KS-520 Convoy

**Designation:** Key West – South 520  
**Port of Origin:** Norfolk, Virginia  
**Destination:** Key West, Florida  
**Merchant Ships:** 19 (tankers and freighters)  
**Escorts:** 5 (U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard)  
**Attacked:** July 15, 1942  
**Losses:** Bluefields (sunk), J.A. Mowinckel (damaged), Chilore (sunk later), four killed

On July 14, 1942, 19 merchant ships and five Navy and Coast Guard escort vessels of convoy KS-520 departed Norfolk, Virginia on a seven-day cruise to Key West. During this time, KS-520 would experience constant threat from German U-boats known to be operating in the mid-Atlantic, especially off the North Carolina coast.

The 19 ships in the convoy were: Mount Pera, Bluefields, Zouave, Tustem, Gulf Prince, Robert H. Colley, American Fisher, Para, Mount Helmos, Jupiter, Hardanger, Nicania, Toteco, Clam, Egton, J.A. Mowinckel, Unicoi, Rhode Island, and Chilore. The five support vessels that made up Escort Group Easy were: USS Ellis, USS McCormick, USS Spry, USCG Triton and USCG Icarus. Several merchant vessels in the convoy also had Armed Guard crews aboard manning deck guns.

On July 15, at approximately 4:15 p.m., U-576 attacked the convoy off Ocracoke, North Carolina. Three ships were hit in less than four minutes. The Chilore was struck with two torpedoes and the J.A. Mowinckel and Bluefields were each hit by one torpedo. Bluefields sunk in just minutes while the others remained afloat.

The Armed Guard crew aboard Unicoi fired and hit the U-576, while two U.S. Navy Kingfisher aircraft dropped a series of depths charges directly on the U-boat resulting in its immediate sinking.

Mowinckel and Chilore strayed into a Hatteras minefield and struck mines. During a salvage attempt, the tugboat Keshena struck a mine and sank, while Chilore later ended up sinking under tow. In addition to the deaths of the submarine crew, the skirmish resulted in four Allied casualties: A naval gunner, a merchant sailor and two crewmen on the tug Keshena.