

## COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE LOSS OF HMAS SYDNEY II

Before The Hon TRH Cole AO RFD QC

Held at the Residence of Mr Ernst Hildenbrand  
[REDACTED] Germany

Counsel Assisting: LEUT Matthew Tyson  
LEUT Stephen Harper

On Thursday, 3 July 2008  
(Day 6)

26 THE PRESIDENT: I have come to the home of Mr Ernst  
27 Hildenbrand [REDACTED] in Germany to take evidence from  
28 you. Thank you very much for agreeing to see us.

29

30 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I have come to the residence of Mr. Carl  
31 [Transcribers note: it seems that the interpreter used a wrong name. The  
32 correct name should be "Hildenbrand", instead of "Carl".] [REDACTED] in  
33 Germany to take a statement from him in connection with the sinking of  
34 the Sydney.

35

36 THE PRESIDENT: As I'm  
37 about to take evidence from you for the Commission, I would  
38 ask you to take the oath.

39

40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: For this purpose I would like to ask you to take  
41 the oath.

42

43 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I swear by God the Almighty in Whom I believe that  
44 every word I say shall be the truth, so help me God.

45

46 <ERNST HILDENBRAND, sworn:

47 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much indeed.

1

2 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Thank you very much.

3

4 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: OK.

5

6

7 LEUT TYSON: Q. Herr Hildenbrand, I should just  
8 introduce myself. My name is Leut Matthew Tyson. I'm here  
9 with Herr Frank Thomas, interpreter, and my colleague,  
10 Leut Stephen Harper.

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Mr. Carl [Transcribers note: it seems that the  
13 interpreter used a wrong name. The correct name should be "Hildenbrand",  
14 instead of "Carl".], I would like to introduce myself personally. I am  
15 Lieutenant Tyson. I am here together with our interpreter, Mr. Thomas,  
16 and my colleague, Lieutenant Harper.

17

18 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

19

20 LEUT TYSON: We are here on behalf of the Cole  
21 Commission of Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding  
22 the loss of HMAS Sydney II.

23

24 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I am here on behalf of the Cole Commission of  
25 Inquiry into the sinking of the HMAS Sydney II.

26

27 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

28

29 LEUT TYSON: Sir, could you start, please,  
30 by telling us your full name?

31

32 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Mr. Carl [Transcribers note: it seems that the  
33 interpreter used a wrong name. The correct name should be "Hildenbrand",  
34 instead of "Carl".], could you please start the interview by stating your  
35 full name?

36

37 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Ernst Hildenbrand.

38

39 A. Ernst Hildenbrand.

40 Q. What was your date of birth?

41

42 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What is your date of birth?

43

44 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: [REDACTED]

45

46 A. [REDACTED]

47

1 Q. Sir, can you please tell us what your address is?

2

3 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you please state your full address?

4

5 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, [REDACTED]

6

7 A. [REDACTED]

8

9 Q. Sir, just before the outbreak of World War II, what  
10 was your occupation?

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What was your occupation at the onset of the Second  
13 World War?

14

15 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I was a gardener.

16

17 A. I was a gardener.

18

19 Q. You were a sailor on Kormoran. Could you tell us,  
20 please, whose division you were in? Who was in charge of  
21 the division?

22

23 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I volunteered for the marine when I was a young  
24 boy, aged 16, 17, and I was then recruited in by the Kriegsmarine as a  
25 volunteer in 1940.

26

27 A. I volunteered for the Navy as a young boy, when I was  
28 16, 17 years old, and then in 1940 I became also volunteer  
29 in the Kriegsmarine.

30

31 Q. Were you in Skeries' division or von Goessel's  
32 division?

33

34 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Which was your division? The one of Mr. Skeries or  
35 the one of Mr. Goessel?

36

37 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Goessel. Doctor Goessel, yes, yes. He was the  
38 officer in charge of the division.

39

40 A. Yes, I was in the division of Mr Goessel, who was our  
41 division officer.

42

43 Q. And can you tell us, please, sir, what were your duties on Kormoran?  
44 What did you do?

45

46 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And can you tell us about your duties on board of  
47 the Kormoran?

1  
2 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: My duties? We were trained on a gun. It was a 15 cm  
3 gun. And I was loading the shells [Translator's note: lit. "the shell  
4 number" or "the shell guy"]. We were grouped into shells and cartridges,  
5 and I was then the number 1. Well it was three groups, first the gun  
6 commander, then two "BUE's" (Befehlsuebermittler) (= command messengers)  
7 and then me loading the shells.

8  
9 A. I was trained at the guns, at the 15cm guns, that's  
10 where I was, but then we had a crew that was divided into  
11 three groups. First there were the people who operated the  
12 guns, then there were called shells, and then they were

13

14

15

16 called cartridges. Well, it was three divisions - the  
17 first one at the gun, the second one were the people who  
18 transmitted the orders and I was in the third group they  
19 called the shell or grenade.

20

21 Q. Can you please explain what was the third group, what  
22 did you do? Did you load munitions?

23

24 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What were the exact duties of this third group of  
25 which you were a member? Did you load the shells, or ...?

26

27 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. I was a seaman and a seaman has all sorts of  
28 duties on board of the ship. Cleaning, and so on and so forth. Aside from  
29 that I had to operate the guns. I was assigned to the fifth gun under the  
30 command of first Lieutenant Goesseln in the second division.

31

32 A. No, no, no, I was a seaman and, as a seaman, we have  
33 many tasks on board, like cleaning and everything, but also  
34 we were - well, I did help in the operation of the guns and  
35 I was at the fifth gun under our division officer  
36 Mr Goesseln.

37

38 Q. Sir, I want to take you to the afternoon of  
39 November 1941 when Kormoran met Sydney.

40

41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Now I would like to take you back to the 19th of  
42 November 1941, the day of the battle between the Kormoran and the Sydney.

43

44 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

45

46 Q. Do you

47 remember the alarm to go to battle stations ringing that

1 afternoon?

2

3 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you remember the alarm being sounded on that  
4 day? Or when the alarm was sounded to man the battle stations?

5

6 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. Let me explain the circumstances. At 4  
7 o'clock, 4 pm, my shift ended. We were just about to sit down to have our  
8 meal when the alarm went off. And we thought that here we go again ... we  
9 ran to our gun. Then we heard, it was said to be a steamer, a smoke  
10 column. We did not worry at that time. Then all of a sudden it was said  
11 that it is a ship of the "grey class" [ Translator's note: "graue Klasse"  
12 ("grey class") is jargon for "warship"]. It turned out to be the Sydney.  
13 We did not know that it was the Sydney. But a ship of the grey class.  
14 What was what we have heard.

15

16 A. Well, I have to say a bit about it. It was about  
17 4 o'clock in the afternoon, 16 o'clock, to be true, and my  
18 watch just had finished and we were sitting down to have  
19 our lunch or to eat something when then the alarm rang, and  
20 then we ran to our guns and the first thing we saw was just  
21 the steam column that we thought was a steamer - or the  
22 smoke column, sorry, coming up there, and then as the ship  
23 approached, we could see that it belonged to what we called  
24 the grey class. We didn't know at this point that it was  
25 Sydney, but we knew it was a warship.

26

27 Q. Sir, you said you ran to the gun. Which gun did you  
28 run to?

29

30 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You said you ran to your gun. Which gun did you run  
31 to?

32

33 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: To the fifth. The gun to which I was assigned to.  
34 It was aft, starboard.

35

36 A. I ran to the fifth gun, which is in the aft on the  
37 starboard side. That was the one where my battle station  
38 was.

39

40 THE PRESIDENT: Q. That's the 15cm gun?

41

42 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was that the 15 cm gun?

43

44 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, correct.

45

46 A. Yes.

47

1 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, I'll show you a diagram which is a  
2 sketch plan of Kormoran. Could you please indicate on that  
3 diagram where that 15cm gun was that you were at? This is  
4 the bow and the stern.

5

6 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That was at the bow. Yes the bow. And there, on the  
7 right, starboard.

8

9 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you mark where roughly that was?

10

11 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Starboard. There are the flaps. Here at the back.  
12 Here.

13

14

15 THE PRESIDENT: I'll just mark that. I'll put a cross  
16 where Mr Hildenbrand put a mark and I'll mark that diagram  
17 exhibit 16.

18

19 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I mark it as evidence number 16 where Mr.  
20 Hildebrand has made a cross.

21

22 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes. I am reading a book about the Kormoran,  
23 everything is in there as well.

24

25

26 EXHIBIT #16 SKETCH PLAN OF KORMORAN INDICATING LOCATION

27

28 OF 15 CENTIMETRE GUN BEING BATTLE STATION OF  
29 MR ERNST HILDENBRAND

30

31 THE WITNESS: I've just read a book from Kormoran again.  
32 It's also included in there.

33

34 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, that 15cm gun that you were at, did  
35 that have any type of camouflage or disguise?

36

37 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: This 15 cm gun to which you were assigned, was it  
38 camouflaged or hidden in any way?

39

40 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, there were flaps. The flaps were pulled  
41 upwards with counter weights. So when needed, the counter weights were  
42 detached and then the flap lifted up.

43

44 A. Yeah, they were disguised with flaps and they were  
45 lifted up and had counterweights on the other side and that  
46 made - it was quite easy to lift them up. In the worst  
47 case, they could be lifted up.

1

2 Q. When you received an order to fire, how long did it  
3 normally take to remove the camouflage and have the gun  
4 ready to fire?

5

6 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When an order was given to open fire, how long did  
7 it usually take to remove the camouflage and free the guns ...

8

9 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: It took a long time. It took a very long time.  
10 After all, the Sydney was ...

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: No, I mean on the Kormoran.

13

14 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Oh, on the Kormoran. Yes, yes. It only took a few  
15 minutes. But on the Sydney it took a long time.

16

17 A. Well, the Sydney needed quite a long time for it,...

18

19 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: The question is, on the Kormoran, at your gun, how  
20 long did it take there?

21

22 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: When we fired it only took a few minutes

23 A. ...but - it was just a question of a few minutes.

24

25 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Did you ever get an order to fire, or  
26 did you just get an order to remove the camouflage?

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you ever get an order to fire or did you only  
29 get the order to remove the camouflage?

30

31 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, it came much later. The order to fire came  
32 much, much later. At 4 o'clock we came [to the Sydney]. The battle was at  
33 half past five and at half past five we received the order to remove the  
34 camouflage. And the guns were all set then.

35

36 A. Well, no, that was much later. Well, first we sighted  
37 Sydney at 4 o'clock, as I said before, and then at  
38 half past 5 the order was given to remove the disguise and  
39 then the order to start firing.

40

41 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, on this particular 15cm gun, what  
42 was your precise role? What did you do on that gun?

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What was your precise role at the 15 cm gun? What  
45 did you do there?

46

47 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I was loading the shells. The shells. We had to get

1 the shells from the elevator, they were brought to us, and then I loaded  
2 them into the gun. Then came the guy who pushed the shell in once more,  
3 then the casing again and then we fired. All that took about 8 to 10  
4 seconds until ...

5

6 A. Well, my job was to bring the ammunition or the  
7 grenades from the elevator and to load it into the cannon  
8 and then after me there came this other person to put the  
9 shell on it and who pushed it and - well, that was my job,  
10 yes.

11

12 THE PRESIDENT: Q. When you say " the grenades", do you  
13 mean --

14

15 LEUT TYSON: Shells?

16

17 THE PRESIDENT: Q. -- shells?

18

19 THE INTERPRETER: Good question.

20

21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When you mentioned the "shell" and then "the  
22 casing", and you also mentioned "cartridge": what precisely is the  
23 "shell"?

24

25 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: The projectile. The shell is the projectile. With  
26 the fuse. Yes. That is the shell.

27

28

29 THE INTERPRETER: When I said "grenade", it's the actual  
30 bullet, including the fuse, and then I think it's the  
31 cartridge.

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40 THE INTERPRETER: Does that make sense?

41

42 LEUT TYSON: Yes.

43

44 Q. I want to ask you how orders to fire actually reach  
45 the gun position? Does Skeries send, through a telephone  
46 on the ship, an order to a commander of the gun, or does  
47 the order come over a loudspeaker to actually fire?



1

2 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you understand this, or would you like me to  
3 translate?

4

5 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes please.

6

7 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would like to ask whether the orders to fire  
8 were issued by Skeries to each gun commander through the headphones, or  
9 how else? Or were they generally issued over the loudspeakers?

10

11 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: By the command. There is a central command. All  
12 guns were linked to it. And the guns were given the elevation and angles  
13 before the camouflage was removed. Then the command messengers, they  
14 configured the gun, elevation and angle and all that. And my task was to  
15 wait for the alarm, and then load the shells into the gun.

16

17 A. Well, there was a director's control unit and all  
18 orders were given from there directly to the several guns,  
19 and then these people who transmitted the orders, they were  
20 responsible for setting the elevation and for aiming with  
21 the guns, and then it was to wait for the alarm, then it  
22 was my job to load the gun with the bullets.

23

24 THE PRESIDENT: Q. I just want to go back a bit. When  
25 Kormoran sighted another ship and the captain said, "Go to  
26 action stations," how was that communicated?

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I just want to go back a bit. When the Kormoran  
29 spotted the other ship, when the ship was spotted and the order was given  
30 to man the battle stations, how exactly was this order communicated?  
31 Through which channels?

32

33 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: You have the gun commander, he is communicating.  
34 And he then gives instructions to the men as to what has to be done with  
35 the gun. So all I had to do was obey the order to load the gun.

36

37 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I rather think he [the president] would like to  
38 know how ...

39

40

41 THE INTERPRETER: Sorry, I think this was wrong. Can you  
42 please repeat your question, so we make it clear again?

43

44 THE PRESIDENT: Q. When the Kormoran sighted another  
45 ship and the captain gave the order to go to action  
46 stations, how were the crew told to go to action stations?

47

1 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Precisely. The question is as to how the crew got  
2 to know that the Sydney had been spotted, on the Kormoran.

3

4 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes. Yes.

5

6 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: How did the crew get to hear the commands or the  
7 alarm issued by Captain Detmers? How did they get to know?

8

9 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: So we were at the gun. First it was said that it  
10 was a "steamer with smoke column", then they said a "steamer of the grey  
11 class". It was the Sydney, but naturally we did not know her name at that  
12 time. And she approached us very fast.

13

14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was that communicated over the loudspeakers, or  
15 over ...?

16

17 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. Everything was communicated over the  
18 loudspeakers. Everything was told to us that way. It was said that it is  
19 continually approaching, very fast. They then contacted each other, with  
20 the signal flags and so on. And suddenly she was beside us. And we were  
21 curious, I was 21, others were just 20 years old. And we looked through  
22 every crack to see what the Sydney was doing. She was very fast, and we  
23 were somewhat scared of a cruiser like that, with everything on it, with  
24 an aircraft and all that. What is going to happen now? That was our last  
25 thought before it all started.

26

27 A. Well, we were at the gun and then, yes, yes, yes, we  
28 heard it all, everything was transmitted via loudspeakers.  
29 Then the whole thing started, they showed their flags, and  
30 that's when the signalling process started, and then  
31 suddenly the Sydney was next to us. Well, I was 21, I was  
32 very curious, and we all looked through every single gap  
33 within the ship to see what's happening there on the other  
34 side and she was very quick and approached very quickly and  
35 I was very, very scared, and of course we didn't know  
36 what's going to happen. We were scared.

37

38 LEUT TYSON: Q. I might just ask a question: you went  
39 to action stations, did you, because the alarm rang, as  
40 opposed to an actual order saying, "Go to action stations"?  
41 Is that correct?

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you go to your battle station because that  
44 order was given over the loudspeakers or because the alarm was sounded?

45

46 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That was always the case. During an alarm. If there  
47 is an alarm, then our task was to run to our guns. What were we to do

1 now? We had to wait and see what instructions our gun commander received  
2 from the battle command.

3

4 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And how was the alarm sounded, over the  
5 loudspeakers or over ...?

6

7 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Over the loudspeaker. The alarm applied to the  
8 entire ship.

9

10

11 THE INTERPRETER: I asked again if this alarm was given by  
12 loudspeakers or by other means - that was your question,  
13 wasn't it, as I understood it?

14

15 LEUT TYSON: Yes.

16

17

18

19

20

21 THE INTERPRETER: Anyway, his answer is there was a  
22 director control unit and the alarm was given - was  
23 generally - everybody knew it and then we only knew that we  
24 had to run to our action stations.

25

26 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Was it a bell system or did somebody  
27 say, "Go to action stations"?

28

29 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was there a bell or did someone yell "now go to the  
30 ...."?

31

32 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, it was an alarm siren. The siren could be heard  
33 everywhere on board. Because everybody has to be at his assigned post in  
34 case of a battle.

35

36 A. No, it was a siren. It could be heard all over the  
37 ship, because in the moment of the battle, everybody had to  
38 be obviously at his action station.

39

40 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, you mentioned earlier that the  
41 alarm first rang at about 1600 hours and at 1730 you talked  
42 about an order to fire being given. Do you remember that?

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Earlier you said that the alarm was first sounded  
45 at 4pm and that the order to fire was finally given at around 5:30pm. Is  
46 that correct?

47

1 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes that is correct. Yes.

2

3 A. Yes.

4

5 Q. I want to ask you, in that period of about one and a  
6 half hours, what did Kormoran do? Did she change her  
7 position at all, did she continue on the course she was  
8 first at?

9

10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would like to ask you what the Kormoran did  
11 during these one-and-a-half hours? Did it change its position, did it  
12 change course?

13

14 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. Straight on. Just like the Sydney. We were  
15 cruising side by side for a long time. And we asked ourselves as to how  
16 long this will go on. Either we got out or something else had to happen.  
17 It took one-and-a-half hours. We just looked and looked and looked at the  
18 ship. The Sydney, she was a big cruiser for us. We were just a commercial  
19 ship after all.

20

21 A. Well, we just went parallel for quite a long period -  
22 well, not parallel, sorry. Kormoran just followed her  
23 course, just straight, and that took one and a half hours.  
24 We were there and just looked at this big cruiser, Sydney,  
25 which was for us very impressive because we were just a  
26 merchant ship.

27

28 Q. Do you remember anything about Kormoran moving from a  
29 northerly direction and then turning westward?

30

31 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you remember that the Kormoran changed its  
32 course from Northerly to Westerly?

33

34 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. No. No.

35

36 A. No, no.

37

38 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Could you see Sydney when you were at  
39 your action stations for that one and a half hours before  
40 the camouflage was lifted?

41

42 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you see anything of the Sydney before you  
43 removed the camouflage during these one-and-a-half hours prior to the  
44 battle?

45

46 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Oh yes of course. She was 900 meters away. We could  
47 see every movement of her crew, her torpedoes, her guns ... we could see

1 it all. And it was also interesting for us. We did not think about  
2 anything, we were just curious. What is out there, what ship is that?

3

4 A. Yes, of course, only they were just 900 metres away.  
5 I could see everything. I could see sailors on board and  
6 I could see the turrets and of course we were very curious  
7 what's happening there. It was a big impressive ship.

8

9 Q. But when Sydney was 900 metres away, were the  
10 camouflage flaps up or down?

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When the Sydney was 900 meter away, was the  
13 camouflage already lifted up then?

14

15 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, everything was closed at that time.

16

17 A. No, everything was still disguised.

18

19 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, can you please explain how you were  
20 able to see Sydney then if the camouflage was already up --

21

22 THE PRESIDENT: Down.

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30 LEUT TYSON: Q. -- down at that stage?

31

32 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you explain to us as to how you could see the  
33 Sydney whilst the camouflage was still down?

34

35 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: We could see through the small gaps. And you could  
36 look through the barricades. And we observed her, she was continuously  
37 cruising beside us. She was in contact with signals and things, that is  
38 how they communicated.

39

40 A. Well, we could see through little gaps in between the  
41 camouflage and we could observe how the signals were  
42 exchanged and things like that, the signalling process.

43

44 Q. There were actually peepholes into the side of the  
45 ship, were there?

46

47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Were there real scuttles through which you could

1 look?

2

3 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, there were gaps in the hull, you could see  
4 through them.

5

6 A. There were just, like, long things like that.

7

8 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Slits?

9 A. Slits in between the camouflage pieces.

10

11 Q. Did you ever see Sydney when she was further away than  
12 900 metres?

13

14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you ever see the Sydney when she was further  
15 than 900 meters away?

16

17 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. At the time when she approached us. When  
18 we got the news that the steamer was a grey class, a warship, then we  
19 were naturally keen to see what she was doing. And she was extremely  
20 fast, the Sydney. She was here and we were in contact with signals and  
21 things like that, flashes and things like that, they way they  
22 communicated with each other. She came closer and closer and then she  
23 followed our course. We continued our stable course and the Sydney  
24 cruised along. And we asked ourselves as to how long this will go on.

25

26 A. Yeah, of course I could see her approach. When we  
27 heard the news that there's - at first we thought it was a  
28 steamer. Anyway, when we heard this news that the steamer  
29 was approaching, we were so curious that we tried to see  
30 what ship was approaching there, and then she came closer  
31 and closer and when for a very long period she went abeam  
32 of us, more or less parallel, we asked ourselves how long  
33 will this take, and that's how it was.

34

35 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, can I just take you through that  
36 period: did you see any changes in Sydney's course during  
37 that time?

38

39 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Once again in detail about the time when the Sydney  
40 approached. Did you notice whether the Sydney changed its course as she  
41 was approaching?

42

43 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, she approached us like this.

44

45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Would you like to show it to us with this?

46

47 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: So, this was our ship. We were heading North and

1 the Sydney came, and when we saw her, she turned like this and approached  
2 us very, very fast. Very fast. We saw for the first time how a warship  
3 performed against us, us and our 15 knots. We could not turn our eyes  
4 away from that ship. We were sailors. Did not matter whether German or  
5 whatever, we were sailors. The ship was our life. And she approached us  
6 like this and then she turned and followed on the same course as us. We  
7 both cruised like that. And later, at around half past, the camouflage  
8 came down and the first shells were loaded.

9

10 A. Well, we were going on a northerly course and the  
11 Sydney came from this direction, first of all, and came  
12 very, very quickly.

13

14 THE PRESIDENT: Q. From the East?

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So the Sydney approached from the East?

17

18 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes.

19

20 A. Yes, and it was so impressive that this ship was so  
21 quick. I mean, our ship, or our merchant ship, the  
22 Kormoran, was only able to do 15 knots. In a funny way, we  
23 couldn't get enough of Sydney, because we are sailors and  
24 the sea is our life and ships are our life, so we were very  
25 interested in how the ship looked and to see her approach  
26 in such a quick pace.

27

28 LEUT TYSON: Q. At any stage did you see Sydney change  
29 her pace or change her position and move away from  
30 Kormoran?

31

32 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you see at any time whether the Sydney changed  
33 her speed?

34

35 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No.

36

37 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Or whether she changed her course to distance  
38 herself from the Kormoran?

39

40 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. She came when we saw her and then she kept  
41 heading towards us. She was very close to us. We wondered. We were  
42 heading North. We cruised like this. And she came like this, from  
43 Australia, and then approached us like this. I only know it by chance,  
44 our command messengers at the gun who set elevation and angle, they were  
45 told 900 meters. That is why I know that the Sydney was 900 meters away  
46 from us.

47

1 A. No, it came directly towards us - well, it came from  
2 the side and then --

3

4 THE INTERPRETER: Well, as he described it, you know,  
5 moving this direction.

6

7 THE INTERPRETER: And I know by coincidence that it was  
8 900 metres the distance, because the people responsible for  
9 transmitting the orders for the elevation, and things like  
10 that, they said 900 metres, and that's how they set the  
11 guns, for a distance of 900 metres.

12

13 LEUT TYSON: Q. You heard that in your gun crew?

14

15 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You heard it for yourself at your gun?

16

17 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes, yes. They got the instruction, set to 900  
18 meters.

19

20 A. No, they received the message 900 metres and I heard  
21 it, yes.

22

23 Q. Sir, can you tell us, did you observe any activity on  
24 Sydney's decks at all during this period before the firing  
25 started?

26

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you tell us whether you saw any activities on  
28 the deck of the Sydney before the battle broke out?

29

30 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no. We only noticed that the sailors, who were  
31 probably curious as well about what was around, came to the railing. They  
32 were equally as curious. It was not many, only a few were standing there.

33

34 A. Well, I didn't see much. I didn't see many. There  
35 were just a few sailors. I mean, probably they were also  
36 curious what's happening there on the other ship, or what  
37 ship that is, but not many, just a few were there on deck.

38

39 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No gun and no nothing was aimed at us. The guns all  
40 aimed straight forward. So they guns were in their normal position. Not  
41 that they were already aimed at us or anything like that, that was not  
42 the case.

43

44 A. Even the turrets were not pointed at us. They were stil  
45 pointed towards forward and they didn't - no, they were not  
46 pointing at us at all.

47



1 Q. You talked about an order to fire being given at 1730.  
2 Where were Sydney's turrets pointed at 1730 hours?

3

4 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You said that the order to fire was given at around  
5 5:30pm. Where did the guns of the Sydney point at when this order was  
6 given at 5:30pm?

7

8 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Well, as far as I can remember, they were still  
9 pointing forward. No gun aimed at us. I am asking myself today: why? They  
10 were all pointing straight forward or backward. None was aimed at us, no  
11 gun. We could only see it through the cracks, but 900 meters is not that  
12 far. They were aimed straight forward or backward.

13

14 A. They were directed straightly forward or aft to  
15 behind. They were not pointed at us, not at all. I'm  
16 still asking myself today why this was like this, because  
17 I could see it all through these slits and the camouflage,  
18 I could see all this, so I don't know why they did it, but  
19 they were not pointed at us.

20

21 Q. Did you have the opportunity to see whether there was  
22 any activity involving Sydney's aeroplane?

23

24 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you observe whether there was any activity  
25 in connection with the aircraft on board of the Sydney?

26

27 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no. There was no engine [on], as I said. It  
28 stood there. No engine was on, nor was it turned to a side in any way. It  
29 was as if it was peace time, if I may put it like that.

30

31 A. No, I didn't see anything happen there. The engines  
32 were not running and it was not moved to any direction. It  
33 looked to me, if I might say, a lesson in peace time.

34

35 Q. What about any of Sydney's boats on her decks? Did  
36 you see any attempt to lower a boat into the water or  
37 anything like that?

38

39 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What about the boats on the Sydney, her lifeboats?  
40 Did you see whether they were possibly lowered into the water?

41

42 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, nothing changed on the ship until the battle.  
43 We observed it. At least I have seen that nothing went on, no boat was  
44 lowered into the water, and no men were handling the boats, nothing like  
45 that.

46

47 A. No, I haven't seen anything like that. I've seen a

1 lot and - but there weren't even people going around and  
2 trying to lower these boats and they were not lowered.  
3 There was nothing happening, in fact, on deck.

4

5 Q. What about signals from Sydney? Did you see any morse

6

7

8

9 lamp signals or any flag signals from Sydney?

10

11 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Regarding the signals coming from the Sydney, did  
12 you see any of the flags or Morse signals which were sent?

13

14 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, I more or less noticed that they signalled  
15 "please declare your position" once or twice. The answer was not  
16 understood, once or twice.

17

18 A. No, I just heard or just noticed that one or two times  
19 they tried to declare their position and they didn't  
20 understand each other or didn't answer correctly, something  
21 like that, but it's not really something I have seen.

22

23 Q. Is signalling something that you're not trained to  
24 understand or you don't understand those signals?

25

26 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you understand signals? Flag signals?

27

28 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: A bit, but I do not remember anything.

29

30 A. A little bit, but it's all gone now. I can't remember  
31 nowadays.

32

33 Q. Can I just ask you, do you remember whether lamps were  
34 being used or whether it was just flags?

35

36 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you possibly recall whether only flags were  
37 used, or whether Morse lights were used as well?

38

39 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Morse lights. I remember that Morse lights were  
40 used when she approached.

41

42 A. When she approached, I remember that morse lamps were  
43 used.

44

45 Q. Sydney used morse lamps?

46

47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: The Sydney used them?

1

2 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

3

4 A. Yes.

5

6 Q. At any stage between this period of 1600 hours to  
7 1730 hours, were the smoke generators being used on  
8 Kormoran to generate smoke, or anything like that?

9

10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: In the time between the first sighting at 4pm until  
11 5:30pm, did the Kormoran use the smoke dischargers?

12

13 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no. Not at all.

14

15 A. No, not at all.

16

17 THE PRESIDENT: Q. When the camouflage was lifted, where  
18 were Sydney's guns pointing?

19

20 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When you lifted your camouflage, where did the guns  
21 of the Sydney point at?

22

23 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Now I have to lie precisely. Well, they did turn.  
24 But I do not remember anymore whether they actually fired. We were busy  
25 at our gun. We could no longer see anything over there.

26

27 A. Now I have to - how do I say this? - I have to lie  
28 exactly. That's just the job I have. But I remember that  
29 they turned at that point because they were also shooting  
30 them (inaudible) start to shoot, but whether they really  
31 shot I can't remember now. We were then quite busy doing  
32 our job at our gun that we didn't see much more of the  
33 other ship.

34

35 LEUT TYSON: Q. Just before the camouflage was removed  
36 and just before the firing started, were you in a position  
37 to see what flags, what ensigns, were on Kormoran, what  
38 were hoisted?

39

40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Just after the camouflage was lifted but before the  
41 battle started, were you in a position to see which flag the Kormoran was  
42 flying?

43

44 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes. The command was to remove the camouflage, and  
45 the signallers were standing next to us. They had the Imperial War Flag  
46 [Reichskriegsflagge] and they pulled it up, at the same time they took  
47 the Dutch flag down, which we were sailing under. So the Imperial War

1 Flag was up at the moment when we started to fire.

2

3 A. Yeah, I can remember that well because we had the  
4 people responsible for hoisting the flags and they hoisted  
5 the war ensignage, or the war ensign, at the same time as  
6 the Dutch flag under which we sailed was lowered.

7

8 Q. Whereabouts on the Kormoran was the Dutch flag and  
9 where was the war ensign?

10

11 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Roughly where on board of the Kormoran was the  
12 Dutch flag and where as the Imperial War Flag?

13

14 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That is aft.

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: No, that is the bow. That is the bow here.

17

18 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Ah yes, correct. At the mast here. No, it was at  
19 the back here.

20

21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Even further back? This is not a precise drawing of  
22 the Kormoran, only of a similar ship.

23

24 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, at the back here. We saw the signallers who  
25 were four, five steps away from our gun, and they had the flag in their  
26 hand and then pulled it up the Mast. There was a flag pole aft ...

27

28 Q. Perhaps, Herr Thomas, on  
29 exhibit 16 Herr Hildenbrand could indicate where the two  
30 different flag poles were.

31

32 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you mark it again please. You were standing  
33 here where the cross is ...

34

35 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: The flag was hoisted here.

36

37 THE PRESIDENT: I'll mark that one. I'll mark that A.

38

39 Q. What was there?

40

41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So there was the Dutch as well as the Imperial Wag  
42 Flag, they were both there?

43

44 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That is correct. One was hoisted, the other was  
45 lowered.

46

47 A. That's where both flags were - the Dutch and the

1     ensign flags.

2

3     Q. Both flags?

4     A. Well, not at the same time. At the same position,  
5     more or less. One was hoisted, whereas the other one was  
6     lowered.

7

8     Q. So they were both on the same mast?

9

10    INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Both were on the same mast?

11

12    HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes, yes.

13

14    A. Yes, yes.

15

16    LEUT TYSON: Q. The orders that were given before the  
17    firing started, can you remember as best you can in precise  
18    terms what the order was?

19

20    INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would like to go back to the orders which were  
21    given before the battle. Can you precisely remember the sequence of the  
22    orders and the orders that were given?

23

24    HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: When both ships were next to each other, the  
25    "BUE's", the command messengers, received instructions about distance,  
26    elevation and angle. And then came the order to "remove camouflage". And  
27    as I said the counter weights were cut and the guns were already set up  
28    properly, elevation and angle. And then the order was given to "fire".

29

30    A. Well, it was when both ships were parallel at this  
31    time and these people responsible for transmitting orders  
32    had received the order to - or more or less the message how  
33    to set the guns up, like elevation height, things like  
34    that, and then came the order to remove the disguise and at  
35    this time we had already loosened the counterweight of the  
36    camouflage system, so at this point the guns were already  
37    pointed in the right direction and then came the order to  
38    start fire.

39

40    Q. Is that an order that you yourself heard, or is it an  
41    order that went to the gun crew commander?

42

43    INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you hear this order yourself or did it go to  
44    the gun commander?

45

46    HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Gun commander.

47

1 A. It was only to the gun commander, yes.

2

3 Q. Who was the gun commander on your gun?

4

5 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Who was your gun commander?

6

7 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: His name was Saalfrank.

8

9 A. Mr Saalfrank, yes.

10

11 THE PRESIDENT: Q. What did he do when he received that  
12 order?

13

14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What did he do when he received this order?

15

16 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: He passed it on and then we started firing.

17

18 A. He forwarded this order and then the shooting started,  
19 firing.

20

21 LEUT TYSON: Q. How long did that take, from when the  
22 order was given to fire to before your gun fired? Do you  
23 know how long that took?

24

25 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you still remember how long it took from the  
26 time this order was given until the gun actually fired its first shot?

27

28 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Oh, that was a matter of second. The gun that was  
29 port side, the men there did not have anything to do so they have helped  
30 us here on our side. They have undone the straps of the camouflage, the  
31 ones holding the counter weights, and then they helped to carry the  
32 shells from the elevator.

33

34 A. That was just a question of seconds, because as the  
35 gun crews from the port side, they didn't have anything to  
36 do, they helped us, and it was them who had loosened the  
37 counterweights and who also helped us to bring bullets and

38

39

40 water from the elevator.

41

42 Q. Which gun fired first? Was it one of the 15cm guns?  
43 Was it your gun? Do you know which gun fired first on  
44 Kormoran?

45

46 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you still remember which gun on the Kormoran  
47 fired first. Your gun or the 15 cm gun?

1

2 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: All guns started firing at the same time. There  
3 were 3 guns on one side of the ship and they got the order at the same  
4 time. Each had another target where the gun was aiming at, and all they  
5 had to do was wait for the "fire" order.

6

7 A. No, that was more or less simultaneous, because they  
8 all received the order at the same time and then they had  
9 their - well, their position, or, no, their targeting was  
10 already done and so it was more or less at the same time.

11

12 Q. When you say "simultaneous", do you mean just the 15cm  
13 guns or did also the 2cm guns fire at about the same time  
14 the 15cm guns fired?

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When you say "at the same time", does that mean  
17 that only the 15 cm guns fired together? Or the 15 cm and 2 cm guns ...?

18

19 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes everything. Everybody was ordered to fire.

20

21 A. It was completely free. They all shot at the same  
22 time. It was free to shoot once the order came ready to  
23 fire, start firing.

24

25 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Including the 3.7?

26

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Including the 3.7 gun?

28

29 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. That one too. Everything.

30

31 A. Yes.

32

33 LEUT TYSON: Q. During the battle, when the guns were  
34 fired, were you trying to fire as fast as you could or was  
35 there a salvo coordinated by Skeries? Did you have to wait  
36 and did the guns all fire simultaneously in a salvo?

37

38 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When you started firing, did you simply fire as you  
39 liked or were the salvos coordinated by instruction of Mr. Skeries? Did  
40 you regularly have to skip a turn?

41

42 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Ah well we were order to fire. You could say that  
43 it means that you can fire immediately and as often as you like. And we  
44 were still in the rhythm, the gun commander always said: "Clear! Salvo!  
45 Fire!"

46

47 A. Well, it was free to fire as you liked, but then the

1 gun commander, he was the one who coordinated salvo and he  
2 said, like, salvo, stop fire, salvo fire, salvo fire.

3

4 Q. Sorry, the gun commander on your gun or do you mean  
5 Skeries in director control?

6

7 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you mean the gun commander at your gun or  
8 Skeries up in the ...?

9

10 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: The gun commander. He got his order from the battle  
11 command.

12

13 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did the two 15 cm cannons fire simultaneously or  
14 not?

15

16 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: They fired simultaneously.

17

18 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: In the same rhythm?

19

20 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. In the same rhythm.

21

22 A. No, the 15cm guns, they have fired in the same rhythm,  
23 so it was a coordinated salvo, ...

24

25 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And was this rhythm dictated by Skeries or by each  
26 gun commander?

27

28 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Ah, it was dictated by the battle command. By  
29 Skeries.

30

31 A. ...and this coordination was  
32 done by Skeries from the director control unit.

33

34 Q. Did you aim for specific targets on Sydney or parts of  
35 Sydney or were you just firing in her general direction?

36

37 THE INTERPRETER: Sorry, I just didn't hear the first part  
38 of the sentence.

39

40 LEUT TYSON: Q. I want to ask you about whether your  
41 guns were targeted at particular parts of Sydney. Did you  
42 fire at targets on Sydney, were you given targets, or was  
43 it just general firing in her direction?

44

45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Were your orders to aim at certain points on the  
46 Sydney, or did you just fire anywhere? Or did you have set targets which  
47 you fired at?



1

2 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no. The "BUE's" (command messengers) had the  
3 direction, elevation, angle ...

4

5 A. No, the guns were already in a position - or targeted  
6 already, so there was no other target, no specific target.

7

8

9

10

11

12

13 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Which part of Sydney were you trying  
14 to hit? If you can't remember, say so.

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Which part of the Sydney did you try to hit? If you  
17 cannot remember, then you do not have to tell me.

18

19 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I really cannot remember that. Was it amidships or  
20 aft? I do not know. I only know that the gun was set at the beginning.  
21 Maybe there were orders, but I did not hear them anymore.

22

23 A. I can't tell, really, if it was the centre or the aft  
24 or the stern. I cannot tell, really. It might be - well,  
25 it was all set up before the firing started, our guns, and  
26 then they just shot. Once it started, I didn't hear what  
27 the orders were anymore.

28

29 Q. Did you see where in fact Sydney was hit?

30

31 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you see where the Sydney was actually hit?

32

33 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Well, when the battle smoke first lifted, her guns  
34 were hanging down as if they had been hit. I do not know whether they  
35 were all gone. But I know that the guns at the bow were pointing  
36 downwards.

37

38 A. Well, when the first smoke disappeared, I could see  
39 that the front gun turrets were already damaged and didn't  
40 work anymore.

41

42 THE PRESIDENT: Q. What about the bridge? Could you see  
43 the bridge?

44

45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you see the bridge?

46

47 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no. Neither ours nor that of the Sydney.

1

2 A. No, I could neither see our bridge, nor the bridge of  
3 Sydney.

4

5 LEUT TYSON: Q. Is that because of the extent of the  
6 smoke?

7

8 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Were you unable to see the bridge because of the  
9 smoke or for another reason?

10

11 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Not because of the smoke. I could not see ours in  
12 any case and I could not see the bridge of the Sydney. She was on fire.  
13 Suddenly she caught fire. She was on fire but I do not remember where  
14 exactly the fire was on the Sydney.

15

16 A. No, our own bridge I couldn't see at all anyway, that  
17 was clear, and the bridge of Sydney I also couldn't see it,  
18 and suddenly there was just fire everywhere. It started to  
19 burn.

20

21 Q. Do you remember what shells you used in your 15cm  
22 gun - was it the base-fused shells or the nose-fused  
23 shells?

24

25 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you still remember what type of shells you used  
26 for your 15 cm gun? What it those that on impact ...

27

28 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Nose-fused shells. On impact.

29

30 A. Nose-fused shells.

31

32 Q. Do you remember, in relation to when Kormoran fired,  
33 when Sydney started to fire back against Kormoran?

34

35 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you remember when the Sydney returned fire,  
36 during the battle, after the Kormoran opened the fire?

37

38 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I cannot tell you precisely, I only know that we  
39 were told "we are hit". The hit went into the engine. But I do not know  
40 the when and how. We were very busy on our gun ...

41

42 A. No, I cannot really tell, because we were so busy  
43 doing our job. I just heard that - suddenly it was said we  
44 got hit. But that's all. I cannot tell really in relation  
45 where and what - how it was.

46

47 Q. Sir, you described earlier the position of the

1 two ships at the beginning of the action. Did Sydney and  
2 Kormoran stay in that position at all times after the  
3 firing started or was there a movement in the relative  
4 position of the ships?

5

6 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You told us earlier that the two ships were in  
7 about this position. Now that the battle has started, did the positions  
8 of the ships change or did it stay the same?

9

10 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: The Sydney slowed a bit. Later she came around us  
11 astern. Then she was on our port side. And we could see that she was  
12 burning very bright. Then the order came for us to "abandon ship" and we  
13 did not pay any more notice to the Sydney. He had to get off after all,  
14 we were hit too.

15

16 A. Well, no, the Sydney slowed down a bit and then she  
17 changed her course and passed our stern. That's when she  
18 came on our port side later and then she was already  
19 burning quite a lot, and that's all we could see of her and  
20 then - well, later she disappeared and then we had to

21

22 1 abandon ship and then we didn't take so much care of what  
23 2 was happening to Sydney anymore.

24 3

25 4 THE PRESIDENT: Q. So was it like this?

26

27 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What is a bit like this, like my colleague is  
28 showing? Was that the movement?

29

30 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I would assume that she was drifting away more,  
31 with all that damage to her stern.

32

33 5 A. Well, I assume it was more drifting.

34 6

35 7 Q. That's the stern.

36 8

37 9 THE INTERPRETER: Yes, that's what he says, that she moved  
38 like from the --

39

40 THE PRESIDENT: Q. The stern this way?

41

42 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes. When we were in captivity later on they said  
43 that two torpedoes passed our stern. They said they were fired by the  
44 Sydney. So it could only have been in front here, there we realized that  
45 there were torpedoes at the stern of the Sydney. Torpedos were standing  
46 there, a twin, no turret, thus without any protection. They stood there ...

47

1 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Just a moment, now here we have the stern, is that  
2 right?

3

4 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes, yes. And the torpedoes were there, the  
5 ones that passed us afterwards.

6

7 A. Yeah, that's because also - but that's what I heard  
8 later in the prisoner of war camp, my friends told me that  
9 the Sydney fired two torpedoes at us. That's probably why  
10 she moved this course, to fire those torpedoes, which were  
11 in the aft of the ship but we weren't hit by these  
12 torpedoes. It was a twin torpedo which was shot at us, but  
13 it didn't hit us, but this was only something I heard from  
14 other people in the prisoner of war camp.

15

16 Q. So you don't know whether Sydney fired torpedoes from  
17 the port side or the starboard side?

18

19 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: So you do not know for yourself whether the  
20 torpedoes that the Sydney fired were fired from the port side or  
21 starboard?

22

23 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, it was port side. It is left, it is this side.  
24 During the battle, we have seen often enough that there were people  
25 there. But they did not fire. They probably only fired when she was  
26 astern like this, such that she could fire once more.

27

28 A. No, it was from the port side. No, it was - we even  
29 saw people there. They were fired from the port side, and  
30 we could even see people there, although they didn't fire  
31 this, but I think in the end they did fire them and they  
32 had to be in this position to be able to fire them, the  
33 torpedoes, in this direction.

34

35 Q. That means that they were fired from the same side  
36 that had been bombarded in the whole battle?

37

38 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: That means that the torpedoes were fired from the  
39 same side that has been shot at the whole time?

40

41 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That is correct. That is correct. Yes, yes. We were  
42 starboard and this is port side, the left side. This side fired. And at  
43 the back there were the guns. In the process she must have hit one of our  
44 guns. We suffered three hits from there.

45

46 A. Yes, exactly. Exactly. Yeah, exactly. It was all on  
47 the port side of Sydney and then we have here these aft

1 turrets and one of them was still shooting at us and that's  
2 the one that hit us three times, I think.

3

4 LEUT TYSON: Sorry, we just need to stop for a moment for  
5 the tape. The tape has run out.

6

7 SHORT ADJOURNMENT

8

9 LEUT TYSON: Thank you, Leut Harper, the tape has now  
10 started again.

11

12 Q. In that short intermission, sir, you were making some  
13 comments about Sydney. Can you just repeat, please, what  
14  
15 you just told us?

16

17 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Thank you Mr. Harper for changing the tape. The  
18 recorder is back on again. Mr. Hildenbrand, in the short break you made  
19 some comments about the Sydney and the whole matter. Could you please  
20 repeat them?

21

22 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes of course. The men over there were mates. They  
23 were sailors. We loved the sea. We just could not comprehend that the  
24 commander approached so closely. It was war after all! As far as I know,  
25 an armed merchant cruiser was spotted down there. It was known that there  
26 were armed merchant cruisers down there. How could a man with such a ship  
27 approach to 900 meter and dare to ... I just cannot understand something  
28 like this. He wished us Godspeed and that was his last message. I just  
29 cannot understand it!

30

31 A. It's all impossible. I cannot believe it still today.  
32 I ask myself why did they come so close. I mean, the guys  
33 that were there, they were all friends, they were sailors  
34 as well, they love the sea, and I just can't understand why  
35 he came so close. It doesn't want to go into my brain.

36

37 Also, the last thing we heard of him - also, they must  
38 have known that there were auxiliary cruisers in the area  
39 around. I think, as far as we know, they should know that.  
40 How can they do such a mistake, to come so close to a ship  
41 which might be an auxiliary cruiser? They should have  
42 known that. And the last thing he said was, "Have a nice  
43 journey." I still can't believe this today, why he made  
44 such a mistake.

45

46 Q. When you make that reference to, "Have a nice  
47 journey", can you please tell us what you're referring to?

1

2 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: This signal which you referred to, "Godspeed", can  
3 you explain in detail what that was referring to?

4

5 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes. She sailed alongside of us. And we were only  
6 expecting the identification code. She said "Godspeed" and  
7 "identification code". It must have come shortly afterwards, since after  
8 that the command to fire was given.

9

10 A. Yeah, well, of course I do. He was going next to us,  
11 and I will explain it to you. Then that's when he told us  
12 "have a safe journey", but then he asked us for our secret  
13 sign and, well, of course after this the firing started.

14

15 Q. What you've just told us, is that something you saw  
16 yourself or is that something that other members of  
17 Kormoran told you after this battle?

18

19 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What you have just told us, is this something that  
20 you have heard yourself or it is something that others ...?

21

22 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, this was communicated over the loudspeaker. It  
23 was announced that he wished us "Godspeed" and "identification code".  
24 Anyway, everything was communicated through the loudspeaker on board,  
25 everybody could hear it. Whether it was the commander or Skeries at the  
26 battle command, both did it.

27

28 A. No, that was transmitted by the loudspeakers on board.  
29 We heard how he said, "Have a nice journey," and then,  
30 "Secret sign". Generally, everything that was said on  
31 board was transmitted by these loudspeakers. In fact,  
32 everybody could hear all the time what's happening. Even  
33 if it was Skeries or somebody, you could hear it on the  
34 loudspeakers.

35

36 Q. So is it the case, for example, let's say that Ahlbach  
37 is having a conversation with Capt Detmers or von Goesseln  
38 is having a conversation with Capt Detmers on the bridge,  
39 did those conversations go through Kormoran?

40

41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Is it then really the case ...

42

43

44 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Over the loudspeakers?

45

46 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do I have to understand it that if there was a  
47 discussion between Mr. Ahlbach and Captain Detmers, or between Messrs von

1 Goesseln and Detmers, that it was broadcast over the loudspeakers too?

2

3 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, not these kind of things. That were  
4 discussions. No, they were not ...

5

6 A. No, those kind of things, if they were discussing  
7 under themselves, those were not transmitted via the  
8 loudspeakers.

9

10 Q. Who was it who said over the loudspeaker, "Have a nice  
11 voyage"?

12

13 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Who was it who said over the loudspeaker that she  
14 wished you "Godspeed"?

15

16 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That must have been someone from the bridge.  
17 Whether it was the commander or ... ah well, who else could it have been.  
18 It must have been the commander.

19

20 A. It must have been somebody from the bridge. I don't  
21  
22 know if it was the commander. It must have been the  
23 commander, yes. It can only have been the commander who  
24 said he wishes us a safe journey.

25

26 LEUT TYSON: Q. How long was it between "Have a nice  
27 journey" and "Show us your secret sign"? How long? What  
28 was the interval of time between those two things being  
29 reported to you?

30

31 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: How much time was there between the "Godspeed" and  
32 the "show us your identification code"? Do you know that?

33

34 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That was very short. It must have been very short.  
35 The command to "remove camouflage" was given directly afterwards, and  
36 then it was already removed. It was of no use any longer, our commander  
37 said that we have to show our true colours now.

38

39 9 A. Must have been a very short period, because shortly  
40 after this came the order to remove the disguise, so it  
41 must have been a very short period. Well, it wasn't useful  
42 anymore, so our commander said we now had to show them who  
43 we were.

44

45 Q. What you have just said, "Our commander said we had to  
46 show them who we were," is that something as well that you  
47 heard through the loudspeaker?

1

2 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Is this also something that you have heard over the  
3 loudspeaker? What you said last, that "we now have to show our true  
4 colours".

5

6 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no. That is just my comments.

7

8 A. No, no, that was just my comment.

9

10 Q. I just want to go back to a line of questioning that  
11 Commissioner Cole was asking you about before the tape  
12 stopped about the change in the relative positions of the  
13 two ships.

14

15 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Before the break, Mr. Cole asked you a few question  
16 regarding the position of the ships and their courses. I would like go  
17 back to that.

18

19 Q. On 1 December 1941 when you were being  
20 interrogated in Australia, the account of your interview  
21 says that you drew sketches of the action. Do you remember  
22 that?

23

24 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When you were interviewed in Australia on 1  
25 December 1941, a report on your interview states that you drew sketches  
26 of the battle. Do you remember that?

27

28 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I did that? No, no.

29

30 A. I am to have done this? No, I cannot remember.

31

32 THE INTERPRETER: Just repeat this again.

33

34 LEUT TYSON: Q. It says "Hildenbrand. 1 December".

35

36 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Just let me read parts of it to you.

37

38 THE INTERPRETER: "Drew sketches of action and position of  
39 guns and torpedo tubes". Yes.

40

41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Precisely. It states that you made a drawing of the  
42 battle and the position of the torpedo tubes ...

43

44

45 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Just let me read.

46

47 THE INTERPRETER: Are you reading it and I shall translate



1 it?

2

3 THE PRESIDENT: Yes, please.

4

5 THE INTERPRETER: Okay, sorry.

6

7 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Do you remember that on 1 December,

8

9 after you had been rescued, you were interrogated by some  
10 Australian military officers from the Trocas.

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: But you remember that you were ... by an Australian ...  
13 on 1 December 1941 ...

14

15

16 LEUT TYSON: No, this was back at camp.

17

18 THE PRESIDENT: No, it's not.

19

20 Q. Do you remember being interrogated?

21

22 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you remember being interrogated?

23

24 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes.

25

26 A. Yes, yes.

27

28 Q. Was that on the Trocas or back at camp?

29

30 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was that on the Trocas or in the camp?

31

32 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That was in the camp, in Perth. And there was a Mr.  
33 Moon there.

34

35 A. It was in the camp at Perth and it was somebody called  
36 Mr Moon.

37

38 Q. His notes of the questions that he asked you and your  
39 answers are as follows.

40

41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: These are the questions he asked, and the answers  
42 you gave ...

43

44 Q. It says this, "He was on duty" -  
45 that's you. You were on duty on the 15cm gun aft  
46 starboard - that's correct?

47

1 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: He said your battle station was the 15 cm gun aft  
2 starboard.  
3  
4 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, that is correct.  
5  
6 A. Yes, correct, yes.  
7  
8 Q. During the action your gun fired 50 shots.  
9  
10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: During the battle you gun fired 50 shells.  
11  
12 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Well, that has been 66 years ago, so it could have  
13 been a few more or it could have been a few less. But it could have been  
14 roughly that number.  
15  
16 A. Yeah, that's quite possible. I mean, it's 66 years  
17 ago now. It might be a bit more, a bit less, but more or  
18 less that's correct, yes.  
19  
20 Q. Then the notes say, "The range: 1100 metres"?  
21  
22 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Then the record states that the distance was 1,100  
23 meters.  
24  
25 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. All I can say is that I heard the distance to  
26 be 900 meters.  
27  
28 A. I can only say what I heard, that it was 900 metres.  
29  
30 Q. Then it goes on, "Many hits seen on the cruiser"?  
31  
32 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Then it continues: "I have seen many hits on the  
33 cruiser, thus on the Sydney."  
34  
35 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, that is about right, yes, yes.  
36  
37 A. Yeah, that's true.  
38  
39 Q. "Setting fire at first to the bow, then the bridge.  
40 No damage aft."  
41  
42 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You first set the bow on fire, then the bridge.  
43 However, no damage was caused on the aft of the ship.  
44  
45 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: On the Sydney?  
46  
47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Yes. So bow first, then bridge, and no damage aft.

1

2 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Now let me tell you something. I definitely did not  
3 say that. I am certain I did not say this. How could I have seen from the  
4 back, at the gun, as to what happened in front there? That is number 1.  
5 That cannot work out, that is not correct. I cannot say that we hit this  
6 one there, from the back, in front there, so ... something is not correct  
7 here.

8

9 A. That's not true. I cannot have said this, because if  
10 I was there at the aft at my gun, I couldn't have seen what  
11 was happening there at the front gun, and those are there  
12 and those are there, I cannot have said this. I would  
13 never have said this. Something is wrong about this.

14

15 Q. Then it says your ship, the Kormoran, had six 15cm  
16 guns and six torpedo tubes, four above the water line and  
17 two below?

18

19 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: It goes on stating that the Kormoran had six 15 cm  
20 guns ...

21

22 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

23

24 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And six torpedo tubes ...

25

26 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Two below the water-line. That is correct. Yes.

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Precisely. Two below the water-line and four above  
29 it.

30

31 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Four above the water-line. Yes.

32

33 A. Yes, correct.

34

35 Q. Then it says "Loading for the guns" - that's  
36 Kormoran's guns - "was immediately below each gun"?

37

38 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: "The area where we loaded the guns was directly  
39 below each gun."

40

41 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, the shell rooms. Yes, certainly. The guns sat  
42 on a pivot and the shell rooms, the stores, were combined in the middle  
43 between the two guns. For number five and number six. And the elevator  
44 was there to bring the shells up to the gun.

45

46 A. Well, yeah, that's correct. Where the grenades were

47

1 stored, the shells were stored, this room was for the fifth  
2 and the sixth turret both together, and that's also where  
3 the elevator was which brought the shells up to where the  
4 guns were.

5

6 Q. Then the notes say that you said that the Kormoran  
7 opened fire sometime before the cruiser - that's Sydney -  
8 fired?

9

10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Then it continues: "The Kormoran opened fire some  
11 time before the cruiser, the Sydney, fired." First the Kormoran, then the  
12 Sydney. Is that correct?

13

14 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, I cannot deny that.

15

16 A. Yes, I cannot deny that.

17

18 Q. And it says, "First sight of the cruiser on the  
19 horizon coming towards Kormoran at high speed"?

20

21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: It goes on: "First sighting of the cruiser on the  
22 horizon, then she approached the Kormoran at high speed."

23

24 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes that is correct.

25

26 A. Yes, correct.

27

28 Q. Then it says, "Cruiser asked their name" - that's  
29 Kormoran's name - "Didn't know what the reply was"?

30

31 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Then: "The Sydney asked for the name of the  
32 Kormoran, the armed merchant cruiser, but could not recognize the  
33 answer."

34

35 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I do not know that either. I only know that our  
36 signallers stood there with the flag.

37

38 A. That's also something I cannot really answer. The  
39 only thing I can remember is that our signalling crew was  
40 there with the signal, the ensign signal, but above this  
41 I cannot remember.

42

43 Q. Then the notes say, "The cruiser" - that's Sydney -  
44 "then came up on the starboard side of the ship to  
45 approximately 1200 metres"?

46

47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Then it goes on: "The cruiser, the Sydney, caught

1 up on starboard and sailed alongside at a distance of about 1,200  
2 meters.”

3

4 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. It was 900 meters. That was what I heard at  
5 that time when the orders were transmitted. 900 meters.

6

7 A. No. No, it was 900 metres. At least that's why I -  
8 what I heard those days when the orders for the guns were  
9 transmitted.

10

11 Q. Then the notes say, "When asked for secret challenge  
12 they" - that's Kormoran - "opened fire"?

13

14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And then the records go on stating: "When the  
15 Kormoran was asked for the identification code, she opened fire.”

16

17 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. That was the code, she wanted the  
18 identification code. She wanted to know our code.

19

20 A. Yes, of course, that's because they wanted to have our  
21 secret code, they wanted to have a code.

22

23 Q. "First salvo hit the cruiser. Second salvo, cruiser  
24 on fire"?

25

26 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: "The first salvo hit the Sydney straight away and  
27 the second salvo already set her alight.”

28

29 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Oh well ... she was on fire, but already after the  
30 second salvo?

31

32 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You do not remember that anymore?

33

34 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I do not remember that.

35

36 A. Yes, well, it took fire and all that, but I cannot  
37 remember nowadays if it was after the second salvo. That's  
38 something I don't know.

39

40 Q. The notes go on, "Kormoran continued firing as quickly  
41 as possible"?

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: It goes on: "The Kormoran continued to fire as fast  
44 and frequent as possible.”

45

46 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. That is what I said in the beginning.

47

1 A. Yeah, that's what I said in the beginning. Yes,  
2 that's right.

3

4 Q. It says, "The cruiser when hit continued at fair  
5 speed, then stopped and dropped at stern, broadside on, to  
6 take up position at slightly astern on port side."

7

8 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: "After the Sydney was hit, she nevertheless  
9 continued to sail at a fair speed. Then she stopped ..."

10

11 THE INTERPRETER: What is "dropped astern"? What is this?

12

13 THE PRESIDENT: Stopped astern, dropped behind, dropped  
14 back. "Dropped astern broadside on".

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: "Then she dropped astern ..."

17

18

19 THE INTERPRETER: What is "broadside on"? Can you explain  
20 this to me?

21

22 LEUT TYSON: That's the broadside.

23

24 THE INTERPRETER: Yes. Okay.

25

26 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: "... broadside, to take a position, directly behind  
27 our stern at port side ..."

28

29

30 THE PRESIDENT: Q. "To take up position at slightly  
31 astern on port side".

32

33 THE INTERPRETER: That's what I've said already.

34

35 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: "... to get into a position, just aft of our port  
36 side."

37

38

39 THE PRESIDENT: Q. The cruiser - that's Sydney - fired  
40 from starboard but you did not know whether it hit your  
41 ship?

42

43 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Then the recording continues: "The Sydney fired  
44 from the starboard side, but you did not know whether you were hit or  
45 not."

46

47 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I do not remember. It is difficult to imagine. She

1 ought to have hit us like that, in our bow.

2

3 A. Yes, well, as I said before, it's something I cannot  
4 really remember, because if it would have been like that it  
5 could have, should have, hit us there in our stern, really,  
6 which it didn't.

7

8 Q. "From the port side, the cruiser" - that's Sydney -  
9 "fired five to six minutes. Three or four big shells hit,  
10 doing damage to the Kormoran"?

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: "The Sydney fired for five to six minutes from her  
13 port side. Three or four large shells hit us and damaged the Kormoran."

14

15 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, that is correct.

16

17 A. Yeah, that's correct.

18

19 Q. The action lasted 40 minutes and there were no  
20 casualties suffered at your gun station, but two or three  
21 were killed elsewhere?

22

23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: "The whole battle lasted 40 minutes. On your gun  
24 there were no deaths or injuries, but two or three men where killed  
25 elsewhere."

26

27 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, in the engine room. There were 20 men in  
28 there. Yes, and then two, three colleagues, mates, they were on the upper  
29 deck. That is correct.

30

31 A. Yes, that's correct. Two or three and then 20 men  
32 were killed in the engine rooms.

33

34 Q. Then it says that you drew sketches of the action and  
35 the position of guns and torpedo tubes.

36

37 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And then it says here: "He made a drawing of the  
38 battle and the position of the guns and torpedo tubes."

39

40 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I did that? No, no.

41

42 A. No way. No way have I done that.

43

44 Q. Have we got the document?

45

46 LEUT TYSON: It's not his document.

47

1 THE PRESIDENT: What's that one?

2

3

4 LEUT TYSON: It's done by the naval intelligence officers.

5 It doesn't purport to be Herr Hildenbrand's document.

6

7

8 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I drew this?

9

10 THE WITNESS: It's said that I have drawn this?

11

12 LEUT TYSON: Q. No, no, it's not suggested that you have

13 drawn this, but we'd like to ask you some questions about

14 this later, and if you did a sketch, whether it was in any

15 way similar?

16

17 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: No, you did not draw this one. We are not assuming

18 that you did. This is just a drawing which we would like to show you

19 later, about the progress of the battle, but if you actually have drawn

20 anything which is in any way similar ...

21

22 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, I definitely did not draw this. Definitely not.

23 I would not even know why.

24

25 A. No, I definitely did not draw any sketch. I did not

26 draw any sketch. No way. I wouldn't even know why, what

27 the purpose of this would be.

28

29 THE PRESIDENT: I'm having difficulty reading it.

30

31 LEUT TYSON: I think mine is a better copy, sir.

32

33 THE PRESIDENT: What does it say?

34

35 Q. You do not know the make of the sea plane, as same was

36 kept secret from the men, and it says that the sea plane,

37 that's the plane on the Kormoran, never flew in the

38 Indian Ocean, but flew twice in the Atlantic.

39

40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: The sea plane which you had on the Kormoran, you

41 claim here that it was never used in the Indian Ocean, but that it flew

42 twice in the Atlantic Ocean.

43

44

45 THE INTERPRETER: What was the beginning of the sentence?

46 Can I just have the other - do you need this one now, the

47 other one?



1

2 THE PRESIDENT: It is hard to read. You can't read it in  
3 that. Anyway, I don't think that is very important.

4

5

6 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Well regarding our airplanes ...

7

8 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You do not know the brand of the sea planes?

9

10 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Well the engines were "Arado" engines. But  
11 otherwise nothing. We flew them twice and the commanding officer always  
12 made a show out of it and then the Captain said: "Enough. This bird stays  
13 inside." It never flew again.

14 THE INTERPRETER: We've used them once or twice, this, but  
15 I know the make. They were "Arados"). We used them once  
16 or twice, but it was quite a show to use them and in the  
17 end our captain said, no, we are not going to use them  
18 anymore. This bird is going to stay inside.

19

20 THE PRESIDENT: Q. The notes also say that you told the  
21 interrogators that you had instructions to always aim for  
22 the water line?

23

24 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Then it is said that you were under instruction at  
25 that time to always aim at the water-line. Is that correct?

26

27 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I said that? No, no, no. We had the command  
28 messenger to do that, they set the water-line. All I did was loading the  
29 shells. That was the sin I committed, nothing else.

30

31 A. No. No, I cannot - no, no, no, no way, because I was  
32 the one responsible for loading the shells into the gun,  
33 and I didn't aim at the target or anything, so it was not -  
34 none of my duties.

35

36 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, I want to show you a sketch, and  
37 I want you to please feel free to tell us either whether

38

39 you agree with it or disagree with it or whether it is true  
40 in part. It is completely up to you.

41

42 THE PRESIDENT: It is not your sketch.

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: This is not your sketch. But I would like to show  
45 you a sketch anyway, and you can say about it what you like. I will ask  
46 you a few questions, answer quite freely, or if you do not want to  
47 answer, then that is not a problem either. Do as you like.

1

2 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

3

4

5 LEUT TYSON: Q. It's a sketch that we understand was  
6 done by an Australian intelligence officer after he  
7 interviewed some members of the Kormoran crew.

8

9 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We assume that this drawing was made by a member of  
10 the Australian marine after he had interviewed some crew members of the  
11 Kormoran.

12

13 LEUT TYSON: So in no way  
14 could it be suggested that this itself represents a direct  
15 eyewitness account.

16

17 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: It can therefore not at all be suggested that this  
18 document has the status of an eyewitness account.

19

20 LEUT TYSON: Please have a look at it.

21

22 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Please have a look at it.

23

24 LEUT TYSON: Take as  
25 long as you like to study it. Sydney and - Kormoran is  
26 here. Sydney.

27

28 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: That is the Sydney. She approached like this. We  
29 were heading North ... hold on, this is pointing South. The whole thing is  
30 upside down. We were heading North. It can only have been after the  
31 battle that she passed us aft.

32

33

34 A. We went north. She came here. This is going south.  
35 The whole thing should be the other way around, because we  
36 went up north. How can it be that - it could only be that  
37 this was after the battle when she passed the stern of us.

38

39 THE PRESIDENT: Q. But I thought Kormoran, when she saw  
40 Sydney, turned to 260 degrees into the sun?

41

42 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: But I always thought that the Kormoran, upon  
43 sighting the Sydney, turned to 260 degrees West, into the Sun?

44

45 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Well I would not know about that. I only know, it  
46 was said "smoke column", "cruiser", and that she was approaching us. That  
47 we changed our course? No. I cannot understand it.

1

2 A. I cannot say this. I don't think we have changed our  
3 course. I cannot understand it. I can only remember how  
4 we saw the smoke of a ship on the horizon and then the ship  
5 approached and then we knew it was a cruiser, but I don't  
6 think we have changed our course.

7

8 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: The Sydney came straight towards us. The battle was  
9 up there. Then the Sydney did not run anymore, she had to turn, around  
10 us. And then she fired her torpedoes.

11

12

13 A. The Sydney came directly towards us. That's where the  
14 battle was. But then the Sydney did not run anymore. She  
15 drifted more than she was sailing by her own, making her  
16 own power, now she drifted and then she came astern of us,  
17 past us there, and that's also where she fired her  
18 torpedoes.

19

20 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Well, when we had to abandon our ship, when it was  
21 on fire, we had to go down and then we saw the Sydney on the port side.  
22 She was on fire. Then we went into the water. And suddenly it was quiet.  
23 We did not see anything anymore. No fire, no nothing.

24

25

26 A. When Sydney was away, when we abandoned ship, we saw  
27 her...

28

29 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Port side, right?

30

31 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes.

32

33 A. ...on our port side, but then when we went into the  
34 lifeboats, it was already quiet there and she had already  
35 exploded, I think.

36

37 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Well I would not know if we changed course. We  
38 sailed straight ahead. And she sailed along-side of us. Very long, very  
39 long. Until she asked for the identification code and wished us  
40 "Godspeed" and then it happened. Then it all started.

41

42 A. I cannot remember that we have changed  
43 the course at all. I just remember that we went parallel  
44 for a very long period, very long, until the end, he wished  
45 us a safe journey and asked for the signal.

46

47 LEUT TYSON: Commissioner Cole, would it be appropriate

1 that that be marked as an exhibit?

2

3 THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I will mark the document shown to  
4 Herr Hildenbrand as exhibit 17.

5

6 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Mr. Cole, may I please mark this document as  
7 exhibit number 17?

8

9

10 EXHIBIT #17 SKETCH DONE BY AUSTRALIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

11

12 AFTER HE INTERVIEWED MEMBERS OF THE KORMORAN CREW SHOWN TO  
13 MR ERNST HILDENBRAND

14

15 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, I just want to ask you, you've  
16 spoken a lot about how Sydney passed the stern of Kormoran,  
17 and you said that other members of Kormoran crew told you  
18 that when Sydney passed the stern of Kormoran, torpedoes  
19 were fired by Sydney. Do you remember that?

20

21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: We have discussed a few times that the Sydney  
22 passed the Kormoran on her stern and, as you have heard, the Sydney did  
23 also fire torpedoes. That is correct, yes?

24

25 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

26

27 A. Yes.

28

29 Q. Do you know, when Sydney passed the stern, did her  
30 guns also continue to fire at Kormoran at that stage of the  
31 battle?

32

33 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Do you know whether the Sydney's turrets were still  
34 firing at the Kormoran at the time when the torpedoes were fired?

35

36 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, the turrets were gone by then. The guns did not  
37 shoot anymore. The barrels were already pointing down.

38

39 A. No, no, the turrets had already been destroyed by  
40 then. They were not working anymore.

41

42 Q. All four turrets had been destroyed by the time that  
43 Sydney passed the stern? Is that what you're saying?

44

45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: All four turrets were destroyed when the Sydney  
46 passed the stern of the Kormoran? Is that correct?

47

1 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

2

3 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: All four?

4

5 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes, yes.

6

7 A. Yes, all four of them.

8

9 Q. What about any of Sydney's secondary guns? Were any  
10 of those firing after she passed the stern of Kormoran?

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What was the status of the Sydney's secondary guns?  
13 The other guns and canons she had on board, did they fire as well or not?

14

15 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: The 2 cm guns did not shoot at all at 1,000 meters,  
16 or 1,200 meters. They kept the torpedoes at bay at 900 meters. At the  
17 back, here. This side. Yes. They were kept at bay so that they could not  
18 fire their torpedoes. Then the 3.7 and the 2 cm ...

19

20 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: No, I mean, the secondary guns of the Sydney. On  
21 the Sydney, the smaller guns, whether they were still firing at you?

22

23 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. Well, I do not remember. I cannot say that. I  
24 only heard from mates that there must have been a 10 cm amidships, port  
25 side. But I do not know that. And that gun must have been the one that  
26 hit us.

27

28 A. No, I don't know. I haven't seen any of this. I just  
29 know - but also this is what my comrades told me later,  
30 that the Sydney must have had her amidships on the  
31 port side a 10cm gunner. That was the one that hit us.

32

33 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I only know that from hearsay.

34

35 A. And I know this also by third person accounts, not by  
36 myself.

37

38 Q. Do you know whether Kormoran's port guns fired at  
39 Sydney when Sydney passed the stern of Kormoran?

40

41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you remember whether the port side gun of the  
42 Kormoran fired at the Sydney when the Sydney passed her astern?

43

44 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, nobody was shooting anymore at that time. The  
45 battle was over.

46

47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Now back to the Kormoran.

1

2 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes. They were no longer attacking. The order  
3 came, when we were done, to abandon ship. And then we got out aft, on top  
4 it was burning, so we went below through the ship, to the bow here, to  
5 the lifeboats.

6

7 A. No, they didn't fire anymore, because that was also  
8 when already the order was given to abandon ship, and then  
9 we went downstairs and went to the fo'c'sle where we came  
10 up and where the lifeboats were.

11

12 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: The battle on our side was over. After a while the  
13 command came to cease fire. It was no longer possible. And then: "abandon  
14 ship."

15

16 A. No, the battle had  
17 finished because after some time there was nothing more to  
18 do and then the order came to abandon ship.

19

20 Q. When Sydney moved away from Kormoran, did she appear  
21 to be making way under her own power, or was she drifting?

22

23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: When the Sydney went away from the Kormoran, did it  
24 appear to you as if she was under power or if she was just drifting?

25

26 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: It looked to me as if she was drifting,  
27 [Translator's note: Very colloquial phrase: "durch Düne oder so was".  
28 Unknown to translator. ], behind us; in my view she was no longer under  
29 power. Otherwise she would have definitely turned around us faster.

30

31 A. No, for me it was drifting, definitely, because  
32 otherwise she could have gotten around us much faster.  
33 I don't think she had any power left.

34

35 Q. Sir, I want you to think back to your last memory of  
36 Sydney, the last time you saw Sydney. Can you tell us what  
37 you saw - describe her condition, her appearance?

38

39 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you still remember your last impression, or the  
40 last time when you saw the Sydney? What was your last impression? What  
41 did you see of the ship, the Sydney?

42

43 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Nothing else. We did not see anything else. Nothing  
44 else. We only asked about what happens to the mates over there. Those  
45 were our questions.

46

47 A. Nothing I have seen. I have just asked myself,

1 together with my comrades, what happened to our friends on  
2 board of Sydney, because they were also sailors, but apart  
3 from that, nothing I have seen.

4

5 Q. Sir, you mentioned before about abandoning ship.  
6 Can you please give us your account? What did you do as  
7 part of the abandon ship routine? Can you tell us about  
8 that?

9

10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You have told us earlier that the order was given  
11 to abandon ship. Could you explain to us the normal procedure involved in  
12 abandoning the ship, and tell us what you have done then?

13

14 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Suddenly we were ordered to "cease fire". There was  
15 nothing left. That was the end of the battle. Suddenly the order to  
16 abandon ship came. She was on fire after all. She did not only burn  
17 amidships, the Sydney also hit our engine room, 20 men were in there.  
18 Then the skylight, it rattled, the glass on top broke and the oxygen went  
19 in there and then the whole ship started to burn. We could not go over  
20 the deck anymore, we had to go down into the ship where we could still go  
21 through and run to the bow, back up to where they were lowering the last  
22 boats into the water. We were ordered: "down, down, down". Then I jumped  
23 overboard, what else could I do? You tried to get in wherever you could.  
24 I got into a rubber boat. And then at midnight, I only know this from  
25 hearsay in the camp, the captain blew up the ship. With all his crew down  
26 there he placed the explosives and blew her up at around midnight. That  
27 was the end. We were told: "Keep close by, if possible such that we can  
28 see each other again in the morning", well ... we did see each other  
29 again, but in different boats.

30

31 A. When the fire ceased, then it was quite quickly, and  
32 there was - well, there was no order given to cease fire,  
33 because it was obvious that we had to stop firing as there  
34 was no other fire coming back. Then it was quite quickly  
35 that the order to abandon ship was given, and as it was,  
36 the fire was already there in amidships because the engine  
37 was destroyed, or we were hit in the engine room, and this  
38 happened because also what I heard was how glass broke, and  
39 that's when all the oxygen went into the engine room and  
40 fed the fire.

41

42 The problem now was that we couldn't go through the  
43 ship anymore from the stern to the front where the  
44 lifeboats were, or there was one part blocked of it, so we  
45 had to go underneath the fire, underneath the engine room  
46 somewhere, to reach the foreship where other crew members  
47 were already trying to lower the lifeboats.

1

2 Well, then, what I did, I jumped from port, and what  
3 else could I do, and I ended up in a rubber boat and then  
4 I just - but this is also only something I've heard from my  
5 comrades later, that around midnight our commander and our  
6 captain scuttled Kormoran. I can remember also that he  
7 said stay together, more or less, that he might see us  
8 again tomorrow morning, but we never saw each other again  
9 the next morning, of course, but then we met later.

10

11 Q. Before you got on that lifeboat, were the men of  
12 Kormoran ever gathered together, marshalled on deck, and  
13 did either Capt Detmers or von Goesseln address the men as  
14 a group?

15

16 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Now before you went into the lifeboats, or jumped  
17 overboard, was the crew called on deck of the Kormoran? Was there any  
18 address by Captain Detmers or Mr. von Goesseln?

19

20 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no, no. I only know, for us who were at the  
21 guns aft, we were instructed to abandon the ship. And when we got to the  
22 bow we saw that they were lowering one more lifeboat into the water and  
23 that is where the commander must have been.

24

25 A. No, no, no, there was no such thing. I can only  
26 remember that all the people, all the crew members who were  
27 working in the aft ship, in the back ship area, when we  
28 came to the front there were already the ships lowered and  
29 then we went into the ships, and I can remember that there  
30 was one ship left, and that's obviously the one where  
31 Capt Detmers was rescued with, or which he entered.

32

33 Q. Did you have any supplies in the lifeboat you were  
34 on - food, any torches, guns, anything like that? What did  
35 you have in the boat with you?

36

37 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Did you have any supplies on board? Food, or torch  
38 lights? Did you have anything with you?

39

40 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no. When I went into the water, a mate from  
41 Hamburg pulled me into his boat and asked straight away whether I had  
42 anything to drink on me. So we were 16 men in a rubber boat and we had  
43 one flight ration from the pilot. He ended up in our boat. He brought  
44 along this ration and a small bottle of milk. That was what we had for 6  
45 days.

46

47 A. No, when I was in the water, a good friend of mine, a



1 comrade, from Hamburg, actually, he took me out of the  
2 water and pulled me into the lifeboat and then he asked me,  
3 "Do you have something to drink with you?", and I said,  
4 "No," and in fact it happened that we were 16 people on  
5 this rubber boat and all we had was one portion that one of  
6 the pilots had. He has also in this rubber boat. That was  
7 all the supply we had, as far as food was concerned, and  
8 then we had one small bottle of milk, and that was all we  
9 had for 6 days

10

11 A: ...No, when I was in the water, a good friend of mine, a comarad, from  
12 Hamburg actually, he took me out of the water and pulled me into the  
13 lifeboat, and then he asked me "Do you have something to drink with you?"  
14 and I said "No." and in fact it happened that we were 16 people on this  
15 rubber boat and all we had was one portion that one of the pilots had. He  
16 was also in this rubber boat. That was all the supply we had as far as  
17 food is concerned. And then we had one small bottle of milk. And that was  
18 all we had for -

19

20 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Five or six days?

21

22 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Six days. On midday of day seven we were fished out  
23 of the water.

24

25 A. ...for six days. On the seventh day at noon they rescued  
26 us.

27

28 Q. Was there an officer or one of the senior warrant  
29 officers in charge of your boat, or who was the most senior  
30 person in your boat?

31 I

32 NTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Was there an officer or sergeant in your boat?

33

34 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: We had a sergeant in our boat. His name was  
35 Marwinski. He was later the camp commander in Murchison.

36

37 A. Yeah, a warrant officer was in our boat. Marwinski  
38 was his name. Later he was also the camp commander in  
39 Murchison.

40

41 Q. I just want to ask you some miscellaneous questions  
42 before I get to the final topic.

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Now I would like to ask you some miscellaneous  
45 questions before we get to the last topic.

46

47 Q. Can I show you a

1 photograph, please, sir. Have a look at that. Is that  
2 something that you recognise or is that something that was  
3 ever used in target practice from the Kormoran?  
4

5 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I show you a picture. Please have a look. Have you  
6 seen this object before? Could it possibly be something the Kormoran has  
7 used for target practice? A target?  
8

9 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, I would not know what this would be. This is a  
10 huge ship. No, I do not know what this would be. No.  
11

12 A. No, I cannot. I don't know what this could be. Well,  
13 that's quite a big boat there, but I've got no idea. No,  
14 no, I've got no idea what this can be.  
15

16 LEUT TYSON: Commissioner Cole, would it be appropriate to  
17 have that marked as an exhibit as well?  
18

19 THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I will mark that as exhibit 18.  
20

21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could we please have this marked as evidence as  
22 well, Mr. Cole? – Yes we do that.  
23

24  
25 EXHIBIT #18 PHOTOGRAPH SHOWN TO MR ERNST HILDENBRAND  
26

27 LEUT TYSON: Q. Sir, as well, I want to take you back.  
28 Before the engagement with Sydney, had you been involved in  
29 any of the engagements between Kormoran and some of the  
30 merchant ships she either captured or attacked?  
31

32 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Returning to the period prior to the battle of the  
33 Sydney and the Kormoran. Where you also involved in the earlier battles  
34 between the Kormoran and the commercial ships?  
35

36 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, yes, we have ships ... yes, yes, certainly. We  
37 were on the hunt, to put it that way. We got a few of them.  
38

39 A. Yes, of course. I mean, that was our task. We were  
40 hunting other ships. Of course I was.  
41

42 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: But it was never in the form of a battle, is was  
43 rather like: "Stop! Where do you want to go?" We never fired. Only one  
44 shot into the bow, but nothing else.  
45

46 A. But there never was  
47 any battle involved. It was just stop and when we want to

1 go, then that was it. There were no shots. There was a  
2  
3 shot in front of the bow if they didn't want to stop,  
4 you know, but apart from that, there was nothing.

5  
6 Q. But what I want to ask you, was the war ensign ever  
7 flown in those engagements before Kormoran fired on those  
8 merchant ships?

9  
10 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I would like to ask whether the Imperial War Flag  
11 was ever raised during the encounters with the other commercial ships?

12  
13 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Always. It was the first thing we always did.  
14 Always. I could see it very well. Our gun and beside it was that mast  
15 where the Imperial War Flag was hoisted.

16  
17 A. Always, always. It was always hoisted. I could see  
18 this very well because the gun where I was at was just  
19 directly next to the mast where the ensign flag was  
20 hoisted.

21  
22 Q. Do you know roughly how long it took to open up the  
23 war ensign?

24  
25 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Can you remember how long it approximately took to  
26 hoist the Imperial War Flag?

27  
28 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: The mast was five meters. Well, that took seconds.  
29 The flag was just hooked in, the other flag was lowered and the new one  
30 went into position at that very moment.

31  
32 A. It must be seconds. I mean, the mast, maybe it's  
33 metres tall, and then you just need to hook the flag onto  
34 the rope and then simultaneously one is lowered, the other  
35 one is hoisted.

36  
37 Q. I want to turn to a different topic.

38  
39 THE PRESIDENT: Just before you do.

40  
41 LEUT TYSON: Sorry, yes.

42  
43 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Was the German battle flag actually  
44 hoisted or was it in a position where you could pull a rope  
45 and it flew free?

46  
47 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Another question regarding this: was the Imperial

1 Flag hoisted from the deck or was it already fixed to the top of the mast  
2 and released by pulling a rope ...?

3

4 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, it was hoisted.

5

6 A. No, it was hoisted at the time.

7

8 LEUT TYSON: Q. As you may know, this battle between  
9 Kormoran and Sydney has stimulated a lot of books and a lot  
10 of articles, particularly in Australia,...

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: As you probably know, the battle between the  
13 Kormoran and the Sydney has led to many books, articles and other items  
14 being published in Australia.

15

16 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes.

17

18 LEUT TYSON: Q. ...and many different  
19 writers have provided different theories and accounts of  
20 what they say happened in the battle.

21

22 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And various authors and journalists have published  
23 a wide range of different theories as to what actually happened in this  
24 battle.

25

26 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I have to excuse myself here.

27

28 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: There is more to come. Shall we continue? We will  
29 get to the point.

30

31 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, of course.

32

33 LEUT TYSON: Q. What I would like to  
34 do is to give you an opportunity to respond to some of the  
35 theories and let us know whether you agree or disagree with  
36 some of these theories.

37

38 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Now I would like to give you the opportunity to  
39 comment on some of the theories which I will present to you. And then you  
40 can tell us whether you agree or disagree with the theories.

41

42 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Okay.

43

44 LEUT TYSON: Q. One of the theories has suggested  
45 that a Japanese submarine or Japanese U-boat actually fired  
46 a torpedo into Sydney.

47

1 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: One of these theories suggests that a Japanese  
2 submarine fired a torpedo on the Sydney.  
3  
4 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. We would have heard something about that. No,  
5 no.  
6  
7 A. No, that's impossible. We would have noticed that.  
8 I haven't seen any.  
9  
10 Q. Another set of theories suggests that Kormoran  
11 surrendered or pretended she was under distress when Sydney  
12 was first sighted.  
13  
14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Another theory claims that the Kormoran surrendered  
15 or pretended to be in distress.  
16  
17 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no, no. As far I knew our commander, no.  
18  
19 A. No, impossible. As far as I know, our captain - no.  
20  
21  
22 Q. You never saw a white flag on Kormoran before this  
23 encounter with Sydney?  
24  
25 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: You never saw the white flag on the Kormoran?  
26  
27 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No.  
28  
29 A. No.  
30  
31 Q. Another writer has suggested that Kormoran was  
32 disguised as a Norwegian merchant ship.  
33  
34 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Another author claims that the Kormoran was  
35 disguised as a Norwegian commercial ship.  
36  
37 Q. Do you remember at  
38 the time of the battle with Sydney was Kormoran disguised  
39 as a Norwegian ship?  
40  
41 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Could you ...?  
42  
43 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: We were twice ... we were once Japanese, the Sakito  
44 Maru, and once Dutch ... that was the last one, the Dutch. And I can tell  
45 you this here. The Sakito Maru, the Japanese, we repainted it. All white,  
46 like the Japanese. And then we managed to catch ships. And after a while  
47 we repainted the ship again. It was painted black, the line red.

1

2 A. No, we were not going as a Norwegian ship. Once we  
3 had a disguise as a Japanese ship - Sakito Maru is the name  
4 of the ship. We were disguised as this ship, that's when  
5 we were painted in white and black, and also we captured  
6 and sank some ships with this disguise. But then later it  
7 was just this Dutch disguise and every now and then the  
8 whole hull of the ship and everything was repainted.

9

10 THE PRESIDENT: Q. Another theory is that Kormoran was  
11 in company with either a German or a Vichy French submarine  
12 and that she fired a torpedo.

13

14 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Then yet another theory says that the Kormoran was  
15 accompanied by either a German or a French Vichy government submarine.  
16 What do you think of that?

17

18 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. I made an oath. No, no.

19

20 A. No, I have made an oath, but, no, no, absolutely not.

21

22 LEUT TYSON: Q. Now, another serious allegation that is  
23 made is that there were survivors of Sydney in the water  
24 and that they were shot by some members of Kormoran's crew.

25

26 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Another very serious allegation that is made is  
27 that survivors of the Sydney were shot by the crew of the Kormoran whilst  
28 they were swimming in the water. What is your comment on that?

29

30 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, no, no. We were 80 men. They were in a rubber  
31 boat. The rubber boat sank and the 80 men died. 20 men were in the engine  
32 room, burnt to death. We lost 100 men. And no shots were fired. We did  
33 not shoot anybody. No.

34

35 A. No, no, no, impossible. There were 80 people of us  
36 that were in a rubber boat which capsized and they died.  
37 Then there were 20 men who died in the engine room. But we  
38 didn't shoot at anybody. No way.

39

40 Q. And the light speed boat, the leichte schnell boat,  
41 was that used to pull around any of the lifeboats or  
42 anything like that after Kormoran was abandoned?

43

44 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And the speed boat which you had on board, was that  
45 used to pull the other life boats? Or was it used in any way?

46

47 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No. When the ship sank it was ... sorry. The

1 aircraft were in a store room and the speed boat was in a storeroom  
2 [Transcriber's note – inaudible]. Our engines which the electricity  
3 generators, in the engine room, they were destroyed. As a result we could  
4 no longer pull up the heavy iron plates. And the speedboat was never used  
5 either.

6  
7 A. No, we didn't use the speed boat. You must imagine  
8 that we had the two sea planes, we had them in one hold,  
9 and the speed boat was in the other hold, but as we didn't  
10 have any power left at this point, we weren't even able to  
11 remove the very heavy hatches on top of them, so we  
12 couldn't use them. Anyway, we have never used speed boats.

13  
14 LEUT TYSON: Commissioner, on behalf of Counsel Assisting,  
15 they're probably the principal questions we want to put at  
16 the moment.

17  
18 THE PRESIDENT: There is only one other thing I want to  
19 raise.

20  
21 Q. Herr Hildenbrand, at Easter last year, 2007,...

22  
23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I have one last question. Easter last year, in  
24 2007, ...

25  
26 Q. ...off the  
27  
28 Australian coast, Red Bluff, where one of the lifeboats  
29 landed, ...

30  
31 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: ... near Red Bluff, where one of the lifeboats came  
32 ashore ...

33  
34 Q. ...they found a gun. Just last year.

35  
36 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: ... a gun was found.

37  
38 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Where a boat from the Sydney landed?

39  
40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Precisely.

41  
42 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes, I have also heard, that a gun was said to have  
43 been in there ...

44  
45 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Oh no, sorry, a boat from the Kormoran. Not the  
46 Sydney. The Kormoran.

47

1 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Oh, from the Kormoran. No, we all came ashore here.  
2 We were the last, we came from the Trocas who fished us out of the water.

3

4 A. We all came on that. We were rescued by the Trocas.

5

6 THE INTERPRETER: I think he just got it mixed up.

7

8 THE PRESIDENT: Q. What they found was this gun  
9 encrusted onto a rock, a pistol encrusted onto a rock,  
10 about 45 metres from the shore.

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: What they found was a gun which was encrusted into  
13 a rock.

14

15 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I cannot remember any more.

16

17 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Around 45 meters from the beach, from the coast  
18 away.

19

20 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: No, I do not know about it. No. When we were  
21 rescued we had ...

22

23 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: I think he wants to say some more. He wants to  
24 explain it again in great detail. You do not have to answer yet.

25

26 A. No, I cannot - I don't know what it is.

27

28 Q. Research has shown that in fact it was a Mauser  
29 pistol.

30

31 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: It turned out to be a Mauser pistol. This is a  
32 picture of the impression in the stone.

33

34

35 LEUT TYSON: A Kriegsmarine Mauser.

36

37 THE PRESIDENT: Q. It was the type issued to  
38 Kriegsmarine officers.

39

40 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: And that is precisely the type of gun that was  
41 given to officers of the Kriegsmarine.

42

43 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I cannot remember. We had Marwinski in our boat. He  
44 was a sergeant.

45

46 A. I cannot remember that.

47



1 Q. You don't know if the officers on board had these  
2 Mauser guns?

3

4 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Our officers? No. I would not know whether our  
5 officers carried guns in the first place. No.

6

7 A. No, not that I'm aware of. I don't even know if our  
8 officers at all had weapons with them. On my boat, there  
9 was just Mr Marwinski. He was a warrant officer. But  
10 I don't - not as far as I know, he didn't have a weapon.

11

12 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Thank you very much.

13

14

15 Q. Herr Hildenbrand, thank you very much, indeed, for  
16 giving us your help.

17

18 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I cannot tell you anything more.

19

20 A. There's not more I can tell you.

21 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Once again thank you very much ...

22

23 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: I am so sorry for all this, it is beyond believe. I  
24 always have to tear ... I always have to ... I can still see the 600 men  
25 on the Sydney at that day. My son taped something here, from the TV ...  
26 too bad there is so much English in it, I understood only very little ...

27

28 A. I always have to cry  
29 because I always have to think about these poor boys who  
30 died there, those 700 men. I saw them the other day also  
31 again, I saw the 700 men in a TV program which my son had  
32 captured on videotape for me, and it always makes me cry  
33 and I still feel sorry for this whole thing.

34

35 THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much indeed.

36

37 INTERPRETER [GERMAN]: Thank you very much indeed. Thank you very much.

38

39 HILDENBRAND [GERMAN]: Yes. Yes.

40

41

42 LEUT TYSON: Thank you, sir.

43

44 THE INQUIRY ADJOURNED ACCORDINGLY

45

46

47

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