

P R E S S N O T I C E

The appointment of Lieutenant Commander F. H. E. HOPKINS, D.S.C., R.N., of the Fleet Air Arm, to the Distinguished ^{Service} Order (announced in the London Gazette tonight) is in recognition of the leading part he played in a successful air attack on an important enemy convoy on its way to Tripoli on the night of January 23/24.

It was due to his unflinching devotion to duty and his determination that the convoy, although outside the safe range of the Swordfish aircraft available in the prevailing bad weather conditions, was located and later attacked. As a result of this and other attacks the heavily escorted Italian liner VICTORIA (13,098 tons) was hit with torpedoes and almost certainly sunk.

To achieve this result, Lieutenant Commander Hopkins, made flights lasting nearly 12 hours through bad weather which steadily grew worse.

First he led a number of Swordfish on a search for the convoy. Rain and a low ceiling of cloud made the search very difficult.

By the time the convoy was sighted all but two of the aircraft had been forced to return to their base.

Although he now knew that the convoy was outside the safe operational range of his aircraft, which meant that attacking aircraft might not be able to get home again, Lieutenant Commander Hopkins was not deterred. He flew back to his base and organised a striking force of Swordfish torpedo-carrying aircraft.

By this time the weather had grown still worse, but he set out again with the new formation. Again the convoy was located and the Swordfish dived to the attack.

Two torpedoes were seen to hit the liner, and later aircraft reconnaissance could find no trace of this ship.

It was Lieutenant Commander Hopkins' refusal to be deterred from getting at the enemy which made this success possible.