

Op-16-B-45 MAR 12 AM 10 33

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

CONFIDENTIAL

7 March 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR FILE

ALL TIMES GCT

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS MARINA, U.S. Cargo Ship, 5086 G.T., owned by WSA, operated by A. H. Bull & Company.

1. The MARINA was mined at 1019 GCT, 16 January 1945, in 49.30.20N - 00.04.12W about 1/3 mile North of swept channel #664 in Le Havre harbor, having sailed from New York 3 January in convoy CU-53 for Le Havre, France, loaded with a U.S. Army general cargo. Vessel did not sink, but was beached outside the breakwater at Le Havre. Subsequently vessel was floated and put in drydock 18 February at Le Havre.

2. Ship was on course 150-160°, speed 8 knots, not zigzagging, five lookouts, one merchant crew on port wing of bridge, two Armed Guard forward, and two in the aft gun tub. The weather was clear, sea calm. At 0938 while ship was approaching port of Le Havre, fifth ship in convoy, course 212° true, speed about 6 knots, French pilot was put aboard. Shortly after boarding, pilot informed Master that ship's cargo had been given a high priority. The pilot's instructions were that ship was to be docked first and he intended to proceed ahead of other ships as soon as he received orders from the Escort Commodore. At 1000 no orders having been received, the Escort Commodore was called on the TBY and permission was received to proceed ahead of the convoy. At this time, ship was approximately 1500 yards NE of the entrance buoy #HV-3. Master reported that third ship in the convoy ahead of his position was just rounding the buoy on the outside at time permission was given to proceed ahead. Pilot immediately ordered engines put at half speed and vessel picked up to about 8 knots. At the same time, pilot gave command left rudder, thereby swinging ship off the course of 212° and onto a course of approximately 160° or 150°. By this maneuver, pilot's obvious intentions were to cut inside of buoy #HV-3. The regularly scheduled route of this convoy was on a course of 212° until the #HV-3 buoy was reached, then swinging to a course of approximately 90° after the buoy was rounded.

3. At 1018 pilot gave orders for full speed ahead, and at about this time, Convoy Commodore called over the TBY system and suggested that MARINA be kept within the swept channel. Master immediately advised the pilot of the suggestion and almost at the same time, 1019, a terrific explosion in the stern portion jarred the vessel from stem to stern. General alarm was sounded and engines were immediately stopped. Shaft alley door was open and immediately an attempt was made to close it. Bulkheads on each side of the door were buckled by the explosion and door could only be closed to within about 3". Water also was coming into the engine room from the sea, directly through three pipelines which were broken. Engine room flooded and vessel began to take water rapidly from the stern and to settle by the stern. Two stern life rafts were blown overboard by the explosion. The British tug EMPIRE ROGERS approached and put aboard a tow line. Shortly thereafter a U.S. Army tug came up off the port quarter and made fast along the side. Ship was taken in tow and beached outside the breakwater at Le Havre. No information obtained regarding the disposition of confidential codes but it is assumed that they were retained on board.

4. Master ordered part of the complement aboard to abandon ship and they left by stepping aboard an escort vessel which was alongside. Remainder of personnel departed after ship had been beached. Total complement on board was 100, including 45 merchant crew, 29 Armed Guard, 1 U.S. Army Security Officer, and 25 U.S. Army personnel; all survived.

*Pl. Deck
Deck 1/5 Marina (1)
Survivors (12)
x 1000 (11) Jmu.*

fill page

CONFIDENTIAL

Op-16-B-5

SS MARINA, Contd.

7 March 1945

5. No description of the mine was obtained.

6. It was the opinion of the Chief Engineer that 75% of the water which flooded the engine room came through approximately a 3" opening of the shaft alley door. It is believed by the reporting officer that it would have been necessary to beach the ship had the shaft alleys been closed when entering dangerous waters so as to prevent flooding of the engine room.

The CO, U.S. Naval Advanced Base, Le Havre, has been instructed to further impress upon local French pilots the necessity of keeping well within swept channel in proceeding through mined areas. In addition the areas adjacent to the approach channel have been swept to a width of one mile from center line of channel.

BARBARA CONARD
Lt. (jg) USNR.

DISSEMINATION: Op-16-E-2, 16-P-1, 16-Z(5 copies), Op-20-G, Op-23-L, Op-30-M, Op-39-P-3(2 copies), COMINCH F-20, F-21, F-41, FX-37(C&R), FX-40, FX-43, FX-45, AFASU, BuOrd, BuShips, CG(4 copies), Coord Res & Dev, JAG, DIO 1, 3, 4, 5(2 copies), 6, 7(3 copies), 8(2 copies), 10 (4 copies), 11 (3 copies), 12, 13, 14(4 copies), 15NDs, BuPers 535.

CONFIDENTIAL