

SECRET.

LOSS OF HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP "HECLA".



FROM ... The Naval Commander Expeditionary Force, ALGIERS.
DATE ... 13th December, 1942. NO ... 82/00222/1p.
TO ... The Secretary of the Admiralty.

(Copies to - Captain (F), Algiers;
Captain (D), 3rd Destroyer Flotilla;
Commanding Officer, H.M.S. VINDICTIVE;
Commanding Officer, H.M.S. VENOMOUS;
Commanding Officer, H.M.S. MARNE;
Captain G.V.B. Faulkner, R.N.)

The enclosed packs regarding the loss of H.M.S. HECLA are forwarded for the information of Their Lordships. The loss of this valuable and useful ship at this time is much to be regretted. The manner in which HECLA stood up to repeated torpedo hits does credit to her Damage Control organisation and her construction alike.

2. I have carefully considered whether a Board of Enquiry should be convened but have decided that such a course is not practicable in view of the early departure of many officers concerned for the United Kingdom, and the dispersal on active operations of those who remain.

3. I consider that the reconstruction of events by the Commanding Officer, H.M.S. VINDICTIVE is reasonable, but it would seem that there were in all probability, two U-Boats present, both of them on the surface.

4. In my view there was a bad failure in A/S, quite apart from R.D.F. It was not until after the harm was done that A/S started to pick up echoes.

It appears that :-

- (a) VINDICTIVE failed to ensure proper co-ordination of R.D.F. arrangements, and, in consequence, R.D.F. results appear to have been completely negative.
- (b) An error of judgement caused VINDICTIVE to assume that what was, in fact, a U-Boat, was VENOMOUS joining up. As a result no real attempt was made to identify the object sighted.
- (c) A/S was thoroughly unsatisfactory until the enemy had betrayed his presence by firing torpedoes. It is appreciated, however, that submarines were probably on the surface.

5. A satisfactory feature of this incident was the sound appreciation, initiative and determination of the Commanding Officer, H.M.S. VENOMOUS, who coped admirably with a most difficult situation, making two highly effective attacks on U-Boats, recovering survivors and arranging for the safeguarding of H.M.S. MARNE, before he left to fuel.

W. L. ...

ADMIRAL.

- (a) Commanding Officer, H.M.S. HECLA's letter dated 16th Nov. 1942.
- (b) Commanding Officer, H.M.S. VINDICTIVE's letter No. 3384/0191 dated 19th Nov. 1942. (Enclosures 1, 2 and 3 to Admiralty only.)
- (c) Commanding Officer, H.M.S. MARNE's letter dated 7th Nov. 1942.
- (d) Commanding Officer, H.M.S. VENOMOUS' letter dated 14th Nov. 1942.