

Public Information Division  
U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters  
Washington, D. C.

SS SAN PATRICK AGROUND  
ULAK ISLAND, ALASKA

Stormy seas pounded the broken hull of the Liberian freighter (Victory Ship) SS SAN PATRICK pinned among the jagged rocks at Hasgok Pt. on isolated Ulak Island, Aleutian Chain, Alaska, where she ran aground December 17, 1954, at position 51-19N, 178-58W. The U. S. Coast Guard Search and Rescue Center, Juneau, reported all 32 members of the Spanish crew apparently perished. During the ensuing week of search around Ulak and surrounding islands and waters, Navy searchers recovered only four bodies in the area of the wreckage. These bodies were picked up by the 205-ft. Navy tug TAWAKONI with guidance from a helicopter.

A distress signal from SS SAN PATRICK was reported by the Japanese motor vessel TETSUKO MARU, en route to Yokohama, but she could obtain an accurate position fix from the freighter. Navy aircraft and Navy tug TAWAKONI, which was lying west of Amatignak, were dispatched to take up the search. While combing the shorelines and water areas of the islands for survivors, TAWAKONI sighted oil slick and debris of a few lumber pieces, paper, and what looked like a ship's fender. On December 20th the TETSUKO MARU reported a grounded bow section which the Navy tug followed up. On the same day a Navy helicopter located the hull of the SS SAN PATRICK at Hasgok Pt. Ulak Island, and observed from 500 ft. altitude the ocean bottom straggle through the center section. The bow was folded up over the top of the remains of the hull. The Navy helicopter crew retrieved a shotline missile about 200 yards inland with line attached running up over a 100-ft. cliff from the wreckage, indicating an attempt from the freighter had been made to get ashore by line. A body was sighted in an area inaccessible to the helicopter crew. When the tug TAWAKONI went to recover it, she found three more bodies.

On December 25th, the tug MONARCH reported a light bobbing on the horizon, which disappeared when she followed the direction of it. Navy aircraft from Adak took off in search of the light but to no avail.

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CREDIT - Photo by courtesy of the  
U. S. Naval Air Station, Adak, Alaska,  
20 December 1954.

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