

erly gales," proceeded eastward at an average speed of 8 knots towards Britain and the U-boats of the *Wildfang*, *Burggraf*, and *Neuland* groups.¹⁸

On 6 March, authorities ashore informed the escorts of SC-121 that the "U-boats were probably preparing for an attack." This was confirmed when the Allied ships obtained a number of HF/DF bearings on that date indicating that U-boats were making radio transmissions from the vicinity of the convoy. In an attempt to force the U-boats to lose contact, at 2135Z hours, Heineman ordered SC-121 to alter course 40 degrees to port. The U-boats remained in contact. Just before midnight, a number of red and white rockets, or flares, were sighted by the escorts. At this time, Heineman received no reports of any ship in the convoy being torpedoed or attacked. At 0200Z hours on 7 March, HMSC *Rosthern* sighted "bright lights bearing about 3 miles astern of the convoy." After an investigation, she came upon a merchant ship rescuing survivors from the merchant ship *Egyptian*, which had been torpedoed by U-230.¹⁹ The merchant ship sank quickly, leaving her crew in the water. *Rosthern* rescued three survivors. However, the merchant ship which also picked up members of the *Egyptian*'s crew was not identified. It was thought afterwards by Heineman to have been the *Empire Impala*, torpedoed and sunk by U-591 shortly thereafter.²⁰ At 0433Z hours, HMS *Dianthus* and *Rosthern* ran down several HF/DF bearings on the starboard quarter of the convoy, but after an hour's search, nothing was found. The two escorts rejoined SC-121. No further contacts with the U-boats were reported during 7 March.²¹

The operations of the U-boats during that day were considerably influenced by "unfavorable and difficult weather conditions." Wind strength was up to Force 10, accompanied by snow and hail which reduced visibility to between 100 and 500 meters. Six U-boats sighted ships of the convoy. The Germans concluded that SC-121 had been split up into several groups, which led the BdU to conclude that "maintaining contact was therefore out of the question."²² At 1158 hours, the BdU, in order to bring more U-boats

into contact with SC-121, ordered the *Ostmark* group to form a patrol line across the projected course of the convoy from 59°39'N 34°24'W to 57°51'N 31°48'W. This patrol line was to be formed, if possible, by 0800A hours on 8 March. The Allies did not decode this order until the early hours of 16 March.²³

At 0875Z hours on 9 March, the USCGC *Spencer* saw a cloud of smoke. A torpedo hit the merchant ship *Guido*, a "romper," about three miles ahead of the convoy, causing an explosion. The *Spencer* proceeded to the area and obtained a sonar contact which was attacked, without result. Several depth charges brought no results. After picking up thirty-five crew members of *Guido*, the Coast Guard cutter returned to her position in the screen of SC-121. The *Guido*, hit on the starboard side in the engine room, immediately begun to sink. The U-boat which torpedoed her is not known. Several hours after the sinking, and unknown at the time to the escort, the U-boats torpedoed and sank four stragglers from the convoy. U-257 torpedoed and sank the merchant ship *Fort Lamy*, while U-591 destroyed the *Vojvoda Putnik*. The merchant ship *Leadgate* was torpedoed and sunk by U-648, and the *Empire Lakeland* by U-190.²⁴ These four sinkings occurred astern of SC-121.

During 8 March, the corvette HMCS *Dauphin* joined SC-121, and HMCS *Trillium* left the convoy.²⁵ The escort was reinforced on 8 March by the dispatch from Iceland and Northern Ireland of four VLR B-24 Liberator aircraft to provide air support. However, air operations were hampered by the inclement weather, which prevented several aircraft from making contact with the convoy. Aircraft E/120 did not sight the convoy and returned to base, although aircraft B/120 did sight several ships of the escort before ending the operation. Aircraft Q/120, while not making contact with SC-121, sighted and attacked a U-boat. As for aircraft R/120, it met the convoy and, while conducting a patrol, sighted and attacked a U-boat with depth charges.²⁶

During the morning of 9 March, SC-121 was again supported by the dispatch of three more VLR B-25 Liberator aircraft from Northern Ireland. Aircraft C/120 returned to base without sighting the convoy. Aircraft G/120 was also