

DD399/A16-3
JLW/rbc
Serial 0141.

U.S.S. LANG (399)

S-E-C-R-E-T

SECRET

c/o Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California.
August 15, 1943.

From: The Commanding Officer;
To: The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.
(1) Commander Destroyer Division FIFTEEN.
(2) Commander Task Group THIRTY-ONE POINT TWO.
(3) Commander Task Force THIRTY-ONE.
(4) Commander South Pacific Force.

Subject: Action report of surface engagement in Volla
Gulf night of 6-7 August 1943.

References: (a) Pacific Fleet conf. ltrs. No. 24CL-42 and
No. 36CL-42.
(b) U.S. Navy Regulations 1920, articles 712,
874(6) and 948.

Enclosures: (A) Commanding Officer's Narrative.
(B) Executive Officer's report.
(C) Track chart.

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b),
enclosures (A), (B), and (C) are submitted herewith.

J. L. WILFONG

Advance copy to:

1. Commander-in-Chief; U.S. Fleet.
2. Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Copy to:

1. Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.
2. Commander South Pacific Force.
3. Commander Task Force THIRTY-ONE.
4. Commander Task Group THIRTY-ONE POINT TWO.
5. Commander Destroyer Division FIFTEEN.
6. Commander Destroyers, Pacific Fleet.
7. Representative of Commander Destroyers, Pacific Fleet in
South Pacific Area.
8. Commander Aircraft South Pacific.
9. War Diary, copy attached to.
10. File.

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COMMANDING OFFICER'S NARRATIVE

REPORT OF THE BATTLE IN VELLA GULF NIGHT OF 6-7 AUGUST 1943

1. Comments on and summary of outstanding events. All times minus eleven.

Task Group 31.2, Commander F. Moosbrugger, USN in command; composed of:

Division One A, Commander F. Moosbrugger, USN,
U.S.S. DUNLAP (F), Lieut-Comdr. C. Iverson, USN,
U.S.S. CRAVEN, Lieut-Comdr. F. T. Williamson, USN, and
U.S.S. MAURY, Commander G. L. Sims, USN.

Division Two A, Commander Rodger W. Simpson, USN,
U.S.S. LANG (F), Commander J. L. Wilfong, USN,
U.S.S. STERETT, Lieut-Comdr. F. G. Gould, USN, and
U.S.S. STACK, Lieut-Comdr. R. A. Newton, USN,

under orders from Commander Task Force 31 departed Purvis Bay at 1100 Friday, August Sixth, 1943, to proceed Vella Gulf via Gizo Strait to destroy enemy forces encountered. At 1715 received a relayed contact report from plane one of flight fifteen, "Fast fleet 4-50 south latitude, 154-40 longitude, course 190 true, speed 15 knots". Concluded that if this force made twenty-one knots it could reach Vella Gulf about midnight. Passed through Gizo Strait and entered the southern reaches of Vella Gulf without incident. At 2334 an enemy task force was contacted by radar and destroyed in a few minutes.

2. Preliminary Operations.

(a) Enemy forces: Unknown, we had expected troop barges, probably destroyers, possibly the "Tokyo Express". At 2334 CRAVEN reported radar contact at 351°T, 19,900 yards. At 2336 LANG had contact bearing 339°T, distant 16,900 yards, on Sugar George radar, one pip at first then four developed. They seem to be in column or line of bearing due to a shallow zig-zag.

(b) Own Operations: Task Unit 31.2 in line of bearing of division guides. Course 030°T, speed 25 knots. LANG, flagship of Division Two A, bearing 150°, distant 4,000 yards from DUNLAP, flagship of Division One A. Divisions in column, distance between ships 500 yards. LANG in condition of readiness one and material condition Afirm.

(c) Wind from 110°T force 3, sea smooth. Moonset was at 2225. The night was dark with only such illumination as resulted from the stars when they showed through the clouds. There were light intermittent rain squalls. Visibility 3,000 yards.

3. Chronological log of Battle.

Three Black Cats had been assigned to scout until midnight when they were to be relieved by three others. No information was received from any of them.

2334 C.T.U. 31.2 announced three contacts bearing 350°T, distant 19,000 yards and told division 1 A to stand by to fire torpedoes.

2336 LANG made contact on Sugar George radar of one pip bearing 339°T, distance 17000 yards, and in less than one minute determined there were four definite targets. Largest pip was third in column.

2336 C.T.U. 31.2 asked CRAVEN, "Do you have those contacts?"

2337 LANG's C.I.C. determined targets course 196°T, speed 25 knots.

2338 CRAVEN reports, "Contacts look very good now. We have three of them.

2338 LANG's C.I.C. corrected target course to 180°T. Targets evidently making shallow zig-zaggs.

2339 C.T.U. 31.2 ordered Division 1 A to come to course 335°T. Commander Division 2 A ordered Division 2 A to come to course 335°T

2340 CRAVEN reported target to be on course 180°T, speed 23 knots.

2340 C.T.U. 31.2 ordered ship of Division 1 A to prepare to fire eight torpedoes to port.

2341 CRAVEN reported to C.T.U. 31.2, "I get one eight zero, speed twenty six."

2342 C.T.U. 31.2 executed the foregoing signal to fire torpedoes.

2342 Division 2 A started changing course to the left.

2343 LANG's C.I.C. checks targets course 180°T, speed 27 knots.

2343 Division 2 A steadied on course 270°T.

2344 Division 2 A changed course to 190°T.

2346 Torpedoes fired by Division 1 A hit the enemy. The flashes of four hits were observed. Large fires broke out on

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two ships. The Sugar George radar had been coaching LANG's director onto one of its P.P.I. scope pips by furnishing bearing, range, course and speed. The F.D. radar in the director was indicating a pip and when the fires appeared LANG's director was on the left hand burning ship.

2346 1/2 LANG commenced firing.

2348 Having noted some gun flashes to the left of present target, checked fire and directed control to search to the left for a new target.

2349 LANG on course 230°T. Director on target by F.D. radar. Commenced firing.

2350 About third salvo, yellow fire broke out amidships and spread rapidly. Target seen to be a destroyer which returned an ineffective fire, apparently from two twin mounts. STACK and STERETT took up fire. Explosions noted in the largest burning target to the right.

2352 Began changing course to 270°T.

2353 Destroyer rolled over and sank, ceased firing.

2355 1/2 Conn directed control to search to the right of the burning cruiser where a few flashes had been seen.

2355 Control on target by F.D. radar. Commenced firing.

2356 Began swinging left to 090°T and checked fire.

2358 Resumed fire, target appeared to be a destroyer which was also under fire from Division 1 A. Bridge structure of target reported shot away.

0000 Contact on above target lost, pips disappeared from radar. Ceased firing, bridge observers reported ship pounded to pieces and sank. Commanding Officer was investigating steering difficulty reported by helmsman and did not see this ship go down.

0001 Commenced firing at burning cruiser.

0004 Began swinging right to 230°T, checked fire.

0008 On course 238°T.

0011 On course 300°T, continued swinging on to course 000°T.

0014 Steadied on course 050°T, commenced firing at burning cruiser.

0017 An astounding sight appeared. An apparently undamaged destroyer moved slowly into silhouette in front of the burning cruiser. It was probably backing away from the cruiser

but our speed gave it an apparent motion in parallax which seemed to make it move slowly ahead. It was on an apparently even keel, no fires on it are recalled, and was not firing in our direction, if at all. LANG shifted fire to it as did STERETT and STACK. Its tripod mast structure was soon knocked forward at an angle of thirty degrees. Fires were breaking out on board it. LANG was preparing and requesting permission of the Division Commander to fire torpedoes at it when a salvo of shells from the STERETT hit just aft of amidships.

0022 There was a violent explosion aft, the bow pointed up at an angle of sixty degrees, ship sank stern first in a matter of seconds. Fire was then shifted back to the cruiser.

0022 On division signal from CDD-15 (Commander Division 2 A), fired two torpedoes at cruiser, one aimed at foremast the other at the mainmast. One violent explosion was seen at proper time.

0027 Cruiser looked like a bed of red hot coals thrown a thousand feet in the air. This was followed by three or four similar explosions, probably from other torpedoes fired by the Division after which the cruiser seemed to break up and sink. A raging fire remained on the surface for some time but the last pip disappeared from the P.P.I. scope of the S.G. radar at 0028.

4. Special comments on enemy forces.

- (a) Three destroyers and one cruiser sunk. The Commanding Officer once was certain that he had seen two flaming ships in the area of fire to the left of the burning cruiser. These ships looked completely red hot and appeared to be one stack destroyers. They were in an area of oil fires surrounding all three; duties in connection with the conn and observing the ship under fire by this vessel caused me to lose sight of them. My attention was later attracted by explosions in this area. These ships could not be accounted for by radar. There was but one big pip in the fire area. However, the undamaged destroyer that appeared from alongside the burning cruiser at 0017 was not seen by Sail George radar at any time. Cruiser had three stacks, tripod mast and two turrets forward. Light tripod mast structures observed on two destroyers.
- (b) No enemy communications observed.
- (c) No smoke other than battle damage, no camouflage or deception used.
- (d) Enemy gunnery was entirely ineffective. A few splashes were seen to fall over and astern of STACK. They seemed to be supplied with a flashless powder which gave a very small flash.

- (e) Estimated material casualties: all of the enemy force, three destroyers and one cruiser sunk. The personnel casualties must have reached a very high percentage of the personnel involved as no one could remain on the raging infernos which consumed all of the ships before they sank. When the LANG first steamed through the survivor area at twenty-five knots, the sea was literally covered with Japs. There were men every few yards as far as the Commanding Officer could sweep the surface with his binoculars; it took about four minutes to cross this area. When the Commanding Officer first heard the strange sound he thought the crew had gathered on the starboard side to jeer at the last remaining flames and smoke of the enemy force, and ordered over the phone circuits and by megaphone for the crew to pipe down and get back to their stations. However, it was immediately evident that LANG's crew was not making the noise but that it was coming from Japs in the water. In general it was a word that sounded like "Kow-we, Kow-we", chanted in unison so that considerable volume resulted. It was a weird unearthly sound punctuated at times by shrieks of mortal terror. AS LANG was making twenty-five knots, bodies were reported thrown up in the phosphorescent wake. On LANG's second passage through this area only about ten percent as many Japs seemed to be afloat. Efforts to pick them up were unsuccessful as on one occasion when they heard English someone in the water blew a whistle and the chanting ceased and they all swam away from the ship.

5. Special comments on own forces.

- (a) The six destroyers employed were grouped into two divisions; each division having practically the same type of torpedo armament. Division 1 A attacked with torpedoes while Division 2 A maneuvered to distract with gunfire in case the enemy discovered Division 1 A during its approach or retirement. Apparently Division 1 A's torpedo attack was so unexpected and so devastatingly effective; and was followed so quickly by the gunnery attack of Division 2 A that the enemy was thrown into utter and helpless confusion from which he never recovered.

(1) Material and Training deficiencies:

Casualties:

Gun One: One jammed cartridge case removed by use of extractor; case thrown overboard. Two jammed cartridge cases, both removed by opening the plug. Short cases were loaded and used to fire the projectiles in each of the above instances.

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Gun Two: No casualties.

Gun Three: Two jammed cartridge cases. Both removed by opening the plug. Cases thrown overboard. Short cases loaded and used to fire the projectiles in each of the above instances.

Gun Four: One jammed cartridge case removed by opening the plug. A short cartridge was loaded and the gun fired. One misfire on about fiftieth salvo. After four attempts to fire, plug was opened and the cartridge thrown over the side. During the removal of the cartridge a fire hose was played into the barrel to cool the barrel and projectile. A short round was inserted and the gun fired. All jammed cartridge cases are considered due to faulty loading on the part of the powder loaders concerned in that they either placed the cartridge in the tray with the forward end low just as the spade took up against the after end or they allowed them to drop into the tray and bounce so that the spade started the case forward just as it was at the high point of the bounce. Gun captains, rammermen and powder loaders have been cautioned about this in the past and it will be further stressed.

Repair parties should stack empty powder tanks in officer's rooms and other spaces like cordwood rather than throw them in without regard to an orderly arrangement as many more tanks can then be accommodated.

- (2) Fire discipline, gunnery communications, and radar fire control methods functioned perfectly. This was the first time that the F.D. radar has been at all successful. In this case it seems to have vindicated itself as all firing was by full radar control and all spotting was by F.D. radar.

Ammunition expended: Three hundred thirty eight rounds of 5"/38, composed of eighty rounds of dye loaded common projectiles, and two hundred fifty-eight rounds of mark 18, mod. 2 common AA projectiles with fuses set on safe. C.T. G. 31.2's verbal instructions called for the use of common against destroyer targets. LANG had only eighty rounds of dye loaded common and it was all expended. The ammunition distribution of the dye loaded was with three rounds in each handling room and the remainder in gun three's magazine. One smokeless cartridge was fired by gun two after it had expended all of its flashless. Ammunition expended by guns: gun one 65;

gun two, 102; gun three, 80 rounds of dye loaded and 11 of mark 18-2; gun four, 80. One mark 15 and one mark 15-1 torpedoes, each fitted with a mark 15 mod. 2 warhead, intermediate speed, one set for five and the other for nine feet, magnetic devices inoperative, range 5320 yards. They apparently ran hot, straight and normal. One was a sure hit and the other a possible hit.

- (c) Sugar George radar used intermittent long and short scale search before contact, then short scale.
- (d) No aircraft assistance. Did not hear any Black Cats.
- (e) Pertinent comments on Engineering, Supply and Medical Departments.

Engineering: During the action the following circuits were carried on the emergency diesel: diesel exhaust blower, emergency lighting I.C. switchboard (gyro and fire control), radio central, emergency radio, number two 5"/58 gun. All other electrical loads were carried on the main generators. Number one main generator, the replacement of which has been recommended by the Commanding Officer of the MEDUSA, was cut in parallel with number two generator by order of the Engineer Officer. It ran throughout the engagement with a great deal of noise and excessive vibration.

Medical: No remarks.

Supply: Repair parties had distributed coffee and sandwiches about 2200.

- (f) No damage incurred.
- (g) Casualties to personnel. About the second salvo, SANG, Mitchell T., 646 13-21, Coxswain, USNR, the shell loader on gun three, received a slightly crushed hand with a one inch laceration between the first and middle fingers of his right hand. He continued at his station until the action was over and then received treatment; three stitches were taken.

6. Commendations where merited.

The following personnel are recommended for commendation as indicated:

Lieutenant Pemberton Southard, USN, Executive Officer, Silver Star Medal

Lieutenant (jg) Edward Silsbee Eunsom, USNR, Gunnery Officer, Silver Star Medal.

Lieutenant (jg) Ralph Mortimer Thompson, USNR, Officer-

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of-the-Deck, Legion of Merit, Degree of Officer.

Lieutenant (jg) Milton Dawson Bennett, USN, Torpedo Officer, Legion of Merit, Degree of Officer.

Leonard James Wood, 291 35 30, Chief Gunner's Mate (AA), USN, Legion of Merit, Degree of Legionaire.

Edward Earl Craft, 262 41 83, Boatswain's Mate Second Class, USN, Legion of Merit, Degree of Legionaire.

Mitchell Thomas Sang, 646 13 21, Coxswain, USNR, Silver Star Medal.

Alton Harold Crawford, 272 77 68, Rdm3c, USN, Legion of Merit, Degree of Legionaire.

Frank Edward Branighan, 274 41 83, Coxswain, USN, Silver Star Medal.

Eugene Louis Dunn, 500 08 45, Gunner's mate third class, USN, Silver Star Medal.

Donald Francis Ellison, 212 50 60, Gunner's mate first class, USN, Legion of Merit, Degree of Legionaire.

Draft citations for the above personnel will be forwarded by separate correspondence to Commander South Pacific Force via chain of command.

All hands did their duty and performed creditably.

7. Lessons learned and recommendations.

- (a) Raid into enemy territory where he isn't expecting you.
- (b) Take advantage of land background to render enemy radars ineffective.
- (c) Make stealthy torpedo approach.
- (d) Attack from divergent angles of about ninety degrees.
- (e) If one attack group is discovered, other group divert enemy with gunfire.

There is nothing new about items (a) to (e).

- (f) Drop depth charges in the area where enemy survivors are swimming.
- (g) Early installation of remote P.P.I. scopes for the S.C. radar is extremely desirable.

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- (h) A flash proof device and quick closing watertight flaps in the magazine ventilation system, so that magazine crews can get some air, and the requirements of the Damage Control Instructions and Safety Precautions still be met.
- (i) That research be conducted with a view to producing a better battle uniform. One that is light flexible and really fire resistant. It should have pockets so that fire proof gloves and a face mask or hood can be carried.

SECRET

August 13, 1943.

From: The Executive Officer.
To: The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. LANG.
Subject: Action report against Japanese force August 6-7, 1943.
Reference: (a) Art. 948, U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920.

1. In accordance with reference (a) the following report is submitted.

2. During approach and entrance into Vella Gulf, was conducting all around search on S.G. radar, using short scale with frequent long scale sweeping into the entrances to Vella Gulf. No contacts of any kind developed until 2336. At about 2335 a ship of division 1 A ahead, reported radar contact at 350°T, 19,000 yards. At 2336 had radar contact on one ship bearing 339°T, range 16,900 yards, using long scale, and shortly there appeared four definite targets in loose column, course 180, speed 26 knots. In my opinion, the size of contact indicated three of destroyer size and one slightly larger. Ranges and bearings were fed to C.I.C. control, conn, and Torpedo Directors as opportunity permitted, still keeping close watch on other section and for any new targets. The first section was making their attack from the port bow and beam of the enemy while the second section maintained station ahead and slightly on the bows of the enemy. The two sections were about 9,000 to 10,000 yards distant during the first part of the action.

It is quite evident that the enemy was taken by complete surprise, as there were no indications of any evasive action made by the enemy. One target pip disappeared shortly after action was joined, and by 0028 the screen was clear of all enemy contacts.

During the action all our ships showed ABE identification signals which were clearly visible on the SC-1 screen, and it was very easy to keep track of section 1 A in this manner, however, in this particular action no difficulty was encountered keeping track of section 1 A with sweeps of the S.G. but the SC-1 gave us an added check. At the close of the action the flaming hulk could not be picked up on the S.G., indicating that there was not much, if any, Japanese ship left.

This most decisive action can be attributed to the high proficiency of the development of radar, S.G. and F.D. in this case. It is to be noted that Task Group 31.2 was close to

SECRET

August 13, 1943

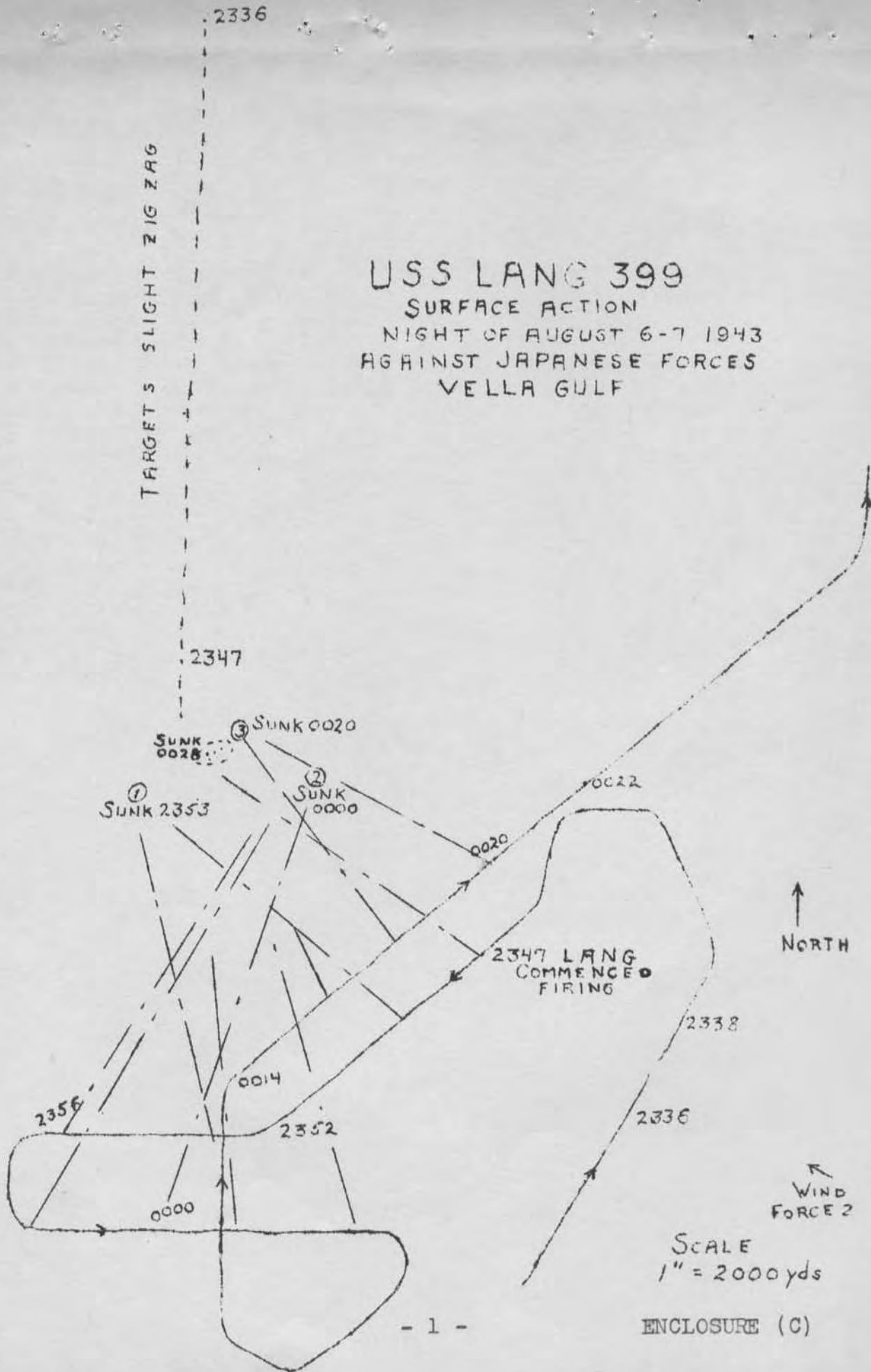
Subject: Action report against Japanese forces August 6-7,
1943.

Kolombangara when contact was made and if the Japs had radar, land interference behind us, totally collapsed the efficiency of their radar. There was no land background to interfere with the enemy contacts on our S.G. during the entire action, there was however, very slight interference on the F.P.I. scope from other ship S.G.'s. The radar was in good working order before, during, and after the battle. It kicked out once by shock of gun fire but was back in commission in a matter of seconds. None of the 5" salvos of our ships were discernable on the S.G. F.P.I. scope for spotting purposes, because the S.G. beam was trained on the target only long enough to get a range and bearing, sweeps being made to keep the Division Commander (Division 2 A) and Captain informed of other targets and Division 1 A. The Gunnery Officer had reported they were easily made out on the F.D. screen and accurate spotting was done by the F.D. operator. At no time did other than friendly contacts appear on the SC-1 screen. Here again land background interfered with the SC-1, and it is recommended the F.P.I. scopes be installed on this type radar for those ships which operate in land-locked waters.

The Executive Officer again notes with pride the fine performance the men exhibited upon contact with the enemy. All personnel and equipment worked 100%. A rehearsed radar short range battle practice and torpedo practice could not have gone over more smoothly.

PEMBERTON SOUTHARD

USS LANG 399
 SURFACE ACTION
 NIGHT OF AUGUST 6-7 1943
 AGAINST JAPANESE FORCES
 VELLA GULF



ROKO PT

VELLA LAVELLA

VELLA GULF

FIRING AND SURVIVOR AREA

USS LANG 399

TRACK CHART

NIGHT AUG. 6-7, 1943

NORTH ↑

SCALE 1" = 2mi

2227

156-50 E

2322

152-55 E

2259

KOLOMBANGARA

8-00 S

VANGA VANGA

GIZO ISLAND

0215

7-45 S

0120

0028

0100

0032

7-50 S

2317

2356

0014

2352

2356

0000

TOMBULU

VANGA PT

7-55 S

157-00 E

UNITED STATES SHIP LANG (DD399) Friday 6 August, 19 45
(Day) (Date) (Month)

Zone description -11

Position	0800	1200	2000
Lat.	Purvis Bay	Off Entrance to Purvis Bay	6 miles west Baniata Point, Rendova, New Georgia
Long.			

OPERATIONAL REMARKS
(WAR DIARY)

1. As before. Task Group 31.2
2. As before. Plus CDD 12 secret Battle Plan.
3. 0800 Purvis Bay. 1200 Off Entrance to Purvis Bay. 2000 6 miles west Baniata Point, Rendova, New Georgia.
4. 0000-0400 Anchored as before.

T. E. Johnson
T. E. JOHNSON, Ens., USNR

0400-0800 Anchored as before. 0620 U.S.S. TALBOT underway and stood out to sea. 0635 U.S.S. WARD underway and stood out to sea. 0640 U.S.S. STRINGHAM underway and stood out to sea.

R. L. Hopper
R. L. HOPPER, Ens., USNR

0800-1200 Anchored as before. 0805 U.S.S. DUNLAP stood in and anchored. 0855 U.S.S. CRAVEN stood in and anchored. 1015 U.S.S. GRIDLEY underway and stood out to sea. 1125 U.S.S. MAURY, U.S.S. DUNLAP, U.S.S. CRAVEN underway and stood out to sea. 1130 U.S.S. STACK underway and stood out to sea. 1131 Underway for sea, steaming on various courses at various speeds conforming to the channel.

C. O. Amnette Jr.
C. O. AMONETTE, Jr., Ens., USNR

1200-1600 Steaming as before. 1207 Changed speed to 20 knots. 1215 Changed speed to 23 knots, changed course to 265°T. Maneuvering to take station 1500 yards ahead of U.S.S. DUNLAP. 1255 On station. Course 279°T. speed 25 knots. 1315 Changed course to 269°T. 1337 Changed course to 262°T. 1400 U.S.S. STACK and U.S.S. STERETT joined formation. Task Group 31.2 less U.S.S. GRIDLEY and U.S.S. WILSON. Task Group Commander, Commander Division Able One, Comdesdiv 12 in U.S.S. DUNLAP, with U.S.S. MAURY and U.S.S. CRAVEN. Comdesdiv 15, Commander division able two in U.S.S. LANG with U.S.S. STERETT and U.S.S. STACK. Task group proceeding Gizo Strait by route south and west of Rendova Island. 1415 Changed speed to 23 knots. 1426 Russell Islands abeam to starboard about 5 miles. 1504 Changed course to 286°T.

R. M. Thompson
R. M. THOMPSON, Lieut.(jg), USNR

1600-2000 Steaming as before. 1704 Changed speed to 25 knots. 1809 Formed line of divisions Columns, 270°Rel. Division Able One U.S.S. DUNLAP, U.S.S. CRAVEN, U.S.S. MAURY, Division Able Two 3500 yards astern Div.A.1. 1905 Set Condition Afirm and General Quarters for evening alert. 1920 Set Condition II, Condition Baker.

E. H. Winslow
E. H. WINSLOW, Lieut.(jg), USN

Approved: *J. L. Wilfong*
J. L. WILFONG, Comdr., U.S.N.
Commanding Officer.

Examined: *Pemberton Southard*
PEMBERTON SOUTHARD, Lieut., USN
Navigator.

UNITED STATES SHIP LANG (DD399) Friday 6 August, 19 43
(Day) (Date) (Month)

Zone description -11

Position	0800	1200	2000
Lat.			
Long.			

OPERATIONAL REMARKS
(WAR DIARY)

2000-2400 Steaming as before. 2120 Set Condition Affirm, General Quarters. 2125 Changed course to 000°T. Entered Vella Gulf. 2225 Changed course to 070°T. 2228 Changed course to 124°T. 2256 Changed course to 000°T. 2323 Changed course to 030°T. 2335 Put #1 generator on power line. 2334 Made contact with 4 ships bearing 350°T., range 19,000 yards. 2342 Changed course to 330°T. Division Able One fired torpedoes, Division Able Two changed course to 270°T. 2345 Changed course to 190°T. 2346 Observed four torpedo hits to targets. 2346 1/2 Division Able Two commenced firing. 2348 Changed course to 230°T. 2352 Changed course to 270°T. 2353 Target sank, shifted fire to new target. 2356 Changed course to 090°T.

R. M. Thompson
R. M. THOMPSON, Lieut.(jg), USNR

5. For ammunition expended see August 7, 1943.
6. CTG 31.2 signalled orders as regards getting underway. For info: Rdo Koli secret despatches 060206 and 060223.
7. Remarks: For details of battle see attached action report.

Approved: *J. L. Wilfong*
J. L. WILFONG, Comdr., U.S.N.
Commanding Officer.

Examined: *Pemberton Southard*
PEMBERTON SOUTHARD, Lieut., U.S.N.
Navigator.

UNITED STATES SHIP LANG (DD399)

Saturday

7

August

19 43

(Day)

(Date)

(Month)

Zone description -11

Position	0800	1200	2000
Lat.	8-56S.	Tulagi Harbor	10 miles SE Russell Islands.
Long.	159-32E.		

OPERATIONAL REMARKS

(WAR DIARY)

- As before.
- As before.
- 0800 Lat. 8-56S., Long. 159-32E.; 1200 Tulagi Harbor; 2000 10 miles SE Russell Islands.
- 0000-0400 Engaging enemy as before. 0004 Changed course to 230°T. 0008 Changed course to 238°T. 0008 1/2 Changed course to 300°T. 0011 Changed course to 000°T. 0013 Changed course to 050°T. 0022 Fired two torpedoes at one remaining target. 0027 Saw torpedo hits of fire from Division Able Two. 0028 Ceased firing, last target disappeared. Oil on water in target area still burning. Changed course to 355°T. 0040 Commenced maneuvering on various courses, searching area. 0104 Passed many survivors in water. 0110 Division Able One departed area and directed Commander Division Able Two to make further search and pick up survivors. 0133 Changed speed to 15 knots. 0158 Stopped engines, prepared to rescue survivors. 0208 Abandoned search for survivors. Took departure from area. 0210 Set course 090°T., speed 30 knots. 0230 Changed course to 100°T. 0345 Changed course to 118°T.

R. M. Thompson
R. M. THOMPSON, Lieut.(jg), USNR

0400-0800 Steaming as before.

R. M. Thompson
R. M. THOMPSON, Lieut.(jg), USNR

0800-1200 Steaming as before. 0818 Changed course to 110°T. 0820 Set Condition Baker, Condition II. 0834 Changed speed to 28 knots. 0900 Changed course to 100°T. 0906 Changed speed to 25 knots. 0930 Changed course to 050°T. 0933 Changed speed to 20 knots. 0935 Changed speed to 15 knots. 0938 Proceeding independently on various courses and various speeds to enter Tulagi Harbor, Captain at the conn, navigator on the bridge. 0957 Moored port side to fueling barge YO 144 with six 6W manila lines. 1005 Commenced fueling. 1010 U.S.S. STERETT moored starboard side to YO 144. 1015 U.S.S. STACK moored to starboard side with six 6" manila lines. 1055 U.S.S. CRAVEN stood in and moored starboard side to U.S.S. STERETT.

E. H. Winslow
E. H. WINSLOW, Lieut.(jg), USN

1200-1600 Moored as before. 1205 Completed fueling. Fuel received 58,905 gallons at 60°F. 1220 Made all preparations for getting underway. 1250 U.S.S. STACK underway from alongside. 1259 Underway from alongside. YO 144. Captain at the conn, Navigator on the bridge. Boilers #1 and #3 on the main steam line. Proceeding at various speeds and on various courses out of Tulagi Harbor. 1320 Steaming at 25 knots, on course 213°T. 1353 Changed speed to 15 knots. 1400 Changed course to 315°T, changed speed to 25 knots. 1410 Sighted four friendly ships bearing 315°T. 1422 Put #2 boiler on main steam line. 1425 Changed course to 305°T. 1428 Changed speed to 30 knots. Five ships identified as U.S.S. MAURY, with three LST's and SC-531. 1451 Changed speed to 20 knots. 1455 Changed speed to 15 knots. Relieved U.S.S. MAURY as escort for LST's 1095, LST 395, and LST 399. Formation on course 269°T. Speed 10 knots. U.S.S. LANG patrolling station 3045 at 15 knots, 1500 Boiler #2 put in stand-by condition.

W. M. Hanavan
W. M. HANAVAN, Lieut.(jg), USNR

Approved:

Examined:

J. L. Wilfong
J. L. WILFONG, Comdr., U.S.N.
Commanding Officer.

Pemberton Southard
PEMBERTON SOUTHARD, Lieut., U.S.N.
Navigator.

UNITED STATES SHIP LANG (DD399) Saturday 7 August, 1945
(Day) (Date) (Month)

Zone description -11

Position	0800	1200	2000
Lat.			
Long.			

OPERATIONAL REMARKS
(WAR DIARY)

1600-2000 Steaming as before. 1815 Ship sighted bearing 070°T. at 8 miles, identified as U.S.S. STACK. 1822 Darkened ship. 1842 U.S.S. STACK took station in formation, relieving U.S.S. LANG. Changed speed to 20 knots, set course 091°T., proceeding to Purvis Bay, Solomon Islands. 1857 Changed course to maneuver around ship, identified as friendly. Resumed former course.

M D Bennett
M. D. BENNETT, Lieut.(jg), USN

2000-2400 Steaming as before. 2052 Changed course to 065°T. 2056 Changed course to 055°T. 2118 Changed course to 090°T. 2123 Changed course to 105°T. 2230 Changed course to 065°T. Made all preparations for entering port. 2235 Changed speed to 10 knots. 2240 Changed speed to 5 knots. 2310 Passed through anti-submarine gates. 2350 Anchored in berth #21, Purvis Bay, Florida Island, in 17 fathoms of water with 65 fathoms of chain on deck.

E S Eunson
E. S. EUNSON, Lieut., USNR

5. Expended following ammunition against Japanese surface vessels: 258 AA Com MK 18-2, 80 dye loaded (orange), 323 flashless and 20 smokeless powder; 2 MK 15 torpedoes with MK 15-2 warheads. Received from NAD Tulagi 335 flashless powder cartridges.
6. For info: RDO Koli secret despatch 061520. Received CTG 31.2 070015 and complied. RDO Koli 07122 and complied. Sent. to RDO Koli 070833. Received CTG 31.2 071056 but cancelled for U.S.S. LANG. RDO Koli 070145 and complied.
7. Remarks: For details of battle see attached action report.

Approved: *J. L. Wilfong*
J. L. WILFONG, Comdr., U.S.N.
Commanding Officer.

Examined: *Pemberton Southard*
PEMBERTON SOUTHARD, Lieut., U.S.N.
Navigator.

DD399/Al6-3
JLW/rbc
Serial 0142.

U.S.S. LANG (399)

c/o Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California.
August 16, 1943.

S-E-C-R-E-T

SECRET

From: The Commanding Officer:
To: The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.
Via: (1) Commander Destroyer Division FIFTEEN.
(2) Commander Task Group THIRTY-ONE POINT TWO.
(3) Commander Task Force THIRTY-ONE.
(4) Commander South Pacific Force.

Subject: Action report of surface engagements in Vella
Gulf night of 9-10 August 1943.

References: (a) Pacific Fleet conf. ltrs. No. 24CL-42 and
No. 36CL-42.
(b) U.S. Navy Regulations 1920, articles 712
and 874(6).

Enclosures: (A) Commanding Officer's Narrative.
(B) Track chart.

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b),
enclosures (A) and (B) are submitted herewith.

J. L. WILFONG

Advance copy to:

1. Commander-in-Chief; U.S. Fleet.
2. Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Copy to:

1. Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.
2. Commander South Pacific Force.
3. Commander Task Force THIRTY-ONE.
4. Commander Task Group THIRTY-ONE POINT TWO.
5. Commander Destroyer Division FIFTEEN.
6. Commander Destroyers, Pacific Fleet.
7. Representative of Commander Destroyers, Pacific Fleet in
South Pacific Area.
8. Commander Aircraft South Pacific.
9. War Diary, copy attached to.
10. File.

53808

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no

SECRET

U.S.S. LANG (399)

S-E-C-R-E-T

COMMANDING OFFICER'S NARRATIVE OF ENGAGEMENTS IN VELLA GULF
NIGHT OF 9-10 AUGUST 1943.

1. Comments on and summary of outstanding events. All times minus eleven.

Task Group 31.2, Commander F. Moosbrugger, USN, in command; composed of:

Division One A, Commander F. Moosbrugger, USN,
U.S.S. DUNLAP (F), Lieut-Comdr. C. Iverson, USN,
U.S.S. CRAVEN, Lieut-Comdr. F. T. Williamson, USN, and
U.S.S. GRIDLEY, Lieut-Comdr. J. H. Motes, USN.

Division Two A, Commander Rodger W. Simpson, USN,
U.S.S. LANG (F), Commander J. L. Wilfong; USN;
U.S.S. STERETT, Lieut-Comdr. F. G. Gould, USN, and
U.S.S. WILSON, Lieut-Comdr. W. H. Price, USN,

under orders from Commander Task Force THIRTY-ONE, departed Purvis Bay, Florida Island at 1300 August 9th, 1943, for a raiding sweep of enemy shipping in Vella Gulf. Enemy troop carrying barges were expected to be in the Gulf with the possibility of most anything as we had found two nights before. After entering Vella Gulf via Gizo Strait, groups of barges were taken under fire with indeterminate results. Task Group left Vella Gulf at 0235 via Gizo Strait and returned to Tulagi.

2. Preliminary Operations.

- (a) Enemy forces: Three groups of Japanese troop barges located by radar in Vella Gulf night of 9-10 August 1943.
- (b) Own operations: Line of bearing of division guides, each division in column, interval 4,000 yards, distance 500 yards.
- (c) Wind was from the southeast; force three. The sea was force two, visibility 1,000 yards. Sky overcast.

3. Chronological log of Battle.

There were to be three Black Cats scouting for us; no contact was made with any of them.

2235 Entered Gizo Strait on course 000°T at 27 knots. Ship in condition of readiness one, and material condition Affirm.

- 2250 Changed speed to 15 knots.
- 2301 Changed course to 050°T.
- 2308 Changed course to 055°T and changed speed to 20 knots.
- 2320 Changed course to 070°T.
- 2322 CRAVEN reported contact bearing 320°T, distant 4,000 yards.
- 2323 CRAVEN reported contact making seven knots, bearing 300°T, distant 3,900 yards.
C.T.G. 31.2 directed that the contact be disregarded.
- 2325 Changed course to 050°T.
- 2326 Changed course to 124°T.
- 2327 Changed course to 130°T.
- 2335 Changed course to 124°T.
- 2343 Changed course to 000°T.
- 0002 Changed course to 030°T, changed speed to 27 knots.
- 0015 DUNLAP reported surface contact bearing 043°T, distant 5,800 yards.
- 0017 LANG has two surface contacts bearing 010°T distant 4,000 yards.
- 0018 On orders from Comdiv 2 A changed course to 340°T. Comdiv 2 A making signal to the division to open fire.
- 0020 Director reports visual contact with two troop barges starboard bow range 1,000 yards. Conn sighted barges; ordered "commence firing."
- 0020 Enemy commenced firing. LANG began firing. Enemy ceased firing. F.D. radar contact lost unable to sight enemy visually. Search light had been out of commission for some time so could not illuminate. LANG fired 44 rounds of 5"/38, 105 rounds of 20MM, and 26 rounds of 40MM.
- 0024 Ceased firing, changed course to 040°T.
- 0026 Ships astern still firing.

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- 0036 Changed course to 270°T.
- 0044 Changed course to 300°T taking station astern of Division 1-A.
- 0047 Changed course to 270°T.
- 0050 Changed course to 240°T, changed speed to 26 knots.
- 0052 Changed course to 200°T.
- 0055 Changed speed to 20 knots.
- 0018 GRIDLEY reported surface contact dead ahead of DUNLAP, and asks DUNLAP to please check. DUNLAP reports one surface contact bearing 207°T, distance 8,500 yards.
- 0120 CRAVEN reports the contacts course as 320°T, speed 7 knots.
- 0123 Changed course to 130°T, changed speed to 25 knots.
- 0125 CRAVEN opened fire. Enemy returning fire.
- 0128 Changed course to 165°T.
- 0130 Enemy fire seems to be falling short.
- 0131 CRAVEN ceased firing.
- 0131 LANG's radar reports surface contact 230°T, distance 8,000 yards.
- 0134 On division TBS signal from ComDiv 2-A to fire ten salvos, began firing.
- 0139 LANG ceased firing, having fired eleven salvos.
- 0141 F.D. radar reports surface contact bearing 057°T, distant 6,930 yards.
- 0143 DUNLAP reports surface contact bearing 128°T, speed 8 knots; but that contact is changing course and speed.
- 0146 Changed course to 020°T.
- 0150 Changed speed to 15 knots. Division 1-A is firing.

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- 0151 On division TBS signal from ComDiv 2-A to fire ten rounds per gun, began firing at contact bearing 083°T, distant 5710 yards.
- 0153 Ceased firing, having fired ten rounds per gun.
- 0202 Changed speed to 20 knots.
- 0205 Changed course to 270°T.
- 0210 Changed course to 300°T.
- 0210:30 Shifted rudder changed course to 220°T standing out of Vella Gulf.
- 0235 Changed speed to 30 knots.
- 0304 Changed course to 150°T.
- 0320 Set condition two and Baker.

4. Special comments on enemy forces.

Barges seemed to be traveling in pairs. Estimated length 100 to 150 feet. In phase I they opened fire promptly with small caliber machine gun. Hit the bridge, swept down the starboard side of the hull, then fired over amidships. Their ammunition made numerous small dents, but did not penetrate in any instance.

In phase I the two barges were very close together and were enfiladed by our fire. Their fire was stopped by ours. Both may have been damaged, one may have been sunk; but at least one passed by as the ships astern fired on a passing barge or barges. No return fire from the enemy towards the STERETT or WILSON was observed from the LANG.

In phase II, two barges were visible at times in the flashes of our exploding shells. Twice there was the appearance of fires starting but they did not develop. It looked like an uncomfortable situation for those in the barges. By the end of the firing the F.D. radar had lost the contact.

In phase III, firing was opened on bearing 083°T, range 5,710 yards. Full radar control. There was some fire returned by the target which seemed to be directed at Division 1-A. Two star shells were fired by some ship in our force. F.D. radar operator spotted no change. After eighth salvo contact was lost. No visual observations other than some of our splashes and flashes of return fire. Results indeterminate.

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5. Special comments on own forces.

(a) It is believed time fused 5"/38 ammunition should be tried against these barges. All firing was done with the fuses set on safe.

(b) Ammunition expended:

5"/38 mark 18 mod 2 projectiles	128
5"/38 flashless cartridges	128
40 millimeter	26
20 millimeter	105

(c) Pertinent comments on Engineering, Supply, and Medical Departments.

On getting underway number three boiler was out of commission due to furnace floor having melted and run down the inclined sections. Boilermakers completed removing the old burned out brickwork and laid about twenty-six square feet of boiler deck by 1900. The boiler was cut in on the main steam line at 2050.

Supply department, assisted by the repair parties, served coffee and sandwiches after the crew went to general quarters.

(d) Summary of damage:

About a dozen small dents on starboard side made by enemy machine gun fire. No holes.

(e) No casualties to personnel.

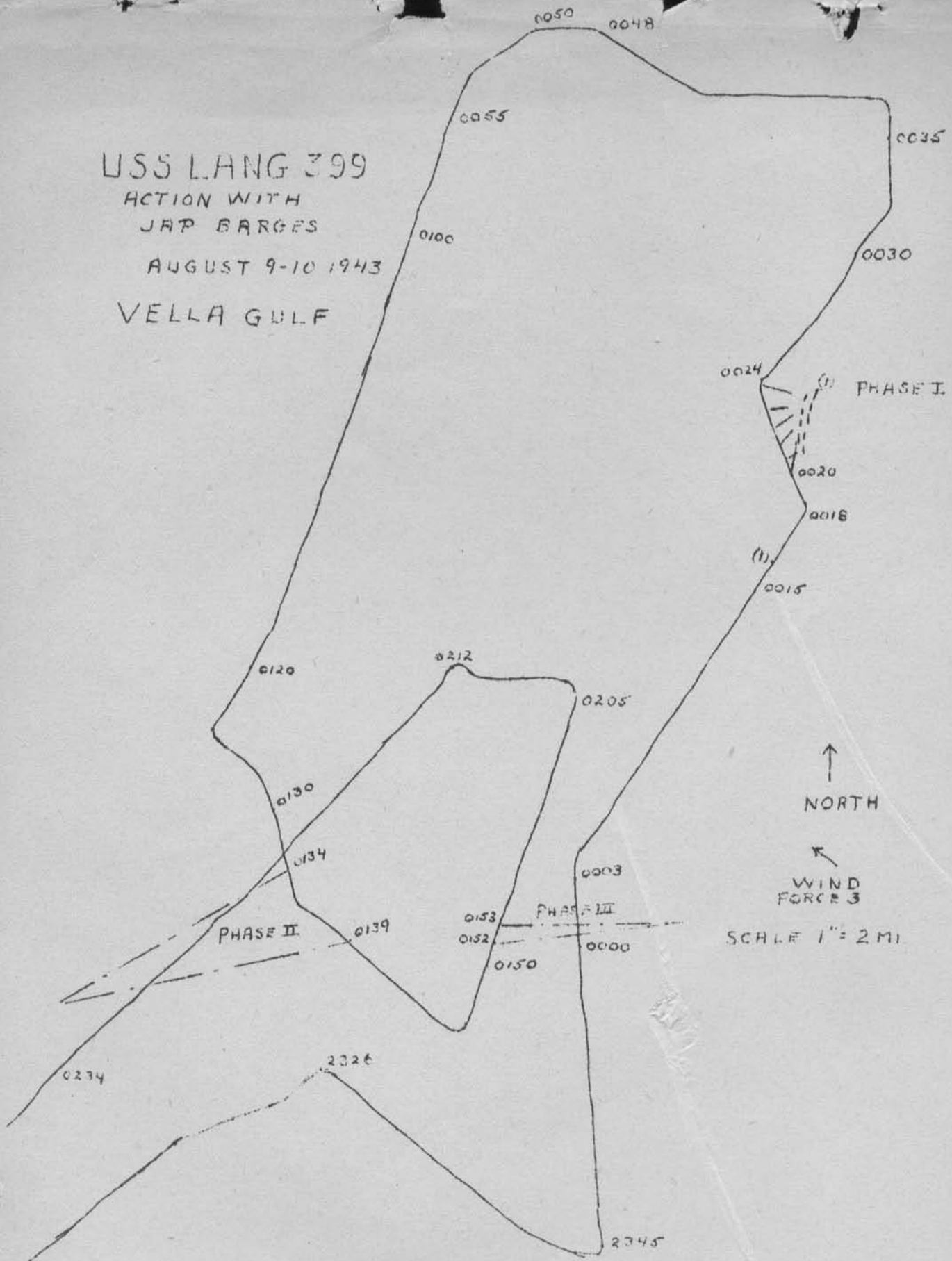
6. Commendations where merited.

None.

7. Lessons learned and recommendations.

These barges are difficult targets to maintain contact with by radar.

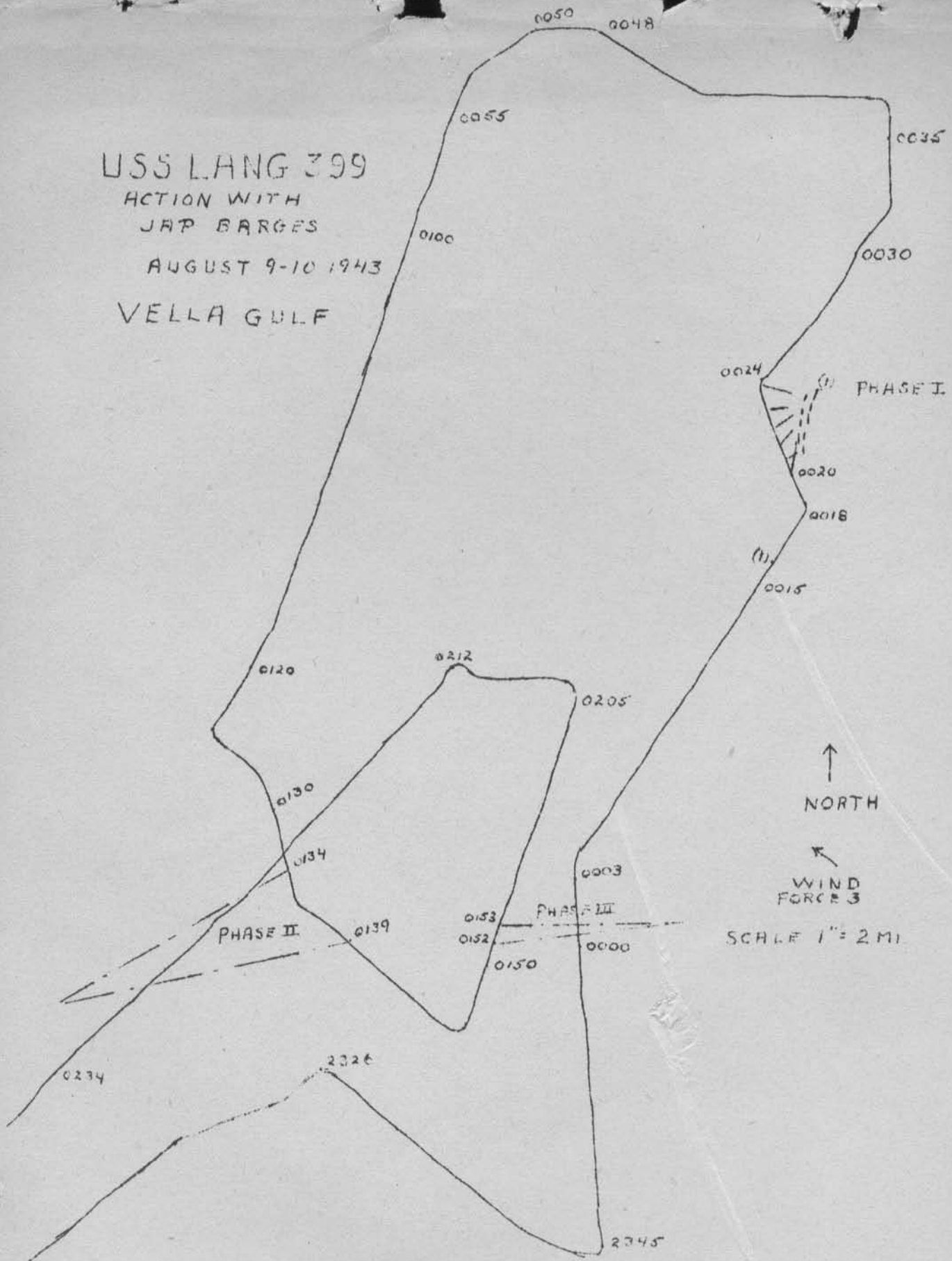
USS LANG 399
ACTION WITH
JAP BARGES
AUGUST 9-10 1943
VELLA GULF



4308

ENCLOSURE (B)

USS LANG 399
ACTION WITH
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VELLA GULF



ENCLOSURE (B)