

NO. 1124

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AMERICAN CONSULATE

Bombay, India, November 29, 1943.

SUBJECT: Assault and Stabbing Incident at Bombay
on Board the s.s. Esso Baytown

1-1055

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

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SIR:

I have the honor to enclose a copy of a memorandum prepared in this office relative to a recent incident at Bombay in which one of two American seamen participants suffered superficial knife wounds. The Department may construe it appropriate to furnish a copy of the enclosed memorandum to the Merchant Marine Personnel Records and Welfare Section of the United States Coast Guard.

Respectfully yours,

Howard Donovan
American Consul

Enclosure: ✓

Copy of memorandum

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File
Donovan
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Merchant Marine
Library

AIR MAIL

Enclosure to Despatch no. 1124 dated November 29, 1943 from Howard Donovan, American Consul, Bombay, India, on subject of "Assault and Stabbing Incident at Bombay on Board the s.s. Esso Baytown"

AMERICAN CONSULATE

Bombay, India, November 25, 1943.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

On Sunday, November 21, 1943, Vice Consul Thurston received a telephone call from the U.S. Naval Liaison Officer at Bombay to the effect that, according to information which the Naval Liaison Officer had just received from the local police authorities, one Harvey Coxhead, a seaman on the American tanker Esso Baytown, had been arrested by the police on the previous evening in connection with a stabbing incident which took place on the vessel. It appears that another seaman on the vessel named Anthony S. Deklerow had returned to the vessel in a highly intoxicated condition, had assaulted Coxhead in consequence of an argument which had occurred ashore earlier in the evening, and that Deklerow had been stabbed by Coxhead in the course of the altercation, suffering superficial knife wounds in the chest and right hand.

It appears that the police had contacted the Naval Liaison Officer in the belief that the United States Navy might wish to exercise jurisdiction in the case. Mr. Thurston informed the Naval Liaison Officer that the whole affair came properly within the jurisdiction of the local police authorities, as both seamen concerned were ordinary merchant seamen.

The Master of the Esso Baytown, Mr. O. Faran, called at the Consulate on November 22 and made a full verbal report on the incident. Coxhead appeared at the office later in the day, in police custody, and arrangements were made through Inspector Neale to have Coxhead's trial expedited in order that he would be enabled to depart with the vessel if he were acquitted on the grounds of self-defence. Accordingly the hearing was scheduled for 10.30 a.m. on November 24. On the basis of testimony offered at this hearing, at which both Deklerow and Coxhead were in attendance, the Magistrate is understood to have decided that Deklerow had been the aggressor and that there was insufficient cause to hold Coxhead for prosecution. He was accordingly discharged. The Magistrate is understood to have made an effort to reconcile the differences of the two seamen but Deklerow would not acquiesce. Captain

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Faran informed me later that Deklerow stated before the Magistrate that he was not through with Coxhead and that he would 'have his turn' later.

Subsequent to his discharge and prior to his return to his vessel, I took the opportunity to point out to Coxhead the possible consequences of any further misconduct on his part. He stated that he deeply regretted the whole affair and that he would do everything in his power to avert any similar incident in the future. He expressed a fear for his life if he and Deklerow were to continue on the same vessel, however, and stated his belief that it would be to everyone's advantage if either he or Deklerow were left behind at Bombay.

It had been the intention of all concerned to have Deklerow depart from Bombay with his vessel but at the last moment the medical authorities at St. George's Hospital, where he was being treated, decided that the wound in his right hand might become infected and that it would be unwise for him to leave. Accordingly, with the knowledge and acquiescence of this office, Deklerow was left behind. There was insufficient time formally to sign him off but Captain Faran undertook to have his personal effects and his wage-account sent ashore to the agents. He is to be formally signed off the articles at the next available consular office.

Charles O. Thompson
American Vice Consul

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Copies to:

The Standard-Vacuum Oil Company, Bombay
U.S. War Shipping Administration, Bombay
U.S. Naval Liaison Officer, Bombay