

Serial 0044

U. S. S. NEWCOMB

care of Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, Calif.,
October 31, 1944.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.
Via: (1) The Commander Destroyer Squadron FIFTY-SIX.
(2) The Commander Task Group SEVENTY-SEVEN point TWO.
(3) The Commander SEVENTH Fleet.
(4) The Supreme Commander Allied Forces, South-west Pacific Area.

Subject: Action Report - Battle of Surigao Strait, 24-25 October 1944.

Reference: (a) PacFlt restr. ltr. 201-44.

Enclosure: (A) Navigational track from DRY scale 1 to mile, Missing.
(B) Torpedo firing data, p. 8

PART I. NARRATIVE OF THE ACTION.

1. This vessel was acting as flagship for Commander Destroyer Squadron FIFTY-SIX (plus HALFORD), who was in command of destroyers of the left flank, task force 77.2 in battle disposition A-1 on the night of 24-25 October, 1944. This force was guarding the Gulf of Leyte from expected attack by Japanese surface forces.

2. At 0228, October 25, 1944, contact of enemy ships standing up Surigao Strait was made by PT picket, at which time Destroyer Squadron 54 proceeded to launch torpedo attack. At 0300 units of Destroyer Squadron 54 proceeded to launch torpedo attack, and reported five (5) enemy targets. At 0337, having been ordered to launch torpedo attack, Commander Destroyer Squadron FIFTY-SIX directed a three (3) section attack by ships of his squadron. The first section, composed of U.S.S. NEWCOMB, RICHARD P. LEARY and ALBERT W. GRANT proceeded to attack from ahead.

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COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
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3. At 0404 at a range of 6200 yards, this vessel fired five (5) torpedoes at a FUBO Class battleship, after which retirement was taken at maximum speed in a northeasterly direction. Hits on this target were indicated by the track maintained in Combat and by actual observations by topside personnel at correct run to hit time. At 0406 we made funnel smoke, and zigzagged to right and left of course. There may have been some aid in effecting our retirement without damage, as several splashes were observed close aboard.

4. Shortly after the turn to the north for retirement had been ordered the RICHARD P. LEAHY was observed close astern and the ALBERT W. GRANT appeared to be dropping ast. At 0407 it was observed that the ALBERT W. GRANT was being hit by gunfire, and was slowing down. We stood on out to post attack rendezvous, and at 0432 were ordered to proceed to assist ALBERT W. GRANT, RICHARD P. LEAHY standing by. At 0630 NEWCOMB had ALBERT W. GRANT under tow alongside to clear battle area, while supplying power for pumping and receiving casualties aboard.

5. All times referred to herein are local times (-9 Zone).

6. (a) This vessel had been engaged in shore bombardment and fire support missions as a unit of Task Force 77.2 since its arrival in Leyte Gulf on October 18, 1944. On the afternoon of October 24, 1944 word was received that a Japanese surface force was preparing to force its entry into Leyte Gulf through Surigao Strait. Battle orders were received and Task Force 77.2 was ordered to form battle disposition A-1.

(b) As a ship of destroyers left flank our mission was to close the enemy and attack with torpedoes when ordered.

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The tactical situation envisaged a strong attacking group estimated as 2 BB, 2 CA, 2CL and 6-10 DD, attempting to force its way into Leyte Gulf by way of south Surigao Strait. This attempt was to be met by a superior force of our ships disposed in battle formation within the Gulf.

- (a) Our forces consisted of following units:
- (1) Right Flank
Cruisers (CruDiv 15, modified)
PHOENIX, BOJIE, SHROPSHIRE (RAM).
Destroyers (DesDiv 47)
BACHE, BEALE, HUTCHINS, DALY, KILLEN,
ARUNTA (RAM).
- (2) Battle Line
Battleships (BatDivs 2, 3, 4)
TENNESSEE, CALIFORNIA, PENNSYLVANIA,
MARYLAND, WEST VIRGINIA, MISSISSIPPI.
Destroyers (DesDiv 124)
GLAXTON, THORN WELLES, AULICK, GONY,
SIGOURNEY.
Pickets (DesRon 54)
HENRY, MEHTZ, MOUSSEN, McDERMOT, MCGOWAN,
McHAIR, MELVIN.
- (3) Left Flank
Cruisers (CruDivs 6 and 12 modified).
LOUISVILLE, PORTLAND, MINNEAPOLIS, DENVER,
COLUMBIA.
Destroyers (DesRon 56 modified).
NEWSOME, BARNICH, H.L. EDWARDS, R.P. LEARY,
LEUTZ, ROBINSON, A.W. GRANT, BRYANT, HALFORD.

(4) This vessel attacked with torpedoes one battleship, identified visually at 6000 yards as FUGO class. Total enemy forces estimated to be at least 2 BB, 2 CA, 2 CL, and 6 DD.

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(e) Weather conditions excellent with slight sea and wind. No moon made ships invisible over six (6) or seven (7) thousand yards.

PART II. CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF ACTION.

1. Contact was made with enemy force at 0320, range 33,000 yards, bearing 165° T. Estimated three (3) ships in this group. A track was commenced and gave enemy on zigzag course based north at speed of twelve (12) knots. At 0333 order to attack was received by Commander Destroyer Squadron FIFTY-SIX and on order sections carried out previously ordered three (3) section attack. NEWCOMB was leader of section one (1). Section two (2) was in column ahead and section three (3) in column astern, approximately one (1) mile north of deployed cruiser (left flank) line, which was on a course of 090°, speed 5 knots. All sections turned simultaneously by column movements to south. Section three (3) maneuvering to clear astern of cruiser line and proceeded down west side of Strait. Section two (2) increased speed, passed ahead of cruiser column and proceeded down east side of Strait. Section one (1) maintained ten (10) knots, allowing sections two (2) to clear and also allowing sections two (2) and three (3) to advance to their firing sectors. It was necessary for section one (1) to maneuver to east to clear cruiser line. At 0353 increased speed to twenty-five (25) knots and the attack proper was commenced on course 200 - 210 T. At this time one (1) large target was seen on 50 Radar at about 23,000 yards, while FD target, believed to be other heavy ships, was seen on same bearing at 33,000 yards, and optically observed as glowing dimly. The close heavy ship was chosen for the target of this ship. There were no light forces observed near this target. Track of target at this time indicated course north speed twelve (12). At range of 9000 yards torpedoes were set high speed. At range of 5300 yards target

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course changed radically to left and torpedo speed was set back to intermediate. Range was closed to about 7000 yards, at which time (0400) course was changed to 270° T. Track of enemy indicated a course of 290° speed 9 knots. At 0404 torpedoes were launched, using half salvo plan.

2. At 0406 course was changed to north and speed increased to thirty-two (32) knots. At 0407 course was ordered to zigzag twenty (20) degrees each side of 0300 T. At 0408 Funnel smoke was commenced. At 0408 course changed to approximately 060° T. At 0410 ceased funnel smoke. At 0411, when Combat indicated the target to be in torpedo water, two (2) heavy explosions were seen. A track of target after the time of NEWCOMB firing indicated that it changed course at 0405 to approximately south - speed twelve (12).

3. Throughout the torpedo run we were under fire from the enemy. At 0350 our battle line opened fire and this fire was observed to pass overhead, verifying that we were in the direct line of fire.

4. At 0407 own fire was observed to be falling near our section and this information was passed to OTU.

5. At 0411 ALBERT W. GRANT was observed hit and slowing. A track was commenced immediately on ALBERT W. GRANT. She was stopped; dead in water, at 0426.

6. We retired generally eastward, followed closely by RICHARD P. LEAHY, to post attack rendezvous three (3) miles north of Hibuson Island.

7. At 0432 NEWCOMB and RICHARD P. LEAHY left rendezvous point and proceeded to assist ALBERT W. GRANT. While standing toward ALBERT W. GRANT target was tracked still proceeding south and observed by director crew to be burning fiercely. At 0440 SC contact was lost.

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8. Navigational track made from DRT, plotting SO
ranges and bearings is enclosed as Enclosure (A).

PART III. PERFORMANCE.

1. Torpedo battery performance was excellent.
A total of five (5) torpedoes were launched, and all performed
normally.

2. Enemy gunfire was not sufficiently accurate to
obtain hits on this vessel, but did hit the ALBERT W. GRANT,
which was third ship in column. Salvo splashes of enemy and
own gunfire landed very close to this vessel, but caused no
damage.

3. Copy of torpedo firing report is enclosed as
Enclosure (B).

PART IV. BATTLE DAMAGE.

1. Own battle damage - none.

2. Enemy battle damage - Hits on enemy battleship,
FUSO Class, which subsequently sank, either by virtue of tor-
pedo hits sustained by the battleship, or by combination of
said hits plus gunfire and torpedo fire of other ships. It is
estimated that all hands on this ship were lost, although no
definite information is at hand concerning what Japanese
prisoners were taken from the water.

PART V. MATTERS OF SPECIAL INTEREST.

1. No special comment.

- (a) Communications were satisfactory.
- (b) Radars (SG and FD) worked excellently.
- (c) No air operations during this vessel's action.
- (d) Tactics - covered in narrative.
- (e) Smoke, Camouflage, Deception. As mentioned in

narrative - Funnel smoke and signagging at maximum speed aided
in successful retirement.

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(f) CIC - made possible the success of our mission by maintaining a continuous, up to the minute, accurate plot.

(g) Navigation - handled in combat.

(h) Engineering - Excellent engineering performance.

(i) Supply - No comment.

(j) Medical - This vessel removed all wounded personnel from the ALBERT W. GRANT and treated them on board. Our Medical Officer was assisted by the Medical Officers and pharmacist's mates from the RICHARD P. LEAHY, McCORMAN and REMMY. None of the NEWCOMB personnel were injured. All ALBERT W. GRANT personnel on board were rushed to the hospital ship HENRY at transport area for further treatment as soon as ALBERT W. GRANT was towed clear of battle area.

2. Other reports - None.

3. Lessons learned, conclusions. This engagement proved the valuable qualities of destroyers when opportunity allows them to perform their best missions in high speed, night torpedo attacks by sections. In this manner the enemy is bound to be passing through torpedo waters, no matter which way he turns. It would be well to insure that all firing ships be coached with the fact that the flank destroyers must retire after launching their torpedo attacks, and be on the alert not to open fire on them.

PART VIPERSONNEL PERFORMANCE.

1. This night torpedo attack against a Japanese surface force of large ships was the first night engagement under fire of the enemy surface ships that this vessel has engaged in. It is accepted to be one of the most dangerous combat functions in a fleet engagement, and it is with keen pleasure that the Commanding Officer reports that every member of the ship's company performed his duties in a most courageous and efficient manner, well in keeping with the highest traditions of the Navy.

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L. B. GORK.

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Advance copy to:

✓ Cominch.

Supreme Comdr. Allied Forces, Southwest Pacific Area.
Cincpac.

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TORPEDO ATTACK REPORT FORM

U.S.S. NEWCOMB (DD 586) Torpedo Attack No. 1

Time 0404 Date 25 October, 1944 Lat. 10° - 25' N. Long 129° 25' E.

ADDITION: The target was tracked by the 30 radar and the 7D radar heading up Surigao Strait on course 000° T, speed 12 knots. At approximately the time of the first torpedo attack by Destroyer Squadron FIFTY-FOUR, the target turned left to course 290° T, speed 9 knots. This was the target set up used by the ship. The type of target had not been determined as yet and the torpedoes were consequently set for six (6) foot depth. It appeared that there was one target with no escort. When this ship had closed for the attack a number of men reported seeing a FUBO Class battleship in the flashes caused by the gunfire from our battle line. Due to the reduced visibility the attack was conducted completely by radar control, target course and speed and true bearing being supplied by Combat Information Center.

SHIP DAMAGED AND PROBABLY SUNK: It is believed that one FUBO Class battle ship, probably the YAMASHIRO, of 30,000 tons, was sunk with assistance of torpedoes of this vessel.

DAMAGE DETERMINED BY: Combat Information Center commenced tracking the target at 32,000 yards and followed it continuously. The track shows that the target passed through our torpedo water simultaneously with our torpedoes. At the time the torpedoes were due to reach the target, the Executive Officer, acting as Evaluator in C.I.C., passed the word over the JA circuit that our torpedoes should be hitting. At the same time personnel in control and torpedo control observed large explosion at the target. The Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. ALBERT W. GRANT reported later that he had observed the same large explosion. The target was tracked out for 33 minutes after the torpedoes time of run and at 25,000 yards disappeared from our screen. This loss of target was not due to long range

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ENCLOSURE (3) TO NEWCOMB SECRET SERIAL 0044 OF OCTOBER 31, 1944.

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as we had commenced tracking the target at 32,000 yards coming in. This type of target would normally remain on the SC radar screen out to 40,000 yards.

<u>TARGET DRAFT</u> 28 feet	<u>COURSE</u> 290	<u>DEPTH</u> 9 knots	<u>RANGE (AT FIRING)</u> 6200 yards
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OWN SHIP DATA

<u>SPEED</u> 15 knots	<u>COURSE</u> 269	<u>DEPTH</u> 6 feet	<u>ANGLE (AT FIRING)</u> torpedo course angle 304°
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TYPX ATTACK: This attack was conducted in radar control. Target course, speed, and true bearing were derived in C.I.C. and sent to torpedo control. The setup was made on the director and bridge control, bridge aim was used.

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TUBES FIRED	LEFT	LEFT CENTER	CENTER	RIGHT CENTER	RIGHT
TRACK ANGLE	1200°	1200°	1200°	1200°	1200°
DRG ANGLE	1400	1410	1420	1430	1440
DEPTH SET	16 FT	16 FT	16 FT	16 FT	16 FT
CONTACT	ALL "IMMEDIATE"				
HIT OR MISS	Believed Hit	Believed Hit	Miss	Miss	Miss
REMARKS	ALL "NOT OBSERVED"				
MARK NUMBER	15 - 3	15 - 3	15 - 3	15 - 3	15 - 3
SERIAL NO.	137881	138911	138159	138157	137867
MARK EXPLODER	16 - 6	16 - 6	16 - 6	16 - 6	16 - 6
SERIAL NO.	127990	127807	120946	127511	120997
ACTION SET	ALL "CONTACT ONLY"				
ACTION ACTU-	ALL "NOT OBSERVED"				
AL	1				
MARK WAHEAD	147	147	147	147	147
SERIAL NO.	14353	14358	14943	14793	14367
DEPTH	11, N.T.	11, N.T.	11, N.T.	11, N.T.	11, N.T.
TIME INTERVAL	1 SECONDS BETWEEN TORPEDOES				
WAVE SPREAD	10	10	10	10	10
SEA CONDITIONS	10alm	10alm	10alm	10alm	10alm
OVERHAUL ACTIVI-	ALL "U.S.S. PIEDMONT"				
TY	1				
DATE	16-10-44	16-8-44	16-6-44	16-5-44	16-6-44

REMARKS: No erratic torpedo performance or casualty to tubes or fire control system was observed. The firing problem as set up was correct for the information obtained. The target turned left at the time of firing but still entered the water of the left two torpedoes at the correct time for contact and it is believed that these two torpedoes hit.

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