LORAN STATION BATTLE HARBOR

Station Fire 26 FEB 1950 correspondence

Retrieved from NARA during Sept 2017 and Posted to <u>www.loran-history.info</u> APR 2018 by the LHI Team

Note: The Board of Investigation report is missing.

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

ADDRESS REPLY TO

Commanding Officer

LTS Battle Harbor, Lbdr.

To:

CG AIR FACILITY ARGENTIA, NFLD.

SUPPLY

27 February, 1950

COMM

CO EXEC

Commander, First Coast Guard Districtor

From: Commanding Officer, LTS Battle Harbor, Labrador.

MAR I locu

Via: Representative, Commander, 1st CG District, Argentia, Nfld.

Subj: Damage to LTS Battle Harbor by fire; Report of

1. The following is a chronological account of the events relating to subject matter: All times are plus three and one half zone local time.

1143 - Dowd, Daniel J. passed down passage way to Loran shack and noticed nothing unusual.

1145 - MURRAY, Paul (272-365)ET3 in passing engine room on way to loran shack thought he smelled smoke, looked in the work shop and engine room but could see no signs of smoke or fire so continued on way to loran shack and relieved watch. He did not mention the incident.

1146 - BUCKLESS, Roy R. (285-122)SN was relieved by MURRAY, in passing engine room also detected smell of smoke, investigated, but could see no signs of smoke or fire in engine room or work shop. He continued on to messhall for late chow. He did not mention incident.

1200 - LEPINE, Armand A. (273-325)SM passed down passage way, also thought he smelled smoke. He looked into the engine room but not the work shop, could see nothing wrong, so continued on to loran shack. He did not mention incident. 1215 - 1545.7z Power failure, complete black out. Power safety alarm in EN quarters signaled engine failure. WILKEY, Robert J. (269-801) ENCA started for engine room immediately meeting ROBINSON, Claude A. (217-541)ETC in galley, both entered passageway but were unable to continue more than about seventy-five feet before being forced back by dense smoke. ROBINSON returned to quarters section and passed the alarm to Commanding Officer and those members of the crew attending a special movie showing. WILKEY, meanwhile, had continued to the engineroom outside, the south side of the passageway being covered with snow drifts, he crossed over to the north side and succeeded in reaching the outside door to the entrance to the work shop. Upon opening the door he was met by a solid wall of flame, so closing the door he returned to assist in moving fire equiptment. The Alarm being passed all hands carrying every available type of fire fighting equiptment forced their way through waist high snow on south side of passageway, there being no clear access to the north side due to smoke filled passageway, Upon arrival at the scene I found smoke issuing from from every crack in the passageway and buildings at the eastern end of the station. Flames had already broken through the roof of the engine room and connected passage way and were being fanned by a NW wind of 35 knots velocity forcing the flames and dense smoke down the short (about 80 foot) passage to loran shack, and making any attempt to salvage equiptment or spare parts, in the opinion of the C.O. excessively dangerous, so was not attempted. Some personal gear was salvaged through the rear door to the technicians quarters. The men on watch had

no indication of a fire until the outside door leading into the passageway had was opened, but were busy with the aid of a battle lantern making the necessary adjustments to the loran equiptment in preperation to going back on the air. The door was opened to allow some light to enter and the passage was found to be filled with smoke. An attempt was made to sound the alarm but the power being off the alarm was useless, as was the telephone due possibly to the shorting of the wires. The equiptment room was immediately filled with smoke forcing the operators to the outside. Men were dispatched to the isolated hut where the dynamite is stored for dynamite to blast the passage way. The fire fighting equiptment on hand being of no use on a fire of such magnatude (i.e., hand CO2's, hand water extinguishers, and water buckets). When the necessary equiptment was assembled, the flames forced by the high wind and blowing directly towards the loranshack group had made the saving of these buildings impossible. Therefore the first charge of dynamite was placed on the fire side of the fire wall in the passage way. An attempt was made to salvage some stores from the storeroom by way of an outside window but here again dense smoke was deterring factor and flames had already reached the passage entrance to the storeroom. The blast shattered the passage way but to make certain another charge was placed on the opposite side of the fire wall in case it should not stop the flames. A hole was made into the passage to enable ROBINSON to close the metal door in the fire wall. The wall aided by hand extinguishers and the blast held the fire. A message was sent by messenger to the Marconi station in the village of Battle Harbor notifying the apropriate authorities. Emergency quarters were set up in the Mess hall with an oil stove for heat and a temporary arrangement to enable food to be prepared on the galley range. All water lines were drained and water for cooking and drinking secured from the well by bucket and line.

- 2. An examination of the damage reveals that all of the station from the fire wall east is a total loss. This includes a storeroom with a quantity of provisions, stationery supplies, recreational gear and GSK stores. The engine room with power plants and tools, spare parts, and various equiptment stored there. The carpenter shop and tools, technicians quarters with some personal gear. Loran shack, all equiptment and spare parts. Only the antenna tuning unit and transmitting antenna were left standing. The receiving antenna of course was not touched since it is located at the opposite end of the station.
- 3. No personnel were injured and adequate temporary quarters have been set up. Provisions on hand will last approximately three weeks, and more will be secured before that time.
- 4. It is my belief that everything possible that could have been done under the circumstances was done, and I have no complaint to make of the actions of any of the personnel attached. While it is true that the men passing the engine room and thought they smelled smoke should have reported it (as instructed in Station Order NO. 1), they did investigate and seeing nothing wrong, thought no more of it.
- 5. Outside of salvage of some tools and fittings, nothing is being done pending an inspection by a board of inquiry, or investigation.

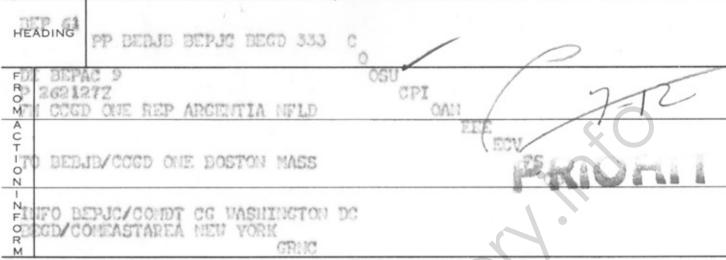
Louis E. Price

Commanding

OPERATIONALPRIORITY

JOHNS QUOTE BATTLE HARBOR LORAN EQUIPMENT COMPLETELY DESTROYED
BY FIRE X NO PERSONNEL INJURED & POWER PLANT COMMA STORE ROOM COMMA
AND LORAN SHACK COMPLETE LOSS & FIRE HALTED AT FIRE WALL X GALLEY
COUMA BOILER ROOM COMMA QUARTERS AND RADIO SHACK UNTOUCHED X REQUEST
ASSISTANCE WHEN POSSIBLE X EMERGENCY QUARTERS BEING SET UP IN
UNDAMAGED PORTION ON STATION X RADIO UNUSABLE X COMMUNICATE THROUGH
MARCONI STATION BATTLE HARBOR X HAVE VALKE TALKIE FOR POSSIBLE
PLANE CONSERVATION X SIGNED L E PRICE COMMANDING OFFICER X UNDOUTE
DT 2628302

26/2004Z FEB BEPAC



TEXT

PLAN FLIGHT TOMORROW MONDAY WE PERMITTING TO BATTLE HARBOR TO
MAKE NECESSARY DROPS OF PROVISIOUS AND TO ASCERTAIN DETAILS
OF SITUATION AND OTHER INMEDIATE REQUIREMENTS IF POSSIBLE
25/21312 FEB DEPAC

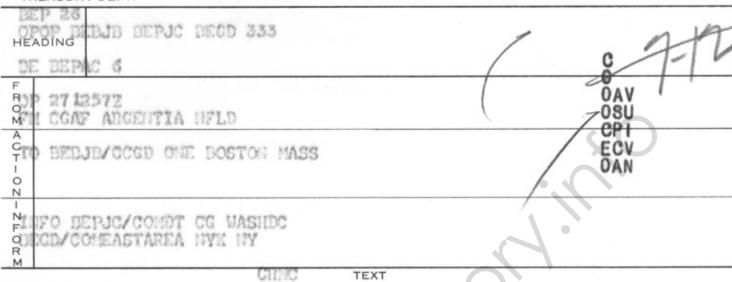
27/19207

FEB BEPAC

OPERATOR'S RECORD AND DATE

OFFICIAL INITIALS

1164(5)



PBYSA CONO 4830% CDR HENTHORN LANDED 13012 GANDER X STARBOARD ENGINE CUTTING OUT X WEATHER PRECLUDES FLIGHT TO BATTLE HARBOR TODAY

CFN PBY5A 48304 1141Z

27/12592 FEB BEPAC

OPERATIONAL PRIORITY

OPERATOR'S RECORD AND DATE

AMDA 1958



OFFICIAL INIT

TEXT

ESTABLISH COMPUNICATION WITH BATTLE HARBOR VIA COMPERCIAL RADIO FACILITY AND ASCERTAIN IMMEDIATE NEEDS THAT CAN BE SUPPLIED BY AIR DROP X TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION AND ADVISE

27/1519Z FEB BEBJB

BEPA 44 HEADERDE BEPJC 22	105U 6047-12
FDE BEPAC 12 BR271S1SZ MF1 REP CCCDONE ARGENTIA	CPIOAN
CTO BEBJE/CCGD ONE	DAV, & OG
NINFO BEPJC/COMDT COGARD CRNC GRNC	

DATTLE HARBOR STATED ONLY IMMEDIATE REQUIREMENT IS SMALL GAS DRIVEN POWER PLANT TO OPERATE HEATING BOILER GALLEY AND RADIO SINGLY ALSO TWO 24 INCH STILLSON WRENCHES X HAVE REQUESTED OF THEM VOLTAGE AND POWER REQUIREMENTS X HAVE OBTAINED ONE GAS GENERATOR FROM NAVY ONE POINT FIVE KW 60 CYCLE 115 VOLT AC WHICH WILL BE DROPPED FIRST OPPORTUNITY X COMMERCIAL RADIO STATION AT BATTLE HARBOR UNDERSTOOD TO BE ABOUT FIVE MILES FROM LORAN STATION 60 COMMUNICATIONS AT PRESENT IS SLOW X WILL DROP EXTRA WALKIE TALKIE EQUIPMENT TO ATTEMPT ELIMINATE INCIDENT DELAY BETWEEN COMMERCIAL AND LORAN STATION X PLAN FLIGHT TOMORROW WEATHER PERMITTING X A SECOND GENERATOR MAY BE DESIRABLE

CFN 24 60 115 AC

Th

CO, CGLTS, Battle Hrbr, Lab. to Comdr., First CG District

Ind-1
Rep., ClCGD
Argentia, Nfld.

PERSONNEL DIVISION RESERVED 2 March, 1950950

IST C. G. DISTRICT

From: Representative of Comdr., 1st CG District, Argentia, Nfld.

To: Commander, First Coast Guard District

Subj: Damage to LTS Battle Harbor by fire; Report of

1. Forwarded.

2. There is no available means of holding a Board of Investigation concerning the fire, before the arrival of a vessel at Battle Harbor, which, with normal ice conditions expected may not occur before late spring. If a board at that time is desired it is requested that it be convened by Commander, First Coast Guard District, with personnel attached to the ship which goes to Battle Harbor.

TORBAY ONOSPHERE STATION ADVISES TODAY QUOTE BATTLE HARBOUR LORAN STATION DESTROYED BY FIRE BONAVISTA ALSO NOT TRANSMITTING UNQUOTE.

TOR 0100Z 3RD MAR AL OPERATOR'S RECORD AND DATE

OFFICIAL DISPATCH

SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL RESTRICTED

DATE 3 MARCH 1950

FROM

COMMANDANT

TO (FOR ACTION)

CONTROLLER OF RADIO. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA

TO (FOR INFORMATION)

URGENT PRIORITY ROUTINE 20000 DEFERRED MAILGRAM ACKNOWLEDGE URGENT PRIORITY ROUTINE DEFERRED MAILGRAM ACKNOWLEDGE

MAIL TO

TELEPHONE TO

MESSENGER TO

OUTGOING HEADING

031916

TEXT

YOUR TELEGRAM RE BATTLE HARBOR & EVERY EFFORT BEING EXERTED TO RESTORE STATION TO OPERATING CONDITION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE X LORAN RATES 113 AND 114 SECURED PENDING RESTORATION BATTLE HARBORIX PUBLIC NOTICES OF LORAN SERVICE STATUS HAVE BEEN DISSEMINATED.

> L. H. BAKER CAPTAIN, USGG ASSISTANT CHIEF, OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

J. L. LATHROP LT., USCG

CC: REE

TOP \$31916/NTX 69/MR

OFFICE OF ORIGIN:

INITIALS OF RELEASING OFFICER:

(OAM)

TIME RELEASED:

T U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1943 16-23739-1 355(3)

STATES COAST GUARD

ADDRESS REPLY TO Loran Transmitting Station Battle Harbor, Labrador

CG AIR FACILITY ARGENTIA. CO EXEC 13 March OPS COMM

PORVICTORY

Commanding Officer, LTS Battle Harbor,

Commander, First Coast Guard District

Via: Coast Guard Representative, 1st CG District, Argentia, Nfld.

Analysis of possible point of origin and cause of recent fire; report of Subj:

(a) ClCGD/D 091638Z March, 1950

(b) My letter of 27 February, 1950, on subject matter

- A careful study of the facts pertaining to the recent fire, reveals, that its point of origin must have been in the engine room, the connected work shop or the adjoining passage way. The reason for the seeming vagueness is that these three are really one building, and when I arrived at the scene the flames were already breaking through the roof of the passage way and the adjoining work shop and engine room. Since I arrived at the scene within one minute after the alarm, the fire would have to have been burning for some time in order to fill the passage with heavy smoke and burn through the roof.
- The probable cause of the fire is much more difficult to determine. There was an oil stove in the work shop, but since this was on a Sunday, there was no work being done in the shop and the stove was not burning. There were shelves of regular engineers supplies, tools, spare parts, and the like in the work shop, but no especially combustible materials. There were two outboard motors in an attic like space above the engines where they are always stowed for the winter months, also a special tank for lubricating oil, but these were not within range of the heat from the engine exhausts. On my regular weekly inspection of the area the day before, I found it to be clean and free of oil soaked rags or other dangerous materials.
- In the entrance way to the work shop there was an empty oxygen and acetylene cylinder and a safety can with two gallons of gasoline. This particular space is well ventilated however and the snow, that drifts through the cracks, had been cleaned out the morning of the fire. All other oils, gasoline, and the like are stowed on an outside platform some thirty feet from the buildings, being to windward, this was not reached by the flames.
- 4. It is the belief of the ETC, ENCA and myself, that the most probable cause of the fire was the wiring, or rather the type of wiring used and the apparent abandon with which it was run anywhere and everywhere. This situation was one of the things that I was going to request that the District have corrected this next summer. It looks as though every year new lines have been added, and some of the replaced old ones just left hanging loose. This has been remedied wherever encountered, but the whole station should be rewired, and conduit should be used where appropriate.

The above is the best explanation of the cause and point of origin of the recent fire that I am able to make from the facts and conditions known to me.

E. Frice, LTJG USCG

BEP 113 HEADING RR BEBJB BEPJC BEGD 333

F8 OAN

RE 1519422 MFN CCCD ONE I

CCCD ONE REP ARGENTIA NF

EEE

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A C T TO BEDJEY COGD ONE

TIMFO DEPJC/COMDT CC HEADQUARTERS
DECD/COMEASTAREA
GRNC

O R M

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TEXT

ALL LORAN EQUIPMENT TRANSPORTED TO DATTLE MARBOR X FINAL TRIP WITH THREE DRUNS GASOLINE COMPLETED THIS DATE X BILLS FROM EASTERN PROVINCIAL AIRLINES WILL BE FORWARDED AS SOON RECEIVED X APPROXIMATE TOTAL COST TWO THOUSAND THREE HORIDRED DOLLARS CANADIAN

16/1949Z MAR

BEPAC

TEXT

ALL LORAN EQUIPTMENT RECEIVED IN GOOD CONDITION X INSTALLATION SEVENTY FIVE PERCENT COMPLETED X EXPECT TO HAVE SIGNALS ON AIR FOR TEST PURPOSES 19 MARCH X IR SAXISFACTORY OPERATION EXPERIENCED STATION WILL RESUME REGULAR OPERATION 20 MARCH ST 171220Z

CFN 19 26

COMINTICEPAT

17/572 MAD BETAC

	DEP A	NAC 21 NJN 191620Z NIPS W NJN1 NJN2	FFE	ME GR 39 H
FROM	FN	CG RADIO BATTLE HARBOR LABRADOR	ECV	11
A C T - O Z	TO	CCGD ONE	0310	Mel
- Z F O R S	INEO	CG RAD BONAVISTA NEWFOLKIDLAND GREENLAND CONDT COGARD REP	CG RAD FREDERICKS	DANL ///

TEXT

OPERATIONAL PRIORITY

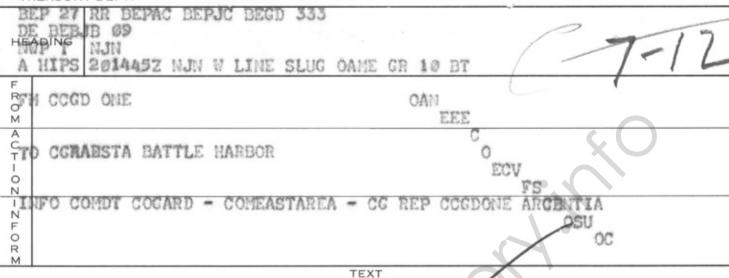
OPERATION ON RATE 113 SATISFACTORY & RESUMED SERVICE THAT RATE
OFFICIALLY 1530Z X TEST CONTINUING ON RATE 114 MASTER APPARENTLY
CANNOT SEE SLAVE SIGNAL X AM ATTEMPTING O ERECT SEPERATE TRANSMITTERS
ANTENNA FOR THIS RATE X WILL ADVISE RESULTS BT 191620Z

CFN 1L3 15302 1L4

19/1722Z HAR BEFAC

OPERATOR'S RECORD AND DATE

OFFICIAL INITIALS



REUR 191620Z WELL DONE FOR LIEUT FISHER AND STATION CREW BT 201445Z

REF

OPERATION ON RATE ALS SATISFACTORY X -- ETC---

CFN 191629Z

20/1446Z MAR BEBJB

1659(5)

CO, CGLTS, Battle Hrbr, Lab. to Comdr., First CG District

Ind-1 Rep., ClCGD Argentia, Nfld.

CG-606 23 March, 1950

From: Representative of Comdr., 1st CG District, Argentia, Nfld.

To: Commander, First Coast Guard District

Subj: Analysis of possible point of origin and cause of recent fire;

report of

Forwarded.

J. A. GLYNN

Ind-2

4 April, 1950 File: 0 - 601

From: Commander, First Coast Guard District
To: Commandant (OSU)

Forwarded, with inclosure. A formal board of investigation will be held when tender visits this location in the Spring.

Incl:

Letter (original) of CO LTS, Battle Harbor, 27 February, 1950, with 1st indorsement of Rep.1st CGDist. Argentia dated 2 March, 1950.

203981

U. S. COAST GUARD HERRS. MAJL & RECORDS SERVICE SECTI COMDR., 1 CGD, Boston, Massachusetts RECEIVED APR 28 1950 (7) 26 April, 1950 Commander, First Coast Guard District Captain William B. Chiswell, U. S. Coast Guard Fire at Coast Guard Loran Transmitting Station, Battle Harbor, Labrador on 26 February, 1950; convening order for board of (a) Article 900, Coast Guard Courts and Boards (b) Article 909, Coast Guard Courts and Boards (e) Article 884, Coast Guard Courts and Boards A board of investigation consisting of yourself as sole member is hereby ordered to convene at the Coast Guard Loren Transmitting Station, Battle Harbor, Labrador, or such other place as practicable, as soon as practicable for the purpose of inquiring into the fire which occurred at that station on 26 February, 1950. Among other things the board will examine and inquire into the nature and extent of the fire; the nature and extent of damages caused by the fire; the nature and extent of personal injuries, if any; the cause of the fire; whether or not any personnel were negligent, and if so, who; and the nature and extent and estimated cost of necessary repairs and replacements resulting from the fire. The proceedings of the board will be in accordance with Coast Guard Courts and Boards, 1935 (as amended). Upon completion of the inquiry, the board will submit in quadruplicate a record of its proceedings, which record will include appropriate findings of fact, opinions, and

The executive officer, USCGC SORREL is directed to furnish the necessary clerical assistance.

L. B. OLSON

CC ±

HO (OSU) CGLTS, Battle Harbor

recommendations.

dli-123

investigation

From:

Subje

Refs:

2.

To:

SORREL Personnel

ROUTING SHEET

CONTROL NUMBER

TIME OF RELEASE

SUDGET DIVISIO

RECEIVED

1950 MAY 12 14 32

FROM: BUDGET DIVISION, PLANNING & CONTROL STAFF

IMPORTANT

- 1. This request must be forwarded promptly so that the Chief, Budget Division may take final action on the matter without unnecessary delay. If this request is referred to an office not listed in the following routing, call \$5308. If it is necessary to delay submitting a recommendation on this request, detach carbon copy of form, note reason for delay, and return copy to Chief, Budget Division.
- 2. Final action on allotting funds and approving or disapproving expenditures will be taken by the Chief, Budget Division. Letters, dispatches, etc., to this effect will be prepared for his signature.

			be prepar	ed for h	his signature.
DISTRICT:	R OF REQU	twist		UNIT:	DATE OF REQUEST
LETTER ID	ENTIFICAT	ION . D			GROUP REQUISITION IDENTIFICATION TOENTIFICATION OF OTHER REQUEST FORMS
APPROPRIA	TION & SUE	BHEAD A	MOUNT REQUI		Replace four buildings and construct one additions
ROUTING ORDER	ROOM OR STATION	OFFICE OR DIVISION	DATE OF	DATE OF RELEASE	DECOMMENDATIONS AND INITIALS
1.	6-5	CÐ			Referred to ŒU, ECV. \$55,000, under subhead (43), and \$6,000, under subhead (42), have previously been allotted for the restoration of this station. C. B. ARRINGTON Chief, Budget Division
2.	7-82	GH6-1		5/25	Forwarded approved. There is a requirement for the continuing operation of this station.
					R. M. ROSS Chief, Aids to Navigation Div.
2a.		GH6-6	5/26	6/2	Unit is operationally necessary. Approval recommended subject to Engineering review.
					S.H. EVANS
3.	5-1	ECA			Acting Assistant Chief, Office of Operations
		4			
				2.4	
		10			

Boston 13, Massachusetts Borbon, Minagoliusetta

Commander, First Coast Guard District

> 31 May, 1950 File: dli - 123

Commander, First Coast Guard District Tot LT Robert J. Carson, U.S.Coast Guard

Subja Fire at Coast Guard Loran Transmitting Station, Battle Harbor, Labrador on 26 February, 1950; convening order for board of investigation. sancellation of

Refs: (a) Article 900, Coast Guard Courts and Boards

(b) Article 909, Coast Guard Courts and Boards

(c) Article 884, Coast Guard Courts and Boards

A board of investigation consisting of yourself as sole member is hereby ordered to convene at the Coast Guard Loran Transmitting Station, Battle Harbor, Labrador, or such other places as practicable. as soon as practicable for the purpose of inquiring into the fire which occurred at that station on 26 February, 1950

- 2. Among other things the board will examine and inquire into the nature and extent of the fire; the nature and extent of damages caused by the fire; the nature and extent of personal injuries, if any; the cause of the fire; whether or not any personnel were negilgent, and if so, who; and the nature and extent and estimated cost of necessary repairs and replacements resulting from the fire.
- The proceedings of the board will be in accordance with Coast 3. Guard Courts and Boards, 1935 (as amended). Upon completion of the inquiry, the board will submit in quadruplicate a record of its proceedings, which record will include appropriate findings of fact, opinions, and recommendations.

The executive officer, USCCC SOFREL is directed to furnish the necessary clerical assistance.

GC :

HQ(OSU)

CGLTS Battle Harbor

SCRREL

Personnel

L. B. OLSON

3619 (5)

Commander, First Coast Guard District

Boston, Massachusetts

31 May, 1950 File: dli - 123

From: Commander, First Coast Guard District

To: Captain William B. Chiswell, U.S. Coast Guard

Subj: Fire at Coast Guard Loran Transmitting Station, Battle Harbor, Labrador on 26 February, 1950; convening order for board of investigation; cancellation of

Ref: (a) CCGD1 letter, 26 April, 1950 (dli-123)

Reference (a) is hereby cancelled and the board of investigation consisting of yourself as sole member is hereby dissolved.

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CC:

HQ (OSU)

CGLTS, Battle Harbor

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SCRREL

Personnel

L. D. OLSO

include appropriate findings of fact, commonly or

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any personnel wash magnifests, and to

Chief, Legal Division 23 August 1950 GH6-6/123 Chief, Office of Operations B/I 3532, covering fire at CG Loran Transmitting Station, Battle Harbor, Labrador on 26 February, 1950 Forwarded. This office concurs with the proceedings, findings of fact, opinions, and recommendations of the Board. FORWARDED 2-4---2/71950--Return to 7-12 5634(5)