

(OMI)

CG-MIN-WILLIAM

B. WOODS

7 August, 1944

CONFIDENTIAL

To: DCGO, 5th Naval District (omi)

Subj: War action casualty involving the WILLIAM B. WOODS,
10 March, 1944.

1. Your attention is referred to HQ instructions of 15 March and 2 August, 1943, (CG-MIN-C-100). Paragraph 13 of the instructions of 2 August, 1943 provides as follows:

"As the Coast Guard at its Headquarters is responsible for the administration of requirements and institution of corrective measures for the safety of life at sea and as many novel conditions are introduced by war action casualties, the necessity of Coast Guard personnel to be especially diligent in the performance of their duties with regard to the investigation of war-action casualties, as required by the directive of the Commandant and as further implemented by these observations cannot be over-emphasized."

2. The WILLIAM B. WOODS carrying 478 persons and with insufficient lifesaving equipment on board, was attacked and sunk on 10 March, 1944, while enroute from Palermo to Naples, with the loss of 52 lives. In view of the seriousness of this casualty, HQ in its letter dated 15 June, 1944, addressed to the DCGO 5th N.D., requested that the Master of the subject vessel be contacted and the case investigated in accordance with the above-cited instructions. In the investigation of this case at Baltimore, Maryland, the instructions of HQ were totally disregarded.

3. The letter containing the information with respect to this casualty from the OIC, MI, Baltimore to HQ, dated 24 July, 1944, (CG-MIN-H&I-1753), states in subparagraph (b)(1) that 8 life rafts were on board; subparagraph (b)(3) states that 6 rafts were lost, and subparagraph (b)(2) states that 12 rafts were used. From other information on file at HQ, it is evident that the information submitted by the OIC-MI, Baltimore, does not at all reflect the actual facts relating to the lifesaving equipment or its use on board this vessel at the time of her attack and sinking.

Ltr. to DCGO, 5th N.D.
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4. As the statutes, as well as detailed HQ instructions, require all war action casualties to be investigated from the standpoint of instituting necessary corrective safety measures, it is necessary that all war action casualties be investigated in strict conformance with HQ instructions of 15 March and 2 August, 1943. Unless all of the pertinent technical details with respect to the causes for the loss of life and the malfunctioning or inadequacy of better security of life at sea equipment or requirements are fully developed and submitted to HQ, the evaluation of war action casualties and the institution of necessary corrective safety measures is to a considerable extent seriously impeded.

5. A consolidated copy of HQ instructions of 15 March and 2 August, 1943 is herewith forwarded for your ready reference.

CHAS. A. PARK
By direction

Incl:

1. Consolidated Copy
of HQ instructions of
15 Mar. & 2 Aug., 1943.