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ACTION BETWEEN BRITISH AND ITALIAN FORCES OFF CAPE SPARTIVENTO ON 27th NOVEMBER, 1940:

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 18th December, 1940, by Vice-Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, K.C.B., D.S.O., Flag Officer Commanding, Force "H".

H.M.S. RENOWN.

18th December, 1940.

I be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the attached narrative of an engagement which took place on 27th November, 1940, during the execution of Operation "Collar", between forces under my command and an Italian Naval force in the area to the South of Sardinia.

Object of Operation "Collar".

2. The object of this operation was to secure the safe and timely passage through the Mediterranean of the following:—

1,400 Royal Air Force and Military personnel.

Two SOUTHAMPTON Class Cruisers,

Three M.T. ships,

Four Corvettes.

Composition of British Force.

3. The British force was composed as follows:—

Force "B". Battleship:—

RENOWN (Flag Officer Commanding, Force "H").

Aircraft Carrier:—

ARK ROYAL.

Force "B"—continued.

Cruisers:—

SHEFFIELD.
DESPATCH.

Destroyers:—

FAULKNOR.
FIREDRAKE.
FORESTER.
FURY.
DUNCAN.
WISHART.
ENCOUNTER.
KELVIN.
JAGUAR

Force "F". Cruisers:—

MANCHESTER (C.S.18)*
SOUTHAMPTON.

(Carrying approximately
700 R.A.F. and
Military personnel
each.)

Destroyer:—

HOTSPUR.

(With no asdics and
speed limited.)

Corvettes:—

PEONY.
SALVIA.
GLOXINIA.
HYACINTH.

(Corvettes fitted with
L.L. sweeps† and
asdics. Maximum
speed—16 knots.)

Admiralty footnotes:—

* C.S. 18—Vice Admiral Commanding, 18th
Cruiser Squadron.

† L.L. sweep—anti-magnetic mine sweep.