



SUPPLEMENT

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RAID ON MILITARY AND ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES IN THE LOFOTEN ISLANDS.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 4th April, 1941, by Admiral Sir JOHN C. TOVEY, K.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet

H.M.S. KING GEORGE V.
4th April, 1941.

OPERATION "CLAYMORE"

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the enclosed report of Operation "Claymore"* prepared by the Captain (D), 6th Destroyer Flotilla, H.M.S. SOMALI, in command of the operation. I concur fully in the report and in the remarks of the Rear Admiral (D), Home Fleet, in his Minute II, particularly in paragraph 2.

2. Among the factors which contributed to the success of this small combined operation I would draw attention to the following:—

(a) The excellent co-operation between all ranks and ratings of the Navy and Army taking part. Each single phase required a joint decision to be taken, and in each phase Naval units and Army units were working side by side in complete agreement and harmony. It is appropriate to record the appreciation of the Naval officers and ratings who took part for the qualities of their soldier opposite numbers.

(b) The weather. It had not been practicable to carry out more than elementary drills in the short time at Scapa, and it was a great relief to me that the landing craft did not have to contend with swell, strong

wind or tide. I would stress moreover that any less time than was allowed for rehearsal and planning, and it was two days less than originally planned, would have been quite unacceptable.

3. I would mention the valuable part played by the submarine SUNFISH in her role as a D/F beacon.* This scheme worked well, and although in the event the force was able to fix by sights, had this not been possible they would have been in an uncomfortable position without the SUNFISH'S aid

4. With reference to paragraph 29 of Captain D.6's report, I had laid particular emphasis in my verbal instructions on the importance of punctuality in withdrawing all forces at the end of the agreed time, and I endorse the opinion that it was necessary to sink the HAMBURG rather than to attempt to steam her down the Vestfjord and then some 750 miles to the Faroes with the resources available, but she should first have been boarded and searched for papers or other material likely to be useful.

(Signed) JACK C. TOVEY,
*Admiral,
Commander-in-Chief,
Home Fleet.*

MINUTE II

H.M.S. TYNE.
15th March, 1941.

Forwarded.

2. Great credit is due to Captain C. Caslon, Royal Navy, for his part in the efficient planning and execution of this operation.

3. It was fortunate that the conditions were ideal. The weather throughout the passage could not have been better, and the opposition was negligible.

Admiralty footnote —
* D/F beacon—an aid to navigation.

4. It is thought that future operations of this nature will not only need equally efficient and careful preparation and execution, but also adequate air support, if the geographical position is not so favourable to us.

(Signed) L. H. K. HAMILTON,
Rear Admiral (D),
Home Fleet.

H.M.S. SOMALI.
8th March, 1941.

OPERATION "CLAYMORE"—REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

I have the honour to forward the following report of the proceedings of Force "Rebel" in Operation "Claymore".

2. Force "Rebel" consisted of the following ships:—

Destroyers

SOMALI—Captain C. Caslon (Captain (D), 6th D.F.).

BEDOUIIN—Comdr. J. A. McCoy, D.S.O.

TARTAR—Comdr. L. P. Skipwith.

LEGION—Comdr. R. F. Jessel.

ESKIMO—Comdr. E. G. Le Geyt.

Troop Carriers

QUEEN EMMA—Comdr. C. A. Kershaw.

PRINCESS BEATRIX—Comdr. T. B. Brunton.

3. During the afternoon of Friday, 28th February, Brigadier J. C. Haydon, D.S.O., O.B.E., embarked in SOMALI with his headquarters staff which consisted of Major A. R. Aslett (Brigade Major), 2nd Lieutenant L. M. Harper-Gow (interpreter in Norwegian), and four other ranks.

4. Force "Rebel" sailed from Scapa at 0001 on 1st March, 1941, and proceeded to Skaalefjord, Faroes, arriving there at 1900 on the same day. Destroyers refuelled from WAR PINDARI and the force sailed at 0001 on 2nd March. Course was set for position L (64° 00' N. 3° 00' W.) and thence for position P (67° 12' N. 02° 00' W.).

5. After clearing the Faroes a speed of 20 knots was maintained until 1100 on 2nd March in order to be as far to the northward as possible by that time. It was hoped that, by so doing, the force would evade detection by the Zenit flight.* No aircraft was in fact sighted.

6. After passing through position P at 0130 on 3rd March course was shaped for position Q (67° 09' N. 11° 55' E) which was reached as planned at 0001 on 4th March, speed having been adjusted as necessary.

7. Up to this time the passage had been uneventful and the weather conditions very favourable. These were particularly so while making the approach to position Q from the westward. The sky was, for the most part, overcast with low cloud and frequent snow showers were experienced which tended to reduce the chances of detection. The weather cleared sufficiently at intervals, however, for navigational observations to be taken to fix the position of the force.

8. During the passage from P to Q the wind was from E.N.E., force 3, and the state of the

Admiralty footnote —

* Zenit flight—a daily meteorological flight flown by the Germans.

sea 24.* It was unnecessary, therefore, even to consider postponing the operation as conditions promised to be excellent. Special weather reports made by Admiralty were received, also reports of air reconnaissance patrols from the Commander-in-Chief, Rosyth.

9. During the approach to position Q, D/F bearings were obtained of SUNFISH at the expected times and these bearings confirmed the position obtained by astronomical observations. It is estimated that the force passed 2 miles south of SUNFISH at 2335. This method of checking the position was most valuable in making the landfall. Had no sights been obtained, it would have been the only means of fixing the position of the force at this critical stage of the approach.

10. From position Q the force moved up Vestfjord towards position C (68° 05' N. 14° 29' E.), continuing in night cruising order until 0300 when ships formed into single line ahead. Position C was reached without incident at 0430 when the force split, SOMALI, BEDOUIIN, TARTAR and QUEEN EMMA proceeding to position D (68° 14' N. 14° 42' E.) and LEGION, ESKIMO and PRINCESS BEATRIX to position E (68° 08' N. 14° 01' E.). It is believed that the force was observed by coast-watchers during this passage, but that no reporting message got through to the mainland. This point may be mentioned by the military who gave me the information after our return to Scapa.

11. Passage up the Vestfjord was much simplified by the fact that all lights were burning at full brilliancy and with normal characteristics, with the following exceptions:—Skomvaer, Tennholm, Grytoy. By 0445 the outline of the coast could be distinguished.

12. After the splitting of the force, SOMALI, with BEDOUIIN, TARTAR and QUEEN EMMA in company, moved towards position D where the landing craft for X landing were lowered by 0508. These were taken in charge by TARTAR while SOMALI, BEDOUIIN and QUEEN EMMA proceeded to position F (68° 12' N. 14° 52' E.).

13. The weather conditions now were—wind E.N.E., force 3, sea 10 to 20.† It was intensely cold, the temperature being between 20° and 25° F. The weather continued to be fine and very clear throughout the day, with brilliant sunshine.

14. By this time it had become apparent that, in view of the lightness of the dawn and the perfect visibility, the landing of troops could, with advantage, have been made earlier than at 0645, the projected time. No alteration, except in the case of X landing, was however possible owing to the distances to be covered by landing craft after having been lowered.

15. Craft for X landing, covered by TARTAR, were comparatively close to their objective on being lowered and must have been clearly visible to those ashore. To avoid the loss of the element of surprise, therefore, they moved off to Port X‡ at 0530 and arrived there approximately half an hour before the planned time.

Admiralty footnotes —

* Wind force 3—gentle breeze of 7–10 knots; sea 24—slight sea, moderate average length swell.

† Sea 10 to 20—smooth to slight sea with no swell.

‡ For positions of Port A (Stamsund), Port B (Henningsvaer), Port X (Svolvaer), and Port Y (Brettesnes), see Plan 2.

16. In the meantime LEGION, ESKIMO and PRINCESS BEATRIX had reached position E at 0540. Landing craft were lowered and led inshore to Ports A and B by LEGION and ESKIMO respectively. Disembarkation proceeded in accordance with the timetable and landings were made at 0645.

17. At 0610, shortly before the arrival of BEDOUIN and QUEEN EMMA at position F, SOMALI parted company to proceed to Ports A and B to see if the landings were being effected satisfactorily there. On passage, an armed trawler, later found to be the KREBS, was sighted steering away from Port X. Fire was opened at a range of 3,000 yards at 0620 and the enemy very quickly hit. Our fire was returned by three rounds fired from a small gun in the bows of the trawler, but no hits were obtained on SOMALI. Immediately afterwards three shells were observed to be effective, one apparently exploding the ready-use ammunition, another bursting in the wheelhouse and the third in the boiler room. A considerable volume of smoke was seen to be coming from the trawler which was clearly out of control. Fire was accordingly checked. Five survivors were then seen to be swimming in the water; they were picked up by 0655.

18. At this time gunfire could be heard at Port X. As W/T communication with the landing places had not yet been established and the Brigadier was anxious to find out if any landings had been opposed, SOMALI left the now helpless trawler, which had run aground on a small island, and proceeded to ascertain the state of affairs at Ports X, B and A.

19. At 0710 SOMALI made the negative W/T silence sign and from then on, throughout the operation, satisfactory W/T communications were maintained with all landing places. V/S* communication was also established at each landing place.

20. At each port, operations were proceeding according to plan and by 0735 reports had been received that at all four ports landings had been effected successfully without opposition and that relations with the Norwegian population were most cordial. From this time onwards, reports came in from all military landing parties that allotted tasks were being carried out successfully and the Brigadier, from his position on SOMALI'S bridge, was kept in continual touch with the progress of operations.

21. By now the local Norwegian fishing fleet had put to sea; there were literally hundreds of little fishing smacks and small puffers beginning to fish in the adjacent waters. It quickly became clear to them that our operations were directed against the Germans and that they were not to be molested. They showed their friendliness and enthusiasm by cheering and waving and hoisting Norwegian flags.

22. From Port A SOMALI then proceeded back to Port X. During the passage the trawler KREBS, still burning, was seen to have re-floated and to be drifting towards the centre of the fjord. As SOMALI closed, a white flag was seen being waved and at 0910 a boarding party was sent over in a Norwegian fishing boat who volunteered their services. The survivors consisted of five ratings, all of whom were

wounded by gunfire, two seriously. The balance of the crew, consisting of the captain and thirteen ratings, had been killed in the action.

23. The boarding officers, Major A. R. Aslett, Lieutenant Sir Marshall G. C. Warmington, Bart, R.N., the Signal Officer on my staff, and 2nd Lieutenant L. M. Harper-Gow, searched the ship so far as was possible.

24. The wheelhouse was found to have received a direct hit and nothing could be recovered from there, other than a number of charts. The captain and one rating were found dead by the wheel; one or two bodies which could not be identified were also in the wheelhouse.

25. The ship was still on fire below and no entry could be made into the fore-peak or the engine room.

26. The search of the KREBS occupied three quarters of an hour and while SOMALI was stopped numbers of fishing craft took the opportunity to come alongside and throw their fish on board as gifts to the ship's company. The fishing boat which took the boarding party was rewarded with gifts of food and cigarettes.

27. At 1015 the KREBS was sunk by gunfire after an unsuccessful attempt had been made to destroy her by depth charge fired from the port thrower. She finally disappeared at 1030. Her armament consisted of a 3 or 6-pdr. gun forward, a 2-cm Madsen machine-gun aft and eight depth charges in two chutes.

28. A summary of the happenings at the various ports is given in the ensuing paragraphs.

29. At Port X an important success was the destruction of the HAMBURG by gunfire from TARTAR. This was a ship of 9780 tons which had been specially converted into a fish-refrigerating and factory ship. From the report of the officer in charge of the naval demolition party at Port X it appears that a plan was made to take possession of this ship and to steam her as a prize to England and that this plan was frustrated by TARTAR opening fire and destroying her. I consider that the Commanding Officer, H.M.S. TARTAR, was justified in the action he took, having regard to the general instructions for the conduct of the operation and to the fact that no information of the plan to seize the ship had been communicated to him. Nor was I, myself, aware of it.

30. In addition, TARTAR sunk the PASAJES, 1996 tons, and completed the destruction of the FELIX HEUMANN, 2468 tons, which was still floating after partial destruction by the naval demolition party. The latter, from H.M.S. NELSON, under the command of Lieutenant D. D. Bone, R.N., sank the EILLENAU, 1404 tons, the trawler RISSEN and, as stated above, commenced the destruction of the FELIX HEUMANN. The work performed by this party was most creditable. It is believed that the large majority of the crews of all these ships were made prisoners by the military landing parties and brought back in QUEEN EMMA.

31. At 1035 the Norwegian trawler MYRLAND, whose crew wished to proceed to England and asked for instructions, was directed by TARTAR to proceed independently to Skaalefjord in the Faroes. This was reported in my signal timed 1444 of 6th March, 1941. She arrived safely today, 8th March.

Admiralty footnote —
* V/S—visual signal.

32. At Port Y, BEDOUIN at 0626, while leading the landing craft in towards the shore, intercepted the Norwegian ferry steamer MIRA flying the Norwegian flag and endeavoured to stop her by firing a shot across her bows. As this had no effect a second shot was fired into the fore part of the ship, but as the ship still did not stop effective fire was opened. One shot entered the ship below the funnel, steam poured from her and she lost way. BEDOUIN then left her to see the landing parties safely ashore. This done, BEDOUIN, acting in accordance with my instructions, returned to sink the MIRA. It was seen that she was being abandoned and, when this was completed and the rafts were clear, fire was opened. MIRA was very soon severely damaged and started to sink slowly.

33. I was subsequently informed by a military officer of one of the landing parties that the captain of the MIRA was forced at the pistol-point by a German officer on board to continue on his course, despite BEDOUIN'S warning shots. It is believed that this officer and 12 German soldiers who were also on board were later taken prisoner and brought back in QUEEN EMMA. It is feared that there were some casualties to Norwegian civilians as a result of BEDOUIN'S gunfire.

34. By 0840 it had become evident that the work of the landing parties at Port Y would shortly be completed. QUEEN EMMA, who had been lying off Port X, was accordingly directed to proceed to Port Y to commence re-embarkation of A.L.C.s.* This was completed at 1024 when QUEEN EMMA, with BEDOUIN, returned to Port X who had reported all tasks completed at 1011 and parties ready to re-embark.

35. By 1030 SOMALI was proceeding to cover the landing parties at Port A as LEGION had moved southward to investigate two trawlers which subsequently proved to be Norwegian puffers. During this passage, dense columns of heavy black smoke could be seen at Ports X and A rising to the tops of the surrounding mountains, a height of several thousand feet, sure evidence of the thoroughness with which the landing parties were carrying out their tasks of destruction.

36. At Port A the military completed their tasks successfully and LEGION was not called upon to give any support. Two German trawlers, the ANDO, 300 tons, and the GROTTO, 200 tons, which were the only enemy ships in the harbour, were sunk by the naval demolition party from H.M.S. RODNEY under the command of Lieutenant C. P. N. Wells-Cole, R.N. By the time SOMALI had arrived at 1100 re-embarkation of troops had already commenced.

37. At Port B, as at Port A, ESKIMO was not called upon to give any support to the landing parties, who completed their tasks successfully, nor was there any enemy shipping present against which she could take action.

38. SOMALI returned to Port X at 1200 to find re-embarkation in progress. The time required for this was increased by the large number of prisoners and volunteers to be embarked in QUEEN EMMA who sailed with 852 persons on board. By 1230, however, the last

landing craft had left the shore and at 1255 QUEEN EMMA reported that she was ready to proceed. At 1256 PRINCESS BEATRIX made a similar report from Port B.

39. SOMALI, BEDOUIN, TARTAR, and QUEEN EMMA proceeded to position C at 20 knots. LEGION, ESKIMO and PRINCESS BEATRIX joined company at 1330 and the whole force, in day cruising order, set course at best speed down Vestfjord. Columns of smoke were still rising from the burning oil tanks and plant and a heavy pall lay over the scene of the day's operations.

40. At 1530 as the force was passing Vaeroy, a German reconnaissance aircraft was sighted by BEDOUIN and was heard by the same ship to make a W/T report: BEDOUIN accordingly carried out jamming procedure. The aircraft flew at about 6,000 feet making full use of cloud cover and was engaged by ships' guns as opportunity offered. Although conditions appeared very favourable for a bombing attack none was made and the aircraft disappeared shortly after 1600. In view of this sighting, I made the W/T report of the successful completion of the operation at once, without waiting until the force was clear of the area.

41. At 1700 course was altered to the westward for position P which was reached at 0900 on 5th March, after which course was altered to the southward. Vice Admiral Commanding, 18th Cruiser Squadron, in EDINBURGH, with NIGERIA in company, were sighted at 1020 on 5th March and provided escort for the remainder of the passage.

42. It was known on the morning of 5th March that the Germans had announced that a raid had been made and I therefore considered it desirable to signal a brief report of the success of the operation as early as could be done with safety. Accordingly when the force was in position of approximately 64°00'N. 4°00'W and darkness was approaching W/T silence was broken for this purpose. Unfortunately signalling conditions were very unfavourable and it took much longer than had been anticipated to clear the message.

43. The wounded prisoners from the KREBS were accommodated in the sick bay, and my harbour cabin during the return passage. They received the greatest care and skilful attention from my Medical Officer, Surgeon Lieutenant M. G. Low, R.N.V.R., assisted by the sick bay staff, the Flotilla chaplain and the canteen manager. The Army other ranks also assisted. Two of the men were very seriously wounded and owe their lives to the skilled nursing they received. Similar good arrangements for the wounded were made in QUEEN EMMA.

44. The return passage was made without incident and Force "Rebel" arrived at Scapa at 1300 on 6th March.

45. After arrival prisoners and volunteers were disembarked from all ships, the wounded being discharged to H.M.H.S. AMARAPOORA.

General Remarks.

46. I was greatly impressed with the efficient handling and station-keeping of the troop carriers, particularly as they were both newly commissioned ships with no previous experience of working in formation. The lowering and hoisting of the landing craft during the operation was carried out in a most efficient manner.

Admiralty footnote —

* A L C — Assault Landing Craft.

47. Owing to the troop carriers sailing for the Clyde a few hours after our return to Scapa it has not been possible for me to obtain details of the military operation with sufficient accuracy to make any but the most general reference to them in this report. It has, however, been arranged for copies of Brigadier Haydon's report to be forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, as soon as it has been prepared.

48 I should like to record with pleasure that throughout the planning and execution of this operation Brigadier Haydon co-operated wholeheartedly and at no time did we have the slightest difficulty in reaching mutually satisfactory conclusions. His presence on board SOMALI, with his staff, was most welcome in every way.

(Signed) C. CASLON,
Captain (D),
Sixth Destroyer Flotilla.

APPENDIX

REPORT ON OPERATION "CLAYMORE"

by Brigadier J. C. Haydon, D.S.O., O.B.E.,
Commanding Special Service Brigade.

13th March, 1941.

Objects of the operation.

1. (a) The Military objects of the operation were to destroy the facilities for producing herring and cod oil in the Ports of Stamsund, Henningsvaer, Svolvaer and Brettesnes, all of which are situated in the Lofoten Islands; to arrest local supporters of the Quisling party; to capture any enemy personnel found in the ports, and to enlist recruits for the Free Norwegian Forces.

(b) The Naval objective at the ports was the destruction or capture of enemy ships and of Norwegian vessels found to be working for the Germans.

Forces taking part in the operation.

2. Naval.

(a) The 6th Destroyer Flotilla, under the command of Captain C. Caslon, R.N., and composed of:

H.M.S. SOMALI,
H.M.S. BEDOUIN,
H.M.S. TARTAR,
H.M.S. ESKIMO,
H.M.S. LEGION,

formed the Naval escort and were responsible for the safety of the military forces during the approach to and return from the Lofoten Islands and for the provision of close support while the operations on shore were in progress.

(b) H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA (Commander C. A. Kershaw, R.N.) carrying the troops destined for Svolvaer and Brettesnes.

(c) H.M.S. PRINCESS BEATRIX (Commander T. B. Brunton, R.N.) carrying the troops destined for Stamsund and Henningsvaer.

(d) Naval demolition parties carried in H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA and H.M.S. PRINCESS BEATRIX.

3. *Military*.—The Military forces taking part in the raid were:—

(a) Operational Headquarters Special Service Brigade in H.M.S. SOMALI.

(b) 250 all ranks of No. 4 Commando under the command of Lieut.-Colonel D. S. Lister, M.C. (The Buffs) in H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA.

(c) 250 all ranks of No. 3 Commando under the command of Major J. F. Durnford-Slater (Royal Artillery) in H.M.S. PRINCESS BEATRIX.

(d) One Section No. 55 Field Company Royal Engineers (2nd Lieut. H. M. Turner, Royal Engineers).

(e) 4 officers and 48 other ranks of the Norwegian Forces, under the command of Captain Martin Linge.

The detachments of Royal Engineers and of Norwegian troops were divided between H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA and H.M.S. PRINCESS BEATRIX in accordance with the tasks to be carried out in each port.

Concentration of the force and preparatory work.

4. Operational Headquarters Special Service Brigade, Nos. 3 and 4 Commandos, the Royal Engineers detachment and the Norwegian troops embarked at Gourock in H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA and H.M.S. PRINCESS BEATRIX during the afternoon of Friday, 21st February, 1941, and left for Scapa Flow on the evening of that day.

Scapa was reached at 1430 hours on the 22nd February and the ships were anchored between H.M.S. NELSON and H.M.S. KING GEORGE V.

The troops remained at Scapa until the force sailed for the Lofoten Islands at 0001 hours on Saturday, 1st March, 1941. Thus, there intervened a period of almost a week during which all the final arrangements, plans and orders could be prepared, published and explained and during which those who were to operate together during the operation could meet and get to know one another.

There can be no doubt whatsoever regarding the essential nature of this comparatively short time of preparation.

Though the nature of the raid precluded meticulous rehearsals of the tasks allotted to each troop or detachment, the week at Scapa was invaluable from the military point of view, in that it gave both officers and men time to accustom themselves to the ships from which they were to work; to get to know the officers and crews of the landing craft which were to take them inshore, and, in general, to make the personal contacts which are so essential a preliminary to an enterprise of this kind.

5. So far as the Naval and Military Commanders were concerned, the period at Scapa was filled by a series of conferences, at which all details and difficulties were examined and solutions reached.

Several points of major importance emerged during these meetings. The first concerned the problem of supporting fire from the destroyers.

Captain C. Caslon, R.N., the Senior Naval Officer, having studied the charts of the area of operations, reached the conclusion that, owing to navigational difficulties, the escorting destroyers would not be able to lie closer than approximately 1 mile from each port.

This distance, taking into account the somewhat tortuous nature of the approaches, and the half-lights of early morning, made it unlikely that the destroyers would be in a position

to afford support by direct fire or that they would even be able to keep the landing craft in view throughout the passage between the ships and the shore.

These were, of course, important considerations and changed somewhat drastically the military aspect of the operation, under which it had been envisaged that the landing craft would be able to move into each port with the escorting destroyers in the closest attendance and dominating any possible opposition with their guns.

However, in view of the information available concerning the enemy forces which were likely to be encountered, it was decided to accept the disadvantages and difficulties arising from the possible employment of indirect fire and to insert special instructions in the operation order concerning the use of this method of support.

In this connection, it will be appreciated that the lack of gridded maps, the restricted size of each port, the danger areas which would have to be allowed for and the desire to avoid any unnecessary damage to Norwegian property, all tended to complicate the situation and to make it more and more apparent that there would probably be a period in each port during which the troops would have to rely only on their own weapons and on such covering fire as could be given by any detachments which had already been landed.

In these circumstances, Commanders were instructed to make their approach with caution and to use the leading craft at each port as a scout so that all would not be subjected to fire at one and the same time.

Further, troops were to be prepared to open fire and mutually support each other from their landing craft should the need arise.

The situations which might have arisen clearly called for the use of S.L.C.s* but there were none available.

6. A further decision arrived at after a study of the navigational difficulties, concerned the movement of H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA after the landing craft for Svolvær had been launched.

It was thought originally that the two A.L.C.s† required for Brettesnes could be dropped at the same time as those for Svolvær and that they would then be able to proceed astern of their escorting destroyer through the narrow channel named on the chart as Holen Skjoldver.

It was decided, however, that it would be both unsound and unwise to risk passing either a destroyer or unescorted landing craft through this passage.

As a result of this decision, H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA was instructed that, having dropped the landing craft for Svolvær, she was to proceed to Brettesnes in company with the escorting destroyer, passing to the south of Skravven.

As this route was appreciably longer than that through Holen Skjoldver and as it was desirable that the concentration of the force after the conclusion of the shore operation should not be delayed, orders were issued that the troops landed at Brettesnes should be ready to re-embark at 1130 hours which was 1 hour

earlier than the time limit fixed for the other three ports.

7. The third matter of importance from the military point of view was the possibility which was explained by the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, that the escorting destroyers might be forced to leave the vicinity of the four ports should a naval action be precipitated by the move of the force to the Lofotens.

The period during which the destroyers might be away could not, of course, be forecast with any accuracy but, as a precautionary measure, each man was ordered to take ashore with him rations sufficient for 48 hours.

8. It should be stressed that it was the few days spent at Scapa which gave each Commander ample opportunity to examine in the most complete detail the problems which faced him and to consult naval officers concerned on any points of difficulty arising out of them.

It is also worthy of emphasis that, had the nature of the operation entailed a long approach in darkness for the landing craft, or had the tasks allotted to the various detachments been such as to require exact and repeated rehearsal, this preparatory period of six days would not have been long enough.

In such circumstances, 14 to 18 days might well have been required.

The approach to the Lofoten Islands.

9. The force, which bore the code name "Rebel", left Scapa Flow at 0000 hrs. on the 1st March and proceeded first to Skaalefjord in the Faroes where the destroyers were to refuel.

The fjord was reached at 1900 hrs. on 1st March, and the weather conditions had been such that it was hoped, with some degree of confidence, that Force "Rebel" had escaped enemy observation.

10. After a stay of about five hours, the force proceeded on its way routed through various points previously fixed by the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet.

11. During the night of Monday, 3rd March, Force "Rebel" entered the Vestfjord and shortly before 0400 hrs. on the following morning, the many navigational lights in the neighbourhood of the Lofotens came into view.

That these should have been burning at what appeared to be full brilliance was somewhat surprising but certainly gave good cause for the hope that the arrival of the force had been unheralded and that the complete effects of surprise might be obtained. Such indeed proved to be the case.

12. The exactness of the timing and the extreme accuracy of the naval approach, both of which were due to the careful arrangements and the untiring supervision of Captain C. Caslon, R.N., and of his Navigating Officer, Lieut-Commander Shaw, R.N., cannot be praised too highly.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the accomplishment of the military tasks on shore was much facilitated thereby.

The operations on shore.

13. The operations ashore proceeded according to plan and all tasks allotted to the force were carried out. The times of the initial landings at each port varied but troops were ashore at all of them by 0650 hours. By 1300 hours

Admiralty footnotes —

* S.L.C.—Support Landing Craft

† A.L.C.—landing craft for landing troops

both H.M.S. PRINCESS BEATRIX and H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA had re-embarked all their troops and were ready to sail.

Inter-communications.

14. Owing to the excellence of the intercommunication arrangements made by Lieut. Sir Marshall G. C. Warmington, Bart., R.N., of H.M.S. SOMALI, it was possible to obtain at all times a most clear and accurate picture of the progress of the operations on shore.

The personnel for the various signal detachments were all drawn from the Home Fleet. They were faced with the task of operating wireless sets to which they were not accustomed, and with but little time to practise with them.

The ease with which they overcame this difficulty and the speed and accuracy with which the many signals were passed says much for their individual skill and for the instruction and training they were given by the naval officer to whom I have referred above.

State of the light at the time of the landings.

15. The original intention was to make four simultaneous landings at 0630 hrs. but, after further examination of the meteorological data, it was considered that such early landings would force the A.L.C.s and M.L.C.s* to make their difficult approaches in conditions of what may be termed "dangerous" darkness.

The time of landing was therefore put back to 0645 hrs.

In the event the morning of March 4th was exceptionally clear and calm. There was no fog, no sea mist, no rain or snow and what breeze there was blew from a favourable though unusual quarter.

Thus the landing craft approached the shore under rather better light conditions than were required or were desirable.

However, it is difficult to see how such rare conditions can be legislated for except by abandoning the idea of making the landings simultaneously and allowing instead a 30 or 45 minutes period during any part of which they may take place.

The obvious danger of such a procedure is that the defences at the point where the earliest landing is made may be given time to warn other points at which landings are attempted 10 or 20 minutes later.

Effect of low temperatures.

16. Even during the short passage between H.M.S. QUEEN EMMA, H.M.S. PRINCESS BEATRIX and the various ports, it was found that weapons had a distinct tendency to freeze up and become hard to operate.

Should such low temperatures be anticipated again in the future, some special arrangements would have to be made to guard against this danger.

Opposition.

17. At no point on shore was any opposition encountered, though some of the enemy personnel, notably those at the air station outside Svolvaer who were armed with a machine-gun and other weapons, might well have inflicted casualties and delayed progress. So far as is known, the only shots fired by the enemy were the three or four rounds aimed at H.M.S. SOMALI by the armed trawler KREBS. No casualties were incurred by our troops.

Reception by the inhabitants.

18. The reports received from the Military Commanders at each port show that in every case our troops were given a welcome, the genuine enthusiasm of which cannot be doubted.

Although it must have been abundantly clear that the demolitions which were being carried through would inevitably have sad effects on the livelihood of many, there always seemed to be the over-riding realisation that they were well worth aiding and abetting so long as they were also the means of retarding and interfering with production urgently required by the enemy.

In many instances, the gifts distributed by our troops were at once matched by presents given to them by the inhabitants. In short, they were welcomed by a people whose natural virility and inherent soundness of character had ridden safely over the many insidious dangers which must follow from months of enemy occupation.

Military action at the four ports.

19. The following were the Senior Military Officers at each port:—

At Stamsund—Major J. F. Durnford-Slater, R.A.

At Henningsvaer—Captain A. S. Ronald, K.R.R.C.

At Svolvaer—Lieut.-Colonel D. S. Lister, M.C., The Buffs.

At Brettesnes—Major M. E. Kerr, The Rifle Brigade.

20. The characteristics which seem to stand out from the operations as a whole are the excellent and frequent reports rendered by the senior officers at each port; the speed with which the detachments carried out their allotted duties, and the initiative shown by junior commanders in seeking for and carrying through useful and important tasks in addition to those specifically mentioned in the operation orders.

I would particularly bring to your notice Lieut.-Colonel D. S. Lister, M.C., The Buffs, who was in command of the operations at Svolvaer and Brettesnes and Major J. F. Durnford-Slater, Royal Artillery, who commanded the troops at Stamsund and Henningsvaer.

21. Lieutenant H. M. Turner, Royal Engineers, and his section of No. 55 Field Company Royal Engineers accomplished excellent work and carried out their tasks in a most skilled and competent manner.

22. Consolidated results of the operation are given in the Annexure

Assistance rendered by the Norwegian troops.

23. It is not too much to say that the operations on shore could not have been carried through within the time limits laid down in the Operation Orders or with the ease or good relations and understanding that existed had it not been for the enthusiastic help and co-operation of the Norwegian detachment commanded by Captain Martin Linge.

This officer never spared himself for one moment either during the preparatory period or during the raid itself.

His enthusiasm and personality were infectious and it is hoped that his most valuable services and those of his detachment may be brought to the notice of the Norwegian authorities.

Admiralty footnote —

* M.L.C.—landing craft for mechanised vehicles.