

Alleged sabotage UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
aboard Ship #275, S. S. JOHN MCKINLEY
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

OFFICE
DISTRICT COAST GUARD OFFICER
FOURTH NAVAL DISTRICT

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DECLASSIFIED
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By JH NARA. Date 5/23/17

17 April, 1944

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

Subj: Alleged sabotage of fire extinguishing equipment
aboard Ship #275, S. S. JOHN MCKINLEY(American),
Pier 96 South, Delaware River, Philadelphia, Pa.;

SUMMARY

Investigation revealed that the carbon dioxide equipment and the contents of the Cylinder Room had not been molested. The key was not located, and the cause of the damage to the key-box was not determined.

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

1. In compliance with your request an investigation was conducted, regarding the Subject.
2. At 1500 on 14 April, 1944, Harold B. HESS, (04190-930), C.B.M., Platoon #4, VPSF, reported that during his tour of inspection he discovered that the glass was broken and the key was missing from the key-box which is part of the fire extinguisher system installed on Ship #275, S. S. JOHN MCKINLEY(American), moored at Pier 96 South, Delaware River, Philadelphia, Pa.
3. Investigation revealed that the Lux Fire Extinguisher Box, manufactured by Walter Kidde and Company, Bloomfield, N. J., is standard equipment on "Liberty Ships", and was located on the bulkhead of the Steward's store room alley-way, port. The box was installed to contain a key for the Cylinder Control Room, which is used to store tanks of Carbon Dioxide gas to be released in the case of a fire in the engine room. The key-box had a glass cover prior to the discovery that the key was missing. There was no trace of broken glass in the box or on the deck. By removing four screws it is possible to gain access to the key without breaking the glass. Upon examination of the CO² tanks in the control room, it was revealed that the containers were intact and apparently had not been molested. The release handles were in "off" position

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and the wire and lead seals of the dust-laden tanks were secure. In the case of an emergency this CO² room can be controlled more conveniently from the switch in the main deck passage-way amid-ships, which acts independent of the Subject key-box.

4. Captain William RHODES, Fire Prevention Department, Port of Embarkation, U. S. Army, examined the CO² room and stated that evidently the tanks had not been disturbed, but possible escape of gas could not be positively determined without gauging with instruments.

5. W. H. EDMUNDS, Third Assistant Engineer, was interviewed and stated that he has not been aware that the key-box was broken, and the key was missing. He recalled the key-box being intact when he came aboard the vessel a week ago in Baltimore. He stated that there were three keys aboard for the Control Room, one in possession of the Chief Engineer, one for the Engineering Officer on watch, and one was in the key-box. EDMUNDS mentioned that possibly the motive for any person to take the key was to gain access to engine room stores that were kept in the control room. The stores consisted of flash-lights, wrenches and sundry tools. A superficial check-up did not disclose anything missing. After he inspected the equipment and supplies, he maintained that everything was in "ship-shape", and that it was probable that some stevedore had broken the key-box glass accidentally while they were stowing stores in Baltimore. EDMUNDS immediately replaced the lock on the Control Room and kept the new keys in his possession until the key-box was repaired.

6. George LERAND, Chief Steward, and Milton USTAZEWSKI, Messman, concurred in their statements that when the deck of the ship was swept while in the Port of Philadelphia, since 11 April, 1944, there was no trace of broken glass from the key-box. Stores were taken aboard in Baltimore, but no one had reported breaking the key-box.

7. PETERSON and MOHRMAN, FBI agents arrived on the scene at 1615.

8. Lieutenant (jg) DOUGHERTY, USCG, Custom House, Philadelphia, Pa., requested the investigator to notify him at Market 6000, Extension 377, if it is determined that a member of the ship's crew is responsible for the damage to the key-box.

9. No member of the Military Intelligence was contacted aboard the ship. One was seen to have left the ship prior to 1530.

WILLIAM LAINE
Investigator