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U. S. S. ALHENA

CONFIDENTIAL

Care Fleet Post Office,  
San Francisco, California.

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From: Commanding Officer.  
To : Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet.  
Via : Operational Chain of Command.

Subject: Action Report - Operation IWO JIMA, 27 February to  
5 March 1945.

Reference: (a) Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter LCL-45.  
(b) ComTransDiv-33 despatch 060202 of March 1945.

Enclosure: (A) Subject report.

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded in accordance with references  
(a) and (b).

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ENCLOSURE ("L")



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- PART I. Omitted in accordance with paragraph 5 (c) of reference (a).
- PART II. Omitted in accordance with paragraph 5 (c) of reference (a).
- PART III. This vessel in company with Task Unit 51.1.4 anchored off the Eastern beaches Iwo Jima at 0920, 27 February, and commenced unloading operations. These operations were substantially hampered throughout the entire period by the northeasterly swell, which caused damage to this vessel and craft loading alongside, in addition to creating a shortage of lighterage by limiting operations at the beach.

Only one percent of total cargo was unloaded prior to 1813, at which time night retirement was made with transport vessels of various units as designated by the Commander Joint Expeditionary Force. Retirement was continued without incident and return to anchorage was made at 0817, 28 February, at which time unloading was recommenced. Unloading operations were interrupted by an air raid warning at 0130, 1 March, during which smoke was made for a period of one-half hour. Unloading was secured and night retirement commenced at 1730 in company with units of the Joint Expeditionary Force Reserve. During both night retirements boats were left behind. After an uneventful night the ship was anchored at 0809, 2 March, and unloading again commenced. During the afternoon LSM 260 was brought alongside with considerable difficulty, but before unloading could be started it was recalled by Commander Task Group 51.1. LSM 145 secured alongside just before operations were suspended at 2122 by an air raid warning during which smoke was made for fifteen minutes. The LSM stayed alongside during this interval, and unloading operations were resumed immediately upon securing from battle stations.

At 0938, 3 March, anchor was weighed and course set for anchorage off the western beaches of Iwo Jima where the vessel anchored at 1036 and resumed unloading under appreciably better sea conditions. Twenty-three percent of total cargo had been unloaded up to this time. A beach party consisting of one officer and ten men was sent ashore to augment the small force at the newly established beach. Unloading continued until 1020 of 4 March, at which time all equipment of forces landed or to be landed had been sent ashore. During the remainder of the day the ship's platoon was disembarked, a staff communication organization was taken aboard from two units of the Fire Support Group, and eleven casualties were received from the beach. Boats were dispatched to unload vessels carrying Garrison Group Zero. At 2340 reloading of certain THIRD MARINES equipment was commenced, which was completed at 0334, 5 March. The remainder of this day was spent in regaining control of boats dispatched the previous night, recovering beach party, and exchanging operative boats for the inoperative boats of LSD-2.

Departure from the area was made at 1748 in company with Transport Division THIRTY-THREE less USS HERCULES (AK-41), plus USS WHITESIDE (AKA-90).



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PART IV. Ordnance.

No ordnance equipment was used except in making smoke. (See VI D 3).

PART V. Damage.

No battle damage was incurred.

PART VI. Special comments and information.

C. Amphibious Action.

1. Troops and cargo.

(a) Third Regimental Combat Team, 10 officers, 225 enlisted.

(b) Embarkation: Guam.

Disembarkation: Iwo Jima (8 officers, 199 enlisted);

Guam (2 officers, 26 enlisted).

(c) Cargo consisted of vehicles, petroleum, rations, clothing, water and ammunition. 1265 tons of cargo was loaded on the ship. This was considered a small load and loaded in such a manner that the total working time to unload the ship was ten hours. Ration "B" was given a low priority; therefore, to utilize all the ship's space and leave space for troops in the cargo space, a false deck consisting of two layers of 1" x 12" boards was built in the lower hold of number three hatch over "B" rations to support heavy vehicles. The "B" rations and ammunition were all palletized.

(d) Loaded: Guam, 9-10 February.

Discharged: Iwo Jima, 27 Feb - 5 March (742 tons).

2. Landing Craft.

(a) 10 LCVP's, 8 LCM's; 1 LCP(L).

(b) Launching and loading of boats were made difficult, especially at night, by motion of the ship in the swell.

(c) Control of landing craft was exercised by Commander Transport Squadron-11 and Commander Transport Division-33, and in some cases by Commander Attack Force. This multiplicity of control, combined with uncertainty as to future plans, resulted in occasional conflict in boat employment.

4. Landing of troops and cargo.

(b) Beach organization operated effectively, but a lack of appropriate beach markers and signs was noted.

5. Casualties.

(a) No special preparations were made for casualties beyond routine readiness.

(b) Eleven casualties were brought alongside in DUKWs. They were hoisted in Stokes stretchers on approved casualty pallets and carried to Sick Bay. The pallet, which is satisfactory for casualty handling in regular landing craft, was most unwieldy when used in conjunction with DUKWs. Slings to fit Stokes stretchers are being made for future use.



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D. 1. Combat Information Center.

- a.(2)(a) Air targets were tracked satisfactorily at ranges from 70 to 45 miles.
  - (b) The SA equipment occasionally picked up targets at seventy miles which could be tracked in satisfactorily except between the ranges of 45 to 35 miles. Low altitude planes were seldom picked up on the SG-1 radar, and did not in any instance remain on the scope long enough for accurate tracking.
  - (c) The SG-1 equipment was used for navigational purposes on Iwo Jima and Minami Iwo Jima with satisfactory results.
  - (f) When the surface search radar was used for station keeping, sea return combined with heavy interference from other sets on the same frequency in the near vicinity made targets under 1000 yards practically unreadable. Attempts were made to correct this condition by retuning the duplexer and local oscillator and cutting down gain close to a minimum; very little success was obtained.
  - (g) Target composition reading was accurate.
- a.(4) Reception on IFF equipment was exceptional, and signals were at all times readable.
- a.(5) Very few false echoes were picked up, due primarily to cool weather and the absence of electrical storms.
- a.(6) Internal communications were satisfactory with the exception of minor difficulty with the JX telephone circuit. External communications were satisfactory, but the noise level in CIC was too high. This will be reduced by fitting headphones to the air warning and fighter director circuit.
- 2. Communications were good with the exception of occasional interference on voice circuits.
- 3. No camouflage or deception was used or detected. Smoke was laid by Besler generators and smoke pots and floats during night air raid alerts. Results could not be considered effective, due to prevailing wind of about 13 knots, which left masts and superstructures of ships visible.
- 4. Navigational aids installed on the Island were consistently blanked off by anchored ships.
- 6. Provisions were issued to three landing craft and one AKA. Coffee and sandwiches were available in the galley almost continuously while in unloading area for the benefit of boat crews for whom it was otherwise impossible to provide.
- 7. (a) Patients were treated by one operating team in the main operating room, and were hoisted aboard on a salmon board, at starboard side of #4 hold.



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- (b) Only accepted methods of treatment were employed. Fractures were immobilized in plaster casts or splints early. All extensive soft tissue wounds were splinted. Penicillin was administered to selected cases. The majority of injuries involved the extremities and were of the gunshot or shrapnel variety. Wounds in general were not of a very severe nature, although three cases as designated below by asterisk were severely injured.
- (c) All very extensive wounds received skin sensitivity tests for gas gangrene vaccine and if negative, patients were given vaccine promptly. All casualties received routinely 1/2 cc tetanus toxoid immediately. Two pints of whole blood were used on selected casualties in addition to plasma and glucose and saline.
- (d) No deaths occurred among casualties received.
- (e) All patients are to be transferred to U.S. Naval Hospital Guam, upon arrival.

(f) The below table classifies the injuries treated:

SHRAPNEL WOUNDS	FRACTURES SIMPLE	FRACTURES COMPOUND	EYE INJURIES	GUNSHOT WOUNDS
3	0	1*	0	4
SURGICAL ABDOMENS	CHEST INJURIES	AMPUTATIONS ARMS	GAS GANGRENE, LEG	AMPUTATIONS FINGERS
1*	0	0	0	0
BURNS 2nd & 3rd	LEGS AMPUTATIONS	BLAST CONCUSSION		
0	1*	1		

- (g) All Marine casualties from the beach (11 total) were received on 3-4-45 within a period of 1/2 hour with resultant overloading of facilities and consequent delay in rendering medical care in some cases.

PART VIII. Lessons learned, conclusions, and recommendations.

1. Of the 10 LCVP's carried by this vessel, use was made of 2 as smoke boats, and, for one night only, 2 more as smoke boats for a garrison group. At all other times during the 6 days that this vessel was in the area these boats were kept manned in order to prevent their loss due to weather conditions. The necessity for these precautions is indicated by the fact that in spite of them one boat was lost while this vessel was on night retirement. Besides the loss of over 3000 man hours and one boat, 3 LCVP's now on board are so weakened as to be unfit for future combat service. In order to reduce this loss in future it is recommended that all but 2 LCVP's be removed from AKA's and that 2 LCPR's be added to their allowance to be used for utility and salvage.



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2. This vessel participated in this operation with a shortage in complement of 22 men or 7 percent of allowance, having tried unsuccessfully to obtain replacements at three points in the forward area. This shortage, together with the employment of men in LCVP's, imposed an undesirable strain on the crew. It is recommended that all transport vessels be furnished personnel to at least 100 percent of complement prior to embarking troops and equipment for an amphibious operation.
  3. It is recommended that aids to navigation be installed on sufficiently high ground to enable them to be seen above the crowded shipping of the transport area.
  4. It is recommended that an effective base for small craft be established in the unloading area so that boat crews may obtain food and some shelter during periods when parent vessels are absent or when under control of agencies other than parent vessels.
  5. It is recommended that all transport type vessels be supplied an allowance of mattresses, blankets and field clothing for issue to casualties whether designated as casualty vessels or not. This gear should be issued at forward bases and staging points.
  6. Officers commanding LSM's report that it is frequently impracticable to work end hatches of conventional transport type vessels, especially in a swell, because of the damage sustained when caught under the flare or overhang. This was borne out by the experience of this vessel, which suffered minor damage from that source; in one instance the commanding officer of an LSM was entirely unwilling to work #1 hatch.
- It is recommended that LCT's be reserved for end hatches in all but favorable weather.