

flag; sending HERMIONE to be off the entrance at daybreak. Both cruisers joined company by 0830.

59. In the actual bombardment DEVONSHIRE did not open fire. The signals which were being received from the Army on shore indicated that the bombardment was unnecessary.

60. At 1330 DEVONSHIRE was detached with ACTIVE and PANTHER to join Rear-Admiral Aircraft Carriers to give cover to the carriers. INDOMITABLE was sighted at 1630.

Friday, 8th May, and Saturday, 9th May.

61. DEVONSHIRE remained to the West of the island covering the carriers' movements and also that of the fast convoy, finally entering Diego Suarez Bay at 0810 on Saturday, 9th May, astern of ILLUSTRIOUS.

(Signed) R. D. OLIVER,
Captain, R.N.
Commanding Officer.

The Flag Officer Commanding,
Force "F".

ENCLOSURE 2.

H.M.S. LAFOREY.
8th May, 1942.

I have the honour to forward the following report of proceedings in Operation "Ironclad".

2. LAFOREY fuelled from Oiler EASEDALE a.m. 4th May, 1942, rejoining the slow convoy at 1330, and took station to form up for the final approach.

3. At 1800 parted company with LIGHTNING and ANTHONY on course 125° speed 14 knots, to close Nosi Anambo, adjusting course to 114° following fix by stars at 1839.

4. At 1950 ANTHONY reported a suspicious vessel in sight on the starboard bow. Destroyers reduced to slow speed to try to evade, altering to port and forming single line. It was not until 2021, when the Division were about to attack with torpedoes that the phantom vessel was identified as an island, and course to Anambo was resumed.

5. At 2040 soundings shoaled very rapidly to 4 fathoms. Division was stopped to ascertain our position. This shoal was unexpectedly shallow and raised some doubt as to ships' position. Shortly after 2100 a bright white light was seen on a bearing of 100° range 7,000 yards, and at 2122 the moon very conveniently rose directly behind the tower on the island, to the relief of all concerned.

6. ZA buoy was laid at 2150 and course shaped for Nosi Fati shoal, which was found without difficulty, both land and breakers showing up well in the moon's rays. The 3 white light buoy to mark this shoal was dropped at 2249 but to our consternation capsized. It was, however, quickly relaid by the First Lieutenant's danlaying party.

7. At 2310 No. 1 Main Channel buoy was laid and the positions of these two buoys checked. LIGHTNING was instructed to anchor and show her lights immediately, and ANTHONY to inform the convoy that the buoys were properly laid.

8. LAFOREY then proceeded down the channel laying buoys 2 to 5. This part of the operation was not difficult as the entrance to the bay between Nosi Hara and Nosi Anjombavola was well defined by the moon and no appreciable set was experienced. No. 3 buoy was laid 2 cables to the Northward of the correct position.

9. After dropping the last buoy, weather conditions were obviously so good for boatwork that there was no necessity to investigate further, and at 0003/5th course was altered to 295° turning up channel. At that time it was with some foreboding that the whole convoy was visible without binoculars just entering the channel. At 0030 spoke DEVONSHIRE, and at 0040 KEREN, on her way in, informing them that the channel was correctly laid. Course was then reversed to take station close astern of the minesweepers.

10. At 0100 ANTHONY closed and was given a message for transmission to F.O.C. Force "F" that all was in order.

11. At 0127 passed the entrance and at 0141 stopped engines with two minesweepers and FREESIA close ahead. At 0154 WINCHESTER CASTLE anchored very commendably with a minimum of noise, and by 0203 tows were seen lining up.

12. There was a slight hitch at this time as tows went ahead with the leading minesweeper, and caused both of them to haul in their sweeps. However, the loud hailer proved invaluable, and by 0235 the party was sorted out and proceeding up the bay with LAFOREY and 10 landing craft close astern of FREESIA, CROMARTY and ROMNEY. At 0301 a mine exploded ahead in the vicinity of position HH, and various reports were received from sweepers of mines being encountered and being seen close to the ship. At 0328 when near JJ a mine exploded close ahead and was reported to S.N.O.(L), and we all expected the fireworks to begin. To our surprise the quiet of the night was undisturbed while the tows passed LAFOREY and were informed by loud hailer that their dispersal point marked by FREESIA was 2 cables ahead. At 0330 they were seen moving towards the land.

13. At 0438 received a signal that the Commandos had landed unopposed, and informed F.O.C. Force "F" and S.N.O.(L) accordingly at 0444. By this time LIGHTNING and ROYAL ULSTERMAN were in close company, latter disembarking troops. At 0510 it was clear that no opposition from the batteries ashore was likely, and a signal was sent to suggest that ships should enter the bay, expediting minesweeping.

14. At 0525 I was informed that the Commando was still advancing without opposition, and at 0545 the "Success Colt" signal was received and retransmitted to F.O.C. Force "F" and S.N.O.(L).

15. Meanwhile the first flight of landing craft had been seen returning from shore, and at 0520 were closing ROYAL ULSTERMAN. There appeared to have been some delay in getting away Blue Beach landing, and ROYAL ULSTERMAN was told to expedite this.

16. Following reports from F.O.O.I, a situation report was made at 0606 informing