

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR (Arctic) REPORT NO. [redacted] 25X1

SUBJECT 1. Port of Murmansk DATE DISTR. 10 July 1953

2. Ammunition Explosion at Pier NO. OF PAGES 6

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DATE OF INFO. [redacted] REQUIREMENT NO. [redacted] 25X1

PLACE ACQUIRED [redacted] REFERENCES [redacted] 25X1

[redacted]

1. [redacted]

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2. At noon on 31 January 1953 [redacted] a group of Soviet warships, coming from the direction north of Kildin Island (N69-21, E34-26), approached from an easterly direction, steering for the entrance of Murmansk Inlet. They were sighted when approximately at N69-25, E33-24. The group included five destroyers [redacted] they all were of the same type. The ships were in good condition, having a dark-gray coat of paint, and were cruising in perfect order. They proceeded in line about 100 meters apart; they [redacted] out into Murmansk Inlet, quickly disappearing in the haze. [redacted] the rearmost destroyer [redacted] was flying a white flag with a red inclined cross at her signal yard, [redacted] the group turned away to starboard, and probably put into Olenya Bay (N69-19, E33-21), or Polyarnny (N69-12, E33-28). These destroyers, which were about 100 meters long, had two raking funnels with a black top band or a smoke hood. They also had a tripod mast between the bridge and the forward funnel, a small signal mast forward of the after funnel, and carried a rangefinder on the bridge, as well as a top, a radar installation, with a pear-shaped cupola. They had a twin turret on the foredeck, and two other turrets on the fantail. A torpedo mount, which [redacted] had three tubes, was located between the two funnels. A similar torpedo mount was located aft of the second funnel, and two depth charge throwers were located on the stern. Antiaircraft guns were located in various places on the ships [redacted]

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[redacted] a Soviet BU 234-type patrol vessel, which was a wooden motor vessel without a funnel, arrived from the southern entrance of Yekaterininskiy Island (N69-13, E33-27) [redacted]

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The Soviet vessel was about 45 meters long, and had two masts, a bridge structure on the after deck, and an antiquated shieldless gun with a short, thick barrel in front of the bridge structure. At the peak of the gaff of her mizzen mast, she flew the Soviet war ensign, which had a blue stripe on the lower edge. Three men wearing fur coats were in the bridge house, while no crew members were on deck. [redacted] the patrol vessel turned off at high speed in the direction of Polyarnyy through the southern entrance, making a good speed and a large bow wave.³ The pilot vessel, which had come from Tyuva Bay, was a single-masted, motor fishing cutter; it was painted black, and had a plain bridge house aft. A permanently mounted machine gun was located on each side of the bridge house. [redacted]

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[redacted] soldier was posted on the forward end of the ship, and the other on the fantail. All sea charts and binoculars were locked in the charthouse.

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At dusk, a large, brightly illuminated, floating dock was observed at the western corner of Vayenga Bay (N69-05, E33-26). [redacted] the entire upper edge of the dock was illuminated. [redacted] the dock could accommodate ships up to 20,000 tons. Brightly illuminated workshops, apparently installations of the shipyard to which the floating dock belonged, were observed ashore. No details of the shipyard installations, which seemed to be very large, could be observed. The silhouettes of some large warships, which were totally blacked out and exhibited only riding lights, were observed in Vayenga Bay. [redacted]

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[redacted] mooring berth near the harbor installations in Murmansk [redacted] The mooring berth was in the commercial harbor near a signal tower at the head of the south pier.⁴ A total of 15 border guards and customs officers arrived on a small tug [redacted]

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Three auxiliary ships of the Soviet Navy were near the signal tower on the south pier. They were painted gray, and carried the Soviet war ensign. One, a single-stack vessel of about 1,500 GRT, was a former freighter of modern design, which [redacted] was a tender or supply ship. The second ship, which was a single-masted one-stacker of about 1,500 GRT, had a flush and unencumbered after deck, fitted with a large bulb on the upper edge of her square stern, and large net-lifting cranes at the stern. [redacted] it was a netlayer. The third ship, which [redacted] was an auxiliary ship of about 2,000 GRT, had two masts and a single stack. It had a raking bow and a long foredeck, and had her deck structure in the mid-section. [redacted] the ship was the former German auxiliary

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-3-

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7. [redacted] the apatite loading quay, a short stone jetty about 150 meters long. [redacted] a strong current was running. The tidal range was about 1.5 meters. Apatite, which had been dumped in a place close to the pier, was the only cargo shipped at this berth. The apatite dump had three spur tracks. The loading cars were emptied by three, small, traveling, motor cranes. No cranes were on the loading pier. The ship was loaded by a floating crane, which was maneuvered between source's ship and the pier. The crane, which had a capacity of three to four tons, quickly finished the loading of the apatite from the dump; [redacted]
8. A wooden pier, with some wooden sheds and a high iron smokestack, was about 800 meters from the apatite loading place in the direction of Rosta (N69-03, E33-05). On 2 and 3 February 1953, two large cargo lighters, each of about 1,000 tons' capacity, lay alongside this pier. They unloaded boxes with their cranes. At about 1400 hours on 3 February, ammunition, [redacted] anti-aircraft and tracer shells, exploded on the pier. After the explosion, the wooden pier and several wooden sheds were ablaze. The two lighters were hurriedly towed to the opposite shore by a small tug, while firemen and soldiers fought the fire. The area was cordoned off by soldiers. The fire was smothered during the afternoon. [redacted]
9. Two warships of remarkably large size, with widely separated funnels, were observed at another pier tied up side by side, north of the ammunition dump. [redacted] a heavy, multi-staged naval mast on one of the ships.
10. [redacted]
11. [redacted]
- In the northern outskirts of the town, [redacted] about 100 navy men, who wore dark blue, knee-length cloaks with gold anchor buttons; they wore blue sailor hats with a black ribbon and gold inscription [redacted]. They were unarmed and loitered about. [redacted] about 60 men walking to the harbor. They wore fur caps with ear flaps, and black coats without epaulets. Some of them had fur collars, and wore leather waist belts with pistol holsters on their coats; others carried rifles slung on the shoulder. [redacted] some unarmed soldiers with visor-type caps with flat crimson tops and dark-red edges. They wore camel-hair cloaks with broad, red epaulets, and a brown waist belt.

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-4-

Legend to the Sketch of Murmansk:

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2. Three Soviet auxiliary ships.
3. A stone signal tower with a small house on the roof, with a signal mast on the latter. During the night, the signal station made its signals by flashing light.
4. Coaling pier with electric cranes, store sheds, and spur tracks.
5. "Lesnyye"- bridge loading pier.
6. Apatite loading pier.

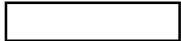
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25X1 8. Floating crane,

9. Wooden pier on which an ammunition dump exploded on 3 February.
10. Two lighters which unloaded boxes at the wooden pier. Following the explosion, the lighters were towed to the opposite shore.
11. Two large warships, with two widely separated funnels, and a very large, multi-staged fighting tower (sic).
12. Sunken vessel.

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- 25X1 1. [] Comment. Set Point is probably Set-Navalok (N69-24, E33-30).
- 25X1 2. [] Comment. The description seems to indicate that these vessels were new "Modified O-Class" destroyers.
- 25X1 3. [] Comment. The description indicates that vessel BO-234 is not a BO-type or ARTILLERIST-Class vessel. It is interesting that BO-234 returned to Polyarnyy through the southern passage, which in German sea chart No. 1195 (1944 Edition) is charted as a drying tidal flat. The Soviets seem to have dredged this passage, which can now presumably be used by destroyers.
- 25X1 4. [] Comment. For sketch of Murmansk harbor installations, see page 5.
- 25X1 5. [] Comment. A single-funnel netlayer was observed at a pier off Rosta on 22 August 1952. No former German auxiliary by the name of GOMBEN is known.
- 25X1 6. [] Comment. The two large ships were the two CHAPAYEV-Class cruisers, the CHAPAYEV and the ZHELEZNYAKOV, which were transferred to the Arctic waters from the Baltic Sea in the summer of 1951.

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