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SPRT 000000

P 030349Z

FM ACNB

TO RAYNG/FOCAF

RUEAKKE/ANA WASHINGTON

RUMFKLP/FOCAF FLAG

INFO RBDWC/ANRUK

RAYNSC/FOIC EA

• RAYFN/NOIC NA

ZEN/NOIC QLD

ZEN/NOIC SA

ZEN/NOIC VIC

ZEN/NOIC TAG

ZEN/NOIC WA

RAYNXT/NOIC PNG

RAYGAL/J NOIC PNG

BT

PRIORITY

UNCLD FOLLOWING STATEMENT BY MINISTER ISSUED 1300K

2. THE RAN AIRCRAFT CARRIER HMAS MELBOURNE HAS BEEN INVOLVED
IN A COLLISION WITH THE US NAVY DESTROYERS

~~USS~~

RUSS FRANK E. EVANS

APPROXIMATELY 650 MILES SOUTHWEST OF MANILA IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

USS EVANS WAS OUT IN TWO IN THE COLLISION BUT THE EXACT NUMBER OF

PAGE WO RAYNN 074 UNCLAS.

CASUALTIES ARE NOT YET KNOWN. PRELIMINARY REPORTS FROM THE COLLISION
SCF INDICATE THAT THERE ARE 197 SURVIVORS FROM THE AFTER SECTION
OF THE EVANS WHO HAVE BEEN TAKEN ABOARD MELBOURNE. EVANS WAS LAST
REPORTED TO BE CARRYING 273 OFFICERS AND MEN. THERE WERE NO
CASUALTIES ABOARD HMAS MELBOURNE. MELBOURNE AND USS EVANS WERE
INVOLVED IN AN ANTI-SUBMARINE PHASE OF THE SEATO MARITIME EXERCISE
'SEA SPIRIT'. THE SEA WAS CALM AND IT WAS A BRIGHT MOONLIT
NIGHT. UT APPROXIMATELY 3.15 AM LOCAL TIME (6.15 AM EASTERN
AUSTRALIAN TIME) MELBOURNE ORDERED THE EVANS, WHICH WAS AHEAD OF HER
IN THE ANTI-SUBMARINE SCREEN, TO CHANGE COURSE TO A RESCUE DESTROYER
ASTERN OF HER. EVANS APPROCHED ON A COLLISION COURSE AND DESPITE
URGENT ACTION BY MELBOURNE A COLLISION OCCURRED. THE CAPTAIN OF
MELBOURNE CAPTAIN J.P. STEVENSON, WAS ON THE BRIDGE AT THE TIME.
IN THE COLLISION EVANS WAS CUT IN TWO. THE BOW SECTION SANK
ABOUT 10 MINUTES LATER. MELBOURNE WAS ABLE TO SECURE THE AFTER
SECTION OF THE DESTROYER TO HER ^{STARBOARD} ~~STANDARD~~ SIDE AND SAILORS AND
OFFICERS MADE A SEARCH OF HER AND ALL PERSONNEL WERE TAKEN ONBOARD
MELBOURNE. THE CAPTAIN OF THE EVANS, COMMANDER A. S. MCLEMORE AND
THE SHIP'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER WERE AMONG THE SURVIVORS.
AFTER THE SEARCH WAS COMPLETED THE AFTER END OF EVANS WAS CAST OFF.

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MELBOURNE HAS BEEN HOLED ABOVE THE WATERLINE. HER FLIGHT DECK WAS
BEEN DISTORTED AND THE CATAPULT IS UNSERVICEABLE. SHE IS ABLE TO
MAKE A SPEED OF BETWEEN EIGHT AND 10 KNOTS. TEMPORARY REPAIRS
WILL BE MADE TO THE SHIP BEFORE SHE RETURNS TO AUSTRALIA.
THE NAVAL BOARD IS AWAITING FURTHER REPORTS BEFORE DECIDING MELBOURNE'S
IMMEDIATE PROGRAMME. THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF (VICE ADMIRAL V.A.T.
SMITH) HAS SPOKEN BY TELEPHONE FROM CANBERRA TO THE FLAG OFFICER
COMMANDING THE AUSTRALIAN FLEET (REAR ADMIRAL G.J.B. CRABB)
ABOARD MELBOURNE. ADMIRAL CRABB IS DISCUSSING WITH A US NAVY
ADMIRAL THE ACTION NECESSARY TO BEGIN AN ENQUIRY TO ASCERTAIN
THE FACTS. THE NAVAL BOARD WILL CONSIDER PROPOSALS REGARDING THE
NATURE OF THE ENQUIRY AND WILL DECIDE WHAT ACTION THE RAN WILL TAKE.
MESAGES OF CONDOLENCE ARE BEING SENT TO THE AMERICAN AUTHORITIES.
SEATO AUTHORITIES HAVE CALLED OFF THE EXERCISE

R3. ANA

EEEEEEE SEATO AUTHORITIES HAVE CALLED OFF THE EXERCISE

3. ANA WASHINGTON REQUESTED TO ADVISE AMBASSADOR.

BT

Rush

Phil (2)

at 0705/03

ANR

SOADM

20 (P)

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