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Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

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U. S. S. BRISTER (DE 327)

FLEET POST OFFICE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

FILE NO.

DE327(FMR)/A9.  
Serial #00186.

SECRET

9 Sept 1945

From: The Commanding Officer.  
To : The Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet.  
Via : (1) ComTaskUnit 77.1.3 (USS GARY DE326).  
(2) ComTaskGroup 77.1 (USS BLOCK ISLAND CVE-106).  
(3) Com7thFlt.  
(4) CinePac-CinePoa.  
Subj: Evacuation of Allied Prisoners of War from Formosa - Action Report on.  
Ref : (a) PacFlt Conf ltr 101-45 of 1 Jan 1945.

1. This vessel participated in subject operation as part of Task Unit 77.1.3, acting as screen for Task Group 77.1, Rear Admiral D. KETCHAM, USN, CTG 77.1 and ComCardiv 27, in USS BLOCK ISLAND (CVE-106). In addition to the flagship and this vessel, the following ships were in the group: USS Santee (CVE-29), USS THOMAS J. GARY (DE-326), carrying Comdr. D. H. JOHNSON, USNR, CTU 77.1.3 and ComCertDiv 57, USS FINCH (DE-328), and USS KRETCHMER (DE-329). The USS CHEPACHET (AO-78) joined the formation as TU 77.1.2 northeast of LUZON, but was detached before the group proceeded to Formosa.

2. The task group sortied from San Pedro Bay, LEYTE Gulf, at 1300 on 29 Aug 1945, under ComCardiv27 Secret Operation Order #2-45 of the same date, implementing Com7thFlt Top Secret Operation Order 13-45. A typhoon moving west from a point north of the Carolines passed south of the group as it proceeded north in the direction of OKINAWA. When the typhoon turned to the northwest, the group rode out the rough weather through 2 Sept 1945 in the general vicinity of 23° North, 129° East. In the meantime Com7thFlt Secret Dispatch 010140 of 1 Sept 1945 changed the group's mission to evacuation of POW's from northern FORMOSA. At 1131 Item on the 3rd, course 277° (T) was set, headed for the operation area. The night of the 4th we were off the northeast corner of FORMOSA.

3. The morning of 5 Sept 1945 two (2) DE's, the THOMAS J. GARY and the KRETCHMER, proceeded into KIIRUN Harbor to evacuate POW's, while this ship and the FINCH remained as screen for the carriers, which remained off the northeast coast making sorties to drop supplies to POW camps. The two ships returned from KIIRUN after dark with about 175 evacuees each. Between 2015 and 2215 Item these men were transferred to the carriers by boats from all ships. This vessel's motor whale boat was used between the KRETCHMER and the Santee.

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4. The morning of 6 Sept 1945 all four DE's entered KIRUN. This vessel was moored alongside, in berth #2 of the Inner Harbor, at 0945 Item. A little after 1300 a trainload of POW's arrived on the docks and were divided equally among the four ships. At 1400 this vessel took on board 199 enlisted men (11 of them stretcher cases), one Australian Army medical corps captain, and three American Air Force officers, a total of 203 persons. We got underway at 1552, and the evacuees were fed immediately. They were also furnished towels, soap, and chocolate bars, and a special awning was rigged on the fantail for the comfort of those who did not care to use the living compartment (C-201-L, with bunks for 45) set aside for them. Separate head and shower facilities were set aside for them. At 1800 rendezvous was made with the carriers about twelve (12) miles northeast of BITO KARU. Between 1800 and 2300 Item, this ship's 26-foot motor whale boat and a similar boat from the SENTER transferred to the latter vessel 153 persons, including the stretcher cases. Fifty POW's in good to fair condition of health were retained on board. Forty-nine were British Army enlisted men and one was an American Army enlisted man. Several had slight cases of diarrhea or symptoms of beri-beri. All were markedly anaciated.

5. The Task Group got way on and headed for MANILA that night (the 6th) at 2335 Item. We arrived in Manila at 0910 Item on 9 Sept.

6. During this operation the escorts were permitted to run their Fairbanks-Morse engines on single-engine operation whenever the fleet speed of advance made this practical, and were given warning sufficiently in advance when greater speeds were foreseen to be necessary. We were also permitted, in re-orienting the screen, to increase our engine revolutions gradually instead of five knots at a time. Though this resulted in somewhat slower re-orientation upon a change of fleet axis, the saving of wear and tear on the engines, and of fuel, was believed to counterbalance this result in view of the reduced danger of submarine attack at the time. An even slower rate of acceleration, in view of the reduced submarine menace, would greatly reduce engine wear and the number of cracked cylinder linings resulting from rapid acceleration of Diesel engines.

7. The added load of visual communications during this operation made it necessary to shift two men from our quartermaster group to assist the signalmen. It is submitted that our allowed complement of three rated signalmen is insufficient in such circumstances.

8. The afternoon of 3 Sept 1945, this ship attempted to fuel from the BLOCK ISLAND in a medium rolling sea. After we had connected the fueling line the ship began to yaw and the helmsman was unable to stop it.

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Fueling had to be stopped when the line was torn loose from the carrier. In view of the cruising radius of DE's of this type (FMR)--about 13,000 miles at 12 knots--it is not believed to be necessary or advisable to attempt fueling at sea except under perfect or near-perfect conditions.

9. In the circumstances of this operation this ship found itself fully equipped to transport evacuees more by accident than by design. Where evacuation operations can be foreseen, it is recommended that special medicines and other supplies, such as mattresses, blankets, towels, clothing and survivor kits, be delivered on board before leaving. Sufficient stowage for extra gear can be obtained by emptying a depth charge or hedgehog magazine. It is not anticipated that our present supply of depth charges and hedgehogs will be required in future operations.

10. After entering MIIRUN the DE's of this Division discovered that they had passed perilously close to a Japanese mine field. In operations of this sort all ships should be assured of having the absolute maximum of information concerning dangers to navigation.

11. During the transfer of evacuees from ship to ship the night of 6 Sept, the sea developed a considerable swell, making the debarkation into small boats of men in a weakened condition an extremely ticklish business, and the handling of stretcher cases even more ticklish. In view of the hazards involved it is believed that APB's, with their LCVP's, instead of DE's would be better for this type of operation, or that more and larger boats should be furnished from the carriers involved.

F. C. CADDY.