

NAVAL MESSAGE

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NAVY DEPARTMENT

IMMEDIATE
J 192026Z JUN 67
FM CINCUSNAVEUR

TO SECNAV

INFO CNO

Declassified and approved for
release by NSA and the U.S. Navy
on 03-08-2007 pursuant to E.O.
12958, as amended. ST 51667

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LIBERTY INCIDENT (U)

1. FOLLOWING RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS POSED BY SECNAV:

A. WAS SMOKE FROM FIRES ABOARD LIBERTY FOLLOWING AIR ATTACK HEAVY ENOUGH TO PRECLUDE IDENTIFICATION? YES, PARTICULARLY BY TORPEDO BOATS APPROACHING FROM STARBOARD QUARTER. SURFACE WINDS WERE NEGLIGIBLE SO RELATIVE WIND DUE PRIMARILY TO LIBERTY'S SOA. SMOKE FROM BURNING MOTOR WHALE-BOAT (STARBOARD WAIST) AND STACK (ABAFT ISLAND STRUCTURE) MUST HAVE PROVIDED EFFECTIVE SCREENING OF HOLIDAY COLORS FLYING FROM PORT HALYARD.

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B. WHAT LIBERTY MOVEMENTS COULD HAVE BEEN CONSTRUED AS SUSPICIOUS? THE WESTERLY MOVEMENT OF THE SHIP IN THE GENERAL DIRECTION OF UAR MAY HAVE REENFORCED ELEMENTS OF DOUBT IN THE MINDS OF ISRAELI PILOTS WHO LOOKED THE SHIP OVER IN THE FORE-NOON, HOWEVER, LIBERTY MADE NO SUSPICIOUS MOVEMENTS PRIOR TO THE ATTACK, AFTER ATTACK BY AIRCRAFT LIBERTY INCREASED SPEED TO ABOUT 15 KTS, IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE TORPEDO ATTACK LIBERTY 50 CAL MACHINE GUN ROUNDS WERE FIRED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE TORPEDO BOATS EITHER BY PERSON UNKNOWN OR BY COOK OFF FROM FIRE IN THE VICINITY OF THE AFTER STARBOARD MACHINE GUN.

C. DID LIBERTY ATTEMPT TO ANSWER SIGNALS FROM PATROL BOATS PRIOR TO ATTACK? YES, PATROL BOAT SIGNALS WERE PARTIALLY OBLITERATED BY FLAMES AND SMOKE FROM BURNING MOTOR WHALEBOAT ABAFT STARBOARD WING OF BRIDGE, PATROL BOAT SIGNALS COULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD BY LIBERTY WHO ATTEMPTED ESTABLISH

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COMMUNICATIONS BY ALD'S LAMP, OTHER SIGNAL LIGHTS HAD BEEN SHOT AWAY.

D. DID LIBERTY HAVE ANY KNOWLEDGE OF HEAVY GUN FIRE FROM THE SEA AGAINST EL ARISH? NO. PLUMES OF SMOKE IN VICINITY OF EL ARISH WERE VISIBLE PERIODICALLY FROM LIBERTY AND, IN TALK TO CREW BEFORE SECURING FROM SURPRISE GENERAL QUARTERS DRILL FOLLOWING LUNCH, C.O. USED THESE SIGHTINGS AS EXAMPLE OF INTENSITY OF COMBAT ASHORE. NAVIGATOR USED MINARET AT EL ARISH FOR RADAR NAVIGATIONAL FIX SO RADARMEN FREQUENTLY CHECKED THAT SECTOR OF HIS SCOPE. ALSO, IT APPEARS THAT ANY BOMBARDING SHIP OFF EL ARISH WOULD HAVE BEEN SIGHTED BY BRIDGE WATCH.

E. DID LIBERTY HAVE ANY OTHER SURFACE CONTACTS ON RADAR OR VISUALLY AT TIME OF EITHER AIR OR TORPEDO ATTACK. NO.

F. DID LIBERTY RADAR INDICATE ANY AIR COMBAT - PATROL OR RECONNAISSANCE PATTERN? NO. LIBERTY HAS NO AIR SEARCH RADAR AND THE SURFACE SEARCH RADAR PICKED UP ONLY OCCASIONAL RETURNS FROM LOW FLYING DISTANT AIRCRAFT. UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT WERE SIGHTED VISUALLY AS THEY CIRCLED LIBERTY AT 0850B, 1056B AND 1126B.

G. DID THE ISRAELIS ASK ALUSNA TEL AVIV ANY TIME PRIOR TO 8 JUNE IF U.S. SHIPS WERE IN THE AREA? NO. WE SPECIFICALLY QUERIED ALUSNA ON THIS POINT ON 17 JUNE.
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