

easily dealt with. There was less sea at UTAH than elsewhere and very good progress was made in landing troops and vehicles throughout the day.

General Remarks on D Day.

48. The outstanding fact from the naval point of view was that, despite the unfavourable weather, in every main essential the plan was carried out as written. Tactical surprise, which had not been expected, was achieved and greatly eased the problem of getting ashore in every sector except at OMAHA. Losses of ships and landing craft of all types were much lower than had been expected, but damage to L.C.T. and smaller craft, aggravated by rough weather conditions, was higher than had been allowed for. Only one or two minor air attacks were made on our shipping and on our landing beaches during the day. This was a remarkable demonstration of the degree of air superiority that had been attained before D day. By the end of D day immediate anxiety was felt on only one count—whether the weather would improve sufficiently quickly to enable the build-up to start as planned.

Commencement of the Build-up.

49. The build-up was planned to commence immediately on D+1 with the arrival of eight ship convoys on that day. The convoys all arrived to time but unloading was severely restricted due to the unfavourable weather, wind being force 5 from the north at midday. Anxiety had been felt regarding the passage through the Straits of Dover, p.m. on D day, of convoy E.T.P.1, consisting of nine large personnel ships from the Thames. They were the first large ships to pass the Strait for four years, and arrangements were made with Coastal Command for F.A.A. aircraft to assist M.L.s in laying smoke screens for this and subsequent convoys. The enemy batteries opened fire on an M.T. ship convoy that was preceding it and sank one ship. I decided, however, that the risk of a daylight passage must be accepted and convoy E.T.P.1, then ahead of time, was accordingly turned back until the smoke screening M.L.s had had time to replenish. A most effective smoke screen complementary to the shore-based R.C.M. cover was finally laid and convoy E.T.P.1 passed through the Straits at 1700, 6th June, without any enemy interference. This was the only personnel ship convoy to be sailed from the Thames during the build-up.

Arrival of blockships.

50. The first convoy of 45 blockships arrived in the assault area at 1230 on 7th June and the sinking of these ships was commenced at once according to plan. All five GOOSEBERRY shelters were completed quickly and conformed broadly to the planned design. The early completion of this project was later found to be of the greatest benefit to the ferry craft off the beaches and the skilful manner in which this operation was conducted reflected great credit on all concerned.

Air Attacks.

51. Air attacks on the beaches and the shipping lying off them were carried out during the night of 7th-8th June. The attacks were not serious and only minor damage and casualties were caused, but, unfortunately, one of the

early attacks soon after midnight coincided with the arrival of some of our troop-carrying aircraft with airborne reinforcements. These Dakota aircraft were fired on by ships of the Eastern Task Force and at least one of them was shot down. This most unfortunate incident, which was a repetition, though happily on a small scale, of our experiences in Operation "Husky", emphasises the danger of routing our own aircraft over our own naval forces. This had been pointed out repeatedly during the planning but the naval objections had to give way to the demands of the Air Force plan.

First Enemy Light Craft Attacks.

52. During the night of 6th-7th June, enemy R-Boats came out from Havre and E-Boats from Cherbourg. Both were intercepted by our coastal forces and the enemy were forced to retire after suffering damage. Similar sorties were made almost nightly from Havre and Cherbourg during the next few weeks but the measures taken by the Task Force Commanders nearly always prevented the enemy from penetrating the protecting screen. By inflicting casualties on the enemy forces on most nights that they came out, their offensive spirit was blunted and the potential threat from them thereby reduced.

Casualties due to Mines.

53. The enemy scored a measure of success with his mines on D+1 when a number of ships were sunk or damaged. In some cases this resulted from ships either not following, or being forced out of, the swept channels; and showed clearly that the policy of sailing ships in convoy, which I had insisted upon, was very necessary during the opening phases of the operation.

Prevention of U-Boat Attack.

54. The concentration of effective U-Boats in the Biscay ports that had been made before D day showed that it was the enemy's intention to launch a full scale submarine offensive against our invasion shipping as soon as we had become committed to a major landing. The plan of the Admiralty and Headquarters Coastal Command was accordingly to flood the western approaches to the Channel with aircraft in order to keep the U-Boats submerged for as long as possible and also to operate a number of A/U Support Groups in this area. Initially four of these groups worked under the command of Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, while five more took part in operation "C.A." under the orders of Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches, in conjunction with escort aircraft carriers. A/S conditions were generally poor in the Channel area but a number of promising attacks were made by these Support Groups during the first four weeks of "Neptune", including some kills. Coastal Command also increased their offensive patrols in the "northern transit area" off the Norwegian coast prior to D day. From 16th May until 3rd July, there were 44 sightings in this area, 38 of which were attacked and 13 probably sunk. These operations were of direct value to the anti-U-Boat operations in the Channel and were a material factor in the defeat that the enemy undoubtedly suffered here during the opening weeks of "Neptune".