

Subject: Voyage report of S.S. ABANGAREZ

February 10, 1943

99800

I suggest that at convoy conferences matters such as the above should be clearly and emphatically laid down by those in charge and that the Masters be given to understand exactly what they are to do under a given set of circumstances.

(j) None.

*Edward G. Magennis*  
Edw. G. Magennis, Lt.(jg) USNR

1st Endorsement

17 Battery Place, New York, N.Y.  
February 15, 1943.

CONFIDENTIAL  
SERIAL PDNYF 06791

From: The Port Director, Third Naval District  
To: The Vice Chief of Naval Operations

Subject: Report of Voyage S.S. ABANGAREZ

1. Forwarded.
2. Enclosure (A) recommending higher splinter shield has been retained in the Ordnance office.
3. It is noted that British vessels are being supplied with 4" shrapnel ammunition for use against torpedo bombers in certain areas. (Par. (iv) - page 2).

*UT 4538*

*2/21/43  
Board is  
procuring  
4" + 5" HC  
time found  
shells for  
other purpose  
acc*

RECEIVED S-C FILES

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FEB 19 1943

MAIL ROOM 23

UP FILE NO (12)

FILE NO

FILE NO

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*3296168*

*A4-3/Abangarez*

F. G. REINICKE,

By

*[Signature]*

Office of the Chief of Naval Operations  
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*ecc  
4 file*

*LRR  
[Signature]*

*HUD*

CONFIDENTIAL

Date February 10, 1943

From: Lt. (jg) Edward G. Magennis  
To: The Vice Chief of Naval Operations

Via: The Port Director, Third Naval District

Subject: VOYAGE REPORT OF S.S. ABANGAREZ

Reference: (a) General Instructions for Commanding Officers of Naval Armed Guards on Merchant Ships 1942.

Enclosure: (A) Sketch of 20 mm. gun installation

1. In accordance with reference (a) the following is submitted:

(a) Name of vessel: S.S. ABANGAREZ; type: cargo ship; Gross tonnage: 4538; Type of cargo: In ballast (sand); owner: United Fruit Company; Chartered to: War Shipping Administration.

(b) Departed from dock at Barry Docks, Wales on Jan. 19 and anchored outside. Jan. 20 went to Milford Haven. Jan. 22 went to Belfast. Left Belfast at 2245 Jan. 23, in company with about 20 ships. The next day we joined up with about 40 other ships and 7 escorts. Speed of convoy supposed to be 9.5 knots. Arrived New York Feb. 10, 1943 at 1315.

(c) None

(d) Incidents out of routine:

(1) The named ship was in a collision and had several near collisions. (2) In an argument between two of the merchant crew one stabbed the other. (3) A drifting mine was sighted outside Milford Haven and reported to a corvette.

Lights shown - Lights were shown a great deal both in outward and homeward voyages, stern lights as well as running lights.

Vessel's speed - Vessel capable of 12.5 knots cruising speed, but maintained convoy speed, varying from 7.5 to 10 knots.

Fog signals - Vessel, a sound repeating ship, sounded its number when lead ship did, however, constant high winds usually prevented hearing signals, if any made.

(e) None

(f) Yes

(g) (i) See my letter dated 12 January, 1943 addressed to Vice Chief of Naval Operations via U. S. Naval Liaison Officer, Bristol Channel Area, Cardiff, Wales and the Commander, U. S. Naval Forces in Europe. The homeward voyage in constantly rough weather and poor visibility has made it even clearer how dangerous the gun mounts on the forecastle deck are to safe navigation. Considering the greatly increased chances of collision in the broad stretches of the Atlantic caused by the obstruction mentioned it may be inquired whether the additional gun protection forward is worth the greater risks involved.

(3 Copies of this Report should be submitted at Destination)

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority 750161

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(ii) Requests have been made heretofore for lockers to be secured on the gun platforms for spare parts, barrels, tools, etc. Those requests are again made.

(iii) Likewise, criticism of the firing steps installed on all 20 mm. guns has been made. Attached hereto as Enclosure (A) is a sketch of a view of a typical 20 mm. gun installation on named ship. From this sketch it will be seen that a man standing on the top step with a magazine in his hands has little chance to save himself if he loses his balance in rough weather. The knees of a normal sized man are level with the top of the splinter shield. For the same reason it seems needlessly risky to have a man stand usual watch in the gun mount. Besides, there is no place left to strip the gun.

I recommend that the top step at least be removed. In my opinion sufficient fire can be maintained with two steps which should be wooden and made removable.

(iv) It was stated at a recent convoy conference in England at which I was present that a good protection against torpedo bombers is shrapnel set to burst at about 750 yards. I understand that British ships are being supplied with such ammunition. I suggest that the same be issued to American ships carrying 4"50 guns.

(h) Apparently he did.

(i) The many narrow escapes from collision, as well as the one this vessel did not escape, while in convoy raise the question whether adequate instruction is given the Masters at convoy conferences and whether Convoy Commodores themselves are not subject to criticism for failure to obey their own signals, particularly speed signals. This vessel found itself in difficulties repeatedly for no other reason than that the Commodore's ship suddenly, for no apparent reason and without signal of any kind, slowed down. In thick weather and at night this kind of thing caused much anxiety to the officers of this ship.

There is no uniformity about the showing of lights. Sometimes nearly all of the ships in the convoy would show lights. There would be some, however, who would not do so. The result, in many instances, was that ships astern or on the beam had no way of knowing that there were any ships near them - with consequent danger to all.

Large alterations of course were ordered from time to time in the daytime, execution to be at night. Usually, the alteration was to be made by wheeling in succession. The proper method of making such alterations was apparently not understood by all. Some would start altering too soon. Some would make the entire alteration at once. Others would ease over gradually. Commonly, at night, the result was chaos, with the responsible personnel on the various ships not knowing from one minute to the next what was going to happen. Lack of uniformity in showing stern lights in thick weather of course added to the confusion.