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EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF PROCEEDINGS OF NAVAL C. in C. EAST INDIES & EGYPT. 17th. March - 26th June, 1917.					

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H.S.548.
153 to 157.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS FOR PERIOD 17TH MARCH TO 8TH APRIL 1917 OF NAVAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, EAST INDIES AND EGYPT.

SECRET.

Naval Commander-in-Chief,

East Indies & Egypt.

No.425/1139.

8th April, 1917.

Sir,

In continuation of my letter No.345/1139 of 16th March, 1917, be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the following report of the proceedings in the Station under my command:-

* * * *

On the 26th March our Military forces attacked the enemy in position at GAZA. The attack, which had been arranged for the early morning, was delayed owing to the prevalence of a thick fog. After two days fighting, in which the enemy suffered considerable losses, the operations were brought to an end, and preparations are now being made to advance and capture GAZA. I had proposed to the General Officer Commanding assistance with gun fire from the sea, but owing to the uncertain movements of his Cavalry he considered that it would be inadvisable. On the second day, however, I sent two Monitors out, as it was thought that their fire might be of assistance, but owing to the cessation of the operations they were not used. In the meantime, stores are being landed on the beach in rear of our lines, an operation which is being continued. Gun fire from the sea will be used in the next attack.

* * * *

On H.M.S. "BRISBANE" joining my Flag it is my intention to send her to the MALDIVES & LACCADIVES to establish a Patrol round those Islands. Arrangements will be made for her to meet Colliers there so that she will be able to prolong her cruise in those waters.

* * * *

(Sgd:) R.E. WEMYSS,

VICE-ADMIRAL,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

The Secretary
of the Admiralty.

H.S.548.
161 to 170.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS FOR PERIOD 9TH TO 27TH APRIL 1917 OF NAVAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, EAST INDIES AND EGYPT.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Naval Commander-in-Chief,

East Indies & Egypt.

No.538/1139.

27th April, 1917.

* * * *

E G Y P T.

Since my last letter H.M. Ships "EMPRESS", "GLOUCESTER" and "BRISBANE" have joined my Flag; the former remains at PORT SAID, whilst the two latter have sailed for the East for escort duties.

* * * *

The loss of the "VERONICA" and the laying up of the Yacht "NORTH STAR" considerably curtails the escorting capacity of my Flotilla. I quite realise that Their Lordships are unable to reinforce me, but although every effort will be made to cope with the situation it must be expected that ships requiring escort will be occasionally hung up.

As previously arranged the operations against GAZA commenced in the early morning of Tuesday 17th April, when after a heavy bombardment in which H.M. Monitors 21 & 31 and the French Cruiser "REQUIN" took part, the first objective was easily gained.

During the first day's operations seaplanes from the Seaplane Carrier "EMPRESS" kept up a patrol for submarines; but owing to the weather conditions the chance of any being sighted was not great enough to counter balance the risk incurred by the "EMPRESS", who presents a large and conspicuous target. I therefore sent her back to the base in the evening.

On the following day, April 18th, an intermittent bombardment was carried out with the idea of preventing the Turks improving or repairing their positions, and on Thursday the 19th the attack was commenced at 7 a.m., the operations being brought to a close in the evening.

The Naval bombardment was carried out after consultation with tye Military Authorities and according to a co-ordinated plan with the artillery. The ships

were

were protected by a screen of trawlers and drifters, and the "REQUIN" had a special escort of two French destroyers. In the afternoon the "REQUIN" was attacked by a hostile submarine, who only fired one torpedo which missed. The submarine was attacked and driven off by the small craft and never made her appearance again, though I do not think that she was in any damaged. This attack was no surprise, as from information received it was confidently expected that such would happen.

It is a noticeable fact that the enemy submarine made no sort of attempt to attack either of the Monitors, and I am inclined to think that their small size and general appearance when mixed up with other small craft caused the enemy some difficulty to distinguish them.

On the cessation of the operations on the 19th I sent the "REQUIN" and Monitor 21 back into harbour, keeping Monitor 31 ready at the request of the Military Authorities, who had apparently made up their minds that an alteration of their plans was necessary. She returned to Port Said the next day.

The fire of the warships was effective, the forward observation duties being carried out by Lieutenant Commander Phillimore of H.M.S. "SCARAB".

The Naval operations were directed by Captain W.B. Macdonald, who admirably organised and carried them out.

In the meantime there is a cessation in the operations, and the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief has not yet informed me of what his future plans are.

The landing of stores on the beach is proceeding at full pressure whenever the weather admits. Owing to the better weather conditions, to the amelioration in the organisation of the Egyptian Labour Corps, and to the greater experience in handling the surf boats, this work has greatly improved. Off EL ARISH in December, 1916, it took 32 days to land some 3,000 tons, whereas nearly 6,000 tons have been landed in 19 days off GAZA. Arrangements are being made by the P.N.T.O. whereby he hopes to keep a perpetual stream of native craft running between Port Said and the scene of disembarkation, for the Military Authorities are very insistent upon the utility of so doing, since every ton so landed helps to relieve their long line of single railway.

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(Sgd:) R.E. WEMYSS,

VICE-ADMIRAL,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

H.S.548.
180 to 186.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS FOR PERIOD 28TH APRIL TO 15TH MAY 1917 OF NAVAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, EAST INDIES AND EGYPT.

Naval Commander-in-Chief,

No.625/1139.

East Indies and Egypt.

15th May, 1917.

Sir,

In continuation of my letter No.538/1139 of the 27th April, 1917, be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the following report of the proceedings in the Station under my command:-

E G Y P T.

The military situation at GAZA has developed into trench warfare and there has recently been no offensive on either side with the exception of night air raids which have caused some casualties.

A Monitor is kept ready at short notice to proceed to the scene of operations if required.

The continuation of the disembarkation of stores at DEIR EL BELAH will necessitate my retention of the Division of Drifters lent to me by V.A.E.M.S.

A branch railway is being run out now from RAFA to SHELLAL. It is reported that the Turks have brought down two of the "GOEBEN'S" guns and are mounting them at GAZA. It is feared that they will be able to reach SHELLAL, and if so the constructions of the railway will suffer.

* * * *

R E D S E A.

I am leaving Egypt on the 15th May in H.M.S. "NORTHBROOK" for a cruise in the Red Sea, and I propose visiting WEJ, JEDDA, ADEN, JIBOUTI and PORT SUDAN, returning to my Headquarters towards the end of the month.

* * * *

Mine sweeping operations are proceeding satisfactorily at COLOMBO, ADEN and BOMBAY. It is hoped to sweep up all the mines before the Monsoon breaks, as sweeping operations during that period will be difficult.

The Secretary
of the Admiralty.

H.M.S.

H.M.S. "BRISBANE" left COLOMBO on the 5th May carrying a seaplane to search for the Raider in waters adjacent to but beyond the COLOMBO Patrol. She returned to COLOMBO on the 13th instant having, not unexpectedly, seen nothing. I feel confident that the Raider has left these waters. The French Admiral informs me that he had intelligence, but not of a trustworthy character, that she had been seen at APIA. This would help to confirm my views that she has probably gone into the Atlantic via the Hors.

The arrangements for escorting Transports, etc. are being satisfactorily carried out; and the Patrols off COLOMBO, SOCOTRA and at entrance of PERSIAN GULF are being maintained.

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(Sgd:) R.E. WEMYSS,

VICE-ADMIRAL,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

H.S.548.
193 to 200.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS FOR PERIOD 16TH MAY TO 2ND JUNE 1917 OF NAVAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, EAST INDIES AND EGYPT.

CONFIDENTIAL.

No.721/1139.

Naval Commander-in-Chief,
East Indies and Egypt.
2nd June, 1917.

Sir,

In continuation of my letter No.625/1139 of the 15th May, 1917, be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty the following report of the proceedings in the Station under my command:-

E G Y P T.

On the 18th May H.M.S. "LOWESTOFT" arrived at PORT SAID with His Highness the Maharajah of Bikanir and Staff, who transhipped into the P. & O. "MANORA" and proceeded East. H.M.S. "LOWESTOFT" sailed on the 22nd May for TARANTO with Mr. Holman, Prime Minister of New South Wales and his party.

* * * *

I N D I A A N D C E Y L O N.

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H.M.S. "RAVEN II", with all the "Short" seaplanes, left BOMBAY on the 22nd May in H.M.S. "EXMOUTH'S" convoy.

Two baby "Sopwiths" have been left at COLOMBO to fly from Patrol Cruisers.

H.M.S. "BRISBANE" reports that whilst cruising these seaplanes have been of the greatest value and can be easily manipulated.

* * * *

On the 10th May the S.S. "CLAN GRAHAM" reported having been chased by a Raider off CAPE COMMORIN, but on further investigation I am convinced that there was no ground for believing that the ship sighted was a Raider. I am still of opinion that the latter has left these areas.

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(Sgd:) R.E. WEMYSS,

VICE-ADMIRAL,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

The Secretary
of the Admiralty.

H.S.548.
204 to 209.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTER OF PROCEEDINGS FOR PERIOD 3RD TO 26TH JUNE 1917 OF NAVAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, EAST INDIES AND EGYPT.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Naval Commander-in-Chief,
East Indies and Egypt.

No.855/1139.

26th June, 1917.

* * * *

E G Y P T.

H.M. Ships "EXMOUTH", "BRISBANE", "NEWCASTLE" and "GLOUCESTER" have all left my Command in accordance with Admiralty orders.

* * * *

The military situation in Palestine has undergone no change, and the Monitors have been inactive.

The landing of stores on the beach at DEIR EL BELAH continues as satisfactorily as possible, though for the last three weeks the operations have been somewhat hampered by the surf.

* * * *

(Sgd:) R.E. WEMYSS,
VICE-ADMIRAL,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

The Secretary
of the Admiralty.

65 3334