



THIRD SUPPLEMENT

TO

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THURSDAY, 9 OCTOBER, 1919.

*Admiralty,*

*9th October, 1919.*

The following despatch has been received from the Rear-Admiral, Black Sea, on the action in the Caspian Sea off Fort Alexandrovsk, on the 21st May, 1919:—

*5th July, 1919.*

I have the honour to submit the following despatch on the action off Fort Alexandrovsk on the 21st May, 1919, with an account of the circumstances leading up to it and all subsequent operations:—

At the beginning of May reports were being received from various sources that the Bolsheviks had occupied, or intended to occupy, Fort Alexandrovsk. From reports of refugees, prisoners, etc., it was also apparent that the Naval Authorities at Astrakhan were desirous of carrying out an attack on Petrovsk or Baku with the object of obtaining oil, of which they were in urgent need.

2.—Commodore Norris determined, therefore, to visit Fort Alexandrovsk and to carry out a reconnaissance by means of the coastal motor boats and by the seaplanes of "A. Yusanoff," supported by the ships of the Caspian Squadron. In accordance with this plan, "Krüger," "Asia," "Emile Nobel," "Sergie," and "A. Yusanoff" left Chechen

on 14th May and steered for a rendezvous off Kulaly Island. Early in the morning of the 15th the wind got up from the south-east, and it was impossible to get out C.M.B.'s or seaplanes, and the Squadron therefore altered course direct for Fort Alexandrovsk. Soon after daylight a number of fishing boats and a steamer hull down were sighted on the star-board bow, and later on a convoy of three steamers towing two barges in sight, escorted by one T.B.D. The convoy made off in the direction of Fort Alexandrovsk and the destroyer kept on the port bow of the squadron out of range. "Emile Nobel" fired a few long range shots at the convoy, and at 07.15 the barges were slipped. The chase was continued until early noon, when the enemy disappeared into the mist which was lying off shore, and Commodore Norris, being unable to determine his position, drew off. During the afternoon the barges were sunk and their crews made prisoners.

3.—The examination of the prisoners revealed the fact that Fort Alexandrovsk was occupied by a considerable number of Bolsheviks, and that the main part of their fleet was there. Also that the concentration was preparatory to an attack on Petrovsk, with the object of obtaining oil.

4.—On 17th May the wind had gone round to west, so that no lee was obtainable on the