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On this day: USS Kearny

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NCR Today

On this day, 70 years ago, a German U-boat torpedoed the USS *Kearny* in the North Atlantic.

Click here to see the headline on an extra night edition of The Baltimore News-Post. Preliminary reports said there were no casualties, but the country would soon learn that eleven men had been killed and twenty-two injured. The *Kearny* made it to port on her own power.

"We have wished to avoid shooting. But the shooting has started. And history has recorded who fired the first shot. In the long run, however, all that will matter is who fired the last shot."

--President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in a radio address about the attack on the *Kearny*.

Time Magazine listed the names of the "**FIRST U.S. CASUALTIES**" in its Monday, Oct. 27, 1941, edition:

From The U.S.S. *Kearny*, torpedoed Oct. 17, 1941.

Missing

George Alexander Calvert, fireman, first class, Gillespie, Ill.

Floyd Andrew Camp, ship's cook, first class, National City, Calif.

Luther Asle Curtis, water tender, first class, Wilmington, N.C.

Louis Dobnikar, water tender, second class, Cleveland, Ohio.

Herman August Gajeway, water tender, first class, Troy, N.Y.

Lloyd Dalton Lafleur, pharmacist's mate, second class, Beaumont, Tex.

Sidney Gerald Larriviere, fireman, first class, Lafayette, La.

Dwight Floyd Pyle, seaman, second class, Bainbridge, Ga.

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Iral William Stoltz, fireman, first class, Spangler, Pa.

Russell Burdick Wade, fireman, third class, Houston, Ala.

Harry Tull Young, machinist's mate, second class, Reader, Ark.

Critically Injured

Samuel R. Kurtz, torpedo man, third class, Erie, Pa.

Seriously Injured

Leonard Frontakowski, chief boatswain's mate, Norfolk, Va.

(Scroll down almost to the bottom for "the true story of the U.S.S. Kearny, which was torpedoed but not sunk three weeks ago, . . . told from a hospital cot after she arrived at Reykjavik, Iceland, by Ensign Henry Lyman, of Ponkapog, Mass.")

The attack on the *Kearny* came just 43 days after the USS *Greer* was involved in a confrontation with a U-boat. The "skirmish ended with the intervention of a British destroyer. *Greer* then proceeded to Iceland without further interference."

--*Blood on the Sea: American Destroyers Lost in World War II*, by Robert Sinclair Parkin, Da Capo Press, 2001.

Two weeks after the *Kearny* was torpedoed, the *Reuben James* was sunk. She was escorting a convoy of British ships carrying Lend-Lease goods to Great Britain when "the thunderbolt struck--a torpedo smashed into her port side forward and ignited the ammunition in her forward magazine."

Notice on the front page of The Baltimore News-Post something else that happened on October 17, 1941. Tojo took over in Japan.

--*Tojo: The Last Banzai*, by Courtney Browne, Holt, 1967.

Click here for the Wikipedia article on Tojo.

Click here for the Wikipedia article on the *Kearny*.

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