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UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
TASK GROUP THIRTY-EIGHT POINT THREE

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Serial: 0090

SECRET

2 DEC 1944

From: Commander Task Group THIRTY-EIGHT POINT THREE, (Rear Admiral Frederick C. Sherman, Commander Carrier Division ONE, U.S.S. ESSEX, Flagship).

To : Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.

Via : (1) Commander Task Force THIRTY-EIGHT.
(2) Commander THIRD Fleet.
(3) Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas.

Subject: BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, 24-25 October 1944, Task Group THIRTY-EIGHT POINT THREE - Action Report of.

References: (a) PacFlt Conf. Ltr. 2CL-44, of 1 January 1944.
(b) ComTHIRDFlt Operation Order No. 21-44.
(c) ComTaskFor 38 Operation Order No. 11-44.
(d) ComTaskGrp 38.3 Operation Order No. 3-44.
(e) Enclosure (D) to LANGLEY Conf. Ltr. serial 0277 of 7 Nov. 1944.
(f) Enclosure (C) to PORTERFIELD Conf. Ltr. serial 082 of 30 Oct. 1944.

Enclosures: (A) Slected photographs taken by TG 38.3 planes.- p.16
(B) Track Chart of Task Group 38.3. - p.24
(C) Copies of all messages received and sent Oct. 21 to 29 1944, (CinCPac only).
(D) U.S.S. ESSEX Action Report - Battle of the Philippines, 24-25 October 1944, serial 0195 of 21 Nov. 1944, M-Ser. 95334
(E) ComCruDiv 13, Action Report, Air Strikes and Surface Action, Octobe 24-25 October 1944, serial 0087 of 30 October 1944, M-Ser. 94729.
(F) USS SANTA FE, Preliminary Action Report for period 18-30 October 1944, serial 0834 of 31 Oct. 1944, M-Ser. 95960
(G) USS MOBILE, Second Battle of the PHILIPPINES; Enemy air attacks on Carrier Task Group 3 (TG 38.3), 24 Oct. 1944, Action Report of, serial 0028 of 28 Oct. 1944, Missing
(H) USS RENO, Action Report - 24 Oct. 1944, serial 067 of 30 Oct. 1944, M-Ser. 93011
(I) ComDesRon 55, Battle of the Philippines, 20-25 October 1944 - Action report of, serial 088 of 30 Oct. 1944, M-Ser. 94731.
(J) Several Action Reports for period 24-27 October 1944 - USS MORRISON, Submitting of, serial 009 of 29 Oct. 1944, M-Ser. 93131.
(K) Action Report, USS PRESTON, Battle of the PHILIPPINES, 24-25 Oct. 1944, serial 065 of 9 Nov. 1944, Missing.
(L) USS PORTERFIELD, Surface Action Report on October 25, 1944, serial 028 of 27 Oct. 1944, M-Ser. 93595.
(M) USS PORTERFIELD, Anti-Aircraft Action Report on 24 Oct. 1944, seria 077 of 26 Oct. 1944, M-Ser. 96768.
(N) USS CASSIN YOUNG, Action Report, Period 24-25 Oct. 1944, Covering the Battle of the Philippines, serial 061, of 30 Oct. 1944, M-Ser. 93045
(O) CAG-15, Report of Air Operation conducted by Carrier Air Group 15 during the period 21-27 October 1944, inclusive - Submission of, serial 028 of 11 Nov. 1944, M-Ser. 94989

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FOREWORD

1. It is believed that the Battle of the Eastern Philippines Sea of 24 and 25 October was one of the most decisive battles of the war in the Pacific For this reason, this report is submitted in full covering the action of Task Group 38.3 as a whole from the view point of the Task Group Commander. No effort is made to cover individual ship actions except as they bear on the picture as a whole. It is believed the action reports of the individual ships give adequate coverage to each one's individual part in the action.

THE SITUATION

2. Task Group 38.3 was commanded by Rear Admiral Frederick C. Sherman, USN, in the ESSEX as his flagship. Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher was embarked in the LEXINGTON and was in command of Task Force 38. The LEXINGTON was part of Task Group 38.3 and the Task Group Commander being in close contact with Vice Admiral Mitscher, received various orders from him from time to time regarding the conduct of the action as will appear in the narrative.

3. Task Group 38.3 on 24 October 1944 consisted of the following ships.

2 CV - ESSEX - flagship, R.Adm. Frederick C. Sherman.
LEXINGTON - flagship, V.Adm. M.A. Mitscher.
2 CVL - PRINCETON, LANGLEY
2 BB - MASSACHUSETTS - flagship, R.Adm. G.B. Davis.
SOUTH DAKOTA - flagship, R.Adm. E.W. Hanson.
3 CL - SANTA FE - flagship, R.Adm. L.T. Du Bose.
MOBILE
BIRMINGHAM
1 CL(AA) - RENO
13 DD - PORTERFIELD - flagship, Capt. C.R. Todd, Screen Commander.
C.K. BRONSON, COTTEN, DORTCH, GATLING, HEALY, CALLAGHAN, CASSIN YOUNG, IRWIN, PRESTON, LAWS, LONGSHAW and MORRISON.

4. The four task groups of Task Force 38 had been operating east of the Philippines since early September covering the landings on Palau, Morotai, and Leyte. Heavy strikes had been made on aircraft, aircraft installations, and shipping extending from Nansei Shoto and Formosa, through Manila and the Philippines to southern Mindanao. Some reaction from the Japanese fleet could be expected. The operations were conducted under Commander Western Pacific Task Forces OpPlan 14-44 and CTF 38 OpOrders 10-44 and 11-44 with despatch additions from time to time as circumstances dictated.

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5. At daylight on the 24th of October, three task groups were lined up east of the Philippines about 125 miles apart, with Task Group 38.3 in the northern position, 60 miles east of Polillo Island, 38.2 in the middle, and 38.4 in the southern position. Task Group 38.1 was several hundred miles to the eastward on its way to Ulithi for replenishment. Submarine and shore-based air had reported sightings the day before indicating movements of major units of the Japanese fleet, including 7 BBs, from the Singapore-Borneo area into the Sulu Sea and the Western Philippines area. No aircraft carriers had been reported in the area.

NARRATIVE OF THE ACTION

6. Throughout the night of 23-24 October, single enemy snoopers were almost constantly in our vicinity. Night fighters were kept in the air and held most of these planes at a distance. One was splashed at 0227 but at 0555 there were five separate snoopers on the screen on widely different bearings. The enemy was evidently well aware of our position, at least of our task group, if not of the others.

7. Under orders of CTF 38, "reinforced search teams", consisting of 4 VB and 4 VF, to cover sectors from 225° to 295° to a distance of 300 miles, were launched at dawn on the 24th. These searches took in sea areas well to the west of Luzon and from Coron Island on the south to Lingayen Gulf on the North. Their objective was major units of the Japanese fleet and it was apparent from their composition that they were intended as both search and attack units. Both the VF and VB carried bombs. In addition, a 20 plane VF - sweep was ordered off to attack enemy aircraft in the vicinity of the Manila airfields and two VF - communication linking teams were stationed at 100 and 200 miles respectively to relay contact reports. A deck load strike was ordered ready on deck of each carrier to strike enemy units reported by the search. No search to the north or northeast of Luzon was ordered. This ommission had a definite effect on the rest of the day's action as will be shown later. The reinforced search teams plus the fighter sweep left us with only a barely adequate number of fighters as escorts for the ready strike plus a modest number for combat air patrol over the group.

8. Just before 0800 a contact report was intercepted from Task Group 38.2 search planes which reported 4 BB, 8 CA plus escorts heading into the Sibuyan Sea from south of the Island of Mindoro. Preparations were immediately made to launch the ready deck load strike against these forces. However before this strike could be launched a large number of enemy planes (about 40), were reported to be closing on bearing 250°. Shortly thereafter a second large group was reported to be closing behind the first. At this time we had CAP of 12 VF overhead plus SNASP of 4 VF and 4 VB. This number was not deemed sufficient to handle a major air attack which was estimated to be pending. Accordingly at 0805, 12 additional fighters each were scrambled from LANGLEY and PRINCETON, and 7 from ESSEX.

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Within a few minutes a third large enemy raid appeared on the screen bearing 240 60 miles. At 0831 LEXINGTON was ordered to launch her remaining 12 fighters. This necessarily left us with insufficient fighters to escort the strike which it had been my intention to send off against the Jap fleet in the Sibuyan Sea before the incoming enemy attacks got in too close. Due to this shortage of fighters the despatch of this strike was held up and not launched till later. This decision was also influenced by the fact that about this time it became necessary to conduct radical maneuvers of the Task Group to avoid the oncoming air attack.

9. There were a number of medium rain squalls in the vicinity and every possible advantage was taken of them. The Task Group was maneuvered as much as possible to keep within the rain squalls while enemy planes were close aboard and it was only maneuvered to emerge to the edge of the squalls when necessary to launch additional planes or land planes out of gas or ammunition. We were kept pretty busy with the attack for the next several hours.

10. The CAP were effectively sent out against the large groups of enemy planes approaching from the westward. With the melee which developed the screen became very confused with a great number of friendly and enemy aircraft mixed up in the area. The largest raid was #3 - a group of 50 to 60 planes divided about evenly between dive bombers, torpedo planes, and fighters. First to reach this group were seven fighters led by Comdr. David McCampbell, ESSEX Air Group Commander. Diving into the Japs these seven planes had them well scattered by the time other planes had arrived. Comdr. McCampbell shot down nine enemy planes while his wing man got six and the remaining pilots got nine between them - a total of 24. There were more or less continuous reports of splashing planes coming in. After the CAP's had reported Tally Ho it became impossible to give them further direction and the size of the bogies reported justified throwing everything we had after them, which was done.

11. As a result of the efficient preformance of the fighters and the cover of the rain squalls, no organized group of enemy planes reached the immediate vicinity of the Task Group. At this time CTF 38 gave the order "Hey Rube" to the fighter sweep which was just arriving over Manila. This signal peremptorily recalled them to base, but the planes were not able to return in time to enter the fight.

12. By this time many of the fighters were short on ammunition and gas and had to be landed. The screen was now relatively clear. Carrier decks had been respotted to land these fighters. Scattered remnants of the large attacking force kept popping up on the screen in small groups or as single snoopers at widely varying altitudes, bearings and distances. Interceptions by fighters which still had gas and ammunition were still proceeding and small bogeys were being splashed from time to time.

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13. At 0939 the Task Group emerged to the edge of a rain squall to land the fighters which needed reservicing. At that time no bogeys were showing on the screen within 50 miles. The PRINCETON, to land her fighters, had put her VT which were ready for deck load strike and armed with torpedoes, on the hangar deck. Suddenly out of nowhere a single Judy dove out of the low clouds over PRINCETON and put a small bomb through her flight deck amidships. This bomb started a small fire which appeared at first would be easily handled and there would be no serious consequences. It seemed to me that there was little to fear from 1 small bomb hitting a ship of the ability and strength of the PRINCETON. I felt that under the circumstances to ward off a major attack with only 1 plane getting into the disposition and with only 1 small bomb hit, we had come off exceedingly well. Shortly after the bomb hit, a small fire started on the PRINCETON's hangar deck and a tremendous explosion occured which was evidently from torpedoes in the VT on her hangar deck. I immediately ordered the RENO and 3 destroyers to stand by the PRINCETON which was rapidly dropping astern and later directed the BIRMINGHAM and one additional destroyer to also stand by. The subsequent efforts to save the PRINCETON are covered by separate reports of ships concerned and will not be given in detail here. I maneuvered the Task Group to remain in the general vicinity of the PRINCETON group during the day although the got as far away as 60 miles at times. At no time was I entirely without TBS communication with some ship in the PRINCETON group and I kept myself informed of the condition existing in the fight to put out the fire and save her.

14. Meanwhile by 1100 sufficient fighters had been landed and reserviced to send off a properly escorted attack on the Jap Task Force in the Sibuyan Sea. After the strike was launched the reinforced search planes were landed aboard. Pilots reported considerable targets in the Manila area, including 2 CL, 1 damaged CA, several DD and many merchant ships. However targets of the major enemy Task Force now in the Sibuyan Sea east of Mindoro and proceeding toward the San Bernadino Straits were considered the main objective. Continued presence of bogeys and insufficient number of fighter planes also precluded any possibility of sending additional strikes to Manila. Furthermore even though most of the enemy planes attacking our force came from the direction of Luzon, a preponderance of carrier based types led to the opinion that a Jap carrier force might be in vicinity to north or northeast. At 1155 orders were received from CTF 38 to launch a search consisting of 2 VF and 1 VB in each sector between bearing 350° and 040°. This search, as well as a second deckload strike, was about to be launched at 1245 when another large group of enemy planes was reported bearing 035°, 105 miles, closing. The strike was sent off but in order to intercept the new raid with sufficient strength, it was necessary to scramble the LEXINGTON fighters ready to go on search and this prevented launching the search as scheduled. This first enemy attack from the northeast was successfully met and broken up while still 45 miles from the formation. While the dogfight was still

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going on another large group was reported at 90 miles, bearing 040°. More fighters were scrambled and again the raid was intercepted at about 25 miles. A few individual enemy planes filtered through these attacks and at 1351 an estimated 6 to 8 Judys dived on the group. Timely maneuvering prevented any hits and ship gunfire sent at least 3 planes down in flames. These planes attempted suicide attacks without success.

15. Having utilized all my fighters on these attacks no fighters were available to accompany the VB search planes. Being strongly suspicious of the presence of Jap carriers to the northeast I obtained permission from CTF 38 to send VB search planes on single plane search without accompanying fighters. These planes were launched from LEXINGTON at 1405. At 1640 two of our searches found the Jap force near Lat. 18-20 N., Long. 125-30 E. bearing 020°, 190 miles from our formation The enemy ships were reported to be in two groups consisting of 3 CV, 4 BB, several cruisers and destroyers - on courses to the south and southwest closing our disposition. This information was duly reported to CTF 38 and ComThirdFlt. Amplifying reports established the force as 1 CV, 3 CVL, 2 XCV-BB, 1 CA, 4 CL and 6 DD. It was too late to get off a strike that afternoon against these ships as the planes were just returning from the strikes in the Sibuyan Sea.

16. However the picture was now complete. We now knew the definite location of all the enemy forces in the theatre of our operations. The carrier forces to the north were our meat; they were close enough so that they could not get away if we headed to the northward, and would be in a favorable position for our attack next morning. We had borne the brunt of their all out attack both from carrier based planes and from their available aircraft on the island of Luzon We had lost the PRINCETON but the remaining carriers had suffered no damage and the Air Groups of the ESSEX, LEXINGTON and LANGLEY were still intact and had lost remarkably few planes. As the sun went down the situation was entirely to my liking and I felt we had a chance to completely wipe out a major group of the enemy fleet including the precious carriers which he could ill afford to lose. Our loss of the PRINCETON was unfortunate but did not seriously affect our military situation and our ability to pulverize the enemy.

17. To go back to the PRINCETON for the moment, at 1619, I received a report from the Commanding Officer of the RENO, who was then in charge, that the BIRMINGHAM had suffered many casualties and top-side damage from a heavy bomb magazine explosion aft on the PRINCETON, that the latter had no steering or motive power and that he recommended she be sunk by our forces. I referred this report to CTF 38 who directed me at 1644, in view of the contact of strong enemy forces in the north, to have the PRINCETON destroyed. I then directed the Commanding Officer of the RENO to remove all personnel, destroy the PRINCETON in accordance with his recommendation and rejoin. The RENO, BIRMINGHAM and accompanying destroyers all of which had received some damage in attempting to save the PRINCETON

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rejoined shortly after dark. The BIRMINGHAM, IRWIN, MORRISON and GATLING which had received the most serious damage, were later directed on orders from CTF 38 to proceed to Ulithi and they left the disposition at 2300.

18. The strike on the enemy force in the Sibuyan Sea had found 5 BB, at least 8 CA, 2 or 3 CLs and some 13 DD in that locality. Our planes were hampered in their dives by cloud cover at 5 to 6 thousand feet, but there was no air opposition. The AA encountered was intense. Pilots reported 3 torpedo hits on one YAMATO class BB and two to three 1000# bomb hits on another, 4 torpedoes in a NAGATO class BB, 2 torpedoes each in a NACHI class CA and an unidentified CA, single 1000# hits on an ATAGO class CA and an unidentified CA and undetermined damage on two CL and several DDs. From information at hand, additional strikes on this force were made by planes of Task Group 38.2 and 38.4.

19. The last strike and search planes were landed aboard at 1745. In addition to the shipping damage reported above, 120 Japanese aircraft had been definitely shot down attacking our formation and 47 near Luzon - a total of 167 for the day. Our own losses for the day were 10 planes, 5 pilots and 4 aircrewmen

20. At 1723 I was informed by CTF 38 that he intended to proceed to northeastward during the night. If this course was maintained I knew that the enemy force to the northward could not get away. However orders had been received from ComThirdFlt to concentrate to the southward towards Task Group 38.2. In obedience to these orders we headed southeast about 1900. I was apprehensive that this night lose our chance with the northern forces next morning. However at 2329 after rendezvousing with the other Task Groups, course 000° was ordered with this task group in the northern position at speed of 16 knots. At midnight the course was changed to northeast toward Lat. 16-00 N., Long. 127-00 E. INDEPENDENCE in Task Group 38.2 was ordered to launch night searches to the north about 2400 and orders were received for formation of TF 34 which comprised all the battleships, several of the cruisers and destroyer screen. At 0205 the INDEPENDENCE night searches reported the enemy forces in two groups, one at Lat. 16-42 N., Long. 125-36 E., and the other 26 miles due north of that position. Both groups were reported on course 110° - speed 15 and the nearest was 85 miles, bearing 352° from our formation. At 0253 TF 34 units withdrew from the carrier Task Groups and took station 10 miles North of Task Group 38.3. Course was set at 000°, speed was reduced to 10 knots to allow heavy ships and their escorts to clear ahead. MASSACHUSETTS, SOUTH DAKOTA, SANTA FE, MOBILE, C.K. BRONSON, COTTEN, DORTCH and HEALY were detached from this group to join TF 34.

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21. At 0220 in accordance with instructions previously received from ComTaskFor 38, LEXINGTON was ordered to send out dawn searches on bearings from 290° to 330° to a distance of 350 miles. ESSEX was ordered to furnish two communication relay units of 2 VF(N) each stationed at 100 and 200 miles from the launching point. Similar missions were to be carried out in sectors 330° to 360° by Task Group 38.4 and 190° to 220° and 250° to 290° by Task Group 38.2

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22. It was considered certain that regardless of whether the enemy continued his southeasterly course or headed north in an attempt to escape he would be within easy range of air attack at dawn. With this in mind orders were sent out at 0340 to arm the first deckload strike immediately and launch the CAP, searches and first attack at earliest dawn. Plane availability, after taking into account necessary patrols and searches, was such that only one well balanced strike group could be mustered. At 0543 ComTaskForce 38 advised that there was no recent information of the enemy's position and therefore ordered initial strike planes to take station 50 miles to the north, where they were to await target data and further instructions.

23. Fortunately, the weather was excellent - clear with only a few clouds on the horizon and wind from 050° at 16 knots. There was sufficient light to commence launching at 0555, and soon afterward search planes took departure from Lat. 16-06 N., Long. 125-55 E., Since it appeared likely that the enemy might be east of assigned search sectors, one division of ESSEX CAP was vectored out on orders of CTF 38 to conduct a high speed search to the northeast. The decision paid rich dividends, for it was these pilots who first sighted the Jap task force at 0710 in Lat. 18-37 N., Long. 126-45 E., bearing 020°, 135 miles from our formation, on a northeasterly course. Although forced to climb steadily to avoid intercepting fighters, our CAP performed a magnificient reconnaissance job. For a full fifty minutes they circled over the enemy ships reporting their position, composition and maneuvers. The force consisted of seventeen ships:

1 ZUIKAKU class CV
2 CHITOSE class CVL
1 ZUIHO class CVL
2 ISE class XCV (battleships with flight deck aft)
1 unidentified CA
1 OYODO or AGANO class CL
2 NATORI class CL's
1 unidentified CL
6 DD

24. At time of original contact, strike #1 planes were already orbiting fifty miles north of our formation and thus were only some 85 miles from the enemy. Half an hour later they had the Jap ships in sight and at 0800 their attack was in progress. About fifteen enemy fighters attempted interception but they were quickly eliminated. As a result it was possible to keep a target coordinator over the ships almost continuously throughout the entire day, directing each attack, assigning targets and reporting results.

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25. Task Group 38.3 sent five air strikes against the enemy forces - three full scale attacks launched at 0555, 1145 and 1615, and two small groups of remaining available planes which took off at 0835 and 1315 and joined Task Group 38.4 strikes. Also in midafternoon 4 cruisers and 12 destroyers were sent to find and destroy any cripples within practicable range. Detailed evidence of sinking and damage is contained in individual ships reports. A brief narrative of the days events follows.

26. Reports of ESSEX CAP, target coordinator and pilots of strike #1 confirmed the original enemy composition as stated in paragraph 23. As the first strike approached, one CHITOSE class CVL pulled out of formation, apparently attempting to launch planes by the Japanese version of "method Baker". This carrier received at least three torpedoes and several direct 1000# bomb hits from Task Group 38.3 planes. Many violent explosions occurred and the ship was left dead in the water burning furiously. The other CHITOSE class CVL was also left dead in the water from several direct bomb hits. One torpedo was put into an ISE class XCV and another into one of the NATORI CL's. Damage was also reported on two DDs. Nine enemy fighters were shot down.

27. At 0925 the returning ESSEX strike leader was heard reporting best available targets to pilots of Strike #2. He said that when he left there were four carriers still afloat, two of them badly damaged. However, by the time the second strike arrived over the Jap force about 1015 only three carriers could be found - ZUIKAKU, ZUIHO and one badly damaged CHITOSE class CVL. In the interval between attacks the other CHITOSE class CVL, left burning and exploding by Strike #1, is estimated to have sunk. LEXINGTON and LANGLEY planes, which had joined with Strike #2 from Task Group 38.4, reported making two torpedo hits on the ZUIKAK and one on an ISE class XCV. Fires were started on one NATORI class cruiser by strafing.

28. Meanwhile urgent requests for assistance had been intercepted from Task Force 77 CVE's which were under attack by Japanese surface forces to the east of Samar Island. At 1100 ComThirdFlt ordered Task Group 38.2 plus all the battleships, VINCENNES, MIAMI, BILOXI and DesRon 52 (units of TF 34) to reverse course at 1115 and proceed south. ComTaskGroup 38.3 and ComTaskGroup 38.4 were directed to continue strikes against the enemy carrier forces.

29. Shortly after strike #3 took off at 1145, BELLEAU WOOD target coordinator reported that the enemy ships were then in two groups. One to the south, thereafter known as "The Cripples", was composed of an ISE class XCV, one CL and 2 DD's, all circling the second CHITOSE class CVL which was still dead in the water and burning as a result of the first attack. The other group was some 20-30 miles northwest of the cripples. It consisted of ZUIKAKU, ZUIHO, the other ISE XCV, 3 cruisers and 2 or 3 destroyers. The enemy ships were approximately 102 miles, bearing 351° from our formation and Task Group 38.3 planes were ordered to strike

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the northern group, which was apparently still heading 000° at 15-20 knots. Their attack at about 1310 put finishing touches on ZUIKAKU with nine direct 1000# and 2000# bomb hits. In addition one torpedo was put into the northern ISE class XCV. Planes from Task Group 38.4 were seen to make several good hits on ZUIHO, which was also left dead in the water burning badly. At about 1400 LEXINGTON target coordinator watched ZUIKAKU go under - a very gratifying sight. The "cripple group" was not attacked by Strike #3, but at about 1410 a division of LEXINGTON CAP, which had been ordered to keep an eye on these ships, reported the XCV, CL and 2 DD's were abandoning the damaged CVL and heading north to join the main group.

30. Remaining available planes from LEXINGTON and LANGLEY (designated Strike #4) were again launched at 1315 to join a Task Group 38.4 attack. Their assigned target was the northern ISE class XCV and three torpedo hits were obtained in a well coordinated attack. The ruggedness of this enemy ship is shown by the fact that she stopped dead in the water for only about 10 minutes and then got underway again. Pilots reported that they observed ZUIHO listing heavily and burned almost to water level. LANGLEY target coordinator saw her sink at 1520.

31. The final attack of the day - full deckloads from ESSEX, LEXINGTON and LANGLEY - took departure at 1615, with the enemy ships bearing 327°, 92 miles. Pilot reports, substantiated by photos indicate that only ten vessels were still afloat - 2 ISE XCV's, 1 unidentified CA, 1 OYODO or AGANO CL, 1 NATORI CL, 1 unidentified single stack CL and 3 DD's all underway - plus the crippled CHITOSE class CVL, dead in the water and abandoned by the other ships. As a result of well coordinated attacks, two torpedoes and six direct bomb hits were obtained on the XCV's. One of them slowed to 8 knots temporarily, but later was reported still heading north at 20 knots. A destroyer was confirmed sunk and one 250# bomb hit was obtained on the stern of a CA.

32. In the course of the day's strikes it rapidly became evident that there might be several Jap cripples which could best be finished off by ship's gunfire or torpedo attacks after dark. At 1340 ComTaskGroup 38.3 requested permission from ComTaskFor 38 to organize a cruiser and destroyer attack against enemy cripples after dark. At 1342 he directed me to prepare for such attack but stated he expected with 1 BB in each group it might be a little tough and he desired to take the force out without towing damaged ships. On this information I directed ComCruDiv 13 and Comdr. Screen to prepare for this attack leaving RENO and 4 destroyers to remain with carriers and ESSEX to furnish 2 night fighters for snooping. I felt that the tactical situation warranted this reduction in the carrier screen. We ruled the sea in our vicinity, there were no enemy aircraft in the air to bother us, the enemy was in full retreat, and the only remaining objective

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was to prevent his cripples from getting away. However, ComCruDiv 13 returning from TF 34, although close to the disposition never reported to me for duty. At 1412, CTF 38 directed him to proceed north with cruisers and DD's. I did not issue him any further orders although I sent ComDesRon 55 in PORTERFIELD with CALLAGHAN at 1454 to join him and just before dusk had the ESSEX send two night fighters to report to him to the north.

33. This cruiser-destroyer group consisted of the SANTA FE, MOBILE, WICHITA, NEW ORLEANS, and DD's PORTERFIELD, C.K. BRONSON, COTTEN, DORTCH, HEALY, COGSWELL, CAPERTON, INGERSOLL, KNAPP, CALLAGHAN, BAGLEY and PATTERSON. At 1615, ComCruDiv 13 reported he had in sight the final enemy CVL, still dead in the water and listing badly. Our ships opened fire at long range. There was some ineffective return fire from the carrier but at 1700 it turned turtle and sank in Lat. 19-08 N., Long. 126-32 E. Further north at 1840 radar contact was established with three enemy ships which had been spotted and kept under observation by ESSEX VF(N). They were estimated to be 2 DD and 1 CL dead in the water, probably picking up survivors. As soon as our ships opened fire the two enemy destroyers fled north at high speed. Neither the VF(N) or our ships were able to regain contact with these vessels, but the Jap CL put up stubborn resistance and maneuvered at speeds up to 26 knots. Finally after receiving many hits from our gunfire, she was seen to explode and sink at 2055 in Lat. 20-14 N., Long 126-11 E. By then our VF(N) had contacted the remainder of the enemy force (reported as 5-6 ships) some 45 miles further north on course 000° speed 20. ComCruDiv 13 considered it impracticable to close and withdrew. He reported enthusiastically on the performance of ESSEX VF(N).

34. From the tactical point of view of this Task Group Commander, the situation during the day had been ideal. We had wiped out the enemy air on the day before and we had him within striking range of our aircraft. We were proceeding towards him at 25 knots, he could not get away, and a good fresh breeze for air operations was only 45° on my starboard bow. It was a happy situation. The enemy was between 80 and 100 miles away, an ideal distance for aircraft strikes We pounded him from dawn till dark with everything we had. The only untoward incident was at 1328 when I received orders from CTF 38 to proceed no further northward. At that time I felt we almost had the enemy cripples in sight. In accordance with these orders I headed 270°, which, with operations into an easterly wind, kept me in the same general locality. However at 1417 I requested permission from CTF 38 to proceed to northward again to insure getting in my last strike of the day before dark. Upon receiving affirmative from this transmission, we headed north again

35. At 1800 the Task Group turned southeast toward assigned fueling rendezvous and at 0915 the following day our cruisers and destroyers rejoined from their cripple hunt. The action of 25 October had been gratifying to say they least - the Japanese Navy had been dealt blows from which it is safe to say they will probably never recover. Our losses for the day of 6 planes, 3 pilots and 4 crewmen had been very minor compared to the total effort employed.

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UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
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36. This ended the BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINES 24-25 October insofar as this Task Group was concerned. Later reports indicated our submarines in the path of the retreat of the cripples had made some torpedo attacks which sank or damaged one or more additional ships.

SUMMARY OF DAMAGE DONE TO ENEMY

1. During the BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, 24-25 October, planes of Task Group 38.3 flew 653 sorties, including 408 against Japanese Fleet, 41 search and 204 CAP-ASP. They dropped 136 tons of bombs and 70 torpedoes.

2. Damage to the enemy by this Task Group was as follows:

(a) Planes shot down.....176 plus 20 probables.
(b) Ships sunk.....1 CV ZUIKAKU Class.
1 CVL CHITOSE Class.*
1 CVL ZUIHO Class.
1 CL AGANO Class.**
1 Unidentified DD.
(c) Ships damaged.....1 CVL CHITOSE Class (also seen to sink, but not claimed by planes of this Task Group).
2 BB YAMATO Class.
1 BB NAGATO Class.
2 XCV ISE Class.
1 CA NACHI Class.
1 CA ATAGO Class.
3 Unidentified CA.
2 CL NATORI Class.
3 Unidentified CL.
5 DD.

* Damaged by planes, sunk by ships' gunfire.
** Sunk by ships' gunfire.

3. Own losses in this Task Group were as follows:

(a) Planes lost in combat	14
(b) Planes lost operationally	3
(c) Flight Personnel lost in combat	17
(d) Flight Personnel lost operationally	4
(e) Ships sunk	1 CVL (PRINCETON).

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3. (Cont'd)

(f) Ships damaged (alongside PRINCETON)	1 CL (BIRMINGHAM). 3 DD (IRWIN, MORRISON, GATLING.
(g) Ships personnel lost in combat - (incomplete report).	Approximately 175 killed, 450 wounded.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL

1. It is considered that "reinforced searches" are not warranted in that they dissipate planes that would otherwise be available for strikes after contact is made. It is considered that search planes should have no other mission than search, should avoid combat, and that they should not carry bombs. However it is believed sound where practicable to have 1 VB accompanied by 1 VF to give it protection against enemy fighters encountered in seeking its information. When sufficient fighter types are available a search team of two fighters is probably better still.

2. When carriers are beyond the coverage of own shore based air searches, it is believed essential for security that carrier searches be made in all directions from which enemy carriers might approach within striking distance.

3. It is considered that the best role of the fast battleships under modern conditions of naval air warfare is to remain with carriers until the air strikes have produced cripples as suitable targets for the battleships and until control of the air has been gained to a point where CAP is not required for the battleships when they are detached.

4. Effectiveness of our Ordanance against Enemy Heavy Ships.

(a) The performance of our bombs and torpedoes against enemy battleships on 24 and 25 October was disappointing. Either the Japanese ships are much tougher than thought or else our bombs and torpedoes as used are not sufficiently effective against the Japanese heavy ships.

(b) Depth settings of torpedoes used against the Japanese BB's were mixed 10 and 20 feet. Three hits on one and four on another failed to stop them on 24 October. On the 25th two ISE class XCV's received 9 torpedoes between them, yet were able to steam at 20 knots.

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4. (Cont'd)

(c) It is recommended that the explosive charge of our torpedoes be increased to make them more effective. If range must be reduced to effect this, it is believed a maximum of 3000 yards is ample for an aircraft torpedo.

(d) A study of penetration tables for A.P. bombs shows that with dive bombing they could only penetrate about 3 inches of armor. Thus they are of little effect in damaging a BB. Practically all bombs used against the BB's in that battle were AP or SAP and it is believed they were being defeated by the armor and not getting even as much effect as a G.P. instantaneous fused bomb would have obtained

(e) In order to obtain the penetration necessary to cause internal damage and holes in the bottom some type of rocket is required. Rockets of a large size equal to the 1000 lb. A.P. bomb should be developed with all possible speed. It is believed that rockets are the coming weapo of aircraft as they will be able to penetrate any armor that is practicable to install in a ship.

5. Communications.

Communications during this operation were excellent, particularly between aircraft and the target coordinator.

6. Ships Reports, listed as enclosures, are hereby forwarded without comment except as noted below:

(a) ComCruDiv 13, serial 0087, dated 30 October 1944, Appendix "A" to Part II: TBS transmission at 1415 on 25 October was from CTF 38 and not CTG 38.3 as listed.

(b) USS ESSEX, serial 0195, dated 21 November 1944 - Particular attention is invited to Part V, Special comments on air search radar and proposed doctrine for return and recovery of strikes. This doctrine is recommended for study and possible incorporation in Standard Carrier Task Force Instructions.

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7. 7. General Recommendation.

It is recommended that the BATTLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, 24-25 October 1944, be designated as an engagement meriting the award of a star to be worn upon the Asiatic-Pacific campaign ribbon as provided by Navy Department General orders, 194 and 207 of 4 June 1943 and 7 February 1944, respectively.

FREDERICK C. SHERMAN,
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy.,
Commander Task Group THIRTY-EIGHT POINT THREE.

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