

to the meagre resources available in the Middle East to meet its very wide responsibilities. It was necessary to keep the commitment in British Somaliland to a minimum, hoping to the last that the French would continue the struggle at Jibuti, of which I had had repeated assurances from General Legentilhomme. The poverty of Berbera as a port made landing slow and difficult when reinforcements did arrive.

VI. APPRECIATION OF SERVICES.

49. I wish especially to bring to notice the work of Brigadier A. R. Chater, D.S.O., O.B.E. Throughout a most difficult and trying period his work and spirit have been admirable. His disposition of his slender resources has always been made with sound judgment; his appreciations of the situation have been well founded; and the way in which he has inspired and led the forces under his command has been admirable. I consider that his services in Somaliland deserve special recognition.

50. Major-General A. R. Godwin Austen showed great skill in his handling of operations during the short period he was in command. He took over while a battle was in progress, grasped the situation rapidly, and by his personal energy and spirit did much to inspire the resistance. It was due to his well thought out arrangements that the evacuation was carried out with so little loss.

APPENDIX "A"

Air Headquarters, Steamer Point, Aden.

22nd August, 1940.

THE SOMALILAND CAMPAIGN.

INTRODUCTION.

On 6th July, 1940, G.H.Q. Middle East asked O.C. Somaliforces whether, if the French at Jibuti accepted the terms of the armistice, he considered that British Somaliland was untenable and that troops should be gradually withdrawn. O.C. Somaliforces replied that with certain additional military forces he did not consider the position in Somaliland untenable provided he could rely on his Naval requirements and on air support from Aden.

2. In forwarding Somaliforce signal to G.H.Q., A.O.C. Aden stated that "a measure of air support could be provided but air forces here (in Aden) are small and have prior commitment with convoys and in defence of Aden."

3. The role of the air forces in Aden has been clearly defined:—

(a) Protection of convoys.

(b) Neutralisation of enemy air forces as far as possible to achieve (a) above and to protect shipping at Aden.

4. Permission was, however, obtained from H.Q. R.A.F. Middle East for a flight of aircraft to give close support in Somaliland to the best of their ability. It was never intended by Higher Command to use any more than this flight in close support of the Army except in the case of emergency.

OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE ROYAL AIR FORCE.

From outbreak of War with Italy up to Start of Advance on Somaliland.

5. Forty-four reconnaissances were carried out on the Somaliland-Abyssinian frontier.

These entailed thirteen detachments to Berbera each of about three days' duration. During this time our casualties were two officers wounded, one aircraft lost and one damaged.

From 5th August to 19th August.

6. The following was carried out:—

(a) Twelve separate reconnaissances.

(b) Nineteen bombing-reconnaissances employing thirty-two aircraft.

(c) Twenty-six bombing attacks on enemy troop concentrations, and transport employing seventy-two aircraft.

(d) Standing fighter patrols were maintained over Berbera for thirteen days employing 36 sorties.

In addition to the above, No. 223 Squadron carried out six long distance raids on enemy bases in the back areas, including Addis Abeba. The intention was to draw the enemy fighters away from British Somaliland. The total number of sorties for these operations was thirty-two.

7. During these operations approximately sixty tons of bombs were dropped and the total number of sorties was 184.

Casualties.

8. Our casualties were as follows:—

(a) Seven aircraft lost.

(b) Ten severely damaged and a number slightly damaged by enemy action.

(c) Twelve killed.

(d) Three wounded.

9. During the period under review the following enemy aircraft were shot down or damaged:—

(a) *By fighters*—One shot down and one heavily hit.

(b) *By bombers*—Two shot down in flames.

Achievements.

10. Long range fighters were used in standing patrols for the protection of Berbera against air attack during the evacuation. It will be noted that this port was reasonably immune from air bombardment during this critical period. Had this not been so the evacuation might have been badly held up with unfortunate consequences.

11. In co-operation with the Royal Navy our air forces effectively delayed and finally stopped the Italian advance along the coast road from Zeilah to Berbera.

DIFFICULTIES UNDER WHICH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE WAS WORKING.

12. Although the maximum air effort possible was afforded in support of the Army in Somaliland it may not have appeared impressive from the ground. The difficulties under which we were working were as follows:—

(a) There was no protected aerodrome from which either our fighters or bombers could operate in Somaliland. The two aerodromes—one at Berbera and one at Laferug—were quickly made untenable by enemy bombardment which was practically unopposed by ground defences. Two of our fighters were destroyed in the initial stages on the ground owing to lack of protection normally afforded by the Army. Fighter aircraft therefore had to be withdrawn.