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H.M.S. "Furious".

12th August, 1942.

No. 00527Z.1.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following report of my proceedings in the execution of operation "Bellows", in accordance with paragraph 53 of the orders for operation "pedestal" dated 23rd July, 1942.

2. On Wednesday, 29th July, 1942, "Furious" was detailed to carry out operation "Bellows". In the afternoon of that day, the ship sailed for Campbeltown to disembark 822 and part of 823 Naval Air Squadrons to the Royal Naval Air Station, Machrihanish, the aircraft being flown off en route.

3. "Furious" proceeded up river to King George V dock, Govan, p.m. on 30th July, to embark Spitfires. The embarkation of 41 of these aircraft was started a.m. on 31st July and completed on 1st August, the ship then returning to Tail o' the Bank.

4. During the period 30th July to 1st August, doubt was expressed regarding the take off ability of the Spitfires, it being found that the aircraft were fitted with De Havilland bracket type, type 5/39, propellers of 11 feet 3 inches overall diameter, which allowed of only 2650 revolutions on the ground at 12 pounds boost. The Seafires with which trials had previously been carried out had had Rotol propellers of only 10 feet 3 inches diameter, which gave 3000 revolutions at 12 pounds boost on the ground.

5. In consequence of this it was decided to carry out a trial take off, and the ship proceeded accordingly a.m. on Sunday, 2nd August, 1942. The trial was carried out under full load conditions, using full length of flight deck and with a wind speed on 29.5 knots. Under these conditions, the pilot only just succeeded in taking off and the trial was considered unsatisfactory.

6. In the forenoon of 3rd August, an Air Ministry technical expert arrived to effect adjustments to the engines in an attempt to increase the take off boost and hence the revolutions. A trial run up of the first aircraft so modified gave 13½ pounds boost and 2900 revolutions, but in a take off trial carried out in the afternoon of the same day, the pilot misunderstood his instructions and only obtained 10 pounds boost and 2900 revolutions, the take off shewing no improvement over the first trial.

7. As a result of this it was decided to embark hydromatic propellers for the aircraft, which it was known would give 3100 revolutions at take off, and to leave the boost at 12 pounds. The Air Ministry had already arranged to supply 40 of these propellers on 4th August. It was intended that these should be fitted while the ship was on passage.

8. Embarkation of these propellers and of one replacement Spitfire and disembarkation of the original propellers was completed by 2035 on 4th August, and at 2350 "Furious" sailed in company with "Manchester", and escorted by O.R.P. "Blyskawica", with 40 Spitfires and 4 Albacores of 823 Squadron on board.

9. "Sardonyx" from Londonderry joined the escort at 0640 on 5th August.

10. At 0700 on 6th August, one Spitfire, fitted with a hydromatic propellor, was flown off for a final trial. This proved to be fully successful.

11. "Blyskawica" and "Sardonyx" were ordered to return to their bases during the night 5th - 6th August.

12. Intermittent thick fog was experienced during the night 5th - 6th August and throughout the following day.

13. Rendezvous with the Senior Officer, Force "F", and convoy W.S.218 was made in position 39 degrees 20' North, 17 degrees 20' West at 1510 on 7th August.

14. The fitting of the new propellers was completed by p.m. on Saturday, 8th August, and the aircraft were ranged on 9th and 10th August for running up of engines. The final range of eight aircraft was left on the flight deck p.m. on 10th August, to be ready to form the first flight of operation "Bellows". One aircraft developed major defects which prevented it from flying off.

11th August, 1942.

15. At 1215, the ship was brought to the first degree of readiness for action and, escorted by "Lookout" and "Lightning", hauled out to port of the convoy to carry out operation "Bellows".

The first aircraft of the first range took off at 1229 in position 38 degrees 07' North, 02 degrees 52' East, and the flying off of the eighth Spitfire of the range was completed at 1235.

16. The second range of eight aircraft commenced taking off at 1309½. At 1314, immediately after the sixth Spitfire of the range had been flown off, "Eagle" was observed to have been torpedoed and "Lookout" left "Furious" screen to assist in the hunt. The final aircraft of the second range took off at 1315.

"Eagle" was observed to sink at 1324.

At 1318, one Spitfire of the second range reported itself in difficulties and was ordered to attempt to land on "Indomitable". It was learnt later that the attempt was completely successful.

17. The completion of the operation was somewhat hampered by the submarine alarms following the sinking of "Eagle", and the consequent necessity of remaining inside the convoy screen. The following are the take off times of the remaining ranges:-

	First Aircraft	Last Aircraft.	
3rd range	1347	1400	8 Spitfires
4th range	1441½	1445	7 Spitfires
5th range	1508	1512	7 Spitfires

A total.....

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A total of 38 Spitfires were thus flown off, of which 37 left for Malta. The Vice Admiral, Malta, reported at 1807 that the last flight had then landed, and, at 2128, that a total of 36 Spitfires had arrived.

A delay of 8½ minutes in the flying off of the third range, after the second aircraft had flown off at 1348½, was caused by avoiding action having to be taken on a report of a periscope sighting on the ship's starboard quarter.

18. At 1715, "Furious" parted company, escorted by "Wrestler" and "Wolverine", "Keppel", "Malcolm" and "Venomous" joining the screen after embarking the Captain, 67 officers and 862 men surviving from the "Eagle". When all destroyers had joined, at 1900, "Furious" proceeded at 21 knots to return to Gibraltar.

Fighter escort was provided by "Indomitable" until "Furious" was sixty miles from the convoy.

19. At 0120 on 12th August, in position 37 degrees 12' North, 01 degrees 51' East, a report timed 0105 was received from "Keppel" that "Wolverine" had rammed a submarine, and later reports indicated that she had received some damage, a main steam pipe being broken. At 0245, "Keppel" reported that "Wolverine" was making good six knots on one engine and that "Malcolm" had been detached to stand by her.

20. Anti-Submarine patrols were flown on 12th August, and at 0930 on that day an Albacore was flown off to Gibraltar with immediate despatches for the Flag Officer Commanding, North Atlantic.

21. "Furious" arrived at Gibraltar at 1915 on 12th August, 1942.

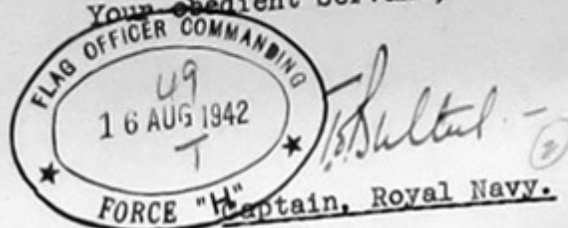
22. All times in this report are zone minus two.

23. I have no recommendations to make for honours or awards.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,



The Flag Officer Commanding,
Force "F".

(Copy to:-
The Rear Admiral, Aircraft Carriers,
Home Fleet).

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MOST SECRET.

FROM The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. "FURIOUS".

DATE 19th August, 1942. No.00536Z.1.

TO THE FLAG OFFICER COMMANDING, FORCE "F".
(Copy to:-
The Rear Admiral, Aircraft Carriers, Home Fleet).

H.M.S. "FURIOUS" - REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS IN OPERATION
BELLOWS.

With reference to my letter dated 12th August, 1942, number 00527Z.1, the following supplementary remarks are submitted for your information.

2. The first range of Spitfires took off at a distance from Malta of 584 miles and the last at 555 miles. The distance that a Spitfire fitted with overload tanks can fly in still air, at an economical speed of 143 knots, is 834 miles (Sea).

3. A report of R/T traffic intercepted by "Furious" during the period of operation "Pedestal" is included as Appendix I to this letter.

4. Appendix II is a note on "Furious" endurance figures, observing that this operation was the first opportunity experienced since the ship's recent large refit of assessing these.



[Handwritten Signature]
CAPTAIN. ⁽²⁾