dispatch 081040, August 1942, to CTF 61.

** Letter August 24th, 1942, from Commanding Officer, ENTERPRISE, Concerning Operations in Support of Occupation of Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 7th-8th, 1942, Serial 0194, August 24th, 1942; Letter August 14th, 1942, from Commanding Officer, WASP, Concerning Capture of Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area August 7th-8th, 1942, Serial 003, August 14th, 1942 and SARATOGA War Diary, August 1942, Annex "B".

*** War Diary, ENTERPRISE, August 1942.

(d) OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SUBMARINES

(1) Operations of S-38

During the 8th the S-38 was patrolling in St. George's Channel along a fifteen mile run; in and out on courses 320°(T) and 140°(T), respectively. At 0242, having noted Japanese units moving out on course 140°(T), the submarine commander notified COMSUBDIV FIVE of this fact by dispatch. However, he could take no offensive against them for his port motor panel had failed and he was engaged in repairing it in a position clear of the channel. At 2100 he resumed his 320°-140°(T) patrol. At 2255 he sighted a large Japanese submarine, apparently the I-122, en route from Rabaul to Tulagi, standing out of the channel at high speed. This submarine was too far away to attack and soon disappeared.*

The approximate 2400 position of the S-38 was bearing 270°(T), distant fourteen miles from Cape St. George.

(2) Operations of S-44

The S-44 was patrolling submerged off the southern entrances to Byron and Steffen Straits and made no contacts. The Commanding Officer surfaced after dark. Some time thereafter he received a message directing him to move to Area ZED, which appears to have been the area off Cape St. George, New Ireland. He therefore proceeded at about 2100 in a westerly direction around New Hanover Island.**

At 2400 he was about five miles south of New Hanover Island in a position about thirty miles west of Steffen Strait.

(e) OPERATIONS OF CTF 63 (Commander Aircraft South Pacific Force)

CTF 63 search operations on August 8th were in general very similar to the preceding day, and are shown on Diagram "D". Sectors I, II, V and VI remained the same; Sector III was modified; Sector IV was advanced from Espiritu Santo to Maramasike Estuary, Malaita Island; and Sector VII was a new sector flown from Espiritu Santo. The results of these searches follows:***

Sector I was not searched because of bad weather.

Sector II was scarcely half searched. The right half was not searched because of bad weather; the left half was searched to a radius of 650 miles only rather than to the planned 750 miles radius for the same reason. Results were negative. It was through Sector II that the Japanese Cruiser Force approached Savo Island, but the Allied search, even if it

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* War Diary S-38, August, 1942.
** War Diary S-44, August, 1942.
*** War Diary CTF 63, August 1942.

had been flown as planned, would not have discovered the Cruiser Force. This was because that force did not enter this sector until about 1900 August 8th, whereas the B-17 that did search was abreast Tulagi about sunrise and had reached its 650 miles extremity by 0715. Had an afternoon search in addition to the early morning search been provided, and had the planes making this search been instructed to be at the extremity of their sectors by sunset, they would probably have discovered the Japanese Cruiser Force between Choiseul and New Georgia Islands. Such an afternoon search had been placed in effect in Sectors III and V on August 5th and 6th at the special request of CTF 62 who feared an attack through that area, but was dropped thereafter. It is not clear why a search of this type was not organized in Sector II, after the Japanese cruisers were reported off Rabaul and later in St. George's Channel on August 7th.

Sectors III, VI, and VII were searched with negative results.

Sector IV was searched by the patrol planes which had been moved up from Espiritu Santo to Maramasike Estuary the preceding day. These planes operated from the tender MACKINAC.

Sector V was searched to a distance of only 600 miles with negative results. The outer fifty miles of the planned 650 miles was not searched.

There is some doubt as to whether the search of the sector 290°(T) to 318°(T) from Malaita Island, which search had been requested the preceding day by CTF 62, was actually made. CTF 63 states in his War Diary that all searches were conducted in accordance with the Basic Operation Plan and there is no entry in the Diary concerning a search of this new sector.* On the other hand, CTF 63's Chief of Staff has recently stated that this search was made by two B-17's from Espiritu Santo, which searched to a distance of about 315 miles beyond Malaita Island with negative results.** Assuming that the search was made and that the planes departed at dawn, they should have reached the outer limit of their search at about 1215. A plot of this search is shown on Diagram "D". At this time, the Japanese Cruiser Force was roughly sixty miles to the northwest. It is apparent, therefore, that this search as conducted, would necessarily have been ineffective. No special report concerning the results of this search was made by CTF 63 to CTF 62.

CTF 63, who had received not only the dispatch from COMSOWESPAC reporting the Japanese Cruiser Force off Bougainville Island, but also CTF 62's request to bomb these ships in Rekata Bay on August 8th, seems to have concurred in CTF 62's opinion as to the destination of the Cruiser

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* War Diary CTF 63, August 1942.

** Letter October 20th, 1948, from Rear Admiral M.B. Gardiner, USN (Chief of Staff to CTF 63) to President, Naval War College.

Force, for he did not recommend other action. In fact, he directed the ELEVENTH Bombardment Group to be prepared to attack this enemy force in Rekata Bay at 1200, August 9th. He also directed the Commanding Officer, MACKINAC (CTG 63.5) at Maramasike Estuary to make a four-plane night torpedo attack on this force on August 9th.* This latter order was released at about 0254, August 9th.**

Table 4 shows the disposition of Allied land and tender-based aircraft in the SOPAC Area as of 2400, August 8th.

(f) OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER ALLIED AIR FORCES, SOWESPAC

Commander Allied Air Forces North Eastern Area, SOWESPAC, conducted air searches on August 8th in support of the operations in SOPAC Area as follows:

(a) Three Hudsons from the Fall River Field at Milne Bay reconnoitered the Solomon Islands in Reconnaissance Area "B", and a fourth Hudson made a short reconnaissance flight over Reconnaissance Area "Siren" which appears (from previous delineation of search areas) to have included the sea approaches to the Louisiade Archipelago, the Lusancay Islands, and the approaches to Buna Roads from Rabaul.

(b) One B-17 from Port Moresby reconnoitered Reconnaissance Area "C"; another covered Reconnaissance Area "D", and a third B-17 made a photographic intelligence mission in Reconnaissance Area "E" with particular emphasis on Rabaul and Kavieng.

The reconnaissance flights of the three Hudsons in Reconnaissance Area "B" are of particular significance, since these Hudsons re-established the previous day's contacts on the Japanese Cruiser Force as it moved southward towards Tulagi. The contacts were made as follows:

(a) Hudson Flight Number A16/218 was heading up from the southeast at 1025 when he made contact on the Japanese Cruiser Force in Lat. 05°-49' S., Long. 156°-07'E. and reported it as three heavy cruisers, three destroyers, and two seaplane tenders or gunboats on course 120°(T), speed fifteen.*** This force actually consisted of five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and one destroyer.

The pilot did not trail this contact but proceeded to return directly to his base at Fall River. This fact is revealed by the contact he made an hour later, at 1127, on one Japanese submarine, apparently the I-121 en route from Rabaul to Tulagi, in a position in the Solomon Sea 175 miles away from the cruiser contact on a direct line to Milne Bay. The Hudson pilot attacked this submarine with two 100-pound bombs, but missed.***

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* War Diary CTF 63, August 1942.

** CTF 63 Dispatch 081554, August 1942 to MACKINAC.

*** Operations Report Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area for August 8th, 1942.

TABLE 4
DISPOSITION OF ALLIED SHORE AND TENDER-BASED AIRCRAFT
AS OF 2400, AUGUST 8, 1942.

BASE	11th Bombardment Group	69th 70th Bombardment Sqdns	67th 68th 70th Pursuit Sqdns	VP Sqdns 11, 14 & 23	R.N.Z.A.F. Units			Marine Corps Squadrons		Navy Inshore Patrol Sqdns	TOTAL PLANES
								VMF 111 & 212 VMO 251	VMO 151	VS1 D14	
	B-17	B-26	P-39	PBY-5's	Hudsons	Singapores	Vincents	F4F	SBC	OS2U	
ESPIRITU	10*			3				20**		3	39
EFATE				2				12		3	15
NEW CALEDONIA	8	10	38	3	6					3	67
NANDI	12	12	17	6	12	3	9				71
NDENI				5***							5
MARAMASIKE ESTUARY				8****							8
SAMOA								18	17	10	45
TONGATABU			24							6	30
TOTALS	30	22	79	27	30			50	17	25	280

* Rotated up from EFATE and NANDI
** VMF-212 transferred 3 of the 4 F4F-3A back to EFATE later on August 8th, leaving 17 F4F at ESPIRITU
*** 1 of 6 PBY-5's at NDENI down at sea on August 8th.
**** 1 of 9 PBY-5's at MARAMASIKE ESTUARY struck reef on August 8th.

The procedure governing Air Force reconnaissance missions stipulated that a plane making contact at sea was to remain in the vicinity of the sighted target until recalled or forced to retire.* It is assumed that this pilot was forced to retire for cause, probably because of fuel limitations. His contact report, unfortunately, was in error as regards both numbers and recognition. These errors had a profound effect on the decisions of CTF 62 and CTG 62.6.

All evidence available for this study seems to indicate that the above two contact reports were made after the plane returned to its base at Fall River, since both of them were combined into a single dispatch. The basic instructions required that each contact be reported by dispatch as soon as made by the plane in flight.*

The dispatch which reported these two contacts was passed over the Australian Air Force circuit from Fall River to Port Moresby, and thence to Townsville to the Headquarters of the Commander North Eastern Area. At this point (or at Port Moresby), had the urgency been recognized, it might well have been broadcast on Task Force 63's point-to-point Net "E". Instead, it was passed from Townsville over the Australian Air Force land-line circuit to the Headquarters of Commander Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area, at Brisbane. It was then passed by hand to COMSOWESPAC, also at Brisbane, who passed it over the Navy (U.S.N.-R.A.N.) land-line circuit to Canberra, Australia in his dispatch 080717 (time of origin 1817, minus eleven Zone Time) for transmission over the air on the Canberra BELLS broadcast schedule. Canberra then transmitted it on the BELLS schedule to the Australian Forces and to Pearl Harbor for transmission on the HOW Fox schedule to the American Forces. Canberra completed its transmission on the BELLS schedule at 080737 (1837 minus eleven Zone Time). Pearl Harbor completed its transmission on the HOW Fox schedule at 080743 (1843 minus eleven Zone Time).

This dispatch was received by COMSOPACFOR, the action addressee, and by CTF 62 on the HOW Fox schedule between 1843 and 1845. It was received by CTF 62.6 on the BELLS schedule at 1837, and on the HOW Fox schedule at 1843.** Thus, this vitally important contact report was received by the responsible commanders in the SOPAC Area about eight hours and twenty minutes after the contact was made.

(b) At 1101, the pilot of Hudson Flight Number A16/185 made contact on the same Japanese Cruiser Force in Lat. 05°-42'S., Long. 156°-05'E., and reported it as two heavy or light cruisers and one unidentified vessel. This plane was reported by the Japanese to have trailed them for some time

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* Signal Annex to Operation Instruction Number TWO, GHQ, Southwest Pacific Area, April 25th, 1942.

** Report of Informal Inquiry into the Circumstances Attending the Loss of the VINCENNES, etc. by Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN (Ret.), May 13th, 1943, page 10.

and this fact is borne out by the report of a 2000-ton motor vessel by this same pilot one hour and twenty minutes later in Bougainville Strait in a position that was but eighty miles away from this first contact.* Additional contact reports on other, but unimportant, targets indicate that he reconnoitered Gizo Island and returned to his base at Fall River.

The report of the contact made at 1101 was even more incomplete than the 1025 report, and did not tend to clarify an already confused situation. Why the pilot did not make a more correct report is not known. However it may have been due, in part at least, to the fact that all five Japanese heavy cruisers had been recovering planes in widely separated positions until about 1200 before joining up. It seems logical to assume that the Australian pilot failed to see the five heavy cruisers, but that he did sight the TENRYU, YUBARI and YUNAGI which latter three ships had not launched planes and had been operating as a unit apart from the heavy cruisers.

The report of this contact was received by COMSOPACFOR at 2136 or about ten and one-half hours after it had been made. Whether or not it was received by CTF 62 and CTG 62.6 remains unknown.

The fact that both of these reports from the Hudson reconnaissance planes were received at Tulagi many hours after the contacts had been made, and the further fact that sunset was at 1816, once again denied COMSOPACFOR the opportunity of requesting an immediate air attack by COMSOWESPAC planes, should he have desired that such an attack be made; and denied the Air Support Force (TG 61.1) the opportunity to attack this Japanese force on the afternoon of August 8th.

The recurrence of this slowness of communications on August 8th, as on August 7th, is a repetition of a similar historical incident that occurred in World War II some two years earlier. In that instance, an R.A.F. Hudson plane of the British Coastal Command on a reconnaissance flight on the eastern side of the North Sea on Sunday, April 7th, 1940, sighted shortly after noon a large German naval force escorting transports on a northerly course. The pilot failed to report this contact by radio and only mentioned it verbally after returning to base some four hours later. This contact was of vital concern, since it was part of the German invasion force headed for Norway. The invasion of Norway commenced on April 9th.** Although a squadron of bombers was belatedly sent out from a British east coast base, it failed to intercept this enemy force. The Commander-in-Chief, British Home Fleet, was denied information of the movement of the Germans until too late for effective countermeasures.**

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* Operations Report Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area, August 8th, 1942.

** Report June 24th, 1940 from U.S. Naval Attache, London Concerning Great Britain (Norway) Norwegian Campaign - Initial Error, Serial 690, File 907.

Thus, long delays in Royal Air Force communications (both British and Australian) on directly opposite sides of the globe had assisted the enemy; first, in April, 1940 in the case of the German invasion of Norway, and second, in August 1942 in the case of the Japanese attempt to defeat the Allied operations in the Solomons.

It should be apparent that the long delay in the receipt by the action addressees of the two R.A.A.F. Hudson contacts made on the Japanese Cruiser Force on August 8th, 1942, taken together with the similar delay in the receipt of the B-17 contacts made on this same force on August 7th, serve to indicate a uniform pattern of slow and ineffective communications between aircraft of the Allied Air Force in the North Eastern Area and the responsible Allied commanders in the SOPAC Area.

In spite of the fact that the two bases, Townsville and Port Moresby were linked on COMAIRSOPAC (CTF 63) Net "E" and that three air bases (the above two plus Fall River) were able to communicate on CTF 63's Net "C", these circuits were not employed by the Allied Air Forces in the North Eastern Area to broadcast the vital information contained in these contact reports. Instead, as provided in the SOWESPAC Communication Plan, these "signals originated in the North Eastern Area and addressed to South Pacific Forces (were) routed via Headquarters Allied Air Force".* As was shown previously, there was the additional provision that: "When urgency demands, (signals) may be routed via Port Moresby or Townsville on the above (Net "E") point to point series."* But this provision called for a decision as to what constituted information of urgency, and such a decision would therefore have required the advice of a naval liaison communications officer at each of the bases in the North Eastern Area. Unfortunately, the Allied Air Forces were dependent upon the communication facilities and personnel of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The latter personnel had unhappily become complacent as a result of their inability to take offensive action prior to the influx of American Forces, and were slow in responding to the demands of the situation.**

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* Signal Instructions, Annexure (B) to Operation Instruction No. 18, Headquarters Allied Air Forces, July 31, 1942.

** Interview on January 13th, 1950, Captain B.F. Roeder, USN, Assistant Communication Officer on Staff of COMSOWESPACFOR on August 1942, conducted by Commodore Richard W. Bates, USN, (Ret.), Head of Department of Analysis, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

CHAPTER VIII
MEANS AVAILABLE AND OPPOSED
August 9th, 1942

(a) FORCES ENGAGED

(1) ALLIED FORCE*

(1) SCREEN

BLUE (DD), RALPH TALBOT (DD) - Total:	2 DD

(2) CHICAGO GROUP

CANBERRA (CA), CHICAGO (CA)	2 CA
PATTERSON (DD), BAGLEY (DD)	2 DD

(3) VINCENNES GROUP

VINCENNES (CA), ASTORIA (CA), QUINCY (CA)	3 CA
WILSON (DD), HELM (DD)	2 DD

Total forces engaged: 5 CA, 6 DD

(2) JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE

CHOKAI (FF)(CA), AOBA (CA), KAKO (CA), KINUGASA (CA), FURUTAKA (CA)	5 CA
TENRYU (CL), YUBARI (CL)	2 CL
YUNAGI (DD)	1 DD

Total forces engaged: 5 CA, 2 CL, 1 DD

(b) ARMAMENT:

(1) ALLIED FORCE

CHICAGO, VINCENNES, QUINCY, ASTORIA (nine 8-inch, eight 5-inch); CANBERRA (eight 8-inch, four 4-inch, eight 21-inch torpedo tubes); BLUE, RALPH TALBOT, PATTERSON, BAGLEY, WILSON, HELM (four 5-inch, sixteen 21-inch torpedo tubes).

(2) JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE**

CHOKAI (ten 8-inch, four 5.0-inch, sixteen 24-inch torpedo tubes); AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA (six 8-inch, four 4.7-inch, eight 24-inch torpedo tubes); TENRYU (four 5.5-inch, one 3-inch, six 21-inch torpedo tubes); YUBARI (five 5.5-inch, one 3-inch, four 24-inch torpedo tubes); YUNAGI (four 4.7-inch, six 21-inch torpedo tubes).

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* Additional Allied ships were in the final phase of this night action. However, for one reason or another, as will be shown in this chapter they were not actually in the battle. These were the AUSTRALIA, SELFRIDGE, MUGFORD, ELLET. The JARVIS was disabledbut passed through the combat area during the battle.

** SOURCE: ATIS Historical Division G2 General Headquarters, Far Eastern Command April 1950.

(c) STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS FACTORS

The following survey of pertinent strength and weakness factors of each force has been made to summarize the material for testing the feasibility and acceptability of possible courses of action.

ALLIED FORCE

STRENGTH FACTORS	WEAKNESS FACTORS
Radar	Forces separated so could be destroyed piecemeal.
More, and more modern destroyers (6 to 1)	Commanders of different groups not familiar with one another's plans.
More 8" guns (44 to 34)	Personnel worn out after two days in combat area.
Cruisers had more life (27 to 23.6)	No flag officer present.
Cruisers generally superior to Japanese cruisers.	No battle plan.
Close support nearby (3 cruisers 5 destroyers)	Lack of correct intelligence concerning composition enemy cruiser force.
More torpedo tubes in destroyers (96 to 6)	Night attack not anticipated by high command.
More 4.0" and 5.0" than enemy's 4.7", 5.0" and 5.5" guns (60 to 34)	

JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE

STRENGTH FACTORS	WEAKNESS FACTORS
Surprise	Non homogeneous
Initiative	Enemy forces stronger than expected.
More light cruisers (2 to 0)	Had not operated together.
More torpedo tubes in cruisers (58 to 8)	
Better trained in night operations	
Ship-based aircraft well trained for night flying.	
Familiar with combat area.	
Freedom of action.	
More war experience.	
Forces concentrated.	

This analysis indicates that, insofar as guns, torpedo tubes, radar, design, and equipment in general were concerned, the advantage lay with the Allies; that insofar as combat experience, freshness of personnel, surprise, initiative and concentration were concerned, the advantage lay with the Japanese. Thus, the Allies had material superiority; the Japanese, morale and tactical superiority.

CHAPTER IX

OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE

0000 August 9th to 0132 August 9th

(a) THE APPROACH

The Japanese Cruiser Force continued onward in night cruising disposition towards Tulagi on course 120°(T) speed twenty-four knots, and all ships in condition of readiness ONE. At exactly 0000, August 9th, with the south entrance to Tulagi bearing 140°(T) distant thirty-seven miles, Commander Cruiser Force changed course to that bearing, increased speed to twenty-six knots and assumed the battle formation which he had ordered in his Signal Order No. 25.* The vanguard of his cruising disposition, which was composed of the TENRYU and the YUNAGI in position 1000 yards on the port bow of the CHOKAI, and the YUBARI in a similar position on the starboard bow, immediately reversed course and took position in the battle formation.** This formation was actually a simple column with the ships in the following order: CHOKAI(FF), AOBA(F), KAKO, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA, TENRYU(F), YUBARI, and YUNAGI.

At 0025 Commander Cruiser Force sent two signals to his force. One was: "Three heavy cruisers south of Savo Island, course 290°(T), speed eighteen knots"; the other was: "Prepare to fire torpedoes!"*** The signal, referring to the heavy cruisers, evidently was a report of the AUSTRALIA Group which had reversed from a northwesterly course at 0015, ten minutes earlier, to a course of 125°(T). This information had been given to the Japanese Commander by one of the two cruiser planes which were reconnoitering the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area and the observation was made at the time the CHICAGO Group was on course 306°(T) at speed twelve knots.**** The report was somewhat inaccurate as to composition. There were actually two destroyers and two cruisers in formation at the time. The third cruiser, the AUSTRALIA, had departed at 2123 for Area XRAY off Guadalcanal. This report was reasonably accurate as to course (306° instead of 290°) but somewhat inaccurate as to speed (twelve instead of eighteen). However, when one considers the pilot's problem of operating over hostile surface forces, in low visibility and on a moonless night, his performance must be rated unusually creditable and reflected merit on the Japanese ship-based pilots.

Commander Cruiser Force must have been extremely gratified to receive this report, for his late afternoon reconnaissance plane had not returned.

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947, page 1.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160143.

**** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Kenkichi Kato, IJN, page 361.

This information not only tended to verify his own estimate of enemy forces, based in part upon the report of Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force, but it also indicated that he was going into action against divided enemy forces, each group of which was inferior to his own force.

The signal "Prepare to fire torpedoes" was in keeping with his signalled battle plan and it foreshadowed relatively "close action".

At 0045, he ordered battle stations alerted.* This order established a condition of readiness believed to be similar to the American Condition of Readiness ONE. A few minutes later, at about 0053, the CHOKAI sighted on bearing 162°(T) a ship resembling a destroyer.** This destroyer was the BLUE on her radar patrol station. At 0054 the AOBA, which was directly astern of the CHOKAI in column also sighted the BLUE.*** Diagram "E" shows that the range at the time of contact was 10,900 yards. It was fortunate for the Japanese that the BLUE, even with radar, failed to detect the Japanese Cruiser Force on its approach. This long-range sighting by the Japanese lookouts was merely one of many long-range and astonishingly accurate reports made by them during the action.

As will be shown later, the Japanese reports of sightings were almost always made long before similar reports were made by the Allied lookouts and were, therefore, of inestimable value to the commanding officers of all Japanese ships engaged. This superiority in night visual detection was presumably due to superiority in night glasses; to longer training in actual war conditions and to freshness of lookouts, when compared with the Allied lookouts who may have been suffering from fatigue resulting from several days of intense combat operations. It may have been due also to an unwarranted reliance on radar by the Allied ships.

Commander Cruiser Force appears to have been somewhat surprised by the presence of the BLUE. His planes had not reported her, she was patrolling across his line of approach through the south channel into Iron Bottom Sound, and she might seriously interfere with his plans if she discovered his cruiser force. He had two apparent courses of action. The first was to continue on, to endeavor to pass the destroyer without discovery and without gun action, and to endeavor to surprise the three cruisers reported to be south of Savo Island. The other was to change course to a little south of east and to endeavor to pass through the north passage into Iron Bottom Sound without discovery. He chose the latter course of action, for at 0058 he changed the flag-ship's course to 100°(T) and signalled "Enter by north entrance!"***

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* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Kenkichi Kato, IJN, page 361.

*** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947, page 4.

At about 0103, he sighted on bearing 159°(T) what he mistook to be another destroyer,* but what evidently was a two-masted schooner. This schooner was probably the same ship which had been reported by an ENTERPRISE plane on August 7th in a position northwest of the Russell Islands, since no other Japanese ships had been observed in the area. Because of this contact, Commander Cruiser Force now had to re-estimate his situation. It must have appeared to him that this second destroyer was part of a patrol across the entrance. Although no picket ships had been reported by his planes, nevertheless, it was a logical security measure for the Allies to take. He decided that he would gain no advantage by endeavoring to enter through the north channel which would also be patrolled. It would be wise to strike immediately. He also observed that both "destroyers" (BLUE and the schooner) were gradually withdrawing to the southwestward and had either not discovered his cruisers or had decided to take no direct action other than report his presence. He did not think that either of these possibilities was likely.** Although the action reports do not so state there is reason to believe from some of the interrogations that Commander Cruiser Force's decision to carry out his original plan to enter through the south channel may have been affected also by possible reports from his cruiser planes of an Allied cruiser group east of Savo Island in addition to the one to the south.

He therefore, at 0105, directed the CHOKAI to turn right to course 150°(T); and at 0108 he signalled "Enter from south passage!"** He continued at twenty-six knots on course 150°(T) with his ships at general quarters. He decided to withhold fire, maintain silence and trust to chance. This was a wise decision, for his command had not as yet been observed by the BLUE or by any other Allied ship. His presence was unknown.

During this time, Commander Cruiser Force made no contacts on the other Allied radar patrolling destroyer, the RALPH TALBOT. This was probably because the RALPH TALBOT, at 0100, was approximately 24,000 yards away, or slightly more than double the Japanese demonstrated range of visibility. When the CHOKAI turned southward at 0105, she was approximately 19,000 yards away and therefore was still beyond visual range insofar as the Japanese lookouts were concerned and beyond radar range insofar as she, herself was concerned.

At 0112 when due west of the north point of Savo Island, Commander Cruiser Force changed course by follow-the-leader tactics to 160°(T). He then, at 0118, changed course to 180°(T); at 0120 to 150°(T); and at 0121 to 110°(T).***This latter course would have taken the Cruiser Force just

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* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947, page 2.

** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 109, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, page 472.

*** Track Chart Annexed to Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

outside the 100 fathom curve on the south side of Savo Island. Why Commander Cruiser Force desired to operate so close to Savo Island is not explained. It would appear as though the correct course, once the Allied patrolling destroyers had been evaded, would have been to head directly into Iron Bottom Sound and towards the transports off Guadalcanal. Perhaps he hoped to interfere with Allied radars by operating close to a land mass. Perhaps he was seeking the three cruisers, which had been reported as operating south of Savo Island about one hour earlier, and wished to locate them prior to his "rush in". Whatever may have been the reason Commander Cruiser Force proceeded on course 110°(T) until 0124 when he commenced running into a heavy mass of clouds which obscured the southern end of Savo Island and extended several miles to the southward. He, therefore, at 0124, changed course to 160°(T) to avoid this cloud mass. At 0126, Commander Cruiser Force signalled "Proceed independently!"* It is believed by this signal, he meant that the CHOKAI, CRUDIV SIX, CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and the YUNAGI were to act independently of each other.** This was an unusual order, but in view of the nature of night operations, was sound provided that each of the above tactical units was to operate independently against Allied shipping, their designated objective. Otherwise, does it not seem that it would have been wiser to have kept them together? Night combat operations are very difficult and unless forces are kept together, melees often result, and it is difficult to distinguish friend from foe. This was especially true of the Japanese forces at this time, for, as has been pointed out previously, the cruisers comprising this force had never maneuvered together before.

At 0128½, the CHOKAI changed course to 130°(T) and at 0132, to course 095°(T).*** She passed Savo Island at a distance of about three miles on her port beam. The other ships followed in column.

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 109, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, page 472 and Nav. No. 61, Vol. I, Interrogation of Rear Admiral M. Matsuyama, IJN, page 255.

*** Track Chart Annexed to Records, CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

CHAPTER X

OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SCREENING GROUP

0000 August 9th to 0132 August 9th

As the Japanese Cruiser Force approached the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area, the ships of TG 62.6 and of Fire Support Groups LOVE and MIKE, which were assigned patrol stations in the western entrance to Iron Bottom Sound, were cruising in their assigned patrol areas as described previously and as shown on Plate IV. Because the Allied ships, which actually engaged in the battle, were not concentrated into one group but were instead widely separated into four groups consisting of two groups of single ships, one group of four ships and one of five ships, it seems wise to discuss the actions of each of these groups separately in the order that they were encountered by the Japanese.

(a) OPERATIONS OF BLUE

The BLUE was patrolling her radar and anti-submarine station. She was in American Condition of Readiness TWO. The weather was partly cloudy with a wind of four knots from the northeast. The sea was calm, no moon.* The visibility of 8000 yards, as given by the BLUE, was about 3000 yards less than the 11,000 yards demonstrated by the Japanese. This discrepancy appears to have been due to the superior ability of the Japanese to detect and recognize ships at night.

At 0000, the BLUE was headed on course 231°(T) at twelve knots and was in position bearing 270°(T) distant ten and seven-tenths miles from the center of Savo Island. At 0010 she reached the southwestern end of her patrol line and reversed course to 051°(T). She completed this leg of her patrol at 0040, when she reversed course to 231°(T). At about 0053 she was sighted by the CHOKAI bearing 162°(T) distant 8700 yards. However, the BLUE in return did not sight the CHOKAI which was closing her rapidly. At 0110 the BLUE once again reversed course to 051°(T). Between 0105 and 0120 her average distance from the CHOKAI was 13,000 yards. The fifth ship in the Japanese column, the FURUTAKA, which passed through the CHOKAI's wake about six minutes later than the CHOKAI, obtained accurate bearings on the BLUE at 0121 and at 0126. At these times, Diagram "E" shows that the BLUE and FURUTAKA were 11,000 yards apart.

During this time, the BLUE and the two-masted schooner were operating fairly close to each other - about 9000 yards - but the BLUE failed to see her either. The schooner was beyond the radius of visibility which the BLUE observers reported as 8000 yards, but it is not clear why the BLUE

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* Letter August 17th, 1942, from Commanding Officer, BLUE to CTF 62, Concerning Supplemental Information to Action Report Blue (Serial 031, August 12th, 1942), Serial 035, August 17th, 1942.

failed to locate the schooner by radar. The BLUE's radar was operative, as is shown by the fact that about one-half hour earlier it had detected one of the Japanese cruiser planes flying over Savo Island. However, she did not make this aircraft detection until she had been alerted by the RALPH TALBOT's broadcasted warning. Whether this failure to make radar contacts was due, (a) to the interference of the land masses nearby (Savo Island and Guadalcanal), (b) to inexperience or inattention on the part of the radar operators, who were probably very fatigued after several days of intense concentration, or (c) to the simple fact that the BLUE's sole search radar was more effective against aircraft targets than against surface targets cannot be determined. Suffice it to say that the BLUE's radar was highly ineffective.

At 0132 the BLUE was on course 051°(T), speed twelve knots and was bearing 273°(T) distant nine miles from the center of Savo Island.

(b) OPERATIONS OF CHICAGO GROUP

At 0000 the CHICAGO Group composed of the CANBERRA, CHICAGO, PATTERSON and BAGLEY was patrolling south of the line 125°(T) from the center of Savo Island on course 306°(T) at a speed of twelve knots. The CANBERRA was leading the cruisers in column. The PATTERSON was 2000 yards on the port bow (due west) of the CANBERRA - the BAGLEY was 2000 yards on the starboard bow (due north of the CANBERRA). At 0015 the CHICAGO Group reversed course by column movement to 130°(T). At about 0100, when Lunga Point was bearing 180°(T) distant five miles, course was reversed again by column movement to 306°(T).

Except for the report of the CANBERRA that she heard one of the Japanese planes overhead at intervals, no contacts were made.

All American ships were in American Condition of Readiness TWO. The CANBERRA was in British Condition of Readiness TWO, to be discussed later.

At 0132 the CHICAGO Group was on course 306°(T) speed twelve knots and was bearing 145°(T) distant eleven and two-tenths miles from the center of Savo Island.

(c) OPERATIONS OF VINCENNES GROUP

At 0000 the VINCENNES Group, composed of the VINCENNES, QUINCY and ASTORIA in column in that order and screened by the HELM 1500 yards on the port bow of the VINCENNES and by the WILSON in a similar position on the starboard bow, was patrolling along the perimeter of its patrol square at a speed of ten knots. All ships were in Condition of Readiness TWO. Course was being changed every half-hour on the hour and half-hour. At midnight, at the western corner of the patrol square, the VINCENNES Group changed course from 315°(T) to 045°(T). It continued on this leg until 0030, when it changed course to 135°(T). While on this leg, Commander VINCENNES Group determined that his group was being set to the southeast, so he decided to change course at ten minutes before and twenty minutes

after the hour to regain correct patrol station.

As a consequence of this decision, he changed the course of the VINCENNES Group at 0050 rather than at 0100 from 135°(T) to 225°(T); after which, he returned to his emergency cabin. He planned to make the next change at 0120. However, he did not make this change, for it appears that additional checking by the Executive Officer, who had relieved him as Primary Ship Control, indicated that the VINCENNES Group had been set to the eastward. The plot showed that the VINCENNES Group would have to remain on course 225°(T) for some twenty additional minutes or until 0140* in order to regain the planned position in the square for that hour.

At 0132, the VINCENNES Group was on course 225°(T), speed ten knots and was bearing 094°(T) distant 18,400 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(d) OPERATIONS OF RALPH TALBOT

The RALPH TALBOT was patrolling her radar and anti-submarine patrol line.** She was in American Condition of Readiness TWO. At 0000 she was on course 252°(T) at twelve knots and was in position bearing 013°(T) distant seven miles from the center of Savo Island. At about 0015 she reached the western end of her patrol line and reversed course to 072°(T). She continued on this patrol until about 0045 when she reversed course again to 252°(T). At 0120 she again reached the western end of her patrol line and reversed course to 072°(T). At this moment she was at her nearest point - 13,000 yards - to the Japanese Cruiser Force which had commenced its "rush in" on course 150°(T). Actually this range of 13,000 yards was on the destroyer YUNAGI, the last ship in the Japanese formation. Neither the RALPH TALBOT nor the YUNAGI sighted each other nor did the Japanese cruisers sight the RALPH TALBOT.

At 0132 the RALPH TALBOT was on course 072°(T) speed twelve knots and was bearing 014°(T) distant 16,000 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(e) OPERATIONS OF SAN JUAN GROUP (TG 62.4)

At midnight, the SAN JUAN Group, consisting of the cruiser SAN JUAN and H.M.A.S. HOBART 600 yards behind her in column, screened by the destroyers BUCHANAN and MONSSEN on anti-submarine stations on the starboard

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* Letter, August 17th, 1942 from LCdr. J.R. Topper, USN, Supervisory Officer-of-the-Deck ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer concerning Action Morning, August 9th, 1942, page 2.

** Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

and port bows respectively, of the SAN JUAN, were patrolling on a line running due north-south and a mile or so to the east of the limiting line, the meridian 160°-04'E., longitude, at speed fifteen knots.*

The general surface visibility to the eastward, through the semicircle from north to south, was one mile and the visibility in the westward semicircle though very poor was somewhat better, increasing to three miles.* This group passed through no rain squalls after 0000, August 9th, although many squalls occurred in close proximity and the clouds in the area remained low.*

No significant event disturbed the routine nature of the patrol of the SAN JUAN Group between 0000 and 0132. At this latter time, this Group was near the southern end of its patrol in the vicinity of the screen around Transport Area XRAY.

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* Appendix 18 to CTG 62.6 Report of First Battle of Savo Island August 8th-9th, 1942, Letter from H.M.A.S. HOBART to CTG 62.6, August 15th, 1942, "Narrative of Night of August 8th-9th, 1942."

CHAPTER XI

OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE

0132 August 9th to 0150 August 9th

(a) ACTION WITH THE CHICAGO GROUP

At 0132, Commander Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI commenced his run in on course 095°(T) and, at about 0133, he signalled the order: "All ships attack!"* At about 0134 he sighted an Allied destroyer at a range of about 3000 yards on his port hand bearing 76° to left of base course or 019°(T), and moving slowly on an opposite course.** One minute later, at 0135, both the AOBA and KAKO sighted this destroyer,*** which was the damaged American destroyer JARVIS en route to an Australian port for repairs. At this time the JARVIS seems to have been on course 270°(T), which course took her 3000 yards south of the southern tip of Savo Island. The Japanese Cruiser Force trained its guns on the JARVIS, but withheld fire.*** Presumably, the Japanese doctrine was not to open fire until the flagship had done so. Commander Cruiser Force, mindful of the fact that neither of the previous two destroyers had opened fire, apparently decided to continue his basic plan which was to withhold gunfire until after he had fired torpedoes at the southern force.**** He must have been surprised that he had not been fired on, as yet, by any one of the three destroyers sighted. This was especially significant in the case of the JARVIS which was not only plainly visible but was well within easy gun and torpedo range. It is probable that he did not know that the JARVIS was a disabled destroyer.

It would be of interest, therefore, to know why Commander Cruiser Force did not change his plan in view of the close presence of the JARVIS for he knew that she was enemy. He felt it was highly probable that, even if the other Allied destroyers had not reported his presence, this one would do so.***** He also felt that as this destroyer did not either open fire or attempt to escape, she might be leading him into an ambush.***** Therefore, the maintenance of secrecy, by not firing his guns, was of doubtful importance since surprise was probably now lost. Finally, of course he knew that a destroyer has such a concentration of destructive power as to make it highly dangerous for the ships of his cruiser force to

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* Records CRUDIV 18, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** War Diary 8th Fleet August 7th-10th, 1942; CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

*** War Diary, KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

**** 8th Fleet Signal Order No. 25 in Records CRUDIV 18, WDC Document 160984, August 8th, 1942.

***** USSBS The Campaigns of the Pacific War, Battle of Savo Island, page 106.

pass within close gun and torpedo range of one of them without taking any offensive action whatsoever. Whatever may have been his motives, it so happened that he guessed correctly, for the JARVIS failed to report the presence of the Japanese ships, apparently as a result of communication difficulties. Commander Cruiser Force thereby continued to retain the factor of surprise.

At 0136, Commander Cruiser Force sighted the CANBERRA and CHICAGO in column on bearing 120°(T)* distant 12,500 yards. He then changed course to that bearing in order to close the enemy. In the resultant relative movement, the CHOKAI and the CHICAGO Group closed one another almost head on at a relative speed of about thirty-six knots. At this time the CHOKAI had still not been sighted by the CHICAGO Group. Commander Cruiser Force then gave the order "Independent firing!" From this time onward the Japanese Cruiser Force while maintaining a speed of twenty-six knots, was strung out in a loose column generally following the CHOKAI, but actually proceeding independently by divisions and firing independently by ships. Because of the weather conditions existing at the time - night and varying visibility - and because of the distance of about 1300 yards between ships in column, it was next to impossible to maintain correct station-keeping in formation. Commander Cruiser Force had taken cognizance of this situation as shown by his signals. He was fully aware that in a night attack, maneuvering the cruiser force and controlling the target designation and fire distribution of the force from the flagship was most difficult. He also was fully aware of the fact that in a surprise attack, targets of opportunity might present themselves to the individual ships of his command.

At 0137, the CHOKAI sighted a cruiser bearing 060°(T).* This appears from Diagram "F", to have been the VINCENNES which was leading the VINCENNES Group in column formation on course 225°(T), and was heading towards the CHOKAI. The VINCENNES at this time was approximately 18,000 yards away. This is the greatest distance at which a visual sighting was reported during the action. It is not clear what conditions existed at the time of this sighting, but it is possible that the VINCENNES may have been silhouetted, or even have been momentarily illuminated, by the fires at Tulagi or by lightning. This sighting may have been facilitated by additional messages from the cruiser planes, which reported the presence of cruisers east of Savo Island.** On the other hand, because of the above information, the sighting may have been imagined. Even so, the bearing appears to have been correct.

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* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese officials, Interrogation of Captain Kenkichi Kato, IJN, page 361.

At 0138, when at a range of 10,000 yards from the CANBERRA, the CHOKAI fired four port torpedoes at the CANBERRA and CHICAGO.* Five minutes later, or at 0143, the CANBERRA noted two torpedoes on either side of her, coming from about 345° relative and passing down the column on roughly opposite courses.** The torpedoes appear to have been fired "curved fire ahead", to have run at a speed of about forty-five knots, and to have run true. It is not clear why the CHOKAI fired torpedoes at this time for the CANBERRA and CHICAGO were in the best possible position to avoid torpedoes from ahead and offered the smallest possible target.

Perhaps Commander Cruiser Force, sceptical lest he had been reported by the Allied ships, expected them to change course by column movement within the next several minutes in order to attempt to cross his "Tee" or at least to unmask their batteries. In such case, they might turn into his torpedoes. Perhaps he wished to obtain what benefit he could from his port torpedoes. He might not be able to fire them once he had changed course to port as he had apparently already planned to do. As it was, the CHOKAI torpedoes all missed.

CRUDIV SIX followed, in general, the movements of the CHOKAI although it did not follow in the same water. At 0139, COMCRUDIV SIX in the AOBA, which at the time appears to have been on course 110°(T) rather than the 120°(T) being steered by the CHOKAI, sighted another destroyer four degrees on his starboard bow on opposite course at a "great distance".*** This destroyer was the BAGLEY which, at the time, was 9500 yards away. At 0140, COMCRUDIV SIX sighted three ships thought to be one battleship and two heavy cruisers but which were later identified as LONDON class cruisers bearing a few degrees on the starboard bow of the AOBA*** at a range of about 9,000 yards. These ships were the CHICAGO Group.

At about the same time, when the CHOKAI had closed the range to about 7,500 yards and her torpedoes were about half way to their target, Commander Cruiser Force reported sighting four ships on a mean bearing of 120°(T).* This sighting was accurate, as these four ships composed the CHICAGO Group. Actually the PATTERSON bore 130°(T) distant 5,500 yards, and was so reported by the CHOKAI at 0140½.*

At 0140 the CHOKAI changed course to 090°(T).**** She made this change

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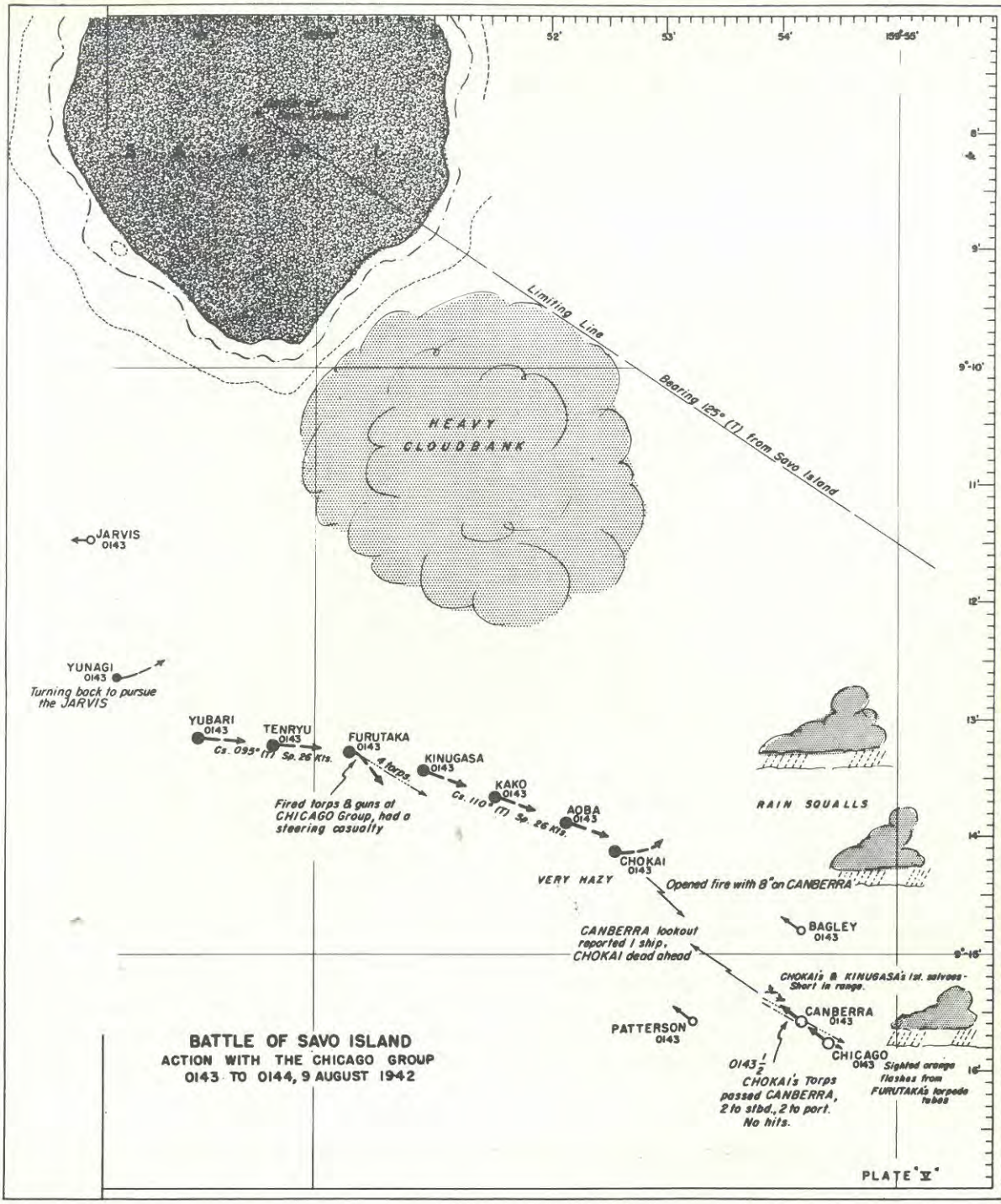
* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

** Report of Executive Officer, CANBERRA to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning Loss of CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942.

*** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

**** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND
ACTION WITH THE CHICAGO GROUP
0143 TO 0144, 9 AUGUST 1942

apparently to cross the "Tee" and, at the same time, to uncover the CHOKAI's battery as well as to unmask those of the ships following astern. Commander Cruiser Force appears to have chosen this easterly course, rather than one more to the northeast, because he wished to continue to close the CHICAGO Group at a rapid rate. This change of course is considered sound. It not only improved the relative position of the cruiser force and made it possible for each ship to deliver its maximum fire against the CHICAGO Group, thus hastening the destruction of that group; but it also - and this should have been the vital accomplishment - assisted in clearing the way to the transports.

At this same time, the YUNAGI, which was the last ship in the Japanese column sighted the JARVIS about 3000 yards on her port hand on roughly opposite course, proceeding to the westward and trying to escape.* The Commanding Officer of the YUNAGI decided, inasmuch as he was far removed from the main force, to attack the JARVIS rather than to continue on with the cruisers.* He made this decision without referring the matter to Commander Cruiser Force. His decision does not appear to have been correct, for his objective was the destruction of the Allied transports and cargo ships at Guadalcanal. He was only concerned with those Allied combatant ships - those targets of opportunity - which interfered with his accomplishment of that objective.

It is only fair to digress sufficiently to point out here that, in interrogations three years later, Commander Cruiser Force's Chief of Staff stated that: "The YUNAGI had remained outside of Savo to act as a picket and to engage Allied destroyers if they attempted to follow the cruiser force in".** COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN stated in a similar interrogation that: "One of our destroyers (there was only one) left the formation and remained outside of Savo. I think it was assigned an Allied destroyer as a target."*** Both of these statements seem improbable on analysis, since there is no record of this assignment in Commander Cruiser Force's War Diary nor did Commander Cruiser Force realize at 0145 that the destroyer which he saw leaving the formation was the YUNAGI.**** Does it not seem reasonable to assume that Commander Cruiser Force, his Chief of Staff, and COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN would have known of the expected activities of the

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* Records CRUDIV 18, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 160984. Also Diary Ensign Nakamura, IJN, Chapt. I, 2(J), page 34.

** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 109, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, page 472.

*** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 61, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Rear Admiral M. Matsuyama, IJN, page 255, Vol. I.

**** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

Yunagi at this time, and yet their later testimonies disagree? How can these later opinions expressed above, concerning the YUNAGI's assignment outside of Savo, be reconciled with the documents of the activities of the YUNAGI found in Ensign Nakamura's Diary, which account seems to have been the Japanese Navy Department's approved version and which makes no mention of pickets at all?*

Returning now to the action, the CHOKAI commenced firing with her 8-inch battery at about 0143. She did not employ her secondary battery at this time. The accuracy of her gunfire was facilitated by the fact that, just prior to this time, one of the Japanese cruiser planes dropped illuminating flares over the Allied shipping in Transport Area XRAY off Guadalcanal Beach. These flares silhouetted the CHICAGO Group and made it an excellent target** for all the Japanese ships. Allied reports show that the first flare was sighted at about 0143 and that, by about 0145, at least four flares had been dropped. Technical Japanese data shows that a Japanese parachute flare in 1942 burned about four minutes.*** The Japanese dropped flares at intervals thereafter until about 0225.**** Their gunfire was impressive, for the CANBERRA was first hit between 0144 and 0145, and by 0148 - approximately three or four minutes later - she had been hit with at least twenty-four shells.*****

Also about 0143 the FURUTAKA, which was the fifth ship in column and, therefore, in position roughly 5200 yards behind the CHOKAI, sighted the CANBERRA and CHICAGO at a range of about 9,000 yards. She immediately commenced firing her guns and launched her four port torpedoes. She made no torpedo hits. One or more torpedoes passed under the CHICAGO about four minutes later****** - or at 0147 - and appear to have been the FURUTAKA's. It is not known how many salvos were fired by the FURUTAKA or at which Allied cruiser, but, at about 0144, she commenced having serious steering

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* Diary Ensign Nakamura, IJN, Chapt. I, 2(J), page 34.

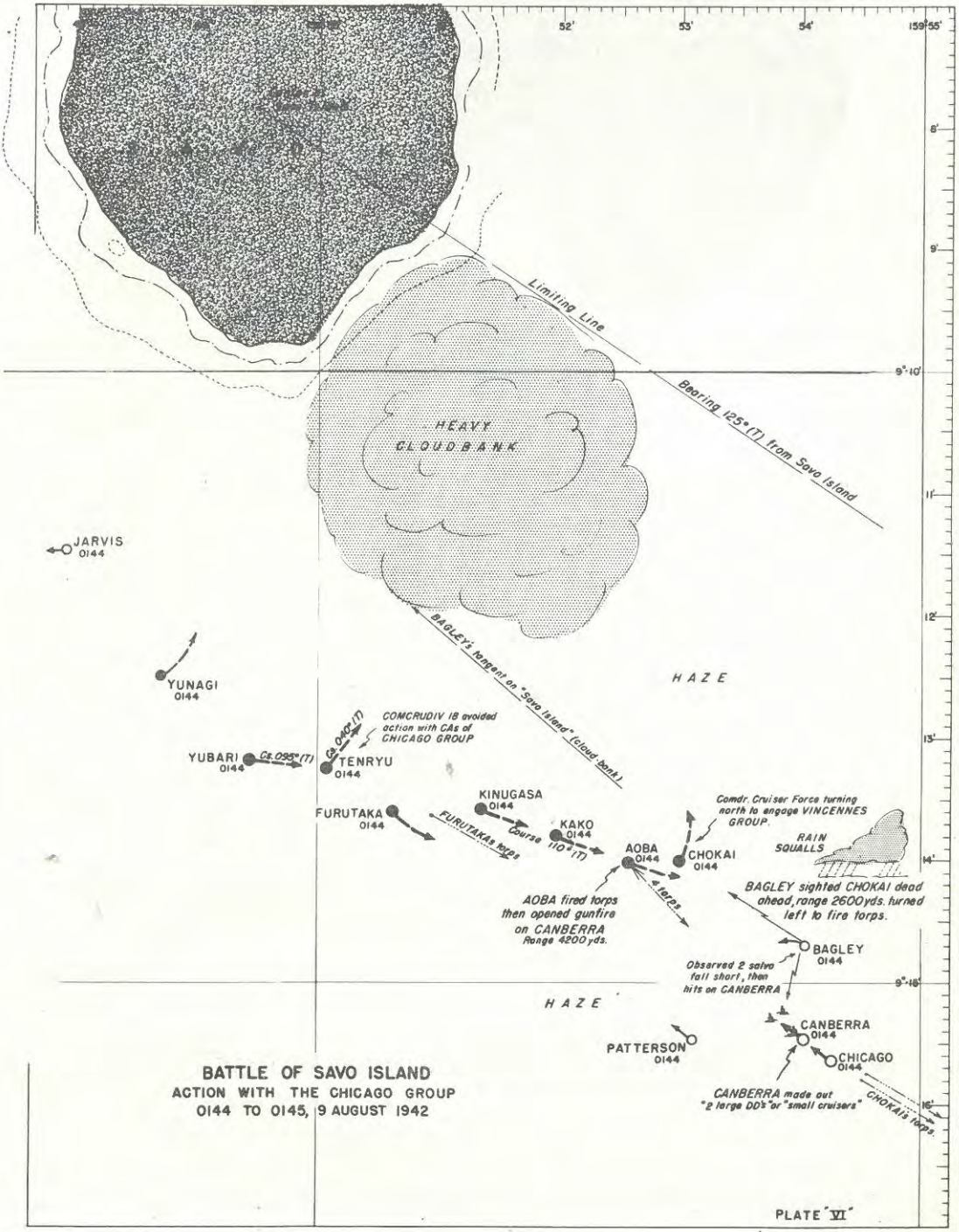
** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

*** Handbook of Japanese Naval Explosive Ordnance OpNav 30-3M August 15th, 1945, Navy Aircraft Parachute Flares, page 252, August 9th, 1942.

**** War Diary CTF 62, August 9th, 1942 and Letter August 15th, 1942 from Commanding Officer HMAS HOBART to CTG 62.6, "Narrative of Night of August 8th-9th, 1942", Appendix 18 to CTG 62.6 Report of First Battle of Savo Island, August 8th-9th, 1942.

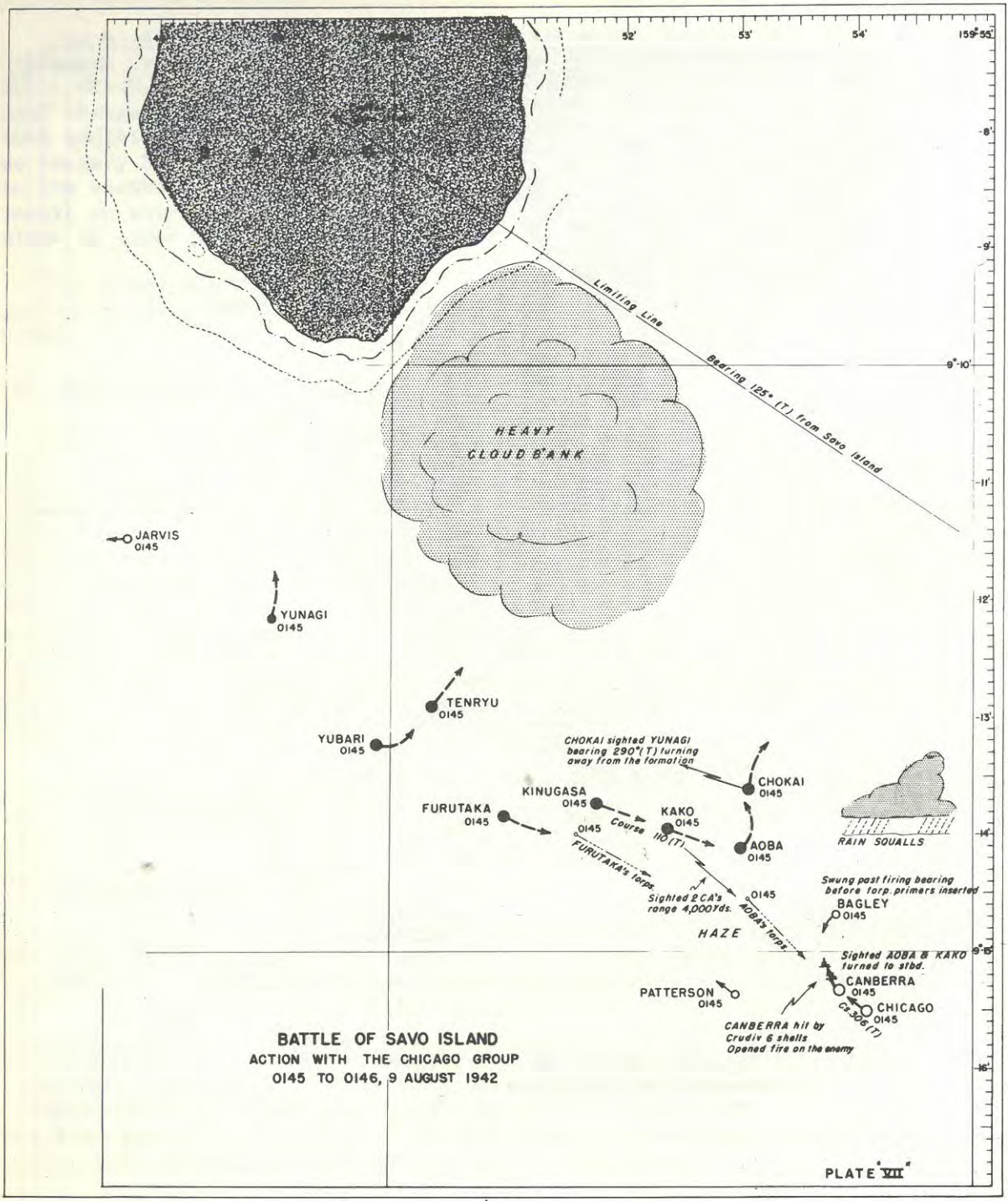
***** Reports of Commander J.A. Walsh, Executive Officer, CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942 to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) and of Lieut. Comdr. E.J.D. Wight, RAN, Principal Control Officer, CANBERRA August 12th, 1942 to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning Loss of CANBERRA, Night August 8th-9th, 1942.

****** Action Report CHICAGO, concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND
ACTION WITH THE CHICAGO GROUP
0144 TO 0145, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE "VI"



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND
ACTION WITH THE CHICAGO GROUP
0145 TO 0146, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE "VII"

difficulties, which were occasioned by the effect of her own gunfiring on her steering mechanism.* (See Plate V)

At 0144, Commander Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI was making a radical change to the north, either to engage the VINCENNES Group or to attack the Allied shipping at Tulagi. He settled on the new course of 050°(T) two minutes later.** Students of naval warfare will ponder over his reasons for heading in that direction rather than towards Guadalcanal Beach. For his objective, self-assigned it is true but nevertheless the objective which he had issued to his command, was the destruction of the transports and cargo ships. He had heavily damaged the principal ships which were between his own forces and the transports and cargo ships off Guadalcanal, and had thereby cleared the way to those targets. Should not his next move have been to close the transport area XRAY immediately and destroy as many of these ships as possible? He did not do this but headed towards other targets. By his decision, which was somewhat similar to that of the Commanding Officer, YUNAGI, he lost an opportunity to convert a tactical success into a strategical victory which could have been of enormous consequence to the Japanese cause.

About this time the AOBA, which had closed to a range of approximately 4200 yards on the CANBERRA, opened fire with her 8-inch battery and, in addition, fired three torpedoes from her starboard torpedo battery at that ship. Although she thought that she had made three hits on the CANBERRA,*** it seems probable that all torpedoes missed.

At about 0144, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN, with the TENRYU and YUBARI, also changed course to the northeast to 040°(T) and away from the CHICAGO Group.* (Plate VI)

It is not possible to determine why he made this change of course rather than to have followed the movements of COMCRUDIV SIX. COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN stated that the plan for the command was to break up into an inner and outer group after passing around Savo Island and that CRUDIV EIGHTEEN, plus possibly the YUNAGI, was to compose the inner group.****

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* Records CRUDIV 18, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

*** Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers WDC Documents 160623 and 161407. Also, from Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

**** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 61, Vol. I, Interrogation of Japanese officials, Interrogation of Rear Admiral M. Matsuyama, IJN, page 255.

This seems doubtful for such a plan would have been in direct opposition to Commander Cruiser Force's basic plan which directed the destruction of the transports and cargo ships. According to COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN the basic plan was to be accomplished as follows: "CRUDIV SIX was to attack the transports at Guadalcanal while CRUDIV EIGHTEEN was to attack the Tulagi transports."* It has been suggested that the erratic movements of the FURUTAKA may have forced the change. This also seems doubtful, as the FURUTAKA, despite her steering troubles, was proceeding in a southeasterly direction and toward the CHICAGO Group. It appears more likely that, having been directed to operate independently and noting that the heavy cruisers were about to engage the Allied heavy cruisers, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN decided that prudence required him to remove his light cruisers from that phase of the action, and so he retired in a northerly direction. Whatever may have been his reason, it appears unsound. The presence of the two light cruisers in the Japanese battle line would have increased the number of targets the Allies would have had to keep under fire, would thereby probably have reduced the volume of fire directed at any Japanese ship, would have increased the number of torpedoes available for launching, and would have increased the number of intermediate guns (ten 5.5 inch) that could have been employed against the CHICAGO Group.

At 0145 the KAKO, which was next in column behind the AOBA sighted the CHICAGO Group five degrees on her starboard bow at a range of about 4,000 yards.** If this were her first sighting, then she had been a little slow in discovering the Allied ships, possibly because she was not "closed up" in formation; or because she was not as alert as the other cruisers. It is probable that she first became alerted to the presence of the Allied ships when they were illuminated by the airplane flares.

Also at 0145, Commander Cruiser Force noted that a destroyer, which he did not recognize, bearing 290°(T) had reversed course.*** This was the YUNAGI, which by this time was swinging to her new course of about 270°(T). She had reversed course apparently without notifying the other Japanese ships of her action. (Plate VII)

As a result of the casualty to the FURUTAKA and the reversal of course by the YUNAGI, the cruiser force now fell into two groups to be known as the Eastern Group and the Western Group. The Eastern Group was composed of the CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO and KINUGASA; the Western Group was composed of CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and was joined a few minutes later by the FURUTAKA. The YUNAGI was operating by itself.

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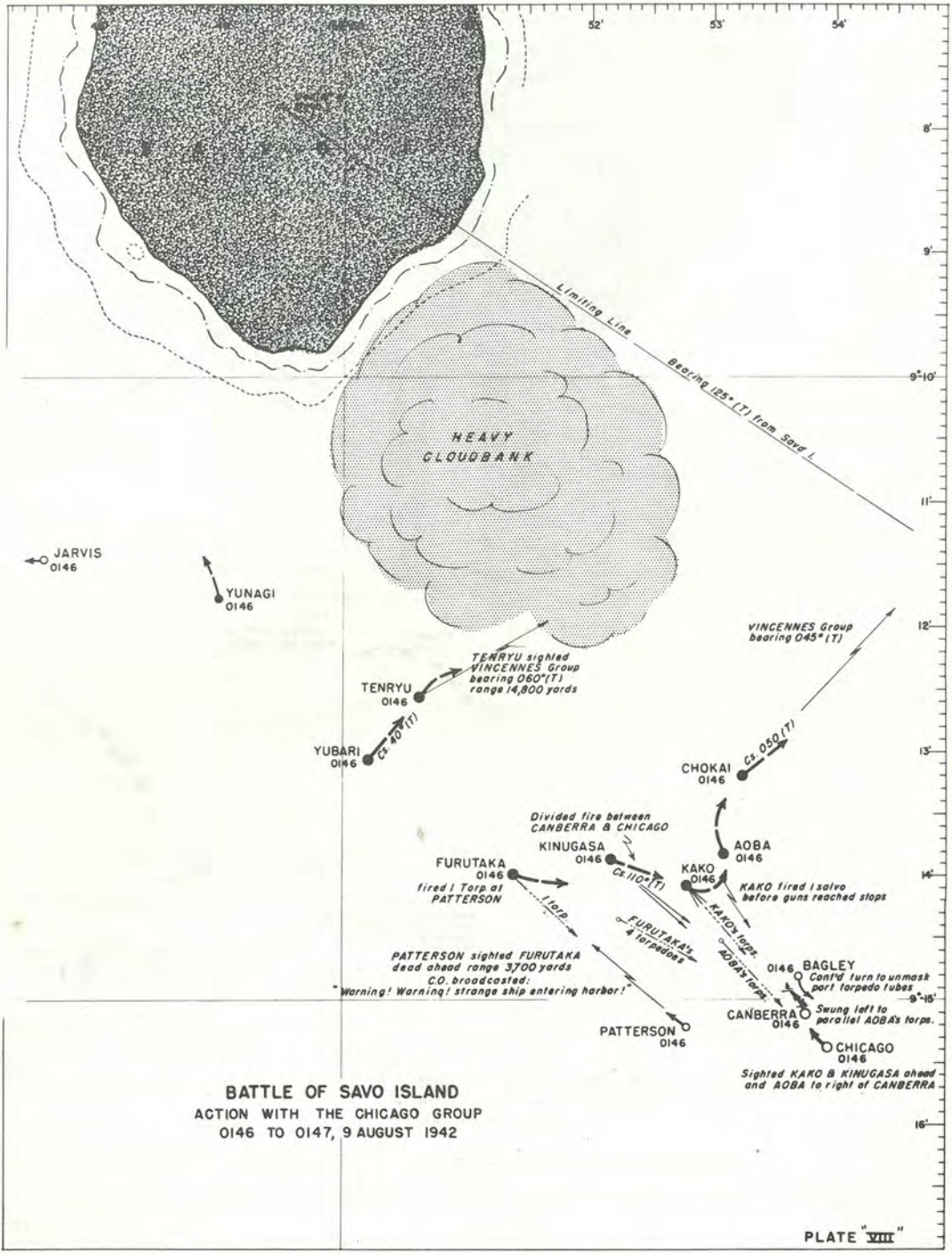
* USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 61, Vol. I, Interrogation of Japanese officials, Interrogation of Rear Admiral M. Matsuyama, IJN, page 255.

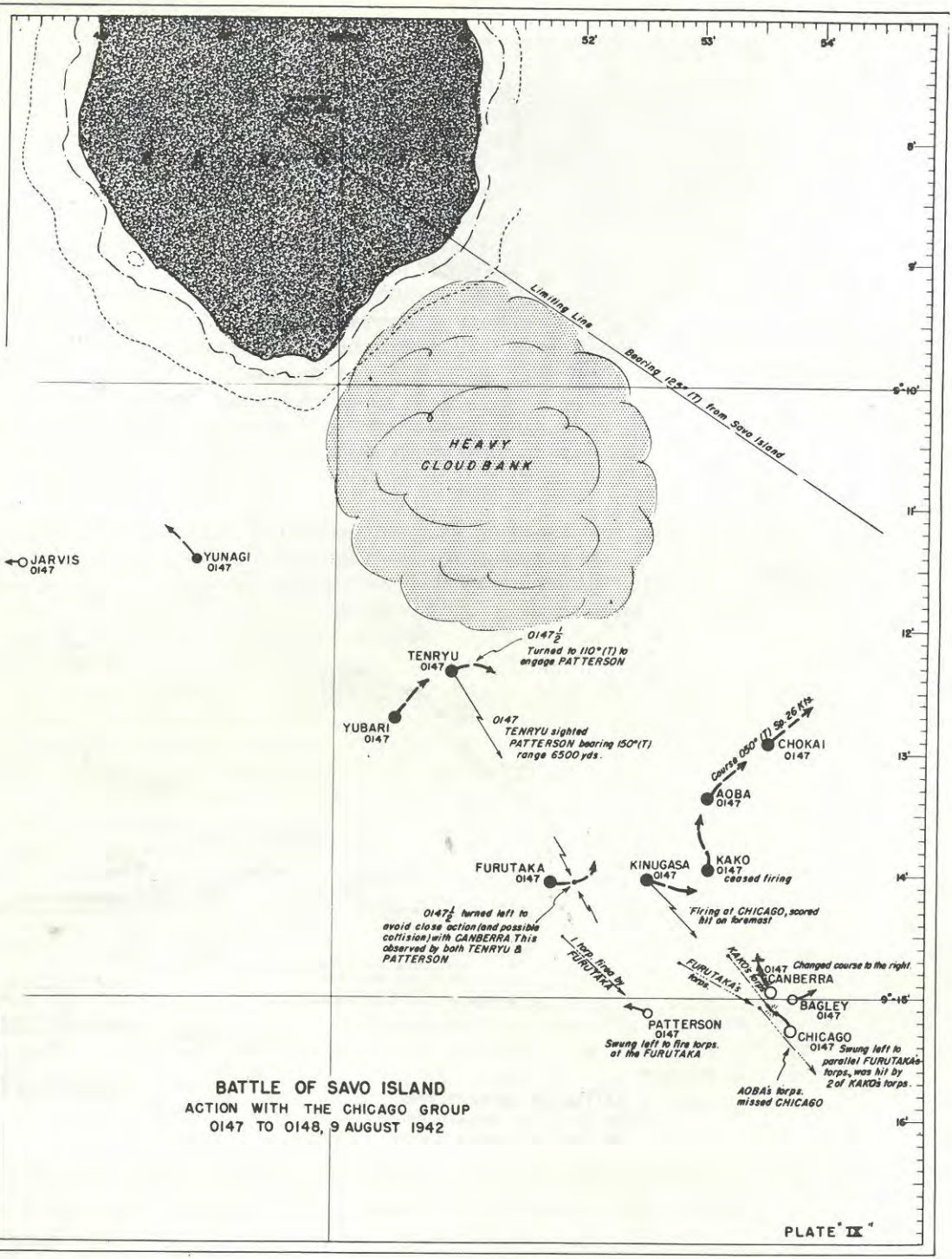
** War Diary KAKO, Solomons Sea Battle, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160143.

*** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND
ACTION WITH THE CHICAGO GROUP
0146 TO 0147, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE "VIII"



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND
ACTION WITH THE CHICAGO GROUP
0147 TO 0148, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE "IX"

(b) APPROACH TO THE VINCENNES GROUP

Both of the cruiser groups were proceeding to the northward. The Eastern Group proceeded in a northerly direction to engage the VINCENNES Group. The Western Group appears to have paralleled the Eastern Group and was in a supporting position. It is doubtful if the Western Group was informed as to the plans of Commander Cruiser Force. However, this was soon cleared up, for at 0146 COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN sighted the VINCENNES Group bearing 060°(T) distant what he thought was 6,600 yards but which was, in fact, 14,800 yards from the TENRYU (Diagram "F"). Course was changed at 0146½ to 070°(T).* Apparently this sighting was made possible by the light of aircraft parachute flares which were dropped at the time by one of the two Japanese cruiser planes. COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN reported that the glare of the illuminating flares revealed five heavy cruisers. Actually the number of ships reported was correct but the recognition was somewhat in error, possibly because of the great range, as there were, in fact, three heavy cruisers and two destroyers in the VINCENNES Group on bearing 060°(T).

Slightly before 0146, the KAKO fired three of her four starboard torpedoes at what she thought was a battleship but which was the CHICAGO bearing 145°(T), distant about 3600 yards. She then changed course to follow the AOBA which was making an "S" turn to the northeast. At 0146 she opened fire on the Allied ship. She also opened fire on a cruiser of the KENT Class, the CANBERRA, employing both her main and secondary batteries. She claimed having hit the CANBERRA on her first salvo but after that, she discovered while in her turn that most of her main battery guns could not bear any more, being up against the stops; and ceased firing.** She also claimed sinking the CANBERRA with three torpedo hits.***

Also at 0146, the FURUTAKA fired one starboard torpedo at a destroyer bearing 130°(T) distant 4500 yards.*** This was the PATTERSON. The FURUTAKA thought that she had sunk the PATTERSON, but her torpedo had missed. (Plate VIII illustrates the action during this minute.)

The FURUTAKA's position at this time was outside the wake current (and to the right) of the KINUGASA and the other ships of CRUDIV SIX, which were ahead of her. Whether this offset position was the result of the KINUGASA's turning to the right to fire her port torpedoes at 0143, or was incident to steering difficulties is not clear. But it is clear that the Commanding Officer, FURUTAKA was at this time considering the

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* Records CRUDIV 18, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

*** Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers WDC Documents 160623 and 161407. Also from Track Chart No. 2 annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927 of June 27th, 1947.

problem as to how to rejoin in single column behind the KINUGASA, being mindful of the FURUTAKA's faster movement outside the wake current.* To complicate matters, he found himself headed on a collision course with the CANBERRA which had changed course to the northward. He also noted that the CHOKAI and the preceding cruisers of CRUDIV SIX were engaging enemy vessels (CHICAGO Group). He thereupon abandoned the idea of rejoining in column, possibly because he did not trust his steering gear in the emergencies of battle; and instead, attempted to turn to the left and extricate himself.* At 0147½, he was able to change course to about 000°(T)** and commenced firing with both main and secondary batteries at the disabled CANBERRA.*** (Plate IX)

At about 0147 COMCRUDIV SIX observed a heavy cruiser sink as a result of a torpedo hit. This sinking occurred about 2000 yards broad on the starboard beam of the flagship AOBA. The heavy cruiser was the CHICAGO, which did not sink, but which suffered the loss of a small part of her bow from one torpedo hit and suffered an additional hit on her starboard side amidships which did not detonate.**** These two torpedoes apparently came from the KAKO.

Also at about 0147, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN sighted a destroyer of the CRAVEN class going in an opposite direction bearing about 150°(T) distant 6500 yards. This was the destroyer PATTERSON which was changing course to the westward. He immediately changed course to 110°(T), illuminated the PATTERSON with searchlights and opened fire. By 0150, he considered that the PATTERSON was sunk.** Actually the PATTERSON was not sunk, but was seriously damaged on her topside aft. Why he considered her sunk is not explained, but it is probable that PATTERSON's change of course to the south and then east affected his judgment. Neither of the Japanese ships suffered other than slight damage from the PATTERSON's guns.

At 0148, the CHOKAI fired four starboard torpedoes***** by what appears to have been "curved fire ahead" at the VINCENNES which was about 9500 yards away almost directly ahead of her. The CHOKAI was headed on course 050°(T). (Plate X)

At the same time COMCRUDIV SIX sighted the VINCENNES Group off the starboard bow of the AOBA which was swinging northward following the

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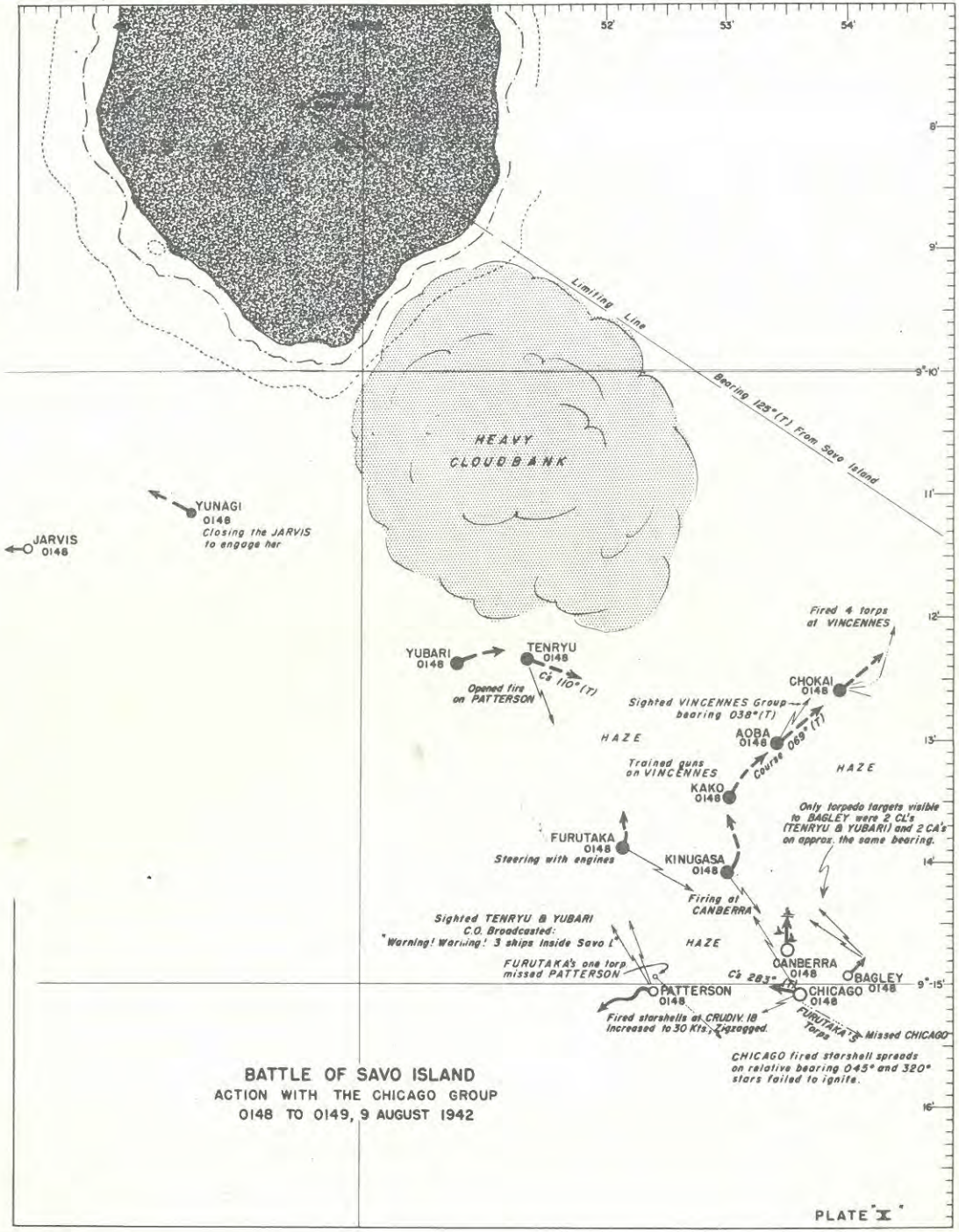
* Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, Battle of Savo Island by Historical Branch, G2 General Headquarters, Far Eastern Command, Tokyo, August, 1949.

** Records of CRUDIV 18, August 8th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

**** Summary of War Damage to Battleships, Carriers, Cruisers and Destroyers, Bureau of Ships, September 15th, 1943, page 29.

***** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND
ACTION WITH THE CHICAGO GROUP
0148 TO 0149, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE "I"

movements of the CHOKAI. The range at this time was 12,000 yards, yet the first two ships sighted were identified as one ASTORIA-class and one PORTLAND-class cruiser, and shortly thereafter the third cruiser was identified as of the ASTORIA-class.* These identifications were remarkably correct when the range and low visibility at night are considered. Actually all three cruisers were of the ASTORIA-class.

At 0149 or about one minute after firing his torpedoes, Commander Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI changed course to 069°(T).** It can be seen from Diagram "J" that this change of course headed the CHOKAI directly towards transport Area YOKE at Tulagi. This heading brings up the question as to whether Commander Cruiser Force had now given up his first objective, the transports and cargo ships off Guadalcanal, and had decided to attack those at Tulagi, or whether he had decided next to engage the VINCENNES Group. The weight of evidence available seems to support the latter view; for, as will be shown later, he made no attempt to close the transports and cargo ships at Tulagi.

Simultaneously at 0149, the FURUTAKA which had succeeded in clearing the CANBERRA and in changing course to 000°(T) in spite of her steering difficulties, fired her remaining three starboard torpedoes at that ship at a range of 3500 yards. The FURUTAKA claimed three hits*** but it now appears that all torpedoes missed.

At 0150, Commander Cruiser Force observed the sinking of a KENT-class cruiser (evidently the CANBERRA) by two torpedo hits. Both the CHOKAI and the KAKO claimed credit for this sinking. Actually the CANBERRA, although heavily hit by gunfire did not sink at this time, but remained afloat for about four and one-half hours. The CHOKAI was only about 2000 yards from the CANBERRA when she made this observation. During this action, other Japanese ships made similar claims of sinkings; none of which sinkings, in fact, occurred at the times claimed. These discrepancies show the difficulty of making correct observations during a night action, even with well trained and well equipped lookouts.

To summarize the action from 0132 to 0150, a total of seventeen torpedoes had been fired by the CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO and FURUTAKA at the CANBERRA and CHICAGO; and one torpedo was fired by the FURUTAKA at the PATTERSON. The Japanese thought that they had made nine hits on the cruisers; and the FURUTAKA thought that she had sunk the PATTERSON with her single torpedo. Actually, it is improbable that any torpedo hits

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

*** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

were made on the CANBERRA. This improbability was established by a Board of Enquiry subsequently held at Sidney.* Two hits were made on the CHICAGO. One accomplished some slight damage; the other, a dud, accomplished none. No torpedo hits were made on the PATTERSON.

During this period, although several of the Allied ships fired partial salvos from intermediate batteries and one destroyer fired four torpedoes, only CRUDIV EIGHTEEN reported having observed any enemy gun splashes and none of the cruisers reported having observed torpedo tracks. These results clearly show that the Allied ships were caught by surprise and fired both guns and torpedoes without having adequately solved their gunfire and torpedo problems.

The 0150 positions of the Japanese ships, with relation to the center of Savo Island, were:

(a) EASTERN GROUP

The CHOKAI was bearing 130°(T) distant 13,500 yards.
The AOBA was bearing 135°(T) distant 13,000 yards.
The KAKO was bearing 140°(T) distant 13,000 yards.
The KINUGASA was bearing 147°(T) distant 13,250 yards.

(b) WESTERN GROUP

The FURUTAKA was bearing 153°(T) distant 12,150 yards.
The TENRYU was bearing 151°(T) distant 10,900 yards.
The YUBARI was bearing 156°(T) distant 10,100 yards.

(c) YUNAGI

The YUNAGI was bearing 205°(T) distant 8,150 yards.

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* Note to Appendix F to British Battle Summary No. 21, Naval Operations at the Landings in the Southern Solomons, August 7th-10th, 1942, dated 1944.

CHAPTER XII

OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SCREENING GROUP

0132 August 9th to 0150 August 9th

(a) ACTION OF CHICAGO GROUP WITH JAPANESE CRUISERS

At 0132, the CHICAGO Group was on course 306°(T) at speed twelve knots approaching the northern end of its patrol line. The CHICAGO, PATTERSON and BAGLEY were still in American Condition of Readiness TWO. which meant that one-half of the armament and all the fire control and communication stations were sufficiently manned and ready for immediate use.* The CANBERRA was in a modified British Condition of Readiness TWO.** British Condition of Readiness TWO was normally a higher condition of readiness than its American counterpart. It required that all battle stations be fully manned, but permitted a certain proportion of the personnel to rest at their battle stations, and a few of them to leave their stations to obtain food and to answer calls of nature. The American Condition of Readiness ONE EASY, employed later in the war may have evolved from this British Condition of Readiness. The modifications in British Condition of Readiness TWO, as employed by the CANBERRA, relaxed the watch to something a little more than that on the American ships present, and lessened the ability of the CANBERRA to meet a surprise attack. Half of the CANBERRA gun batteries - both 8-inch and 4-inch AA - were fully manned and ready, and the other half were relaxed with the crews sleeping in the vicinity of their battle quarters. All gunnery communications personnel were awake and sentries were alert in all shell-handling rooms.***

None of the Commanding Officers, with the exception of the PATTERSON were awake. The others were asleep on the bridge level, relaxing from the heavy grind of the operations of the preceding days preparatory to the further operations to be expected in the morning. None of them gave adequate consideration to the possibility of a night attack by Japanese surface forces. Although both COMSOWESPAC and CINCPAC had broadcast over their respective Fox schedules the 1025 contact report on the Japanese forces off Bougainville, it is apparent that this report was given no more than passing notice.

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* War Instructions, U.S. Navy 1934, FTP143, Chapter VII, para. 806, page 28.

** Report of Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN, (Ret.) to CINCPAC, May 13th, 1943, on Informal Inquiry into Circumstances Attending the Loss of the VINCENNES, etc., on August 9th, 1942, page 33.

*** Report of Executive Officer CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning Loss of CANBERRA.

The weather conditions at this time were smooth sea, light easterly winds, no moon and variable visibility. The Japanese reported that the visibility, augmented by the illuminating flares was excellent to the southeast.* On the Allied side, the BAGLEY reported that the visibility was very low, and the sky heavily overcast with intermittent showers.** The CHICAGO reported electrical storms in and near the area.*** The CANBERRA reported the visibility as 4000 yards in the clear weather, but there were rain patches.**** The visibility was fairly thick in the sector between the BAGLEY and the PATTERSON which were roughly 2400 yards apart. During the early stages of the action, that is, between 0132—0150, neither of these ships sighted the other.** The differences between the Japanese and Allied reports of the weather conditions within the same area resulted from the fact that the Japanese ships were on the edge of a cloud bank which had formed to the southeast of Savo Island whereas the Allied ships were about one and one-half miles outside of the edge of this cloud bank. Consequently the Allied ships, silhouetted as they were by flares, were much more distinct to the Japanese lookouts than the Japanese ships were to the Allied lookouts.

The weather conditions were not the whole answer. Among other factors was the Japanese advantage in knowing what they were looking for and the manifested superiority of their lookouts, who were well equipped and trained for night operations, as compared with those of the Allied forces. Poor visibility alone should have had no effect on the Allied radars, but it is probable that the heavy cloud bank was ionized and sent back echoes similar to land. The visual sightings by the Japanese outdistanced the electronics detection of the Allies. It is probable that the failures of detection in the CHICAGO Group were due in a large measure to the same factors which affected the BLUE as pointed out earlier. These were (a) the adverse effect that land masses had on radar operations at that early date, (b) the inexperience of the personnel in war operations, and (c) some fatigue of personnel.

The cloud bank off Savo Island also interfered with the navigation of the Allied ships. Examples of this are here given by way of illustration. The BAGLEY reported at 0144 that the left tangent of Savo Island bore 310°(T) distant one and seven-tenths miles** whereas it bore 315° distant seven miles. The PATTERSON reported at 0146 that the

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

** Action Report BAGLEY, Night Engagement August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

*** Action Report CHICAGO, Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

**** Report of Executive Officer, CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning Loss of CANBERRA.

western end of Savo Island bore north distant four miles,* when, in fact, it bore 325° distant seven and one-half miles. Actually, these bearings were taken on this cloud bank and not on Savo Island at all. Both of these destroyers reported the Japanese ships close to Savo Island when first detected. Diagram "F" shows that at 0144 the CHOKAI was no nearer Savo Island than five miles.

(1) Action by CANBERRA**

When the action commenced, the CANBERRA was leading the formation on heading 310°(T). At 0143 her port lookout sighted a ship dead ahead. The bridge personnel were not able to verify this contact; so both the Commanding Officer and Navigator were immediately called and they arrived on the bridge in a matter of seconds. (See Plate V)

The CANBERRA was soon alerted to a dangerous situation, for at 0143½ she sighted four torpedoes - two on either side, passing roughly parallel to the column of Allied cruisers and on opposite course.*** These four torpedoes had been fired by the Japanese flagship, CHOKAI at 0138.****

The CANBERRA immediately went to British Condition of Readiness ONE, which alerted everyone in a manner equivalent to the American "General Quarters". She then observed two large destroyers or small cruisers on the port bow at a distance thought to be under one mile by one observer*** but 5000 yards by another.***** The armament was immediately trained on these targets.*** Actually, at 0143, the CHOKAI was crossing the "Tee" of the Allied cruiser column at a range of 4500 yards and CRUDIV SIX was coming in on a bows-on approach to the CANBERRA on course 110°(T).

The Commanding Officer, CANBERRA, without waiting for instructions from Commander CHICAGO Group changed course to port to bring his starboard battery to bear. However, after a few seconds he changed course to starboard, increased speed to full speed, and prepared to fight a normal action with his port battery. He appears to have realized that his first

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* Action Report PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

** The breakdown of the tactical command of the CHICAGO Group has made it necessary hereinafter to evaluate separately the conduct of the Commanding Officers of the several ships within that group. Each of these Commanding Officers either operated independently by choice, or was forced to do so by the demands of the situation.

*** Report of Executive Officer, CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) Concerning Loss of CANBERRA.

**** War Diary, 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

***** Letter August 12th, 1942, from LCdr. E.J.D. Wight, RAN, to CTG 62.6, Concerning Loss of CANBERRA, Night August 8th-9th, 1942.

change of course would have forced his ship to fight a reverse action which might permit the Japanese cruisers to move directly into the transport areas; and that if he was to prevent this, it was necessary to interpose his command between the transports and the enemy cruisers. This could best be accomplished by a change of course to starboard and by an increase in speed, which he executed at 0145. (See Plate VI)

It is unfortunate that he did not advise his immediate superior in command in the CHICAGO Group of his contacts with the enemy. Whatever may have been the reason for this failure, it in no way relieved him of the responsibility for alerting the command to the presence of the enemy. The failure of the CANBERRA, as well as the BAGLEY and CHICAGO, to alert the command may have contributed in no small degree to the ensuing destruction of the VINCENNES Group.

As the CANBERRA swung to starboard, she was hit by numerous Japanese shells. This happened before she could get her guns to bear on the Japanese ships to port, and before Condition ONE could be effectively set. Although the Executive Officer stated that within one minute - that is, by 0145 - she had been hit by at least twenty-four shells,* this is not believed to have been feasible. It is considered more probable that she received her damaging hits within the next four minutes. Although she was fired on by the CHOKAI, AOBA and FURUTAKA, she was maneuvering radically and it is scarcely probable that hits in any number were made until the range was found by spotting ladders. The BAGLEY's report substantiates this conjecture by stating that the CANBERRA was not hit until about the third salvo observed.**

At about 0146, the CANBERRA sighted a spread of torpedoes approaching her. These had been fired at about 0144 by the AOBA. The Executive Officer, CANBERRA reported that the CANBERRA had been hit between the boiler rooms by one or two torpedoes.* This report has been found to be incorrect by the conclusions of an inquiry subsequently held at Sidney by the Royal Australian Navy. That Board found: "That after very careful examination of the survivors, the Board of Enquiry.....came to the conclusion that this was improbable (that there were any torpedo hits). No fuel oil whatsoever was seen around the ship after the action, nor had any survivors experienced the shock of an underwater explosion. It was assumed that the list which gradually increased from five degrees to thirty degrees in about five hours, was caused by a shell going right through the ship and penetrating the starboard side under water."*** The radical turns of the CANBERRA had saved her from being hit by the AOBA's torpedoes. (See Plate VII)

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* Report of Executive Officer, CANBERRA August 12th, 1942, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) Concerning Loss of CANBERRA.

** Action Report BAGLEY, Night Engagement, August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

*** Note to Appendix F to British Battle Summary No. 21, Naval Operations at the Landings in the Southern Solomons, August 7th-10th, 1942, dated 1944.

The CANBERRA continued to swing to starboard while being hit by the gunfire of the Japanese cruisers. However, her swing was never fully completed and she tended to straighten out on a northeasterly course. Battle damage most probably was the direct cause of this modification in the change of course.

At about 0148, the Commanding Officer was mortally wounded, and the Gunnery Officer was killed. The Executive Officer was notified that the Captain was down and he assumed command.

The CANBERRA endeavored to return the enemy fire.* She may have succeeded in firing a few shots at about 0147** with her port 4-inch battery, but did not succeed in firing any torpedoes.*** These shots were not well directed. Nothing in the available Japanese reports indicates that shell splashes or torpedo wakes - let along hits - were observed at this time.

In summarizing the action between 0144 and about 0148, the CANBERRA suffered heavy damage, which disabled her and rendered her almost defenseless. Her damage in part was as follows: at least four hits on the 4-inch gun deck; at least two hits in the torpedo space; one hit on the after director; one hit in the plotting room; one hit between the guns of "X" turret; one hit on "A" turret; at least one hit in each boiler room which resulted in the loss of all steam and power and one hit on the bridge. As a consequence of 8-inch armor-piercing shells passing through the ship below the water line, the ship took a list to starboard of five degrees which slowly increased to a maximum of thirty degrees some hours later.

At 0150, the CANBERRA, without power but still with way upon her, was in a position bearing 149°(T), distant seven and six-tenths miles from the center of Savo Island.

(2) Action by CHICAGO

At 0143, the CHICAGO, in column about 600 yards astern of the CANBERRA, sighted the first of the four aircraft flares which the Japanese had dropped in Transport Area XRAY, bearing between 110° and 120°(T). The CHICAGO had also sighted, just prior to this time, two orange-colored flashes near the surface of the water in the vicinity of Savo Island,** which might possibly have been the flashes from the torpedo tubes of FURUTAKA. (See Plate V)

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* Report of Executive Officer, CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) Concerning Loss of CANBERRA.

** Action Report, CHICAGO Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

*** Report of Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN (Ret.) to CINCPAC, May 13th, 1943 on Informal Inquiry into Circumstances Attending the Loss of the VINCENNES etc., on August 9th, 1942, page 20.

At about 0145, the CHICAGO noted that the CANBERRA was swinging to starboard. The Officer of the Deck of the CHICAGO must have assumed that the CANBERRA had turned to starboard for one of two reasons: (a) that she had sighted something which required an emergency turn, or (b) that she had suffered a steering casualty. He could normally have expected to be advised immediately in either event; but in this case he was doomed to disappointment, for the CANBERRA made no report.

However, he did not have long to wonder, for at 0146 as the CANBERRA moved to starboard, the Officer of the Deck noted two dark objects between the CANBERRA and the PATTERSON, and one other object to the right of the CANBERRA.* Viewing from the left, the first two objects were the KINUGASA and KAKO; the object to the right of the CANBERRA was the AOBA. It is assumed that the Officer of the Deck sounded "General Quarters" at this time bringing the Commanding Officer to the bridge almost immediately. Meanwhile, he continued to follow in the wake of the CANBERRA, and made preparations to fire a star shell spread to starboard in order to illuminate the AOBA. (See Plate VII)

Once the Commanding Officer was on the bridge and had familiarized himself with the unusual circumstances of the situation, is it not surprising that he did not immediately attempt to broadcast a general warning to the entire task force about the presence of the enemy ships, including any amplifying information available such as: enemy types, formation or disposition, location, course and speed? Having failed to do this, is it not equally surprising that he did not attempt to notify either Commander VINCENNES Group - who, as Screening Commander in the absence of CTG 62.6, was in command of the western screen, and therefore responsible for the coordination of the screening groups for battle, or CTG 62.6 who, as overall Screening Commander, might still be able to direct some defensive measures even though he was located for the moment in Transport Area XRAY? Similar questions could be asked regarding his failure to notify CTF 61, CTF 62, CTF 63 and COMSOPACFOR.

He not only failed in his responsibility as regards these matters but he also failed in his additional responsibilities as Commander CHICAGO Group. He, of course, knew that the CANBERRA was cognizant of the situation; for she was already maneuvering for position. But what about the BAGLEY and the PATTERSON? It was his responsibility, as Officer-in-Tactical Command of this group to lead it into battle and to give the necessary orders to his four ships in order that this might be effectively done. He did not do this but instead allowed each ship to operate independently. Perhaps he found himself unable to perform the dual function of Group Commander and Commanding Officer, or perhaps under the pressure of events he simply forgot that he was the Group Commander. His failure to exercise command properly contributed in a large degree to the unfortunate events which were to follow in Iron Bottom Sound.

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* Action Report, CHICAGO, Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces, August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial C99, August 13th, 1942.

While preparations were in progress to fire the star shell spread to illuminate the AOBA, the starboard bridge lookout reported a torpedo wake to starboard at 0146.* The Commanding Officer started to turn to starboard with full right rudder,* presumably in an attempt to parallel the torpedo track. But within a few seconds, and before the turn to starboard could be executed, the Main Battery Control Officer reported having sighted the bubbles of two torpedo wakes approaching from port to starboard on bearing 345° relative.* Because the first wake to starboard could not be made out from the bridge and because those on the port hand could be clearly seen, the Commanding Officer immediately turned to port with full left rudder to parallel these latter wakes.*

It seems wise to digress here to explain the several torpedo wakes by the CHICAGO. (See Plates VIII and IX)

(a) The failure of the bridge personnel to make out the wake reported to starboard confirms the fact that it was a dead wake left on the smooth sea by a torpedo that had already passed. As the CHICAGO, steaming at twelve knots, should have been crossing, at about 0146, the wakes of the CHOKAI's four torpedoes which had passed the CANBERRA a little earlier it seems clear that the dead wake was from one of these torpedoes.

(b) The bubbling wakes to port - bearing 345° relative to CHICAGO's course of 306°(T) - lay on true bearing 291°. This bearing was the approximate direction from which the FURUTAKA had fired four torpedoes at the CHICAGO Group at 0143. As a Japanese cruiser torpedo, running for four minutes at maximum speed (fifty knots)* could have reached a point a few hundred yards on bearing 291°(T) from the CHICAGO at 0147,** it is considered that the wakes to port of the CHICAGO were made by the FURUTAKA's torpedoes.

Shortly after 0147, Main Battery Control sighted one of the torpedo wakes on bearing 345° relative heading for the CHICAGO's port bow. In half a minute there was an explosion well forward under the bow. The Commanding Officer thought that this torpedo had struck the CHICAGO on the port bow.* Actually the torpedo which had been fired by the FURUTAKA, had missed. The CHICAGO had been hit instead on her starboard side by two torpedoes which she had failed to observe. One of these torpedoes blew off a small part of the bow at frame Number Three;* the other struck at frame Number Ninty-five (starboard), but failed to detonate.*** The underwater damage from this torpedo did not cause any perceptible change in the

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* Action Report CHICAGO Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** Report of Basic Characteristics of Foreign Torpedoes Design Department, Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, R.I., January 29th, 1948, page 6.

*** Summary of War Damage to U.S. Battleships, Carriers, Cruisers, and Destroyers, October 17th, 1941 to December 7th, 1942, NavShips (374), Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, September 15th, 1943, page 29.

CHICAGO's trim at the time.*

The torpedoes which struck the CHICAGO were fired by the KAKO. This conclusion has been reached after careful study of the KAKO's target identification, her time of firing, and the range and bearing of her target, all compared with the firing times and targets of the other Japanese cruisers which fired torpedoes at the CHICAGO Group. The plotting analysis of all these Japanese torpedo tracks is shown on Diagram "F". By way of partially explaining this evaluation, the KAKO stated that her target was "What appeared to be a battleship"** - the CHICAGO Class had been mistaken previously by the Japanese for battleships. Since the Japanese had already correctly identified the CANBERRA by her three smoke pipes as a KENT Class cruiser, the KAKO's target could have been none other than the CHICAGO. This evaluation is supported by (a) the fact that the estimated range to the KAKO's target was given as 3500 meters,* which closely approximated the actual range of about 3600 yards to the CHICAGO at the same time and by (b) the fact that the KAKO's target was on a relative bearing of 30°* which was within five degrees of the bearing of the CHICAGO at the time of firing.

The CHICAGO's change of course to port to parallel the observed torpedo tracks was sound, for it was an emergency measure to avoid being hit. However, it became essential for her Commanding Officer to change course back to starboard, once the immediate danger from torpedoes had passed, and to follow the CANBERRA to the eastward in order to protect the Tulagi transports from the enemy force that was moving in their direction, as well as to insure that the two cruisers were in a position of mutual support and concentration. But as the CHICAGO swung to port and was approximately paralleling the FURUTAKA's torpedo tracks, her Commanding Officer decided to swing further to port because he observed "what was then believed to be a destroyer in a position to discharge torpedoes."* He had actually sighted the FURUTAKA, which at 0147 was headed approximately toward the CHICAGO and was 4000 yards away on bearing of about 295°(T). The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO did not visualize the connection between the FURUTAKA and the torpedoes which had just passed the CHICAGO, and was taking further precautions against being hit. He steadied on course 283°(T).

At about 0147½, the CHICAGO observed gunfire flashes close aboard on bearing 320° relative. She also observed gunfire flashes from two ships on her starboard bow.* The flashes to port were from the guns of the PATTERSON; those to starboard were from the guns of the TENRYU and the YUBARI. These opposing units were heavily engaging one another. It is

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* Action Report CHICAGO Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

singular that the gunfire of these ships was the first gunfire reported by the CHICAGO; for the CANBERRA - only 600 yards away - had been under heavy fire from three Japanese heavy cruisers during the preceding three minutes.

At this time the CHICAGO fired two 4-gun salvos of star shell spreads on a mean bearing of 320° relative, set for a range of 9200 yards.* Since this bearing was in the direction of the PATTERSON, it is assumed that the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO wished to investigate the area beyond the PATTERSON to discover, if possible, the extent of Japanese penetration into Iron Bottom Sound, and the character of the enemy force.

At the same time the CHICAGO also fired two 4-gun salvos of star shells to starboard, on a mean bearing of 045° relative, set for a range of 5000 yards, to illuminate a cruiser - the AOBA - which the CHICAGO reported as being about 5000 yards beyond the CANBERRA and firing upon her. The CANBERRA was bearing 045° relative distant 1200 yards from the CHICAGO.* The range setting on these star shells should have been about 7200 yards if the 6200 yards range estimated by the CHICAGO was correct. But since the range to the AOBA was actually but 4000 yards, the range setting of 5000 yards should have proven satisfactory inasmuch as the correct firing range for a star shell burst was roughly 1000 yards beyond the target at an altitude of about 1500 feet. However, the error in ranging was overshadowed by another error in fuse-setting, for it became painfully apparent to the Commanding Officer that his star shells had failed to burst.

Just prior to 0148, the CHICAGO received her first hit by a shell which struck the starboard leg of her foremast, detonated approximately over the foreward smoke pipe and showered shell fragments over the topside. It also bent the topmast, causing interference with the radar antenna for Director One.*

At about 0149, the CHICAGO observed the PATTERSON engaging "two destroyers".* These were the light cruisers TENRYU and YUBARI. The CHICAGO incorrectly thought that the PATTERSON was employing her searchlights.* The PATTERSON was employing star shells, and it was the enemy who was employing searchlights against her.

At 0150, the CHICAGO was still on course 283°(T), speed twelve knots and was bearing 155°(T) distant 16,000 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(3) Action by BAGLEY

The BAGLEY was in her screening position about 1600 yards on the starboard bow of the CANBERRA on course 310°(T) when the action commenced.

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* Action Report, CHICAGO, Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces, August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

At 0144, she sighted a number of unidentified ships slightly on her port bow which appeared to her to be very close to Savo Island at an estimated range of 3000 yards from the BAGLEY on an estimated course of 125°(T) at high speed.* These ships were the CHOKAI and the AOBA, KAKO, and KINUGASA which were astern of her. This contact proves to have been quite accurate as borne out by the plot on Diagram "F". The CHOKAI was actually bearing 303°(T), distance 2800 yards from the BAGLEY, and the three above mentioned ships of CRUDIV SIX were on course 120°(T). Coincident with making the contact, the BAGLEY also observed two or three Japanese salvos land short of the CANBERRA. After the first hit was scored on the CANBERRA, there followed a concentration of heavy fire from the Japanese cruisers.*

The BAGLEY did not report this contact to her immediate superior in command in the CHICAGO, nor did she broadcast it to all ships. This was unfortunate, for, as has been pointed out in the cases of the CANBERRA and CHICAGO, information concerning enemy contacts was of vital importance to the entire command. The necessity for reporting enemy contacts should have received priority over all other considerations.

The Officer of the Deck immediately ordered "General Quarters." The BAGLEY attempted to launch a torpedo attack with her starboard torpedo battery.* She swung "hard left" and increased speed to twenty-five knots. Her action had been so precipitious that she swung completely past the safe firing bearings before primers could be inserted.* She then decided to continue her swing in order to bring her port battery to bear.* This action of the Commanding Officer, BAGLEY in making this change of course to port rather than to starboard is questionable, for by so doing, he placed himself in the position of seriously embarassing his own cruisers** without receiving any commensurate gain, such as decreased torpedo firing time. Should he not have realized that the Commander CHICAGO Group, in order to continue to carry out his objective, must necessarily change course to starboard, and that the BAGLEY must keep clear by also changing course to starboard? A starboard turn would automatically have interposed his ship between the Japanese cruisers and the Allied transports. At the same time it would have taken the BAGLEY out of the probable line of fire, as well as have kept her in a position to provide some anti-submarine protection for the cruisers of the CHICAGO Group.

At 0145, the BAGLEY observed the flares which had been dropped over Area XRAY. (Plate VII shows the situation at this time.)

At about 0149, she steadied on a northeasterly course and fired four torpedoes in a northwesterly direction from her Number Two torpedo tube mount. Her targets were identified by her as two light cruisers of the

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* Action Report, BAGLEY, Night Engagement August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

** Oral Statement June 1st, 1949, by CTF62 to Commodore R.W. Bates, USN (Ret.) Head of Department of Analysis, U.S. Naval War College.

TENRYU Class and two heavy cruisers of the ASHIGARA Class.* Since at this time the two Japanese light cruisers - the TENRYU and YUBARI - were bearing about 310°(T) from the BAGLEY and since the two Japanese heavy cruisers - the FURUTAKA and KINUGASA - were approximately on the same bearing, it is believed that the BAGLEY fired on the mean bearing of 310°(T). These torpedoes missed,* probably because the two light cruisers effected a course change a minute later, and probably because of poor aiming which was due in part to the fact that the visibility to the north was poor, making the enemy ships not only very indistinct in general, but actually lost to view as the torpedoes were fired.*

After firing the torpedoes, the BAGLEY again turned left for the purpose of scanning the passage between Guadalcanal and Savo Island.* This action was of doubtful correctness, for the BAGLEY had not been released by the Commander CHICAGO Group nor had she as yet received orders to proceed elsewhere. She was still part of the cruiser screen, and should properly have maintained reasonable station until such time as she was either released, assigned to other duty, or it became apparent that the Officer-in-Tactical Command was unable to exercise effective control over the existing emergency situation. Perhaps, having received no instructions from the Commander CHICAGO Group, the Commanding Officer, BAGLEY felt that this latter condition obtained.

At 0150, the BAGLEY was swinging with left rudder from her previous firing course of 040°(T), speed 25 knots; and her position was bearing 145°(T), distant eight and three-tenths miles from the center of Savo Island.

(4) Action by PATTERSON

The screening position of the PATTERSON was on the port bow of the CANBERRA between 1500 and 2000 yards. At 0140½ the CHOKAI had observed the PATTERSON on bearing 130°(T) at distance 5500 yards,** thus revealing her actual position as 1900 yards west of the CANBERRA. (See Diagram "F").

The PATTERSON herself made no contact on the enemy force until five and one-half minutes after having been sighted by the leading Japanese cruiser, during which time she advanced 2200 yards farther along her patrol course of 306°(T). At 0146 she visually sighted an unidentified ship on bearing 305°(T) - dead ahead - at an estimated distance of 5000 yards, close in to what she thought was the western end of Savo Island,** but what was actually the heavy cloud bank already mentioned in previous sections. Her contact was the FURUTAKA, whose relative position as fifth

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* Action Report BAGLEY, Night Engagement, August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

** Action Report PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

ship in the Japanese column - 5200 yards astern of the CHOKAI, or six minutes run at twenty-six knots - would have placed her at 0146 in approximately the vicinity of the CHOKAI's 0140 position. The actual range from the PATTERSON to the FURUTAKA was 3700 yards rather than the 5000 yards she reported. (See Plate VIII)

It has been suggested that the PATTERSON's screening position to the west of the CANBERRA should have made it possible for her to sight the enemy before other ships in the CHICAGO Group, particularly before the BAGLEY. Plotting analysis proves otherwise, for the BAGLEY's screening station - nearly a mile north of the CANBERRA and therefore about 2500 yards northeast of the PATTERSON - was in much better position to contact the CHOKAI at 0144 at the range of 2800 yards, as pointed out in the previous section. Under the weather conditions, PATTERSON and BAGLEY were not in sight contact with each other.

The Commanding Officer, PATTERSON - who was on the bridge when contact was made - immediately sounded "General Quarters", endeavored to notify the CANBERRA and CHICAGO by blinker signal, and passed a warning broadcast to all ships over the TBS voice radio at about 0146: "Warning! Warning! Strange ship entering harbor."* The CANBERRA was already engaged with the enemy, and although she saw the visual signaling** she was too busy to reply. It is doubtful that either the CHICAGO or CANBERRA received the voice warning.

The Commanding Officer rang up maximum speed at 0146½ and altered course to port in order to unmask his starboard gun and torpedo batteries.*** This change of course is considered sound for by changing course to port the PATTERSON should have succeeded in rapidly launching her torpedoes to starboard. This was so important as to take priority over all other objectives. A change of course to starboard would probably have delayed the firing of the torpedoes as much as several minutes. It might also have caused her to foul the line of fire of her own heavy cruisers.

As the PATTERSON swung to port, the Commanding Officer directed that the torpedoes be fired when ready; but the Torpedo Officer failed to hear this order,*** and the torpedoes were not fired as the PATTERSON steadied on heading 270°(T). Consequently the FURUTAKA escaped without being hit, and was observed by the PATTERSON to turn left to a northerly course at 0147½.*** (See Plate IX)

As the FURUTAKA cleared the range, the PATTERSON observed two other Japanese cruisers farther beyond on bearing 70° relative, a true bearing of 340°. She identified them as one MOGAMI Class and one JINTSU Class

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* Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lt. (jg) C. P. Clarke, USNR, QUINCY.

** Report of Cdr. J. A. Walsh, Executive Officer, CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning loss of CANBERRA.

*** Action Report PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

cruiser. The plot in Diagram "F" shows that these enemy cruisers were undoubtedly the TENRYU and YUBARI of CRUDIV EIGHTEEN.

The Commanding Officer - whose voice was recognized by the RALPH TALBOT - immediately transmitted via TBS voice radio the following general alarm to the entire task force: "All ships. Warning! Warning! Three enemy ships inside Savo Island."* By this action and by his previous action at 0146 he evidenced a thorough appreciation of the urgent necessity of immediately informing the Officer in Tactical Command, the Group Commanders, and all Commanding Officers of vital information concerning the enemy. It is singularly significant that he was the only Commanding Officer in the CHICAGO Group who endeavored to inform his own Group Commander, and other interested group commanders, of the initial contact with the enemy, notwithstanding the fact that the CANBERRA and BAGLEY had both made earlier contacts.

At about 0147½ while broadcasting the warning, the Commanding Officer received a report of a torpedo wake fifty yards on his starboard quarter. This is believed to have been the wake of the single torpedo which the FURUTAKA had fired at the PATTERSON at 0146.** It had missed and was running beyond the PATTERSON.

The PATTERSON then brought her guns to bear and opened fire on both the TENRYU and YUBARI. She first fired two four-gun star shell spreads. Thereafter she maintained the illumination with one gun only, and employed her remaining three guns to fire service ammunition at her targets which were at actual range of about 5600 yards.*** During this engagement she was illuminated by searchlights from both Japanese light cruisers.

Although she zigzagged at high speed she was not entirely able to avoid hits. She was hit at about 0148 in the crew shelter of Number Four gun by one shell which ignited several rounds of ready service powder and enveloped the after section of the ship in flames. This forced both of her after guns out of action and caused casualties of ten men killed, or missing, and ten men wounded. As the PATTERSON swung around to an easterly course every effort was made to extinguish the fires around guns Numbers Three and Four so that they might open fire to port as soon as they could bear. These efforts were sufficiently successful to permit the firing of gun Number Four, but they were unsuccessful as regards gun Number Three. Slightly after 0149 the PATTERSON resumed firing to port

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* Letter August 15th, 1942 from Commanding Officer RALPH TALBOT to CTF 62, Concerning Morning Report Heard on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008.

** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

*** Action Report, PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

employing guns Numbers One, Two and Four. She claimed that she maintained rapid and accurate fire and succeeded in scoring several hits during the next minute on the rear JINTSU-type cruiser (the YUBARI).* This claim was supported in part by the CHICAGO's report that she had observed the PATTERSON score hits on the YUBARI at this time,** and in part by the YUBARI's report of receiving "some scratches (during the night action) from the light fire of an enemy destroyer",*** but the YUBARI did not indicate at what time the damage was received. The YUBARI was illuminated during this minute by PATTERSON's star shells which had been fired before gun Number Three went out of action.

All firing ceased at 0150. At this time the PATTERSON was on course 090°(T) at speed of probably twenty-seven knots; and was bearing 164°(T), distant 16,000 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(b) OPERATIONS OF VINCENNES GROUP 0132 to 0150

During the engagement between the Japanese Cruiser Force and the CHICAGO Group, the VINCENNES Group, which should have been alerted to the situation, continued its patrol in a more or less unalerted condition at a speed of ten knots. At 0132, it was proceeding along the southwest leg of the patrol square on course 225°(T).

All ships were in Condition of Gunnery Readiness TWO but there was an important difference between them. The VINCENNES and ASTORIA manned two guns in all three turrets,**** whereas the QUINCY manned one forward turret and half of her after turret.***** In addition all nine turret guns on all three ships were loaded with projectiles but not primed. These turret guns had been loaded during threatened air attack the previous day.

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* Action Report, PATTERSON, Concerning Engagement with Japanese Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

** Action Report CHICAGO, Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 1942.

*** Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers, WDC Documents 160623 and 161407.

**** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruiser Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942; Letter August 13th, 1942, from LCdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA, Concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

***** Memorandum February 10th, 1943, from Cdr. H.B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, QUINCY, to Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN (Ret.) Concerning Additional Information in regard to the EX-USS QUINCY, at the Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942.

The Main Ship Control Officer in the VINCENNES at this time was the Executive Officer;* in the QUINCY the Assistant First Lieutenant and Damage Control Officer,** and, in the ASTORIA, the First Lieutenant and Damage Control Officer.***

All cruiser Commanding Officers were fully dressed and asleep in their emergency cabins adjoining their respective pilot houses. It is assumed that the Commanding Officers of the destroyers were asleep also in view of the fact that they had experienced several long and difficult days. The fact that all Commanding Officers were asleep is not surprising. Condition of Readiness TWO was designed for a situation whenever action with enemy surface ships was probable but exact information of the enemy was not available.**** It gave about half of the ship's company an opportunity to relax. Certainly, the Commanding Officers who had been on their bridges for long hours over several days were entitled to a rest, and it was their duty to keep themselves fit for further action. The only necessity was the insurance that the watch was alerted to the developing situation. Only the Commanding Officer, VINCENNES appears to have done this. The Commanding Officers of the other cruisers seem to have overlooked this possibility with the consequence that they, as will be shown later, failed to appraise adequately the situation when surprise occurred.

Weather conditions in the north channel area were about as follows: night dark and overcast with occasional light mists and rain; light breeze from the southeast; ceiling about 1500 feet; average visibility 10,000 yards; heavy clouds around and to the south of Savo Island; sea smooth.

The Commanding Officers of the three cruisers were aware of the contact report of the first R.A.A.F. Hudson plane on the Japanese Cruiser Force at 1025, August 8th.***** In addition, the Commanding Officer, VINCENNES was aware of the second contact report on this group made by another R.A.A.F. Hudson plane at 1100, August 8th.***** Inasmuch as all ships copied the Fox schedules, it is presumed that the Commanding Officers of the screening destroyers WILSON and HELM had received at least one of these contact reports.

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* Cdr. W.E.A. Mullan, USN.

** LCdr. Edmund Billings, D-V(S), USNR.

*** LCdr. J.R. Tepper, USN.

**** War Instructions, U.S. Navy 1934, FTP 143, Chapter VIII, "General Instructions for Vessels Underway", page 28, para. 808.

***** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 2; Action Report ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942, pages 2 and 3; Letter August 19th, 1942, from W.R. Daniel, Chief Radio Electrician, USN, QUINCY, Concerning Loss of QUINCY to Commanding Officer.

The Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, who was also the Group Commander, had estimated the situation on the basis of these contacts, and had alerted himself to the enemy capability of proceeding with this cruiser force at high speed and of attacking the Allied forces some time during the current midwatch.* As a result he had entered a notation of this capability in his Night Orders and had stressed the importance of being particularly alert. He did not, however, alert the other ships of his command to the possibility of a Japanese night attack. This was a fatal omission, for he was the Group Commander and it was his responsibility to insure that his command was fully informed as to the probability of night action. Perhaps the Group Commander felt that any messages received by the VINCENNES had also been received by the other ships of the VINCENNES Group and that correct action had already been taken within each ship. As will be shown later, nothing could have been further from the truth; and the result was that all ships were caught by surprise.

At this time, there was considerable concern in the ASTORIA over the fact that her forward main battery fire-control radar was out of commission. Since her after fire-control radar had also been out of commission for some time because of a shorted transformer which could not be repaired aboard, this meant that her main battery was entirely without fire-control radar. Although this placed her at no disadvantage as compared to the Japanese, who were without radar of any description, the ASTORIA nevertheless realized the value of the fire-control radars and expedited every effort to complete repairs on the forward fire-control radar. These repairs were successfully completed just prior to contact with the enemy.**

At 0140, the VINCENNES changed course to 315°(T) in order to regain the group's planned position in the square; for as had been pointed out earlier, this group had been set to the south eastward. The QUINCY and ASTORIA followed around in column, the latter completing the turn at 0144.*** The destroyers completed adjusting their screening position after the turn at about the same time.

At 0145 - immediately after the task group had settled on the new course - both the QUINCY and the HELM endeavored to fix their positions by cross-bearings on Savo Island. The resulting fixes were considerably in error, because both ships mistook the edge of the heavy cloud-bank south of Savo Island as the actual left tangent of that island, and because both found the right tangent somewhat obscured by the haze in that

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* Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 2.

** Letter August 13th, 1942 from LCdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer Concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

*** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942.

direction. Evaluation of data available from all sources indicates that the QUINCY's fix was about 6700 yards in error in the direction of 345°(T) from her actual position, whereas the HELM's fix was about 3200 yards too far to the northwest. These errors in piloting are discussed here to indicate the navigational difficulties which beset the Commanding Officers of ships forced to operate in restricted areas under combat conditions and under poor visibility. Radar has considerably reduced these difficulties since August 1942, but has not fully eliminated them.

Some of the ships of the VINCENNES Group evidenced more concern at this time with the danger of submarine attack than with the possibility of surface ship attack.* As a consequence, when a distant underwater explosion was felt at 0144 the ASTORIA, as well as other Allied ships which had felt the same explosion, believed that enemy submarines were being depth charged. This was incorrect, for not only were there no submarines being depth charged at this time, but no Japanese submarines had as yet arrived in Iron Bottom Sound. The disturbance noted was most likely caused by the explosion of the CHOKAI's self-destruction torpedoes after their run past the CHICAGO Group.

At 0145, the HELM, WILSON, VINCENNES and QUINCY observed the aircraft flares which had been dropped by a Japanese plane in Area XRAY to silhouette the transports. Some of these ships, notably the VINCENNES, QUINCY and WILSON, also observed gunfire. The Allied ships reported the illumination as highly effective. In particular, the VINCENNES reported having sighted four flares in the direction of Florida Island, and also reported having observed a group of ships (apparently the CHICAGO Group) being silhouetted by a "great display of light" southeast of Savo Island. The VINCENNES was able to see clearly enough to estimate the course of the CHICAGO Group as northwest, and therefore parallel to the course of the VINCENNES Group.** The ASTORIA alone did not observe the flares, silhouettes, or gunfire at this time, and fully five minutes were to elapse before the Supervisory Officer of the Deck observed them.** There is no doubt that the strenuous employment of this and other ships in the past forty-eight hours had impaired somewhat the efficiency of the various ships' companies through fatigue, but this placed no disadvantage on the ASTORIA as compared to the other ships. It is evident from the statements of ASTORIA personnel that the primary attention in a number of stations was diverted to other considerations than that of maintaining a sharp lookout in all sectors. The attention on the bridge was directed specifically to station-keeping after the completion of the turn,*** in order to take full advantage of the

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942.

** Letter August 14th, 1942 from Executive Officer VINCENNES to Commanding Officer Concerning Night Action, August 9th, 1942, off Savo Island.

*** Letter August 17th, 1942 from LCdr. J.R. Topper, USN, Supervisory Officer of the Watch, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer Concerning Action on Morning August 9th, 1942, page 1; also Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lt.(jg) N.A. Burkey, Jr., USNR, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer Concerning Action on August 9th, 1942, page 1.

anti-submarine screening destroyers. The Gunnery Officer was intent with the radar operator upon testing the repaired radar, using the ships ahead in column as targets.* Lookouts were scanning the sky, searching for the Japanese plane heard overhead,** and in some cases may have been looking out of their own sectors. Certainly, not the least important source of information at night or in low visibility under combat conditions is the prompt detection and reporting of visual sightings. Accordingly, Commanding Officers should take measures to insure that alert and keen lookouts are maintained in all sectors during such circumstances, lest they be surprised.

In reaction to the sightings at 0145, WILSON and probably HELM ordered Condition of Readiness ONE. The Commanding Officer in VINCENNES was notified at once of the occurrences observed at this time, and he hastened to the bridge.

Immediately after his arrival on the bridge, the Commanding Officer - who as Group Commander, was the Officer-in-Tactical Command of the VINCENNES Group - discussed the circumstances of the moment with his officers and ascertained the situation from them. He determined that the position of the VINCENNES was about three and one-half miles east of Savo Island; although his actual position based on Diagram "F" was seven miles away on bearing 098°(T) from the center of that island, the error being attributable, of course, to the difficulty in obtaining accurate bearings because of low visibility. He observed three or four star shells, and he observed a ship to the southwest which he believed was firing star shells toward the southeast. This observed ship appeared to be under fire from another ship which was about thirty degrees toward the southeast.*** The action thus observed by the Group Commander was that taking place between the Japanese light cruisers of CRUISER DIVISION EIGHTEEN and the PATTERSON (which was firing the star shells actually toward the northwest). The Group Commander saw no other ships, no heavy gunfire, nor any searchlights.*** While he continued his discussions and observations, he decided at about 0147 that the CHICAGO Group had contacted an enemy destroyer. He estimated that this destroyer was a part of a Japanese diversionary plan designed to draw the VINCENNES Group out of position so that the Japanese Main Attack Force might approach via the north passage, and pass through his sector in order to attack the transports.***

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* Letter August 13th, 1942, from LCdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer Concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

** Letter August 17th, 1942, from LCdr. J.R. Topper, USN, Supervisory Officer of the Watch, to Commanding Officer, ASTORIA Concerning Action on Morning of August 9th, 1942, page 2, para. 4.

*** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

It would have been well if the Commander VINCENNES Group had set Condition of Readiness ONE at this time within his command, for the seriousness of the situation demanded immediate action.

It was just about this time that the PATTERSON's second contact report: "Warning! Warning! Three enemy ships inside Savo Island!" was being broadcast. It was heard in the VINCENNES by the TBS radio operator but was not heard by the Commanding Officer nor by the Executive Officer on the bridge. Why this operator did not insure that both of these officers received this message is not known. Had the Commanding Officer, who was also the Group Commander, received this message, it is quite possible that he might have had a clearer picture of the strength of the attacking Japanese forces than his visual observations were revealing. As it was, having received no information of enemy forces from any Allied ships and especially from those in the western screen, and having received no orders from CTG 62.6 who had failed to inform the command of his departure for Area XRAY at 2055, Commander VINCENNES Group did not fully understand the situation. He naturally was concerned primarily with his own immediate objective of denying his area to any approaching enemy forces, and of thus protecting the transports in Area YOKE. He quite understandably did not know that CTG 62.6, in the AUSTRALIA, was absent and that he therefore, as Officer-in-Tactical Command, was the Senior Commander in the western screen and responsible for the coordinated defense of the western approaches.*

The PATTERSON's warning message was received by the QUINCY at 0147½** the time at which it was broadcast by PATTERSON. The QUINCY immediately went to Condition of Readiness ONE, and the Commanding Officer was called. It was also received by the WILSON, but its originator was unknown to that ship.*** Neither the ASTORIA nor the HELM received this TBS voice radio message, possibly because the VINCENNES at the time was sending out the course change to be executed at 0200.** The operators in the ASTORIA and the HELM probably had become confused by the two messages which must have interfered with one another, causing later repetitions of this course signal and a delay in its acknowledgement. Perhaps the failure of the VINCENNES operator to deliver the warning message to the Commanding Officer was due to his preoccupation incident to the delivery and receipt of the course signal.

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* Personal Interview of Captain Frederick Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by The Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

** Action Report QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island by LCdr. H.B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)/hmc, August 16th, 1942, page 2.

*** Action Report WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island, Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942.

The VINCENNES went to Condition of Readiness ONE at about 0148 on the order of the Group Commander, who, acting instinctively as a Commanding Officer, directed this order to the VINCENNES alone. Had he acted instinctively as a Group Commander, as well as a Commanding Officer, he would have directed the entire VINCENNES Group to set this Condition of Readiness.

At 0148, the QUINCY observed, probably against the illumination provided by the searchlight beams of the TENRYU and YUBARI which were illuminating the PATTERSON, the silhouettes of three cruisers with three turrets forward* which had rounded the southern tip of what was thought to be Savo Island* but which was in fact the heavy cloud bank south of that island. For some reason, this information was not promulgated within the QUINCY with the unfortunate result that the gunnery department was not alerted to the presence of these ships.* About this time, the Commanding Officer came on the bridge. Why he did not broadcast this sighting to the Officer-in-Tactical Command as well as to the entire VINCENNES Group is not clear at this writing, for he clearly recognized that they were not friendly ships as they had "three turrets forward",* a characteristic of Japanese NACHI Class and ATAGO Class cruisers.

Meanwhile, the Group Commander held course and speed while he studied the situation. He felt confident that no enemy heavy ships had engaged the CHICAGO Group, because had they done so, surely the CHICAGO Group would have illuminated and engaged them.** He was aware of the fact that his present course of 315°(T) was carrying him somewhat to the westward of the best position for intercepting any Japanese forces that might endeavor to slip through the north channel; and therefore he considered changing course to 045°(T) in order to obtain a better intercepting position immediately.** However, he did not make this course change, for he felt that he might be called upon to support the CHICAGO Group and a change of course to the northeast would rapidly increase the distance between the two Allied groups.** Instead, he decided to increase speed to fifteen knots and to await developments. Although he felt that there was need for further information concerning enemy forces approaching his own area from the west, he nevertheless refrained from firing star shells in that direction as he did not wish to disclose his own presence or position to such forces.** Based on the information available to the Group Commander, his decisions at this time, except as previously noted, appear to have been generally correct and logical.

At 0149½ Commander VINCENNES Group executed the order to steam at fifteen knots.

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island by LCdr. H.B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)/hmc August 16th, 1942, page 2.

** Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 1.

At this time, all ships of the VINCENNES Group with the exception of the ASTORIA were assuming Condition of Readiness ONE which they had variously ordered between 0145 and 0148. The manning of stations usually required about five minutes during daylight hours and required a minute or so more during darkness, although the time quite naturally varied in each ship. The ASTORIA, unfortunately, seemed entirely unaware of the serious situation which was evolving about her, and she remained in Condition of Readiness TWO. This was due to a number of circumstances, the more vital of which were: (a) she did not observe the Japanese aircraft flares at about 0145 or observe the gunfire in the direction of the CHICAGO Group;* (b) she did not receive the PATTERSON's warning broadcast,** and (c) she underestimated the enemy capability of making a night attack on the Allied forces at Savo Island by employing for this purpose the cruiser force which had been reported by an R.A.A.F. Hudson plane off Bougainville at 1025 that morning.***

At about 0150, the ASTORIA observed four aircraft flares well astern.* Whether these were the original flares which were burning a little longer than four minutes or whether they were new flares cannot be determined. Possibly they were a combination of both. The Gunnery Officer interpreted these flares as meaning enemy action and requested that Condition of Readiness ONE be set. However, no action was taken on this request.**** Just as the ASTORIA was increasing speed to fifteen knots, she was illuminated by the searchlights of the CHOKAI.

A few seconds later, the QUINCY was illuminated by the AOBA and the VINCENNES by the KAKO. Thus, it is apparent that the action between the Japanese cruisers and the VINCENNES Group commenced while all ships of the VINCENNES Group, with the exception of the ASTORIA, were in the process of shifting from Condition of Readiness TWO to Condition of Readiness ONE.

The 0150 positions of the VINCENNES Group with relation to the center of Savo Island were:

The VINCENNES was bearing 095°(T) distant 14,000 yards.
The QUINCY was bearing 096½°(T) distant 14,400 yards.
The ASTORIA was bearing 098°(T) distant 14,900 yards.
The HELM was bearing 096°(T) distant 12,350 yards.
The WILSON was bearing 088°(T) distant 13,900 yards.

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* Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lt.(jg) N.A. Burkey, Jr., USNR, Officer of the Deck, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer, Concerning Action on August 9th, 1942.

** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942, page 13.

*** Ibid, page 3.

**** Letter August 13th, 1942, from LCdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer, Concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942, page 2.

(c) OPERATIONS OF BLUE

The BLUE continued to patrol her radar and anti-submarine picket station.* At 0132 she was on course 051°(T) at twelve knots. She was completely unaware of the fact that the Japanese Cruiser Force had just passed. The last ship of that force, the YUNAGI was bearing about 117°(T) distant 12,400 yards and was rapidly increasing the range to the southeast. The BLUE was completely unaware also of the Japanese two-masted schooner which was but 3000 yards away on bearing about 110°(T). Apparently, the BLUE's radar search and her visual detection were not very effective in that direction. Perhaps they were not very effective in the northern direction either, for the Japanese had passed through that sector without being discovered.

At 0145, the BLUE reached the northeastern limit of her patrol line and then reversed course to 231°(T).** As she changed course, she sighted four flares burning to the southeastward across the southern tip of Savo Island.* She immediately set Condition of Readiness ONE.*** These were, of course, the aircraft flares dropped by the Japanese cruiser planes over Transport Area XRAY, some thirty miles away from the BLUE. Following this sighting, the BLUE observed flashes of gunfire to the eastward in the vicinity of Sandfly Passage, and heard the blast of heavy gunfire.* The visual observation was unquestionably the land operations at Tulagi, which were reported aglow with illumination both by the Japanese Cruiser Force and by the ships of the VINCENNES Group. The blasts of heavy gunfire must have been the salvos from the 8-inch batteries of the Japanese cruisers as they fired upon the CHICAGO Group.

The BLUE evidently heard these salvos clearly, for she stated that the sound of the third salvo was accompanied by a much heavier explosion followed by a red glow emanating from a position about six miles southeast of Savo Island.* The position given was the approximate position of the CHICAGO Group at this time. It appears quite probable that the BLUE had witnessed the torpedo explosion on the CHICAGO at 0147.

The BLUE thereafter observed one or more aircraft to the eastward of Savo Island, showing intermittent flashing red and white lights, as though using them for signalling.* These planes were, of course, the two Japanese cruiser scouting planes.

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* Action Report BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942.

** Letter August 17th, 1942, from Commanding Officer BLUE, to CTF 62, Concerning Supplemental Information on Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 035.

*** Statement of Cdr. R.S. Craighill, USN, Executive Officer, BLUE, to Commodore R.W. Bates, USN (Ret.) Head of Department of Analysis, Naval War College, September 23rd, 1949.

The Commanding Officer, BLUE, then endeavored to report these planes to the Officer-in-Tactical Command* - presumably to CTG 62.6. He did not know, of course, that CTG 62.6 was no longer with the screening group but was off Area XRAY in the AUSTRALIA. He discovered that he was only able to communicate with the RALPH TALBOT.* His effort to provide intelligence was therefore ineffective. Would it not have been wise to have paralleled this TBS message by CW radio?

The BLUE continued on her patrol course of 231°(T) at twelve knots and watched the indications of action east of Savo Island, probably wondering what was going on and waiting expectantly for orders or at least for some news.

At 0150, the BLUE was in a position bearing 294°(T), distant eight and one-half miles from the center of Savo Island.

(d) OPERATIONS OF RALPH TALBOT

At 0132 the RALPH TALBOT continued to patrol her radar and anti-submarine picket station. She was steaming on course 072°(T) at a speed of twelve knots.

At about 0145, having reached the eastern end of her patrol station, she reversed course to 252°(T).

At about 0148, she heard the PATTERSON's warning message as: "All ships! Warning! Warning! Three enemy ships inside Savo Island."** She went to General Quarters immediately.***

At 0150, she was bearing 032°(T) distant ten miles from the center of Savo Island.

(e) OPERATIONS OF CTG 62.6 (AUSTRALIA)

At 0132, CTG 62.6, in the AUSTRALIA, had just cleared Transport Area XRAY where he had been in conference with CTF 62. He had returned to the AUSTRALIA at about 0115, August 9th,**** or but seventeen minutes earlier,

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* Statement by Cdr. R.S. Craighill, USN, Executive Officer, BLUE, to Commodore R.W. Bates, USN, (Ret.), Head of Department of Analysis, Naval War College, September 23rd, 1949.

** Letter August 15th, 1942, from Commanding Officer, RALPH TALBOT, to CTF 62 Concerning Warning Report Heard on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 08.

*** Action Report, RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, Gunnery Report, Enclosure (A), Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

**** Action Report, CTG 62.6, Concerning First Battle of Savo Island, Serial AF1056/15, August 13th, 1942, para. 92.

after having achieved some idea of CTF 62's plans in the conference. As has been pointed out previously, he had been concerned about the Japanese Cruiser Force sighted off Bougainville at 1025 the preceding morning. But, as a result of his discussion with CTF 62 and with the Commanding General First Marine Division, he was now satisfied that this enemy force was en route to Rekata Bay and that no immediate danger during the night was in sight. He was tired. He had been responsible for the protection of the transports and cargo ships during the passage to the objective area. He was now responsible for their protection in the objective area. He must have realized that, with the probable retirement of the carriers and the subsequent loss of direct air cover, his responsibilities would increase with the break of day. He also knew that he would be responsible for the protection of the transports and cargo ships during their withdrawal that day; and he knew that during this time he would be without direct air cover except that provided against submarines by his ship-based aircraft. All of these considerations must be weighed heavily on him. In addition, now that he had achieved a certain feeling of security concerning the probability of night action, he evidently experienced a physical letdown, for he decided to remain within the anti-submarine screen at Area XRAY rather than to rejoin the AUSTRALIA Group.* It is probable that he wished to sleep because he was worn out. In this connection CTF 62 stated that when CTG 62.6 had reported on board the MCCAWLEY for the conference, he appeared to be exhausted, "about ready to pass out".** Perhaps CTF 62 had advised him to get some rest.

CTG 62.6 realized later that he should have rejoined the AUSTRALIA Group, for he endeavored to explain his action by the statement that: "I had decided not to attempt to rejoin my group.....in the dark and there were but a few hours to 0500 when we would reform screen on the transport groups."*** As a matter of fact, there were some three and one-half hours more of darkness, and he might readily have rejoined the AUSTRALIA Group within less than one hour. This comment is made here not so much to criticize CTG 62.6 as to indicate the debilitating effect physical exhaustion can have on the will of a commander.

Having made this decision, CTG 62.6 ordered his flagship, the AUSTRALIA, to patrol in the vicinity of the transport squadron in Area XRAY, keeping within the anti-submarine screen.****

He did not notify CTF 62 nor did he notify the Commanders of either the VINCENNES or CHICAGO Groups of his decision to remain in Area XRAY.**

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* Action Report CTG 62.6, Concerning First Battle of Savo Island, Serial AF1056/15, August 13th, 1942, para. 92.

** Report of Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN, (Ret.), to CINCPAC, May 13th, 1943, on Informal Inquiry into Circumstances Attending the Loss of the VINCENNES, etc., on August 9th, 1942, para. 108.

*** Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

**** Action Report CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, dated August 13th, 1942, para. 92.

This was a serious mistake, for had Commander VINCENNES Group known that he himself was Officer-in-Tactical Command of the western screen, it is not improbable that he might have taken more positive action towards the coordination of the VINCENNES and CHICAGO Groups at the time of the sighting of the aircraft flares.

At about 0145, the AUSTRALIA sighted aircraft flares to the southward and eastward of Area XRAY. CTG 62.6 was immediately notified, and he estimated that the Japanese were attempting an attack on the transport, by either submarines or aircraft.* He had excluded from his consideration the course of action that the enemy at the moment was actually executing - viz., a night attack by surface craft - because such a capability had been assessed as of little or no importance at the midnight conference with CTF 62.

In order to present as small a silhouette as possible in the glare of the aircraft flares, the AUSTRALIA now steamed on such courses as would keep her as nearly as possible end-on to the flares. Therefore, she steamed northward and westward from the illumination, which was to the southward and southeastward. It was at this time that CTG 62.6 learned of the RALPH TALBOT's contact report made at 2345 on the Japanese cruiser aircraft which she had observed flying over Savo Island headed east.* This report had been received at 0016, at which time CTG 62.6 had been in conference with CTF 62 in the MCCAWLEY. CTG 62.6 seems to have attached little importance to this report, for he issued no warning instructions to his command. Would not an alert to the Screening Force have been the correct procedure for its Commander? Perhaps he thought that the aircraft contact was too old (about one and one-half hours) to bother about.

A little before 0150, CTG 62.6 observed what he thought was a flare dropped in the direction of the channel southwest of Savo Island.** Actually, what he had seen was the burst of the star shells fired by the PATTERSON at this time. He then noted gunfire which appeared to come from the AUSTRALIA Group. At first he believed this to be an Allied ship firing at a flare-dropping aircraft,** but about one minute later he observed heavy surface fire from the eastward of the source of the tracers.** The initial action to the left was the engagement between the PATTERSON and the light cruisers of CRUDIV EIGHTEEN; that to the right was the commencement of battle between the Japanese Eastern Group and the VINCENNES Group.

At 0150, CTG 62.6 in the AUSTRALIA was still abreast of Area XRAY,

(f) ACTION BY SAN JUAN GROUP

At 0132, the SAN JUAN Group, consisting of the cruisers SAN JUAN and HOBART, screened by the destroyers MONSSEN and BUCHANAN, was on course

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* Action Report, CTG 62.6, Concerning First Battle of Savo Island, Serial AF1056/15, August 13th, 1942, para. 93.

** Ibid, para. 94.

180°(T), speed fifteen knots, patrolling to the eastward of the meridian 160°-04' East Long.

At 0135, CTG 62.4, in the SAN JUAN, reached the southern limit of the patrol line and reversed course to 000°(T).*

While on this northerly course about ten minutes later, at 0145, he observed a series of three or four aircraft flares just west of south* beyond the transports in Area XRAY. Other ships of his group observed these flares at the same time on the starboard quarter** and aft.*** Because of their angular height and since gunfire was neither observed nor heard, these flares were assumed to be enemy aircraft flares and not star shells, and were presumed to have been dropped for the purpose either of illuminating Transport Area XRAY or the Lengo Channel entrance.** Immediately thereafter, heavy gunfire was noted at about nineteen miles to the westward of the SAN JUAN.*

At 0148, a warning (the PATTERSON's) was heard over the TBS voice radio by at least the MONSSEN*** and the BUCHANAN** that enemy ships were entering the harbor south of Savo Island.

At 0148, the faint glow of a burning ship (the CANBERRA) was seen on the port beam out on the horizon,**** bearing 268°(T). Then an explosion was noted to occur on a ship (the CHICAGO torpedoed) in the same location.**** Tracer shells were then seen directed at this ship from the northwest (TENRYU's and YUBARI's firing), having a flat trajectory and a rate of fire that gave the impression of small caliber guns fired at short range from a destroyer which was below the horizon of the SAN JUAN Group.****

Thus all ships of this group had observed accurately, though indistinctly and without knowledge of what was transpiring, the engagement between the CHICAGO Group and the Japanese Cruiser Force.

By 0150, the SAN JUAN Group had gone to General Quarters.**** CTG 62.4 in the SAN JUAN continued on his northerly course toward Transport Area YOKE at fifteen knots, closely watching developments as he continued to observe the gunfire on the western horizon.

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* Action Report CTG 62.4, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Serial FE24/A16-3(001), August 13th, 1942, page 6.

** War Diary, BUCHANAN, August 1942, and Appendix 18 to Action Report CTG 62.6, Concerning First Battle of Savo Island, Serial AF1056/15, August 13th, 1942, which is Report of HMAS HOBART.

*** War Diary MONSSEN, August 1942.

**** Appendix 18 to Action Report CTG 62.6 Concerning First Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, Serial AF1056/15, August 13th, 1942, which is letter August 15th, 1942, from Commanding Officer, HMAS HOBART to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6).

CHAPTER XIII

OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE*

0150 August 9th to 0200 August 9th

(a) ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP AND VINCENNES GROUP

Commander Cruiser Force, leading the Japanese Eastern Group in the CHOKAI had just about steadied on course 069°(T) at 0150 and was proceeding at twenty-six knots in the direction of the Allied transports at Tulagi. It is doubtful if he was actually seeking the destruction of the Allied transports at that time, for his movements are an indication that he was seeking action with the VINCENNES Group.** His course of 069°(T) carried his Eastern Group well to the southward of the VINCENNES Group but within easy gun range. He was followed in a loose column by the AOBA, KAKO and KINUGASA which were in the process of changing course in succession. Evidently, Commander Cruiser Division SIX, who had been authorized to operate independently, still chose to follow the CHOKAI in his operations against Allied forces rather than to proceed alone.

It is not clear why Commander Cruiser Force chose to engage the VINCENNES Group prior to attacking the transports and cargo ships off Tulagi. Whereas Commander Cruiser Force's original objective had been the destruction of the cargo ships and transports off Guadalcanal, his turn to the northeast reveals that he had chosen to disregard that objective. He was now confronted with a similar objective with relation to the transports and cargo ships at Tulagi. He had been presented with a rare opportunity to destroy the shipping with a minimum of interference, while the main Allied screening forces which might be able to oppose him were gradually drawing off to the northwest. Despite this most favorable tactical situation, he chose to ignore this objective also; and assigned himself a new objective: "the destruction of the VINCENNES Group". He failed to notify his command of this new objective. It will be shown later that, by this change in his objective, he once again lost an opportunity to convert his tactical success into a strategical victory. This error on

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* The times of firing by Japanese ships given in this Chapter are, as a whole, derived from the analysis of the action, although some of the times were obtained from Japanese sources. The data concerning the mean points of impact of the Japanese salvos was obtained entirely from Allied sources. Both the times of firing and the mean points of impact as determined herein are believed to be reasonably accurate.

** USSBS Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Kinkichi Kato, IJN, page 361.

his part contributed in no small degree to the later Allied successes in the Solomon Islands.

All of the cruisers of the Eastern Group were cognizant of the presence of Allied cruisers in the area east of Savo Island because the two Japanese cruiser planes had reported them sometime earlier and because the Japanese cruisers themselves had sighted one or more of the Allied cruisers as early as 0137, and had subsequently developed better visual contacts on them.

On the other hand, their approach was entirely unsuspected by cruisers of the VINCENNES Group until about three minutes before they commenced their attack on that group. At this time, about 0147, their action with the CHICAGO Group had attracted the attention of both the VINCENNES and QUINCY which promptly went to General Quarters but the ASTORIA took no action until much later.

As Commander Cruiser Force approached within gun range of the VINCENNES Group, the first ship that he clearly observed was the last ship of that group, the ASTORIA. He noted that the main battery of the ASTORIA was not trained either on his Eastern Group or on his Western Group. He realized that he again had gained the factor of surprise. The Executive Officer of the CHOKAI stated that the ship's company had entered the engagement "very easy mindedly, without any worries"*; but Commander Cruiser Force stated later that he, as the Commander, had plenty of worries.**

At 0150, Commander Cruiser Force directed the CHOKAI to commence firing. The CHOKAI immediately illuminated the ASTORIA on bearing 033°(T), range 7800 yards, preparatory to opening fire some seconds later. The AOBA, which was next in column then, at about twenty seconds later, illuminated the QUINCY, which she incorrectly identified as a PORTLAND-class cruiser, on bearing 033°(T), range 9200 yards. Finally, about twenty seconds after this, the KAKO illuminated the VINCENNES which she correctly identified as an ASTORIA-class cruiser on bearing 032°(T), range 10,500 yards. This latter range was probably the maximum at which searchlight illumination was as effective as star shells, other conditions being favorable.***

The KINUGASA took no action at this time against the VINCENNES Group, but directed the fire of her starboard battery at the burning CANBERRA at a range of 3000 yards.**** (See Plate XI)

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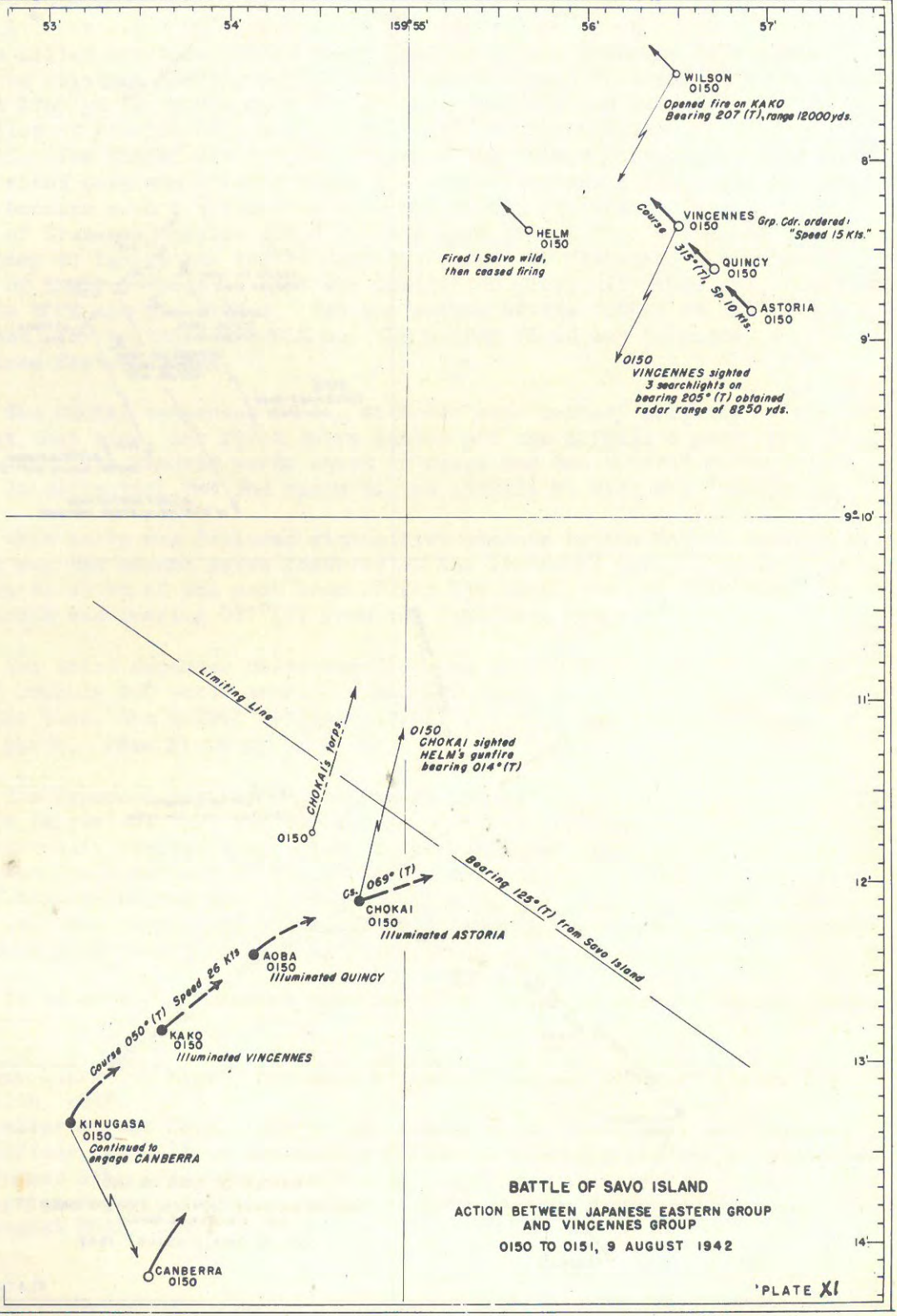
* USSBS, Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Kinkichi Kato, IJN, page 361.

** Statement by Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, IJN, Tokyo, July, 1949, to Lieutenant Roger Pineau, USNR.

*** Gunnery Instructions, U.S. Navy 1933, "illumination for gunfire", page 95.

**** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

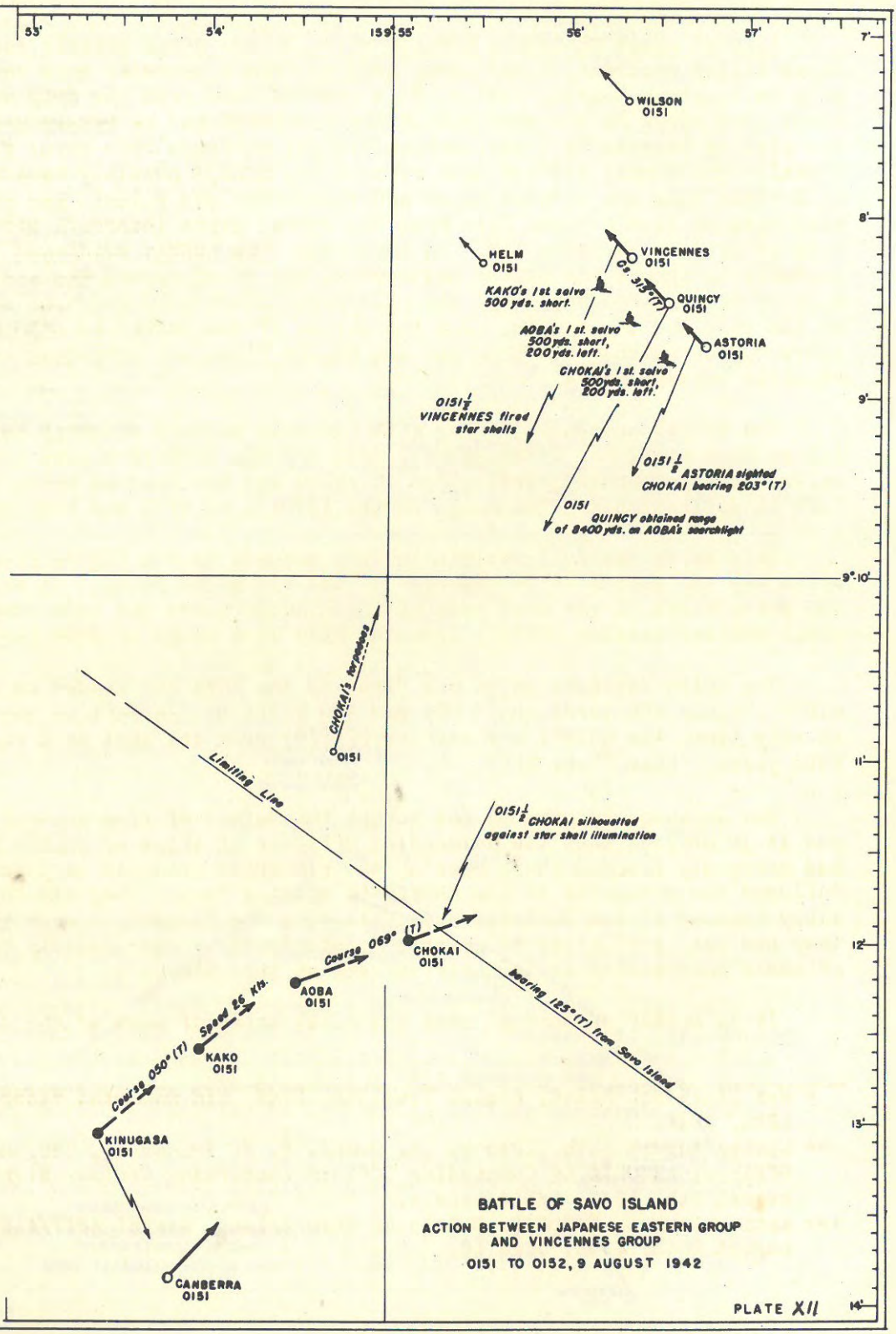


BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP
AND VINCENNES GROUP

0150 TO 0151, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE XI



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP
AND VINCENNES GROUP

0151 TO 0152, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE XII

Also at about 0150, the CHOKAI, which by now could plainly see all three Allied cruisers, noted enemy gunfire from a somewhat more remote ship on relative bearing 305°.* This gunfire came from the HELM which was about 1700 yards on the port bow of the VINCENNES and as determined from the plot of Diagram "G", was bearing 014°(T) at range 7800 yards from the CHOKAI. The CHOKAI did not open fire on the HELM,* possibly because the HELM fired only one erratic salvo and thereafter was silent; and perhaps also because such a cross fire from the CHOKAI might interfere with the fire of Cruiser Division SIX. In this case, the CHOKAI evidenced the same tendency to ignore the Allied destroyers, and to disregard the potentialities of their torpedoes, that she manifested previously when she encountered the BLUE and the JARVIS. But the action of the CHOKAI at 0150 was correct, for neither the HELM nor the WILSON fired any torpedoes at the Japanese Eastern Force.

The CHOKAI commenced firing with her main battery slightly before 0151, for at that time, her first salvo landed off the ASTORIA's port bow. This salvo was five hundred yards short in range and two hundred yards to the left in deflection.** The range to the ASTORIA at 0151 was 7400 yards.

This salvo was followed within five seconds by the KAKO's first salvo, which was the second salvo observed by the VINCENNES Group. It fell about 500 yards short of the port beam of the VINCENNES.*** At this time, the VINCENNES was bearing 027°(T) from the KAKO at a range of 9400 yards.

The third Japanese salvo was fired by the AOBA and landed at about 0151½ roughly 500 yards short of, and 200 yards to the left of the QUINCY.** At this time, the QUINCY was bearing 025°(T) from the AOBA at a range of 8250 yards. (See Plate XII)

The Japanese reports do not reveal the method of fire control employed, but it is obvious that the Commanding Officers of ships of CRUDIV SIX who had correctly trained their guns on the VINCENNES Group as early as 0147, followed the movements of the CHOKAI in opening fire. They did this possibly because it was doctrine when following the flagship - even though they had been authorized to proceed independently - and possibly because of their uncertainty as to their targets at this time.

It is worthy of comment that the first salvo of each of the Japanese

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* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

** Letter August 13th, 1942 by Lt. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Cruiser Night Action, August 9th, 1942, table page 4.

*** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, page 16.

cruisers fell about 500 yards short in range and, in the case of the CHOKAI and AOBA, about 200 yards ahead in deflection. These results are considered excellent inasmuch as the initial solution of the fire-control problem in each case was necessarily based on a rapid mental estimate of enemy range, course and speed, rather than on mathematical computations.

At this point a discussion of the Japanese searchlight technique is also in order. The Japanese cruisers employed searchlights as the means of illumination throughout this phase of the action. The doctrine for the employment of searchlights seems to have been somewhat flexible and to have been based in part on the theory that, because lighted searchlights offered an excellent point of aim and a good ranging mark for an enemy, they should be turned on for a limited time only. The Japanese ships therefore employed searchlight illumination intermittently.* The manner of their employment varied within each ship. The CHOKAI, for example, turned on her searchlights only while firing, and extinguished them between salvos. Although Commander Cruiser Force believes today that the CHOKAI kept her searchlights on continuously,** this is patently incorrect and is not supported by his Chief of Staff*** nor by the Executive Officer of the CHOKAI*, nor by observers on Allied ships.****

The AOBA and KAKO clearly were less restrictive, but this could have been due to the lack of effective opposition from the Allied cruisers. The ASTORIA noted at 0151½ that the leading cruiser (CHOKAI) was not employing her searchlights at that instant,***** although other enemy ships (AOBA and KAKO) were employing them. The KINUGASA was not observed by the ASTORIA at this time because the KINUGASA, which was attacking the heavily damaged CANBERRA, was not using searchlights but was utilizing the light from that burning ship. It is thus apparent from the above circumstances and from the fact that the Japanese cruisers in firing on the CHICAGO Group did not employ searchlights (presumably because the aircraft flares made this employment unnecessary), that Japanese searchlight doctrine also embraced the restriction that searchlights were not normally to be employed against self-illuminated targets nor against silhouetted targets.

The soundness of this searchlight doctrine was made painfully apparent

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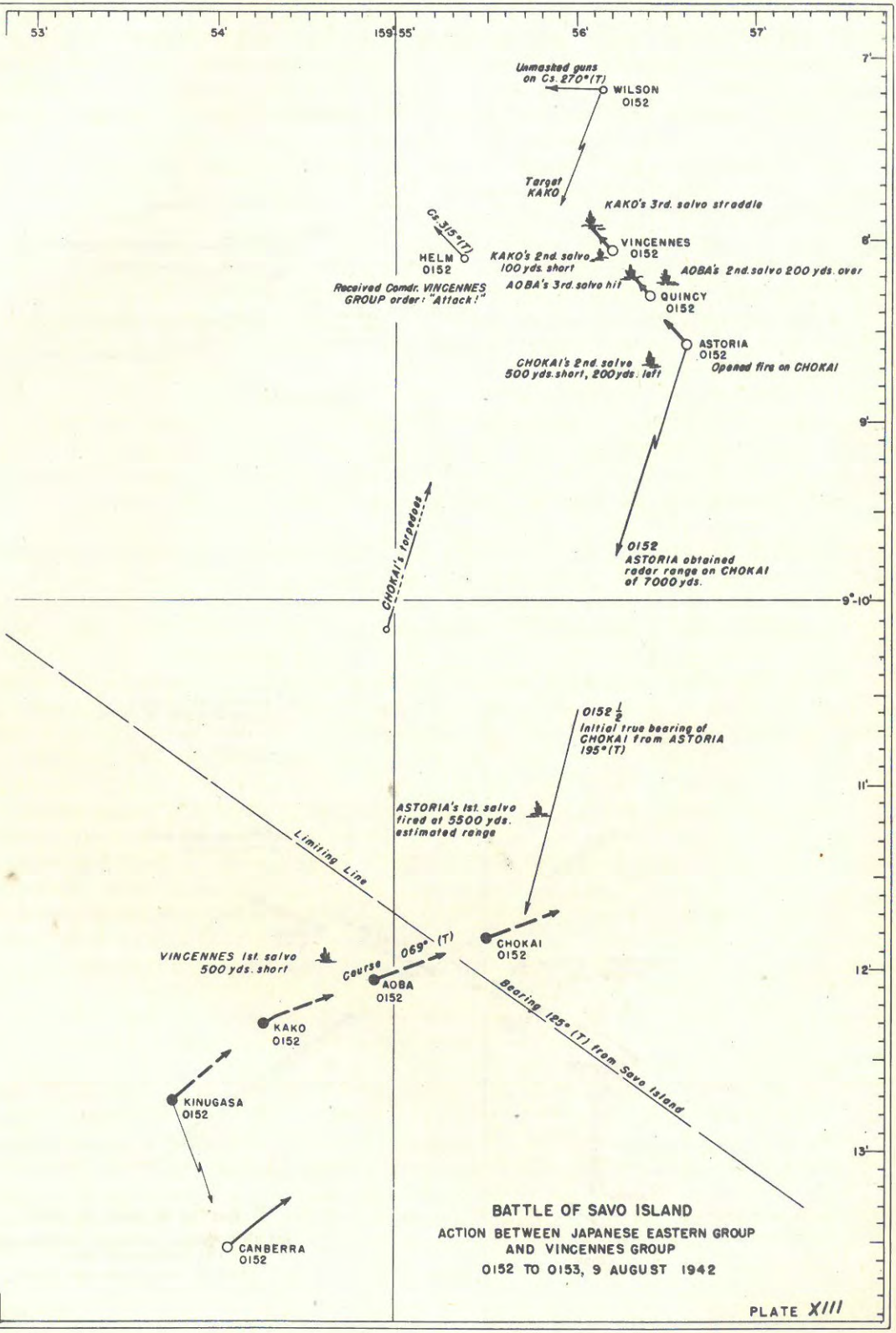
* USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Kinkichi Kato, IJN, page 362.

** Statement by Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, IJN, July 1949 to Lieut. Roger Pineau, USNR.

*** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 109, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, page 472.

**** Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th, 9th, 1942, Serial 021, August 14th, 1942, para. 11.

***** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Cruiser Night Action August 9th, 1942, page 7.

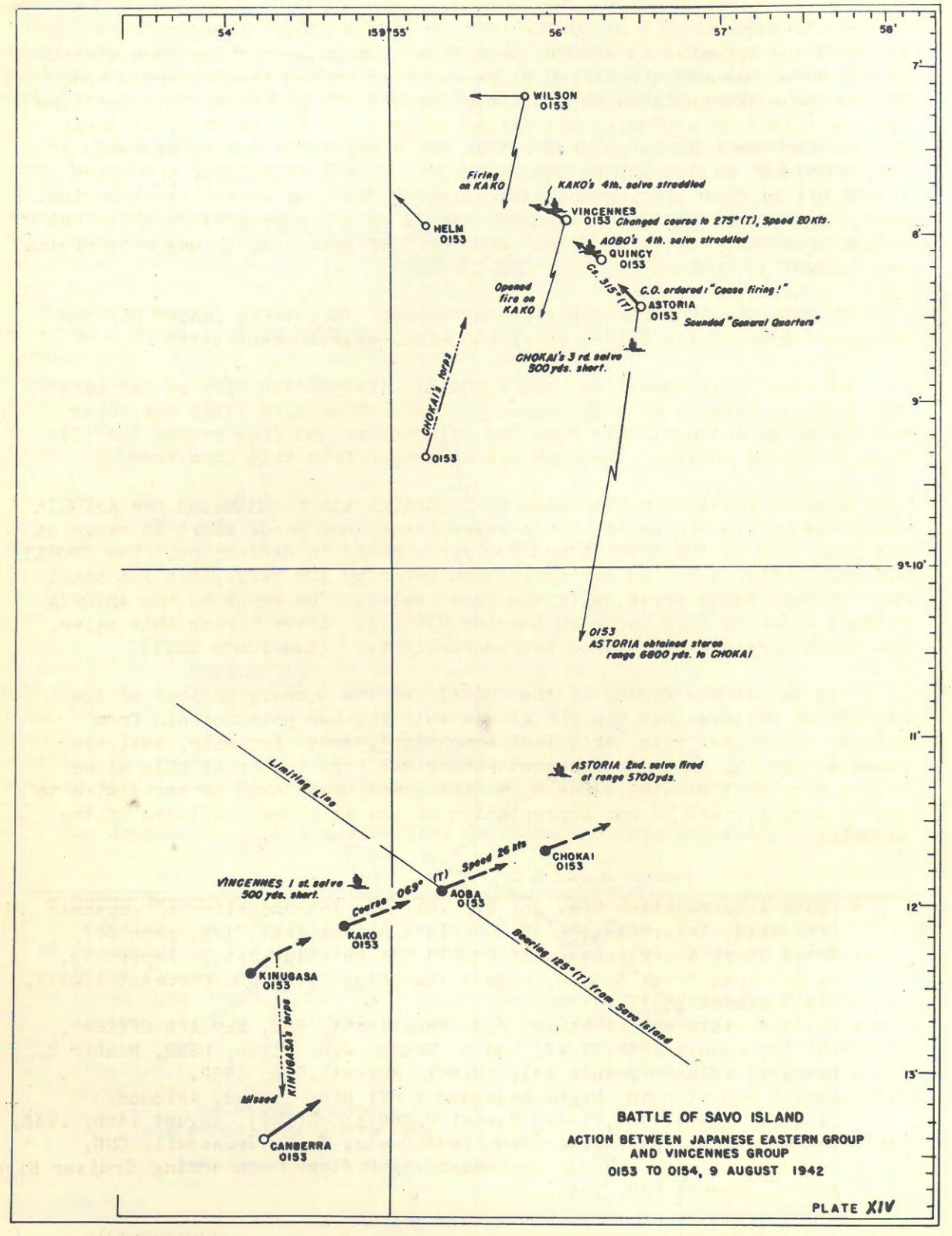


BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP AND VINCENNES GROUP

0152 TO 0153, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE XIII



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP AND VINCENNES GROUP

0153 TO 0154, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE XIV

during the action. The Executive Officer of the CHOKAI reported that the Allied ships appeared to return their fire only while the Japanese searchlights were on;* and the Allied ships reported losing their targets when the Japanese searchlights were extinguished.** In addition, this doctrine had the effect of confusing the Allied ships as to the accuracy of their gunfire for, as will be pointed out in the analyses of the engagements of the individual Allied ships, the PATTERSON, WILSON, VINCENNES and RALPH TALBOT all claimed hitting and extinguishing Japanese searchlights during some phase of the action. Japanese reports do not substantiate this, but rather show that the turning "on" and "off" of searchlights was part of the searchlight technique.

At 0152 the AOBA fired her second salvo. This salvo landed off the starboard side of the QUINCY about 200 yards over in range.***

At about this same time, the KINUGASA directed the fire of her port dual-purpose battery at a destroyer to the northward.** This destroyer was the HELM, which at this time was swinging around from course 315°(T) to a southerly course. The HELM was undamaged from this fire.****

Also at about this same time the CHOKAI again illuminated the ASTORIA and fired her second salvo. This salvo landed 500 yards short in range on the port side of the ASTORIA and 100 yards ahead in deflection. The CHOKAI had apparently corrected her deflection error by 100 yards, but she still had the same range error as in the first salvo. The range to the ASTORIA at this time was 7000 yards on bearing 019°(T). After firing this salvo, the CHOKAI again extinguished her searchlight. (See Plate XIII)

The deliberate firing of the CHOKAI led the Gunnery Officer of the ASTORIA to believe that the CHOKAI was shifting her point of aim from cruiser to cruiser with "brilliant execution".***** Actually, analysis reveals that the CHOKAI was concentrating her fire on the ASTORIA alone during the first minutes. Her slow firing was occasioned by her desire to insure accuracy and to her appreciation of the helpless condition of the ASTORIA.

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* USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Kinkichi Kato, IJN, page 362.

** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV SIX Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, CIA Document 76817.

*** Written statement of Lt(jg) R.H. McElligott, USN, Sky Aft Officer, QUINCY, August 10th, 1942; and of Ensign J.H. Tighe, USNR, Number 2 Battery Officer (5-inch AA), QUINCY, August 10th, 1942.

**** Action Report HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3(129), August 14th, 1942.

***** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut.Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer, concerning Cruiser Night Action, August 9th, 1942.

The KAKO, also at about 0152, fired her second salvo which landed about 100 yards short of VINCENNES.* The range from the KAKO to the VINCENNES was then 9100 yards on bearing 024°(T).

At about 0152½, the third salvo from the AOBA hit the QUINCY on the main deck aft. The range was 7800 yards on bearing 018°(T). The QUINCY was still not ready to return the fire for her battle stations were not as yet adequately manned.**

At about 0152 3/4, the KAKO straddled the VINCENNES, making amidships hits with both 8-inch and 4.7-inch shells. The range was 8100 yards on bearing 013°(T).

The Japanese Eastern Group was first fired on by the VINCENNES Group between 0152 and 0153. During this minute, the CHOKAI was the target for two salvos from the ASTORIA. The first salvo, consisting of eight or nine 8-inch shells, and the second salvo, of 5-inch shells,*** missed. The KAKO was the target for the VINCENNES' first salvo. This salvo of nine 8-inch shells which was fired at about 0152 3/4* also missed, being roughly 500 yards short in range.

At 0153, the CHOKAI fired her third salvo at the ASTORIA. It was correct in deflection but landed 500 yards short in range. By this time, the range had closed to 6800 yards. (Plate XIV)

Also at 0153, the KINUGASA fired another salvo of 4.7-inch shells at the HELM.**** The HELM was not hit and was completely unaware she had been fired on.***** The KINUGASA lost sight of the HELM after this salvo which fact indicates that the visibility was poor in the vicinity of the HELM.

Shortly after 0153 the AOBA fired her fourth 8-inch salvo and scored hits on the QUINCY's bridge, killing and wounding several persons.

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* Letter undated from Lieut. Comdr. R. L. Adams, USN, Main Battery Control Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer concerning Action off Savo Island.

** Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island. Report of Captain H.B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942.

*** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer concerning Cruiser Night Action, August 9th, 1942.

**** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, CIA Document 76817.

***** Action Report HELM Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3(129), August 14th, 1942.

At about 0153½, the KAKO's fourth salvo was observed by the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA, to straddle the VINCENNES.* The KAKO undoubtedly could see the fire which had started in the airplanes in the hangar and** which made the VINCENNES a self-illuminated target.

Also at about 0153½, the KINUGASA fired four torpedoes at the CANBERRA. These appear to have been her port torpedoes. The track chart of CRUDIV SIX indicates that these torpedoes were "modified" but the meaning of this term is unknown. It probably was concerned with the method of firing. The KINUGASA claimed having made two torpedo hits on the CANBERRA, which she reported as afire and sinking. These torpedoes actually missed.***

At 0154, the CHOKAI sighted another ship somewhat more distant than the cruisers, bearing 280° relative (349 degrees true). This was the WILSON which was in a position about 1700 yards on the starboard bow of the VINCENNES. At this time, the WILSON was firing at an enemy ship in the Japanese Eastern Group, most likely the KAKO. The CHOKAI fired on the WILSON,**** probably with her port 5.0 inch battery, but made no hits.

At 0154, CHOKAI's fourth salvo landed just 200 yards short of the ASTORIA. The range from the CHOKAI to the ASTORIA at this time was 6600 yards and the illumination appears to have been highly effective.

The fall of her salvos discloses that the CHOKAI spotted on in deflection first, and then spotted on in range, using an upladder of from 200 to 300 yards until she found the range.***** Her rate of fire during the first five minutes was not hurried. In taking full advantage of her knowledge of the lack of readiness of the ASTORIA, she could afford to be deliberate in her spotting and in her fire-control.

At 0154 the AOBA scored hits with her fifth salvo on the QUINCY's port battery, putting gun Numbers Six and Eight out of action, exploding the ammunition in ready service boxes and killing most of the gun crews,

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Ser. AP37/A16-3/-(00500), August 9th, 1942.

** Letter August 10th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. R. R. Craighill, VINCENNES, to Commanding Officer concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

*** Note to Appendix F to British Battle Summary No. 21, Naval Operations at the Landings in the Southern Solomons, August 7th-10th, dated 1944.

**** War Diary 8th Fleet August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1949.

***** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

making the QUINCY's port battery useless thereafter.*

The KAKO continued to hit the VINCENNES at this same time. However, her firing was less deliberate than was that of CHOKAI and was not quite as effective. The KAKO also employed an upladder.** She hit the VINCENNES with her early salvos and continued to hit with later ones, but her control was somewhat inaccurate, for many of her shells either passed through the rigging of the VINCENNES or hit in the upper parts of the ship, such as the bridge and gunnery control stations.**

Also at about 0154, the KINUGASA, which had just settled on course 069°(T) and was in about the position which the CHOKAI had occupied at 0150, entered the engagement in support of the other Japanese cruisers. She took the VINCENNES as her first target and illuminated her with her searchlights. By so doing, she placed a double concentration of fire on that ship. The Gunnery Officer of the ASTORIA, who was extraordinarily observant throughout the action, remarked: "Their plan, it seems to me, was to open up on the van with two ships concentrating on the leader and the third ship to fire upon the second in line."*** This observation was correct. (See Plate XV)

The KINUGASA was hit, at about 0154½, by the second 8-inch salvo fired by the VINCENNES. This salvo struck her in the port steering control room, as a consequence of which she extinguished her searchlights and veered radically to the left. It is not clear whether she was able to employ her normal steering control, but it seems doubtful, for her courses steered as shown on the track chart of CRUDIV SIX are not the same as those steered by the AOBA and KAKO. She probably steered with her main engines and endeavored to remain as nearly as possible in column. Her track, therefore, was somewhat of a deviation from the wake of the ships ahead throughout the rest of the battle.****

At about 0154½, the AOBA, directed the fire of her port dual-purpose battery at a destroyer (the HELM) standing to the southward. Not only did the shells all miss, but they must have missed badly, for the HELM was entirely unaware that she was being fired on.

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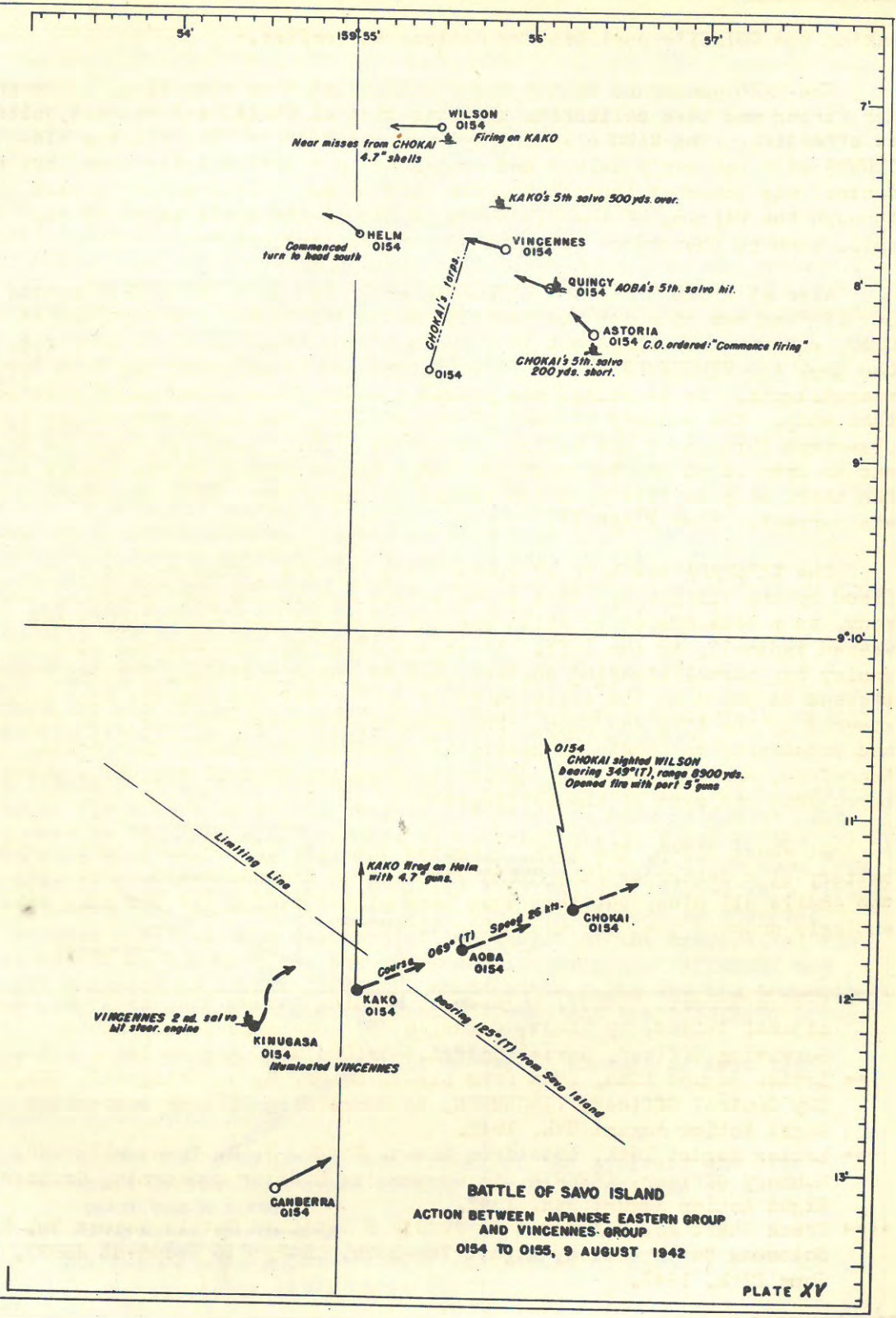
* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island, by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942.

** Letter August 10th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. R. R. Craighill, USN, Sky Control Officer, VINCENNES, to Commanding Officer concerning Night Action August 9th, 1942.

*** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer concerning Cruiser Night Action August 9th, 1942.

**** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

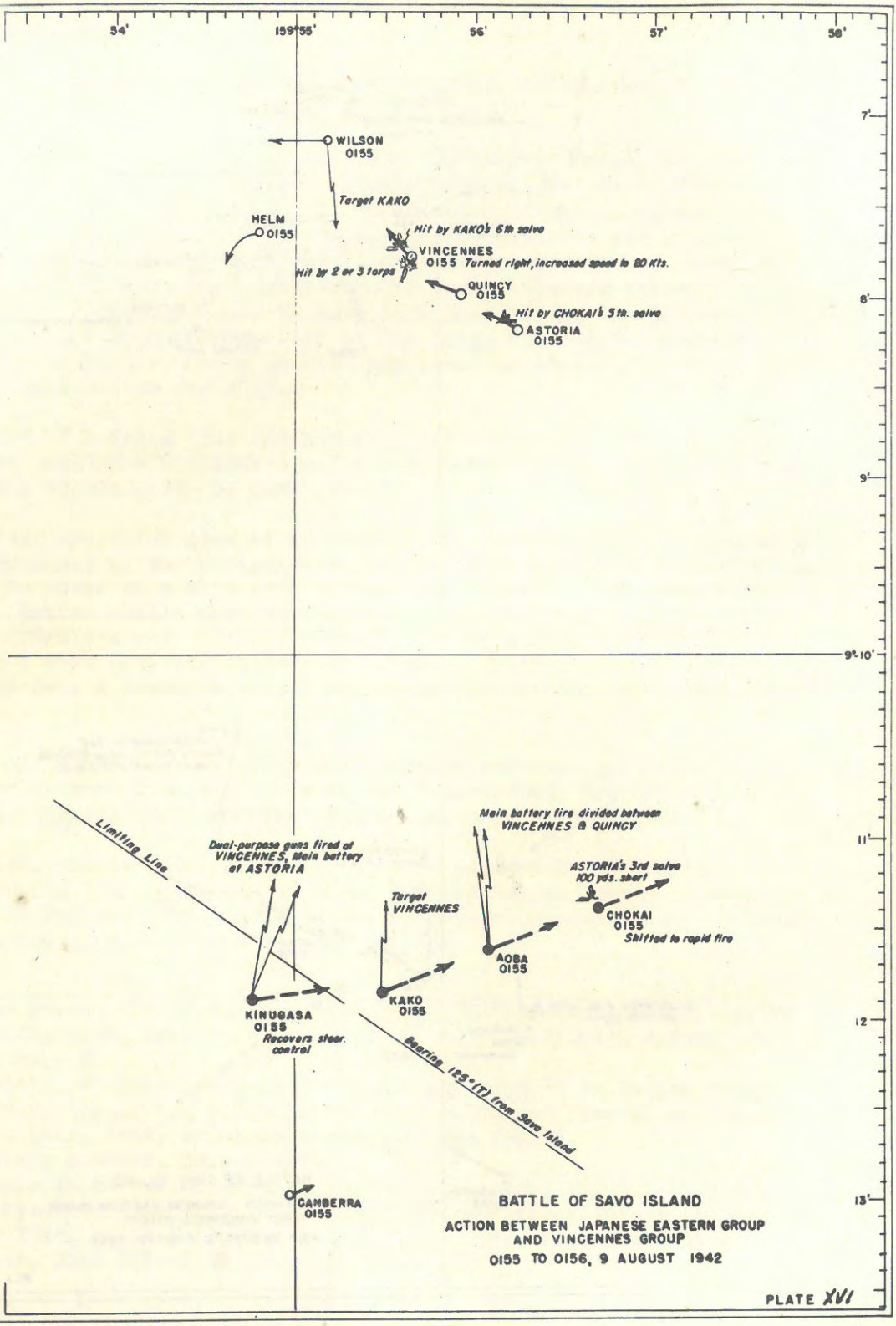


BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP
AND VINCENNES GROUP

0154 TO 0155, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE XV



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP AND VINCENNES GROUP

0155 TO 0156, 9 AUGUST 1942

PLATE XVI

Just before 0155, the AOBA's sixth salvo hit the QUINCY's well deck and started a conflagration there that illuminated the QUINCY so brightly amidships that the AOBA turned off her searchlights.*

At 0155, the AOBA divided her main battery fire between the VINCENNES and the QUINCY, which ships at this time were fairly close together in bearing and provided broadside self-illuminated targets.

At about 0155, the CHOKAI's fifth salvo hit the ASTORIA with at least four 8-inch shells amidships and started fires on the boat-deck and in the airplanes in the hangar. These fires gave the CHOKAI a perfect point of aim, without necessitating the employment of her searchlights, and assisted in solving her fire control problem.

Also at about 0155, two or three of the torpedoes which the CHOKAI had fired at 0148½ hit the VINCENNES. These torpedoes must have run at almost fifty knots to have covered the distance of 10,500 yards in six and one-half minutes. (Plate XVI)

At this same time, the KAKO hit the VINCENNES in her Main Battery Control Station Aft, killing the Control Officer and most of the other personnel on this station. The Spotter was seriously wounded.

At 0155, the KINUGASA, which was coming back into column,** directed her dual-purpose guns at the VINCENNES and her main battery at the ASTORIA. Since both the VINCENNES and the ASTORIA had burning airplanes and boats amidships, the KINUGASA was given "not only a perfect point of aim, but also perfect ranging conditions."***

At about 0155½, the KINUGASA fired an additional salvo of 4.7-inch shells at the HELM, but these missed again. Although the HELM was not hit during this battle, the Japanese believed that she had sunk at about 0156, probably because she disappeared into a rain squall or a patch of the mist she reported at this stage.****

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/hmc(004) August 16th, 1942.

** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

*** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer, concerning Cruiser Night Action, August 9th, 1942.

**** Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3(129) August 14th, 1942.

The CHOKAI's next salvo struck the ASTORIA at about 0155½ and put turret I out of action, killing all in the gun chamber and the upper powder-handling room. The CHOKAI at this point, having finally determined the hitting range and deflection, may have gone to rapid fire; for thereafter the ASTORIA was hit with increasing rapidity with both large and small caliber shells.*

At about 0156½, the KINUGASA concentrated all the fire power of both her main battery and her port dual-purpose battery on the VINCENNES. It was at about this time that she herself received an intermediate battery hit on her starboard side near the waterline at frame No. 315.** This hit presumably came from the PATTERSON which had maintained contact by paralleling the eastward movement of the Japanese after 0150.

At 0158, Commander Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI changed course at 028°(T) presumably to close the enemy.*** Commander Cruiser Division SIX observed at this time "that the LONDON, ASTORIA and PORTLAND class heavy cruisers (VINCENNES Group) had suffered direct hits by shell-fire or torpedoes, burst into flames which enveloped the ships, gushed black smoke, slowly listed and sank."** This report was highly optimistic and, in view of the accuracy of most of the Japanese reports concerning this battle, is surprisingly inaccurate insofar as sinkings were concerned. None of the three cruisers had sunk at this time; and none sank during the time the Japanese cruisers were in Iron Bottom Sound. In fact, the first Allied cruiser to sink was the QUINCY, which went down at about 0235 - over one-half hour later.

At 0159, the CHOKAI changed course to 015°(T),** presumably to reduce the range to the Allied cruisers.

Also at 0159, the KAKO commenced training her port torpedo tubes at the ASTORIA which she reported to be afire at the time.****

At 0149½, the CHOKAI noted large fires raging on the Allied cruisers, all three of which were roughly on the same bearing of 313°(T). She now changed course to 059°(T)*** and commenced falling behind CRUDIV SIX which continued on a northerly course.

Since the war, in August 1942, Commander Cruiser Force stated that

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Ser. AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942.

** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

*** War Diary 8th Fleet August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

**** War Diary, KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle WDC Document 160143.

the CHOKAI did not fall behind CRUDIV SIX; that instead she was always in the van throughout the battle.* This would be equivalent to saying that the CHOKAI did not change course to 059°(T). To have led CRUDIV SIX at this stage of the battle, the CHOKAI would have had to change course to approximately 000°(T) as CRUDIV SIX changed to that course at 0200.

However, it is clear that the CHOKAI did not lead CRUDIV 6 for not only did Commander Cruiser Force's Chief of Staff state in November 1945 that the CHOKAI had lost her leading position during this turn because of the difference in turning circles employed by the CHOKAI and the ships of CRUDIV SIX;** but also because later bearings made by the CHOKAI on the VINCENNES Group plainly showed that she was behind the ships of CRUDIV SIX. Diagram "H" shows that based on the plotting analysis, the CHOKAI had fallen as far behind as 3900 yards.

A possible further confirmation of the above analysis was provided by the VINCENNES which reported that at about 0200 the leading Japanese ship was observed indistinctly on course 115°(T).*** It any credence can be given to this report, taken, as it was, at long range, at night in hazy weather and under battle conditions, then the CHOKAI must have swung erratically wide indeed. This would indicate a steering casualty or similar trouble.

The anomalous fact that the courses steered by the CHOKAI up to 0159½ were accurately recorded, that those steered thereafter were conspicuously omitted indicates the possibility that Commander Cruiser Force considered it advisable to forget to record the confused maneuvers of the CHOKAI at this time. Whatever may have been the reason for the CHOKAI's maneuvers, the fact remains that Commander Cruiser Force changed course at 0159½ to 059°(T),**** that this was his third change of course within 1½ minutes,**** and that he was not followed in this turn by COMCRUDIV SIX in the AOBA.*****

At 0200, the positions of the cruisers of the Japanese Eastern Group, with relation to the center of Savo Island were:

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* Statement by Vice-Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, IJN, Tokyo, July 1949 to Lieutenant Roger Pineau, USNR.

** USSBS Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Nav. No. 109, Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, Vol. II, page 472.

*** Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 4.

**** War Diary 8th Fleet August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

***** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947, page 4.

(a) The CHOKAI was bearing 105°(T) distant 17,600 yards.
(b) The AOBA was bearing 110°(T) distant 17,900 yards.
(c) The KAKO was bearing 113°(T) distant 17,100 yards.
(d) The KINUGASA was bearing 116°(T) distant 16,200 yards.

(b) ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE WESTERN GROUP AND VINCENNES GROUP

At 0150, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN in the TENRYU believed that he had sunk the PATTERSON to the southward, and changed course to 032°(T).* The position of the YUBARI - which had been in column up to this time at about 1300 yards astern of the TENRYU on the previous course of 110°(T) - was bearing 290°(T) from the TENRYU. The FURUTAKA was about 1250 yards on bearing 175°(T) from the TENRYU, heading north. COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN had been aware of the FURUTAKA's steering difficulties since 0144 and had observed her separation from CRUDIV SIX at 0147½, when she had changed course to the northward.**

The FURUTAKA's position and northerly course threatened collision with the YUBARI if CRUDIV EIGHTEEN continued on its easterly course; and the deduction of this analysis is that COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN executed a ship's turn to the left to 032°(T) to avoid interference from the FURUTAKA. Meanwhile, the FURUTAKA presumably joined in column astern of the TENRYU and, as will be shown later, maintained that relative position until about 0200.

This relative position of the FURUTAKA was determined after full consideration of all factors that influenced her track and positions between 0143 and 0150, as revealed in four documents.*** The track of CRUDIV EIGHTEEN as shown on Diagrams "F" and "G", is based on the only reliable information available, the war diary of COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN.** The plots on these diagrams are therefore considered to be reasonably correct. Whereas a vague and loosely-drawn post-war interrogation chart**** shows the FURUTAKA leading the column of the Japanese Western Group, this last document is considered to be incorrect in this particular for several reasons:

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* Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 18 Records of August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Action Report PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942; Diary Ensign Nakamura, IJN, Chapt. 1, 2(H) (I), page 34 and Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

**** Night Engagement Track Sheet, Report on Sea Battle off Savo Island August 8th, 1942, GHQ, SCAP, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) Document 15685, March 15th, 1946.

(a) It does not seem reasonable to presume that COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN would have followed a ship that was having steering or other navigational difficulties, (b) since the FURUTAKA had no flag officer, it does not seem reasonable to assume that COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN in the TENRYU would take any other than the lead position, (c) it is not possible, employing the documentary information available for plotting, to get the FURUTAKA ahead of CRUDIV EIGHTEEN at 0150.

The course of 032°(T) carried CRUDIV EIGHTEEN roughly parallel to, but opened the range on, the rear ships of the Eastern Group which were on course 050°(T). He could clearly see three of the cruisers of the Eastern Group turn on their searchlights at 0150; for the position of these ships, relative to the TENRYU, were as follows: the CHOKAI on bearing 079°(T) distant 5100 yards, the AOBA on bearing 083°(T) distant 3900 yards, and the KAKO on bearing 098°(T) distant 2900 yards. It is clear that if COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN desired to rejoin the battle column, he would have to regain a position about 2600 yards astern of the KINUGASA in order to allow the FURUTAKA to rejoin first. At 0150, the KINUGASA, the last ship in the Eastern Group, was bearing 128°(T) at range 2300 yards from the TENRYU. It therefore would appear from the plotting analysis that COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN's selection of 032°(T) as his course at this time was incident to his desire to lose enough distance to be in a position to rejoin in proper station, should it become advisable to do so.

At about 0151 the Tenryu was hit in the after deck by shell fragments from the CHICAGO killing 23 men and injuring 21.* At 0152, the TENRYU sighted a FARRAGUT Class destroyer on bearing 120° relative (a true bearing of 152 degrees) at a distance of 5000 meters (5500 yards), slightly illuminated.** This destroyer was the BAGLEY at actual range 5550 yards. Since the TENRYU had by this time opened the range on the KINUGASA to 2800 yards, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN changed course to 050°(T)** - exactly parallel to the movement of the KINUGASA - for the purpose of keeping the TENRYU's battery unmasked to starboard; and opened fire on the BAGLEY. The YUBARI is believed to have turned simultaneously with the TENRYU, but probably was unable to open fire on the BAGLEY because the FURUTAKA fouled the range. The FURUTAKA's course at this time, as shown on CRUDIV SIX track chart, indicates that she stood on in column through the wake of the TENRYU and turned in succession to course 050°(T) a minute and a half later, but did not open fire.***

The TENRYU claimed having damaged the BAGLEY greatly.* This claim is seriously disputed, for the BAGLEY reported that she suffered no damage

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* Action Reports and Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers WDC Documents 160623 and 161407.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

and made no contacts on enemy forces after 0150.* Consequently, the TENRYU's gunfire at this time is considered to have been very inaccurate.

Until about 0153, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN probably had entertained the thought that Commander Cruiser Force might still have as his objective the Allied shipping at Tulagi, in which case he might rejoin him in column. But by this time he could clearly see that Commander Cruiser Force had selected as his immediate objective the destruction of the VINCENNES Group. He realized that he could no longer continue in an easterly direction because his Western Group might soon become an attractive target for the Allied cruisers, and because he would foul the line of fire of the opposing Allied and Japanese heavy cruisers which were engaging in a reverse action. He apparently did not choose to join in the battle line against heavy cruisers for the same reason that had impelled him earlier, at 0144, to withdraw. He thought it wise to make a change of course to the north, and to remain on that course until he could ascertain which cruiser group - Allied or Japanese - was gaining the advantage. Therefore, at 0153½, he executed a change of course to 000°(T).**

At 0155, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN observed the superior effectiveness of the gunfire of the Japanese Eastern Group against the VINCENNES Group, for several of the Allied cruisers were on fire at this time. He considered that he now could close the range with relative safety in order to support his own heavy cruisers. His decision to do so is evidenced by his change of course to 020°(T),** which headed his group towards a suitable torpedo firing position.

COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN observed, also at 0155, that a large enemy cruiser on relative bearing 120° was afire and sinking.** This was the CANBERRA, which at the time was 5200 yards away on bearing 140°(T).

At 0156, the FURUTAKA, in column behind the TENRYU, opened fire on an Allied cruiser on her starboard bow,*** employing searchlights.**** Her target was the QUINCY on bearing 040°(T), distant 8000 yards at this time. The FURUTAKA's fire, together with that of the AOBA to the southeastward, placed the QUINCY under a double concentration.

At 0158, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN sighted what he identified as a KENT-type cruiser bearing about 050°(T) at range of about 5600 yards.** This identification was poor, for no KENT-class cruiser was in the VINCENNES Group.

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* Action Report BAGLEY, Night Engagement August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942, para. 7.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

**** Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942, off Guadalcanal Island by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc of August 16th, 1942.

He had actually sighted the QUINCY. He also sighted two ASTORIA-class cruisers, one ahead and one astern of the "KENT" (QUINCY).* These were the VINCENNES and the ASTORIA. He decided at this time to attack these heavy cruisers with torpedoes;* and so ordered, for the TENRYU began readying her torpedo mounts at this time for firing to starboard.

At 0159, the TENRYU opened fire on the "KENT-class" cruiser (QUINCY) on bearing 040°(T) distant 4000 yards. At this same time, the TENRYU commenced maneuvering to fire torpedoes.* She altered course about ninety degrees to the left and then swung again to the right in an "S" turn to about her original course of 020°(T).*

The sighting and identification of the TENRYU at about 0159 by the QUINCY confirms the evaluation made earlier in this analysis that, when the FURUTAKA joined CRUDIV EIGHTEEN at 0150 to form the Western Group, the TENRYU held the leading position and the FURUTAKA followed in column. The TENRYU was identified in the QUINCY at 0159 as a three-stack cruiser directly in front of the cruiser (FURUTAKA) that had been illuminating and firing on the QUINCY.** This identification of the TENRYU is further supported by the statement that the three-stack cruiser was turning out of formation at this time,** a maneuver which is identical to that executed by the TENRYU as she commenced maneuvering at 0159 to fire her torpedoes, The YUBARI was not mentioned in this observation, so it is a fair presumption that she was not seen because she was further to the westward of the TENRYU.

While the above operations were in progress, the FURUTAKA continued on course 020°(T) and shifted her fire from the QUINCY to the VINCENNES.** It is assumed that at this time (0159) the YUBARI was also continuing on her original course 020°(T), notwithstanding the TENRYU's change of course toward her; for it is known that the YUBARI was gaining a position from which she too could fire torpedoes.*** As a consequence of the above movements, by 0200 the YUBARI was ahead of the TENRYU and the FURUTAKA was observed to be aft of the TENRYU.** The plot of the positions of the three ships of the Western Group, as shown at 0200 in Diagram "G" and "H", is based on the evaluation of documentary evidence, and is considered to be reasonably accurate.

The 0200 positions of the ships of the Japanese Western Group with

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* Track Chart Annexed to Records, CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** Written Statement by R. D. Byers, GM2c, USN, QUINCY, Concerning Night Sea Battle, Guadalcanal, August 9th, 1942.

*** Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers, WDC Documents 160623 and 161407.

relation to the center of Savo Island were:

(a) The TENRYU was bearing 104°(T) distant 8500 yards.
(b) The YUBARI was bearing 100°(T) distant 7700 yards.
(c) The FURUTAKA was bearing 110°(T) distant 8900 yards.

(c) ACTION BY YUNAGI WITH JARVIS

The YUNAGI - on course 295°(T) at speed 26 knots - was operating singly at 0150, having departed the cruiser force at about 0140 for the purpose of engaging the JARVIS which was proceeding to the westward at ten knots. She had been rapidly overhauling the JARVIS, and now approached her target from the latter's starboard quarter. She closed to a reasonable gun range, and at 0155 opened fire on the JARVIS.

She engaged the JARVIS for about five minutes. Whether she employed her searchlight is not known. The gun action had been observed by the CHICAGO from her position to the southeastward, but the CHICAGO reported only gun flashes and made no mention of searchlight illumination.* The YUNAGI noted at this time the gaping hole in the JARVIS's starboard bow, abreast gun 2,** which had been inflicted by a Japanese aircraft torpedo at noon, August 8th.***

The Commanding Officer, YUNAGI claimed inflicting damage on the JARVIS.** But the fact that he broke off the action at about 0200 indicates that he made no real effort to sink her. What action the JARVIS took is not known - since she was later lost without a trace or a survivor - but it is presumed that she returned the YUNAGI's fire in such volume as to cause the latter to discontinue the action.

Why the Commanding Officer, YUNAGI discontinued the action with the JARVIS poses an interesting but unanswered question. Perhaps he found the JARVIS's gunfire too accurate and considered it unwise to engage an already seriously damaged ship, lest his own ship suffer such heavy damage as to permit her to fall an easy prey to the Allies. Perhaps he had already decided to make a reconnaissance sweep to the northward around the west side of Savo Island in order to provide Commander Cruiser Force with information concerning additional Allied Forces in the area; and, in the

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* Action Report, CHICAGO, concerning Action Against Enemy Forces, August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Action Report COMDESRON 4, Operations in Solomon Islands, August 7th-8th, 1942 - Anti-Aircraft Action - Report of, Serial 005 September 9th, 1942, Enclosure (G), JARVIS Dispatch 080620, August 1942.

fulfillment of this self-assigned task, did not desire to expend time and ammunition on a ship which was evidently trying to escape* and which was no longer a menace to his own forces.

Whatever may have been his reasons the general impression created by his decision to discontinue the action with the JARVIS - when considered together with his retirement at 0140 just before he could join battle with the CHICAGO Group - is that he did not have an offensive state of mind.

The YUNAGI's position at 0200 was bearing approximately 238°(T) distant 9800 yards from the center of Savo Island.

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* Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

CHAPTER XIV

ALLIED OPERATIONS*

0150 August 9th to 0200 August 9th

(a) ENGAGEMENT OF VINCENNES GROUP WITH JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP

At 0150, the Group Commander in the VINCENNES commenced accelerating from ten knots to fifteen knots speed, as his group continued on course 315°(T). In a few moments, his cruisers were illuminated by three searchlights which he observed were on a mean bearing of about 205°(T). He noted that these searchlights illuminated the ASTORIA first, then the QUINCY and finally the VINCENNES;** and that a difference of but forty seconds occurred between the turning on of the first and last searchlights.*** He obtained a radar range of 8250 yards presumably on the leading Japanese ship, the CHOKAI.**

The thoughts that were passing through the mind of Commander VINCENNES Group at this time are of interest to any student of naval warfare, since they constituted the basis for the action he took in the engagement just commencing with his group. In order to present them here, it is recalled that three minutes earlier - at 0147 - Commander VINCENNES Group had estimated that a Japanese destroyer was creating a diversion with the CHICAGO Group which was designed to lure the VINCENNES Group to the southward so that the Japanese Main Attack Force might approach from the north of Savo Island and pass through his sector in order to attack the transports. His action had been to hold course 315°(T), increase speed to fifteen knots, and await developments.****

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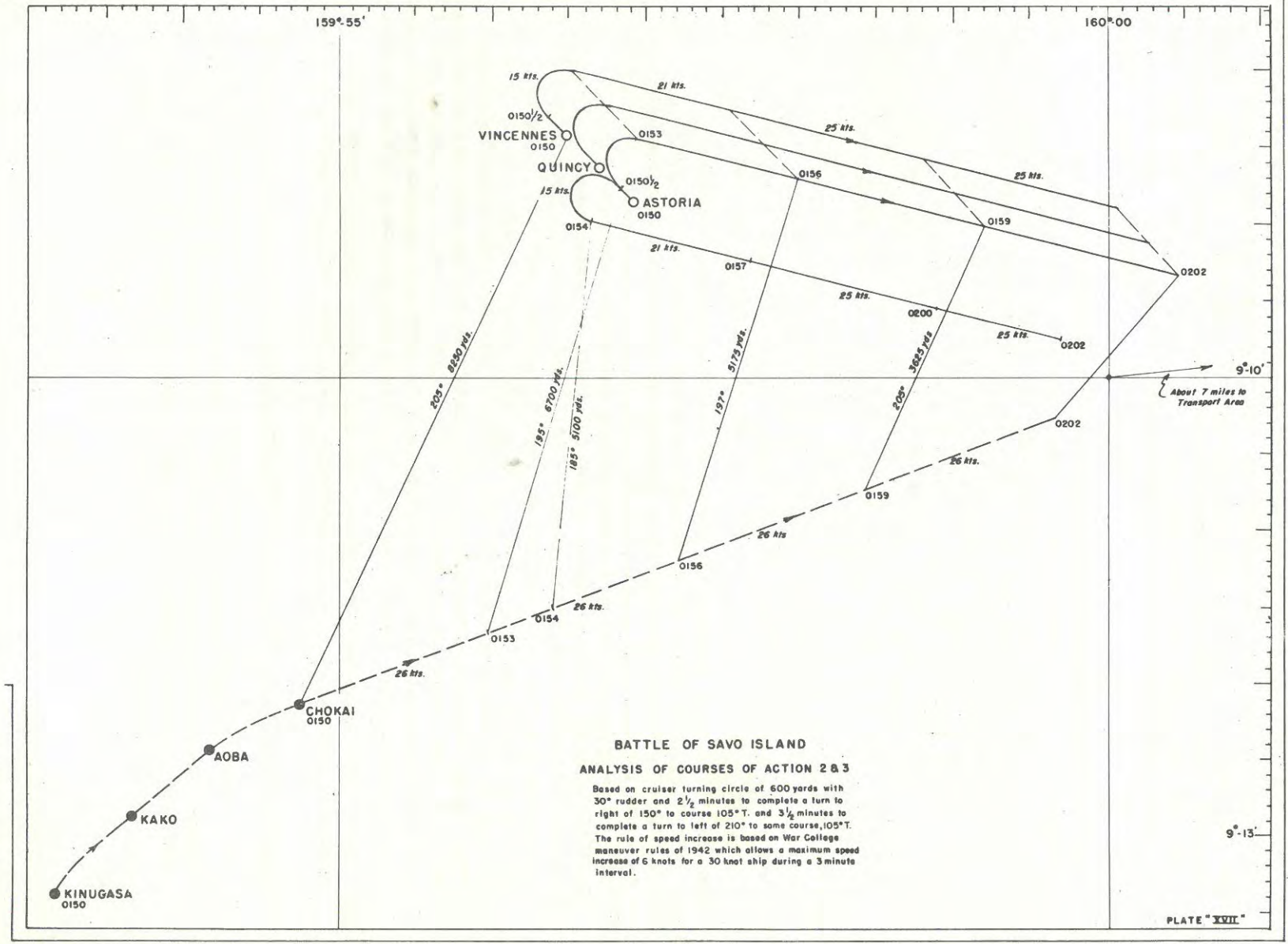
* The times of firing by Allied Ships given in this chapter are chiefly derived from the analysis of the action, although some of the times were obtained from Allied reports. The data concerning the mean points of impact of the Japanese salvos was obtained entirely from Allied sources. Both the times of firing and the mean points of impact, as determined herein, are believed to be reasonably accurate.

** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 14th, 1942.

*** Letter August 10th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. R. R. Craighill, USN, to Commanding Officer concerning Night Action August 9th, 1942, page 1.

**** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 3; also personal interview of Captain Frederick Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.



BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

ANALYSIS OF COURSES OF ACTION 2 & 3

Based on cruiser turning circle of 600 yards with 30° rudder and 2½ minutes to complete a turn to right of 150° to course 105° T. and 3½ minutes to complete a turn to left of 210° to same course, 105° T. The rule of speed increase is based on War College maneuver rules of 1942 which allows a maximum speed increase of 6 knots for a 30 knot ship during a 3 minute interval.

PLATE "XVII"

At 0150 he was giving serious consideration to the best method of meeting strong enemy opposition, for he felt that his was the vital area for defending the transports. He felt that his position and movement were correct.* Unfortunately, in making his estimate, he did not give adequate consideration to the possibility of the enemy attacking in force through the entrance south of Savo Island. As a consequence of this erroneous estimate, he had been caught by surprise when the Japanese Eastern Group, approaching from that direction, had illuminated his group at 0150 and commenced the engagement. (Plate XI)

He did not know the composition or identity of the force attacking his group.* He had seen no enemy heavy ships and none had been reported.* He stated, three years later, that he had thought that these searchlights were those of the AUSTRALIA Group which was following in and searching for light enemy forces which might have stood into Iron Bottom Sound. He further stated, in this interview that he had immediately told them over TBS voice radio to get their lights off his ships, for his command was friendly.* This message is not available to this study.

He wanted to guard against firing on friendly ships, but at the same time he felt obliged to take measures to defend himself. He appears to have felt that the continued illumination of his group by searchlights constituted a hostile act. He therefore felt that he had to fire on the ships using the searchlights, and promptly ordered his cruisers by TBS voice radio to open fire on the searchlights.* This order was repeated in the QUINCY, but there is no record of its having been received by the ASTORIA, WILSON or HELM. He continued to hold course and speed.

But were these decisions correct? In this situation, should not his first thought have been to protect the Allied shipping at Tulagi? His familiarity with his patrol area should by this time have been such that a quick glance at the relative position of the seemingly hostile ships would reveal they were in an excellent position - regardless of their possible course and speed - to attack the transports at Tulagi. It was therefore incumbent upon him to interpose the VINCENNES Group. Should he not have instantaneously realized that he would not be able to do this if he continued on his base course at his present speed? How then might he have accomplished it? A study of a possible solution has been worked out on Plate XVII. He could have turned either to the left or to the right by

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* Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 3; also personal interview of Captain Frederick Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

simultaneous ship movements. But which change of course was preferable?

(a) If he had turned to the left, and the ships illuminating his group turned out to be enemy, he would then have been closing them at a time when he was not fully prepared for battle - his ships were still in the process of shifting from Condition of Readiness II to Condition of Readiness I and would not be fully ready for battle for at least two or three minutes more. Such a turn would therefore have created a highly unfavorable situation.

(b) If on the other hand he had turned to the right - let us say, to a course of about 105°(T) - and had increased speed to twenty-five knots or greater, he would thereby have reduced the effectiveness of the torpedoes or gunfire which these seemingly hostile ships might direct at his unprepared command. At the same time he would have attained a better relative position from which to interpose his command between the enemy and the transports at Tulagi.

In turning to the right he would have been carrying out the course of action which doctrine in 1942 prescribed for surprise encounters with enemy ships during night or low visibility. The doctrine for both the American and British navies was as follows:

(1) The American doctrine provided that cruisers meeting enemy ships: "should normally in chance night encounters avoid action unless the conditions were favorable for engaging."*

(2) The British doctrine was: "to endeavor to gain time by a turn away."**

Therefore it seems clear that if he believed these ships were enemy his correct course of action should have been to change course to the right.

But what action should he have taken had he believed these ships to be friendly? Would not his correct course of action in such case also have been to turn away to the right and for the same reasons propounded in the discussion above?

In either case, in view of possible doubt, should he not have withheld fire? Does not the fact that he did not withhold fire betray his underlying belief that the ships which had surprised him were most probably enemy?

If the above analysis is correct, why then did Commander VINCENNES

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* War Instructions, U.S. Navy 1934 FTP 143 Chapter IX, Instructions for Night Encounters, page 44, para. 935.

** Royal Navy Firing Manual 1939, Chapter on Night Action, para. P.

Group choose that course of action least suitable to the proper accomplishment of his objective? The answer seems to be that he was both fatigued and confused at this time, and had had insufficient time or data to make a correct decision although five minutes had elapsed since he had arrived on the bridge. The unfortunate results of his failure to turn away and to increase speed in accordance with doctrine were to become manifest as the battle progressed.

(1) Action by VINCENNES*

At 0150 the VINCENNES sighted the first pair of searchlights trained on the ASTORIA, and her Main Battery Control Officer ordered the turrets to train left and pick up this target (the CHOKAI).** At the same time her port five-inch battery was alerted, preparatory to firing star shells.*** In less that a minute two additional pairs of searchlights came on in succession, and illuminated first the QUINCY and then the VINCENNES.** The VINCENNES thereby was illuminated before her turrets could be brought to bear on the CHOKAI. Since there were now three targets, she carried out the fire-distribution doctrine of training her main battery on the right-hand pair of searchlights - the KAKO's - and discontinued training left to pick up the CHOKAI.** Why the VINCENNES did not immediately open fire on the KAKO with her Condition II watch is nowhere explained, for all turret guns were already loaded, the exact bearing of the enemy was known, and an excellent range on the enemy had been obtained by radar. Perhaps the statement of the Main Battery Control Officer that the VINCENNES was not yet manned and ready for General Quarters** provides the clue to an answer - the gunnery organization was disrupted by the shifting from Condition of Readiness II to Condition of Readiness I.

By 0151, she noted a salvo splash short of one of the two Allied cruisers astern of her*** - the CHOKAI's first salvo landing 500 yards short and 200 yards ahead of the ASTORIA**** - and also noted gun flashes on a relative bearing of 245 degrees.*** These flashes were from the batteries of

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* Owing to the breakdown of the group command within the VINCENNES Group it has become necessary hereinafter to evaluate separately the conduct of the Commanding Officers of the several ships of that group.

** Letter undated from Lieut. Comdr. R. L. Adams, USN, Main Battery Control Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Action of USS VINCENNES off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942.

*** Letter August 10th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. R. R. Craighill, USN, Sky Control Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Night Action of August 9th, 1942.

**** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer, concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

the AOBA and KAKO, which were firing on the QUINCY and VINCENNES respectively. Before the VINCENNES could fire her star shells to silhouette the ships which were illuminating and firing on the VINCENNES Group, she observed a salvo - the KAKO's first - land off her own port beam about 500 yards short in range.* The battle was underway! (Plate XII)

Since the Group Commander had received no instructions from CTG 62.6,** and was unaware that he was the OTC of the Western Screen, it seems logical that, at this time, he should have immediately notified CTG 62.6 that his ship and his group were engaged by unidentified and unreported ships. It is possible that, under the surprise and duress of the moment, Commander VINCENNES Group was principally concerned with bringing his own ship to readiness and with gaining more information of the enemy ships by star shell illumination.

The VINCENNES fired her first salvo of star shells from her port five-inch battery at 0151½.* Since the ASTORIA sighted the CHOKAI silhouetted against an illumination to the southwest at about this time, it is probable that the VINCENNES' star shells burst properly.

At about 0152, the VINCENNES noted another Japanese salvo - the KAKO's second salvo - land just 100 yards short of her.*** It appeared to the VINCENNES at this time that there were many sources of fire all along her port hand, somewhat comparable to a line of shore batteries.* This impression was not entirely incorrect, for the Japanese cruisers extended from a bearing of 227°(T) to 190°(T) from the VINCENNES. Most of these ships were firing at this time - the TENRYU at the BAGLEY, the KINUGASA at the CANBERRA, while the CHOKAI, AOBA and KAKO were firing at the VINCENNES Group. Thus, enemy gunfire was visible to the VINCENNES in an arc extending from a bearing slightly forward of her beam to almost broad on her port quarter.

Commander VINCENNES Group was by now fully convinced of the enemy character of the firing ships, and directed his two screening destroyers - the HELM and WILSON - to attack.**** He still held his cruisers on course

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* Letter August 10th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. R. R. Craighill, USN, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Night Action of August 9th, 1942.

** Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

*** Letter undated from Lieut. Comdr. R. L. Adams, USN, Main Battery Control Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Action of USS VINCENNES off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942.

**** Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3(129), August 14th, 1942; and Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

315°(T) at standard speed fifteen knots. He had lost two vital minutes during which the enemy had all but found the range, and during which his own ships had not fired a single eight-inch salvo. Even so, Commander VINCENNES Group still had a chance to protect the transports at Tulagi and at the same time to carry out the doctrine of disengaging his group by executing a radical increase in speed and a simultaneous turn away to the right until such time as his ships were ready to return the fire. By so doing, he also would have maneuvered to avoid any enemy torpedoes that might already be heading through the water toward his cruisers. For these and other reasons, which were set forth in detail in War Instructions, 1934 and which were common knowledge of all captains and watch officers, it is considered that the action of Commander VINCENNES Group in holding course and speed was unsound. (Plate XIII)

The VINCENNES was straddled by the KAKO at about 0152 3/4 with both 8-inch and 4.7-inch shells.* She suffered numerous hits, most of which were in the carpenter shop and the hangar. The two planes in the hangar, which fortunately had no gasoline in their tanks, immediately burst into flame.** One 5-inch shell struck the port side of the bridge forward, and killed the Communications Officer and several enlisted men.*

At about 0153, the VINCENNES finally succeeded in firing her first salvo - a full nine gun salvo from her main battery directed at the KAKO.** She employed as the firing range the radar range of 8250 yards obtained on the CHOKAI some three minutes earlier.*** The VINCENNES did not see this salvo land; but analysis based on Diagram "G" indicates that it fell about 500 yards short, since the range at this time was actually about 8800 yards. (Plate XIV)

At about 0153½, the VINCENNES was hit again - this time by the KAKO's fourth salvo. The mean point of impact was over in range, for the shells whistled through the VINCENNES' rigging or hit the upper works of the ship.* One shell struck Battle II and the antenna trunks, cutting the searchlight cables and putting them out of commission for the remainder of the action.* This hit also caused all gun-control electrical power to be lost temporarily on both the main and secondary batteries.* The VINCENNES shifted to auxiliary power until the gun-control electrical power was

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* Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

** Letter August 10th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. R. R. Craighill, USN, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Night Action of August 9th, 1942.

*** Letter undated from Lieut. Comdr. R. L. Adams, USN, Main Battery Control Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Action of USS VINCENNES off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942.

restored about one minute later.*

While the action continued, Commander VINCENNES Group was making a running estimate of the situation. He was in a most difficult situation, for he was being heavily hit while he was endeavoring to fight his own ship and to guide his task group as well. He could see from the rapid rate of change of bearing of the enemy that a reverse action was being fought, and that the enemy would soon pass under his stern headed towards Tulagi. He could no longer remain on his base course at standard speed, for his forward turrets would soon reach their limit of train and would be unable to bear on the enemy. He was forced to make a turn promptly, if he wished to destroy the enemy and to protect the shipping at Tulagi. He decided to increase speed to twenty knots,** and to turn by simultaneous ship's turn to the left with the view of closing the enemy and continuing around on a reverse course if he (the enemy) stood toward the transport area.**

This decision reveals that Commander VINCENNES Group had an appreciation of his objective at this time but still did not understand how to accomplish it. It has already been pointed out that his best chance of interposing his group for the protection of the transports at Tulagi had been presented at 0150. He had failed to capitalize on this opportunity then, and he had failed again to do so at 0152. He had now placed himself in a situation where his guns could no longer bear on the enemy.

While a turn to the left by simultaneous ships turn would have temporarily unmasked his guns to port and would have permitted him for a limited time to continue the engagement with his main battery; it would also have closed the range at a time when the VINCENNES Group was not only being heavily hit by the enemy, but had not as yet found the range. In addition, is it not clear from Diagram "G" that during such a simultaneous ships turn, his fire would soon have become blanketed by his own ships and his "Tee" crossed?

Had he turned to the right, increased speed to twenty-five knots or greater and headed toward Tulagi, he might have reduced somewhat the effectiveness of the Japanese gunfire. This might have enabled him then to concentrate effectively the guns of his own group on re-engaging the enemy to starboard in a normal action and should have given him a better chance to protect Tulagi. Therefore his correct move at this time should have been to change course to the right.

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* Letter undated from Lieut. Comdr. R. L. Adams, USN, Main Battery Control Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Action of USS VINCENNES off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942.

** Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

Commander VINCENNES Group was unable to transmit his decision to the rest of his group because all inter-ship radio communications and signal searchlights were out of commission, and even the blinker signalling tubes had been lost in the blast on the bridge.* He had taken too long to arrive at this decision; and by now the only course of action open to him was to resort to follow-the-leader tactics with the hope that his other captains would interpret his intentions, and would maneuver and fight their ships accordingly.

In following this plan, he then (at 0153½) changed course to the left to about 275°(T) and increased speed to twenty knots.** His own ship was being hit continually by what appeared to him to be 8-inch and 5-inch shells.* His midships section was on fire, and the anti-aircraft control stations, both forward and aft, had been heavily hit. Fire fighting was ineffective because the fire mains had been ruptured and no water was available topside, although the fire and bilge pumps were still running.*

When the VINCENNES lost her gun-control electrical power, she had been firing on the KAKO. By the time her power had been restored, and she was ready to resume fire, a new right-hand target had appeared. This was the KINUGASA which was now entering the next phase of the battle. The VINCENNES immediately trained on this new target; and at 0154, she fired the second full salvo from her nine 8-inch guns at it.*** She evidently had the correct range and deflection, for this salvo hit the KINUGASA and exploded in her port steering control room. The VINCENNES' observers noted that her target made a radical turn to the left, as though out of control, and was no longer in sight after it extinguished its searchlights.**** This observation was correct, for the KINUGASA temporarily had lost steering control and veered out of column. (See Plate XV)

The VINCENNES now attempted to train her turrets on the next searchlight target to the left, the KAKO; but was unable to do so, since her turrets would not bear.***** The Group Commander's forty degrees turn to

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* Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Commander A. M. Loker, USN, Navigating Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer concerning Night Engagement with Enemy August 9th, 1942, page 2.

*** Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

**** Letter August 10th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. R. R. Craighill, USN, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Night Action, August 9th, 1942.

***** Letter undated, from Lieut. Comdr. R. L. Adams, USN, Main Battery Control Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer, concerning Action of USS VINCENNES off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942.

the left had not been great enough to compensate for the rapid rate of change of bearing to the left of his former target.

He was now able to see that his left turn had placed his group in an even more difficult situation than it had been in previous to the turn. His own ship was being heavily hit and he could see the QUINCY on fire off his port quarter.* His ship was in such a line of bearing relative to the Japanese Eastern Group as to insure the crossing of his "Tee", astern with the consequent concentration of fire on his rear cruiser, the ASTORIA. He, therefore, at long last arrived at the decision he should have made four minutes earlier - to change course to the right by a radical turn and to increase speed to twenty-five knots.* But this decision now did not promise the advantages which would have accrued from its execution at 0150.

The VINCENNES was never able to attain more than eighteen knots through the water;** for at about 0155, while in the right turn, she was hit by a torpedo on her port side. The ship shook and shuddered. Although the Commanding Officer believed that the VINCENNES had been hit at this time by two or three torpedoes, it is likely that she was hit by but one, This hit was on the port side at Frame 38 under the sick bay.*** The other two hits, which the VINCENNES attributed to torpedoes, were probably made by armor-piercing shells penetrating the hull below the water line** in a manner similar to those reported by the Australian Board of Enquiry in the case of the CANBERRA.

The torpedo which hit the VINCENNES had been one of those fired by the CHOKAI shortly after 0148, or roughly one and one-half to two minutes before the latter turned on her searchlights. This torpedo had to run at about fifty knots to have covered the 10,500 yards in approximately six and one-half minutes.

The Commanding Officer, VINCENNES thought this torpedo had been fired by an enemy submarine. He had not surmised that it might have come from a Japanese cruiser, even though the United States Navy had been studying and discussing the danger from torpedo fire by Japanese cruisers long before the war. He explained his viewpoint on the basis that no flashes from enemy torpedo tubes had been sighted in the vicinity of the enemy searchlights

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* Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

** Letter August 13th, 1942, from Commander A. M. Loker, USN, Navigating Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer concerning Night Engagement with Enemy Early Morning August 9th, 1942, page 2.

*** Loss in Action, QUINCY, ASTORIA, VINCENNES, Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942, War Damage Report No. 29, NavShips 29(374) Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, June 12th, 1943, page 16.

prior to this hit.* His action in holding course 315°(T) for four minutes after the engagement commenced - and nine minutes after the first alert to enemy action - indicates that Commander VINCENNES Group may well have overlooked the danger from enemy torpedoes, either from submarines or cruisers.

Immediately after having been hit by the torpedo, the VINCENNES lost steering control on the bridge; but was able to steer from the steering engine room. She also lost all main battery power, although the internal communication circuit remained intact. A hit in Main Battery Control Aft killed most of the personnel and wrecked the station** blowing the director over the side.*** Power for turrets I and III was provided by the auxiliary diesel generators, but power for turret II was completely lost so that the crew was forced to operate the turret by hand power** - an extremely slow process, indeed.

About this time, No. Four fireroom was flooding from a hit, reported to be by torpedo, and was thereafter abandoned. Owing to the slowness with which this fireroom flooded - it took seven minutes for the water to reach the floorplates - it is quite likely that the fireroom had been disabled by an 8-inch shell which had penetrated the hull below the water line and had then detonated, rather than by a torpedo.****

For some reason, probably the accumulative shock to the equipment caused by the exploding shells and the torpedo hit, difficulties were also experienced in firerooms Two and Three. In fireroom No. Two it was impossible to get oil suction, and in fireroom No. Three steam pressure was lost and could not be regained. As a consequence, the VINCENNES commenced losing her motive power and gradually slowed down.

Also about this time, as the VINCENNES was still being heavily hit despite her attempted turn to the north, the Commanding Officer attempted to change course to the left; but was unable to do so because the steering

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* Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

** Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

*** Personal Interview of Captain Frederick L. Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

**** Loss in Action, QUINCY, ASTORIA, VINCENNES, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, War Damage Report No. 29, NavShips 29(374) Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, June 12th, 1943, page 15.

control was out. He then endeavored to steer by his engines. He ordered the port engine stopped but there was no reply from the engine order telegraph. He discovered that he could not establish communication by any telephone; though the ships service telephone was heard to ring. He therefore sent a messenger to obtain information and to ascertain conditions in the engine room.*

Being unable to change course to the left he continued along what appears to have been an approximate course of 285°(T) from 0156 to 0158. About 0158 he managed to change course to the right to 340°(T). During the turn, turrets I and II reached their limit of train to port and could not fire. However, it seems probable that at this time, turret III fired at least one three-gun salvo at the Japanese Eastern Group. Throughout this period, the VINCENNES continued to be heavily hit by Japanese shells.

At 0200, the VINCENNES was bearing 083°(T), distant 10,000 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(2) Action by QUINCY

The Commanding Officer, QUINCY had been on the bridge for two minutes when the Japanese searchlights came on at 0150 and illuminated the VINCENNES Group. The QUINCY had been the first cruiser of this group to go to General Quarters, but the Commanding Officer knew that she had not had time as yet to fully man all stations and get ready. Since he did not live to explain his reactions at this time, or his mental processes later, his running estimate through the engagement will never be known accurately. But an attempt is made in this study to glean a reasonable reconstruction of his actions from the statements of others.

The glare of the Japanese searchlights on the QUINCY had caught her by surprise. Although bridge observers and Sky Aft had detected the silhouettes of three Japanese cruisers to the southwest at 0148, there is no evidence that this information was given either to the Commanding Officer or to the gunnery control stations. Lacking this information, the Commanding Officer immediately ordered the recognition lights turned on, and asked the Officer-of-the-Deck which way he could turn. That officer answered "to the right". The Commanding Officer immediately asked the same question again, and received the same reply.** His use of the night fighting lights in a cruiser meant, according to doctrine, that he was identifying his Allied character in a confused situation where it was possible that he might be fired upon by friendly vessels.*** His question as to which

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* Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

** Written statement August 10th, 1942, by Lieut. (jg) C. D. Clarke, USNR, Officer-of-the-Deck, QUINCY.

*** War Instructions, United States Navy, 1934, Chapter VIII, Section XV, "Night Fighting Lights", page 35.

direction to turn indicates that he thought that an enemy submarine had been discovered on the surface and that friendly ships - probably the AUSTRALIA Group - had closed the VINCENNES Group in pursuit of this submarine and were now illuminating it. False reports of submarines on the surface were made by various ships during this night. A clue to these reports is provided by the report of HMAS HOBART, in the SAN JUAN Group, which at 2034 had illuminated a "submarine on the surface" only to find that it was the wreckage of one of the many Japanese torpedo bombers which had been shot down the preceding day.*

Besides his inherent submarine consciousness attained during his long tour of escort duty in the Atlantic, the Commanding Officer had recent and immediate reasons for thinking that an enemy submarine had been discovered. He had received two contact reports from aircraft of submarines approaching TULAGI. In addition, he had been alerted by CTF 62's two warning dispatches to TF 62. The first dispatch received at 0710 stated "Enemy submarine reported near. May enter area today."** The second dispatch received at 1207 stated: "There are possibly one or more submarines in the transport area."***

It is rather singular that the Commanding Officer, QUINCY did not consider that the ships illuminating the VINCENNES Group were enemy cruisers. For he had received over the HOW Fox schedule at about 1900, August 8th, a contact report of a force of Japanese cruisers and seaplane tenders, or gunboats, sighted at 1025 on the 8th off Bougainville on a southeasterly course. A plot of this contact would have shown that at least a part of this force could reach Iron Bottom Sound between 0130 and 0200 and was capable of attacking TF 62 that night. He seems to have overlooked this enemy capability - as had both CTF 62 and CTG 62.6 - for he did not inform his Heads of Departments, nor did he make any pertinent entry in his Night Order Book.

If we accept the logic of the above discussions, then it follows that the Commanding Officer's query to the Officer-of-the-Deck - as to which way to turn - was also logical. However, before he could take any action, two orders were received from Commander VINCENNES Group over the TBS voice radio. The first order was "Steam at standard speed, fifteen knots!" The other was: "Fire on the searchlights!" The effect of these orders on the Commanding Officer, QUINCY was to keep him in column formation conforming to the course and speed of his Group Commander, who obviously

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* Appendix 18 to Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning First Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial A.F.1056/15, August 13th, 1942 which is Letter August 15th, 1942 from Commanding Officer, HMAS, HOBART to CTF 44(CTG 62.6) "Narrative of Night of 8th-9th August, 1942".

** CTF 62 Dispatch 072000, August 1942, to TF 62.

*** CTF 62 Dispatch 080107, August 1942, to All Stations.

considered the searchlights were from enemy ships. Concurrent with the receipt of the second message, he directed the Gunnery Officer to "fire on the searchlights!"*

Just before 0151, the QUINCY observed the CHOKAI's first salvo land short of the ASTORIA** and the KAKO's first salvo land short of the VINCENNES.* (Plate XII)

At 0151 the QUINCY succeeded in obtaining a stereoscopic range finder range of 8400 yards on an enemy searchlight.* As the range to the AOBA at this time was 8400 yards, according to Diagram "G", and since the AOBA was the second ship in formation and therefore the logical target for the QUINCY, it seems highly probable that this range was taken on the AOBA's searchlight. The QUINCY was unable to take advantage of this excellent range and settle on a suitable target, because of circumstances that caused unusual delay and confusion incident to shifting from Condition of Readiness II to Condition of Readiness I. The implications of these circumstances warrant a digression from the battle narrative at this point for discussing their causes and effects on the QUINCY's performance in this night action.

The requirement that all anti-aircraft batteries (torpedo defense) be fully manned at all times during Condition II created a battle organization which employed personnel on the broadside guns from the other batteries. Consequently, these personnel had to first be relieved before they could proceed to their regular battle stations which, in many cases, were in distant parts of the ship. The QUINCY unfortunately accomplished the setting of Condition ZED - maximum watertight integrity - before the General Quarters Stations were fully manned. The direct result of this was that many officers and men were never able to reach their battle stations because the watertight doors and hatches were battened down. Such delay and confusion would not have occurred had the personnel been assigned Condition II watches that were either the same as, or in close proximity to, their regular battle stations.*

It is presumed that the "current doctrine" then in force - the complete manning of the anti-aircraft batteries at all times when in Condition of Readiness II - was to provide the maximum readiness against possible enemy submarines on the surface at night. This could have had real meaning in the QUINCY, for that ship had but recently (June 10th) arrived in the Pacific Ocean from long service in the submarine-infested Atlantic Ocean.

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942, off Guadalcanal Island, by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, QUINCY, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942, page 2.

** Written Statement of Lieut. (jg) R. H. McElligott, USN, Sky Aft Officer, QUINCY, August 10th, 1942.

It is believed that the QUINCY's awareness of the effectiveness of submarines in the Atlantic and her further consciousness that main-battery guns had been of little importance against the German submarine, were chiefly contributory to her failure to provide effective measures of organization for combat operations against surface ships in the Pacific. The torpedo defense battery had been the prime weapon in the Atlantic; and the fact that it was not so important in the Pacific Ocean had not been fully appreciated as yet within the QUINCY. Hence, the QUINCY's battle organization was designed to favor the torpedo defense battery rather than the main battery. This organization required that personnel be taken from other stations, the manning of which, while not important against submarines, became highly important against surface ships.

One of the particularly unfortunate outgrowths of the QUINCY's battle organization was the necessity for relieving the talkers - the men who manned the telephones and transmitted orders and information.* This shift of personnel seriously interfered with the prompt and accurate flow of communications with the consequence, pointed out earlier, that neither the PATTERSON's warning message: "three enemy ships inside Savo Island", received on the bridge at 0147½, nor the bridge observation of the silhouettes of three Japanese cruisers made at 0148, was transmitted from the bridge to the gunnery control stations.

Likewise, Sky Aft - the after anti-aircraft director officer - also observed these three silhouettes and reported them to Sky Control** - the officer in control of all anti-aircraft fire; yet, there is no evidence that the latter officer forwarded this information either to the Commanding Officer or to the gunnery control stations. It appears possible that, had the latter stations been alerted to the presence of these silhouettes, the QUINCY might have been able to open fire at least with a portion of her Condition of Readiness II gunnery organization, as had the ASTORIA. As it happened, the gunnery control stations were not alerted until they were surprised by the glare of the Japanese searchlights on the cruiser column at 0150.*

A possible additional retarding influence may have been psychological in nature, for there was a feeling in the QUINCY that the ships which had

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island, by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, QUINCY, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942. para. 6(k).

** Written Statement of Lieut. (jg) R. H. McElligott, USN, Sky Aft Officer, QUINCY, August 10th, 1942.

illuminated and were firing on the VINCENNES Group were friendly.* Momentous enough, this same feeling was noted in the ASTORIA,** and in the VINCENNES.***

At about 0151½, the QUINCY observed the AOBA's first salvo land off her port bow;**** and within 30 seconds she noted AOBA's second salvo land off her starboard side - over in range about 200 yards.*****

In the meantime, the QUINCY was making preparations to fire starshells to port.****** This was correct procedure, particularly when taken by surprise, since the employment of searchlights would have provided the enemy with a definite point of aim.

At 0152½, the AOBA's third salvo struck the QUINCY on her main deck aft, disabling the Number Three mount of the 1.1" machine gun battery and starting a fire on the fan-tail. The QUINCY immediately flooded the 1.1 clipping room for this mount and succeeded for a time in keeping the fire in check in this area.

Shortly after 0153, the QUINCY was hit on her bridge by the AOBA's fourth salvo. This salvo accomplished more damage to personnel than to material and wounded several persons, including the Supervisory-Officer-of-the-Watch. This officer's battle station was with one of the repair parties; but since it took him several minutes to orient the Commanding Officer to the situation, he was delayed until after the setting of Condition ZED. He undoubtedly decided to remain on the bridge rather than to open doors and hatches, thereby impairing her watertight integrity while the QUINCY was under fire.

Meanwhile, the QUINCY endeavored to fire star shells to port, and succeeded by 0154 in placing the star shells in the fuze pots of the port battery. The communications in the anti-aircraft battery were confused,

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island, by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, QUINCY, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942 para. 6(k).

** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942, page 4.

*** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

**** Written Statement of Lieut. Comdr. J. D. Andrew, USN, Assistant Gunnery Officer, QUINCY, August 15th, 1942.

***** Written Statement undated by Lieut.(jg) E. L. Kempf, USNR, QUINCY, and written statement August 10th, 1942, by 1st Lieut. F. S. Aldridge, USMC, QUINCY.

****** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lieut.(jg) R. H. McElligott, USN, Sky Aft Officer, QUINCY, and by Ensign J. H. Tighe, USNR, Number 2 Battery Officer, QUINCY.

and there is no record of an order being given to the port battery to fire the star shells. At this time (0154) she was struck by the AOBA's fifth salvo which put her anti-aircraft guns six and eight out of action, killing most of their gun crews and exploding the ammunition in the ready service boxes. Her remaining two anti-aircraft guns on the port side, guns two and four, lost a number of key personnel from this same salvo. Flying fragments cut the cartridge cases of the star shells in the fuze pots causing them to burn "like Roman Candles".* The port battery was rendered useless at this time, and more ammunition ready-boxes exploded.**

About this time the Commanding Officer, QUINCY observed that the VINCENNES was making a radical turn of about forty degrees to the left.*** He did not know what Commander VINCENNES Group had in mind by this turn, for he had received no instructions. It is logical that he would normally assume that Commander VINCENNES Group was endeavoring to bring more guns to bear on the enemy; and that such a radical change was necessary because of the rapid rate of change of bearing of the enemy targets. Consequently, he decided to change course to the left by ship's turn to parallel the new course of VINCENNES in order to bring more of his own guns to bear, rather than to execute a turn by column movement. Had he decided to follow the VINCENNES to the left by column movement, he might have contributed to thwarting the Japanese from crossing the "Tee" from the rear. On the other hand, if his batteries could soon commence fire his gun power would have been seriously reduced during this critical time, since his forward guns would be unable to bear. Furthermore, had he held the QUINCY on the base course for a longer time, there was the possibility that she might have intercepted enemy torpedoes. His decision therefore to change course to the left by ship's turn was correct. (See Plate XV)

Just before 0155, the AOBA's sixth salvo hit QUINCY's well deck and set afire the airplane secured there. Exploding gasoline was sprayed over the well deck, the boat deck and the airplane on the port catapult, starting fires. The Commanding Officer ordered that the burning plane on the port catapult be shot off, but in the confusion the order was not carried out. These fires enveloped the plane on the starboard catapult and spread rapidly. Soon the QUINCY was illuminated so brightly amidships that the AOBA, as a consequence, was observed to turn off her searchlight.*

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942.

** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Ensign J. H. Tighe, USNR, Port Battery Officer, QUINCY.

*** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lieut.(jg) E. P. Clarke, USNR, Officer-of-the-Deck, QUINCY.

At about 0155, the Commander VINCENNES Group noted the QUINCY was aft and on the port hand of the VINCENNES, and was afire.* The Commanding Officer, ASTORIA also noted that the QUINCY at this time had fires raging amidships.** By this time the QUINCY was in a line of bearing from VINCENNES about ten or fifteen degrees to the left of the base course of 315°(T),** and was headed about forty degrees to the left.

About this time the Commanding Officer was heard on the bridge giving excited commands.*** What these commands were or to whom addressed is not disclosed, but they probably had to do with the QUINCY's failure to open fire. He had every reason to be aroused, for approximately eight minutes had now elapsed since the sounding of "General Quarters" and his ship had not as yet fired a single shot either from her main battery or from her anti-aircraft battery. She was being hit by a heavy concentration of shells but was not firing in return. The necessity for expediting the opening of fire by the QUINCY was critical.

It was at this time that the smoke, fumes, and glare of the fires amidships commenced interfering with the fire control stations. The line of sight from the forward stations in the direction of the enemy was obscured. The after stations were so enveloped in the fumes and smoke that they became untenable and had to be evacuated.**** Neither the QUINCY's original target, the AOBA, nor the other ships of the Japanese Eastern Group could be seen, because their searchlights were not necessary against the self-illuminated ships of the VINCENNES Group which were all ablaze at this time. Additionally, the QUINCY was steaming through the smoke from the guns and from the fires raging on the VINCENNES, which the light wind was not carrying clear of the formation. It was extremely difficult, and in some cases impossible, for the QUINCY to sight the enemy at this time.*

At about 0156, Spot I was able to make out a searchlight to the southwestward through the difficult sighting conditions prevailing at the time. He estimated the target angle as sixty degrees, range 6,000 yards, target speed fifteen knots; and he so reported to control.***** This data, however much in error, was greatly welcomed by the fire control officer, since it was the first target that had been made out since 0151- when the

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942.

** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, para. 13.

*** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lieut.(jg) J. H. Mee, USNR.

**** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lieut.(jg) C. H. McElligott, USN, Sky Aft Officer, QUINCY.

***** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lieut.(jg) E. S. Hopkins, USN, QUINCY.

range of 8400 yards had been obtained on the AOBA's searchlight. At the time, the Fire Control Officer thought that this target was the same ship that had been firing at the QUINCY so devastatingly.* However, analysis discloses that the QUINCY's new target was not the AOBA at all, but was a ship of the Japanese Western Group - the FURUTAKA, which had now entered the action with the VINCENNES Group. The FURUTAKA had turned her searchlights on the QUINCY at 0156 and had opened fire on her,** thus revealing her presence. The FURUTAKA was still on course 000°(T) at twenty-six knots. following the TENRYU at a distance of roughly 1300 yards, and had not as yet reached the point where the TENRYU had changed course at 0155 to 020° (T). The QUINCY at this time bore 040°(T) from the FURUTAKA, according to Diagram "G".

The tactical situation was now becoming serious. Japanese heavy ships were not only crossing the QUINCY's stern, but an additional one - the FURUTAKA - had appeared off her port bow and had commenced firing. The QUINCY was now being fired on from two directions. The Commanding Officer undoubtedly considered the FURUTAKA to be his primary target, not only because of her comparative closeness but also because of her torpedo potentiality. He therefore decided to engage her with his entire main battery.

The QUINCY consequently trained her main battery on the FURUTAKA and prepared to fire, using a firing range of 6,000 yards. Prior to opening fire, she obtained a radar range of 5800 yards, but this range was not used with the first salvo.*** Plotting analysis establishes the time as about 0158 when the actual range from the QUINCY to the FURUTAKA was 5800 yards. She then at about 0159 fired her first main battery salvo. The time of this salvo was determined by two factors: (a) by the written statement of one of the engineering officers wherein he recorded 0158 as the time of the QUINCY's first main battery salvo**** (actually it was a little later); and (b) by the degree of promptness of firing the QUINCY's first salvo after having obtained a range on the FURUTAKA.

This salvo was a full nine-gun salvo, and was fired on a bearing of approximately 217°(T). In view of the difference between the firing range and the radar range, the QUINCY applied a correction for the second salvo of "down 200 yards" and "no change" in deflection, without waiting to observe the fall of shot.

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* Statement of Captain H. B. Heneberger, USN, Former Senior Surviving Officer, QUINCY to Commodore R. W. Bates, USN(Ret), Head of Department of Analysis, Naval War College, Newport, R.I. on August 24th, 1949.

** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report No. 8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

*** Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island, by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942.

**** Written Statement August 10th, 1942 by Ensign A. F. Cohen, USN, QUINCY.

At 0159, the QUINCY sighted another enemy cruiser to the southwest, the presence of which was divulged by the latter's opening fire on the QUINCY. This enemy cruiser bearing about 221°(T) distant 4100 yards from the QUINCY - was observed to be directly ahead of the FURUTAKA, to have three stacks, and to have commenced a turn at this time.* She was the TENRYU, which it will be remembered had identified the QUINCY incorrectly as a KENT-class cruiser, and had opened fire.**

The Commanding Officer, QUINCY was now faced with another difficult situation. He was not only being subjected to the harassing fire of the ships of the Japanese Eastern Group, as they were crossing under his stern, and to the gunfire of the Japanese Western Group, but he also found himself in an excellent position to be torpedoed by the latter group from close range. He observed that the VINCENNES was changing course to the right at this critical time. He decided to execute a change of course to the right also. His maneuvers indicate that he made this decision, as he had earlier at 0154, in order to parallel the VINCENNES by a simultaneous ship's turn, even though in this case, as in the former maneuver, he had received no instructions from Commander VINCENNES Group. It is probable that he did not observe the torpedo hit on the VINCENNES some three minutes earlier, but his relative movement on the VINCENNES must have alerted him to the fact that the VINCENNES was slowing down and was steering an uncertain course, making it difficult to conform to her movements.

In arriving at his decision to change course to the right, the Commanding Officer, QUINCY, clearly realized that the QUINCY's forward turrets soon would be unable to bear on the FURUTAKA to port, but should be able to bear on the Japanese Eastern Group to starboard.*** In order to make the best of this new situation, he notified the Fire Control Officer at 0159½ that the ship was changing course to starboard.*** He also directed that turret III was to continue the engagement with the FURUTAKA and that turrets I and II were to pick up a new target to the eastward.

Unfortunately at this time turret III was hit on the face-plate by an 8-inch shell from the FURUTAKA and a large piece of armor was dislodged in such a way as to jam the turret in train.*** This hit put turret III completely out of action. For the moment the QUINCY was unable to fire either at the FURUTAKA or at any other target. Meanwhile, the Commanding Officer, QUINCY ordered the starboard 5-inch battery to illuminate with star shells and the main battery to engage any enemy target discovered.

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* Written Statement August 9th, 1942, by R. D. Byers, GM2c, USN, QUINCY, Night Sea Battle, Guadalcanal.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/hmc(004) August 16th, 1942.

From this time onward, the QUINCY was being hit repeatedly by 8-inch, 4.7-inch, and 5.5-inch shells throughtout her length. She was in a serious predicament, because she had now been caught in a cross-fire between the Japanese Eastern and Western Groups and was unable to bear on the enemy with either her main or secondary batteries.*

At 0200, the QUINCY was in a position bearing 087°(T), distant 10,700 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(3) Action by ASTORIA

At 0150, the ASTORIA was proceeding in column behind the QUINCY. She was still in Condition of Readiness II, and was unmindful of the events in Iron Bottom Sound which had motivated both the VINCENNES and QUINCY to go to General Quarters two minutes earlier. The Commanding Officer was still asleep in his emergency cabin on the bridge.

At about this time the ASTORIA sighted aircraft flares to the southward. The Gunnery Officer alerted all stations, trained out both the main battery - which had been loaded since noon the previous day - and the 5-inch battery to the port quarter, and loaded the 5-inch guns in readiness for the first target that might appear.** He reported the flares to the bridge, and requested that the Supervisory Watch Officer sound "General Quarters".** No mention is found in the reports of the ASTORIA personnel of the searchlights of the Japanese cruisers at this time, although both the QUINCY and VINCENNES had seen the ASTORIA illuminated first.

Because of the delay in the ASTORIA's shifting from Condition of Readiness II to Condition of Readiness I, it becomes necessary to bring out details in the narrative to show the relative unimportance attached to the flares by officers on the bridge who seem to have been more concerned with routine matters.

On receipt of the report from the Control Station concerning the aircraft flares sighted, the Supervisory Watch Officer instructed the Officer-of-the-Deck to call the Commanding Officer and report the aircraft flares,*** while he went out on the port side of the bridge to investigate. Unfortunately, the Officer-of-the-Deck continued in his efforts of the moment to

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/hmc(004) August 16th, 1942.

** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942, page 3.

*** Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. J. R. Topper, USN, Supervisory-Officer-of-the-Deck to Commanding Officer concerning Action Morning August 9th, 1942.

acknowledge over the TBS voice radio the VINCENNES message concerning the next change of course at 0200, and did not immediately call the Commanding Officer.*

At about 0151, a salvo was observed to land off the ASTORIA's port side - about 500 yards short in range and 200 yards ahead in deflection** - by the Main Battery Control personnel, but was not noticed by the bridge personnel. The Main Battery Control Officer (Gunnery Officer) now requested again that the bridge sound "General Quarters".*** This communication did not get through to any officer on the bridge.

A half minute after the salvo was sighted, Spot I sighted a cruiser silhouetted against the illumination to the southwest caused by the VINCENNES' star shells. This cruiser was identified by its three turrets forward as a NACHI Class cruiser.**** Actually it was the CHOKAI of the ATAGO Class which closely resembled the NACHI Class cruisers. The presence of two other cruisers following the CHOKAI was then immediately revealed by the illumination from their own searchlights. These cruisers were assumed by the spotter to be of the same class also, for he reported to the Control Officer that three cruisers of the NACHI Class had been sighted. The two cruisers following the CHOKAI were, of course, the AOBA and the KAKO. (See Plate XII)

The spotter quickly estimated the enemy's target angle to be 315 degrees, speed as twenty-five knots or greater, and range as 5500 yards.***** These estimates of target angle and speed were very accurate, indeed. The enemy's speed of course, was twenty-six knots. With the CHOKAI on course 069°(T), this target angle would establish her as having been on a bearing of 204°(T) from the ASTORIA. As plotted on Diagram "G", the rate of change of bearing of seven and one-half degrees per minute since 0150 would have advanced the CHOKAI to a position bearing 203°(T), from the ASTORIA at 0151½; and this time is thereby established for the spotter's first sighting of the Japanese Eastern Group. The estimated range, however, was about 1500 yards in error, for the plot indicates the range to the CHOKAI at 0151½ was 7200 yards.

Coincident with the receipt of the spotter's report, the Gunnery Officer observed two more enemy salvos. One of these - the KAKO's first

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* Action Report ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, page 14.

** Letter, August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer, Concerning Night Cruiser Action August 9th, 1942, page 4.

*** Ibid, page 2.

**** Ibid, page 6.

***** Statement of Lieut.(jg) D. R. Marzetta, USN, Plotting Room Officer ASTORIA, August 13th, 1942.

salvo - landed near the VINCENNES about 500 yards short in range (off the VINCENNES' port beam); the other - the AOBA's first salvo - landed about 500 yards short in range and 200 yards ahead of the QUINCY in deflection.* The Gunnery Officer, keenly aware that "General Quarters" had not been sounded, as yet, and apprehensive of the ASTORIA's unreadiness for battle, urgently requested the Supervisory Officer of the Watch to sound the General Alarm. This time he also requested that he be authorized to open fire, for the ASTORIA now had a specific target.** Once again no action was taken by the Supervisory Officer of the Watch on this request.

The fact that enemy cruisers had been sighted and identified was reported to the bridge by the Main Battery Control Officer. The bridge talker did not repeat it, so it was not relayed to the responsible officers on the bridge nor was it announced within the ASTORIA. As a consequence, the Supervisory Officer of the Watch, who was charged initially with fighting the ship, was unaware that enemy cruisers had been sighted.***

Meanwhile, the Officer-of-the-Deck, having completed his acknowledgment over the TBS voice radio at about 0151½, and mindful of his instructions to call the Commanding Officer, announced to that all-important officer through the door from the pilot house to the emergency cabin, that aircraft flares had been sighted.**** He reported nothing concerning the enemy cruisers or salvos, because he knew nothing about them. He did not make sure that the Commanding Officer had been awakened sufficiently to understand his report. Instead, he immediately busied himself with correct station-keeping in order to take advantage of the anti-submarine screen provided by the WILSON and HELM which the Commanding Officer had stressed as highly important in his Night Orders.*** This failure of the Officer-of-the-Deck to insure that the Commanding Officer was fully alerted to the presence of the aircraft flares had serious implications, for the Commanding Officer either did not hear this report or was too drowsy to appreciate its importance. As a consequence, he continued sleeping peacefully at a time when his experienced judgment was required on the bridge.

At 0152, while waiting for the orders from the bridge, the Gunnery Officer made a quick radar check of the report from Spot I and observed four pips on the forward main-battery fire control radar screen. These pips were

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* Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer, concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942, page 4.

** Ibid, page 2.

*** Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. J. R. Topper, USN, Supervisory-Officer-of-the-Deck, to Commanding Officer, ASTORIA, concerning Action Morning August 9th, 1942.

**** Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut.(jg) N. A. Burkey, USNR, Officer-of-the-Deck, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Action on August 9th, 1942.

the CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO and KINUGASA. An initial radar range of 7000 yards was obtained at this time on the leading cruiser, which the ASTORIA took as her target.* (The plot in Diagram "G" confirms this radar range). At this same time the Gunnery Officer observed another salvo land off the port side of the ASTORIA.** This salvo - the CHOKAI's second - landed about 500 yards short in range and 100 yards ahead in deflection.** The Gunnery Officer, realizing that the ASTORIA was about to be heavily hit and presuming correctly that his failure to receive the order from the bridge to open fire must be due either to a lack of appreciation of the rapidly developing situation or to a failure of communications, decided that he should open fire without waiting for further orders; and thereupon gave the order to Spot I to commence firing.*** This action of the Gunnery Officer was sound, for in so doing he was acting in accordance with the battle plan of his Commanding Officer who had authorized the Gunnery Officer first to open fire in case of surprise attack and then to notify him.**** Had he acted otherwise, he might well have been considered to have failed in the higher qualities of courage, judgment, initiative and loyalty.

There appears to have been no doctrine within the VINCENNES Group concerning opening fire or fire distribution. Presumably each Commanding Officer was authorized to open fire on his own initiative. War Instructions stated that "Commanding Officers should be prepared to open fire without signal for opening fire or for fire distribution."*****

The ASTORIA obtained an initial true bearing on the CHOKAI of 195 degrees. Plotting analysis shows that this bearing most probably was obtained at 0152½, and that the rate of change of bearing was eight and nine-tenth degrees between 0152 and 0153. At this same time, the ASTORIA fired her first main-battery salvo at the CHOKAI at a range of 5500 yards - the range estimated by Spot I. (The radar range of 7000 yards had not been transmitted to the Plotting Room.)****** This salvo probably consisted of six shells, since but six main battery guns were manned in Condition of Readiness II (two guns in each of the three turrets). (See Plate XIII)

About this time, the Supervisory Officer of the Watch, who had finally been alerted to the situation by the ASTORIA's first salvo, called from the

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* Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer, concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942, page 6.

** Ibid, page 4.

*** Ibid, page 2.

**** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 9th, 1942.

***** War Instructions 1934, FTP 143, Section IX, Fire Distribution, para. 12148.

****** Written Statement, August 13th, 1942 by Lieut.(jg) D. R. Marzetta, USN, Plotting Room Officer, ASTORIA.

port wing of the bridge: "Stand by the General Alarm".* Why he did not decide to set Condition ONE immediately remains unexplained. He was an experienced officer; he had seen the aircraft flares; he had noted that the Gunnery Officer had opened fire, although he did not know at what target; his ship was part of a defense screen operating in enemy waters; and he knew that enemy action was possible at any time. He should have been thoroughly familiar with the current War Instructions which directed that "Condition of Readiness ONE shall be taken immediately without order by any vessel sighting an enemy surface vessel or vessels."** Finally, as the Commanding Officer's representative, he of course knew that he was charged with the responsibility for insuring that his ship was not caught by surprise and unready for action. While it is true that precipitate haste in alerting fatigued personnel is to be avoided, is it not also true that, where doubt as to the nature of a contact exists and the safety of the ship may be at stake, undue delay in taking positive action is also to be avoided? It so happened in this case that the Supervisory Officer of the Watch was acting with undue delay. Perhaps he was lacking in decision. Perhaps hearing nothing from his Group Commander he considered the target unimportant. Perhaps the free expression of initiative on the part of responsible subordinates had been inadvertently discouraged within the ASTORIA. Whatever may have been the reason, the fact remains that he took no action to prepare the ship for battle, when fully five minutes had elapsed since the other ships of the VINCENNES Group had gone to General Quarters.

Concurrently, the quartermaster of the watch had observed one low flare burn out astern and a string of four more flares being dropped. He had noted that a friendly ship on the port bow (probably the HELM) had fired a salvo. He therefore, at about 0153, without requesting permission to do so from anybody, sounded the General Alarm.*** His conduct in so doing was somewhat irregular and infers a possible misunderstanding of the order.****

The Junior Officer-of-the-Deck, realizing at 0153 that the Commanding Officer was long delayed in arriving on the bridge and sensing that the situation demanded his presence, went into the emergency cabin and called him.*****

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* Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. J. R. Topper, Supervisory Officer-of-the-Deck, to Commanding Officer, ASTORIA, concerning Action Morning August 9th, 1942, page 2.

** War Instructions, U.S. Navy 1934, FTP 143, Chapter 8, page 27.

*** Letter undated from R. A. Radke, Quartermaster Second Class, USN, to Commanding Officer concerning the Action of the ASTORIA, August 9th, 1942.

**** Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut.(jg) N. A. Burkey, Jr., USNR, Officer-of-the-Deck, to Commanding Officer, ASTORIA, concerning action on August 9th, 1942, page 1.

***** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, page 14.

Whether it was this call by the Junior Officer-of-the-Deck which alerted the Commanding Officer to the urgency of his presence on the bridge or whether the ASTORIA's first main battery salvo, fired but a few seconds before, had already accomplished it, is immaterial. Suffice it to say that the Commanding Officer had now been alerted, and was entering the pilot house from the starboard (disengaged) side of the bridge at the very moment that the ASTORIA was firing simultaneously her first salvo from her port anti-aircraft battery and her second salvo from at least eight guns of her main battery.* Turrets II and III each fired three guns and turret I probably fired two guns. This salvo was fired on a relative bearing of 245 degrees. The range employed was 5700 yards.** (See Plate XIV)

The Commanding Officer immediately assumed direct control over the ASTORIA's operations and promptly queried the Supervisor of the Watch as to: "Who sounded the General Alarm?"; "Who gave the order to commence firing?"; and then: "Topper, I think that we are firing on our own ships. Let's not get excited and act too hasty! Cease firing!"*** This latter order was transmitted to the Gunnery Officer, who immediately ceased firing. The Commanding Officer stated in his action report that he had given this order because "the flares and searchlights were to the south of us and well inside the bay, and my first reaction was that our vessels had spotted an enemy submarine on the surface, and we were firing into our own ships."****

This initial estimate of the situation by the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA was a perfectly natural one. He had just awakened from a sound sleep and his ship was firing. He had received no information which might lead him to suspect that enemy cruisers, or even enemy destroyers, were inside the screen and in Iron Bottom Sound. He had reason to expect that had any ships tried to enter the Sound south of Savo Island they would have been contacted by the BLUE or by the AUSTRALIA Group and he would have been informed. He had been alerted to the presence of submarines in the area. Finally, he had not yet appreciated the fact that the VINCENNES Group was being fired on.

His action, however, in ordering "cease firing" is not considered

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* Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut.(jg) N. A. Burkey, Jr., USNR, Officer-of-the-Deck, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Action on August 9th, 1942, page 2.

** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

*** Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. J. R. Topper, USN, Supervisory-Officer-of-the-Deck, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Action Morning August 9th, 1942.

**** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942, page 4.

correct. It connotes a lack of confidence in his Fire Control Officers. This was particularly true in the case of his Gunnery Officer who was the Main Battery Fire Control Officer at the time. This officer was later commended by the Commanding Officer in his action report for outstanding performance of duty. It infers a lack of appreciation of his own battle plan which gave his Main Battery Fire Control Officer authority to open fire in case of surprise.* It reveals a tendency on his part to act first without having obtained a clear understanding of the situation and contrary to the expressed judgment of his Main Battery Fire Control Officer whom he did not even consult. It implies a lack of appreciation of the possibility of night action presented by the SOWESPAC dispatch, received at about 1900, concerning the movements of Japanese cruisers at 1025 the preceding day.** Lastly, it shows a failure to consider adequately enemy capabilities other than that of submarine attack.

Would it not have been wiser for the Commanding Officer first to have familiarized himself with the salient features of the developing situation, and to have permitted the firing to continue until he had had an opportunity properly to orient himself; rather than to have acted hastily without sufficient evaluation of the influence of the factors involved?

The Supervisory Officer of the Watch - who, surprisingly enough was still unaware of the presence of the Japanese cruisers - informed the Commanding Officer that he had not ordered the General Alarm sounded; had not given the order to commence firing, and that he concurred with the Commanding Officer's view that they were firing on their own ships.*** However, he was soon alerted to the true state of affairs; for the Gunnery Officer not only promptly informed the bridge that enemy cruisers had been sighted, but he also again made a most earnest appeal to open fire, stating: "For God's sake, give the word to commence firing!"*** At the same time, it was reported from the port wing of the bridge that a searchlight was illuminating the Allied ships to port and that some ships appeared to be firing on them from far out on the horizon.

At this moment the Gunnery Officer observed another enemy salvo (the CHOKAI's third) land about 500 yards short of the ASTORIA and correct in deflection. This salvo was not observed by the Commanding Officer. The

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, page 15.

** Letter August 18th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. B. Davidson, USN, Communication Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Engagement with Enemy August 9th, 1942.

*** Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. J. R. Topper, USN, Supervisory-Officer-of-the-Deck, to Commanding Officer, concerning Action Morning August 9th, 1942, page 3.

ASTORIA obtained at this time a range finder range of 6800 yards on the CHOKAI.* The plot of this phase of the action, based on the radar ranges and the courses and speeds of both Allied and Japanese groups, reveals that the actual range at 0153 was 6800 yards and that ASTORIA's range finder operation was excellent.

The first enemy salvo that the Commanding Officer observed was at 0153½, when he saw the KAKO's fourth salvo straddle the VINCENNES.**

At 0154, the Commanding Officer observed the CHOKAI's fourth salvo land just 200 yards short of the ASTORIA. One 8-inch shell of this salvo pierced the hull of the ASTORIA in the bow, forward of turret I, and passed through the paint locker without starting a fire. The range had decreased by now to 6600 yards. As a result of his observation of this salvo and of the preceding salvo which had landed near the VINCENNES, the Commanding Officer remarked: "Whether our ships or not, we will have to stop them!" He thereupon ordered: "Sound General Quarters!", and within a few seconds thereafter ordered: "Commence firing!"*** These remarks and orders of the Commanding Officer are highly illuminating, for they indicate the confusion which was in his mind regarding this phase of the action. He was unable as yet to convince himself that there were, in fact, enemy cruisers at hand. He did not realize that his own command was already in the process of setting Condition of Readiness I. (See Plate XV)

At about 0155 the ASTORIA was hit amidships with at least four 8-inch shells which started fires on the boat-deck and in the airplanes in the hangar,**** and which also temporarily disabled the power supply to turret III.* These fires provided adequate target illumination for the CHOKAI, and she then extinguished her searchlights.

At about 0155, the Commanding Officer was informed that the Japanese cruisers were of the NACHI Class, and that the Group Commander had ordered the speed of the group increased to fifteen knots, standard speed. His reaction to this information was that this speed was too slow; and he thereupon rang up full speed (twenty knots) and swung the ASTORIA slightly to the left to bring the target as far forward as possible without getting into a position to foul the line of fire of the QUINCY.*****

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* Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Cruiser Night Action, August 9th, 1942.

** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942.

*** Letter August 17th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. J. R. Topper, USN, Supervisory-Officer-of-the-Deck to Commanding Officer, ASTORIA concerning Action Morning August 9th, 1942, page 3.

**** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, page 16.

***** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, page 4.

A few seconds later the ASTORIA resumed fire on the CHOKAI with her third main-battery salvo of six guns from turrets I and II on a relative bearing of 235°. The range employed was 6200 yards which should have given a mean point of impact of about 100 yards short. The accuracy of this firing range resulted from the opportunity afforded the plotting room - in the interval between the Commanding Officer's order to "cease firing" and his order to "commence firing" - to correct the range keeper range with the optical ranges. After this salvo the ASTORIA decreased her firing range at an estimated rate, since she was unable to range because the Japanese searchlights were out.

At about the same time that the ASTORIA fired this main battery salvo, her number two 1.1-inch mount opened fire to port at the CHOKAI** and expended 190 rounds before it and the port 1.1-inch director were hit and several men killed.*** The CHOKAI admitted receiving "a large number of machine gun hits, but they did not do any damage."****

Immediately after this main battery salvo, turrets I and II reached their limit of train on the port side. The Commanding Officer's turn to the left had not been sufficient to permit his forward turrets to continue to bear, and he was soon requested repeatedly by the Gunnery Officer to bring the ship even more to the left.

The Commanding Officer now re-estimated the situation as regards the ASTORIA. He had not received any battle plan, orders or other communications from Commander VINCENNES Group since the battle began, other than the speed signal for fifteen knots. He, of course, could see that the leading Japanese cruiser was now in his stern arc; that he was unable to fire at his target because his only turret that could bear, turret III, was temporarily disabled; that the rate of change of bearing was high (it was now about nine and one-half degrees per minute); and that the enemy would soon pass under his stern. He knew that it was incumbent on each of the several ship commanders to remain together so as to afford mutual support and concentration, to avoid blanketing fire and confusion of targets, to endeavor to reduce by individual ship maneuver the destructive fire effect the crossing of the "Tee" would have on the ASTORIA in particular, in view of her position nearest the enemy, and to avoid the possibility of firing into own vessels.*****

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* Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Cruiser Night Action, August 9th, 1942.

** Written Statement, August 18th, 1942 by W.W. Johns, FClc, USN, Spot II, ASTORIA.

*** Written Statement, August 18th, 1942 by Lieut. Comdr. E. K. Wakefield, USN, Air Defense Officer (Sky Control), ASTORIA.

**** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Kinkichi Kato, IJN, page 362.

***** War Instructions, U.S. Navy 1934, FTP 143, page 44, para. 935.

In line with this reasoning, he probably hoped that Commander VINCENNES Group would soon undertake some group maneuver which might improve the present unfavorable tactical situation. He observed that the VINCENNES and QUINCY had already altered course to the left without signal,* with the result that all three cruisers were in a line of bearing at ten or fifteen degrees to the left of the base course of 315°(T).* He gained the impression that perhaps Commander VINCENNES Group had commenced a maneuver to swing left to a southerly course in such a manner as to permit the QUINCY and ASTORIA to come in astern and at the same time to keep the port batteries of all three cruisers bearing throughout the maneuver.* (Plate XVI)

He had guessed correctly the plan of Commander VINCENNES Group to swing left to a southerly course; but he had not guessed that the Group Commander had hoped to execute a simultaneous maneuver by ship's turn, even though the normal manner of changing course for a division in line of bearing was by simultaneous turn movement.** He could not be expected to have executed this turn without a signal from the Group Commander - and the latter was without any form of signalling device at this time. The left column movement as envisaged by the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA, was not only impractical as a tactical maneuver but it also would not have permitted his ship's main battery to bear continually on the enemy.

At about 0156, the ASTORIA was hit in turret I by three armor piercing 8-inch shells which probably came from the same salvo. Two of these shells pierced the barbette and exploded in the gun pit and one pierced the face plate and exploded in the gun room. As a consequence, all of the turret crew in the gun room and upper powder room, and all but two men in the shell deck were killed.*** Fires raged. This destructive salvo could have been fired either by the CHOKAI or by the KINUGASA which had directed her fire about one minute earlier on the ASTORIA. But the effectiveness of the hits would seem to indicate that the salvo came from the CHOKAI, since that ship had already solved her fire control problem.

Also at about 0156, the ASTORIA fired two guns of her only useful turret, turret II, at the CHOKAI on a relative bearing of 225° at a range of 6000 yards.**** This was the ASTORIA's fourth 8-inch salvo.

The ASTORIA was now being hit with increasing rapidity with both large and small enemy shells, for the enemy had found the range. Several additional fires had been started. One was started inboard of guns six and

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942.

** General Tactical Instructions, FTP 183, 1942, para. 357.

*** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer concerning Cruiser Night Action August 9th, 1942, page 9.

**** Ibid, page 5.

eight of the 5-inch battery; another was started in the well-deck and spread to the airplanes on the catapults. The ASTORIA's port 5-inch battery had been firing until it commenced being hit at this time, and shortly was silenced.

During this time, the Commanding Officer, who by now had obtained a reasonably clear - if unhappy - picture of the situation, had been endeavoring to zig-zag the ASTORIA by using 10° to 15° of rudder. He did this not only to permit his battery to bear to port and thus to maintain the fire but also to endeavor to avoid the enemy salvos which he reported - in a remarkable understatement - were falling close.*

About 0157, ASTORIA regained power on turret III and fired her fifth main-battery salvo from six guns of turrets II and III to port on a relative bearing of 220° with a firing range of 5500 yards.** This range was far short of the actual. The range error was possibly due to the fact that the Japanese had ceased using searchlights, once the targets had become illuminated by their own fires. This range of 5500 yards was therefore an estimated range.

At about 0158, the ASTORIA fired another salvo (her sixth) with five guns of turrets II and III. Turret III was intermittently losing and regaining power between the salvos during this phase. A firing range of 5300 yards was used on this salvo which was fired to port on a relative bearing of 217°.** This range also was far short of the actual.

At 0158, turret II and Director I reached the limit of train. The CHOKAI at this moment had just altered course from 069°(T) to a course of 028°(T). The increased rate of change of bearing would soon prohibit any further firing to port from the forward turrets of ASTORIA, as the CHOKAI - now in the stern arc - was rapidly passing from the port quarter across the stern to the starboard quarter.

At 0159, the ASTORIA fired her seventh 8-inch salvo from the three guns of turret III with Director II controlling. Control had just been shifted from Director I, which had been having trouble sighting through the fire that was raging amidships. Director II was having no easier time controlling, because of the smoke and fumes that were drifting aft. The seventh salvo was fired on a relative bearing of about 200 degrees using a firing range of 5100 yards.**

At 0159, the Commanding Officer took note of the QUINCY's first main

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) of August 20th, 1942, page 15.

** Letter August 13th, 1942 from Lieut. Comdr. W. H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Night Cruiser Action August 9th, 1942, page 5.

battery salvo* - fired at the FURUTAKA in the Japanese Western Group. He presumed that it was directed at the Japanese Eastern Group which at this time was passing astern of the ASTORIA.* He noted that the ASTORIA was nearly on the same bearing from these Japanese cruisers as were the QUINCY and VINCENNES, and that the ASTORIA was drawing ahead on the QUINCY.* He considered that he was already too close to the supposed line of fire between the QUINCY and the Japanese Eastern Group and would cross through it if he continued on his present course and speed.* At this time both his Navigator and Chief Quartermaster, who had been assisting him in maneuvering the ship to maintain fire to port, were killed.* He decided to clear the QUINCY's line of fire by a radical change of course to the right for a few minutes and then to swing back to the left to resume his position with the formation.* He undoubtedly realized at this time that his earlier estimate of being able to continue around to a southerly course on the inside of the echelon while at the same time keeping his guns bearing on the enemy, was infeasible of accomplishment.

At 0200, the ASTORIA was bearing 090°(T), distant 11,500 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(4) Action by HELM

At 0150 the HELM was proceeding on the base course of 315°(T), maintaining her anti-submarine screening station on the port bow of the VINCENNES. (Her 0150 position as shown on Diagram "G" was 1700 yards due west of the VINCENNES. It was obtained by crossing the bearing of her assigned screening station from the VINCENNES with the bearing of the HELM reported by the CHOKAI.)** It is presumed that she was in Condition of Readiness I at this time, not only because she had been alerted at 0145 by the aircraft flares and by the gunfire which appeared to her to come from the AUSTRALIA Group,*** but also because of the promptness with which she later fired a full salvo from her guns.

At about 0150, the HELM received over TBS voice radio the Group Commander's order to increase speed from ten knots to fifteen knots. She executed this speed signal and continued on course with the VINCENNES Group, which she observed was soon under fire.*** The Commanding Officer, HELM was neither able to determine the direction from which the shells came, nor could he make out any ship of the firing force.*** He reported that the

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) of August 20th, 1942, page 5.

** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 161259, May 12th, 1947.

*** Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3(129), August 14th, 1942.

visibility was about two miles,* and it is probable that the haze in the vicinity of the HELM accounts for his sighting difficulties at this time.

The Fire Control Officer of the HELM opened fire at once with a four-gun salvo, as soon as he saw the firing commence. But since no target was visible and no clear picture of the situation was yet apparent, the Commanding Officer correctly ordered cease firing.*

The Commanding Officer, HELM was the senior of the two destroyer Commanders in the VINCENNES Group. Although he did not so state in his report, he probably was giving serious consideration to the possible employment of these destroyers. Although War Instructions were not specific for every situation, he knew that the doctrine set forth therein for anti-submarine screening vessels during night encounters was to attack enemy vessels menacing the force screened,** and to make smoke to cover the movements of that force.*** He knew that prompt and decisive attack with guns and torpedoes would be preferable to an attempt to avoid action.**** He also knew that current doctrine at the time for destroyers was to endeavor to reach a favorable position for torpedo attack before discovery by the enemy larger vessels.***** Therefore, guns should normally not be used initially.***** The action he should take in accordance with the above doctrine had not been prescribed in the Special Instructions of CTG 62.6 to the Screening Group - in which they rightly should have been set forth - ****** and he apparently expected his Group Commander to issue specific orders for the present unforeseen situation.

At 0152 the HELM received the order via TBS voice radio from the Commander VINCENNES Group to attack.* The Commanding Officer - still having no information of the course, speed or even the location of the target ships - remained on the base course in his screening station, and endeavored to obtain a visual picture of the situation. He probably wished that the Group Commander had at least given him the bearing of the enemy.

About 0152½ he observed the QUINCY being hit by Japanese shells. He also observed the ASTORIA open fire, followed by the VINCENNES. Notwithstanding these observations, he still was unable to distinguish any enemy targets. His best estimate of the situation was that the VINCENNES Group was being attacked from the southeast and was being illuminated from the same direction, although the source could not be made out because of smoke from gunfire and burning ships.* At 0154, he changed course to the south, but he gave no orders to the WILSON and showed no interest whatsoever in the activities of that ship. For some unknown reason he allowed her to

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* Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3/(129), August 14th, 1942.

** War Instructions, U.S. Navy 1934, FTP 143, para. 944(g).

*** Ibid, para. 944(i).

**** Ibid, para. 941.

***** Ibid, para. 942.

****** Ibid, para. 943.

operate independently rather than to form an attack section of two destroyers - as he properly should have done as the senior destroyer officer.

While yet in his turn to the south at 0155, he became aware of the fact that the Japanese gunfire was extremely accurate, for all three Allied cruisers had topside fires raging.* Five minutes had elapsed since the force that he was screening had been taken under fire by the enemy; but he had accomplished nothing that might have forced the Japanese fire to be less effective. Because of the futility of his visual observations, the question arises as to why he did not request from his division commander such vital information as the bearing of the enemy.

He continued on a southerly course at fifteen knots, ostensibly attempting to determine the location of the enemy so that he might take whatever action he could against them. This course brought him under fire intermittently during the next five minutes from both the AOBA and KINUGASA. The fire of these ships was evidently very inaccurate, because the HELM was not only completely unaware of it but was also unaware of the presence of the firing ships which by this time were not using their searchlights. The Japanese cruisers each claimed sinking the HELM,** but it is probable that she disappeared from their view into the mist that was making it impossible for the HELM to locate the enemy.

At 0200 the HELM was bearing 102°(T), distant 10,500 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(5) Action by WILSON

At 0150 the WILSON was on her anti-submarine station on the starboard bow of the VINCENNES, on course 315°(T) at speed ten knots, and was in Condition of Readiness I. At about this time she observed that three unidentified ships on the port side of the VINCENNES Group had illuminated all three cruisers of this group and then had commenced firing.*** She could not identify these ships, since the only targets visible to her were the searchlights.****

However, the Commanding Officer later learned that his spotter had made out a raked funnel, typical of Japanese cruisers, on one of the targets.****

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* Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3/(129), August 14th, 1942.

** Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8 Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

*** Action Report, WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island, Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942, para. 2.

**** Ibid, para. 12.

The WILSON selected the right-hand searchlight as her target, obtained a range of 12,000 yards* on it with her stereoscopic range finder,** and opened fire.* Her target was the KAKO - the third ship in column of the Japanese Eastern Group. (Diagram "G" indicates that the KAKO was bearing 207°(T) from the WILSON, at range 12,000 yards, and confirms the excellence of the WILSON's initial ranging).

Shortly after 0150, the Commanding Officer, WILSON, received the Group Commander's order via TBS voice radio to increase the group's speed from ten knots to fifteen knots.* He immediately executed this speed change. After the WILSON's second salvo, he observed that her forward guns had reached their limit of train and could not bear on the target.* He therefore checked fire, and as he did so, a casualty occurred on gun number four - the plug jammed,** which left him with but one after gun which could bear.

The order to increase speed was the last order received from the Group Commander by the WILSON.* The order addressed at 0152 to the destroyers "to attack" was therefore not received. The Commanding Officer had his torpedo battery ready for firing at this time but because of the confusing nature of the action, he considered it unwise to launch a torpedo attack, *** without instructions from the Group Commander. At 0152, he changed course to the left to unmask his battery to port and, at the same time, to gain a position in which the Allied cruisers would not foul his line of fire.**** He made this change of course by a wide easy turn in order to avoid cutting sharply across the VINCENNES' bow, as well as to remain well clear of the area in which enemy salvos were falling.

While in this turn, the WILSON was not firing and was herself not under Japanese fire. The Commanding Officer was thereby afforded an opportunity to view the ensuing action. He observed that the Allied cruisers were enveloped in a plunging fire.* He noted that a number of enemy shells were falling about 1000 yards on the WILSON's port beam between her and the nearest cruiser.**** These were "overs" from the KAKO which were landing about 500 yards beyond the VINCENNES. By 0153, the Commanding Officer, WILSON, observed fires break out on both the VINCENNES and QUINCY.*

He was now on a westerly course which permitted all of his guns to bear. This included gun four on which the plug had been cleared. He decided that the range (which was by this time about 10,000 yards) gave a high enough trajectory to permit firing over the VINCENNES,**** and he therefore resumed fire.

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* Action Report, WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships Off Savo Island, Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942, para. 2.

** Ibid, para. 8.

*** Ibid, para. 10.

**** Letter undated from Lt. G.A. Hill, USN, Executive Officer, WILSON TO Commanding Officer, Enclosure (D) to Action Report WILSON.

At 0154, the flashes from the WILSON's guns attracted the attention of the CHOKAI which reported her as bearing 280° relative (a true bearing of 349°). The 0154 position of the WILSON shown on Diagram "G" is based on this sighting, which reveals that she was somewhat ahead of the VINCENNES and had maintained the relative position of her anti-submarine screening station. The WILSON was immediately taken under fire by the CHOKAI's 5.0 inch guns* and reported that, as a consequence, some shrapnel had fallen on her deck and had hit her stern. She also reported that shells could be heard passing extremely close aboard; but that she had suffered no damage or casualties.**

At 0155, the Commanding Officer, WILSON, must have observed the HELM, which was only about 1000 yards distant, swinging to the south. He probably expected to receive instructions concerning this movement from the Commanding Officer HELM as he had heard nothing from the Group Commander. But in this he was to be disappointed for the Commanding Officer HELM also remained silent. Why the Commanding Officer WILSON did not then request instructions from either the Commanding Officer HELM or, failing that, from his Group Commander is not explained.

The WILSON continued to engage the enemy on a westerly course for the next five minutes, directing her fire by tracers and employing a rocking ladder back and forth across the stereoscopic range finder range. She attempted to range by radar but found it was ineffective because of land interference. Her guns performed satisfactorily - all four being used in director control, master key fire, for the first few salvos. Then as there was no illumination on the target, and as the spotter was therefore unable to spot splashes, the Commanding Officer shifted to continuous fire.**

During this firing the Commanding Officer, WILSON, observed that the Allied cruisers were completely enveloped in flames. He also observed that the gun flashes from the Japanese appeared quite dim in comparison with those of the Allied cruisers.

Just before 0200, the Commanding Officer, WILSON, noted that the VINCENNES had "swung hard right".*** Actually the VINCENNES had commenced her right turn at 0158 and was well around by this time. At 0200, the Commanding Officer, WILSON, also changed course to the right*** for the purpose of adjusting station on the VINCENNES. He checked fire to port and commenced training his battery to starboard,*** in order to continue firing at the Japanese Eastern Group. At this time the WILSON had not as

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* War Diary, 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 161270 of May 12th, 1942.

** Action Report, WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island, Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942, para. 14.

*** Ibid, para. 2.

yet observed the Japanese Western Group, nor had she been discovered by that group. This singular situation is conspicuous because the range at 0200 from the WILSON to the TENRYU was but 3100 yards; and to the YUBARI was but 2600 yards. Either there was a dimination of visibility in this area - which seems probable - or the attention of "all hands" on both the Japanese and Allied sides was directed intently upon the cruiser action.

At 0200, the WILSON was bearing 081°(T), distant 8850 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(b) OPERATIONS OF CHICAGO GROUP

The CHICAGO Group was completely disorganized at 0150, when each of the four ships - which had comprised it before the Japanese attack at 0144 - commenced operating independently. Accordingly, this analysis will continue to discuss separately the operations of each ship.

(1) Action by CHICAGO

It will be remembered that at 0150 the CHICAGO was on course 283°(T) at speed twelve knots. The Commanding Officer had observed the PATTERSON at this time at a range of 3000 yards, crossing the line of fire of the CHICAGO's port five-inch battery (which was trained on relative bearing 320°). This observation placed the PATTERSON on bearing 243°(T), distant 3000 yards from the CHICAGO. The Commanding Officer had also noted that the PATTERSON had turned left to an easterly course and was no longer illuminating the Japanese "destroyers" (the light cruisers TENRYU and YUBARI).*

Why the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO did not order the PATTERSON to rejoin the CHICAGO in order to provide anti-submarine protection, as well as to provide additional gun and torpedo strength, is not explained. It would appear that he had completely forgotten his responsibilities as the Group Commander. But even as the Commanding Officer, he had serious responsibilities with relation to his objective - namely, the protection of the Allied shipping at Tulagi and Guadalcanal. Although he had been in a serious gun and torpedo battle with enemy ships which had passed from west to east, he had not as yet responded adequately to the challenge to his ability to accomplish this objective.

Had he made an adequate estimate of the situation at this time he would have realized that he had two vitally important tasks to accomplish immediately. One was to alert Commander VINCENNES Group, as well as the other important commanders of TF 62, such as CTF 62, CTG 62.6 and CTG 62.4, to the fact that a strong Japanese cruiser force was in Iron Bottom Sound; that it was heading in the direction of the Allied shipping at Tulagi, and

* Action Report CHICAGO concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

that there was a possibility of immediate action. The second was to proceed to the eastward as rapidly as possible, consistent with his damaged bow, in order to support Commander VINCENNES Group, and to recall his destroyers en route. Had he thought the situation through, he would have realized that he was justified in moving to the eastward at this time. Since the enemy was heading in that direction the defense of the shipping at Guadalcanal against any additional enemy raiding forces now properly became largely the responsibility of CTG 62.6 in the AUSTRALIA, who was apparently still in that area, supported by the destroyers of the screen in Area XRAY and possibly by the SAN JUAN Group. Unfortunately, Commander CHICAGO Group did not make a thorough estimate and apparently failed to appreciate the necessity for carrying out the above tasks.

Instead, he continued on to the westward on course 283°(T) at twelve knots and opened fire with the four guns of his starboard 5-inch battery on the left hand "destroyer" with an opening range of 7200 yards.* His target was reportedly the YUBARI which was about 1300 yards astern (to the left) of the TENRYU. The actual range, as determined by analysis, Diagram "G", was 6000 yards; and the actual bearing was 328°(T), or forty-five degrees relative. His opening of fire was facilitated by the fact that the CHICAGO's starboard 5-inch battery was already trained on this bearing. The CHICAGO fired twenty-five rounds of 5-inch ammunition. As a result of this firing, the Commanding Officer observed one shell burst on the enemy and thought that he had obtained one hit.* However, the YUBARI does not admit having been hit by an Allied cruiser at this time. The TENRYU on the other hand admits having received shell fragment hits on the after deck causing numerous casualties.** Analysis indicates that this damage was most probably received at this time, and therefore indicates that it was probably done by the CHICAGO.

While his action in engaging these cruisers was sound to the extent that any Japanese combatant ship which was in a favorable position to attack him (or which was in a favorable position to strike at the Allied shipping) became a proper target, his action in engaging them on a reverse course is questioned. The rate of change of bearing was necessarily high; the period of gunfire would be short; his course was rapidly removing the CHICAGO from the vicinity of the other enemy cruisers which were swiftly moving to the eastward. Finally, the maintenance of the base course of 283°(T) at a uniform speed made the CHICAGO an exceptionally apt target for the torpedoes of the ships he thought were "two destroyers", which torpedoes might already be headed towards her. A marked change of course and speed by the CHICAGO was indicated at this point.

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* Action Report CHICAGO concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers WDC Documents 160623 and 161407.

Shortly after opening fire on the YUBARI, the CHICAGO lost her target. This was probably occasioned by the turnaway of the YUBARI at this time, and serves to confirm the supposition made in this analysis that the YUBARI turned simultaneously with the TENRYU at 0150 to the new course of 032°(T).* The CHICAGO, now without a target, turned on her Number Two and Number Four searchlights - which, at the moment, were trained on relative bearing 320°, as was the port anti-aircraft battery - and swept to the left down the port side. But since she discovered no targets in that area, she extinguished the searchlights.*

While this employment of searchlights was not recommended by War Instructions which stated: "Opening lights and sweeping over wide arcs for the target will be avoided,"** its use in this case is considered to have been correct because the CHICAGO's star shells - fired on this same bearing several minutes earlier - had all failed to function. The Commanding Officer, whose own ship had been disclosed already, was determined to exercise the greatest vigilance to guard against additional attacks through dark sectors and this required a quick search.

About the same time, at 0151, the Commanding Officer observed a gun action to starboard which thereafter drew to the northward.* Although he makes no mention in his action report as to what ships were engaged in this gun action, he must have felt fairly confident that the gunfire was between the VINCENNES Group and the Japanese Cruiser Force with whom he had been so recently engaged. The range to the latter group averaged less than 6000 yards from the CHICAGO.

The Commanding Officer ignored this action and continued on course 283°(T) at speed twelve. Why he made no effort to close the gap between the CHICAGO and the VINCENNES Group is not clear at this writing. Perhaps he felt that, should other enemy ships attempt additional operations in the south channel, he might be able to interfere with them; perhaps he felt that he was too far away to be able to support adequately the VINCENNES Group.

Also at about 0151, the CHICAGO sighted a friendly destroyer on her starboard quarter bearing 063°(T) distant 2900 yards.* This was the BAGLEY. One minute later the CHICAGO sighted the PATTERSON passing about 1500 yards abeam to port on approximately an opposite course.* This resighting of the PATTERSON casts some light on the conditions of visibility in that particular direction. Although the CHICAGO had seen the PATTERSON turn to course 090°(T) at 0150, while the latter was in a position on her port bow,

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* Action Report, CHICAGO concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** War Instructions, U.S. Navy 1934, FTP 143, Chapt. IX, para. 917, page 42.

she must have lost sight of her shortly, for she rediscovered the PATTERSON on her port beam about two minutes later. This emphasizes the need for keeping own forces together during night or low visibility in order to avoid confusion and to avoid the possibility of firing on own ships. It also emphasizes the fact that a Commanding Officer, who can feel confident that any ship sighted during night action is enemy, has a marked initial advantage over a Commanding Officer who is forced to withhold fire until the enemy nature of the ship sighted has been determined.

The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO now, at 0152, with no target, decided to examine his ship to ascertain the extent of damage sustained from the torpedo hit which he had received shortly after 0147. This inspection disclosed the flooding of compartments and a hole in the second platform deck, forward of Frame 15, and in the first platform deck, forward of Frame 10. The damage was in the process of being brought under control and the strength bulkheads were being shored up preparatory to increased speed.*

The Commanding Officer decided to test the strength of these shored up bulkheads, and commenced increasing speed to throw increased pressure on them. Although he ran at a higher speed for a period of but two minutes, and therefore, had succeeded in increasing speed only slightly, he decided that the CHICAGO would be able to operate safely at twenty-five knots.

About this time, at 0154, the CHICAGO completed decoding a message to withdraw towards Lengo Channel. Although the Commanding Officer did not give the text, the originator or the addressees of this message, it probably was the one from Commander Transport Squadron YOKE who had gotten his ships underway from the Tulagi anchorage at 0150.

Between 0154 and 0200, the CHICAGO continued on to the westward; and neither participated in any action nor reported sighting any action. It appears likely that during this period her vision was blanketed by the cloud bank south of Savo Island so that she did not observe the Japanese Eastern Group as it drew off to the northeastward. At the end of this period, the CHICAGO was 16,500 yards from the CHOKAI and but 13,000 yards from the KINUGASA.

The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO was alerted to the fact that a battle was still underway in his area at 0200, when he observed gun action between unidentified ships to the westward of Savo Island.* This was undoubtedly the brief battle between the damaged and retiring American destroyer JARVIS and the Japanese destroyer YUNAGI. The plot on Diagram "G" discloses that these destroyers were about 14,000 yards away on bearing 300°(T) at this time.

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* Action Report CHICAGO concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

At 0200, the CHICAGO's position relative to the center of Savo Island, was bearing 167°(T) distant 13,700 yards.

(2) Action by CANBERRA

At 0150, the CANBERRA was drifting - with the way on that full speed had given her before her engineering plant was put out of operation - on a heading of about 030°(T). She was ablaze, and was listing five degrees to starboard at this time. Her Captain was mortally wounded on the bridge, and the Executive Officer was commanding.

Three torpedoes - fired at her at 0149 by the FURUTAKA* - were closing her rapidly, but eventually missed. She was being fired on at this time by one Japanese cruiser - the KINUGASA.* She remained under the fire of the KINUGASA's dual purpose guns until about 0153, at which time the KINUGASA fired two torpedoes at her and claimed direct hits. These torpedoes missed.

The position of the CANBERRA at 0155, as shown on Diagram "G", was determined by the sighting of the TENRYU which noted her on bearing 140°(T), afire and sinking.**

The CANBERRA made every effort to extinguish the fires, to repair the damage and to continue the action. Operations were initiated to launch the remaining torpedoes, to push overboard the gasoline tanks, to flood all magazines and shell rooms, and to drop overboard all ready ammunition. Efforts were also made to quench topside fires, employing bucket chains.

At 0200 she was bearing 133°(T), distant 15,000 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(3) Action by PATTERSON

At about 0150 the Commanding Officer, PATTERSON completed his turn to an easterly course.*** He had seen the enemy moving rapidly to the eastward, and knew that additional night action was probable. His reason for proceeding independently to the eastward is presumed to have been that the transports and cargo ships were endangered and he wished to be in a supporting position.

His action would have been laudable had the PATTERSON been on independent duty, instead of a part of the anti-submarine screen of the CHICAGO

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* Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Action Report PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships, Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

Group. She had neither been released by the Group Commander nor had she been directed by CTG 62.6 to join a destroyer striking force. The PATTERSON's 0150 position, with relation to the CHICAGO, was on the correct bearing and but 1000 yards outside of the assigned patrol station. It seems proper that she should have altered course at this time to assume an anti-submarine station on the CHICAGO.

At about 0150½, the Commanding Officer - who had been checking up to ascertain how his ship had performed during the heat of the surprise engagement with the Japanese light cruisers - discovered to his chagrin that his order at 0148 to fire the torpedoes had not been heard by the Torpedo Officer, probably because of the noise of gunfire, and that the torpedoes had not been fired.* This error brings out the necessity for insuring within a command that all battle commands and orders are promptly delivered and understood. If necessary, such commands and orders should be repeated back to the source for verification. Obviously the Commanding Officer PATTERSON should have made certain not only that his Torpedo Officer had received and understood his order, but that he had in fact fired the torpedoes.

The PATTERSON reopened fire a few minutes later. She believed that she was still firing at the YUBARI, but analysis of the movements of CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and of the Japanese Eastern Group reveals that she was probably firing at the KINUGASA which was the left-hand ship of the Japanese Eastern Group - as viewed from the PATTERSON. Since these ships were employing their searchlights intermittently on the VINCENNES Group to the north, it is highly probable that the westernmost ships, the KAKO and KINUGASA, silhouetted themselves to the PATTERSON. The KINUGASA received an intermediate battery hit on her starboard side near the waterline,** at about 0156½ which apparently was scored by the PATTERSON. As the PATTERSON does not report having been fired on at this time and as the Japanese do not report having fired to starboard, it is probable that she was disregarded by the Japanese. The PATTERSON fired intermittently, as the opportunity afforded when the enemy was silhouetted. She employed no star shells after 0150 or searchlights.

Also at about 0156½ when the KINUGASA was about 7700 yards away on bearing 010°(T), the Commanding Officer, PATTERSON changed course to a generally northeasterly direction, ostensibly to parallel the course of the Japanese Eastern Group and to close the range if possible. If this were his reason, it is unfortunate that he did not broadcast his solution of the enemy course and speed, for it might have been helpful to the VINCENNES Group, as well as to other interested Commanders. It might have allowed

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* Action Report PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships, Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

CTG 62.4 in the SAN JUAN Group to bring his cruisers into the engagement. As a result of this change of course, the PATTERSON had succeeded in closing the range to about 6100 yards by 0200, when she noted that the enemy had commenced changing course to the northeast.*

At 0200, the PATTERSON was bearing 134°(T), distant 18,000 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(4) Action by BAGLEY

It will be remembered that the BAGLEY having failed to rejoin the CHICAGO at 0150 was swinging with left rudder at twenty-five knots to a new course of approximately 340°(T) for the purpose of scanning the passage between Guadalcanal and Savo Island. This was roughly the bearing on which she had last seen the two light cruisers and two heavy cruisers at which she had fired her torpedoes at 0149.** At about 0151 while still in her swing, she noted that the burning CANBERRA, on a northeasterly heading had moved to this bearing. She therefore continued her swing to pass under the CANBERRA's stern. Her position at this time as shown on Diagram "G" was obtained from the observations of the CHICAGO which placed the BAGLEY on bearing 063°(T) distant 2900 yards.

As the BAGLEY came out of her turn to steady on a westerly course, her gyro compass failed, and she was forced to steer by magnetic compass.***

At 0152, she was sighted by the TENRYU and incorrectly identified as a FARRAGUT Class destroyer on bearing 120°(T) at range 5500 yards from the TENRYU.**** Although she was taken under fire by the TENRYU, she neither observed this Japanese cruiser nor witnessed the firing. This firing was poorly directed, for otherwise she would necessarily have noted the splashes of some of the salvos. The ability of the TENRYU to sight the BAGLEY at this time, without having been detected in return, was probably the result of the silhouetting of the BAGLEY against the glow of the CANBERRA's fires while the TENRYU was concealed in low visibility to the northwest.

During the minutes the BAGLEY was passing under the stern of the CANBERRA, the Commanding Officer, BAGLEY had ample opportunity to observe her disabled condition. He probably considered screening her, but rejected this course of action because of the doctrine that "no effective combatant

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* Action Report, PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships, Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942, page 2.

** Action Report BAGLEY, Night Engagement August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

*** Action Report CHICAGO concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 12th, 1942.

**** Records CRUDIV 18, August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

ships..... are to attempt to assist disabled ships until the engagement is over."*

Instead, he concluded that his proper course of action still was to obtain information of the enemy. He decided therefore to continue "to scan the passage between Guadalcanal and Savo".** While his decision to obtain information was sound his method of accomplishing his objective was of doubtful correctness. For by scanning this passage he was scanning the area through which the Japanese cruisers had already passed. Would he not have contributed far more to the Allied possibility of success had he endeavored to maintain contact with the Japanese cruisers and to report their movements to the Officer-in-Tactical Command?

During the next seven minutes, the BAGLEY made no contact whatsoever - either on friendly or on enemy ships. It seems unusual that she did not observe the action between the Japanese Eastern Group and the VINCENNES Group, for Japanese searchlights and later, the fires of the Allied cruisers provided many sources of illumination. This singular circumstance seems to be explained by the fact that the track of the BAGLEY passed through the area under the heavy cloud bank which lay south of Savo Island; thereby took her through spotty weather marked by frequent rain squalls and consequent low visibility.

The BAGLEY's 0200 position, as determined from the contact made on her by the HELM when a flash of lightning revealed her position,*** was bearing 150°(T), distant 9200 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(c) OPERATIONS OF RADAR AND ANTI-SUBMARINE SCREEN

(1) Operations of BLUE

During the period 0150 to 0200 the BLUE advanced two miles farther along her picket line on course 231°(T) at speed twelve knots. She was in Condition of Readiness ONE. She noted that the action previously observed continued intermittently and that it was moving eastward to the area which was obscured from her view by Savo Island.****

She did not receive any reports or orders during this period. In the absence of orders, the Commanding Officer considered that his task was to continue his anti-submarine and radar patrol. This was, of course, correct,

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* War Instructions U.S. Navy 1934, FTP 143, para. 12183.

** Action Report BAGLEY, Night Engagement August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

*** Action Report HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3(129), August 14th, 1942.

**** Action Report, BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942.

for it complied with the Special Instructions of CTG 62.6 for the radar pickets in the event of attack.

(2) Operations of RALPH TALBOT

At 0150, just two minutes after going to General Quarters, the RALPH TALBOT saw floating flares over Guadalcanal Bay and star shells* (the latter had been fired by the PATTERSON). She also observed immediately thereafter searchlights and gunfire to the southward at about 28,000 yards range.* She was witnessing the Japanese Eastern Group open fire on the VINCENNES Group.

The Commanding Officer then broadcast a message over TBS voice radio: "Nothing in sight north of Savo Island." In making this report, he was providing the OTC with certain negative information which he felt should help that officer to localize the area of combat at a time when the latter was in need of information. It is doubted that this message was ever received by the action addressee, or by any other ship. It would have been wise had the Commanding Officer, RALPH TALBOT, paralleled this TBS voice radio message with a straight (CW) radio message. There was difficulty in receiving voice radio at this time, but little difficulty in receiving keyed radio.

In the next ten minutes, the RALPH TALBOT witnessed a heavy exchange of gunfire. She could see three Allied cruisers (the VINCENNES, QUINCY and ASTORIA) silhouetted by flares to the southward. She noted that the enemy ships used pairs of searchlights only while firing. She saw one Allied cruiser get hit, burst into flames, but continue to return the fire.

During this time she stood on to the southwestward on her patrol course of 252°(T). At 0200, the Japanese Eastern Group was still at about 23,400 yards range from the TALBOT and the VINCENNES Group was roughly at about 15,000 yards range.

The 0200 position of the RALPH TALBOT was bearing 023°(T), distance 16,400 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(d) OPERATIONS OF CTG 62.6

At 0150, CTG 62.6 in the AUSTRALIA was operating within the anti-submarine screen of Area XRAY. He had just observed the firing between CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and the PATTERSON. Then at about 0151, he observed strong action

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* Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action August 8th-9th, 1942, Gunnery Report, Enclosure (A), Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

to the eastward of the PATTERSON which suggested surface ship action.* He was impressed by the intensity of the developing action, for he stated: "the gunfire was very heavy, and I thought it must have been the VINCENNES Group coming into action against an enemy being engaged by the AUSTRALIA Group".** His statement indicates that he believed that the VINCENNES Group and the CHICAGO Group were coordinating their efforts adequately for their common defense and for the defense of the transports. Actually, he had observed the Japanese Eastern Group opening fire on the VINCENNES Group.

It is not clear why he believed that his two groups were adequately coordinating their efforts. He had done little to facilitate such coordination. He had not issued any battle plan which provided for coordination. He had withdrawn from the screen without notifying Commander VINCENNES Group of his absence. As a consequence, that officer not only did not know that he himself was Officer-in-Tactical Command in the Western Screening Area but he also did not know that the AUSTRALIA was absent. Does this not indicate that CTG 62.6 should have expected little more than limited coordination between his groups, and that even this limited coordination would probably be obtained as a matter of luck?

CTG 62.6 suffered some severe disillusionment because of this firing. He had believed that he had established a night screen which would be highly effective against enemy submarines or surface forces. He later wrote: "It should not have been possible for an enemy force to get inside Savo Island without being detected either visually or by radar by the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT."** Now to his chagrin, the enemy had broken through this screen with surface ships and apparently without having been detected, for he had received no contact reports.

By 0156, he had observed that the action had distinctly shifted to the right and had increased in intensity. In the absence of any information - either of the enemy forces or of the success, if any, of his own screening groups in the engagement - he presumed that the enemy had been turned to the eastward by contact with the CHICAGO Group, and had been forced by the CHICAGO Group into action with the VINCENNES Group. He did not see any cause for undue alarm, for he felt that the combined action of the VINCENNES and CHICAGO Groups could effectively deal with any enemy force likely - from his intelligence of the enemy in the area - to attack.**

He realized that the action was progressing so rapidly that he could not rejoin the CHICAGO Group before the battle was over. He also surmised that there was a distinct possibility that one or more enemy ships might succeed in evading the CHICAGO Group and could be en route even now to

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* Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning Final Battle of Savo Island, Serial AF1056/15 August 13th, 1942, para. 94.

** Remarks of CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942, page 1.

attack the transports and cargo ships in Area XRAY off Guadalcanal.* He correctly decided that the proper action to take was: (a) to place the AUSTRALIA in an interposing position between the enemy and Area XRAY and (b) to order the destroyers of the transport screening group to rendezvous immediately on the AUSTRALIA in order to provide sufficient strength to drive off any enemy ships encountered.* He therefore ordered the AUSTRALIA to patrol a line on courses 060°-240°(T) in a position about seven miles to the westward of the transport group in Area XRAY,** and he commenced encrypting a dispatch to the destroyers to rendezvous on the AUSTRALIA. It is apparent that he realized (a) that his objective at this time was the protection of the Allied shipping at Guadalcanal, and (b) that this could only be achieved by remaining in a close covering position near Area XRAY. He did not allow himself to forget his objective.

This decision of CTG 62.6 indicates the measures that he might have taken on the western screening station, as Commander AUSTRALIA Group, had he been caught by surprise - as was the Commander CHICAGO Group. Had he been Officer-in-Tactical Command during the battle, it is likely that he would have alerted the VINCENNES Group, and would have directed its commander to move that group immediately to a covering position suitable for the protection of transports and cargo ships off Tulagi. What the Japanese commander would have done had this situation developed is merely conjecture; but judging from his conduct throughout the battle, it is not impossible that he would have retired without taking further offensive action.

At 0200, the AUSTRALIA appears to have commenced her covering patrol on course 060°(T) at twelve knots.

(e) OPERATIONS OF SAN JUAN GROUP

At 0150 the SAN JUAN Group was on course 000°(T) at fifteen knots, observing the gun action between the Japanese Western Group and the ships of the CHICAGO Group. This firing ceased suddenly about 0151.***

Almost immediately a searchlight (the CHOKAI's) was exposed from a position bearing about 300°(T) from the SAN JUAN Group.*** Gunfire followed and star shells (the VINCENNES') were observed. This heavy gunfire was the opening of the engagement between the VINCENNES Group and the Japanese Eastern Group.

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* Remarks of CTG 62.6 concerning Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, August 11th, 1942, page 1.

** Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning Final Battle of Savo Island, Serial AF1056/15 August 13th, 1942, para. 95.

*** Appendix 18 to Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning Final Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942, Serial AP1056/15, August 13th, 1942 which is letter August 15th, 1942 from Commanding Officer, HMAS HOBART to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6)

At 0153, the searchlight illumination from the Japanese cruisers was dimmed to the view of the observers in the SAN JUAN Group by the more brilliant glare of a second string of aircraft flares which were dropped at this time.* (These were the first flares sighted by the ASTORIA). The distant silhouettes of three unrecognized ships were seen vaguely, and heavy gunfire was observed to be exchanged.*

At 0155, the original burning ship, bearing 258°(T) from the HOBART, was recognized as the CANBERRA with a list to starboard. She appeared to be stopped, but the fires aboard did not seem to be serious at this time.*

At 0158, the SAN JUAN Group had reached the northern limit of its patrol and had commenced a reversal of course to 180°(T). At this moment the CHOKAI, which was 15,000 yards from the SAN JUAN was changing her course from 069°(T) to 028°(T). However, she was not visible to the SAN JUAN Group.

During this ten minute period from 0150 until 0200, CTG 62.4 had observed this engagement. He believed that two columns of ships were firing at each other.** He observed that the right-hand column appeared to be headed either to the northwest or to the southeast, he could not tell which. This right-hand column, of course, was the VINCENNES Group, though CTG 62.4 was inclined to think it was the enemy.** He observed a large fire break out in one ship** (probably the QUINCY). By the light of this fire, he was enabled to observe some splashes, evidently "overs" to the right of the right column (VINCENNES Group) and some shell hits on this column of ships.

At 0200, CTG 62.4's position was about fourteen miles north of Koli Point and about five miles southwest of Tulagi Island. His position with relation to the Japanese Eastern Group was such that, had he been able to see clearly the approach of that group towards the Allied shipping at Tulagi, and had he received any information from the Western Screening Group, he might well have offered considerable resistance to that operation. However, as he was without information, and as his basic instructions directed that he was to prevent enemy light forces from coming into Iron Bottom Sound from the eastward via Lengo Channel, he correctly continued his patrol on course 180°(T) at fifteen knots.

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* Appendix 18 to Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning Final Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942, Serial AP1056/15, August 13th, 1942 which is letter August 15th, 1942 from Commanding Officer, HMAS HOBART to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6)

** Action Report CTG 62.4, Report of Action, Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A) FE24/A16-3(001), August 13th, 1942.

CHAPTER XV

OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE

0200 August 9th to 0220 August 9th

(a) ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE EASTERN GROUP AND VINCENNES GROUP

At 0200 the CHOKAI and CRUDIV SIX of the Japanese Eastern Group were in the process of separating temporarily. It was pointed out previously that the CHOKAI had changed course from 015°(T) to 059°(T) at 0159½; but whether or not she remained on this latter course for longer than one minute or so remains obscure. The fact that she had changed course radically (by some forty degrees) to the right must have been clearly observed by COMCRUDIV SIX, who was immediately confronted with the necessity of deciding upon whether to follow the CHOKAI or to continue the engagement. He changed course to 000°(T),* and continued to engage the VINCENNES Group.

Had Commander Cruiser Force been heading towards Tulagi, and had he noted that COMCRUDIV SIX was not following in column, does it not seem reasonable to presume that he would have ordered COMCRUDIV SIX, with his three ships, to follow? The fact that he permitted COMCRUDIV SIX to proceed independently - continuing the engagement on a retirement course - throws some light on the CHOKAI's maneuvers; and indicates that they had nothing to do with Tulagi, but were more or less independent in nature. Perhaps the CHOKAI had suffered a minor casualty, or perhaps her difficulties were evident to COMCRUDIV SIX, who either decided to ignore them or had been directed by Commander Cruiser Force to disregard his movements. Suffice it to say, he proceeded to the north, passing to the westward of the CHOKAI and thereby interposing between her and the VINCENNES Group with the guns of his cruiser division.

In so doing, it is possible that COMCRUDIV SIX was carrying out Japanese doctrine which may have been somewhat similar to the Allied doctrine concerning disabled ships in action - quoted previously in the case of the BAGLEY and CANBERRA.

As the AOBA changed course to the north, the KAKO - the next ship in column - commenced training her port torpedo tubes and her guns on the ASTORIA. It will be remembered that the KAKO's gun target had been the VINCENNES which now was obscured by both the QUINCY and ASTORIA because of the crossing of the "Tee" from the rear.** The KINUGASA also shifted her fire from the VINCENNES to the ASTORIA. As she did so, she fired her right torpedoes towards Transport Area XRAY which was roughly 26,000 yards

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle WDC Document 160143.

away.* The range was well within the radius limitations of the Japanese torpedoes - 33,800 yards at forty knots** - but the direction of travel was obviously in error, since the transports had gotten underway at 0150 and had stood out from their anchorage. All torpedoes missed.

This action of the Commanding Officer, KINUGASA is markedly indicative of the concern with which he viewed the departure of the Cruiser Force from the area. He apparently realized that the assigned objective - the destruction of the Allied transports and cargo ships at Guadalcanal and Tulagi - was not to be accomplished and he was aggravated to take the independent action of firing his torpedoes. The Commanding Officer, KINUGASA disclosed by this petulence a finer strategic understanding, than did his superior, of the adverse effect the failure to destroy the Allied shipping might have on the Japanese cause. On the other hand, he disclosed a poor tactical understanding of the possible future employment of these torpedoes against enemy targets during the remainder of this raiding operation.

As an outgrowth of the CHOKAI's erratic movements and of COMCRUDIV SIX's change of course to the north, the CHOKAI fell behind CRUDIV SIX and gradually assumed an offset position near the rear of the column.*** It is presumed that Commander Cruiser Force, immediately commenced an attempt to regain his position at the head of the column; but the analysis of his bearings (recorded on Allied ships during the period 0200 to 0216) reveals that he had not succeeded in recovering much, if any, distance on CRUDIV SIX before 0216.

At 0201 the CHOKAI observed a direct shell hit on the ASTORIA - identified correctly by her as a SAN FRANCISCO Class cruiser.**** Since the CHOKAI was not firing at this time, it is probable that this shell had been fired by the AOBA which had opened fire on the ASTORIA. The CHOKAI also reported that this same enemy cruiser, as a result of this hit, had burned and sunk. This report was in error, as the ASTORIA did not sink for some ten hours.

Also at 0201, the KAKO fired four torpedoes from her port tubes at the ASTORIA which was then bearing 323°(T).***** She set these torpedoes

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* Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

** Report of Basic Characteristics of Foreign Torpedoes, Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, R.I., January 29th, 1948.

*** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 109, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, page 472.

**** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

***** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

at a depth of four meters and at a speed of fifty knots; but underestimated the range to the ASTORIA as 6600 yards, when it was actually 8500 yards. The turn movement of the ASTORIA to the right at this time, may have been the reason that these torpedoes missed.

The AOBA again at 0202 selected the QUINCY as her target which she incorrectly identified as a "PORTLAND Class heavy cruiser, immediately in front of and on the same course as the burning ASTORIA Class heavy cruiser". The AOBA opened fire on the QUINCY scoring hits.*

At the same time the KAKO fired her 4.7-inch anti-aircraft guns and her 25-millimeter machine guns at the ASTORIA getting hits on her bridge area,** causing great damage and killing the helmsman.*** These hits undoubtedly were made by the anti-aircraft guns, since the effective horizontal range of the 25-millimeter machine guns was but 4000 yards.**** The firing of these latter guns at this time indicates poor fire discipline within the KAKO.

At 0204, the CHOKAI noted that the ASTORIA had been hit on her stern by shellfire.***** This damage was confirmed by the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA who reported having been hit at this time in the after engine room. It is probable - from the angle of penetration - that this hit was made by the KINUGASA.

The CHOKAI reported the ASTORIA's bearing at this time as 318°(T).***** This bearing discloses the approximate relative position of CHOKAI and confirms the fact that she was near the rear of the column, rather than in the van. Had she remained in the van - about 1300 yards ahead of the AOBA - her bearing on the ASTORIA at 0204 would necessarily have been about 303°(T).

At 0205, the AOBA reported that the CHOKAI had illuminated an ASTORIA Class cruiser with her searchlights, had opened fire, and had scored hits.****** It is evident from this statement that the CHOKAI had gotten back around to a northerly course to re-enter the engagement at this time, and between 0204 and 0205 had closed CRUDIV SIX in such manner that her line of fire cleared both the KAKO and KINUGASA.

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

*** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942.

**** General Survey of Japanese Naval Ordnance and Equipment, ONI, Serial P-2; 6-44, August 1st, 1944.

***** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

****** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

Thus, the Japanese Eastern Group had given the ASTORIA, the nearest Allied heavy cruiser, a terrific concentration of fire for about five minutes - from 0200 to 0205. The KAKO and the KINUGASA had concentrated their fire on her throughout; the AOBA had briefly added her fire to this concentration from 0200 to 0202 before shifting back to the QUINCY; and finally, at 0205 the CHOKAI had resumed fire on the ASTORIA.

At this same time the CHOKAI was hit by three shells from the QUINCY's turrets I and II. Two shells landed in the operation room (Flag Plot) located just aft of the CHOKAI's bridge, killed thirty men and burned all the charts of Commander Cruiser Force. The third shell landed near the aviation crane.* The CHOKAI's position was revealed by her bearing on the starboard quarter of the QUINCY and by the fact that observers on the QUINCY noticed that the glare of the explosion aboard her silhouetted a closer Japanese cruiser** - most likely the KAKO. This observation indicates that the CHOKAI was to the eastward of CRUDIV SIX.

At 0205 the KAKO fired two additional torpedoes at the ASTORIA. Since the ASTORIA executed a turn to the left during the time these torpedoes were approaching her, these torpedoes were bound to miss; and the KAKO reported that they missed.*** At 0206, the KAKO observed a direct hit on the ASTORIA, and considered that it was made by one of the four torpedoes she had fired at 0201.*** Her conclusion was in error, for all of her torpedoes missed.

At 0207 the AOBA noted that her target, the QUINCY, had changed course to the northeast and "although afire, rushed to attack our battle formation from twenty degrees to port."**** The Japanese were much impressed with the heroic conduct of the QUINCY and remarked that her Commanding Officer was a very brave man.*****

The AOBA turned to the left at 0208 to a course that the CRUDIV SIX Track Chart depicted as about 328°(T). This change of course toward the QUINCY was made because COMCRUDIV SIX desired "to counterattack"**** within a close torpedo range in order to insure hitting the QUINCY, which at this time was in a gradual turn to the right. COMCRUDIV SIX interpreted this turn of the QUINCY as being an all-out last-gasp attack upon his flagship. His own turn served also to close the range from his division to the VINCENNES and ASTORIA which had turned away to the left.

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* USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials; Interrogation of Captain Kinkichi Kato, IJN, page 362.

** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Ensign Perry Roberts A-V(N), USNR, QUINCY.

*** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

**** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

***** Interrogation of Vice Admiral Mikawa, IJN and Captain Ohmae, IJN, by SCAP in August 1949.

The ships of CRUDIV SIX followed the flagship successively in column; and the CHOKAI, which was attempting to overhaul the AOBA, probably cut the corner by turning at about 0210 to a parallel course. The CHOKAI had to be mindful of the movements of the KINUGASA at this time; for the latter was having steering difficulties and was probably steering with her engines. The track of the KINUGASA discloses that she was not in column at this time, but had deviated from a position on the port quarter of the KAKO to a position on the latter's starboard quarter just before her change to 328°(T).*

During this time the KAKO fired her main battery at the QUINCY and the WILSON. The KINUGASA also fired her main battery at the QUINCY but directed her anti-aircraft battery at the ASTORIA.* The AOBA and the CHOKAI were not firing at this time.

At 0213 - while on course 328°(T) - the CHOKAI turned her searchlight on, swept its beam past the WILSON, located the VINCENNES on bearing 260° (T), and commenced firing. By this time the VINCENNES had reversed course and was at a range of about 8300 yards. The CHOKAI considered that she had made direct hits on the VINCENNES and noted large fires.* The VINCENNES was helpless at this time,** and was attempting unsuccessfully to cover herself with smoke.

The bearing of the VINCENNES from the CHOKAI at 0213 provides the chief basis for determining the approximate position of the CHOKAI at this time. This bearing establishes the CHOKAI's position as just about abreast of the KINUGASA. She was necessarily to the eastward still, and probably was keeping a safe distance of about 1000 yards in case the KINUGASA again swerved toward her - as she had done previous to the turn at 0210. This position of the CHOKAI indicates that she had made good a speed of twenty-six knots since 0204.

Meanwhile, the AOBA had reopened fire on the QUINCY which was now in a position about 3000 yards off the AOBA's port beam. The AOBA fired one torpedo to port at the QUINCY at about 0214. At 0215 the KINUGASA illuminated the QUINCY and fired at her with both main and anti-aircraft batteries.* At about 0216 the AOBA's torpedo struck the QUINCY. The Japanese stated that the QUINCY had caught fire and had sunk immediately.*** The QUINCY actually sunk some twenty minutes later; but the Japanese did not observe her sink because they were then at least 15,000 yards away. This claim - similar to other erroneous Japanese statements concerning the sinking of Allied ships during the battle - indicates a tendency, which became more pronounced throughout the war, to make exaggerated claims

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* Track Chart No. 2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

*** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

concerning enemy damage without first making every effort to verify the truth.

At about 0216 the CHOKAI - in her offset position to the eastward of the KINUGASA - received a direct hit on her turret I by an 8-inch shell. This shell, which seems to have been a wild shot intended for the KINUGASA, was fired by the ASTORIA in local control; and was well over the KINUGASA in range.

The Japanese then at 0216 extinguished all their searchlights and ceased firing.

Commander Cruiser Force at this moment was confronted with the necessity of making an important decision. He had so seriously damaged the VINCENNES Group that it was all but destroyed. He had effectively eliminated all opposition from the Allied wastern screening groups, but had suffered only slight damage to his own force. He had come into the Sound to destroy the Allied transports and cargo ships at both Guadalcanal and Tulagi; but as yet had taken no action against them. He had encountered no effective opposition to the accomplishment of that task. He was now no further away from the Tulagi anchorage than he had been at 0200 - 20,000 yards - and even if the transports there had been alerted and gotten underway (which they had) the way now lay open to rapidly overhaul them. He was already on a retirement course out of the Sound, but the rear position of his flagship, CHOKAI, afforded him a ready opportunity to assume the leading position by an immediate reversal of course.

While Commander Cruiser Force discussed the situation with his staff, COMCRUDIV SIX continued to lead the Eastern Group on course 328°(T) at twenty-six knots, retiring from the area after the cessation of action at 0216. The Commanding Officer, CHOKAI - steaming a parallel track slightly to the eastward and abreast the KINUGASA - continued his efforts to regain the leading position. It is assumed that he commenced accelerating to maximum speed at this time. It is probable that COMCRUDIV SIX was wondering what action Commander Cruiser Force would take - now that all gunfire had ceased - and was anxiously awaiting some order from him.

At 0220, Commander Cruiser Force had made his decision to retire, and directed by radio: "All ships withdraw!"*

This decision is not considered to have been correct, because it rejected the accomplishment of the basic objective - the destruction of the Allied shipping. The Japanese High Command also considered that the rejection of the basic objective was incorrect, for the Commander-in-Chief, Combined Fleet severely criticized Commander Cruiser Force for failing to destroy the Allied transports and cargo ships - even at the cost of all

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* CRUDIV 6, Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

of his cruisers.*

Students of naval warfare will be concerned with the considerations that motivated Commander Cruiser Force to make this decision. The interrogation of several Japanese officials after the war divulges the fact that opinion was divided on the flagship as to whether or not to turn back and attack the transports.** Vice Admiral Mikawa stated in 1949 that he had wanted to return, but had allowed the recommendations of his staff to prevail against his own opinion.*** The opposition of his staff was based on the consideration that considerable delay would be incurred in reforming the Japanese Cruiser Force, and that, if it turned back to attack the transports after this delay, the force would be within radius of Allied planes the next morning.**** In addition, the loss of the charts in Flag Plot may have been a temporary inconvenience and was given some mention by his Chief of Staff;**** but the same officer later stated that their loss was of no consequence, since the CHOKAI had spare charts on her bridge and in her underwater chart stowage room.*****A careful evaluation of the above sources of information on this point has led to the positive conclusion in this study that the real reason for the decision of Commander Cruiser Force to withdraw was his apprehension of Allied carrier-based aircraft. The Japanese knew of the presence of the carrier aircraft in the vicinity, because they had been listening to "Red Base" (ENTERPRISE) and "Black Base" (CHICAGO) broadcast all day during the 8th.**** Commander Cruiser Force had no air cover**** to combat the Allied carrier planes. He was seriously concerned with the operation of putting as much salt water as possible between his own force and the Allied carriers before daybreak.

If this is accepted as being the case at 0220, it becomes necessary to discover - if possible - the change in the Japanese concept of the operation whereby Commander Cruiser Force's apprehension of Allied air attacks became greater at 0220 than it had been on the previous day when he formulated his plan.

It seems clear that his original plan - signalled to his force at 1640, August 8th - was predicated on the necessity of remaining in Iron Bottom Sound until after 0330. That is to say, in formulating his plan, a study of the chart must have revealed that he could not enter Iron

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* Statement of Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, IJN, Tokyo, July 1949, to Lieutenant Roger Pineau, USNR.

** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 83, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials; Interrogation of Captain Kinkichi Kato, IJN, page 362.

*** Interrogation of Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, IJN, Battle of Savo Island by Historical Branch, G2 General Headquarters, Far Eastern Command, Tokyo, August 1949.

**** USSBS Interrogation Nav. No. 109, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, Vol. II, page 472.

***** Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, Battle of Savo Island by Historical Branch, G2 General Headquarters, Far Eastern Command, Tokyo, August 1949.

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Bottom Sound before 0130, that in proceeding at twenty-six knots directly to the transport area at Guadalcanal and thereafter to Tulagi - allowing himself a total of forty-five minutes for the destruction of the Allied shipping at both places - he could not possibly have commenced his retirement before 0330, even if he had encountered no opposition whatsoever. Therefore, 0330 became his earliest retirement time for planning purposes.

With his knowledge of the presence of the Allied carriers, it then became necessary for him to determine whether or not this time was acceptable in view of the danger of Allied air attacks. A study of the Japanese searches during the preceding two days - during which time the search planes had failed to locate the Allied carriers - probably convinced Commander Cruiser Force that these carriers were operating in an area well to the southward of Tulagi - as far away as 100 miles - and that the Allied carrier commander would not risk bringing his force within the range of the land-based bombers of the FIFTH Air Attack Force. The fact that Commander Cruiser Force entered Iron Bottom Sound to carry out his plan is evidence: (a) that he accepted 0330 as his earliest predetermined time of withdrawal, and (b) that he assumed that the Allied Carrier Force would remain in their operating area of the previous two days. His plan, therefore, seems to have been based on the calculated risk of being able to withdraw at thirty knots to gain a position 175 miles away from the Allied carriers at 0600.

What then had influenced Commander Cruiser Force at 0220 - with still another hour and ten minutes available before 0330 - to reject his basic objective (the destruction of the Allied shipping) and to commence his withdrawal from the area? Had he come to doubt the soundness of his assumption that the Allied Carrier Force would remain in its operating area about 100 miles south of Tulagi? It seems clear that by the end of the cruiser action he had become concerned with the possibility that the Carrier Force might have been alerted to the action in Iron Bottom Sound, and even now, might be proceeding at high speed to the northwest to close him. If he now wished to avoid complete destruction, he had better retire immediately.

It seems to be far more than a passing thought - heretical though it may seem to some, and particularly to the Japanese - that it is not improbable that Commander Cruiser Force had decided very early in the action to retire well in advance of 0330. This idea gains credence when it is remembered that he rejected his opportunity to close the Guadalcanal anchorage at 0145 without opposition, and again at 0200 rejected the same as regards the Tulagi anchorage. His battle track through the Sound shows that he had radically cut corners and divulges a consciousness on his part of being pressed for time. This consciousness, stemming from a fear of daylight air attacks, may have been the principal motivating factor which caused him to engage only the cruisers, rather than to penetrate deep into the transport areas.

At 0220, the positions of the cruisers of the Japanese Eastern Group,

with relation to the center of Savo Island were:

(a) The CHOKAI was bearing 060°(T), distant 15,000 yards.
(b) The AOBA was bearing 050°(T), distant 14,900 yards.
(c) The KAKO was bearing 055°(T), distant 14,800 yards.
(d) The KINUGASA was bearing 060°(T), distant 14,500 yards.

(b) ACTION BETWEEN JAPANESE WESTERN GROUP AND VINCENNES GROUP

At 0200, the three ships of the Japanese Western Group were engaging the VINCENNES Group from a position to the southwestward at a mean range of 3800 yards. The TENRYU and YUBARI each were maneuvering to a firing position to launch torpedoes. The FURUTAKA was continuing on her course of 020°(T), shifting her gunfire from the QUINCY to the VINCENNES.

The FURUTAKA did not follow the TENRYU's maneuver to fire torpedoes.* She had fired a total of eight torpedoes during this night action,** and had gotten them all out against the CHICAGO Group prior to 0150.* At 0201, she was observed from the QUINCY to be paralleling the northerly course of the ships of the VINCENNES Group.*** This observation is confirmed by CRUDIV SIX track chart which shows the FURUTAKA on a course of about 000°(T) at this time. The FURUTAKA therefore had changed course from 020°(T) to 000°(T) to continue her gunfire on the VINCENNES without needlessly closing the range - which in Diagram "H" was about 4000 yards. In so doing she had made provision for ample lateral sea room for the TENRYU - to maneuver preparatory to firing her torpedoes and guns at the QUINCY. The TENRYU was bearing 340°(T), distant about 1000 yards from the FURUTAKA at this time.

At 0201, both the TENRYU and the YUBARI - then about 1200 yards north of TENRYU - commenced swinging left to bring their respective torpedo targets abeam to starboard. The TENRYU at 0202 fired six torpedoes** at the QUINCY which was abeam to starboard**** on bearing 045°(T) at range 3000 yards. The YUBARI is also believed to have fired four torpedoes at this same time at the VINCENNES which the plotting analysis shows to have been on a bearing of 045°(T) distant 2400 yards. Actually, the firing of torpedoes at this time by the YUBARI is an evaluation based on the documented facts: (a) that the YUBARI fired four torpedoes** during this night action, (b) that the VINCENNES as well as the QUINCY, was torpedoed on her port side one and one-half minutes later, and (c) that CRUDIV EIGHTEEN did not reach a torpedo-firing point at any other time in this battle.

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* Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

** Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers, WDC Documents 160623 and 161407.

*** Written Statement, August 9th, 1942, by R.D. Byers, GM2c, QUINCY.

**** Track Chart Annexed to Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

The range at which these torpedoes were fired indicates that COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN felt that the cruisers of the VINCENNES Group were so seriously damaged as to make close range operations by his light cruisers reasonably safe. He had every reason to think so. He had observed that each of these Allied cruisers had been under fire for some ten minutes; his own ships had not been fired on except in a desultory fashion and had suffered little if any damage; and the Allied ships appeared to be operating without coordinated direction. The success of the CRUDIV EIGHTEEN torpedo operation indicates the soundness of his estimates.

After firing torpedoes the TENRYU swung back to starboard to settle on course 340°(T)* and to pour a heavy concentration of fire into the port side of the QUINCY.** The identity of the TENRYU as the firing ship at this point is established by statements of QUINCY personnel who either noted her "three high fat stacks"** or described her as "a cruiser which looked like a three-stack English or Australian cruiser."***

The YUBARI and FURUTAKA concentrated their gunfire at this time on the VINCENNES.**** It is quite logical to assume that both the YUBARI and FURUTAKA paralleled the movement of the flagship TENRYU on course 340°(T). The YUBARI was on the starboard bow of the TENRYU. The FURUTAKA was on the starboard quarter of the TENRYU and is shown on CRUDIV SIX track chart as being on a course of about 340°(T) at this time.

At about 0203½, one of the YUBARI's four torpedoes struck the VINCENNES in the vicinity of fireroom One, making it inoperative. This torpedo appears to have exploded with a low order of detonation.*****

At about 0204, two of the TENRYU's six torpedoes struck the QUINCY, one hitting in the way of firerooms Three and Four, the other just forward of the I.C. Room at Frame 45.

At 0204, the TENRYU sighted a destroyer bearing about 40° relative - a true bearing of 020°(T) - at an estimated range of 3000 yards and headed on an opposite course. This was the WILSON which - on the basis of the plot - was at an actual range of about 2100 yards, and had reversed course to unmask her starboard battery in order to engage the Japanese Eastern

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* Track Chart Annexed to Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** Written Statement, August 10th, 1942, by Ensign J.H. Tighe, USNR, Port Battery Officer, QUINCY.

*** Written Statement, August 9th, 1942, by R.D. Byers, GM2c, QUINCY.

**** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

***** Loss in Action QUINCY, ASTORIA, VINCENNES, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, War Damage Report No. 29, NavShips 29(374), Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, June 12th, 1942, page 16.

Group. The TENRYU shifted her fire from the heavily hit QUINCY and shelled the WILSON with her four 5.5-inch guns for about a minute. She claimed inflicting some slight damage.* The WILSON acknowledged that shells had passed extremely close aboard and that one "dud" had landed in the water but a few feet from the ship. However, she did not admit any hits.**

At 0205 the TENRYU changed course to 320°(T) and ceased firing on the WILSON.* She now returned her attention to the KENT Class cruiser (the QUINCY), which had been her previous target, to observe the damage inflicted. By 0206 she confirmed the sinking of this ship.* This report was incorrect, for the QUINCY did not sink until about thirty minutes later. In this case, the later actual sinking of this ship verified the Commanding Officer, TENRYU's claims, but this was fortuitous. In war, claims of sinking should never be made until positive proof is available, lest incorrect intelligence later bring both tactical and strategical disaster.

In the meantime the YUBARI and FURUTAKA on course 340°(T), which was parallel to the course of the VINCENNES, had continued to concentrate their fire against that ship. The actual course of the YUBARI at this time is unknown. The Commanding Officer YUBARI in noting the TENRYU's course change at 0205 now found himself about 1100 yards broad on the starboard bow of his division commander. It is assumed that he attempted to cross over to the disengaged side and to fall back, thereby allowing the flagship of COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN to assume his original position. Diagram "H" shows the movement of the YUBARI along course 307°(T) at twenty-six knots, and is a maneuvering board solution which would have allowed the YUBARI to have passed 800 yards ahead of TENRYU at 0208. It is known definitely that the YUBARI was on the port hand of the TENRYU later, as will be shown.

The FURUTAKA during these minutes of action with the VINCENNES remained on course 340°(T) until about 0206; and then paralleled the track of the TENRYU on course 320°(T).*** This movement is confirmed by the circumstances surrounding the movements and experience of the VINCENNES during these minutes. The FURUTAKA probably changed course at 0206 when she observed the VINCENNES swinging left to approximately a reverse course. The FURUTAKA thereafter was observed by the VINCENNES (who thought she was friendly) to fire on the latter from a relative bearing of 120 degrees until about 0208.****

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* Records CRUDIV 18, August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** Action Report WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942.

*** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

**** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

At about 0208 the YUBARI and the FURUTAKA ceased firing at the VINCENNES*- the YUBARI ceasing in order to maneuver through an easy S-turn to fall back in bearing on the TENYRU, and the FURUTAKA ceasing fire in order to make a change of course to the westward to fall in roughly astern of the TENRYU. The Japanese Western Group, at 0208, ceased engaging the Allied cruisers and commenced a definite retirement. It's only engagement thereafter was with a picket destroyer, the RALPH TALBOT, to be discussed later.

At 0210 the TENRYU picked up a "SOMERS Type" destroyer thirty degrees on her starboard bow illuminated by "flare light" and at an estimated range of 5000 meters (5500 yards).** This was the RALPH TALBOT of the GRIDLEY Class. This error in identification was a logical mistake since the GRIDLEY and SOMERS Classes were quite similar.

The source of the "flare light" by which the RALPH TALBOT was discovered was probably the searchlight of the YUNAGI, since the RALPH TALBOT made reference to the searchlight illumination.

At 0211½, the FURUTAKA observed the QUINCY to the eastward bearing about 100°(T).*** The QUINCY was at this time at a range of 6000 yards from the FURUTAKA. The FURUTAKA also observed the HELM at 0212, bearing 065°(T) at range 4200 yards.*** The HELM was heading to the northwest at this time at twenty-five knots. The FURUTAKA seems to have illuminated the HELM momentarily, and probably incorrectly identified her as friendly - i.e., as the YUNAGI - since a Japanese chart of this action indicates a friendly destroyer at this position.****

At 0214, the TENRYU illuminated the RALPH TALBOT with one searchlight on bearing 334 (T), and commenced firing***** at an actual range of about 6200 yards. The FURUTAKA also opened fire on the RALPH TALBOT at an estimated range of 7900 meters (about 8700 yards).*** This discrepancy between the initial estimated ranges of the TENRYU and FURUTAKA probably was occasioned not only by the fact that the FURUTAKA was roughly some 1300 yards astern of the TENRYU but also because the TENRYU had to estimate the range from a "flare light" of limited duration whereas the FURUTAKA had the benefit of the TENRYU's searchlight. The actual range from the RALPH TALBOT to the FURUTAKA, based on Diagram "H", was about 7500 yards.

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* Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

** Records CRUDIV 18 August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

**** Combined Operational Chart Annexed to War Diary KAKO, August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74631, May 12th, 1947.

***** Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, Gunnery Report, Enclosure (A), Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

The TENRYU and FURUTAKA, together, fired a total of about seven salvos. Five of these salvos were short. Most of the short salvos were probably fired by the TENRYU, since she had underestimated the range. As a result of this firing, the RALPH TALBOT received one hit on her Number One torpedo mount and lost two men who were killed. It is significant that the RALPH TALBOT thought, as had other Allied ships previously in this night action, that she was fired upon by friendly forces. She did not immediately return the fire, but maneuvered and made every effort to identify herself.*

At 0215½, the FURUTAKA ceased firing, probably because the RALPH TALBOT, in crossing ahead, had reached a bearing that placed the TENRYU directly in the FURUTAKA's line of fire.

At 0217, the TENRYU also ceased firing at the RALPH TALBOT, but she continued to keep the RALPH TALBOT illuminated.**

At 0218½, the YUBARI, which had been incorrectly identified by the RALPH TALBOT as a light cruiser of the TONE Class, illuminated the RALPH TALBOT with her searchlight and commenced firing at a range of 3300 yards on a bearing which, from Diagram "H", was approximately 300°(T).

At 0219, the FURUTAKA reopened fire, employing her port dual-purpose guns.*** The range was about 5000 yards.

At 0220, Commander Cruiser Force directed by radio that all ships of the Japanese Cruiser Force were to "break off the engagement and withdraw!"** The TENRYU immediately turned off her searchlight and changed course at 0220 to 300°(T).**** The YUBARI likewise changed course to 300°(T), closed the range on the RALPH TALBOT and continued firing. The FURUTAKA ceased firing, apparently changed speed to thirty knots, but continued on course 320°(T) because there was no further need for following the movements of the TENRYU, flagship of COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN. She seems to have commenced forging ahead at thirty knots to overtake and pass the TENRYU in order to take her proper column position ahead of that ship when the Cruiser Force was reformed.

At 0220, the position of the Japanese Western Group, with relation to the center of Savo Island was:

(a) The TENRYU was bearing 351°(T) distant 12,200 yards.
(b) The YUBARI was bearing 346°(T) distant 11,800 yards.
(c) The FURUTAKA was bearing 355°(T) distant 11,200 yards.

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* Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, Gunnery Report, Enclosure (A), Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

**** Track Chart Annexed to Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

(c) OPERATIONS OF YUNAGI

As the YUNAGI retired at 0200, her Commanding Officer appears to have decided to locate the Allied destroyers - the BLUE and the two-masted schooner - which had been observed in a picket line west of Savo Island. Whether he did this merely to insure avoiding them or whether he did it to obtain information which might be helpful to the Japanese forces is not known. However, since he did employ his searchlights, the latter thought is the more probable.

The Commanding Officer, YUNAGI sighted neither the BLUE nor the Japanese schooner at 0210 when he arrived in the area where they had been seen at 0105 because these ships were both in the vicinity of the southwestern limit of the BLUE's patrol line - roughly 16,000 yards from the YUNAGI.

It is possible however that he did sight the RALPH TALBOT, for that ship reported that at about 0210 a single sweeping searchlight on her port bow - bearing 235°(T) distant about 15,000 yards - had momentarily illuminated her for about ten seconds and then had swung away.* This appears to have been the YUNAGI. This supposition is supported by the track of the YUNAGI** and by the TENRYU's report of sighting a ship of the SOMERS Class (the RALPH TALBOT) illuminated by "flare light" at 0210.***

Whether or not the YUNAGI actually detected the RALPH TALBOT at 0210 is not known definitely. But if the pause of her searchlight for ten seconds on that ship can be taken as an indication that she did sight her, the need for the YUNAGI to take any action against this Allied picket soon vanished. For a few minutes later, at 0214, the TENRYU and the FURUTAKA commenced engaging this target. The YUNAGI could not have failed to observe this action, since the searchlights and flashes of gunfire were visible to the BLUE some minutes later at an even greater range,**** and to the CHICAGO as late as 0229 at a very great range.*****

It is presumed that at this time the YUNAGI, which had been on a course of about 026°(T), swung to a retirement course of about 340°(T) and withdrew at twenty-six knots.

The position of the YUNAGI at 0220 was 17,500 yards on bearing 326°(T) from the center of Savo Island.

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* Action Report RALPH TALBOT Preliminary Report of Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942, Enclosure (A).

** Night Engagement Track Sheet, Report on Sea Battle off Savo Island, August 8th, 1942, GHQ, SCAP, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, (ATIS) Document 15685, March 15th, 1946.

*** Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

**** Action Report BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942, para. 5.

***** Action Report CHICAGO Concerning Action Against Enemy Forces, August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

CHAPTER XVI

OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SCREENING GROUP

0200 August 9th to 0220 August 9th

ENGAGEMENT OF VINCENNES GROUP WITH JAPANESE EASTERN AND WESTERN GROUP

(a) ACTION BY VINCENNES

At 0200 the VINCENNES had completed her right turn and had steadied on a course of 340°(T).* The Commanding Officer, whose attention had been directed toward the Eastern Group, lost track of the enemy at this time. The reason for this was that the KAKO and KINUGASA, which had been concentrating their fire on the VINCENNES, both shifted their fire to the ASTORIA as the Eastern Group crossed the "Tee" under the rear of the VINCENNES Group.

The Commanding Officer had received no report in Conn that enemy ships were seen at any time.** The VINCENNES had not observed the outline of any Japanese ship, but had only observed the searchlights.** Now at 0200, the Japanese Eastern Group was lost to view, except for an observation of the Gunnery Officer of an indistinct ship which appeared to be on a course of about 115°(T).** This ship may have been the CHOKAI in her radical maneuver at this time, but since the range was about 10,000 yards - far beyond the reported range of visibility for Allied ships - the accuracy of this report is extremely doubtful.

At 0200, the VINCENNES had become the gun target of the FURUTAKA in the Western Group, and also the target for the YUBARI which was then maneuvering to fire torpedoes at her. The Commanding Officer, VINCENNES was unaware of the Japanese Western Group and was at this time training his forward turrets around to starboard to re-engage the Eastern Group when their searchlights again became visible.

The FURUTAKA concentrated both her 4.7-inch and 8-inch batteries on the VINCENNES which she illuminated by searchlight.*** The Commanding Officer,

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* Letter August 13th, 1942 from Commander A.M. Loker, USN, Navigating Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer Concerning Night Engagement with Enemy Early Morning August 9th, 1942.

** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, CA44/A16-3, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942.

*** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997.

VINCENNES stated that at about 0200 "counter illumination was not attempted as enemy searchlight was believed to be on a destroyer and illumination of enemy by our destroyers was expected.* The basis for this statement lay in CTG 62.6's special instruction in the case of a night surface attack. However, these instructions provided for the illumination of enemy ships by own destroyer searchlights only if the destroyers were specifically ordered to illuminate.** The Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, of course, had no means of communication by which to order his destroyers to illuminate; nor did he know where his destroyers now were - he had last seen the WILSON on his starboard bow just before 0158 when he had turned right to 340°(T).***

The VINCENNES at this time was heavily damaged by the FURUTAKA's fire. Turret III received three or more 4.7-inch hits in the side and face plate, none of which penetrated.**** Sky Forward was hit, and numerous sparks fell on the Main Battery Control Station from this hit.***** Very shortly, all power was lost in Control Forward as a result of a hit in the fire control tube - from which dense clouds of smoke, smelling of paint and rubber, began to pour under the main battery director. The turrets were directed to go to local control; and the control stations - both Main Battery Control Forward and Sky Control Forward - were evacuated.******

At 0202, the VINCENNES again sighted searchlights on her starboard quarter******- the AOBA's searchlights now illuminating the QUINCY. The Commanding Officer, VINCENNES believes he fired two 8-inch salvos to starboard from his forward turrets - six gun salvos - in local control.******* Since he so stated in his Action Report********- even though the main and

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* Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, CA44/A16-3, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 5.

** Special Instructions to Screening Group and Vessels Temporarily Assigned, paras. 6(a) and 6(d) issued by CTG 62.6.

*** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, CA44/A16-3, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 4, para. 10.

**** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, CA44/A16-3, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942, Enclosure (C) "List of Known Shell Hits with Location".

***** Letter undated from LCdr. R.L. Adams, USN, Main Battery Control Officer, VINCENNES, to Commanding Officer Concerning Action of USS VINCENNES off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942.

****** Personal Interview of Captain Frederick L. Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

******* Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, CA44/A16-3, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942, page 5.

secondary battery officer's reports are vague on this point - it is probable that the VINCENNES did fire two partial salvos between 0202 and 0203½, her fourth and fifth main battery salvos.*

While he was re-appraising the situation to the eastward at 0203½, the VINCENNES was hit on the port side of Number One fireroom by a low-order detonation torpedo, which is believed to have been fired by the YUBARI. The torpedo explosion put this fireroom out of commission and left no survivors,** as a result of which the VINCENNES now lost all steam pressure.

The VINCENNES continued to be hit by enemy fire** from the FURUTAKA*** and from the YUBARI, which now opened fire with her guns after completing her torpedo run. The VINCENNES' forward engine room sustained a hit which carried away the exhaust steam line and caused a flange in the main steam line to leak badly. As a consequence of the accumulative damage in the engineering plant, the responsible officers secured all the firerooms and the forward engine room, but failed to notify the Commanding Officer.

The after engine room had suffered no damage at all. But as the steam pressure fell the officer in charge of this station - realizing that the firerooms were out of commission - secured and abandoned the after engine room without requesting the Commanding Officer's permission and without notifying that officer that the VINCENNES was now completely without motive power. Needless to say, his actions seem ill-considered and hasty.

This state of affairs brings up a point worthy of comment. It is to be expected, of course, that engineering casualties in battle may make it necessary to secure parts of the propulsive plant and to abandon the engineering spaces involved without first obtaining permission to do so. But in such cases, the Commanding Officer should be notified as soon as possible, lest he embark on a course of action that is rendered infeasible by the lack of motive power. Furthermore, he might wish to employ the engineering personnel - thus released from their regular battle stations in the engineering spaces - in damage control functions, and certainly would not want them to drift about the ship in exposed places where they might interfere with the conduct of the action.

At about 0205 the Commanding Officer, VINCENNES observed a destroyer crossing the bow of the VINCENNES from port to starboard; and about a minute later he observed another destroyer to starboard, proceeding in a

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* Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, CA44/A16-3, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942, page 7.

** Ibid, page 5.

*** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

northerly direction.* Although he did not know their identity, he thought they must be friendly as they did not fire at each other.* They were actually the WILSON to port and the HELM to starboard.

At this time he received a report that Number One 5-inch gun - manned only by an ensign and a Marine sergeant, because the rest of the crew had been killed - had fired on a submarine on the surface at a range of 400 yards, and had scored a hit on the base of the conning tower.* Actually there were no enemy submarines in the Sound. It is probable that the floating wreckage of one of the Japanese bombers, shot down at noon the preceding day, had been mistaken for a submarine. This supposition is made on the basis of the HOBART's report of making the same mistake.**

The Commanding Officer probably considered it was this "submarine" that had torpedoed him one and one-half minutes earlier. This report, taken together with the proximity of the unidentified destroyers (WILSON and HELM) probably made him very conscious of the fact that his Number One 5-inch gun was the only gun firing.*

He therefore sent a messenger to the Gunnery Officer asking for gunfire, and ordered it to be directed on the two searchlights illuminating the VINCENNES.* The Gunnery Officer - who had been making his way with difficulty down to the bridge - arrived at the time and informed the Commanding Officer that he had no guns with which to fire.* Being unable to get any gunfire against the enemy, the Commanding Officer now desired to conceal his ship with smoke but could not communicate with the engineering department. About this time the messenger whom he had sent below at about 0157 returned and reported to him that the engine rooms had been abandoned and were dark.*

The Commanding Officer still felt that he was being fired on by friendly ships.*** He had heard that the colors had gone down aft - the AOBA reported them shot away at 0202****- and he ordered the Chief Quartermaster to hoist a set of colors on the starboard yardarm to indicate his friendly nature.*** All these circumstances served to make him realize

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* Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, CA44/A16-3, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942, page 6.

** Appendix 18 to Action Report CTG 62.6 Concerning First Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, Serial AF1056/15, August 15th, 1942, which is Letter August 15th, 1942, from Commanding Officer, HMAS HOBART to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6).

*** Personal Interview of Captain Frederick L. Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945, by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

**** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

the hopelessness of the situation. As he stated it: "I was completely put out of action. I had no power at all in the engines, no power on the fire main, and by that time all of our guns but one had been put out of action."*

It was at about 0206, while the ship still had steerageway, that the Commanding Officer, VINCENNES managed to communicate with the steering engine room over the sound-power telephone and ordered a turn to the left** because he found "the firing on the starboard side.....was rather irritating, to say the least."* (The QUINCY's observation of the VINCENNES' radical turn to the left*** confirms this time of turning).

At 0208 the VINCENNES noted that the previously mentioned two friendly destroyers (which actually were the WILSON and HELM) had narrowly escaped collision with one another, and that the WILSON thereafter was firing star shells and heavy machine guns to the eastward.**

It is profitable at this point to consider whether such a near collision need ever have occurred if the Commanding Officer, HELM - as the senior destroyer commander - had directed the WILSON to join him in the attack ordered by Commander VINCENNES Group some eighteen minutes earlier, rather than to have permitted him to operate independently. In addition, does not the doubt in the VINCENNES as to the identity of these destroyers - the Commanding Officer stated that his Chief Quartermaster had gotten a good look at one and informed him it was Japanese*- point out the advisability of keeping own forces reasonably concentrated during night action, even with radar identification devices, in order that the question of their identity may not be too confusing to own forces?

As the VINCENNES swung slowly to the left, the Commanding Officer again observed "two destroyers" which he felt were friendly and which were illuminating him with searchlights - one from a bearing of about 120 degrees relative, and the other from a bearing of about 150 degrees relative, at an estimated range of about 3000 yards.**** Perhaps - forgetting for the moment, as he did, that the VINCENNES was gradually turning to port*****- he thought they were still observing the WILSON and HELM; perhaps he thought

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* Personal Interview of Captain Frederick L. Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

** Letter August 13th, 1942, from Cdr. A.M. Loker, USN, Navigating Officer, VINCENNES to Commanding Officer Concerning Night Engagement with Enemy Early Morning August 9th, 1942.

*** Written Statement undated by Lt.(jg) J.D. Seal, USN, Sky Forward Control Officer, QUINCY.

**** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942, page 6.

***** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 5.

they might be the BAGLEY and PATTERSON which somehow had come into the area - a possibility which he had forecast several days earlier in a dispatch to CTG 62.6* and which now may have echoed from his subconscious mind.

These ships were in fact the YUBARI and the FURUTAKA of the Japanese Western Group which had been illuminating and firing on the VINCENNES since 0200 from the port hand while he had been intent to starboard. Despite the western component of their tracks at 0207, they appeared to the VINCENNES to remain on a steady bearing because the VINCENNES was slowly turning left.**

As a consequence of this enemy fire, the VINCENNES received numerous hits on her starboard side in the vicinity of the machine shop, the five-inch ammunition passage, the forward mess hall, and the starboard catapult tower.*** Her turret I received a hit in the starboard side of the barbette and jammed in train.*** Her turret II was penetrated by an 8-inch shell which ignited exposed powder and placed this turret out of action.***

The belief of the Commanding Officer, VINCENNES that the ships of the Japanese Western Group were friendly recalls to mind his reaction to being illuminated by searchlights at 0150, and then fired upon by the Japanese Eastern Group. At 0150 he had considered that he had to fire on the searchlights. But at this later time, despite everything that had ensued during eighteen minutes of grueling battle, he seems to have clung tenaciously to the idea that these newly encountered ships were friendly. He finally after great difficulty got a large U.S. National Ensign hoisted on his foremast at 0208 - the time at which the YUBARI and FURUTAKA ceased firing at him. He commented later: "Strange to say, after the colors went up the searchlights went out and the firing ceased."*

Why he entertained the thought that they were friendly is difficult to understand. He had forecast the possibility of night attack by Japanese surface forces. He had been under heavy fire earlier by other ships which he had thought might be friendly, but had found it necessary to open fire on those "friendly" ships with guns, and had directed a torpedo attack against them by his own destroyers. By this time his group had not only suffered heavy damage, but his own ship was once again under heavy and accurate fire. Would it not seem that, at long last, he would become convinced of their enemy character?

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* Personal Interview of Captain Frederick L. Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Occurring off Savo Island (Guadalcanal-Florida Island) Area - Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0021, August 14th, 1942, page 5.

*** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942, pages 5 and 6.

As the Japanese Western Group "went out on the starboard side and headed right out to sea",* the Commanding Officer saw that his ship was taking an appreciable list to port as a result of her last torpedo hit.* He had previously ordered his crew below when he saw that he could do no more firing;* and he now - at about 0210 - gave the order to prepare as many life rafts as possible to abandon ship.* He sent a messenger to the Damage Control Officer in Central Station to inquire as to the possibility of removing the ever-increasing list;** but the damage to the ship prevented the messenger from getting through, and later prevented the personnel below decks from abandoning ship.*

At 0213, she fell under the illumination of the CHOKAI's searchlight, and the latter ship resumed fire on her.

By 0215, the VINCENNES was dead in the water and was listing heavily to port. The Commanding Officer, in examining his desperate situation, could see that his ship was in a predicament from which she could not be saved. At 0216, when the CHOKAI broke off action and the Japanese disappeared from view, the Commanding Officer gave the order to put the life rafts into the water and to start abandoning ship.

At 0220, the VINCENNES was bearing 085°(T) distant 8400 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(b) ACTION BY QUINCY

As has been pointed out previously, the QUINCY had been caught just before 0200 in the cross-fire from ships of both the Japanese Eastern and Western Groups. At 0200, her Commanding Officer was executing a turn to starboard to bring his main battery into action against the Eastern Group which was to the southeastward; but as yet, neither his main battery nor his starboard 5-inch battery was able to bear. Since his port 5-inch battery had been knocked out of action earlier, and his turret III had just been jammed in train by an 8-inch shell from the FURUTAKA, he had no guns firing at the Western Group, although the TENRYU was at this time maneuvering to fire torpedoes at the QUINCY.*** Since the FURUTAKA shifted her gunfire at 0200 from the QUINCY to the VINCENNES,**** and

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* Personal Interview of Captain Frederick L. Riefkohl, USN, Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, recorded January 26th, 1945 by the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Records and Library.

** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

*** Written Statement August 21st, 1942 by Lt. R.J. Ovrum, USN, Air Defense Officer, QUINCY, and Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lt.(jg) J.C. Smith, Jr., USN, Spot II Officer, QUINCY.

**** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

since the AOBA - in the Eastern Group - shifted her fire from the QUINCY to the ASTORIA,* the QUINCY was not being fired at by either the Western Group or the Eastern Group for the next two minutes.

The QUINCY was unable, for the moment, to make out any ship of the Japanese Eastern Group to starboard, since it was unnecessary for these ships to employ their searchlights on the brightly burning ASTORIA upon which they were concentrating their fire. Additionally, the burning ASTORIA was so aglow as to conceal the enemy ships beyond her.**

After a minute the QUINCY found that the ASTORIA had cleared her line of fire to the southeast, and her starboard 5-inch battery was now able to bear on the left-hand target.*** She then fired a salvo of four star shells to starboard, employing a range of 8000 yards with a fuze setting of twenty-five and six-tenths seconds.*** This range was 1000 yards greater than the QUINCY's estimated range of 7000 yards; but the estimated range was approximately 2000 yards short of the actual range as developed by the plot in Diagram "H". The QUINCY's star shells burst above the low-hanging clouds and burned out before dropping through the overcast.*** This cloud cover was probably providential because the star shells burst about 1000 yards short of the Japanese ships. Had there been no clouds, the illumination not only would have been ineffective for the QUINCY, but also might have interfered with the fire of the ASTORIA.

The QUINCY then fired a second salvo of four star shells and a third salvo of three star shells, but these salvos also burst above the clouds and provided no illumination.*** She now endeavored to employ searchlights but her communications to them had broken down.**** As a consequence of these illumination and commmication failures, the QUINCY was unable at this time to employ her main battery against the Japanese Eastern Group since no target was provided.

At 0202, the Air Defense Officer sighted three pairs of searchlights in the Japanese formation to the southeastward.***** He estimated that

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* Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

** Track Chart Annexed to Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Written Statement August 10th, 1942 by Captain F.J. Frazer, USMC, Sky Forward Officer, QUINCY, and Written Statement undated by Ensign H.T. Martin, USNR, Battery No. 3 Officer, QUINCY.

**** Written Statement undated by Lt.(jg) J.D. Seal, USN, Sky Forward Control Officer, QUINCY and Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Captain F.J. Frazer, USMC, Sky Forward Officer, QUINCY.

***** Written Statement August 21st, 1942, by Lt. R.J. Ovrum, USN, Air Defense Officer, QUINCY.

the searchlights were about 1000 yards apart.* These searchlights were probably those of the AOBA, KAKO, and KINUGASA, and were actually about 1300 yards apart. The fact that only three sets of enemy searchlights were observed at this time supports the indications already advanced that the CHOKAI had fallen out of the formation.

The Commanding Officer undoubtedly also saw these searchlights, since the AOBA's searchlight was directed on the QUINCY and the AOBA had shifted her gunfire from the ASTORIA at this time back to the QUINCY as the ASTORIA cleared the range.

Within a minute, the QUINCY was hit by a salvo from the AOBA. This salvo hit forward on the gun deck in the vicinity of AA guns Numbers One and Three, and aft in the vicinity of AA guns Numbers Five and Seven, putting them out of action.* It also hit Sky Forward, putting out of commission the director, the range finder and the communications with the starboard broadside battery. The Commanding Officer was so informed.*

At about this time the QUINCY received a hit on the port side in her Number One fireroom which necessitated its being secured. She was left with three firerooms, and a probable maximum speed of about twenty-seven knots.

As the TENRYU in the Western Group opened fire on the QUINCY after having fired torpedoes at her at 0202, the Commanding Officer must now have become keenly aware that the cross-fire - to which he was again subjected - came from at least one of three heavy cruisers moving northward on his starboard quarter and from one or more cruisers or "destroyers" moving northward on his port quarter. He was caught between them! What should he do?

He knew, of course, that the VINCENNES was fairly close on the port hand and that the ASTORIA, which was on his starboard hand, was in a gradual turn to the right. If he had not done so earlier, he must have realized by now that the VINCENNES Group was no longer a maneuverable group, and was so disorganized that each Commanding Officer was forced to fight his ship independently. He must have realized also that, should he endeavor to make any radical change of course, (either to the left or to the right) he might place his ship im more jeopardy than it was in at present. There was not only the possibility of collision (with the VINCENNES if he turned to the left and with the ASTORIA if he turned to the right), but there was also the probability that, for a time at least, he would present an even better target to the Japanese. He therefore appears to have decided that he would steer a course somewhat parallel to the mean track of both Japanese Groups. As his speed was only about fifteen knots at this time and as he must have had a reasonable idea of the speed of the two Japanese groups - i.e., twenty-six knots - he

* Written Statement August 21st, 1942, by Lt. R.J. Ovrum, USN, Air Defense Officer, QUINCY.

probably felt that while they were passing the QUINCY on both sides he would sell his ship dearly. This explains his order to his Fire Control Officer: "We are going through the middle* (or between them**). Give them hell!"

About 0203 the QUINCY fired her second main battery salvo (the first to starboard) from turrets I and II at a target to the southeastward. The QUINCY's target for this salvo is identified as the AOBA, since it was the left-hand ship*** and since it had two searchlights trained on the QUINCY.**** The AOBA's searchlight was turned off before this salvo landed, so the Spotter reported no observation*****; but this salvo was noted by one observer who thought it was over in range.******

At about 0204, the QUINCY was hit on the port side by at least two torpedoes. The TENRYU had fired her torpedoes at the QUINCY at 0202,******* and they obviously had run at fifty knots to have covered the distance of about 3000 yards in two minutes. One of these torpedoes hit the QUINCY in the vicinity of the Central Station and the I.C. Room; the other in the vicinity of the after two firerooms. The latter torpedo knocked out of commission firerooms Number Three and Number Four and killed all personnel therein. Concurrently, enemy gunfire was taking its toll on the QUINCY and her forward two turrets were receiving hits from both the starboard and port sides.

About this time, the QUINCY was able to make out the source of enemy salvos on the port hand. She could plainly see the ships of the Japanese Western Group passing her at ranges of from 2000 to 3000 yards, firing vigorously at her and scoring many hits.******** One of these hits, which

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* Written Statement undated by K.J. Perry, Y3c, USN, Forward Control Talker on Captain's (JA) Circuit, QUINCY.

** Action Report; QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942, off Guadalcanal Island by LCdr. H.B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942.

*** Written Statement August 21st, 1942, by Lt. R.J. Ovrum, USN, Air Defense Officer, QUINCY.

**** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997 and Written Statement August 10th, 1942 of Captain W.P. Baker, USMC, QUINCY.

***** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lt.(jg) E.S. Hopkins, USN Spot I Officer, QUINCY and Written Statement August 10th, 1942 by Lt.(jg) E.L. Kempf, AV(N), USNR, QUINCY.

****** Written Statement undated by Ensign E.F. Shannon, Jr., USN, Forward 1.1 Control Officer, QUINCY, and Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lt.(jg) E.L. Kempf, AV(N), USNR, QUINCY.

******* Records CRUDIV 18, August 9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

******** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lt.(jg) J.C. Smith, Jr., USN, Spot II Officer, QUINCY.

later affected the control of the ship, disabled Battle II.* The TENRYU's gunfire was shifted from the QUINCY at 0204½ to the WILSON, so that the QUINCY thereafter was only engaged to starboard.

The QUINCY had lost sight of the AOBA, her target for the second main battery salvo, but shortly after 0204 she observed another set of searchlights farther aft on her starboard quarter to the southeast. She trained on this target; and at 0205 fired her third (and last) main battery salvo, employing the six guns of her forward two turrets. One officer observer followed the tracers of these shells in flight and saw them go very close to an enemy ship, noted smoke rising up through the searchlight beam of the latter, and felt sure that the QUINCY had got a hit.** A second officer observed an enemy cruiser burst into flames on the QUINCY's starboard quarter, silhouetting another enemy cruiser closer to the QUINCY on the same bearing.***

Japanese records reveal that only one ship of the Eastern Group was hit at 0205 - the CHOKAI. Two 8-inch shells had hit just aft of the CHOKAI's bridge in the Flag Plot of Commander Cruiser Force, killed thirty men and burned all the charts there.**** Another 8-inch shell had hit near the aviation crane. These hits might possibly have come either from the QUINCY or from the ASTORIA, since they were the only Allied cruisers that were firing during this phase of the action. However, the ASTORIA's range settings had been markedly short and, at 0205, her left turn had brought her forward turrets to their limit of train so that she had momentarily ceased firing. The hit on the CHOKAI therefore must have come from the QUINCY.

It is probable, then, that the two young officers in the QUINCY, inexperienced as they were in night surface spotting, had unmistakably witnessed the hit on the CHOKAI, and had correctly attributed it to the QUINCY's last salvo. It is probable that the closer cruiser that was silhouetted in the glare of the explosion was one of the ships of CRUDIV SIX, most likely the KAKO. Not only do these statements add to the mounting indications that the CHOKAI had fallen behind, but the latter*** also reveals that the CHOKAI was now to the eastward of CRUDIV SIX.

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* Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Lt.(jg) J.C. Smith, Jr., USN, Spot II Officer, QUINCY.

** Written Statement undated by Ensign E.F. Shannon, Jr., USN, Forward 1.1 Control Officer, QUINCY.

*** Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by Ensign Perry Roberts, A-V (N), USNR, QUINCY.

**** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947, and USSBS Interrogation Nav.No. 109, Vol. II, Interrogation of Japanese Officials, Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, page 472.

At about 0206, an enemy salvo from the AOBA struck the starboard side of the QUINCY's bridge and "cleared out the pilot house".* All personnel were killed except the Commanding Officer who was mortally wounded.** The Junior Officer-of-the-Deck entered the pilot house and was directed by the Commanding Officer, as the latter collapsed beside the steering controls, to "transfer control to Batt II!" The Junior Officer-of-the-Deck thought that the Commanding Officer had died at this moment.** This was incorrect. About this time a signalman also entered the pilot house from the open bridge and took over the wheel.***

Unfortunately, Battle II had been destroyed some minutes before, but this fact was not known on the bridge. The Junior Officer-of-the-Deck, finding himself unable to communicate from the demolished bridge, attempted to find a telephone in commission to carry out his Captain's last orders.

Concurrently with other hits from the starboard side at 0206, the QUINCY's turret I was hit in the barbette in way of the shell deck,**** and was damaged to the extent that it could not fire,***** after which it was hit in the gun chamber and again in the booth.***** It was then abandoned because of the flames and the failure of the sprinkling system.****

Turret II was struck, probably near the top of the barbette. Flames from burning ammunition extended outside the turret and placed turret II out of action.*****

The shells striking the QUINCY at this time knocked out her fire control stations, destroyed all communications, and generally made her armament unusable.

At 0208, the ASTORIA was turning to the left to avoid collision with the QUINCY. The nearness of collision seems to have passed unnoticed by the responsible officers in the QUINCY, since there is no comment on it in any of the statements of the QUINCY's survivors. It is probable that the QUINCY's personnel were too engrossed in their own internal difficulties at this time to notice external matters over which they had no control.

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* Written Statement August 10th, 1942, by 1st Lt. F.S. Aldridge, USMC, QUINCY.

** Written Statement August 10th, 1942 by Lt.(jg) J.H. Mee, USNR, Junior Officer-of-the-Deck, QUINCY.

*** Written Statement August 15th, 1942, by LCdr. J.D. Andrew, USN, Assistant Gunnery Officer, QUINCY.

**** Loss in Action VINCENNES, QUINCY, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, War Damage Report #29, NavShips 29(374), Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, June 12th, 1943.

***** Written Statement August 9th, 1942, by Connolly, CTC, Turret I, QUINCY.

The QUINCY commenced listing rapidly to port and settling down by the bow. Up to this time both of her engine rooms had been in operation. But at about 0210 the increasing list on the ship forced the personnel to abandon the after engine room. No effort appears to have been made by the after engine room personnel to notify the forward engine room of the seriousness of the situation; and no one ordered the forward engine room abandoned, with the result that that engine room continued to operate as the ship slowly settled. About this same time the fireroom personnel secured Number Four boiler. The sea water, which was leaking in through sprung bulkheads, had reached the fire box of that boiler owing to the list of the ship.

The enemy fire, insofar as the QUINCY was concerned, had now subsided; for the Japanese Western Group had ceased firing at her at 0204½, had withdrawn, and the Eastern Group now was firing only intermittently.

At about 0212, turret II, which has suffered an internal shell hit several minutes earlier, exploded with such violence that the Executive Officer, ASTORIA, reported that the QUINCY had blown up.* It appears probable that the forward main battery magazines had exploded; since the flames engulfed the bridge structure and the forward fire control station, and forced the abandonment of the lookout and 1.1-inch control station atop the bridge.

At about 0214, when these fires had subsided, the Gunnery Officer sent his assistant to the bridge to report the condition of the battery to the Commanding Officer and to obtain the latter's orders.** The Assistant Gunnery Officer found everyone in the pilot house dead, except a signalman at the steering wheel and the Commanding Officer lying beside him.*** The steersman was spinning the wheel to port with no steering control. Upon being questioned, the steersman reported that the Commanding Officer had instructed him to beach the ship on Savo Island which was four miles distant on the port quarter. The ship was in a gradual turn to starboard. At this time the Commanding Officer "straightened up and then, without having uttered any other sound than a moan, fell back as though dead."*** The steersman then reported the Captain's order to shift steering control to Battle II, and also reported that Battle II was believed to be wiped out.

The order of the Commanding Officer, QUINCY to beach his ship was sound. But his order was given at a time when there was serious doubt as to whether the Allies would be able to retain their precarious hold on Tulagi-Guadalcanal - in view of the evident Japanese success in this night

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* Letter August 19th, 1942 from Cdr. F.E. Shoup, USN, Executive Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer, para. 6(z).

** Action Report QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942, off Guadalcanal Island by LCdr. H.B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc of August 16th, 1942.

*** Written Statement August 15th, 1942, by LCdr. J.D. Andrew, USN, Assistant Gunnery Officer, QUINCY.

battle. It therefore seems pertinent to point out that, in ordering a ship beached, a Commanding Officer must be as sure as humanly possible that the ship will not then fall into enemy hands. On the other hand, he should make every effort to save his ship by the prosecution of damage control measures with the utmost energy and tenacity, even if she might later have to be scuttled to prevent the enemy from capturing her.

The Assistant Gunnery Officer, having observed the Commanding Officer's death and having learned of his final orders, then reported these facts to the Gunnery Officer.

The situation in the QUINCY as regards command was now in utter confusion, for she was without a Commanding Officer who was in fact exercising command. Consequently, there was no over-all direction. The Gunnery Officer did not consider that he was in command; and since he was the Junior Head of Department and was therefore fifth in rank below the Captain, he felt that some of his seniors were still alive. In this opinion he appears to have been correct, for it seems clear that the Damage Control Officer and the Engineer Officer were still at their battle stations. No information is available concerning the Executive Officer.

The Gunnery Officer therefore correctly continued to operate as the Gunnery Officer. Whether he made any attempt to discover who now was the Commanding Officer and to ascertain his orders; or whether, owing to fires and damage, he found it impossible to do so is not clear. However, it seems wise to point out that in cases of this nature in which command devolves upon a subordinate, every effort must be made to inform that officer of his succession to command. A case in point is that of the burning and listing CANBERRA at 0148, wherein the Executive Officer was notified that the Captain was down, and he immediately assumed command of the ship.

The Gunnery Officer, now realizing that it might be necessary to abandon ship, gave orders to the gunnery personnel to prepare to abandon ship but apparently informed no one else.

At 0216 the QUINCY suffered a torpedo hit on her starboard side below 5-inch gun Number Three. A great blast of steam escaped from the forward smokepipe at this time and the steam pressure dropped to 150 pounds per square inch. Soon after this, the level of salt water in Number Two fireroom rose to the firebox of Number Three boiler and it was found necessary to secure this boiler also. As a consequence, the QUINCY gradually slowed down as the resistance of the sea overcame her momentum.

By 0216, the Japanese Eastern Group had ceased the engagement and were withdrawing. The QUINCY's firerooms were all inoperative and she lay helplessly in the water, listing heavily to port and sinking by the bow. She had not only suffered heavy material damage but had suffered by far the heaviest personnel casualties sustained by any of the Allied ships in this night action. Her surviving personnel were concentrating all their energy at this time on the tedious business of preparing to abandon ship.

At 0220, the QUINCY was bearing 067°(T) distant 12,000 yards from the center of Savo Island and was drifting to a position that was about 2200 yards from the KINUGASA as the latter passed her abeam to port.

(c) ACTION BY ASTORIA

At 0200 the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA was changing course to the right in order to clear the QUINCY's line of fire. He planned then, as soon as well clear, to change course to the left to continue the action with the Japanese Eastern Group on his port hand from his proper position in formation.* He did not display any knowledge of the presence of the Japanese Western Group, although the QUINCY had actually fired at that group.

The ASTORIA was now undergoing a severe challenge; for she, as the rear ship of the VINCENNES Group, drew the concentrated fire of the AOBA, KAKO, and KINUGASA as these enemy ships crossed the "Tee". To oppose the enemy fire, the ASTORIA was firing only with the guns of her turret III. Her gun deck, port and starboard, was completely on fire; and all the 5-inch guns of the secondary battery were out of action with the exception of gun Number One. The entire well deck and hangar were a mass of flames. Turret I was out of action, and turret II was swinging around to starboard to pick up a target and to continue the engagement.*

At 0200, the ASTORIA fired her eighth salvo - a three-gun salvo from turret III - at her target, the CHOKAI, on a relative bearing of about 170 degrees with a range setting of about 5000 yards.** This firing range was far short of the actual, which works out to be 6500 yards from the plot in Diagram "H". This salvo, of course, missed.

The ASTORIA was hit at 0201*** by shells which were probably fired by the AOBA.**** At this same time, the ASTORIA succeeded in bringing her forward controlling director and turret II into action and fired a six-gun salvo (her ninth) at an enemy cruiser on a relative bearing of about 150 degrees using a firing range of about 4900 yards.** Since the CHOKAI was out of the engagement temporarily at this time and somewhat farther in range than the nearest ship, the AOBA, it is probable that the ASTORIA's target at this time was the AOBA. The actual range to the AOBA at 0201, as derived from Diagram "H", was about 7900 yards.

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 9th, 1942.

** Letter August 13th, 1942, from LCdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer Concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

*** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

**** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

The very marked discrepancy between the estimated ranges (that the ASTORIA used on her successive salvos during these minutes) and the actual ranges (as they have been derived from the plotting analysis in Diagram "H") has imposed a problem of reconciliation between these two sets of ranges.

In retrospect, it is recalled that the estimated range of 5500 yards was employed on the first salvo fired at 0152,* at the time of the ASTORIA's initial radar range of 7000 yards.* This estimated range was applied to the Mark VIII range keeper in the Plotting Room.** The range setting of 5700 yards was used on the second 8-inch salvo fired a minute later*- the very same time that the stereo range finder range of 6800 yards was obtained. In view of the fact that 6800 yards was the first range received by the Graphic Plotting Officer,*** it is likely that the radar range of 7000 yards had never been applied to the solution in the Plotting Room. The next range received in the Plotting Room about a minute later (that is, at 0154) was 5700 yards,*** which was 900 yards short of the actual.

After the ASTORIA was hit at 0155, she obtained no more radar ranges, and was unable to range visually because the Japanese turned off their searchlights at this time. It is probable then, that she had insufficient ranges to correctly solve the range rate. The ASTORIA quite plausibly felt that the Japanese Eastern Group was closing her at a more rapid rate than would actually result from the relative movement of the enemy on the base course of 069 (T).**** There is no documentation whatsoever of any deviation by COMCRUDIV SIX from this course until he turned left to 000 (T) at 0200.***** The plot shown in Diagram "H" is therefore believed to be reasonably correct.

Returning now to the battle narrative, at 0201 the ASTORIA was still interposed in the QUINCY's line of fire to starboard.****** It was principally to avoid this very circumstance that the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA had made the radical change of course to the right at 0200, but he had succeeded only in continuing to foul the range. He could not have

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* Letter August 13th, 1942, from LCdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer Concerning Night Cruiser Action August 9th, 1942.

** Written Statement August 13th, 1942, by Lt.(jg) D.R. Marzetta, USN, Plotting Room Officer, ASTORIA.

*** Written Statement August 13th, 1942, by Ensign E.E. Rogers, USNR, Graphic Plotting Officer, QUINCY.

**** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

***** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

****** Written Statement August 21st, 1942 by Lt. R.J. Ovrum, USN, QUINCY and Interview August 24th, 1949 of Captain H.B. Heneberger, USN, by Commodore R.W. Bates, USN,(Ret.).

known, of course, the simultaneous intention of the Commanding Officer, QUINCY to turn right. It is unfortunate that the communications of Commander VINCENNES Group had failed; and that, as an outgrowth at 0200, the three cruisers of this group had begun to operate independently and without proper group leadership and direction.

At 0202 the ASTORIA was hit on the starboard side of the bridge structure* by shells from the KAKO's high angle guns and 25-millimeter guns.** Her steersman was killed; her signal officer and the boatswain's mate of the watch, who was manning the engine room telegraphs, were wounded.* The ship continued swinging to the right farther than the Commanding Officer had intended, but the wheel was soon remanned* and she steadied on a course of about 045°(T). The bridge communications were seriously impaired by this hit.

About this time the Commanding Officer noted that the ASTORIA was not increasing speed in answer to his order for flank speed, twenty-five knots.* He knew, of course, that fireroom Number Two had been secured because of battle damage, but it is doubtful if he knew that firerooms One and Three had never been cut in on the main steam line.*** Unfortunately, the boiler readiness policy within the ASTORIA merely required the standby boilers to be ready to cut in on the main steam line within fifteen minutes. Such a degree of boiler readiness was unrealistic, to say the least, and once again indicates the Commanding Officer's lack of appreciation of the dangers inherent in the existing situation at Savo Island. If he had had any expectation of surface ship attack, is it not logical to assume that his standby boilers either would have been on the line, or would have been on shorter notice?

Also at about 0202, the ASTORIA's lone 5-inch gun opened fire.****

During the period 0200 to 0202, the ASTORIA was being hit repeatedly, almost continuously, from her foremast aft by the shells of the three ships of CRUDIV SIX. However, at 0202, the concentration was somewhat slackened, for the AOBA shifted her fire back to the QUINCY. The ASTORIA then, for the next two minutes, was subjected to the concentrated fire of the KAKO and KINUGASA.

One deadly salvo hit her at 0203 in the vicinity of the well deck and did extensive damage both topside and below decks. Since the angle of

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* Action Report ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, page 5.

** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

*** Letter August 18th, 1942, from LCdr. J.D. Hayes, USN, Engineering Officer, ASTORIA, to Commanding Officer Concerning Action With the Enemy About 0200, August 9th, 1942, page 1.

**** Action Report ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942, page 17.

penetration through the ship indicated that this salvo had come from a relative bearing of 150°, the firing ship must have been the KINUGASA. This salvo, in addition to other damage, hit and ignited a kerosene tank on the well deck. The heavy black smoke from this fire, added to the smoke from the hangar fires, entered the after engine room and forced the crew there to secure. The after engines had been making revolutions for thirteen knots, but the ship now commenced slowing down.

At this same time the ASTORIA fired her tenth salvo from five guns of turrets II and III with a range setting of about 4800 yards.* This salvo was directed at the AOBA which was now just abaft her starboard beam (relative bearing 095°) at a range of about 6900 yards. The range setting used by the ASTORIA was as before far short of the actual, and the ASTORIA, therefore, had not as yet obtained any hits.

At about 0204 the ASTORIA's fires had died down sufficiently to require the enemy to illuminate her again. The CHOKAI - which had resumed the engagement at that time - turned her searchlights on the ASTORIA and opened fire. The ASTORIA once more came under the concentrated fire from three ships. She was heavily hit by Japanese shells which silenced gun-mounts, wrecked the control stations, and disrupted communications between stations.

The Commanding Officer now learned that the ASTORIA was in an even more serious situation than before her right turn at 0200. Her topside, already a shambles, was receiving more damage as the enemy shells rained on the ship. Her engineering department had been so seriously affected by exploding shells, and by the resultant fires, that her speed was markedly reduced. Her major gunnery installations, except for turrets II and III, were practically all out of action.

There was little the Commanding Officer could do about this situation. He could see clearly that if he continued on the same course, he would close the Japanese Eastern Group which was now moving in a northerly direction, and that a steady course made his ship a susceptible torpedo target. He decided to carry out his previous decision to turn back to the left, once he had cleared the QUINCY's line of fire, and gave the order for this turn to the left at about 0204.

As the ASTORIA swung left her forward director and turret II reached the limit of train, but turret III and the after main battery director remained on the target as its bearing passed through the stern to the port quarter.

At 0205 the ASTORIA's Number One 1.1-inch mount fired eighty-eight rounds at a ship bearing 095° relative at an estimated range of 4000

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* Letter, August 13th, 1942, from LCdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer Concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

yards.* Her target was the leading Japanese cruiser, the AOBA, at an actual range of 6000 yards. A portion of the 20-millimeter battery also opened fire at this time. The range was satisfactory for the 1.1-inch guns (maximum range 7325 yards), but it was not satisfactory for the 20-millimeter guns (maximum range 4734 yards).

At about 0206, the 1.1-inch mounts on the after deck (Number Three and Number Four mounts) fired on the searchlight of a ship on the starboard quarter at an estimated range of 5,000 yards.** This target was probably the AOBA - the nearest Japanese cruiser - at an actual range of 5800 yards. The AOBA acknowledged receiving "machine gun hits" on her Number Two torpedo mount.*** No other ships of CRUDIV SIX admitted any machine gun hits whatsoever. The ASTORIA's Number Three 1.1-inch mount expended 400 rounds** and her Number Four 1.1-inch mount expended 100 rounds.**** Check fire was then ordered because - in the ASTORIA's left turn - the target moved to a relative bearing of 200° and the after 1.1-inch mounts could no longer bear on it.**

At about 0207, the ASTORIA fired her eleventh 8-inch salvo from the three guns of turret III with a range setting of 4700 yards at a Japanese cruiser bearing 200° relative.***** It is probable that the ASTORIA's target was the KINUGASA, but the error in range assured that this salvo would fall short. This salvo was the last director-controlled firing from the ASTORIA. Propitiously, the enemy fire now slackened. What a relief this must have been for the ASTORIA's crew! They had been able to see only destruction before them, but now perhaps they might be able to bring themselves and their ship through. This idea was appropriately expressed by the ASTORIA's Gunnery Officer who stated;

"Why the enemy did not completely destroy the ASTORIA that night is a mystery to me as we had ceased firing; but for some reason they withdrew and did not come in for the kill."*****

This reflective observation of the Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA is not without merit. For, had Commander Cruiser Force had a proper appreciation of his battle objective, he would never have permitted the three Allied cruisers to remain afloat but would have insured their destruction prior to his departure from the area. U.S. Navy doctrine at this time stated

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* Written Statement August 18th, 1942 by Lt.(jg) G.L. Alair, USNR, Battery Officer, 1.1 Director I, ASTORIA.

** Written Statement undated by Lt.(jg) V.J. Chatelain, USNR, 1.1 mounts Aft, ASTORIA.

*** Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers, WDC Documents 160623 and 161407.

**** Written Statement undated by LCdr. E.K. Wakefield, USN, Air Defense Officer, ASTORIA.

***** Letter August 13th, 1942, from LCdr. W.H. Truesdell, USN, Gunnery Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer, Concerning Night Cruiser Action, August 9th, 1942.

"Victory in action once gained, must be followed up to the complete annihilation of the enemy."* It is presumed that Japanese doctrine contained similar annihilation provisions. Fortunately for the ASTORIA, her damage was limited to that received from enemy gunfire which had not penetrated the ship below the second deck. Although six torpedoes had been fired at her by the KAKO - four torpedoes at 0201 and two at 0205 - none had hit her.

At about 0208, as the ASTORIA was slowly turning to the left at about nine knots, the Commanding Officer suddenly noted that the QUINCY, in a gradual right turn and with considerable way on, was crossing his bow from port to starboard. He avoided collision by applying full left rudder.** He perhaps realized that the QUINCY was not under steering control at this time, as she was ablaze and was not firing.

As the ASTORIA swung by the QUINCY at about 0211, she steadied on course 185°(T). By 0213 she had received additional damaging hits, including the loss of steering control on the bridge. She was forced to steer from Central Station, and headed on a zigzagging southerly course. She was once again illuminated at 0214 this time by the KINGUSA. At 0215 the forward engine room had lost all power and had secured. This left the ASTORIA without any motive power whatsoever.

The Commanding Officer, ASTORIA now was faced with the problem of ascertaining the combat effectiveness of his ship. He knew, of course, that he had no motive power; that his entire topside aft of the foremast was on fire; that his secondary battery was out of action; that turret I was out of action but that turrets II and III could be fired in local control. What else was destroyed? Now his Gunnery Officer reported on the bridge; informed him that all of his fire control equipment with its necessary communications was inoperative, and suggested that he abandon the bridge.** This report must have crystallized the reality that, as he already suspected, his combat effectiveness, to all intents and purposes, was nonexistant. He therefore, at 0216, ordered all personnel, including the wounded, to move to the relatively undamaged forecastle. The Executive Officer meanwhile had ordered all personnel, who could do so, to assemble aft on the fantail. Thus, two groups of personnel were assembled - one on the forecastle - the other on the fantail. Neither group knew of the other's existence, because of their separation by fires which completely enveloped the ship amidships.

At this time the ASTORIA was still being illuminated by the KINUGASA's searchlight, probably for the purpose of ascertaining the extent of damage since the KINUGASA had ceased firing. The ASTORIA was able to get off one last salvo from her turret II which fired in local control. The

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* War Instructions, U.S. Navy 1934, FTP 143, General Doctrine in Action, page 19.

** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942.

actual range (as evaluated) to the KINUGASA was 4300 yards. This salvo missed the KINUGASA, but hit the CHOKAI which was somewhere to the eastward of the KINUGASA at this time. The KINUGASA extinguished her searchlight, and the enemy was lost to view. The battle was over!

At 0220, the ASTORIA was bearing 078°(T) distant 10,750 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(d) ACTION BY HELM

The HELM had been standing to the southward on course 180°(T), speed fifteen knots. She was evidently operating in an area of low visibility, for she neither had observed the TENRYU - which was but 2000 yards on her starboard beam - nor was she observed by the TENRYU.

At about 0200 she sighted a ship on her starboard bow at an estimated range of about 8000 yards* partially illuminated by what she thought was a searchlight but what must have been a lightning flash - there were no searchlights being employed in the area at this time by either side. This ship appeared to the Commanding Officer, HELM to be headed to seaward, passing close to the south side of Savo Island.* Actually she was passing close to the heavy cloud bank south of Savo Island. Since the Commanding Officer could not identify this ship, he assumed logically that she was part of the enemy force headed out.*

He immediately changed course to the southwest to about 225°(T), headed for this unidentified ship at full speed - twenty knots, and prepared to launch the torpedo attack previously ordered by Commander VINCENNES Group. However, before he could fire torpedoes, the target ship was once again illuminated momentarily - probably by lightning - and the Commanding Officer, HELM discovered to his disappointment that she was one of the Allied destroyers.*

This destroyer was the BAGLEY which did not sight the HELM, possibly because of the low visibility.

This contact between the HELM and BAGLEY may appear somewhat surprising and yet it plainly indicates the recognition difficulties which can arise during night and low visibility when ships of a command are allowed to operate independently within detection range of one another. These two destroyers were from two separate groups and had been roughly 13,000 yards apart when the action commenced at 0143, and yet, in a matter of some seventeen minutes, the HELM had almost run foul of the BAGLEY.

The Commanding Officer, HELM now realized that the enemy was not in the area where he had contacted the BAGLEY. He therefore reversed course,

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* Action Report, HELM Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3/(129), August 14th, 1942.

possibly to close his own cruisers, and increased speed to about twenty-five knots. He continued on this course and speed until about 0205, when he sighted the VINCENNES and the QUINCY being illuminated by searchlight from the east.* He then decided to pass between them and therefore changed course to about 350°(T) to accomplish this. He noted, at this time, that the QUINCY appeared to be stopped and to have suffered heavy damage.* She was not stopped but was slowing down somewhat, having been torpedoed by the TENRYU but a moment before. He also noted that the VINCENNES had turned around.

At about 0208 the HELM narrowly missed colliding with the WILSON,** which was close aboard to the westward, although he did not know it. Such a lack of attention on the part of the bridge and gunnery personnel is not indicative of a smart command.

At about 0210 the HELM received a dispatch from CTG 62.6 directing all destroyers not in contact with the enemy to concentrate on him northwest of the transport groups. For some unexplained reason this message was not delivered to the Commanding Officer until some time later.* The result of this was that the Commanding Officer, HELM, having no other orders and mindful of the fact that he had not carried out his assigned task to attack with torpedoes, decided to remain in the vicinity of the Group Commander. He had observed several enemy salvos falling nearby and he desired to locate the source of the enemy salvos.*

It is judged to have been about this time (0210) that he received a TBS radio message from COMDESDIV SEVEN directing all destroyers to concentrate north of Savo Island. He therefore changed course to 315°(T). At the same time he decided to open fire on an enemy searchlight, which analysis discloses was probably that being employed by the FURUTAKA in the Western Group. However, before he could open fire, the searchlight was extinguished and thereafter the HELM had no point of aim.*

As the HELM was proceeding on course 315°(T) at 0215 she observed to the northwestward a ship illuminated and some firing. This ship was the RALPH TALBOT which was being illuminated by the TENRYU. The Commanding Officer immediately increased speed to thirty knots,* and proceeded on a heading of about 280°(T) to investigate.

At 0220, the HELM was bearing 004°(T), distant 10,000 yards from the center of Savo Island.

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* Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3/(129), August 14th, 1942.

** Action Report, WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island, Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20, 1942.

(e) ACTION BY WILSON

At 0200, the WILSON, which was now bearing roughly 280°(T) distant about 1300 yards from the VINCENNES, found it necessary to make a right turn to 040°(T) in order to maintain her approximate station on the VINCENNES, and at the same time to bring her battery to bear on the Eastern Group. At 0204 the WILSON steadied on her new course.

The WILSON shifted her fire from the KAKO to the AOBA, which was now the leading Japanese ship and was using searchlight illumination. The WILSON succeeded in obtaining a stereo range finder range* on the AOBA, for the range she employed - 9600 yards**- is approximately confirmed by the range of 9800 yards derived in the plotting analysis and shown by Diagram "H".

At this time she was fired on by the TENRYU of the Western Group.*** The WILSON suffered no damage during the action and consequently no hits were scored on her at this time. Some shrapnel fell on her deck, however, shells were heard passing close aboard, and one "dud" landed in the water a few feet from the ship but did not explode.* It is quite likely that the WILSON was unaware of the presence of the Western Group and considered the near misses were coming from the Eastern Group.

At 0208, the WILSON observed a MONSSEN Type destroyer on her starboard bow bearing down on a collision course.* This was the HELM. There were no MONSSEN Type destroyers present with the VINCENNES Group, although the MONSSEN herself was with the SAN JUAN Group. Possibly the Commanding Officer, WILSON thought that the SAN JUAN Group had reinforced his group, although he makes no comment to this effect. The Commanding Officer, WILSON immediately ceased firing; changed course to port by a full left turn; and increased speed to thirty knots to avoid collision. He was very anxious to resume fire, so as soon as his guns could bear he settled on that heading and slowed to fifteen knots. This heading established his new course as about 220°(T). At this time the only Allied cruiser visible was the ASTORIA.* The WILSON could not see either the VINCENNES or the QUINCY both of which cruisers were blazing fiercely. This was probably due to low visibility because both Japanese and Allied ships were consistently unable to sight ships which were otherwise well within visual range.

At 0210, the WILSON, employing an enemy searchlight as a point of aim, resumed fire on the Japanese Eastern Group which was now on her port hand. By 0213, she noted that only one enemy searchlight was still

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* Action Report WILSON, Report of Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island, Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942.

** Written Statement undated by Lt. G.A. Hill, USN, Executive Officer, WILSON, Enclosure (D) to Action Report WILSON.

*** Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

burning. She observed that this searchlight, which happened to be on the CHOKAI, was sweeping. The Commanding Officer, WILSON considered that his ship was the object of the CHOKAI's search because his was the only Allied ship which he could see that was firing.*

The WILSON continued firing at the CHOKAI until 0216 when the CHOKAI extinguished her searchlight. The Commanding Officer, WILSON, thought that the WILSON's gunfire had knocked out the Japanese searchlights.* This was, of course, a wrong conclusion but was a conclusion that was drawn during the battle by several other Allied ships under similar circumstances.

After ceasing fire the Commanding Officer, WILSON did not observe any other Allied cruisers, and continued on towards Savo Island.* His actions in so doing are not understood, for although he was no longer part of the screen (having been released previously by Commander VINCENNES Group to attack the Japanese Eastern Group) he did not know this, and had continued to operate as a screening destroyer. Therefore, was it not incumbent on him to ask his release of the Commander VINCENNES Group or, failing that, of the Senior Commanding Officer? As he makes no mention of having done so, it is presumed that he failed to do so. Instead, he headed towards Savo Island. Perhaps he thought that the cruisers of the VINCENNES Group had been sunk or too seriously disabled to be able to continue the action; perhaps, having received no orders from Commander VINCENNES Group, he considered himself released. Even so, why did he head for Savo Island? Would it not have been more in accord with doctrine to have trailed the Japanese forces and to have advised the Officer-in-Tactical Command, as well as CTF 61, CTF 62, CTF 63 and COMSOPAC as to their composition, course and speed so that these Commanders might take necessary action against them on the morrow by all weapons, especially by air and submarine?

About this time, the Commanding Officer, WILSON, received a TBS voice radio message, apparently from the RALPH TALBOT, stating that a Japanese cruiser was standing out north of Savo Island. He immediately concluded that this message referred to the WILSON. He, therefore, changed course to the south to avoid being fired on by friendly ships.* Why he thought that it referred to the WILSON is not clear for he well knew that a number of Japanese cruisers (the Eastern Group) had passed to the north but a few minutes before. Since the WILSON was not in hot pursuit of these ships but was merely heading towards Savo Island, the action of the Commanding Officer was perhaps wise.

At 0220, the WILSON was bearing 083°(T), distant 6650 yards from the center of Savo Island.

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* Action Report WILSON, Report of Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island, Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942.

(f) ACTION BY CHICAGO

At 0200, the CHICAGO was standing to the westward on course 283°(T) at twelve knots and had just observed the gun action between the retiring American destroyer JARVIS and the Japanese destroyer YUNAGI on a bearing of 300°(T) at a distance 14,000 yards. The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO then increased speed to seventeen knots,* full speed, and stood on to the westward to investigate this action and to enter it if occasion permitted.

It is probable that the heavy explosion of the torpedoes of the YUBARI and the TENRYU - as these torpedoes struck the VINCENNES and the QUINCY, respectively - had attracted the attention of the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO. For, at 0205, he fired a star shell spread on approximate bearing 100° relative - 023°(T) - to burst at 11,000 yards* endeavoring thereby to disclose the ships engaged to the northward. Since his star shells revealed nothing, he decided these ships were beyond range, and ceased firing.* He did not detect the BAGLEY at this time, which was about 5000 yards due north of the CHICAGO in the blackness of Savo Island.

After ceasing to fire star shells, he observed what he at first thought was a burning ship to the northward, and obtained a firing range of 18,000 yards on it.* This burning ship could have been either the VINCENNES or QUINCY; but it was more probably the latter, because of her brighter fires at this time. The QUINCY then was 17,700 yards away on bearing 030°(T).

The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO decided this burning ship was a fire on Savo Island,* since he could detect no further action to the northward. His Action Report states: "All firing ceased, no ships visible."*

He continued on to the westward at seventeen knots until 0213 when he slowed to twelve knots.** It is probable that his return to standard speed at this time was occasioned by his belief that the ships engaged to the westward - which he could no longer see - had disappeared beyond Savo Island.**

At 0217, he sighted on his starboard bow a destroyer which he recognized as friendly. This was the BAGLEY which at that time was about 5200 yards to the northwest of the CHICAGO.

It seems strange that throughout all of this time the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO failed to inform his Immediate Superior in Command, CTG 62.6, or Commander VINCENNES Group of the fact that he had been in action, of the results of that action, and of his present activities. He neither

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* Action Report CHICAGO, Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942, page 4.

** Ibid, page 5.

issued any instructions nor requested any. The result was that his immediate superiors, notably CTG 62.6, were completely uninformed as to the activities of the Screening Force.

At 0220, the CHICAGO was 12,600 yards on bearing 208°(T) from the center of Savo Island.

(g) ACTION BY CANBERRA

The CANBERRA, completely out of action at 0200, was drifting in a position about eight miles southeast of Savo Island. She was heavily disabled and was making every effort to quench her fires by bucket brigades as well as to effect repairs to save the ship. She found it advisable to throw overboard all of her ready ammunition. All magazines were flooded.*

At 0220, the CANBERRA was lying to, listing about ten degrees to starboard, and was within about 800 yards of her 0200 position.

(h) ACTION BY BAGLEY

At 0200, the BAGLEY had completed her run across the waters through which the Japanese ships had passed about ten minutes before, but had sighted nothing. The BAGLEY was unaware of the HELM, 8000 yards to the northeast of her, as the latter commenced to close and identify her. The BAGLEY was now in the area of low visibility which had been mistaken earlier by so many Allied ships (including the BAGLEY, herself) as the southern end of Savo Island.

The BAGLEY thereafter proceeded to the west, passing south of Savo Island en route to the designated rendezvous five miles northwest of Savo Island.** This rendezvous was that specified in CTG 62.6's Special Instructions for the Screening Group which was to be used in the event of early warning of the enemy and then only if ordered. Whether or not the BAGLEY received any order to concentrate is not known as she makes no reference to it in her action report.

She neither saw anything nor was she seen until she emerged from the low visibility in a position southwest of Savo Island. She had overhauled and passed the CHICAGO 5,000 yards on her port beam without seeing her, or being seen by the CHICAGO during this time. Plotting analysis of the BAGLEY's run from the position in which she was detected by the HELM

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* Letter August 12th, 1942, from Cdr. J.A. Walsh, RAN, Executive Officer, CANBERRA to CTG 62.6, Concerning Loss of HMAS CANBERRA on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, para. 7.

** Action Report BAGLEY, Night Engagement August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

at 0200* to the position in which she was sighted by the CHICAGO at 0217** reveals she was on a course of about 270°(T) at speed twenty-five knots.

At 0220, the BAGLEY was bearing 237°(T), distant 12,800 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(i) ACTION BY PATTERSON

At 0200, the PATTERSON was on a course of about 045°(T) at speed thirty knots, maintaining contact on the Japanese Eastern Group. She observed the enemy's change of course by column movement at this time to north.*** At 0203 when the KINUGASA - the last Japanese cruiser in column - changed course to north, the PATTERSON was left in a relative position from which she could no longer hope to gain a favorable torpedo firing position or to continue her gunfire. She continued on to the northeastward.***

She undoubtedly saw the searchlights of the Japanese Eastern Group as they illuminated certain ships of the VINCENNES Group, for the RALPH TALBOT could see them from her position to the northward at nearly four times greater range. However, the PATTERSON makes no mention of this sighting in her report. She apparently lost them at about 0210. She then proceeded to the designated rendezvous*** five miles northwest of Savo Island. Although her action report does not divulge her reasons for so proceeding, the fact that she did so indicates that she had probably received CTG 62.6's dispatch to concentrate but had misinterpreted the point of rendezvous. It appears likely that the PATTERSON proceeded to pass south of Savo Island, for she was later detected by the CHICAGO's radar in this area.

At 0220, the PATTERSON was bearing 125°(T) distant 11,600 yards from the center of Savo Island.

(j) OPERATIONS OF BLUE

As the BLUE continued to the southwestward on her picket line at 0200, her attention continued to be drawn to the action which was taking place inside Iron Bottom Sound. She does not appear to have observed the gun action between the YUNAGI and JARVIS which took place about this time on bearing 130°(T) distant but 14,000 yards from her. This action occurred

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* Action Report HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3(129), August 14th, 1942.

** Action Report CHICAGO, Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

*** Action Report PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area to CTF 62, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

in the same general area through which the Japanese Cruiser Force had passed at 0132. Her failure to observe this destroyer duel may have been due to the obscuration of the destroyer firing by the brighter glow of light from the illumination east of Savo Island, and to the drowning out of the destroyer firing sounds by those from the 8-inch guns of the cruisers that were engaged at this same time.

During the next fifteen minutes, from 0200 to 0215, the BLUE neither detected the YUNAGI's sweep around the west side of Savo Island to the northward nor sighted the JARVIS as it stood on to the westward and gradually closed her.

At about 0215 - the time when all action with the VINCENNES Group had ceased - the attention of the BLUE was diverted by a sound contact.* The Commanding Officer then looked out on the bearing of this underwater sound contact to determine if the contact was on a surface craft or on a submarine. He immediately sighted a ship on an easterly course which had not been previously reported. He identified this ship as a small harmless two-masted schooner powered by a slow speed auxiliary engine.* This appears to have been the same two-masted schooner that was mistaken for a destroyer by Commander Cruiser Force as he was entering Iron Bottom Sound at 0103.

The contact on this schooner made by the BLUE at 0215* is most significant in revealing the wakefulness of the BLUE. For this contact was only sighted after it had come within sonar range - a maximum of about 2000 yards in these waters. The question as to how the Japanese could have passed the BLUE undetected seems to be answered, in part at least, by the circumstantial evidence that the BLUE was not vigilant, at least on certain bearings. The statement of the Commanding Officer that the contact made by sonar echo ranging at 0215 "diverted" the attention of his ship from distant and obscure battle noises (which by this time had ceased) to the immediate presence of an unidentified ship scarcely 2000 yards away appears most revealing in this respect.

At 0216, the BLUE was at the southwestern limit of her patrol line nine miles west of Savo Island.** The Commanding Officer then being satisfied as to the harmless nature of the small schooner, reversed his patrol to course 051°(T) and continued his patrol at twelve knots.**

At 0220, the BLUE was bearing 265°(T), distant 24,000 yards from the center of Savo Island.

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* Action Report BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942.

** Letter August 17th, 1942, from Commanding Officer, BLUE to CTF 62, Concerning Supplemental Information on Operations in Solomon Islands on Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 035.

(k) ACTION BY RALPH TALBOT

At 0200, the RALPH TALBOT was proceeding along her picket line toward the southwest, fully ready for action with all hands at General Quarters. She was observing the action between the Japanese Eastern Group and the cruisers of the VINCENNES Group. She had not detected up to this time the presence of the Japanese Western Group.

At about 0210, she was illuminated by a single searchlight - apparently from the YUNAGI - located about 15,000 yards on her port bow.* This searchlight had been sweeping and had paused on her for about ten seconds before it swung away.* She did not know the identity of the ship that had thus momentarily illuminated her, nor did she realize that this brief illumination had disclosed her to the Japanese Western Group which was then withdrawing from action and was about to pass through her patrol line.

At 0214 she was illuminated by a single searchlight on her port beam and was taken under fire by ships which she thought were friendly.* Actually, she had been illuminated by the searchlight of the TENRYU at a range of 6200 yards on bearing 154°(T) and had become a target for the gunfire of both the TENRYU** and the FURUTAKA.*** The Commanding Officer stated that his reasons for thinking that these ships were friendly were: (a) they employed but one searchlight instead of two (b) they employed shells which gave colored splashes and (c) their position.****

The Commanding Officer now immediately increased speed to the maximum, and commenced zigzagging to the westward, flashed his fighting lights to indicate his identity as a friendly ship, and told the firing ships over TBS voice radio to cease firing on him as his command was friendly.**** He also transmitted over the TBS voice radio to own forces that he was being fired on by Allied forces.*

At 0215½ he noted that the gunfire against him had lessened.**** This was because the FURUTAKA had ceased firing.

At 0217, he observed that all gunfire against him had ceased although he was still illuminated by the TENRYU's searchlight.* The TENRYU now also had ceased firing. He thought incorrectly that the firing had ceased because these ships had become aware of his friendly character by his

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* Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action on August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

** Track Chart Annexed to CRUDIV 18 Records, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

**** Action Report RALPH TALBOT Preliminary Report of Action on August 8th-9th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Gunnery Report, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

fighting lights and his TBS voice radio transmissions.* Actually, this was not the case. Instead, the display of these fighting lights probably indicated to the Japanese that the ship employing them was enemy. It is apparent therefore that the employment of fighting lights requires considerable regulation.

During the above firing from 0214 to 0217, the RALPH TALBOT counted seven salvos fired at her of which all but two were short.** As a consequence, her damage was not extensive. She received but one hit at this time. This hit disabled Number One torpedo tube and killed two men.**

At 0218, the Commanding Officer, RALPH TALBOT observed the dim shape of an enemy light cruiser, which appeared to resemble a TONE Class heavy cruiser headed across his stern in a westerly direction from port to starboard.** It is believed that he had recognized the light cruiser YUBARI, for the FURUTAKA had two smoke pipes, and the TENRYU three, whereas the YUBARI had but one. None of these ships were headed in a westerly direction. Instead they were headed on course 320°(T) at twenty-six knots. The apparent movement across his stern noted by the Commanding Officer, RALPH TALBOT was incident to the change in relative bearing as the RALPH TALBOT swung right to engage.

The RALPH TALBOT prepared to open fire. She had not fired at the TENRYU nor at the FURUTAKA as she had thought them friendly, but she now had an enemy target. She obtained a range finder range of 9000 yards on the YUBARI.**

At 0218½, the RALPH TALBOT was illuminated by the YUBARI's searchlight and taken under fire. She was now illuminated by two searchlights, one from the TENRYU, the other from the YUBARI which appears to have been about 1000 yards on the port beam of the TENRYU. At 0219, the RALPH TALBOT was also taken under fire by the dual-purpose guns of the FURUTAKA which ship wisely employed the illumination from the other two cruisers.***

The RALPH TALBOT, which was swinging right, came around even more sharply to bring her starboard torpedo tubes to bear on the YUBARI. She opened fire with her guns, employing a range setting of 9000 yards.

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* Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action on August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

** Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action on August 8th-9th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Gunnery Report, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

*** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

Immediately after this salvo, she obtained a radar range of 3300 yards* and applied this correction to her second salvo. The marked discrepancy between the range finder range and the radar range was probably due to a combination of low visibility and the emergency stress of the situation. This indicates the difficulty of ranging by range finder in areas of low visibility and shows the vast superiority of radar for such purposes.

As a result of the YUBARI's gunfire, the RALPH TALBOT received five hits in close succession. She was hit first under the bridge in the chart house. This hit knocked out the port torpedo director, and a fragment from a "short" ricochetted on board and cut all power and fire control circuits to the searchlights. Thus, when she endeavored to counter-illuminate the YUBARI, she was unable to do so.*

Soon after firing her second salvo, the RALPH TALBOT received the second hit. This shell hit in the after end of the chart house. It destroyed the SC and FD radars and cut the fire control equipment known as the automatic gun train and elevation orders.*

She then received her third hit which landed in the ward room, her fourth which struck the starboard side just aft of Number Three torpedo tube, and finally her fifth hit which struck gun Number Four. These last three hits killed twelve men.*

Just prior to 0220, the RALPH TALBOT fired three starboard torpedoes from her Number Three tube mount using the open sight on the starboard torpedo director because of the blinding glare from the searchlights. In firing, she employed the YUBARI's searchlight as a point of aim and led it by ten degrees in the direction the target was last seen heading. She could not fire her Number One tube mount because of the hit which had disabled it about 0216. She was also unable to fire the right torpedo in her Number Three torpedo tube mount, either by electricity or percussion, because of a faulty primer.*

Immediately after firing her starboard torpedoes, the RALPH TALBOT, then at 0220, changed course with full left rudder in order to fire the port torpedoes.

About this time, the three Japanese ships engaging the RALPH TALBOT received the order of Commander Cruiser Force to break off the battle and withdraw.** The FURUTAKA seems to have ceased firing immediately, but the YUBARI continued firing and continued to employ her searchlight.

At 0220, the RALPH TALBOT was bearing 340°(T), distant 13,100 yards from the center of Savo Island.

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* Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action on August 8th-9th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Gunnery Report, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

** Records CRUDIV 18 August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

(l) OPERATIONS OF CTG 62.6 (AUSTRALIA)

At 0200, the AUSTRALIA on course 060°(T) and at twelve knots speed was on her patrol line seven miles west of the transports in Area XRAY.

CTG 62.6 in the AUSTRALIA was still waiting for information as to the nature of the operations then underway in the vicinity of Savo Island. He naturally expected to hear from his group commanders and from his destroyer pickets but, to his great disappointment, he heard nothing. Meanwhile, he must have been anxiously waiting for the encryption of his order directing all destroyers, not in contact with the enemy, to concentrate on him in the AUSTRALIA in position west of Area XRAY. He had to wait some minutes for this and it therefore was not until about 0206 that this unauthenticated encrypted dispatch was finally transmitted by radio to his command.

Unfortunately, the position given in this order could not be deciphered by all destroyer addressees because it had been made from the General Signal Book and reciphered by the signal cipher in force.* These destroyers as a consequence headed for the wrong rendezvous, an occurrence which was not known at the time by CTG 62.6.

At 0220, CTG 62.6 was still without any information whatsoever concerning the naval action which he had been observing, although he could plainly see that the battle was practically over, for gunfire was diminishing. For reasons best known to himself, he refrained from querying his group commanders concerning their activities.

(m) OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER SAN JUAN GROUP (CTG 62.4)

At 0200, the SAN JUAN Group was at the northern extremity of its patrol line, making the turn to reverse course to 180°(T) at fifteen knots. CTG 62.4 could now see clearly the three cruisers of the VINCENNES Group because they were brightly illuminated by the fires raging aboard. Their mean position, relative to the SAN JUAN, was about ten miles distant on bearing 282°(T). The Japanese Eastern Group was not visible to CTG 62.4, though it was somewhat nearer - about seven and one-half miles distant on bearing 265°(T).

During the next fifteen minutes, CTG 62.4 watched the engagement as he steamed south at fifteen knots, and observed it draw off more to the northward. At about 0216, he observed a heavy explosion occur in (what he considered to be) the leading of two burning ships.** This explosion was the AOBA's torpedo exploding in the QUINCY which was the farthest

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* Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

** Appendix 18 to CTG 62.6, Report of First Battle of Savo Island, August 8th-9th, 1942, Letter from HMAS HOBART to CTG 62.6, August 15th, 1942.

north Allied cruiser. This cruiser (the QUINCY) appeared to divide in two, "but the distance was now becoming too great for observations."*

At 0220, the SAN JUAN Group was in Lat. 09°-15'S., about half way along her patrol line heading south at fifteen knots.

* Appendix 18 to CTG 62.6 Report of First Battle of Savo Island, August 8th-9th, 1942, Letter from HMAS HOBART to CTG 62.6, August 15th, 1942.

CHAPTER XVII

OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE

0220 August 9th to 2400 August 9th

(a) WITHDRAWAL OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE 0220 to 0340

(1) Operations of Commander Eastern Group

It will be remembered from the narrative of the final phase of the action that at 0220 Commander Cruiser Force had ordered all Japanese ships to withdraw. The CHOKAI was in the process of accelerating to maximum speed, and probably had attained about thirty knots by 0220 as her Commanding Officer headed her under the stern of the KAKO, passing about 600 yards ahead of the KINUGASA, in order to gain ground by "cutting the corner." It is presumed that Commander Cruiser Force had told him, to take advantage of the next five minutes to gain distance to the northwest, for it was his own intention to retire on course 300°(T) as soon as the CHOKAI was in a favorable position.

At 0225, when the CHOKAI presumably had succeeded in reaching her maximum speed of about thirty-five knots and had gained a position bearing roughly 180°(T) distant 2000 yards from the AOBA, Commander Cruiser Force signalled: "Course 300°(T), speed thirty knots!" COMCRUDIV SIX in the AOBA immediately changed course to the left to 300°(T) by column movement and increased speed from twenty-six to thirty knots. Meanwhile, the CHOKAI continued to close the AOBA on course 315°(T).

COMCRUDIV SIX reported sighting the north point of Savo Island abeam to port,* which the plot indicates was 12,400 yards away. He stated that the "excellent visibility" (encountered outside Iron Bottom Sound at this time) "caused fear of enemy air attack, and so we withdrew northwestwards at full speed."*

At about 0229, the CHOKAI probably changed course to 300°(T) and paralleled the track of the AOBA at a lateral interval of about 600 yards. By 0240 she had overtaken and eased into the leading position ahead of the AOBA and had assumed formation guide. This evaluation of the movements of the CHOKAI is supported by (a) CRUDIV SIX track chart which shows the CHOKAI in the leading position at 0240, and (b) by the report of COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN in the TENRYU at 0240 - the time he first sighted the Eastern Group after the battle - that the CHOKAI was leading the column and was bearing 080°(T), distant 9900 yards from the TENRYU.**

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* CRUDIV SIX Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

At 0240 - with the Eastern and Western Group in contact - Commander Cruiser Force became mindful of the whereabouts of the units of his force for the first time in an hour. It will be recalled that commencing at 0140 - when the YUNAGI fell out of formation to engage the JARVIS - Japanese units had progressively separated themselves from the battle column formed on the flagship CHOKAI. Next, after the separation of the YUNAGI, came the FURUTAKA's steering casualty at 0143 which caused her to break off from CRUDIV SIX. Then a minute later at 0144, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN turned away to the northeast to avoid the heavy cruisers of the CHICAGO Group later to engage the light forces (the PATTERSON), and eventually formed the Western Group with the FURUTAKA. Then, there was the CHOKAI, herself, which - for some unknown reason - also fell out of formation at 0200; and thereafter assumed for a time a position to the rear of CRUDIV SIX. Now at 0240, the Japanese ships were in a position to reassemble.

Commander Cruiser Force "intentionally gave no instructions about the formation because he was seriously concerned (at 0240) on lengthening the distance between the U.S. carrier force and his fleet by daybreak, thus saving the time for forming the column and avoiding the loss of speed in single column."* Accordingly both the Eastern and Western Groups continued to withdraw independently.

By 0340, the Western Group - whose position five miles west of the Eastern Group allowed it to lose distance in rejoining - had gradually eased into position in column, bringing the YUNAGI with it. Thus, at 0340, Commander Cruiser Force had his force reassembled in approximately the same position where he had taken up the battle formation at midnight. All his ships were intact without even serious damage. He continued his withdrawal through "the inner passage" (New Georgia Sound).

(2) Operations of Japanese Western Group

It will be remembered that the Western Group received the signal from Commander Cruiser Force at 0220 to cease the engagement and withdraw;** that the TENRYU and YUBARI had simultaneously changed course to 300°(T);*** and that the FURUTAKA had continued on course 320°(T)**** for another minute since she was approximately in column behind the TENRYU. Only the YUBARI had continued the engagement with the RALPH TALBOT at this time.

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* Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae by Historical Branch, G-2 General Headquarters, Far Eastern Command, August 1949.

** Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

*** Track Chart Annexed to Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

**** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

At 0221, the TENRYU slowed to twenty-two knots.* It is presumed that COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN, who was in the TENRYU, directed the FURUTAKA to pass ahead of the TENRYU so that upon rejoining Commander Cruiser Force the FURUTAKA could fall in behind the KINUGASA in the normal order of ships. The FURUTAKA changed course at 0221 to about 305°(T)** and presumably increased speed to thirty knots.

At 0223 the Commanding Officer, FURUTAKA, which ship had closed to about 500 yards on the TENRYU's starboard quarter, observed the RALPH TALBOT (illuminated by the YUBARI's searchlight) on bearing 267°(T) at range 3200 meters (3500 yards).** He changed course to 330°(T)** to open the interval between the FURUTAKA and the TENRYU to about 600 yards, and then after about a minute, paralleled the TENRYU's track of 300°(T).**

At 0225, the Commanding Officer, TENRYU again sighted the RALPH TALBOT on bearing 250°(T).*** The range, as plotted on Diagram "I", was about 3900 yards. He immediately gave the order to commence firing;*** but he soon discovered that the YUBARI was in his line of fire, so he directed the TENRYU to withhold fire. He desired to let the YUBARI do the firing.*** It appears that when the YUBARI illuminated the RALPH TALBOT by searchlight, the RALPH TALBOT became visible to the TENRYU and the FURUTAKA through the low visibility which the RALPH TALBOT reported in the area.

At 0228, the Commanding Officer, FURUTAKA again observed the YUBARI - bearing 247°(T) distant 2100 yards - still firing on the RALPH TALBOT to the southward.** At this same time he observed the TENRYU about 600 yards on his port beam.

Meanwhile, the Commanding Officer, TENRYU gradually increased speed to twenty-six knots at 0228* incident to falling in astern of the FURUTAKA which was steaming at thirty knots. Two minutes later (at 0230), with the FURUTAKA about 750 yards on his starboard bow, he increased speed to twenty-nine and two-tenths knots.*** Then at 0232, he fell into formation about 1300 yards astern of the FURUTAKA. At this time COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN signalled: "Course 300°(T), speed thirty knots!"* to the Western Group, which signal was executed by all ships, except the YUBARI. The latter ship had ceased her action with the RALPH TALBOT at 0230, fell in 1300 yards astern of the TENRYU at 0232, and took up the formation course and speed. The Japanese Western Group was now in position to form column astern of the KINUGASA when the Eastern and Western Groups were ready to rejoin.

The YUBARI now extinguished her searchlight as no longer necessary.

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* Track Chart Annexed to Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

** Track Chart #2 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

*** Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

It was this cessation of illumination by the YUBARI which caused the Commanding Officer, RALPH TALBOT to think that his gunfire had hit the YUBARI's searchlight and had thereby caused her to cease firing.* Actually the YUBARI was scarcely damaged at all and reported only "some scratches from the light fire of an enemy destroyer."**

At 0235, the Japanese Western Group secured from "General Quarters" and assumed a lower condition of readiness.*** This signal shows that in the case of the Japanese, the Officer-in-Tactical Command normally prescribed the condition of readiness for the command. This procedure was the same as present American practice.****

At 0240, the TENRYU sighted the CHOKAI broad on its starboard quarter on bearing 080°(T), at a distance of 9900 yards,*** but COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN did not make any effort to rejoin the Japanese Eastern Group at this time. Instead he continued his withdrawal on course 300°(T).*** He correctly perceived that Commander Cruiser Force - who had given him no orders at this time - did not desire to form up his ships, but preferred to gain as much distance as possible from Savo Island, and from possible Allied counter action, before he lost time in reorganizing his formation.

As the Japanese Western Group reached the waters, at about 0310, through which the Cruiser Force had passed during the approach after midnight, course was changed to 320°(T) to gradually converge on the Japanese Eastern Group. The position of the Western Group - five miles to the west of the CHOKAI - allowed this maneuver with no loss in speed for the join-up.

At about 0325, the TENRYU sighted the YUNAGI bearing ten degrees off her port bow, distant roughly 1100 yards,***** as the YUNAGI - which had preceded the Western Group in withdrawing - was now dropping back and subsequently took station in column astern of the YUBARI. The Japanese Western Group joined up with the Eastern Group at 0340***** in approximately the same geographic location where Commander Cruiser Force had commenced his approach at 0000 in battle column. This point of rendezvous appears to have occurred without having been prearranged. Commander Cruiser Force had not ordered his force to reassemble as yet, and the join-up appears to have been accomplished on the initiative of the Western Group Commander. This indicates a high degree of mutual understanding among the Japanese Commanders.

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* Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, Gunnery Report, Enclosure (A), Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

** Action Report from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers WDC Documents 160623 and 101407.

*** Track Chart Annexed to Records CRUDIV 18, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

**** General Tactical Instructions, U.S. Fleets, USF 2, Navy Department, 1947, para. 1105.

***** Records CRUDIV 18 August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

(3) Operations of YUNAGI

At 0220 when the YUNAGI received the order from Commander Cruiser Force to withdraw, she was already retiring from the area and was some nine miles northwest of Savo Island. At this time the Commanding Officer, YUNAGI was aware of the position of his ship relative to the Japanese Western Group, since he had been observing the engagment with the RALPH TALBOT. He did not know, of course, that the cruisers had split into an Eastern and a Western group. He must therefore have been wondering what had happened to the other ships of the cruiser force for now he could see but three of the original seven cruisers. Where were the others? He knew that the CHOKAI, at least, must be all right for he had just received orders from Commander Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI but he did not observe her in the Western Group. Perhaps the others were with the CHOKAI. He would see presently. Meanwhile, he continued on course 340°(T)* and awaited instructions. He was interested particularly in the course and speed of the Western Group.

At 0225, he received the dispatch from Commander Cruiser Force to his cruisers ordering "course 300°(T), speed thirty knots". This answered his course and speed problem. At this time, the Commanding Officer, YUNAGI changed course to about 320°(T),* perhaps to converge on the track of the retiring Japanese cruisers; perhaps to provide an anti-submarine screen for them.

The YUNAGI was gradually overhauled by the cruiser force, which was making thirty knots. Sometime later (probably around 0300) the Commanding Officer YUNAGI observed the Eastern Group. It must have been a distinct relief to him to observe that the remaining four cruisers were in that group.

At about 0325, the YUNAGI was reported by the TENRYU as being about ten degrees on her port bow distant 1100 yards.** She was now dropping back into position; for at 0340, she finally took station as the last ship in the Japanese column which, as has been pointed out previously, was completely reformed at this time.

(b) OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE - 0340 to 0958

By 0340, all units of the Cruiser Force were in their original battle order as follows: CHOKAI, AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA, FURUTAKA, TENRYU, YUBARI and YUNAGI. None had suffered serious damage. Commander Cruiser Force once again had direct tactical command over his force for the first time in two

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* Night Engagement Track Sheet, Report on Sea Battle off Savo Island, August 8th, 1942, GHQ, SCAP, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) Document 15685, March 15th, 1946.

** Records CRUDIV 18 August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160984.

hours. What a relief it must have been to him for it is doubtful whether he really had known whether any of his ships had been lost or seriously damaged! He permitted his ships to operate loosely in column in order to avoid loss of speed in station keeping, and continued on the withdrawal course of 300°(T) at thirty knots speed until daybreak.

However, as the twilight increased in brightness he realized that he could no longer disregard the possibility of counteraction by carrier borne planes. So at 0610 - twenty-seven minutes before sunrise - he ordered "formation for anti-aircraft raid."* In order not to lose time he caused this formation to be assumed without reducing the fleet speed of thirty knots, so that it took about thirty-five minutes for his ships to attain their new stations. At 0645, COMCRUDIV SIX logged the fact that an appropriate dispersed formation had been assumed and preparations had been made for air attack,** which is presumed to have meant that all ships were in anti-aircraft Condition of Readiness One.

By 0700, Commander Cruiser Force had advanced his command to a position about 135 miles northwest of Savo Island in "The Slot" (New Georgia Sound).*** At this time, the northwest end of Santa Isabel Island was abeam to starboard at a distance of some thirty miles and the northern end of New Georgia Island (Visuvisu Point) was broad on the port bow, also distant some thirty miles. He now changed course to the left to 280°(T) in order to continue through "The Slot".***

At 0830, he changed course back to 300°(T) to conform to the passage and proceeded towards Bougainville Strait.*** At this time Kolombangara Island was abeam to port, distant about ten miles. In these operations, Commander Cruiser Force generally maintained the medium of the passge as his base course. It is presumed that he did this not only to provide maneuvering room in the case of sustained air attack but also to keep beyond the visual range of any coast watchers who might report his presence. At 0830 he was approximately 175 miles from Savo Island - 275 miles from his estimated position of the Allied carriers - and he was still within range of air attack. He realized, of course, that there was little that he could do except to continue up "The Slot" at his highest sustained speed and trust that he would escape discovery. If he could avoid attack for another hour, he would be reasonably safe.

By 0900, Commander Cruiser Force had reasonable assurance that he had

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* Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, IJN, by Lieut. Roger Pineau, USNR, August 1949, Information compiled by Historical Branch G-2 General Headquarters, Far Eastern Command.

** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

*** Track Chart #1 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

avoided the Allied carrier aircraft, for he was now but eighteen miles short of the 300 miles radius from his assumed position of the Allied carrier's operating area. He therefore turned his mind to future operations of his command. At 0900 he issued the following instructions to COMCRUDIV SIX: "The commander designates CRUDIV SIX as emergency standby (force) in the Bismarck Island area."*

At 0930, when abreast of the northern end of Vella Lavella Island, he felt safe at last. His command was now about 300 miles from the estimated position of the Allied Carrier Force and it had suffered no air attack whatsoever. He decided that he could slow down and therefore at 0935 he reduced speed to twenty knots,* and presumably assumed a lower condition of readiness. His ships were now at the point to carry out their new assignments.

(c) SEPARATION OF JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE - 0958

At 0958 his cruiser force separated into two major groups.** One group, consisting of CRUDIV SIX (the AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA and FURUTAKA), the emergency standby unit in the Bismarck Island Area, proceeded in column formation back to its station at Kavieng via Bougainville Strait;*** the other group, - to be called the Rabaul Group - consisting of the CHOKAI, CRUDIV EIGHTEEN (the TENRYU and YUBARI), and the YUNAGI - proceeded to Rabaul on the initial course of 300°(T). Thus both groups were planning to pass eastward of Bougainville Island.

(d) OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE 0958 to 2400

The movements of these two groups during the remainder of the day were about as follows:

(1) Operations of Commander Bismarck Island Area Group

At 1000, COMCRUDIV SIX set course 325°(T) speed twenty knots**** and proceeded to carry out his instructions. At 1100 he had reached a point thirty miles north of Vella Lavella Island where he changed course to 345°(T) to pass through Bougainville Strait.**** Inasmuch as Bougainville Strait is obstructed by numerous islands which divide it into two distinct

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8 Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

*** First Solomon Island Naval Battle Track Chart, Report on Sea Battle off Savo Island, August 8th, 1942, GHQ, SCAP, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) Document 15685, March 15th, 1946.

**** Track Chart #1, Annexed to CRUDIV 6, Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

channels, COMCRUDIV SIX quite naturally decided to employ the principal channel between Choiseul Island on the East and the Oema Islands on the West. This channel is roughly fifteen miles wide with some shoals. COMCRUDIV SIX feeling that this strait offered an excellent position for Allied submarines or aircraft to attack him because of the relatively narrow waters assumed an open cruising disposition which he felt provided satisfactory anti-aircraft and anti-submarine security.* He undoubtedly set a high condition of readiness within the command to avoid being caught by surprise.

At 1230, when CRUDIV SIX had completed its passage through Bougainville Strait and was abreast Cape Alexander, Choiseul Island, COMCRUDIV SIX ordered the KAKO to launch one cruiser plane.** What this plane was directed to do is nowhere explained, but it seems probable that it was employed as an anti-submarine screen rather than as a reconnaissance plane. COMCRUDIV SIX probably was aware that air reconnaissance to safeguard the movement of his cruiser division was even now being provided by the FIFTH Air Attack Force. He was also probably aware that the reconnaissance planes had departed Rabaul on this duty at 0630.

At 1300, when CRUDIV SIX was well into the open sea to the eastward of Bougainville Island, COMCRUDIV SIX set a base course of 320°(T);*** and held this course throughout the remainder of the day.

At 1412, he was alerted to the fact that a Lockheed type scout bomber plane had been sighted on bearing 230°(T), distant twenty-five kilometers (about fourteen miles).* This plane was an R.A.A.F. Hudson operating on a reconnaissance mission from the Fall River airfield at Milne Bay, New Guinea. COMCRUDIV SIX immediately alerted his command, but the plane made no attack and disappeared from view at 1455.* Commander Cruiser Division SIX considered that his location was known to the Allied Command. In estimating this situation, it is probable that he expected that from now on the Allies would make every effort to prevent his safe return to base. He had two dangerous threats to fear - one, Allied submarine attack; the other, Allied air attack by horizontal bombers from New Guinea. The more dangerous of these threats at the present time would necessarily be that of the Allied submarines. He therefore took certain precautions against them,**** although he knew that it would be some hours and probably after nightfall before any Allied submarines could move into a good attack position unless they were already fortunately correctly positioned.

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* CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143, CIG Document 86927, June 27th, 1947.

*** Track Chart #1 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th 1947.

**** War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

It is probable that in view of the submarine torpedoing and sinking of the transport MEIYO MARU with troops for the reinforcement of the Guadalcanal garrison in St. George's Channel early that morning, he realized that the submarine menace was particularly serious in the area between the north end of Buka Island and St. George's Channel. As will be shown later, he had reason to fear this area.

At 1845 the sun set. At 1905 the FURUTAKA sighted what she believed to be an Allied periscope and promptly attacked.* It is not clear what the Japanese practice was in such cases, but it is assumed that it was similar to the Allied practice i.e., to head towards the contact and attempt to ram, or to turn away and to open fire, not only to destroy the submarine if possible, but also to alert the ships in company to the danger and of its location. The FURUTAKA fired an unknown number of torpedoes at the submarine,** but her tactics are otherwise unknown. While this is not considered to be a particularly effective employment of torpedoes, and should never be used unless the submarine is on the surface and in an ideal situation for torpedoes, the Commanding Officer probably felt that he might succeed in hitting the submarine. Actually there were no Allied submarines in the area and the contact was false. As a consequence of this submarine alert, COMCRUDIV SIX directed that an anti-submarine watch be set for the night,* thus alerting his command to the ever-present danger of submarine attack.

The remaining hours of August 9th were uneventful as CRUDIV SIX proceeded along her base course of 320°(T) at twenty knots. At 2400 the AOBA, flagship of CRUDIV SIX, was in Latitude 03°-40'S, Longitude 153°-56'E. This position was bearing 140°(T) distant forty miles from Feni Island.

(2) Operations of Commander Rabaul Group 0958 - 2400

At 0958, when CRUDIV SIX left the formation, Commander Cruiser Force in the CHOKAI turned to the westward to form the Rabaul Group, consisting of the CHOKAI, CRUDIV EIGHTEEN and the YUNAGI. At 1042, Commander Rabaul Group set the course to transit Bougainville Strait - about 340°(T). He ordered Japanese zigzag Plan "A" at this time*** as an anti-submarine precaution, and proceeded at twenty knots. At 1200 he commenced passage of the narrows of Bougainville Strait east of Fauro Island; and was well clear of all shoals off Bougainville Island at 1345, when he changed to course 315°(T).****

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* War Diary KAKO, August 7th-10th, 1942, Solomons Sea Battle, WDC Document 160143.

** Track Chart #1 Annexed to CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

*** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 9th, 1942 CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

**** First Solomon Island Naval Battle Track Chart, Report on Sea Battle off Savo Island, August 8th, 1942, GHQ, SCAP, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) Document 15685, March 15th, 1946.

At 1412 the Rabaul Group observed that they were being scouted by a Lockheed Hudson bomber which remained in the vicinity until 1455 when it disappeared.*

At 1726, the CHOKAI, in a position eight miles off Cape L'Averdy, Bougainville Island sighted what was reported as a periscope.* Actually there were neither Allied nor Japanese submarines in this area.

At 1740, Commander Rabaul Group ordered his task group to "cease zig-zag course!"*

About 1945 the CHOKAI was sighted and reported as a possible aircraft carrier by a coast watcher on the northern tip of Buka Island. Her position was at this time about seven miles due east of Cape Henpan, Buka Island.**

At 2000, the Rabaul Group had reached a position eight miles due north of Cape Henpan, and had executed a change in course from 315°(T) to 260°(T).*** This latter course led to St. George's Channel, passing through a point twenty miles south of Cape St. George.

At 2400, the Rabaul Group was in a position twenty-eight miles from Cape St. George on bearing 124°(T).

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* War Diary 8th Fleet, August 9th, 1942 CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947.

** War Diary CTF 63, August 9th, 1942.

*** First Solomon Island Naval Battle Track Chart, Report on Sea Battle off Savo Island, August 8th, 1942, GHQ, SCAP, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) Document 15685, March 15th, 1946.

CHAPTER XVIII

OPERATIONS OF OTHER JAPANESE FORCES

0000 August 9th to 2400 August 9th

(a) OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER FIFTH AIR ATTACK FORCE

During the 9th, Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force was busily engaged in conducting the routine searches which had been ordered (Dispatch Operation Order No. 201) at 1200 the preceding day.* When these searches were ordered, he knew that, if all went well, Commander Cruiser Force would be retiring toward Rabaul from the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area on the following morning after destroying the Allied shipping there. He also knew that planes from his air attack force had struck the Allied shipping in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area at 1200 the preceding day. It was, of course, militarily highly important to ascertain in fact what damage had been done to the Allied shipping by the above two attacks. It was necessary to discover, if possible, what effect these attacks were having on Allied plans and particularly to discover whether the Allied forces were now retiring.

Commander Cruiser Force appears to have reported to Commander Outer South Seas Force and also to Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force - probably no later than two hours before dawn - the results of his night action, and doubtless at this time requested supporting land-based air operations against the Allied carriers, which he had every reason to believe would pursue him. It is to be remembered that his own concept - discussed with Commander-in-Chief, Combined Fleet in Truk on July 27th - was to accomplish the destruction of Allied carriers with the limited forces available in his area by decoying them within range of the air attacks from the Base Air Force (FIFTH Air Attack Force).** Certainly, his retiring cruiser force - in the situation existent in the early hours of August 9th - was a provoking and enticing lure for the Allied carrier force.

In re-estimating the situation before dawn August 9th, Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force seems to have been satisfied that his planned searches were properly disposed (a) to locate the Allied carriers if they approached within a 700 mile radius from Rabaul, and (b) to obtain the necessary information concerning the damage done to the Allied shipping at Tulagi-Guadalcanal by both the air attack, and by the night cruiser attack, which he now knew had only hit combatant ships. He therefore authorized no changes in the search plans.

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* Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947, page 2.

** War Diary, 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, WDC Document 161529, May 12th, 1947.

These search plans which were designed to cover the area between 090°(T) and 150°(T) to a distance of 700 miles from Rabaul and were based on a visibility of thirty miles,* were conducted as follows:

(a) At 0630, one land reconnaissance plane from the TAINAN Air Group departed Rabaul on course 123°(T) to reconnoiter Tulagi.** It proceeded at 200 knots, and - from the plot of its track - passed near the Japanese Cruiser Force at 0825. When it arrived over Savo Island, the pilot found that the weather was very cloudy,* and he was able to use these clouds to considerable advantage as cover.

This plane was detected on the SAN JUAN's radar screen at 0911 in a position twelve miles to the southward of Tulagi.*** It was unmolested by anti-aircraft fire because it stayed outside the range. Subsequent to the departure of TG 61.1, there were no Allied fighters available over Iron Bottom Sound to attack and destroy this reconnaissance plane. Consequently, it remained in the vicinity from 0915 to 1000 and reconnoitered the area.****

The pilot reported that the Allied forces present at 1000 consisted of one heavy cruiser, two light cruisers or destroyers, seven destroyers or minesweepers and nineteen transports - none of which showed any indications of leaving the harbor.**** This report, while considerably in error as regards the combatant ships, was absolutely correct as regards the large transports (APs). There were exactly nineteen. It is presumed that the heavy cruiser observed was either the CHICAGO or the AUSTRALIA, and that the HOBART and SAN JUAN were classed as light cruisers or destroyers.

After completing its reconnaissance of Tulagi-Guadalcanal, this plane proceeded again on course 123°(T) to extend its search toward the 700 miles radius from Rabaul.**** It disappeared from the SAN JUAN's radar screen at 1004.*** It is very doubtful indeed that it succeeded in reaching this distance, since it crash-landed at Rabaul at 1305.**** This time of landing means that the plane would have had to reverse her course at about 1010 - approximately over Nura Island in the center of Indispensable Strait - returning direct to Rabaul in order to arrive there by 1305. The extension of this search to but 600 miles - instead of 700 miles - did not adversely affect the Japanese situation.

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* Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947, page 3.

** Ibid, page 4.

*** Action Report, SAN JUAN, Report of Action, Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Serial 001, August 15th, 1942.

**** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, page 4, May 12th, 1947, also Secret Message #57, War Diary 25th Air Flotilla, WDC Document 161730.

In the first place, the search plane in the next sector to the right covered Indispensable Strait on its return track. In the second place, the Allied carrier task force, TG 61.1, was at this time fully 760 miles from Rabaul and was on a southeasterly course, at fifteen knots. The position of this task force assured that it would not be discovered by a search to a radius of but 700 miles from Rabaul.

The fact that this pilot crashed on landing* indicates a possible shortage of fuel, and this may have been his reason for an incomplete mission. On the other hand, he may have felt that the remainder of his search was unimportant, since the Allied ships were still in Iron Bottom Sound and showed no signs of retiring.** In such case, it would have been unnecessary for him to pursue the Allied force (in retirement) to a 700 mile radius.

(b) At 0700, four land attack planes - all from the FOURTH Air Group - departed Rabaul. The time of take-off was one-half hour later than planned.** These planes operated as follows:

(1) One plane proceeded direct to Mono Island, from which it took departure at 0823, making good the track of 123°(T) to a distance of 420 miles (700 miles from Rabaul). At 1030, at the outer end of its search, it flew sixty miles to the left, passing over the position where TG 61.1 had been at 0600, and then at about 1048 started its return to Rabaul. At 0935, this plane sighted and reported by radio a large enemy destroyer in position 100 miles on bearing 231 (T) from Tulagi.*** This was the JARVIS, whose position, derived from plotting her known course and speed from previous contacts, was actually ninety-seven miles from Tulagi on bearing 239°(T). Considering his long overwater navigation, the Japanese pilot had given a fairly accurate position report. This pilot made no other contacts.

(2) One plane proceeded direct to Green Island, from which it took departure at about 0735. It then commenced its search along track 120°(T) to a distance of 580 miles (700 miles from Rabaul). At 1030 at the outer end of its search, it flew sixty miles to the left; and then, at 1048, started the return leg via Green Island to Rabaul. This plane made no contacts.

(3) One plane proceeded along track 138°(T) from Rabaul to a distance of 700 miles. At 1030, when it was at the outer end of its search, it flew to the left for sixty miles until 1048, and then headed

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* Strength and Disposition of 25th Air Flotilla on August 7th, 1942, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947.

** Japanese Search Plans August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947, page 4; also Secret Message #57, War Diary 25th Air Flotilla, WDC Document 161730.

*** Ibid; this translation gives the time of contact as 1135, which is obviously a mistranslation.

for Rabaul. At 1100 this plane reported by dispatch the sighting of an ACHILLES Class cruiser retiring from the area, damaged and at slow speed.* The identification of this contact as an ACHILLES Class cruiser was in error; since it was, in fact, the damaged JARVIS which was retiring from the area on course 230°(T) at ten knots. It seems probable that the position of the JARVIS at this time was about 237°(T), distant 110 miles from Tulagi. This search plane did not, at this time, continue its return flight to Rabaul; but tracked* the JARVIS until relieved at 1300 by an Air Attack Group in a position 130 miles from Tulagi.*

(4) One plane proceeded along course 106°(T) to a distance of 700 miles. At 1030 when it was at the outer end of the search, it flew to the left for sixty miles; and at 1048 it commenced its return flight to Rabaul. At 1350 it was sighted to the westward of Tauu Island by an R.A.A.F. Hudson pilot who correctly recognized it as a Mitsubishi heavy bomber.** This Japanese plane made no contacts.

(c) At 0614, one large flying boat from the YOKOHAMA Air Group departed Rabaul and proceeded to search on course 096°(T) to a distance of 700 miles. At 1026 when at its outer limit of search, it turned left to cover a lateral leg of sixty miles; and, at 1047, it commenced its return leg to Rabaul where it landed at 1445. It made no contacts, but was sighted and correctly recognized as a Kawanishi flying boat at 1320 by an R.A.A.F. Hudson in position thirty-five miles north of Tauu Island.**

(d) One large flying boat of the FOURTEENTH Air Group departed Rabaul at 0618 and proceeded along track 148°(T) to a distance of 700 miles. At 1025, when at its outer limit of search, it turned to the left and flew a lateral distance of sixty miles until 1047, when it commenced its return to Rabaul, landing about 1454. It made no contacts.

By way of summarizing the above searches, they were successful in discovering the JARVIS, and in obtaining reasonably good information concerning the Allied forces at Tulagi-Guadalcanal - particularly as regards the transports; yet they were completely unsuccessful in discovering the Allied carrier task force. This was, of course, because the carrier task force was not in the area searched, but was already retiring to the southeast.

This failure to locate the Allied carriers on the 9th must have been even more confusing to Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force than it had been on the previous day. He knew the carriers must be in the area, for his planes had encountered Allied carrier-based planes over Tulagi-Guadalcanal on the preceding two days. He also knew that the Japanese Cruiser Force was retiring and was within striking range of the Allied carrier aircraft.

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* Japanese Search Plans August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947, page 4.

** Operations Report, Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Area, August 9th, 1942.

Was it not reasonable therefore to assume that an attack would be made on these cruisers by Allied carrier-based planes? If so, where were the carriers?

It is not entirely clear what Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force had decided to do in this matter, but it is known that he had launched a powerful air attack group from Rabaul early that morning. This attack group consisted of sixteen land attack planes of the MISAWA Air Group - armed with torpedoes - and fifteen fighters (Zekes) of the TAINAN Air Group. The exact time of the departure of this attack group from Rabaul is not available. It is presumed, however, that it was at about 0740, since the Australian coast watcher on the north end of Bougainville Island reported having heard an enemy air attack group at about 0845.* Analysis indicates that it would have required about one hour for the attack group to cover the distance between Rabaul and the north end of Bougainville Island where the Japanese airfield on Schana Island in Buka Passage was located.

No information is available as to the initial objective of this air attack group, but it seems probable that it was the diversion of Allied carrier planes away from the retiring Japanese Cruiser Force. Initially, on its departure from Rabaul, Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force may have assigned it either of two tentative objectives:

(a) The destruction of the Allied carriers - in case they were discovered by his search planes, or

(b) The destruction of the Allied transports - if they showed any indication of withdrawing from the area.

In either case, as the Allied carrier planes would probably be drawn thereby into the defense of the target, it seems clear that these objectives would have been correct.

Analysis shows that the Japanese air attack group could not have proceeded directly to its objective without some delay en route. It seems probable that the entire air attack group was sent to the airfield at Buka Passage, there to top off in fuel while awaiting specific orders from the Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force. This supposition is based on the time and place of its attack on the ill-fated JARVIS - to be discussed later. To have arrived at 1300 over the JARVIS, the air attack group would have had to depart Buka Passage after 1030. It so happened that 1030 was also the time the Japanese search planes had reached their 700 mile radius from Rabaul without having located the Allied carriers. Whether this was simply a coincidence or whether it was planned, is not clear; but it seems clear that Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force did know at 1030 through radio reports from his planes that there was little - if any - probabilty that

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* HMAS AUSTRALIA, Action Report, CTG 62.6 Action Report and CTF 62 War Diary.

the Allied carriers were within air striking range of the Japanese Cruiser Force. The only contact his searches had made was that at 0935 on a large enemy destroyer bearing 231°(T) distant about 100 miles from Tulagi.

Although there is no definite information as to whether or not the Japanese employed their airfield at Buka Passage at this time, it is known that Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force had dispatched advance base personnel from the TAINAN Air Group* and one section of the garrison unit from EIGHTH Fleet Headquarters to Buka in the AKIKAZE* on August 6th** to activate the airfield for use, and that the base was ready for use on August 8th.* It is also known that the R.A.A.F. Hudsons from Milne Bay had been reconnoitering the airfield once daily since August 5th but had discovered no flight operations there.*** However, the R.A.A.F. plane which had passed over Buka Passage on August 9th had done so at 1330 - three hours after the Japanese air attack group had taken off. This R.A.A.F. plane did discover the small ships anchored at the base, and was fired on by one of them.****

It seems logical to conclude that Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force had decided at 1030 to attack the Allied ships at Tulagi and Guadalcanal, and that he had directed such an attack. Judging from the time of attack - at 1300 - and the speed and distance factors, his air attack group should have taken off from the airfield at Buka Passage at about 1045 in compliance with this attack order. This being the case, the sighting at 1100 of an "ACHILLES Class cruiser" damaged and retiring from the area, by another of his search planes***** was reported while his attack group was in the air, en route to Tulagi. The "ACHILLES Class cruiser" was reported in a position a little to the southwest of the 0935 contact made on a "large enemy destroyer".***** Commander FIFTH Air Attack Force appears to have clearly realized that these two contacts were on the same ship. He had ignored the destroyer earlier, but a cruiser was a different matter! He recalled that Commander Cruiser Force had reported at about 0345 that an "ACHILLES Class cruiser" had been "put to flight".****** Here she was! What should he do? Should he divert his air attack group to destroy this cruiser or should he permit the ordered attack on the transports in Iron Bottom Sound to be carried out?

In re-estimating the situation at this time, his considerations probably were somewhat of the following nature:

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* Detailed Battle Report #8 of the FIFTH Air Attack Force, WDC Document 160140.

** War Diary, 25th Air Flotilla, WDC Document 160155.

*** CinC, SOWESPAC Radio No. C-245, CM-IN 3795, August 11th, 1942, to Chief of Staff, U.S. Army.

**** Allied Air Forces, SOWESPAC Area, Reconnaissance Report, August 9th, 1942.

***** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632.

****** War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947, page 1.

(a) He knew, of course, that the MEIYO MARU had been sunk off Cape St. George by an Allied submarine at 0024, August 9th, and that the five other Japanese transports with her had been recalled to Rabaul from their expedition to reinforce Tulagi. He also knew that this removed for the immediate present the possibility of reinforcing whatever Japanese ground troops remained in the objective area. (All contact with these ground troops had been lost on August 7th). He appears to have felt that for the time being he was unable to interfere seriously with the operations of the Allied landing force. Therefore, the urgency of destroying the Allied transports was lessened.

(b) He knew from the report of the Japanese reconnaissance plane over Tulagi at about 1000 that the Allied ships showed no indications of departing from Iron Bottom Sound. The transports therefore, still constituted a target for later Japanese air attacks - to be carried out as his reinforcements arrived from the Marshalls and Marianas Islands.

(c) He appears to have considered the cumulative effect the sinking of an additional Allied cruiser (that was trying to escape) would have on the immediate Allied strategy. He concluded that the destruction of this cruiser, when added to the Allied losses of the night action, would have a greater adverse effect on that strategy than would the loss of a few transports.

He decided to attack this "cruiser"; and therefore, at about 1115, directed the air attack group from Rabaul to this new target; and, at the same time, appears to have advised the air Group Commander that the "cruiser" was being tracked by one of his land-based search planes from Rabaul.

The air attack Group Commander immediately headed for the above contact. At 1300, under the protection of a strafing attack by his fighters, he succeeded in torpedoing the "cruiser" (JARVIS) and in sinking her without a trace or a survivor in a position bearing 234°(T) distant 130 miles from the center of Savo Island.* In accomplishing this result his air attack group encountered heavy AA fire from the JARVIS as a consequence of which the MISAWA Air Group lost two planes shot down, one severely damaged and forced into an emergency landing and three lightly damaged; a total of six.** His staff, in preparing the report, recorded that the 1300 torpedo attack was made on Allied ships "at Tulagi".*** This entry reveals that the target assigned had been the Allied shipping, and it appears that his staff had inadvertently overlooked the change of target to the "ACHILLES".

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* Secret Message #57, War Diary 25th Air Flotilla, WDC Document 161730.
** War Diary 25th Air Flotilla, WDC Document 161730.
*** Strength and Disposition of 25th Air Flotilla, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74629, May 12th, 1947.

Thus the deceptive roles were unwittingly reversed. Instead of the retiring Japanese Cruiser Force acting as a lure to draw the Allied carrier force within range of the Rabaul-based bombers, the retiring destroyer JARVIS became the lure which drew off the Japanese air attack from the Allied transports and cargo ships.

(b) OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE SUBMARINES

The exact movements of the Japanese submarines on August 9th are not available but can be discussed in a general way.

(a) The RO-34 was still on station off Port Moresby where it was reconnoitering Allied movements in that area.

(b) The I-121 and possibly the RO-33 were operating in the vicinity of Iron Bottom Sound.

(c) The I-122 and the I-123 were still en route to the Tulagi area.

CHAPTER XIX
OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SCREENING GROUP
0220 August 9th to 2400 August 9th

(a) OPERATIONS OF CHICAGO GROUP

(1) Operations of CHICAGO

At 0225, the CHICAGO's radar made contact with a ship at 7,000 yards range. This contact was reported to the Commanding Officer as the same small ship that had been sighted at 0217.* This ship was, of course, the BAGLEY. The radar ranges and bearings revealed that it was at this time headed north.

At about 0226, the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO received a message from CTG 62.6, addressed to the Commanders of the Screening Groups, asking: "Are your groups in action?"**

This message must have caused him to realize suddenly that he had been out of the action for some thirty-six minutes, that he had located no enemy ships on his present course, that any continuing action must be occurring east of Savo Island since CTG 62.6 was aware of it, and that he himself was completely out of it. He must have become deeply concerned over his own conduct of the battle. He had been caught by surprise; his own CHICAGO Group had disintegrated tactically under the Japanese fire; he did not know where they were or what had happened to them, although he did know that the CANBERRA had been on fire. What reply could he give CTG 62.6? His answer was brief: "Were, but not now."**

At this time he decided to return to his operating area and therefore reversed course, steadying on heading 100°(T) at 0228.*

About one minute later, at 0229, he observed a gun action between two ships bearing between 240 degrees and 250 degrees relative* - 350 degrees true - at a distance of about 24,000 yards. This was the final engagement of the night action - the last exchange of fire between the RALPH TALBOT and the YUBARI. The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO had no idea of what this firing was; nor did he show the same interest in investigating it that he had shown at 0200, when he had observed the action between the JARVIS and the YUNAGI. He was concerned now with other considerations.

He probably realized that, as Officer-in-Tactical Command of the CHICAGO Group, he had failed to give orders to his own group, or to coordinate the operations of his group with those of the VINCENNES Group, or to alert

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* Action Report, CHICAGO, concerning Action Against Enemy Forces, August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

the VINCENNES Group as well as both CTF 62 and CTG 62.6. Instead of carrying the action to the Japanese earlier as they moved to the eastward, he had moved independently to the westward - in good faith, it is true - but unfortunately, he had encountered no enemy ships in that direction. Meanwhile, he had observed that the VINCENNES Group had been heavily engaged; he had seen a burning ship. Where were these ships now? He had lost all contact! Had they succeeded in driving off the Japanese attackers or had they failed? Were the transports all right? Furthermore, where were the BAGLEY and the PATTERSON? It is highly probable that these and many other questions were fleeting through his mind as he closed the combat area. He was to find out the sad tale soon enough!

While standing towards his operating area at 0232, the CHICAGO commenced radar tracking a ship detected on his port hand.*

Shortly after 0242, the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO received a message from CTG 62.6 which directed him: "Report situation!"** At 0245 he replied: "We are standing toward Lengo on course 100."**

By 0249 he must have thought better of his economy of words in replying to the two queries of his Immediate Superior in Command. So far, he had laconically stated the uppermost thought in his own mind; but perhaps he had better report the situation as he knew it. He therefore sent an amplifying report to CTG 62.6 which stated: "CHICAGO south of Savo Island. Hit by torpedo. Slightly down by bow. Enemy ships firing to seaward. CANBERRA burning on bearing 125°(T) five miles from Savo. Two destroyers standing by CANBERRA."**

How Commander CHICAGO Group obtained his information that two destroyers were standing by the CANBERRA is not known, as this information was incorrect. Perhaps Commander CHICAGO Group presumed that as the BAGLEY and PATTERSON were not with him they must be with the CANBERRA.

The CHICAGO continued to track the radar contact on her port hand until 0306, when she identified it visually through the haze as the PATTERSON.* The PATTERSON then took an anti-submarine station on the CHICAGO's starboard bow,* thus reforming the CHICAGO Group to a limited extent.

At 0312, Commander CHICAGO Group changed course to 119°(T) to close area XRAY.* At 0335 he detected the CANBERRA about two miles astern*** and dispatched the PATTERSON to the assistance of the CANBERRA* which - disabled and burning - was lying to, but had not been sighted previously because the visibility in the rain squalls in this area was very low.

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* Action Report, CHICAGO, concerning Action Against Enemy Forces, August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

*** CHICAGO Dispatch 082350, August 1942, to CTF 62 and CTG 62.6.

Two minutes later, at 0337, the CHICAGO slowed to ten knots.* She was about eight miles from Area XRAY, where the visibility was very poor and where many ships were milling about underway.* At 0342, when about seven miles from Area XRAY and in the vicinity of the AUSTRALIA's patrol line, she slowed to five knots,* probably as a precautionary measure in navigation. The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO then reported his position, course and speed to CTG 62.6 and added: "Believe bulkheads will hold against high speed."**

At 0347, the CHICAGO was carefully observing the surface contacts which were showing on her radar. She had already tracked one target in particular as it stood in towards Area XRAY.*

At 0410, the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO thought that he had observed heavy gunfire in the direction of Savo Island.* He probably still hoped to enter into a gun duel with the enemy. However, he was doomed to disappointment since there were no gun actions in the area at this hour. What he appears to have heard and seen was the heavy thunder and lightning which was reported by the ASTORIA, CANBERRA, PATTERSON, HOPKINS and by other destroyers as well in that general area. The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO set a course of 291°(T) and proceeded at about fifteen knots to investigate.*

At about 0520 he commenced tracking by radar a target which was thought to be a destroyer.* In the low visibility this ship was not sighted, nor was the burning CANBERRA detected. However, at 0525, the CHICAGO was illuminated on her starboard side by this destroyer's searchlight.* The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO increased speed to twenty knots to haul clear.*

Although no orders had been given in the CHICAGO to open fire, the gun captains on Number One and Number Five 5-inch guns opened fire by percussion in the direction of the searchlight.* The Secondary Battery Control Officer (starboard) ordered: "Cease firing!" and rang the cease firing gong.*

By this time the destroyer, which was in fact the PATTERSON, was observed to return the fire. Whereupon, both the starboard 5-inch Control Officer and the 1.1-inch Control Officer ordered their batteries to commence firing.* At this juncture, the Commanding Officer observed the PATTERSON make the wrong emergency identification signal, but - knowing her to be friendly because of her location pursuant to the orders he had given her earlier - he immediately repeated the order to cease firing.* The PATTERSON too ceased firing and illuminating, and all was quiet and darkness again.*

The CHICAGO continued on her course of 291°(T). Once again he discovered

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* Action Report, CHICAGO, concerning Action Against Enemy Forces, August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

nothing. However, as no vessels were in sight and there was no sound of gunfire,* he reversed course at 0600 and stood toward the CANBERRA, which had signaled him that she had 400 men on board.* As the CHICAGO approached, she sighted a destroyer standing in toward the CANBERRA and soon identified her as the BLUE. The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO, once again acting as the Group Commander and interested in assisting a damaged ship of his CHICAGO Group, directed the BLUE to assist in taking off the crew of the CANBERRA. Such orders were superfluous since the BLUE had already been directed to do this by COMDESDIV EIGHT.** He then reported to CTG 62.6: "Standing by CANBERRA. Have ordered BLUE alongside to take off remaining 400 men."***

At 0610, the CHICAGO again stood toward Area XRAY for the purpose of meeting the designated time of being off Lengo Channel for the 0630 withdrawal.* At this time, the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO reported to CTG 62.6 that: "BLUE, SELFRIDGE, PATTERSON, standing by CANBERRA. Am proceeding to concentration area."***

At 0700, the CHICAGO sighted the SAN JUAN, and immediately thereafter received a signal from CTG 62.4 (in the SAN JUAN) to follow him toward Area YOKE.* The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO fell in astern of the SAN JUAN and attempted to increase speed to conform to that ship's movements, but was unable to maintain any greater speed than ten knots because of the tearing of the ruptured plates on the bow and because of the pressure on bulkheads which had not been sufficiently shored up as yet.*

At 0720, the CHICAGO, operating alone, received a visual message from CTG 62.6 to stand toward the AUSTRALIA. As this order was carried out, the CHICAGO assumed her designated daylight position in the screen of the transports of Group XRAY.* Her operations throughout the remainder of the ninth were in the capacity of a screening ship of TF 62.

* * *

During the entire action, the CHICAGO fired twenty-five 5-inch shells but no 8-inch shells. She received in return one shell hit, probably 4.7-inch. She also received one torpedo hit in the bow which detonated, and one torpedo hit amidships (starboard) which failed to detonate.

(2) Loss of CANBERRA

At 0220, the CANBERRA was lying to helplessly, with about ten degrees

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* Action Report, CHICAGO, concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** Action Report, BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942, and Action Report, PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

*** Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

list to starboard. Uncontrollable fire enveloped her midships section, which area of the ship had been closed down in the hope that the fire would smother itself.*

At about 0345, the PATTERSON was observed to approach and the Executive Officer, CANBERRA, acting for the wounded Commanding Officer requested that the PATTERSON come alongside to port and to supply fire hoses. Just at this time, the CANBERRA's 4-inch ready service ammunition began to explode,* and the CANBERRA signaled the PATTERSON: "you had better wait!"** Eventually at about 0405, word was given that it was considered safe for the PATTERSON to come alongside. The CANBERRA received one pump (handy-billy) and four hoses from the PATTERSON, and commenced to fight the fire amidships.

At 0500, the Executive Officer, CANBERRA was informed by the Commanding Officer, PATTERSON that CTF 62 had directed that if the CANBERRA could not be made to steam in time to join the general retirement at 0630, she was to be abandoned and destroyed.* He looked the situation over as regards the condition of the ship and realized his position was hopeless. He therefore at 0515 gave orders to stop efforts to save the ship and prepare to abandon ship.

At this same time, he received a warning from the PATTERSON: "Out all lights!"* He stopped the transfer of the wounded. The PATTERSON then immediately went ahead on her engines, casting off some lines, cutting others, and even parting a few to get clear.* As soon as the PATTERSON was clear, the Executive Officer, CANBERRA observed on his port quarter a cruiser resembling the CHICAGO. He noted that the PATTERSON and this cruiser opened fire on each other, and both disappeared ahead of the CANBERRA in the rain squalls and low visibility.

The CANBERRA continued her arrangements for abandoning ship, and collected parties on the quarterdeck and forecastle.*

At about 0550, as first light was breaking, she sighted a destroyer and then a cruiser on her port beam. These turned out to be the BLUE and the CHICAGO, respectively. At about 0600, the PATTERSON reappeared. The BLUE came alongside and secured to her port bow at 0622; the PATTERSON at 0625 secured to her port quarter.* The CANBERRA was listing about fifteen degrees to starboard at this time.

She transferred the remainder of the wounded, including the Captain,

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* Report of Commander J. A. Walsh, Executive Officer, CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning Loss of HMAS CANBERRA.

** Action Report, PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, 1942, Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area to CTF 62, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

and all unhurt personnel as well to these two destroyers, completing the transfer by 0640. By this time, the CANBERRA's list had increased to about twenty degrees to starboard, and she was still fiercely on fire amidships.

The PATTERSON and BLUE departed at about 0645 to Transport Area XRAY where they later delivered the CANBERRA's personnel to the BARNETT and the FULLER, respectively.*

Meanwhile, at 0640, the SELFRIDGE had arrived in the vicinity of the abandoned CANBERRA. At 0650, she received orders from CTF 62 to sink the CANBERRA.** At 0710, she opened fire on the CANBERRA - expending 263 rounds of 5-inch common projectiles and four torpedoes.** The number of shell hits made is not known, but one of the four torpedoes hit. The other three passed under the CANBERRA without exploding.

At the time the SELFRIDGE was firing into the CANBERRA, the Commanding Officer, ELLET arrived in the area. Noting the SELFRIDGE firing, he concluded that the CANBERRA was a disabled Japanese cruiser, closed at full speed, and opened fire at 5000 yards, scoring several hits. However he was immediately informed by COMDESRON FOUR that his target was the CANBERRA. He therefore at 0743, ceased firing after expending 106 rounds of 5-inch ammunition.***

At 0747, as the CANBERRA had not sunk, COMDESRON FOUR directed the ELLET to complete the job. She then, at 0756, from close range, fired one torpedo into the starboard side of the CANBERRA under the bridge and observed the CANBERRA sink at 0800. Then the SELFRIDGE and ELLET proceeded toward Area XRAY until the air raid warning at 0845 directed them to form cruising disposition AC-3.

* * *

During the entire action, the CANBERRA fired no 8-inch shells and probably fired no more than three 4-inch shells, the exact number being indeterminate but certainly few. She received in return not less than twenty-four 8-inch and 4.7-inch hits. Despite statements to the contrary, she appears to have received no torpedo hits.

(3) Operations of BAGLEY

At 0220, the BAGLEY was headed north at twenty-five knots from her position about six miles southwest of the center of Savo Island, proceeding to the destroyer rendezvous five miles northwest of Savo Island. She

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* Report of Comdr. J.A. Walsh, Executive Officer, CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning Loss of HMAS CANBERRA.
** War Diary, COMDESRON FOUR in SELFRIDGE, August 9th, 1942.
*** War Diary, ELLET, August 9th, 1942.

arrived at this rendezvous about 0300 and slowed her speed to about fifteen knots. She did not report sighting any other destroyers in this area, but her attention was drawn to a burning ship about five miles east of Savo Island.* After milling about in the rendezvous area for some time, and not receiving any orders, the Commanding Officer, BAGLEY appears to have determined that the night action was over and that the burning cruiser east of Savo Island warranted investigation. If she were friendly, he might be of assistance; if enemy, perhaps he might sink her. It seems likely that he proceeded toward the burning cruiser at about 0400. As he approached this cruiser he soon identified her as the ASTORIA.* At 0430, he received a visual signal from the ASTORIA requesting him to "stand by", and then another request to come alongside.** He therefore approached the ASTORIA, bows on, and tied up alongside her starboard bow at 0445.

The BAGLEY removed approximately 450 survivors, including 125 wounded men and the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA. After removing all survivors from the ASTORIA's forecastle, the BAGLEY backed clear and busied herself with picking up other ASTORIA survivors from the water.

Shortly before daylight, lights were observed on the after main deck of the ASTORIA.* The Commanding Officer, BAGLEY, noting that there was no severe fire aft on the ASTORIA and that the ASTORIA appeared in no immediate danger aft; and that the fire on the hangar and amidships was dying out, decided to recover the personnel in the water first. He, therefore, signalled the party on the stern of the ASTORIA that they had been seen, and continued his rescue operations. During the remaining darkness, the BAGLEY recovered the ASTORIA survivors who had been driven overboard by the ASTORIA fires amidships.*

At 0545 (full daylight), the BAGLEY went alongside the starboard quarter of the ASTORIA to return on board the ASTORIA the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA and certain repair personnel.* At the same time, she received the ASTORIA's wounded as well as other personnel not required for salvage work. She then backed clear and stood by, continuing to rescue personnel from the water in the vicinity. At this time, she received survivors from all three cruisers (VINCENNES, QUINCY and ASTORIA).*

At 0900, she observed an unknown minesweeper, which turned out to be the HOPKINS, standing in from the west of Savo Island. She requested the HOPKINS to stand by the ASTORIA while she proceeded to the transport Area to transfer the wounded and other survivors.*

She transferred the survivors to the PRESIDENT JACKSON, and then took

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* Action Report, BAGLEY, Night Engagement August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

** Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942.

up her daylight screening station in Transport Area YOKE.*

* * *

During the entire action the BAGLEY fired no projectiles at the enemy. She fired four torpedoes, all of which missed.

(4) Operations of PATTERSON

At 0220, the PATTERSON was heading west to pass south of Savo Island and her Commanding Officer intended, when clear to seaward, to proceed to the rendezvous point five miles northwest of Savo Island. Her movements are revealed by the fact that the CHICAGO, which was standing in toward the eastward, commenced radar tracking the PATTERSON at 0232 and subsequently identified her at 0306.** The PATTERSON thereafter took station on the starboard bow of the CHICAGO.**

The Commanding Officer, PATTERSON makes no mention of it in his report, but the presence of the CHICAGO caused him to change his plan of proceeding to the destroyer rendezvous to that of screening the CHICAGO. He took station on her bow apparently without orders.

At 0312, the PATTERSON conformed to the CHICAGO's change of course to 119°(T) and continued with her at twelve knots toward transport Area XRAY.** En route she observed the burning CANBERRA to port. At 0335, when in a position about nine miles from Area XRAY, she received orders from the CHICAGO to close and stand by the CANBERRA.***

As she approached the CANBERRA, the Commanding Officer, PATTERSON learned that the CANBERRA was unable to cope with the many fires. He received a request from her to come alongside the windward side amidships and to furnish hoses for fighting fire. He could see violent explosions on the CANBERRA at irregular intervals and because of these he was signaled from the CANBERRA: "You had better wait."***

The weather in this area at the time consisted of heavy rain squalls accompanied with thunder and lightning; the visibility was less than one mile, and sufficient wind had risen to make the sea choppy.*** These rain squalls helped to quench the fires on the CANBERRA as they had done at about the same time on the burning ASTORIA.

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* Action Report BAGLEY, Night Engagement August 9th, 1942, Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, Serial 016, August 13th, 1942.

** Action Report, CHICAGO, concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942 Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

*** Action Report, PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships, Night August 8th-9th, in Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

Eventually, at about 0408, the PATTERSON went alongside the port midships section of the CANBERRA, since the latter was listing about ten degrees to starboard.* Hoses and handy billies were sent across to the CANBERRA and fire fighting commenced. The PATTERSON started removing the wounded from the CANBERRA across brows, in small boats, and even in cargo nets.* At 0410, the Commanding Officer, PATTERSON reported to CTF 62 that the CANBERRA was out of commission.

At a few minutes before 0500, a dispatch was received from CTF 62 which stated: "It is urgent for this force depart this area 0630." Almost immediately another message from CTF 62 addressed to CTG 62.6 was intercepted in the PATTERSON as: "If CANBERRA cannot join retirement in time, she should be destroyed before departure."**

This latter message was read to the Commanding Officer, CANBERRA (the Executive Officer was acting), who then made the decision to abandon ship. Before executing this decision to abandon, however, all wounded were removed to the PATTERSON and the crew of the CANBERRA, to the man, stayed aboard until this was accomplished.

While removing the wounded at about 0510, the PATTERSON made a surface radar contact on her port quarter at 8000 yards and noted that it decreased in range slowly.

At 0515, COMDESDIV EIGHT (in the PATTERSON) requested the BLUE to proceed to the assistance of the CANBERRA.*** The PATTERSON cast off all lines and stood clear. The CANBERRA was alerted and all lights were extinguished aboard. The PATTERSON challenged the strange ship three times, but received no reply.***

At 0525, when the range had closed to 3000 yards, the PATTERSON illuminated the strange ship with searchlight, and was immediately fired upon. The PATTERSON returned the fire with three salvos of 5-inch shells.

The Commanding Officer, PATTERSON noted the strange ship appeared somewhat like the CHICAGO.*** He therefore fired the emergency identification signal (which the CHICAGO reported was incorrect);**** and he ordered

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* Action Report, PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, in Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

** CTF 62 Dispatch 081735, August 1942 and Action Report, PATTERSON Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships, Night August 8th-9th, in Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

*** Action Report, BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942.

**** Action Report, CHICAGO, concerning Action Against Enemy Forces, August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

"cease firing!"* The strange ship (which was actually the CHICAGO) and the PATTERSON ceased firing. Fortunately, no hits were made.

The PATTERSON returned to the CANBERRA at daylight to resume her work of taking off the survivors. By this time the list on the CANBERRA had increased to fifteen degrees. COMDESDIV EIGHT then reported to CTG 62.6 that the CANBERRA was abandoning ship, that he had rescued the entire crew, and would sink her. This message was released before the PATTERSON had accomplished the rescue mission, and it was either garbled in transmission or was misunderstood by CTG 62.6 on reception. This seems so, for the PATTERSON did not complete her rescue work until 0640 and even then did not rescue the entire crew.**

In the meantime, the BLUE had arrived and had gone alongside the port bow of the CANBERRA at 0622. The PATTERSON then returned alongside the CANBERRA, this time on her port quarter as the BLUE eased forward to the port bow.

By 0640, all survivors had been removed. The BLUE had taken off 250 survivors from the forecastle, and the PATTERSON had taken off the remainder - 400 survivors, including seventy wounded men. The PATTERSON, having been relieved of the task of sinking the CANBERRA by the SELFRIDGE, proceeded to transport Area XRAY and later transferred all the CANBERRA survivors, and eight wounded men of her own crew as well, to the BARNETT.

* * *

During the entire action, the PATTERSON fired thirty-three(?) 5-inch projectiles at the enemy. She fired no torpedoes. She received in return one 5.5-inch hit.

(b) OPERATIONS OF VINCENNES GROUP

(1) Loss of VINCENNES

At 0220 the VINCENNES, in position bearing 085°(T), distant 8400 yards from the center of Savo Island, was dead in the water and preparing to abandon ship.***

At 0230, when the list had increased so that it was apparent that the

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* Action Report, PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships Night August 8th-9th, in Savo-Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

** CTG 62.6 (CTF 44) Dispatch 081927, August 1942, to COMSOWESPAC and A.C.N.B. (Australian Commonwealth Naval Board).

*** Action Report VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

ship could not remain afloat, the Commanding Officer gave the order to abandon ship.* During the next twenty minutes the crew of the VINCENNES were lowering the wounded over the side to life rafts and abandoning the ship while she continued to heel more to port.*

At 0240, the Commanding Officer left the bridge and proceeded to the superstructure deck to supervise and to expedite the abandonment, for he realized the ship would soon turn over. At this time, he passed the word along for all remaining personnel to get off immediately.*

At 0250, the water had reached the deck on which he was standing, and he commenced swimming.* The ship sank at 0250, and the foremast struck the water just a few feet from where the Commanding Officer was swimming clear.*

Destroyers appeared at 0615 and commenced rescue operations of the VINCENNES' survivors. By 0820 they had recovered the personnel on the raft to which the Commanding Officer was clinging.

* * *

In connection with the loss of the VINCENNES, the Bureau of Ships stated that the damage to the VINCENNES was so extensive that its loss was inevitable; that it is not possible for any lightly protected vessel to absorb such punishment and survive. The Bureau also stated that fires were a major contributing factor.**

* * *

During the entire action, the VINCENNES fired about thirty-three 8-inch shells and about twenty 5-inch shells, the exact number in each case being indeterminate. She received in return fifty-seven actual 8-inch, 5.5-inch and 4.7-inch hits with a possibility of not less than seventeen more, a total of seventy-four hits.*** She also received two torpedo hits.

(2) Loss of QUINCY

At 0220, the QUINCY was drifting to the eastward in a position bearing 067°(T), distant 12,000 yards from the center of Savo Island. The KINUGASA, last ship in the Japanese column, passed about 2200 yards from the QUINCY. The whole attention of the QUINCY personnel at this time was devoted to abandoning ship. The ship was listing heavily to port, the forecastle was

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* Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

** Loss in Action QUINCY, ASTORIA, VINCENNES, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, War Damage Report No. 29, NavShips 29(374), Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, June 12th, 1943, page 1.

*** Ibid, Plate II.

awash and the water was rapidly approaching the coaming on the port side of the gun deck. The after part of the ship was ablaze.

The senior officer in the forward part of the ship was the Gunnery Officer, who gave the order to those in his area to abandon ship. This officer was later the Senior Surviving Officer of the QUINCY, but, as has been pointed out earlier, he did not know it at that time. Life preservers were broken out, life rafts and floater nets were cut loose, and all floatable objects, including empty 5-inch shell tanks were thrown into the water.

At 0235, the gun deck was awash and about a minute later, the bow went under. The ship was in her death throes and sank about 0238, going down by the bow and rolling to port.*

* * *

In connection with the loss of the QUINCY, the Bureau of Ships stated that damage to QUINCY was so extensive that its loss was inevitable; that it is not possible for any lightly protected vessel to absorb such punishment and survive. The Bureau also stated that fires were a major contributing factor.**

* * *

During the entire action, the QUINCY fired twenty-one 8-inch shells and no 5-inch shells. She received in return thirty-six actual 8-inch, 5.5-inch and 4.7-inch hits with a possibility of not less than eighteen more - a total of fifty-four hits.*** She also received three torpedo hits.

(3) Loss of ASTORIA

At 0220, the ASTORIA was in a position bearing 078°(T) distant 10,750 yards from the center of Savo Island. Her bow was headed on 185°(T) but she was drifting approximately along 220°(T).

For the next two hours the party of 300 men on the forecastle, under the supervision of the Commanding Officer, assembled seventy wounded men together and attended them; gathered many dead preparatory to burial; and organized bucket brigades under the direction of the First Lieutenant, who

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* Action Report, QUINCY, Engagement Morning August 9th, 1942 off Guadalcanal Island by Lieut. Comdr. H. B. Heneberger, USN, Senior Surviving Officer, Serial CA39/A16-3/(004)hmc, August 16th, 1942.

** Loss in Action QUINCY, ASTORIA, VINCENNES, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, War Damage Report No. 29, NavShips 29(374), Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, June 12th, 1943, page 1.

*** Ibid, Plate IV.

reported up from Central Station. Some progress was made against the fires. The party on the main deck aft whose presence was completely unknown to the Commanding Officer and which was under the supervision of the Executive Officer, engaged in similar salvage work and worked forward to the well deck against the raging fires. Turret III was kept manned and loaded (without primers being inserted) for a time in case the enemy should return to sink the ASTORIA. The magazine of this turret eventually had to be flooded.

In the meantime, the Engineer Officer reported to the Executive Officer and gave an optimistic appraisal of the condition of the engineering spaces. The ship had only a three degree list to port which was not increasing. It was believed by these officers that the ship could be saved. About 0400, a rain squall set in and aided considerably in quenching fires topside.

About 0430, the BAGLEY was observed approaching the ASTORIA. The Commanding Officer, ASTORIA signalled the BAGLEY to "stand by". She was then requested to come alongside the ASTORIA's starboard bow with her own starboard bow, keeping her stern in the clear ahead of the ASTORIA. At 0445, the BAGLEY came alongside in this manner. The wounded were moved across to her, and then all survivors on the forecastle, including the Commanding Officer, were transferred to the BAGLEY.*

As the BAGLEY backed clear, the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA requested the BAGLEY to stand by until daylight so that an examination of the ship could be made and the possibility of salvage determined.* The Commanding Officer thought at this time that he had evacuated all hands and did not realize that a considerable number of his men were on the fantail awaiting rescue.

At about 0450, the BAGLEY made a report of the situation as regarded the ASTORIA to CTF 62 over TBS voice radio. It is probable that, with this exchange of communications, CTF 62 requested information about the VINCENNES and QUINCY and was told that these ships were not in sight.

At this time, the Executive Officer, on the after main deck of the ASTORIA, attracted the BAGLEY's attention by flashing lights (no messages).** He was immediately answered by flashing light from the BAGLEY. He thus knew that his presence was known to the BAGLEY. This was reassuring also to the other personnel who were on the after main deck with the Executive Officer.

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942.

** Letter August 19th, 1942 from Commander F.E. Shoup, USN, Executive Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Night Cruiser Action off Savo Island, early morning August 9th, 1942, para. 16.

At 0545 (full daylight), the BAGLEY placed her bow alongside the starboard quarter of the ASTORIA. The Commanding Officer, ASTORIA then learned that his Executive Officer and Chief Engineer were present. These officers advised him there was a good chance of salvaging the ship.*

The Commanding Officer, ASTORIA thereupon placed on board the ASTORIA a salvage crew consisting of two deck divisions, the C & R force, engineers, electricians, ship control force, etcetera, totaling about 325 men and all officers who were not wounded. The Commanding Officer took charge. By 0600, all the wounded from the fantail of the ASTORIA and all the others, not needed for the damage control operations, had been transferred aboard the BAGLEY, which then shoved off.**

At 0600, the list on the ASTORIA was still three degrees to port. This list later increased because of three 8-inch holes on the port side just above the water line, one abreast of fireroom Number One and several others. Fire fighting by bucket brigades went forward in an energetic manner. The Engineer Officer attempted unsuccessfully to get power and to raise steam.

At 0915, the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA hailed the HOPKINS, as she came within hailing distance, and requested her to tow the ASTORIA into shallow water off Guadalcanal. About 0915, he ordered the HELM and WILSON (through the HOPKINS' TBS radio) to screen the ASTORIA and HOPKINS during this towing operation. (An air-raid alert had just been broadcast about twenty-five minutes before.)**

The HOPKINS succeeded in swinging the ASTORIA's stern around to the southeast, and by 1100 was proceeding nicely, though with some difficulty. In the meantime, (probably before 1045), the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA had filed a message on the HOPKINS to CTF 62, reporting the conditions and the hope that the ASTORIA might be salvaged if power and water to fight fire could be provided.**

At 1100, when the air raid alert was secured, the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA directed the WILSON - which had been ordered by CTF 62 to assist the ASTORIA - to close and fight fire on the ASTORIA. The WILSON went alongside her with all fire hoses going, tied up forward, and put over a working party to assist the ASTORIA's party. At this time, the ASTORIA's turret II, conning tower, and lower bridge structure were still burning fiercely.

In the meantime, the fire below decks in the ASTORIA was increasing.

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* Letter August 19th, 1942 from Commander F. E. Shoup, USN, Executive Officer, ASTORIA to Commanding Officer concerning Night Cruiser Action off Savo Island, early morning August 9th, 1942, para. 16.

** Action Report ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500), August 20th, 1942.

Frequent small explosions were heard and the list to port had increased to about ten degrees. At about 1100, a much heavier explosion was heard which turned out to be the forward magazines. The ship now began to increase her list to port.*

At 1119, CTF 62 ordered the HOPKINS, by TBS radio, to cast loose her tow and return the survivors she had aboard to Area XRAY when relieved by the BUCHANAN at about 1145.** CTF 62 also ordered the WILSON and HELM to Area XRAY to discharge the survivors when the BUCHANAN arrived to stand by the ASTORIA.

At 1140, COMINRON TWO in the HOPKINS ordered HELM and WILSON to proceed with HOPKINS to Area XRAY. She therefore, at 1145, dropped the tow line and departed.** At 1157, the WILSON, upon being relieved by the BUCHANAN, also cast loose and proceeded to join the HOPKINS and HELM.

At 1200, the BUCHANAN attempted to come alongside the starboard bow of the ASTORIA to pump water. By this time, however, the ASTORIA was listing about fifteen degrees to port and it became evident she was shipping water through the 8-inch holes along her port side on the second deck level, and that she could not remain afloat much longer.*

The Commanding Officer, ASTORIA therefore requested the BUCHANAN to stand by the starboard quarter, and he directed all hands to assemble on the stern of the ASTORIA.*

At 1205, when the port waterway of the main deck was awash, the Commanding Officer gave the order: "Abandon Ship!" All hands went over the side. By this time, the ALCHIBA had arrived, pursuant to orders from CTF 62 to take the ASTORIA in tow.*

The BUCHANAN lowered two motor whaleboats to pick up the survivors, but departed immediately to track a "submarine contact". In the meantime, the ALCHIBA commenced picking up survivors.*

The ASTORIA turned over on her port beam, then rolled slowly as she settled by the stern so that the keel under her bow raised a few feet above the water before she disappeared below the surface at 1215.* Her position of sinking was bearing 125°(T), distant 7700 yards from the center of Savo Island.

After the ASTORIA sank, the ALCHIBA recovered thirty-two survivors from the water, rafts and boats.***

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* Action Report, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, Serial AP37/A16-3/(00500) August 20th, 1942.

** Letter August 12th, 1942 from Lieut. W.T. Dutton, USN, Executive Officer, HOPKINS to Commanding Officer concerning Engagement in Guadalcanal-Florida Area, August 7th-9th, 1942, page 12.

*** War Diary ALCHIBA, August 9th, 1942.

Meanwhile, the BUCHANAN attacked the submarine contact, which was considered doubtful, with two 600-pound depth charges. She then returned and picked up the remaining survivors including the Captain of the ASTORIA. She finally recovered 350 officers and men which she transferred to the PRESIDENT JACKSON.*

* * *

In connection with the loss of the ASTORIA, the Bureau of Ships stated: "Structural damage to the ASTORIA was not such that loss of the vessel was inevitable. The fires which resulted, however, effectively prevented control of the damage. Fires could not be controlled because of the initial lack of certain facilities, the destruction of some facilities initially available, and the fact that certain others were inoperable because of a lack of power. Thus damage and uncontrolled fires resulted in the loss of the ASTORIA.**

* * *

During the entire action, the ASTORIA fired about fifty-three 8-inch shells and fifty-nine 5-inch shells. She received in return thirty-four actual 8-inch, 5.5-inch and 4.7-inch hits with a possibility of not less than twenty-nine more - a total of sixty-three hits.*** She received no torpedo hits.

(4) Operations of HELM and WILSON

At 0220, the HELM was 10,000 yards due north of Savo Island, proceeding to the westward at thirty knots to investigate the action which was being fought between the RALPH TALBOT and the Japanese Western Group.

At about 0225, she identified the RALPH TALBOT as a friendly destroyer when she was silhouetted by a flash of lightning. She did not see any other ship at this time. The firing from the RALPH TALBOT had lasted for only a few more salvos.

At about 0230, the HELM was sure that all action had ceased. She saw no further indication of the RALPH TALBOT's being in contact with the enemy or of being in trouble. The HELM continued on toward the rendezvous point five miles northwest of Savo Island.****

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* War Diary, BUCHANAN, August 9th, 1942.

** Loss in Action QUINCY, ASTORIA, VINCENNES, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, War Damage Report #29, NavShips 29(374), Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, June 12th, 1942, page 1.

*** Ibid, Plate V.

**** Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3/(129), August 14th, 1942.

Meanwhile, the WILSON was heading to the southward to pass around Savo Island. At 0220, she was about 6650 yards on bearing 083°(T) from the center of Savo Island. She proceeded south at fifteen knots until she was clear of Savo Island, then changed course to 270°(T) until she had reached the open sea. She then proceeded northwesterly past Savo Island to the point of rendezvous five miles northwest of that island, where she arrived at 0400.

At 0430, the HELM which had previously arrived in the rendezvous area, was joined in column by the WILSON.

At 0538, as daylight was breaking, the Commanding Officer, HELM heard by TBS voice radio that the SELFRIDGE and MUGFORD, which were in the same area as he, were returning to the transport area. He then ordered the WILSON to return with him toward Area XRAY and to pick up any survivors encountered enroute. He set the course for the WILSON and HELM toward the scene of the night action with the VINCENNES Group.*

At 0630, he commenced rescuing survivors in the vicinity of the position in which the VINCENNES had sunk.* At 0640, the WILSON commenced picking up QUINCY survivors.

At 0708, the WILSON made an underwater sound contact which she thought was a submarine, but - on tracking it - lost the contact in a few minutes.

Rescue operations were continued by both the WILSON and the HELM until the receipt at about 0915 of an order from the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA, through COMMINRON TWO in the HOPKINS, to screen the ASTORIA. By this time, the HELM had recovered 175 survivors from rafts, and from the water. Of these survivors, one was from the QUINCY, three were from the ASTORIA and 171 were from the VINCENNES.* The WILSON by this time had recovered 211 survivors, all that had been in sight up to this time.**

The HELM and WILSON then proceeded to the vicinity of the ASTORIA and provided an anti-aircraft and anti-submarine screen until 1100. At that time, the WILSON was ordered to fight fires on the ASTORIA.** She went alongside that ship forward with all fire hoses going, and tied up. The Commanding Officer, WILSON put a working party aboard to assist the ASTORIA fire party. The HELM continued to stand by in a screening position. The air raid (predicted at about 0900) had not developed by 1100, but the submarine contacts, which had been reported, alerted the Commanding Officer, HELM to commence anti-submarine patroling about the ASTORIA.

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* Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3/(129), August 14th, 1942.

** Action Report, WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island, Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942.

At 1140, COMMINRON TWO in the HOPKINS ordered all destroyers in the vicinity (HOPKINS, HELM and WILSON) to proceed to Area XRAY and discharge the survivors.

At 1157, the BUCHANAN relieved the WILSON as fire fighting ship. The WILSON then fell in formation astern of the HELM in the column of destroyers led by the HOPKINS and proceeded to Area XRAY.

At 1300, orders were received over TBS from CTF 62 to transfer all survivors to the HUNTER LIGGETT. The HELM went alongside the HUNTER LIGGETT at 1315 and the WILSON shortly thereafter moored alongside the HELM. Both ships completed the transfer of survivors, including about thirty wounded men, at 1414. The HELM and WILSON thereafter operated as a part of the screen of Task Force 62.

* * *

During this battle, the HELM fired one salvo of four 5-inch guns at no visible target. Therefore, it is considered that she did not fire at the enemy at all. She received no hits.*

The WILSON, on the other hand, fired 212 5-inch projectiles. She also received no hits.**

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(c) OPERATIONS OF RADAR AND ANTI-SUBMARINE SCREEN

(1) Operations of BLUE

At 0220 the BLUE was proceeding along her patrol line - located west of Savo Island - on course 051°(T), heading in the general direction of the RALPH TALBOT. At about this time, she observed that the RALPH TALBOT which was under searchlight illumination and gun-fire, flashed her two vertical red lights as an emergency identification signal.*** She observed that in spite of this signal, the firing continued intermittently for several minutes.*** The Commanding Officer, BLUE then witnessed the engagement between the RALPH TALBOT and the YUBARI, though he did not have a clear picture of the situation. He noted that the gunfire shifted and eventually was directed from the northwest on the RALPH TALBOT. It ceased at 0232 when the searchlight (YUBARI's) was extinguished.*** By this time the BLUE was far

* Action Report, HELM, Night Engagement off Savo Island, Solomon Islands, August 9th, 1942, Serial DD388/A16-3/(129), August 14th, 1942.

** Action Report, WILSON, Action Against Enemy Surface Ships off Savo Island, Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 008, August 20th, 1942.

*** Action Report, BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942.

enough north to see beyond Savo Island, and sighted a burning cruiser about five miles east of that island, which ship was probably the QUINCY.*

At 0235, the BLUE reached the northeastern limit of her patrol line. She thereupon reversed course to 231°(T);* and, steaming at twelve knots, continued her routine radar patrol. She does not appear to have received COMDESRON FOUR's order over TBS voice radio for the destroyers to concentrate. It appears probable that such voice transmissions from ships east of Savo Island were blanked out over much of the length of the BLUE's patrol line. However, even had she received this order to concentrate, she would not have left her patrolling station, for both the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT were directed in the basic screening instructions to continue their patrols along their designated picket lines, even though concentration was ordered.

At 0250, when about midway along her patrol line, she sighted an unidentified ship to the southwest which she noted was rounding Cape Esperance* and taking a southwesterly course at average speed.* The BLUE increased speed to twenty knots* and trailed this contact, closing it until 0325. She challenged the unidentified ship (visually), and received an answer (visually) that this ship was the JARVIS withdrawing from the area for repairs.

At 0325, the BLUE closed to within 500 yards of the JARVIS.** She noted that the JARVIS, which had increased speed upon being trailed by the BLUE (whom the JARVIS may have thought was another enemy destroyer attacking, as had the YUNAGI), had now slowed to about eight knots.** Actually she appears to have averaged ten knots. The BLUE noted the heavy oil slick left by the JARVIS, which was quite pronounced even in the darkness.**

At 0325, the BLUE reversed course to 045°(T), and increased her speed to regain her patrol station and resume her routine patrol until dawn.

At 0515, the Commanding Officer, BLUE received a request from COMDESDIV EIGHT (in the PATTERSON) to stand by the CANBERRA and to assist her in abandoning ship. He immediately left his patrol area and proceeded to the assistance of the CANBERRA. En route, he encountered light rain and visibility which was reduced to one mile. As he approached the CANBERRA at about 0600, he lowered a life boat to recover personnel observed in the water and continued his approach. At 0622 he went alongside the port quarter of the CANBERRA, which he noted was listing about fifteen degrees to starboard and burning badly on the starboard side amidships. At 0625,

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* Action Report, BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942.

** Letter August 17th, 1942 from Commanding Officer, BLUE, to CTF 62 concerning Supplemental Information on Action Report BLUE (Serial 031, August 12th, 1942) Serial 035, August 17th, 1942.

he shifted forward to the port bow to allow the PATTERSON to ease in astern of him.

The BLUE commenced removing personnel, and by 0640, had cleared all hands from the forecastle. The Commanding Officer, BLUE, then cleared the side of the CANBERRA, recovered his boat with the survivors it had picked up, and proceeded to Transport Area XRAY where he later transferred the CANBERRA survivors to the FULLER.

The BLUE had taken no active offensive measures in this night action. She had inflicted no damage on the enemy. She had made no contact reports, and had sustained no loss or damage.* The entire action appeared to her to have taken place on the opposite side of Savo Island.*

* * *

During the entire action, the BLUE fired no projectiles or torpedoes. She received no hits.

* * *

(2) Operations of RALPH TALBOT

At 0220, the RALPH TALBOT was engaging the YUBARI and had just commenced a sharp left turn with full rudder in order to bring her port torpedo tubes to bear.

It so happened that at the same time, the Japanese Western Group had changed course to the left also, the YUBARI coming to course 300°(T) to parallel the retirement course of the TENRYU. This change placed the YUBARI on the RALPH TALBOT's port quarter, so that it was unnecessary for the latter to come further to the left than about 260°(T). Judging from the bearing on the RALPH TALBOT that was obtained by the TENRYU a few minutes later (at 0225), it seems probable that the RALPH TALBOT steadied on course 262°(T) at about 0222.

In this left turn, the RALPH TALBOT had shifted to the port torpedo director. Thirty degrees left gyro angle was set,** which setting reveals that the TALBOT's target was well aft to port and supports the supposition that the RALPH TALBOT had not turned further to the left than the heading 262°(T). It was immediately discovered that the transmission between the director and tubes was out, and the tubes were unable to match pointers.** The port director had been put out of commission by the number one hit in the chart house. The tube mounts were immediately ordered to fire by

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* Action Report BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942.

** Action Report RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

local control using the (YUBARI's) searchlight as a point of aim.*

Some difficulty was experienced on the tube mounts, for only one torpedo was fired - the torpedo in the right barrel of tube mount Number Two.* This torpedo, which was fired at about 0223, missed.

The RALPH TALBOT - which had trained her guns around to the target - again opened fire on the YUBARI, employing the searchlight as a point of aim.* As a result of this firing, the Commanding Officer, RALPH TALBOT believed that he had scored one or more hits with his 5-inch guns, and believed also that he had hit directly on or very near the searchlight, for it suddenly flared and went out.* While it is true that he did score at least one hit at this time, it is also true that he did not hit the YUBARI's searchlight. He was simply mislead by the Japanese searchlight technique - which had caused a number of the Allied ships to believe they had damaged other enemy searchlights during this night action.

At about 0232, the Commanding Officer, RALPH TALBOT was without a target, for he could no longer see the YUBARI after she extinguished her searchlight. This was partially due to the fact that the visibility was much reduced in this area because of the proximity of rain squalls.* He therefore ordered both his torpedo and gun batteries to "cease firing!"*

The RALPH TALBOT was now listing twenty degrees to starboard, had lost steering control, and was forced to slow to one-third speed, five knots.* Meanwhile, she was passed abeam by the YUBARI at a range of about 2000 yards.

At 0232 all action ceased** and a heavy rain set in. The RALPH TALBOT had now lost all power, and her radio transmitters were out. She was helpless to move, and unable to report her plight. However, by about 0240, she had succeeded in regaining steam pressure on her after boilers and headed slowly for Savo Island where she lay to near shore, commenced repairing damage, putting out fires, and taking the list off the ship.

Concurrent with these salvage operations, she made a temporary rig to transmit and receive by radio.* At 0515, the Commanding Officer reported by radio that he was badly damaged near shore northwest of Savo Island,*** and requested help.

At 1115, she visually contacted the SELFRIDGE, which had been ordered at 1030 to proceed - from her screening position near Transport Squadron

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* Action Report, RALPH TALBOT, Preliminary Report of Action, August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial A16-3/DD390/03, August 11th, 1942.

** Action Report, BLUE, Operations in Solomon Islands on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 031, August 12th, 1942.

*** Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

XRAY - to her assistance.* The SELFRIDGE stood by thereafter to help in case of need.

By about 1300, the RALPH TALBOT had made sufficient repairs to get underway on two boilers. She got underway at 1315 and escorted by the SELFRIDGE, stood toward Area XRAY via the passage south of Savo Island. She arrived in Area XRAY at 1420 and then made preparations to proceed as a part of Task Force 62 in the retirement scheduled on the afternoon of the ninth.

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During the entire action, the RALPH TALBOT fired about twelve (?) 5-inch projectiles, the exact number being indeterminate. She also fired four torpedoes, all of which missed. She received, in return, six 5.5-inch hits.

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(d) OPERATIONS OF CTG 62.6 in AUSTRALIA

At 0220, the time at which the Japanese Commander had ordered the engagement broken off and the withdrawal of his force, CTG 62.6 had as yet received no information from his command as to the continuing nature of the battle or what its results had been so far. Meanwhile, while awaiting such information, and while awaiting the arrival of the destroyers which he had directed to rendezvous on him in Area XRAY, he kept the AUSTRALIA patrolling along the line 060°(T) - 240°(T), seven miles west of that area, in order to cover the transports and cargo ships there.

At 0226, he finally decided to query his Group Commanders as to the situation in their areas. He therefore sent a message to the CHICAGO (Commander CHICAGO Group), VINCENNES (Commander VINCENNES Group) and to CTG 62.4 in the SAN JUAN asking "Are your groups in action?"** To this question he received a surprisingly brief and laconic reply from the CHICAGO stating: "Were but not now"; a more complete and satisfactory reply from CTG 62.4 stating: "This force not in action. Appears to be surface force between Florida Island and Savo"; and no reply whatsoever from the VINCENNES.**

A somewhat similar situation had occurred at the Battle of Jutland some twenty-seven years previously when Admiral Jellico had signalled Admiral Beatty: "Where is the enemy's battle Fleet?" and Admiral Beatty had replied in a most laconic and incomplete manner: "Enemy battle cruisers

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* War Diary, SELFRIDGE, August 9th, 1942.

** Remarks by CTG 62.6 Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62 August 11th, 1942.

bearing southeast."* Unfortunately Admiral Beatty had failed to report the presence of the German battleships and had thereby seriously delayed and affected Admiral Jellicoe's decision on how and when to deploy the Grand Fleet.

Does it not seem clear that CTG 62.6's ability to make decisions regarding any additional deployment of his own forces was being handicapped similarly by his failure to receive more complete information from the Allied ships engaged?

However, the message from CTG 62.4 must have reassured him somewhat. At least it showed that the battle, for the present, was confined to the western screening sector. Certainly so far, he had heard no alarms from the transports.

The lack of a reply from the VINCENNES appears to have concerned him considerably for he stated later that he could hear the VINCENNES working CTF 62 by radio. This seems to have been incorrect, for the VINCENNES' radio was disabled early in the action (about 0153½) and there is no record of any radio communication thereafter between the VINCENNES and CTF 62 or with any other ship. The Commanding Officer, VINCENNES stated later that "Intership communications by radio and signal searchlights was lost at this time."** Failing to communicate with the VINCENNES, CTG 62.6 endeavored to communicate with the ASTORIA and QUINCY but he was unable to raise them.

At about 0240, CTG 62.6 in spite of the rain squalls in his own area that blanketed his observations, had information that there were three burning ships between Savo Island and Florida Island and that the gunfire had stopped. As he had been informed by CTG 62.4 that the area between Savo Island and Florida Island was the battle area, and as he had been unable to communicate with his northern cruisers, he must have become even more seriously concerned than heretofore. He decided to query the CHICAGO again and, therefore, he ordered the Commander CHICAGO Group by radio to: "Report situation!"***

At 0245 he received a reply from Commander CHICAGO Group as follows: "We are standing towards Lengo on course 100°(T)."*** If he had been irritated before he must have been even more irritated now, for it probably appeared to him that the Commander CHICAGO Group was withholding information. CTG 62.6, of course, did not realize that the CHICAGO had not participated in the battle after about 0151, and that Commander CHICAGO Group therefore had little or no information concerning the operation of any ships

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* "The Battle of Jutland" by Commander Holloway H. Frost, USN, U.S. Naval Institute 1936, page 301.

** Action Report, VINCENNES, Report of Action Between USS VINCENNES and Japanese Heavy Cruisers Near Savo Island on Night of August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 0022, August 16th, 1942.

*** Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

other than his own. What a commentary on command communications! The Amphibious Commander, CTF 62, did not realize that his Screening Commander, CTG 62.6 was not with the Western Screening Group and the Screening Commander in his turn, did not realize that his Group Commander, Commander CHICAGO Group was not in the thick of the battle.

However, at 0307 he received Commander CHICAGO Group's amplifying report (time of origin 0249) "CHICAGO south of Savo Island. Hit by torpedo. Slightly down by bow. Enemy ships firing to seaward. CANBERRA burning on bearing 150, five miles from Savo. Two destroyers standing by CANBERRA."* From this report he could surmise that the CHICAGO had been out of the action since its inception, for he had observed earlier that the battle had commenced with the CHICAGO Group to the left, and then had moved to the right.

CTG 62.6 now, realizing that CTF 62 was eager to obtain information and should properly be informed, forwarded to that officer a distinctly uninformative message: "Surface action near Savo. Situation undetermined."* This message, strangely enough, gave no indication to CTF 62 of the whereabouts of CTG 62.6 who, from his dispatches to his Group Commanders, was evidently not in the battle area.

At 0315 he observed several lightning flashes to the eastward of Savo Island which he mistook for gunfire flashes.* He became concerned about the CANBERRA. Because he was unable to communicate with her directly and since he had been advised by Commander CHICAGO Group that destroyers were standing by the CANBERRA, he queried the PATTERSON - the senior destroyer of the CHICAGO Group - as to the state of the CANBERRA.* He received a message in reply as follows: "Disabled on fire in position seven miles southeast of Savo Island."* This message was ambiguous and confused CTG 62.6 who stated later:

> "I was in doubt about PATTERSON because, having asked the Commanding Officer earlier to report the condition of the CANBERRA, I subsequently received a signal from him: 'Disabled on fire in position seven miles southeast of Savo Island.' As the time of origin of my message had not been quoted (by PATTERSON in replying) I was in some doubt whether this message referred to the condition of CANBERRA or whether it was intended to report PATTERSON's condition."*

None of his destroyers had arrived in Area XRAY although more than one hour had elapsed since he had directed them to rendezvous on the AUSTRALIA. Any doubts that he may have entertained as to the safety of his destroyers

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* Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

were removed at 0338 when he received a dispatch from COMDESRON FOUR, in the SELFRIDGE: "Destroyers concentrated in position northwest of Savo Island."* The text of this message confronted CTG 62.6 with an entirely new situation. (a) His destroyers were in a most disadvantageous position for covering the transports in Area XRAY, leaving the AUSTRALIA to screen them alone; (b) his freedom of action was immediately restricted at least for the present, because he was forced to retain the AUSTRALIA in the most logical covering position, which obviously was roughly where she was, and (c) he was forced to a distinctly passive role, since he was uninformed as to the movements of the Japanese Cruiser Force and as to the activities of his own force.

CTG 62.6 later learned that his order to his destroyers had been misunderstood because they had been unable to decypher the AUSTRALIA's position as given in his dispatch order. This was due to the fact that the position had been made from the General Signal Book and had then been enciphered by the signal cypher in force.* The destroyer commanders believed that the rendezvous ordered must be the rendezvous given in CTG 62.6's Special Instructions, even though the conditions specified therein did not obtain in the action that actually developed.

It so happened that this misunderstanding did not affect the outcome of the battle, for the battle had already been decided before the destroyers had received the dispatch. It also happened that this misunderstanding was helpful, in a post-battle way, as it permitted the Allies to recover many personnel from the heavily damaged Allied cruisers who might otherwise have been lost. This was so, for most of the destroyers, in going to and from their rendezvous, passed Allied cruisers en route.

At about 0344, CTG 62.6 received another report from the CHICAGO: "Am now six miles from Area XRAY. Course 119, speed ten. Believe bulkheads will hold against high speed."* This message might well have meant that the AUSTRALIA could be reinforced by a powerful heavy cruiser - somewhat damaged it is true - but still powerful. It seems somewhat surprising therefore that CTG 62.6 did not at this time advise the CHICAGO of his position, course and speed and order the CHICAGO to rendezvous on him and thus reform the AUSTRALIA Group. However, either because of the CHICAGO's damage or for reasons best known to himself, CTG 62.6 did not inform the CHICAGO of his location. The result was that the CHICAGO eventually stood away to the westward to investigate what she thought was gunfire, and her rendezvous with the AUSTRALIA was not effected until after daylight.

At 0410, CTG 62.6 received a message from Commander Destroyer Division EIGHT (in the PATTERSON) that the CANBERRA was out of commission.* The condition of the CANBERRA was of special concern to CTG 62.6 who, as senior

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* Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

Australian Naval Commander was charged by his own government, through the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board, with certain responsibilities with regard to the Australian ships operating with the Allied forces.

At 0445, CTG 62.6 received a dispatch from CTF 62 directing: "This is urgent. If CANBERRA cannot join in retirement in time, she should be destroyed. Our departure urgent!"* At about this same time he received another dispatch which CTF 62 had addressed to TF 62 announcing: "It is urgent for this force to depart this area 0630." (This departure time was subsequently delayed until 0730).

At 0515, he received the RALPH TALBOT's report that she was badly damaged near shore, northwest of Savo Island,* and in need of help.

At 0525, he received the Commanding Officer, PATTERSON's message (released ten minutes before) that the CANBERRA had abandoned ship, that he had the entire crew aboard, and would now destroy her.

At 0530 he was informed that another short burst of firing had been observed by the AUSTRALIA, which firing appeared to be south of Savo Island. (This was the exchange of gunfire between the CHICAGO and the PATTERSON). CTG 62.6 now became concerned over both the CANBERRA and the PATTERSON and at 0532 ordered COMDESRON FOUR (in SELFRIDGE) to investigate the state of these two ships giving their position as five miles southeast of Savo Island. He instructed COMDESRON FOUR that they were to be abandoned and destroyed if they could not join the retirement plan at 0730.** He wanted particularly to clear up the situation as regards the PATTERSON's ambiguous message sent to him at about 0330.

As dawn was breaking, CTG 62.6 was still uninformed as to the results of the night action. He had heard nothing from the ships of the VINCENNES Group and little from the ships of the CHICAGO Group. His sum total of information appears to have been that there had been a battle, that the enemy ships had apparently approached through the channel south of Savo, had attacked the CHICAGO Group, seriously damaging the CANBERRA and torpedoing the CHICAGO in the bow, had then moved northeastward and had attacked the VINCENNES Group. But what had happened to the VINCENNES Group? All he knew was that he could not communicate with the VINCENNES, QUINCY or ASTORIA. His lack of information made him cautious lest the Japanese forces were still in Iron Bottom Sound. Naturally it was difficult for him to believe that, having once reached the area, they would retire without attacking the transports and cargo ships. He, therefore, at 0547 sent a message to the Screening Forces: "Situation obscure. Be prepared to give battle at dawn in the vicinity of the transport groups."*** He did not at the time, present a battle plan. He did not know what forces were available, either to himself

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* Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

** Ibid, page 2.

*** Ibid, page 3.

or to the Japanese, and the weather was still abominable. Since midnight there had been frequent heavy rain squalls and lightning, and the visibility varied from moderate to very poor. At present it was very poor.

At 0622 he heard that the CHICAGO, which had reported at 0344 that she was in the vicinity of Area XRAY, was now standing by the CANBERRA and had ordered the BLUE alongside to take off the remaining 400 men.* Where were the PATTERSON and the SELFRIDGE? He knew, of course, that the PATTERSON had been standing by the CANBERRA and had taken off some of the survivors - she had reported that she had all of them, although this was evidently in error - but where was she now?

He decided to inform the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board of the CANBERRA's condition. He therefore, at 0627, sent a dispatch to that Board and to COMSOWESPAC that the CANBERRA had been damaged heavily in the night action, was on fire, was abandoning ship, that the crew were being rescued by the PATTERSON, and that the PATTERSON would destroy her.**

At 0644 he received a report from the SELFRIDGE: "ASTORIA in flames, position 09°-08' South, 159°-47' East. Four dog dogs picking up many survivors".* At about this time he also received a report from CTF 62, who had apparently received the above SELFRIDGE dispatch, to the effect: "ASTORIA on fire. Captain and some of the crew trying to save. Apparently QUINCY sunk. No news of VINCENNES. Believe TALBOT sunk. Believe ships ran into submarine and surface torpedo trap."***

At first light, CTG 62.6 diverted the AUSTRALIA from her patrol to close in toward the transports in Area XRAY. The transports had been underway since 0150, expecting an attack, and were just at dawn resuming their positions in the unloading area.****

At 0648, he received a report from the CHICAGO: "BLUE, SELFRIDGE, PATTERSON standing by CANBERRA. Am proceeding to concentration area."*

The retirement (planned for 0730) had not been commenced because the threat of surface attack on the transports during the night had kept them underway, and therefore the landing of essential stores and equipment had not been completed. At daylight the transports and stores ships had returned to the disembarkation areas and the unloading operations had been resumed.*****

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* Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942, page 3.

** Ibid, page 7.

*** Ibid, page 6.

**** Appendix 19 to Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning First Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial AF 1056/15, August 13th, 1942 which is letter, August 12th, 1942 from Commanding Officer, HMAS AUSTRALIA to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6).

***** Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning First Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial AF 1056/15, August 13th, 1942, para. 120.

At 0700, the AUSTRALIA's scouting aircraft were hoisted out to provide anti-submarine patrol through Lengo Channel.*

At 0725, heavy explosions, which seemed to come from the northwest, were heard by the AUSTRALIA,* and for fifteen minutes afterward. Actually these were the shells and torpedoes of the SELFRIDGE exploding into the CANBERRA.**

For the next hour and a half, CTG 62.6 attempted to clear up the doubt as to what had happened to the VINCENNES Group. At 0819 he reported to CTF 62 that he had been unable to get VINCENNES or QUINCY by radio, and that he had no real information of the night battle.***

At 0830, the AUSTRALIA closed the FULLER to transfer two British medical officers and three medical attendants to the FULLER to assist with the wounded CANBERRA survivors.* It was at this time that CTG 62.6 learned that the QUINCY and VINCENNES had been sunk and that the ASTORIA was on fire.*

At 0846, CTG 62.6 received information over the Australian coast watcher's circuit, (which only the AUSTRALIA was guarding), that enemy aircraft from Rabaul were passing over the north end of Bougainville en route toward Tulagi.* CTG 62.6 immediately broadcast an air raid warning at 0850 as a consequence of which Transport Groups XRAY and YOKE got underway again,**** screened by the AUSTRALIA, CHICAGO, HOBART, seven destroyers and three minesweepers.*

At 0852, he received a report from COMDESRON FOUR that the RALPH TALBOT had been caught in enemy cross-fire at 0230; that he had heard the TALBOT broadcast a call at 0722 for "Help!"; that he had been unsuccessful since that time in getting a reply to his calls to the RALPH TALBOT on various frequencies; and that the present position of the RALPH TALBOT was unknown, although she had last been seen seven miles north of Savo Island.*****

By 1100 no air attack had developed, so the transports again returned to their anchorages. CTF 62 then ordered all ships except the NEVILLE, ZEILIN, HEYWOOD, PRESIDENT JACKSON and HOPKINS to hoist all boats.**

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* Appendix 19 to Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning First Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial AF 1056/15, August 13th, 1942 which is letter, August 12th, 1942 from Commanding Officer, HMAS AUSTRALIA to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6).

** War Diary, SELFRIDGE, August, 1942.

*** Remarks by CTG 62.6, Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942, page 3.

**** Action Report CTG 62.6 concerning First Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial AF 1056/15, August 13th, 1942, para. 121.

***** COMDESRON FOUR Dispatch 082132, August 1942 to CTF 62 and CTG 62.6.

Those transports - which were the exceptions - again resumed unloading operations.*

CTG 62.6 commented later that the day had passed without air attack and that he considered that the losses suffered by the enemy in the air attacks on the Allied ships during the previous two days were largely responsible for this. He also considered that, in addition to the aircraft which he had actually seen destroyed during these attacks, there must have been a large number of others which would never reach Rabaul.** He did not know, of course, that the report of the coast watcher (that enemy aircraft from Rabaul were approaching) had been accurate, nor did he know that the crippled JARVIS - to the southwest in the open waters of the Coral Sea - had served as a decoy to the Japanese and had drawn off their air attack from Iron Bottom Sound.

From noon onward, CTG 62.6 continued to receive reports from the various ships. The medical officers from the AUSTRALIA, who had gone aboard the FULLER to assist with the British wounded survivors, brought back to CTG 62.6 an accurate report of the CANBERRA's part in the engagement. Other reports came to him by radio from the CHICAGO, BLUE, SELFRIDGE and other ships. He also had information from the survivors of the QUINCY, ASTORIA and VINCENNES. With this information he was enabled, while underway the next day, to reconstruct a fairly clear picture of what had happened in the night action.

At 1515, the AUSTRALIA's aircraft again took off to carry out an antisubmarine patrol off Area YOKE and then to conduct a patrol over Lengo Channel and the area to seaward of it ahead of the withdrawing ships of TF 62.***

At 1545, CTG 62.6 in the AUSTRALIA, in company with the HOBART and eight Allied destroyers, all of which were screening the remaining ships of Transport Group XRAY, moved across to the Tulagi Area to screen the remaining transports as these units formed up to proceed out through Lengo Channel.*** At 1800 the AUSTRALIA recovered her scouting aircraft.***

About 1900, the transports formed into a special night cruising disposition, with the AUSTRALIA leading the HOBART in column 1,000 yards astern of the formation.***

CTG 62.6 commanded the screen of TF 62 in its retirement back to Noumea. The leading group of TF 62's ships consisted of part of the transports

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* Action Report CTG 62.6, First Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial AF 1056/15, August 13th, 1942, para. 121.

** Ibid, para. 124.

*** Appendix 19 to Action Report CTG 62.6, First Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial AF 1056/15 August 13th, 1942 which is letter, August 12th, 1942 from Commanding Officer, HMAS AUSTRALIA to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6).

escorted by the damaged ships CHICAGO, PATTERSON, RALPH TALBOT and MUGFORD, plus the DEWEY and five destroyers of MINRON TWO which were undamaged. The second group consisted of the remainder of the transports, the destroyer-type transports (APD's) and cargo ships, escorted by the AUSTRALIA, HOBART, SAN JUAN, SELFRIDGE, HENLEY, HELM, BAGLEY, ELLET, WILSON, HULL, MONSSEN, BLUE and BUCHANAN.

(e) OPERATIONS OF SAN JUAN GROUP (CTG 62.4)

At 0220, the SAN JUAN Group was about midway along her patrol line, steaming south at fifteen knots. At about this time, CTG 62.4 observed a plane fly northward over his group and then drop three flares in the Tulagi-Gavutu Area.* The glare of these flares blanked out his view to the northward; but at 0224, he could still see three burning ships, including the CANBERRA between bearings 285°(T) and 317°(T).

At 0238, the SAN JUAN had covered the ten miles of her patrol line to Latitude 09°-20'S., which position was abreast Sealark Channel. CTG 62.4 then commenced a reversal of course to 000°(T).** Upon completing the turn, the HOBART took note of her AUSTRALIAN sister in service, the CANBERRA, and logged (at 0242) that the CANBERRA bore 301°(T) from her.**

The large ships, which were heavily afire, had been observed to continue burning for some time, then diminish, and finally two were observed to extinguish as though they had sunk.***

By 0230 no further firing was observed. All action had ceased. CTG 62.4 had received no reports of any kind including contact reports concerning the foregoing action,* nor had he received anything that would indicate what type or number of the enemy had been engaged.***

By 0258 the burning CANBERRA was the only ship visible.** (The QUINCY and VINCENNES had already sunk, and the ASTORIA probably was obscured by a rain squall). The fires on the CANBERRA seemed less intense.**

At about 0318, the SAN JUAN turned south again; and just before 0400 reversed course to north. At 0357, the CANBERRA was seen to flare up again

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* Action Report, CTG 62.4, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A) Serial FE24/A16-3(001), August 13th, 1942.

** Appendix 18 to Action Report CTG 62.6, First Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial AF1056/15, August 13th, 1942, which is letter August 15th, 1942 from Commanding Officer HMAS HOBART to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) Narrative of Night of 8th-9th August, 1942.

*** Action Report SAN JUAN, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Serial 001, August 15th, 1942.

as though the fires had reached the magazines.* This was the explosion of the CANBERRA's ready service ammunition which was delaying the PATTERSON from going alongside her at this time.

Nothing was noted thereafter for an hour and a half by the SAN JUAN Group, as it continued its patrol. However, at 0525, when the SAN JUAN Group was in the mid-position of the patrol line, gunflashes were observed and heard bearing 280°(T) from this position.** This was the brief exchange of gunfire between the CHICAGO and PATTERSON. Though CTG 62.4 had no knowledge of its source, it must have had the effect of keeping him continually alert. At this time the TBS voice radio indicated that Allied ships were in action, and much confusion arose as to the identity of friendly or enemy ships.***

At 0643, about ten minutes after sunrise, CTG 62.4 sighted the CHICAGO standing in from the western patrol area.* Since it appeared likely to CTG 62.4 that the enemy might again attack,**** he promptly changed course to 300°(T) at 0645 and increased speed to twenty-five knots to contact the CHICAGO,* and apparently to investigate her condition. At this time he broke up the night screening group, ordered the MONSSEN and BUCHANAN to screen transports in Area YOKE, and released the HOBART. The latter ship proceeded to her daylight screening position in Area XRAY where she reported to CTG 62.6.** During daylight the SAN JUAN, MONSSEN and BUCHANAN constituted Fire Support Group MIKE.

After an interchange of communications with the CHICAGO,* CTG 62.4 ordered the CHICAGO to join up and follow him to Area YOKE.***** At 0700, CTG 62.4 came to course 060°(T) and commenced increasing speed to thirty knots in order to expedite his return to Area YOKE,* where his Fire Support Group MIKE was to assume a daylight screening position near the transports.****** CTG 62.4 had just received CTG 62.6's message to be prepared to do battle in the transport areas,* and he was making haste to arrive as

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* Action Report SAN JUAN, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Serial 001, August 15th, 1942.

** Appendix 18 to Action Report CTG 62.6, First Battle of Savo Island August 9th, 1942 to CTF 62, Serial AF 1056/15, August 13th, 1942 which is letter August 15th, 1942 from Commanding Officer HMAS HOBART to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6).

*** War Diary BUCHANAN, August 1942.

**** Action Report CTG 62.4, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Serial FE24/A16-3(001), August 13th, 1942.

***** Action Report CHICAGO concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

****** War Diary, MONSSEN, August 1942.

soon as possible. The effect of this speed was to cause the CHICAGO to fall out of the formation, for she could not make more than ten knots safely with her damaged bow.*

At 0700, the SAN JUAN detected a group of unidentified aircraft (SARTOGA search planes) on her air search radar to the southwest. She noted that by 0743 the aircraft had disappeared from the screen. She thereafter - in company with the MONSSEN and BUCHANAN - having arrived in the vicinity of Transport Area YOKE, slowed to standard speed, fifteen knots.**

At 0848, CTG 62.4 received the air raid alarm from CTG 62.6.** The SAN JUAN commenced maneuvering on various courses, building up speed preparatory to repelling air attack, and adjusted her position to protect the transports, which had gotten underway from Tulagi and had formed a double column formation.**

At 0911, the SAN JUAN detected a bogey on her air search radar circling near the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area about twelve miles to the southward.** This was the Japanese land reconnaissance plane from the TAINAN Air Group at Rabaul, which circled the area until 1000 unmolested by Allied aircraft or anti-aircraft fire.***

By 0929, the SAN JUAN had attained a speed of thirty knots.** At 1004, her radar screen was clear,** the Japanese reconnaissance plane having proceeded eastward to investigate Indispensable Strait.*** The SAN JUAN then slowed to standard speed and maneuvered to close the transport area. At 1032, she began her patrol of the transports which had settled back in their unloading berths.

At 1115, several ships - which turned out to be destroyers, at least one of which (the BAGLEY) was bringing in survivors from the ASTORIA - were observed standing into Area YOKE from the vicinity of Savo Island.**

At 1125, CTG 62.4 directed the BUCHANAN to assist ASTORIA, damaged and on fire. The BUCHANAN arrived in the vicinity of the ASTORIA at 1157 and relieved the WILSON and the HOPKINS which had been standing by.****

During the remainder of the day, Fire Support Group MIKE screened the

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* Action Report CHICAGO concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** Action Report SAN JUAN, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Serial 001, August 15th, 1942.

*** Japanese Search Plans, August 7th-9th, 1942, CIG Document 74632, May 12th, 1947.

**** War Diary BUCHANAN, August 1942.

transports of Squadron YOKE during their unloading.* No incident occurred to further delay the unloading of the transports.**

At 1917, on orders from CTF 62, the remaining ships in Area YOKE were formed in Approach Disposition AR-4. The SAN JUAN took station ahead, and led the withdrawal at twelve knots through Lengo Channel, which had been previously swept and buoyed by MINRON TWO.**

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* Action Report, CTG 62.4, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A) Serial FE24/A16-3(001), August 13th, 1942.

** Action Report SAN JUAN, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Serial 001, August 15th, 1942.

CHAPTER XX

OPERATIONS OF OTHER ALLIED FORCES

0000 August 9th to 2400 August 9th

(a) OPERATIONS OF CTF 62

With the passage of midnight both transport groups, XRAY and YOKE, were busily engaged unloading cargo, primarily ammunition and rations. This unloading had been proceeding slowly during the previous two days for a number of reasons, the more important being the necessity (a) to await orders to land cargo after a beachhead had been secured, (b) to cease unloading on orders from the beach, (c) to get underway, move into unloading berths and then anchor, (d) to get underway to avoid enemy air attacks, (e) to man General Quarters stations, and (f) to divert ships boats temporarily to other ships. About one-half the actual time available was employed in above operations.*

Just before midnight, CTF 62 had completed a conference on board the McCAWLEY with CTF 62.6 and the Commanding General, First Marine Division. After this conference broke up, CTF 62 sent a dispatch at about 0100 to CTF 61 stating in part: "Air attacks today resulted in loss of ELLIOTT, severe damage JARVIS. Probably increasing tomorrow, and absence of air support requires me to withdraw all ships temporarily from this area to avoid unwarranted loss."** Unfortunately, a portion of this dispatch was garbled, as received by the WASP.*** Since the original is not available to this study, it is not clear what else CTF 62 reported to CTF 61. But it is surmised that it had something to do with the withdrawal of the carriers.

After sending out the above message, and while waiting to hear from the Commanding General, First Marine Division concerning the logistic situation ashore at Tulagi, CTF 62 turned his attention to the unloading operations of his transports and cargo ships at Guadalcanal. He had clearly dismissed the possibility of night attack by surface ships when he decided that the Japanese force - contacted at 1025, August 8th - was en route to Rekata Bay.****

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* Action Report, BETELGEUSE, Report of Action off Guadalcanal Island, Solomon Islands, August 7th-8th, and 9th, 1942, Serial AK28/A16-3, August 15th, 1942.

** CTF 62 Dispatch 081405, August 1942, to CTF 61.

*** CTG 61.1.1 (CTF 18) visual dispatch 082225, August 1942, to CTF 61 (CTF 11).

**** Action Report CTG 62.6 First Battle of Savo Island, Serial AF 1056/15, August 13th, 1942, para. 91.

At 0145 he observed the aircraft flares dropped in Area XRAY by a Japanese plane.* At the same time, he heard heavy gunfire to the westward in the channel south of Savo Island.* What his reactions were at this time are not recorded. He had not expected such an attack at this time. However, when he approved CTG 62.6's night screening disposition, it is clear that he shared that Commander's confidence that the Allied screening groups constituted adequate force properly placed for the very purpose of repelling an enemy surface attack. Therefore, he does not appear to have been greatly alarmed by the situation which suddenly developed at 0145.

The majority of the transport and cargo ships in Area XRAY, upon sighting the aircraft flares, promptly discontinued unloading operations, darkened ship, went to General Quarters, and at about 0150 some of them got underway without orders so as to be able to maneuver in case of attack.** It is evident that the Commanding Officers clearly appreciated the threatening danger. The night was dark, there were frequent rain squalls which gave poor visibility - as low as 500 yards at times - and low clouds, all of which gave excellent cover to an attacking ship,** and it appeared wise to clear the anchorage and head for deeper water and maneuvering room.

The handling of these transports and cargo ships by the responsible officers at this time, in the light of weather conditions, was excellent; and showed unusually fine training and fine discipline. All of the ships were "milling around" in close proximity to each other and yet no ships collided and none opened fire on a friendly ship.** It is pertinent to quote the Commanding Officer of an AK, who stated; "It is most remarkable that none of our ships of the transport group fired on any other ship during the entire period, although all ships must have had each other covered; the slightest mismove on the part of any one would have caused much indiscriminate firing."**

Meanwhile, CTF 62 could see the gunflashes, but he heard nothing from his commanders concerning the nature of their opposition. He must have been anxious for an immediate report. However, he took no direct action, but left the conduct of the battle to CTG 62.6. He did not know that CTG 62.6 and the AUSTRALIA had not rejoined the screening group; for that officer - in deciding not to rejoin his command - had failed to notify CTF 62 of this fact.***

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* War Diary, CTF 62, August 9th, 1942.

** Action Report, BETELGEUSE, Report of Action off Guadalcanal Island August 7th, 8th, and 9th, 1942, August 15th, 1942.

*** Report of Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN (Ret.), to Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, May 13th, 1943, on Informal Inquiry into Circumstances Attending the Loss of VINCENNES, etc., on August 9th, 1942, para. 51.

However, CTF 62 eventually learned of the absence of CTG 62.6; for, in all probability, he intercepted the dispatch from that officer at 0226 to the CHICAGO, VINCENNES and CTG 62.4 asking if they had been in action.* He probably also intercepted the CHICAGO's reply that she had been in battle but was not now,** and CTG 62.4's reply that his group had not been in action.** It is highly probable that CTF 62 had also noted that CTG 62.6 was unable to get any replies from the QUINCY, VINCENNES or ASTORIA.

Later on, at about 0249, CTF 62 seems to have intercepted a dispatch from the CHICAGO to CTG 62.6 which stated that the CHICAGO, which was south of Savo Island, had been hit by a torpedo and was slightly down by the bow; that the enemy ships had been firing to seaward; and that the CANBERRA was on fire with two destroyers standing by.**

What CTF 62 thought, now that he had discovered that CTG 62.6 was missing from the battle area and that his ships had suffered severely, is nowhere stated; but it is significant that he took no action even to consult with CTG 62.6 by TBS voice or C.W. radio. It is likely that he believed that CTG 62.6 was capable of handling the situation, and therefore he should not interfere with him at this critical time. It also appears likely that he felt confident that, once that officer understood the rapidly developing situation, he would immediately inform him.

At 0310, CTF 62 received a message from CTG 62.6 which stated that a night action between surface ships was underway near Savo Island, but that as yet he had not been able to determine its character.** CTF 62 then realized that CTG 62.6 knew as little as he did about the action, which was far from reassuring.

This situation must have become critical - to his way of thinking - when at 0330 he intercepted the expected dispatch from COMSOPACFOR to CTF 61 approving the withdrawal of TG 61.1.*** CTF 62 then promptly sent a dispatch to CTF 61 at 0340 in which he reported: "Surface attack on the screen coordinated with use of aircraft flares. CHICAGO hit torpedo. CANBERRA on fire."**** This message indicates a hope on the part of CTF 62 that CTF 61 might delay his planned withdrawal of TG 61.1 from the area in view of the bad news. Unfortunately, as will be pointed out later, this vital message was not received by CTF 61 until about eight hours later.

At 0410, CTF 62 received a message from the PATTERSON reporting the CANBERRA out of commission.

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* CTG 62.6 Dispatch 081526, August 1942.

** Action Report, CTG 62.6, The Capture and Occupation by United Nations Forces of Tulagi and Guadalcanal, Serial AF1056/15, August 13th, 1942 to CTF 62.

*** COMSOPACFOR Dispatch 081144, August 1942, to CTF 61.

**** CTF 62 Dispatch 081645, August 1942, to CTF 61.

About this time, CTF 62 likely sensed that his screening forces had been heavily damaged, but the fact that his transports had not been attacked gave him assurance that perhaps the screen had succeeded in driving off the enemy raiding forces. Had he realized that actually they had not done so, but that instead there had been an almost open lane to his transports and cargo ships for the past two hours, he would have experienced great concern. As it was, he concluded that the execution of his tentative plan of retiring at about 0630 was now even more urgent than he had originally thought. He must depart or lose his ships! He could not be delayed! Even though the Commanding General, First Marine Division had not yet returned from Tulagi with the logistics information upon which CTF 62 tentatively planned to base the time of his withdrawal, he now reached a decision to set his withdrawal time at 0630. For at 0435 he released two messages. The first was addressed to the Task Force, and read: "It is urgent for this force depart this area 0630!"* The second message, addressed to CTG 62.6, read: "If CANBERRA cannot join retirement in time, she should be destroyed. Our departure urgent!"**

The decision to destroy the CANBERRA was probably an extremely difficult decision for CTF 62 to make. He of course knew that there was an over-all shortage of Allied combatant ships in the Pacific, and that every ship was vital for future operations. He had every reason to fear that his own cruisers, if not already sunk, would probably be out of action for some time while undergoing repairs. Finally, it is probable that he considered the effect that the destruction of the CANBERRA might have on Australian public opinion.

He appears to have based his decision on the following: He was retiring; he could not tow the CANBERRA away without air cover, as he would merely invite Japanese attack upon her - either by submarine or aircraft - and would probably lose thereby not only the CANBERRA but also one or more of the towing ships, which necessarily would be cruisers or destroyers. He could not leave her to fall into Japanese hands, for if not salvaged by them, at least she would be thoroughly searched and studied. The correctness of this decision is borne out somewhat by the Executive Officer, CANBERRA who later stated: "It was realized the position was hopeless, and orders were given at approximately 0515 to stop efforts to save the ship and to prepare for abandoning. The list at this time had increased to about seventeen degrees and there had been internal explosions and rumblings."***

At 0515, CTF 62 intercepted a message from the RALPH TALBOT to CTG 62.6 stating that she had been badly damaged and needed help.

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* Action Report, PATTERSON, Engagement with Enemy Surface Ships, August 8th-9th, 1942, Serial 001, August 13th, 1942.

** CTF 62 Dispatch 081735, August 1942, to CTG 62.6

*** Report of Executive Officer, CANBERRA, to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning Loss of CANBERRA, August 12th, 1942.

At 0525, he was aware of gunfire on bearing 290°(T) from his position; but he did not know the source of it - as he later indicated in a dispatch to CTF 61.* This firing, which ceased at about 0527, was exchanged between the PATTERSON and the CHICAGO which had mistaken one another for enemy and had opened fire, fortunately without damage.

By this time, CTF 62 was becoming concerned about his unloading operations which had been interrupted by the transports and cargo ships getting underway at 0150. At sunrise, 0632, he noted that they were still underway. It is not clear whether he had heard as yet from the Commanding General, First Marine Division as to the logistics requirements at Tulagi. Certainly that Commanding General had not as yet returned to the McCAWLEY.

The Commanding General, First Marine Division has recently stated that, after he had consulted with the senior officers at Tulagi - COMTRANSDIV EIGHT** and the Commanding General Group YOKE (Tulagi)*** - apparently on board the transport NEVILLE, he had sent CTF 62 a dispatch by TBS voice radio from the SOUTHARD (probably initiated after 0500 when he had returned on board the SOUTHARD).**** This dispatch is not available to this study. However, Commanding General, First Marine Division states that to the best of his recollection he reported "that there was a day and a half of fire of ammunition ashore, that there was approximately three days of rations, that the island had not been completely secured; that TF 62 should not sail until more ammunition and rations were put ashore; and that he urged at least six hours more unloading before sailing."***** Whether or not this message was finally received by the McCAWLEY (CTG 62's flagship) cannot be determined; but it is known that the SOUTHARD endeavored to send it throughout the remainder of the night.******

Received or not, it seems clear that CTF 62 knew at this time that he had not succeeded in landing adequate supplies since his 2325 conference with the Commanding General, First Marine Division and CTG 62.6. He had learned this in part from his Assistant Chief of Staff****** who stated: "I had personally visited most of the transports of the Tulagi Transport Group that night and (had) urged the Commanding Officers, including the Transport Group Commander,** to get supplies unloaded, stating that these were Admiral Turner's orders."

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* Action Report CTF 62, August 9th, 1942.

** Captain George B. Ashe, USN.

*** Brigadier General William H. Rupertus, USMC.

**** War Diary, SOUTHARD, August 9th, 1942.

***** Letter March 25th, 1949, from General A.A. Vandegrift, USMC (Ret), to Commodore R.W. Bates, USN (Ret), Head of Department of Analysis, U.S. Naval War College.

****** Letter March 30th, 1950, from Brigadier General H.D. Linscott, USMC to Commodore R.W. Bates, USN (Ret), Head of Department of Analysis, U.S. Naval War College.

CTF 62 once again had to choose between two alternatives. Should he remain until he had landed sufficient supplies to insure that the Marine combat power was adequate to accomplish its objectives and thereby take the chance of losing many of his ships; or should he retire promptly, bearing in mind that he would thereby be jeopardizing the Allied land operations through lack of sufficient logistic support and threatening the complete failure of the entire operation? He did not long delay in his decision. He correctly decided to remain, and at 0641 informed CTF 61 of this decision as follows: "Unable depart as planned because insufficient supplies have been landed. Request air cover for attack on enemy surface forces this area."* In this message, CTF 62 had plainly inferred that any losses which his command might suffer while unloading on the 9th - with or without air cover - were now warranted. This was a reversal of the decision expressed in his dispatch at 0105 wherein he had stated that it was necessary to retire to avoid unwarranted loss, and is an excellent example of CTF 62's ability to recognize that the situation had changed - a primary qualification for command.

At 0644, COMDESRON FOUR reported the ASTORIA was in flames, and four destroyers were picking up her survivors.

A few minutes later, CTF 62 reported to CTG 62.6 along similar lines: "ASTORIA on fire, Captain and crew trying to save. Apparently QUINCY sunk. No news VINCENNES. Believe TALBOT sunk. Believe ships ran into submarine and surface torpedo trap."** This dispatch reveals the confusion which was in CTF 62's mind, even at this late hour, concerning the nature of the night battle and once again points out the necessity for a subordinate to keep his interested commanders informed as to the progress and nature of any action in which said subordinate may be engaged.

Between dawn and about 0700, transports and cargo ships, which had been milling around in Iron Bottom Sound, had returned to their anchorages and had commenced unloading again.

At 0700, most likely both CTF 62 and CTG 62.6 received the report from the SAN JUAN of her radar contact on an unidentified group of planes. (Actually, they were the SARATOGA search planes). CTF 62 or CTG 62.6, or both, then ordered Fire Support Group MIKE, which included the SAN JUAN, MONSSEN and BUCHANAN, to return to Transport Area YOKE and to be prepared to do battle there.***

About this time, CTF 62 commenced receiving reports concerning submarines in Iron Bottom Sound. At 0708 he received such a report from the WILSON; at 0712 from the MUGFORD. Actually there were no Japanese submarines in the area until after sunset on August 9th.

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* CTF 62, Dispatch 081941, August 1942 to CTF 61.

** Remarks by CTG 62.6 "Night Action off Savo Island, August 9th, 1942" to CTF 62, August 11th, 1942.

*** Action Report, CTG 62.4, Report of Action Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Serial FE24/A16-3(001), August 13th, 1942.

During this time, CTF 62 received, either directly or through interception, limited information from time to time from those destroyers which were engaged in recovering survivors and trying to salvage the ASTORIA.

At 0747, the SOUTHARD, closed the McCAWLEY and transferred the Commanding General, First Marine Division and his staff to that ship.* However, it appears that the Commanding General, First Marine Division, and his staff, did not actually board the McCAWLEY as it was necessary for the Commanding General to proceed ashore to Guadalcanal to rejoin his division headquarters.** It is not clear whether he discussed matters with CTF 62 at this time but it seems probable that he held a conversation at the gangway while the members of CTF 62's staff, who were with him, climbed aboard the McCAWLEY by cargo net.** If CTF 62 had not heard before of the general situation at Tulagi he was now informed.

At 0800, CTF 62 decided that CTF 61 should be advised as to the progress of the action. He sent him by dispatch: "Heavy actions continue to the westward. More of our ships in trouble. Submarines in the area."*** Why he did not, at this time, advise CTF 61 of the possible loss of the QUINCY and TALBOT, of his lack of news of the VINCENNES, and of the fire on the ASTORIA - information which he had given over one hour earlier to CTG 62.6 - is not known. Perhaps he desired to report definite information rather than surmise.

Also at 0800, CTF 62, who was aware of the scout bombers from the ENTERPRISE dropping photographs on Guadalcanal Beach, sent these planes a voice message through Orange Base: "To Admiral Fletcher from Admiral Turner - Appreciate knowing Admiral Fletcher's plan by message drop."**** At this time, CTF 62 did not realize that CTF 61 had not received either his 0105 or his 0345 messages.

At 0840, CTG 62.6 in the AUSTRALIA received word from a coast watcher on Bougainville Island that he had heard a formation of aircraft going southeast,***** and passed this word to CTF 62 who immediately broadcast an air raid alert. Because of this alert, all transports ceased unloading; got underway - on orders this time - and assumed a formation to repel air attack.****** CTF 62 also immediately informed CTF 61 by dispatch:

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* War Diary, SOUTHARD, August 9th, 1942.

** Letter March 30th, 1950 from Brigadier General H.D. Linscott, USMC to Commodore R.W. Bates, USN (Ret), Head of Department of Analysis, U.S. Naval War College.

*** CTF 62 Dispatch 082100, August 1942 to CTF 61.

**** CTF 61.1 Visual Dispatch 082139, August 1942 to CTF 61.

***** COMSOWESPAC Dispatch (about) 082107, August 1942, to Any U.S. Naval Ship.

****** War Diary CTF 62, August 9th, 1942, and Action Report CTG 62.6 Concerning First Battle of Savo Island, Serial AF1056/15, August 13th, 1942.

"QUINCY sunk by torpedoes and gunfire, air attack en route."*

The warning of approaching Japanese planes must have been discouraging to CTF 62, for he could plainly see that if air alerts were to be routine all day with the result that his transports and cargo ships would be kept underway during daylight, he might not be able to discharge sufficient supplies to permit his departure that day.

In conjunction with this air raid warning received from a coast watcher on Bougainville Island - there was also the radar contact of the SAN JUAN on the Japanese search plane which had arrived over Iron Bottom Sound shortly after 0900.** Certainly the sensitivity of the units of TF 62 to air attack was chronic.

In the meantime, CTF 62 anxiously awaited some reply from CTF 61. He knew that that Commander and the carriers were within operating radius of Tulagi, for the SARATOGA search planes and the two scout bombers from the ENTERPRISE had been overhead at 0730. CTF 62 appears to have hoped that CTF 61 would then appreciate the critical nature of the situation confronting him - as presented in the various dispatches which he had sent since 0100 - and that CTF 61 would take some positive action.

At 0916, CTF 62 received a report of a submarine operating in the vicinity. This was a false contact.

As the operations of rescuing survivors were reported by the destroyers to CTF 62, he became aware of the extent of the damage effected by the Japanese night attack. By 1025, he knew the VINCENNES had sunk at 0245 with heavy casualties. He so informed CTF 61.*** By 1048, he was informed by a dispatch from the Commanding Officer, ASTORIA - transmitted through COMMINRON TWO in the HOPKINS - that there was a chance that the burning ASTORIA might be saved by towing her through Lengo Channel to Efate. He informed CTF 61 to this effect, adding: "Movements require protection which I am unable to provide."**** This appeal seems to have been CTF 62's last attempt to obtain CTF 61's support.

By 1100, it is probable that CTF 62 wondered why no Japanese air attacks had been made on his command, for the logical time for an air attack is when an enemy is disabled, disorganized, and possibly demoralized. Perhaps he concluded - as did CTG 62.6 - that the enemy air losses had been so serious as to prevent such an attack being made. Actually as has been pointed out previously, this was not the case for the Japanese air attack group had been diverted to attack the JARVIS at 1300. Since the JARVIS was without radio communications, CTF 62 was never informed of her plight.

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* CTF 62 Dispatch 082152, August 1942 to CTF 61.

** Action Report SAN JUAN, Report of Action, Tulagi-Guadalcanal, August 6th-10th, 1942, Enclosure (A), Serial 001, August 15th, 1942.

*** CTF 62 Dispatch 082325, August 1942 to CTF 61.

**** CTF 62 Dispatch 082358, August 1942 to CTF 61.

Since no Japanese air attack had materialized by 1100, CTF 62 directed the transports and cargo ships to return to their berths. He had already determined, while his ships were underway during the air raid alert, that the critical items of supply for the Marines ashore at Tulagi were in the holds of the NEVILLE, ZEILIN, and PRESIDENT JACKSON, and that those needed at Guadalcanal were in the HEYWOOD. He ordered these ships to resume unloading operations.* He ordered all other ships except the HOPKINS, which was still attempting to tow the ASTORIA at this time - to hoist all boats and prepare to sortie.**

As his transports and screening vessels were returning to their respective unloading areas, CTF 62 turned his attention to the survivors of the night cruiser action. Obviously there were many wounded men who had spent hours in the water without medical attention. Furthermore, the crowded conditions in the rescuing destroyers interfered with their battle efficiency. Now that his transports were beginning to drop their anchors,*** the first opportunity arose to care for the survivors, especially the wounded. At 1119, he ordered the ALCHIBA to proceed to the ASTORIA and take her in tow, and ordered the BUCHANAN to stand by the ASTORIA to fight fires. At the same time, he directed COMMINRON TWO to bring the HOPKINS, HELM, and WILSON into Area XRAY.

By 1250, CTF 62 observed that the unloading operations had been fully resumed.* He selected a transport for the survivors and at 1300, gave an order over TBS radio to COMMINRON TWO to discharge all survivors to the HUNTER LIGGETT.****

At 1415, he had his answer as regards CTF 61's plans for he intercepted that officer's dispatch addressed to COMSOPAC summarizing his (CTF 62's) reports to him.***** His reaction to CTF 61's final comment in the above dispatch - namely: "Direct Turner to make reports direct to you, info to me!" - is nowhere recorded, but can readily be surmised. CTF 62 now knew that he would receive no support from either CTF 61 or CTG 61.1. He also knew that, in view of the retirement of CTF 61 with TG 61.1, he automatically became the Officer-in-Tactical Command of what remained in the area of the original Expeditionary Force, TF 61. It seems surprising that he had not been informed directly by COMSOPACFOR or by CTF 61 of the departure of CTF 61 with TG 61.1. In addition he had not been advised of his own succession to command or of his superior's plans? He was definitely on his own!

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* War Diary CTF 62, August 1942.

** CTF 62 Dispatch 090030 August 1942 to Ships in Area XRAY. (See Action Report HOPKINS Report of Engagement in Guadalcanal-Florida Area, August 7th-9th, 1942, Serial 0067, August 12th, 1942.)

*** Action Report, BETELGEUSE, Report of Action off Guadalcanal Island, Solomon Islands, August 7th, 8th, and 9th, 1942, August 15th, 1942.

**** Action Report HOPKINS Report of Engagement in Guadalcanal-Florida Area, August 7th-9th, 1942, Serial 0067, August 12th, 1942.

***** CTF 61 Dispatch 090315, August 1942 to COMSOPAC

He therefore re-estimated the situation, possibly about as follows. He had reason to believe that submarines were in the area, and suspected that more would soon arrive there. He also had reason to believe that the Japanese commander would not allow his ships to remain in Iron Bottom Sound free from air attacks. He probably felt that - in view of the nearness of Japanese air bases to the northwest - these air attacks would gradually increase in intensity and ferocity. On the other hand, he realized that the Marines would be left in a precarious position ashore, should he leave before sufficient supplies had been landed. And yet, the expected Japanese air attacks would make it more and more difficult to land supplies in the daytime, and the Japanese submarines would make it almost impossible at night. This was already apparent, for the possibility of air attack this very morning had caused the transports to be delayed in unloading for hours. CTF 62 knew that less than half of the sixty days supplies and ten units of fire, which he had brought with him, had been unloaded. Actually, there were but four units of fire available ashore at Tulagi-Guadalcanal.* Realizing the difficulty of getting supplies ashore and fully appreciating the fact that practically no supplies had been landed all day,** he decided that nothing was to be gained by remaining. He therefore gave orders to retire.

He directed that the transports and cargo ships in Area XRAY, consisting of the FULLER, AMERICAN LEGION, BELLATRIX, BARNETT, LIBRA, HUNTER LIGGETT, FOMALHAUT, BETELGEUSE, CRESCENT CITY, ALHENA and HEYWOOD, plus the escorting screen composed of the CHICAGO, MINE SQUADRON TWO, PATTERSON, DEWEY and MUGFORD, under command of Commander Transport Group XRAY, were to get underway at 1500.*** By about 1520 all ships were underway and proceeding to form cruising disposition.*** This group passed Lengo Channel en route to Noumea at 1830, speed fourteen knots.

CTF 62 in the McCAWLEY had meanwhile moved to Area YOKE. He directed that the transports and cargo ships in Area YOKE consisting of the McCAWLEY, PRESIDENT HAYES, PRESIDENT ADAMS, PRESIDENT JACKSON, ALCHIBA, NEVILLE and ZEILIN, plus the screening ships, SAN JUAN, AUSTRALIA, HOBART, TRANSDIV TWELVE, HULL, WILSON, MONSSEN, BUCHANAN, SELFRIDGE, BAGLEY, HELM, BLUE, HENLEY were to get underway at 1700.*** By 1917, this group had formed approach disposition AR-4; and at 2024, the group headed out to pass through Lengo Channel which they cleared at 2145. Formation AR-4 was similar to AR-3 except the SAN JUAN was guide with the AUSTRALIA and HOBART in the rear.****

At 2310, CTF 62 set course 118°(T), speed twelve knots and headed for Noumea.

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* U.S. Army in World War II - The War in the Pacific - Guadalcanal The First Offensive, page 81.

** Commanding General, First Marine Division, Final Report on Guadalcanal Operations, Phase II (From "H" Hour to Evening, August 9th) Serial 00204-108/333.

*** Action Reports of Various Ships Involved.

**** War Diary SAN JUAN August 9th, 1942.CTF 62 Dispatch 090600, August 1942.

(b) OPERATIONS OF CTF 61

CTF 61 continued to operate with CTG 61.1 on August 9th - as he had on August 7th and 8th - necessarily because he was a part of it in the role of CTG 61.1.1 and, as such, a subordinate carrier Group Commander under CTG 61.1. He was awaiting a reply from COMSOPACFOR to his dispatch recommending the withdrawal of TG 61.1 and requesting a fueling rendezvous. It is not clear what thoughts were occupying his mind during this time; but it is presumed that he was considering the air operations for the 9th, should the reply from COMSOPACFOR be in the negative. He had already determined the area wherein he planned to operate TG 61.1. It is presumed also that he had been thinking about the effect his request for the retirement of the carrier force would have on CTF 62. For reasons unknown, he had failed to query that officer. He does not appear to have made any serious effort to ascertain the status of the operations in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area. It seems clear that CTF 61 considered himself more the Commander of the carrier force than of the Expeditionary Force and that, in such guise, he operated almost independently of CTF 62.

At 0300 - although it cannot be definitely so stated - it appears highly probable that he heard the same flash report which was heard by CTG 61.1.2 in the ENTERPRISE, indicating that some type of surface action was transpiring in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area.* This was probably the dispatch from the CHICAGO to CTF 62.6, wherein the CHICAGO reported that she had been torpedoed, that the CANBERRA was on fire, and that enemy ships were firing from seaward.**

CTF 61 should now have been seriously concerned regarding the operations of TF 62; for - as has been pointed out earlier - he knew that the latter task force had not as yet completed its operations in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area. CTF 61 was responsible for the success of the basic operation there; and therefore he could not properly have viewed with complacency enemy counteraction in such strength as to seriously damage several of CTF 62's heavy cruisers. He continued on his course of 320°(T) at fifteen knots for a time, awaiting further developments.

At 0330 he received the long awaited dispatch*** from COMSOPACFOR, authorizing the retirement of TG 61.1 and directing that force to fuel at sea to the westward of the line Espiritu Santo Efate. At 0400, he changed course to the right to 050°(T). Because of the nature of the disposition - three carrier task groups in an equilateral triangle of five miles on each side - the changes of course made by TG 61.1 usually took thirty minutes to execute. It is assumed that CTF 61 consulted with his staff as to the advisability of either remaining in the area until he had gained a correct

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* War Diary, CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16), August 9th, 1942.
** CHICAGO Dispatch 081549, August 1942 to AUSTRALIA.
*** COMSOPACFOR Dispatch 081144, August 1942 to CTF 61.

appreciation of the situation at Tulagi-Guadalcanal, or of retiring immediately. It is possible that he expected to hear from CTF 62, or even from COMSOPACFOR with relation to the situation, but he heard nothing further at this time. He finally headed southeast at 0430, and commenced his retirement from the area.

In line with the above, CTF 62 had actually originated a message at 0345 stating "Surface attack on screen coordinated with use of aircraft flares. CHICAGO hit torpedo, CANBERRA on fire."* For some unknown reason this message was not received by CTF 61 until about eight hours later, or at 1153. This was extremely unfortunate, for CTF 61 might possibly have delayed his retirement in order to take offensive action against the Japanese cruisers.

At this time (that is, at 0430) TG 61.1 was but 198 miles southeast of the Japanese Cruiser Force and therefore would have been within easy bombing range of that force at dawn, had it continued on to the northwest. This thought was advanced regretfully by CTG 61.1.2 who stated: "Prompt report of the situation might have permitted aircraft units from TG 61.1 to participate and engage enemy forces present."**

CTF 61 did not direct any morning searches in addition to that already scheduled for the SARATOGA's planes. The fact that he did not increase the radius of search of the SARATOGA's planes, clearly indicates that he had definitely closed his mind to the operations in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area, insofar as assistance from his carrier planes was concerned. He was now more interested in making fueling plans.

At 0740 he changed course to 210°(T) in order to comply with the Point Option given the SARATOGA search planes.

He heard nothing further from any ship of TF 62 until about 0800 when flash reports from the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area were received in the carrier force - notably in the ENTERPRISE - indicating apparent surface action with damage by gunfire and torpedoes.** It is not clear exactly what these flash reports were; but one of them - apparently received at 0800 by CTF 61 - seems to have been from CTF 62 who reported "Heavy actions continue to westward. More of our ships in trouble. Submarines in area."*** CTF 61 appears to have made no effort to learn what information had been heard within TG 61.1; indicating a serious lack of appreciation of the situation in Iron Bottom Sound. Whether this was due to a failure to receive enough of these reports on which to base a decision - the case as stated by CTG 61.1.2,** or whether it was due to the fact that CTF 61 had decided to continue to retire and to disregard his information is unknown; but it is clear that he took no offensive action whatsoever.

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* CTF 62 Dispatch 081645 August 1942, to CTF 61.
** War Diary CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16) August 9th, 1942.
*** CTF 62 Dispatch 082100 August 1942, to CTF 61.

At 0839, CTF 61 received a dispatch from CTF 62, relayed visually by the WASP, the text stating: "Appreciate knowing Admiral Fletcher's plan by message drop."* CTF 61 must have been somewhat surprised at this, as he had received little information from CTF 62 concerning the developments of the night battle and probably wondered what action CTF 62 anticipated receiving. Unfortunately, he had not as yet received either of CTF 62's two dispatches, one originated at 0105, the other at 0641. In the first dispatch - drafted before the night action had occurred - CTF 62 had informed CTF 61 that the absence of air support required him to withdraw all ships temporarily to avoid unwarranted loss.** In the second message, CTF 62 reported that the planned departure of TF 62 was being delayed and requested air cover for attacks on enemy surface force in the general area.*** Had CTF 61 received these dispatches, it is possible that he might have replied to CTF 62; but as it was, he appears to have withheld reply.

At 0930 the morning search conducted by the SARATOGA's planes was completed. CTF 61 learned that the searches had been negative but that the flight had observed the JARVIS retiring from the area.**** Course was then, at 0935, changed back to 140°(T), the retirement course. By coincidence, it happened that at this very same time, Commander Japanese Cruiser Force had reached the 300 mile radius from the position he figured to be the probable location of the Allied carrier force, and had correctly decided that he would no longer be in danger of attack by Allied carrier-based bombers. He had therefore slowed from thirty knots to twenty knots at this time, had divided his force into two groups and had directed each of these groups to proceed independently. Thus by 0935, the two opposing Commanders, separated by a distance of 390 miles, were retiring in opposite directions. Insofar as they were concerned, the battle was over!

At 1000, it is probable - though there is no confirmation of this - that CTF 61 received information from the ENTERPRISE (CTG 61.1.2) that the pilots of certain planes from the ENTERPRISE, which had been sent to Guadalcanal to deliver photographs, had been queried on their return and had reported that they saw no evidence there either of surface action or of enemy ships.*****

At 1009, CTF 61 received from CTG 61.1 a partial translation of a garbled message from CTF 62.****** This was the message wherein CTF 62 stated that, owing to the absence of air support, he would be required

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* CTG 61.1.3 (CTF 18) Visual Dispatch 082139 August 1942 to CTF 61.
** CTF 62 Dispatch 081405 August 1942.
*** CTF 62 Dispatch 081941 August 1942.
**** War Diary SARATOGA, August 9th, 1942.
***** War Diary CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16) August 9th, 1942.
****** CTG 61.1 (CTF 18) Visual Dispatch 082225, August 1942 to CTF 61.

to withdraw all ships temporarily.* This dispatch appears to have been the first intimation that CTF 61 had received from CTF 62 that it was necessary to withdraw the surface forces that day, although it is not improbable that he may have estimated that this was a distinct possibility.

Shortly after 1100, the SARATOGA detected a "bogey" by radar, bearing to the northwest at a range of about 150 miles. This "bogey" was tracked for a few minutes and was found to be on a course to the southeast at the speed of a land-based bomber. Under the threat of this new situation, CTF 61 immediately sent a dispatch designating himself as Officer-in-Tactical Command of the carrier force and directing CTG 61.1 to assume command of aircraft operations.** At the same time, he also directed CTG 61.1: "Double the Combat Air Patrol!"***; and: "Stand by for air attack!"*** Task Group 61.1 immediately went to General Quarters. In the meantime, flight decks were readied to launch fighters.

At 1140, the WASP reported sighting a submarine, and CTF 61 maneuvered TG 61.1 to avoid it. This maneuver delayed somewhat the launching of the intercepting and patrolling fighter groups.

About this time, CTF 61 became aware of the night action near Savo Island, for he sent a message at 1150 to COMSOPACFOR stating: "Am receiving dispatches from Turner describing heavy losses in cruisers in engagement which continues to westward. Are you receiving them?"****

The "bogey" turned out to be a U.S. Army B-17.***** CTF 61 therefore discontinued his AA alert, set Condition of Readiness Two, and assumed a cruising disposition probably designed against submarines.

At 1415, CTF 61 sent to COMSOPACFOR a dispatch which contained, in toto, all messages which CTF 62 had sent him concerning the losses and damages suffered by his command during the night action, indicating that the heavily damaged ASTORIA would be towed to Efate as the only chance to save her; and that this movement required protection which he, CTF 62, was unable to provide.****** It is apparent from this dispatch that at this time - twelve hours after the battle - CTF 61 had information showing that the QUINCY and VINCENNES had been sunk and that the CHICAGO, ASTORIA and CANBERRA had been heavily damaged. Despite this knowledge, CTF 61 still appears to have shown little concern. He seems to have felt that, now that he had been directed to retire, he no longer had any direct responsibility for the operations in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area.

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* CTF 62 Dispatch 081405, August 1942 to CTF 61.

** CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 090014, August 1942 to CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16), and CTG 61.1.3 (CTF 18).

*** CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 090014, August 1942 to CTG 61.1 (CTF 18).

**** CTF 61 Dispatch 090050, August 1942 to COMSOPACFOR.

***** War Diary, SARATOGA August 9th, 1942.

****** CTF 61 Dispatch 090315, August 1942 to COMSOPACFOR.

This supposition is borne out by the fact that he ended the above dispatch to COMSOPACFOR with the following illuminating words: "Direct Turner to make reports direct to you, info to me."*

It is assumed that, some time after 1715, CTF 61 was informed by CTG 61.1 that the afternoon search made by the ENTERPRISE between bearings 055°(T) and 235°(T) to a distance of 150 miles had been negative but that certain sub-sectors to the southwest had not fully been searched, owing to bad weather.

At 1800, CTF 61 changed the fleet course to 180°(T). It took twenty-six minutes to complete this change of course.

At 2100, he changed the fleet course to 145°(T) and continued thereon at fifteen knots.**

(c) OPERATIONS OF CTG 61.1

CTG 61.1 conducted air operations throughout the 9th as follows: (a) combat air and anti-submarine cover for his own task force, (b) a search to support a rescue operation of CTF 63, (c) searches to cover the retirement of his own task force, and (d) a flight to Tulagi to deliver some photographs. No combat air cover or air support was provided TF 62 at Tulagi-Guadalcanal, nor was any air support provided the Marines ashore, because TG 61.1 was retiring.

The weather conditions in the vicinity of the task force were: high scattered clouds, visibility twelve miles, gentle northeasterly surface winds, flying conditions average.**

At 0300, CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16) in the ENTERPRISE heard a flash report indicating that some type of surface action in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area was occurring.** As was pointed out in the preceding section, it is probable that this flash report was also received by CTF 61 as well as by other Group Commanders and Commanding Officers.

At 0600, the SARATOGA turned into the wind to launch her morning search. This search was conducted by eight scout bombers operating from a point of origin; Latitude 11°-14'(S), Longitude 161°-01'(E) - thirty-eight miles northeast of Rennell Island. The search was to cover the sixty degree sector between 270°(T) and 330°(T) to a radius of 175 miles.*** It was tangent on the east to Savo Island and, as may be seen from Diagram "K", scarcely extended to the northwest beyond the Russell Islands. It duplicated a portion of CTF 63's sector II search for that day - both in area and in time - and therefore, as designed, was of little value to

* CTF 61 Dispatch 090315 August 1942 to COMSOPACFOR.
** War Diary CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16) August 1942.
*** War Diary SARATOGA, August 9th, 1942.

CTF 62's operations. It was of value only in determining whether any enemy surface forces were approaching TG 61.1 from the northwest and was primarily defensive. If it had been launched to be helpful in an offensive way, it should have been extended to the maximum radius possible - from a point of origin similar to that used on the afternoon of August 8th; namely, West Cape, Guadalcanal Island. A maximum radius search from the point of origin actually employed would not have discovered the Japanese Cruiser Force, for that force was well beyond that radius. But neither CTF 61 nor CTG 61.1 had any knowledge of the Japanese Cruiser Force at the time.

At 0617, the ENTERPRISE launched four scout bombers to conduct an inner air patrol against submarines. She also launched two scout bombers to drop to the Marines on Guadalcanal Island the photographic prints of the air reconnaissance made of that Island on the preceding day.* After this launching, CTG 61.1 resumed the equilateral triangle cruising disposition which he had been employing throughout the operation wherein TG 61.1.1 was in the van, TG 61.1.2 was five miles on the starboard quarter, and TG 61.1.3 was five miles on the port quarter.

At 0740, course was changed to 210°(T) to reach a position for recovering the morning search planes, which position was fifty miles on bearing 145°(T) from the point of origin, and sixty miles on bearing 105°(T) from the eastern end of Rennell Island.

At this same time, search planes from the SARATOGA sighted and identified the JARVIS in Latitude 9°-42'(S), Longitude 158°-59'(E), on approximate course 225°(T), at an estimated speed of ten knots, down by the bow and leaving a heavy oil wake.** This contact on the JARVIS reveals that her movement since she had been contacted by the BLUE at 0250 was along a course of 230°(T) at a speed of ten knots. It indicated that the JARVIS was proceeding, damaged and unescorted, directly across the Coral Sea to the nearest Australian port.

At 0800 - as was indicated under the discussion of the operations of CTF 61 - flash reports from the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area were being received in the carrier force by some of the ships, notably by the ENTERPRISE.* Whether these reports were received by CTG 61.1 is not definitely known, but it is presumed that he did receive them. However, no information is available as to his reactions at this time.

It is somewhat surprising that, when the above flash reports of night action in Iron Bottom Sound were being intercepted, none of the Task Group Commanders or Commanding Officers of ships of TG 61.1 forwarded to CTG 61.1 - or to their own Group Commanders - any of the information thus received, nor did the Task Force Commander or any Group Commander endeavor

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* War Diary CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16), August 9th, 1942.
** War Diary SARATOGA, August 9th, 1942.

at this time to collect this information within his own force or group. Does it not seem that - in view of the delicate nature of the operations in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area and the basic responsibility of CTF 61 therewith - it would have been a wise move on the part of CTG 61.1 or of his Group Commanders to have collected, correlated, and evaluated such information and then to have forwarded the same to CTF 61 or to CTG 61.1, as the case might be, with any pertinent comment or recommendations?

At 0839, the WASP intercepted the following message from Orange Base to a flight of scout bombers over Guadalcanal: "To Admiral Fletcher from Admiral Turner - Appreciate knowing Admiral Fletcher's plan by message drop." She immediately passed this message by visual means to CTF 61.*

At 0930, the SARATOGA recovered her search planes. These planes reported sighting no enemy units, but reported sighting and identifying the JARVIS. They also reported a minesweeper off the west coast of Guadalcanal in Latitude 09°-25'(S), Longitude 159°-00'(E).** This latter craft was probably the HOPKINS, a minesweeper which had proceeded to the westward at 0400 on orders of COMMINRON TWO, and fixed his position as ten miles southeast of the Russell Islands at 0725.***

At 1000 the cruisers and the battleship, NORTH CAROLINA, provided the inner air patrol against submarines for TG 61.1.****

At 1057, the ENTERPRISE recovered the four scout bombers which had been providing the inner air patrol and the two scout bombers returning from the special trip to Tulagi-Guadalcanal. The pilots from the latter two planes, upon being interrogated, reported that they saw no evidence of surface action there and no enemy ships.****

It is not known whether or not either the ENTERPRISE or CTG 61.1.2 forwarded this information to CTF 61. It should have been so forwarded, since it was very pertinent to the clarification of a highly confused situation in which adequate synthesized information was wanting.

At 1100, the SARATOGA detected a "bogey" by radar bearing to the northwest at a range of about 150 miles. She launched at 1158 twelve fighters to intercept this "bogey" which now had reached a position bearing 335°(T) distant fifty-five miles from the SARATOGA.** At this time, the SARATOGA was eighty miles due south of Cape Surville, San Cristobal Island. This position was farther to the north than might have been expected from the base course of 140°(T), but the necessity for turning northeastward into the wind to launch and recover aircraft had denied the task force more southerly movement.

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* War Diary CTG 61.1.3 (CTF 18), Visual Dispatch 082139, August 1942 to CTF 61.

** War Diary SARATOGA, August 9th, 1942.

*** Action Report HOPKINS, Report of Engagement in Guadalcanal-Florida Area August 7th-9th, 1942, Serial 0067, August 12th, 1942.

**** War Diary CTG 61.1.2 (CTF 16) August 9th, 1942.

In accordance with CTF 61's orders, at 1114, to double the combat air patrol,* the ENTERPRISE launched eight fighters at 1210 to relieve the combat air patrol of four planes from the WASP**- then over the task force.

At 1220, the SARATOGA's fighters intercepted the incoming "bogey" and found it to be a U.S. Army B-17 which was flying at a high altitude.***

At 1403, the SARATOGA launched four scout bombers to search for a patrol plane reported down at sea in Latitude 12°-25'(S), Longitude 162°-58'(E).*** (The crew of this patrol plane was rescued by the McFARLAND).

During the remainder of the day TG 61.1 conducted routine carrier operations.

At 2400, the mean position of TF 61.1 was Latitude 14°-28'(S), Longitude 163°-26'(E) or 188 miles due west of Cape Cumberland, Espiritu Santo Island.

(d) OPERATIONS OF ALLIED SUBMARINES

(1) Operations of S-38

At 0000, August 9th, the S-38 was on course 140°(T), patrolling her line 320°-140°(T) in St. George's Channel. At 0005, the Commanding Officer sighted a large ship with a single destroyer screen bearing 170° relative and approaching on a parallel course of 140°(T) so as to pass close aboard the S-38.**** He tracked this contact for nineteen minutes when, at 0024, he fired two torpedoes by sound.**** A half minute later he heard both torpedoes explode and the sound of the propellers of the large ship stopped.**** The S-38 had sunk the Japanese transport MEIYO MARU which was one of six troop-carrying ships bearing Japanese reinforcements from Rabaul to Guadalcanal.***** The MEIYO MARO sank on bearing 270°(T) distant fourteen miles from Cape St. George, and lost fourteen officers and 328 enlisted men.***** The other five transports reversed course and returned to Rabaul.

The Commanding Officer, S-38 immediately thereafter commenced operating submerged at a very slow speed on various courses in order to avoid the Japanese escorting destroyer which was searching for him. He

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* CTF 61 Visual Dispatch 090014, August 1942 to CTG 61.1 (CTF 18).
** War Diary ENTERPRISE, August 9th, 1942.
*** War Diary SARATOGA, August 9th, 1942.
**** War Diary S-38, August 1942.
***** Southeast Area Naval Operations, Part I, Doc. 4042, Historical Division, U.S. Army, July 31st, 1947; also War Diary 8th Fleet, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 74633, May 12th, 1947, page 3.

continued so to operate until 0145. At this time, as the sounds of the searching destroyers had faded from his listening gear well astern he considered himself safe, set course 180°(T), and commenced reloading his torpedo tubes.* He shortly thereafter surfaced and continued on this course until at dawn he had reached a position thirty-eight miles south of Cape St. George, having made good ten and one-half knots.

Then, at 0521, he determined his patrol for the day. He decided to remain in the southern part of this area, running deeply submerged during daylight, because he knew that Japanese aircraft search and bombing missions were certain to pass over his operating area. He also decided that before he again closed the Japanese traffic lanes, he would first rest his crew. At 0521, he changed course to 270°(T).*

At dusk, 1837, he surfaced and changed course to 090°(T) to move east to the longitude of Cape St. George. He reached this position at 2400, and then changed course to 000°(T) to close the traffic lanes off Cape St. George. The 2400 position of the S-38 was about thirty-eight miles south of that Cape.

(2) Operations of S-44

At 0000, August 9th, the S-44 was proceeding westerly on the surface along the south coast of New Hanover Island, en route to Area ZED in accordance with orders received about three hours before. At about this time, she changed course to the northwest to round the island, and at about 0230 changed course to the northeast. By dawn, she had reached a position bearing 300°(T), distant forty miles from North Cape, New Ireland.**

The Commanding Officer submerged at this time and proceeded to the southeast. He remained submerged during daylight. Immediately after dark, when he had reached a position four miles north of North Cape, he surfaced and proceeded toward Simberi Island, making best speed toward Area ZED,** which lay in the vicinity of Cape St. George.

At 2400, the S-44 was about forty miles east of North Cape.

(e) OPERATIONS OF CTF 63

CTF 63's Operation Plan scheduled for August 9th had the same search operations as those specified for August 8th. The contact on the Japanese Cruiser Force at 1025, August 8th, however, had precipitated some changes. It is to be remembered that CTF 62 had requested CTF 63, late on August 8th, to bomb these ships in Rekata Bay, Santa Isabel Island; and that CTF 63 had ordered the ELEVENTH Bombardment Group to be prepared to conduct this attack at 1200, August 9th.

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* War Diary S-38, August 1942.
** War Diary S-44, August 1942.

At 0254, CTF 63 sent a dispatch to CTG 63.5 in the MACKINAC directing him to send the patrol plane in the western sub-sector of Sector IV to reconnoiter Rekata Bay at earliest possible on August 9th, since enemy seaplane tenders were believed to be based there.* CTG 63.5 was directed to reduce the patrol planes on search in the eastward sub-sectors of Sector IV as necessary to make four patrol planes available for night torpedo attack on this Japanese force.* Information was included that the B-17s would hit the same target about noon.* Whether this dispatch was ever received in the MACKINAC is unknown. Sector IV was reported searched in all sub-sectors on August 9th, as hereinafter shown, so it is clear that the night torpedo attack was not carried out.

The scheduled search operations in other sectors were carried out as scheduled. The results of these searches follows:

Sector I again was not searched;** but this time either because of bad weather (which prevented the ENTERPRISE scouting planes from completing their search in this area on the afternoon of August 9th***), or because the B-17s were being employed in the strike mission against Rekata Bay. Other land-based bombers on New Caledonia conducted local searches.**

Sector II was searched by two B-17s from Espiritu Santo which reported one hundred per cent coverage with negative results.** It is evident that these planes took off from Espiritu Santo at about 0340, because one was detected about noon by the SARATOGA's radar.***

This radar detection indicates that the search B-17s were flying much too high for effective surface search. It is probable that the inexperience of the Army Air Corps in overwater search operations, and their lack of briefing by the Navy units in AIRSOPAC were the reasons for this. It also indicates that the B-17 search planes in Sector II were abreast of Tulagi at about 0750, on their respective outbound legs. On this premise, they reached the 750 miles extremity of search at 0912, which position was abreast of Manning Strait and just beyond the northwest extremities of both New Georgia and Santa Isabel Islands. At that moment the Japanese Cruiser Force, which had passed northward through Sector II, was just forty-five miles due west of the B-17 in the western sub-sector. The B-17s changed course at 0912 to the southwest to proceed along a forty miles cross-leg before turning back at 0930 toward Espiritu Santo. At 0930, the Japanese Cruiser Force was forty miles northwest of the B-17 in the western sub-sector. By 0953, the B-17 in the eastern sub-sector was over Rekata Bay and sighted no enemy units there. At 1200 the B-17 in the western sub-sector was bearing 335°(T), distant fifty-five miles from the SARATOGA, which carrier had dispatched a flight of twelve fighters to intercept it.*** It was intercepted and reported as a friendly B-17*** by this flight group at about 1220.

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* COMAIRSOPAC Dispatch 081554, August 1942 to MACKINAC.
** War Diary COMAIRSOPAC, August 1942.
*** War Diary, SARATOGA, August 1942.

Sector III was searched by two patrol planes from the CURTISS, anchored in Espiritu Santo. These planes reported ninety-five per cent coverage, and results negative.*

Sector IV was searched by six patrol planes based on the MACKINAC at Maramasike Estuary. The outer fifty miles of the 650 mile radius was not searched.* The MACKINAC reported one hundred per cent coverage, and negative results.*

Sector V was assigned to be searched by four patrol planes based on the McFARLAND at Ndeni. The McFARLAND made no report for this sector on August 9th.* The sector was searched, however, with negative results.** The McFARLAND had gotten underway at 2210 on August 8th, after gassing all search planes and placing the crews aboard the minelayer, BREESE, to rescue the crew of a patrol plane down at sea to the westward of Ndeni.*** The McFARLAND returned to her anchorage in Gracioso Bay, Ndeni, Santa Cruz Islands at 2200, August 9th.* The BREESE placed the plane crew aboard their planes at 0545, and fueled them from the McFARLAND's bowser boats after their return from search flights at 1708.***

Sector VI was searched by four patrol planes based ashore at Nandi, Fiji Islands. This sector was reported as coverage ninety per cent, results negative.*

At about 0645, CTF 63, in accordance with the request of CTF 62, launched, from the air base at Espiritu Santo, a striking force of eight B-17s to attack some Japanese cruisers and seaplane tenders which had supposedly arrived in Rekata Bay the preceding day. This striking force proceeded as far north as the northern end of Santa Isabel Island, reconnoitering the adjacent waters off shore, but failed to find the cruisers and seaplane tenders. There were no seaplane tenders, of course, at Rekata Bay, nor nearby, for the identification of the Japanese Cruiser Force on August 8th had been in error. By the time these B-17s had reached Rekata Bay, the Japanese cruisers had already passed through Bougainville Strait and were beyond the radius of these planes. After finding no enemy target, the eight B-17s returned to the southern tip of Santa Isabel Island where they dropped their bombs, and then returned to Espiritu Santo.

The routine nature of CTF 63's air searches throughout the 9th, and more particularly the fact that his air attack group of eight B-17s was launched against a seaplane escort group, indicates that no reports of the night action had reached CTF 63 in sufficient time or completeness

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* War Diary COMAIRSOPAC, August 1942.

** Interrogation of Cdr. J.O. Cobb, USN, VP-6 Executive Officer and McFARLAND Detachment Commander (August 1942) by Commodore R.W. Bates, USN (Ret.), Head of Department of Analysis, Naval War College, Newport, R.I., October 25th, 1949.

*** War Diary BREESE (DM18), August 1942.

for him to direct this attack group against the retiring Japanese Cruiser Force. As has already been pointed out, the search planes in Sector II missed the Japanese Cruiser Force by some forty miles. Therefore it would only have been possible for CTF 63 to have located the Japanese cruisers had the two B-17s in Sector II been abreast Tulagi at sunrise (0632) instead of at 0750 as it turned out. Even had CTF 63 located the Japanese cruisers and diverted the eight B-17 attack group toward them, these B-17s could not have reached the noon position of the Japanese ships. It therefore is evident that, under the circumstances, CTF 63 was in no position to take offensive action against the Japanese Cruiser Force.

On August 9th, he requested COMPATWING TWO in Pearl Harbor to make ready nine replacement patrol planes, four of which were to be sent to AIRSOPACFOR as soon as possible to replace those lost in the then current operations.

(f) OPERATIONS OF COMMANDER ALLIED AIR FORCES, SOWESPAC

Commander Allied Air Forces, Northeastern Area, SOWESPAC conducted air searches on August 9th similar to those conducted on August 8th.* These searches were as follows:

(a) Three Hudsons from the Fall River airfield at Milne Bay reconnoitered the Solomon Islands in Reconnaissance Area "B", and a fourth Hudson made a short reconnaissance flight over Reconnaissance Area "Siren".

(b) One B-17 from Port Moresby reconnoitered Reconnaissance Area "C"; one, Reconnaissance Area "D", and one searched Reconnaissance Area "E", which latter included Kavieng and Rabaul.

Of the above flights, only those made by the Hudsons in Reconnaissance Area "B" were important as regards this study, and only these are shown on Diagram "K". These planes made contacts as follows:

(a) One of them made a contact on four cruisers in Latitude 06°-05' (S), Longitude 155°-57' (E) at 1435 on course 320° (T), speed estimated at twelve knots. Actually the speed of these cruisers, which happened to be CRUDIV SIX, was twenty knots. The plane developed the contact on these cruisers until 1455**, at which time it retired, probably because of limitations of fuel.

(b) Another of these Hudsons observed, at 1520, what he thought was one cruiser and one destroyer in Latitude 07°-08' (S), Longitude 154°-40' (E) on course 300 (T) speed ten knots.* Actually this identification

* Allied Air Forces, SOWESPAC, Reconnaissance Report, August 9th, 1942.
** CRUDIV SIX Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-9th, 1942, WDC Document 160997, June 27th, 1947.

appears to have been in error. It is more likely that it was an important auxiliary, rather than a cruiser, escorted by a destroyer, for no Japanese cruiser was in that area. It could not, of course, have been part of the Japanese Cruiser Force, as that force was to the east of Bougainville Island at this time.

Whether these two contact reports ever reached the responsible commanders in SOPACFOR is not known, but as there is no record of their having been received, it seems likely that they were not forwarded. While it is true that, even had they been forwarded, they would not have precipitated any offensive action by COMSOPACFOR as the contacts were made too late in the day; nevertheless, they are mentioned here to show how the communications had failed on August 9th. The study made earlier of the delays on August 7th and 8th showed that the average time of delivery of an aircraft contact report in the Northeastern Area of SOWESPAC on those two days was approximately ten hours. This was excessive. However, the time of delivery on August 9th was even more excessive for on that date the contact report was not delivered at all.

EPILOGUE

CHAPTER XXI

EPILOGUE

(a) CONCLUDING EVENTS:

The concluding events consisted, in the main, of the withdrawal of both the Allied naval and air forces and the Japanese naval forces from the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area.

(1) Allied operations

On the Allied side, (a) TF 61, the Air Support Force, was proceeding to a fueling rendezvous at sea well to the south and to the west of Espiritu Santo; (b) TF 62, the Amphibious Force, was en route southward to Noumea; and (c) TF 63 was retiring its forward search groups from Maramisike Estuary and Ndeni to Espiritu Santo, which air base then became the most forward air position in the South Pacific Area. The Marines ashore on Tulagi and Guadalcanal Islands were left without naval support and without air support. Although Marine fighter groups were en route from Pearl Harbor, they were not to arrive at Guadalcanal until August 13th.

(2) Japanese Operations

On the Japanese side, the cruisers which had been so successful against the Allied screening groups early on August 9th, were retiring to their bases. The CHOKAI and CRUDIV EIGHTEEN arrived at Rabaul at 0539, August 10th and CRUDIV SIX (less KAKO) arrived at Silver Sound outside Kavieng at 1811, the same day.

The KAKO had been attacked by the Allied submarine S-44 at 0908, August 10th in a position sixteen miles northeast of Simberi Island and had been hit by three torpedoes. She had sunk at 0915.

Three Japanese submarines of SUBRON SEVEN, the RO-33, I-121 and I-122 were operating in Iron Bottom Sound. The I-123 was not due to arrive until possibly late on the eleventh. Air and other Japanese reinforcements had been ordered and many were en route to the South Seas Area.

The Combined Fleet was preparing to sortie from its bases in anticipation of fighting a decisive battle in the Solomons Area. It sortied on August 11th, 16th and 17th.

(b) SITUATION AS OF 2400 AUGUST 10th

The situation in the South Pacific Area at midnight August 10th was a confused one, because, as can be seen from the above, a complete redisposition of forces, both Allied and Japanese, was underway. The operations which had led to, and which had included the night action known as the

Battle of Savo Island, had terminated. The gathering forces on both sides were soon to lead to other naval and air engagements which would continue the bitter struggle in the Solomon Islands until their final capture by Allied forces many months later.

THE EFFECTS OF THE BATTLE

CHAPTER XXII

THE EFFECTS OF THE BATTLE

The Battle of Savo Island, which was incidental to the first Allied offensive amphibious operations of World War II, was a limited Japanese tactical victory. This was so, for the destruction of the ASTORIA, VINCENNES, QUINCY, CANBERRA, JARVIS and the heavy damage to the CHICAGO, RALPH TALBOT and PATTERSON with but slight damage to the Japanese cruisers CHOKAI, AOBA, KINUGASA, YUBARI and TENRYU gave the Japanese a temporary command of the action area which, had it been exploited by an attack on the Allied transports, might have caused the complete failure of the Allied plans in the Solomon Islands. However, the Japanese commander did not exploit his tactical success and retired without attempting to accomplish the destruction of the transports and cargo ships and without annihilating the Allied screening force.

Victories at sea are not necessarily always measured by ships lost or tactical successes gained. They are more often measured by the effect such losses or tactical successes may have upon ultimate victory; upon the extent to which such losses or tactical successes contribute to the accomplishment of the strategical plan. In naval warfare it is not sufficient to gain temporary control of the action area; it is far more important to insure that the action contributes its full share towards final victory. This may require immediate exploitation of the tactical success.

The question therefore arises as to whether, in view of the failure of Commander Cruiser Force to exploit his tactical success, he may be considered as having satisfactorily accomplished his objective. The answer is obviously an emphatic no! For through his failure to destroy the Allied transports and cargo ships, he permitted the Allied unloading operations at Tulagi-Guadalcanal to continue. This enabled the Allies to secure their beachheads more firmly. It also enabled them, prior to their scheduled retirement at 1800, August 9th, to provide from these ships additional logistics support sufficient to make it feasible for the Marines to continue successfully their military operations ashore.

The initial success of the above landing operations and the failure of Commander Cruiser Force to force the Allied withdrawal by destroying his shipping, caused the Japanese Navy and the Army General Staff to designate the Solomons as a vital area with the idea of staking everything on a decisive fight there. They even appeared willing to fight a decisive fleet action if necessary in defense of the area. This was, of course, a considerable departure from the plan adopted soon after Midway to fight such a decisive fleet action in waters nearer the Empire. The Japanese felt that should the Allied operation succeed, the Allies would gain confidence and would push against other Japanese occupied areas. The Japanese Army Department did not fully concur with the plan to fight a decisive action in the Solomons because of the distance from the home bases and the ensuing

difficulty of sending armaments and supplies. As a consequence, there was no real unified action between the Army and the Navy in the early days of Allied occupation and the Japanese military power was gradually frittered away. Thus, the Allied seizure of Guadalcanal became a brilliant strategical success because it forced the Japanese to expend their military power in an area far from their sources of military strength.

The loss of the four cruisers was a serious blow to the Allies. They were preparing to conduct the North African invasion as well as to conduct offensive operations in the Aleutians, and the shortage of heavy escort and bombardment ships in all areas was very acute indeed. Therefore, the loss of these cruisers in the SOPAC area was immediately felt in the other areas. This was necessarily so because in these early days losses in one area often forced an immediate redistribution of forces in other areas.

The Japanese, much as they did after the Midway operation, employed their tactical success in the night action to keep alight the nation's resolve to victory. A grossly exaggerated story of the Allied losses in surface ships was given great emphasis by the Japanese press and radio and broadcast to the world.

The Allies also, on the other hand made little comment on their naval losses, but employed the fact that they had successfully seized Tulagi and had landed on Guadalcanal to bolster the morale not only of their own people but of their allies as well. Although they did not know it at the time, this was the first of a long series of successful Allied amphibious operations in the Pacific which were to culminate in the Battle of OKINAWA. It is possible that the Allied claims also had an excellent morale effect on those peoples subjugated by the Axis such as the Poles and the Chinese,* as it showed that the Allies had not only seized the offensive but were capable of defeating the Japanese in overseas operations.

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* Editorial, New York Times, Wednesday, August 12th, 1942.

BATTLE LESSONS

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2. The Japanese counted heavily on gaining surprise against the Allied forces at Tulagi-Guadalcanal. In this they were so remarkably successful as to succeed in destroying the main strength of the Allied screening force with but slight damage to themselves. In accomplishing this they succeeded in obtaining a decisive superiority in gun-power over each of the Allied screening groups. The effect on the Allied commanders was almost stupifying. They confused the situation; mistook the enemy for friends; failed to make reports of the enemy's presence; made numerous incorrect decisions; and almost completely forgot their primary objective - the defense of their transports and cargo ships.

LESSON:

Surprise is the injection of the unexpected for the purpose of creating an unfavorable military situation for the enemy. Judiciously conceived and successfully employed, it may be a most potent factor. It produces both physical and morale effects. In general, the physical effect is to produce a decisive superiority at the decisive time and place. However, the effect of surprise is predominantly one of morale and is not in proportion to physical gains and losses. It can therefore have a very adverse reaction upon the professional judgment of the surprised commander, as well as upon his command, in which case confusion, temporary loss of initiative, and even relaxation of effort may obtain. On the other hand, the commander who achieves surprise may thereby engender such confidence within his command as to contribute heavily towards victory.

Surprise must not be counted on too strongly in planning, although it should be considered as the soul of nearly every operation. There must be sufficient means available to insure success even though surprise be not obtained. In considering surprise, the enemy's intelligence potentialities should not be overlooked.

There are, of course, occasions when surprise may not be desired as for example in deception operations where it is hoped to entice enemy forces into a definite area and away from another area.

* * *

3. CTF 61, the commander of the Expeditionary Force, was stationed in a carrier, with the carrier force, TF 61.1. He also was in command of one of the carrier task groups within that force. He was so stationed and assigned because he was the only combat trained carrier task force commander in the area. It was felt in view of the importance of carrier operations, that the most trained carrier commander should be with the carriers at all times. This was shown to be specious reasoning, for CTF 61 was never fully cognizant of the progress of the landing and unloading operations at Tulagi or at Guadalcanal, and his carrier force was rarely ever nearer than eighty miles to these places. The result of this was that CTF 61, to all intents and purposes, attached more

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importance to the carrier operations than he did to the amphibious operations at Tulagi-Guadalcanal and finally retired, to the serious detriment of the landing operations.

LESSON:

The commander of an expeditionary force should have freedom of action so that he may be present at the point of paramount interest should he so desire. In other words he should be free to be at the scene of the landing operations during a landing and free to join the surface forces should naval and air action be imminent. This enables him to keep himself continuously informed of the constantly changing situation and permits him to employ his communications fully once contact with the enemy has been made. For this reason, he should normally be stationed in a cruiser or a battleship which can be spared from its projected assignments rather than in a carrier which can only operate within limited areas.*

He should have no responsibilities except the operation of the force as a whole. He should therefore not become involved directly in the operations of smaller groups or units lest in so doing he overlook his more important responsibilities.**

* * *

4. The Japanese Commander Cruiser Force designated an objective to his force viz., the destruction of the Allied transports and cargo ships at Tulagi-Guadalcanal. He made no effort thereafter to accomplish this objective but instead engaged the Allied screening forces in heavy combat after which he retired from the area.

The Japanese commander also appears to have designated as a battle objective "the destruction of the Allied screening forces." He did not destroy these screening forces but instead retired without insuring their destruction.

The Allied commander likewise designated an objective to his screening force viz., the defense of the transports and cargo ships against Japanese air, surface and submarine attack. The Allied group commanders and the commanding officers, despite this objective, made little effort to interpose their commands between the Japanese cruisers and the Allied shipping at either Tulagi or Guadalcanal. The fact that

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* Statement June 1st, 1949 by Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, USN(Ret) to Commodore Richard W. Bates, USN(Ret), Head of Department of Analysis, Naval War College.

** Statement April 8th, 1950 by Admiral Henry K. Hewitt, USN(Ret) to Commodore Richard W. Bates, USN(Ret), Head of Department of Analysis, Naval War College.

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this shipping was not attacked was a Japanese command failure rather than an Allied command success.

LESSON:

A military objective is the end towards which action is being or is to be directed. As such it is an objective in mind. Therefore, an objective, being a mental concept, is a situation to be created or maintained. It is generally assigned to a subordinate by his commander, but under some conditions it may be adopted by the commander concerned on his own initiative in order to meet the demands of a situation which has suddenly arisen and on which his immediate superior has not had time or opportunity to act. It will be noted that the Allied commander assigned the objective to his defending forces above, whereas the Japanese commander adopted his objective on his own initiative to meet a new but anticipated situation.

It is essential that a commander make every effort, consistent with proper "costs" to accomplish his objective, since his failure to do so may have a seriously adverse effect on his superior's general plan.

In the examples shown, the Japanese commander, after disrupting the Allied screening force, failed to complete his mission by the annihilation of the transports and cargo ships. This was an objective entirely within his capabilities. This failure permitted the Allies to seize a foothold from which they were never dislodged. Furthermore the Japanese commander only partially carried out his self assigned objective as regards the Allied screening force.

In the cases of the Allied commanders, they appeared to forget almost completely that their objective was the protection of the same transports and cargo ships. Had the Japanese commander been of sterner fiber, it is quite possible that CTF 62 might have been compelled to abandon his attack on the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area.

* * *

5. There was a marked tendency on the part of the Japanese commanders to claim that own forces had inflicted much more extensive damage and many more sinkings than had in fact occurred. This was especially noticeable (a) when the Commander 5th Air Attack Force claimed sinking by air attack on August 8th, two heavy cruisers, one large cruiser, two destroyers and nine transports and damaging and setting fire to one large cruiser and two transports, when in fact all he had accomplished was to damage the JARVIS and the GEORGE F. ELLIOTT; (b) when the Commander Cruiser Force claimed sinking during the night action early morning August 9th, two British heavy cruisers, five American heavy cruisers, one American light cruiser and six destroyers and to have damaged one British light cruiser and one destroyer. What he had ac-

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complished in fact was to sink one Australian heavy cruiser, the CANBERRA, three American heavy cruisers, the VINCENNES, QUINCY, ASTORIA, and to damage one American heavy cruiser, the CHICAGO, and two destroyers, the PATTERSON and RALPH TALBOT. The Allies on the other hand realized that they had done some damage but made no claims as to enemy surface ships sunk.

LESSON:

Accurate knowledge of the enemy's losses has an importance considerably beyond that of reflecting credit on own forces and own commanders, for no commander can make correct decisions in battle nor yet learn and apply its lessons to future tactics without knowing how successful he has been in damaging the enemy. It is important to realize that over-estimation of enemy losses may work definite harm in the following ways:

(a) It may warp the immediate judgment of commanders in battle. It should be apparent that should a commander have an erroneous belief as to the number of enemy units destroyed and the number still remaining, he may fail to press home or to repeat an attack, or to finish off cripples, or to pursue fugitives and cut off their escape. He may permit enemy vessels left supposedly sinking to survive and escape; he may relax his guard against enemy units which are apparently disabled but which are actually still dangerous, or which have disappeared only to reform, rearm, and re-attack.

(b) It may hinder tactical advancement. If a commander believes that he has been highly successful and has inflicted heavy losses on the enemy when the contrary is actually the case, he may fail to remedy weaknesses and to make improvements in material, training, and tactics.

(c) It may affect own long range strategy, which of necessity is based largely on an analysis of the enemy's strength with relation to own strength. This, in turn, is affected by the accuracy of own estimate of previous enemy losses.

* * *

6. Commander Cruiser Force authorized his division commanders to operate independently. As a consequence, COMCRUDIV EIGHTEEN and the YUNAGI both separated from his command immediately prior to opening fire on the CHICAGO Group. However, despite this, Commander Cruiser Force, who appears to have been constantly advised as to the Allied cruiser formations by his planes, was always able to obtain an appropriate degree of combat superiority over the Allied screening groups at each point of contact. Therefore, his division of forces did not work a hardship on his command.

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CTG 62.6, on the other hand and as a corollary of the above, not only so divided his forces as to risk combat inferiority at the point of contact but he failed to make adequate provisions for the coordination of his forces. His division of forces therefore placed his command at an initial disadvantage.

LESSON:

While a flat statement that it is unwise to divide a force may contain a sound element of caution, it is not necessarily unwise to do so for a division of forces may be necessary or desirable. Such axiomatic advice to be adequate should indicate when and in what measure such division may or may not be necessary or desirable.

On the other hand, however true as a generality, the statement that the requirements of warfare are met by bringing superiority to bear at the decisive time and place is also inadequate. What is necessary here is to determine the appropriate degree of superiority and the proper time and place.

* * *

7. The Allied High Command, on occasions, estimated the course of action that the enemy intended to follow and then based their plans on this estimate of the enemy's intention. They did not give adequate consideration to other enemy capabilities which might adversely affect their plans. As an example, they estimated that the Japanese forces noted off Bougainville were heading for Rekata Bay and therefore overlooked the enemy capability of attacking the Savo Island Area that night. Also two of the Allied cruiser commanders (the QUINCY and ASTORIA) overlooked the enemy capability of being present in the area and estimated that the Japanese forces illuminating them were friendly. A partial result of this oversight was that they were caught by surprise and their ships were so seriously damaged that they sank within a short time.

LESSON:

A commander, in making his plans, should follow the method of enemy capabilities rather than the method of enemy intentions. The method of enemy intentions, which has been discarded by the United States Armed Forces, as the enemy's intentions are subject to change, but which is still used by certain important navies, consisted of an estimate by the commander, based on that course of action which he thought, or even knew, the enemy intended to follow. The method of capabilities consists of an estimate by the commander based on those courses of action which the enemy is capable of doing and which if adopted will materially affect the accomplishment of the commander's objectives. He should, where possible, list the enemy courses of action in order of priority-- that is, he should list the more likely before the less likely. In case of

doubt, he should give the higher priority to those enemy courses which he considers more dangerous to himself.

* * *

8. All of the Allied ships with the exception of the CANBERRA, which was in British Condition of Readiness TWO, were in American Condition of Readiness TWO. Most of the Allied ships appeared to have so organized their commands as to make it possible to set Condition of Readiness ONE from Condition of Readiness TWO in about five minutes which was normal practice at the time. However, the QUINCY required much longer to accomplish this - possibly ten minutes. This appears to have been (a) because she had so organized her Condition of Readiness TWO that many of her personnel who should have been on watch in their regular battle stations,* instead were on watch at other stations - for example, at the anti-aircraft directors - and therefore took much longer to reach their general quarters stations, and (b) because she was closed up in Material Readiness Condition ZED so rapidly that many of the personnel were unable to reach their battle stations. The net result of this, plus a reduced radius of visibility owing to smoke and fire, was that the QUINCY was delayed in firing her first salvo for about twelve minutes. Both the QUINCY and the VINCENNES appeared unable to open fire with the Condition of Readiness Two organization while setting Condition of Readiness One.

LESSON:

A commanding officer should make every effort to insure that his ship is so organized and trained that only the minimum time is necessary to open fire or to set any higher condition of readiness. In addition he should insure that his organization not only permits fire to be opened immediately with that portion of the battery which is manned under the existing condition of readiness, but also permits the maintenance of an effective fire during the period when a higher condition of readiness is being set.

It is, of course, realized that in certain sea areas one portion of the armament may be considered more important to the requirements of the situation than is another portion and may be given more consideration as regards reliefs for the personnel. Therefore, certain relief personnel from other battle stations may be assigned to assist in maintaining a higher degree of readiness in that more important portion of the armament. These relief personnel should, whenever practicable, come from battle stations nearby.

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* Memorandum February 10th, 1943 from Lieutenant Commander H.R. Heneberger, USN, to Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN(Ret) concerning Additional Information in Regard to the EX-USS QUINCY, paragraph 12.

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Each commanding officer with the above idea in mind should study the fundamental requirements of the sea area in which he is operating and should insure that his conditions of readiness are synchronized with the demands of the situation. It must be emphasized that he alone is responsible for that state of readiness which will best meet the situation at the time.

* * *

9. During this action the Allied ships were equipped with radar; the Japanese ships were not so equipped. The Japanese therefore were forced to rely on their visual means of detection to insure their discovering the Allied ships. The Allies, on the other hand, relied on their radars and appear to have attached little importance to their visual means of detection. So confident was CTG 62.6 as to the capabilities of his radars that he stated later that it should not have been possible for an enemy force to get inside Savo Island without being detected either visually or with radar by the screening destroyers BLUE and RALPH TALBOT. He particularly stressed radar. He stated that these screening destroyers were so stationed that radar with a surface range of but six miles would insure that nothing got by. He did not realize that the BLUE and RALPH TALBOT could be as much apart as twenty miles. Neither he nor his commanding officers appear to have been familiar with the limitations of the radar of those days or with its failure in the presence of land masses.

As a consequence, the Japanese almost invariably made visual contact on the Allied ships long before the Allied ships made radar or visual contact on the Japanese ships.

LESSON:

Complete reliance should not be placed on technological devices. This is especially important when such devices have not been fully proven. While such devices when operating correctly can give unusual and, in some cases, almost insurmountable advantages to those who have them, they can also, when operating incorrectly, be seriously disadvantageous as they may contribute false impressions as to the accuracy of their performance. It is of great importance, therefore, that commanders understand the utility of and know something of the capabilities and limitations of their technological devices, and that they make provision, when practicable, for paralleling the more vital technological devices by other means.

* * *

10. The Joint Chiefs-of-Staff desired that COMSOPAC should be in supreme command of all of the operations for the seizure of Tulagi-Guadalcanal. In order to effect this they moved the boundary between the SOWESPAC Area and the SOPAC Area to the westward from Longitude

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165°(E) to Longitude 159°(E). This placed the objective area of Tulagi-Guadalcanal within the SOPAC Area. However, in doing this, they permitted a division of command over the shore-based aircraft required for the operation. As a result the shore-based aircraft in SOWESPAC remained under the command of COMSOWESPAC and that in SOPAC under COMSOPAC. This seriously interfered with the prompt reporting to the Allied commanders in SOPAC of contacts made by SOWESPAC planes and was one of the contributory reasons for the Allied failure in the tactical phases of the Night Battle of Savo Island.

LESSON:

A commander charged with the conduct of an operation should be given operational control over all shore-based aircraft required for that operation. If such operational control cannot be obtained then he should be able to communicate directly with all pertinent bases, and with aircraft on search or combat missions, in order to insure immediate receipt of all contact reports and other information vital to the successful conduct of operations.

* * *

11. The Japanese plan for the employment of land and tender-based aircraft in the defense of the Southwest Area called for covering the area with search aircraft primarily for intelligence purposes, and for supplementing the search aircraft with attack aircraft. All aircraft were to be based on selected fields and at selected bases throughout the area, and all were under a single command.

The Allied plan for the employment of land and tender-based aircraft in the assault on Tulagi-Guadalcanal called for covering the approaches to and the operations within the objective area by search aircraft primarily for intelligence purposes. It also called for supplementing the search aircraft with attack aircraft. All aircraft were to be operated from selected fields or selected anchorages in New Caledonia, New Guinea, the Fiji, New Hebrides and Santa Cruz Islands and were to extend their searches as far north as the range of aircraft would permit. These aircraft, unfortunately, were operated under a divided command.

In both cases the air cover was far from adequate because of the limited number of search planes, the limited range of search aircraft, the shortage of suitably located air fields, and finally because of bad flying weather in certain areas.

LESSON:

The employment of land and tender-based aircraft for the defense of a sea area when no carrier-based aircraft are available and when weather conditions are favorable can only be effective when said

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aircraft are adequate in number and training and suitably disposed to furnish the intelligence required for the security of the area; when the airfields are suitably located to provide mutual support and concentration not only for themselves but for any surface forces in the area; when the attack aircraft are sufficient in numbers and quality and the pilots are adequately trained, and when all aircraft are operated under a single command.

* * *

12. COMSOPAC directed CTF 63 to conduct patrol plane searches for the protection of the surface ships of TF 62 against land based aircraft during the approach, the landing attack and the unloading. He did this not only because he believed that this was the basic problem but also because CTF 61 desired searches which would prevent an enemy air striking group from approaching undetected. CTF 63 does not appear to have received any specific requests either from CTF 61 or CTF 62 for protection against attacks by enemy surface craft prior to 2242, August 7th. The results of the action showed that it was in surface craft that the principal threat lay.

LESSON:

In planning an operation, the Commander should consider fully every element of weakness and strength and every element of advantage and disadvantage. Such a study should disclose to him every possibility which the enemy might exploit and should enable him to envisage those enemy operations which presumably could materially affect his own plans. For example, he might by such a study be able to determine the enemy strength which could be moved into position within time limits which could affect his own courses of action. He should then be able to determine what action he should take to insure the successful completion of his plans, or what modification of his plan should be made in the light of this knowledge of enemy capabilities. CTF 62 at 2242 August 7th determined by such a study the need for additional air searches in the unsearched area north of Choiseul Island and in the direction of Rabaul as a protection against the approach of enemy surface forces from the westward. This was an excellent example of the above reasoning process.

* * *

13. Of the two cruisers and two destroyers which comprised the CHICAGO Group, and the three cruisers and two destroyers which comprised the VINCENNES Group, but one ship, the destroyer PATTERSON, made any attempt to broadcast a contact report to the Officer-in-Tactical-Command or, failing that, to CTF 61, 62, 63 or COMSOPAC. She attempted to make this contact report by TBS voice radio, and did not parallel it by radio but endeavored to do so by visual means. The result of this was that her report was received by but three ships of the above groups, the VINCENNES

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QUINCY and WILSON, and by the RALPH TALBOT on radar picket duty. The QUINCY and WILSON appear to have acted on it immediately but the VINCENNES operator failed to deliver it to the bridge so that it became ineffective.

LESSON:

It is particularly important that contact reports of enemy ships as well as of enemy aircraft in position to threaten the principal forces be made as soon as possible. Detailed accurate information of the enemy should be provided and this should include the enemy's bearing, and distance from a geographical point or his latitude and longitude; his disposition or formation; the number of his units and their course and speed. The senior officer of ships within visual touch of each other at the point of contact is not only responsible that the information is transmitted to the proper officer but he is also responsible for preventing unnecessary duplication of reports by the ships in visual contact with him. However, when a junior observes that his senior appears unable to transmit information because of damage or other reasons, he, the junior, should assume that duty.

The employment of plain language by the PATTERSON was correct as own forces were in immediate danger. Communication Instructions state that "enemy reports should normally be encrypted - - - - -. Plain language should not be used except when own forces are in immediate danger, or under other circumstances which make it apparent that the normal delay incident to encryption is not warranted."*

It is often wise to parallel a voice transmission with a radio transmission or even in some cases by visual means. Whether or not to employ radio when other proper means of transmitting a contact report are available is a command decision based on the need for radio security against the possibility of a failure in the communication system.

* * *

14. Both Commander CHICAGO Group and Commander VINCENNES Group failed to inform their immediate superior-in-command, CTG 62.6, and the other commanders who should know, of the fact that the western screening group was in a fierce night engagement with strong enemy forces. These commanders also failed to inform CTG 62.6 and the other commanders who should know, of the number and nature of the enemy forces involved, of the progress of the action being fought, and of the termination of the action.

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* Basic Rapid Communication Plan USF 70 (B), para. 1432.

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LESSON:

It is of vital importance for the proper functioning of command during battle that the Officer-in-Tactical Command is kept informed of the various changes in the situation which may affect his battle plan. Partial information promptly received is of vastly greater importance than complete information received too late. Negative information may be as important as positive information.* Therefore, new factors which may change the situation should be reported to him immediately. He, in turn, should keep his subordinate commanders so informed. For the same reason, it is important that coordinate commanders who are involved in the same operation but with independent tasks, should keep one another informed of any new factors which may change the situation.

Very often a commander incorrectly assumes that his immediate superior, as well as the other commanders who should know, has information which he does not in fact have. On other occasions he may assume that information is inconsequential when as a matter of fact it may be vitally important to another commander.* In view of this fact it is wise, in case of doubt, to provide more, rather than less information to such commanders and with minimum possible delay.* In order to accomplish this, experience has shown that each ship and each staff should have available an intelligence unit, even if it consists of but one competent man, to keep information matters in mind and to prepare information reports for release by his commander.**

* * *

15. No night battle plan was prescribed for the Allied screening force. While it is recognized that it was next to impossible to predict the exact contact conditions governing any expected gun and torpedo action, nevertheless, it does appear that a night battle plan in general terms indicating the method of coordinating the various units and groups assigned to CTG 62.6 should have been provided.

LESSON:

A battle plan sets forth the methods or principles for the coordinated employment of forces during battle. The chances of success in battle, and, especially in night battle, are greatly improved if such a plan is employed. Without some such plan, or some doctrine for

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* Basic Rapid Communication Plan, USF 70(B), June 7th, 1947, Para. 133.
** Statement of Admiral Henry K. Hewitt, USN(ret) to Commodore Richard W. Bates, Head of Department of Analysis, Naval War College, April 8th, 1950.

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guiding the commanding officers in their individual actions, it may be impossible to obtain coordinated action.

This plan should be brief, clear as to the tactics to be employed and, especially so, if new or non-standard procedures are prescribed. It should, whenever practicable, be issued in advance and discussed with the principal commanders concerned. If it is well considered and correctly executed, it will promote initiative and will ensure the most effective employment of the forces available.

* * *

16. CTG 62.6 left the AUSTRALIA Group at about 2055 August 8th, and headed into the anchorage at Guadalcanal. He informed the Commanding Officer, CHICAGO, who thereby temporarily succeeded to command of the AUSTRALIA Group, but failed to notify either Commander VINCENNES Group who temporarily succeeded to command of the entire western screening group, or his other sub-group commanders, of his departure. Therefore, neither Commander VINCENNES Group nor the other non-informed sub-group commanders knew that Commander VINCENNES Group in the VINCENNES was temporarily Officer-in-Tactical Command. As a direct consequence, when Commander VINCENNES Group first observed the airplane flares and realized that the Japanese were probably attempting a night surface ship operation, he appears to have awaited instructions from CTG 62.6 rather than to have initiated himself the action necessary for the coordination of the various sub-groups.

LESSON:

All changes in tactical command should be promulgated to the command by signal or dispatch, and the command should be informed in the same communication as to the location of the Officer-in-Tactical Command - i.e., the ship in which he is embarked.* In this connection, it is important to note that a change of the senior officer present during a tactical situation should not normally involve a change in the Officer-in-Tactical Command unless such change is advisable for additional reasons. However, no delegation of authority can relieve the senior of his inherent responsibility.

* * *

17. The Commanding Officer, CHICAGO, performed additional duty as Commander CHICAGO Group and the Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, performed additional duty as Commander VINCENNES Group. Neither of these officers had time nor staff personnel adequate for handling these dual responsibilities. The result was that both of them overlooked almost entirely their duties as group commanders and devoted their interests

* General Tactical Instructions, USF 2, Navy Department 1947, para. 113.

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to their basic function of commanding officers. This forced the commanding officers of all ships to act independently being guided somewhat by doctrine.

LESSON:

There are many occasions when the commanding officer of a ship can also command a small task group in an effective manner. This is particularly true in peacetime operations. However, it is not recommended for war time operations and especially in combatant task groups which may engage the enemy. This is so because (a) in the case of the commanding officer of a ship in battle, his responsibilities are so pressing and the demands of the situation both internal and external, are so great as to generally require all of his time to function adequately and (b) in the case of a combatant task group commander, his responsibilities are also so vital to the success of the action that he must devote his mind and time exclusively to them and cannot be expected to devote his attention to other matters. In general, the commanding officer of a ship has inadequate personnel to handle both assignments.

It might be well, therefore, on such occasions for the commanding officer to delegate the ship responsibilities to the executive officer. Under such circumstances it should be the accepted naval practice that the commanding officer thereby divests himself of the responsibility for the handling of the ship, and in effect, the erstwhile executive officer assumes full responsibility as commanding officer of a flagship. Such a delegation of authority would give the commanding officer the freedom of action essential to the adequate discharge of his higher responsibilities.

* * *

18. The difference in night gunnery performance between the Japanese cruisers and the Allied cruisers was so marked as to show plainly what success can be achieved by correct training in night firing, and what disaster can result from a lack of such training, particularly when complicated by the effect of surprise.

(a) The Japanese cruisers fired rounds of ammunition as follows:*

(1) 8-inch:	CHOKAI 302, AOBA 183, KAKO 192 KINUGASA 185, FURUTAKA 152	Total	1014
(2) 5.5-inch:	TENRYU 80, YUBARI 96	Total	176
(3) 5.0-inch:	CHOKAI 120	Total	120

* Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers, WDC Documents 160623 and 161407.

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(4) 4.7-inch: AOBA 86, KAKO 130, KINUGASA 224, FURUTAKA 94 Total 534

(5) 3.0-inch: TENRYU 23 Total 23

Thus the Japanese cruisers fired at the Allied cruisers and destroyers a total of 1867 shells, and made, according to Allied best estimates, a minimum of not less than 159 actual hits (ASTORIA thirty-four, QUINCY thirty-six, VINCENNES fifty-seven, CANBERRA twenty-four, CHICAGO one, PATTERSON one, and RALPH TALBOT six) with a probability of not less than sixty-four additional hits, making a total of about 223 hits.* If this is a correct accounting, then the Japanese attained approximately twelve per cent of hits.

(b) The Allied cruisers and destroyers fired rounds of ammunition as follows:

(1) 8-inch: CANBERRA 0, CHICAGO 0, VINCENNES 33(?), QUINCY 21, ASTORIA 53.

(2) 5-inch: CHICAGO 25, VINCENNES 20(?), QUINCY 0, ASTORIA 59, PATTERSON 33(?), RALPH TALBOT 12(?), WILSON 212.**

(3) 4-inch: CANBERRA 3(?).

Thus the Allied cruisers and destroyers fired at the Japanese cruisers a total of 471 shells, and made, according to Japanese reports, a total of about ten hits.*** (CHOKAI four, KINUGASA two, YUBARI three, TENRYU one). This gave a percentage of hits of approximately two and one-tenth per cent.

(c) While there is no direct evidence that the Japanese cruisers in this action had done any recent night firing, it is assumed that they had. The Japanese prided themselves in their night fighting ability and they were continuously training to improve their proficiency.

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* Loss in Action VINCENNES, QUINCY, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, War Damage Report #29, NavShips 29(374), June 12th, 1943, Plates II, IV, and V, also Report of Executive Officer, CANBERRA August 12th, 1942 to CTF 44 (CTG 62.6) concerning Loss of CANBERRA also Action Report CHICAGO concerning Action Against Enemy Forces August 9th, 1942, Guadalcanal-Tulagi Area, Serial 099, August 13th, 1942.

** This study of "The Battle of Savo Island".

*** CRUDIV 6 Detailed Battle Report #8, Solomons Naval Action, August 7th-10th, 1942, CIG Document 86927, page 70, also Action Reports from Tabular Records of Japanese Cruisers, WDC Documents 160623 and 161407.

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In addition, some of these cruisers were present at the capture of both Guam and Wake although they did little surface firing in either operation. The YUBARI, however, was badly damaged by the Marine shore batteries during the first Wake operation, December 11th, 1941.

The Allied cruisers, on the other hand, were not adequately trained in night fighting. The VINCENNES and QUINCY had but very recently arrived in the Pacific from the Atlantic Fleet and had taken no part in any Pacific operation. While in the Atlantic Fleet for at least fifteen months, neither ship had held any night target practice nor any night battle exercises. The ASTORIA was in the Pacific Fleet and had recently held some night target practices. It is understood that practically none of the ships assigned to TF 62 had engaged in any night battle exercise since the beginning of the war, and that few had fired target exercises.* None of the British ships except the AUSTRALIA had done target firing more recently than May and no ship had done a night target firing within eight months.**

LESSON:

Gunnery effectiveness in war stems not only from frequent battle experience with its resulting improved fire discipline but also from intensive training in day and night gunnery exercises in the combat areas as well as in the rear areas. It is only by such continuous training that units can be kept ready for battle. Type commanders, task force and group commanders, and commanding officers are responsible for insuring that their commands are trained as necessary to maintain this combat efficiency.

During peacetime, gunnery training is accomplished by rigid schedules. During the early months of war, the initial tendency of all commands is to draw on the peacetime training reserve and to envision that fighting the enemy will keep training standards up to required levels thereafter. This is a faulty concept, since men and material will be different, and since the proportion of time in actual combat with the enemy will probably be extremely small. Consequently, gunnery training as well as all training, must be intensified in wartime. This intensification can be most effectively implemented by moving training areas and services as close to the combat area as possible, and by utilizing all sortie, entry and cruising occasions for training purposes.

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* Report of Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn, USN(Ret) to Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet, May 13th, 1943 on Informal Inquiry into Circumstances Attending the Loss of VINCENNES, etc., on August 9th, 1942, para. 102.

** British Battle Summary #21, 1944, Naval Operations at the Landings in the Southern Solomons, August 7th-10th, 1942, page 27, note 5.

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19. The failure of Allied command at the Battle of Savo Island was most marked. It may seem astonishing, but it is nevertheless a fact that the group commanders and the commanding officers of the Allied ships who were probably as proficient as most of their contemporaries in the U.S. Naval service at the time, and who had met all of the essential peacetime tests, once they had been caught by surprise, almost entirely thereafter made incorrect decisions. Except for the Commanding Officer, PATTERSON's initial attempts by TBS voice radio at 0146 and 0147½ to report the enemy coming into the harbor, and the Commanding Officer, RALPH TALBOT's report at about 0215, also by TBS voice radio, that she was being fired on by friendly ships, no group commander or commanding officer during the battle, made any reports concerning the enemy to the Officer-in-Tactical Command or to anyone else in authority. Except for the Commanding Officers, QUINCY and ASTORIA and for the initial actions of the Commanding Officer, VINCENNES, each commanding officer acted independently. The group commanders, who were also commanding officers, generally operated only as commanding officers. The destroyer commanding officers, generally operated individually and without reference to one another or to the cruiser groups to which they were attached. Both group commanders as well as all commanding officers appeared to forget their objective - the defense of the transports and cargo ships at Tulagi-Guadalcanal. No attempt, with the possible exception of the PATTERSON, was made to trail the Japanese cruisers during the action, and few reports appear to have been made to the high command once the action was over. Instead, CTF 62 and CTG 62.6 had to request information which, when it came, was usually very incomplete indeed.

LESSON:

After Savo Island and continuing throughout and after World War II, there arose within the Navy a growing appreciation of the need for a considerable improvement in professional judgment in command. It became more and more understood that more attention should be given to the employment of the brain in war; that too much attention had been given in peacetime to purely technical and administrative matters and too little to the broad study of command. It was realized more and more that naval officers should be trained to think clearly and correctly, and to act coolly; that the finest weapons and most able personnel were valueless if they were not properly employed.

The Battle of Savo Island, as well as the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway which preceded it, plainly showed, particularly to those who had to make decisions in the face of a fierce and resolute enemy, that a commander's moral capacity to command and his mental ability to solve military problems receive their maximum tests during the swift moving action of a tactical engagement, whether in the air or on the sea. It also showed that during this time, because of the vital issues which hang on his decisions, the commander in view of his personal responsibility, must employ his utmost resources of mental power.

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How can the Navy best prepare her prospective commanders for command? The answer presents itself (a) by instilling in them as early as possible the fundementals of warfare which in turn requires a knowledge of history by land, sea and air; (b) by providing them with the maximum mental training in the art and science of war; (c) by giving them the opportunity for study and reflection, and for the exchange of views within and among the several echelons of command; (d) and finally by providing them with the maximum practical training in fleet and task group maneuvers as well as in maneuvers of lesser scope.

There should be, in addition to the above training, a ruthless and impartial elimination of those whom such maneuvers and mental training show to be lacking in initiative or to be lacking in the ability to make prompt and sound decisions under the pressure of fast moving events.

How can a prospective commander best prepare himself for command? Marshal Foch answers this as follows: "One is not born with learning. Everyone of us must make for himself his faith, his connections, his knowledge of things. Here again the result will not be produced by a sudden revelation of light coming in a flash or by an instantaneous development of our faculties. We shall only reach it by a continuous effort of penetration, absorption, assimilation, by a repeated and detailed labor."*

There is no substitute in war for the brain tempered by experience!

* * *

20. The Commander Expeditionary Force, CTF 61, retired from the objective area with the Air Support Group, TG 61.1 before his covering operation had been completed. By so doing, he left the Amphibious Force without any air cover. This caused the Commander Amphibious Force, CTF 62, to retire TF 62 before the transports and cargo ships could be more than partially unloaded. This, in turn, left the First Marine Division alone in the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area exposed to Japanese attacks by air, sea and land without air cover or naval surface support. It also left this division without adequate supplies, either of food or ammunition, without any long range warning or fire control radar sets, without the motor transport repair section or its equipment which caused the immobilization of certain vehicles and without any heavy construction equipment. All of this equipment remained in the holds of the transports and cargo ships.

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* The Principles of War by Marshal Ferdinand Foch, French Army, Chapter I, Published by Chapman and Hall, London, 1921.

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LESSON:

The function of a carrier covering force which is providing close air support as well as general covering duties during an amphibious operation is to gain and maintain local command of the objective area and to give air support and air protection to the amphibious forces, both ship and shore based. Such a covering force should be of sufficient strength and of sufficient logistic capacity to remain in the vicinity of the objective area until the officer commanding the landing forces has assumed the responsibility for the defense of the objective area.

* * *

21. During this action, the damage control measures adopted by all ships were generally ineffective for immediate results. This state of affairs was due to numerous factors among which the following appear the most important: (a) combat inexperience; (b) excess paint on ships' bulkheads causing fires which were not controllable under existing means of damage control; (c) the initial lack of certain facilities such as fog nozzles and other mechanical aids;* (d) the destruction of some facilities, initially available, such as fire mains and fire main risers;* (e) the fact that certain other facilities, such as fire and bilge pumps, were inoperable due to a lack of power;* (f) the premature abandonment of certain ships and of certain stations such as engine-rooms; (g) the failure of responsible subordinates to make preliminary and continued investigations, and to make evaluated reports to the commanding officer concerning the extent of damage sustained as well as concerning the progress of corrective measures taken; (h) and finally, the failure of certain damage control units to continue vigorous efforts in their own areas to combat adequately flooding and fire even though intership communications had failed.

Such failures not only assisted in preventing the adequate fighting of the various Allied ships but, in addition, caused them to be presented to the enemy as brilliant targets with an ever decreasing combat ability factor.

LESSON:

Damage Control is the responsibility of all hands. Upon its effectiveness depends the ship's ability to maintain its maximum offensive power against the enemy. Although ships are designed with inherent resistance features such as proper displacement, proper distribution of liquids, watertight integrity, and optimum operation conditions coupled with rigid watertight integrity discipline, it often

* Loss in Action, VINCENNES, QUINCY, ASTORIA, Battle of Savo Island, August 9th, 1942, Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, War Damage Report #29, NavShips 29(374), June 12th, 1943.

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happens that the above inherent resistance features will be found inadequate. Instead the survival of the ship will depend on the application of prompt and correct control measures after damage.

War experience has shown that inexperienced, untrained, personnel are prone to attach exaggerated importance to flooding following an explosion and to become unduly alarmed; to give undue weight to fires which can often be quickly brought under control; to be unduly concerned by a heavy list and to thereby become fearful of the danger of capsizing, which danger often does not, at the moment, exist; and to abandon ship before it is necessary to do so. War experience has also shown that in many cases ships which appeared to have been damaged beyond saving were often saved because the personnel had been well trained and put forth the same determined efforts towards saving the damaged ship that they exerted in fighting her.

Commanding Officers therefore should maintain the most effective damage control organizations possible, and should so train their personnel in damage control principles and methods that they will automatically act correctly in accordance with such principles and methods.

* * *

22. The communications system in SOWESPAC Area was so operated as to enable the direct flow of information from SOWESPAC aircraft and from SOPAC aircraft in flight to COMSOWESPAC Area via the Headquarters, North Eastern Area at Townsville and via the Headquarters, Allied Air Forces at Brisbane. The TF 63 Common Frequency (Net "C") was employed to obtain prompt reports from SOPAC aircraft in flight, but as employed in the North Eastern Area, it did not serve, in practice, to provide a direct flow of information from SOWESPAC aircraft to the Officer-in-Tactical Command in the SOPAC Area. Such a communication arrangement would have been proper had the strategic responsibility for the operations in the Solomons lain with Commander Southwest Pacific Area with the support and cooperation of Commander South Pacific Area. Actually, the responsible and supporting roles were assigned in the reverse order. Communications from SOWESPAC aircraft reached the Officer-in-Tactial Command in SOPAC via the chain of command in the SOWESPAC Area rather than by a simple functional organization* designed for the operation. In four specific instances (two on August 7th, and two on August 8th) contact reports from aircraft in the North Eastern Area, SOWESPAC were passed from the plane to the base; thence over the R.A.A.F. communications circuit through two or three command centers to Brisbane; thence over the USN-RAN circuit to CANBERRA where they were broadcast to the

* This is an organization wherein all echelons of command are on the same circuit so that, for example, when a contact is made or an order given, all hands down to the lowest echelon hear it at the same time.

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SOWESPAC naval forces over the BELLS Schedule; thence to Pearl Harbor where they were re-broadcast to the PacFleet naval forces on the HOW FOX Schedule. These four instances serve to illustrate a pattern. The average time from contact until receipt of the information in the SOPAC Area was ten hours and eight minutes.

LESSON:

The necessity for the maintenance of reliable, rapid, and secure communications is vital and cannot be over-emphasized. Commanding officers should realize that no more important duty exists than that of obtaining and delivering to the Officer-in-Tactical Command timely information of the enemy forces. Therefore communications must be so organized as to insure that vital information, positive or negative, such as contact reports, gets through with the minimum possible delay.

Although control of communications ordinarily follows the chain of command, situations may arise where better communications, more efficient use of personnel, equipment and available frequencies, will result from functional organization. Typical examples of functional communications organizations are the Fleet broadcast schedules and the common frequencies generally used in amphibious operations. Another example might well be the contact report frequencies for search and reconnaissance planes.

When higher efficiency will result, functional communications organizations should always be employed.

* * *

23. On several occasions during this action, certain of the Allied ships failed to recognize correctly friendly ships with the result that they fired at one another. Notable in this group were the CHICAGO and PATTERSON which at 0525 opened fire on one another but, fortunately, ceased firing before damage had been done, and the ELLET which at 0710 in broad daylight commenced firing at the damaged and abandoned CANBERRA which she mistook for an enemy cruiser.

On another occasion, the VINCENNES at 0210 incorrectly identified the Japanese heavy cruiser FURUTAKA and the Japanese light cruiser YUBARI as two friendly destroyers as a consequence of which the VINCENNES received heavy damage.

LESSON:

The need for prompt and accurate recognition and identification of Allied and enemy surface craft under conditions of combat is of unquestioned importance. This is so not only because of the necessity for hitting the enemy first, but also because the commanders decisions may be seriously influenced by such prompt and accurate recognition.

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Night visual recognition and identification will always be important even when paralleled with electronic devices. The Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet stated "If there is one lesson we have learned from the Pacific War, it is that constant training in visual recognition and identification for all topside station personnel on board ship and for all aircraft personnel is of vital importance."*

Every effort should therefore be made to train personnel in recognition and identification so that a friendly ship may not be taken under fire; a friendly plane shot down; or an air or surface ship attack be allowed to gain an advantageous position without being subjected to attack by guns and planes.

* * *

24. During this operation, more attention seems to have been given to refueling TF 61 than to other logistic support requirements. Fleet oilers CIMARRON, PLATTE, KASKASKIA, and KANAWHA were sent to SOPAC during July; chartered tankers with about 225,000 barrels of fuel were to arrive at Noumea on July 22nd and August 2nd.

No provisions were made for rearming the ships at sea although one AE was available. No replacement aircraft, and in particular no fighter aircraft, were provided. This lack of replacement aircraft whether due to a shortage in the Pacific area or to a lack of appreciation of the problem was a major factor in the premature retirement of CTF 61 with TG 61.1.

At this stage of the war, while the technique of refueling at sea was well developed and had been employed in this operation in fueling both TF 62 and TG 61.1 en route to the objective area, the full capabilities of mobile logistic support were not developed, nor as yet fully recognized. Owing to the relatively primitive logistics organization, the Officer-in-Tactical-Command was forced to do his own long and short-range logistical planning; he had neither the experience nor the staff to do this effectively. Therefore, it is not surprising that the support furnished in this operation was intermittent and poorly organized compared with the continuous, well organized support in fuel, ammunition, provisions, general stores, replacement aircraft and crews, etc., which permitted the sustained fleet operations of 1944-45.

LESSON:

When combat operations are being conducted in an area remote from shore-based logistic support, the effectiveness of the various commands can be vastly increased by the utilization of mobile logistic support. Such support is usually provided by positioning the necessary service ships - fleet oilers, ammunition, provision and stores ships

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* Recognition Instructor's Manual, Part I, Navpers 16045A, December 1945, page 2.

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and transport carriers - in an area reasonably safe but in close proximity to the combatant forces to be supplied. The force providing this support should be under the command of the Officer-in-Tactical Command, and its requirements should be planned concurrently with those of the interested commands.

Experience during World War II has shown that only by utilizing this means for furnishing logistic support can the maximum effectiveness for sustained fighting be retained by the Fleet.

25. Throughout this battle and, as a matter of fact, throughout World War II, combatant ships, notably cruisers and destroyers, were employed as separate units often entirely apart from their task organizations. This was particularly true in amphibious operations and in carrier operations. In this battle for example the VINCENNES Group was composed of the VINCENNES from CRUDIV FOUR, and the QUINCY and ASTORIA from CRUDIV SIX; TG 61.1.2 (TF 16) of the Air Support Force was composed in part of the NORTH CAROLINA from BATDIV SIX, the PORTLAND from CRUDIV FOUR, and the ATLANTA from CRUDIV ELEVEN. Fire Support Group Love was composed, in part, of the HULL and DEWEY from DESDIV ONE, the ELLET from DESDIV TWELVE, and the WILSON from DESDIV FIFTEEN. This broke down the chain of command within the squadrons and divisions. Such a condition will probably obtain in a future war (a) because of the demands of modern naval warfare with the heavy battle damage incident thereto (b) because of the rapid changes in design of ships and, (c) because of the vastness of the sea areas wherein modern sea power operates.

LESSON:

All ships should be so trained as to readily permit their being shifted from one organization to another without unacceptable loss of efficiency. However, whenever the military situation permits, the existing task organization should be maintained, and the designated tactical commanders should be employed in order to maintain the chain of command, as well as to insure that well indoctrinated tactical groups are available against the enemy. This is particularly applicable when night operations are anticipated.

26. Throughout the time of the Battle of Savo Island - 0132 to 0232 August 9th - the TBS voice radio had been employed by many ships within Iron Bottom Sound, making it difficult for the Commanders on many occasions either to transmit or to receive.

COMINCH commented: "Regarding the failure of the TBS report (PATTERSON's contact with the enemy) to get through, comments indicate that there is a tendency to use such a convenient and rapid means of communication for routine matters instead of reserving it for emergency. While it is being used for routine matters it cannot be used for emergency and, apparently, the loud speaker on the bridge distracts

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people's attention from other matters so that on occasion it may be more of a hindrance than a help."*

The Commanding Officer BUCHANAN at the Battle of Savo Island stated in 1950, after reading this War College Analysis: "Being a factual study of the Battle, the panic, desperation and utter confusion indicated by the voluminous traffic on the TBS is missed in this document. Perhaps it is just as well, for none of it was creditable; but it amply illustrated the unpreparedness and confusion which existed."**

LESSON:

The senior flag or commanding officer on a tactical voice radio circuit is the officer controlling the circuit. If the voice radio discipline is poor (a) it may so overload the circuit as to render the tactical voice radio more or less useless thus slowing or even stopping communications (b) it may cause confusion (c) it may interfere seriously with vital tactical operations (d) it may supply the enemy with important military data (e) it may provide the enemy with opportunities for deception (f) and finally, it reflects adversely upon the commander who is responsible for its control.

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* Battle Experience Information Bulletin #2, Solomon Islands Actions August 1942 Headquarters CinC, U.S. Fleet, pages 11-20.

** Letter April 17th, 1950 from Captain Ralph E. Wilson, USN, to Commodore R. W. Bates, USN(Ret), Head of Department of Analysis, U.S. Naval War College.

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CHAPTER XXIII

BATTLE LESSONS

1. COMSOWESPAC and COMSOPAC who were charged with the execution of the basic plan to seize the New Britain-New Guinea-New Ireland area wished to defer that operation on the ground that there was insufficient air coverage available for the different phases of the operation which, they considered, once initiated, should be pushed through as one continuous movement. They felt that the recently developed strength of the enemy positions, the shortage of transports and airplanes for the continued maintenance of strong air support throughout the operation, and the lack of sufficient shipping, made the successful accomplishment of the operation very doubtful indeed.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in reply stated that they fully appreciated the disadvantageous position of COMSOWESPAC and COMSOPAC. However, they further stated that despite this they felt it necessary to go ahead because it was essential to stop without delay the enemy's southward advance from Tulagi, and because enemy airfields at Guadalcanal would seriously hamper if not prevent the Allied establishment of bases at both Santa Cruz and Espiritu Santo.

LESSON:

In general, it is the duty of tactics to insure that its results are appropriate to the strategic aim, and the duty of strategy to insure that the attainment of tactical objectives furthers exclusively this strategic aim as well as insures that the tactical struggle is initiated under favorable conditions. However, there are occasions when the demands of strategy require that the tactical struggles be initiated under conditions which are not considered favorable but where it is so important to achieve a strategic aim that severe tactical sacrifices are necessary and acceptable.

This decision of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff was a case in point. For here, it was so important to the strategic aim to prevent further Japanese expansion to the south, and to prevent the establishment of Japanese airfields at Guadalcanal, that the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff decided, as a calculated risk, to seize Guadalcanal under relatively unfavorable conditions. They fully expected that tactics would make heavy sacrifices but they considered that such sacrifices would be appropriate. In cases of this nature, it should be emphasized that any such decision made by higher command over the objections of a subordinate commander should be made only after a thorough study of the subordinate's recommendations and after a thorough reconsideration of all of the factors involved.

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CHAPTER XXIV

COMBAT APPRAISAL OF THE JAPANESE COMMANDER CRUISER FORCE

VICE ADMIRAL GUNICHI MIKAWA

Vice Admiral Mikawa was an active, quick thinking, competent commander of naval forces so long as his functions were essentially administrative and where the possibility of losing his naval forces by air attack was more or less remote. He thought clearly, and had considerable initiative. His decision to repel the Allied attacking forces immediately by the employment of both air and naval power was correct. His decision to attack the Allied amphibious forces at Tulagi-Guadalcanal at night, employing his available cruisers and destroyers, was also correct. His concept embraced boldness tempered with considerable discretion.

His tactical handling of his cruiser force up to the time of his entrance into Iron Bottom Sound was excellent. He had successfully formed up his cruisers and his lone destroyer into a fast, powerful striking force. He had succeeded in moving this command to Savo Island without damage and in so doing, he had so deceived the Allies as to his probable operations as to completely surprise them. He thoroughly understood the value of correct intelligence and made every effort by the employment of land-based search planes as well as through reports from his land-based attack planes to ascertain the true composition and location of the Allied forces at Tulagi-Guadalcanal. He correctly employed his cruiser-based planes in the early evening of August 8th to give him the latest information concerning these Allied forces, and, based on the information given by these planes, he decided to carry out his attack. He also correctly employed his cruiser-based planes at the moment of attack to provide flares for illuminating and silhouetting enemy forces and to contact scout Allied screening forces.

However, once he had succeeded in reaching Savo Island, he no longer acted with that intelligence, understanding and courage which his previous operations had forecast. For he completely ignored the objective which he had assigned his command. Instead of heading toward either Tulagi or Guadalcanal or both, to destroy the Allied shipping there, he engaged the Allied screening forces in battle. Although he succeeded in so seriously damaging the principal units of these screening forces as to cause them to sink or be sunk later, he did not assure himself that they had been annihilated. Finally he retired, while his ships were in excellent combat condition having suffered little damage, without having made any effort to disrupt the Allied operations at either Tulagi or Guadalcanal. Content with a tactical success he failed to exploit the strategical situation by destroying the transports and cargo ships.

He had such apprehension of carrier-based air power as to allow it to seriously affect his judgment. This apprehension was principally responsible

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for his decision to retire and it may have been responsible for his decision to attack the screening forces in lieu of the transports and cargo ships. He did not seem able to evaluate properly the possible loss of his ships in accomplishing his objective against the adverse effect which the failure to disrupt the Allied operations might have on the Japanese strategical plans. He was more of a tactician that a strategist, and, in his mind, the possible loss of his warships seemed too high a price to pay to accomplish the destruction of mere merchant shipping. When this conception is compared with that of the Commander in Chief, Combined Fleet, the reduced caliber of Commander Cruiser Force becomes marked indeed.

From the above, it is apparent that there were serious frailties in Vice Admiral Mikawa's military character. Whereas he was probably successful as a surface ship commander, he was lacking in that resolute spirit ever found in commanders of the first rank. In addition, he does not appear to have been a deep military thinker, nor does he appear to have had a proper appreciation of the relation between strategy and tactics and of the necessity for insuring that his tactical successes contributed fully to the aims of strategy. Had he had this appreciation, is there any doubt that he would have attacked the transports and cargo ships as his physical objective?

As with Vice Admiral Takagi at the Coral Sea, and Vice Admiral Nagumo at Midway, this failure in command of Vice Admiral Mikawa augured well for future Allied success.

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COMBAT APPRAISAL
of the
JAPANESE CRUISER FORCE COMMANDER
Vice Admiral GUNICHI MIKAWA

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APPENDIX I

ORGANIZATION OF SOUTHEAST AREA FORCE

AT THE TIME OF THE

BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

South Seas Area Force — Vice Admiral TSUKAHARA, Nishio

(A) Outer South Seas Force — Vice Admiral TSUKAHARA, Nishio

(1) Support Force — Rear Admiral GOTO, Aritomo

(a) CruDiv 6
AOBA, KAKO, KINUGASA,
FURUTAKA

(2) CHOKAI — Vice Admiral MIKAWA, Gunichi

(3) Escort Force — Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA, Mitsuharu

(a) Cruiser Division 18 — Rear Admiral MATSUYAMA, Mitsuharu
TENRYU, YUBARI
(b) Destroyer Group
(1) DesDiv 29
OITA, ASAKAZE, YŪZUKI, YUNAGI
(2) DesDiv 30
MUTSUKI, UZUKI, YAYOI, MOCHISUKI

(4) Submarines

(a) SubRon 7
RO-33, RO-34, I-121, I-122, I-123
(b) SubRon 3
I-168, I-169, I-11, I-171, I-174, I-175

(B) Fifth Air Attack Force — Rear Admiral YAMADA, Sadayoshi

(a) Tainan Air Group
24 Type Zero Fighters
2 Land-Based Reconnaissance Planes
(b) Second Air Group
15 Type-Zero Fighters
16 Carrier-Type Bombers
(c) Fourth Air Group
32 Type-One Land Attack Planes
(d) Misawa Air Group
17 Type-One Land Attack Planes

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(e) Yokohama Air Group
9 Type-Two Seaplanes at Tulagi (sunk on 7 August)
(?) Type-97 Large Flying Boats at Rabaul
(f) Fourteenth Air Group (detached unit)
2 Type-Two Large Flying Boats
(g) First Special Duty Unit
AKITSUSHIMA
(h) Second Special Duty Unit
MOGAMIGAWA MARU
(i) Escort Surface Craft
AKIKAZE (DD)
(j) Air Base Construction Battalions
10th NCB's (Vunakanau)
14th NCB (Buna)
11th NCB's (Guadalcanal)
13th NCB's (Guadalcanal)
15th NCB (Buka Passage)
12th NCB (Kavieng)

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APPENDIX II

ORGANIZATION OF SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE AT THE TIME OF THE BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

South Pacific Force	Vice Admiral Ghormley, Robert
(A) TF 61 Expeditionary Force	Vice Admiral Fletcher, Frank J.
(1) TG 61.1 Air Support Force	Rear Admiral Noyes, Leigh
(a) TG 61.1.1 (TF11)	Vice Admiral Fletcher, Frank J.
(1) Carrier Group SARATOGA (FF) 34 F4F, 36 SBD, 16 TBD	Captain Ramsay, DeWitt C.
(2) Cruiser Group MINNEAPOLIS, NEW ORLEANS	Captain Lowry, Frank J.
(3) Destroyer Group PHELPS(F), FARRAGUT, WORDEN, MACDONOUGH, DALE	Captain Brewer, Samuel B. (COMDESRON 1)
(b) TG 61.1.2 (TF16)	Rear Admiral Kincaid, Thomas C.
(1) Carrier Group ENTERPRISE (F) 36 F4F, 36 SBD, 14 TBD	Captain Davis, Arthur C.
(2) Battleship Group NORTH CAROLINA	Captain Fort, George H.
(3) Cruiser Group PORTLAND(F), ATLANTA	Rear Admiral Tisdale, M.S.
(4) Destroyer Group BALCH(F), MAURY, GWIN BENHAM, GRAYSON	Captain Sauer, Edward P. (COMDESRON 6)
(c) TG 61.1.3 (TG18)	Rear Admiral Noyes, Leigh
(1) Carrier Group WASP (F) 29 F4F, 30 SBD, 9 TBF	Captain Sherman, Forrest P.
(2) Cruiser Group SAN FRANCISCO, SALT LAKE CITY	Captain McMorris, Charles H.
(3) Destroyer Group LANG(F), STERRETT, AARON WARD, STACK, LAFFEY, FARENHOLT	Captain Tobin, Robert G. (COMDESRON 12)

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(2) TG 61.2 (TF62) Amphibious Force Rear Admiral Turner, Richmond K.

(a) TG 62.1 Transport Group XRAY Captain Reifsnider, Lawrence F.
(1) TRANSDIV AFFIRM (62.1.1) Captain Theiss, Paul S.
FULLER(F), AMERICAN LEGION,
BELLATRIX
(2) TRANSDIV BAKER (62.1.2) Captain McFeaters, Charlie P.
MCCAWLEY(FF), BARNETT,
GEORGE F. ELLIOTT, LIBRA
(3) TRANSDIV CAST (62.1.3) Captain Reifsnider, Lawrence F.
HUNTER LIGGETT(F), ALCHIBA
FOMALHAUT, BETELGEUSE
(4) TRANSDIV DOG (62.1.4) Captain Kiland, Ingolf N.
CRESCENT CITY(F),
PRESIDENT HAYES, PRESIDENT
ADAMS, ALHENA

(b) TG 62.2 Transport Group YOKE Captain Ashe, George B.
(1) TRANSDIV EASY (62.2.1) Captain Ashe, George B.
NEVILLE(F), ZEILIN, HEYWOOD,
PRESIDENT JACKSON
(2) TRANSDIV TWELVE (62.2.2) Commander Hadley, Hugh W.
LITTLE(F), COLHOUN,
MCKEAN, GREGORY

(c) TG 62.3 Fire Support Group LOVE Captain Reifkohl, Frederick L.
(1) Cruiser Group
VINCENNES(F), QUINCY,
ASTORIA
(2) Destroyer Group
HULL, DEWEY, ELLET, WILSON

(d) TG 62.4 Fire Support Group MIKE Rear Admiral Scott, Norman
(1) Cruiser Group Captain Maher, James E.
SAN JUAN(F)
(2) Destroyer Group
MONSSEN BUCHANAN

(e) TG 62.5 Minesweeper Group Commander Hartt, William H., Jr.
HOPKINS(F), TREVER, ZANE,
SOUTHARD, HOVEY

(f) TG 62.6 Screening Group Rear Admiral Crutchley, VAC (RN)
(1) Cruiser Group Rear Admiral Crutchley, VAC (RN)
AUSTRALIA(F), CANBERRA,
HOBART, CHICAGO
(2) Destroyer Group Captain Flynn, Cornelius W.
SELFRIDGE(F), (COMDESRON 4)
DESDIV 7 Commander Austin, Leonard B.
HENLEY(F), BLUE, HELM,
BAGLEY

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DESDIV 8 Commander Walker, Frank J.
PATTERSON(F), RALPH TALBOT
MUGFORD, JARVIS

(g) TG 62.7 Air Support Control Group
Fighter Director Group in CHICAGO
Air Support Director Group in McCAWLEY
Air Support Director Group (Standby) in NEVILLE
These Director Groups Controlled Fighters and Dive Bombers from TG 61.1 when they were over the Target Area.

(h) TG 62.8 Landing Force (First Marine Division) Major General Vandegrift, Alexander A.

(1) TG 62.8.1 Guadalcanal Group Major General Vandegrift, Alexander A.

(2) TG 62.8.2 Tulagi Group Brigadier General Rupertus, William H.

(B) TF 63 Aircraft South Pacific Force Rear Admiral McCain, John S.

(1) TG 63.1 Colonel (AC)(USA) Rich, Clyde
69th Bombardment Squadron (10 B-26)
New Zealand Reconnaissance Squadron (6 Hudsons)
67th Pursuit Squadron (38 P-39)
2 PBY's and 3 OS2U

(2) TG 63.2 Colonel (AC)(USA) Saunders, LaVerne G.
11th Bombardment Group (32 B-17's)

(3) TG 63.3 Commander Browder, Maurice E.
CURTISS
VP-11 and VP-23 (4 PBY's)

(4) TG 63.4 Lt. Commander Alderman, John C.
McFARLAND
VP-6 and VP-14 (6 PBY's)

(5) TG 63.5 Commander Hitchcock, Norman R.
MACKINAC
VP-23 (9 PBY's)

(6) TG 63.6 Major (USMC) Bauer, Harold W.
VMF-212 (16 F4F)
VS D-14 (6 OS2U)

(7) TG 63.7 Lt. Colonel (USMC) Hart, John N.
VMO 251 (16 F4F-P)

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APPENDIX III

ORGANIZATION OF SOUTHWEST PACIFIC FORCES WHICH ASSISTED SOPAC OPERATIONS AT THE TIME OF THE BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND

(A) Allied Air Forces Southwest Pacific Area - Lt. Gen. (USA) Kenney, George C.

(1) Northeast Area Command - Air Commodore (RAAF) Lucas, F.W.F.

19th Bombardment Group (40 B-17's)*

35th Pursuit Group (40 P-39's)

32nd General Reconnaissance Squadron (RAAF) (5 Hudsons)

75th & 76th Fighter Squadrons (RAAF)

3rd Bombardment Group

22nd Bombardment Group

(2) Submarine Force Southwest Pacific - Rear Admiral Lockwood, Charles A.

(1) TF 42 (Submarine Force) - Captain Christie, Ralph W.
S-38 and S-44

* 435th Squadron Reserved for Reconnaissance (composed of LB's, B-24's and B-26's).

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APPENDIX IV

Summary of Japanese Damage

August 7th **Aircraft losses**

(1) Shot down: 3 land attack planes, 2 carrier bombers, 7 large flying boats, 2 fighters, 9 seaplane fighters.

(2) Missing: 4 carrier bombers.

Total: 27 planes.

August 8th **Aircraft losses**

(1) Shot down: 17 land attack planes, 1 fighter.

(2) Missing: 1 fighter, 1 ship-based observation plane.

Total: 20 planes.

August 9th 3 heavy cruisers - CHOKAI, AOBA, KINUGASA - slightly damaged.
2 light cruisers - YUBARI, TENRYU - slightly damaged.

Aircraft losses

(1) Shot down: 2 land attack planes.

(2) Crashed on landing: 1 reconnaissance plane.

Total: 3 planes.

August 10th 1 heavy cruiser - KAKO sunk.

Aircraft losses

(1) Shot down: 2 land attack planes.

Total: 2 planes.

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Total ship losses - 1 heavy cruiser.
Total plane losses - 52 planes.*

* About 7 Japanese aircraft were reported making emergency landings. Numerous other aircraft were reported as being damaged.

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APPENDIX V

Summary of Allied Damage

August 7th 1 Destroyer - MUGFORD damaged.

Aircraft losses

(1) Missing in Action: 10 fighters, 1 dive bomber.

(2) Crashed on landing: 5 fighters, 1 dive bomber, 1 heavy bomber (Army).

Total: 18 planes

August 8th 1 Destroyer - JARVIS damaged.

1 Transport - GEORGE F. ELLIOTT damaged.

Aircraft losses

(1) Crashed on landing: 1 fighter, 2 patrol planes.

Total: 3 planes.

August 9th 4 Heavy Cruisers - VINCENNES, QUINCY, ASTORIA, CANBERRA - sunk.

1 Destroyer - JARVIS - sunk.

Aircraft losses

None

August 10th No losses.

*****

Total Ship Losses: 4 heavy cruisers, 1 destroyer.
Total Plane Losses: 21 planes.*

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* The above statement of losses includes only those in the SOPAC Area and does not include those in the SOWESPAC Area.

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