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RAID ON MILITARY AND ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES IN THE VICINITY OF VAAGSO ISLAND

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 7th January, 1942, by Admiral Sir JOHN C. TOVEY, K.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet.

Home Fleet.

7th January, 1942.

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the attached report on Operation "Archery."

2. The operation was well conceived, planned and rehearsed with skill and thoroughness, and executed with great efficiency, precision and boldness. Though a minor operation, it affords a fine example of smooth and effective co-operation between the three Services and reflects great credit on Rear-Admiral H. M. Burrough, C.B., Brigadier J. C. Haydon, D.S.O., O.B.E., and all officers, ratings and ranks taking part.

3. The co-operation of the aircraft of Coastal and Bomber Commands was most effective. The operation could not have proceeded without it.

(Signed) JACK C. TOVEY,

Admiral,

Commander-in-Chief.

From: THE NAVAL AND MILITARY COMMANDERS,
OPERATION "ARCHERY."

Date: 2nd January, 1942.

To: THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, HOME FLEET.

The following report, by the Naval and Military Commanders, on Operation "Archery" which was carried out on Saturday, 27th December, 1941, is forwarded.

2. The intention of Operation "Archery" was to carry out a raid on military and

economic objectives in the vicinity of Vaagso Island with the object of harassing the coastal defences of S.W. Norway and diverting the attention of the enemy Naval and Air Forces from Operation "Anklet."*

Planning.

3. The Naval and Military Commanders were appointed on 6th December, 1941, which gave three weeks to plan and rehearse the operation. This is considered to be the absolute minimum time required. At least two full rehearsals should take place to allow timing and communications to be perfected. Weather conditions frequently make rehearsals impossible for days on end and this must be allowed for in the programme.

4. After the preliminary meeting between the Force Commanders and the Air Adviser to the Chief of Combined Operations, the plan was drawn up in London. It is strongly recommended that this procedure be followed in future as the facilities for obtaining the latest intelligence and information of all kinds are so much better than those elsewhere.

Composition of the Force.

5. (a) *Naval.*

H.M.S. KENYA (Rear Admiral Commanding, 10th Cruiser Squadron—Naval Commander).

H.M.S. ONSLOW (Captain (D), 17th Destroyer Flotilla).

H.M.S. ORIBI.

H.M.S. OFFA.

H.M.S. CHIDDINGFOLD.

Admiralty footnote —

* Operation "Anklet" was a longer term operation in the Lofoten Islands

H.M.S. PRINCE CHARLES.
H.M.S. PRINCE LEOPOLD.
H.M. Submarine TUNA.*

(b) *Military.*

Operational Headquarters, Special Service Brigade.

Detachment of the Special Service Brigade Signal Section.

All ranks of No. 3 Commando.

Two Troops (less one Section) of No. 2 Commando.

An R.A.M.C. detachment from No. 4 Commando.

An R.E. detachment from No. 6 Commando.

Troops of the Royal Norwegian Army.

Officers from the War Office (M.I.9).

A Press Unit of correspondents and photographers.

Total Military Personnel: 51 officers, 525 Other Ranks.

(c) *Air Force.*

Ten Hampdens of 50 Squadron (for smoke laying and bombing).

Blenheims } Fighter
Beaufighters } protection.

19 Blenheims of Bomber Command (for bombing diversion).

Rehearsal.

6. The Naval Force, with the exception of ONSLOW and CHIDDINGFOLD, assembled at Scapa Flow by 15th December, when embarkation of the Military was completed. A programme of rehearsals followed.

7. The Force proceeded from Scapa at 2115/24th December arriving at Sullom Voe at 1330/25th December. Heavy weather was encountered on passage and on arrival both PRINCE CHARLES and PRINCE LEOPOLD discovered and reported various defects including compartments forward flooded to a depth of about fourteen feet.

8. In order to allow time to make PRINCE CHARLES and PRINCE LEOPOLD as seaworthy as possible, and in view of the latest meteorological reports it was decided at 1615 to postpone the operation for 24 hours.

9. All ships had topped up with fuel and all repairs had been completed by 1400/26th December. The weather forecast was far more promising and it was therefore decided to sail the Force at 1600 that day to carry out Operation "Archery" at dawn, 27th December, 1941.

The Naval Approach.

10. The passage across the North Sea commenced in bad weather but, as anticipated, the weather rapidly improved as the Force proceeded to the eastward and conditions were perfect on arrival off the Norwegian coast.

11. Position by the landfall, which was made exactly as planned, was confirmed on sighting the mark submarine TUNA in the position ordered. She was passed at 0739, one minute late on planned time.

Admiralty footnotes —

* KENYA acted as H.Q. Ship and carried Brigade Operational H.Q.

ONSLOW, ORIBI, OFFA and CHIDDINGFOLD—Destroyers

PRINCE CHARLES and PRINCE LEOPOLD—Infantry Assault Ships, later known as "Landing Ships, Infantry (Small)"

12. The Force entered Vaagsfiord* on time apparently unobserved and it seems possible that the look-out post at Hovdenoes was not manned. KENYA moved over to the southern side of the fiord while CHIDDINGFOLD led PRINCE CHARLES and PRINCE LEOPOLD to the bay south of Hollevik as planned. ONSLOW closed on KENYA's starboard quarter and OFFA closed astern of KENYA. ORIBI remained near the entrance of the fiord to cover the Force from the west.

The Bombardment.

13. Hampden aircraft† timed their arrival in the area perfectly, keeping all the attention well up-fiord and drawing the fire of four or five light A.A. guns.

14. At 0842 PRINCE CHARLES made the signal indicating that Assault Landing Craft were formed up and moving ahead. KENYA was moving ahead slowly and at 0848, just before the line of fire opened, star-shell were fired to burst over Maaloy Island. These were bursting and illuminating the point of aim on the island when, half a minute later, the line of fire opened and the bombardment commenced, ONSLOW and OFFA joining in as soon as clear.

15. The battery on Rugsundo which had already been bombed by Hampden aircraft opened fire on KENYA at 0856. It was erratic and the rate of fire low, but nevertheless proved a great nuisance throughout our stay. The guns were thought to be smaller than 5.1-inch and were more probably about 4.7-inch. On bursting, the shell gave off a purple smoke.

16. At 0857½ the "cease bombardment" signal was made by the Military in the Assault Landing Craft now rapidly approaching their objectives. The Naval bombardment of Maaloy Island thus came to an end and from reports received from the Military who landed on the island, there is no doubt whatsoever that it had been completely successful.

17. At 0858 KENYA, having changed over to full charges, opened fire on Rugsundo. After 2½ minutes the enemy guns were silenced. The smoke bombs, dropped by the Hampdens near Rugsundo, were by now effective and gave cover to our ships in the fiord.

Smoke Laying by Aircraft.

18. At 0858½ on a signal from KENYA, seven Hampden aircraft, showing great skill and dash, came in at very low altitudes to drop their smoke bombs. These were placed with great precision on Maaloy Island, and as a result the landing there was unopposed. The bombs were dropped on a front of approximately 250 yards, and as there was practically no wind, gave a screen of ideal density in which visibility was some 15—20 yards.

19. The smoke bombs dropped at the landing place in South Vaagso were only 50 yards out of the desired position, but one of them most unfortunately struck a landing craft setting it alight and causing some 20 casualties from burns.

Admiralty footnotes —

* Vaagso lies 2½ miles up this fiord, whose entrance is less than half a mile wide

† The aircraft operated from bases on the NE coast of Scotland, a distance of approximately 300 miles

20. Despite this serious accident it is considered that these bombs were of great value, for they enabled the troops to be put ashore with few casualties from the automatic weapons which were bringing fire to bear on the landing place, and which might have inflicted even heavier losses had they been given a clear and unimpeded view of their targets.

21. It must here be noted that the aircraft which dropped the bombs at South Vaagso appeared to be on fire and not properly under control. It was almost certainly the Hampden bomber which later fell into the sea near the entrance to Vaagsfiord. If this was so, then the degree of accuracy achieved in placing of the bombs must have been the result of a very gallant attempt on the part of the crew of the aircraft to carry out in full their allotted task. PRINCE LEOPOLD proceeded to the rescue, but unfortunately only one of the three members of the crew picked up, survived.

22. One Hampden bomber which overshot the target attacked and silenced positions in the area with machine gun fire

23. It is regretted that one other Hampden failed to return from this operation.

24. Of the three Hampden bombers detailed to attack the Rugsundo battery, one had to return with engine trouble, but the other two carried out an attack, the results of which could not be observed from KENYA but which were apparently very successful.

Military Operations.

25. For the purpose of the operation, the Military Forces set out in paragraph 5(b) were organised into the Operational Headquarters which remained throughout in the Flagship KENYA, with the Brigade Commander in close touch with the Naval Commander on the bridge, and the troops who were put ashore in Assault Landing Craft from KENYA, PRINCE CHARLES and PRINCE LEOPOLD and in the ship's boats from ORIBI.

The Forces ashore were divided into five Groups for purposes which will become clear in the course of this report.

General Tasks of each Group (see sketch map attached).

26. The purpose of Group 1 was to land near Hollevik and clear the Halnoesvik area where a German gun had been reported. Having accomplished this task Group 1 was to move along the coastal road to South Vaagso and form a reserve for Group 2 unless given other orders.

Group 2, which was to be put ashore immediately south west of South Vaagso, was to attack the town itself and carry out a number of Military and industrial tasks.

Group 3 was to assault the Island of Maaloy.

Group 4 was retained as a floating reserve in the hands of the Military Commander of the Force.

Group 5 was to be landed from a destroyer on the western shore of Ulvesund in order to cut communications between South and North Vaagso and to send a fighting patrol into the latter village.

The Landings.

27. At 0839 PRINCE CHARLES and PRINCE LEOPOLD lowered all landing craft

which moved off in formation about three minutes later. In little more than five minutes No. 1 Group was ashore at Halnoesvik and the landing craft of Nos. 2 and 3 Groups were moving towards the headland just south of Halnoesvik Village.

28. Just before the landing craft came into view of the enemy defences in South Vaagso and Maaloy Island, KENYA opened fire. The Naval bombardment was extremely accurate and most effective, and Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. Durnford-Slater, who was in command of Group 2 and the Senior Officer proceeding ashore, was able to let the landing craft of Groups 2 and 3 approach to within 100 yards of their landing places before sending up the "cease bombardment" signal. KENYA signalled the Hampden aircraft who then came in at very low altitudes to drop their smoke bombs. As a result of these bombs Group 3 completed their landing unopposed and the volume of fire brought to bear on Group 2 was considerably reduced.

The Operations Ashore.

29. Groups Nos. 2 and 3 landed almost simultaneously, and from that time onwards the sequence of events was as follows:—

30. Group 1 cleared the area and village of Halnoesvik very rapidly and signalled the Headquarters Ship for instructions. They were at once ordered to move along the coastal road and to come into reserve at Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. Durnford-Slater's Headquarters which were situated near Group 2's landing place. This signal was made at 0950.

31. Group 3 very quickly gained control of Maaloy Island, where those enemy troops who had not been killed by the Naval bombardment were for the most part demoralised and dazed by its effect, and quickly surrendered. At 0920 Major J. M. T. F. Churchill was able to signal that all guns on the island were in our hands and four minutes later he reported that the whole area was under control. ORIBI, carrying Group 5 and followed by ONSLOW, moved past Maaloy some 10 minutes later, as soon as the smoke had cleared sufficiently for them to do so, and entered Ulvesund.

32. Group 2, from the start, encountered very stiff opposition, both from German Infantry who fought to the last man in the buildings in which they were established, and from snipers, armed often with automatic rifles, who took up positions on the hillside west of the town where they were very difficult to locate owing to the excellent natural cover. It must be emphasised that the opposition in South Vaagso was severe in degree and skilful in quality. It appears from the interrogation of prisoners that the garrison had been fortuitously augmented by a detachment who had been moved into the town for Christmas but, however that may be, there is no doubt that the fighting spirit, marksmanship and efficiency of the enemy in this area was of a high order.

33. At 1020 Group 5 were landed just south of the village of North Vaagso. They cratered the coast road between North and South Vaagso and were able to capture a number of prisoners who had escaped ashore from ships attacked by ORIBI and ONSLOW. A fighting patrol, which was sent forward into North Vaagso

directly the Group had landed, collected the chief Quisling, took over the telephone exchange and, before leaving, wrecked the instruments.

34. In the meanwhile Group 3 had been instructed (0925) to send a party by landing craft to destroy the herring oil factory at Mortenes, and at 1015 Captain A. S. Ronald landed with his troops in the area of the factory and completed its destruction without meeting opposition.

35. From 1000 hours onwards, the situation became confused in South Vaagso, where Group 2 were encountering strong opposition in the northern end of the town. The destruction of communications with the forward troops rendered control by the Flagship difficult.

36. By 1020 hours the whole of Group 4 had been despatched to the assistance of Group 2, and were committed on the left flank.

37. By 1030 hours house-to-house fighting in the centre and northern end of the town had become bitter, resulting in severe casualties, especially in officers and senior N.C.O.s. Group 1 arrived from Halnoesvik and was committed in support of No. 4 Troop in the centre. With the authority of Force H.Q., Group 3 on Maaloy Island contacted Group 2, and on request the latter despatched No. 6 Troop.

38. No. 5 Group at North Vaagso were ordered to move south and close on the rear of the enemy in South Vaagso.

39. No. 1 Troop (Group 2) secured the landing place, cleared the southern end of the town, capturing a prominent Quisling, and prepared the main demolitions.

40. At 1230 hours Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford-Slater, after personally directing operations in the town, reported to Force Headquarters that resistance was nearly overcome and that demolitions were in progress.

41. As the majority of the industrial targets had been destroyed and as landing craft were becoming dispersed in ferrying wounded and Norwegian volunteers out to the ships and might take some time to reorganise for withdrawal purposes, the Military Commander, in agreement with the Naval Commander, ordered re-embarkation at 1250 hours.

42. The withdrawal of all groups was carried out without opposition. The Firda factory, which was the last of the industrial targets, and the Seternes Lighthouse were demolished before the troops re-embarked.

43. Group 5, who had been delayed in their southward move along the coast road by the shelling of beached merchant shipping in Ulvësund, were ordered to re-embark in ORIBI to the north of South Vaagso.

44. At 1408 hours Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford-Slater reported that all troops had left the shore, and returned himself in the last landing craft.

45. The re-embarkation had been completed and all landing craft hoisted by 1434

46. In considering the course of the operation particular attention is drawn to the following factors which both had important bearings on the course of the fighting: in the first place,

the hampering effect of the desire to comply strictly with the orders which had been issued to avoid all possible damage to Norwegian property; and in the second place, the conflicting claims of the comparatively short time limit imposed by the whole nature of the operation, and of the restrictions on speed which are inherent in all street fighting but particularly when it is conducted against determined opposition.

47. It here requires mention that the opposition was overcome, and all the demolition tasks completed, often under heavy enemy fire, well within the time limits laid down and that such results could not possibly have been obtained had it not been for the personal leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. Durnford-Slater, and for the sense of discipline, the initiative and courage that was shown time and again by junior leaders, both officers and N.C.O.s.

Tasks Completed

48. One hundred and two prisoners were captured, comprising 7 officers (1 Army and 6 Merchant Navy), 91 ratings and other ranks (40 Army, 15 Navy and 36 Merchant Seamen), and 4 Norwegian "Quislings". In addition 77 Norwegian volunteers were embarked. It is estimated that at least 150 Germans were killed in South Vaagso and Maaloy by Naval, Army and R.A.F. Forces in the course of the operation.

49. The tasks executed on shore were as follows:—

(i) All German Offices were burnt or demolished.

(ii) The W/T Station and mast were destroyed.

(iii) The German car and lorry garage was destroyed.

(iv) One German tank of 10 to 15 tons was entirely destroyed.

(v) Four coast defence guns and one anti-aircraft gun on Maaloy Island were blown up.

(vi) The petrol tanks on Maaloy Island were cut by explosives.

(vii) The ammunition store on Maaloy Island was demolished.

(viii) The German barracks and Headquarters on Maaloy Island were burnt out by the initial Naval bombardment.

(ix) A searchlight and generator were blown up on Maaloy Island.

(x) A beach mine store was destroyed.

(xi) A telephone cable hut was destroyed.

(xii) All huts used as billets by German soldiers, both in South Vaagso and Maaloy were burnt down.

(xiii) The Ulvësund Hotel, entirely occupied by German soldiers and held as a strong point, was burnt down.

(xiv) The mechanism of Seternes Lighthouse was destroyed.

(xv) The road was cratered between North and South Vaagso.

(xvi) The telephone exchange at Rodberg was taken over and the apparatus smashed.

(xvii) The building and plant of the main canning factory in South Vaagso were entirely destroyed by explosives.

(xviii) The herring oil factory at Mortenes was entirely destroyed by explosives and fire.

(xix) The Firda factory was set on fire and left blazing.

(xx) A smaller canning factory and herring oil factory were set on fire, and the plant damaged by explosives (not yet confirmed).

Naval and Air Operations—0900-1445

50. During this period PRINCE CHARLES, PRINCE LEOPOLD and CHIDDINGFOLD had moved across to Slaaken Bay on the south side of the fiord to obtain cover in accordance with the pre-arranged plan.

51. The first sortie of Blenheims arrived shortly before 0930 while ORIBI and ONSLOW were taking up position to enter Ulvesund but it was not possible to establish reliable R/T* communication with them. (Maaloy Island was now in our hands but the smoke was still too thick for the destroyers to pass through Maaloy Sund.)

52. Two minutes later, at 0932, Rugsundo Battery re-opened fire on KENYA who hotly engaged with "A" and "B" turrets and again silenced the guns which did not re-open fire until 1308.

53. By 0930 the smoke screen across the Rugsundo line of fire was thinning and CHIDDINGFOLD was ordered to reinforce with smoke floats and funnel smoke, while moving fast. She did this well and also engaged the battery with a few salvos.

54. At 0945 Maaloy Sund was sufficiently clear for the destroyers to proceed. ORIBI followed by ONSLOW entered Ulvesund.

55. The first enemy aircraft appeared at 1005, when two ME.109s came in and immediately engaged two of our Blenheims one of which was shot down two minutes later. This Blenheim would possibly not have been lost, and the mortality among German aircraft, later in the day, would probably have been higher, if efficient R/T communication between ship and aircraft could have been established and maintained.

56. Quite apart from the need for efficient communication it was apparent that two R.A.F. officers should be carried in the Headquarters Ship with the sole duties of concentrating on the air situation and directing the fighters. The ideal would be to have officers personally known to the fighter pilots and for these officers to have carried out rehearsals from the Headquarters Ship.

57. KENYA fired occasional salvos at Rugsundo Battery, to check gun range and to discourage any attempt to get their guns functioning again.

58. The second sortie (Beaufighters) arrived at 1015 and about 25 minutes later was in pursuit of the first two enemy bombers—two JU.88s—to put in an appearance. These two aircraft never got within range of KENYA's guns. Only intermittent R/T communication could be established with the Beaufighters.

59. At 1100 KENYA opened fire, at long range, on two ME.109s who quickly turned away and disappeared to the south.

60. During this period the position regarding merchant shipping in Ulvesund had not been clarified so it was decided to send in KENYA's

motor dinghy, with Lieutenant J. N. Kempton, R.N., in charge, to investigate and report. After entering Maaloy Sund this boat was heavily fired upon, caught fire and burnt out. The crew were rescued by a Support Landing Craft.

61. About noon, a small number of enemy bombers were sighted to the northwards but no attack developed at this stage.

62. During the period since the bombardment of Maaloy Island had been completed. OFFA had been protecting the Force from the west, and shortly after noon reported a merchant ship and Armed Trawler escort proceeding to Vaagsfiord from the north. She was ordered to capture if possible and CHIDDINGFOLD ordered to support her. Unfortunately, in spite of all efforts, the merchant ship—s.s. ANHALT—beached herself and the escort vessel endeavoured to escape.

63. OFFA proceeded to chase and engage the Armed Trawler DONNER, securing several hits. The crew abandoned ship but the vessel continued to steam out to sea at 10 knots. OFFA proceeded alongside the trawler and, finding that she had insufficient fuel for the return passage to the U.K. under a prize crew, destroyed her and then picked up survivors from her crew.

64. During this period CHIDDINGFOLD had closed the merchant ship ANHALT and, using loud hailer, ordered the crew, in German, to bring their boats alongside. They were told that if the order was disobeyed they would be fired on. The boats disregarded the warning and pulled for the shore, only a few yards distant. CHIDDINGFOLD immediately opened fire and sank one boat. The other, although hit, succeeded in escaping inshore while CHIDDINGFOLD was engaged with enemy aircraft.

65. It was, at this time, 1236; that all ships became engaged with enemy bombers. Several formations, generally consisting of two or three Heinkels, were driven off and their bombs dropped wide. One H.E.III was destroyed.

66. These raids continued until about 1300 and shortly afterwards Rugsundo Battery re-opened fire. KENYA immediately replied from "X" and "Y" turrets and with 4-inch. KENYA was hit by one round on the armour belt and a few minutes later a near miss abreast the port torpedo tubes slightly wounded one rating. At 1317 KENYA received a hit which burst and holed her about ten feet above the water line abreast the bridge. Rugsundo Battery was then finally silenced.

ONSLow and ORIBI in Ulvesund

67. Having received the signal that Maaloy Island was in our hands and Maaloy Sund clear, the destroyers passed through the narrows and entered Ulvesund at 0941. A good deal of light fire was directed at the ships and ORIBI sustained three minor casualties.

68. When clear of the smoke, the German s.s. REGMAR EDZARD FRITZEN, s.s. NORMAR, and Armed Trawler FOHN were observed proceeding so as to beach themselves in the small bay immediately to the north of Brandhaunnes Point. Shots were fired across their bows and their upper decks were swept with Oerlikon fire but they had gained sufficient time to succeed in their project.

Admiralty footnote—

* R/T = radio telephone

69. ORIBI proceeded up Ulvesund and landed Group 5 at 1007. Two ME.109s were in the vicinity one of which attacked ORIBI with cannon fire but obtained no hits.

70. ORIBI and ONSLOW then proceeded to destroy the three ships referred to in paragraph 68, the Dutch Schuyt EISNER which had also been abandoned, and another German merchant ship, the ANITA L.M. RUSS, with a tug in company, which at this time had entered Ulvesund apparently unaware that a raid was in progress.

71. ORIBI after an engagement with two low flying ME.109s, re-embarked the remainder of Group 5 with their prisoners, while both destroyers gave supporting fire and dealt with snipers who were troublesome during the re-embarkation. On completion of their tasks they rejoined the Force at Vaagsfiord at 1356 and then engaged Rugsundo to keep that battery quiet while KENYA was re-embarking her troops. CHIDDINGFOLD also laid a smoke screen to mask it. All troops having been re-embarked the Force commenced to withdraw at 1445.

Bombing Diversions

72. At 1202 13 Blenheims from No. 114 Squadron, each carrying four 250-lb. G.P. bombs and some 4-lb. incendiaries attacked Herdla.* Many hits were observed on the timber runways and an enemy fighter was seen to turn over while taxiing. P.R.U.† photographs taken immediately after the attack confirmed that there were at least 20 new bomb craters on the aerodrome.

73. It is to be regretted that two Blenheims were lost from this squadron due to a collision after bombing; both aircraft fell into the sea. It is probable that this happened because one of them was hit by flak.

74. Six Blenheims from No. 110 Squadron, each armed with two 500-lb. bombs left Lossiemouth at 0850 to patrol off the Norwegian coast southwards from Obrestad. After keeping together to a point two miles south west of Eigeroe the leader and one other aircraft carried

Admiralty footnotes—

* Herdla—the nearest enemy aerodrome, some 80 miles south of Vaagso.

† P.R.U.—Photographic Reconnaissance Unit

out an apparently successful attack on a single ship of 1,500 tons, while the remaining four proceeded towards a convoy observed four miles further south.

75. None of the four aircraft which turned south to attack the convoy have returned to base, but a number of explosions were seen round the convoy and one ship was observed to be sinking rapidly with her stern well out of the water. There is no evidence to show how these four aircraft became casualties, but one was seen to make a good landing in the sea with the port engine on fire, while another crashed into the sea after being attacked by a fighter.

Fighter Protection.

76. Fighter protection over the Force was provided from 0928 until 1615 by Blenheim and Beaufighter aircraft of 404, 254, 235, 236 and 248 Squadrons operating from Wick and Sumburgh aerodromes. Five sorties were made, and with the exception of the fourth, enemy aircraft were encountered by each sortie and a satisfactory toll taken of them, for the loss of 2 Blenheims and 2 Beaufighters.

The Naval Withdrawal.

77. The destroyers were ordered to proceed out of the fiord and form a screen for the Assault Ships and KENYA, who left last. KENYA stopped off Hovdenoes Point and fired 15 rounds of 6-inch, at point blank range, at the Merchant Ship ANHALT and she was left aground and burning fiercely.

78. A few minutes later, at about 1500, when ships had just cleared the fiord, a formation of Heinkel bombers came in to attack. These aircraft were hotly engaged by KENYA and destroyers with the result that the formation broke up and their sticks of bombs fell wide.

79. After the escort of Beaufighters had had to return to base at 1600 single aircraft were driven off by the Force in the dusk and bright moonlight. When darkness fell a large alteration of course was made and the Force arrived at Scapa, without further incident, at 1600, 28th December, 1941.

(Signed) J. C. HAYDON,
Brigadier.

H. M. BURROUGH,
Rear Admiral.

LONDON

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