

20/8/42 - No. 37

COMBINED OPERATIONS COMMUNIQUE

Combined Operations Headquarters has issued the following communique:-

Reports now received from the Force Commanders make it possible to give a full co-ordinated story of the Combined Operations raid in the Dieppe area.

These reports show that as a Combined Operation the raid was a successful demonstration of co-ordination of all three Services.

A large military force embarked on board Naval vessels and transports; this force assembled and negotiated a most hazardous sea passage and arrived off selected points off the French coast at 4.50 a.m.

Troops were landed on all the six beaches selected at the time laid down. Aircraft covered these landings as arranged and then continued to cover the ships and men throughout the operation.

The raid had as its objectives:-

The testing by an offensive on a larger scale than previously of the defences of what is known to be a heavily defended section of the coast, the destruction of German batteries, of a Radio Location Station which plays an important part in the German attacks on our Channel convoys, the destruction of German Military personnel and equipment and the taking of prisoners for interrogation. The raid was a reconnaissance in force having a vital part in our agreed offensive policy.

It was known that as a consequence of our avowed aggressive policy the Germans had recently been heavily reinforcing the coastal defences of the whole of the occupied territory. Heavy opposition was therefore anticipated. In fact it became clear during the raid that the enemy had brought additional troops and guns to the Dieppe area quite recently.

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Despite this heavy opposition forces were landed on all the beaches together with some tanks. They succeeded in destroying two batteries and the Radiolocation Station, inflicting heavy casualties upon the enemy forces in sinking two small vessels and in bringing back a number of prisoners. Our troops, the majority of whom were Canadians, remained ashore for nearly nine hours from dawn and were then re-embarked in the Naval vessels which throughout this period were lying close off the French coast, assisting our landing forces by a heavy bombardment. The tanks which had been landed and some of which succeeded in breaking into the town, were ordered to be blown up and destroyed before our troops re-embarked.

During the engagements on shore there were numerous acts of individual bravery by our forces.

Throughout the landing extensive air cover for both ships and landing forces was provided by aircraft from all Operational Commands of the Royal Air Force, from the United States Army Air Force, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Royal New Zealand Air Force, and Polish, Czech, Norwegian, Belgian and Fighting French squadrons.

While the principal objective of the air operations was to give support to the landing and cover to the forces during the land engagement, and to the Naval craft, there in fact developed one of the greatest air battles of the war.

Although this air battle had not been planned as one of the objectives of the operation the Germans were forced to call up aircraft reinforcements from all parts of occupied France, Holland and Belgium. Many of these enemy aircraft were engaged before they ever reached the area of the operations, large formations being broken up and dispersed particularly over the mouth of the Somme. During the engagement 91 German aircraft are officially known to have been destroyed and about twice that number have probably been destroyed or damaged.

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In all these operations 98 of our aircraft were lost and the pilots of 30 of these are saved.

Throughout the operation the Naval forces were under heavy air attack and land artillery bombardment. Despite this heavy attack our only Naval losses were a fairly large number of landing craft, which was to be expected in an operation of this nature, and one destroyer, H.M.S. Berkeley (Lieutenant J.J.S. Yorke, Royal Navy) which was so seriously damaged that she had to be sunk by our own forces; the majority of the ship's company are known to have been saved.

Before the landing operation began a chance encounter with the escort of an enemy convoy by one of our groups of landing craft resulted in the destruction of a German armed trawler and the setting on fire of another. This chance engagement only threw out the time schedule of this particular landing party by twenty minutes.

Naval craft did not leave the French coast until it was known that every possible man had been taken off.

As a result of the heavy fighting which developed during the operation our casualties were high, but not unduly so in view of the operation.

The Naval force which included a Polish destroyer and some Fighting French Chasseurs, was under the command of Captain J. Hughes-Hallett, Royal Navy. The Military force was under Major General J.H. Roberts, M.C. and the Air Forces under Air Marshal T.L. Leigh-Mallory, C.B., D.S.O.

The Military forces were drawn from the following units of the Canadian Army: Royal Regiment of Canada, Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, the Essex Scottish Regiment, The Camerons of Canada, the Fusiliers Mount Royal, the South Saskatchewan Regiment, the 14th Canadian Army Tank Battalion.

In addition the following Special Service Brigade Troops took part: Numbers 3 and 4 Commando, Royal Marine "A" Commando, a detachment from a United States Ranger Battalion and a small contingent from the Inter Allied Commando (No.10).

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