

SS323/A16-3

Serial (020)

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U.S.S. CAIMAN (SS 323)
c/o Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, Calif.,
22 January 1945.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.
Via : (1) Commander Submarine Division TWO SIXTY TWO.
(2) Commander Submarine Squadron TWENTY SIX.
(3) Commander Submarines, Southwest Pacific Fleet.
(4) Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Subject: U.S.S. CAIMAN (SS 323)- Report of First War Patrol.

Enclosures: (A) Subject report.
(B) Track chart (ComSubSoWestPac only).

1. Enclosure (A), covering the first war patrol of this vessel, conducted in the South China Sea during the period 13 November 1944 to 22 January 1945 is forwarded herewith.

F. C. Lucas, Jr. 02527
F. C. LUCAS, Jr.

DECLASSIFIED-ART. 0445, OPNAVINST 5510.10

BY OP-0989C DATE 5/25/72

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(A) PROLOGUE

This vessel was commissioned at the Submarine Base, New London, on 17 July 1944. Training operations were conducted in the New London area from 21 July to 20 August. Departed New London on 21 August and arrived in Key West, Florida 28 August. Operated with Fleet Sound School, Key West, Florida from 29 August to 2 September. Departed Key West 3 September, arrived Fort Lauderdale, Fla., 3 September. From 4 September to 6 September conducted experimental work for Bureau of Ships in conjunction with the Harvard University Underwater Sound Laboratory. Departed Fort Lauderdale, Fla. 7 September and arrived in Canal Zone 11 September. On 14 September departed Canal Zone and arrived Submarine Base Pearl Harbor 1 October. Underwent voyage repairs and complete overhaul of the hydraulic system. Commenced regular new construction training schedule, firing nine torpedoes and had three nights of exercises. Spent four days conducting special exercises. Departed Pearl on 13 November 1944.

(B) NARRATIVE

Nov. 13
1538 VW Underway for Saipan with PC 579 as escort.
1845 VW Released escort.

Nov. 14 (Y)
1300 Y OOD sighted torpedo broach, heading toward. Evaded.

Nov. 15 (Y) - Nov. 19 (M)
1830 M Conning tower hatch failed to close completely during training dive because lanyard caught in hatch. Some water entered the conning tower - no damage.

Nov. 20 (M)
2210 Picked up radar sweeping on APR on 120 mc. Probably from Wake which was 40 miles away.

Nov. 21 (L) to Nov. 23 (K)
Made routine training dives.

Nov. 24 (K)
1635 Made trim dive. After adjusting pit log came up to periscope depth for a look and at
1717 sighted periscope and impulse bubble on starboard quarter. Went to 350 feet to evade torpedo and listen for submarine. JP got a screw count of 280 RPM. At

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(B) NARRATIVE (Cont'd)

1900 came up to periscope depth to see if we could pick up
sub. Sound made contact but could not hold it.
1918 Surfaced and sent contact report.

Nov. 25 (K)

0350 APR showed Jap radar 109 mc. on Sarigan Island sweeping
and at

0634 Picked up another radar, 176 mc.

0700 Saturation reached on APR. At

0703 Sighted 3 B-24's 12 miles away flying low. IFF return
12 miles. At 6 miles SD pip appeared.

0725 Sighted escort.

0755 Joined escort PC 115 and set course for Saipan.

1430 Moored port side to RAZORBACK alongside FULTON in nest
with SPEARFISH, SEGUNDO, RAZORBACK, and TREPANG.

Nov. 26 (H)

Took on fuel, lub oil, battery water, and fresh water.
Accomplished minor repairs.

1405 Underway from alongside of FULTON.

1442 Passed entrance buoy, joined PINTADO and escort. Set
course for entrance to safety lane.

2030 Released escort. Proceeding up joint zone.

Nov. 27 (H)

2235 Comdr. John B. AZER taken ill. Sent message to ComTask
Group 17.7 advising that we are returning to Saipan.

Nov. 28 (H)

1500 Sighted escort, U.S.S. DUNLAP (DD 384).

1533 Joined escort, proceeding to Saipan.

2015 Moored port side to SHAD alongside FULTON in nest with
REDFISH and SHAD.

Nov. 29 (I)

1600 Comdr. Frederic C. LUCAS, Jr., U.S.N., relieved Comdr.
John B. AZER, U.S.N. as Commanding Officer.

Nov. 30 - Dec. 3 (I)

Conducting training exercises. Made radar and sub-
merged practice approaches. Topped off fuel, lub, fresh
water, and battery water.

Dec. 4 (I)

1015 Underway for area from alongside FULTON.

1050 Joined escort, PC 1126.

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(B) NARRATIVE (Cont'd)

1520 Released escort.

Dec. 4 to Dec. 6 (I)
Made routine dives and conducted training.

Dec. 7 (I)
1530 IH While testing firing circuits fired #9 tube with outer door closed. Fired Mk 18-1 torpedo #56594, which exploded at end of run. Able to close door but operating shaft apparently sprung and tube out of commission.

Dec. 8 (H)
Enroute to station. Heavy weather.

Dec. 9 (H)
0530 Dived.
1810 Surfaced. Continued heavy weather. Proceeding through Balingtang Channel.

Dec. 10 (H)
0520 Dived.
1820 Surfaced.

Dec. 11 (H)
0113 Radar interference on SJ.
0144 Exchanged recognition signals with SEGUNDO by SJ radar.
0555 Dived.
1000 Passed to operational control of CTF 71 at 18-30N; 118-30E.
1800 Surfaced.
2000 Received orders to patrol southern half area A-3.
2315 Radar interference on SJ.

Dec. 12 (H)
Proceeding to assigned area.
0020 Exchanged recognition signals with U.S. Submarine, believed to be BLENNY, by SJ radar.
0555 Dived.
1810 Surfaced.
2114 Received orders to be on Lifeguard Station, 20 miles west of Pt. Sampoloc, Luzon at dawn on 14, 15, and 16 December for carrier strike on Manila.

Dec. 13 (H)
0519 Dived off Palauig Point, Luzon.
1247 Sighted aircraft. (Aircraft Contact #1)
1820 Surfaced.

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(B) NARRATIVE (Cont'd)

Dec. 14 (H)

Proceeding to assigned Lifeguard Station.

0239 176 mgc. signal on APR which steadily increased until at
0244 Signal at saturation and steady. Dived to avoid. From
later experience believe this was a friendly plane.

0341 Surfaced.

0447 150 mgc. signal on APR at saturation and steady. Dived.
This signal later became very familiar and is apparently
shore-based early-warning aircraft search type on Luzon.
It is probably non-directional as it does not sweep, but
comes on at irregular intervals gradually increasing in
strength until a steady saturation signal is received,
and at this time was assumed to be the 150 mgc. airborne
radar which has recently been used against our subma-
rines south of Formosa. Since we were nearly on life-
guard station decided to remain submerged until dawn.

0617 On station, submerged, looking for fighter cover or
some indication that the strike is on. Do not believe
that we can surface here without fighter cover, or at
least until we know the show has started. Listened on
vertical antenna at intervals.

0700 Sighted Jap float plane flying peacefully up the coast.
(A.C. #2)

1135 Sighted one Nell. (A.C. #3)

1149 Sighted another Nell. (A.C. #4)

1150 Sighted large PC or PF headed out from Subic Bay.
(S.C. #1) He searched all over the area, pinging.
Evaded at periscope depth.

1300 Sighted masts of another small ship headed out from Subic
Bay. This is too busy a spot for a Lifeguard Station.

1307 Observed that new arrival, was a destroyer and that all
his guns were firing. Then saw 2 Hellcats make a dive
bombing attack. Geysers of water completely obscured
him but he emerged apparently unscathed. Commenced
approach hoping to get in an attack while he was fully
occupied by the planes but he maneuvered radically and
did not come inside 7000 yards.

1310 Observed another attack on the destroyer, this time by
four Hellcats. No apparent damage. After this the
planes departed. Both ships remained in the area,
apparently searching, until

1600 Both ships headed in toward Subic Bay.

1822 Surfaced. APR immediately reported a 155 mgc. signal,
steady on and increasing to saturation.

1825 Dived again to avoid aircraft. This signal was also
later identified as from a shore-based installation. No
indication of aircraft on SD or SJ radar.

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(B) NARRATIVE (Cont'd)

- 1845 Surfaced. APR signals on 150, 155 and 176 mgcs. Decided not to dive until SD or SJ radar gave indication of aircraft. There were several 176 mgc. signals, apparently from our own planes which were bombing Luzon.
- Dec. 15 (H)
- 0118 Radar contact 17,000 yards. Commenced tracking. There are two small ships, apparently escort type vessels, base course 270⁰T. speed 12. (S.C. #3)
- 0300 Under light conditions that precluded identifying the type of target and sea conditions which would not permit the shallowest torpedo settings, did not consider that a night attack offered much chance of success and did not feel justified in abandoning lifeguard duties for a daylight attack in view of the apparent size of the targets, so secured tracking and set course for lifeguard station.
- 0316 Made radar contact on two more groups, of two each, same type vessel as previous contact, same general course and speed. Then believed this might be an outer screen for a major force sortieing from Manila so searched astern, without further contact, until Set course for lifeguard station on four engines.
- 0419 Dived, approaching lifeguard station.
- 0520 Sighted smoke bearing 118⁰T. Commenced approach.
- 0835 Sighted Nell bomber. (A.C. #6)
- 0913 Target identified as properly marked hospital ship north-
- 0935 bound from Manila (CONTE VERDE, EU). (S.C. #5)
- 1820 Surfaced. No indications of fighter cover or strike during the day.
- Dec. 16 (H)
- 0005 Aircraft contact on SJ radar at 13,000 yards. Keyed SD radar and when plane closed to 6 miles, dived.
- 0030 Surfaced.
- 0137 Radar contact at 17,000 yards. (S.C. #6) Commenced tracking. Two ships of about same size as those of last night indicated. Believed we had stumbled across a place to make contact with escorts coming out of Manila to pick up convoys which we will investigate when free from lifeguard duties. Discontinued tracking and set course for lifeguard station.
- 0520 Dived on lifeguard station to wait for some fighter cover.
- 0915 Sighted aircraft. (A.C. #8)
- 0947 Sighted masts. (S.C. #7) Commenced approach. Ship turned out to be another hospital ship, southbound to Manila. Took photographs.
- 1820 Surfaced. No sign of strike today.

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(B) NARRATIVE (Cont'd)

Dec. 17 (H)
0530 Dived in position 14-37N; 119-37E.
1822 Surfaced.

Dec. 18 (H)
0520 Dived off Palauig Point, Luzon.
0921 Sighted 2 float type planes. (A.C. #9)
0950 Sighted aircraft. (A.C. #10)
1548 Sighted aircraft. (A.C. #11)
1820 Surfaced.
2110 APR contact, 176 mgs. (A.C. #12) Out in SD, picked up two planes, one at 10 and one at 12 miles. The plane at 12 miles closed to 6 miles. Dived. Probably Liberators. Note:

Although it was not known at this time, our EEF was not functioning due to a break in the coaxial cable. Since Liberators are now making searches all over the South China Sea many of the subsequent plane contacts were undoubtedly friendly although not identified as such.

0539 Dived in position 14-16N; 119-27E.
1304 Sighted aircraft.
1814 Surfaced.
2206 Received orders to establish patrol line with BLENNY and LIPON at 17-50N, between 118-10E and 118-50E.

Dec. 20 (H)
Very heavy head seas. Could make good nearly as much submerged as on surface, so at
0610 Dived.
1805 Surfaced.

Dec. 21 (H)
Patrolling on patrol line.

Dec. 22 (H)
Patrolling on patrol line.
2000 Made rendezvous with LIPON and gave her a 1945 Nautical Almanac
2200 Received instruction from CTG 71.1 to patrol area A-2 with BLENNY. Assigned BLENNY southern half. Proceeding toward Luzon coast in northern half.

Dec. 23 (H)
0547 Dived off Dile Point, Luzon.
1811 Surfaced.

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(B) NARRATIVE (Cont'd)

Dec. 24 (H)
0527 Dived off Salomague Island, Luzon.
0738 Sighted two sea trucks skirting the shore line, (S.C.#8)
1817 Surfaced.

Dec. 25 (H)
0525 Dived off Salomague Island, Luzon.
0730 Sighted aircraft. (S.C. #14)
1330 Sighted small coastal steamer anchored in Lapog Bay.
(S.C. #9)
1828 Surfaced.
2150 SJ radar picked up plane 14,000 yards. (S.C. #15)

Dec. 26 (H)
0527 Dived off Dile Point, Luzon. The constant two knot northerly set which had previously been experienced along this part of the coast was much more tricky at this point, having a rotary counter-clockwise movement that was never completely solved. Maneuvered to obtain position on the 100 fathom curve 2 miles west of Dile Point.
1502 Sighted masts of four ship convoy headed south along the coast. (S.C. #10) (A.C. #16) Convoy consisted 1 large LP, 1 medium, and 2 large AK's in column, with one destroyer leading; 3 more destroyers on the starboard (seaward) flank, and 3 smaller escorts (DE's or PC's) on the port flank. One plane was sighted, patrolling ahead. Convoy course was 190°T, speed about 12 knots. Estimated from a quick cut that the convoy would have to hold this course to Dile Point abeam, and headed in to attack the last two ships, 2 large AK's.
1520 Convoy had changed course to 175°T and went by at a minimum range of 4,000 yards. The only possible answer is that we were considerably further from the beach than the fix taken at the start of the approach had shown. This was verified by a fix taken immediately afterward, but even so the convoy must have skirted the 5 fathom curve. In retrospect, this approach was made with too much regard for navigation and not enough for the targets.
1817 Surfaced and sent contact report to CTF 71, and to BLENNY on wolfpack frequency. Could not obtain receipt from the latter although we had had SJ interference strongly from inshore. Commenced chase to intercept along the coast.

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(B) NARRATIVE (Cont'd)

2250 Sighted properly illuminated hospital ship. (S.C. #11)
(Hospital ship contact #3) Maneuvered to avoid.
2319 Sighted aircraft circling hospital ship, range 5
miles. Bright moonlight. Verified by keying SD.
(L.C. #17) Doubt that this is air cover so is prob-
ably one of our planes investigating.
2320 Plane headed toward. Dived.

Dec. 27 (H)

0002 Surfaced.
0527 Dived off Caiman Point, Luzon and closed to within
two miles of the beach. Chose this point partly because
of a hunch on the name; but chiefly because it was one
point on the coast where nothing can get by inshore.
Knew from intercepted message that two other submarines
were attempting to intercept convoy to the southward,
and that LIPON, by her SJ interference, was somewhat to
the northward.

1113 JP reported fast screws bearing 350°T. (S.C. #12)
1118 Sighted masts of what was first believed to be a des-
troyer. Commenced approach. The target was on a
southerly base course steering a constant helm or ran-
dom zig-zag at high speed. During the early stages of
the approach he looked like light cruiser but was later
seen to be a much smaller type, probably a PF or DE.
(LIPON called him an "unlisted type of DD or CL" and
tracked him at 25 knots.) His lines were very similar
to our AVP's, but he was considerably smaller and
lightly armed.

1145 Fired three electric torpedoes from the stern tubes.
All missed. (Attack No. 1)

1146 Target had turned toward, 2° port angle on the bow.
Possibly one torpedo broached with 3 foot setting,
fired across a heavy swell. Went to 400 ft., rigged
for depth charge attack.

1149 Four depth charges, none close. He then swung around
and came right over but did not drop. Evaded to sea-
ward at 80 RPM. The A/S vessel milled around for a
short while, stopping occasionally to listen but never
pinging, and then faded out.

1830 Surfaced.

2258 Received orders to establish patrol line on 200 mile
circle west of San Jose, Mindoro, with BLENNY, PADDLE,
HAMMERHEAD, LAPON, SEALION, BAYA, CAVALLA and ANGLER.
Proceeding to assigned position, 13-53N; 118-02E.

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(B) NARRATIVE (Cont'd)

Dec. 28 (H)
0610 Dived.
0642 Surfaced.
0800 Aircraft contact on SD radar at 30 miles - moved in to 28 miles, then faded out. (A.C. #18)
1325 Aircraft contact on SD at 28 miles. (A.C. #19)
1530 Arrived on assigned position on 200 mile circle from San Jose.
2300 Lookout sighted plane. Dived. (A.C. #20)
2350 Surfaced.

Dec. 29 (H)
0907 Lookout sighted plane. (A.C. #21) Dived.
1020 Surfaced.
1035 APR picked up radar at 176 mgs. sweeping. Keyed SD radar and got contact at 22 miles. 25
1036 Lookout sighted plane.
1038 Dived. (A.C. #22) Probably Liberator.
1227 Surfaced.
1552 Lookout sighted plane. (A.C. #23) Dived.
1655 Surfaced.
2055 SJ picked up plane at 4 miles. (A.C. #24) Dived.
2158 Surfaced.

Dec. 30 (H)
0000 Lookout sighted plane. (A.C. #25) Dived.
0144 Surfaced.
0647 Lookout sighted three planes. (A.C. #26) Dived.
0811 Surfaced.
1517 Sighted plane. (A.C. #27) Dived.
1607 Surfaced.

Dec. 31 (H)
0703 Sighted plane. (A.C. #28) Dived.
0757 Surfaced.
1039 Sighted abandoned lifeboat from OBYOKU MARU, Osaka. Closed and attempted to sink with 20mm. Boat was awash and would not sink. Position: 13-03N; 115-45E.
1553 SD contact 9 miles. (A.C. #29) Dived.
1653 Surfaced.
2339 Received orders dissolving patrol line and assigning CALVIN to southern half of area B-4 with SEMLION. Set course for area.