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UNITED STATES FLEET  
U. S. S. PENNSYLVANIA, Flagship

San Pedro, California,  
17 October, 1931.

*Ref 10*

CONFIDENTIAL

UNITED STATES FLEET CONFIDENTIAL LETTER NO. 11-31.

From: Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet.

To : Fleet.

Subject: Instructions and Safety Precautions, Tactical Exercises, United States Fleet.

*Corrected Copy*

1. U. S. Fleet Confidential Letter No. 13-30 is cancelled.

2. These instructions will govern during Fleet exercises unless other conflicting instructions are specifically prescribed. It is not intended that they shall limit the discretion of force commanders in prescribing additional instructions, or in modifying these instructions when the character of the exercise makes such additional instructions or modifications appropriate.

3. General Signal Book.

The General Signal Book shall be used whenever practicable in order to avoid the use of coded dispatches.

4. Simulating Gun Fire, Torpedo Fire, and Bombing.

(a) Gun Fire.

(1) Ships of all types will simulate gun fire of all calibers, both by day and by night, by keeping a searchlight trained steadily on the bearing of the target. In addition, turrets will fire one-pounder blanks and other guns 30-caliber blanks.

(2) This rule applies to both aircraft and ship targets.

(3) One searchlight will be used for each caliber firing, unless the fire of a caliber is divided in which case one searchlight will be used for each target engaged by that caliber.

(4) When searchlights are used at night safety of ships shall be the primary consideration. The utmost care shall be taken to keep searchlight beams clear of ships' bridges. When indicating gun fire at night by the use of a searchlight the beam must be elevated so as to pass well above the target, unless it is possible to illuminate the after portion of the target, and only the after portion, which is permitted.

(5) It will be noted that there is no distinction in night gun fire between the indication for searchlight illumination, star shell illumination, and no illumination. A steady display of the searchlight is used in each case.

(b) Torpedo Fire in Daylight.

(1) Surface vessels will simulate torpedo fire in daylight by flashing a searchlight at the target, using a number of 6-second flashes with 3-second intervals.

(2) Submarines (on the surface or submerged) will simulate torpedo fire in daylight by firing a smoke grenade from the submerged gun when submerged, or by firing smoke rifle grenade or smoke rocket when on the surface, using any color except red."

"Submarines will simulate firing torpedoes in daylight by firing a smoke grenade from the submerged gun when submerged, or by firing smoke rifle grenade or smoke rocket when on the surface, using any color except red."

DECLASSIFIED IAW DOD MEMO OF 3 MAY 1972, SUBJECT: SOF CODED DISPATCHES, DECLASSIFICATION OF WWII RECORDS

- (3) Torpedo planes will simulate torpedo fire by the leading plane of each unit making a puff of smoke.

(c) Torpedo Fire at Night.

- (1) Surface ships will indicate torpedo fire during darkness by firing a white Very star.

Paragraph 4(c) (2) change to read—

“Submarines will indicate torpedo fire at night by firing a light grenade (any color except red) if submerged, or by firing a white Very star if on the surface.”

(a) Dumping.

- (1) Heavy bombers will simulate release of bombs by the leading plane of each unit making a puff of smoke.

- (2) Dive bombers will simulate release of bombs by diving at the target.

5. Battle Lookouts

Battle lookouts will always be stationed when submarines are making attacks on surface vessels or when operating submerged in the presence of surface vessels. Battle lookouts will always be stationed when aircraft squadrons are in the air and operating with the fleet. Battle lookouts will be stationed at all other times when the character of the exercise requires them.

6. Paravanes.

Paravanes will be ready for use, unless instructions to the contrary are issued.

7. Smoke Screens.

- (a) During exercises in which torpedoes are actually fired smoke screens may be used by the side firing torpedoes but not by the other side.
- (b) Vessels will not approach smoke screens or smoke curtains closer than 1,000 yards unless the screen is laid by themselves, or unless it is certain that no other vessels are in the smoke.
- (c) Vessels will not attack through a smoke screen or smoke curtain unless it is certain that collision will not result by so doing.
- (d) Vessels being attacked by forces using smoke screens or smoke curtains will not enter the smoke unless it is certain that collision will not result by so doing.
- (e) Smoke screens or smoke curtains will not be laid when submarines are operating with the forces.

8. Torpedoes.

Actual torpedoes will not be fired through or under a destroyer or light minelayer formation.

9. Aircraft.

- (a) Opposing aircraft will not approach each other closer than five hundred (500) feet.
- (b) In simulating engagements between opposing aircraft, prolonged melees are prohibited.
- (c) In simulating dive bombing attacks airplanes will complete recovery from dives at an altitude not less than five hundred (500) feet.
- (d) Dive bombing attacks on ships actually firing guns are prohibited.

- (e) In simulating torpedo plane attacks airplanes will break their formation and start climbing when not less than fifteen hundred (1500) yards from their targets.

- (f) No airplanes, except those laying smoke, or torpedo planes, will fly through smoke screens or smoke curtains. Torpedo planes will not enter smoke unless it is certain that collision with other airplanes or vessels will not result. The low limiting altitude for flying through smoke shall be three hundred (300) feet unless the exercise is one held specially for torpedo plane attacks, alone or in connection with other form of attack.

- (g) Plane guards will be provided when possible if land planes are operating with the fleet.

- (h) The nearest vessel to an airplane crash or to an airplane forced to land will render immediate assistance.

- (i) When airplanes are assumed to carry bombs, torpedoes or guns they shall be operated in such a manner that the duration of the flight will not exceed that which would be practicable if the assumed ordnance equipment were actually carried. Should the duration of the flight exceed this limitation the airplanes will be considered out of action and not available for further use in the exercise concerned. These provisions will not be considered as limiting the amount of fuel actually carried which will in all cases allow an adequate margin of safety.

10. Submarines.

- (a) If the submarines are not participating in the exercises they should be assigned definite areas in which to operate. These areas will be clear of the operations of other vessels.

- (b) When submarines are simulating an attack on surface vessels, the individual surface vessels will not make independent maneuvers to avoid attack, nor will anti-submarine screening vessels simulate depth charge attacks. All surface vessels will maintain the prescribed course, except in emergency to avoid collision with a submarine. This is not to be construed as preventing surface vessels zigzagging together according to prescribed zigzag plans. If a surface ship is about to make a radical or unexpected turn when in close proximity to a submarine she will make the signal “I am turning as indicated”.

- (c) Submarines may fire a signal from the submerged gun before coming to the surface. Surface vessels, however, should not rely on this signal entirely.

- (d) Submarine attacks will not be made on surface vessels if the visibility is less than five (5) miles.

- (e) It will usually be desirable, for reasons of safety, to have all submarines assigned to one fleet or force when there are two opposing fleets or forces exercising against each other.

11. Darkening Ship.

- (a) When night exercises are held ships normally will be darkened. Ships will keep men stationed by the navigation lights, ready to turn them on. Navigation lights will be turned on promptly in case of emergencies.

- (b) When vessels of the fleet are operating with ships darkened, it is desirable to hold the exercises in areas in which there is as little merchant ship traffic as

Paragraph 11 add as subparagraph (d)—

“Regardless of whether or not ships have been ordered to darken submarines shall always at night show the navigation lights required by law. The effect of this provision and of the requirements of paragraph 10(d) is that submarines shall invariably show navigational lights and shall not simulate attacks at night.”

12. General Quarters and Condition of Readiness.

It is not desirable that ships' companies be held at general quarters for prolonged periods when a general engagement is not being simulated, nor is it desirable to assume Condition of Readiness 2 for long periods.

**13. Speeds.**

- (a) The plans for the exercises will include a statement of the maximum speeds required for different types of vessels for the various exercises.
- (b) All vessels will economize fuel, using high speed only when required by the exercise, or when necessary to avoid delaying the exercise.

**14. Information and Reports.**

- (a) All commanding officers will take such measures as may be necessary or desirable to inform their officers and men of the nature of the exercises, the progress of the exercises in major problems, and the results. They will also caution them regarding any features that should not be divulged to persons outside the naval service.
- (b) Prior to fleet problems the officers of some vessels have played the problem as a chart maneuver and during the problem have followed its progress, plotting the forces, contacts, information received, etc., and have made quick estimates of the situation when the situation changed. This has resulted in a better understanding of the problem and stimulated intelligent interest. In all problems of a major character this procedure will be followed to the extent practicable by all light cruisers and larger vessels.
- (c) Officers conducting tactical exercises will make reports to the Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet, of the exercises held, with comments or analyses of the operation.

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List IV, Case 2, A to E incl.; FF6, FF8, EN1 to EN2-2 incl.;  
EN3, EN6, EN11; NC2; NC3-80; PGS-80.

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