

13. *Conclusions.*—

(i) Due to the fact that the convoy appeared much sooner than we expected, and that we found ourselves right in their track, there were two courses open to us.

(ii) The first was to haul out and return to carry out a silent attack in the hope that the escort would not see us. This course was not adopted as it was considered that we were already too close, and were bound to be observed any moment.

(iii) The alternative was to deliver an attack at once, down the middle of the convoy, as it would not have been possible to get outside the screen without using all engines and making a great deal of noise.

(iv) We adopted the second method, which was made much easier by the very indifferent look-out that the convoy was keeping.

(v) They could not have been using R.D.F. or keeping a listening watch.

(vi) In future, more use could be made of a gunboat diversion astern of the convoy to leave the M.T.B.s a clear run from ahead.

(vii) For this method of attack more gunboats are needed.

(viii) Both torpedoes should be fired at the same target to make certain of sinking it.

(Signed) R. A. M. HENNESSY,  
*Lieutenant, R.N.*

*The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 12th October, 1943, by Vice-Admiral Sir HENRY D. PRIDHAM-WIPPELL, K.C.B., C.V.O., Flag Officer Commanding, Dover.*

*Dover,*

*12th October, 1943.*

SINKING OF ENEMY SUPPLY SHIP IN A STRONGLY ESCORTED CONVOY EASTBOUND FROM LE HAVRE—NIGHT 26TH/27TH SEPTEMBER, 1943.

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the attached reports of an action between three M.T.B.s, supported by three M.G.B.s, and a strongly escorted enemy convoy on passage from Le Havre to Boulogne during the night 26th/27th September, 1943.

2. Aerial reconnaissance had reported the presence in Le Havre of two enemy merchant vessels which were expected to attempt the passage of the Dover Strait.

3. Accordingly, M.T.B.s 202 (Lieutenant J. L. Bommezyn, R.Neth.N.); Lieutenant E. H. Larive, D.S.C., R.Neth.N., Senior Officer embarked, 204 (Lieutenant H. C. Jorissen, R.Neth.N.), 231 (Lieutenant C. H. Vaneeghen, R.Neth.N.) with M.G.B.s 108 (Lieutenant L. E. Thompson, R.N.V.R.), 118 (Lieutenant M. O. Forsyth Grant, R.N.V.R.), 117 (Sub-Lieutenant D. W. B. Woolven, R.N.V.R.), were ordered to patrol the vicinity of Berck Buoy in accordance with my signal timed 1545 on 25th September, copy of which is attached.

Albacore patrol between Boulogne and Dieppe had to be withdrawn earlier owing to weather.

4. Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of the remarks of the Senior Officer, M.T.B.s are concurred in.

This well planned and skilfully executed attack reflects the greatest credit on Lieutenant E. H. Larive and the officers and men under his command.

It is probable that the enemy's misplaced faith in his recently laid minefields, through which a channel had been swept only two days prior to the engagement, together with the improbability of our Coastal Forces operating in the prevailing weather conditions, contributed to an unusual element of surprise.

The likelihood of this event in no way belittles the success of the M.G.B.s' diversion to seaward which, added to the advantage of the light, no doubt accounted for the unpreparedness of the enemy for a torpedo attack from inshore.

5. This action was fought outside the range of shore-based radar and in consequence considerable risk from enemy minefields to returning craft doubtful of their position had to be accepted, but had all craft been fitted with Rotet,\* valuable assistance could have been given in the later stages of their return.

(Signed) H. D. PRIDHAM-WIPPELL,  
*Vice-Admiral.*

ENCLOSURE I TO F.O.C. DOVER'S LETTER.

FROM ... Senior Officer, H.M.M.T.B.s,  
Dover.

DATE ... 6th October, 1943.

TO ... Flag Officer Commanding, Dover.

I have the honour to submit the following report of proceedings of the night 26th/27th September, 1943, from the Senior Officer, 9th M.T.B. Flotilla.

2. The action was well planned and executed and led to the sinking of the main torpedo target.

3. The handling of the force by the Senior Officer, 9th M.T.B. Flotilla up to the moment of firing torpedoes was excellent and put the M.T.B.s into a perfect firing position. I feel, however, that he would have been better advised to have had the M.T.B.s in Starboard Quarter line instead of Port Quarter line and thus avoided M.T.B.204 crossing the bows of M.T.B.231 just before M.T.B.231 fired. Starboard Quarter line in this instance would have been the usual formation.

4. I consider M.T.B.231 was incorrect in shifting his point of aim to a coaster from the main torpedo target. All Commanding Officers should realise that while the main torpedo target remains afloat that target only should be attacked. Even if the main target has been hit but has not yet sunk, any torpedoes remaining in the force should be used against that target.

5. It has long been the intention to attack from inshore in this area and it is most satisfactory that on this first occasion the attack was successful. This is only possible between the Berck Buoy and the southern limit of the Command. The suggestion in para. 17 of the Senior Officer, 9th M.T.B. Flotilla's report is agreed with and it is hoped to try it out at an early opportunity.

(Signed) B. C. WARD,  
*Lieutenant, R.N.*

*Admiralty footnote:*

\* Rotet—a device to increase the range of shore-based radar.