

15.2.1944.
Tuesday.

War Diary.

HOME COMMANDS.

Operations.

Engagement with E-Boats off Southwold. (Contd.)

1. At 2231 about 6 E-Boats were detected by K.163 approaching 3A buoy at high speed. MALLARD and SHEARWATER (patrols 7 and 8) engaged them at about 2300 near 3A buoy whereupon E-Boats turned about a mile short of Swept Channel and retired N.E. passing North of Z.51 and then altering to 110° at 30 knots.

2. Minelaying is suspected after action with corvettes and a ground mine swept today about 1½ miles N.E. of 3A buoy appears to confirm this:

3. C/F Units at Z.51 and Z.50 heard H.E. at 2245 but could not intercept. They appeared well placed during Corvette action but enemy's turn to N.E. took them clear of the M.L. unit at Z.51. Two fast units sent to Southern end of Brown Ridge did not make contact.

4. Shore Radar. K.163 and K.164 detected E-Boats at range of 16½ miles and followed them well throughout until plot faded at 2342 at range of 23 miles.

5. 16 Group A.S.V. Wellingtons were delayed going on patrol by weather until after E-Boats had passed through their patrol lines. Subsequent reports from them were too inaccurate to be of value.

6. SHEARWATER reports that the five E-Boats seen had back hulls, light upperworks and very little superstructure. They were engaged with 4 inch H.E. which appeared close.

Although no hits are claimed corvettes by their prompt action undoubtedly prevented minelaying in the Channel. (C. in C.Nore 152006A to Admty.)

Engagement off Ijmuiden. 1 F-Boat, 1 E-Boat, and 1 trawler claimed sunk. 4 E-Boats, 1 trawler & 1 flak-ship damaged.

Following from MANTIS begins:

Unit M. and O. acted on C. in C.Nore's 142318 and proceeded 130° 50 miles at full speed arriving in position at 0103 and 0118 respectively. M.T.B. 456 unable to maintain speed was ordered to stop. At 0149 unit O. received H.E. effect proceeding E. and decision was made for M. and O. to join forces and proceed E. Units R/V at 0300 in 252° I.J.M. 19. At 0315 H.E. effect was received to eastward and so decided to sweep to 270° I.J.M.5. At 0345 when in 265° I.J.M. 5 Radar contact was received bearing "Green" 40, 4000 yards. Unit

altered course 3. 70° E. 10 knots to close. At 0350 small ship was sighted and S.O. detached

M.T.B. 455 (only M.T.B. carrying torpedoes) to attack.

Following is narrative of M.T.B. 455. At 0353 M.T.B. 455 detached to starboard and almost at once observed that ship already sighted was a trawler and was followed by an F-Boat L.C.T. Type 3 and another trawler. Proceeded to attack F-Boat at 10 knots. When Radar range was 1000 yards both trawlers and a shore station challenged M.T.B. who increased speed to 14 knots and at 0400 fired both torpedoes at F-Boat Radar range 600 yards speed on sight 4 knots track angle 90° depth setting 5 feet. When torpedoes left tubes all ships opened fire. M.T.B. 455 disengaged at speed to port returning fire hitting trawler with Pom-pom. Both torpedoes hit (this confirmed by remainder of Unit and Lt. Leaf reported to 1st Lt. that he had seen mast collapse. Whilst disengaging M.T.B. 455 endeavoured to rejoin Unit but owing to confused action was unable to do so and took no further part in the action.

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 4 E-Boats, 1 trawler and 1 flak-ship damaged.
 (Contd.)

Following is narrative of the remainder of the Unit. M.T.B. 455 Unit continued on opposite course turning so as to engage the rearmost trawler from her starboard quarters. At 0400 fire was opened on rear trawler at range of 700 yards and closed to 100 yards. Fire was returned by rear trawler Unit circled to port and came in to attack again trawler being silenced and was left heavily damaged and on fire forward. Unit retired to N.W. at 0405. At 0407 Unit was in seven order at 80 knots when fire was opened on the S.C. from the N. by a small flak ship at range of about 200 yards fatally injuring S.C. of Unit and killing the Coxswain and 2 other ratings and putting W/T

out of action causing boat to lose temporary control and lose touch with remainder of unit.

Following is narrative of 1st Lt. M.T.B. 444. At 0410 having disengaged and cleared the bridge and taken control with Signaller steering, observed confused action to S.E. Boat not in a fit state to re-engage and M.T.B. 444 proceeded to Lowestoft.

Following is narrative of M.T.Bs. 439, 443, 441. Seeing S.C. disengaging Unit engaged small flak ship each boat in turn and altered course to W. and stopped and reformed at approx. 0415 under the command of S.C. of M.T.B. 439. Decision was made to retire to W. and endeavour to rejoin M.T.Bs. 444 and 455. At 0420 four Radar contacts received bearing S.E. 1000 yards course maintained and echoes proved to be 4 E-Boats shadowing on port quarters in line ahead. E-Boats were allowed to close the range to 600 yards when course was altered 90° to port Unit crossing E-Boats bows which turned to port fire being opened by all boats on leading and 2nd E-Boats. Leading E-Boat ceased fire and stopped heavily damaged and on fire aft.

2nd E-Boat was hit and damaged by Pom-pom shells. During this action other Radar contacts were picked up on both bows and S.C. considered he was running into a trap so disengaged and W. in order to engage units separately. On this turn M.T.B. 441 lost contact. 6 echoes were almost immediately obtained ahead 1000 yards and 6 E-Boats were sighted. Unit again crossed bows of enemy at ranges from 500 to 100 yards. Fire was opened on leading and 2 E-Boats both of which were badly damaged. Unit proceeded N.W. and 2 more E-Boats were encountered and engaged at range of approx. 500 yards. Hits were obtained but damage could not be assessed. Unit proceeded W. and encountered a further 3 E-Boats on parallel and opposite course. Fire opened at 500 yards with inconclusive results. Unit then returned to Lowestoft.

Following is narrative of M.T.B. 441. M.T.B. 441 avoiding possible depth charge attack by own Unit turned to starboard and ran ahead of E-Boats engaging leading E-Boat then turned to port to rejoin S.C. but sighted 3 vessels on port bow presumed to be remainder of Unit. These proved to be E-Boats and fire was opened and at same time fire was opened on M.T.B. 441 and 3 more E-Boats on starboard quarter. M.T.B. 441 proceeded on S.Wly. course with E-Boats on either quarter engaging. Attempt to rejoin was frustrated by E-Boats on either quarters. M.T.B. 441 gained bearing on pursuing E-Boats eventually outdistancing them. During this action hits were observed on port E-Boats. Damage was caused but cannot be assessed.

Enemy probably sunk: 1 E-Boat L.C.T. type 3 (2 torpedo hits) severely damaged, 1 trawler (silenced and on fire), 1 E-Boat (stopped and on fire). Damaged 4 E-Boats, 1 trawler, 1 small flak ship.

/Casualties...

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Engagement off Ijmuiden. 1 F-Boat, 1 E-Boat and 1 trawler claimed sunk. 4 E-Boats, 1 trawler and 1 flak-ship damaged. (Contd.)	Casualties M.T.B. 444 C.C. and 3 ratings killed, 2 ratings wounded. M.T.B. 443, 3 ratings wounded. M.T.B. 455, 1 rating wounded. 151539 Ends. (C. in C.Nore 152007A to Admty.)
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Mining.

Humber. Request you arrange for 4th M.S.F. to carry out a high percentage formation search of the area bounded by lines joining the following points:
 A. 53° 04' 12" N. 01° 33' 36" E.
 B. 53° 06' 00" N. 01° 34' 48" E. C. 53° 02' 54" N. 01° 47' 06" E.
 D. 53° 01' 00" N. 01° 45' 48" E.
 (C. in C.Nore 151105A and 151835A to F.O.I.C. Humber.)
 C. in C.Nore's 151105. Intend sailing KELLET, SUTTON, ELGIN, SELKIRK from Immingham at 0830 tomorrow.
 2. E.T.A. Sheringham emergency anchorage 1530.
 3. Request 25th Group be sailed independently to join me at Sheringham.
 (M/S 4 151835A to C. in C.Nore.)

East Coast. One Acoustic mine was swept at 1145 today by 15th M/S 15. in position 044° 3A Buoy 1.8 miles. Two mine detonations were felt by FYCHLEY using 3.A. gear at 1935 and 1940 respectively today when in position one and a half miles west of 3A Buoy.
 E-Boats returning course on which they probably jettisoned their mines was approx. 060° from 3A Buoy for 10 miles.
 (C. in C.Nore 152235A to F.O.I.C. Harwich.)

Return to Harwich Harbour at daylight tomorrow, sweep position (C. in C.Nore 152344A to M/S 15.)

Enemy Intelligence.

Improved Enemy Destroyers. Two improved Roeder Destroyers each mounting two five inch guns forward and two ditto aft passed sound southbound this afternoon. A two. (N.A. Stockholm 151612 to Admty.)
 Comment: These destroyers were probably two MAA3 class which were seen at Kristiansand South by P.R.U. on 30th Jan. Two Narvik class also seen at Kristiansand South on 30th Jan. are probably still there.

MARIA. Dutch coaster MARIA ¹⁵⁰/₃₄ tons was sunk off Kirkenes, cause unknown early Feb.
 (N.A. Stockholm 151617 to Admty.)

/Norwegian...