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THE LANDINGS IN NORTH AFRICA

The following Despatch was submitted to the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces on the 30th March, 1943, by Admiral of the Fleet Sir ANDREW B. CUNNINGHAM, G.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean.

*Office of the Commander-in-Chief,
Mediterranean,
Algiers.*

30th March, 1943.

OPERATION "TORCH"—REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS.

I have the honour to render the following report on Operation "Torch", covering the period 22nd October to 17th November, 1942, from the sailings of the assault convoy from the United Kingdom until the occupation of Bone. This report deals mainly with the British naval assaults, since the naval operations of the Western Naval Task Force have already been reported in the Commander, Task Force 34's letter of 28th November, 1942 to the Commander-in-Chief, United States Atlantic Fleet.*

2. The early stages of the operation prior to D day were remarkable for lack of incident. This was indeed fortunate since, in the course of this vast and complex movement, delays caused by casualties or stress of weather would have rendered the timely delivery of the assaults improbable.

3. The movement of the assault convoys and Force "H"† through the Straits of Gibraltar

Admiralty footnotes:—

* The Naval Commander Western Task Force was Vice-Admiral H. K. Hewitt, U.S.N. The publication of the report of this Task Force is a matter for the United States Navy Department, and it is therefore not included with these reports.

† Force "H"—a surface force covering the landings and providing fighter support.

on the 5th/6th November and the continuous entry and departure of all classes of ships for fuelling placed a heavy strain on the resources and organisation of Gibraltar. The manner in which this strain was withstood reflects credit on the Vice-Admiral, Gibraltar and Commodore Superintendent, Gibraltar and their staffs.

4. It is also a tribute to the skill and seamanship of individual Commanding Officers that this continuous flow of movements and berthing in a congested harbour and anchorage in the dark was accomplished with but a single minor collision.

5. The only major incident inside the Mediterranean before the assaults was the torpedoing of United States Ship THOMAS STONE at 0535 on 7th November. A notably courageous decision was taken by Captain O. R. Bennehoff, United States Navy to send on his escort and boats to the assault, leaving his ship defenceless; tenacity and seamanship was displayed by His Majesty's Ship WISHART (Commander H. G. Scott, Royal Navy) in towing United States Ship THOMAS STONE to Algiers.

6. Reconnaissance by submarine and Folbot* parties prior to the assaults was in the main successfully carried out. Inshore reconnaissance by Folbot teams had always been viewed with misgiving as endangering security. That these fears were well grounded was proved at A Beach when two officers were captured. Fortunately they kept their heads and imparted no information concerning the projected operation. The work of Lieutenant-Commander Willmott, Royal Navy, both in

Admiralty footnote:—

* Folbot—a collapsible rubber boat.

active reconnaissance and in his painstaking training and preparation before the operation, is worthy of special note. Credit is also due to the Captain (S), Eighth Submarine Flotilla and the Commanding Officers of His Majesty's Submarines P.45, P.48, P.221, P.54 and URSULA for their efficient co-operation.

7. The arrival of the assault forces at their initial positions off their beaches proceeded without a hitch. Contacts were made with beacon submarines as planned. In fact the operation up to this point proceeded with a flawless accuracy which reflects high credit on Task Force Commanders,* Commanding Officers of His Majesty's Ships and Masters of Merchant Vessels alike.

8. Assaults at Oran beaches passed off without a hitch; but at Algiers B and C Beaches things went awry and delay and confusion resulted, which might well have endangered success had the opposition been determined or alert. These points are well brought out in the report of the Naval Commander Eastern Task Force (Vice-Admiral Sir Harold M. Burrough, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.) and that of Lieutenant-Commander H. M. C. Willmott, D.S.O., Royal Navy.† I would only wish to state my entire concurrence with the remarks of the former and re-emphasise that these difficulties are not "lessons learnt", but recognised and foreseen disadvantages which had reluctantly to be accepted owing to the speed with which the operation was staged and the consequent short time available for training, coupled with the difficulty of co-ordination of units scattered initially from Scapa to Sierra Leone.

9. The actual landings when the troops reached their beaches appear to have gone according to plan and the work of the beach parties was excellent, but unnecessarily large numbers of landing craft were crippled as the disembarkations proceeded. These losses were mostly avoidable and due to lack of training and bad seamanship. In this connection it is recommended that the use of new entries, not properly disciplined, in this type of operation be avoided.

Various suggestions have arisen, chiefly from United States Army reports, that landing craft should be manned and operated by the Army on the score of improved co-ordination and training. In fact, it is felt that it matters little what uniform the crews wear provided that they are disciplined, trained and practised seamen and provided that they are organised and operated by officers competent in their jobs and in close touch with the requirements of the troops they are required to land and maintain. As, however, the ships taking part in an assault are tied to a great degree to their landing craft during the period of unloading, it remains essential that the control of the latter should rest in the hands of those responsible for the safety of the ships.

10. The direct assaults planned against the harbour of Algiers and Oran (Operations "Terminal" and "Reservist") were in no sense planned as imitations of Zeebrugge but

Admiralty footnotes:—

* The British Naval Task Force Commanders were:— Eastern Task Force, Vice-Admiral Sir Harold M. Burrough, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.; Centre Task Force, Commodore T. H. Troubridge, D.S.O., R.N.

† Lieutenant-Commander Willmott's report is not being reproduced here.

were intended to be launched just before the surrender or capture of the ports with the purpose of preventing sabotage of ships and port installations. The choice of the correct moment for entry was a difficult one, depending on the existing situation and the large degree of resistance encountered.

In the event, neither operation was successful in its object but both were remarkable for the determination and gallantry with which all concerned tackled their task, and both were successful in forcing an entry through the booms.

Operation "Terminal".

11. His Majesty's Ship BROKE (Lieutenant-Commander A. F. C. Layard, Royal Navy) succeeded in getting alongside in Algiers and disembarked her troops, but they were pinned by machine-gun fire and did no good. It is considered that the Commanding Officer's decision to retire from a position rapidly becoming untenable was a correct one. It is much to be regretted that an underestimate of damage sustained should have led to the subsequent foundering of this ship when she might by then have been safely berthed in Algiers harbour.

Operation "Reservist".

12. The choice of the ships for this operation had rested on their American appearance, and their chance of a friendly reception lay largely in this appearance and the use of the American Ensign. In the face of serious opposition it could not be expected that they would succeed in their task. In the event, the moment chosen could hardly have been less fortunate, since the French alarm to arms was in its first full flush, whilst darkness prevented any American complexion to the operation being apparent.

The expedition was a failure, redeemed by the gallantry displayed by officers and men of both nations as they strove to achieve their object in the face of hopeless odds. It is much to be regretted that Captain F. T. Peters, V.C., D.S.O., D.S.C., Royal Navy, the leader, having survived this ordeal, lost his life in an aircraft accident on his way to the United Kingdom.

Support Fire.

13. The experience of units detailed to provide supporting fire for soldiers ashore served only to re-emphasise the well known fact that ship gunfire cannot be expected to knock out forts by obtaining direct hits on gun positions. Ships' gunfire is capable of very considerable moral effect when using heavy calibre guns, and of smothering effect from the rapid volume of medium calibre fire of any calibre gun at close range, but that is the most that should be expected. Cases reported of delays in responding to calls for fire are attributable to two main causes, namely, inability of military authority to appreciate that a ship cannot remain waiting indefinitely in her bombarding position in submarine infested waters, and failure to make proper use of the support wave for rapid communication.

Air Support.

Fighters.

14. Taken as a whole the provision of fighter support over the shipping and beaches left little to be desired. It suffered from all the known limitations of carrier-operated aircraft,

but was fully effective within those limitations. In general, it is considered that the operations of carrier-borne fighters reflected great credit on the foresight and planning of the Rear-Admiral Aircraft Carriers, on the spirit and training of the Fleet Air Arm and the efficiency of the carriers alike.

Bombers.

15. The provision of close support bombing by carrier-borne aircraft suffers from similar limitations to those referred to in paragraphs 13 and 14 above. In spite of these drawbacks it proved remarkably effective whenever opportunity was given.

In particular the dive bombing of La Senia aerodrome was most striking not only for its accuracy and effect, but also for the extremely gallant and determined manner in which it was pressed home.

16. A point which emerged was the ineffectiveness of the means provided for the destruction of the Fleet Air Arm aircraft in the event of landing in hostile territory.

Communications.

17. The complication of the communications inherent in any Combined Operation was enhanced in "Torch" by the fact that a W/T organisation had to be evolved for a new station concurrently with carrying out a major operation therein.

18. Further difficulties were the number of services involved and the manner in which they were inextricably mingled in both the Eastern and Centre Task Forces. The mounting of the Western Task Force in the United States of America added considerably to the troubles of the planning stage.

19. Naval communications were generally satisfactory and stood up well to the heavy load of traffic which was considerably increased by the failure of certain W/T links of the other services.

20. The two Headquarters Ships—His Majesty's Ships BULOLO (Captain R. O. Hamer, D.S.O., Royal Navy) and LARGS (Commander E. A. Divers, R.D., Royal Naval Reserve)—were of inestimable value.*

Naval Operations.

21. The complaisant attitude of the Italian fleet, and the inactivity of the French main fleet, unfortunately gave Force "H" no scope for action. This powerful force had in fact to be kept cruising idly in an area where it was subject to sporadic air attack and faced with an increasing concentration of U-Boats. We were perhaps fortunate that torpedo casualties were limited to the two destroyers, His Majesty's Ship MARTIN and Her Netherlands Majesty's Ship ISAAC SWEERS.

22. The value of Force "R" was amply demonstrated. These two oilers, Royal Fleet Auxiliary DINGLEDALE and Royal Fleet Auxiliary BROWN RANGER, did yeoman service. It was not my intention that large cruisers should fuel from this force, nor should I have permitted it except in emergency. It

is considered very fortunate that His Majesty's Ship BERMUDA (Captain T. H. Back, Royal Navy) escaped damage in her prolonged fueling at dead slow speed on a steady course inadequately screened.

23. In this connection it has been observed from numerous reports that many Commanding Officers without Mediterranean experience lacked appreciation of the problem with which they were faced in these narrow submarine and aircraft infested waters. It is clear that advice on this subject should have been promulgated beforehand. This has now been done within the "Torch" area, and will be available for future operations.

24. Such surface actions as did take place were somewhat distasteful and one sided encounters with the French destroyers trying to break out of Oran. His Majesty's Ship BRILLIANT (Lieutenant-Commander A. G. Poe, Royal Navy) fought a satisfactory duel with the French destroyer LA SURPRISE. His Majesty's Ship AURORA (Captain W. G. Agnew, C.B., Royal Navy) polished off her opponents on each occasion with practised ease. The performance of His Majesty's Ship JAMAICA in expending 501 rounds to damage one destroyer was less praiseworthy.

Unloading.

25. The weather only held in our favour long enough to enable the smooth working of the assault and early maintenance. The break of weather on D+1 was not sufficient to stop disembarkation, but speedily reduced the flow of supply and served to show up the need for greater robustness in the landing craft and for training in rough water and surf conditions for the crews.

26. The early seizure of Arzeu and the surrender of Algiers were invaluable in assisting unloading of the convoys. Even so, we were left with the great anxiety of vast masses of shipping anchored in open roadsteads for many days. Had the enemy shown more enterprise with his U-Boats or had more torpedo aircraft been at his call, our losses might well have been uncomfortably high. This had of course been recognised as an unavoidable and acceptable risk.

Shipping Casualties.

27. I was concerned to get shipping away as soon as possible from these crowded anchorages. Orders had been issued on this subject in accordance with which the fast troopships were sailed independently for Gibraltar as soon as empty. We were most unfortunate, I consider, in that two of these ships blundered on to U-Boats and were destroyed. It was an even chance whether they would be safer at sea proceeding at high speed for Gibraltar alone, or anchored in the mass, escorts not being available.

28. This ill fortune with the big troopships persisted with the destruction of ETTRICK and WARWICK CASTLE in convoy M.K.F.1 after they had passed clear of the Mediterranean.

29. Other personnel ship losses, notably NARKUNDA, CATHAY, and His Majesty's Ship KARANJA (Acting Commander D. S. Hore-Lacy, Royal Navy), were part of the price which may be expected to be paid for taking such large and valuable vessels into the for-

Admiralty footnote:—

* These H.Q. ships for the conduct of combined operations, accommodating combined service staffs, were the first to be converted for this purpose, and this was the first occasion on which they were used.

ward area in order to ensure the early occupation of a port, in this case, Bougie. These losses and the damage suffered by various ships at Algiers serve to point again to the essential importance of establishing properly directed fighter protection at the earliest moment. This was a lesson well learnt in the Western Desert campaign, and well digested by all concerned; but now in the novel circumstances of amphibious entry to a new theatre of operations new lessons had to be learnt by bitter experience. These lessons all relate to the necessity, in the combined planning stage, of assuring the necessary priority for the establishment of R.A.F. ground control and servicing equipment ashore at an early stage.

Anti-Aircraft Gunfire.

30. A striking feature of the operation at Algiers and to eastward of that port was the number of enemy aircraft shot down by ships' gunfire, warships and merchant vessels alike. This was perhaps the first great undertaking by our seaborne forces in which ships entered the area of operations adequately armed. We suffered loss, but the toll paid by the enemy was high.

31. The presence of the anti-aircraft ships at occupied ports was invaluable.

Administrative Arrangements.

32. The administrative arrangements for this operation worked well, due chiefly to the detailed planning carried out by the Admiralty departments and the administrative staff at Norfolk House.*

The efficiency with which the administrative section of the Plans Division at the Admiralty met all my requirements and interpreted them to the Supply Departments, where they were well implemented, fully justified the establishment of this section and, together with the assistance rendered by the Second Sea Lord's office and the department of the Director of Personal Services, contributed greatly to the success of the operation.

In future operations the planning should ensure an adequate supply of clothing for naval and merchant seamen from D day.

The Naval and Victualling Store Departments at Gibraltar were inadequately manned to achieve their full functions.

Advance to the East.

33. No sooner was Algiers occupied than the Flag Officer, Inshore Squadron† in co-operation with the General Officer Commanding 1st Army pressed on energetically with the task of expanding the occupation eastward. The acquiescence of the French enabled the occupation of Bone to be quickly undertaken, and it was not until we were within 16 miles of Tunis that the Axis forces were able to stop the tide of our advance.

34. During the initial planning stage, I advocated a landing at Bizerta, and it is a matter of lasting regret to me that this bolder conception was not implemented. Had we been prepared to throw even a small force into the eastward ports, the Axis would have been forestalled

in their first token occupation and success would have been complete. They were surprised and off their balance. We failed to give the final push which would have tipped the scales.

35. To sum up, there were few new lessons learnt, but many old ones received fresh emphasis. Those which require most firmly to be borne in mind are

(a) The need for boldness and the value of holding even a small highly mobile reserve to exploit success daringly.

(b) The importance of not overestimating the enemy's resources, exemplified in this case by the infra-red equipment bogey, which led us to lie too far offshore at the initial landings.

(c) The importance of training in a service which is no longer manned by a majority of prime seamen, and the need for combined training with the soldiers with whom they are to work.

(d) The importance of carrying out such beach reconnaissance as is required well in advance, to gain security.

(e) The vital necessity for immediate installation of a proper air defence system at occupied ports.

(f) The need of co-ordination in the various elements of Naval Port Parties who should be assembled and organised under one command before embarkation.

(g) The necessity for promulgating experienced advice about conditions in a theatre of operations to units joining from other stations.

36. That the operation achieved the success it did was due, in so far as general operations are concerned,

(a) To the high measure of secrecy achieved, which enabled us to gain surprise.

(b) To the sound planning and forethought shown in the Naval sphere by Admiral Sir Bertram H. Ramsay, K.C.B., M.V.O.*, who made a contribution not easily measured to the smooth running of the seaborne operations.

(c) To the excellent co-operation which existed through all ranks of the services of both nations, the foundations of which were laid during the period of combined planning at Norfolk House.

(d) To the compact and efficient arrangement of the Combined Headquarters at Gibraltar.

(e) To the high standard of seamanship and technical efficiency which is mercifully still maintained in the units of the Fleet. In this connection the value of the Western Approaches training is outstanding.

(f) To the courage, determination and adaptability of the Merchant Navy.

37. In conclusion I feel it should be placed on record that in this most difficult of all types of operation with a number of services involved and despite the difficulties inherent in welding together the systems of command and organisation of two nations, there reigned a spirit of comradeship and understanding which provided that vital force which

Admiralty footnotes:—

* Norfolk House—in St. James's Square, London; the pre-operational H.Q. of the Allied Commander-in-Chief.

† Flag Officer, Inshore Squadron—Vice-Admiral Sir Harold M. Burrough, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.

Admiralty footnote:—

* Deputy Naval Commander Expeditionary Force.

brought success to our undertaking. The embodiment of that spirit was exemplified in our Commander-in-Chief, General Dwight D. Eisenhower; we counted it a privilege to follow in his train.

(Signed) A. B. CUNNINGHAM,
Admiral of the Fleet.

The Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces.

ENCLOSURE I.

*The Office of Flag Officer, Inshore Squadron,
H.M.S. BULOLO.*

8th December, 1942.

The following report on Operation "Torch" is forwarded.

Prior to leaving U.K..

2. In compliance with Admiralty instructions I hoisted my Flag as Flag Officer, Force "E", in H.M.S. BULOLO at Greenock at 0800 on 14th October, 1942.

3. Most ships who were to form the fast and slow convoys, K.M.F.1 and K.M.S.1 respectively, had assembled in the Clyde area by 17th October. I took the opportunity on this and succeeding days of visiting all L.S.I.s*, with General Ryder, U.S. Army (in command of the assault on Algiers) and Major-General V. Eveleigh, O.B.E. (in command of the British 78th Division), and spoke briefly to the ships' companies, landing craft crews, beach parties, and military and R.A.F. personnel embarked.

4. Whilst in the Clyde every endeavour was made to exercise both naval and military personnel and to prepare them for the parts they would be required to play in the operation. In this connection great difficulty was experienced by the Senior Naval Officers of Landing in making contact with the M.T. ships of the slow convoy; this was due partly to delay in preparing ships and concentrating them and partly to the fact that berths were many miles apart. In the event, it proved impossible for the M.T. ships and their landing craft to be exercised at all.

5. H.M.S. BERMUDA and all Hunt class destroyers taking part in the operation carried out practice bombardments on the Arran range. All destroyers who were available were also given bombardment communication exercises with their own military F.O.O.s† ashore.

6. On 17th October, the Fleet minesweepers ACUTE (Commander M/S), CADMUS, ROTHER, SPEY, ALARM, ALBACORE, ALGERINE, HUSSAR and SPEEDWELL were exercised in special night sweeping operations which included the laying of lit danst. These exercises were designed as far as possible to reproduce the actual requirements of the operation and proved most valuable.

7. On the night of 20th/21st October, Exercise "Flaxman", which had been prepared by the staff of Rear-Admiral Combined

Operations, was carried out in the Loch Fyne area. Owing to many ships not being available, "Flaxman", which was designed to exercise fully all ships, military and R.A.F. personnel and units in combined operations, was on a very reduced scale. Moreover, as it was urgently necessary to conserve landing craft, which could not be replaced if damaged, only a minimum of troops, vehicles and equipment could be landed. In consequence, communication with the beaches was bad and little information of what was going on was received in the H.Q. Ship. Discussions on return to Greenock proved that while the exercise had been of value to the S.N.O.L.s,* military, landing craft crews and beach parties, etc., it was quite inadequate owing to the restrictions which had to be imposed.

8. On 22nd October, Convoy Conference for K.M.S.1 was held on board H.M.S. AVENGER; and on 25th October, the Convoy Conference for K.M.F. 1 was held on board the REINA DEL PACIFICO. At both these conferences the orders for the operation were gone through in detail with the Commanding Officers of naval forces and the Masters and S.N.O. (T)† of Red Ensign ships.

From U.K. to passage of Straits.

9. Convoy K.M.S.1 sailed from the Clyde on 22nd October, 1942. At 2100 B.S.T. on 26th October, I sailed in H.M.S. BULOLO with Convoy K.M.F.1 from the Clyde in single line ahead at 9 knots.

10. In view of the danger of moored mines, the Fleet minesweepers and twin-screw corvettes escorting K.M.S.1 and K.M.F.1 carried out Oropesa search ahead of both convoys from longitude 06° W. to the 100 fathom line. The search was made with double Oropesa in "H" formation and covered a 3 mile front 5 miles ahead of leading ships of the convoys.

11. At 0900 on 27th October, H.M.S. SHEFFIELD, wearing the Flag of Rear-Admiral C. H. J. Harcourt, C.B.E., Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron, joined K.M.F.1 with the escort from Belfast, where she had embarked some 600 U.S. troops under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Swenson, U.S. Army, and 50 naval ratings commanded by Captain H. St. J. Fancourt, R.N., who were to take part in the direct assault on Algiers (Operation "Terminal").

12. The passage of the convoy from the United Kingdom to the rendezvous with the additional escort off Cape St. Vincent, and the division of the convoy into K.M.F.A.1 and K.M.F.O.1 on 4th November, was wholly successful, and there is reason to believe that the convoy was never sighted or reported by U-Boats.

13. From 30th October to 3rd November, A/S‡ patrols were flown from H.M.S. BITER, and at 1700 on 30th October a Swordfish sighted a U-Boat on the surface 25 miles, 270° from the convoy. The U-Boat dived before the aircraft could attack, but the aircraft kept him down for sufficient time to enable the convoy to pass unreported. BITER's last Swordfish became unserviceable landing on in a swell after the dusk patrol on 3rd November. No A/S air patrol was provided on 4th November

Admiralty footnotes:—

- * L.S.I.—Landing Ship, Infantry.
- † F.O.O.—Forward Observation Officer.
- ‡ Dan—a marking buoy.

Admiralty footnotes:—

- * S.N.O.L.—Senior Naval Officer Landing.
- † S.N.O.(T)—Senior Naval Officer (Transport).
- ‡ A/S—anti-submarine.

as the weather at Gibraltar was unsuitable. Shore-based A/S aircraft took over protection from 0700 5th November.

14. During the passage the convoy was frequently exercised in emergency turns and in changing from one cruising disposition to another. Outstanding in these exercises was the Polish BATORY leading the fifth column, who was consistently handled with the precision and skill of a well trained naval unit. All ships carried out functioning trials of their A.A. weapons in preparation for the air attacks we expected in the Mediterranean.

15. The convoy should have rendezvoused with the destroyers ESCAPADE, ISAAC SWEERS and MARNE in position 45° 50' N., 26° 08' W. at 0800 G.M.T. on 31st October. These destroyers had sailed from Ponta Delgada on 29th October and were joining as additional escort. Owing to the incorrect receipt of a cypher message, the rendezvous was, however, missed, and ROTHER was detached a.m. 31st to look for them but was unsuccessful. At 1815 on 1st November, H.M. Ships CLEVELAND, ALBRIGHTON and ESKDALE were sighted northbound to join K.M.S. 2 and they reported having seen ESCAPADE earlier in the day steering south-east. ISAAC SWEERS and ESCAPADE eventually joined the screen at 1200 on 2nd November, and MARNE at 0800 on 3rd November.

16. At 1830 3rd November, H.M.S. SHEFFIELD was detached and proceeded ahead independently to Gibraltar. Her fuelling of escorts had throughout been conducted most energetically under difficult conditions due to the following swell. On the passage out, escorts were fuelled from SHEFFIELD and ORBITA.

17. From 0930 4th November, the convoy was re-disposed preparatory to the Oran section parting company. At 1150 on 4th November in position 36° 13' N., 13° 07' W., H.M. Ships JAMAICA, VERITY, WISHART, VELOX, WESTCOTT, ACHATES and ANTELOPE joined as additional escorts for K.M.F.O. 1 and K.M.F.A. 1; and at 1400 K.M.F.O. 1 proceeded independently under Commodore T. H. Troubridge, R.N., flying his Flag in H.M.S. LARGS. After re-disposing the screen K.M.F.A. 1's course was set for 093°, speed 12 knots.

18. At 0730 5th November, the A.A. ships PALOMARES and POZARICA and the destroyer AMAZON joined from Gibraltar. Dutch Ship ISAAC SWEERS was detached at 0745 to join Force "H" which had been sighted 10 miles to the northward at 0720. The 0800 position of convoy K.M.F.A. 1 was 36° 07' N., 09° 09' W.

19. A merchant ship bearing 110°, 7 miles sighted at 0925 5th November proved to be the Vichien CAUDEBEC, bound for Casablanca with a cargo of wood. WIVERN was ordered to close her and to place an armed guard on board to take her to Gibraltar. Our first prize.

20. From 1600 to 1630 5th November, the convoy was formed into Cruising Order No. 24 for passage of the Straits. This was in three columns led by KEREN, BULOLO and KARANJA in that order from port to starboard column.

21. At 1830 on 5th November, ROYAL ULSTERMAN, ROYAL SCOTSMAN, ULSTER MONARCH and LEINSTER left

the convoy for Gibraltar. They were escorted by SPIREA and JONQUIL who had joined from Gibraltar at 1700 for this purpose.

22. The passage of the Straits was uneventful. Several unidentified vessels on a westerly course were passed when the convoy was abeam Cape Spartel at 2245, but no action was taken.

23. At 0230 6th November, BROKE, MALCOLM, VANOC and WRESTLER joined the screen as reliefs for AMAZON, ACHATES, ANTELOPE and WIVERN, who proceeded into Gibraltar.

From passage of Straits to Assault.

24. At 0925 on 6th November, the convoy, being ahead of time, was turned back on its course to 275° by emergency turns. This course was continued until 1010 when course was altered back to 080°.

25. At this time Force "H" and K.M.S.A. 1 were in sight against the Spanish coast to the westward. SHEFFIELD and supporting force had been sighted at 0900 to the eastward.

26. At 1045 6th November, the screen was augmented by the arrival of ACUTE, ALGERINE, ALARM, ALBACORE, CADMUS, SPEEDWELL, HUSSAR, BLYSKAWICA, WILTON, LAMERTON and WHEATLAND, whilst IBIS, ENCHANTRESS, CLARE, BROKE, MALCOLM, WRESTLER and VANOC were detached to join K.M.S.A. 1.

27. At 1230 6th November, the Spanish fishing vessel JESUS DEI GRAN was sighted to the south-east. I ordered LAMERTON to board her and to send her under armed guard to Gibraltar. The crew were apparently very friendly and in no way resented this interruption of their peaceful occupation.

28. At 1415 6th November, the first enemy aircraft to be seen passed over the convoy from south to north. It was identified as a German reconnaissance Ju.88. One salvo was fired by POZARICA but with no apparent effect.

29. Additional and most welcome escorts joined K.M.F.A. 1 at 1430 from K.M.S.A. 1. They were BRAMHAM, BICESTER, COWDRAY and ZETLAND, all of whom were to play an important part in the later operations.

30. At 1500, the convoy was again turned back on its course to 277° and this course was held until 1600 when it was altered back to 086°.

31. At 1630, another German Ju.88 reconnaissance plane was to the south of the convoy steering east. Information was received at this time that a large naval formation had been reported by German aircraft off Cape Gata.

32. The night of the 6th November passed quietly until at 0520 (received 0535), H.M.S. TYNWALD reported low-flying aircraft bearing 010°, closing. At 0535, two guns or explosions were heard from the port side of the convoy and several H.A. bursts were also observed. Two emergency turns of 45° were made at 0553, making the final course for the convoy 016°.

33. At 0630, Captain C. D. Edgar, U.S.N., S.N.O.L.(C)*, in U.S.S. SAMUEL CHASE, reported that an underwater explosion had

Admiralty footnote:—

* S.N.O.L.(C).—Senior Naval Officer Landing (C Sector).

damaged the stern of THOMAS STONE, a Combat Loaded Transport of his sector, and had caused her to stop. H.M.S. SPEY was detached to stand by her and V.A.C.N.A.* was asked to send tugs. At first it was thought that a T/B† aircraft had done the damage, but the weight of evidence now indicates that a submarine was responsible. At 0706, convoy resumed course of 086°.

34. At 0954 7th November, a submarine contact was reported on the port bow. The convoy made an emergency turn of 45° to starboard. BICESTER attacked with depth charges. Course of 086° was resumed at 1000.

35. At 1130 7th November, Force "H" was manœuvring about 8 miles ahead of the convoy. Shortly afterwards SHEFFIELD and Force "R" were bearing 030°, 8 miles steering west. At 1400, H.M. Trawlers JULIET, RYSA, CAVA, HOY, OTHELLO, INCHOLM and MULL and the M.L.s 238, 273, 283, 295, 336, 338, 444, joined K.M.F.A. 1 from Force "R". M.L. 307 had joined at 1055 from eastward, and H.M. Trawler STROMA at 1545 also from eastward.

36. Hostile shadowing aircraft were in evidence at intervals during the afternoon of 7th November. From 1700-1745 considerable A.A. fire was observed from Force "H" to the northward and many aircraft passed over and astern of the convoy in that direction. Several ships opened fire but no results were obtained.

37. At 1800, the convoy was wheeled to 180° and SAMUEL CHASE (Captain C. D. Edgar, U.S.N.—S.N.O.L.(C)), LEEDSTOWN, ALMAACK, EXCELLER and DEMPO escorted by TYNWALD, COWDRAY, ZETLAND, ALGERINE, HUSSAR, SPEEDWELL, CAVA, OTHELLO and M.L.s 273 and 295, proceeded independently to C Sector.

38. At 1900, the convoy wheeled to 200° and at 1920 formation was changed to 2 columns. At 2130, the starboard column consisting of KARANJA, VICEROY OF INDIA and MARNIX escorted by POZARICA, BICESTER, BRAMHAM, ROTHER, CADMUS, RYSA, JULIET, STROMA and M.L.s 283, 336 and 338, proceeded independently to A Sector, and the course of the remainder was altered to 110° by two 45° turns to port.

39. At 2140, radar from submarine P.48 was picked up. Speed was reduced to 6 knots at 2150, and at 2154, P.48 was sighted bearing 105°.

40. At 2230, BULOLO (H.Q. Ship) and the ships of B Sector, KEREN, WINCHESTER CASTLE, OTRANTO, SOBIESKI, AWATEA, STRATHNAVER, CATHAY, escorted by PALOMARES, ACUTE, ALARM, ALBACORE, LAMERTON, WHEATLAND, WILTON, BLYSKAWICA, HOY, INCHOLM, MULL, and M.L.s 444, 238 and 307, were stopped in position 36°52½'N., 02°49'E.

41. At this time there was a moderate N.E. breeze, slight sea, clear sky and good visibility. Cap Caxine and all coastal lights were burning, which was a re-assuring sign for the military.

Admiralty footnotes:—

* V.A.C.N.A.—Vice-Admiral Commanding, North Atlantic, whose H.Q. were at Gibraltar.

† T/B—torpedo bomber.

The Assault on Algiers.

42. The ships of the fast assault convoy, with the exception of U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, were at their release positions as arranged by about 2230z* on 7th November. Submarines marking the release positions were in place in all three sectors and homing arrangements worked well.

43. From the time of arrival at the release positions until the move into Algiers harbour and Bay on D+1 escorts carried out an endless chain A/S patrol round the stopped transports.

44. Minesweeping was carried out entirely to plan, except at Sector B where it was decided that sweeping was unnecessary, and it was cancelled. No mines of any kind were swept or detonated throughout the operation. Fleet minesweepers did valuable work in the A/S patrol.

45. During the period that boats were being lowered, manned and assembled, a south-westerly set caused by the N.E. wind resulted in ships drifting as much as 5 miles from their proper release positions by the end of the first 1½ hours.

The Landings.

46. *A Sector.* The landing at A Sector was carried out most satisfactorily. S.N.O.L.(A) personally supervised the transfer of the pilots from the submarine to the motor launches, and at 2349, the assault flights moved off to the A GREEN and A WHITE Beaches. A GREEN flight beached at H hour (0100z) and A WHITE flight at H hour + 8 minutes, both without incident.

47. *B Sector.* The landing at B Sector was marred by avoidable mistakes. The motor launch detailed to embark the pilot from submarine P.48 for B WHITE Beach first embarked the P.B.M.† from KEREN who assumed command of the M.L., and having failed to pick the pilot from the submarine, led a flight for B GREEN to A WHITE Beach, which was some six miles to the southward. In the meantime, as the submarine had to leave the release position for the inner beacon position, the pilot for B WHITE embarked in the nearest landing craft, which proved to be one of a flight bound for B GREEN Beach. He led in the first and second flights, and gave the order "Go" off B GREEN Beach at H hour + 3 minutes. The first flight instead of following the approach directions went some way to the east before beaching; the second flight on the pilot's suggestion went straight in and touched down first.

The only craft to beach at B WHITE before dawn (0600) were 3 L.C.P.s‡ destined for B GREEN Beach. Other craft for B WHITE landed wrongly to the south-west of Sidi Ferruch and as far west as A Sector.

The mistakes at B Sector can largely be traced to lack of training and uncertainty whether the submarine and the M.L.s had received the latest orders. This caused the S.N.O.L. to delay the M.L. until the P.B.M. could be embarked and resulted in the M.L. failing to embark the pilot from the submarine.

Admiralty footnotes:—

* The suffix "z" indicates G.M.T.

† P.B.M.—Principal Beach Master.

‡ L.C.P.—Landing Craft, Personnel.

It is of the utmost importance that similar uncertainty should be avoided in any future operation and that Flotilla Officers should be thoroughly trained.

48. *Scramble Landings.* Landing craft for RED 1, 2, 3 and 4 Beaches were very late in getting away from AWATEA, and one group had to be left behind. A number of craft lost touch with the escorting motor launch on the way inshore, in spite of reductions of speed. Troops were landed at Bains Romans and various beaches to the west. The two craft detailed for RED 1 Beach found their objective unaided, though 1½ hours late. Six landing craft approached the Ilot de la Marine, some two miles south-east of their intended beach, and came under heavy fire. Four were sunk and the remaining two withdrew.

49. *C Sector.* Owing to the delay in the receipt of orders some confusion arose as to the beaches to be used. The pilotage party were only briefed for Ain Taya beach whereas the use of three beaches was contemplated.

A short conference was held in U.S.S. SAMUEL CHASE where it was decided that M.L. 273 should take a flight to C BLUE, the original beach; that M.L. 295 should lead a flight to C RED Beach, keeping station on the port quarter of M.L. 273 until reaching Bordelaise Rock, where they would break off; and that the pilot in Flotilla leader's craft should lead the Commando flight to C GREEN for the assault on Matifou.

Owing to delay in forming up, the assault flights for C BLUE and RED Beaches did not leave until H hour - 50 minutes. At Bordelaise Rock, M.L. 295 attempted to lead off the craft for C RED, but they all continued to follow M.L. 273 to C BLUE, where they touched down at H hour + 25 minutes. Several craft for C GREEN were also mixed up in this flight, including those with ammunition for the Commando at C GREEN.

The flights for C GREEN were not finally loaded and assembled until H hour - 15 minutes, and as the convoy had by now drifted some 4 or 5 miles from its release position they did not touch down at C GREEN Beach until H hour + 1 hour 50 minutes.

50. *General.* Generally speaking all landings were hampered by the unfortunate necessity of long delays in lowering craft and forming up into flotillas. The obvious solution to this is that all L.S.I.s carry sufficient landing craft to embark their own first flight and that these landing craft be lowered with their full load.

All landings, except that at Ilot de la Marine, were effected without opposition, which was fortunate, as, had there been any serious naval or military opposition, the confusion which arose at B and C Sectors might well have been disastrous.

51. At 0040, the ships of the slow convoy K.M.S.A. 1 began to arrive at B Sector, where H.M.S. BULOLO was lying, and they arrived at the correct times at the release positions of A and C Sectors.

52. At A Sector the L.S.I. of the fast convoy started to close the beach at 0100, the slow convoy following them in. Owing to the drift from proper release positions ships were not

finally anchored until 0356. The ferry service then began to operate satisfactorily.

53. At 0130, as Cap Matifou battery showed no signs of activity, S.N.O.L. (C) moved his L.S.I. in to within 4,000 yards of the beach. At 0200, searchlights from the battery picked up and held H.M.S. ZETLAND, but neither side opened fire. H.M.S. ZETLAND turned away and made smoke and the transports were not illuminated. At 0340, ZETLAND was again picked up by this searchlight, and Cap Matifou battery opened fire on the westward transports. ZETLAND closed the battery and opened fire on the searchlight, which went out showing a glow as though it had been hit. At 0400, ZETLAND was picked up by another searchlight and the battery again opened fire. ZETLAND closed the battery, dealing successfully with this searchlight too.

54. At 0131, I ordered H.M. Ships BROKE and MALCOLM to carry out Operation "Terminal".*

55. At 0237, information was received that Sidi Ferruch Fort had been captured without opposition, and I ordered KEREN and the ships at B Sector to close B WHITE Beach. Ships had by now drifted some 7 miles to the south-westward, and it took them over 2 hours to reach the anchorage. Once anchored, the ferrying of personnel ashore proceeded rapidly.

56. By 0515 D day, the information received in H.Q. Ship was as follows:—

0131 From C.E.N.T.F.†—BROKE and MALCOLM proceed in execution of previous orders.

0159 Landing B WHITE successful.

0220 Signal station A GREEN open—nothing to report.

0220 From BROKE—MALCOLM in company and proceeding.

0223 Landing successful B GREEN.

0225 S.N.O.L.(C)—1st and 2nd wave landed, am closing beach.

0237 Sidi Ferruch and infra-red installations captured.

0238 S.N.O.L.(B)—Loaded M.T. very slow due to conditions.

0246 C.E.N.T.F. to KEREN—Close beach as convenient; sweep B will not be carried out.

0246 S.N.O.L.(A)—L.S.I. anchored A WHITE. Landing delayed by swell. Assault flight landed 0147.

0257 S.N.O.L.(B)—B GREEN and WHITE landings successful. Sidi Ferruch captured. No RED Beach report.

0255 A Sector—No resistance reported so far.

0301 S.N.O.L.(C)—Am under way, all quiet here.

0315 Flares bearing 045° to seaward. Possibly BROKE and MALCOLM.

0327 S.N.O.L.(C)—Landing successful. Beach secure. No report from troops inland.

0332 B RED SCRAMBLES—Two forts captured.

0335 S.N.O.L.(B)—Ships are closing the beaches now.

0344 S.N.O.L.(B)—Division 1 close beaches. KEREN's speed 8 knots. Division 2 and 3 follow.

Admiralty footnotes:—

* See paragraph 11.

† C.E.N.T.F.—Commander Eastern Naval Task Force.

- 0345 Gunfire between 075° and 085°.
 0351 S.N.O.L.(A) to RYSA—Contact P.221 and escort her to sanctuary.
 0415 Occasional flashes bearing 090°.
 0421 From C.E.N.T.F. to BROKE—Report progress.
 0430 BULOLO position—260° 13 miles Caxine.
 0435 From B WHITE flight to S.N.O.L.(B)—Have been landed on A WHITE Beach request instructions.
 0435 From S.N.O.L.(C)—Matifou defences apparently not taken.
 0435 From C.T. 168 to A.M.L.O. B WHITE—260 men 2nd Battalion apparently landed A WHITE Beach.
 0456 From Control B Sector—Serials 1 to 68 despatched. Serials 44 to 52 appear to have landed A WHITE. Difficulty with L.C.M.*, only 5 L.C.M. disembarked from W.2. Shackles of lifting gear bent.
 0500 BULOLO manœuvring to close B Beaches.
 0515 From BROKE to C.E.N.T.F.—MALCOLM damaged, two boilers out of action. Searchlights on Brise Lames Est very troublesome. Have made three attempts to find entrance. Am making another attempt with BROKE. Entrance would be easier if searchlights could be put out of action.

57. At 0600, BROKE reported that she had berthed alongside in Algiers harbour and was landing troops, and a few minutes later that she had little difficulty in entering.

58. At 0632, BROKE reported that a submarine was leaving harbour. This was attacked and forced to dive by aircraft from VICTORIOUS, and STORK and two A/S vessels were detached to search for it.

59. At this time news from shore was very scarce. The landing of the 11th Brigade at A Sector appeared to be going well; and General Mast, Commanding Algiers Division, was reported at Sidi Ferruch to be offering full co-operation and urging that our forces should push on to Algiers without delay. On the other hand it was known that Cap Matifou had not yet surrendered; and at 0625 WILTON, who was in support of landing craft at SCRAMBLE landings, reported that she was under fire from Fort Duperre. No hits were made and WILTON withdrew to the westward, joining patrol at B Beaches until the military situation clarified.

60. At 0827, the welcome news that Maison Blanche aerodrome had been captured was received. At 1000 the aerodrome was reported serviceable, and a few minutes later a squadron of Hurricanes flown from Gibraltar landed on. Although the R.A.F. did not formally take over the defence of Algiers until D+2, R.A.F. fighters were operational on D day, making several sorties on D day and D+1. This helped materially to supplement the extremely efficient air support given by the hard-pressed fighters and squadrons of R.A.A.†

61. At 0856, information was received that tanks were concentrating and moving along the road from Algiers in the direction of Maison Blanche. Three of these tanks subsequently

returned to the harbour in an effort to dislodge BROKE; she had, however, made good her withdrawal before they came into action.

62. The unloading of M.T. was proceeding very slowly. B GREEN Beach had to be abandoned owing to the swell and general unsuitability. B WHITE had to be restricted to a width of 100 yards. C Beach was a lee shore, and felt the full effects of the slight swell, and many landing craft broached to.

63. At 0930, BROKE requested bombing of the battery on Jetée du Nord to cover her intended withdrawal at 1030, as her position was becoming untenable. Bomber support was also called for urgently on Fort Duperre at 1030. R.A.A. was asked to fulfil these commitments.

64. At 0934, a Martlet landed on Blida aerodrome and reported a friendly reception.

65. At about 1000, BROKE left harbour. The battery on Jetée du Nord was bombed most successfully at 1030. Twelve hits were obtained on this small target and severe damage was done to the buildings and living quarters in the fort. BROKE was engaged by a number of batteries on her way out and was badly damaged. ZETLAND went to her aid, steering between her and Cap Matifou battery. This was successfully bombarded, hitting the control tower and putting the range-finder out of action. ZETLAND then stood by BROKE.

66. I consider that much credit is due to Captain H. St. J. Fancourt, R.N., Commanding Officer "Terminal" Force, for his courage and determination in pressing on with the attack after the initial repulse of his ships, and also to Lieutenant J. V. Wilkinson, Commanding Officer, H.M.S. ZETLAND, for the gallant and skilful manner in which he took his ship to the rescue of BROKE.

67. At 1130, Blida aerodrome was occupied by the military. One Ju.88 was sighted over B Sector at this time.

68. Shortly after 1300, Fort Duperre was bombed by naval Albacores. Subsequent reports say that the bombing broke the resistance of the defenders and the Commandos were able to take possession of the fort unopposed at 1515.

69. In response to urgent calls for support from F.O.O.7, Cap Matifou battery and Fort d'Estrées were bombarded by BERMUDA and bombed by naval aircraft almost simultaneously between 1400 and 1530. Both bombing and bombardment were most successful, and having driven the defenders underground, the Commandos occupied the forts without opposition.

70. At about 1600, the military situation did not appear to H.Q. Ship to be progressing favourably. 11th British Brigade in A Sector had reached all its objectives, but 168th U.S. R.C.T.* from B Sector was held up in high ground, to the west of Algiers, and Fort L'Empereur was reported as being strongly held. As a result, the 6 Royal West Kents were ordered to land to give additional weight to the attack. This order was subsequently cancelled. 39th U.S. R.C.T. from C Sector advancing on Algiers from the east were held up by shelling from Hussein Dey areas and

Admiralty footnotes:—

* L.C.M.—Landing Craft, Mechanised Vehicles.

† R.A.A.—Rear-Admiral's Air.

Admiralty footnote:—

* R.C.T.—Regimental Combat Team.

reported heavy casualties. A concentration of tanks was also believed to be forming in this area. Unloading of M.T. at C Sector practically stopped, due to the rising wind and swell, and was proceeding very slowly at other sectors. It was therefore with considerable relief that the following signal was received from General Ryder at 1658: "Darlan wishes to negotiate immediately. He will not deal with any Frenchman. Recommend that arrangements for Algiers be presented. Resistance of Navy in isolated batteries has been severe. Resistance of Army has been token".

71. At dusk the first Axis air attack developed. Ships at C Sector were the objectives of dive and torpedo bombers. H.M.S. COWDRAY was hit and seriously damaged. U.S.S. LEEDSTOWN's steering gear was put out of action by a hit on the stern and U.S.S. EXCELLER suffered minor damage from a near miss. I had previously ordered screening ships to cover concentration of shipping with smoke and this undoubtedly prevented more serious casualties. One enemy aircraft was shot down.

72. Unloading of M.T.s had to be stopped during the night due to the heavy swell and rising wind which caused large casualties to landing craft at all sectors.

73. At 2200, H.M.S. SPEY arrived with American soldiers from the damaged THOMAS C. STONE. They had left their ship 140 miles N.W. of Algiers in landing craft, escorted by H.M.S. SPEY, in a spirited attempt to take part in the assault. Weather and breakdowns necessitated abandoning the landing craft on passage.

74. I wish particularly to draw your attention to the courageous decision of Captain O. R. Bennehoff, Commanding U.S.S. THOMAS STONE, to send his landing craft and troops off on a journey of 140 miles to their beaches under the escort of the only A/S vessel then available to screen his ship, and also to the fine display of seamanship and determination given by Commander H. G. Scott, R.N., Commanding Officer, H.M.S. WISHART, in towing the helpless U.S.S. THOMAS STONE safely to Algiers in spite of bad weather and the perils of air and submarine attacks.

75. At 0500, I proceeded to Algiers harbour in BULOLO, berthing alongside at 0700. On the way round BULOLO was attacked twice by single Ju. 88s; the first attack was unobserved, but in the second attack the enemy plane received a hot reception from the close-range weapons, and after complaining of his rough handling crashed into the sea.

76. An enthusiastic reception was given to us by the large crowd assembled on the dock side and on the road overlooking the harbour.

77. At 0800, all shipping was ordered into Algiers Bay. This concentration of shipping was attacked by about 30 Ju. 88s at 1630. Twelve of these were shot down by Spitfires who were directed by visual control from BULOLO.

The Assault on Bougie and Djidjelli.

78. At 1700 10th November, the slow assault convoy sailed for Bougie, consisting of the M.T. ships GLENFINLAS (Commodore), STANHILL, URLANA, and OCEAN

VOLGA, escorted by H.M. Ships ROBERTS, BLYSKAWICA, SAMPHIRE, PENSTEMON, HOY, INCHOLM and RYSA. The fast assault convoy consisting of L.S.I.s KARANJA, MARNIX and CATHAY escorted by H.M. Ships SHEFFIELD, TYNWALD, BRAMHAM, CADMUS, ALBACORE, ROTHER and SPEY, sailed at 2000.

79. The oiler DEWDALE left Algiers at 1800 10th November, having been delayed by oiling ships. H.M.S. MULL of the slow assault convoy escort remained behind to escort her to Bougie. DEWDALE and MULL arrived Bougie at 0600 11th November.

80. At 2310, L.S.I. AWATEA escorted by BICESTER and WILTON sailed for the assault on Djidjelli. STRATHNAVER had been detailed to carry out this task but had developed engine-room defects which restricted her speed; R.A.F. Commandos, stores and petrol had been transferred to AWATEA during the day.

It was then intended that STRATHNAVER should accompany the fast assault convoy to Bougie but she was not able to get away in time.

81. The Armistice at this time had not been signed, but I had been assured of a friendly reception. The Commandos for the assault of coast defence batteries were not despatched. Information was received after the assault shipping had sailed that the landing at Bougie might be opposed and in consequence I sent a signal to that effect to the Naval Commander, Captain N. V. Dickinson, R.N. On receipt of this signal at about midnight, Captain Dickinson ordered all landings to take place on D WHITE Beach, this beach being outside the range of shore batteries.

82. At 0345, H.M.S. SHEFFIELD (C.S. 10) left the fast assault convoy and acted independently to give surface cover to the assault.

83. H.M.S. ROBERTS escorted by PENSTEMON and SAMPHIRE parted company from the slow assault convoy when off Cap Carbon and stood off prepared to bombard.

84. At 0445, L.S.I.s stopped in the release position (105° Cap Carbon 7). Troops for the assault had been embarked in L.S.I.s MARNIX and CATHAY. KARANJA's boats were despatched to ferry CATHAY's assault troops ashore. The assault flight left for D WHITE Beach at 0530 from MARNIX and at 0600 from CATHAY. First troops landed at about 0615.

85. At 0609, KARANJA, MARNIX and CATHAY followed up astern of the assault flight, being swept in by ALBACORE, SPEY and CADMUS, and stopped one mile off D WHITE Beach.

86. At dawn, Force "O", consisting of H.M. Ships ARGUS, SCYLLA, CHARYBDIS, escorted by VANOC and WRESTLER, were off Bougie and provided a continuous fighter patrol off the beaches. The direction of fighters was carried out by TYNWALD. It was the intention that Fleet Air Arm fighters should provide fighter cover until the R.A.F. Spitfires could be established at Djidjelli aerodrome—the nearest suitable aerodrome to Bougie. H.M.S. ARGUS had been hit by a bomb at 1717/10 and had only 7 Seafires serviceable. At dawn, I ordered H.M.S. AVENGER, at the time in Algiers with engine

defects, to put to sea and to fly off two sorties of four Hurricanes each to reinforce ARGUS. One of these sorties was unable to locate ARGUS and returned to AVENGER.

87. The slow assault convoy hove in sight at 0547 and closed the L.S.I.s. At 0614, AWATEA and escort were sighted. The S.N.O., Commander P. Stubbs, R.N., had decided to abandon the assault on Djidjelli because of the swell, which was causing heavy surf on the beaches. AWATEA carried R.A.F. stores, maintenance personnel, and petrol, it having been the intention to operate R.A.F. fighters from Djidjelli aerodrome by noon at the latest to provide cover. This decision was to have far reaching effects.

88. In the meantime, friendly signals had been received from the coastguard station, and at 0540 ships were invited to enter. At 0702, BRAMHAM was ordered by the Naval Commander to enter the port and to find out the French intentions. At about the same time, Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron ordered WILTON to carry out a similar mission.

89. At 0720, the Naval Commander decided to hoist all craft and close the harbour. Commander Thery and the Military Commander of Bougie boarded WILTON at 0800. As a result of the ensuing interview, KARANJA, CATHAY, MARNIX and AWATEA were anchored in Bougie Bay at 1000. The M.T. ships of the slow convoy anchored soon afterwards.

90. At 1140, Rear-Admiral Commanding, 10th C.S. received my order for Force "O" to withdraw to the westward. SHEFFIELD therefore closed ARGUS and her screen and withdrew as ordered. Fighter protection of shipping ceased at 1200. R.A.F. fighters were to have flown on to Djidjelli aerodrome during the forenoon of the 11th, but when the news of the failure to land petrol and stores at Djidjelli reached Algiers, their departure was delayed until the following day.

91. At 1345, the shipping in the bay was attacked by five S.M. 79 torpedo bombers. One was shot down, one probably destroyed, and two were damaged. There was no damage to ships.

92. During the afternoon the M.T. ships URLANA, GLENFINLAS and STANHILL entered harbour. Unloading of personnel from KARANJA, CATHAY, AWATEA and MARNIX continued from the bay.

93. At 1305, BLYSKAWICA and BRAMHAM sailed for Algiers, where they arrived at 1740. They were required to escort STRATHNAVER to Bougie.

94. At 1625, AWATEA had finished unloading R.A.F. personnel, stores and petrol, and sailed for Algiers with H.M.S. BICESTER and H.M.S. WILTON as escorts.

95. At 1640, a very heavy dusk air attack by about 30 Ju. 88s developed. This was followed by a T/B attack by He. 111 aircraft. One T/B was shot down.

96. S.S. AWATEA was hit by four bombs, one bomb causing a fire in No. 2 hold and others flooding the engine-room, causing a list of 40°. PENSTEMON, detached from A/S patrol by S.N.O., immediately proceeded alongside. Later BICESTER proceeded alongside

too, but efforts to extinguish the fire were abortive and the ship was abandoned. About 300 survivors were taken off by PENSTEMON, 26 others were rescued from 1 lifeboat by BICESTER, and 3 boat loads by MULL. The ship sank by 2300 in deep water.

97. H.M.S. ROBERTS was hit by two bombs. One of these exploded in the issue room and one on the sloping side armour. Boiler room fans were put out of action and the inner and outer bilges on the port side flooded, but otherwise the ship's fighting efficiency was not impaired.

98. CATHAY was hit by one bomb in the galley, which did not explode, and had some near misses. She still had 1,200 troops on board. All the available landing craft were sent over and the majority of the soldiers landed. The ship was abandoned by all. At 2315, a fire started. This took hold and the ship burned all night.

99. As CATHAY was known to have depth charges on board, KARANJA and MARNIX shifted berth. MARNIX anchored off Cap Aokas outside the A/S patrol.

100. The vital petrol for the fighters at Djidjelli had been landed from AWATEA before 1630, but as the AWATEA carried no M.T. (except a few Bren-gun carriers which were appropriated by the 5th Buffs) and as the M.T. ships had not yet been unloaded, the R.A.F. Servicing Commandos had no transport to take it to the aerodrome. It was not until 2030 that the S.N.O. ex AWATEA, Lieutenant R. H. H. Webber, R.N., who had taken over Beach Master in control of landing craft at the Eastern Boat Slip was asked by the M.L.O.* Major Jordan, if the Navy would undertake the transportation of petrol to the aerodrome as there was no army transport available, priority one having been allocated to the 5th Buffs. Lieutenant Webber then volunteered to take the petrol, stores and R.A.F. Commandos by landing craft at dawn the next day.

101. At 0445 12th November, H.M.S. TYNWALD weighed anchor in readiness for the expected dawn air attack. Thirty minutes later, two violent explosions occurred and the ship settled down in seven fathoms of water. The ship was abandoned and survivors were picked up by boats from ROBERTS and SAMPHIRE. The cause of the explosion is not known, but it is thought to be mines laid by aircraft as flares were dropped over the harbour at 0205.

102. At dawn (0540), a small sharp air attack was delivered by a number of Ju. 88s from low cloud. KARANJA was hit by at least two bombs. An oil fuel fire immediately broke out and the amidships portion burst into flames.

103. The fire spread very rapidly. Survivors from CATHAY and some military personnel lowered the lifeboats without orders. The ship's company of KARANJA behaved in an exemplary fashion, salvaging some Oerlikon guns and ammunition, and eventually abandoning ship at 0830 when nothing further could be done. The ship was empty except for some petrol.

Admiralty footnote:—

* M.L.O.—Military Landing Officer.

104. At 0630, STRATHNAVER arrived, escorted by BRAMHAM and BLYSKAWICA, and secured alongside in the outer harbour.

105. Between 1000 and 1100, a heavy attack by about 30 Ju. 88s developed. The principal targets of this attack were MARNIX and DEWDALE, but individual vessels on patrol were also attacked. Most of the planes were kept high by A.A. fire. The gunnery efficiency of DEWDALE and MARNIX undoubtedly saved these ships. The only damage was a near miss on BLYSKAWICA. Two Ju. 88s were shot down by DEWDALE.

106. At 1100, MARNIX escorted by BICESTER sailed for Algiers. Unloading had not been fully completed.

107. Landing craft were delayed by all these attacks but left for Djidjelli with petrol and R.A.F. stores between 1100 and 1200, arriving late that night.

108. At 1240, the harbour was attacked by six torpedo bombers. At least two of these were shot down, one, the first, by a Spitfire patrol from Algiers; the other is claimed by DEWDALE. The attack was broken up and turned away, torpedoes being dropped at long range.

109. Two high level bombing attacks were carried out between 1330 and 1430. One attack was by ten planes, the other by four planes. One aircraft was shot down by A.A. fire. BLYSKAWICA sustained further casualties and damage from a near miss and was sailed for Algiers at 1600.

110. At 1655, Ju. 88s carried out dive attacks from scattered low clouds. When the light was failing two waves of torpedo bombers attacked. The attack was directed against DEWDALE, who again came through unscathed. Two planes were shot down. WILTON was hit by a bomb which fortunately passed through the ship without exploding and only caused superficial damage. WILTON then sailed for Algiers, being practically out of ammunition.

111. At 2115, STRATHNAVER sailed for Algiers escorted by BRAMHAM.

112. Fighters had been providing cover intermittently throughout the day, but were only once present during an air attack. They had to be flown to and from Maison Blanche aerodrome at Algiers, which only permitted 20 minutes of patrol over Bougie. R.A.F. fighters at Algiers also had other commitments and the cover provided at Bougie was consequently thin and inadequate.

113. R.A.F. fighters were flown to Djidjelli aerodrome in the early morning of the 12th, but were not able to operate continuously until the 13th, because the attempts to land petrol and ammunition by landing craft did not succeed until midnight 12th/13th. By using up all the petrol in the tanks of its aircraft, the squadron was able to carry out one sortie in defence of Bougie, destroying a number of enemy bombers, before being grounded through lack of petrol.

114. At 1210, a bombing attack was carried out by fourteen Ju. 88s, the attack being well pressed home. The M.T. GLENFINLAS was hit alongside whilst unloading and subsequently sank. The French ship ALCINA was also hit and set on fire. Fighters drove off the raiders. ROBERTS shot down two of the attackers.

115. It was decided as a result of this raid that two French ships, unable to raise steam, should be scuttled to prevent them catching fire. Both ships rolled over and lay on their beam ends.

116. During the night the M.T. ships OCEAN VOLGA and STANHILL and the oiler DEWDALE sailed for Algiers, together with five French merchant ships.

117. The M.T. URLANA, the last ship of the assault convoy to be unloaded, was sailed during the night of the 17th.

118. On Sunday, 15th November, the A.A. ship POZARICA arrived at Bougie. I had sent her there on relief by DELHI from her duty as A.A. guardship, Algiers. Enemy air activity since then has been on a very reduced scale.

119. Before concluding my report, I would like to refer to the very happy relations which existed in H.M.S. BULOLO between the Navy, the Army, the Air Force and the American Army. In my quarters I was privileged to have Major-General C. W. Ryder, U.S. Army, Major-General V. Eveleigh, O.B.E., 78th Division, and Air Commodore G. M. Lawson, C.B.E., M.C., R.A.F., and throughout the whole period there was complete understanding and co-operation between us and our services.

120. The operation was in many ways far more difficult than a straightforward Combined Operation in that the political factors were very strong and denied us the initiative in offensive action. The quick success of the operation was undoubtedly due mainly to surprise, good weather, and the number of places at which landings took place which gave the impression of overwhelming force. Had the operation taken place in bad weather and with strong opposition it might well have failed due to lack of training and rehearsal, and this fact should not be overlooked when planning further operations.

(Signed) H. M. BURROUGH,
Vice-Admiral.

ENCLOSURE II.

*Office of Naval Commander Centre
Task Force.*

c/o Admiralty, S.W.1.

27th December, 1942.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of proceedings of the Centre Naval Task Force in Operation "Torch".

2. An operation of such magnitude and scope must of necessity produce many lasting impressions and of these the zeal and enthusiasm of every man, British and American, were the most outstanding.

3. With Major-General L. R. Fredendall, the Commanding General, and his staff, co-operation was easy, and from first to last we worked as one.

4. The altogether admirable discipline of the American troops evoked much favourable comment. Once they understood what was expected of them, they were untiring until the job was properly performed.

5. The value of preliminary practice in combined operations needs no emphasis and great value was gained from the exercise in Loch Linnhe and elsewhere prior to sailing.

6. Finally, it should never be forgotten by those who seek to draw conclusions from what follows, that the operation was to all intents and purposes unopposed, and it is important to bear constantly in mind this essential fact when planning combined operations in the future.

(Signed) T. TROUBRIDGE,
Commodore.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS—OPERATION "TORCH."

NAVAL COMMANDER CENTRE TASK FORCE. *Narrative of Events.*

Monday, 26th October.

Under the orders of Rear-Admiral Sir Harold Burrough, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O. in H.M.S. BULOLO, the combined fast convoy (K.M.F. 1), of which I acted as Vice-Commodore in H.M.S. LARGS, sailed from the Clyde after dusk and proceeded, without incident and in favourable weather, towards Gibraltar on the route ordered.

Wednesday, 4th November.

2. The Oran section, K.M.F.O. 1, parted company from the remainder of the convoy at 1315. The three "Ulstermen" (L.S.I. small) continued with the Algiers section, K.M.F.A. 1, until proceeding into Gibraltar to fuel. Course was altered to the westward and subsequently adjusted so as to lose 2½ hours on K.M.F.A. 1 in order to pass through the Straits after dark on 6th November.

Thursday, 5th November.

3. Rendezvous was made with AURORA at 1700 as previously arranged.

4. Several A/S contacts were obtained during the day by the screen and attacked but without visible results.

Friday, 6th November.

5. BITER flew off A/S patrol at daylight. Catalinas from Gibraltar carried out A/S patrol in the vicinity of the convoy. JAMAICA flew off Walrus to Gibraltar which returned before dark.

6. At 1600, the convoy formed into three columns for passage of the Straits. Cape Trafalgar was sighted shortly after dark. The passage of the Straits was uneventful. Off Gibraltar, WIVERN, ANTELOPE, BRILLIANT and BOADICEA relieved WESTCOTT, VERITY, WISHART and VELOX on the screen, the latter proceeding to Gibraltar to refuel. Many small fishing craft were passed at the eastern end of the Straits.

Saturday, 7th November.

7. At daylight the M.L. Flotilla was in sight ahead, the "Ulstermen" in sight to the southward, and DASHER, escorted by AMAZON and ACHATES, astern.

The "Ulstermen" reported they had been sighted at some distance on the previous night by a French destroyer and two submarines proceeding eastwards.

K.M.S.O. 1* was sighted ahead at 0700.

Admiralty footnote:—

* K.M.S.O. 1—the slow convoy for Oran, which had sailed from the Clyde on Thursday, 22nd October.

8. From daylight, A/S patrols were carried out over the convoy by (a) Swordfish from BITER, (b) Walrus from JAMAICA, and (c) Catalinas from Gibraltar.

9. K.M.S.O. 1 was ordered to form Cruising Order No. 40 by 1330 in preparation for joining company with K.M.F.O. 1, up to which time the fast convoy was manoeuvred in broad sweeps astern of the slow convoy.

10. Commencing at 1330, the two convoys and their escorts were joined together and divided into groups as previously arranged.

At this time there was a total of 97 vessels of all types in company, all of which had their allocated position to take up.

The manoeuvre was completed by 1630 and was well carried out.

11. At 1815, the two southernmost columns of the convoy parted company and, led by AURORA, proceeded towards the western marking submarine off X and Y Beaches. They made a successful rendezvous and then divided, 5 ships with their escorts for Y Beach and 7 ships with escorts for X Beach. The latter sighted a French convoy of four ships and an armed trawler straggled out across their line of advance and were obliged to slow down to avoid it. This made them late on the schedule, but the assault craft were eventually lowered and beached successfully half an hour after H hour (zero hour).

The assault craft for Y Beach were lowered and beached according to plan, their landing, in common with the remainder of the assault, being unopposed and undetected.

12. The column (of 7 ships) for Z Beach led by JAMAICA parted company at 1825, making for the eastern marking submarine, H.M.S. URSULA. TEGELBERG, the fifth in the line, lost touch with her next ahead and the column straggled badly in consequence. LARGS, which accompanied this column, acted as whipper in and by 2000 all ships were in station. The submarine's signal was sighted right ahead at 2100, and at 2205, Arzeu Island light and the glare over the town of Mostaganem were in sight.

By that time the wind was nil, the sea smooth, and even the stars obscured by cloud. Conditions were perfect.

13. The ships were stopped by orders from JAMAICA at 2315 and anchors lowered* on to the bottom in fifty fathoms. At the same time the assault craft were lowered and manned, and after assembling proceeded inshore. From LARGS, five cables on the beam of the anchored column, no sound was heard and not even the flash of a torch was observed.

Sunday, 8th November.

14. H hour (0100).—At Z Beach the assault craft touched down undetected within a few minutes on either side of zero hour and the troops and beach parties proceeded on their several missions unopposed. A company of U.S. Rangers whose mission was to capture the fort above Arzeu landed on a small beach near Cape Carbon. They did not even get their feet wet. The remainder of the Rangers landed in Arzeu harbour and quickly secured the dock area.

Admiralty footnote:—

* To avoid noise.

15. At 0100, seven M.T. ships from the convoy led by DEPTFORD and under the orders of Commodore Elliott in S.S. ALPHARD arrived at Arzeu Bay and anchored close to seaward of the assault ships. They began at once to unload.

16. An hour and a half after the landing there was still no sign of fighting ashore and although all along we had been sceptical, the Commanding General and myself were beginning to wonder whether the persistent claim of Mr. Rounds, the U.S. Vice-Consul at Oran (a passenger in LARGS), that there would be no resistance was justified. It seemed unbelievable that the French lookouts could be so indifferent. Shortly after 0230 tracer bullets were seen inshore by Arzeu.

17. At 0300, searchlights and gun flashes from the direction of Oran were seen in the sky over the hills above Cape Carbon. This, as it later transpired and was at the time suspected, was the French reception of H.M. Ships WALNEY and HARTLAND, which were due to enter Oran harbour at that hour. Their mission,* though gallantly undertaken, failed, and both ships were sunk in the harbour.

18. It being now evident that the French were resisting, orders were sent to the carriers to attack the enemy aerodromes, with the main weight on Tafaraoui, the naval aerodrome, at dawn. The reception of this signal was much delayed and the aircraft were airborne before it arrived. The Senior Officer of the Carriers, Captain T. O. Bulteel, R.N. in H.M.S. FURIOUS, having received no orders by 0430, had correctly used his judgment to carry out tasks laid down in the operation orders and concentrated the main weight of the attack on La Senia aerodrome where the bulk of the enemy fighters were located.

The attack was devastating in its thoroughness, eighty per cent. of the enemy aircraft being put out of action. The fact that most of the French fighters were destroyed either in the air or in the hangars at La Senia in all probability deterred such few bombers as remained serviceable from later taking off and interfering with the landings.

Later inspection of the aerodromes revealed the preparedness of the French; bombers were bombed up and fuelled, fighters were complete with ammunition and petrol, and at the seaplane station at Arzeu the aircraft had their torpedoes in place complete with pistols and ready in every respect for immediate action.

19. At 0456, the success signal indicating that the batteries covering Arzeu were in our hands was observed, and there being at the time no further use for the two destroyers detailed to support the landing with gunfire, they were sent to reinforce the Oran Bay patrol under AURORA.

The latter ship was soon busy in intercepting French destroyers which started to come out of Oran as soon as the alarm was raised. Aided by the destroyers she either sank or seriously damaged three of them soon after daylight but was obliged to keep her distance

from the shore batteries, whose accurate fire at long ranges was one of the noticeable features of the operation. The French ships fought well against odds, their gallantry being worthy of a better cause.

20. Although unobserved by the patrols which were well inshore during the darkness, the submarines in Oran also came out and both AURORA and later RODNEY were attacked, happily without result.

21. At first light (0600), orders were given by the Senior Naval Officer Landing for ships to proceed to the inshore anchorage. REINA DEL PACIFICO was the first to anchor off Arzeu and shortly afterwards was fired at by a field gun battery behind the town. It scored three hits which luckily caused neither material damage nor casualties.

Landing craft in the vicinity put up an effective smoke screen round the ship, whereupon the battery shifted fire on to the two Maracaibos* which were in process of unloading their M.T. on the beach. No hits were scored and on the arrival shortly afterwards of VANSITTART the battery prudently ceased fire and withdrew.

22. The Maracaibos had beached themselves in accordance with plan at 0400. Owing to the gradual slope of the beach it was necessary to make use of a floating roadway to get the vehicles ashore. This had been brought in the ships and proved an outstanding success, the ships being cleared by 0800. The Maracaibos then backed off and later, when the weather became bad, were used for unloading the M.T. ships, the Maracaibos discharging on to the seaplane ramp in Arzeu harbour.

23. The remainder of the convoy consisting of low priority store and personnel ships arrived at daylight and all ships were anchored inshore by 0640. Unloading then proceeded in earnest.

24. The minesweepers which had swept a channel into Arzeu Bay ahead of the ships, and later swept the anchorage, now formed together with available sloops and destroyers an endless chain patrol off the anchorage. This was maintained day and night for the remainder of the week.

25. At X and Y Beaches the landing of troops and unloading of stores proceeded well, though at Y Beach a sandbar off the beach, a common feature in the Mediterranean, made things very difficult for the big L.C.M.s conveying heavy vehicles. At all beaches there was much grief among the propellers, rudders and "A" brackets of these craft and the need for a large number of spares was apparent.

26. At 0900, the Du Santon battery above Mers el Kebir opened fire on the ships off Y Beach and scored hits on MONARCH OF BERMUDA and LLANGIBBY CASTLE. The former was ordered out of range and would have been followed by LLANGIBBY CASTLE but for a call for fire on the battery from RODNEY being promptly and accurately answered; it ceased fire. Thereafter RODNEY was frequently engaged with Du Santon from extreme ranges and her fire, though it did

Admiralty footnote:—

* Their mission was to capture the port by a *coup de main* before harbour works could be put out of action or ships scuttled.

Admiralty footnote:—

† Maracaibos—the earliest and at that time the only existing "Landing Ships, Tank."

not knock out the battery, was always sufficiently accurate to cause it to cease firing.

27. Y Beach was also visited by the French chasseur LA SURPRISE which, according to statements made later by prisoners, had orders to attack the ships there. She was engaged and finally sunk by BRILLIANT, the supporting destroyer off the beach.

28. At noon, information was received that the U.S. armoured force, for the most part landed from the Maracaibos, had taken Tafaraoui aerodrome and an immediate request was sent to Gibraltar for the U.S. Army Spitfires.

29. The naval aircraft, after the attack on the aerodromes, maintained standing fighter patrols over the area of operations and these aircraft directed by LARGS were used extensively for tactical reconnaissance. The latter was one of the features of the operation and was all the more important owing to the very scanty and uncertain nature of the army communications.

30. Twenty-four U.S. Spitfires arrived at Tafaraoui by 1600 and whilst airborne were in touch with LARGS by W/T.

Monday, 9th November.

31. During the night a considerable swell came in at all beaches and landing operations were delayed in consequence.

32. GARDENIA and FLUELLEN on patrol off X Beach were in collision, the former unfortunately sinking with the loss of three men.

33. During the forenoon JAMAICA and AURORA engaged two destroyers which came out of Oran, both destroyers being seriously damaged and beached under the batteries.

34. A French Zouave battalion from Mostaganem gave some trouble to the American battalion guarding the eastern flank of the beaches, and owing to the lack of good communications, which made the situation obscure in LARGS, together with a panicky message from the British F.O.O. in that area, caused for a short time some anxiety. The situation was, however, quickly restored when JAMAICA arrived off the beach to give supporting fire and some accurate high level bombing by FURIOUS's three remaining Albacores caused the enemy to withdraw.

35. More U.S. Spitfires from Gibraltar arrived in the course of the afternoon together with a half squadron of Swordfish for A/S patrols. I therefore ordered the carriers to return to Gibraltar on completion of their last fighter patrol of the day. Their co-operation had been invaluable and was carried out with all the dash and efficiency that characterises the operations of naval aircraft.

36. By the evening, the situation ashore, both from the positions gained by the advancing troops and the quantity of the ammunition and stores that had been got up to them, determined the Commanding General to carry out a general assault on Oran at 0800 on the following day.

RODNEY, AURORA and JAMAICA were detailed to assist by bombardment of the two big forts at Du Santon and Cape Canastel, and FARNDAL and CALPE, under the orders of Captain J. S. Bethell, R.N., my Chief

of Staff, were ordered to be ready to seize the earliest practicable opportunity of entering harbour to endeavour to stop any blocking operations, which all along I was convinced the French would undertake.

37. Early morning reconnaissance of the harbour from the air, however, revealed that this had already been carried out; consequently I decided to keep our ships clear. There was nothing they could have done and their presence at that stage would only have caused additional aggravation.

Tuesday, 10th November.

38. The assault went off as planned and by noon General Fredendall who had gone ashore early was taking the surrender of Oran.

39. News was received shortly afterwards that much of the French shipping in the port had been sunk, but that like most blocking operations hurriedly conceived and undertaken, the results were not so bad as they at first appeared.

40. The first follow-up convoys were due the following day and I ordered the five personnel ships of the fast portion into Mers el Kebir and the slow portion into Arzeu Bay.

Wednesday, 11th November.

41. RODNEY was sent to join Force "H" cruising between Algiers and Oran.

42. I embarked in AURORA during the forenoon and visited X and Y Beaches. As at Z Beach they had been much impeded by bad weather but with perseverance and resourcefulness were getting on very well. The big L.S.I.s, BATORY, MONARCH OF BERMUDA and LLANGIBBY CASTLE, had already been sailed empty for Gibraltar.

43. The NIEUW ZEELAND, which had been sailed independently from Arzeu, was unhappily sunk by a submarine when almost within sight of Gibraltar. I therefore arranged for all further returning ships to be escorted, and thereafter none were sunk in the Mediterranean.

Thursday, 12th November.

44. Unloading proceeded with great rapidity at all the beaches. At Z the unloading was confined to the harbour at Arzeu and it was found possible to get no less than seven ships inside, four of them alongside.

The congestion in the docks was bad and the stores, mostly petrol and ammunition, mountains high. It was as well that there were no air raids.

45. I visited the airfields of Tafaraoui and La Senia during the day, and to avoid disturbing the minds of those it was our policy to propitiate, covered my uniform with an American overcoat and tin hat. The local population appeared for the most part indifferent to the coming and going of the American troops.

The efficiency of the naval air attack on La Senia was impressive and I counted over forty wrecked aircraft on the aerodrome. The two hangars containing the fighters were completely wrecked, but the other hangars were virtually undamaged save for fragmentary perforation.

46. I went into Oran for an unofficial look at the port, which was now in charge of Rear-Admiral Bennett, U.S. Navy. The Americans had already cleared a passage through the blocked entrance sufficient to admit a freighter of average size, and a part of the follow-up convoy, which had been sent round under escort from Arzeu, was already in harbour or waiting off the entrance to berth.

47. A number of personnel ships and supply ships of the original convoy which had completed unloading at Arzeu were sailed escorted for Gibraltar in the evening. AURORA also sailed.

Friday, 13th November.

48. Further ships of the follow-up convoy went round to Oran and JAMAICA sailed for Gibraltar. S.S. BROWNING was sunk on her way to Oran, presumably by torpedo, though no track was seen and the escorts gained no contact. The ship was laden with T.N.T. and motor transport and it is not impossible that the explosion was internal. Witnesses saw no column of water usually associated with an

external explosion. The ship was sunk well outside the 100 fathom line.

Saturday, 14th November.

49. All ships, save one which had a broken derrick, having now completed unloading at Arzeu, I collected them into three convoys and picking up the ships off X and Y Beaches and escorted by all available craft, sailed for Gibraltar, where they arrived safely the next and following days.

The ZEBULON B. VANCE with the broken derrick was sent round with the four last remaining ships of the follow-up convoy to Oran to unload.

50. Thus the forty-seven ships which had taken the resources of a number of British ports and three weeks to load were unloaded for the most part over beaches inside a week. Under the weather conditions prevailing, I much doubt whether the work could have been greatly bettered.

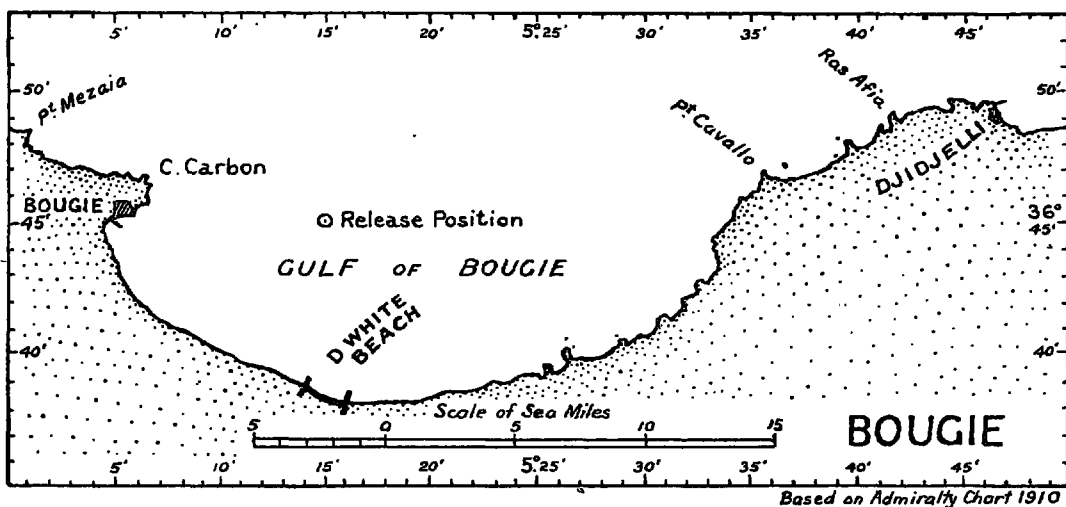
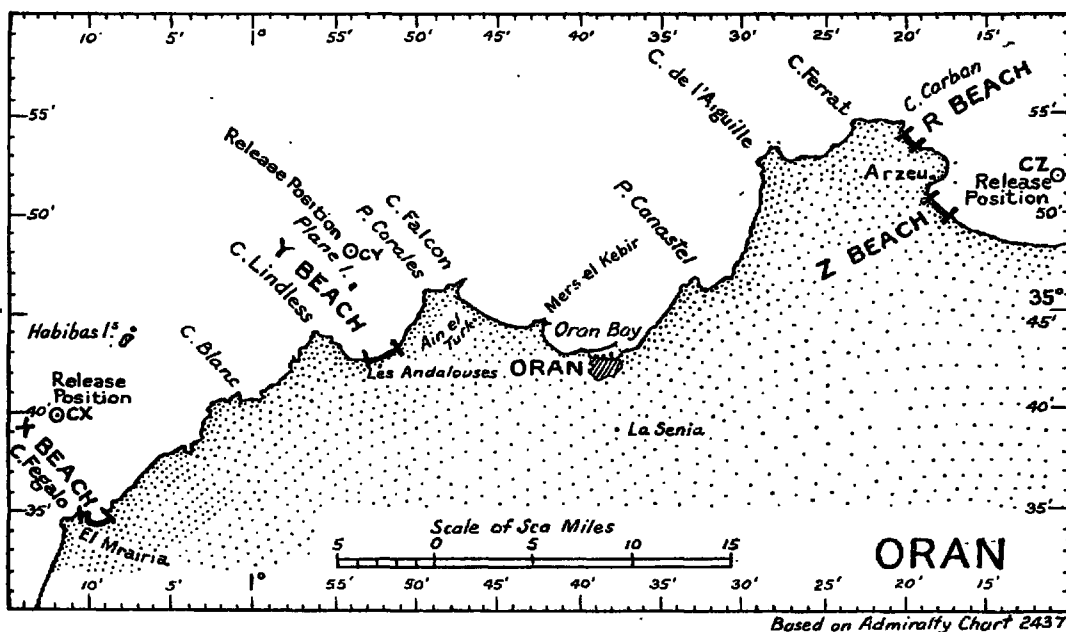
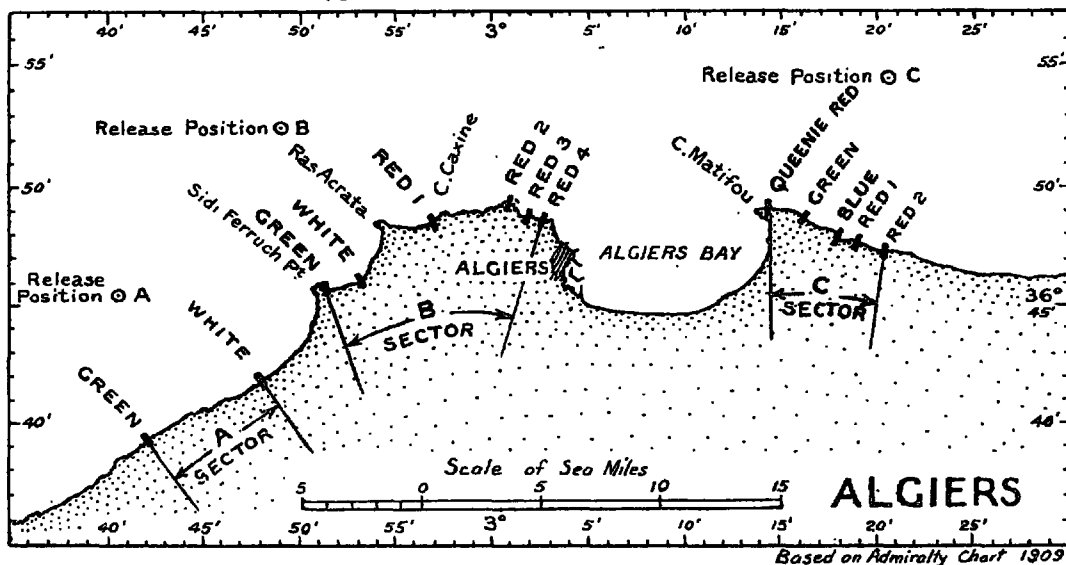
51. On Monday, the Centre Naval Task Force ceased to exist. At sunset I struck my broad pendant in LARGS.

OPERATION "TORCH"

NORTH AFRICA — NOVEMBER, 1942.

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LANDING BEACHES



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