

TRANSCRIPTION of ACTION REPORT

for

U.S.S. SHERIDAN - APA51

Marshall Islands Operation

31 January - 8 February 1944

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Transcribed by John Clingman

Info:

31 January to 8 February 1944 : 31 January arrived in vicinity of Kwajalein Atoll. 1 February landed 1473 personnel and 774.6 tons of equipment of Landing Team 2/23 of the 4th Marine Division, in assault on Beach Red III, Roi Island. Seventy-four (74) casualties were received and cared for aboard. Two (2) bodies of deceased buried at sea. Operation conducted under CTF 53. Ship remained in area until departure on 8 February for Pearl Harbor via Kahului, Maui.

ACTION REPORT

DECLASSIFIED
(previously CONFIDENTIAL)

USS SHERIDAN

APA 51

SERIAL 025

24 APRIL 1944

U.S.S. SHERIDAN – REPORT ON MARSHALL ISLANDS OPERATION.

**COVERS ASSAULT AND INITIAL LANDING ON ROI AND
NAMUR ISLANDS, NORTHERN KWAJALEIN ATOLL FROM
31 JANUARY – 8 FEBRUARY 1944 WHILE OPERATING
IN TASK UNIT 53.2.3.**

APA51/A16-3/A9
Serial No. 05

U.S.S. SHERIDAN
C/O Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California
14 February 1944

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commander FIFTH Amphibious Force Pacific.

Via : (1) The Commander Transport Division TWENTY-
EIGHT (Commander Task Unit 53.11.3.).
(2) The Commander Transport Group THREE.

Subject: Marshall Islands Operation - report on.

Enclosure: (A) Report of Lieutenant J.E. FLETCHER,
D-V(S), USNR, Boat Group Commander.
(B) Report of Salvage Officer.
(C) Report of Lieut. W.W. WEST, D-V(G), USNR,
Communication Officer.

1. Enclosure (A), (B), and (C) are forwarded here-
with.

2. The successful landing of our Combat Team CT2/23
was the responsibility of Lieut. John E. Fletcher, D-V(S), USNR,
our Boat Group Commander. Due to his thorough planning and
intelligent execution of those plans the landing on Red Beach
3 was a success. His judgment and ability to cope with the
various problems confronting him under difficult situations,
plus hard work and the efficient handling of the men under
his command was outstanding and came in for high praise from
returning Marine Officers. This is the second time this
officer has been under enemy fire, the first time being at
Tarawa, and during both operations has performed his task
successfully and in an excellent manner. He is in my opinion
deserving of special commendation.

3. From our arrival in the Transport Area at
Roi-Namur, Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands Group, at 1235
(zone plus 12 time) 31 January 1944, until 8 February 1944,
the actions and attention to duty of both officers and men
was highly commendable. Not a single instance was seen by
or reported to me requiring censorship.

(not signed)
J.J. MOCKRISH

(stamp) 70783 **FILMED**

U.S.S. SHERIDAN

10 February 1944

From: Lieutenant John E. Fletcher, D-V(S), USNR.
Subject: Report of Boat Group Commander.

The SHERIDAN carried a landing team from the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines, plus attached units and priority cargo, for occupation of the east end of Roi Island, Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands. The greater part of the attacking force was transferred to LST's outside of the lagoon on D-Day, while other units in the initial assault were taking five small islands which flanked Roi and Namur to the south. On D-plus-1 Day the LST's entered the lagoon, the main assault waves were formed, and the attack was successfully carried out under cover of heavy naval bombardment. Enemy resistance was limited to sniper fire after marines had consolidated their positions on D-plus-1 Day, although on Namur more difficulty was experienced. Troops and cargo were re-loaded on the SHERIDAN for further transportation when the operation was completed. In my capacity as Boat Group Commander for Beach Red 3, I was with the boats and LVT's almost continuously for seven days, starting with the transfer to LST's, through the main assault, until troops and cargo had been re-embarked. In my report I have eliminated the recounting of ordinary events as they would inevitably occur in such an operation. Instead I have limited myself to comments which might be of some value in the planning of future amphibious attacks.

Preliminary Plans

1. Lack of coordination was evident between naval and marine landing plans. LT2/23, for example, wanted ten waves, but the naval plan contained only seven; numbers of LVT's within the waves varied; marine plans called for waves 1 to 10 consecutively, while naval plans included alphabet waves A through D; marines wanted medium and light tanks separate, but the naval plan placed them in the same wave. This was particularly confusing to the LST's, which had no contact with the main force for almost three weeks prior to invasion.

2. Information containing plans and changes of plan too often arrived late or not at all.

3. Timed approach schedules counted on a greater speed than LVT(A)'s and LVT(2)'s are capable of making.

4. The plan called for more than 200 LVT's to rendezvous in the same area. This can successfully be done only on paper.

5. It is suggested that a single landing plan be evolved by only one unit - either naval or troop. In landings such as this, boat officers have no contact with or control over LVT drivers or officers responsible for LVT waves. Yet we felt that all aspects of the movement until the beach was reached were our responsibility. Wave commanders from the LST's

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Subject: Report of Boat Group Commander.

should have been assisted by marine personnel who understood all aspects of the operation.

Transfer to LST's

1. The transfer of troops to LST's a short time before invasion presents no major problems and is infinitely preferable to shifting personnel from boats to LVT's.

2. LT2/23 plan for pre-loading boats with personal gear and part of a reserve unit of fire was excellent. However, troops showed inadequate training in the use of debarkation nets and in lowering away gear. One LCV(P), for example, took more than an hour to load, with men going down the net one at a time, and gear being lowered away on a single line.

3. LST's were not prepared to receive boats alongside. Both on D-Day, outside of the lagoon, and later inside the lagoon, this was a major hazard. In general, LST's;

A. Had inadequate nets, both in number and in type.

B. Had fragile bow and stern lines, with few men to tend them on deck. These lines have to be at least 2½" in order not to snap, with an eye for the boat cleat, and they must be tended from the deck.

C. Needed gear for hoisting equipment out of boats. This should be accomplished **at the same time** as men are going up the nets.

4. LST's should lie as close to the Transport Area as possible before the transfer of assault personnel. In this operation, because of prevailing wind and the strong set to the current, keeping station seemed quite a problem for both transports and LST's.

Use of LST's and LVT's in Amphibious Operations

1. LST's should lie close enough to the Line of Departure to eliminate the Rendezvous Area, LVT's should go immediately to the Line of Departure and form waves there, rather than attempting to pick up LVT's from three or four LST's before moving off. Need for this is evidenced by the fact that more than two hours were spent forming six LT2/23 waves, although some of the delay was occasioned by difficulty in getting LVT's off the top decks of LST's. It was reported that elevators were too short for handling LVT's, and needed to have the hatch opening enlarged.

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Subject: Report of Boat Group Commander.

2. LST's were very late in assuming position and commencing the unloading of LVT's. They came inside the lagoon at 0730, and the waves were not formed until 1100.

3. It must be recognized that LVT's are difficult to handle in the water. They cannot be formed and moved as if they were boats. A simple landing plan, involving a minimum of circling and maneuvering, is essential when LVT's are employed.

4. LST's should embark complete waves insofar as possible, so that LVT waves will not have to be "rounded up" any more than necessary. It is realized that dispersal is required in case of the loss of any LST, so that the landing formation will not be seriously impaired. In our landing, for example, Wave I had eighteen LVT(A)'s from three different and widely separated LST's, and getting them together constituted a serious problem.

5. It seems preferable that LVT's for initial waves be carried within the LST rather than topside, so that in the event hoists fail to operate, it will not seriously endanger the operation.

Forming Waves and Control of Traffic

1. The use of LCC's is excellent. However, after assault waves are in, each LCC should **anchor** off its respective beach and control traffic and cargo priority. With superior communication facilities, it can operate as liason between the troops, the Beachmaster, and the ships.

2. LCC's for Red beaches did not know that the Rendezvous Area had been shifted inside the lagoon until informed by me at a time well after the LST's had entered the lagoon. The information reached me at 0200 on D-plus-1 Day, and should have reached them at the same time.

3. LST wave commanders were not properly briefed, and as a result handled their waves badly. They did not seem to be familiar with the over-all plan, or charts of the area, and did not have radio communication with either the LCC or the Boat Group Commander.

4. The Line of Departure was well marked, and the dispatching of waves well handled. However, information of the delay in W-Hour (because of the slow formation of waves for Red beaches) was not passed on. The Beach Red 3 LCC, and even the CO, LT2/23, were ignorant of the time for the assault right up until the 1st wave was dispatched by the PHELPS.

5. The rocket and 37mm barrage, added to naval bombardment, proved LVT and LCI effectiveness. The enemy made almost no defense of beach installations on the lagoon side of

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Subject: Report of Boat Group Commander.

(Burlesque redacted - Roi handwritten), and assault troops secured a beach-head immediately.

6. Medium and light tanks were landed without incident from LCM(3)'s, and their early presence on the beach seemed of value to the assault.

7. Waves to be landed "On Call" run into danger of not being contacted or of being held up somewhere between the Line of Departure and the beach. It is felt that in this landing if there had been immediate need for reserve troops, they would not have been available. Perhaps a time schedule for all waves is better, with the understanding that they may be held up off the beach if they are not needed or wanted.

8. Transfer of reserve elements from boats to LVT's returning from the beach can easily be effected. These LVT's can be particularly useful in carrying to the beach any priority cargo needed initially, before the beach has been secured.

9. Unloading of boats presented difficulties because of the conspicuous absence of shore party personnel, and the absence of cats and bulldozers with which to clear the beach. Many boat crews had to unload their own boats several times in succession, resulting in a dispersion of material all along the beach, regardless of its type or priority.

10. It is felt that earlier use of LCT's is advisable if they can be made available. They draw no more than an LCM(3), and can better carry the trucks and tractors necessary for the early working of cargo. LCT's could have been used at any point along the lagoon side of Burlesque. LST's, too, could have been employed earlier to advantage.

11. Boat crews were very cooperative in matters of traffic control, obeying orders without question. The only problem was presented by two LST's which disregarded signals and orders, and as a result got hung up on a reef on the left flank of Beach Red 3.

12. Communications were superior to those before experienced in any practice or real landing. The 610 channel was very satisfactory, although it was crowded beyond its capacity. Communication with LST's was inadequate. On one day, for example, we were ordered to pick up troops off three LST's which had either left the lagoon altogether, or had moved South too far for visual contact.

13. The chain of command seemed too complex. We had a Group Beachmaster on the SC1012, a Division Beachmaster on an LCC, a Regimental Shore Party Commander (replaced three times in four days), and various battalion Shore Party Commanders - and it was usually impossible to get in touch with the right person when a decision had to be reached. Fewer authorities with more definite spheres of action would be less

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confusing.

14. Use of cats on the ramps of LCV(P)'s, both for loading and unloading, caused many ramps to be sprung. Of sixteen LCV(P)'s left aboard the SHERIDAN after the operation, five had ramps which leaked to such an extent as to render them inoperative. Remedy: longer bridles, and more of them.

15. Too often boats were sent to inaccessible places after dark, regardless of tide conditions, reef condition, or the coxswain's knowledge of his course and destination. This resulted in breached and swamped boats, and lost time.

16. Boats should all be equipped to cut the straps on a pallet in case it has to be broken down before being unloaded.

17. Boats were too often overloaded or loaded too far forward. This makes landing difficult at best, and almost impossible when the tide is coming in.

18. Boats were badly battered by being tied up alongside ships when not in use. Wherever possible, it is preferable to hoist them clear of the water.

Total Reaction

The landing on Roi and Namur was accomplished with few deviations from basic plan. It was obvious to this writer that most of the lessons of Tarawa had been well learned. Many of the weaknesses of Aliso Canyon and San Clement were rectified, and had it not been for the delay on a few LST's supplying assault waves for Red beaches, the results might have been as nearly perfect as one could expect from any amphibious operation.

(not signed)
JOHN E. FLETCHER.

U.S.S. SHERIDAN

10 February 1944

From: Ensign J.J. Borgenson, D-V(G), USNR,
To : The Commanding Officer.

Subject: Invasion of Roi (Burlesque), Marshall
Islands, 31 January to 6 February 1944.

As Salvage Officer I shall briefly enumerate things in this report which I believe hindered the debarking and landing of Marine Troops in order that it may prove valuable simply as a suggestion for future landing.

D-DAY (31 JANUARY 1944). TRANSFERRING TROOPS TO LST's.

The LST's were poorly equipped with bow and stern lines for our boats. These lines were too light (two and one-half inch line should be the minimum used) with the result that many snapped off placing our boats in precarious positions. Another unnecessary difficulty boat crews had to contend with was that lines used from the LST's decks were not eyespliced. The lines were secured to cleats on the LST's decks with LST crews expecting boat crews to take out the slack down in the boat. As boat crews are few, this is a dangerous practice and practically an impossibility.

The Marine Troops were slow and apparently poorly trained in debarking and embarking on nets and unloading gear into and from boats. They went up the nets one or two at a time, and hoisted their equipment slowly, debarking the same way. This resulted in some boats pounding against the ship's sides for a period extending from thirty minutes to an hour - in some cases.

D-DAY PLUS ONE

The LST's after moving into the lagoon were slow in getting the LVT's into the water, reason unknown.

Most of the initial waves were made up of LVT's from different LST's, which made waves exceedingly difficult to form. For example, Wave One consisted of eighteen LVT(A)'s, three different scattered LST's contributing six LVT(A)'s each. Forming such waves was so hard that it resulted in a delay of W-hour, and that some waves were never wholly formed and went to the beach incomplete.

The attempts of the LST Wave Commanders to help form waves was feeble, principally, because they did not have complete information concerning the operation prior to the operation itself. Getting waves rounded up and headed in the right direction became the full responsibility of the

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Subject: Invasion of Roi (Burlesque), Marshall
Islands, 31 January to 6 February 1944.

Boat Group Commander, the Salvage Officer, and the Assistant
Wave Commanders.

As far as my work as Salvage Officer was concerned, all went smoothly with the boats except that many of the boats' ramps were sprung due to the catapillar tractors being driven on them to pull out heavy cargo from the stern of the boat. This resulted in openings at the bottom of the ramps which admitted water, causing some boats to swamp on the beach. This can be remedied by having the catapillars use longer bridles so that the catapillar itself would not have to go up on the ramp.

(not signed)

JAMES J. BORGENSON

U.S.S. SHERIDAN

10 February 1944

From: Lieutenant William W. West, D-V(G), USNR.
Subject: Roi-Namur Operation - Communications of.

The following critical observations and recommendations based on experience gained in the attack on Roi-Namur Islands are offered with the view of improving communications in future operations.

SCR 608/610

1. The use of the 608/610 radio for boat control for ship-to-shore communications was found to be far more reliable than the TBY and TBX used in the Gilbert Islands operation. The equipment held up better, and transmissions were easier to read.

Task Force Commons

1. Excessive voice interference was experienced on this circuit.
2. Transmission from the Control Station were too rapid at one time, after this ship had requested a repetition of several groups, the control station asked if the operator was ready to receive forty words a minute. As personnel limitations make it impossible to have well trained and experienced men on every circuit, it is suggested that high speed transmissions be eliminated in the interests of reliability.

Strict radio discipline on all circuits must be enforced if the number of transmissions is to be appreciably reduced. Too many ships broke into both C W and voice circuits in the middle of another ship's transmission. This naturally resulted in needless repetition.

Operators on voice circuits should be instructed to speak slowly and distinctly. Fast talking operators are the cause of most repeat requests.

If the operation requires small boat recognition signals, it is suggested they be prepared in advance and be included in the communication plan. This would ensure distribution to all boats prior to the time the signals go into effect. It would prove particularly valuable in the case of boats being sent on lengthy missions beyond the transport area.

A separate ship-to-ship administrative channel is recommended for Marines embarked while in the transport area. This would help clear the congestion of naval channels, and lighten the burden of internal distribution and filing.

In summation: Communications were more reliable than in the Gilbert operation and previous practice exer-

U.S.S. SHERIDAN

Subject: Roi-Namur Operation - Communications of.

cises. The ship-to-shore administrative set and the boat control net were crowded beyond capacity. The TBS was in large reserved for its primary purpose as a tactical circuit. Good advantage could be taken of a duty mail boat for the transference of routine **reports** and deferred traffic among the transports.

(not signed)
W.W. WEST.

U.S.S. SHERIDAN

10 February 1944

From: Lieutenant John E. Fletcher, D-V(S), USNR.
To: The Commanding Officer.
Subject: SHERIDAN Beach Party - Excellent conduct of.

As Boat Group Commander for Beach Red 3 on Burlesque Island during the Flintlock Operation, I was in a position to observe the functioning of the SHERIDAN Beach Party. As a unit it is deserving of special commendation for the manner in which it handled the many problems which arose during its four and one-half days of continuous activity. Working under severe handicaps, such as the absence of mechanized equipment for clearing the beach and dispersing cargo, and the failure of Shore Party personnel to be present in adequate numbers for the unloading of boats, the Beach Party still carried out all its functions with speed and efficiency.

Special mention should be made of the personal leadership evidenced by the Beachmaster, Lt. (jg) William P. Dickson, USNR, who assumed responsibilities far greater than those demanded of him. In spite of a painful injury, he directed and capably controlled his beach, refusing to leave until a permanent island beachmaster was established, with all information and equipment necessary to carry on. The Assistant Beachmaster, Ensign W.P. Whalen, USNR, handled the right flank of Beach Red 3, making it one of the most efficient beaches on the island despite harrassing sniper fire and adverse reef conditions. The Medical Section, under Lt. (jg) A.V.N. Goodyer, MC-V(G), USNR, ably performed its functions of treatment and evacuation of casualties.

All members of the SHERIDAN Beach Party acted in a manner which would have given the Commanding Officer a feeling of pride had he been in a position to observe their conduct himself.

(not signed)
JOHN E. FLETCHER

FILE NO. A16-3/A9/(90)

OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
GROUP THREE, FIFTH AMPHIBIOUS FORCE
UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

ly

SERIAL NO. 0100

April 11, 1944.

2nd Endorsement on
CO, SHERIDAN, conf. ltr.
APA51/A16-3/A9 serial
05 dated Feb. 14, 1944.

From: Commander Group THREE, FIFTH Amphibious Force.
To : Commander FIFTH Amphibious Force.

Subject: Marshall Islands Operation - report on.

1. Forwarded.

2. In acknowledgement of his noteworthy performance of duty, Lieutenant John E. Fletcher, D-V(S), USNR, was awarded a letter of commendation by the Commander, Group Three, Fifth Amphibious Force.

(signature)
R. L. CONOLLY.

Copy to:
ComTransDiv-28
CO, SHERIDAN

(STAMP) 6 01153

(STAMP) 1049