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COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FLEET

**LOSS OF HMS ARDENT
BOARD OF INQUIRY**



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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From: A R M JAFFRAY CB., Deputy Under-Secretary of State (Navy)

Ref: 14/2/35(21)

14 January 1983

Commander-in-Chief Fleet
Northwood
Middlesex HA6 3HP

Sir

BOARD OF INQUIRY - REPORT INTO THE LOSS OF HMS ARDENT

Reference: 520/241L dated 21 September 1982

1. I am commanded by the Admiralty Board of the Defence Council to inform you that they have taken note of your report and the Board of Inquiry proceedings forwarded under the reference.
2. The Admiralty Board made the following observations:
 - a. As in the loss of HMS COVENTRY the Inquiry highlights the vulnerability of ships against air attack when employed in-shore and armed with AAW not optimised for that situation. This incident has demonstrated the need for multiple channels of fire, capable of local control when under such attack.
 - b. Greater emphasis on training in the use of GSA 4 Emergency Modes will be beneficial, but technical limitations suggest that it will be impossible to achieve reasonable results unless the LAS is replaced by a more suitable equipment. Consideration will be given to an Electro Optical sight incorporating a wide field of view for acquisition, a narrower field of view for tracking and a simple deflection device.
 - c. The observations on secondary armament are noted. It is not clear at present why 20 mm guns were not fitted before the ship left Ascension. There is no record of demand on DNADs for GPMGs before HMS ARDENT sailed; generally HM Ships did not begin to demand them until May when the LLAD policy was clarified. It is assumed that thereafter they were allocated to ships in accordance with an assessment of priorities.

Copy to: The Flag Officer First Flotilla

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MDG(N) ←
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DG Ships
DGW(N)
DNW

MAJOR AIR ATTACKS ON HMS ARDENT

13. Having had confirmation of the completion of her Gunfire Support task at about 1700Z, ARDENT was told to 'split air attacks from the South' with HMS YARMOUTH. The origin of this order is obscure but ARDENT proceeded to a patrol line West of North West Island with YARMOUTH to the West of her.
14. Shortly after arrival in the new area at 1740Z a group of three A4 Skyhawks was sighted by ARDENT crossing Falkland Sound from the West. They circled the ship anti-clockwise at about two miles and then turned in to attack from the North East. This attack was pressed home vigorously from the port quarter, out of 4.5 gun arcs, and although 20 mm and LMGs blazed away, the Seacat, again in Emergency mode, failed to fire for no immediately obvious reasons.
15. The aircraft attacked with cannon and bombs, two of the bombs exploding in the Hangar area, one penetrating down through the After Switchboard and into the After Auxiliary Machinery Room without exploding, the others missing.
16. This attack caused major damage to the Hangar area, tossed the Seacat mounting onto the Flight Deck and severely damaged the Lynx helicopter. The After Switchboard was severely damaged with resultant loss of power including normal supplies to the 4.5 Mk 8 gun. There was flooding in the Dining Hall, Ship Control Centre and flat, and Galley areas due to fractured pipes, and a fire started in the starboard side of the Hangar. There were also several casualties.
17. The ship however still had steering and full control of main engines, and having reported her state to XXXXXXXXXXXX was ordered to proceed to San Carlos water. S38
S40
S44
18. Shortly after this as the ship headed North at about 1800Z a further attack of five A4 Skyhawks developed. They approached from either quarter and dropped a considerable number of normal and retard bombs of differing size. The ship was virtually defenceless and could not fend off this attack. Two to four bombs exploded in the ship aft of the Hangar and further unexploded bombs almost certainly penetrated into the ship from the Hangar area aft on the port side. Several bombs exploded in the water nearby and the ship whipped heavily. Again most of the bombs fell aft, but there was some damage to the plating on the starboard side of the Forward Auxiliary Machinery Room resulting in a minor leak.
19. The bombs aft had devastated the Dining Hall and Pain Shop area where there were many casualties and the steering failed, although the Tyne engines were still driving the ship and were under control.

POST DAMAGE ACTION

20. Although a full damage assessment had not been completed the ship's team had virtually got the fire and flooding of the first attack under control when the second attack arrived.

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OFFICE OF

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ANNEX A TO
REPORT OF HMS ARDENT BOARD OF INQUIRY
DATED 6 AUGUST 1982

00520/3.X

See Distribution

((June 82

LOSS OF HMS ARDENT - BOARD OF INQUIRY

1. You are to assemble in HMS DRAKE at 0900 on 28 June 1982 as a board of inquiry whereof ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ is to be the President and hold a full and careful investigation into the circumstances leading to and attending the disablement and later sinking of HMS ARDENT under the command of ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ between 20 and 23 May 1982, calling before you such witnesses as are necessary and reasonably available to enable you to form correct conclusions.

S38
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S44

2. Specifically you should ascertain and identify by questioning those involved and other available witnesses the matters listed in Annex A. Although the matters in Annex A are significant, they are not intended to be exhaustive and all other areas of inquiry deemed pertinent should be scrutinized.

3. The Commanding Officer HMS ARDENT's preliminary report is at Annex B.

4. Should any information come to light which the President considers should be communicated urgently to me or to any member of my staff, such information is to be sent by any appropriate manner in anticipation of completion of the inquiry.

5. A list of those on board HMS ARDENT on 21 May 1982 is at Annex C.

6. The inquiry is to be conducted in accordance with the directions contained in QRRN Chapter 23, Appendix 38, and FLAGO 1619.

7. The report of the board is to be accompanied by minutes of evidence, or statements taken, and is to contain an expression of opinion on the degrees of adequacy of personnel, material and procedures.

8. The report is to be signed by each member of the board and is to be forwarded in original and unstapled form. The President is to deliver his report personally and brief me on the principal findings.

9. Shorthand writers will be detailed from the offices of the Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Flag Officer Plymouth and Flag Officer Portsmouth.

J D E FIELDHOUSE
Admiral

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Annexes:

- A. Specimen Matters for Investigation.
- B. The Commanding Officer HMS ARDENT's Report dated 3 June 82.
- C. List of Personnel on board HMS ARDENT on 21 May 82.

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SPECIMEN MATTERS FOR INVESTIGATION

Operational

1. The Task Group Commander's assessment of the threat before the attack.
2. The Task Group Commander's intentions and policies in force at the time of the attack.
3. The Task Group communications plan before the attack.
4. The disposition of the Task Group.
5. The degree of readiness of the Task Group, and the ship, before, during, and after the attack.
6. The ship's OPDEF state immediately before the attack.
7. The manning states of operations teams, weapons, propulsion and generation systems, and the locations of personnel.
8. The damage control state and condition immediately before, and at the time of, the attack.
9. The nature and sequence of events before, during and after the attack.
10. The use of the ship's weapon systems and sensors.
11. The use of countermeasures, including chaff, against the attack.

Design/Maintenance

12. The adequacy of the Type 21's weapon and sensor fit and its ability to react to the threat.
13. The adequacy of the damage control and fire fighting organisation, procedures, equipment and training.
14. Any problems arising from the design and layout of Type 21 destroyers and their machinery and equipment, with particular regard to any hazardous materials.
15. The degree of readiness of, and confidence in, all weapons, sensors and communication equipments, including the degree to which standard operator checks and performance servicing logs were used.
16. Any shortcomings in machinery operating procedures.
17. The influence, if any, of the material state of the ship on events.

Environmental

18. The environmental conditions and observed effect on picture compilation.
19. Any evidence of stress affecting the ship's company before the attack.
20. Any evidence of efficiency being reduced because of seasickness, shortage of sleep, or length of time closed up at action and defence stations, or any other cause.

Training

21. The adequacy or otherwise of individual training and preparation of personnel.
22. The adequacy or otherwise of whole-ship training and preparation of personnel.

Administrative/Medical

23. Whether those trained in First Aid were adequate in numbers and in expertise.
24. Whether First Aid parties were closed up.
25. Whether emergency operating station was rigged.
26. Whether access to the Sick Bay and First Aid stations was affected by damage.
27. Whether any casualties were treated.
28. Whether any clinical diagnoses of causes of death were established.
29. Whether man-made fibres rather than cotton were worn by personnel, and whether these fibres contributed to burns.
30. Any evidence of toxic fumes arising from electrical cable insulation, plastics, cushions, etc.
31. Any evidence to assist towards the registration of deaths, and towards giving further information to next-of-kin, such as - where each fatal casualty was last seen, his apparent physical condition at that time, and known or conjectured cause and circumstances of death.

Rescue and Salvage

32. Brief narrative of immediate rescue assistance by other ships to HMS ARDENT and her personnel.
33. Brief narrative of any attempt to take in tow; and eventual sinking.
34. Summary of any equipment, materials, etc salvaged from the ship before she sank.