## ACTION REPORT

USS WORDEN SERIAL 9

DD 352 17 JANUARY 1943

LOSS OF SHIP, USS WORDEN, IN A WAR OPERATION OF JANUARY 12, 1943, IN CONSTANTINE HARBOR, AMCHITKA, ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, - REPORT OF.

[ LANDED ADVANCE SECURITY UNIT AT AMCHITKA, ] RAN AGROUND AND WAS ABANDONED.

47071

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U.S.S. WORDEN DD352 C/O Postmaster San Francisco, Calif. January 17, 1943.

SECRET (Officer Messenger)

From:

Commanding Officer.

To:

Secretary of the Navy.

Via:

Commander Destroyer Division ONE.

Commander Task Force EIGHT.

Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.

Commander in Chief. United States Fleet.

Subject:

Loss of Ship, U.S.S. WORDEN, in a War Operation of January 12, 1943, in Constantine Harbor, Amchitka, Aleutian Islands; report of.

Reference:

(a) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Article 841. (b) Confidential chart of Constantine Harbor

(H.O. No. 5643). (c) Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter 2CL-42 (Corrected by Cincpac confidential despatch

160057 of July 1942).

Enclosure:

- (A) Despatch orders to WORDEN.
- (B) Tracing of reference (b).
- All copies of the ensuing report are transmitted herewith to Commander Task Force EIGHT for delivery in accordance with reference (c).
  - All times are Zone Plus TEN.
- It is reported that the U.S.S. WORDEN was lost after going aground, breaking up and sinking on rocks in Constantine Harbor, Island of Amchitka, Aleutian Islands, on the morning of January 12, 1943, following the execution of an assigned mission in the Bay. Survivors were rescued by boats from U.S.S. DEWEY, U.S.S. MIDDLETON and own ship's boat, and carried on board U.S.S. DEWEY and U.S.S. MIDDLETON where the two parties have been separated and without means of intercommunication because of the operation in progress. Personnel losses are now fairly accurately known as follows: three dead, eleven missing, one severly injured - all enlisted. The circumstances attending the loss of the ship are set forth below.
- U.S.S. WORDEN received orders from Commander Task Force EIGHT to transport from Adak Island and land at

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Amchitka the Advance Security Detail of the Army under command of Lieutenant Colonel VERBECK. The detail was to be placed ashore by 0730, but verbal instructions from General JONES via Colonel VERBECK were that the earlier the landing time could be advanced the better it would be for them in establishing the Security Detail on the beach and an early landing was desired in Constantine Harbor. WORDEN approached from the Northeast in order to use the charted soundings and to try to get a radar picture of the harbor entrance. The night was dark and the weather was clearing and calming following a storm. Kirilof Point, the rocks to East and Southeast of it and the left bank of the harbor were seen and radar checked the picture. A course of South was set to pass along the longitude line 1790 18 East midway between the charted kelp bed and the rocks to Westward of it. On arriving at a point about 700 yards from the line between the kelp and rocks, large breakers were observed breaking over the kelp bed. Since at the moment it could not be definitely determined whether the breakers were on the kelp or elsewhere, the ship was stopped, turned on her heel, and course was reversed in order to check navigation. The check was satisfactory and the ship proceeded in as before and anchored in 9 fathoms of water in the S.W. end of the harbor, at about 0600, and commenced debarking the Army detachment. This operation was completed at about 0720, very shortly after which WORDEN got underway and stood out.

Small breakers could be seen at the rocks and kelp bed and the outline of the bluffs at the sides of the harbor could be seen for a comfortable distance. The same route out as was taken in was decided upon because it offered a wider channel with land marks (the rocks and kelp bed) on each side of it, than did the channel close to the right bank (on exit). It should be stated here that the SG radar picture was never of much assistance when the ship was inside the harbor because the scale was too small and it seemed to blur or choke up. From a position outside, however, it was definite assistance. Standing out of the harbor, the ship, according to eye observation aided by 7 x 50 binoculars, and by radar, was equally distant from either side. It is believed this was true.

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Ship was slowed from 10 to 5 knots on approaching the channel. This was done as a precaution in event ship's bow should ground there would be the possibility of backing clear. The fathometer was in use continuously. A man was standing by in the chains. but was not actually sounding because it would require the use of a light. The fathometer and lead line in daytime always checked together accurately. Twenty fathoms depth was reached while turning to the North heading. After looking the situation over on this course, a change of 200 to the right was made to ensure more clearance on the rocks than on the kelp bed. thereafter change back to North was made due to the breakers across the kelp bed appearing to look too close on the starboard bow. The situation now looked as good or better than on entering. The wind was from 4 to 6 knots from East. While inside the 10 fathom patch. running between kelp bed and rocks, the ship hit a submerged rock under the engine room. Three distinct shocks were felt about three seconds apart. engines were stopped and the ship drifted past and clear. engineroom was filling rapidly. All available pumps including main circulators were put into use to free the engineroom of water, and a point was reached where the intake was just greater than the outgo, but the water level was soon equal that of the sea. Power was lost and the engineroom was partially abandoned. No other leaks were discovered. Firerooms were intact. The anchor was dropped to hold the bow to prevent going broadside into the main rock pile. The ship rode in this manner without touching bottom until daylight (0900) when swells started coming in from the North and the stern would take a bounce on a submerged rock astern on the port quarter. At about 0940 MIDDLETON and DEWEY came into sight and DEWEY was ordered by MIDDLETON to assist WORDEN. The only ship's boat had already been loaded and despatched to the beach with the first load of unnecessary personnel. Since no landing could be found it was recalled and ordered to go to DEWEY as she was now nearby. MIDDLETON sent landing boats to assist. Meantime DEWEY took position to tow. WORDEN's 120 fathom 10" line was expeditiously passed to DEWEY. It was shackled to 15 fathoms of WORDEN's chain, all that remained accessible on WORDEN. Very slow ahead movement was achieved while the increasing seas

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began to pound the stern at intervals on a submerged rock. Preparing for such a possibility, and to gain stability, all torpedoes had been fired and depth charges were dropped prior to DEWEY's coming into sight. Now, all ready service ammunition was jettisoned. As the tow line took the strain and WORDEN's anchor chain started tending aft, the chain was slipped clear. It is buoyed. Shortly afterward the tow line parted. inevitable result would be drifting into the rocks and breaking up. All hands were ordered to abandon ship. MIDDLETON had despatched about six landing boats to assist DEWEY's and WORDEN's two motor whale boats. All of life rafts could not be paddled clear of the ship because of seas and the personnel swam from them to boats. The ship rather rapidly worked itself against the rocks astern and on the port quarter. The breakers made rescue a slow and hazardous undertaking. The ship was settling and listing to starboard. When 350 list was attained and heavy shocks were prevalent, the Commanding Officer left the bridge and took station on the port side of the port 40 mm splinter shield and watched rescue operations by landing boats at the stern and on port quarter. When more information is available as to names, this will be the subject of an additional report. The performance of two of the Coxswains of landing boats was above and beyond the call of duty. They were threatened by destruction by the breakers and rocks around which they were working. Seas were now crashing over the ship which was almost on her starboard side. The last observation the Commanding Officer made was that two men were on the stern in the process of being rescued, two were on the forecastle, and the Executive Officer was with the Commanding Officer amidships. At this time seas knocked the Commanding Officer overboard and he was not conscious again until sometime after the rescue operations had ceased.

Radars and sound apparatus were not demolished because it appeared undesirable to do so until too late. Although the ship might settle, there seemed excellent chance that the gear could be salvaged in our own port. If it becomes necessary the bridge area can be effectively bombed and the gear demolished.

U.S.S. WORDEN DD0002 C/O Postmaster San Francisco, Calif. January 17, 1943.

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- 7. The ECM was in hand operation decoding two URGENTS, one addressed for action to WORDEN, up to the time the Communication Officer had to get clear. ECM was left intact, but can later be destroyed by explosives. Registered Publications were properly placed in security bags and were being pulled to a boat. Seas made the operation almost impossible. The Communication Officer reports that some of the bags sank. Some were saved. All were weighted and perforated.
- 8. The Disbursing Officers' Funds are reported as partially recovered. They were floated in a bag secured to two powder cans. Included were some funds belonging to Ship's Service and Welfare. Only two disbursements had been made by Disbursing Officer since closing out accounts for quarter ending December 31, 1942 and sending the accounts to U.S.S. CUYAMA in U.S. Mail.
- 9. All service records were saved by the courageous action of Paul Gillesse, 311 46 37, Y.2c., U.S. Navy, who tied the bag of records to his foot and swam for about 20 minutes after which he and the records were rescued.
- 10. This report is preliminary and incomplete inasmuch as the survivors are in two groups, one in MIDDLETON and one in DEWEY, not in the same area and no possible communications. As soon as possible, an accurate list of dead, missing and injured will be forwarded to proper authority, the exact status of Registered Publications and Official Funds will be stated, and appropriate recommendations for acts of heroism will be made.
- ll. The conduct of all personnel was most praise-worthy. Every individual exhibited a cool and collected calmness absolutely devoid of any sense of panic while taking quick and proper damage control measures and during the abandoning ship operation.
- 12. The mission this ship was assigned to carry out was recognized as a hazardous undertaking from the start and

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all precautions were taken. The landing of the main security force prior to the main troop landing was accomplished, providing security to main disembarkation later.

- 13. It now appears to the Commanding Officer that there was a set to the Northwest together with a very light wind of about 4 to 5 knots in the same direction which put the ship into danger before it could be detected.
- 14. Copies are supplied herewith for the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet to forward to Commander Destroyers, Pacific Fleet and Commander Destroyer Squadron ONE.
- 15. In order to expedite forwarding, a copy of this report is being transmitted to Commander Task Group 8.8 with the request that he forward any comment thereon to Commander Task Force EIGHT.

W. G. POGUE.

Copy to:

Comtaskgroup 8.8.

Unless other employment of security detachment desired by General Jones. Worden proceed to Amchitka and land detachment arriving at about How Minus three hours. Middleton give to General Jones for information. Worden will await Middleton at Amchitka.

Paraphrase of Commander Task Force EIGHT secret despatch 110530 JAN.

ENCLOSURE (A) to WORDEN'S ltr DD352/Al6-3 serial 9 of 1/17/43.

#### SECRET

FIRST ENDORSEMENT to Worden's Ltr., DD352/ A16-3 Ser.9 of 1-17-43.

3 1019

From:

Commander Destroyer Division ONE.

Commander Task Force EIGHT.

Via: Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet.

Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.

Subject:

Loss of Ship, U.S.S. WORDEN, in a War Operation of January 12, 1943, in Constantine Harbor, Amchitka, Aleutian Islands; report of.

Enclosure:

(A) C.O. U.S.S. DEWEY Report of Attempt to Salvage U.S.S. WORDEN, with enclosures (A) and (B) thereto.

- 1. Forwarded. The reports of the Commanding Officers of the U.S.S. WORDEN and the U.S.S. DEWEY in regard to the stranding and attempted rescue of the U.S.S. WORDEN show the circumstances in so far as it is possible to determine at this time.
- The hazards of this landing in the dark were discussed in conference with General LANDRUM, General JONES, Lieutenant Colonel VERBECK, Commander POGUE and myself on 8 January. At this time the WORDEN was designated to carry out the task providing it was approved by the Task Force Commander.
- Under this condition the limits of the south side of Constantine Harbor are almost undefined. The natural tendency is therefore to favor the side of the channel from which the position of the ship could be determined, in this case the rocks off Kirilof Point and the Kelp Patch. I noticed this same tendency on the part of the DEWEY when entering the harbor twice, a few hours later. The Kelp Patch was white with foam due to the breaking of swells and appeared even more a threat than the apparently deep water near the rocks, on the north side of the entrance. A set toward these rocks was noticed as the DEWEY approached the WORDEN to render assistance and the Commanding Officer cautioned by me of this fact.
- 4. Parting of the towing hawser was critical. The strain on the hawser had been properly applied increased by two or three t turns of one engine, at a time. Although an effort was immediately made to run the DEWEYS' wire hawser there was insufficient time for accomplishment and rescue of personnel became paramount.

SECRET

FIRST ENDORSEMENT to Worden's Ltr. DD352/ A16-3 Ser.9 of 1-17-43.

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- Landing boats from the MIDDLETON had been previously requested and more were asked for when the tow parted, loss of the ship due to the violent pounding was evident and abandoning had been ordered by me. Certain of these crews and also those of the DEWEY's and WORDEN's boats should be commended for their rescue work undervery hazardous conditions.
- At 1300 on 17 January the complete hull of the WORDEN had disappeared below the surface. Recovery of any classified equipment appears impossible. Destruction of the forward section by aerial bombs is recommended as the most expeditious means of preventing compromise. Recovery of some of the torpedoes fired clear of the ship with locked propellers is considered possible.

7. The conduct of the Captain, Officers and Crew of the WORDEN during the attempted salvage and abandon ship operations was cool and courageous.

G. R. COOPER.

Copy to:

ComPaskGroup 8.8 C.O. WORDEN.

3 1049

From: Commanding Officer.

To: Commander Destroyer Division One.

Subject: Report of attempt to salvage U.S.S. WORDEN by U.S.S. DEWEY and rescue of WORDEN PERSONNEL.

Enclosure: (A) Chronological Record of Events.

(B) List of Survivors brought aboard DEWEY.

- 1. On the morning of January 12, 1943, (zone plus 10 date), DEWEY and BANCROFT were escorting the MIDDLETON toward Constantine Harbor, Island of Amchitka. Fandfall was made at about 0940. Shortly thereafter the U.S.S. WORDEN was sighted aground on the rocks on the western side of the entrance to the harbor. WORDEN's anchor was down. Her head was toward the sea on about 0300 T. Her stern was on the rocks. As soon as the MIDDLETON entered the harbor DEWEY was directed by Commander Destroyer Division One to proceed to the assistance of the WORDEN.
- DEWEY was already rigged for towing aft. The harbor was entered leaving the rocks and kelp bed to starboard. A hard right turn was made in the harbor and an exit made between the kelp bed and the rocks to a point ahead of the WORDEN where the DEWEY anchored in 12 fathoms of vater, bearing 030° T, distance 300 yards from the rocks on which the MORDEN was aground. The chain was stoppered with 45 fathoms on deck. This approach was necessary since the DEWEY was rigged for towing aft.
- 3. At the time of anchoring there was a gentle breeze from the east and the sea was calm. Heavy swells, however, were breaking on the kelp bed and the rocks near the WORDEN. The swells increased in size during the operation and at the end, while personnel were being rescued, they were breaking fiercely, sweeping the entire decks and upperworks of the WORDEN.
- WORDEN towing hawser was delivered to DENEY by WORDEN boat. When the hawser, (10 inch Manila), was made fast to the towing shackle the DENEY commenced taking in anchor chain and went ahead one-third speed on one engine. The speed was slowly increased to 72 RPM on one engine. The hawser took a slight strain and the WORDEN slipped her anchor. Almost immediately thereafter the towing hawser parted. At this time the DENEY was still heaving in on the anchor chain with 28 fathoms on deck, chain tending aft.

Subject:

Report of attempt to salvage U.S.S. WORDEN by U.S.S. DEWEY and rescue of WORDEN personnel.

- 5. As the hawser parted the WORDEN broached quickly on to the larger rocks. Heavy swells commenced breaking over her midsection. A messenger for the DEWEY towing wire was started to the WORDEN but brought back on board since it was apparent at once that any further towing efforts were futile. The WORDEN was pounding her full length broached port side to the rocks and listing heavily to starboard. WORDEN was ordered to abandon ship. DEWEY, WORDEN and MIDDLETON boats were ordered to rescue personnel.
- 6. At this time DEWEY got underway and re-entered the harbor, anchoring 400 yards south of the WORDEN, from which point rescue operations were directed by Commander Destroyer Division One.
- 7. Enclosure (B) is a list of the survivors of the WORDEN brought aboard the DEWEY. It is not to be regarded as a complete list of survivors since 150 men and 6 officers were taken aboard the MIDDLETON.
- 8. WOOD, C.F. WTlc, and BASS, L.F. Sealc USN, who died on board the DEWEY, were buried at sea at 1200 (W), 13 January 1943 with appropriate ceremony.

J. P. CANTY.

# CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF EVENTS - ATTEMPTED SALVAGE OF USS WORDEN BY USS DEWEY

All Times Zone Plus 10, 12 January 1943.

- 0940 Standing in to Constantine Harbor, escorting MIDDLETON. Sighted U.S.S. WORDEN aground on rocks on western side of entrance to harbor.
- 1040 MIDDLETON anchored and commenced debarking troops. Sent some boats to assistance of WORDEN.
- 1100 DEWEY anchored ahead of WORDEN. Received messenger to WORDEN towing hawser from WORDEN boat.
- 1121 Towing hawser secured for towing.
- 1122 Commenced towing and heaving in on anchor chain.
- 1127 WORDEN slipped anchor.
- 1128 Towing hawser parted. WORDEN's head began to fall off to port.
- 1129 Brought up DEWEY towing wire. Unshackled WORDEN parted hawser. Passed messenger to MIDDLETON boat.
- 1140 (approximately) Ordered MIDDLETON boat to cast off messenger and proceed to pick up WORDEN personnel. DEWEY, WORDEN and other MIDDLETON boats directed to pick up survivors. WORDEN ordered to abandon ship by ComDesDiv One.
- 1145 (approximately) DEWEY underway proceeding into harbor.
- 1157 DEWEY anchored in Constantine Harbor 400 yards south of WORDEN. First boat load of survivors came alongside.
- 1225 Hull of WORDEN broke forward of after deck house.
- 1238 Sent landing barge of survivors to MIDDLETON.
- 1240 Sent second landing barge of survivors to MIDDLETON.
- 1244 Aircraft motors heard. Heaved in to 30 fathoms of chain on deck.
- 1249 Temperature of water taken and found to be 360 F.
- 1250 Sent third landing barge load of survivors to MIDDLETON.

#### CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF EVENTS - ATTEMPTED SALVAGE OF USS WORDEN BY USS DEWEY

#### All times Zone Plus 10, 12 January 1943.

- 1300 Commanding Officer of WORDEN, Commander W.G. Pogue, USN, brought on board.
- 1314 Executive Officer of WORDEN, Lieutenant S.J. Caldwell, U.S. Navy, and one other survivor brought on board. Reported to be last of survivors.
- 1319 Reported that group of WORDEN men had previously been landed on beach by WORDEN boat. DEWEY boat sent to investigate. Results negative.
- 1330 (approximately) DEWEY underway proceeding out of harbor to patrol station.

W. G. POGUE, Commander, U.S. Navy - Commanding Officer.

S. J. CALDWELL, Lieutenant, U.S. Navy, - Executive Officer.
J. C. SPITLER, Lieutenant, U.S. Navy - First Lieutenant.
W. R. BARRANGER, Lieut.(jg) D-V(G) USNR - Communication Officer.

R. P. BARKER, Lieut. (SC) USNR - Disbursing Officer.

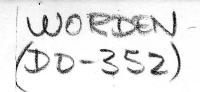
BECK, Wells Roger, 660 21 73, Sealc. BENISON, William Milo, 664 22 23, F3c. BRADLEY, David Allen, 382 84 55, Sealc. BROWN, Harl Lester, 368 73 65, Sea2c. BROWN, Earl Roy, 624 38 33, Sea2c. BROWN, James William, 662 57 44, Sea2c. BYERS, Vincil "D", 342 28 33, Flc. CARLIN, Joseph Holland, 632 47 73, SOM3c. COATES, James McIntosh, 385 75 77, SFlc. COLLYER, Harry James, 223 88 49, Flc. DAWSON, Louis Dean, 337 61 07, Sealc. FARNSWORTH, Curtis Jessee, 212 57 97, TM3c. FRITZ, Bam Wesley, 380 27 50, CCS(PA). GILLESSE, Paul Jr., 311 46 37, Y.2c. GRIMES, Robert Frank, 222 74 08, CBM(PA). GUTHRIÉ, Ramond Thomas, 663 27 52, Flc. GWINN, Paul, 265 90 20, SK3c HAYNES, Warren "C", 381 33 50, F2c. HOLMAN, Robert Thomas, 662 48 35, SOM3c. HUNTER, James Francis, Jr. 381 29 03, MM2c. JAMES, Sylvester Jr., 670 14 70, Sea2c. KITCHEN, Edward Walter, 223 81 24, SM3c. LINES, Richard Ferdinand, 342 25 13, Flc. MACCHI, Alfred Edward, 376 05 38, F2c. MATNEY, Claudie Allan, 356 19 92, WT2c. MCMULLEN, William Thomas, 654 78 04, Sealc. O'NEAL, James Willard 287 16 07, MMic. PELES, Adolph Raymond, 622 93 92, Sealc. PERKINS, Raymond Richard, 223 30 52, SMlc. RAY, Wilburn Buel, 360 29 35, Cox. REEDER, Robert Bruce, 385 87 29, SClc. ROGERS, John Francis, 234 39 67, Sea2c. RUDY, Harry Wendell jr., 337 34 76, Sea2c. SCHIELER, Paul Anthony, 300 69 05, Sea2c. SCOTT, Myron, 612 08 86, Sealc. SEITNATER, Albert Joseph, 628 13 62, F2c. SENOGIES, Albert Earl, 628 13 70, Sealc. SHOEMAKER, Frank Alfred, 311 48 70, CM3c. SULLIVAN, Edward Lawrence, 654 65 59, SOM3c. SUTTER, Morris LeRoy, 337 35 74, Flc. SWITZER, Ira Clifford, 376 02 50, BM2c. TAMSY, Toribio Maptac, 337 37 99, MA3c. VREEKEN, William Jacob, 381 31 92, Cox.

WILCOXEN, Joe Breckenridge, 341 92 02, TMle. WINNER, Ervin William, 300 04 86, FC3c(M). WINFIELD, James Andrew, 630 41 42, Sea2c. WININGER, Daniel Martin, 291 89 03, Sea2c. WOJTALIK, Richard Andrew, 742 67 29, Sea2c. ZAJACZKOWSKI, Robert Joseph, 724 67 56, Sea2c. ZDOLINSKI, Chester Bronislaw, 608 42 79, Sea2c.

PICKEN, James Fancher, 29825477, Pvt., U.S. Army, H.Q. Ad.M.P. Fort Richardson.

In addition to the above, the following men died on board and were buried at sea:

BASS, Leland Floyd, 662 54 10, Sealc. WOOD, Charles Frederick, 238 54 56, WTlc.



### U.S.S. WARDEN

January 12, 1943.

### DIED BY DROWNING:

	NAME	RATE	SERVICE NO.	SERVICE
BLUE,	Leland F. Don A. Charles F.	Sea-lc.V-6. EM-3c.V-6. WT-lc.	669 28 81 624 13 67 238 54 46	uśnr. Usnr Usn.

### MISSING:

NAME	RATE	SERVICE NO.	SERVICE
A CONTRACTOR OF THE PROPERTY O	RM-3c.	329 01 93 2 <b>9</b> 3 63 57 337 91 77	USN

## INJURED:

SWINSCOE, Alfred E. Sea-2c.V-6 620 98 02 USNR.