

Aerial Torpedo or Submarine Launched Torpedo?

By Francesco Mattesini

**"There can be no doubt, it was a German airplane, a Heinkel He 111 from the 6th Squadron of the 26th Bomber Wing (6/KG.26), that attacked the THOMAS STONE. This was the only German air torpedo squadron present in the Mediterranean on November 7, 1942, while the two groups I./KG.26 and III./KG.26 (respectively with torpedo-carrying aircrafts He 111 and Ju 88), coming from Norway, arrived in Grosseto the morning of November 8, and were utilized from Sardinia in the area of Algiers starting from the morning of November 9. The subsequent torpedoing of the American troop transport ship LEEDSTOWN is attributed to the Ju 88 from the III./KG.26 and to the German submarine U 331. With respect to my information on the November 7 submarine attacks, my objections/observations to Rohwer's book (of which I have the original German version): At 20:09 the German submarine U 205 (bürgel) attacked a large ship (16.000 tsl), in CH 8333 corresponding to lat. 37°27'N, 02°40'E. The THOMAS STONE was in effect hit quite far away, at lat. 37°31'N, long. 00°01'E (33 miles from Cape Palos); but most of all the fact that it was damaged at 05:43 is important, and consequently not on the evening of November 7 but at morning's first light, when the 6/KG.26's He 111 attacked. At 21:00 the Italian submarine TOPAZIO (Patané) carried out an attack with no results northwest of Algiers, lat. 37°05'N, long. 02°41'E. 40 miles northwest of Cape Casine."**

THOMAS STONE (former "President van Buren"), 9255 tons (26 November 1942) Steamboat from passengers, gained from the American Navy January 14 1942, and transformed in transportation troops. It participated all' operation "Torch", the landing of the Allies in the North one Africa French. It left from Clyde, in Great Britain, with the convoy d' invasion KMF.A/1, destined to the zone of landing of Algiers. The convoy, constituted from nineteen large ships from landing and from transportation troops, was attached at daybreak of the morning of November 7 1942, to about 33 miles from Head Palos (Spain), from you are torpedoing German He 111 of 6^ Squadron of 2^ Group of 26^ I Rustle Bombardment (6/KG.26). The "Thomas Stone" (captain OR. R. Bennehof), that embarked 1400 men of 2^ Battalion of 39^ Regiment of 9^ American Division of infantry, destined to disembark raises of Head Matifou (Area Charlie), to the hours 05,43, finding itself on the extreme column of political left of the convoy, was hit to stern from a torpedo, in lat. 37^32^TMN, long. 00^01^TME, and the killed nine men. Despite the damages restored all' extreme stern and all' removal dell' tree of the rudder, to that added themselves the bad conditions of the sea, the transportation troops, after to be arrested temporarily, continued in its route. escorted from the British corvette "Spey" (captain of corvette H. G. Boyd Smith). The "Thomas Stone" at first was dragged, to the speed of four knots, from twenty-four landing crafts in endowment to the ship, on which had taken place 800 soldiers, with the greater Oakes. When then for the conditions of the sea, more bad, it threatened to sink the landing crafts, these let go the tow and continued for Algiers, escorted from the "Spey", that, to protect the LCVP was compelled to left anch' be the "Thomas Stone". Reached then from other three two British unity, sailed for l' work of helped from Gibraltar " first the destroyer "Wishart" and "Velox" and then the tugboat "St Day" "

that took it to tow, to 10,30 of the 11 November the "Thomas Stone" arrived to Algiers, far away 145 miles from the point of the undermining. It was preceded, to the speed of nine knots, from its twenty-four landing crafts. Submitted in harbour in the following days to other aerial attacks, and hit from bombers in contribution German of II Fliegerkorps during the night of November 25, the "Thomas Stone", with two districts flooded I was left' next day 26, after that a heavy sea, increasing the damages, had make hamper it in lat.  $36^{\circ}49'$  N, long.  $03^{\circ}07'$  E. December 12 1943, what was now a wreck was again attached, this time from means d' assault of the Direction Navy, before transported the port of Algiers from the submarine "Ambra" (holding of vessel Mario Arillo). An explosive charge, placed of SLC (torpedo to slow race) of the midshipman Giorgio Reggioli and of the assistant diver Columbus Pamolli, was make explode under the hull of the "Thomas Stone" (abbreviation PT 59), that the stern removed. In the same action they had been sunk from the other means d' assault dell' "Ambra" (SLC and swimmers range) the British steamboats "Ocean Vanquisher", "Berta", "Empire Centaur" and "Armattan".