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A.J. E. L.  
3  
June 13, 1942

My dear Mr. Henning:

I am returning herewith the material you sent to Admiral Willson.

Confirming my telephone conversation, Admiral Willson states that Mr. Johnston's account of his conversation with the Admiral is substantially correct, but not complete. You will recall that in his first statement to Admiral Willson, which you heard, Mr. Johnston maintained that he had neither seen nor copied any paper.

You will appreciate, however, that we are very anxious to avoid repeated emphasis, even though the story has once been published, on the actual existence of the precise information which was quoted therein. Further discussion of the existence of this detailed list prior to June 2nd is considered undesirable, and it would be preferable that Mr. Johnston's story as a whole be not published. I believe the statement in the next to last paragraph on page 6 of the enclosure should prove sufficient.

If, however, you consider it essential, that Mr. Johnston render such a public account, in justice to himself, I have made certain suggestions for modification of his statement, which do not, I believe, essentially affect his position. For clarity, I have re-copied page 8 with the corrections effective.

Thanking you for referring this matter to us, and trusting you may see your way clear to adopt my suggestion of omitting Mr. Johnston's statement, believe me,

Very sincerely,

T. S. Wilkinson,  
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy,  
Director of Naval Intelligence.

Mr. Arthur Henning  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
815 Albee Building  
Washington, D. C.

8/11/42

Certified true copy.  
T.S. Wilkinson

I was using the typewriter to clean up my stories and on moving some old papers from my desk saw a piece of paper with light blue lines on which someone had written the names of Japanese warships and listed transports, et cetera, under various headings.

I copied the names off the list - although I was familiar with almost every warship from Janes Fighting Ships. (This publication has been my bible since the outbreak of war because of the great importance of world navies and consequently I am familiar with practically every capital ship - aircraft carrier and cruiser listed therein.)

About that time the marine orderly came in to inform me that Commander Seligman desired me to pack quickly and report to him on the pier. This I did hurriedly and left the paper from which I copied the list of ships on the desk where I first found it (my desk).

That night I examined the copy again and typed out a memo to send to my editor just in case some news broke to indicate an attack by some such force. Naturally I figured there was a censorship here ~~which~~ took care of publication of such news.

I managed to secure accommodation on a plane from Los Angeles to Chicago and buying a paper before leaving learned that an attack had been made on Dutch Harbor. This information when compared with facts made available from communiques issued by Admiral Nimitz telling of a big battle being fought near Midway - later of sinkings of aircraft carriers, damage to battleships etc., I realized that the ships on the list referred to estimates of the forces now being used by the Japs, based ~~perhaps~~ *probably* on submarine observations.

Several releases, official, semiofficial and newspaper speculation said, "We had expected an attack" - The forces at Midway and Dutch Harbor were on the alert having been warned several days previously....."

The fact that our Navy forces were at sea and in the right place to intercept the enemy was proof both to me and for that matter for the Japanese also that we had prior warning of their intentions.

Here I pointed out to the Admiral that we could not have sent out ships from where they were two weeks previously to where they intercepted the enemy unless we steamed fast and to a definite position. I insisted that the enemy would certainly not believe they were there by coincidence.

8/11/42 Certified true copy.  
*T. B. Sullivan*

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 76716

NAVY DEPARTMENT  
Washington, D. C.  
August 11, 1942

I certify that this and attached papers, attested with my initials, are photostatic copies made under my direction of documents given to me for the purpose of such photostating by Rear Admiral T. S. Wilkinson, USN, then Director of Naval Intelligence, on June 12, 1942 at about 5:00 P.M.

*F. Van Deren Coke*  
F. Van Deren Coke,  
Ensign, USNR.

I certify that the original from which these papers were photostated was given to me by Vice Admiral Russell Willson, USN, at about 4:00 P.M. June 12, 1942, with the information that it had been very recently received from the signer, Mr. Arthur Henning. I returned the original to Mr. Henning by messenger the following morning, June 13, 1942.

*T. S. Wilkinson*  
T. S. Wilkinson,  
Rear Admiral, USN.

*of June 12*  
*Maloney statement is on first 6 pages.*  
*Johnston statement is on last two*  
*sheets*

# Chicago Tribune

THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

WASHINGTON BUREAU

815 Albee Building

Washington, D. C. June 12

Dear Admiral:

You will find herein Johnston's account of his last conversation with you.

I wondered if you would <sup>look</sup> it over and see if it agrees with your recollection.

Sincerely,

*Arthur H. ...*

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND 76716

Tribune Chicago

Hold for release

Add Henning--lead to come

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Mr. Maloney, the Tribune's managing editor, was not afforded the

opportunity, which he requested, to appear in his own defense. He denies the charges and gives the following account of the incident:

The charge that The Tribune printed information of use to the enemies of the United States is outrageous and ridiculous. As a World War aviator, a member of Rickenbacker's squadron, I am familiar with information useful to the enemy.

The thought that Stanley Johnston would offer information to The Tribune for publication which would be of use to the nation's enemies is just as outrageous.

Johnston, who joined the Australian army at the age of 14½ in the World War, who was through the battle of Britain as an observer for The Tribune, who aided Guy Murchie, Tribune correspondent when he and Johnston fell four stories as a Nazi bomb shattered a building in Dover, would sooner cut off his right arm than give information to the enemy.

Recently we have learned that Johnston has been cited for bravery under fire in the recent battle of the Coral sea. Vice-Admiral Willson has informed us that the Johnston recent citation states that Johnston labored for days to keep up the morale of the men fighting with him in the Coral sea. He is also cited, we are informed, for siding in the rescue of ten or a dozen men who were near drowning.

Soon after the battle of Britain Johnston who was at that time an Australian citizen, came to the United States on his way to Australia. While here he sought employment with The Tribune. At that time his name was submitted to both the naval and military intelligence by the Tribune. Both these divisions checked his record abroad and gave him a clean record. About this time Johnston received his final papers as a United States Citizen. The Tribune had every reason to believe that he was a man of fine character, experience and loyal to the cause of the united nations, and still so believes.

" It is true that Johnston, fighting side by side with the men and officers of his ship in the battle of the Coral sea, gained much information. After the battle the officers with whom he was closely associated - three of whom bunked with him - often discussed the make-up of the enemy forces both in the Coral sea battle and more recently the make-up of the Jap navy which penetrated the northern Pacific, attacked at Dutch Harbor, and later were so soundly defeated west of Midway Island.

" It is true that the make-up of the Jap navy, its fire power, speed, etc., has been and is being discussed everywhere among naval men, arm chair strategists and even ordinary citizens. As was the case in the World War and as is the case in all wars, sailors, soldiers and airmen think continually of the forces opposing them and discuss possibilities of attack and methods of outwitting and out-fighting the enemy. This is what Johnston and his comrades on shipboard did. It was as a result of such discussion with navy men and officers that the information concerning the probable names and organization of the Jap fleet which was engaged off Midway Island came into the hands of The Tribune. The story was printed along with Admiral Nimitz's announcement of the great American victory in this sea fight. This is how The Tribune got the story:

" After his thrilling experience in the battle of the Coral sea Johnston arrived in a west coast port on June 2nd (verify date). He called his paper. He declared he had the most fascinating eye-witness detailed story of a sea battle which has been told in a lifetime. When asked for details he meticulously refused to give any saying that under navy regulations to which he was subject as a correspondent, his stories would have to be transmitted to the navy department in Washington thru navy channels. He would neither

indicate the losses of the enemy nor would he state whether the United States navy had suffered losses in the Coral sea battle; nor would he mention the names of ships on either side which participated in the battle. He was told to proceed to Chicago at once. He did so by air.

(( Once in Chicago he went to work writing the story of the Coral sea battle in great detail. One by one these stories were deposited with the navy department in Washington. (Captain Lovett, Chief of the navy press relations, said the stories would undoubtedly prove a great boost to navy morale.)

(( Because the Tribune was fortunate enough to be the only newspaper to have a correspondent with a naval unit in this battle, it was decided to turn Johnston's stories over to all important press services so that they might receive the widest possible publicity. In doing this the Tribune voluntarily relinquished a great newspaper scoop that an eye-witness account of the bravery of the American navy might reach practically every newspaper reader in the United States.

(( As Johnston wrote his stories in Chicago the sea battle of Midway was being fought. On Saturday night, June 6th came Admiral Nimitz's victory announcement. When Johnston learned of the great victory he hurried to the desk of the Tribune managing editor. When I arrived in San Diego I wrote you a letter which I never mailed because I was too busy and did not realize its importance until this moment," he said, presenting the letter. "It may be of value now that the victory is won," Johnston continued. "It is the best information I have been able to obtain concerning the ships we have been fighting west of Midway. It shows the tremendous enemy forces we have licked."



"The managing editor read the letter. It supplemented the facts as disclosed by Admiral Nimitz and as Johnston said, enhanced the greatness of the American victory. Johnston, who had refused to disclose any detail of the battle of the Coral sea on the telephone, presented this information concerning the enemy's ships for publication as a contribution to The Tribune's report of the great victory. In reporting this information given him by his comrades in the battle of the Coral sea, Johnston believed, and still believes, that he was aiding the American cause.

"The Tribune printed it. The next morning - Sunday - The Tribune was notified that the Bureau of Censorship had cited it for violating the censorship code. Arthur Sears Henning, head of the Washington bureau of The Tribune, made the following reply:

"In the story in question The Tribune believed it was conforming to the censorship code in every respect for these reasons: The location of the enemy ships given in the story was no more precise than that contained in Admiral Nimitz's communiques. The story located the Japanese warships in the vicinity of Dutch Harbor and Midway Island where they had previously been located by navy communiques. The story identifies the warships making up the Japanese attacking forces. There is nothing in the censorship regulations forbidding the publication of the identity of enemy ships wherever engaged. The story contains no statement of the location, movements and identity of the U.S. ships not contained in previously published navy communiques."

"After due consideration he was told by the censor in charge that his reply was adequate and that the bureau has no further quarrel with the Tribune in this matter."

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"The censor's bureau, however, did put out a supplementary rule of censorship requesting newspapers hereafter to impute no advance knowledge of the disposition of enemy ships to the United States navy, thus in effect admitting that the previously promulgated regulations had been insufficient to prevent such publication.

Meanwhile the navy department had complained to The Tribune concerning publication of the story. The Tribune immediately forwarded full information and sent Johnston to Washington by airplane with orders to tell his entire story detail by detail. This he did to Vice-Admiral Willson, chief of staff of Admiral King, commander of the navy.

"Admiral Willson insisted that certain statements in The Tribune story, together with the manner of their presentation, proved that Johnston's information came from a secret document belonging to the navy. Johnston denied that he ever possessed or had seen any such secret document. He admitted that from ten to twelve officers of the ship on which he returned to the United States had discussed enemy ships in his cabin, had made notes of them on his desk and that he, who had just been thru a five-day battle fighting shoulder to shoulder with these officers, had participated in the discussion and had also made notes of the probable enemy ships. He maintained that the information he gave The Tribune in the moment of the Midway victory was not secret but common talk among naval officers not only his boat but throughout the naval service.

"In the story in question The Tribune gave its readers what it believed to be the facts concerning the Jap navy. In so doing it believed that it was performing a patriotic act and a journalistic service, and it still so believes."

~~Substantive information~~ To Admiral Willson on June 9 ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Johnston gave his account of the ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> which he came into ~~XXXXXXXX~~ possession of the information ~~published~~ on the ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Japanese forces. He set down the account in the following statement:

"At 11 am today I called at the Navy Office and saw Admiral Willson and gave him the following explanation of how the list of Japanese ships came first into my possession - and the circumstances under which I handed the memo to Mr. Loy Maloney, Managing Editor of the Tribune.

"After being rescued in the Coral Sea by other warships when the Lex went down I was taken together with the other survivors to the island of Tongatabu where we - 2,750 - were transferred to two small transports for passage, to the United States.

"Naturally these ships were overcrowded and officers were crowded into the insufficient accommodation.

"I occupied a bed in a section which was also occupied by an officer while Commander Seligman occupied a separate cabin which had formerly been portion of this suite - in this cabin the Commander slept and directed the administration of the many duties connected with Lexington affairs.

"Because of the overcrowded conditions in all other cabins and in consequence of their need to be continually in contact with the executive officer, my section of the room was always crowded with senior officers - heads of departments, squadron commanders, etc., either waiting to discuss affairs with the Exec or to hand in reports.

"There was a large table in this cabin and two small desks. In the absence of sufficient yeomen aboard the senior officers frequently worked at either this table or one of the desks.

"I had a large map of the Pacific ocean pinned to the bulkhead above a small desk which stood at the foot of my bed. These gentlemen often congregated in front of this map - discussed the various phases of our recent battles, possible Japanese moves - and hoped for eventual moves by the United States forces.

"During the last two days at sea there was a lot of serious discussion between all officers about the impending Japanese invasion attempt in the North Pacific sphere. It was natural that I would hear the discussions.

"Also during the last week aboard Commander W. Terry was confined to his bed suffering a particularly severe attack of hives. All of the doctors and Terry's friends visited him several times daily and this added considerably to the men who were in the cabin.

"Another factor which added to the numbers was the fact that there was no coffee mess on the ship. We secured two big vacuum flasks and kept them filled with coffee which was served to senior officers morning, afternoon, and again after dinner.

"The evening we arrived at San Diego I did not expect we would be allowed to go ashore until next morning owing to the late hour of arrival.

" I was using the typewriter to clean up my stories and on moving some old papers from my desk saw a piece of paper with light blue lines on which someone had written the names of Japanese warships and listed transports etcetera under headings of "Striking force", "Oculation force" and, "support force".

" The large number of ships and their grouping suggested to me that this evidently referred to something big. I noticed that someone had scratched out several names and written in other names as if trying to straighten out errors.

" I copied the names off the list - although I was familiar with every warship with the exception of 5 ships all of whose names began with C. These I assumed were new building which had not yet found their way into Janes Fighting Ships. ( This publication has been my bible since the outbreak of war because of the great importance of world navies and consequently I am familiar with practically every capital ship - aircraft carrier and cruiser listed therein)

" About that time the marine orderly came in to inform me that Commander Seligman desired me to pack quickly and report to him on the pier. This I did hurriedly and left the paper from which I copied the list of ships on the desk where I first found it (my desk)

" That night I examined the copy again and typed out a memo to send to my editor just in case some news broke to indicate an attack by such a force. Naturally I figured there was a censorship here which took care of publication of such news.

" I managed to secure accommodation on a plane from Los Angeles to Chicago and buying a paper before leaving learned that an attack had been made on Dutch Harbor. This information when compared with facts made available from communiques issued by Admiral Nimitz telling of a big battle being fought near Midway - later of sinkings of aircraft carriers, damage to battleships etc., I realized that the ships on the list referred to the forces now being used by the Japs.

" Several releases, official, semiofficial and newspaper speculation said "We had expected an attack" - The forces at Midway and Dutch harbor were on the alert having been warned several days previously".....

" The fact that our navy forces were at sea and in the right place to intercept the enemy was proof both to me and for that matter for the Japanese also - that we had prior warning of their intentions.

" Here I pointed out to the admiral that we could not have sent out ships from where they were two weeks previously to where they intercepted the enemy unless we steamed fast and to a definite position. I insisted that the enemy would certainly not believe they were there by coincidence.

" This I considered rather removed the implication that the publication of the news would be the sole source of information the Japs would have to draw from to get the inference that "we by some means were able to see their hand."

I further explained that I retained the memo in my pocket some days after arrival in Chicago. During the night of Friday 13th., I saw the grand communique which set out the list of ships sunk or seriously damaged and suggesting that remnants of the Jap fleet were trying to escape, I went directly to Mr. Maloney who was very busy getting out a late edition of the Tribune and told him that this was wonderful news - so because of the powerful forces and high expectations employed by the enemy, and their high expectations of invading occupation of some of our territory.

(( I showed Mr. Maloney the memo I had written and suggested that a list was undoubtedly the enemy formations employed.

(( The reports of fighting which had taken place, and complete absence of mention of any further enemy movements around Dutch Harbor showed clearly enough that their early very light attack on that area was a feint delivered with the hope of misleading us as to their real intention.

(( Mr. Maloney said he wanted about 75% of a column on this story naturally I presumed the article would have to go thru censorship at when leaving the building - I worked locked in a room separated from everyone with a special guard to prevent anyone entering because I was working on the stories dealing with the Coral Sea battle which was secret until passed by the Navy censors in Washington - I picked up a Tribune and read the article on the front page.

(( I did mention to someone that the piece had been put thru the censors rapidly - was told that we did not have to pass articles dealing with enemy armed forces thru censorship.

(( That is all I heard of this matter until told at 9pm Sunday night to take the first available plane to Washington and try to get there by 9 am to meet Admiral King.

(( I managed to get aboard a plane which left Chicago at 10.30 - the airline held it back until I could get to the airfield.

(( Because I could not get a flight from New York I had to take a train and arrived here at about 10:30 - taxied direct to the office and told to go immediately to the Navy office where I met Mr. Henning in the Press Relations office and we were taken straight to the Admirals rooms.

(( The first realization I had that something was brewing was when informed by Admiral Willson.

(( Naturally I immediately realized that this matter might get some of the men with whom I had recently been associated with into trouble and naturally had a definite desire not to do this. I had seen these men in battle and have a great admiration both for their efficiency and high courage.

(( Today I had had opportunity to think over the situation and realized that the times we are living in were different to normal peace time living and that the only right thing to do was to assist the navy in every way - that is why I have called here now to explain this matter. ))

*Handwritten signature*

I further explained that I retained the memo in my pocket some days after arrival in Chicago. During the night of Saturday 13th., I saw the grand communique which set out the long list of ships sunk or seriously damaged and suggesting that the remnants of the Jap fleet were trying to escape, I went directly to Mr. Maloney who was very busy getting out a late edition of the Tribune and told him that this was wonderful news - more so because of the powerful forces and high expectations employed by the enemy, and their high expectations of invading and occupation of some of our territory.

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Authority NND 76716

UNITED STATES FLEET  
HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
NAVY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.

June 11, 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BIDDLE

Stanley Johnston was in the status of an authorized correspondent returning from the Coral Sea area in the U. S. Navy transport BARNET.

The despatch in question was dated 31 May and was received on board that ship that date.

Johnston when first questioned insisted that he had put together the substance of his article from general conversation on board the BARNET. He later stated that he had found the text as written by him in his article on a sheet of plain paper on a desk which he used jointly with some of the senior officers with whom he was quartered.

He states that he wrote the substance of the article on Saturday last and turned it over to his managing editor. He claims that the headlines and the statement that the information was obtained in Washington was not his work. He admitted that it was not true.

Mr. Johnston has returned to Chicago but is holding himself in readiness to return to Washington by air.

RUSSELL WILLSON  
Chief of Staff



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