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NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

Op-16-B-5

18 April 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR FILESALL TIMES GMT

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS FORT McLEOD, British Merchant Ship, 7127 G.T., owned by the Ministry of War Transport, and operated by the Glen Line.

1. The FORT McLEOD was torpedoed at approximately 1633 GMT, 3 March 1944, in 02.01 N - 77.06 E, having sailed from Colombo 2 March to Durban, with 700 tons of general cargo. Ship sank at 2000.
2. Ship was on a mean course 203°, speed 10 knots, zigzagging, sea moderate with swells, wind NW force 3, visibility good.
3. At 1633 a torpedo struck on the starboard side at the propeller, immobilizing the ship as the propulsion and steering gear were put out of action. At 1740 a second torpedo struck on starboard side in vicinity of #4 hatch. At 1900 it is presumed a third torpedo struck as there was a further explosion. The sub surfaced at 1930 and fired approximately 7 rounds into the ship before she finally sank. A distress signal was sent and answered. At about 1710 a BAMS message was received indicating an enemy sub about 40 miles to the eastward. No counter offensive offered. Gun crew was commended by the master for staying at their stations and manning the guns. None were fired, although the sub was in the vicinity of ship before it was finally abandoned. No information available on confidential codes.
4. As the master had not seen the sub he ordered ship abandoned at 1700 with the intention of reboarding at daylight if no further attack developed. Four lifeboats were lowered but personnel was put into 2 boats as the other 2 were taking water. At 1100, 4 March, a Liberator plane sighted the survivors and at 0600, 6 March, they were picked up by the HM TRAWLER SLUNA and landed at Colombo at 0230, 8 March. Total complement on board was 49, including 9 gunners; all 49 survived.
5. The sub circled the ship at 1900 and surfaced at 1930. It appeared large, although it was indistinct, no other description available.
6. The Aluslo Colombo stated that as has been the case with so many sinkings in the Indian Ocean area, recently reported, it would appear that had the guns been fired, even though the sub's position was not precisely known, there might have been a chance that the sub could have been driven off and the ship saved.

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