

SECRET

H.M.S. "WISHART".

The Commander-in-Chief, Levant.
 (Copies to:- The Commodore, (D), Levant.
 The Captain (D), Gibraltar).

4th July, 1943.



Sir,

I have the honour to submit herewith a report of proceedings in H.M.S. "WISHART" during the period 21st June to 3rd July, 1943 while Senior Officer of the Escort of Convoy GTX.3 proceeding from GIBRALTAR to ALEXANDRIA.

Reports from other ships of the Escort, the majority of which are no longer in company, have not yet been received but they will be forwarded in due course, as necessary to amplify H.M.S. "WISHART's" report. The latter has been divided up as follows:-

Narrative and Remarks.

Appendix A. Table showing composition of Convoy and Escort.

Appendix B. Copies of Signals affecting certain details of narrative.

SECRET

LEVANT 2186/00214(a)10

27th August, 1943.

SUBJECT

CONVOY G.T.X. 3

age and the
as:-ENCLOSURES

1. The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. "WISHART's"
Report of Proceedings dated 4th July, 1943.
2. The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. "BEAUFORT's"
Report of Proceedings dated 4th July, 1943.

THE SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY.

(Copies to:- Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean.
Commodore (D), Levant).time of
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Forwarded for the information of Their Lordships, concurring in the action taken by the escorts although they were unsuccessful in locating the U-boat.

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2. The torpedoing of the OLIGARCH was the final incident in the 3 weeks patrol carried out by this U-boat. A summary of the U-Boat's activity was given in Levant 1803/00217/5024 dated 18th July, from which it will be seen that there was strong evidence that the U-Boat was firing long range acoustically controlled torpedoes.

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Office of Commander-in-Chief, for ADMIRAL
Levant.

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4th July, 1943.

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Sir,

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Appendix B. Copies of Signals affecting certain details of narrative.

NARRATIVE AND REMARKS.Convoy.

3. The weather was fine throughout the passage and the Convoy had no difficulty in keeping to the time-table which was:-

EUROPA POINT	0001/22nd June.
ORAN Meeting Point	0600/23rd June.
ALGIERS " "	0800/24th June.
BOUGIE " "	2100/24th June.
PHILLIPPEVILLE Meeting Point	0900/25th June.
BONE " "	1500-1830/25th June.
BIZERTA " "	0900/26th June.
TUNIS " "	1200/26th June.
SOUSSE " "	0230/27th June.
SFAX " "	2130/27th June.
TRIPOLI	1600-1830/28th June.
ALEXANDRIA	1700/3rd July.

4. It was in fact possible to advance the time of arrival at Alexandria to 0600/3rd July by increasing speed on 30th June after receiving the Commander-in-Chief Levant's signal timed 292033C.

5. As may be seen from Table A, the number of ships in the Convoy varied between 59 and 11, the former number including 19 L.S.T's.

6. Stationkeeping was generally good and there was little straggling, notable exceptions being the S.S. BUST from SFAX (whose maximum speed was only 6 knots and for whom STELLA CARINA had to be detached as special escort) and the Tanker BASSET HOUND who had difficulty in catching up the Convoy after the latter had passed the BENGHAZI meeting point early on time-table.

para.....7 over.

7. While passing through the searched channels between BONE and SOUSSE, with ships formed in 4, 3 or sometimes only 2 columns, the Convoy stretched over a length of several miles and this inevitably made the task of A.A. defence by the escorts more difficult.

8. The Convoy included two Tugs, the ORIANA and HENGIST which were in company as far as TRIPOLI. During the passage from BIZERTA onwards they were employed towing causeway pontoons which hitherto had been towed by L.S.T's. A third Tug the FAVOURITE was employed on similar duties between SOUSSE and TRIPOLI but reported that she could not maintain the speed of the Convoy so the Trawler K.L.O. from SOUSSE was ordered to escort her independantly. The ORIANA did useful work in towing the Trawler STELLA CARINA when the latter broke down on 25th June.

Escorts.

9. The composition of the Escort, which is shown in Appendix A, was always comparatively strong and at one stage it consisted of no less than twelve vessels including seven destroyers.

10. The changes in the ships forming the Escort were clearly inevitable but resulted in some loss of efficiency of the unit as a whole. For example there was always a steady improvement in the way ships worked together to preserve the best 'A/S front' after they had been doing so for a day or two.

11. Only WISHART, VENOMOUS and STELLA CARINA were with the Convoy for the whole passage from GIBRALTAR to ALEXANDRIA. The destroyers fuelled at ALGIERS (where French Naval passengers for ALEXANDRIA were picked up), BONE (where provisions were supplied) and TRIPOLI.

12. The Trawlers had the most difficulty in maintaining the speed of the Convoy throughout the passage. Three in all, GAVOTTE, CORIOLANUS, and, for a short time STELLA CARINA, broke down and, despite every effort, had to fall out. On one occasion, after the OLIGARCH had been torpedoed, I found it necessary to ask the Commodore to reduce the speed of the Convoy (by 1 knot for 2 hours) to enable two Trawlers to regain their screening positions.

13. The WISHART and VENOMOUS developed engine defects which are now being made good.

Air Attacks.

14. Though sighted a number of times by enemy reconnaissance aircraft, the Convoy was only attacked on 26th June when in the Swept Channel rounding CAPB BON.

15. The day attacks, which began in a position 4 miles East of Cape BON and lasted from 1655 to 1740, were delivered by F.W.190 fighter bombers dropping single bombs of estimated size 500 lbs.

16. The number of attackers has been variously assessed between 12* and 24, and it was difficult to make an accurate estimate because the number of friendly fighters in sight increased rapidly as the attacks progressed. I made a 'HELP' signal when the first of the enemy appeared because at the time none of our fighters could be seen from the WISHART. A proportion of friendly aircraft never showed I.F.F. on the WISHART's Type 286.

* . Figure given in my 281130 B

17. Escorts were stationed as follows:-

WISHART ahead, LAMERTON, WHEATLAND, BROCKLESBY and JULIET spread down the length of the Convoy on the Port side, OAKLEY, VENEMOUS, STELLA CARINA and WILTON in corresponding positions on the Starboard side. Ships adjusted their distance from the Convoy as necessary to keep within the Channel.

18. The first attacks were made down sun on rear of the Convoy and on BROCKLESBY, who shot down one aircraft (capturing the pilot) and saw another destroyed by fighters. Thereafter aircraft attacked in 2's or 3's from any direction. Two that attacked the WISHART released their bombs in a shallow glide at an angle of about 10 degrees, height 1000 feet.

19. The enemy scored no hits. Damage from near misses was negligible, the worst being two L.S.T.'s (Nos. 322 and 65) who became out of control with defective steering gear but who speedily remedied the defects and regained station.

20. The fighter directing ship LAMERTON reported that communications with the Allied Fighters failed due to the volume of chatter between pilots. Later with British pilots communications were satisfactory.

21. Before and after the day attacks, three destroyers (one at a time) were engaged in embarking personnel from L.S.T.'s for onward passage to TRIPOLI. Seeing the latter part of this evolution may have made the enemy think that he had achieved some success with his bombs.

22. At 2110, shortly before the beginning of the dusk and night attacks (when in position $36^{\circ} 43' N 11^{\circ} 05' E$) an unusual incident occurred. The OAKLEY depth charged a contact which must have been that of a sunken ^{Tanker} wreck - with such accuracy that large quantities of oil and debris came to the surface, igniting as it did so. As the blaze increased it looked exactly like a ship burning from Truck to Waterline and only those ships closest to it (including the STELLA CARINA whom I ordered to stand by) saw what had really happened. The TANGO, passing by later, also thought it was a burning ship (vide her signal 270045)

23. This fire probably gave some aid to the enemy aircraft who were heard reporting the position of the convoy with reference to it (one German, according to WHEATLAND described it optimistically as burning Aircraft Carrier).

24. The dusk and night attacks lasted from about 2115 to 2200 and were preceded by the dropping of flares on the Dark side. The latter seemed of poor quality and cannot have helped the enemy much. Sunset was at 2040.

25. Escorts had been ordered to make white smoke just before the first attackers came in and later were told to make funnel smoke (Signal QQ 1, 2 and 3).^{as well} The screen did not look very impressive from ahead but ships astern reported afterwards that it was good and it certainly appeared to make the enemy bomb from a greater height. One aircraft which dropped a stick of bombs at WISHART seemed, by sound, to be pulling out at about 2 to 3000 feet. Three ships in the convoy were flying balloons.

26. It is believed that all the attackers were bombers, of numbers variously estimated between 15 and 30, and many of them dropped their bombs in sticks. Of the escorts LAMERTON apparently received the most attention, with 10 bombs. It was too dark to distinguish the type of aircraft.

27. Again the enemy scored not a single hit. A good volume of blind barrage fire was put up by escorts and convoy. BROCKLESBY reports seeing one enemy aircraft shot down by ships' gunfire and L.S.T. 324 reported what may have been the burning wreckage of another.

28. Ample warning of both the day and the night attacks was obtained firstly by interception of the shore Red warnings and secondly by the Hunt class destroyers, OAKLEY, LAMBERTON, WHEATLAND and BROCKLESBY who were using Headache.

29. The last named ship was of the opinion that the convoy had been shadowed by E-Boats, this presumably being based on the frequency, but I did not consider this likely in view of the good visibility and the number of own aircraft about. The BROCKLESBY reported sighting a periscope at 1734 but her search proved fruitless.

30. At 2340 ships of the convoy opened fire on a force of Wellington aircraft passing directly overhead. It had not been possible to warn them of this possibility (the escorts knew) and the prompt firing of recognition cartridges by the aircraft only produced still hotter gunfire from the merchant ships.

31. White smoke was made in anticipation of further attacks at dawn on 27th June but no attack materialised.

32. Submarine Attacks.

Asdic conditions were not good at any stage of the passage and non-sub echoes were particularly prevalent from TRIPOLI onwards.

33. The Tanker OLIGARCH was torpedoed at 0003 on 1st July in position $32^{\circ} 57' N$ $21^{\circ} 10' E$. At the time the escorts were stationed WISHART in position A, CONVULVUS in C, EKMOOR in D, BEAUFORT in F, BREAM in G, VENEMOUS in M, PENSTEMON in N, KANARIS in P and STELLA CARINA in Q, all at distances of 3000 yards, Zig-Zagging, and adjusting positions by small amounts as necessary to present the best 'A/S front'. The arrangement of the escorts had been dictated by mutual A/S interference and also by consideration of A.A. defence at dusk. The convoy was not Zig-zagging on this night which was moonless.

34. As events transpired it would have been advantageous, with reference to para 9 of MWSGO 41, if a fast escort had been in position S, though the Trawlers are believed to have been astern of their correct stations.

35. When OLIGARCH, who was second ship in the Port column was struck she made a white rocket signal, but the noise of the torpedoes sounded very much like a pattern of depth charges as did also a second series of explosions a few minutes later which may well have been other torpedoes self-destroying at the end of their run. Nevertheless the six Rear escorts were ordered at 0006 to carry out operation 'Half Raspberry (without starshell)' and the BEAUFORT was ordered to take charge of the search. Unfortunately, the R/T signals took several minutes to clear (the last R was received at 0016): this was most unsatisfactory and I consider it was due to the fact that there had not been time to tune the newly joined escorts R/T sets at TRIPOLI. It was not possible to see how many of the escorts moved on receiving the first transmission of the order.

SECRET

66. It is considered that either the submarine was outside the screen throughout or that, aided by the slowness of escorts moving back, it was able to get away astern.

67. No report on the operation Half-raspberry has yet been received from BEAUFORT who subsequently proceeded on an independent search (vide her signal 010320C) but the other five escorts saw no signs of distress in the OLIGARCH when they passed her. She was still under way and appeared merely as a straggler trying to catch up. The Commodore afterwards stated that he saw the correct red light signal (of a dim nature) showing in the OLIGARCH but this was not seen by an escort who passed as close as 3 cables to her (see also Appendix B). The ZANARIS stated that the OLIGARCH began flashing a signal to her then annulled it.

68. So, after completing their hunt- in which only one ship, the EXMOOR dropped a pattern on a contact subsequently classified as non-sub - the escorts, with the exception of the BEAUFORT, regained their stations and made no reports of any casualty. An important lesson from this is that torpedoed ships must show a red light of sufficient brilliance.

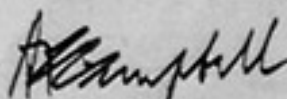
At daybreak the absence of the valuable OLIGARCH was apparent for the first time and all ships were ordered to report what they had seen during the night. I had already originated a signal reporting the loss when the welcome news was received from the JUMNA, who with the HYACINTH and PRINCESS KATHLEEN had been following upto join the convoy from astern, that the missing ship was now making her own way to TOBRUK escorted by the HYACINTH. My original signal was stopped and a situation report, giving the true position of the torpedoing, was sent instead.

General.

69. The scale of air cover provided was most satisfactory.

70. The Convoy, under Commander MACKELLAR, RNR as Commodore, was well disciplined and manoeuvred.

I have the Honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient Servant



COMMANDER R.N.

Ref. 03/13.

Secret

H.M.S. Beaufort.

4th. July, 1943.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following Report of Proceedings from 1st. July to 2nd. July, 1943.

2. At 0005C/1st. July, Oligarch No. 32 in Convoy G.T.X.5 was torpedoed in position 32° 54' N, 21° 10' E.

3. Escorts were ordered to carry out operation 'Half Raspberry' and subsequently Beaufort was ordered to search for the submarine, as no contact had been made. A 2-mile square-search was made around the position of two rafts, which had been blown off the tanker by the explosion but no contact was obtained. This square was repeated on 4-mile sides, but again no contact was obtained.

4. At 0215 it was decided to carry out a search to seaward, as this was the most likely course of escape for the submarine, and a main course was set to 340°, Zigzag 6 and speed 16 knots.

At 0315-a/c to 070° Continued zigzag. Request to S.N.O.C. for air assistance and codeword. 010320C Refers.

At 0415 -a/c to 160° Continued zigzag.

At 0515 -a/c/ to 250° "

At 0630 passed position of rafts and continued on course 250° Continued zigzag.

At 0730- a/c to 340° "

0830- a/c to 070° " Joined by a Baltimore, who was ordered to act in accordance with L.C.A.O.'s.

At 0930- a/c to 340° Continued zigzag.

1030- a/c to 070° "

1130- a/c to 160° "

1230- a/c to 070° "

1330- a/c to 340° "

1430- a/c to 250° "

1530- a/c to 295° "

1630- a/c to 070° "

1730- a/c to 160° "

The decision to rendezvous with Vetch at 'Chop' was made, since it would be almost dark at the time, and it was essential to make contact accurately.

At 1830- a/c to 250° Continued zigzag.

1930- a/c to 102° "

2140- sighted H.M.S. Vetch.

2200- a/c to 300° Vetch stationed 1½ miles on Port beam, speed of advance- 11½ knots.

At 2400- a/c to 270°

0100- a/c to 098°. Increased to 22 knots.

My 011828C to Commander-in-Chief, Levant refers.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,



To:-
The Commander-in-Chief,
Levant Station.
Copy to:-

C.E. 783. The Rear-Admiral, Alexandria.
Sta. 47/33. The Commodore (D) Levant.

[Signature]
(S.O.C. ROCHE)

Lieut. Commander. R.N.
Commanding Officer.