

JACKAL were returning independently and were south west of Crete.

(d) Force E was returning to Alexandria.

(e) DECOY and HERO were joining Force A1, having embarked the King of Greece, H.B.M. Minister and other important personages from Agriarumeli (south coast of Crete) during the previous night.

(f) Force D were on their way to Alexandria, DIDO was just outside the harbour, AJAX and ORION were some way astern of DIDO as they had not had time to rejoin.

(g) Captain (D) 10th Destroyer Flotilla; in STUART, with VOYAGER and VENDETTA, was off Gavdo Island, having received orders from C.S.7 to search for FIJI survivors.

(h) JAGUAR and DEFENDER had been detached from Force A1 and were south west of Gavdo, making for Suda Bay, with ammunition urgently required by the Army.

48. Captain D.5 with his flotilla had been retiring at full speed from Canea since dawn. After surviving two air attacks without being damaged they were attacked at 0755 by 24 JU.87 divebombers. KASHMIR was hit and sank in two minutes. KELLY was doing 30 knots, under full starboard rudder, when she was hit by a large bomb. The ship took up an ever-increasing list to port, finally turning turtle with considerable way on. After floating upside down for half an hour she finally sank. The dive bombers, before leaving, machine gunned the men in the water, killing and wounding several.

49. KIPLING immediately closed to pick up survivors from KELLY and KASHMIR. For three hours KIPLING continued with her rescue work, in which she was considerably hampered by six high level bombing attacks. After picking up 279 officers and men from the water KIPLING left the scene, at 1100, for Alexandria. She estimated that between 0820 and 1300 no less than 40 aircraft attacked her, dropping 83 bombs, but she emerged from this ordeal unscathed. C.S.15 reluctantly decided that he could send her no help from Force C or Force A1. It was necessary to send PROTECTOR to meet her at 0800 the next day, 50 miles from Alexandria, as she had run right out of fuel. In these engagements the 5th D.F. shot down at least two, and damaged at least four, enemy aircraft.

50. In view of the intense scale of air attack off Crete, the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, after consulting the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, ordered GLENROY and escort, at 1127, to return to Alexandria. The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, then made a further plan for the reinforcement of Crete, using ABDIEL and/or destroyers. The Admiralty, at 1559, ordered GLENROY to turn northwards, pending instructions. At 1651 the Admiralty urged the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, to land the reinforcements from GLENROY in Crete, if it could be done that night. At 1837 the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, informed the Admiralty that it was much too late for GLENROY to reach Tymbaki that night (23rd/24th May). At 2237 the Admiralty was informed that the GLENROY, had she continued northward, would have been in the worst possible position for enemy air attacks at daylight. Disembarkation of

troops by day was out of the question. She had, therefore, been ordered to Alexandria.

51. In Crete the Army formed a new line in the Maleme-Canea sector. Very heavy air attacks were being made on our troops, who were without fighter cover, and the enemy kept up a steady flow of reinforcements with his troop carriers. The five M.T.B.s of the 10th M.T.B. Flotilla in Suda Bay were singled out for attack by aircraft and all were sunk. During their operations off the Cretan coast and while in harbour, the M.T.B.s accounted for two aircraft for certain and two probably shot down. The Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda Bay, decided that the time had come to consider plans for evacuation. At Heraklion, an ultimatum was received from the enemy, calling for Heraklion to surrender but this was rejected by the British and Greek Commanders.

52. During the night 23rd/24th May, JAGUAR and DEFENDER disembarked ammunition in Suda Bay and returned to Alexandria via the Kaso Strait.

24th May, 1941.

53. The naval situation at daylight on the 24th May was:—

(a) Forces A1, C and E had arrived Alexandria during the previous night.

(b) PROTECTOR had gone out to meet KIPLING who was about 70 miles from Alexandria.

(c) GLENROY escorted by COVENTRY, AUCKLAND and FLAMINGO had returned to Alexandria during the night 23rd/24th May without landing their troops.

(d) JAGUAR and DEFENDER having disembarked ammunition in Suda Bay were returning to Alexandria via the Kaso Strait. They had on board 250 naval officers and ratings not required in Crete.

(e) ABDIEL had left Alexandria during the night of 23rd/24th and was on her way to Suda, with ammunition and stores for the Army.

54. There had been indications that a landing might take place at Sitia during the night 24th/25th. In order to deal with this landing, a force consisting of AJAX (Senior Officer), DIDO, KIMBERLEY and HOTSPUR left Alexandria at 0800 on the 24th May, with orders to pass through the Kaso Strait and sweep the north coast of Crete during the night 24th/25th May. If nothing was sighted and time allowed, this force was also to bombard Maleme aerodrome.

55. ISIS (Senior Officer), HERO and NIZAM sailed from Alexandria at 0930 with the Headquarters and two battalions of Special Service Troops (Layforce) who were to be landed at Selinos Kastelli on the south coast of Crete.

56. The weather was too bad for ISIS and her force to land their troops and they were recalled to Alexandria. The force with AJAX passed through the Kaso Strait and swept along the north of Crete, but they did not encounter any enemy convoys. As they were unable to reach Maleme for the bombardment in time to be well clear by daylight, they withdrew to the southward via Kaso.