

Kos and Kalymnos, and it appeared that preparations to mount the assault on Leros were in train. The afternoon reconnaissance showed a concentration of landing craft in Kos harbour.

43. The enemy intentions were still not clear. As the next force of destroyers could not reach the area until late on the night 12th/13th, it was essential to conserve fuel in Captain (D), 8th Destroyer Flotilla's force. He was therefore ordered to move to an anchorage nearer to Kos Channel and to send his two Hunts to attack any landing craft in Kos roads reported by air reconnaissance.

44. Motor Torpedo Boat 307 (Lieutenant J. G. G. Muir, R.N.V.R.) on passage from Casteloriso to Leros was in action with two unknown destroyers off Kalymnos at 0330/12th November, and at 0445/12th the motor torpedo boat force sailed from Alinda Bay at full speed to search for an enemy merchant ship reported 4-5 miles south-east of Leros. No sighting was made, but later when sweeping to the northward, two destroyers were sighted off Pharmaco. These were mistaken for British destroyers.

45. At approximately 0400/12th November Motor Launch 456 (Lieutenant-Commander F. P. Monckton, R.N.R.) on patrol to the east of Alinda sighted and reported enemy forces 12 miles east of Leros proceeding north and later engaged a force of two destroyers and ten landing craft. After a short and gallant action Motor Launch 456 was damaged and forced to return to Alinda Bay where she landed wounded.

46. Between 0600 and 0830/12th November the enemy succeeded in landing both north and south of Alinda Bay with the object of "pinching out" the bay where he would then be able to land heavy support weapons. A further landing was attempted at Blefuti Bay on the north of the island, but was repelled with the loss of two landing craft. It would appear that the Italian C.D.* guns did not open fire until too late, and this coupled with the fact that our close range weapons were sited to cover the more important bays, enabled the enemy to land forces at Palma, Pasti Di Sotto, Grifo and N. Appetici with the loss of only one more landing craft. Landings were counter-attacked and held by our forces, but at 1340B/12 the situation was made more difficult by the landing of parachute troops to the west of Alinda. When darkness fell, H.M. Ships FAULKNO, BEAUFORT and H.H.M.S. PINDOS (Lieutenant-Commander D. Fisas, R.H.N.) together with Motor Torpedo Boats 315 (Lieutenant L. E. Newell, D.S.C., R.N.Z.N.V.R.), 266 (Sub-Lieutenant J. N. Broad, R.N.Z.N.V.R.), and 263 (Lieutenant A. G. Fry, R.A.N.V.R.) swept in the Leros/Kalymnos/Levitha area to prevent enemy reinforcements reaching Leros, and at 2210, Mount Clido battery, Leros was bombarded from the eastward at the request of the Army ashore. They made no sightings. H.M. Ships DULVERTON, ECHO (Lieutenant-Commander R. H. C. Wyld, R.N.) and BELVOIR were picked up by enemy aircraft whilst entering the Aegean and shadowed, and H.M.S. DULVERTON was hit by a glider bomb at

0145/13th and sunk. ECHO and BELVOIR, after picking up survivors, proceeded. Minesweepers and motor launches which had been sent to Samos from Leros were loaded with reinforcements and ammunition, but since time would not permit their reaching Leros that night, they were held at Samos.

47. During the night 12th/13th November a southerly gale blew up which restricted the operation of light craft on both sides. On 13th November fighting continued ashore, and in spite of very heavy bombing by the enemy and a further parachute landing at 0900B/13th November, which suffered high casualties due to the strong wind blowing, our forces kept the enemy pinned down to the eastern shore in the Alinda Bay area. During the night of 13th/14th November, H.M. Ships FAULKNO, BEAUFORT, and H.H.M.S. PINDOS after attempting to bombard enemy positions in Leros, left the Aegean owing to shortage of fuel. H.M. Ships ECHO and BELVOIR however bombarded enemy positions on Leros at the request of the Army, and later carried out a sweep in the area without making a sighting. Reinforcements from Samos in the motor launches and minesweepers were turned back by the weather. H.M. Ships PENN, ALDENHAM and BLENCATHRA (Lieutenant E. G. Warren, R.N.) entered the Aegean.

48. At Leros all naval signal publications were destroyed at 0700/14th November when an enemy attack threatened to overrun the naval headquarters and this seriously interfered with communications and therefore with operations. From then on, signalling with the Senior British Naval Officer at Leros had to be done through army channels using army cyphers.

49. During the day of the 14th November, fighting in Leros continued, our forces counter-attacking with some success in the forenoon, but with the growing weariness of our garrison who had been fighting for 48 hours with no real rest under heavy scale air attack, fresh troops and more ammunition were urgently required. These were collected during the night from Samos by H.M. Ships ECHO and BELVOIR. ECHO, by proceeding at 30 knots, managed to land her 250 troops at Portolago before daylight, but BELVOIR with her slower speed was forced to lie up.

50. Enemy positions were attacked from the seaward by H.M. Ships PENN, ALDENHAM and BLENCATHRA who arrived at Alinda Bay at dusk on 14th November. Unfortunately only three enemy caiques were in the bay, but these were engaged and targets ashore, pointed out by our forces, were taken under fire. H.M.S. PENN and her force then patrolled in this area being repeatedly attacked by enemy aircraft including glider bombers. She was searching for landing craft reported by Leros, but failed to find. They had evidently turned back as a result of enemy air reports of H.M.S. PENN's force.

51. Motor torpedo boats again patrolled the area and shortly before daylight they joined H.M.S. ECHO, who was returning from Portolago, in attacking an enemy force which was approaching Alinda Bay, sinking an F-lighter and two landing barges all laden with troops.

Admiralty footnote:

* C.D.—coast defence.