

U. S. S. HONOLULU

CL48/A16-3
(0142)

December 4, 1942.

SECRET

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.
Via: (1) Commander Task Unit SIXTY-SEVEN POINT TWO POINT THREE.
(2) Commander Task Force SIXTY-SEVEN.
(3) Commander South Pacific Force.

Subject: Action Report - Engagement off Savo Island, Night
of November 30th - December 1st, 1942 -
U.S.S. HONOLULU.

Reference: (a) Arts. 712 & 874(6), U.S. Navy Regs. 1920.
(b) Pacific Fleet Letter 24CL-42.

Enclosure: (A) Statement of Executive Officer.
(B) Track chart of approach, engagement, and
retirement.
(C) Chronological report of gunfire.
(D) Extract from Engineer's Bell Book.
(E) Transcript of pertinent messages, or paraphrase
thereof, received by visual or radio.
(F) Pertinent extracts from TBS Log.

1. At about 1945 (minus eleven zone time) November 29th word was received from Commander Task Force SIXTY-SEVEN to prepare to get underway without delay. Ships departed from anchorage in Second Channel, Espiritu Santo Island in accordance Commander Task Force SIXTY-SEVEN Operation Plan 1-42 at 2400. Force as originally constituted was Commander Task Force SIXTY-SEVEN in MINNEAPOLIS, NEW ORLEANS, PENSACOLA, Commander Task Unit SIXTY-SEVEN POINT TWO POINT THREE in HONOLULU, NORTHAMPTON. Senior Destroyer Commander in FLETCHER, DRAYTON, MAURY and PERKINS. Commander Destroyer Division NINE in LAMSON and LARDNER joined the next night. Route was to east and north of Espiritu Santo, east and north of San Cristobal, and via Lengo Channel. Force arrived off Lunga Point at 2215 November 30th. Cruisers were then in line of bearing 140° T. on course 280°, the four original destroyers ahead and the other two in the rear. HONOLULU was fourth heavy ship from ahead.

2. At about 2317 word was received that the enemy had been sighted. Destroyers ahead were directed to attack with torpedoes at 2320.

- 1 -
Encl (G) Count as before 67 secret letter serial 06
of 9 Dec 1942

U. S. S. HONOLULU

CL48/A16-3
(0142)

December 4, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: Action Report - Engagement off Savo Island, Night
of November 30th - December 1st, 1942 -
U.S.S. HONOLULU.

3. Cruisers were directed to commence diring at about 2321. Battle was joined by the MINNEAPOLIS at about 2323 followed by the cruisers in order. The HONOLULU's port five-inch battery was directed to illuminate with star shell. The main battery was ordered to commence firing when Control reported on the target. The targets were sharp on the bow when fire was opened at about 2325. The main battery opened up with two salvos, then went to continuous rapid fire, checking as necessary when targets were lost. Fire was continued until enemy was blanked by own crippled ships and burning oil on the water. Shortly after the NEW ORLEANS opened fire, a large explosion was observed on the MINNEAPOLIS. Immediately after the HONOLULU opened fire a similar explosion was observed on the NEW ORLEANS which had sheered out to port. The PENSACOLA appeared to sheer out to port to pass both of the above ships which were slowed and were surrounded by flame.

4. As soon as our second ship had been torpedoed and it appeared that the PENSACOLA had slowed, this ship went to thirty knots, sheered out to the right to avoid torpedo water and to avoid being silhouetted. No torpedoes were observed by the HONOLULU. Fire was continued during the turn and the ship was maneuvered radically on westerly and northwesterly courses, exploiting the ability of this type to maintain accurate and rapid fire under such circumstances. During this time our fire covered the three ships originally ahead.

5. The NORTHAMPTON sheered to starboard also, following the movements of the HONOLULU. Shortly after the NORTHAMPTON had passed the MINNEAPOLIS and NEW ORLEANS an explosion was observed on board her. She appeared to be entirely enveloped in flames.

6. As the HONOLULU neared Savo Island she was illuminated by three star shells and fired on apparently by friendly vessels. Fighting lights were flashed for not to exceed two seconds and were answered by PENSACOLA and NORTHAMPTON in turn, and the firing ceased. Overs, rights and lefts were observed but no hits were received. Immediately PENSACOLA turned off her fighting lights, an explosion was observed on board. The HONOLULU

U. S. S. HONOLULU

CL48/A16-3
(0142)

December 4, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: Action Report - Engagement off Savo Island, Night
of November 30th - December 1st, 1942 -
U.S.S. HONOLULU.

checked fire with main battery at 2331 because optical contact was lost but continued with star shell until 2336 in an effort to develop more targets. During the period of this ship's gunfire, the first target was observed to blow up and sink. The second target was being hit when fire was checked due to the target being obscured.

7. The HONOLULU continued on to the north to develop four targets picked up by radar and continued on north and north-easterly courses until it was determined that the targets were own destroyers. At this time Commander Task Unit SIXTY-SEVEN POINT TWO POINT THREE directed that this ship proceed on easterly and southeasterly courses favoring the Florida Island side. These orders were being executed when at about 0013 a searchlight beam was observed just over the horizon to the southeast sweeping toward the HONOLULU. Course was reversed immediately to interpose Savo Island and avoid illumination. Commander Task Unit SIXTY-SEVEN POINT TWO POINT THREE then directed HONOLULU to retire to the west and southwest. While the HONOLULU was complying, friendly planes dropped flares over the beach in the vicinity of Tassafaronga and reported damaged vessels there. Commander Task Unit SIXTY-SEVEN POINT TWO POINT THREE then directed the HONOLULU to proceed to a point 15000 yards from Tassafaronga and take the ships under fire. While proceeding it was learned that the vessels sighted were burnt out hulks from a previous engagement. Commander Task Unit SIXTY-SEVEN POINT TWO POINT THREE thereupon directed this vessel to retire south and southeast of Savo towards Lengo Channel. At about 0133 the Commanding Officer requested authority to retire to the west between Savo and Cape Esperance and thence southwesterly. Authority was granted and at 0135 course was reversed. At this time signal lights were observed from a point believed high on the slope of Mount Gallego behind Domma.

8. Shortly after reversing course HONOLULU was joined by FLETCHER and DRAYTON. When the vicinity of the NORTHAMPTON was reached rafts loaded with survivors were seen. Ship's course was altered radically to prevent running them down and speed slowed briefly to fifteen knots to reduce chances of capsizing them. The FLETCHER and DRAYTON were directed by Commander Task Unit SIXTY-SEVEN POINT TWO POINT THREE to rescue survivors and the HONOLULU stood on alone at thirty knots.

U. S. S. HONOLULU

CL48/A16-3
(0142)

December 4, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: Action Report - Engagement off Savo Island, Night
of November 30th - December 1st, 1942 -
U.S.S. HONOLULU.

9. In obedience to orders from Commander Task Unit SIXTY-SEVEN POINT TWO POINT THREE the ship passed between Cape Esperance and the Russell Islands at about 0630 December 1st on course 040° T, and rounded Savo to the north and east. No sign of any forces, friendly or enemy, was observed except two B-17 planes and one PBV flying over the area, until east and south of Savo when the LAMSON and LARDNER were intercepted and instructed to join. The three ships proceeded through Lengo Channel and returned to Espiritu Santo.

10. Ammunition expended was as follows:

6"/47 common	244 rounds;
5"/25 illuminating	81 rounds.

11. The HONOLULU sustained no battle damage or personnel casualties. The after Fox Cast Radar became inoperative from shock of first salvo.

12. The conduct of the officers and crew left nothing to be desired except as follows:

- (a) Ensign Owen Bert Keene, D-V(G), U.S. Naval Reserve, Turret Officer, Turret One, during the engagement suffered disabling cramps and had to be removed from his turret. Later observation coupled with some historical background resulted in a diagnosis of "Anxiety Neurosis". He has been sent to Base Button Hospital No. 3, for observation and treatment.
- (b) A few new recruits who had never gone through gunfire before froze at their stations and had to be "collared" by the older men until over their initial stage-fright. Once they were usefully employed they were helpful in serving the battery and indicated they probably would perform their duties satisfactorily in the future.

All others did their jobs as and when expected of naval personnel.

U. S. S. HONOLULU

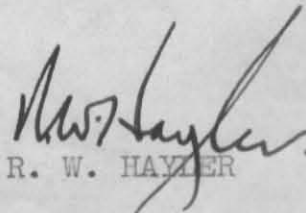
CL48/A16-3
(0142)

December 4, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: Action Report - Engagement off Savo Island, Night
of November 30th - December 1st, 1942 -
U.S.S. HONOLULU.

13. The weather was overcast with drizzles at times. No moon before about 0040, but by 0135 the moon broke through and shone brightly making a brilliant path. Prior to 2300 visibility was about 1500 yards opening up to about 15 miles by 0135. The sea was calm with slight swells from northeast; the wind from east, about 15 knots.


R. W. HAYLER

Copy for: CINCPAC (Orig. & 1)
COMSOPAC (1)
COMTASKFOR 67 (1)
COMTASKUNIT 67.2.3 (1)
War Diary (1)
File (1)

SECRET

December 2, 1942.

From: Executive Officer.
To : Commanding Officer.
Subject: Report of Night Action, November 30 -
December 1, 1942.

1. Battle 2 is poorly equipped as a battle control station. Since installing the 1.1 directors nothing can be seen from there, therefore the Executive Officer has gone to the next lower level for better vision. Battle was joined by the MINNEAPOLIS with targets fairly sharp on port bow and which I could not see immediately. She was followed in turn by the NEW ORLEANS, PENSACOLA, HONOLULU and NORTHAMPTON. Soon after the NORTHAMPTON joined, a huge fire on the surface of the water in the vicinity of the NEW ORLEANS was reported. This could not be seen immediately from Battle 2. The HONOLULU sheered out to the right in order to clear this burning area. The NORTHAMPTON followed suit. By this time both NEW ORLEANS and MINNEAPOLIS were afire, the HONOLULU continuing to fire at the enemy which could be seen emerging from smoke. The NEW ORLEANS and MINNEAPOLIS were stopped or nearly so, and the HONOLULU passed them. Shortly after the NORTHAMPTON, following the HONOLULU, had gotten by the NEW ORLEANS and MINNEAPOLIS a huge explosion took place aboard her, entirely enveloping her in flames - the huge smoke and fire cone rose about 250 feet and the entire ship seemed to be aflame almost instantly.

2. It was difficult to see in the blinding glare of the flashes from the guns. In the vicinity of Savo, a friendly ship mistook the HONOLULU for enemy and fired three stars and one salvo at the HONOLULU who immediately flashed the fighting lights, answered by PENSACOLA and NORTHAMPTON, and the firing stopped. About this time, the MINNEAPOLIS or NEW ORLEANS - I could not tell which in the distance and confusion - started firing in all directions as if she had torpedo boats close aboard. Shortly after the PENSACOLA shut off her fighting lights an explosion occurred aboard her. The HONOLULU rounded Savo and started back to southeast, when someone opened up with a searchlight, and we turned around again to get out of its glare. It was actually over the horizon and not shining directly on us. We came back around Savo and went on to westward and proceeded down southeast again, looking for more enemy. After going beyond the burning ships, the HONOLULU turned and came back out to northwest again. The moon was just out enough for us to get in its path of light to the east. As we turned, a signal station far up in the hills opened up on a signal light. Two of our DD's were fairly close aboard again to southeast and they followed us back to northwest.

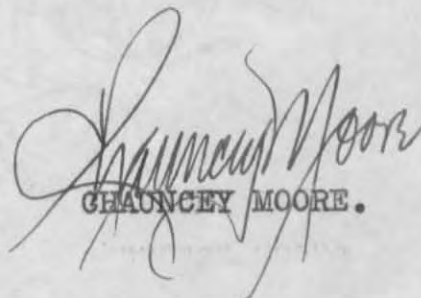
Subject: Report of Night Action, November 30 - December 1, 1942.

SECRET

3. Coming out, we passed through a large oil spot with men on rafts in it who signalled with flashlights. The DD's were directed to pick them up and P.T. boats were sent out from Tulagi. The HONOLULU proceeded to round Guadalcanal to west and went southwest for a couple of hours waiting for daylight when we came back in, rounded Savo to east and proceeded down the channel to join DD's. About 0345, the engine-room reported a hot bearing in the #3 main condensate pump and that shaft was slowed to 220 r.p.m., the others being able to maintain speed at 25 knots, later going to 28.

4. All hands under observation by the Executive Officer were calm during the action, the talkers getting words through promptly and distinctly.

5. No torpedos nor torpedo boats were seen close aboard of this ship by the Executive Officer.


CHAUNCEY MOORE.