

Op-16-B-5

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NAVY DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
WASHINGTON 25 D C

17 Apr 45

MEMORANDUM FOR FILE

ALL TIMES GCT

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS ATLANTIC STATES, U.S. Tanker, 8535 G.T., owned and operated by Atlantic Refining Company.

1. The ATLANTIC STATES was torpedoed at 2230 GCT, 5 Apr 45, in 42.07N - 70.00.42W, having sailed from Boston, 5 Apr 45, independently for Las Piedras, Venezuela, in water ballast, draft 20' forward, 23' aft. Vessel did not sink, but was towed back to Boston for drydocking, arriving 1800 GCT, 7 Apr, draft 31' aft, unknown forward.
  2. Ship was on course 114° T; speed 14.4 knots in 45 fathoms; not zigzagging; degaussing on M coil plus 120 amps., F coil -54 amps., Q coil - plus 18 amps; radio silent; torpedo detector on; 4 lookouts - 2 Armed Guard on the poop and 2 merchant crew on bridge wings. The weather was clear, sea choppy with white caps, wind NW force 5, dusk, visibility unlimited, no other ships in sight. In compliance with routing instructions ship was proceeding from Boston on a route outside Cape Cod.
  3. At 2230 a torpedo struck on the starboard side aft at the engine room. No torpedo track was sighted. There was a strong odor of burned powder after explosion. Some survivors stated they saw powder smoke coming out of engine room. Tanker began to settle by the stern. Engines were secured immediately. The screw and rudder were blown off, steering engines completely wrecked. Lower engine room flooded within several minutes, upper one partially flooded. All machinery soon out due to flooding. There was no fire. Main radio transmitter and receiver knocked out; emergency worked, although no messages could be received. Explosion occurred in lower engine room starboard side. There was a large hole below water line, plates bent inboard. Bulkhead and decks around steering engine and magazine partly buckled. Aft 5" gun loosened, though not thrown from its mount. Tanker was taken in tow and returned to Boston. Distress signal sent. No counter offensive offered as nothing was sighted. Confidential publications were thrown overboard in a weighted box and weighted bags.
  4. Upon orders of the Master, ship was abandoned at 2240 by all of the crew with the exception of the Master, Chief Officer, First Radio Operator, Armed Guard Officer, and one AB. Survivors left in lifeboats and were picked up from the boats by the USS GUINEVERE by 0030, 6 April and landed at Boston 1315. Survivors who remained on board the tanker arrived in Boston with the ship. Total complement on board was 57, including 45 merchant crew, and 12 Armed Guard; all 57 survived.
  5. The sub was not sighted. White caps made the possibility of sighting a periscope extremely unlikely.
  6. The torpedo detector had been turned on upon ship's departure from Boston. This instrument gave no signal before the explosion, but immediately afterwards sounded the alarm until the power went out.
- At time of attack, besides the 4 lookouts, only the Chief Officer and the helmsman were above decks.

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Master stated that he had ordered abandon ship because he feared a further attack, and since all propulsive machinery was out, there was no need for the majority of the crew to remain aboard. Later, due to rising wind and seas, it was impossible to take the men back aboard.

Although survivors stated ship was damaged by an explosion probably caused by a torpedo, dispatches state ship was torpedoed.

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