

H.M.S. EREBUS was also well occupied during the day carrying out the following shoots:—

(a) from 0542 to 0602, coast defence batteries, range 1,800 yards, rounds 27. Target area covered.

(b) from 0628 to 0634, anti-aircraft battery, range 2,650 yards, rounds 10. Target area covered.

(c) from 0653 to 0658, coast defence battery, range 3,000 yards, rounds 6. Target area covered, probable ammunition dump blown up.

(d) from 0744 to 0747, coast defence battery, range 14,800 yards, rounds 6. Target area covered, and barracks observed hit.

(e) from 0749 to 0756, coast defence battery, range 3,000 yards, rounds 8. Target area covered and explosion observed.

(f) from 1018 to 1029, coast defence batteries, range 11,000 yards, rounds 13. Target area covered and explosion observed.

(g) from 1031 to 1033, same coast defence batteries, range 10,000 yards, rounds 7. Target area covered and on closing to two miles, guns in first target observed apparently intact but building immediately behind damaged. Guns of second target badly damaged.

(h) from 1050 to 1058, H.A. battery, range 12,600 yards, rounds 10. Indirect shoot, no spotting.

(i) from 1132 to 1142, town of Mellili, range 18,300 yards, rounds 12, of which 8 observed to fall in target area.

(j) from 1338 to 1400, town of Mellili, range 18,000 yards, rounds 32. Whole area of town covered.

H.M.S. ORION and UGANDA also carried out bombardments in the vicinity of Mellili and Augusta in the course of the day.

Enemy Air Activity.

Once again the northern end of the area experienced the heaviest attacks during a day when activity was on much the same scale as the previous day. Details:—

A. BARK WEST.

There was slight activity at dawn, and one aircraft was shot down by a night fighter controlled by the radar set in L.C.T. 305.

B. BARK SOUTH.

A raid warning in the early hours left BARK SOUTH untouched. On this occasion M.L.s* put up a very effective smoke screen. After nightfall, further warnings, with aircraft passing overhead, still produced no bombs.

C. BARK EAST.

The hospital ship DORSETSHIRE had arrived the previous afternoon and before nightfall had been sent to sea by S.N.O.L.(N) so as to be well clear of the assault area and illuminated during the night. Nevertheless, at 0500/12th July, she was attacked and sustained some structural damage and casualties from near misses. Though the attacks on the anchorage were of some weight no other damage was caused.

Following the experience of TALAMBA and DORSETSHIRE the latter and AMRA were for the night of 12th/13th July darkened and anchored close to the convoy so as to have the benefit of the anti-aircraft and smoke protection of the anchorage.

D. ACID SOUTH and NORTH.

At 0500, H.M.S. ESKIMO, when about three miles to the southward of Cape Murro di Porco on her way with Naval Commander Force "A" to investigate the situation at Augusta, was attacked by several aircraft and hit in Nos. 5 and 6 oil fuel tanks. The ship stopped and was ordered to Malta in tow of H.M.S. TARTAR; they arrived at 1700 without further incident.

At dawn an attack developed off JIG sector and a near miss at the fore end of S.S. OCEAN PEACE caused a fire in the cased petrol in No. 1 hold. The fire could not be controlled and the ship had to be sunk to prevent further disaster. The usual raids after dark on anchorage and beaches were again ineffective, causing only a few casualties ashore. A good smoke screen was put up before the raids began.

Augusta entered.—Late the previous night there had been a report that Augusta was being evacuated by the enemy and in execution of orders from Naval Commander Eastern Task Force, sweepers proceeded to sweep the channel at first light. They were not molested by coast defence batteries, which were under occasional fire from H.M.S. EREBUS to keep them quiet, but a field gun opened fire on the B.Y.M.S. (L.L.) when on their last leg out.

At 1045, H.M.S. EXMOOR, flying the flag of Naval Commander Force "A"—he had transferred from H.M.S. ESKIMO after she had been bombed—proceeded into the harbour. The gate was open and the boom vessel abandoned, and there was no sign of life until a field gun, or possibly a tank, concealed behind trees, began shelling the ship at short range. The fire was accurate, and as no target could be distinguished EXMOOR was ordered out. No counter shoot could be conducted owing to the proximity of our own troops.

N.C.E.T.F. enters Augusta.—H.M.S. EXMOOR with the Greek Hunt class destroyer KANARIS in company re-entered the port at 1600 followed later by H.M.S. BROCKLESBY flying the flag of Naval Commander Eastern Task Force. Again the ships had to withdraw because of fire from high velocity guns of 3 to 4-inch calibre to which no adequate reply could be made owing to uncertainty in regard to the exact whereabouts of our own troops. Much transport was seen in motion ashore, but could not be engaged as it was not known whether they were friend or foe—they were in fact enemy.

Late in the evening one of the brigades of 5 Division penetrated into the town, and the naval port party arrived from Malta. The army's hold was, however, precarious, and later the S.B. Squadron, S.A.S. Regiment* was successfully landed by H.M.S. ULSTER MONARCH as a reinforcement. In consequence of this uncertainty and a statement by the Brigadier that he might have to retire from

Admiralty footnote:

* M.L.s Motor Launches.

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* S.B. Squadron, S.A.S. Regiment—Special Boat Squadron, Special Air Service Regiment.