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# ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Officer designations should be used in the "TO" column. Under each comment a line should be drawn across sheet and each comment numbered to correspond with the number in the "TO" column. Each officer should initial (check mark insufficient) before further routing. This Routing and Record Sheet should be returned to Registry.

FROM:

NO.

DATE

10 Aug. '53

TO	ROOM NO.	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS
		REC'D	FWD'D		
1. CWH					<p>CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM RELEASE AS SANITIZED</p> <p>2003</p>
2.					
3.					
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10 August 1953

CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME OF THE RECONNAISSANCE OF THE LCFANGLED COMMENCING  
25-JULY 1953

The LCFANGLED took departure at the Colon <sup>break</sup> ~~headwater~~ 0648 on the 25 July 1953. The course was set due north toward Identity 1. Seven engines were in operation and with the aid of a favorable wind an average speed of 5.88 knots was made for the first day's run. During the morning one engine failed as a result of a broken spline shaft. This failure of one engine did not have any drastic effect upon the speed. Of greater significance, however, was the fact that both bilge pumps became inoperative. The vessel was equipped with two gasoline auxiliary pumps but only one was of a size that could contend with the leakage into the engine room bilges. Except for the above-mentioned mechanical trouble, the first day passed uneventfully and a good day's run toward Identity 1 was clocked up.

2nd Day - 26 July

At 0700 the second engine gave out due to overheating. This slowed the vessel down to an average speed of 4.87 knots. Only five engines were now functional. A strong NE wind and sea caused the vessel to pitch and roll heavily and sea sickness became prevalent.

3rd day - 27 July

Noon sights on the 27th found the vessel about 10-15 miles to the west of Identity 1. The course was changed accordingly and the vessel beat up into the weather until Identity 1 was reached at 1410. The anchor was dropped and a recon party consisting of three men well equipped with cameras ~~was~~ put ashore. A good recon was made of the island and the men returned to the vessel at 1800. The anchor was weighed at 2200 and the course was set for Identity 2. This run should have been accomplished without any trouble for it was only a distance of 45 miles, 9 hrs. at 5 kts. running. On the following day I began to realize that the engine failures affected greatly the navigability of the vessel.

4th day - 28 July

I had hoped to pick up Identity 2 early in the morning of the 28th. Overcast made morning stars impossible for navigation, but morning sun sights found the ship well to the west of the island. It could not be found how far the ship was to the north or south until noon so the course was corrected to the eastward and held there until noon. At 1630 on the 28th, the third (3rd) engine went out. This prevented us from holding to our desired course. Noon positions showed that the

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vessel had slipped a good 20 miles to the westward due to wind and sea, even though a five mile leeway was allowed in setting the course. The sun position also put us about 20 miles to the north of Identity 2. I commenced to realize about this time that the vessel was becoming dangerous and in the face of increasing seas and winds it was best to look to the safety of the ship and crew. I consulted with C. and Mac and though I preferred to hold to the south and seek out Identity 2 which was well lighted I finally agreed to proceed north in an attempt to find Identity 3. This was approximately 65 miles further to the northward. It was felt that Identity 3 could offer sufficient shelter so that the engine room could be repaired sufficiently to complete the return leg. It was intended that Identity 2 be visited southbound.

5th day - 29 July

The 5th day was spent in an attempt to beat to the eastward to reach Identity 3. However, in the face of increasing winds and seas the vessel did not have the power. At this time four engines were running and a fifth was kept on a stand-by basis. Noon sights found the vessel still to the left so she was allowed to beat into the weather for another four hours in a vain attempt to reach the island. At 1600 the folly of this action was realized so, in the face of the failing engine room, it was decided to beat to the southerly in hopes of finding Identity 2 before the vessel became unmanageable. A course to the southward was consequently set.

6th day - 30 July

During the night the vessel made 30 miles to the southerly and was blown 40 miles to the westerly. The winds were now blowing gale force and the waves were up to 15 feet high. A fourth engine went out at 1900 and the vessel was no longer under control. Faced with untenable circumstances the only alternative was to radio for assistance. I feared at the time that the vessel would, if existing conditions prevailed, be blown into the Coast of Nicaragua. I realized that this could not be permitted for reasons of security and since it appeared doubtful at that time that I could even get it back to Colon, the only place she could go, having in mind the illegality of both vessel and crew, I requested authority to scuttle the vessel and to have the crew removed via a PBM seaplane. The discretion to scuttle the vessel was given me and the crew stood by awaiting the arrival of the Naval plane. A later cable informed me that the plane was not en route, due to its inability to land in the rough seas. A cable also stated that a tug was to be dispatched from the Canal Zone and I was asked to stand by. That night was one of violent rolling and pitching. The only thing left to do was to hold the vessel ~~with~~<sup>into</sup> the weather and hope that she had enough steerage to prevent her from floating broadside in the seas. Little sleep was had and a feeling of desperation prevailed. That night a merchant

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vessel heeded our call for assistance but C. for security reasons thought it best to refuse assistance from a commercial vessel since we were awaiting Navy aid.

7th day - 31 July

The following morning I reversed this decision, feeling that since the crew of the commercial vessel could not come aboard they could not learn much. I therefore radioed a dead reckoning position to the merchant vessel but because the LCFANGLED had been out of control for more than 12 hours it was impossible to say how accurate the dead reckoning position was. The commercial vessel did arrive at the D.R. I gave and searched the area but unfortunately we were to the N and W of the given D.R. The twilight came in clear and I was able to get a very accurate position using stars. I had this position radioed but the merchant vessel did not follow it up. I later learned she herself had broken down or had some mechanical difficulty. At 0700 we were advised that a Navy destroyer had picked up our signal and was proceeding to our position. At 0930 the DD 709 Pervis was alongside and the Executive Officer came aboard. He asked a series of questions, none of which I could answer. I requested aid to return the vessel to Colon and that any information he wished could be gotten by contacting the C.O. at Coco Solo Naval Base. I was asked to go aboard the Pervis and I gave the C.O. the same story. His name was Cmdr. Ely Vinock. Cmdr. Vinock passed my story on to the task commander aboard the DD 706 who in turn sought to verify my position by contacting Coco Solo. By this time the weather had moderated somewhat, so the LCFANGLED was put on a southerly course. She ran at a speed of 3.5 knots ahead but of course it was not apparent to the Navy just what her drift was due to wind and sea. The Pervis attempted to contact commercial vessels in the area in order to get us tow, but none showed up. I left the 709 and returned to the LCFANGLED. Shortly after the 709 left the scene and the 706 (Gainard) stood by. The Exec of the 706 came aboard and he was given the same story given the 709 people. He had with him some engineers but when Mac explained the situation in the engine room, they acknowledged that repairs could not be made without lifting the engines bodily and this was impossible in a rolling sea. At 1430 the boarding party left and at 1515 the 706 stood by to take us in tow. At 1630 she put a line aboard and commenced towing at 1650. The towing line had been made fast to the LCFANGLED's anchor chain and approximately 30 feet of the chain had been slacked out. The moment, however, that some pressure was put on the chain a link snapped and the tow was parted. The 706 in disgust prepared to leave. Our situation was cabled to the Canal and it was asked that the 706 be made to stand by. All that came through was indecisive, so rather than risk another night on the LCFANGLED with the strong possibility that the engines might go all together, we asked the 706 if she would take the crew aboard if the LCFANGLED was scuttled. The 706 agreed to this so

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plans were made to scuttle. Also considered was the cost that would have to be borne to put the vessel in running order should she be returned to port. It was felt by all concerned the best place security-wise and otherwise for the LCFANGLED was 2 miles down. Perhaps never before has a ship come so close to being sunk. The engine room was prepared and two bolts had only to be removed from the sea suction to admit the ocean. Since the 706 refused to permit the use of their lifeboat, the LCFANGLED's lifeboat was prepared for launching. It was swung out but the moment the davits felt the weight they gave and the forward one tore from the deck and fell into the ocean along with the lifeboat. The lifeboat was cut free and it commenced to drift to the southwest. Before the attempted launching some men had thrown their suitcases into the lifeboat. Not wanting this tell-tale information floating up on some beach and not knowing whether their names appeared anywhere in the luggage, I put the ship about in an attempt to retrieve the boat. I could see that we did not have the power to work up to it so I ordered that it be filled with holes and sunk. Two guns and twenty-five bullets accomplished this. About this time the 706 was becoming impatient. It was my guess that with all the midshipmen aboard she was trying to make the Canal Zone for a Saturday night in port. She radioed and gave us thirty minutes. Finally from the Canal we received a message stating that the 706 had been ordered to stand by and we were told not to scuttle. We realized it would take a while for the orders to reach the 706, so when she turned to depart we knew she would be back. At 1915 the 706 left us but she was back at 2245. She radioed she had received orders to stand by us through the night, which she did.

8th day - 1 August

At 0715 on the 8th day the auxiliary pumps went out. Water was soon flooding the engine room via the steering engine room. It was necessary to put a bucket brigade into the engine room to bail it out. The DD 706 was informed of this situation and they brought over an ejector pump, one we couldn't use anyway since we had no pressure in the fire mains. They removed a piece of our pump for repair purposes but they never did return it. The DD 706, having stood by throughout the night, realized, I believe, how much we were falling off to the right and they no longer had any doubt as to our navigability. At 1040, the 706, having received orders to take us under tow, prepared to come alongside and put a line aboard. She failed, however, and it was not until 1340 with the third attempt that she finally succeeded in putting a line aboard. Meanwhile the bucket brigade was continually in use to keep the engine room dry. By this time, only two engines were operative so the engine room was next to useless. To prevent the engine room from flooding the last two engines were cut out and the steering engine room sealed off. At 1700 a makeshift system was set up to pump the engine room bilges thus eliminating the fear of sinking. Now under tow by the 706, the LCFANGLED proceeded toward Colon at a speed of 6-7 knots. This speed

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continued throughout the night.

9th day - 2 August

At 0840 the salvage tug Recovery ARS 43 from Panama was alongside. At 1030 the 706 let go and at 1115 the LCFANGLED was under tow by the ARS-43. The tow continued throughout the day and night at a speed of approximately 5-6 knots. With the exception of the steering engine the engine room had been secured. The 9th day passed without mishap.

10th day - 3 August

The LCFANGLED continued under tow throughout the day and the Canal Zone was raised at 2000. The ARS-43 took us through the breakwater and arrival was made at 2212. A Canal pilot and Navy tug smaller than the 43 assisted us to [ ] where the LCFANGLED was received at 2320.

[ ]  
Laurence Sillence [ ]

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the entire crew be commended for a job well done in bringing the LCFANGLED home and for the courage and stability which they demonstrated.

2. That the Navy be thanked for the cooperation extended. Though I am sure there was some grumbling aboard the 706, still they saw their duty and they acted with speed and assurance.

3. That much thought be given before the LCFANGLED be used again on such a distant operation. I am convinced it is beyond repair for it is too old and is now quickly falling apart. I mention for example the lifeboat davit which through rust alone fell into the ocean. Incidents such as this make for a dangerous situation. To launch a lifeboat properly, two or more people should ride it down. If they had in this case we surely would have lost them.

Spending more money on the vessel would be throwing good money after bad. It has gone too far to be repaired.

I see one chance, however, where the ship might be used. If the range of the operation could be shortened to about 60 miles, that could put it either on the Coast of Panama or at sea. As the vessel stands, or with some repairs, she may be able to make sixty miles on a calm night. If the operation could be done at sea the men could be blacked out beyond recognition, after which the vessel could be sunk and the crew returned via small boats. I think this could be done, weather permitting. If this is not possible, then a sheltered bit of coastline somewhere west of the Canal (see National Geographic Aug. 1953) could be utilized and the ship could be sunk after the job has been completed. These suggestions should be seriously considered before excessive funds are expended either to repair the LCFANGLED or to purchase a new vessel.

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LAURENCE SILENCE  
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IDENTITY 1

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IDENTITY 2

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IDENTITY 3

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