

WSA 310

WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON

July 6, 1943

COAST GUARD

ON

TO: Commander H. T. Jewell
U. S. Coast Guard

FROM: H. W. Jackson, Mgr. Marine Operations

CONFIDENTIAL

Acknowledging receipt of your memorandum of June 28, enclosing complete file on suspicious actions of Captain Robert Nycke, which file is returned herewith.

THE CREW DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

The vessel is expected at New York in the very near future.

The question of Captain Nycke's conduct has been discussed with the Panama Transport Company, owners of the MV. MOTOCARLINE. Captain Nycke will be removed upon the arrival of the vessel at New York and will not be assigned to another vessel until such time as he has been cleared by the O.N.I.

ur information and such action of conf memo from Combat Intell. et, dated May 14, 1943, and a copy Petroleum Officer to Army-Navy 1943, relating to the suspicious 1 MOTOCARLINE.

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andant.

H. W. Jackson

JEWELL,
der, U. S. Coast Guard,
Merchant Marine Personnel
on.

(1) H. W. Jackson
(2) [unclear]
[unclear]

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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

ADDRESS REPLY TO
THE COMMANDANT (PMP)
REFER TO FILE: CG-64

WASHINGTON

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28 June, 1943

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CREW DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

Subj: S. S. MOTOCARLINE

1. I am transmitting for your information and such action as you deem appropriate a copy of conf memo from Combat Intell. Headquarters, Commander 4th Fleet, dated May 14, 1943, and a copy of conf ltr from Assistant Area Petroleum Officer to Army-Navy Petroleum Board, dated May 11, 1943, relating to the suspicious actions of the Panamanian vessel MOTOCARLINE.

2. It is requested that these papers be returned to this office when they have served their purpose.

By direction of the Commandant.



H. T. JEWELL,
Commander, U. S. Coast Guard,
Chief, Merchant Marine Personnel
Division.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NN3-26-83-11
By RH NARA. Date 6/30/17

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UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET

Headquarters of

THE COMMANDER FOURTH FLEET

c/o Fleet Post Office, New York, N.Y.

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May 14, 1943

Memorandum from: Combat Intelligence

Subject: "S. S. MOTOCARLINE", Possibly suspicious actions.
April 28 to May 8.

1. "S. S. Motocarline" was in convoy TB-12, departing Trinidad April 23rd.
2. On April 27, the Senior Escort "Barry" had a radar contact at 1815P and dropped two depth charges at 1820P. Contact was considered doubtful.
3. On the morning of April 28, the "Motocarline" requested permission to test her radio. This request was refused. At 1025P the "Motocarline" broke down and dropped astern. "Barry" asked Convoy Commodore: "Is tanker broken down?"

Reply was "Answer affirmative, following from tanker, I think it will be about 30 minutes to repair the damage we are pumping telemotor system through."

Convoy Commodore also sent to "Barry" the following message:

"Motocarline" has past record of suspicious conduct in convoy. He requested permission to test radio transmitter on high and medium frequency on grounds that tubes may have been damaged by concussion last night. This, of course, was denied. His record of breakdown together with his position to lag astern when previous convoys were attacked, should be well considered. The Master, Chief Engineer and Radio Operator are belligerents."

4. On May 5 at 2301P, "Barry" sound gear picked up a transmission that appeared more like radio code than underwater sound. This, however, may have been from her own radio which was transmitting at the time. However, the next morning transmissions were picked up again by the sound gear. The crew was called to general quarters, and it was ascertained by the Captain that "Barry's" radio was not then transmitting.

5. On May 6 at 1530 "Motocarline" was requested to leave Convoy and take straggler's route. For two days past, she had been leaving a heavy oil slick which was believed to be endangering the convoy. The "Barry" had investigated the oil slick and ridden it right into the convoy. A plane also had picked up the slick and reported it to "Barry." The "Motocarline" stated that she could not stop the oil leakage owing to leaky rivets. "Barry's" message at 1512P May 6 to Convoy Commodore follows:

Request for safety to convoy that "Motocarline" be ordered to leave now, haul out well to starboard, then take stragglers route. Her heavy oil slick will lead sub to us. Courses proposed satisfactory. Give to ships after "Motocarline" leaves.

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Subject: "S. S. MOTOCARLINE," Possibly suspicious actions
April 28 to May 8.

6. When "Motocarline" was told to take stragglers route, she went to 12 or 13 knots and soon left the convoy astern. Apparently she gained a position well ahead of the convoy owing to herspeed and to the slowing of TB-12 for the rendezvous to exchange escorts off Recife on May 8.
7. On May 8 at 0440P the "Motocarline" reported sighting a submarine. At 0452P she reported being attacked. Radio Olinda inquired whether sub was on surface, to which "Motocarline" replied: "Has dived." Commander Fourth Fleet Staff Duty Officer inquired by dispatch at 0525P, "Are you in difficulty? If so give location and details." At 0545P "Motocarline" radioed "SSSS SSSS de HPGM. Attacked again by sub, 09-13 S, 34-36 W." At 0610P she radioed, "Sent two torpedoes across our bow but so far cannot find any place that we have been hit. Are continuing our voyage. MASTER"
8. The above incidents led to initiation of an intensive Anti-Submarine search by aircraft of TF-44 and by destroyers. (see Combat Intelligence Report, dated May 11, 1943 for details).
9. Captain of the "Barry" noted that "Motocarline" was rusty, but that the funnel had been freshly painted gray with a wide band of black at the top and was easily recognizable.
10. Previously as a member of TB-1 in January 1943, the "Motocarline" was involved in a serious of what may have been suspicious incidents. On January 7 she left convoy during the night without reporting course, speed, or reason for leaving to Commodore or Escorts. On January 8 at 0500 suspicious radio transmissions were heard and that night the convoy was attacked and four ships lost. On January 9 "Motocarline" radioed to convoy at 0815 and again at 0818 using incorrect calls both times. On January 24 she rejoined convoy at 2225. "Motocarline" was in Recife from January 25th to February 4, 1943 during which time, discharge of fuel oil cargo proceeded slowly and inefficiently, the Captain Robert NYCKE appeared to be uncooperative in many respects and often under the influence of liquor.
11. None of these incidents standing by themselves might be particularly significant, and any one sequence of events might be purely coincidental. However, all the above incidents taken together would appear to be of sufficiently great weight to merit consideration of action being taken to avoid risk of possible future incidents endangering lives and shipping.

Copy to: Chief of Staff.
Base Fox.
Base Intelligence Officer.
Flag Secretary.
Air Combat Intelligence.

Darius V. PHILLIPS.

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OFFICE OF U. S. NAVAL OBSERVER

OS1/All
 Serial 006
CONFIDENTIAL

Recife, Brazil

May 11, 1943.

From: Assistant Area Petroleum Officer.
 To: The Army-Navy Petroleum Board, Navy Department,
 Washington, D.C. (Att: Comdr. W. N. GRUBB, USNR)

Subject: Suspicious Actions of the Captain of the Tanker S/S MOTOCARLINE.

Enclosures:

- (A) Letter from Air Combat Intelligence Officer to Commander South Atlantic Force, dated January 29, 1943.
- (B) Conf. letter NO/PL3 (0124) for Alusnob, Recife to the Commander South Atlantic Force, dated 4 February 1943.
- (C) Conf. Letter All-1/TB-1, Serial 0148 from the C. O., U.S. Atlantic Fleet Anti-Submarine Welfare Unit to the Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, dated Feb. 25, 1943, with enclosure.
- (D) Third Endorsement to CO GOFF ltr. DD247/A16-3(1) Serial 003 of 1/24/43 from Cominch, U.S. Atlantic Fleet to Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet, dated March 13, 1943.
- (E) Conf. Memo. from Combat Intelligence Officer to the Chief of Staff FOURTH FLEET, dated 10 May 1943.

1. The captain of the subject ship has been involved in a series of peculiar circumstances, both in convoy and in port, as will be borne out by the enclosures, the latest event having occurred on May 6, 1943 while in Convoy TB-12. Enclosure (E), which is a copy of a report from Lt. Comdr. Henry Siegbert, outlines all the details of this event.

2. It is my understanding that the captain of the MOTOCARLINE is a Belgian by birth and that his family are still in that country. In view of this and the succession of events, it is my recommendation that this merchant captain be relieved and his services be utilized in some work that will not jeopardize lives and strategic supplies.

3. The series of events might be pure coincidence, but in view of the enclosures I feel that a thorough investigation should be made and protective measures taken.

4. I am sending a copy of this report to the U. S. Naval Attache, Montevideo, as this tanker should arrive there within a week, and I feel that office should be thoroughly familiar with the past events and close observation be made of both the ship and the captain.

/s/ C. C. Dunn

C. C. DUNN,
 Lieut. Commander, USNR.

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Copies to: Comfourthfleet.
 Alusna - Montevideo.

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ok
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January 29, 1943

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Air Combat Intelligence Officer.
 To: Commander South Atlantic Force.
 Subject: Panamanian Tanker "MOTOCARLINE", trip of, from Trinidad to Bahia and Bahia to Recife.

COPY

Enclosures: (a) U. S. Naval Observer, Bahia, QSl-Serial (4373) January 23, 1943
 (b) Radio message to convoy, sent by MOTOCARLINE 1210Z January 9, 1943.
 (c) Pilot request by MOTOCARLINE.
 (d) Copies of all messages received by MOTOCARLINE.
 (e) Message to MOTOCARLINE by Comsolant.
 (f) Radio log.
 (g) Ship log.
 (h) Bautista Vallejo, Break of Discipline by.

1. The MOTOCARLINE was part of the convoy TBI bound from Trinidad to Behia. The convoy left Trinidad at 1400 Q5. The speed was 8.25 knots and 6 knots over the ground.

2. At 2230 Q7, one engine broke down reducing her speed to 4.75 knots over the ground. As a result she left the convoy without giving any report. At 0800 Q8, with the engine repaired she attempted to rejoin the convoy at the next rendezvous.

3. At 2000 Q8 at position 07-56 N, 56-20 W, and while steering a course of 140°, flares and flashes were observed dead ahead. She continues on course till 2400, at which time lights were seen 3 points on the starboard bow beyond the horizon extending upwards 30 feet. These became a glare followed by repeated explosions which lasted till daylight at 0500. At 0030 Q9 a red Very light was seen 2 points abaft the starboard beam. Radio silence was broken early in the morning when for ten minutes messages (encl. B) were sent over 500 Kc. to the convoy. This narrative agrees in broad outline with the report of the convoy escort.

4. The ship proceeded independently to Recife where instructions were flashed for her to continue to Bahia. (encl. C) was received by Comsolant from MOTOCARLINE. In accordance with the request contained in (encl. C) a reply (encl. D) was sent at the time requested but a day late. The master claims non-receipt of the message. The radio log (encl. F) shows that the radio watch officer maintained a watch for the message on the day mentioned but secured at 1800 on the day the message was sent.

5. (encl. G) shows the positions through which the ship passed on her voyage.

6. (encl. A) mentioned that four members of the crew were left behind when the ship left Bahia for Recife. The master was questioned in detail regarding these members of the crew. There was apparently no question regarding the loyalty of these men. One of these had been involved in difficulties at Curacao and (encl. H) covers the report of the incident.

Bautista Vallejo

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7. When the master appeared for the convoy conference of BT-2, he was in a drunken condition. Reports made by the Naval Observer's Office indicate that he did not endeavor to have his ship ready for sailing at the appointed time.

CONFIDENTIAL

subject

8. In accordance with the conclusions contained in (encl. A) and the incidents occurring prior to the departure of BT-2, it is suggested that a copy of this report be forwarded to Standard Oil office in New York For appropriate action.

(Signed) Henry Siegbert.

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Office of the U. S. Naval Observer
Recife, BrazilCOPY
(gwo)

P13 (0124)

4 February 1943.

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From: The U. S. Naval Observer, Recife, Brazil.
To: Commander South Atlantic Force.

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Actions of Captain of M/V "MOTOCARLINE"
(Panamanian) while in port of Recife.

Reference: (a) Report dated 1/29/43, from Air Combat Intelligence Officer to Comsolant concerning voyage of "MOTOCARLINE" from Trinidad to Bahia and Bahia to Recife.

1. The Panamanian M/V "MOTOCARLINE" arrived Recife January 25th and departed February 4, 1943, during which time conduct of the Captain, NYCKE, Robert, was found to be rather uncooperative in many respects. Information contained herein is supplementary to report mentioned in reference (a).

2. Vessel arrived this port for discharge of 10,109 metric tons of fuel oil having discharged approximately 4,500 tons at Bahia, the entire quantity at both ports being for U. S. Navy stocks. She was assigned a berth immediately and arrangements were made for prompt discharge in order that vessel would be available for joining northbound convoy, A.M. January 28th. In order to facilitate bunkering of four U.S. Navy vessels in port at the time, the "MOTOCARLINE" was instructed to fuel direct to these vessels and discharge balance remaining into tanks ashore, ample time being available for all purposes.

3. The discharging proceeded rather slowly and when questioned the Captain advised that he thought one of his pumps was in bad working order. The Captain was under the influence of liquor at the time and very little information could be obtained as to the exact trouble, it being learned that he had been aboard the vessel for only a short period of time since arrival even though he was aware that every effort should be made to complete discharge in order to join convoy sailing within a few days. Upon request of this office, two Marine Superintendents of the Standard Oil Company inspected vessel and advised that in their opinion ship would have difficulty in completing discharge in time to join convoy. The local discharging agents were of the same opinion. The Captain was not aboard his vessel during the day of January 27th and the Chief Mate did not go aboard until about four O'clock in the afternoon. The Captain appeared for convoy conference on the afternoon of the 27th, still in a drunken condition, at which time he again said he was confident that he could not make the convoy and reiterated previous statements that he would just as soon be routed independently in any event, even though it was known he had not been aboard for several hours.

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Office of the U.S. Naval Observer,
Recife, Brazil

NO/P13
(0124)

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(gwo)

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4 February 1943

Subject: Actions of Captain of M/V "MOTOCARLINE" (panamanian) while
in the port of Recife.

COPY

An attempt was made to impress upon the Chief Officer the importance of completing discharge and he advised he expected to finish at least by early morning of the 28th. At convoy sailing time vessel still had more than 3000 tons aboard having developed only five pounds pressure during the night and consequently discharged only a very meager quantity. Having missed the convoy, the Captain still desired to sail independently, but it was decided to hold the vessel for the next convoy.

4. During the intervening days, the Captain appeared to be under the influence of liquor on other occasions. On February 2nd, he appeared at this office, with VALLEJO, Bautista, Utility Man, to inquire if we could do anything about arranging for discharge of this crewman, a Uruguayan subject. VALLEJO claimed the Captain had all of his seaman's papers and would not return same. The Captain denied this, but upon investigation, it was learned that the local Standard Oil Agent had received VALLEJO's papers from Naval authorities in Curacao and turned them over to the Captain for delivery to VALLEJO, which was in direct contrast to the Captain's statements. Nothing could be done about discharge of VALLEJO at this port due to his nationality and other complications and as far as is known, he was aboard when vessel sailed.

C. C. DUNN
By direction.

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P
YUNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET
ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE UNIT
150 Causeway Street
Boston, MassachusettsCONFIDENTIAL

February 25, 1943

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet.
Subject: Report of Operations by Escort Unit 23X2 in Escort of TB-1.
Reference: (a) C. O. GOFF (Comdr. Escort Unit 23X2) Serial 003 of January 24, 1943.
Enclosure: (A) Analyses of Depth Charge Attacks made by U.S.S. GOFF.

3. The suggestion of the escort commander in reference (a) that the SS "MOTOCARLINE'S" movements be further investigated appears most pertinent when the facts are set forth by themselves. The convoy security may have been directly affected by them.

January 7 SS MOTORCARLINE left convoy during night - course, speed, and reason unknown - seen to leave only by one other merchantman. Absence not discovered by escorts until daylight.

January 8 At 0500 faint and suspicious radio transmissions were heard on 095° for a period of over an hour. That night the convoy was attacked.

January 9 At 0815 SS "MOTOCARLINE" called on 500 Kcs and again at 0818 using incorrect calls on both transmissions. The convoy had been attacked the previous night and four ships lost. To answer these calls would have helped enemy submarines to regain touch with TB-1.

January 24 SS "MOTOCARLINE" was sighted astern at 2205. She rejoined convoy at 2225.

COPY

CINCIANT FILE
A14-1/(0688)

UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET

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Care F.P.O., New York, N.Y.

March 13, 1943

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THIRD ENDORSEMENT to

CO GOFF ltr. DD247/
A16-3(1) Serial 003
of January 24, 1943.

From: Commander in Chief, United States Atlantic Fleet.
To: Commander in Chief, United States Fleet.

Subject: Report of Operations in Escort of TB-1.

Enclosure: (E) LantFlt ASW Unit Serial 0418 of Feb. 25, 1943.

1. Forwarded for information.
2. It is noted that the escort commander ascribes the loss of four (4) ships to (a) the slow speed and lack of endurance of the escorts and (b) lack of air coverage.
3. By copy of this endorsement the Commander South Atlantic Force is directed to furnish you, copy to me, details of the air coverage given this convoy.
4. It is requested that the actions of the S.S. "MOTOCARLINE" be investigated.

R. E. INGERSOLL

Copy to:

- ComSoLantFor (with copy encl. (E).)
- ComCaribSeaFron
- ComDesLant
- CO GOFF
- LantFlt ASW Unit

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UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET
 Headquarters of
 The Commander Fourth Fleet

CONFIDENTIAL
 10 May 1943

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

MEMORANDUM FROM: Combat Intelligence Officer.
 TO: The Chief of Staff Fourth Fleet

Subject: S.S. "MOTOCARLINE."

1. The S.S. MOTOCARLINE which sailed from Trinidad on 23 April in TB-12, has been involved in a number of suspicious and curious incidents. This report should be read in conjunction with previous report made on the same ship when she was a member of Convoy TB-1.
2. The following message was received from the Escort Commander of TB-12 at 2057 Zebra, 6 May: "At 1530 to-day ordered MOTOCARLINE to leave convoy and take stragglers route X Believe convoy endangered by MOTOCARLINE X She recently straggled and requested test radio, request not granted then she rejoined X Has been leaving heavy oil slick for two days stating leaky rivets causing itX" At 2301 Prep last night, BARRY picked up apparent transmission, quote, "Space sign PSC", unquote. Only part (a) to copy underwater sound gear, sounded like the clicking of a fathometer.
3. At 0740 ZEBRA, 8 May, NKM intercepted on 500 KC, a message from MOTOCARLINE to radio Olinda, stating submarine sighting. At 0752 a second call was intercepted stating "ship attacked". At 0805 a message was sent by radio Olinda, inquiring whether sub was surfaced, to which she replied, "has dived". At 0825, I sent a message to the ship, "Are you in difficulty X If so give location and details." At 0835 Lieut. Myers of Admiral NEIVA'S Staff phoned, confirming the receipt of the above message and giving position as 40 miles Southeast of Olinda. At 0845 message received, giving position as 9-13 south, 34-36 west. This position was roughly 24 miles off the stragglers route for convoy TB-12. At 0910 a message was received, "Sent two torpedoes across our bow but so far cannot find any place that we have been hit X Are continuing our voyage."
4. At 1201 a message was received stating that Panamanian ship position 9-4 S. 34-36 W. continues calls for assistance.
5. As soon as the BARRY arrives in port, full details of the incident will be obtained. It is recommended that a copy of this report as well as the previous report be forwarded to Montevideo, the port of destination of the MOTOCARLINE, as well as to the Army-Navy Petroleum Board. At the request of Commander in Chief ATLANTIC FLEET, a copy of the first report has been previously sent to him. These two series of incidents are of such a strange nature that it would appear necessary that some definite action be taken.

HENRY SIEGBERT.

Copy to: Base Fox Intelligence.

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