

SECRET.

Subject: REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS LEADING TO THE TORPEDOING OF H.M.S. MARNE.

From .. THE COMMANDING OFFICER, H.M.S. MARNE.

Date .. 17th November, 1942.

To .. THE NAVAL COMMANDER, EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.
(Copies to: The Captain, 3rd Destroyer Flotilla, H.M.S. MILNE,
The Captain, H.M.S. HECLA.)

H.M. Ships VENOMOUS and MARNE were screening H.M.S. VINDICTIVE and H.M.S. HECLA in screening diagram No.2; VENOMOUS Position "A"; MARNE position "O"; course 090° speed 13 knots. The weather was cloudy, night visibility 4000 yards with slight sea and moderate swell.

Course was altered to 090° and zig-zag No.15 started at 2230Z/11 as previously arranged without signal.

At 0016 in position 35° 47' N 9° 52' W an explosion was heard which was thought to be VENOMOUS firing a gun. Signalling between VINDICTIVE and HECLA was seen. VINDICTIVE altered course to port; HECLA to starboard; MARNE conformed to HECLA'S movements.

Soon after, MARNE received a signal from HECLA saying she had been torpedoed starboard side. At 0027 a search firing starshell was commenced on HECLA'S starboard side: nothing was seen.

MARNE was ordered by HECLA to screen her. Half an hour later VENOMOUS was met, who enquired what had happened and the situation was passed to him. At 0132 HECLA was torpedoed a second time, received a third torpedo at 0148.

At that moment VENOMOUS began illuminating with starshell and dropped a pattern of depthcharges on HECLA'S port beam. Thinking he had found the submarine and that the first torpedo must have come from the port side and not the starboard side as was reported by HECLA, MARNE began to close VENOMOUS to assist. At 0153 a signal from HECLA was received, "About to abandon ship, stand by me". MARNE was by then on HECLA'S port side closing VENOMOUS. Course was altered to stand by HECLA. Ship was stopped on HECLA'S port quarter - 2 cables - and swimmers could then be seen in the water, whaler was about to be slipped, survivors were coming alongside, a swirl was seen about 5 cables on HECLA'S port beam. Full speed astern was ordered with the intention of proceeding to investigate the swirl but was immediately reversed to half ahead both to take sternway off the ship when it was reported boats and survivors not clear. At the same time, fire was opened with starshell.

While the boats were being cleared, there was an explosion aft in HECLA and the wake of a torpedo was seen approaching MARNE 1 cable away and immediately there was an explosion aft.

A signal was made reporting the situation to N.C.X.F. After trying in engines which had been reported alright, it was realised that the propellers had been blown off. Damage control personnel set about shoring up bulkheads, whilst the picking up of HECLA'S survivors continued. At 0225 HECLA sank. 9 Officers, including the Captain of HECLA and 67 ratings were picked up. The damage in MARNE was as follows:

All shaft 90 bulkhead had been blown away. This bulkhead held in place shoring this bulkhead and the next forward, No.62 was proceeded with. MARNE checked out A/S patrol for the remainder of the night.

*At 0520 a dark object

At 0520 a dark object and a swirl was seen 1000 yards on the starboard beam, fire was opened with 4.7 and starshell. H.E. was heard on the bearing, good firm echoes obtained at a range of 1000 yards, extent of target about 5°. Range decreased to 150 yards and contact was lost as submarine passed underneath. VENOMOUS was informed and asked to drop depthcharges. She was unable to gain contact, it is thought that this may have been a large fish.

At 0630 VENOMOUS who was 10 cables on our starboard beam fired a starshell over MARIE and a few seconds later opened fire with Oerlikons at a position 1000 yards 30° on our port bow. MARIE heard faint H.E. on this bearing but did not gain contact, but as the director layer saw a small dark object fine on port bow, fire was opened with "B" turret. Fire was ceased as VENOMOUS came in, she dropped a 10 pattern charge about 5 cables ahead of MARIE. No further incident occurred that night.

At 0800/12 VENOMOUS proceeded to search for HECCLA'S survivors and did not rejoin till approx. 1600. Being short of fuel, an endeavour was made to fuel her alongside but this had to be given up owing to a heavy swell. JONQUIL took over A/S patrol when VENOMOUS left to oil.

HECCLA'S survivors and all MARIE'S ship's company except 80 were transferred by boat to JONQUIL before dark. All remaining G.B's and S.P'S that did not sink in the safes and chests in the Commanding Officer's cabin were collected and sent with an officer to JONQUIL.

Nothing occurred during the night of the 12th and 13th and at daybreak on the 13th H.M. Tug SALVONIA arrived and commenced towing immediately. The weather was cloudy and a heavy swell was running; wind force 3 from 010°.

0945 PRESCOTT and the tug JAUNTY arrived.

1200 LANDGUARD arrived on the scene.

1230 JONQUIL left for Gibraltar.

(Signed) H.N.A. RICHARDSON

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER IN CHARGE.