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22 June 1945

From: Commander Task Unit 76.20.20.  
(Commander LSM Flotilla SEVEN).  
To: Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet.  
Via: (1) Commander Task Group 76.20.  
(Commander LST Flotilla TWENTY-FOUR).  
(2) Commander Task Group 78.1.  
(Commander Amphibious Group SIX).  
(3) Commander Task Force 78.  
(Commander SEVENTH Amphibious Force).  
(4) Commander SEVENTH Fleet.

Subject: Action Report, WESTON Operation.

Reference: (a) Article 762, U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920.  
(b) Com7thPhib conf ltr, Serial 0563, dated  
10 March 1945.

Enclosure: (A) Commander Task Unit 76.20.20 Action Report,  
WESTON Operation.

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded herewith.
2. Commanding Officers of ships of this unit have been directed not to submit individual action reports as it is not believed that they could add anything of value to this report.

W.E. VERGE

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COMMANDER TASK UNIT 76.20.20  
Action Report, WESTON Operation

PART I

1. Planning on the WESTON landing began on 14 June 1945 at Labuan Island, Borneo with informal conferences with representatives of 9th Australian Division. Conferences were also held with CTG 78.1. These conferences were continued through 16 June at which time agreements were made as to beaches and landing plan.
2. The WESTON Assault Unit, Task Unit 76.20.20, was formed as derived from Commander LST Flotilla TWENTY-FOUR acting as Commander Task Group 76.20, Landing Attack Order No. 1-45. This unit consisted of LSM 54(FP), LST 562, LST 573, 31 LCMs, and 2 LCM(G)s. The Fire Support consisted of 2 destroyers, CHARRETTE (DD581) and BELL (DD587).
3. The general plan as developed was to lift the 2/32 Australian Infantry Battalion from Labuan Island, Borneo, transport and land at Gray beach at Peter hour on William day in order to seize and occupy WESTON in support of the reoccupation of BRUNEI BAY area in Northwest Borneo.
4. The beach as agreed upon was to consist of four slots, two on each side of a jetty extending about 150 feet from shore at WESTON. These slots were between nepa shacks built on stilts off the shore. The line of departure was 100 yards wide 150 yards off shore. The slots proved to be useless as there was a mud bank extending about 35 yards off shore and the terrain on land was so soft that all types of vehicles bogged down and stalled shortly after beaching.
5. The personnel and equipment carried by this unit was as follows: 1333 men, 104 vehicles, 120 tons of bulk cargo. The vehicles were: 41 jeeps, 34 jeep trailers, 8 two and one-half ton trucks, 4 three-ton trucks, 6 tanks, 9 dozers, 6 guns, and 4 miscellaneous trailers.
6. Peter hour was set at 0930 and William day was 17 June 1945. Minus nine zone time was in effect.
7. LSM 54, LST 562, LST 573, and LCMs were loaded at Brown beach on 15 and 16 June. Twenty-seven LVTs were loaded aboard the LSTs.

Enclosure "A"

-1-

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2

CONFIDENTIAL

Part II - CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS

14-16 June 1945

Conferences held between Commanding General 9th Australian Division, Commanding Officer 2/32 Australian Infantry Battalion, and Commander WESTON Assault Unit. Decision reached to land the 2/32 Australian Infantry Battalion at WESTON at 0930 on 17 June 1945. It was decided that the initial assault was to consist of ten waves. The first seven waves were to be landed according to a predetermined time schedule. The beach was designated as Gray Beach. It consisted of four slots. The four slots were to be established two on each side of a jetty that extends about 150 feet into the water. The jetty at WESTON is seven and one-half miles up Padas Bay from the Transport area, Point Able. A very narrow channel was buoyed by H.M.A.S. LACHLAN.

15 June 1945

LSM 54 and LSTs 562 and 573 loaded with equipment at Brown Beach, Labuan Island.

16 June 1945

0800 LCMs loaded with troops and equipment. Troops loaded aboard LSMs and LSTs.

1300 Attack Order completed and distributed to the Task Unit.

1800 Task Unit anchored in vicinity of Point Oboe, Lat. 05° - 14' North, Long. 115° - 16' East. LST 573 took an LCM with one disabled screw in tow.

17 June 1945

0330 Task Unit 76.20.20 underway from Point Oboe en route to Point Able. Course 111 degrees true, speed 6 knots. LSM 54 burned running lights intermittently so that craft in the vicinity would recognize the formation and not fire on the LCMs astern.

0555 Commanding Officer 2/32 Australian Infantry Battalion reported that six LCMs and one LCM(G) and no LVTs were to remain at the objective area.

0701 Anchored at Point Able. Commenced unloading LVTs from LSTs. LST 573 cast off its tow. Wave guides began forming waves into column. This column eventually consisted of 27 LVTs, 33 LCMs and 10 LCVPs and was 2 miles long.

0725 Control boat directed to proceed to the line of departure.

0730 Waves underway for line of departure. Control boat passed buoy number 2 abeam to starboard.

0732 Control boat passed buoy number four abeam to starboard.

0759 Control boat reported being abeam buoy number 5 to port. The current had a tendency to push boats to port out of channel and boats were directed to stay in narrow channel.

0805 Control Officer instructed to have the LCMs close up and maintain a straight column.



CONFIDENTIAL

Part II - CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS

17 June 1945 (cont'd)

- 0807 Control boat passed buoy number eight abeam and to starboard.
- 0815 Control boat passed buoy number ten abeam and to starboard.
- 0822 Commander WESTON Assault Unit dispatched an officer to direct the LCMs past the first channel buoy. They were turning too sharply to the left and were dangerously heading toward shoal water.
- 0822 Fifth Wave Guide reported that the second boat of the fourth wave appeared to be having steering trouble.
- 0822 Control boat passed buoy number twelve abeam and to starboard.
- 0830 Commander WESTON Assault Unit informed the Control Officer that LSM 54, LST 562 and LST 573 would depart from the area when the Control Officer returned to transport area about 1800. All available craft were to return with or prior to the Control Officer. Any craft not ready to return by that time were to remain at Gray Beach over night and to take orders from the LCM Commanding Officer.
- 0831 Control Officer notified that all craft had left the transport area.
- 0835 Control boat passed buoy number fourteen abeam and to starboard.
- 0837 Third boat of the fifth wave reported broken down.
- 0838 Control Officer reported a light flashing at the formation from the objective area. Also reported a small craft in the same area. Craft was unidentified and disappeared to northward up the river.
- 0845 First boat of third wave reported broken down. Control Officer informed that the LCMs must steer a straight course between buoys and stay in the channel. If they insisted on making sharp turns they would run aground.
- 0848 Control Officer notified Commander WESTON Assault Unit that reserve LCMs had been directed to take disabled craft in tow.
- 0849 Control boat passed buoy number sixteen abeam to starboard.
- 0900 Control boat passed buoy number eighteen abeam to starboard.
- 0906 Second boat of third wave reported trouble with steering gear.
- 0907 Commanding Officer 2/32 Australian Infantry Battalion requested a boat to pick up the Commanding General 9th Australian Division, Major General Wootten, at the transport area.
- 0908 Control boat passed buoy number twenty abeam to starboard.
- 0912 Control Officer reported he was at objective area and had established

Enclosure "A"



CONFIDENTIAL

Part II - CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS

17 June 1945 (cont'd)

the line of departure.

- 0912 Third boat of fifth wave reported disabled.
- 0913 Control Officer directed to dispatch waves to the beach.
- 0914 First wave of 4 LVTs and 2 LCM gunboats dispatched to the beach from the line of departure.
- 0916 First Wave landed at Gray Beach.
- 0917 Second wave of 4 LVTs dispatched to the beach.
- 0919 Second wave landed at Gray Beach.
- 0920 Third wave originally consisting of 4 LVTs reported to line of departure with 2 LVTs and was dispatched to the beach.
- 0921 Control Officer was notified that an LCPV would pick up the Commanding General, 9th Australian Division when located and bring him to the objective area.
- 0922 Third wave landed at Gray Beach.
- 0923 Control Officer dispatched Wave Guide boat to investigate the small island east of the river channel and the shore line 3000 yards up stream. Results of this investigation were negative.
- 0924 Fourth wave originally consisting of 4 LVTs reported at line of departure with 3 LVTs and was dispatched to the beach.
- 0926 Fourth wave landed at Gray Beach.
- 0927 Fifth wave originally consisting of 5 LVTs reported at line of departure with 4 LVTs and was dispatched to the beach.
- 0929 Fifth wave landed at Gray Beach.
- 0930 Sixth wave of 4 LVTs dispatched to the beach.
- 0932 Sixth wave landed at Gray Beach.
- 0934 Seventh wave of 2 LVTs dispatched to the beach.
- 0935 Seventh wave landed at Gray Beach.
- 0935 Commanding Officer 2/32 Australian Infantry Battalion landed at Gray Beach and assumed command of forces ashore.
- 0940 Eighth wave of 4 LCMs dispatched to the beach.

CONFIDENTIAL

Part II - CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS

17 June 1945 (cont'd)

0941 Eighth wave landed at Gray Beach.

0945 Control Officer reported as follows: "An unloading LCMs at end of jetty. There appears to be a mud bank extending out from the beach about 35 yards. The last two waves are being held up on instructions from Commanding Officer 2/32 Australian Infantry Battalion until debris is removed from jetty and along beach. No resistance on beach. Possible resistance inland."

0958 Ninth wave of 2 LCMs dispatched to the beach.

1000 Ninth wave landed at Gray Beach.

1005 Disabled LVTs 4 in number assembled and dispatched to beach as a wave.

1010 Reserve LCVPs 5 in number arrived at line of departure.

1017 Two reserve LCVPs dispatched to the beach.

1018 Reserve LCVPs landed at Gray Beach.

1019 Tenth wave of 2 LCMs dispatched to the beach.

1020 Tenth wave landed at Gray Beach.

1024 Commenced sending unloaded craft back to the transport area for turn around trips.

1028 3 reserve LCVPs dispatched to the beach.

1030 All Reserve Company troops landed.

1049 Two smoke columns observed about 4,000 yards northeast of objective area.

1051 ComDesDiv 28 relieved ComDesRon 22 of duty as Fire Support.

1054 Commanding General 9th Australian Division landed at the objective area, having been sent up the river on an LCVP.

1055 Six planes of the air cover patrol arrived southwest of objective area.

1100 Reports received that snipers were making sporadic attacks at LCMs proceeding down the bay. An LCM(G) was sent down to investigate. Results were negative.

1225 Six planes of the air cover on patrol were observed coming from the south.

1240 Six planes sighted proceeding from the south toward the objective area. Identified as friendly.

Enclosure "A"

CONFIDENTIAL

Part II - CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS

17 June 1945 (cont'd)

- 1251 Six more friendly planes sighted proceeding from the south toward the objective area.
- 1336 Fire Support ships, CHARRETTE and BELL secured.
- 1500 Report received that eight LVTs would be unable to return due to mechanical difficulty and that sixteen LCMs would be unable to unload prior departure of Task Unit from the transport area. They were directed to remain in the area. Sixteen LVTs were reloaded in LST 562 and three LVTs in LST 573.
- 1544 Control Officer turned over duties at the objective area to the Commanding Officer of the LCMs and departed for the transport area. LST 573 directed to complete unloading 90 tons of bulk cargo and LCMs were provided. LST 562 completed unloading 30 tons of bulk cargo.
- 2000 LSM 54, LST 562 and LST 573 released from duty this unit and directed to report to Commander Task Unit 76.20.50 for duty with LUTONG Assault Unit. One LCM(G) and ten LCMs were dispatched to Brown Beach. LSM 54 proceeded to Yellow Beach for loading, and LSTs 562 and 573 proceeded to Brown Beach for unloading of LVTs and reloading.

Part III

The Fire Support Plan was not carried out due to the fact that advance reports from the Hydrographic Survey Unit stated that there were few or no enemy forces in the objective area. The destroyers CHARRETTE (DD581) and BELL (DD587) remained on station during the day for call fire. None was required. The first few waves of LVT's sprayed the nepa shacks on shore with machine gun fire as they landed. The two LCM(G)s assigned to the unit did not fire.

Part IV

Although there were reports of enemy sniping activities on boats proceeding down the bay there were no casualties and no damage due to enemy action. There was no battle damage to the enemy.



CONFIDENTIAL

Part V

1. The four slots originally planned for landing proved to be useless. The village was previously noted to be built out over the water. Commander WESTON Assault Unit had directed the LVTs to plough through the shacks in the hope of making suitable slots or passage for the following LCMs. This was done and areas were cleared but the slots made were unsuitable because of the lack of depth of water and the soft marshy bottom. LCMs were eventually unloaded at the jetty which was a built up dirt ramp. Eight LVTs bogged down inland and many trucks, jeeps and tanks became stranded after proceeding a short distance inland. It was necessary to improvise two landing slots at the end of the jetty and unload the LCMs at these points. The narrowness of the channel, the current, and the large number of craft in the river presented a very difficult task to the Control Officer. He was also working at a distance of 7-1/2 miles from the Assault Commander, and the only means of communication for instructions was by voice radio. In spite of these handicaps the Control Officer kept the situation well in hand by maintaining all craft, awaiting unloading, in an orderly arrangement out in the stream.

2. The LVTs encountered considerable difficulty in landing and moving inland due to the soft marshy terrain which resulted in LVTs bogging down and causing engines to be burned out. The only durable access inland was via a narrow gauge railroad bed. Because of the ties and rails in the road bed a number of tracks on the vehicles were disengaged.

3. The assault craft, 70 in all, were expeditiously dispatched to the jetty and a minimum of lost time was experienced in shifting boats at the landing points. Upon arrival of all craft in the area the Control Officer realized that the original assembly area for LCMs on call was not suitable. He immediately directed the LCMs on call to tie up to a sunken wreck northwest of the originally planned position. This proved most advantageous and eliminated possibility of traffic congestion. This operation could not have been run off so smoothly but for the effort, planning, and complete control at all times by the Control Officer.

4. For this operation the line of departure was seven and one-half miles from the transport area. It was found that LVTs are not well suited for approaches of this distance. Many of the LVTs were broken down before they reached the line of departure. One wave which started with four LVTs arrived at the line of departure with but two LVTs. This type of craft is best suited for the usual type of short run from the line of departure to the beach but cannot stand long runs. In this operation they were required to run 15 miles. Furthermore the maximum speed of an LVT is four knots and this necessitates a long period of time for the assault craft in proceeding from the transport area to the line of departure, when long runs are required.

Part VI

While on the surface this operation appeared to be small in nature yet because of the distances and narrowness of the approach area personal responsibilities of the individual were greater than in an operation of larger scope.

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Part VI (cont'd)

The performance of all personnel was extremely gratifying and that of certain individuals was outstanding. Recommendations for awards will be made the subject of separate correspondence.

Enclosure "A"