

NAVAL SPEED LETTER

VIA AIRMAIL 10 December 1952

To: Chief, Bureau of Ships (Code 588)
 Navy Department
 Washington 25, D.C.

ERIE PROGRESS REPORT NUMBER FORTY-EIGHT X Final Report X Rigged antirendering wires on forward chains of pontoons on stern section X So rigged that stern section will not roll or slide out of pontoons if it breaks off X Erected framework of light structural members to tie stern to main hull X Purpose to assist in preventing drooping X Passed two 1-5/8 inch wires near main deck starboard from frame in stern section to frame in main section and hauled taut X Bolted a heavy tee from stern to main section near main deck port side X Purpose to assist in preventing stern from rising X Swept under wreck at 35 feet and later at 33 feet and cleared projections including lines X YFNB-17 60 KW generator failed during this critical period X Shop repairs effected by commercial dockyard X Removed 25 ton pontoon rigged to port deck edge report 43 X Replaced 3 inch hose to block 5 with two 1-1/4 inch hoses X Picked up two 1500 pound anchors buried ashore for mooring X Put in position and reshackled chain of harbor mooring buoy cut report 6 X Set all structural pontoons in final position X Used commercial crane to lift out and put ashore two sections of after superstructure plus other wreckage on pontoon barges X Cut off rudder X Removed 25 ton pontoon from stern chock X Recovered from bottom two 25 ton pontoons X Of original six 40 and thirteen 25 ton pontoons only one 25 ton still missing X All should be inspected and repaired by manufacturer X Informed Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Harbormaster, Netherlands Naval Commander, Director of CPIM, and American Consul General of plan for towing wreck to sea X Engaged tugs and pilots X OPPORTUNE turned around to bring wreck on starboard side bow to bow X Shifted air supply from YFNB to OPPORTUNE X At 090540QR got underway X One 400 HP tug towing wreck, OPPORTUNE and 850 HP tug astern X Dutch Naval Base tug and OPPORTUNE LCPR assisting X Entered channel at 0640 X Long low swells in channel caused stern to begin working X Swells increased and working worsened as channel was traversed X Just past bridge and before channel was clear about 0720 stern began to roll in addition to pitching X Probably completely broken of and held in place by port shaft and two 1-5/8 inch straps X Still buoyant because draft of pontoons did not increase X Starboard. pontoon banged against strut barrel with each swell X Bled air out of D413 to increase load on pontoons X Wind and sea conditions becoming worse X Requested OPPORTUNE to increase speed because stern could be in no worse condition at higher speed X Set course to southeast to clear telephone cables X Wind and cross swell made navigation difficult but arrangement of tugs permitted best measure of control X Should have cleared cables in 25 minutes after passing entrance buoy but attempts to find easiest course for wreck (with stern now rolling badly) and unexpected westward set consumed time and wreck was not clear until after 0900 X Of possible alternatives to release pontoons, only one was permitted by condition of sea X Put explosive charges in stools on top of pontoons X Commercial tugs cast off and stood clear X OPPORTUNE cast off all except bow line and swung ahead of wreck X Fired charges X Six pontoons broke clear including two on stern section X Stern sank X

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Party boarded wreck and reset primacord on two pontoons on which charges did not fire X In limited time available also removed some gages, hose, and other equipment X Fired charges X Pontoons broke clear X OPPORTUNE steamed astern with wreck in tow X Wreck sank at 1043 4600 yards 211 degrees from entrance in 300 fathoms X OPPORTUNE and tugs recovered pontoons and returned to harbor X Two pontoons damaged and all should be tested and reconditioned X All chain went down with wreck X Considerable other equipment lost X YFNB-17 and OPPORTUNE will prepare requisitions for replacement or submit surveys or reports as appropriate X Salvage job considered complete except for few cleanup items X Will search for missing 25 ton pontoon as permitted by time required for RFS OPPORTUNE YFNB-17 and YFK's but will not delay departure for this purpose X Attention invited ComServLant 091822Z to ComCaribSeaFron info BuShips X Salvage OinC will clear up outstanding bills and other administrative matters and depart Willemstad 14 December X


J. E. FLYNN

Copy to: CNO (OP43)
ComCaribSeaFron

Address: Salvage Officer in Charge
c/o U.S.S. OPPORTUNE (ARS-41)
c/o Fleet Post Office
New York, New York

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