

June 20, 1942

MEMORANDUMRe: STANLEY CLAUDE SAMUEL JOHNSTON;
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This memorandum brings up to date the investigative work completed since the submission of the memorandum dated June 18, 1942, and also furnishes specific information requested in the memoranda directed to Mr. John Edgar Hoover by Mr. W. D. Mitchell.

Accrediting of Johnston as a Tribune Correspondent

Lieutenant Commander R. W. Berry, Public Relations Division, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., made available the complete file dealing with the accrediting of Johnston as a war correspondent for the Chicago Tribune. Commander Berry explained that he did not have any personal knowledge of the first transactions which occurred, inasmuch as he was not in Washington at the time. The first serial in the file is a letter from the Chicago Tribune under date of December 29, 1941, addressed to Lieutenant Commander H. W. Gordon, Jr., Public Relations, Navy Department. This letter requested that the Navy Department approve four Tribune reporters to cover war operations aboard United States battleships. Stanley Johnston was listed among the four. Copies of this letter, as well as all other correspondence contained in this particular file at the Navy Department, are being photostated at the present time and will be made available.

Commander Gordon, who is presently assigned to sea duty, was interviewed in Washington while he was en route from Boston to Tampa. He recalled having been contacted by Walter Trohan of the Washington Bureau of the Chicago Tribune on several occasions when the Tribune was seeking to have Johnston accredited. However, he is certain that at no time were there any verbal discussions between any representative of the Tribune and himself regarding restrictions to be placed upon the war correspondents or anything as to the manner in which their stories should be cleared through the Navy. It may be noted here that nowhere in the file described above are there any communications which pertain to restrictions or clearances. The second serial in the file is a notation regarding transportation being furnished for Johnston after his arrival in San Francisco. This serial is dated January 14, 1942. A memorandum in the file states that Walter Trohan was informed on January 16, 1942, that transportation for Johnston had been approved and that the Tribune should contact the Navy Office in San Francisco.

The file dealing with the accrediting of Johnston, mentioned in the second paragraph on this page, has been secured. Photostatic copies of all of the material contained in the file are attached hereto.

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A radiogram dated March 4, 1942, from Admiral Nimitz' headquarters, Honolulu, stated that Johnston had arrived and it requested that he be accredited by Washington as a war correspondent. There is written in long-hand opposite the name of Johnston on this communication a notation to the effect that he was cleared by ONI, 1-9-42. A radiogram from Washington to Admiral Nimitz' headquarters under date of March 10, 1942, approved the accrediting of Johnston. The last serial in the file is a letter from the Public Relations Division of the War Department, which is dated May 11, 1942, and which states that Johnston, among others, is a "cleared correspondent."

It may be noted here that Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake and Lieutenant James Bassett have submitted written statements in Honolulu to the effect that Drake verbally informed Johnston as to the restrictions placed upon him for clearing his articles. This matter is treated in more detail in this memorandum under the subheading of the interview with Commander Drake.

It should also be noted that Rear Admiral Sherman has stated that he verbally instructed Johnston as to the method of clearing his stories when the latter came aboard the USS Lexington. This is also treated in detail under the interview with Admiral Sherman.

Clearance of Johnston's Stories

Lieutenant Commander Paul C. Smith, Public Relations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., has stated that Johnston did not submit any stories which were cleared through the Navy Department at Washington prior to his series which dealt with the battle of the Coral Sea. There have been no other stories by Johnston cleared since that series was approved. Commander Smith explained that Johnston, while apparently still aboard some ship in the Pacific, forwarded to Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake at Honolulu two of his series of stories on the Coral Sea battle. These stories were sent to Washington by Commander Drake. Attached to these stories was a copy of a letter which was worded as follows:

"Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake
Press Censorship Office
Subbase--Cincpac, P.H.

"Dear Waldo:

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"Please see if you can get this stuff censored and have commercial cables send it as fast as you can arrange to have the news cleared. What a pal you turned out to be - wait till I get back to Honolulu - hope to see you inside next ten-twelve days if the luck holds.

Sincerely yours,

(No signature) "

Commander Smith then stated that the remainder of the Coral Sea stories were forwarded to his office from Navy headquarters, San Diego, California. With the stories was a copy of a letter which reads as follows:

"Commander Anderson
Eleventh Naval District Headquarters

"Dear Commander:

"I spoke to Lieutenant H. Requa last night and arranged to call and see you this morning. Meanwhile I have to take the early train to Los Angeles and am sending these stories to you in the hope that you can somehow forward them in the official manner to the department in Washington concerned with censoring them.

"When they are received there, I would be pleased if the censor would inform Mr. Henning, Chief of the Chicago Trib. Washington Bureau, Albee Buildings, that the department has them and when released for publication will turn them over to him in time for publication.

"Just to get things straitened out I will telephone you from Los Angeles.

"Hoping to see you when I return here, I remain

Yours truly,

Stan C. Johnston "

This letter was dated June 4, 1942, addressed to Commander Anderson, Eleventh Naval District Headquarters, and written on the stationery of Hotel Del Coronado, Coronado, California.

Commander Smith explained that the material sent from Honolulu and that sent from San Diego reached his office in Washington a very short time before the stories as they actually appeared in print were forwarded by Johnston from Chicago to the Tribune Bureau in Washington. Details regarding the handling of these stories appears in the memorandum submitted

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under date of June 17, 1942. Commander Smith explained that due to the fact the Chicago stories arrived and were examined by him, no action has been taken on the first two series of stories received and they have remained in his file to the present time.

Official Navy Photographs in Johnston's Possession

Information concerning the official Navy photographs which were determined to have been turned over to the Chicago Tribune by Johnston prior to the time they were released by the Navy Department was furnished in the memorandum dated June 17, 1942. Information assembled to date, which is set out in greater detail later in this memorandum in the interviews with particular Navy officers, indicates that photographs of the sinking and burning of the USS Lexington were taken from a number of United States warships in the vicinity of the Lexington. After these photographs were developed aboard ship, some apparently were forwarded direct to Washington, while others were sent to Honolulu. At the present time there is no central file of these pictures and it is not possible to definitely determine the particular individual who developed any specific picture. Due to the rush in which these pictures were developed and dispatched, the appropriate and proper serial numbers do not appear on the backs of the pictures.

Lieutenant Commander E. J. Long, photographer, Public Relations, Navy Department, Washington, furnished information regarding the photographs in question, as is set out in the memorandum of June 17, 1942. He has been reinterviewed, and he has verified the statement of Lieutenant White of the Navy Department, Chicago, Illinois, to the effect that White received two complete sets of photographs and one complete set of photographic plates from the Chicago Tribune and mailed these to Admiral Hepburn, Washington, D. C. These sets of photographs consist of fourteen pictures each and the photographic plates number thirteen inasmuch as two small photographs are shown on one plate. One set of photographs consist of the original pictures which Johnston delivered to the Tribune upon his arrival in Chicago and which were used by the Tribune laboratory in making the photographic plates. The second set of photographs are pictures which were made from the photographic plates by the Tribune. As has previously been explained, the set of photographs which were sent by the Tribune to its Washington Bureau had typewritten data on tissue paper, "flimsies" on the rear of the photographs. It is noted that the one set of photographs from Chicago has similar notations. The set of photographs which Johnston delivered to the Tribune have stamped on the back the official stamp of the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics. It is noted that the set submitted to the Tribune by Johnston consists of photographs four by five and eight by ten, while the second set consists of photographs eight by ten and ten by twelve, which are printed on proof paper. Commander Long is having four by five photographs made of each of the fourteen pictures and copies of these will be forwarded to Navy headquarters, Honolulu, in an attempt to have them identified and obtain information as to the ship on which they were developed and the person by whom they were taken.

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Commander Long explained that the photographs which had been appearing along with Johnston's articles, which are currently running in the newspapers, were taken from the photographs officially released by the Navy Department and that these can be secured by any newspaper which has Associated Press or any other press association coverage.

Commander Long further stated that the photograph which has the Navy stamp on the back and the Serial #0163, which was secured from the Tribune, is an absolute duplicate of the official Navy photograph which was forwarded to Washington by Admiral Sherman in his report to Admiral Willson. It is further noted that the picture which Admiral Sherman sent in also has the number 0163 on the back, and Commander Long said that he can testify as an expert photographer that both pictures were taken from one original negative. He bases this statement upon the position of certain figures in the photograph, such as white caps on waves, smoke from explosions, sailors sliding down ropes, and small boats approaching the USS Lexington. According to Commander Long, the only persons who could release these photographs are Admiral Nimitz and Admiral Hepburn. Commander Long ascertained that Admiral Hepburn did not release these photographs prior to their being found in the possession of the Chicago Tribune, and an appropriate inquiry is being made at Admiral Nimitz' headquarters to verify the fact that they were not released there.

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Handling Secret Messages on the USS Barnett

Captain Carl F. Holden, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., explained the general handling of secret dispatches aboard a ship of the type of the USS Barnett. He explained that the message is originally received in the Radio Room in a coded form, of course. From the coded message a decoded copy is submitted and the coded copy is then placed in a safe in the Radio Room where it is kept in numerical order. The decoded copy, of which only one is made, is routed to the officers aboard who are entitled to see it and after it has been initialed by these individuals it is placed in a safe in the Communications Room. The commanding officer of a ship is under no obligation to decode messages which are not directed to his ship. However, in some instances such messages which are known in the service as "intercepts" are decoded. There are no special regulations as to the length of time "intercepts" should be maintained. However, if they are not destroyed immediately after they are reviewed by the interested officers it is incumbent that they be maintained in a guarded location. Captain Holden stated that the fact that the members of the Lexington crew were traveling on the Barnett undoubtedly is the only reason that so many "intercepts" were decoded. It is noted that Officers Bontecou and Brewer carried the decoded copy of message #311221 to the officers who were aboard the USS Barnett who initialed them. The question was raised as to whether the message according to Naval regulations should have been destroyed but it would seem from the information furnished by Captain Holden there is no set time as to the destruction of "intercepts". Messages which are not "intercepts" are ordinarily maintained from eighteen months to two years aboard the ships receiving them.

Questioning of Johnston by Naval officials

It has been noted that some question has arisen as to who was present in the office of Admiral Willson when Johnston was first questioned as to the story appearing on June 7, 1942. It has been determined that the following officers were present at the first interview with Johnston. The second interview which took place later on June 8, 1942, was between Admiral Willson and Johnston alone.

Vice Admiral Russell Willson
Vice Admiral F. J. Horne
Rear Admiral A. J. Hepburn
Captain Frank E. Beatty
Lieutenant Commander Paul C. Smith
Rear Admiral T. S. Wilkinson
Captain Lovette

Memorandum for Mr. Hoover from Mr. W. D. Mitchell dated June 18, 1942

The first question appearing on page one of this memorandum concerns Clause Two of the Full Naval commitment regarding the manner in which

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accredited war correspondents must secure clearance for their stories. Since the submission of Mr. Mitchell's memorandum dated June 18, 1942, he undoubtedly has received a photostatic copy of Clause Two of this usual Navy agreement and it has also been set out in previous memoranda that the full commitment was made up and printed as of April 12, 1942, and was therefore not available for Johnston to sign in Honolulu before he boarded the USS Lexington on April 15, 1942. The memorandum submitted June 18, 1942, reflecting investigation completed to that date, on page one reflects the results of an interview with Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake which it is believed will clarify the question regarding the reasons why Johnston was not requested to sign Clause Two. 18

As is set out earlier in this memorandum, the file of the Navy Department has been reviewed for all information pertaining to the manner in which Johnston was accredited as a war correspondent and copies of all serials are being photostated at the present time. It may be mentioned that there has been developed to date nothing which would indicate that the Chicago Tribune or any of its representatives have been directly informed either in writing or verbally as to the manner in which war correspondents should submit their material. Sub Section (C) on page two of Mr. Mitchell's memorandum mentions the dispatch from Washington to Admiral Nimitz accrediting Johnston but, as has been noted previously, this dispatch consisted merely of a short radiogram which stated that Navy Headquarters in Washington affirmed the accrediting of Johnston by Admiral Nimitz. Sub Section (D) on page two has been adequately covered, it is believed, in the interviews with Lieutenant Commander Drake and Admiral Sherman. It is also believed that the inquiry contained in Sub Section (E) on page two will be answered when the material and the statement submitted by Lieutenant Commander Drake arrive in Washington. They are presently en route by air mail. Page three of the memorandum deals with the question of what articles by Johnston had been submitted for censorship and as is set out in this memorandum the only articles by Johnston cleared by the Navy Department were those pertaining to the Coral Sea battle. The memorandum dated June 17, 1942, deals with the manner in which the Coral Sea series were handled at the Office of Censorship and later at the Navy Department.

Page seven of Mr. Mitchell's memorandum deals with the manner in which secret messages were handled on the USS Barnett. It is believed that information previously set out in this report will cover the point in issue. On page 7 also there is a question regarding the status of the Barnett. It has been ascertained from Captain Holden that the USS Barnett is a Navy transport.

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Interview with Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake,
Public Relations Officer, Pearl Harbor Navy Yard

Lieutenant Commander Waldo Drake advised that Stanley Johnston was given oral instructions by him with respect to the necessity for clearance by Johnston of his articles through the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, before publication of any articles. According to Lieutenant Commander Drake, these instructions were given to Johnston in the presence of Lieutenant James E. Bassett. Lieutenant Commander Drake also gave Stanley Johnston a copy of a memorandum entitled "Subjects Not to be Released for Publication", the substance of which is contained in the Navy commitments entitled "Regulations for Correspondents Accredited to the U. S. Pacific Fleet", dated April 12, 1942.

Lieutenant Commander Drake stated that Stanley Johnston did not sign any papers in Honolulu, as it was assumed all Naval regulations had been complied with before Johnston was dispatched to the Pacific fleet by authority of the Secretary of the Navy. The regulations requiring war correspondents to sign an agreement as contained in Appendix A of the "Regulations for Correspondents Accredited to the U. S. Pacific Fleet", were not promulgated until after Johnston took passage on the USS Lexington. Efforts are being made to obtain a signed statement from Lieutenant Commander Drake concerning the above, and also a copy of the memorandum furnished by Lieutenant Commander Drake to Johnston.

Interview with Rear Admiral Frederick Sherman,
U. S. S. Lexington

Rear Admiral Sherman has stated that no secret dispatches were ever shown to Stanley Johnston, although some discussions of secret matters may have been had in his presence. Rear Admiral Sherman stated that between April 15 and April 30, 1942, aboard the USS Lexington, he definitely placed a verbal restriction on Johnston, requiring Johnston to submit his material for censorship. Rear Admiral Sherman asked Johnston if Johnston understood that it was necessary for him to obtain a release on everything which he published from the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet or from the Navy Department in Washington, and Johnston replied that he definitely understood this, according to Rear Admiral Sherman.

Rear Admiral Sherman further advised that while on the USS Minneapolis he had asked the Commanders of all the ships which were involved in the Coral Sea battle to furnish him with any pictures taken during the engagement, and he has had five sets of the best of these pictures made for his reports. Rear Admiral Sherman gave one set of these pictures to Commander Mortimer Seligman, and thinks he may have given a set to the Captains of the

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USS Minneapolis and USS Astoria. The remaining pictures were forwarded to Washington with Rear Admiral Sherman's official reports. Rear Admiral Sherman does not recall speaking to Johnston about photographs at all, and stated he did not give Johnston any photographs.

Interview with Lieutenant James E. Bassett,
Staff Officer, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet, Pearl Harbor

Lieutenant James E. Bassett advised that photographs of the USS Lexington in a sinking condition were taken from practically every ship that was in the vicinity of the Lexington at the time. Lieutenant Bassett forwarded several sets of these photographs to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C., and advised that the photographs which had been in the possession of Johnston might be identical with photographs contained in any one of these various sets. Lieutenant Bassett advised he would be unable to identify the serial numbers on the photographs in question, and that these serial numbers were probably used in the photographic department of one of the destroyers or cruisers. However, he advised that photographs bearing any similar serial numbers had not been received by the Commander in Chief at Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. He also stated there is no reason to believe that all the photographs taken of the USS Lexington in a sinking condition were turned in to the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, as undoubtedly some photographs were sent directly by the Commanders of the various vessels to the Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet, Washington, D. C.

Additional Interview with Lieutenant Daniel Bontecou,
Communications Officer, USS Barnett

Lieutenant Daniel Bontecou advised that only the original decoded message is made and there are no copies made by the decoding watch of messages received. He advised that this original consists of gummed tape, on which the machine decode is made, and the tape is then pasted on a sheet of paper. Concerning the coded copies, there is a work copy from which the decoded original is made, and this coded work copy is destroyed immediately after decoding. He advised that all decoded messages were usually destroyed about every two days.

It will be recalled Lieutenant Bontecou has advised the secret message in question was taken by him to Captain W. B. Phillips of the USS Barnett on the morning of June 1, 1942, and then returned to the safe in the Communications Room. He intended to leave the message until a later time when he would perform his duty of destroying same.

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Interview with Ensign George Y. McKinnon Jr.,
Decoding Officer, USS Lexington

Ensign George Y. McKinnon, Jr., advised that he was aboard the USS Lexington when it was sunk, and about May 16, 1942, was put aboard the USS Barnett and put on duty in the Communications Room. The following paragraphs are quoted from a signed statement which was obtained from Ensign McKinnon:

"While I don't remember the exact date, I recall taking a message to the executive officer, Commander Seligman. This message was along with a group of other messages, and set forth the size of the Japanese task force that was approaching Midway Island. The only pencil notation on the communication noted the date and time the message was received, from whom and to whom it was sent, and the notation 'secret'. When I took this message to Commander Seligman, I recall that he read parts of it out loud to Stanley Johnston.

"Regarding Stanley Johnston, I wish to state that two or three days before we received the message noted above, Ensign Johnson and myself went to Lieutenant Davis, who was our superior officer, and reported to him that we knew that Stanley Johnston, the newspaper reporter from the Chicago Tribune, was getting secret information to which he was not entitled. While we did not name Seligman specifically, Ensign Johnson and myself, as well as some of the other officers in the communications room, had heard Seligman read 'secret' messages aloud in Johnston's presence. By 'secret', I mean those messages which bore the caption secret. Ensign Johnson and myself made our report to Lieutenant Davis in order to protect ourselves, inasmuch as we felt that Johnston was not entitled to know of the information contained in the messages, which should have been kept confidential in accordance with communications security.

"After the message concerning the Japanese task force was read by Seligman, he initialed it, and I then took it to Commander Duckworth, who was the air officer from the Lexington. Thereafter, I placed the message in the safe of the communications room.

"To the best of my recollection I did not decode this particular message, nor am I aware of the identity of the officer who did decode the message. I did not show this particular message, or any other message to Stanley Johnston. I do not believe that any of the other officers in the communications room ever showed any messages to Johnston, as we all had received strict orders not to divulge any information except to the proper officers to whom the messages were to be routed. I made no pencil notations on any of the messages, and the only copy of a message I made was at the request of Commander Seligman. The message I copied was a message issued by Captain Frederick Sherman indicating that a new ship would be built and named the Lexington. Commander Seligman said he wanted this copy for his files.

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"I did not have any photographs of the sinking of the Lexington, and I don't anyone else who did."

In his statement McKinnon also advised that Lieutenant Commander Winthrop Terry, who was sick in bed at the time, was in the room at the time Seligman read the message referred to in the statement to Stanley Johnston.

Additional Interview with Commander A. F. Junker,
Chief Engineer, USS Lexington

Commander Junker stated that he did not show the secret message in question to Johnston, nor did he make either a copy or notes therefrom. He advised that he did not discuss the secret message with Stanley Johnston, and the only discussion he recalls having concerning the message was in the Wardroom where Commander Duckworth was playing bridge with three junior officers. The discussion, according to Commander Junker, did not go into any detail about the make-up of the Japanese force, and Johnston was not present at any time during this discussion.

Commander Junker recalls no other discussion concerning the secret message, and did not know whether any other officers showed the message to Johnston or made notes or copies thereof. Commander Junker stated that there had been previous messages concerning the same matter, and the secret message in question merely clarified them. He advised that he saw the secret message in his quarters and did not recall having discussed the secret message in the quarters which were being used by Stanley Johnston, at any time.

Commander Junker does recall having seen the silhouette book in the Commodore's suite, but cannot recall whether this was the same night that he saw the secret message. Commander O'Donnell was discussing a particular ship in the silhouette book and Commander Junker believes the general topic of the discussion at this time was the Coral Sea battle. Commander Junker advised that Stanley Johnston asked at one time if he might see one of his reports of the Coral Sea battle, at which time Commander Junker referred him to Captain Sherman.

Commander Junker advised that the only photographs of the Lexington in a burning and exploding condition which he has seen were shown to him by Commander Mortimer Seligman on the USS Barnett. There were several other officers present, but Commander Junker does not recall Stanley Johnston having been present. After he saw the pictures, Commander Seligman replaced them in an envelope and answered in the negative when Commander Junker inquired if he might obtain a set of the pictures. Commander Junker could furnish no information concerning how Stanley Johnston may have gotten possession of such photographs.

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Additional Interview with Lieutenant Commander
Winthrop Terry, Communications Officer, USS Lexington

Lieutenant Commander Winthrop Terry advised that he never showed the secret message to Stanley Johnston, that he never copied or made notes from the secret message, that he never discussed the secret message, and that he has no knowledge of any officers doing any of these things. Lieutenant Commander Terry first saw the secret message in the office of the Commandant, Eleventh Naval District, San Diego, on June 12, 1942. He also advised that on May 17, 1942, Commander Mortimer Seligman showed him photographs of the USS Lexington burning and exploding, and these were kept in Seligman's chiffonier. Lieutenant Commander Terry never saw these photographs in Johnston's possession and has no knowledge of how Johnston may have obtained such photographs.

Additional Interview with Commander Herbert Duckworth,
Air Officer, USS Lexington

Commander Duckworth advised that he did not at any time show the secret message to Johnston, nor did he make a copy or notes concerning it. Commander Duckworth stated he did not discuss the contents of the message with Johnston or within earshot of Johnston. Commander Duckworth recalls seeing the secret message while he played bridge in the Wardroom of the USS Barnett at approximately 9 PM on May 31, 1942, at which time Johnston was not present. There was no discussion of the specific contents of the message at that time.

Commander Duckworth advised that he saw numerous photographs of the Lexington in a burning condition while on the USS Barnett and on the USS Chester, but he does not recall who had custody of these pictures. Duckworth stated these pictures were taken from the USS Chester and USS Minneapolis, but he does not know where or by whom they were developed. Commander Duckworth never saw any of the questioned photographs in Johnston's possession, and does not know who furnished any such photographs to Johnston, or how Johnston could have obtained possession of any such photographs.

Additional Interview with Commander Mortimer Seligman,
Executive Officer, USS Lexington

Commander Seligman stated he did not at any time show the secret message to Stanley Johnston, nor did he make a copy or notes concerning it. He stated that he did not discuss the contents of the message with Johnston or within earshot of Johnston, and does not recall a discussion of this particular message with anyone. Commander Seligman advised that he does not know how Johnston may have obtained the contents of the secret message. Commander Seligman does not recall when or where he saw the secret message, and can only assume that he saw it.

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With reference to the Japanese silhouette book, Commander Seligman stated he does not recall exactly when he used this book or who was present at the time, but that it was used only in connection with the Coral Sea battle to identify a Japanese carrier believed to have been sunk in that battle. He does not recall ever having studied the silhouette book with Johnston.

Commander Seligman has stated on several occasions that Johnston brought up the question of censorship, indicating that Johnston knew everything was to be censored. For example, Seligman advised that Johnston asked how he might send his stories in to be censored in the quickest possible manner. *

Commander Seligman stated that numerous photographs of the burning and exploding of the USS Lexington were taken on the USS Minneapolis, and these were officially developed on board the USS Minneapolis. He stated that Admiral Sherman furnished him one set of these photographs, which he kept in his possession or in a drawer in his room on the USS Barnett, and which he still retains. Commander Seligman has never seen any photographs of this nature in Johnston's possession, and does not know who furnished the photographs to Johnston. He knows of no one having such photographs, other than himself and Admiral Sherman, and believes the negatives were kept on the USS Minneapolis. Commander Seligman stated the photographs were also circularized on board the USS Minneapolis, and believes that Johnston saw them there, because Johnston asked him how he could obtain a set, to which Seligman replied that Johnston would have to see some higher authority.

Interview with Lieutenant Commander Edward H. Eldredge,
Junior Flight Officer, USS Lexington

Lieutenant Commander Eldredge stated he never saw the secret message in question, but that about 9 PM one evening he and Commander O'Donnell were in the Commodore's suite of the USS Barnett for coffee, and at this time there was a group of men at the large table in the room, including Commander Seligman and several other officers. He did not know whether Johnston was in the room, but thinks that Johnston was present. On the table Lieutenant Commander Eldredge saw a hand written outline on a piece of paper about 4 inches by eight and one-half inches, containing the information in detail contained in the secret dispatch. Eldredge did not recognize the handwriting on this paper and stated the group of officers was discussing the size of the "Kirishima", and during the discussion the Japanese silhouette book was called for. Shortly afterward Eldredge and Commander O'Donnell left the room.

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Additional Interview with Lieutenant Irving E. Davis,
Acting Communications Officer, U. S. S. Lexington.

Lieutenant Irving E. Davis, in a signed statement, stated he did not, as a matter of practice aboard the U. S. S. Barnett, receive copies of secret messages but recalls having seen one message on the composition of the Japanese task force. He saw this message in the code room and made neither copies nor notes therefrom. Lieutenant Davis has no recollection of the date when he saw this message or who was present at the time. Lieutenant Davis stated that he did not discuss any message with Stanley Johnston and knows of no one who did discuss any message with Johnston. Lieutenant Davis stated that Ensign J. B. Johnson and Ensign G. Y. McKinnon did report to him that Commander Mortimer Seligman had read aloud a secret message in the presence of Stanley Johnston. However, Lieutenant Davis is positive that this message did not concern the composition of the Japanese task force approaching Midway. According to Lieutenant Davis, he took no action upon the report of Ensigns Johnson and McKinnon because it was not his duty to question the action of his superior officers. Lieutenant Davis stated that he has no information concerning the manner in which Stanley Johnston may have obtained the contents of the secret message concerning the make-up of the Japanese task force. (X)

Lieutenant Davis advised that he has no information as to the manner in which Stanley Johnston may have obtained photographs of the U. S. S. Lexington in a burning or exploding condition. Lieutenant Davis has no firsthand knowledge that such photographs of the U. S. S. Lexington were taken, but understood that such photographs were in existence. According to Lieutenant Davis, Lieutenant B. A. Smith, meteorologist, U. S. S. Lexington, was reported to have had some photographs in his possession but the nature of these photographs is not known to Lieutenant Davis who never at any time saw these photographs.

Additional Interview with Ensign James B. Johnson,
Decoding Officer, U. S. S. Lexington.

Ensign James B. Johnson, in a signed statement, stated that when he was stationed on the U. S. S. Barnett, he and Ensign G. Y. McKinnon advised Lieutenant I. E. Davis prior to May 31, 1942, that Stanley Johnston was in a position to pick up, possibly, snatches of conversation and obtain information of value or interest. Ensign Johnson stated that his reasons for so advising Lieutenant Davis were the fact that he was well acquainted with the communications system and the reasons for its security and that

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Johnston being a newspaperman was not to be trusted with Naval secrets or information which he might accidentally pick up. Ensign Johnson advised that on board the U. S. S. Barnett several secret messages were received concerning an impending attack on Midway and that he remembers one message, the origin of which indicated that it was not the secret message in question. Ensign Johnson advised that he had never heard Commander Mortimer Seligman read a secret message or in any other way impart information to Stanley Johnston. Ensign Johnson never showed anything to Stanley Johnston and, in fact, had no association with him. Ensign Johnson does not know if other officers made any remarks in Johnston's presence but stated that it was possible that Johnston could have heard remarks not directed to him. According to Ensign Johnson, Stanley Johnston roomed with Commander Seligman and Lieutenant Commander Terry in a very small room and may have heard remarks passed between those officers. Ensign Johnson was unable to state how Johnston may have secured the contents of the secret message, as no one is allowed in the coding room except those designated to receive messages. Ensign Johnson believes that, after the sinking of the U. S. S. Lexington, Stanley Johnston may have picked up bits of conversation among the officers in their moments of relaxation.

Ensign Johnson stated that he did not see the photographs of the U. S. S. Lexington burning and knows nothing concerning where such photographs may have been taken or developed. He advised that from hearsay he understands that Stanley Johnston had endeavored to obtain some photographs. Ensign Johnson, during the interview, indicated that Stanley Johnston had asked Commander Seligman for photographs and the request was refused but Ensign Johnson would not mention this in his signed statement, as he considered it a matter of hearsay.

Interview with Lieutenant Commander George L. Markle,
Chaplain, U. S. S. Lexington.

Lieutenant Commander Markle advised that he did not see the secret message in question and consequently did not show it to Johnston nor make any copies or notes therefrom. Lieutenant Commander Markle also advised he did not discuss the contents of the message with Johnston or within Johnston's earshot, although it was generally known aboard the U. S. S. Barnett that a Japanese fleet was proceeding toward Midway and that the American Navy knew the course and speed of this fleet. Lieutenant Commander Markle advised that he heard no discussion concerning any particular composition of this fleet. Lieutenant Commander Markle does not know whether any officers showed the secret message to Johnston or discussed it with Johnston and does not know how Johnston may have obtained the contents of the message. Neither does Lieutenant Commander Markle know of any officer's having obtained either a copy or notes of the secret message.

Lieutenant Commander Markle stated that he saw pictures of the U. S. S. Lexington burning and exploding, a few days after he boarded the U. S. S. Barnett. He advised that Commander Mortimer Seligman had these pictures in his room and he noticed that Commander Seligman had duplicate pictures of several shots, including one of the U. S. S. Lexington exploding and another showing heavy volumes of smoke pouring from amidship. Lieutenant Commander Markle does not know where these photographs were taken and did not see any of them in the possession of Johnston. Commander Seligman had the photographs in a manila envelope in a drawer. Lieutenant Commander Markle does not know how Johnston obtained possession of any photographs of the U. S. S. Lexington, although he stated Johnston could have taken them from the drawer.

Interview with Lieutenant George F. Schmitt,
Doctor, U. S. S. Solace.

Lieutenant George F. Schmitt from the U. S. S. Solace, who returned aboard the U. S. S. Barnett, advised that he was in the Commodore's Suite on the U. S. S. Barnett on only one occasion, when he visited Lieutenant Commander Terry, who was a patient. On this night, according to Lieutenant Schmitt, Commander Seligman and Johnston were sitting at the large table and he entered into a conversation with them concerning the activity of doctors in the war zone. The impending Midway battle was not discussed. Shortly afterwards Lieutenant Schmitt and Commander Seligman went into Commander Seligman's room and conversed for an hour or an hour and a half, during which time Commander Seligman exhibited some photographs to Schmitt. Stanley Johnston was not present in Commander Seligman's room and there was no conversation at all concerning Midway. Lieutenant Schmitt stated that it was common knowledge on the U. S. S. Barnett that a Japanese task force was proceeding eastward in the Pacific, but he never heard any details concerning it.

Attachment



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