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OFFICE OF PORT DIRECTOR, N. T. S.

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Room 2055

MAY 29 1943

ROUTE TO:-

1st. Endorsement

to CO Armed Guard Unit
S/S ABIGAIL ADAMS ltr of
May 12, 1943

Op File No. (SC).....

Doc. No.....

Copy No..... of.....

PRN.....

From:

To:

Port Director (NTS), Twelfth Naval District.
The Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

Subject:

Armed Guard Unit S/S ABIGAIL ADAMS - Voyage
Report of.

MAY 1 1943

Forwarded.

2. Regarding defects listed in paragraph (G) of the subject report: The binoculars aboard the S/S ABIGAIL ADAMS are the standard issue for Armed Guard crews aboard merchant vessels and therefore will not be replaced by a stronger type.

3. This office has recommended that pipe guides be installed on the 3"/50 caliber gun to allow greatest arc of fire. When subject vessel is available for repairs, pipe guides will be installed. At this time, additional drainage holes will be cut in the 3"/50 gun tub and 20mm barrel coolers and spare barrel holders will be installed. A boreage and lapping-out head for the 3"/50 caliber gun and barrel removing tools for 20mm guns will be supplied to the S/S ABIGAIL ADAMS when they become available.

4. A general alarm bell is being installed in the midship quarters. This office has been informed that additional general alarm bells will not be installed on the top-side fore and aft. The reinforcement of 20mm gun tubs with an asphalt composition is not considered a necessity. The gun crew aboard the subject vessel is the standard allotment according to the armament aboard.

(see pages 36) L & C

W. F. LAFFENZ
LWR
LRR

Captain, U.S.N. (Ret.)
Assistant Port Director (NTS)

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ARMED GUARD UNIT
S.S. ABIGAIL ADAMS
ARMED GUARD CENTER (PACIFIC)
Treasure Island
San Francisco, California

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May 12, 1943

From: Commanding Officer, Armed Guard Unit
S.S. Abigail Adams.

To: The Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department,
Washington, D. C.

Via: The Port Director, San Francisco, California.

Subject: Report of voyage of S.S. Abigail Adams.

Reference: (a) General Instructions for Commanding Officers of
Naval Armed Guards Aboard Merchant Vessels, para-
graph 436, sub-paragraphs (a) through (j), page 74.

1. In accordance with Reference (a), the following information
is submitted:

A. Name of vessel: S.S. Abigail Adams.

Type of vessel: "Liberty" EC2 Freighter.

Owner of vessel: U.S.A., represented by the War Shipping Administration.

Gross tons: 7,176. Cargo: Sugar.

Charter: De La Rama Steamship Company, Inc.

B. Port of departure: Honolulu, T. H. Time and date of departure: 1300, May 1, 1943. Sailed in convoy or singly: In convoy.
Number of ships in convoy: 10. Number of escort vessels: 1. Number of escorting aircraft: 2 (in immediate Oahu area only). Speed of convoy: 9 knots. Port of arrival: San Francisco, California. Time and date of arrival at San Francisco, California: 1900, May 12, 1943.

C. Detailed account of contact with enemy: No contact.

D. General resume of voyage: The eight vessels sailing from Honolulu and Pearl Harbor formed a line ahead outside of Honolulu harbor, and remained so until after target practice was completed at 1630. Between 1500 and 1530, each vessel fired five rounds from its largest gun at a floating target (originally towed, but came adrift), using ammunition supplied for the purpose by Naval Ammunition Depot, Pearl Harbor, T. H. Between 1530 and 1630 three planes cruised back and forth above the convoy towing target sleeves for machine gun target practice. Using only the 20 MM machine guns mounted amidships in the bow and on the starboard side (guns Nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9), this vessel fired 900 rounds, each member of the Armed Guard crew, including communications liason group, firing a full magazine of 60 rounds. Personnel casualties: None. Materiel casualties: One misfire, MG No. 3. Cause: Flat pointed striker. One misfire, MG No. 9. Cause: Broken hammer. May 3, the convoy was joined by the two vessels from Hilo, T. H.

At 0610, May 4, a large plane crossed between clouds overhead, course about 250° true, altitude about 7,000 feet, speed approximately 200 knots.

At 0300, May 7, a large plane, burning blue, white, and red running lights, passed the convoy, high, on course of approximately 241° true.

At 0315, May 7, a flashing white light was sighted for about four seconds, approximately 3,000 yards distant, three points abaft port beam. Message, if any, not intelligible.

At 1120, May 9, sighted an unidentified ship on bearing 030° true, distant about 11 miles, on course of approximately 150° true. Appeared to be Norwegian type killing whaler, with high superstructure at bow. Destroy-

er escort steamed out to investigate, exchanged signals with strange vessel by flashing lights, and returned. Stranger apparently slowed, and changed course to convoy course, and was left astern, disappearing below the horizon on bearing 300° true at 1300.

At 2315, May 9, a strange vessel, apparently a converted yacht, with running, range, and masthead lights burning, passed through the convoy, on opposite course.

Speed of vessel: 4 to 9.7 knots; Average speed: knots.
Lights shown: None. Fog signals used: None. No zig-zag instructed; none performed.

E. Written or radio orders received by vessel from foreign government officials: None.

F. Commercial radio operator appeared to carry out war time radio instructions for merchant vessels, - with regard to keeping intercepted messages confidential, and otherwise.

G. Defects or deficiencies in location or arrangements of battery: None. In equipment as regards materiel: Should have a "long glass" (spy glass) for communications liason group, as 6 x 30 binoculars are inadequate for reading distant flag hoists and flashing light signals. 3-inch 50 Cal. gun should be equipped with a pipe stop for train and elevation, to prevent gun bearing on superstructure of vessel. Should have bore gage and lapping out head for 3-inch 50 Cal. gun. Turret "tub" for No. 10 (3-inch 50 Cal.) gun holds water, - needs additional drains. Turret "tubs" for 20 MM machine guns Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, should be equipped with barrel cooling "pots" as well as spare barrel storage pots. Should have five additional metal barrel removing tools for 20 MM guns. Protective "splinter" sides

of turret "tubs" for 20 MM machine guns Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7, and for 3 inch 50 Cal. gun should be reinforced with "asphalt" composition, as are those for 20 MM machine guns Nos. 4, 5, 8 and 9. Additional general alarm bells should be installed forward and aft (topside), as general alarm bells cannot be heard outside of deck houses. General alarm bells should be installed in quarters of Armed Guard Unit members amidships, as general alarm bells in amidships passageways are not sufficiently audible in such quarters. In equipment as regards personnel: Naval personnel insufficient to maintain fully efficient lookout watches on 24-hour basis, or effectively to man armament now installed on board (1 officer, 2 signalmen - communications liason group -, 1 GM 3/c, 11 S 1/c, 1 S 2/c; 1 3-inch 50 Cal. gun, 9 20 MM machine guns).

H. Master and officers of ship did carry out "INSTRUCTIONS FOR NAVAL TRANSPORTATION AND U.S. MERCHANT VESSELS IN TIME OF WAR". Master and ship's officers are very cooperative. Inter-relations are cordial.

I. Recommendations tending to the improvement or greater efficiency of this service: 1. Increased naval personnel for gun crews. 2. More thorough naval indoctrination of enlisted naval personnel. 3. More thorough information of masters with regard to defensive procedure, particularly with respect to ship's company supplementing gun crews at definitely assigned stations.

Criticisms and suggestions relating to BAMS radio operations:

It is true of this ship, and obviously of other merchant ships, that the commercial radio transmitter is preset to channels of 500 kc, 454 kc, 400 kc, 375 kc, and 355 kc. It is noted that U.S. Navy radio stations call merchant ships on 500 kc and instruct them to shift to and respond on frequency of

468 kc, or some other frequency than those pre-set on the ship's transmitter. The result is that either mutual contact is not established, or is substantially delayed while the ship's radio operator goes into the back of his transmitter and sets it on the specified frequency or while contact on 500 kc is re-established for the purpose of agreeing on one of the pre-set frequencies - causing unnecessary transmission by ship's radio, and unnecessary traffic on the frequencies involved.

At least one station sends entire long messages on the 500 kc watch band, not shifting to a "working frequency", but obstructing the distress-signal frequency with messages of little or no apparent urgency.

It is also submitted that the unnecessary daily listening, copying, and de-coding occasioned by the following practices (a) destroys existing respect for the BAMS safety system, and (b) takes much of the time of the ship's commercial radio operator, and Naval communications officer, which would be better spent, respectively, on an alert 500 kc watch, and other Naval communications and/or Armed Guard duties:

1. Some messages are addressed "to all areas"; which, upon decoding, are found to apply only to three or four areas, - e.g. a recent message of 177 code groups sent by the British Admiralty.

2. Some messages have no direct relation to safety of shipping, - e.g. a recent one of 127 code groups, sent by the British Admiralty, regarding a thief wanted by Scotland Yard.

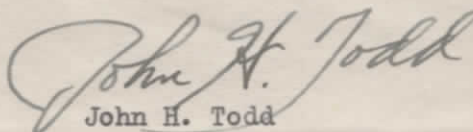
3. Many messages are unnecessarily verbose, some containing information wholly immaterial to the purpose of the message, - e.g. a recent message reporting the sighting of an enemy submarine, which rambled on to state that the submarine had been sighted by an Army pilot, that the pilot

"was actually flying at the time", and that the message had been forwarded from another specified station.

4. Some Navy stations sending calls, and spot BAMS broadcasts on 500 kc do not respect regular BAMS schedules. e.g., one station begins broadcasting on 500 kc just before a scheduled BAMS broadcast, making it impossible for a one-man ship's radio station to follow both.

5. Some Navy stations begin regularly scheduled BAMS broadcasts earlier than the scheduled time, causing ships' operators to miss the list of traffic on hand, even though they tune in on time.

6. In the list of traffic on hand preceding BAMS broadcasts, sometimes the call sign of a particular ship to which a message is addressed is included, - and sometimes it is not. This makes it necessary for all operators to continue copying until the call sign is revealed in the preamble to the actual message. In one case, it was necessary to listen for two hours before the message was identified.


John H. Todd

Liaut. (j.g.), D-V(S), U.S.N.R.