

CONFIDENTIAL

AUGUST , 23, 1944.

(5)

FROM: LT. (JG) MERLE J. GRAHAM, USNR.
COMMANDING OFFICER, NAVAL ARMED GUARD,
(C/O ARMED GUARD CENTER, S. BROOKLYN, N.Y.)
S.S. ABEL STEARNS, GROSS TONS 7176

9 02286

TO: THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

VIA: THE NAVAL PORT OFFICER, NAPLES, ITALY.

SUBJECT: VOYAGE REPORT OF S.S. ABEL STEARNS FROM NAPLES, ITALY
TO AMPHIBIOUS OPERATION GULF ST. TROPEZ, SOUTHERN FRANCE.
AND RETURN.

REFERENCE: (a) GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMANDING OFFICERS OF NAVAL
ARMED GUARDS ON MERCHANT SHIPS, PARAG. 4301 THRU 4308.

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFERENCE (a) THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS
SUBMITTED.

(A) TYPE OF VESSEL: FREIGHTER (LIBERTY)
TYPE OF CARGO: AMMUNITION, ARMY GENERAL, AND ARMY PERSONNEL.
OWNER OF VESSEL: U.S. WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION
CHARTERED TO: A.H. BULL & CO., OPERATORS

(B) PORT OF DEPARTURE: NAPLES, ITALY.
DATE: AUGUST 13, 1944.
CONVOYED.
SPEED (AVERAGE) 9 KNOTS
ARRIVED GULF ST. TROPEZ, FRANCE, AUGUST 15, 1944.
DEPARTED GULF ST. TROPEZ, FRANCE, AUGUST 21, 1944.
CONVOYED.
SPEED (AVERAGE) 9 KNOTS.
ARRIVED NAPLES, ITALY, AUGUST 23, 1944.

NUMBER OF SHIPS IN CONVOY: OUT OF NAPLES 51
OUT OF ST. TROPEZ 14

NUMBER OF ESCORTS: OUT OF NAPLES 7
OUT OF ST. TROPEZ 5

INTERMITTENT AIR COVERAGE DURING THE ENTIRE VOYAGE.

ATN :
TO :
FROM :

APD

LEG
L-4 W

copy # 2 in folder 0223

X
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DATE:
CLASSIFICATION

(C) AT APPROXIMATELY 1800 AUGUST 15, THIS VESSEL MOVED TO BEHIND A SCREEN OF BATTLE SHIPS, CRUISERS, AND DESTROYERS WAITING FOR INSTRUCTIONS TO PROCEED THE REMAINING FIVE MILES TO ANCHORAGE. THE NAVY SHIPS MAINTAINED A CONTINUOUS BOMBARDMENT OF INLAND SHORE INSTALLATIONS. AT 2000 AN LCI CAME ALONG SIDE WITH ORDERS TO PROCEED INDEPENDENTLY TO ANCHORAGE IN PAMPELONNE BAY. AT 2100 WHEN STILL ABOUT ONE MILE FROM THE ANCHORAGE NAVY SHIPS ASTERN OPENED HEAVY AA BARRAGE. GENERAL ALARM WAS SOUNDED AS A WARNING TO MERCHANT AND ARMY PERSONNEL, THE ARMED GUARD CREW BEING ALREADY AT GENERAL QUARTERS. AGCO OBSERVED PLANE APPROACHING FROM THE STARBOARD QUARTER AT APPROXIMATELY 3000 FEET. FIRE WAS OPENED BY THE FORWARD 3/50 USING 1.8 FUSE AND WAS FOLLOWED BY THE 20MM ORLIKONS AS PLANE TRAVERSED THE SHIP. SEVERAL BOMBS WERE DROPPED, ONE FALLING IN THE WATER ABOUT 100 YARDS FROM THE STARBOARD BOW. FRAGMENTIS FROM THIS BOMB AS WELL AS FROM A SPENT 20MM SHELL WHICH FELL ON THE PORT SIDE OF THE MAIN DECK BETWEEN #1 AND #2 HATCHES WOUNDED THE FOLLOWING TWELVE SOLDIERS.

File 7746-1

Army Personnel

AMBES, JOSEPH L.	TEC. 4	35491598
JONES, ALLEN B.	TEC. 5	38208198
MILLER, FOREST	SGT.	35471932
RYAN, JAMES M.	PFC.	35509728
ZARR, THOMAS	TEC. 5	36444704
BOENIGEN, PAUL A.	PFC.	32389092
BRYANT, AMOS L.	TEC. 5	34605630
DUNSHEE, BERNARD L.	PVT.	38006464
LOGESON, JAMES G.	TEC. 4	36207419
WEISER, PAUL H.	TEC. 5	33411173
WILSON, JACK H.	PFC.	20836683
MOORE, STANLEY	PVT.	18202298

ALL CASUALTIES WERE TREATED BY DRS. BOSWORTH AND ANDERSON USMC. NONE OF THESE MEN WERE FATALLY INJURED BUT ALL WERE EVACUATED BY HOSPITAL SHIP THE FOLLOWING DAY. ALL MEMBERS OF THE ARMED GUARD CREW PERFORMED THEIR DUTIES WITH COOLNESS AND EFFICIENCY. THE 3/50 GUN CREW PERFORMED EXCEPTIONALLY WELL, FIRING FOURTEEN ROUNDS WITH GREAT RAPIDITY SCORING SEVERAL CLOSE BURSTS. IT WAS THE OPINION OF SEVERAL OF THE ARMY OFFICERS OBSERVING THE ACTION THAT THE PLANE WAS TRAILING SMOKE AS IT PASSED FROM SIGHT BUT THE UNCERTAIN LIGHT MADE OBSERVATION DIFFICULT THE SAME LIGHTING CONDITION MADE POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLANE QUESTIONABLE BUT IT WAS BELIEVED TO BE A FW 200 K. THE 20MM FIRED 423 ROUNDS. THREE JAMS OCCURED WHICH WERE QUICKLY CLEARED AND THE GUNS RETURNED TO ACTION. GENERAL QUARTERS SECURED AT 2115 AND CONDITION TWO SET .

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ON AUGUST 16, AT 2100 WHILE ANCHORED OFF DELTA BEACH NEAR THE GULF OF ST. TROPEZ, THREE ENEMY PLANES PASSED OVER ANCHORAGE. ALL SHIPS OPENED FIRE WITH ALL GUNS. NINE ROUNDS WERE FIRED FROM 3/50 AND SEVERAL MAGAZINES FROM 20MM WITHOUT ANY HITS BEING REGISTERED BY THIS OR ANY OTHER SHIP.

File
AUGUST 18, AT 2055 AN ENEMY PLANE WAS OBSERVED FLYING INLAND SOUTHEAST SKIRTING THE DELTA BEACH ANCHORAGE. SHORE BATTERIES AND MANY SHIPS OPENED FIRE. THIS VESSEL DID NOT FIRE AS PLANE WAS CLEARLY OUT OF EFFECTIVE RANGE. AT 2115 ALL SHIPS AND SHORE BATTERIES OPENED FIRE AT TWO JU88s FLYING SOUTHWEST ACROSS THE ANCHORAGE. THIS VESSEL FIRED SEVEN ROUNDS FROM 3/50 WITH ~~3.4~~ FUSE AND SEVERAL BURSTS FROM BRIDGE 20MM. OBSERVERS REPORTED SEEING BOMBS LANDING AT A CONSIDERABLE *Distance* FROM THIS SHIP BUT NEITHER THE AGCO NOR ANY MEMBER OF THE ARMED GUARD CREW OBSERVED ANY BOMBING. NO HITS WERE MADE ON EITHER OF THE PLANES.

AUGUST 20, AT 2100 AN ENEMY PLANE FLEW OVER THE ANCHORAGE. SHORE BATTERIES AND SEVERAL SHIPS OPENED FIRE. THIS VESSEL DID NOT FIRE AS SMOKE SCREEN MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SEE TARGET UNTIL IT WAS OUT OF RANGE. NO BOMBING WAS OBSERVED.

File
ON AUGUST 21, WHILE LYING FIVE MILES OFF CAPE CAMORRAT WAITING FOR RETURN CONVOY TO FORM THE BOW LOCKOUT REPORTED AT 2016 TWO PLANES APPROACHING FROM THE EAST DEAD AHEAD OF THIS VESSEL. AGCO OBSERVED PLANES WHICH APPEARED TO BE JU88s FLYING AT ABOUT 3000 FT. THE LEADING ESCORT OPENED FIRE AS THE PLANES PASSED ABEAM CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY THE FORWARD 3/50. THE FIRST ROUND FIRED WITH A 3.4 FUSE BURST DIRECTLY UNDER THE FIRST PLANE LOOKING LIKE A SURE HIT. PLANE BANKED SHARPLY TO THE LEFT AND MADE OFF AT RIGHT ANGLES TO ITS ORIGINAL COURSE. EIGHT MORE ROUNDS WERE FIRED IN RAPID SUCCESSION BUT ALL WERE WIDE OF THE MARK. THE SECOND PLANE CONTINUED ON COURSE AND WAS LAST OBSERVED PASSING INLAND THRU A HEAVY BARRAGE FROM SHORE BATTERIES AND SHIPS ANCHORED IN THE HARBOR. THIS VESSEL'S #1 AND #7 20MM FIRED 90 ROUNDS AS PLANE PASSED ABEAM BUT RANGE WAS TOO GREAT FOR EFFECTIVE 20MM FIRE. GENERAL QUARTERS SECURED AT 2015.

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- THE COPY OF THIS REPORT IS TO BE
ON VESSEL TV. VS 51
- (D) EXCEPT FOR THE ACTION DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (C) THE VOYAGE WAS ROUTINE THROUGHOUT. THIS VESSEL MADE SMOKE WHEN ORDERED AND WAS NOT REQUIRED TO SHOW ANY SPECIAL LIGHTS OR TO ZIG ZAG.
 - (E) THE CARGO WAS VERY EFFICIENTLY HANDLED BY SOLDIERS OF THE 396TH PORT BATTALION UNDER THE COMMAND OF LT. JOHN BAUR.
 - (F) THE MERCHANT RADIO OPERATORS APPEARED TO CARRY OUT WARTIME RADIO INSTRUCTIONS PARTICULAR IN REGARD TO KEEPING INTERCEPTED MESSAGES CONFIDENTIAL.
 - (G) THERE ARE NO DEFECTS IN ARMAMENT OR EQUIPMENT REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.
 - (H) THE MASTER AND OFFICERS OF THE SHIP WERE DILIGENT ABOUT CARRYING OUT " WARTIME INSTRUCTIONS FOR U.S. MERCHANT SHIPS".
 - (I) *Before
not approved
not true
etc* IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT ALL MERCHANT SHIPS BE EQUIPED WITH DUAL PURPOSE GUNS BOTH FORE AND AFT. THE IDEAL GUN FOR THIS PURPOSE IS THE BOFORS 40MM RATHER THAN EITHER THE 3/50 OR 5/38 AS THESE GUNS ARE NOT AS WELL ADAPTED TO LOCAL CONTROL.
 - (J) NO IMPROPER PROCEDURE ON THE PART OF FRIENDLY AIRCRAFT APPROACHING THIS VESSEL WAS NOTED.
 - (K) DUE TO THE NATURE OF THIS OPERATION INSTRUCTION CLASSES WERE DISPENSED WITH DURING THIS VOYAGE AS MEN WERE ALERT CONTINUOUSLY ON THE ALERT

Merle James Graham
MERLE JAMES GRAHAM,
LT. (JG) D-115) USNR.
ARMED GUARD COMMANDER