

S-E-C-R-E-T

USS LCI(L) # 24

July 8, 1943

From: The Commanding Officer, USS LCI(L) # 24
To : The Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet

10 1439

Via :
The Commander LCI(L) Group 14.
The Commander LCI(L) Flotilla 5.
The Commander Landing Craft Flotillas, SoPacFor (CTG 31.3)
The Commander Amphibious Force, SoPacFor (CTF 31.)
The Commander South Pacific Force

Subject: Action Report- July 4, 1943 to 6 July, 1943.

Enclosures: (a) Anti-Aircraft Action Report.
(b) Sketch of location during action.

1. Task Unit 31.9.1, under command of Commander LCI(L) Group Fourteen, arrived at Rendova Harbor, Rendova Island, New Georgia group, at 0700, July 4, 1943. This task unit included LCI(L)'s 23, 24, 63, 65, 327, 328, 329, 330, 332, and 336.

2. LCI(L) # 24 immediately anchored waiting word to proceed to the beach and unload troops & cargo. At 1300 got underway and at 1330 beached in accordance with previous orders issued by the Group Commander. Because of the shallow beach, the ship was unable to get in closer than 150 feet of the beach. The water at the end of the ramps was about three feet deep. The LCI(L)'s were beached in close proximity - within 20 feet of each other.

3. It was about 1400 when 16 twin engined bombers were seen off the port side flying through the clouds. They were on a course approximating that of the ships heading 085° T. These planes were about 5000 feet in elevation and 8 miles distant. Identification was impossible with the naked eye and with the 7x50 binoculars. However General Quarters was sounded and Battle Stations assumed. The ship had not secured from General Quarters when these same planes were seen approaching from over the ridge and tree tops, on a course approximating 265° T. This lead them directly over the target area. After they had passed over, they changed their course to starboard approximating 280° T. The elevation of the planes was about 60° when first seen as the trees on the beach greatly impaired vision. They were in a very tight formation. As the planes passed directly overhead, only one enemy fighter plane was seen in company with them. It appeared to be several hundred feet above the bombers. In their approach and over the target area, there was no fighter plane interception; however our fighters engaged the enemy bombers soon after they had passed over the target area.

4. The four 20MM, two fifty caliber, and one thirty caliber guns opened fire. After the gunners had commenced firing the Battle phones were lost as a method of contact and control as the sound of battle was so intense ~~no~~ word could be heard over them. All spotting and control was localized and was carried out by the gunners in giving sufficient lead.

5. Several rounds were expended when a flight of planes approached the target area and flew directly overhead. Enemy planes were still visible but beyond 20MM range. The guns on this and other ships opened fire and soon thereafter the bridge identified them to be F4F's. They were well above the 20MM ceiling and did not change their course. None were hit. Word was passed on the Battle Phones and with a megaphone from the bridge but it did not get through until the # 2 20MM was personally instructed to cease firing.

SECRET

6. LCI(L) # 24 is certain of having shot down one enemy bomber. Tracers from #2 20MM gun were seen entering the plane near the starboard engine and wing. A fire soon started causing the plane to drop from formation and into the water about 1500 yards astern of the ship. Another plane was seen smoking as a result of our 20MM fire and it is quite likely he could not have returned to his base.

7. The ship was not strafed nor was it hit by bombs directly. There were three near misses. One bomb fell on the port side amidship between LCI(L)'s 24 & 65 causing considerable damage to both ships. Both ships were beached less than 20 feet apart. Another bomb fell off the starboard bow about 50 feet but did no damage; one fell off the starboard quarter about 75 feet. Shrapnel from this last mentioned bomb opened the gravity tank atop the deck house.

8. During this action word was passed from the bridge to throw overboard all gasoline drums and cans, large caliber ammunition and mortar shells. Had the mortar shells not been removed from the port side, the damage to the ship and personnel would have been much greater. Six 20MM magazines were accidentally thrown overboard.

9. Soon after the bomb hit the ship took a decided list to port of about 8 degrees and settled low in the water. Bomb fragments started fires in the Troop Officers quarters, Troop quarters (A 205L), and in the crews quarters (A 206L). Power from the fire and bilge pumps was lost as they were inoperative and the fire main was severed. The fire was first fought with CO 2 extinguishers, one handy-billy, and bucket brigades. Before the main fire, in the crew quarters, was brought under control, LCI(L) # 23 came along our starboard side and a fire hose was led from their fire plug into the crews quarters. This was a very important source of water. The forward engine bulkhead was very hot. Because of this, orders were given to open the sea chests and allow water to fill the bilges. The extent of damage, possible fuel oil leaks, and fires made it advisable to start sprinkling the magazine compartment.

10. When the fire was brought under control, all flooding ceased temporarily and counter flooding of ballast tanks was commenced in an effort to right the ship. Also, all hands not involved in fighting fires and counter flooding the ship, were ordered to immediately reload all empty 20MM magazines.

11. Fighting of fires was considerably handicapped as one of the two hand-billies allowed the ship had long been inoperative beyond repair and no replacement was available; furthermore, the one Rescue Breathing apparatus was perforated with shrapnel and beyond repair & use. AA goggles and a handkerchief over the nose and mouth were used to enter the crews quarters; also, the regulation gas mask.

12. There were numerous holes in the hull, below and above the water & the deck house. The water, ventilation, electrical, radio, and bridge control systems were all badly damaged. There was approximately 2 feet of water in the crews quarters and in compartment (A 205L).

13. The ship remained on the beach during the night. As a result of counter flooding, the ship had righted itself; however, flooding continued until there was about a 5 degree starboard list. Arrangements were made July 4th with the Beachmaster to provide 2 LCP's to tow the ship off the beach at dawn July 5th. With the starboard list all holes below the water line were out of the water. About 0700, the LCP's towed the ship to a cove off BAW Island where she was brought starboard side to on the beach. Just astern of LCI(L) # 65. Camouflage nets and natural foliage was used extensively.

(9)

8

SECRET

14. The Construction Battalion welded sheet metal plates over large areas of small holes and spot welded small holes. This work was continued until all holes below the water line were made water tight. In the meantime the crew plugged up all holes above the water line with wooden plugs and rags. All other necessary repairs in preparation for getting underway were made.

15. The ship remained in the cove off BAU Island until 1700, July 6, and then proceeded to Tulagi in company with one DD, one LST, and LCI(L) # 65.

16. The wounded Navy and Army personnel were evacuated to the beach. The Navy casualties were as follows;

(a) WILSON, Ernest A., 404-19-84, BM2c. Killed in action by shrapnel. Buried ashore.

PAULSON, Mahlon F., 638-57-49, RM2c. Killed in action by shrapnel. Buried ashore.

STEINERT, Norman C., Lieut(jg)- 161242. Shrapnel wound in back and leg. Remained aboard.

DEAN, George E., 612-83-24 Coxswain. Shrapnel wounds in face, body, and legs. Transferred to LST for medical attention and evacuation.

STEWART, James H., 268-35-55, MoMMlc. Shrapnel wound in left arm. Remained aboard.

STEFFENSEN, Herlof H., 730-86-71, SC3c. Shrapnel wound in right arm and shoulder. Remained aboard.

(b) Of the Army personnel that remained aboard to unload the ship, two and possibly three had gone below into troop quarters (A 205L) to seek cover where they were killed by shrapnel. Another standing on the port side amidship was killed, and another was standing outboard the bulworks on the port side. He was seriously wounded from shrapnel in his body and right leg badly shattered.

17. The officers and enlisted personnel fought the ships guns, and fires without regard to their personal safety. For a new crew in their first action, they worked quietly, efficiently, and with valor. Individual initiative, courage, and cooperation represented that of the highest traditions of the Navy.

R. E. Ward
R. E. WARD

(10)

9