

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

This Case Originated At WASHINGTON, D. C.

File Number 65-1143

Report Made At	Date When Made	Period	Report Made By
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA	JUN 25 1942	6-17,18,19,20, 22,23/42	W. A. ROBINSON, JR. WAR:jec

Title	Character of Case
STANLEY JOHNSTON	ESPIONAGE - J

SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:C O N F I D E N T I A L

Commander SELIGMAN received a set of official photographs of the burning and exploding of USS Lexington from Admiral SHERMAN who stated he had five sets. SELIGMAN still has his set in his possession. Admiral SHERMAN stated he may also have given a set to the Captains of the USS ~~Minneapolis~~ and the USS Astoria and that he returned the others to Washington with his official reports. Lieutenant Commanders ELDRIDGE, DIXON, and O'DONNELL all have recalled that on a certain evening aboard the Barnett, which was probably May 31, 1942, the secret dispatch book was exhibited to SELIGMAN in the Commodore's Suite, and a pencil memorandum containing the names of the Japanese ships taken from instant dispatch was on the table in front of Commander SELIGMAN.

Approved
and
Forwarded

SAC

DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES

- 5 - Bureau
- 2 - Boston
- 2 - Birmingham.
- 2 - San Francisco
- 2 - Los Angeles (Information)
- 2 - Chicago (Information)
- 2 - New Orleans
- 2 - Washington Field
- 6 - San Diego

They state that there was some discussion about the Japanese task force and that a Barnett silhouette book was sent for during this discussion in order to determine whether a certain Japanese ship was a battleship or cruiser. They said that JOHNSTON was present during at least some of the discussion although he was not seated at the table. SELIGMAN advised that he does not deny that he may have made some rough notes from instant dispatch although he definitely does not remember doing so. He said, however, that he was the Senior Officer present on the occasion described by ELDRIDGE, DIXON, and O'DONNELL, and he was therefore willing to assume the full responsibility for not taking the proper precautions to keep JOHNSTON from obtaining instant message. He said although he could not remember the incident as described by those officers, he was very willing to accept their version as the truth.

- RUC -

REFERENCE: Report of Special Agent Wm. A. ROBINSON, JR., San Diego, California, June 16, 1942.
Teletype from the Bureau to the San Diego Field Division dated June 17, 1942.
Conference teletype from the Bureau to the San Diego and San Francisco Field Divisions dated June 17, 1942.

DETAILS: AT SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

Instant report covers investigation conducted by reporting Agent and Special Agents L. ALEX GILLIAM, JR. and D. A. FISH.

Commander MORTON T. SELIGMAN was interviewed and asked specific questions set out in referenced teletype from the Bureau dated June 17, 1942. He advised that to the best of his recollection he did not at any time show the secret message to JOHNSTON and he did not make a copy or notes of the message. He said he did not recall any discussion whatsoever of this particular message with anyone and did not therefore believe he had discussed the contents of the message with JOHNSTON or within his earshot. He said he did not know if any of the Lexington Officers either showed the message to JOHNSTON, made a copy or notes of it, or discussed it with JOHNSTON. He said he did not know how JOHNSTON may have obtained the contents of the message but, as he had stated previously, he thought he could have obtained it by overhearing conversations between authorized officers or even by looking over the shoulder of an authorized officer who was reading the dispatch. He reiterated that he did not remember when he saw instant message and stated that he only assumed he saw it because it had been pointed out to him in San Francisco that his initials were on the

message and Lieutenant BREWER had said that he showed it to SELIGMAN.

With reference to the photographs, SELIGMAN stated that a lot of pictures had been taken by a sailor aboard the USS Minneapolis and that he understood these were officially developed on the Minneapolis by someone on that vessel aided possibly by Ensign CAMPBELL, Photographic Officer of the Lexington. He stated that he thought Captain FREDERICK SHERMAN while on the Minneapolis had asked for eight sets of these pictures for his official files. SELIGMAN believed that some other pictures were taken from airplanes and from other ships but he knew nothing about any of them except those which were developed on the Minneapolis. From the pictures on the Minneapolis, SELIGMAN said he recalled at least three had appeared subsequently in the newspapers. One showed the men leaving the Lexington from the stern, and two of them showed the Lexington exploding and burning. SELIGMAN stated that SHERMAN gave him one set of these photographs in which there were approximately twelve to fifteen pictures, size 8 by 10 inches. He obtained these from Captain SHERMAN while they were on the USS Astoria, and he received only prints and no negatives. He said that he had kept these pictures with his other official records in a manila envelope, and on the Barnett he kept them in a drawer in his room. SELIGMAN exhibited the pictures he had, and they were found to consist of nine official photographs, size approximately 8 by 10 inches stamped "Not to be used for Publication by Order of the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics". These photographs bore the following numbers:

0151	0158	0161
0152	0159	0162
0153	0160	0163

There was a duplicate of 0151 also. In addition, SELIGMAN had 22 small 4 by 5 inch photographs from the negatives of which the larger prints had been made. He said he never saw any such photographs in JOHNSTON'S possession and he does not know who furnished any photographs to JOHNSTON. He knew of no one other than himself who had the photographs on the Barnett and does not know how JOHNSTON got possession of any photographs. He advised that on the Astoria when Captain SHERMAN had all the photographs, JOHNSTON had been in the room with SHERMAN. He said that SHERMAN may have given some photographs to JOHNSTON or JOHNSTON may have removed them from SHERMAN'S possession on the Astoria because SELIGMAN recalls that a great number of these photographs were spread out in a room on the Astoria when JOHNSTON and SHERMAN were present. He said that if he had been the Commanding Officer he would have seen nothing wrong in giving some photographs to JOHNSTON with the understanding, of course, that they were not to be published without the specific permission of the Navy Department.

SELIGMAN stated that Commander TERRY had recalled to his mind one incident that occurred on the Barnett when SELIGMAN was studying a book entitled "The Stability of Ships and Damage Control". This book was restricted and had

diagrams of the Lexington in it and that SELIGMAN was studying it some time on the return trip on the Barnett. He said he had drawn on the diagrams the places where the torpedoes had struck the Lexington and that JOHNSTON had been in the room with him and started to make a sketch from the diagrams, looking over SELIGMAN'S shoulder. He said he had noticed this and forbade JOHNSTON'S copying these diagrams. He stated that he pointed out this incident of which TERRY had reminded him only in an attempt to give a true picture of conditions aboard the Barnett on the return trip to San Diego when he and the other Senior Officers were constantly working on their official reports in the Commodore's Suite and paying little attention to JOHNSTON, simply as a result of their association with him. He said that this incident demonstrated that he, as well as the other Lexington officers, attempted even under the most adverse conditions to keep JOHNSTON from obtaining information to which he was not entitled, although he said that he naturally realized that JOHNSTON would necessarily obtain much secret information but would have to have everything censored before anything was released for publication.

With further reference to the photographs, SELIGMAN stated that while returning on the Barnett he had showed them to quite a number of officers but gave no photographs to anyone. He said also that either on the Minneapolis or the Astoria JOHNSTON had asked him how he could get a set of the photographs, and SELIGMAN replied that he could only get them from a higher source than himself.

Referring to the question of censorship of JOHNSTON'S material, SELIGMAN advised that several times in conversations among himself, Captain SHERMAN, and JOHNSTON, JOHNSTON brought up the question of censorship, indicating that he knew that everything he had was to be censored before it could be published. SELIGMAN pointed out specifically that on board the Lexington a tanker came alongside, and JOHNSTON asked whether it would save time in getting some of his articles censored to send them to Honolulu aboard the tanker. Many times JOHNSTON raised the question of how he could get his stories into the Commander-in-Chief in the Pacific Ocean or to the Navy Department in Washington for censorship in the quickest possible manner.

On June 17, 1942 Lieutenant Commander WINTHROP TERRY was interviewed by Special Agent L. ALEX GILLIAM, JR. at his apartment in the Mar Vista Apartments at Pacific Beach, California, and furnished the following answers to the following questions:

1. Did you at any time show the secret message to JOHNSTON?

No

2. Did you make a copy or notes of the secret message?

No

3. If so, did JOHNSTON have access to the copy or notes, or were they left where JOHNSTON might obtain them?

4. Did you discuss the contents of the message with JOHNSTON or within earshot of JOHNSTON?

No

5. Do you know if any of the officers did any of the above?

No. He stated that he knows that none of the Junior Officers would make such a copy and does not think for that matter that anyone would have done so.

6. Do you know how JOHNSTON may have obtained the contents of the secret message?

No

7. As well as can be recalled, when did you see the message and who else was present, and what took place at that time?

Lieutenant Commander TERRY stated the first time he saw the message was in the office of Admiral HOLMES at the Eleventh Naval District at San Diego on June 12, 1942; that there was no one present at the time except Admiral HOLMES and himself.

8. Do you have any information concerning official photographs of the USS Lexington burning and exploding?

Yes. He stated Commander SELIGMAN showed him these photographs in SELIGMAN'S cabin; that SELIGMAN had them locked away in the drawer of his personal chiffonier. He advised that SELIGMAN was not keen about showing them and cautioned him not to let them get away. He estimated that this was about the 17th or 18th of May. He stated that while he looked at the pictures, SELIGMAN remained in the room. Lieutenant Commander TERRY further stated that SELIGMAN had a certain amount of security in his room, having an orderly on watch there all the time and also a personal mess attendant named SABLAN.

9. From what ships were these photographs taken and where developed and by whom?

He stated that he does not know; that he thinks he was informed that they were taken from a cruiser, but he cannot remember where he got this information.

10. Did you see any such photographs in JOHNSTON'S possession?

No

11. If so, when and under what circumstances? - - -
12. Who furnished the photographs to JOHNSTON. - - -
13. Did you see or have knowledge of anyone having such photographs?

No one except Commander SELIGMAN.

14. If so, who, where, and when? - - -
15. How could JOHNSTON have gotten possession of such photographs?

Lieutenant Commander TERRY stated that he had not the slightest idea, and would not even guess.

On June 19, 1942, Commander HERBERT S. DUCKWORTH, Flight Officer, U. S. Navy, was interviewed by Special Agent D. A. FISH at his temporary office at the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California. He said that he did not at any time show the secret message to JOHNSTON. He said that he did not make any copy or notes of the secret message. He said that he did not discuss the contents of the message with JOHNSTON and is confident that he never discussed said contents within earshot of JOHNSTON.

He said he did not know of any other officers doing any of the above.

He said that he recalls having seen the instant dispatch while in the wardroom of the USS Barnett where he was playing bridge. It is noted that in the second interview DUCKWORTH recalled specifically having seen the instant dispatch whereas, as indicated in the previous memorandum, he was not certain that he had ever seen the dispatch. He said that the wardroom contained three long bench-like tables which were arranged lengthwise with the line of the ship. He said that he was seated at the middle one of these tables and that he was seated about four feet from the corner of this table which faced the stern of the ship. To his left and on said corner was Lieutenant (jg) _____ SAMPSON. He said that diagonally across from him and at the other corner of this table was seated Lieutenant _____ NOBLE. Directly across from him he said was seated Lieutenant (jg) _____ COWARD. At the same table and more toward the forward end of the table were seated four other officers playing bridge. He could not recall the order of their seating around this table. He was not certain whether Lieutenant Commander _____ DIXON was in this group or not but was certain that the remainder of the group was made up of Lieutenant _____ BORRIES, Lieutenant _____ DIBRELL, and Lieutenant _____ BOLLINGER.

He said that after seeing the instant bulletin there was a general

discussion in his group about the task force of the Japanese which was being sent toward Midway and the Aleutian Islands and specifically recalled there being a discussion of the fact that four carriers were in the group of Japanese ships going in the direction of the Midway Islands. He is certain that no names of ships were mentioned and was positive that STANLEY JOHNSTON was not in the vicinity of this table at the time of this discussion.

DUCKWORTH said that he saw a number of pictures of the Lexington in a burning and exploding condition while he was on the Barnett and while he had previously been on the Chester. The latter pictures, he said, had been taken by men on the Chester. He could not recall who had custody of these pictures.

He said that he believes that all of these pictures had been taken from the USS Minneapolis and the USS Chester. He could not say as to who had developed these pictures, and he could not say as to where they had been developed.

He said that he never saw any of the instant photographs in JOHNSTON'S possession.

DUCKWORTH said that instant photographs were made available to any and all of the Senior Officers and was sure that they had been viewed by all of said officers. He expressed the belief that Lieutenant Commander ELDRIDGE had some photographs in his possession when he came aboard the Barnett but he did not know what disposition had been made of these photographs. He said that ELDRIDGE came aboard the Barnett at the same time he boarded it.

DUCKWORTH said that there was no equipment on the USS Barnett for the developing and printing of pictures. He said the photographs were contained in a manila envelope and that said envelope was never seen to be lying openly in any place unattended. He said they were usually together with official papers and files. He said he did not know in whose custody the photographs were kept. He said that he did not know how many prints there were of each picture. He noted that JOHNSTON had no equipment for the developing and printing of pictures.

Commander A. F. JUNKER, Engineering Officer of the USS Lexington, who is residing at the Hotel Biltmore in Coronado, stated that he was quartered in the general's suite on the Barnett returning to San Diego with Lieutenant Commanders ELDRIDGE, O'DONNELL, and MARKLE and Commanders WHITE and DUCKWORTH. He stated he did not at any time show instant message to JOHNSTON and did not make a copy or notes of the message. He said he recalled discussing the message with some Lexington Officers in the wardroom after Commander DUCKWORTH had seen the message. He said he recalled a Lieutenant (jg) SAMPSON asking him about the possibility of a submarine tracking a fleet. He did not recall who brought

the message to DUCKWORTH but he did know that JOHNSTON was not around when the question of a submarine tracking the fleet was discussed, and he said there was no further discussion about the situation that he remembered. He did not know whether any of the Lexington officers showed the message to JOHNSTON or made a copy of it or discussed it with JOHNSTON. He stated that he did not know how JOHNSTON obtained the contents of the message but was sure that it was not shown to him. In this connection, JUNKER said that JOHNSTON was in his quarters on one occasion and asked if he could see JUNKER'S official report, to which JUNKER replied "No", that he would have to see the Captain. JUNKER did not recall the specific time when he saw instant message but thought it was before dinner one evening and he was in his quarters, sitting on his bunk. An Ensign brought in the folder of secret messages, and ELDRIDGE and O'DONNELL were present. He saw it first and then O'DONNELL saw it, and JUNKER stated that he looked at quite a few messages at the same time that he had not previously seen. He said there had been a previous message along the same lines but the message in question clarified the previous message and he discussed it briefly with O'DONNELL after they had read it. Subsequently on the same evening, he and O'DONNELL were in the Commodore's Suite after dinner, and there were three or four Lexington people there having coffee. He said he believed that JOHNSTON was there part of the time. He did not recall any discussion of instant message at that time. He also said he recalled some night in the Commodore's Suite seeing a silhouette book on the table but he did not know whether this was the same night that he saw instant message. He stated that at no time did he see a piece of paper or pencil notes containing the gist of instant message. He recalled on the night he saw the silhouette book in the Commodore's Suite that Lieutenant Commander O'DONNELL stated that a picture of a certain Japanese ship was incorrect because O'DONNELL had seen this ship in China waters and he knew the silhouette was wrong. He stated to the best of his recollection that the general topic of discussion was the Coral Sea Battle.

JUNKER said that the only photographs he had ever seen of the Lexington burning and exploding were shown to him by SELIGMAN on the Barnett. SELIGMAN had several in a manila envelope with his other papers and JUNKER thought SELIGMAN showed them to him in the wardroom when there were several other officers present. He did not recall whether or not JOHNSTON was present at this time and stated that after these officers had looked at the pictures they put them back in the envelope. JUNKER said he asked SELIGMAN at this time if he could have a set of the pictures, and SELIGMAN said "No". He did not know from what ship these pictures were taken but he believed SELIGMAN told him they were from the Minneapolis. He did not know where or by whom they were developed. JUNKER did not see any photographs in JOHNSTON'S possession and did not know who furnished photographs to JOHNSTON or how JOHNSTON could have got possession of them.

Lieutenant Commander O'DONNELL was interviewed and asked similar questions by Agents of the San Francisco Field Division.

Lieutenant Admiral FREDERICK SHERMAN told reporting Agent that

he had definitely placed verbal restrictions on JOHNSTON between the 15th and 30th of April aboard the USS Lexington with reference to JOHNSTON'S clearing his stories through Navy censorship. SHERMAN said that he had asked JOHNSTON if JOHNSTON understood that he had to get a release on everything he published either from the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet or from the Navy Department in Washington, at which time JOHNSTON stated he definitely understood that. SHERMAN said that this had been discussed between them on several occasions. L

With reference to photographs, Admiral SHERMAN advised reporting Agent that he recalled asking on the Minneapolis for five sets of prints and he said that he gave one set to SELIGMAN and may have given a set to the Captains of the Minneapolis and the Astoria. He said he gave JOHNSTON no set of pictures and returned all that he had with his official reports to Washington.

Admiral SHERMAN was interviewed by Special Agent D. A. FISH at his office at the Naval Air Station on June 19, 1942. At this time Admiral SHERMAN said that after the Lexington was sunk and when he was on board the USS Minneapolis he sent a message to all ships that were engaged in the Coral Sea Battle to send prints and photographs taken by crew members of said ships to him. He said that these photographs were received by him from time to time while he was on the USS Yorktown and the USS Chester.

He could not specifically recall from what ships these pictures had been taken but does know that there was one roll of films that had been taken from the USS Yorktown. He said they were developed on the ships on which they were taken. He said he did not know the names of the parties developing said films. He said that the development and printing of these films was under the supervision of the Commanding Officers of the respective ships in that said officers had personally been requested by him to send photographs to him.

He said that he never saw any of the photographs in JOHNSTON'S possession. He said that the only party he could specifically recall as having been any photographs other than himself was Admiral FITCH and that was on the USS Lexington where pictures were shown of sinking Japanese ships, probably the Ryukaku which was sunk on May 7, 1942. He showed these pictures to Admiral FITCH personally. Admiral SHERMAN could advance no theory as to how JOHNSTON may have gotten into possession of the questioned photographs.

Admiral SHERMAN specifically recalled having given JOHNSTON verbal restrictions on April 15, 1942 when JOHNSTON boarded the USS Lexington. In these restrictions he stated that JOHNSTON was advised that all of his material would have to be submitted to the proper officers for censorship before it was released.

Lieutenant GEORGE F. SCHMITT, formerly a doctor aboard the USS Solace, was interviewed at the Naval Hospital in San Diego where he is presently attached, and he advised that he had been in the Commodore's Suite on the

Barnett only once during the return trip to San Diego. He stated that Doctor KEETON had asked him to go down with the Barnett Ship's Doctor to see Lieutenant Commander TERRY who was ill. He stated that this was a night or two before TERRY was admitted to the Barnett sick list, and at this time JOHNSTON was in the room typing at the large table and SELIGMAN was in the room also, working at this table. He said after the Doctor had looked at TERRY he remained behind and spoke to SELIGMAN and JOHNSTON, discussing the activities of doctors in the war zone, some of the aspects of the Coral Sea Battle, and the possibilities of opening a second front. A little later SELIGMAN took Doctor SCHMITT into SELIGMAN'S room to show him a National Geographic Chart and point out some of the aspects of the war. While they were in this room, SELIGMAN showed SCHMITT some photographs of the Lexington burning but told him not to say anything about these photographs. JOHNSTON was not in SELIGMAN'S room with them.

SCHMITT said that it was fairly common knowledge on board the Barnett that there was a Japanese task force heading eastward in the Pacific but he said he knew this question was not discussed by SELIGMAN or JOHNSTON in his presence, and he said he never knew any more definite information about this force until after he arrived in San Diego.

On June 20, 1942, Lieutenant Commander GEORGE LA CLEDE MARKLE, Chaplain, United States Navy, was interviewed at his home at 569 "C" Avenue, Coronado, California, Telephone H-34354. He stated that dispatches and bulletins were very seldom routed to him at any time. He said that he did not see the instant message. He said that he had heard rumors to the effect that the Japanese fleet was proceeding toward Midway; that the United States knew the course and speed of this fleet, and that the United States had made preparations for meeting the Japanese. He cannot recall the exact source of this information.

He alleged that he never heard any discussion of the instant dispatch and noted that in his capacity as a Chaplain he did not come in contact with the so-called "line officers", to which group any discussion of this dispatch would be confined.

He said that he went to Commander SELIGMAN'S quarters on the USS Barnett only on two occasions and these were for the purpose of getting some coffee. The time of these visits was in the evening, but he could not recall the dates of said visits. He said that on neither of these two visits did he hear any discussion of the instant dispatch. He noted that he and Lieutenant Commander COFFIN generally obtained their coffee in the ship pantry so that he never had occasion to go to Commander SELIGMAN'S room. He also observed that he purposely avoided going to Commander SELIGMAN'S quarters because they were usually very crowded with officers.

MARKLE said that he first saw JOHNSTON after the sinking of the Barnett when MARKLE boarded the Barnett on May 15, 1942. A few days thereafter he saw the pictures of the Lexington in a burning and exploding condition. The occasion for seeing these pictures was upon one of the above-mentioned visits

to SELIGMAN'S quarters. At that time SELIGMAN had the pictures in his hand. MARKLE recalled asking SELIGMAN if he could see them and stated that SELIGMAN replied in the affirmative but requested that they not be taken out of the room and that after they had been viewed they should be placed in the upper right hand drawer of his dresser. At the same time, another officer came into the room, and SELIGMAN told this officer, name unknown, that he also could look at the pictures. MARKLE said that both he and this other officer viewed the pictures and that when they were through he personally placed them in their enclosing manila envelope and placed the envelope in the dresser drawer as SELIGMAN had directed. He further said that they were placed in said dresser drawer under a stack of papers. MARKLE said that there were some duplicates of these prints, and he specifically recalled that a picture of the Lexington exploding amidships and throwing planes from the deck at the stern was in duplicate and that another picture of the Lexington showing heavy volumes of smoke arising from amidships was also in duplicate.

MARKLE said that he did not at any time show the secret message to JOHNSTON.

He said that he did not make a copy or notes of the secret message.

He said that he did not discuss the contents of the message with JOHNSTON or within earshot of JOHNSTON.

He said that he did not know whether any of the other officers did any of the above.

He could not venture any specific theory as to how JOHNSTON may have obtained the contents of the secret message.

He said he did not know from what ships the pictures of the burning and exploding Lexington were taken.

He said he never saw JOHNSTON in possession of the instant photographs.

He said the only party he knew of having the instant photographs was Commander SELIGMAN.

He said that in view of the intimacy between SELIGMAN and JOHNSTON in that they lived in the same quarters, JOHNSTON had access to the dresser drawer of SELIGMAN in which the instant photographs were placed.

On June 19, 1942, Lieutenant Commander EDWARD H. ELDRIDGE, Junior Flight Officer on the USS Lexington, was interviewed at the office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, San Diego. Although he could not specifically

recall the date involved, he recalled that one evening about nine o'clock he was playing bridge in the forward starboard cabin of the SS Barnett with Lieutenant Commander HENRY COFFIN, Lieutenant Commander E. J. O'DONNELL, and Chaplain G. L. MARKLE. At about this time, he and O'DONNELL proceeded to the cabin of the Executive Officer, specifically Commander SELIGMAN, for coffee. He recalled that upon entering the room, there was a group of men about the central table composed of SELIGMAN and two or three other officers, whose names he did not recall.

On the surface of the table there was a handwritten outline in which was stated in paragraph form the various forces and composition and the notation of the occupational forces of the Japanese fleet reported as proceeding in the direction of Midway. (At this time, ELDRIDGE was shown a photostatic copy of the article appearing in the Chicago Tribune wherein the various forces of the Japanese fleet were elaborately set forth. He said that the material in this memorandum included the information shown in this article.) He said that this memorandum was written on a piece of paper about 4 by 8½ inches, but he could not recall whether the paper was ruled or plain. He did not recognize the handwriting in this memorandum. He said that the discussion among the group was mainly about the size of the Kirishima. During this discussion, the silhouette book of Japanese ships was called for. Thereafter the discussion was of the size of the guns on the Kirishima. According to ELDRIDGE, O'DONNELL and he left the room to resume their bridge game. He could not specifically say who was left behind in the Executive Officer's room. As to others in the room besides the group above referred to, he was certain that Lieutenant TERRY was there in his bunk as he was ill. He was not certain whether JOHNSTON was in the room or not as he does not recall JOHNSTON'S having said anything that would definitely place JOHNSTON'S presence in the room in his memory. However, he believes he was present in the room.

ELDRIDGE said that he never saw the original dispatch in question and that he never saw the pencil memorandum and he does not recall any detailed discussion of this dispatch among the officers at any time subsequent to his visit to SELIGMAN'S room above mentioned.

ELDRIDGE stated that he did not bring any photographs aboard the Barnett. He said that he did obtain a Fairchild camera containing about eight exposed pictures from the USS Morris, a destroyer, while he was on the Barnett. He said that he retained this camera for about a day in his quarters and then delivered the still loaded camera to Commander SELIGMAN. Thereafter, the camera remained in SELIGMAN'S custody. He said there was no equipment on board the SS Barnett for developing exposed films so that he was certain that this film contained in this camera was not developed on the Barnett. He said there were pictures of the burning and exploding of the Lexington on the Barnett. The only time that he saw these pictures was when they were brought to Commander SELIGMAN at the luncheon table on a date unknown and that they were enclosed in manila envelope. He did not know how many prints of these pictures there were in evidence. He said from their appearance they were taken mainly from the

Minneapolis and that in view of the fact that one of these pictures showed the port side of the stricken Lexington, he believed that it was taken from the USS Hannan, or a ship in a similar position. He could not recall who brought these pictures to Commander SELIGMAN and he did not know who had custody of them.

ELDRIDGE said that he did not at any time show the secret message to JOHNSTON.

He said that he did not make a copy or notes of the secret message.

He could not say whether he had discussed the contents of the secret message within earshot of JOHNSTON in view of the fact of the incident in Commander SELIGMAN'S cabin above described. He was certain that he had never discussed the contents of this message directly with JOHNSTON.

He did not know whether or not any of the officers had done any of the above.

He said that JOHNSTON could have obtained the contents of the secret message in view of his presence when the above-mentioned memorandum was drawn up. He further added that JOHNSTON could have overheard discussions of the contents of this message among the officers.

He said that the only pictures that he had seen of the burning and exploding of the Lexington were those seen at the "luncheon table incident" above described and those he had seen on the USS Chester which had been taken by the Chaplain of the Chester. So far as he knew, the pictures he had seen on the Chester remained in the possession of the Chaplain of the Chester. He said that he had never seen any of these photographs in JOHNSTON'S possession.

He said that to his knowledge, the only person having possession of photographs of the burning and exploding of the Lexington was Commander SELIGMAN at the luncheon table, which incident is above described.

ELDRIDGE could advance no specific theory as to how JOHNSTON could have gotten possession of these photographs.

ELDRIDGE said that he had never been on the Minneapolis after the burning and exploding of the Lexington but that he had gone on board the Barnett directly from the USS Chester about May 15, 1942.

Lieutenant Commander ELDRIDGE may be reached at 2551 Camino del Rio, Mission Valley Road, care of FELIX J. ROSSOLL, telephone - Jackson 6593.

Lieutenant Commander ROBERT E. DIXON, United States Navy, a Scout

Bomber Squadron leader on the Lexington, was interviewed at his home at the El Cordova Hotel in Coronado, at which time he stated that he had had quarters on the Barnett returning to San Diego aft of the Commodore's Suite. He said that it was his practice to be in the Commodore's Suite on an average of about once a day, and he recalled being in there one night when the silhouette book of the Barnett was called for. He stated there were present SELIGMAN, JOHNSTON, Lieutenant Commander COLEMAN of the Barnett, TERRY, O'DONNELL, and possibly another Lexington officer. He said he was previously aware of the fact that the Japanese were making a sortie. He recalled this night that he went into the Commodore's Suite that the secret dispatch folder was on the table in front of SELIGMAN, and an Ensign was standing nearby. He could not recall whether the Ensign brought in the folder while DIXON was present or whether it was already there when DIXON entered the room. He said he did not hear a dispatch read concerning the makeup of the Japanese task force but he said that there was a discussion going on about this force. He remembered seeing on the table in front of SELIGMAN a list of Japanese ships written in pencil on a piece of scratch paper of an unknown size. He said that he thought SELIGMAN wrote it and he thinks he saw him write it but he was not sure of that. DIXON said he sat at one end of the table, and this pencil memorandum was passed to him and he read it. He thought that this pencil memorandum was broken up into three groups including a striking force of carriers and cruisers, a supporting force with battleships, and a follow-up force including transports. He said he recalled nothing on this paper other than the forces and the names of ships. There was definitely no other detail on the paper. He said he did not know how many persons present read this paper and he said that JOHNSTON was not sitting at the table with the officers but was walking about the room. He did not recall JOHNSTON'S at any time having the memorandum and did not know what became of it. He did not recall SELIGMAN'S reading the dispatch and does not think that he did while DIXON was present but he stated that as a result of the discussion about the Japanese force, some question arose concerning the detail of a Japanese battleship or cruiser, and Lieutenant Commander COLEMAN went for the silhouette book. He said he recalled O'DONNELL talking about the armament of a cruiser during this discussion. He recalled that the pencil memorandum contained somewhere in the neighborhood of twelve to fifteen names of ships, and he remembered figuring in his own mind that it was a formidable array that would be tough to stop. He said he did not remember any other papers being on the table at this time except the pencil memorandum and the dispatch folder, and he does not recall whether the Ensign took the dispatch folder back while he was in the room or not. He said that he was in the Commodore's Suite this particular evening for a period of only between fifteen and thirty minutes. He recalled nothing particular about the handwriting on the pencil notes that he saw and he did not recall the dispatch folder's ever being opened while he was there, but he stated that he himself got the gist of the message from the conversation that went on at that time.

DIXON concluded by saying that on quite a few occasions when various officers on the Lexington and the Barnett were reading secret dispatches, he had seen them fold up the dispatch folder when subject came into their

presence. He could cite no specific examples of this, but he said it was his opinion that it was practically impossible to keep all secret material from a man in JOHNSTON'S position. He said that any good newspaperman could obtain almost any information that he desired if he were placed in a position similar to the position JOHNSTON occupied on board the Lexington and returning upon the Barnett.

Lieutenant Commander EDWARD J. O'DONNELL, Gunnery Officer of the Lexington, advised that after discussing instant case with some of the other Lexington officers, he remembered being present in the Commodore's Suite one evening when the officers mentioned by DIXON were present. He stated he entered the room and remembered DIXON sitting at one end of the table and that DIXON handed him a piece of Navy scratch paper which listed the names of approximately twelve Japanese ships which were divided up into three groups including striking force, support force, and occupation force. He said when he was in the room he did not recall the dispatch folder being present and was sure that it was not present because he did not see instant message until subsequently, and if the dispatch folder had been present he would have seen the message at that time. He recalled, however, that there had been a discussion of the message in the room particularly concerning the types of ships in the Japanese force and the United States force which could be lined up to meet them. He recalled that one of the ships in this list had been seen by him in the China Sea and remembered that a book was sent for to determine how that ship was listed. He stated he thought the book sent for was "Janes' Fighting Ships". He said he knew JOHNSTON was present because he remembered JOHNSTON'S saying to him something to the effect "It will be some fight, Mac", but he stated that he was quite sure JOHNSTON did not join in the discussion regarding the strength of the Japanese force but apparently overheard some of the officers' discussion. O'DONNELL advised he was in the Suite for about fifteen to thirty minutes and said he did not know what became of the paper memorandum. He recalled JOHNSTON'S telling him on another occasion how he had outwitted Prime Minister WINSTON CHURCHILL in obtaining some highly confidential information, and he recalled another time that JOHNSTON asked him a lot of questions about his guns on the Lexington and also asked him for a secret new projectile that the Navy was using on the Lexington. O'DONNELL refused this request and stated that it was his impression from JOHNSTON'S general attitude that JOHNSTON was not very scrupulous and was interested first in the Chicago Tribune, with all other considerations being second. He stated by way of background that there had been other newspapermen on board the Lexington previously who had behaved quite differently from JOHNSTON and who had not attempted to get into discussions or obtain information on matters unless they were invited to do so.

Commander MORTON SELIGMAN was interviewed at the Naval Hospital, San Diego, with reference to the events described as taking place in the Commodore's Suite in the presence of Lieutenant Commanders ELDRIDGE, DIXON, and O'DONNELL, and he stated that he had the greatest confidence in those officers and was sure that the matters took place as they described them. He said

he did not deny that he may have made rough notes from the message describing the Japanese task force approaching Midway, but he reiterated that he did not recall the incidents described by DIXON and the others and definitely did not recall making any notes. He stated, however, that he has made rough notes in the past from messages but has never made copies of any secret messages. He stated that he has looked through all of his effects for any pencil memorandum listing the names of Japanese ships, but he does not have any such memorandums. He stated with reference to the discussion in the Commodore's Suite described by DIXON and the others that he was the Senior Officer present and as such he was willing to assume the full responsibility for not taking proper precautions to keep the gist of instant message from subject. He stated that he was positive, however, that no one had ever showed subject the message in question or deliberately given subject any pencil memorandum from which subject might have made up the information contained in the article published in certain newspapers on June 7, 1942.

SELIGMAN went on to say that he thought it could easily have happened that a discussion was entered upon by the Lexington officers concerning the possibilities of the United States meeting and defeating the Japanese task force of the strength described in the message in question and that JOHNSTON could have been present in the room and could have overheard the discussion. He said that in view of the recollections of the other officers, he felt that this must have happened and he must therefore as the Senior Officer have been careless by not keeping JOHNSTON from hearing any of this discussion.

Lieutenant Commander MacPHERSON, Medical Corps, United States Navy, who is attending Commander SELIGMAN at the Naval Hospital in San Diego, advised that Commander SELIGMAN is expecting to undergo two operations shortly, and he said that SELIGMAN'S condition is such as a result of his injuries aboard the Lexington that he doubts whether SELIGMAN'S memory of the events aboard the Lexington or the Barnett would be most dependable at the present time.

At the Minute Unit at the Destroyer Base it was learned that Ensign JAMES B. JOHNSON and Lieutenant IRVING E. DAVIS were in Birmingham, Alabama, and Northampton, Massachusetts, respectively on leave.

- REFERRED UPON COMPLETION TO THE OFFICE OF ORIGIN -



National Security Archive,
Suite 701, Gelman Library, The George Washington University,
2130 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037,
Phone: 202/994-7000, Fax: 202/994-7005, nsarchiv@gwu.edu