

APA49/A16-3
Serial 088

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U.S.S. ORMSBY (APA49)

REPORT OF PELELIU OPERATION

TO: The Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.
VIA: (1) The Commander Task Unit 32.3.2.
(2) The Commander Task Group 32.3.
(3) The Commander Task Force 32.
(4) The Commander Task Force 31.
(5) The Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

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U.S.S. ORMSBY (APA49)
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, Calif.

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C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

25 September 1944

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet.
Via: (1) The Commander Task Unit 32.3.2.
(2) The Commander Task Group 32.3.
(3) The Commander Task Force 32.
(4) The Commander Task Force 31.
(5) The Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: Operation Report - PELELIU, PALAU ISLANDS.

Reference: (a) ComTaskGroup 32.3 Landing Attack Order 17-44.
(b) ComTaskGroup 32.1 Attack Order No. A502-44.
(c) ComTaskForce 32 Operation Plan No. A501-44.
(d) ComTaskForce 32 Movement Order A503-44.

Enclosure: (A) Comments of Commanding Officer.
(B) Comments of Communication Officer.
(C) Comments of Medical Officer.
(D) Comments of Beachmaster.
(E) Troop Units Embarked.
(F) Cargo Plan.
(G) Casualty and Casualty Evacuation Report.
(H) Unloading Time Study.
(I) Wave Time Study.

1. On 19 and 21 August 1944, loaded cargo and combat equipment. (See enclosure (F)). On 25 August 1944, embarked the units of the First Marine Division as shown on enclosure (E).

2. At 0600, 8 September 1944, got underway with Task Unit 32.3.2 and formed cruising disposition 3AL in accordance with instructions contained in Movement Order of Task Force 32 (U.S.S. Mt. MCKINLEY) enroute to objective for assault operations.

3. Enroute to objective held conferences with boat and troop officers, conducted classes of instruction for both officers and crew in aircraft recognition, first aid, gas warfare, damage control, and oriented both officers and crew with forthcoming operation. Held various emergency drills daily. Exercised troops in taking debarkation stations.

4. At 0506, 15 September 1944, entered Transport Area off PELELIU, PALAU ISLANDS. At 0515, set Condition IA. At 0526, received orders to "Land the Landing Force." At 0527, gave command to lower all boats. H-hour confirmed as 0830. At 0547,

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all boats in water; four boats from U.S.S. TRYON and three boats from U.S.S. LEEDSTOWN reported. Commenced boating troops at 0600; at 0610, 15 boats from U.S.S. CENTAURUS reported. At 0635, eight boats from U.S.S. HERCULES reported. All boats accounted for. At 0649, all troops of Waves 9, 10, 11, and 12 boated. At 0650, commenced loading equipment for Wave 27. At 0710, 9th wave left for Line of Departure; at 0715, 10th Wave despatched; at 0720, 11th Wave despatched; at 0725, 12th Wave despatched. At 0820, three LCM's for 27th wave loaded.

5. At 0933, 15 September 1944, barge from LST 487 alongside to receive swing crane. At 0945, Wave 27 despatched to Line of Departure. At 0959, commenced boating second trip of boats. At 1000, commenced receiving casualties from beach. At 1011, second trip of boats despatched for Line of Departure. At 1052, barge with swing crane left for reef off ORANGE Beach. At 1115, commenced discharging "hot" cargo and despatched to beach as boats became available. At 1030, embarked on board 54 boat riders from TRYON. At 1143, LCT 579 alongside and loading three 2½ ton trucks as previously ordered. Sent three officers and 100 men of 16th Field Depot to U.S.S. HERCULES. At 1244, pontoon barge from LST 276 alongside and commenced loading miscellaneous ammunition as ordered. At 1337, ORMSBY Medical Section of Beach Party sent to LST 271 as ordered by Commander Transport Division SIX. At 1450, despatched three boats with concertina to beach. At 1520, pontoon barge with ammunition despatched to reef off ORANGE Beach. At 1545, despatched three boats to LST 272 as ordered by Commander Transport Division SIX. At 1828, got underway and retired for the night with Commander Transport Division SIX, U.S.S. FAYETTE, and other units of Task Group 32.17.

6. At 0531, 16 September 1944, arrived in Transport Unloading Area and took station as previously ordered. At 0700, continued loading boats with "hot" cargo as boats became available; continued receiving casualties. At 1215, sent three boats to TRYON. Sent all available stretchers and blood plasma to Beach ORANGE THREE. At 1730, got underway and retired out of Transport Area in company with Commander Transport Division SIX and various other units of Task Group 32.17.

7. At 0721, 17 September 1944, arrived in Transport Area, continued discharging "hot" cargo. At 0830, received one officer and fifteen men from U.S.S. CLEMSON, survivors of U.S.S. NOA. At 0907, received one officer and thirty-seven men from U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS, survivors of U.S.S. NOA. At 0915,

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received six officers and forty-two men from U.S.S. HONOLULU, survivors of U.S.S. NOA. At 1100, received orders to commence discharging all cargo; complied as boats became available. At 1100, LCI 455 alongside for fuel, water, and provisions. At 1130, bomb disposal unit despatched to beach as ordered. At 1250, LCI 455 cast off; delivered to LCI 455: 8500 gallons fresh water, 2900 gallons diesel oil, and various fresh and dry provisions. At 1300, received orders to move in close to middle of all beaches to act as temporary casualty evacuation ship, relieving TRYON. At 1345, took station off center of beaches. At 1400, Marine JUKW with tank alongside and delivered 600 gallons of fresh water to same. At 1520, LCT 929 alongside and loading same with combat vehicles and cast off at 1720. At 1740, got underway and retired for the night in company with Commander Transport Division SIX and various other units of Task Group 32.17.

8. At 0610, 18 September 1944, arrived in Transport Area and continued discharging cargo as boats became available. At 0854, pontoon barge from LST 272 alongside; loaded same with gas and oil and cast off at 1053; at 1030 transferred 34 bed casualties and 10 ambulatory patients to U.S.S. SAMARITAN. At 1017, ORMSBY Medical Section of Beach Party detailed on LST 271 ordered to return to ship. At 1147, received orders to cease loading all boats. At 1300, held burial services. (See enclosure (G)). At 1429, commenced loading LCM's only. At 1510, LCI 456, alongside for provisions, fuel and water. At 1555, commenced loading LCVF's. At 1645, LCI 456 cast off having received 11,100 gallons fresh water, 1292 gallons diesel oil, and various fresh and dry provisions. At 1745, got underway and retired for the night in company with Commander Transport Division SIX and various other units of Task Group 32.17.

9. At 0610, 19 September 1944, arrived in Transport Area and continued unloading. At 0625, transferred survivors of U.S.S. NOA to U.S.S. MARYLAND for investigation in accordance with Commander Task Group 32.5 despatch 180220. At 0705, held burial services. (See enclosure (G)). At 0822, ORMSBY Beach Party was sent to reef off ORANGE THREE and relieved FAYETTE Beach Party. At 0945, 10 Marine casualties restored to duty and sent to beach. At 1137, six members of boat pool transferred to U.S.S. ELMORE in accordance with instructions. At 1409, LCT 574 alongside and commenced loading same with cargo. At 1702, Salvage Section of Headquarters, First Marine Division Service Troops sent to beach as instructed. At 1735, LCT 574, while only partially loaded requested to leave and discharge on beach due to having hole in bottom and taking water faster

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than it could be pumped out. At 1740, LCT 574 was cast off and despatched to beach; continued discharging in available ship's boats. At 1800, stationed deck patrol and smoke boats preparatory to remaining in Transport Area during the night. At 1856, Condition RED was set, ceased discharging, and all hands to general quarters. At 1926, Condition WHITE, continued discharging. At 2030, completed discharging all cargo. Took station 1000 yards to west of CENTAURUS for the night.

10. At 0630, 20 September 1944, commenced disembarking ship's platoon; at 0800, sent all whiskey and medical brandy to Commander Transport Division SIX as instructed. All Marine mail sent to LST 607 as instructed. At 0850, all Marine boat riders despatched to beach; all troops disembarked. Thorough inspection of ship was made and no Marine personnel, troop's cargo or equipment found on board. At 0940, despatched to Beach 17 casualties who were restored to duty. (See enclosure (G)). At 0940, all excess medical supplies sent to U.S.S. DuPAGE as instructed. At 1038, all boat pool personnel, four LCVP's and one LCM(3) transferred to DuPAGE. At 1120, closed beach and relieved FAYETTE as casualty evacuation ship. At 1230, on instructions from Commander Transport Division SIX, ORMSBY Medical Section of Beach Party released and returned to ship. One officer and 10 enlisted men and ORMSBY LCVP #22 ordered to remain as reef party off Beach ORANGE THREE to be returned to ORMSBY at a later date by some other vessel. At 1540, all boats accounted for and made preparations to leave Transport Area. At 1640, released as casualty evacuation ship. At 1700, got underway with Commander Transport Division SIX, Task Unit 32.19.4 and left Transport Area for rear area. At 1805, held burial services. (See enclosure (G)).

11. At 0729, 24 September 1944, anchored in SEEDLER HARBOR, MANUS, ADMIRALTY ISLANDS. Casualties are to be transferred to the Naval Base Hospital, SALESIA BEACH. (See enclosure (G)).

Leonard Frisco
LEONARD FRISCO.

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COMMENTS OF COMMANDING OFFICER

1. The operation was executed in accordance with existing plans and instructions. From the viewpoint of the commanding officer the entire operation appeared to be well-planned, efficiently executed, and operation plans were so prepared that every detail was covered leaving no doubt as to the particular task to be performed by the commanding officer and the personnel under his command.

2. The daily debarkation drills, the sincere cooperation of the Commanding Officer of Troops and his troops resulted in a smooth and efficient debarkation schedule which enabled the ship's officers to debark four (4) waves in 51 boats in record time and well in advance in order that no delay would be experienced at the Line of Departure. All waves arrived at the Line of Departure on time and were despatched in accordance with the time schedule. All hands were so indoctrinated that not one extra word of further instruction was required.

3. The operation and reliability of our landing craft and its crews was everything to be desired. All boats operated at their highest efficiency and although considerable damage to boats by LVT's was experienced, not one boat remained in davits for repairs for over twenty minutes. Reef and beach conditions were considered about as bad as will ever be encountered and in addition to damage caused by LVT's a total of 80 boats had to be hoisted and repairs made to bottoms, propellers, rudders, struts, etc. In spite of exceptionally bad beach conditions the commanding officer feels that all boats were handled remarkably well which also speaks well of the construction of this type of landing craft.

4. The cargo discharge went off smoothly and efficiently. The aid of two LCT's and two small pontoon barges contributed greatly to the expeditious manner in which cargo was discharged and despatched. The longest winch working time of ten hours and twenty minutes was experienced at number two hatch which was loaded with 192 tons of cargo. This, the commanding officer considered a very good performance in an individual hatch discharge and total cargo discharge of 991 tons. The continued use of LCT's and pontoon barges is highly recommended, especially LCT's which facilitate the rapid discharge of large vehicles and equipment which usually carry a high priority at initial landings. All cargo gear operated to our complete satisfaction.

5. The officers and crew of the ORMSBY are to be commended for their loyal, efficient, sincere, and tireless efforts performed day and night, which in their small way,

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COMMENTS OF COMMANDING OFFICER (Con't)

as one organized unit, contributed to the success of a large and difficult amphibious operation.

LEONARD FRISCO,
Captain, D-M, USNR,
Commanding.

Enclosure (A)

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COMMENTS OF COMMUNICATION OFFICER
Lieut. A.H. DARLING, C-V(G), USNR

1. During the entire operation communications aboard this vessel functioned in a satisfactory manner according to plan, no difficulty being encountered in the performance of equipment or personnel.

2. In the practice phase radio voice circuits during drills were adequately controlled and comments and criticisms made on the spot which assisted greatly in fulfilling the purpose of the drills. All operators taking part in the daily drills derived considerable benefit.

3. In the assault phase, the outlying position of the transports prevented visual traffic with the beach, but routine inter-ship traffic was transmitted visually and little difficulty with overcrowded circuits was noticed.

4. A great improvement in circuit discipline was accomplished on the transport group command, transport division boat control, and division-ship-shore administrative nets by exercising a more rigid net control. Important traffic was expeditiously cleared and repetitions were held at a more normal level. Strict enforcement of circuit discipline should be maintained by a competent officer, especially during the assault and unloading phases of an operation.

5. For the convenience of those concerned, particularly communication and radio officers, the pocket size communication manual again proved its worth by saving time and unnecessary steps. The future use of similar booklets is strongly recommended.

6. Although limited in use, the operation of NAN gear proved highly successful. This equipment definitely has its place in visual communications after sunset, especially in areas where strict radio silence must be observed.

CONCLUSION: It is gratifying to note that lessons learned from past operations are being incorporated in present plans with commendable results. The following are noteworthy improvements:

- (a) Standardized assignment of voice circuits according to equipment and personnel available in various types of ships.
- (b) Direction of operational and administrative transmissions through properly allocated channels.
- (c) Methods and suggestions for reducing non-essential voice transmissions.

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COMMENTS OF SENIOR MEDICAL OFFICER
LT.CDR. W.L. KELSEY, MC-V(S), USNR

1. The Medical Department handled a total of 245 cases during the operation of which 164 were disabled by battle wounds. Fifty were cases of heat exhaustion. The remaining consisted of mix causes not significant. The large number of exhaustion cases was due to the extreme heat of the area, and possibly the lack of shade, salt intake and drinking water combined to make so many non-battle casualties. It is probable that at least a few could have been prevented by carrying salt tablets. The ship sent ashore approximately 50,000 salt tablets.

2. It is believed that shrapnel from mortar shells was the principal cause of wounds in this operation, in contrast to clean rifle wounds which usually predominated in such landings.

3. Most casualties received on board had been given preliminary first aid in the form of dressings, morphine, plasma and splinting. However, a very large percentage of wounds contained coral sand and debridement and Dakin's irrigation was used often.

4. On D/3, 34 stretcher and 10 ambulatory cases were transferred to the U.S.S. SAMARITAN.

5. Up to the date of this report no case of tetanus or gas gangrene has developed among the wounded. All wounded were given tetanus booster shots and all severely wounded also given prophylactic gas antitoxin. Adequate penicillin in stock made it possible to be used in all desirable cases.

6. Three hopeless cases of head wounds were received on board simultaneously with a large number of other casualties, and it was impossible to do more than cover their wounds. All three expired in approximately three hours.

7. One case of acute appendicitis was accepted from an LST, and operation was postponed until all casualties sent to the ship had been taken care of.

8. Improvement in ventilation of the sick bay is badly needed, and it is understood that alterations are approved. The temperature of the operating room varied from 98 to 102 degrees F., and it is felt that this is very detrimental to the patient.

9. The "MIKE" flag served as an excellent means to allow an even distribution of casualties.

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COMMENTS OF BEACH PARTY MEDICAL OFFICER
Lt(jg) O.L. FRANK, MC-V(G), USNR

1. One doctor and eight corpsmen debarked from this ship at 1100, 15 September 1944. This unit was stationed aboard LST 271. The LST 271 was stationed off off Beach ORANGE THREE for the purpose of receiving casualties evacuated from the beach. During the days 15 September to 17 September inclusive, a total of approximately 370 patients were received. Of these, 16 died and were buried at sea. The others were given the necessary first aid and evacuated to the transports. This medical beach party then returned to this ship the morning of 18 September 1944 and assisted in handling casualties here. The party was again debarked at 0800, 19 September and stationed off the reef of Beach ORANGE THREE. From 1600, 19 September to 20 September, this party supervised the transfer of approximately 75 casualties from LVT's to LCVF's and an attempt to distribute these casualties equally among the transports operating off Beach ORANGE THREE was made.

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COMMENTS OF BEACHMASTER
LT. L.W. MILLER, D-V(S), USNR

1. The ORMSBY Beach Party landed on reef off Beach ORANGE THREE as relief for U.S.S. FAYETTE reef party at 0900, 19 September 1944.

2. Although there was an acute shortage of DUKW's and LVT's to haul cargo from the boats and barges at the reef to the beach, unloading progressed satisfactorily considering the reef obstacles presented.

3. In many cases unloading of ships was unnecessarily held up due to DUKW's and LVT's hunting for special cargo rather than carrying cargo which had priority and was then available and being unloaded.

4. The crane-rigged barges greatly expedited the transfer of cargo from LCVP's and LCM's to DUKW's and LVT's, and future use of these cranes is recommended when beach obstacles such as were presented here are again encountered.

5. It is believed that a Marine officer stationed on the reef to exercise control of DUKW's and LVT's carrying cargo from reef to beach would afford closer cooperation with the reef party and would expedite unloading.

6. On 19 September 1944, two ORMSBY shipfitters reported to Beach ORANGE THREE who, with Marine welding equipment placed from one to three patches on each of six LVT's which were disabled during the initial landing. The repaired LVT's were recommissioned and placed into service immediately.