

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

601 - CONFIDENTIAL

18 September, 1942

I.O.F.

OFFICE, DISTRICT COAST GUARD  
OFFICER  
EIGHTH NAVAL DISTRICT

1942 SEP 21 PM 12 18

From: District Coast Guard Officer, Eighth Naval District.  
To : Commandant.

Subject: Tanker "AMATLAN"; torpedoing and sinking of.

Enclosure: (A) Form NNI-142, Report of Enemy Attack on Merchant  
Ships.  
(B) Form NNI-142-X.

1. Enclosures (A) and (B) are forwarded herewith  
for the information of Headquarters.

*N. W. Nelson*  
N. W. NELSON,  
By direction.

LMO

ENCLOSURE (A)



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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

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Summary of Statements by Survivors Boat 18 September, 1942. Mexican  
Tanker taken at 1000R 8 September 1942 at the Port Isabel Coast  
OFFICE, DISTRICT COAST GUARD Station, Port Isabel, Texas.

OFFICER

EIGHTH NAVAL DISTRICT - - - - -

1. The "AMATLAN" was torpedoed without warning first at 2230R, 4 September 1942 at a position 15 miles off shore from Punta Jernand 40 miles off shore from Port Isabel, same date. From District Coast Guard Officer, Eighth Naval District. To same position at 2250R, same date, same position. Ship was en route from Galveston, Texas to Tampico, Mexico in water ballast. Subject: Tanker "AMATLAN"; torpedoing and sinking of. last unknown, compartments or tanks unknown; draft of ship forward and aft unknown.

Enclosure: (A) Form NNI-142, Report of Enemy Attack on Merchant

2. The ship of the tanker was unknown; speed believed to be about 8 knots. (B) Form NNI-142-X. not zig-zagging unknown as survivors interviewed were asleep at the time of attack. Len on watch and location of look-outs unknown.

1. Enclosures (A) and (B) are forwarded herewith the sea calm; for the information of Headquarters. ships in sight; there was a light breeze blowing.

3. The first torpedo struck the ship from the starboard side at the stern destroying propeller and steering gear; second torpedo struck forward of the first near the engine room; third torpedo struck midships likewise from the starboard side and blew out the boilers. The torpedoes were spaced about ten minutes apart.

4. After the first torpedo struck N. W. NELSON, the ship was immediately abandoned. One lifeboat was by direction. The five survivors on the life raft were rescued by the fishing schooner WINDY at 0600R 7 September 1942, at 24 degrees 10 minutes north 17 miles off shore and were landed at the Coast Guard Life Saving Station at Port Isabel, Texas 0730R 8 September 1942. None were injured. Movements of the three lifeboats is still unknown.

5. Disposition of the confidential and secret codes unknown but believed to have sunk with ship which was last observed sinking at 0800R 5 September 1942.

6. The survivors reported sighting a blurred object which they took to be a submarine at 2300R 4 September 1942 but were rather doubtful and could not positively identify it as a submarine. This was following third torpedo hit.

7. The "AMATLAN" was owned by the Petroles Mexicanos of Mexico captained by Gonzalo Montalva SALAZAR and carried a crew of 34, all citizens of Mexico. The five survivors who landed at Port Isabel, Texas stated it was likely that some crew members lost their lives but none were seen killed and the identity of those who left the ship in the three lifeboats is unknown.

8. Subject ship was unarmed and though equipped with radio, no message was sent and no message received. Survivors interviewed were comparatively new aboard subject ship and were not familiar with ship's tonnage, routing instructions, position of lock-outs and other details.

ENCLOSURE (A)



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Summary of Statements by Survivors Boat Tanker "AMATLAN", Mexican Tanker taken at 1000R 8 September 1942 at the Port Isabel Coast Guard Life Saving Station, Port Isabel, Texas.

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1. The "AMATLAN" was torpedoed without warning first at 2230R, 4 September 1942 at a position 15 miles off shore from Punta Jerez and 40 miles north of Tampico; Mexico; second at 2240R, same date, same position, third at 2250R, same date, same position. Ship was en route from Galveston, Texas to Tampico, Mexico in water ballast carried in several compartments. Amount of ballast unknown, compartments or tanks unknown; draft of ship forward and aft unknown.

2. The course of the tanker was unknown; speed believed to be about 8 knots; whether or not zig-zagging unknown as survivors interviewed were asleep at the time of attack. Men on watch and location of look-outs unknown. Weather was cloudy; the sea calm; visibility poor; no moonlight; no ships in sight; there was a light breeze blowing.

3. The first torpedo struck the ship from the starboard side at the stern destroying propellor and steering gear; second torpedo struck forward of the first near the engine room; third torpedo struck amidships likewise from the starboard side and blew out the boilers. The torpedoes were spaced about ten minutes apart.

4. After the first torpedo struck, the ship was immediately abandoned. One life raft and three lifeboats were lowered. The five survivors on the life raft were rescued by the fishing schooner ROSEMARY at 0800R 7 September 1942, at 24 degrees 10 minutes north 17 miles off shore and were landed at the Coast Guard Life Saving Station at Port Isabel, Texas 0730R 8 September 1942. None were injured. Whereabouts of the three lifeboats is still unknown.

5. Disposition of the confidential and secret codes unknown but believed to have sunk with ship which was last observed sinking at 0800R 5 September 1942.

6. The survivors reported sighting a blurred object which they took to be a submarine at 2300R 4 September 1942 but were rather doubtful and could not positively identify it as a submarine. This was following third torpedo hit.

7. The "AMATLAN" was owned by the Petroles Mexicanos of Mexico captained by Gonzalo Montalva SALAZAR and carried a crew of 34, all citizens of Mexico. The five survivors who landed at Port Isabel, Texas stated it was likely that some crew members lost their lives but none were seen killed and the identity of those who left the ship in the three lifeboats is unknown.

8. Subject ship was unarmed and though equipped with radio, no message was sent and no message received. Survivors interviewed were comparatively new aboard subject ship and were not familiar with ship's tonnage, routing instructions, position of look-outs and other details.

ENCLOSURE (A)



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SI-142 (Revised)

Intelligence Report  
ENEMY ATTACK ON MERCHANT SHIPS

Subject: Enemy attack on Boat Tanker "AMATLAN".

Name of Ship: "AMATLAN"

Flag: Mexico

Type: Tanker (Bulkheads unknown).

- (1) Tanker - (a) Single Bulkhead ( )  
                   (b) Twin Bulkhead ( )  
                   (c) Summer Tank ( )  
 (2) Cargo ( )  
 (3) Passenger ( )  
 (4) Passenger-Cargo ( )

Gross Tonnage: Unknown

Whether Armed: Yes ( ) No (x)

Date of Attack: 4 September 1942, 2230H

Position at Attack: 15 miles off shore near  
 Punta Jerez, Mexico and  
 approx. 40 miles north of  
 Tampico, Mexico

Whether Sunk ( ) Damaged ( ) Captured ( ) or Escaped ( )

Sinking when last seen.

PARTICULARS OF SHIP AND VOYAGE

QuestionsAnswers

1. (a) Port of Departure: Galveston, Texas.

(b) Date of Sailing: 3 September 1942.

(c) Destination: Tampico, Mexico

(d) Route Instructions: Unknown

2. Name of Owners and Charterers (if any) Petroleos Mexicanos of Mexico.  
 (If on Government Service the fact should  
 be stated)

(1) Cargo:

(a) Loaded or in ballast (type of ballast) In water ballast.

(b) General description and weight of cargo

(c) Deck load (give distribution)

(d) When a tanker give distribution and  
 amount of liquid cargo or ballast

Amount of ballast unknown distributed  
 through several compartments.

3. Full Christian Name, Surname and Nationality  
 of Master:

Gonzalo Montalvo SALAZAR, Mexican



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MI-142 (Revised) "ALATLAN"

4. Ship's position, date and time(a) When enemy was sighted

(1) Date (local) and time (specify whether GCT, Zone, War Time): Enemy not sighted

(2) Depth of water: Unknown.

(b) When attack commenced: 4 September 1942 at 2230R. Position same as page 1.(c) Was warning given? Yes ( ) No (x)(d) Ship's position, date and time -(1) When ship sank, or(2) When chase was abandoned(e) Ship's position, date and time ship was abandoned Same position. Time 2240R.

5. (a) What was the cause of ship sinking: Three torpedoes, fired about ten torpedo (x) gunfire ( ) bombs ( ) or mine ( ) minutes apart.

(1) Estimated type, weight, diameter of projectile, bomb, torpedo or mine: Unknown.

(b) Was she seen to sink? Yes ( ) No (x)

## (1) Manner of sinking:

(a) Capsized ( )

(b) Even keel ( )

(c) Plunged --- bow ( ) or stern (x) first

(d) Listed --- to port ( ) or starboard ( ) - degree of list:

(e) How long afloat after being hit? At least 10 hours.

(2) Depth of water where sunk: Unknown.

6. Course and speed of ship when enemy was first sighted or when attack commenced:

(1) Course and speed after damage: Was making 8 knots and plunged stern first when first torpedo struck.

(2) Drafts, forward and aft, before and after damage (approximate): Unknown.

7. Was ship zigzagging? Yes ( ) No ( ) - If so, Unknown (all survivors questioned were asleep at time of attack.)

(a) Nature of zigzag:

(b) How long had ship been zigzagging previous to the attack?

ENCLOSURE (A)



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NNI-142 (Revised) ("AMATLAN")

## 8. Weather conditions at time of attack:

- (a) Clear ( ) Rain ( ) Fog ( ) Snow ( ) Haze ( ) Dark and cloudy.
- (b) Condition of sea; Smooth (X) Choppy (s) White caps ( ) Swells ( )
- (c) Wind: Direction: Force-- Light breeze blowing.
- (d) Moonlight: Yes ( ) No (X) - If so, give phase of moon:
- (e) Bearing and height of the sun:
- (f) Visibility: Poor.

## 9. (a) Was ship attacked with torpedo by submerged submarine? Yes (X) No ( )

- (1) When torpedo was fired were any people still on board? Yes (X) No ( ) - If so, how many? Entire crew of 34.

## (b) If attacked by submerged submarine:

- (1) Was periscope of submarine seen? Yes ( ) No (X)
- (2) Was track of torpedo seen before vessel was struck? Yes ( ) No (X) - If so, at what distance from own ship?
- (3) What avoiding action was taken? None
- (4) Did submarine subsequently come to the surface? After attack survivors saw a blurred object believed to be submarine.  
Yes ( ) No ( ) - If so, when, and at what distance?
- (5) Were any signals sent by the submarine? Yes ( ) No (X)

10. (a) Was ship attacked with gunfire? Yes ( ) No (X)

If so, give details under No. 21 and 22

- (b) Was enemy seen prior to the attack? Yes ( ) No (X)
- (c) Was any warning or order given by enemy?  
Yes ( ) No (X) - If so, what?

11. How many lookouts were on watch? Unknown.

- (a) Where were they stationed?
- (b) Did they have binoculars?
- (c) How long had they been on watch?
- (d) Were they trained lookouts? Yes ( ) No ( )
- (e) State the approximate height of lookout stations above the sea Unknown.

12. Speed and course of aircraft, raider, or submarine relative to ship when first sighted, or when attack commenced:

Submarine attacked at stern from starboard side.

13. (a) What colors, if any, was ship flying at time of attack? Survivors stated they believed Mexican flag was not flying at time of attack
- (b) When were they hoisted? Colors hoisted at Galveston believed to have been subsequently lowered.



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-142 (Revised) "AMATLAN"

14. (a) If attack took place at night, what lights, if any, was ship showing? None.
- (b) If navigation lights were burning, were they dimmed? None burning.
15. How was ship maneuvered after sighting enemy? Enemy not sighted.
16. (a) Were any other vessels in sight? Yes ( ) No (X)
- (b) If so, what were their positions and movements and names if known?
- (c) Did any signal pass between them and the ship or enemy? Yes ( ) No ( )
17. Was ship equipped with radio? Yes (X) No ( )
- (a) Did she use it? Yes ( ) No (X) What signals?
- (b) Was any reply received? Yes ( ) No ( )  
From whom?
- (c) How long before attack did ship last use her radio? Unknown.  
And on what wave length?
- (d) Did enemy order silence or jam radio transmission? Yes ( ) No (X)
- (e) What were the ship's call letters? Unknown.
18. (a) What course was submarine, raider, or aircraft steering when last seen, or, if submarine, did she dive? Unknown.
- (b) Time enemy ship was last seen? At about 2300 the blurred object referred to above was lost sight of.

CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

19. (a) Were there Navy or British codes on board? Yes ( ) No ( ) Unknown.
- (b) Which ones?
- (c) What became of them? Unknown. Believed to have sunk.
20. (a) Were there any other confidential papers or mails on board? Yes ( ) No ( ) Unknown.
- (b) If so, what became of them? Believed to have sunk.
- (c) What did the confidential papers consist of? Unknown.
- (NOTE: If codes or papers came to enemy hands, OpNav to be advised immediately by dispatch).

ENCLOSURE (A)



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OFFENSIVE ACTS OF ENEMYGunfire21. At what range did enemy open fire?

- (1) Relative bearing of enemy ship?
- (2) Was any shot fired "across bows" as warning?

22. Number of rounds fired by enemy:

None.

- (a) Before ship was abandoned \_\_\_\_\_ hits \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) After ship was abandoned \_\_\_\_\_ hits \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) Approximate rate of fire:
- (d) Contact or delay shell fuse action;  
if delay, how far did shells travel  
beyond point of entry to point of explosion?

Torpedo or Bombing23. Distance and bearing of submarine or aircraft  
when torpedoes or bombs released:Bearing unknown. Submarine was  
to starboard.

(a) If bomb, state:

- (1) Whether horizontal or dive release -
- (2) Altitude of release -
- (3) Angle of dive -

24. Was there any way on ship at time of torpedo  
or bomb hit(s):

Yes ( ) No ( ) Unknown.

- (1) If so, how much?
- (2) How soon after hit were main engines secured?

Unknown.

25. Number of torpedoes or bombs released:

Probably four. Torpedoes.

- (a) Hits
- (b) Near misses (how near)
- (c) Before and after abandoned
- (d) Contact or delay explosions:

Three.

One.

Ship was abandoned after first torpedo.

Contact explosions.

- (1) If delay, how long (distance from point  
of impact to point of explosion)



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26. Were there any outstanding circumstances or peculiarities of the explosion (flash, fumes, odors, after burning on surface, unusual behavior of torpedoes before exploding, etc.)

Yes ( ) No (X) - If yes, explain

27. A brief complete outline of extent of damage caused by each hit.

- (a) Hull damage such as ruptured and distorted deck, shell and bulkhead plating (give dimensions and location).
- (b) Machinery damage, main and auxiliary.
- (c) Fire damage (state interval from time of hit until time fire was first observed and exact location where fires started).
- (d) Radio damage
- (e) Ship control (damage to instruments, steering gear, etc.)
- (f) Flooding (state whether immediate or slow - affected by open or loosely dogged water-tight doors and hatches).
- (g) Shock damage.
- (h) Fragment damage (give size of fragments).

Details of damage unknown except as follows: First torpedo blew out the propeller and steering gear; second torpedo forward of first struck the engine room; the third torpedo striking forward of the second hit amidships and blew out the boilers. The ship immediately settled by the stern, raising the prow of the ship well out of the water. All three torpedoes came from the starboard side.

#### Boarding

28. Was ship boarded by enemy and how?

Yes ( ) No (X)

29. Was Master interrogated by enemy officer?

Yes ( ) No (X)

What questions were asked?

Which officer (or officers) asked questions and what knowledge of the English language had he?



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NL-142 (Revised) "AMATLAN"

Explosive Charges

30. If ship was sunk by explosive charges: None used.
- (a) How many were used?
- (b) Where were they placed?

DEFENSIVE ACTS OF SHIPSGunfire

31. What guns were carried? None.
- (a) Was there an armed guard on board? Yes ( ) No (X)
32. At what time and range did ship open fire?
33. Was ship showing her proper colors when she opened fire? Yes ( ) No ( )
34. (a) Number of rounds fired by ship?
- (b) Approximate rate of fire?
35. Number of times enemy was hit by gunfire?

Additional information desired in case a magnetic acoustic or other influence weapon is suspected:

1. Were engines running at a steady speed? Yes ( ) No ( )
2. Propeller RPM's for each propeller.
3. Number of blades on each propeller and any known defects.
4. Degaussing equipment; current in coils.
5. Were paravanes or bow protection gear in use? Yes ( ) No ( )
6. If not acting singly, give position in information.

Forward with report such informative sketches or photographs as may be available.

ENCLOSURE (A)



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NNI-142 (Revised) "AMATLAN"

Smoke

36. Was ship supplied with smoke apparatus?

Yes ( ) No (X)

If so -

(a) What pattern?

(b) How was it used and with what effect?

Personnel37. (a) Were there any casualties?

Yes ( ) No ( ) Unknown, but survivors report there may have been.

(b) What were they?

(c) How caused?

38. (a) What was the number and nationality of the passengers and crew?

Thirty-four, all Mexicans.

(b) How did they behave?

Excited at first but soon settled down.

39. (a) What became of the passengers and crew after abandoning ship?

Three life boats and one raft were lowered. Whereabouts of three life boats unknown.

(b) Were any taken prisoner?  
If so, who?

Yes ( ) NO (X)

PARTICULARS OF ENEMY CRAFT

40. Was the submarine seen?

If so -

(a) Number, if submarine or aircraft

Yes ( ) NO ( ) Survivors reported seeing a blurred object which may have been the submarine but they could not positively identify it as such.

(b) Where was number seen and how distinguished?



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NNI-142 (Revised) "AMATLAN"

41. With the help of a sketch or silhouette drawing give a general description of the enemy ship and especially of any peculiarities noticed. A drawing of the submarine or raider, however rough, should be attached and the following points of descriptive detail noted as examples:

- (a) Whether large or small
- (b) Color and whether any streaks or stripes
- (c) Shape of conning tower
- (d) Shape, rake and position of stack
- (e) Any irregularities or bulges on hull or superstructure
- (f) Gun position(s)
- (g) Any net cutter? Yes ( ) No ( )
- (h) Shape of bow, of stern
- (i) Relative height and position of masts

42. Guns, number, position, and nature?

43. Number of masts and king posts?

44. Radio aerials and gear, description of

45. (a) What color was enemy vessel painted?

(b) Did paint look old ( ) or new ( ) ?

(c) Did ship bear any marks of damage?  
If so, what?

Yes ( ) No ( )

46. Estimated speed:

47. Estimated tonnage (gross):

48. Steam ( ) or motor ( ) ship?

(Impossible to obtain a sketch as the only thing seen by the survivors was a blurred object and no description possible.)



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-142 (Revised) "AMATLAN"

## 49. Officers of enemy vessel.

Names and personal description:

Not obtainable.

REPORT OF INTERVIEWING OFFICER

## 50. General remarks by interviewing officer:

The survivors interviewed stated that they were all asleep at the time of the attack at 2230 R, September 4, 1942; that upon being awakened by the explosion they lowered a life-raft and observed three life-boats being lowered; that a fourth life-boat was destroyed by the explosion; that immediately following their abandoning of the ship, a second torpedo hit the afterpart of the vessel on the starboard side; that about ten minutes later the third torpedo struck the ship amidships also from the starboard side; that the ship immediately plunged down at the stern, bringing the prow well out of the water; that the three life-boats appeared to clear the ship without mishap. The survivors stated that they did not know whether or not there were any casualties. That they drifted at sea all night and the following morning saw the damaged vessel off in the distance slowly sinking; that about two hours later at 0800 Saturday morning, September 5, the ship could not be seen; that two days later at 0800 (R) September 7, 1942, they were rescued by the fishing schooner "Rosemary" and were landed at the Padre Island Coast Guard Life Saving Station, 0730 (R) September 8, 1942.

(S)

O. A. TOOLE

LIEUT. USNR.

Officer-in-Charge, Brownsville, Texas.



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QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED OF SURVIVORS  
FOR FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSIONNAME OF VESSEL "AMATLAN"CALL LETTERS Unknown

1. Date, Time, Location and nature of Disaster: See below.
2. Time elapsed between first notice of trouble (or first distress message) and abandoning of vessel.
3. Time (as accurate as possible) distress messages were sent, and the contents of these messages, if known.
4. Frequency or wavelength on which distress message was sent.
5. Was auto alarm signal transmitted? By hand or machine?
6. Which radio transmitted (main, emergency, or other) was used to send distress message?
7. If emergency power was used, was it inadequate in any respect for operation of the equipment? (Not immediately available, battery discharged, etc.).
8. What type of equipment, power, and class of emission was used?
9. Was main antenna used for transmission of distress signals?
10. Was there any delay in sending out distress message? If so, what was it caused by? (Describe in as great detail as possible any mechanical or electrical defect which caused delay.)
11. Was radio direction finder used to locate position of vessel during distress? (For both rescuing and distressed vessels).
12. Names and call letters of stations acknowledging the distress messages.
13. Name and call letters of any station interfering seriously with the distress messages.
14. What time was normal traffic resumed on 500 Kilocycles (obtained from logs, etc.)?
15. Any comments not covered by above. (Suggestions-remarks concerning radio conditions. Any special points, good or bad, of apparatus or procedure, infraction of rules observed, etc.

Subject vessel was torpedoed at 2230 (R) September 4, 1942, 15 miles off shore from Punta Jerez and forty miles North of Tampico, Mexico. No radio messages sent or received.

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ENCLOSURE (A)



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NNI-142-X  
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## Office of Naval Intelligence

NAVY DEPARTMENTIntelligence ReportENEMY ATTACKS ON MERCHANT SHIPS

Name of Ship	Boat Tanker "AMATLAN"	Flag Mexican	Type Tanker
Name of Owners and Charterers or Operators (if any)	Petroleos Mexicanos		
Date of Attack	4 September 1942, at 2230R.		
Whether Sunk, Damaged, Stranded, Burned, Captured or Escaped	Damaged and believed to have sunk.		

ADMIRALTY LOSSESQuestionsAnswers

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Was the vessel seen to sink?<br>If so, by whom?        | Was not actually seen to sink.   |
| 2. Position of sinking and, if available,<br>water depth. | 15 miles off shore and approx. 40 miles north of Tampico, Mexico at Punta Jerez. |
| 3. Did the ship make port?<br>If so, where?               | No.  |

MARINE CASUALTIES

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 4. Were there any casualties?<br>Dead or injured?  | Unknown.                   |
| 5. Can you identify any of the missing members of the crew or passengers as being now dead? If so, who are they? | No.                        |
| 6. How did you determine that such persons are dead?   |                            |
| 7. What members of the surviving crew and passengers were injured? How and to what extent?                       | Known survivors uninjured. |
| 8. What crew members were hospitalized, give name and address of the hospital.                                   | None.                      |

Enclosure (B)



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PERSONAL EFFECTS

9. Did any of the crew or passengers save any substantial amount of their personal effects, and, if so, what are their names? Nothing saved.

CREW AND PASSENGER CONDUCT

10. Did any crew member perform outstanding service in the emergency? (Beyond that expected in line of duty?) None.
11. If so, whom? (Give name, address, status, or position on board.)
12. Furnish a statement of the act or acts deserving of honor awards.
13. Was the conduct of any crew member particularly reprehensible?
14. If so, whom? (Give name, address, status or position on board.)
15. Furnish a statement of the conduct in question.
16. Furnish name or names and addresses where they can be contacted of persons (preferably senior officers of the vessel itself) who can substantiate the above information.

Enclosure (B)



CONFIDENTIAL

NNI-142-X -- "AMATLAN"

THE FOLLOWING SURVIVORS OF THE MEXICAN BOAT TANKER  
"AMATLAN" WERE LANDED AT THE COAST GUARD LIFE SAVING STATION,  
PORT ISABEL, TEXAS. ALL ARE MEXICAN AND NONE INJURED.

ABRAHAM NUNOS LOPEZ, FIFTH ENGINEER  
GUILLERMO GUTIERREZ VALIENTE, FIREMAN  
RAFEAL LUNA LEETCH, THIRD MESS BOY  
ROBERTO SANCHEZ GARCIA, SECOND COOK  
JOSE DIAZ VALDEZ, OILER

SURVIVORS ESTIMATE SOME MEMBERS OF CREW PROBABLY KILLED. HOWEVER,  
NONE WAS SEEN DEAD. THREE LIFEBOATS WERE SEEN TO CLEAR SHIP FULLY  
LOADED.