

(OMI)  
CG-MIN-BENJAMIN  
CONTEE

11 July, 1944

**CONFIDENTIAL**

To: DCGO, 8th Naval District (OMI)

Subj: War action casualty involving the BENJAMIN CONTEE

1. HQ letter of 15 April, 1944, directed that Captain Evansen, formerly Master of the BENJAMIN CONTEE, be interviewed at Houston, Texas, in connection with the war action casualty involving the subject vessel, in accordance with HQ instructions of 15 March and 2 August, 1943, which set forth the purposes of and the procedure for the investigation of war action casualties. Paragraph 3 of HQ instructions of 2 August provides as follows:

"The Coast Guard shall conduct an investigation to determine the functioning, adequacy and efficiency of better-security-of-life-at-sea equipment and requirements under actual wartime service conditions, pursuant to which corrective measures or other actions may be instituted for the protection and preservation of American seamen and ships.\*\*\* All cases should definitely establish by facts the manner and causes of the loss of personnel."

2. The BENJAMIN CONTEE was attacked but not sunk on 16 August, 1943, off Bone, Algeria, with the loss of 297 war prisoners. The record of investigation in this case conducted at Houston consists of three pages of general questions and answers. It does not contain any detailed information with respect to the berthing or location of the 1,800 prisoners on board, the panic conditions that followed the attack, or the provisions made for the safety of such prisoners in the event of attack, damage, or sinking of the vessel. Nor does the record contain any information relating the causes, proximate, remote or otherwise, for the loss of the large number of prisoners who perished in this disaster.

Ret. to 8-2

PH:mt



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3. In order that HQ may have the benefit of the information required by the above instructions in the evaluation of safety equipments and requirements under actual wartime service conditions, it is most desirable that the pertinent instructions as cited above be followed as closely as possible in the investigation of all war action casualties.

CHAS. A PARK  
By direction

Ret. to 8-2

PES:mw