

DECLASSIFIED

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CD32/A16-3/A9
Serial 005

DESTROYER DIVISION THIRTY-TWO

c/o Fleet Post Office

FIRST ENDORSEMENT to:
DD601/A16-3 ser 030
of 10 April 1944.

New York, N. Y.

10 April 1944.

From: Commander Task Unit TWENTY-SEVEN POINT SIX POINT TWO.
(Commander Destroyer Division THIRTY-TWO)

To : Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet.

Via : (1) Commander Task Unit TWENTY-SEVEN POINT SIX POINT ONE.
(Commander Destroyer Squadron SIXTEEN)
(2) Commander Task Group TWENTY-ONE POINT FIFTEEN.
(Commanding Officer, U.S.S. CROATAN)
(3) Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

Subject: Task Unit 27.6.2, Anti-submarine, Hunter-Killer Operations -
Report of.

Reference: (a) CinCLant ltr 13CL-43 (Revised).

Enclosure: (A) Copies of all despatches in chronological order, sent
and received pertaining to operation.

1. The following chronological report is submitted concerning the anti-submarine, hunter-killer operations leading up to and including the sinking of German U-boat U-856, about 1723 Queen, 7 April 1944 in vicinity of latitude 40-19 North, longitude 62-35 West:-

TUESDAY, 4 APRIL 1944 - ZONE PLUS 4 TIME

0856 - Task Unit 27.6.2, consisting of USS BOYLE, USS NIELDS, USS CHAMPLIN and USS ORDRONAUX underway in accordance with CinCLant's despatches 290311 of March and 021703 of April 1944, standing out of Casco Bay, Maine. Commander Task Unit 27.6.2 (Commander Destroyer Division 32) in USS BOYLE (DD600).

1030 - Proceeding on course 116°T, speed 15 knots in column.

1600 - Formation changed to scouting line bearing 026°, interval 3000 yards, speed 18 knots.

WEDNESDAY, 5 APRIL 1944 - ZONE PLUS 4 TIME

0043 - Received dispatch from CTG 21.15 which read in part:- "TARE UNCLE FOUR MOVE INTO AREA 39-41 NORTH AND 62-64 WEST. TARE UNCLE TWO WILL RELIEVE UPON ARRIVAL". CTG 21.15 despatch 041612 of April 1944.

0625 - Changed speed to 15 knots, TU 27.6.4 sighted to south.

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0636 - Task Unit 27.6.2 relieved Task Unit 27.6.4 (Desdiv 36) on patrol in position 40-30 N, 63-00 W. Proceeded to patrol area 62-64 W, 39-41 N.

1415 - CHAMPLIN reported sound contact bearing 155°T, range 1000 yards.

1417 - CHAMPLIN dropped 3 charge pattern on doubtful contact, losing contact at 350 yards range. CHAMPLIN was directed to remain in vicinity and investigate. Contact subsequently evaluated as fish.

1507 - Directed CHAMPLIN to resume station in scouting formation.

1650 - Search plan for night patrol outlined in despatch 051510 from CTG 21.15 was same as day before except area shifted two degrees west. Area to be patrolled, latitude 39-41 N, Longitude 64-66 W. Set course for new patrol area.

2045 - SG radar contact on four surface targets at 270°T.

2130 - Surface targets picked up at 2145 identified as TG 21.15.

THURSDAY, 6 APRIL 1944 - ZONE PLUS 4 TIME

0847 - Target bearing 015°T, distance 28,000 yards picked up by SA radar.

0850 - Sighted two planes bearing 010°T, distance 16,000 yards.

0852 - Planes sighted were determined to be friendly planes from USS CROATAN.

1125 - Altered course to 090°T and formed scouting line for sweep in accordance with CTG 21.15 instructions as outlined in his dispatch 041612 of April.

1300 - Changed course to 000°T to pass around group of friendly surface targets identified as TG 21.15.

1920 - Changed speed of formation to 17 knots.

1927 - First voice contact between CTU 27.6.1 (CDS16) and CTG 21.15 (CROATAN).

1931 - Changed course to 270°T, speed 15 knots.

DEATH

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FRIDAY, 7 APRIL 1944 - ZONE PLUS 4 TIME

- 0310 - Plane from the USS CROATAN reported contact. TBM-1X
- 0330 - Contact reported to be at 40-47 N, 62-19 W. Contact fired upon plane.
- 0337 - CTU 27.6.2 directed by CTG 21.15 to proceed at maximum speed to point of contact, distance 65 miles.
- 0345 - Changed course to 066°T, speed 25 knots.
- 0459 - Sighted red flare bearing 071°T, identified as having been dropped by one of the CROATAN's planes.
- 0506 - Sighted another flare bearing 070°T.
- 0508 - Changed course to 072°T.
- 0525 - CROATAN's planes orbiting over site of contact, dropped two white flares bearing 080°T, distance 25 miles.
- 0552 - Changed course to 060°T.
- 0559 - Sighted four planes bearing 070°T.
- 0606 - Changed speed to 19 knots.
- 0610 - BOYLE reported sound contact which was believed to be positive on bearing 170°T, range 1500 yards.
- 0618 - BOYLE dropped 11 charge pattern at deep setting at 5 second intervals. Speed at time of firing 15 knots, course 170°T, approximate location 40-30 N, 62-31 W. Commanding Officer of BOYLE reported sighting periscope in wake shortly after depth charge explosion.
- 0628 - BOYLE regained contact bearing 085°T, range 1050 yards.
- 0632 - BOYLE passed over dropping point and dropped two depth charges as contact appeared doubtful.

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- 0635 - Three planes circled over formation. CHAMPLIN reported she had contact but lost it before dropping. CHAMPLIN was directed to try to regain contact.
- 0650 - Ships of this unit less CHAMPLIN were directed to close in to form scouting line, CHAMPLIN remained in locality of original contact. Scouting course 020°T, ships in line normal to course, distance 3000 yards.
- 0715 - CTG 21.15 sent dispatch (070815) to CinCLant, informing that definite contact fired at aircraft and submerged at lat 40-47 N, long 62-19 W.
- 0750 - Changed course to 200°T. USS HUSE and USS FROST from TG 21.15 joined the formation and took station on beam of flagship, 3000 yards distance. CHAMPLIN rejoined formation not having regained contact.
- 0821 - Altered course to 020°T.
- 0843 - Task Unit 27.6.2 plus HUSE and FROST joined by Task Unit 27.6.1, proceeded to patrol area in scouting line, CTU 27.6.1 in operational control.
- 0850 - Executed box turn to starboard. Commenced search in accordance with diagram #21 FTP 219. HUSE and FROST directed to conduct independent search area of contact.
- 0920 - Executed box turn to starboard, interval after turn to be 3000 yards.
- 1015 - Executed box turn to starboard. HUSE and FROST ordered to take station in scouting line, one at each end as second ship.
- 1136 - Executed box turn to starboard.
- 1200 - Executed box turn to starboard.
- 1249 - Executed box turn to starboard, coming to course 110°T.
- 1350 - CTU 27.6.1 directed CTU 27.6.2 to proceed with TU 27.6.2 plus HUSE to point bearing 220°T, 15 miles distant from point of BOYLE's initial contact. Scheduled time to start retiring search curve 1600, with initial course to eastward. Changed course to 200°T.

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Subject: Task Unit 27.6.2, Anti-submarine, Hunter-Killer Operations -
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- 1507 - Formation changed course to 270°T with formation on bearing 044° from BOYLE.
- 1530 - Changed course to 134°T, scouting line bearing 044°. Order ships from right to left: BOYLE, CHAMPLIN, NIELDS, HUSE and ORDRONAU, distance 3000 yards. Scouting line headed to pass through initial point at 1600 on initial course of retiring search curve.
- 1540 - CHAMPLIN reported sound contact on port bow at 600 yards range, no charges dropped. Directed CHAMPLIN to remain in vicinity lat 40-19 N, long 62-35 W.
- 1551 - CHAMPLIN regained contact, HUSE assisting.
- 1552 - CHAMPLIN lost contact at 700 yards range.
- 1555 - CTU 27.6.2 reported positive contact to CTU 27.6.1.
- 1605 - HUSE reported strong contact at 025°T. Lost contact.
- 1609 - Formation less CHAMPLIN and HUSE changed course to 224°T and reduced speed to 14 knots to patrol in close vicinity of contact.
- 1611 - CHAMPLIN and HUSE regained positive contacts.
- 1614 - CHAMPLIN reported again lost contact, was directed to stay with it.
- 1616 - CHAMPLIN dropped smoke float at point of contact.
- 1623 - CHAMPLIN reported contact at 347° T, 700 yards range. HUSE reported same contact.
- 1624 - Directed CHAMPLIN to use deep settings.
- 1632 - CHAMPLIN and HUSE working together made successive runs on contact and CHAMPLIN dropped 11 charge deep pattern and HUSE fired hedge-hog.
- 1643 - HUSE regained contact and went in for another attack using hedge-hog. HUSE reported he did not fire as he was not satisfied with the problem.

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- 1650 - CHAMPLIN, having regained contact, made another run and dropped a nine charge medium depth pattern. Evaluated as good contact.
- 1655 - Submarine surfaced.
- 1656 - BOYLE, NIELDS and ORDRONAU directed to close submarine. CHAMPLIN and HUSE directed to close submarine and sink with gunfire, which they proceeded to carry out.
- 1658 - CHAMPLIN rammed surfaced submarine and reported several hits in conning tower by gunfire.
- 1701 - Survivors reported in water, the submarine captain apparently having ordered "abandon ship" after the ramming. CHAMPLIN and HUSE firing on the submarine. Reported to CTU 27.6.1 - "Submarine on surface".
- 1702 - CTG 21.15 and CTU 27.6.1 reported they were closing scene of action.
- 1715 - Submarine reported badly damaged and sinking..
- 1720 - NIELDS and ORDRONAU were ordered to pick up survivors and BOYLE, CHAMPLIN and HUSE to screen them.
- 1723 - Submarine sank lat 40-19 N, long 62-35 W.
- 1732 - CHAMPLIN reported she had sustained damage, the full extent of which was not yet known. CHAMPLIN also reported the Commanding Officer, Commander John J. Shaffer, III, U.S. Navy seriously injured by gunfire. CHAMPLIN was directed to take a safe course and repair damages.
- 1757 - CHAMPLIN reported damage under control. The damage amounted to two holes, one of four feet by eight inches in compartment A-204, and the other of three feet by six inches in compartment A-205; believed tanks A-4, C-4 and C-10 ruptured; ice machine room flooded.
- 1820 - Altered course to 075°T, speed 12 knots to enable CHAMPLIN to effect temporary repairs. BOYLE standing by. ORDRONAU and NIELDS picking up survivors with HUSE screening. Condition of wind and sea made rescue of survivors extremely difficult.

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- 1900 - The submarine was identified as being of the 750 ton class and the ORDRONAU reported that in addition to the captain it had picked up one other officer and fifteen ratings and the NIELDS reported having picked up one officer and ten ratings totaling 28 survivors (see CTU 27.6.1 despatch 080506 of April 1944). The submarine's number was revealed as being U-856.
- 1925 - The Commanding Officer of the CHAMPLIN, Commander John J. Shaffer, III, U.S. Navy, was reported as doing nicely.
- 2255 - NIELDS and ORDRONAU rejoined. BOYLE, NIELDS and ORDRONAU screening CHAMPLIN. CHAMPLIN proceeding with damage repairs and operation on Commanding Officer.

SATURDAY, 8 APRIL 1944 - ZONE PLUS 4 TIME

- 0030 - Changed course to 085°T.
- 0200 - CHAMPLIN reported operation on Commanding Officer completed, condition unfavorable.
- 0245 - Formation changed course to 268°T, speed 12 knots, CHAMPLIN having effected temporary repairs. Proceeding to New York in accordance with verbal orders received from CTU 27.6.1.
- 0533 - Changed speed to 15 knots after TBS conversation, establishing fact that CHAMPLIN could make this speed safely.
- 0816 - CHAMPLIN reported that their Commanding Officer, Commander John J. Shaffer, III, U.S. Navy, died at 0803 that morning.

2. Weather conditions at 1700 Queen, 7 April 1944:-

Wind - Force 4, SW x W.
Temperature - Dry bulb - 55°.
Temperature, water - 66°.
Sea - 4, SW x W.
Bathothermograph range - 2400 yards.

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3. CTU 27.6.2 considers that the German submarine U-856 was sunk by the combined action of the USS CHAMPLIN (DD601) and the USS HUSE (DE145). USS ORDRONAU (DD617) picked up fifteen ratings and two officers including commanding officer. USS NIELDS (DD616) picked up ten ratings and one officer. Rescue of survivors was carried on under difficult sea conditions. Prisoners, totaling twenty-eight, were delivered to representatives of the Commandant, Third Naval District on arrival New York, N.Y.

4. The action was carried on to a final conclusion in accordance with the best traditions of the Naval Service. In the progress of the action, Commander John Jackson Shaffer, III, U.S. Navy (63162), Commanding Officer, USS CHAMPLIN (DD601), was seriously wounded by gunfire and died the following morning as a result of these wounds.

5. Transmission of this letter by registered mail within the continental limits of the United States is authorized.

C. L. Melson
C. L. MELSON.

COPIES FOR:

COMDESRON 16 (CTU 27.6.1)
CO USS CROATAN (CTG 21.15)
CINCLANT

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