

COMMANDER DESTROYER SQUADRON TWENTY-ONE

Refer to:

AIC-3

Care of Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California,
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Serial 0023

SECRET

FIRST ADDRESSEMENT to
CG NICHOLAS ltr, 18440/
AIC-3 ser. 0023 dated
July 7, 1943.

From: The Commander Task Unit 36.1.4 (Commander
Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-ONE).
To: The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.
Via: (1) The Commander Task Group 36.1 (Commander
Task Force NICHOLAS).
(2) The Commander South Pacific Force.
Subject: Action Report.
Reference: (a) Report Unit 36.1.4 (Commander 21) ltr,
AIC-3, ser. 0023 dated July 29, 1943.

1. Forwarded.
2. Commander Task Unit 36.1.4 (Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-ONE) was embarked in the NICHOLAS and has submitted a separate report of the action by reference (a).
3. It is believed that the NICHOLAS definitely obtained hits on an enemy ship (possibly a transport) during the firing in the first phase commencing at 0150. Other ships were probably firing on this target also. It was seen to flame and burn for several minutes. It is also believed that the NICHOLAS obtained hits on the enemy ship during the second phase at 0212.
4. Words are inadequate to express the actions of the NICHOLAS, (together with the RANFORD), during the rescue of the HELIX survivors in the pitch dark of night. The rescue operations were carried out for three hours in almost the direct path of enemy ships retiring from Kula Gulf to northern bases. No one knew how many or what size ships would engage next. Moment reports of torpedoes, torpedoes missed, submarines - and as daylight approached reports of enemy aircraft were received. On three occasions the NICHOLAS left the survivors' area to engage enemy surface ships. It is believed that the NICHOLAS obtained one or possibly two torpedo hits on a four stack cruiser at about 0230 or one torpedo hit on this cruiser and one torpedo hit on an enemy destroyer near the cruiser.

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Serial 0225

July 21, 1945.

SECRET

Subject: Action Report.

With this ship closing the range the Captain of the NICHOLAS calmly remained dead in the water in order to better track the enemy before he fired his torpedoes at a range of 7000 yards. This act stood out in the annals of our Navy as a brave and heroic act. The NICHOLAS later illuminated the cruiser with star shells and fired projectiles at it. At the same time the ship was fired on by the enemy. It is believed that the NICHOLAS and SAMPSON succeeded in sinking an enemy light cruiser and a destroyer and damaging another destroyer. No better description can be given than the words of the commanding officer of the NICHOLAS as he steamed toward one enemy ship at full speed, "If the son-of-a-bitch wants to fight I'll give him a fight". After each action against the enemy the ship returned to the survivors' area and resumed rescue operations. These were carried out in a well organized and efficient manner on the part of all hands. As daylight approached, the threat of attack by enemy aircraft from nearby bases was imminent yet rescue operations continued until the ship was ordered to depart the area.

5. It is considered that the NICHOLAS is deserving of the Presidential Unit Citation for outstanding performance in action.

6. I have been informed that Commander Task Force NICHOLAS has recommended to Commander South Pacific Force the award of the Navy Cross to Lieutenant Commander Andrew J. Hill, U.S. Navy (Commanding U.S.S. NICHOLAS) for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service in the line of his profession. The Squadron Commander strongly concurs in this recommendation.

P.A. MANNING.

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