SUBMISSION No 15H

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE
ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE (DEFENCE SUBCOMMITTEE)
REFERENCE HMAS SYDNEY INQUIRY
SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION
WRITTEN COMMENTS ON LINDSAY PEET’S PAPER AS REQUESTED BY
ACTING CHAIR OF THE PERTH INQUIRY

BY
GP CAPT CAV BOURNE MBE AE

21 JULY 1998
Supplementary Submission
by
Gp Capt CAV Bourne

THE LINDSAY PEET PAPER (Vol 12 Page 2975)

APPENDIX A: Lindsay Peet’s Paper
APPENDIX B: Page 23 RAAF Central War Room Operations Diary
APPENDIX C: Pages 101 – 104 inc SWACH Logbook
APPENDIX D: Page 1 Appendix D RAAF Pearce Report
APPENDIX E: Thoughts on the disappearance of HMAS Sydney – Peet

INTRODUCTION

Lindsay Peet’s paper at page 2975 Vol 12 of submissions to this Inquiry stands in unexplained isolation but in fact it opens up a can “full of worms.”

It was tabled by him at the Perth Public during the Open Forum Session held on Friday 17 April 1998. Unless he has submitted a Confidential Submission Lindsay Peet has not submitted a formal written submission on the subject matter in this tabled paper.

In respect of this paper Mr W.L. Taylor Acting Chairman asked me “Could you give me something in writing?” and I replied “Yes I can.” “I will do” as recorded in Handsard.

This paper is therefore submitted as result of an official request by the Inquiry. How this occurred I shall explain much later.

PEET’S VERBAL SUBMISSION

This begins at page FADT 311 of the Handsard Report, Perth Friday 17 April 1998.

Nearing midday Peet received the call to speak. I shall quote the relevant section of his remarks out of context as follows:

“The second point is that I examined a primary source that I do not think anyone else has examined and that is the RAAF Central War Room Diary. Here are some extracts I typed up last night from notes I made five years ago.”

[Peet is wrong here. I have been researching the RAAF CWR Diary and SWACH LogBook for several years. He preceded me.]

At this stage Peet tabled the paper attached Appendix B when the following action immediately occurred as recorded in Hansard.

Resolved (on motion Mr Dondas)

“That Mr Peet’s paper of 16 April 1998 be accepted as evidence.”

Mr Peet went on to say.

“I also matched the times in the SWACH log. It is just a short summary but it does indicate that on Saturday 22 November 1941. Area Combined Headquarters in Fremantle told RAAF Pearce to commence a search the object being to locate HMAS Sydney – not necessarily that there was anything wrong but they just wanted to know where it was. That was North West of Rottnest Island [the underlining is mine].

Rubbish! Examination of the SWACH record at Appendix C shows nothing of the sort. Peet is speculating here. There is no record in the SWACH or ACH records to support this statement by Peet. I attach copies of pages 101 - 104 of the SWACH log covering the period Saturday 22nd to Monday 24th November 1941 as Appendix C to illustrate several points in this paper.

For continuity sake I shall start analysing Peet’s paper in brief only at this stage. Further amplifying details will follow.

Date of Writing

Peet said he typed this paper the night before. I submit that he typed this paper five years before and photocopies have received limited circulation since then. His telephone number at the top left-hand corner of the letterhead uses the old “09” WA STD prefix not the new “08” WA STD prefix. He did not alter this telephone number.

At the 1997 HMAS Sydney Forum Lindsay Peet showed me a short note written in blue biro giving the broad details of the 22/11/41 entry ie that an air search had been planned at RAAF CWR on that date. I was already aware of this but said nothing other than to query whether a time was K or Z time.
Slightly Edited?

Lindsay Peet quotes this document as Extracts from the RAAF CWR Diary which he had slightly edited. Why? This is an understatement there are some drastic anomalies in his paper hence I have attached a photocopy of page 23 of the CWR Diary as Appendix B for comparison.

Peet obviously regarded the RAAF CWR diary as suspect ie at the bottom of the page he states he examined the handwriting.

At the 1997 Lindsay Peet told me that several years earlier whilst in RAAF Historical Records he had taken a quick peek in the large 3ft square CWR Diary which had been left on the table whilst the Historical Officer Bob Piper was absent at the toilet. In recent times this large book has been held in the Australian War Museum under the Angam Series AWM 164 Items 06-09 as an “oversize item” covering only the period 27 June 1942 – 30 November 1942. Note that this oversized item does not cover November 1941.

Peet also said, “It is now available on Microfilm, the period 1940-42 being on reel 1.”

I wrote to the Executive Officer Historical Records – Air Force, David Wilson on 20 April 1998 seeking further information on this subject and in his reply dated 22 April 1998 he wrote:

From memory this document was transferred to microfilm about four years ago and the originals passed to Australian Archives and the Australian War Museum about this period [the underlining is mine].”

I also wrote to the AWM at the same time and in their reply dated 1 May 1998. I was advised that the Research Centre was currently closed for refurbishment until the end of October 1998 and that the archival and library collections had been put in storage. However, a handwritten footnote was added to the bottom of the AWM letter which read.

“These items are not in microfilm though most are.”

I rang David Wilson to discuss this matter and he reaffirmed his former advice that from memory the item had been put on microfilm 4 years earlier. He then went on to say the RAAF CWR Diary was a large item about 3 feet by 2 feet. He also said that written copies had been made into two exercise books. The question is from whence were these copies taken. The raw copy at Appendix B is certainly not from an exercise book its printed page 23 at the top is similar to the printed page numbers of the SWACH log at Appendix C and this is a large 500 page leather bound minute book.

If a request is made to the AWM for the RAAF CWR Diary AWM64 0/2 one will receive papers covering the period 06 November 1941 – 30 December 1941. Appendix B was extracted from these papers.

It can be seen that both Peet and I have good reason to suspect both the SWACH log and the RAAF CWR diary.

JAPANESE LUGGARS AND MOTHERSHIP

Peet’s paper refers to the concern over the position of Japanese lugger (06) and their mother ship as referred to by Gillison (1962 pp 134), Gillson’s book refers to the Kokoku Maru which put into Darwin harbour with Australian permission to put her captain into hospital. Of far greater importance is the fact that Intelligence summaries show that on the 18/19 November three Japanese mother ships, the Kokoku Maru, New Guinea Maru and Arafura Maru were still operating off the pearling grounds north of Bathurst Island. During October/November 1941 No 13 MR Squadron’s Unit History records show that 24 luggers were operating off Spit Point (about 20 nms North of Port Hedland) with others off Broome and along the North West Coast from Port Hedland to Darwin.

At the request of Mike McCarthy, Curator of the Fremantle Maritime Museum, Lindsay Peet wrote a paper titled “Thought on the disappearance of HMAS Sydney” which examines the possible relationship between Japanese submarines and Japanese luggers and their mother ships. I attach it as Appendix E.

22/11/41 ENTRY EXAMINED

This is the pertinent entry. Compare it with the same entry in Appendix B. Note that Peet has inserted the signal No. C247 on his paper but this is not shown on the original at Appendix B for this specific entry.

Appendix B shows further down the page that signal C247 was sent to Area Combined Headquarters Townsville not ACH Fremantle. This signal C247 is covered in my paper “Deceit by the Chief of Naval Staff” which will have been published by now in Volumes 15 or 16. It relates to the original intention of Admiral Royle to board HMS Manoora at Townsville on the 26 November 1941 and by ordering “no shadowing” it was preventing possible RAAF W/T Traffic Analysis by the enemy or Japanese indicating the CNS’ movements. Readers will well remember Admiral
Yamamoto’s fate in 1943 resulting from US W/T traffic analysis of Japanese aircraft movement signals.

Nowhere in the RAAF CWR diary or in the SWACH log papers at Appendix C covering Friday 21 - Monday 24 November 1941 is there any evidence that the RAAF CWR sent this signal to either ACH Fremantle or SWACH Perth on the 22nd November 1941. The first evidence of this search P1/24 is shown on page 102 Appendix C at 1.05 am WST on Monday 24 November 1941 when SWACH sent this signal to Pearce yet RAAW CWR Diary shows its exact contents some 2 days earlier on Saturday 22 November 1941. This raises the question did CWR order this airsearch on Saturday or did ACH Fremantle operating through SWACH initiate this first recorded air search? Commander Hardstaff in his paper at Vol 1 was concerned about the apparent numbers of Headquarters involved and who ordered what searches.

We now have a conundrum. On Saturday 22/11/41 CWR apparently planned and ordered an air search to be carried out giving the search details. There is no record in the SWACH log over this period that this signal or advice was ever received at SWACH or Pearce prior to the actual search taking place on Monday 24/11/41.

We also have the SWACH signal to Pearce (R) CWR and HMAS Sydney with a time of origin (T.O.O.) of 1.05 am Monday 24/11/41 but nowhere in the RAAW CWR Diary is there a record of the Time of Receipt (T.O.R.) of this signal and its search details.

The fact that Pearce was forewarned by ACH Fremantle at 1630 pm WST on Sunday 23/11/41 of a search to be instigated and this was confirmed by Pearce Operations were only just “concerned”, despite the signals from HMAS Sydney received on the evening of Wednesday 19 November 1941.

In fact there was a lot happening on the Western seaboard on Sunday 23 November 1941. Between 6 am and 7 am WST, HMT Aquitania had broken radio silence to report she had picked up a raft containing 26 Germans who reported a battle involving HMAS Sydney at a fictitious site 130nms South East of Fremantle and two nearby crowded lifeboats which did not appear to want to be rescued.

As a result a black and yellow target towing Fairey Battle aircraft had been sent from No 4SFTS Geraldton to circle these two lifeboats (the Germans under interrogation confirmed this). A Hudson aircraft A16-30 with myself as second pilot was despatched on a search southward from Rottnest in the general direction of the fictitious battle area. At the same time since the alleged battle on 19 November 1941 the secret Dutch military signals unit in the Port Hotel Carnarvon had been listening out on all signals arising from ships and German lifeboats for the last four days.

The point I am making is that there was a mass of information available that day 23/11/41 and there would have been many signals, telephone calls and messages arising as a result and they would have been recorded.

I submit that not only have the SWACH log and RAAF CWR Diary been sanitised but all records relating to Sunday 23 November 1941 have been savagely scarified. Either at the time or at a later date. However in the destruction or hiding of HMAS Sydney records by the RAAF or RAN a few escaped notice. Sufficient records for Third Officer Westhoven to say in her post war report that an air search took place from Rottnest on 23 November 1941. And then there was the No 4 SFTS Unit History Record for November 1941, which showed that a Fairey Battle flew from that airfield on Sunday 23 November 1941 with an obviously clumsy cover story.

DNOWA sent a signal to the ACNB on Friday 21 November 1941 to say that HMAS Sydney had not yet arrived. It appears that over the weekend 22/23 November 1941, ACH Fremantle and SWACH took what they thought to be appropriate action without the approval of the ACNB who had more knowledge of the loss of HMAS Sydney than those Headquarters in WA who were kept in the dark.

I believe that both SWACH log and RAAW CWR diary have been sanitised and made to tally to some extent to cover the unauthorised air actions on Sunday 23 November 1941.

I say this because at the top of Appendix D it will be seen that at 4:30 pm EST on Sunday 23rd November 1941 RAAP Pearce Operations were warned of a possible air search for HMAS Sydney and this was confirmed at 5:35pm with No 14 Sqn forewarned. I was told at 8pm that evening by
my Captain Flt Lt Fletcher to have an early night with a 4:30am early call, breakfast 5am in preparation for a maximum air effort next day to search for HMAS Sydney.

If indeed RAAF CWR did plan this search on the Saturday 22 November 1941 even though there is no record of it being so the information must have been passed somehow possibly by telephone before 4:15pm on Sunday 23rd November 1941 to ACH Fremantle because that is exactly how the search Flt/24 carried out on Monday morning of 24th November.

Why it was left so late to record and order this search officially early on Monday 24th in not understood. The actual sequence in W.S.T. was:

- 4:30 am 23/11/41/ ACH Fremantle warned Pearce Operations of likely search.
- 5:35am 23/11/41 ACH Fremantle confirmed search, 14 sqn notified.
- 12:05am 24/11/41 ACHQWA signed the P1/24 Operations order
- 00:50am 24/11/41 Wg Car McLean ordered a search for the 24th.
- 01:05am 24/11/41 SWACH sent signal to Pearce ordering search and advising CWR and HMAS Sydney --- etc -- 0105z/23.

The first 0105 entry in the left hand column is the time of entry into the SWACH log by the duty watch keeper Flg Off Rigden. The second = 0105z/23 supported to be the T.O. time of origin of this signal (or message) to Pearce but this interpolates as 1105H/24. Looking at the alterations in the SWACH log it appears that Flg Off Rigden was confusing Zulu time with H or W.S.T time and that in fact this signal was sent at 0105 H/24.

It must be understood here that SWACH on the 7th floor of the old CML building in St Georges Terrace Perth, did not have W/T communications at this date in 1941. They only had a teletypewriter and Secraphones (telephones fitted with scramblers). They relied on RAAF Pearce powerful radio transmitters and receivers for all W/T communications. Nor did RAAF Headquarters Western Area situated in ANA house directly opposite the CML building have its own W/T communications. HQWA also relied on RAAF Pearce Signals Section.

An interesting feature of this signal was that it was to be repeated to HMAS Sydney. RAAF W/T operators would undoubtedly know her naval frequencies but this signal would never have been transmitted in P/L. It would have been in a naval code and it is most unlikely that the RAN would have made these available to the RAAF at this relatively lowly level of command and control. It is most likely that there were RAN codists and W/T Operators in RAAF Pearce W/T Signals Section.

It was quite common at this date to see Army and Naval dispatch riders and couriers entering and leaving Station Headquarters Pearce. Army and Naval Personnel were also a common sight in the "dry" canteen and at the Beam bus stop.

The three service VD ward was in the corner hut at the SE corner of the Station Sick Quarters Complex. The 1939-42 Operations room was in the hut diagonally opposite in the NW corner of this complex only about 20 yards from Station Headquarters which had the W/T section on the 1st floor together with a vault for storage of secret items including the drums for use in machine coding which the RAAF used.

This probability of Naval W/T and decoding activity at RAAF Pearce confirms my long held belief that RAAF Pearce intercepted Aquitania's signal about 7 am WST on Sunday 23 November and that this message was passed through SWACH to the ACH and the ACHQWA personally. Although the naval signal room in ACH Fremantle was manned on a 24 hour 7 days a week basis there is evidence that Operations Officers were not always available.

An entry in the SWACH log at 0745 am WST on Tuesday 25 November 1941 reads in part:

"NOTE It is considered that the Herstein sighted in position 26° 08' S 111 50' E at 2337 hrs should be diverted to pick up the lifeboat. There were no naval officers on duty to arrange this."

Barabara Winter gives a warped account of the Herstein's fruitless search for this lifeboat but this does not agree with the official naval records.

Strange as it may seem I believe that the ACHQWA Air Cdr De La Rue without consulting his staff made a snap decision to send the Pearce Stand by Hudson on a token search along the normal shipping route towards the SW Cape Area. The more experienced maritime Operations Officers Wg Cdr McLean and Sqn Ldr Daniels would probably not have sent a search aircraft at all in view of the impossible fictitious battle area. If they had ordered any search it would have been for the aircraft to proceed to a Datum Point 130 nms South East of Fremantle to carry out a square search to maximum safe endurance.

The Fairey Battle search originating from No 4SFTS Geraldton was probably ordered by either the AOC or Wg Cdr McLean ringing GP Capt Hefferman CO of No 4SFTS Geraldton and ordering such a search with the emphasis on secrecy. This probably led to the botched up cover story by No 4SFTS in their Unit History Sheet for November 1941 showing that Flt
Lt Daly with a crew of two took off on Sunday for target towing duties at Pearce.

This is obviously deception on the following counts:

1. Pearce had its own two target towing Fairey Battles
2. There were no operational aircraft or warships at Pearce or Fremantle to tow targets for they were all up North that week searching for the Sydney;
3. To carry a pilot plus a crew of two it was necessary to remove the winch, drum of steel cable and drogue from the near cockpit. In such a state the aircraft could not tow targets.

The moral of this story is that if you are going to cover up you need a

PEET’S CONCLUSION

Much as I would like to accept this conclusion as it supports the air search I carried out from Rottnest southward on Sunday 23 November 1941 I cannot do so. There is no known entry in the RAAF CWR diary, SWACH log or ACH Fremantle records of the flight southward by A16-30 crewed by Flt Lt Fletcher, Flg Off Bourne, Sergeant Williams and Sgt Townsend. I am the only living survivor of that crew left.

The only known records are by Third Officer Westhoven based on Fremantle records available to her in 1945. In what is known as the Westhoven report she states “and on November 23 an air search was carried out from Rottnest”. It is again recorded in the first para, page 1844 Vol 8 of this Inquiry in Submission No 94 the Official Department of Defence Submission J. H. Straczek, Senior Naval Historial and Archives Officer on behalf of the minister for Defence. When he tried to retract this submission as being incorrect I analysed this paragraph as shown on page 3067 Vol 13. Straczek’s documentation of this flight on Sunday 23 November and his subsequent retraction is so important I shall repeat that analysed paragraph hereunder with key words underlined and my comments in square brackets:

"An initial air search was commenced PM 23 November. This search was [not these searches] based on Rottnest Island off Fremantle. The following day another air search to diverging search P1/24 using 6 Hudson aircraft was carried out, again based on Rottnest Island between bearings 270° and 340° to a

depth of 300 miles (whether statute or nautical miles is not known). It is common knowledge that ships and aircraft navigate in nautical miles. Statute miles were only used for land travel in 1941. Both of these searches failed to locate the vessel [ie both of these searches were for HMAS Sydney only]. On completion of these searches [P1/24 covers one search pattern of six tracks] the aircraft moved to Geraldton.”

I now invite attention Straczek’s retraction in the name of the Defence Department somehow printed much earlier than the analysed paragraph above which was contained in my letter to him dated 24 March 1998. Somehow his retraction appeared in Volume 10 page 2469 well before my letter in Volume 13 page 3067.

Straczek’s letter of claiming an error in his original submission of 8 December is not acceptable to me. He rightly claims the decision to conduct an air search the next day was made PM 23 November but how can he reconcile this simple statement with his original paragraph above with his reference to “another air search and again based on Rottnest statements.

THE PERTH INQUIRY 16/17 APRIL 1998

In the 45 minutes I was allocated to speak on Thursday 16 April 1998 I related the broad details of my air search in A16-30 on Sunday 23 November 1941 to the Southward using Cape Vlamingh Rottnest as Datum Point and several other aspects when the Acting Chairman interrupted me saying, “I am sorry to interrupt but is that the 22nd or 23rd?”

I replied, “It was Sunday 23 November. These dates are most important”.

Once or twice I became rattled during my speech by interjections and questions from the Inquiry about an RSL paragraph in one of my submissions and a query from the Acting Chairman whether it was the Pier Hotel not the Port Hotel in Carnarvon I was taking about.

Page FADT 216 of the Hansard Report for Perth Thursday 16 April 1998 first paragraph contains my statement “On the weekend 22-23 November my crew were on stand by at Pearce” it goes on to relate details of the air search by my crew in Hudson A16-30 southward from Rottnest on the 23 November 1941 as stated in the Westhoven Report. The following is then recorded:

ACTING CHAIR - “I am sorry to interrupt you but is that the 22nd or 23rd?”

4283

4283
I replied, "It was Sunday 23rd November. These dates are most important."

The Acting Chairman’s question about the 22nd [Saturday] was the forerunner of things to come. This was the first time I have ever heard such a query involving the possibility of an air search for HMAS Sydney Saturday 22nd November 1941.

Just prior to the beginning of the Open Forum on Friday 17 April 1998 the Acting Chairman made the point that this Session was to be primarily for the Public and not for those who had spoken the day before who however could speak if time permitted.

This statement by the Acting Chairman was made in the presence of about 100 people at least who could attest to it being made. However, it was not included in the Hansard Proof nor in the final Hansard Transcript of proceedings on Friday 17 April 1998. In my letter of 12 May 1998 I drew the attention of the Secretary to this omission and one other. At about 11.45 am on Friday 17th the Acting Chairman said that he intended to finish this session sharp on midday and he had no intention of missing his aircraft flight. I finished my letter with the words "in conclusion if I do not raise these issues before 15 May 1998 no one else will!"

I was surprised therefore when the Acting Chairman gave Glenys McDonald favouring first call to speak as she had spoken at length the previous day. It was obvious that this had been pre-arranged between the Acting Chairman and Glenys McDonald in anticipation of Lindsay Peet’s Paper being tabled later on. That is to say that both the Acting Chairman and Glenys McDonald had prior knowledge that Lindsay Peet would want to speak later on, that he would be given the call and that he would table his paper. I believe they both misinterpreted the signals to read that on the 22nd November 1941 CWR ordered an air search to take place midday and he had no intention of missing his aircraft flight. I finished my letter with the words "in conclusion if I do not raise these issues before 15 May 1998 no one else will!"

Peet’s paper of 16 April 1998 be accepted as evidence." It appeared that Mr Dondas had previously seen this paper, and expecting it to be tabled was ready with this motion.

Similarly it appeared that the Acting Chairman had sighted Peet’s paper earlier as with only a brief glance at the tabled paper he confidently referred to Z6 23/11 which is recorded as Zulu 6 23/11.

I believe this apparent signal reference is of no significance. It is not used again elsewhere in the RAAF CWR Diary.

After Lindsay Peet had resumed his chair the Acting Chairman called my name. I rose to my feet and took two or three steps towards the microphone on the top table when the Acting Chairman stopped me in my tracks saying, “Could you give something in writing?” and I replied "yes I can.” I was thus denied the opportunity speak publicly on this paper.

He may have the gleam in my eyes when I rose triumphantly as I knew I could over trump Gleny’s McDonald’s earlier statement on two separate counts:

(1) There is not one scrap of evidence in Peet’s paper that an air search was actually carried out on Saturday 22 November 1941;

(2) My crew was on rostered standby from 1700 hrs Friday 21 November 1941 to 0800 hours Monday 24 November 1941. If an air search was to be carried out on Saturday 22 November 1941 we would have done it. No operational or training flights by No 14 Sqn took place that day and none are recorded in No 14 Sqn Operations Record Logbook nor the Unit History Sheets for 22 November 1941. I spent that morning doing some laundry and skeet shooting at the traps behind the Officer’s mess in the afternoon.

On the other hand, I welcomed the opportunity to write on the subject because the alarm bells were ringing that I was being set up and memory of my CWR research was telling me that there was far more in Peet’s paper than met the eye and I needed to access my files first before I spoke or wrote. I could only do justice to the subject in a later written submission.

I later wrote to Glenys McDonald and asked her on what grounds she had made her statement and in her letter of 25 April 1998 she replied;

"I mentioned a possible search on the 22nd. This was because I had heard of Lindsay Peet’s extract from the Central War Room Diary which referred to a signal on the 22nd November regarding a search."
After hearing him speak it now appears that although this signal was on the 22nd it referred to your search on the 23rd. What is still interesting is that the signal is missing from the SWACH log.

We now have both Lindsay Peet and Glenys McDonald confirming their belief that an air search took place on Sunday 23 November 1941 yet they were confusing the issue by suggesting that an air search took place on Saturday 22 November 1941.

I believe the Acting Chairman sparked off this line of approach by his query the afternoon before, "I am sorry to interrupt but is that the 22nd or 23rd?"

In this manner Glenys McDonald was permitted to get in her allegation "we were actually searching on the 22nd". Quite obviously this procedure was pre-arranged between the Acting Chairman and Glenys McDonald in preparation for Lindsay Peet to play his pre-planned part in tabling his paper and Mr Dondas came in fast with his motion, then I was stopped from publicly speaking on the issue.

All concerned including Peet did not comprehend the total significance of this paper at Appendix A just because a search is planned and the orders given it doesn't necessarily follow that it actually took place. Quite often air searchers were cancelled or varied even whilst the aircraft were airborne.

The collusion between the parties concerned is obvious. Their purpose was to create confusion over the planned and actual searches on the weekend of 22/23 November 1941 and cast doubt on the Southward air search actually carried out on Sunday 23 November 1941. This unrecorded air search in which I was personally involved together with the circling of two German lifeboats at Lat 24° 34’ Long 110° 57’ E on that same day is proof positive that Aquitania broke radio silence early on the morning of Sunday 23 November 1941.

A vast web of deceit around the Aquitania was contrived by the ACNB at the time to conceal this fact culminating in Aquitania’s Captain Gibbons being made a scapegoat for this wartime coverup.

This coverup was continued after World War II with the Westhoven Report being held in a secret Naval intelligence file until 1992.
APPENDIX "A"

LINDSAY J. PEET
BSc, Dip Val, Dip Real Est Mngt, Grad Dip App Her Stud, FGS, AREI, MPHR
PROFESSIONAL HISTORIAN AND HERITAGE CONSULTANT

Telephones: (09) 386 1240
(09) 386 7058
Facsimile: (09) 386 1240

39 BEATRICE ROAD
DALKEITH 6009
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

EXTRACTS FROM RAAF CENTRAL WAR ROOM DIARY*

[Slightly edited transcription of notes made on a personal examination of the original CWR Diary in November 1992, with the later addition of matching entries from the SWACH Log]

*This Diary is a large ledger held by RAAF Historical Archives, E-4-10, Russell Offices, Canberra. It is now available on microfilm, the period 1940-42 being on Reel 1]

[Signal entries from Darwin from 06/11/41 show concern over the position of Japanese luggers (c6) and their mother ship. This mother ship is referred to by Gillison (1962, pp 134)]

22/11/41 C 247 (signal number) 1815 [time] #29 [file number] ACH Fremantle (to Pearce)
Z6 23/11. P1/24. Search the area between bearings 270° and 340° from datum 32° 01' S 115° 27' E and to a distance of 300 miles to seaward commencing 0001Z. Object locate HMAS “SYDNEY”.
[This datum is Rottnest Island and the start time is 0801H (WST) on 23/11/41]
[SWACH does not show this signal until 24/11/41 at 0105 hours H?]

24/11/41 0550 #29 ACH Fremantle to Pearce:
Z7 24/11. P1/25. Search the area between bearings 262°-337° from datum 28° 00' S 114° 10' E and to a distance of 300 miles to seaward commencing at 0001Z. Object locate HMAS “Sydney”.
[This datum is near Ajana, north of Geraldton and the start time is 0801H]
[SWACH: 24/11/41 1242H?]

24/11/41 0709 #29 From ACH Fremantle:
[This “completed and negative” time is 1310H]
[SWACH: 24/11/41 1332H?]

[There are lots of entries relating to the search for HMAS Sydney from 25/11/41 onwards. I inspected the CWR Diary to see if there was evidence of it having been rewritten, the different handwriting types indicated that if this had been done it would have been a major task and would have involved a significant number of persons]

CONCLUSIONS [written in 1998]

Sometime on Saturday 22/11/41, it was decided that an order should be given to RAAF Pearce to carry out a search to the northwest of Rottnest Island commencing Sunday morning. Although this was sent from SWACH Fremantle, the SWACH Log shows no corresponding entry until early Monday morning. This signal was also transmitted to HMAS Sydney

14/11/41
Thoughts on the Disappearance of HMAS Sydney

LINDSAY J. PEET
Aviation Researcher & Historian

I have been asked by Mike McCarthy to present my thoughts on the loss of HMAS Sydney based on my overseas research experiences, especially my interest in Japanese military activities involving U-boats during World War II. Because of time pressures, I have based relevant literature references on items in my personal collection.

In the usual historical manner, I pose the following questions for the period of November 1941:

1) Could a Japanese submarine have been off the WA coast, particularly one carrying aircraft?

2) Was anything going on in Japan, indicating that they were going to war?

3) What intelligence gathering was going on in the South East Asian/Australian region just prior to Pearl Harbour?

4) Was the loss of Sydney connected with Roosevelt's decision on 26 Nov not to proceed with the nodus Vivendi?

In dealing with these points, I will include some of my overseas research experiences.

Japanese Submarines

According to Watts and Gordon (1971) and Gill (1957), the IJN had, in late 1941, a submarines force comprising some 67 boats, including 22 cruise boats and 22 fleet submarines, a large proportion of which had ranges of over 10,000 miles, with some types in excess of 20,000 miles. They were able to put about 30 into the Pearl Harbour operation and about 32 into the Malayan operation (Riddlesbook and Maloney, 1977).

If the two unidentified aircraft sightings over Pearce and Geraldton on 28/29 November were Japanese floatplanes, then we must look at those submarines capable of carrying and launching aircraft. In OCT/NOV 41 there appears to have been about 40 of these operational, all of which had six 21 inch torpedo tubes and carried 17-18 torpedoes:

Type J2 (1-6 class) – range 20,000 miles (1 boat).
Type X1 (1-9 class) – range 16,000 miles (2 boats).
Type B1 (1-15 class) – range 14,000 miles (7 boats).

I have two eyewitness reports of what are believed to be Japanese floatplanes over Forrest and Horseman in WA in FEB-MAR 42, thus indicating that IJN submarines were capable of operating in the Great Australian Bight. Lind (1990) lists two Type B-1’s (1-21 and 1-29) in the Sydney Harbour raid of May 1942. He also lists J-25 (Type B2) as carrying our flights over Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Auckland and Suva in FEB-MAR 42. J-29 carried out similar operations off the west coast of America in DEC 41. She also later operated off Madagascar and even sailed to Germany and back.
That the Japanese had no hesitation of overflying Allied territory before Pearl Harbour is illustrated by Tsuji (1960) who participated in two aerial reconnaissances from Saigon to northern Malaya and return, in Oct 41.

Another difficulty is the supply of fuel (and perhaps food) to any such submarine. Gillison (1962, p. 134) details Japanese lugger activity along the northern coast of Australia in JUN and JUL 41, with up to 30 boats being sighted. The Japanese made an undetected landing in the Kimberley in 1944, and it seems reasonable that a shipping rendezvous could have been made in 1941. Gillison also mentions that a Japanese 'Mother' ship, the Yoko ko Maru, sought and was granted permission to enter Darwin Harbour on 29 Oct. The IJN in the Northern Area (Darwin) had the main task of keeping watch on these craft. Incidentally, Gillison gives a short account of the disappearance of the Sydney, from the IJN viewpoint.

Although I believe that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a Japanese submarine could have been involved, the available literature does not indicate the specific presence of IJN submarines in the Indian Ocean before Pearl Harbour.

**JAPANESE RESEARCH**

I have not been able to examine the appropriate volume of the mammoth Japanese war history, Senshi Sosho, published in a series of 104 volumes in the 1960's and 1970's; these volumes are very expensive, are all in modern Japanese, and virtually have excellent maps. There is also the set of 'Japanese Monographs' prepared by the US Army 1945-1950. Then there are the very many Japanese language books published in recent years about aspects of the Greater Asia War - these are hard to track down but first (1991) lists some of them.

To check out the Japanese story it would be necessary to visit Tokyo. Most IJN records appear to be held in the Senshi Shitsu, Boi Kenkyujo (the Department of Military History of the National Institute for Defense Studies) in suburban Tokyo. I visited it for three days in 1983, in connection with my research into the twenty Japanese air raids on WA. It was not an easy place to find out about in Australia - even the Defence Attaché at the Japanese Embassy in Canberra did not know of it. Through a friend in Perth I was given a Tokyo contact and this showed my way in (I suspect the correct procedure is to go through Australian Foreign Affairs Department). Finding Senshi-shu in the suburban ‘jungle’ of Tokyo was even harder - it took me three days before I could find my way straight to it! I have only heard of two Australians visiting it before me.

Apart from an entirely different culture, there are problems with the language. If one is going to fish around in Senshi-shu, one really needs to have a Japanese person with an excellent command of English, an understanding of military history (most Japanese wondered why I was bothering about the Greater Asia War), and most importantly, a good knowledge of the older 30-40 stroke characters used in the 1940's. Even when a reasonable translation of the characters is made, the form and style of the Japanese language seems tortuous and imprecise. Quite surprisingly, once shown, I was able to memorize certain characters and read the dates, and I actually was able up call out material on my own. I was impressed by the IJN's paper war: for air operations they used standard daily report forms (in 1942) these even had edition numbers. They even had rubber stamps for some of the more complex 30-40 stroke characters.

It has been often said that pre-Pearl Harbour IJN intelligence records were destroyed by the fire bombing, or deliberately after 14 Aug 45 to protect Japanese personnel from Allied vengeance. However, as pointed out by Walton (1982, p.37) a large amount of archive IJN material has survived in various parts of Japan with some documents being lodged with Senshi-shu. Walton states that ‘this intelligence material is only accessible to a few serving officers of the Japanese Self-Defense force. All other researchers are absolutely excluded from these archives’.

Walton goes further to state that ‘interviews with former naval intelligence officers are almost impossible to obtain as these people constitute a close-knit group which cannot be penetrated by outsiders, either Japanese or Australian’.

Japanese research is not easy, and if you visit Tokyo, very expensive!

**JAPAN IN NOVEMBER 1941**

Much useful information is contained in the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (1946).

The Basic Plan for the Greater East Asia War was formulated in early Nov: it included the seizing of Timor and Java. A subsidiary operation was an attack on Allied surface lines of communication in the Indian Ocean using German submarine blockade tactics. There was also a plan, later also, to operate auxiliary cruisers in the East Indian Ocean at the outbreak of war.

The IJN dispatches ordering commencement of hostilities are instructive (up to 19 NOV). Some extracts from translations are given below.

**05 NOV 41**: “In view of the fact that it is feared that war has become unavoidable with the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands, and for the self preservation and future existence of the Empire, the various preparations for war operations will be completed by the first part of December.”

**07 NOV 41**: “The CINC Combined Fleet, as a measure of self defense, is authorized to carry out operations against Portuguese Timor ...”.

On 19 NOV the “vinds” set up message was sent out (Toland 1982, p.69).

**AMERICAN ARCHIVES**

In 1980, I visited the National Archives in Washington - where I first met Barbara Winter. I was following up documents on USAAF units which operated out of WA during World War II. By following up a lead, I found 16 boxes of material on the main bomb group which operated out of northern WA during 1943-45. These had been sitting there since the end of the war, waiting for a researcher to look at them! I reported this find immediately to that bomb group’s historian who was preparing the third edition of its history. He was astounded that it took an Australian to find it!

The point that I want to make is that you never know what you will find in overseas archives! Whilst I was there I also obtained copies of the history of
The Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies, were successfully intercepting Japanese signal traffic before Pearl Harbour, and their archives in Holland may hold some material. Layton, Pineau and Costello (1985, p. 206) mention that code breaking was being carried out in "Kamer 14" at Rapenburg; they were reading Red, 5-19 and some 3N-25, but not Purple. They state that all Dutch decrypts were burned in the retreat from Bandoeng (MAR 42). Horner (1982, p.135) and Tolland (1982, p.346) both mention these operations.

Ball (1978, p.304) says that Japanese transmissions were being monitored in Java and Singapore.

In Australia, Sigint work was carried out by the RAAF. Ball (1978, p. 302) mentions that there was an American military intelligence group which worked closely with RAAF Intelligence before Pearl Harbour. It is worth quoting Ball (1978, p.25): "The RAAF had a Sigint station at Townsville from mid-1941. It was also required to monitor the transmissions of Japanese radio stations, to read the Kana code and to take bearings on the transmissions. The Japanese security code was broken by the Australian Service officers and one message, intercepted early in December 1941, revealed the Japanese fleet movements to Pearl Harbour. This information was passed immediately to the American authorities. During the first few months, bearings taken on Japanese transmissions showed that their stations were in the South Pacific Ocean in the east, across the north and in the Indian Ocean. Japanese aircraft became known by their squadron call-sigons. Our operators became adept at reading Japanese transmissions and this experience became invaluable later (by italics) when the war entered".

Ball (1978, p. 304), quoting from Pearl Harbour congressional hearings, says that Australia had a small Communications Intelligence Organization in DNC (4) and that they were intercepting Japanese diplomatic radio traffic and reading J-19 messages.

That Roosevelt received some information on the night of 25-26 Nov 41 or early on 26 Nov is undeniable. The question is what was really in the message.

There is considerable conjecture about this and non-co-operation of Secretary of War Stimson's version that it dealt with ships at Shanghai.

In his book on the Pacific war, Costello (1985, p. 351) mentions the withholding of of the British ULTRA data and the Two Rev 1941 Churchill files. He repeats (page 355) the comments of Layton et al about the loss of Sydney, and goes a little further in "suggesting a possible connection between the war warning and the disappearance of HMS Sydney a week earlier".

It seems to me that with the "New World Order", and the changes in the Soviet Union and western Europe, that this material could be released, thus enabling one further matter relating to the Sydney to be cleared up.

A CURRENT ON WAR CRIMES LEGISLATION

I believe that the enactment of the recent Federal war crimes legislation (and indeed elsewhere in the world) does not help the investigation of the truth about controversial aspects of World War II. It is better to get to the truth of what happened rather than hound old men and equally old witnesses at great expense to the taxpayer. I understand that in Australia it has cost over $6 million and a conviction has yet to be obtained, yet the Australian War Memorial is so starved for funds it cannot afford to carry out forensic tests on the Carley Float, and may have to cut back on staff. It has cut out its "50th anniversary" applications (some $70,000) at a time when wins on "50th anniversary" of World War there should be proper research - the veterans are dying off at an increasing rate.

Suffice to say, any real war criminal has had to live with what he has done.

It is not improper to commemorate the victims, however.

CONCLUSIONS

In this brief paper, I have shown that there are some aspects of the disappearance of the Sydney that need further exploration, albeit overseas.

I do not believe that a Japanese submarine can be ruled out completely until this work is done. Similarly, the matter with Roosevelt.

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Churchill was unsure of Americas commitment to war, and that such an incident was insufficient evidence to prompt Roosevelt to abandon the nodas vivendi. It would have suited all sides to hush up the matter. To be fair to Layton et al, they consider (p. 204) that whatever the intelligence it had to be specific, credible, and from an undisputed source - such as details of the Japanese army or navy war plans. They suggest that it might have been information from the British. And that it might show a British penetration of Russian cipher traffic which was describing these war plans, possibly obtained by Richard Jorgie's spy ring in Tokyo. Later, Admiral Stark was asked at a secret inquiry what the message was and declined to answer on the grounds of detriment to the public interest. Layton et al give the relevant British PBO number and quote correspondence as late as 1983.

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Dear Mrs Towner

INQUIRY INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SINKING OF HMAS SYDNEY

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION

1. It has appeared necessary to make a few further comments and to provide factual information on several matters.

2.1 Questions at interview on 22 May 1998 relative to the above and my responses caused me to wonder whether I had been sufficiently explicit in paragraph 6.2 of Appendix A of my original submission, and also to look at what others had said. It was surprising to observe inaccuracy in the Department of Defence response to the Committee's request for detail, vide Submissions Vol. 13, p. 3187.

2.2 The correct detail is as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>J. Burnett RAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>E.W. Throstin DSC RN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant-Commander</td>
<td>J.C. Bacon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant-Commander</td>
<td>M.M. Singer DSC RN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant-Commander</td>
<td>C.A.C. Montgomery RN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant-Commander</td>
<td>A.M. Wilkinson RAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>E.E. Mayo RAN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To that list might be added

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torpedo Officer</td>
<td>E.E. Mayo RAN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the six executive officers named above, five had served under Collins in the Mediterranean. The sixth, Wilkinson, had joined the ship some time after her return to Australia in February 1941.

2.3 Apropos officers on the bridge at the time of the concluded approach to Kormoran, I would again refer the Committee to paragraphs 23 and 27 (Submissions Vol. 9, pp 2021 & 2023) of Appendix B of my submission. Also to Professor Dudley Creagh's interview response (FADT 121) to the Chairman's question whether "caution should have been present and that should have been vested in the commanding officer." "Certainly the executive officer, the commanding officer and the navigator ought to have been on the bridge. .....They certainly would have been all present at the same time in the same place. They should have made the decision." That response...