

AKA22/A12
Serial 032
CONFIDENTIAL

U. S. S. ATHENE, AKA-22
c/o Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, Calif.

12 March 1945

From: The Commanding Officer,
To: The Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.

Via: (1) Commander Task Unit 53.1.3
(2) Commander Task Group 53.1
(3) Commander Task Force 53
(4) Commander Task Force 51
(5) Commander FIFTH Fleet.
(6) Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Area

Subject: Action Report for the Iwo Jima Operation, Submission of.

References: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations 1920, Articles 712, 574(6).
(b) Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter
10L-45.

Enclosure: (A) Subject Action Report.

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b) the subject
Action Report is herewith submitted as Enclosure (A).

H. R. NELSON, Jr.

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ENCLOSURE (A)

PART I

No remarks. Covered in the Division Commander's report.

PART II

No remarks. Covered in the Division Commander's report.

PART III

- A. This vessel operated throughout the operation in Task Unit 53.1.3. The Task Unit Commander was the Commander, Transport Division Forty-Eight.
- Departed Saipan Island, Marianas Islands, 16 February 1945 with Task Group 51.12 and arrived Iwo Jima Island, Volcano Islands 19 February 1945. The passage Saipan to Iwo Jima was uneventful.
- On 19 February maintained position on Division Guide in the Transport Area and retired the night of 19-20 February with units of Transport Division 46. At 1914 received a "Flash Red" and at 2051 received a "Flash White." This Group was not molested by the enemy aircraft.
- On 20 February maintained position in the Transport Area and retired the night of 20-21 February with units of Transport Division 46. The retirement was uneventful.
- On 21 February maintained position in the Transport Area and retired the night of 21-22 February with units of Transport Division 46. At 1710 received "Flash Red" and at 2041 received "Flash White." This group was not attacked.
- On 22 February maintained position in the Transport Area. The retirement, night of 22-23 February with units of Transport Division 46 was uneventful.
- On 23 February remained in the Transport Area and retired night of 23-24 February with units of Transport Division 47. At 1906 received "Flash Red" and at 2103 received "Flash White". This Group was not molested by enemy aircraft.
- On 24 February anchored off Iwo Jima in 80 fathoms of water and got underway in time to retire the night of 24-25 February with Transport Division 47. Night was uneventful.
- On 25 February again anchored off Iwo Jima in about 65 fathoms of water and retired night of 25-26 February with units of Transport Division 47.

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(ENCLOSURE A)

Anchored again on 26 February and retired that night with Task Group 51.14. Uneventful.

Anchored in 80 fathoms of water 27 February and commenced unloading cargo at 1100. Remained at anchor throughout the night and continued unloading cargo. The night was uneventful.

At 1715, 28 February completed the discharge of cargo and got underway at 1840 for passage to Saipan with Task Unit 51.16.10. The passage to Saipan was uneventful and we arrived there 3 March 1945.

B. Zone time minus ten(10) was used throughout the operation.

PART IV

No comments.

PART V

A. Operational Damage.

1. Considerable minor structural damage was suffered by this vessel during unloading operations 27-28 February, inclusive. Principal cause was a heavy westerly swell which caused LST's and LSM's to heave into the side with great force. The use of fenders was found impracticable, since they were soon cut to pieces. The damaging effect was intensified when two LST's were handled alongside simultaneously. Part of the damage was incurred when an LST made a bow on landing on the starboard side as she was attempting to come alongside. This damage was in the vicinity of Frame 85.

2. Damage is as follows:

	<u>Location</u>	<u>Amount</u>
a.	Frs. 66-68(F)	Dent in shell plating about eight feet below upper deck heading.
b.	Fr. 85(S)	Overhead stiffener and plating at main deck buckled. Life raft carried away. Stowage buckled.
c.	Frs. 118-133(S)	Stanchions at main deck which support upper deck are distorted. Sheer strake distorted.

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- d. Frs. 133-135(S) Bounding bar connecting sheer strake to main deck plating distorted. 14 rivets carried away.
- e. Fr. 56(F) Life rail damaged. Two life rafts damaged.
- f. Gangways. Fr. 105(PAS) Port and starboard gangway fittings bent, carried away.
3 stanchions bent.
- g. Fr. 123(F) Lights damaged.
- h. Compartment G-101-L1 2nd., 3rd., 4th. beams from forward bulkhead(Stbd) bent.
- i. No. 3 Hold Shell plating bent inward and hole forced(repaired).
Bent badly.
- k. Ordnance Stores, Fr.126 Frames 125, 126, 128 welds broken;
1. Compartment G-201-1L 129, 134, stanchions bent; frame 135(S) bent; frames 133, 134 (F) bent.
- m. Fr. 130(F) Gun tub broken and ammunition racks bent out of shape.

PART VI

- A. No comments on surface gunnery operations.
- B. No comments on air operations.
- C. Amphibious Action.
 - 1. Troops and Cargo.
 - a. This vessel embarked 3 officers, 126 enlisted Marines of Ship's Platoon(AKA) 27th. Replacement Craft and 1 officer and 17 enlisted Marines of Fifth Marine Division.
 - b. Troops were embarked 25 December 1944 at Hilo, Hawaii, T.H., and disembarked 28 February 1945 at Iwo Jima Island, Volcano Islands.
 - c. The total quantity of cargo amounted to 963 short tons, consisting of 33 vehicles, "B" rations and "B" supplements, post-exchange and quartermaster supplies for the Fifth Marine Division. Also included were 52 short tons of depth charges and accessories(Naval Ammunition).

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(1). Cargo was stowed below decks in a semi-commercial type load utilizing all of the ship's holds. All of the general cargo and approximately half of the total number of vehicles were worked using yard and stay rigging.

d. Naval Ammunition was loaded 23 December 1944 at Naval Depot dock, West Loch, Pearl Harbor, Oahu, T.H. Other cargo was loaded at Hilo, Hawaii, T.H., 25-27 December, 1944. Fifth Marine Division cargo was unloaded at Iwo Jima, 27-28 February into 2 LST's, 1 LSM and ship's LSM's. Naval ammunition was discharged to dock A4 Saipan, 4 March 1945.

COMMENT: While unloading at Iwo Jima, difficulty was experienced in providing sufficient men for working parties from the ship to handle and stow the cargo aboard the LST's and LSM's alongside. During the majority of the time there was an LST and/or LSM on both sides of the ship.

2. Landing Craft.

a. This vessel carries 11 LCVP's, 2 LCM's and 1 LCP(L). All of these boats were used the first two days (February 19-20), but after the morning of D-Day plus 3, only the LCM's were used for discharge of cargo. The LCP(L) was used throughout the operation as a Boat Group Commander's boat and as a salvage boat. Two LCVP's were fitted with smoke generators and smoke floats and were available for duty as smoke boats. Other LCVP's were used as messenger and casualty transfer boats.

b. All LCVP's and the LCP(L) were launched by means of Welin davits and the two LCM's were disembarked by means of a thirty ton boom. No difficulty was encountered in the lowering of any boat and the launching of all boats was accomplished in less than 15 minutes.

c. In general, control of landing craft was excellent, but because of the wind and set, the cargo circles at the line of departure were difficult to keep in position. Due to the few boats unloaded on the beach in the first few days, a large number of loaded boats were present in the cargo area, making control most difficult.

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3. Minesweeping. No comment.

4. Landing of Troops and Cargo.

a. Since this ship did not commence unloading until D-Day plus 3, the ship's boats were sent to other APA's and AKA's where they were loaded while alongside.

b. LCM's were found far more valuable while operating in heavy surf than LCVP's which readily swamped.

5. Casualties.

a. This vessel is well equipped for handling casualties. Regular stretcher bearers number 10 with others available in emergency. Stokes stretchers are located throughout the ship and army litters equipped with blankets and battle dressings are numerous. The main sick bay and two(2) battle dressing stations are fully equipped for handling casualties. The wardroom is used for a casualty clearance station.

b. Casualties were received from LCVP's and LCM's on the port side of number one hatch and were hoisted aboard by means of a sling attached to litters.

D.

1. In general, the employment and performance of the radars in air and surface search, tracking, navigation and station keeping were satisfactory. I.F.F. performance was only fair to satisfactory due to the following causes:

- (1) A large degree of interference from friendly aircraft made the reading of pips both difficult and uncertain.
- (2) Faulty I.F.F. equipment in aircraft resulted in a number of friendly planes being reported and tracked as "Dogies."

The enemy made only limited use of radar jamming and deception. On 19 February 1945, 1900-2000, low frequency MGW jamming was observed on the SC-4 radar in the sector 150-180 degrees true from POINT HOT ROCKS. The base line on the "A" scope was caused to jump but not sufficiently to prevent the reading of the pips. No air raid was in progress at this time. On 22 February 1945 at 1830 the enemy employed window during the course of an air raid. A raid split was effected from behind the window but was easily followed on the radar.

(ENCLOSURE A)

2. Communications in general seemed to be entirely satisfactory. The only conspicuous exception to this generalization was found in the difficulty experienced for a few hours each night, usually on the mid-watch, in receiving the re-broadcast of the NPM secondary FOX schedule from Guam. Transmission difficulties, or other causes rendered A-1 transmission unintelligible and necessitated the complete omission from the FOX log of a number of despatches.
3. No deceptive measures were taken by this vessel.
4. This vessel is not Loran equipped. Enroute, celestial navigation was entirely satisfactory. At the area, visual tangents and radar provided accurate piloting.
5. Engineering. No comment.
6. A capacity load of fresh and dry provisions and general stores were taken aboard at Pearl Harbor on 25 January 1945. Fresh and dry provisions were taken aboard at Eniwetok, 6 February 1945. Fresh provisions were issued on that date to U. S. S. YO-161. No provisions were taken aboard at Saipan. Three coils of 3-inch manila line were obtained at the Naval Supply Depot, Saipan, prior to the operation. At Iwo Jima dry and fresh provisions were issued to the U. S. S. SC-1296, 20 February 1945, U. S. S. LST-715 and U. S. S. LST-261 on 27 February, and to U. S. S. LST-84 on 28 February 1945. On returning to Saipan 3 March, fresh provisions were exhausted as of that day but none were available to be taken aboard. Considerable quantities of four and five inch manila line was used in taking LCVP's and LSM's alongside and all available large fenders were severely punished by the LST's alongside and should be replaced at the earliest opportunity.

The quantity of boat spares aboard was sufficient to meet operational needs and no boat was inactive because of a lack of engine or hull parts. Of three thousand gallons of fog oil carried from Pearl Harbor, approximately 600 gallons were used aboard. The fog generators consumed gasoline at the rate of about one gallon of gasoline to each twelve gallons of fog oil. Three LCVP's were lost on the beach and with them their equipment of kapok life jackets, water breakers, yellow dye and tarpaulins, all of which must be replaced.

The small boats were usually away from the ship throughout the night and needed food and hot drinks. The one-gallon

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insulated jugs furnished under contract NXas 59499 proved to be very easily damaged and rendered poor service. Many of them were dented by ordinary use which in most cases damages the insulation and makes them unfit for use. Boat crews were constantly called upon to give their winter and utility clothing to casualties and extra quantities of such clothing should be carried to replace clothing thus given away.

Emergency issue of clothing and small stores and ship's store stock was made to the casualties received aboard ship.

Ship's Store stock, consisting largely of cigars, cigarettes, candy and soap were issued to U.S.S. LST's and U.S.S. LSM-261.

7. This vessel received 15 casualties with wounds varying from serious to minor. Two White casualties were transferred to the U.S.S. LEEDSTOWN (APA-56) at Iwo Jima; 2 war-neurosis casualties were transferred to the U.S.S. GECIL (APA-96) at Iwo Jima; one casualty expired enroute Saipan and was buried at sea and the remainder were transferred to the U.S.S. PICKINS (APA-190) at Saipan. At the time of transfer, condition of all was favorable.

PART VII

No remarks.

PART VIII

Considerable surf and a steep beach made unloading difficult. LCP's were successfully used when their stay on the beach was not in excess of a minute or so (i.e., when unloading personnel). However, when cargo had to be unloaded and the lapse of time on the beach was more than a few minutes, boats tended to broach and swamp. LCM's had far less difficulty, but when they had to remain on the beach in excess of ten minutes there was a tendency here also to broach in spite of all the coxswain could do. Cables from bulldozers on the beach, placed on the forward cleats of the LCM's as steadying lines were used with a high degree of success since in most cases they prevented broaching even though the boat remained on the beach for a long period of time.

A number of LCM's failed to dog-down the hatch cover on the after compartment securely (aft of the engine room space). Consequently, this space became filled with water as the surf broke over the stern. When retraction was attempted, the boat was unable to retract under its own power and assistance from a salvage boat was

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necessary. In isolated instances the hatch cover over the engine room space of the LCM was left uncovered and the surf readily entered the compartment quickly rendering the motors inoperative.

There seemed to be a lack of small-craft salvage boats on the first two days of the operation, but on the third day this situation was remedied. During the assault phase it seems that the largest number of salvage craft should be present since at this time more boats are beaching than at any other time. Boats not salvaged soon after breaching or swamping are often impossible to pull off a few hours later and constitute obstacles to other boats approaching the beach.

With respect to the difficulty in cargo control circles this situation might have been alleviated had boats carrying a particular type of cargo been instructed to rendezvous together under the direction of a competent officer displaying a large visible designating marker. This was done with the hot cargo circles at the onset of the operation and seemed most successful.

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