

3 April, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF, MERCHANT MARINE INSPECTION DIVISION

Subj: Nested lifeboats on liberty vessels

1. The JOSE NAVARRO was torpedoed and sunk off the Southeast coast of India on 27 December, 1943. This vessel had 166 persons on board consisting of 34 Gun Crew, 46 Merchant Crew and 86 Military Passengers, all of whom survived this disaster.

2. This vessel was fitted with 8 lifeboats under four sets of davits. The lower boats were 450 cu. ft. and the nested boats were 310 cu. ft. In this casualty the vessel was struck at 0412, the order to abandon was given at 0430, and the vessel was abandoned at 0500. The Master was particularly emphatic at the investigation that lifeboats should not be nested on liberty type vessels, as in the event of a casualty with attendant rough weather, or listing of the vessel, the lifeboats could not be launched, and in this connection the Master stated as follows:

"Nested boats should not be on vessels in war-time. In three experiences I found you haven't time to launch the boats with double banks, because you have the bottom boats in the way. It was proven in New Orleans. It took 35 minutes on the four boats, with my merchant crew. I protested myself on it, but they said they couldn't do anything about it, because the U.S.A. requires it."

3. In view of the foregoing, it would appear desirable to review the feasibility of approving the nesting of lifeboats on liberty vessels, and the issuance of definite instructions with respect thereto.

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