

103
DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED
Authority *NND 96081 33*
By *SPW* NARA Date *12/19/05*

IN REPLY
REFER TO:
SS312/A16-3
Serial (002)

U. S. S. BURRFISH (SS312)

Care of Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, California.
24 August 1944.

From: The Commanding Officer.
 To : The Commander Submarine Force, PACIFIC FLEET.
 Subject: Photographic and Special Reconnaissance of YAP - PALAU Islands.
 Reference: (a) Comsubpac Operation Order No. 236-44, as modified by
 Comsubpac dispatches 231017 of July and 140953 of August.
 (b) Commander Third Amphibious Force Top Secret, Serial
 (00010) dated 10 July 1944.
 (c) USS BURRFISH Top Secret Letter SS312/A16-3, Serial (001).
 Enclosure: (A) Reconnaissance Report.
 (B) Film negatives, contact prints of photographs taken, and
 chart overlays.
 (C) Detailed report of beach reconnaissance submitted by
 Senior Officer, Special Reconnaissance Detachment,
 addressed to Commander Third Amphibious Force.
 (D) Tabulation of data obtained from APR-1 type radar detector,
 with notes.

1. A photographic and special reconnaissance report covering the period 29 July - 4 August, spent in the PELELIU - ANGAUR Area has been submitted, reference (c).
2. The report covering reconnaissance conducted subsequent to 4 August is submitted herewith, (Enclosures (A) to (E)). The original only is complete - sketches and photographs not having been prepared for the copies.

W. B. Perkins
W. B. PERKINS.

CONFIDENTIAL

LINCOP BOX #1911-2hrs # 01722PTT S (GEN) JACITE # 2
 New

0170

DECLASSIFIED

Authenticity: *NM 968133*

By: *SW* NARA Date: *12/11/05*

PAI Reconnaissance Report

1. Periscope photographic coverage of the beaches on the southern tip of YAP and of the beach northeast of PELAK ENTRANCE on YAP, comprising sixteen rolls of film and sixteen sets of prints mounted in panorama, with overlays and tabulated ship's positions is forwarded as enclosure (B). Roll number 16 was taken with the ship's 35 MM camera, duplicating the coverage of rolls numbered ten to fifteen.

No additional PPI pictures were taken since it was considered prudent to leave the SJ secured when close to land.

2. Current observations were made when possible. The following data were obtained:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time(-9)</u>	<u>Position</u>		<u>Set</u>	<u>Drift</u>
		<u>Lat.</u>	<u>Long.</u>		
12 August	1630	6-50N	134-10E	270	1.2 kt.
12 August	1730	6-51N	134-10E	250	1.0 kt.
12 August	1830	6-52N	134-11E	270	0.8 kt.
12 - 13 August	1900 - 1900	6-40N	134-04E(Mean)	270	1.0 kt.
16 August	1000 - 1200	9-26N	138-06E	235	0.5 kt.
16 August	1400	9-27N	138-02E	None	None
16 August	1630	9-27N	138-02E	070	0.7 kt.
16 August	1645	9-24N	138-02E	225	0.4 kt.
16 August	1730	9-23N	138-02E	220	1.1 kt.
16 August	1830	9-23N	138-04E	240	0.5 kt.
18 August	0900 - 1300	9-31N	138-15E	230	0.5 kt.
18 August	1600 - 1730	9-31N	138-17E	300	0.7 kt.
18 August	2000 - 2400	9-29N	138-13E	220	0.5 kt.
19 August	0600 - 0900	9-28N	138-14E	230	0.4 kt.
20 August	0800 - 1000	9-30N	138-13E	220	0.4 kt.

It will be noted that the few additional observations taken in the vicinity of ANGAUR tend to confirm the data submitted on enclosure (C) to reference (c).

In the vicinity of YAP, the ocean currents appear to be westerly, splitting at the eastern tip and conforming to the trend of the coast in northwesterly and southwesterly directions. One observation would indicate that the current eddies around the reef on the southern tip of the island giving a counter current across this reef at times. The drifts of all currents were small.

3. Three beach reconnaissance trips were made by the special reconnaissance party. Beaches covered were those listed as 1(b), 3(a) and 3(c) in reference (b). A detailed report of the rubber boat sorties is enclosed as enclosure (C). It is noted that what appeared to be scullies on the beach on PELELIU from pictures and periscope observations turned out to be log supports for a smooth wire fence. Land based radar in the PELELIU - ANGAUR area prohibited further landings there. Beach

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Subject: PALAU - YAP Rec

Authority

NAT 9108133

By

NARS Date

12/11/05

3(b), on YAP, was not attempted due to the inability of the submarine to reach a reasonably close launching point for the rubber boat due to reported mines near the GOFENU Entrance, combined with the effect of the unfortunate loss of three members of the reconnaissance party on the night of 18 - 19 August. A narrative of the events leading to the loss of these men is included in enclosure (C).

4. A tabulation of data obtained from the radar detector model APR-1 (80 - 300 MC, 300 - 1000 MC) is appended, enclosure (D). The remarks included with this tabulation are believed to be of interest, and represent a great deal of work on the part of the Radar Officer.

Radar equipped planes seem to be plentiful in the PALAU area - the BURRFISH was forced down six times by them. All except one were on 176 MC. It is noted that they fly on moonless as well as moonlight nights.

No time schedule could be worked out covering the operation of the land based (155 MC) radars on PALAU. They were intermittent and unpredictable. The YAP night schedule of off at 1900 and on at 0400 was very consistent, and convenient for us.

No radar installations on PELELIU or ANGAUR could be identified as such. Observations were made from various points close to and at a distance from these islands and, although the presence of radar was definitely established, no radar antenna could be identified.

Recognition signals were successfully exchanged with the U.S.S. BALAO by keying the SJ at an estimated distance of 25 miles. It is pointed out that the BALAO and BURRFISH were effecting a rendezvous and were without doubt, alert for such a signal at the time.

There was some evidence that the JAPANESE were DFing our SJ when we were within approximately 10 miles from land. For this reason we did not turn on our SJ on those nights when rubber boat sorties were planned until after all operations were completed and the BURRFISH had opened to at least 10 miles from land. The SD radar was not used at all after the first aircraft contact off MARCUS while enroute to station.

The APR-1 was manned almost continuously while on the surface, day and night. In addition to indicating when land based radar was trained in our direction, it proved invaluable as an early warning device for radar equipped airplanes.

5. No details on the islands not otherwise charted or apparent on the photographs taken or previous ones could be observed through the periscope. Slight activity was observed - a flash of light here and there at night and occasional strollers along the shore by day. The stone tower on TOMIL Island is logically used as a lookout station and persons were observed in its vicinity.

Searchlight beams emanating from the vicinity of the airfield on PELELIU and

DECLASSIFIED

Subject: PALAU - YAP Res

Authent: *MD 968133*By *SW* N.A.R. Date *12/19/05*

on the southwestern part of YAP were seen to flash on on a number of occasions. It is believed that these searchlights were used incidental to the landing of aircraft.

No aircraft were sighted operating from YAP.

The usual small motor sampans were observed taking passage from ANGAUR to PELELIU. Only one boat - a utility motor boat - was seen at YAP. He stood out of TOMIL entrance and entered PELAK entrance. It may be significant that this boat, whose maximum draft could not have exceeded $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet, took a route which led him outside the charted reef line.

6. H.O. Chart No. 5421 was used exclusively for navigation near YAP. It appears correct in all respects. Tangents cut in well.

The stone tower on TOMIL Island was cut in repeatedly and is located in Latitude $9^{\circ}-31'-42''N$, Longitude $138^{\circ}-11'-26''E$.

Reef noises were used to advantage in navigating close in to the islands at night, both while on surface and when submerged. The sound contour of the reefs was established on the chart by cutting in the sound bearings from known navigational fixes during daylight. These sound contour lines ran about 750 yards outside the charted reef.

7. Concerning the loss of the three men who failed to return on the morning of 19 August 1944, little can be added to the remarks and narrative set forth in enclosure (C). It is regretable that the late hour (0315) of actual rendezvous with the rubber boat precluded all possibilities of a thorough search for them before the turning on of the land based radar. As planned, the submarine was to surface at 0030, should have had the rubber boat on board by 0130, with normal luck. Actually, the BURRFISH was set a good two miles to the southward during the submerged period, which, combined with the fact that the rubber boat made much better speed away from the beach than was anticipated, caused the late rendezvous. Submerged searches were conducted the following two days near the appointed rendezvous point and along the designated bearing line from the stone tower in hopes that the missing men may have escaped the island in a canoe and could be rescued. Excellent visibility and a flat sea obtained on these days.

The Commanding Officer and Officers join the Senior Officer and members of the Special Reconnaissance Party in their grief over the loss of ROEDER, Howard L., 680 10 60, CGM(AA), USNR, BLACK, Robert A., jr., 811 44 04, QMLc, USNR, and MAC MAHON, John C., 402 71 86, Sp(A)lc, USNR, three courageous shipmates. They were respected and admired by all hands and their loss is keenly felt.

GENERAL NOTES.

Personnel.

Additional stowage and berthing space was arranged by leaving off four torpedoes forward.

Subject: PALAU - YAP Res

DECLASSIFIED
 Authority *NND 968133*
 By *SW* NARS Date *12/19/05*

Enroute station, reconnaissance party provided a high periscope watch. They should be given more to do but no other watch suited. Topside lookout watches would be more beneficial for them.

Little or no trouble was had with messing - three messes being set up for each meal. Additional commissary supplies were taken aboard to cover the increase in compliment.

All of special reconnaissance party was berthed in the forward torpedo room where they slept on mattresses installed in the empty torpedo skids. The increase of personnel in the forward torpedo room made this compartment warmer than on previous patrols but otherwise proved satisfactory

Rubber Boats.

Rubber boats were inflated, deflated, and stowed by the ship's company. Two men, supervised and assisted by an officer, were trained for this purpose.

Air was made available topside by altering the line to the whistle. A quick release coupling was attached topside.

A special inflating and deflating device (primarily designed for rubber pontoon work) is almost a necessity. Without it complete deflation of the boat is a slow and difficult process.

The cylindrical, free flooding, boat stowages provided by E & R at Pearl Harbor worked well.

Launching was effected by throwing the boat over the side. Boat was retrieved by hand from alongside (the submarine being well trimmed down). This is a much better system than that of attempting to float the boat off the stern by trimming down aft.

Boat handlers and boat's crew used the gun access hatch when coming topside.

Boats hold up well. The two in the stowages have been there for over 45 days continuously and are still serviceable. Submergence does not injure them.

Inflation and deflation should be effected in a location where personnel have the benefit of life lines - this is particularly true while restowing since the ship has low buoyancy at this time and rudder will drag the stern down.

The SJ radar is of no assistance in locating the rubber boat.

Chronology of events

DECLASSIFIED

Auth. by

NAV 968133

By

CW

N.A.R. Date

12/19/05

ree men on beach 3(c) on GAGIL
1944.

1. Boat launched from ship at 2006 at a point 3000 yards off center of beach 3(c). Course to beach 315° mag.
2. Ship submerged at 2007.
3. Ship surfaced at 0034 and fixed her position as being 5000 yards bearing 000° from rendezvous point.
4. From 0034 to 0300 steamed various courses at various speeds attempting to make contact with rubber boat.
5. At 0300 sighted flashing white light from boat and altered course and speed to close boat.
6. At 0315 picked up boat with BALL, John E., CBM(PA) and CARPENTER, Emmet L., CM3c, the only crew members in it. Missing were ROEDER, Howard L., CGM(AA), 680 10 60, MacMAHON, John C., SP(A)lc, 402 71 86, and BLACK, Robert A. jr., QMLc, 811 44 04.
7. At 0348 JAP radar was picked up on the APR and the ship dived to avoid detection.
8. From 0348 to 0640 patrolled off beach 3(c). At 0640 changed course to 135°(T) and ran out this line as this was rendezvous course line from beach. At 1829 surfaced but because of extremely black and rainy weather no attempt was made to run to the rendezvous point. At 0515 dived and made submerged approach on rendezvous point. Searched all day along beach, and along southeast rendezvous course line.
9. According to BALL and CARPENTER the following is the chronology of the rubber boat's movements: The boat was launched at 2006 and given a course to land of 315° Mag. distance 3000 yards. On this beach the reef is approximately 1100 yards from the shore line. The boat had no difficulty in making the correct beach. As they approached the surf they started taking soundings and in the space of about 120 yards found "no bottom at 25", a sounding of 15', and finally 3'. They were then allowing the boat to drift and discussing the feasibility of going on through the surf when a roller caught them and left them no alternative, however they crossed the surf with no great difficulty and paddled to a point about 100 yards toward the shore and anchored the boat in 7' of water. ROEDER (who was crew captain) then directed BLACK and CARPENTER to go in toward the beach on the left, while he and MacMAHON would go in on the right. Each of these teams had a compass, and each man wore two knives, a hand grenade, a face mask, a waterproof watch, and all had swim fins except ROEDER who had lost his apparently when the boat was launched although he made no mention of it. The boat was anchored about 500 yards off the shore. ROEDER gave each man a rendezvous time back at the boat at "absolutely no later than 2245". The boat had been told to leave the beach no later than 2330. At 2110 the two teams left the boat headed for the beach - the high point of which was plainly visible. BALL was left as boat keeper. At about 2130 CARPENTER and BLACK returned to the boat because CARPENTER was in distress and too tired to swim farther. BLACK then oriented himself, took another compass check, and headed back alone for the shore. At 2315, which was 30 minutes past the deadline time, BALL and CARPENTER manned the boat and rowed into within 100 yards of the beach. They then returned to a point inside the surf line and then rowed in a general Northeast and then Southwest line until 0015 at which time BALL was forced to make the decision to return to the ship it then being 45 minutes past the deadline given the boat to depart for the rendezvous with the

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

Subject: Chronology of GAGIL TOMIL Is *Auth. by Nats 968133* of three men on beach 3(c) on *By NARS Date 12/11/05*

- ship and 1½ hours past ROEDER's time for rendezvousing with boat. The boat went through the surf without too much difficulty and once through, they abandoned all caution and flashed their flashlight all around in hope of picking up the other three men. They had no success, so started rowing out on the rendezvous course of southeast. At 0315 they were picked up, then being approximately 4½ miles southeast of the rendezvous point. They were aided by a northwest breeze, and a southerly current.
10. BALL had a very difficult decision to make. However, it is believed that he made the correct one. At the most the three men (who were the most experienced men and the strongest swimmers in the entire group) had from 2110 (2130 for BLACK) to 0015 to make a swim the total time of which should not have taken them more than 40 - 60 minutes for the round trip. After considering all possibilities it is believed that the three men joined up, saw something interesting near the shoreline, decided to investigate and were captured. They must have been on, or very close to the shore, as they were much too experienced swimmers for all of them to have been taken in the water. The men were covered with Commando black paint, and were very difficult to see in the water.
 11. The conclusions reached in paragraph 10 are of course a matter of conjecture, but appear to be the soundest that can be made based on the available information.
 12. Both ROEDER and MacMAHON had an overly amount of "guts". BLACK also had a full share, but was inclined to exercise more caution than the other two. The instructions to the boat crew before they left the ship were to the effect that "if the reef was not passable for landing craft, to not go in farther toward the shore but rather to search Northeast and Southwest along the reef for possible boat passages". They were in three feet of water before they reached the surf line, and the bottom was covered with niggerheads. The reef was obviously an extremely poor one for landing craft. However, in spite of this, ROEDER elected to go on in farther and get "all the information". This is not written as a criticism of him, but to show that he would go to ends over and beyond the course of duty to obtain more information. The other men had full confidence in his judgment and apparently were perfectly willing to follow him.
 13. After the boat returned to the ship the men in the other reconnaissance group, who were on the ship, pleaded to man a boat and go back to the reef. However, this could not be done because there was only about one hour of darkness left, and the JAP radar actually came on (as was customary) at 0348 causing ship to dive to remain undetected. On the next night the weather was very squally with practically zero visibility. It would have been pure foolishness to put a boat over in such weather, as neither the ship nor the boat could fix positions and effecting a rendezvous would have been next to impossible.
 14. In this officer's experience this group of men were outstanding - both professionally, and as shipmates. They have had a long and difficult cruise in the submarine, but have acquitted themselves admirably. It is a tragedy

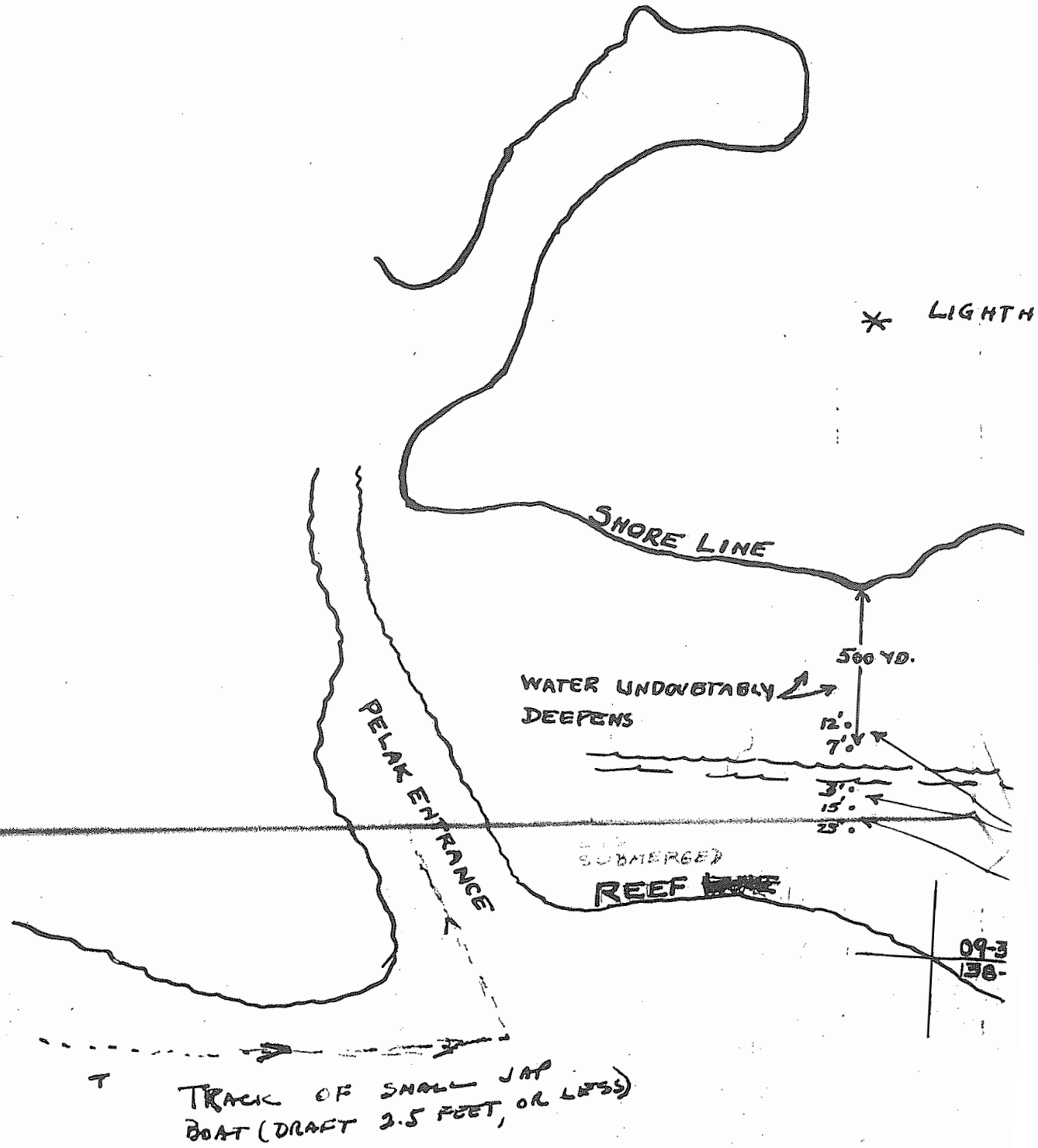
[Redacted]

DECLASSIFIED
Authent: NW 968133
BY ew N.R. Date 12/19/05

Subject: Chronology of GAGIL TOMIL Is of three men on beach 3(c) on

that ROEDER, MacMAHON, and BLACK are not aboard.

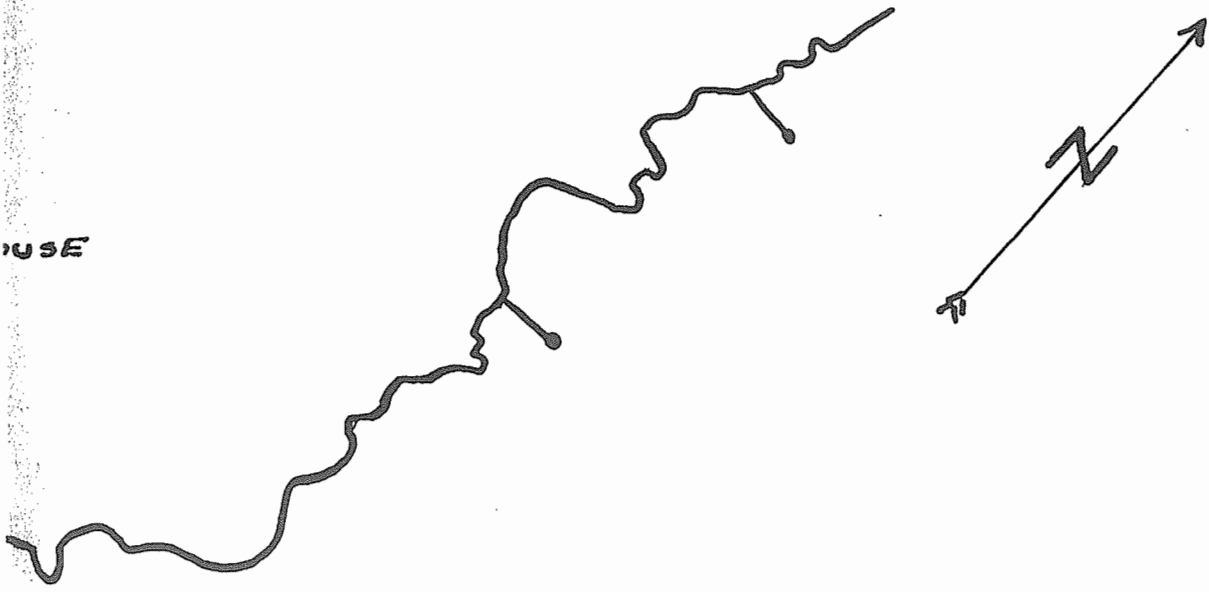
DECLASSIFIED
Authority NAV 968133
By SW NARA Date 12/19/05



INFORMATION ON THIS BEACH IS NOT COMP SURF, BOTTOM, AND WATER DEPTHS IS NO MINES, SCULLIES OR OTHER BEACH

DECLASSIFIED
Authent: *NM 968133*
By: *SP* NARA Date: *12/19/05*

200 100 0 200 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 2000
APPROX. SCALE IN YARDS

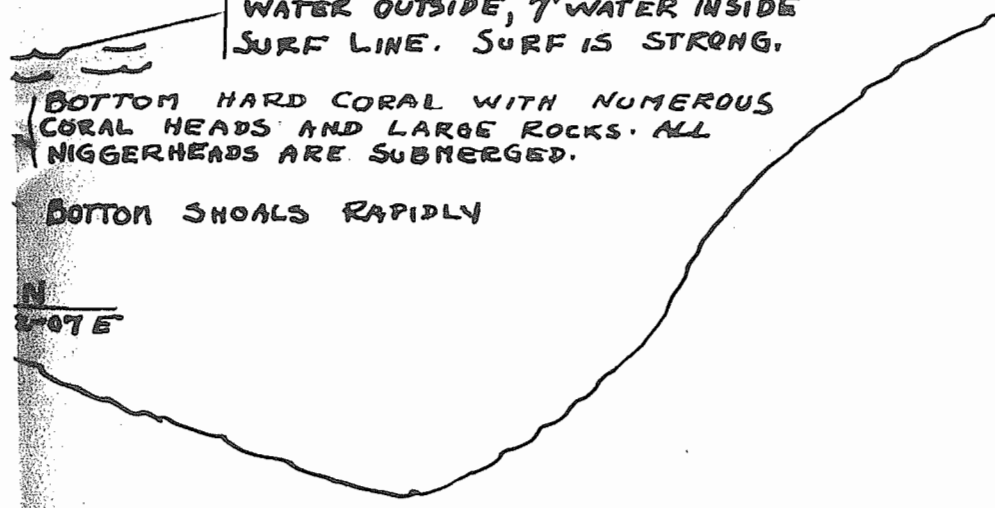


SURF 4'-5' HIGH 75-100 YDS WIDE, 3'
WATER OUTSIDE, 7' WATER INSIDE
SURF LINE. SURF IS STRONG.

BOTTOM HARD CORAL WITH NUMEROUS
CORAL HEADS AND LARGE ROCKS. ALL
NIGGERHEADS ARE SUBMERGED.

BOTTOM SHOALS RAPIDLY

N
207 E



ETE. HOWEVER DATA GIVEN ON
ACCURATE. SOUNDINGS IN FEET.
OBSERVED.

1 Reconnaissance ltr.
4.