

night, Vice Admiral, Dover, was informed of continuous bombing and machine gunning of troops in the beach areas, and directed Senior Officers present on the beach to use their discretion in ordering withdrawal of the Naval forces, observing that a strong fighter protection should be expected after dawn; this having been arranged after a special visit by the Liaison Officer to Hawkinge to procure the maximum effort.

11. Limiting factors were thought most likely to be restrictions due to enemy action at Dunkirk and on the beaches, and the difficulties of concentrating the ships and troops at a common point or points. The general evacuation plan had been conveyed to the G.O.C. by the S.N.O. on his way to Dunkirk, and the Vice Admiral, Dover, hoped to receive in return some outline of the Military's operational plan upon which the rate of evacuation in the various areas under the scheme must depend. Subject to the development of beach evacuation and the continuation of fine weather, it appeared to the Vice Admiral that adequate shipping for his plans was either in, or on its way to the Dover area, except for a chronic shortage of beaching boats.

Tuesday, 28th May.

12. By 0100/28 a large number of craft was approaching the Belgian-French coast, while two Personnel Carriers were crossing to Dover with 1,400 troops. Two other carriers, whose entry into Dunkirk had been stopped as a result of S.N.O., Dunkirk's signals 2005/27 and 1958/27, were unable to make the beaches and one, the MAID OF ORLEANS was damaged by enemy bombing and another, the QUEEN OF THE CHANNEL was sunk. During the preceding afternoon the Hospital Carrier* ISLE OF THANET was shelled and damaged by the Calais Battery. All available destroyers were working off the La Panne-Malo beaches using their own boats, since the supply of beaching boats from the United Kingdom had not yet reached across the Channel. A moderate surf on the beaches reduced the rate of embarkation, exhausted the boats' crews, the majority of whom were "hostility only" ratings, rendering the whole operation slow and difficult.

13. In view of the heavy casualties experienced during the last 24 hours to personnel carriers caused by the development of German air threat over Dunkirk and the increasing artillery fire on the sea approaches to Dunkirk, it was decided that until the situation was restored, these personnel vessels could not be used on the French Coast during full daylight, and consequently for the moment evacuation from Dunkirk by day must be confined to warships and other small vessels. Furthermore, since evacuation from the beaches by day with the troops exposed to bombing and machine gunning was likely to be ineffective with the small number of beaching craft at the Vice Admiral's disposal, the plan provided for evacuation from both Dunkirk and the whole length of beaches by night. (At that time—1100/28—information was being received of the loss of a great number of the small beaching craft during the preceding night and of the considerable amount of organisation still

required to bring the surviving boats effectively to bear on the beaches.)

14. During the forenoon it became more evident that the greatest effort must be made the following night and the Admiralty instructed Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches, and Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, to sail every available destroyer to Dover. In addition the 7th and 8th M/S Flotillas were ordered to Harwich under the orders of the Vice Admiral. Commander-in-Chief, Nore, arranged a patrol of all available M.T.B.s and A/S Trawlers to cover the North-east flank of the evacuation area against attack by enemy surface craft from the North between 2030/28 and 0600/29.

15. At this time great concern was felt over the lack of water which had been reported on the beaches and joint Naval and Military measures were set on foot to provide for the supply of water in receptacles and in tanks to the beaches apart from the arrangements for evacuation. Ships off the beaches were also instructed to do what they could with their own resources to help in this matter.

16. Evacuation plan for the night was communicated to S.N.O. Dunkirk by signal—timed 1555/28—and provided for the use of 3 Hospital Carriers, 7 personnel steamers and 2 destroyers at the East Pier, Dunkirk, while some 20 destroyers, 19 paddle and fleet sweepers, 17 drifters, 20 to 40 skoots, 5 coasters, 12 motor boats, 2 tugs, 28 pulling cutters and life-boats were to be distributed between La Panne and point $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles East of Dunkirk, on the beaches; the destroyers running continuous round trips.

It was estimated that the personnel vessels and hospital carriers would be clear of the danger area by 0630. As regards the beaching and other small craft which had not yet reached the Dover Straits, arrangements were made with other authorities to route all small craft, which had not already been despatched, direct to the beaches East of Dunkirk, provided they had charts, food, fuel, etc.

At this time some difficulty was experienced in having at hand the large number of charts required for these additional vessels.

17. Owing to the suspension of daylight work by personnel vessels it was necessary to increase the number handled in Dunkirk during the dark hours as the attempt to use the surplus personnel vessels off the beaches by night seemed unlikely to bear fruit. Accordingly, S.N.O. Dunkirk, was asked whether personnel vessels could be berthed inside Dunkirk Harbour, the only information in Vice Admiral's possession having indicated that the East Pier of the harbour entrance was the only suitable berth for such ships to which British troops could have access. To increase the off-shore forces, Commander-in-Chief, Nore, was asked to sail CALCUTTA to be opposite La Panne at 2200 to embark troops using own boats.

Orders were issued that all ships proceeding to Dunkirk from Dover were to use the Southern Route Z provided that the passage from No. 6 Calais Buoy to Dunkirk could be made in darkness.

18. At 1830 GRAFTON reported that several thousand troops remained on beaches at Bray and that more were arriving. At that time there were off Bray, one tow of pulling boats, number

* Admiralty footnote: Hospital Carriers were manned almost wholly by members of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets.