

showed nine landing craft and two escort vessels in Lavrion with a further four landing craft at Zea. They were reported moving eastward on 5th November. Between then and the evening of 10th November when they arrived in the Kos/Kalymnos area, they moved only by day under heavy fighter protection, dispersing and lying up during the night, first in the Paros/Naxos area and later in Amorgos, Levitha and Stampalia.

32. Every effort was made to intercept the force. Beaufighters and Mitchells of 201 (Naval Co-operation) Group attacked it by day, and at night our destroyers often under an attack searched the areas where the landing craft were expected to be lying up, and bombarded harbours in these areas. Our efforts met with small success, due by day to the heavy scale of fighter protection the enemy maintained over the convoy and by night to the difficulty of spotting the craft which were probably beached and camouflaged in the many small bays available. One F-lighter, one landing craft and two caiques remained behind in Amorgos on 9th November, after the rest of the force had sailed, and these were probably damaged by Beaufighters during their attack p.m. on 8th November. H.M. Ships PENN and PATHFINDER (Lieutenant-Commander C. W. Malins, R.N.) sank a caique (probably a Naval Auxiliary) south of Paros on the night 6th/7th November.

33. With the arrival of this force at Kos and Kalymnos on 11th November, the enemy had available a total force of 4 serviceable F-boats, 13 I-boats, 5 Auxiliary Naval craft and a number of armed caiques, and into these he loaded troops and equipment already assembled in these islands.

#### APPRECIATION ON THE MORNING ENEMY INVASION FLOTILLA REACHED KOS/KALYMNOS (10TH NOVEMBER).

34. Despite the efforts of our destroyers and Air Force, the enemy had, as previously described, succeeded in getting the bulk of his invasion flotilla to its destination. The delays imposed upon him by our activities had at any rate given time to the reinforced Leros garrison to re-organise and prepare for the impending invasion. It was now necessary to decide on the policy for the employment of destroyers in the event of Leros being assaulted from the neighbouring islands.

35. The following factors governed the matter:—

(a) The opinion of the Army Command that the reinforced garrison of Leros should be able to beat off, or at any rate destroy after landing, an initial attack provided that reinforcements in strength and heavy equipment could be prevented from reaching the enemy.

(b) The enemy's complete air superiority in the area, and the heavy scale of attack he could inflict on the ships by J.U. 88s and J.U. 87s with fighter escort. Experience has shown that the enemy had no intention of refraining from attacking ships under way in Turkish waters.

(c) The limited number of destroyers it was possible to maintain in the area over the period of waiting for the invasion to start. Due to the distance from Alexandria or

Limassol ships could only remain in the area for a short period. For example, the Hunts had only enough fuel for one whole night's sortie at high speed and the return journey to Alexandria or Limassol.

(d) The short haul for enemy invasion craft for the actual assault, particularly if, as was expected, they assembled first in the various bays of Kalymnos Island and then moved off to attack at the selected moment.

36. Accordingly it was decided that if Leros was being invaded, destroyers could best contribute by endeavouring to intercept at night and destroy the follow-up convoys, which it was considered would be vital to the enemy. Destroyers were therefore instructed that they should not leave their lying up positions by day in order to intercept invading forces unless specifically ordered to do so by the Commander-in-Chief.

37. Motor launches, motor torpedo boats and motor gun boats were placed under the orders of the Senior British Naval Officer, Aegean. At night the motor launches carried out anti-invasion patrols, whilst the motor torpedo boats and motor gun boats were held at immediate notice in harbour to act on enemy reports. Fuel stocks for coastal forces were established in Samos and in caiques, with small emergency stocks in Leros.

#### *Situation on evening of 10th November.*

38. The bulk of the enemy invasion flotilla having arrived at Port Kalymnos and Kos harbour, it was hoped that they would have to spend at least one night there fuelling and preparing to move up to the northern bays of Kalymnos, from which the invasion was expected to be launched.

39. Bombardments of Port Kalymnos and Kos harbour and roads were therefore carried out in bright moonlight on night 10th/11th November respectively by destroyer forces under Commanding Officer, H.M.S. PETARD (Commander R. C. Egan, R.N.) and Captain (D), 8th Destroyer Flotilla (Captain M. S. Thomas, D.S.O., R.N.) in FAULKNER. H.M.S. PETARD's force, consisting of H.M. Ships PETARD, ROCKWOOD (Lieutenant S. R. le H. Lombard-Hobson, R.N.) and O.R.P. KRAKOWIAK, spent one and a half hours close off Port Kalymnos and pumped 1,500 rounds of 4-inch into this small harbour. A ship which had been damaged previously was set on fire and capsized, but it is not known whether damage was done to landing craft.

40. Both forces were bombed and H.M.S. ROCKWOOD in PETARD's force, damaged by an unexploded glider bomb, hit in the gearing room. By a fine feat of seamanship, ROCKWOOD was towed by H.M.S. PETARD under constant bombing attack to Losta Bay in the Gulf of Doris, where they arrived by daylight.

41. Captain (D), 8th Destroyer Flotilla who had been instructed to proceed with his force on completion of his bombardment remained in the Gulf of Kos so as to be in a position to assist H.M.S. PETARD with H.M.S. ROCKWOOD if required.

42. During 11th, air reconnaissance showed considerable movement of landing craft between