

5. At 0044, when in a position 114 degs. No. 4 Kerkenah buoy 6 miles; course was altered to 310 degs. and speed reduced to 20 knots.

6. At 0100, I altered course to 333 degs., this being the reciprocal of the enemy's probable course and, at 0110, started normal night zig-zag.

7. At 0142, I passed the enemy's expected position, assuming that his speed was still 8 knots, and increased to 25 knots. At 0155, had the enemy proceeded at 7 knots, he should have been only three miles ahead; it was therefore clear that he had steered some other course.

There were two possibilities:—

(a) He might have altered to the Northward on realising that he had been reported;

(b) He might have kept closer inshore.

If he had done (a) it would have been a hopeless task to attempt to find him. My only chance, therefore, was to work under the assumption that he had done (b). Therefore, at 0155, I altered course to 214 degs. to close Kerkenah No. 1 buoy.

9. Attached are narratives of the subsequent action of H.M. Ships JERVIS, NUBIAN and JANUS, together with a copy of the Commanding Officer's report on the sinking of H.M.S. MOHAWK.

(Signed) P. J. MACK,
Captain (D).

SKIRMISH OFF SFAX—NARRATIVE OF H.M.S. JERVIS.

Wind—N.W., Force 5.

Sea—31.*

Moon bearing 135 degs.—140 degs.

Course 214 degs. Speed—25 knots.

Single line ahead in sequence JERVIS, JANUS, NUBIAN and MOHAWK.

Time—Zone -2.

0158 Sighted ships bearing 170 degs. about 6 miles.

0159 Made signal "Enemy in sight to port".

0200 Altered course to 140 degs.

0201 27 knots.

0202 Made signal "Train torpedo tubes to starboard".

0203 Altered course to 210 degs. to bring enemy between me and the moon.

0205 Made signal "Train torpedo tubes to port".

0207 Able to count 5 ships in all.

0210 Enemy bearing 140 degs. 4 miles.

0211 7 ships counted. Altered course to 170 degs.

0212 Enemy bearing 135 degs.—150 degs., 2½–3 miles.

0213 Altered course to 160 degs. Enemy now seen to consist of 5 merchant vessels, 1 large destroyer, 2 small destroyers.

0214 Altered course to 150 degs.

0215 Enemy bearing 128 degs.—140 degs.

0218 Altered course to 140 degs.

0220 Opened fire on enemy destroyer bearing 100 degs., range 2,400 yards.

0222 Enemy hit by pom-pom and 4.7-in. Enemy appeared to return fire with Breda and probably 3.9-in. with flashless cordite.

0225 1 merchant vessel on fire.

0227 Checked fire. Destroyer sinking.

From now on a general mêlée ensued. Fire was opened with 4.7-in. pom-pom, Breda, 0.5-in. and Hotchkiss at many enemy ships at ranges varying from 50 to 2,000 yards. 1 merchant vessel of about 3,000 tons attempted to ram me, but I just crossed his bows in time by going full speed ahead on both engines.

Fighting lights were switched on. One large destroyer passed down the line to starboard and was heavily engaged, hit with the first salvo and set on fire amidships.

0240 Fired one torpedo at large enemy destroyer, probably obtaining a hit aft.

0244 Fired one torpedo at merchant vessel stopped and on fire, but missed.

0250 An ammunition ship blew up with an enormous explosion; smoke and flames rose to a height of 2,000 feet and JERVIS who was 1,500 yards away was showered with pieces of ammunition, etc., weighing up to 20 lbs.; the sea around appeared as a boiling cauldron. Inspection reveals that the ammunition was of German manufacture.

0252 Received a signal from NUBIAN reporting that MOHAWK had been sunk by torpedo. I ordered NUBIAN to burn masthead lights and I proceeded towards her.

0311 A torpedo track passed directly under the bridge, apparently fired from the large destroyer previously engaged, which was stopped and burning and thought to be out of action. Opened fire on this destroyer, scoring several hits, and as the bearing drew too far aft ordered JANUS to finish her off, which she did.

0320 The situation was now as follows:—

1 destroyer sunk; 2 destroyers and 4 merchant vessels burning fiercely; the fifth merchant vessel (the ammunition ship) sunk; MOHAWK sunk in about seven fathoms lying on her side with about 50 feet of her forecastle above water. NUBIAN picking up MOHAWK's survivors.

0323 Went alongside wreck of MOHAWK and took off two survivors. I then picked up more survivors and ordered JANUS to sink the remains of MOHAWK which she did by gunfire having no torpedoes left. Position of MOHAWK's wreck 34 degs. 56.5 mins. North, 11 degs. 42.4 mins. East by fix from Kerkenah Nos. 3 and 4 light buoys. Whilst picking up survivors 1 merchant vessel was seen to turn over and sink.

0403 Set course 080 degs. 20 knots.

0418 29 knots.

0420 Normal night zig-zag (10 degs. either side of mean course).

SKIRMISH OFF SFAX—NARRATIVE OF H.M.S. NUBIAN.

0045 Altered course to 330 degs. 20 knots. Snaking the line.

About 0120. Sighted dark shapes on the port bow, which were thought to be land.

Admiralty footnote:—

* "Wind force 5" signifies "fresh breeze. (16–20 miles per hour)."

"Sea 31" signifies "moderate sea with short, low swell."