

First Endorsement to Report of Outward Passage of the Commanding Officer,
Armed Guard Unit, S.S. ABEL PARKER UPSHUR, dated October 10, 1942.

FIRST ENDORSEMENT

U. S. NAVAL LIAISON OFFICE

A9-8 (967)

CONFIDENTIAL

BOMBAY, INDIA

October 19, 1942.

From: The U. S. Naval Liaison Officer.
To: The Chief of Naval Operations.

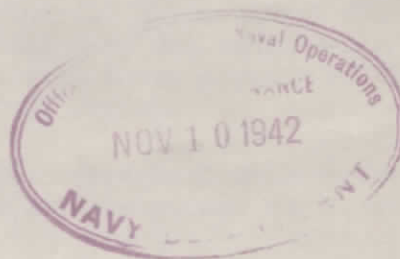
Subject: Armed Guard Unit, S.S. ABEL PARKER UPSHUR - Report of Outward
Passage.

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CONFIDENTIAL

October 10, 1942

From: Commanding Officer, Armed Guard Unit
S/S Abel Parker Upshur.

To: Chief of Naval Operations, via U.S. Naval Attache,
Bombay, India.

Subject: Report of Outward Passage.

Reference: General Instructions for Commanding
Officers of Naval Armed Guards (Par. 38)

1. General Resume of Voyage. This report covers the outward passage of the above ship on its maiden voyage. This is a type EC-2 vessel, armed with a 5" 51 calibre gun mounted aft, and four .50 calibre machine guns, two mounted aft, and two on the wings of the flying bridge. She is being operated by the International Freighting Corporation as general agents and was chartered by American Export Lines, Inc. to carry a Lend-Lease cargo of general war supplies from Newport News, Va. to Bombay, India. The voyage from Hampton Roads to Bombay was made via Key West, Fla., Trinidad, B. W. I., and Cape Town, Union of South Africa. The ship was convoyed from Hampton Roads to Key West, from Key West to Trinidad, and for 48 hours after taking departure from Trinidad. From that point the voyage was completed alone and without escort.

The naval armed guard unit joined the ship on July 14, 1942 at the shipyard in Wilmington, N.C. A brief record of the movements of the ship since that date follows:

July 15, 1942 departure taken from Wilmington, ship moving down river to South Port. July 16, took departure from South Port, proceeding up coast in convoy.

July 19, 1942 arrived Hampton Roads. Ship calibrated at Degaussing range and placed in drydock at Newport News shipyard.

July 21, 1942 shifted to Chesapeake and Ohio piers Newport News, and began to work cargo. Loading completed on August 5, 1942.

August 5, 1942 ship taken to Deperming station. August 6, to Degaussing Range, then proceeded to Lynnhaven anchorage to await sailing orders.

August 7, 1942 sailed for Key West, moving down coast in convoy. Arrived Key West August 13, 1942.

August 13, 1942 departed Key West in convoy bound for Trinidad, B.W.I. August 25, arrived Port of Spain, Trinidad. Took water and fuel oil bunkers.

August 28, 1942 sailed in convoy from Trinidad. August 30 at 0430 escort withdrew, convoy dispersed, and ship proceeded alone.

September 19, 1942 arrived Cape Town, Union of South Africa. Took water and received routing instructions from Royal Naval Control.

September 20, 1942 ship calibrated on Table Bay Range, and took departure for Bombay.

October 8, 1942 arrived Bombay.

Elapsed sea steaming time, distances covered, and speed were as follows:

Cape Henry to Key West ---	6 days, 4 hours, 1106 miles, 7.4 K.
Key West to Trinidad-----	11 days, 12 hours, 1981 miles, 7.1 K.
Trinidad to Cape Town-----	21 days, 20 hours, 5680 miles, 10.8 K.
Cape Town to Bombay-----	17 days, 20 hours, 5033 miles, 11.7 K.

2. Incidents Out Of The Routine. The outward passage was completed without experiencing any unusual incidents, and without engagement with the enemy.

3. Synopsis Of Route In Foreign Waters: On departure from Key West, crossed Gulf Stream, rounded Western tip of Cuba, thence through Caribbean to a point south of Jamaica, thence to a point north of Aruba, and thence into Port Of Spain, Trinidad.

Leaving Port of Spain, passed along northern coast of Trinidad. Then steered a course southeast and to the westward of St. Paul Rocks to a point east of Santa Cruz, Brazil. From there the course steered was approximately 112 degrees to longitude 10 east. From this point the course was approximately directly east to the swept channel into Table Bay Anchorage, Cape Town. Leaving

Leaving Table Bay, rounded Cape of Good Hope, passed well to the eastward of Madagascar and the islands of Reunion and Maritius, to a point in latitude 20 south. Then steered a course of approximately 20 degrees to a beam and well to the westward of Chagos Archipelago. Then steered a course of approximately 4 degrees leaving the Maldive and Laccadive Islands well to starboard, to a point in latitude 14 degrees north. Thence approximately 35 degrees to the swept channel into Bombay Harbor.

4. Orders Received From Foreign Governments. No written or verbal orders were received from foreign governments beyond routing instructions from Royal Naval Control at Trinidad and Cape Town. The ship received no radio orders.

5. Items of General Or Special Interest. Ships taking fuel oil bunkers at Trinidad are furnished an extremely heavy grade of

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oil - so heavy it necessitates the use of heating coils in tropical waters.

6. Defects Or Deficiencies in Battery and Equipment. This ship has no bow gun, although a magazine and gun platform are installed in the bow and ready for use. A bow gun was requested by letter to the Bureau of Ordnance, and from the Officers in Charge at NOB, Norfolk, Va., but no gun could be obtained for the ship prior to sailing. It is suggested that a 20 MM mounted on the forward gun platform, if no 3" 50 calibre is available, would add to the effectiveness of the ships armament.

The AA battery consists of four .50 calibre machine guns, It is suggested that these guns be replaced by 20-MM's as soon as this is feasible.

The 5" 51 calibre gun mounted aft trains very slowly. The Office Of Naval Inspector Of Ordnance at Newport News sent a man aboard to take up on the training gear, but without visible improvement. If this condition is characteristic of all old 5" 51 calibre broadside guns placed on merchantmen as centerline mounts, and cannot be corrected by installing new training gear, it detracts from the general advantage obtained by arming ships with these heavier calibre guns.

3425 .50 calibre rounds of ball and 575 rounds of tracers were placed aboard the ship as its quota of AA ammunition -- allowing one tracer in every five rounds. As armed guard crews have had only a minimum amount of experience in the actual firing of a .50 calibre machine gun at a moving target, a much higher ratio of tracers must be furnished to insure effective AA protection (It was possible to secure an extra 200 rounds of tracers from the Naval Operating Base at Norfolk).

The after magazine on these ships is located just forward of the steering engine room, and a high temperature (maximum 125 degrees) will prevail if only the regularly provided small ventilator is relied upon. No thermometer or windsail was provided for the armed guard unit on this ship at Wilmington, N.C., and none could be obtained from NOB Norfolk. By borrowing a thermometer and windsail from the ship, the average temperature of the powder aboard has been reduced and a partial record kept. A thermometer and windsail to control magazine temperature should be made a part of the armed guard unit's equipment.

The ship is not equipped with Paravanes, a short wave radio, or a daylight signal lamp.

7. Recommendations Tending To The Improvement For Greater Efficiency of the Service. It is suggested that general operating agents be instructed to place enough extra cash aboard to enable the captain to pay armed guard crews. Even with the partial pay-card system, and in foreign ports where a United States Naval Authority is present, much delay and difficulty is experienced in getting Armed Guard Personnel properly paid.

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To insure reasonably effective AA defense, armed guard personnel should be given actual AA firing practice, and supplied with ammunition carrying a heavy ratio of tracers. Increasing the number of tracers also would tend to give enemy aircraft the impression of heavier anti-aircraft fire from the ship, and keep them higher or cause them to veer off before getting directly over the target.

In regulating the number of men assigned to armed guard crews, the necessity of keeping a bright lookout must be considered, as well as the number of men necessary to man the particular guns mounted aboard. Merchant seamen lookouts can never be relied upon, and on long voyages the armed guard personnel cannot remain bright and alert standing lookout watches of more than two hours on and four hours off. And on this schedule, to insure alertness, it is necessary for the armed guard officer to take the watches of a few men each day to enable members of the armed guard to obtain more than three and one-half or four hours sleep at a time. To have four Navy personnel on lookout, on a schedule of two hours on and four off, requires a minimum armed guard crew of twelve men, the number now attached to this ship. This number should not be reduced even though the armament of the ship is never increased.

Also, the number of men on armed guard crews should not be kept at a minimum on the theory that merchant seamen can be trained and relied upon to help serve the guns aboard. While almost every man of the crew of this ship has been trained in the operation of the guns aboard, it is certain that not more than three members of this crew would stand by the guns in event of an attack.

8. Commercial Radio Operator. The commercial radio operator did appear to carry out all war time radio instructions for merchant vessels.
9. Speed in War Zone. The average speed of the vessel in the war zone was 7.25 knots in convoy and 11.2 knots when steaming alone (including zig-zag).
10. Lights in the War Zone. A total blackout was maintained aboard at all times. Dim running lights were shown by direction of the Royal Naval Control for two nights while running along the African coast, after departure from Cape Town.
11. Fog Signals in the War Zone. No fog signals were employed in the war zone.
12. Zig-Zag in the War Zone. The vessel zig-zagged in accordance with instructions. Zig-zag commenced when convoy dispersed 48 hours after departure from Trinidad and was maintained during all daylight and moonlight hours. The ship did not zig-zag, in accordance with Royal Naval instructions, after departure from Cape Town until it reached 19 degrees east, and did not zig-zag during the hours of darkness when

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there was no moon.

13. Instructions For Naval Transportation and United States Merchant Vessels. The master and officers of the ship did carry out "Instructions For Naval Transportation and United States Merchant Vessels in Time of War".

John M. Smyth, Jr.
John M. Smyth, Jr.
Ensign, USNR

In regulating the number of men assigned to armed guard duty, the necessity of keeping a bright lookout must be considered, as well as the number of men necessary to man the particular gun assigned aboard. Merchant vessel armaments can never be relied upon, and in any way reduce the armed guard party. It is necessary for the armed guard officer to schedule a few men each day to enable members of the armed guard to obtain more than three and one-half or four hours sleep at a time. To have four Navy personnel on lookout, on a schedule of two hours on and four off, requires a minimum armed guard crew of twelve men, the number not attached to this ship. This number should not be reduced even though the armament of the ship is never inspected.

Also, the number of men assigned to gun duty should not be kept at a minimum on the theory that merchant vessels can be trained and relied upon to help man the guns aboard. While almost every man of the crew of this ship has been trained in the operation of the guns aboard, it is certain that not more than three members of this crew would stand by the guns in event of an attack.

4. Commercial Radio Operator. The commercial radio operator did appear to carry out all war time radio instructions for merchant vessels.

5. Speed in War Zone. The average speed of the vessel in the war zone was approximately 10 knots (including zig-zag).

10. Light in War Zone. A total blackout was maintained aboard at all times. No running lights were shown by direction of the Royal Naval Command for the nights while remaining along the African coast, after departure from Cape Town.

11. Fog Signals in War Zone. No fog signals were employed in the war zone.

12. Light in War Zone. The vessel zig-zagged in accordance with instructions. Zig-zag commenced when danger increased 48 hours after departure from Trinidad and was maintained during all daylight and moonlight hours. The ship did not zig-zag, in accordance with Royal Naval instructions, after departure from Cape Town until it reached 19 degrees east, and did not zig-zag during the hours of darkness when