

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 21½ 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 manœuvred 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 manœuvre 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.