

Own Force.

2. His Majesty's M.G.B. 662 (Senior Officer), His Majesty's M.T.B. 634 (Lieutenant W. E. A. Blount, D.S.C., R.N.V.R.), His Majesty's M.T.B. 637 (Lieutenant R. C. Davidson, D.S.C., R.N.V.R.) and His Majesty's M.T.B. 638 (Lieutenant D. Lummis, R.N.V.R.).

Duty on which Force was employed.

3. On patrol, North of Zara, in accordance with instructions from the British Senior Naval Officer, Vis.

4. *Weather*—fine: *Wind force and direction*—north-east, force 1-2*: *Sea and swell*—nil: *Moon*—moonrise 0114: *Visibility*—1,000 yards until moonrise: *Phosphorescence*—slight.

General Narrative.

5. It was arranged that the unit proceed on patrol, north of Zara, on D - 1 day, lie up at Ist on D day, patrol on the night of D day and either return to Vis on D + 1, or wait at Ist for a further night, patrolling on D + 2 and returning to Vis on D + 3 day.

Accordingly, the unit left Komiza at 1300 on 10th October, 1944, proceeding northwards at seventeen knots in arrowhead formation. H.M.M.T.B. 634, who had been to Ist before, was sent ahead at nineteen knots to contact the L.R.D.G.† Officer and the Partisan naval authorities and obtain the latest naval intelligence. At 1845, the unit arrived at the rendezvous position just south of Ist harbour, but as H.M.M.T.B. 634 was not there H.M.M.G.B. 662 entered the bay to find her and go alongside.

6. Lieutenant W. E. A. Blount, D.S.C., R.N.V.R., reported that the intelligence he had been given was as follows. A northbound convoy of some four or five ships (mostly F-Boats) had been seen by L.R.D.G. to enter Zara some three or four days ago and it was to be expected that they would endeavour to proceed northwards as soon as possible. Further, no shipping had been seen either northbound or southbound for three days and there was a certainty of something passing near Vir Island during the night. In addition, three Partisan "tigers"‡ were patrolling the Maon Channel to the northwards (where they had recently sunk one and captured another enemy schooner), and a Ju.88 had machine-gunned a small ship in Ist Bay at dawn two days previously.

7. Accordingly the unit was led between Ist and Mulat (a very narrow but deep channel) at 1945 and course was set to close Vir Island on silent engines, the three "tigers" being sighted on the port beam, forming up into their cruising formation as the leading boat left the channel.

8. At 2040 the unit closed the coast of Vir, and lay stopped, in wait for the promised northbound convoy.

Admiralty footnotes:

* Wind force 1-2—light air to light breeze (1-6 m.p.h.).

† L.R.D.G.—Long Range Desert Group.

‡ Tigers—any minor partisan craft employed on reconnaissance or patrol duties.

The weather was very dark and thundery, with vivid flashes of lightning to the southwards, but apart from two panics caused by the spire of Zara Church, all was quiet.

9. At 2245, three white flares were seen over Mulat.

At 2347, much tracer was seen coming from Ist, in what appeared to be a land battle, but the L.R.D.G. representatives on board H.M.M.T.B. 634 considered that a low flying air attack was being made on the harbour. I myself thought this unlikely, and was of the opinion that an E-boat was firing irresponsibly for some obscure reason known only to the enemy. (I had seen this happen before, in the same place, on the night of 26th June, this year.) The firing then ceased, but ten minutes later broke out further south, near Mulat. This time there were some flares (or starshell) being used, and some large flashes were seen on the land, and the aircraft theory seemed possible: however, some 88-m.m. tracer was identified from the eastern side of Mulat and it was obvious that there was something taking place.

10. In view of the intelligence reports received earlier in the evening, I was averse to leaving the patrol area—in fact the firing may have been a diversion to draw our craft away from the eastern side of the channel—but it did seem possible that there was at least one F-lighter or siebel ferry* over on that side, so at 0039 H.M.M.T.B. 634 was detached to go to Ist to contact the L.R.D.G. or Partisans and find out what was happening, whilst the remainder of the unit stayed in the patrol area.

11. At 0223, H.M.M.T.B. 634 made R/T† contact with H.M.M.T.B. 637 and reported that there had been two destroyers in position 206° 4½ miles Veli Rat Light, having previously sent a W/T signal to me to the effect that there was heavy firing to seaward, and broadcasting an enemy report. H.M.M.T.B. 634 also reported that an F-lighter had been seen by the Partisans in amongst the islands, but was southbound.

The unit at once proceeded to Kok Point to rendezvous H.M.M.T.B. 634, torpedoes were set to 3 and 5 feet, radar switched on and a course set to pass between Skarda and Ist, to carry out a sweep outside the islands to try and find the two destroyers. Search was abandoned at 0345, as there was a rising wind and sea, and unit returned to Ist.

12. It seemed probable that the destroyers had proceeded northwards at high speed, directly after the bombardment and the chance of catching them was remote.

My opinion is that I was justified in staying off Vir and not leaving my area, but that I should have detached H.M.M.T.B. 634 earlier, when I might have been able to have contacted the enemy.

13. At 0900, a Partisan reported a large warship with two funnels in a cove on the east coast of Mulat, a moderately alarming report to receive at any time, but this dwindled to an F-lighter by 1000, an E-boat by 1100 and a "trick of the light" by 1200.

Admiralty footnotes:

* Siebel ferry—a type of German landing craft.

† R/T—radio-telephony.