

seems possible that a photographic reconnaissance was being carried out by the enemy. This formation remained in the vicinity for some time but no attack developed.

17. At 1545 Rear-Admiral, Aircraft Carriers informed me that one of our aircraft had force-landed, bearing 022°, 23 miles away. WESTCOTT was ordered to proceed to search for the pilot and join Force R before dark. The pilot was recovered and WESTCOTT then joined Force R as directed.

18. Paravanes were streamed by battleships, cruisers and M.T. ships at 1635.

The Dusk Attack on the Force.

19. From about 1700 until the attack developed at 2045, Force F was continuously snooped by three or more enemy aircraft and the fighters were kept extremely busy.

20. At 1634 I received Vice-Admiral Commanding, North Atlantic's 1446A/11 warning me that the enemy would probably make a JU.88 attack at dusk. The fleet was by now in the second degree of H.A. readiness and at 1854 I ordered Captain (D), 6th Destroyer Flotilla (then the Senior Officer of destroyers in the absence of Captain (D), 19th Destroyer Flotilla, who was oiling) to station Hunt class destroyers close to the flanks of the convoy as in Cruising Disposition No. 17 by sunset; also that the screen were to increase their distance from the convoy to 6,000 yards in the event of an attack.

21. Radar reports made it evident that a raid was coming in at 2030, and not many minutes later sighting reports of enemy aircraft were received from the screen. The last destroyers to oil, which included LAFOREY (Captain D.19), joined at this time, thus bringing the force up to full strength.

22. At 2056, 15 minutes after sunset, firing began from destroyers on the port bow followed almost immediately by the cruisers and battleships.

23. The attack was by a number of JU 88s which dived from about 8,000 feet to 2/300 feet and by some torpedo bombers; the latter did not press home their attack though some tracks were seen and avoided. The attack lasted until about 2130 and the barrage put up by the force was most spectacular. Three enemy aircraft were shot down for certain by ships' gunfire.

Force R to the south'ard also came in for attention, one JU.88 dropping two bombs, one of which fell between the oilers and the escort, another diving on JAUNTY who was about seven miles to the westward endeavouring to join. She claims to have damaged it with Oerlikon fire. No damage was done to any ship in these attacks.

A number of friendly fighters were in the area throughout but were unable to locate the enemy in the failing light. They had to be landed on after dark, and in doing so some were fired on by our own ships.

24. During the above air attack, QUENTIN in position A on the screen confirmed an asdic contact, carrying out three depth charge attacks before rejoining at 2140.

25. No further incident occurred during the night and the force proceeded to the eastward unmolested.

At dusk Beaufighters from Malta attacked Elmas and Decimomannu aerodromes with results reported by Vice-Admiral, Malta as having been highly satisfactory.

By night two Liberators from the Middle East, operating from Malta, bombed Decimomannu aerodrome.

Wednesday, 12th August (D.3).

26. Radar reports of enemy snoopers began to come in at first light and all ships went to the first degree of readiness for H.A. and L.A.* at 0530. Twelve fighters were flown off at 0610, and this number was maintained in the air throughout the day, being reinforced as necessary. There were few moments when neither aircraft, submarines, torpedoes nor asdic contacts were being reported. Cruising Disposition No. 17 was formed at 0600.

27. Information having been received of a probable concentration of U-Boats in the area to the northward of Galita, I ordered Captain (D), 19th Destroyer Flotilla, as an additional A/S measure, to reduce the distance apart of destroyers in the ahead and wing positions on the screen while shortening the distance of the screen ahead of the convoy and lengthening the distance apart of destroyers in the beam and quarter positions.

28. The first raid of the day by about 20 high level bombers approached at 0907. They were engaged by 16 of our fighters who were observed to shoot down one. The aircraft came in over the fleet from right ahead at 0914, dropped their bombs and were away in about six minutes. Two JU.88s were observed to be shot down and a third retired to the south'ard on fire fore and aft and losing height. Our fighters shot down 8 certain, 3 probable and 2 damaged. No damage was done to any ship.

29. FURY on the starboard wing of the screen confirmed an asdic contact at 0935 and was joined in the hunt by FORESIGHT. This was about 12 minutes after LAFOREY in position B had counterattacked a confirmed contact and it is possible that a U-Boat having escaped from LAFOREY, by diving under the convoy, was detected by FURY.

Soon there were four destroyers investigating contacts on the starboard side and at 0940 all destroyers were ordered to rejoin by Captain (D), 19th Destroyer Flotilla, as the U-Boat, if there was one there, was no longer a danger to Force F.

30. In order to fill gaps in the screen due to destroyers falling out for asdic contacts two Hunts from the convoy close screen were stationed astern of positions B and P to act as reserve destroyers.

31. Meanwhile spasmodic firing by the screen at snoopers which came within range continued and, of course, the carriers and their "chickens" were, as always, extremely busy.

32. PATHFINDER in position C (port bow) confirmed an asdic contact and heavily attacked it. She was assisted in the hunt by ZETLAND who was in the spare position. The hunt lasted from 1135 until 1150 when both ships

Admiralty footnote :

* H A —High Angle armament; L.A —Low Angle armament