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1942 OCT 3 AM 10 35
Habana, Cuba, September 25, 1942

AIRMAIL

No. 1123

Subject: Misconduct of two members of the crew of the
American vessel FIRMORE.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

1/ In accordance with the provisions of the Department's circular instruction of July 18, 1942 (file No. 195.2117) entitled "Control of Merchant Shipping", I have the honor to enclose a report, received through the office of the Naval Attaché, prepared by the second officer of the American vessel FIRMORE and delivered by the master of that vessel. The report in question concerns the misconduct while intoxicated of John Henriksen (Norwegian, aged 43 years) and Ira Van Hornor (American citizen, aged 44 years), employed as quartermasters aboard the vessel in question. The report also contains observations regarding certain activities of the gun crew aboard the vessel.

The vessel FIRMORE is not returning directly to a port in the United States, and while in Habana harbor the master has been instructed in writing to refuse shore leave to the members of the crew mentioned above and to prohibit any members of the crew taking intoxicating liquor aboard.

Respectfully yours,
For the Ambassador:

Harold S. Tewell
American Consul General

Enclosure

C O P Y

Havana, Cuba.
Sept. 22, 1942.

I, Thomas J. Brady 2nd Officer of the S/S FIDORE on duty on the night of September 21, 1942. lying at the Havana Coal Dock discharging cargo, did see one John Henriksen quartermaster of said ship, assault one Claude Fowler, able seaman of said ship, without provocation, tearing Fowler's shirt from his body, and throwing him to the deck. I then persuaded Henriksen to stop fighting and leave his unwilling opponent, and go about his own business. Through this action Fowler suffered no aparent bodily injuries. This action started about 10:45 P.M.

Henriksen was quiet for about ten (10) minutes, when he found another victim one William Kirk, ordinary seaman of the ship's crew. After threatening Kirk to some extent and challenging him to fight, I again interceded and asked Henriksen to leave everyone alone because they did not want to fight, and that he had better turn in or I would have him put in irons. I then returned to the port quarter deck and was followed by Henriksen who rushed at me with fury knocking me to the deck, and wrestling a policeman's night stick from me which I was carrying for self protection, he then swung the night stick at my head, and at the same time pushed me down a ladder leading to the main deck. Now armed with the night stick he followed me to my quarters amidship shouting that he was going to kill me. I seeing now that he was out of control, made for the gangway, and ashore where I reported the incident to the Police, asking them to come aboard and arrest Henriksen.

Five (5) uniformed Havana Harbor Police returned to the ship with me in about ten (10) minutes. We were met at the gangway by a number of the ship's crew, and to my knowledge three (3) U.S. Navy gunners, two (2) of such gunners were armed with regulation .45 cal. automatics, namely Doughty and Blair. We were informed by some members of the ship's crew that Henriksen was below decks and quiet, that he had no more fight in him. I then agreed to drop my request for his arrest, providing he turned in and went to sleep, realizing that he was in a drunken condition. But Claude Fowler demanded his arrest immediately, and I quote his words; "If you do not arrest John Henriksen now, and remove him from the ship I will go ashore and have the American Consul do it."

The question was then brought up by Blair, a U.S. Navy gunner, on who had the authority to board an American ship to arrest a man. It was quickly decided by Blair and John Dembrow able seaman of the ship's crew, that the Havana Harbor Police were out of bounds, and they were ordered off the ship by said Blair and Dembrow. The Police refused to leave the ship, and offered no resistance until attack by one Ira Van Wormer, quartermaster of the ship's crew, who struck one Policeman on the left side of his face. Then the Police cleared the decks with night sticks, taking Van Wormer from

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the ship and to the Police Station. To my knowledge the only member of the ship's crew, or the U.S. Navy gun crew who struck a blow at the Police was Van Wormer. The other men who offered resistance to the Police were, John Deabrow of the ship's crew, and Blair of the U.S. Navy gun crew, they tried to crowd the police to the gangway.

I was then told by the Police that they would call the Cuban Navy aboard the ship and arrest everyone on board. This information got to U.S. Navy gunner Blair, who told me to inform the Police that if the Cuban Navy attempted to board the ship they would be met at the gangway with U.S. Navy bullets. I relayed this message to the Police, so they withdrew, deciding against any possible bloodshed.

Not mentioned here before, Claude Fowler of the ship's crew was taken ashore by the Police at his own request, about two (2) minutes before the fight with the Police mentioned herein, started.

Thomas J. Brady
2nd Officer S/S FIREORE

(Sgd) Thomas J. Brady