

RECORD OF CONFERENCE CONDUCTED

Federal Office Building

by

San Francisco, Calif.  
June 11, 1942

J. W. GREENSLADE  
Commandant, Twelfth Naval District

Present:

Admiral R. P. McCULLOUGH, District Intelligence Officer  
Captain W. K. KILPATRICK, Chief-of-Staff, Western Sea Frontier  
Captain W. B. PHILLIPS, Commanding Officer, USS BARNETT  
Commander M. T. SELIGMAN, Executive Officer, USS LEXINGTON  
Commander H. S. DUCKWORTH, Air Officer, USS LEXINGTON  
Lieutenant (jg) Fred C. BREWER, Communications Watch Officer  
Lieutenant (jg) Daniel BONTECOU, Communications Officer, USS BARNETT

Commandant: I have been ordered by the Commander-in-Chief to go further into the circumstances connected with a matter I think you are all familiar with, and I have here a letter which was prepared by Captain PHILLIPS at my direction concerning further details of this matter. Have you anything, Captain PHILLIPS, to add to this letter of June 9, 1942?

PHILLIPS: No sir.

Q You don't think of anything else?

A No sir, that contains the whole story.

And this letter relates on the authority of Lieutenant BONTECOU, Communications Officer of the BARNETT, that Commander SELIGMAN stated on the BARNETT that he had been authorized on the USS LEXINGTON to show all secret messages and letters to a Mr. JOHNSON; that he had overheard this statement in a general conversation which was being conducted. I will now read this letter -- (contents of letter read to the officers by the Commandant).

SELIGMAN:

There is a lot to remember in there, Admiral. In the first place, the conversation to which BONTECOU refers is entirely a misunderstanding. I naturally would have no authority whatsoever to show Mr. JOHNSON or anybody else any secret matter; and in the second place, the Communications Watch Officers on the USS LEXINGTON did not take their orders from me, they took their orders from the Admiral, and I did - was, however, somewhat concerned. Mr. JOHNSON had been with us since the 15th of April on the order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet and he was escorted aboard with the proper credentials. He undoubtedly - here's what - I believe I discussed with BONTECOU - I am not positive - concerning JOHNSON, who was an extremely observant person. He had been on the ship through a series of battles, being here and there, on the bridge seeing signals passed back and forth, and I was concerned as to what was going to become of any information that he might have in his possession, although we had no instructions as to what to do when we arrived in port. Now Mr. BONTECOU completely misunderstood me as to my saying that I had any such authority. Even if I had said so, it would have been ridiculous. Now the next point - there was another point there, Admiral - I didn't arrive on the BARNETT

SELIGMAN: (continuing) until after everybody else had been there for some little time. I was on the ASTORIA. Commander DUCKWORTH made the arrangements, and I think he will bear me out on this - he made arrangements with the Captain.

DUCKWORTH: I had nothing to do -

SELIGMAN: Didn't you say that the Captain told you whom you could -

DUCKWORTH: No, we didn't start this watch until after we got under way.

Commandant: Just a moment. Suppose you go on, Commander, with what you have to say, and then we will ask Commander DUCKWORTH.

SELIGMAN: Well, I remember discussing the matter of -

Commandant: Different things that may have occurred to you in this connection, and then we will allow him to make his statement.

SELIGMAN: I remember discussing the matter of despatches with the Captain, and we were assisting the ship in every way we could. We immediately offered to assist the ship in any way possible en route. We had officers standing gun watches, and an officer below decks on watch, and also in the coding room. May I ask what the next point was there, sir - it was pretty involved?

Commandant: You and Commander DUCKWORTH occupied a room with Mr. JOHNSON - on the BARNETT?

A: No sir, Commander DUCKWORTH had a room on the other side of the ship with several other officers and Mr. JOHNSON - sort of an alcove - then there was an intervening small room with a table in it, and on the other side of that there was a private room where I was.

PHILLIPS: This was all one suite.

SELIGMAN: I might add there, sir - I would like to add there, Admiral, one point that may not be clear. Neither myself nor any other officers assumed responsibility for any matter in the ship. We loaned officers to the ship, but we certainly didn't attempt to assume any of the prerogatives of the Commanding Officer, or in the way things were carried out, in handling the ship or in the way things were carried out.

Commandant: Do you recall the particular despatch which is in question here?  
A: I have had one very slight glance at that despatch, and the little I saw of it - I do not remember seeing it. I may have seen it, but I do not remember it specifically. The despatches I have read I always put my initials on. I didn't read all the despatches because there was only a few that I was interested in - that is, those that were brought to me.

Commandant: Did you discuss with Mr. JOHNSON any method or means by which strategic information had, or could be obtained?

SELIGMAN: Absolutely not, sir.

Commandant: Did you have in your possession a copy of the secret report of the Commanding Officer of the LEXINGTON regarding the loss of the ship? I certainly did, sir. The Captain of the LEXINGTON instructed me while we were on the ASTORIA, and again sent for me while he was on the YORKTOWN, and I was handed a copy of the report - this report was given to me on the ASTORIA. He said, "I want you to read that over. Keep it. Collect all of the data that you can obtain from all of the people on the ship. Let me have the reports of all of the other heads of departments and every particle of information you can get en route back." And we worked, as a matter of fact - most of the time we were working up these reports on the way home. We saved the war diary and the Quartermaster's log book. An accurate track chart was a very valuable thing. We had to make one out, and I made that accurate track chart out from the war diary and the log book and turned it over to Captain SHERMAN on our arrival. This, of course, was all on - I want it thoroughly understood - on Captain SHERMAN's orders to me.

Q Was Mr. JOHNSON permitted to see this report and a tracing of the Coral Sea battle?

A No sir, not to my knowledge. There were two officers working on that report, and unless somebody had all the facts in their possession and sat down and studied it, it wouldn't have done them any good in any case. However, Mr. JOHNSON had all of the information relative to the Coral Sea battle, in fact, some of the information that we didn't have on the Coral Sea battle and two other engagements which were handed me on the LEXINGTON. They were handed to the Admiral with a view to letting the story be released at some future time.

Q That was the Admiral and not the Captain?

A Insofar as I know, that was the Admiral. I don't know anything about that particular thing, because it was none of my business. There were some other minor points in that letter, Admiral - there might be a slight misunderstanding there. I don't remember just what they were. The implication in the letter is that I assumed responsibility for communications on the BARNETT, which I did not do, and that I had authority to show messages to Mr. JOHNSON, but I want it very clearly brought up by the Communications Watch Officer that these messages were never shown to Mr. JOHNSON, and the Communications Watch Officers carried out the same orders they had carried out on the LEXINGTON, plus the orders they received from the Communications Officer of the BARNETT, presumably from the Captain. The Captain had his own instructions - showed how he wanted messages handled, and the persons that could see them. I remember it distinctly, discussing it with the Captain that certain of the heads of the departments had messages with the LEXINGTON, especially where they concerned them, and I think DUCKWORTH may be able to tell you more about that than I can.

Q Have you anything more you would like to add, Commander?

A While I can't think of anything just this second, sir, I am very anxious to clear this thing up, and anything we can do we want to do.

Commandant: Then we will ask Commander DUCKWORTH if he will discuss anything - points concerning these circumstances.

DUCKWORTH: I haven't anything except to repeat and to re-emphasize several of the points that Commander SELIGMAN has brought out, mainly that Mr. JOHNSON had absolutely no access to any confidential or secret messages of any kind at any time during his entire stay on the LEXINGTON or BARNETT. He was a smart man or he wouldn't have been at his job. He had had previous naval training as a Signaller and code reading. He could read any messages that were flashed back and forth from the various ships, served as a gunner in the Australian Army during the last war. He is a native Australian naturalized American citizen. He had worked in the New Guinea area for a matter of four or five years with the gold mining interests there, and was very intimate with the natives, their customs, the islands, and he knew the Coral Sea area as well as any civilian could possibly know it, and the fact that he had any details concerning the battle of the Coral Sea is to be recognized because it was his own backyard. He knew the place. He knew more about the islands than we did with the charts we had available. He was, as I say, very observant and undoubtedly collected an awful lot of information as far as the Coral Sea battle is concerned. At no time did he ever demonstrate on the BARNETT or indicate that he was interested particularly in anything that was going on at the time in the Pacific, other than his general interest. There were very few of us who knew much about what was going on. Captain PHILLIPS called Commander SELIGMAN and I to his cabin one morning - the exact date I can't tell you, and I will have to get despatches and messages and find out the exact date - and showed us in red a despatch very similar to the one in questions in which he outlined the Pacific - the movements of the Japanese forces in the Pacific - and said that this information he considered too vital to be let spread around the ship in any manner whatsoever, and proposed to burn it up after we had read it. He said, "I am going to burn this up." Now as to my recollection as to ever seeing the despatch in question, I got a glance at it yesterday afternoon. I read it once and it was removed from my hands, and I have no means of - my recollection is that it contained a lot more detailed information concerning any Japanese - of the Japanese in the Pacific Ocean. I personally doubt whether the message in question was ever routed to any officer on the BARNETT - I mean any LEXINGTON officer on the BARNETT.

Commandant: We are just trying to get at the truth. DUCKWORTH, you were the Air Officer, so that you have nothing to do with despatches and nothing except - - . Suppose we have PHILLIPS make that statement right now with reference to the handling of this message referred to. Captain PHILLIPS, will you relate the circumstances and also anything that may bear on this subject as to the handling of messages.

PHILLIPS: The message referred to just previously by Commander DUCKWORTH was an AIDAC message, which gave - which, as I recall, gave the disposition of the United States forces in the Midway area and which I showed to Commander SELIGMAN, DUCKWORTH, and the Executive Officer of the BARNETT

PHILLIPS: (continuing) and then destroyed it myself immediately thereafter. The AIDAC was in force at that time, and I considered it wrong for it to be deciphered.

Commandant: It should not have been deciphered on the ship?  
A Yes, it should not have been deciphered on the ship. This was not the message referred to in the investigation.

SELIGMAN: We were discussing, sir, the question of having four carriers in this force and three battleships. My understanding is that there were Jap carriers in that message, weren't there?

PHILLIPS: Messages in the morning about our forces - well, I don't recall the contents of the messages except they were two AIDAC messages deciphered after showing them to these officers. Those are not the messages which are under the subject of investigation. I happen to know definitely.

Commandant: Now this message which is under investigation, Captain PHILLIPS, what was its nature, and should it have been deciphered by your communications group?

A It was addressed to - I have the message and the officers who initialed it in my pocket. Now how it was saved out of the wreck I wouldn't know, but I have the message here. Do you wish me to present it at this time?

Commandant: Yes.  
A See, it was addressed to All Task Force Commanders, but, following the usual custom in the Fleet the addressees on these messages of great interest to the whole Fleet apparently are not considered. That is the common practice throughout - it has been common - -

Q It has been the common practice to break such messages down for the information of the Commanding Officer?

A For the Commanding Officer and such officers as he feels fit to see them. Of course, you understand, Admiral, I probably couldn't substantiate that. I just know from going from ship to ship - we spoke of things that we both know, and the only way you could get it was to break it down to message. That had six initials on it - that is, Commander DUCKWORTH's, and I took the other to be JUNKER, and the other one down in the corner, I don't know whose that is.

Q E.H.T. - do you know who that is?

BREWER: I might recognize it, sir - maybe it is Mr. TERRY's signature.

Commandant: There appears here - there Captain PHILLIP's initials, Commander DUCKWORTH's, and Commander SELIGMAN, and Commander JUNKER -

BREWER: I can explain this - I - that is, my signature here. I signed because I showed it to the Communications Officer and the Radio Officer, and when they saw a message I signed for them, and the Communications Officer was sick at the time.

SELIGMAN:

Well, I can say this, sir, that I recall going to the Captain on the bridge a day or so following our conversation and he indicated to DUCKWORTH and myself that there was something going up to Midway and something going to Alaska or Dutch Harbor, and I recall going - probably the Captain will recall this - I said, "Have you heard any dope lately about how the Midway show is going on?" and he said, "No, the stuff is not coming over in any code we have", which I took he meant either in this jeep code or this AIDAC code. Therefore, we were at a loss for information. Now the battle of the Coral Sea was discussed with Mr. JOHNSON, and I might add there that I think what DUCKWORTH was trying to bring out, sir, is that JOHNSON is a very highly trained observer. He has been a war correspondent for some years. He has been on ships before - I think he said he had two sunk on him - British ships.

DUCKWORTH:

He was in the Crete campaign, sunk in Crete.

SELIGMAN

He was in the Crete campaign, he was in the Libyan campaign, and, of course, came to the LEXINGTON with the highest kind of recommendations right from the CinC. However, that wouldn't have led us to give him any secret message. What I was concerned about - I wanted to emphasize about what was going to be done to see to it that none of the stuff that he had might be of a nature that they wouldn't want anyone to have, and we had no authority to detain him or anything of the sort. He was a free agent. I did, however, arrange for him to meet the Public Relations Officer of the Eleventh Naval District and they chatted and he left his articles in their office, and the Commandant arranged for a plane to fly them East. Apparently this thing is something entirely different, and I never had the impression that he was very much interested in the Midway affair. He was working day and night on his articles on the Coral Sea. He had enough to write three books of them.

PHILLIPS:

I might add there that my Communications Officer said that for some reason or other he didn't like the man from the beginning when he saw him. He was rather suspicious of him, and he personally took him by the hand and led him up to the Inspectors and the Immigration officials in San Diego, so as to be sure there was no slip about their seeing and examining the one civilian on board.

DUCKWORTH:

That is at the Destroyer Base.

PHILLIPS:

That was at the Destroyer Base, San Diego.

SELIGMAN:

Of course they wouldn't have examined his papers.

Commandant:

It isn't a question here quite so much of what he knew or could reveal of our operations, it is a question of his developing in this article - the question is how we got information of the enemy.

DUCKWORTH:

Well, Admiral, I brought out these points about JOHNSON mainly because Captain PHILLIPS, or his statements there, speak of the access that



DUCKWORTH: (continuing) JOHNSON had to the events and the facts concerning the Coral Sea battle. I mean, I am just trying to clarify the situation insofar as Mr. JOHNSON is concerned, and ourselves also.

Commandant: So the questions that I ask you, Commander SELIGMAN, do not concern so much the discussion of information as to our own Fleet's movements, etc., but it hinged around questions of what information was obtainable concerning the "Orange" Fleet and how that - I think we all know is one of the things that should never be discussed in our service.

PHILLIPS: I don't see how, Admiral, that could have been brought up by any officer.

Commandant: Have you read this article?

A No sir.

Q So that you have no knowledge of anything on that - when that might -

SELIGMAN: No sir, we have been wracking our brains to discover -

Commandant: Nor have you?

DUCKWORTH: No sir.

SELIGMAN: I think you can readily understand even if a person were very much more familiar with the Japanese Fleet than we are, I couldn't read that despatch through and repeat it. My memory isn't that good.

PHILLIPS: It is a despatch. It begins with an estimate - naturally the Commander-in-Chief is going to make -

DUCKWORTH: None of us has seen that article, sir.

SELIGMAN: I talked to Admiral WILSON over the telephone yesterday morning and he said that the article he considered probably contained a verbatim copy of this despatch, and I want you to try and find out where JOHNSON got a verbatim copy of the despatch. That is, before we had orders from you to come up here. There is one other point I would like to make with regard to the confidence in which Admiral FITCH and Admiral SHERMAN held Mr. JOHNSON. Admiral SHERMAN made a very fine recommendation to the Secretary of the Navy that he should be awarded a Navy Cross or such other award as the Secretary considered appropriate. I can't quote the exact words - on account of his heroic conduct, etc., in action, and Admiral WILSON had that letter yesterday.

Commandant: I think I will just ask you to relate anything that you have of your own knowledge that may be helpful in clearing these questions that we have been discussing.

INTERVIEW:

The communications are run the same as we run them on our own ships without any changes. There are a couple of points in regard to communications that might not be perfectly clear unless you have been out

BREWER:

(continuing) on an operating ship recently. That is, in regard to the messages that you decode. It has been the practice on our force and all ships in our force to decode everything that you had a system for, because you never know when you will find an addressee in the text. Consequently, we decoded everything that we had a system for. Those of no interest are destroyed. Those of some interest are routed. And all my junior officers under me - I was Communications Watch Officer - along with the rest of the men under the Communications Officer - and they have had specific orders time and time again regarding communications security, and I feel that they are very, very dependable men. In fact, I have contacted all but one and I am sure of the fact that no despatch information or no despatch alone was ever observed or ever allowed to be out of either their hands while they were routing it, or the officer who was reading that message. That has been adhered to completely, and in the routing - in regard to the point of routing - they routed the same as myself. When they had the watch they did routing, if there was any routing to do. I did possibly more than they did due to the fact that the officers concerned would ask me if there was anything to be routed. I would go up to look and I would find it and route it to - consequently I did more routing than anybody else, and I can say truthfully that I have never seen a message or a message file that was out of either my hands when I was routing, or the officers' who were reading it.

Commandant: Were you aware that Mr. JOHNSON had knowledge of these despatches referred to?

A No sir, I am not.

Q Not in ordinary conversation or in any other unofficial way?

A No sir, I never talked to the man myself - never. I saw him about the ship first one place and then another, but I never did say anything to him.

PHILLIPS: I might say, it looks like he deliberately kept away from the Communications personnel who handles these messages.

BREWER: They were always in the officer's hands who was reading them or in my own hands during the routing, and when we had them in our possession the officer who was routing them - the covers were closed of the despatches.

PHILLIPS: May I make a little observation on this - I don't think we ought to start trying to see if he did see it; however, I would like the matter cleaned up as far as I am concerned.

Commandant: In this article Mr. JOHNSON, if this was written by him - it is not signed - states that details were released by reliable sources in the Naval Intelligence. In other places he states the responsibility for his information is described by the same source wherein he reveals that he obtained this knowledge from some Naval source. Looking at the despatch and a newspaper article, there can be no question, I think, in anybody's mind that the information he published was obtained from



Commandant: (continuing) a copy of this despatch, as the number, the sequence, the names - there can be no question as to that. What the Naval source is hasn't been revealed as yet.

McCULLOUGH: ONI sends out a list of the organization of the Japanese task forces. He possibly had seen one of these. We get those aboard ship, you know, every month.

KILPATRICK: No sir, that is entirely different; that wouldn't have helped him in this case because what ONI sent out was the organization of the Fleet and the normal task forces. It has never been issued except in that one despatch.

SELIGMAN: When I talked to Admiral WILSON yesterday morning he told me that -

Commandant: I am going to ask you in succession a question which I was about to ask anyway - to state any circumstances within your knowledge which might indicate the possibility or the probability that at any time Mr. JOHNSON might have had access to this despatch or to a version of it. Captain PHILLIPS?

PHILLIPS: Not to my knowledge, no sir.

SELIGMAN: Commander, I have been wracking my brain, sir, to try to figure out how he might have gotten access to it. The suite - more or less - in which we were living there was a bunk in each corner of one room, a little desk there where JOHNSON worked and has his typewriter. There was a table outside where - that we used for the officers and one thing and another, the Communications Watch Officers very often brought the messages right in to us at this table and we would read the despatches and hand them back to the Communications Watch Officer.

PHILLIPS: BREWER has assured me that he never saw anybody copy a despatch, and I can't imagine anybody doing it, but it is perfectly possible that somebody was standing there and made some notes from memory about that despatch and left them carelessly lying around. I am merely theorizing.

SELIGMAN: I have no knowledge of it, but that is a possibility. It would also, under certain conditions - with the chronic conditions under which we were living - the number of people in the room, etc. - it might have been possible for the Watch Officer's attention to be diverted, our attention also diverted - people were about reading the despatch - and somebody look over your shoulder and read the despatch. Of course, naturally you would not permit it if you knew about it. Now there is only one other possibility that I can think of. I have seen occasions in the file when it got pretty thick where a despatch or two would come loose. They would have to be stuck back in. I don't know what the Watch Officer did about them. BREWER can answer that question. But there is one other thing that occurred to me: How come this particular despatch was saved out of that file and no other?

**Commandant:** The probable answer to that is that it was of the greatest possible interest.

**PHILLIPS:** No sir, the reason for it, Admiral, was that the Communications Officer had it in his safe and hadn't burned it. That was the last few days that we decoded it and he had, oh, about a half a dozen or more with which this was, and he probably just put it off overnight. He had it in his safe, but that was in a secure safe. That is how we had started digging for the message when this matter came up and he did not destroy the last few messages we had decoded.

**Commandant:** Can you tell me what officer delivered this message to those who initialed it?

**A:** I stated in my report, Admiral, the Communications Officer showed it to myself, the Security Officer of the BARNETT, and he in turn gave it to Lieutenant BREWER, and he showed it to the designated LEXINGTON officers. That is also borne out by what Lieutenant BREWER said.

**DUCKWORTH:** Admiral, the date on this despatch is the 31st, isn't that correct, sir?

**Commandant:** Yes.

**DUCKWORTH:** We got in on Tuesday, the 2nd.

**Commandant:** Can you account for this despatch, Mr. BREWER, during the entire period that it was in your possession?

**BREWER:** Yes sir, I believe I can account for it. It was routed to Commander SELIGMAN in his cabin, and Lieutenant Commander JUNKER - they were in a cabin on the other side of the ship, on the quarterdeck. I did this as I usually did, as I was going around the quarterdeck to the next senior officer, and then I routed it to Lieutenant DAVIS in the wardroom, sitting in a large chair - Lieutenant DAVIS, Assistant Communications Officer - he took over the Communications Office after Mr. TERRY got sick, although Mr. TERRY still required - he was in bed in his cabin - and after the routing was completed it was returned. It was returned to the COM Office in all cases. Incidentally, it wasn't routed alone - it was routed with the rest of the file. Usually we didn't take it down only a couple of times a day and it piled up to be half a dozen of such messages.

**Q:** Would it be out of your sight at any time during your routing?

**A:** No sir, I am sure that the message was in my possession or the other officers who were reading it.

**Q:** Then it wouldn't be left with him?

**A:** No sir, I always stand by, sir. I believe each officer in - every officer to whom I have routed messages personally will bear me out in that statement.

**Commandant:** Did you handle this message, Lieutenant BONTECOU?

**BONTECOU:** Yes sir, on the ship. I took it to the Captain. I used to take messages to him once a day and sometimes twice a day - the whole file -

**BONTECOU:** (continuing) I would leave it with him and he would send an orderly after me when he was through with it, or he would tell me to take it back to the Security Officer or the Radio Sentry.

**Commandant:** And during the time you had it, was it at any time out of your sight?  
**A:** Yes, it was. I don't know - oh, sometimes he would call me in there with him as he read them, and other times he would just take it and keep the file for about ten or twenty minutes and send for me.

**A:** But it came back to you from the person in each case to whom you delivered it?

**A:** Yes sir, the Captain delivered it to me personally. Twice he gave it to the Executive Officer of the ship, who delivered it to me personally. I don't know of any time it was out of the hands of commissioned officers - responsible officers. It was brought up a little while ago about people copying these despatches. Now, I have seen times when they have made notes from a despatch on the same sheet of paper. In other words, with this despatch they would draw figures on the bottom of the page, but I have never seen any officer or heard of any officer or heard of any officer copying it on another piece of paper.

**PHILLIPS:** We had this method to prevent that - no copies being made on the BARNETT. In the past, flag officers have made copies of these messages, but we got away from that entirely and I adopted this method of putting the tape on paper to prevent that.

**DUCKWORTH:** No one on the ship had any reason to preserve any copies of the message as we were merely trying to keep ourselves up to date more or less.

**PHILLIPS:** We were a little concerned because we were not so far removed from the striking force that might come down south.

**Commandant:** Did you ever see, Mr. BONTECOU, Mr. JOHNSON making notes or copying any message of this description?

**BONTECOU:** No, sir, the only time I ever met him - the ship - the BARNETT's Gunnery Officer brought him up to my room one day and the BARNETT Gunnery Officer asked if I could furnish him with an old chart of, I think it was the South Pacific. As I was Navigator of the ship, I went and got it for him and he looked around and talked for a little while. That was the only time I ever talked with him except in the Wardroom - he was with the Wardroom Officer of the ship.

**Commandant:** Did you ever see him making notes from a despatch of this description?  
**A:** No, sir, I haven't. In the room he was usually at a typewriter. Sometimes he was working there with the men but he was not near the despatches so it was at his work bench that I would see him. That is the only place where I would see him.

**Commandant:** Captain PHILLIPS, was there a chart prepared on the ship indicating the dispositions or any dispositions in the Midway Area?  
**A:** No sir, not to my knowledge; it wasn't prepared in my cabin.

Commandant: Do you know of any such thing, Commander SELIGMAN?  
A No, sir, I know of course of the track chart that we made of the Coral Sea battle. This particular show -

Commandant: I am referring only to the information concerning the set-up.

SELIGMAN: No, sir, there was a chart where we put the daily position of the ship just as a matter of interest. I don't recall anything else on that chart that might have a bearing on this case. I don't remember seeing anything on there.

Commandant: That is your own ship only?

SELIGMAN: We kept track of our own ship, but I don't remember anything else on that chart, but people used to go look at the chart quite frequently. We were all anxious to get home. There might have been something else on there, but I just don't recall it.

Commandant: Did you, Commander DUCKWORTH, see any such chart at any time?  
A No, sir, there was no such chart in our possession showing the position of the U.S. or enemy ships in the Midway Area.

PHILLIPS: Wait a minute, Admiral. Had it come to my notice, I wouldn't have permitted any such -

McCULLOUGH: Did JOHNSON, in talking to you informally, ever discuss this force, I mean did he in the course of conversation ever make a surmise on that, that you recall?

SELIGMAN: I don't remember specifically, Admiral, but I wouldn't be surprised if he did. There is one thing I would like to bring out, sir, that after the adventures we had out there over a considerable period, we were all in very much of a mental turmoil and as it was we were loaded with a terrific amount of work that we wanted to get accomplished before we arrived there. Some of us were not particularly well, and in fact I was supposed to go to the hospital today, and the recollection of specific instances is rather difficult to bring back. We were sort of - I was in sort of a state of confusion and thousands of people a day asking me questions about this and that and the other things and I wouldn't be able to remember a conversation to save my life. Naturally the war was discussed. It couldn't help being discussed, but I don't remember any discussion of this particular set-up.

BONTECOU: Sir, the Executive Officer told me that the entire LEXINGTON personnel had been under sort of a strain as they were all a little -

SELIGMAN: We were all very much under a strain which is only natural.

(The officers were requested by Admiral GREENSLADE to retire to another room for a short period, and were later recalled for individual questioning as follows).

Commandant: Mr. BREWER, I want to impress upon you that I can't conceive of anything more important to the security and to the security of our whole

Naval effort than the solution of this particular problem. You stated that during the circulation of this message it was not out of your sight or possession.  
That is correct, sir, to the best of my knowledge.

You stated that you initialled it for two other officers?  
That is correct. I do that quite often. I want to make sure that they have seen it, Lieut. DAVIS, our Radio Operator, and Lieut. Commander TERRY, as I stated before who was sick - he was in bed at the time. I find that they had seen the message signed for them with their permission. I always asked the officer, "do you want me to sign for you?"

Did you read it to them?  
They read it for themselves, sir.

To your knowledge, was this message read aloud by anyone?  
I don't believe so, there may have been discussions in the room. As it was read I always stood over near the door out of the way, but I don't remember really whether it was discussed or not.

Do you recall who was in the room at the time this message was delivered?  
I couldn't say certainly all who were in the room. I delivered it to Commander SELIGMAN. It was in his possession and Commander TERRY was in the bed near him, and this newspaper man was nearly always in there. He must have been there; I didn't pay much attention to him. I wasn't interested in getting information from him or seeing him, so naturally I don't recall absolutely whether he was in there at the time or not. I couldn't say truthfully, but as I recall, he was and there were a couple of flying officers working at that time, if I recall correctly.

KILPATRICK: Do you remember seeing notes or memoranda or any data from this message by anybody to whom you delivered it?  
A No, sir, I do not. That is a fact.

Commandant: Was the substance of this message discussed as a matter of general information throughout the ship?  
A No, sir, I never heard that it was. In fact I have got into trouble several times, or rather incurred the displeasure of other officers because I wouldn't tell them what was going on and they wouldn't bother me any more. They didn't like me or something. It is true on a ship if there is news everybody likes to discuss the news. No doubt there was, I don't know that there was or there wasn't, because immediately after the Commander signed those I take them and get out.

Commandant: Thank you very much.

(There being no further questions, Lieutenant J. J. BREWER, retired from the conference room).

Commandant: Commander SELIGMAN, in the handling of this particular message under discussion, can you recall how you received it?

A

No, sir, I cannot, Admiral. If I hadn't seen my signature on there I would have sworn that I hadn't seen the message. I don't know whether that was delivered to me in this larger room that I use more or less as an office and clearing house and coffee room and quarters, or whether it was handed me in this small separate cabin that I had, but I imagine that it may have been delivered in that big room. I can't remember - if I could remember back, and remember the specific instance of receiving it -

Q  
A

It didn't make any impression upon your mind that you recall? The messages that the Captain showed to DUCKWORTH and myself made a very definite impression upon my mind because we were naturally interested in the whereabouts of the Japanese carriers in this message that we saw in the Captain's cabin. One of these messages they said, I am quite sure, four carriers were on their way out. Now that was what we were interested in, accounting for them. We knew that three were in the Empire because we had been in battle with the SYOKAKU and the ZUIKAKU and the third one I can't remember the name of it, they had been torpedoed we had heard. So that left some other carriers. This message, however, I don't recall that it made any impression upon me, Admiral.

Q  
A

What was the nature of the one the Captain gave you? Did it discuss this information, or did it discuss the Alaska or the Aleutian force? As I recall it, it was a little obscure as to the distinction of forces, and it seems to me the Captain remarked, "Well, this bunch is going down to Midway and these fellows are going to the ~~North~~ and the reason it impressed me was because I had thought that they would send the larger force - mistakenly - and the smaller with a feint at Midway. That made a very distinct impression on my mind. The other message that the Captain showed us in his cabin was, I am quite sure, had to do with task force #8, but I very distinctly ~~remember~~ four carriers being mentioned in one of the messages and I believe the RYUZYU was mentioned. I think they said the RYUZYU was at sea in northern waters, if I am not mistaken. That is why it particularly affected us because we had been all in a state trying to figure out how much damage we had done in our two days battle.

Q  
A

Was Lieutenant Commander Terry in your group about that time? Was he in there?

Q  
A

Was he in your group, did he live in your suite? Yes, sir.

Q  
A

And was he on the sick list? Yes sir, he was very ill, still is.

Q  
A

Do you recall showing him this message? I wouldn't have shown it to him, Admiral, unless he was sitting right



A Cont'd.

alongside of me. Once in a while they would bring the messages down and several of those who were authorized to see them would be grouped around the table and one would look over the other's shoulder and we would run through them. May I see if his initial is on this, sir?

He was signed for by Lieutenant BREWER.

Well, I think BREWER said that the reason he had put his name on that he had shown it to Commander TERRY, I think Commander TERRY was - I might say for your information that the doctor had been giving Commander TERRY very large doses of morphine. He was mentally very hazy for days. Now I think the Watch Officers took those messages over to him more to humor him than anything else, because I doubt very much if he could digest them. He was on and off - I mean he was suffering pretty badly and they were giving him sedatives and morphine as I recall it.

KILPATRICK: Was there any speculation or discussion as to the composition of our own or Japanese forces in the Midway Area, insofar as you know, held among officers on the ship?

I don't recall the exact discussions, Captain, but there certainly was discussion on the ship of the Midway battle. We were all very much interested in the developments at Midway and - however, that was just shortly before we got in, that this news about the Midway battle became generally known on the ship. But there was - you naturally couldn't have a group of that many officers with one of the biggest engagements in history going on and they wouldn't discuss it.

McCULLOUGH: Do you think there is any possibility of that message being read aloud in your suite?

I could have been, yes sir.

One man might have read it aloud?

Well, sometimes in a group one person might read it aloud and one don't have anybody in the room except those who are supposed to see it as far as you know. However, it is possible the way we were living that somebody else could have been in that room. They wouldn't have been noticed. In other words, when you are concentrating over a table, we will say, and somebody walks in a room, you might not notice him.

JOHNSON wasn't in that suite much of the time?

He was in that suite a great deal of the time and while we wouldn't deliberately read anything aloud if he were there, we might have - he might have been around the corner. If you would like me to draw a little diagram of that suite, I think I can show you about what it looked like. This is going to be a rather crude sketch, sir.

(Drawing by Commander SELIGMAN)

But it would be perfectly possible for anybody to walk into this room, people discussing something at this table, and those people not see him, if they were particularly interested in the discussion. I could not specifically remember a discussion of this despatch, but there might have been one. Now another thing, as I told you before, sir, how you take ordinary precautions somebody might at any time move up behind you

A Cont'd. and read something over your shoulder.

Commandant: Where is Lieutenant Commander TERRY now, in the hospital?

A Naval Hospital, San Diego, Sir.

(There being no further questions, Commander SELIGMAN retired from the room.)

Commandant: Sit down, Commander DUCKWORTH. Do you recall the receipt of this message, the occasion of it?

DUCKWORTH: No sir, not at all, sir. It doesn't stick in my mind at all as ever having seen it.

Q This keeps coming to me that this message was one of such import that it must have been the subject of discussion among those who were aware of it.

A The reason I brought up the question of the other message with Captain PHILLIPS - the one that he called Commander SELIGMAN and me to his cabin about, and showed us what it contained - exactly the same information but in nowhere as much detail. I think it concerned task force #8 which was the Alaskan defense organization. We discussed the general situation that morning, there was nothing further in any despatches for about two days about the Midway or Alaskan situation, and when this message came in I must have realized as I read the first part of it, that it was substantially the same information that I had seen before. It didn't make any impression upon me at that time. This came two or three days after the AIDAC messages which referred to the formation of the task force #8. I was very surprised when I saw it to see that it came. You see, we had the pile of AIDAC messages made up in quite a thick file.

Commandant: My thought was entirely different, that they hadn't formed task force #8 until later.

KILPATRICK: My recollection and DUCKWORTH's recollection are exactly parallel on that question.

DUCKWORTH: That is what had us up in the air, SELIGMAN and I. We were talking about it yesterday when we got the first information, and I couldn't place any message that gave any of the details of any Japanese organization except the message the Captain had read to us in his cabin and had burned up, and I was very much surprised to see my initials on that message when he produced it a while ago.

Commandant: So that you don't recall having seen or having handled this message, or do you recall any discussions about this situation in this group where you were?

A I remember particularly that since only four officers on the ship outside of the Communications Watch Officer and the coding board knew the first message, that neither Commander SELIGMAN nor I spoke of it. I say they began to contain information concerning them. I can't even quote you any of these messages. The information just began to filter into the general run of messages that we saw.

Do you recall that there was any discussion around the ship or around the Wardroom, let us say, before this Midway affair, that would have indicated that there was general knowledge of it throughout the ship? No sir, I can recall no particular instance. While I am sure that we must have talked - I mean - I say that we did talk the general situation over, it was general knowledge that there was a task force leaving Japan for Midway and another one leaving Japan for the Aleutian Islands. Now the details of that task force, I am sure, were never mentioned beyond this point - that there were four carriers in the Midway task force, and we were under the impression that there were three battleships. The three battleships stick in my mind because I, as I recall it, an AIDAC message originally said that the Japanese were moving battleships plus supporting light forces which means heavy cruisers, of course, and a transport. I have never heard anybody mention by name except the AKAGI and the KAGA. As I recall, those were the only ones that could have possibly have been there. They were all slow ships, none of the fast carriers were mentioned in there. They correspond more distinctly to the battleships and could operate more nearly together, and that is the general trend of the conversation.

**KILPATRICK:** Mr. DUCKWORTH, in times when there were men working at this table and the despatches were brought in, were there times when somebody read the despatches aloud to save the other people's time and their attention being taken from the work that was going on? I should say that absolutely that was not a practice. Someone might have called attention to some particular point in a despatch to someone else who was sitting there, but I think most people resented having a despatch - because - I mean, they would like to read it themselves.

**TERRY** was laid up there in his bunk, how did they communicate the information contained in these despatches to him? I don't recall ever seeing him do it. He was ill with a very bad case of hives and was quite sick from it, but I think that he took the messages and read them right there. No one read them to him. I mean, I certainly can't recall any.

**McCULLOUGH:** And JOHNSON was in this suite most of the time? Yes, Admiral, he was in there, in and out a little - I mean his typewriter work and - however, most of the time during the day he would - I wouldn't say most of the time - he was in the habit of sleeping quite late in the morning, most of the morning. We used to kid him about trying to work while everybody else was asleep. But he generally did most of his sleeping in the morning and worked rather late at night.

He couldn't help but overhear a lot of general conversations? He was bound to overhear a lot of conversations, but I can never recall anybody speaking of the details of this information outside of what I said - the four carriers of which we only knew the names of the two, the AKAGI and the KAGA, and as far as the cruisers and all that, I was not under the impression that they were even mentioned.

**Commandant:** Now, while you can't state as a fact, one can't read this newspaper clipping and this despatch without realizing that the man that wrote that article must have had an opportunity, not to listen to anyone reading it, but to copy it.

**DUCKWORTH:** He must have copied it directly, sir, from that.

**Q** We have to accept that. Can you give us any clue as to how that might have happened? Clearly it must have happened on the BARNETT.

**A** Yes sir, I can draw you a picture of the suite and show you approximately how it could have happened. Here is the picture of it here.

**Commandant:** We already have one.

**A** Now then, at this end of the table we had the two officers working on the track chart of the Coral Sea and anybody who came in to sit down - he only had about two chairs in the place, one being used there - and they would sit down and have a cup of coffee and when the Communications Watch Officer came in there were officers sitting around the table here reading that despatch, or any despatch. He would easily have been able to read over the shoulders of the officers. That is an absolute fact and a possibility. It could be read over the shoulders of the officers.

**Q** Were you aware that that did happen on any occasion?

**A** I have never seen or never recall anyone looking over anyone else's shoulder. It is possible that they have done that. They were low-backed chairs, of course, and a person could have easily stood behind you and read it over your shoulder.

**Commandant:** Thank you.

(There being no further questions, Comdr. DUCKWORTH retired from the room)

Comdr. H. F. JUNKER, Chief Engineer, USS LEXINGTON, was escorted into the room by Captain KILPATRICK, introduced to Admirals GREENSLADE and McCULLOUGH, familiarized with the subject under discussion, and was then questioned as follows:

**Commandant:** Do you recall receipting for a despatch concerning information of the organization and make-up of a Japanese force?

**JUNKER:** I don't recall that particularly, sir. I recall one despatch about an estimate.

**Q** This is your initial here?

**A** Yes sir, that is my initial.

**Q** Do you recall this particular despatch and the occasion of its receipt?

**A** Yes sir - I don't the occasion.

**KILPATRICK:** If he will read the despatch, it might help him to recall it.

**Commandant:** Do you recall that you were in the suite occupied by a group of officers of the LEXINGTON on the occasion of the receipt of that despatch?

**JUNKERS:** I recall that I receipted for that in my own stateroom. If you say a group of officers - there were six of us bunking together, sir.

**Commandant:** Where was your stateroom with relation to this?  
**A** We were on the other side of the ship, sir.

**Q** Right directly across from this?  
**A** Yes sir.

**Q** Do you recall any excitement or **discussion that attended receipt of** this despatch?

**A** Well, I received that, sir, when I was alone. I was alone when I receipted for that despatch.

**Q** Subsequently?

**A** No sir, I don't recall any discussion of it.

**Q** Can you help us in this question as to the possibility in the handling of a message of this kind on that particular ship of it being seen and copied by unauthorized persons?

**A** No sir, I could see no reason for that. The messages were always brought to me by an officer and he stayed there while I read the message and I handed it back to him.

**Q** Have you any thoughts that you would like to have cleared up?

**A** No sir.

**Commandant:** Well, I think that is about all, Commander. Just leave your address with my Aide, and in case I want to get hold of you again - There is no compulsion to remain where you are put. Only just keep us informed for the next couple of days. You can phone my Aide before you go back. Thank you very much.

(There being no further questions, Comdr. JUNKERS retired from the room)

**Commandant:** Sit down, Lieutenant BONTECOU. Mr. BONTECOU, there are a couple of other things that we would like to clear up. Do you remember any of the circumstances connected with your statement here that Commander SELIGMAN had mentioned that it was the custom to order, or that he had authority to show secret messages and letters to Mr. JOHNSON?

**BONTECOU:** I remember that he said Mr. JOHNSON never saw the ECM or any of the code, but that he had seen a lot of other secret confidential papers.

**Q** What was the purpose of that remark and under what circumstances was it made?

**A** When we were in the chart house one morning and I asked him that because the day before this - I think this was about the beginning of the trip - I am not sure - but I think I told you before the Gunnery Officer brought this newspaper man up to my room, asking for a chart, and I gave him a chart. My room is right across from the chart house. That was a restricted chart - it was a plotting sheet, that was all it was. I asked him if he thought that was all right, and if I remember correctly -

Commandant: You asked Commander SELIGMAN?  
BONTECOU: Yes sir. This was a day or two later from the time I gave him the chart. I asked him if he thought that was all right and he said "Yes". He said this newspaper man had been authorized to see secret, confidential publications, not restricted - I don't mean that - but because he had seen the whole battle and all that, and then he went on to say, "Well, one thing he never did see while on the LEXINGTON was the coding machine and all the coding devices." He said that he himself (Commander SELIGMAN) was authorized to do that, but somebody a lot higher than he had given this newspaper man authority. This was a general conversation, that is all.

Q Did you on any occasion deliver messages into the group including Commander SELIGMAN and Lieutenant Commander TERRY, in their quarters?  
A No sir, I never delivered anything in their quarters. Once the Captain told me to show something to Commander SELIGMAN and he was out in the lobby or in the front of the Executive Officer's office. I was never in there - those quarters - while he was. That I can remember, and I don't know Commander TERRY - I knew who he was.

Q So you didn't see him while he was on board?  
A Yes sir, he used to eat up in the Wardroom and I think about the first day he was on the ship, I remember I was in the Wardroom talking to Mr. BREWER, and Commander TERRY came around and gave Mr. BREWER some order about something on the ELLIOT to round up the list of all the survivors. I think that was about the first night they were on the ship.

Q Did you have much to do with JOHNSON - did you have any conversations at all?  
A The only one was the one I mentioned before - the only conversation I ever had with him was about the chart. Well, then he started telling me all about the battle, but I was busy at the time and I wanted to get away from him. He did all the talking - he just struck me as a man who talked a lot.

Commandant: Well, I guess that is all. Thank you very much.

(There being no further questions, Lieut. BONTECOU retired from the room)

Commandant: Sit down, Captain PHILLIPS. Captain, any one reading this despatch which is here in question and the newspaper article, I think, would definitely come to the conclusion that the man who wrote that newspaper article must have had in his possession the despatch or a copy of it.  
A Yes.

Q Can you help us in that question?  
A Well, I have been at the bottom of things. It is very greatly to my interest to have the matter cleared up. The only thing I can say is that I have been over the situation from top to bottom, Admiral, since this thing came up. I never did decipher the messages - only the stuff that - when they came aboard and proposed this and said they had a



PHILLIPS:

(continuing) fine communications organization, I put it in effect. Now I have a set-up on this ship that I consider perfect, with a locked room from which people take a message and deliver it personally, never letting it out of the hands of the Communications Officer or the Decoding Officer, and these messages go back and are destroyed by the Communications Officer, and in some cases the messages are actually destroyed by me when I thought they were important. Now with that set-up I never worry about it at all. Messages were brought in to me, they were shown to me, and I had every reason to believe they were shown to the other officers whom I had agreed they would be shown to, and that they were destroyed. Now, to try to get at the bottom of this thing, how he could have gotten it - naturally the fact that they were rooming together down there - I got the set-up on the rooms, of course, from the Executive Officer - I don't know that they were actually - that DUCKWORTH was living on the other side - that was the report that the Executive Officer made to me as to how they were rooming. It seems that DUCKWORTH was living on the other side and TERRY, the Communications Officer, was living with the newspaper correspondent and SELIGMAN. While I maybe went off on a tangent and assumed that that was where it took place, right in that cabin, I haven't in my investigation left out any of the other details how he could have gotten it - I wouldn't know. He said he didn't have a word with him. BONTECOU is a thoroughly reliable young Reserve officer whom I have known for a year and I would trust him absolutely, and he didn't have anything to do with him. The only thing that I can see is that we have a very clever individual with a thorough knowledge of the Navy, and that I understand since then - he has made it a point to go around to the entire crew, my whole crew, and he gets into the inside of everything. He even knew what the officers' duties were on the ship in a very short time. He was just a clever individual and went about to get this thing. Now the only thing that I can throw on the light of this thing was that I understand that he had in his possession a copy of the Silhouette Book, which is, I believe, on the Restricted List and was probably given him. That came out here in conversation a while ago. He could have made this up from gossip that he might have gotten from these officers who saw the message - he could have made this darned thing up from his Silhouette Book.

Commandant:

Have you seen the newspaper article?

A

I didn't bring my glasses with me and I can't digest the article.

Commandant:

The paragraph in the newspaper follows the despatch absolutely, so I don't see how he could have gotten it then, unless he actually saw the message, either over somebody's shoulder or - . Did you ever have any conversation with Commander TERRY?

A

No sir, I can't remember what he looked like. They tell me that he was sick in the bunkhouse all the time, in a corner bunk of that room.

Q

This despatch which you have given us, and which was not signed, was it missing at any time to your knowledge?

A

No sir, it couldn't possibly have been, because it was actually locked in the Communications Officer's safe and I will bank on the fact that

PHILLIPS: (continuing) my Communications Officer didn't give it to him. That should have been burned, of course, right away, but I imagine that he, being the Navigation Officer and the Communications Officer, and coming up on the Coast during the trip, he just forgot to burn it. Now here was a suggestion that I made: It was two or three days before we could muster these people and find out who was actually on board from the cruisers and destroyers, and it is very hard when you have 1300 men in addition to your own men to even get a correct muster of the officers. It was about three or four days before we did it. I discovered he was on board and knew his connection with the LEXINGTON officers and I must have assumed that he was under their control. Of course, I know that he wasn't, as a matter of fact, and I am Commanding Officer, but I must have assumed that he was under their control, otherwise I would have turned him over to the Intelligence Officer, which I should have done when we arrived in San Diego. That was a slip I made - a very serious slip.

Commandant: Do you recall that he was vouched for by anyone, or did anyone speak to you about him?

A Oh yes, Commander SELIGMAN and one or two of the other officers said that they recommended that I talk to him; that he was a very well-read, widely-known newspaper correspondent, and from the general conversation I assumed that he was thoroughly in the confidence of the LEXINGTON officers, and it never occurred to me to look into him, but I didn't go back again. I still don't see how he could have gotten the secret despatch, because that wasn't in the category for him to see those things, or to even think of such a thing.

It was stated here that you had read to Commander SELIGMAN and other officers, including the Communications Officer, in your cabin, a despatch which you had received, which I believe you had stated was one that should normally have been received by -

A That is right.

Q Were the contents of that despatch similar to this one?

A Admiral, I am pretty sure it was not. It gave the organization of Task Force #8, and naturally I considered an organization of our own people was super-secret, and I don't remember - I can't tell you - the contents of any other despatch that I saw, but I got that principally from talking it over with the other officers here. DUCKWORTH assured me that it was a composition of Task Force #8, and I saw right away that that shouldn't get out of my cabin. You see, they don't tell us - the decoding is done in a locked room.

McCULLOUGH: I thought that was in a clear message?

PHILLIPS: No sir, that was in secret code, and, of course, went to the decoding room first.

- END -

NOTE: The name JOHNSON appearing throughout the above is properly spelled as JOHNSTON.



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