

AL2/Al6-3/WAR
Serial (092)

U. S. S. PHELPS

August 3, 1943.

~~SECRET~~

From: Commanding Officer,
To: Commander in Chief, United States PACIFIC Fleet.
Via: (1) Commander Destroyer Squadron ONE.
(2) Commander Battleship Division TWO.
(3) Commander North Pacific Force.

Subject: USS PHELPS - ACTION REPORT - Bombardment of
Kiska Island, August 2, 1943.

Reference: (a) PACFLT COM, LTR. 3651-42.

ENCLOSURE: (A) Sketch of USS PHELPS Track during
subject bombardment.

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded herewith.

2. On August 2, 1943, the U.S.S. PHELPS was part of Task Group 16.17 which bombarded the enemy held island of Kiska. Task Group 16.17 consisted of the U.S.S. THUNDERBOLT (fleet guide), the U.S.S. IDAHO, the U.S.S. PHELPS, the U.S.S. DALL, the U.S.S. ANDERSON. Just prior to the bombardment the U.S.S. ALLIANCE, on patrol north of Kiska, joined Task Group 16.17 to act as a screening vessel only; she did not participate in the bombardment.

3. The primary mission of the destroyers was to act as a screen for the battleship column, while destroyer bombardment was listed as their secondary mission. Upon the U.S.S. ALLIANCE's joining the formation, Commander Destroyer Squadron ONE in the PHELPS stationed the destroyers to afford the maximum screening protection and yet give them the opportunity to fire should the occasion arise. The PHELPS took station four thousand yards dead ahead of the guide, the DALL took station three thousand yards, twenty-five degrees on the starboard bow of the guide, the ALLIANCE took station three thousand yards broad on the guide's port bow, while the ANDERSON was stationed broad on the starboard quarter of the guide, distance three thousand yards. The ANDERSON's duty was to guard against submarine and torpedo boat attacks from the quarter and rear.

4. The firing course, 160° True, was laid out to take the island under fire to starboard at a mean range of 16,000 yards. Prior to the action the U.S.S. THUNDERBOLT and U.S.S. IDAHO each launched two planes to act as spotting aircraft for main battery fire and anti-submarine patrol. When the ALLIANCE had joined and the destroyer screen formed, the Task Group changed course to 140° and commenced the approach. All times used are WILLIAM. At 1557 Commander

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Task Group 16.17 hoisted the signal for general quarters, with which the PHELPS immediately complied. Fleet speed during the bombardment was 18 knots.

5. At 1543 eight Liberator bombers, acting as part of the combined air and naval attack force, flew overhead enroute to bomb enemy positions on Kiska. Their bombs were heard to explode at 1551. The PHELPS was on course 160°, 300 yards outside the scheduled firing track. During the bombardment the PHELPS was carrying a 4° list to port. This assisted greatly in preventing the guns from being elevated into the stops when firing at such extreme ranges. The maximum navigational range at which the PHELPS could ordinarily fire for the target elevation was 16,100 yards, assuming zero wind. A 19-knot offshore wind from 220° True tended to decrease this maximum, but the 4° list previously mentioned enabled the ship to fire at ranges greater than that calculated. The sea in the lee of the island was calm with a light swell. The commencing of fire at 1614 by the secondary battery of the U.S.S. THUNDERBOLT was the signal for the other ships to open fire. Ten seconds later the PHELPS opened fire to starboard with all guns in automatic at target 1618, located atop a 200-foot hill just north of Burnside Cove. The navigational range was 16,300 yards. Since the range was increasing at the time of commencing fire, and the PHELPS would soon pass out of range, a salvo interval of eight seconds was used to expedite the firing. The starboard rangefinder operator was able to spot both in range and deflection, with his spot on the opening salvo being 1200, 100. By means of spots the target area was well covered. The PHELPS fired 20 six-gun salvos, and ceased firing at 1618.

6. Ammunition allowed each destroyer was 205 rounds of 5"/54 A.A. Cannon. The PHELPS was firing about her beam, with her projectiles passing just ahead of the DASH. The Commanding Officer, seeing an air burst above the DASH, believed that it was one of the PHELPS's shots, and ordered the firing to be ceased for safety reasons. The PHELPS did not expend her ammunition allowance for the bombardment, and it later developed that the air burst was caused by one of the DASH's own projectiles exploding in mid air. Task Group 16.5 was bombarding the island from the south, and were plainly visible to the PHELPS during the latter part of the firing.

7. At 1622 the THUNDERBOLT and INLAND commenced firing their main batteries at selected targets on the island. At 1638 the PHELPS changed course to the left to commence the retirement. The two battleships ceased fire at 1639 and changed course to the left, when the Task Group had proceeded several miles

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On the retirement course, the ALVIN left the formation to resume her patrol off the north coast of Kiska. As soon as the battleships had recovered their planes, the Task Group proceeded as previously directed.

8. The bombardment was well planned, well executed, and the performance of the battery and the morale of the crew were excellent. There were no casualties, communications were well handled, and it is felt that considerable damage was dealt out to the enemy installations on the island of Kiska.

J. H. EDWARDS.

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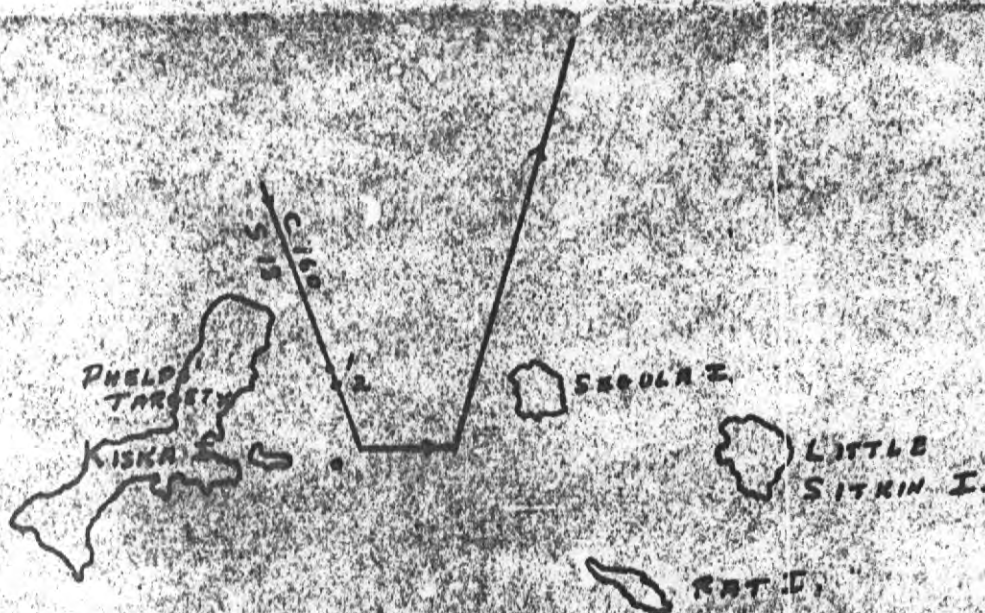
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COMMANDER
U.S. FLEET
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CHART OF PHELPS' TRACK



POINT 1 - PHELPS COMMENCED FIRING

POINT 2 - PHELPS CEASED FIRING