

Op-16-B-5

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

CONFIDENTIAL

5 July 45

MEMORANDUM FOR FILEALL TIMES GCT

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS COLIN P. KELLY, JR, U.S. Freighter, 7176 G.T., owned by War Shipping Administration, Operated by Waterman Steamship Company.

1. The COLIN P. KELLY, JR, was mined at 0650 GCT, 4 June 45 about 3 cables bearing 265°T. from NF6 Buoy, approximate position 51.20N - 02.50E, having sailed from the Downs about 0100, 4 June, in convoy TAM-89 for Antwerp with a full cargo of Army foodstuffs. Vessel did not sink but was towed to Tillbury Docks, London, arriving the following afternoon. Ship will be drydocked and repaired.
2. Ship was on an unknown course, speed about 10 knots, 68 RPM, not zigzagging, degaussing on, Navy Lookouts - forward gun tub, both wings of flying bridge and at the aft gun. Weather was clear, sea choppy with moderate swells running, moderate breeze force and direction unknown, visibility excellent. Convoy was in two columns. KELLY's position was in port column; unknown number of vessels ahead in the column. Entire convoy in sight, 2 corvettes forward on either flank and one oncoming convoy about 10 miles away.
3. At 0650 a mine exploded on the starboard side amidships close to the forward auxiliary condenser. Explosion was deafening; a large column of black smoke and water arose from the starboard; water thrown up almost mast high. No flame, flash or odor were noted. Deck plates forward of the midship housing were buckled up starboard and down portside. The deck was split across opposite #3 hatch and also between #4 hatch and the midship housing. Stanchions amidships were smashed. Hull plates are believed to have been buckled amidships both port and starboard. The forward port life raft was blown off and also the two life rafts aft. It was believed that the main radio transmitter was smashed, but the emergency transmitter was said to be in working order, as was also the steering gear. There was considerable shock damage, such as doors ripped from hinges and fixtures ripped from bulkheads. Machinery damage is unknown since the engine room flooded rapidly. The shaft alley was probably flooded and #4 hold is known to have been flooded. The helmsman is said to have left the wheel immediately after the explosion, permitting the vessel to circle until one of the mates took over a minute or so later. The engines were secured by shutting off the auxiliary steam throttle and the oil valve on deck, the vessel losing way a few minutes later. It is not known whether any distress messages or signals were sent. The vessel was salvaged by two British tugs a few hours later and was towed to Tillbury Docks, London, arriving the following afternoon. Confidential publications were secured overboard in the overboard box.
4. The vessel was partially abandoned upon orders of the Master within approximately 1/2 hour, a small skeleton crew remaining aboard. The remainder of the crew abandoned ship directly into a Belgian tug which came alongside. These survivors were transferred from the tug to a British corvette which followed ship into port, where the vessel was reboarded by the entire crew before anchoring. There were no casualties.
5. The mine was not sighted and no fragments were recovered.

E. M. HARRIS, Jr., Lieut USNR.

Suppl. info. for file

DISSEMINATION: Op-16-E-2, 16-P-1, 16-PT, 16-Z(5 copies), Op-20-G, Op-23-L, Op-30-M, Op-39-A-1(2 cop), COMINCH F-20, F-41, F-43, F-45, AFASU, BuOrd, CG(4 cop), Coord Res & Dev, JAG, DIO 1, 4,5(2 cop),6,7(2 cop),8(2 cop),10(2 cop),11(3 cop),12,13, 14(4 cop),15NDs, BuPers-535.

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