

CONFIDENTIAL

S/S James Fergus

File No. 44-7

21 April 1944

From: Lt.(jg) Robert P. McCormick  
Armed Guard Commander  
To: United States Naval Attache  
Montevideo, Uruguay

Subject: S/S James Fergus, fire on flying bridge of.

1. At approximately 1115 today fire was discovered in the flag-bag on the port side of the flying bridge of this ship. The fire was extinguished by means of fire hoses and a fire extinguisher within ten to twelve minutes.

2. Smoke was first observed by Henry Magdalinski, O.S., who reported it to Cornelis Van den Berg, Boatswain, who in turn informed the mate on watch.

3. As a result of the fire, seventy-two flags and pennants are eighty to ninety percent damaged, the flag-bag sufficiently damaged to render it unuseable, and the canvas bag cover and wind protector completely destroyed. The contents of the flag-bag are as follows:

One set of alphabet flags, complete.

Two sets of numeral pennants.

Two sets of repeaters.

Two Easy flags.

Two Code pennants.

One each of the following flags: Baker, Dog, George, Item, King, Negat, Sugar, William, X-ray.

Seven miscellaneous flags.

4. The fire was, in all probability, caused by particles of burning foot from the ship's funnel. After the fire such particles were observed to be falling on the deck in the vicinity of the flag-bag. Also, at 1320 two life jackets were seen burning in lifeboat number two, apparently caused by sparks from the same source. There was no evidence of sabotage. The bag was last inspected by John T. Castimore, SM3/c, at 0900 today, at which time everything was in order.

5. It will be necessary for the interior of the flag-bag to be completely re-lined if the signalling on this ship is to be carried on efficiently. There remains on the ship one complete set of flags plus duplicates for approximately thirty-five miscellaneous flags and pennants.

6. The use of metal flag-bag covers in place of canvas covers would aid greatly in preventing the recurrence of such fires as this. Fireproof life jackets are also highly desirable.

/s/ Robert P. McCormick

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