

## MEMORANDUM

June 18, 1942

Re: STANLEY CLAUDE SAMUEL JOHNSTON  
ESPIONAGE J

This memorandum supplements and brings up to date previous memoranda submitted in this investigation.

Reference is made to Section Four of the memorandum furnished Mr. Hoover by Mr. W. D. Mitchell and also to the third paragraph on page one of the memorandum dated June 17, 1942, which furnished results of investigation conducted on that date. It will be noted that the references refer to inquiry being made as to any verbal restrictions which may have been placed upon Stanley Johnston regarding the manner in which he should get clearance for his stories and sets out that Commander R. W. Berry was making inquiry of appropriate Naval officials in Honolulu as to any possible verbal restrictions.

Commander Berry advised that he telephonically communicated with Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake at Honolulu on the evening of June 17, 1942. Commander Drake informed him that he had verified the fact that Johnston did not sign any special restrictions nor did he sign the full Navy commitment. Commander Drake also stated that he did not recall giving Johnston any specific verbal instructions regarding the manner in which he should get clearance for his stories submitted from the combat zone. However, he informed Commander Berry that he had engaged in numerous conversations with Johnston and that there was no doubt whatsoever in his mind from the general nature of these conversations that Johnston had a clear realization as to the duties and obligations imposed upon all war correspondents by the Navy Department as to the manner in which they should get clearance for their stories. Commander Drake promised to immediately dictate a memorandum setting out his best recollections of these conversations with Johnston and air mail this memorandum to Commander Berry. A copy of this memorandum will be made available by the Navy Department.

A radiogram message from the Honolulu Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation stated that Commander Drake had been interviewed by Agents of that Office and he informed them that he had given Johnston oral instructions in the presence of Lieutenant James E. Bassett with respect to the necessity for clearance on any articles submitted by Johnston by the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet before these articles were published and that as long as Johnston was in the Hawaii area he complied with these instructions. Commander Drake also said that he had furnished Johnston a copy of a memorandum entitled "Subjects Not To Be Released for Publication" which is now contained in Navy commitments entitled "Regulations for Correspondents Accredited to the United States Pacific Fleet" dated April 12, 1942. It will be noted here that a copy of this Navy commitment mentioned above was attached as an enclosure to the memorandum summarizing the investigation which was dated June 17, 1942. Commander Drake further explained that regulations

Memorandum

- 2 -

requiring war correspondents to sign an agreement as contained in Appendix A of the above mentioned regulations were not promulgated until after Johnston took passage on the USS Lexington. Commander Drake concluded by stating that Johnston did not sign any papers in Honolulu as it was assumed that all Naval regulations had been complied with before Johnston was dispatched to the Pacific Fleet by the Secretary of the Navy and reference to the memorandum of June 17, 1942, reflects that Commander Berry stated that there were no written instructions signed by Johnston in the files of the Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

The attention of the Honolulu Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been called to the information furnished by Commander Berry relative to his telephonic contact with Commander Drake and that Office has been requested to present the apparent conflict of Commander Drake's statements for his attention and after this has been done to secure full and detailed written signed statements from Commander Drake and Lieutenant Bassett.

The memorandum of June 17, 1942, on page two, three and four refers to certain photographs of the USS Lexington when it was in a sinking condition and sets out details regarding the fact that these photographs were in the possession of Johnston and the Chicago Tribune prior to their official release by the Navy Department. It is noted that the third paragraph on page three of this memorandum states that Lieutenant R. Q. White, USNR, Chicago Illinois, forwarded photographs and photographic plates by registered mail to Rear Admiral H. A. Hepburn. Lieutenant Commander E. J. Long, Press Relations Division, Washington, D. C., made inquiry and determined that the envelope in question was opened personally by Admiral Hepburn who retained the photographs, the plates and the envelope in his possession until he delivered them to Commander Long who has retained possession of these articles to the present time.

The memorandum of June 17, 1942, furnishes information as to the manner in which clearance was received from Lieutenant Commander Paul C. Smith on the series of stories by Johnston regarding the battle of the Coral Sea. However, it is noted that the last paragraph in the memorandum submitted on June 16, 1942, refers to an envelope of copy left by Johnston in San Diego on June 4, 1942, which was mailed by Admiral Ralston Holmes to Navy Headquarters, Washington, D. C. Lieutenant Commander Paul C. Smith who actually granted clearance for the stories was questioned as to the copy received from Admiral Hepburn and he stated that to the best of his recollection that copy consisted of the same stories which he cleared for publication for the Chicago Tribune only they were in the form used by newspaper reporters when compiling material which is intended to be sent by cable. He explained that these "cablies" were undoubtedly prepared by Johnston while he was aboard ship and that he most likely was of the belief that it would be necessary for him to cable his stories to the United States. However, after

Memorandum

- 3 -

his arrival in San Diego and his furnishing these "cables" to the office of Admiral Holmes he proceeded to Chicago and then prepared the stories in the manner in which they were set out when Commander Smith gave them clearance. Commander Smith is having a search made of his files in order to verify these facts.

The memorandum dated June 15, 1942, which reflects investigative work performed to that date on page thirteen, paragraph four, sets out a statement by Commander Mortimer Seligman to the effect that he could not understand why the secret radio dispatch in question was still available in San Francisco because Captain W. B. Phillips stated in San Francisco that he burned messages of this type at the end of each day. Inquiry was made of the Office of Naval Intelligence at San Francisco as to the existence of any Naval requirements to the effect that messages of this type must be burned at the end of each day. However, that Office was unable to furnish the proper answer. Captain Carl F. Holden, Washington, D. C., Navy Headquarters, was questioned on this point and he stated that there are no Naval regulations which require that messages of this nature be burned.

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Interview with Lieutenant Commander Edward J. O'Donnell, Gunnery Officer, USS Lexington

Lieutenant Commander Edward J. O'Donnell, Gunnery Officer, USS Lexington, returned to San Diego, California, on the USS Barnett. Lieutenant Commander O'Donnell stated that he saw the secret message in question on board the USS Barnett but he was unable to recall the exact date when he had seen it or who had exhibited the message to him. Lieutenant Commander O'Donnell was unable to shed any light on the manner in which Stanley Johnston may have come into possession of the content of the secret message. However, Lieutenant Commander O'Donnell felt positive that none of the officers would show the secret message to Johnston.

Interview with Ensign Edward H. Railsback, Decoding Officer, USS Lexington

Ensign Edward H. Railsback advised that while on board the USS Barnett, after the Lexington had been sunk, he decoded messages. He related that either he or one of the other decoding officers decoded the messages which were received by the USS Barnett, following which the original coded message was placed in a folder in the Communications Room and the decoded copy, if secret and confidential, was set aside to be looked at by the Communications Officer of the USS Barnett, Lieutenant Bontecou. Secret or confidential messages were shown by Bontecou to the Captain and Executive Officer of the USS Barnett and returned to the Communications Officers of the USS Lexington, who were serving as the decoding watch on the USS Barnett. Such messages would then be routed by one of the five decoding officers of the USS

Memorandum

- 4 -

Lexington to Commanders Seligman, Junker and Duckworth, and Lieutenant Commanders Terry and O'Donnell. The decoded messages would then be returned to the Communications Room where they were placed in the folder with the coded copies. Railsback advised that he never at any time routed any messages to any persons other than the five above named officers of the USS Lexington. He also stated that he had never seen Stanley Johnston reading a secret or confidential message and that he had no knowledge of Johnston ever having access to any such message. Railsback stated that Johnston at no time had access to the Communications Room. Ensign Railsback does not remember having seen the secret dispatch in question but recalls having seen some dispatches relating to Midway Island which were received prior to his boarding the USS Barnett.



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