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OPTICAL TECHNOLOGY DIVISION
OPTO-MECHANICAL DESIGN ENGINEERING
Memorandum ME 71

22 November 1971

To: Distribution
From: L. B. Molaskey
Subject: Trip Report - Recovery of RV #3
Location: At Sea - 350 Miles Northeast of Hawaii

INTRODUCTION

This trip report continues chronologically the events of the subject task for the period of 9 November thru Thursday 18 November 1971.

TUESDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 1971

The weather still prevents any dive activity. The task force is headed for the Southern most sector of the operation area awaiting word on how the Apache fuel problem is to be solved. There is also growing concern for the status of Trieste. Being towed at length in such rough sea there is a possibility of damage to exterior equipment. The forward speed of the tandem tow has been reduced to a minimum. About two knots is required to maintain steerage.

WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 1971

Word was received that another ship was being sent out to relieve Apache so that she can go to Pearl Harbor for fuel. White Sands, Apache, and Trieste are headed for the rendezvous area. The weather has showed some signs of abating but the seas are still too high even to board Trieste to assess the damage done by the rough weather.

THURSDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 1971

A salvage ship, about the same size as Apache, will meet with White Sands, to relieve Apache at about 1400. Meanwhile, one of the officers on Trieste, Al Amara, is reported to be suffering from apendicitis. A Navy task force including the Aircraft Carrier Ticonderoga was reported to be somewhere nearby. They were contacted and plans were made to evacuate Lt. Amara via helicopter from the deck of White Sands. This transfer occurred at about 1300. A sequence of photos was taken of the operation.

The "Current" arrived on schedule and the tow was transferred from the Apache to the "Current". Apache headed to Pearl Harbor. The first outgoing mail was transferred to Apache prior to her departure. Arrangements were made, through [redacted] to mail my trip report to his wife who was requested to get a copy to D. Patterson and to my office.

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ME 71

The plan at this time is to proceed toward Pearl Harbor; de-gas the Trieste in the lee of one of the small islands; load Trieste into the dock well of White Sands and return to Pearl Harbor. A review of the condition of Trieste and the equipment damaged at sea and a check with the long range weather predictions will be the deciding factor upon which the future of the project is planned. In my opinion that decision has already been made and the project will be postponed until far more favorable weather can be predicted than is normal for the search area in December and January. The decision, however, is being held until after the review in Pearl Harbor.

FRIDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 1971

The task force is underway, heading for Pearl Harbor at about 4 1/2 knots. The seas are somewhat calmer but still running about 4 to 6 feet. Winds are from 10 to 15 knots. No significant activity performed.

SATURDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 1971

Still heading for Pearl Harbor at about 4 1/2 knots. No activity planned for the day.

SUNDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 1971

Trieste was de-gassed commencing at about 0800. The seas have calmed down to 1 to 3 feet with winds about 10 knots. The towing speed was reduced to about 2 knots during the 8 hour de-gassing operation. De-gassing is performed by connecting a gas hose between Trieste and White Sands. The tanks in Trieste are then pressurized by about 4 pounds per square inch of nitrogen. The aviation gasoline is then pumped out through the hose into the tanks of White Sands. All open flames, cigarette smoking, etc., are prohibited during the de-gassing operation for obvious reasons. Once sufficient gas has been removed from Trieste to raise it in the water to the level required to clear the tail gate of White Sands the Trieste will be towed into White Sands and docked. (The shot has been removed prior to the de-gassing operation.)

During de-gassing operation one of the service lines to Trieste became entangled in the bow frame. The crew of the whaler (16 ft. Boston Whaler) was dispatched to untangle the lines by coming alongside the Trieste and reaching out to the lines. In the process, the Trieste bow frame, coming down from a sea swell, landed on the bow of the whaler tipping it up on end and flipping the two sailors aboard into the water. When this occurred, of course, the "man overboard" alarm was sounded and all hands mustered to the proper stations.

Actually, there was little danger to the sailors who were in life jackets at the time as they immediately caught hold of the Trieste and were taken aboard. There was, however, significant damage to the whaler and its engine. A second whaler was launched to replace the damaged boat and the original recovered.

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SUNDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 1971 (Cont)

Once the gas was removed the hawser boat was launched, the service lines to Trieste were disconnected and the White Sands flooded down to allow the Trieste to be brought aboard. This operation, essentially the reverse of the launching operation, is conducted in a similar manner. (Unfortunately both the launching and docking sequences were performed after dark and were therefore not photographed.) The Trieste was safely aboard and secured by about 0100 the following morning.

MONDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 1971

The task force was met by three tugs at the mouth of Pearl Harbor just after noon. The Apache was uncoupled and White Sands proceeded to a pier on Ford Island. This is an island in the middle of Pearl Harbor and is accessible only by launch or ferry. [REDACTED] and I went ashore and established lodgings at the Holiday Inn and returned later for our luggage. At this time the recommendation from Cdr Mooney was to discontinue all further recovery efforts until the spring because of the predicted poor weather at the site. The official decision, however, and future plans were to be formulated at a meeting to be held the following morning with Adm. Lacey. Cdr Mooney contacted his superior, Cap. S. Packer, in San Diego and briefed him on the operation and presented his recommendation. A review of all of the photography taken of the operation was held in the ward room and approximately 70 slides were selected to illustrate the operation for the briefing. Duplicate copies of the selected slides were made and arranged to serve as official coverage of the operation for the Trieste's file. Approximately 30 of my slides were used.

TUESDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 1971

The briefing meeting was held at the Submarine Base commencing at 1430. All the officers of the Trieste and White Sands, and Cdr. Mooney participated. Following that meeting [REDACTED] met with Adm. Lacey for further discussion of the operation. The outcome of these briefings and discussions was a decision to return to the site and again try to recover the payload. This time, however, more support from the Navy will be available. It seems that much more attention from the higher ups in the Submarine fleet will be directed toward successful completion of the operation. As a result Lt. Cdr Bartels was directed to outline his needs and requirements for continuation of the operation. A list of requirements was started immediately. The objective was to be ready to go back to sea by Saturday, 20 November.

WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 1971

Activity on the ship became intense as plans were being made to repair Trieste, order replacement parts, provision the ship for the operation, etc. Among the items required were: two new outboard motors, a new whaler, a large refrigerator to replace the one built aboard ship on the way out, gas

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ME 71

hose for refueling Apache and loading Trieste, more shot, lithium hydroxide for Trieste's life support system, fuel oil, lubrication oil, food, a new washing machine, fire pump parts, etc.

At this point in time I called the office to seek direction as to our participation in the next attempt to make the recovery. [REDACTED] had indicated that he felt it was not imperative that I return to sea for the next attempt. He indicated, however, that I should use my own judgment. I therefore called home to seek direction and later received word to remain with the task force for the next operation. I informed [REDACTED] that I concurred with the decision to remain on the job and would continue to provide whatever support and/or service I could, but that it would mean a change to our contract in that such a long period at the site was not originally anticipated. He indicated that this was understood.

This afternoon [REDACTED] and I visited [REDACTED] of the Air Force. We thanked him for his cooperation in providing the dry ice (via the air drop) and discussed the Air Force's capability for providing weather information at the site. This discussion led to a definition of the requirements for operation of the Trieste. In order to better illustrate the problems associated with preparation for and making a dive we suggested a review of the slides of the operation. We therefore presented all of the slides used for briefing Adm. Lacey as well as a few others concerning the air drop. During these discussions [REDACTED] indicated that [REDACTED] was in Honolulu and that he would be very interested in the operation. [REDACTED] was contacted and arrangements were made to provide the same briefing to him on the following morning at 0830 at [REDACTED] office.

THURSDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 1971

We met with [REDACTED] as scheduled and presented the briefing planned. Cdr. Mooney also attended and participated in the discussion. The meeting was very informal but I feel quite opportune. [REDACTED] appeared genuinely interested in the operation and seemed appreciative of the opportunity to get such firsthand information on the subject.

In further discussion of the Air Force's operation out here in Hawaii, the general capabilities on the subject was covered. The question of Multi-Bucket configurations was also brought out. I got the feeling that [REDACTED] recognized this as the "next step" on the program.

After [REDACTED] left, [REDACTED] gave us a slide presentation and showed a motion picture of his entire operation.

In addition Cdr. Mooney was introduced to the people who have access to the most modern, up-to-date weather information gathering equipment and who agreed to provide weather data in support of our activity. I feel that the meeting was very informative for all parties concurred.

In the afternoon we returned to White Sands (she had been moved from the pier on Lord Island to a berth in the shipyard at the Naval Base).

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ME 71

We discussed the operation required to bring the payload aboard White Sands and to load it into the newly acquired freezer box. Another piece of equipment was identified for the requirement to transfer the payload from the dock well to the freezer. It was decided to try to obtain a dolly, with wheels, capable of transporting one ton on the deck of the dock well. This would preclude having to lower the fork lift truck into the dock well and thereby simplify the freezer loading sequence. The request was made for such a dolly.

L. B. Molaskey for
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LBM/mf

- cc: M. F. Maguire
- H. W. Robertson
- R. W. Jones
- C. Karatzas
- P. Petty
- R. Roylance
- J. Braddon
- [REDACTED] (HQS)

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