



SUBM.002.0126

AGENDUM No. 401/1941.

Copy No. 15

WAR CABINET AGENDUM.H.M.A.S. "SYDNEY"

(This Agendum is prepared for record purposes only and subsequent to discussion of the subject).

The following report in regard to H.M.A.S. "Sydney" has been submitted by the Chief of the Naval Staff :-

"H.M.A.S. "SYDNEY" sailed from Fremantle p.m. on 11th November, escorting S.S. "ZEALANDIA" with troops on board to a rendezvous with H.M.S. "DURBAN" near the Sunda Straits.

21st p.m. "SYDNEY" was due to arrive at Fremantle.

There was considerable doubt as to what speed would be made good by the "ZEALANDIA". Between Melbourne and Fremantle her speed had varied from 7 knots to 13 knots.

21st p.m. Information was received that "ZEALANDIA" had arrived at Singapore 24 hours late and it was assumed therefore that "SYDNEY" would arrive at Fremantle 24 hours late, i.e. p.m. on the 22nd.

23rd a.m. As "SYDNEY" had not arrived p.m. 22nd, a discussion took place the following day, 23rd, when it was decided to give her another 12 hours, i.e. until dark, before breaking W/T silence. There was nothing unusual about this procedure as with a cruiser on the trade routes there are always possibilities of her being diverted to answer Q.C. messages. There was also some doubt as to whether she might have missed H.M.S. "DURBAN" at the rendezvous and proceeded on to Singapore; a signal was made to the C-in-C, China, asking for time and date of rendezvous.

23rd p.m. As she had not arrived by dark, i.e. p.m. of the 23rd, endeavour was made all that night to communicate with her by W/T.

24th - Daylight. As no communication could be established with the "SYDNEY", air searches from Perth were started along the home track; meanwhile a reply was received from C-in-C, China, giving time and position of rendezvous, which definitely indicated that the "SYDNEY" was overdue.

24th p.m. C.E.N. was asked to search with aircraft the northern part of the route. Two Catalinas were ordered from Port Moresby to Perth to search outwards along "SYDNEY's" possible track.

24th 1700 The British tanker "TROCAS", bound from Palembang to Fremantle, reported that she had picked up 25 German naval men on a raft in a position about 115 miles W.N.W. of Carnarvon. The survivors stated they were from the "OCHORON" which had been sunk by a cruiser.

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Air searches are continuing, and all British and Allied merchant vessels in the area bound for Australia have been ordered to pass through the above position and to search for the survivors. One British ship outward bound from Fremantle has also been ordered to the area. Four auxiliary vessels from Fremantle have been ordered to the area.

25th a.m. The Dutch cruiser "TROOP" leaves Sunda Straits this morning, Tuesday, and will proceed to Fremantle at high speed to search the probable route taken by "SYDNEY".

25th 1030 Aircraft sighted a lifeboat in position 40 miles south of where the raft was picked up.

25th noon Aircraft reported two lifeboats on the coast north of Carnarvon.

The tanker S.S. "TRONES" has been asked to obtain more detailed information from the survivors."

W. J. C. MAKIN

Minister for the Navy.

25th November, 1941.