

M.S. Cape Alava

5. As mentioned in p San Pedro, California (a) security was practically nil. This can be attributed to two causes. 1.) is extremely garrulous and vital information is often April 13, 1942. Matters of vital information are frequently with door open or on the open bridge in the hearing of the helmsman.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Commanding Officer of Armed Guard Unit.
To : Chief of Naval Operations.
Via : Port Director, San Pedro, Calif.
Subject: Report of voyage of M.S. Cape Alava, Brisbane, Australia, to San Pedro, Calif.
Reference: (a) My letter of March 6, 1942 to Chief of Naval Operations.

Enclosure: (A) Subject report is hereby submitted. (B) Copy of reference (a).

1. Ship left Brisbane, Australia, March 14, 1942, for Sydney, Australia. Arrived Sydney March 16 and completed loading there. Left Sydney March 20 sailing Southeast so as to round the southern end of New Zealand. After making the turn we sailed due east as far as 120 degrees West Long. and due North from there to San Pedro, Calif. These courses and turning points can not be given accurately in this report because of lack of proper information as mentioned in paragraph 10 of reference (a).

2. Incidents of the voyage included the sighting of two probable torpedo tracks crossing the ship's bow in Lat. 41.02 S Long. 155.30 E., at about 0500 March 22. This incident reached the Armed Guard Officer through a mess steward at 0700 that same morning and was later verified by the captain. On March 20 the captain believing the ship to be out of dangerous waters ceased zig-zagging except the short periods at dawn and dusk.

3. On April 1 the Officer of the Deck sighted a display of searchlights on the Horizon on starboard beam. The Captain notified the Armed Guard Officer afterward and said he changed course to put them astern. About two hours later searchlights were seen again on the port quarter. April 8 the Armed Guard look-out aft and several members of the crew saw a bright light similar to a flare during the forenoon. The ship's officers did not see this phenomenon and apparently put it down as imagination.

4. Paragraphs 3 and 4 of reference (a) are applicable to this voyage also. No changes were noted.

Route to (Armed Guard) to retain

5. As mentioned in paragraph 5 of reference (a) security was practically nil. This can be attributed to two causes. 1.) The Captain is extremely garrulous and vital information is often inadvertently spilled to messmen, radiomen, or other members of the crew or officers. 2.) Matters of vital information are frequently discussed in the chart house with door open or on the open bridge in the hearing of the helmsman. Before the drill, and the whole thing is done in such a routine and stereotyped manner as to almost pass unnoticed.
6. As the ship even when sailing singly would not supply more than one lookout the Armed Guard personnel supplied three men during the day and two men at night as well as having all men at General Quarters for one hour at dawn and dusk. The men were frequently allowed to turn in while off watch in order to keep them mentally alert for any emergency.
7. Co-operation between Armed Guard crew and ship's company was practically non-existent because the ship's company insisted on overtime every time they lifted a hand and the Chief Mate felt it desirable to limit overtime money to a minimum in order to keep his standing with the American Mail Line.
8. No information is available as to radio messages received since all such were kept secret between radiomen and Captain so far as I know.
9. The ready service locker for the 4 inch gun is located rather poorly being too close to the gun and opening on the port side. The men's quarters are rather poorly placed to secure rapid action on a night alarm especially with a deck cargo being carried.
Port Director, San Francisco, Calif.
10. In the writer's opinion the best way to effect the highest degree of safety against submarine torpedo attacks is to provide two high elevation lookout stations and to connect all lookout stations with a continuous watch on the bridge manning sound power telephones. This method should waste the least time in getting prompt action from the officer of the deck when any object is sighted.
11. The vessel maintained maximum speed in the war zone and showed no lights and sounded no fog signals.
12. In the writer's opinion the officers of this ship show excellent technical ability and are adequate to the handling of this ship in peace time. However the Captain and the Chief Mate have become so ingrained in Merchant Marine procedure in peace time, that they disregard practically all of the written matter the Navy has so carefully prepared for wartime. For example the Master maintains that no instructions should be given to the Officer of the Deck as to what to do in sighting a submarine. He contends that each attack is different and no general rules will be of any assistance.

PART 13. In spite of the Armed Guard Officer's requests the Master will not allow the general alarm to be rung for any drills other than the fire and boat drills required by the Department of Commerce. These drills are held every Saturday at 1300, all fire hoses are led out to the rail before the drill, and the whole thing is done in such a routine and stereotyped manner as to almost preclude the possibility of any responsible action being taken in an actual emergency. No distinction is possible for submarine or aircraft attack. The reason given for not using this signal for drill is that the Master has promised the crew that when it sounds it will mean real action.

Four 1531 Date 15 NOVEMBER 1945. Place

(8) Last Part COLLEGO Armed YES Damaged YES Speed 13.5

(9) Crew (No. and Nationality) 50 in crew including 11 officers
J. H. Dittmer, Ens. D-V(G), U.S.N.R.

(11) Name of Radio Spcr. ONE (1)
ABRAHAM WALDMAN

(14) Transmitters: Main (YES) High Freq. (YES) Emergency (YES) Lifeboat (YES)

Copies to: Chief of Naval Operations
Port Director, San Pedro, Calif.
Port Director, San Francisco, Calif.
Armed Guard Center (Pacific)

Type Morse & Aldis Manufacturer R. M. C. A. Model RT 6019 CA

Freq. Calibration 355, 375, 400, 425, 450, 460, 500 KCS.

Complied * NO Sealed YES

Why sealed ONLY ONE KEY ABOARD.

How sealed MARKED WITH YELLOW PINE AND SEALED PAPER.

Seals used 15765

(10) Transmitters Type HIGH FREQUENCY Power 200 WATTS

Manufacturer R. M. C. A. Model RT 6019

Freq. Calibration 4310, 5520, 6210, 6290, 11,040, 12,420, 15,670 KCS.

Complied * NO Sealed YES

Why sealed ONLY ONE KEY ABOARD.

How sealed SEALED CUT OUT SWITCH AND SEALED PAPER.

Seals used 15763

* Complied with conditions stated in V.C.N.O. serial 800/820 if only.