



SUPPLEMENT

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**TRANSPORTATION OF THE ARMY TO GREECE AND
EVACUATION OF THE ARMY FROM GREECE, 1941.**

**TRANSPORTATION OF THE ARMY TO
GREECE.**

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 11th December, 1941, by Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, G.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Station.

Mediterranean.

11th December, 1941.

OPERATION "LUSTRE".

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the following report concerning Operation "Lustre"—the move to Greece of some 58,000 troops with their mechanical transport, full equipment and stores. The operation commenced on 4th March and ceased on 24th April when the evacuation from Greece commenced.

2. The operation was carried out in accordance with the outlines contained in the Commander-in-Chief's Operation Orders and, in general, went according to plan.

3. The passage from Egyptian ports to the Piraeus, virtually the only port of the country, led past the enemy bases in the Dodecanese from which his air and sea forces were in a good position to operate against our lines of communication. Cover had also to be provided against interference from enemy surface forces from Italy. In consequence it was desirable to move as many personnel as possible in warships whose high speed would take them quickly through the danger zone. In the event the movement of personnel in H.M. Ships became a necessity owing to the mining of the Suez Canal which prevented sufficient troopships being available.

This policy proved successful and during the whole period of this complicated operation no

men or equipment were lost at sea—except for a few casualties from bomb splinters in one merchant ship. The losses sustained were either in ships proceeding in the convoys but not connected with "Lustre" or in ships returning empty (see Appendix).

4. During the greater part of the move a proportion of the Battle Fleet was kept at sea to the westward of Crete to provide heavy cover for our forces. In addition, Operation M.C.9, running a Malta convoy, was carried out between 19th and 24th March whilst "Lustre" still proceeded.

5. The whole operation was smoothly carried out owing to the hard work and willing spirit shown in the ships concerned. It threw a considerable strain on the port of Alexandria where nearly all commercial shipping movements had to be stopped. The difficulties were, however, overcome, including some trouble with Asiatic crews of merchant ships, by a firm insistence that, whatever the numbers of men or vehicles the Army had ready to move, the demand must be met and men and stores reach Greece without delay.

(Signed) A. B. CUNNINGHAM,

*Admiral,
Commander-in-Chief.*

APPENDIX.

**CASUALTIES CAUSED TO SHIPPING AT SEA
DURING "LUSTRE".**

21st March, 1941.

Danish Oiler MARIE MAERSK, in Convoy A.N.21, hit and set on fire. Crew taken off by H.M.A.S. WATERHEN who towed the ship to Suda Bay.

22nd March, 1941.

Convoy A.S.21 attacked by HE.IIIs S.E. of Gavdo. Greek NICHOLAS EMBIRICOS and SOLHEIM both badly damaged. NICHOLAS EMBIRICOS sank later and SOLHEIM abandoned.

31st March, 1941.

H.M.S. BONAVENTURE, escorting Convoy G.A.8, was hit amidships by two torpedoes at 0830 and sank almost immediately.

2nd April, 1941.

Convoy A.S.23 attacked by six JU.88 D/B.* KOULANDIS, XENOS and HOMEFIELD hit and abandoned. S.S. TETI, who had apparently been near missed, reported that she was leaking badly and proceeded to an anchorage near Lissmos.

2nd April, 1941.

Convoy A.N.F.24 attacked by H.L.B.† S.S. DEVIS hit in No. 6 hold and fire started, 7 men being killed and 14 injured.

3rd April, 1941.

Convoy A.N.F.24 attacked by D/B. NORTHERN PRINCE (carrying important stores for Greece from U.K.) was hit and set on fire—later blew up and sank.

17th April, 1941.

Convoy A.N.27 attacked by H.L.B. and T/B.‡ Oiler BRITISH SCIENCE torpedoed and speed reduced to 6 knots. Proceeded independently for Suda Bay. Torpedoed again at 1530/18 and caught fire. Ship abandoned and later sank.

21st April, 1941.

Convoy A.S.26 attacked by D/B. BRITISH LORD hit and later taken in tow by AUCLAND.

EVACUATION OF THE ARMY FROM GREECE.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 7th July, 1941, by Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, G.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Station.

Mediterranean.

7th July, 1941.

REPORT ON OPERATION "DEMON"

The attached reports on the evacuation of Imperial troops from Greece between 24th and 29th April, 1941, are forwarded for the information of Their Lordships.

2. The operations were most ably conducted by the Vice Admiral, Light Forces§, who met the needs of a confused and constantly changing military situation in a masterly manner. In this he was substantially assisted by the untiring efforts of Rear Admiral H. T. Baillie-Grohman, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., who was in charge of arrangements ashore in Greece.

3. The conduct of the naval forces involved including the special landing craft was, with few exceptions, beyond praise. Officers and men went for many days almost without rest under conditions of great discomfort with their ships

Admiralty footnotes:—

* D/B—Dive Bombers.

† H.L.B.—High Level Bombers.

‡ T/B—Torpedo Bombers.

§ Vice Admiral, Light Forces—Vice Admiral H. D. Pridham-Wippell, C.B., C.V.O.

crowded with troops under constant air attack. They were materially helped in their task by the admirable discipline and spirit among the troops they embarked.

4. A notable feature of the operation was the gallant and enterprising performance of the merchant seamen in the troopships who had to take their ships into unlighted and difficult anchorages, in many cases without adequate charts. A high proportion of Dutch ships were included and were particularly noticeable for their efficient and seamanlike performance.

5. It was most fortunate that the Glen ships* with their landing craft were present in the Mediterranean. These ships, their landing craft and the tank landing craft, although playing their rôle in the reverse of that for which they were intended, proved invaluable and undoubtedly made it possible to embark many more troops than would otherwise have been the case.

6. This melancholy operation coming as it did on top of the prolonged operation of transporting the troops into Greece, threw a very severe strain on both men and material of the Mediterranean Fleet; a strain which was most nobly shouldered in the face of heavy air attack which usually had to be met without fighter protection of any sort.

7. The operation was throughout a most anxious one; performed, as it was, with no cover from enemy surface interference. The urgent need for destroyers for the actual evacuation precluded the provision of screens to enable the sorely needed battleship cover to be provided. Had our enemy shown more enterprise the results might have been very different.

(Signed) A. B. CUNNINGHAM,

Admiral,

Commander-in-Chief.

ENCLOSURE I.

Office of Flag Officer Attached Middle East,
General Headquarters, Middle East,
Cairo.

15th May, 1941.

*The Commander-in-Chief,
Mediterranean.*

I have the honour to forward herewith my report on the evacuation of the British forces from Greece, covering the period 17th April to 30th April, 1941, with the following remarks.

Situation in Piraeus, and Control of Local Shipping.

2. On arrival in Greece, I found Piraeus failing to function as a harbour on account of the great destruction caused by the explosion of an ammunition ship, with the resultant fires in the harbour on 7th April and continual mining or bombing since that date. Moreover, the Greek authorities, through whom the British naval authorities had been working for the control of shipping, berthing, supplies for ships and so on, had been prevented by the destruction and disorganisation caused by the explosion from attending at their posts except in one or

Admiralty footnotes:—

* Glen ships—a class of merchant ships converted to "Infantry Assault Ships", subsequently known as "Landing Ships, Infantry", for use in Combined Operations.

two isolated cases. This, combined with the fact that the military and civil authorities were very properly endeavouring to send away all redundant personnel and stores as quickly and inconspicuously as possible in local ships, threw a great strain both on my staff and on the staffs of the Naval Control Service Officer and the Divisional Sea Transport Officer, whose numbers had already been greatly reduced by casualties. The language problem added to our difficulties.

The Changing Military Situation.

3. The military situation in Greece changed very quickly from day to day, and was constantly deteriorating due to three main factors. The first factor was the gradual change in the morale of the Greek fighting services, which though very mercurial was deteriorating on the whole. The second factor was the reduction of our Air Force to such small proportions that its support became completely inadequate—this chiefly due to the small numbers of our aircraft available in Greece, and to the loss of aerodromes as the Army retired. The resultant German air superiority showed itself in massed attacks on shipping in Greek waters, 23 ships being destroyed in two days, in the entire immobilisation of our armies by day, and in the severe bombing of roads in rear of our armies on which our troops depended both for their supplies and for their retirement. The third factor was the sudden collapse of the Greek Army in the Epirus region, which caused an immediate withdrawal from the Thermopylae line and hastened in an unexpected manner the date of final evacuation.*

Decisions Regarding Dates, Beaches and Numbers.

4. Further, the exact military situation at the front was usually obscure to General Headquarters in Athens, and seldom determined until some 18 to 24 hours after troops had moved, owing to the great unreliability of wireless in the mountain regions. This necessitated action with regard to shipping being taken in ample time, observing that 600 miles separated our bases and the coast of Greece. Even during the passage of our ships the situation could and did alter very considerably, and a selection of the right beaches under these conditions was no easy matter.

5. Owing to the very difficult nature of the military operations and the confused political situation, it was exceedingly difficult to arrive at firm figures in regard to dates and numbers. As an example of this, it was found to be impossible to obtain the date for D.I of the operation until approximately 48 hours before the evacuation was actually due to begin. Also estimated numbers for the total lift fluctuated between a minimum of 32,000 and a maximum of 56,000.

Admiralty footnote :—

* The deterioration in Greek Army morale and the sudden collapse of the Greek forces in Epirus were due largely to the hopelessness of the military situation after the German attack, to the demoralising effect of the lack of air support, to exhaustion to which Greece had become subjected after many months of fighting against an enemy materially and numerically superior, and to the dispiriting effect on the front line units of having to withdraw from positions which they had previously won by dint of many months of hard hand to hand fighting.

Failure of the Enemy to Bomb Embarkation Beaches.

6. In this particular, we were fortunate. The enemy made no attempt to bomb our evacuation beaches or our ships by night. This may have been partly due to our policy of not permitting ships to reach beaches till one hour after dark and so making it more difficult for the enemy to find the exact beaches in use. Or it may have been due to lack of flares or the enemy's deliberate policy to make use of daylight only.

Whatever the reason, our evacuation was certainly very much simplified by the enemy's failure in this respect.

Combined Headquarters.

7. The combined headquarters and Joint Planning Staff which was established at G.H.Q. of the British Troops in Greece immediately on my arrival in Athens, worked very smoothly indeed and I should like here to express my appreciation of the co-operation and great assistance I and my staff received from Brigadier Galloway, Brigadier Brunskill, Lieutenant Colonel Davy and Group Captain Pelly, R.A.F., and all the members of the Army Staff at G.H.Q. without exception.

8. Nevertheless, as strangers in a strange town with many contacts to be established and our way to find about, the task of my staff was no easy one and might easily have had a less successful ending for these reasons alone; I submit, therefore, that in the future, whenever forces of the Army or Air Force are sent to another country by sea, it should be recognised that it is essential to appoint a Senior Naval Officer to the country of their destination. No doubt in this case, Rear Admiral Turle, the Naval Attaché in Athens, was able to carry out these duties efficiently while everything was going evenly according to plan, but as soon as a hitch occurred, his diplomatic duties increased at the same rate as did other problems. The result was that I and my staff had to be despatched in a hurry to function in surroundings new to us all, in itself a great handicap, whereas a properly established Senior Naval Officer on the spot would no doubt have functioned far more easily and with less chance of a disastrous finish.

Beach Parties.

9. The numbers of the beach parties allocated to the operation proved to be sufficient and their composition well balanced. The information brought in by beach reconnaissance parties, together with that supplied by Captain Razikostikas, Hydrographer of the Greek Navy, proved, in the event, to be accurate and was invaluable to the conduct of the evacuation. This officer was most helpful and obliging, and the Greek Admiralty at all times most helpful.

Landing Craft.

10. The operation was to a great extent rendered possible by the employment of considerable numbers of our own landing craft. Of the total approximate number of 47,000 embarked, only 14,000 were taken from recognised wharves or piers, the balance being taken from open beaches in landing craft and ships' boats.

The maximum loads which it was found practicable to lift in the various types of landing craft were:—

L.C.T.*	...	900
L.C.A.†	...	60 to 70
L.C.M.‡	...	150.

Although every endeavour was made to obtain as many local craft as possible, these could not be relied upon except in cases when British officers were in command, and the number of British officers available was limited.

11. It should be emphasised that the landing craft mentioned in paragraph 10 had neither any adequate A.A. armament, nor were they supplied with wireless; a very grave handicap under the circumstances.

Communications.

12. The naval responsibility was the establishment of a direct W/T link to naval authorities and ships. While at Athens, this was maintained through Botannikos W/T station whose personnel were extremely helpful and co-operative. After leaving Athens the link depended on an R.A.F. G.P. set manned by naval ratings.

13. The events of the night 26th/27th April, which cut all inland communications to beaches and nearly broke the all important naval line, demonstrated the necessity for taking an early decision on the location of the new site and making alternative transport arrangements before moving Headquarters, if its communications were to continue to function efficiently.

Officers and Men.

14. The conduct of officers and men throughout was excellent and all duties were performed with cheerfulness and efficiency. The question of those officers and men whom I consider to be worthy of special mention or recognition forms the subject of a separate letter.

(Signed) H. T. BAILLIE-GROHMAN,
Rear Admiral,
Flag Officer Attached
Middle East.

REPORT ON EVACUATION OF BRITISH TROOPS FROM GREECE, APRIL, 1941.

Thursday, 17th April.

I left Cairo for Greece by air at 0930 with a small staff of four specially selected officers. My orders were to plan and arrange the evacuation of our troops from Greece in concert with the two other Services. I arrived at Athens at 1700 and took up my Headquarters in the Hotel Acropole, where G.H.Q., B.T.G., was already established. A Joint Planning Staff was at once formed and a conference held at G.H.Q. at 2200, when a general review of the situation was given by the Army authorities. The point that at least four days notice was required for the arrival of shipping in Greek waters was emphasised as strongly as possible; also that between 22nd April and 2nd May moonless nights would be in our favour should evacuation be decided upon. I was informed that the withdrawal of our Army to the Thermopylae

position had just begun; the new position to be occupied was from Molos on the N.E. coast to Bralos Pass, and south westward to the sea covering Giona, Oros and Eratine. The N.Z. Division was to occupy the right sector from the sea to the summit of the ridge, blocking the coast road south of Lama, and the 6th Australian Division Bralos Pass and to westwards of it.

2. It was decided to send out combined naval and military parties to reconnoitre all suitable beaches and landing places in Euboea, the Gulf of Corinth, the south and east coast between Khalkis and the Corinth Canal, and the south and east coasts of the Morea between the Corinth Canal and Kalamata.

Friday, 18th April.

3. I proceeded to take stock of the naval situation in the Athens—Piraeus area. This took some time. I found that Rear Admiral Turle, the Naval Attaché, whose offices were distant about two miles from G.H.Q., in addition to his political duties, controlled all shipping movements, the staff of Naval Control Service Officer and Divisional Sea Transport Officer being located in his office together with the cypher staff.

He was also in close touch with the harbour authorities in Piraeus. Three British minesweepers (HYACINTH, SALVIA and MUROTO) were under his orders. He was, in fact, performing the duties of Senior British Naval Officer, Greece, as well as being Naval Attaché. It soon became obvious that to control the evacuation, I would have to control the local Greek and other shipping in Greek waters, and this could not be done in an office two miles away, whose staff was under the orders of another officer. The work of the Naval Control Service Officer and Divisional Sea Transport Officer whose small staff had been greatly reduced by casualties and sickness, had been to a great extent carried out through the Greek harbour authorities, and the smooth working of the organisation was almost entirely dependent upon their efforts. Owing to the exploding of an ammunition ship in the harbour a few nights previously, after an air raid, some twelve merchant ships in Piraeus harbour were lost. Great damage was done to the harbour facilities, tugs and small craft of all sorts were destroyed; the telephone system was put out of action, and only five berths out of the total of twelve were left available for the use of shipping. In addition there were some twenty or more merchant ships, mostly Greek, gathered round Phaleron Bay, Salamis Bay, Piraeus and off Eleusis, who, owing to damage done to Piraeus, could not obtain water or coal. It was estimated that ten of these would have to sail not later than Saturday night, 19th April, otherwise they would run short of fuel.

4. About the time of my arrival the Greek harbour authorities in Piraeus showed signs of ceasing to function, including the Greek pilots on whom we had depended to berth ships. Each day the situation in this respect deteriorated, and the control of shipping, loading and so on became more and more difficult. Ships' Agents also disappeared. The arrangements for reporting the arrival of ships in the roadstead collapsed completely, and it was a matter of the greatest difficulty to discover what ships were in the harbour, were sailing, or expected to arrive, or even their whereabouts.

Admiralty footnotes:—

- * L.C.T.—Landing Craft, Tanks.
- † L.C.A.—Landing Craft, Assault (personnel).
- ‡ L.C.M.—Landing Craft, Mechanised vehicles.

This state of affairs was further aggravated by the fact that during the moonlight nights ships proceeded to sea and kept under way until daylight, with the object of avoiding bombing attacks inside the harbour or being mined in. Although sound in theory owing to the factors mentioned, this resulted in ships frequently disappearing during the course of the night, and all contact with them was lost in the morning, some Captains refusing to bring their ships back for several days. As the planning and success of the evacuation in the early stages largely depended on efficient control of shipping in Greek waters and as Greek ships might be required to assist, quite apart from any shipping from Egypt, it was quite clear this state of affairs would have to be altered. As a first step a signal station was established in Phaleron Bay manned by Royal Naval ratings for reporting and keeping in touch with ships. Greek sailors supplied by Greek naval authorities, with a knowledge of English, were placed on telephone watch at the most important telephones to Piraeus and Phaleron Bay, and interpreters provided. Also an arrangement was come to whereby I gradually took over control of Greek shipping in local waters, and eventually the conduct of all local naval affairs, the Divisional Sea Transport Officer and Naval Control Service Officer moving to my office at G.H.Q. Rear Admiral Turle was left free to give his attention to his diplomatic duties, which increased daily as the situation grew more critical. The cypher staff of the Naval Attaché were later on also transferred to my office. This arrangement was a mutual one between Rear Admiral Turle and myself, and I received every possible assistance and co-operation from him.

5. I could appreciate at once that the bottle-neck of any evacuation would be the small craft required for ferrying troops to H.M. Ships and transports from the beaches. It would have been a bad risk to use what quays were left available at Piraeus, and Kalamai in the S.W. Morea was the only other port with quays. A "Caique and Local Craft Committee" was formed this day under the direction of Commander K. Michell (of the Divisional Sea Transport Officer's staff) with military and Greek representatives, its purpose being to charter and fit out as many caiques, motor boats and local craft as possible. As it turned out hundreds of soldiers owe their escape to caiques and small craft taken up in this manner.

6. The reconnaissance parties already referred to left to reconnoitre beaches and roads. That this was necessary was shown by the fact that one of the best beaches to which roads were shown on some maps and charts had, in fact, no approach roads or tracks whatever, and so was useless for the purpose of evacuation. In order to put the beach organisation on a solid footing, the C.-in-C., Mediterranean was requested to send 12 officers for beaches and services with local craft and 24 Petty Officers and Leading Seamen, 72 Seamen and 6 Signalmen for beaches. These parties were considered vital as a quick turn round of craft at beaches would be essential, and numbers requested were based on the fact that the likelihood of being able to transfer parties from one locality to another under the prevailing conditions, was remote.

7. From a conference held at Air H.Q. this day at which General Wilson, Air Vice Marshal d'Albiac and I were present, the following facts emerged:—

(a) There was a marked deterioration in the military situation and in the morale of the Greek forces, as well as a weakening of the will to resist on the part of the Greek Government. General Papagos, the Greek Commander-in-Chief, had informed General Wilson that, if it was possible, he would like the British forces to be withdrawn as soon as practicable. General Wilson had informed the Greek Commander-in-Chief that the British could hold on for another month, but General Papagos doubted if the Greeks could hold out as long as that.

(b) Two major considerations at this time pointed to an early withdrawal:—

(i) The enemy's superiority in the air.

(ii) The fact that if our forces remained in Greece we would undoubtedly be confronted, at an early date, with the problem of feeding two million people.

(c) The earliest date of D.I for Operation "Demon" was likely to be Monday, 28th April.

(d) It was possible that the Thermopylae line might not hold out as the covering troops might not get back in time to hold it. It was therefore agreed that an emergency plan of evacuation should be made forthwith, without awaiting the results of beach reconnaissances.

8. Large numbers of the British colony were evacuated this day in two ships which sailed after dark. Subsequent to their sailing, I was informed that there were still 1,500 British subjects remaining to be evacuated. Every day saw this number diminishing, as they took whatever Greek ships were available, whether escorted or not.

9. The Greek Prime Minister today committed suicide and a new Government had to be formed.

Saturday, 19th April.

10. A conference was held at 1800 at which General Sir Archibald Wavell was present. The following points emerged and show the situation as it was at this time:—

(a) The new Greek Government had not yet been formed, and a new Prime Minister had not yet been elected. No decision had yet been received from the Head of the Government whether they wished to hold out or withdraw.

(b) A cable was received from the British Prime Minister in which he stated that there could be no question of a withdrawal of British troops for the present unless specially requested both by the Greek King and Government. The cable pointed out that as the Greeks had asked for the assistance of British troops in Greece, these troops could not be withdrawn on the grounds that the country would be devastated if they stayed.

(c) General Wilson was of the opinion that we could hold the Thermopylae line indefinitely once our troops were in position.

(d) I emphasised that I must know not later than Wednesday, 23rd April if withdrawal was to commence on 28th April or not, due to the fact that four days' notice was required before the necessary shipping could be made available in Greek waters.

(e) The A.O.C. drew attention to the precarious state to which his fighter strength was being reduced.

(f) It was decided that no preliminary evacuation should take place, both from the point of view of secrecy and because it was undesirable to discourage the Greeks at this time.

Sunday, 20th April.

11. Most of the beach reconnaissance parties returned during the course of the day. As soon as their reports had been considered, an outline plan was drawn up in collaboration with the Army and R.A.F. authorities. The plan was of necessity only a rough approximation, as it was impossible at this time to arrive at reliable figures, or predict the sequence of events in what would obviously be an extremely difficult military operation.

Monday, 21st April.

12. News was received that the Adolf Hitler Division had reached Yannina the previous evening, and that the Greek Army in the Epirus had capitulated without informing the Greek Government and without reference to General Papagos, and consequently without warning to the British in Athens. As the left of the Anzac Corps was now under the German threat from the direction of Messolonghion and had insufficient troops to meet it, and as, moreover, there appeared to be a possibility that the Italians and Germans might try a landing at or near Patras which would threaten the whole left rear, General Wilson decided that evacuation must begin at the earliest possible moment. I accordingly requested, as a preliminary step, certain shipping to be held in readiness in Suda Bay in case of emergency.

13. Brigadier Hewer flew to Cairo where a meeting was held at G.H.Q., M.E., to decide ways and means of putting the military and naval outline plans into effect.

14. In the evening I was called to General Wilson's house for a conference, and after dark General Wilson, Brigadier Galloway and I motored to the vicinity of Thebes, and had a conference with General Sir Thomas Blamey. Details of the retirement were decided upon and it was agreed that the evacuation should be commenced at the earliest possible date, which was likely to be the night of 24th/25th April.

15. Today a Naval Signal Office was established at Combined H.Q. with direct telephone lines to Botannikos W/T station and to a stand-by W/T station on the roof of a house about a quarter mile away from G.H.Q. Owing to language difficulties it was necessary to send a P.O. Telegraphist and a Signalman to man the telephone line in Botannikos W/T station. The Signalman had a lamp in case the telephone should be put out of action. The W/T station on the roof maintained communication on 465 kc/s with Suda Bay.

Tuesday, 22nd April.

16. At this time it was thought that the Glen ships, in view of C-in-C., Mediterranean's signal timed 1023/19, might already be at

Suda Bay, so that a preliminary evacuation might be possible if required on the night of 23rd/24th April. It was learnt later, however, that the Glen ships were not due to arrive at Suda until 2300 on 23rd April, and so would not be available until 24th/25th.

17. A fresh outline programme was then made out and signalled in my 1429/22. This programme was subsequently altered owing to the fact that the G.O.C. decided it was impracticable, due to the unexpectedly rapid advance of the German forces, to embark the rearguard, who were likely to be in contact with the enemy, from the Megara area, and that it would be necessary to withdraw these troops across the Corinth Canal and embark them from positions in the Morea. As will be seen later, this plan had again to be altered owing to the attack on the Corinth Canal by German parachute troops at daylight on Saturday, 26th April.

18. On 21st and 22nd April there were heavy massed air attacks on shipping and 23 vessels including two hospital ships and the Greek destroyer HYDRA were reported sunk in local waters on these two days. This did not promise well for the evacuation. After consultation with Air Vice Marshal d'Albiac, and considering both the naval and air aspects, I decided that the best time for transports to arrive at the beaches was one hour after dark, and to leave at 0300. This would prevent enemy reconnaissance aircraft from spotting the exact beaches being used, and so bombing them by the light of flares, while the transports should still be able to find the beaches. The early return from the beaches would give some chance of the ships clearing the coast without being spotted, and would give them more time to reach the area within support of the fighters from Crete by daylight or as soon as possible afterwards. There would be no such support from Greece whatsoever from 24th April onwards. I decided to accept the disadvantage of reducing the time the ships were at the beaches in order to give this possible extra security, and as events turned out it appears this was justified. The only transport to leave really late, the SLAMAT, was bombed and sunk and was the only ship to become a total loss after loading. Moreover, no beaches were bombed during embarkation.

Wednesday, 23rd April.

19. L.C.T. arrived at their beaches as follows:—

L.C.T.1 and 19 at Megara,

L.C.T.6 at Nauplion,

L.C.T.5 at Lavrion.

All except L.C.T.6 were lost in this operation.

The fact that they had no W/T was a great handicap at this time, as well as decreasing their chances of survival on the Greek coast.

20. Evacuation of the British colony, and certain numbers of troops, was proceeding irregularly in Greek steamers, sailing after dark, mostly for Crete. It was usually with the utmost difficulty that these ships could be found, fuelled and watered so that they could proceed. The majority of them were very slow, and nearly all unescorted.

Thursday, 24th April. D.1 Day.

21. Embarkation from the area east of Athens and Nauplia on the night 24th/25th was satisfactory, 10,200 personnel being embarked. Unfortunately, at Nauplia, ULSTER PRINCE grounded across the fairway, thus denying the use of the wharves to destroyers on succeeding nights. ULSTER PRINCE's quota of troops was taken off by PHOEBE. This embarkation was greatly assisted by ten caiques under the command of Lieut. Commander Carr, R.N.R., and again on the night 26th/27th.

22. H.M. King George and some members of the Greek Government left Athens for Crete in a flying boat. This was not announced until some days later.*

23. A large Greek yacht, the HELLAS, arrived unexpectedly in Piraeus harbour, reporting that she could steam 18 knots and take 1,000 passengers. She was instructed to sail after dark, loading to take place as late as possible. About 500 of the British community (mostly Maltese and Cypriots) decided to leave in this ship and walking cases from an Australian hospital were sent on board. About 1900 the HELLAS was dive bombed in the harbour and hit by two bombs, which set fire to the ship and jetty alongside. Colonel Renton, who was on board at the time, considers that four to five hundred people must have lost their lives and he believes the only gangway to the shore was destroyed. There were no hoses working on board at all and none from the jetty until nearly an hour afterwards.

24. One W/T set and one set of cypher books were sent in a lorry in the charge of a cypher officer to establish itself at new H.Q. near Myli to which we expected to move on Friday or Saturday. Owing to the inexperience of the W/T rating in charge the assistance of a skilled R.A.F. operator or technical officer was requested, and promised from Argos. This aerodrome was, however, bombed and completely disorganised this day and no assistance was forthcoming. This, and the fact that the set had become damaged in transit over bad roads, resulted in a failure of communications during the night 24th/25th, while H.Q. were moving from Athens to Myli.

25. Captain Clark-Hall, R.N. (D.S.T.O. Greece) was directed by me to proceed to Kalamata to assist in the embarkation at that port. He was fully in the picture as regards our plans, so far as they were formed, and was an especially suitable officer as he recently had experience of embarking troops at Le Havre and other ports in France where there were quays.

Friday, 25th April. D.2 Day

26. At 1930 the Joint Planning Staff and I left Athens bound for the new H.Q. with General Wilson at Myli, in the Morea. This change in H.Q. was made at the last possible moment to maintain the advantage of good W/T communications at Athens as long as possible. A second W/T set together with a signal and cypher staff followed in a convoy of lorries and cars in charge of my Signal Officer.

Admiralty footnote :—

* Like many other Heads of States whose countries were overrun by the enemy, the King of Greece deemed it his duty to go where he could most effectively aid the Allies in the prosecution of the war.

27. On our way, we stopped at P beach in the Megara area and saw the organisation behind the beaches for the embarkation, the transports and escort arriving just as we left.

Arrangements made appeared to be excellent. We passed over the Corinth Canal at 0030 Friday, 26th April, the German parachute troops arriving at dawn a few hours later.

28. During this day, ULSTER PRINCE, on shore at Nauplia, was heavily bombed and became a total loss.

29. On this night (25th/26th April), 5,700 troops were embarked from the Megara area (P beach) in spite of the losses of the transport S.S. PENNLAND on the way north, and of one of the two L.C.T. which had arrived in this area. Seven caiques under the command of Commander Michell assisted. It is believed that about 500, many of them wounded, were left on shore after waiting four days near the beach. This was due to the facts that they were to be embarked last, and that the L.C.T. fouled her propeller with a wire on her last trip (the other engine already being out of action). It is not yet known whether the wounded were taken off from another beach, and to what extent the caiques were able to assist.

Saturday, 26th April. D.3 Day

30. At 0530 we arrived at the new H.Q. near Myli. These were established in an olive grove in order to obtain cover from enemy dive-bombers. This was very necessary, as for some days the enemy had had complete air superiority, and I believe I am correct in saying that after 23rd April not one British plane left the ground in Greece (mainland) in support of our troops or ships. This is of course in no way whatever intended as a criticism of the R.A.F., whose pilots, hopelessly outnumbered, fought most gallantly to the end, but it is intended to emphasise our complete inferiority in the air at this time.

31. Besides myself and staff, Brigadier Galloway and Group Captain Pelly, the following had arrived here during the night:—

General Sir H. Maitland Wilson, and staff.

Major-General T. G. G. Heywood, Head of the British Military Mission and other members of the Mission.

Rear Admiral C. E. Turle, Naval Attaché, Athens, and staff.

Brigadier A. G. Salisbury Jones, of the British Military Mission.

Prince Peter of Greece.

The Greek Minister of the Interior.

Admiral Sakellariou (ex Minister of Navy, and ex Vice-Premier during the last days).

Three other Greek Ministers or Members of Household.

A destroyer had been asked for to take this party off from Myli at 2200, but no confirmation had been received that she was arriving. A flying boat was also expected at the same time as the destroyer, but if the weather was at all bad, she would not have been able to land, the bay not being sheltered from the south.

32. On arrival at Myli, every endeavour was made to re-open communications which had been broken during our move. Owing to continual presence of enemy aircraft overhead, it was necessary to site all sets under trees. This, and the fact that H.Q. was in a valley, rendered

reception doubtful and transmission on any adequate aerial impossible. This resulted in some unreliability in naval communications which finally caused use to be made of an Army Marconi W/T set working to Cairo. This was subsequently proved to be unnecessary since my immediate signals 1103/26 and 1151/26 were, in fact, received by V.A.L.F. about 1400/26.

On departure from Myli, one W/T set and books were embarked in the caique and subsequently in the destroyer HAVOCK, but due to the darkness, confusion with Army personnel and equipment, and the limited and varied means of water transport, an essential box of spares was lost overboard, and the set itself suffered some damage.

33. At 0900 news was received that the Corinth Canal, together with the road and rail bridge, had been attacked and was probably held by German parachute troops, following on an intense aerial bombardment. This necessitated a further alteration of plan, as it was then evident that the only place from which the rear-guard could be withdrawn with reasonable safety was from the embarkation points in the area to the east of Athens. A fresh plan was made and signalled, and this was adhered to for the remainder of the evacuation. It was very fortunate that this signal could be passed to Brigadiers Charrington and Puttock at this time.

34. At sunset we abandoned our H.Q. and the whole party proceeded to Myli pier. On arrival at the pier it was found that the flying boat had arrived, but there was no sign of the destroyer. The more important passengers were embarked in the flying boat. My arrangements were for my Chief Staff Officer, Commander Fearn, to accompany General Wilson to Suda that night with the object of co-operation with S.N.O. Suda Bay and V.A.L.F. in the directing of movements of escorts and shipping at Suda Bay, in case W/T communications from the Morea should fail in the later stages. Commander Fearn was, of course, fully conversant with the situation so far as it was known. General Wilson suggested that I should leave with him that night, but I decided to remain until the N.Z. Brigade under General Freyberg had been evacuated, and to proceed to their beaches at Monemvasia myself, taking with me my signal staff, W/T set, beachmasters, etc. It appeared to me at the time that if the L.C.T. failed to arrive, this might be a difficult operation and lengthy, and I preferred to be on the spot myself.

35. The local situation in the Morea was that at midnight, our covering forces 15 miles to the north of Myli were being withdrawn through Myli to Tripolis, and it was anticipated that by next morning the enemy would be in Myli and Nauplia, by which time the large embarkation, which was in the process of being carried out at the latter place, should be completed. The enemy air superiority made it necessary for us to get to Monemvasia, 56 miles distant, before daylight. As an alternative method of proceeding, in the event of a destroyer not being available, the Crown Prince of Greece's motor yacht had been placed at my disposal, with Lieut. Harrison, R.N.R. in command, but this yacht had been bombed and put out of action during the course of the afternoon. The only other alternative was a caique chartered by Colonel Smith-Dorrien; and, in the absence of the

destroyer, we proceeded to board her—later the destroyer HAVOCK arrived and took us off the caique, and enabled us to reach Monemvasia before daylight.

Sunday, 27th April. Near Monemvasia.

36. Off Monemvasia we unexpectedly came up with ten L.C.A. belonging to GLENEARN, who had been bombed on Saturday. We landed in these and lay in a small bay four miles north of Monemvasia, scattering the L.C.A. amongst the beaches about half a mile apart. It was most fortunate that these were not spotted by enemy aircraft which were constantly overhead for the next two days.

37. Heavy bombing was heard to the northward during the morning, which later proved to have been the attack on the Dutch transport SLAMAT which resulted in her loss, together with that of the destroyers DIAMOND and WRYNECK.

38. In the forenoon, Commander James, the Principal Beachmaster at Monemvasia, and other officers, reconnoitred the beaches in preparation for the coming night's embarkation. I ordered him to try to get into telephonic communication with Kalamata, but this he was unable to do. Brigadier Galloway also got into touch with General Freyberg and found the retirement on Monemvasia was going according to plan. After dark I sent three L.C.A. further north to increase their dispersion.

39. On arrival at Monemvasia, the W/T set and the few ratings and cypher officers were landed and communication was established with Malta and Alexandria on 8260 kc/s. and with Malta and ship detailed by V.A.L.F. on 465 kc/s. Communication from Monemvasia was not perfect throughout, as even after all the spares carried with the W/T set had been used, one of the remaining transmitting valves was found to be soft and lost its emission as soon as it heated up. Despite this handicap, all messages vital to the operation were cleared and similar messages from V.A.L.F. and Suda were received.

Embarkations.

40. On the night 26th/27th April, a total of approximately 18,000 troops were evacuated, and all areas were used except the Megara area. Owing to a heavy ground swell off Raphena (C beach) difficulty was experienced in transferring troops from landing craft alongside the GLENGYLE. The Commanding Officer therefore issued instructions that the last landing craft were to be clear of the beach by 0215, in order that craft could be hoisted in time for GLENGYLE to sail at 0300. About 700 men were left ashore and were brought off the next night.

41. The numbers embarked from Nauplia were greatly reduced owing to the stranding of ULSTER PRINCE preventing the use of wharves by destroyers, and also to the non-arrival of GLENEARN landing craft, due to the ship having been disabled by bombing attack on 26th April. The numbers actually embarked from this area (Beaches S and T) were approximately 5,500 instead of the 8,000 planned.

42. On the night 27th/28th April, approximately 4,700 embarked from the area to the east of Athens. This party included the rear-guard formed by the 4th N.Z. Brigade, whom

as has already been stated, it had been intended in the first instance to embark from Megara, and subsequently from the Peloponnesé. The latter project had to be abandoned when the Corinth Canal was seized by the enemy.

Monday, 28th April.

43. Reconnaissance aircraft were over the beach on which we were established early, followed by dive bombers who made a series of heavy attacks on some craft about three-quarters of a mile distant immediately the other side of the hill behind our beach and invisible to us. It subsequently turned out that the object of their attack was L.C.T. 5 from Nauplia, which had left that beach on Sunday morning, laid up for the day and proceeded to Monemvasia on Sunday night, arriving at daylight Monday, with 600 Australians on board. The Australians had been landed at Monemvasia at dawn and took cover with the N.Z. Division, but the L.C.T. was seen and bombed shortly afterwards. The L.C.T., though she replied vigorously at first, was soon on fire, and there was a constant series of ammunition explosions from her during the day. The fire on board prevented her being boarded to effect her complete destruction. There were no casualties.

44. The above incident left the L.C.A. as practically the only means for embarking the N.Z. Division this night, and it was most fortunate they were not seen and bombed, also that the C.O. GLENEARN had the foresight to send them to Monemvasia, as they could not have made Nauplia in time, after this ship had been bombed.

45. After dark, I proceeded with all L.C.A. to the embarkation point at Monemvasia, where I met General Freyberg in his H.Q. near the beach at 2130. At this time, I had received no confirmation that ships were arriving, and also did not know whether they would be transports or H.M. Ships. Furthermore, it was doubtful whether my signal regarding the actual embarkation points had been received by the ships concerned, or not; the bay is a large one. At 2230 no ships had arrived, so I despatched Lieut.-Cdr. Robertson in a L.C.A. to endeavour to get in touch beyond Monemvasia Island which had the beaches from seaward. He soon contacted the destroyers, which were actually on their way in, and I proceeded on board GRIFFIN and led her close to the North Jetty, leaving Lieut.-Cdr. Robertson in the ISIS to go to the South Jetty.

46. The embarkation which took place mainly from the causeway connecting the Island to the mainland, began at 2350 and was completed by 0300/29, 3,800 men being embarked. General Freyberg and I saw the beaches cleared and went on board AJAX at 0300/29. Two caiques were employed on this night under the command of Lieut. Cumberlege, R.N.R., and Lieut.-Cdr. Hook, R.N. (Retd.) and did excellent work.

47. The whole embarkation was remarkably well carried out from five different points. The Army organisation in rear of the beaches and the discipline of the troops were magnificent; especially considering that they had been fighting a rearguard action for some weeks, from Salonika almost to Cape Matapan. AJAX

and destroyers all closed well in to the jetties, and the organisation for embarking the troops in the ships was excellent. The fact that we had at this time collected extra signalmen and so had good communication with the ships, much accelerated the whole operation. The young officers in the L.C.A. handled their craft very well.

48. I had arranged with the Commanding Officers of AJAX and GRIFFIN to place charges in the L.C.A. so as to destroy them before departure. The charges were placed in each craft, and the C.O. AJAX gave the order for their destruction. However, at this time, fires on shore caused by burning M.T. lit up the ships in the bay, and the C.O. AJAX decided he could not wait to complete the destruction. The lights on shore had been bright for some time, and with the danger of submarines I considered he was correct to leave at once. One submarine had been depth charged on the way to the beaches. One or two L.C.A. were destroyed by the destroyer HOTSPUR, but four or five were left afloat.

49. During the same night it had been intended to embark approximately 8,000 personnel from Kalamata. This operation was, however, frustrated, as on the arrival of the ships off the entrance to the harbour, it was reported that the harbour was in the possession of the enemy, and also the harbour had been mined. Some of our troops were collected in an area to the south-east of the harbour, but in view of the close proximity of the enemy and the absence of landing craft (which had not been provided as it had been intended to use the wharves in the harbour) it was not possible to embark more than a very few of these troops. Ships withdrew at about 0230/29, leaving a total of approximately 4,000 British and 2,000 Palestinian and Cypriot troops, together with 1,500 Jugoslav refugees, on shore.

50. As first hand information as to what actually happened at Kalamata this night will be reported by those directly concerned, I do not propose to enlarge on the matter here, but from information from military sources which has already come to hand the facts of the case appear to be briefly as follows. The Germans entered the town at about 1600 with a force consisting of a number of infantry and two medium guns. They were counter-attacked and driven from the harbour by 2300 with a loss of 140 prisoners and one gun. Unfortunately, the naval embarkation officer, Capt. Clark-Hall, and his signalman, had been captured by the Germans on their first entry, and as he was the only naval officer present ashore, this doubtless had a bad effect on communication between the troops ashore and the ships. There is no evidence to show that ships were ever informed that the enemy had been driven out of the town.

Tuesday, 29th April.

51. I arrived at Suda Bay in AJAX at 0800 and reported with General Freyberg to General Sir Maitland Wilson at his H.Q. This night destroyers were sent to Kalamata with the object of bringing off any troops that could be embarked from the beaches in the vicinity, but this only resulted in about 120 officers and men being recovered.

Wednesday, 30th April.

52. At 0430 I left for Alexandria in a flying boat. On this night, destroyers were again sent to the Kalamata area, approximately 130 officers and men being recovered. Two destroyers were also sent to Milos, and succeeded in evacuating 650 troops, of whom approximately 400 were Palestinians. These had reached Milos in a Greek vessel which had been bombed some days previously.

(Signed) H. T. BAILLIE-GROHMAN,
Rear Admiral.
Flag Officer Attached
Middle East.

ENCLOSURE 2.
Office of Vice Admiral,
Light Forces,
Mediterranean,
H.M.S. ORION,
5th May, 1941.

The Commander-in-Chief,
Mediterranean.

I have the honour to report that I sailed from Alexandria in H.M.S. ORION with H.M. Ships DECOY, HAVOCK and HASTY in company at 1915 on 24th April, in accordance with your signal 1620/24th April.* H.M.S. DEFENDER joined my flag at 1000 on 25th April.

2. The situation at midnight 24th/25th April was as follows:—

Nauplia

H.M.S. PHOEBE	} Embarking troops.
H.M.A.S. STUART (Captain (D), 10th Des- troyer Flotilla)	
H.M.A.S. VOYAGER	
H.M.S. ULSTER PRINCE	
H.M.S. GLENEARN	
H.M.S. HYACINTH	

Raphitis

H.M.S. CALCUTTA	} Embarking troops.
H.M.A.S. PERTH	
H.M.S. GLENGYLE	

On Passage

H.M.S. GRIMSBY	} A.N. 29 arriv- ing Aegean on 25th April.
H.M.A.S. VENDETTA	
H.M.A.S. WATERHEN	
S.S. THEMONI	
S.S. ZEALAND	
S.S. KIRKLAND	
S.S. ARAYBANK	
S.S. RUNO	

On Passage

H.M.S. COVENTRY	} A.N.F. 29 ar- riving Aegean on 25th April.
H.M.S. WRYNECK	
H.M.S. DIAMOND	
H.M.S. GRIFFIN	
S.S. PENNLAND	
S.S. THURLAND CASTLE	

Admiralty oönote —

* The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean's signal 1620/24th April included the following instructions:—
"The object is to embark men, if possible, with arms, but no material must be allowed to take precedence to men. Troop ships with men embarked to sail direct to Alexandria, except Glen ships which must unload at Suda Bay (Crete) and do a second embarkation. Destroyers take their troops to Crete where they will be transferred later."

On Passage

H.M.S. ORION (V.A.L.F.)	} Arriving Suda Bay at 1800 on 25th April.
H.M.S. DECOY	
H.M.S. HASTY	
H.M.S. HAVOCK	
H.M.S. DEFENDER	

On Passage

H.M.S. ISIS	} Arriving Suda Bay at a.m. 26th April.
H.M.S. HERO	
H.M.S. HOTSPUR	
H.M.S. HEReward	
R.F.A. BRAMBLELEAF*	

On Passage

H.M.S. NUBIAN	Arriving Suda Bay at 0400 on 26th April.
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On Passage

H.M.S. CARLISLE	} A.G. 14 ar- riving Aegean at 0700 on 26th April.
H.M.S. KANDAHAR	
H.M.S. KINGSTON	
S.S. COSTA RICA	
S.S. CITY OF LONDON	
S.S. DILWARA	
S.S. SALWEEN	
S.S. SLAMAT	
S.S. KHEDIVE ISMAIL	

On Passage

H.M.S. FLAMINGO	Arriving at 1700 on 26th April.
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On Passage

H.M.S. KIMBERLEY	} A.G. 15 ar- riving at 1300 on 27th April.
H.M.A.S. VAMPIRE	
H.M.S. AUCKLAND	
S.S. IONIA	
S.S. CORINTHIA	
S.S. ITRIA	
S.S. BELRAY	
S.S. ELONORA MAERSK	
S.S. COMLIEBANK	

3. *General Considerations.*—Because of the presence in Greece of strong enemy air forces and the rapidly diminishing fighter support, it was necessary to carry out all evacuation at night and withdraw all ships to the southward during the day. The whole programme was based on this consideration. It will be noticed that nearly all losses from aircraft were sustained in the region of the parallel of 37 degrees North, which was approximately the limit of the range of the enemy dive bombers. It was my policy to insist on all ships leaving the places of embarkation in time to be south of 37 degrees North by daylight and it will be noted that the failure of the SLAMAT to leave Nauplia at the time ordered resulted in her being within range of the dive bombers well after dawn.

Another factor to be borne in mind was the possibility of interference by surface craft from the westward.

Throughout there was no fighter support for ships at sea north of 37 degrees North. The R.A.F. in Crete did what they could for convoys south of this latitude, but the protection was slender, by reason of the small number of aircraft available.

Admiralty footnote —

* R.F.A. BRAMBLELEAF—A Naval oil tanker.

NIGHT 24TH/25TH APRIL.

4. *General Disposition.*—Ships had been detailed to embark troops at Nauplia and Raptis as shown in paragraph 2 above.

5. *Bombing of GLENEARN.*—At 1745 on 24th April, whilst on passage to Nauplia, H.M.S. GLENEARN was attacked by two Heinkel bombers and was hit on the forecastle. The anchor and cable gear were destroyed and a fire started forward. The fire was extinguished and the ship proceeded at 1845.

6. *ULSTER PRINCE — Grounding.*—H.M.S. ULSTER PRINCE in attempting to go alongside the quay ran ashore and, although every endeavour was made to get her off by towing, it was not possible to do so in the time available. The following day she was heavily bombed and gutted. Apart from the loss of the ship which was severely felt during the rest of the operation, this had an unfortunate effect in that she was a physical obstruction to destroyers and corvettes going alongside, thus slowing down the rate of embarkation at Nauplia on that and other nights. I agree with the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. ULSTER PRINCE that it was unwise to attempt to put her alongside when the information as to water, etc., was so meagre.

7. *Embarkation at Nauplia.*—It is estimated that the following numbers were embarked:—

PHOEBE	1,131
GLENEARN	5,100
VOYAGER	340
STUART	1
HYACINTH	113
Total	6,685

8. *Embarkation at Raptis.*—Despite a slow start owing to lack of troops ready to embark, things went smoothly and about 5,000 were embarked in GLENGYLE and 700 in H.M.S. CALCUTTA.

25TH APRIL.

9. *Convoy to Alexandria—Diversion.*—H.M.S. ORION arrived Suda at 1845. H.M. Ships GRIMSBY and VOYAGER with certain ships from Suda were then leaving harbour for Alexandria. It was explained to the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda, that the contents of several of the ships which had just sailed would be urgently required at Suda, e.g. food and coal. GRIMSBY was therefore ordered to return to Suda with THEMONI, ROCOS, ZEALAND and KIRKLAND, and VOYAGER to continue with the remainder comprising CHERRYLEAF and some Greek ships.

10. *General Situation.*—The military situation in Greece was obscure. The numbers to be evacuated were given in F.O.A.M.'s* 1813 of 24th and 2025 of 24th as:—

25th-26th April	5,000 from Megara area.
26th-27th April	27,000.
27th-28th April	Nil.
28th-29th April	4,000 from Githion and Monemvasia.
29th-30th April	4,000 from Kalamata, Githion and Monemvasia.

Admiralty footnote:—

* F.O.A.M.—Flag Officer Attached Middle East.

11. *Disposition for night's embarkation.*—F.O.A.M.'s programme provided for embarkation at Megara in PENNLAND, THURLAND CASTLE, COVENTRY, WRYNECK, DIAMOND and GRIFFIN commencing at 2200. I also despatched WATERHEN and VENDETTA, on their arrival at Suda with A.N.29, to assist. DECOY, HASTY and HAVOCK were detached to Nauplia to investigate the situation there as regards troops and the ULSTER PRINCE and were ordered to embark any troops available and convey them to Suda.

12. *S.S. PENNLAND.*—During the afternoon the PENNLAND was bombed and damaged. H.M.S. GRIFFIN was ordered to stand by till dark. Later the PENNLAND was again attacked and damaged and eventually sank. H.M.S. GRIFFIN picked up the survivors and returned to Suda. I therefore diverted DECOY, HASTY and HAVOCK from Nauplia to Megara to embark PENNLAND's quota as far as possible.

13. On my arrival at Suda I conferred with the Naval Officer-in-Charge and later took H.M. Ships ORION, PERTH, PHOEBE and DEFENDER to sea for the night.

During the whole of this time I was in constant anxiety with regard to fuel. There was none at Suda and R.F.A. BRAMBLE-LEAF was not arriving until a.m. 26th April.

NIGHT OF 25TH/26TH APRIL.

14. *Embarkation.*—At Megara, THURLAND CASTLE, COVENTRY, WRYNECK, DIAMOND and GRIFFIN embarked 4,600 army personnel. DECOY, HASTY and HAVOCK embarked 1,300. Owing to the breakdown of a L.C.T., 250 were left ashore.

After H.M.S. GLENROY had grounded at Alexandria six of her L.C.A. and a beach party were embarked in THURLAND CASTLE and were of the utmost value.

26TH APRIL.

15. *Disposition for embarkation 26th/27th April.*—The following embarkation arrangements were made for the night of 26th/27th April:—

Raphina — GLENGYLE, NUBIAN, DECOY, HASTY.

Raptis—SALWEEN, CARLISLE, KANDAHAR, KINGSTON.

Nauplia—SLAMAT, KHEDIVE ISMAIL, CALCUTTA, ISIS, HOTSPUR.

Tolon — GLENEARN, DIAMOND, GRIFFIN, HAVOCK.

Kalamata—DILWARA, CITY OF LONDON, COSTA RICA, PHOEBE, DEFENDER, FLAMINGO, HERO, HEReward.

In addition, NUBIAN was detailed to embark 600 men, reported at Port St. Nikolo, Zea Island, and then return to escort GLENGYLE. HAVOCK was detailed to embark the G.O.C., his Staff, and F.O.A.M. and Staff at Myli opposite Nauplia. These dispositions were made in response to F.O.A.M.'s 1336 of 25th.

16. *H.M.S. GLENEARN — Damage.*—H.M.S. GLENEARN was bombed and hit in the engine-room p.m. on 26th April. GRIFFIN took her in tow to Suda Bay and she was

instructed to send landing craft to Monemvasia, since they could not reach Nauplia in time for that night's evacuation.

In consequence ORION, PERTH and STUART proceeded to Nauplia to assist in the embarkation.

All ships were instructed that if the weather delayed embarkation, they were to take what troops they were able and leave at 0300.

17. *SCOTTISH PRINCE*. — R.F.A. BRAMBLELEAF arrived safely at Suda a.m. The *SCOTTISH PRINCE* on passage from Smyrna to Suda was bombed and damaged south of Milo at about noon. H.M.S. GRIMSBY was sent by the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda, to assist. The Senior Officer of convoy G.A.15 detached H.M.A.S. VAMPIRE to her assistance. She was not sinking and her crew was put on board again and with the aid of some naval ratings from the GRIMSBY she eventually reached Suda.

18. At 1547 information was received from the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda, of a Greek vessel with British troops on board, bombed and requiring medical assistance off Milo. The Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda, was instructed to send GRIMSBY if sufficient information became available.

NIGHT OF 26TH/27TH APRIL.

19. F.O.A.M. had signalled on 25th that position C (Raphina) and T (Tolon) must each be worked by one Glen ship and this had been arranged. But, during the afternoon of 28th April, I received F.O.A.M.'s 1103/26th asking for a Glen ship to go to S (Nauplia) instead of to T (Tolon). I accordingly asked F.O.A.M. to communicate direct with CALCUTTA if he required any change, but shortly after this GLENEARN was bombed and disabled and reported that she had sent all her landing craft down the coast to Monemvasia.

20. *Nauplia and Tolon*.—I took ORION, PERTH and STUART to Nauplia to do what was possible to embark GLENEARN's quota. On arrival I detached STUART to see what was the position at Tolon while ORION and PERTH went to Nauplia where CALCUTTA, SLAMAT, KHEDIVE ISMAIL and four destroyers were already anchored.

At Nauplia there was only one motor caique transporting troops to SLAMAT. Apart from this, the warships' boats did what they could. KHEDIVE ISMAIL received no troops at all owing to the lack of any craft to transport them to her.

Meanwhile STUART reported at Tolon there was a large number of troops, and a L.C.T., and she (STUART) was already full. I ordered STUART alongside ORION to embark the 600 troops she had on board from Tolon and sent PERTH and STUART back to Tolon to continue the embarkation there.

In the end the ships had to sail with 4,527 troops, having left ashore a number variously reported as 2,500 and 6,000. This very unsatisfactory outcome is solely due to the bombing of GLENEARN and the absence of her boats. All available craft and the L.C.T. were fully employed throughout the available hours.

21. The ultimate fate of the L.C.T. is not known. The motor caique is known to have embarked 19 military staff officers and their batmen, and beachmaster and some naval ratings and reached Monemvasia in time for the final embarkation there.

22. The following numbers were embarked during the night:—

Raphina and Raphtis.

GLENGYLE	...	3,500
SALWEEN	...	2,000
CARLISLE	...	1,310
KINGSTON	...	850
KANDAHAR	...	560
NUBIAN	...	3

(500 men were left at Raphina)

Nauplia.

ORION	...	600
SLAMAT	...	500 (estimated)
CALCUTTA	...	960
ISIS	...	408
HOTSPUR	...	500
KHEDIVE ISMAIL	...	Nil
DIAMOND	...	Nil

Tolon.

ORION	...	600
PERTH	...	850
STUART	...	109

Kalamata.

DILWARA	...	2,400
CITY OF LONDON	...	3,500
COSTA RICA	...	2,500
DEFENDER	...	250 and Yugo-Slav Crown jewels in cases.
PHOEBE, FLAMINGO, HERO and HEReward	...	Nil

23. *Zea Island*.—NUBIAN reported that troops on Zea Island had left Port Nikolo for embarkation elsewhere.

The L.C.T. working nightly at Raphtis is believed to have hidden at Zea each day. It is fairly certain that this party returned in the L.C.T. to Raphtis on the evening of 27th April and were embarked in AJAX or destroyers.

24. H.M.S. HAVOCK embarked F.O.A.M. and the combined H.Q. Staff. F.O.A.M. was landed at Monemvasia.

27TH APRIL.

25. *Sinking of S.S. SLAMAT*. — The SLAMAT did not sail from Nauplia until 0415 although repeatedly told to do so at 0300. At 0715 she was bombed and set on fire in position 37° 01' N. 23° 10' E. DIAMOND was ordered by CALCUTTA to go alongside to take off her troops, the convoy proceeding meanwhile. I had ordered WRYNECK, WATERHEN and VENDETTA from Suda to join the convoy to relieve ISIS and HOTSPUR, so that they could go ahead to Suda to disembark their troops. WRYNECK, WATERHEN and VENDETTA joined at 0910 and CALCUTTA immediately despatched WRYNECK to the assistance of DIAMOND, who had, at 0815, called for help in picking up survivors from the SLAMAT, reporting that she was being constantly dive bombed while doing so. At 0925 DIAMOND reported that she had picked up most of the survivors and was proceeding to Suda Bay. At 1025 WRYNECK made a request for fighter protection.

26. I had difficulty in getting Senior Officers of forces to say how many troops had been embarked in the large transports. On this depended the decision whether to send all ships direct to Alexandria or some to Suda. It also complicated the arrangements of escorts and fuelling before escorting. The KHEDIVE ISMAIL had none and I thought of sending her to Suda, but there was no escort to take her there.

27. *Convoy G.A.14.*—As there was no room in Suda and I deemed the changing situation to make further delay dangerous, Convoy G.A.14 was formed and proceeded, consisting of GLENGYLE, SALWEEN, KHEDIVE ISMAIL, DILWARA, CITY OF LONDON and COSTA RICA escorted by COVENTRY, CALCUTTA, FLAMINGO, STUART, VENDETTA, WATERHEN and VAMPIRE. They were covered from the north-westward by PERTH, PHOEBE, DECOY, HASTY, NUBIAN, DEFENDER, HERO, HEReward and WRYNECK during the night 27th/28th April, 1941.

It was arranged for this convoy to form up—and for escorts to be exchanged—in position 35° 50' N. 23° 50' E. (about 20 miles north of Maleme aerodrome) and the Senior Air Force Officer, Crete, was asked to provide maximum fighter protection while this was in progress.

28. *H.M.S. GLENEARN.*—Meanwhile the GLENEARN had been towed to Kissamo Bay by GRIFFIN, and GRIMSBY was sent round from Suda to take over. GRIFFIN took off 150 of GLENEARN's complement leaving 90 onboard. The GLENEARN had no steam and no anchors and required 12 hours to prepare for towing. She was eventually taken in tow by GRIMSBY and reached Alexandria safely although attacked by aircraft while off Gavdo on 28th April.

29. *General Movements.*—AJAX, from Alexandria, joined my flag at 0730 and I arrived at Suda in H.M.S. ORION with PERTH and AJAX in company at 1130, 27th April and disembarked troops. AJAX, KINGSTON, KIMBERLEY and HAVOCK sailed soon after noon for Raptis. PHOEBE, with DEFENDER, HEReward, KANDAHAR, NUBIAN, DECOY, HASTY and HERO arrived at 1900, disembarked troops and fuelled. PERTH and PHOEBE with DECOY and HASTY left at 2030 to cover G.A.14. NUBIAN, HERO, HEReward and DEFENDER also sailed at 2300 for the same purpose. I reported to you the progress made.

30. *S.S. COSTA RICA—Sinking.*—The COSTA RICA in G.A.14 was hit by a bomb at about 1500 in position 35° 54' N. 23° 49' E. and sank 90 minutes later. AUCLAND and SALVIA were sent out from Suda to assist, but her entire troops and crew had been taken off by HERO, HEReward and DEFENDER and were landed at Suda.

31. *Loss of DIAMOND and WRYNECK.*—When it was realised that DIAMOND had not arrived with PHOEBE and other destroyers I became anxious about her. From 1922 to 1955 DIAMOND had been called without

reply. As DIAMOND had last been heard of with WRYNECK during the forenoon, PHOEBE and CALCUTTA were asked whether WRYNECK had been seen going away with G.A.14 since I did not wish to ask WRYNECK herself to break W/T silence. Their replies at 2235 and 2245 gave no definite indication. I therefore despatched GRIFFIN to the position of the sinking of the SLAMAT to investigate. At 0230 GRIFFIN reported she had come upon a raft from WRYNECK and everything pointed to the fact that both WRYNECK and DIAMOND were sunk. H.M.S. GRIFFIN picked up about 50 survivors. WRYNECK's whaler was reported to have made towards Cape Malea. This eventually arrived at Suda. The total naval survivors from the two ships comprised one officer and 41 ratings. There were, in addition, about 8 soldiers. From statements of the survivors, it appears that the two ships were bombed at about 1315 both receiving hits which caused them to sink almost immediately.

32. *Movements of Vice Admiral, Light Forces.*—I had intended to go with the covering force of G.A.14 but I decided that I must stay in Suda for the night so that I would be free to communicate by W/T. Experience had shown it would be quite impracticable to maintain W/T silence.

NIGHT 27TH/28TH APRIL.

33. AJAX with KIMBERLEY, KINGSTON and HAVOCK were sent to Raptis to arrive 2200 27th April, to embark the rearguard of about 3,000 and the beach party. This was the final evacuation north of the Corinth Canal.

(The following were embarked:—

AJAX ...	2,500
KINGSTON ...	640
KIMBERLEY ...	700
HAVOCK ...	800 from Raphena Cove.

ISIS and HOTSPUR took a battalion of troops from Suda to Canea for the defence of the aerodrome at the urgent request of CRETFORCE.*

28TH APRIL.

34. *Formation of Convoy G.A.15.*—I was now becoming increasingly anxious to evacuate as many troops as possible from Crete. This anxiety was also shared by the Senior Officers of the other services. There was the probability of heavy air attack at any moment and the possibility of an attempt to take Crete and interference by enemy surface forces. I therefore proposed sailing G.A.15 via Kaso p.m. 29th April or a.m. 30th April after the final evacuation on the night of 28th/29th. The route through the Kaso Strait was selected as interference from Italian forces and attack by the German air force was less likely and cover by the battleships possible. This course of action was approved in your 0917/28th and 1444/28th April.

35. I reported progress to you in my 1515 of 28th April, 1941.

Admiralty footnote:—

*CRETFORCE—Officer Commanding Military Forces in Crete.

NIGHT OF 28TH/29TH APRIL.

36. *General*.—The following arrangements were made for the final embarkation on the night 28th/29th April:—

Kalamata.

PERTH PHOEBE NUBIAN DEFENDER HERO HEREWARD DECOY HASTY	Direct from covering G.A.14 the previous night. It was estimated there were 7,000 troops remaining. The intention was that this force should sail for Alexandria on completion of embarkation.
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Monemvasia.

AJAX
HAVOCK
HOTSPUR
GRIFFIN
ISIS

Kithera.

AUCKLAND
SALVIA
HYACINTH

37. *Kalamata—Yugo-Slav Refugees*.—In consequence of information received from F.O.A.M. that there were 1,500 Yugo-Slav refugees still at Kalamata, KANDAHAR, KINGSTON and KIMBERLEY were sent from Suda to assist PERTH, PHOEBE and the destroyers there.

38. *Leonidion*.—It was not possible to provide for the embarkation of the party at Leonidion, but the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda, was instructed to investigate the possibility of evacuating them by Sunderland flying boat.

39. *Kalamata*.—The first report from this beach was from HERO at 2207 that the harbour was occupied by the Germans and that British troops were to the south of the town. I sent ashore to ask General Wilson to come on board ORION where he could receive the latest information from Kalamata as it arrived and advise me on the military aspect of a possible further evacuation from Kalamata the following night. At 2234 a signal was received from HERO stating that troops were collecting on the beach south east of the town, that all firing had ceased in the town and that evacuation was considered possible from the beach. At 2240 information was received from HERO that the Germans appeared to have no artillery and requesting PERTH's position so that he could close and report the situation. At 2250 I instructed PERTH to use his discretion but to make no promises for the following night, unless he heard from me. I impressed on him that he was to sail at the time ordered. However, at 2315/28 I received PERTH's 2231/28 that the town was occupied by Germans, that he had abandoned the operation and was steering 175 degrees 29 knots with the whole of his force in company except HERO.

General Wilson advised me that most of the troops would probably be forced to surrender on the morning of 29th April and asked me that 2 or 3 destroyers only should be sent on the night of 29th/30th to embark such small parties as might have moved down the rocky coast towards Cape Matapan.

HERO reported that he was returning at 0200 on 29th with as many as he could.

40. H.M. Ships KANDAHAR, KINGSTON and KIMBERLEY arrived at Kalamata at 0100; joined HERO off the beach; this force was able to embark the following troops in their own boats:—

KANDAHAR	...	...	126
HERO	...	...	134
KIMBERLEY	...	...	33
KINGSTON	...	...	39
Total			332

41. *Monemvasia and Kithera*.—The embarkation at the beaches at Monemvasia and Kithera proceeded smoothly and troops were embarked as follows:—

Monemvasia

AJAX	...	1,050
HAVOCK	...	850
HOTSPUR	...	800
GRIFFIN	...	720
ISIS	...	900

Kithera

AUCKLAND	}	60 military
SALVIA		700 R.A.F. and
HYACINTH		60 Greek soldiers

The evacuation at Kithera was effected by a L.C.A. ex GLENROY taken in H.M.S. AJAX and towed back to Suda Bay by H.M.S. SALVIA.

42. *H.M.S. YORK*.—Your 0950/28th* was received at 1130/28th. I decided to leave onboard H.M.S. YORK working and maintenance parties and a nucleus salvage party. The remainder of the crew and some valuable stores were embarked in ORION.

29TH APRIL.

43. *Convoy G.A.15*.—Convoy G.A.15 sailed from Suda at 1100 on 29th April via Kaso, speed 10 knots. It was comprised as follows:—

DELANE (Commodore)	}	625 Italian officers
		700 distressed British seamen
		585 troops
		120 Fleet Air Arm
THURLAND CASTLE		2,640 troops
COMLIEBANK		1,450 troops
CORINTHIA	}	330 Consular staff and British subjects
		332 troops
ITRIA	}	1,775 R.A.F.
		237 troops
IONIA	}	450 walking wounded
		237 nurses
		157 troops
BRAMBLELEAF	...	Nil

Admiralty footnote:—

* This signal gave orders to abandon the salvage of H.M.S. YORK for the present and to land her A.A. armament and ammunition for local defence at Suda Bay.

Escorted by

CARLISLE ...	50 troops	
AUCKLAND ...	50 troops	
KANDAHAR ...	50 troops	
KINGSTON ...	50 troops	
DECOY		} joined at sea.
DEFENDER		
HYACINTH		

Covered by

ORION... ..	435 naval personnel (mostly ex YORK) 15 troops	}
AJAX	616 troops 27 naval ratings	
PERTH PHOEBE HASTY HEREWARD NUBIAN		} joined at sea.

44. The Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda, is much to be complimented on the celerity with which this convoy was handled and sailed. The various ships bringing in over 5,000 men from Greece did not arrive at Suda till 0730 onwards and the redistribution of these troops into transports and fuelling of destroyers, as well as the embarkation of a further 5,000 men from the shore was a most complicated task in the three hours available, and fully occupied all transport available.

45. *Uncompleted Evacuations.*—There were still several uncompleted evacuations at this time.

(a) *Kalamata.* I requested your instructions regarding this place as it appeared likely that only small numbers could be collected. On receipt of your 0945/29th* I detailed ISIS, HERO and KIMBERLEY to leave Suda at 1700 and proceed to Kalamata, leaving not later than 0300/30th, returning to Suda. They embarked 16 officers and 17 other ranks.

The same ships again visited the Kalamata area on the night 30th April/1st May and collected the following:—

ISIS	2 officers and 60 troops,
HERO	5 officers and 56 troops,
KIMBERLEY	16 officers and 63 troops,

a total of 202. They reported that any chance of further embarkation was slender as the Germans were mopping up.

(b) *Milo and Nio (Ios).* The Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda had reported 2,000 British and Greek troops in Milo, probably mostly Greeks. I later heard that there were 600 British troops at Nio and I detailed HAVOCK and HOTSPUR to visit this island during the night 29th/30th and, if necessary, to go on to Milo if further information was received regarding that place.

At 1126/29th I received the Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda's signal 1044/29th giving

Admiralty footnote —

* In this signal the Commander-in-Chief replied that the attempt to bring off troops south of Kalamata should be made that night, 29th/30th.

further information re Milo. It stated that there were approximately 3,500 British troops on the island and that those on Nio had escaped by motor caique, also that magnetic mines had probably been laid. I therefore cancelled my original instructions to HOTSPUR and HAVOCK and told Naval Officer-in-Charge, Suda to endeavour to obtain more information and use his discretion as to carrying out the operation.

HOTSPUR and HAVOCK visited Milo on the night 30th April/1st May and evacuated 700 British and Palestinian troops, leaving none.

(c) *Syra.* Colonel Macky and 50 Anzacs were reported to be at Syra but opportunity did not offer for bringing them off.

(d) *Leonidion.* Colonel Smith-Dorrien and a party of 20 British, formerly at Leonidion (para. 38 above), were now known to be at Kyparissi, possibly moving by boat to Monemvasia.

(e) Lieutenant Commander Willmot, who had been the beachmaster at Raptis throughout the operation, had asked, through the Commanding Officer, H.M.S. KIMBERLEY, to be fetched from Port Livadhi, Serpho Island (Scriptos), whither he had presumably gone with his L.C.T.

There were insufficient ships available to collect these small parties whilst there were still large numbers at the beaches on the mainland. I was informed that Greek money had been issued to the troops and they had been instructed in the event of their not being picked up, to endeavour to make their way by caique through the islands of the Aegean by night to Turkey or Crete. There was, however, no certainty that a party reported at an island would be there at a later time.

46. *Passage to Alexandria.*—I had instructed PERTH to rendezvous with me at 1400 on 29th off Suda. I sailed from Suda at 1300, 29th April, in accordance with my 1059/29th and proceeded to act as cover for the convoy with AJAX, PERTH, PHOEBE, HASTY, NUBIAN and HEReward in company. During a.m. 29th April, NUBIAN had suffered a near miss and was damaged.

47. During the night of 29th/30th April, whilst passing through the Kaso Straits, the convoy was attacked by E-boats and possibly torpedo boats from 2315 till 0300. Some torpedoes were fired but no damage was caused to the convoy. Own destroyers chased the enemy off several times.

48. At 0630/30th April, the First Battle Squadron and FORMIDABLE took over close escort of the convoy and I proceeded with AJAX, HASTY and HEReward in company to Alexandria in advance of the convoy, leaving PERTH, PHOEBE and NUBIAN to reinforce the Battle Squadron.

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

APPENDIX

TO VICE ADMIRAL, LIGHT FORCES' REPORT DATED 5TH MAY, 1941.

	Kalamata	Monemvasia	Tolon and Nauplia	Raphina and Raphtis	Megara	Kithera	Milo
Night 24th/25th ...			6,685	5,700			
Night 25th/26th ...					5,900		
Night 26th/27th ...	8,650		4,527	8,223			
Night 27th/28th ...				4,640			
Night 28th/29th ...	332	4,320				760	
Night 29th/30th ...	33						
Night 30th/1st ...	202						700

Totals at each beach ...	9,217	4,320	11,212	18,563	5,900	760	700
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Total embarked	50,672
Lost in SLAMAT	500

Nett Total	50,172
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