

USS Curtiss, Report of Pearl Harbor Attack

AV4/A16-3 (071)

U.S.S. Curtiss (AV4)

December 16, 1941

From: Commanding Officer.

To: The Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Raid on December 7, 1941, Report of

Reference: (a) Cincpac despatch 102102 of December, 1941.

On Sunday morning the Curtiss was moored in berth Xray 22 at Pearl Harbor, T.H. The ship was in material condition Xray with #3 boiler steaming.

There were 9 officers and 55 men on shore leave and liberty at 0730.

The Executive Officer, Air Officer, First Lieutenant, Assistant Navigator and Assistant Gunnery Officer were the senior line officers on board. At 0750 torpedo and bombing planes were observed attacking the Naval Air Station and ships in the harbor. The following is a chronological sequence of events during the raid:

0750 General Quarters. Ship being strafed by fighter planes. Bomb hits observed on patrol plane hangar at the Naval Air Station and at Hickam Field. The Utah, Raleigh and Richmond were attacked with torpedoes. The Utah capsized.

0803 Curtiss commenced firing .50 cal. machine guns.

0805 Commenced firing 5" battery in local control. All guns ordered to "fire individually on any target making on offensive approach." All 5" and .50 cal. guns were firing continuously. Lighted off boilers number 1, 2 and 4.

0808 Ordered engine room "Underway emergency".

0825 Curtiss attacked by bombers. Bombers under heavy fire.

0827 Cut in boilers number 1, 2, and 4.

0835 Tested main engines. Engineering Department ready for getting underway.

0836 Sighted submarine periscope on starboard quarter, distance 700 yards. 5" guns ordered to "Fire on Submarine". #3 gun fired one shot over and two just short and directly at periscope. #2 gun opened fire.

0840 Submarine surfaced showing conning tower and section of bow. Submarine observed to fire one torpedo up North Channel toward destroyer. Conning tower hit twice by 5" shells from gun #3.

0842 Ordered "Cease firing on submarine".

0843 Monaghan (DD354) dropped two depth charges on submarine. Air bubbles and slick appeared.

0905 One of three planes pulling out of dive over Ford Island was hit by Curtiss, set afire, crashed into starboard side against #1 crane. Plane disintegrated, gas tank exploded and the plane burned on the boat deck. Crew of #3 gun was forced to abandon gun temporarily.

0912 Group of planes under heavy fire attacked Curtiss. During attack, one bomb hit stern mooring buoy, one fell short, one over, and one hit ship on

starboard side of boat deck. The latter passed through the carpenter shop, radio repair shop, entered the hanger and detonated at the Main deck Level. The bomb destroyed bulkheads, decks, equipment and fixtures within a radius of 30 feet from point of detonation, and started numerous fires which destroyed equipment in hangar, upper handling room of #4 gun, battery ship, movie booth, and radio transmitter room. All fatalities occurred as a result of this detonation or from fires resulting from this hit. In this attack one plane was shot down about 1000 yards on the port bow, and one disintegrated from a hit 500 yards on port beam and one plane was shot down on port beam landing in the water off Pan American dock. These planes were later recovered. Another was reported to have crashed in the cane fields astern and! ! one forward of the ship.

0927 After engine room out of commission and evacuated due to smoke, broken steam lines and water from overhead.

0928 Fired forward guns at planes passing high over head from bow to stern.

0936 First Lieutenant reported fires under control.

Casualties:

Dead 20 (2 unidentified).

Injured and transferred to Solace and HOSPITAL 33.

Injured and retained on board 25.

Missing 1.

Distinguished Conduct of Personnel.

Ensign R.C. Kelly, E-V(G), U.S.N.R.

Ensign Kelly was in the immediate vicinity of bomb explosion and, through injured, he displayed marked courage and devotion to duty as he continued directing the midship repair party. He was instrumental in bringing the fire under control and also in removing the dead and wounded from the wreckage.

Ensign G.K. Nicodemus, Jr., D-M, U.S.N.R.

Ensign Nicodemus was the After Battery Officer at No. 3 gun. He effectively directed fire on the enemy submarine which unquestionably disabled the submarine. Following this attack an enemy plane struck No. 1 crane adjacent to No. 3 gun. Ensign Nicodemus displayed unusual courage, leadership and devotion to duty in directing the fire fighting and reorganizing his crew to continue fighting the gun.

JONES, R.E., RM1c and RAINES, J.G., RM2c, U.S.N.

JONES and RAINES were in the Radio Transmitter Room in company with ORWICK, D.B., RM2c and SCHLECT, B., RM2c. The explosion dismounted and upset several transmitters. One transmitter fell across the legs of ORWICK. SCHLECT was caught under another. The Transmitter Room was immediately filled with flame and smoke from the film and smoke from the Movie Projection Room immediately below. JONES and RAINES rescued ORWICK from the weight of the transmitter. They then made numerous unsuccessful attempts to remove SCHLECT.

EKBLOM courageously and without regard for personal safety, directed

and actively participated in the rescue of personnel and in fighting the fire. EKBLOM contributed materially in reducing fatalities and minimizing damage to the ship.

DORSETT, H.C., SF1c, USN.

DORSETT was tireless and fearless. His thorough knowledge of the ship and equipment and his industry and devotion to duty contributed materially to the successful rescue of the injured and to minimizing the damage to the ship by fire.

BIBZCZC, R.R. S1c, U.S.N.R.; D'AMELIO, J.A., S1c, U.S.N.

Both BIBZCZC and D'AMELIO continued fighting fires on the boat deck, while exposed to machine gun strafing by enemy planes, with complete disregard for their personal safety.

MOSHER, J.H., CWT, U.S.N.; BEACH, F., CMM, U.S.N.; SAFRANSKI, S.F., MM1c, USN.

MOSHER, BEACH and SAFRANSKI during the engagement, returned to the evacuated engine room, disregarding steam and acrid smoke filled compartments, to start pumps, in order to clear the after engine room of water. This arduous work was performed under very trying circumstances and demonstrated disregard for their personal safety and sincere devotion to duty, when the safety of their ship was involved.

The conduct of the officers and crew was that traditionally expected of naval personnel. Not less than three enemy planes were victims of gunfire from the Curtiss. The enemy submarine was seriously damaged if not totally

disabled by the Curtiss.

[signed]

H.S. KENDALL.

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