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ACTION REPORT

**DECLASSIFIED**

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BY AUTHORITY OF  
OPNAV IN.. INST. 5510.1  
DATED 15 JUN 53

USS SUWANNEE

CVE 27

SERIAL 008

By ACN Date 1-14-57

6 NOVEMBER 1944

ACTION REPORT, LEYTE OPERATION.

[COVERS 2 OPERATIONS WHILE OPERATING IN TASK  
UNIT 77.4.1 FOR AIR SUPPORT FOR LEYTE LANDINGS  
AND THE BATTLE OFF SAMAR FROM 18-27 OCTOBER  
1944.]

DECLASSIFIED - OPNAV INST 5500.30  
BY 91C DATE 6-10-64

93540



UNITED STATES FLEET  
COMMANDER SEVENTH FLEET

Doc. No. OM-012310  
L.S. No. 12 123

A16-3(F-4/wmw)

Serial: 002386

S E C R E T

NOV 26 1944

SECOND ENDORSEMENT to:  
CO SUWANNEE Secret Action  
Report, A16-3(3) Serial  
008 dated 6 Nov., 1944.

From: Commander SEVENTH Fleet.  
To : Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.

Subject: Action Report, LEYTE Operation.

- 1. Forwarded.

*J. H. Long*  
J. H. LONG  
By direction.

1944 DEC 2 16 23  
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF  
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File No.  
CVE27/A16-3(3)  
(95-hlr)  
Serial 008  
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U.S.S. SUWANNEE  
(CVE-27)

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c/o Fleet Post Office,  
San Francisco, Calif.,

6 NOV 1944

From: The Commanding Officer.  
To: Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.  
Via: (1) Commander Task Group 77.4.1.  
(Commander Task Group 77.4).  
(2) Commander Task Force 77.  
(3) Commander SEVENTH Fleet.

12 123

Subject: Action Report, Leyte Operation.

Reference: (a) Articles 712, 762 U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920.  
(b) Com7thPhib conf. ltr FE25/A16-3(3) serial 0212,  
dated 17 February, 1944.

Enclosure: (A) Aircraft Action Reports, Leyte Operation, Air  
Group SIXTY.  
(B) Ship Anti-Aircraft Reports #1, 2 and 3.  
(C) Bomb Disposal Officer's Preliminary Report.  
(D) Battle Damage Report.  
(E) Photographic File, action and damage photographs.  
(F) Executive Officer's Report.  
(G) Casualties and medical report.

1. In compliance with reference (b) the following  
report is submitted:

PART I

1. On 12 October 1944, at 0434I, U.S.S. SUWANNEE de-  
parted Seeadler Harbor, Admiralties, in accordance with CTG  
77.4 Speedletter 100551 of October 1944, in company with TU  
77.4.11, for Leyte Gulf, P.I. SUWANNEE rendezvoused with TU  
77.4.21, TU 77.4.31 and TG 77.2 during the day (CTG 77.4  
Rear Admiral T.L. Sprague in SANGAMON). On 17 October, A-3  
DAY and days thereafter, SUWANNEE maintained part of the  
target and local combat air patrol, local anti-submarine patrol  
and anti-snooper patrol. On 20 October, A-Day, and Sub-  
sequent days, SUWANNEE supplied air support missions for  
ground forces operating on Leyte Island, provided fighter  
sweeps against the western Visayan Islands and northern  
Mindanao and launched strikes against enemy airfields in  
those regions, including the airfields of Del Monte, Tacloban,  
Cebu, Opon, Medellin, Alicante, Fabrica, Bacalod, Carolina  
and others. Anti-shipping sweeps sunk several small AKs,  
numerous luggers and some PT boats. Extensive damage was done  
to enemy installations, equipment and personnel. Air Group  
SIXTY shot down twenty four enemy planes and probably shot  
down one other. SUWANNEE VT, on 25 and 26 October made nine  
torpedo attacks against enemy surface task forces, getting  
three torpedo hits on an enemy BB, of Kongo or Fusu class, in  
the Mindanao Sea, and one probable and one possible hit on a



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Kongo BB off Samar, and one hit on a Kuma class cruiser south of Masbate Island. VF with 500 $\pi$  SLP obtained two hits and one near-miss on a Nachi class cruiser in San Bernadino straits and one hit and three near-misses against two enemy DD in the Mindanao Sea. A VT dropped one 500 $\pi$  SLP on the Kuma cruiser south of Masbate. VF strafed, and left sinking, an already crippled DD south of Masbate. VT and VF continually strafed enemy BB, CA and CL, and DD. On 25 October, at 0804I, an enemy VF with 250 kilogram bomb, made a "suicide dive" on SUWANNEE, crashing just forward of the after elevator, leaving it inoperative, tearing a hole 10 feet in diameter in the flight deck, its bomb, which exploded between the hangar and flight decks, tearing a hole 25 feet in diameter in the hangar deck and damaging the main deck. After temporary repairs, SUWANNEE launched the other strikes of 25 October and the strike of 26 October against enemy surface forces. However, at 1238I, on 26 October, another "suicide plane" with 250 kilogram bomb crashed into the forward elevator, destroying it, and, together with a 100 kilogram bomb dropped by another enemy plane, one to three minutes later, caused a severe fire on the flight deck and a fire on the hangar deck. Fire buckled the flight deck and burned 13 planes. SUWANNEE was unable to carry on air operations. Personnel casualties for 25 and 26 October were: Killed in action: 5 officers, 80 enlisted men; wounded in action: 13 officers, 89 enlisted men; missing in action: 2 officers, 56 enlisted men. Captain W.D. Johnson, Commanding, was seriously wounded. Control was shifted from the bridge, no longer operative, to Batt II. On 27 October, in accordance with CTG 77.4's SUWANNEE proceeded to Kossol Passage, Palau, evacuated the seriously wounded to BOUNTIFUL and MERCY and proceeded to Scedler Harbor, Admiralties, anchoring 4 November 1944. For "Composition of own forces", "mission, doctrine and tactical aspects", see Action Report of Commander Task Group 77.4.

Statistical Summary of Operations

1. Sorties	VF 267	VT 89	Total 356
2. Strikes	VF 67	VT 48	" 115
3.*Hours flown	VF 934.7	VT 302.9	" 1237.6
4. Anti-submarine patrol	34		
5. Combat Air Patrol	178		
6. Photographic missions	6		

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 (CVE-28)

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|--|------------------------|----------|
| 7. Air observer                        | 3                      |          |
| 8. Search                              | 4                      |          |
| 9. Air coordinator                     | 3                      |          |
| 10. Anti-snooper                       | 12                     |          |
| 11. Miscellaneous                      | 1                      |          |
| 12. Own personnel losses:              |                        | Total 5  |
| Combat: 3 pilots, 2 crewmen (missing). |                        |          |
| Operational: None.                     |                        |          |
| 13. Own aircraft losses:               |                        | Total 19 |
| Combat: 2 VF, 1 VT.                    |                        |          |
| **Operational: 9 VF, 7 VT.             |                        |          |
| 14. Bombs dropped, tonnage             | 43.6                   |          |
| 15. Ammunition expended                |                        |          |
| .50 cal.                               | 60,000 rounds (approx) |          |
| .30 cal.                               | 3,000 " "              |          |
| 16. Torpedoes                          | 9                      |          |

\* 26 October not included since some pilots landed on other carriers and have not yet reported.

\*\* By fire: 13; By water landing: 3.

PART II

- 12 Oct. In accordance with CTG 77.4's Speedletter 100551 of October 1944, U.S.S. SUWANNEE departed Scaevler Harbor, Admiralties, at 0434I in company with TU 77.4.11. At 0600I TU 77.4.21 and TU 77.4.31 joined the formation. At 0830I formation went to air defense for practice firing. At 1620I joined TG 77.2 (CTG 77.2 Rear Admiral Olendorf in LOUISVILLE, CTG 77.4 Rear Admiral T.L. Sprague in SANGAMON)
- 14 Oct. Maintained CAP and ASF over TG 77.2 and TG 77.4.
- 16 Oct. Fueled HEERMAN, WINN, HAZELWOOD and RAYMOND. At 1700I set condition of readiness II and left TG 77.2. Because of heavy weather, carriers retired Southeastward.
- 17 Oct. In company with TG 77.4.1, rode out heavy weather on Northwest heading.



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- 18 Oct. Launched 2 VT, 2 VF for search of northern Mindanao Sea and Tanon Strait to northwest tip of Cebu. Search planes got near-misses on gunboat and medium AK off Tanjay, Negros. 4 VF and later, 4 VF and 4 VT were launched for support missions for TG 77.2 over Leyte. 12 VF, target CAP, strafed Tacloban and San Pedro airfields on Leyte and also sank a small AK. A strike of 4 VF destroyed by burning two PT boats off Liluan, Cebu, and strafed Medellin airfield, Cebu, and Opon airfield, Mactan Island. One VF pilot attacked and hit a "Val" which spun into the clouds at 500 feet and was destroyed, off Mactan.
- 19 Oct. SUWANNEE planes flew 59 sorties, including two strikes of 4 VF, the second striking at the western Visayas. "Tony" was shot down south of Cebu city, Cebu. Two support missions were launched destroying several buildings and numerous trucks on Leyte. Nine small AKs were strafed and damaged off Guimaras Island. Target CAP was flown over Leyte.
- 20 Oct. Made 45 sorties, including three local CAP of 8 VF and one local ASP of 4 VT. Two missions of 4 VF and 3 VT supported the landings on Leyte, destroying six trucks in the Jaro-Carigara area and five buildings in Burauen. Air observer and air coordinator were flown. At 0755I unidentified aircraft were noted on the screen and CAP vectored out, but recalled before tally-ho was made. At 0820I, SUWANNEE course 340°T, speed 18, heading into the wind commenced landing. At 0824I enemy VF with wheels down were noted astern formation, apparently simulating friendly VF. When close aboard SANTEE, the planes, identified as "Zekes", strafed and bombed SANTEE, missing, and then S. LANGAMON hitting her. They headed westward at 300 knots about 50 feet off the water. SUWANNEE, on order of OTC, went to General Quarters. At 0834 planes were noted bearing 260°, distance six miles and closing, 75 feet above the water. Reaching the formation they "zoomed", turned hard right and began to pull away as formation opened fire, shooting down one, the other being shot down shortly after by CAP. SUWANNEE made only slight evasive maneuver, not being attacked. Position at time of attack was 25 miles, bearing 090° from Suluan Island, Philippines, Latitude 10° 48' N, Longitude 126° 17' E. Thirty four rounds of 40 mm. and 11 rounds of 20 mm. were expended. Enclosure (A), Photographs #1, 2, 3 and 4, show the attack.
- 21 Oct. Thirty nine sorties were flown, including local CAP and ASP and target CAP. Strike of 6 VT and 4 VF was launched against Cebu and Opon airfields, VF destroyed several "Zekes" turning up their engines on Cebu. One "Zeke" was shot down



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 after making a run on SUWANNEE VF. One VT photo plane and one VT with Army Air Observer were flown over Panaon Strait and southern Leyte. At 1833I SUWANNEE went to General Quarters, by order of OTC and secured at 1902I. Again went to General Quarters at 1928I, an enemy "heckler" circling formation and "jamming" SUWANNEE's radar. Secure from General Quarters at 2114I.

- 22 Oct. SAGINAW BAY, PETROF BAY, BULL and EDMONDS joined formation at 0653I. Launched 4 VF and 4 VT against Cebu and Opon airfields in western Visayas, which destroyed several buildings at Cebu field. Two hits were made on a small oiler left burning off Cebu city. 4 VF of target CAP provided air cover during air-sea rescue of CHENANGO pilot. Several small craft were destroyed 25 miles south of Cebu city, on east coast of Cebu. Local and target CAP were flown. At 1730I EVERSOLE joined formation.
- 23 Oct. Launched 6 VF which strafed airfields of northern Mindanao, finding only Delmonte No. 2 operational. 4 VF and 4 VT struck airfields of northern Negros, VT sinking 3 luggers off Bacalod and VF, with other VF from TG 77.4.1, strafing Alicante, Fabrica, Bacalod and Carolina airfields, burning 24 operational planes on the ground. One VF, piloted by Lieutenant (jg) Helwig, was shot down, the pilot attempting to parachute from 300 feet, the parachute opening just as he hit a rice paddy about two miles from Alicante. Local and target CAP were flown.
- 24 Oct. Made 37 sorties, including local ASF and 4 VF for anti-snooper patrol. Twenty eight planes were launched for CAP over Leyte. Target CAP shot down nine planes, seven of them "Lilys" attempting to attack our shipping in Leyte Gulf, and two "Zekes", also over Leyte. Local CAP shot down one "Jake" while making an assigned search near northern Mindanao.
- 25 Oct. Made 35 sorties, including local ASF and 4 VF for anti-snooper patrol, 8 VF for local CAP and 3 VF for target CAP, the latter shooting down three "Zekes" over Leyte. A strike of 4 VT, accompanied by 2 VT from another carrier, made a torpedo attack on a Kongo or Fuso class BB in the Mindanao Sea (09° 10' N; 124° 20' E), four hits being observed, with three probably by SUWANNEE planes. 4 VF with 500# SAP attacked the last two DDs in the enemy task force off the east coast of Samar, getting one direct hit and three near-misses. A strike of 4 VT and 2 VF was also launched against the enemy task force off Samar, VT getting one probable and one possible torpedo hit on a Kongo class BB. 6 VF with 500# SAP attacked a Nachi class cruiser in



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San Bernadino Straits, getting two direct hits and one near-miss. These VF also shot down eight planes, three "Oscars", two "Lilys", a "Val", a "Zeke" and a "Judy", the "Oscars" being shot down when the VF were returning to SUWANNEE next morning, having landed at Tacloban after the strike against the cruiser. One VF pilot, Ensign Richardson, did not return. SUWANNEE was at General Quarters throughout the day beginning 0738I when "bogies" were reported on the screen. At 0740I enemy aircraft were seen and batteries opened fire. TU 77.4.1 was landing aircraft when three enemy planes were spotted, one of which was on SANTELE's port quarter about 8000 feet. Identified as "Zeke", it came in at a 20° dive, crashing on forward part of SANTELE flight deck. A half-minute later, another "Zeke" circled aft SUWANNEE, was struck by AA, probably SUWANNEE's, and spiralled down, smoking slightly and then rolled over into a 45° dive heading for SANGAMON. The only 5-inch shell fired by SUWANNEE hit the plane when it was about 500 feet from SANGAMON, causing the plane to swerve slightly and crash into water on SANGAMON's port side. A "Zeke" was then spotted slightly aft SUWANNEE, circling in the clouds at 8000 feet. AA fire caught it and as it smoked, it rolled over, putting it slightly on the starboard beam, dodged a pursuing F6F, then came straight down, hitting at 0804I about 40 feet forward of the after elevator, slightly to the starboard side, making a hole in the flight deck about 10 feet in diameter. Its bomb, carried below the belly, estimated to be 250 kilograms, exploded between the flight and hangar decks, tearing a hole 25 feet in diameter in the hangar deck, and injuring the main deck, where it dented but did not penetrate a welded seam. The engine penetrated to the main deck. SUWANNEE took no evasive maneuvers. The after elevator was made inoperative. Gyro-failure and steering failure caused steering to be shifted to steering engine room. Fire on the hangar deck was quickly subdued. Air operations were resumed at 1009I, the flight deck damage being temporarily repaired, and landings were made on wires No. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only, the others having been destroyed. At 1149I, SUWANNEE opened fire on enemy VF attacking PETROF BAY; plane missed and escaped. At 2022I secured from General Quarters and at 2037I shifted steering to Pilot House, repairs completed. See enclosure (E), photographs #5 to #17 inclusive.

26 Oct. Made 20 sorties including local ASP, 4 VF for anti-snooper, and 8 VF for local CAP. A strike of 3 VT, one with torpedo, and 1 VF was launched against the retreating surface force south of Masbate Island. One hit with 500# S&P on a Kuma class cruiser and a probable torpedo hit was reported. An enemy DD, already crippled, was strafed and



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left sinking. A VT, returning from ASP, shot down a "Tony" about to dive-bomb PETROF BAY. "Bogies" were on the screen when SUWANNEE began to take on planes. A VT landed at 1238I. Shortly before, three enemy planes were spotted astern three or four miles out, at 10,000 feet. One "Zeke" made a slow slight turn, and came right in, at a 45° dive, started strafing at 3000 feet and crashed into the VT, landed a half minute before, parked on the forward elevator, causing an instantaneous explosion of both planes. (Enclosure (E), photographs #18 and #19). The pilot, Lieutenant Beidelman, and two crewmen are missing. The bomb was probably dropped at bridge height (visual and external testimony so indicating) and exploded on contact with the deck. There was no arming wire; the bomb was approximately 250 kilograms. A detailed discussion is found in enclosure (G). See enclosure (E), photographs #20 and #21. One to three minutes later there was a second explosion in the catapult machinery space, in all probability caused by a second bomb from an enemy dive-bombing plane, starting a fire in the elevator well. This bomb was 100 kilograms, according to available evidence. Depth charges from VTs were found burned but not exploded. Forward elevator was smashed to hangar deck level and catapult machinery space and compartments forward severely damaged. SUWANNEE made no evasive maneuvers. Shortly after the fire started 7 VF and 2 VT, spotted forward, burned and exploded, causing severe fire on the flight deck which was subdued after several hours. A hangar deck fire was quickly controlled. Steering and bridge communications were severely injured and control shifted to Batt II. SUWANNEE, dead in water for a few minutes, shortly resumed headway and rejoined the formation. Position at time of attack was 09° 37' N; 126° 52.9' E. Personnel casualties for both days were: killed: 5 officers, 80 enlisted men; wounded: 13 officers, 89 enlisted men; missing: 2 officers, 56 enlisted men. Many wounded subsequently died; some missing were subsequently located. Enclosure (G) contains a detailed list. See enclosure (E), photographs #30 and #31. SUWANNEE, after fire was subdued and repairs made, retired with formation on southeasterly course.

27 Oct. In accordance with CTG 77.4's 262135, SUWANNEE proceeded to Kossol Passage, Palau, to evacuate seriously wounded.

PART III

No comment. Details are contained in enclosure (B).



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#### PART IV

##### 1. Battle Damage - Own.

On 25 October one 250 kilogram bomb exploded between hangar and flight decks at frame 64 about 20 feet to starboard centerline, rupturing hangar deck with hole 25 feet in diameter; ruptured flight deck with hole 10 feet in diameter and damaged main deck; it caused extensive damage to structure, piping, wiring and other equipment in the vicinity by fragmentation and fire. The after elevator was damaged and made inoperative. On 26 October one 250 kilogram bomb exploded at flight deck level on the forward elevator completely demolishing elevator and causing distortion and extensive damage to the flight deck and bridge structure. The main deck was ruptured and bulkhead 81 damaged. The fire resulting from the explosion charred 30% of the flight deck. One to three minutes later one 100 kilogram bomb exploded in the catapult machinery space at frame 84, destroying the catapult and damaging all equipment, damaging equipment and bulkheads, frames 82 to 91 on the gallery and forecastle deck levels. A detailed report on battle damage is contained in enclosure (D), photographs are in enclosure (E), #22 to #29.

##### 2. Battle damage - Enemy.

No comments. For observed results on enemy surface task forces and enemy aircraft, see enclosure (A), Aircraft Action Reports, Air Group SIXTY.

#### PART V

##### 1. CIC.

The greatest difficulty in intercepting "bogies" was found to be the lack of altitude information. This occurred because:

(a) Ships operating as close as 30 miles to large land masses resulted in the radar screen being blocked in bearing up to 180 degrees.

(b) Failure of actual "fitting" fade charts in use, even though fade charts in use were constructed and based on many radar calibration runs.