

DD360/A14-9  
Serial (98)

U.S.S. PHELPS

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7 February 1944.

From: The Commanding Officer.  
To: The Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet.  
Via: (1) The Commander Destroyer Squadron ONE,  
(2) The Commander Task Group 53.5  
(3) The Commander Task Force 53.  
(4) The Commander Task Force 51.  
(5) The Commander Central Pacific Force.  
(6) The Commander-in-Chief Pacific Ocean Areas.

Subject: Action Report, capture of ROE and MAMUR Islands,  
MWSALIN Atoll, 31 January - 1 February 1944.

Reference: (a) Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter 2CL-44 of  
1 January 1944.

Enclosure: (A) Subject Action Report, with appendix "1" thereto  
attached to original letter.

1. In accordance with reference (a), the subject action  
report, involving the participation of this vessel, is forwarded as  
enclosure (A).

D.L. MARTINEAS.

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PART I

All times referred to in this report are Zone plus 12.  
Time of sunset 1812; end evening twilight 2006.  
Time of sunrise 0712; commencement morning twilight 0600.  
Dog Day, 31 January 1944.

1. General Narrative of the Action:

Prior to dark on 30 January Task Force FIFTY THREE formed its approach disposition for the final advance against Roi and Namur Islands. While it had been fully expected that enemy contacts would be developed during the night, particularly with submarines, the approach to the dawn positions was uneventful.

At about 0500, PHELPS arrived in her assigned area about 3,000 yards from ENNUBIRINI and HELLU Islands to render close fire support, and to mark the lines of departure for the landings to be made on those islands. Many lights could be seen on the adjacent main islands of ROI and NAMUR. With the arrival of good light at about 0645, general bombardment of the objective islands was commenced by all fire support units. PHELPS proceeded to effectively neutralize ENNUBIRINI Island and made direct hits on enemy batteries observed on ROI. Enemy resistance was generally negligible and wholly ineffective. Well before noon, landing waves had been despatched and firmly established on both ENNUBIRINI and HELLU Islands, thus completing the first stage of the operation for Dog Day.

PHELPS then proceeded to enter the lagoon via HELLU Pass as fire support for the minesweepers. Enemy resistance continued negligible and PHELPS stood up the lagoon and anchored at 1340 on the new lines of departure about 3,600 yards from ENNUBIRINI and ENNUBIRI Islands. To the best knowledge of the commanding officer, PHELPS thus became the first allied vessel to be anchored in pre-war Japanese territory since the war began.

While the landing waves were forming up to commence the second stage, PHELPS took under fire likely looking targets of opportunity with good results. Meanwhile the five islands still held by the enemy continued to receive a terrific pounding from all surface and air units.

PRIOR to dark, ENNUBIRINI, ENNUBIRI, and ENNUGARRET Islands had been successfully assaulted and captured by our landing forces. All preparations proceeded for the main attack on ROI and NAMUR Islands to be made the following day.

PHELPS was later joined by LAVALLETTE, and both vessels remained at anchor in the lagoon during the night, to render assistance and fire support if necessary to the smaller vessels and landing craft then operating in the lagoon. Intermittent bombardment of ROI and NAMUR Islands was continued throughout the night by other destroyers outside the lagoon.

At daylight, PHELPS shifted anchorage to mark the lines of departure 4,000 yards from ROI and NAMUR. Targets of opportunity on NAMUR were taken under fire using partial salvos, and an attempted enemy counterattack from NAMUR reported by our troops on ENNUGARRET was broken up and the area cleared.

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Prior to the time the main attack waves were despatched, the already heavy bombardment of the two remaining enemy islands was greatly intensified. The leading waves started in at 1111, and the others followed very close to schedule. No appreciable resistance was encountered as they proceeded toward the designated beaches.

The remainder of the operation was uneventful, consisting largely of moving troops and equipment to the beaches, and the final mopping up of enemy forces.

### 2. Preliminaries.

#### (a) Operations prior to the beginning of action:

Following a period of training, indoctrination, and material repair, PHELPS departed from San Diego on 12 January, in company with the major groups of Task Force FIFTY THREE. While enroute to the Hawaiian Area in a single cruising formation, an intensive training schedule was carried out daily as directed by the Force Commander. On 21 January the greater part of the Task Force anchored at Lohaina Roads for fueling and provisions. PHELPS, however, proceeded to Pearl Harbor in company with APPALACHIAN, the Force flagship. While at Pearl Harbor, a visit was made to the Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Area (JICPOA) where much additional hydrographic and intelligence information was obtained pertaining to the little known KWAJALEIN Atoll.

On 22 January, Task Forces FIFTY TWO and FIFTY THREE departed from Hawaiian ports. Each Force formed its own cruising disposition and proceeded along the same direct route to KWAJALEIN Atoll, remaining within supporting distance. Training exercises were continued, including the deployment and approach formations, anti-aircraft gunnery and tracking.

At 1655 (one plus 11) on 25 January while proceeding alongside APPALACHIAN for mail delivery, an explosion followed by fire was observed on SANGAMON, one of the CVE'S operating in the rear areas of the disposition. Proceeded at maximum speed to render possible assistance along with the regular plane guard destroyers. SANGAMON reported fire under control and directed PHELPS to search for survivors. Conducted search with no results until 1805 when detached by SANGAMON and directed to rejoin formation.

PHELPS' normal station in Cruising Disposition 3-Love, was 6-5000. Each night from sunset until 0800, assigned station as night picket 16.000. No enemy contacts of any kind were made by any ship of the Task Force during the entire period.

On 26 January, commencing at daylight, special fueling disposition was formed in order to fuel all cruisers, destroyers, and smaller vessels. Completed by sunset and resumed normal cruising disposition. During the period 27 - 30 January, final preparations were completed for the missions assigned in the Attack Orders.

On 29 January, the four cruisers attached to Task Force FIFTY THREE departed with screening destroyers to bombard WOTJE Atoll the following morning. This group rejoined prior to dark on 30 January.

At the same time, the entire force formed Approach Disposition 3-A as previously directed, and Commander Task Force Initial Attack Order A158-44 became effective. PHELPS then became a part of Fire Support Unit #5 (53.5.5), and acted initially as a screening unit for Fire Support Unit #2. At 0235, 31 January, PHELPS was detached to proceed independently to her assigned fire support area off ENNUERING Island. The remainder of the approach was uneventful. On passing ROI and NAMUR it was observed that many lights were showing on these islands. PHELPS arrived in the vicinity of her station at 0500, and waited for daylight to commence bombardment.

(b) Our mission, doctrine, plans, and assumptions.

The operation order for the initial attack on Dog Day, 31 January involved two stages, one of which was a simultaneous attack on ENNUERING and NHELU Islands from seaward. As soon as these two islands were properly secured, the second stage was to commence, consisting of another simultaneous attack but this time against ENNURMENNET and ENNUBIER Islands, from inside the lagoon. For both stages, PHELPS was assigned the dual mission of close fire support ship and of accurately marking the lines of departure for all attacks. Captain E. R. McLEAN, the Squadron Commander on board PHELPS, had been specifically designated as Commander Fire Support Unit #5, consisting of PHELPS and six L.C.I.'s. He was also designated as Commander of Control Boat Units, comprised of PHELPS, and the necessary L.C.G.'s and S.C.'s, to form and despatch the landing waves. Captain McLEAN and myself had thoroughly discussed and studied all factors of the situation, pertaining to PHELPS' operations and our respective duties. Also on board for the period of this operation was a British naval officer, Commander Anthony KIDMENS, R.N., Commander KIDMENS having participated in numerous amphibious operations in the European Theatre, was in a position to furnish us with the benefits of his experience which he very willingly did.

Inasmuch as the Japanese have long and jealously guarded all information pertaining to their Pacific Atolls, navigational and hydrographic facts were particularly lacking. From the many reconnaissance photographs, however, and from the charts that were reconstructed, certain feasible courses of action could be determined. The following difficulties presented themselves in the original estimate;

- (1) Navigational hazards in an uncharted lagoon.
- (2) Enemy shore batteries.
- (3) Mine fields, both contact and controlled.
- (4) Torpedo launching devices from shore.
- (5) Possibility of enemy shore based raiding parties attempting to damage or capture the ship while anchored in the lagoon, particularly at night.

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As the operation actually progressed the above difficulties proved to be either non-existent or of little consequence. Prior to the attack, however, uncertainty existed and the following plans had been formulated:

- (1) There was no reliable information available as to navigation inside the lagoon except that it was known that from reconnaissance photographs that the Japanese were using certain large areas for ships of average draft. A careful study of the excellent photographs clearly indicated all of the border reefs and the most prominent of others dangerous to navigation. It was therefore possible to lay out in advance what proved to be a very safe ships course both for entry and movement in the lagoon. It was also observed that during daylight, particularly at midday with bright sunlight, that nearly all of the hazardous coral heads could be easily and clearly discerned. We were also pleasantly surprised to observe that the Japanese had bequeathed to us a fairly good buoyage system within the lagoon.
- (2) The danger from enemy shore batteries was not considered to be serious. The best and most effective protection being, an alert fire control party and an accurate gun battery. It is believed that there have been few if any enemy shore batteries encountered in this war that could not be effectively silenced with well-placed fire from five inch guns or above.
- (3) Inasmuch as PHELPS was to follow a channel swept by own minesweepers, the possibility of contact mines appeared to be slight. We were mildly surprised, however, to find that the Japanese had placed no mines in KWAJALEIN Atoll. But much thought and consideration had been given to the likelihood of controlled mines. It was originally intended that PHELPS enter the lagoon via the narrow North Pass. In our preliminary planning we decided that practical difficulties would require the Japanese to operate any such fields near North Pass either from ENNUEBING or MELLU Islands. Since the Marines were to occupy both of these islands prior to our entry into the lagoon it was considered that this hazard would be largely obviated. Otherwise the possibility of mine damage had to be accepted. In case the ship were to suffer uncontrollable underwater damage, it was decided to attempt beaching her on the lagoon side of either ENNUEBING or MELLU Islands, and hope that her guns could be still partially operated.
- (4) It is believed that any shore torpedo launching device from barges, docks, etc., could be very effectively handled by covering of possible points with well directed fire at the earliest possible time.

(5) It was considered essential that PHILIPS remain anchored inside the lagoon during the night prior to the main attack on ROI and NAMUR Islands, in order to render support to the small craft then operating in the lagoon and to the marine positions on the occupied islands. It was previously assumed that the enemy would still be capable of considerable resistance throughout the night (which did not prove to be the case). The possibility was considered of their sending small boats, midget submarines, or even swimmers close aboard under cover of darkness either for attack or to place explosive charges on the hull. Under certain conditions they might easily get inside the minimum range of the larger guns on the ship. It was therefore decided to set up strong patrols about the decks consisting of men armed with Thompson machine guns, automatic rifles and pistols. An additional supply of these weapons had been obtained at Pearl Harbor. All hands showed a very eager interest in the possibility of any small arms action. The deck patrols turned out to be highly alert and efficient. No craft of any kind approached the ship during that night without being thoroughly covered from several points. Successful enemy attacks of this nature were therefore considered to be quite out of the question. Obviously it was necessary to issue very careful instructions, and to exercise a strict control of this large number of small arms to prevent any casualties by mistaken identity.

(c) Own forces at the outset of action.

In accordance with Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE Initial Attack Order A-53-14, PHILIPS (with Captain E.R. McLEAN, USN, Commander Destroyer Squadron ONE aboard) became a part of Fire Support Unit #5. Captain McLEAN commanded Fire Support Unit #5, the remainder of which were comprised of six L.C.I.'s specially equipped with rockets and 40 M.M. guns. In addition to acting as close fire support ship of this Fire Support Unit, PHILIPS had been assigned the dual mission of accurately marking all lines of departure for the landing waves, with Captain McLEAN functioning as Wave Control Officer.

Fire Support Unit #1 was comprised of TENNESSEE, COLORADO, LOUISVILLE, MOBILE, ANDERSON and MORRIS.

Fire Support Unit #2 was comprised of SANTA FE, MARYLAND, INDIANAPOLIS, BILSKI, MUSTIN and RUSSELL.

Fire Support Unit #3 was comprised of PORTERFIELD, HARADEN and 3 L.C.I.'s.

Fire Support Unit #4 was comprised of HOPWELL, JOHNSTON and 3 L.C.I.'s.

The Initial Transport Groups consisted of the following units: Transport Division 26 (4 APAs, 1 AKA, 1 LSD) with Marine Combat Team #25 embarked, Raider Unit (SCHLEY), Transport Screen (HEMEY, MACDONOUGH) and LST Unit #1 (9 LST's, 2 SC's and LAVALLETTE).

The Minesweeper Group consisted of 1 LMS, 3 AM's and 4 YMS's.

The Carrier Group consisted of SANGAMON, SUWANEE and CHENANGO; Carrier Screen: FARRAGUT, DALE and MONAGHAN.

The Main Attack Detachment consisted of: Transports Divisions 24 and 28 (7 APA's, 1 AP, 2 AKA's, 1 LSD) with Marine Combat Teams 23 and 24 embarked; Transport Screen (FLETCHER, HUGHES, ELLET, STANSBURY and HAMILTON); LST Unit #2 (6 LST's, 1 SC and WYLVIN).

The Salvage Group consisted of 3 AT's.

All of the above groups comprised Task Force FIFTY THREE known as the Northern Attack Force, with main objectives at ROI and NAMUR Islands, and commanded by Rear Admiral R.L. CONNOLLY, U.S.N.

Simultaneously, the Southern Attack Force (Task Force FIFTY TWO) in similar strength and commanded by Rear Admiral R.L. TURNER, U.S.N., attacked its main objective at KWAJALEIN Island on the southern portion of KWAJALEIN Atoll.

During the approach and final operations of Task Forces FIFTY TWO and FIFTY THREE, four carrier striking groups totalling 12 heavy and light carriers, 8 new battleships, 3 heavy cruisers, 3 A.A. cruisers, and 36 destroyers, operated offensively throughout the MARSHALL Islands area, neutralizing all other enemy bases in the area, and securing the Northern and Southern Attack Forces from attack by superior enemy forces. Another smaller task group captures and occupied MAJURO Atoll, while still another cruiser task group continuously bombarded and kept out of action the enemy air bases at WOTJE and TAROA.

(d) Enemy Forces.

No enemy surface or air forces saw fit to put in an appearance in any vain effort to resist the genuine sledgehammer strategy of the entire Central Pacific Force. Their bases throughout the MARSHALLS remained completely neutralized, as the result of continuous air bombardments over a period of weeks, and the final powerful blows struck commencing 29 January. Reports were received of small scale and unsuccessful enemy submarine activities.

(e) Wind, Sea, visibility.

General weather conditions remained excellent throughout the operation. The prevailing winds are northeast and average about 16 knots. On the morning of the initial landings against ENWUERING and NELLIS Islands, the surf was found to be too heavy for a landing from seaward. But the landing boats had no apparent difficulty in working their way around the islands to land from the lagoon side. Against stronger opposition, such a last minute shift could have proved a much greater handicap. Except during the brief shower periods, visibility is practically unlimited.

- 0630 PHILPS on station in vicinity of Line of Departure, for beaches Blue and Blue 2, 4,000 yards from ENNUERING and MELLU Islands.
- 0653 Commenced firing to cover seaward beaches of ENNUERING in order to destroy or disrupt any possible torpedo launching devices.
- 0659 Checked fire to further observe possible targets or signs of enemy activity.
- 0708 Commenced fire on small tower in Area 910, ENNUERING. Straddled with A.A. common salvoes.
- 0715 Observed enemy battery in Area 910, ENNUERING. Took it under fire, and scored direct hits.
- 0721 Own planes commenced strafing ROI. Negligible enemy A.A. fire noted.
- 0734 Resumed fire on targets of opportunity in Target Area 913, ENNUERING, concentrating on beached barges on southern tip, and a small building. Unable to destroy barges or to score direct hits - it proved to be an elusive target despite the fact that it was beached.
- 0738 Hang fire reported in Mount #2, cleared with no difficulty.
- 0759 Observed enemy troops in vicinity of barges, Area 913, ENNUERING, and commenced fire, clearing the area with A.A. common.
- 0811 Commenced neutralisation fire on ENNUERING. Covered all areas according to Neutralisation Tables in F.T.P. 167, except we were unable to finish Area 913.
- 0824 Ceased neutralisation fire. Experienced considerable difficulty bringing full battery to bear, due to necessity of keeping ship pointed properly to mark Line of Departure. Landing waves for ENNUERING and MELLU fanning around ship.
- 0900 First waves dispatched on signal from Commander Fire Support Unit 53.5.5 on PHILPS.
- 0905 Enemy reported in Area 910 on ENNUERING. Commenced firing using mounts #1 and #2 only, as mount #3 could not bear.
- 0910 Area 910 reported clear.
- 1000 Enemy A.A. bursts observed near PHILPS.

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**LOG BOOK**

- 1005 Detected enemy A.A. battery to be firing from ROI, Area 802. Reported information to O.T.G., and took it under fire. Direct hit on first salvo; but continued to fire additional salvos, and battery remained silenced thereafter.
- 1025 Another enemy battery observed in Area 802, ROI, but not firing. PHILPS opened fire and obtained two good straddling salvos. That particular target area was thereafter kept under close observation.
- 1107 Planned to enter lagoon via North Pass, but ordered to use HELLO Pass by Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE, due to 15 foot depth reported by US'ns.
- 1230 Commenced entry into lagoon via HELLO Pass, following astern of US, and proceeded direct to new station marking lines of buoyage for beaches Blue 3 and Blue 4, ENHUGARNEY and ENHUBIRI Islands.
- 1340 Anchored in lagoon, in assigned station, grid NU 155-220.
- 1408 Commenced fire on cement structure (possible pill box) on ENHUBIRI, Area 942 and observed direct hits.
- 1432 First landing waves despatched to ENHUGARNEY and ENHUBIRI Islands.
- 1505 Shore Fire Control Party requested, via Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE, that fire be placed on north shore of ENHUGARNEY, in Areas 922 and 923. PHILPS directed to take it under fire, and effectively complied.
- 1515 Large explosion observed on ENHUGARNEY; not certain as to whether or not it was caused by PHILPS fire.
- 1540 Heavy explosion observed on north tip of ENHUBIRI Island, and so reported to Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE. We have since considered this to have been caused either by a land mine or by demolition work.
- 1600 Observed considerable machine gun fire close aboard our landing boats near southern tip of ENHUGARNEY. Reported to Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE, who directed us to use own own judgment in taking ENHUGARNEY under fire. Careful observation led us to believe splashes were caused by our own boats testing their guns.

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**LOG REX**

- 1005 Detected enemy A.A. battery to be firing from ROI, Area 802. Reported information to O.T.C., and took it under fire. Direct hit on first salvo; but continued to fire additional salvos, and battery remained silenced thereafter.
- 1025 Another enemy battery observed in Area 802, ROI, but not firing. PHILPS opened fire and obtained two good straddling salvos. That particular target area was thereafter kept under close observation.
- 1107 Planned to enter lagoon via North Pass, but ordered to use NELLU Pass by Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE, due to 15 foot depth reported by IHS's.
- 1230 Commenced entry into lagoon via NELLU Pass, following stern of IHS, and proceeded direct to new station marking Lines of Departure for beaches Blue 3 and Blue 4, ENHUGARNEY and ENHUBIRI Islands.
- 1340 Anchored in lagoon, in assigned station, grid NU 155-220.
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- 1600 Observed considerable machine gun fire close aboard our landing boats near southern tip of ENHUGARNEY. Reported to Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE, who directed us to use our own judgment in taking ENHUGARNEY under fire. Careful observation led us to believe splashes were caused by our own boats testing their guns.
- 1725 Underway to shift anchorage in lagoon.
- 1743 Anchored off GUELLA Island in 23 fathoms of water. Made all preparations for spending night in lagoon. Kept main engines on 5 minutes notice. Following stations remained fully manned: Main battery director, two 1/38 mounts, two twin 40 M.M. mounts, four 20 M.M. guns. Maintained fixed security patrols on fore-castle and fantail, and roving patrols amidships; patrols armed with Tommy guns, BAR's, shotguns, Springfield rifles, and .45 cal.

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## NOG BEACH ONE BAK

- 0715 Underway to shift anchorage.
- 0739 Anchored on station marking mid-point of Line of Departure for main attack on NOI and NAMUR. Grid coordinates NU 171-213.
- 0750 In view of the great margin of fire power superiority already evidenced, PHELPS requested from Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE authority not to fire the final concentrated neutralization against beaches Red 2 and Green 3. Under the conditions it was considered more desirable to keep the ship properly headed toward these beaches in order to better control the landing waves at the Line of Departure. PHELPS was accordingly directed to restrict her fire to call and opportunity targets.
- 0834 Commenced firing on NAMUR Pier with A.A. common salvoes, to clear underside of pier, but not demolish it. Landed two effective salvoes just short of pier.
- 0843 Observed large cement structure in Area S48 on NAMUR. Took it under fire, using common ammunition, and made direct hits.
- 0924 Observed a tremendous explosion on NAMUR that appeared to originate in the general vicinity of Area S47-S48, enveloping the entire island in a deep curtain of black smoke.
- 0954 Observed enemy troops on the beach of SALLY Point facing HUNOCARNEY, reported to Commander Task Force FIFTY THREE, and were directed to open fire.
- 0955 Took SALLY Point under fire using A.A. common. Good results observed, and area was reported cleared.
- 1100 Landing waves forming up for all beaches.
- 1108 First waves dispatched by signal from Commander Fire Support Unit 53.5.5 on PHELPS.
- 1111 First waves actually left Line of Departure.

**1. Performance of our Ordnance material and equipment:**

- (a) Material performance of the 5"/38 main battery was excellent. One hangfire occurred in Mount #2 and was cleared within two minutes. PHELPS main battery consists of six 5"/38 single purpose guns in three mounts. While this battery is very well adapted for surface action and bombardment, its anti-aircraft function is limited to the use of Mk. 32 ammunition against low flying planes, with a makeshift control system. While the Bureau of Ordnance has already made plans to convert the 1850 destroyer leader class main battery to double purpose guns, it is strongly believed that further consideration should be given to installing three twin mounts, instead of two twins and one single. The quadruple 40 M.M. mount now contemplated, could be displaced by a twin 40 M.M. mounts if necessary for stability purposes. This proposed arrangement would result in a more powerful and useful destroyer.

All gunnery communication functioned very satisfactorily, both interior and exterior. While not called upon by Shore Fire Control, PHELPS had the equipment and personnel ready to answer up as needed.

The fire control bombardment plan employed by PHELPS is both simple and effective. Whenever time permits, a composite chart of the intended area is prepared on the ship to a convenient D.R.T. scale, and reproduced on linen tracing cloth. Combat Information Center and main battery control work in close coordination. The position of the ship is kept accurately fixed by Combat Information Center at all times, using visual bearings, radar ranges and bearings, or both. Thus Combat Information Center can transmit to control at any time the best navigational range to any designated target, and control is not entirely dependent on its F.C. radar and rangefinder. It makes effect firing unnecessary, and permits the fire control party to concentrate on the straight gunnery problem.

One of the charts mentioned above, reproduced and used by PHELPS is submitted herewith as appendix "1", and shows also the track of PHELPS on DCG and DCG plus One Days.

**(b) Ammunition expended:**

429	5"/38 A.A. common
45	5"/38 Common

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PART III

(c) Effectiveness of gunnery:

PHELPS' gunnery on both days was observed to have been highly effective. Direct hits were made on at least three enemy shore batteries, two areas were cleared of observed enemy troop activity, two enemy counterattacks reported from shore were broken up, in addition to carrying out routine neutralization of ENNUKBING Island and effective firing against other targets considered to be potential sources of resistance.

2. Performance of enemy ordnance, material, and equipment:

- (a) The negligible fire from enemy shore batteries was most ineffective. At about 1000 on 31 January, off ENNUKBING Island, anti-aircraft bursts were observed coming from ROI Island. A few fragments fell within about 500 yards of the ship. This enemy battery (about a 5" A.A. gun) was then detected on ROI, and was knocked out by PHELPS. No other enemy gunfire was observed by PHELPS.

PART IV

1. Own battle damage:

No battle damage was sustained, except minor derangements caused by own gunfire when firing close to ahead.

2. Enemy battle damage:

Total and complete. Specific enemy damage as caused by PHELPS is indicated elsewhere in this report.

- (a) Communications generally were excellent. The radio equipment enabled PHELPS to cover 12 separate circuits during the action. The landing waves were controlled at the lines of departure largely by the use of special flags, and three portable Newcomb announcing systems (bull horns). This latter equipment was most useful for many purposes throughout the entire operation, and it is strongly recommended that one of these portable bull horns be placed aboard every destroyer. We even prefer it to the more elaborate Operadio Battle Announcing System. It should be said that the latter system is only partially installed on PHELPS and may well be the cause of mediocre results to date. T.B.S. functioned exceptionally well, and due to discipline exercised by the Force Commander, that circuit was kept quite free on non-operational traffic.
- (b), (c), (d) No further comments.
- (e) The Attack Orders provided for three smoke missions during various phases of the landing. One of these missions provided for smoke coverage during mine sweeping operations, and entry into the lagoon involving PHELPS. The aircraft smokers commenced to lay the prescribed screen to blanket possible enemy fire from ROI, NAMUR, and ENNEBARRET. It was observed that the north east wind was carrying the smoke across the entrance passage, and PHELPS reported to the Force Commander that further smoking might complicate the navigational problems of entering the lagoon. It is firmly believed, however, that carefully prescribed smoke missions should be provided for all amphibious operations, to be placed in effect for protection if serious enemy gunfire is encountered.
- (f), (g), (h), (i) No further comments.
- (j) While anchored at the lines of departure in the lagoon, several wounded marines were brought on board, two of them seriously. All were treated and cared for by the Medical Officer throughout the night; except for one of seriously wounded who required an emergency abdominal operation and it was necessary to transfer him via an L.C.V.P. about midnight to a vessel having better surgical facilities. I was impressed with the fact that a destroyer anchored close in near the line of departure, is in a good position to temporarily receive and treat critically wounded cases. It is usually a long hard boat trip to the transports for such cases, that might otherwise be benefited by temporary treatment by the destroyer Medical Officer. It might even be advisable to temporarily place additional medical facilities aboard destroyers at the line of departure, & those other close to shore.

(j) (Cont'd).

These points are illustrated by the two critical cases on board PHELPS. The Medical Officer removed one of these Marines from L.C.V.P., in a dying condition. By means of transfusion and careful treatment, the patient was much improved when transferred in the morning. On the other hand, it was necessary to transfer the other serious case requiring immediate major surgery, since destroyers do not normally carry the equipment that was required. This patient had a long trip in an L.C.V.P. through open sea to a transport.

2. Lessons, comments, and recommendations:

- (a) In addition to being a close fire support ship, PHELPS was also assigned to accurately mark all lines of departure. Since this required that the ship be kept headed toward the landing beaches in order to properly control the landing waves at the beaches in order to properly control the landing waves at the Lines of Departure, difficulty was experienced in bringing the entire main battery to bear, and frequently resulted in only the forward mounts being on designated targets. Firing sharp on the bow caused some minor structural damage within the ship.
- (b) While marking the Lines of Departure inside the lagoon, it was considered best to anchor the ship. To ease any sudden stresses to the anchor chain, and also to obtain better train angles, the ship was maneuvered almost continuously with her engines.
- (c) Common ammunition was used only when firing against concrete or other heavy emplacements. This was considered to be the best procedure for a close fire support ship, since the short ranges permitted nearly all targets to be easily observed. Neutralization fire against ENNUEBING was carried out entirely with A.A. common, and according to the tables in F.T.P. 167.
- (d) Previous consideration had been given to the possibility of the enemy's using torpedo launching devices from the beaches. Therefore the first firing done against ENNUEBING Island was a thorough coverage of its entire seaward beach.
- (e) Deflection spread was used only for area and neutralization firing. Against definite targets, the smallest possible pattern was employed.
- (f) The fire control party, gun captains, and lookouts were all given previous instruction in the general plan; all charts and photographs were made available for their study. This paid good dividends.

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PART V

- (g) While in Pearl Harbor on 21 January, a visit was made to the Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Areas (JICPOA), with a view toward supplementing the paucity of navigational and hydrographic information on ENWALIKIN Atoll. I was very much impressed with the excellent service made available by this very useful organization. Additional photographs and intelligence information were obtained, proving to be both useful and assuring - particularly from a navigational standpoint.
- (h) At one stage of the landing on ENWUGENNET, machine gun splashes were observed close to a group of our landing boats who were ENWUGENNET at the time. This caused us some concern, since we were uncertain as to whether or not our troops had landed on ENWUGENNET. We were ready to open fire; but continued observation indicated that the splashes were caused by our own boats testing their guns. It is recommended that landing boats be instructed not to test their weapons in this manner - such tests if necessary might better be conducted against the beach.
- (i) With full appreciation for the problems of Landing Team Commanders, it is considered that they should promptly report progress both during and after landing. Uncertainty existed in this respect, particularly for the landings on ENWUEBING, MELLU, and ENWUGENNET. PHELPS had operating an adequate number of S.C.R.'s for such communication, and it included the Beachmaster circuits. But the Beachmaster did not land with the first wave, and for a considerable period there was no communication with the initial waves landed ashore. This was a matter of some concern to the Control Officer, (Captain McLEAN on board PHELPS), and to the Task Force Commander as well.
- (j) It is therefore strongly recommended that an S.C.R. 608 be landed with the first wave, in addition to Shore Fire Control Circuits, in order to keep the Control Officer at the Line of Departure accurately informed as to tactical progress and requirements. In turn the Control Officer can filter these reports, and keep the Task Force Commander informed of essential facts.
- (k) The white phosphorus ammunition carried presented a stowage problem. The only available stowage was in the mounts, thus displacing other more useful ammunition. It is recommended that the white phosphorus ammunition carried be kept to a minimum.
- (l) It is believed that a greater percentage of common ammunition should be carried by close support destroyers. Such vessels are in a position to clearly detect pill boxes, cement and log structures, some of which may require considerable pounding to effect destruction. It was also noted that these obscured certain targets for firing ships on the seaward side, while they could be clearly seen from the lagoon side.

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PART V

- (m) It is recommended that destroyers designated to mark lines of departure be scheduled to fire only against call and opportunity targets. It is important that such ships be kept headed toward the landing beaches; to swing around for sustained broadside firing is disadvantageous in forming up the landing waves. Firing close to ahead, particularly on older destroyers, causes considerable structural damage in the vicinity of the mounts.
- (n) It is believed that a destroyer is best suited to function as control vessel at the Line of Departure, due to its communication and fire power facilities. It was noted that landing boats tended to form up around the destroyer rather than the smaller S.G.'s and L.C.G.'s. The two latter types are, however, also essential at the Line of Departure.
- (o) When landing against strongly fortified beaches, it is recommended that the control destroyer at the center of the Line of Departure, be supplemented by two other destroyers to be on station at the extremities of the Line of Departure. The Control Destroyer at the center can then keep properly headed to permit better control of the waves, firing as necessary at targets of opportunity on the bow. The other two destroyers to have more maneuvering latitude, while concentrating their entire broadsides on counterbattery, opportunity and close fire support.

PART VI

1. Personnel performance and casualties:

The performance of PHILPS' personnel throughout this action was excellent in all respects. Gunnery accuracy was outstanding; the navigational and communication problems, somewhat complicated due to PHILPS' diverse duties, were very skillfully and efficiently handled.

2. There were no casualties.

D.L. MARTINEAU.

Appendix "1" to enclosure (A)  
Action Report U.S.S. Phelps  
KWAJALEIN Atoll Operations

