



SUPPLEMENT

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NORWAY CAMPAIGN, 1940.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 17th July, 1940, by Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of Cork and Orrery, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., Flag Officer, Narvik.

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the following Report upon the recent operations in the Narvik Area of Northern Norway.

SECTION I.

PRELIMINARY STAGES.

1. On the afternoon of Wednesday, April 10th, I received a message that the First Sea Lord would like to see me and was informed by him that a combined expedition was to be sent to Narvik and that I was to go in charge of the Naval force, etc. I then accompanied him to a meeting of the Service Ministers and Chiefs of Staff where the whole matter was discussed.

On the same evening, I attended a further meeting in the First Sea Lord's room on the subject.

I was then informed that Captain L. E. H. Maund was to go as my Chief Staff Officer, the officer I had asked for not being available.

Captain Maund who was present at the meeting left by 'plane the same night for Scapa, there to join the SOUTHAMPTON, which ship was conveying Major-General P. J. Mackesy, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., appointed to command the Military force, to Harstad, in Vaagsfjord, selected as the Military Base.

On the afternoon of Thursday, April 11th, I saw the First Lord for a few minutes, and left the same night for Rosyth, accompanied by Commander A. G. V. Hubback and my personal staff—(Temporary) Paymaster-Captain

H. R. H. Vaughan, Secretary, and Lieutenant-Commander The Hon. D. C. Cairns, Flag Lieutenant and Signal Officer.

My impression on leaving London was quite clear that it was desired by H.M. Government to turn the enemy out of Narvik at the earliest possible moment and that I was to act with all promptitude in order to attain this result.

2. On April 12th, I embarked in H.M.S. AURORA and sailed at noon for the Narvik area. After an uneventful passage, Skjelfjord was reached at 2000, April 14th.

3. It had been the original intention to proceed to Harstad where, as already stated, the G.O.C. Troops was on passage, as was also the Military Convoy.

This destination was changed, however, on receipt of a signal from Vice-Admiral W. J. Whitworth, C.B., D.S.O., flying his flag in WARSPITE, in which ship he had carried out his successful raid on the German naval forces in Narvik Waters on April 13th.

4. In this message appeared this sentence:—

“ I am convinced that Narvik can be taken by direct assault now without fear of meeting serious opposition on landing. I consider that the main landing force need only be small but that it must have the support of Force B or one of similar composition . . . ”

5. In order to take immediate advantage of this situation, I made the following signal:—

“ AURORA and SOUTHAMPTON are to arrive at Skjelfjord by 2000 today, Sunday . . . ”

350 soldiers had been embarked in SOUTHAMPTON and it was hoped that during the night it might be possible to organise a landing force with these troops and seamen and