4 Knowledge of German raiders

4.1 Central to this Inquiry is the question of whether in November 1941 CAPT Burnett was aware there was a possibility that a German raider disguised as a merchant vessel was operating off the Australian coast.

4.2 The existence of German raiders was well known, but the guise they took, their movements and their location were not. The problem a warship faced was thus one of identifying a vessel in order to determine if she was a disguised raider or a friendly merchant vessel.

4.3 Before considering systems of identification, however, it is important to gain an understanding of the extent of CAPT Burnett’s knowledge of German raiders and of the possible presence of a disguised German raider off the Western Australian coast in November 1941.

4.4 On 21 March 1940 the Admiralty issued Confidential Admiralty Fleet Order 422, entitled ‘German Merchant Vessels’, which divided the known German merchant fleet into categories showing the potential for wartime use of the units. Category A was ‘potential raiders’, and within it were passenger and mail liners, fruit ships, Hamburg–America Elbe excursion ships, cargo liners, and Deutsche Luft Hansa floating aerodromes.1 In all, 832 vessels were described.

I return to CAFO 422 when discussing the identification of merchant ships. I mention it here because the order makes it clear that in early 1940 there was an expectation that Germany would disguise merchant vessels as raiders.

4.5 During 1940 and 1941 information about raiders became available. It was provided to commanding officers and other officers through weekly intelligence reports2 that were prepared in the United Kingdom and forwarded by ship to Australia. Copies of these reports could be retained by commanding officers for reference, and additional copies could be retained for reference in ships where a captain or a more senior officer was in command.3 In accordance with usual practice, SYDNEY and her officers received the reports, although not until about two months after the date they bore. Before taking command of

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1 NAA.013.0001 at 0002
2 The reports were prepared and issued by the Naval Intelligence Division of the Admiralty from 15 March 1940: NAA.001.0001.
3 NAA.005.0036 at 0037
SYDNEY, CAPT Burnett, in his role as Assistant and later Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, received the reports.

4.6 From October 1940, following the suggestion of CAPT Burnett that intelligence agencies in Australia be coordinated, the Combined Operational Intelligence Centre was established in Melbourne. From May 1941 the centre published weekly summaries that were provided to senior military officers. Ships’ commanding officers also received the summaries.5

Weekly intelligence reports

4.7 In the weekly intelligence reports of 1940 that CAPT Burnett, SYDNEY and her officers received, the following information was conveyed:

- On 2 August 1940 Weekly Intelligence Report number 21 reported that on 28 July 1940 a raider had been encountered off Rio de Janeiro. It was described as being of ‘about 8000 tons and 19 knots carrying a broadside of four guns, probably 5.9-in. with director firing’. It had ‘opened fire at 16,000 yards with great accuracy’.6

- By 9 August 1940 there were three or four German armed merchant cruisers operating abroad, and possibly another three.

- In Weekly Intelligence Report number 26 of 6 September 1940 a survivor of SS DAVISIAN, which had been sunk by the raider WIDDER, recounted that the raider was about 11,000 tons, had a speed of 20 knots, had opened fire ‘with all her guns both fore and aft’ at about 800 yards, and had ‘6-inch guns’. She had been cleverly camouflaged and was able to change the shape of her stern. It was believed that part of the funnel was detachable.7

- By 4 October 1940 a broad description of raiders and their tactics could be provided. A section headed ‘German raiders’ began:

  From May to September 9 the total confirmed losses from Raider activities amounted to 16 ships of 108,713 tons, while a further 10 ships of 50,604 tons are also presumed to have been sunk or captured. The largest losses have been incurred in the Atlantic, but recently the centre of activity appears to have shifted to the Indian Ocean.

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4 NAA.111.0047
5 NAA.011.0149
6 NAA.002.0216 at 0233
7 NAA.003.0033 at 0060 to 0061
At the beginning of August there appear to have been five raiders operating, but the numbers are now harder to estimate …

The raiders are converted merchantmen and probably have a number of characteristics in common. They would appear to be of between 7,000 and 9,000 tons, of the cargo liner type, with a speed of at least 16 knots. They have a heavy armament of two or more 5.5-in. and four or more 4-in. guns, as well as dual purpose pom-poms and machine-guns. It is probable that at least two torpedo tubes are mounted and a large number of mines are known to have been carried in two vessels. It is reported that in one case a raider carried two aircraft, one fitted as a bomber; and one British ship is known to have been bombed in the Indian Ocean. The guns are very well concealed, and outwardly the raiders present a completely innocent appearance, being disguised as Swedish or other neutral vessels.

…

The tactics of the raiders appear to have been carefully thought out and probably do not greatly vary. In some cases raiders have been sighted at a considerable distance in the evening and have then disappeared, approaching again during the night or on the following morning to make their attack. They usually seem to approach on a gradually converging course from ahead, so that identification is difficult, and it is impossible for their victims to bring their gun to bear. Fire is opened without warning, shrapnel and pom-poms being employed to disable the W/T [wireless telegraphy] gear immediately and prevent the gun being manned. Shooting appears to be very accurate, though H.M.S. Alcantara reported that during the course of her action, it deteriorated when the raider was herself hit.8

• In Weekly Intelligence Report number 30 there was an account by a survivor of an attack by a raider on SS TROPIC SEA. It related that the raider ‘looked like an ordinary cargo ship’9, but at 4 miles’ distance had hoisted the German flag and signalled TROPIC SEA to stop and not use wireless. The raider had a complement of about 350 men and carried two sea planes, one of which was a bomber. The vessel had been converted from a merchant ship, had a maximum speed of 16 knots and:

She had two guns on the fore-deck, A/A guns amidships and two heavy guns aft which were disguised by collapsible boats and a small house. There were also 4 torpedo tubes on each side.10
• On 29 November 1940 it was reported that three ships were overdue at Penang and Colombo and were presumed sunk by German raiders.11

• On 6 December 1940 it was reported that on 23 November mines had been detected off Newcastle, New South Wales, that might have been laid by a raider; on 26 November 1940 a New Zealand merchant ship was attacked and sunk off the North Island of New Zealand, and two merchant ships were sunk by raiders in the Indian Ocean.12

• On 13 December 1940 it was reported that on 5 December HMS CARNARVON CASTLE had engaged a raider south of Rio de Janeiro. The raider, having been signalled to heave to and a warning shot having been fired, responded by firing a four-gun salvo at 17,500 yards. Her fire was accurate. In addition, she fired two torpedoes at CARNARVON CASTLE and continued firing four-gun salvos with accuracy up to a range of 18,000 yards. CARNARVON CASTLE suffered 23 direct hits. For the first time a detailed description of the raider was published:

   The Raider appears to have been a ship of about 5,000 tons with a flush deck and raised forecastle. Her bow was raked and she had a cruiser stern. She had two masts with heavy cross trees and a short squat funnel only slightly higher than the bridge. There were sampson [sic] posts close before the funnel and a conspicuous cowl abaft it. She had some passenger accommodation round her lower bridge. Her broadside is thought to have consisted of four modern 5.9-inch guns and two torpedo tubes, and she was fitted with a complete director system. Her speed was probably about 16½ knots. From the description she would seem to resemble the German Levante, 4,769 tons, of the Atlas line, a ship rumoured to have been fitted out as a Raider …13

In addition, it was reported that on 7 December 1940 a ship had struck a mine off Spencer Gulf, west of Adelaide, and on 8 December 1940 a merchant vessel had been attacked by a raider off Nauru.14

• On 20 December 1940 it was noted that there was uncertainty about whether one or more raiders were operating in the Indian Ocean. It was also noted:

   They are all exceptionally well equipped and are probably armed with modern 5.9 guns with an effective range of at least 18,000

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11 NAA.004.0144 at 0166
12 NAA.004.0179 at 0186
13 NAA.004.0213 at 0216
14 NAA.004.0213 at 0222
yards and complete director control. They also carry torpedo tubes, pom-poms and, in some cases at least, an aircraft and mines.\(^\text{15}\)

- On 3 January 1941 Weekly Intelligence Report number 43 reported that it was by then known that three ships had been sunk off Nauru on 8 December 1940 and another, which had left Newcastle, New South Wales, on 6 December, was presumed sunk by a raider. From a total of 10 ships sunk by raiders, eight hundred survivors had been landed on Emirau Island, New Guinea, by the raider supply ship KULMERLAND.\(^\text{16}\)

- On 10 January 1941 WIR number 44 contained a ‘Raider Appreciation’ for 1940. It was in the following terms:

  **Raiders**

  2. The following is a Raider Appreciation for 1940.

  3. Five raiders with attendant supply ships are still operating, and were responsible for all sinkings in the past year. One in North Atlantic, one in South Atlantic, one in Indian Ocean, two in Pacific. Scheer is also possibly still at sea.

  4. **Raider A.**—Left Germany April 6. Sank *Haxby* in North Atlantic and proceeded to Pacific via Horn with tanker *Winnetou*. Operated New Zealand waters in June. Spent July at Marshall Islands base, August in Tasman Sea, September and October at base. Joined by Raider B, she left base in company in November for New Zealand, where she was joined by supply ship Kulmerland from Kobe, which had mined Australian waters. December, attacked phosphate ships near Nauru, landed survivors at Emirau, and shelled Nauru.


  6. **Raider C.**—Left Germany mid-April, sank *Scientist* near St. Helena in May. Mined the Cape and entered Indian Ocean and is thereafter responsible for all sinkings in the Indian Ocean. This presupposes a highly successful cruise but is possible without exceeding 12 knots, and the evidence available points to one raider only, possibly operating with supply ships.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{15}\) NAA.004.0248 at 0254

\(^{16}\) NAA.004.0317 at 0331

\(^{17}\) NAA.005.0001 at 0009
On 17 January 1941 WIR number 45 again summarised the state of knowledge of raiders and plotted their assumed paths throughout 1940. It was thought that there were two in the Pacific and one in the Indian Ocean. The report stated:

It does not appear that Raiders from the Indian or Pacific Oceans had returned home, since there is some evidence that vessels known to have been operating in those oceans in June were still active there in November and December.\(^\text{18}\)

Figure 4.1 shows the relevant portion of the chart.\(^\text{19}\)

![Raider plot in Weekly Intelligence Report number 45 of 17 January 1941](image)

4.8 Throughout 1940 knowledge of the existence and possible presence of raiders was not restricted to the Naval or military authorities. On 25 August 1940 the Prime Minister was to make a statement about the presence of raiders in waters adjacent to Australia.\(^\text{20}\) The censor initially advised that the statement should not be broadcast but instead be released only to the press. The purpose was to keep such knowledge within Australia. Once it was realised, however, that the information had already been broadcast to the public by the BBC in London—the BBC having received the information from the New Zealand Prime

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\(^{18}\) NAA.005.0036 at 0039

\(^{19}\) NAA.005.0036 at 0041

\(^{20}\) NAA.010.0180
Minister—the restriction on broadcasting was lifted.\(^{21}\) No such statement has been located, although on 26 August 1940 the Minister for the Navy refused to comment on a German broadcast that a raider had sunk the New Zealand cargo ship, SS TURAKINA. The matter was reported on the front page of *The Canberra Times* on 26 August 1940.\(^{22}\)

4.9 On 23 November 1940 the censor again directed that any mention ‘of the possible presence of an enemy raider in Australian waters’ be deleted from overseas communications.\(^{23}\) On 28 November that prohibition was lifted subject to the following restrictions:

In all press and broadcast releases no reference is to be made to the following: No reference to locality of attack other than ‘in the Indian Ocean’. No reference to rescue vessel other than as ‘an Australian warship’. No reference to names of personnel of rescue vessel. No description of rescue vessel or suggestion of type of ship. No reference to port of landing of survivors other than as ‘an Australian port’. No reference to ports of departure, routes, or destinations of Maimoa and Port Brisbane other than ‘which had left an Australian port some time previously’. Names of Maimoa and Port Brisbane may be given. Names and ranks of survivors may be given. Description of enemy raider may be given. This does not release any other reports or rumours of shipping incidents.\(^{24}\)

These restrictions highlight the intelligence environment at this stage of the war: great lengths were gone to to prevent from becoming public any information that, if picked up by the enemy, might be useful.

4.10 On 6 December 1940 the Director of Ordnance, Department of Defence, wrote to ‘Head of N’ a minute entitled: ‘Raiders’. He proposed that ‘In view of the difficulty of providing adequate cover against raiders to unconvoyed Merchant Vessels making ocean passages’, certain fast vessels that then carried one 6-inch gun and one high-altitude gun be equipped with a further three 6-inch guns to enable them to fire a three-gun salvo. The minute was endorsed ‘suggest proposal to be put to Admiralty’.\(^{25}\)

4.11 On 7 December 1940 the Department of Defence submitted to the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff a proposal entitled ‘Consideration of Protection of Trade on the Ocean Routes’.\(^{26}\) It concluded that within Australian waters ‘The RAAF gives Australian trade reasonably good protection’ and noted:  

\(^{21}\) NAA.010.0179; NAA.010.0180

\(^{22}\) NLA.001.0010

\(^{23}\) NAA.010.0177

\(^{24}\) NAA.010.0178

\(^{25}\) NAA.011.0319

\(^{26}\) NAA.011.0325
Our broad object is the protection of trade. Natural desire is to adopt an offensive policy. If we can destroy the enemy raiders, shipping is well protected and the loss of a few ships while this task was being carried out would be amply repaid. We cannot, however, adopt such an offensive policy at the expense of our shipping, unless it is likely to pay a dividend.

Accordingly, it proposed that such maritime forces as were available be used to convoy groups of ships on ocean trade routes. This was the policy adopted.

**Policy against raiders: CAPT Burnett’s involvement**

4.12 In his role as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, CAPT Burnett prepared a minute paper dated 19 December 1940 and headed: ‘Policy against raiders in Indian and Pacific Oceans’. In the light of its importance, the document is reproduced in full as Figure 4.2.

4.13 The document is important for a number of reasons.

First, it establishes that in December 1940, before taking command of SYDNEY five months later, CAPT Burnett played a central role in developing an Australian Naval strategic response to the threat of German raiders in the Indian and Pacific Oceans surrounding Australia. CAPT Burnett had given the matter ‘considerable thought’.

Second, CAPT Burnett identified three aspects of the problem of dealing with raiders, describing them as ‘lessons’. The first was that raiders were fast vessels. The second was that slow armed merchant cruisers were of little assistance in engaging and destroying raiders (‘bringing these raiders into action’). The third was an understanding or appreciation, at least in December 1940, that raider attacks were not usually carried out on ‘the focal areas on the trade routes’ but usually ‘some distance to seaward’. This suggests that CAPT Burnett had understood both the characteristics of vessels likely to be raiders and the locations where they were likely to attack.

The encounter between SYDNEY and KORMORAN less than a year later occurred in or adjacent to the shipping ‘trade route’ between Fremantle and Singapore and quite close to a focal point, the port of Fremantle. It is doubtful if the point of encounter can be described as ‘some distance to seaward’ of the shipping route or focal point.
Figure 4.2 CAPT Burnett’s minute paper, 19 December 1940

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27 NAA 011 0317
5. The second proposal is that certain of our slow A.M.Cs. should be reconverted to cargo ships, leaving the bulk of their armament available, but enabling them to carry cargo as well.

Signed: It is realised there are disadvantages to the above schemes, but it is suggested that their substance should be communicated to the Admiralty for their information.

19/12.

[Signature]

Yes. I think the broad principle is:

That it is not unreasonable to maintain:

p = 0

Orbit

The remaining 6" to keep as follows:

One 6" gun to mount on:

- No. 2 deck

one 3" gun

- No. 1 to 3 deck

- No. 4 to 5 deck

- No. 6 to 7 deck

I understand from D.O.T.M. that there are no 127mm guns available to exchange with any of the above 6" guns.

[Signature]
According to CAPT Burnett’s view in December 1940, the encounter occurred where raiders did not commonly attack shipping and thus were not usually expected to be. Figure 4.3 shows the location of the encounter (taken as the position of the KORMORAN major wreck) in relation to the Fremantle–Singapore ‘trade route’ and the focal point of the port of Fremantle. Because the actual path SYDNEY sailed from the Sunda Strait to where she encountered KORMORAN is not known, the supposed path plotted is that taken by SYDNEY on her return from the Sunda Strait on her previous escort voyage in October 1941. The handover points were close to each other, so it is likely the return paths were similar.

Figure 4.4 provides a closer view of the approximate battle site compared with the previous voyage track. It shows that KORMORAN, disguised as STRAAT MALAKKA, was in or adjacent to the shipping route.

4.14 The proposal to further arm merchant vessels was submitted to the Admiralty on 17 January 1941 by means of a document that began as follows:

ENEMY RAIDER OPERATIONS IN INDIAN AND PACIFIC OCEANS.

I am directed to advise, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that the Australian Naval Board have given considerable thought to the policy to be adopted in connection with action against Raiders in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The following lessons have been learnt from recent attacks on shipping in these areas:-

(a) Enemy ships chosen as raiders appear to be fast, perhaps 18 to 20 knots, and so the ordinary merchant ship has little chance of escape once it has been sighted.

(b) Slow Armed Merchant Cruisers are of little value in bringing these raiders into action.

(c) Most of the attacks in the area under consideration have been carried out clear of the focal areas on the trade routes some distance to seaward.29

The proposal was ultimately rejected on 2 May 1941.30

29 NAA 011 0316
30 NAA 011 0314
Note: HMAS SYDNEY handover to HMS DURBAN on 17 November 1941 at 007°15' S 104°40 E; handover to HMS GLASGOW on 3 October 1941 at 007°44' S 104°01 E.

Figure 4.3  Distance between the battle and handover sites

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31 RAN.002.0170
4.15 On 31 December 1940, in a memorandum headed ‘Enemy raiders: activities, survivors’ to the Controller of Postal and Telegraphs Censorship, Navy Office noted that a number of survivors from vessels lost in the Pacific were due in Sydney the following day and asked that restrictions be imposed on publication of details of raider vessels, photographs, armaments of raiders, details of raider attacks that resulted in the sinkings, and similar matters.

4.16 On 31 December 1940 and again on 7 January 1941 the Australian Ambassador to Japan, Sir R Craigie, protested to the Japanese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs about the provisioning of a German raider, which had recently shelled Nauru, by the German supply ship KULMERLAND, operating out of Japanese ports. He also advised the Vice Minister that the raider appeared to be disguised as a Japanese vessel.

4.17 Thus, by the end of 1940, the existence of raiders in the coastal regions around Australia, their operations in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, their supply from Japanese ports, their carrying of 5.9-inch guns, their capacity to fire broadsides with accuracy, their approximate size, their speed, and their capacity to change their disguise were well known to

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RAN.002.0171
NAA.010.0175
NAA.004.0317 at 0330; SPC.002.0221; SPC.002.0227; SPC.002.0229
the Australian Government and Australian military authorities. CAPT Burnett had played a central role in considering and determining the Australian Naval response to the known threat of raiders in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. With less detail because of censorship restrictions, the possible presence of German raiders in Australian waters was also known to the Australian public.

1941

4.18 On 31 January 1941 Weekly Intelligence Report number 47 reported that three Norwegian whaling ships, previously thought sunk, had probably been captured by German raiders east of the Seychelles. It also published the first photograph of a raider, Raider C.

![Photo courtesy of National Archives of Australia](image)

Figure 4.5 The first published photograph of a raider, Raider C

4.19 Those on board SYDNEY on 25 January 1941, on her return voyage from the Mediterranean campaign, were aware of the existence of raiders: she searched for one without success on 25 and 26 January out of the Seychelles. CAPT Collins reported:

9. It had been my hope that our passage Eastward might have brought us in the vicinity of the raider but no ship of any sort has so far been sighted since leaving the Seychelles. The failure to catch the raider has been a bitter blow to all onboard, but hope springs that even now we may achieve success before reaching Australia.

35 NAA.005.0118
36 NAA.005.0118 at 0125
37 AWM.001.0313 at 0314
4.20 On 7 and 21 February 1941 in WIRs 48 and 50 there were further reports of raiders. WIR number 50 reported on the loss of two vessels to a raider in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{38}

4.21 On 25 February 1941 the Admiralty sought the disposition of SYDNEY and HOBART from Australia to participate in a search off Africa for the German pocket battleship ADMIRAL SCHEER. It wrote, ""Adelaide", "Manoora" and "Westralia" in the Tasman area, which, with New Zealand Naval forces, form a reasonable insurance against raider activities'.\textsuperscript{39} The proposal was agreed to by the Australian Government and the Naval Board.\textsuperscript{40}

4.22 WIR number 54 is dated 21 March 1941. Since the reports were sent to Australia by ship they did not arrive for at least two months, and they were then distributed to ships. CAPT Burnett assumed command of SYDNEY on 15 May 1941. It is likely WIR number 54 was received on board after that date and was therefore read by him. The copy in the Australian National Archives is initialled by two officers as having been read on 16 and 17 June 1941.\textsuperscript{41}

WIR number 54 contained a summary of what was known of raiders at that date. It being probable that the report was read by CAPT Burnett, the section on raiders is reproduced here in full:

The following notes on Raiders, are an attempt to amplify and bring up to date, the general information about Raiders contained in the Appreciation of Raider Activity during 1940, which appeared in W.I.R. No. 47.

A. Armed Merchant Raiders

Raiders, although differing in individual details, are probably very similar in many respects. They are certainly very well equipped and skilfully handled.

(i) Appearance. As will be seen from the photograph of Raider C in W.I.R. No. 47 (January 31, 1941), one of them closely resembles a Hansa merchantman of the Fels class, while others operating in 1940 are reported to have resembled fruit ships of the Ahrensberg type and the Levante of the Atlas-Levante Line. They make effective use of disguises and have masqueraded as British A.M.C.s. Tonnage seems to vary from 5,000 to 10,000 tons.

\textsuperscript{38} NAA.005.0221 at 0231
\textsuperscript{39} AWM.002.0325
\textsuperscript{40} AWM.002.0320
\textsuperscript{41} NAA.006.0073 at 0113
(ii) Armament. Their main armament appears to consist of at least six guns, probably 5.9-in., though it is possible that one or more are of a slightly larger calibre. In addition, 4-in. H.A./L.A., pom-poms, machine-guns and probably four above-water torpedo tubes are carried. Raider C has made considerable use of her aircraft, both for reconnaissance and for attacks on shipping, and it is probable that other raiders do the same. In accordance with Admiral Raeder’s precepts, importance is attached to the nuisance value of minelaying.

(iii) Speed. A maximum speed with a clean bottom of 20 knots appears to be confirmed in at least two cases, but cruising speeds seem to vary from 6 to 10 knots. While on passage or when changing their area of operations, raiders probably average from 11 to 12. Some, if not all, are diesel-engined, and by the fitting of extra fuel tanks in the holds, they probably all have a big endurance.

(iv) Fuel. – Some of them undoubtedly make use of supply ships, such as the Altmark and Rekum, but Raider C is reported to have relied solely on her captures for fresh supplies of fuel and provisions. Her Captain, nevertheless, intended to beat the Wolf's record in the last war of 420 days at sea and seems well on the way to doing so. It is probable that the supply ships also act as scouts, reporting the position, course and speed of likely victims to the raiders. It is difficult to state where refuelling is most likely to take place but it appears possible that one area is within a radius of 300 miles of 23°N., 40° W., while another very probable area is south of St. Helena about 28° S., 6° W. Raiders almost certainly retire to remote areas periodically to carry out self-refits and rest, but except in the Pacific, there is no evidence of the establishment of a base on shore.

(v) Objectives. – It is probable that, as in the last war, the Captains of the raiders are left a very great measure of initiative. They do however appear to follow closely the general policy laid down by Admiral Raeder, namely to be content with small gains, not to risk their ships by attacks on defended objectives and to rely on the cumulative effect of the loss of two or three ships per month and the disorganization caused to trade by British counter measures. Surface commerce warfare is designed to supplement the U-boat and air offensive.

(vi) Tactics. – Raider C is reported to have varied one week’s slow hunting with two weeks’ reconditioning, when, presumably, she changed her area of operations. She does not appear to have tried to make a second attack in any one area if the first victim was able to make a distress message, but if no distress message was made two or three attacks might be made in the same area. Other raiders probably operate on much the same system. The first object in any attack is to disable the W/T apparatus and bridge and the second to prevent the merchant ship’s gun being
manned or brought to bear. From such reports as have been received, raiders appear usually to approach from ahead on a gradually converging course, opening fire with little or no warning at short range. Some attacks in the North Atlantic seem to have been of the “sink without trace” variety but in other areas, once it has become obvious that the crew of the merchantman is abandoning ship, the conduct of the raiders has been reasonable.

(vii) **Intelligence.**—The finding of victims must depend to some extent on chance, but as suggested above, assistance is probably given by supply ships, which might cruise in company at visibility distance, as in the Pacific, or be several hundred miles away and report by W/T. Aircraft are also used, while D/F and reporting organizations in neutral and British Empire ports provide other sources of shipping intelligence.

(viii) **Home Bases.**—The crews of several ships attacked by raiders both in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean have been reported as prisoners of war in France and Germany. These may have been brought back in supply ships but it is probable that the Germans have succeeded in getting one or two prizes to Bordeaux or other French Atlantic ports. The Dutch Kertosono reached Lorient with a prize crew in July, 1940, but no other definite reports of prizes reaching occupied territory have been received. The Tropic Sea scuttled herself when intercepted in the Bay of Biscay on September 3, when she was making for Bordeaux, while it is probable that the Tiranna was torpedoed by H.M.S. Tuna off the Gironde on September 22. The Rekum is known to have put into St. Nazaire in October, after having acted as a supply ship, and although there is no definite evidence yet of raiders themselves using French occupied ports it is possible that they would find Bordeaux or St. Nazaire more convenient than a German port. The Hipper Class cruiser was at Brest during January and returned there again after her attack on SLS.64 on February 12.42

4.23 On 28 March 1941 WIR number 55, dated 4 April 1941, reported under the heading 'Raider activity', '6. It is now known that five more ships were attacked by the battle cruisers or an armed merchant raider on March 15 and 16' and, further, that a raider had been sighted in the South Atlantic Ocean. It noted:

She was described as being similar to the Weser, or alternatively like the “fruit” ship shown in C.A.F.O. 143/41, with disguised funnel, but judging by her smoke she appeared to be coal-fired.43
4.24 On 11 May 1941 the Minister for the Navy, Mr Hughes, released a statement, which was also broadcast on the ABC, dealing with the capture by HMAS CANBERRA and HMS LEANDER of a ‘German raider supply ship’. This was KETTY BROVIG.

4.25 WIR number 55 published the second photograph of a raider, SANTA CRUZ (THOR).

![Image of SANTA CRUZ](Photo courtesy of National Archives of Australia)

Figure 4.6 The raider SANTA CRUZ (THOR)

The report about SANTA CRUZ was the first item in WIR number 56:

The German raider *Santa Cruz* which is known to have been operating in the North Atlantic in March was attended by a tanker which refuelled the ex-Norwegian whale-catchers subsequently intercepted by H.M.S. Scarborough on March 6 in approximately 27° 00' N., 42° 00' W. The *Santa Cruz* was built in 1938 and used to belong to the Oldenburg-Portugal line. She is a ship of 3,862 tons with a listed speed of 16 knots. It is probable that she can do at least 18 knots. The picture is from a pre-war photograph and it is probable that her Sampson [sic] posts have been removed and that the forewell deck has dummy bulwarks giving a flush line from the forecastle to the midship superstructure. Her bow lines are noticeably fine. The *Santa Cruz* was reported to have a very foul bottom and may have been at sea for a considerable time. She might be Raider D of the Appreciation of Raider Activities, 1940 (in W.I.R. for January 17, 1941), but it appears that the Germans have fitted out several ships of similar appearance, one type being similar to the *Fels* class of the Hansa Line and other similar to the *Santa Cruz* or other fruit-ships.

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44 AWM.002.0139; AWM.002.0155; AWM.002.0156
45 NAA.006.0150 at 0152
46 NAA.006.0150 at 0152
4.26 On 2 May 1941 WIR number 60 reported that some time before 18 April 1941 a trawler had struck a mine off Newcastle, New South Wales, and had sunk with loss of life.47

4.27 On 9 May 1941 WIR number 61 noted, under the heading ‘Raider activity’, that a recently laid mine had been washed ashore off Norah Head, New South Wales, and that a ship had been lost west of Colombo as a result of raider activity.48

4.28 On 16 May 1941 WIR number 62 reported that HMS CORNWALL had sunk a raider in the Indian Ocean. The disguise of the raider was not penetrated until 12,000 yards. During the ensuing encounter, the raider had ‘opened fire with accuracy and rapidity’.49 Fifty-three German sailors and 27 prisoners were rescued, but a further 206 prisoners lost their lives during the action.50 The report also noted, ‘There is a possibility that a raider is again operating in the Pacific’.51

4.29 On 19 May 1941 the Combined Operational Intelligence Centre Weekly Summary of Operational Intelligence, having referred to the sighting of a ship in the New Hebrides and two aircraft sightings, concluded:

There has been no evidence to suggest the presence of enemy raiders on the Australia Station subsequent to the above reports.52

... 

b. Latest D/F intelligence shows there to be at least one other enemy unit still in the Indian Ocean. This was considered to be within 200 miles of 6°.50’ South 73°.40’ East on May 17th.

Comment

This unit could reach the Western limits of the Australia station by May 21st at 15 knots.

c. Vessel resembling Indian Ocean raider “ATLANTIS” (No.16) was sighted in the South Atlantic on May 3rd.

Comment

This ship could reach the western limits of Australia Station by 27th May at 12 knots.53
4.30 On 23 May 1941 WIR number 63 plotted the supposed course of the raider sunk by HMS CORNWALL. The chart (see Figure 4.7) showed that the raider had been off the Australian coast.54

![Figure 4.7 Plotted course of the raider sunk by HMS CORNWALL](image)

4.31 On 30 May 1941 WIR number 64 reported that a raider thought to have been in the Indian Ocean had attacked an Egyptian ship off St Helena.56 It also reported that the supply ship KULMERLAND had returned to Bordeaux, and ‘It is therefore probable that the two Pacific raiders have also returned to France or Germany’.57 Another raider, Ship 10, was also thought to have returned to Germany.58

4.32 On 30 May 1941 the Admiralty published a supplement to WIR number 64, entitled *Raider Supplement*.59 A comprehensive statement of the then known information about each raider, it gave details of seven raiders—known as raiders A to G—one of which, raider F, was noted as having been sunk by CORNWALL. It gave a general overview of raider activity and, where possible, a picture or silhouette of each raider and descriptions that might assist in the ship’s recognition. Particular

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54 NAA.007.0041
55 NAA.007.0041 at 0056
56 NAA.007.0083 at 0096
57 NAA.007.0083 at 0097
58 NAA.007.0083 at 0097
59 NAA.027.0036 at 0037 to 0050
attention was paid to features such as size, bow shape, stern shape, superstructure, gunnery and disguises.\textsuperscript{60}

The Australian National Archives copy of the \textit{Raider Supplement} bears a notation indicating that it had been read by an officer on 9 September 1941.\textsuperscript{61} That is consistent with it having arrived in Australia by ship some time in August and having then been distributed. It can safely be assumed it was read by CAPT Burnett around that time. In the light of its temporal proximity to the loss of SYDNEY in November 1941, I set out much of what appears in the supplement.\textsuperscript{62} I also reproduce the picture of the raider, where one was provided in the supplement, to aid interpretation.

\textbf{German Surface Raiders}

Since the beginning of the war German warships and auxiliary cruisers have inflicted considerable damage on British and Allied shipping. Up to the end of March, 1941, they had sunk or captured at least 102 ships totalling 589,035 tons in the Atlantic Ocean, 29 ships totalling 194,629 tons in the Indian Ocean, and 14 ships totalling 93,648 tons in the Pacific, making a grand total of 145 ships of 877,312 tons.

\textbf{ARMED MERCHANT RAIDERS}

\textit{Numbers}

Armed Merchant Raiders have been operating continuously since April, 1940, the numbers at sea varying from four to six. Though these numbers might be increased in the future, it is possible that supply and other operational difficulties will prevent the Germans from keeping more than six at sea at any one time.

\textit{Characteristics}

Though differing in details, armed merchant raiders are very similar in many respects. It is possible that sister ships have been deliberately converted, to increase the difficulties of identifying them.

\textit{Size}

The raiders are not big ships, the largest being about 10,000 tons, and it is unlikely that passenger liners will be used for this purpose. Fast modern cargo or fruit ships, with a large radius of action and a comparatively small silhouette, have proved more suitable than converted liners.

\textsuperscript{60} NAA.027.0036 at 0039 to 0049
\textsuperscript{61} NAA.027.0036 at 0050
\textsuperscript{62} NAA.027.0036
Numbers and Names

All raiders are known by a number, but these are not allotted consecutively, so that the fact that there is a Number 46 does not indicate that there are 46 commerce raiders. In addition they appear to have names. These are used both as a disguise and for purposes of recognition with other raiders and supply ships. These names are frequently changed and are not, therefore, of any great value. This is all the more true since two raiders are both thought to have used the name Narvik.

Supplies

All the raiders are very well equipped and capable of remaining at sea for at least twelve months. With the possible exception of the Pacific, they do not appear to rely on shore bases, though they probably have definite areas at sea for rendezvous with supply ships and for resting and refits. It is also possible that they make use of islands in the Southern Indian Ocean and of anchorages on the South American coast for more extended self-refits and for a run ashore for their crews.

The lower holds, deep tanks and double bottoms enable them to carry large quantities of fuel, while most, if not all, of them operate in company with tankers, which are relieved from time to time as necessary. An additional but valuable source of supply is provided by their prizes. On the whole, fuel does not present the same problem as it did in the last war, but there have been several reports which show that raiders have run dangerously short of provisions.

Fuelling is carried out at sea by means of a length of flexible hose stopped by canvas becets to a seven-inch manilla, the raider usually towing the tanker at slow speed. The system does not appear always to have worked satisfactorily and is in any case a slow one. In consequence raiders take every opportunity of topping up and keeping their tanks full.

Disguises

Great use is made of disguises. All funnels and topmasts are telescopic, and dummy funnels, ventilators, sampson [sic] posts, etc., are often rigged. This is carefully done so that the raider can be made to resemble a Swedish, Japanese or even British ship as required. In addition, false bulwarks in the well decks, false deck houses, boats and deck cargo, assist in changing the ship’s appearance. Repainting is done so frequently that reports of the colours which a suspicious ship or raider is painted are quite valueless 24 hours later.

Special workshops and ratings are carried to make and manipulate these disguises and also to carry out the extensive repairs necessitated by the long periods at sea.
Crew

The crews carried are large, at least 300 and probably 400. They are mainly young regular naval ratings, but some are reservists from the merchant navy who have had peace-time experience of the waters in which the raider is to operate. This is particularly true of the officers, who are in a position to advise the captain of the types and habits of shipping likely to be encountered.

OPERATIONAL AREAS AND STRATEGY

Each raider appears to be allotted to an operational area and there are few instances of a raider making an attack outside its own area, though in some instances two raiders appear to have operated in fairly close company. No armed merchant raider is known to have made an attack in the Atlantic north of 40°N. and it is probable that this area is reserved for warships which have more chance of escaping from or dealing with the more numerous British forces likely to be encountered there. On the whole, merchant raiders have avoided the well-known focal areas and have been content to exact a small but steady toll of shipping using the less congested routes. Where attacks have been made in focal areas the raider has always retired as soon as his position has been compromised.

The German Admiralty appears to exercise a general control over the broad strategy and movements of the raiders, but, as in the last war, a very large measure of initiative is left to the individual captains. They do, however, appear to follow closely the general policy laid down by Admiral Raeder, namely, to be content with small gains, not to risk their ships by attacks on warships, even if of inferior strength or on defended shore objectives, and to rely on the cumulative effect of the loss of two or three ships per month and the disorganisation caused to trade by our countermeasures.

Raiders appear to have varied one week’s slow hunting with two weeks’ reconditioning, when presumably they changed their areas of operations and altered their appearance. They have not, on the whole, tried to make a second attack in any one area if the first victim was able to make a distress message, but have steamed away at 15 or 16 knots for 12 hours or more. On the other hand, if no distress message was made, they have remained in the same area, attacking two or more ships within the space of a few days.

Importance is attached to the nuisance value of minelaying. It is not thought that many mines are ever laid at one time, as the chances of the raider being detected would be too great. It is possible that the ferocity of raiders’ attacks on ships are due to their fear of a victim scoring one lucky hit on their stock of mines.
TACTICS

The tactics employed have varied with the individual captains. When raiders first began operating they appear to have relied mainly on their innocent appearance and on merchant captains’ ignorance of the existence of disguised raiders, to approach their victims on a gradually converging course. Fire would then be opened without warning in an effort to destroy the W/T room before a distress message could be made, and also to prevent resistance being offered.

This method is still scoring successes, but in many cases, something more subtle has been required. One method is to locate a victim by air reconnaissance or masthead look-out during daylight, and then, lowering the telescopic topmasts and funnel, shadow until darkness enables an undetected approach to be made. Alternatively the raider may pass her victim some distance away during daylight and then, when she is out of sight, turn and overtake during darkness.

A second method is for the raider’s aircraft, which has British marking, to drop a message to the merchant ship, ordering her to steer a certain course as raiders are in the vicinity. This course, in actual fact, brings the victim straight to the raider.

The aircraft may also attempt by bombing to force the merchant ship to stop and not to use her W/T, but this is unlikely to be very effective. Some successes have been scored by aircraft diving low at a ship with a trailing hook device which brings down the W/T aerial; but if Admiralty instructions concerning the rigging of a jury aerial are adhered to, this danger will be overcome.

Another method is for a raider to make a false SOS, but there is only one known instance of this.

Whatever the method of approaching the victim, the attack is always sudden and severe, the primary targets being the bridge, W/T room, and gun. No attempt is made to spare the crew until the destruction of these points has been achieved and in some cases firing has continued for twenty minutes or more, both with the main armament and with pom-poms, long after it was obvious that no attempt at resistance was being made. Torpedoes are apparently only used to “finish off” a disabled vessel.

INTELLIGENCE

Raiders, particularly in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, appear to be very well informed about British and Allied shipping movements. There appears to be no doubt that they have agents in Empire and neutral ports who supply them with this information.

Another source of information is provided by their supply ships, who may be hundreds of miles away and report by W/T the position, course and speed of any ships sighted.
PRIZES

Raiders have succeeded in taking a number of prizes. Some of these have been retained for a few weeks and used as prison ships, before being sent home. Others, tankers with full cargoes of fuel oil, have been retained for longer periods, acting as supply ships, prison ships, scouts and even auxiliary minelayers ...

RAIDER “A”

1. REAL IDENTITY. Not known.

2. NAMES. Narvik or The Black Ship. Orion in brass letters on stern (painted over). Rocus, Mandu.

3 NUMBER. Possibly No. 41 or 21.

4. SILHOUETTE. This was made from a very poor photograph and from sketches done from memory by British prisoners. It is believed to be reasonably accurate.

5. APPEARANCE. Reported to resemble Uckermark. Sits low in water. Slightly raked bow, counter stern. Squat oval funnel close abaft bridge. Two boats each side abaft funnel not visible in silhouette. Foremast well aft and mainmast well forward. Looks like a tramp.

6. DISGUISES. Not recorded.

7. DIMENSIONS. 8,000 to 10,000 tons.

8. ENGINES. Two Diesels driving one shaft. Reported to smoke a great deal, but this is possibly due to unsuitable fuel. Speed with clean bottom, 18 knots.

9. ARMAMENT AND EQUIPMENT. Probably six 5.9-in. Guns, two 4-in., several H.A. guns and pom-poms. Probably four above-water torpedo tubes. Mines. At least one seaplane, probably an Arado. This may be fitted with a machine-gun and bomb-racks, but is mainly used for reconnaissance.

10. TACTICS. Has used false distress messages to attract victims. Worked in company with Raider “B” and Kulmerland, cruising at extreme visibility distance by day, closing in at night.


12. PRESENT LOCATION. Unknown, possibly returned to Germany.
...  

**RAIDER “B”**

1. **REAL IDENTITY.** Possibly *ex* submarine depot ship *Erwin Wassner*.

2. **NAMES.** *Manyo Maru*

3. **NUMBER.** Possibly 41 (if “A” is not) or 21.

4. **SILHOUETTE.** Prepared from a poor photograph and sketches made from memory by British prisoners. Believed to be reasonably correct.

5. **APPEARANCE.** Raked bow, cruiser stern. Foremast abaft the well deck, funnel (probably telescopic) close abaft the bridge. Dummy bulwarks in the fore well deck give an unbroken line from forecastle to bridge structure. Sampson [sic] posts immediately before and abaft midship superstructure. Cross-trees on both fore and main masts very high up.


7. **DIMENSIONS.** 4,000 to 5,000 tons. (If this ship is the *Erwin Wassner* her tonnage is 3,866.) Length about 350 ft. Beam about 50ft.

8. **ENGINES.** Reported to be diesel (*Erwin Wassner* had turbines) Speed with clean bottom 19 knots.

9. **ARMAMENT & EQUIPMENT.** Six to eight 5.9-in. guns. Three guns and two above-water torpedo tubes on each side in Nos. 1 and 2 hatches. H.A. pom-poms reported to be raised from shelter deck to forecastle deck level by electric lifts. Possibly one under-water torpedo tube in the bows, but this is very doubtful. One seaplane, probably an *Arado*, which may be fitted with a machine-

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*NAA.027.0036 at 0039*
gun and bomb racks but is mainly used for reconnaissance. Probably fitted for minelaying.

10. TACTICS. No information.

11. AREA OF OPERATIONS. Pacific, Australasian waters.

12. PRESENT LOCATION. Unknown. Has probably returned to Germany.

RAIDER “C”

1. REAL IDENTITY. Unknown. Probably a Hansa Line cargo vessel [built] in August, 1939, or one of the Fels class.

2. NAMES. Atlantis, Tamesis, Willi, Kakimaru (when masquerading as Japanese with K on funnel), Kross (Russian), Grioteland, Coldmeil.

3. NUMBER. 16

4. PHOTOGRAPHS. Taken by an engineer in Norwegian Teddy when the latter was captured, 8th November, 1940.

5. APPEARANCE. Typical cargo liner. Raked bow, cruiser stern, two heavy masts and big funnel. Large bridge superstructure. Dummy bulwarks in fore well deck give an unbroken line from forecastle head to bridge. Noticeable features are foremast stays, which are carried seven ft. in-board to allow gun flaps to fold clear, and single Sampson [sic] post on centre line at break of poop deck (this may be movable).

6. DISGUISES. P. and O. Liner, Japanese freighter or British armed merchant cruiser. Frequently rigs a dummy funnel between the real one and the bridge, and can change the shape of the genuine funnel from circular to oval by plating. Funnel and top masts

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Figure 4.9 Raider B

...
telescopic. Dummy ventilators made of oil drums can also be rigged, and deck houses considerably altered. Dummy bulwarks rigged in the well decks give an unbroken line from bow to stern.

7. DIMENSIONS. 8,000 to 9,000 tons.


9. ARMAMENT AND EQUIPMENT. Three 5.9-in. guns on each side (six in all) on main deck below No.2 hatch. Possibly one in after well deck. Possibly one 5.9-in. gun under poop deck, with 4.7-in from Teddy above it. Two 4-in. on each side on main deck below No.1 hatch. One H.A. 3-in. right forward, H.A. machine-guns on the bridge and abaft the funnel. Two above-water torpedo tubes on each side below the bridge (four in all).

Rangefinders on each side abreast of the funnel. Main magazine in No.1 hold. Main shell room in No.5 hold abaft the main mast. Ready-use shell room abaft the funnel on No.2 deck and ready-use rack by guns. One S/L, probably 24-in., on each side of the upper bridge. Fitted for minelaying.

One seaplane carried in No.2 hold. This is fitted with machine-gun and bomb racks and a trailing hook device to destroy merchant ships’ W/T aerials. Possibly has a smoke-screen apparatus on both sides abaft the funnels. Wicker covered stone jars on poop, believed to contain smoke floats.

10. TACTICS. (a) Makes considerable use of her aircraft, using British markings, for the following purposes:- (i) To drop false messages stating that a German raider is in the vicinity and giving directions for a course which actually leads the victim to the raider; (ii) to dive and destroy the aerial; and (iii) to bomb ships and compel them to stop.

(b) Represents herself as a British armed merchant cruiser (H.M.S. Antenor) and sends a boarding party to examine the merchant ship’s papers. The boarding party then seize the ship.

(c) Alternates one week’s hunting with two weeks’ slow cruising, when refits and changes of appearance are undertaken. These periods also rest the crew and give time to change the area of operations.

(d) False navigational lights, carried on sides and on Sampson [sic] posts, are shown at night to give the impression that she is altering course away from a victim.

(e) Smoke apparatus in the funnel is used to simulate a coal-burning ship, especially at the beginning of each watch as though she were a steamship cleaning fires.
11. AREA OF OPERATIONS. Indian Ocean

12. PRESENT LOCATION. Unknown. May have returned to Germany, but possibly is still in the Indian Ocean.

![Figure 4.10 Raider C65](image)

... 

25. The present whereabouts of Raider “C” are not known. She may still be in the Indian Ocean. If so she has not made any attacks since early February, and it is more probable that she has returned home.

**RAIDER “D”**

1. REAL IDENTITY. Fruit ship.

2. NAME. **Narvik**.

3. NUMBER. Probably 21

4. SILHOUETTE OR PHOTOGRAPH. None

5. APPEARANCE. Modern fruit ship, raked bow, cruiser stern. Two masts and one squat funnel. Forecastle flush to bridge. The deck aft of the midship superstructure is noticeably lower than that forward of it. Reported to resemble **Ahrensberg**.

6. DISGUISES. Uses Swedish and American colours.

7. DIMENSIONS. About 4,000 to 5,000 tons.

8. ENGINES. Probably Diesel, with a speed of 18 knots.

9. ARMAMENT AND EQUIPMENT. Probably six to eight 5.9-in. H.A. guns and pom-poms. Torpedo tubes. Not known if fitted for minelaying or if an aircraft is carried.

10. TACTICS. Has made several night attacks of a very brutal type, one at least being the “sink without trace” variety. Apparently
shadows her victim by day and approaches to a very close range at dark or first light.

11. AREA OF OPERATIONS. North Atlantic south of 40° N.

12. PRESENT LOCATION. Probably returned to Brest about the middle of November. May still be refitting, but may have put to sea again.

...  

16. May now have put to sea again.

RAIDER “E”

1. REAL IDENTITY. Santa Cruz. (Fruit ship of Oldenburg Portugese Line and sister ship to Erwin Wassner. May have been taken over by the navy before the outbreak of war.)

2. NAME. Vir (when masquerading as Yugoslav).

3. NUMBER. 10.

4. PHOTOGRAPHS. Taken before the war. Sampson [sic] posts possibly now removed.

5. APPEARANCE. Well raked slightly clipper bows, cruiser stern, two masts. One funnel close abaft the bridge. Some passenger accommodation. Very fine lines forward. Dummy bulwarks in the well deck give unbroken, noticeably straight, lines from bow to stern.

6. DISGUISES. Might attempt to disguise herself as an American fruit ship. Only report received mentions Yugoslav colours.

7. DIMENSIONS. 3,866 tons

8. ENGINES. Speed 19 to 20 knots with clean bottom.

9. ARMAMENT AND EQUIPMENT. Not definitely known, but probably eight 5.9-in. guns (four per broadside). Torpedo-tubes, probably two per broadside. Fitted for minelaying. One seaplane with British markings.

10. TACTICS. Not recorded

11. AREA OF OPERATIONS. (i) Western South Atlantic, 1940. (ii) Cape Verdes - Freetown - Pernambuco triangle, 1941.

12. PRESENT LOCATION. Not known. Possibly still as in (ii) above, but reported to have returned to Germany in April, 1941 (graded B2)

13. CAPTAIN. Kahler. Obviously very capable.

14. GENERAL NOTES. One of the most successful of the raiders.
RAIDER “F”

No.33 was engaged and sunk by H.M.S. Cornwall 500 miles north of the Seychelles on 8th May 1941. In appearance and equipment she was very similar to the other Indian Ocean raider, Raider “C” (No.16)

CAPTAIN. Kuhn

9. Captured Storstad in estimated position 036°S., 114°E. about 19th October. Storstad was retained as a prison and supply ship until 8th January, when she was sent back to Pauillac, where she arrived on 5th February. Storstad was directed to the raider by a false message from the latter’s aircraft stating that raiders were in the vicinity and ordering her to steer a certain course. No distress message received.

10. According to two reports, Storstad laid mines in Australian waters, probably in Spencer Gulf (where Hertford was mined on 7th December but was towed into port) and in Bass Straits (where Cambridge was sunk on 7th November and the U.S. City of Rayville on 8th November). Raider “F” in the meantime was reported to have mined Hobart Straits, where mines were discovered on 4th January.

26. Sank British Empire in 008 30’N., 056°25’E. on 7th May.

27. Sighted by aircraft from H.M.S. Cornwall in the early morning of 8th May. Chased all day, brought to action and sunk in 003° 30’N., 057° 40’E.

When the report that British Emperor was sinking was received, H.M.S. Cornwall closed towards the position at high speed in accordance with
The Loss of HMAS SYDNEY II

orders from C.-in-C., East Indies. She carried out a vigorous search and at 0219 G.M.T. on 8th May her aircraft, which was 60 miles away, reported a suspicious vessel. An all-day chase ensued, Raider “F” disguising herself effectively as the Norwegian Tamerlane, and making a raider distress signal as though from that ship. Touch was maintained with her by Cornwall’s aircraft from time to time. At 1100 G.M.T. she was sighted by H.M.S. Cornwall and at a distance of about 17 miles turned away and made the distress signal. Her disguise was not fully penetrated until the range dropped to 12,000 yards. After a second warning shot had been fired she turned and opened fast and accurate fire at 1215. At 1225 she blew up with a large explosion, possibly owing to the 150 mines she was reported to have on board.

RAIDER “G”

1. REAL IDENTITY. Unknown.
2. NAMES. None recorded
3. NUMBER. 46
4. SILHOUETTE OR PHOTOGRAPH. None
5. APPEARANCE. Squat funnel in centre of rather high superstructure. Stern half-counter, half-cruiser type. Reported to resemble a modified Kulmerland.
6. DISGUISES. None recorded.
7. DIMENSIONS. Estimated 10,000 tons
8. ENGINES. Probably Diesel
9. ARMAMENT AND EQUIPMENT. Reported to be the only raider fitted with under-water torpedo tubes. Very completely equipped, probably on same general lines as the other raiders.
10. TACTICS. Not recorded.
11. AREA OF OPERATIONS. Atlantic.
12. PRESENT LOCATION. Possibly South Atlantic.
13. CAPTAIN. Name unknown.
14. GENERAL NOTES. Only completed at the end of 1940. Reported to be the best equipped of all the raiders. There is very little information about her, and the reconstruction of her cruise is mainly conjectured.
RECONSTRUCTION OF CRUISE

*1. Left Germany early in January 1941.

2. Sank *British Union* by shelling and torpedo in 026° 34'N., 030° 58'W. during the night of 18th January. Distress message received.


*5. May now be operating in the South Atlantic.

4.33 On 6 June 1941 WIR number 65 recorded details of the battle on 27 February between HMS LEANDER and a raider identified as RAMB I. At 1115 LEANDER went to action stations, ‘but her turrets remained fore and aft’, at a range of 5½ miles. At 10,000 yards LEANDER ordered colours to be hoisted. After four minutes the stranger hoisted the Red Ensign. LEANDER ordered the hoisting of signal letters and this order was obeyed after five minutes, but the letters hoisted did not correlate with any book of reference. LEANDER made the secret challenge, to no response. LEANDER decided to board and ordered the vessel to stop instantly. Again, no response. As LEANDER was preparing to fire a shot across the vessel’s bow, RAMB I hoisted the Italian mercantile ensign and a few moments later began to train her guns on LEANDER.

By then LEANDER, which had intended to take station on the vessel’s bow, was slightly forward of the starboard beam. Her armaments were at once ordered to train on the target. RAMB I opened with inaccurate fire, to immediate response from LEANDER at a range of 3,000 yards. LEANDER fired five salvos in one minute. The Italian ship was hit and subsequently abandoned. LEANDER’s boats approached to try to prevent scuttling but the Italians told the men not to board the ship, which was on fire, because she was laden with ammunition. The ship subsequently sank after two heavy explosions on board.

If CAPT Burnett read WIR number 65, as he certainly would have, it is reasonable to assume he would have appreciated that an unidentified merchant vessel that turned out to be an enemy raider:

- had been dilatory in responding to signals to identify herself
- flew a false flag

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67 NAA.007.0115 at 0119 to 0120
68 NAA.007.0115 at 0120
• could not respond to the secret challenge
• had opened with inaccurate fire, causing no damage to the warship.

He would also have noted that the warship:
• went to action stations at a modest distance—5½ miles
• did not train her guns on the vessel until the enemy flag was flown
• before identification was made, had achieved a station almost abeam the unidentified vessel
• opened fire at a distance of 3,000 yards
• contemplated boarding the vessel to prevent her scuttling.

4.34 On 16 June 1941 the Combined Operational Intelligence Centre Weekly Summary 5 reported:

The “KYOKUYO MARU” the 17,000 ton oil-refinery ship commissioned in 1938, one of the eleven tankers and whalers suspected of supplying fuel to German raiders and reported as having been blacklisted by the British Government was reported by the U.S. Naval Authorities, Seattle, as having been practically hove-to in mid-Pacific on 27/5 and 28/5 during her voyage to Japan from Los Angeles.

...There has been no raider activity reported in the Indian Ocean and it is considered that Raiders No.46 and No.16 both of which were last reported in the Atlantic are possibly the only raiders at present operating.

...A report previously received states “ERLANGEN” was to supply German raiders south of Cape Horn.69

4.35 On 23 June 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 7 reported:

2. WEST of Australia Station
   a) INDIAN OCEAN – Poor D/F bearings on June 23rd indicated that an enemy unit was either in the Indian Ocean or South Atlantic but Admiralty consider probably the latter.
   b) ATLANTIC OCEAN – No. 16 is considered to be still operating in the South Atlantic. German supply ship

69 NAA 011 0298 at 0301 to 0302
“ALSTERTOR” was intercepted and scuttled 220 miles south west of Kallundborg June 23rd carrying survivors from the ships “Rabaul” and “Trafalgar”. These ships were sunk by No.16 in the South Atlantic on May 14th and 24th. German supply ship “Babbitonga” proceeding southward was intercepted in position 2°5’ South 27°42’ on June 21st which may indicate that No.16 is not returning home.70

4.36 On 7 July 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 8 commented:

The longitude 88° East passes approx through Calcutta. The only recent intelligence to suggest the possibility of an enemy unit being in the Indian Ocean was Admiralty’s recent signal stating that poor D/F bearings on June 23rd indicating the presence of an enemy unit either in the Indian Ocean or South Atlantic but probably the latter.

Admiralty advised at 1819B/2 that it was impossible at that date to determine whether a raider was operating in the Indian Ocean.71

4.37 On 4 July 1941 WIR number 69 reported the sinking by raiders of two ships off South Africa in the Indian Ocean.72

4.38 On 11 July 1941 WIR number 70 reported, ‘No raider activity in the Indian Ocean has been reported since sinking of Raider F (No. 33) by H.M.S. Cornwall on 8th May’.73

4.39 On 14 July 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 9 reported:

GENERAL COMMENT ON RAIDER ACTIVITY

It would appear probable that there are 2 raiders at present operating in the Atlantic and probably one in the Indian Ocean. No.16 was last reported as sinking “TRAFLGAR” on 24th May in the Sth. Atlantic in position 25°S, 1°E so could have reached the area of the Indian Ocean reports by June 26th. Furthermore, Admiralty obtained a poor D/F bearing on June 23rd which indicated an enemy unit in either Indian Ocean or South Atlantic. It was considered probable at the time that No.16 was still in the Sth. Atlantic as her supply ship “BABITONGA” was proceeding south when intercepted N.E. of Pernambuco on 21st June. It now seems possible that No.16 proceeded to the Indian Ocean after sinking “Trafalgar”. The only other recent intelligence suggesting the presence of a raider in either Pacific or Indian Ocean is the report of an unidentified 12,000 ton German ship at Yokohama on 7th July. This is similar in appearance to Indian and Atlantic Ocean raider types. It could not, however, have reached Yokohama by 7/7 from the

70 NAA.011.0283 at 0285
71 NAA.011.0275 at 0279
72 NAA.007.0252 at 0263
73 NAA.007.0292 at 0303
position of the recent Indian Ocean raider report of June 26th and, if a raider, is more likely to have come from the Atlantic via the Horn.74

Referring to ships reported to be in Yokohama port, it detailed:

It is thought possible that the 12,000 ton ship may be a raider and that the other 3 vessels with her in Yokohama are to act or have acted as supply ships ... The size and suggested appearance of the fourth unidentified ship of 12,000 tons, which a fairly similar to those of the Indian and Atlantic Ocean raider types suggest that she may well be a raider which has proceeded from the Atlantic via the Horn using the other units as supply ships en route.75

4.40 On 19 July 1941 WIR number 71, under the heading ‘Raider activity’, referred to an absence of news from two vessels in the Indian Ocean. After referring to the receipt of a raider distress message on 26 June 1941 it noted, ‘... but it is not at present considered certain that a raider has been operating in the Bay of Bengal’.76

It also published a picture of Raider No. 16.

4.41 On 21 July 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 10 reported that a two-masted vessel thought to be a lugger had been sighted 50 miles north-west of Darwin. It said:

The raider thought to be operating east of Ceylon on 26/6 could have reached the position of sighting at an average speed of 12-13 knots although it would seem improbable that a raider would take a course in such close proximity to Darwin.77

Under the heading ‘Raiders’ it reported:

RAIDERS – Admiralty’s last signal on raider activity dated 15th July indicates that there are probably at least 3 raiders operating at present, viz.

(a) One in North Atlantic (possibly No. 46)

(b) One in South Atlantic (there have been no recent attacks in this area but No. 16 is believed to still be there).

(c) One in either Indian or Pacific Oceans. There have been no subsequent reports of attacks since C. in C East Indies advice of the “MAREEBA” and “VELEBIT” being overdue and the faint Q distress message being picked up by the “West Point” on 26/6.
The fact that the Norwegian ship “SOPHOCLES” is overdue at Capetown from Karachi since July 15 suggests the possibility that this raider may have moved to the west side of the Indian Ocean.

Further information is being sought regarding the possibility of the 12,000 tons unidentified ship sighted at Yokohama on July 5th being a German raider.78

4.42 On 28 July 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 11 reported:

Admiralty report a D/F indication of the presence of an enemy unit in the Indian Ocean on 17th and 21st July and suggest this to be probably the raider which attacked “MAREEBA” and “VELEBIT”. This would rule out the possibility of the same unit having been in the position of the Norfolk Island sighting on 15/7 as previously suggested. unless, as would appear unlikely, there was more than one raider operating in the area.79

And, under the heading ‘Raider activity general’:

23. … Admiralty’s last signal of 22nd July indicates that there were still probably 3 raiders operating, namely, one in North Atlantic, one in South Atlantic, and one in the Indian Ocean. (Also refer Para.16 for Raider in Indian Ocean.)80

4.43 On 31 July 1941 the COIC Daily Summary reported:

RAIDER ACTIVITY – D/F indications on 25th and 29th July point to the presence of a raider in the southern Indian Ocean probably in the area between the Kerguelen and Amsterdam Islands.

Comment – The following is a list of possible raider indications in the Indian Ocean area since 1st June:-

(1) “MAREEBA” and “VELEBIT” are presumed sunk about 26/6 about in position 8°N 88°E;

(2) D/F indications on 17th and 21st July considered to be possibly communication between a German raider and her supply ship possibly arranging to transfer prisoners from the “VELEBIT” and “MAREEBA”.

(3) The British ship “CROMARTY” (4,974 tons – 10 knots) has not yet been reported arrived at Capetown from Fremantle where she was due on 16/7. She was reported overdue on 20/7.81

78 NAA.011.0257 at 0261 to 0262
79 NAA.011.0249
80 NAA.011.0249 at 0253
81 SPC.001.0041 at 0041 to 0042
On 4 August 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 12 stated:

12. **Raider Activity in Indian Ocean** – The “CROMARTY” reported
   
   a) overdue since 16/7 arrived Capetown on 23/7.
   
   b) D/F indications on 25th and 29th July point to the presence of a raider in the southern Indian Ocean probably in the area between the Kerguelen and Amsterdam Islands.

   The following list of possible raider indications in the Indian Ocean area since 1st June is as follows [sic] -

   (1) “MAREEBA” and “VELEBIT” are presumed sunk about 26/6 about in position 8°N 88°E;
   
   (2) D/F indications on 17th and 21st July considered to be possibly communication between a German raider and her supply ship possibly arranging to transfer prisoners from the “VELEBIT” and “MAREEBA”;
   
   (3) The Norwegian vessel “EIDSVOLD” (4,184 tons – 12) ...

   PS Raider Activity in Indian Ocean. – Para. 12(b)3

   Further advice shows that the “EIDSVOLD” is due to arrive Rottnest Is. (W.A) on 5/8.82

And, under the heading ‘Enemy warships and raiders’:

16. **RAIDER ACTIVITY – GENERAL** – Following the interrogation

   a) of survivors from the “TOTTENHAM” which was sunk by a raider in the South Atlantic on 17th June it is learnt that this ship was not sunk by No.16 as previously thought but by a smaller raider of 3,000 to 3,500 tons. Description – funnel medium thickness, close to and 6 feet higher than bridge, diesel engine, cruiser stern. At least one gun firing ahead. General impression, similar to No.10 (Santa Cruz) though No.10 is thought to be still in Germany.

   Comment – From the description this unit appears of similar type to “MANYO MARU”.

   b) As this raider may also have been responsible for the attack on the “Balzac” off Pernambuco about 22nd June and a distress message picked up from 1°16’S, 30°00’W on 5/7, No.16 could be operating either in the North Atlantic or Indian Oceans. A German prisoner suggests No.16 may be in North Atlantic at present and will remain at sea until October.

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82 NAA 011 0240 at 0243 to 0244
Comment - It would appear that at least one raider is at present operating in the North Atlantic and one in the Indian Ocean.83

4.45 On 8 August 1941 WIR number 74 published a picture of Raider No. 33.84

4.46 On 11 August 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 13 reported:

WEST of Australia Station

10. Raider Activity - There are indications that a raider unit was in the Indian Ocean, probably in the Kerguelen - Crozet Island area on 31/7 and 1/8.

Comment - If this is the same unit as that thought to be in St. Paul - Kerguelen Island area on 25/7 and 29/7, it would appear to be moving westward away from the Australia Station.85

…

15. Raider Activity - An attack on the “CHAUCER” in 16°46’N, 38°01’W on 29/7 and an incomplete distress message received at 0744Z/4/8 from an unknown position, possibly latitude north, shows that a raider (either No.16 or No.10) is still operating in the North Atlantic.

C. ENEMY WARSHIPS & RAIDERS (GENERAL) -

…

17. Raiders - There appears to be at least one raider still operating in the North Atlantic (probably No.16 or No.10) and one in the Indian Ocean.

No advice has yet been received from H.M.C.S. “PRINCE ROBERT” which is investigating a raider report from Easter Island where she was due to arrive on 8/8.86

4.47 On 18 August 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 14 reported:

3. Rabaul – Possible Raider Distress Signals – Rabaul radio reports having heard at 1214 a.m. on 18th August four dashes resembling auto alarm and six R’s on 500 kcs. Owing to heavy static and interference it was impossible to copy more. The Station strength was 3. At 0111 a.m. Rabaul radio reported nothing further heard there on 500 kcs.
Comment – No other station has apparently received this signal, nor is there any indication as to bearing or position whence the signal originated. It would appear likely that his signal is of Japanese origin. Repetition of the letter “R” is a common practice in Japanese commercial W/T traffic and N.B. has already suggested to the Admiralty that the “RRR” Distress Message symbol be changed to avoid confusion.87

In relation to vessels in Japanese ports, the following comment appeared:

The unidentified new Glen line ship (raider type) which was previously reported at Yokohama on 7/7 with 3 other new arrivals (considered to be probably “Rhakotis”, “Bogota” and “Quito”) may possibly be a raider that intends using “Spreewald” and “Burgenland” as supply ships. Although several German merchant ships are known to be operating in the Japanese coastal trade, German raiders and supply ships have previously masqueraded as Japanese ships when operating in these waters.88

In relation to ‘West of Australia Station’, the summary stated:

15. Indian Ocean Raider Activity – An intercepted W/T message reported by radio from Broome (W.A) suggests that there may have been a raider some 25 miles off the African coast, about 90 miles north of Mozambique on 14/8. There has been no signal to suggest that the ship allegedly sending the signal (“Clan MacGillivray”) is overdue.89

And, in connection with raiders generally:

17. Raiders

(a) North Atlantic – No further intelligence.

(b) South Atlantic – A life boat from the “Balzac” has been washed ashore near Pernambuco. Admiralty considers this ship was possibly sunk about 22/6 by the same raider which shelled “Tottenham” on 17/6. This raider was described as being of about 3000-3500 tons, and not Raider C (No.16) as was at first reported.

It is now known that “Sir Ernest Cassel” was captured on 16/4 by Raider E (No.10) which returned to Cuxhaven via the English Channel on 30/4.

(c) Indian Ocean – A prisoner of war from Raider F (No.33) stated that when this raider was intercepted by H.M.S. “Cornwall” she was waiting for one or two other raiders to

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87 NAA.011.0220
88 NAA.011.0220 at 0223
89 NAA.011.0220 at 0224
lay mines off Bombay, another Indian Port and the Gulf of Aden. She had only 8 mines left, but No.41, which left Germany in January and may have been concerned, had 200, both ordinary and magnetic. This statement is graded B.3.

He also states that No.33 had rendezvoused with “Alstertor” at Kerguelen in March. This island had also been visited by Raider E (No.10) after the “Alcantara” action, and by Raider C (No.16). Orders were then received not to use Kerguelen again, and the raiders’ base is now believed to be Crozet Island or Possession Island. This statement is graded B.2.

In a further signal on the subject, the prisoner (presumably the same one) is reported to have stated that he believes that raiders in the Indian Ocean have orders not to send a prize home but to sent [sic] it either to Crozet or Kerguelen Islands, where it can be concealed, and where prize crews have orders to establish observation and W/T posts ashore and on the approach of a British warship to scuttle the prize by means of an electric cable from the shore.

He states that No.36 (perhaps a tentative number for a new Indian Ocean raider) is a Hansa vessel similar to Nos.33 and 16, and is possibly at present in the Indian Ocean.

(d) Pacific Ocean – No report has been received from H.M.C.S. “PRINCE ROBERT” regarding the disabled raider alleged to have been at Easter Island.

(ii) The unidentified new Glen type ship of about 12,000 tons (previously suggested as possibly being a raider) which departed from Yokohama about the 10th of the month could now have reached the northern limits of the Australia Station.90

4.48 On 1 September 1941 COIC Weekly Summary 16 reported:

EAST of Australia Station

11. Pacific Ocean Raider Activity

(a) With regard to the report by the Dutch “BRASTAGI” of the sighting of a suspicious Japanese vessel on 16/8 in position 3°25’S, 90°34’W, it has been ascertained that the noon position of the “MONTEVIDEO MARU” on Sunday 24/8 was 01°40’N, 166°10’W or E which rules out the possibility of the “MONTEVIDEO MARU” being the ship sighted.

Comment – It is remarked that the description of the suspicious ship sighted on 15/9 fits Raider A, “NARVIK”. This raider’s

90 NAA 011.0220 at 0224 to 0225
number is now reported to be 36. Admiralty advise that she is probably the raider that was responsible for attacking the “MAREEBA” and “VELEBIT” off Ceylon about the 26/6. A report graded B.3 from prisoners of war stated that raider which they named No.45 was in the Indian Ocean at that time but in view of its lack of success would proceed to southern Australia, New Zealand, Panama and back to South Atlantic via Capetown.

(b) The British ship “HALIZONES” reported that at 2235Z/10 when she was in position 008°50’S, 009°20’W she heard start a “Q” signal, which however was jammed by a powerful spark set transmitting a British call-sign, rendering the signal unintelligible. From the strength of the signal it was thought to be 50 miles distant.

Comment – This confirms the report of a “Q” signal heard by “New Zealand Star” at approximately the same time (2220Z/19/8) when she was 340 miles to the eastward. The positions of “Halizones” and “New Zealand Star” at the time mentioned were approx 300 miles S.E. and 8.3.3 of the point where the Dutch “KOTA NOPAN” was attacked on 17/9. It would appear that the attack on 19/9 occurred somewhere with the triangle formed by these 3 points.

(c) The ship which transmitted QQQQ on 19/8 is thought to be “AUSTRALIND” 6 days overdue at Balbao [sic] from Adelaide.

(d) A report from S.C. (I) Wellington was received that unreliable D/F bearings from Bulawayo and Durban suggested the possible presence of a German unit on 10°N, 160°W at 1720Z/28/8.

Comment – Apart from the fact that no Pacific W/T Stations have reported any bearings near this position, the frequency employed by the German unit was that allocated for U-boats working south of Gibraltar and would be unsuitable for communication to Germany from the position mentioned. It would appear that the position given is incorrect and that the bearings were probably from a U-boat in the Atlantic.

(e) H.M.C.S. “PRINCE ROBERT” failed to find any evidence of a raider having been at Easter Island.

(f) U.S. Naval authorities advise that a search by naval units off the coast of the Galapagos Islands, with the exception of the Island of Abbermarle [sic] V was unproductive of evidence of a raider.91

91 NAA.011.0200 at 0203
14. **RAIDERS (GENERAL)**

(a) **North Atlantic** – No further attacks have been reported.

(b) **South Atlantic** – A further ship is overdue Capetown from Aruba (W.Indies). From the description of the unidentified ship reported on 10/8 south of St. Helena it would appear that the raider in this area is either Raider E. (No.10) or Raider B. (“MANYO MARU”).

(c) **Indian Ocean** – The vessel “CONGELLA” has not been reports as arrived Colombo from Durban. In view of Admiralty’s report that the raider operating in the Galapagos area on 19/8 was probably Raider A (“NARVIK”) which had proceeded from the Indian Ocean, it would appear that the enemy unit detected by D/F bearings as being in the Kerguelen Crozet area on 1/6 was either a supply ship or another raider from the South Atlantic. The absence of further activity in this area suggest that the former is more likely.

(d) **Pacific Ocean** – From the area of the last reported attack on 19/8 this raider (believed to be Raider A (“NARVIK”)) could reach the eastern limits of the Australia Station by 1/9/41 at an average speed of 15 knots.92

4.49 **CAPT Burnett might not have seen WIR number 75.** The copy, dated 15 August 1941, held in the Australian National Archives bears a notation indicating it was read by an officer in Navy Office on 15 November 1941. So does WIR number 77, dated 29 August 1941. CAPT Burnett left Fremantle in SYDNEY on 11 November 1941, so it would be unsafe to find that he received or read any weekly intelligence report after WIR number 74, dated 8 August 1941, having regard to the delivery time by ship from the United Kingdom and the subsequent distribution time from Navy Office Melbourne.

4.50 **The material quoted from the weekly intelligence reports makes it plain that the existence of German raiders was well known to readers of the reports.** Since the reports were issued to commanding officers of ships, it can be safely held that CAPT Burnett received and read the information in them. By the time he had received the reports, though, the information in them was more than two months old and so could not be relied on as accurate at the time of reading. The information did, however, clearly show that there were German raiders operating, that their location was uncertain and unpredictable, and that they operated in the Indian Ocean. It also showed that German vessels had laid mines off the Australian coast and that German raiders were equipped to lay mines. It was known that such raiders were provisioned at sea, probably by vessels operating out of Japan, and so could remain at sea.

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92 NAA 011 0200 at 0204
for long periods and change location and appearance without detection. It was also known that they were armed with 5.9-inch guns and torpedoes and could fire with accuracy at considerable distance.

**Combined operations intelligence reports**

I return to the reports issued by the Combined Operational Intelligence Centre.

4.51 **COIC Weekly Summary 18, dated 15 September 1941, reported:**

6 **GERALDTON – Unidentified Aircraft** – A report graded C.3 was received from the Air Intelligence Officer, Western Area as to the sighting of an unknown aircraft near Geraldton Aerodrome (R.A.A.F) at 0430H/11. Evidence of a yellowish light which approached from, and returned to, the S.W. was given by two R.A.A.F. guards while a sergeant pilot and a civilian stated that they heard an aircraft about the same time.

Comment – Western Area Intelligence can find no reasonable explanation other than the presence of a reconnaissance aircraft from a ship at sea. However, no British warship carrying aircraft was in the vicinity and there has been no intelligence to suggest an enemy unit being in the Indian Ocean since 1/8. It is considered improbable that a possible Indian Ocean raider in the area would not have been seen by clearing searches for convoy U.S.12A, which were carried out on 10/9.93

Further:

**EAST of Australia Station**

9. **EAST PACIFIC – Raider** – As Admiralty have received a report graded B.2 that the Raider A (“NARVIK”) has recently arrived in Germany the previous reference to the probability of this vessel being the Galapagos raider (WS/16, 11(a)) is cancelled. Admiralty signal of 9/9 stated that nothing more was known of the raider and that she may have moved to Australian or South Atlantic waters.

10. **EASTER ISLAND – Warship sighting** – The British Naval Attache Santiago states that the Chilean Naval authorities received a report from Easter Island of the sighting of 3 warships from the island at 2200/3/9 and that British Admiralty Delegation, Washington, confirmed that these were not U.S. vessels and that U.S. C. in C. had been informed.

Comment – Assuming these ships to have been sighted, it is considered most likely that they were merchant ships, and not warships as stated. Only one German warship, the “EMDEN”, could

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NAA 011 0181
have been in that position and there has been no indication of Japanese warships going so far from home waters. In that case the following possibilities present themselves:

(1) That the vessels sighted were Japanese merchant ships homeward bound from South America. In this connection it is known that several Japanese merchant ships returning home from the east coast of South America via the Horn direct to Japan have been passing near this area;

(2) that the raider off the Galapagos Is. captured the “KOTA NOPAN”, the “DEVON” … the “AUSTRALIND” and conducted two of them to Easter Is …

And, in relation to a distress signal received:

Comment - In view of the known practice of raiders to issue bogus cancellations of their victims’ distress message this latest intelligence suggests that a raider has attacked the “SILVAPLANA”.

If this is correct she could have been one of the 3 vessels reported as sighted at Easter Is. on 3rd September by averaging a speed of just over 16 knots. Apart from the fact that Admiralty have not mentioned this report in their latest raider signal, it is not usual for a raider to maintain such a speed, for a period of 8 days. It would appear likely therefore that if a raider has been responsible it is the unit that was operating off the Galapagos Is. on the 17 and 19 August. On a westerly course at 15 knots the “SILVAPLANA’s” attacker could reach the Australia Station (New Caledonia or New Hebrides area) by the 16th September.95

In connection with raiders generally, it was reported:

(c) Indian Ocean – No report since D/F indications on 31/7 – 1/8 between Kerguelen and Crozet Is.

(d) Other Raiders – Raider “A” (“NARVIK”) is reported to have recently returned to Germany.

Raider D (No.21) returned to Brest in 1940 but may have since put to sea.

Raider E (No.10) returned to Cuxhaven on 30/4 and may have since put to sea but probably would be undergoing a long refit.

Raider F (No.33) was sunk on 8/5 by H.M.S. “CORNWALL”.

(e) Pacific Ocean – Following is a summary of recent raider activity in the Pacific:-
(1) Suspicious vessel similar to “Montevideo Maru” sighted on 15/8, 150 miles S.W. of Galapagos. Description – straight stem, clipper stern, black hull, white upperworks, Japanese flag one side, one funnel black with 2 white bands, two masts with short topmasts. About 15 knots;

(2) “KOTA NOPAN” attacked 17/8 off Galapagos;

(3) “AUSTRALIND” and possibly “DEVON” attacked 19/8 off Galapagos. Transmitted QQQQ

(4) 3 Warships reported at Easter Is. on 3/9;

(5) QQQQ from “SILVAPLANA” on 11/9 in position 26°16’S, 164°25’W;

(6) “RIO BRANCO” overdue Los Angeles;

(7) “DEVON” 4 days overdue Auckland from Panama on Sept. 13. She would have been in the Galapagos area on 18 and 19 August.

Comment - At least one raider is operating in the Pacific. From a review of the latest intelligence on all raiders it would appear that Raider G (No.46) which left Germany in January and is reported to be the latest and best equipped of all raiders is the most likely raider to be in the area. Her real identity is unknown but she is described as having a squat funnel in the centre of rather a high superstructure. Stern half cruiser, half counter type, reported to resemble a modified “Kulmerland”. The sighting of the suspicious vessel (like “Montevideo Maru”) in the Galapagos area on 15/8 rather confirms this.

In view of the Easter Island report (3 ships) the comparative lack of surface raider activity in the Atlantic over the past 2 months and the fact that “RIO BRANCO” which could not have been intercepted by the “Silvaplana” raider has not yet been accounted for at Los Angeles, the possibility of more than one raider being in the area cannot be overlooked.

In this connection Raider “B”, “MANYO MARU” (thought to have been sighted in South Atlantic 18/8 and known to have supervised operations in this area last year), Raider D (No.21) or E (No.10) could all be in the area although Raider E is considered less likely.96

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96 NAA 011 0181 at 0185 to 0186
COIC Weekly Summary 19, dated 22 September 1941, reported:

10. PACIFIC RAIDER

(a) The “RIO BRANCO” previously reported overdue at Los Angeles, has arrived safely

... Comment – The list of ships now apparently attacked in the Pacific since mid August includes:- “KOTA NOPAN” “AUSTRALIND” “DEVON” and probably “SILVAPLANA”.

(c) A W/T bearing of 328° from Singapore at 1658Z/15/9 on 12700 Kc/s may have originated from a Pacific Ocean Raider.

Comment – This bearing passes close to Easter Is. and up towards Equador [sic] approx 700 miles south of the Galapagos. If it was from an enemy unit in the Pacific it might have come from either a raider, a supply ship or a captured vessel. If from a raider the distance from the “SILVAPLANA” QQQQ on 11/9 would suggest that a second raider is operating in the Pacific.97

On ‘Raiders (general)’ it reported:

(c) Indian Ocean - No report since the D/Fs of 31/7 – 1/8 between Kerguelen and Crozet Is.

(d) Pacific Ocean - There have been no further attacks on shipping reported nor further ships reported overdue following the distress message from “SILVAPLANA” on 11/9.

Four ships appear to have been attacked, three of which, “KOTA NOPAN”, “AUSTRALIND” and “DEVON”, were all probably intercepted in the vicinity of the Galapagos Is. during the latter part of August. The raider (possibly Raider G, No.46) then probably proceeded westward and attacked “SILVAPLANA” on 11/9 S.W. of Raratonga. Although the intelligence available does not prove that more than one raider is in the Area, it is possible that the Pacific raider has been joined by another ship, possibly the one like “MANYO MARU” in the South Atlantic, unreported since 18/8. It will be remembered that the earlier Pacific raiders operated as a pair, with “MANYO MARU” apparently in charge. Further evidence to support the view that a second raider is operating is the discrepancy between the position of the attack on “SILVAPLANA” on 11/9 and Singapore’s possible D/F bearing on 15/9. The presence of supply ships or of captured ships may however account for this bearing. Admiralty has made no mention of the report of 3 warships sighted at Easter Is. on 3/9, so it may be concluded that this report is unreliable.

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97 NAA 011 0162 at 0165 to 0166
(e) **General** - An appreciation of all raider activity during recent months is attached as an Appendix to this summary.98

Annexure A to this Weekly Summary set out the Australian intelligence assessment of ‘Known enemy raiders’. In view of its importance I set it out here in full:

**KNOWN ENEMY RAIDERS**

**Raider A: “NARVIK” (from Pacific Ocean) No.36**

Recently returned to Germany (B.2)

**Raider B: “MANYO MARU”**

Last reported shelling Nauru on 26/12/41. She probably underwent refit in the Japanese Mandates. The description of this raider fits the sightings of 17/6 and 18/8 in the South Atlantic and she may be considered to be the South Atlantic raider of the period subsequent to the shelling of “Tottenham” on 17/6. (Sth. Atl. Paras. 4 & 9 above). Taking 18/8 as the most recent sighting this vessel could not have been in the Galapagos area on 17/8, but at 15 knots could have reached Easter Is. on 3/9. To maintain such a speed for so long is contrary to general raider practice. On the other hand “MANYO MARU’s” previous Pacific experience would be useful and she may have been ordered to join another unit already raiding there.

**Raider C: “ATLANTIS” “TAMESIS” etc. No.16**

Admiralty consider that this raider’s speed has been reduced to a maximum of 15 knots. The sightings on 23/7 and 31/8 (see Nth. Atl., 3 & 9) fit her description but she has not been definitely identified since she sank the “TRAFALGAR” on 24/5 and met the “Babitonga” on 30/5 in the South Atlantic. On the other hand all the raider reports since 30/6 from the North Atlantic may be explained by the probable presence of another Hansa-Fels class ship, which almost certainly must have been responsible for the sightings by “Prince David” and U.S. aircraft on 27/8 and 28/8. It would seem certain that No.16 would not have proceeded to the Pacific, possible that she is still in the Nth. Atlantic and probable that she has returned to Germany for refitting.

**RAIDER D: No.21**

Returned to Brest November 1940, but may since have put to sea after refitting. Raider D is somewhat similar to Raider B and may be responsible for the reports attributed to Raider B above. Assuming, however, that it is this raider which is unaccounted for, it would be physically possible for her to have been responsible for both the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean sinkings, although other intelligence is definitely against this.

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98 NAA.011.0162 at 0167 to 0168
RAIDER E: No.10
After capturing “SIR ERNEST CASSEL” on 16/4 she returned to Cuxhaven via the English Channel (30/4). Again it would be physically possible for this vessel to have been responsible for the sinkings in the Indian and Pacific oceans, though the former is most unlikely and again all intelligence is against this view. Most probably she has been in dock undergoing long repairs and overhaul.

RAIDER F: No.33
Sunk by H.M.S. “CORNWALL” 8/5

RAIDER G: No.46
This raider is known to have left Germany in January 1941. Approx. 10,000 tons, she is described “squat funnel in centre of rather high superstructure. Stern half counter, half cruiser type. Reported to resemble a modified “Kulmerland”. Only completed end of 1940. Very completely equipped, said to have under-water torpedo tubes”.

The sightings of “Shenking” on 16/6 and “Brastagi” on 15/8 fit this vessel. Moreover the absence of any report of her activity elsewhere and the statements made by prisoners of war (see Indian Ocean – Other intelligence) are further evidence which make it likely that No.46 was the raider in the Indian Ocean in June and now in the Pacific.

HANSA CLASS VESSEL
An unidentified Hansa class vessel was sighted in the north Atlantic on 27/8 and 28/8, travelling at a speed which Raider C (No.16) cannot now attain. It would appear therefore that this vessel is responsible for all recent raider activity in the North Atlantic or that both it and Raider C (No.16) are in the North Atlantic.

GENERAL CONCLUSION:

All the positive evidence points to Raider G (No.46) being both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean Raider. On negative grounds only, Raider D could have been the raider. Similarly on negative grounds Raider E could have been the raider, but this is improbable (especially as regards the Indian Ocean sinkings) in view of her obvious need of refit after a long period at sea. Finally, assuming the accuracy of the suggestion that she has been operating in the Sth. Atlantic, Raider B could have reached Easter Is. by 3/9 at 15 knots for 16 days, a most unlikely performance.

It would appear therefore that Raider G is the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean Raider. Since Admiralty has made no mention of the report of 3 warships supposed to have been sighted at Easter Is. on 3/9 it may be concluded that that report was unreliable. If, however, enemy ships were there on 3/9 the only raider which could have reasonably been in the position would be Raider D; but much more
probably supply ships or captured vessels may have gone to the island.

Although one vessel only is probably responsible for attacks to date, there are some grounds for thinking that a second raider may now or soon be operating in the Pacific. The D/F of September 15th from Singapore suggests the presence of another enemy unit though not necessarily a raider. The fact that previously 2 raiders have operated together in the Pacific suggests that this arrangement may be adopted again. Moreover, the fact that since 18/8 there has been no report of the Sth. Atlantic Raider (possibly “Manyo Maru”) which, it will be recalled, was one of the Pacific raiders of last summer and probably was in command of the earlier operations) suggests that this unit may have transferred to the Pacific where her experience would be of great value. Both Raider D and Raider E could have reached the Pacific by Sept. Although there are no positive grounds to support this view and in the case of Raider E her certain need of refitting after her return on 30th April to Cuxhaven makes it unlikely that she would already be operating again.

Thus, in late September 1941 all ships' commanding officers were provided with the assessment that Raider G was likely to be the raider in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

4.53 COIC Weekly Summary 22, dated 13 October 1941, reported:

3. ROTTNEST ISLAND (W.A.) – Report of Unknown Ship - A ship was reported by the A/S vessel H.M.A.S. “YANDRA” at 1415Z/5 eight miles from Rottnest Island bearing 295° as signalling her name “SALLAND” (Dutch) from Calcutta.

“SALLAND” however, was reported by H.M.A.S. “SYDNEY” to have been sighted in approx 14°23’S, 107°06’E at 0405Z/4/10 and as she duly arrived Fremantle on 9/10 as expected she could not have been the ship reported by “YANDRA”.

Another Dutch ship “SAIDJA” arrived Fremantle on 6th Oct. from the N.E.I. but she advised on enquiry that she did not signal nor was she in the vicinity at the time mentioned.

On the arrival of H.M.A.S. “SYDNEY” on 7/10 a full investigation was made and “SYDNEY” reported that it was extremely doubtful whether an unknown ship had been, in fact, present at the time and place of the reported sighting and that the lights seen by H.M.A.S. “YANDRA” were considered to be those of the “ARMADALE” which departed Fremantle at 1035Z/5.

\*\*\* NAA 011 0162 at 0175 to 0178
All air searches carried out on the 6th and 8th were negative while minesweeping operations on the 7th and 8th revealed no trace of mines.

Comment – It is considered that the original report was inaccurate and that the lights sighted were from the “ARMADALE”.

Further:

(ii) WEST of Australia Station

8. INDIAN OCEAN – Possible Raider Activity - The Greek cargo vessel, “STAMATIOS G. EMBIRICOS” (3900 tons), which is overdue at Colombo since 28/9, may possibly have made the series of R’s intercepted by Trincomalee at 1549 (corrupt)Z/26/9. She should then have been in the vicinity of the Maldive Islands.

Comment – There has been no other intelligence (apart from Geraldton aircraft report of 11/9) since the 1/8 to suggest the presence of a raider in the Indian Ocean. The “Silvaplana” raider could not have been responsible. If the “EMBIRICOS” has been attacked, the raider could have been off Fremantle by 5/10 at 15 knots.

And, after referring to certain intelligence:

(b) Indian Ocean – “S.G.EMBIRICOS” has been overdue at Colombo since 28/9 and may have been attacked by a raider in the vicinity of the Maldive Is. on 26/9. See Para.B. Such a raider could now be on the Australia Station.

4.54 COIC Weekly Summary 23, dated 20 October 1941, reported on an unidentified vessel off north-west Samoa:

(c) Raider – In view of the aircraft sightings mentioned in (b) and the known presence of at least one raider in the Pacific, it is possible that the vessel was an enemy unit which considering Fiji-Samoa to be a focal point for the routeing of shipping across the Pacific, was patrolling in the area when sighted. It is known that some raiders have masqueraded as 2 funnel ships. However, it is difficult to understand an enemy unit risking itself so close to known British and American operational bases during daylight hours over so long a period unless as a ruse to draw attention to that area while raider operations were to be conducted elsewhere.
And:

(ii) **WEST** of Australia Station

15. **POSSIBLE RAIDER ACTIVITY**

(i) There is still no news of the “S.G.EMBIRICOS” which has been overdue Colombo since 28/9.

(ii) A further ship, “PACIFIC” (2,800 Tons, 1923) was reported on 15/10 as overdue Colombo from Aden since 9/10. Admiralty stated on the 15/10 that this ship was very old and may still arrive. No advice of her arrival has yet been received.

Comment - If this ship is a raider victim it appears that a raider was operating in the Arabian Sea area early this month.  

On ‘Raiders (general)’ it reported:

(b) **Indian Ocean** – The fact that the “S.G.EMBIRICOS” has failed to arrive and a further unit is overdue strengthens the view that a raider is operating in the Indian Ocean and was possibly in the Arabian Sea area early this month. Such a raider could now have reached the western section of the Australia Station.

4.55 Importantly, this Weekly Summary also provided a description of the STEIERMARK, which was in fact the KORMORAN. It described the vessel as follows:

(d) **GENERAL** – Admiralty has provided the following description of the “STEIERMARK” which is probably Raider G. Raider G it will be recalled had previously been suggested in this summary as possibly operating in the Pacific. (Appendix A WS/19).

Length 524 feet, 9,400 tons; flush deck from break of forecastle to stern; raked bow, probably half cruiser half counter stern; 2 masts, fairly fat round crutch close abaft; square bridge superstructure, 4 pairs tall typically German Samson posts 2 forward 2 aft but these probably removed or cut down. General impression similar to “ANTILLA” (Talbot-Booth 1940, No.50).

This is a reasonable generalised description of the KORMORAN. The weekly summaries went to SYDNEY and were a major source of intelligence, so Summary 23 must have been seen by CAPT Burnett.

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104 NAA.011.0104 at 0110 to 0111
105 NAA.011.0104 at 0111
106 NAA.011.0104 at 0112
107 NAA.011.0149
COIC Weekly Summary 24, dated 27 October 1941, reported:

(ii) WEST of Australia Station

7. **COLOMBO – Overdue Shipping** – No further advice has been received of either of the two ships already reported overdue at Colombo, “STAMATIOS G. EMBIRICOS” (3,900 tons – 1936) since 28/9 and “PACIFIC” (2,800 tons – 1923) since 9/10.

Comment – It would appear probable that both these vessels are victims of raider activity.108

Further:

12. **PACIFIC OCEAN – D/F Intelligence**

a) It was reported from Wellington that by D/F fix at 1547Z/20 a German surface unit was probably within 300 miles of 32°S 139°W.

Comment – This position is approx 630 miles S.W. of Pitcairn Island and some 760 miles from the fix on 13/10, which placed an enemy unit about 400 miles N.W. of Pitcairn Island. It would appear likely that this is the same unit which for some reason is remaining in an area comparatively unfrequented by Pacific shipping. This may indicate that the unit in question is a supply or prison ship which is keeping out of the way for the time being while a raider operates further westward.109

COIC Weekly Summary 25, dated 3 November 1941, reported:

7. **Raider Activity** – The Swedish ship “PACIFIC” which was reported overdue Colombo from Aden since 9/10 has now arrived.

There is still no further news of the Greek “S.G.EMBIRICOS” due Colombo 28/9 which was apparently attacked by a raider in the Maldives area on 26/9.

The Dutch ship “OLIVIA” made an unspecified raider distress message on 20/10 from position 1°N 55°E (approx 250 miles north of Seychelles).

Admiralty state that there has been no other evidence to confirm a raider being in the Indian Ocean.

Comment – On the facts available it is suggested that the “S.G.EMBIRICOS” must now be regarded as a raider victim and that it would appear likely this same raider attacked the “OLIVIA” north of the Seychelles on 20 October.110

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108 NAA.011.0090 at 0093
109 NAA.011.0090 at 0094
110 NAA.011.0069 at 0073

The Loss of HMAS SYDNEY II

225
b) Indian Ocean – The arrival of the overdue “PACIFIC” at Colombo means that “S.G.EMBIRICOS” (due Colombo 28/9) is now the only vessel known to be overdue in the area. In view of the faint distress message heard by Trincomalee on 26/9 this ship must now be regarded as a probable raider victim.

The Dutch “OLIVIA” which made an unspecified raider distress message on 20/10 from a position approx 250 miles north of the Seychelles is possibly a victim of the same raider which could now be on the western portion of the Australia Station.\textsuperscript{111}

It is not known if COIC Weekly Summary 26, dated 10 November 1941, was received by SYDNEY before she sailed from Fremantle on 11 November. If she did receive it, the following would have been read:

4. GERALDTON (W.A) – Unidentified Aircraft

Comment – This report recalls that made of a possible aircraft heard S.W. of Geraldton and apparently some distance out to sea at 1840Z/1/11 (Graded D.4); also a similar report made from Geraldton Aerodrome on 11/9 (Graded C.4).

On the assumption that an aircraft was responsible for the latest sighting and that this aircraft was raider-based, the Indian Ocean raider could have reached the area at 12 knots from the position given by the Dutch “OLIVIA” on 20/10. One of the Pacific Ocean units would also have had time to reach the vicinity of Geraldton.\textsuperscript{112}

25. RAIDERS (GENERAL) – Apart from the interception of the German supply ship “ODENWALD” in the Atlantic on 6/11 the following reports are to hand:

b) Indian Ocean – There is no further intelligence to hand concerning the distress message from the Dutch “OLIVIA” when north of Seychelles on 20/10.

c) Pacific Ocean – There is continued evidence of the presence of at least one German unit in the South West Pacific.
25/10 – D/F fix 850 miles East of Wellington;
3/11 – D/F fix in Ellice Is. area;
6/11 – Suspicious vessel sighted between Gilberts and Phoenix Groups.
One unit could have been responsible for all these reports and also the 
D/F of the 20/10 further eastward. It is possible in view of the known 
practice last year that this unit is a raider which is proceeding north to 
rendezvous with a supply ship (ex Japanese ports) in the Marshalls.\textsuperscript{113}

In view of the uncertainty referred to, I disregard this summary in any 
consideration of what CAPT Burnett knew, in November 1941, of the 
possible existence of raiders off the Western Australian coast.

4.59 The primary purpose of Australian warships escorting merchant 
vessels, either singly or in convoy, was to protect them from attack by 
German raiders or U-boats. Apart from ADMIRAL SCHEER, which 
appeared in the western Indian Ocean in early 1941, there was no 
suggestion of conventional German surface warships operating in the 
Indian Ocean. Thus the only threats Australian warships had to 
contemplate when operating off the Australian coast before Japan’s 
entry into the war in December 1941 were raiders, U-boats and mines. It 
was known that mines were laid only in waters less than 100 fathoms 
(about 200 metres) deep and either in shipping lanes or adjacent to port 
entrances. Thus, while a warship was at sea beyond the 100-fathom line 
the danger posed to it came mainly from raider attack. It was known, 
too, that a raider could be in the company of a U-boat.

4.60 These factors highlight the importance of adherence to sound 
recognition procedures when an unidentified merchant vessel was 
encountered.

Knowledge of the possible presence of raiders: a 
summary

4.61 By November 1941 the following was known about German merchant 
ships disguised as raiders:

- They had the capacity to move rapidly across the world’s oceans.

- They had the capacity to remain undetected for long periods.

- They had the capacity to appear in unexpected locations far from 
past known locations.

- They had the capacity for disguise.

- They could fire with accuracy at distance.

\textsuperscript{113} NAA.011.0054 at 0062
• They carried multiple 15-centimetre guns with the ability to fire salvos with director control.

• They carried torpedoes.

• They carried underwater torpedoes.

• Their armaments were disguised or camouflaged.

• Their length, approximate tonnage, description and superstructure and the approximate layout of the masts were known, although some features were subject to alteration.

• They constituted a serious threat to any unprepared vessel.

• They ranged in size from 3,000\textsuperscript{114} tons to 12,000\textsuperscript{115} tons.

• They were modern diesel-powered cargo ships or fast fruit carriers.

At any particular time it was not known precisely where each raider was. Nor was the number of raiders in any ocean known, although intelligence suggested certain numbers at different times.

The most recently described raider was Raider G, STEIERMARK, which in late September 1941 was thought to be operating in the Pacific, although she was also thought to be the raider that had been operating in the Indian Ocean.

It was because of the known existence of raiders and the uncertainty about their location that warships escorted ships and convoys. It was also why a sophisticated system of recognition had been established to enable warships to detect friendly merchant ships and thus, by deduction, raiders and, if possible, neutralise the raiders.

4.62 It follows that in November 1941, SYDNEY, and CAPT Burnett, knew of the possibility of a raider disguised as a merchant vessel being present in waters off the coast of Western Australia. One of SYDNEY’s functions was to investigate unknown merchant ships and identify them. If it was established that the ship was a raider, the ship was to be neutralised by capture or destruction.

\textsuperscript{114} NAA.011.0240 at 0245
\textsuperscript{115} NAA.011.0266 at 0272
CAPT Burnett’s suspicion about the presence of raiders

4.63 Apart from the general background of knowledge of the possible presence of raiders gained from reading the weekly intelligence reports and the COIC weekly summaries, there is material that establishes beyond doubt that CAPT Burnett was mindful of the existence of raiders and their possible presence off the Australian coast in late 1941. Earlier in this chapter I refer to the central role he played in determining the Australian Naval response to the threat of raiders in December 1940, when he prepared the minute paper 'Policy against raiders in Indian and Pacific Oceans'.

4.64 At 1810 on 3 October 1941 SYDNEY sighted floating at sea a square object that proved to be a latticework structure supported on beams and floated on oil drums. It appeared to be a target or some form of sea mark and was hoisted on board and dismantled.

On 6 October 1941 CAPT Burnett wrote a report on the incident to the Rear Admiral Commanding the Australian Squadron and the Director of Naval Intelligence, attaching a photograph of the object and saying, among other things, ‘It is considered that there is just a possibility that it may have been a target dropped by a raider’.

Three matters arising from this report are relevant. First, CAPT Burnett thought there was ‘just a possibility’ the structure might have been dropped in the water by a raider. The potential presence of a raider was thus to mind. Second, SYDNEY had just handed over convoy ships near

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116 NAA.011.0317
117 WAM.032.0071
118 CORR.003.0332
119 WAM.032.0072

Figure 4.12 The square lattice object SYDNEY sighted at sea on 3 October 1941.
the Sunda Strait and was returning to Fremantle when the object was sighted.\footnote{AWM.001.0204} Third, the notion that the structure might possibly have been dropped from a raider occurred less than seven weeks before the encounter with an unidentified merchant vessel, which might have been, and was in fact, a raider—KORMORAN. It is also of note that on sighting the object SYDNEY went to action stations.

4.66 On 5 October 1941 CAPT Burnett addressed the ship’s company at Sunday Divisions. He said words to the effect, ‘I must tell you that there is an enemy raider out there and I intend to get it. I want you all to be very alert and on your toes at all times’.\footnote{WIT.001.0001_R at 0011_R}

4.67 The possibility of an enemy vessel being present was also brought to CAPT Burnett’s mind when he investigated the HMAS YANDRA incident and reported to the Naval Board on 7 October 1941. On that day he sent from SYDNEY to the Naval Board and the District Naval Officer (WA) a signal that stated:

Have investigated circumstances regarding unidentified ship in S.W.A.C.H.Q. 0717 6th Oct. Evidence almost conclusive that that unknown ship in position 295° Rottnest Island light 8 miles at 1415Z 5th October and gave false name SALLAND. ...

Suggest appropriate warning to merchant shipping be issued.\footnote{NAA.010.0246}

YANDRA was a requisitioned patrol craft. At 2220 on Sunday 5 October, whilst off the searched channel at Fremantle, she encountered a vessel that after inquiry identified herself as SALLAND, sailing from Calcutta. That ship was shown on a list of ships expected in or leaving Fremantle provided to YANDRA. But she was not due for another two-and-a-half days. She was allowed to pass. Doubts were later raised by shore authorities about whether the ship was SALLAND or SAIDJA. When SAIDJA did arrive, on 6 October, she said she had entered Fremantle without challenge. SALLAND was searched for but not found. On YANDRA’s return to port, her officers were questioned about the identification, but they maintained that they had identified SALLAND. CAPT Burnett reported:

Then it became evident that the ship reputed to be “SALLAND” was, if “YANDRA’s” statement could be relied upon, a suspicious vessel that had given a false name and then put back to sea.\footnote{NAA.010.0225 at 0226}
SYDNEY, which was at sea on 6 October, was advised by signal of this incident. She replied that at 1220 on Saturday 4 October she had carried out a daylight recognition of SALLAND by ‘exchange of signal letters followed by correct procedure exchanging secret callsign and by fairly close inspection of “SALLAND” by “SYDNEY”’.\(^{124}\)

On receipt of a signal regarding the possibility of the vessel identified by YANDRA being SALLAND, CAPT Burnett ‘considered proceeding to WESTWARD to carry out search for supposed raider’.\(^{125}\) He did not do so, however, deciding instead to intercept the arriving QUEEN MARY to ensure her safe entry to Fremantle.

Having considered the arguments for and against there being an ‘unknown ship which gave a false name and then cleared out’, CAPT Burnett concluded in his report of 7 October 1941, ‘In my opinion, balance of judgment is definitely in favour of no unknown ship being present, but it is difficult to explain the signalling points’.\(^{126}\)

In relation to recognition of merchant ships, he wrote:

> It seems entirely wrong that the identification of ships at night should be left at merely accepting the Plain Language name and port of departure of a ship on the list of expected arrivals as sufficient evidence. Patrol ships are not supplied with secret callsigns of Merchant Ships, and their orders do not appear to include any instructions that they should make close investigation unless there are especially suspicious features.\(^{127}\)

Later the same day CAPT Burnett sent a second signal to the Naval Board:

> My 0643 7th. Subsequent investigation has brought fresh evidence to light and am now extremely doubtful that unknown ship was in fact present. Consider lights seen were “ARMADALE” (Brit). In view of the above do not intend proceeding to sea. Air search ahead Q E is being arranged. Air mail report follows.\(^{128}\)

Thus, CAPT Burnett considered whether there was an unknown vessel—possibly an enemy raider—off Fremantle on 7 October 1941 but ultimately concluded that this was ‘extremely doubtful’.

\(^{124}\) NAA.010.0225 at 0227
\(^{125}\) NAA.010.0225 at 0227
\(^{126}\) NAA.010.0225 at 0227
\(^{127}\) NAA.010.0225 at 0227
\(^{128}\) NAA.010.0257
Conclusion

4.68 There can be no doubt that CAPT Burnett had knowledge of the possible existence of a raider off the Australian coast in November 1941. Nor can it be doubted that he had that possible presence in mind.