

# FIRST NAZI SUB PRISONERS CAPTURED OFF CAROLINA COAST, NAVY REPORT SAYS

CHARLESTON, S. C.—Rear Admiral Jules James, USN, disclosed today that Navy ships, planes and blimps investigated at least 157 reported probable contacts with German submarines off the coasts of Carolina, Georgia, and the St. Johns River, Fla., during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Admiral James, commandant of the Sixth Naval District and of the Charleston Navy Yard, had directed anti-submarine activities of the combined American and British forces from the U. S. Naval Base at Bermuda, prior to being ordered to Charleston, from where he directed anti-submarine activities off the coasts of the Sixth Naval District under the Commander, Eastern Sea Frontier.

The first German U-boat prisoners captured in East Coast waters were landed in Charleston after the Coast Guard Cutter Icarus sank a Nazi sub off the Carolina coast.

At least sixteen ships were hit by torpedoes in the waters off the Sixth Naval District coasts during the Battle of the Atlantic but so well had anti-submarine patrols been organized by May, 1942, that only three ships were torpedoed off the Carolinas and Georgia after that month. A ship was lost in June, 1943, another in July, 1943, and the last was torpedoed on Sept. 12, 1944.

The story of submarine warfare along the Sixth Naval District coast is one of which the Navy can be proud. It also is a story of cooperation.

At the outbreak of war, few fighting ships were available to escort cargo carrying vessels. The Navy took over the tough little fishing boats, outfitted them with machine guns and depth charges and put them off the coast on submarine patrol.

These fishing boats, and pleasure craft, hastily placed in Naval service, earned the nickname of the "shrimp fleet." They took the rough and cold weather, tossing about on the choppy seas to radio any suspicious activity at sea. Their ships, young reserves with no previous experience, didn't hesitate to attack when the occasion demanded, even though their own depth their own ship up. (They didn't.)

Other fishing boats not taken over were organized to furnish information.

Rapidly the Navy installed guns and armed guard crews on cargo carrying vessels. They materially aided in the war against the submarine, and many are the tales of heroism which are told of the armed guard officers and crew.

In the early days when their vessels were being sunk, unhesitatingly they returned to sea on another ship. Armed guardsmen were the last to leave a torpedoed ship, firing rounds at the submarine as long as they could.

In these early days, British ships were helping convoy along the east coast and the Royal Air Force joined with the Army and Civil Air Patrol planes in patrolling the ship lanes on anti-sub patrol. Then, the Navy brought the blimps into action and its own Navy planes, as they became available.

The most spectacular sub battle in the Sixth Naval District coastal waters was that in which the Icarus sank the U-boat and captured 33 members of her crew, including her captain.

The sub was detected by sound devices, and though the undersea craft was much larger than the Icarus, the cutter blew the sub to the surface with depth charges.

A portion of the submarine, including the conning tower, came to the surface for four minutes, just long enough for the 33 men to escape, and then dropped to the bottom, taking with her the 12 remaining members of the crew.

The prisoners were the first Nazis to be taken by an American ship in the sub warfare along the Atlantic coast.

As the sub came to the surface, the cutter's crew opened fire, attack-

ing the U-boat with her three inch deck gun and two machine guns. They ceased firing on surrender of the Nazis.

The prisoners were taken from the water and quartered on the cutter under guard until they could be brought to port in Charleston. One of the prisoners, who suffered injuries from the gun fire as he was leaving the conning tower, died aboard the American vessel.

The cutter carried a crew of 49 men and every man conducted himself with marked alertness, enthusiasm and coolness during the entire action, according to Lieutenant Maurice D. Jester, of Staten Island, New York, skipper of the cutter.

Several minutes after the sub was detected by the cutter, she fired a torpedo at the American ship. The torpedo exploded prematurely, however, about two hundred yards off the stern of the ship. It was at this instance that the cutter began dropping depth charges, all of which damaged the U-boat and the 11th of which blasted her to the surface.

Each Nazi was equipped with a life jacket and was taken aboard the cutter within less than an hour after the sub sank. There were no casualties or injuries among the American crew, nor any damage to the cutter during the entire encounter. The cutter was 300 yards from the U-boat when the undersea craft sank.

The discipline of the captured Nazis was good and their manner courteous, Icarus crew members reported. The Nazis were bearded and looked as though they had been at sea for some time. They spoke only in German, although several of them understood English and other languages. They talked freely about personal affairs.

The skipper of the 165-foot Icarus was awarded the Navy Cross for this action.

One of the 33 German prisoners taken in this battle off the North Carolina coast was mortally wounded and was buried in Charleston. On occasion, his shipmates have sent flowers for his grave through the International Red Cross from their New Mexico prisoner of war camp.

April, 1943, was the high mark in the reported submarine incidents in this district's coastal waters, when 35 reported "contacts" were investigated.

Not all reported contacts proved to be submarines, however. Some "submarines" seen underwater turned out like this:

A plane made a depth charge attack off the Savannah Lightship in April, 1943. The pilot let his cans go at a swirl which appeared like a submarine submerging. His report to base said: "Result whale meat."

Busiest spot in the district for submarine patrol was Charleston. A reported 65 contacts were investigated. Another 26 were reported and investigated off Jacksonville, with an additional 15 off Fernandina. Twenty-two were reported off Cape Fear, 16 off Savannah Lightship and 14 off St. Simons.

Quite often investigation proved that the "contacts" were sunken ships, schools of fish, or other ships which civilian observation posts on land had reported as probably submarines. The same wrecks and same shoals prompted U-boat warnings repeatedly. Still other reports were probably of submarines.

Depth charge attacks by ships, blimps and planes were made.

Only one submarine was positively sunk in the waters off Georgia or the Carolinas. That was the one the Icarus got. No U-boat was captured and brought to port. Rumors that had subs operating in conjunction with confederates ashore, which were frequent during the height of the ship sinkings in 1942, were strictly rumors and nothing more. Each was investigated.

Only two of the many ships which

were routed by the Port Director's office failed to make their first port of call. One of these was sunk in an accidental meeting with a home-bound submarine.

During the war, the Port Director's Office, Charleston, has routed ships directly to all major ports in Europe, Africa and North America, from Newfoundland to Capetown. Before a route was decided upon, careful study was made of submarine activities and known locations by a special section which the Port Director maintained to keep this information up to date.

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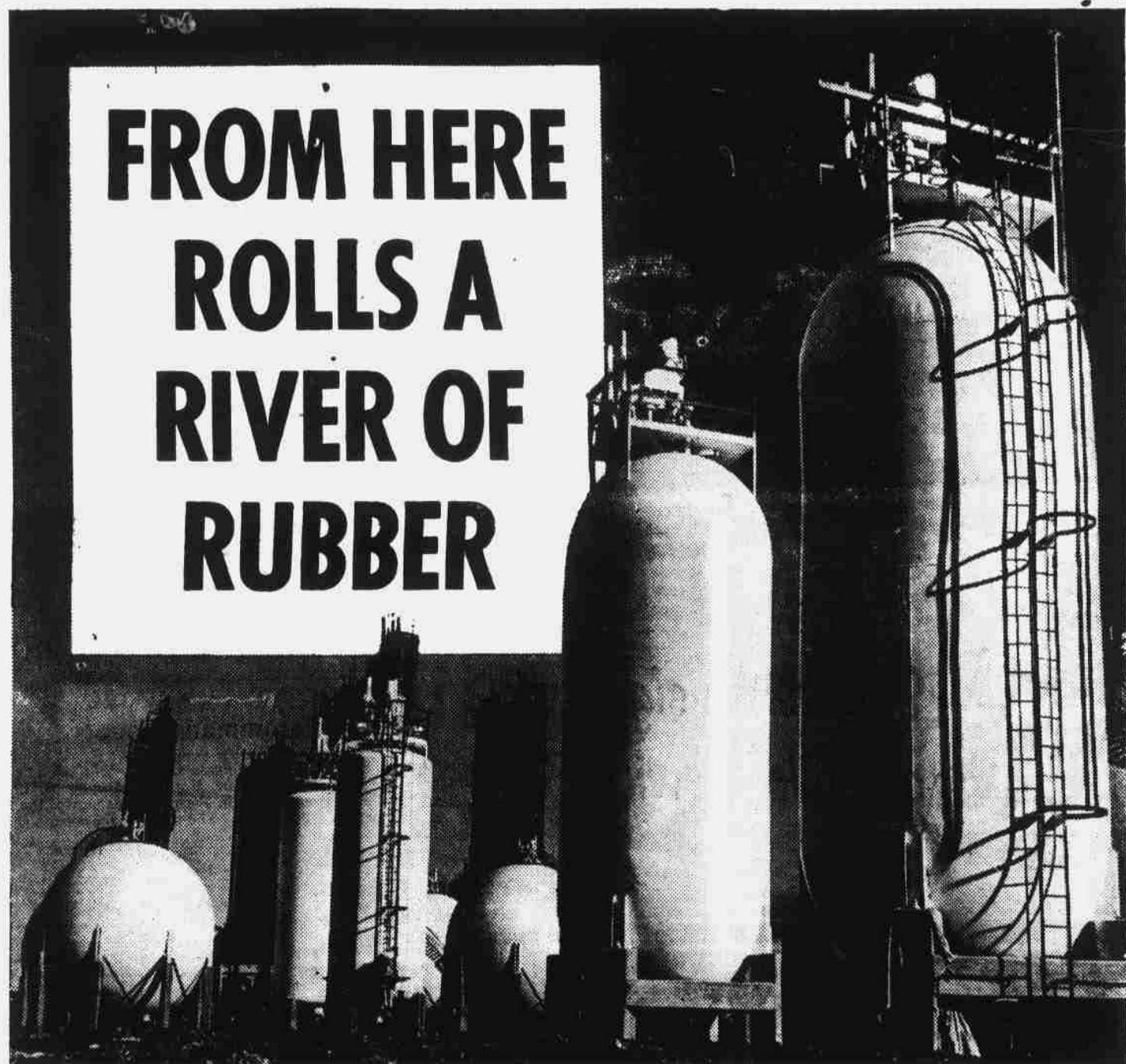
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