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TELEGRAM

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Admiralty

From THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS
To THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, CANADA

EN CLAIR

LONDON, October 17, 1939.

CIRCULAR D. 47

Circular D. 47. My telegram Circular
D. 46. Statement begins;

The battleship "Royal Oak" was sunk at anchor by a U-Boat in Scapa Flow at approximately 1.30 A.M. on the 14th instant. It is still a matter of conjecture how the U-Boat penetrated the defences of the harbour. When we consider that during the whole course of the last war this anchorage was found to be immune from such attacks on account of the obstacles imposed by the currents and the net barges this entry by a U-Boat must be considered as a remarkable exploit of professional skill and daring. A Board of Inquiry is now sitting at Scapa Flow to report upon all that occurred and anything that I say must be subject to revision in the light of their conclusions. It appears probable that the U-Boat fired a salvo of torpedoes at the "Royal Oak" of which only one hit the bow. This muffled explosion was at the time attributed to internal causes and what is called the inflammable store where the kerosene and other such materials are kept was flooded. Twenty minutes later the U-Boat fired three or four torpedoes and these striking in quick succession caused the ship to capsize and sink. She was lying at the extreme end of the harbour