

20. The immunity from air attack was as surprising as it was satisfactory and considerably greater than I had been led to expect. Our ships were not attacked until 1015/10th July, when a raid was made on the ships at ACID. On subsequent days there were intermittent air attacks, principally on the east coast, and an increasing number at night. It was fortunate that more damage was not done by these attacks; only three M.T. ships and one hospital ship were sunk by them. The hospital ship TALAMBA was deliberately attacked and sunk and the ABA and DORSETSHIRE were also attacked whilst lying over five miles to seaward fully illuminated. It is regretted that the orders regarding the conduct of hospital ships were not sufficiently clear; it had always been my intention that if hospital ships had to remain off the beaches at night they should remain darkened and in the fleet anchorage, and that normally full illumination would only be switched on when five miles clear of the beaches and on passage to or from the assault area. It is clear that the illumination of hospital ships stopped offshore provides the enemy with a temptation to attack that is too great to resist and, in consequence, after the TALAMBA incident hospital ships were kept in the anchorages all night without lights. This procedure is recommended for future occasions.

21. Syracuse was occupied at 2100/10th July, the port party entered during the forenoon of 11th July and the D+3 personnel convoy arrived there according to plan on 13th July: unloading all twelve ships and sailing them again at 1800 the same day was a notable achievement. Attempts were made to enter Augusta which was reported as having been evacuated at 0500 on 12th July but on her way to do so ESKIMO with Naval Commander Force "A" onboard was damaged in an air attack. Later in the day other ships of Force "A" again entered Augusta, and I myself went in in the evening in BROCKLESBY with Naval Commander Force "A". At this time the enemy on the outskirts of the town commenced to shell our ships intermittently with field guns and we had to clear out. I strongly support the recommendation of Naval Commander Force "A" that the foremost elements of the army should have some means of notifying their positions to supporting warships, as on this occasion we saw a large amount of M.T. which we thought belonged to the Eighth Army but which in fact belonged to the enemy. In consequence we missed an excellent and easy target.

22. In accordance with my instructions Naval Commander Force "V" took over the BARK sectors on 13th July in order that Naval Commander Force "B" could proceed to Syracuse to take over the duties of Flag Officer Sicily. On visiting that port on 15th July I found a certain amount of confusion existing in the naval organisation which was absorbing the attention of Rear-Admiral McGrigor, to the detriment of the performance of his functions as Flag Officer Sicily. As I was anxious that he should proceed to and carry out these functions in Augusta without further delay, and as I deemed it advisable that a naval officer of standing should be temporarily present in Syracuse to supervise the Naval Officer-in-Charge and put matters right, I

directed Naval Commander Force "A" to proceed there forthwith and Flag Officer Sicily to carry on to Augusta.

23. A larger number of L.S.T. and major landing craft was found to be serviceable on D-1 than had been anticipated, and as a result it was possible to commence loading the first flight of the ferry service before ships and craft which had been engaged in the assaults had returned. The Eighth Army plan was to clear the high priority vehicles and stores from Malta before working craft in any numbers from Sousse and Tripoli, and in the first seven days 56 L.S.T., 36 L.C.T. and 33 L.C.I.(L) cleared loaded from Malta. Some initial difficulty was experienced over the control of the Ferry Service, as the Military Movements organisation set up in Malta did not appear adequate to meet the demands made upon it, but after a shaky start things went much better, and the planned programme was finally completed earlier than anticipated.

24. It was decided, both to reduce signalling and to avoid delays to sailings, that the short passage between Malta and Sicily should be made by L.S.T. and major landing craft engaged in the ferry service without making any sailing signals. The organisation of a convoy was often only completed immediately before it sailed, and I am satisfied that this apparently casual method was fully justified in order to continue the build-up of the army as fast as possible. As far as I know there was only one mishap; WALLACE engaged an L.C.I.(L) on the night of 12th/13th July, but happily only one rating was wounded. It would not have been possible to continue to sail these landing craft convoys in this manner, unescorted or only lightly escorted as they were, had the weather not remained calm after D day, and had there not been an increasing period of moonlight. Although the first quarter of the moon at first sight appeared unfavourable for landing operations from the naval aspect, in the event it proved greatly to our advantage against a weak enemy and with our possession of great air superiority.

25. Major landing craft seemed to keep running very well during the first few days of the operation, but my flag was struck at about the time when I imagine that defects were beginning to accumulate. It must always remain a difficult decision in future operations as to when to withdraw a proportion of landing craft for essential maintenance as the need for this must be balanced against the vital requirement of following up the initial blow as expeditiously as possible.

26. It is greatly regretted that a number of our troop-carrying aircraft were shot down by our ships off the east coast on 13th July. The question of the rules for the engagement of aircraft off the beaches was always a vexed one during planning, and the orders were twice altered by agreement with the R.A.F. As finally framed, ships were free to open fire at night at aircraft whose approach indicated hostile intent, and it was stated that if friendly aircraft had to fly over our convoys they would do so above 6,000 feet. All troop-carrying aircraft were routed in lanes to avoid our convoys on the night of D-1/D, but for the second airborne attack on D+3, they flew low over the Gulf of Noto. It is understood that Mediterranean Air Command had