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UNITED STATES FLEET

Serial: 01750 DESTROYERS, ATLANTIC FLEET

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APR 24 1944

The proceedings, finding of facts, opinion and recommendations of the Court of Inquiry to inquire into the circumstances connected with the fatal injury of Commander John Jackson Shaffer, III, U.S. Navy, Commanding Officer, U.S.S. CHAMPLIN (DD601), and injuries to personnel of that vessel on 7 April, 1944, are approved.

Commander Destroyers, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, has issued directives to all ships of Destroyers, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, embodying the recommendations of the Court. Commander Destroyers, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, further recommends that vessels of other commands also be informed in the premises.

No further action is contemplated.

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ROUTE TO: 27 APR 1944

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J. Cary Jones
J. Cary Jones,
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy,
Commander Destroyers, Atlantic Fleet,
United States Fleet,
Immediate Superior in Command.

Copy to:
Cinclant.

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FINDING OF FACTS

1. That on the late afternoon of 7 April, 1944, the USS CHAMPLIN (DD-801) was in action with a surfaced enemy submarine in the North Atlantic.

2. That during the action and at about 1703 (zone description plus 4), Commander John Jackson Shaffer, XII, U. S. Navy, commanding officer of the USS CHAMPLIN (DD-801) was wounded by fragments of flying metal, while standing on the port wing of the bridge and facing outboard.

3. That first-aid to Commander Shaffer was immediately administered.

4. That at 2210 on 7 April, 1944, an exploratory laparotomy on Commander Shaffer was begun.

5. That, at the request of Commander Shaffer, the operation was begun under spinal anesthesia, which wore off after approximately 40 minutes, necessitating supplemental intravenous anesthesia which proved unsatisfactory so that eventually ether had to be used.

6. That it was discovered that Commander Shaffer had sustained multiple perforations of the small intestines and that a piece of metal was embedded in the mesentery.

7. That ten perforations of the small intestines were closed and the piece of metal removed from the mesentery by the medical officer of the USS CHAMPLIN.

8. That during the course of the operation Commander Shaffer went into a state of deep shock.

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9. That although plasma and intravenous injections of glucose and saline were administered, Commander Shaffer did not recover consciousness and died at 0803 on 8 April, 1944.

10. That Commander Shaffer was buried at sea on the afternoon of 9 April, 1944, by orders of Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, through dispatch No. 001785, April 1944.

11. That no autopsy was performed.

12. That, in addition to the abdominal wounds, Commander Shaffer sustained puncture wounds in the lateral aspect of the upper third of the left thigh and in the medial aspect of the lower third of the right leg.

13. That the evidence establishes beyond doubt that Commander Shaffer was wounded when shells from the No. 4, 20-millimeter gun on the port wing of the bridge struck the raised lid of the ready ammunition box.

14. That the lid of the ready ammunition box was in its raised position and extended above the top of the bulwark at the time the 20-millimeter gun fired into it.

15. That on the afternoon of 7 April, 1944, the cam limit stops of No. 4, 20-millimeter gun would not prevent the projectiles from striking the lid of the ready ammunition box in raised position.

16. That the cam limit stops had been installed in the USS CHAMPLIN (DD-601) at the New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, New York, on 1 February, 1944.

17. That the installation of the cam limit stops on No. 4, 20-millimeter gun conformed to the policy set forth in

18. That the ready ammunition box had been installed prior to the installation of the cam limit stops.

19. That the evidence establishes beyond doubt that, at the time the projectiles from the No. 4, 20-millimeter gun struck the raised lid of the ready ammunition box, No. 4 gun was trained forward and firing on the submarine then bearing about 320° Relative.

20. That the gun was being operated by Miller, Richard Eugene, signalman third class, class V-8, U. S. Naval Reserve, who was firing without the use of a gun sight, which was not in operation, and solely by tracer.

21. That the lid of the ready ammunition box was raised in order to obtain magazines for servicing the No. 4, 20-millimeter gun.

22. That during the action, when the projectiles from the 20-millimeter gun struck the raised lid of the ready ammunition box, Hollingsworth, Raleigh Potter, signalman first class; Okun, Joseph Albert, sonarman third class; and Estes, Gerold L., seaman first class, who were standing in way of the ready ammunition box, were wounded by fragments of metal.

23. That during the action the following members of the ship's company of the USS CHAMPLIN (DD-601) were injured:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Nature of Injury</u>
Estes, Gerold L.	Seaman first class	Lacerations of head and left hand
Hollingsworth, Raleigh Potter	Signalman first class	Lacerations of right arm, head, and lower back

<u>Name</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Nature of Injury</u>
Okun, Joseph Albert	Sonarman third class	Lacerations of left foot and lower left leg
Loyd, Joseph	Coxswain	Lacerations and contusions of left hand
Miller, Edward R.	Gunner's mate third class	Possible punctured tympanum
Higgins, Donald C.	Torpedoman third class	Possible punctured tympanum

That Okun, Joseph Albert was hospitalized at the U. S. Naval Hospital, Brooklyn, New York. That the remaining men listed received appropriate medical treatment aboard ship. That, other than the men enumerated in this finding, no members of the ship's company were injured.

24. That there is no evidence to indicate that shells from the submarine caused the injuries.

25. That there is no evidence to indicate that projectiles from any other vessel in the vicinity caused the injuries.

26. That the members of the gun crew were not aware of the possibility that projectiles from the No. 4, 20-millimeter gun would strike the raised lid of the ready ammunition box.

27. That the projectiles from the 20-millimeter gun could not have struck the lid of the ready ammunition box if it had been in closed position.

28. That upon inspection of the USS CHAMPLIN (DD-601) by this court on 11 and 12 April, 1944, it was found that the after inboard corner of the cover of the ready ammunition box servicing the No. 4, 20-millimeter machine gun had been struck by projectiles from this gun, that the forward wall of the