

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

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

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

Bombing Diversions

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

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

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

Admiralty footnotes—

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

† P.R.U.—Photographic Reconnaissance Unit

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

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

Fighter Protection.

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

The Naval Withdrawal.

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

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

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

(Signed) J. C. HAYDON,
Brigadier.

H. M. BURROUGH,
Rear Admiral.

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