

illuminate, nothing of any size could be seen. After twenty minutes searching with starshell by both H.M.M.G.B.662 and H.M.M.T.B.634, and some pom-pom fire from all boats, at the two small objects north of Vir light that had been seen, and nothing having happened from the beach, it was decided to close very near the coast and run down to the southwards.

30. At 0251, when about fifty yards off the coast line the unit was brought round to south-west and set off down the coast in single line ahead at eight knots.

At 0254, a very large F-lighter was sighted dead ahead, at about four hundred and fifty yards, with bows into the beach, a perfect torpedo target. H.M.M.G.B.662 at once altered round to starboard, ordering H.M.M.T.B.634 to sink the target with torpedoes, and lay off ready to engage with covering gunfire. H.M.M.T.B.634 fired at 0256, scoring hits with both torpedoes, and the unit, in loose formation, was stopped to the eastwards of the smoking wreckage.

31. At 0310, H.M.M.G.B.662 decided to close the small piece of F-lighter still visible to try and identify it. Smoke was being carried away from the shore by a light breeze and H.M.M.G.B.662 went through this "screen" to the southwards at 0314. At that moment I found myself only 50 yards from a beached convoy of two F-lighters and some small craft. Fire was at once opened with all guns and the unit called up to close me with despatch. These beached craft were heavily damaged by gunfire from all boats, and the one F-lighter that was not burning was sunk by a torpedo from H.M.M.T.B.637 at 0337.

During the whole of this third attack the enemy could not have fired more than twenty rounds in all.

32. It was now decided to withdraw. Two of these last F-lighters had been torpedoed, hit, and the third was well ablaze. Any small craft that were alongside the lighters had been sunk. There seemed no object in staying and it was desired to get out of the channel before the Royal Air Force came over: accordingly at 0355 the unit proceeded to Ist. All the way across the burning F-lighter was seen to be blowing up continuously.

33. We informed the L.R.D.G. and Partisan authorities of what had occurred and then proceeded to Komiza in two units, H.M.M.G.B.662 and H.M.M.T.B.637 at twenty-two knots, and H.M.M.T.B.s 634 (who had a defective engine) and 638 at fourteen knots.

34. As regards assessing the actual damage suffered by the enemy, great difficulty has been experienced. The natural desire to claim what one believes to have been sunk has been curbed by the almost too satisfactory nature of the best possible results. Conservative and considered estimates are:—

First attack:

1 F-lighter heavily hit by M.T.B.634 and seen to sink by all boats.

1 F-lighter heavily damaged by H.M.M.G.B.662 and seen to sink later by all boats.

1 F-lighter heavily damaged by H.M.M.T.B.637, probably sunk.

2 F-lighters set on fire by H.M.M.T.B.s 637 and 638.

(1 F-lighter seen to be undamaged and going to the beach).

2 Pi-L Boats fired and sunk by H.M.M.G.B.662 and H.M.M.T.B.638.

1 Pi-L Boat sunk by H.M.M.G.B.662.

1 E-boat sunk by H.M.M.G.B.662.

1 E-boat damaged by H.M.M.T.B.638.

1 E-boat damaged by H.M.M.T.B.634.

Second attack:

1 F-lighter sunk by H.M.M.G.B.662 and H.M.M.T.B.634.

1 F-lighter damaged by all boats.

1 Pi-L Boat damaged by H.M.M.T.B.637.

Third attack:

2 F-lighters sunk by torpedoes.

1 F-lighter beached and completely on fire.

1 Pi-L Boat sunk by gunfire from H.M.M.G.B.662.

1 possible E-boat sunk by gunfire from H.M.M.T.B.637.

or in brief,

6 F-lighters sunk.

1 F-lighter probably sunk.

4 Pi-L Boats sunk.

1 E-boat sunk.

1 E-boat possibly sunk.

2 E-boats damaged by gunfire.

It is felt certain by all our boats that no F-lighters got away, although it is possible that one or more may have beached in a more or less invisible manner.

The Pi-L Boats were the larger type of small German lighter, with a silhouette like an R.C.L.*, but the high bow and stern made it impossible to distinguish them from an F-lighter, except in fairly full side view.

Casualties and Damage to Own Force.

35. On the other hand our force suffered only superficial damage and the following casualties:—

One A.B. killed, and two seriously and one slightly wounded.

Items of interest.

36. The enemy used no light signals, but one ship fired a three white star cartridge during the latter part of the first attack. Except for the flak-lighter the enemy displayed a lack of vigilance, courage, initiative, and resource. It is possible that the unit was fortunate enough to contact the enemy at the crossing place of two convoys, the one coming up from Sibenik and Zara and the other coming down from the north. This would account for the fact that some of the enemy vessels never at any time opened fire, due to their not knowing which ship was which, the northbound convoy being sighted first.

37. The enemy vessels' armament was the normal one for F-lighters and other craft, except that more than one F-lighter had the 88-m.m., quadruple 20-m.m., twin 20-m.m. and single

Admiralty footnote:

* R.C.L.—Ramped Cargo Lighter.