

c.3 German U-boats and the Sinking of the Lusitania

Almost twelve hundred men, women, and children died when the Lusitania, a British passenger ship sank. Many of the dead were American citizens.

U-20

Official Report to the German High Command

May 7, 1915

While on patrol of the southern approaches to the Irish Sea on May 6, we torpedoed the Centurion without warning in accordance with the rules of unrestricted warfare. She was an unarmed merchant ship so she sank quickly.

At 1:20 pm, the lookout reported a stream of smoke on the horizon. Eventually, we could make out the shape of a steamer with four funnels about 14 miles away. I gave the order to dive and passed on my information to the navigation office. The ship was quickly identified as either the Lusitania or the Mauretania.

At 2:35, I ordered a change of course to the starboard to draw near for firing. We closed in on the ship at full speed. When we reached 700 meters, I gave orders to fire one torpedo. It struck a point near the bridge. A secondary explosion tore the ship apart. I suspect they were carrying military explosives on board. She sank too quickly to lower all her lifeboats.

We returned to port with all due speed as we only had two torpedoes left.

Lt. Comdr. Walter Schwieger