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Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

NO 386
R.S. NO 10 02
REG. SHEET NO 203

USS KRETCHMER (DE 329)

Fleet Post Office

~~NAVY HARBOR~~

San Francisco, Calif.

File No. DE329(FMR)/A9
TB:fph
Serial 049.

9 September 1945

CONFIDENTIAL

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.
Via : (1) Commander Escort Division 57;
(2) Commander Task Group 77.1;
(3) Commander SEVENTH Fleet;
(4) The Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Action Report, Evacuation of Prisoners of War from Formosa,
5 and 6 September 1945.

Reference: (a) CincPac conf. ltr. 161-45.
(b) U.S. Navy Regulations 1920, Art. 712, 874(6).
(c) CTG 77.1 Visual Dispatch 040126 September.

1. This report covers the period from 29 August 1945 to 9 September 1945. This ship, as a unit of Task Group 77.1, participated in the evacuation of prisoners of war from the island of Formosa, entering Kiirun Harbor on 5 and 6 September for the embarkation of prisoners of war.

2. (a) This ship was operating with Task Group 77.1, composed of U.S.S. BLOCK ISLAND (CVE-106), U.S.S. SANTEE (CVE-29), U.S.S. GARY (DE-326), U.S.S. FINCH (DE-328), and U.S.S. BRISTER (DE-327). Commander Task Group 77.1 was in U.S.S. BLOCK ISLAND, and Commander Escort Division 57 was in U.S.S. GARY.

(b) This ship sortied from San Pedro Bay, Samar Island in the Philippines, on 29 August 1945 and proceeded northward to approximately 21° 50'N, 127° 32'E, where rendezvous was made with U.S.S. CHEPACHET (AO-78) on 1 September 1945. From 1 September to 3 September the Task Group maneuvered to avoid a typhoon. On 3 September U.S.S. CHEPACHET was detached and Task Group 77.1 set course for Formosa Island.

(c) The mission of this vessel was to enter Kiirun in company with U.S.S. GARY, make contact with the prisoners of war, and evacuate as many as possible, departing Kiirun before dark. The standard hydrographic office issue of charts was available, plus several photostated air photographs of Kiirun supplied by Commander Task Group 77.1 on the eve of the entry. There was no reliable information concerning the minefield. It was known that air support would be provided. The remainder of the Task Group was lying close at hand to the eastward. During the entire action of two days no enemy forces were encountered.

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3. Chronological Account of the Action.

Zone time minus nine (Item time). Weather: The weather during the entire two day action was good. Fair skies with scattered clouds and occasional light showers prevailed. There was only a light swell, and this greatly aided transfer of prisoners of war.

September 5, 1945: 0257 U.S.S. GARY and U.S.S. KRETCHMER detached from Task Group 77.1, proceeding into Kiirun Harbor. 0615 General Quarters, set material Condition Able. 0634 Altered course to 230° True, heading into Kiirun, about fifteen miles distant. Steering various courses and speeds, while in column, open order, astern of U.S.S. GARY. 0741 Commenced firing on floating mine, hits were scored but mine remained afloat and was later sunk by carrier aircraft. Good air cover was provided during the entry by aircraft from Task Group 77.1. From 0850 to 1020 both ships were lying to north of Kiirun Island waiting for a pilot. 1020 Proceeding into Kiirun with small pilot boat leading the way. Passed through breakwater into the outer harbor. 1146 Moored at berth number 2, inner harbor. Immediately put out dock patrol composed of ten men and one officer, and an armed boat patrolling harbor side of the two vessels. There was no sign of hostility. Japanese flags on public buildings and on fort were at half-mast. The populace of Kiirun was kept back from the docks and warehouses by Japanese Army guards. There appeared to be a spirit of cooperation. 1705 Received an overlay from the Japanese showing mine fields. It is worthy of note that track line during entry had passed directly thru minefield. 1730 Received 154 prisoners of war on board. 1747 Underway, proceeding out of Kiirun in column, astern of U.S.S. GARY. 1818 Passed thru breakwater, proceeding to rendezvous with Task Group 77.1. 2016 lying to off U.S.S. SANTEE at a point fifteen miles east of Bito Kaku. 2025 Commenced transfer of prisoners of war by motor whaleboat. 2155 Completed transfer of 154 prisoners of war. 2333 Task Group 77.1 underway, steering various courses and speeds throughout the night to remain in the same general area.

September 6, 1945: 0545 U.S.S. GARY, U.S.S. BRISTER and U.S.S. FINCH detached to proceed into Kiirun. 1002 U.S.S. KRETCHMER detached from Task Group 77.1, proceeding into Kiirun. 1127 Passed through breakwater. 1147 Moored, bow towards harbor entrance, at berth number 3, inner harbor. 1435 Last prisoner of war aboard, received 206, including nine stretcher cases. 1445 Two British cruisers and one British destroyer entered inner harbor and moored to berths 15 and 16. 1545 Underway, proceeding out of Kiirun in company with U.S.S. GARY, U.S.S. BRISTER and U.S.S. FINCH in column formation. Steered various courses at various speeds to conform to safe channel. 1740 Rendezvoused with Task Group 77.1 and commenced transfer of prisoners of war to U.S.S. BLOCK ISLAND. 2202 Completed transfer of 155 prisoners of war, 51 remaining on board. 2335 Task Group 77.1 underway for Manila, Philippine Islands. No incidents of note occurred during trip to Manila.

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4. Recommendation for Improvement.

There is very little to recommend in the way of improvement on the whole operation. As far as this vessel was concerned the entire action went very smoothly. The handling of the prisoners of war was not difficult. On this ship the problem of transferring the prisoners to the CVE's was greatly simplified and speeded up by the use of a standard chain and wood cargo net and the use of this equipment is recommended for future operations of this kind. In addition to the use of the cargo net, a heavy leather belt, four inches wide, with a large metal ring and line attached, was put around every man before letting him go over the side; this and the use of the cargo net gave the prisoners confidence, which they lacked using the regular ship's ladder, and greatly speeded up loading.

T. BULFINCH

cc: ComDesPac