



Secretary of the HMAS Sydney11 Commission of Inquiry.

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HMAS Sydney 11 Commission Of Inquiry

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## THE LAST MOMENTS OF HMAS SYDNEY 11.

### A CONJECTURE.

It is universally accepted that HMAS *Sydney* was hit on the port bow by a torpedo fired by HSK *Kormoran* at the very start of the exchange between them. The damage to *Sydney* was extreme. She took on so much water that the bow went down to a point that some of the German witnesses thought that she would sink there and then. With the bow going down so far the stern lifted out of the ocean such that the propellers were seen revolving out of the water.

But *Sydney* recovered. She returned fire with success and headed toward *Kormoran* with the intention, according to the Germans, of ramming. This never occurred. But *Sydney* came so close to *Kormoran*—some say a 100 meters— a personal report said within 20 meters!—that the eyewitnesses could easily see the damage then inflicted upon *Sydney* as she passed behind *Kormoran*. No witness reported the extent of damage shown by the photographs and videos taken by Mr David Mearns during the ROVE investigation of the area where the bow had come away from the hull of the wreck. This means that that damage occurred many hours after the *Sydney* passed behind *Kormoran*. *Sydney* could not have stayed afloat with the damage revealed by the photographs. Hence, an explosion, many hours after the battle, was inflicted upon *Sydney*. That explosion caused the damage revealed in the photographs and caused the bow to be torn away from the hull. The loss of the bow caused *Sydney* to sink.

What exploded? Where was the explosion? What caused the explosion? It is clear that the bow section of *Sydney* suffered an explosion. The metal decking has been bent up and almost over the forward gun on the starboard side. If the explosion was in the hull section this damage could not have occurred as it did. If there was some substance or munitions in the bow and that exploded what caused it to explode when it had survived the blast, the heat, the concussion and the flash of the exploding *Kormoran* torpedo? Why did it not explode then? That substance and or munitions was flooded by the seawater taken in after the torpedo hit on the bow. How could the substance and munitions, now immersed in water, explode when they never previously exploded?

What exploded could not have been an internal agent within the bow of *Sydney*. There could not have been a fire in the bow—it was flooded with sea water. The explosion must have been come from an external agent. It could come from only a mine or a torpedo. A mine is unlikely but possible. A torpedo strike on the starboard bow is the more likely cause.



David Mearns said that there was only one torpedo hit on *Sydney*. He ought to know because at the time of writing this submission he is the only person that we know about who has seen all of the photographs and videos of the *Sydney* wreck. Mr Michael Montgomery, one of the originators of the Japanese torpedo hypothesis, complained about the statement such that David Mearns admitted that he should not have said what he did. This was not a retraction by David Mearns but seems to be an admission of poor timing on his part.

Thus, this conjecture suggests that, given the paucity of the photographic evidence at this time, a suggestion that there was more than one torpedo hit on *Sydney* seems reasonable.

### **Summery.**

- (1) A final explosion, hours after the battle, removed the bow from HMAS *Sydney*.
- (2) The loss of the bow caused *Sydney* to sink.
- (3) The explosion was in the bow section and not in the hull.
- (4) If material in the bow exploded why did it not explode when the Kormorons torpedo hit?
- (5) How did the material now explode when it had been immersed in sea-water for hours?
- (6) If there was no explosive material in the bow then the explosion came from an external agent.
- (7) If there was explosive material in the bow but could not explode then the explosion came from an external agent.
- (8) A mine or torpedo as an external agent is indicated.

The conjectural nature of this submission is because only a handful of photographs have been made public. Until all evidence is in the public domain any resolution of the last moments of HMAS *Sydney* will remain an open conjecture. Hopefully, this submission will encourage the release of the photographic and video evidence. Also it is hoped that debate will be encourage on this demanding and important question.