

SECRET
TRIPLICATE

H.M.S. VENOMOUS
14th November 1942.

35/1730

Sir, I have the honour to report the proceeding of H.M.S. Venomous between 6th and 14th November. All times quoted are G.M.T.

1. 'Venomous' sailed 1700Z/6th and proceeded to meet convoy C.F.7, at 1245Z/9th in position 28° 34'N 21° 31'W. On meeting 'Vindictive' and 'Hecla' were detached; 'Venomous' and 'Marne' were stationed in screening diagram No2 occupying positions 'a' and 'o' respectively. The Passage was without incident until the night of 11th November.

2. At 2215, a good R.D.F. contact was obtained bearing 215°, 4000yds and I turned to investigate reporting my action by R/T on 2410 kc/s.

It was unfortunate that at this moment, as a result of water in an oil fuel tank, there was a large amount of smoke made, and any aspect of surprise must have been lost. The R.D.F. contact was lost at 2200 yds at 2228 and nothing could be seen on the bearing. A brief asdic search of the area was carried out and at 2250 I set course to rejoin 'Vindictive' and 'Hecla' at 18 knots. The R.D.F. Enclosure No.4 to NCXF. No. 82/00222/17. & 13 DEC.

TRIPLICATE

SECRET

(THE COMMANDING OFFICER, H.M.S. VENOMOUS'S NO.35/1730 OF 14TH NOVEMBER).

II.

No. 145/10,
THE NAVAL COMMANDER,
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

VENOMOUS's report of proceedings for the period 6th to 14th November, 1942 and two reports of attacks on U-Boats are forwarded.

3. Enclosure No.2 and the recommendations for awards have been detached, as it has been found necessary to refer them to VENOMOUS. They will be forwarded later.

NAVY COMMANDER
0022/107
11 DEC. 1942
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Signed: R. J. SHAW
CAPTAIN.

2316
oke
la'
ag
ped
the
ped-
I
stern
full
ad
to
and
g
the
ne
way
ght
he
s
nt
off
seen.
ntil
ced
est-

SECRET
TRIPLICATE

R.N.S. VENOMOUS
14th November 1942.

I have the honor to report the proceeding of R.N.S. Venomous between 14th and 15th November. All times quoted are G.M.T.

Venomous sailed 1700Z/6th and proceeded to meet convoy O.F.7, at 1245Z/9th position 20° 34'N 210 31'W. On meeting 'Vindictive' and 'Hoola' were detached; 'Venomous' and 'Horne' were stationed in screening diagram No.2 occupying positions 20° 34'N 210 31'W respectively. The Passage was without incident until the night of 14th November.

At 2235, a good R.D.F. contact was obtained bearing 215°, 4000yds and I closed to investigate reporting my action by R/T on 2410 km/s.

It was unfortunate that at this moment, as a result of water in an oil tank, there was a large amount of smoke made, and any aspect of surprise must have been lost. The R.D.F. contact was lost at 2200 yds at 2228 and nothing could be seen on the bearing. A brief sonic search of the area was carried out and at 2250 I set course to rejoin 'Vindictive' and 'Hoola' at 18 knots. The R.D.F. range at this time was 17000 yds.

Shortly afterwards distant starshell was sighted bearing 167° and at 2316 bright glow and a large column of smoke were observed bearing 007°. The smoke cleared and a merchant ship was sighted and closed for investigation (2342).

This was found to be R.N.S. Hoola and R.N.S. Horne reported that 'Hoola' had been torpedoed in both boiler rooms. 'Horne' was carrying out a circular patrol and I adjusted course to join in the patrol. While taking position 'Hoola' was observed to be hit by a torpedo again and reported at 0015 she was torpedoed from bow 115°. I closed this position and at 0039 dropped both charges although not in contact, and carried out a starshell search of the area but with no result. I then set course to resume patrol.

While closing, I heard a torpedo on sonics and 'Hoola' was again torpedoed and abandoned ship. I was instructing 'Horne' to pick up survivors while I continued to patrol when at this moment 'Horne' herself was torpedoed and her stern came off.

'Horne' reported the U-boat on her starboard quarter and I closed at full speed illuminating the area by starshell. The U-boat was sighted crossing ahead on port to starboard at high speed at about 1500 yards range. I endeavoured to close and ran and opened fire with 'F' gun. The U-boat was zig-zagging ahead and the range was about 1000yds fired a torpedo from her stern tube. Avoiding the mine was taken and the torpedo passed down the starboard side. I estimate the U-boat was making a good 20 knots as at 24 knots I was overtaking very close. To give better illumination I fired a snowflake rocket whereupon the U-boat dived. The periscope was seen passing down the port side about 10 yds away at 0050/10 a five charge pattern set to 50 ft was fired by eye and is thought to have been very accurate. The last feather from the periscope was passing the U-boat on firing and the ship was about on a parallel course. The U-boat would appear to have been within the pattern. The explosion from the last charge was considerably heavier than normal and the column of water much higher. The distant starshell of the starboard dynamo caught fire and the machine had to be taken off the board. Another snowflake and 12 pr starshell was fired, but nothing was seen.

Contact was not regained and a search of the area was carried out until 0100 when I closed the position at 11000 yds in which 'Hoola' sank and commenced picking up survivors. Rescue work was broken off on several occasions to investigate R.D.F. contacts and to drop a depth charge periodically.

At 0550 an R.D.F. contact was gained at 1600 yds moving right. I closed to investigate and left home, 'Town of Signin', sighted a U-boat on the surface moving from left to right towards 'Horne'. I increased speed to run and opened fire with 4-7 and Oerlikon. It is my opinion that the presence of 'Venomous' had not been observed by the U-boat until this time. The Oerlikon was seen to hit and the U-boat dived about 20 300 yds fine on the port bow. Sonic contact was regained at 0610 yds and a 5 charge pattern counter was carried out at 0654. After the 5 charge was detonated, a sixth and heavier explosion was heard. This was testified both by officers on the bridge and by the depth charge party aft. Immediately after commencing the attack I had to alter course to port to avoid 'Horne'.

TRIPPLICATE

SECRET.

to avoid 'Marne'.

Contact was regained and a second counter attack firing a five charge pattern of heavy depth charges was carried out at 0603. A second counter attack was considered essential rather than waiting to reload for a deliberate attack. In case 'Marne' was again attacked. Contact was not regained after this attack and a search was carried out until daylight when rescue operations were resumed (0730).

10. SUMMARY OF ATTACKS.

I am unable to determine for certain whether one or two U-boats were present, but the initial R.D.F. contact and the fact that 'Hocla' was torpedoed no less than five times, the latter attacks taking place in quick succession from the port quarter and starboard bow respectively lead me to the conclusion that there were two. From observations of many witnesses, the U-boat sighted at 0550 was much larger than that seen at 0039.

The first depth charge attack is thought to have been highly damaging but not fatal, although no material evidence was obtained.

In the second attack the sixth explosion cannot be explained, although such an incident has been read of in other reports.

The fact that 'Marne' and 'Venomous' remained unmolested for the remaining time suggests that the U-boat or U-boats were not in a condition to continue the attack.

11. RESCUE.

The picking up of survivors was a lengthy task owing to their having become widely separated during the night. The reason for this seems to have been that most of the paddles had been blown out of the carley floats, and they could not therefore close each other. It was not until 1250/12 that the final man had been rescued. A total of seventeen officers and 476 ratings were picked up and it is greatly to be regretted that there were not more. About 30 bodies were seen who had died from drowning or exposure during the night. It must have been most disheartening for the survivors at times when I was obliged to abandon rescue work for investigation and attacks.

12. FUEL.

On completion of picking up survivors there was no more than 29 tons of oil fuel remaining, insufficient to reach Gibraltar. An attempt was made to fuel from H.M.S. 'Marne', but after 15 minutes it was clear that the risk of damage owing to the swell was too great, and the attempt had to be abandoned. My whaler and one carley float sustained damage.

By 1600 there was no sight of either 'Prescott' 'Albrighten' or 'Indguard' detailed to join and escort 'Marne', 'Jonquil' and 'Louisberg' however they were sighted proceeding to join convoy U.G.F.2. As it was imperative that 'Venomous' should proceed immediately if she was to make harbour under her own power, 'Jonquil' was instructed to stand by 'Marne' until the arrival of other escorts, expected very shortly. This action was reported in my message timed 1608Z.

At 1615 I set course for Casablanca at 12 knots

It was by no means certain whether there was sufficient fuel to reach this, the nearest United Nations port, but it was clearly impossible to proceed to Gibraltar, and to have remained longer standing by 'Marne' would have resulted in two ships being out of action.

I entered harbour at 0735/13 and secured alongside U.S.S. 'Augusta' at 0822.

The amount of fuel remaining was just under 4 tons.

13. SIGNALS.

Difficulty was experienced in passing my initial reports of the situation owing to insufficient power being available due to one dynamo being put out of action, and it is regretted if this failure prevented the early knowledge that 'Hocla' had been sunk.

16. CASUALTIES

On securing I waited on Admiral Hewett, Commanding W.N.T.F., and fully explained the situation. His response was immediate and magnificent. All survivors were received on board the *Augusta* where washing facilities, food and clothing were provided. Provisions were also obtained for *Venomous*.

Fuelling was commenced and continued from *Augusta* until 1100 when *Augusta* required to shift berth owing to the arrival of U.S. Transports.

Venomous shifted berth alongside U.S.S. *Chenango* where fuelling was continued, and repairs commenced by ship's staff to the port condenser which had developed a leak on the passage out.

Fuelling and repairs were completed by 1800/13 at which time I had intended to sail for Gibraltar. At 1800 however extremely heavy rain squalls started. To provide accommodation between decks for 500 survivors, scantily clad, who had already suffered from exposure was quite impossible, and to sail under these conditions was most undesirable.

I explained the circumstances to Captain Wyatt U.S.N. Commanding U.S.S. *Chenango* who immediately agreed to my request that the survivors should sleep in *Chenango's* empty hangar for the night. With him I visited Admiral Hewett U.S.N. who concurred with these proposals, and my intentions were passed to C-in-C X.F. by U.S.S. *Augusta*.

The survivors were not only accommodated in *Chenango* but were given a meal before returning in the morning.

I cannot speak too highly of the generous assistance provided by U.S.S. *Augusta* and *Chenango*. Copies of signals exchanged are included in enclosure No 1.

20. CASUALTIES

The casualties among the survivors were fortunately light and apart from a large number suffering initially from exposure, only 2 officers and 4 ratings were seriously wounded. One rating was transferred to U.S.S. *Augusta*, but it is regretted that he died during the night. His body was re-embarked before sailing, and together with three other ratings who had never recovered after rescue, was buried at sea.

Venomous slipped at 0630/14 and proceeded at 20 knots for Gibraltar, arriving at 1618.

22. REMARKS

The night's rest in harbour was most beneficial both for the survivors and for my officers and ship's company, who had worked unceasingly both at action stations, rescue operations and subsequently providing for the needs of the survivors. It is difficult to single out individuals when the work was so handily performed by all, but I wish to commend those officers and ratings who were conspicuous for their untiring and successful efforts at rescue. Names are contained in enclosure No2 and recommendations for awards forwarded.

The bearing of the survivors was most satisfactory throughout.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

00217/1157
NAVY COMMAND
21 DEC 1942
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

The Commander in Chief
Expeditionary Force.

Commander
Royal Navy

COMMODORE (F)
145/10
21 NOV 1942
GIBRALTAR