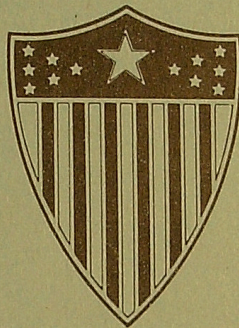


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**WAR DEPARTMENT
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
WASHINGTON**



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6-8.0711/42 (7749)

CO USS Thomas Stone, Ser 0228/42, Torpedoing & Salvage of

7-11 Nov 42

DECLASSIFIED
Authority *NND735017*
By *PTNARA* Date *5-5-06*

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Salvage + Torpedoing of
Sec 0228
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7-11 Nov 42

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AF59/L11
Serial 0228/42

U.S.S. THOMAS STONE

c/o Postmaster,
New York, N.Y.

CONFIDENTIAL

2 Dec 1942

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Commander Transport Division ELEVEN.
Subject: U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, Torpedoing and Salvage of, November 7-11, 1942.
Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Par. 712.
Enclosures: (A) Report of Commander, C.H. PIKE, U.S. Navy, Executive Officer.
(B) THOMAS STONE despatch 071035 of November, 1942.
(C) Copy of Commanding Officer, U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, letter AF59/P15, Serial 0229/42 to Commander Eastern Naval Task Force.
(D) Copy of Commanding Officer, U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, letter AF59/P15, serial 0239/42 to Brigadier General Benjamin F. CAFFEY, Jr., Commanding 39th Combat Team, U.S. Army.

1. On November 7, 1942, U.S.S. THOMAS STONE was steaming in company with Commander Transport Division ELEVEN as a part of Convoy KNFAL, a portion of the force under command of Rear Admiral Sir H.H. BURROUGH, R.N., Naval Commander Eastern Task Force, in H.M.S. BULOLO, en route Firth of Clyde to Algiers. The convoy was disposed in line of division guides, divisions in column. The THOMAS STONE was second in the left flank column 600 yards astern of the U.S.S. SAMUEL CHASE, Flagship of Commander Transport Division ELEVEN, Transports, Amphibious Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. At 0510 the THOMAS STONE went to General Quarters. Material condition "Affirm" was being maintained, having been set throughout the night. The mean course was 065°T, convoy speed 11 knots. The convoy was not zig-zagging. The anti-submarine screen was disposed around the convoy, there being several units about 200 yards distant from the left flank column.

2. At 0335, while still dark, the ship was struck by a torpedo under the port counter near the rudder. Just previous to the hit a two engined plane was sighted approaching the ship on the port quarter on an estimated course approximately parallel to the ships course, distant about 800 yards, altitude about 200-300 feet. When just forward of the beam it banked sharply away to the northward, climbed rapidly and disappeared. A black cloud of smoke passed abeam to port. This was a bomb dropped from the plane whose explosion in the water was accompanied by a distinct detonation. A torpedo wake which appeared to have its origin in the vicinity of this smoke was observed and reported by several persons. The Officer of the Deck observed the torpedo wake approaching approximately on the port quarter, ordered the rudder hard right and then personally rang up flank speed on the engines. The ship had turned right through about 90 degrees when the torpedo struck the stern. A few moments prior to this the Captain had ordered the rudder eased (as the wake of the torpedo appeared to him to be passing under the counter, torpedo being ahead of wake, and about 30 to 40 degrees from being parallel to the ship) in order to steady the ship parallel to the torpedo wake (or wakes if more than one was fired) and preparatory to swinging back to the formation course to avoid collision with column of ships to starboard. The rudder was eased back only a few degrees before the torpedo struck. No one saw the plane drop a torpedo. The plane a large two-engined monoplane, was not identified and fire was not opened on it. While no submarine was sighted it is believed that the torpedo was fired by an enemy submarine and the plane

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U.S.S. THOMAS STONE

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, Torpedoing and Salvage of, November 7-11, 1942.

was a friendly plane conducting a bombing attack on the submarine or on the torpedo itself. Two white signal rockets were fired to signify the ship was torpedoed. It was impossible to accompany this signal with one red light due to failure of electric power caused by the hit.

3. The force of the explosion blew out the bottom around the stern, broke the propeller shaft, and drove the propeller and rudder over to starboard. The ship continued to turn with hard right rudder until way was finally lost. As the result of the explosion, the personnel in the Steering Engine Room, After Magazine and Handling Room, and the First Platform Deck suffered severely. Seven men in the Magazine and Handling Room were lost and two men in the Steering Engine Room were killed instantly.

4. The measures taken to control the situation followed the Ship's Organization and Ship's Orders and were taken promptly and efficiently. Stretcher bearers and rescue and medical details were summoned, appeared promptly at the scene, proceeded to help extricate those trapped in compartments, and rendered aid to the wounded. Damage control took immediate steps to shore up weakened bulkheads, stop dangerous leaks, and control a situation which threatened to result in the flooding of No. 5 hold. In the meantime all gun crews, lookouts and other personnel concerned with the armament remained at their stations prepared for action. The troops on board remained calm. H.M.S. SPEY (Corvette) came up and acted as a screen, and the convoy stood on its course.

5. When day dawned and a better examination of the situation of the material damage could be made, it was seen that the ship was in no immediate danger of sinking, for the entry of water into No. 5 hold had been stopped and only the stern compartments and Shaft Alley were flooded. At the same time it was apparent that the ship could not proceed under her own power. Information was received from H.M.S. SPEY that a tug had been ordered from Gibraltar to tow the ship and the H.M.S. SPEY would remain as anti-submarine screen. Later, further information was received from H.M.S. SPEY that two destroyers were proceeding to assist.

6. The situation at this time was as follows: The ship was stopped with approximately 1400 assault troops on board which were an essential part of the forces ordered to land and attack east of the City of Algiers in about 20 hours. The position of the ship was Lat. 37° 31', 30°N, Long. 00° E, approximately 160 miles northwest of Algiers. The sea was smooth and a light breeze blew from the northeast. It was determined that, with the gasoline tins available on board, the ship's landing boats could probably complete the 160 miles to Algiers.

7. While the Captain was considering the situation, Major W.M. Oakes, Army of the United States, the Commanding Officer of Troops, had also been giving the matter serious thought and come up on the bridge to see if there was any way the troops could be sent on in time to carry out their mission. After a brief conference the Captain and Major Oakes found that they were in complete agreement. The decision was taken to dispatch, see Enclosure B, approximately 800 troops, comprising three assault waves in the 24 most seaworthy (LCP(1)s and LCVs) of the ship's landing boats escorted by H.M.S. SPEY. It was expected that the waves could leave about 1400, but

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U.S.S. THOMAS STONE

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, Torpedoing and Salvage of, November 7-11, 1942.

due to changes in loading plans that had to be made, the troops and equipment were not loaded until 1600 and it having been determined that no course they could take would cloak their general purpose and destination, the Captain decided that, in order that the secrecy of their destination be not compromised, thereby jeopardizing the element of surprise on which the successful landing of the entire force depended, the boats would not proceed until after dark.

8. The boats were launched, provisioned, equipped with extra gasoline and loaded with troops. At 1852 they were dispatched under command of Lieutenant (junior grade) R. C. MARLER, USNR, and under escort of H.M.S. SPEY with orders to land the troops at Beach Queenie Blue (unless otherwise directed by S.H.O.L.(C)) situated on Algiers Bay, southwest of Cape Matifou.

9. This left U.S.S. STONE adrift without protection until such time as the destroyers ordered from Gibraltar (presumably) should arrive; but, because of the importance of the mission, despite the belief that a submarine was lurking in the vicinity, it was considered that the risk was justified, in view of the fact that sufficient boats and life rafts remaining to accomodate all the crew and remaining troops. The two 50-foot tank lighters had been put in the water and were retained in the vicinity to act as rescue craft if necessary. A landing boat was stationed on either side of the ship, 1000 yards distant to patrol as an anti-submarine screen. The absence of any submarine attack after dark is the only fact which makes the Commanding Officer doubt his belief that the torpedo was fired from a submarine and not dropped by the plane, as some believe.

10. At 2040 H.M.S. WISHART and VELOX, destroyers, which had been sent as anti-submarine protection, arrived in the vicinity of the ship. H.M.S. WISHART maneuvered to take the ship in tow and an 8" hawser was made fast to 30 fathoms of port anchor chain as a tow line, but parted. At 2313 an inch and a half wire was then run from WISHART but that vessel was unable to tow the ship successfully on the course for Algiers and made little progress during the night.

8 November, 1942

At 0535 H.M.S. ST. DAY (tug) reached the ship, took a position astern with a line to either quarter of THOMAS STONE and acted as a rudder while the WISHART towed. This did not prove successful and the tow was shifted from H.M.S. WISHART to H.M.S. ST. DAY. While this shift was being made a ship's landing boat was sighted at 0835. It proved to be one of the landing boats in which troops had set out for Algiers, the evening before. It was in a sinking condition with its stem smashed and evidently had been abandoned, for it was stripped of all its equipment. An effort was made to salvage this boat, but the length of time necessary for this operation involved additional risk of an enemy attack, since the ship had been reported spotted by a German Ju88 bomber. Therefore the boat was taken in tow by a tank lighter and sank shortly thereafter. H.M.S. WISHART joined the screen.

11. The wind freshened slightly during the morning and in the afternoon started blowing about force 3. H.M.S. ST. DAY was unable to make progress under these conditions and the tow fell off to the southward. During the remainder of the day friendly planes were occasionally sighted.

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U.S.S. THOMAS STONE

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, Torpedoing and Salvage of, November 7-11, 1942.

12. At 1430 burial services were held and the bodies of JEANES, John Oscar, 263-56-08, Sea, 2c., U.S.N., and JEFFRESS, Robert Valentine, 658-23-96, Sealc, USNR, two of the men who lost their lives in the xplosion were buried at sea. During the day an additional bulkhead on the 1st platform deck in No. 5 hold was built as a safety measure. It was composed of sheet iron and wood.

9 November, 1942

13. The wind increased to force 4--5 in the early morning and the tow made practically no progress. At 0840 an enemy plane was sighted and General Quarters was held. When it threatened to approach fire was opened with the 3" anti-aircraft battery and the plane withdrew, returned later from a different direction and again withdrew when fire was opened. A total of 21 rounds were fired, no hits. The enemy plane disappeared at 0914. At 1107 friendly planes came in sight and remained in the vicinity for the remainder of the day.

14. Because of the lack of progress it was decided to tow in tandom with the WISHART towing and the ST. DAY holding her head up. A 2" wire towing hawser was passed to H.M.S. WISHART and shackled to the ship's port anchor chain. Chain was veered to 60 fathoms. The ST. DAY also towed with a wire shackled to H.M.S. WISHART's anchor chain. In this way, the WISHART was able to tow on her course with a speed slightly in excess of 4 knots. A tarpaulin was rigged as a trysail from the port cargo boom on No. 5 hatch to assist in hold the ship's head up. H.M.S. VELOX dropped a depth charge during the day and reported she thought she heard a submarine. There were no further indications, however, of the presence of a submarine.

November 10, 1942

15. Good progress was made during the night of 9-10 November. At 0659, however, it was necessary for the WISHART to stop in order to adjust the shackle of the tow line which was fouled on her stern. At 0734 towing was resumed but H.M.S. ST. DAY parted her tow line causing further delay. At 0900 the tow proceeded at a speed of 4.2 knots. Friendly planes were overhead intermittently throughout the day. At 1040 H.M.S. VELOX was ordered to H.M.S. WISHART to drop four depth charges astern of the THOMAS STONE in the belief that a submarine was trailing. At 1235 a task force of British capital ships and carriers was sighted zig-zagging on opposite course at high speed. The tow passed through this formation. Various British men-of-war were sighted during the afternoon. Commencing at 2018 aircraft illuminating flares were sighted to the eastward and southward well over the horizon and occasionally distant gunfire was heard. Those seemed to draw progressively nearer and course was changed 45 degrees to northward at 2130. At 2211 a return to base course was made as the falres were discontinued.

11 November, 1942

16. At 0027 Cap Caxine light was sighted bearing 142 degrees true and later various lights in the vicinity of Algiers also became visible. As day broke many British men-of-war were sighted patrolling outside the port of Algiers. The tow arrived off Algiers Harbor at 0725 and the ship brought to anchor at 1034. Upon

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CONFIDENTIAL

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arrival in Algiers the following despatch was received from Rear Admiral Sir H.H. BURROUGH, R.N., Commander Eastern Task Force: "My warmest congratulations on the splendid effort put up by U.S.S. THOMAS STONE. The determination you have shown to take part in this operation whatever the obstacle is an example to us all."

TACTICS

The only tactics involved were the maneuvering of the ship to avoid the torpedo as described above.

CONDUCT OF PERSONNEL

The officers and crew of the THOMAS STONE in this surprise emergency behaved in an exemplary manner. They showed the results of discipline and training. Despite the fact that few had been under fire before, there was no confusion and each individual did his assigned duty. The personnel concerned with the armament remained steadfastly at their stations.

THE ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY THE SHIPS OF THE ROYAL NAVY:

H.M.S. SPEY stood by shortly after the torpedoing until 1852 prepared to rescue the personnel and acted as anti-submarine screen in a highly efficient manner. Later the SPEY, on orders from the Commanding Officer, U.S.S. THOMAS STONE proceeded with 24 landing boats of THOMAS STONE filled with troops with the mission of escorting these boats 160 miles of open sea and landing the assault troops on the enemy shore. During the course of the voyage to land rough weater was encountered and the landing boats making no progress and being danger of swamping, it became necessary to embark all troops, boat crews, and equipment on H.M.S. SPEY for the completion of the task. This was accomplished without loss of any kind. The hearty cooperation and efficiency of the Commander Officer of H.M.S. SPEY is worthy of high praise.

H.M.S. WISHART AND VELOX arrived in the vicinity of the THOMAS STONE at 2040 November 7, 1942, and remained with her until the THOMAS STONE anchored at Algiers 1030 November 11, 1942. The WISHART, handled in a most seamanlike manner by her Commander Officer, took the ship in tow at night under very difficult conditions. When the tow line parted he maneuvered his ship into position while another tow line was passed. The WISHART towed the THOMAS STONE all through the night. The H.M.S. ST. DAY joined at daybreak November 8, 1942, and later took over the tow. When, due to the strength of the wind and height of the sea and through the lack of her own power was unable to make progress, the WISHART again took the THOMAS STONE in tow in tandem with H.M.S. ST. DAY which was placed ahead to assist in keeping the WISHART

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Authority NND735017
By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

U.S.S. THOMAS STONE

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, Torpedoing and Salvage of, November 7-11, 1942.

on her course. All this required great coolness, patience, and a high order of seamanship. The VELOX constantly and efficiently screened and protected the THOMAS STONE throughout the operation. Her Commanding Officer is deserving of high praise for his efficiency.

H.M.S. ST. DAY arrived in the vicinity of the THOMAS STONE at 0535 November 8, 1942, and assisted in towing her to port first by acting as a rudder while the WISHART towed then by taking the THOMAS STONE in tow and finally when unable to make the progress herself assisting the WISHART when that vessel took over the tow. The Commanding Officer of H.M.S. ST. DAY is deserving of recognition for his efficient assistance rendered in bringing the THOMAS STONE safely to port.

I It is recommended that suitable recognition be extended by high authority to the Commanding Officers above mentioned in addition to the separate letter which the Commanding Officer is addressing to the Commander Eastern Naval Task Force (Enclosure (C)).

PARTICIPATION OF THE ARMY

Major W.M. OAKES, Army of the United States, Commanding Officer of Troops, at all times demonstrated his outstanding ability as a leader and his cooperation in all matters was complete. The Captain would have hesitated in sending forward the assault boats under a less competent leader.

Captain David Brooks, Army of the United States, who succeeded Major Oakes as Commanding Officer of Troops, performed his duties admirably in the emergency. Under his energetic direction additional A.A. guns were set up and the troops augmented the crew in many exacting duties.

First Lieutenant R.M. DeGABRIELE, Army of the United States, in command of the detail of 36th U.S. Engineers rendered prompt and efficient assistance to the Damage Control Party at the scene of the explosion. His performance of duty was commendable.

The services rendered by the Army personnel are being brought to the attention of the proper Army authorities by separate letter (Enc. D).

DAMAGE SUSTAINED

STRUCTURE

The fantail of the ship was demolished from bulkhead 182 aft including all decks, save a portion of the 2nd Deck, and Main Deck. The Main and 2nd Decks sagged down about 15 degrees from normal sheer. Both decks buckled approximately at frame 182. Hull side plates were torn away below the level of the 2nd deck and badly buckled outward on both sides from the Main Deck down, as a result of fantail sagging. The 5" ammunition hoist trunk, Shaft Alley Escape Trunk, and Magazine

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U.S.S. THOMAS STONE

CONFIDENTIAL

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Escape Trunk were completely blown away below the level of the 2nd deck. The Handling Room and part of the magazine were blown away. Some fantail frames were left hanging on higher scantlings, but were torn and twisted in one the port side and out on the starboard. Bulkhead 182 split from the Main Deck down, possibly to the keel. The propeller and tail shaft bent 30° to starboard and down at an angle of about 18°. The structure was blown away from around the shaft and propeller. The rudder was left in place but the stock was bent to starboard and the stern frame was demolished. Bulkhead 175, extending from the 2nd platform deck to the 1st platform deck, which is the forward boundary of the 5" magazine remains intact, and is shored up. The Shaft Alley is flooded but all deep tanks on each side of the alley are intact. The Shaft Alley door held, but leaks slightly. All electric leads to the Magazine were severed as well as the fire main, ventilation, and sprinkler system. All these have been secured. The steering gear is out of action. The level of the sea, after the ship settled due to flooding and loss of buoyancy aft, reached to just below the 1st Platform Deck at Bulkhead 182.

ENGINEERING

Captstans: Stub shafts bent just above gear housing. Starboard control panel damaged.

Steering Gear: All machinery knocked loose from foundations. Foundations badly bent. Links from rams to rudder stock bent. Cap on rudder stock broken. Rudder stock bent. Bearing split open (bolts sheared), all motors broken open, oil pumps damaged, replenishing tanks badly damaged.

Propeller shaft broken. Stern tube and frame apparently carried away. Propeller blades believed bent, one section shaft bent.

DeGaussing cables "M" and "Q" damaged. Section of "M" missing.

Electric equipment in Shaft Alley, diesel oil equipment (separator and diesel pump motors) and emergency fire pump submerged.

Boiler tube spares may be damaged due to salt water.

Wiring to all above units damaged.,

One vent fan severely damaged.

A more thorough inspection may reveal other damage.

ORDNANCE

The 5"/51 caliber gun-mount was badly damaged. The roller race and rollers are badly damaged. The holding-down bolts were sheared off. The carriage jumped up on stand about eight inches. The training worm and lower bevel gears are broken. Further damage is highly probable but cannot be detected until the gun is removed and the mount lifted.

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172

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By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

U.S.S. THOMAS STONE

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, Torpedoing and Salvage of, November 7-11, 1942.

AMMUNITION LOST

325 projectiles 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ /51 cal.
325 powder charges 5"/51 cal.
750 rounds 3"/50 cal.
10,000 rounds .45 cal. pistol ammunition
12,000 rounds .22 cal. target ammunition
200,000 rounds .30 cal. machine-gun ammunition
30,000 rounds .50 cal. machine-gun ammunition

BOATS LOST

7 LCP(1)
15 LCV

* 1 LCS(S) was subsequently recovered.

O.R. BENNEHOFF.

②

122

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By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

c/o Postmaster,
New York, N.Y.,
November 12, 1942.

From: Commander C. H. PIKE, U.S. Navy, Executive Officer,
U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.
To: Commanding Officer.,
Subject: Observations incident to torpedoing of U.S.S. THOMAS STONE -
7 November, 1942.
Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920, par. 948.

1. About 0500 7 November, 1942, the crew of the THOMAS STONE went to General Quarters. I was at my battle station, Battle II, which is on the after Main Deck just forward of the five inch gun almost directly over the propeller. About 0530 while still very dark, a plane was reported coming in from aft on the port side. When I first observed it, the plane was about 800 yards from the ship, altitude about 200 feet. For a short distance it was on a parallel course then bore off to the northward away from the ship climbing rapidly. It was a large twin engine plane. I observed a black cloud of smoke on the surface of the water over which the plane had passed just abeam of the ship. About the same time there was a warning cry the exact nature of which I do not recall then a tremendous detonation in my immediate vicinity. Practically all personnel on the after deck including myself were thrown to the deck which heaved violently and settled back with a considerable angle of slope from normal.

2. The crews of the 5"/51 gun and 20 mm guns numbers 13 and 14 were scattered somewhat but under the positive leadership of their battery officer, Ensign R.T. Soule, D-V(G), USNR, and Hanley, E.H., 170-55-74, Coxswain, F-4-D, USFR, Gun Captain of #5 gun, quickly regained their stations.

3. As soon as it became apparent that the attack was over I investigated the situation. The ship had stopped and was being passed by the remainder of the convoy. I saw that measures were taken at once to extricate those trapped, bring the injured up from below and that the repair parties were at the scene. My impression at first was that an aerial bomb had struck in the vicinity of number 5 hold so I went there. I found the repair party at work shoring up the after bulkhead and plugging leaks and it was then that I first realized that the ship had been torpedoed and that the torpedo had exploded directly under me.

4. It is not certain whether the plane or a submarine fired the torpedo. As far as I can determine the plane was not seen by anyone to have headed for the ship. Furthermore the black smoke on the surface mentioned above was thought to have been from a depth charge dropped by the plane on the submarine. The plane was not identified and did not return. No shots were fired at the plane which is not surprising as it was within range and sight but a very few seconds and was not sighted until just before it turned away.

5. It seems probable to me that the attack was made by an enemy torpedo plane, yet there seems to be a possibility that the torpedo was fired from a submarine which was attacked simultaneously with a depth charge by a friendly plane.

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By *PTNARA* Date *5-5-06*

Subject: Observations incident to torpedoing of U.S.S. THOMAS STONE
7 November, 1942.

6. All officers and men coming under my immediate observation behaved calmly and did their duty in accordance with the best tradition of the Navy.

7. The following acted with heroism in effecting the rescue of Kelly, W.J. 224 97 87, Seaman second class, U.S. Navy. It is recommended that their act be brought to the attention of higher authority:

Lieutenant (jg) Eric J.W. Nelson, E-M, USNR - coolness and courage - though severely injured, with the assistance of Erickson, R.O., 610 09 42, Fireman second class, V-6, USNR, rescued Kelly who was pinioned in the steering engine room.

Erickson, R.O., 610 09 42, Fireman second class, V-6, USNR - outstanding courage in descending into the steering engine room and assisting in the rescue of Kelly.

8. The following displayed outstanding leadership and coolness:

Ensign R.T. Soule, D-V(G), USNR - battery officer at the 5"/51 gun.

Masterson, F.L.O. 355 63 00, Boatswain's Mate first class, U.S. Navy and Henley, E.H., 170 55 74, Coxswain, F-4-D, USFR, Gun Captains.

C. H. PIKE.

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Authority *NND735017*

By *PTNARA* Date *5-5-06*

NAVAL MESSAGE

From: THOMAS STONE
To: EAST NAVAL TASK FORCE COMMANDER
INFO: S.N.O.L. Charlie

UNLESS OTHERWISE ORDERED ABOUT 14 HOURS (BST) WILL DESPATCH ASSAULT WAVE
IN LANDING BOATS ARRIVING BEACH QUEENIE BLUE ABOUT 8 HOURS 8 NOVEMBER
ESCORTED BY H.M.S. SPEY NOW SCREENING THOMAS STONE. RECOMMEND A/S SCREEN
REPLACEMENT BE PROVIDED /071035

ENCLOSURE (B)

(11)

122

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Authority NND 735017
By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

U.S.S. THOMAS STONE

c/o Postmaster,
New York, N.Y.,
2 December, 1942.

AP59/P15
Serial 0229/42

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Commander Eastern Naval Task Force.

Subject: Assistance rendered U.S.S. THOMAS STONE by His Majesties Ships
7-11 November, 1942.

1. It is a pleasure to inform the Commander Eastern Naval Task Force that the report submitted to Commander Transport Division ELEVEN covering the events surrounding the torpedoing and salvaging of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE 7-11 November, 1942, has drawn the attention of higher U. S. Naval authority to the splendid part played by H.M.S. SPEY, WISHART, VELOX and ST. DAY.

2. As you are aware the SPEY stood by the THOMAS STONE immediately after the torpedoing on November 7, 1942, and when the decision was reached to despatch the Landing Boats with the assault troops to Algiers most readily cooperated first by escorting the craft and then when conditions became too unfavorable, took on board approximately 800 troops, and landed them all safely in Algiers. The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. SPEY is to be highly commended for his excellent judgement and close cooperation in bringing this venture to a safe and successful conclusion.

3. During the night of 7 November H.M.S. WISHART and VELOX which had been sent to screen the THOMAS STONE, arrived on the scene. The Commander Officer of the WISHART maneuvered his ship in a most capable manner and took the THOMAS STONE in tow while the VELOX acted as a screen. The WISHART turned the tow over to the H.M.S. ST. DAY the morning of 8 November but when the ST. DAY proved unequal to the task, the WISHART again took over the tow with ST. DAY out ahead in tandem. Thus the THOMAS STONE was brought into Algiers on 11 November, 1942, with VELOX still screening in a highly efficient manner. The Commanding Officers of the WISHART and VELOX accomplished a most noteworthy task in bringing the THOMAS STONE to port under constant threat of enemy attack from air and submarines.

4. The ST. DAY which arrived on the scene early on 8 November, 1942, although hampered by lack of power showed no lack of heart or enthusiasm and contributed most importantly to the success of the operation.

5. The Commanding Officers, officers, and crews of His Majesties Ships which took part in this operation have the lasting admiration of the Captain, officers, and crew of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.

O. R. BENNEHOFF.

(12)

(122)

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND 735017

By PT NARA Date 5-5-06

AP59/P15
Serial 0230/42

c/o Postmaster,
New York, N.Y.,
2 December, 1942.

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Brigadier General Benjamin F. CAFFEY, Jr., U.S. Army,
Commanding 39th U.S. Combat Team.
Subject: Distinguished Service of Troops under your command, 7-11
November, 1942.

1. During the recent passage of the THOMAS STONE with the 2nd Battalion, 39th Combat Team embarked as assault troops, the ship was torpedoed by the enemy and left behind by the convoy, about 100 miles from its destination. Throughout this trying and critical period you will be pleased to know that the officers and troops behaved in a most praiseworthy manner and won the undying admiration of us all.

2. The conduct of the Commanding Officer of Troops, Major W.M. OAKES, Army of the United States, commanding the 2nd Battalion, is brought to your attention particularly. He proved himself to be a leader of great capability and determination who not only cooperated whole-heartedly with the Captain in all things but when the time came to decided what to do about the assault troops, had independently arrived at the same decision as the Captain, that they be embarked in the boats and sent forward. As you know he embarked with approximately 800 men in twenty four landing boats and proceeded towards his object under escort of H.M.S. SPEY.

3. Captain David BROOKS, Army of the United States, succeeded to the Command of Troops on board and employed them in a multitude of duties as required to augment the crew of the THOMAS STONE in the emergency following the torpedoing. Anti-aircraft weapons were set up and extra lookouts, gun crews, boatmen and guards were employed. Captain Brooks conduct under these circumstances is highly commendable.

4. First Lieutenant R. M. De GABRIELE in command of the detail of 36th Engineers on board rendered particularly effective service in connection with damage control immediately following the torpedoing. He helped materially in the efforts to maintain the water tight integrity of the ship and is deserving of recognition.

5. Lastly, the behavior of all troops during and after the torpedoing, was in accordance with the highest traditions of our service and fills us all with great pride that we have had the honor to associate with them as comrades in the undertaking.

O. R. BENNEHOFF.

13

132

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Authority *NND735017*
By *PTNARA* Date *5-5-06*

AP59/A16
Serial 0231/42

c/o Postmaster,
New York, N.Y.
2 DEC 1942

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Commanding Officer.
To: Commander Transport Division ELEVEN.
Subject: Report of Lieut. (jg) R. C. MARLER, USNR, Officer in Charge Landing Boats, 7-11 November, 1942, forwarding of.
Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, 19420, Art. 712(1).
Enclosure: (A) Subject Report.

1. The report of Lieut. (jg) R. C. Marler, USNR, enclosed herewith, speaks for itself. It is considered that he acted with sound judgement and the safe arrival of nearly 800 troops embarked in twenty four landing boats for a sea voyage of 160 miles was due in large measure to his outstanding leadership. Credit is also due the two boat division officers who accompanied him, Ensign P. C. CULBERT, USNR, and Ensign J.B. WHEELER, III, USNR.

2. It is desired to call special attention to the part played by H.M.S. SPEY in this expedition. Without the fine seamanship and patience of her Commanding Officer it could not have succeeded. Accordingly it is recommended that this action on the part of H.M.S. SPEY be brought to the attention of higher authority for appropriate acknowledgement.

3. The notable part played by Major W. M. OAKES, Army of the United States, Commanding Officer of Troops, in this expedition has been brought to the notice of Army higher authority in other correspondence.

O. R. BENNEHOFF

Copies to:
Allied Hq., No. Africa (by request) - 1
Comtransdiv 11 - Orig & 5
File - 1

(14)

(122)

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Authority MND735017
By PT NARA Date 5-5-06

c/o Postmaster,
New York, N.Y.
12 November 1942.

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Lieutenant (jg) R. C. Marler, U.S.N.R., Officer in Charge Landing Boats carrying Assault Troops to Algiers.

TO: Commanding Officer.

Subject: Report Covering Operations of Landing Boats under my Command, 7-11 November, 1942.

Reference: (a) U.S.S. THOMAS STONE letter AP59/P16-4/00 of 7 November, 1942.

Enclosure: (A) Copy of Reference (a).

1. Pursuant to Commanding Officer's letter, File No. AP59/P16-4/00 of November 7, 1942, Enclosure (A), on November 7, I took charge of 24 landing boats loaded with 800 troops and officers and equipment for assault action on beach westward of Cape Matifou; the THOMAS STONE being at this time approximately 160 miles from said beach.

2. The boats were completely loaded with troops and equipment at approximately 1600. Orders for departing were delayed until 1900 at which time we departed, with the corvette H.M.S. SPEY leading the boats. Ensign Wheeler took position at rear center of group with a boat repair crew. Ensign Culbert took position leading right flank boats and Major Oakes was leading left flank in support boat. I took position at head of group in order to be in position to send and receive signals from guide ship, SPEY.

3. I instructed the SPEY to make between 8 and 9 knots. The boats could not remain at this speed so at 1920 I had the SPEY reduce speed to 6 knots. All the boats were able to maintain this speed at the time. At approximately 2000 one Victor boat broke down due to engine trouble. I went to rear of group to assist Ensign Wheeler to effect repairs. Repairs were completed and boat rejoined group at approximately 2130 at which time 2 more boats broke down. Repairs were made on these and they rejoined the group. From that time on there was never a period of over 30 minutes that all the boats were able to proceed at one time due to broken oil lines, broken water lines, overheating, etc. When one boat broke down, the guide and all boats of the Group had to stop and wait for that boat to be towed up in position to take a line from the guide or until repairs could be made.

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By *PTNARA* Date *5-5-06*

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Report covering operations of Landing Boats under my Command, 7-11 November, 1942.

4. At approximately 2115, the Captain of the SPEY informed me that he had orders to return to the THOMAS STONE. I talked with Major Oakes and Major Sample and requested that they agree to keep on with the boats and troops for Algiers, but Major Oakes would not approve as he was doubtful we could make shore safely with the men. We followed the corvette SPEY back towards the THOMAS STONE. At approximately 2200 the Captain of the SPEY advised me that he had orders to take the boat group either to the STONE or to Algiers. I told him to proceed toward Algiers and carry out the original orders.

5. At approximately 2300, the Captain of the SPEY stated that he was going to leave the boat group and pull over to port about four miles to investigate craft he had picked up on his Radar. I had the group run very slow awaiting his return. At approximately 2330 we saw firing from 20 MM gun off to port and a white flare. At approximately 2355 the SPEY rejoined the Group stating that he had fired on boat #28 which had fallen behind and gotten off out of position and was proceeding in the wrong direction to regain position. At about 2400 the wind was approximately force three and the sea was increasing from southeast. All boats using gasoline for fuel were refueling at every stop for broken down boats. At approximately 0030 of November 8 Ensign Wheeler advised me he would have to abandon boat #9 as he had had a collision with another boat and was taking water fast through the bow. I instructed him to place his troops and equipment on board the SPEY and open the seacocks of boat #9. He carried out these instructions and came into the support boat with me for the remainder of the night. I thought that if the sea went down and the wind decreased we could proceed at about 6 knots, the speed having been reduced to four knots at approximately 0100.

6. At approximately 0600 (daylight) I saw that the condition of the sea was very unfavorable to continue with the troops in the boats as each boat was taking considerable water on board. The troops were all sea sick and wet, all the gear and equipment soaked. I talked to Major Oakes and we both went on board the SPEY and consulted with the Captain about placing all troops and equipment on board the SPEY. The Captain of the SPEY stated that we would have to do just that as he had to proceed at a greater rate of speed in order to carry out a mission that he had to perform on the following morning. I decided to carry out that plan, scuttle all boats that would not run and proceed independently with the remaining boats. The Captain of the SPEY and Major Oakes protested against my trying to make shore with the boats as the reports by radio were that the beaches were under fire from Cape Matifou and air attack was expected on the beaches at any time. I proceeded with placing troops and equipment on board the SPEY and checked extra fuel and fuel in the tanks of the boats. I discovered that I had enough fuel for approximately three ramp boats, two personnel boats and the two support boats to make Algiers providing the weather did not get any worse. Radio reports were that the assault waves had landed but that all boats were lost due to high seas and rocky beaches.

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Authority NND 735017
By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Report covering operations of Landing Boats under my Command, 7-11 November, 1942.

7. At approximately 1100 X completed transfer of troops from boats to the SPEY, scuttled all boats with the exception of three ramp boats, two personnel boats and the two support boats. I loaded all the extra fuel into these boats and proceeded behind the SPEY. The Captain of the SPEY would not proceed at less than 11 knots. The two support boats would not make but about $9\frac{1}{2}$ knots. The compasses on none of the boats would work and the sky was overcast the whole of the night before. I saw that I would be all right for getting my direction from the sun that day but would not be able to see any stars for night navigation. I reviewed all the facts concerned in the case, had the SPEY stop and went aboard for another conference with the Captain of the SPEY. He agreed to tow the two support boats but not any other boat.

8. The sea and wind were steadily increasing from the south east. I scuttled all the remaining boats except the support boats which I placed on a wire line behind the SPEY. At approximately 1300 the SPEY proceeded at 12 knots for "Queenie Blue Beach", Algiers. At approximately 1500, one of the support boats broke adrift from the towing cable and the SPEY stopped, recovered the boat and proceeded again. The Captain informed me that he could not risk the lives of the large number of troops by stopping again as he had picked up submarines and destroyers of the enemy forces on his Radar and submarine device. At approximately 1800 one of the support boats broke away from the towing cable and at 1900 the remaining one broke away. Major Oakes and I prepared the SPEY's one life boat for unloading troops, our intention being to carry as many troops as possible ashore with rifles and leave the equipment on the SPEY. We requested landing boats by radio but could not get any answer. The sea from the southeast was large by this time causing the SPEY to reduce speed on account of the men and equipment being in danger of being washed overboard.

9. At 2030, the SPEY anchored one mile off shore from "Apple Beach" as previously directed. Orders were received to stand by for further orders. At 2300 orders were received that as Algiers had ceased resistance we would remain anchored and proceed into Algiers at 0600 the following morning, 9 November. At 0600 the SPEY got underway and proceeded astern of the BULOLO into the harbor of Algiers. Enroute the BULOLO was attacked by one enemy bomber plane. No hits were made on the BULOLO. The SPEY moored at the main passenger quay at Algiers at 0700 and commenced unloading troops and equipment.

10. I went on board the BULOLO and reported to the Chief of Staff for orders. He told me to do the best I could and call on him for any assistance. Colonel Brown of the U.S. Army also offered any assistance but could not advise me just what to do. At 0830 the troops, Navy personnel and equipment were completely unloaded.

(17)

(122)

DECLASSIFIED

Authority *MND735017*

By *PTNARA* Date *5-5-06*

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Report covering operations of Landing Boats under my Command, 7-11 November, 1942.

I established a port on the end of the pier, posted sentries to guard Navy equipment and hoisted the U.S. ensign from the light tower on the outboard corner of the building. I set up the TBY radio and attempted to get in touch with the U.S.S. SAMUEL CHASE. I had Ensign Wheeler and Ensign Culbert divide the Navy company into three sections for watches, mounted machine guns on the roof of the buildings on the pier and mounted the two 50 cal. guns for protection against aircraft strafing. I had sufficient water for 6 days.

11. The local police assumed that the U.S. Navy had taken over the port and came to me with requests of every nature. They wanted permission to join the American armed forces and be given arms to fight. I refused to commit myself in any way on these requests and referred them to the Chief of Staff of the BULOLO.

12. At approximately 1200 there was an air raid of two or three bomber planes. No hits were made and the planes were driven off by anti-aircraft fire. Throughout the day the only defending aircraft sighted were four Spitfires. At 1500 I was advised by the U.S. Army that a heavy bomber attack was expected. I appealed to the British Navy to secure some air raid shelter for my men. They requested that I go out, find sufficient shelter to take care of the British Staff and my men, take charge of the available buildings and report to them. I did not favor this plan. I talked the matter over with the two officers with me and decided to operate independently of any armed force. I then marched the men up to the Central Police station and requested they find us shelter. The police would not do anything so I left the men there under the charge of Ensign Wheeler and went to the American Consul. He secured the use of the bottom floor of a newspaper building for us. I then went to the Hotel St. George to see the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, Colonel Ross of the U.S. Army was very cooperative and made every effort to have the group of men fed at the hotel.

13. Ensign Culbert acted as interpreter on alloccasions where discussions were in French. His services were indispensable as hardly any of the local people can speak English. We then brought the men from the Police station to the newspaper building, washed up and had dinner at the hotel. We had four machine guns, two rifles, one sub-machine gun, four side arms and one to two hand grenades per man. After dinner we posted armed sentries about the front of the building as the U.S. Army and British Army officers in charge of policing the city advised me to expect trouble from the French Fascists. Ensign Culbert talked with the local people and with some people that had just landed from France and it was definitely established that Algiers was very much pro-American and strongly anti-British.

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By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

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CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Report covering operations of Landing Boats under my Command, 7-11 November, 1942.

14. The next morning, November 10, we marched back to the base at the end of the pier and remained there all day. Contact was made with the CHASE and orders received at approximately 15000 to make my own way to the beach where the CHASE was unloading and there we would be evacuated to the CHASE. I did not know the route or distance to the beach and thought it would not be to the best interestes of the relationship between the local people and the U.S. Army for my group to make such a display of force as I would have to make by carrying the large number of machine guns and ammunition that I had through the streets at night.

15. About 1000 Lt. Col. Richard Clare Partridge of the U.S. Army told me that General Clark and the American authorities had Admiral Darlan at a hotel approximately 2 miles from my base. They intended to put pressure on him to have all North Africa cease resistance and allow the Allied forces to enter and that there were no armed guards available to make enough show of force to hold the French Admiral and his staff if he decided to wald out. I sent 50 men with 10 machine guns, side arms, sub-machine gun and hand grenades to the hotel under the charge of Ensign Wheeler and Ensign Culbert. We were relieved of this duty at 1300 and the men returned to the base. Ensign Culbert, through his knowledge of French, learned that the American General made satisfactory agreements with Admiral Darlan. (The British had had the French Admiral on board the BULOLO on 9 November and were unsuccessful in their efforts to make a deal.

16. That night, November 10, I again marched the men to the newspaper building, had dinner at the Hotel St. George for all hands, and spent the night in the building.

17. Next morning, November 11, I could see the CHASE standing into the harbor when we formed up prior to returning to the prior base. I sent Ensign Culbert and Ensign Wheeler with the men to the base, took a signalman and went down to the dock to contact the CHASE. I was able to get on board the CHASE at approximately 0800 and reported to Captain C.D. EDGAR, Commander Transport Division ELEVEN, who told me that the STONE was just outside the harbor and to return to my base, contact the STONE and be taken on board. Prior to this time I had information from the British Staff Office that the STONE was tied up in Gibraltar having reached there on the night of November 10. I contacted the STONE, received two LCM landing craft and returned all men and equipment on board the STONE at approximately 1600, 11 November.

18. On the night of November 10, I was visited by the French General Giraud who expressed his pleasure at seeing American Navy forces in Algiers.

19

122

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND735017

By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Report covering operations of Landing Boats under my Command, 7-11 November, 1942.

19. I cannot speak too highly of the two officers and men under my charge during this period. Their conduct and actions were a credit to the U.S. Navy in every respect. The Petty Officers who on board ship had never displayed any ability or leadership took charge of the men and organized them in such a manner that they were able to be a self-sufficient group and did not have to appeal to any allied forces for anything.

R. C. MARLER.

(20)

123

DECLASSIFIED
Authority MND 735017
By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

AP59/P16-4/00

c/o Postmaster,
New York, New York,
November 7, 1942.

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Commanding Officer.
To : Lieutenant (jg) R. C. MARLER, USNR.
Subject: Officer in Charge Landing Boat Group - Orders for.

1. You will take charge of the ships landing boat group and transport designated assault troops and land them on Beach "Queenie Blue" to south westward of Cape Matifou. In case this is impracticable report to Commander Transport Division ELEVEN, to eastward of Cape Matifou.

2. You will depart about 1400, November 7, 1942, and make best practicable speed. HMS SPEY will be escort. Boats shall be dispersed in the there waves as planned for the original assault and troops landed as required by Commanding Officer Troops.

3. Take sufficient fuel in excess of tank capacity, to insure arrival. Members of boats crew will provide themselves with one unit Army Field Rations which is sufficient for three days. Take minimum bedding and toilet gear.

4. Ensigns J. B. Wheeler, and F.C. Culbert are assigned as division commanders in addition to yourself. Regular boat crews will man boats.

5. After landing the troops you will report to Commander Transport Division ELEVEN for further orders.

6. While enroute maintain communication visually vis SPEY. Take TBY Portable Transmitter for necessary communication with Commander Transport Division ELEVEN during landing.

O. R. BENNEHOPP.

122

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Authority *MND 735017*
By *PTNARA* Date *5-5-06*

ENCLOSURE (C)

AP59/L11
Serial 0233/42

c/o Postmaster,
New York, N.Y.,
December 6, 1942.

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Commanding Officer.
To : Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.
Via : Commander Transport Division ELEVEN.
Subject: Stranding of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.
Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Art. 840.
(b) U.S.S. THOMAS STONE dispatches 032130 and 032145,
December, 1942.
Enclosure: (A) Copy of report of Lt. M.C. Deschamps, R.N.R.,
Base Salvage Officer, Algiers.

1. The U.S.S. THOMAS STONE stranded on the south shore of the Bay of Algiers, Algeria, at 1605 on the 25th of November, 1942. The attendant circumstances are detailed below.

2. On 19 November 1942 the U.S.S. THOMAS was moored at the Quai de Falaise, Algiers, Algeria, and had completed the discharge of troops and army equipment. Captain J. Wright, U.S. Navy, came on board carrying a message from the Commodore Algiers to the effect that it would be necessary to move the ship and anchor her in the outer harbor. The reason for this, he stated, was to make room for vessels of two large convoys which were due to arrive and required all available berthing space. The ship at this time had no means of propulsion, having previously sustained a torpedo hit aft, which had blown away a large part of the underwater shell at the stern and rendered useless the shaft and muffler. Her buoyancy was jeopardized as the after bulkhead of No. 5 Hold had been partially destroyed and a temporary bulkhead built by ship's force was all that would keep out the water in case the sea rose above the heights of the Second Platform Dock.

3. Considering that this is the wintry and stormy season of the year, that the Bay of Algiers provides relatively poor holding ground for ships at anchor, and the critical condition, structurally, of the ship, the Captain considered that it was dangerous to anchor the ship in the outer harbor. Accompanied by Captain Wright, he called on the Commodore Algiers and protested the proposed anchoring of the THOMAS STONE in the outer harbor in view of the foregoing considerations. The Commodore Algiers stated that it was a military necessity for the ship to be moved from the dock, but the next morning would give consideration to the possibility of

(21)

122

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND 735017
By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Stranding of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.

mooring the THOMAS STONE inside the breakwater with head to anchors and stern either to Quay Wall or to buoys. However, during the night the following despatch was received from Commodore Algiers:

"PILOT AND TUGS HAVE BEEN ORDERED FOR 0900 A TOMMORROW FRIDAY REQUEST YOU WILL ANCHOR NEAR B1 BERTH 10½ CABLES 094° FROM LIGHT ON BRISE LAMES EST/1815"

4. On 20 November 1942 the following message was delivered to Commodore Algiers at 0819 Zone -1:

"REQUEST BERTH MOLE ADMIRAL MOUCHEZ TO FACILITATE REPAIR WORK CONTEMPLATED. FAILING THAT DESIRE BERTH INSIDE BASIN STERN SECURED TO BUOY. NEXT PREFER ANCHORAGE ASSIGNMENT TEN CABLES ONE TEN TRUE FROM BRISE LAMES EST LIGHT IN THREE CABLES BERTH IN ORDER THAT FURTHER DAMAGE MAY NOT CAUSE SHIP TO SINK IN DEPTH OVER WATER-TIGHT STRUCTURE."

The following despatch was received in reply from Commodore Algiers at 0845 Zone -1 20 November, 1942:

"REGRET NO BERTH ALONGSIDE OR AT BUOY AVAILABLE AT PRESENT AAA ANCHOR 10 CABLES 110 DEGREES FROM BLE EST AS DESIRED BT 0911/20."

The THOMAS STONE was moved during the forenoon of 20 November, 1942, to the outer harbor and at 1026 anchored in 8 fathoms of water with 60 fathoms of chain to port anchor, soft bottom, draft of ship forward 14' 9", aft 24' 7". Bearings of anchorage as follows:

Brise Lames Est 110° 10 cables distant
Old Seminary Aero Beacon 189°

5. During the period from the time of anchoring until 25 November 1942 the ship's anti-aircraft battery was in action every night. On the night of 20-21 November at 1931 an enemy bomb exploded 50 yards from the port quarter. The following despatch was sent to Commodore Algiers at 0629, Zone -1, 22 November, 1942:

"UNDERSTAND SITUATION REGARDING BERTHS. AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE REQUEST CONSIDERATION MY RECENT REQUEST REGARDING SUCH ASSIGNMENT A" MOLE ADMIRAL MOUCHEZ. HAD NEAR MISS WITH LIGHT BOMB LAST NIGHT FIFTY YARDS OFF PORT QUARTER NO DAMAGE."/1500/21.

No answer to this was received.

6. A check on the anchor bearings at sunset 24 November showed the ship in position.

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Authority MND735017
By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Stranding of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.

7. At 2210 24 November 1942 the ship was struck by an enemy bomb just forward of the after port 3 inch anti-aircraft gun at frame 180. The bomb pierced two decks and went out through the hull of the ship, apparently exploding in the water.

25 November, 1942 (All times zone minus 1)

- 0715 Checked anchor bearings and found anchor was holding. Ordered anchor bearings to be checked at least every half hour by the Officer of the Deck.
- 0920 Heavy swell commenced to roll in from seaward.
- 0935 Recheck of anchor bearings showed ship had dragged approximately 50 yards from original anchorage but was holding now.

The following despatch was delivered to Commodore Algiers at 1023:

"251023
HIT NEAR STERN BY BOMB LAST NIGHT. HEAVY SWELLS THREATEN TO POUND STERN OFF WITH PROBABLE TEARING OF PRESENT SOUND STRUCTURE WITH LOSS OF BUOYANCY AND GUNS AFT. LIKELIHOOD GALE DEMANDS ASSIGNMENT TODAY OF SHELTERED BERTH INSIDE HARBOR WHICH IS HEREBY REQUESTED."
(Time of delivery erroneously used as time of origin).

A conference had been arranged for the forenoon of 25 November 1942 aboard the THOMAS STONE with representatives of Commodore Algiers and the French Naval constructor relative to the repairs necessary to make the THOMAS STONE seaworthy for towing to Gibraltar or the United States to determine final details before submitting the proposed plans to the Navy Department. The threatening weather and mounting seas evidently prevented those from ashore attending this conference, for they did not come aboard. In the meantime no reply was received from Commodore Algiers to the ship's despatch of the morning requesting a berth inside the harbor. The Captain, sensing danger as the weather became more threatening drafted a despatch requesting a reply to the message containing his request for an inside berth. It was his intention to release this despatch if conditions grew much worse.

- 1130 Ship commenced dragging anchor, bearing showed ship had dragged approximately 50 yards. Sounding at stern showed 5 3/4 fathoms.
- 1138 Let go starboard anchor 15 fathoms of chain with orders to veer when chain became taut.
- 1200 Bearings showed anchors were holding.
- 1230 Ship commenced dragging again. Veered to 30 fathoms.
- 1245 Bearings showed anchors were holding.
- 1248 Attempted to raise shore signal station to send following message to Commodore Algiers: "Request reply my 251023 x Require tug x Dragging with both anchors down."
- Continuous calling by Searchlight failed to raise the shore signal station until at 1258 the following message was received via shore station from Commodore Algiers:

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By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Stranding of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.

The Captain immediately changed message to be sent by deleting "request reply my 251023" and ordered the remainder sent.

The ship was now dragging slowly again. Continuous calling for some minutes by Searchlight failed again to raise the shore signal station and the message that was to be sent was again changed to "Must have tug immediately x Dragging with both anchors down", and effort continued to raise the signal station. About 1310, after a few minutes with no success, hoisted international signal "NC" and shortly afterwards blew a series of long blasts on the whistle.

At 1323 delivered "must have tug immediately" to Empress of Australia, lying at Brise Lames Est jetties, which immediately (without waiting for remainder of signal) called signal tower and at 1330 signalled back "Have contacted shore". Message was delivered to signal station at 1325 (with time of delivery, to Empress of Australia, erroneously used as time of origin).

In the meantime H.M.S. QUENTIN heard the whistle signals and approached, and upon being informed that the ship was dragging toward shore, maneuvered to take the ship in tow. Due to the heavy swells, it was difficult to hold the QUENTIN in position but at 1400 the THOMAS STONE's two inch wire towing cable was taken on board and shackled to the QUENTIN's towing pennant and at 1407 the starboard anchor was aweigh; port anchor still had 30 fathoms out and chain slack. At 1409 the QUENTIN went slowly ahead. The strain on the towing line, due to the force of the wind and the heavy swell, proved too great and the QUENTIN's pennant parted at 1411.

At 1412 the Starboard anchor was let go and chain veered. The ship held for the time being with both anchors down. In the meantime H.M.S. HENGIST (tug) had stood out from the inner harbor and now came over to the ship, circled ahead of the ship and seemed to have considerable trouble maneuvering into position due to the heavy swells, but finally at 1421 anchored to windward of the THOMAS STONE. Several attempts from ship and tug to get a messenger across were ineffectual, and at 1450 the following message was sent to the tug: "If you don't get a line to me soon I will be aground". At 1451 sounding at stern showed depth of water 28 feet. A ship's landing boat, which had been launched earlier for just such an eventuality, after several attempts finally succeeded in placing the STONE's messenger aboard the tug at 1452. A 14" manila towing hawser with wire pennant was finally run from the tug to the THOMAS STONE. At 1531 the following message was sent from THOMAS STONE to tug: "We have two anchors out which we will heave in when you are ready." At 1535 from tug to STONE: "Wait until I take strain on rope". The tug then took a strain and observing that the anchor chains became slack the following message was sent from THOMAS STONE to tug: "The chain is tending up and down", in order to spur tug into reporting ready. The tug replied "Heave in."

(24)

132

DECLASSIFIED

Authority MND 735017

By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Stranding of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.

At 1544 the THOMAS STONE's starboard anchor was aweigh. Noting that the tug was having difficulty keeping the THOMAS STONE's head into the wind, at 1548 the following message was sent to the tug: "Can you get assistance to pull us off". The tug answered: "If we can get your head into the wind I can increase speed".

At 1550 the port anchor was aweigh. The bow of the THOMAS STONE soon fell off in the heavy swell and the tug was unable to keep the ship from drifting toward the beach. From 1550 to 1555 the ship drifted in a direction of 117° true approximately 355 yards. From 1555 to 1600 the ship drifted 173° true approximately 235 yards. From 1600 to 1602½ when the stern commenced to strike bottom occasionally the ship drifted 156° true 155 yards. From 1602½ to 1604 when the tow line parted and both anchors were ordered let go (one was let go and the other was dropped shortly thereafter) the ship had drifted 186° true 95 yards. At about 1605 the ship was aground.

The force of the very heavy swells swung the ship around to starboard where it took a position with the starboard side to the shore line on a heading of approximately 100° true. The ship rested on a hard, sandy, gradually sloping beach and sustained a heavy pounding from the seas as they swept in and worked the ship further on to the beach. Orders were given to flood fuel tanks 6 and 7, which had been kept dry at anchor to keep the stern up, to help prevent the ship washing up on the beach. The forward magazines were ordered flooded also, for the same reason and to prevent an explosion if plates began grinding with possible production of sparks, but the pumps went off before the magazines could flood more than a little, due to shut down of engine room to avoid silting up of condensers. It was not considered advisable to flood down more as the breakers were heavy and it was considered that more damage would result from pounding than if the ship were allowed to assume her position even if somewhat further on the beach. This continued during the night of 25 November and on the morning of the 26th of November when the seas commenced subsiding, a check showed the ship was heading 134° true in 11½ feet of water at the bow, 13 1/4 feet amidships and 17 feet at the stern.

DAMAGE SUSTAINED:

Structure

As a result of the grounding, or due to the bomb hit on 24 November, the rudder and propeller and shaft which had been broken previously by the torpedo dropped off. Two accommodation ladders, two boat booms and nineteen life rafts were swept away by the sea. Although the bottom has been examined only partially by a diver there is no indication of any structural damage to the hull as far as can be observed from inside or outside the ship except slight leakage into some tanks through outer bottom.

(25)

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 735017
By PTNARA Date 5-5-06

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Subject: Stranding of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.
Machinery

No damage appears to have been sustained. However, further examination including a check of alignment of the engine and machinery will be necessary to confirm this statement. It will be impossible to definitely determine, if misalignment is found, whether it is due to torpedo hit or grounding.

PRESENT SITUATION

The THOMAS STONE is resting on a hard, sandy, gradually shelving beach on an even keel. Soundings show following depths of water: Bow 11½ feet, midships 13¼ feet, stern 17 feet. The ship's head is 134° true while the shore line opposite is in a east westerly direction. Soundings offshore indicate that it will be necessary to haul the ship about 100 yards in a 350° true direction before she floats. Under present trim the ship's draft is 14' 09" forward and 24' 07" aft. It is possible to readily remove fuel, gasoline, water, and less easily stores, ammunition and other articles amounting to 2985 tons which will lighten the ship approximately 4 feet 10 inches, new draft forward 10' 09", aft 19' 04". A cofferdam is being built in the shaft alley at frame 171, which will permit the pumping out of an additional 250 tons (approximate).

Representatives of the Commodore Algiers have determined that the ship can be hauled off the beach and that facilities are available to accomplish this. The THOMAS STONE at present being under the British Eastern Naval Task Force Commander, the Royal Navy is undertaking the salvage operations and beach gear is already laid out.

The weather is a factor which will affect operations and while favorable at the moment, during this season of the year, stormy winds from northerly and easterly directions may be expected which, with the heavy seas accompanying, may interrupt operations and increase the damage to the vessel.

REPAIR

There is no drydock in Algiers large enough for the THOMAS STONE and the large floating drydock at Oran is reported sunk. Enclosure (A) is a copy of the report of the British Naval Base Salvage Officer Algiers made prior to the stranding but there probably will be little change due to the condition of the ship at present. The Salvage Officer recommended that the stern be removed. However, it is not believed necessary or desirable to cut off the stern. Captain ELLSBERG, USNR, has inspected the ship and considers it inadvisable to remove the stern.

(26)

122

DECLASSIFIED

Authority *MND 735017*

By *PTNARA* Date *5-5-06*

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Stranding of the U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.

From the foregoing it is concluded:

1. The ship can be floated with local facilities.
2. The ship can be made seaworthy with local facilities for towing to Oran, Gibraltar, or the United States.
3. It is believed that, given the necessary priority, the stern can be rebuilt at Oran after the large drydock is raised and repaired in about a month after some parts which should be shipped from the United States arrive. Those needed will be reported later.
4. No estimates of cost or time have been submitted. Undoubtedly the time factor would depend on priorities and the need of local repair facilities for urgent military purposes from time to time.

C.B. BENNEHOFF.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority *MND 735017*

By *PT* NARA Date *5-5-06*

November 19, 1942.
From: Lieutenant M.C. Deschamps, Royal Navy Reserve.
Base Salvage Officer, Algiers.
To : The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.
Subject: Examination of damage sustained to U.S.S. THOMAS STONE.

1. In carrying out the examination of your vessel, using British Naval Divers, the object of my examination has been made with a view to making your vessel suitable for towage either to Gibraltar or the United States. In my opinion, it will be necessary to cut away the whole of the stern portion abaft the fracture caused by the torpedo. In my opinion, the port has facilities for making your vessel sea-worthy for this purpose.

2. The divers have paid particular attention to the rudder, propeller, and shaft. The shaft is fractured forward of the shaft coupling in the position marked on the plan. The stern frame is fractured in two places in approximately the position marked on the plan. The shaft and propeller are now held in position owing to the fact that with the dropping of the shaft, the inboard end of the shaft has jammed in the position indicated. In addition, some of the shell plating is folded around the shaft but it is considered probable that with the 30-ton floating crane in Algiers the propeller and shaft can be removed in one piece before cutting away the stern.

3. The rudder post is still intact, being only fractured at the hell piece. Therefore, it would not be possible to remove it without removing the rudder pintles.

4. Should it be decided to cut away the stern, it should be possible to extend your bulkhead above the after bulkhead of the C.D. Stores. The Tunnel Shaft could be coffer-dammed and pumped out. The chief difficulty attached to the operation may be caused by the fact that we have no under-water cutting gear at the moment, but it is considered that on request from you to the British Naval Authorities this could speedily be provided and the divers that are at present available are competent to carry out any under-water cutting.

M. C. DESCHAMPS,
Lieutenant, R.S.R.

28

122