

IN REPLY PLEASE  
REFER TO:

EN3-11/HAV  
Ships K  
L-129-44  
(JCH:1a)

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OFFICE OF NAVAL ATTACHE AND NAVAL ATTACHE FOR AIR  
AMERICAN EMBASSY  
HAVANA, CUBA

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4 October 1944

To Colonel John N. Hart, USA  
Naval and Air Attache  
American Embassy

From: Naval Attaché and Naval Attaché for Air, Havana, Cuba.  
To: Director of Naval Intelligence.

Subj: SS KATRINA LUCKENBACH (US), SS JULIAN ALONSO (Cuban) -  
Collision of.

Ref: (a) DNI conf ltr 01023916, 9 Aug 44, same subj.

Encl: (A) Translation of report furnished by Cuban Navy.

1. Pursuant to reference (a), which requested any additional information concerning subject, this attaché has secured from the Cuban Navy, a transcript of the report made to it by Empresa Naviera de Cuba, owner of the JULIAN ALONSO.
2. Enclosure (A) is a translation thereof and is forwarded since it contains some further information concerning the resultant legal action, damages claimed, etc.

At that time the Commander of the United States Naval escort vessel SC-23, ordered a two-column parallel formation, the first comprised of the SHARON, STEEL ELECTRICIAN and SEATRINE NEW ORLEANS and the second to starboard of the first being formed by the KATRINA LUCKENBACH, JULIAN ALONSO and PAE ORLEANS.

JOHN N. HART

On two occasions the captain of the JULIAN ALONSO was given his only instructions for sailing in the convoy, i.e., to follow the wake of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH. The JULIAN ALONSO did not have radio communications and had no means for receiving signals from the other ships. The convoy guide was the SHARON and the guide of the second column was the KATRINA LUCKENBACH.

At about 9:30 P.M. the course of the convoy was altered to starboard. At about 9:45 P.M. the KATRINA LUCKENBACH stopped and turned to port until it was on a course of 34 degrees. The JULIAN ALONSO, carrying out its instructions of following the wake of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH, continued behind, although it did not follow the course of the other ships.

As the KATRINA LUCKENBACH, followed by the other two ships, crossed in front of the SHARON, the latter began blowing its whistle as a signal of danger. The time was approximately 11:20 P.M. The KATRINA LUCKENBACH then turned sharply to starboard. The JULIAN ALONSO maneuvered likewise in order to follow the wake of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH, but suddenly the latter ship stopped its engines and pro-

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MERCHANT MARINE  
INSPECTION DIVISION

*Pls. Index  
file X-45 Katrina Luckenbach - vol 1 (10)  
X-5/5 Julian Alonso (1)  
X-hav. Int. Office as reqd (7)*

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Republica de Cuba  
Marina de Guerra

Department of Inspection  
Vedado, La Habana, September 27, 1944

MEMORANDUM

To Colonel John N. Hart, USMC  
Naval and Air Attaché  
American Embassy

Subj: Collision JULIAN ALONSO - KATRINA LUCKENBACH  
4 August 1942.

With respect to your request for information regarding the collision on 4 August 1942 of the steamers JULIAN ALONSO and KATRINA LUCKENBACH in the vicinity of Key West, Florida, there is quoted below a report submitted to this Department by the Empresa Naviera de Cuba.

"That on 4 August 1942, at about 6:16 P.M., the steamers JULIAN ALONSO and KATRINA LUCKENBACH departed the port of Key West for Habana, as part of a convoy in a single column formation comprised of the following vessels in their order of position: SHARON, STEEL ELECTRICIAN, SEATRAN NEW ORLEANS, KATRINA LUCKENBACH, JULIAN ALONSO and PAN ORLEANS. The convoy continued in this formation until about 7:51 P.M. when it was in the vicinity of the light ship which marks the entrance of a mined area.

"At that time the Commander of the United States Naval escort vessel SC-23, ordered a two-column parallel formation, the first comprised of the SHARON, STEEL ELECTRICIAN and SEATRAN NEW ORLEANS and the second to starboard of the first being formed by the KATRINA LUCKENBACH, JULIAN ALONSO and PAN ORLEANS.

"On two occasions the captain of the JULIAN ALONSO was given his only instructions for sailing in the convoy, i.e., to follow the wake of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH. The JULIAN ALONSO did not have radio communications and had no means for receiving signals from the others. The convoy guide was the SHARON and the guide of the starboard column was the KATRINA LUCKENBACH.

"At 9 P.M. the course of the convoy was changed to North 86° W. At about 9:10 the KATRINA LUCKENBACH started to drop gradually to port until it reached a course of S. 34° W. The JULIAN ALONSO, carrying out its instructions of following the wake of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH, continued behind, although it saw no change in the course of the other column.

"As the KATRINA LUCKENBACH, followed by the other two ships, crossed in front of the SHARON, the latter began blowing its whistle as a signal of danger. The time was approximately 9:20 P.M. The KATRINA LUCKENBACH then turned sharply to starboard. The JULIAN ALONSO maneuvered likewise in order to follow the wake of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH, but suddenly the latter ship stopped its engines and pro-

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Page 1 Encl. (A) to NA Havana L-129-44

ceeded full speed astern causing the ship to fall away more and more to starboard, closing the gap between it and the JULIAN ALONSO. Upon seeing the KATRINA LUCKENBACH's maneuver, the JULIAN ALONSO also proceeded astern, giving the regulation blasts of the whistle and veering to the starboard as much as possible to avoid the collision, but this was impossible due to the sudden and unexpected maneuver of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH. The bow of the JULIAN ALONSO struck the starboard side just above the first hatch at approximately right angles, but by reason of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH's maneuver, when veering to starboard, dragged the JULIAN ALONSO along, causing the two ships to arrive at a bow-to-bow position in a straight line, the bow of the JULIAN ALONSO having been dragged in the direction which the KATRINA LUCKENBACH was going, that is, astern. The ships were sailing with about 5000 yards between them, and approximately the same distance was maintained between the two columns.

"From the foregoing it will be noted that the KATRINA LUCKENBACH did not maintain the position which had been assigned her in the convoy; that she did not keep the right course; that she changed her course to starboard without warning and later, again without warning, stopped and backed causing the collision with the ship following, the JULIAN ALONSO.

"The JULIAN ALONSO returned to Key West where it received temporary repairs, and later returned to Habana on 12 August 1942 where it received permanent repairs at the yards of the Empresa Naviera de Cuba, owner of the ship. This permitted repairing the vessel with a minimum cost amounting to \$36,776.45. The captain of the JULIAN ALONSO filed the proper protest before the Cuban Consul at Key West and with the Captain of the Port of Habana.

"The KATRINA LUCKENBACH continued on its course to Habana in the same convoy on 4 August and was repaired in the Habana yards of Mr. Palmer of the Compañia de Fomento Maritima. The owners claim the amount of \$70,000 for damages and losses. The Compañia de Fomento Maritimo charged \$24,120 for repairs made, but in addition the owners claim \$17,990 for cost of layover of the vessel and the balance for losses.

"Repairs on the JULIAN ALONSO took 59 days, without any overtime being paid, and amounted to only \$23,788.80. The KATRINA LUCKENBACH entered on 5 August 1942 and left on 19 August of the same year, although it is presumed that several days were lost awaiting the formation of another convoy.

Gaspar Maspons Jordan, M.N.Y.M.  
Captain

"About the middle of 1943 the company which owns the KATRINA LUCKENBACH filed suit in the Southern District Court in the State of Florida, U. S., claiming the sum of \$70,000 for damages and losses from Empresa Naviera de Cuba. This claim was contested by the latter company, which made a counterclaim in the sum of \$36,776.45 for damages and losses, which actually amounted to much more due to the fact that the figure given was a very conservative estimate.

"The attorneys for the KATRINA LUCKENBACH have recently declared that the total amount of damages and losses amount to \$86,119.05.

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"If the JULIAN ALONSO had been repaired in the yards of the Compañia de Fomento Maritima, it is calculated that the cost thereof would have been \$50,000.

"At the hearings being carried out in the United States the only statements made have been by the Captains of the SHARON and the KATRINA LUCKENBACH.

"On 29 February 1944, statement was taken in New York from Mr. Fred Kornick, Captain of the KATRINA LUCKENBACH. In his statement, Mr. Kornick admitted that the KATRINA LUCKENBACH stopped completely four or five times between 8:30 and 9:20 P.M. and that such maneuvers would have imperiled the ship which followed. He also admitted that the escort vessel signalled him at 9:15 to maintain his position in the convoy, that he had difficulty in maintaining his position opposite the SHARON due to the slow speed at which the convoy was sailing; that at 9:15 he was advised by the escort ship to maintain his position in the convoy, and at 9:20 he stopped his engines; at this time he was then able to see the SHARON at a distance of 900 feet; that when he arrived at the starboard end of the bridge he observed a ship nearing his; that it turned out to be the JULIAN ALONSO and that he then ordered full speed astern because the KATRINA LUCKENBACH has a greater reverse speed than forward.

"On 15 August 1943 Mr. Dale E. Barr, Captain of the SHARON, with 13 years experience as a Master, declared that at approximately 9:20 P.M. the LUCKENBACH turned sharply to the left and crossed his bow at about 100 yards distance without having given a change of course signal; that this maneuver forced him to turn to the right, to stop and to give several blasts of his whistle to signal the danger to the other vessels; he was on the bridge and was able to see the maneuvers of the LUCKENBACH and of the ALONSO; that the ALONSO could not have avoided the collision and that the only responsible person was the Captain of the LUCKENBACH.

"The remainder of the witnesses are awaiting call to make their statements but none of them are as important as the two who have already testified with the exception of the Captain of the escort ship who probably will not be located until after the war."

Gaspar Maspons Jordan, M.N.yM.  
Captain  
Asst. to the Chief of Staff  
Chief of the Department of Inspection

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