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651

OCT 6 - 1944

To: The Commandant (INT)

Via: ~~DOGGO~~, 3rd Naval District

Subj: SS CORNELIA (U.S. cargo vessel); fire aboard; from
investigation of; report on

1. At 0040, 4 October, 1944, Lieutenant (jg) J. R. Collins, Duty Officer at the Barge Office, notified this office of a fire aboard subject vessel, which was moored to the south side of Pier 22, Brooklyn.
2. Investigation revealed that at approximately 0015, 4 October, 1944, Peter Manning, a roving civilian guard aboard subject vessel, discovered smoke escaping from the forward section. He immediately notified Roundsmen A. Kelly and Andrew Scanlon, who were on the pier, to send in an alarm of fire.
3. The fire was discovered to be in #1 hold and was confined to that hold and the cargo therein. At the time of discovery, #1 hold was battened down and sealed. The cargo in that hold consisted of fertilizer, beans, cartons of medical supplies and other general cargo in the lower hold. Cartons of lard and pork, absorbent cotton and bandages were stored in the 'tween deck. Subject vessel is a refrigerated ship, and the fire destroyed the granulated cork used to insulate the entire hold.
4. The fire was apparently caused by a carelessly discarded lighted cigarette butt left by an unknown stevedore who was working the hold several hours previous to the fire. An inspection of #1 hold could not be made at the time of this investigation as it had been flooded in the process of extinguishing the fire; however, evidence of smoking was found in other holds aboard the ship at the time of the investigation.

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A second probable cause may have been a spark or short

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circuit from an electric motor used in the hold to refrigerate the cargo therein. This motor is connected by an automatic switch whereby, if a short circuit occurred, the switch would automatically shut off. An inspection of several other holds aboard subject vessel, which contained identical refrigeration systems, showed that the cargo in those holds could not be stored closer than four feet from the motor. Prior to the sealing of #1 hold, approximately eight stevedores, employed by the Bull Steamship, Inc., were employed in lading that hold.

6. Damage sustained by subject vessel as a result of the fire will exceed \$25,000. This amount was quoted by Capt. E. B. Hudgins, Port Captain for the Bull Steamship Company. Cargo in #1 hold is considered a total loss from fire and water damage, and the cargo in #2 hold was also damaged by water seepage.

7. The fire was extinguished by land apparatus of the New York Fire Department, assisted by the municipal fireboats FIRE FIGHTER and HEWITT and CG fireboats CG-56102-F and CG-30084-F. Prior to the arrival of the fire apparatus, the steam fire smothering system aboard subject vessel was brought into action by E. W. Austin, Chief Engineer of the CORNELIA. Subject vessel is under the command of W. E. Hudgins, who was aboard at the time of the fire.

8. Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation are working on this case.

JOHN M. CANNELLA

CC: The Commandant (OPS).
CO, Port Security Command, 3ND
Merchant Marine Hearing Unit, 3ND

Ind-1
ODCGO-3ND
CG-6612
7 October, 1944

Forwarded.

G. U. STEWART
Assistant DCGO-3ND