

fighters. The remainder of the passage was uneventful, Force C arriving Alexandria at 1700 on the 29th May.

23. At 2100 on the 28th May, Force D, consisting of C.S.15 in PHOEBE, with PERTH, GLENGYLE, CALCUTTA, COVENTRY, JERVIS, JANUS and HASTY left Alexandria for Sphakia, where they were to embark troops during the night 29th/30th May.

24. During the night 28th/29th May a message was received from the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda at Sphakia saying that up to 10,000 troops would be available for evacuation on the following night but another message was received from CREFORCE stating that it was unlikely that the troops could hold out until the night 30th/31st May. CREFORCE thought that "an optimistic view" of the fighting troops which could be evacuated, was under 2,000 but there would be a number of stragglers (CREFORCE 0.672 timed 1310 of 28th May). It was deduced from these two signals that the situation in Crete was very bad but that 10,000 troops remained to be evacuated. Of these, only 2,000 would be in organised bodies. The night 29th/30th May, would have to be the last night for evacuation.

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25. A Royal Air Force aircraft had been sent to drop a message over Retimo ordering the garrison to withdraw to Plaka Bay on the south coast. This aircraft, however, did not return and CREFORCE reported that he could not guarantee that the troops had received the message. As they had no supplies it was doubtful whether they would be able to reach the coast. It was, therefore, decided to send ships to Sphakia only for the evacuation but 1,200 rations were dropped by air on Plaka Bay.

26. On the 29th May, Major General J. F. Evetts, C.B., C.B.E., M.C., flew to Cairo from Alexandria to explain the naval situation and to discuss the question of further evacuation with General Wavell. After consulting General Blamey and Air Marshal Tedder, General Wavell sent a personal message to the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, saying that it was thought that "GLEN" ships and cruisers ought not to be risked any more but that destroyers should continue the evacuation (MID-EAST 0/18491 of 29th May).

27. In a "Most Immediate" message to the Admiralty the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, summarised the situation regarding the evacuation up to date. Three cruisers and one destroyer had already been damaged and casualties to the closely packed troops on board amounted to some 500. Further heavy casualties to men must be expected on the following day, especially if GLENGYLE was hit with 3,000 troops on board. The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, asked if he was justified in accepting a scale of loss and damage to his already weakened fleet. He was, however, ready and willing to continue the evacuation as long as a ship remained to do so, realising that it was against all tradition to leave troops deliberately in enemy hands (the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean's message timed 1305 of 29th May, to Admiralty).

28. A reply from the Admiralty was received at 2026/29th ordering GLENGYLE to turn back and the remaining ships to proceed (Ad-

miralty message timed 1900 of the 29th May to the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean). The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, however, considered that it was then too late to turn the GLENGYLE back and he informed the Admiralty accordingly, adding that three extra destroyers, with no troops on board, were being sent to meet GLENGYLE (the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean's message timed 2147 of 29th May to Admiralty). The Admiralty approved the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean's action (Admiralty message timed 0105 of 30th May to the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean).

29. Captain (D), Tenth Destroyer Flotilla in STUART, with JAGUAR and DEFENDER left Alexandria p.m. on the 29th May to join Force D. These destroyers had no troops and the intention was that in addition to providing extra protection to Force D they would be available to take troops off from any ship which might be damaged by air attack (see paragraph 28).

30. During the course of the day, General Evetts' Staff Officer, Colonel R. B. Jennings, had been able to interview a number of senior officers recently returned from Crete. As a result of these interviews coupled with the more hopeful signals which had recently come from CREFORCE and the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda, it became clear that the situation in Crete was not so desperate as had been thought. The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, therefore, decided to send four destroyers to embark men on the night of 30th/31st May.

31. Meanwhile Force D, under C.S.15 were proceeding to Sphakia. At 1003 on the 29th May, a single JU.88 dropped a stick of bombs close to PERTH without result. GLENGYLE and the cruisers of Force D were anchored off Sphakia by 2330/29th whilst the A.A. cruisers and destroyers patrolled to seaward. The A.A. cruisers were not required to embark any troops but the destroyers closed in one at a time to embark their quota. The troops were ferried from the beach to the ships in GLENGYLE's landing craft, assisted by two Assault Landing Craft which had been carried in PERTH. The beach was too small for ships' boats to be used in addition. By 0320/30th a total of about 6,000 men had been embarked and Force D proceeded towards Alexandria. Three motor landing craft were left behind for use on subsequent nights.

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32. At 0645/30th May, STUART, JAGUAR, and DEFENDER joined Force D to act as additional escort. There were three air attacks on the force during the passage to Alexandria. In the first of these at 0930, PERTH was hit and her foremost boiler room put out of action. In the second and third attacks there was no result although bombs fell very close to PERTH and JAGUAR. Some of our fighter patrols failed to make contact with Force D but the force was covered by two or three Royal Air Force fighters during most of the day. These fighters, on one occasion, drove off 20 JU.87s and JU.88s, and, in various engagements, shot down two H.E.111s and damaged a number of other enemy aircraft. In addition, one JU.88 was seen to be damaged by ships' gunfire.