

Long after the war it was assumed that USS *Pompano* had been mined on a recently-laid minefield off Sanriku coast, northeastern Honshu. This theory was based on Wilfred J. Holmes's research, who had analyzed Japanese wartime „Notices to Mariners“ publications for that area.

Holmes's view was first questioned by Vernon J. Miller in his „Analysis of US Submarine Losses.“ Miller noted that there had been several attacks on submarines sighted off Shiriya Zaki cape (Aomori Prefecture, Honshu) on 17-18 September 1943 that could have accounted for *Pompano*'s loss. We have performed an independent analysis of events of that time, based on original Japanese action reports and war diaries (cf. Sources).

Narrative

After the appearance of American submarines off northeast Honshu in June 1943, the Ominato Naval Air Group, responsible for guarding that area, had dispatched a detachment of floatplanes to Shiriya Zaki cape. Ominato Naval District HQ likewise received several small patrol vessels to conduct anti-submarine sweeps in that area.

At 0735 on 17 September, floatplane No. 17 spotted a moving oil slick only 2 miles from Shiriya Zaki, bearing 320. The aircraft dropped two depth charges and alerted the Ominato Naval District HQ about the sighting. The converted patrol boat *Miya Maru* and the subchaser CH-41 were dispatched to that area, where they were directed to the target by the floatplane. Contrary to what has been written elsewhere, its pilot did not reporting the sighting of a surfaced submarine and neither was his plane fired upon by the sub.

At 1010, *Miya Maru* arrived and detected the oil slick, now located 6 miles from Shiriya Zaki, bearing 350, moving eastward. The converted patrol boat made three attacks with depth charges. Following the last one the target stopped and the oil slick was seen to be spreading.

At 1050, *Miya Maru* was joined by converted patrol boats *Higashi-Nippon Maru* No. 2 and *Mizuho Maru*. After 1110 each vessel made an attack against the target, which was again moving eastward. These attacks again stopped the target.

Next the minelayer *Ashizaki* arrived from Hakodate, followed by *Ishizaki* from Muroran. *Ashizaki* made a depth-charge attack at 1340, and oil was seen to float to the surface in large quantities. *Ishizaki* made a follow-up attack at 1450. After each explosion the slick extended further. The CO of *Ishizaki* concluded that the submarine was probably resting on the seabed in the area 3 miles from Shiriya Zaki lighthouse, bearing 318, having lost the motive power. He tried to locate the target, using both the fathometer and sonar, but in vain. *Ishizaki* remained in the area, while the smaller vessels returned to Ohata port to replenish their supply of depth charges.

Ashizaki made another attack with 7 depth charges. Gushing oil was seen and her CO reported the sub as sunk. Nevertheless, at 1500 CH-41 made a last attack before the sundown and then returned to Hachinohe harbor. At 1750 *Higashi-Nippon Maru* No. 2 marked the location of the sub with a buoy.

During the 17 September action, *Ishizaki* had expended a total of sixteen depth charges, *Ashizaki* ten, *Higashi-Nippon Maru* No. 2 eight, *Miya Maru* seven and *Mizuho Maru* five.

At 0850 on the following morning *Ishizaki* returned to the scene and made another unsuccessful attempt to locate the submarine with her fathometer. The location of the buoy was now verified as 2,900 meters from Shiriya Zaki lighthouse, bearing 319. The oil was still gushing out during the entire day.

At 1620 on 18 September a different submarine was sighted by a patrol aircraft 12 miles off Ofuyu Misaki cape, bearing 155. The same submarine was apparently sighted again and attacked on the 20 September.

Sources

Detailed Action Report of Ominato Guard Squadron No. 7 (Anti-submarine action off Shiriya Zaki on 17 September 1943). Ominato Guard Squadron Secret Message No. 91/2 from 17 December 1943.

Ominato Guard Squadron War Diary, 1-20 September 1943.