

CONFIDENTIAL

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

Op-16-B-5

17 April 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR FILES
ALL TIMES GCT

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS MAIDEN CREEK, American Freighter, 6156 G.T., owned by W.S.A., operated by Waterman Steamship Line.

1. The MAIDEN CREEK was torpedoed at 0820 GCT, 17 March 1944, in 37.08 N - 05.27 E, about 30 miles NNE of Bougie, having sailed from Naples 15 March in convoy SNF-17 for Oran, in water ballast, draft 10.3" forward, 19.6" aft. Ship did not sink but was towed by a British escort vessel arriving at Bougie 18 March and beached, where she broke in two just forward of #4 hatch. Stem out of water, #1, 2 and 3 holds dry.
2. Ship was on a westward course, speed 13.5 knots, convoy position first ship in starboard column, just coming out of #12 zigzag diagram, had been zigzagging since moonrise the previous night, radio silent, 9 lookouts; third mate on bridge, 1 merchant seaman on forecastle, 7 Armed Guard, 1 forward gun platform, 1-#2, 1-#3, and 1-#4 gun tubs, and 3 aft gun platform. The weather was clear, sea moderate, wind NNW, force 4, sun bearing 160° true, height 30°, visibility good, other ships of convoy in sight.
3. At 0820 a torpedo struck very deep on starboard side just forward of #4 hatch, breaking the propeller shaft and possibly contributing to breaking the vessel's back. The overspeed governor automatically secured the engines immediately. Merchant crew abandoned vessel but returned at 1045, leaving two lifeboats tied to the stern with 2 men in each. At 1300 a second torpedo struck in the fantail damaging the 2 lifeboats. It is believed by some survivors that a third torpedo struck almost simultaneously at #4 hatch on the port side. Antenna was knocked out no fire, flooding fast through shaft alley to engine room, #1, 2 and 3 holds tight. Ship settled rapidly by the stern to 3' of aft deck. No distress signal sent, no counter offensive possible. Confidential codes were thrown overboard in a weighted bag, except Mersigs, Identification and Secret Log which were turned over to the British NOIC, Bougie.
4. Ship abandoned on master's orders after first hit—crew ordered back aboard at 1045. After the second and third torpedoes struck, the crew again abandoned ship by jumping into the water. They were picked up by an escort vessel and landed at Bougie. Total complement on board was 76, including 47 merchant crew and 29 Armed Guard. One dead, 4 missing, 42 survived of merchant crew, 2 dead, 3 missing, 24 survived of Armed Guard.
5. The sub was not sighted at any time.

NOTE: The MS DEMPO, Dutch, 17.024 G.T., in the same convoy was torpedoed and sunk 17 March.

B. A. CONARD,
Ensign, W-V(S), USNR.

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