

16 September 1954

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ORIGINAL

CVA20

Oct-623

THIRD ENDORSEMENT on subject record

From: Judge Advocate General  
 To: Chief of Naval Operations  
 Via: (1) Chief of Naval Personnel  
 (2) Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery  
 (3) Chief, Bureau of Aeronautics  
 (4) Chief, Bureau of Ships  
 (5) Commandant of the Marine Corps  
 Subj: Ct. of Inq. - Deaths and injuries to Naval and Marine Corps personnel and to one civilian in explosion and fire aboard USS BENNINGTON (CVA-20) on 26 May 1954 near Newport, R. I.

1. Forwarded for information and return.
2. The Judge Advocate General holds that the deaths and injuries of naval and Marine Corps personnel listed below were suffered in the line of duty and were not the result of their own misconduct. The Judge Advocate General further holds that the deaths and injuries sustained by personnel of the reserve components of the Navy and Marine Corps listed below were incurred while the said Reservists were employed on extended active duty as defined by Public Law 108, 81st Congress (34 USC 855c-1):

Died on 26 May 1954

- ADAMS, Charles Edward, AN, USN
- ALEXANDER, Cornelius Melroy, SD3, , USN
- ARBOGUST, George Albert, LT, , USN
- ARRIGONI, Joseph Fred, LT, , USN
- BACON, Francis Sylvester, TN, USN
- BASKIN, William Nash, AA, , USN
- BEMISS, Guy Morton, CHPHOTO, , USN
- BOYD, Rossel (n), AN, , USN
- BRYAN, Terry Willard, LTJG, , USN
- BYERS, George Washington, TN, , USN
- COLEMAN, Lloyd (n), TA, , USN
- CROMARTIE, James (n), SD2, , USN
- DAVIS, Prince Arthur, TN, , USN
- DEAN, Albert Penton, CHGUN, , USN
- DREW, Henry Jackson, LT, USN
- EOVINO, Dominic Joseph, CHSCLK, , USN
- EPPS, Robert Daniel, Jr., AB3, , USN
- FAVRE, Joseph Louis, TN, , USN
- FIX, Leo Francis, CHBOSN, , USN
- FORE, Fred Walter, FP2, , USN
- FOURNIER, Paul Eugene, LCDR, USN
- GOLASZEWSKI, Edward John, AB1, 14, USN
- GONZALES, Leon (n), SD3, , USN
- GOODRUM, Douglas (n), TN, , USN
- GREEN, Jesse Nelson, AO3, , USN
- HART, George Joseph, Jr., AB3, , USN
- HILLYER, Donald Paul, DT2, , USN
- HOLLOWAY, Delois Vergil, LT, , USN
- HOOKER, Alfred Punnell, SD3, , USN
- HUBETSEL, Alexander (n), AO1, , USN
- HURD, James Walter, CHCARP, , USN
- HUSTOFT, Harold Roger, ME3, , USN
- JACKSON, Billy Glen, LT, , USN
- JACKSON, Charles (n), SD3, , USN
- JEFFERSON, Paul "B", SN, , USN

By: [Signature]  
Content's Noted  
Casualty Branch  
Date: 10-20-54  
Per: G-2  
ST

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO UNCLASSIFIED  
 BY AUTHORITY OF: OPNAVINST 5500.40  
 DATE: 24 JUN 1959  
 BY: [Signature]  
 Office of JAG, Navy Dept.  
 LT, USN

This endorsement is automatically declassified when removed from the basic record

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KEIR, Richard Henry, AB3, , USN  
 KING, Max (n), CHGUN, , USN  
 LAKATOS, Albert "J", MM3, USN  
 LAMB DIN, Dewey Whitley, LT, , USN  
 LENZ, George William, SK2, , USN  
 LEWIS, Elliot Stanley, AO3, USN  
 MARTIN, Ernest Simms, AML, 80 , USN  
 MATTHIAS, Albert Joseph, EM3, , USN  
 MC GHEE, Charles Hunter, AN, , USN  
 MC NATT, Lloyd (n), MACH, USN  
 MILLER, Gordon R., LTJG, , USN  
 MILLS, Arthur Gean, SN, , USN  
 MOODY, Thaddeus Eugene, AN, , USN  
 MORTON, "J" Clyde, LT, USN  
 O'NEAL, Walter Issiah, SN, , USN  
 PHELPS, Donald Lee, LTJG, , USN  
 PRANEK, Francis Joseph, SN, USN  
 PUGH, William Howard, PACT, , USN  
 REED, Marvin (n), LCDR, , USN  
 REYES, Juan (n), SD3, , USN  
 RICH, Wallace (n), LT, , USN  
 RILEY, Claude Patrick, SK1, , USN  
 RIVERS, Jesse Elmore, SD2, , USN  
 SICO, Benigno (n), SD2, , USN  
 SMITH, Ralph C., AMC, USN  
 SMITH, Robert Kent, SD3, , USN  
 SOMMARS, Cantrell Wallace, IC3, , USN  
 THOMAS, Eric Alfredo, SD1, USN  
 THORNHILL, David R., LTJG, USN  
 THORNTON, Earl (n), Jr., CHSCLK, USN  
 TINNEY, Earl Crawford, AO3, 6 USN  
 TRIPLETT, Howard, SD2, , USN  
 VAN DER HOONING, John (n), AOC, , USN  
 WAGES, Kell Bruce, Jr., AB3, , USN  
 WILLIAMS, Marion (n), TN, , USN  
 WITVOET, Gerald James, LTJG, USN  
 WONSETLER, Paul Dallas, FT3, USN  
 WOODUM, Lonnie Gene, TA, , USN  
 WRIGHT, Henry Harold, Jr., SD3, , USN

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Died on 28 May 1954

75 ~~CAPISTRAND, Stanley L., CHPCLK, , USN  
 DEMERS, Raymond Conrad, RELE, USN  
 HACKBARTH, Thomas C., AO3, , USN  
 RAMEY, H., EM2, , USN  
 WILLIS, Herbert Lee, SD1, , USN  
 WILLIAMS, Willie, TN, , USN~~

Died on 30 May 1954

WRIGHT, Robert Reid, LT, , USN

Died on 4 June 1954

ROBINSON, Alto Lee, TN, , USN

Died on 26 May 1954

MARCHISELLI, Frederick Davis, PFC, USMC  
 MAYES, Bobby Lee, PFC, USMC

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Died on 28 May 1954

65 STANFORD, James T., PFC, USMC

Died on 1 June 1954

BAIRD, Delbert, PFC, USMC

Died on 26 May 1954

BARBER, Cyron Melvin, LT, USNR  
 BARNES, Roger Earl, LTJG, USNR  
 DOLL, Charles Joseph, AN, USNR  
 DUFFY, Robert James, LTJG, USNR  
 GOINS, Floyd Wilson, AOU3, USNR  
 HOPPER, Charl. Edward, LTJG, USNR  
 INGE, Robert Paul, LTJG, USNR  
 KANE, Orlo Hamlin, LTJG, USNR  
 KRASSY, Charles Edward, ADE3, USNR  
 O'DONNELL, Roger Raymond, LT, USNR  
 PENDELL, Emory Dean, ENS, USNR  
 SCHMUCKER, Charles Edwin, Jr., LTJG (SC), USNR  
 SMITH, Daniel Joseph, LT, USNR  
 100 THOMAS, Clyde Dana, Jr., LT(MC), USNR

Died on 28 May 1954

TONDO, Paul S., LTJG, USNR

Injured on 26 May 1954

(n), TN, USN  
 , AA, USN  
 , SN, 7, USN  
 , SN, USN  
 , IC2, USN  
 , SN, USN  
 , QM2, USN  
 , SD3, USN  
 , SD3, USN  
 , IC3, USN  
 , LCDR, USN  
 AKAN, USN  
 , QM2, USN  
 ADAN, USN  
 FT3, USN  
 , FN, USN  
 (n), BT3, USN  
 , SD1, USN  
 (n), SA, USN  
 , TN, USN  
 (n), AD3, USN  
 , AKAN, USN  
 , FT3, USN  
 , IC3, USN  
 , LTJG, USN  
 (n), SN, USN  
 , SN, USN  
 BMI, USN  
 , BT1, USN

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.. TN, , USN  
 , SN, , USN  
 .. SD1, SN  
 , BT3, USN  
 , SN, , USN  
 , TA, USN  
 , TN, USN  
 , TN, USN  
 SD3, , USN  
 SN, USN  
 GM2, , USN  
 SN, , USN  
 , SN, USN  
 , SN, , USN  
 .. PR1, USN  
 , AN, USN  
 , AMAN, , USN  
 , LT, , USN  
 , AN, USN  
 .. SN, , USN  
 , SD3, USN  
 , TN, , USN  
 , TN, , USN  
 , TN, , USN  
 (n), SA, , USN  
 , SA, , USN  
 (n), AN, , USN  
 , RD3, , USN  
 .. IC3, , USN  
 SN, , USN  
 (n), LCDR, , USN  
 .. IC2, USN  
 , SN, USN  
 (n), SN, , USN  
 .. SD3, USN  
 , AD1, USN  
 (n), AQAN, , USN  
 , SA, , USN  
 , TN, , USN  
 , TN, , USN  
 .. SN, , USN  
 , SN, , USN  
 , LT, USN  
 , TN, , USN  
 (n), SD2, , USN  
 (n), ET1, , USN  
 (n), IC2, , USN  
 , DC3, USN  
 (n), PFC, USMC  
 , PFC, USMC  
 , CPL, USMC  
 . PFC, USMC  
 .. AO3, USNR  
 , LTJG, USNR  
 , ENS, USNR  
 , LTJG, USNR  
 , SN, USNR  
 .. EMP3, , USNR  
 LT, SNR  
 , LTJG, USNR

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- 3. The Judge Advocate General further holds that the death of Harold I. Loucks, civilian, occurred on 26 May 1954 as a result of the explosion and fire on board the USS BENNINGTON (CVA-20), and that his death was incurred within the scope of his employment by Westinghouse Electric Company while he was on authorized temporary duty aboard the USS BENNINGTON,
- 4. Subject to the remarks of the ordering and reviewing authorities, the proceedings in the attached case are legal.

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25 AUG 1954

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SECOND ENDORSEMENT on Proceedings of Court of Inquiry, RADM  
USN, President

From: Commander in Chief U. S. Atlantic Fleet  
To: Judge Advocate General

Subj: Court of inquiry to inquire into an explosion and fire aboard USS  
BENNINGTON which occurred 26 May 1954

1. Forwarded.

2. The Commander in Chief considers that the complete isolation of catapult compartments is an absolute necessity until such time as the cognizant technical bureaus in the Navy Department state unequivocally that the hydrolube selected has been tested and found to be noninflammable in all pressure and temperature ranges known or thought to exist in the launching accumulator.

3. The Commander in Chief further considers that the contradiction presented in setting the accumulator relief valve at a higher lift pressure than the prescribed hydrostatic test pressure for the accumulator, i.e., 4,000 p.s.i. vs 3,850 p.s.i., warrants immediate review and correction.

4. Subject to the foregoing, the proceedings, findings of fact, opinions and recommendations of the court of inquiry in this case, as modified by the convening authority, are approved.

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COMAIRLANT

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*Handwritten notes:*  
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COURT RECOMMENDATIONS REFERRED TO IN FIRST ENDORSEMENT BY COMA IRIANT

Recommendation 3 - Use of Nitrogen in high pressure hydro-pneumatic systems.

Recommendation 4 - If 100% Nitrogen not feasible then minimum amount required.

Recommendation 5 - Recommend following interim measures until non inflammable hydro-lube can be found:

a. Restrict use of cats to absolute minimum consistent with urgent military requirements.

b. If urgent military necessity requires continued use of cats then:

- (1) Use maximum cycle times.
- (2) Maintain maximum liquid level in accumulator.
- (3) Use lowest possible launch pressures.
- (4) Keep gasoline system inerted during cat launches.
- (5) Secure magazines and bomb elevators during cat launches.

Recommendation 7 - Installation of a "dead man" type of control for cat pumps so that oil flow to accumulators would cease if man at control board were incapacitated.

Recommendation 8 - Recommends venting cat compartment directly to atmosphere and isolating entire compartment from remainder of ship.

Recommendation 9 - That future hydro-pneumatic system designs avoid direct liquid-gas contact.

Recommendation 15 - That a study of electrostatic charges in air-oil systems to determine whether a hazard exists at or near bulk oil surfaces be undertaken.

Recommendation 19 - That a hydrostatic overload test of 50% over maximum working pressure be applied to the cat hydro-pneumatic system after initial installation and during each ship overhaul.

Recommendation 20 - That pending development of a suitable over-pressure relief system, a periodic check of the relief valve lifting pressure on top of launching and retracting accumulators be prescribed.

Recommendation 23 - That actions be taken to obtain isolation in order to prevent widespread distribution of explosive gases, flame, and blast effects from any source within combatant ships.

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26 JUL 1954

15. Subject to the foregoing remarks, the proceedings, findings of fact, opinions and recommendations of the court of inquiry in this case are approved.

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6. Recommendation 5 is approved with the substitution of the word "or" for "and" in the first sentence so that the first sentence reads as follows: "That, in the interim, until a suitable hydrolube, or insofar as practicable, an adequate percentage of nitrogen, are in use in catapults, such action as the following be taken:"
7. Recommendation 6 is approved with the substitution of the words "design test pressures" for the words "design working limits."
8. Recommendation 7 is not approved since the forthcoming installation of a fire-resistant or non-inflammable hydraulic fluid renders the need for such a device extremely small and the device therefore becomes a refinement, the added complexity and maintenance requirements of which can not be justified.
9. Recommendation 8 is approved. It should be pointed out, however, that this recommendation becomes no longer applicable as soon as the approved hydrolube has been installed.
10. Recommendation 9 is approved for oils and other flammable fluids, but is considered an unnecessary complication when the approved hydrolube has been installed.
11. Recommendation 15 is approved, except that the emphasis for this investigation should be shifted to the circumstances and ambient conditions existing in fuel oil and heavy end aviation fuel tanks.
12. Recommendation 19 is approved in principle. It is recommended that the practice established for steam pressure vessels such as boilers be applied to this equipment.
13. Recommendation 20 is approved in principle. However, a complete redesign of the relief valve system is indicated before a satisfactory periodic pressure test can be accomplished by other than factory or shipyard shop facilities.
14. Recommendation 23 is approved in principle, but not to the extent that the entire structural arrangement of the ship is dictated by this consideration to the disadvantage of other important factors. Further, it should be pointed out that this redesign appears to be of relatively minor importance after the installation of the approved hydrolube has been completed.

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26 JUL 1954

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FIRST ENDORSEMENT on Proceedings of Court of Inquiry, RADM  
[redacted], USN, President

From: Commander Air Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet  
To: Judge Advocate General of the Navy  
Via: Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet

Subj: Court of Inquiry to inquire into an explosion and fire  
aboard the U.S.S. BENNINGTON which occurred 26 May 1954

1. Forwarded.

2. It is considered that the subject investigation as a whole was unusually thorough, exhaustive, and complete in all pertinent details. The president and all of the members of the court, as well as the technical assistants to the court, are deserving of high praise for the outstanding loyalty and devotion to duty demonstrated by the exceptional record presented herewith which required aggressive, persistent and arduous work extending over a long period of time.

3. The opinions are considered to be well supported by the findings of fact and the result of unusually keen analysis of complex and frequently confusing circumstances. The findings and opinions are concurred in and, together with such recommendations as are finally approved, should receive wide dissemination in order that this information for which such a high price has been paid may be most effectively utilized by all units of the United States Naval forces in which hydro-pneumatic or hydraulic machinery is employed.

4. Recommendation 3 is approved as an interim measure in those ships wherein the introduction of the approved fire-resistant hydraulic fluid can not be installed at a very early date for various reasons such as the location of the ships on deployed duty or the unavailability of sufficient quantities of the fire-resistant fluid to meet the first upkeep availabilities in the continental United States.

5. Recommendation 4 is approved subject to the comments on recommendation number 3 above.

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