The Mole

Did British and Chinese secret service collaboration lead to the sinking of Shinano during the Pacific War?

By CARLO MOLE, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Through an analysis of my grandfather’s unpublished memoir, A Mole in Our Midst,¹ I seek to shed light on a rarely discussed area of history, namely the extent and importance of the collaboration between British and Chinese intelligence agencies during the Pacific War. Kenneth Mole’s memoir, written in the 1990s, recounts his experiences as a British SIS agent in Japanese-occupied China during the Second World War. As part of a newly devised intelligence unit—a result of the collaboration between SEAC’s Lord Mountbatten and the Chinese Nationalist Party’s leader Chiang Kai-shek—Mole details his discovery of Shinano, Japan’s largest ever aircraft carrier, and its subsequent sinking by USS Archerfish submarine in the Pacific Ocean. However, according to official U.S. Naval archives and Captain Enright himself, Archerfish came upon Shinano by chance, an encounter since hailed as an exclusive success of the U.S. Navy.² Mole’s memoir contradicts this narrative, instead claiming that the whereabouts of Shinano were garnered from British-Chinese intelligence collaboration before being relayed to the Americans. This essay shall therefore explore previously unanalyzed evidence in order to substantiate Mole’s claim to the discovery of Shinano. Through a careful consideration of secondary historical sources, first-hand accounts, diaries, and archival and naval log materials, I will seek to ascertain whether intelligence was used in the sinking of Shinano, and consequently, whether collaboration between the British and Chinese intelligence agencies in the Far East has been understated.

SHINANO

On November 29, 1944, Shinano was sunk by four U.S. submarine torpedoes. At the time of her sinking, Shinano was the most powerful warship in the world, and she remains the largest aircraft carrier ever to be sunk by a submarine. Plans for her creation emerged in 1934, when the Japanese Naval General Staff, foreseeing a confrontation with the Americans, ordered the creation of three Yamato-class super-battleships—Yamato, Musashi, and Shinano.³ The Japanese were convinced that the key to naval dominance in the Pacific lay in the creation of battleships. By the time the Americans had declared war, Japan had developed a superior fleet. Although the Japanese only had 10 battleships compared to the Americans’ 17, they had destroyed four in their surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Japan also had more carriers, auxiliary carriers, heavy cruisers, and light cruisers than the Americans.⁴ However, Japan’s naval supremacy was lost after the Battle of Midway in the summer of 1942, a battle that resulted in the destruction of four Imperial carriers. To rectify the damage inflicted by the Americans, the Japanese quickly ordered the conversion of Shinano from a super-battleship into an aircraft carrier. Shinano was scheduled for completion in February 1945.⁵ But by 1944, with defeat on the horizon, the Japanese Naval General Staff ordered Shinano to be delivered four months earlier than scheduled.⁶ On November 28th, escorted by three destroyers—Isokaze, Yukikaze, and Hamakaze—Shinano began her maiden voyage to Kure. 17 hours into her journey, she was hit by four torpedoes, killing 1,435 Japanese service personnel and civilian workers.⁷ Shinano was to be Japan’s last hope. Her sinking signaled the end of Japan’s chances in the Pacific War.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

A Mole in Our Midst offers an alternative and unique lens through which to view the Pacific War. Despite the increasing role of intelligence agencies in international affairs, historical studies of intelligence are lacking.⁸ According to Christopher Andrew and David Dilks, intel-

² John Deane Potter, Yamamoto: The Man who Menaced America, 29.
³ Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee, Japanese Naval and Merchant Ship Losses During World War II by All Causes, Table II, page vii.
⁴ Watts and Gordon, The Imperial Japanese Navy, 68
⁶ Enright and Ryan, Sea Assault, 17.
⁷ Douglas Ford, Britain’s Secret War against Japan, 1937-1945 (London: Routledge, 2006). 3
ligence is the “missing dimension” of history. Although this ‘missing dimension’ is becoming increasingly accessible with the declassification of documents, British intelligence during the Pacific War has remained understudied. Indeed, as D.C. Watt suggests, “a further subject for investigation is the role of intelligence agencies on [the British and Japanese] side.” Douglas Ford remarks in his examination of Britain’s involvement in the Pacific War that the history of intelligence, especially in the Far East, is often “taken for granted or overlooked.” Richard Aldrich concurs with Ford, explaining, “almost nothing has been written on the British SIS during the war against Japan.” When viewed alongside the historiography of the Second World War, analyses of the impact of British and Chinese intelligence collaboration have not attracted much scholarly attention. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, British activities in the Pacific paled in comparison to those of the United States. Historians focusing on the Pacific War (P. Calvocoressi, J. Keegan, A.R. Millett, W. Murray, and G.L. Weinberg) therefore scarcely discuss Britain’s contribution, instead emphasizing the contributions of the United States. Secondly, official histories centering on Britain’s role in the Second World War have focused overwhelmingly on the Western front, largely ignoring the Pacific realm, particularly with regard to intelligence.

However, a historiography of intelligence during the Pacific War does exist. For example, Ronald Lewin analyzes the United States’ use of SIGINT during the Pacific War, while Richard Aldrich posits that the wartime conflict between British and American secret services in Asia mirrored political disagreement at the highest level between Roosevelt and Churchill. Furthermore, Keith Stevens and Douglas Ford emphasize British intelligence in China and the Pacific.” Yet Rana Mitter bucks the trend with his work *China’s War with Japan*, which emphasizes the importance of Chinese secret services in helping Britain and the United States to combat the Japanese. This essay should thus be viewed as part of recent attempts to question the incumbent consensus among historians that Britain, and especially China, played limited roles in the Far Eastern intelligence arena. Indeed, the whereabouts of *Shinano* would not have been garnered were it not for the collaboration between British and Chinese secret services.

**British, Chinese and American Secret Services**

Kenneth Mole’s memoir must be viewed within the political and historical context of British-Chinese collaboration. His posting was a direct result of Lord Mountbatten and Chiang Kai-shek’s agreement to station collaborative intelligence stations throughout the East Coast of China in 1943. Mole was situated in Wenzhou, one of two Chinese ports still unoccupied by the Japanese, in an office known as the “Liaison Office of the British Embassy.”

The outbreak of the Second World War witnessed a consolidation of British and American intelligence networks of human agents and listening posts in the Far East. The Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, and Britain’s devastating defeat in Malaya and Singapore in 1942, however, reinforced an urgent need for change. The Allies poured further resources into intelligence agencies in the Far East. When it became clear that the Japanese were relying heavily on Chinese resources, Britain and the United States became China’s main diplomatic, financial, and military allies. Yet, according to Ford, until 1943, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), and the Special Operations Executive (SOE), “found themselves without the finances necessary to employ skilled agents and to foster useful contacts within Japan.” Indeed, Britain played a secondary role in the Pacific War, as its war effort focused almost exclusively on Germany. It was only in 1944 that Churchill committed a
British fleet to the Pacific. This had the important effect of placing more emphasis on Britain’s intelligence units.

However, as Aldrich contends, the collaboration between British and American intelligence agencies was strained for political reasons. He argues that as the Pacific War intensified, from 1942 onwards, the British and Americans focused increasingly on each other’s future ambitions, rather than the common enemy. Britain sought to regain its lost empire to the dismay of the anti-imperial Americans. The raising of the Union Jack over Singapore was more important to the British than any victory parade through Tokyo. Ford supports Aldrich’s interpretation, concluding that Britain’s lack of reliable naval intelligence was a result of “the poor state of Anglo-American intelligence cooperation, which ‘essentially did not exist’ in the pacific between 1943-1944.”

What Britain lacked in partnership with the Americans, however, it made up for through its collaboration with the Chinese. In total, there were fifteen known allied intelligence agencies, but these organizations were uncoordinated and inexperienced and thus relied on domestic Chinese secret services. Britain’s pre-war presence on the east coast of China enabled it to establish ties with both the Kuomintang Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the communists. A joint British-Chinese signals intelligence (SIGINT) station was, for example, established in Hong Kong as early as 1937. The KMT had also allowed British W/T stations concealed in Canton, Tigris, and Hainan.

By 1941, the British had created guerrilla and commando training operations for the Chinese, in both China and Britain. In 1942, as the war intensified, SOE formed “204 Military Mission” which consisted of six Army Commando Contingents, three of which were scheduled to enter China to train Chinese military forces at the beginning of the war with Japan. By 1943, Lord Mountbatten secured the personal agreement of Chiang “to SIS operating freely in China, especially in coastal areas.” By the end 1943, SIS operated five radio stations across China.

Britain realized that efforts to maintain its colonies would only be feasible with cooperation from the Chinese. The KMT was determined to control all secret service activities in China, forcing Britain to pursue a path of collaboration. John Keswick, a leading SOE official, suggested that the only intelligence activities in China not known to Chiang in 1943 were some joint SIS-OSS intelligence activities, but “that it was only a matter of time before they too were uncovered.” Operations such as 204 Military Mission gained support from Chiang, thus enabling the British to establish strong domestic intelligence links. Many of these operations were deliberately kept secret from the United States, a move championed by Chiang. Indeed, Roosevelt “ignored the practicalities of dealing with Chiang’s KMT.”

However, British-Chinese collaboration was not without flaws. According to Mitter, “SOE and the SIS had some successes in China … but overall it was equally unable to create a coordinated and effective structure.” Moreover, the Chinese were wary of British intentions: Chiang considered Britain’s interest in China as merely a manifestation of its efforts to maintain its empire. Ultimately, the collaboration between the British and Chinese could have gone further. In late 1944, the Director of Military Intelligence in China offered to create a new British-Chinese intelligence unit that would have provided the Chinese with British SIGINT. The Americans, however, pressured the British to withdraw the offer.

Nevertheless, the assumption that Britain played a minor role in the Chinese theatre is misguided. The British Secret Service played a crucial role in combining and reinforcing intelligence collaboration between the Chinese, British, and Americans. China should be remembered firmly as one of four principal wartime Allies, alongside Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union, and thus fundamental to the victory over the Japanese.

A Mole in Our Midst

A Mole in Our Midst is the autobiographical account of an eccentric young Englishman, caught up in an exotic world of espionage, romance, and danger. Kenneth Mole was born in Manchuria, China to British missionary doc-
tor parents in 1919. Raised by his amah, or nursemaid, he felt China was in his blood. But at the age of eight, he was ripped from his amah’s arms and sent by himself to be educated in England, the homeland he had never known. Despite his separation from his family, Mole excelled at school, gaining an organ scholarship at Oxford where he studied Classics and Philosophy. When the Second World War broke out, Mole, aged 21, was faced with a philosophical crisis.

Mole’s Buddhist upbringing meant that he abhorred the violence of the Second World War. He believed it was every Englishman’s duty not to participate in the horrors and madness of war. Accordingly, Mole registered as a conscientious objector; a decision that risked vilification, imprisonment, and public humiliation. However, his experiences during the London Blitz changed his mind. As the war’s evils became increasingly apparent, Mole realized that he had a role to play, and that the war could offer him an opportunity to return to his beloved China. He decided to enlist in the Royal Air Force.

Bespectacled and lanky, the philosophy graduate was hardly a natural soldier. But his ability to speak and write Mandarin caught the attention of the Secret Service. He was swiftly tasked with a secret mission: to gather intelligence on the Japanese in China.

After further training, Mole was sent via India to the Chinese border. From Calcutta, the novice spy was flown in a Dakota over the Himalayas, a terrifying, sick-making journey. Armed with a pistol, a pen-camera, razor blades, and a typewriter—the only weapon he yet knew how to wield—Mole set off alone on foot and by river, a journey of over 1000 miles, for the one of only two unoccupied ports in Eastern China. As Mole recounts:

I was told to find my way to Wenchow, a port on China’s east coast, south of Japanese occupied Shanghai. I was given a fountain pen in a presentation box and told first to report to the Firm’s treasurer in Kunming in westernmost China and hand the pen to him personally and in private. China was inaccessible by land, with the Gobi Desert to the North and the Himalayas and the Jap controlled Burmese jungle to the West. To the East, the Japanese controlled the entire coast from Russia in the North to Siam in the South, except for two minor ports. One was Foochow, up the coast a bit from Hong Kong, and the other was Wenchow, down the coast a little from Shanghai. That was where I was to go.

It was in Wenchow that Mole made contact with another agent, Sam Gittens. Suave, savvy, and Oxford-educated, 28-year-old Gittens was half-British and half-Chinese. He was a precocious master of espionage with a long list of local informants and lovers. Working out of the “White House,” a colonial structure on one of the tributary rivers in Wenchow, Gittens ran a decadent outpost of the Empire, walking a tightrope between Chinese double agents, the U.S., and British spy networks. He sated rival Chinese factions with contraband and information. Mole writes:

We were in a large and comfortable European building, called the White House. Sam had only recently moved here from a place which had been both his office and quarters for himself and his staff. The office was known, like our office in Kunming, as the Liaison Office of the British Embassy, not a wholly convincing cover for a two-man British organisation in a remote town from which all Europeans with a modicum of intelligence had already left. The title Methodist Mission would have better merged into the landscape, but it would have been a struggle for Sam and I to feign an evangelistic spirit, what with his philanderings.
and my Buddhist leanings.\textsuperscript{38}

Mole, known to his counterparts as “Kang,” realized his immaculate Mandarin would not get him very far: he stuck out like a sore thumb. His work would therefore rely on informants. Gittens and Mole recruited agents, briefing and debriefing them, encoding their information using ‘one time pads’ and sending it to Calcutta. They also gleaned information from local dignitaries by plying them with rice wine and cigarettes — commodities in high demand in wartime China.

Mole’s first recruit would become one of his most valuable. The identical twin of a crane driver on a Japanese dockyard, he would replace his brother and take down details of all the ships in port. Mole details the informant’s account of his first day:

[He] waited until there was a lull in his brother’s crane activities, borrowed his entry pass into the docks, and being an identical twin with a fool-proof photograph, walked cleanly past the entry guards and climbed the ladder to the crane’s cabin. His fear of Japanese harbour police was soon replaced by vertigo from the sickening exposure to the awesome drop below. He was shocked to see how people could be transformed into slowly moving dots when seen from high above. Safe at last in the cabin, he spent the day making notes on the shipping and troop movement activity he saw, God’s gift to a spy.\textsuperscript{39}

Realizing the agent’s value, Mole commissioned drawings of the ever-growing Japanese Navy in the informant’s elegant Chinese brush strokes. Upon hearing relevant information, Mole would classify material from “A,” meaning “seen with own eyes,” to “F” — “probably worthless”— before sending it to his superiors. For the following two years, Mole successfully reported on Japanese naval movements, perhaps enabling the Americans to make several correct interceptions.

However, Mole’s most valuable informant came in the form of a tea shop owner at a Japanese Naval dockyard. Mr. Li, one of Mole’s recruits, overheard the tea shop owner one night in Wenchow:

This man had a Korean father, a Japanese mother and a married sister in Wenchow and had taken advantage of the Japanese capture of Wenchow to visit his sister there. But there he found that she’d been gang-raped by Japanese soldiers when they entered the town. Enraged and drunk in a Wenchow bar, he vowed vengeance against the Japanese… All our Mr. Li had to do was to explain to him how he could avenge his sister and even get paid for doing so, simply by reporting to us anything whatsoever he could find out about Kure dockyard.\textsuperscript{40}

Intelligence from this informant led to Mole’s most important discovery: the existence of the world’s largest aircraft carrier—Shinano. On November 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, the tea shop owner surfaced at the White House. Mole recounts:

On November 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, another starred entry in my diary, the Kure tea-house owner surfaced at our temple. He told us of a warship currently under construction at Yokosuka dockyard in Tokyo Bay, hidden beneath sisal curtains, a battleship of the Yamato class. She would be the biggest warship in the history of the world, unsinkable, with a foot-thick deck of solid steel over a layer of concrete, capable of resisting any imaginable bomb. Our Kure agent got wind of this because the construction, begun at Yokosuka in Tokyo Bay, could be completed only in Kure dockyard in the Inland Sea. He told us that she was due to leave Tokyo before the end of November for Kure. Not yet ready for action, she would be manned by a scratch crew. Her name, somehow he also knew, was Shinano.\textsuperscript{41}

Appreciating the gravity of this intelligence, Mole quickly encrypted the message using a “one-time pad” to be sent to Mountbatten in India. As Mole noted, “Mountbatten in Ceylon now had a real bingo to pass on to the Americans in the Pacific and the monstrous Shinano, with her foot-thick deck of solid steel over a layer of concrete, was doomed.”

**Shinano and Archer-Fish**

Named after Japan’s longest and largest river, Shinano was considered unsinkable. She measured 872 feet, weighed close to 70,000 tons, and was armoured with 16 high angle guns, 145 25-millimeter rapid firing machine guns, and 12 multiple rocket-launchers. Her four steam

\textsuperscript{38} Mole, A Mole in our Midst, 82.
\textsuperscript{39} Mole, A Mole in our Midst, 98.
\textsuperscript{40} Mole, A Mole in our Midst, 173.
\textsuperscript{41} Mole, A Mole in our Midst, 24.
turbines were capable of developing 150,000 horsepower, generating a speed of 27 knots. The carrier provided quarter to 2,500 officers, sailors, specialists, and airmen, making her the largest carrier ever built.\(^{12}\) Shinano was thus able to outpace enemy battleships and submarines, and withstand aerial bombs and torpedoes.

Not only was Shinano believed unsinkable, but her existence was completely unknown to the allies. To conceal Shinano, a towering steel fence had been constructed on all sides of the graving dock. Her thousands of builders, confined to quarters, lived under threat of execution if they spoke of her existence.\(^{13}\) Although the Japanese Naval prospects were markedly reduced after the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, Shinano offered the increasingly desperate Japanese a chance to keep in the fight against the U.S. Navy. Shinano was to be Japan’s secret weapon.

Originally laid down as a Yamato-class battleship, Shinano was converted to an aircraft carrier. On June 15, 1944, with the war turning against the Japanese, the Yokosuka Naval Shipyard was ordered to complete the conversion four months earlier than schedule. The carrier was quickly finished and untested. On November 29, she was transferred from Tokyo Bay en route to Kure to begin accepting a stock of aircraft and armament fittings. She would be making the journey along the southern coast of Japan—waters that were heavily patrolled by American submarines—without its full capabilities.

Although this was certainly a risk, the Japanese were confident that Shinano would make the journey without issue. Captain Abe, the man chosen to command Shinano, had proven himself as one of Japan’s leading naval commanders. Shinano was to be escorted by three proven destroyers—Hamakaze (beach wind), Yukikaze (snow wind), and Isokaze (strand wind)—each capable of reaching 35 knots. An enemy ship would be no match for Shinano.

Compared to the 4,000 personnel manning Shinano and its three destroyers, only 82 sailors were aboard Archerfish. On November 9th, 1944, Captain Joseph F. Enright “flew to Guam, where Vice Admiral Lockwood and his staff were located” and was given a “verbal summary of [his] assigned location and what [they] were to do.”\(^{44}\) After receiving new orders, Archerfish embarked on its mission to patrol Japanese warships for downed U.S. Air Force pilots.

In effect, Archerfish “had authorization to roam at will over a vast expanse of enemy waters.”\(^{45}\)

On November 24, with the U.S. beginning its mass bombing of Japan, Captain Abe learned that a group of U.S. submarines, known as a wolfpack, were patrolling the waters of Tokyo Bay. Captain Abe decided to navigate Shinano further out to sea, during nighttime, in order to avoid B-29 bombers and the wolfpack. Should Shinano run into the wolfpack, her superior size and pace would be enough to escape.

On the evening of November 28th, with only the moon for light, Archerfish spotted an unknown ship. Crewmember Martin W. Fuller records, “We sighted a target coming out of Tokyo Bay. It was the largest ship I had ever seen.”\(^{46}\) Captain Abe had also spotted Archerfish, however, the Captain mistakenly presumed that Archerfish headed a wolfpack of other submarines. This assumption led Shinano to manoeuvre defensively. Had Captain Abe decided to go on the offensive, Archerfish would have been forced to escape. In order to avoid the submarines, Shinano began zig-zagging. Archerfish would therefore have to predict the carrier’s movements to maintain its chase. The submarine had to be placed perfectly within the “firing window,” which would likely only last several seconds.

Seventeen hours into her journey, Shinano was hit by four torpedoes. Captain Enright had found the firing window. He writes in his diary:

The first torpedo smashed into Shinano’s hull some ten feet below the surface. There was a tremendous roar, and a huge ball of red and orange flame rolled up the starboard of the ship and shot into the dark sky […] The blast ruptured and caused prompt flooding […] The explosion also burst through the deck above, killing engineering personnel who were asleep in their compartments. Within the next 30 seconds three more torpedoes slammed into Shinano.\(^{47}\)

On November 29, 1944, Shinano was sunk, killing 1,435 Japanese service personnel and civilian workers. Shinano was, and remains, the largest warship ever to be sunk by a submarine. One of the survivors later wrote of the moment Shinano was hit by the torpedoes:

I went over to the port side into the water and immediately got sucked into a huge exhaust vent.

\(^{12}\) Enright and Ryan, Sea Assault, 17.
\(^{13}\) Enright and Ryan, Sea Assault, 17.
\(^{15}\) Enright and Ryan, Sea Assault, 40.
\(^{16}\) Marteen W. Fuller, USS Archerfish Deck Log and Patrol Report, (November 9th – December 15th 1944).
\(^{17}\) Enright and Ryan, Sea Assault, 190.
about three meters below the deck along with many of my comrades. Most of them screamed in vain for help as they disappeared in the swirling water into the bowels of the ship. Just as I was about the give up hope, I managed to seize hold of a wire cable and pulled myself out of the vent and crawled back onto the deck again … As I floated away from Shinano, I seized hold of a big section of lumber … When I looked back, Shinano was heeled way over to starboard. What an incredible sight!*

The sinking of Shinano was seen by the Japanese as a major loss and embarrassment. Despite the immense loss of life, the events of November 29 were hidden from the public. Survivors were quarantined to keep Shinano’s existence secret.† The report of the U.S. Technical Mission to Japan included the following observation:

Of all naval catastrophes, from the Japanese point of view, the loss of Shinano was most depressing. The third and last of the super warships, she was sunk on the second day of her maiden cruise, by only four submarine torpedoes. The shock which went through the Japanese Naval Ministry is better imagined than described.‡

Captain Enright was awarded the Navy Cross, and the sinking of Shinano would become a legend of naval warfare. In the words of Admiral Bernard A. Clarey: “Who would have believed this leviathan, an embodiment of Japan’s aspirations to snatch victory from defeat, could be stopped in such a lethal fashion by a vessel less than a thirtieth her size, a 2,000-ton American submarine?”§

### Conflicting Accounts

Remarkably, according to official U.S. archives and Captain Enright himself, Archerfish came upon Shinano by chance. This discovery has since been hailed as an exclusive success of the U.S. Navy.¶ There is no overt evidence of intelligence having played a role in the Americans’ discovery of the carrier. Captain Enright resolutely asserts in his memoir that he was unaware of the existence of Shinano. Mole’s memoir, therefore, contradicts the U.S. narrative, instead claiming that the whereabouts of Shinano was gleaned from British-Chinese intelligence collaboration before being relayed to the United States.

This raises several interesting questions: Was intelligence used in the sinking of Shinano, or was it purely by chance? Did either Captain Enright or Mole lie? Could they both be telling the truth? If Mole’s account is truthful, did the intelligence reach the Americans? Without evidence of SIGINT linking Mole’s intelligence to the British

---

* Enright and Ryan, *Sea Assault*, 190.
† Enright and Ryan, *Sea Assault*, 256.
‡ Enright and Ryan, *Sea Assault*, 260.
or Americans, these questions cannot be fully answered. Even Mole notes the lack of evidence. He writes, “Somewhere in those 17,000 tons of American records of World War Two, there must be a reference to a report to MI6 from a teahouse owner in Kure Dockyard.” At the time of writing, this crucial evidence has not been found. However, this limitation does not foreclose an investigation into the sinking of Shinano. One can still learn important truths. As Mole remarked on his time China: “Nothing is as it seems.”

**Mole and Enright**

The plausibility of both accounts must therefore be taken into consideration. Firstly, I must answer the central question: Was it possible for Mole’s intelligence to reach Captain Enright? Without this link, Mole’s account loses all credibility. Crucially, the British and Americans shared intelligence in 1944. Without a fleet of its own, Britain relayed its intelligence to the U.S. Navy in the Pacific. Intelligence gathered by SIS in China would have been relayed to Bletchley Park in Britain before being sent to the United States Naval Communication Intelligence Organization. If action upon this information required the use of submarines, the intelligence would then have been sent to the Commander of the Submarine Force (ComSubPac). Interestingly, one month prior to the sinking of Shinano, a joint Anglo-American naval intelligence base was set up at Guam. This base connected Pearl Harbor and Bletchley Park’s SIGINT capabilities to Guam. Crucially, according to Archerfish’s logs, Captain Enright visited Guam five days after Mole’s discovery, and nine days before spotting Shinano. It was therefore possible for Mole’s intelligence to reach Captain Enright. However, this does not prove a connection.

Secondly, one must ascertain whether Enright’s account is possible, and ultimately plausible. In other words, was it possible for Archerfish to happen upon Shinano by chance, and is it likely to have occurred? Upon first reflection, it seems unlikely. Why would a lone submarine be patrolling Japanese Inland waters? It was common practice for the US Navy, particularly towards the end of the Second World War, to deploy wolfpacks in Japanese waters. Captain Enright has, however, provided a plausible reason for entering Japanese waters alone. Archerfish was tasked with lifeguard duties off the coast of Japan. Any downed B-29 pilots were to be picked up by Archerfish and returned to Guam. Moreover, the fact that Archerfish was alone suggests that the US Navy was unaware of Shinano. When one considers the size and might of Shinano and its three destroyers, it seems unlikely that the US Navy would have sent a lone submarine. Captain Enright’s account of the sinking of Shinano is therefore possible.

Furthermore, one must analyze the reliability of Mole and Captain Enright’s accounts. On the surface, one would expect the account of a naval commander to hold strong over the word of a spy. Indeed, one can fault the reliability of Mole’s claim. It is plausible that Mole personified SIGINT in the form of the Kure teahouse owner. It is not unknown for memoirs to romanticize the events portrayed, especially within the genre of intelligence, which has been influenced by popular culture. Moreover, it is conceivable that Mole was concerned about revealing state secrets; he could have also stopped short of revealing the ways and means of his gathered intelligence.

Yet, Captain Enright’s account is not perfectly reliable either. Highly classified information was hidden as far as possible, which could explain its omission from the chain of events expressed in Captain Enright’s memoir. Jasper Holmes, the head of clandestine communication between the Combat Intelligence Unit in Hawaii and the Pacific Submarine Command in Guam, described how information was conveyed:

I went directly to the chief of staff of ComSubPac and delivered it orally. I did not tell him how the information was obtained, but he must have guessed. We kept no records. If I had a position in latitude and longitude, I wrote the figures in ink on the palm of my hand, and scrubbed my hands after I had delivered the message.

To maintain secrecy, it was forbidden for captains to write about highly classified information. As Lewin remarks, “The captain’s war diaries and patrol reports, which provided him with a rich variety of action stories and human drama, rarely—and then only incidentally—reflect the inner truth of many a successful engagement.” Therefore, the fact that there is no evidence of the use of

---

intelligence in either Enright’s diary or Archerfish’s logs does not prove that intelligence was not used. Indeed, Archerfish’s communications with COMSUBPAC can be viewed in this light. The message sent to “Pearl Harbor informing them that we were chasing a large ship, possibly a carrier, and requesting help if any other subs were closer than we were,”\textsuperscript{61} suggests that the submarine did in fact encounter Shinano without prior information. Yet there could have been a discrepancy between Captain Enright and his crew in their understanding of orders and events.

Further, Captain Enright’s sudden flight to Guam in order to be given a “verbal summary”\textsuperscript{62} suggests that the US Navy was handling delicate information. If the navy had been dealing purely with the lifeguard operation, they would not have recalled Captain Enright in person; they could have relayed orders via transmission. Indeed, there is no reference to the lifeguard operation after Captain Enright was given his supposed order. Perhaps Archerfish failed to find downed pilots—or perhaps that was not its real mission.

However, despite the concerns relating to Enright’s account, there remains a crucial gap between Mole’s intelligence and the sinking of the Shinano. Ultimately, Mole’s intelligence would not have sufficed. The U.S. Navy would have almost surely needed greater information to plan and enact a sinking of Shinano. Mole’s intelligence, that Shinano was “due to leave Tokyo before the end of November for Kure,” was important insofar as it provided intelligence relating the whereabouts and existence of the Shinano, as well as its planned route. However, the intelligence did not provide an exact location or date. Mole’s intelligence could have been known by the US Navy, but it could not have inevitably “doomed” Shinano.

Nevertheless, although at the time of writing it is not possible to indisputably prove the link between Mole’s intelligence and the sinking of Shinano, it is perfectly possible that Mole, and by extension, British-Chinese intelligence operations, played a role in the sinking of Shinano. The delicate nature of intelligence complicates historical accounts of war, and this case is no different.

Conclusion

This essay has explored previously unanalyzed evidence in order to substantiate Mole’s claim to the discovery of Shinano. Bedridden as a result of a rare neurological disease which led to his death in 2010, my grandfather was unable to find “the report to MI6 from a teahouse owner in Kure Dockyard,” among the “17,000 tons of American records of World War Two.”\textsuperscript{63} My goal throughout was simple: I hoped to continue my grandfather’s research to prove the connection between his intelligence and the sinking of the Shinano. Although I was unable to find a “report from a teahouse owner in Kure,” I have uncovered further evidence that undermines the official U.S. narrative. However, despite the challenge to remain impartial, it is evident that questions remain. Through a careful consideration of secondary historical sources, first-hand accounts, diaries, and archival and naval log material, this essay has demonstrated that intelligence was likely used in the sinking of Shinano, and that consequently, collaboration between the British and Chinese intelligence agencies in the Far East has been understated. Without Lord Mountbatten and Chiang’s collaboration, Mole would not have uncovered the whereabouts of Shinano.

APPENDIX A

The Official Secrets Act

Much of the information regarding the activities of intelligence agencies in the Pacific War has remained secret, and consequently, historical narratives have been skewed. The British government, for example, does not authorize the publication of memoirs of former members of the Secret Service under the Official Secrets Act. The Act regulates the disclosure of information by current and former members of Britain’s security or intelligence services. According to the Official Secrets Act, memoirs written by former intelligence personnel are censored to safeguard Service personnel and others who assist the British government (both past and present) and to preserve the integrity of Service operations. As the Act notes, the disclosure of a memoir is prohibited if it “causes damage to the work of, or of any part of, the security and intelligence services.” The penalty for unlawful disclosure is a maximum of two years’ imprisonment or an unlimited fine for conviction following indictment of any of the offenses in the Act.”\textsuperscript{64}

The publication of Kenneth Mole’s memoir is therefore considered prohibited under the Official Secrets Act. The publication in the United Kingdom of an account by a former member of the Secret Service, without authorization, is in contravention of the Act. After Mole’s

\textsuperscript{61} John Potanovic: USS Archerfish Deck Log and Patrol Report, (November 9\textsuperscript{th} – December 15\textsuperscript{th} 1944).

\textsuperscript{62} Joseph F. Enright: USS Archerfish Deck Log and Patrol Report, (November 9\textsuperscript{th} – December 15\textsuperscript{th} 1944).

\textsuperscript{63} Mole, A Mole in our Midst, 53.

\textsuperscript{64} OSA, Section 10(1)(a)
death in 2010, his family’s attempt to publish the memoir was halted by the British government. The family was informed by the British Disclosure Office that the publication of *A Mole in our Midst* breached “Section 5 of the Official Secrets Act because […] the memoir is likely to cause damage to the Service’s work.”

Yet, since 1989, there have only been thirteen cases prosecuted under the Art, with three involving members of the public—an MP’s staff member, a writer, and a TV producer. Of the thirteen, five officials, and one member of the public spent time in jail. The longest sentence received—one year—was served by a former intelligence agent who attempted to sell information a Dutch intelligence agency. Significantly, the thirteen cases involved relatively new classified information. The publication of a memoir recounting events from the Second World War is thus unlikely to be pursued. Moreover, the publication of information prohibited under the Official Secrets Act does not prohibit publication abroad. Indeed, in the case of *Observer and Guardian v United Kingdom* in the European Court of Human Rights in 1991, the fact that a former MI5 personnel’s memoir, *Spycatcher*, had been published in the United States played an important role in its subsequent publication in the United Kingdom. The publication, or reference to, *A Mole in our Midst*, outside of the United Kingdom is therefore unlikely to be problematic.

---

**Personal family papers. From British Disclosure correspondence with Kenneth Mole’s wife – Jean-Marie Mole.**

---

65. British Disclosure Office (PO BOX 1300, London, SE11BD) Correspondence with Kenneth Mole’s wife – Jean-Marie Mole. See Appendix A
