New York Times, Feb. 19, 1942



The E. H. Blum, One of Largest in World, Shaken by 3 Blasts, but She May Not Have Sunk

CREW SAFE AT NORFOLK

They Differ on How the Vessel Was Attacked—11,615-Ton **Craft Under Sealed Orders**

The 11,615-ton tanker E. H. Blum, owned by the Atlantic Refining Company, was damaged by three violent explosions spaced about fifteen minutes apart as she was proceeding off the Atlantic coast Monday evening, the Navy Department announced yesterday. Frunumos Buin Her entire

The Air Ministry issued the foland yesterday.

nand off the south rol yesterday. An enemy fighter was destroyed y aircraft of the Fighter Com-

command are missing from pahese operations. Two sircraft of the Coastal No aircraft is missing from

Fermany.

Last night a small force of air-raft of the Bomber Command thacked objectives in Northwest :จุกษุณกานขอว ธนาก

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The Air Ministry issued the fol .TSSIUT

aug-doni-tagis auo uo SIL ruisers on their way back to arbor and scored two torpedo vas seen to be on fire and tropping astern of her consorts. Later one of our submarines in-ercepted some of the enemy. ult, one of the enemy cruisers

nd attacked with torpedoes. Hits were scored on two cruis-rs and one destroyer. As a rehe enemy cruisers and destroy-rs were located by naval aircraft As was announced in yester-ay's Middle East communique, elves severely handled.

Mines or Torpedoes Wreck Big Tanker Off U.S. East Coast; Crew of 40 Rescued

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Fla., who was on lookout at the Blum, said that he sent out an E. H. Blum was torpedoed.

"I saw a light, which I took to be the mast light of another ship, about seventy-five yards off the starboard bow," he told The Associated Press. "I reported this light to the bridge and about fifteen seconds later the captain ordered full speed ahead and hard right. Then there was an explosion and the bow came up five or six feet. I thought we had rammed a submarine. The tanker listed to port.

"The captain gave the order to stand by the lifeboats but not to lower away. Fifteen minutes later there was a second explosion and the skipper gave the order to abandon ship. After the second blast the ship stopped dead. That is why I believe the third explosion, which took place after my lifeboat had, left the tanker, must have been from a torpedo, because a motionless ship could not run into a mine.

All On Starboard Side

Thomas said that judging by the sound of the explosions all three were on the starboard side, one amidships and the other two aft. He said the second explosion put out all the ship's lights and left the crew in darkness.

J. H. Herringer, quatrermaster, of Port Arthur, Texas, who was also on watch, told The United Press that he believed the tanker hit a mine.

"There were no flashes from any of the explosions," he said. "After the first explosion I could hear the air coming up through the vents. It was near amidships. We were traveling at half speed, our running lights were on and our fog horn was blowing. I heard the captain's order for full speed ahead, hard to the right. Just as the order was relayed to me the first explosion came."

W. Hammer of Philadelphia, first radio operator of the E. H. had a speed of 13.25 knots.

time of the first explosion, was one SOS immediately after the first of those who was positive that the explosion, and then stood by his lifeboat. He was "certain" that the tanker was torpedoed.

> "I have never been torpedoed before, but the ship was stopped dead still after the first hit," he said. "When the second and third hits came her motors were dead. Although she wallowed in a choppy sea there was no forward motion."

Holds to Mine Theory

Fireman Irving Blumenberg, who was on duty in the engine room, leaned to the mine theory on the ground that "the bulkheads sort of collapsed" instead of "blowing upward as they would have done if we had been struck by torpedoes." Boatswain John Johansen of Larvik, Norway, said he believed the ship had struck a mine because he saw no "explosion flashes."

One of the most graphic accounts came from a survivor who had no opinion as to whether a mine or a torpedo caused the damage to the E. H. Blum. He was B. J. Watson of Philadelphia, a seaman, who was taking a shower when the first

explosion jarred the ship. "I was naked," he said. "I ran up on deck, stood by my lifeboat just long enough to see that I would rather die with some warm clothes on than to be saved without. I ran back to my locker and got dressed. By the time I got back to my lifeboat the second explosion came and we abandoned ship. That's all I know."

The E. H. Blum had sailed from Philadelphia under sealed orders.

The E. H. Blum was launched last March 15 at the yards of the Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, Chester, Pa., and was one of the largest all-welded tankers in the world. Five hundred and twenty-one feet long, she carried 154,000 barrels of oil in twentyseven tanks. She was fitted with pumps that enabled her to discharge her cargo in nine hours and