



SUPPLEMENT

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TRANSPORTATION OF THE ARMY TO GREECE AND EVACUATION OF THE ARMY FROM GREECE, 1941.

TRANSPORTATION OF THE ARMY TO GREECE.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 11th December, 1941, by Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, G.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Station.

Mediterranean.

11th December, 1941.

OPERATION "LUSTRE".

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the following report concerning Operation "Lustre"—the move to Greece of some 58,000 troops with their mechanical transport, full equipment and stores. The operation commenced on 4th March and ceased on 24th April when the evacuation from Greece commenced.

2. The operation was carried out in accordance with the outlines contained in the Commander-in-Chief's Operation Orders and, in general, went according to plan.

3. The passage from Egyptian ports to the Piraeus, virtually the only port of the country, led past the enemy bases in the Dodecanese from which his air and sea forces were in a good position to operate against our lines of communication. Cover had also to be provided against interference from enemy surface forces from Italy. In consequence it was desirable to move as many personnel as possible in warships whose high speed would take them quickly through the danger zone. In the event the movement of personnel in H.M. Ships became a necessity owing to the mining of the Suez Canal which prevented sufficient troopships being available.

This policy proved successful and during the whole period of this complicated operation no

men or equipment were lost at sea except for a few casualties from bomb splinters in one merchant ship. The losses sustained were either in ships proceeding in the convoys but not connected with "Lustre" or in ships returning empty (see Appendix).

4. During the greater part of the move a proportion of the Battle Fleet was kept at sea to the westward of Crete to provide heavy cover for our forces. In addition, Operation M.C.9, running a Malta convoy, was carried out between 19th and 24th March whilst "Lustre" still proceeded.

5. The whole operation was smoothly carried out owing to the hard work and willing spirit shown in the ships concerned. It threw a considerable strain on the port of Alexandria where nearly all commercial shipping movements had to be stopped. The difficulties were, however, overcome, including some trouble with Asiatic crews of merchant ships, by a firm insistence that, whatever the numbers of men or vehicles the Army had ready to move, the demand must be met and men and stores reach Greece without delay.

(Signed) A. B. CUNNINGHAM,

*Admiral,
Commander-in-Chief.*

APPENDIX.

CASUALTIES CAUSED TO SHIPPING AT SEA DURING "LUSTRE".

21st March, 1941.

Danish Oiler MARIE MAERSK, in Convoy A.N.21, hit and set on fire. Crew taken off by H.M.A.S. WATERHEN who towed the ship to Suda Bay.