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NAVAL OPERATIONS IN THE AEGEAN BETWEEN THE
 7TH SEPTEMBER, 1943 AND 28TH NOVEMBER, 1943.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 27th December, 1943, by Vice-Admiral Sir ALGERNON U. WILLIS, K.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Levant.

*Levant.
 27th December, 1943.*

Be pleased to lay before Their Lordships the attached report of Naval Operations in the Aegean between the 7th September, 1943 and 28th November, 1943.

(Signed) A. U. WILLIS,
*Vice-Admiral,
 Commander-in-Chief.*

GENERAL REPORT ON AEGEAN
 OPERATIONS.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO OUR ENTRY INTO THE
 AEGEAN.

The possibility of capturing the island of Rhodes and subsequently opening up the Aegean (Operation "Accolade") had been under active consideration since January, 1943. Outline plans were drawn up but the requirements of the advance in North Africa and later the invasion of Sicily ("Husky"), prohibited the allocation of forces necessary to mount such an operation.

2. In April, Force Commanders and their staffs were assembled in Cairo to plan for "Accolade" to take place shortly after the landing in Sicily, when an Italian surrender was considered possible. By the middle of June, however, it became apparent that assault shipping, craft and air forces would not be available and the Naval Force Commander and staff were sent to Algiers to plan "post-Husky" operations in the Central Mediterranean.

3. Following our successful landings in Sicily with unexpectedly small losses of assault shipping and craft, an attempt was made to plan and mount "Accolade" using such forces as were available in the Middle East or were earmarked for India. Once again, it became necessary to call on General Eisenhower to make up deficiencies, particularly in long range fighters, and, as a result, "Accolade" was cancelled by decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, at the Quadrant Conference.* The Commanders-in-Chief, Middle East informed the Chiefs of Staff on 31st August that the only operations which could be mounted from Middle East were:—

- (a) Small Scale Raids.
- (b) Sabotage and Guerilla operations by Resistance Groups.
- (c) Unopposed "walk-in" to areas evacuated by the enemy.

PHASE I.

Surrender of Italy to the opening of the German Air Offensive.

8th to 26th September, 1943.

4. When it was known that Italy had surrendered, it was decided to take advantage of this situation by encouraging the Italian garrisons to hold such Aegean islands as they could against the Germans, and to stiffen their resistance by sending in small parties of British troops. Between 8th and 16th September, Castelloriso, Kos, Leros, Samos, Kalymnos, Symi and Stampalia were all occupied by small detachments of Raiding Force troops accompanied by Civil Affairs Officers. Fairmile motor

Admiralty footnote :

* Quadrant Conference—the British-American conference held at Quebec in August, 1943.