

Statement of Survivor Glenn Oliphant

Shortly after the torpedo hit, the order was received to abandon ship. I proceeded to the outside hatch in the radio transmitter room and undogged the door. I tried pushing it open but it was extremely difficult as the ship was listing to starboard and I was trying to open the door on the port side and it was heavy. I enlisted help from someone and we got the hatch open.

When I got on deck I looked forward and discovered that the rack that held my life raft and all the life rafts had been consumed by fire. I then went to the starboard side of the ship and found injured men coming up from the messdecks to the main deck. I assisted several of them and within minutes shells and shrapnel were flying everywhere coming from the torpedo boats. The order was given to return to the mess decks.

I crawled back to the transmitter room and entered it. After some time, I heard no more explosions so I went back onto the main deck and proceeded aft to look at an antenna mount. I discovered that a shell had hit the mount. I then remember looking behind the ship and seeing three liferafts floating in the water, I would say about 150 yards behind the ship. Then I saw spurts of water around the rafts I heard machine gun fire and then I saw the rafts deflating. A torpedo boat came into view and stopped and picked up one of the liferafts. The torpedo boat stayed in that position for some time and then proceeded to come along the port side.

Some time later I was back on the port side of the ship on the main deck and I saw helicopters approaching from a distance, they appeared to be military helicopters. When the helicopters got closer, I heard the order "prepare to repel boarders". I remember ducking down when the helicopters got close and I saw a soldier manning a machine gun in the helicopters door and he was aiming the gun at me. The helicopters hovered for some minutes on the port side, moving along side the ship, I noticed that there were troops in the helicopter and appeared armed. One helicopter paused near the 03 level of the port wing and must have said something to the Captain and then it turned and left the area.