



Anyone identified any of these ship?



Sinking of the HMBS FLAMINGO

For the 40th Anniversary of Bahamas Independence, Bahamas Post issued a set of stamps of which the 65c is interesting for ship stamp collectors.

It depicts the patrol boat **HMBS FLAMINGO**, lost on May 11, 1980 after it was attacked by Cuban MiG-21 aircraft.

FLAMINGO, HMBS (patrol boat)

Bahamas # (2013) 65c

1978 – Vosper Thornycroft, U.K.; Bahamas Defence Force; Displ. 100 tons standard, 125 tons full load; 31.5m x 5.9m x 1.6m; two Paxman Ventura diesel engines, 2,900 hp., twin shafts, 24 kn, Range @ 13 kn, 2,000 mile; Armament 1 – 20mm AA gun; crew of 19.

HMBS FLAMINGO (P 02) was built by Vosper Thornycroft in the U.K., for the Bahamas government, as a steel hulled patrol boat of the 103-foot patrol boat design. She and her sister, the **HMBS MARLIN (P-01)**, arrived in the Bahamas in July 1978.

The **HMBS FLAMINGO** had sailed from Coral Harbour Base on Thursday, May 8, 1980, on what should have been a routine 10-day patrol of Bahamian territorial waters to stem poaching. Two days later, two fishing vessels were spotted and attempted to flee as the **FLAMINGO**

approached. When the marines boarded the vessels they found four Cuban crewmen on each vessel along with a large quantity of fish. They took the vessels into tow to the nearest caye for a more thorough search.

At this point things became far from routine as two Cuban MIG-21s arrived and buzzed and strafed **HMBS FLAMINGO**, despite flying the Bahamas flag in Bahamas territorial waters. She was hit by rockets and machine gun fire and began to take on water and the bridge burst into flames. Commander Rolle ordered the crew to evacuate and even as the ship sank and the crew attempted to swim

to safety, the jets returned, strafing the surrounding waters and tearing apart the two lifeboats that had been jettisoned overboard.

All except four of the nineteen crewmen made it to one of the fishing boats and despite extensive searches, the missing marines - Fenrick Sturup, David Tucker, Edward Williams and Austin Smith - were never found.

The remaining Bahamian crew and their prisoners arrived at Ragged Island on the Sunday and proceeded to Duncan Town on foot to send telegraphs to Nassau about the tragedy and the unprovoked attacks.

Unbelievably the Cuban jet fighters returned with a large long range transport aircraft and a helicopter, simulating rocket attacks over the island and at one point the helicopter landed opposite the Cuban fishing vessel dispersing armed troops. It seemed that a full scale invasion was underway and it was not until a U.S. jet flew

over that the Cubans withdrew. The small island community had been harassed for more than three hours.

Initially the Cubans claimed that the **FLAMINGO** had been mistaken for "a pirate ship." But this was not accepted; and the immediate concern was to continue the search for the missing men. Weeks of diplomacy ensued and the Cubans eventually accepted full responsibility for the attack.

(Sinking of the HMBS FLAMINGO, cont. on page 18)

