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- FINDING OF FACTS -

1. That on the early morning of 26 May 1954, the U.S.S. BENNINGTON was about 80 miles S.S.E. of Brenton Reef Lightship enroute from Norfolk to Narragansett Bay operating area and was engaged in normal flight training operations.
2. That the ship was under the operational and administrative control of Commander Air Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.
3. That Captain \_\_\_\_\_ USN, \_\_\_\_\_, was the Commanding Officer and was on the bridge.
4. That Lieutenant (junior grade) \_\_\_\_\_, USNR, was the Officer of the Deck and had the conn.
5. That, at about 0600, jet aircraft launchings commenced.
6. That the first plane on the starboard catapult was a dud, and no launches were made on this catapult.
7. That 13 jet aircraft were launched in about as many minutes on the port catapult.
8. That at 0615 the ship's position was Latitude  $80^{\circ} 10.5' N.$ , Longitude  $70^{\circ} 39.3' W.$ , course  $330^{\circ} (T)$  and speed 28 knots.
9. That, shortly after the 13th launch on the port catapult, white "smoke" was observed from the bridge emanating from under both sides of the flight deck forward and the general alarm was sounded, followed shortly thereafter by the fire alarm.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3110074-55

(29)

ALL B6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

10. That, after the "smoke" was sighted and at about 0615, a series of devastating explosions occurred in the forward portion of the ship. At least three explosions occurred.
11. That there was a considerable amount of "smoke" observed in many compartments in the forward part of the ship, including Hangar Bay No. 1, prior to the first explosion.
12. That there was no evidence that the gasoline, HEAF, fuel oil, and other fuel systems did either initiate, or add energy to the explosions, or in any way contribute to the extension of damage, nor that the aircraft lubricating oil system did initiate or contribute to the explosion.
13. That the ammunition, pyrotechnics, magazines and ordnance equipment did not initiate the explosions nor add power thereto, and were not involved in the casualty, except for secondary effects such as: isolated flooding of certain magazines, blast down a bomb elevator trunk knocking two 250 lb. bombs out of their bins in A-527-M and exposure of fifty-six 2.25 inch STAR rockets on the third deck to the explosion effects.
14. That the source of the explosive gases and vapors was the flammable hydraulic fluid from the port catapult hydro-pneumatic launching system.
15. That, except for damage to the hangar deck and in A-309-L, structural damage was not extensive.
16. That shock damage was minor.
17. That no conflagration occurred, only small, isolated, incipient fires which were extinguished by the fire fighting efforts of the crew and by leaks from small damaged pipe lines.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ (29)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

8. That fire fighting facilities were generally adequate after the explosions in spite of the broken firemain riser on the starboard side of the second deck.
9. That partial flooding of the gasoline and salt water pump room, and of the gasoline pump motor room, put the forward gasoline system out of commission.
10. That the majority of damage sustained by the ship was to the light metal inner bulkheads and to the non-tight ventilation ducts on the 2nd and 3rd decks forward, between frames 23 and 100, and to the 100 #STS hangar deck plating in Hangar Bay No. 1.
11. That the performance of steel watertight vent ducts, in resisting overpressure from either within or from without, was far superior to that of non-watertight vent ducts.
12. That flooding of the ship was minor, It was due to the rupture of one firemain riser and fracture of small pipe lines such as fresh water, drainage, etc., and to the fire fighting. Two magazines and the forward gasoline pump and pump motor rooms were flooded. Flooding had no serious effect on the ship's stability.
13. That, at the time of the casualty, the U.S.S. BENNINGTON was going from Condition Yoke to Condition Xray.
14. That most of the 3rd and 2nd deck passageway doors and hatches were open.
15. That the ship was in a weak material condition for warding off the effects of an internal explosion.
16. That, prior to 0626, Nos. 1 and 2 firerooms were secured as a result of entrance of dense smoke.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

30

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

27. That, after securing Nos. 1 and 2 firerooms, and with heavy smoke in the engineroom, shafts 1 and 4 were secured.
28. That No. 1 Boiler was found to have suffered a low water casualty due to leaving one burner in operation after the feed water had been secured.
29. That the emergency fuel oil trip valve for securing all fuel to No. 1 Boiler was not closed in securing the boiler. It was found difficult to operate.
30. That boilers 5, 6, 7 and 8 were found salted to approximately 25 E.P.M.
31. That the normal watch in Damage Control Central handled damage control action with limited personnel until smoke asphyxiated the personnel in the space. Subsequently, control of damage was assumed by Main Engine Control and later by Repair IV.
32. That at 0747 communications on 1MC, 2MC, 21MC and 24MC were lost on the bridge and were regained at 0826.
33. That power was lost forward when No. 1 switchboard was secured.
34. That the only damage to aircraft was to plane 112, which suffered damage to a wing when a hatch, frame 51, in the starboard side of the hangar deck was blown open by the force of an explosion which occurred below.
35. That the BENNINGTON suffered terrific loss of life and very widespread damage emanating from a local internal source.
36. That a check was made of the brig shortly after the accident and it was determined that the one prisoner had been released.

31

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

37. That the following named U. S. Navy and Marine Corps personnel attached to the U.S.S. BENNINGTON, all of whom were then in a duty status, were killed on the dates set forth hereafter as a result of said explosions occurring in said ship and of the causes set opposite their respective names:

NAVAL PERSONNEL

Died on 26 May 1954

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SERVICE NUMBER</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
1 ADAMS, Charles Edward, AN		
2 ALEXANDER, Cornelius Melroy, SD3		
3 ARBOGUST, George Albert, LT		
4 ARRIGONI, Joseph Fred, LT		
5 BACON, Francis Sylvester, TN	1	
6 BASKIN, William Nash, AA		
7 BEMISS, Guy Morton, CHPHOTO		
8 BOYD, Rossel (n), AN		
9 BRYAN, Terry Willard, LTJG		
10 BYERS, George Washington, TN		
11 COLEMAN, Lloyd (n), TA		
12 CROMARTIE, James (n), SD2		
13 DAVIS, Prince Arthur, TN		
14 DEAN, Albert Penton, CHGUN		
DREW, Henry Jackson, LT		
EOVINO, Dominic Joseph, CHSCLK		
EPPS, Robert Daniel, Jr., AB3		

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

(32)

ALL B6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SERVICE NUMBER</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
FAVRE, Joseph Louis, TN		
FIX, Leo Francis, CHBOSN		
FORE, Fred Walter, FP2		
FOURNIER, Paul Eugene, LCDR		
GOLASZEWSKI, Edward John, AB1		
GONZALE S, Leon (n), SD3		
GOODRUM, Douglas (n), TN		
GREEN, Jesse Nelson, AO3		
HART, George Joseph Jr., AB3		
HILLYER, Donald Paul, DT2		
HOLLOWAY, Delois Vergil, LT		
HOOKER, Alfred Punnel, SD3		
HUBETSEL, Alexander (n), AO1		
HURD, James Walter, CHCARP		
HUSTOFT, Harold Roger, ME3		
JACKSON, Billy Glen, LT		
JACKSON, Charles (n), SD3		
JEFFERSON, Paul "B", SN		
KEIR, Richard Henry, AB3		
KING, Max (n), CHGUN		
LAKATOS, Albert "J", MM3		
LAMB DIN, Dewey Whitley, LT		

3110074-55

38

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

ALL B6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SERVICE NUMBER</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
<u>LENZ</u> , George William, SK2		
LEWIS, Elliot Stanley, AO3		y
MARTIN, Ernest Simms, AM1		
MATTHIAS, Albert Joseph, EM3		ody,
MC GHEE, Charles Hunter, AN		
<u>MC NATT</u> , Lloyd (n), MACH		
MILLER, Gordon R., LTJG		
MILES, Arthur Gean, SN		
MOODY, Thaddaeus Eugene, AN		5
MORTON, "J" Clyde, LT		
<u>O'NEAL</u> , Walter Issiah, SN		
PHELPS, Donald Lee, LTJG		
PRAMEK, Francis Joseph, SN		
PUGH, William Howard, PACT		
REED, Marvin (n), LCDR		
<u>REYES</u> , Juan (n), SD3		
RICH, Wallace (n), LT		
RILEY, Claude Patrick, SK1		
RIVERS, Jesse Elmore, SD2		
SICO, Benigno (n), SD2		
<u>SMITH</u> , Ralph C., AMC		
SMITH, Robert Kent, SD3		

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ (34)

[REDACTED]

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SERVICE NUMBER</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
SOMMARS, Cantrell Wallace	, IC3	
THOMAS, Eric Alfredo	, SD1	
THORNHILL, David R.	, LTJG	
THORNTON, Earl (n) Jr.	, CHSCLK	
TINNEY, Earl Crawford	, A03	
TRIPLETT, Howard	, SD2	
VAN DER HOONING, John (n)	, AOC	
WAGES, Kelly Bruce, Jr.	, AB3	
WILLIAMS, Marion (n)	, TN	
WITVOET, Gerald James	, LTJG	
WONSETLER, Paul Dallas	, FT3	
WOODUM, Lonnie Gene	, TA	
WRIGHT, Henry Harold Jr.	, SD3	
Died on 28 May 1954		
CAPISTRAND, Stanley L.	, CHPCLY	
DEMERS, Raymond Conrad	, RELE	
HACKBARTH, Thomas C.	, A03	
RAMEY, H.	, EM2	
WILLIS, Herbert Lee	, SD1	
WILLIAMS, Willie	, TN	

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(35)

ALL B6





<u>NAME</u>	<u>SERVICE NUMBER</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
	Died on 30 May 1954	
WRIGHT, Robert Reid, LT		
	Died on 4 June 1954	
ROBINSON, Alto Lee, TN		

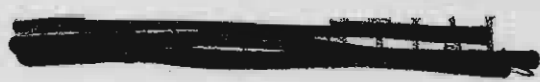
MARINE CORPS PERSONNEL

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SERVICE NUMBER</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
	Died 26 May 1954	
MARCHISELLI, Frederick Davis, PFC.		
MAYES, Bobby Lee, PFC		
	Died 28 May 1954	
STANFORD, James T., PFC		
	Died 1 June 1954	
BAIRD, Delbert, PFC		

38. That the following named U.S. Naval Reserve personnel attached to U.S.S. BENNINGTON, all of whom were then on extended active duty and in a duty status, were killed on the dates set forth below as a result of said explosion occurring in said ship and of the causes set opposite their names:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SERVICE NUMBER</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
	Died 26 May 1954	
BARBER, Cyron Melvin, LT		
BARNES, Roger Earl, LTJG		

(36)



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<u>NAME</u>	<u>SERVICE NUMBER</u>	<u>CAUSE OF DEATH</u>
DOLL, Charles Joseph, AN		
DUFFY, Robert James, LTJG		
GOINS, Floyd Wilson, AOU3		
HOPPER, Charles Edward, LTJG		
INGE, Robert Paul, LTJG		
KANE, Orlo Hamlin, LTJG		

KRASSY, Charles Edward, ADE3

O'DONNELL, Roger Raymond, LT

PENDELL, Emory Dean, ENS

SCHMUCKER, Charles Edwin, Jr.  
LTJG (SC)

SMITH, Daniel Joseph, LT

THOMAS, Clyde Dana, Jr., LT(MC)

Died 28 May 1954

TONDO, Paul S., LTJG

39. That the following named civilian employee of the Westinghouse Electric Company, who was then authorized by the Chief of Naval Operations to take passage in naval vessels, and by Commander Air Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet to report to the Commanding Officer, U.S.S. BENNINGTON for temporary duty in connection with rendering technical assistance, and who was then at work aboard the U.S.S. BENNINGTON, was killed as a result of said explosions occurring in said ship and of the causes set opposite his name.

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(37)

ALL 136