



HEADQUARTERS

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

WASHINGTON

18th Naval District
Seattle, Washington
17 October, 1942

29 October, 1942.

Subject: S. S. MAPELE, fire on board.

Reference:

1. Approved.

Summary of Information: The following from an official report from the DCGO Seattle, 13ND, is forwarded for your information:

At 1320, 7 October, 1942 fire occurred aboard Subject vessel at Pier B, Seattle, Washington, caused from sparks from a welder's torch. The fire was extinguished at 1350 by the Seattle Fire Department and the damage is reported as inconsequential. The report indicates that at the time of the fire a barge loaded with 70 octane gasoline lay alongside Subject vessel, and that several hundred barrels of gasoline had been loaded from the barge to the forward hold of the MAPELE. No evidence of sabotage is reported.

13ND is cognizant.

Intellog information

Distribution:

DNI

C.G. Operations

Evaluation:

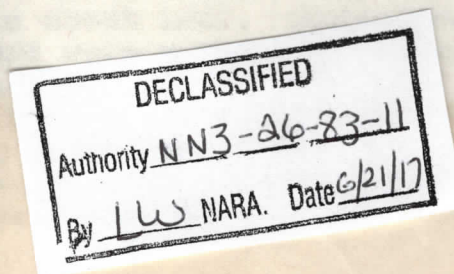
Source: Reliable

Information: Reliable

FOR DEFENSE



BUY
UNITED
STATES
SAVINGS
BONDS
AND STAMPS



COP-6612

1c

Seattle, Washington

13 October, 1942

From: Captain of the Port, Seattle.
To: Commandant, Coast Guard Headquarters.
Via: District Coast Guard Officer, Seattle,
Thirteenth Naval District.
Subject: Fire occurring aboard the S. S. MAPELE.
Reference: (a) Headquarters letter 8 April, 1942 (SC-601).

1. At 1320 on 7 October, 1942, a fire occurred aboard the S. S. MAPELE at Pier B on the waterfront at Seattle, Washington. At the time of the fire there was a large barge loaded with 70 octane gasoline alongside this ship. In the morning of that same day several hundred barrels of this gasoline had been unloaded from the barge to the forward hold of the vessel. The gasoline being loaded was cargo belonging to the U. S. Navy and the cargo loading was supervised by a Naval Loading Officer. The fire occurred as a result of sparks from the burning torch of a welder who was burning a hole in a plate above the space which was formerly used as a coaling hatch. This hatch was of triangular construction, just aft of the main stack, and formerly served as a chute for the loading of coal on to the shelter deck prior to the conversion of this ship from coal to oil. The welders were burning a hole through the inboard corner of this triangular hatch to permit the installation of an emergency rod for the boilers so they could be turned off from the boat deck.

2. Several years ago when this ship was converted from coal to oil, this coaling hatch was sealed off with a concrete bulkhead on the port side of the ship. At the time it was sealed at least twelve sacks of White Pine sawdust were left in the hatch. There were also some old paint rags in the hatch. Sparks from the burning torch ignited this sawdust and rags.

3. When the fire occurred the Mate on the vessel called the Captain of the Port Officer of the Day, who in

Captain of the Port, Seattle
13 October, 1942

turn called the Fire Department of the City of Seattle, and a general alarm was sounded of the Captain of the Port personnel. The City Firemen arrived quickly but were unable to get at the flames until the hole had been cut in the deck plating above the old coaling hatch. Due to the fact that the coaling hatch was entirely sealed the sawdust did not burn to any great extent, although there was considerable smoking.

4. The fire was extinguished at 1350; 7 October, 1942, and the hatch was cleaned out by a member of the ship's crew. The damage was inconsequential.

5. There was no evidence of sabotage in this instance and the Federal Bureau of Investigation was not advised.

6. At 0900 on 7 October, 1942, the Coast Guardsmen aboard this ship called the Officer of the Day at the Captain of the Port, Seattle, Headquarters, and advised that welding operations were to start soon. The welding operations were conducted by the Olsen Boiler & Welding Works of Seattle. This concern supplied two civilians as fire watchmen on the welding job. The welding was done by John Edward Gustafson, an employee of the Olsen Boiler & Welding Works. This man had a waterfront identification card and is a reliable operator. At 0945 F. W. Cole, Sea. lc of the U. S. Coast Guard, Captain of the Port, was assigned by the Officer of the Day to duty aboard this ship as an additional fire watch. The Coast Guardsman already aboard as a regular ship security watch was also ordered to standby the welding operations. These two men as well as the civilian fire watchmen were below in the boiler room standing by the welding operations when the barge loaded with gasoline was brought alongside the ship. The barge was brought alongside by a tug belonging to the U. S. Navy. The Coast Guardsmen aboard were not advised of the loading of gasoline, which loading started at 1030. Between 1100 and 1200 on 7 October, the gasoline loading ceased as the men went to lunch. Shortly before 1200 the Coast Guard watch aboard the ship was changed and the new watch took up positions as a fire watch below decks about 1200. Consequently none of the Coast Guard watch aboard were aware that actual loading of gasoline was taking place due to the fact they were below decks when the loading did take place, or were going off watch at a time when no loading was being done. None of the Coast Guardsmen aboard were aware gasoline was being loaded at any time. The loading of gasoline was ordered by the Naval Loading Officer.

Captain of the Port, Seattle
13 October, 1942

7. The situation in this instance, namely that of loading dangerous cargo while welding operations were being carried on aboard, was due in part to failure of the Coast Guard personnel aboard to understand the orders given relative to loading of dangerous cargo and in part to the failure of the Port Director, NTS, Thirteenth Naval District to advise this office of their intent to unload this cargo.

8. The problem of the Coast Guard security watch aboard has now been met so that a situation of this kind will not reoccur. The security watch is responsible for preventing dangerous cargo loading when welding is being done, as well as responsible for standing watch at the scene of the burning if needed.

9. All commercial concerns have been ordered to report the contemplated loading of dangerous cargo to the Captain of the Port. Such report is to be made far enough in advance to allow the proper securing of the vessel during the loading operation. Commercial concerns have been cooperating nicely and little trouble along this line is encountered. Liaison has now been established with the Port Director, NTS, Thirteenth Naval District so that in the future the Captain of the Port will be advised of contemplated loadings of dangerous cargo which is under Naval jurisdiction.

10. As is usual, a security inspection of this ship was made but such an inspection could not have revealed the coaling hatch or the condition within it due to the fact that this hatch was completely sealed and not accessible to inspection.

11. This report is forwarded for information and in accordance with reference (a).

which loading started at 1100 and 1200 on 13 October, the gasoline loading was completed as the men went to lunch. Shortly before 1200 the Coast Guard watch aboard the ship was changed and the new watch was D. T. ADAMS a fire watch below decks about 1200. Some of the Coast Guard watch aboard were aware that loading of gasoline was taking place due to the fact they were below decks when the loading did take place, or were going off watch at a time when no loading was being done. Some of the Coast Guardsmen aboard were aware gasoline was being loaded at any time. The loading of gasoline was ordered by the Naval Loading Officer.