

RESTRICTED

Aboard USS Mt. McKinley
6 August 1946

Memorandum to Brigadier General Nichols

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED
DATE APR 20 1976

1. I have made no report since that which I wrote on 2 August inasmuch as there were no developments of any significance during the last few days, except the decision to have the Mt. McKinley leave the lagoon for the States this Saturday, the 10th. It was this planned departure that prompted my radio recommending my return to Los Alamos. Our advance into the target area has been so slow that I can see a long delay before any real information is to be gained from a study of the target ships. The last tolerance time limit I heard quoted for the New York and the Pensacola below decks was from five minutes to a half an hour, and this they would permit only to essential workers in a salvage party. I have managed to get aboard several target vessels, but those that I have boarded showed no visible external or internal damage.

2. Sawyer has not yet rendered a report on the study he has started of the photographs I mentioned in my last memo. Admiral Parsons expects his report by Thursday.

3. Experience so far seems to indicate that the process of decontamination of very hot vessels is going to be a very long drawn out affair. Those vessels that have been washed several times show that after the first treatment, which usually cuts the activity about fifty percent, very little progress is made with subsequent washings. They do not get real results until they can get the ship cool enough to put a crew aboard that can really scrub things down well. They have ordered boiler compound and a few other similar materials to try to see whether or not they can make the scrubbing process more effective. The results of the experimentation will not be available for some time, but I am assured that your office will receive a copy of the final report on this.

4. The concrete dry dock, which did not appear earlier to have been damaged, has filled on one side and capsized. It is expected to sink any time now.

5. They are working hard at keeping the Pensacola pumped out to try to correct a list of almost ten degrees that was developing. The chief difficulty is that of getting salvage personnel aboard. It is still a hot ship.

6. Yesterday's staff conference did no more than plan the turnover of command functions from this staff to people remaining.

A.W. Betts
Colonel, Corps of Engrs