

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

Div 24 - Lt. W. N. FINLEY, USNR

LSTs

539 - Ens. T. J. AUSTIN, USN
351 - Lt. R. W. CALDWELL, USNR
16 - Lt. W. L. HORTON, USCGR
75 - Lt. S. A. SOKULSKI, USN
519 - Lt. F. L. BRIMMER, USN

Operational Assignment

- Task Force 125
- Task Force 125
- Task Force 126
- Task Force 124
- British Force G

Composition of Task Group 126.4 (Convoy B-3)

Convoy B-3, Commander T. W. GREENE, USN

LST 7, 306, 331, 391, 392, 393	(Div 70) 6 LST
LST 59, 516, 523, 532, 533	(Div 97) 5 LST
LST 5, 61, 307, 335, 369, 355	(Div 71) 6 LST
LST 336, 337, 338, 356, 388, 389	(Div 72) 6 LST
LST 27, 28, 212, 266, 262, 538	(Div 23) 6 LST
LST 325	(Div 67) 1 LST
LST 16	(Div 24) 1 LST
LST 197, 326, 381	

Escort, Task Unit 126.4.1, Commander A. R. REINKEN, USN

U.S.S. HAMBLETON	1 DD
H.M.S. VOLUNTEER, VIMY	2 ODD
H.M.S. BOADICIA, BLUEBELL	2 Corvettes
H.M.S. T33, 34, 35	3 A/S Trawlers
USCG Sea Rescue Cutters 29, 30	2

1 June 1944

The paper work of the last month is beginning to be translated into the hard reality of actual events. Ships of the Task Group are moving in to the loading ports. Twenty-seven LSTs of the Task Group are to load and remain at Falmouth. Three LSTs of the Task Group are to load at Falmouth and proceed Helford River Anchorage. The remaining 4 LSTs of the Task Group are to load at Falmouth and proceed Fowey. LSTs 197, 326, and 381 are enroute to the United Kingdom and will join the Task Group on arrival. In addition to the load of combat troops and vehicles we will carry, there will be 26 tows made up of pontoon causeway sections, Rhino and warping tugs, and pontoon causeway blisters. Loading has started.

2 June 1944

Ships are constantly moving in to the loading hards and there in the half light troops and vehicles stealthily come aboard. The loading has progressed on schedule. Since the briefing conference ships have been sealed and no personnel are allowed ashore.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

1ST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

Members of the flotilla staff are kept busy attending to last minute detailed instructions. The Commanding Officer, USNAATB, Falmouth, is doing a wonderful job in sending equipment, supplies, and mail to the ships to preclude the necessity of anyone needing to go ashore. Additional medical officers and medical personnel have been assigned to all ships and they are instructing all personnel in the proper treatment of gas casualties. Elaborate measures to cope with a gas attack have been taken by all ships. Necessary equipment for the detection of gas and the protection against gas have been placed aboard all ships.

3 June 1944

All ships in the Task Group have completed loading and are disposed in the post-loading assembly ports as planned. Causeway tows have been delivered to the ships and are rigged alongside due to congestion of the harbor, but are ready to be streamed when sortie begins. Convoy U-4, consisting of 9 LSTs with causeway tows, is to sortie from Salcombe and join the Task Group. A last minute word from the Task Force Commander assures us that our Operation Order meets with his highest approval. The 5th day of the month has been appropriately chosen to carry out the V symbol of this "War to Make Democracy Safe for the World." We are ready.

4 June 1944

According to plan, escorts H.M.S. VOLUNTEER, H.M.S. VIMY, H.M.S. BOADICIA, and Commander Task Unit 126.4.1 in U.S.S. HAMBLETON, sortied and established an anti-submarine patrol to seaward. At H-minus-25 hours the first LST scheduled, sortied on time. A total of 10 LSTs had sortied when a message was received postponing D-day by 24 hours. With the escorts maintaining their anti-submarine patrol the LSTs stood in to harbor to their assigned moorings. The weather was not conducive to scheduled operations. Although the operation was postponed, the "dummy run" made by ships that sortied, gave us a clear picture of the soundness of our planning and timing. LSTs 197, 326, and 381 have not yet arrived at their loading port and it is evident they will not be included in the initial convoy.

5 June 1944

For the second time the escort units sortie and at H-minus-25 hours the first LST of Task Group 126.4 passes the boom gate on time. Tugs are standing by in the event the tows get out of hand. The weather has been steadily improving and the prospect of a smooth sea is welcome to the ships with the unwieldy pontoon tows. By H-minus-22:24 hours all the ships of the Falmouth Section have passed the boom gate and are forming up in a three column disposition in the channel. At 0800, to the westward, three very

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

large groups of warships stood in view from around Lands End. To avoid congesting the main channel with LSTs and tows and possibly embarrassing the warships, B-3 Convoy was anchored in formation in the Falmouth Channel until the three groups of warships were well clear ahead. The Helford River Section stood out on schedule and joined the convoy at anchor. Our convoy got underway and turned into the main channel astern of the heavy units who rapidly out-distanced us. Due to the large number of convoys, sweepers, and bombardment units at sea at the same time, and the relative congestion of the channel, each group of ships were operating on a tight time schedule. Points only thirty miles apart had to be made exactly on time to avoid fouling ships ahead and astern. The desired time of arrival in the Assault Area was the controlling factor and the time table was worked backward from that, giving consideration to units that were sortieing, convoys that were enroute, and conformance to the recently swept channels. Convoys were scheduled to pass points when the least amount of traffic was at that point. This exact planning had given our Task Group a speed of advance of five knots, and with the currents in the channel running up to 3½ knots we soon saw our major problem was to maintain enough steerage way to keep in the swept channels with our tows. Off Eddystone Light our Fowey Section of four LSTs with tows and four escorts, H.M.S. BLUEBELL and three A/S trawlers, H.M.S. ELLESMERE, H.M.S. CORNELIAN and H.M.S. PEARL, joined on time. We were in perfect formation and exactly in the channel when, at this opportune moment, Commander Western Naval Task Force's Flagship stood in view astern. The ship rapidly overhauled our slow group and when the Flagship was abeam we received a terse "You look good" from our top naval Commander. At H-minus-9.5 hours we were off Start Point and the nine LSTs of U-4 Convoy with tows joined on time. Our Task Group now becomes ECL-1, totaling 40 LSTs with 35 tows. During our first day underway we have been paralleling the tricky currents of the English Channel and adjustments of speed have been sufficient to keep our scheduled timing. However, we look for more difficulty when we change course and head for our next stop, FRANCE.

6 June 1944

D-day. During the early morning we have lost two of our unwieldy tows. The urgent necessity of keeping on time, the value of our combat loads, and our orders to the ships covering this anticipated situation, make the recovery of the tows impossible. Just before dawn we sighted many large groups of troop carrying aircraft headed south with their loads of surprises for the enemy. In a matter of minutes the planes are sighted again headed North. Our ships have been well instructed in the scheduled movements of these aircraft and no one fires. At 0610 (H-hour) we

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

LST FLOTILLA FOUR
FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

S E C R E T

From: Commander, LST Flotilla FOUR.
To : Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.
Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

LST Flotilla FOUR - Commander T. W. GREENE, USN, Commanding, is now attached to the European Theatre of Operations under Commander Landing Craft and Bases, ELEVENTH Amphibious Force. Pennant is in the LST 266. Administration for the flotilla is aboard the flagship. Commander LST Flotilla FOUR on 1 June 1944 assumed command of Task Group 126.4 which includes seven ships of Flotilla FOUR. Other ships of the Flotilla have been assigned to various task forces for operational control during Operation Neptune. Commander LST Group TWELVE has been ordered temporary additional duty to command LST Group THIRTY-ONE.

Composition and Operational Assignment of the Flotilla

Group 11 - Commander I. C. McKEE, USNR

Div. 21 - Lt. F. J. OBERG, USNR

LSTs

360 - Lt. W. C. HANWAY, Jr., USNR
383 - Lt. (jg) J. I. LYNCH, USNR
384 - Lt. J. H. MILLER, USNR
385 - Lt. C. STASAVICH, USNR
386 - Lt. D. A. PACE, USNR
327 - Lt. C. J. GILLERAN, USCG
540 - Lt. F. J. OBERG, USNR

Operational Assignment

- British Force L
- British Force L
- British Force L
- British Force L
- British Force L
- British Force L
- British Force L

Div. 22

LSTs

1 - Lt. L. EMLEY, USNR
359 - Lt. H. V. R. PALMER, Jr., USNR
377 - Lt. J. P. CUNNINGHAM, USNR
378 - Lt. E. C. ANDERSON, USNR
379 - Lt. J. B. CHASE, USNR

- British Force G
- British Force G
- British Force G
- British Force G
- British Force G

Group 12 - Commander C. A. LEGG, USN

Div. 23

LSTs

27 - Lt. A. VOLTON, USCG
28 - Lt. B. D. QUIRK, USNR
212 - Lt. M. D. ELLIS, USN
262 - Lt. V. HILL, USCGR
266 - Lt. L. A. BOLON, USNR
538 - Ens. H. W. WILLIAMS, Jr., USNR

- Task Force 126
- Task Force 126
- Task Force 126
- Task Force 126
- Task Force 126
- Task Force 126

80218

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

7 June 1944

Aided by the periodic QH fixes given to us by the escort, we have maintained the time schedule and kept to the allotted channels. During the early morning hours we see flashes of gun fire from the beachhead. At the first light of day we look astern and begin counting, the total is forty. All ships present and on station. After such a night, the feeling experienced on finding all ships are present is beyond words. The nine LSTs of the U-4 Section of the convoy are destined to deliver their tows and to unload on the Utah assault sector of the beachhead. The original thirty-one LSTs of the B-3 Section of the convoy, with combat units of the 29th Infantry Division embarked, are scheduled to unload on the Omaha assault sector of the beachhead. Seven LSTs of this group have pontoon causeway tows that are to be delivered to the Utah assault sector. Latest information received before we left for the assault indicated that LCI(L)s would be dispatched from Utah to pick up the seven pontoon causeways and tow them to Utah beaches after all the thirty-one LSTs that are scheduled to unload on Omaha had anchored the tows off the Omaha beaches. At 0715, Commander Task Force 126's Flagship came alongside and informed us that he would lead us in to the anchorage area where we were to anchor the tows. On further instructions from CTF 126, ships having tows for Utah were detached from the convoy and ordered to deliver their tows to Utah beaches and return to Omaha beaches for unloading troops and equipment. The remaining ships of the Task Group stood into the anchorage and anchored in their assigned positions. Any real mariner would have been touched with a feeling of pride on viewing such a concentration of ships. A rough count of the large ships in sight totalled 264. The heavy units of the bombardment forces were hurling salvo after salvo on enemy strong points on a low plateau south of the beachline. An occasional burst of enemy shellfire is seen on the beach. One of the Assault Force Commander's Control Craft came alongside and requested that we send all available 30 calibre ammunition, including the ship's supply, to Easy Green Beach as quickly as possible. The ammunition required was loaded in assault boats and dispatched to the beach immediately. A message was received from CTF 126 directing us to land all Combat Infantry immediately. We discovered the quickest way to get troops ashore was to hail passing boats. The ships were equipped with ladders for four disembarking points and soon many of the ships were discharging troops from four points. One ship had unusual success in hailing passing boats and it was later learned that this particular ship sent a message to each empty boat in sight and asked the crews to come aboard for a hot meal. While boat crews were eating, the troops were busy loading. The individual ships displayed great initiative in requesting and obtaining the necessary equipment to unload. With the boats purloined and the boats dispatched to help with our unloading, we are soon able to report excellent progress on landing the high

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

1ST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

priority combat infantry to our Force Commander. We are in constant voice communication with all the ships of the Task Group, now that radio silence has been broken. The circuits are surprisingly well disciplined. The particular frequencies allotted our group and the lack of latest authorized equipment on some of the older ships, necessitates using several different circuits to contact all of the ships. All during the day there is a constant cover of zebra striped allied planes overhead. There is no disputing that part of the battle. From the beach we see the occasional blast of sappers clearing the mine fields and from enemy artillery that is still in action. Our destroyers have stood in close to the beach and are on call fire. They seem to get excellent results. Our Flagship has completed unloading all combat troops. Reports from other ships give a good picture of the progress of the unloading. A lumbering Rhino Ferry comes along and the crew asks for a hot bath. While the ferry crew accomplishes this, we load the last of our motor equipment aboard and they deliver it to the proper beach. All other amphibious craft seem to look upon ISTs as their big brothers and constantly ask for something which we gladly give. Between unloading periods, our ships are seen fueling smaller craft, dispensing hot food and coffee, and extending their hospitality to the tired crews of the smaller craft. Commander Task Force 126 has asked for a complete report on the progress of the unloading of our group as of noon tomorrow. By every conceivable means of communication, we are collecting this information. The results are much better than anticipated. During the dwindling hours of daylight, the enemy air force make their first appearance and we undergo a thorough alert; however, no bombs are seen in our immediate area. A glider bomb alert is received later in the night.

8 June 1944

At first light our Flagship gets underway and threads her way among the anchored ships to contact ISTs of our Task Group for up to the minute information on the progress of their unloading. Some of our ships have been ordered to beach, "dry out", and unload on the next low tide. We pass close aboard the ISTs with whom we are concerned and use the hailer to get what information is needed. By noon our report is ready and discloses that sixteen ships have discharged combat troops and are estimated to be fifty percent discharged. Some of the ships have Headquarters Troops aboard and their complete unloading is not planned immediately. The forty ISTs of our Task Group have delivered to the beachhead approximately 14,000 combat troops, 3200 vehicles, and fifty-four sections of pontoon causeway equipment consisting of pontoons, rhino tugs and warping tugs. Our report on the status of the unloading is sent to Commander Task Force 126. In accordance with the Force Commander's operation order, our Task Group is dissolved upon unloading.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

We direct the individual ships to report to the Captain of the Northbound Sailings, in the HMS CERES, for inclusion in the first northbound convoy, as soon as they are unloaded. Since the unloading is practically completed and our flagship is empty, we send a report of the progress of the unloading to the next Senior U. S. Naval Officer of our group, Commander F. H. NEWTON, Commander LST Group THIRTY-ONE, in LST 331, and direct him to take net control of our Task Group radio circuits. We report to HMS CERES and receive a visual message, "You are convoy Commodore. Get underway with your group for Portland." We have no idea what ships are to be included in the convoy and ask what our group includes. A reply comes back, "All LSTs get underway." All LSTs is a very large order, but darkness is rapidly approaching and we get underway to clear the anchorage before dark. The necessary signals are made to get the convoy underway and formed up, then a boat is dispatched by Captain Northbound Sailings and delivers to us a partial list of the composition of the convoy. We continue to assign pendant numbers to the late joiners until the fog stops all signalling. By radar we can count at least thirty ships in this convoy, the first convoy of LSTs sailing the return trip to the Near Shore, FPL-1. The fog increases steadily during the night until the visibility is zero. We use the convoy radio circuit and change course constantly to avoid the innumerable heavy laden southbound convoys that seem to completely fill the Channel. Our escorts are discovered to be two small A/S Trawlers, HMS CORNELIAN and HMS PEARL of our original escort units, and an additional Motor Launch. The successful crossing with a force so large and in such weather, under such congested conditions, always striving to keep within the limits of the swept channels, could not be accomplished without the use of our very meager radar equipment. By 2400 we have altered course on three different occasions to avoid southbound convoys. The remainder of the night holds a promise of even more excitement.

9 June 1944

The night creeps along with no apparent let-up in the ever present fog. Each time the long columns get in what could be called a fair expectation of what a four column convoy, of no one knows how many ships, can be disposed in under such weather conditions, we do a ships right or left to clear another like convoy approaching from the North. There is no right side or left side of the channels, passing ships with tows fighting the tricky currents have taken care of the channels, sweeping away some of the buoys and damaging others. Since we are empty we give the right of way to anyone whom we suspect of being loaded that is headed South. Just at daylight the fog lifts enough for us to see the escort. They are steaming so close to the column leaders that they appear to be part of the columns. The Senior Officer of the escorts asks us if we would like for him to find out how many and what ships are in the convoy. We reply in the affirmative. The Senior Officer Escorts immediately calls his subordinate and

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

are steaming along the south coast of England and are off the Portland Bill; our two USCG Sea Rescue Cutters, numbers 29 and 30, rendezvous on schedule, a change of course is made and we start fighting the current. We have twenty-four hours in which we must travel about one hundred miles. The tricky currents running normal to our course, our slow speed of advance, and the burden of the cumbersome tows make accurate station keeping almost impossible. At times we are forced to steer as much as forty-five degrees to the right or left of the course in allowing for leeway. The width of the swept channel decreases and our convoy is formed in two columns according to plan. Just as far as the eye can see astern there are LSTs with their small tows. All through the day we see convoys following various other channels, all headed south. The bouying of these channels was a remarkable feat, although many of the bouys which we depend on to keep in the exact channel are not in place or are not lighted; the magnitude of the job is apparent. After turning South we have soon lost sight of the English Coast and our Radar navigation is impossible. We must depend on the buoys for fixes. A heavy sea is running and our tows are ever in danger of going adrift. During the late evening two more small sections of the tow are lost. In the final minutes of daylight we all look astern at the long unbroken columns and wonder if they will all be on station when the morning comes. We realize this is the final test of the soundness of our planning and minute preparation. All emergencies have been anticipated and discussed. Many times during the coming night the relatively inexperienced officers and men will be called upon to make decisions whose soundness will be reflected in our ultimate performance as a group. Whatever may be said for LST personnel, should include the fact that the commanding officers of these ships are real seamen, because a crossing such as this demands the best of ships and men. Unshamefully we breathe a prayer for luck. Now that land is out of sight and radar fixes are impossible, we have difficulty in remaining in the narrow swept channels. Occasionally a buoy is missing or unlighted and the currents are capable of carrying us well out of the channel in a matter of seconds. One of our British escort units informs us that he is equipped with QH and gives us an accurate fix. We receive periodic fixes from the escort and are able to maintain our schedule. Most of our LSTs are equipped with radar and find this equipment invaluable in off shore navigation, after seeing the excellent results that can be obtained with the QH equipment, we are now in the market for QH. If the enemy were the only danger, the sailing could be said to be smooth. We are in danger of being run down by our own faster forces astern and on both sides. The sea is alive with ships. Many alerts occur during the night when flares are dropped and E boat warnings are received. Pity the E boat that tries to slip between the columns of our convoy. The pontoon causeways, lying low in the water, will make an effective barrier for prowling E boats, and we intend to make causeway cargo of any encountered. The night is one to remember.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

○ LST FLOTILLA FOUR ○

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

12 June 1944

We proceed during the darkness to Queen Victoria Dock. British service, supply, and engineering personnel come aboard to check up on our needs. Soon we begin loading troops and vehicles of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry Division. When loading is completed we proceed to convoy assembly area for inclusion in the next southbound convoy sailing to the beachhead. Numerous U.S. LSTs pass and we vainly hope to sight some of the units of our badly dispersed flotilla. The results are negative.

13 June 1944

At noon LSTs 360 and 386 stand in to the anchorage and anchor. We notice they are loaded with British troops and equipment. These two particular members of our flotilla have been relatively unheard of since we left the Mediterranean more than a month ago. In fact it is the first time they have been seen since their hasty inclusion in the flotilla. At 2140 the convoy departs anchorage for the Sword Assault Sector of the British beachhead. While passing through the Dover Straits we have been warned to be alert for shell fire from the German coastal guns in the Pas de Calais area. In the timing of our convoy it was arranged for us to pass through the straits during darkness. No gunfire is encountered.

14 June 1944

There are a total of 22 U.S. LSTs with British loads and numerous British merchant ships included in this convoy, ETM-8. The Convoy Commodore is in the SS SAMARK. The passage is without incident. At 2200 we arrive convoy anchorage area of the British Assault Sector. As soon as darkness falls we receive an air raid alert. Enemy planes are never visible but there is continuous firing from the AA defense on the beach and British warships in the anchorage. LSTs have been well indoctrinated not to fire unless actually attacked; the value of this indoctrination is justifiably apparent now since the ships in the anchorage are so closely packed that their firing would only result in casualties among our own ships. An E-boat alert is received and human torpedoes have been reported approaching the anchorage.

15 June 1944

Between 0425 and 0630 we undergo a thorough and prolonged air attack; the enemy planes are never actually visible but by following the steady stream of arching tracers we can trace their progress across the anchorage and over the beaches. No evidence of bombs dropped or damage to ships in the anchorage is observed. At 0800, a visual message is received from Deputy Senior Officer Assault Group directing us to beach on Queen Red Beach of the Sword Assault Sector, in the following order from East to West; the first ship beaching at 0915: LSTs 331, 2, 307, 266, 347, 356, and 360. The

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

ships got underway and beached in proper order on time. The time of beaching was approximately three hours before low water and the tide was ebbing rapidly. Once aground there was no possibility of retracting until after unloading and on the next high tide. At 1000, shells are noted falling to the eastward of the line of beached ships. At 1045, the water had fallen low enough for us to begin unloading, although the vehicles had to negotiate the first ten yards in six to eight inches of water. The shellfire had slowly walked up the beach and at 1120 a shell landed off the port quarter of the IST 307. Numerous others follow and all appear to be hitting the 307. The beached ships begin laying smoke but a moderate off shore breeze carries most of the smoke away. Smaller craft are dispatched to the eastward and lay smoke. Fairly good results are obtained but the shells continue to fall. A request for medical assistance is received from the 307 and our ship's medical officer, with ten Hospital Corpsmen, is sent to the damaged ship. The monotonous regularity of the shellfire continues with one landing each twenty seconds. They are definitely on the target. The Commanding Officers of the beached ships have long since ordered their crews to take shelter; however, the unloading continues. Thinking the enemy may be ranging on our barrage balloons, they are ordered out adrift. At 1201, three shells burst within ten seconds off our port bow, a slight shudder is felt in the ship and we assume she has been hit. All personnel, except a skeleton crew and the repair parties, are ordered ashore to seek shelter. The crew seems not too concerned about the shelling and show no great anxiety to get ashore. About 1300, British warships lying offshore begin shelling a hill bearing 082T from our ship. The shelling from the enemy battery ceased. The crews that had left the ships were well dispersed on the beach; each small group of men were discussing the war and the enemy guns in particular. An officer from the 266 remarked that he would like to borrow a jeep and tour the front. Just at this point a shell came schreeching over and burst on the beach; the Staff Ck2c inquired, "De front of what?" At 1330 the enemy resumed fire and for twenty minutes we get a thorough going over. The shells walk up and down the line of beached ships and many hits are noted. At 1430 the shelling has ceased and, due to the rapidly rising tide, the crews that have been sent ashore are ordered to get back aboard by the British shore authorities. Just as the last of the crews get back aboard, the shells start falling again. All unloading has been completed and the ships close their bow doors and prepare to retract. At 1500, the LST 356 successfully retracts and is followed by ISTs 360, 347, 266, 307, 2, and 331. The last ship clears the beach at 1630 and is apparently under fire until clear of the beach. We proceed to the westward and anchor. A hasty examination of the ships that were beached reveals that all were hit. Two received minor damage from flying fragments and the remaining five suffered a total of fifteen direct hits well distributed among the five. Our flagship was hit in ballast tank A-406-W and the hole measures six feet by three feet. In addition to this,

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

- - - - -

a frame was completely broken. From the other ships we learn that there were a total of six killed and approximately thirty-two wounded. Our decks are littered with small shell fragments and many life lines are shot away. One large shell splinter pierced a ready service box and a filled 20mm magazine, stopping only when it hit the 20mm shell. In the usual playback that follows a ball game or a war, we decide what could have been done to the enemy battery with a six inch naval gun. The shell fragments and the range that was involved, indicate that the enemy used a 105mm gun. The rapid rate of fire indicated that at least three guns were employed. We were beached on the extreme eastern section of the British beachhead, and since enduring almost six hours of shelling, we have begun to doubt if we really control that part of the beach. The conclusions reached were that if ships beach and "dry out" to unload, it should at least be well within the hotly contested flanks of our beachhead. The commanding officers of the ships that were involved have agreed that a new sort of record was established during that particular retracting operation. The absence of LCT and Rhino Ferry equipment to unload the larger ships as originally planned is alarmingly apparent. All hands concerned unanimously agree that we shall never forget the screech, whine, and thud of an enemy shell to our dying day. Embarked on ships that had lately undergone such a shelling from the enemy were one LST Group Commander and one LST Flotilla Commander, yet they had no tactical function in the convoy's passage or unloading procedure. All of the passage and the unloading were under British operational control. The ships remain at anchor and just at dark experience another air alert. While the enemy planes are overhead, we receive a warning that E-boats are approaching the anchorage. At 2300 we can see flares to the eastward of the anchorage that have been dropped by Allied aircraft who are giving Le Havre a pounding in an effort to eliminate the E-boat nuisance. While we watch the progress of our attack on Le Havre, enemy planes continue their runs over our anchorage and even have the audacity to strafe the beach. The anti aircraft fire thrown up by the beach defenses is beyond description, however, the enemy planes seem to get out of the fire and away safely. The day has been one of excitement and action with danger our constant companion yet, in the American way we now laugh about the one sided six hour battle with the enemy. Perhaps in the next encounter they will get within range of our guns.

16 June 1944

The morning is spent in patching up the numerous small holes in the ship. Soon orders are received to sail with a northbound convoy that is to leave the anchorage at 1556. We take our assigned position in convoy and sail for the Isle of Wight area. The passage is without event except for passing southbound convoys, in one of which we see three of the ships of the flotilla, LSTs 379, 359, and 212. After darkness we enter the NAB and proceed to the anchorage area.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

17 June 1944

We are anchored off Portsmouth, England, by 0235 and immediately inform the shore authorities that we have suffered damage due to enemy action. During the day many ships are noted standing in to the anchorage with signs of damage. Representatives from the bases, which are British, come aboard and receive a report on the extent of the damage. No information is received as to when repairs can be effected. A few of the ships of our badly scattered flotilla are observed going in to the loading hards and then return to the outbound convoy anchorage.

18 June 1944

Passing ships are seen loaded with both British and American troops and equipment. Many of the ships of our flotilla are going in to the loading hards and then leaving. We envy their activity but are not able to join. We have visions of troops lined up to be transported to the other side and feel a responsibility to get back in action, but still no word is received as to when we can be repaired. The Commanding Officer of our flagship considers the ship in a condition to operate and informs the authorities ashore that he is willing to load. The weather has taken a turn for the worse and a moderate gale is blowing. The British sailing authorities inform us that the ship cannot go to sea until the hole is fixed.

19 June 1944

Still no word on the arrangement for our repairs. We see many of the ships of our flotilla busy at work. An officer from the ship is sent in to the base to find when we can expect to find out definitely what is to be done regarding our damage. He returns with the news that arrangements are being made for yard availability to effect repairs. The exact time the work will be started is still unknown. We have no news from the ships of our flotilla except the ones that are actually sighted. The official mail system seems to hold nothing addressed to the flotilla. We wonder how well our ships made out on D-Day and if they are still all afloat.

20 June 1944

No news as to when we are to be repaired. If we could only get some negative information it would help, but nobody will commit themselves to dates or time. The mails that do arrive yield no information as to the status or whereabouts of our ships. Finally in sheer desperation, after seeing that we may be at anchor here for the duration without being repaired, the commanding officer of the flagship is directed to use what staff personnel as are required, along with the ship's force, and effect repairs to the extent possible. All hands turn to with a will, they are eager to get back in the battle.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

21 June 1944

The work on our battle damage goes forward to a remarkable degree. The ship has been listed to starboard and evidently presents an unusual picture because many boats come out to see what is going on. The work moves on a round-the-clock basis and an estimate of the completion of the job indicates we may be ready to load tomorrow. We still have only scanty information as to the activities of our wayward flotilla. The long awaited mail from home arrives and does much to improve the morale of the crew. The flagship is able to give one section liberty, the first since the ship was sealed.

22 June 1944

The progress of our repairs moves along steadily and it is now estimated that repairs will be completed by noon tomorrow. LST 384 and LST 360 are observed in the process of loading for their next trip to the beachhead. Other ships of the flotilla are scattered along the south coast of England at different loading points. We have little contact with them. Today we receive limited information as to the location of the other ships of the flotilla. At darkness we receive an alert for a new kind of air raid; the German "buzz bomb".

23 June 1944

During the day we see many LSTs loading and sailing to join southbound convoys. In the late afternoon, our repairs are completed and we notify the loading authorities. Soon we are underway for Southampton to load. We embark troops and vehicles of the King's Royal Service Corps. Our destination is the JUNO sector of the British beachhead. Upon completion of the loading, we proceed to the southbound convoy assembly area for inclusion in the next convoy to the beachhead.

24 June 1944

At 0947 we weigh anchor and take our assigned position in the convoy. The passage is without incident and we arrive off the JUNO sector of the beachhead at 2200. After darkness the enemy planes make their usual appearance, always out of sight but strafing the beach and dropping flares. Anti-aircraft batteries on the beach and on the large ships in the anchorage put up a steady stream of fire. No bombs are observed to be dropped and no planes are seen shot down.

25 June 1944.

We beach alongside other LSTs and when the tide recedes we begin to unload. Upon completion of the unloading and when the tide is right, we retract and proceed to the northbound sailing area where we immediately join a northbound convoy. Our section of the

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

convoy is bound for Southampton. At 2300, a "buzz bomb" passes over our convoy. The ships do not fire at the bomb since there is a southbound convoy just ahead of ours. After the bomb passes over the other convoy, they fire at the bomb but it continues on its way.

26 June 1944

Before daylight, two more of the flying bombs are sighted well out of range and flying in the general direction of Southampton. We enter the NAB and anchor during darkness. Orders are received to proceed to Southampton for loading. At 0915, just as we are preparing to go alongside the loading hard, one of the flying bombs lands on the beach off our port beam about a mile away. The concussion is terrific even at this distance. Reports are received from two of our ships that have suffered damage. LST 28, at 0049 on 25 June, was involved in a collision with the Belgian transport LEO-POLDVILLE. Damage to the LST 28 consists of torn deck plating, a crushed assault boat, and bent davits. Damage to the transport consists of broken bow plating and a crushed life boat. On 11 June 1944, while in a southbound convoy, LST 538 was torpedoed at 0200 by an enemy E-boat in position Lat. 49°-47'-30" N. 00°-31'-00" W. Long. The resulting explosion and electrical fire caused considerable damage to the ship's hull. In spite of the damage the ship was able to proceed to the beachhead under her own power. The troops and vehicles were unloaded and temporary repairs effected. The ship returned to the United Kingdom under her own power and is presently undergoing repairs at NORE. Our loading is completed and we proceed to the southbound convoy assembly area. We have troops and road building equipment of the 9th Air Force embarked.

27 June 1944

At 0130 we get underway and take our assigned position in convoy. Our destination is OMAHA assault sector of the American beachhead. We arrive in the convoy anchorage at 1420 and are directed to anchor and beach at 1830. We beach on schedule. Difficulty is experienced in unloading the road building equipment we carry due to its extreme dimensions and weight. Due to numerous off shore bars on this particular beach it is necessary to use bulldozers to fill up the holes that frequently occur under the ramps. Much of the low tide is lost in filling up the holes and we find it will be necessary to remain for a second low tide.

28 June 1944

By 0700 our load is completely discharged and on the ensuing high tide we retract. We proceed to the northbound sailings area and receive orders to act as convoy commodore of Convoy FCM-17 sailing at 1500. We receive little information as to the composition of the convoy; however, when we get underway and form up we find there are 10 LSTs and 2 merchant ships in the Portland section, and 10 LSTs and 6

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

LST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

merchant ships in the Southampton section. The convoy is disposed in four columns. At 1800 two of our escorts make a determined depth charge attack on a sound contact. We note the tremendous discoloration within the area depth-charged but see no positive evidence of it having been a submarine. At 2330 we are entering the NEEDLES.

29 June 1944

We anchor during darkness. At noon we receive orders to proceed to Southampton for loading. LSTs 212 and 262 are present at Southampton in various stages of loading. LST 1 is sighted flying a minor damage signal. The Commanding Officer of the 1 pays his respects. This is the first occasion of contact with this particular ship although she has been in the flotilla more than two months. The Staff Engineer is ordered aboard the LST 1 to make one complete shuttle trip in her to analyze and assist with engineering problems. The flagship loads troops and heavy grading equipment of the 843rd Aviation Engineering Battalion. Upon completion loading, we proceed to the convoy assembly area to await the sailing of convoy ECM 18-W.

30 June 1944

At 0800 we get underway and take our assigned position in convoy. Our convoy, the ISLE of WIGHT section, is scheduled to rendezvous with convoy ECM-18 south of the Isle of Wight at 1000. We rendezvous on schedule and form up astern of the larger convoy. The transit of the Channel is without event. At 1700, just as we enter the OMAHA assault area anchorage, a flight of approximately 500 Allied planes passes over the convoy headed southeast in the direction of Caen. We see the planes make their runs over the target, drop their loads and head back across the Channel. Perhaps the big drive has started. The closing hours of the first Invasion Month are as good a time as any for reminiscing. We have come far, as a flotilla, since we were the training flotilla back in the Chesapeake Bay. In this month, the indoctrination and standards of the training ships served well in battle. The material program and high standards of maintenance demanded in this flotilla have, on more than one occasion, after contact with the enemy, been directly responsible for the return of the ships to service after effecting their own repairs. There are ships of this flotilla in practically every northbound and southbound convoy, carrying on, carrying their load of defeat for the enemy. They have taken their torpedoes and shells in the best traditions of the service and have come back for more. The newer ships of the flotilla, the late joiners from the Mediterranean, have simply repeated their past good performances. Together they have formed a unit capable of much. We look to the days ahead, when the battle is not so critical, to enable us to meet the ships lately joined, and to impart to them the standards and spirit of Flotilla FOUR. Then may the coming months bring us new battles and new beaches to be conquered.

T. W. Greene
T. W. GREENE.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

S E C R E T

1ST FLOTILLA FOUR

Subject: War Diary, period 1 to 30 June 1944.

tells him to go back through the convoy and get the information for us. The subordinate, in the H.M.S. PEARL, sends back a message beginning, "Who me---", and the Senior Officer breaks in on his transmission and replies, "Yes, you." Our interception of this bit of palaver brings a laugh to everyone of the bridge personnel. Much later, the PEARL comes alongside and passes us the desired information by hailer. To our surprise, we learn the convoy has grown to forty-two LSTs. During the morning we have the opportunity to exchange many messages with the escorts and their sparkling sense of humor, when giving us fixes on buoys that their equipment will pick up, makes the transit seem much faster and much merrier than it actually is. By 1120 we are anchored in Weymouth Bay. The convoy just conducted from the beachhead was conceived, organized, and got underway in approximately twelve minutes. We arrived under very trying conditions and, if there be no other distinction, it would seem the movement's greatest distinction was that it is probably the only convoy of its size in the history of the convoy system that sailed WITHOUT THE CUTTING OF A SINGLE STENCIL.

10 June 1944

Many of our ships have brought back casualties from the beachhead and these are given priority in going in to the Hards where they may be unloaded and the ship receive another load. To expedite getting the wounded ashore we request LCTs be dispatched to the anchorage and that the casualties be transferred to the LCTs, who have more extensive loading facilities than LSTs at this particular port. By 2236 we are underway in convoy with Commander LST Group THIRTY-ONE in LST 331 as Commodore of the Convoy, and are bound for the Thames River Area for loading British Troops and equipment. There are Group Commanders from two different Groups of LSTs and one Flotilla Commander underway in this convoy of nine ships.

11 June 1944

We are still underway in convoy from Portland, England, to Tilbury on the Thames. At 0900 an escort stationed on our port quarter begins a depth charge attack very close to the column of ships. The attack consists of three distinct approach runs with a full pattern of charges dropped and thrown. Soon other escorts join in the attack. There is no apparent debris. However, the tenacity with which the escorts cling to the contact indicates something is present which should not be there. We notice a plane has joined the hunt and is circling above. The attackers soon fade in the channel haze. In the late afternoon we round the Dover coast and enter the Thames Estuary. At 1700 we sight a convoy headed south with LSTs 359 and 379 included. By the vehicle markings we can tell they are loaded with British troops and equipment. The status, location, present and prospective movements of the remainder of the ships of the flotilla are unknown.