

Enclosure 2

**SECRET**

H.H.J. "MACKAY",  
c/o C.P.O. LONDON.

14th February, 1942.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit the following report on the torpedo attacks delivered on the German force on Thursday 12th February. Up to the time of going in to attack "Mackay" and "Whitshed" were in company with "Campbell". The only incidents to remark on were

- (i) A good bombing attack by a Hampden at 1446. The Hampden was fired at on appearing out of the clouds and this probably misled the pilot.
- (ii) Another bombing attack by a Hampden at 1454, bombs falling wide.
- (iii) Deliberate Medium level attack by He.111 on "Mackay" at 1523, bombs falling over.

THE ATTACK.

2. At 1540 gunflashes were sighted to starboard, which it was assumed were from enemy ships firing at aircraft. Warning had been received from "Campbell" previously of an R.D.F. plot in that direction.

At 1542 one large enemy destroyer appeared bearing 150 degrees, range about 6000-8000 yards and an alarm was made. Almost immediately afterwards a large enemy unit was sighted a mile on the far side of the destroyer. This was taken to be one of the Battle Cruisers, this ship was steering directly towards "Mackay". As this target appeared to be the one which the rear sub-division could close most quickly and with least opposition I decided to attack it.

"Mackay" turned to starboard to close at the same time as "Campbell", and steadied first on course approximately 125° and later on 170° to close as quickly as possible. The target started to alter to his original North Easterly course after "Mackay" and "Whitshed" had turned. It was hoped to turn and fire from the bow position, passing on opposite course at close range. The enemy turned to starboard more quickly than was expected and the tubes took longer to train than usual owing to the heavy rolling. Torpedoes were fired at 1545 at a range of 4000 yards or less from the beam of the enemy, deflection 18 knots left. Speed of the enemy had been estimated as 24 knots. Enemy appeared to have steadied on course 070 degrees at the time of firing, but according to "Whitshed" who fired later altered course to starboard after "Mackay" had fired and eventually swung round to an opposite course. It is probable that "Mackay's" torpedoes missed well ahead except possibly for the last two (those with the least deflection), which the T.C.O. reported as having been fired late. The officers aft reported seeing a large orange flash on the target at the time "Mackay's" torpedoes should have arrived. The target was identified as PRINZ EUGEN after she had turned to starboard. One hit may possibly have been made.

"Mackay" followed later by "Whitshed" retired on course 340 degrees.

ENEMY ACTION.

3. No salvos were observed fired by PRINZ EUGEN during "Mackay's" run in possibly because

(1) we were.....

(1) we were not recognized during the early part of the approach when we presented our targets.

(11) PRINZ EUGEN was under attack when we were close and could be recognized.

The large destroyer on our beam made no attempt to counter attack when my sub division turned in and I do not know where she went to. There was a one funnelled ship close to PRINZ EUGEN resembling an M class minesweeper which fired at "Mackay" and was reported - I think incorrectly - to have fired torpedoes.

#### THE WITHDRAWAL.

While withdrawing, three destroyers were observed on my starboard beam distant about 2 miles. I thought they were "Campbell's" sub division attacking, but I am not sure whether it was so.

After getting clear the sub division retired to the eastward at 15 knots and reported position, course and speed. A few Dorniers attacked, two being driven off by gunfire and only one pressing home.

#### REMARKS.

##### General.

In the light of after events it would have been better if "Mackay" and "Whitshed" had proceeded with CAMPBELL, when they could probably have been able to attack the rear BATTLE CRUISER. I never saw the leading Battle Cruiser at all and the rear one only distinctly and my impression at the time of turning in was that the three major enemy units had become split up taking avoiding action during air attacks.

The attack carried out on PRINZ EUGEN had great possibilities and had she held on to her northerly course only a further minute or so "Mackay" and "Whitshed" would have been able to get into really very close range probably without having suffered punishment. As it was we had to turn and fire at a range too great to ensure scoring hits on a target with freedom of manoeuvre.

Conditions during the approach and attack were most unpleasant. There was continuous heavy spray over the bridge while the upper deck was washing down. Training the tubes was a long and laborious operation.

Owing to our initial position being only just before the beam of the enemy on their mean line of advance and to their high speed all our destroyers had to go full speed regardless of the weather.

##### AIRCRAFT.

The mixture of aircraft in the vicinity of the heavy German units was extraordinary. Low there were large numbers of Me.109 and occasional Beauforts; a bit higher up Hampdens, Dorniers and He.110's were mixed up; while higher up still a few Halifax's etc., were to be seen. In the course of the afternoon the following types were sighted: Me.109, Me.110, Junkers 88, He.111, Dornier 215, Spitfire, Whirlwind, Hampden, Beaufort, Wellington, Halifax, Lancaster. Many of the enemy aircraft obviously thought we were friendly while a few of our own aircraft made it evident that they considered us hostile. We on our part opened fire on several occasions on aircraft later recognised as friendly. The aircraft on both sides must have found the situation very confusing. We were fortunate in being attacked by Dorniers and Heinkels only and not by Junkers dive bombers.

8. Two Hunt class destroyers would have been of great help and should have done much execution.

They should have just been able to keep up at the speed at which the flotilla steamed to the eastward.

RECOGNITION MARKINGS.

9. It is considered that deck markings might have assisted our aircraft in recognising British destroyers. On the other hand they would have made us more conspicuous to enemy aircraft. As however, the object of this operation was the destruction of the enemy heavy units I consider that it would have been advantageous to have brought into force one of the special deck markings for the operation, in order to prevent British bombers wasting bombs on us.

NAVIGATIONAL.

10. The position given in the initial enemy reports of CAMPBELL and MACKAY differed by about 5 miles. It is considered from the fix obtained at the end of the run westward that the true position was half way between the two, "Mackay" putting ships too far to the westward and "Campbell" too far to the eastward.

ENGINE ROOM DEPARTMENT.

11. I must pay a tribute to the Engine Room Departments of "Mackay", "Worcester" and "Whitshed", especially the two latter. "Whitshed" is a slow ship and must have been doing a full power trial all the time, while the action of "Worcester's" Engineers in getting their ship home in bad weather after sustaining severe damage was highly creditable to them.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,



CAPTAIN (D),  
SIXTEENTH DESTROYER FLOTILLA.

Captain C.T.M. Pizey, D.S.O., R.N.,  
H.M.S. "Campbell".

ENCLOSURES:-

- (1) ~~The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. "Blinton's"~~  
~~Report of proceedings dated 13th February, 1942,~~  
~~and Track Chart.~~
- (2) The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. "Whitshed's"  
Report of Proceedings dated 14th February, 1942,  
and Track Chart.

ge  
up  
in

S  
or

it o  
lg

ne

ng t  
utmo