

June 29, 1942

MEMORANDUM

Re: STANLEY CLAUDE SAMUEL JOHNSTON  
ESPIONAGE - J

This memorandum furnishes the results of investigative work completed in compliance with the requests contained in the enclosure furnished by Mr. William D. Mitchell in his letter of June 24, 1942, to the Honorable Francis Biddle. It is noted that these requests pertain to the report of Special Agent William A. Robinson, Jr., dated June 16, 1942, at San Diego, California. There are also set forth the results of additional general investigative work performed to date.

Report of Special Agent William A. Robinson, Jr.,  
Dated June 16, 1942, at San Diego, California

Rear Admiral Frederick Sherman was interviewed on June 27, 1942, at his suite in the Wardman Park Hotel by Special Agent E. J. Gebben and was requested to furnish information in detail as to what "understanding" he had to the effect that Johnston's publications would have to be submitted to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet or the Chief of Staff at Washington, D. C. Admiral Sherman explained that he saw Johnston for the first time about three days after Johnston first came aboard the USS Lexington. Johnston was introduced to him by Commander Seligman, and at that time Admiral Sherman did not request that Johnston's credentials be exhibited to him, inasmuch as he presumed this matter had been handled by Commander Seligman. On the occasion of his first meeting with Johnston, he explained to him that it would be necessary for Johnston to clear all of his publications through the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu.

After the USS Lexington was sunk, Admiral Sherman was aboard the USS Minneapolis and the USS Astoria. Johnston was also aboard both of these vessels with other survivors of the USS Lexington. Admiral Sherman recalls a conversation with Johnston aboard one of the above vessels, during which Johnston requested advice as to where he should clear his publications in view of the fact that he would not be taken to Honolulu before arriving in the United States. At that time Admiral Sherman informed him that inasmuch as he was returning to the mainland, he should clear all publications through the Commander in Chief of the Fleet, Washington, D. C.

Admiral Sherman was questioned closely as to the exact instructions which he furnished to Johnston, and he explained that he could not recall the exact words which he used. However, he stated as follows: "Although I am unable to furnish the definite words which I used on the several occasions when I discussed with Johnston the manner in which his publications should be cleared through the Navy Department, I can swear that Johnston had full knowledge of the fact that any information he secured while acting as a war correspondent aboard vessels of the United States Fleet must necessarily

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receive clearance through the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet or through the Commander in Chief of the Fleet, Washington, D. C." Admiral Sherman did not recall any specific conversation with Johnston relating to articles which the latter might write after his return to the United States, but he stated that the conversations resulted in a complete understanding on the part of Johnston that all information he gained while an accredited war correspondent must have Navy clearance before being published.

Admiral Sherman reached San Diego on the USS Chester prior to the arrival of Johnston, who traveled on the USS Barnett. He did not see Johnston in San Diego, however, while en route from San Diego to Washington he was contacted by Johnston in Chicago. At that time he mentioned to Johnston that he understood Johnston and the Chicago Tribune were in some difficulty due to the fact that one of Johnston's articles had been published without Navy clearance. Johnston explained to him that he filed his story with the Chicago Tribune with the understanding on his part that necessary clearance would be obtained for it before it would be published. He further explained that the Managing Editor of the Chicago Tribune had taken full responsibility for the entire matter and that the difficulty appeared to have been cleared up.

Admiral Sherman also stated that a further proof of the fact that Johnston realized the necessity of securing clearance through the Commander in Chief of the Fleet, Washington, D. C., was the fact that he once mentioned to Admiral Sherman that he would be unable to secure proper clearance for his articles when he reached San Diego and that this would necessitate the articles being forwarded to Washington, D. C.

Admiral Sherman did not at any time see any documentary instructions which Johnston may have received from the Navy Department and he explained that it was natural for him to presume that all such matters had been attended to by the Public Relations Division of the Navy Department at Honolulu prior to the accrediting of Johnston as a war correspondent.

Mr. Mitchell requested that Mr. Arthur Sears Henning, who is in charge of the Chicago Tribune, Washington, D. C., Bureau, be interviewed and questioned as to what material he may have received by air mail from Johnston when the latter was in San Diego, California.

Mr. Henning was interviewed at his office on June 26, 1942, by Special Agents L. L. Tyler and E. J. Gebben. When questioned regarding material forwarded direct to him by Johnston he stated that he had at no time received any articles or stories direct from Johnston. He explained that it was his understanding that Johnston had forwarded certain copy to the Navy Department at Washington but Mr. Henning is positive that nothing was sent by Johnston to the Washington Bureau of the Chicago Tribune or to Mr. Henning himself by Johnston at any time.

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Accrediting of Johnston as a Tribune Correspondent

There is attached hereto a copy of a Memorandum for Correspondents, dated January 9, 1942, which is signed "Waldo Drake, Lieutenant Commander, USNR, Public Relations Officer." This is the memorandum which has previously been mentioned in memoranda setting forth the results of investigation conducted, and it should be noted a copy of this was furnished to Johnston prior to the time he boarded the USS Lexington. There is also transmitted a copy of a memorandum furnished Commander R. W. Berry under date of June 18, 1942, by Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake.

Lieutenant Commander Drake advised that he orally instructed Johnston that all articles written at any time while operating under Pacific Fleet credentials or at any time thereafter must be submitted to a representative of the Commander-in-chief for censorship before publication. Johnston was not given permission to publish articles based upon his observations while with the Fleet after he returned to the United States, but was given specific instructions to the contrary. According to Lieutenant Commander Drake, Johnston agreed to comply with all these regulations.

Communiques Issued by C. W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief,  
United States Pacific Fleet

There are attached hereto the following enclosures which consist of communiques issued by Admiral Nimitz:

Communique #1, dated June 4, 1942      Communique #4, dated June 7, 1942  
Communique #2, dated June 5, 1942      Press Release #52, dated June 8, 1942  
Communique #3, dated June 6, 1942

Copies of these communiques were forwarded to Commander Berry by Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake.

Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press

There is attached hereto a copy of the Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press issued by the Office of Censorship, Washington, D. C. It will be noted that this edition is dated June 15, 1942, and includes all amendments up to date.

Original Honolulu Secret Message #311221

Captain Carl Holden, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., has in his possession at the present time a photographic copy of the original secret message #311221, which was sent out from the headquarters of Admiral Nimitz at Honolulu on May 31, 1942. He also has in his possession a deposition dated June 18, 1942, signed by Lieutenant Commander Edwin T. Layton, Staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet. Captain Holden stated that he is willing to make this material available at any time it may be necessary in the future for any legal proceedings which may be instituted.

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Official Navy Photographs in Johnston's Possession

Lieutenant Commander E. J. Long, Public Relations Division, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., stated that the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, received a number of original negatives for photographs taken at the battle of the Coral Sea. Commander Long compared the photographs which were developed from these negatives with the photographs which Johnston delivered to the Chicago Tribune and which were later furnished to the Navy Department by that paper. As has previously been set out, the Chicago Tribune had fourteen separate photographs. Commander Long was able to identify twelve of the fourteen photographs as being identical with the official Navy pictures, the negatives of which were forwarded from Honolulu. The serial numbers appearing on the backs of the photographs secured from the Chicago Tribune have previously been set out. These serial numbers have been found to correspond as follows with the official Navy serial numbers:

0151	AN44054 - 11
0159	AN44054 - 16
0163	AN44054 - 7
0158	AN44054 - 25
0152	AN44054 - 26
0162	AN44054 - 12
0160	AN44054 - 9
0161	AN44054 - 30
0153	AN44054 - 29
0155	AN44054 - 28
0156	AN44054 - 21
0157	AN44054 - 18

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The memoranda previously furnished under dates of June 20 and June 22, 1942, furnish information regarding the handling of the photographs in question by the Navy Personnel. A review of the information obtained to date reflects that twelve of the fourteen photographs which were in the possession of the Chicago Tribune have been identified as having been taken from aboard the USS Minneapolis. A study of the other two photographs indicates that they were taken from aboard the USS Lexington itself, however the identity of the person who took these photographs has not, to date, been established. It may also be noted, as a set out in memoranda of June 22, 1942, that the photographs which were taken from aboard the USS Minneapolis and later developed on that ship were given serial numbers 0151 and 0181. These numbers correspond with the Chicago Tribune photograph numbers.

Commander Long stated that he, as an expert photographer, will testify to the fact that the twelve Chicago Tribune photographs described above as being identical with photographs taken aboard the USS Minneapolis must have come from one original negative. He explained that the photographs could be positively identified as being similar by the position of the white-caps on waves, the figures of various men appearing in the water and aboard ship, the position of the clouds, the position of antiaircraft explosions and other numerous details.

Rear Admiral Frederick Sherman, when interviewed in Washington, D. C. on June 27, 1942, was questioned again as to the method in which the photographs of the Coral Sea battle were handled. He explained that he sent out a general request to all of the war ships which comprised the task force to send to him aboard the USS Minneapolis at least five copies of all photographs taken during the Coral Sea engagement. As a result of this request, numerous photographs were received by him, and he and Lieutenant Commander Seligman picked out what they considered to be the best photographs and forwarded these to Washington, D. C. with the official report submitted by Admiral Sherman. Admiral Sherman was questioned as to previous information received which indicated that eight sets of a certain group of photographs were made up and after one set was furnished Admiral Nimitz and another set kept by Lieutenant Booda for the official files of the USS Minneapolis, the remainder was given to Admiral Sherman. He was also reminded of the fact that in a previous interview he had indicated that he received five sets of the photographs mentioned above.

Admiral Sherman stated that due to the large numbers of photographs which he examined prior to the submission of his report to Washington and due to the fact that very few of the photographs had on them appropriate serial numbers, he is not at the present time in a position to state definitely just what disposition was made of the various photographs. He does not recall having furnished any photographs to Johnston but believes that he exhibited a number of them to Johnston at various times while aboard the USS Minneapolis. He further explained that if Johnston had requested him for

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copies of certain photographs, he would most likely have furnished them inasmuch as he was certain that Johnston understood fully the fact that he could not have such pictures published until they were officially released by the Navy Department. He then mentioned that he has some recollection of Johnston having possession of certain photographs which show the bombing of a Japanese carrier and explained that one of the Japanese carriers was bombed by planes from the USS Lexington on May 7, 1942, and that photographs of this bombing were developed that night aboard the USS Lexington. He does not recall that Johnston ever had in his possession any photographs showing the burning and sinking of the USS Lexington itself.

F. W. Scanland, former Captain USS Astoria, now Captain of the Yard, Pearl Harbor Navy Yard, stated that he only received three prints of photographs of the USS Lexington from Admiral Sherman. These prints are still in Captain Scanland's possession and two of these prints have been identified as number 0151 and number 0158, which were taken from the USS Minneapolis. The third print in his possession has not as yet been identified. Captain Scanland maintained that these are the only prints of the USS Lexington which have been given to him by anyone. None of these prints bear the official stamp identifying them as official photographs. Captain Scanland advised that Johnston seemed to be very friendly with Admiral Sherman, who occupied Captain Scanland's cabin while on the USS Astoria. On one occasion Captain Scanland observed Stanley Johnston in the cabin with Admiral Sherman and noted numerous photographs lying on the table in the room.

Captain Frank Lowry, USS Astoria, advised that he received no photographs of the USS Lexington from Admiral Sherman, but did receive a complete set of prints from his official photographer, Lieutenant Booda. These prints he still has in his files.



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