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

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Op-16-B-5

2 May 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR FILEALL TIMES GCT

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors SS JARED INGERSOLL, U. S. Freighter, 7191 G.T., owned by War Shipping Administration and operated by the American West African Lines.

1. The JARED INGERSOLL was damaged by an aerial torpedo at 0312 GCT, 1 April 1944, in 36.46 N - 01.44 E, or about 45 miles NW of Algiers, having sailed from Charleston, S.C., 10 March in convoy UGS-36 for the Persian Gulf, with a cargo of Army and lend-lease equipment and mail, draft 24'6" forward, 28'4" aft. Ship did not sink, but was towed by HMRT TALBOT and USS MILLS (DE-383) to Algiers harbor and beached in about 45' of water.
2. Ship was on course 087° true, speed 8 knots, degaussing on, not zig-zagging, convoy position #93, radio silent, blacked out, 8 lookouts; 2 on bow, 4 on bridge and 2 on aft gun platform. The weather was clear, sea smooth, no moonlight, visibility was impaired by the smoke screen laid down by the escort from early evening on. Other ships of convoy in sight.
3. At 0300, just as the watch was about to be relieved, flares were dropped from overhead and at 0312 the wake of a torpedo was seen by a Navy lookout, on a reciprocal course off the port bow. Torpedo veered toward the ship, struck on port side slightly below the waterline at #1 hold. Fire immediately started in #1 hold which flooded rapidly. No. 2 hold flooded slowly; at 0400 there was 45½" of water, 0800 - 86", 0830 - 98", and when ship was beached 156". Attempts were made to fight the fire without much success. Forward 3" gun knocked out. Five minutes after first explosion a second explosion occurred in same place and was of about the same intensity. No explanation has been offered to account for this but as some of cargo consisted of oil drums, it is believed these were the cause. Communication to engine room out, engines secured immediately after second explosion. Mail and pallets burned in #1 shelter deck. Forward magazine was flooded and ship abandoned. About 0630 when it was evident ship was not going down, survivors on the MILLS were put back on board. The engine room gang was able to stop flooding in engine room caused by a break in the line to forepeak tank. Again fire could not be put out and the MILLS was called alongside again and ship abandoned a second time after 0800. At 0930 the C.O. of the MILLS decided to take a hand in fighting the fire, came alongside, put his own firefighting crew aboard and with one hose put out the fire. Fire was still smouldering when ship arrived at Algiers. The merchant crew was not allowed aboard until ship was beached. A distress signal was sent. 20 mm opened fire immediately after escort vessels started firing. The 8 - 20 mm's fired about 4 magazines each at a rate of 300 rounds per minute. The gun crew manning the aft 20 mm on port side claims to have hit one of the planes and to have seen it crash into the sea. Confidential codes, except Mersigs (Br. 637) which is in the Captain's possession, were thrown overboard in a weighted box.

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4/24

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Op-16-B-5

2 May 1944

4. Ship was abandoned, upon orders from the Captain, in 4 lifeboats. Two were picked up by the MILLS and two by the HMRT TALBOT. Survivors were put back on board the ship at Algiers. Total complement on board was 70, including 41 crew, 28 Armed Guard and 1 U.S. Army security officer; all 70 survived.

5. Three planes were seen not in formation and described as JU-88's flying on a reciprocal course off port side at high speed. The attackers were evidently dispersed by Beaufighters.

6. There were 200 bags of mail and secret Army publications and material salvaged.

BARBARA A. COMARD,
Ensign, W-V(S), USNR.

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5 MAY 1944

Op-16-B-2

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