File
EF13-50/A17-20

Serial:

UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE
COMMANDER NAVAL BASES
SOUTH SOLOMONS SUB-AREA

86-fbk

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~ 00478 UNCLASSIFIED 28 FEB 1945

It is noted that there is no page numbered "20" in the record, but since the record does not lose continuity, the omission of the number is obviously typographical.

The proceedings, findings, opinion and recommendations of the court of inquiry in the attached case, to inquire into all the circumstances connected with the loss of the U.S.S. SEMPENS (AK97), are approved.

H. L. HERSEY, Jr.
Captain, U.S. Navy,
Commander Naval Bases, South Solomons Sub-Area,
United States Pacific Fleet, South Pacific Force.

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RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

of a

COURT OF INQUIRY

Convened at the U.S. Naval Advanced Base, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, by order of the Commander Naval Bases, South Solomons, Sub-Area, United States Pacific Fleet, South Pacific Force.

To inquire into all the circumstances connected with the loss of the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK-97), near Lunga Point, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, on 29 January 1945.

30 January 1945

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RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

OF A

COURT OF INQUIRY

CONVENED AT THE U. S. NAVAL ADVANCED BASE,

GUADALCANAL

BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS

By order of

Commander Naval Bases, South Solomons Sub-Area,

United States Pacific Fleet, South Pacific Force.

To inquire into all the circumstances connected with the loss of the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK-97), near Lunga Point, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, on 29 January 1945.

30 January 1945

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BY AUTHORITY OF: OPNAVINST 5500.40
~~C.NAVINST 5510.1B~~
DATE: 13 JUL 1
BY: [signature]
ROBERT C. STEPHEN, LT. USN
Office of JAG, Navy Dept.

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UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET
SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE
COMMANDER NAVAL BASES
SOUTH SOLOMONS SUB-AREA

86-fbk

30 JAN 1945

From: Commander Naval Bases, South Solomons Sub-Area.
To : Lieutenant Commander Audrey A. Scott, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, U.S. Naval Advanced Base, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands.

Subject: Court of inquiry to inquire into the loss of the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK-97).

1. A court of inquiry, consisting of yourself as president, and of Lieutenant Commander John O. Vaughn, Medical Corps, U.S. Naval Reserve, and Lieutenant Dwight P. Colburn, S(O), U.S. Naval Reserve, as additional members, and of Lieutenant (junior grade) Nathaniel H. Willis, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, as judge advocate, is hereby ordered to convene at the U.S. Naval Advanced Base, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, at 10 o'clock a. m., on Tuesday, 30 January 1945, or as soon thereafter as practicable, for the purpose of inquiring into all the circumstances connected with the loss of the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK-97), near Lunga Point, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, on 29 January 1945.

2. The court will make a thorough investigation into all the circumstances connected with the aforesaid loss, the causes thereof, damages to property resulting therefrom, injuries to personnel incidental thereto, and the responsibility therefor. In connection with this inquiry, the attention of the court is invited to Section 725, Naval Courts and Boards.

3. The attention of the court is particularly invited to Section 734, Naval Courts and Boards.

4. The court will include in its findings a full statement of the facts it may deem to be established. The court will further give its opinion as to whether any offenses have been committed or serious blame incurred, and, in case its opinion be that offenses have been committed or serious blame incurred, will specifically recommend what further proceedings should be had.

5. The Commander Naval Base, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, is hereby directed to furnish the necessary clerical assistance to aid the judge advocate in recording the proceedings of this court of inquiry.

M. L. HERSEY, Jr.
Captain, U.S. Navy,
Commander Naval Bases, South Solomons Sub-Area,
United States Pacific Fleet, South Pacific Force.

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"A"

FIRST DAY

U. S. Naval Advanced Base,
Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands,
Tuesday, January 30, 1945.

The court met at 1 p.m.

Present:
Lieutenant Commander Audrey A. Scott, U. S. Coast Guard Reserve,
Lieutenant Commander John O. Vaughn, Medical Corps, U. S. Naval Reserve, and
Lieutenant Dwight P. Colburn, S(O), U. S. Naval Reserve, members; and
Lieutenant (junior grade) Nathaniel H. Willis, U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, judge advocate.

The judge advocate introduced Robert R. Mitchell, chief yeoman (acting), U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, as reporter.

The court was cleared and the judge advocate read the precept, original prefixed hereto, marked "A".

All matters preliminary to the inquiry having been determined and the court having decided to sit with open doors, the court was opened.

Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Commanding Officer, U. S. S. Serpens (AK97), was designated by the court as an interested party to the inquiry, was notified accordingly, and he entered, and with permission of the court introduced Lieutenant George W. Wakefield, U. S. Naval Reserve, as his counsel.

The interested party was informed of his rights.

The judge advocate read the precept.

The interested party stated that he did not object to any member.

Each member, the judge advocate, and reporter were duly sworn.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.
A. Magnus J. Johnson, Lieutenant Commander, U.S.C.G.R., Commanding Officer, U.S.S. Mintaka.

2. Q. Last evening, 29 January 1945, did you go to the Serpens?
A. I did.

3. Q. How did you go to it, by what mode of conveyance?
A. Several of the Serpens' officers were aboard our ship last evening and after the movies we sat out on the beach for an hour or more and they mentioned transportation back to their ship. So I said, "Well we'll furnish you transportation. It's a nice evening so we'll run you over there".

4. Q. Do you know what time it was you left for the ship?
A. I almost lost track of time. I really could not tell you that time. I noticed what time the explosion was but had no other sense of time.

5. Q. Did you notice what time it was when you arrived at the Serpens?
A. No.

6. Q. Did you go aboard the Serpens when you got there?
A. No, I did not.

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7. Q. Did you notice any of the activities that were taking place around the Serpens at the time you were there?

A. Just as we came up to the gangway, one dukws was leaving and another one was at number four hatch. I failed to notice whether there was any cargo going aboard her at the time.

8. Q. Could you tell whether either one of the dukws had any cargo in it?

A. No, I could not tell you.

9. Q. How long did you remain at the Serpens?

A. Only long enough for the seven officers to disembark. We did not stay or even put a painter out. We just held the boat at the gangway while the seven officers disembarked.

10. Q. After you left the Serpens did anything unusual happen?

A. Yes, after we had left the ship, and when we were about a mile from the Serpens I noticed a light. With my back toward the ship, I thought something had happened to our engine. I glanced back there, and I saw a flame at first and then great fire works and then an explosion.

11. Q. Where was the flame coming from? Was it from the Serpens?

A. Yes, in that direction. Mr. Alligood said "My God, there goes the Serpens".

12. Q. Can you describe the flame at all as to color or size?

A. I did not see the flame to start with. As I say, I thought it was something in the boat with my back towards it, but as I glanced back it was a yellow flame and then spread out in great fire works.

13. Q. Was there an explosion?

A. Yes, then the explosion, yes.

14. Q. What kind of smoke rose from this explosion?

A. Yes, a black smoke I would say.

15. Q. Did you notice the time, at any time along then?

A. No, I did not.

16. Q. Could you say what happened to the Serpens itself?

A. I could not see anything except the explosion. We assumed that it was the Serpens after the explosion. It was in that general direction.

17. Q. After all the smoke and so forth cleared away, did you observe whether the Serpens was still there?

A. We turned around and went back there. We were there. We came up with the first boat. We went right across it with the boat that came from the Port Director's office. That boat was out there in very few minutes after the explosion.

18. Q. Did you find any survivors?

A. We did not see any survivors. Mr. Flynn spoke about not having a light, and we could not see any then, and, with the boats coming from all directions, we were anxious to get back to our own ship and left at that time.

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Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

19. Q. Commander, while you were alongside the Serpens, did you notice any undue activity on deck aboard ship?

A. No sir, I did not. I don't think there was any cargo handled while we were alongside. We were there a very short while. There were seven men that stepped on the gangway.

20. Q. You did not notice anything unusual happen on deck?

A. Nothing unusual.

Reexamined by the judge advocate:

21. Q. Can you tell us the names of the officers you returned to the ship?

A. Aiken, Kotkas, Auble, Davis, Goral, Doctor Levine. I do not know the seventh officer.

Examined by the court:

22. Q. Mr. Johnson, what part of the ship do you think the flame started at?

A. I could not answer that. The fact is I did not know whether it might be ashore when I first saw the flame.

23. Q. Was the ship well lighted when you went alongside, in reference to lights around the hatches?

A. Yes.

24. Q. What side was the dukw on that was alongside the ship?

A. Port side.

25. Q. Did the dukw that was leaving the ship, leave from the port side?

A. Yes sir.

26. Q. Both dukws were on the port side?

A. That is right.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. James Q. Alligood, Lieutenant, U.S.C.G., Executive Officer of the Mintaka (AK94).

2. Q. Did you have occasion last night to visit the Serpens or go alongside of her?

A. Alongside of her, at approximately 2300. I did not look at the watch but the time was about 2300 when we were alongside.

3. Q. I understand you had seven officers from the Serpens with you?

A. Yes.

4. Q. The following have been named, Mr. Aiken, Mr. Kotkas, Mr. Auble, Mr. Davis, Mr. Goral and Doctor Levine. What is the seventh's name? xxx

A. Mr. Questad.

5. Q. While approaching alongside or leaving the Serpens, did you observe any of the activities going on alongside the ship or aboard the ship?

A. They were working on the starboard side number four. The dukws were on the portside forward. Two Dukws. When we pulled away they were maneuvering, either leaving the ship or coming in. I was standing forward in the boat.

6. Q. Were these two boats on the portside or the starboard side?

A. Let me get that straight now. I said there were two dukws. I am not going to swear to that. Let us say dukws maneuvering on the portside.

7. Q. Did you see any cargo being handled at all?

A. Coming up, they were working number four, and the lights were on, and I saw cargo either on the barge or just being put on a sling but everything was apparently quiet. There was very little activity. The lights were on and we did not pay much attention to it. At least, I did not. Mr. Aiken and I were busy talking and I did not observe closely.

8. Q. Did you observe what kind of cargo they were working?

A. The barge was practically empty, and whatever it was, there was a small box of whatever was left, a small box on the tray, salmon tray.

9. Q. After you left the Serpens, would you tell just what you saw and heard?

A. We bid them goodnight, farewell and shoved off, and we then came around the stern and cut down lengthwise of the ship towards the Mintaka. We went down, I guess, approximately a mile. The captain was running the boat. I asked the captain if he desired relief, and he said, "Yes". I then took the wheel and I had no more than taken the wheel when I heard someone shoot a flare. I turned around, and I saw the red flame going up and right over. Someone said, "My God, there goes the Serpens". There was smoke and red flame continued right up with a flash. I stopped the boat. Mr. Flynn said, "Don't stop, speed up", and I did give the motor the gun for a few seconds. The flame kept over us, and I was afraid of the debris falling over us, and I xxx speeded up a little more, and stopped. We hesitated there for a minute and xxx one-half or a couple of minutes, and we decided to go back and see if we could not pick up somebody. On the way we ran into clouds of salt water, oil mixed, very thick, heavy rainfall, salt water and oil. When we got up to the Serpens, the bow was sticking out and the boat close alongside. There was a lot of debris, wreckage, and floating black objects. Rather than run into it and fowl the boat up we backed off and circled around and came in. There were several boats right then coming in from the vicinity, one at the bow. We came in at the Army Port and then went over to the Port Director's pier.

10. Q. About how long would you estimate the flame lasted?

A. The flame, the actual red flame, I would say about 30 seconds, 35 seconds.

11. Q. Was it a red flame?

A. White, red flame first and then proper combustion, white clear flame, hot flame.

12. Q. Did any smoke arise?

A. The flame died out instantly and nothing but a big cloud of black smoke resulted rising and drifting.

13. Q. Do you know approximately where the Serpens was anchored?

A. Yes. I have not looked it up but I would say about 1800 yards off Lunga Point bearing about 30 or 40 degrees. I have not looked it up. I have not checked on that.

Examined by the court:

14. Q. What part of the ship do you think the flame started from?

A. From our location, I cannot say. I would say probably number four, amidships.

15. Q. It was number four?

A. Because after, as I say I thought it was a flare, and turned around, it was already aflame, red flame and already the length of the ship; but, where it started, I don't know.

16. Q. You say you were a mile away. That would put you at Lunga Point?

A. Not quite Lunga Point.

17. Q. How was the ship heading, in what direction?

A. The ship was headed about lengthwise with the coast.

18. Q. Parallel with the coast?

A. Yes.

19. Q. The ship's head was heading west or east?

A. The bow was facing west towards Kukum, facing inshore, that is at an angle.

20. Q. That is the way she was when you went alongside?

A. At an angle to the beach, not straight.

21. Q. That is the way she was when you went alongside?

A. Yes.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness made the following statement:

Going out approaching the Serpens, Mr. Aiken and I were on the portside of the boat which would be the off shore side and we were leaning over the gunwale talking, and someone says, "There goes number four". Mr. Auble said, "There goes our number four", and I made a wise crack, "You mean number four buoy", and someone said, "Our boat", I glanced up and saw what appeared to be a boat but there was no speed.

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Reexamined by the court:

22. Q. What do you mean our boat?

A. I will correct that, sir. What appeared to be a boat, a black object and she was already off our port quarter which would be off shore, and it must have been four or five hundred yards away. Mr. Aiken and I resumed talking and nothing more was said.

23. Q. Were there any lights on this boat?

A. There was not. The boat was dark.

Reexamined by the judge advocate:

24. Q. Do I understand you to say that one officer thought it was one of their boats? 7/44

A. Mr. Auble made a statement and said, "There goes number four". They apparently thought it was their boat coming to get them.

25. Q. Where did this boat go?

A. We left her on our port quarter, several hundred yards distant. When I glanced up she might have been amidship at first, but we kept right on going.

Reexamined by the court:

26. Q. Did the boat head parallel to the coast?

A. It appeared heading off to an angle toward the west, toward Savo Island. That is the angle when I looked up. She appeared to be heading that way and not down the beach.

27. Q. What kind of a boat? Are you familiar with these various types of boats?

A. Yes.

28. Q. What type of boat did it appear to be?

A. I would say, apparently at that distance and the little interest that I took in identifying it, that it was an LCV.

Reexamined by the judge advocate:

29. Q. Did it appear to be moving or staying still?

A. When I glanced up, why it was moving, traveling slow.

Reexamined by the court:

30. Q. Did you hear a motor?

A. The boat?

31. Q. Yes?

A. No, I did not hear a motor. No sir. I am a little hard of hearing and with our motor running, it was hard. There was a remark made, "Probably somebody fishing". I don't know who made the remark.

32. Q. No lights were on the boat?

A. No lights, sir. There could have been running lights away from me, but I would not have been them because actually it was passed. There could have been lights, but I did not see them. 7/44

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None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. John A. Flynn, Lieutenant Commander, U.S.C.G.R., Engineering Officer of the U.S.S. Mintaka.

2. Q. Did you go alongside the Serpens last night?

A. Yes sir.

3. Q. Was that in a boat from the Mintaka?

A. That is right, yes.

4. Q. While you were approaching the Serpens or while you were alongside or as you were leaving, did you notice any of the activity aboard?

A. They were loading from dukws, that is all I noticed.

5. Q. Did there seem to be anything unusual going on?

A. Just regular loading operation from dukws coming and going.

6. Q. Did you notice whether the dukws were going to one side of the ship or to both sides?

A. I could only see one side, the port side aft, at number four.

7. Q. Will you tell the court just what you saw and heard after you left the Serpens?

A. Well after we got away from there some eight or nine hundred yards I gave the captain a cigarette; and, while he was lighting his and I mine, a flame came on and then the explosion. I said, "Let's get going, there might be a tank blowing up". We did not want to stop. He said, "My God, that must be the Serpens". That is all I remember, and we went back again.

8. Q. Did you see the flash?

A. Oh, yes.

9. Q. Can you describe it?

A. Well the explosion was straight up. It was not a side explosion. I saw the flash from the beginning. First the flash, the puff of smoke and then the explosion, and then there was another explosion in 10 seconds. That is, to my knowledge. I figure there were two. It might have been the echo from the first one. I know it was an enormous explosion, and a smoke screen went up.

10. Q. Which was the larger explosion, the first or second?

A. The second one.

11. Q. Were you looking toward the explosion at the time the second one came?

A. Oh, yes.

12. Q. Was there anything you noticed about it?

A. I would not say there was. It was a terrific blast, that is all.

13. Q. The first flash and then an explosion came almost simulataneously?

A. That is right. It would be pretty hard to time it.

14. Q. Then another explosion?

A. I mean the two explosions - first the flash, the explosion and then the second explosion.

15. Q. Was there a second flash at the time of the second esplosion?

A. I don't recollect. There was so much going on in the air at that time, I don't remember.

16. Q. Did you return to the spot where you saw the flash?

A. Yes, and all around there.

17. Q. What did you find there?

A. It looked like the tide drift gathered the debris around a half circle. It looked like it was built quite high about a foot or so and looked raised on the surface of the water. We could see the bow of the ship sinking. Part of it was sticking out. We did not have any running lights and did not think there was any use going further. There were so many boats crossing with lights. We stayed around 15 or 20 minutes and then went off to the dock.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson.

18. Q. Commander, you stated you heard two explosions. Did you feel a concussion from two or only one?

A. I did not feel any concussion at all. I just heard the explosion. In fact, I did not feel anything in the boat. It was a pressure on our ears, but that was all.

19. Q. There were not two separate times when you felt that pressure?

A. They were close together, big ones and quick.

20. Q. Approximately how far away from the Serpens were you at that time?

A. I figure about 1000 yards. That is my observation. Between the DE and the Serpens, the DE anchored out there.

21. Q. Do you know where you were with relation to the Lunga dock, that it the dock in fromt of the Port Director's Office? N/Ks

A. We looked for the Lunga dock but landed in the army dock - it was pretty dark. I do not know, but in a couple minutes we were at a dock. N/Ks

22. Q. When you heard this explosion you say you were close to a DE that was anchored?

A. I would say a couple hundred feet out and back. We were out a way five or six hundred feet from it. There was a DE and PC,. The PC was ahead of the DE.

23. Q. Was there a difference in the color between the two explosions that you saw or were they both approximately the same?

A. It was just an orange flash. That is all I noticed. It seemed to

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me that there was a flame and smoke after the explosion too. It looked like it was first in the air.

Examined by the court:

24. Q. When you approached the Serpens coming alongside, how was she heading?

A. Her bow was heading out in this direction (indicating). We came out from here (indicating).

25. Q. Did you approach the Serpens bow first?

A. Yes, her bow was heading out.

26. Q. West?

A. Toward Tulagi in that general direction.

27. Q. And you approached her on the port side?

A. Yes.

28. Could you tell when the flames started, what part of the ship it was?

A. No sir.

29. Q. You could not?

A. No sir.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

2.2.2.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Peery L. Stinson, Lieutenant Commander, U.S.C.G., Late Commanding U.S.S. Serpens, now attached to Naval Bases, South Solomons Sub-Area.

2. Q. Commander, when did the Serpens arrive in this port? Do you recall the date?

A. On Wednesday last, that would be the 24th, from the Russell Islands.

3. Q. And where did you anchor or moor when you came in?

A. To the best of my recollection it was berth 24.

4. Q. Did you remain in the same anchorage during the whole time the ship was here?

A. We did.

5. Q. How was the ship loaded at the time she came into port?

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A. At the time of arrival in port, all holds were empty with the exception of a few small packages in the silk room in 'tween deck number 4.

6. Q. Did those packages contain explosives?

A. Those packages contained personal belongings of an officer who had lately been stationed in the Russells and had been transferred here.

7. Q. Were you loading at this time at this port?

A. We were loading.

8. Q. Will you tell the court just what you were loading and in what holds?

A. We loaded number one 'tween deck with depth bomb fins in the main part of the hold, and in the starboard strong room there were a few micellaneous packages. In the port strong room there were loaded depth bomb fuzes. It was the intention to load personnal baggage in the remaining portions of these strong rooms. The personal baggage stored with the fuzes to be separated by a bulkhead. Number three hold lower was loaded with airplane wings, airplane engines, spares and quite a number of belly tanks, topped off with belly tanks. Number four hold contained approximately 600 tons of depth bombs, unfuzed and unfinned. To my last knowledge it was the intention to store personal belongings, personal baggage in the silk room in 'tween deck of number four. Number 5 lower hold was loaded with miscellaneous freight.

9. Q. Were there any explosives contained in that freight?

A. None to my knowledge. The cargo plan did not call for explosives in number 5 hold.

10. Q. When you were last aboard the ship on the 29th had the personal baggage you mentioned been placed in number one strong room?

A. I do not know whether it had or not. I left the ship at approximately 2015, and to my knowledge the personal baggage had not yet come aboard. I think I made a misstatement there. I should say I have no knowledge of any personal baggage having yet come on board.

11. Q. Was number two hold left empty?

A. Number two hold was completely empty. That day I had some of the hatch boards removed for ventilation purposes.

12. Q. Was your ship in anyway especially equipped or fitted out to carry ammunition or explosives?

A. In December, while the ship was in the ship yard in Wellington, New Zealand, number one lower hold and 'tween deck, number four lower hold number five lower hold had been sheathed to magazine "A" specifications.

13. Q. Was number 3 lower hold filled with the articles you mentioned?

A. Yes.

14. Q. And your number three 'tween deck is occupied by the crew, is that correct?

A. Yes.

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15. Q. Number four hold, the last time you know of, contained 600 tons?

A. Approximately 600 tons. That is at the time of the explosion to the best of my figures, having talked with various people concerning the amount that had gone on board. That is the various loading people.

16. Q. Commander, are you familiar with the regulations and rules laid down by the Coast Guard in loading vessels with ammunition and explosives?

A. I am.

17. Q. How much experience have you had in handling such things as ammunition and explosives?

A. I have handled ammunition for ship's guns, that is the ship's allowance of ammunition at various times since 1927. I have hauled ammunition cargo at various times during the past four months.

18. Q. Did you issue orders aboard ship to carry out safety precautions that should be taken in case of loading explosives?

A. General safety precautions for handling all cargo were posted at each winch station. There was a sign painted above them, which read "Safety Instructions". Upon arrival in any port, the officer or other person in charge of loading or unloading of the vessel was handed a copy of the General Safety Precautions to be observed aboard the U.S.S. Serpens. In the case of handling ammunition, they were handed a copy of ammunition loading instructions which contained either quotations from or reference to the instructions for handling explosives and other hazardous cargo on board U.S. vessels during the present emergency. In case of loading or unloading vehicles they were handed a copy of the vehicle loading instructions which were based upon the Navy Transportation Service Manual, special instructions for handling vehicles. In each case, the person receiving these instructions signed a receipt for same and turned the receipt over to either the Executive Officer, the Cargo Officer or myself.

19. Q. Were these matters that you have outlined carried out as usual upon arrival in this port?

A. They were.

20. Q. Was any one certain officer aboard the ship detailed to look after the handling of cargo and stowage of it?

A. Lieutenant Aubée was designated as cargo officer and division officer for the cargo division which was comprised of 60 men who attended all operations in handling cargo.

21. Q. How long had he been acting as cargo officer?

A. About three or four months. He had at one time served until 15 January in the dual capacity of cargo officer and navigator. I better change that to three months.

22. Q. Had he had experience before this in the loading of ammunition aboard your vessel?

A. Indirectly.

23. Q. Will you explain that?

A. In that he had observed the loading of ammunition during the latter part of September in 1944 in this port when a great deal of discussion arose over the handling of the ammunition. He had I believe been well indoctrinated concerning the handling of ammunition and the proper stowage of same.

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24. Q. Did you observe his work during the time you were in port this present time?

A. I did.

25. Q. How did he carry it out?

A. He performed his duty in a very satisfactory manner. Of course having had much more experience with explosives cargo and in handling men in general, I did find fault at times. I would find various small things wrong and would call them to his attention. He would rectify the faults as soon as he possibly could.

26. Q. How much of your time was spent in observing the handling of the ammunition, the loading of it as it came aboard ship?

A. That is a rather hard matter to judge. As many times I would go and observe the handling of cargo just as I would breathe. It was second nature. I would be awake at night, go down and watch the loading crews and see that they were handling the ammunition carefully. It was hard to state just how much of my time was spent observing. I believe that the various loading officers from the 492nd Port Battalion stationed at Guadalcanal can give you a much better estimate of how much time I spent observing their loading.

27. Q. Will you explain the manner in which the depth bombs were loaded into number four, the rigging that was used and how it was worked?

A. The depth bombs were hoisted from dukws, three on a pallet board, the pallet board inside the cargo net. They were lowered on to an ammunition mat resting on the bottom of the hold and were then rolled into place. Despite the fact that regulations state that class 10 ammunition shall not be rolled, I can think of no safer way of handling it than rolling it over a smooth deck into place. The bombs weighed 350 pounds a piece and I would judge were about 36 inches long by 16 inches in diameter affording no proper hand holds for men to lift. Metal tools can not be used in loading and any sling that may have been devised would have required juggling to get them out.

28. Q. Were you loading number four hatch from one or both sides of the ship?

A. We were loading number four hatch from both sides of the ship with instructions that the two slings were never to be working in the hold at the same time, that is that two slings of ammunition could not be lowered together, or that a sling of ammunition could not be lowered while the empty hook was coming up from the other side because of the danger of the hook catching in the cargo net and upsetting the pallet board, thus causing the depth bombs to fall into the hold.

29. Q. How many booms were used for that operation?

A. Three booms were used - two ordinary five ton wooden cargo booms rigged outboard, and the jumbo boom with the whip removed and two gin blocks placed on the boom head. Spans were rigged between each cargo boom and a gin block on the jumbo boom. The spans were worked by one five ton winch and by one jumbo winch each.

30. Q. What personnel operated the winches?

A. Army winchmen operated all the winches.

31. Q. Do you know what company or battalion these army men came from?

A. We were this time being worked by the 492nd Battalion under command of Major Knox.

32. Q. Do you know what or how many depth bombs were loaded per day, approximately?

A. The number of bombs varied greatly from day to day due first to inexperience of some of the people in handling and also to weather conditions. At the time of the explosion approximately 3500 depth bombs had been loaded on board.

33. Q. For how many days had you been loading them?

A. Since Wednesday, the 24th.

34. Q. The same day you arrived in port?

A. Yes.

35. Q. Do you recall when the depth bomb fuzes were loaded in number one 'tween deck?

A. I believe it was Friday or Saturday. I do not remember which day they completed that loading. In connection with that, some of the field cans containing the fuzes had been punctured. I immediately sent for the Port Ordnance Officer to question him concerning the safety of these fuzes. He assured me that punctures in the cans would not effect them at all. He stated that the safety pins were in all fuzes and that they were perfectly safe in the condition in which they were.

36. Q. Do you know the name of that officer?

A. I do not, his name may be obtained from the Office of Commander Cargo at Kukum Beach.

37. Q. He was the Army Ordnance Officer?

A. Yes sir.

38. Q. Was number one hold being worked last night?

A. I believe they were getting ready to put the baggage in number one when the explosion occurred or they may have loaded some of the personal baggage in there at the time.

39. Q. Commander, will you explain how the depth bombs were stowed?

A. Depth bombs were stowed in layers. Each tier of bombs pointing alternately fore and aft and athwartships. Dunnage was placed in each tier of bombs; and, after a layer was completed, the layer was dunnaged off and the next layer started.

40. Q. Was there any dunnage placed between any of the bombs in any manner?

A. Only where there was a play in the bombs. Where they did not exactly fill the distance between partions and the skin of the ship or from skin to skin, then it was necessary to place dunnage between those to prevent any play.

41. Q. Who did the stowing?

A. 492 Port Battalion.

42. Q. How were the fuzes stowed?

A. The fuzes were stowed in their containers, in a strong room class A magazine 'tween deck number one, 'tween deck port side number one.

43. Q. They did not take up the whole space of the strong room?

A. They did not.

44. Q. Was there any shoring put up or was that to be filled by the personal baggage?

A. There was shoring erected eight feet from the side of the ship which is necessary for detonator stowage below deck, the fuse being in the same catagory as the detonator.

45. Q. And where was the personal baggage to be stowed in relation to the fuzes?

A. Between the shoring and the skin of the ship.

46. Q. At what time did you leave the ship on the night of the 29th of January 1945?

A. At about 2015.

47. Q. Do you know who was the officer of the deck at that time?

A. I do not remember whether Mr. Shogren was officer of the deck. I do not know that. A few minutes before 8 o'clock Mr. Shogren was officer of the deck because I had spoken to him at that time. Now, whether he had not been relieved for the 8 to 12 or whether he had already relieved for the 8 to 12, I cannot say.

48. Q. Does the officer of the deck have any duties in regard to the handling and stowage of the cargo?

A. There was a separate cargo officer assigned for the day's duty.

49. Q. Is that other than Mr. Aubéé?

A. Yes, either Mr. Aubéé or Mr. Johnson took the duty on alternate days to handle all matters in connection with the handling of cargo.

50. Q. Did that entail their remaining aboard ship for a 24 hour period while they were acting as cargo officer?

A. Yes, to the best of my knowledge, Mr. Johnson had the cargo duty on the night of the 29th. He had at one time been on cargo duty and then taken off and to the best of my knowledge was put back on with Mr. Aubéé when it became necessary to have cargo officers acting.

51. Q. Will you state positively whether or not Mr. Johnson was the Cargo Officer that night?

A. I cannot state positively that Mr. Johnson was Cargo Officer that night. However, Mr. Aubéé was known to have gone to the U.S.S. Mintaka and he would not have left the ship if he were the cargo officer with the duty.

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52. Q. Do you know what time Mr. Aubel left the ship?

A. I believe he left the ship at abour 1800. I am not certain because he would have obtained his permission to leave the ship from the Executive Officer.

53. Q. You were away from the ship at the time of the explosion?

A. I was.

54. Q. Did you observe the explosion?

A. I did.

55. Q. Do you know what time it took place?

A. At a few minutes after 2315.

56. Q. Where were you at the time of the explosion?

A. I was in the quarters of Captain Conklin, U.S. Air Force, in a Section referred to, I believe, as Comair Army, Guadalcanal.

57. Q. And at the time when you heard the explosion, did you have any idea what it was?

A. I had no idea. It was my first visit to that part of the Island, and I attempted to orientate myself as to the direction of my ship inasmuch as we were loading explosives. The officers with me assured me that it was not from the direction of my ship but from the direction of Henderson field. I had already made preparations to return to the ship and immediately returned to the dock; and upon arriving at the dock, I ascertained that the explosion occured in the Serpens.

58. Q. What did you do then?

A. I commandeered a boat and searched all the debris in the surrounding area and observed the bow of the Serpens apparently capsized. I may have been looking at it so that the stern appeared to be the keel, but it appeared that the stem was at an angle of about 70 degrees horizontal and that the keel was pointed to the sky. I could clearly make outthe piece welded to the fore-foot or the attachement of paravane gear which was to have been fitted in New Zealand but the lack of time prohibited even drilling the necessary holes in it. I then returned to the dock and we reported to CNB South Sols who is also Repseronsopac to which command the U.S.S. Serpens was assigned.

59. Q. Did you find any survivors?

A. We picked up ~~no~~ survivors in the water. I searched around. I found my boat crew consisting of three men, one man who had missed the boat back. Two men had been picked up by Captain Hersey and Captain Cooper in a base boat. My Supply Officer, my Chief Commissary Steward and an officers steward, third class. The last named was waiting for a boat to return to the ship.

60. Q. Do you know what the actual complement aboard your ship was?

A. Officers and men to the best of my knowledge, the complement of the U.S.S. Serpens at the time of the disaster was 205. I have been attempting to obtain the last sailing list filed to verify my count.

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61. Q. You can supply that later when you find the information?

A. Yes.

62. Q. Briefly describe the only remaining portion of the Serpens that you observed.

A. The bow was the only thing that I could identify as being part of the Serpens or her gear or cargo with the exception of several belly tanks which I saw and other people in the boat with me observed.

63. Q. Do you have any complaint to make in regard to the way any of the cargo was being handled, loaded or stowed?

A. I have no complaint. At the beginning I did reprimand one of the junior officers attached to the 492. I explained to him how it should be handled and made him handle it in a proper way. Attention to this fact was called to Captain McCain who is attached to the office of Commander Cargo who is responsible for the handling of the cargo. The other two loading officers at all times cooperated to the fullest extent and the officer first named showed a decided change for the better and was loading properly toward the latter part of the loading.

64. Q. Do you know that officer's name?

A. Lieutenant Olsen.

65. Q. Do you have any idea what might have caused the explosion?

A. For approximately fifteen hours I have attempted to analyse it; and, bringing in play, every rumor, other peoples' analyses and the like and deductions from past testimony given before this court, it is not improbable that this vessel was torpedoed. There have been numerous reports of submarine sightings and contacts in this part of the world for the past three weeks to my knowledge. A submarine can travel during the night more than 200 miles and during the day about 60 miles. References made by other witnesses have stated two separate explosions. I felt and observed the explosions - two separate ones but at that time came to the conclusion that one was a ground wave and the second one an air wave. As one witness testified, the first explosion seemed much smaller than the second explosion which would indicate the possibility of a torpedo. I feel that I can definitely state that the fuzes stowed in number one hold did not explode at any time because of the fact that in number one hold there is also a three inch magazine and underneath that about 50 bottles, that is a rough approximation of CO2. Those are the large 50 pound bottles which when ruptured have a highly explosive effect themselves. Two men in the boatswain's locker which is separated only by a regular bulkhead from the three inch magazine and from number one hold, were relatively uninjured and the only persons on the ship who survived. That clearly indicates that the fuzes did not explode because I firmly believe that they would have set off all the 3 inch ammunition and ruptured the bottles and had they done either, they would have caused the bulkhead in the forward part of number one to go. I must state that I have no grounds other than those mentioned for the submarine possibilities. The first explosion may have been ~~not~~ caused by a single depth bomb going off and the other explosion by the depth bomb being set off by concussion by the single one.

Examined by the court:

66. Q. Commander, what type of ship was the Serpens?

A. It is known as a liberty ship, an "EC2" class.

67. Q. Can you state the draft of your ship on the day of the explosion?

A. No sir, I cannot.

68. Q. Can you state it approximately?

A. I believe that the draft was about 12 feet forward and about 18 feet

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aft on the morning before the explosion. I am not certain.

69. Q. What was the depth of water in which the Serpens was anchored?

A. In berth 24, in about 110 feet of water. It was approximately 19 fathoms. That is what the chart reads.

70. Q. How did you ascertain this position?

A. I crossed bearings from the two beacons.

71. Q. Was that the assigned anchorage?

A. That was the anchorage assigned to this vessel when she returned to Guadalcanal 24 January.

72. Q. Have you recovered anything from the ship?

A. I have seen nothing from the ship. It has been reported to me that two seabags have been recovered, that is all.

73. Q. In other words everything was a complete loss?

A. Yes.

74. Q. Could you determine this position on the chart if the court furnishes one?

A. I believe, I can sir.

75. Q. Did you ever discover any smoking on this ship, that is on deck while the vessel was at this port?

A. There was no smoking allowed outside of the superstructure of the ship while loading ammunition. No smoking was allowed below deck at any time outside the engine room casing. While in port but when loading ammunition, smoking was not allowed on the open deck. They were allowed to smoke only in the wardroom and the crews messroom in the cabin.

76. Q. Were these measures carried out on the whole while loading?

A. They were carried out. To the best of my knowledge and belief, there was no one smoking on the deck at any time. I failed to observe any one smoking at any time.

77. Q. How did you disperse copies of safety measures?

A. The copies of safety measures were delivered to Commanding Officers of the Port Battalion. They were delivered to Comcargo. They were posted at each winch station.

78. Q. Were they familiar with these safety measures?

A. They apparently, after some few difficulties that necessarily had to be ironed out, became very familiar with them. I know that some of the officers gave the men nothing to do but read the instructions. That is one man was assigned out of their gang who had nothing to do but stand there with this safety precaution pamphlet in his hand reading it over and over all the time and checking it to see that they were observing all the safety instructions.

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79. Q. You mean that the men were working according to the safety instructions?

A. Yes, men and officers.

80. Q. Were any explosives loaded at ~~any~~ holds that were not sheathed for Class A explosives?

A. None to my knowledge. None were called for in the loading plan.

81. Q. Commander, at number four hatch, you said you had three booms, one on each side and one over the center of the hatch. Could both lifts come up, be hoisted and meet amidship at the same time?

A. They could but strict orders were given that they would not.

82. Q. Who was the hatch tender?

A. Army personnel.

83. Q. On both sides?

A. Hatch men on each side and an army man approximating a safety man standing in the hatch. Part of the hatch boards and one beam were left in. They were clamped in place or welded in place, one of the two.

84. Q. Did that arrangement speed up your loading?

A. Very much.

85. Q. Commander, was all of your loading gear in proper working order?

A. To the best of my knowledge my loading gear was always in best working order. We had at one time had one bad winch, and as I demanded that the working gear be in good order at all times, I had that fixed. I believed that all of the loading crews were satisfied with the condition of the gear.

86. Q. How high was the lowest point of the cargo net above the pallet?

A. How high at the lowest point. The pallet fits flat in the cargo net and the cargo net is drawn up over the side. In some few cases we have had bombs slip from the pallet boards due to movement in the ducks coming out, but the nets were of such small mesh that it would be impossible I believe for any bomb to slip through the nets. I cannot state for certain but I noticed several of them that went down outside of the pallet board.

87. Q. Could they have slid over the top of it?

A. I don't believe they could have.

88. Q. The net came up high enough?

A. There was plenty of height above the pallet if the nets were properly placed in the boards. They might have been improperly placed and the bomb go over, but I did not observe any being improperly placed, at the times I saw the loading going on, which was quite a bit of the time.

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89. Q. Commander was any gasoline or oil or any inflammable material on deck anywhere near the hold?

A. There was. Aft there were gasoline racks. We carry gasoline for the handy billy pumps and one emergency generator. We carry lube oil on deck. It is the only place we have for it. Our tanks are not large enough, but all of our tanks were at this time (interrupted).

90. Q. How did you carry this oil? In drums?

A. Yes.

91. Q. How far away would that be from number four hatch?

A. Approximately 25 to 30 feet, I would say.

92. Q. That would be abaft of number five hatch?

A. No, because the drums sat outboard next to the bulwark and aft from number four.

93. Q. Well it would not be anymore than 25 feet abaft of the after part of number four hatch then?

A. Well yes. You see because we have two sets of winches there. We have a mast table there which occupies quite a bit of space, and number five is a fairly long hatch. The gasoline drum is aft by the after deck house. That is the rack for the gasoline drums.

94. Q. That would be around number five hatch?

A. Well, aft of number five hatch for the gasoline. The lube oil was not.

95. Q. Where was the lube oil?

A. The lube oil as I told you was in these drums along the bulwark. They were abaft the mizzenmast.

96. Q. Did you ever empty any of these drums partly?

A. Yes, at times it was necessary to empty the drums part of the way because of the small storage space. If we had to fill something and it took only five gallons out of the drums I certainly could not afford to sacrifice the rest of the drum.

97. Q. But you had a small storage tank for storage in addition to that for your gasoline?

A. No, we had no storage tank other than the drums because we had no boats that used gasoline. Our boats were diesel. The only thing that used the gasoline was the jeep, handy billy and this generator.

98. Q. You had a tank for your oil?

A. Yes, we had a tank below deck, but it was only a small tank and did not hold enough for any length of time, so it was necessary to have the drums on deck, which was the standard practice for all liberty ships I believe.

The court then at 4 p.m., adjourned until 10 a.m., 31 January 1945.

SECOND DAY

U. S. Naval Advanced Base,
Guadalcanal, B.S.I.
Wednesday, 31 January 1945.

The court met at 10 a.m.

Present:
Lieutenant Commander Audrey A. Scott, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve,
Lieutenant Commander John D. Vaughn, Medical Corps, U.S. Naval Reserve, and
Lieutenant Dwight P. Colburn, S(O), U.S. Naval Reserve, members, and
Lieutenant (junior grade) Nathaniel H. Willis, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve,
judge advocate;
Robert R. Mitchell, chief yeoman, acting, U.S.Coast Guard Reserve, reporter.
Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U.S. Coast Guard, interested party,
and his counsel.

The judge advocate stated that the record of the proceedings of the first day of the inquiry was not ready. The court decided to postpone the reading of this until such time as it shall be reported ready and in the meantime to proceed with the inquiry.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U.S. Coast Guard, interested party, resumed his seat as witness, and was warned that the oath previously taken was still binding, and continued his testimony.

Examined by the judge advocate:

99. Q. I show you H.O. Chart Number 1009 and ask you whether the berth 24 which you referred to yesterday, is on this chart?

A. Yes it is.

100. Q. Did you berth according to that chart?

A. We did.

101. Q. Did you use the beacons shown there for your bearings?

A. We came in on the line between Beacon Dog and the center of berth 24 and anchored on the bearing on Beacon Easy.

102. Q. Commander, do you know how many officers were aboard the ship that night and who was left?

A. I cannot state definitely how many officers there were on board at the time but I feel certain that there was a full watch of officers on board.

103. Q. What is a watch of officers when you are in port, composed of?

A. The watch of officers are divided into two sections of three officers each. To the best of my knowledge Ensign Shogren, Lieutenant Prance, Machinist Baker were on board at the time. Which officer who stands the day's duties was on board I cannot state. I had talked with Lieutenant (jg) Auble at approximately 1745 in regard to stowage of certain cargo expected on board.

104. Q. You are not sure whether or not he was the cargo officer for that day though?

A. No, I am not sure whether he was the cargo officer and was later relieved or whether he was relieving the regular cargo officer inasmuch as there are only two of them. They may have exchanged watch duties for a few hours.

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105. Q. When does their day normally start?

A. The watch normally changed at noon at each day.

106. Q. Commander, I show you two phamplets, put out by the U.S. Coast Guard entitled "Explosives or Other Dangerous Articles on Board Vessels" dated April 9, 1941 and "Regulations Governing Transportation of Military Explosives on Board Vessels During Present Emergency" dated 1 October 1943, and ask you whether or not those or either one of them are the regulations previously referred to as followed in the loading of explosives on your ship?

A. I referred to the second publication mentioned which is also contained in the appendix of a later edition of the first publication. You will remember that I referred to the stowage of vehicles on board vessels which was based on a publication known as "The Naval Transportation Surface Manual". I believe that is the name of it. It is the publication put out by the Naval Transport Service which governs the carriage of different type freight on board ships in the Naval Transport Service of which this ship is directly a part, being assigned originally to the Naval Transport Service and ordered to Comseronsopac.

107. Those are the instructions and regulations which you followed at all times during the loading of ammunition?

A. To the best of the ability of myself and my officers, my crew and such crews as were sent from the beach. There were also loading instructions covering the handling of any type cargo which fully covered the operations of the winches. The safety precautions to be observed in regard to first, conduct of the personnel on board; the necessity of keeping clear passageways on deck so that in case an emergency should arise, the passage would be effected.

108. Q. Did you at various times inspect the explosives that were being loaded in number four hatch?

A. Yes, I would walk back to number four hold frequently during the day and night.

109. Q. What was the condition of those explosives?

A. The explosives simply consisted of 350 pound bombs uncrated.

110. Q. Did they appear to be in good shape? Were they damaged, or were damaged ones reported to you by anyone?

A. No damages reported to me by anyone, and I observed no damaged ones.

111. Q. Do you know the nature of the explosives the bombs contained?

A. I understand that the bombs contained explosives known as Torpex.

112. Q. The red covered phamplet sets up certain classifications of ammunition and explosives, what did you consider those bombs to come under?

A. Class 10.

113. Q. Have you been able to obtain a list of the personnel aboard ship?

A. I have.

114. Q. Do you have that with you?

A. I do not. I can give you the numbers if you so desire.

Examined by the court:

115. Q. Commander, how many officers did you have aboard the Serpens, the total.

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A. I had thirteen officers attached to the Serpens including myself.

116. Q. The record shows that seven officers returned to the ship just prior to the explosion?

A. That is correct.

117. Q. There are three other surviving officers?

A. No, there are two surviving officers. Myself and the paymaster.

118. Q. Then there would be four officers on board the ship in the absence of these nine?

A. That is correct.

119. Q. Were those officers capable of handling the cargo and the safety of the ship with the absence of these nine officers?

A. They were.

120. Q. In your opinion were they competent to handle the loading of the cargo and look after the ship?

A. Yes sir.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness resumed his seat as interested party.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Elmer O. Nelson, Lieutenant, U.S.N.R., YMS 281, Commanding Officer.

2. Q. What is your position on the YMS 281?

A. Commanding Officer.

3. Q. Was your ship in this port, Guadalcanal, 29 January 1945?

A. Yes, it was.

4. Q. Was it at anchorage?

A. Yes, it was.

5. Q. Will you describe approximately where it was?

A. Yes, about one hundred yards off the northeast buoy of the small boat anchorage (referring to HO Chart no. 1009).

6. Q. Can you describe it by a berth?

A. Berth 22. Outer limits of berth 22.

7. Q. About how far from the Serpens would that be in your estimation?

A. We estimated approximately a quarter or one-half mile, as far as we were able to determine.

8. Q. Were you aboard at the time of the explosion?

A. Yes, I was.

9. Q. Where abouts on the ship were you at that time?

A. Sitting in the amidships on one of the bulwarks at the time it happened.

10. Q. Will you tell just what you saw and heard and experienced?

A. While sitting there the first thing we heard was the tremendous explosion.

11. Q. Do you know what time it was?

A. About 1120, as far as we were able to recall, I heard the first explosion; and, not knowing what it was, somebody asked what it was. At that time we heard the second one, and I turned. I was going toward the deck and turned around, and the only thing I could see was the blast which appeared like a sun coming up over the horizon. I took one look at it and went down the deck, then to the wardroom. That is the last we were able to see except the tremendous smoke rising after this.

12. Q. You mentioned two explosions. What was the first one like? Was it a large explosion?

A. Quite. In my mind the first one was slightly smaller than the second one.

13. Q. Did you notice any flame or any light in the sky at all at the time you heard the first explosion?

A. No, I did not. It was not large enough that I could see it anyway. I just scanned the horizon right away, and I don't remember seeing it at the time of the first explosion.

14. Q. At the time of the second explosion, did you see any flame?

A. Yes, that was when I raised my head and turned around and saw this tremendous blaze.

15. Q. Were any of the personnel aboard your vessel injured by the explosion or by pieces of metal falling?

A. We had no personnel casualties on board.

16. Q. Was your ship damaged in any way?

A. The ship was damaged all over the topside so far as the pieces of shrapnel crashing into the stowage boxes, through the main deck, and the concussion and the jarring loose of doors, compasses, and I would say that constitutes the main damage. No water lines were broken.

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17. Q. Most of the damage was of a minor nature?

A. Yes.

18. Q. Did you get underway that evening after the explosion?

A. After, I would say approximately one half hour after, the explosion we received orders to get underway and cover a screen.

19. Q. Did you have any difficulty after the damage to the vessel in getting underway?

A. No, we did not.

20. Q. Can you estimate the time that elapsed between the first and second explosion?

A. From opinions of personnel on board and myself, we estimated between approximately five to eight seconds between the two concussions.

21. Q. Do you think it might have been possible that, what you called the first explosion could have been the rushing of air from the scene of an explosion, and the second, the return of the air into the vaccum created by the explosion?

A. It might have been possible although the thing against it is the fact that the concussion seemed to be approximately in the same direction. It is hard to remember exactly but the opinion on board seems that there were two.

22. Q. It is your opinion as to what you know that we are interested in?

A. I don't know, it might have been a possibility.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

23. Q. Mr. Nelson, I think your testimony is that you did not notice any first flash from the first explosion, is that true?

A. I did not.

24. Q. There was a large visible flash on the second explosion?

A. What we term the second explosion, yes, a tremendous one.

25. Q. In your opinion could the first explosion have been an underwater explosion?

A. From the feel of it aboard ship, it seemed to be under water. It felt as though a depth charge had been dropped someplace.

Examined by the court:

26. Q. Were you looking at the source of the sound of the first explosion at that time?

A. No sir.

27. Q. Then had there been a flash, you could not have seen it in any event?

A. I could not identify it if there was a flash. I did not see it.

28. Q. What previous experience have you had with depth charges?

A. Dropping them off of our ship on practice runs.

29. Q. Did you ever experience a torpedo explosion?

A. No sir.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

30. Q. As I understand your testimony Mr. Nelson, you were sitting with your back toward the Serpens at the time?

A. I would say my side was toward the Serpens.

31. Q. Sitting in that position would you have been conscious of a flash from the first explosion if there had been one?

A. I would say I should have been conscious of it, but as I recall I don't remember seeing one after the first concussion that we felt.

32. Q. You were definitely conscious of the second one?

A. Yes.

33. Q. Do you believe you would have been conscious of the second explosion if your back would have been turned toward the Serpens?

A. Yes, I believe so.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness made the following statement:

I consider this very trifling but might as well state it. After the explosion had occured and we were underway, two of my men came up on the main deck and said that approximately 30 days ago, while attending a movie over here, they had talked to two men in marine uniform. Approximately a week ago while attending a movie, the two same men were in sailor uniforms. These men at that time were inquiring about the AK 97, the U.S.S. Serpens and asked what regulations there were on the gangway watch. My men explained to them, and that is the last that they saw of them. Whether that has anything or any bearing in this court, I don't know. That is what they reported to me and so I thought I better tell the court about it.

Examined by the judge advocate:

34. Q. Will you give us the names of the two men who reported this to you?

A. John Minton, ship's cook third class and Floyd Mitchell, seaman second class.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. John A. Petrich, Lieutenant (jg) U.S.N.R., Executive Officer on the YMS 281.

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2. Q. Were you aboard the YMS 281 at the time of the explosion on the 29th of January?

A. Yes sir.

3. Q. Do you know what time the explosion occurred?

A. Sometime after 2300, approximately 2320 I believe.

4. Q. Where on the ship were you at the time of the explosion?

A. Sitting up on the main deck close to the fantail just aft of amidships.

5. Q. Do you know where the Serpens was anchored?

A. I know the approximate position.

6. Q. Were you facing towards her?

A. No, my right side was facing the position of the Serpens. I was facing almost due west at the time.

7. Q. Will you explain or tell what you saw and heard?

A. Well the first thing I saw was the great flame coming up right off the fantail of the ship. I did not have any idea at the time what it was. The explosion and concussion hit the ship and all of us were thrown on the deck. We started to crawl up under cover to the wardroom and got up and ran up toward the wardroom and hit the deck again. Whether it was the next concussion I don't know. I know I crawled up to the wardroom and waited until all the fragments had fallen and came out again to discover the damage done to the ship. I checked the injuries to personnel and that is all there was to it.

8. Q. Did you hear an explosion or see a flame or blast first?

A. I saw the blast first.

9. Q. Then you felt the explosion?

A. Yes.

10. Q. You felt nothing at all before you saw the flame?

A. No sir, I saw the flame first.

11. Q. Was there just the one flame or did it vary, shoot up twice?

A. By the time what I thought was the second concussion, my back was facing toward the Serpens. I thought it was one big flame. It was growing in intensity.

12. Q. Was there any difference in the intensity of the first and second explosion?

A. I could not tell any. I imagine the first one had the most effect. I would not be definite on that statement at all.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. William E. Hughes, seaman first class, U.S.C.G.R., attached to the U.S.S. Serpens.

2. Q. Where were you at approximately 2315 to 2330 on 29 January 1945?

A. I was down at the dock, sir.

3. Q. What dock do you refer to, the one just below the Port Director's office?

A. Yes.

4. Q. Was the Serpens visible from there?

A. Yes sir.

5. Q. Will you tell the court just what you heard and saw and felt?

A. Well, I was down at the boat at the time waiting for the Captain. I was sent over to pick him up. While we were waiting there, well, as we came in, a liberty party came down and wanted to go aboard. I told them that the liberty boat just left that it would be an hour before there would be another one. They asked me to run them across the lagoon to the other side so that they could pick up a dukw so that they could go out. I told them that I could not do that, that I would have to wait for the Captain, so they went to the dock to wait for the next boat. About 20 minutes after 10 the explosion occurred.

6. Q. You mean after 10 or after 11?

A. About 20 minutes after 11.

7. Q. What did you see of the explosion?

A. Well, there was a big flash and flame and I was laying down in the boat. I hardly realized what happened. It all happened so suddenly. As I got up, the explosion occurred and knocked me down. I crawled out from the boat. I don't know how I got out, but the fact is I got out and up on the dock, and the debris started to fall around me, and I rushed over to the signal station and got underneath the signal station.

8. Q. As you were lying down in your boat what was the first sensation? Did you see a large flame or light?

A. A large flame.

9. Q. Or did you hear an explosion first?

A. It was a large flame, a real large flame. I was just partly asleep. I was not sound asleep at the time because I was talking to the boys previously to that.

10. Q. Did you hear anything at the same time you saw the flame?

A. No, it was a pause between the flame and the explosion.

11. Q. Before the explosion came, you got up?

A. Yes, I was standing on my feet.

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12. Q. Was that the only explosion you heard?

A. Well, that is the only explosion I heard, just one explosion.

13. Q. How many of you were there in the boat?

A. There were three of us down there in the boat.

14. Q. Were you all three, members of the crew?

A. Yes sir.

15. Q. What were the names of the other two men in the boat?

A. Mike and I can't recall the last name, a motor machinist mate.

16. Q. Do you remember the name of the other one?

A. I cannot remember his name.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

17. Q. Hughes, as I understood your testimony, about 2320 you were lying down in the boat, is that true?

A. Yes,

18. Q. You were lying down?

A. Yes, I might say right up to that time.

19. Q. And were you asleep at the time?

A. No, I was just lying there because I was just talking to the boys previously to that - just lying and talking.

20. Q. What was it that first attracted your attention to the Serpens?

A. Well, the real bright flame attracted my attention. It just blew everything right up because I was facing out toward the water, with my head toward the bow at the time of the explosion. I noticed the flame and got up, and right after I got up a few seconds afterwards, the explosion occurred and knocked me down. I got up somehow or other, and I managed to get out on the dock.

21. Q. You only noticed one explosion?

A. One distinct explosion. There might have been two, but all I can say is just one distinct explosion.

Examined by the court:

22. Q. When you looked up where did the flame seem to come? From what direction on the ship?

A. Directly out to where our ship was anchored?

23. Q. No, to what part of the ship?

A. Right from the amidships. I would say from amidships, close to amidships.

24. Q. The ship was right abeam to you, was she not?

A. Yes, it was abeam to us.

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None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Robert J. Smart, signalman striker, seaman first class, attached to the U.S.S. Serpens.

2. Q. Where were you at the time of the explosion on the night of 29 January 1945?

A. I was on the dock reading a message from the ship.

3. Q. How was the message being sent from the Serpens?

A. By light blinker.

4. Q. Do you remember how much of the message he sent?

A. He got through the date and time group and that is when I heard the first.

5. Q. Go right on, what happened then, what did you hear, see and feel?

A. I heard one. It was more or less a muffle as I remember, and then I got up on my feet and stood and watched it, and then the other one went off. I mean just that quick. I got up to my feet, and then I came to myself and ran across the dock, and just about that time the concussion hit us both, and we went flat on the ground. I said for Carmana to get down, and all that shrapnel started to fly and that stuff, and we got up together and took cover by the coconut palms behind the tower right close to the quonset hut.

6. Q. Did you see a large flame at any time?

A. Yes.

7. Q. When did you see that in regard to the first muffled explosion you heard?

A. I could not say that I did see a flame on that one.

8. Q. Do you think you heard the muffled explosion before you saw the flame?

A. I am pretty sure of that. We heard that, and then we got up, and by that time the other one went off and that flame. From where we were standing we bent our neck looking at it. The ship itself looked like it was made out of sand, and somebody scooped the bottom part of it. It was just about like that. It crumbled more or less.

9. Q. What position were you in at the time you were reading the message that was being sent?

A. I was sitting down on the dock.

10. Q. Where on the dock?

A. We ran right across the dock and we hit the dirt so it was just right where the dock starts to go out from this side of the dock.

11. Q. You were at the end closest to shore?

A. We were on the channel side of the dock.

12. Q. Were you one of the crew of the Captain's gig that evening?

A. No sir, I was over my liberty.

13. Q. Did the flame that you saw, seem to come from any particular part of the ship?

A. It just seemed to shoot straight up from about amidships, number four hold I guess.

14. Q. Could you state positively that it came from there?

A. No, I would not swear that I actually saw it come from there; but, as close as I could see or say, that is where it came from.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

15. Q. Smart, are you a signalman striker?

A. Yes.

16. Q. That accounted for the fact that you watched the message that the ship was about to send?

A. Yes.

17. Q. I understand your testimony is that you heard a muffled explosion first, is that true?

A. That is true.

18. Q. Now did this muffled explosion seem to come from the direction of the Serpens?

A. I know it came from there because the signalman was right in the middle of the group with his blinker light, and that is when the first went off.

19. Q. In other words the light went off immediately?

A. Right in the middle of the GR. He sends that together. It would come right together, but it did not.

20. Q. Then after you heard this muffled explosion, did there seem to be any flame at the time or light of any sort?

A. I believe I did see a flash, but I could not say there was a flame or anything because the other one came right on top of it. If there was, I would not know for sure.

21. Q. Then as I understand your testimony you heard the first muffled explosion and then got up and you heard the second explosion?

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A. Yes, it came that quick. I heard the one, and then Carmana and myself went down, and then the other one came, and we ran across the dock. We knew what happened. It shook and crumbled the ship, that is about all.

22. Q. In what direction was the Serpens heading when the message was being sent?

A. We were looking - here is the dock (indicating) and we were looking at the port quarter.

23. Q. Port quarter?

A. Yes. She was heading out that way and here we were (indicating), and she had been setting that way since 11 o'clock because that is when I had gotten on the dock. At 11 she was still at the same angle.

24. Q. She had not moved between the time you got there?

A. She had not swung enoughto be noticed from where we were.

25. Q. Then when you saw the flash from the second explosion, it seemed to come from that part of the ship that was closest to you, is that true?

A. Yes sir. No, we would not have been looking at her from the port quarter because here was the dock and here was the ship like that (indicating) and we were looking just about the beam (indicating with two pencils). We were not sitting back this way. It was more like that (indicating with his fingers).

Examined by the court:

26. Q. Was the ship parallel to the beach?

A. No, her stern was (interrupted).

27. Q. Was her head off shore?

A. Yes.

28. Q. How much would you say. How much off shore, at about what angle?

A. Well here was - she must have been setting like that with her bow out here (indicating with fingers).

29. Q. You would say at an angle of 75 degrees.

A. Yes, that would be pretty close.

30. Q. But her head, she was heading off shore?

A. Yes, she was headed going there (indicating with fingers).

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

SECRET UNCLASSIFIED

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. Richard M. Figgs, officer steward third class, USCGR, present station U.S.S. Serpens.

2. Q. Where were you on the night of 29 January when an explosion on the Serpens occurred?

A. Where the dukws hit the water, the shed where the dukws hit the water.

3. Q. Do you know where the Port Director's Office is?

A. No sir.

4. Q. Where the dukws were coming from the ship?

A. Yes, that is (interrupted)

5. Q. You were right on the beach?

A. Yes sir.

6. Q. Had you just come off the Serpens or were you headed for her?

A. I was headed for her.

7. Q. Had you gotten aboard a dukw yet?

A. No, I had not gotten aboard a dukw yet.

8. Q. Which direction were you facing at the time of the explosion? Were you looking at the Serpens or away from it?

A. At a side angle.

9. Q. Will you tell us just what you heard or just what you saw and felt?

A. I was standing there, and a kid lit a cigarette, and at the same time the light went off, and I turned to look to see what was going on, and the light was too great for my eyes so I turned and started to run and followed the crowd and ran off, and then I heard the explosion, and then things began to fall around me.

10. Q. First of all you saw a light?

A. A light, yes.

11. Q. Did you see what the light was?

A. No, I could not see. It was just a red light.

12. Q. Were was it?

A. Off at an angle of the ship when I saw it.

13. Q. After you saw that, you felt the explosion?

A. Yes sir.

14. Q. You did not hear or feel anything prior to seeing the light?

A. No, sir.

SECRET

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. Peter Puzio, attached to NAB, Guadalcanal, seaman first class, USNR.

2. Q. Did you see an explosion on 29 January 1945?

A. Yes sir.

3. Q. Where were you at that time?

A. I was sitting on the end of the pier fishing.

4. Q. What direction were you facing?

A. I was facing out. The pier is like this (indicating with a pencil) and here is the edge and I was facing out toward Tulagi.

5. Q. Facing the direction where the explosion came from?

A. Yes sir.

6. Q. Will you tell what you saw and heard and what you felt?

A. The last I remember I was looking at my watch. It was 25 minutes past 11. I was not paying any attention because small boats were coming in and out, and I was holding my dropline. A big flash, a red flash, took place. It was a red flash so suddenly lighted up, that in my past experience in the service I just layed down because I knew there was something wrong. I heard a tremendous explosion, and I was just laying down in that position, I was. I knew that some sprays of water and stones went over me. I was laying down. I was expecting more but it quietened down. I lifted my head up toward the ships there and noticed a big cloud of smoke, and I was still laying down and heard some kind of a water noise. I was looking out and saw a big wave coming toward me rolling white foam. I ran to the beach. That is all I know.

7. Q. What was the very first thing that attracted you r attention?

A. The big blast like lightning.

8. Q. The red light in the sky?

A. Yes sir.

9. Q. Did you feel any explosion before you saw that?

A. You mean my past time in the service, yes sir.

10. Q. No, out here?

A. No sir.

Examined by the court:

11. Q. Do you recall if the ship appeared to you as if she was laying parallel to the beach?

A. It is hard for me to tell because I really did not pay any attention.

12. Q. You don't recall where the flame appeared to start from on the ship?

A. The flame started exactly where the ship was - a blast. The blast was so powerful.

13. Q. You don't understand my question. Do you recall where the flame actually started from, at what part of the ship?

A. No sir.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. Willard Eugene Batchelor, ship's cook second class, U.S.N.R., attached to NAB Guadalcanal.

2. Q. Where were you on the night of January 29 when an explosion occurred?

A. I was standing by the pier fishing.

3. Q. Is that the pier by the Port Director's office?

A. Yes sir.

4. Q. Were you facing toward the explosion at the time?

A. Well, I was facing at an angle. The ship was out more to my right at the dock. The ship was setting athwartship of the dock.

5. Q. Will you tell the court what you saw, heard and felt?

A. I was sitting there fishing, and the first thing I knew I saw a big flash, a big hot flash. I then rolled over and got up. I started to get up, and the big flash knocked me down, but I kept on running. I happened to look up when I saw the thing go up at first.

6. Q. You saw what go up at first?

A. I saw a big explosion. A big flash of light and everything up. I did not know what happened. I got up and started to run. I heard the report that it blew up.

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None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection there with, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The court then at 11:45 a.m., took recess until 1:30 p.m., at which time it reconvened.

Present: All the members, the judge advocate, the interested party to the inquiry and his counsel.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness previously called by the judge advocate entered and was informed that his former oath was still binding.

The judge advocate stated that this witness, Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U.S.C.G., Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. Serpens (AK97) was called in order to comply with section 725(e) of Naval Courts and Boards, and that there was present before the court at that time all surviving officers and crew except Fidel O. Carmana, seaman second class, 676-292, U.S.C.G.R.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. Lieutenant Commander Stinson, have you made an official written report containing your narrative of the loss of the U.S.S. Serpens (AK97)?

A. Yes, I have.

2. Q. Will you furnish a copy of the report and read same?

A. Yes, here it is.

Lieutenant Commander Stinson read said report. A certified copy of the report is appended to the record and marked Exhibit "1(1), 1(2)".

The remaining officer and crew of the U.S.S. Serpens (AK97) were duly sworn.

3. Q. Commander Stinson is the narrative just read to the court a true statement of the loss of the United States Ship Serpens (AK97)?

A. To the best of my knowledge and belief it is.

4. Q. Have you any complaint to make against any of the surviving officers and crew of the said ship on that occasion?

A. I have not.

5. Q. Surviving officer and crew, have you any objection to make in regard to the narrative just read to the court, or anything to lay to the charge of any officer or man with regard to the loss of the United States Ship Serpens (AK97)?

A. All surviving officer and crew answered no.

At this point all the surviving offisers, except Lieutenant Commander Stinson and the surviving crew present, were dismissed from the court, and the inquiry proceeded.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. John R. Clark, Lieutenant, U.S.C.G., U.S.S. Serpens, (AK97).

2. Q. Mr. Clark, what time did you leave the Serpens on the night of 29 January 1945?

A. At approximately 1830.

3. Q. Do you know what officers remained aboard at that time?

A. Mr. Prance was aboard. Mr. Showgren was aboard, officer of the deck.

4. Q. Do you know whether or not Mr. Baker was aboard?

A. Mr. Baker was. Was he the Machinist?

5. Q. Yes?

A. Yes, Mr. Baker, and Mr. Davis. I recall them before leaving the ship. I saw them aboard.

6. Q. Did you observe any officers leaving the ship prior to your departure?

A. Yes.

7. Q. About what time?

A. About 6:10 I saw the doctor.

8. Q. That would be 1810?

A. Yes, 1810, I saw the doctor and Mr. Kotkas.

9. Q. Were those the only two?

A. Those were the only two I actually saw leave.

10. Q. Did anybody leave the ship with you?

A. Yes.

11. Q. Who was that?

A. Mr. Johnson and Chief Commissary Steward Jones.

12. Q. Do you know who was Cargo Officer that day, the day of 29 January?

A. You mean all day long?

13. Q. Yes?

A. Mr. Aubel was during the day time.

14. Q. Was he also Cargo Officer that evening?

A. When I left the ship Mr. Prance had relieved Mr. Johnson as Cargo Officer, that I am positive of. I asked Mr. Johnson whether he wanted me to pick him up and he said "No, he had to go back to the ship and relieve Mr. Prance who was standing by for him as Cargo Officer.

15. Q. Approximately how far away were you from the ship at the time of the explosion?

A. That I am not sure of, but it was inland about a quarter of a mile off Point Cruz.

16. Q. Were you within sight of the ship?

A. No, I was not.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. James Benjamin Adams, seaman first class, signalman striker, stationed at NAB, Guadalcanal.

2. Q. What are your duties on the base?

A. My duties are signalman striker.

3. Q. Were you on duty on the night of January 29 at about 2300?

A. Yes sir.

4. Q. Where were you on duty?

A. I was on duty at Lunga Signal Tower.

5. Q. Did you receive a message or any message from the U.S.S. Serpens?

A. I was receiving one at the time of the explosion.

6. Q. How much of it had you received?

A. I received the call of the ship and date and time space went off and that was all.

7. Q. Will you explain to the court what you saw?

A. I looked out and there was a bright light. It was just a quick flash and it came all from the bottom and the water all around and covered with a red flash and then the explosion. There were two explosions.

8. Q. Did you see the flash before you heard anything?

A. I saw the flash before I heard anything at all.

9. Q. And then you heard an explosion.

A. Yes sir.

SECRET
UNCLASSIFIED

10. Q. You said two explosions, when did the other one come?

A. They both came right together. It seemed to me like at the same time I saw the flash. Maybe it was an explosion. The first one was not as loud as the second one and then came the second one with a real flash but I am positive I saw that flash. I am positive of that. I know I saw it.

11. Q. You saw two flashes?

A. Yes sir.

12. Q. What did the first flash look like?

A. It was a bright light. A bright light. It almost blinded me. It looked odd to my eyes.

13. Q. Did you hear anything at the time you saw that?

A. Not to my knowledge.

14. Q. What happened next, did you hear an explosion or see another flash?

A. Then the red fire came up, and I heard an explosion right after that.

15. Q. Then you think you heard another explosion too?

A. The same time. I heard them both at the same time. I am positive. They were right behind each other, identically almost.

16. Q. Did each explosion sound as loud as the other?

A. I would not say the first seemed as loud as the other. It did not seem to me. I might have been a little shakey, but it did not sound as loud as the last one.

17. Q. Did you remain in the tower at this time?

A. After that I went down, shrapnel was flying all through the place. I went down and stayed down about three minutes, and there was a large gush of black smoke going up, and then I went back to the tower, and all the lights were cut and a lot of ships were calling. At least two or three ships were calling but there was no light service.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

18. Q. Adams, how was the Serpens headed with relation to the tower at the time you were taking this message?

A. It was a regular message, space, able, space.

19. Q. I was talking about the heading of the ship?

A. Which way she was setting?

20. Q. Yes?

A. Front of the ship was pointed toward Tenaru Beach.

21. Q. Adams, when you saw this first flash, did it seem to come from any particular part of the ship?

A. It came from all around the ship.

22. Q. It came from all around the ship?

A. From all around, but the explosion I am positive was directly in the center, right under the structure. Right under the signal tower, I am postive of that.

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

23. Q. Let us talk about one thing at the time and please answer the question I ask you?

A. Yes sir.

24. Q. The first flash you saw seemed to come from all around the ship?

A. Yes sir.

25. Q. Was the flash from the water or the air?

A. From the water.

26. Q. Then you saw a second explosion or second flash?

A. Yes sir.

27. Q. And how did that look to you?

A. Red.

28. Q. Red?

A. Yes sir.

29. Q. Where did it seem to be coming from as far as the ship was concerned?

A. From the ship itself.

30. Q. From the ship itself?

A. Yes.

31. Q. Did that go up in the air or stay there?

A. It went up. I don't know maybe thirty thousand feet, it really went up.

32. Q. Could you tell whether it came from any particular part of the ship or water?

A. I would say the center.

33. Q. From the center?

A. Direct center, yes.

34. Q. Did you see anything else at that time that was unusual?

A. No sir.

35. Q. Just the two first flashes and then the large flame and the second explosion?

A. Yes.

Examined by the judge advocate:

36. Q. Did you notice whether or not there were any small boats out alongside of the ship at that time?

A. I think a dukw came away from the ship. A dukw was on its way in from the ship.

37. Q. That is the only activity you noticed out there?

UNCLASSIFIED

A. That is all I think I noticed.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. James Therrel Jones, seaman first class, signalman striker, U.S.N.R., division D, NAB, Guadalcanal.

2. Q. Where were you on duty on the night of January 29, at about 2300?

A. Yes sir, on the tower.

3. Q. Did you see the explosion that evening?

A. Yes sir.

4. Q. Were you looking towards the explosion at the time when you first noticed it?

A. Yes, because the other fellow was receiving a message from the Serpens and I was watching.

5. Q. Were you watching the message coming in?

A. Yes sir.

6. Q. Will you explain just what you saw and felt?

A. The message started off with the heading space, able space and time and call is as far as he got. The originator the date and time group was as far as he got in the heading of the message. The explosion occurred right after he finished the space and time.

7. Q. Then what happened?

A. The explosion occurred. It was a white flash first and immediately following was covered red all over and the smoke came up and starting down immediately.

8. Q. Did you see a white flash before you heard anything?

A. We saw the white flash first.

9. Q. Did you hear anything before you saw this first flash?

A. We saw the white flash first.

10. Q. Then what happened, did you hear an explosion or see another flash?

A. I heard the explosion and a large explosion immediately following with red flames covering it, and the smoke shot up.

11. Q. Did the red flames and the second explosion come at the same time?

UNCLASSIFIED

A. That is right, yes sir, about the same time.

12. Q. Where did the first white flash seem to come from or where did it look to you?

A. It seemed to come from about the bow part of it. The bow part of the ship. It was not exactly the bow but a little bit from the bow.

13. Q. Where was the bow of the ship?

A. It seemed to me that the bow was facing east.

14. Q. Facing east. Was the ship parallel to the beach or at an angle?

A. I think it was parallel to the beach.

15. Q. A white flash appeared to you to come from the easterly end of the ship?

A. That is right.

16. Q. When did the red flash occur?

A. The red flash occurred immediately after the white flash, and it seemed to cover the whole ship.

17. Q. Did either one of the flashes spread out from the ship, or did they go straight into the air.

A. They seemed to have gone straight into the air.

18. Q. Did you remain on the tower after the explosion?

A. After the explosion I went back on the tower, but during the explosion I ran off.

Examined by the court:

19. Q. Can you describe the shape of the first white flash you mentioned?

A. It seemed to have been just a large round ball with a white flash the height of the ship.

20. Q. What part of the ship did the white flash come from?

A. It seemed to come from the bow part. Not exactly the bow part though.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

21. Q. Jones, when you saw this white flash, how high would you say it went up from the water?

A. It did not go up very high. It seemed to have gone up the height of the ship.

22. Q. Just about the height of the ship itself?

A. Yes sir.

23. Q. Could you tell where it started at all?

A. All I can say is that it started about three-quarters away from the bow.

24. Q. Three-quarters away from the bow?

A. It was not quite half way.

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SECRET

25. Q. From the bow to amidships?

A. Yes, it was not quite half way.

26. Q. Now this white flash extended up to the height of the ship?

A. Yes.

27. Q. Did it seem to cover the water along the water line of the ship?

A. Yes sir, it did.

28. Q. It seemed to start right at the water?

A. It seemed to start right at the water line of the ship.

29. Q. And go up to the top?

A. Yes sir.

Examined by the court:

30. Q. That was on the shore side of the ship?

A. That is the way it seemed to me, yes.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. Warren A. James, signalman second class, U.S.N.R., attached to NAB, Guadalcanal.

2. Q. What are your duties on the tower?

A. I am watch supervisor at Lunga Signal Tower.

3. Q. Were you on duty at the time of the explosion on 29 January 1945?

A. Yes sir.

4. Q. Which way were you facing at the time of the explosion?

A. I was facing the ship.

5. Q. Will you tell us just what you saw, heard and felt?

A. I was on watch, and one of the fellows was receiving a message. I was reading it over his shoulder, and all at once it seemed to me very bright. When I stood up, it looked red as though somebody lit some powder, it went straight up and there was an explosion. At this time I left the tower and got under cover at the boat dispatcher.

UNCLASSIFIED

6. Q. Were you sitting down at the time you were receiving the message?

A. He was receiving the message. I was sitting down when it first started to happen.

7. Q. The first thing you noticed was the bright light?

A. I don't know whether it was his light. Then I got up and saw a red light.

8. Q. Where was this red light?

A. Just forward of the super structure. It seemed to be come up just in front of the super structure.

9. Q. Which way was the ship heading?

A. She was laying I would say with the bow toward us and the stern seaward to the east. You see the way it is out there. The way she was laying, her stern was seaward but toward Tenaru beach.

10. Q. She was heading more or less west?

A. The bow?

11. Q. Yes?

A. I think so.

12. Q. Could you say where the white light was that you noticed?

A. I did not notice it. I did not see much of the white light.

13. Q. When did you first hear an explosion?

A. I don't know the time but it was 20 (interrupted)

14. Q. I mean in regard to the lights?

A. The explosion, it was as the red light came up. That was the large explosion then there was a small one just before the red light.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

15. Q. James, could you tell from where you were sitting at the time, how high the first flash came?

A. The white flash?

16. Q. Yes, the first one.

A. I could not tell you exactly how high, but it was bright, and it seemed to come from the water up and lit up the whole place.

17. Q. Came from the water up?

A. Yes sir.

18. Q. Then where did the red one seem to come?

A. Just amidships, and it went higher than the superstructure.

Examined by the court:

19. Q. On which side of the ship was that white flash that you speak of?

A. I could not tell.

UNCLASSIFIED SECRET

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Roy L. Vercellone, Lieutenant, U.S.N.R. assigned to the Port Director's Office, NAB, Guadalcanal.

2. Q. Were you on duty at the port Director's Office at the time of the explosion on the 29th of January?

A. I was.

3. Q. Do you know what time that explosion took place?

A. I logged it in at 2315 but I believe it would be close to 2320.

4. Q. Do you know approximately how far it is from the center of berth 24 to the dock or the Port Director's Office?

A. From the office itself it is approximately three-quarters of a mile.

5. Q. How far is the dock from the Port Director's Office?

A. The tip of the dock?

6. Q. Yes?

A. I would say approximately 100 yards.

7. Q. Where is the Lunga signal tower in relation to the Port Director's Office?

A. Directly over it.

8. Q. Were you looking out toward the Serpens at the time of the explosion?

A. No, I was not. At the time I was sitting behind a desk facing the sea.

9. Q. Will you explain just what you saw and heard?

A. I first of all heard a noise, blast and raised my head and saw the flash.

10. Q. What sort of a flash?

A. Very red, red flames is what I saw.

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SECRET

11. Q. Did you hear more than one explosion?

A. No, I can't truthfully say that I did, although I would not swear that there were not more than one. In the excitment I thought it was one prolonged explosion.

12. Q. Who is in charge of the small boats stationed at NAB Guadalcanal?

A. My understanding is that they are directly under a petty officer of the watch. However, they do come under the Port Director's Officer of the watch.

13. Q. Do you know whether or not any boats were dispatched to the scene of the explosion?

A. Everyone available was sent out which was about four or five minutes afterwards. While half way out of the lagoon they had to turn back because the wave was too great. They feared they would capsized and returned to the dock to see whether the sea would quiet down a bit.

14. Q. After the large wave passed, they went out again?

A. Yes, every boat available went out.

15. Q. Do you have any idea how many boats went out?

A. I would not want to say. I imagine there were six to eight.

16. Q. Were any other steps taken in the matter of safety of lives and property around there, such as the fire department being called?

A. With the initial blaze the lights went out in the building. We tried to get Public Works and the Henderson line was out. The only one we could get was the Kukum line, and with that we could not get Public Works. We noticed ambulances coming down in practically ten minutes but there were no fire steps taken.

17. Q. Did units of the fire department show up?

A. They were there within ten or fifteen minutes afterwards.

18. Q. And amubulances also showed up, did they stand by?

A. Yes, they stood by and a couple stood by all night.

Examined by the court:

19. Q. You said the phone was out, did you contact the fire department?

A. I did not contact them.

20. Q. Were any messengers sent out?

A. No.

21. Q. Do you know if anyone sent messengers to the fire department or to the hospital?

A. I do not, but every man we had on watch at the time was part of the boat crews that went out with boats. I was the only one left in the Port Director's Office. I did notice the fire department and ambulances vehicles were there very soon after the explosion.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

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The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. George Joseph Prudhomme, seaman first class, U.S.N.R., attached to NAB, Guadalcanal.

2. Q. What are your duties here?

A. Engineer on a boat, BLIL.

3. Q. Were you on duty on the night of 29 January?

A. Yes sir.

4. Q. Did your boat go out to the Serpens that night?

A. Yes, at 11 o'clock.

5. Q. Can you tell me which way the Serpens was heading.

A. The bow was headed right towards the beach. The stern was straight out to the bay.

6. Q. Was it almost perpendicular to the beach?

A. I would say it was.

7. Q. At the time that you went out at 2300, did you notice anything unusual around the ship?

A. No sir. I carried this officer and went around the port side and went around to the starboard side to the gangway. I went around the stern, and there were two dukws setting there. Onewas loading and one just pulled in, and I let the officer off and came back to the beach.

8. Q. Where were the two dukws?

A. They were at the stern and starboard side.

9. Q. Stern and starboard side?

A. No, that would be the port side - the gangway was on the port side. There were two or three barges on the starboard side.

10. Q. Do you remember approximately what hatches those barges would have been at if they were on the starboard side?

A. I would say one was at the forward hatch and one was back by the stern hatch. Number four, I would say.

11. Q. Were there any other barges or small boats around the ship?

A. I passed one dukw going out. He was coming in.

12. Q. When you left from the Port Director's Office, did you go directly out to the Serpens?

A. Straight to the Serpens.

13. Q. How did you return?

A. I came straight back. I only had the one officer aboard. I came straight in.

UNCLASSIFIED

14. Q. Was anyone else in the boat with you?

A. No sir, I was by myself.

15. Q. Did you observe the explosion that took place?

A. My back was to it when it first happened.

16. Q. Were you already ashore at the time?

A. Yes, it happened about three to four minutes after I got back up to the boat shack.

17. Q. After the explosion was over what did you do?

A. After the explosion was over, I would say it was three or four minutes I went back out in the bay and headed for the Serpens to pick up any survivors.

18. Q. Do you know how many boats went out at that time?

A. Two of us and a tank lighter started out, I believe came out. There were two personnel boats and one tank lighter.

19. Q. They all went out right after the explosion?

A. Yes sir.

20. Q. Do you know whether or not other boats were manned later?

A. Yes, by the time we got back in from the first trip there were other boats on their way out.

21. Q. Did you pick up any survivors?

A. Four off the YP and two stretcher cases and the other two were not seriously hurt.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The court then at 3:45 p.m., adjourned until 9:30 a.m., 1 February 1945.

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THIRD DAY

U. S. Naval Advanced Base,
Guadalcanal, B.S.I.
Thursday, February 1, 1945.

The court met at 9:30 a.m.

Present:
Lieutenant Commander Audrey A. Scott, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve,
Lieutenant Commander John O. Vaughn, Medical Corps, U.S. Naval Reserve, and
Lieutenant Dwight P. Colburn, S(O), U.S. Naval Reserve, members, and
Lieutenant (junior grade) Nathaniel H. Willis, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve,
judge advocate;
Robert R. Mitchell, chief yeoman, acting, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, reporter.
Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U.S. Coast Guard, interested party,
and his counsel.

The judge advocate stated that the record of the proceedings of the first and second days of the inquiry was not ready. The court decided to postpone the reading of this until such time as it shall be reported ready and in the meantime to proceed with the inquiry.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank and present station.

A. L. H. McCain, Captain, Transportation Corps, Headquarters Island Command, Port Section, Offical capacity Superintendent of the Water Division.

2. Q. Captain, what do your duties consist of?

A. The direction of loading and discharging of ships at this port and the allocation of small boats and other water transportation used in this process.

3. Q. Did you have anything to do with the loading of the Serpens on the date of 24 January to 29 January 1945?

A. I did.

4. Q. Did you ever receive from the Captain of the Serpens any copies of Safety instructions regarding loading of the vessel?

A. I did.

5. Q. Do you have those with you?

A. I have, here are two copies.

6. Q. Referring to the second page of this copy whose writing is that, do you know?

A. The writing is - I do not know who wrote that. It was given to me by Captain Stinson of the Serpens and I believe that it was outlined by the cargo officer aboard the ship.

7. Q. The writing was on it when you received it?

A. Yes.

UNCLASSIFIED

8. Q. Is that true of this other copy also?

A. Yes, sir. The check marks on it I believe out here (indicating) were put on after the stowage of the ship.

The judge advocate offered said documents in evidence, submitted the same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, they were so received and copies are appended and marked "Exhibit "2(1), 2(2), 3(1)" and "3(2)."

9. Q. Captain, these instructions have reference to a phamphlet entitled "Regulations Governing Transportation of Military Explosives on Board Vessels During Present Emergency" dated 10 October 1943 published by the U.S. Coast Guard. Do you have or have you received prior to the loading of the Serpens such a phamphlet?

A. I have this one dated 1 October 1943.

10. Q. Do you have one dated 10 October 1943?

A. No, I have one dated 1 October 1943.

11. Q. Captain, did you have a loading plan made up or any sort of a plan to show where different types of cargo were to be loaded aboard the ship?

A. I did.

12. Q. Do you have that with you?

A. I have the final plan that was made to start the operations.

13. Q. This was made up before any loading was started?

A. This plan was not - the plan made was carried to the ship by myself and discussed with Captain Stinson, and he suggested alterations, and the loading was started by the alternate plan of which this is the plan. I then returned ashore and we started loading this way, and this plan was made up the next day.

14. Q. This is the plan that was followed in the loading of the ship?

A. Yes.

The judge advocate offered said plan in evidence, submitted the same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended and marked "Exhibit "4".

15. Q. The revised loading plan and the matters listed on the second pages of the two instructions that you gave me include the same material?

A. They do not.

16. Q. Do you know whether there are matters on the instructions - the second pages of the instructions that are not included in the loading plan or are there matters included on the loading plan that do not appear on the second pages of the instructions?

A. There are matters on the second page of the instructions that do not show on the plan and were not loaded and were not to be loaded on the ship.

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SECRET

17. Q. You have jurisdiction over the army cargo officers, those officers who go aboard these ships and are in charge of the personnel loading the cargo?

A. Through the battalion operations officer, I do.

18. Q. Were these instructions for loading ammunition passed on to them by you?

A. The Battalion Operation Officer and the Cargo Loading Officer on duty the night we started operations, each received a copy of the instructions and gave the ship a receipt for it.

19. Q. Captain, Exhibit 2 and Exhibit 3 which are the instructions, particularly Exhibit 3 has a line which reads as follows "ammunition 3568 bomb, depth; weight tons, 624, volume cubic feet, 22014; type, 10; stowage required, magazine "A" or "B"; location, 4H; handling not to be overstowed by vehicles." Did you also check the type which is listed here as 10 for depth bombs?

A. That is correct.

20. Q. You checked that yourself?

A. Yes, sir.

21. Q. Did you also check all the other explosives that were listed as to their types?

A. We checked those over, and that particular item I checked myself, and the planning section checked the total list. I checked that particular item on the bombs because there was a question of future loading.

22. Q. Did you receive orders to load the U.S.S. Serpens, that is written orders?

A. Yes, I did.

23. Q. Do you have a copy of those orders?

A. Shipping order Number 290 from Headquarters, Guadalcanal, Island Command.

The judge advocate offered in evidence said shipping order, submitted the same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended and marked "5".

24. Q. Captain, did you compile or have compiled under your direction an estimate of the amount of cargo and the particular cargos that had been loaded aboard the vessel at the time of the explosion?

A. I did.

25. Q. Will you go through this order, Exhibit No. 5 and tell us as to each item on there whether or not it had been loaded or partially loaded, and how much of it was loaded, and also where it was loaded?

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A. To the best of my knowledge the first item 70 pieces of FS smoke were not loaded. The second item 8 pieces of machine gun were loaded in number 5 hold. Item 3 depth bombs and accessories. The depth bombs were being loaded in number 4 hold. The accessories in number 1 'tween deck.

26. Q. Do you know how many of the depth bombs were loaded?

A. I had estimated there were about 3399 depth bombs aboard ship or alongside the ship.

27. Q. Those were all being loaded into the lower hold of number 4?

A. Yes, the accessories were completely loaded in number 1 'tween deck. The item number 4, the air craft engine, 21 drop fuel tanks and all but approximately 165 of the 500 drop tanks were loaded in number 3 hold. The next item, one piece PWJ parts were loaded in number 3 hold. The 1283 pieces of miscellaneous supplies were loaded in number 5 hold. These items, the 1283 plus additional items of non-explosive nature were loaded in number five hold and the baggage was scheduled for number 1 (tween deck and number 4 'tween deck in the lockers).

28. Q. Had they gone aboard?

A. All except the baggage had gone aboard. They were in the process of loading the baggage. The last item, 14 crates of outer wing panel assembly were in number 3 hold. The exact stowage on the 15 boxes and 4 boxes - 15 boxes of photographic gear and four boxes of generator coolers, I could not say where they were stowed. The 15 boxes of photographic gear were under discussion and were to be taken up with the ship's officers, and stowage was to be determined when the gear could be positively identified.

29. Q. Had they gone aboard the ship?

A. I could not say.

30. Q. Do you know whether or not that photographic gear contained any film or any acids or any other mixtures used in developing film?

A. I do not. The gear was to be inspected prior to the loading to determine any special stowage required.

31. Q. Who was to do that?

A. That was to be done by the ship and the cargo officer with the stevedores. It was to be delivered and inspected by them prior to loading.

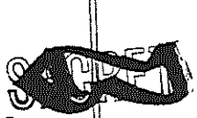
32. Q. Captain, did you have occasion to visit the Serpens during the process of loading?

A. I did.

33. Q. Approximately how many times would you say you were aboard her?

A. I was aboard her when we started loading, when we made the preparations for loading.

34. Q. Was that the 24th of January?



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A. Yes, the 24th. I was aboard the next time I believe the 27th. I am not sure, I was there right after lunch and looked the loading over. Captain Stinson was not aboard that day. The next time I contacted Captain Stinson when I was aboard but don't remember what day it was. That was along in the latter part of the afternoon.

35. Q. On the two occasions you were aboard when they were actually loading, did you have an opportunity to observe the manner this loading was being performed?

A. I did.

36. Q. From you observations do you have any complaint to make against the manner in which the cargo was being loaded or against the conduct of any men either army personnel or ship's personnel?

A. I have none.

37. Q. As far as you could tell, the loading was being done in accordance with the safety regulations that came to your knowledge?

A. They were.

38. Q. Did you in your official capacity ever receive any complaints from any of the cargo officers or the men under them concerning the captain of the ship?

A. The only complaint that I received was from Captain Stinson and that was in no way effecting the safety of the loading. That was the conduct of an officer and his expediting of the loading of the ship. It was not that he complained about the safe handling of the ammunition, but that the men should load the ammunition at a faster rate.

39. Q. That is the only complaint that you received?

A. Yes, the only complaint I received.

40. Q. Do you know who the Army Cargo Officers were that were handling the loading of the cargo aboard the Serpens?

A. Yes, Lt. McGrath, Lt. Olsen and Lt. Ritter were the three officers loading the ship.

41. Q. One of those officers was killed in the explosion?

A. To the best of my knowledge, Lt. McGrath was killed in the explosion.

42. Q. Do you know how the depth bombs were being taken out to the ship for loading?

A. They were being loaded in amphibious trucks and on the night of the explosion we loaded one barge which was alongside the ship.

43. Q. Did you observe the loading of that barge?

A. I did not.

44. Q. Did you leave any instructions as to how the barge was to be loaded?

A. I told the beach master that we would not have enough dukws available to load the ship completely, and it would be necessary to use one barge to keep the supply of bombs at the ship's side.

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45. Q. Do you know who loaded that barge?

A. I believe the barge was loaded by a Lt. Gifford who was on duty.

46. Q. Is he the beach master?

A. Yes, I believe he started loading and then it was either Miracle or Hempe who completed loading the barge.

47. Q. Do you know to which side of the ship the barge was secured?

A. The information I received at the beach was that the barge was on the starboard side of number 4.

48. Q. Do you know what army equipment was lost and damaged as a result of the explosion?

A. I don't know all of it but I assume that the barge was lost and one amphibious dukw.

Examined by Lt. Commander Stinson:

49. Q. Captain McCain, did you also receive from the Captain of the Serpens or members of his crew copies of general safety orders applicable to the loading of all cargo aboard the ship?

A. I remember seeing such a copy as put out by the U.S.S. Serpens, but I don't recall receiving a copy of that order but believe that Major Knox and Lt. McGrath each received a copy of it the night that we started loading.

50. Q. But you yourself do not have that copy of these instructions now?

A. I do not have those now and do not recall getting a copy on this trip. I may have received a copy of it on a former trip when the ship was in port.

51. Q. To your knowledge, however, there were such instructions issued bu the ship?

A. Yes, sir there were instructions issued by the ship.

Examined by the court:

52. Q. Captain McCain , you stated in your testimony that the Captain of the Serpens requested faster loading if possible. Do you think that the measures adopted to speed up this loading did in any way endanger the safe handling of this ammunition?

A. I do not.

53. Q. Captain McCain , do you know how many stevedores were missing as a result of the explosion aboard the Serpens?

A. I believe it was 52. I am not positive. I have not counted the number as submitted by the stevedore battalion. I had been given a figure, a total of 52.

54. Q. Does that include all the army personnel, dukws and barges?

A. No, sir.

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55. Q. Do you know how many others?

A. The amphibious truck reported the loss of two men on the dukw along side the ship and the 364th Harbor Craft Company reported two men that were on the barge.

56. Q. That would be a total of 56?

A. I believe that is correct. I received the amphibious truck losses and the barge losses.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated the following: The Captain of the Serpens specified and to the best of my knowledge it was followed through, that no more than three depth bombs would be loaded in a draft which is, in so far as I know, the correct procedure.

Examined by the court:

57. Q. Those measures you always followed?

A. They were in this case as far as I know. When I was aboard the ship, they were using three depth charges to a draft. I talked to the captain about smoking before we started loading the ship and he said, "No smoking" and that information was transmitted to the operations officer, and I received no violations of those orders. The ship was unusual in its construction inasmuch as a magazine had been provided. The walls and the battons of number 4 were sheathed with the idea of handling ammunition.

58. Q. Did your men inspect these sheathed holds before loading?

A. I don't know whether they were inspected. It was an addition that had been put in the ship recently.

59. Q. Would you state if there was any danger whatsoever of the bombs sliding off the pallet boards and going throughthe net?

A. I would not say that it was not impossible, but I would say that it was improbable. The board was placed in the net and used to cushion the load and to keep the load spread out in the net.

60. Q. What was the net made of?

A. They were regular cargo nets.

61. Q. Made of rope or wire?

A. Rope. That was the method we adopted to load those bombs because they were of a smooth construction.

62. Q. What size mesh was the net?

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3. Q. Do you also have anything to do with the loading of ships?

A. At the present time I have been pinch hitting for the officers in the company who are in school.

4. Q. Did you have anything to do with the loading of the U.S.S. Serpens?

A. I am in charge of the section of the 233rd Port Company that worked the Serpens.

5. Q. When was the last time you were aboard the U.S.S. Serpens?

A. 0800 on the morning of 29 January 1945.

6. Q. What time had you gone aboard the Serpens?

A. At 0001.

7. Q. Was that a normal watch for your section?

A. Yes, sir.

8. Q. Did you and your men always stand the same watches each day or were you always on duty from zero hours to 0800?

A. May I ask a question - you mean the same men all the time or the men from the same company because the reason I ask that, the same company stood the same watch each day but different sections.

9. Q. In other words you did not always work with the same men? N/H

A. That is right.

10. Q. Were you yourself on duty aboard the Serpens from zero hours to 0800?

A. Yes, sir.

11. Q. When you first started supervising the handling and loading of cargo on board the Serpens, did you receive from the Captain or other officers of the ship a copy of some safety instructions?

A. I did.

12. Q. And did you disseminate those instructions and regulations to your men? N/H

A. I did.

13. Q. Will you explain in what manner that was done?

A. The Executive Officer gave me a copy of the instructions set up by the ship's commanding officer; and , after I had read them, he asked me to sign a receipt for them which I did; and then I called the sergeant in charge of all of the sections to the wardroom and had him read the instructions and ask him N/H

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to call one man from each section; and in turn they read the instructions, and they disseminated the instructions on to the other members of the individual sections. The sections pertinent to the winch operators, to the hatch tenders and other individuals, I checked on to make sure that they had received those instructions. At the end of my watch, the next officer was told that he would receive his instructions also from the deck officer.

14. Q. Was this done each day?

A. Each time that I had a new section, the same procedure was gone through. When I had one of the old sections who were previously informed of the regulations, I told them that the instructions previously received still held.

15. Q. Do you have a copy of these instructions?

A. I do not have them with me.

16. Q. Will you explain how the depth bombs were transported out to the ship?

A. The depth bombs as far as I know were laid on pallet boards at the beach. The pallet boards were inside of cargo nets and three bombs only to each draft. There were two drafts or discharges on a dukw, that were brought to the ship's side by the dukw.

17. Q. Were barges ever used for transporting the depth bombs out to the ship?

A. Not while I was on duty.

18. Q. Will you explain the handling of the depth bombs from their arrival in the dukw alongside the ship until they were stowed?

A. The ship's hook was dropped down so that the dukw operator and his assistant could properly hook the net on to the snorter, which was one of the requirements, and then as carefully lifted aboard the ship over the square of the hatch and lowered down into the hold on a large mat, a cargo landing mat in the hold. The pallet board and cargo net and bombs remained there in a stationary position until the stevedores in the hold could remove them and stow them in their proper places. After all three bombs had been removed from the pallet board, then the cargo net with the pallet board was removed and returned to the dukw.

19. Q. Was the cargo net unfastened from the hook at any time during this operation?

A. Yes, one side of it or one corner. On some of them the side and on some of them the corner was unfastened so that the men could get to the bombs and get them out of the nets properly.

20. Q. How were the bombs moved from the pallet board and net to their final place of stowage?

A. They were rolled.

21. Q. What were they rolled over?

A. Wooden floor, wooden dunnage.

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22. Q. Was that dunnage over each tier of bombs as it was placed there?

A. The dunnage was placed on the floor first. The bombs were placed in their proper position then, and when there was space enough between the bombs, they put dunnage in both directions, and then laid the floor, but never at any time were bombs lowered and tried to be raised up to the higher floor. Always had one floor worked at a time. There was always three inches of dunnage placed between each layer of bombs.

23. Q. A part of the time that you were loading these depth bombs in number 4 hatch I understand that, what might be described as double rigging was used whereby the bombs could be loaded from both sides of the ship, is that right?

A. That is right.

24. Q. What precautions were taken to prevent a meeting of either two loaded trays or one loaded and one empty tray?

A. The first thing was that there would never be but one draft inside the hold at one time. Only one draft would be there. If a dukw came up on the opposite side of the ship it was permitted to bring that draft up and set it on the deck and wait until the other draft had been stowed and net completely cleared the hatch of the ship, before they would ever start to put one down, the second one in.

25. Q. Did you ever see any violations of that?

A. I never saw any of it in my sections.

26. Q.Did your men handle all of the gear, the winches and the unloading of the bombs?

A. Yes, sir.

27. Q. Did they have anything to do with attaching the hooks to the net while the net was still in the dukw?

A. No, sir.

28. Q. Who was that done by?

A. By the dukw companies or what they call the dukw hoppers. The dukw operators and the dukw hoppers. Sometimes the dukw hoppers would be the members of the dukw companies and sometimes they were members of other organizations.

29. Q. How many men were there directing the operations of the winches at the time the double rig was in use - hatch tenders and watchers?

A. There were two on each section and there were two sections. That would be four men.

30. Q. Can you explain the functions of those four men?

A. One man was the regular hatch tender. He was to stand by the rail of the ship and give the winch operator the directions for raising and lowering the falls while the hook was over the side. This is necessarily true for

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each side of the ship. The other man would stand near the coaming of the hatch where he could see into the hold and still be free from the hook and would give the winch operators directions from that position and at this time the winch operator could see into the hold.

31. Q. How many winches were used for each side of the rig?

A. Two.

32. Q. Did both of those winch drivers see into the hold?

A. No, sir. Pardon me. May I make it clear. One of the winch operators on each side could see into the hold.

33. Q. I mean on one side?

A. No, sir. The answer is no.

34. Q. Have you had any prior experience in the loading of ammunition aboard vessels?

A. Yes, sir.

35. Q. In this port?

A. I can't quite remember. When we first came over here a year ago this month I worked a few ships and then was transferred to duty as the Port Supply Officer. That was from approximately March until December last year. I don't remember just exactly what the type of ships were that I worked on the first time I came here but since coming back I had not worked on any ammunition ships.

36. Q. Do you know whether or not the men under your control had any previous experience?

A. Definitely, sir.

37. Q. That is in loading ammunition?

A. Yes, sir.

38. Q. Did you, at any time while you were aboard the Serpens, observe any violations either by your own men or by members of the ship's complement of the safety regulations that were issued to you?

A. No, sir.

39. Q. Did you observe any practice of any kind that you would consider at all dangerous to the safe loading of the ammunition?

A. No, sir.

40. Q. Can you describe for the court one of the pallet boards that were used?

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A. Standard pallet board used was commonly known as four by six feet by eight inch pallet board consisting of eight pieces of two inch lumber six feet long and approximately six inches wide placed four pieces above and four pieces below and two pieces of four by four lumber four feet long. Each of these boards were bolted through the four by four by bolts long enough to go through but not extend beyond the surface of the completed pallet board.

41. Q. There were four pieces of lumber on the top of the pallet board?

A. That is right.

42. Q. Were they placed side by side or was there a space between them?

A. Space between each one.

43. Q. Do you know how much space?

A. I could not say definitely because I never measured it, but I would judge four to six inches, not any more than that.

44. Q. How were the pallet boards placed in the cargo net?

A. In the center.

45. Q. Were they fastened to the cargo net in any way?

A. They were not.

46. Q. Can you describe the cargo nets that were used?

A. The cargo nets were 12 feet by 12 feet square. Most of them were made of one inch rope.

47. Q. Do you know the size of the mesh?

A. I should say 3 inch rope. No, I do not know the definite size of the mesh. Some of the cargo nets had ears on the corners, and some of them had two corners connected with one rope.

48. Q. Would you be able to estimate the length of a side to each small square within the cargo net?

A. Between ten and twelve inches square.

49. Q. Did you ever observe, while on duty, this pallet board not being in the center of the cargo net?

A. The pallet board originally would be placed in the center of the cargo net.

50. Q. As they came over the side of the ship into the hatch, were they still in the center of the net?

A. Sometimes they were not.

51. Q. Did you ever observe one in an unsafe condition because it was not placed correctly?

A. There were some cargo pallet boards that were placed in the cargo net ashore that were too small and my instructions were to the hatch tenders who were at the ship's rail that if the cargo net did not come up well around the side that it would be gently lowered back into the dukw and sent back to shore.

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I would not permit any cargo to come aboard the ship where the net did not come up around the pallet board at least 12 inches.

52. Q. Was it usual for the bombs to rest between the spaces of the pallet boards?

A. Yes.

53. Q. Did you observe any in which the bombs had moved from that position?

A. Yes.

54. Q. And how did they move, in what direction?

A. Toward the end of the pallet board.

55. Q. That is down the groove that was formed?

A. Yes, toward the end of the pallet boards.

56. Q. Were any part of those bombs that you observed in that position, visible outside of the cargo net?

A. Never.

57. Q. The cargo net stopped the bombs completely?

A. Yes.

58. Q. Do you have any idea as to whether or not the use of this double rig for loading the bombs from both sides of the ship was unsafe or could have contributed to the unsafe loading of ammunition?

A. While we had never used such a rig, I cannot see how it is unsafe, especially if there is close coordination between the two sections, which I believe is definitely proven as it worked very well because we had worked it two days before on the entire shift.

59. Q. Was there a coordinator to prevent the lowering or rather the meeting of two cargo nets or was it up to the job of the hatch tender who was standing closest to the hatch to do that?

A. It was the job of the hatch tender to watch each side to see. The hatch tender on the starboard side would watch the one on the port side and see that they do it properly.

60. Q. There was no one man who was in charge?

A. One man was in charge of the whole thing but could not be at both places at the same time. There was no one man definitely in charge.

61. Q. You stated previously that one man from each section was informed by the sergeant, I believe, as to the safety instructions issued?

A. He was informed by myself. I personally gave him instructions.

62. Q. Did you have any one keep an eye out to see if those instructions were observed?

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A. That man was the one who read the instructions and was the one to see that those instructions were observed. I personally checked everyonce in a while to see that they were being followed.

Examined by Lt. Commander Stinson:

63. Q. Lt. Ritter I have just a few questions. I would like to ask you, if you noticed whether or not there were any safety instructions posted aboard the Serpens.

A. Yes, there were. They were directly behind the winch drivers on the bulk head, and all over the ship, there were safety instructions such as "No loitering", ropes put out to prevent members of the crew or persons not authorized to be at a particular section, to be there.

64. Q. Did you observe the fire protection facilities aboard the ship?

A. I did.

65. Q. And I wonder if you will illustrate what they were?

A. There were CO2 fire extinguishers in every hatch. On deck there were larger containers of CO2 with hose running the full length of the ship. Personally I feel that the ship was very well protected from fire, probably the best that I have ever seen.

Examined by the judge advocate:

66. Q. Will you describe the cargo landing mat that was used in the hold?

A. The cargo landing mat was about six feet by eight feet and about eight inches thick. I don't know what was on the inside of the mat. I think it was covered with canvas. It was placed in such a position in the hatch that the fall would set the cargo directly on it.

67. Q. Was the mat more or less soft?

A. Yes.

Examined by the court:

68. Q. Did you have any landing mat on deck?

A. Just cargo nets that were not being used without the pallet board.

69. Q. How were they placed?

A. They were in a heap, so that the draft could be set over on to the nets.

70. Q. How many cargo nets would you say there were?

A. Four on each heap on each side.

71. Q. You mean one above the other stretched out?

A. No, they were not. They were more or less jumbled up to afford greater protection.

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72. Q. Spread out so that they would be even?

A. Yes, sir.

73. Q. Whenever you landed any load on deck they would land on that?

A. Yes.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement concerning anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness made the following statement:

On the smoking instructions the men were permitted to smoke in the crew's mess at the last table aft. The officer in charge was permitted to use the officer's wardroom of the ship and no other place. Those instructions were followed implicitly.

Examined by the Court:

74. Q. Did you examine or inspect the hold stowage spaces prior to loading ammunition?

A. Yes.

75. Q. In number 4 hold I believe the shaft runs from the engine room to the propellor?

A. Yes, sir.

76. Q. Was that boarded over?

A. No, sir.

77. Q. Isn't that ordinarily boarded over before you start loading?

A. Before we started loading, sir?

78. Q. Yes?

A. On normal cargo it isn't but when each section - when a bomb is put next to that we put dunnage in between next to that and the bottom.

79. Q. Did you observe any nails protruding anywhere in the hold?

A. No, sir.

80. Q. Is there any inspector who inspects the hold in the regualr stevedore group?

A. Not that I know of, unless it is ComCargo.

81. Q. Is there any ammunition officer who inspects the hold or observes the loading during the process?

A. While I was on duty, there was one ordinance officer who came out. I don't know who he was. He was on duty at the beach at all times.

82. Q. He does not stay on the ship at all times during the loading?

A. No sir.

83. Q. While you were on duty on the ship was there any shoring of the cargo done?

A. You mean the entire ship or just the number four hatch?

84. Q. Number four hatch?

A. The only shoring we did was to lay the floor over each tier of bombs and wherever there is a possibility of a bomb being loose then they broke off pieces of dunnage and block it in so that there would not be any possibility of that bomb rolling.

85. Q. Were any nails used in this process?

A. No sir. Not even sawing in the hatch, that is why I said broken.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

86. Q. Mr. Ritter was the shaft that ran through the number four hold sheathed in any way or was it just covered like the rest of the deck?

A. I don't remember, so in that case I will have to withdraw that last statement on the other. I really don't remember.

Examined by the judge advocate:

87. Q. By that you refer to the statement that you made, that the shaft alley was not covered?

A. That is right.

88. Q. Can you describe the sheathing that you do remember in the hatch number four?

A. It is very hard to do that because I noticed that the ship was specially sheathed. I have never seen one like it before. At the present time I am a little mixed up as to what I saw was sheathed and what was not sheathed. I would not say it was sheathed and I would not say that it was not.

Examined by the court:

89. Q. In the stowage of this ammunition, would you say every precaution was taken so that no part of the ammunition would be stowed against metal?

A. Except the metal of one depth charge to another, but not to any metal of the ship. There was one inch dunnage placed between the ends of each row of bombs.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The court then at 12 noon took a recess until 1:30 p.m., at which time it reconvened.

Present: All the members, the judge advocate, the interested party and his counsel.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

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Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Gilbert A. Olsen, Lieutenant, 232nd Port Company.

2. Q. Did you have anything to do with the loading of the U.S.S. Serpens?

A. I did.

3. Q. What were your duties?

A. Loading officer.

4. Q. Did you have any particular watch?

A. From 0800 to 1600.

5. Q. Did you have the same men under you each day?

A. No, I did not.

6. Q. Did you have completely different groups of men each day?

A. I did.

7. Q. Did you receive any copies of any safety instructions concerning the handling of cargo?

A. Yes, I did.

8. Q. From the officers of the ship?

A. I did.

9. Q. When did you receive those?

A. On the morning I arrived on the ship.

10. Q. And did you retain those copies?

A. I did.

11. Q. Do you have one with you?

A. I do not.

12. Q. Did you disseminate that information to your men?

A. I did.

13. Q. Will you explain how that was done?

A. By giving it to the sections. Each day they would read it and I would read myself with them.

14. Q. Did your men handle the cargo from the time it arrived alongside the ship until it was finally stowed?

A. They did.

15. Q. Will you explain how that cargo was handled at the time it arrived alongside the ship?

A. You mean in detail the picking up of the bombs and everything else or just the men handling it?

16. Q. Yes, from the time it arrived alongside the ship?

A. The dukws would arrive on the port and starboard side. There were two men on each dukw. The inward winch would drop the outward fall over the side and pick up one lift. There were two lifts. They would bring it up from there. The outboard winch would carry it amidship and drop it into the hold. There it would be rolled off. Before that it would have been put on a mat and from there it would be rolled off the net onto the mat rest to where it would be stowed. There was dunnage. Each row was dunnaged. Each layer was dunnaged.

17. Q. Were the ropes from the corner of the cargo net ever released from the hook after the load had been placed in the hold?

A. No.

18. Q. In that case the bombs had to be lifted out of the net?

A. The fall drops down just low enough so the men would ease the corner out and there they rolled them off.

19. Q. Then the bombs were rolled over to their final stowage place?

A. That is right.

20. Q. Did you ever observe any lift come aboard the ship in which the pallet boards had moved from the center of the cargo net?

A. They did.

21. Q. Had the bombs in those lifts also moved?

A. They had.

22. Q. Did you ever observe any of those bombs or any portion of them outside of the cargo net, sticking through the cargo net, that is through the mesh?

A. I don't recall.

23. Q. Did you ever observe any violations either by your own men or by any member of the ship's crew?

A. No.

24. Q. Of the safety instructions that were issued to you?

A. No.

25. Q. When was the last time you were aboard the ship?

A. 29th of January.

26. Q. From 8 in the morning until 1600?

A. Until 1630.

27. Q. At that time were they using only dukws to load the ship, to carry the bombs out to the ship?

A. Just one side, I noticed there were only two dukws. I don't know about the other side.

28. Q. Did you ever notice any bombs come aboard that were damaged or dented in any way?

A. No sir.

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29. Q. Did you ever have to send back any loads?

A. Yes, I did.

30. Q. For what reason?

A. Too many were on the side of the ship at one time and could not be loaded on.

31. Q. Too many dukws standing off the ship you mean?

A. That is right.

32. Q. What instructions did your men have in regard to the prevention of two lifts meeting through the use of this double rig?

A. The hatch tender was to see that only one lift was to come up at a time.

33. Q. Was there just one man who had that duty?

A. One hatch man and two signalmen took care of that.

34. Q. Have you ever had any experience prior to this of loadingammunition on ship?

A. No, I have not.

35. Q. Were your winch drivers experienced men?

A. They were.

36. Q. Hatch tenders experienced?

A. They were.

37. Q. Do you have any complaints of any kind against anyone in connection with the handling of the ship?

A. None whatsoever.

38. Q. Did you experience any difficulty in being relieved that evening at 1600 or 1630?

A. The only thing was in getting off the men at the time.

39. Q. Did a full crew report on board to relieve your section?

A. That is right, they did.

40. Q. Who was in charge of that?

A. Lieutenant McGrath.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

41. Q. Mr. Olsen did you notice copies of any safety regulations posted aboard the ship?

A. Yes, there was. In back of each winch and in front of each hold.

42. Q. Did you notice what fire fighting equipment the ship had aboard?

A. Yes, there was a full CO2 container in each hold.

43. Q. Did you notice anything else?

A. I did not notice.

44. Q. Did you consider these instructions adequate for the safety of the men handling the cargo itself?

A. I do.

Examined by the court:

45. Q. To what depth had this number 4 hold been loaded when your shift left the ship?

A. There had been 5 layers of bombs.

46. Q. Can you count the approximate weight that would mean on each bottom bomb?

A. No, sir I cannot.

47. Q. Can you tell us what the temperature of the hold was when you left- was it unduly hot?

A. It was moderate, sir I would say.

48. Q. How many degrees Fahrenheit would you say moderate is?

A. Approximately 88 degrees.

49. Q. When you completed loading the said quantity of ammunition, was it necessary at times to shore up the last tier?

A. It is sir.

50. Q. In the process of shoring, it is necessary to use nails?

A. Yes, it is depending upon how the ammunition would be stowed. In the case of bombs they would not have to be nailed.

51. Q. When your shift left the ship were they approaching the end of the loading of these bombs?

A. The bombs had stopped coming when they had changed shifts.

52. Q. Were there many more to be loaded?

A. They were coming out when the other shift was on the boat.

53. Q. Could they have started any shoring operations during that next shift?

A. Pardon, sir?

54. Q. Could they have started any shoring up operations during that next shift?

A. They could have.

Examined by the judge advocate:

55. Q. Lt. did each layer contain the same number of bombs?

A. They did.

56. Q. Do you know how many bombs each layer contained?

A. Approximately 660.

Examined by the court:

57. Q. What size nail is usually used in shoring up operations, when it is necessary?

A. I don't know.

Examined by Lt. Commander Stinson:

58. Q. Mr. Olsen do you remember whether there was a shaft tunnel running through number 4 hold?

A. There was.

59. Q. Do you recall whether or not that shaft tunnel was sheathed in any way?

A. It was.

60. Q. What did that sheathing consist of?

A. Of lumber.

61. Q. Of lumber?

A. It was.

62. Q. Did you inspect that sheathing before the loading of the hold?

A. I did.

63. Q. Did you notice any nails or other sharp projections at any point?

A. There was none.

64. Q. Do you know whether or not there was any sheathing necessary or required in connection with the loading of the bombs in number 4 hold?

A. What do you mean by that sir?

65. Q. Did you use any sheathing other than ordinary dunnage?

A. No other, nothing but ordinary dunnage.

66. Q. No structure as such to keep the bombs away from the skin of the ship?

A. Lumber was placed in there.

67. Q. Was that lumber nailed or just?

A. Just placed against it.

68. Q. I wonder if you can describe for us the permanent sheathing that was around the shaft tunnel, that is if you remember?

A. I can describe that in my own words. I went down to inspect and the entire hold was sheathed with limber and the entire shaft. The cylindrical

part was all in lumber that I recall. If I am not mistaken, it was around it and pieces would be nailed around to it, to the shaft. The rest of the hold was in similar manner and that is all I recall of it.

69. Q. You say there was similar sheating in other parts?

A. It would be the same thing as rafters on a building giving support to other boards running horizontal to the things. That is the best way I could describe it to you.

70. Q. Perhaps you did not understand my question. I say was there similar sheathing in the hold other than the shaft alley itself?

A. I still don't understand the question.

71. Q. The shaft tunnel runs through the center of the hold and I understand your testimony was that it was sheathed?

A. It was metal sheathing and on top was the lumber, is that what you want to know?

72. Q. Yes, and was there similar sheathing around any other part ot that hold?

A. The entire hold was sheathed as I recall. Is that the answer you wish, sir?

73. Q. If that is the way you remember it?

A. I remember the entire hold as being entirely sheathed.

74. Q. I believe your testimony was that you inspected the hold before the first bombs were loaded?

A. Yes.

75. Q. And at that time did you find anything in that sheathing that might have been dangerous in any way?

A. No, I did not.

Examined by the court:

76. Q. You testified that on the opposite side of the ship you are not sure what type of conveyor had brought the bombs out, is that right?

A. You mean on the ship at the change of shift? I could not say. As far as I know there were no barges just dukws.

77. Q. If any other type of conveyer had brought bombs out while you were there, you would have known?

A. I would have.

78. Q. How was the weather?

A. Getting rough.

79. Q. How rough would you say? Were dukws banging against the side?

A. They were.

80. Q. Did you experience it that rough on any other occasion since starting to load the ship?

A. No, I did not.

81. Q. In other words that was the roughest?

A. I had seen on that ship.

82. Q. At this particular time on the 29 of January, it was rougher than any other time since you started to load the ship which started from the 24th of January?

A. On my shift it was.

83. Q. Did you consider it dangerous to continue loading under these conditions?

A. I would have.

84. Q. Did you do anything about it?

A. No, sir I did not. It was reported in to the beach. They had a beach master for that.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement concerning anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank and present station.

A. Winfred O. Harrington, 01548429, Lieutenant, U.S. Army, 585th Ordinance Company.

2. Q. What are your duties with that company?

A. I was the depot officer. Ammunition Officer if you want to call it that.

3. Q. Did you have anything to do with the ammunition and explosives that were loaded on the U.S.S. Serpens?

A. I did.

4. Q. Did you inspect the depth bombs that were loaded and to be loaded on the U.S.S. Serpens?

A. I inspected the stack but not each one individually.

5. Q. And in what condition did you find them?

A. I found them in my estimation in very good condition. We have some of the same material left and I believe Lt. Colburn saw them.

6. Q. Did you find any evidence of dents or damage of any kind on the bombs?

A. No, I did not.

7. Q. Did you also inspect the fuzes that were loaded?

A. I had not inspected those recently. The last time I checked them I would say as far as I know they were in excellent condition. I was called to the ship and the Commander of the ship said that there were some of them punctured.

8. Q. Did you examine them while aboard the ship?

A. I looked at them before I went up to see him, and while down there an officer was there I don't know his name but I did not see any of them. I did not go through them individually. I just looked in groups and saw nothing wrong,

9. Q. Where were the depth bombs stowed when they were on the island?

A. I can not give the exact number. I could figure it up. We had them in a bomb dump number 2 at Koli and we had 150 bombs in number 1 at Koli.

10. Q. Do you know how long they had been there approximately?

A. Ever since the Burnett unloaded them. I don't know the exact date when that came in. Roughly speaking I would say four months. We also had a few bombs down here at Fighter 2.

11. Q. Will you describe the depth bombs, what they looked like?

A. I have a picture here if someone wants to look at it. (submits text book). It is not the same type; that is, it is the same type but not the same bomb. This gives the composition of Torpex. I will give you the picture of the bomb now. (submits text book with illustration). This is more or less the complete bomb. That is the same type bomb but not the same one. The Mark 54 is a newer bomb.

12. Q. What is the official designation of the bombs loaded on the Serpens?

A. Aerial depth bomb Mark 54. They had stamped on the end "TPX" which stands for Torpex and dash 2. I don't know what the 2 means, different composition. (Illustration of the bomb was examined by the court at this time).

13. Q. Do you know what explosives those bombs contained?

A. Torpex number 2 is what I would call it. TPX-2.

14. Q. Do you know what Torpex is?

A. Right here (book in hand) it says 44 percent cyclonite, 37 percent TNT, and 18 percent aluminum powder and 1 percent bee's wax.

15. Q. What book are you referring to?

A. This is Technical Manual TN9-1904. It does not give the Mark 54. 47 is what I am referring to. The 54 does not seen to be in this book.

16. Q. Do you know the stability of Torpex?

A. I could not say. Lt. Colburn told me it was 150 degrees.

17. Q. We want to know from your own personal knowledge?

A. No, I don't know.

18. Q. Have you ever seen a bomb or any amount of Torpex explode?

A. None other than the ship.

19. Q. Do you know what explosives the fuzes contain?

A. (refers to book) It lists tetryl according to the book. It is tetryl after the primer which is mercury fulminate.

20. Q. How are the fuzes packed?

A. They are packed in a tin container sealed and four in a crate.

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21. Q. Is there any padding within the tin container?

A. I never opened them myself.

22. Q. They come packed?

A. Yes, and I have no reason to open them.

23. Q. Do you know anything about the stability or any properties of the explosives that are contained in the fuzes?

A. No, I do not.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

24. Q. Mr. Harrington, I think you testified that the Captain of the Serpens had sent for someone to come to the ship to investigate something?

A. Yes sir.

25. Q. Some punctures?

A. I was the man who reported to him.

26. Q. What were these holes in, that he was referring to?

A. Well I had not seen any as I told the court a minute ago. He said they were there perhaps he is right. I have no reason to say he is not or is. He probably saw something, but I did not. Now if they would have been punctured as he said they were in the sealed containers and it is quite possible that they were.

27. Q. It was reported to you that the containers were punctured?

A. That is right.

28. Q. In your opinion if the containers had been punctured, would that have effected the stability of the fuzes?

A. It would in due time; but, if they had punctured very recently, the only thing that would effect them would be corrosion and that would not get down to the inside because it is pretty much sealed off. I have a picture of the fuze if the court would like to see it. (illustration is examined by the court).

29. Q. What was your advise to the Captain of the Serpens with respect to those punctured containers?

A. Well he asked me if they would be any danger, any particular danger to it, and I told him that there would not be.

30. Q. In your opinion the fact that some containers were punctured would not effect the safety of the cargo?

A. That is right.

31. Q. And after you expressed that opinion nothing further was done with respect to the fuzes?

A. That is right.

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Examined by the court:

32. Q. What are the approximate overall dimensions?

A. About fifteen and some odd fractions of an inch for the A.N. Mark 230.

33. Q. And the diameter?

A. That I don't know. From looking the way I saw them approximately one and one half inch to one and three fourths inches.

34. Q. There was no damage to the bombs?

A. No.

35. Q. Were there any fuzed bombs?

A. No.

36. Q. Did you notice whether there was any oil on the bomb cases?

A. No, I did not.

37. Q. Can you tell us at what temperature these bombs had been stowed for the last four months?

A. The best I can say the temperature of the island, that would be the temperature in the direct sun.

38. Q. You have no record of what that temperature is?

A. No, I have not.

39. Q. Was there any ordnance man thoroughly familar with this type of ammunition stationed at the beach or on the ship during the whole process of loading?

A. I would not say thoroughly familar. We have general information about it but I don't know what you mean by thoroughly familar. In that case I would have to say, no, we had an ordnance officer on the beach during the process of loading. He would occasionally go out to the ship and return. I was on the ship twice myself.

40. Q. Would this officer have been familar with the special parts of ammunition such as primers, fuzes, different types of fillers?

A. Yes, I would say they were.

41. Q. Can you tell us from the reference the thickness of the wall of this particular bomb?

A. I have no particular reference of this particular bomb, but the one similar to it is six hundredths of an inch thick. That is the side wall of the casing, made of sheet steel.

42. Q. That is approximately one-sixteenths of an inch?

A. That is right. It is very thin in my estimation.

43. Q. Previous testimony has indicated that these were stowed to a depth of five bombs at about the time of the explosion. If that weight meant around one ton, do you think that a one ton weight on the lowest bomb would crush the lowest bomb?

A. The weight of the stack above it, I don't believe it because the weight would be evenly distributed along the length of the bomb.

44. Q. Do you have with you a record of all the identification marks that were on the bombs that still remain and were not loaded?

A. Not with me, no.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Paul R. Thompson, Lieutenant (jg), U.S.N.R., Commanding Officer of SC 1039.

2. Q. Where was your ship on the night of 29 January 1945?

A. We were patrolling our assigned tour off Lunga, sector Baker Charlie.

3. Q. Can you describe the approximate limits of that sector?

A. The sector covers the area between Koli Point and Fox off Lunga Point.

4. Q. Where was your ship at the time of the explosion?

A. We were about three thousand yards west of the ship. We were proceeding in an easterly direction, and the ship I would say was fifteen degrees off the starboard bow when the explosion came.

5. Q. You were proceeding westerly?

A. I was heading east.

6. Q. How far away was the Serpens from you at the time of the explosion?

A. Three thousand yards I would say.

7. Q. Were you maintaining a watch on your sound gear for submarine or any other enemy craft?

A. Yes, we keep a constant sound watch while patrolling the sector. We patrolled that sector many times in the past and we rotate the watch. Each man in the duty section will stand a half hour of sound watch.

8. Q. Did you receive any contact that night?

A. That night we had three contacts on the sound gear. The first of which took place at 2100 just east of marker Fox.

The court stated for the record at this time that the court was closed.

9. Q. The first contact you got was 2100, you said?

A. Yes.

10. Q. How did you evaluate that contact?

A. There were several sharp pings on the sound gear which is a usual case in the event of contact. However, by the time I was called topside, I heard two pings. I believe it was. Then it stopped very suddenly, and inasmuch as we were in a good position to continue the cut on the contact we ascribed it to skip distance, a technical term applied to the sound wave striking the floor of the ocean and hitting another object, you see. That occurs at times due to various differences in temperatures in the water, you see. The next contact was after the explosion.

11. Q. At about what time?

A. That was 2340. The explosion took place at 2315 according to our ship's clock.

12. Q. Will you describe the second contact?

A. We picked up the second contact off the port bow at a range of 2700 yards and as I described it in my report to Operations, it was bearing 040° true from the mid point of sector Baker Charlie. And I came up and headed for the contact which is the prescribed doctrine in such cases, and we got it and it seemed to be wake echo. That is the type you get pointing out to the stern of the ship or submarine. On the edges, I should say there were a number of sharp pings in the middle, and we could detect what we thought was strong hydrophone which is noise given off by ship's propellors. However we lost contact on that between 600 and 400 yards and we gained momentary contact at 400 yards and lost it again. Inasmuch as there was insufficient evidence to drop charges because of the fact that the depth charges disturb the water and ruin any sound. I did not drop any charges, and I carried out the prescribed doctrine for regaining contact and we were unable - do you want me to go into the technical phrases of it?

13. Q. Yes?

A. As far as I could determine the bearings were moving left and the standard doctrine in such cases calls for you to make a 20 degree course change to the left and conduct a thorough search and then turn another 20 degrees until you regain contact or are satisfied that you are off the track. I carried out this three different times, that is changing course 20 degrees and then went to the standard search doctrine, called operations observant, which is a box shaped affair with two miles on each length and we- this was started at 2345 entering search plan and at 2345 in accordance with orders from Operations ComSoSols we reported to the U.S.S. Gendreau, DE 639 which had been named OTC for this jasa unit. Jasa 17. At 0115 we secured from general quarters. However, we still conducted this search. At 0159 we received a radio message from the Gendreau to sweep Sealark Channel at each end. At 0250 we picked up another contact at Sealark Channel. One of the men on the bridge had reported a periscope, which I believe was a fish, and we were steering at various courses for about five minutes, I should say. At the time we picked up this contact. The contact at that time was bearing 350 degrees relative at a range of 1200 yards. We carried out an attack on the strength of the information and circled for a re-attack in conformance with prescribed doctrine. And at 0253 we lost contact. While carrying out our retiring search plan to regain contact we ran aground on Sealark Reef at 0315. I guess that is all.

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14. Q. Can you tell us approximately where you were when you got your second contact at 2340?

A. I would say midpoint of sector Baker Charlie and I used that point as a reference when I reported to operations stating that the contact was distant 2700 yards bearing 040 degrees true from that point.

15. Q. Had there been much disturbance in the water caused by the explosion?

A. Yes, we were about 3000 yards from the ship when it blew up and I was standing on the bridge at the time. I noticed a powerful underwater disturbance; in fact it could be felt aboard our ship. It lifted the ship out of the water you see; and then a large mass of flame shooting up. A light orange flame and we felt small fragments on the deck and on the bridge.

16. Q. How did you evaluate your contact at 2340?

A. The best evaluation I could give to that is that it was a probable submarine.

17. Q. What about the one at 0250?

A. Well, I think that is the best answer I could give to that too, probable submarine.

18. Q. What were you doing during this time? Were you operating the sound equipment?

A. I was conning the ship.

19. Q. Was an officer in charge of the sound gear?

A. No, sir. I have a second class sound man on the sound gear. My executive officer was on the chemical control.

20. Q. In which direction were you looking at the time of the explosion?

A. We were heading east at the time sir. At a distance of 3000 yards from the ship.

21. Q. Do you think had there been a torpedo that you would have seen its wake?

A. I believe that we were close enough, that we would have seen one had there been one. I was looking in that direction at the time myself and as I say the ship was probably 15 degrees off the starboard bow and the third officer was on the bridge. He had been looking in that direction as he later said, and I think we were close enough at the time that, if there had been a torpedo, we would have seen its wake in the water.

22. Q. Do you know how the Serpens was lying, did you notice the direction she was heading?

A. I believe she was heading northwest, sir, slightly northwest.

23. Q. Did you see the wake of the torpedo?

A. No sir, I did not.

Examined by Lt. Commander Stinson:

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24. Q. You say that you believe you could have seen the wake of a torpedo. Can you tell me how far behind a torpedo the wake lags, when the torpedo is set for a depth of say 18 feet?

A. I could not tell. I could not say exactly sir, No, sir.

25. Q. What is the speed of a modern torpedo?

A. I believe the best that we have is 45 knots, sir.

26. Q. That is a mile or two thousand yards in less than one one-half minutes, am I right?

A. That is about right.

27. Q. That is approzimately 22½ yards a second?

A. That is correct.

28. Q. You have doubtless observed bubbles rising through water, have you not?

A. Yes, sir.

29. Q. From a depth of 18 feet it requires several seconds for them to rise?

A. Yes, sir.

30. Q. In other words the torpedo may have been fired and the wake would be way behind so far behind that an explosion would have occurred before you would have ever noticed any wake?

A. Well, I should think it would leave the disturbed water or trail of disturbed water a good distance away from the ship, sir.

31. Q. If the rising rate of the bubbles was one foot a second, the bubbles closest to the ship at the time of the explosion would be approximately 400 yards away, would they not?

A. Yes, sir.

32. Q. Now, at this contact at 2340 you stated that it was 2700 yards 040° nmw true from midpoint Baker Charlie?

A. Yes, sir.

33. Q. This contact at 2340, you stated that the first contact was at 2700 yards?

A. Yes, sir.

34. Q. And that you lost contact at 650 yards. Can you tell the court what time you lost contact?

A. I am afraid I could not, sir. Running a contact it would be pretty hard. It would be a guess on my part.

35. Q. Is your vessel equipped with a chemical recorder?

A. Yes, sir.

36. Q. Do you have the chemical recorder sheet of that contact?

A. I don't have it with me. I have it aboard ship.

Examined by the court:

37. Q. What is your present opinion concerning the pings heard on the sound gear at 2100?

A. I think that was I say caused by what is known as skip distance because of the fact that it vanished so abruptly.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

38. Q. At what range did you lose the contact?

A. Four hundred yards sir.

39. Q. At four hundred yards?

A. Yes sir.

40. Q. At what range can you hold contact on a submarine at a depth of two hundred feet?

A. Under good conditions you ought to be able to hold contact within one hundred and fifty yards.

41. Q. Does not your sound projector go out at a definite angle?

A. The sound head itself does not turn, sir. There is a thing inside the sound head which turns. You see the sound head is shaped like a football.

42. Q. What type sound gear do you have aboard?

A. WEA 1.

43. Q. Is not sound projection at approximately fifteen degrees to the horizontal?

A. I could not say, sir.

44. Q. Isn't it possible to hold contact on a submarine near the surface a much closer distance than one deeper?

A. You should be able to, yes sir.

Examined by the court:

46. Q. Is the experience such as the experience recorded by your testimony during this period exceptional, or have you had similar episodes previously?

A. We have had other episodes in the past, sir, and they could be caused by a number of things. Fish quite often give you a good echo, especially black fish and whales sound just like a submarine.

47. Q. Can you tell the court how frequently in general these similar episodes have occurred just an average figure?

A. I am not sure, sir, I know just what type of an answer you want. I would answer once every three months which is the best I could give you.

48. Q. That is your answer to this question?

A. It is awfully hard to say actually. I can put it this way that that experience is quite common among vessels with sound gear. Did you mean my personal experience?

49. Q. I meant your personal experience in these waters?

A. As for a definite answer, I would say it is infrequent, would you accept that answer?

50. Q. Yes, that is all.

Examined by the judge advocate:

51. Q. What type of a contact did you have at 2340? Did you have a contact on the submarine itself or what might have been a submarine or a wake contact?

A. There were elements of both in the contact, sir. We had the wake echos on the edges and sharp pings in the middle and what seemed to be hydrophone effects what seemed to be sound from the propeller, so you see there were elements of both.

52. Q. Under the type of contact that you had at that time could you possibly have picked up the wake of a ship?

A. It is possible.

53. Q. Did you notice any ships around you at the time?

A. Yes, sir the PC 588 was in the vicinity and we later saw the Gendreau but the first ship we saw after the explosion was the PC 588. At that time we had gone into our retiring search plan.

54. Q. What was the bearing of the contact, relative bearings?

A. 310.

55. Q. Do you remember seeing anything on that bearing at the time?

A. We did not see anything.

56. Q. Could you tell the direction of the object contact?

A. From where sir?

57. Q. I mean could you tell the direction in which the contact was moving?

A. It was proceeding 040° true.

58. Q. Do you know your heading?

A. We were following contact. We were heading straight for the contact when it was reported so we were also in that heading.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

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A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Russell Ireland, soundman third class, U.S.S. SC 1039.

2. Q. Were you on duty at the sound gear as a contact was made by your ship at approximately 2340 on the night of 29 January 1945?

A. I was.

3. Q. Will you describe that contact?

A. That was the one right after the explosion?

4. Q. Yes?

A. Well, we had the bearing . I don't know what direction we were going on all the time, but relative bearing was picked up at about 20 degrees off starboard bow; and the captain came to dead ahead bearings and we had what I term, at the time a good contact. It seemed a submarine was going dead away from us. We heard a double echo right on the stern. We had a double echo and a lot of propeller noises like a stern contact would be. Then we followed for quite a distance and were having trouble keeping good contact because there was an awful lot of water noise, and then the propeller noise made a lot of noise, and then we lost our contact about 450 yards. When they asked us from the beach what kind of contact we described it as a probable submarine. That is about all.

5. Q. How long did you keep that contact?

A. It was not too long. I would say around four to seven minutes. I did not notice the time because it is pretty hard to remember.

6. Q. Were you also on duty at the time you got the contact at 0250 in Sealark Channel?

A. Yes, sir.

7. Q. Will you describe that contact?

A. Well, it might have been as good a contact as the other one was. We dropped charges on this one and stayed up on it until it was time to drop charges. We made a full submarine run on that contact. It was a lot weaker than the oth r contact was and we did not have any propeller noises and pretty wide target width to the target. It did not seem to be what I would term as good a contact as the one we had before.

8. Q. How much experience have you had on this particular sound gear, the SC 1039 has?

A. Two and one-half months with the gear we have.

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9. Q. Have you had other experience on other types?

A. I was on a destroyer before where they had QC gear.

10. Q. How much experience did you have on picking up contacts?

A. As far as I know we never dropped charges on any submarines before. I went to our sound school at Pearl Harbor. We went out with our own submarines.

11. Q. When was it that you went to that school?

A. That was when I was serving aboard a destroyer. I went to sound school at San Diego, Calif. and graduated in September 1943.

Examined by Lt. Commander Stinson:

12. Q. Ireland, do you know what speed the ship was making at that time?

A. You mean right after the first contact?

13. Q. I mean that contact at 2340?

A. No, I don't sir. I don't know the speed.

14. Q. You have no idea of the approximate speed?

A. Our attack speed is 12 knots for submarines.

15. Q. What is your searching speed?

A. I can't say what our searching speed is. 640 revolutions per minute I am sure, that is when on ping patrol.

16. Q. What are the revolutions for 12 knots, do you remember that?

A. No, I don't remember that, sir.

17. Q. Did you at any time shift to JK, otherwise known as underwater sound detection only, not projection of sound from your ship?

A. Yes, sir we shifted when I first picked up the propeller noises. I turned it on just for listening, and I heard strong propeller noise, and I gave the bearings, and when we came dead ahead I shifted back. That is when I got the double echo.

18. Q. Did you at any time observe doppler effects?

A. No, sir, none that we could notice. It should have been pretty strong if it was a stern target but we did not notice it.

19. Q. Did you when at sound school at Pearl Harbor work with tame submarines?

A. Yes, sir.

20. Q. In other words you have heard echos from submarines that you knew existed in a certain place?

A. Yes, sir.

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21. Q. Did this echo that you received sound to you to be a submarine echo, and echo from a submarine.

A. Well, at the time I said when they asked about the target, I said probable submarine, and I still think that is about what I would say, probable submarine, but would not say for sure.

22. Q. Have you in your time ever picked up an echo from a whale or a school of fish that were later sighted visually?

A. Yes sir, on several occasions.

23. Q. What is the characteristics of that echo?

A. Well, on fish echoes you usually have several echoes, multiple echoes but they are not as strong or sharp as a submarine echo.

24. Q. Is it known in sound circles as a mushy echo?

A. Well, for a group of small fish it would be but for one large fish you would have a sharp echo; but after a while because of erratic movement and things like that, you could tell it is not a submarine. I remember one occasion while I was not on the gear, another operator picked up a large black fish, they call it and it sounded like a very good echo but the erratic movement of it, and later it was sighted.

25. Q. What was the movement of this echo what you picked up at 2340 on the night of 29 January?

A. Well, there was not too much movement. Most of the echoes we got were dead ahead and then there was a split what I would call a drift to the left, and the captain of the SC came to the left ten degrees and then we had him dead ahead, and then just about dead ahead at the time when we lost him. The dead ahead was the best echos we got.

26. Q. In other words you tracked him for about two thousand yards on a steady bearing, is that correct?

A. Well, I would not say for the distance. I would say about four or five minutes we were tracking. I don't know whether it would be approximately two thousand yards.

27. Can you state the range at which you picked the echo?

A. I believe it was around twelve hundred yards. I would not say for sure. I would say about twelve hundred yards.

28. Q. On the one at 2340?

A. I am not certain about that. I thought it was around twelve hundred yards. Maybe it was a different one. Maybe it was the other one we got. I know we had him for around four or five minutes. I don't know the time because I was not watching the clock and we lost it at about four hundred and fifty yards and that covers quite a distance.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

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The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. George T. Paine, Commanding Officer, U.S.S. YP514, Lieutenant, USNR.

2. Q. Lieutenant where was the YP 514 on 29 January 1945?

A. The latitude was 9° 24' 15" south, longitude 160° 3' east. Bearings 278°true on Beacon Fox.210.5° true on Beacon Easy.123° true on Beacon Dog.150 yards inside berth 22 that is to say on the shore side.

3. Q. About how far was that from the Serpens?

A. About six or seven hundred yards from the Serpens. The Serpens was anchored right in the middle of berth 24 according to the charts.

4. Q. Do the Beacons to which you referred appear on this chart which is HO No. 1009?

A. Our chart, I cannot give you the number, but it is a newer chart I think. It is a longer chart, but those are the same beacons.

5. Q. Where were you at the time of the explosion of the Serpens?

A. I was asleep in my bunk, in my cabin.

6. Q. Will you tell the court what damage if any your ship suffered as the result of that explosion?

A. May I read you from our ship's log or shall it be extemporaneous.

7. Q. You may read from the log?

A. (reads from ship's log) Damage to the vessel believed to be above water line and through hull and fittings resulting from concussion. Large pieces of flying steel which poured into the ship at vertical and oblique angles piercing its wooden structure at numerous points. There were no fires started and no ammunition set off on the ship. One of the large pieces was identified as the connecting rod approximately four feet long and about four inches in diameter which lodged in the overhead of the ship's magazine. Other heavy pieces demolished the bow, crows nest and broke all radio antennae, demolished large sections of the rails, above deck frames, ruptured ready boxes and bent gun shields, blowing off and damaging hatch covers, doors, breaking glass, shorting electrical circuts and rupturing numerous topside water lines. The ammonia refrigeration lines remained intact. Heavy pieces of metal hurtled through the deck and overhead into compartments where officers and men were asleep. Four inch pieces landing in bunks from which men had been thrown clear by the explosion. That is a brief of the material damage that occurred. The rest of this is personnel.

8. Q. Was there any damage done to the hull below the water line?

A. Not that can be determined.

9. Q. Do you know the injuries received by the personnel aboard ship?

A. Yes, I do. (reads from the ship's log) No deaths occured to members of ship's company. Muster was held at 2335 and all hands accounted for. Abbot, W. L., Seaman first class, 721-71-26, B6 . He was sent ashore for treatment and returned to duty. Appel, J. E. coxswain, B6 Sent ashore for treatment and returned to duty. Appeson, B.R., Seaman first class, 873-82-16, B6 Sent ashore for treatment and returned to ship. Boyd, H. L., boatswain mate second class, 641-51-97. Shock and returned to duty after one night of treatment at NAB Dispensary. Carver, Roy J., seaman second class, 314-02-00, B6 Sent ashore and returned to duty. Dishong, H.B., seaman first class, 941-30-49, B6 . Sent ashore for treatment and returned to duty. Gibbs, W. S., seaman second class, 575-55-33, B6 Returned to duty. Harsman, H. J., Motor machinst mate third class, 871-73-67, B6 B6 at Fleet Hospital 108. He was this date taken off the critical list. Moorer, K. L., Gunnersmate first class, 274-17-55, B6 B6 Received treatment ashore and returned following day. Music, L. S., seaman second class, 945-45-44, B6 Fleet hospital 108. Removed from critical list today. Rucki, S. F., Chief Boatswain mate 311-20-16, B6 returned to duty. Senra, Vito, seaman second class, 951-36-16 shock. Fleet Hospital 108. Pharmacist mate first class, B6 sent ashore for treatment and returned to duty. Wright, W. H., Ensign 372999, B6 Paine, G. F., 201261, B6 at Fleet Hospital 108.

10. Q. Are there any other pertinent remarks in your log concerning any of the effects of the explosion?

A. (reads from the log) Mangled torso beyond identification was removed from the bridge and sent ashore.

11. Q. That mangled torso was not one of your men?

A. No.

Examined by the court:

12. Q. Was anyone on deck who might have observed the explosion?

A. Yes, there was. The man on deck was at the gangway watch and he was injured from concussion to a point where he was unable to give any information at all. There was another watch stander on the bridge who was maintaining a radio guard, and in the confusion he too was unable to give any pertinent information, having been hit by this torso on his way out through the door and was confused.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The court then, at 3:40 p.m. adjourned until 10 a.m. 2 February 1945.

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FOURTH DAY

U.S. Naval Advanced Base
Guadalcanal, B.S.I.
Friday, 2 February 1945

The court met at 10 a.m.

Present:

Lieutenant Commander Audrey A. Scott, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve.
Lieutenant Commander John O. Vaughn, Medical Corps, U.S. Naval Reserve and
Lieutenant Dwight P. Colburn, S(O), U.S. Naval Reserve, members and
Lieutenant (junior grade) Nathaniel H. Willis, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, judge advocate;
Robert R. Mitchell, chief yeoman, acting, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, reporter.
Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U.S. Coast Guard, interested party, and his counsel.

The judge advocate stated that the record of the proceedings of the first, second, and third days of the inquiry was not ready. The court decided to postpone the reading of this until such time as it shall be reported ready and in the meantime to proceed with the inquiry.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rank and present station.
A. Walter C. Ackland, Lt.Colonel, 481 Port Battalion, A.P.O. 709.

2.Q. Colonel what are your duties?
A. I am the Commanding Officer of the 481st Port Battalion.

3.Q. In connection therewith do you have anything to do with the loading of ships?
A. Yes, we have. We have to do with the loading and unloading of ships.

4.Q. Did you have anything to do with the loading of the SERPENS?
A. Yes in the latter part of September and early part of October 1944.

5.Q. What was she loading at that time?
A. Ammunition, general cargo, mail and vehicles.

6.Q. In regard to the loading of the ammunition aboard the vessel at that time, were any steps taken by the Captain of the ship or other officers of the ship to insure the safe loading of that ammunition?
A. There were.

7.Q. Can you state briefly what they were?
A. For one thing the Captain of the ship insisted that no inflammable material such as matches or metal objects to be carried on board by the crews handling the ammunition. Fire hoses were rigged and to the best of my knowledge there was head pressure on the lines to the holds that we were loading. Smoking regulations were strictly enforced not only insisted by the Captain but by myself and my officers. There was I believe one spot on the house, we would say the main deck, on the off shore side, that we call the off shore side, away from the loading. I asked for number 10 cans to be placed in that smoking area which the Captain of the ship thought was very nice so that they would not have

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them on the deck so that there would be no chance of any spark igniting anything. Furthermore, the Captain very strenuously objected to the Port's method of handling ammunition and insisted that the Coast Guard regulations be adhered to strictly. It met with my concurrence. In fact I became very well acquainted with the Captain of the SERPENS at that time and took to adjusting the differences in the Port method of handling ammunition and the required Coast Guard regulations.

8.Q. Who was the Captain of the SERPENS at that time?
A. Captain Stinson, Lt.Commander, U.S. Coast Guard.

9.Q. Did you during the time the SERPENS was last here in this port, the time from the 24th of January until 29 January go aboard her at all?
A. I did not.

10.Q. Do you know whether as a result of the conferences with the Captain of the SERPENS when you were loading her, the information he desired was disseminated to all and those practices were adopted by the army?
A. A great many of the practices that the Captain of the SERPENS insisted upon in October were disseminated and passed on to the other loading port battalions and to the best of my knowledge there is a memorandum put out based on the Coast Guard regulations and the standing operating procedure that the Captain of the SERPENS introduced.

11.Q. Did anything come to your knowledge that would indicate any violations of any of these instructions by the ship's personnel or any other personnel?
A. By statements made by Port Officers, this was one time that the Port was adhering strictly to loading regulations. A great deal of care was being taken and upon inquiring for my own information in case I should load the ship again I asked if the regulations started in October were being carried out in this work. There had been no trouble with the Captain or his officers in regard to the loading of the ship this last time.

12. Is there anything you know that might have come to your attention in connection with the explosion of the SERPENS that occurred on January 29th?
A. No, although knowing the Captain of the ship and having an interest in the loading of ammunition it was just my own personal inquiry that I found out that everything was going according to Hoyle. There is no knowledge that I have outside that might have caused it.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rank and present station.
A. John M. McConnell, Lieutenant, USNR, attached to and serving with CNB SoSols Operations Office. 2/40

2.Q. What are your duties in the Operation's Office?
A. I have the duties of escort officer in charge of all anti-submarine small craft.

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3.Q. On the night of 29 January 1945, did you receive word officially of a contact made by one of the escort vessels?
A. Yes, I did.

4.Q. From what vessel was that?
A. That was from the SC 1039.

5.Q. From the information furnished you by that vessel were you able to locate the contact as given to you?
A. Yes. I might say that I was although it was difficult from the information that I received to definitely determine the exact location of that contact.

6.Q. Your plot would only be approximate?
A. Only approximate.

7.Q. What was your plot of that contact? at 1146
A. The original contact was given by the SC 1039, Love time. That was on the 29th, and he also said that he lost it at 1151. We asked him the location of the contact and he said midway between sectors Baker and Charlie. Those are two arbitrary sectors we have set up from Lunga Point to Koli Point. I then asked him a range and bearing from this contact, and he gave me 040 degrees true, 2700 yards. I then asked him the location from beacon Fox, and I did not get an answer from that but on the strength of that original contact we plotted the contact from beacon Fox 073 degrees true and that would approximately put the contact in the traffic lanes both inside and outside the screening sector.

8.Q. Do you have that point charted on a chart with you?
A. Yes, I do. I have HO Field Chart No.1009.

9.Q. Is this the contact plotted by you (indicating)?
A. That is the contact plotted by me and also the quartermaster.

10.Q. There are other lines on the chart which I don't believe usually appear there - will you explain what they are?
A. This one (indicating) line designated Charlie Baker is the screening that the Sugar Charlie 1039 was on. The other line designated Baker Baker Charlie Charlie is the other screening sector that we have had on our screening operation.

The judge advocate offered said chart in evidence, submitted same to the court and to the interested party. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended and marked "Exhibit 6".

11.Q. Lieutenant McConnell, how many of these sectors set out here (indicating) were being patrolled on the night of the 29th?
A. The only screen that was patrolled in this group was the sector Baker Charlie and in addition to that we have another that we call the roving screen sector, called the chain, which is out 8000 yards, and we had a vessel out screening that. That is an outer screen but there was no vessel on Baker Baker Charlie Charlie. Actually we only had two ships anchored in the vicinity of Lunga Point. We had additional screen vessels on sector Dog which goes from Lunga Point to Point Cruz and overlaps.

Examined by Lt.Commander Stinson:

12.Q. Mr. McConnell I understood you to say that you do not have with you either prior or subsequent submarine contacts reported in this area?
A. Well this submarine contact was designated as Jasa 17. We have had no following contacts. There have been no other contacts since Jasa 17. There has been a Jasa 16. I don't know the exact date but it was initiated off of Tulagi, Purvis Harbor approaches.

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13.Q. What were the results if any of Jasa 17 as now completed?
A. The one that we just finished?

14.Q. Yes?
A. Negative.

15.Q. As I understand the Jasa No. 16 involved a contact in the Purvis Tulagi area?
A. It was not a contact. It was supposedly a sighting by a colored personnel on shore who sighted a periscope at 8000 yards.

16.Q. Do you remember the date of that sighting?
A. No, I don't recall that, within the last week.

17.Q. Since January 29th have any further submarine contacts been addressed to the attention of CNB SoSols.?
A. You mean within the vicinity?

18.Q. Yes, within our own area?
A. No, there has not.

19.Q. Have there been contacts reported in the Solomons area but outside of our jurisdiction?
A. I believe there was one this morning near Green Island.

20.Q. That was at Green Island, in the vicinity of Green Island. During the month of January, can you tell us whether or not there had been more or less submarine sightings in our area than there were during the preceding month of December?
A. No, I can't definitely say whether there was or not. I believe there was more in January. I think probably two were the most, that is within the vicinity of Guadalcanal area.

21.Q. On the night of 29 January or morning of 30th was there any submarine contact reported by any ship other than the SC 1039?
A. Not that I know of.

22.Q. Mr. McConnell, there were on the night of 29 January and the morning of 30 January a total of three contacts reported, were they not by the same vessel?
A. The only one that was brought to my attention was the original contact at 1146 that was after the explosion on the 29th. That is Love time.

23.Q. Well, it had been brought to my attention that there was a contact at 2100, there was a contact at 2346, I believe, and a contact at 0250. The last contact resulting in an anti submarine attack?
A. I believe you are correct on that, sir except the first one. I have received no information about the one at 2100, but there were depth charges sent out from the SC 1039 at approximately 0255. That was the contact.

24.Q. The point which you identified as the contact point at 2346 is approximately three and one-half miles from berth 24, Guadalcanal?
A. No, sir. I think it is about three miles and about 9000 yards from beacon Fox which is at Lunga Point. I have not accurately figured out the distance it was from berth 24.

25.Q. I believe if you measure it on your chart roughly it is three and one-half miles?
A. It is slightly over three miles.

26.Q. This contact occurred approximately 30 minutes after the explosion, is that correct?
A. 23 minutes. We have the explosion logged at 1123. It is between 25 and 30 minutes at the best.

27.Q. What is the assumed maximum under water speed of a submarine?
A. 8 to 10 knots.

28.Q. From the chart which you have, what is the depth of water to the east of beacon Fox?
A. In what berth, sir?

29.Q. In the screened area there just to the east?
A. You mean where the point of contact was?

30.Q. No, just the average depth of water in there?
A. The average is anywhere from 43 fathoms, 27 fathoms, 38 fathoms.

31.Q. Are you familiar with the sound gear as used in the contacting vessel?
A. Sir, I am not a qualified sound operator. I have seen them in operation, and I know what they are supposed to do, but I don't believe that I would be qualified to state the type of sound contact. It would take a man of more experience.

32.Q. Have there been any definite contacts of enemy submarines in this immediate vicinity at any time to your knowledge?
A. To my knowledge I would say, no. We have had several contacts. I have been on the staff for 13 months, and during that period of time I can assuredly say that there was never any definite evidence that there was a submarine in the vicinity. We have had several whales and several logs that have been reported as submarines. We never can assume they are not submarines.

33.Q. During the past month the submarine activity in the vicinity of Bougainville, Solomon Islands, New Hebridies and surrounding territory has shown an increase, has it not?
A. I believe the reports in the last month have shown an increase from the previous month. I could not definitely say without looking at the statistics but it seems to me we have had more reports than previously.

34.Q. There were submarines reported at each end of the slot, were there not?
A. Well, would you qualify that by saying which?

35.Q. In the general area of?
A. The Solomons area?

36.Q. Yes?
A. What would be the extremities on that?

37.Q. By that I mean within a few hundred miles of it?
A. You mean within the last month?

38.Q. Within the last month?
A. Well, I don't believe I could answer that question.

Examined by the court:

39.Q. Mr. McConnell, I understand your testimony to indicate some uncertainity as to the exactitude of the location of this reported contact at

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2340. Can you give us an opinion of possible error involved?
A. The original contact given by the SC 1039 was not definite because it did not give us a range and bearing on any definite point. It said mid-point between sectors Baker Charlie, bearing 040 degrees 2700 yards. Well, he may be off the sector or he may be on the sector. He may be on either side of it or may be 300 or 400 yards this side of sector Baker Charlie and the point would therefore be arbitrary. I contacted the captain after the contact, and he said he could not see the beacon to give me a definite range and bearing. I immediately alerted the PC 588 and the DE Gendreau to go to the sector where the SC 1039 had the contact, which they did. They got under way and proceeded, but inorder to establish a good search plan and anti submarine attack you have to have a definite point in longitude and latitude or bearing to initiate a definite attack or search party. I felt that the SC 1039, immediately when these two ships got out there to the point, would alert them on the approximate position of the contact.

40.Q. Is it possible for you to indicate on this chart the dislocations produced by the greatest possible error introduced?
A. Well, yes I could. I could take any part of this sector. It might be all the way, the longest line. I presume his bearing was true but it could be anywhere along this point here (indicating).

Examined by Lt.Commander Stinson:

41.Q. Mr. McConnell, in the contact at 0250 on 30th January did you have any knowledge of a periscope sighting at the same time?
A. I did not, sir.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated the following: I have not except that I would like to state, if I may, that within the area and adjacent to the sector that the SC 1039 was screening, the PC 588 at the time of the explosion sent a signal in and said that she was weighing anchor and getting underway. The Commanding Officer of the SC 1039 was continuing his observation search on about a mile rectangle and while doing so he told me that the PC 588 passed quite close to him. I am just offering that in evidence for what it is worth the reason being that there is a possibility that the sound operator picked up the wake of the PC 588 under way as a contact.

Examined by Lt.Commander Stinson:

42.Q. Mr. McConnell, the report of that contact was 2700 yards?
A. That is right.

43.Q. Would you consider 2700 yards close by?
A. No, I would not consider it close by.

44.Q. In other words that statement would rather tend to say that it was not the PC 588?
A. There would be no definite way of telling exactly the position of the PC 588 unless we plotted her course.

45.Q. But what I am trying to point out to you is that the contact on the sound gear was 2700 yards?
A. That is right.

46.Q. Yet the PC 588 was close aboard?
A. How close aboard I don't know.

47.Q. 2700 yards is not considered close by in craft the size of the SC 1039 and PC 588?

A. As far as I know it is the standard cargo net we have. That net was used because we could not figure any other method of attaching the sling to the bomb. It was a small cylinderical bomb.

63. Q. Were these bombs to your knowledge dropped, rolled, dragged or slid over any surface?

A. Not to my knowledge. They were delivered to the beach and handled by crane there. The only rolling done would be rolling it from the point of rest in the square of the hatch to its final stowage location. It would be rolled on a floor of dunnage.

64. Q. Captain, in these regulations referred to, " Regulations Governing Transportation of Military Explosives on Board Vessels During Present Emergency" - class 10 instructions for handling are "nets shall not be used - bomb shells shall be loaded by the use of trays or wire rope slings". The testimony has shown that pallets were being used to load these depth bombs, would this combination of pallet and net be classified as a tray?

A. That was our interpretation because it did form a tray. The pallet boards in the net preventedany rolling of the bomb out. That is, in putting bombs in just a rope sling itself there would be much better chance for them to bang against the other bombs in the draft. By using the pallet board, bringing the net up around it is insured a positive prevention of one of the bombs rolling off. We used that as a tray and have used it in the past when we have loaded defective ammunition or transferred defective ammunition from a ship. We used the pallet in the net to form that tray so that we avoided the possibility of sliding out of the board.

65. Q. It is your experience that the net has always been drawn tight enough to prevent the bomb from falling off?

A. When you take up on it, the net comes up all around the pallet. I would not say that they do not slide off.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank and present station.

A. Eugene E. Ritter, 2nd Lieutenant, TC, 230 Port Company.

2. Q. What are your duties?

A. Primarily company officer.

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A. No, I would not except as I stated the SC 1039 went into an observant rectangle program which the Captain of the 1039 explained to me was on a mile pattern. A mile on either side. Now if he conducted this observant pattern, that certainly would bring it much closer to the 588. In other words he went into a regular diagram right into the spot.

48.Q. But if the PC 588 was less than a mile from the SC 1039 the contact at 2700 yards would not be on the PC 588, would it?
A. Well, that is a debatable point.

49.Q. Mr. McConnell, a mile is 2000 yards?
A. That is right.

50.Q. Less than 2000 yards would not be 2700 yards, would it?
A. No.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rank and present station.
A. Robert E. Lawrence, Ensign, USNR, LCT liasion officer CNB SoSols.

2.Q. Mr. Lawrence, will you tell us what damage if any were done to the LCTs in this port on 29 January 1945 by the explosion on the SERPENS?
A. There was only one boat hit, the LCT 317. She had two holes in the well deck caused by two pieces of shrapnel that hit it.

3.Q. How big were these holes?
A. Approximately 8 inches in diameter.

4.Q. Were there any injuries to any personnel of the LCTs?
A. Just one man. He was thrown up against the bulkhead and hurt his shoulder. He was taken to the hospital and discharged.

5.Q. Where were you at the time of the explosion?
A. I was on the LCT 317 sitting in a jeep in the middle of the deck.

6.Q. Were you facing the SERPENS?
A. Yes, I was.

7.Q. Will you tell us just what you saw and heard?
A. The first thing I saw was the large flash just off the port stern. I was facing that way and sawthis large explosion. I just remember one flash, a large flash and the driver of the jeep - we had him cut the motor. He immediately drove off the ramp and hit the deck off the ramp on the beach.

8.Q. You stated that you saw the flame off the port quarter, was that the LCTs port quarter?
A. LCTs port quarter. I was facing to the stern of the LCT.

9.Q. Did you see one flame?
A. Yes, one flame.

10.Q. What color was it?
A. Red.

11.Q. Did you hear an explosion?
A. I remember only one explosion, hearing one explosion.

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12.Q. When did that come before you saw the flame or after?
A. That I could not remember. I only remember one explosion and saw the flame at one time.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rate and present station.
A. Esker Cutlip, Technician 5 Grade, 457 Amphibious Company.

2.Q. Were you on duty on the night of 29 January 1945?
A. Yes, sir.

3.Q. What were your duties that night?
A. We were hauling cargo, sir.

4.Q. You and who else?
A. Cortez Cook.

5.Q. Were you driving a dukw?
A. Yes.

6.Q. Were you driving the dukw?
A. No, sir I was assistant driver.

7.Q. Did you make a trip out to the SERPENS just shortly before she exploded?
A. Yes, sir.

8.Q. What were you carrying when you went out?
A. We were carrying dunnage.

9.Q. Where did you tie up to the SERPENS?
A. Number 4 hatch on the port side.

10.Q. Did you notice whether or not there was a barge on the starboard side?
A. Not on that trip but the trip before that I saw a barge pull in to number four on the starboard side.

11.Q. Do you know approximately what time you left or pulled away from the SERPENS?
A. No, sir. I really don't know, but I believe it was around 1115 or something like that.

12.Q. Did you notice whether or not another dukw came in and took your place when you pulled away?
A. Yes, there was one that pulled in and tied up.

13.Q. Do you know with what that dukw was loaded?
A. I really don't know.

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14.Q. Will you explain what happened on your way back to shore from the SERPENS?
A. Well we untied from the hatch and started back in. I was up on the bow of my dukw, and I walked back in the cargo compartment, and as I walked back I saw this other dukw pull into number four hatch. I sat down on the spare tire with my back toward the ship. I guess I rode that way about a minute or two, and that is when it went off.

15.Q. What was the first thing you noticed?
A. When I looked back?

16.Q. No, the first thing?
A. The first thing I noticed was fire.

17.Q. Was the sky lighted up?
A. Yes.

18.Q. What did you do then?
A. Well, I was in the water at that time. Lot of shrapnel falling . I tried to watch out for myself and kept away from the shrapnel. I got back on my dukw and two large waves came and almost upset the dukw, and I got in and got it started and headed toward shore. The driver was laying back in the cargo compartment so I took over his duty and brought the dukw back in.

19.Q. Did you hear an explosion?
A. Yes, sir.

20.Q. Would you say there was one or two explosions?
A. Two explosions.

21.Q. Which would you say was the larger?
A. The last one I would say.

22.Q. Did you notice whether the first explosion occurred before you noticed any flame or the same time or shortly afterward?
A. I would say the same time because I was knocked in the water or thrown in the water and at the moment I thought there was a big one went off and everything then smoke and fire.

Examined by Lt.Commander Stinson:

23.Q. What was the condition of the sea at the time you made your trip out to the SERPENS, was it rough?
A. It was very calm.

24.Q. I take it then you had no difficulty in unloading your cargo?
A. No, sir.

25.Q. Did they seem to be having any difficulty aboard ship with the cargo at that time?
A. No, sir, not that I know of.

26.Q. As far as you could tell, everything was operating as usual?
A. Yes, sir.

27.Q. After you left the SERPENS and were on the way back to the shore, did you see one flash or two flashes?
A. Well I had my back to the ship and when this explosion came and if there were two, it seemed they were so close together you could not tell.

28.Q. Then you don't recall any particular flash in connection with the first explosion?
A. No, sir.

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29.Q. There was of course this big sheet of flame that shot into the air from one explosion?
A. Yes, there was fire in the air.

30.Q. Was it the first explosion that knocked you into the water?
A. I suppose it was, yes, sir. I was in the water and that is when I thought another one went off.

31.Q. You thought there was a second one while in the water?
A. Yes, sir.

32.Q. Can you tell us how far from the SERPENS you were at that time?
A. Sir, in my estimation I would say I was about 50 or 75 yards.

33.Q. I think you have testified that the cargo you carried was dunnage, what sort of material did it consist of?
A. Lumber, sir. I don't know what size the lumber was - just different sizes.

34.Q. It was ordinary lumber?
A. Yes, sir.

Examined by the judge advocate:

35.Q. Do you have any sort of number on the dukw?
A. Yes, we have.

36.Q. What was your number?
A. 724.

Examined by the court:

37.Q. You stated a barge was alongside the ship the previous trip - what type barge was it?
A. Just an ordinary flat barge with a motor on.

38.Q. Was the barge loaded with bombs?
A. Yes, it had depth charges on her. Depth charges were on top of a pallet board.

39.Q. Were the bombs spread all over the barge that is from side to side and end to end?
A. Yes, sir.

40.Q. Did you see the bombs being hoisted from the barge aboard ship?
A. No, sir I never saw them take any bombs off the barge.

41.Q. Do you recall if the dunnage you were taking out to the ship was for shoring purposes or for dunnage of the cargo?
A. I really don't know. I heard the signalman say to the winch operator to lay it down outside the hatch, over the side of the hatch.

42.Q. And you don't know if all the bombs were loaded or taken out to the ship by the time you made your last trip there?
A. No, sir.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

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The witness stated he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The court then, at 11:40 a.m., took a recess until 1 p.m., at which time it reconvened.

Present: All the members, the judge advocate, the interested party and his counsel.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rank and present station.
A. Ohio Knox, Major, TC, 492 Port Battalion, APO 709.

2.Q. What are your duties Major?
A. I am the Executive Officer for the Battalion and also the Operations Officer.

3.Q. And that Battalion is a Battalion that loads and unloads ships?
A. That is correct.

4.Q. Did you have anything to do with the loading of the U.S.S. SERPENS?
A. Yes, that was our battalion. That is I should say the men from our battalion were aboard the ship from the time we started to load until the accident.

5.Q. Before you started to load, had you discussed the manner of loading at all with either the Captain or any of the officers of the ship?
A. On the night of the 24th, Captain McCain, Superintendent of Army , ComCargo went out and met the captain of the ship with the proposed loading plan, and we discussed the proposed loading plan with the captain.

6.Q. You went along with Captain McCain?
A. I did.

7.Q. Were matters of safety taken up in this conference with regard to the handling of the ammunition to be loaded?
A. They were.

8.Q. Did you receive from the Captain of the ship any suggested instructions or regulations in regard to the handling of that ammunition?
A. We did.

9.Q. Do you have a copy of that?
A. Yes.

10.Q. Will you produce those?
A. Here they are. Here is the copy of loading safety instructions from U.S.S. SERPENS which was handed to me by one of their officers by direction of the Captain. Also regulations for handling and stowage of explosives handed to me at the same time.

The judge advocate offered in evidence the Loading Safety Instructions and the Regulations for the Handling and Stowage of Explosives, submitted the same to the court and to the interested party. There being no objection, they were so received and are appended and marked respectively "Exhibit 7(1), 7(2)," and "Exhibit 8(1), 8(2), 8(3) and 8(4)".

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11.Q. Major were these instructions and regulations disseminated to the personnel that was to actually load the ship?
A. Yes, in this way. Lt.McGrath, deceased officer of our organization was always present during all of the discussions of the loading of the ship with Captain McCain, the captain of the ship and myself. He received a set of the orders the same way I did after it was agreed on. Lt. McGrath and myself went to the wardroom, at which time I gave him instructions to have all of our men assemble. This information was read to our men. At this time we had one man of our section act as a sentry to see that these regulations and rules were carried out.

12.Q. Major, did you have reasons to go aboard the SERPENS at various occasions while in port?
A. I was aboard her twice beside this other time.

13.Q. Those times that you were aboard did you observe any violations of these regulations either by ship's personnel or by any other personnel?
A. I do not as I recall.

14.Q. Major, there were to be loaded in number four hold 3568 depth bombs. There has been testimony here to the effect that approximately all of those except I believe about 120 were loaded at the time of the explosion. Had you issued any instructions to anyone concerning the manner in which the bombs were to be finished off, that is in case there were not a full layer of bombs on top? How they were to be secured?
A. I had not at the time prior to the explosion because when I left the Captain, I told him I would be aboard his vessel again before the ship sailed and I personally wanted to see how the hatch finished up before any instructions were given prior to shoring off.

15.Q. Then no instructions were issued to Lt. McGrath who was on duty aboard ship, to shore off in case he finished?
A. I had not issued any instructions, no.

16.Q. Was there to be anything stowed on top of the bombs?
A. We had approximately a thousand pieces of personnel effects which were to go aboard that ship. These personnel effects were going to be placed in number 1 hatch where they could be better secured than in number 4. If number 1 could not take it then I gave instructions to Lt. McGrath to discuss with the Captain of the ship whether to put the overflow in number 4 hatch.

Examined by Lt.Commander Stinson:

17.Q. Major, were you familiar with the procedure that was followed in loading bombs from ammunition dump or bomb dump down where they were originally stowed to the time they were delivered to the ship?
A. Only part way. When they came on to the beach, we left instructions with the Beach Commander to have these bombs put three to a net. In this net there was a pallet board and three bombs. They were loaded in the dukw and taken out to the SERPENS.

18.Q. How were they transported from the bomb dump to the beach?
A. I believe by truck. I am not positive about that. That is something we don't have to pay any attention to.

19.Q. In other words that was something outside your jurisdiction?
A. As a matter of fact all cargo is to be delivered to us at the ship's side under the present set-up of the army port.

20.Q. Were any special precautions taken because of the nature of the cargo that was to be handled?

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A. Well, yes. In comparison to the way we handle ammunition here, this is the first ship, (there has been quite a few we have loaded) where I have seen the care with which these drafts were handled. This is the first time we have ever had specified the number of bombs we can lift in one net. That has always been left up to our own good judgment of what the net can carry. This has also been the first time we have had any safety rules or regulations handed to us by any ship governing that.

21.Q. In the past then, the manner of loading cargo has been left up to your own judgment?
A. That is correct.

22.Q. Major, do you know whether or not on the night of 29 January 1945 there was a barge alongside the ship on which ammunition was being loaded?
A. Can I qualify that question?

23.Q. Yes?
A. About 3 o'clock when Captain McCain and myself got together for the nights operation and discuss any changes of equipment or anything, he told me at that time that he would have to use a barge on these bombs to take them out to the ship. Around 4 o'clock I assume around 4 o'clock a barge was taken down to Lunga and loaded with these depth charges. We also had 10 other dukws working the ship five of which were working one side of the ship and the other five were set up to start working this baggage up to number 1 hold. Whether the barge actually got out to the ship or not I don't know but that was the water equipment assigned to the ship.

Examined by the court:

24.Q. Major, I think your testimony states you loaded these bombs in a net, will you describe that?
A. We take a cargo net placed on the ground. In the center of this cargo net a pallet board is placed. On top of the pallet board three depth charges are placed. Then the net was taken and placed over the top with the rope portion of the net into the hook which lifted up the load.

25.Q. Were these bombs loaded in number four lower hold stowed all over and leveled off when a tier is completed?
A. This is what we would do. We would take the bombs and start them off let us say forward of the ship and after each row of bombs there was a strip of dunnage placed with sufficient height so that it would be up above the top of the top part of the bombs as it was laid on its side. That tier was all dunnaged off clear across the hatch and another tier of bombs was laid.

26.Q. When you rolled the bomb out on this dunnage, do you have to drop the bomb to get it in place?
A. No, the floor is level at all times.

27.Q. Do you feel that these safety rules as laid out to you by the Captain of the SERPENS were an added safety precaution in the handling of this ammunition?
A. Definitely, yes.

28.Q. Do you feel, Major, there was any necessity of doing any shoring in number four hold if there were not sufficient bombs to make the layer completely level?
A. Why, yes.

29.Q. Would any shoring have been done in your absence or had you given any orders for that to wait your instructions?
A. I feel that they would have gone ahead and shored off without waiting

for my instructions because our organization had worked for approximately seven and one-half months at an arsenal in California in the year 1943, handling nothing but ammunition. There we handled even the Navy torpedo war heads. Sergeant Child who was out there with Lt. McGrath, as walking boss, would have definitely gone ahead. We have loaded these ships as I say seven and one-half months at this arsenal under very close supervision of Ordinance and their safety scheme they have set up there, and our enlisted men are very familiar with the necessary type of shoring with this type of ammunition.

30.Q. Did you have your own equipment for shoring, that is hammers, saws, nails and son on?
A. I don't believe so. If we did need them out there it would be a small matter to signal ashore and send them out.

31.Q. Has that been the general procedure to send them out or try to get that from the ship?
A. Sometimes we would try to get them from the ship but most of the time they go out with their own equipment. The reason why we try to get it from the ship is because hand tools are getting very difficult to replace here on the island, and when we lose a hammer or saw now, it is just gone.

32.Q. Major, with your knowledge of the cargo being loaded on board the SERPENS, do you think it possible that some shoring could have taken place that night?
A. No, because of the fact that afterwards, after the explosion there was some cargo to go on and our men would not have started any shoring up until all the cargo was in and until they could actually see what the picture was and what they would have to do.

33.Q. There has been testimony that a barge was alongside number 4 hatch, starboard side, do you know what type barge that was?
A. No, I don't. I don't know whether it was a live barge or a dead barge.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rank and present station.
A. William Robert Laughton, Lieutenant (jg) USNR, Executive Officer of the U.S.S. SC 1039.

2.Q. Were you aboard the SC 1039 on the night of 29 January?
A. I was.

3.Q. Do you have any other duties beside Executive Officer?
A. I am sound officer also in addition to the First Lieutenant and Radar Officer.

4.Q. Did you have any contacts that night of 29 January?
A. We did

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5.Q. Will you tell us when they occured and what became of them?
A. The first contact we had was about 9 o'clock, the sound man was on watch.

6.Q. That was at 2100?
A. Yes, the soundman on watch called the officer of the deck, the Third Officer and he in turn called the skipper and myself, and by the time we got up there - the skipper took the bridge and I checked the contact on the sound stack, and it was a very sharp echo, good pings, but we did not get a chance to turn on the chemical recorder. I took over the sound stack and sent out about 10 transmissions and received good echoes from that. We lost contact and regained it about three minutes later. Two transmissions. Then about 15 or 20 minutes later, we picked up one more ping and that was all on that one. Then as I remember the SERPENS was just about on our beam, starboard beam and it blew up. Everybody was scared. We looked all around. Everyone came to the bridge, that is the three officers came to the bridge. General quarters was called again and we could see - we looked all around for torpedo wake and could not see any around. Approximately 2340 we picked up another sound contact, and we got good echoes from that. Strong hydrophone effect. The sound man turned the echoes on each cut-on and said they were wake echoes and I agreed with him. I turned on the recorder. Tracers were not too clear on the recorder. We did have sharp echoes on the center bearing on this contact but could not tell too much on the tracers. We lost contact about 600 to 650 yards and then regained it about 400 and lost it for good. Well, that is until we picked up a third contact. We lost it until about 0250.

7.Q. Do you have the chemical recorder sheet with you?
A. I have it with me. I took it out of the recorder last night, and I understand that I neglected to bake it as Lt.Commander said. The result is that the tracers are not clear and not nearly as clear as when we were making the contact. There is not too much evidence here as I can see.

8.Q. Will you point out which was the 2340 and which the 0250?
A. This is (indicating) the 2340 and this is the 0250.

The judge advocate offerred said chemical recorder sheet in evidence, submitted same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended and marked "Exhibit 9".

9.Q. Are there any notations made thereon of the contact made at 2340?
A. There are.

10.Q. Will you read those? By the way who were they put on by?
A. By me.

11.Q. When?
A. That was after I took the recorder tracers out of the recorder. I did not make those until today. I did not make those notations until today. These others (indicating) were made last night.

12.Q. Will you read it please?
A. The attack speed is 12 knots - that is the ship's speed. The range rate, that is the rate at which the range was closing, 8½ knots. That indicated that if there were a submarine it was moving away from us and that it would most likely be a stern chase. The strong hydrophone effect showed good propeller beat and wake on either side. That is wake on either side of the bearings either your right or left cut-on with sharp pings on the center bearings. Lost contact at 600 yards. That was not enough information to warrant firing. Initial range on sound contact was 2700 yards.

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13.Q. Do you know those matters you just read to be true?
A. Yes.

14.Q. Those are the observations you made at that time but were not recorded until today?
A. Yes, to the best of my knowledge, yes, sir.

15.Q. Were any notations made as to the contact portion concerning the contact at 0250?
A. There were.

16.Q. Will you read that?
A. Dropped five charges from the stern and two K guns and fired on range rate at 8 knots. I will explain that in that we never did get up to an attack speed. That is the standard attack speed for our ship is 12 knots, and we were going at approximately 8 knots when we fired, and the range rate was 8 knots. Now on this one (indicating) I was not too sure because the tracers were not too clear. This was not nearly as good a contact as the 2340 and it could have been a reaf that we were pinging on. The tracers were short, around 7500 yard in length that is about 25 yards longer than the out going transmission but still and all there was no noticeable bearing movement and the range rate was approximately the same rate as attack speed. Doppler was not noticeable and I am doubtful that that was a good run. We did drop charges on that one. This occurred in Sea lark Channel.

17.Q. Did you examine the recorder at the time this was made?
A. You mean (interrupted)

18.Q. Did you observe it at that time?
A. I was on the recorder. I was operating the recorder. These tracers are not very clear.

19.Q. Mr. Laughton, how much experience have you had with sound apparatus of the type aboard the SC 1039?
A. I attended SCTC at Miami for five weeks preliminary, and then I was sent to Key West Sound School as A.S.W. specialist for five weeks training there. With the type of gear we have, I had approximately two weeks training all in all. I did not have so much on materiel.

20.Q. How long have you been aboard the SC 1039?
A. Since April 16, 1944.

21.Q. Have you had many contacts during that time?
A. We have had several contacts most of them have been reefs or bottom echoes. This is the first time that we dropped depth charges to my knowledge.

22.Q. What would be your evaluation of the contact at 2340?
A. I would say it was a very good contact and due to the fact that we had strong propeller beats I would term that as probable submarine.

23.Q. I suppose you have taken into consideration the fact that there were quite a number of boats and ships moving around?
A. The reason I say that is because we check every contact. We check the bearings and there was no surface vessel at the time on this particular bearing when we had a contact.

24.Q. How do you evaluate the one at 0250?
A. I would say that was not a very good contact but it was worthy of dropping depth charges because it was doubtful.

25.Q. Will you explain why you dropped depth charges on the one you did not consider so good?
A. Because we held the contact all the way in. On the 2340 run we lost contact. We did not have enough information as to bearing, movement and the width of the target as we did on the 0250 run.

Examined by Lt.Commander Stinson:

26.Q. Mr. Laughton, did you work on tame submarines when at Key West?
A. I did.

27.Q. In other words you were qualified to identify echoes?
A. We had quite a bit of practice in that.

28.Q. You mentioned the contacts around 2100 and the contact a short time after the SERPENS exploded as being good echoes, very sharp. What was your evaluation of those two different contacts you had?
A. It is very hard to say on the first one because we did not have a chance to turn on the recorder but as far as echoes itself goes, it was very good pings as I have said and the one at 2340 was, as I term it probable submarine.

Examined by the judge advocate:

29.Q. Would you term the contact of 2100 a probable submarine?
A. I cannot say that because we did not have enough information.

30.Q. There has been testimony brought out before that that might have been caused by skip distance?
A. We did think it was skip distance due to this fact - because the sound beam is apt to go down and then turn up again. The submarine is out here (indicating) say 2000 yards. The beam goes down and goes up when the range closes to say 500 yards. It could go down and miss it and go down a little closer and go down and catch him again. That is one reason, when we lost contact, it might have been due to skip distance that we lost contact because the beam did not touch him during that period of skip distance.

31.Q. Well, the prior testimony as I recall it was to the effect that it might have been the beam striking the bottom of the ocean and then a ship rather than a submarine - what is your theory on that?
A. It could be possible.

Examined by the court:

32.Q. Why do you evaluate 2300 contact as propeller beats?
A. Because they were rhythmic and nearly dead ahead 20 degrees on either side of the bow and they were very rhythmic movements.

33.Q. Had it ever been your experience to pick up propeller beats on a submarine that is on tame submarines?
A. Yes, sir.

34.Q. How did this sound in relation to the sound on the tame submarine?
A. Very similar.

35.Q. In your opinion, what do you think this could have been a fish, a log, a submarine or what?
A. I think it could have been a submarine. A fish would not leave rhythmic beats like that. Sometimes you get what you might call a wake echo on fish, but it is not rhythmic.

Examined by Lt.Commander Stinson:

36.Q. To clarify the mind of the court, this issue of getting an echo from the bottom - what is the angle at which your original transmission goes out from your sound?
A. It varies.

37.Q. What is it set at?
A. Well, it is just according to the temperature of the water at what angle it goes out.

38.Q. But it travels out at an angle of 15 degrees from the horizontal down, is that not right?
A. No, sir.

39.Q. You cannot use your sound gear for fathometer all the time?
A. You cannot use it at any time for fathometer unless you have an echo and the echo off of a hull of a submarine for example which goes down and comes up, that is one way you can use it.

40.Q. In working on tame submarines in Key West, did you ever have any recorder traces at the time of firing?
A. When we fired?

41.Q. When you actually fired, did you have any contact on the submarine?
A. Yes.

42.Q. What is the purpose of chemical recorder?
A. To determine firing time and range rate.

43.Q. But do you not normally lose contact with the submarine unless it is almost on the surface long before you fire and you have to fire on the bar of the chemical recorder?
A. Sometimes you have to fire on the bar but on a depth charge attack you usually fire ---. The attack you are speaking of, you are right. I was speaking of a mouse trap attack that when you fire 300 yards, at approximately 300 yards ahead, you maintain contact all the way in usually, unless the submarine is extremely deep.

44.Q. This is not an argument or anything - what I am trying to do is to obtain information and to convey to the court the full knowledge of the reason a contact is lost is because of the fact that the submarine or other object will go out of the projected sound that goes out from it. The deeper your submarine the further away you lose contact as I believe Mr. Laughton as a qualified officer has stated?
A. That is right.

45.Q. So that this statement concerning bottom echoes has apparently put confusion in the minds of the court - you obtain echoes from reefs and the like but that is not from the bottom, is that correct?
A. If it is a shallow bottom, sir, you can sometimes obtain bottom echoes.

46.Q. From ahead of you if it sticks up into the cone of the projection?
A. That is right, it must be in the sound beam.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rate and present station.
A. George S. Kennedy, seaman second class, USCGR, attached to U.S.S. SERPENS now at NAB Dispensary.

2.Q. Were you aboard the SERPENS the night of 29 January 1945?
A. Yes, sir I was.

3.Q. Where were you at approximately 2300?

A. I was asleep in the boatswain's locker.

4.Q. Will you explain where in the ship the boatswain's locker is located?
A. In the foremost part, right in the bow.

5.Q. Is there anything over it?
A. A three inch gun platform is directly over the boatswain's locker.

6.Q. What was the first thing you knew after you went to sleep that night?
A. Well, the first thing I knew I was awake, swimming in oil. I was in the water on the inside.

7.Q. What happened then?
A. Well, I came to, I could not quite place what was happening. I could not get it through my head what was the matter so I - the water lights of the ship are kept in the boatswain's locker when the ship is in port. They are to be kept fixed so when the ship goes out they are in good working order. I had them all down there and in working order. I grabbed a light and looked for a way out. There were two openings. Water was coming in at two places and I went to one and could not locate it and went to the other. I could not locate it but I could hear it so I went under water and came up on the outside.

8.Q. When you came up what did you see?
A. Well, the minute I came up I saw a boat. It was a large boat not the one that picked me up sitting out not far away. It was the first thing I remember seeing and naturally saw what was left of the ship, the anchor and the floating part and the boat was the first thing I saw when I came up.

Examined by Lt.Commander Stinson:

9.Q. Kennedy, what time did you go down to the boatswain's locker that night?
A. Immediately after the show. We had a show aboard that night. It must have been around 9:30 or very close to 9:30.

10.Q. Was the ship being loaded when you went down there, do you remember?
A. I could not say for sure other than number one hold. They were working number one. That is directly below the boatswain's locker. That is the only one I passed.

11.Q. Was anyone else asleep in the boatswain's locker with you that night?
A. Kemp.

12.Q. You and Kemp were the only ones?
A. Yes.

13.Q. You and Kemp were the only ones in the locker at that time?
A. Yes, sir.

14.Q. Were you picked up on the bow of the SERPENS or were you picked up from the water?
A. Picked up from the bow of the SERPENS?

15.Q. And you just climbed back aboard the bow?
A. Yes, I came from the hold directly up to the bow.

16.Q. Was the bow right side up at that time?
A. Well, sir, I could not tell you for sure but the port anchor was dropped and I came out and grabbed hold of the starboard anchor so it was very much on its side or bottom completely over. I could not make it out. There was very little of the ship showing.

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17.Q. Could you tell whether you were on the deck or side of the ship?
A. I don't know. You mean when I came out? No, sir I remember I just grabbed hold of this starboard anchor to climb out. That is the first thing I grabbed. The minute I grabbed that - it just came to my mind it was the screw for some reason or another because I just reached up and grabbed it but it was the starboard anchor. It could be laying on its side or completely upside down. I don't know for sure.

18.Q. It probably was not the deck you were on?
A. I don't know, sir. As far as I know it seems to me it was completely upside down. That is what I really think. I could not be sure of that.

Examined by the judge advocate:

19.Q. Was the boatswain's locker intact, do you know - was it all there when you were trying to get out of it?
A. As far as I know, sir, it was all there. I saw no hole whatsoever. I saw no opening at all to the boatswain's locker myself. I heard the water coming in and just happened to go down and come up on the outside myself. I went down from the inside and came up to the outside.

Examined by the court:

20.Q. Did you go down the ladder?
A. No, I just went underwater.

Examined by the judge advocate:

21.Q. Do you know from what part of the boatswain's locker you escaped? Was it through the door or through a port or through the deck?
A. I don't know that at all because I have no idea what the hole looks like that I came out of. I never saw it. It was very nearly under when I came out. There was less than two feet of air space left.

22.Q. Was any of it showing above the water when you came to the top?
A. Of the ship?

23.Q. No, of the boatswain's locker?
A. No, the bottom of the ship - what I call the bottom of the ship.

24.Q. There was no part of the 3 inch gun or platform?
A. No, sir.

Examined by the court:

25.Q. Were you standing in the water when you went down?
A. What do you mean by that?

26.Q. When you went down, you say you were standing in water?
A. I went down and came up.

27.Q. Yes?
A. I was in water. I don't remember whether I was standing on anything. I was hanging on to different objects. The boatswain's locker stands way off. There was very little air space in there.

28.Q. The rest was water?
A. Yes, and I was hanging on to different objects.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rate and present station.
A. Kelsie K. Kemp, seaman first class, USCGR, attached to U.S.S. SERPENS now at NAB Dispensary, Guadalcanal.

2.Q. Where were you at approximately 2300, on the night of 29 January 1945?
A. At that time I was in the boatswain's locker.

3.Q. What time did you go to the boatswain's locker?
A. As soon as the show was over and that was over approximately 9:30.

4.Q. Where was the show held?
A. Number 3 hatch.

5.Q. And did you go to sleep right away when you got to the boatswain's locker?
A. Yes, sir.

6.Q. Were you asleep at the time of the explosion?
A. Yes, sir.

7.Q. What was the first thing you knew?
A. The first thing I knew I saw a vision of my ship mates - that is the first thing that I could remember and then I (interrupted)

8.Q. Where were you at that time?
A. I was still in the locker somewhere or other. I don't know where or how. Then I started to climb. I happened to look up and saw a light, one of these water lights so I got up there and just happened to look up a little further and saw the water. I then climbed right up and there was a hatch on top of the locker. I reckon it must have been blown partway off. I went up on that and sat there and kept waving the light to the signal tower so they began. When I was waving to the signal tower they were sending lights to some other ship. I sat there a little while longer and the ship kept sinking. When I first got on the hatch the water was just reaching my legs. I was just sitting there and sometime later I saw a couple of boats come by.

9.Q. Where was this hatch that you were sitting on?
A. Boatswain's locker, it was not the hatch of the ship. It must be about 4 by 4. I don't know the exact measurement. Then I hollered and waved my light a bit. They saw my light before it went out and when they pulled in about approximately 10 feet from me they asked me if I could swim and I said I could not. They then told me to stay there and they will come in and get me so they pulled me there and the best that I can remember was the boat and they got me in. That is about all I remember. They told me I had to go back amidships in the boat. That is all I remember.

10.Q. When you left the movies did you notice what was going on aboard ship - any cargo being loaded?
A. They were loading that day but I did not notice whether they were loading or not. They had been in number four hatch and around amidships

but when I was leaving before I went to sleep I heard them - some winch, I don't know what it was. It must have been between the boatswain's locker and amidships.

11.Q. Do you know how much of the ship was out of the water at the time you first got out?
A. Well, the best I could see because one eye was blurred. The best I can remember was about 10 feet that was sticking out. When I left the ship it must have been sinking pretty good then because I was in water around here (indicating) to chest. I was standing up.

12.Q. Was part of the boatswain's locker out of the water when you first got out?
A. The water was just right up to the hatch which was opened up. It was a dream to me. It was about even to the hatch.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1.Q. State your name, rank and present station.
A. John H. Dray, Lt.Commander, USNR, Port Director, Guadalcanal, B.S.I.

2.Q. Do you know where the SERPENS was anchored on 29 January 1945?
A. The SERPENS was anchored in berth 24 as shown on HO Field Chart No. 1009.

3.Q. Will you tell us the state of weather on that night at about 2300?
A. The wind was light, easterly. Sea was smooth.

4.Q. Clear sky?
A. Clear sky.

5.Q. Can you tell us what steps the Port Director's Office took after the explosion, particularly insofar as the boats were concerned?
A. The boats that were in operation were sent out and all other available boats were manned as soon as possible and sent to sea. We had no telephone communications because they were out.

6.Q. Would you say there were about 12 boats sent out?
A. Approximately.

7.Q. About what time did you arrive down at the Port Director's Office?
A. Approximately 2330.

Examined by the court:

8.Q. You are responsible for assigning berths to incoming ships to Guadalcanal?
A. I am.

9.Q. And are you satisfied that the SERPENS was in the berth assigned to her?

A. Yes.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The court then at 4:30 p.m. adjourned until 10 a.m., 3 February 1945.

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FIFTH DAY

U. S. NAVAL ADVANCED BASE,
GUADALCANAL, BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS,
Saturday, February 3, 1945.

The court met at 10 a.m.

Present:
Lieutenant Commander Audrey A. Scott, U. S. Coast Guard Reserve,
Lieutenant Commander John O. Vaughn, Medical Corps, U. S. Naval Reserve, and
Lieutenant Dwight P. Colburn, S(O), U. S. Naval Reserve, members, and
Lieutenant (junior grade) Nathaniel H. Willis, U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, judge advocate;
Robert R. Mitchell, chief yeoman, acting, U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, reporter.
Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U. S. Coast Guard, interested party, and his counsel.

The judge advocate stated that the record of the proceedings of the previous days was not ready. The court decided to postpone the reading of this until such time as it shall be reported ready and in the meantime to proceed with the inquiry.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

The court announced that it would adjourn to the Army beach at Lunga, Guadalcanal, B.S.I.

All the members, the judge advocate, and the interested party and his counsel assembled at Army beach, Lunga, Guadalcanal, B.S.I. and witnessed a demonstration of depth bombs being hoisted and lowered on pallet boards in cargo nets in the manner in which they were loaded aboard U.S.S. Serpens.

All the members, the judge advocate, and the interested party and his counsel returned to the regular place of meeting where the court reassembled.

The court then, at 11:30 a.m., took a recess until 1 p.m., at which time it reconvened.

Present: All the members, the judge advocate, the reporter, and the interested party and his counsel.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness previously called by the judge advocate entered, and was informed that his oath was still binding.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. Mr. Harrington, are you the same Lieutenant Harrington who testified here before?

A. I am.

2. Q. Have you, since that time had a chance to check the remaining depth bombs in your dump for identification?

A. I have.

3. Q. Will you give us the marks that you found on those bombs?

A. I checked 36 bombs all together and had them turned over so that we could read the markings on them. Some of them were badly faded, but we read them the best we could. One group was marked 350 pounds, Aircraft Depth Bomb, TPX-2, MK 54 U.S.P. Co. Manufacture Insp. A.L. DGS, Contract No. N. Ord 4575, Loading Date 6/44, Bu Ord. Dr. No. 394181, 2 Boosters MK 1.

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Some of this group had 5/44 as a loading date. The other group was marked 350 pounds Aircraft Depth Bomb, TPX-2 Mark 54, Rex Mfg. Co. GHB DjM, Contr. No. N Ord 4394, Loading date 4/44, Bu. Ord. Dr. No. 394181, Code No. 102710-A. Some bombs in this group had Insp. E. L. W. and one had NAD/MCA Insp. E. L.W. Other loading dates on this group were 3/44, 5/44, 6/44 and 7/44.

4. Q. Will you also give us the markings on those fuzes now ashore that were in the same stacks as those loaded aboard the Serpens?

A. One group was marked AN MK 230 Mod #3, Lot 18 1943, Reo Motors, Loaded at NOP MA BM, Net wt. 14 pounds. Gross wt. 18.55 pounds, Con't. N Ord No. 3437, Insp. A.L. There were also lots 12, 25 and 22. The other group was marked as follows: AN MK 230 Mod 4, Lot 6 1944, O Type gasket, Aldon Products Co., Contract N Ord 4688 Insp AB, Loaded NOP M RP. There was also lot 7.

5. Q. It has come to my attention that these aerial bombs have provisions for two fuzes, one in the nose and one in the tail?

A. Yes.

6. Q. I believe that these fuzes that you designated were tail fuzes. It is also my understanding that usually both sets of fuzes are shipped along with the aerial depth bombs. Do you know whether or not any of the nose fuzes were shipped this time or not?

A. There are no nose fuzes shipped from our company. Nose fuzes usually are point detonator instead of hydrostatic.

7. Q. Do you know on what ship these bombs arrived on this island?

A. S. S. E. A. Burnett.

8. Q. Do you know when it arrived?

A. My nearest estimate would be four months ago.

Examined by the court:

9. Q. Did you observe any shipping orders on either the bombs or the boxes of fuzes?

A. That came in?

10. Q. On these that remain that were not loaded on the Serpens?

A. No, I can't say that I did.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

11. Q. Was there at any time to your knowledge any question raised as to the stability of these bombs or of the fuzes?

A. No, no question to my mind came up to the stability. I knew they were harder to handle than the other type TNT bombs so we were taking a little more precautions with them. Outside of that I did not have any information as to stability.

12. Q. So as far as you knew there was no question of the stability of this particular group of bombs?

A. That is right.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, and was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Samuel D. Kusabs, commanding officer of Q-400, lieutenant, Royal New Zealand Voluntary Reserve.

2. Q. Was your ship at anchor at Guadalcanal on the night of 29 January 1945?

A. Yes sir.

3. Q. Did she sustain any damage as a result of the explosion?

A. She sustained minor damage from shrapnel, four pieces of which penetrated the deck and other pieces damaged deck fittings without actually penetrating.

4. Q. How large were the holes made by the four pieces?

A. Three of the holes were four inches square. One hole was approximately eighteen inches by three inches. It was caused by a piece of pipe about that length.

5. Q. The damage to the fittings that you mentioned were those other than navigational instruments?

A. None of the navigation instruments were damaged nor the engines or anything to do with the running of the ship except one hole aft penetrated the deck also the port wing fuel tank and a certain amount of gasoline escaped into the bilges.

6. Q. You had no fires?

A. No fires at all.

7. Q. Were any of your personnel aboard ship injured in any way?

A. None of the personnel aboard ship were injured in any way.

Examined by the court:

8. Q. Has the damage to the ship been corrected by the personnel of your ship?

A. No sir, they require services of the base, the staff.

9. Q. Have you gone into that matter to have the repairs done?

A. Yes, at present the ship is at the Russels being repaired.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

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The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A member of the court was called as a witness by the judge advocate and was duly sworn.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Dwight P. Colburn, lieutenant, U.S.Naval Reserve, ammunition officer on the staff, CNB SoSols.

2. Q. Have you examined any of the depth bombs from the dump from which the bombs were taken that were loaded aboard the U.S.S. Serpens?

A. I have.

3. Q. Did you find any markings thereon other than those which have been testified to by Lieutenant Harrington?

A. I did.

4. Q. Will you state what they were?

A. In addition to those already reported I found the following markings: Bureau of Ordnance Shipping Order No. 38665 covering shipment from McAllister to Hawthorne. Also Bureau of Ordnance Shipping Order No. 96065 covering shipment Hawthorne to Bevi 51. These markings were on the bombs.

5. Q. Did you ever examine any of the fuzes?

A. No.

6. Q. Have you made any studies during the last six months of temperatures that are reached in the direct sun on this island?

A. I have.

7. Q. Will you explain just what those experiments were and what your results were?

A. For my own information I made tests of the temperature of the stowage condition on this island when ammunition is exposed to the direct rays of the sun in the open. A standard maximum and minimum thermometer was placed in an empty powder cartridge tank and the cover was sealed in the regular way. This was left in the sun as if it were the top tier of any open stow. The maximum, minimum temperatures were observed for a period of about seven days during July 1944 and about seven days in December 1944. The readings of the maximum temperatures were from 113 degrees to 119 degrees with one reading on a very hot day of 132 degrees in December. Minimum readings were from 72 degrees to 75 degrees each day. This means there was a daily variation of about 40 degrees.

8. Q. The maximum and minimum temperatures that you have mentioned were approximately the same during both July and December, is that correct?

A. That is correct.

9. Q. During the course of your examination and inspection of the bombs that were to have been loaded aboard the U.S.S. Serpens, did you notice their condition?

A. I did.

10. Q. Will you tell us just what you found?

A. On the morning of January 30 at about 0900 I examined the bombs not yet loaded on the Serpens at Number 2 Fighter Field. I also examined three dukw loads of bombs which were returned there at the time from the beach. There were three stows of bombs. All were in good condition. There were no signs of any damage, no dents, no corrosion. All were well painted and paint chipped from the bombs was negligible. No bombs were fuzed. All had fuze seats plugged. Plugs were in each fuze pocket, hand tight. At this time I removed the plugs from several bombs both nose and tail and found the boosters were undamaged and were in good position. The boosters were held in position by a cardboard distance piece and in each fuze pocket was placed a proper ordnance handling instruction. I could find no leaking bombs. None with any fuzes, none with fumes or gas escaping it. I could find no local heating other than the heat caused by the sun's rays.

11. Q. The revised proposed loading plan introduced as "Exhibit 3" indicates that there were to be 70 drums of FS smoke loaded aboard the U.S.S. Serpens, do you know whether or not those drums were so loaded?

A. On the morning following the explosion I went to the beach master at Lunga beach and was informed that the 70 FS drums had not been loaded but were over at Lunga beach.

12. Q. Did you see those drums yourself?

A. Yes. I found the full count of 70 FS drums still on the beach.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

13. Q. Mr. Colburn are you familiar with the characteristics of various explosions, that is the characteristics of the explosions of various explosive substances?

A. I am familiar with some of the general characteristics of an explosion but I am not familiar with the differences in explosions between different types of explosives.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness resumed his seat as a member.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Robert W. Reaves, lieutenant (junior grade), (CEC), U. S. Naval Reserve, stationed at Public Works Department, Guadalcanal, and am also Navy Fire Marshall.

2. Q. Have you made an inspection of the damage done to naval installations on this island by the explosion of the Serpens?

A. Yes.

3. Q. Can you tell us in general what the damage was?

A. Well, the principal damage has been to arch type buildings, that is the trans steel wire house and trans steel hut commonly known as the quonset hut. The large single item of damage was the damage done to those warehouses in the vicinity of the beach areas, post office, BRU, NLFED, BORU. The remaining damage is primarily damage to screening and broken glass, in some places communication lines, power wires and generally screens and panels of prefabricated buildings. I have contacted all of the naval units on the beach and the estimate that I have prepared is based on that and my personal observations and any information I obtained.

4. Q. Will you tell us what that estimate is?

A. Well, the labor estimate was based on man hours expended at each unit. That is as a total of all the units for instance labor was furnished by CBMU and the total on that is approximately $3000 for labor cost, based on the basis of eighty cents an hour. We have used that as a figure of estimating labor costs using enlisted personnel. The estimated material damaged in my estimate would be $900. These are round figures. I am not trying to arrive at an absolute figure because it is absolutely impossible to do. The next would be in addition to the labor, in the work there has been a certain amount of equipment in the way of trucks, winches and various other welding equipment that was required in connection with the rehabilitation of these buildings and that has been estimated on an hourly cost basis of $5 an hour, total of $840. The total estimate monetary loss would be $4740.

5. Q. You also stated that you were Naval Fire Marshall, will you tell us what steps you took or were able to take on the night of the explosion?

A. That is right. This fire marshall arrangement, it is not restricted to any service. The Army marshall is an Army captain and the next senior officer is automatically senior assistant for all island protection no matter what branch of the service you belong to, and that happens to be me. At the time the explosion occurred my first conscious movement that I made was to grab a telephone and phone Island Fire Headquarters, and, having been able to see the approximate location of the explosion, it was my intention in case no one else directed the equipment to the nearest point of embarkation to direct certain facilities to be sent to Lunga beach. When I finally raised our local switch board operator he could not get any outside connections because of the disruption of the service, so I put my trousers and shoes on and immediately proceeded to Army Lunga beach. The reason I did not go to fire headquarters was that I had observed certain pieces of fire equipment on the highway coming so there was no reason to go there. Our plan of procedure in the event there had been any evidence of anything burning at the time we arrived there, is to employ whatever LCTs or any other type of floating equipment to embark fire trucks and proceed on to the scene of the fire. When we arrived at Army Lunga, there was no evidence of any fire burning whatever. It was just this ball of smoke hanging over the water in that vicinity. The only thing we could do was to stand by and assign some equipment to the vicinity of Navy Port Director in the event fire should break out aboard any vessels lying off there or any local installations because there was a possibility that some of those hot fragments might ignite some buildings. Beyond that there was nothing else we could do.

6. Q. Also tell the court what you experienced at the time of the explosion.

A. Sunday morning I was lying in my bunk. I would say about 11:15 as nearly as I can remember. We had one of these little earthquakes which are quite common here. I started reading and let it pass off. I remember thinking that one of these days we might have one that was quite severe.

So on the night of this explosion my first thought when I was awakened was that we really had one of those earthquakes that we had the day before we had the small one. I thought it was undoubtedly a major earthquake or something of that order.

7. Q. Do you know what it was that actually awakened you?

A. It was undoubtedly the shock. I think it was the concussion of the blast because the first thing I realized was that my quarters were shaking very violently and whether or not I was thrown out of bed or jumped out of bed I don't know because I was sound asleep. The next thing I realized of course as soon as I opened my eyes was that it was fire in connection with this explosion. My quarters are right at this side of the stage over there (indicating). I had a very good view of the water and I could see this great flare down at the water. At the time that I was on my feet as I told you before, I was trying to telephone the Fire Department. I was looking toward the water and while I was trying to telephone at that time I noticed another terrific eruption of flying debris or burning particles of some sort because articles flying through the air were of fragmentary form and hot enough and burning. After that of course as soon as those fragments settled I had in the meanwhile left the area and gone on toward Lunga beach so I saw nothing beyond that other than a column of smoke which I estimated probably being four to six thousand feet in height. That would be my guess.

8. Q. In your estimation, was there one or two explosions?

A. I would say two very definite explosions from my observations. The first one to my mind was the one which awakened me and the fact that the whole horizon over there was aglow. At the time I first realized what was happening and then while I was trying to telephone the second one occurred. That is my impression. Of course under the more or less excited condition of anyone being there it might be possible that it was the concussion from the first one and it might have been one explosion and the concussion reached that point and the sound may have come later, but I think there were two definite distinct explosions.

9. Q. Did the flame remain the same color approximately while you were watching it?

A. No, I would say not. My first view of the thing was general illumination of a more or less solid color as though it were a solid illumination. In the second blast which I noticed there were various shades of burning particles. Some seemed redder than others and larger fragments than others.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

10. Q. Do you know whether or not the Island Fire Marshall maintains fire look outs over the ships in the harbor?

A. Not to my knowledge. The only arrangement we have for fire protection over ships in the harbor is this that we do have a very definite understanding among all the personnel of the Fire Department in positions of authority as to what procedure would be followed in the event there is a fire aboard ship either tied up at the piers or in the harbor. That, if in the opinion of the authority that is present it is necessary to send fire fighting facilities out, they procure the transportation from the Navy boat pool or as a matter of fact from any vessels that are available and load the first trucks on the vessels and proceed to the fire. Beyond that we have no arrangements.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

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The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A member of the court was called as a witness by the judge advocate and was duly sworn.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. John O. Vaughn, lieutenant commander, Medical Corps, U. S. Naval Reserve, senior medical officer, Dispensary, Naval Base, Guadalcanal.

2. Q. Were you present on Guadalcanal on the night of 29 January 1945?

A. I was.

3. Q. Will you tell the court what steps were taken by the medical department of the base and Fleet Hospital, if you know, in regard to the explosion aboard the Serpens?

A. The entire medical department of the dispensary comprising two medical officers, one dental officer and twenty-six hospital corpsmen was alerted immediately and two ambulances with crews and first aid equipment were dispatched at once to Navy Lunga. Within a very few moments ambulances appeared at both Navy and Army Lunga from Fleet Hospital 108 and from various Army station hospitals.

4. Q. Will you explain whether or not there were any particular problems that arose from the explosion?

A. It can be stated that there was at all times an ample supply of medical equipment and personnel and that at no time were the facilities overtaxed. I might add that a few small units in the neighborhood such as Casu 41 dispatched their entire medical department to our dispensary without formal notification, insofar as I know. From the medical standpoint the experience is remarkable in that the number and type of casualties is much fewer and much less severe than one anticipated in theory from a catastrophe of this size. Such casualties as there were were adequately treated without exception and at no time did we encounter any problems with which we could not cope, but none of the medical officers in this area can account for such a small number of casualties on any basis other than apparently good fortune.

5. Q. Were the injuries of any certain type?

A. No, the only remarkable fact about the type of casualties is the absence of severe burns. Otherwise they represented all types of injuries.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness resumed his seat as a member.

Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U. S. Coast Guard, was recalled as a witness by the judge advocate, and was informed that his previous oath was still binding.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. Do you have a list of all personnel that were attached to the ship at the time of the explosion?

A. I have here two lists which between them show all of the personnel. One the casualties and the other the survivor list.

2. Q. Will you produce the list of the casualties?

A. Yes, here it is.

The judge advocate offered in evidence said casualty list, submitted same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, it was so received, and is appended marked "Exhibit 10(1)" through "Exhibit 10(10)".

3. Q. How many persons are listed on that casualty list?

A. One hundred and ninety-six.

4. Q. Does that include both officers and men?

A. It does.

5. Q. Have the bodies of all those men been recovered and identified?

A. No, there have been two bodies, those of Michael L. Cammarta, seaman second class, 685177 and Richard O. Kirchner, seaman first class, 605312, were identified, and many other bodies have been recovered but identification was impossible.

6. Q. You also have the list of the survivors?

A. Yes, I have.

7. Q. Will you produce that?

A. Yes, here it is.

The judge advocate offered in evidence said list of survivors, submitted same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, it was so received, and is appended marked "Exhibit 11".

8. Q. Were any of the persons who are survivors of the U.S.S. Serpens injured at the time of the explosion?

A. There were two, Kemp, Kelsey K., seaman first class, 599022, who suffered lacerations about the face, broken nose and lacerations of the leg and Kennedy, George S., seaman second class, 587983, suffered a broken collar bone.

9. Q. Will you explain the location of the boatswain's locker in relation to the number one hold?

A. The boatswain's locker in the U.S.S. Serpens was located in the bow of the ship. The very first compartment forward. There was, between the boatswain's locker and number one hold a very shallow compartment approximately five feet in length. That length being along the center line of the ship which was known as an auxiliary radio room.

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10. Q. The boatswain's locker is located on the deck is that correct?

A. No, the boatswain's locker is located below the main deck. It is the first compartment in the eyes of the ship.

11. Q. Can you tell what ship's ammunition there was aboard the ship at the time?

A. There was three inch common, three inch anti-aircraft and three inch star shell. There was twenty millimeter explosives common and tracer and five inch anti-aircraft.

12. Q. Do you have any idea of the quantity of those types of ammunition?

A. I would hesitate to make any estimate now. However, there were several hundred rounds of three inch, of five inch, and I believe 20,000 rounds of twenty millimeter. There was in addition various small arms ammunition and pyrotechnic material aboard.

13. Q. Do you know whether or not it was the standard allowance of the ship?

A. I was just going to say that we had drawn our full allowance, our standard allowance by drawing five inch. I believe it was a few days prior to the explosion on the Serpens. I remember drawing the five inch here.

14. Q. Since that time had any of the ammunition been fired?

A. No. No ammunition had been fired since that time. It is a practice to bring our ammunition allowance up to the standard allowance each time we come into port.

15. Q. Will you also explain where the ammunition, the ship's ammunition was kept aboard ship?

A. Three inch ammunition was kept in the magazine located below the three inch gun in number one hold.

16. Q. Explain in what hold five inch ammunition was kept.

A. In the magazine forward of the steering engine room beneath the five inch gun. Twenty millimeter ammunition was kept in the magazine in the same location. Ready ammunition was kept at each gun in ready boxes provided for it.

17. Q. Do you know whether or not the ready boxes contained the full amount of ammunition which they ordinarily hold?

A. The ready boxes were kept filled at all times except in areas where there was no danger of attack such as ship yards, or New Zealand. We removed it there. We removed all the ammunition from the ship, but otherwise the ready boxes were kept filled with common anti-aircraft and star shells and for the anti-aircraft guns, twenty millimeter common and tracers.

18. Q. Will you also tell us what the regulations were aboard the Serpens for officers to obtain permission to leave the vessel while it was in port?

A. The officers obtained permission to leave the vessel as a standard Navy and Coast Guard procedure. Officers junior to the executive officer requested permission of the executive officer to leave the ship. The executive officer would request permission of the commanding officer.

19. Q. Had the executive officer requested your permission to leave the ship on the 29th of January?

A. He did.

20. Q. Were there any rules and regulations put out by you as to the number of officers that were to be aboard ship at one particular time?

A. The officers were divided into two watch groups. That is there were two groups of three watch officers each, who were required to be on board. During cargo handling operations one cargo officer was to be on board.

21. Q. Was there any officer designated as a cargo officer other than Mr. Auble and Mr. Johnson?

A. No, there were none other assigned to cargo duties.

22. Q. In your opinion was Mr. Prance qualified to act as cargo officer in the absence of both Mr. Auble and Mr. Johnson?

A. I believe that he could have acted as cargo officer.

23. Q. It is your opinion that he would have been competent enough to fill that position?

A. I think so. Mr. Prance was the first lieutenant of the ship and being responsible for the rigging of the ship came in contact with cargo handling operations a great deal and I know that he observed cargo handling a great deal.

24. Q. Has any of the ship's equipment or supplies been recovered?

A. None to my knowledge except three pieces of equipment which were ashore at the time of the explosion which consisted of one quarter ton four by four recon car, one twenty-eight foot motor whale boat and one landing craft vehicle, the last named being under repair at the time of the explosion.

Examined by the court:

25. Q. Would any of the ship's magazines or ready boxes have been opened at the time of the explosion?

A. Could they have been opened?

26. Q. Yes?

A. It would have been possible for them to have been opened but I do not believe they were.

27. Q. No orders were given for them to open the boxes?

A. None whatsoever.

Examined by the judge advocate:

28. Q. Were gun drills ever held on anyone's order other than your own?

A. Yes. Gun drills were held at any time when the division officer would see fit and on the approach of any plane when underway. These drills were when we were underway. They were held without any orders whatsoever. It was a standard order that they were to exercise. However, that did not require the opening of ready boxes.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness resumed his seat as an interested party.

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A witness called by the judge advocate entered, and was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. Raymond P. Briscoe, able seaman, gunner rate, Royal New Zealand Navy, attached to ML 2407.

2. Q. Where was your ship at the time of the explosion of the Serpens on the 29th of January?

A. She was down anchored at the Tui Camp, not very far from Koli.

3. Q. Do you know what the section of beach is called that is along there? Is it Tenaru beach?

A. I could not say, sir. It is not very far from Koli Point.

4. Q. Toward Koli Point?

A. Yes sir.

5. Q. Where were you at the time you first saw any sign of an explosion from this direction?

A. When I first saw the explosion I just came up from aft. I was just about to enter it in the log and that is when I saw a light and thought it was someone flashing, calling the ship.

6. Q. What color light was it?

A. White.

7. Q. Where were you at that time?

A. I was in the wheel house writing the log.

8. Q. Is the wheel house open?

A. It is all open.

9. Q. What did you do when you first saw this white light?

A. As soon as I saw the light I thought it was somebody flashing and went to the top of the bridge.

10. Q. What did you see then?

A. I looked down and when I saw the light again it was just one big ball of fire.

11. Q. What color was the flame then?

A. It was a sort of red and white mixed and there was flares that seemed to be shooting up at both sides of the ship.

12. Q. What happened next?

A. It seemed like five minutes before I heard any explosion between the time when I first saw the light and heard the explosion. I was thinking to call the CO as we were supposed to do when we are in doubt. I just stepped down off the bridge and that is when the explosion took place and I looked and saw my CO and the first lieutenant standing up by the bandstand.

13. Q. Could you tell from what part of the ship this first white light came or seemed to come from?

A. I cannot say. They were too far away.

14. Q. Did you hear one explosion only, or two?

A. Just the one explosion. As soon as I heard the explosion, smoke came out from the direction of the ship. We were not sure it was a ship. We took our bearings, we were taking our bearings off the ship which was due West from where we were anchored.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

15. Q. You said, I believe, that you saw a white light?

A. Yes sir.

16. Q. And then a red light, is that correct?

A. No, I saw a white light when I first saw it. When I got to the bridge I saw a red and white mixed.

17. Q. Did the white light appear as a flash?

A. No, just like a little ball as though someone was flashing with a lamp. Then I saw a big light.

18. Q. Did the big light come on as a flare or did it gradually grow up?

A. It came up and got bigger and bigger before the explosion.

19. Q. When you first noticed the red light was it small like the white light or big?

A. It was bigger, sir. It was not exactly a red light. It was sort of a red and white mixed together.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, and was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Fred L. Gifford, first lieutenant, TC, Island Command.

2. Q. What are your duties here?

A. Beachmaster, Lunga Beach.

3. Q. Were you on duty at Lunga Beach on the night of 29 January?

A. I was on duty until eleven o'clock.

4. Q. What time had you gone on duty?

A. Three o'clock in the afternoon.

5. Q. During that time had you received orders to load a barge with depth bombs to send out to the U.S.S. Serpens?

A. I did.

6. Q. Will you explain to the court the type of barge that was used and how the depth bombs were loaded and arranged?

A. It was a self-propelled one hundred ton barge. The bombs were loaded on beginning forward to the propulsion unit laid crosswise and blocked. The barge was nowhere near loaded to capacity.

7. Q. Were the bombs loaded on the barge in the same manner in which they were loaded on the dukws, that is were they on the pallet boards?

A. They were not. We did not have the pallet boards.

8. Q. Were they placed on nets?

A. No sir. They were placed flat on the barge, in rows, clear across the barge and the next row beginning after that.

9. Q. Was there more than one layer of bombs?

A. No, there was not even one layer over the deck.

10. Q. Was each individual bomb blocked beginning in the back and finished off so they would not move?

A. They were not blocked individually. A block was laid across the back end, they were laid up against that and they were wedged in from the front one when completed.

11. Q. Was there any blocking of any kind along the side of the barge?

A. I don't know that there were.

12. Q. How many men went out on the barge?

A. To the best of my knowledge only the two coxswains from the barge people.

13. Q. Had you issued any instructions to them concerning the manner in which the bombs were to be handled when they got alongside?

A. They do not handle bombs. They tie up the barge and stay with it until it is empty and bring it back. They in no way handle cargo.

14. Q. Do you know who was to handle the bombs?

A. The 492 Port Battalion. They were to handle the bombs.

15. Q. They were to handle the bombs aboard the barges as well as the ship?

A. Yes sir.

16. Q. Do you know how many bombs were placed on the barge?

A. I don't know exactly how many bombs were on because that is a thing that was of minor importance to me except for the physical count. In other words as soon as the ship, you know the ship was double rigged. They were working number four hatch from both sides. When I got my orders from ComCargo, Army Port to load a barge, and as soon as the ship called for the baggage which was up in the storage shed the dukws were to pick up the baggage and the rest were to continue to work the one side of the hatch, number four. The barge was to go to the other side of hatch number four and proceed to discharge bombs to the ship. The barge was used to fill in for the lack of dukws. The remaining dukws were to finish.

17. Q. Are you referring now to the number of bombs that were on the beach?

A. Yes, and on the trucks waiting to come on the beach.

18. Q. The total number of bombs to be loaded aboard ship?

A. We were nearing the completion line.

19. Q. Do you know what time the barge left the beach?

A. I cannot state the time. I did not log that. It is on record at the Harbor Craft, Dispatcher's Office. At the time it left the beach, I say it should be somewhere in the neighborhood of eight thirty. I would not say definitely but somewhere in that neighborhood.

20. Q. Did the coxswains have instructions as to which side of the Serpens they were to go to?

A. The only instructions we were able to issue to them since the ship did not tell us which side they were rigging, barges and dukws don't operate together. I told them to go to the opposite of number four, that number one was rigged on so that dukws would work on one side of the ship and barges the other. The ship knew the barge was coming and they were rigging for it.

21. Q. Could there be any way of finding out how many bombs were loaded on this barge?

A. The checkers might have it on their records at the Cargo Control Office. I cannot tell you.

22. Q. Had the barge returned to the beach at the time you went off duty?

A. No, I was still on the beach when the explosion came.

23. Q. The barge did not return?

A. It has not returned yet.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

24. Q. How were these bombs transferred from the shore to the barge?

A. They came from the dump in the trucks and the bombs were in nets. They were lifted by crane from the trucks to the barge and placed on the barge.

25. Q. Were there pallet boards in the net?

A. I cannot recall that. I have heard that there were not, but I thought they had pallet boards, I don't know for sure. I had a good many other operations to look after.

26. Q. As I recall your testimony was to the effect that the bombs were blocked along the back of the barge, that is next to the propulsion unit?

A. That is right.

27. Q. Then they were also wedged from the front?

A. That is right, to keep them from rolling back and forth across the barge.

28. Q. I think also your testimony was that you did not recall whether or not they were wedged in from the side?

A. I don't know whether they were wedged in from the side or not. It is not normally necessary because the barge has a flange of steel rising there, just a small amount. Normally we never block them from the sides when they lay crossways. If they are not blocked, they would not slide but roll the other way.

29. Q. The bombs were laid crossways?

A. That is right, crossways on the barge.

30. Q. There was no dunnage of any kind used?

A. I did not use dunnage underneath the bombs. It has never been a normal procedure, and I did not think it was necessary. I don't know whether it was necessary or not.

31. Q. Did you have any or do you have any instructions issued to you for the handling of explosives?

A. Yes, we have memos on them, Port orders and so forth. Every precaution possible is taken. An ordnance officer is present at the beach when handling ammunition. Definite instructions were issued to the men that they were not handling ordinary TNT. More instructions were put out that they were not to drop it or mishandle it any way. We used strictly the best of cargo nets and pallet boards. There were three new pallet boards and nets on this barge for the ship to work with and according to the skipper's instructions three bombs to a net only were to be hoisted. The nets were strictly fourteen by fourteen instead of a ten by ten net. A ten by ten did not satisfy the skipper so we used the fourteen by fourteen which held the bombs in so that they would not roll out.

32. Q. I take it that the deck of the barge was ordinary sheet metal?

A. Ordinary barge sections, pontoon barges, yes sir.

Examined by the court:

33. Q. Was that the first time since you started to load the Serpens that bombs had been sent out on a barge in that condition?

A. If you will remove that word "condition" I will say that that is the first time that a barge was used to that ship.

34. Q. Did I understand you to say that the bombs were stowed from fore to aft?

A. No, you did not. They were stowed from aft forward.

SIXTH DAY

U.S. Naval Advanced Base,
Guadalcanal, B.S.I.
Monday, February 5, 1945.

The court met at 1:30 p.m.

Present:
Lieutenant Commander Audry A. Scott, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve,
Lieutenant Commander John O. Vaughn, Medical Corps, U.S. Naval Reserve, and
Lieutenant Dwight P. Colburn, S(O), U.S. Naval Reserve, members, and
Lieutenant (junior grade) Nathaniel H. Willis, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, judge advocate.
Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U.S. Coast Guard, interested party, and his counsel.

The record of proceedings of the first, second and third days of the inquiry was read and approved.

The judge advocate stated that the record of the proceedings of the fourth and fifth days was not ready. The court decided to postpone the reading of this until such time as it shall be reported ready and in the meantime to proceed with the inquiry.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

The court then, at 4:15 p.m., adjourned until 9:30 a.m., February 6, 1945.

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35. Q. But they were rolled on in this position. When they were stowed the ends of the bombs were pointing fore and aft?

A. I said they were stowed crosswise.

36. Q. Will you illustrate that please?

A. Where is your propulsion unit?

37. Q. This is the length of the barge (indicating). This is aft (indicating). This is crosswise?

A. They were stowed crosswise beginning with the first section with the propulsion unit. It was timbered up here keeping them from rolling back. The bombs were laid in there and about halfway up the deck was the end of the load with a large platform forward to work from.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

Major Ohio Knox, AUS, was recalled by the judge advocate as a witness and was informed that his previous oath was still binding.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. There has been testimony given here that the bombs, the depth bombs sent out on the barge were not loaded on the pallet boards and nets at the time they were sent out. They were loaded directly on to the barge and the pallet boards and nets were also sent along, three I believe. Did you issue any instructions to your men as to how those bombs were to have been handled when they reached the side of the ship?

A. No.

2. Q. Did you know in what manner they were to be taken out to the ship?

A. I knew that a barge was to be used and they were to be on the barge. I assumed they were to be left in the net and on the pallet board and if not certainly the officer on duty out there who started the ship on the 24th would see to it that it came on to the ship in proper order.

3. Q. When did you learn that the barge was to be used?

A. About three o'clock that afternoon.

4. Q. I believe that was prior to the time ~~at~~ which Lieutenant McGrath and his section went on duty aboard ship?

A. That is correct.

5. Q. Was he also notified that the barge was to be used?

A. Lieutenant McGrath was present when Captain McCain and myself were discussing about the baggage and at that time Captain McCain announced that he would have one barge and ten dukws. So Lieutenant McGrath would have had knowledge that this barge was coming out.

6. Q. Did you ever receive orders from Island Command or elsewhere that only dukws were to be used in the loading of the ammunition?

A. No sir.

7. Q. Who is in charge of this barge?

A. That would come under this lieutenant, I can't recall his name now. It is out of the Harbor Craft Company.

8. Q. Do you know of other instances where barges have been used to transport ammunition out to the ship?

A. Yes.

9. Q. Do you know whether it was customary to put dunnage between the barge and the ammunition?

A. What do you mean, stow it like we do in the ships?

10. Q. Yes, to cover the steel deck of the barge with dunnage?

A. No.

11. Q. Do you recall what type of ammunition it was that was transported in that manner?

A. Some nineties, most of it was boxed goods and big bombs. By that I mean like small arms, fifties, fins, and so forth.

12. Q. What was your understanding as to the personnel that was to work the ammunition on the barge itself?

A. The personnel which would probably work it at the ship's side would be our men.

13. Q. Did you have adequate number of men aboard the ship at that time to take on that extra duty?

A. Yes, because our sections normally are broken down to give us four men on the dock or barge whatever the case may be. You see we carried seventeen men to our section which allows us eight men in the hold, four men on the dukw or barge, two winch operators, a signal man or hatch tender whatever you want to call him, and one sergeant in charge and a corporal.

14. Q. Well, under the rigging that was used in number four hold aboard ship, I believe you required at least two extra signal men, is that correct?

A. I don't know if that is a fact but I would say if we did have to have two extra signal men our extra corporal that we had in the section could act as signal man beside hatch tender or signal man and still would not effect our working personnel.

15. Q. Are you familiar with the so-called double rigging that was used in number four hatch during the latter part of the loading?

A. Only insofar as I observed it at noon of the 29th.

16. Q. I believe there was testimony before that there were four men used to direct the operations of the winches, the men on each side of the ship and the men on each side of the hatch. If that were the case would that still leave you ample men to handle the ammunition aboard the barge?

A. Oh yes, because we had two sections or a total of thirty-four men on that one hatch.

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None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The court then, at 3:55 p.m., adjourned until 9:30 a.m., February 5, 1945.

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SEVENTH DAY

U.S. Naval Advanced Base,
Guadalcanal, B.S.I.
Tuesday, February 7, 1945.

The court met at 9:30 a.m.

Present:
Lieutenant Commander Audry A. Scott, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve,
Lieutenant Commander John C. Vaughn, Medical Corps, U.S.Naval Reserve, and
Lieutenant Dwight P. Colburn, S(O), U.S. Naval Reserve, members, and
Lieutenant (junior grade) Nathaniel H. Willis, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, judge advocate;
Robert R. Mitchell, chief yeoman, acting, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, reporter.
Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U.S. Coast Guard, interested party and his counsel.

The record of proceedings of the fourth, fifth and sixth days of the inquiry was read and approved.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Joseph F. DeMay, Captain, TC, Administrative Officer, Army Port APO 709.

2. Q. Captain, in your official capacity have you gathered official information concerning the army personnel that was lost as a result of the explosion?

A. I have.

3. Q. Do you have that with you?

A. I do.

4. Q. Does this report cover all the personnel that were known to be in the vicinity that night and is this to the best of your knowledge a list of all those personnel?

A. Yes, it is a copy of the letter I submitted to the Commanding General of the Island.

Judge advocate offered said report in evidence, submitted same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended and marked "12(1), 12(2) and 12(3)".

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

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A. Edwin J. Hottinger, Captain, Ordnance Dept. I am assigned to Headquarters, South Pacific Base Command, A.P.O. 709. I am on a special mission from the states for the examination and renovation of ordnance ammunition.

2. Q. Captain, have you had experience either in the army or civilian life with explosives?

A. I was employed by the Picatinny Arsenal, Technical Group and designed and developed and tested ammunition for approximately 10 years. And after having received a commission in the army, I was back and had charge of the loading department in the same arsenal.

3. Q. Have you ever done any work for either the Army or Navy Bureau of Ordinance or both of them?

A. Yes.

4. Q. What type of work have you done for them?

A. Development of new ammunition, setting up of lines, testing and coordination between the two units both at Picatinny and at Washington, D.C.

5. Q. Captain, have you had any experience with explosions?

A. I have witnessed somewhere in the neighborhood of 6 or 7 explosions and have been in a couple of myself, minor ones.

6. Q. Captain, are there any characteristics that are common to explosions in general, whether or not they are of different types of explosives?

A. The explosives starting with black powder being the lowest and ranging up to fulminate of mercury range in sensitivety rate of detonation and base of detonation as the order of the explosive increases. By that I mean black powder and smokless powder are considered low explosives because their detonating or burning rates are a few meters per second going up to lead azide or fulminate of mercury which approach a detonating rate of 10,000 meters per second, and mixtures of explosives or other explosives range to anything you want between them. Usually sensitivety and brisance effect goes up as the detonating rate goes up.

7. Q. Does a blast wave from an explosion travel faster than a sound wave?

A. Yes, sir. Sound is approximately 1100 feet per second where high explosives would be anywhere from 6000 to 10,000 meters per second.

8. Q. Do both blast and sound waves travel at different speed through different media, that is through ground and water?

A. That is correct.

9. Q. Do you know through which they would travel the fastest?

A. Well the more dense the material the faster it would be transmitted. In other words they would travel through water faster than air.

10. Q. Would it travel through ground faster than air?

A. Yes.

11. Q. In other words a person a mile away from the explosion would feel the explosion in the ground sooner than he would hear it?

A. Definitely.

12. Q. Do you know whether or not it is a common experience for people hearing explosions to think there are two, when there is actually but one because of the blast wave and the sound wave?

A. In the past or recently in the Sun Valley Fire we had here at Guadalcanal, I was on the Court of Inquiry and we had stories, conflicting stories as to the number of explosions and the time there was between them. You usually get conflicting stories on something like that.

13. Q. To what do you attribute that?

A. I don't think I could answer that question.

14. Q. Is it possible to tell from the color of flame which arises from the explosion, the type of explosive that was in the explosion?

A. If the explosives were close together in nature it would be very difficult but if they were very far apart in nature there would be a decided difference in both the brisance effect and the color of the flame. The lower the order of the explosion, the more red and orange it would be. The higher the order, the more brillant and white.

15. Q. Can you tell us anything about Torpex in that respect?

A. Torpex is one of the newer explosives, it is not a straight explosive but a mechanical mixture of RDX "B", TNT, Aluminum powder and if the RDX was desensitized it would contain a small amount of bees wax. Torpex ranges between PETN or tetryl and TNT as to brisance effect, sensitivety and order of detonation. The order of detonation, I quote from memory having left all my notes back in the States is in the order of 8000 meters per second while TNT is in the order of 6000 meters per second. The blast effect of Torpex probably because of its higher density over TNT is much greater than TNT. Its effect is more noticable under water than above ground because of its being more closely confined. One hundred parts of Torpex are equivilant in brisance effect to one hundred fifty parts of TNT.

16. Q. Would there be any distinguishing color in the flame in the Torpex explosion?

A. Between Torpex and TNT?

17. Q. Yes?

A. That would depend on the concentration and confinement of the explosives involved. The greater they would be confined, the greater the blast effect or the brisance effect would be. It is possible for both TNT and Torpex and Tetryl to burn without any explosion at all but as soon as you get it confined, the intensity increases.

18. Q. Captain, there has been testimony introduced here earlier which might indicate that the first thing seen was a not too large white flame followed immediately by a much larger redish or orange flame. Does that have any significance that you know of?

A. With the report - I heard the second, the loud report. I was on the Island at the time. You mean there were two detonations, two bangs or whatever you might call it?

19. Q. Yes, there has also been testimony to that effect that there were two explosions heard and there has been this other testimony concerning the size and color of the flames that were seen.

A. Torpex could go sympathetically with the previous explosion but if it went sympathetically, I doubt if anyone would be able to distinguish the time lag between the two because of the greater detonation of both the Torpex and the brisance effect needed to detonate the Torpex. As I stated the detonating rate is so rapid in meters per second that anything in a close vicinity, there being such a shortdistance, I would not expect that the time interval would be detected by the human ear. However, the secondary detonation might have been caused by heat rather than by sympathetic detonation, and, Torpex being confined in that case, the pressure would build up quite rapidly, and you would get a secondary detonation from heat.

20. Q. You mean had there been a fire first that might have caused the explosion rather than the explosion first?

A. Or if the first explosion were accompanied by fire. However if the Torpex were initiated by heat rather than by detonating wave, I would expect that the rate of detonation would be lower. I might make a point there of explanation of what I mean by that. Some explosives when you initate them by heat such as Lead Azide form a mercury PETN and will build up to a maximum detonating rate in a very short period of time or a very short column of explosives. Other explosives starting off by heat will not get up to their maximum. In fact I have seen Tetryl, TNT, Amatol and similar explosives start burning and go out rather than detonate.

21. Q. Do you know the stability of Torpex?

A. Again it will be a comparison - it is the only way I have. Torpex would have about the same stability as Tetryl or PETN or similar explosives. There is a slight gas pressure built up by Torpex. I don't know the reason but after that pressure is built up in the case to a certain degree it stops but that does not mean anything as far as stability.

22. Q. What about its sensitivity?

A. On storage you mean? More sensitive after storage?

23. Q. Yes, would storage effect it, particularly storage in the direct sun's rays?

A. No more than any other high explosive.

24. Q. Even though those temperatures ran up as high as 115 degrees fahrenheit?

A. I would not expect too much deterioration even at 115, 120 degrees. We have RDX loaded bombs which is a straight "B" composition in the bomb dumps and I have put my hand on them where it is impossible to hold them from the heat and in opening the fuze wellcup I have seen an indication of any kind of any exidation or break-down of any nitros fumes and Torpex is about 42 percent RDX composition.

25. Q. If the Torpex bombs are stowed five tiers high so that the weight of the upper tiers with the dunnage amounted to about 1600 pounds on thelowest tier, would bombs six hundreths of an inch thick, that is the side wall of the bomb would be crusched.

A. I would not expect it to be. The Torpex is cast loaded and in itself one sixteenth of an inch. I would not expect that height of bombs to crush the lower cases. That is in the stowing of them, I am not counting anything dropping on them or anything like that.

26. Q. Do you know what explosives are used in Japanese war Heads?

A. No, the army artillery ground ammunition, I have had some experience in examining but their naval, I have had nothing to do with at all.

27. Q. Do you have any idea how long a Torpex bomb would have to be subjected to a gasoline fire before it would detonate?

A. It would not be too long a time. The time interval I don't know because it would depend on the condition of the intensity of the flame on the spot but it would not be - I would say it would be in the order of a few minutes. Torpex melts about the same as TNT because that is the main ingredient in casting, that is 80.20 degrees centigrade and TNT itself starts deteriorating with not very much higher. I believe it is 300 degrees which means that a gasoline fire would not take very long to start it and Torpex is more sensitive to heat than is TNT alone. I have seen Torpex burn however, in the open without detonating but the piece was never covered with flames always burning right at the point. It did not have a chance to heat up and cause any deterioration.

28. Q.If one Torpex bomb had exploded, the other night thus setting off all the bombs in the hold at the time, would you expect anyone to hear one or two explosions?

A. I would expect one explosion.

29. Q. Would your answer be the same in case it had been set off by a torpedo?

A. Yes, again I base that answer on detonating rate and the travel of detonating, the speed of the detonating wave.

30. Q.Do you think that a variation of temperature in which these bombs were stored of 40 degrees a day between say 75 degrees and 115 degrees Fahrenheit would effect their sensitivity at all or stability?

A. Over a great period of years I would expect so. By that I mean 15 or 20 years but in 3 or 4 years I would not expect so because we have conducted accellerated tests on all of the explosives including Torpex before they were used even in tests of ammunition at the Aberdeen Proving Ground.

31. Q. Captain, the Serpens was loaded in her number 4 hold with approximately 600 tons of these torpex bombs at the time of the explosion, would you expect if those bombs created the explosion that the explosion would go straight up or what kind of effect would it have - blow out completely?

A. Explosives hanging in air where the medium is the same on all sides, the explosion goes the same in all directions. As that explosive is brought to the ground you get a reflecting wave, you will direct it up and away. However, the forces going in all the directions would be approximately equal. The increase of force of reflection rather than the explosion going one way or another way, the rate of detonation follows the column.

32. Q. What about the flame itself? I suppose it would be forced up by the medium?

A. It would go down and the medium if it is water or is more dense than the other medium would be forced in that direction. That is one reason for mud tapping in dynamiting. If you want the blast to go down, concentrate it down, you would cover it with a mud tap to increase the force of the explosion down rather than have it all be reflected upwards.

Examined by Lt. Commander Stinson:

33. Q. Captain, in case of an under water explosion would the flame travel directly up or would it have a tendency to spread through a fan shape covering a much greater distance than the explosive which created that flame?

A. I have seen spot photographs taken of explosives detonated from various heights above the ground and the reflecting flame tend to come up as you say in a fan.

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34. Q. Under water would that effect be increased or decreased?

A. I would expect that it would be increased because the water could not be compressed down and it would have to be up and away.

35. Q. In comparison what are the colors of the explosions of Torpex and TNT?

A. The Torpex will be slightly brighter than TNT with the same rate of detonation.

36. Q. I mean in the color range, red, white, blue, green and the like?

A. I would expect it to be - right at the point it would be a brilliant white and very close to it would be orange tapering off to red on the outside. That red masks your hardier explosion because of the unburnt particles in the gases going away from the explosion which later burns at a lower rate and will give you the red color.

37. Q. I understand the more pressure that an explosion builds up the greater the explosive rate, is that correct?

A. That is correct.

38. Q. And the greater the explosive rate, the brighter the flame?

A. That is correct.

39. Q. In other words an explosion under water would produce a much greater flame than an explosion in the air?

A. I would expect that, yes.

40. Q. Captain, have you any experience whatsoever with modern torpedoes?

A. No, I have not. My experience has been completely with artillery ammunition and bombs.

41. Q. Thes Japanese shells that you say you have investigated, with what were they loaded?

A. I have seen them loaded with very little Tetryl. However, I have seen some small calibre using Tetryl, nitrostarch, lidite and TNT which is inferior to ours. It would be equal to our grade "B" TNT and there were several other explosives but I don't remember what they were. These long organic names, I don't remember them.

42. Q. Captain, you are familiar with the construction of modern cargo vessels, are you not, their hold spaces?

A. Yes, sir.

43. Q. An explosion inside the hold of a modern cargo vessel of say a liberty ship and you are familiar with those, would that explosion apparently be delayed from any side action by the steel structure of the ship and show up only through the open hatch?

A. If the order of the detonation was low, a steel side would deflect it but if it would a high order, I don't believe that the steel would have enough strength to hold it.

44. Q. Would there be some time regardless of how small for the disintigration of this steel?

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A. Everything takes time and the time that that would take would cause some deflection but I don't think you could notice it by watching it.

45. Q. Would it be possible for low order detonation to be caused by Torpex exploding in a sympathic explosion or in other words explosion caused by the explosion of something else near it?

A. You mean would the Torpex explode sympathetically with some other explosive? 2/4/46

46. Q. No, I mean if some other explosive had gone up and the Torpex exploed from the concussion of the first explosion, could that be a low order detonation or would it necessarily be a high order detonation?

A. What ever the detonating rate that enters it, it may detonate. It could detonate with the same rate of detonation that the other material detonated with which it went sympathetically.

47. Q. Just one point we should clear up. Captain with respect to the possibility of a witness observing two explosions where there was a first explosion there ~~was~~ sympathetic explosion of the remaining bombs, would the fact 2/4/46 that an observer was a half mile or a mile away from the explosion increase the possibility that he would see two explosions rather than one?

A. I don't think that I am qualified to answer that. You mean does distance make any difference to the perception of the second explosion?

48. Q. That is right. In other words if you were farther away from the 2/4/46 explosion would you be more able to separate the two?

A. I would not expect so but it would be possible. I don't know. I would rather not answer that, I am not sure, but I would not expect it. 2/4/46

49. Q. Captain, you say that these explosions and concussions are practically simulataneous with the explosion causing the first?

A. Yes, sir.

50. Q. Concussion?

A. Yes, sir.

51. Q. Why in the explosion of an ammunition dump or anything like that that you receive at times a long series of explosions, one right after another?

A. I can answer that from the Sun Valley, the first Sun Valley fire here where we had an explosion in Pentolite, loaded rifle grenades. I happened to be there and I saw it and the first explosion spread some of the Pentolite grenades. The Pentolite grenades went on subsequent impact and the time it took those pentolite grenades to fly through the air to strike was in most cases due to the factor of the lag between explosions. Now on the salvage fire, I was in an M4 tank and went up to the fire. I noticed the same thing. I witnessed quite a few of the explosions through the periscope of the M4 tank and there you could see the burning missiles flying and going on impact and if they should impact another stack of explosives it would be possible for that stack of explosives to go on impact.

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Examined by the court:

52. Q. Captain from your experience of explosives do you think that if a load of three of these Torpex bombs, weighing approximately 350 pounds each while being hoisted into the hold were spilled, would these necessarily explode under impact of their fall from this board?

A. I would expect if they did it would be the exception rather than the rule. I would not expect them to go. If it did it would be an exception rather than if you did it over and over on repeated tests. In a design of aircraft bombs, we designed into them a factor of safety where a bomb might be dropped safely over friendly territory. We have designed them so that they would withstand what is termed a hard surface test. RDX bombs, where the height safety factor is less than TNT, you can drop them from an appreciable height on a hard surface, and very rarely would one go up and detonate on impact. The case will split and the explosives will come out but in most they would not detonate. I believe the height on a TNT loaded bomb is around six thousand feet and that is reenforced concrete backed up with crushed rock of a hard surface. If a bomb dropped from the deck of a ship into the hold and hit a second bomb, I would not expect it generally to go off. However, there is that possibility.

53. Q. You touched on a point I would like to ask about. If a bomb dropped on bombs stowed below, would it give a different effect than it would give falling on concrete?

A. I would not expect it to.

54. Q. Well then you do not consider it very dangerous if one of these bombs were spilled and actually dropped into the hold on top of the other bombs?

A. It would not be desirable. I would not put it in as a steady diet for loading ships. I would not want to load it that way. It is only a little metal case but I would not expect it to detonate.

55. Q. What is meant by RDX?

A. They are the letters which stand for the names of these new explosives. I would not want to be absolutely certain but it is one of the nitramine series.

56. Q. I should like to clarify your answer to a more or less hypothetical question that was put to you in the previous questioning. There has been testimony given indicating that some observers witnessed two explosions each of which was related to light of a different color and measured by apparently definite short interval of time measurable in seconds. Did I understand you to say that in your opinion the explosion of the main mass of the depth bombs would be co-incident with whatever other detonation have been sighted in the mass explosion? By that I mean regardless of whether the initial explosion might have been one or several depth bombs or might have been the war head of a torpedo, did you say that you felt the result would be apparent to an observer as one explosion?

A. If that first explosion were an explosive I would expect no time interval that would be noticable between the first and second explosion. However, if that first explosion were gasoline or some other hydro carbon then of course my answer - I am only referring to explosives on the detonating rate.

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57. Q. I am correct in thinking that gasoline or any other agent that you referred to is fire?

A. That is right. It is not a detonating wave.

Reexamined by the judge advocate:

58. Q. Did you observe the explosion on the Serpens on the 29th of January?

A. I happened to be where I slept facing it. Something awakened me. What it was I don't know. I would expect that it was the earth tremor before the blast effect hit, but my tent mate and I discussed for perhaps two or three seconds before I noticed the real big flash and much smoke going up but everything I saw was through trees or over trees. I was not facing the explosion directly.

59. Q. How far away from the explosion were you?

A. We are on the otherside of Henderson Dump right next to ARU.

60. Q. That would be about five miles?

A. I have no idea how far the ship was out at sea. I would expect that I was between four and six miles away.

61. Q. Is there anything you can say that you gathered from the observation that you were able to make?

A. No, all I could tell from the observation was that I thought it was a high order explosion from where I was and a huge quanity because of the small time involved and the amount of smoke, pillar of smoke that went up with it and the way the things were thrown around in my tent.

Reexamined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

62. Q. Captain in a single explosion you would observe the flash before you would feel the ground tremor or would you not?

A. I would expect that, yes.

63. Q. You stated that something woke you which may have been the ground tremor and that after you were awake you observed the flash, is that correct?

A. No, there was a glow in the sky and my first impression was that it was the torpedo shop at ARU and I realized that was off the direction and before I had a chance to determine where the thing was I felt the detonation.

64. Q. But I am speaking of the flash that you observed?

A. I saw the flash. What awakened me I don't know but I did see the flash.

65. Q. After you were awake?

A. That is right.

66. Q. In other words there may have been a possibility of a smaller explosion of which the ground tremor awakened you and then another explosion of which you saw the flash?

A. That is possible because I have no idea what awakened me. There might have been a series of explosions. I don't know. All I heard was the large one.

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67. Q. The reason I ask you that question is I consider you on the stand in the capacity of an expert so I can refer to previous witnesses who have testified to practically the same thing. Do you consider there may have been a possibility that you were awakened by a ground tremor and saw the flash of the explosion because in an explosion you would see the flash instantaneously, is that correct?

A. The flash is not necessarily instantaneous. The length of the flash depends on the amount of unburned material that is thrown up by the explosion and then continues to burn after detonation.

68. Q. I am speaking of the beginning of the flash, not the length of the flash. Would the first indication of a flash be practically instantaneous with the explosion or not?

A. I would expect it to be because your speed of light is faster than the rate of detonation of explosives.

69. Q. For the normal man's visual distance, the speed of light is considered practically instantaneous for the distance that a man can see. There is absolutely no time whatsoever lapsing, is that right?

A. That is right.

Reexamined by the judge advocate:

70. Q. The sky was already lighted?

A. It was already lighted when I awakened.

Reexamined by the court:

71. Q. Captain, I refer to a Bureau of Naval Ordnance Circular Letter AV 11-44, in which this statement: "It may also be mentioned that Torpex loaded depth bombs, AN Mark 47, dropped from 2500 feet upon frozen ground have consistently failed to detonate. However, when dropped from the same altitude upon concrete, detonations did occur."

A. That is correct.

72. Q. Would that vary your previous answer with regard to the dropping of one sensitive bomb on a stow of sensitive bombs?

A. No, because the force of impact is the rate at which the energy is arrested of the falling body. If it travels a few feet to slow up, the force of impact is less than if it were traveling a few inches. That is zero movement after impact the force is infinite. It is a time distance proposition. The formula on that will give you the energy. You have force is one-half times mass the velocity square. If the velocity of a deceleration is zero your answer is infinitely large. That is why where you fall on a feather bed you are not hurt as much as if you were to fall on the ground. It is a time interval proposition and if the surface on which that bomb hits has very little give to it and the time distance is practically zero, it would not make very much difference if it were reinforced concrete or steel. That is my own explanation of what you asked me on that between frozen ground and concrete. I forget the dimensions on that hard surface test at Aberdeen but if I remember it is better than six feet thick including the crushed rock fill under the area.

73. Q. Would you say it is the principle of fuze design that the sharper the point of the firing pin the more instantaneous and the more sure the detonation?

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A. Absolutely not. The sharper the firing pin the less chance you have of detonation. The firing pin can not be pointed, it has to be blunt. I have proved that personally on the drop test using practically all different kinds of primer in the compound loaded detonators and if you take a needle point you can drive that in to a detonator without any detonation at all. If you put a flat on there and crush them you will get a high order. You will notice on any firing pin design there is a definite controlled flat on the end of a firing pin or it is very blunt, that is to crush. You have to crush it rather than just put a pin in it and spread it to one side.

None of the parties to the inquiry desire further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The court then, at 11:45 a.m., took a recess until 2:30 p.m., at which time it reconvened.

Present: All the members, the judge advocate, and the interested party and his counsel.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the inquiry were present.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Lowell Cooper, Captain, U.S.N., Retired, Chief of Staff Officer, CNB, SoSols.

2. Q. Captain, calling your attention to the night of 29 of January, did you hear an explosion on that evening?

A. I did.

3. Q. Where were you at the time?

A. I was asleep.

4. Q. Do you know approximately how long it was before you reached the Port Director's Office?

A. I should say approximately ten minutes.

5. Q. Did you go out in the boat when you reached the Port Director's Office?

A. I did.

6. Q. Will you tell us what you did when you went out by boat?

A. The boat headed out from Lunga Lagoon in the general direction of the column of smoke which we had observed. I asked the coxswain if he knew where berth 24 was and after we had proceeded perhaps six or seven hundred yards, he turned sharply to the right and headed towards what he thought was berth 24. After about three or four minutes steaming slowly we picked out an object

which appeared to be part of the ship on which there was a man with a flash light hollering for help. We went alongside and rescued a man named Kemp. He informed me that there was another individual in that part of the ship by the name of Kennedy. We stayed alongside the bow of the ship yelling, pounding on the hull in an attempt to raise anybody who might be inside the hull. After staying there for ten or fifteen minutes we shoved off and circled the vicinity very slowly looking for bits of wreckage, etc. After we made a complete circle a picket boat hailed us and said that there was somebody yelling from the bow of the ship. At that time we were some distance away. Immediately we proceeded to the bow again where we found Kennedy sitting astride the stem of the ship. After picking up Kennedy we circled for perhaps another fifteen or twenty minutes but found no further survivors or wreckage of any material worth except bits of burnt life jackets. We then proceeded back to Lunga pier where the two men were placed in ambulances and taken to NAB sick bay.

7. Q. Captain, will you describe for us what the part of the ship looked like when you first came upon it?

A. When we first saw the bow of the ship it was particularly difficult to discern. It appeared to be the hull of a small boat from where we were. Upon getting close to it, we found that the stem of the ship was parallel to the water, the starboard hawse pipe showing well above water and the starboard side of the ship was at an angle of about, I should say, thirty degrees to the water. The forecastle was perpendicular to the water.

8. Q. About how much of the starboard side was showing above water?

A. I should say possibly ten feet aft from the stem and the stem itself was probably about six feet above water when we first got there and settled gradually while we were there.

9. Q. Was any part of the forward gun platform visible?

A. I don't know. The position that we picked up Kemp was somewhere well forward on the forecastle. It was difficult in the darkness to determine what the bit of wreckage was. I should say he was probably forward of the anchor.

10. Q. Captain, have you had any experience with the Commanding Officer of the Serpens that would indicate either that it was his nature to use precautionary measures or not to use them?

A. Yes, I have.

11. Q. Will you tell the court just what that was that came to your attention?

A. On one occasion when the Serpens was loading ammunition, the Commanding Officer came to me protesting the manner in which certain ammunition was being loaded contrary to, if I recall correctly, the Coast Guard regulations concerning the loading of ammunition. I do not recall all the details. However, I do remember that Captain Stinson asked me if I would direct him to load the ship with the army against these specific regulations to which I replied in the negative. I know that the Captain had stopped the army from loading and it is my opinion that the rest of the loading was completed by the ship's force in accordance with the Captain's regulations. I replied in writing to the Captain's request, a copy of that can be found in the files of CNB SoSols. I cannot recall the exact wording of that letter.

12. Q. Did that happen this time that the Serpens was in port?

A. No, this was if I recall correctly around October or November.

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13. Q. Captain Cooper, I might ask if these "Regulations Governing Transportation of Military Explosives Aboard Vessels During Present Emergency" dated 1 October 1943 are the regulations to which you referred?

A. I believe they are.

Examined by the court:

14. Q. Captain you were out there around berth 24 on the night of the explosion were you not?

A. Subsequent to the time of the explosion, yes.

15. Q. How would you say the current was running by what you observed on the water?

A. The current was running to the eastward parallel to the shore line. It was quite noticeable at the wrecked bow of the ship, both by the water and by the movement of the personnel boat in going alongside.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Mark L. Hersey, jr., Captain, U.S.N., Commander So.Sols area, Commander Naval Base, Guadalcanal.

2. Q. Captain, where were you at the time of the explosion on the night of 29 January?

A. I was sitting in my tent talking with Captain Close, Chief of Staff to Comseronsopac and I was facing almost in the direction of the explosion.

3. Q. Will you tell the court what you saw at that time?

A. I saw this flash and felt a concussion like an earth quake and then felt the blast almost all at the same time and shortly thereafter I got into a jeep with Captain Cooper and we went down to the landing. There was a boat alongside and we took it out. Whether we were the first boat or not, I don't know but very soon after we cleared the entrance to the Lagoon we heard calls for help. We went over and found the bow of the U.S.S. Serpens floating with one man on the wreckage. This man's name was Kemp and he told us that he had a shipmate named Kennedy who was sleeping in the boatswain's locker at the time of the explosion. We yelled for Kennedy and I sent a man from the boat on to the wreck and he hammered on the hull but got no response. This man complained of gas fumes and said he was getting sick so we took him off and started looking for survivors off to the eastward in the direction the tide was then setting. We did not have any light in this boat to examine the hull closely nor to examine the wreckage very closely. Also Kemp was bleeding rather badly and we decided to take him ashore. On the way in we again heard cries from the wrecked bow and we went back and picked up Kennedy who

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had crawled out from the boatswain's locker in the meantime. We proceeded in and landed the two injured survivors and I left Captain Cooper behind to take care of anything that might come up. I then got some lights and went back out and with a number of other boats searched down through the debris. I do not know exactly how long we were out but I think I did not get back to the base until about 0130. We did not find anything however, except debris and pieces of life jackets, etc.

4. Q. Will you describe the portion of the hull that you saw when you first saw it?

A. Well it was the bow and one of the anchors showing and about thirty feet of hull was out of water to a height of possibly fifteen feet at the highest point of the forefoot. It was down low enough so that a man could step from the bow on to the forepart of our boat without any trouble.

5. Q. Have you before this time experienced explosions?

A. Not of any great magnitude like this. I have seen two thousand pounds of TNT set off for experimental purposes, the largest explosion I recall now.

6. Q. Was it your impression that at the time of this explosion there was one or two explosions?

A. My impression was that there was only one and I talked afterwards with Captain Close who as I believe has seen other explosions and he felt there was only one.

7. Q. Have you had quite a bit of experience with explosives?

A. No, I cannot qualify as an explosive expert. I was in command of a naval powder factory for over three years but the greater output there was smokeless powder. We built a pilot plant for RDX which is the basis of this Torpex but it is a highly complicated chemical process which I know very little about. I do know that RDX is a more powerful explosive than TNT and it is more liable to detonate under certain circumstances and that it is necessary to dilute it with TNT and with a binder to make it safe to handle. Even so it is not safe and these various explosions we have had beginning with the Yorktown explosion about November, I think, of 1942 have probably been caused by RDX although no cause of anyone of these has been determined so far as I have ever heard. The explosion at Norfolk at the Naval Air Station where some people were killed was determined and was due to RDX but was due to gross mishandling. They overloaded the depth charge trucks and the depth charge rolled off partly, dragged, and caught on fire and went off and set off the rest of it. What happened at the other places nobody seems to know.

8. Q. Captain, as you know the Serpens had quite a quantity of depth bombs aboard which of course are made out of Torpex as the explosive. Had the Serpens been struck by a torpedo, do you believe that that would produce one explosion for the torpedo and another distinct explosion for the Torpex bombs or would they be so simultaneous that you could not tell the difference?

A. If they hit in the hold where the depth charges were, I believe that the explosion would be so close together you could not distinguish between them.

9. Q. You think that might not be true if the torpedo struck elsewhere than number four hold?

A. There might be some delay if there was some distance between the first explosion and the hold containing the depth charges.

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Examined by the court:

10. Q. From your experience with explosives do you think that while hoisting these explosives aboard or lowering them into the hold, if that hoist were spilled and the three bombs feel into the hold, there is a likelihood of them detonating?

A. Yes, with RDX especially. Though in trying to determine the cause of the Yorktown mine depot explosion, we threw around various bombs, depth charges and torpedo warheads of Torpex, loaded with Torpex, trying to see if they would go off. Those experiments were underway when I left. I never saw the final report but they had handled them about twenty in a very rough manner and still no explosion. However, it seems possible that dropping them would cause them to detonate.

11. Q. Captain, the moon was bright on this particular night of the explosion?

A. Yes.

12. Q. And that gave a very good chance of finding anyone in the water even if the boat did not have a search light?

A. Yes, and our searching was mainly done after we had a small search light. One of those magazine lights and another bright flashlight so we could see everything on our second trip very plainly and even an unconscious survivor would have been detected.

13. Q. Captain I believe you stated that if the Torpex was dropped in to the hold that they might go off, is that correct?

A. That is my opinion only.

14. Q. What I want to get clear, sir, would they probably go off or would there just be a possibility of them going off?

A. I don't know enough about this new explosive RDX to answer that as an expert, but my opinion is that there is a possibility for them to go off.

15. Q. Captain do you believe it possible that a nail driven through the bomb case into the Torpex would detonate the bomb?

A. I believe that is possible.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

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A. Paul T. Ludwig, Boatswain, U.S.N.R., Diving Officer, ATA 174.

2. Q. Mr. Ludwig, have you been in charge of the diving operations that were commenced to discover anything that could be found in connection with the Serpens?

A. I have been in charge ever since we started on 3 February 1945. We made one dive on the third.

3. Q. Have you kept a log of the things found by the divers on the bottom?

A. Yes, a complete log of everything found.

The judge advocate offered a copy of said log, submitted same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended to the record marked "Exhibit 13(1), 13(2), 13(3) and 13(4)".

4. Q. On 4 February you have listed as found late in the afternoon unexploded and exploded bombs, can you estimate as to how many bombs were seen down there?

A. They were scattered all over.

5. Q. Would you say one hundred?

A. I would not. The diver that was down might take a guess at it. The ship was lying astern of our buoy.

6. Q. The bow of your ship was west?

A. Yes.

7. Q. That was at all times?

A. Yes.

8. Q. On 6 February the remarks are, "reached end of ship but did not observe anything beyond". What do you mean by end of ship?

A. What we could find of the bow.

9. Q. Can you state approximately whether that was at number three?

A. At number three - some part of number three hatch. Over sixty feet aft of the forward part of number two hold.

10. Q. Was there any part of the ship aft of number three located?

A. No sir, none of it.

11. Q. Did you find any safes?

A. No.

12. Q. Did you find any part of the super structure?

A. None at all.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The witness was informed by the court that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

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The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the judge advocate entered, was duly sworn, and was informed of the subject matter of the inquiry.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. J. G. Ehrlicher, Lieutenant Commander, U.S.N.R., Supply Officer, NAB, Guadalcanal.

2. Q. Were any of the supplies of NAB lost or damaged because of the explosion on the U.S.S. Serpens on 29 January?

A. Yes.

3. Q. Have you been able to determine officially what was destroyed?

A. No, we are still in the process of making that determination.

4. Q. Tell as nearly as you can just what the damage was?

A. The principal damage was in warehouse number four which is one of ship stores and clothing due to the collapse of the upper deck. The dollar value of this damage is being determined since they are accountable stores and will have to be surveyed. At this time I can only give you a rough estimate. I would say that it will run into about five thousand dollars.

5. Q. Describe the items that were destroyed?

A. The items that were destroyed were mostly clothing, ship store stock. There was some title C damage but inconsquential. The chief damage was number four and that was due to the upper deck collapsing.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The judge advocate was called as a witness by the judge advocate and was duly sworn.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade), U.S.C.G.R., judge advocate of this inquiry.

2. Q. On 3 February 1945, did you together with all of the members of the court, the interested party and his counsel attend a demonstration of the cargo net, pallet boards and the manner in which they were used as presented by army officials purporting to show the method of loading ammunition aboard the Serpens?

A. I did.

3. Q. At that time were photographs taken?

A. They were taken by army personnel.

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4. Q. Do you have the prints of those photographs with you?

A. I do. Here are prints of six different photographs. Upon examination I find them to represent what was shown to us on that morning.

The judge advocate offered said photographs in evidence, submitted same to the court and the interested party. There being no objection, they were so received and are appended marked "Exhibit 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19".

None of the parties of the inquiry desired further to examine this witness.

The court informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith which had not been brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness resumed his seat as judge advocate.

A witness recalled by the judge advocate entered, and was informed that his previous oath was still binding.

Examined by the judge advocate:

1. Q. Are you the same Lieutenant Eugene Ritter who testified previously?

A. Yes, I am.

2. Q. I show you a photograph which has been introduced here as Exhibit 14 and ask you whether or not that represents a type of cargo net which was used in loading the U.S.S. Serpens with the depth bombs, together with the pallet boards and three bombs in there?

A. This is the general outline of the way the nets were and the pallet boards, and the bombs were placed in that approximate same position.

3. Q. This is a two becket net. Were they used during the loading of the Serpens?

A. Part of the time they were and part of the time four becket nets were used.

4. Q. I show you a photograph introduced as Exhibit 15 and ask you whether or not that represents the manner in which the nets were attached to the hook?

A. You mean of the ship?

5. Q. Of the ship?

A. That is right.

6. Q. I show you Exhibit 16 and ask you whether that is a good representation of the mets, boards and bombs and the manner in which it was attached to the hook?

A. You mean on shore or on the ship?

7. Q. On the ship?

A. That is a very good representation.

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8. Q. The same thing as to this which is Exhibit 17?

A. That is correct.

9. Q. And to Exhibit 18?

A. The general condition I would say. This is one that would be accepted.

10. Q. As to Exhibit 19?

A. There were a few that came out in that condition.

11. Q. When that occurred on your watch do you know whether or not those were hoisted aboard the ship?

A. They were with special handling. The boys were given instructions to be very careful with anything like that. However you would generally find that the bombs would slide down into the net they would not be up in that position as they are in this particular picture.

12. Q. In Exhibit 19 you stated that the bombs usually at the time they were hoisted aboard would roll down or slide down into the net, did those bombs ever slide so that any portion of them would be showing through the side of the net, sticking outside of the net?

A. In my previous testimony I have testified that they did not.

Examined by Lieutenant Commander Stinson:

13. Q. Lieutenant, in Exhibit 14 you will notice that the bombs are above the edge of the net, would you have allowed such a net to be loaded?

A. No sir.

14. Q. Was that a standard size net?

A. It could not have been a standard size net if it had been it would have gone around the pallet board in the proper manner.

15. Q. Have you anything more that you could tell us concerning the net of that type, what you would have done and the like?

A. As I have testified before when the net did not come up completely around the pallet board, I left instructions with my hatch operators, hatch tenders rather, to send the net and pallet boards and bombs back to shore to be reloaded in the proper manner.

16. Q. Did you ever send any back to shore?

A. I did.

Reexamined by the judge advocate:

17. Q. Have you any way of judging from that picture Exhibit 14 whether or not that is a fourteen by fourteen net?

A. No sir.

None of the parties to the inquiry desired further to examined this witness.

The court informed the witness that th was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the inquiry which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The judge advocate stated that he had no more witnesses.

Neither the court, the judge advocate, nor the interested party to the inquiry desired any more witnesses.

The judge advocate made the following opening argument:

As the court knows there is very little for me to actually argue about. There has been one person named as an interested party which was done at the very beginning of our sessions. However, the court has not seen fit nor have I seen any reason or any evidence produced which should have changed his interest from that of an interested party to that of a party defendant. The main thing, I think, to cover in this matter is the fact that this is a court of inquiry and as such is bound by the regular rules of evidence. There have been a few things that have crept in that perhaps might be classed as hearsay, but in every case I have tried to bring in more direct evidence on all those points. The court is mainly a fact finding body and most of the facts I think are quite clear and can easily be set out, such as the actual arrival of the Serpens in port, the condition of the ship at the time, the manner in which the cargo was loaded and all the precautions that were taken. The conflict of evidence that has appeared has been centered almost entirely around the explosion itself, as to whether or not there was one explosion or two explosions. After listening to Captain Hottinger, I think that the evidence taken as a whole is not contradictory. The evidence of the signalmen that the first thing they saw was a brilliant white flame followed by a red flame was probably not two separate flashes at all, but, as the Captain described, the normal combustion and the normal manner in which an explosion or the flame from an explosion would appear, starting out with the brilliant white flash and then, as the gases rose and burned, and orange and red color. This created the different flashes which might have been seen by the signalmen as they testified. There were many who testified that they felt two explosions, and there were some who testified that in their opinion there was but one explosion. That could well be accounted for by the fact that the blast wave is faster than the sound wave and is particularly faster through a medium denser than air such as the ground and water. He also testified to the fact as an expert that if an explosion set off the main explosion, that is the bombs in the hold, the two explosions together would appear to any normal person as but one explosion. They would not appear as two separate explosions because of the detonating rate.

There is one other matter which I think has caused the court quite a bit of trouble and that is the question whether or not this was caused by a submarine or by something else which we have no way of knowing. The court has heard and has just read over all of the evidence given by the persons concerned with the submarine contact that was received that night or rather the three contacts that were made by the SC 1039, and I don't believe that I have to go into that. It is entirely the court's job to evaluate that testimony and to determine whether or not from the testimony produced, there was a submarine or it can give an opinion that there probably was a submarine which might have caused the explosion.

There have been instances brought before the court which showed that every one concerned at the time of the explosion acted rapidly and did their duty. Now, had there been any particular matters of heroism or any persons performing beyond the call of their duty it would of course be the courts right and privilege to mention that and to make recommendations that those persons receive the proper commendations or awards. But here inspite of the fact that everyone did act quickly and in accordance with their duty, I don't believe there were any called upon or any who had an opportunity to perform above and beyond the call of duty.

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Lieutenant Commander Stinson, interested party, desired to make no argument.

The inquiry was finished, all parties thereto withdrawing.

The court, having thoroughly inquired into all the facts and circumstances connected with the allegations contained in the precept and having considered the evidence adduced, finds as follows:

FINDINGS

1. That on 24 January 1945, at about 1730, the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK 97) an EC2 type vessel, (hereinafter referred to as the SERPENS), under the command of Lieutenant Commander Peery L. Stinson, U.S. Coast Guard, (hereinafter referred to as the Commanding Officer), arrived at Lunga, Guadalcanal, B.S.I. from the Russell Islands.

2. That the SERPENS was assigned Berth 24, Lunga, Guadalcanal, B.S.I. as shown on H.O. Chart No. 1009 by the Port Director and that she anchored in that berth and did not move from there.

3. That at the time of arrival, the SERPENS had no cargo in her except a few pieces of personal baggage which were immediately removed.

4. That during her last stay in this port, Captain L. H. McCain, U.S.A., Superintendent of the Water Division of this port, gave the Commanding Officer a list of the items that he expected to load aboard the SERPENS upon her return.

5. That the Commanding Officer of the SERPENS or his representative classified the items according to U.S. Coast Guard "Regulations Governing Transportation of Military Explosives on Board Vessels During Present Emergency" dated 1 October 1943 and that Captain McCain or his representatives rechecked these classifications and agreed with them.

6. That number one hold, number four lower hold and number five lower hold had been sheathed to magazine "A" specifications and number one 'tween deck contained two strongrooms and one magazine, all conforming to magazine "A" specifications.

7. That all the holds were inspected prior to loading and in particular number four lower hold which was found to be free of protruding nails or other sharp projections.

8. That on 20 January 1945, Headquarters, Guadalcanal Island Command issued secret shipping order No. 290 for the loading of the items listed therein aboard the SERPENS.

9. That a revised loading plan was prepared at a conference between the Commanding Officer of the SERPENS, the Superintendent of the Water Division and the Executive and Operations Officer of the 492nd Port Battalion, which was to do the loading.

10. That at this conference, the Commanding Officer of the SERPENS issued copies of general loading safety instructions and regulations for the handling and stowage of explosives, both of which were later thoroughly disseminated to all the men engaged in loading the SERPENS before they started loading.

11. That among the items to be loaded on the SERPENS were 3568 of the following described bombs, which were to be loaded in number four lower hold, to wit:

350 lb. Aircraft Depth Bomb, Mark 54, Torpex filled. (hereinafter referred to as the depth bombs);

and 1026 of the following described fuzes, which were to be loaded in the port strong room of number one 'tween deck, to wit:

Hydrostatic tail fuzes, AN Mark 230, Mod 3 and Mod 4. (hereinafter referred to as the fuzes)

12. That random samples taken from the remaining unloaded depth bombs were marked as follows:

(a) U.S.P. Co. Manufacture Insp A.L. DGS.
Contract No. N Ord 4575
Loading Date 5/44, 6/44
Bu. Ord. Dr No. 394181

(b) Rex Mfg. Co. GHB DJM, Insp. E.L.W.
Contr. No. N Ord 4394
Loading Date 3/44, 4/44, 5/44, 6/44, 7/44.
Bu. Ord. Dr. No. 394181
2 Boosters
Code No. 102710-A

13. That at the conference, it was decided that the depth bombs were to be loaded as follows: In 14' x 14' cargo nets of three inch rope were to be centered 4 x 6 foot by 8 inch pallet boards on which but three depth bombs were placed and the beckets of the cargo nets were secured to the fall by means of a snorter when lifted aboard ship.

14. That the depth bombs were to be transported to the ship by dukws each dukw containing two drafts of three bombs each, loaded as described above; and that the bombs were to be loaded onto a landing mat and then rolled across a floor of dunnage to their final place of stowage.

15. That each layer of bombs was to be finished off completely and then dunnaged over with three inches of lumber before another layer was started.

16. That at about 2400 on 24 January 1945, the loading of the SERPENS began and continued without interruption day and night.

17. That in order to speed the loading of depth bombs in number four hold, a double rigging that allowed the loading of bombs from both sides of the ship was rigged as follows: two ordinary five tons wooden cargo booms were rigged outboard, a jumbo boom with the jumbo purchase removed and two gin blocks replacing it on the boomhead was rigged over the center of the hatch, and spans were rigged between each cargo boom and a gin block on the jumbo boom, which were worked on each side by one five ton winch and one jumbo winch.

18. That the Commanding Officer of the SERPENS, the Superintendent of the Water Division, and the Operations Officer of the 492nd Port Battalion were in agreement on the use of the above described double rigging and that strict orders were issued to the hatch tenders for the prevention of the meeting at the hatch of two lifts.

19. That about 1830 on 29 January 1945, the Executive Officer, with the permission of the Commanding Officer, and six other officers left the SERPENS by boat to visit the U.S.S. MINTAKA (AK 94) which was docked four and one-half miles away; and that the Supply Officer and one other officer went ashore at the same time.

20. That the Commanding Officer of the SERPENS went ashore at approximately 2015, leaving aboard a full watch of officers consisting of the Officer of the Deck, an Engineering Officer, and a Cargo Officer.

21. That the Executive Officer and the six officers who had gone to the U.S.S. MINTAKA with him, returned by boat, arriving at approximately 2300, at which time an officer arrived aboard from shore.

22. That the Commanding Officer and the Supply Officer of the SERPENS remained ashore.

23. That the Superintendent of the Water Division had assigned for the nights loading operations ten dukws and one self propelled pontoon barge, (hereinafter called the barge).

24. That the barge was loaded with an unknown quantity of depth bombs, in the following manner: a timber was secured athwartships just forward of the propulsion unit and the bombs were laid athwartships on the steel deck starting at the above described timber and working forward to a point a little forward of amidships where they were blocked to prevent any fore and aft movement, thus covering the deck from side to side and from aft to amidships; and that three cargo nets and pallet boards were also placed on the barge for use in loading the bombs in the agreed manner aboard the SERPENS:

25. That the barge had left the beach at about 2030 and had gone to the starboard side of the SERPENS at number four hold where it remained.

26. That at about 2315 the following items had been loaded as follows or were alongside the SERPENS:

8 pieces of machine gun in number five lower hold.
3399 depth bombs in number four lower hold.
Depth bomb accessories in number one 'tween deck.
Aircraft engine in number three lower hold.
21 drop fuel tanks in number three lower hold.
335 drop tanks in number three lower hold.
1 piece, PWJ parts in number three lower hold.
1283 miscellaneous supplies in number five lower hold.
14 crates of outer wing panel assembly in number three lower hold.

27. That depth bombs were being loaded into number four lower hold from the barge on the starboard side and from dukws on the port side and personal gear into number one hold from dukws on the port side.

28. That at about 2315 the sea was smooth with a light easterly breeze, the sky clear with a bright moon, and the current setting easterly.

29. That an instanteous mass detonation of a high order of the greater portion of the depth bombs, stowed in number four lower hold of the SERPENS, occurred at about 2318 on 29 January 1945.

30. That this mass detonation instantly disintegrated and destroyed all of the ship aft of number two hold.

31. That the remainder of the ship was shattered and capsized and that it sank within two hours of the explosion and now rests in nineteen fathoms of water in berth 24, Lunga, Guadalcanal, B.S.I.

32. That the proper rescue procedure was immediately instituted and that two members of the crew, the only survivors of all personnel aboard the SERPENS at the time of the explosion, were rescued from the bow.

33. That the U.S.S. SC 1039, one of the two ships on anti-submarine patrol in the area, reported a contact at 2340, 29 January 1945.

34. That a Joint Air Surface Action, consisting of three ships was instituted immediately.

35. That no further contacts were reported until 0250, 30 January 1945 when the U.S.S. SC 1039 reported a contact in Sealark Channel and dropped depth charges with no known results.

36. That the sound officer and the soundman of the U.S.S. SC 1039 testified describing the contact at 2340 which they evaluated as a probable submarine.

37. That diving operations were initiated and are now in progress, and that in addition to the remainder of the SERPENS the divers have found numerous unexploded depth bombs and the fuzes which had been stowed in number one hold which was reported intact and various sections of the ship scattered over the bottom.

38. That the personnel of the SERPENS consisted of thirteen officers and one hundred ninety-three men.

39. That the following personnel attached to the SERPENS were rescued after the explosion:

KEMP, Kelsie K.	599-922	Slc.	USCGR
KENNEDY, George S.	587-983	S2c.	USCGR

40. The following personnel attached to the SERPENS were ashore at the time of the explosion:

STINSON, Peery L.		Lt.Comdr.	USCG
CLARK, John R.		Lieut.	USCG
JONES, Stanley M.	515-547	CCS	USCGR
FIGGS, Richard M.	7009-220	St3c.	USCGR
HOUSEKNECHT, Morris	563-428	Flc	USCGR
HUGHES, William E.	595-163	Slc	USCGR
SMART, Robert J.	675-709	Slc	USCGR
CARMANA, Fidel O.	676-292	S2c	USCGR

41. That the SERPENS sustained the following personnel casualties, all of whom were members of the U.S. Coast Guard or the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, to wit:

Dead - CAMMARATA, Michael L., seaman second class, 685-177
KIRCHNER, Richard O., seaman first class, 605-316

Missing - The one hundred ninety four persons listed in Exhibit 10 (1) through 10 (7), which list also contains the names of CAMMARATA, Michael L. and KIRCHNER, Richard O. who are listed above as dead.

42. That the army personnel, engaged in loading the SERPENS at the time of the explosion, were reported missing as of 30 January 1945 by U.S. Army, Headquarters Island Command, Office of the Port Superintendent, A.P.O. 709, and are listed in Exhibit 12 (1), 12 (2), and 12 (3).

43. That the dead and missing above named were in a duty status.

44. That numerous minor injuries were sustained by personnel attached to U.S.S. YP 514 and less notably by personnel attached to Naval Advanced Base, Guadalcanal, B.S.I., as well as adjacent activities, all of whom were in a duty status.

45. That the entire SERPENS and her cargo was a total loss with the exception of one quarter ton 4 x 4 truck, one landing craft (vehicle) and one motor whale boat, all of which were ashore.

46. That the following U.S. Army equipment was a total loss:

One 2½ ton 6 x 6 Amphibian Truck (dukw)
One self propelled 100 ton pontoon barge.

47. That the U.S.S. YP 514 suffered the following damage as a result of the explosion:

A section of the bow and the crows nest demolished.
All radio antennae broken.
Large sections of the deck rails demolished.
Several Ready boxes ruptured.
Several Gun shields bent.
Decks and overheads pierced in numerous places.
Other minor damage.

48. That the U.S.S. YMS 281 suffered the following damage as a result of the explosion:

Main deck shattered and pierced in various places.
Stowage boxes pierced.
Other minor damage.

49. That HMNZS Q400 suffered the following damage as a result of the explosion:

Deck pierced in four places causing four holes, three of which were approximately four inches square and one approximately eighteen by three inches.
Various deck fittings damaged.
Port wing fuel tank pierced.

50. That the U.S.S. LCT 317 suffered the following damage as a result of the explosion:

Two holes approximately eight inches in diameter in the well deck.

51. That the U.S. Naval installations ashore suffered the following damage as a result of the explosion:

The arch type buildings, commonly known as quonset huts, used as warehouses in the vicinity of the beach areas, Fleet Post Office, Naval Landing Force Equipment Depot, and Boat Operating and Repair Unit were damaged by blast and shrapnel.
Screening, glass, some power and communication lines were damaged.
The estimated total monetary loss being $4740.00.

52. That the Supply Officer of U.S. Naval Advanced Base, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, sustained the following losses as a result of the explosion:

Clothing and ship store stock to the estimated value of $5,000.

OPINION

1. That the men hereinabove named as dead died from injuries or drowning, or both, suffered in the line of duty and death was not the result of their own misconduct.

2. That the men hereinabove named as missing are in fact dead from injuries or drowning, or both, suffered in the line of duty and death was not the result of their own misconduct.

3. That the cause of the explosion cannot be established from the present evidence, but that the more probable causes appear to be accidents intrinsic to the loading process or enemy action.

4. That the stowage of bombs upon the bare metal deck of the barge was inconsistent with the other safety precautions taken.

5. That no officer or member of the crew of the Serpens was blameful for any act of omission or commission connected with the disaster nor committed any offense.

6. That no officer or enlisted men of the U. S. Army was blameful for any act of omission or commission connected with the disaster nor committed any offense.

7. That, although many persons acted promptly and voluntarily immediately following the explosion, no instance of conduct above and beyond the call of duty has come to the attention of the court.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That whenever possible high explosive cargo be loaded in holds at the extremities of the ship, since this location will be at the maximum distance from crew's quarters.

2. That no "two becket" cargo nets of the type shown by "Exhibit 14" and "Exhibit 17" be employed in loading ammunition.

Audrey A. Scott

AUDREY A. SCOTT,
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Coast Guard Reserve.
President.

John O. Vaughn

JOHN O. VAUGHN,
Lieutenant Commander, Medical Corps,
U. S. Naval Reserve.
Member.

MINORITY REPORT

I agree with the court's findings, opinion, and recommendations but add the following to the court's recommendations:

Four major disasters have occurred recently at Port Chicago, Noumea, Manus and Guadalcanal, and in each case it is understood the ships involved were loading ammunition. It is therefore not impossible that the cause of the disaster may involve a type of activity present during the loading operation, and which is not present when ships are discharging ammunition or under way.

Such an operation may be the use of nails to shore up the end of a stow or to fill a space between cargo and the skin of the ship or some irregularity in the hold. In such cases of disaster, all evidence concerning the nailing operations is destroyed.

It is believed that the present regulations governing the handling of ammunition on shipboard are not sufficiently explicit with regard to the use of nails.

It is therefore recommended that tests be made to determine whether or not 350 lb. Depth Bomb Mark 54 Torpex filled may be detonated by the driving of a nail through the wall into the filler.

It is further recommended that the regulations concerning the use of tools on shipboard while stowing ammunition as cargo be reviewed. It may be found desirable to provide that all tools including nails be placed in the custody of an Ordnance Officer who shall be present during all loading operations. Tools may be used and nails driven only when and where this officer may permit in order to protect from nails, primers, fuzes, tracers, pyrotechnics, demolition items, and as in the present case, thin walled bombs with filler of relatively high sensitivity.

Dwight P. Colburn

DWIGHT P. COLBURN
Lieutenant, S(O), U.S. Naval Reserve, Member.

The record of proceedings of the seventh day of the inquiry was read and approved, the court being cleared during the reading of so much thereof as pertains to the proceedings in cleared court, and the court having finished the inquiry, then at 4:30 p.m., adjourned to await the action of the convening authority.

Audrey A. Scott

AUDREY A. SCOTT,
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, President.

Nathaniel H. Willis

NATHANIEL H. WILLIS,
Lieutenant (junior grade) U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

COPY

AK-97/A9 U. S. S. SERPENS (AK-97)

S-E-C-R-E-T

Subject: Official Report of Loss of Ship

removed from the bow of the SERPENS by Captain Hersey. All were quartered at Naval Advanced Base, Guadalcanal.

7. The search of the area disclosed only about thirty or forty feet of the bow floating keel up which sank in about two hours. Some of the belly tanks which were part of the cargo were seen. Large patches of what appeared to be explosive residue were seen.

8. One body has been found and identified as CAMMARATA, Michael L., (685-177), S2c, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve. Portions of other bodies have been found but identification is impossible.

9. The following material of the ship was saved being ashore at the time of explosion: One ¼ ton reconaissance car, One 28' motor whale boat and one landing craft vehicle.

PEERY L. STINSON.

cc: Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard.

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY

Nathaniel N. Willis, Ltjg.
U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate

SECRET
UNCLASSIFIED

EXHIBIT 1(2)

USS SERPENS
(AK-97)

Capt. McCain: This is Plan for cargo listed by Guadal Is. Command.

AMMUNITION HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

ENCLOSURE: Planning Sheets (4)

1. The handling and stowage of explosives shall be in accordance with "Regulations Governing Transportation of Military Explosives on Board Vessels During Present Emergency", 10 October 1943. (U. S. COAST GUARD)

2. No ammunition will be loaded until cargo plan has been approved in writing by the Commanding Officer of this vessel.

3. The following procedure in arranging for stowage shall be observed

(a) Identification of ammunition (art. 146.29-6) (art. 146.29-100 column 2) (art. 146.29-47).

(b) Classification of each type ammunition (art. 146.29-100, column 1).

(c) Determination of type of stowage required (art. 146.29-100, column 4).

(d) Determination of location of stowage (art. 146.29-7,8,9,10, 11) (art. 146.29-30) (art. 146.29-43,44,45).

(e) Determination of mixing of different types in same stowage (art. 146.29-50) (art. 146.29-43,44,45).

(f) Submission of cargo plan and smooth planning sheet to Commanding Officer for approval.

(g) Construction of required magazine or stowage (art. 146.29-39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46).

(h) Loading of ammunition (146.29-11 to 23 incl., 27 to 29 incl.) (art. 146.29-100, column 7).

(i) Check of closure and ventilation (art. 146.29-48).

SPECIAL NOTES FOR U.S.S. SERPENS:

1. Class XI ammunition in lower 1 or magazine constructed in #1 tween deck only.

2. No Class VIII, X, or XI in hold #2 or #3. None in #4 or #5 if carrying troops in #4 tween decks.

3. In preparing the planning sheets, a rough sheet shall first be made listing all the ammunition and from this the smooth copy shall be made segregating the ammunition by holds and decks.

P. L. STINSON

Received from USS SERPENS one copy of "Ammunition Handling Instructions". Date_____.

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

3543

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EXHIBIT 2(1)

AMMUNITION	WT-Tons	Vol. Cu/Ft.	TYPE	Stowage Location Required	HANDLING NOTE
70 Drums FS Smoke	29.1	980		On Deck	
Depth Bombs and Accessories	748.2	35,144	X	#5 L/H	Cannot be over-stowed with vehicles or cargo of great unit weight.
500 pcs. Drop Tanks	72.5	44,000		#3 L/H	
8 pcs. Machine guns	1.0	60		#2 L/H	
1 pc. Aircraft engine	1.4	180		#2 L/H	
21 pcs. Drop fuel tanks	22.2	8505		#2 L/H	
1 pc. PBJ Parts	0.5	72		#2 L/H	
1283 pcs. Misc. Supplies	76.2	10,797		#4 L/H	
4 bxs. Generators	0.9	54		#2 L/H	
14 crts. Outer wing Assy.	13.9	5964		#2 L/H	
15 bxs. Photographic Gear	1.9	224		#2 L/H	

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 2(2)

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

USS SERPENS
(AK-97)

Capt. McCain: This is plan for cargo per your list of 19 January.

AMMUNITION HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

ENCLOSURE: Planning Sheets (4)

1. The handling and stowage of explosives shall be in accordance with "Regulations Governing Transportation of Military Explosives on Board Vessels During Present Emergency", 10 October 1943. (U. S. COAST GUARD)

2. No ammunition will be loaded until cargo plan has been approved in writing by the Commanding Officer of this vessel.

3. The following procedure in arranging for stowage shall be observed:

(a) Identification of ammunition (art. 146.29-6) (art. 146.29-100, column 2) (art. 146-.29-47).

(b) Classification of each type ammunition (art. 146.29-100, column 1).

(c) Determination of type of stowage required (art. 146.29-100, column 4).

(d) Determination of location of stowage (art. 146.29-7,8,9,10, 11) (art. 146.29-30) (art. 146.29-43,44,45).

(e) Determination of mixing of different types in same stowage (art. 146.29-50) (art. 146.29-43,44,45).

(f) Submission of cargo plan and smooth planning sheet to Commanding Officer for approval.

(g) Construction of required magazine or stowage (art. 146.29-39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46).

(h) Loading of ammunition (146.29-11 to 23 incl., 27 to 29 incl.) (art. 146.29-100, column 7).

(i) Check of closure and ventilation (art. 146.29-48).

SPECIAL NOTES FOR U.S.S. SERPENS:

1. Class XI ammunition in lower 1 or magazine constructed in #1 tween deck only.

2. No class VIII, X, or XI in hold #2 or #3. None in #4 or #5 if carrying troops in #4 tween decks.

3. In preparing the planning sheets, a rough sheet shall first be made listing all the ammunition and from this the smooth copy shall be made segregating the ammunition by holds and decks.

P. L. STINSON

Received from USS SERPENS one copy of "Ammunition Handling Instructions"
Date_____

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate

3 543

SECRET

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EXHIBIT 3(1)

AMMUNITION	WT-Tons	Vol. Cu/Ft.	TYPE	Stowage Required Location	HANDLING NOTE
70 Drums F.S.	29	980		On Deck	X
1 bx Cart. Grenades	-	2		Deck Locker	X
3465 bx Small Arms	150	5194	I	5 L/H	X
49 bx Rifle Gren.WP	1	64	II	On Deck or Deck Locker	X
576 bx.40mmHE	46	1728	IV	5 L/H	X
64 bx 40mm AP	5	192	IV	5 L/H	X
3876 bx 90mm HE	250	10,620	IV	5 L/H	X
342 bx 90mm HE	40	1436	IV	5 L/H	X
208 bx 90mm AP	15	616	IV	5 L/H	X
2 bx Grenades HF	-	2		Deck Locker	X
113 bx Gren. Rifle AT	2	97	IV	5 L/H	X
1026 bx Fuses	34	1374	VIII	Detonator or Portable Deck Locker Magazine	X
3568 Bomb,depth	624	22,014	X	Mag.A or B 1 L/H	Not to be overstowed by vehicles.
3752 Fins and	88	11,743		1 L/H	X
4 bx Arming wire	-	11		2 or 4 L/H	X
48 Drop Tanks	8	3272		3 L/H	X
500 Drop Tanks	72	44,000		3 L/H	X
12 Crt. Wing Assy.	14	6000		2 or 4 L/H	X

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 3(2)

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

S-E-C-R-E-T
I-M-M-E-D-I-A-T-E A-C-T-I-O-N

HEADQUARTERS
GUADALCANAL ISLAND COMMAND
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco
California

:SECRET Auth: C.G.:
:Guadalcanal Is Comd:
:20 Jan. 45 (IBT)IBT:

IBT:LGC:hlr.

20 January 1945.

AG 400

SUBJECT: Supplies ror DOTI - Shipping Order No. 290.

TO : Port Superintendent, Guadalcanal.

In accordance with 170630 January dispatch from COMGENSOPAC-BACOM, it is desired that you load the following aboard the USS SERPENS:

For COMAIR 7th Fleet, Logistics, DOTI:			
(Call Port Section, CWS, Henderson 315)			
70 pcs. (drums) FS Smoke	(GD-317)	980 Cu.ft.	29.1 tons
For Aviation Supply Depot, DOTI 74:			
(Call A.S.A., Avn. 32)			
8 pcs. Machine Guns	(GD-336)	60 cu.ft.	1560 lbs.
For ComAir 7th Fleet, DOTI 19:			
(Call Capt. Bauriedel, 353rd Ord. Bn., Hend. 85)			
Depth Bombs & Accessories	(GD-380)	35144 cu.ft.	748.2 tons
For Aviation Supply Depot, DOTI 74:			
(Call Chief Tiller, A.S.A., Avn. 32)			
1 pc. Aircraft Engine	(GD-396)	180 cu.ft.	1.4 tons
500 pcs. Drop Tanks		44000 cu.ft.	72.5 tons
21 pcs. Drop Fuel Tanks, F6F	(GD-395)	8505 cu.ft.	22.2 tons
For MAG 11 VAWS VIA DOTI 74:			
(Call A.S.A., Avn. 32)			
1 pc. PBJ Parts	(GD-345)	72 cu.ft.	(940 lbs.)
For Marine Air Depot Sqdn. 1, DOTI 83:			
(Call above orgn. thru Henderson then MADS-1)			
1283 pcs. Misc. Supplies	(GD-398)	10797 cu.ft.	76.2 tons
For Aviation Supply Depot, DOTI:			
(Call Chief Tiller, A.S.A.,Avn. 32)			
4 bxs. Generator, Cooler	(GD-399)	54 cu.ft.	(1700 lbs.)
14 crts Outer Wing Panel Assy		5964 cu.ft.	13.9 tons
15 bxs. Photographic Gear	(GD-404)	224 cu.ft.	1.9 tons

NOTE: Headroom will be left in holds as follows: eight feet in #1 and #5, twelve feet in #2, and ten feet in #4.

Upon completion loading at BEVY, vessel proceeds to SHAG to lift capacity load of vehicles of units to be loaded in USS MINTAKA for shipment to DOTI.

It is desired that you include the following in the usual dispatch submitted by you covering loading of vessel:

TO : CG ISLAND COMMAND DESTINATION.

INFO: COMGENSOPACBACOM, COMFEAF, CNB SOSOLS, COMGEN USAF NORSOLS, ROBOG, CINC SWPA, CREGO LEYTE, COMSOPAC, COMSERONSOPAC, COMGENPOA, ROAMT.

By command of Major General MURRAY:

/s/ I B Thomas
I. B. Thomas
Lt.Col.,A.G.D.,
Adjutant General.

DISTRIBUTION:
"SPECIAL"

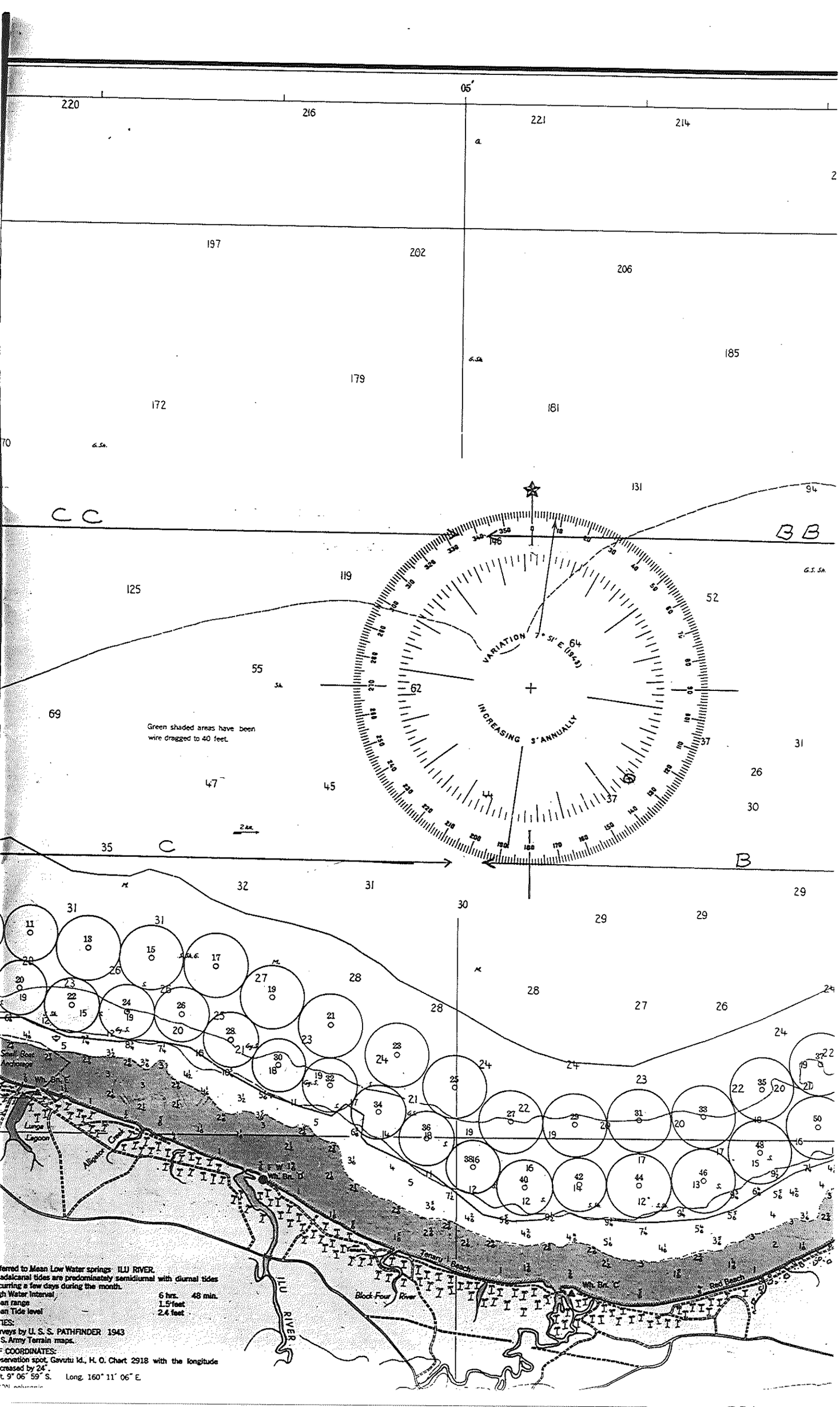
Certified a true copy: Attest:
Nathaniel H. Willis
Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

3 548

SECRET

EXHIBIT 5

UNCLASSIFIED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VARIATION 7° 51' E (1943)
INCREASING 3' ANNUALLY
Green shaded areas have been wire dragged to 40 feet.
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Small Boat Anchorage
Wh. Bn. E
Lunga Lagoon
Alligator Creek
Wh. Bn. D
Ilu River
Ilu River
Tenaru River
Block Four
Wh. Bn. C
Red Beach
ferred to Mean Low Water springs
adalcanal tides are predominately semidiurnal with diurnal tides
curring a few days during the month.
h Water Interval 6 hrs. 48 min.
an range 1.5 feet
an Tide level 2.4 feet
TES:
rveys by U. S. S. PATHFINDER 1943
S. Army Terrain maps.
F COORDINATES:
servation spot, Gavutu Id., H. O. Chart 2918 with the longitude
creased by 24°
t. 9° 06' 59" S. Long. 160° 11' 06" E.

H. O. FIELD NO. 1009

160° 00′

311 281 238

09° 20′

296

SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

SOLOMON ISLANDS

GUADALCANAL ISLAND NORTH COAST

LUNGA POINT AND ADJOINING BEACHES

SOUNDINGS IN FATHOMS
AT MEAN LOW WATER SPRINGS

Natural Scale 1/40,000

256

Nautical Miles

0 ½ 0 1 2

Yards

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000

195 153 151

240 160 176 139 133

191 166 127 121 119 105

101 87

162 89 138 72 83

44 67 56

117 116 63 46 56

96 87 33 39

65 46 40 34

41 34

Point Cruz

Restricted Area

Wm. Ba. G

Kukum Village

25′

U. S. S. SERPENS
(AK-97)

LOADING SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

The following safety rules will apply at all times in handling cargo on board this vessel:

1. Before starting cargo operations all rigging, handling gear, lights and winches will be inspected and the winches drained and tested in the presence of the winchmen and hatchmen. Frequent inspections will be made during cargo handling and any gear not in good shape will be discarded and sent away so as to preclude accidental use.

2. Safety lines with warning boards will be strung before cargo operations arecommenced and no one except the hatchmen will be allowed inside these lines unless loads are rested to allow necessary entry.

3. Passageway on both sides of the hatches will be maintained at all times. Boards and beams will be neatly stacked and no dunnage will be placed on deck except in emergencies and then only upon express permission of the cargo officer or officer of the deck.

4. The whip or hook will in no case be lowered below unshored or unclamped beams.

5. No boards will be removed except for handling cargo, for passage, or for light while working in holds, and will be replaced after work or passage is completed.

6. CO2 fire extinguishers and water will be provided in all holds and necessary fire fighting equipment will be set up in vicinity.

7. No person under the influence of intoxicants or drugs will be allowed to handle cargo. In case of doubt as to person's condition, the opinion of the ship's medical staff will hold.

8. Inasmuch as head and drinking facilities are provided on deck, no person in guard or loading crews will be allowed in any part of the ship other than main deck or cargo holds being worked.

9. Hatchmen will stand while the load is moving.

10. Winchmen will remain standing while operating winches, and no planks, stools, etc., will be placed in the way of the controls.

11. No one will be allowed to converse with the hatchmen or winchmen except on business and then only when load is at rest.

12. Slings, etc., shall be shortened as necessary to prevent span riding too high.

13. No smoking will be allowed in holds or in vicinity of open hatches.

14. No persons will pass on off side of hatch while load is above main deck.

3 548

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate

EXHIBIT 7(1)

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15. Snotters will always be used with four bucket nets.

16. No person will ascend or descend on exposed hold ladder while load is in transit, or walk to the ladder between winch and hatch.

17. No loitering whatsoever will be allowed in vicinity of holds being worked.

18. No persons will stand beneath any load, nor ride the whip in any manner.

19. No load of more than three and one-half (3½) tons will be loaded with single wooden booms. Nets will not be loaded over one and one-half (1½) tons.

20. Oil or grease will be promptly cleaned off deck in the vicinity of winches; if necessary in emergencies when cleaning is impossible, sand will be used to insure proper foot holds.

21. In handling explosives, hazardous cargo, or vehicles, special rules contained in separate sections apply in addition to these rules.

22. Any person observing any unsafe practice will immediately report same to cargo officer or the officer of the deck.

23. Any accidents or failure of gear will be reported immediately to the cargo officer or officer of the deck.

24. Any injury to any person will be reported immediately to the officer of the deck, and examined by the medical staff of this vessel. A certificate of examination will be prepared.

25. In loading, sufficient room for opening all escape doors shall be maintained.

/s/ P. L. STINSON
P. L. STINSON,
Commanding Officer.

- -

Received one copy of U.S.S. SERPENS "LOADING SAFETY REGULATIONS".

Date_____ Signed_____

_____

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 7(2)

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

REGULATIONS FOR THE HANDLING AND STOWAGE OF EXPLOSIVES

During the loading or any explosives or other dangerous cargo there will be a checker at each hold loading at all times. It will be his duty to see that only the cargo designated goes into the hold, that it is stowed in accordance with the loading plan, that it is handled in accordance with the safety regulations, and that the prescribed ventilation or closure is made. He shall see that the working party is inspected and that no unauthorized articles go into the hold.

The following rules are reprinted from Regulations for Explosives or Other Dangerous Articles on Board Vessels.

/s/ P. L. Stinson
P. L. STINSON

- -

HANDLING:

Art. 146.29-13 Cargo Working Equipment. - (a) Before military explosives are loaded or unloaded on or from a vessel the master or other person in charge of the vessel is required to ascertain by examination the condition and working order of all slings, crates, baskets, boxes, chutes, mattresses, tackle, and other equipment to be used in the transfer operation.

(b) Any and all equipment which in the judgment of the master or other person in charge of the vessel is not in safe working condition shall be rejected and he shall prohibit its use and take such precautions as he may deem necessary to be certain such rejected equipment is not used for the purpose of loading or unloading explosives. The master or other person in charge of the vessel shall keep watch of all equipment used during the transfer of explosives and if any part of the equipment shows any defect or is damaged in use, work shall be stopped and the damaged or defective equipment repaired or replaced before permitting the loading or unloading to continue.

(c) This inspection of cargo working equipment shall apply to the vessel's equipment and to stevedores or other contractor's equipment.

Art. 146.29-14 Lights, tools, and equipment. (a) No artificial light except electric lights or electric lamps or flood lights shall be used while loading or unloading military explosives. Such light fixtures shall not be used unless protected against accidental breakage by metal guards. Portable electric lights shall be fitted with stout guards protecting the bulb. Wire of such lights shall be sound and show no evidence of liability to short circuit.

(b) Flashlights of a nonspark type shall be provided by the vessel owner or operator for persons required to enter holds in which explosives are stowed.

(c) Members of the crew of the vessel and other persons permitted on board the vessel to aid and assist in loading or unloading military explosives, shall not be permitted to have or carry on their persons, firearms, matches, knives, bale hooks, metallic tools or personal packages of any description. Lunch boxes, pails, or thermos bottles shall not be brought onto a vessel unless such have been examined and passed by the Coast Guard detail. Lunches shall not be eaten in a hold of a vessel.

(d) Persons engaged in loading explosives shall not wear boots or shoes shod or strengthened with nails or other metal unless such boots or shoes are covered with a nonsparking material.

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

3 548

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EXHIBIT 8(1)

UNCLASSIFIED

Art. 146.29-15 Fires and fire protection. (a) No unnecessary fire shall be permitted on docks, lighters or vessels while loading or unloading military explosives.

(b) Fires deemed necessary must be properly safeguarded and be inconstant charge of some competent person assigned for that purpose by the master or person in charge of the vessel, for the entire period of cargo transfer.

Art. 146.29-15 (c) Barges, lighters, towboats, and other types of vessels engaged in the handling and transfer of military explosives, and equipped with means for heating, cooking, lighting or power involving use of smoke pipes shall have such smoke pipes protected by spark screens. Insofar as practicable such barges, lighters, towboats, and other types of vessels shall not come alongside a vessel loading or discharging military explosives opposite the area where hatches are open to receive cargo. (See Art. 146.29-29 (f)).

(d) Welding or cutting operations, involving the use of open flame or arc shall not be undertaken on a vessel having explosives on board except upon special permission of the captain of the port.

Art. 146.29-16 Smoking. Smoking is prohibited on or near any vessel loading or unloading explosives. "NO SMOKING" warning signs shall be posted during operations of loading and unloading such cargo. One such "NO SMOKING" sign shall be located on the pier at a safe distance from the vessel when such loading or unloading is taking place at a pier.

Art. 146.29-17 Liquor or drugs. No person who, in the judgment of the master, person in charge of the vessel or the officer in charge of the Coast Guard detail, may be considered as being under the influence of liquor or of drugs shall be permitted on board a vessel while operations involving the loading, stowage, unloading, or transportation of explosives are being carried on.

Art. 146.29-18 Handling and slinging of explosives. (a) All ammunition and explosives in bulk must be handled carefully. They shall not be thrown, dropped, rolled, dragged, or slid over each other or over the decks. The provisions of the table in Art. 146.29-100 with reference to handling shall be observed.

(b) In transferring ammunition or explosives in bulk from a pier or another vessel to the receiving vessel, or from a vessel to a pier, the packages may be handled by hand, mechanical hoist or, where permitted by the regulations in this section, a specification chute and mattress may be used. (See Art. 146.09-11 and Art. 146.09-12, Specification of chute and mattress.) A chute shall not be used when the difference in elevation between the two vessels or between a vessel and the loading dock would result in imparting dangerous shocks to the packages by reason of the angle of elevation. When loading or unloading by mechanical means, all ammunition or explosives in bulk shall be handled in the type equipment as specified for the various classes of explosives in the tables, Art. 146.29-100. The maximum load handled in trays or rope net slings per draft shall not exceed 2,400 pounds. Containers

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate

EXHIBIT 8(2)

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

of explosives shall be arranged on trays so that no portion of any container overhangs the tray. For trays provided with sideboards, packages of explosives shall not extend above the sideboard or the crate except packages standing on end may extend above such sideboard, provided the extension does not exceed one-third of the length of the package. Rope net slings shall be so loaded that when lifted a minimum displacement of packages shall occur and the sling shall completely contain the entire load. Explosives shall be hoisted and lowered carefully onto a mattress. Ammunition in fiberboard containers shall not be slung in rope nets. Handles or beckets on ammunition packages shall not be used for slinging purposes.

Art. 146.29-18 Handling and slinging of explosives. (c) Blasting caps, detonating fuzes, fulminate of mercury, and other initiating or priming explosives as defined in the regulations in this part shall be considered as constituting a distinct class of dangerous explosives, and because of the hazard involved they shall be handled with extreme care. (See class VIII, Art. 146. 29-100.)

(d) "Cant" or barrel hooks shall not be used for raising or lowering a barrel, drum or other container ofmilitary explosives. Metal bale hooks shall not be used in handling packages of such explosives.

Art. 146.29-22 Defective ammunition. Ammunition found to be defective while being unloaded from a barge, freight car, or other vehicle, shall not be placed on board a vessel. If found to be defective while on board the vessel, it shall, if at all possible, be removed from the vessel to an isolated location as quickly as possible.

Art. 146.29-23 Recoopering damaged packages. Defective packages shall not be recoopered in the hold of a vessel. Such packages shall not be recoopered elsewhere on board the vessel except upon and under conditions authorized by the captain of the port.

STOWAGE

Art. 146.29-12 Stowage and dunnaging of ammunition and containers of explosives in bulk. (a) Ammunition and the containers of ammunition or explosives in bulk shall be so stowed and dunnaged as to prevent movement in any direction.

(b) Containers of ammunition or explosives in bulk marked "This Side Up" shall be so stowed.

(c) Kegs of black powder shall be stowed in an upright position, the bungs or other opening up, and each tier shall be completely dunnaged.

(d) Metal containers of smokeless powder in bulk having closure means which protrude beyond the chime or the surface of the container shall be so dunnaged as to prevent damage occurring to such closures.

(e) The uppermost tier of ammunition or containers of ammunition or explosives in bulk shall be so braced and blocked that no displacement can occur either upwardly or laterally.

(f) Containers of ammunition or explosives in bulk shall be so stowed that they shall not be liable to be pierced by the dunnaging or crushed by superimposed weight.

(g) Containers of ammunition or explosives in bulk shall not be "cant" stowed, such shall be stowed in full bearing. Broken stowage shall be dunnaged out with cordwood to provide bearing for the container to be added in the tier next above.

(h) Fixed or semifixed ammunition in fiber containers, crated or uncrated, may be stowed on its base or on its side. Dunnaging shall be accomplished in such manner as to bear only upon the metal part of the container. No dunnage or weight shall bear directly upon the fiber portion of the container.

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 8(3)

UNCLASSIFIED

(j) Propellant powder charges in uncrated fiber containers shall be stowed on end. Dunnaging shall be accomplished in such manner as to bear only upon the metalpart of the container. No dunnage or weight shall bear directly upon the fiber portion of the container. Over-stowage with other containers of propellant charges is permitted not to exceed a total of three tiers including the base tier. Each tier shall be floored off.

(k) Separate loading shells that are not boxed or crated may be stowed on their bases or on their sides.

VENTILATION

Art. 146.29-43 Chemical ammunition stowage. Chemical ammunition, class XI, shall be stowed in a deep tank or No. 1 lower hold. When stowed in a deep tank, pump suctions shall be effectively sealed off to prevent the escape of any leakage which may take place. When stowed in No. 1 lower hold the hatch covers, ventilators and pump suction shall be effectively sealed off to prevent the escape of any leakage which may take place. Before entering a deep tank or a No. 1 lower hold containing chemical ammunition the air inside the compartment must be tested by competent personnel to ascertain if leakage has taken place. If leakage has occurred the operation of removing the explosives shall be conducted by skilled personnel, preferably representatives of the Chemical Warfare Service. When the quantity of chemical ammunition to be stowed on board the vessel does not justify the use of a deep tank or No. 1 lower hold, a suitable tween deck space shall be selected and the ammunition stowed in a portable magazine especially constructed to prevent any leakage from the ammunition escaping outside of the magazine. The magazine shall be located at least 8 feet from the ship's side, the space between being stowed with suitable non-dangerous cargo of a type not subject to contamination. No other explosives shall be stowed in the same tween deck hold.

Art. 146.29-48 Ventilation of magazine. A magazine that is not fitted with ventilating ducts to the atmosphere shall be ventilated by omitting the top course of boarding on the sides of the magazine to provide a clear space at least 1 inch and not more than 6 inches below the lower flange or toe of the deck beam within the compartment or hold in which the magazine is constructed. Cowl type ventilators of systems feeding directly into a magazine or a hold in which explosives are stowed shall be covered with a double layer of wire screen of not less than 20 x 20 mesh at the weather end of the cowl. This wire may be attached by folding it back along the cowl and securing the same in place by a sufficient serving with light line or wire to insure a positive closure.

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

SECRET

EXHIBIT 8(4)

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET DESPATCH ROUTINE

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE CREW OF USS SERPENS AK NINETY SEVEN ARE HEREBY REPORTED MISSING AS RESULT OF THE COMPLETE LOSS OF THIS SHIP BY EXPLOSION ON TWENTY NINE JANUARY FORTY FIVE X PAST ACTING SURGEON HARRY M LEVIN US PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE RESERVE X LT JOHN G AIKEN THIRD USCG X LT WILLIAM C KOTKAS USCG X LTJG GEORGE C AUBLE USCGR X LTJG R J JOHNSON USCG X LTJG W C PRANCE USCG X ENS MAX E DAVIS USCGR X ENS JACOB H SHOGREN USCGR X ENS A QUESTAD USCG X CHIEF PAY CLERK JOHN K GORAL USCGR X MACH EDWARD A BAKER USCG X TOTAL ELEVEN OFFICERS X FOLLOWING ENLISTED X EDWIN A ABLES EM SECOND SIX ZERO FOUR SEVEN FIVE FIVE X

ROY G ANDERSON PHM SECOND FIVE ONE SIX THREE SIX EIGHT X

EDWIN F ANTKOWIAK COX FIVE FOUR FOUR FOUR EIGHT FIVE X

HARRY E ARO WT FIRST TWO THREE FOUR TWO NINE SIX X

CLIFFORD D ASHBY AS SEVEN ZERO ONE SEVEN FOUR NINE THREE X

WOODWARD S BABCOCK GM THIRD FIVE ONE EIGHT NINE FOUR THREE X

JACOB NONE BARER S FIRST SIX FOUR SEVEN FOUR ONE SEVEN X

CHARLES R BARNHOUSE S FIRST SIX TWO THREE ZERO TWO FIVE X

JOSEPH NONE BIELINSKI S SECOND SEVEN ZERO TWO ONE ONE ZERO SIX X

BILLY L BOYD SK FIRST TWO TWO NINE ONE FOUR NINE X

LESTER L BRANDLEN S SECOND SEVEN ZERO TWO ZERO ONE THREE FIVE X

GERALD C BREEN F SECOND SEVEN ZERO ZERO ZERO THREE ZERO SIX X

CHESTER BROOKS ST SECOND SEVEN ZERO ZERO SIX FIVE ONE SIX X

JAMES M BROSHEAR QM THIRD TWO TWO SEVEN EIGHT NINE TWO X

LEO H BURKE S SECOND SIX EIGHT FIVE ONE EIGHT FIVE X

KEITH D BURNS S SECOND SEVEN ZERO ONE EIGHT TWO THREE ZERO X

JUNIOR W BUTLER S FIRST FIVE SEVEN FIVE THREE EIGHT SEVEN X

RAYMOND F CALLAHAN S SECOND SEVEN ZERO TWO ONE ONE ZERO TWO SEVEN X

GILBERT J CAMARLINGHI S SECOND SIX ZERO FOUR ONE SEVEN NINE X

ANTHONY NONE CAMBRIA S SECOND SIX SIX TWO THREE ZERO EIGHT X

MICHAEL L CAMMARATA S SECOND SIX EIGHT FIVE ONE SEVEN SEVEN X

CHARLES E CARR S SECOND SEVEN ZERO ZERO FOUR TWO FOUR NINE X

PETER A CASSARIS S FIRST FIVE NINE FIVE FIVE THREE SIX X

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

3 548

EXHIBIT 10(1)

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

PETE NONE CATGENOVA S SECOND SIX EIGHT TWO SEVEN FIVE TWO X

PHILLIP R CERVANTEZ CM THIRD SIX THREE ONE EIGHT NINE FOUR X

LESLIE E CHAMBERS S SECOND SIX ZERO ZERO EIGHT ONE ONE X

FRANK J CIANCIO S FIRST FIVE SIX FOUR FIVE ZERO FIVE X

JOSEPH NONE COPE S FIRST SIX THREE ONE NINE TWO FOUR X

JAMES E CHADWICK MM SECOND FIVE FOUR FOUR FIVE TWO THREE X

JAMES V COTE S FIRST SIX SEVEN FIVE FIVE ONE TWO X

WILLIAM NONE COWHEY S FIRST FIVE EIGHT ZERO SIX SIX THREE X

CHARLES E CRAFT S FIRST SIX THREE SIX ZERO EIGHT NINE X

LAWRENCE F CREECH S SECOND SIX EIGHT THREE ONE TWO TWO X

LOVELL R CROOK S FIRST TWO TWO EIGHT SEVEN FOUR TWO X

RANARD M CROWE S FIRST SIX THREE SEVEN ONE NINE FOUR X

ARDEN O CUMMINGS MOMM SECOND TWO THREE EIGHT ZERO EIGHT FIVE X

ALBERT B CURTIS S FIRST SIX THREE FIVE SEVEN FOUR FOUR X

JOHN C DALY S FIRST SIX THREE EIGHT ZERO TWO ONE X

JOHN A DANCISAK S FIRST SIX ZERO SEVEN FOUR EIGHT ONE X

CLARENCE W DAY S SECOND SIX EIGHT ZERO THREE THREE THREE X

HOWARD J DAY S FIRST FIVE SEVEN FOUR FIVE SIX SIX X

JOHN C DEDMON JUNIOR RDM THIRD SIX THREE THREE NINE SEVEN SIX X

HENRY K DEERMER S SECOND SIX EIGHT ZERO SIX THREE TWO X

SAMUEL NONE DE GAETANO S FIRST SEVEN ZERO ZERO ONE SIX TWO TWO X

ROBERT M DEGREVE S SECOND SIX NINE ZERO SIX SIX NINE X

MARVIN NONE DEROUEN S FIRST FIVE ZERO THREE FOUR EIGHT ONE X

GEORGE L DICKERSON STM FIRST SEVEN ZERO ZERO NINE ONE THREE FOUR X

LEE H DIEHL S FIRST SIX THREE THREE TWO TWO TWO X

HAROLD G DISTEL F FIRST SIX SEVEN FIVE TWO TWO SIX X

HOMER A DIX S SECOND SIX SEVEN SIX SEVEN FOUR NINE X

WILLIAM C DOHERTY S FIRST SIX THREE TWO ONE THREE ONE X

EDWARD J DONATO CM THIRD FIVE EIGHT NINE THREE FIVE THREE X

DONALD R DONOVAN S FIRST FIVE NINE FIVE THREE SIX NINE X

JAMES DRAGO S SECOND SIX ZERO SEVEN SIX EIGHT FOUR X

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 10(2)

SECRET UNCLASSIFIED

WILLIAM C DUNN S FIRST FIVE EIGHT SEVEN NINE ZERO TWO X

EDMUND J DURSO COX FIVE ONE NINE FIVE NINE FIVE X

ROBERT A EASTERDAY MOMM THIRD FIVE ONE TWO TWO FOUR THREE X

GUSTAVE F ECKART COX FIVE FIVE FOUR FOUR FOUR FOUR X

SYLVAN B EISASSER S FIRST SIX THREE TWO SIX NINE ZERO X

JOSEPH D FAUST COX FIVE THREE TWO THREE ONE THREE X

JOHN NONE FIDURSKY S FIRST FIVE SIX ONE SEVEN ONE ZERO X

IRA V FLETCHER S FIRST SIX TWO FIVE FOUR FIVE FOUR X

MURRAY C FLOWERS HA FIRST SIX ONE TWO SEVEN NINE FOUR X

FIELDON B FORKNER EM THIRD SIX THREE THREE FOUR SIX FIVE X

WARREN E FOX CM SECOND FIVE TWO NINE SEVEN SEVEN EIGHT X

ROGER W FREGIA S SECOND SEVEN ZERO ONE SIX ZERO TWO ONE X

JAY F FRENCH S FIRST FIVE FIVE SEVEN NINE ONE SIX X

RALPH C FRITZ S FIRST FIVE FOUR FOUR FOUR THREE FIVE X

JIME GALLO S FIRST FIVE SEVEN FIVE SIX EIGHT ZERO X

ELY GAMSU S FIRST FIVE EIGHT ZERO SIX EIGHT FOUR X

JOHN L GARZON F FIRST SIX SEVEN FIVE EIGHT ZERO TWO X

MACK E GIBSON S SECOND SIX SEVEN FIVE TWO FIVE SEVEN X

ROBERT L GLAZE CBM TWO ZERO EIGHT SIX EIGHT EIGHT X

SHELDON G GOLDSTEIN S SECOND SIX TWO THREE ONE FIVE ONE X

EMELIO C GONZALES S SECOND SIX THREE ONE FIVE FIVE FIVE X

CHARLES GRAEBNER SIX THREE ONE ZERO SIX SEVEN X

WARREN J GRANGER S FIRST FIVE FIVE EIGHT NINE THREE SIX X

DANIEL L GRANT JUNIOR Y THIRD FIVE THREE NINE ZERO EIGHT THREE X

JEAN P D GRAY S FIRST SIX SEVEN FIVE SEVEN NINE SIX X

FREEMAN GREGORY S FIRST FIVE ONE THREE FIVE EIGHT SIX X

FRANK J GRETZ S FIRST FIVE SIX ONE SIX NINE ONE X

LOREN E GRISAMORE S FIRST SIX THREE TWO NINE TWO ZERO X

STANLEY R GRISBAUM S FIRST SIX ONE THREE THREE FIVE FIVE X

BOYCE F GUTHRIDGE RT THIRD SIX FIVE FIVE ZERO TWO FOUR X

ELMER P HAGEMEIER WT SECOND SIX ONE ZERO SIX ZERO THREE X

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (Junior Grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 10(3)

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

ARTHUR C HAGENDORN JUNIOR PHOM THIRD FIVE FOUR ZERO THREE NINE NINE X

RAYMOND C HAMILTON RDM THIRD SIX THREE FIVE THREE FIVE NINE X

JOHN W HAMPTON BM SECOND SIX THREE THREE SEVEN ZERO TWO X

WILLIAM H HARLOW F FIRST FIVE NINE NINE FOUR TWO TWO X

KENNETH H HARMON F FIRST SIX SEVEN SIX THREE FOUR SEVEN X

DONALD J HART S SECOND SEVEN ZERO ONE SEVEN TWO FIVE FOUR X

JAMES HARTLEIB F FIRST SIX SEVEN SIX TWO SEVEN ZERO X

WILLIAM C HARTZLER MM THIRD SIX ZERO SEVEN SIX ONE EIGHT X

MELVIN NONE HASKELL S FIRST SIX ZERO FIVE ZERO ZERO NINE X

PERRY P HEADRICK S SECOND FIVE EIGHT EIGHT EIGHT ONE THREE X

LESLIE HELSEM MOMM SECOND TWO THREE EIGHT ONE FOUR SIX X

FELIX L HENIGAN F SECOND FIVE EIGHT SEVEN ONE ONE ONE X

GEORGE A HENSHAW SC SECOND FIVE TWO ONE SEVEN FOUR FIVE X

ROBERT A HERRINGTON F FIRST SIX THREE THREE SEVEN ZERO THREE X

MARCUS R HICKMAN STM THIRD SIX SEVEN SEVEN ZERO SEVEN SEVEN X

THOMAS L HIGGINS S FIRST FIVE SEVEN THREE SEVEN ZERO FOUR X

HENRY C HINSON GM THIRD FIVE ZERO EIGHT THREE THREE TWO X

ROBERT B HODGE S FIRST FIVE SEVEN SIX EIGHT EIGHT THREE X

BERNARD J HOUCHEN S SECOND SIX SEVEN SIX EIGHT SIX ONE X

ROBERT L HOYT S FIRST FIVE SEVEN FIVE EIGHT NINE FIVE X

RAYMOND E HUBACHER S FIRST FIVE FIVE FOUR ZERO THREE FOUR X

OTIS D HULL S FIRST FIVE THREE THREE ZERO SEVEN NINE X

COLON J HUTCHINSON S SECOND FIVE FIVE SIX FOUR FOUR NINE X

VERNARD C JACOBS MOMM SECOND FIVE SIX NINE SEVEN TWO NINE X

PAUL R JAISSLE S SECOND SIX THREE ONE SEVEN FOUR SEVEN X

NORMAN A JOHNSON S SECOND FIVE SEVEN ZERO NINE SEVEN ZERO X

FRANK KADILAK SK FIRST TWO FOUR SEVEN ZERO ONE ONE X

MILTON R KELLER JUNIOR S SECOND SIX THREE FOUR ZERO ONE FOUR X

ARNOLD E KETTUNEN F FIRST FIVE TWO EIGHT ZERO FIVE SIX X

RALPH D KILEY S FIRST SIX ONE SEVEN FOUR ZERO ZERO X

RICHARD O KIRCHNER S FIRST SIX ZERO FIVE THREE ONE SIX X

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 10(4)

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

MELVIN M KOLAR MOMM THIRD FIVE SEVEN ONE THREE EIGHT ONE X

NORBERT E KRUEGER S FIRST SIX ZERO EIGHT SIX EIGHT FIVE X

VINCENT J KURDILLA S FIRST FIVE SEVEN NINE FOUR NINE SEVEN X

STANLEY J KUSEK S FIRST FIVE FIVE THREE NINE ZERO NINE X

CHARLIE G KYLE STM FIRST SEVEN ZERO ZERO NINE THREE SEVEN ZERO X

JAMES E LAIRD S FIRST SIX SIX FIVE EIGHT ZERO SEVEN X

WALTER P LAMBERT S FIRST SIX ONE SIX TWO TWO TWO X

NOLAN R LEGO JUNIOR S SECOND SIX SEVEN ZERO TWO TWO FOUR X

DAVID F LEWIS SC THIRD FIVE SEVEN FIVE FIVE TWO FIVE X

WALTER J LIMBACHER SK THIRD SIX THREE ZERO TWO TWO NINE X

WOODROW NONE LANHAM S FIRST SIX THREE FIVE FIVE EIGHT THREE X

CHARLES T MACFARLAND MOMM THIRD SIX ONE FIVE FIVE NINE FIVE X

RUSSELL C LEVERENTZ MM THIRD TWO FOUR SEVEN ONE FOUR TWO X

JOSEPH J MACKEY COX FIVE SIX ZERO NINE SIX NINE X

SAMUEL M MADDOX S SECOND SIX FIVE ZERO EIGHT ONE SEVEN X

ALBERT MANKE COX SIX ZERO NINE FIVE ZERO FIVE X

RAYMOND G MAZZANTI COX TWO FIVE ONE SIX TWO FOUR X

JOHN H MCCARTER MM THIRD FIVE SEVEN SIX SIX ONE NINE X

JOHN L MCCAW WT THIRD SIX THREE THREE TWO FOUR NINE X

WILLIAM J MCCULLOUGH MM THIRD FIVE SIX FOUR EIGHT SEVEN ZERO X

MALCOLM W MCDANIEL S SECOND SIX THREE SIX TWO ZERO ZERO X

HAROLD M MCGUCKIN SK THIRD SIX THREE ZERO ONE SIX FOUR X

LLOYD A MCLARTY RM SECOND SIX SEVEN SEVEN FIVE TWO SEVEN X

ALVIS J MENARD MM THIRD SIX ONE TWO FOUR ONE THREE X

MADGE V MILLER STM SECOND SEVEN ZERO ZERO SIX FIVE FOUR SEVEN X

JAMES J MIRON S FIRST SIX ZERO NINE FIVE ONE ZERO X

WILLIAM F NIVIN S FIRST SIX THREE ZERO TWO THREE THREE X

DOUGLAS OAKLUND S FIRST FIVE FOUR FIVE TWO EIGHT NINE X

WILLIAM R ODONNELL COX FIVE ONE NINE SEVEN ONE TWO X

GEORGE E ORTON CMM FIVE ONE NINE SIX EIGHT ZERO X

CHARLES C PAYNE F FIRST FIVE SEVEN THREE SEVEN NINE SEVEN X

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 10(5)

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

WILLIAM O PAZUREK SM THIRD FIVE FOUR FOUR NINE ZERO TWO X

LINCOLN F PETERSON WT THIRD SEVEN ZERO ZERO ZERO ZERO EIGHT ONE X

FREDERICK E A QUALMANN STM THIRD SIX TWO FOUR ZERO SEVEN TWO X

ORVILLE F REUTER S FIRST SIX ZERO SEVEN FOUR NINE THREE X

HUGH RICCARDI MOMM FIRST SIX TWO THREE FIVE SIX SIX X

FRED O ROYER RM THIRD SIX ZERO NINE SEVEN ZERO THREE X

PAUL RUDY CMM FIVE ZERO ONE FOUR EIGHT NINE X

EUGENE RUGGIERO CMM FIVE ZERO FIVE ZERO EIGHT TWO X

ALFONSO G SANDOVAL S FIRST SIX THREE FOUR ZERO ONE NINE X

ROY A SANPAY MM THIRD SIX ONE THREE TWO FIVE ONE X

LEWIS J SARKISOFF S FIRST SIX THREE THREE NINE FIVE EIGHT X

CHARLES E SCHRADER S FIRST FIVE FIVE FIVE EIGHT ONE FIVE X

JOHN P SCHMOOK F FIRST FIVE THREE FIVE NINE TWO ZERO X

JAMES D SELAYA S FIRST SIX THREE ONE ZERO SIX THREE X

WILLIAM E SELEMAN JUNIOR COX FIVE SEVEN FIVE THREE ONE ZERO X

ROBERT J SMITH WT THIRD TWO TWO FIVE NINE TWO SIX X

ROBERT C SNEDDON S FIRST SIX ZERO SEVEN SIX THREE SEVEN X

ROBERT H SORENSON MM THIRD SIX SEVEN FIVE SIX SEVEN ZERO X

CYRIL D STEINMAN JUNIOR RM FIRST FIVE EIGHT NINE SIX FOUR FIVE X

WASHINGTON E STILLMAN CPHM TWO TWO TWO SIX FOUR ONE X

MYRON K STRICKLAND RM THIRD FIVE SEVEN FOUR SEVEN THREE TWO X

FLOYD STUCKEY COX FIVE SIX ZERO ZERO FIVE FOUR X

ROBERT E THOMAS Y FIRST TWO THREE ONE NINE SIX TWO X

JAMES R THORNBURGH MM FIRST SIX ONE FOUR THREE ZERO FOUR X

HUBERT TURNER MOMM FIRST FIVE ONE NINE EIGHT FIVE THREE X

VERNON H TWAIT BM SECOND SIX ZERO SEVEN FOUR FOUR SEVEN X

EDAR L VEDDER EM FIRST FIVE THREE NINE ONE NINE TWO X

WILLIAM W VAUGHAN GM SECOND TWO THREE THREE THREE FIVE FIVE X

SAMUEL E VILLEMONT F FIRST FIVE FIVE EIGHT EIGHT NINE EIGHT X

HAROLD L VINCENT WT SECOND FIVE ONE SIX ZERO THREE ZERO X

JOHN F WALKO COX FIVE SEVEN SEVEN ONE NINE SEVEN X

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 10(6)

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

EUGENE J WARD ST SECOND TWO TWO EIGHT THREE FIVE SIX X

DELOS R WARDLE COX SIX SEVEN FIVE SEVEN FIVE TWO X

KIMCHION D WEST SM SECOND SIX ZERO FOUR THREE EIGHT NINE X

WOODROW H WETTS S FIRST FIVE FOUR FIVE ONE NINE SIX X

ALTON NONE WHITE S SECOND SIX NINE FIVE TWO THREE TWO X

CHARLES B WOOD SC FIRST SIX THREE ZERO TWO THREE FIVE X

TOM ZAFFORE S FIRST SIX ZERO SEVEN FOUR SEVEN FOUR X

TOTAL ENLISTED ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY FIVE X

RELEASED: P. T. GARVER

CNB GUADAL SECNAV

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 10(7)

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

The following men were attached to the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK-97) and are survivors:

NAME	SERIAL	RANK/RATE	SERVICE
STINSON, Peery L.		Lt.Comdr.	USCG
CLARK, John R.		Lieut.	USCG
JONES, Stanley M.	515-547	CCS	USCGR
FIGGS, Richard M.	7009-220	St3c	USCGR
HOUSEKNECHT, Morris	563-428	F1c	USCGR
HUGHES, William E.	595-163	S1c	USCGR
SMART, Robert J.	675-709	S1c	USCGR
CARMANA, Fidel O.	676-292	S2c	USCGR
KEMP, Kelsie K.	599-922	S1c	USCGR
KENNEDY, George S.	587-983	S2c	USCGR

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

3 548

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

EXHIBIT 11

HEADQUARTERS ISLAND COMMAND
Office of the Army Port Superintendent
APO 709

30 January 1945

SUBJECT: Personnel Missing due to Explosion of U.S.S. SERPENS.

TO : Commanding General, Island Command, APO 709.

Certificates here attached reveal the following Army personnel missing.

364th Harbor Craft Company

NAME	RANK	SERIAL NO.
Beskosty, Alec	Tec 5	31459701
Helton, Herman T.	Pvt	38630168

221st Military Police Company

NAME	RANK	SERIAL NO.
Helement, Alexander	Pfc	36553127

492d Port Battalion

NAME	RANK	SERIAL NO.
Childs, Fred L.	S/Sgt	31231574
McMahan, Ted	Sgt	34509543
Davis, James E.	Tec 4	34723425
Matney, Curtiss D.	Tec 4	35650830
Owen, Albert L.	Tec 4	35696021
Arndt, Lawrence L.	Cpl	35574493
Hinerman, Nile W.	Cpl	35749172
Baillargeon, Charles E.	Tec 5	31117116
Carmichael, James G.	Tec 5	35584835
Furrey, Charles D.	Tec 5	35787521
Gutierrez, Phillip	Tec 5	37494093
Hopkins, Robert B.	Tec 5	32735704
Mark, Guy E.	Tec 5	35534921
Moore, Leo E.	Tec 5	35050770
Okichick, Walter L.	Tec 5	35090813
Reilly, George H.	Tec 5	37151302
Ruth, Marcus A.	Tec 5	35091238
Baginski, Walter E.	Pfc	32834015
Barrett, Robert J.	Pfc	37491338
Barrick, Leland C.	Pfc	32838694
Boos, Edwin L.	Pfc	35788031
Borton, Derious F. Jr.	Pfc	35091566
Buchanan, Clarence M.	Pfc	31126132
Cotton, Howard R.	Pfc	38037847
Elam, Billy G.	Pfc	37529737
Feutz, Richard M.	Pfc	39209434
Fulda, Lewis L.	Pfc	32963763
Gesford, Edward C.	Pfc	32839137
Gilbert, Fred E.	Pfc	39699341
Grapentnin, Floyd Jr.	Pfc	39209419
Guyett, Alan J.	Pfc	32735781
Henry, Francis V.	Pfc	34722151
Johnson, Richard C.	Pfc	32735960

A true copy. Attest:
Nathaniel H. Willis
Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

3 548

EXHIBIT 12(1)

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

NAME	RANK	SERIAL NO.
Kayler, William G. Jr.	Pfc	32834049
Keough, Herbert C.	Pfc	34503328
Kreps, Paul F.	Pfc	35534798
McDaniel, Charles E.	Pfc	34723674
Morgan, Huie	Pfc	35650832
Preedom, John J.	Pfc	20149800
Stiles, William P.	Pfc	33726781
Watts, Lawton	Pfc	35650831
Burks, Clifton C.	Pvt	38470794
Cook, John	Pvt	35051243
Dahlberg, Fritz O.	Pvt	37563037
Frank, Glenn B.	Pvt	34722047
Gale, Kayah #46711	Pvt	39853270
Kramer, William J.	Pvt	35543476
Latraille, David A.	Pvt	37562158
May, Nicholas A.	Pvt	35534974
Medves, Raymond F.	Pvt	35534799
Thomas, Ivan B.	Pvt	35090959
1st Lt. McGrath, Arnold J.		0-287474

457th Amphibian Truck Co

NAME	RANK	SERIAL NO.
Robeson, Linton J.	Tec 5	34123916
Brieschke, Alfred W.	Tec 5	39608569

481st Port Battalion

NONE

Headquarters, Island Command, Port Platoon

NONE

84th QM Bn. Mobile

NONE

3767th QM Truck Company

NONE

3388th QM Trk Co

NONE

975th Quartermaster Service Co.

NONE

977th Quartermaster Service Co.

NONE

3768th QM Truck Co.

NONE

3766th QM Truck Co.

NONE

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

EXHIBIT 12(2)

UNCLASSIFIED

For the Army Port Superintendent:

JOS. F. DE MAY,
Capt., T.C.,
Administrative Officer.

13 Incls.

A true copy. Attest:

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U. S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

EXHIBIT 12(3)

EXCERPTS FROM DIVING LOG OF U.S.S. ATA-174

DATE 3, Feb. 1945

NAME: Viramontes, G. RATE BM2c

JOB: Wreckage of U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97). Attempting to locate wreckage.

TIME LEFT SURFACE 1356
TIME REACHED BOTTOM 1358
TOTAL TIME 37 min
PLACE
Lunga Point,
Guadalcanal Island

TIME LEFT BOTTOM 1433
TIME REACHED SURFACE 1449
TIME DECOMPRESSION 14 m
DEPTH 11Ø feet
Reached first stage of decompression 1435. Completed decompression first stage 1448.
Diving Officer.

COMMANTS: No wreckage

Bos'n P. T. Ludwig
Diving Officer

DATE: 4, Feb. 1945

NAME: St. John RATE Slc

JOB: Attmpting to locate wreckage of U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97)
TIME LEFT SURFACE Ø9Ø9 TIME LEFT BOTTOM Ø934
TIME REACHED BOTTOM Ø911 TIME REACHED SURFACE Ø952

FIRST STATE OF DECOMPRESSION: Ø936
FINISHED FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION: Ø951
TIME DECOMPRESSION: 11 minutes
DEPTH: 12Ø ft.
TOTAL TIME: 43 minutes
PLACE: Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island

"FOUND"

Ø923: 1 airplane

DATE: 4, Feb. 1945

NAME: Marcik, H. RATE BM2c

JOB: Attempting to locate wreckage of U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97)
TIME LEFT SURFACT: 1026 TIME LEFT BOTTOM: 1105
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: 1028 TIME REACHED SURFACE: 1153

FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION: 1112
FINISHED FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION: 1130
TIME DECOMPRESSION: 4Ø m
DEPTH: 12Ø ft. STARTED 2nd STAGE 1131
TOTAL TIME 1 h 27 m FINISHED 2nd STAGE 1152
PLACE: Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island

:FOUND:

1Ø28 Sighed wreck piece of Keel about 50 ft. long: fifteen feet high: part of a Bomber. after inspection found to be a piece of a Bombing plane.
1034 Found part of the Keel. a piece of metal 4" wide raised about one inch from the deck braised onto the deck. twisted mass of wreckage standing about 15' high and about 5Ø feet long.

3 548

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

EXHIBIT 13(1)

EXCERPTS FROM DIVING LOG OF U.S.S. ATA-174,
CONTINUED.

1044 Sighted another piece: part of the deck house. Sighted a third piece of wreckage looks like a piece out of the double bottoms 20 ft long & 20 ft wide stands at highest point about 15 ft. part of bulkhead between #1 & #2 holds. biggest piece about 20 ft lg 20 ft found a small motor bringing it up.

DATE: 4, Feb. 1945

NAME: Viramontes, G. RATE BM2c

JOB: Attempting to locate wreckage of the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97)

TIME LEFT SURFACE: 1429
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: 1431 TOTAL TIME: 1 h 27 m
TIME LEFT BOTTOM: 1513
TIME IN 1st STAGE DECOMPRESSION: 1515 PLACE: LUNGA POINT
FINISHED 1st STAGE: 1533 GUADALCANAL IS.
STARTED 2nd STAGE: 1534
FINISHED 2nd STAGE: 1555
TIME REACHED SURFACE: 1556
DEPTH: 120 ft.
TOTAL TIME OF DECOMPRESSION: 40 m

:FOUND:

Steel plates with white numbers on one of them: 3209:
Steel plate 10 feet long 15 or 20 feet wide 3/4 inch thick.

DATE:

NAME: Marcik, C. RATE: BM2c

JOB: Attempting to locate wreckage of the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97)

TIME LEFT SURFACE: 1622 DEPTH: 120 ft.
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: 1625
TIME LEFT BOTTOM: 1646
FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION (IN: 1650 PLACE: Lunga Point
(OUT: 1702 Guadalcanal Island

TOTAL TIME OF DECOMPRESSION: 12 m
TIME REACHED SURFACE: 1703
TOTAL TIME DOWN: 41 minutes

:FOUND:

1628: 2 cowl ventilators
1631 cross beam from hatch
1632 sea bag marked Sherrill B or D. C. (Recovered) and sent ashore
1635 galley stove and exploded ammo. Bombs unexploded and exploded.

-5 Feb 1945-

1544 Enter
NAME; Viramontes, G. RATE BM2c

1754 REACHED SURFACE
2 H 10 M
TOTAL TIME

1544 Entered water
1555 Reached bottom
1638 Left bottom
1640 At stage 1st stage of decompression.
1652 At 2nd stage of decompression.
1721 At 3rd stage of decompression.
1753 Finished decompression.

REPORT

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EXHIBIT 13(2)

EXCERPTS FROM DIVING LOG OF U.S.S. ATA-174

DATE 3, Feb. 1945

NAME: Viramontes, G. RATE BM2c

JOB: Wreckage of U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97). Attempting to locate wreckage.

TIME LEFT SURFACE 1356
TIME REACHED BOTTOM 1358
TOTAL TIME 37 min
PLACE
Lunga Point,
Guadalcanal Island

TIME LEFT BOTTOM 1433
TIME REACHED SURFACE 1449
TIME DECOMPRESSION 14 m
DEPTH 11Ø feet
Reached first stage of decompression 1435. Completed decompression first stage 1448.
Diving Officer.

COMMANTS: No wreckage

Bos'n P. T. Ludwig
Diving Officer

DATE: 4, Feb. 1945

NAME: St. John RATE Slc

JOB: Attmpting to locate wreckage of U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97)
TIME LEFT SURFACE Ø9Ø9 TIME LEFT BOTTOM Ø934
TIME REACHED BOTTOM Ø911 TIME REACHED SURFACE Ø952

FIRST STATE OF DECOMPRESSION: Ø936
FINISHED FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION: Ø951
TIME DECOMPRESSION: 11 minutes
DEPTH: 12Ø ft.
TOTAL TIME: 43 minutes
PLACE: Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island

"FOUND"

Ø923: 1 airplane

DATE: 4, Feb. 1945

NAME: Marcik, H. RATE BM2c

JOB: Attempting to locate wreckage of U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97)
TIME LEFT SURFACT: 1026 TIME LEFT BOTTOM: 1105
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: 1028 TIME REACHED SURFACE: 1153

FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION: 1112
FINISHED FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION: 1130
TIME DECOMPRESSION: 4Ø m
DEPTH: 12Ø ft. STARTED 2nd STAGE 1131
TOTAL TIME 1 h 27 m FINISHED 2nd STAGE 1152
PLACE: Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island

:FOUND:

1Ø28 Sighed wreck piece of Keel about 50 ft. long: fifteen feet high: part of a Bomber. after inspection found to be a piece of a Bombing plane.
1034 Found part of the Keel. a piece of metal 4" wide raised about one inch from the deck braised onto the deck. twisted mass of wreckage standing about 15' high and about 5Ø feet long.

3 548

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EXHIBIT 13(1)

EXCERPTS FROM DIVING LOG OF U.S.S. ATA-174,
CONTINUED.

1Ø44 Sighted another piece: part of the deck house. Sighted a third piece of wreckage looks like a piece out of the double bottoms 20 ft long & 20 ft wide stands at highest point about 15 ft. part of bulkhead between #1 & #2 holds. biggest piece about 20 ft lg 20 ft found a small motor bringing it up.

DATE: 4, Feb. 1945

NAME: Viramontes, G. RATE BM2c

JOB: Attempting to locate wreckage of the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97)

TIME LEFT SURFACE: 1429
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: 1431 TOTAL TIME: 1 h 27 m
TIME LEFT BOTTOM: 1513
TIME IN 1st STAGE DECOMPRESSION: 1515 PLACE: LUNGA POINT
FINISHED 1st STAGE: 1533 GUADALCANAL IS.
STARTED 2nd STAGE: 1534
FINISHED 2nd STAGE: 1555
TIME REACHED SURFACE: 1556
DEPTH: 12Ø ft.
TOTAL TIME OF DECOMPRESSION: 4Ø m

:FOUND:

Steel plates with white numbers on one of them: 32Ø9:
Steel plate 1Ø feet long 15 or 20 feet wide 3/4 inch thick.

DATE:

NAME: Marcik, C. RATE: BM2c

JOB: Attempting to locate wreckage of the U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97)

TIME LEFT SURFACE: 1622 DEPTH: 12Ø ft.
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: 1625
TIME LEFT BOTTOM: 1646
FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION (IN: 165Ø PLACE: Lunga Point
(OUT: 1702 Guadalcanal Island

TOTAL TIME OF DECOMPRESSION: 12 m
TIME REACHED SURFACE: 1703
TOTAL TIME DOWN: 41 minutes

:FOUND:

1628: 2 cowl ventilators
1631 cross beam from hatch
1632 sea bag marked Sherrill B or D. C. (Recovered) and sent ashore
1635 galley stove and exploded ammo. Bombs unexploded and exploded.

-5 Feb 1945-

1544 Enter
NAME; Viramontes, G. RATE BM2c

1754 REACHED SURFACE
2 H 10 M
TOTAL TIME

1544 Entered water
1555 Reached bottom
1638 Left bottom
1640 At stage 1st stage of decompression.
1652 At 2nd stage of decompression.
1721 At 3rd stage of decompression.
1753 Finished decompression.

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EXHIBIT 13(2)

EXCERPTS FROM DIVING LOG OF U.S.S. ATA-174,
CONTINUED.

1547 Wreck lying upside down and leaning to starboard. Ship marking: "K-97". Can see hand rails about 60 feet aft from bow; forward hold is open and is all there. Body observed about 12 feet away caught on rail. Bow appears in good shape. Lowering to bottom.
1555 Reached bottom. Many beams. Eight frames, all bent up. Can see weight on spar buoy. Fuses (in boxes) scattered on bottom. See part of anchor windlass with niggerhead. Pail crate "AVD Mark 53". Suspect air pocket in bow. Walking aft along ship. Wreck appears lying bow to stern of ATA-174. Distance line sent to diver. Seabag found. Pipe bent up.
1616 Aft past #1 hold. Plate bent. Wing of plane under bow, marked with star. Mark 53 Ø Ordnance No. 1 hold did not blow up - all there. Keel of ship looks good quite a way aft. Some of rail damaged. End of distance line - hull complete to aft of #1 hold. Other side appears not as good as starboard lying lower. Possibly damaged. Found 20mm magazine. Appears that ship being held up by kingposts or mast. Rail seems in good shape from bow to aft of #1 hold. Bow estimated to be about 50 feet off bottom.
1638 At rail, aft of anchor about 15 to 20 feet.
1640 At stage.
1645 Ship lying stern toward our bow and bow a little bit away from our stern. Forty feet astern from bow of wreck appears in good shape.

NAME: Mercik, H. RATE: BM2c DATED 6 Feb. 1945

JOB: Inspecting wreckage of U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97).

TIME LEFT SURFACE: Ø835 PLACE: Lunga Pt., Guadalcanal Is.
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: Ø844
TIME LEFT BOTTOM: Ø936
FIRST STAGE DECOMPRESSION (In: Ø941
(Out: Ø955
SECOND STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION (In: Ø956
(Out: 1Ø24
THIRD STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION (In: 1Ø25
(Out: 1057
TOTAL TIME OF DECOMPRESSION: 1H 16M
TIME REACHED SURFACE: 1Ø58
TOTAL TIME DOWN: 2H 23M
DEPTH: 12Ø feet.

:FOUND:
Large Padeye three feet from the broken edge. One body jammed with feet under the wreckage two bodies jammed under wreckage alongside of ship. Major part of debris is depth charges, cargo winch, anchor chain, 10 inch live two closed chalks, one freeing port. Hollow shell looking like port of Deck house 2 1/2 feet wide stands up about 10 feet. Starts resting on bottom where the second scupper begins.

NAME: Mercik, C. RATE BM2c DATE: 6 Feb. 1945

JOB: Inspecting wreckage of U.S.S. SERPENS (AK97).

TIME LEFT SURFACE: 1135 PLACE: Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island.
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: 1141
TIME LEFT BOTTOM: 1219
FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION (In: 1221
(Out: 1227
SECOND STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION (In: 1228
(Out: 1256
THIRD STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION (In: 1257
(Out: 1325.
TOTAL TIME OF DECOMPRESSION 64 minutes
TOTAL TIME DOWN 1 hr. 51 m.
TIME REACHED SURFACE 1326

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EXHIBIT 13(3)

EXCERPTS FROM DIVING LOG OF U.S.S. ATA-174
CONTINUED.

DEPTH 13Ø ft.

: FOUND :

Mark 53 aerial depth charge. Part of an airplane motor. Square block of cement about a foot thick two and a half long and wide. Can see the decks and beams all mangled up the keel and sides are all blown out. End raised up about 2Ø ft. from the bottom.

NAME: St. John, E. RATE: S1c 6 Feb. 1945

JOB: Inspecting wreck of U.S.S. SERPENS (A.K.97).
PLACE: Lunga Point, Guadalcanal Island.

TIME LEFT SURFACE: 1404
TIME REACHED BOTTOM: 1409
TIME LEFT BOTTOM: 1433

FIRST STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION: (In: 1436
(Out: 1448

SECOND STAGE OF DECOMPRESSION: (In: 1450
(Out: 1508

TOTAL TIME OF DECOMPRESSION: 30 minutes
TIME REACHED SURFACE : 1509
TOTAL TIME DOWN : 1 hr. 05 min.
DEPTH :,13Ø feet

REMARKS:
Reached end of ship; could not observe anything beyond.

A true copy. Attest;

Nathaniel H. Willis

Nathaniel H. Willis, Lieutenant (junior grade),
U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, Judge Advocate.

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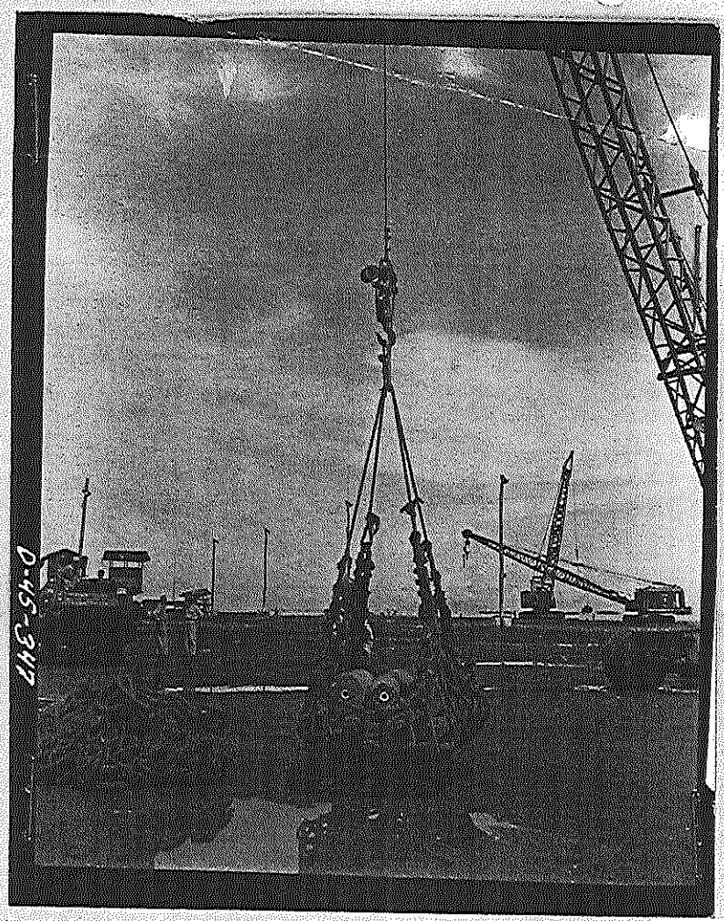
EXHIBIT 13(4)



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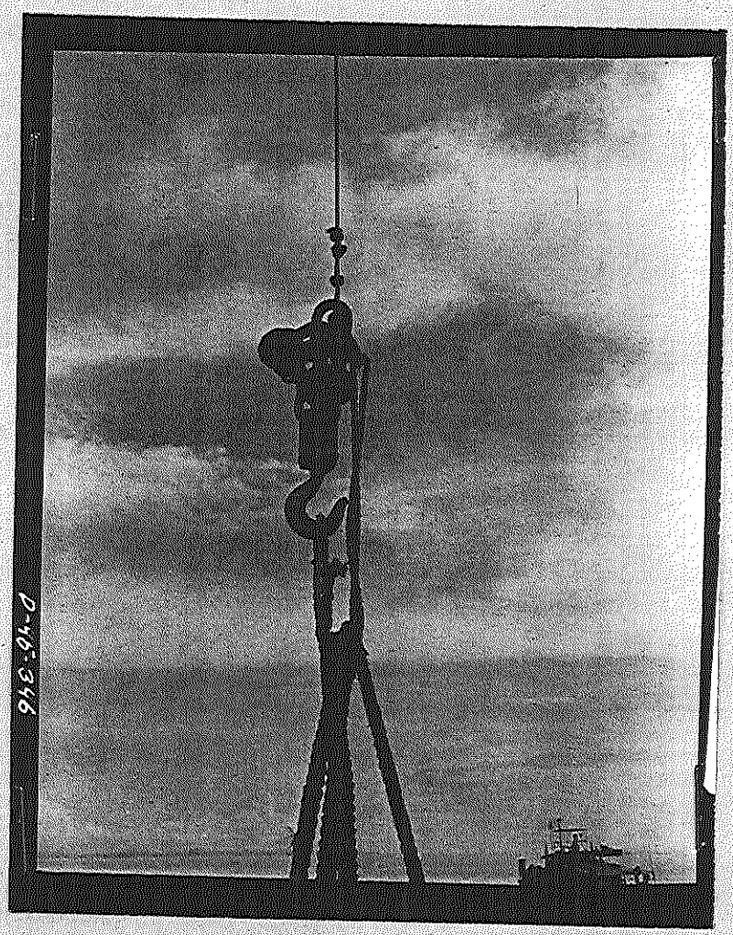

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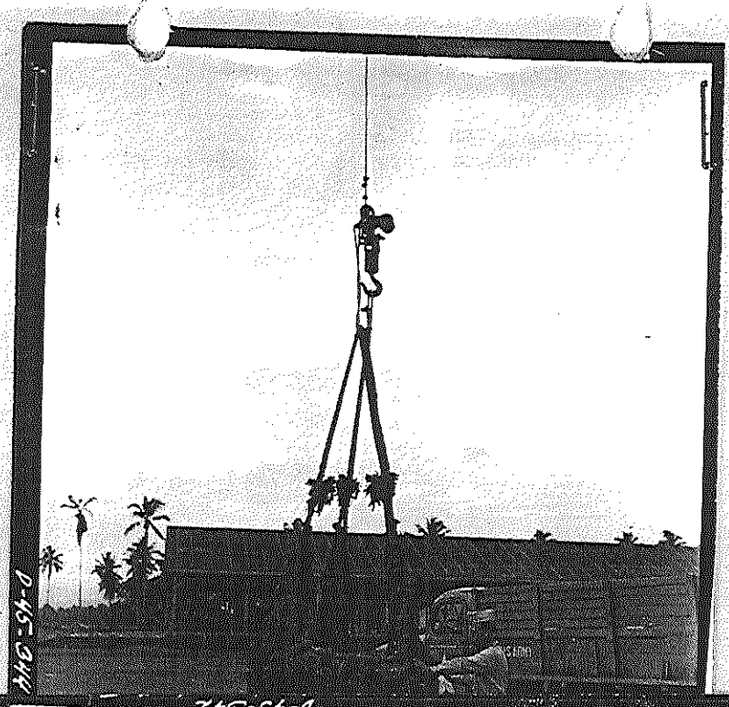

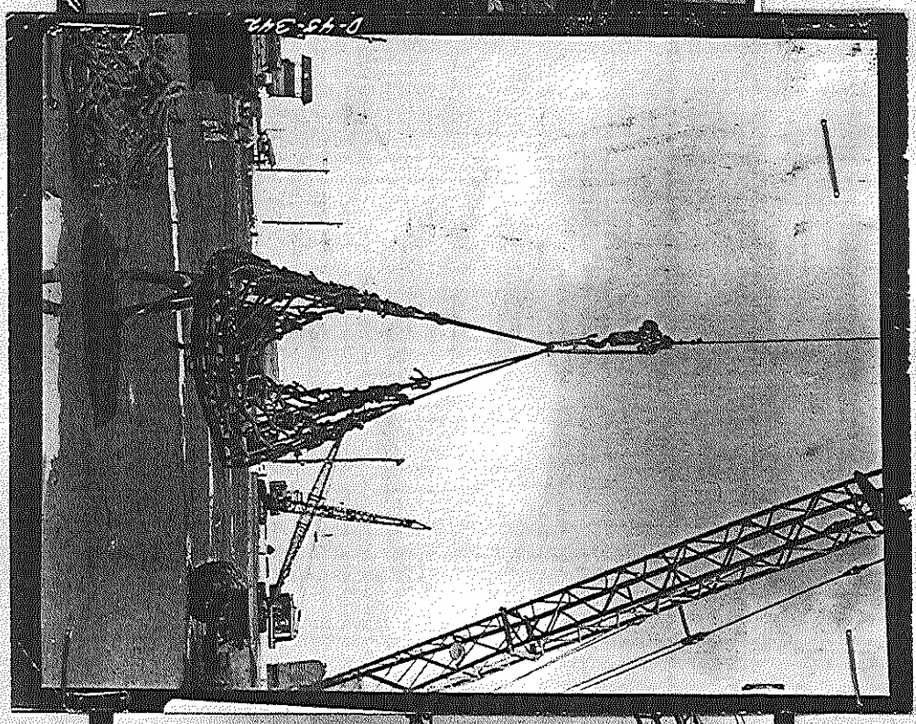

EXHIBIT 17

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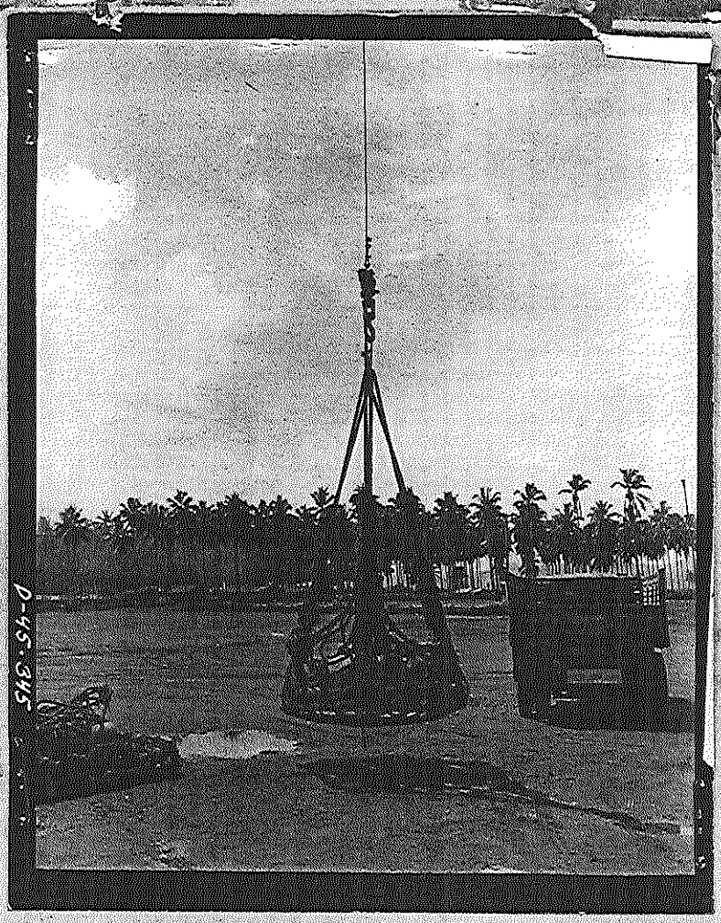

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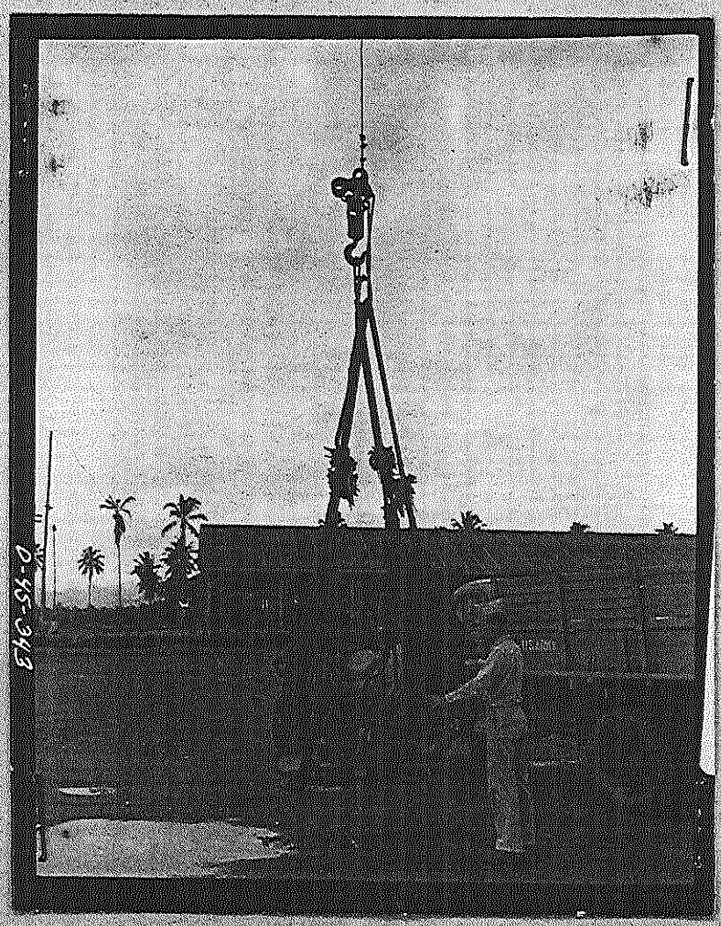

EXHIBIT 19

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