NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON

Op-16-B-5
CONFIDENTIAL

I.O.F.

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MEMORANDUM FOR FILE

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the S/S EDGAR ALLEN POE, American freighter, 7176 G.T., owners, U.S.Maritime Commission, chartered to Weyerhaeuser Steamship Company.

1. The EDGAR ALLEN POE was torpedoed without warning at 1947 (Noumea, New Caledonia time) on November 8, 1942, 56 miles southeast of Amedee Light, Noumea, while enroute from Noumea to Espiritu Santo Island, with 2500 to 3000 tons of Naval war cargo. The vessel did not sink, and with all cargo saved, was towed back to Noumea with the master, a portion of the crew and armed guard on board, by the New Zealand ship MATAI, and later was assisted by the ship KIWI.

2. She was on course 124° true, speed 10½ knots, zigzagging pattern No. 11, since 1700, November 8, blacked out, 12 lookouts; 3 on bridge, 3 on forward gun deck, 2 in bridge machine gun turrets, and 4 on after gun deck. The weather was moderate, sea small, SE wind, force 4, visibility fair, no ships in sight.

3. The torpedo struck amidship on the port side completely demolishing the engine room; boilers blew up, engine lying on its' side on the starboard floor plates, storerooms blown in, engine room trunk bulged, lower decks lifted, and a great deal of damage throughout the midship structure. All bulkheads held but they were apparently weakened, no water in any cargo space. A hole 28x40' was blown in the port side by the very loud explosion. The ships' mechanism stopped immediately. No distress signals sent, radio destroyed by explosion. Torpedo track seen 25 yards away, but no avoiding action could be taken. The sub surfaced about six minutes after torpedo struck and the armed guard immediately opened fire at a range of 300 yards. Two shots were fired from the forward 3" gun, 1 from the stern 4" gun, and machine guns on afterdeck. The survivors were positive that one 4" shell made a hit and at least one of the 3" shells as great flares and explosions were seen and heard from the sub. Some of the survivors were positive that the sub fired some machine gun blasts at the ship and also one large shell. Confidential codes were thrown overboard in a weighted bag.

4. The crew began lowering the lifeboats and rafts on starboard side at approximately 2005. The lifeboats took the rafts in tow and they drifted during the night. At 0800, November 9, boats were sighted by a plane and at 1630 the survivors were picked up by the USS RUSSELL and landed at Noumea. Out of a total complement on board, including 38 crew members, 14 armed guard and 20 passengers, all were rescued except 2 of the crew who were killed.

5. The sub was large, painted black, no streaks or stripes noticeable; conning tower was oblong and there seemed to be a smaller after-

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tower, not certain whether sub had guns or not. As soon as the counter offensive started the sub crash dived and disappeared from sight at 1954.

6. The 4"-50 ready boxes were shaken badly by the explosion, causing all the shells to move forward and freeze themselves in the cylinders in which they lay. Only two shells could be gotten out.

H. V. STEBBINS
Lieut., U.S.N.R.

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