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BATTLE SUMMARY No. 38

Operation "Torch"

Invasion of North Africa

November 1942 to February 1943

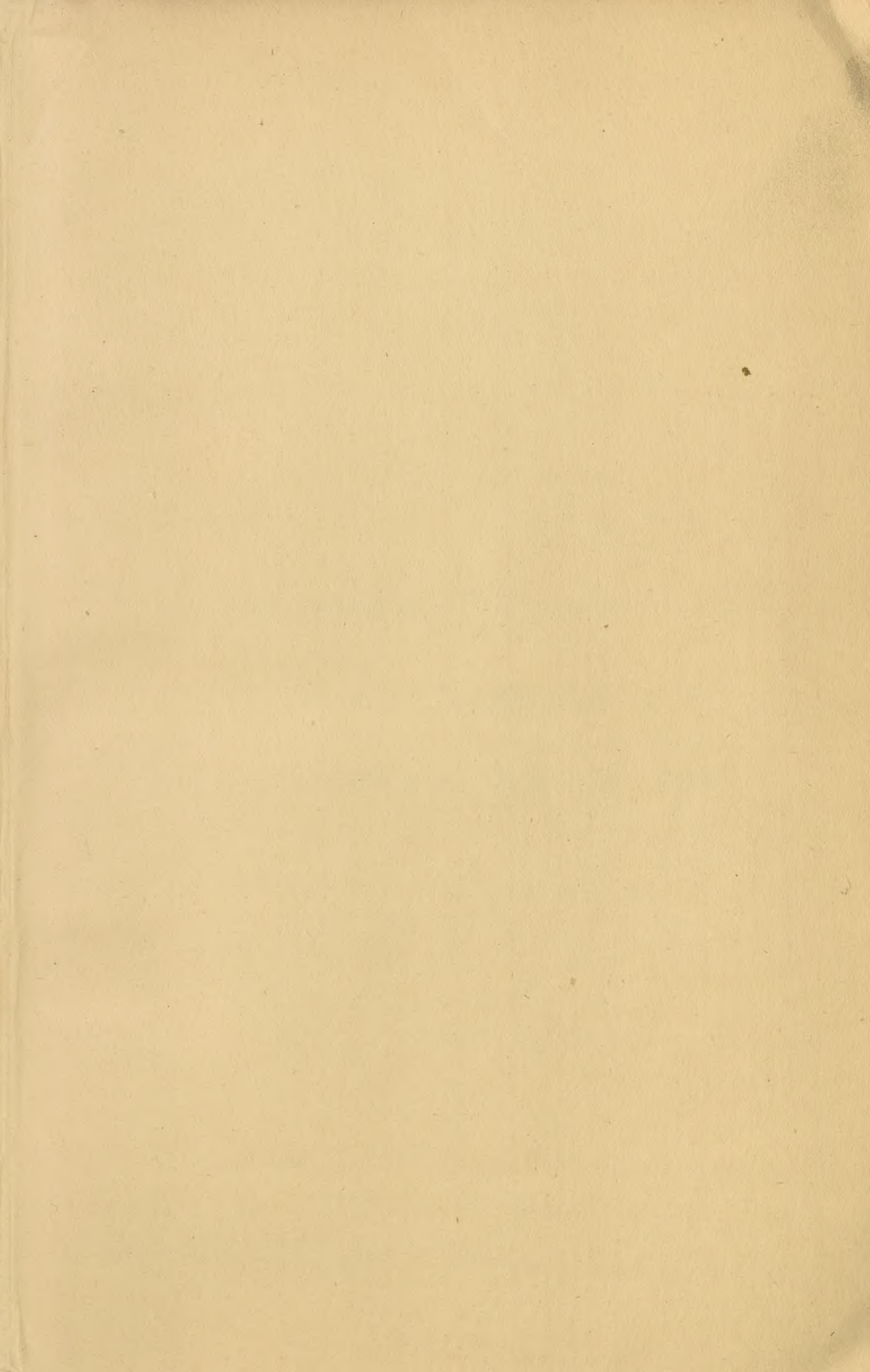
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Operation "Torch"

Invasion of North Africa

November 1942 to February 1943

INVASION OF NORTH AFRICA

Operation "Torch"

NOVEMBER, 1942

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.A.	Anti-aircraft.
A/C.	Aircraft.
A.M.	Minesweeper (U.S.).
A/S.	Anti-submarine.
B.A.D.	.. ..	British and Allied Delegation.
B.N.L.O.	.. ..	British Naval Liaison Officer.
C.N.T.F.	.. ..	Centre Naval Task Force.
C.O.S.	.. ..	Chief of Staff.
Cr.	.. ..	Cruiser.
C.T.F.	.. ..	Centre Task Force.
D-day	.. ..	Day appointed for the assault (8th November, 1942).
Des.	.. ..	Destroyer.
E.N.T.F.	.. ..	Eastern Naval Task Force.
E.T.	.. ..	Mediterranean Convoy, Westbound.
E.T.F.	.. ..	Eastern Task Force.
fn.	.. ..	Footnote.
F.S.G.	.. ..	Fire Support Group (U.S.).
G.U.F.	.. ..	Gibraltar—United States Fast Convoy.

¹ Details in Appendix "G."

² Details in Appendix "G1."

³ See Appendix "A1."

G.U.S.	Gibraltar—United States Slow Convoy.
H-hour	Time appointed for the assault.
K.M.F.	United Kingdom—Mediterranean Fast Convoy.
K.M.F.A.	United Kingdom—Mediterranean Fast Convoy, Algiers Portion.
K.M.F.O.	United Kingdom—Mediterranean Fast Convoy, Oran Portion.
K.M.S.	United Kingdom—Mediterranean Slow Convoy.
K.M.S.A.	United Kingdom—Mediterranean Slow Convoy, Algiers Portion.
K.M.S.O.	United Kingdom—Mediterranean Slow Convoy, Oran Portion.
L.C.A.	Landing Craft Assault.
L.C.M.	Landing Craft Medium.
L.C.P.	Landing Craft Personnel.
L.C.S.	Landing Craft, Support.
L.C.V.	Landing Craft, Vehicle.
L.S.G.	Landing Ship, Gantry.
L.S.I.	Landing Ship, Infantry.
L.S.L.	Landing Ship, Large.
L.S.T.	Landing Ship, Tank.
	Particular types of Landing Craft are defined by the following letters, thus :—(H) Hand hoisting ; (L) Large ; (M) Medium ; (R) Ramped.
M.B.	Motor Boat.
M.L.	Motor Launch.
mm.	Millimetre.
M.S.	Minesweeper.
M.T. Ship	Military Transport.
M/V.	Merchant Vessel.
N.C.C.T.F.	Naval Commander Centre Task Force. (Commodore T. Troubridge.)
N.C.E.T.F.	Naval Commander Eastern Task Force. (Rear-Admiral H. M. Burrough.)
N.C.W.T.F.	Naval Commander Western Task Force. (Rear-Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, U.S.N.)
N.C.X.F.	Naval Commander Expeditionary Force. (Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham.)
N.I.D.	Naval Intelligence Division, Admiralty Naval Staff.
Pol.	Polish.
P.R.U.	Photographic Reconnaissance Unit.
R.F.A.	Royal Fleet Auxiliary.
R.G.	Radio Guide.
R/T.	Radio Telephony.
S.B.S.	Special Boat Section.
S/M.	Submarine.
S.N.O.L.	Senior Naval Officer, Landings.
T.E.	Mediterranean Convoy, Eastbound.
T.G.	Task Group (U.S.).
Ton	" Torch " Order.
T/U.	" Torch," United States, Report.
U.G.F.	United States—Gibraltar Fast Convoy.
U.G.S.	United States—Gibraltar Slow Convoy.
U.S.A.	United States Army.
U.S.C.G.	United States Coast Guard.
U.S.N.	United States Navy.
W.I.R.	Weekly Intelligence Report.
W.N.T.F.	Western Naval Task Force.
W/T.	Wireless.
W.T.F.	Western Task Force.

INTRODUCTION

This Battle Summary gives an account of Operation "Torch" up to and including the occupation of Algiers, the capture of Oran, and the Armistice at Casablanca. It also includes a list of the Follow-up Convoys (Appendix "D" to "D 5") during the period 10th November, 1942 to 20th February, 1943, when the Operation officially ended. The available United States Action Reports do not include Reports from many transports engaged in the landings at Port Lyautey and Cape Fédala (both north of Casablanca) and it has not been found possible to give complete accounts of these landings.

NORTH AFRICA

1655 and 1942

Our intention is to sail hence with the first opportunity to the Bay of Tunis to put an end to the business there, which we shall endeavour to do with all the resolution and circumspection we can, as God shall direct us, it being a business of manifold concernments and interests and subject to divers consequents and constructions. (Admiral Blake (General-at-Sea) to Secretary Thurloe, 14th March, 1655, aboard the *George*, Bay of Callary (Cagliari).)

Operation "Torch," North West Africa, November, 1942

PART I

PREPARATIONS

CHAPTER I

OPERATION "TORCH"

Strategic Considerations

1. On Sunday, 8th November, 1942, a great combined force of British and American troops landed in North Africa to seize the key ports of Algiers, Oran and Casablanca. Known as Operation "Torch"¹ this great enterprise, destined to rank as one of the major strategic strokes of the war, gave the United Nations control of North West Africa and won back the command of the Mediterranean route. For Italy it destroyed the last fading hope of success, and in France lit a renewed hope of delivery and freedom. Taking part in the initial assault were more than 400 British and American warships and auxiliaries,² excluding a great number of merchant vessels and landing craft. Of this total more than 340 vessels passed within a few hours through the narrow Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean. Planned for five months in profound secrecy, executed with almost clockwork precision under the supreme command of Lieut.-General Dwight D. Eisenhower, U.S. Army, the Allied Commander-in-Chief, assisted by Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, Bart, G.C.B., D.S.O., as Naval Commander of the Expeditionary Force, its actual purpose, foreshadowed in the preliminary concentration of ships at Gibraltar, was so effectively masked that the assault took the Axis Powers almost completely by surprise.³ Perfectly timed to coincide with the advance of the British Eighth Army from El Alamein towards Tobruk, the operation stands as the first step in a world-wide offensive towards final victory.

1A. The strategic conception of sweeping the Axis from North Africa and establishing allied control from the Atlantic to the Red Sea necessitated an operation on a scale of such magnitude that once initiated, it had to be followed through with all the forces and shipping that the situation demanded. It was the major allied operation of 1942; a substitute for the assault across the English Channel which had been planned but which was postponed in July, 1942 as impracticable at that stage of the war. It was the first major United States operation of the war against Germany and anything approaching failure would have had a most damaging effect on allied morale. It was clear that the seven divisions originally estimated in June were inadequate and that an eventual build-up of at least ten or twelve divisions must be contemplated.

The pressing problem was, however, not the eventual but the immediate strength. In early plans, in which the aim was to strike as near Tunis as the enemy air threat would permit, it was envisaged that there should be, in addition to three major assaults on Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers, two small-

¹ Appendix "E1."

² Appendix "A."

³ Appendix "F" and "F1."

scale assaults on Philippeville and Bône. By 13th August, 1942, however, it was clear that this programme was too ambitious, and the plan was reconsidered. Two alternatives were suggested. The first was an eastward thrust into the Mediterranean, as planned, in the hope that a possible enemy counter threat through Spain would either not materialise or not have time to develop before Casablanca had been captured, as a second line of communication, by a force advancing overland from Oran. This would give a reasonable chance of capturing Tunis but would leave the allied line of communications dangerously insecure.

The second plan was to confine the assaults to Oran and Casablanca. Both plans were exhaustively examined but both were considered unsatisfactory. On 6th September a final decision was made that the assaults on Philippeville and Bône should be abandoned; combat loaders¹ with a lift of 5,000 men were to be transferred from the Casablanca and Oran forces to form a nucleus of an Algiers force, and the remainder of that force was to be made up by British troops. It was considered politically desirable that only American troops should be employed but this was outweighed by the necessities of sound strategy.²

A Catalina crashes, 26th September, 1942

2. The date originally intended for the operation was 30th October. By mid-September, however, it had been moved on to 4th November,³ but towards the end of the month a dramatic incident jeopardised its secrecy. On 26th September a Catalina in which Paymaster-Lieutenant J. H. Turner, Secretary to Commodore W. E. Parry⁴ was travelling to Gibraltar, was reported overdue. His body was washed ashore near Cadiz and on it was found a letter to the Governor of Gibraltar, giving the "target date" of the operation and stating that General Eisenhower would reach Gibraltar on D—2 or 3. There was a letter, too, to Commodore Parry, opened apparently by the action of sea water, and as articles from the ill-fated aircraft were still drifting ashore the Governor thought it possible that other compromising documents might have fallen into the hands of the Spanish authorities.⁵ His warning arrived on 28th September and the date of the operation was postponed to 8th November.⁶

Attitude towards French

3. In order to encourage the French to acquiesce in the landing and occupation the operation was to be regarded as an United States undertaking and the occupied territory was to fall under American authority as soon as military forces were established ashore.

The operation was greatly complicated by the uncertainty of Allied relations with the French in North Africa. According to the Orders⁷ every effort was to be made through broadcasts, leaflets and diplomatic channels to persuade them to agree to its peaceful occupation as an American sphere of influence. The overriding principle was that no offensive action should be taken against the French unless they took definitely hostile action against the Allies. If action became necessary in any area, it was to be taken with the utmost vigour till active resistance ceased, avoiding unnecessary damage to ships and harbour installations.

¹ See Appendix "K."

² General Eisenhower's Despatch, M. 01167/46.

³ Appendix "E2."

⁴ Additional C.O.S. to N.C.X.F., Appendix "E4."

⁵ Governor, Gibraltar, 28th September, 1942, Appendix "E4."

⁶ Appendix "E5."

⁷ "Ton," Part 3, of 8th October.

The attitude of the French remained doubtful to the end, but the lesson of Dakar, September, 1940,¹ had not been forgotten, for though it was stated to be of paramount importance to avoid unnecessary offensive action, it was definitely laid down that such action, once taken, must be decisive and overwhelming.

The passage of French ships through the Strait of Gibraltar was not to be opposed but all unescorted French submarines outside their territorial waters were to be treated as hostile. Allied submarines were free to attack any darkened ship sighted after 6th November and any French warship sighted on and after 7th November; French warships approaching Allied convoys in areas north of the Canaries or south of the Balearics and disobeying an order to keep clear were to be attacked. Surface vessels were to fire on any darkened ship that failed to identify herself. From the hour of assault all French warships, including submarines, and merchant vessels under way or getting under way were to be treated as hostile; the same principle applied to any shore battery or moored vessel threatening allied forces, any darkened vessel failing to identify herself, any vessel attempting to scuttle and any French vessel or aircraft disobeying an order given by the Allies. Any French aircraft approaching within sight of allied forces or convoys or of Gibraltar would also be treated as hostile.

¹ C.B. 3081 (13).

CHAPTER II
COMPOSITION OF FORCES

Air Forces

4. There were two areas of Allied Air Command, namely, the Eastern Air Command (British), comprising the area east of Cape Tenez¹ under Air Marshal Sir William Welsh² and the R.A.F., and the Western Air Command (U.S.), the area west of Cape Tenez,³ under Major-General James Doolittle and 12th U.S. Air Force. These Commands were under the orders of the Allied Commander-in-Chief, General Eisenhower.

To hold them, the Allies could muster more than 1,000 aircraft as follows :—

	Air Marshal Welsh.		General Doolittle.					
	Gibraltar.	Algiers.	Oran.	Casablanca.				
Catalinas	24	—	—	=	24	
Hudsons	20	20	—	=	40	
Bombers	—	72	57	114	= 243	
Fighters	—	162	320	240	= 722	
P.R.U.	6	6	—	—	= 12	
							<hr/>	1,041

Though the initial assaults were to be supported by seaborne aircraft, it was essential that the maximum possible strength of fighter aircraft should be available as soon as airfields were captured. It was therefore planned to fly from Gibraltar 160 fighters to each of the Oran and Casablanca areas, and 90 to the Algiers area within three days of the attack. Thereafter the build-up was to reach, at the end of seven weeks, a total in all types of aircraft, of 1,244 in the Western Command, and 454 in the Eastern Command.

The Axis forces opposing them were estimated at about 600 aircraft to which might be added nearly 500 Vichy, as follows :—

	Italy.						
	Luftwaffe.	Sicily, Sardinia,					
	Sicily.	Tripoli.	Vichy.	North Africa.			
Bombers	106	134	= 240	185	
Fighters	36	195	= 231	218	
Reconnaissance	27	102	= 129	83	
						<hr/>	486
						<hr/>	600

Allied Military Forces

5. The assault forces to be landed to capture the three ports numbered something like 70,000.⁴

¹ 36° 35' N., 1° 20' E. 330 miles E. of Gibraltar. See Plan 1.

² This area included the whole of the Western Mediterranean "to seaward." See Plan 1.

³ Including west coast of French Morocco.

⁴ Figures of military forces are only approximate.

The Eastern (Algiers) Task Assault Force under Major-General Ryder, U.S. Army, was composed of :—

Two U.S. Combat Teams, 39th and 168th	9,000
Two British Brigade Groups, 11th and 36th	9,000
Two Allied Commandos, I and VI	2,000
	20,000

The landing at Algiers was to be followed up by the British First Army under Lieut.-General K. A. N. Anderson.

The Centre (Oran) Task Assault Force was under Major-General Lloyd R. Fredenall, U.S.A., consisting of :—

Three U.S. Regimental Combat Teams, 16th	
18th and 26th	13,500
One Armoured Combat Command	4,500 and 180 tanks.
First Ranger Battalion	500
	18,500

This landing was to be followed up by an American force.

The planning for the Western (Casablanca) Task Assault Force, which was to sail direct from the United States, had necessarily to be carried out in Washington. The Force under Major-General George S. Patton, U.S. Army, consisted of :—

Five U.S. Regimental Combat Teams, 7th, 15th, 30th,	
47th, 60th	22,500
One Armoured Combat Command	4,500
One Regiment	2,000
One Armoured Combat Team (2 battalions)	2,000
	31,000

to be transported with its 250 tanks in 12 combat loaders, 10 auxiliary combat loaders,¹ 6 cargo ships and 1 sea train.

The follow-up forces in this area were to be entirely American. Except at Algiers where the landing and assault was to be carried out by British and U.S. forces, the assaults were to be made by U.S. forces. At Oran and Algiers the naval forces for escorting, disembarking and supporting were British. At Casablanca they were American.

Early in October two new details of considerable importance were woven into the general plan. The first was a decision to employ a battalion of parachute infantry to be flown all the way from England, to seize the airfields of Tafaroui and La Senia, South of Oran.² The second was a decision in favour of direct frontal attacks against the ports of Algiers and Oran. In both cases the nearest main landings had to be a full day's march distant and it was feared that the delay might afford time for the blocking of these vital ports, and the sabotaging of shipping and harbour installations.

For the plans as finally approved, there were not in the United Kingdom sufficient forces, British or United States, available with the necessary amphibious training. A programme was therefore arranged to afford the best training possible in the short time available. This training took place at the Combined Training Centre near Inverary in Western Scotland. A new United

¹ See Appendix "K".

² See Plans 1 and 7.

States naval base was rushed to completion in the same area and several regimental combat teams were put through a short course there. Those crews which arrived last from the United States had to be hurriedly trained though the training was pressed forward with energy by the ground force commanders.

Naval Forces

6. The great assembly of British naval forces detailed for "Torch" was under the command of Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, Bart., as N.C.X.F. (Naval Commander Expeditionary Force)¹ with Commodore R. M. Dick as his Chief of Staff. It was rendered possible only by reducing convoy forces in the Atlantic to the narrowest possible limits.

The Naval forces were constituted as follows:—

Eastern Naval Task Force (Algiers), E.N.T.F.

Central Naval Task Force (Oran) C.N.T.F.

Western Naval Task Force (Casablanca), W.N.T.F.

Force H.

Force R.

Force Q.

Force H (Vice-Admiral Sir Neville Syfret, K.C.B.), consisting of 3 capital ships (1 detached to C.N.T.F.), 2 aircraft carriers (1 detached to C.N.T.F.), 3 cruisers and 17 destroyers, was to act as a covering force to the landings at Algiers and Oran, guarding them against any excursion of the Italian fleet. Attached to it was Force R of 1 corvette, 2 tankers and 4 trawlers for fuelling purposes.

Force Q, consisting of 2 cruisers and 3 destroyers, was to cruise off the Azores to cover the U.S. Casablanca landing against a possible attack by surface craft in the Atlantic.

The Eastern Naval Task Force of 67 warships and 25 merchant vessels, under Rear-Admiral H. M. Burroughs, consisted of H.Q. ship *Bulolo*, 2 commissioned landing ships and 4 American combat loaders, 4 cruisers, 2 aircraft carriers, 3 auxiliary A/A. ships, 1 monitor and 13 destroyers,² 7 minesweepers, 3 sloops, 6 corvettes, 8 trawlers, 8 M.L.s., 3 submarines, 2 L.S.G., 9 L.S.I. and 16 M/T. ships.

The Centre Naval Task Force—70 warships and 34 merchant vessels, under Commodore T. Troubridge—consisted of the H.Q. ship *Largs* and 10 landing ships, 1 battleship (from Force H), 3 aircraft carriers (1 from Force H), 2 cruisers, 2 A/A. ships, 13 destroyers, 16 minesweepers, 2 sloops, 6 corvettes, 2 cutters, 10 M.L.s., 2 submarines and 34 transports.

The Western Naval Task Force—91 vessels, under Rear-Admiral H. K. Hewitt, U.S.N.—consisted of Flag Group (Force W), 1 cruiser (flag of Commander W.N.T.F.) and 4 submarines acting independently; a Fire Support Group of 2 capital ships, 3 cruisers and 20 destroyers; Aircraft Carrier Group of 4 aircraft carriers, 1 A/A. cruiser and 9 destroyers; Minesweeping Group of 5 fast and 3 slow minesweepers; The Assault Convoy consisted of 12 combat loaders, 10 auxiliary combat loaders, 6 cargo ships, 1 sea train and 2 oilers.

The minesweepers and the Assault Convoy, 39 ships in all, were to sail from the United States as Assault Convoy U.G.F.1.

¹ Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, previously C-in-C., Mediterranean (1939–1941), had been transferred to Washington to assist in planning operations. Admiral Sir Henry Harwood became C-in-C., Mediterranean, 22nd April, 1942 (see S. 49). Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham was appointed Naval Commander Expeditionary Force on 1st November, 1942, hoisting his flag in H.M.S. *Nelson* at Gibraltar, and transferring it to H.Q.s. ashore (H.M.S. *Hannibal*).

² 12 British and 1 Polish.

Composition of Naval Forces¹

7. The composition of these forces was as follows :—

FORCE H (COVERING FORCE).

Capital Ships (3)	... Duke of York (Flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Neville Syfret), <i>Renown</i> , <i>Rodney</i> (detached to Centre Naval Task Force).
Aircraft Carriers (3)	... <i>Victorious</i> (Flag of Rear-Admiral Lyster), <i>Formidable</i> , <i>Furious</i> (detached to Centre Naval Task Force).
Cruisers (3)	... <i>Bermuda</i> , <i>Argonaut</i> , <i>Sirius</i> .
Destroyers (17)	... <i>Eskimo</i> (Capt. D.6), <i>Ashanti</i> , <i>Tartar</i> , <i>Meteor</i> , <i>Martin</i> , <i>Quentin</i> , <i>Quality</i> , <i>Quiberon</i> , <i>Pathfinder</i> , <i>Partridge</i> , <i>Porcupine</i> , <i>Penn</i> , <i>Panther</i> , <i>Lookout</i> , <i>Ithuriel</i> , <i>Mibne</i> (Capt. D.3), <i>Isaac Sweers</i> .

FORCE R (FUELLING FORCE).

Corvette (1)	... <i>Coreopsis</i> (S.N.O. Force R).
R.F.A. Tankers (2)	... <i>Brown Ranger</i> , <i>Dingledale</i> .
Trawlers (4)	... <i>Loch Oskraig</i> , <i>Imperialist</i> , <i>Arctic Ranger</i> , <i>St. Nectan</i> .

FORCE Q (AZORES FORCE).

Cruisers (2)	... <i>Norfolk</i> , <i>Cumberland</i> .
Destroyers (3)	... <i>Onslow</i> (Capt. D.17), <i>Oribi</i> , <i>Offa</i> .

EASTERN NAVAL TASK FORCE (ALGIERS)

7A. H.Q. Ship	<i>Bulolo</i> (Flag, Rear-Admiral H. M. Burrough).
Cruisers (4)	... <i>Sheffield</i> (Flag of Rear-Admiral Harcourt), <i>Bermuda</i> , <i>Scylla</i> , <i>Charybdis</i> .
Aircraft Carrier	... <i>Argus</i> .
Auxiliary A/C. C.	... <i>Avenger</i> .
Auxiliary A/A. Ships	<i>Palomares</i> , <i>Pozarica</i> , <i>Tynwald</i> .
(3)	
Monitor	... <i>Roberts</i> .
Destroyers (12)	... <i>Blyskawica</i> , <i>Bramham</i> , <i>Bicester</i> , <i>Cowdray</i> , <i>Zetland</i> , <i>Lamerton</i> , <i>Wheatland</i> , <i>Wilton</i> , <i>Vanoc</i> , <i>Wrestler</i> , <i>Broke</i> , <i>Malcolm</i> .
Convoy Destroyer	... <i>Clare</i> .
A/S. Fleet	<i>Acute</i> , <i>Algerine</i> , <i>Alarm</i> , <i>Albacore</i> , <i>Cadmus</i> ,
Minesweepers (7)	<i>Speedwell</i> , <i>Hussar</i> .
Sloops (3)	... <i>Stork</i> , <i>Ibis</i> , <i>Enchantress</i> .
Corvettes (6)	... <i>Rother</i> , <i>Spey</i> , <i>Convolvulus</i> , <i>Marigold</i> , <i>Samphire</i> , <i>Pentstemon</i> .
A/S. M/S. Trawlers (8)	<i>Cava</i> , <i>Othello</i> , <i>Juliet</i> , <i>Stroma</i> , <i>Hoy</i> , <i>Inchcolm</i> , <i>Mull</i> , <i>Rysa</i> .
Motor Launches (8)	... 238, 273, 283, 295, 307, 336, 338, 444.
Submarines (3)	... P.45, P.48, P.221.
Landing Ships,	(Large) <i>Keren</i> , <i>Karanja</i> .
Infantry	
L.S. Gantry (R.F.A.)	<i>Dewdale</i> , <i>Ennerdale</i> .
Combat Loaders (4)	A.P. (U.S.N.) <i>Samuel Chase</i> , <i>Thomas C. Stone</i> X.A.P. (U.S.N.) <i>Leedstown</i> , A.K. (U.S.N.), <i>Almaack</i> .

¹ Not including ships in convoy. Orders Ton, p. 17, App. III. For names of Commanders, see Appendix "A—A5" and "A11."

Assembled also at Gibraltar were some 110 ships including :—

S/M. depot ship, 1 ; tugs, fleet, 1 ; colliers, 10 ; submarines, 8 ; tugs, rescue, 4 ; armament supply, 10 ; minesweepers depot ship, 1 ; salvage vessel, 1 ; motor launches, 10 ; M/S. trawlers, 5 ; tankers large, 2 ; small, 5 ; harbour defence M/Ls., 16 ; motor M/Ss., 32 ; tank landing craft, 6 ; tankers, attendant, 2 ; hulks, 6.

CENTRE NAVAL TASK FORCE (ORAN).

- 7B. H.Q. Ship *Largs* (Broad Pendant, Commodore T. H. Troubridge).
 Capital Ship (1) ... *Rodney* (From Force H).
 Aircraft Carrier (1) ... *Furious* (From Force H).
 Auxiliary A/C. C. (2) *Biter, Dasher*.
 Cruisers (2) ... *Jamaica, Aurora*.
 A/A. Cruiser (1) ... *Delhi*.
 Auxiliary A/A. Ship *Alynbank*.
 Destroyers (12) ... *Boreas*,¹ *Brilliant, Boadicea, Bulldog*,¹ *Beagle*,¹
Amazon, Achates, Antelope, Avon Vale,
Farndale, Puckeridge, Calpe.
 Convoy Destroyer ... *Vansittart*.
 A/S. Fleet *Rhyl, Felixstowe, Clacion, Polruan, Rothesay,*
 Minesweepers (8) *Stornoway, Bude, Brixham*.
 Sloops (2) ... *Aberdeen, Deptford*.
 Corvettes (6)... *Exe, Swale, Gardenia, Vetch, Rhododendron,*
Violet.
 Cutters (2) ... *Walney, Hartland*.
 A/S. and M/S. *Eday, Inchmarnock, Kerrera, Coriolanus, Fluel-*
 Trawlers (8) *len, Horatio, Shiant, Ronaldshay*.
 Motor Launches (10) 280, 458, 433, 469, 471, 480, 483, 1127, 1128,
 1139.
 Submarines (2) ... P.54, *Ursula*.
 Landing Ships, (Large) *Glengyle*, (Medium) *Queen Emma,*
 Infantry (6) *Prinses Beatrix*, (Handhoisting) *Royal Scots-*
man, Royal Ulsterman, Ulster Monarch.
 Landing Ships, *Bachaquero, Misoa, Tasajera*.
 Tank (3)
 Gantry (R.F.A.) ... *Derwentdale*.

WESTERN NAVAL TASK FORCE (CASABLANCA).²

- 7C. Flag Group ... Cruiser (1) *Augusta* (Flag, Rear-Admiral H.
 K. Hewitt, U.S.N.). Submarines (4).
 Covering Group ... Capital Ship (1) *Massachusetts*. Cruisers (2)
Wichita, Tuscaloosa. Destroyers (5).
 Fire Support Group ... Capital Ships (2) *Texas* (flag), *New York*.
 Cruisers (3) *Philadelphia, Savannah, Brook-*
lyn. Destroyers (20).
 Aircraft Carrier Group Aircraft Carrier *Ranger* (flag). Auxiliary
 Carriers (3) *Santee, Sangamon, Charger*.
 A/A. Cruiser (1) *Cleveland*. Destroyers (9).
 Minesweeping Group A/S. Minesweepers, fast (5). A/S. Mine-
 sweepers, slow (3).
 Assault Convoy ... Combat Loaders (12). Auxiliary Combat
 Loaders (10). A.K. (*i.e.*, Cargo Ships) (6).
 Sea Train (1). Oilers (2).

¹ From Force H.

² See Section 35 and Appendix "A11—A14"

CHAPTER III

ORGANIZATION AND PLANS

The Naval Operation Orders

8. The Naval Orders for Operation "Torch"¹ were issued in eight parts between 3rd October and 20th October, 1942, under the signature of the Deputy Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay. The orders were given the short title "Ton" (Torch Orders, Naval)² and were comprised in seven enclosures :—

- Ton 1. General outline, dated 3rd October.
- Ton 2. Detailed instructions for passage of forces and convoys through the Strait of Gibraltar, including fuelling arrangements, dated 8th October.
- Ton 3. Instructions for the assault, dated 8th October.
- Ton 4. Orders for submarines, dated 8th October.
- Ton 5. Orders for the re-allocation of forces after the assault, dated 13th October.
- Ton 6. Orders for follow-up convoys, dated 12th October.
- Ton 7. Orders for the formation of returning convoys, dated 12th October.

The object of the operation was the occupation of Algeria and French Morocco by combined British and American Forces with a view to the early occupation of Tunisia and the establishment in French Morocco of a force adequate to move, if necessary, into Spanish Morocco. Three simultaneous assaults were to be directed against Algiers, Oran and Casablanca.

All naval operations within the Mediterranean and the escort of convoys to and from the United Kingdom were to be undertaken by the Royal Navy. All naval operations on the west coast of French Morocco and the escort of convoys to and from U.S.A. were to be undertaken by the U.S. Navy (Western Naval Task Force) under the general direction of the Allied C.-in-C.

The prospective area of operations comprised three groups: Algiers (Eastern), Oran (Centre) and Casablanca (Western). The assault on Casablanca was to be carried out by United States military and air forces supported and landed by the U.S. Navy, and subsequent occupation by U.S. forces. The assault on Oran was to be carried out by United States military and air forces supported and landed by the Royal Navy. In the assault on Algiers, U.S. and British military forces were to land side by side supported and landed by the Royal Navy. The subsequent advance into Algeria and Tunis was to be by British military and air forces.

¹ Folio, buff cover, titled OPERATION "TORCH," NAVAL OPERATION ORDERS (Short Title "TON"), dated 3rd October, 1942, signed B. H. Ramsay, Admiral, for Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force (Short Title NC/XF).

² Folio, 140 pp. There are also Naval Orders for Eastern Task Force (Short Title Torch/NE), 5th October. Rear-Admiral H. M. Burrough (244 pp.) and Naval Orders for Centre Task Force (Short Title Torch/NC), 14th October, Commodore T. Troubridge (233 pp.).

British Convoys

9. The Orders¹ provided for the transfer to the Mediterranean of these large forces in two Advance Convoys and two advance forces,² totalling 71 vessels, to be followed by a main body of 189 vessels and 84 escorts, leaving the United Kingdom for Gibraltar in 6 convoys³ as follows :—

Convoy K.X.3 ...	1 vessel with 2 escorts on 18th October.
Convoy K.M.S.1 ...	46 vessels with 18 escorts on 22nd October.
Convoy K.M.S.2 ...	53 vessels with 14 escorts on 25th October.
Convoy K.M.F.1 ...	39 vessels with 12 escorts on 26th October.
Convoy K.X.5 ...	32 vessels with 10 escorts on 31st October.
Convoy K.M.F.2 ...	18 vessels with 8 escorts on 1st November.

Tables of Convoy Routes with lettered Routeing Positions⁴ provided for cover in the Atlantic by Force H and in the case of the Western Naval Task Force by Force Q off the Azores. During the phase of actual assault on Oran and Algiers, Force H was to perform the important task of covering the landing forces against seaborne attack in the Mediterranean while a special American Covering Group fulfilled the same function for the Western Task Force on the Moroccan coast.

Air cover would be provided by a great concentration of aircraft carriers, backed up by land-based aircraft operating from Malta.

The east-bound transport convoys from the United States were scheduled to reach Casablanca as follows :—

Convoy U.G.F.2 on 13th November.
Convoy U.G.S.2 ⁵ on 30th November.
Convoy U.G.F.3 on 18th December.

Subsequently, U.G.F. convoys with a speed of 13½ knots, consisting of 15 transports (personnel) or 20 (10 personnel and 10 mechanical) and U.G.S. convoys of 45 ships with a speed of 9 knots, would sail regularly every 25 days.⁶

Outward Passage

10. Gibraltar was the pivotal point of the whole operation. Never, in its long and stormy history at the gateway to the Mediterranean, had it played a more vital role. Preparations had early been made to establish there the Allied Force Command Post for the initial operations, and on 5th November General Eisenhower was able to assume full control. Admiral Cunningham's Headquarters were established in the same location, as was that of Coastal Command, R.A.F., Gibraltar, charged with the escort of the convoys during their final approach.⁷

To ensure the passage of more than 340 ships through the Strait of Gibraltar only 8 miles wide, within a limited margin of time, was therefore the crux of the whole operation. Special tables⁸ provided for this and as provision had to be made for ships fuelling at Gibraltar, these involved a large-scale movement of far reaching complexity depending for its success, in the case of

¹ Naval Operation Orders, TON, Part I.

² Force H and Advanced Carrier Force. Force H was to leave Gibraltar on 6th November.

³ The British convoys were designated by the letters K M (*i.e.*, United Kingdom to Mediterranean with F = Fast and S = Slow). United States convoys were lettered U.G. (U = United States, G = Gibraltar).

⁴ See Plan 3.

⁵ U.G.S.1 was not mentioned in Operation Orders.

⁶ See Appendix D.1.

⁷ General Eisenhower's Despatch, M. 01167/46, p. 11.

⁸ TON, p. 3, and routeing tables.

large vessels, on rigid adherence to a time-table, and in the case of small vessels on the rapid and flexible execution of a fuelling programme.

A train of auxiliary craft, tugs, tankers and special personnel was already on its way to Gibraltar early in October in Advance Convoys, designated K.X. The first, K.X.1, sailing on 2nd October, included 10 colliers. The second, K.X.2, of 18 vessels and 13 escorts was a slow convoy, including 5 ammunition ships, due at Gibraltar on 31st October. The third, K.X.3, 12 knots, consisted of only one ship, the *Llanstephan Castle*, carrying 1,369 special personnel (signal staff, radar, A/A., etc.) for Gibraltar. She left the Clyde on 19th October and was due at Gibraltar on 27th October. The fourth, K.X.4, was in two parts, "A" and "B" :—

"A"— $7\frac{1}{2}$ knots, 20 vessels and 8 escorts, from the Clyde, was due on 4th November. It included 3 L.S.T. (Tank Landing Ships), the *Bachaquero*, *Misoa* and *Tasajera*, which were to go on to the Centre Task Force at Oran.

"B"— $6\frac{1}{2}$ knots, 8 vessels and 2 escorts from Milford Haven was due on 3rd November.

Assault Convoys

11. Most important were the Assault Convoys carrying the actual landing forces. These were designated K.M. They were divided into K.M.F. (Fast) and K.M.S. (Slow) and each of these again into portions for Algiers (A) and Oran (O).

K.M.S.1, consisting of 46 vessels with 18 escorts, was to sail on 22nd October, arriving off Gibraltar on 4th November at 0800. There it was to split into two portions, K.M.S.(A) for Algiers and K.M.S.(O) for Oran. The schedule provided for the forces and Assault Convoys passing Europa Point within 33 hours between 5th November/1930 and 7th November/0400, as follows :—

5th November/1930	Force R.
2030	<i>Argus</i> , <i>Sheffield</i> , <i>Scylla</i> , <i>Charybdis</i> , <i>Tynwald</i> and escort.
2300	Monitor <i>Roberts</i> .
2345	Convoy K.M.S.(A)1 (Algiers, Slow).
6th November/0100	Convoy K.M.F.(A)1 (Algiers, Fast).
0300	L.S.T. Landing Ship Tanks.
0430	Force H.
0445	<i>Ulster Monarch</i> , ¹ <i>Royal Scotsman</i> , ¹ <i>Royal Ulsterman</i> . ¹
1445	Motor Launches from Gibraltar.
1660	Convoy K.M.S.(O)1 (Oran, Slow).
2230	Convoy K.M.F.(O)1 (Oran, Fast).
7th November/0400	Advance Carrier force H.M.S. <i>Furious</i> , <i>Delhi</i> , and escort.

On passing the meridian of 3° West, Commanders of Task Forces would assume responsibility for the onward routeing of their ships to the "release" positions laid down for the assaults on Oran and Algiers.² The Eastern Task Force of 65 warships and 25 merchant vessels under Rear-Admiral Burrough in the H.Q. Ship *Bulolo* would proceed to Algiers while the Centre Task Force of 70 warships and 34 transports under Commodore Troubridge in H.Q. Ship *Largs* would proceed to Oran.³

¹ L.S.L., Landing Ships Large.

² See Plans 5 and 7.

³ See Plan 3.

Orders for Force H

12. Force H, which was to cover the Eastern and the Centre Task Forces and their follow-up convoys¹ (T.E. and T.F.) against seaborne attack by Vichy or Italian Mediterranean Fleets, was not to proceed eastwards of 4° 30' E.² except to engage the enemy. Unless strong enemy forces were at sea, the *Rodney*, with the *Boreas*, *Bulldog* and *Beagle* as screen, was to join the Centre Naval Task Force (Oran) at 0600 on the opening day. The *Bermuda* might also be detached to join the Eastern Naval Task Force (Algiers) but Force H, on which the whole security of the operation depended, was not to be jeopardised in order to strengthen other forces. Force H was to refuel, from Force R, at sea if necessary, but if the military situation permitted, it would withdraw to the westward to refuel, possibly at Oran, about 13th November, in immediate readiness for further operations.

Orders for Naval Task Forces

13. The landings at Oran and Algiers were to take place simultaneously. The Eastern Naval Task Force (Algiers) was to direct its movements so as to mislead the enemy, as far as possible, into supposing that it was bound for Malta. It would land the Eastern Task Force for the assault on Algiers about 0100 on D-day (8th November). It could call on Force H for assistance and was empowered to order Operation "Terminal," a direct assault on Algiers harbour by the destroyers *Broke* and *Malcolm*.

The Centre Naval Task Force (Oran) was also to direct its movements so as to mislead the enemy, as far as possible, into supposing that it was bound for a point further eastwards. It would land the Centre Task Force for the assault on Oran about 0100 on the opening day. It could order Operation "Reservist," a direct assault on Oran harbour by the ex-American cutters *Walney* and *Hartland*. American airborne troops, flown from the United Kingdom, would attack the airfields of La Senia, near Oran, and Tafaroui, some 80 miles S.S.E. of it, about zero hour, 0100 on the opening day.

Orders for Submarines and for Air Reconnaissance³

14. The 10th Submarine Flotilla would maintain five patrols off Messina from 5th November, three in the northern approach and two in the southern. The remainder available were to patrol on a line westward from Cape San Vito (north-west point of Sicily). These were to be offensive patrols directed against enemy ships. The 8th Submarine Flotilla was to maintain three submarines on reconnaissance patrols off Toulon in areas A, B and C and to supply five submarines for beach finding and to act as beacons, three P45, P48 and P221, off Algiers and two P54 and *Ursula*, off Oran, to arrive on 5th November.

14A. Three standing air patrols were to be maintained—(1) one, by Catalinas from 7th November between Palamos (Spain, East Coast) and the Strait of Bonifacio (Sardinia) to observe any southward movement of forces in Toulon; (2) one by aircraft from Malta, from 7th November, between Cape Marittimo (Sicily, West) and Cavoli Island (Sardinia) to observe any westerly movements by Italian forces and (3) one, north and west of Dakar (Africa, West) from 3rd November, to observe any northerly movement by forces in Dakar.

Air sorties would also be made over Italian and French ports to locate the whereabouts of Axis and Vichy ships.

¹ Appendix "D4."

² Approximately the longitude of Minorca.

³ See Plan 1.

Anti-submarine escorts were to be provided by aircraft, Catalinas, Hudsons and Swordfish, based on Gibraltar, the Hudsons and Swordfish moving to Algiers and Oran as soon as the operation developed beyond the range of Gibraltar. Reconnaissance of ports in Southern France would be made by aircraft based on the United Kingdom.

General Mark Clark's Mission to Algeria, 22nd-23rd October

15. An incident considered by General Eisenhower to be of the greatest importance took place late in October. Careful sounding of French military opinion in North Africa had established that certain army and air force elements were favourably disposed towards the Allies. To confirm this, and ensure that the Allied plan could safely and with advantage be communicated to responsible French officers, a special mission of senior United States officers—headed by Major-General Mark W. Clark, U.S. Army—was landed 50 miles west of Algiers, from the British submarine P.219 on the night of 22nd and 23rd October.¹

General Mast, the commander of the French military forces in the Algiers area, who headed the French delegation, informed General Clark that given four days' notice he could guarantee that there would be little or no resistance from the French military and air forces. He also guaranteed free entry into Bône. There resulted from this mission, which was carried out under conditions of acute hazard, no actual changes in the tentative plan. However, its outcome was extremely encouraging, and was followed by an agreement on the part of General Giraud to give up his prepared French plans and to go to North Africa and co-operate with the Allied Forces.

On the very night that General Clark and his party left North Africa and were struggling with their small canoes in a choppy sea off Algeria the first "Torch" assault convoy sailed from the United Kingdom.

¹ Report in M. 052138/42. See Appendices "B," "B1," "B2" and Plans 1 and 4.

PART II
THE ASSAULT
WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

CHAPTER IV
THE OCCUPATION OF ALGIERS

General Giraud

16. By 3rd November the Eighth Army had completed its great stroke at El Alamein and next day Rommel was in full retreat under incessant British land and air attack. By 5th November the British were advancing along the whole front, and on the 6th General Montgomery announced that the battle had ended in complete and absolute victory.

That night, at the other end of the Mediterranean, the British submarine, P.219,¹ on the Toulon patrol, with an American naval officer, Captain Wright, nominally in command, embarked General Giraud in Bormes Road, some 20 miles east of Toulon, and transferred him to a Catalina aircraft for passage to Gibraltar.² It was hoped that his influence would unite the many divergent factions in French North West Africa and end any opposition to the Anglo-American landing. He was at first by no means helpful, flatly declining at Gibraltar to take part in the operation except as its Supreme Commander, but finally consented to co-operate on the understanding that he was to be the recognised leader of the effort to prevent Axis aggression in North Africa, the Commander-in-Chief of all the French forces in the region, and the Governor of the Area.³ On the night of 7th and 8th November a second submarine, P.217,⁴ on the Toulon patrol, picked up several members of General Giraud's staff off the River Var, near Nice, and took them to Algiers.⁵

16A. Hostile submarines, of which about 40 were operating on the North Atlantic trade routes, constituted the biggest menace to the whole enterprise. By a stroke of fortune, however, hostile aircraft reported convoy S.L.125, homeward bound from Sierra Leone, passing east and northward of the invasion, fleet. The "wolf pack" turned in pursuit and between 27th and 30th October sank 10 of the 42 vessels in the convoy but left the route to Gibraltar clear for the three great "Torch" convoys which offered such a magnificent target. By the evening of 7th November the advance forces and convoys were well inside the Mediterranean,⁶ the only casualty being the U.S. combat loader *Thomas C. Stone*, in K.M.F.1, torpedoed that morning off the south-east corner of Spain in 37° 34' N., 0° 1' W., with the loss of nine lives but towed safely into port.⁷

¹ Later named *Seraph*.

² Details in Appendix "B3."

³ "Three Years with Eisenhower," by Capt. Harry C. Butcher, U.S.N.R. William Heinemann, Ltd. P. 150.

⁴ Later named *Sibyl*.

⁵ Details in Appendix "B4."

⁶ The Movements of the convoys in the Mediterranean are shown in Plans 3 to 7, inclusive.

⁷ Into Algiers on 11th November. See Plan 4.

The identity of the attacking submarine has not been established. Four German submarines, U.77, U.81, U.565 and U.593, were in the immediate vicinity and sighted the convoy,¹ but as there is no reference to the actual attack in any of their deck logs it appears possible that the attacker may have been Italian.

Algiers

17. Algiers stands on the western shore of Algiers Bay, which lies between Pescade Point and Cape Matifu and is bordered, for the most part, by a sandy beach. Several forts surmount the heights dominating the town which is scattered over the slopes of the hills in the form of a large while triangle. The shore of the bay to the eastward is free from off-lying dangers, and depths decrease regularly towards it. In 1937 its harbour consisted of two basins with a third under construction. Westerly winds raise the sea level in the basins and easterly winds lower it, the difference sometimes amounting to 3 ft. With a population of 260,000 it is the most important town in French Northern Africa, being the seat of Government and a naval port with adequate repair facilities for large vessels.

Cape Matifu, a low headland, extending nearly 2 miles, forms the eastern arm of Algiers Bay. The village of Jean Bart lies on its eastern extremity and a dangerous reef runs west-north-westward for three cables from its western end. Pescade Point, the northern extremity of Cape Caxine, lies 10 miles westward of Cape Matifu across the Bay. On its eastern side stands the ruins of a fort, and small vessels shelter from westerly winds under its lee. Sidi Ferruch, 6 miles south-westward of Pescade Point, is a small peninsula surmounted by a modern fort.² By zero hour, 0100 on 8th November, all was ready for the assault on Algiers.

Landing Beaches, Algiers³

18. The three beaches selected for the allied landings at Algiers were designated "Apples," "Beer" and "Charlie," but are referred to in the Naval Commander's War Diaries simply as Beaches A, B and C.⁴

Beach "Apples" lies 5 miles south-west of Sidi Ferruch and stretches another five along the coast. Beach "Beer" stretches eastward from Sidi Ferruch to a point 2 miles beyond Pescade Point. Beach "Charlie" stretches six miles eastward from Cape Matifu.

Beach "Apples" was divided into "Apples Green" in $36^{\circ} 39\frac{1}{2}'$ N., $2^{\circ} 42'$ E. and "Apples White" in $36^{\circ} 42'$ N., $2^{\circ} 48'$ E. with a "release position" "A" fixed in $36^{\circ} 45\frac{1}{2}'$ N., $2^{\circ} 40\frac{1}{2}'$ E., 5 or 6 miles to seaward. Beach "Beer" was divided into six landing points, namely, "Beer Green," $36^{\circ} 45\frac{1}{2}'$ N., $2^{\circ} 51\frac{1}{2}'$ E., "Beer White" $36^{\circ} 46'$ N., $2^{\circ} 52\frac{1}{2}'$ E., and "Beer Red 1" in a small bay 300 ft. wide, 1,000 yards west of Cape Caxine Lighthouse; "Beer Red 2" in small bay 250 yards wide between Pescade Point and Iles de Pescade; "Beer Red 3" in bay 200 yards wide, 600 yards south-east of "Beer Red 2"; and "Beer Red 4" in bay 400 yards wide immediately south-east of south-east point of "Beer Red 3," with a "release position" "B" in $36^{\circ} 52\frac{1}{2}'$ N., $2^{\circ} 49'$ E., 7 miles out to sea north of Sidi Ferruch. "Beach Charlie" was divided into five points, namely, "Queenie Red," "Charlie Green," "Charlie Blue" and "Charlie Red 1 and 2," with a "release position" "C" in $36^{\circ} 54\frac{1}{2}'$ N., $3^{\circ} 20\frac{1}{2}'$ E., 7 miles out to sea due north of "Charlie Red."

¹ U.77 also sighted the damaged ship under escort.

² Plan 5.

³ Plans 2 and 5.

⁴ T.S.D. 3725/42 and 3726A/42. N.C.X.F.'s War Diaries, November, 1942.

18A.¹ The pilotage parties detailed to reconnoitre the beaches and lead in the landing forces at Algiers and Oran were named "Koodoo" and "Inhuman." Party "Koodoo" reached Gibraltar by air on 24th September. "Inhuman" arrived on 14th October and merged with "Koodoo" bringing the total to 24 officers and 24 ratings. Most of their gear had been brought out from the United Kingdom but some items were in short supply and they set to work to collect and improvise gear, and to carry out trials in four unequipped canoes found in H.M.S. *Maidstone*. By the end of October their equipment was reasonably complete, but there had not been sufficient time to complete their training.

For some days before the opening of the attack the pilots or "leading-in" officers carried out a survey of the shore at periscope depth from the five marking submarines.² Unfortunately at the last moment an order had been received from Gibraltar based on considerations of secrecy that periscope reconnaissance only was to be made, though it had been emphasised that the positions of landings could not be guaranteed unless pilots and markers were able to view the immediate beach approaches by canoe.

A disconcerting discovery was made on the very eve of sailing, that the naval position³ of "Beer White" Beach near Algiers, which subsequently turned out to be incorrect, differed from the military by more than 1½ sea miles.

It was the task of the senior pilot of each team to shew the inner pilotage approach to his marking officer, and this was successfully carried out except in the "Apples" Sector where the First Pilot, Lieutenant L. G. Lyne, and his Marking Officer, Lieutenant P. B. Thomas, R.N.R., were driven out to sea by a storm on 4th November, being eventually picked up by a trawler and taken to Algiers. After their loss, Lieutenant Haydon, Pilot for "Apples White," reorganised the party with himself as pilot for the difficult beach of "Apples Green," appointing Lieutenant Tongue, R.N.V.R., Marking Officer for "Apples White," to take his place as pilot for "Apples White" without a marker at that beach.

Instructions for Assault, "Apples" Sector⁴

19. A portion of fast convoy K.M.F.A.1, carrying the 11th Infantry Brigade, was due at "release position 'A'" at 2245 on 7th November,⁵ being "homed" there by P.221. Assault flights for "Apples Green" and "White" were then to be disembarked, the landing craft turning towards Sidi Ferruch to minimise the effect of infra-red detectors. They would be led towards a marking submarine by M.Ls.⁶; a folbot⁷ being stationed 400 yards off each beach to aid navigation. Included in the K.M.F.A.1 portion were the transports *Karanja*, carrying the Brigade Headquarters and the main party of the 1st Battalion East Surrey Regiment; *Viceroy of India*, carrying the 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers and the Assault Party of the East Surreys; and *Marnix*, carrying, in addition to the Northampton Regiment, the 6th Battalion Royal West Kents,⁸ which were to land after the Northamptons, if necessary.

At H hour, 0100 on 8th November, the assault craft would beach, and a portion of the slow convoy, K.M.S.A.1, including the landing craft ship *Dewdale*

¹ Report by Lieut.-Cdr. N. C. Willmott, R.N. From App. IV to N.C.E.T.F. (Rear-Admiral Burrough).

² See Section 14.

³ N.E. 2223.

⁴ Plan 5.

⁵ H hours minus 2 hours 15 minutes.

⁶ At H hours minus 1 hour 20 minutes.

⁷ Folding boat.

⁸ From the 36th Infantry Brigade.

with 14 L.C.M.¹ and the military transports *Manchester Port* with 2 L.C.M., *Lalande* with 2 L.C.M., *Ocean Wanderer* with 2 L.C.M., and *Ocean Viceroy*² would rendezvous with the fast convoy, at "release position 'A'"; all ships proceeding to a position marked by a lighted dan buoy 1 mile from "Apples White" Beach where they would anchor in two lines. After the assault flights had landed, "Apples Green" Beach would be closed, the landing craft employed there joining the ferry service between the ships and "Apples White" Beach.

Instructions for Assault, "Beer" Sector³

20. The forces detailed for the landings in the "Beer" Sector were portions of K.M.F.A.1 and K.M.S.A.1. The K.M.F.A. 1 portion consisted of the Headquarters ship *Bulolo*, flag of Admiral Burrough, N.C.E.T.F., carrying 2 landing craft; *Keren*, carrying 15 miscellaneous landing craft and the 2nd Battalion 168th Combat Team; *Winchester Castle*, carrying 15 miscellaneous landing craft and the 1st Battalion 168th Combat Team; *Otranto*, carrying 10 assault landing craft and the 3rd Battalion 168th Combat Team; *Sobieski*, carrying 11 landing craft; *Awatea*, carrying 10 landing craft,⁴ and the 6th Commando; *Cathay*, carrying a portion of the 36th Infantry Brigade as a floating reserve; and the *Strathnaver*, carrying 14 landing craft and another portion of the 36th Infantry Brigade, also as a floating reserve. The K.M.S.A.1 portion consisted of 11 transports carrying a total of 31 medium landing craft and stores.

The plans provided for the landing of the 1st Commando, 300 men, on "Green" Beach near Sidi Ferruch; the 168th Combat Group on "Green" and "White" Beaches between Sidi Ferruch and Ras Acrata; the 6th Commando, 550 men, eastward of Point Pescade on "Red 2, 3 and 4" Beaches, and the 6th Commando at Cape Caxine on "Red 1" Beach. The first flight of all these landings was to be ashore at H-hour, 0100 on 8th November.

Instructions for Assault, "Charlie" Sector⁵

21. The forces detailed for the landings in the "Charlie" Sector were the remainder of K.M.F.A.1 and K.M.S.A.1. The fast portion consisted of the *Samuel Chase*, carrying 26 landing craft and the headquarters 1st Battalion 39th Combat Team; *Leedstown*, carrying 24 landing craft, the 1st Commando, and the 3rd Battalion 39th Combat Team; *Almaack*, carrying 14 landing craft and service and anti-tank companies; and *Thomas C. Stone*, carrying 24 landing craft and the 2nd Battalion 39th Combat Team. The K.M.S.A.1 portion consisted of the *Dempo*, carrying the 1st Company, 3rd Battalion 39th Combat Team; *Macharda*, carrying 5 landing craft; and the *Maron*, carrying 2 landing craft. These three ships also carried the light and heavy A/A.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions 39th Combat Team were to land on the "Charlie" Beaches at H-hour; the 3rd Battalion being held in reserve on board the *Leedstown* ready to land at two hours notice on beaches "Charlie Blue" or "Green." The R.A.F., R.E. and R.A. personnel and equipment from the slow convoy were to land at "Charlie Red" Beaches at 0300, H plus 2 hours.

Algiers attack opens, 8th November

22. The attack opened punctually at 0100 on 8th November under Rear-Admiral Sir Harold Burrough, K.B.E., D.S.O., with his flag in the *Bulolo*. In

¹ Landing Craft Medium.

² *Ocean Viceroy* carried no landing craft.

³ See Plan 5.

⁴ L.C.P.

⁵ See Plan 5.

addition to 4 American combat loaders,¹ 1 Polish destroyer and 25 merchant ships, there were under his command 62 British warships,² including the cruisers *Sheffield*, flag of 10th C.S., *Bermuda*, *Scylla* and *Charybdis*, the aircraft carrier *Argus*, the auxiliary aircraft carrier *Avenger*, the anti-aircraft ships *Palomares*, *Pozarica* and *Tynwald*, the two commissioned L.S.Is. *Karanja* and *Keren*, the monitor *Roberts*, 12 destroyers³, including the *Broke*, *Malcolm*, *Cowdray*, *Zeland* and *Bramham*, 10 corvettes and sloops, the submarines P.45 and P.48 of the 10th Flotilla and P.221 of the 8th Flotilla. The three S.N.O.Ls. were:—"Apples"—Captain N. V. Dickinson; "Beer"—Captain R. J. Shaw; "Charlie"—Captain C. D. Edgar.

22A. At 1900 on 7th November Sector "A" and "B" ships of convoy K.M.F.A.1 wheeled to 200° at position "ED"⁴ and at 1920 formed two columns. At 2130, on reaching position "EZ"⁵ the starboard column, consisting of the *Karanja*, *Viceroy of India* and the Dutch *Marnix Van Sint Aldegonde*, escorted by the *Pozarica*, *Bicester*, *Bramham*, *Rother*, *Cadmus*, *Rysa*, *Juliet*, *Stroma*, and M.Ls. 283, 336 and 338, proceeded independently to the "Apples" Sector. The remainder altered course to 110° by two 45° turns to port and proceeded to the "Beer" Sector. The submarines marking the release positions were in place in all three sectors and homing arrangements worked well. The *Karanja*, *Viceroy of India* and *Marnix* sighted the "Apples" Sector submarine P.221, ahead at release position⁶ at 2214. A few minutes later they stopped and went to landing stations while the escorts carried out an endless chain of anti-submarine patrols round them. One L.C.P. had already proceeded⁷ to "release position 'A'" with the S.N.O.L.(A), Captain Dickinson, who personally supervise the transfer of pilots from P.221 to the motor launches. The weather was fine with a moderate swell and clear visibility, but a very strong set carried the ships in a westerly direction at an average speed of 4 knots. By 2304, all the *Karanja's* landing craft except one, which could not be lowered for 40 minutes owing to a broken guy, were in the water and before long had formed up astern of the motor launch with the *Viceroy's* flotilla astern of them. They had seen nothing of the *Marnix's* landing craft and at 2350 set out for "Apples Green" Beach without them. On the way in, the *Marnix's* flotilla was sighted proceeding independently to "Apples White" Beach. The lights of Castiglione were burning and after the *Karanja's* and *Viceroy's* flotillas had passed the submarine, which by this time had moved into her inner beacon position 2 miles from "Apples Green" Beach, they found their way in to the beach without difficulty, thanks to the excellent work of the pilots⁸ and of Lieut.-Commander Willmott (in charge of Beach Reconnaissance Party), assisted by a folbot flashing a light to seaward 400 yards off the beach.⁹ The first flight of L.C.As.¹⁰ from the *Karanja* deployed and landed punctually at 0100 on the 8th at dead slow speed, followed by the second flotilla at 0105 and by the *Viceroy's* flotilla five minutes later. Though the beach proved very bad and dangerous, the landings were carried out safely and according to plan.

Meanwhile, on reaching "release point 'A,'"¹¹ the *Marnix* had lowered all her landing craft, which, owing to the swinging of the ships, had closed a destroyer in mistake for the motor launch which was to lead them, and the *Karanja's* and *Viceroy's* flotillas, ashore. In spite of this and though there was

¹ One torpedoed. See Section 16A.

² Appendices "A4" and "A6."

³ Excluding the Polish destroyer.

⁴ Plan 4.

⁵ Plan 5.

⁶ See Plan 5.

⁷ At 2215/7.

⁸ See Section 18A.

⁹ Plan 5.

¹⁰ 8 L.C.As.

¹¹ Plan 5.

no folbot off "Apples White" Beach, Lieut. J. E. Thomas, R.N.R., led them correctly to the beach where they successfully landed the assault wave of the Northampton Regiment, after being sighted by the *Karanja's* and *Viceroy's* flotillas on their way in. They were not the only landing craft there for some of the forces detailed for the "Beer" Sector also landed on "Apples White" Beach.

22B. Although the landings in the "Apples" Sector were carried out on the correct beaches according to plan, the landings in the "Beer" Sector were marred by a series of "avoidable mistakes" leading to no little confusion. At 2220, 7th November, the *Bulolo*, *Keren*, *Winchester Castle*, *Otranto*, *Sobieski*, *Awatea*, *Strathnaver* and *Cathay*, escorted by the *Palomares*, *Acute*, *Alarm*, *Albacore*, *Lamerton*, *Wheatland*, *Wilton*, *Blyscawica*, *Hoy*, *Inchcolm*, *Mull*, and M.Ls. 444, 238 and 307 reached "release position 'B'," 7 miles off shore, homed by the submarine P.48¹. The weather conditions were good, but the wind, an easterly breeze force 3, made disembarkation from some ships possible only on the lee side and caused some delay. The ships, too, were drifting to the westward and their landing craft experienced difficulty in finding the assembly position. The motor launch detailed to embark the pilot for "Beer White" Beach from submarine P.48, first embarked the Principal Beach Master from the *Keren*. By this time P.48 was out of sight of the *Keren* and the motor launch being unable to find the submarine proceeded without the pilot. P.48 had to leave the release position for the "inner beacon" position at 2315 and as the motor launch had not picked up the pilot, the pilot and leadsman transferred to the nearest landing craft. Fifteen minutes later the pilot, finding himself with the *Winchester Castle's* and *Otranto's* flotillas bound for "Beer Green," transferred to their L.C.S and led in the first flight for "Beer Green," followed closely by the second flight. Meanwhile, the two folbots carried by the submarine had been sent in to "Beer White" Beach only, as "Beer Green," being immediately to the east of Sidi Ferruch, was easy to find. By this time the convoy had drifted three miles west of the release position and the pilot on closing the shore found himself west of Sidi Ferruch Fort and spent an anxious period rounding it. This he successfully accomplished and the order "go" was signalled off "Beer Green," but the first flight apparently failed to see the signal and landed on beaches further east. The second flight landed correctly at "Beer Green" and successfully captured the fort, whose commander obligingly organised a bus service to take them to the airfield. The pilot's next anxiety was to locate the "Beer White" flights, which, according to plan, he should have led in. He therefore went to "Beer White" Beach in a captured motor fishing craft. As no landing craft had landed there² he returned to "Beer Green," but finding that the third wave of landing craft had not arrived, closed down the beach, which he considered unsafe for landing craft owing to the heavy swell and general unsuitability, and then joined the Marking Officer on "Beer White." Together they marked out the only suitable 200 yards of this supposed 2,000 yard beach and informed the *Keren* to this effect. The beach was ultimately worked on this survey and, as a result, became very congested.

Meanwhile the two groups from the *Keren*, having failed to pick up the pilot at "release position 'B'," had proceeded independently for "Beer White" Beach. In the darkness, however, the landing craft lost contact with each other and, owing to the westerly drift, landed their troops south-west of Sidi Ferruch, some, led by the Principal Beach Master in the M.L., as far west as the "Apples White" Beach. The only craft at "Beer White" before dawn³ were three L.C.Ps. intended for "Beer Green" Beach. The *Awatea's* landing

¹ Plan 5.

² 0240 8th November.

³ 0600.

craft were so late getting away that when their motor launch moved off at 2350 one group had to be left behind to follow independently. Those in touch with the motor launch should have put the 6th Commando ashore on the "Beer Red" Beaches but landed them on a beach subsequently identified as Bain des Romans, 8 miles to the east of Sidi Ferruch and west of Beaches "Red 2, 3 and 4." The remainder landed on beaches still further west.

Briefly the procedure for locating the beaches in the "Beer" Sector had partly broken down. The pilot in the submarine had not been picked up by the motor launch and the unpowered flights from the *Keren* and *Awatea* instead of landing on "Beer White" and "Red" Beaches had all landed their forces too far westward, except two craft from the *Awatea* which landed unaided on "Red 1" Beach 75 minutes late. It may be considered fortunate that except at "Beer Red" the landing parties met little opposition.

22c. In the meantime the force assigned to the "Charlie" Sector further east, consisting of the U.S. combat loaders *Samuel Chase*, *Leedstown* and *Almaack*,¹ escorted by the *Tynwald*, *Enchantress*, *Cowdray*, *Zetland*, *Algerine*, *Hussar*, *Speedwell*, *Samphire*, *Pentstemon*, *Cava*, and *Othello*, and the motor launches M.L.273 and 295 had been detached at 1815 on 7th November, and had proceeded independently at 13 knots. At 2135 the beacon submarine P.45 sighted the screening destroyers ahead of the convoy and a little later the pilots from P.45 had a conference in the U.S.S. *Samuel Chase* with the S.N.O.L., Captain C. D. Edgar, and the Military Commander. At the conference the pilot requested that the time for the release of the first flight should be advanced at least half-an-hour. This flight was to be taken into "Charlie Blue" Beach by the assistant pilot in M.L.273. M.L.295 was to lead in "Red" flight, keeping on port quarter of M.L.273 till reaching Bordelaise Rock. The pilot was to take the Commando flight for "Charlie Green" Beach from the *Leedstown* in the flotilla leader's craft. A further beach, "Queenie Red," at La Perouse near Cape Matifu, was cancelled. Weather conditions were fair, with a north-easterly breeze, force 3. On reaching Bordelaise Rock, M.L.295 endeavoured to lead the "Red" Section to "Red" Beach, but apparently the landing craft had not been briefed and continued to follow the assistant pilot to "Blue" Beach. A few craft intended for "Charlie" Green Beach were also mixed up in this flight.

Many of the *Leedstown* craft were not in the water by midnight but were finally rounded up at 0045. This flotilla then proceeded at 12 knots but had to reduce speed to 4½ knots to enable the landing craft to keep company in the fog which drifted seawards from the land. The flotilla did not touch down at "Green" Beach till 0250, nearly two hours late. The beach was without defences, though Fort Matifu was fully alert. Meanwhile the slow convoy, K.M.S.A.1, had reached the respective release positions. At 0345, 8th November, the motor launch from "Apples Green" Beach was ordered to round it up, and reported that all was well.

22d. Meanwhile, at 0340, Cape Matifu had opened fire on the western transports across the Bay. The *Zetland* closing the shore at once replied, extinguishing a searchlight and exchanging shots with the fort, which kept up a stubborn resistance however till finally silenced during the afternoon by the shells of the *Bermuda* and the bombs of the Fleet Air Arm.²

Meanwhile the *Keren* had ordered the transport carriers to land all motor transports on "Beer White" Beach,³ though it had been reduced to 200 yards, and consequently it became very congested.⁴ The *Strathnaver*, *Urlana*, *Glenfinlas* and *Stanhill*, all from the "Beer" Sector, were ordered to go to

¹ The combat loader *Thomas C. Stone* had been torpedoed. See Section 16A.

² Later re-named Naval Air Arm and subsequently Naval Aviation.

³ See Appendix "E7."

⁴ See Section 22B.

" Apples White " Beach, but apparently the signal failed to get through. By this time good progress was being made ashore and by 0830 Maison Blanche and Blida airfields and several more strong points were in Allied hands.

The Occupation of Blida Airfield, 8th November

23. The occupation of Blida was a notable achievement on the part of the Fleet Air Arm. Never before had a military airfield been occupied by British naval aircraft. Early on 8th November, four carrier-borne Martlets attacked two French aircraft on the airfield. At 0800, four more Martlets renewed the patrol under the command of Lieutenant (A) B. H. C. Nation. After circling the airfield for half-an-hour, Lieutenant Nation observed its personnel waving white handkerchiefs. Having satisfied the carrier that he was over the right airfield—it was marked *Blida* in large white letters—Lieutenant Nation receive permission to land an aircraft. Telling the others to keep watch he landed and accepted a written statement from the Station Commandant¹ to the effect that the base was at the disposal of the Allied Armies for landing purposes. He remained at the airfield till a party of Commando and Rangers arrived. Meanwhile the destroyers *Broke* and *Malcolm* had made an ill-fated assault on Algiers Harbour.²

The Assault on Algiers Harbour, 8th November

24. The object of this assault was the prevention of sabotage of the 25 French ships in the harbour and of harbour installations. The destroyers were to force the booms protecting the northern and southern entrances of the harbour and placing themselves alongside the quays were to remain in the harbour unless otherwise ordered.

The assault was carried out under the orders of Captain H. St. J. Fancourt, R.N., with Major Snellman, U.S. Army, in charge of the three companies of United States troops taking part in it. At 0140 the N.C.E.T.F., Rear-Admiral Burrough, ordered the *Broke*, Lieutenant-Commander A. F. C. Layard, and the *Malcolm* to carry out the attack. The *Broke* at once led off from " position ' B '," steering to pass 5 miles north of Cape Caxine³ with the *Malcolm* following 1 mile astern.

By 0345 the final approach was made but the *Broke*, passing the wrong side of the buoy, missed the southern entrance of the port. The *Malcolm* fared no better. The *Broke* then made another unsuccessful attempt under troublesome gunfire from the forts. About 0400 she attempted unsuccessfully to locate the harbour entrance with starshell. At 0407 misfortune overtook the *Malcolm*. She was heavily hit in her boiler rooms and was forced to withdraw.⁴ At dawn the *Broke* made yet another attempt to rush the boom, but for the third time was unsuccessful.

The success which had so far eluded her crowned her fourth attempt. At 0520 she charged the boom at full speed. The break through was smooth and effective. She swung to port and according to plan should have gone alongside the Quai de Dieppe. In the darkness, however, she mistook the layout of the harbour and berthed alongside the Quai de Falaise at the northern end of the Mole Louis Billiard instead.⁵

At 0530 a small French minesweeper opened fire wounding the *Broke*'s coxswain as he steered alongside. Apart from desultory sniping, however, the next hour was comparatively quiet. During it the power station and oil installation were " secured." It was clear, however, that at any moment intensive cross fire might be opened on the ship from the Grand Mole but it was

¹ From " Fleet Air Arm," pp. 117-118, H.M. Stationery Office. No official report has been seen.

² Operation " Terminal."

³ See Plan 5.

⁴ See Plan 9 and Appendix " E6."

⁵ See Plan 10, Position " A."

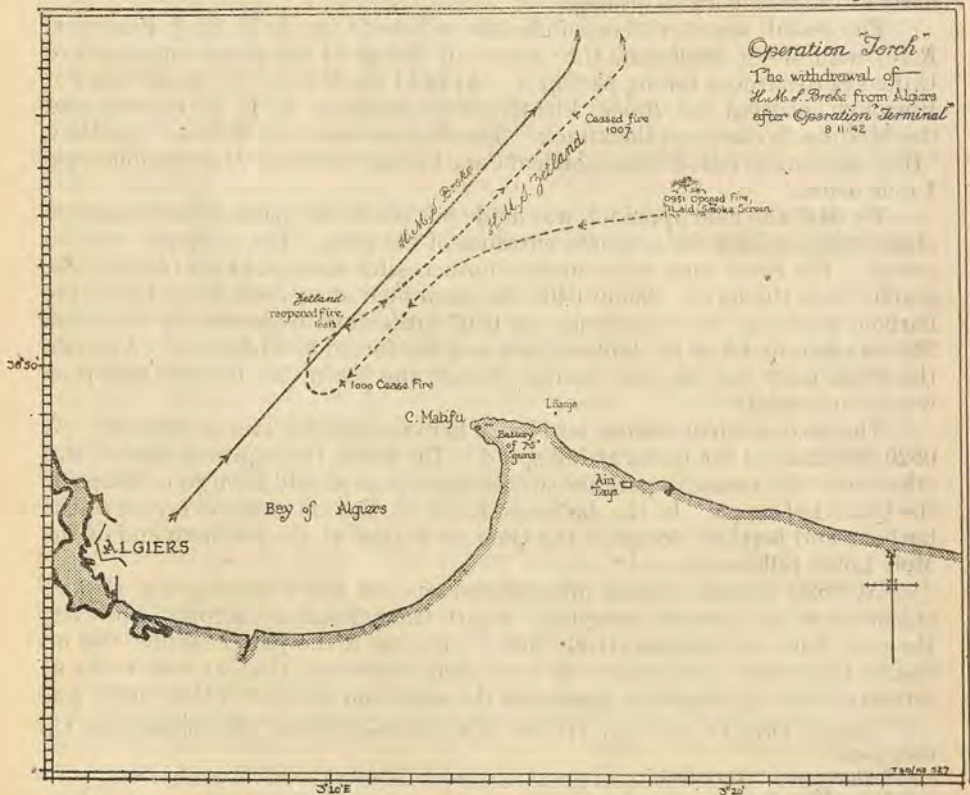
the Jetée du Nord Battery which actually opened fire first. Some shells fell close and the *Broke* moved up to shelter behind a merchant ship. About this time she fired three rounds at a French submarine proceeding to sea. At 0700 the *Broke* turned round and re-berthed alongside the Quai de Falaise, her bows pointing eastward towards the harbour entrance ready "to make a quick getaway, if necessary."¹

Meanwhile, apart from some troublesome sniping and machine gun fire, the general situation was satisfactory. No attempt was being made to sabotage shipping in the harbour and Captain Fancourt recalled some of the boarding parties. Shortly after 0830, however, the ship moved to the west side of Darse No. 1, close under the power station in an endeavour to obscure the range of the Jetée du Nord Battery which had reopened fire.²

About 0850, two French police officers and two civilians came aboard with a request that an United States officer should take over control of the town. Captain Fancourt at once sent an American army officer ashore with a British naval officer as interpreter, but this party failed to get through. An atmosphere of Sunday calm prevailed, tempered only by an occasional "Angelus" call to Mass, but Captain Fancourt asked that the Jetée du Nord Battery might be bombed at 1030 to cover a possible retirement.

About 0915 the *Broke* came under heavy attack from a new quarter. This fire, which appeared to be from a howitzer, was well controlled and three shells narrowly missed the ship. Her position was no longer tenable and immediate

Fig: 1



¹ See Plan 10, Position "B."

² See Plan 10, Position "C."

action was clearly necessary. Reluctantly, Captain Fancourt decided to abandon the harbour though the Jetée du Nord Battery had not yet been bombed. The general recall resulted in only a few United States troops being re-embarked before the ship got under way. As she moved across the harbour she received numerous 3 in. and 4 in. hits. She repassed the boom more than four hours after entering the harbour and about 0940 steered towards Cape Matifu. Passing close under the Cape, which was under bombardment from "Hunt" class destroyers, she stood away to the westward with the *Zelland*, who had been bombarding Cape Matifu Fort, in company.¹ She had been forced to leave 250 men ashore and had suffered heavy damage.² Eventually, the *Zelland* took her in tow but she sank next day in deteriorating weather.³ Fortunately her loss did not delay the capture of Algiers.

Algiers Occupied, 8th November

25. Meanwhile, on 8th November, at 1000, squadrons of Spitfires and Hurricanes had reached Blida and Maison Blanche airfields from Gibraltar but lack of fuel grounded them till next day. French resistance stiffened throughout the forenoon and at 1112 the *Zelland* asked for bombing support at 1300 for troops attacking Cape Matifu. This was arranged and by 1530 the forts at Cape Matifu and D'Estrées, after being silenced by the shells of the *Bermuda* and bombs of the Fleet Air Arm, were in Allied hands. Fort Dupère was still holding out at 1600, but surrendered about 1630 and by 1700 the situation had improved so far that neither the *Sheffield* nor the *Bermuda* was required for any further bombardment.

As the day wore on the wind freshened from the north-east, delaying the disembarkation of stores in the "Charlie" Sector, where 45 landing craft had become total wrecks. Unloading in the other sectors was progressing at fair speed though many landing craft became casualties, including 3 L.C.Ms. stranded on "Apples White" Beach, and 1 sunk near Douada. One L.C.P. from the *Marnix* went ashore on "Apples White" and 4, also from the *Marnix*, stranded off Douada. One L.C.A. from the *Keren* was towed into Chiffaloo Boat Harbour. During the afternoon H.M.S. *Spey* arrived with U.S. troops from the Combat loader *Thomas C. Stone*, which was being towed in by the *Wishart* after being torpedoed early on the 7th.⁴

Although in the opening stages of the assault there had been no hostile air operations these developed during the day. At dusk the *Bermuda* and *Sheffield* were heavily attacked but fortunately the *Bermuda* evaded all the 23 torpedoes which she claimed were fired at her.⁵ About the same time the transports and destroyers at the anchorage were also heavily attacked, the destroyer *Cowdray* being so badly damaged that she was beached to the eastward of Algiers harbour, though it was later found possible to salve her.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Task Force Commander, Major-General C. W. Ryder, had conferred ashore with General Juin, representing Admiral Darlan. It was agreed that all resistance should cease and that Allied forces should occupy the city of Algiers at 1900.⁶ That afternoon the convoys proceeded to Algiers Bay. By nightfall the United States 39th and 168th Regimental Combat Teams and the British 11th Brigade Group had come ashore and Commodore J. A. V. Morse was in control of Algiers harbour. At dawn next day the *Bulolo* entered the harbour and berthed alongside, receiving an enthusiastic welcome from a large crowd of onlookers. Thus the city of Algiers passed safely into Allied hands.

¹ See Fig. 1.

² Her casualties were 7 killed and 20 wounded.

³ In 37° N., 0° 44' E. Appendix "E6."

⁴ Section 16A.

⁵ Appendix "E11."

⁶ Appendix "E7."

CHAPTER V

THE CAPTURE OF ORAN

Landing Beaches, Oran

26. The port of Oran lies 180 miles west of Algiers and approximately half-way between it and Gibraltar. It is situated at the head of a large bight between Cape Falcon, the rocky north-eastern end of the promontory of which Pointe Corales is the north-western extremity, to the west, and Cap de D'Aiguille, to the east. This bight is divided into three bays of nearly equal size by Point Canastel and by Point Mers-el-Kebir, which projects in an easterly direction from the foot of Jebel Santon and is surmounted by a powerful fortress. The heights of Jebel Murjajo lie westward of Oran with the conspicuous Fort Santa Cruz at their eastern end. The artificial harbour at Oran consists of six basins. It is protected on its northern side by a stone breakwater extending eastwards about a mile and a quarter from Pointe Mona on which, at the eastern end of the cliffs under Jebel Murjajo, lies Fort Lamourne.¹

The arrangement of landing beaches at Oran was comparatively simple and consisted of three main beaches, "X," "Y" and "Z," and one subsidiary beach, "R." An armoured column from Combat Command "B" would land at "X" Beach, which lay in 35° 35' N., 1° 10' W. at El Mrairia close to Cape Fegalo, with orders to capture La Lourmel airfield, block the main roads north-east and south of La Lourmel, advance south of Debkra, and assist in the capture of the airfields at Tafaroui and La Senia. The 26th Regimental Combat Team would land at "Y" Beach in 35° 43' N., 0° 52' W. near Les Andalouses with orders to take control of Jebel Murjajo heights, and capture Oran from the west. The 18th Regimental Combat Team would land at "Z Green" Beach in 35° 50' N., 0° 17' W. near Arzeu² with orders to capture the coastal defences, the port of Arzeu, and the port of Oran from the east. The 16th Combat Team would land at "Z White" Beach to secure a bridgehead for Armoured Combat Command "B," cover the east flank of the Oran Force, and take part in the capture of Oran. Combat Team "B"³ would land at "Z Red" Beach to capture Tafaroui, La Senia, and Oggaz airfields and assist in capturing Oran from the south. A portion of the First Ranger Battalion would make a subsidiary landing on Beach "R" southeast of Cape Carbon to capture the batteries at Fort La Pointe; the remainder of the battalion landing in Arzeu Harbour. Meanwhile one parachute battalion would be flown from the United Kingdom and dropped at H-hour near Tafaroui airfield with orders to neutralise all aircraft on La Senia airfield, and capture Tafaroui landing ground.⁴

Instructions for Assault, Oran Beaches

27. The fast assault convoy, K.M.F.O.1, after proceeding through the Mediterranean at 11½ knots under the orders of Commodore Troubridge, the Naval Commander Centre Task Force in the Headquarters Ship *Largs*, would

¹ See Plan 8.

² The location of Z Green and White Beaches depended on the tactical situation.

³ Less Beach X force.

⁴ See Plan 1.

⁵ See Plan 7.

meet the slow assault convoy K.M.S.O.1 in a position C.R. $36^{\circ} 26' N.$, $1^{\circ} 15' W.$, at 1600 on D-1. At the rendezvous they would be formed into seven groups:—

- Groups I and II ... Assault and M.T. ships for "X" and "Y" Beaches, respectively.
- Groups III and IV ... Assault ships for "Z" and "R" Beaches, respectively.
- Group V ... Ships required to land M.T. at "Z" Beach before daylight.
- Groups VI and VII ... Personnel and M.T. ships for "Z" Beach not required until daylight.

The L.S.T. for "X" Beach, the *Bachaquero*, would be Group VIII and the two L.S.T.s for "Z" Beach, Group IX. Speaking generally, the slow convoy would open out its columns to admit those of the fast convoy, Group I being formed in two columns, the remainder in single line ahead, certain ships in each convoy changing columns when ordered. They would then steam towards Malta without further instructions, breaking off towards their respective beaches after dark, Groups I and II remaining together as far as position C.W. in $35^{\circ} 52\frac{1}{2}' N.$, $1^{\circ} 10\frac{1}{2}' W.$

The *Aurora* would be stationed ahead of Group II, the *Jamaica* ahead of Group III, and the *Delhi* ahead of Group IV, but on reaching position C.Z., $35^{\circ} 52' N.$, $0^{\circ} 10\frac{1}{2}' W.$, in the Gulf of Arzeu, the *Jamaica* would proceed independently to provide supporting fire at "Z" Beach. On reaching position C.Y., $35^{\circ} 48' N.$, $0^{\circ} 54' W.$, off Andalouses Bay, the *Aurora*, assisted by the *Jamaica*, if necessary, would patrol 5 miles north of Mers-el-Kebir and destroy any French forces leaving the harbour during darkness. She would, however, keep out of shore range during daylight. Meanwhile the *Delhi* would leave Group VI at 0400 to meet the aircraft carriers at C.F., $36^{\circ} 7' N.$, $0^{\circ} 45' W.$, at 0530, the aircraft carriers keeping westward of C.F. during the night.

The *Rodney*, which was to protect the anchorage from attack by heavy enemy forces, was also due at C.F. at 0530, approaching it through position $36^{\circ} 30' N.$, $0^{\circ} 10' W.$, on a course of 230° in order to keep clear of Groups VI and VII and of the *Delhi* approaching from the eastward.

Positions C.W., $35^{\circ} 52\frac{1}{2}' N.$, $1^{\circ} 10\frac{1}{2}' W.$, and C.E., $36^{\circ} 7' N.$, $0^{\circ} 17\frac{1}{2}' W.$ would be marked by the American submarines S.1 and S.2 and "Y" and "Z" Beaches by folbots signalling their beach letters with infra red lights.

Initial landings would be made simultaneously on all beaches at H-hour; the remainder of the force being landed as rapidly as possible. Should the Ranger Battalion landing at "R" Beach near Cape Carbon not succeed in getting ashore it would land near Arzeu instead, and if the "X" Beach landing force failed to locate "X" Beach it would land, if possible, at "Y" Beach. The three S.N.O.Ls. were:—"X"—Captain G. R. G. Allen; "Y"—Captain E. V. Lees; "Z"—Captain C. D. Graham.

Oran Attack opens, 8th November

28. The attack opened, after some delay, at 0116 on 8th November, under Commodore Thomas Hope Troubridge, with his broad pendant in the headquarters ship *Largs*. In addition to the 34 transports there were under his command 70 warships including the aircraft carrier *Furious*, the auxiliary carriers *Biter* and *Dasher*, three cruisers, *Jamaica*, *Aurora* and *Delhi*, the auxiliary A/A. ship *Alynbank*, 16 destroyers, 8 sloops and corvettes, the ex-American cutters *Walney* and *Harland*, and the submarines P.54 and *Ursula*.

When the two Oran assault convoys, K.M.F.O.1 and K.M.S.O.1 met at the appointed rendezvous C.R.¹ at 1600 on 7th November, they proceeded in seven groups towards Malta according to plan.² The turn away by Groups I, II, III

¹ $36^{\circ} 26' N.$, $1^{\circ} 15' W.$ Plan 7.

² Section 27.

and IV was made punctually at 1815, when the first two groups proceeded with a strong escort to position C.W. on their way to the "X-ray" and "Yorker" release points, respectively. On reaching the marking submarine P.54 at position C.W., Group I, consisting of the L.S.Is. *Batory*, *Queen Emma* and *Prinses Beatrix* and the military transports *Benalbenach*, *Mary Slessor*, *Mark Twain*, *Walt Whitman* and *Bachaquero*, parted company with Group II and made for position C.M. en route for the release position at C.X.¹

The following table shews the ships in which the 39 landing craft were carried:—

Captain G. R. G. Allen, S.N.O.L.(X), H.M.S. *Batory*.

Ship.	L.C.P.	L.C.M.	L.C.A.	L.C.S.	Total.
H.M.S. <i>Batory</i> (L.S.I.) ...	14	1	—	—	15
H.M.S. <i>Queen Emma</i> (L.S.I.) ...	—	2	5	1	8
H.M.S. <i>Prinses Beatrix</i> (L.S.I.) ...	—	2	5	1	8
<i>Benalbenach</i> (M.T.) ...	—	4	—	—	4
<i>Mary Slessor</i> (M.T.) ...	—	—	—	—	—
U.S. <i>Mark Twain</i> (M.T.) ...	—	2	—	—	2
<i>Walt Whitman</i> (M.T.) ...	—	2	—	—	2
<i>Bachaquero</i> (L.S.T.) ...	—	—	—	—	—
	14	13	10	2	39

Though the weather was favourable, calm and dark with good visibility, the unexpected westerly set, which interfered so seriously with the landings near Algiers, was equally disconcerting in the Oran area and in addition a series of unforeseen circumstances delayed by 35 minutes the initial assault in the "X-ray" Sector. Foremost among them was the chance appearance inside the sector of a small French convoy of four ships steaming north-east escorted by a trawler. One of them, the *Eridan*, was boarded by an armed guard who found her engines sabotaged. Her master, who was most obstructive, was taken on board the *Antelope*, and the armed guard, reinforced by 60 American soldiers, took the ship into Arzeu on 12th November. Meanwhile the other three—the *Montaigne*, *Agen* and *Carthage*—had fled to the north-east, but on sighting the ships of Group II in the "Y" Sector, turned back and ran ashore² south of Cape Fegalo.

This interlude was not without its effect. On the Allied side the minesweepers were so badly delayed by the appearance of the French convoy that the "X-ray" assault vessels overran them near position C.M.,³ causing no little confusion and loss of valuable time. When order was finally restored they were instructed to sweep ahead to the release position C.X., but when it became clear that this would mean further loss of time it was decided to proceed with the assault plan, even though the assault ships were still 1½ miles short of position C.X. The minesweepers were accordingly ordered to keep clear and the assault proceeded. It was this incident that led the S.N.O.L.(X), Captain G. R. G. Allen, to regard the arrangements for sweeping and lighting the channel as a failure and to express the view that if minesweeping trawlers were to be used in future they should be much further ahead.

Meanwhile the assault was under way. Here there was another hitch. When the motor launch appeared at 2350 with the "leading in" officer on board, she was ordered to go to the *Queen Emma* but arrived too late to join the *Queen Emma's* assault wave, though it had waited for her till 0001.

¹ Plan 7.

² One, the *Agen*, was successfully refloated and finally reached Beni Saf. See Plans 1 and 7.

³ Plan 7.

The information provided by P.R.U.¹ mosaics, models and panoramas, in addition to the Koodoo reports, was very complete and little difficulty should have been experienced by the assault craft in finding the beaches despite the westerly set and absence of the motor launch.² The *Queen Emma's* assault wave, however, failed to find "Green" Beach and the second wave of assault craft, the *Batory's*, being better co-ordinated, landed there first. In Captain Allen's opinion this landing of the second wave before the first might well have led to disaster if the landing craft had encountered opposition and if the French had not been so completely taken by surprise.

On the other hand at "White" Beach which consisted of a 50-yard stretch in a well-sheltered cove offering excellent protection from the weather the assault was well carried out. The sea near the beach, however, was extremely shallow and bulldozers were required to push the L.C.Ms. off, resulting in such damage to rudders and propellers that in the end only three of the thirteen L.C.Ms. in use remained serviceable.

The performance of the *Bachaquero*, Lieut.-Commander A. W. McMullen, R.N.R., in surveying the approach to "White" Beach and accepting the risk of beaching between rocky headlands is reported by the S.N.O.L. as meriting special mention. The action of this ship undoubtedly played a most important part in the success of the military operations in the "X-ray" Sector, nor was her work confined to "White" Beach. At 0405 she grounded on "Green" Beach, which was long, shallow and exposed to the weather, and had very soft sand and such poor exits for vehicles that soon after daylight on the 8th it had to be abandoned in favour of "White" Beach, which remained in use till 11th November. By then a total of no less than 3,242 men, 458 tanks and vehicles, and 1,170 tons of stores had been successfully landed, most of them on "White" Beach, no small feat on a small beach in difficult circumstances. Meanwhile, Group II had landed its force in the "Y" sector in the face of unforeseen difficulties.

28A. When Group II—the *Glengyle*, *Monarch of Bermuda*, *Llangibby Castle*, *Clan Mactaggart* and *Salacia*—parted from Group I at position C.W., it proceeded to position C.Y., led by H.M.S. *Aurora* according to plan. The weather was excellent, the night dark and moonless with very little wind and a calm sea.

Forty-five landing craft were carried as follows:—

Ship.		L.C.A.	L.C.P.	L.C.S.	L.C.M.	Total.
H.M.S. <i>Glengyle</i> , H.Q.	...	11	—	1	3	15
<i>Monarch of Bermuda</i>	...	12	—	—	—	12
<i>Llangibby Castle</i>	...	—	10	—	1	11
<i>Clan Mactaggart</i>	...	—	—	—	5	5
M/V. <i>Salacia</i>	...	—	—	—	2	2
		23	10	1	11	45

Unlike the X-ray Sector all the landings in the "Yorker" Sector were made on the correct beaches though they encountered unforeseen difficulties. At "Green" and "White" Beaches, the only beaches worked (the proposed small "Red" Beach east of Wadi Hamisch having been incorporated with "White" Beach) the surfaces "cut up" very badly and what was worse it was found that a sand bar extended along the whole length of the sector, 15 to 20 feet off shore, with, at some points, 5 ft. of water inshore of it. This bar proved the bugbear of the "Y" Sector landings. No mention of it had been made in the I.S.I.S. Reports or Sailing Directions, nor was it visible in

¹ Photographic Reconnaissance Unit.

² S.N.O.L.'s Report in M. 053475/43.

air photographs, and it took the landing force completely by surprise. The depth over it varied from 6 in. to 3½ ft. and the landing craft severely damaged their rudders and propellers as they bumped and ploughed their way laboriously across it. Nor was this all, for when the northerly swell gradually increased many of them broached-to on top of it.

Although considerable delay was experienced in unloading the *Monarch of Bermuda* owing to the bad design of her ladders (their rungs being placed too far apart),¹ the first wave of L.C.As. from her and from the *Glengyle* proceeded for "White" Beach at 2345 on 7th November led in by M.L.1128. When the infra-red light from the folbot was sighted the motor launch withdrew. By this time on account of the motor launch's slow speed, the *Glengyle's* flotilla was 16 minutes late and did not touch down till 0116. Her three L.C.Ms. followed and arrived in the correct position off "White" Beach but grounded on the bar at 0145. This proved to be most unfortunate, for their jeeps and guns on starting for the shore disappeared under water. Meanwhile the craft of the *Bermuda's* flotilla had straggled and lost touch with one another. The first part touched down at 0100 and the remainder at 0136. It was fortunate that neither flotilla met any opposition.²

The second wave, from the *Llangibby Castle*, consisting of eight L.C.Ps., arrived in its correct position off "Green" Beach and touched down at 0138, but owing to the delay in getting the final assault wave away the transports did not anchor till 0340, two hours late.

The landing operations in the "Z" Sector, on the Gulf of Arzeu, east of Oran, were on a far greater scale than those in the two sectors, "X" and "Y," west of Oran. In the "X" and "Y" sectors two groups totalling 13 ships and 17 escorts were used, but the "Z" Sector landing force of 29,000 officers and men, 2,400 vehicles, and 14,000 tons of stores, required 34 ships in 6 groups covered by strong escort groups, totalling 28 vessels.³

When the "X" and "Y" Sector Groups, Groups I and II, turned south-westward towards position C.W. at 1815 on 7th November, the "Z" Beaches Group, Group III, namely:—1st Division, the L.S.I.(L)'s *Durban Castle*, *Duchess of Bedford*, *Warwick Castle* and *Etrick*, 2nd Division, the transport *Tegelberg*, L.S.I.(L) *Reina del Pacifico*, and oil tanker *Derwentdale*, and the "R" Beach Group, namely:—Group IV, the L.S.I.(H)'s *Ulster Monarch*, *Royal Ulsterman* and *Royal Scotsman*—proceeded in company south-eastward to position C.E., 5½ miles off shore, led by H.M.S. *Jamaica*, according to plan.

They mustered no less than 85 landing craft, distributed as follows:—

S.N.O.L.(Z).

Captain C. D. Graham, H.M.S. *Reina del Pacifico*.

	L.C.P.	L.C.M.	L.C.A.	L.C.S.	Total.
<i>Duchess of Bedford</i>	—	—	11	—	11
<i>Warwick Castle</i>	—	—	12	—	12
<i>Etrick</i>	—	—	10	—	10
<i>Tegelberg</i>	—	—	10	—	10
<i>Reina del Pacifico</i>	—	—	12	1	13
<i>Royal Scotsman</i>	—	—	4	1	5
<i>Royal Ulsterman</i>	—	—	5	—	5
<i>Ulster Monarch</i>	—	—	4	1	5
<i>Derwentdale</i>	—	14	—	—	14
	—	—	—	—	—
	Nil	14	68	3	85
	—	—	—	—	—

¹ 2 feet.

² S.N.O.L.'s Report.

³ See Appendix "A7" and Plan 7.

The night was dark, but as the Arzeu light was burning the beacon submarine was easily located. It provided a valuable navigational check but unfortunately the speed signal was incorrectly passed down the line as $7\frac{1}{2}$ instead of $11\frac{1}{2}$ knots with corresponding delay at the release position due to some of the ships being astern of station.

The landing at "Z Green" Beach, which extended several miles with good hard sand, shallow gradient and good exits, was not simultaneous. The first flight of assault craft, though led by a motor launch, lost cohesion and reached the beach at intervals covering a period from 12 minutes before to 10 minutes after H-hour (0100). The main party of Rangers, from the *Royal Ulsterman* and *Ulster Monarch*, located "R" Beach punctually at 0100 without difficulty, but "Z Red" Beach was not secured till 0300 and its survey not completed till 0330. All these landings were entirely unopposed.

As soon as the first flight had left, the Army Vehicle Division in the *Warwick Castle* was transferred to the *Derwentdale*, which carried 14 L.C.Ms. Here again there was another setback. The division insisted on taking so much gear that the whole L.C.M. flotilla was delayed $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours and consequently the landing of armed vehicles was late throughout the whole day.

Valuable lessons could be learned from this assault. The old pattern scrambling nets used by the transports make the disembarkation of fully equipped troops difficult and dangerous in the dark. It was found that ordinary ship gangways, two on each side, provide the quickest and safest means of disembarkation. Many landing craft suffered severe damage on the night of 9th November when the surf on "Red" Beach ran very high and a boat repair party would have been of the greatest possible assistance. The U.S. soldiers carried more equipment than was necessary for the assault and if they had met determined resistance on the overcrowded beaches many of them might have perished.

It was anticipated from experience in Madagascar that the French would do their utmost to immobilise the port of Oran before it fell into Allied hands. It was considered that a surprise attack from the sea would be the best method of forestalling any such attempt and shortly after 0300 the *Walney* and *Hartland* made a dashing assault on Oran harbour.

The "Walney's" Assault on Oran Harbour,¹ 8th November

29. It was not expected that the French would offer the maximum resistance at once, but as it was of the utmost importance that the port, when captured, should be in full working order, the attack was specially designed to prevent any attempt to immobilise it. Thus, the object of the operation was to land two parties of American combat troops and anti-sabotage parties with orders to seize the shore batteries covering the harbour and to prevent immobilisation of the dock and harbour works or the blocking of the harbour itself. The ships available were the *Walney* and *Hartland*, with two motor launches, M.L.480 and M.L.483, to provide the necessary smoke screen. If the attackers came under fire when approaching close inshore the Oran patrol and the *Aurora* would support them, though the patrol's main task was to distract and confuse the defences ashore.

The attack was carried out under the command of Captain Frederic Thornton Peters, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N., a retired officer, who had been mainly responsible for its planning. It opened at 0245 and as the *Walney*, Lieut.-Commander P. C. Meyrick, and *Hartland*, Lieut.-Commander G. P. Billot, R.N.R., approached the harbour entrance, with M.Ls. 480 and 483 in company, sirens sounded ashore and all lights in the town were extinguished. For a time the force circled off the entrance while an announcement was made in

¹ See Plan 8.

French by loud hailer from the *Walney*. The reply was hostile. A searchlight was quickly trained on the *Walney* and she came under heavy, though inaccurate, machine gun fire. Followed by the *Hartland*, she at once turned away northwards coming round in a full circle to charge the booms. At the same time M.L. 480 went on ahead at full speed, laying a smoke screen, but hit the outer boom, coming to rest under heavy fire half way across it. She got off again at 0310 just as the *Walney*, after completing her circle, charged the two booms at 15 knots through the smoke and entered the harbour. On reaching it, Captain Peters slipped three canoes, manned by special parties, but at least one of them was sunk almost immediately by gunfire. The *Walney* herself, steaming up the harbour to westwards at slow speed, was hit by a pom pom of the Ravin Blanc battery. Half way up the harbour she narrowly missed ramming a French destroyer making towards the entrance. It raked her with two broadsides at point blank range, wrecking her main engines, and a few minutes later she came under heavy cross fire from the cruiser *Epervier* lying alongside to the south, and from submarines and destroyers moored to the northward. At last, blazing forward and amidships, she drifted out of control bows on to the jetty ahead of the *Epervier*. An attempt to get heaving lines ashore failed and she drifted once more slowly out into the harbour. Her guns were out of action, their crews virtually wiped out. Sixteen officers and men were lying dead on her bridge where Captain Peters alone survived. Below only five officers and men of the landing parties remained alive amid scenes of indescribable carnage. Nothing further could be done and the ship was abandoned; her few survivors, including Captain Peters himself, being taken prisoner. Her end was near and between 0900 and 1000 she blew up and sank.¹ Nor had her consort, the *Hartland*, fared any better in the meantime.

The "Hartland's" Assault on Oran Harbour,² 8th November.

30. When the *Walney* entered Oran Harbour at 0310, Lieut-Commander Billot waited five minutes, in compliance with his orders, before heading the *Hartland* for the entrance. As she approached M.L.480's smoke screen the *Hartland* was picked up by a searchlight, and came under a devastating fire from the Ravin Blanc battery which killed or wounded nearly all her guns' crews and temporarily blinded Commander Billot with a splinter. Before he recovered his sight the ship struck the breakwater, but eventually she entered the harbour and made for her objective, the Quai de Dunkerque, under point blank fire from the destroyer *Typhon* lying alongside it. Shells bursting inside her hull brought her to a standstill turning her mess decks, on which the troops were waiting, into a shambles. Then, with fires raging fore and aft, she drifted alongside the mole. Lieut.-Commander Dickey, U.S.N., calling on his men to follow, at once leapt ashore to seize a trawler alongside, but only one unwounded man was able to obey before the ship, caught by the wind, drifted once more out into the harbour where she anchored under heavy fire. Though her British and American ensigns were clearly visible in the light of the flames the French humanely ceased firing. Despite desperate efforts to subdue them, the flames spread and, expecting her to blow up at any moment, Commander Billot ordered the ship to be abandoned. By 0410 all survivors had left and at 0525 there was an explosion on board, but the *Hartland* remained afloat for some time burning furiously till she blew up with a devastating explosion

¹ *Walney's* R. of P. in M 016311/42. According to Cdr. E. R. D. Sworder, R.N.V.R., who was in the *Walney* at the time, the *Walney* reached the middle of Oran harbour apparently undetected, dropping the three canoes on the way. She was then hit by a pom-pom mounted on the Mole Millerand (not Ravin Blanc battery) and narrowly failed in an attempt to ram the French destroyer making towards the harbour entrance. Cdr. Sworder also states that when the *Walney* sank she rolled over but did not blow up.

² See Plan 8.

which damaged buildings in a large area around the mole and left only wreckage floating on the surface of the water to mark her end.

Both Captain Peters and Commander Billot, though wounded, miraculously survived this great exploit, but by a grim irony of fate Captain Peters was accidentally killed when a Catalina, in which he was returning to the United Kingdom, crashed on landing a few days later. For his gallant action at Oran he was awarded the American D.S.C., and in May, 1943 was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross "for valour in taking H.M.S. *Walney* into the harbour of Oran in the face of point blank fire in an enter rise of desperate hazard."

Oran Captured, 10th November¹

31. While the *Walney* and *Hartland* were gate-crashing into Oran Harbour, the *Aurora* was patrolling 5 miles away to the northward. At 0527 that morning, 8th November, she opened fire on the searchlight illuminating the *Hartland*, successfully extinguishing its beam. Then shortly before first light she engaged and sank a French destroyer of the *Simoun* class at a range of 6,000 yards. By first light, 0545, the channels to the inner anchorage in the "Z" Sector were swept and though the Rangers had taken two batteries at Arzeu the large ships moved inshore in face of a harassing fire from a 75-mm. field gun which scored three hits on the *Reina del Pacifico* without, however, causing a single casualty. About 0600, two more destroyers of the *Simoun* class left Oran, but seeing that they were standing by their sinking consort, the *Aurora* for a time withheld her fire. They were soon in action with the *Calpe* and *Boadicea*, however, and when they fired torpedoes at the *Aurora* she, too, attacked them at 13,600 yards. In the ensuing fight the *Boadicea* was hit forward, and one of the French destroyers, being severely damaged and set on fire by a broadside, was driven inshore. The action ended abruptly at 0727 when the other destroyer, on being hit aft, turned and fled in the direction of Oran. Meanwhile the French chasseur *La Surprise* had been engaged by H.M.S. *Brilliant* at 0630 and sank after a 40-minute engagement without having a chance of torpedoing any of the ships in the Bay.

Despite the unwelcome attentions of the 7.6-in. guns battery on Jebel Santon, 4,330 men and 77 vehicles had landed in the "Y" Sector by 0700. By 0800 the tanks were landing on the beaches and by 0845 naval aircraft from the *Furious*, *Biter* and *Dasher* had fired the hangar at La Senia and had destroyed numerous aircraft in the air and on the ground, with small loss to themselves. Despite some sniping, unloading was proceeding steadily at Arzeu. Unloading started slowly in the "Z" Sector but the beaches were well organised and it gradually improved. Just before 0900 the Jebel Santon battery opened fire on the transports and at 0917 the *Llangibby Castle* received a direct hit forcing her to shift her berth further west. At 1010 the *Rodney* opened fire on the battery, but it continued to fire intermittently and at 1100, scored a hit on the *Monarch of Bermuda*. This was not without its effect for the necessity of keeping the ships out of range caused an unwelcome increase in the time required for unloading them. During the afternoon the *Rodney* bombarded Fort Santon three times at ranges of over 20,000 yards. Meanwhile the landing forces were making steady progress ashore and Tafaroui Airfield was in Allied hands shortly after midday.²

31A. Meanwhile the ambitious plan to seize the airfields in the Oran area by means of the largest paratroop mission on record had gone sadly astray. The 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry, set out from England in 39 C.47's with instructions presupposing an unopposed landing, and failed to receive a later message warning them of probable French opposition. The formation

¹ See Plan 7.

² Captured by Combat Command "B."

became partially scattered over Spain by bad weather. The landing elements which reached Tafaroui encountered flak and landed at La Lourmel where they were joined by later elements. They then flew back to Tafaroui. The mission was regarded as a failure but the paratroopers proved a valuable addition to the combat troops which captured the Tafaroui airfield.

Early that afternoon, 8th November, 26 United States Spitfires arrived at Tafaroui from Gibraltar; one being shot down by a French pursuit aircraft just before landing. The 16th and 18th Regimental Combat Teams advancing from Arzeu towards Oran, met increasingly strong resistance as they neared the city, but by nightfall they had gone forward between 15 and 20 miles. Meanwhile the 26th Regimental Combat Team had moved steadily westward from "Y" Beach near Les Andalouses to the vicinity of Oran overcoming all opposition and capturing Ain-el-Turk on the way.

At 1730, orders were given for all vehicles to be landed on "Z Red" Beach which led to congestion ashore. Towards the end of the day a rising swell seriously hampered beach work and by 2200 congestion and surf had caused a number of L.C.Ms. to strand. Many more landing craft stranded during the night, and by 1530 next day, 9th November, the "Z" Sector beaches were abandoned in favour of Arzeu Harbour, in spite of many difficulties due to its lack of space and to congestion ashore.

Fighting continued all that day, 9th November. That morning the *Aurora* and *Jamaica* engaged two Vichy destroyers at 1024, driving one ashore in flames south of Cape de l'Aiguille and forcing the other to retire damaged to Oran where it was beached near La Marine.

Although the swell had increased and unloading operations had to be suspended altogether in "Y" Sector during the morning the Allies continued to build up their force ashore throughout the day and to gain ground against stubborn resistance. The 16th Infantry Regiment met heavy opposition at Lanacia from French troops, which were believed to have been moved in from Mostaganem, but with supporting fire from H.M.S. *Farndale* gained the day and advanced to within 10 miles of Oran. In the same area, the 18th Infantry Regiment encountered French Infantry and tanks, and had stiff fighting before reaching Mangin, 10 miles from Oran, by nightfall. Elements of Combat Command "B" had to fight all day for control of the airfield at La Senia. The airfield at Tafaroui which throughout the day was being operated as a base by the 12th United States Air Force was made a place of assembly by some elements of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry.

During the day anti-submarine patrols were established off Arzeu with a force consisting of 3 destroyers, 2 sloops, 8 fleetsweepers and 4 corvettes. Unloading continued on the Arzeu beaches though hampered by a heavy swell and shortage of tank landing craft. Fort Santon, which continued resisting strongly, was shelled several times by the *Rodney* before she withdrew at 1839 to patrol 30 miles off Oran.

At 2130 the *Delhi* proceeded to Algiers.

Meanwhile the military operations were progressing favourably ashore. The 1st Infantry Division, after meeting stiff resistance at St. Cloud, eventually reached positions 7 miles east and 3 miles south of Oran ready for the final attack on the town. By evening the key position of La Senia airfield, captured with 500 prisoners and 90 aircraft at 1600, was in the firm grip of Armoured Combat Command, and despite clear signs of a coming counter-attack from the south the final assault on Oran was planned for next morning, 10th November.

The 10th broke fine and clear with extreme visibility. At daylight the *Llangibby Castle* and *Monarch of Bermuda* proceeded independently to Gibraltar. By that time the bar in "Y" Sector had silted to such an extent that it could

be crossed only in two or three places. In these circumstances the *Clan Mactaggart* was not discharged till 1415 and the *Salacia* till 1810, the work being much delayed by the unsatisfactory loading of the ships which caused a "hopeless bottleneck" as only one hatch could be worked in each ship for several hours. Meanwhile the 1st Infantry Division and Combat Team "B" had closed in for the final assault on the city of Oran, and at 0737 launched a co-ordinated attack. Stiff resistance was met throughout the morning, but by 1100 armoured units had penetrated the city. At noon the French capitulated,¹ and formally surrendered to General Fredendall at 1230. Thus, 59 hours after the first landing the city of Oran was safely in Allied hands.

¹ Appendix "ES."

CHAPTER VI

Mediterranean Covering Forces

Forces H, R and O, 8th to 14th November

32. Meanwhile, Forces H and O had covered the assaults on Algiers and Oran against a possible attack by heavy enemy forces from the east. Force H, consisted of the *Duke of York*, flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Neville Syfret, K.C.B., the battle cruiser *Renown*, the aircraft carriers *Victorious*, flag of Rear-Admiral A. L. St. G. Lyster, C.B., C.B.E., C.V.O., D.S.O., and *Formidable*, the cruisers *Bermuda*,¹ *Argonaut* and *Sirius*, and a screen of 17 destroyers. With it was Force R, its oiling force, consisting of the corvette *Coreopsis*, two R.F.A. tankers and four trawlers. Forces H and R cruised off Algiers till 6.30 p.m. on 8th November when Force H turned north at 16 knots. It turned back off the Balearic Islands in 39° N., 2° 29' E.² at midnight and patrolled off Algiers again on the 9th. During the night of the 9th and 10th it steamed eastwards 60 miles from the North African coast, turning back 30 miles beyond Bougie at midnight. By noon on the 10th it was in 37° 8' N., 1° 36' E., between Algiers and Tenez, with Force R close at hand. From then onwards it patrolled an area 60 miles off the coast between Algiers and Cape Tenez, being joined on the patrol by the *Rodney* and four destroyers from Oran at 0615 on the 12th. On 14th November the whole Force returned to Gibraltar, reaching there without incident early on the 15th. At Gibraltar Admiral Syfret transferred his flag to the *Nelson*, and the *Duke of York* and *Victorious*, flying Admiral Lyster's flag, returned to the United Kingdom.

Meanwhile the British submarine P.46³ had scored a notable success while on patrol off Cape St. Vito.⁴ At 1023 on 8th November in 38° 14' N., 12° 43½' E., she fired a dispersed salvo of four torpedoes at the Italian cruiser *Attilio Regolo*, scoring a hit,⁵ and though the *Attilio Regolo* was not sunk she was badly damaged and had to be towed into Palermo.⁶

In the meantime, Force O, consisting of the *Sheffield*, flag of Rear-Admiral C. H. J. Harcourt, C.B.E., R.A.C., 10th C.S., *Argus*, *Avenger*, *Scylla*, *Charybdis*, and a screen of five destroyers, after meeting Force H thirty miles north-east of Algiers at dawn on the 8th, had carried out an off-shore patrol to the northward. On the 9th, the *Sheffield* parted company to take part in Operation "Perpetual," a landing at Bougie. Owing to the weather, however, the landing was postponed and Admiral Harcourt rejoined Force O temporarily, parting company with it again at 1530 on the 10th. That day Force O was twenty miles north of Algiers, but from dawn till 1200 next day, the 11th, was off Bougie. It was anticipated that the R.A.F. would provide air cover from 1200 onwards, but when Force O was withdrawn at 1200 fighter protection ceased. The capture of Djidjelli airfield from the sea, and the landing of supplies there, had been prevented by heavy surf.⁷ R.A.F. Spitfires eventually reached the airfield early on the 12th but were unable to operate continuously as no stores had arrived. Meanwhile Force O had been heavily attacked off Algiers by torpedo bombers at 1700 on the 11th, when the *Argus* was bombed by 13 Ju.88's and straddled by all the bombs except one which slightly damaged the extreme edge of her flight deck. Twenty-four minutes later the *Isis*, forming part of the destroyer screen of the *Argus* and *Scylla*, was hit by an aircraft torpedo 10 miles north of Algiers and sank in a few minutes. The rest

¹ Detached to C.N.T.F.

² See Plan I.

³ Later named *Unruffled*.

⁴ N.W. point of Sicily. See Plan I.

⁵ 02141/43 in Record Office Case 8214.

⁶ Appendix "E10."

⁷ See Section 33 and Plan 11.

of the Force reached Gibraltar safely on the 14th, when the *Sheffield* and *Jamaica* returned to the United Kingdom carrying out a sweep in the Bay of Biscay on the way.

The Landing at Bougie, 11th November

33. Meanwhile Operation "Perpetual," the landing at Bougie, had been carried out unopposed at dawn on 11th November. The port of Bougie¹ is situated 100 miles east of Algiers and lies on the western side of the Gulf of Bougie about 1 mile south of Cape Carbon, a small peninsula crowned with a signal station. It consists of the Avant-Port, south-westward of Cape Buac, a middle basin off the town and the Arrière-Port, south-westward of the middle basin. The object of the operation was the capture of the airfield at Djidjelli and the establishment of an advanced assault craft base at Bougie. The covering force consisted of the cruiser *Sheffield*, the monitor *Roberts*, the auxiliary A/A. ship *Tynwald*, 5 *Hunt* destroyers, 5 corvettes, 2 fleetsweepers and 4 A/S. trawlers. It was under the orders of Rear-Admiral C. H. J. Harcourt, with Brigadier A. L. Kent-Lemon, C.B.E. as Military Force Commander.

At 1830 on 10th November the fast 15-knot convoy, consisting of the infantry landing ships *Karanja*, *Marnix*, *Awatea* and *Cathay*, escorted by the *Tynwald*, *Bramham*, *Hussar*, *Speedwell*, *Rother* and *Spey* left Algiers Bay for Bougie, following the route shewn on Plan 11. The troops from the *Marnix* and *Cathay* had orders to land in the *Karanja's* landing craft on "Duff Green" Beach west of Cape Aokas in the Gulf of Bougie,² but when the Admiral was informed at midnight that a hostile reception was to be expected it was decided to land all the troops on "Duff White" Beach east of Cape Aokas outside the range of shore batteries.³

A few hours later, at 0345 on 11th November, the *Sheffield* took station to seaward and by 0430 the convoy was approaching the release position 4 miles off "Duff White" Beach. The *Sheffield* closed right in under Cape Buac where the fort's guns could not depress and the *Roberts*, screened by the corvette *Samphire* and the auxiliary A/A. ship *Tynwald*, took up a good position to carry out a bombardment, if required. By 0446 the *Karanja* was off Cape Aokas and started lowering her landing craft which proceeded to collect troops from the *Cathay*. As it had been decided to land all the troops on "Duff White" the *Marnix's* landing force set out for that beach at 0500, but when Captain Dickinson, the S.N.O.L., signalled that opposition might be encountered there the flotilla made for a beach further east. They were, however, diverted by a destroyer back to "Duff White" Beach where they landed the Royal West Kents through heavy surf. The arrival of the Allied Force had not escaped the notice of the French, for at 0522 a searchlight at Bougie signalled "whatship?" but was ignored.

Meanwhile the infantry landing ship *Awatea*, carrying R.A.F. petrol and stores, had proceeded to Djidjelli to land troops with orders to capture the airfield. But a heavy swell made landing impracticable and the *Awatea* steered for "Duff White" Beach where the sea was almost flat, though a slight swell was breaking in heavy surf on the beach. By this time the Royal West Kents, treating all French as hostile, were marching on the town of Bougie. The *Marnix's* flotilla proceeding inshore at 0533 landed too far east and shortly before 0600 *Karanja's* landing craft also set out for "Duff White" Beach.

¹ See Plan 11.

² Position in the Gulf of Bougie of Duff Green Beach is not stated, but according to K piteitn H. W. Hettema, R. Neth. N., Commanding Officer of the *Marnix*, it was just west of Cape Aokas.

³ See Plan 11.

Meanwhile the slow 10-knot convoy consisting of the *Urlana*, *Dewdale*, *Glenfinlas*, *Stanhill* and *Ocean Volga* with a strong escort of 10 warships¹ had come into sight and by 0609 had closed the beach, a few minutes before the *Awatea* arrived from Djidjelli.

When the first wave of landing craft returned from "Duff White" Beach they reported a strong undertow and four landing craft stranded. They were ordered not to return to the beach and at 0702 the destroyers *Bramham* and *Wilton* were instructed to ascertain the intentions of the French and reported that the Garrison Commander had agreed to permit ships to enter the Bay. By this time all landing craft had been hoisted and the ships had closed the harbour. At 1000 the *Karanja*, *Marnix*, *Cathay* and *Awatea* anchored off the port and were followed in by the slow convoy. The 36th Infantry Brigade then landed unopposed at Bougie, and though the idea of assaulting Djidjelli airfield from the sea had had to be abandoned on account of the surf, the airfield was attacked by paratroops.

33A. The delay in operating Djidjelli airfield had far-reaching effects, for it restricted fighter protection, and for a time the landing forces were subjected to heavy bombing attacks. The first took place at dusk on the 11th when the upper deck of the *Roberts* was seriously damaged and set alight. The *Cathay* was severely damaged at the same time, and was abandoned at 1745 when 1,200 military personnel remaining on board were landed and her ship's company was transferred to the *Karanja*. At 2200 she caught fire and finally settled on the bottom 12 hours later.

Meanwhile the *Awatea* had been bombed about 1700 and after catching fire was finally abandoned off Cape Carbon. In the course of these attacks only one enemy bomber was shot down. During a dawn bombing attack next day, 12th November, the *Karanja* was set on fire and sank later. The anchorage off Bougie was again heavily attacked by more than 30 bombers between 1110 and noon that day but no damage was done and three bombers were destroyed. There was another fierce but abortive air attack at dusk. That day² the *Tynwald*, which was standing by the damaged *Roberts*, was shaken by a heavy explosion attributed to a torpedo,³ and sank in seven fathoms with the loss of three officers and seven ratings. For nearly two days the landing force had been virtually without air cover and had borne the brunt of devastating air attacks, but much needed relief was at hand. Early next day, the 13th, the R.A.F. Spitfires were operating from Djidjelli airfield and the situation improved so rapidly that when the enemy again attacked shipping off Bougie on the 14th, eleven raiders were destroyed and others damaged.

In the meantime an unopposed landing had been made at Bône, 125 miles east of Bougie, at 0300 on 12th November, when the 6th Commando and two companies of the 3rd Battalion Royal West Kents landed from the *Lamerton* and *Wheatland*. The destroyers fortunately escaped damage in spite of frequent dive-bombing attacks. Meanwhile, far away to the westward, hostilities at Casablanca had ended in an armistice.

¹ See Plan 11.

² No time stated.

³ Not stated whether aircraft or submarine.

PART III
THE ASSAULT
WEST COAST OF FRENCH MOROCCO
CHAPTER VII
WESTERN NAVAL TASK FORCE

Areas of Attack

34. Unlike the landings on the north coast of Africa the operations against the west coast of French Morocco were wholly American undertakings. They were entrusted to the Western Naval Task Force, a powerful Force designated Task Force Thirty-four, which operated in three main attack areas¹ under the orders of Rear-Admiral H. K. Hewitt, U.S.N., and was divided into a Covering Group, an Air Group and three Attack Groups. The Northern Attack Group operated against the Mehdiya-Port Lyautey area, 65 miles north-eastward of Casablanca, the Centre Attack Group against the Fédala-Casablanca area, and the Southern Attack Group against the Safi area, 110 miles south-westward of Casablanca.

A glance at the map² will shew the strategic reasons for this plan. All three landings, if successful, would secure the narrow coastal plain at the foot of the Middle Atlas mountains, through which run all the principal lines of communication in French Morocco. Mehdiya was the nearest landing place to Port Lautey near which is located the best and most accessible airfield in Morocco on which to base Navy aircraft,³ and possession of Port Lyautey would secure the railway that runs parallel to the border of Spanish Morocco through the Taza Gap to Algeria. Fédala beaches were the nearest practicable landing place to Casablanca the only large harbour of the Atlantic coast of Morocco. Finally, Safi was selected because it covered the native metropolis of Marrakech, and its harbour offered the only opportunity of running General Sherman tanks ashore and bringing them up north for an assault on Casablanca. These operations were timed to coincide with the operations against Algiers and Oran except that their H-hour was 0400 instead of the 0100 of the Mediterranean attacks.

The American Orders for the west coast operations were issued in four folders marked "Task Force Thirty-Four," "Air," "Subron Fifty" and "Landing and Assault." The "Landing and Assault" included details of the organisation of "Task Force Thirty-Four."

Organisation of Task Force Thirty-Four, Rear-Admiral H. K. Hewitt, U.S.N.

35. The Task Force Organisation was :—

COVERING GROUP, Rear-Admiral R.C. Giffen, U.S.N.

Massachusetts, battleship.

Cruiser Division Seven, less cruiser *Augusta*.

Destroyer Squadron Eight, less destroyer *Rowan*.

¹ Plan 12.

² See Fig. 2 page 49.

³ "Operations in North African Waters," pp. 33-34.

AIR GROUP, Rear-Admiral E. D. McWhorter, U.S.N.

Ranger, A/C. carrier.*Santee*, *Sangamon*, *Suwanee*, A/C. escort vessels.*Cleveland*, cruiser.

Destroyer Squadron Ten.

Chenango, A/C. escort vessels.

NORTHERN ATTACK GROUP, Rear-Admiral M. Kelly, U.S.N.

*Fire Support.**Texas*, battleship (Flag F.S.G.1).*Savannah*, cruiser (F.S.G.2).Commander Destroyer Squadron Eleven (F.S.G.3), destroyers *Roe* (F.S.G.31), *Kearny* (F.S.G.32), *Ericsson* (F.S.G.33).*Transports A/S. screen and A/M. sweepers*, Captain A. H. Gray, U.S.N.Transport Division Five, plus transports *Florence Nightingale*, *Anne Arundel* and *Confessa*.Destroyers *Livermore*, *Eberle*, *Parker*, *Dallas*.Minesweeping Division Twenty-one, less minesweeper *Auk*.M.Bs. (63 foot), C.9469, C.9470 (in fuel ship *Kennebec*).

Task Group Zed, Brigadier-General Truscott, U.S.A.

One Regimental Combat Team (Ninth Infantry Division, U.S.A.).

One Armoured Combat Team (Second Armoured Division, U.S.A.).

Attached units.

CENTRE ATTACK GROUP, Captain R. R. M. Emmet, U.S.N.

*Fire Support.**Augusta*, cruiser (F.S.G.4), Rear-Admiral H. K. Hewitt, U.S.N.*Brooklyn*, cruiser (F.S.G.5).Commander Destroyer Division Twenty-six (F.S.G.6), destroyers *Wilkes* (Flag F.S.G.61), *Swanson* (F.S.G.62), *Ludlow* (F.S.G.63).*Transports, A/S. screen and A/M. sweepers*, Captain R. R. M. Emmet, U.S.N.Transport Divisions One, Three and Nine, less transports *Florence Nightingale*, *Anne Arundel* and *Lyon*.Destroyer Squadron Thirteen, less destroyers *Ludlow*, *Wilkes*, *Swanson* and *Nicholson*, plus destroyer *Tillman*.Minelayer, *Miantonomah*.Minesweeping Division Nineteen, less minesweepers, *Hamilton* and *Howard*, plus minesweeper *Auk*.M.Bs. (63 foot), C.9471, C.9472 (in fuel ship *Winooski*).

Task Group Yoke, Major-General J. W. Anderson, U.S.A.

Third Infantry Division, U.S. Army.

One Armoured Combat Team (Second Armoured Division, U.S.A.).

Attached units.

SOUTHERN ATTACK GROUP, Rear-Admiral L. A. Davidson, U.S.N.

*Fire Support.**New York*, battleship (F.S.G.7).*Philadelphia* (Flag F.S.G.8), cruiser.Commander Destroyer Squadron Fifteen (F.S.G.9), destroyers *Mervine* (Flag F.S.G.91), *Quick* (F.S.G.92), *Beatty* (F.S.G.93).

Transports, A/S. screen and A/M. sweepers, Captain W. B. Phillips, U.S.N.
Transport Division Seven, plus transport *Lyon* and seatrain
Lakehurst.

Destroyer Division Thirty, less destroyer *Parker*, plus destroyers
Cole and *Bernadou*.

Minelayer *Monadnock*.

Minelayers *Howard* and *Hamilton*.

Fleet tug *Cherokee*.

M.Bs. (63 foot), C.9439, C.9440 (in fuel ship *Merrimack*).

Task Group X-ray, Major-General E. N. Harmon, U.S.A.

One Regimental Combat Team (Ninth Infantry Division, U.S.A.).

Two Armoured Combat Teams (Second Armoured Division, U.S.A.).

Attached units.

Train, Captain J. J. Twomey, U.S.N.

Fuel ships *Housatonic*, *Merrimack*, *Kennebec*, *Chemung* and *Winooski*.

Force Flagship.

Augusta, cruiser, Rear-Admiral H. K. Hewitt, U.S.N.

Rowan, destroyer.

According to Lieutenant-Commander Gerald G. Butler, R.N., British Naval Liaison Officer at Casablanca, who accompanied the expedition, the division of military forces was :—

At Port Lyautey.—The 60th Infantry Regiment and one battalion (Combat Team), with a battalion of light tanks

At Safi.—The 47th Infantry Regiment (Combat Team), one battalion of medium tanks.

At Fédala.—One amphibious division (Combat Team), with a battalion of light tanks.

Covering and Air Groups

36. The task of the Covering Group was to screen Task Force Thirty-Four against hostile forces. It was to destroy by gunfire hostile naval units in or round Casablanca from dawn onwards on D-day, the order of priority being submarines, capital ships, cruisers and light craft. It was also to destroy the hostile shore batteries at Point El Hank and Table d'Aoukacha, which were capable of ranging on the Fédala area.¹ It was to avoid closing to less than 6 miles off the coast till after 1400 on D-day except to exploit any unusual opportunity which might present itself.

The allotted tasks of the Air Group were to destroy hostile submarines in or near Casablanca, to assist the Covering Group to neutralise hostile capital ships and shore batteries, and to destroy hostile aircraft. Priority was to be given to hostile aircraft on the ground, bombers, fighters and reconnaissance aircraft. Priority of local defence tasks was to be given first to the protection of carriers and then to the protection of transports against air attack. Support was to be given to the landing forces at maximum strength consistent with the above tasks. Anti-submarine patrols of the transport areas were to be established as aircraft became available.

¹ See Section 45.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OCCUPATION OF PORT LYAUTEY

Northern Attack Group, Mehdia—Port Lyautey Area

37. Port Lyautey, the second in importance in French Morocco, lies on the left bank of the Wadi Sebou, the largest river on this coast, which enters the sea at Mehdia, 65 miles north-eastward of Casablanca. Its quays are equipped with 5-ton cranes and connected with the railway system. The town of Lyautey has a population of about 17,000 of which one-third are Europeans. Mehdia Lighthouse lies in $34^{\circ} 16' N.$, $6^{\circ} 40' W.$ The town of Mehdia is a good landmark for approaching the Wadi Sebou. From Mehdia to Marmora, 40 miles north-north-eastward, the coast is sandy, broken in places by rocks and backed by sandhills. The northern half of the coast between Mehdia and Salé, about 16 miles south-south-westward, is bounded by conical hills and the southern half by cliffs. The landings in the Port Lyautey-Mehdia area were entrusted to the Northern Attack Group. Its task was to establish Task Group Zed¹ ashore near Mehdia by simultaneous landing at H-hour on Beaches "Red," "Red 2," "Green," "Blue" and "Yellow."² Task Force Zed was to capture the airfield 2 miles north-west of Port Lyautey, Port Lyautey itself, and the airfield at Salé. The Northern Attack Group was to support these operations with naval gunfire, and to destroy batteries and searchlights threatening transports, landing beaches and landing craft. Briefly, it was to land troops and equipment, give fire support to the Army, screen the transport area, patrol against surface vessels and submarines, and maintain air patrols.

The following were the Army objectives:—

At H-hour, plus $2\frac{1}{2}$:—

"Brown" Beach,³ in the Wadi Sebou, to be captured by assault.

"Red" Beach force to advance to position on north bank of river due north of airfield.

"Red" Beach 2 force to advance to north shore opposite Kasba to support assault on Kasba with fire, also to advance to the same position as "Red" Beach force.

"Blue" Beach force to advance straight inland beyond Lagoon, due east, establish line for future advance on airfield.

At H-hour, plus 4:—

"Green" Beach force to be around Kasba, ready for advance on airfield.

At H-hour, plus $6\frac{1}{2}$:—

"Green" and "Blue" Beach forces to reach ridge above airfield, establish line from north-west of city of Port Lyautey along ridge back of ammunition dump.

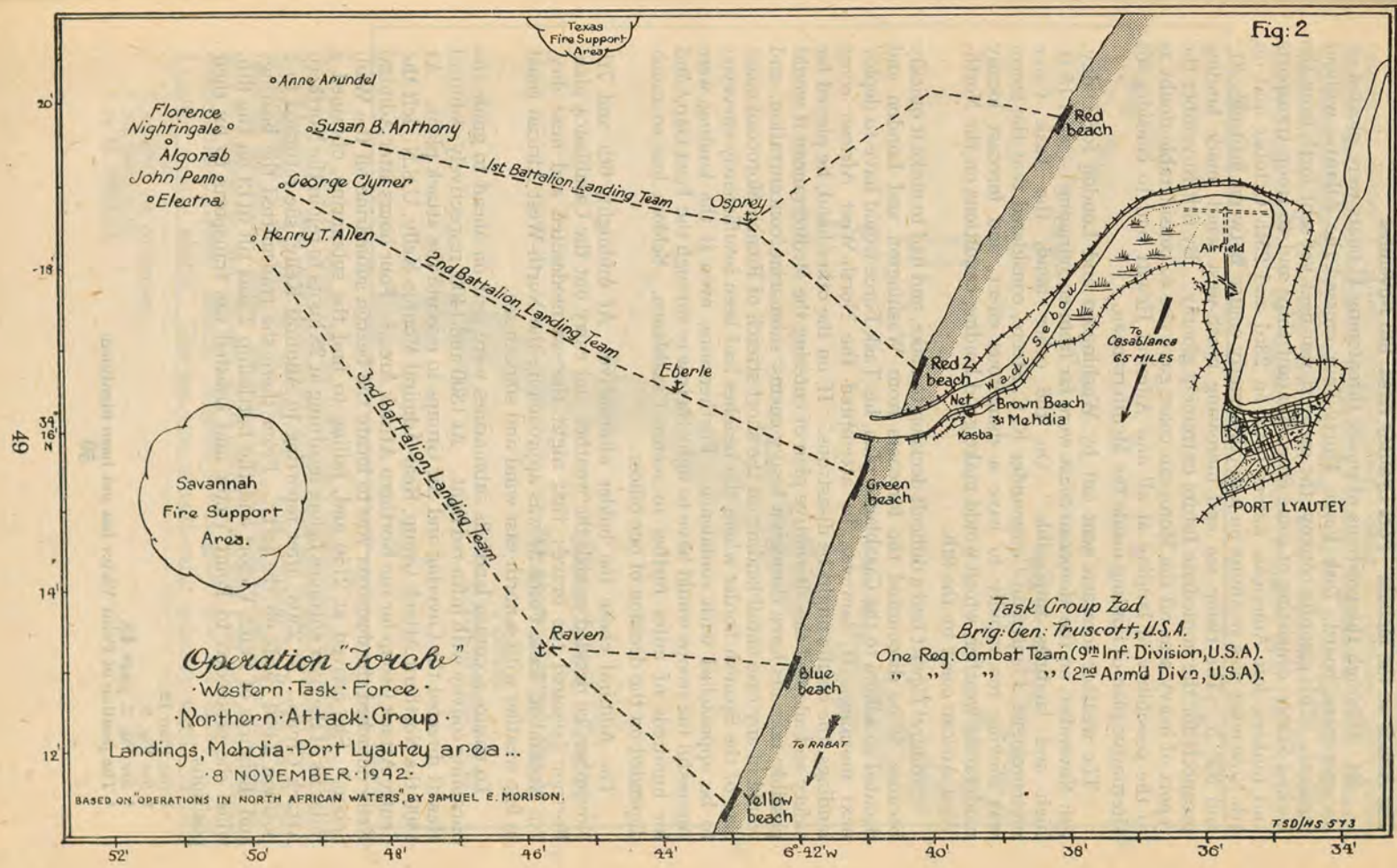
At H-hour, plus $7\frac{1}{2}$:—

"Red" Beach 2 force to advance down east bank of river to bridge, seize and hold it, and be ready to attack across river at airfield, together with "Green" and "Blue" units.

¹ 9,099 officers and men. See Section 35 and Appendix "A12."

² See Fig. 2.

³ See Fig. 2.



LANDINGS, MEHDIA—PORT LYAUTEY AREA.

Fig. 2

TSD/MS 573

The Attack on the Mehdiá—Port Lyautey Area, 8th November

38. Although the positions of many threatening U-boats were plotted on its operations board, Task Force Thirty-Four crossed the Atlantic without incident. This gigantic convoy, the greatest war fleet yet sent forth from the United States, consisting of some 60 combatant ships and 40 troop transports and tankers, left American waters between 23rd and 25th October and on 4th November was steaming on a north-easterly course between latitudes 31° and 32° N. The rising sea and increasing north-west wind, made landing prospects for the immediate future extremely gloomy. By 6th November the report of heavy seas off the Moroccan coast gave rise to considerable doubt as to the possibility of landing at all and Admiral Hewitt had to consider his alternative plan of landing inside the Mediterranean.

The weather forecasts sent out by Washington and London for D-day, 8th November, on the Moroccan coast were far from encouraging—"surf 15 ft. high and landings impossible." On the other hand, the Task Force meteorologist, Lieutenant-Commander R. C. Steere, considered that the storm was moving too rapidly to have a dangerous effect, and forecast locally moderating weather, which would make good landing conditions on the North-West African coast by the 8th.

Admiral Hewitt had a difficult decision to make, and had to make it quickly because, if he discounted the forecasts from Washington and London and decided to adhere to the Casablanca plan, his Task Force would have to deploy next morning. If, however, he attempted the North-West African coast landings, the results might be disastrous. If, on the other hand, he played for safety and adopted the alternative plan of entering the Mediterranean it would possibly take his force through a heavy enemy submarine concentration, and would in any case entail landing on the short stretch of French Moroccan coast east of the Spanish border where the beaches had been insufficiently surveyed to be approached with confidence. Furthermore, even if the landing were successful the troops would have to fight their way through the Taza Gap,¹ and for hundreds of miles further to secure Casablanca. Seldom has so much depended on the decision of one officer.

The Admiral chose the bolder alternative. At midnight, 6th and 7th November, he decided to risk the weather and carry out the Casablanca plan. Fortune favoured the brave; that night the sea moderated and next day, 7th November, Task Force 34 was approaching the North-West African coast in fine weather with a north-east wind and smooth sea.

To ensure accurate landfalls submarines were sent on ahead to guide the oncoming convoy with infra-red light. At 1300 and 1400, respectively, Admiral Hewitt directed the Covering and Air Groups to execute the attack plans. At 1500 the Northern Attack Group, Rear-Admiral Monroe Kelly, U.S.N., left the Centre Attack Group for the Northern Attack Area.² Four hours later Admiral Kelly detached the destroyer *Roe* to locate the beacon submarine off the Wadi Sebou.³ She arrived at 2150 and, failing to find the submarine, obtained a radar fix of the river entrance before returning at 25 knots to rejoin the Northern Attack Group. At 2308, after reporting to Admiral Kelly, she returned to a position 2,000 yards off the jetty. From there she transmitted the bearings and distances of Point Victor⁴ and the battleship *Texas* till 0113 on the 8th, when she proceeded to Point Victor and assisted the transports to fix their positions.

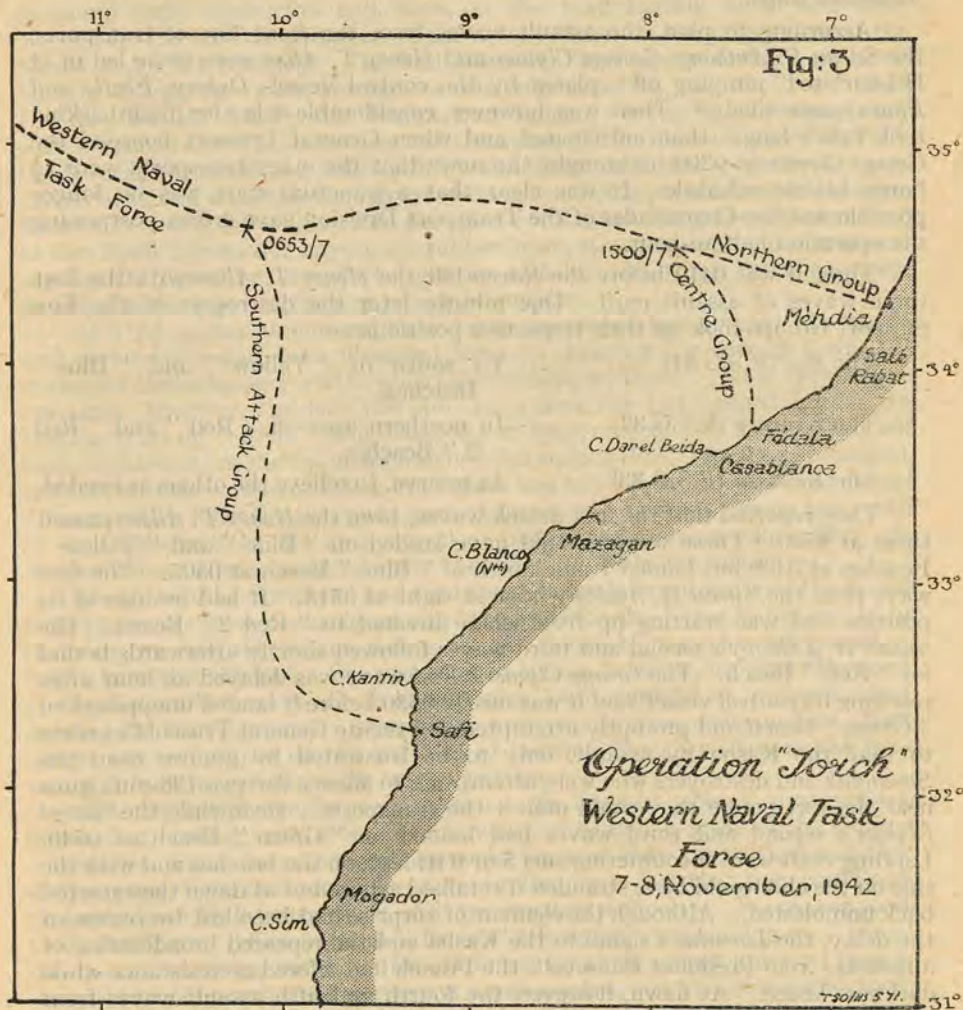
¹ See Plan 12.

² See Fig. 3.

³ See Fig. 2, page 49.

⁴ The position of Point Victor has not been identified.

Meanwhile¹ Transport Division Five, consisting of the United States transports *Henry T. Allen*, *George Clymer*, *Susan B. Anthony*, *John Penn*, *Algorab* and *Electra*, with the transports *Florence Nightingale*, *Anne Arundel* and *Contessa* in company, carrying, according to the B.N.L.O., the 60th Infantry Regiment and one battalion (Combat Team) with a battalion of light tanks² had manned stations for landings. Twenty minutes later the Northern



Attack Group arrived off Mehdia. The only transport report available is that of the *George Clymer*³ who states that at 0000 her boats were lowered and troops disembarked in $34^{\circ} 19\frac{1}{2}'$ N., $6^{\circ} 49\frac{1}{2}'$ W. This position is 15,700 yards 290° from the centre of "Green" Beach. The immediate objective of her battalion was to silence the two 138-mm. guns near the ancient Fort Lyautey or Kasba overlooking "Green" Beach. Visibility was good and the lights of Port Lyautey clearly visible. The sea was smooth with a heavy swell. As the

¹ At 2300, 7th November.

² See Section 35.

³ In M. 03353/43.

transports lowered their landing craft several French merchant vessels passed close by but apparently failed to detect them. When, however, a coastal convoy of five lighted steamers blundered into the transport area their escort, the French S.S. *Lorraine*, signalled in French "Be warned. Alert on shore for 0500," and the convoy was allowed to pass unmolested. A few minutes later the *Lorraine* made a signal to the Kasba, possibly reporting the presence of the American ships.

According to plan, the assault waves from the front line of transports, the *Susan B. Anthony*, *George Clymer* and *Henry T. Allen* were to be led in at H-hour¹ to "jumping off" places by the control vessels *Osprey*, *Eberle* and *Raven*, respectively.² There was, however, considerable delay for disembarking took much longer than anticipated and when General Truscott boarded the *George Clymer* at 0200 he brought the news that the other transports were 1½ hours behind schedule. It was clear that a punctual start was no longer possible and the Commander of the Transport Division gave orders postponing the operation half-an-hour.

Thus, it was 0410 before the *Raven* left the *Henry T. Allen* with the first three waves of assault craft. One minute later the destroyers of the Fire Support Groups took up their respective positions:—

The *Roe* (F.S.G.31) To south of "Yellow" and "Blue" Beaches.

The *Kearney* (F.S.G.32) In northern area off "Red" and "Red 2" Beaches.

The *Ericsson* (F.S.G.33) In reserve, to relieve the others as needed.

They reported that the first attack waves, from the *Henry T. Allen*, passed them at 0500. These waves should have landed on "Blue" and "Yellow" Beaches at 0400 but landed 1 mile north of "Blue" Beach at 0505. The first wave from the *Susan B. Anthony* hove in sight at 0515. It had no idea of its position and was starting up river when directed to "Red 2" Beach. The *Susan B. Anthony's* second and third waves followed shortly afterwards bound for "Red" Beach. The *George Clymer's* first wave was delayed an hour after reaching its control vessel³ and it was nearly 0530 before it landed unopposed on "Green" Beach and promptly attempted to execute General Truscott's orders to take the Kasba by assault, only to be frustrated by gunfire from the *Savannah* and destroyers who were attempting to silence the two 138-mm. guns near the fort before they could molest the transports. Meanwhile the *George Clymer's* second and third waves had landed on "Green" Beach at 0540. Landing craft were encountering surf 5 or 6 ft. high on the beaches and with the tide on the ebb would have stranded if retained ashore but at dawn they started back unmolested. Although the element of surprise had been lost by reason of the delay, the *Lorraine's* signal to the Kasba and the repeated broadcasting of a message from President Roosevelt, the French had offered no resistance while darkness lasted. At dawn, however, the fourth and fifth assault waves from the *George Clymer* were attacked by aircraft and shore batteries. These attacks slowed down landings, many landing craft being stranded and damaged.

As 0629 batteries on the hill at Mehdiya attacked the *Roe*, the first salvo falling 500 yards off her port bow. She replied at 8,000 yards, and after three further salvos had fallen near her the shore batteries ceased fire. When they reopened their attack 10 minutes later their salvos fell dangerously close and she turned away to avoid them. At 0652 she and the cruiser *Savannah* were attacked by two French fighters with machine guns.

¹ 0400.

² See Fig. 2 page 49.

³ U.S. Destroyer *Eberle*.

At 0715 the Kasba battery opened fire narrowly missing the *George Clymer*, and the transports at once opened the range to a point 15 miles off-shore, seriously dislocating the whole landing programme. At 0738, however, the battery was reported silenced and they turned back and closed the beach once more.

At 0820 spotting aircraft reported that troops from "Blue" Beach were receiving little opposition and were on the road leading south and east. Meanwhile the 1st Battalion had taken up a position on the ridge between the Kasba and Port Lyautey. The 2nd Battalion, having successfully captured Mehdia lighthouse had, through a misunderstanding, advanced on Port Lyautey airfield before the Kasba had fallen. Owing to the temporary withdrawal of the transports beyond the range of the Kasba battery at 0715, the battalion was without field artillery and when attacked by the French was driven back and was for a time in grave danger of being cut off from the beaches. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion had occupied a hill overlooking the northern bend of the Wadi Sebou, but having no rubber boats was unable to get across and capture its objective, the Port Lyautey airfield. All three battalions were greatly handicapped by lack of adequate supplies.

At 1105 it was announced that American troops had entered the Kasba and as no firing had been observed from its direction for several hours the destroyer *Dallas* was ordered to proceed cautiously up river. As she approached the jetty, however, the two 138-mm. guns near the fort opened fire on the landing craft off "Blue" Beach and she at once retired. As the fire had not been directed at her she again approached the jetty at 1215. As she approached, however, it was announced that the Kasba was not yet in American hands and a few minutes later the two guns opened heavy and accurate fire on her. She at once returned the fire and retired at high speed under smoke cover. No further attempt was made to enter the river till 10th November.

Meanwhile the *Savannah* had continued to fire intermittently at the Kasba battery, but as it was considered too dangerous for the *Texas* to fire her 14 in. shells in the direction of the troops ashore, General Truscott never permitted her to bombard the fort. She was soon in action, however, for that afternoon¹ at the General's request she fired fifty-nine 14-in. rounds² at an ammunition dump near Port Lyautey. Meanwhile stubborn fighting continued on shore, but at the end of the day in the face of growing French resistance the issue was still hanging precariously in the balance.

* 38A. During the night³ conditions on the beaches, where heavy surf was preventing landing craft from withdrawing, presented a scene of the greatest confusion. Exits from the beaches could be used only by tracked vehicles; lorries, jeeps, light tanks and stores were piling up so fast that they could only be kept above high water mark with the greatest difficulty. Forces supposed to be landing on "Green" and "Brown"⁴ Beaches were landing on "Blue" Beach and searching vainly in the darkness for their proper units. Crews of stranded landing craft were wandering round aimlessly or tinkering ineffectively with their craft. To find an individual or a particular unit "presented a problem of the first magnitude." Daybreak brought no relief ashore for at dawn the surf was running so high on the beaches that landing operations had to be abandoned altogether.

By sunrise the two 138-mm. guns near the Kasba, which had given so much trouble, appeared to have been silenced by the *Savannah*⁵ and at 0750

¹ Between 1343 and 1402.

² Range 16,500 yards.

³ 8th to 9th November.

⁴ Brown Beach was inside the Wadi Sebou.

⁵ Actually only one had been destroyed.

she opened fire on French tanks coming north from Rabat. At least three were reported knocked out, one by a direct hit. The remainder dispersed and retreated rapidly down the road with spotting aircraft bombing them with excellent results. The *Savannah* continued firing till American tanks advanced into the area at 1027.

At 1300 a new and dangerous element entered the situation. French cruisers were reported steaming up the coast from Casablanca, but the threat did not materialise for no French cruisers reached the Northern Attack area. In vivid contrast heavy fighting continued on land throughout the day. By dusk the 1st Battalion, reinforced by tanks, had firmly established itself on the ridge between the Kasba and Port Lyautey and the 2nd Battalion though still badly disorganised despite reinforcements, had made several abortive assaults on the fort. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion had brought up its artillery from the northern beach to a hill overlooking the Wadi Sebou. The situation, however, was still far from satisfactory for owing to the adverse weather less than half the troops had been put ashore. Yet the hardest fighting of the Northern Attack was taking place on land. Medical supplies, water, tanks and ammunition were all urgently required and the troops were calling for them to be landed at all costs. It was a call that could not be ignored and in spite of the mountainous¹ surf still thundering on to the beaches, landing craft were sent in to "Blue" Beach, 3,000 yards south of "Green" Beach,² in a desperate attempt to answer it, but one by one were swamped or stranded till by midnight only six³ remained afloat. When one of the two salvage boats which attempted to clear the beaches was swamped, the other, giving up the attempt as hopeless, returned to the transports. A third, however, sent in later, was able to work throughout the night.

38B. During the night⁴ the 1st Battalion seized a position on high ground overlooking Port Lyautey airfield while the 3rd Battalion, the northernmost jaw of the pincers, stood by to co-operate, but no further action was required for wisely the French moved out as the Americans moved in. At 0400, 10th November, the *Dallas* headed once more towards the jetty but was unable to locate it for two hours. Despite seas breaking astern she finally succeeded in entering the channel and came under heavy fire from an unidentified source. Forcing her way over the bar she rammed the net and made her way up river. A detachment of the 3rd Battalion crossing the Wadi in rubber boats cheered her as she passed. At 0737 she arrived off Port Lyautey and her "raider detachment," landing under heavy fire, seized the airfield. The first American aircraft landed there at 1100.⁵

Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion had launched an attack on the Kasba at 0625. The French offered fierce resistance, but the Americans called for air support and within a few minutes naval aircraft from the *Sangamon* had delivered an accurate bombing attack. It proved so successful that without further resistance the fort surrendered. The way at last lay wide open for the transports which immediately moved in from remote positions. By this time "Green" and "Blue" Beaches had been abandoned and the salvage of damaged and stranded craft had become a major operation.⁶ Unloading on "Brown" Beach in the Wadi Sebou continued with only eight of the *George Clymer's* landing craft still available.

¹ 15 feet high on some of the beaches.

² See Fig. 2, page 49.

³ One tank lighter, 4 personnel boats, and 1 ramp.

⁴ Of 9th to 10th November.

⁵ See Fig. 2, page 49.

⁶ The following day a transport aircraft reported 70 landing craft stranded on the beaches south of Mehdia.

Between 0842 and 1131 the *Texas* heavily attacked¹ a French lorry column moving out of Port Lyautey eastward along the Meknes road. The column was thrown into confusion and damaged lorries were left abandoned all along the road.

During the forenoon² the transports steamed out to sea when the *Roe* made several depth charge attacks on submarine contacts off "Blue" Beach. They returned close inshore as soon as the position was considered reasonably safe and at 1424 the *George Clymer* anchored 3,000 yards from the river entrance. Unloading restarted "with gusto" but congestion on the small "Brown" Beach caused much delay, the round trip sometimes taking as much as eight hours.

Meanwhile French tank and infantry columns had approached on the Rabat road from the south. They were immediately attacked with depth charges by aircraft from the *Texas*, a novel form of air attack which proved most effective, a direct hit resulting in the destruction of three tanks. Dive-bombers also took up the attack and the columns finally retreated south towards Rabat.

The battle was nearly over. Early next morning, 11th November, a message to General Truscott from the French Military Headquarters at Port Lyautey stated that on Marshal Pétain's authority all resistance would cease immediately. General Truscott at once ordered the cease fire and that day the Stars and Stripes floated triumphantly over Port Lyautey.

¹ With 214 rounds of 14-in., range 17,000 yards.

² About 1040, 10th November.

CHAPTER IX

THE CAPTURE OF SAFI

Safi and Mazagan¹

39. While Port Lyautey was being captured by the American Northern Attack Group, the town of Safi, 175 miles away to the south-westward had been taken by the American Southern Attack Group.

The Rade de Safi lies 110 miles south-westward of Casablanca and is formed by the bend in the coast immediately southward of Pointe de la Tour.² It is entirely open to westerly winds but affords a good anchorage during fine weather. The harbour is protected by a breakwater extending north-north-westward from the northern end of the town and by the Jetée Transversale extending westward from a position half a mile northward of the root of the breakwater. The entrance between them is about a cable wide. There are five berths alongside the breakwater with a depth of 32 ft. and there is a berth 460 ft. long with a depth of 31 ft. alongside the Jetée Transversale.

At right angles to this jetty there is a quay 820 ft. long for vessels with draught from 24 to 29 ft. according to the state of the dredging. In strong westerly winds vessels can remain alongside only with difficulty. A good anchorage may be obtained half a mile off Safi in a depth of 8 fathoms, but in strong westerly winds the anchorage is untenable. The town of Safi had a population of more than 25,000 in 1936. It is the seat of a District Administrator and was now to become the scene of a successful landing.

Cap de Mazagan³ lies roughly half way between Casablanca and Safi. The Rade de Mazagan lies immediately eastward of the cape. An artificial harbour formed by two breakwaters with an entrance between them 130 ft. wide lies close south-eastward of the cape. It is accessible only to vessels of less than 15 ft. draught. Landing is difficult at low water but easy at half tide in a camber on the southern side of the town. The town of Mazagan itself had a population of more than 24,000 in 1936, of which nearly 1,800 were Europeans. Mazagan, like Safi, is the seat of the local District Administrator.

In November, 1942, the French garrison at Safi included two batteries Second Foreign Legion Artillery; two companies Second Foreign Legion Infantry; one battery of three 155 mm. guns (mobile); one battery of four 130 mm. naval guns at Pointe de la Tour (Battery Railleuse); one battery of 75 mm. guns motor drawn; two companies Second Moroccan Infantry and detachments of the 41st Group Transmissions W/T, and three Renault tanks.

Southern Attack Group, Assault Plan and Safi Beaches

40. The task of capturing Safi was entrusted to the Southern Attack Group, Rear-Admiral L. A. Davidson, U.S.N. According to the B.N.L.O. the military forces available for the assault on Safi⁴ were the 47th Infantry Regiment (Combat Team) one battalion of light tanks with a battalion of medium tanks.⁵

¹ See Plan 13.

² 32° 20' N., 9° 17' W.

³ 33° 16' N., 8° 31' W. See Plan 12.

⁴ 6,423 officers and men. See Appendix A14.

⁵ See Section 35.

At 0000 on 7th November, Admiral Hewitt ordered Admiral Davidson to put attack plan No. 1 into effect at 0700, and at 0653 the Southern Attack Group accompanied by the aircraft escort ship *Santee* left the Northern and Centre Groups for its theatre of operations.¹ The primary object of the attack was to secure the port of Safi as an unloading base for the 28 ton General Sherman tanks carried in the *Lakehurst*, a former train ferry, with a view to employing them in an attack on Casablanca, 110 miles away to the North. In addition to the problem of reducing Safi which was defended by three batteries, there were troops, artillery and an air force at Marrakech, and a strongly held bridgehead over the Oued Rebia just East of Mazagan².

The tasks allotted to the Southern Attack Group included :—

- (a) The establishment of Task Group X-Ray³ ashore by simultaneous landing assaults at H hours plus 30 minutes on D-day⁴, on the harbour and on four beaches named "Red," "Blue," "Green" and "Yellow."⁵ The first beach named was half a mile north of the harbour Mole. "Blue" Beach was adjacent to the jetty on the northern side of Safi harbour; "Green" Beach north of the Petite Jetée inside the harbour. "Yellow" Beach was in 32° 11' N. 9° 16' W. eight miles south of Safi and was considered a good starting point for an advance on that town from the rear if the direct assault failed further north.
- (b) The capture of the port of Safi.
- (c) The establishment of a beachhead of 10,000 yds. in view of further operations for the capture of Casablanca.

The plan of assault was based on the employment of the two old destroyers *Bernadou* and *Cole*, each carrying a company of assault troops from the 47th Infantry Regiment specially trained in night operations to land within the harbour, seize harbour works and shipping and prevent destruction which might delay or prevent the entry and discharge of the *Lakehurst*.

Co-ordinated with these landings, the attacks by troops from landing craft were to be made simultaneously on Beaches "Red," "Green," "Blue" and "Yellow." The landing craft for the first three beaches named were to assemble in the *Harris'* boat area and follow the *Bernadou* and *Cole* inshore as follows :—

- 1st Landing Wave for "Blue" Beach.
- 2nd Landing Wave for "Red" Beach.
- 3rd Landing Wave for "Green" Beach.
- 4th Landing Wave for "Blue" Beach.
- 5th Landing Wave for "Blue" Beach.

The landing craft for "Yellow" Beach were to meet at the *Dix's* boat rendezvous and to be led in by the destroyer *Knight*.

The Approach to Safi, 7th November⁶

41. The approach was made without incident. From 1300 to 1618 on 7th November, the transport *Lyon* transferred assault troops to the destroyers *Cole* and *Bernadou*. About an hour later, at 1711, the Southern Attack Group formed single line ahead steering 160° at 12 knots in the order *Philadelphia*⁷, transports *Harris*, *Lyon*, *Calvert*, *Dorothea L. Dix*, *Titania*, fuelship *Merrimack*,

¹ See Fig. 3, page 51.

² See Plan 12.

³ See Section 35.

⁴ *i.e.*, at 0430, 8th November, 1942, H Hour was 0400.

⁵ See Plan 13.

⁶ See Plan 13.

⁷ U.S. cruiser.

transport *Lakehurst*, aircraft escort vessel *Santee*, minelayer *Monadnock*, and destroyers *Emmons* and *Rodman*, with orders to take up their launching positions off Safi. The final approach to Safi was made on course 090° in the latitude of Safi harbour. At 2200, when the distance from Pointe de la Tour was 17,000 yards, the column turned south-east. At 2230, it altered course to 180° and 20 minutes later to 090° to enter the Transport Area. At 2310 the column turned to 000° and at 2345 the transports in column bearing 180° from the *Philadelphia* were stopped in the Transport Area with the North end of Safi breakwater bearing 074° 15,000 yards from the *Philadelphia*. The sea was smooth with a moderate swell: the night dark and clear.

The Attack on Safi Opens, 8th November¹

42. The attack opened after some delay. At 2330 on the 7th November, the fuelship *Merrimack* began the long task of hoisting out the two 63 ft. aircraft Rescue Boats she carried. These weighed 27 tons and the first was not in the water till 0300 on the 8th; the second till 0410. They were to act as Assistance Control Vessels but on their way to the *Harris* were fired at and chased some miles to the west by a ship in the transport area, apparently the *Lyon*, and did not reach the *Harris* till daylight.

Meanwhile the *Harris* had lowered her first landing craft at 2355, 7th November, and by 0039 all were in the water. The scout boat from the *Harris* went in just after 0100, but failed to locate the beacon submarine *Barb* which should have been 3½ miles from the end of Safi breakwater, but was apparently so far out of position that Lieutenant Duckworth, the Army Scout Commander, after leaving her, rowed six or seven miles in his rubber boat before arriving inside the breakwater entrance. As he made for his objective, the entrance buoy, he came under fire from the breakwater. Although the *Harris*' scout boat could not locate the *Barb*, Ensign J. J. Bell, the officer in charge of the boat, was sure he had passed through the submarine's correct position. The presence of the scout boat just inside the harbour entrance rendered invaluable assistance to the assault destroyers, particularly to the *Cole*, and to the *Harris*' landing craft.

Meanwhile two L.C.P. (R)² and one L.C.S.³ had reached the *Harris* from the *Calvert* according to plan but the 8 L.C.L. (R) and 10 L.C.V.⁴ from the *Lyon* did not reach her till 0200.

By 0300, it was clear that to enable the last wave of assault craft to reach the rendezvous a 30 minutes delay was inevitable and a new H-hour of 0430 was communicated to the *Bernadou*, *Cole* and *Mervine*.

At 0348 a radar bearing from the *Philadelphia* placed the *Barb* off Safi harbour, in 32° 19' N., 9° 19' W., her correct position, where she was sighted later by the *Mervine* and *Beatty*.

Meanwhile the *Bernadou* had left the *Harris*' boat area at 0345 and was making for the harbour entrance. The *Cole*, which was to follow her round the breakwater, had left the boat area at 0401 leading the tank lighter wave for "Green" Beach inside the harbour and the first waves of troop landing craft for Beaches "Red" and "Blue" north of the mole. On her way in, however, she sighted the *Beatty*⁵ ahead and mistaking her for the *Bernadou* took station on her starboard quarter. Just outside the breakwater the *Beatty* turned south and the *Cole*, thinking she was the *Bernadou* turning into the harbour, followed and missed the harbour entrance.

¹ See Plan 13.

² Landing Craft Personnel (Ramped).

³ Landing Craft Support.

⁴ Landing Craft, Vehicle.

⁵ Fire control destroyer.

Meanwhile the *Bernadou* had been challenged at 0410 and had repeated the challenge. She rounded the bell buoy off the north end of the breakwater at 0438 and came under heavy fire from the 75 mm. battery 1,500 yds. inshore on the heights eastward of the harbour and from machine guns and rifles on the jetties. She replied immediately, and the *Cole* and *Mervine* joined in. Within six minutes, opposition from the 75's and machine guns ceased.

42A. About this time, two heavy batteries, the Battery Railleuse 4—130 mm. naval guns on Pointe de la Tour and a mobile battery of 3—155 mm. south of Safi, opened fire on the *Bernadou* and on the *Cole*, which in the meantime had gained the inner harbour area. That the defences were fully alert was shown by the prompt opening of fire and confirmed later through records captured from the radio station showing that the second alarm signal "Danger" had been received from Casablanca at 0230 and the final "Alert" at 0327.

At 0439 a signal "Play Ball," presumably meaning "Open the attack" was broadcast to all American units and one minute later the *New York*, *Philadelphia* and *Mervine* opened a smothering fire on the Battery Railleuse at Point de la Tour. This drew the battery's fire on the *New York*, diverting it from Safi harbour, and undoubtedly saving the *Bernadou*, which had grounded on the Petite Jetée west of "Green" Beach at 0430, and the *Cole* from severe damage. By 0445, only three-quarters of an hour after the original H.-hour, the *Bernadou* had landed all her troops. They quickly secured the harbour, cutting off the French in their barracks, but in the town they were much hampered by snipers. About 0500 a 14-in. shell from the *New York* wrecked the Railleuse battery control tower. This proved a lucky shot, for the battery's fire became intermittent and erratic, and the *New York*, *Philadelphia*, *Mervine* and *Beatty* though straddled were not hit. All this took place in complete darkness. After several more salvos from the *New York* the battery ceased firing and did not resume till after sunrise. At 0640 it reopened fire and several shells narrowly missed the *New York* but by this time spotting aircraft were over the battery and the *New York* immediately returned the fire. The *Philadelphia* also opened fire and once again the battery came under a heavy and accurate attack. It was finally silenced at 0715 and was eventually captured at 1206.

Meanwhile the first two waves of the *Harris'* landing craft had arrived on "Red" and "Blue" Beaches north of the breakwater at 0505 followed shortly by the tank lighters on "Green" Beach inside Safi harbour. "Red" proved to be a tiny beach enclosed by very high cliffs and it was fortunate that no further waves of landing craft were scheduled to land there. The sand on Beaches "Red" and "Blue" proved too soft for landing vehicles and a wire mesh roadway was eventually made down to "Blue" Beach.

42B. Further south the landings on "Yellow" Beach near Yahudi, eight miles south of Safi, were seriously delayed. The departure for the beach was originally scheduled for 0330 but by 0500 only six of the *Dorothea L. Dix's* landing craft had reported at the rendezvous. At 0530, after a conference with General Patton, an alternative plan was authorised by verbal order from Admiral Davidson. The *Knight* and the *Dix* were directed to make a landing by daylight on "Yellow" Beach. About 0530, however, the *Dix* was hoisting out a lorry which struck her side and burst into flames lighting up the whole area and setting on fire the landing craft alongside. The burning craft drifted astern and her cargo of ammunition exploded. The *Knight*, believing the explosion to have been caused by a torpedo, turned away from "Yellow" Beach and increased speed. The landing craft following her became confused but met later near the *Harris*. They were ordered to return to the *Dix* about 0700. At 0730 the *Dix* was directed to expedite landing, but it was 0757 before the landing craft were finally reassembled at the rendezvous and a

south-easterly course set for "Yellow" Beach. At 0925 the first wave, the 2nd Battalion of the 47th Infantry, U.S. Army, landed unopposed on "Yellow" beach, while the *Philadelphia* and *Beatty* stood by to furnish fire support if required. Although the sand on this beach was very soft, all the *Dix's* Combat Team landed there, but the unloading of stores and equipment had to be abandoned after seven landing craft had been lost in it. Meanwhile the *Harris* and *Dorothea L. Dix* had continued unloading as their boats returned.

Safi Captured, 8th November¹

43. In view of the fire power concentrated on Safi harbour by the defenders the landing of the troops from the *Bernadou* and *Cole* without casualties was a remarkable feat. In the morning, gunfire from the *Cole* had helped to reduce the radio station ashore and at 1000 it surrendered. Meanwhile the forces landed at "Yellow" Beach from the *Dorothea L. Dix* at 0925, were approaching the town from the South. At 0930 the *Philadelphia* scored a notable success when she immobilised the 155 mm. battery south of Safi. It was then bombed and was finally captured at 1130. As the 130 mm. Raillouse Battery on Pointe de la Tour had also been silenced the way was now open for the transports to move inshore and it was probably for this reason that Admiral Davidson considered that the early neutralisation of these two batteries had such an important bearing on the success of the whole operation. From a gunnery standpoint the operations off Safi were successful beyond all his expectations. This, in his opinion, was probably due to surprise, the accuracy of the naval gunfire even during darkness, the volume and rapidity of fire, and the French lack of will to resist.

At 1332² the *Bernadou* successfully cleared the Petite Jetée and at 1346 moored alongside the *Cole*. She had sustained some damage but no casualties. At 1400, the *Harris*, *Dorothea L. Dix*, *Lyon* and *Calvert* were ordered to anchor close to the harbour entrance and continue unloading with their own landing craft on Beaches "Blue," north of the breakwater, and "Green," inside the harbour, and on the harbour piers and wharfs. Lying so close inshore they were more vulnerable to air attack, but, on the other hand, the submarine menace was greatly reduced. By 1430, success had crowned the operation and the town of Safi was in American hands. Meanwhile a Naval Reconnaissance Party which had been sent into Safi harbour at 1000 had reported at 1300 that the *Lakehurst* and *Titania* could be docked there without difficulty and at 1500 the *Lakehurst* entered the harbour. The *Titania* followed at 1530, and about the same time the remainder of the transports reached the anchorage close to the port. This speeded up the discharge of cargo which continued during daylight on the 9th, 10th and 11th without serious interruption.

That the Southern Attack Group was able to capture Safi with only two minor naval casualties and the loss of only nine landing craft with correspondingly light army casualties, estimated at 10 killed and 75 wounded, may be attributed briefly to good fortune, good weather, surprise, retention of the initiative, and accurate and overpowering gunfire. Certainly the defenders were fully alert with their defences manned, but in the darkness were unable to gauge the strength of the attack. The volume and accuracy of the initial U.S. gunfire and speed of assault also added to their confusion. The lucky hit which wrecked the control tower of the French Naval Battery Raillouse, the immobilisation of the 155 mm. battery south of Safi, and the rapid envelopment of the 75 mm. guns, which when captured were added to Major-General Harmon's battery,³ opened the way for the transports. The three old Renault

¹ Appendix "E9."

² High Water.

³ Task Force X-ray, Section 35.

tanks were ineffective against modern U.S. light and medium armour. Machine gun nests and sniping and one aerial bomb accounted for the toll of U.S. Army wounded in the city.

Air Operations off Safi, 8th-9th November

43A. Air operations, however, met with a variety of setbacks. The calm weather which favoured the amphibious operations greatly hampered the flying operations of the U.S. aircraft escort vessel *Santee* working 40 miles west of Cape Kantin.¹ Her difficulties were increased by the failure of her homing device which resulted in the loss of no less than six F4F aircraft out of the first flight from the ship. As a result, reconnaissance reports failed to reach the Group Commander and Commanding General till midnight on the 8th.

During the night of 8th—9th November, the Covering Units, *New York*, *Philadelphia*, *Quick*, *Howard* and *Hamilton*, joined by the *Cowie* at 0500, steered a westerly course to intercept any hostile vessel escaping from the North, but the night passed without incident, and they returned to Safi at daylight.

The apparently passive attitude of the French air force on D-Day, when only three French aircraft had approached Safi, gave hope that the unloading of heavy tanks from the *Lakehurst* might be carried out unmolested, but at daylight, 9th November, a message from Army Headquarters warned ships off Safi of an impending raid by 40 French aircraft. All available U.S. aircraft were put into the air, but a dense fog developed and though a large formation of aircraft was heard overhead, no raid in force was made. One attack was made by a single French aircraft, however, which was eventually shot down in flames on "Blue" Beach, after dropping a bomb on the Merchandise Pier near the *Lakehurst*, causing some damage and casualties.

The fog cleared about 0800 and at 1200 11 bombers and two fighters from the *Santee* were heading eastwards. Admiral Davidson on learning that they were about to bomb Marrakech airfield cancelled the operation as at the time it was considered that the passive attitude of the Marrakech based aircraft precluded the attack. About this time a request came from Admiral Hewitt for bombing assistance in the Casablanca area, and the *Santee* was ordered to comply unless an attack on Marrakech became imperative. At 1500, however, in view of the attack on the *Lakehurst* and in order to avoid leaving hostile aircraft in the rear of U.S. troops advancing north for the attack on Casablanca, a flight of bombers and fighters took off from the *Santee* and destroyed 20 aircraft² grounded at Marrakech. The expected French counter attack from Marrakech was heralded by the appearance near the airfield at Bou Ghedra of a relief column of 14 lorries with troops. It was effectually stopped by the *Santee's* aircraft on the way to Marrakech and by an Army armoured team which landed at Safi³, 12 of the lorries being destroyed and two damaged.

About this time⁴ the battleship *New York* screened by the *Howard* and *Hamilton* left the Safi area to reinforce the Covering Group⁵ off Fédala for the final assault on Casablanca.⁶ By 1655, Safi airfield was in American hands, but was found unsuitable for P-40 aircraft. The disembarkation of troops and equipment continued though slowed down through broken gear and by bad conditions on the beaches at low water. Meanwhile the transport *Lyon* had joined the *Lakehurst* and the beachhead at "Yellow" Beach had extended to 5,000 yards.

¹ See plan 12.

² Five others were damaged at the same time.

³ W.I.R. No. 143, 4th December, 1942, p. 19.

⁴ At 1450, 9th November.

⁵ See Section 35 and Appendix "L." The Covering Group was short of ammunition.

⁶ See Section 48c.

Safi Operations completed, 13th November

44. Operations were now approaching a successful end. The *Philadelphia* screened by the *Quick* spent the night (9th to 10th November), patrolling 10 to 40 miles off Safi, and at 2300 the tug *Cherokee* left the area to report to Admiral Hewitt at Fédala.

Next day, 10th November, General Harmon reported his intention of marching on Mazagan and at 1500 Admiral Davidson issued a plan for supporting him with naval gunfire and for transporting supplies to Mazagan by sea. The report indicates, though it does not explicitly state, that captured French vessels would be used for this purpose. That afternoon General Harmon's force, covered by the Southern Attack Group, moved northwards capturing Mazagan and the bridge at Azimur¹ next morning 11th November. The army did not call for naval or air support, but a French submarine, the *Meduse*, which went ashore that day under the cliff at Cape Blanco North, near Mazagan was destroyed by sea and air attack.

Meanwhile unloading of transports had proceeded steadily at Safi. The *Titania* finished at the Phosphate wharf at 1930 on 11th November, the *Calvert* taking her place at 0630 next day. The *Calvert* finished at 1730 and moved out of the harbour. Two hours later the *Lyon* docked and completed unloading at 1600 next day, 13th November. The *Harris* had completed unloading at the anchorage at 1400 on 11th November, and the *Dorothea L. Dix* at 1000 on the 13th. The *Titania* had left Safi after daylight on the 12th under escort. By the 13th the Safi operations were completed and at 1730 that day a convoy composed of the *Harris*, *Lakehurst*, *Calvert*, *Lyon* and *Merrimack* left there for the United States, escorted by the *Philadelphia*, *Mervine*, *Quick*, *Beatty*, *Cowie*, *Doran*, *Knight* and *Bernadou*. Meanwhile, far away to the north, hostilities at Casablanca had ended in an armistice.

¹ See Plan 12.

CHAPTER X

CASABLANCA OPERATIONS AND ARMISTICE

Casablanca Area¹

45. Casablanca is a flourishing town with a population of more than a quarter of a million of which about 72,000 are Europeans. It is the seat of administration of the district of North Shawiya and the residence of the officers commanding the French naval and military forces in Morocco. Its harbour, which lies in the centre of Casablanca Bay² between Cape dar el Deida (Pointe d'El Hank) and Table d'Aoukacha³ is formed by two breakwaters, Jetée Delure and Jetée Transversale, enclosing a considerable area, with an entrance $1\frac{1}{4}$ cables wide. It can accommodate vessels up to 23 ft. draught alongside and there is ample mooring space in depths up to 46 ft.

Conspicuous objects in the vicinity are Table d'Aoukacha, Blackrock (Roche Noire), lying close inshore south-westward of Table d'Aoukacha, various chimneys, wireless masts and a clock tower in the town. The anchorage outside the harbour is partially protected by El Hank promontory from winds south and west, but the bay is exposed to a westerly swell which may set in with very little warning especially in the bad weather season, October to April. With a heavy westerly or north-westerly swell the anchorage becomes dangerous, the holding ground of sand and rock being mainly poor.

Cape Fédala, which lies 15 miles north-eastward along the coast from Casablanca, is formed by a line of rocks 16 to 50 ft. extending $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in a north-east and south-west direction from a position in $33^{\circ} 43' N. 7^{\circ} 24' W.$ Fédala Bay is formed by a bend of the coast between Cape Fédala and the mouth of the Wadi Neffikh about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the eastward. At the south-west end of this bay is Fédala harbour which is enclosed by two breakwaters with an entrance about one cable wide.⁴ Lying at Casablanca in November, 1942, were the uncompleted French battleship *Jean Bart* which had escaped there when France fell in June, 1940, the 6-in. gun cruiser *Primauguet*, three large and seven small destroyers, five escort vessels, and nine or ten submarines.

Centre Attack Group, Casablanca Area

46. The landings in the Casablanca-Fédala Area were entrusted to the Centre Attack Group. Its task was to establish Task Group Yoke⁵ ashore near Fédala by simultaneous landings on Assault Beaches "Red Two," "Red Three," "Blue," "Blue Two," "Blue Three," and "Yellow Two."⁶ It was to capture the airfield three miles S.S.E. of Fédala with minimum delay, establish a beachhead 10,000 yards beyond port and city of Fédala preparatory to capture of Casablanca, and silence batteries on Cape Fédala if they opened fire. It was also to support military operations with naval gunfire, silence batteries and destroy searchlights threatening transports, landing beaches and land craft.

¹ See Plan 14.

² $33^{\circ} 37' N., 7^{\circ} 39' W.$

³ Africa Pilot I; spelling on Chart is Akoucha.

⁴ In 1939 the harbour and its entrance were dredged to a depth of $19\frac{1}{2}$ feet (6 metres).

⁵ 18,783 officers and men. See Section 35 and Appendix "A13."

⁶ See Plan 14 and Figs. 4 and 5.

The Attack on Fédala, 8th November

47. At 1500 on 7th November, the Centre and Northern Attack Groups separated. In due course, contact was made off Fédala with the beacon submarine *Gunnel* by the destroyer *Wilkes* of the Centre Group. By a stroke of good fortune the Cape Fédala and El Hank navigation lights were found burning, in order to assist the passage of a coastal convoy from Dakar. Many of the landing craft for the initial assault waves were carried by the same transports as the men they were to land, but an appreciable number had to be borrowed from vessels in the second, third and fourth transport lines.¹ The first line of transports, the *Leonard Wood*, *Thomas Jefferson*, *Charles Carroll*, and *Joseph T. Dickman*, reached the area about midnight on the 7th and at once got to work lowering and loading landing craft. First to be hoisted out were the four scout boats whose mission it was to mark the four principal beaches², but the transports in the second, third and fourth lines had straggled badly, entirely upsetting the timing of the landing craft deployment plan, and, as a result the attack opened one hour and five minutes late. Shortly after 0400, zero hour, the destroyers, *Wilkes*, *Swanson*, *Ludlow* and *Murphy* left their rendezvous areas south of their respective transports, the *Wood*, *Jefferson*, *Carroll* and *Dickman*, and conducted the first waves of 6 to 8 landing craft each to the line of departure.³ The transports however, had been able to disembark less than half the waves scheduled, the *Wilkes* four out of 10; the *Swanson* five out of eight; the *Ludlow* five and a half out of 14, and the *Murphy* four out of 10. The destroyers reached the line of departure between 0445 and 0457 and the first wave landed at 0505.

The capture of Casablanca was the crux of the whole expedition. The attacks on Port Lyautey and Safi might have failed without greatly affecting the issue, but if the Fédala landings had failed the success of the whole operation would have been in jeopardy. It was touch and go, for though the night was fine with a gentle breeze from the south-west and calm sea a heavy surf was running and nearly 50 per cent. of the assault craft making the initial landings at Fédala were wrecked during the opening stages of the attack. Both the *Leonard Wood's* control destroyer, the *Wilkes*, and scout boat were out of position and consequently her first four landing waves ran on to the rocks on "Red Two" Beach between 0520 and 0540 wrecking 21 out of 32 landing craft. Two of the *Jefferson's* waves also met with misfortune. Her scout boat developing engine trouble missed the rendezvous, with a result that the first landing wave ran on the rocks nearly three miles east of its objective, "Red Three" Beach, losing four landing craft out of six. The second wave following a few minutes later lost three out of six but the third managed to get ashore successfully further along the coast.⁴ The *Carroll's* waves landing on "Blue" Beach met with the greatest misfortune of all. Out of 25 landing craft, no less than 18 were wrecked, but the *Dickman's* waves landing on "Blue Two" Beach were the most successful, losing only two out of a total of 25 landing craft. The troops carried in the wrecked craft were so overburdened with excessive equipment that many being unable to regain their feet when knocked down by the surf were drowned. Fortunately, however, the majority managed to scramble ashore, bringing the total number landed in the first hour to 3,500, but had they met with determined resistance the result might well have been disastrous.

47A. By daybreak numerous French fishing and coastal craft had been rounded up, those which resisted being captured. There was a slight coastal

¹ See Fig. 4.

² Red 2, Red 3, Blue, and Blue 2.

³ See Fig. 4.

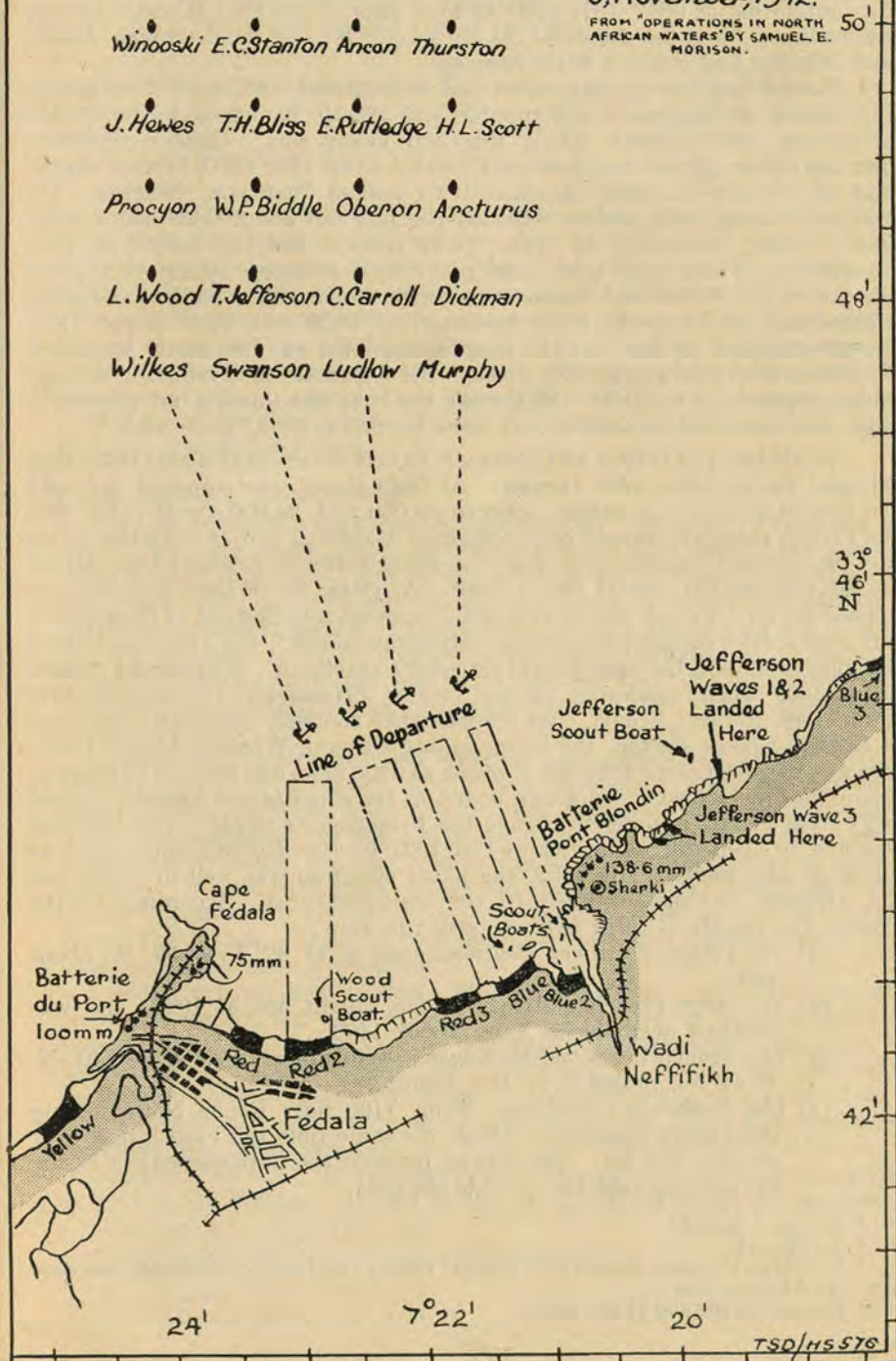
⁴ See Fig. 4.

Fig 4.

*Initial Landings
Fédala Area
8, November, 1942.*

FROM "OPERATIONS IN NORTH
AFRICAN WATERS" BY SAMUEL E.
MORISON.

- Winooski E.C. Stanton Ancon Thurston
- J. Hewes T.H. Bliss E. Rutledge H.L. Scott
- Procyon W.P. Biddle Oberon Arcturus
- L. Wood T. Jefferson C. Carroll Dickman
- Wilkes Swanson Ludlow Murphy



TSD/H5576

S. 47A—47B NAVAL ACTIONS, CASABLANCA AREA

haze but visibility was good to seaward and shortly after 0600, when it was light enough to distinguish prominent objects, the shore batteries opened fire. The Gunfire Support Vessels—the cruisers *Augusta* and *Brooklyn*, and destroyers *Wilkes*, *Swanson* and *Ludlow*—at once replied and a general offensive was authorised at 0617. By 0730 all four guns of the Pont Blondin battery were silenced,¹ and the ships had ceased firing. Hits on the destroyers *Ludlow* and *Murphy* had inflicted little damage.

Though the first landing waves had encountered little opposition ashore, the landing of equipment and supplies was greatly hampered by heavy loss of landing craft through falling tide and heavy surf. Their comparative immunity from attack, too, was short lived, for just after 0800, French aircraft and the Fédala batteries attacked both assault craft and beaches. The *Wilkes*, *Swanson* and *Ludlow* returned the fire and about 0825 came under heavy attack apparently by three Vichy cruisers and two destroyers from Casablanca. Pink, blue, green and plain shell splashes, falling very close, compelled the *Wilkes* and *Swanson* to retire northwards; while the *Ludlow* meanwhile bore off to the north-westward till 0829 with most of the Vichy fire concentrated on her. As the range opened she was frequently straddled. At 0834 a shell tore a large hole through her fore-castle deck inflicting damage which crippled her till 1120. Meanwhile the haze had thinned but the hostile ships were obscured by smoke, only their gunflashes being discernible.²

47B. When the *Wilkes* and *Swanson* retired northwards about 0825 they rejoined the *Brooklyn* and *Augusta*. At 0843 the *Augusta* opened fire with the first of 22 salvos at ranges between 13,000 and 24,000 yards. By 0855 the French ships had turned back towards Casablanca and at 0904 the action was broken off. Shortly after this, the shore batteries resumed their attack on the beaches but ceased fire at 0919. At 0945, the *Wilkes* and *Swanson* opened fire on a French cruiser and two destroyers standing out of Casablanca, but after a brief engagement, lasting only eight minutes, the French withdrew bringing to an end the first naval battle for Casablanca. The second started about 1000 when, reinforced by the cruiser *Primauguet*, the French force again stood towards Fédala. Its reappearance seriously dislocated the plans of General George Patton, the Commanding General, Western Attack Force, who was anxious to land from the *Augusta* as little news had come in of progress ashore, but was forced to remain on board, as the *Augusta* and *Brooklyn* moved away from Fédala in order to engage the *Primauguet's* force.³ The *Brooklyn* was first to open fire, being followed at 1027 by the *Augusta* which fired 42 salvos at long range.⁴ By 1102, the naval situation was well in hand and the American cruisers returned to the transport area. According to the French, the results of these two engagements were:—

- (1) The French destroyer *Fougueux* sank in 33° 42' N. 7° 37' W. about 1000.
- (2) The large French destroyer *Milan* caught fire at 1025, and was beached near Roche Noire about 1400.
- (3) The French destroyer *Boulonnais* was sunk at 1045 in 33° 40' N. 7° 34' W. probably by the *Augusta*.
- (4) The *Primauguet* anchored about 1100 near Roche Noire having been badly damaged. About the same time the French destroyer *Brestois* was hit. She retired towards the harbour with a heavy list and capsized just outside the gate.

¹ See Fig. 4, page 65.

² See Plan 14.

³ M. 053426/43, paras. 21 and 32. General Patton eventually disembarked two days later, on 10th November.

⁴ Between 15,000 and 21,000 yards.

- (5) The French destroyer *Frondeur* returned to Casablanca down by the stern and sank in the inner harbour during the night.
- (6) The large French destroyer *Albatros* was hit twice at 1130. Later she was bombed, and was finally beached near Roche Noire.

French morale was clearly shaken, for about noon, the French army asked for armistice negotiations, and Rear-Admiral Hall, U.S.N., Chief of Staff to the Expedition, went ashore with Major Rogers of the U.S. Marine Corps, to discuss peace terms at Fédala. Eventually the Admiral proceeded to Casablanca to see the French Admiral, Michelier, arriving there about the same time as the first 16-in. shell from the *Massachusetts*. His request for an interview met with a blank refusal and in these difficult circumstances negotiations were broken off.¹ At 1219 orders were given² for the destruction of the remaining French naval units by air attack, but were modified at 1245 to exclude ships in Casablanca harbour. At 1237 three war vessels were reported by the *Wilkes* leaving Casablanca. According to the French, they were the 600 ton sloops *Grandiere*, *Gracieuse* and *Commandant Delage* sent out to pick up survivors. The *Brooklyn* was directed at 1249 to intercept them in company with the *Augusta*. The *Augusta*, after some delay while her aircraft were being fuelled, engaged them from 1326 till 1400. Twelve minutes later they were reported on their way back to harbour assisted by tugs. A new blow now befell the French.

Fédala Captured, 8th November³

48. At 1430 that afternoon, 8th November, Fédala fell. This was only one of the many blows which the French suffered that day. They came off, badly in many directions. Several of their ships were bombed, three submarines the *Amphitrite*, *La Psyche* and *Oreade*, being sunk. Two light bombs hit the *Jean Bart* at Casablanca in addition to the hits on the *Primauguet* and *Albatros*.⁴ Several merchant ships were sunk in harbour. Batteries on El Hank and Table d'Aoukacha were also bombed. Nor did they fare any better in the air, 55 of their aircraft⁵ being destroyed at a cost of 9 Allied aircraft crashed and 13 missing.

Meanwhile, though seriously hampered by shortage of landing craft, the disembarkation of American troops and equipment continued throughout the day. By nightfall 7,750 officers and men had been landed and the Americans controlled the town of Fédala, the harbour, the bridges over the rivers at both ends of the area, and the high ridges commanding the town and beaches. Twice during the morning had the French Fleet attempted to break up the operation but on both occasions were frustrated by the United States Naval Task Force. Thus superior sea power proved a deciding factor in this great combined landing operation.

48A. Daybreak next morning, 9th November, brought the first air attack on the transports, but none were hit, and a lone aircraft which dropped four bombs near the *Brooklyn* at 0737 was equally unsuccessful. All night long unloading from the transports had continued at considerable sacrifice for by 0900 on the 9th, nearly two-thirds of the landing craft were out of action, and a boat repair organisation was started on shore. The heavy swell greatly increased the difficulties and the possibility of using Fédala harbour was considered. At 1130, the transports moved closer in and at 1330 the *Arcturus* docked in the harbour. It was estimated by this time that no less than 140

¹ M. 053426/43, paras. 24 and 26.

² By Admiral Hewitt, Commander, Task Force 34.

³ Appendix "E9."

⁴ Section 47.

⁵ 26 V.G. and 29 V.B.

landing craft were stranded, but disembarkation on the beaches went on, and at 1745 a report reached Admiral Hewitt that unloading was also under way inside Fédala breakwater.

48B. Next morning, 10th November, the *Brooklyn*, being short of ammunition,¹ exchanged stations with the *Cleveland*, taking her place in the Air Group. Unfortunately the Army Headquarters ashore had omitted to take with them the joint code for high grade messages, rendering impossible the re-transmission by the *Augusta* of secret messages from Allied Force Headquarters to Western Task Force Headquarters ashore, and when General Patton landed from the *Augusta* that forenoon, contact between the Army and Navy Headquarters virtually ceased.

At 1110 the *Boyle* reported two hostile vessels attacking the Americans on the beach near Casablanca. According to the French they were the sloops *Gracieuse* and *Commandant Delage*. Six minutes later the *Murphy* reported a large French destroyer engaging troops ashore. Immediate counter-action was necessary, and at 1120 the *Augusta* stood towards Casablanca accompanied by the destroyers *Edison*, *Boyle*, *Tillman* and *Rowan*. From 1139 till 1146 she engaged the French vessels with 10 salvos at range between 16,000 and 18,000 yards. About 1146, however, the *Jean Bart* counter-attacked with 10 2-gun salvos at long range.² The *Augusta* at once turned away and the *Jean Bart's* final salvos just missed her. The *Jean Bart* paid dearly for her fun. At 1500 she was heavily attacked from the air when at least two of the nine 1,000 lb. bombs dropped on her scored direct hits opening up enormous craters in her deck without, however, impairing her fighting efficiency.

Air support for the Army continued throughout the day; 12 French aircraft being destroyed at a cost of two allied aircraft. During the day, too, the batteries at El Hank and on the the *Jetée Delure* at Casablanca were machine gunned and bombed. Unloading also continued all day, primary use being made of Fédala harbour where the *Procyon* took the place of the *Arcturus* at high water.

48C. Meanwhile the invading army had attained its immediate objectives and held an arc of 180° around the city of Casablanca awaiting only the arrival of the General Sherman tanks from Safi. That day, 10th November, Admiral Darlan broadcast an order calling on all French forces in North Africa to cease resistance but at 0130 next morning, 11th November, instructions were issued for the combined sea, land, and air attack on Casablanca to open at 0715. At 0516, however, orders arrived from General Patton for the immediate cessation of surface and air bombardment if the French capitulated according to expectations. At 0600 the *Augusta* got underway with the *New York*, *Cleveland* and destroyers to take part in the final assault on Casablanca, but at 0655, the cease fire order arrived from General Patton and they returned to the Fédala area.

At 1300 Admiral Hewitt left the *Augusta* to take part in armistice negotiations at Fédala. At the conference, which was attended by Generals Patton and Keyes and Admirals Hewitt and Hall for the Americans and General Noguès and Admiral Michelier for the French, it was agreed that naval and military hostilities should be suspended. Commander Bachman, of Admiral Hewitt's staff, had taken with him a draft armistice agreement; but General Noguès declared himself unready to sign on the ground that General Eisenhower and Admiral Darlan were making an agreement which embraced Algeria and Tunisia as well as Morocco. Copies of the Eisenhower-Darlan Agreement,

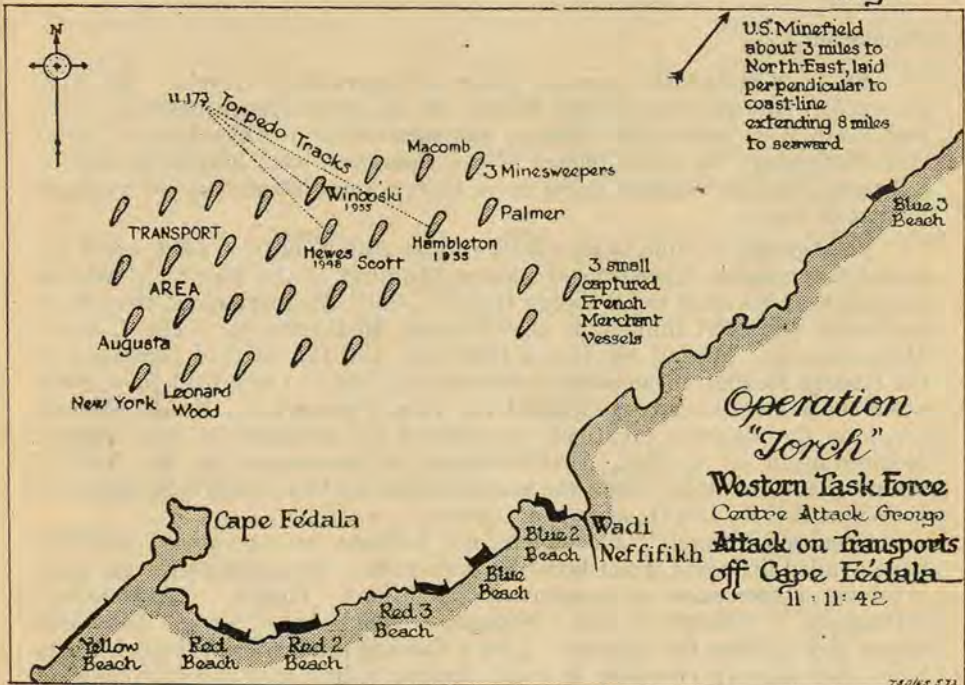
¹ See Appendix "L."

² 18,000 to 26,000 metres.

which provided for little more than an end to hostilities and did nothing to assert the superiority of the Allies, reached Casablanca in due course.¹

48D. Meanwhile at 1918, Admiral Hewitt had informed Task Force 34 that hostilities had ceased, but had added a warning that special vigilance should be maintained against Axis submarines. Its need was all too soon apparent, for only half an hour later, at 1948, a torpedo fired by the German submarine U 173 struck the transport *Joseph Hewes* in the Transport Area off Fédalá and at 1955 another damaged the fuel ship *Winooski* nearby. The destroyer *Hambleton*, anchored near the *Winooski*, was hit half a minute later by a torpedo apparently intended for the fuel ship. The *Joseph Hewes* sank at 2046, but fortunately the *Hambleton* and *Winooski* were in no danger of sinking.²

Fig: 5



Next day, 12th November, the Axis met with further success when the transports *Edward Rutledge*, *Tasker H. Bliss*, and *Hugh L. Scott* were torpedoed by the German submarine U 130³ in the Fédalá area at 1758 in that order. The *Rutledge* sank slowly without catching fire but the *Bliss* burned furiously before sinking. The *Scott* listed heavily to port and sank. The remaining transports got underway leaving three minesweepers with the torpedoed ships. Three days later, on the 15th, another transport, the *Electra*, was damaged by a torpedo fired by U 173 seventeen miles off Fédalá.⁴

¹ See Appendix "C."

² U 173 did not return to base from this cruise. She reported, by signal, on the 12th, attacking three ships off Fédalá, and there appears to be no doubt that she was referring to this attack. Admiral Doenitz credited her with sinking the *Joseph Hewes*, and considered there was no question of its being due to any other submarine. See Fig. 5.

³ Attack recorded in U 130's deck log.

⁴ Attack reported by U 173.

By 17th November, the work of the Centre Attack Group was completed and at 0700 it sailed for the United States. Two days later Rear-Admiral Hall was directed to establish a Naval Operating Base at Casablanca, where the French had placed the entire port organisation at the disposal of the American forces after moving several French vessels to make room for them. Unfortunately, however, the harbour capacity had been greatly reduced by the sinking of some ten ships, including three alongside the Quai Commerciale.

Next day, 20th November, Admiral Hewitt sailed for home in the cruiser *Augusta*. He had the great satisfaction of knowing that his Task Force had achieved all its objectives, but it may be pointed out that although the Allies had taken Oran by actual conquest, though against very indifferent opposition, at Casablanca, as at Algiers, opposition had ceased, not as a result of conquest, but by order of Admiral Darlan.¹

Conclusion.

49. Thus ended the opening phase of Operation "Torch." By 11th November, only three days after D-Day, all the main French bases in North and North-West Africa from Bône to Safi were safely in Allied hands. After 20th November, the naval phases of the Operation were limited to routine follow-up convoys,² subject to no more than normal hazards of sea passages in time of war.

The Operation came to its official end on 20th February, 1943, when the Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force, Admiral of the Fleet³ Sir Andrew Cunningham, reverted to his former title of C.-in-C. Mediterranean, though his command remained limited to the Western Mediterranean. The C.-in-C., Mediterranean, Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, K.C.B., retained command of the Eastern Mediterranean with the new title of C.-in-C. Levant till June, 1943, when he was succeeded by Admiral Sir John Cunningham, K.C.B., M.V.O. Sir John Cunningham eventually transferred his command to the Western Mediterranean as C.-in-C., Mediterranean, in succession to Sir Andrew Cunningham, in October, 1943, and was succeeded by Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon U. Willis, K.C.B., D.S.O., as C.-in-C. Levant.

Operation "Torch," a complete and brilliant success, would however, have availed little had it not been the prelude to a world-wide strategic plan, involving a succession of momentous operations "Husky," "Avalanche," "Dragoon," "Shingle," and "Neptune" which have become household names now passing into history. Like a flaming torch passing from hand to hand, each assault, complete in itself, became a link in a dazzling chain of victories destined to bring final and overwhelming triumph to the arms of the United Nations, and to confirm in splendid manner the words of Shakespeare:—

"Heaven doth with us as we with torches, do,
Not light them for themselves, for if our virtues,
Did not go forth of us, t'were all alike,
As if we had them not."⁴

¹ See Appendix "C."

² Details in Appendix "D-D5."

³ Promoted Admiral of the Fleet, 21st January, 1943.

⁴ "Measure for Measure," Act I, Scene 1.