



HEADQUARTERS

TREASURY DEPARTMENT

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

WASHINGTON

April 11, 1942.

Memorandum for Intelligence Files:

52 (A)

The American S. S. E.H. BLUM, owner Atlantic Refining Company, Master Captain W. L. Evans, departed Philadelphia for Port Arthur Texas at 1430, February 15, 1942. She arrived off the Virginia Capes at 1950, February 16, 1942 and stopped and drifted there because of fog. She was unable to contact the guard boat or obtain a pilot. While she was drifting she ran afoul of several mines which exploded between 2133 and 2212, zero plus time, February 16, about 6320 yards true from Cape Henry light.. There are numerous mines in the vicinity, but it is believed the vessel hit on Navy mines which had come adrift. The vessel grounded soon thereafter. Salvage operations have been under way for some time. That part of the vessel forward of No. 5 tank broke away from the remainder, when the keel broke, and was towed to the Newport News Shipbuilding Co. where it is now pending further arrangements for the repairs necessary.

No responsibility is reported as resting on Naval personnel because of the disaster. The crew of the vessel was taken off by the Coast Guard Patrol Boat WOODBURY.

Finding of the board of inquiry

mmh
[Red signature]

601 CONFIDENTIAL

May 8, 1942

C
O
P
YQuestionnaire of Captain UNITED STATES COAST GUARD of the
Argentina MV RIO IGUAZU

Norfolk, Virginia

Q. What instructions were issued from New York?
May 11, 1942

A. Outside of signals hoist no instructions were issued. The Pilot was taking us out of the harbor when we were stopped by the Coast Guard and told to return to New York. We went back and my agent

From: Captain of the Port, Norfolk, Virginia. a misinterpreta-
To: Commandant, Coast Guard Headquarters.Subject: Argentina MV RIO IGUAZU; violation of mine field
vicinity of Cape Henry, Virginia.Inclosure: (A) Questionnaire of Captain Bernardino Gonzalezs
of the Argentina MV RIO IGUAZU.

1. The RIO IGUAZU on 7 May, 1941, while proceeding to the entrance of the Chesapeake Capes, passed through the mine field area and disregarded a shot fired across his bow for the purpose of heaving him to. On being questioned at this office the Captain of the RIO IGUAZU, Bernardino Gonzalezs, stated that prior his departure New York he was not issued any instructions or advised conditions at the entrance of the Chesapeake Capes. When asked why he did not heave to when the shot was placed across his bow, he stated that he was unaware of any such shot being fired. When this vessel approached the entrance on above date it was very hazy and the reason he did not see the Pilot Boat was that he was too far to the northeast, which is explained under inclosure (A).

2. Captain Bernardino Gonzalezs further stated that when he left New York and after proceeding down the Bay, he was stopped by a Coast Guard Vessel who asked for his permit to depart, etc. When this Coast Guard Officer was advised that all the RIO IGUAZU had was signal letters, Captain Gonzalezs was directed to return New York for proper papers. Captain Gonzalezs stated that he returned to New York and was advised by the Navy that he did not need anything and to go ahead, this he did.

3. The Port Director's Office at the Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia, was contacted and asked to advise this office concerning the movements of Argentina vessels, and that office advised that they were not interested in vessels of this nationality.

4. It seems these ships, prior their departure from U. S. ports, should at least be informed as to the locations of pilot boats and furnished Hydrographic information that is of a public nature.

5. The sunken ship referred to under inclosure (A) is the after part of the U.S. Tanker E. H. BLUM, who was blown apart in the mine fields north of Cape Henry.

Q. Did you visit the Naval Routing Office before leaving New York?
A. I did not receive any instructions to visit the Routing Office.

Copy to:
Com 5ND
Captain of the Port, New York

/s/ R. B. Hall
R. B. Hall.

CONFIDENTIAL
OFFICE OF THE CAPTAIN OF THE PORT,
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

May 8, 1942

Questionnaire of Captain Bernardino Gonzalezs of the
Argentina MV RIO IGUAZU

- Pilot boats and furnished Hydrographic information that is
- Q. What instructions were issued you in New York?
A. Outside of signals hoist no instructions were issued. The Pilot was taking us out of the harbor when we were stopped by the Coast Guard and told to return to New York. We went back and my agent talked with the Navy and the Navy told him it was a misinterpretation of orders that we could proceed, so we proceeded and came to Norfolk.
- Q. Did the Pilot board you outside of Cape Henry?
A. Here inside, the Pilot boarded right outside here all the ships there waiting convoy, which was inside of Cape Henry in Lynnhaven Roads.
- Q. Did the pilot stop you outside of the Capes?
A. No, I did not see any Pilot Boat.
- Q. What route did you take on approaching to Cape Henry?
A. I approached from the northeast, outside of flashing white whistle buoy No. 12 on down pass close aboard flashing white buoy No. 14 and steered directly for Cape Henry flashing white whistle buoy No. 2 passing close to an old sunken ship and no Pilot Boat was sighted in the vicinity thereof. I then went to a position two miles 50 degrees from Cape Henry Light, where I anchored my vessel at approximately 1550 EWT on 7 May, 1942.
- Q. How long did you remain in anchorage?
A. Well I remained about 20 to 25 minutes, awaiting the Pilot.
- Q. Did the Pilot come aboard there?
A. Just before I anchored someone was flashing Morse Code. I thought it was the Pilot so about the time I turned the ship to head to the Pilot, the Coast Guard came aboard and told me to anchor and await the Pilot.
- Q. Where did the Pilot come aboard?
A. While my vessel was at anchor two miles 60 degrees from Cape Henry.
- Q. Did you hear or see a shot?
A. Me and my 1st officer and 2nd officer were on the bridge and did not see nor hear anything.
- Q. How close did you pass that sunken ship?
A. About one mile outside.
- Q. Prior to your departure from New York, did you receive any instructions in regards to approaching the entrance to the Capes?
A. I did not receive anything except the three flag hoist, which was hoisted all the way.
- Q. Did you visit the Naval Routing Office before leaving New York?
A. I did not receive any instructions to see the Routing Officer.

601 CONFIDENTIAL
OFFICE OF THE CAPTAIN OF THE PORT,
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA
 May 11, 1942

Norfolk, Virginia

May 11, 1942

pilot boats and furnished Hydrographic information that is of a public nature.

5. The sunken ship referred to under inclosure (A) is the after part of the U.S. Tanker E. H. BLUM, who was blown apart in the mine fields north of Cape Henry, Virginia.

To: Commandant, Coast Guard Headquarters.

Subject: Argentina MV RIO IGUAZU; violation of mine field vicinity of Cape Henry. R. B. HALL

Inclosure: (A) Questionnaire of Captain Bernardino Gonzalez of the Argentina MV RIO IGUAZU.

Copy to:

Commandant, 5th Naval District
 Captain of the Port, New York

On 7 May, 1941, while proceeding to the entrance of the Chesapeake Capes, passed through the mine field area and disregarded a shot fired across his bow for the purpose of heaving his to. On being questioned at this office the Captain of the RIO IGUAZU, Bernardino Gonzalez, stated that prior his departure New York he was not issued any instructions or advised conditions at the entrance of the Chesapeake Capes. When asked why he did not heave to when the shot was placed across his bow, he stated that he was unaware of any such shot being fired. When this vessel approached the entrance of above date it was very busy and the reason he did not see the Pilot Boat was that he was too far to the northeast, which is explained under inclosure (A).

2. Captain Bernardino Gonzalez further stated that when he left New York and after proceeding down the Bay, he was stopped by a Coast Guard Vessel who asked for his permit to depart, etc. When this Coast Guard Officer was advised that all the RIO IGUAZU had was signal letters, Captain Gonzalez was directed to return New York for proper papers. Captain Gonzalez stated that he returned to New York and was advised by the Navy that he did not need anything and to go ahead, this he did.

3. The Port Director's Office at the Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia was contacted and asked to advise this office concerning the movements of Argentina vessels, and that office advised that they were not interested in vessels of this nationality.

4. It seems these ships, prior their departure from U.S. ports, should at least be informed as to the locations of

601 CONFIDENTIAL

Norfolk, Virginia

May 11, 1942

From: Captain of the Port, Norfolk, Virginia.
To: Commandant, Coast Guard Headquarters.

Subject: Argentina MV RIO IGUAZU; violation of mine field
vicinity of Cape Henry, Virginia.

Inclosure: (A) Questionnaire of Captain Bernardino Gonzalezs
of the Argentina MV RIO IGUAZU.

1. The RIO IGUAZU on 7 May, 1941, while proceeding to the entrance of the Chesapeake Capes, passed through the mine field area and disregarded a shot fired across his bow for the purpose of heaving him to. On being questioned at this office the Captain of the RIO IGUAZU, Bernardino Gonzalezs, stated that prior his departure New York he was not issued any instructions or advised conditions at the entrance of the Chesapeake Capes. When asked why he did not heave to when the shot was placed across his bow, he stated that he was unaware of any such shot being fired. When this vessel approached the entrance on above date it was very hazy and the reason he did not see the Pilot Boat was that he was too far to the northeast, which is explained under inclosure (A).

2. Captain Bernardino Gonzalezs further stated that when he left New York and after proceeding down the Bay, he was stopped by a Coast Guard Vessel who asked for his permit to depart, etc. When this Coast Guard Officer was advised that all the RIO IGUAZU had was signal letters, Captain Gonzalezs was directed to return New York for proper papers. Captain Gonzalezs stated that he returned to New York and was advised by the Navy that he did not need anything and to go ahead, this he did.

3. The Port Director's Office at the Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia was contacted and asked to advise this office concerning the movements of Argentina vessels, and that office advised that they were not interested in vessels of this nationality.

4. It seems these ships, prior their departure from U.S. ports, should at least be informed as to the locations of