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FROM: Officer-in-Charge, Armed Guard Unit aboard SS Abiel Foster.

TO: Chief of Naval Operations

VIA: (1) U.S. Naval Port Office, Southampton.

7 03136

(2) The Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe.

Subject: (A) Report of Turco Voyage of SS Abiel Foster (GB-Utah and return-3rd voyage)

Reference: (A) General Instructions for Commanding Officers of Naval Armed Guards on Merchant Ships. 1943 Par. 4301.

(1) IN accordance with reference A, the following report is respectfully submitted.

(a) Name: SS Abiel Foster--Type: Liberty--Gross Tonnage: 7176--Type of Cargo: Army equipment and personal--Owner: W.S.A.--Operated by: Matson Navigation Lines.

(b) Port of DEparture: Southampton, England

Time: June 20, 1944 at 0400 to anchorage; at anchor Southampton Anchorage until 0850, June 26, 1944, at which time departed for destination.

(All times used herein are double British Summer Time.)

Convoy: Yes--No. of ships: 11 Liberties and numerous small craft.

Escorts: 1 to 3 observed at all times--Speed of Convoy: Course and Speed altered by Commodore, frequently, average 8 knots. (9 hrs. passage) (2 hrs. maneuvering.)

Port of Arrival: Utah Beach (Changed, original destination was Omaha)

Time: June 26, 1944, at 1924.

(c) Contacts and action with enemy (Action experienced and observed.)

At anchor, Southampton, June 25, 1140-Flying bomb passed over ship-explosion heard 3 minutes later off Stb. beam. 1240- Flying bomb exploded 1 mile off Port Qtr. (Ship in vicinity blinked it had been missed by 100 yards.) Did not open fire.

At anchor, Utah Beach, June 27, 1944-0200-Red Flashing Air Raid Warning-Port Beam. No planes overhead.

June 28, 1944, 0115-0215--Red Flashing Air Raid Warning. Flares and Gun-fire on all quarters. at 5 miles. Did not open fire.

With semi-bright moonlight, very little haze, at Outgoing Convoy anchorage, between Utah and Omaha areas:

1140- Yellow Air Raid Warning on 109 Radio; No shore or ship air raid warnings were visible or heard at any time while in this area.

(All warnings, hereinafter set out are radio) (3400KCs). (Prearranged, "Blowlamp" and "Letterbox" were never used.)

June 29-0300-Warning (no color mentioned) unidentified aircraft-0515W, low.) 0040-unidentified aircraft passed over ship at 1900 ft. Did not open fire (nor did other ships or shore batteries.)

0043-White warning.

0045-Enemy aircraft dived on this ship, ending dive at 2500 ft.-dropped two bombs simultaneously which fell approximately 10 to 20 yds. from Stb. beam and bow, respectively. (Apparently bombs were delayed action as they exploded under water with the intensity of 250 lbs. of explosive each and were felt throughout the ship, particularly in engine room; geysers of water from explosions came on deck.) The hazard to this ship was recognized too late to open fire.

0135-White warning-0620 (Oboe-6-2-Zero, "Exact Wording") (If White is all clear, does this warning mean all clear in that direction?)

0210-Red warning-0230-unidentified aircraft, West, low (no planes overhead)

0500-Secure from alert.

Air Attack

X

Enemy action observed: Underway to Southampton: June 29, 1944, 1600-observed 3 Liberty Ships from France bound convoy at undetermined and respectively different distances North of Bouy J. to have had sterns blown off by enemy mines.

Opinion: propeller set up sympathetic vibration to set off mines-Reports on beachheads point out a new type of enemy mine which up to date cannot be swept-is termed type G.) Destroyers and small craft were standing off taking casualties. From our position one ship only could be identified as MT 271.

0830

COMMENTS

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- (1) Music on 3400KCs-QRM and QRN frequent to a great degree.
- (2) Radio does not suffice for opening and ceasing fire, inasmuch as warning covers a large general area and does not provide for any particular group of ships which might be undergoing enemy attack while "all clear" is being given for general area. (This ship was dice bombed two minutes after a Radio White all clear warning was received.)
- (3) Destroyers and shore batteries allowed plane attacking this ship to pass over without opening fire. The undersigned thus assumed that the plane was friendly craft. In addition hereto, a searchlight on the beach remained on constantly throughout the 5 hour period of the alert which Royal Navy Recognition men on board reported to be and indication that friendly craft were in the air.
- (4) The language used in Radio warnings on 3400KCs is not consistent, being true bearings one time and general direction, such as "Southwest" at another time. The use of the word, White and the adding of the word, Warning, moreover, is perplexing. As a result of this dilemma, the undersigned based his decision to open fire on the average interpretation of word White, in such cases and this ship narrowly averted disaster.

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09-30 1940

Respectfully submitted,

L. T. Griffith

Lt.(JG) L. T. Griffith, USNR
Armed Guard Commander,
SS Abiel Foster (MT 219)