

Six more ships of the slow assault convoy were sailed at midday.

B. BARK SOUTH.

S.N.O.L.(S) set up his headquarters in a house above Punta Portopalo with Deputy S.N.O.L. and a V/S* station in the centre of the stores beach.

L.S.T. were employed in addition to L.C.T. in transferring vehicles from the M.T. ships, as more transport was urgently needed at the front.

C. BARK EAST.

The three Category "B" ships of the assault convoy sailed at 1400 to BARK SOUTH to join convoy. This left only one M.T. ship in the anchorage.

D. ACID SOUTH and NORTH.

The remaining ships of the slow assault convoy were sailed for Tripoli at 0630.

JIG sector closed down and all M.T. ships and landing craft proceeded to Syracuse. GEORGE and HOW sectors were progressing well though the stevedores were very tired owing to the frequent night air raids. To alleviate this they had been sent to sleep ashore.

N.C.F.A. turns over to F.O.S.Y.—Naval Commander Force "A" turned over all operations from Syracuse northwards to Flag Officer Sicily who was by now at Syracuse in H.M.S. LARGS. In the evening, having finished at ACID, he proposed turning over to S.N.O.L.(H) with a view to proceeding to Malta the following day in H.M.S. BULOLO.

K.M. 19Y ordered forward.—By noon the situation was such that the Commander-in-Chief ordered forward convoys K.M.F. and K.M.S. 19Y, i.e., those parts of the follow-up convoys from the United Kingdom which had been held at Algiers until required.

H.M.S. CARLISLE to Augusta.—About midday Naval Commander Eastern Task Force ordered H.M.S. CARLISLE to be sent to Augusta as soon as Flag Officer Sicily thought fit, to provide long range air warning. Flag Officer Sicily had, in fact, released her the previous day as he had expected Syracuse to be empty that night except for H.M.S. LARGS and L.S.T. He was of the opinion, however, that she should return to Syracuse on 14th when M.T. ships were due, as the A.A. defences were still below minimum and somewhat extempore.

Gun support.—Ships continued to give supporting fire to the army as required but, apart from a bombardment of Lentini by H.M.S. MAURITIUS lasting from 0702 to 0730, there were no shoots of particular note.

Enemy Air Activity.

The night 13th/14th July was almost free of air raids and the customary dawn attack at ACID was less intense than on previous days. While on patrol at BARK SOUTH after dark H.M.S. MENDIP and H.M.S. WALLACE were bombed. The full moon and many flares dropped by the enemy made evasion difficult for the destroyers, which apparently

were taken as substitute targets, since the merchantmen in the anchorage were quite invisible in the smoke screen put up. Several sticks of bombs fell within one to two cables of the destroyers but no damage or casualties were caused. There was much activity and many flares were dropped at about 2100 but no incidents occurred.

At BARK EAST in the evening smoke cover was also used most effectively, the ships being well backed up from the shore. After the smoke had become effective three M.T. ships and two hospital carriers made the anchorage safely. One circling torpedo was reported, but failed to find a target and neither at BARK EAST or at ACID were any ships damaged by bombs.

At Syracuse there were no daylight raids, and three night raids by single aircraft were ineffective.

Great confidence was inspired among the ships by the successes of nightfighters, and A/S screening vessels also took toll of low-flying aircraft.

Own aircraft engaged by ships.—As a result of our own aircraft being engaged by our ships, in particular low-flying transport aircraft on the night 13th/14th July, the Commander-in-Chief issued orders that fire was to be withheld unless aircraft were clearly identified as hostile, and that the strictest fire discipline was essential.

A/S measures.—Implementing the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean's policy of employing every possible A/S vessel in active offensive measures against the known concentration of U-boats in the operational area, Group "W" of four Hunts was detached from Force "B" to devote all its time to systematic hunting.

D + 5 DAY.

Thursday, 15th July.

Weather.—There was no change in the weather which remained fine and calm.

Situation at beaches.

A. BARK SOUTH.

L.C.M. arrived from BARK WEST where there was nothing more for them to do, and the number of D.U.K.W. available was increased to about 160. By this time a number of L.C.M. were suffering from defects (though many continued to run satisfactorily on one engine), as the beach repair party were still at BARK WEST salvaging damaged craft.

By the end of a good day little M.T. remained to be discharged and two ships were sailed.

B. BARK EAST.

After a considerable quantity of stores had been discharged from the ships which had come round from BARK WEST they were sailed at 1800 to join a Tripoli convoy from ACID. Two further M.T. ships arrived during the evening from BARK SOUTH having discharged their vehicles there.

C. ACID SOUTH and NORTH.

Seven ships of the D + 3 day convoy completed discharge and sailed in convoy at about 1600.

H.M.S. BULOLO with Naval Commander Force "A" left at 1800 and S.N.O.L. (H) took charge of the area.

Admiralty footnote:

* V/S—visual signalling.