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A7-2

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
FLAGSHIP OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF
HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

Serial

SECRET

SECRET

22 October 1943

From: Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet.
To: The Commander North Pacific Force.
The Commander Central Pacific Force.
The Commander South Pacific Force.
The Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.
All Task Force Commanders, Pacific Ocean Areas.

Subject: Security of Ultra Secret Information.

Reference: 1. Examples of extreme laxness with respect to security of ultra secret operational and intelligence information continue to be brought to my attention.

2. Information gained from enemy sources is a potent weapon. Its effectiveness is being jeopardized by lack of discretion and loose talk in the presence of unentitled military and civilian personnel.

3. The source or manner in which we obtain information about the enemy is a matter which need seldom be discussed with personnel not directly concerned with the accumulation of such information.

4. When operational requirements necessitate disclosure of highly classified material to subordinates they shall be specifically warned against discussion or disclosure to unauthorized persons.

5. You will take immediate action to insure utmost security, in the forward areas, of our sources of information and future operations. Disciplinary action, regardless of rank, will be taken when appropriate.

Enclosure (A) to be furnished to the Commanders of the Pacific Fleet with the object of the war that no effort should be spared, including appropriate disciplinary action when indicated, to insure the security of our sources of information and of our operations.

C. H. MEMORRIS
Chief of Staff

P. V. MERCER,
Flag Secretary

Copy for ComSops.

ComSops/Sec (With copy of this)

COMINCH FILE

UNITED STATES FLEET
HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF
NAVY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.

FF1/A7-3

Serial: 002157

6 OCT 1943

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From: Commander in Chief, United States Fleet
and Chief of Naval Operations.
To : Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet.
Subject: Security - Violation of.

Reference: (a) CincPac Secret letter, Serial 001065
of 29 August, 1943.

Enclosure: (A) Report of Investigation of Major John
W. Mitchell, U.S. Army Air Force.

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded herewith for your
information.

2. It would appear from the enclosure that there
is considerable laxness in the forward areas in regard to
security of information concerning operations and to the
source of information on which some of them are based.
The greatest care should be taken in the briefing of pilots
for operational flights and particularly for such specific
operations as may be based on information of a highly secret
nature. It would further appear that there is entirely too
much loose talk engaged in by operational personnel in the
presence of or within the hearing of people, both military
and civilians, who are not immediately concerned.

3. I know this to be a matter in which you are
particularly interested and with which you are constantly
concerned. It is of such vital importance for the success-
ful conduct of the war that no effort should be spared,
including appropriate disciplinary action when such is
indicated, to insure the security of our sources of in-
formation and of our operations.

4. Enclosure (A) to Reference has been returned
to Mr. Jack Mahon with the objectionable portions thereof
deleted.

E. J. King
E. J. KING

Copy to: ComSoPac.
ComSoWesPac (With copy of Ref.(a)).

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Investigation of Major John W. Mitchell, A.C., by Colonel J.F.R. Scott, September 18, 1943, in Office of the Air Inspector, Headquarters Army Air Forces, Room 4 E 184 Pentagon Building.

The witness was sworn.

Q. State your name, rank and organization.

A. Major John W. Mitchell, address at Headquarters Fourth Air Force.

Q. Are you cognizant of your rights under the 24th Article of War?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. There has been submitted to this office for investigation a complaint by G-2 of the War Department forwarded to them by Admiral King of the Navy, in which it is alleged you violated security regulations by releasing information concerning the death of Admiral Yamamoto in the south Pacific to one Jack Mahon, an accredited INS correspondent. Do you know Jack Mahon?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did you ever hear of him?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. This record shows that he was an accredited correspondent with the Army and his diary contains the following remark: "Did one today. Biggest exclusive of this area if can get it through about Yamamoto being shot down by Army Squadron 339. Interviewed Major John W. Mitchell, Enid, Mississippi, for whole story and am praying we can get it back exclusive." This diary apparently was taken from Mr. Mahon and that, together with the complaint of Admiral King and the forwarding letter from General Strong, indicates all that I have, except that Mr. Mahon was not permitted to release the story. As long as you have stated that you do not know Mr. Mahon, do you recall giving an interview to any news correspondent in the south Pacific or at any other time?

A. I have never given anybody any interview concerning that particular mission.

Q. There is also attached here from a Los Angeles paper a statement attributed to yourself and Captain Lanphier on destroying two Japanese ships without using bombs. Do you recall that?

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A. Yes. That was released here in Washington through our Public Relations. We told the story in Washington and it was cleared out and went through public relations.

Q. Can you in any way explain how Mr. Mahon could have made this entry in his diary?

A. The only way he could possibly have gotten it is that he could have heard some of us talking and as far as knowing who I was and where I was from, he could have gotten that easily.

Q. Was the result of the Yamamoto death a secret in your command or a matter of common knowledge?

A. It was a matter of common knowledge.

Q. Is it your view that he picked this up from other sources and merely credited you with the interview in his diary?

A. He must have.

Q. Was there great secrecy about the briefing of your mission before you went out to shoot down Yamamoto?

A. No sir. There were people in the room who were not concerned with the mission at all. At least a dozen people in the room were not concerned with the mission.

Q. Officers of the Air Corps or other services?

A. Other branches of the services, Army, Navy and Marines.

Q. When you returned from this mission was there any effort to disguise the fact that it had been accomplished?

A. No sir.

Q. Were any newspaper correspondents there that you knew of?

A. There were some around the area but not at the time we came off the mission.

Q. Were you under any orders to maintain secrecy on your return from the mission?

A. No. We were cautioned to keep quiet before going.

Q. The briefing was not kept quiet?

A. No sir.

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- Q. When you returned you were under no orders to maintain secrecy and anybody could have picked it up and could have known about it?
- A. Yes sir. We would not have discussed it with any civilian, but as far as discussion among ourselves, all the service personnel on Guadalcanal, Army, Navy and Marines, knew. I know because I have had people in no way concerned with the Air Forces asking me about it later on, a day or two after.
- Q. Have you had anybody discuss the matter in the United States, who were not concerned with it?
- A. Yes. When we first came to Washington one Life reporter asked for an exclusive story and we had not said anything to anybody about it, yet they asked for an exclusive story.
- Q. You say they asked for an exclusive story. Did they specify it was about Yamamoto?
- A. Yes sir. They said his name. When we went to Los Angeles, a hotel clerk, a woman, asked Captain Lanphier if he was not the one who had shot him down. He asked her where she heard that. She said she had picked it up. He told her not to mention it and we just turned and walked away.
- Q. In other words, total strangers in Los Angeles asked you about this?
- A. Yes sir. It is my belief that it is common knowledge throughout the service and also throughout the newspaper workers.
- Q. Do you recall any newspaper men who were out in Guadalcanal at the time?
- A. Not by name.
- Q. Were there newspaper men there at the time?
- A. Yes sir.
- Q. Was there any way whereby these men could have failed to obtain this information if living with the troops?
- A. I am sure that they overheard some of us talking. It was common gossip and they lived among us and there was no reason they could not get it as far as I can see. Some newspaper men got this story and submitted it to Admiral Halsey. This newspaper man submitted the story to Admiral Halsey and Admiral Halsey asked General Harmon to investigate where this newspaper man had gotten the story and General Harmon called us into his office and asked us if we had given out the information and

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everyone denied having done it. He asked us if any precautions had been taken during the briefing, at which the question was addressed to me, and I said it had not and it was affirmed by the other members of the flight present at the time.

Q. Was the responsibility of security in briefing yours?

A. No sir. It was the Brigadier General's, General Harris of the Marine Corps.

Q. Is there anything further that you care to add or any way you can help identify who gave this man his information?

A. No sir.

(Major Mitchell excused).

A CORRECT TRANSCRIPT:

/s/J. F. R. SCOTT,
Colonel, J.A.G.D.

C O P Y