

Chapman

BB40/A16-3
Serial 06Care Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, Calif.,
6 February 1944.~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.
Via: (1) Commander Task Group FIFTY-TWO POINT EIGHT.
(2) Commander Task Force FIFTY-TWO.
(3) Commander Central Pacific Force.
(4) Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas.

Subject: Action Report, Bombardment of islands of KWAJALEIN ATOLL, MARSHALL ISLANDS, 31 January - 1 February 1944.

References: (a) Pacific Fleet Confidential Letter 2CL-44.
(b) ComGenPac Operation Plan No. Cen 1-44.
(c) CTF 51 Operation Plan No. A6-43.
(d) CTF 52 Attack Order No. A1-44.
(e) CTF 52 Cruising Order No. A3-44.
(f) CTU 52.8.3 Bombardment Order No. 1-44.

Enclosures: (A) Track Chart of Bombardment.
(B) Executive Officer's Report of Bombardment.
(C) Gunnery Officer's Report of Bombardment.

In accordance with reference (a), the following Action Report is submitted:

PART ONE

1. General Narrative - (a) The U.S.S. NEW MEXICO bombarded Japanese installations and forces in the southern portion of KWAJALEIN ATOLL, MARSHALL ISLANDS, with main, secondary and five inch 25 caliber anti-aircraft batteries 31 January and 1 February 1944. The firing by this ship and other ships was in support of landing operations.

(b) Pre-arranged fires of the three batteries were delivered on EBEYE ISLAND morning and afternoon of D Day, 31 January (the anti-aircraft fired only a part of the scheduled fire, the remainder being cancelled). Target-of-opportunity fire by the secondary and five inch 25 caliber anti-aircraft battery sank a 110 foot enemy schooner in the lagoon near GUGEGWE ISLAND just before noon of D Day. Interdictory fire on KWAJALEIN ISLAND was delivered by the three batteries the night of 31 January - 1 February. Only the main battery delivered scheduled fires on KWAJALEIN ISLAND on the morning of D plus 1 Day, 1 February, the other firings being cancelled. The last firings were on the afternoon of D plus 1 Day, when the five inch 25 caliber anti-aircraft battery made unscheduled, short range bombardments of small islands north of EBEYE ISLAND.

(c) Pre-arranged firing was terminated in advance of the schedule because of the progress of landing operations. Nevertheless, this was the most

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extensive bombardment in which the ship has ever participated. Firing was conducted intermittently over a 30 hour period.

(d) There were no difficulties in the firing, no effective counter-action and no significant material casualties. One personnel casualty, the death of the ship's Senior Aviator while on a spotting mission, occurred.

2. Preliminaries - (a) The NEW MEXICO, with other units of Task Force FIFTY-TWO, left PEARL HARBOR, T.H., 22 January, 1944, and proceeded in accordance with reference (c). Various training exercises were conducted by the force while enroute; within the ship itself preparations were made for the bombardment. The NEW MEXICO fueled the U.S.S. HAGGARD (DD555) 26 January during general fueling operations of the force. At 1700, 30 January, this and other ships began the final approach on KWAJALEIN ATOLL in accordance with the approach plan, Annex E to reference (d). Scheduled firing on the first assigned targets on EBEYE ISLAND was begun at 0812 (Zone Plus 12), 31 January.

(b) The ship's mission was to provide fire support for assault and occupation of Japanese bases on KWAJALEIN ATOLL as directed by references (b), (c), (d) and (f). The ship's assumptions were as given in those references. The ship's plans, prepared in detail on a basis of the information given in those references, are forwarded as Appendix 1 of Enclosure (C).

(c) Own forces at the outset of the action were disposed as directed by higher authority.

(d) No enemy forces other than those on the atoll were encountered. There was no evidence that any enemy fire from the shore was directed at this ship.

(e) The wind was generally from 060°(T), velocity 15 knots, during the firing periods. The sea was calm with moderate swells. Visibility varied from a maximum of unlimited during daylight to a minimum of 15,000 yards during the night.

P A R T T W O

1. For chronological account of action see next page and the following pages. For navigational track see enclosure (A).

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CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF BOMBARDMENT

(All times are Zone Plus 12)

31 January 1944 (D Day)

0500 Went to General Quarters. Set Material Condition Zebra.

0557 Ships left 30 degrees to 340 true.

0620 Changed course right to 020 true.

0627 Changed course left to 350 true.

0635 Changed course left to 180 true.

0637 Changed course right to 235 true.

0640 Changed course left to 180 true.

0642 Changed speed to 15 knots.

0647 Changed course left to 160 true. Catapulted plane #2 to port on spotting mission.

0652 Changed course to 180 true.

0656 Catapulted plane #1 to port, as standby spotting plane.

0658 Changed course left to 075 true.

0703 Changed course right to 000 true.

0719 Changed course left to 168 true.

0727 Changed speed to 8 knots.

0731 Changed course left to 148 true.

0740 Changed speed to 10 knots.

0742 Changed course left to 045 true.

0750 Changed speed to 12 knots.

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0751 Changed course to 330 true.

0802 Changed course to 168 true.

0805 Light rain commenced.

0807 Changed speed to 8 knots.

0812 Commenced firing main battery on scheduled firings.

0825 Ceased raining.

0829 Changed course left to 344 true.

0843 Changed speed to 12 knots.

0845 Changed course to 004 true.

0846 Changed course left to 344 true.

0847 Changed speed to 8 knots.

0859 Checked fire main battery.

0900 Resumed fire main battery.

0903 Ceased firing main battery. Changed speed to 12 knots.

0905 Changed course to 334 true.

0910 Changed course right to 020 true.

0917 Changed course to 168 true; changed speed to 8 knots.

0921 Changed to 180 true, did not steady on course, but continued to swing right to 210 true.

0926 Changed course to 168 true.

0930 Commenced firing main battery.

0955 Changed course to 178 true.

1004 Changed course left to 000 true.

1030 Checked fire main battery.

1031 Changed speed to 15 knots, and changed course left to 280 true.

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- 1041 Changed speed to 8 knots, and changed course to 170 true.
- 1046 Resumed fire main battery.
- 1101 Changed course right to 000 true.
- 1105 Ceased firing main battery.
- 1117 Commenced firing main battery.
- 1125 Changed course left to 350 true.
- 1131 Changed course left to 340 true.
- 1133 Changed course right to 180 true.
- 1140 Ceased firing main battery.
- 1145 Commenced firing 5"/25 cal. battery and 5"/51 cal. battery at schooner off GUGECWE ISLAND.
- 1146 Ceased firing 5"/25 cal. battery.
- 1150 Schooner observed to sink from effects of gun fire. Ceased firing 5"/51 cal. battery.
- 1150 Changed speed to 12 knots. Ventilated ship; turned on fresh and flushing water for approximately one hour.
- 1152 Changed course left to 090 preparatory to recovering spotting planes. Heavy rain squall lasting 30 minutes encountered, delaying recovery of planes. Steering on various courses and speeds for recovery.
- 1220 Recovered first spotting plane.
- 1233 Recovered second spotting plane.
- 1238 Changed course left to 240 true to return to firing area.
- 1239 Changed speed to 10 knots.
- 1253 Changed course to 210 true.
- 1300 Changed course right to 180 true. (Correct)
- 1317 Catapulted plane #1 to port, with Lt. Forney O. Fuqua, USNR, pilot, and Miller, H.D., ARM2c, USNR, radioman.
- 1319 Changed course right to 240 true.

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1320 Changed course left to 180 true.

1330 Commenced firing secondary (5"/51 cal) battery.

1337 Catapulted plane #2.

1339 Changed course right to 000 true.

1343 Changed speed to 15 knots.

1350 Changed speed to 10 knots.

1351 Changed course to 350 true.

1400 Changed course to 320 true, did not steady but at

1402 Changed course right to 180 true.

1410 Changed speed to 8 knots.

1414 Ceased firing secondary battery.

1415 Changed course to 150 true.

1418 Commenced firing main battery.

1422 Checked fire main battery.

1422 Changed course left to 340 true.

1433 Resumed fire main battery.

1443 Changed course left to 330 true.

1450 Changed course left to 320 true.

1455 Checked fire main battery.

1455 Changed course right to 130 true.

1508 Resumed firing main battery.

1520 Changed course right to 145 true.

1522 Spotting plane #1, with Lt. F.O. Fuqua, USNR, pilot, was struck by shrapnel. Radioman made forced landing in Kwajalein Lagoon directly to the westward of Loi Island. Plane sank with body of pilot still in cockpit; radioman got clear and was rescued.

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1525 Ceased firing main battery.

1526 Changed course right to 325 true.

1540 Commenced firing 5"/51 cal. battery.

1543 Changed course left to 315 true.

1549 Changed course left to 305 true; did not steady but at

1554 Changed course left to 125 true.

1615 Ceased firing secondary battery, (5"/51 cal.)

1616 Ventilated ship.

1617 Changed course right to 000 true.

1630 Changed course left to 330 true.

1635 Commenced firing main battery.

1640 Port engine ahead standard.

1640 Checked fire main battery.

1642 Changed course to 130 true.

1644 Resumed fire main battery.

1645 All engines ahead two thirds.

1655 Changed course to 148 true.

1703 Changed course right to 170 true.

1713 Ceased firing main battery.

1714 Changed course to 080 true.

1720 Changed to 100 true preparatory to recovery of plane.

1722 Changed speed to 15 knots.

1725 Changed course to 350 true.

1727 Changed speed to 10 knots.

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1730 Changed course to 035 true. Recovered plane #2.

1732 Changed course to 015 true.

1736 Changed speed to 5 knots.

1740 Received SC1068 alongside for transfer of official mail: Cast off at 1746

1746 Changed speed to 15 knots.

1748 Changed course left to 285 true.

1752 Secured from Material condition Zebra. Secured from General Quarters and set condition one on AA battery and automatic weapons.

1803 Changed course to left to 140 true. Changed speed to 8 knots.

1807 Commenced firing 5"/25 cal. AA battery.

1819 Changed course right to 160 true.

1822 Ceased firing AA battery.

1830 Changed course right to 180 true. Scheduled fires of Ebeye Island for Dog Day completed. Left day's firing area and proceeded to westward of Kwajalein Island to take position for night interdiction fire on that island, as directed by CTG 52.8. Murray accompanied as screen.

2032 Went to General Quarters for purpose of setting special condition watch for night interdiction fire. Secured when watch was set.

2156 Came to course 320 true for first firing on Kwajalein. Position bearing 008 true, distant 17900 yards from western tip of Island. Steaming at 15 knots, zigzagging.

2200 Ceased zigzagging.

2213 Fired two salvos of starshells from 5"/25 cal. battery.

2226 Changed course right to 340 true, changed speed to 10 knots.

2228 Commenced firing star shells and AA common 5"/25 cal. battery.

2235 Commenced firing main battery.

2240 Checked fire AA and main batteries.

2241 Reversed course to 160 true.

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2250 Resumed fire AA and main battery.

2300 Ceased firing main and 5"/25 cal. batteries.

2312 Changed course left to 000 true.

2321 Changed speed to 5 knots.

2326 Commenced firing starshells and AA common with 5"/25 cal. battery.

2337 Commenced firing main battery.

2350 Changed course right to 180 true.

2355 Ceased firing main and AA batteries.

D plus 1 day -- 1 February 1944

0007 Commenced firing main battery.

0015 Ceased firing main battery.

0016 Changed speed to 15 knots.

0022 Changed course right to 180 true.

0053 Countermarched to 035 true.

0112 Changed course left to 020 true.

0121 Changed course left to 320 true.

0144 Changed course left to 280 true.

0149 Changed course right to 040 true.

0150 Changed speed to five knots.

0151 Commenced firing main battery.

0154 Commenced firing 5"/25 cal. battery.

0157 Commenced firing 5"/51 cal. battery.

0200 Ceased firing main battery.

0205 Ceased firing 5"/25 and 5"/51 cal. batteries.

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0208 Changed speed to 15 knots. Steaming on various courses the remainder of the night, expecting to shoot interdictory fire again about 0500. Orders were received cancelling any further interdictory fire, however, and the ship proceeded to its assigned area for prearranged fire for this day, Dog plus One.

0600 Went to General Quarters and set Material Condition Zebra. Course 010 true speed 15 knots.

0604 Changed course to left to 040 true.

0645 Changed course to right to 180 true.

0701 Changed course right to 330 true.

0707 Changed speed to 10 knots.

0724 Changed course left to 160 true.

0726 Changed speed to 15 knots.

0738 Changed course left to 115 true.

0740 Catapulted plane for spotting.

0742 Changed course right to 175 true.

0743 Changed course right to 320 true.

0746 Changed speed to 10 knots.

0751 Commenced firing main battery on Kwajalein Island.

0805 Chocked firing main battery.

0806 Changed course right to 050 true.

0813 Changed course right to 140 true.

0818 Resumed firing main battery.

0836 Ceased firing main battery.

0840 Changed course right to 170 true.

0847 Changed course to 140 true.

0855 Changed course left to 320 true.

0910 Commenced firing main battery.

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0918 Changed course by ships turning simultaneously right to 340 true.

0927 Ships right to 000 true.

0928 Checked fire main battery.

0930 Resumed fire main battery.

0934 Ships left to 330 true.

0940 Ships right to 150 true.

0950 Checked fire main battery.

0952 Resumed fire main battery.

1000 Checked firing main battery.

1014 Resumed firing main battery.

1026 Ships left 180 degrees to 330 true.

1027 Ceased firing main battery.

1038 Commenced firing main battery.

1057 Ceased firing main battery.

1059 Secured from general quarters and material condition Zebra.
Set condition three.

1107 Changed course right to 140 true, commencing maneuvers to recover plane.

1118 Changed course left to 015 true.

1130 Changed course left to 270 true.

1140 Changed course left to 180 true.

1145 Changed course right to 200 true.

1147 Changed course left to 180 true.

1155 Changed course left to 090 true.

1202 Changed course right to 180 true.

1206 Changed course left to 340 true (correct).

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1214 Set condition 1 on 5"/51 cal. battery

1217 Catapulted plane to starboard.

1220 Set condition 1 on 5"/25 cal. battery.

1225 Changed course left to 305 true.

1235 Changed course left to 270 true.

1240 Changed course to 290 true.

1242 Changed course to 330 true.

1245 Fired on salvo from 5"/25 cal. battery to port.

1252 Changed course right to 000 true.

1253 Commenced firing 5"/51 cal. battery to port.

1255 Ceased firing 5"/51 cal. battery.

1255 Changed course right to 010 true.

1310 Commenced firing 5"/25 cal. battery to port.

1315 Changed course to 070 true.

1317 Changed speed to 5 knots.

1321 Changed course to 050 true.

1329 Changed course to 040 true.

1340 Changed course to 020 true.

1359 Ceased firing 5"/25 battery. Secured from condition 1 on 5" batteries and set condition 3. Firing for day completed.

1400 Changed course to 170 true.

1402 Changed speed to 15 knots, proceeded to rendezvous area.

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PART THREE

1. For detailed information on gunnery performance, see Gunnery Officer's Report of Bombardment, enclosure (C).
2. No information on the performance of enemy ordnance material or equipment is available.

PART FOUR

1. This ship suffered no battle damage. (See Part V, subparagraph 1(b), for details of the loss of one of the ship's two aircraft.)
2. Enemy battle damage was widespread in the areas of KWAJALEIN ISLAND and EBEYE ISLAND on which this ship fired. An inspection of the damage in the target areas was made and a report, with photographs, is being made by CTU 52.8.3 (CBD-3 Rear Admiral Griffin).

PART FIVE

1. Special comment is made on the following matters.
 - (a) Communications were entirely satisfactory. No material failures were experienced. The TBS circuit was overcrowded with nonessential traffic, most of which could have been eliminated by use of visual signalling. Contact with the spotting planes was made without delay and maintained according to plan.
 - (b) Communication personnel on voice circuits were well indoctrinated in procedure. Personnel on CW circuits did not have the operating training or the procedure training necessary to keep the efficiency of a CW circuit up to standard.
 - (c) Navigation-Radar - The night interdiction fire was the first bombardment in which this ship was navigated only by radar fixes. From dark until daylight the following morning all ship's positions were obtained by radar fixes. Ranges to the nearest point of land or reef varied from 5,000 yards to 22,500 yards. The ship made its approaches for firing runs, in each case, from a point south of the western end of KWAJALEIN ISLAND, firing on northwesterly and southeasterly courses from the area to the southwest of the Island. Cuts were obtained by plotting radar ranges, using the western point of KWAJALEIN ISLAND and the southeastern point of ENUBUJ ISLAND. When in the approach area, that is, south of the tip of KWAJALEIN ISLAND, it was found that ranges to ENUBUJ ISLAND were considerably in error, probably because of the lowness of the island and the echoes either from the reef, or the breakers thereon, running from ENUBUJ ISLAND

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to KWAJALEIN ISLAND. Ships anchored near ENUBUJ ISLAND added to the difficulty in determining what was the proper point of the island from which to measure ranges and bearings. It is to be noted that the same difficulty in keeping the ship plotted in by radar was not experienced while on the eastern side of the atoll, either during the daylight firing or while making the early morning approaches.

(d) Navigational charts - The charts and maps furnished for this operation were satisfactory. Cuts obtained by the use of the outlined tangents gave accurate fixes with relation to the islands. The fact that charts furnished included both these to the scale of one inch equals one nautical mile and the scale of one inch equals one-half nautical mile was very valuable. The assigned sector of this ship for firing made it possible to use the scale of one inch equals one-half nautical mile, and, consequently, for the navigator to furnish control stations with ranges to the nearest ten yards. The one inch equals one mile scale was extremely valuable for use in Radar Plot on the Dead Reckoning Tracer. A chart to this scale should always be furnished for operations of this nature. However, it would have been desirable to have had on these charts a scale divided into yards in addition to the scale showing only nautical miles. It would also help to have navigational charts printed on heavy chart paper. The light paper charts furnished became torn or creased from usage unless they were backed with heavier paper such as a cancelled Hydrographic Office Chart. Also, six copies of charts to these scales are not too many for a ship this size.

(e) Air operations - One of the ship's two OS2U aircraft was lost while on a spotting mission over EBEYE ISLAND. Shrapnel or a shell fragment struck the plane and wounded the pilot fatally. The radioman landed the plane on the lagoon of KWAJALEIN ATOLL, but a wing-tip float was carried away and the plane capsized. The plane sank in the lagoon while under tow of the U.S.S. YMS 383.

(f) Engineering - The performance of engineering personnel and operation of all machinery was excellent. There were no machinery casualties that impaired the performance of the Engineer Department.

2. The Executive Officer's Report is submitted as enclosure (B).

3. Projectiles and fragments of projectiles fell near this and other ships during the firing. It is believed that they were ricochets resulting from our own ships' fire at relatively short range on a low terrain.

4. Lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations.

(a) The essential lesson learned was that semi-continuous bombardment, with three batteries each harassing and damaging the enemy with hundreds of rounds can be maintained day and night with facility by a ship of this type. An important qualification is that such long-continued fire be semi-continuous, with breaks for ventilation of magazines and other below deck spaces, for food and sanitation, and for a minimum of rest. These conditions might not be met if there were constant air or submarine threat precluding the breaking of Condition Zebra.

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(b) The lesson learned from study of the effect of various types of projectiles is covered in the Gunnery Officer's Report (Enclosure (C)) and will be the subject of a separate report by Commander Task Unit 52.8.3 (CBD-3 Rear Admiral Griffin.)

(c) It is recommended that any future bombardment of low terrain by a number of firing ships be planned with full consideration for the danger of ricochets if ships fire at close range on approximately reverse bearings.

P A R T S I X

1. Lieutenant Forney Oliver Fuqua, A-V(N), U. S. Naval Reserve, 106462, Senior Aviator of the NEW MEXICO, was killed in action while piloting the ship's spotting plane. See Part V, subparagraph 1(e), for details. There were no other personnel casualties.

2. All officers and men performed their duties satisfactorily during the action. It is contemplated that special comment on the performance of duty of Lieutenant Fuqua's radioman, Harrison D. Miller, ARM2c, V-3, U. S. Naval Reserve, 406-86-39, will be made in a separate letter to the President, Board of Awards, Pacific Fleet.

E. M. Zacharias
E. M. ZACHARIAS.

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GUGEGWE I.

1500

1451

OFMB

1550

1514

CFMB

LOI I.

1404

1409

1443

OF SB

1400

1414 CFSB

1320 CFMB

1325

1536

1528

OFMB

1356

1328

1420

1424

1431

OF SB

EBEYE I.

1353

1350

1334

1339

1345

KWAJALEIN I

D- DAY

1320-1550

GUGEGWE I.

OFAA

1554

1802

1558

1646

1550

1758

LOI

1642

1810

1652

1753

1637

1606

1815

1657

OFMB

1631

1610

1701

1747

1614

CFAA

CFBB

EBEYE I.

1626

1706

1733

1815

CFMB

1714

1716

25

22

21

D DAY

1550 - 1825

KWAJALEIN I.

GUGEGWE I.

LOI I.

EBBYE I.

KWAJALEIN

OFMB
0815

0810

0806
CFMB

OFMB

0749

0817

0730

0825

0756

0735

0740

0645

0653

0641

0659

0705

D+1 DAY
0641-0900

0846

0850

0855

0900

LOI 1.

EBEYE I.

KWAJALEIN I.

0945

0940

0935

0930

0925

0920

CFMB

1002

1058

CFMB

OFMB

1048

OFMB-----0910

1016

0900

CFMB

OFMB

1035

D+I DAY
0900 - 1058

1026

