

The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. "Vindictive".

19th November 1942. Ref:- 352/0191.

Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force.

Report of Proceedings from 9th to 12th November 1942, including torpedoing of H.M.S. "Thetis" at 2315 on 11th November 1942. All times are G.M.T.

The following report is forwarded regarding the torpedoing of H.M.S. EKLA at 2315 on 11th November, 1942, in position 35. 43. North 4. 35 West.

1. At 1245 on the 9th November 1942 I parted company from Convoy G.F.7. (Ocean escort H.M.S. HENRIETTA) in position 28. 16. North 4. 35 West taking under my orders H.M.S. H EKLA, H.M.S. VIGOROUS and H.M.S. MAINE, the latter destroyers having just rendezvoused with the convoy.

2. (a) R/T organization was put into force in accordance with the following signal. "EKLA, VIGOROUS MAINE (R) HENRIETTA from VINDICTIVE". "A.F.O. St/As section H.A. on parting company from HENRIETTA, VINDICTIVE will assume searching 350, 418, 450 W/O's R/T guard and B.N. guard shifting to read "routines". EKLA is to assume 300 W/O's R/T guard and Gibraltar "breakfast shifting to read "routines". VIGOROUS and MAINE are to keep watch as in A.F.O. St/As section H.A. T.O.O. 11554/9/11/42."

(b) EKLA informed me she intended to keep R.D.F. watch Procedure J. VINDICTIVE is not fitted with any form of R.D.F.

(c) No instructions were issued to VIGOROUS or MAINE regarding the nature of R.D.F. or Asdic watch to be maintained, it being assumed that as escorting vessels they were far better capable of running their own affairs without interference from me in subjects in which neither I nor any of my officers have any experience. Neither VIGOROUS nor MAINE requested any instructions or made any reference whatever to these matters.

3. In accordance with sailing orders received immediately prior to leaving Freetown I planned to pass through the following positions: 28 28 N 14 W, 35 13 N 11 30 W, 35 49 N 8 38 W, 35 50 N 6 03 W, thence to Gibraltar.

4. In these orders my speed of advance was given as 15 knots, which entailed arrival at Gibraltar at 1830, 12th November 1942.

5. Since my orders only instructed me to arrive on the 12th November 1942, I decided to increase my speed of advance slightly so as to arrive at Gibraltar in daylight, 1600 hours, 12th November 1942.

6. I was unaware of any operation in progress until the news was publicly released by the B.N.C. on Tuesday 10th November 1942, but I was somewhat disturbed by the apparent concentration of U-boats in the approach to the Straits of Gibraltar.

7. Zig-zag.....

Page 2 of Commanding Officer H.M.S. VINDICTIVE's letter No 3584/0191 dated. 19th Nov. 1942)

6

8. Zig-Zag was continued by day and by night and, except on the evenings of the 9th November, an evasive alteration of Mean Course was made after dark.

9. During daylight hours on Wednesday 11th November, zig-zag No 39 was in force from 0600 until 1840, when zig-zag was changed to No 15. My speed through the water was $14\frac{1}{2}$ knots. While proceeding between point "B" and "S", at 1156 I unexpectedly sighted and passed close astern of a U.S. Task Force under the command of Admiral Giffen, flying his flag in U.S.S. MASSACHUSETTS

10. Whilst still in sight of this force, but to the North Eastward of it, message T.O.O. 1335/11 from an unknown aircraft (re-broadcast by Gibraltar) was received at 1425, reporting a U boat in position 35 39 North 12 10 West. I was in position 34 54 North 11 47 West, Mean Course 043 degrees.

11. In order to increase distance from this U boat and to lead him away from the U.S. Task Force should I be sighted, I altered course at 1425/11 to 073 degrees, passing 15 miles to S.E. of position "S".

12. In accordance with an intentions signal made before sunset, mean course was altered to 043 degrees at 1850/11, (i.e. after dark) - (though with a 3 day old moon) and to 090 degrees at 2230 (i.e. after moonset). No signals were made to execute these turns.

13. Zig-Zag No 39 was in force until 1850/11, from then onwards Zig-Zag No 15 was in force.

14. The courses steered from 2206/11 are as shown in the following table. Speed through the water throughout $14\frac{1}{2}$ knots. Screening diagram No 2 in force - HECLA 3 cables astern on mean course.

Time of wheel over	To steady on	Bearing of Venomous	Bearing of Marnes.
2206	063 degrees	350 degrees 1800 yds	096 degrees 1800 yds
2215	043 "(Mean Course)	350	096
2230	090 "(New mean course)	037	143.
2235	060)	} off the screen.	143
2245	090		143
2250	120		143
2300	090		143
2305	120		143
2315	090		143

Hecla was stationed 223 degrees until 2230 and thereafter 270 degrees

15. At sunset (about 1740) the sky was 8/10 clouded, but during twilight it cleared to the South Westward with a very pronounced after glow, conditions at this period being ideal for a U boat which might be shadowing from ahead. Later the sky clouded over more and throughout the first watch it was 7/10 to 9/10 clouded with occasional short light showers. Wind Northerly, squally, force 3-5. Sea 3i with some white horses. After moonset, no section of the horizon was distinguishable.

16. (a) The first.....

(Page 3 of Commanding Officer, H.M.S. VENICTIVE's letter No 3394/0191 dated 19th November 1942)

16. (a). The first watch was dark. Neither VENOMOUS nor MARNE, nor either of their wakes could be seen with the naked eye.
- (b) With glasses:-
 VENOMOUS could sometimes just be seen when knowing where to look, but not always.
 VENOMOUS's wake or bow wave was more often visible than not.
 MARNE could nearly always be picked up.
 MARNE's wake and bow wave was always visible.
17. At 2230, a report was received from VENOMOUS on R.T. set (2410 K/C's) "An investigating an R.D.F. contact bearing 215 degrees - 2 miles. The situation at 2231 was :-
 Just steamed on new mean course 090 degrees.
 MARNE 143 degrees 1800 yards.
 HECLA. 270 degrees 600 yards.
 VENOMOUS passing (presumably under HECLA's stern but not in sight) to investigate the R.D.F. contact.
18. VENOMOUS had not been in sight for some minutes prior to 2230. If she had been in correct station the bearing of the contact practically passed through VENICTIVE and HECLA. My first impression, therefore, was that she had got a little outside distance and had R.D.F.'d VENICTIVE or HECLA. Had it been a firm contact I expected confirmation from MARNE. The next leg of the zig-zag being 30 degrees away from the contact, already well on the quarter, I decided to make no emergency alteration of course which would have entailed risk of disclosure by light signal or by breaking W/T silence. It was also assumed that MARNE and HECLA had received VENOMOUS's contact report and were ready to take individual action. Nothing further transpiring the zig-zag was continued.
19. No further information was received or anything signalled until 2310 or 2311 when an officer on the bridge reported "a wake" on the Starboard quarter. Directors were ordered on the bearing G.140 (280 degrees) and they also picked it up but some observers considered the "wake" to be white horses. When first observed the "wake" was about 10 - 15 degrees ahead of HECLA's bows and bearing aft, slowly at first, then more rapidly. It was finally lost to sight about 2318 bearing approximately 280 degrees. I was never able personally to pick it up and probably would not have recognized it for what it was even if I had. Both I and all officers who did see it, were divided as to whether it was a case of white horses, or VENOMOUS rejoining. The fact that VENOMOUS had made no amplifying or negative report since her first contact report at 2230 contributed largely to my appreciation at 2315 - 2316; which was strengthened by lack of report from or action taken by HECLA who, I considered, must have been aware of VENOMOUS's 2230 and was closer to the "wake" with a greater chance of identifying the course of it.
20. The error in my appreciation was apparent at 2315 when the explosion of a torpedo (since learnt to have been two) on HECLA was observed. It produced a dull flash extending to her masthead which illuminated her upperworks, indicating she had been struck on the Starboard side. A column of water or smoke was also shown up by the flash but was not distinguishable. Some observers later reported that HECLA had immediately taken a list to Starboard. after the flash had subsided.

Page 4 of Commanding Officer, H.M.S. VINDICTIVE's letter No. 5384/0191
dated 19th Nov. 1942.

21. Port wheel already on for the 2315 zig-zag was increased and speed increased to full speed (the latter in 3 stages 10 minutes apart) and ship was steadied on 090 degrees at approximately 2315. 50. At about 2316.30 I personally observed a torpedo overtaking the ship on a parallel course about 100 feet to port. A report was also made of a similar torpedo to starboard. Subsequent enquiries have convinced me that these two torpedoes were facts and that the starboard, or Southernmost one was a few seconds in advance. The course of these torpedoes was within a degree or two of 090 degrees. At 2318, a faint single explosion, taken to be a torpedo exploding at the end of its run was heard.

22. There have also been reports of a third torpedo crossing VINDICTIVE's wake at a broad angle close under the stern up to a distance of 150 feet. Several persons aft including two officers, stated they heard it but only one saw its track. The officer who also saw it estimated its track as from Green 120. Some ratings who heard and saw it estimated its track as from Red 80. It is difficult to reconcile these reports with any probable reconstruction of the attack, if conducted by only one U.Boat, and I am inclined to think that the course of this torpedo has been wrongly noted. A possible explanation may lie in the possibility of this torpedo having crossed the wake during the turn and of its being the one that passed up my Port side. On the other hand, the possibility of a "W" torpedo or one with a delay action angling device cannot be entirely ignored.

23. To sum up it is considered
- (a) Two torpedos hit HECLA on her starboard side at 2315.
 - (b) About $1\frac{1}{2}$ minutes later two torpedos overtook VINDICTIVE on a course of 090° , running within $+2^{\circ}$ of that course.
 - (c) A possibility exists of a fifth torpedo crossing VINDICTIVE's wake between 2315.45 and 2317.

24. I was about to instruct MARNE to close HECLA when at 2320 she took this action without orders. Also at 2320, a message " R.D.F. contact is without confirmation" was received from VENEMOUS on 2410 KC's.

25. Considering myself clear of the torpedo zone of the main salvo, at 2320 I altered course to 110° to bring astern the estimated position of the U.Boat and at 2340 shaped course 087° to pass through position U. having by then worked up to full speed.

26. An enemy report T.O.O. 2315 was originated when HECLA was torpedoed and amplifying reports 2345/11 and 0145/12 made informing you of my intentions.

27. A few star

SECRET

36. of Commanding Officer, H.M.S. "VINDICTIVE's" letter No. 3384/0191 dated 19th November, 1942.

36. The U. Boat remained on the surface from 2230 until 2318 if later and VENOMOUS's negative report at 2320, covering it is presumed the whole of the intervening period is disappointing. The apparent failure of HSCLA to R.D.F. the U. Boat is also worthy of remark.

37. The U. Boat never approached within visual distance of MARNE. It is not known if HSCLA did sight it, and was led into the same error that I was in mistaking the wake for VENOMOUS returning, or whether she was unaware that VENOMOUS had gone off on a hunt. If this was the case, it suggests that she was not tuned accurately. If she was not tuned in accurately the incident would seem to emphasize the need to break W/T silence for this purpose when "PANGERS" meet an escort.

38. Nothing was heard by VINDICTIVE at any time since leaving the coast on 9th November, 1942, on the 350 - 450 Kc's wave band (paragraph 3 (a)).

(Sd.) H. G. D. ACLAND

(H.G.D. ACLAND)
CAPTAIN, R.N.

ENCLOSURES:-

- No.1 Track Chart from chart 1226 (in original only).
- No.2 Diagram for period 2306/11 to 2320/11 1" = 4,000 yards.
- No.3 Diagram for period 2309/11 to 2320/11 1" = 1,000 yards.