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S.E.C.R.E.T

File NO. 2/4/7.

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY  
at Sea,

4th June, 1966.

The Flag Officer Commanding,  
H.M. AUSTRALIAN FLEET.

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY - REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS - MAY, 1966.

(ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Sir,

I have the honour to report the proceedings of  
H.M.A.S. SYDNEY for the month of May, 1966.

2. On Sunday, 1st May, the ship formed part of Task Force 327 under your command, on passage to Vietnam for Operation HARDIHOOD. H.M.A. Ships MELBOURNE (Captain D.C. WELLS, R.A.N.), YARRA (Captain G.J. WILLIS, A.D.C., R.A.N.) and VAMPIRE (Captain J.L.W. MERSON, R.A.N.) were in company. That afternoon the force transitted Basilan Strait, and the following morning Balabac Strait.

3. At 0200 H on Wednesday, 4th, I assumed tactical command, when you, sir, detached in the flagship. The Task Force continued on to Cap St. Jacques, anchoring off Vung Point at 0740. The approaches to the port were congested with shipping waiting to enter the river, and the YARRA was obliged to shift berth to obtain sufficient swinging room.

4. Immediately after anchoring, my Cargo Officer, Lieutenant Commander M.E. SCOTT, R.A.N., arrived onboard by helicopter, having flown from Sydney to Saigon to liaise with local authorities. Shortly afterwards, the task of unloading some 350 vehicles and 294 tons of ammunition and stores into landing craft and lighters commenced. Initially, I was hopeful of unloading by the late afternoon of Friday, 6th May, but work proceeded at a brisk pace and all cargo was unloaded by 0100 H on Friday morning 6th May. The YARRA and VAMPIRE sailed at 0600 H to form a departure screen, and the SYDNEY sailed at 0645 H.

5. Whilst at the anchorage, I gave two luncheon parties for senior service officers in the Saigon area. On Wednesday 4th, General William C. WESTMORELAND, Commander U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, and Major General J.O. SEAMAN, Commanding General, Second Field Force, Vietnam, together with Major General K. MACKAY, M.B.E., Commander Australian Forces, Vietnam, Brigadier O.D. JACKSON, O.B.E. Commander One Task Force, and Lieutenant Colonel D.L. ROUSE, Commanding 1st Military Logistic Support Group, witnessed unloading operations and remained to luncheon. The following day I entertained Lieutenant General TRAN - NGOC - TAM, Chairman of the Free World Military Assistance Organisation, Lieutenant Colonel HO - NHUT - QUANG, Military Mayor of Vung Tau, Brigadier General W.D. CRITTENBERGER, Deputy Commander, Second Field Force, Vietnam, and Colonel J.M.

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MAXWELL, Australian Naval and Military Attache, Saigon, to luncheon. The Australian Ambassador, His Excellency, Mr. H.D. ANDERSON, had been unable to attend at the last minute.

6. After sailing from Cap St. Jacques, the Task Group set course for the Condore Islands to take departure from the Vietnam coast. Shortly after clearing the harbour, the VAMPIRE was forced to lock one shaft owing to a plunger block overheating, and so was ordered to proceed independently for Hong Kong. The YARRA continued to screen the SYDNEY until 1800 H that evening, when she was detached for Hong Kong.

7. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY continued an uneventful passage, transitting Balabac Strait at 0100 H on Sunday, 8th, and Basilan Straits at 1800 H that evening. While passing through Basilan Strait a favourable tidal stream of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  knots was experienced.

8. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY entered Seadler Harbour at 1350 K on Thursday, 12th May, and after embarking the liaison officer secured off Subalalee Point in the fuelling berth at 1515. Fuelling was completed at 2015 when 768 tons had been embarked. Leave was granted to a proportion of the Ship's Company to accept private invitations and the hospitality of H.M.A.S. TARANGAU messes.

9. The SYDNEY sailed at 0730 the following morning, and entered the Coral Sea through Jomard Entrance at 2300 on Saturday, 14th. The ship passed east of Frederick Reef and after an uneventful passage, entered Sydney Harbour at 0740 on Wednesday, 18th, embarking press, mail and a small amount of explosives, before securing starboard side to Fitting Out Wharf.

10. On arrival, preparations for the second HARDIHOOD operation were put in hand, and during the ensuing two days, ship's stores were embarked. The loading of cargo started on Thursday 19th, and continued until the early morning of Saturday, 21st, recommencing Monday, 23rd, when the loading of vehicles took place. The next morning 8 Iroquois and 4 Sioux helicopters were embarked.

11. An Operation Awkward was conducted on Monday, 23rd, with the assistance of H.M.A.S. RUSHCUTTER to test the security arrangements and exercise our diving team.

12. The General Officer Commanding, Eastern Command, Major General J.W. HARRISON, O.B.E., came aboard on Tuesday, 24th to witness loading operations and walk around the ship.

13. The embarkation of troops took place on the following morning, and at 1500, in similar circumstances to the previous departure, H.M.A.S. SYDNEY proceeded for Cap St. Jacques. When clear of the harbour, H.M.A.S. VENDETTA (Commander D.W. LEACH, R.A.N.) joined for escort duties.

14. During the passage north, the ships exercised as much as practicable, including A.A. Tracking and firings with an Executive Air Services Aircraft. Details are shown in Appendix "B". Jomard Entrance was transitted at 0130 on Sunday, 19th, and later that forenoon, after services in the SYDNEY both Chaplains were transferred by jackstay to the VENDETTA.

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15. LRMP aircraft were employed on close support from 2300 Sunday, 29th, until 2120 Monday, 30th.

16. During the late afternoon on Monday, 30th, H.M.A.S. VENDETTA was detailed to transfer mail off Seeadler Harbour with a TARANGAU boat, but once again mail arrangements seem to have failed as there was no mail for either ship. (Air mail landed at Manus on 28th April, was not received by addressees in Sydney until 28th May, and air mail posted in Saigon on 5th May, arrived at the G.P.O. Sydney, on 30th May. This has been reported separately). On rejoining, both ships continued passage across the Western Pacific Ocean for the remainder of the month.

TRAINING.

17. Ordinary Seamen. Satisfactory progress was made in Common Sea Training, the return passage to Australia between 6th - 19th May, being made good use of for practical and formal instruction of all categories.

18. Higher Ranks. Section 1 and Section 2 Boards for Chief Petty Officer and Petty Officer ranks were convened on 11th and 12th May, Section 1 results were:-

For C.P.O. - 12 passed, 1 failed.

For P.O. - 34 passed, 2 failed.

Section 2 results have not yet been received.

19. 28 candidates took Section 2 tests for promotion to Leading Rank. A Section 1 Board for 36 candidates for Leading Rank will be convened in June, 1966.

CONDITION OF THE SHIP.

20. Marine Engineering. The ship has performed very well from the machinery point of view and no defects of any significance occurred during this month.

21. Electrical. The satisfactory way in which all urgent electrical defects were completed in the short period alongside in Sydney was much appreciated. The Electrical Department has coped well during the month and no additional defects of significance have occurred.

22. Hull and General. The condition of the hull remains satisfactory but numerous leaks have developed recently in the Fresh Water Main.

HEALTH AND MORALE.

23. The health of both the Ship's Company and Troops embarked has been good, there being virtually no sickness. There has been sufficient cloud to prevent the ship becoming excessively hot.

24. The morale of the Ship's Company remains high and continues to be stimulated by the ship being employed in

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an operational role, and the thought of an impending and unexpected visit to Hong Kong.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,



(A.M. SYNNOT)  
CAPTAIN.

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APPENDIX "D" TO H.M.A.S. SYDNEY'S REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS FOR MAY, 1966.

MOVEMENTS AND EMPLOYMENT.

<u>Date from.</u>	<u>Place.</u>	<u>Date to.</u>	<u>Employment.</u>
1.5.66	Sea	4.5.66	Passage to Vietnam
4.5.66	Cap St, Jacques.	6.5.66	Unloading.
6.5.66	Sea	18.5.66	Passage to Sydney
18.5.66	Sydney	25.5.66	Self-maintenance and loading.
25.5.66	Sea	31.5.66	Passage to Vietnam.

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