

June 24, 1942

MEMORANDUMRE: STANLEY CLAUDE SAMUEL JOHNSTON  
ESPIONAGE (J)

This memorandum brings up to date investigative work completed since the submission of the memorandum dated June 22, 1942.

Interview With Lieutenant Commander Robert E. Dixon,  
Squadron Leader, USS LEXINGTON

Lieutenant Commander Dixon returned aboard the USS BARNETT to San Diego, California, and had quarters aft of the Commodore's suite. He advised that he was in the Commodore's suite almost once each day and remembered being there one night when Commander Seligman, Lieutenant Commander Winthrop Terry, Lieutenant Commander Edward J. O'Donnell, Lieutenant Commander Coleman and Stanley Johnston were present. At that time an Ensign brought in a dispatch folder, either before or while Lieutenant Commander Dixon was present, and he recalls the dispatch folder being on the table in front of Commander Seligman. Lieutenant Commander Dixon stated that Commander Seligman may have read the secret message aloud at this time although he does not recall exactly. He stated, however, that he became familiar with the contents of the secret message at that time. He recalls seeing a pencil notation containing the names of the ships in the Japanese Task Force and believes that this memorandum was broken up into Striking Force, Support Force, and Occupation Force. Lieutenant Commander Dixon said he may have seen Commander Seligman write the memorandum because he distinctly remembers it on the table in front of Commander Seligman. Lieutenant Commander Dixon said that at any rate he felt sure that Commander Seligman wrote the memorandum. Lieutenant Commander Dixon believes that the Ensign was present all the time the dispatch folder was on the table. According to Lieutenant Commander Dixon, the group entered into a discussion of the message and a question arose as to whether a certain Japanese ship, possibly the KIRISHIMA, was a battleship or a cruiser and consequently the Japanese silhouette book of the USS BARNETT was sent for. Lieutenant Commander Coleman obtained the silhouette book and the discussion proceeded as to the size of the guns on the Japanese ship. |x

Lieutenant Commander Dixon stated that he was in the room between fifteen and thirty minutes and that Stanley Johnston was not sitting at the table but was walking about the room. Lieutenant Commander Dixon did not see Commander Seligman show the dispatch to Johnston and does not recall

- 2 -

that Commander Seligman read the dispatch aloud. Lieutenant Commander Dixon advised that he himself had the gist of the dispatch from the discussion and from the pencil memorandum that he saw. He recalls no other papers on the table except the pencil memorandum and the dispatch folder, and does not know how many others of those present read the memorandum nor what became of it.

Lieutenant Commander Dixon advised that on quite a few occasions when various officers were reading secret dispatches, he had seen them fold up the dispatch folder when Stanley Johnston came into their presence. He could cite no specific examples of this but said that it was practically impossible to keep all secret material from a man in Johnston's position, and it was his opinion that any good newspaperman could get almost any information he desired if he were placed in a position similar to Johnston's.

Additional Interview With Lieutenant Commander Edward J. O'Donnell, Gunnery Officer, USS LEXINGTON

On June 23, 1942, Lieutenant Commander O'Donnell stated that after having discussed this case with some of the other officers of the USS LEXINGTON, he had recalled being present in the Commodore's suite on one evening when there were present Commander Seligman, Lieutenant Commander Dixon, Lieutenant Commander Eldredge, Lieutenant Commander Terry and Stanley Johnston. He recalls Lieutenant Commander Dixon showing to him a piece of Navy scrap paper on which the names of approximately twelve ships were listed. He thought these names were divided into three groups including Striking Force, Support Force, and Occupation Force. Lieutenant Commander O'Donnell said that he was present for approximately fifteen to thirty minutes and there was a discussion in the suite at that time with reference to the size of the Japanese force, and the possible size of American forces that might be marshaled to meet it.

Lieutenant Commander O'Donnell stated that he is sure that Stanley Johnston was in the room at the same time because he recalled Johnston saying to him, with reference to the impending Midway battle, that it would be some fight. He was quite sure Johnston did not join in the discussion regarding the strength of the Japanese force. Lieutenant Commander O'Donnell advised that the dispatch folder was not present while he was in the room and that he did not see the notes in Stanley Johnston's possession and does not know what became of the notes or who wrote them. He recalled the presence of a book of Japanese ships during the discussion but believed the book was an edition of Jane's "Fighting Ships".

- 3 -

Additional Interview With Commander Mortimer  
Seligman, Executive Officer, USS LEXINGTON

Commander Seligman advised on June 23, 1942, that he does not deny that he may have made rough notes concerning the secret message but he does not remember ever making any such notes. He stated that he has made rough notes in the past of various messages, but that he has definitely not made copies of any secret messages. He advised that he had been informed by other officers that they saw a pencil memorandum containing names of Japanese ships one evening in the Commodore's suite on the USS BARNETT. Commander Seligman stated that he is willing to accept the word of those officers to the effect that there was a memorandum present and added that in view of the fact he was the senior officer present, he is willing to take the full responsibility for not having taken proper precautions to keep Stanley Johnston from obtaining in some manner the context of the secret message.

Commander Seligman is presently in the Naval Hospital in San Diego, California, and is expecting to undergo two operations. His physician has advised that his condition is such, as a result of his injuries aboard the USS LEXINGTON, that he doubts whether Commander Seligman's memory of events aboard the USS LEXINGTON and the USS BARNETT would be most dependable at present.

Interview With Lieutenant Commander J. A. Price,  
Former Medical Officer, USS BARNETT

Lieutenant Commander Price stated that he could not recall having conversed with Commander Terry or Commander Seligman at any time during the voyage and he did not enter their quarters during that period. Lieutenant Commander Price recalled that a newspaper correspondent was on the ship but he never met him. He never overheard any conversations relative to the Midway attack during the voyage and was not in Commander Seligman's quarters on May 31, 1942.

Accrediting of Johnston As A Chicago Tribune Correspondent

Colonel Ernest Dupuy, Bureau of Public Relations, War Department, Washington, D. C., has advised that Stanley Johnston was not at any time a war correspondent accredited by the War Department and is not now accredited by the War Department.



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