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UNITED STATES FLEET

A9-10
Serial C-0781

UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCES IN EUROPE
PORT OFFICE, BRISTOL CHANNEL AREA

Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
FLEET MAINTENANCE
DEC 28 1943
RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT

15 December 1943

U.S. CONFIDENTIAL - BRITISH CONFIDENTIAL

FIRST ENDORSEMENT

From: The U.S. Naval Port Officer,
Bristol Channel Area, Cardiff, Wales.
To : The Chief of Naval Operations.
Via : The Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe.
Subject: Report of Voyage, S.S. ABEL STEARNS.

1. Forwarded.

2. With reference to paragraph (I), this office is merely a transmitting agency for Armed Guard circulars and the Armed Guard Officer's attention has been directed to re-submit the recommendations outlined in paragraph (G) and (I) in his home-bound voyage report in order that they will be brought to the attention of the Port Director upon the ship's arrival in the United States.

Enoch D. Chase

ENOCH D. CHASE
By direction.

7176
EJ

End--2

UNITED STATES FLEET
U.S. NAVAL FORCES IN EUROPE
20 GROSVENOR SQUARE
LONDON, W.1.

Serial 34016

CONFIDENTIAL

DEC 20 1943

From: Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe.
To : Chief of Naval Operations.

RECEIVED SCIFILES
1. Forwarded.
Room 2035

27 DEC 1943

Op File No. 23 / Abel Stearns
Doc. No.
Copy No. of
27157

L. W. Cantrell
L. W. CANTRELL,
By direction.

*See g + e cc
Lynn*

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DECEMBER 11, 1943

FROM: ENSIGN EDWIN ANTHONY GEHRING, U.S.N.R.,
COMMANDING OFFICER, NAVAL ARMED GUARD,
(C/O ARMED GUARD CENTER, BROOKLYN, N.Y.)
S.S. ABEL STEARNS, GROSS TONS 7176

TO: THE ~~VISE~~ CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS.

VIA: 1) U.S. NAVAL PORT OFFICER,
BRISTOL CHANNEL AREA, ENGLAND
2) THE COMMANDER OF U.S. NAVAL FORCES
IN EUROPE

SUBJECT: REPORT OF VOYAGE OF S.S. ABEL STEARNS
FROM BOSTON, MASS. TO NEWPORT, ENGLAND,
VIA HALIFAX, N.S.

REFERENCE: (A) GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMANDING OFFICERS
OF NAVAL ARMED GUARDS ON MERCHANT SHIPS, 1943
EDITION, PARAGRAPH 4301.

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

(A) TYPE OF VESSEL: FREIGHTER (LIBERTY)
TYPE OF CARGO: GENERAL
OWNER OF VESSEL: U.S. WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION
CHARTERED TO: ARMY TRANSPORT SERVICE

(B) PORT OF DEPARTURE: BOSTON, MASS.
DATE: NOVEMBER 24, 1943

CONVOYED

SPEED (AVERAGE): 7 1/2 KNOTS

NUMBER OF SHIPS IN ESCORT: 4 SURFACE VESSELS

1 LIGHTER THAN AIR

ARRIVED AT HALIFAX, N.S. NOVEMBER 26, 1943

LEFT HALIFAX, N.S. NOVEMBER 28, 1943

CONVOYED

SPEED (AVERAGE): 10 1/2 KNOTS

NUMBER OF SHIPS IN CONVOY: OUT OF HALIFAX - 22

OUT OF N.Y. - - - 34

TOTAL - - - - - 56

NUMBER OF ESCORT VESSELS: OUT OF HALIFAX - 4

ENTIRE CONVOY: MOST

COUNTED AT ANY TIME - 9 (INCLUDING AIRCRAFT
CARRIER); PATROL AIRCRAFT WERE SEEN OFF THE CANA-
DIAN AND BRITISH COASTS.

PORT OF ARRIVAL: NEWPORT, ENGLAND

DATE OF ARRIVAL: DECEMBER 11, 1943

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: NND 750161

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(C) THIS VESSEL HAD NO CONTACT NOR ACTION WITH THE ENEMY.

(D) THE VOYAGE WAS ROUTINE WITH THE FOLLOWING EXCEPTIONS:

1) ABOUT 0900 NOVEMBER 30, 1943 ENCOUNTERED STORM AND HEAVY SEA WHICH CONTINUED UNTIL THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 2, 1943. DURING THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER 1-2 VESSEL BECAME SEPARATED FROM CONVOY AND RAN ALONE UNTIL ABOUT 1400 DECEMBER 2, AT WHICH TIME VESSEL MET APPARENTLY DISABLED UNITED STATES LIBERTY SHIP (UNIDENTIFIED) WITH BRITISH CORVETTE NUMBER K330 STANDING BY. K330 GAVE THIS VESSEL COURSE TO JOIN CONVOY AND ADVISED THAT SHE WOULD OVERTAKE US. ABOUT TWO HOURS LATER SHE DID OVERTAKE THIS VESSEL, LEAVING AFORESAID LIBERTY SHIP, AND ESCORTED THIS VESSEL UNTIL SHE REJOINED THE MAIN CONVOY AT ABOUT 1500, DECEMBER 3. POSITION OF LIBERTY SHIP WAS 45 DEGREES 24 MINUTES NORTH, 48 DEGREES 40 MINUTES WEST.

2) ABOUT 0715 DECEMBER 2 CAPTAIN SIGHTED WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS A PERISCOPE ONE HALF MILE OFF AT ABOUT 45 DEGREES RELATIVE. THE GENERAL ALARM WAS SOUNDED; BATTLE STATIONS WERE IMMEDIATELY MANNED. THERE WAS NO FURTHER DEVELOPMENT. THIS VESSEL'S POSITION AT THE TIME OF THE INCIDENT WAS 44 DEGREES 4 MINUTES NORTH, 48 DEGREES 50 MINUTES WEST.

(E) THIS VESSEL WAS NOT DELAYED IN PORTS FOR ANY REASON.

(F) THE COMMERCIAL RADIO OPERATOR APPEARED TO CARRY OUT WARTIME RADIO INSTRUCTIONS PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO KEEPING INTERCEPTED MESSAGES CONFIDENTIAL.

(G) NO DEFECTS OR DEFICIENCIES IN LOCATION OR ARRANGEMENTS OF BATTERY OR IN EQUIPMENT AS REGARDS MATERIAL OR OPERATION IS NOTED. HOWEVER--

1) THE ARMED GUARD COMMANDER'S CABIN IS ENTIRELY TOO SMALL FOR LIVING QUARTERS AS WELL AS THE CONDUCT OF THE BUSINESS WHICH A CREW OF 27 MEN ENTAILS. HIS CABIN IS AS SMALL AS THE SMALLEST CABIN OCCUPIED BY A LICENSED MERCHANT OFFICER ABOARD.

2) THE ARMED GUARD CREW'S QUARTERS AND LOCKERS ARE ESPECIALLY CROWDED AS APPEARS FROM THE COMPARISON WITH MERCHANT PERSONNEL FACILITIES BELOW:

SPACE IN LIVING QUARTERS PER MAN:

MERCHANT---- - - - -225 CUBIC FEET

ARMED GUARD- - - - -133 CUBIC FEET

LOCKER SPACE PER MAN:

MERCHANT- - - - - 13.6 CUBIC FEET

ARMED GUARD- - - - - 6.4 CUBIC FEET

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(H) THE MASTER AND OFFICERS OF THE SHIP WERE DILIGENT ABOUT CARRYING OUT "WARTIME INSTRUCTIONS FOR U.S. MERCHANT VESSELS".

(I) SINCE THE STANDARD HANDBOOKS FOR ARMED GUARD COMMANDERS ARE A) ORDNANCE AND GUNNERY INSTRUCTIONS FOR NAVAL ARMED GUARDS ON MERCHANT SHIPS, AND B) GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMANDING OFFICERS OF NAVAL ARMED GUARDS ON MERCHANT SHIPS; AND SINCE INNUMERABLE CIRCULAR LETTERS, INSTRUCTIONS, ORDERS, ETC. ARE ISSUED TO ARMED GUARD COMMANDERS, MANY OF WHICH CONTAIN NO REFERENCE TO A) OR B) BUT WHICH AFFECT PARTS OF A) AND B) AND ARE REFERRABLE TO SAME EVEN IF REMOTELY, - - IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE PORT DIRECTORS AND ARMED GUARD CENTERS, THROUGH WHOM THESE LETTERS, ETC. PASS TO ARMED GUARD COMMANDERS AND WHO ORIGINATE MANY OF THEM, MAKE NOTE ON SAID LETTERS, ETC. SOME REFERENCE TO PARTS OF A) OR B); THOSE IRREFERABLE TO SAME MAY BE MARKED "MISC.". THE INDIVIDUAL ARMED GUARD COMMANDERS BY LOOSE-LEAF METHODS THEN COULD KEEP WELL-ORGANIZED, UNIFORM, UP-TO-DATE FILES ON ALL CHANGES AND ADDENDA ISSUED BETWEEN SUCCESSIVE EDITIONS OF A) AND B). IF THIS RECOMMENDATION WERE FOLLOWED, THE USE OF REGULAR NAVY SIZE STATIONERY ONLY WOULD BE A CONVENIENCE. IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE INDIVIDUAL ARMED GUARD COMMANDERS BE PERMITTED TO CARRY THESE SUPPLEMENTS TO A) AND B) FROM SHIP TO SHIP AS ASSIGNED, THUS AVOIDING POSSIBLE LAXITY ON THE PART OF A PREDECESSOR.

(J) NO IMPROPER PROCEDURE ON THE PART OF FRIENDLY AIRCRAFT APPROACHING THIS VESSEL WAS NOTED.

Edwin A. Gehring
EDWIN A. GEHRING,
ENSIGN, U.S.N.R.,
ARMED GUARD COMMANDER