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AXIS OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

20 APRIL - 27 APRIL 1941

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LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 590 (21 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 20 April and during the Night of 20/21 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre

X Fliegerkorps

(a) Air Situation - Libya

Evaluation of photographic reconnaissance carried out on 19 April gave details of shipping at Marsa Matruh and Tobruk and of AA positions and other military objectives at Tobruk. Reconnaissance carried out on 20 April established that some of the merchant ships observed on the previous day had left Tobruk.

No enemy aircraft were encountered by fighters on free-lance patrols over a 60 km wide coastal sector west of Tobruk.

A Wellington was shot down in the Tobruk area.

(b) Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

Photographic reconnaissance over Alexandria, Cairo and the southern part of the Suez Canal between Ismailia and Suez gave details of shipping at Suez, Port Tewfik and Ismailia and of aircraft at Ismailia and Heliopolis.

There were no movements of any importance on the railway line between Alexandria and Suez.

Photographic reconnaissance over Malta on 20 April showed changes in the amount of shipping at La Valetta and in the number of aircraft at Ta Venezia, Luca and Halpar airfields. Progress has been made in the construction of airfields at Gudia and Krendi.

During the morning of 20 April two strongly escorted merchant ships were observed south-west of Crete. In the afternoon another convoy comprising four merchant ships and four light warships was sighted north of the Cyrenaican coast.

Operations

A fire broke out in the target area when German dive-bombers attacked harbour installations at La Valetta during the night of 19/20 April.

Attacks on a merchant ship and an anti-aircraft cruiser in the sea area Crete on 20 April had no noticeable success.

In attacks on the shipping observed north-east of Benghazi by reconnaissance, bombers successfully attacked one merchant ship and probably damaged two others.

Four escorting German fighters shot down four Hurricanes.

During the night of 20/21 April attacks were made on La Valetta harbour, shipping and searchlight positions. Results could not be observed owing to thick cloud.

An enemy air attack on Derna airfield was unsuccessful. In a low-level attack on Gazala airfield one transport and three reconnaissance aircraft were destroyed.

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Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean

German:	1 Ju 52	} at Gazala
	3 He 126	
	<u>4 aircraft</u>	
Enemy:	4 Hurricanes	
	1 Wellington	
	<u>5 aircraft</u>	

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

I. Ground Situation on 20 April (2000 hours)

(a) German Operations in Greece

Advanced detachments of Twelfth Army Panzer formations reached the area directly north of Lamia. There was no contact with the enemy.

A Panzer division is moving up in the Larissa area.

Advanced detachments of a Panzer division passed through Kastoria and reached the village of Argos Orestikon.

The main force of a mountain division is located at Larissa.

SS units are still in action against enemy rearguards south-east of Metsovon.

The occupation of Samothraki Island was completed.

At Larissa a train with 10 fuel trucks and considerable amounts of food and clothing were captured.

(b) Italian Operations

Ninth Army troops encountered strong enemy resistance south of Erseke. Eleventh Army formations continued the advance through the Vojussa, Zagorie and Dhrino Valleys and along the west coast.

II. Air Situation on 20 April (2000 hours)

A. German Operations

Luftflotte 4 (VIII Fliegerkorps)

On 19 April dive-bombers damaged one ship of 7 - 8,000 tons east of Almiros and two others of 1,000 tons and 7,000 tons respectively at Khalkis.

Five bombers and five fighters were shot down in air battles and nine aircraft of unknown types were destroyed on the ground.

On 20 April bombers and dive-bombers made continuous attacks on enemy columns at Lamia and in the Yannina - Arta - Agrinion area.

Further attacks were made on shipping at Khalkis, Pireaus and Patras. Two merchant ships totalling 10,000 tons were sunk and two vessels of 3,000 tons and 2,000 tons respectively were damaged.

Single-engined and twin-engined fighters shot down eleven enemy fighters and attacks airfields in the Athens area and at Agrinion. Eight enemy aircraft were destroyed on the ground and others were damaged.

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3.

Total Losses

Enemy:

In the Air: 11 Hurricanes
On the Ground: 8 aircraft (type not known)
19 aircraft

Late Report from 16 April

On the Ground: 2 aircraft (type not known)

Late Report from 18 April

3 Blenheims

Late Report from 19 April

In the Air: 5 Hurricanes
5 Blenheims
On the Ground: 9 aircraft (type not known)
19 aircraft

German: None reported.

B. Italian Air Operations

Aircraft carried out reconnaissance along the western coast of Greece and over the battle areas in Albania and Greece.

181 bombers attacked retreating enemy columns, tanks, vehicles and bridges and roads, dropping light and heavy bombs and shooting up troops. During these operations the Delvinaki - Kalabaki - Yannina roads and the route through the Vojussa Valley were badly damaged.

Harbour installations at Missolonghi were bombed and shot up.

126 fighters effectively shot up retreating enemy columns.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

19 April: South-west of Tobruk further enemy positions were taken in face of stubborn resistance. There was brisk artillery activity.

20 April: In an enemy landing attempt in the Bardia area a major, three other officers and 56 men were taken prisoners. An enemy attack at Sollum broke down.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

19 April: A merchant ship of 4 - 5,000 tons was sighted in Tobruk harbour in the morning.

Photographic reconnaissance over Tobruk showed three AA positions

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on the point and others west of the town in the vicinity of Fort Perrona Arente. There were light cruisers in the harbour, two merchant ships south of the mole, and tent encampments and vehicles north of Arente.

Three merchant ships, which were outside the port in the morning, were observed in the harbour at 1530 hours.

According to photographic reconnaissance there were two destroyers, three merchant ships and one torpedo boat in Mersa Matruh harbour at 1630 hours. There were about 150 goods trucks at the station and three large hut encampments to the west. In addition, a number of anti-tank ditches were observed.

20 April: Apart from the sunken Italian ships, two merchant ships totalling about 3,800 tons were identified in Tobruk harbour. The merchant ships observed on 19 April have apparently left port.

At 0720 hours a warship and a merchant ship were photographed off Tobruk.

Operations

20 April: No enemy aircraft were encountered by three fighters on free-lance patrols between Ain el Gazala and Tobruk.

A Wellington was shot down west of Tobruk. Four of the crew were taken prisoner.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

19 April: Results of photographic reconnaissance over the area Alexandria - Cairo - Suez - Ismailia (incomplete owing to cloud and thick haze):

Merchant Shipping at Suez:

37 merchant ships totalling about 166,500 tons,
3 tankers totalling 12,500 tons.

Total tonnage 179,000 tons. In addition, a warship was identified in the harbour.

Port Tewfik:

1 transport of about 6,000 tons,
9 merchant ships totalling 58,000 tons.

Total tonnage 64,000 tons. There was a merchant ship of about 6,000 tons in Port Tewfik channel.

Ismailia:

2 steam yachts,
1 merchant ship without a stern,
a number of dredgers.

Airfields

Ismailia:

8 single-engined aircraft, probably Hurricanes,
11 twin-engined aircraft, including 3 Wellingtons equipped for clearing magnetic mines; the other aircraft were probably Blenheims.

/Heliopolis:

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Heliopolis: (2 airfields, only partly covered)

3 twin-engined aircraft.

No movements of any importance were identified on the railway line south of Lake Maryut (Alexandria) - Damanhur - Tanta - Benha - north of Cairo - Heliopolis - Suez.

Photographic reconnaissance over Malta at 0815 hours on 20 April showed the following changes in the number of warships at La Valetta since 18 April:

- 1 small submarine has arrived.
- 4 destroyers and 4 submarines have left.

The amount of merchant shipping has changed since 18 April, as follows:

- 1 tanker of about 1,200 tons has arrived.
- 1 cargo and passenger ship of about 12,000 tons and
- 9 merchant ships totalling about 72,000 tons have left.

Airfields:

Ta Venezia: (only partly covered)

12 single-engined aircraft, probably Hurricanes.

Luca:

13 twin-engined aircraft, probably Wellingtons,
2 twin-engined aircraft, probably Blenheims,
1 twin-engined aircraft, apparently damaged,
1 single-engined aircraft.

The parking strips are being extended.

Halfar:

1 twin-engined aircraft (Bombay),
2 single-engined aircraft,
5 single-engined aircraft with folded-back wings,
1 aircraft, apparently damaged.

There were no aircraft at Calafra and Marsa Scirocco.

The construction of Gudia and Krendi airfields is proceeding.

20 April: An anti-aircraft cruiser, two escort vessels and two merchant ships on a southerly course were observed 40 km south-west of Gavdos Island at 0900 hours.

Following a report by an Italian reconnaissance aircraft of enemy warships - one aircraft-carrier, two battleships and a number of cruisers and destroyers - 370 km north-west of Benghazi at 0850 hours, a reconnaissance aircraft was sent out to shadow this force. The ships were located at 1304 hours and contact was maintained until 1740 hours. The formation actually consisted of two light cruisers, two destroyers and four merchant ships each over 8,000 tons and was moving on course 105°.

Operations

20 April: Fifteen German and Italian dive-bombers and four twin-engined fighters which were sent out to attack an enemy shipping formation reported by Italian reconnaissance returned without making contact.

Four fighters escorted fourteen bombers and shot down four Hurricanes.

A bomber on armed reconnaissance in the sea area Crete made an

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/unsuccessful

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unsuccessful attack on an 8,000 ton merchant ship.

An anti-aircraft cruiser of 6 - 8,000 tons was attacked with one 500 Kg. and two 250 Kg. bombs, which fell short of the target.

Three dive-bombers made a nuisance attack on La Valetta during the night of 19/20 April, scoring hits on the royal dockyard and on heavy AA positions on the north-eastern tip of San Elmo. Results were not observed owing to searchlight activity. Aircraft reported seeing a fire when leaving the target area.

Twenty-one bombers attacked the convoy reported 260 km north-north-east of Benghazi between 1655 and 1710 hours. Twenty-one 1,000 Kg. bombs were dropped. A direct hit amidships on the starboard side was scored on one merchant ship. The ship began to list and the crew took to the boats. 3 bombs fell within 10 - 30 yards of another merchant ship. A third merchant ship stopped after a near miss was scored.

Two attacks were made on Malta during the night of 20/21 April. Between 0440 and 0450 a total of nine dive-bombers attacked La Valetta harbour, shipping and searchlight positions, dropping eight 500 Kg. and thirty-four 50 Kg. bombs. The effect could not be observed owing to unbroken cloud.

Defence

Malta: 0430 hours: Night fighters.

0830 hours: Strong light and medium AA fire.
Heavy fire from an AA cruiser; attack by 1 Hurricane.
Moderate heavy and light AA fire from the convoy.

Total number of Aircraft Operational

4 reconnaissance aircraft
60 bombers
21 fighters
85 aircraft

Enemy Operations

Libya

19 April: The enemy made an unsuccessful air attack on Derna airfield. One transport and three reconnaissance aircraft were destroyed in a low-level attack on Gazala airfield. Enemy aircraft shot up German ground forces.

Losses

German: 1 Ju 52
3 Hs 126

Enemy: 1 Wellington
4 Hurricanes

Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

18 April: Nothing of importance was observed by reconnaissance in the area

/south-

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south-east of Fezzan (southern Libya).

The following were observed in the coastal area:

1215 hours: one submarine on a westerly course between Tobruk
Marsa Matruh,

1225 hours: one merchant ship of 10,000 tons on a south-westerly
course in same area,

1230 hours: one battleship, one aircraft-carrier and three cruisers
on a north-westerly course in same area,

1415 hours: three destroyers and two merchant ships of 3,000 and
10,000 tons on a north-westerly course in same area.

Operations

18 April: Two bombers attacked harbour installations and battery positions at
Tobruk.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

19 April: At 0750 hours reconnaissance over the sea area Crete - Nile Delta
observed three cruisers and three merchant ships each of 5,000 tons on an
easterly course between Crete and Kythera Island. At 0840 hours three
cruisers and one destroyer on a north-westerly course were sighted
between Crete and Sidi Barrani. At 0800 hours there was one cruiser on
an easterly course north-west of Tobruk.

Reconnaissance over the Sicilian Channel was negative.

20 April: Two merchant ships were observed in La Valetta harbour.

Operations

19 April: Fighters escorted an Italian convoy and an Italian warship.

20 April: Bombers and fighters escorted an Italian convoy.

Three escorted bombers attacked La Valetta harbour. An Italian
fighter was shot down in an air battle.

Two fighters carried out patrols over Rhodes.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

23 reconnaissance aircraft

35 bombers

64 fighters

122 aircraft

Enemy Operations

Libya

18 April: The enemy made an unsuccessful air attack on Benghazi.

During the night of 20/21 April between 0130 and 0445 hours a
heavy attack was made on Tripoli. Heavy British warships bombarded
the town between 0410 and 0450 hours. No German ships were hit.

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According to reports received so far, there was no damage of any importance in the harbour area. The main weight of the attack fell on the town.

Losses

Italian: 1 Cr 42

Enemy: None reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 591 (22 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 21 April and during the night of 21/22 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre

X Fliegerkorps

(a) Air Situation - Libya

No enemy warships or merchant ships were identified by reconnaissance carried out over Tobruk and westwards along the coast as far as Benghazi on the morning of 21 April.

In the evening escorted dive-bombers attacked Tobruk harbour. Bomb hits and fires were observed.

(b) Air Situation - Mediterranean

(i) Reconnaissance

No enemy warships were observed in the sea area south of Sicily in the morning and off the Tunisian coast in the afternoon.

In the afternoon an enemy convoy comprising four large merchant ships and five light warships was sighted again in the sea area north-west and north of Benghazi. Bombing attacks were unsuccessful.

Photographic reconnaissance over Malta showed little change in shipping at La Valetta.

(ii) Operations

In the morning a German bomber on convoy escort in the Tyrrhenian Sea attacked and probably damaged a submerged enemy submarine which made an unsuccessful attack on a convoy.

German bombers on armed reconnaissance in the sea area south-west of Crete in the morning attacked an enemy convoy, destroying a tanker and probably damaging another merchant ship. In the afternoon bombers attacked and damaged another enemy tanker south of Crete.

During the night of 21/22 April German bombers attacked the naval base at La Valetta with good results.

Bombers and fighters carried out escort operations and fighters made sweeps over Malta.

Three German transport aircraft were lost during an operation. One Hurricane was shot down.

/Enemy

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9.

Enemy Operations

Italian fighters were damaged and a number of soldiers wounded when enemy bombers attacked Derna airfield.

In two enemy bombing attacks on Gazala casualties amounted to five killed, four seriously wounded and two slightly wounded. There was no material damage.

Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean

German: 1 He 111
 3 Ju 52
 4 aircraft

Enemy: 1 Hurricane (in air battle)

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

I. Ground Situation on 21 April (2000 hours)

(a) German Operations in Greece

SS units advanced through Metsovon and reached Yannina.

Panzer formations advanced through Lamia and reached the northern edge of Thermopylae.

Panzer units took Volos in face of strong British resistance.

(b) Italian Operations

Ninth Army units penetrated the first defence line of the Greek rear-guard south of Erseke. Eleventh Army formations made further advances in the Vojussa, Zagorie and Dhrino Valleys and along the coast and reached the Greek frontier at a number of places.

II. Air Situation on 21 April (2000 hours)

A. German Operations

Luftflotte 4 (VIII Fliegerkorps)

During the morning and afternoon bombers and dive-bombers attacked enemy airfields and shipping. Two enemy aircraft were destroyed on Agrinion airfield and a further two on Dadion airfield (30 km south-south-east of Lamia).

Attacks on enemy shipping produced the following results:

Bay on northern coast of Milos Island:

1 cargo ship of 3,000 tons sunk.

Suda Bay:

3 freighters totalling 17,000 tons sunk,
5 freighters totalling 26,000 tons damaged.

Khalkis:

1 freighter of 2,000 tons badly damaged.

/Khalkis area:

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Khalkis area:

3 freighters totalling 13,000 tons sunk,
1 freighter of 3,000 tons badly damaged,
1 freighter of 2,000 tons attacked but results not observed.

In addition, two merchant ships totalling 9,000 tons were sunk, five merchant ships totalling 10,500 tons damaged and an enemy destroyer badly damaged and left burning in operations in Greek waters.

Fighters shot up enemy airfields and destroyed a total of sixteen enemy aircraft on the ground at Eleusis, Athens, Tatoi, Thebes and Dadion airfields.

On 20 April five merchant ships totalling 13,000 tons were sunk and six merchant ships totalling 18,500 tons were damaged.

Enemy Operations

Three enemy aircraft attacked Salonika-Sedes airfield between 0400 and 0445 hours. 12 H.E. bombs were dropped, but no damage was caused.

Total Losses

Enemy:

On the Ground: 20 aircraft (type not known)

German: None reported

B. Italian Air Operations

Aircraft carried out reconnaissance along the western coast of Greece. Nothing of importance was reported.

172 bombers and dive-bombers attacked retreating enemy forces at Preveza and in the Perati - Kalabaki - Ktismata - Delvinaki area. In addition, a small freighter was sunk in a bay of Corfu island and a railway bridge over the Alpheios was destroyed at Pyrgos.

110 fighters patrolled the western coast of Greece and shot up retreating enemy forces in the Yannina - Arta - Agrinion area.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

21 April: Situation unchanged.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

20 April: According to reconnaissance carried out during the morning, three transport ships have arrived at Tobruk. A light cruiser and a ship of 5,000 tons are still in the harbour.

21 April: Nothing of importance was observed by morning reconnaissance carried out over Tobruk and the coastal area as far as Benghazi. No enemy warships were sighted.

/Operations

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11.

Operations

21 April: At 1715 hours 40 German and Italian dive-bombers escorted by 46 German and Italian fighters attacked Tobruk harbour and shipping and secondary targets on the northern side of the harbour. Several direct hits were scored on three ships each of 4-5,000 tons, one of which caught fire. A fire broke out on the southern side of Tobruk.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

21 April: Morning reconnaissance over Malta had to be broken off owing to technical difficulties.

In the morning five aircraft carried out reconnaissance south of Sicily. No enemy warships were sighted. The reconnaissance was not complete as one of the aircraft went missing and courses were consequently changed.

In the search for the missing aircraft a rubber dinghy containing four men was sighted 130 km south-south-east of Malta at 1800 hours. The search had to be broken off at nightfall.

In the afternoon no enemy warships were observed in the sea area Pantelleria - Kerkena - Malta.

Between 1255 and 1734 hours a convoy moving on a south-easterly course was again photographed (position of convoy: 320 km north-north-west of Benghazi and 200 km north of Benghazi). The convoy comprised three cruisers, two destroyers, one cargo and passenger ship of about 12,000 tons and three merchant ships totalling about 26,000 tons. The four merchant ships are identical with the vessels which left Malta, and it is believed that the two destroyers also came from Malta. Of the ships which left Malta, two large destroyers and a merchant ship of 4,000 tons are missing. Damage caused in bombing attacks when the photographic reconnaissance was being carried out could not be ascertained.

According to photographic reconnaissance carried out over Malta at 1815 hours, one destroyer has arrived and two minesweepers and two patrol boats have left port since 20 April.

A merchant ship of about 8,000 tons has arrived at Malta since 20 April.

Operations

21 April: Eight bombers and five fighters escorted a convoy.

Two fighters escorted a reconnaissance aircraft over Malta. During weather reconnaissance over Malta fighters observed a destroyer off La Valetta.

Fighter sweeps over Malta were uneventful.

Three transport aircraft were lost on a flight to Benghazi. One Hurricane was shot down.

At 1238 hours a Hurricane attacked and damaged a German air-sea rescue aircraft 130 km south-west of Gavdos Island.

At 1000 hours a convoy escorted by bombers was unsuccessfully attacked by an enemy submarine 180 km north of Palermo. Two torpedoes were fired and their tracks were observed. Three 250 Kg bombs were

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12.

dropped in an attack on the submarine, which was 2 - 3 km away from the convoy. After the attack a long brown shape with hydroplanes was seen, but could not be located again.

At 0955 hours aircraft on armed reconnaissance observed a convoy comprising two light cruisers, four destroyers and fifteen medium merchant ships on a southerly course 50 km west-north-west of Gavdos Island. A bomber destroyed a tanker of about 8,000 tons. Four 250 Kg bombs fell close to the port side of a merchant ship of about 6,000 tons which was probably damaged. A column of water was thrown up over the stern of the ship. Ten bombers were sent out to attack this convoy but could not locate it. Instead, at 1645 hours, they attacked the lone and apparently unladen tanker "British Lord" of 6098 tons, dropping two 500 Kg. and twenty 250 Kg. bombs. Six 250 Kg. bombs fell close astern. The ship was lifted out of the water and stopped immediately. The propellers and engines were apparently badly damaged.

22 April: Between 0030 and 0050 hours nineteen bombers attacked the naval base at La Valetta, dropping sixteen 250 Kg. and 256 50 Kg. bombs. The target was clearly recognised. No ships were observed. Most of the bombs fell in French Creek and in the royal dockyard. One bomber was lost.

Six bombers carried out a mine-laying operation between 0036 and 0041 hours.

At 0500 hours five dive-bombers attacked La Valetta harbour and Luca airfield. Owing to intense AA and searchlight activity, the results of the attack could not be observed. A fire broke out.

Defence

Malta: 1820 hours: accurate AA fire.

22 April: 0040 hours: badly aimed heavy AA, fired in salvos.
40 searchlights.

Two Hurricanes over the convoy in sea area Crete. The enemy fighters did not intercept. Light and heavy AA fire from the ships.

Tobruk: Three Hurricanes. Very heavy accurate AA fire.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

19 reconnaissance aircraft

92 bombers

33 fighters

144 aircraft

Enemy Operations

Libya

21 April: Eight Blenheims dropped 60 light bombs on Derma airfield. Four Italian fighters were destroyed and another four damaged. A number of men were wounded.

At 1100 hours six Blenheims attacked Gazala. Casualties amounted to five killed, four seriously wounded and two slightly wounded. At 1530 hours another attack was made by one Blenheim. No damage was caused.

German ground forces were repeatedly attacked.

/Losses

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13.

Losses

German: 1 He 111
3 Ju 52

Enemy: 1 Hurricane

Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

20 April: At 1135 hours a patch of oil, probably from a submerged submarine, was observed off Tobra (65 km north-east of Benghazi).

Nothing of importance was observed in the area Scegga (30 km south of Sollum) - Gadd el Ahmar.

Operations

See German report.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

20 April: At 0900 hours a reconnaissance aircraft sighted a medium-sized merchant ship, a tanker of about 10,000 tons and two auxiliary cruisers on course 165° km south-west of Gavdos Island.

21 April: No enemy shipping was observed between Sicily and the North African coast.

Owing to cloud and bad visibility, reconnaissance over the naval base at Malta was incomplete. Five monoplanes were observed, and unsuccessful attacks were made on two of them.

Operations

20 April: Three torpedo bombers attacked an enemy convoy comprising two auxiliary cruisers, two gun-boats, one merchant ship of about 8,000 tons and one tanker of 15,000 tons. The tanker was hit by a torpedo and listed heavily. The ship probably went down. In a second attack by two bombers a torpedo hit was scored on the 8,000 ton merchant ship.

18 fighters escorted bombers and a convoy.

21 April: 15 fighters escorted a convoy.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

27 reconnaissance aircraft
5 bombers
33 fighters
65 aircraft

Losses

Italian: 4 fighters (on the ground at Derna)

Enemy: None reported.

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14.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 592 (23 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 22 April and during the Night of 22/23 April, 1941

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

I. Ground Situation on 22 April (2000 hours)

German Operations in Greece

The Greek Epirus and Macedonian Army, about 15 divisions strong, has surrendered unconditionally.

South of Lamia German Panzer units have reached the Sperkhios River. The enemy is offering resistance in the Thermopylae pass and has a large number of skilfully placed and well camouflaged batteries in position on the northern slopes.

II. Air Situation on 22 April (2000 hours)

A. German Operations

Luftflotte 4 (VIII Fliegerkorps)

Bombers and dive-bombers escorted by single-engined and twin-engined fighters attacked enemy shipping with the following results:

Suda Bay:

- 1 warship (heavy cruiser class) received a direct hit with a 1,000 Kg. bomb,
- 3 merchant ships totalling 25,000 tons sunk,
- 2 merchant ships totalling 8,000 tons damaged.

Patras area:

- 4 merchant ships each of 3 - 4,000 tons sunk,
- 8 merchant ships totalling 27,000 tons damaged.

Salamis:

- 1 merchant ship of 5,000 tons damaged.

In other sea areas:

- 1 merchant ship of 3 - 5,000 tons damaged.

Single-engined and twin-engined fighters attacked enemy airfields, damaging ten aircraft at Tatoi and one at Eleusis. In addition, four AA guns were knocked out at Tatoi and one at Eleusis.

Defence

Strong fighter defence (Spitfires) over Athens.

Total Losses

Enemy: None reported.

German: None reported.

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15.

B. Italian Air Operations

35 aircraft carried out reconnaissance along the western coast of Greece and over the Zagorie and Vojussa Valley frontier areas. Eight ships each of 3 - 5,000 tons on a south-easterly course were observed in the vicinity of Leukas Island. A small ship on an easterly course was sighted in Missolonghi Bay. Two large sailing vessels were attacked and sunk in the Santa Maura channel (Leukas).

Seven dive-bombers carried out armed reconnaissance in the Kotor area and made a successful attack on a British submarine.

Three fighters escorted reconnaissance aircraft in the Yannina area.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

21 April: An enemy attack on Sollum was repulsed with heavy enemy losses. Enemy tanks made further unsuccessful attempts to break out of Tobruk.

22 April: In the morning sizeable enemy forces attacked Acroma (west of Tobruk), but were driven back with losses in a counter-attack. Front-line troops fell back in face of the enemy attack, but regained their former positions in a counter-attack.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Operations

22 April: Ground support operations were carried out in the morning. At 0915 hours five twin-engined and five single-engined fighters made low-level attacks on tank and vehicle concentrations east of Hill 209. Fires were observed after hits had been scored. Retreating British troops and advancing Italians were identified.

At 0945 hours thirteen dive-bombers and German and Italian fighters attacked artillery positions and vehicle concentrations at Meduar (?). Explosions and smoke were observed in the positions inside and north of the fort.

At 1230 hours ten dive-bombers and fifteen twin-engined and single-engined fighters attacked tank concentrations in the Hageiagesaka (?) area. One Hurricane was shot down by a bomber and two others were probably destroyed by fighters. One Italian fighter was lost.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

21 April: There was no enemy shipping in the sea area south of Sicily east of the convoy route to the line Cape Passero - Benghazi.

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over La Valetta between 1620 and 1645 hours. Evaluation so far shows that four destroyers have arrived.

The search for the crew of an aircraft which landed in the sea was unsuccessful. On the morning of 22 April two members of the crew were picked up by an air-sea rescue aircraft.

/22 April:

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16.

22 April: At 1030 hours four British battleships, five 7,000 ton cruisers and five destroyers on course 120° were observed west of Gavdos Island.

Armed reconnaissance north of Sollum was uneventful.

Operations

21 April: Aircraft escorting a reconnaissance aircraft (and meteorological aircraft) over Malta did not encounter enemy aircraft.

In the afternoon two fighters escorting a reconnaissance aircraft over Malta encountered four to five Hurricanes. One of the enemy aircraft was shot down and went into the sea 20 km south-east of Calafra.

Between 2120 and 2152 hours eighteen bombers and thirteen dive-bombers attacked La Valetta harbour and shipping, dropping thirty 500 Kg. and 343 50 Kg. bombs. The target was clearly identified. A large destroyer was hit and probably sunk. Hits were scored on the destroyer base, the royal dockyard, French Creek, Marsa Creek, Lazaretto Creek and on Luca airfield. In Dockyard Creek (east side) a fire was observed in a fuel storage dump or on a nearby ship. Details could not be observed owing to intense searchlight activity. On leaving the target one large and two small fires were observed.

Six bombers carried out a special operation (mine-laying) in the Malta area.

22 April: Bombers scored a direct hit in an attack on a merchant ship of 8,000 tons 220 km north of Sidi Barrani.

Defence

Malta: 1600 hours: light and heavy AA fire, some of it very accurate.
1630 hours: badly aimed heavy AA.

2130 hours: 40 searchlights at first. Very accurate light AA and slight heavy AA in the harbour area. Light AA occasionally fired at the flares. 2 night fighters with navigation lights did not attack.

Meduar: Light AA and infantry weapons. Brisk fighter defence.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

10 reconnaissance aircraft
81 bombers
45 fighters
<u>136 aircraft</u>

Enemy Operations

Libya

22 April: Enemy aircraft once more participated in the ground fighting. Bombs were dropped on Derna airfield during the night.

Losses

<u>German:</u>	None
<u>Enemy:</u>	2 Hurricanes
	2 Hurricanes probably destroyed.

/Italian

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17.

Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Operations

21 April: Two fighters carried out patrols over airfields in Cyrenaica.
Two bombers attacked Tobruk at 0455 hours.

22 April: North of Tobruk a British merchant ship of 6,000 tons was attacked and apparently hit by a torpedo.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

21 April: At 1640 hours a reconnaissance aircraft observed a merchant ship of 10,000 tons and two destroyers 60 km west of Gavdos Island.

22 April: The following were observed in the sea area Rhodes - north of Crete - Nile Delta:

0815 hours: 18 km south of Cape Krio: a convoy comprising one battle-ship, one cruiser, two destroyers, fifteen merchant ships each of 10 - 20,000 tons and fifteen merchant ships each of 3 - 10,000 tons on course 120°.

0830 hours: 200 km south-east of Gavdos Island: a convoy comprising three cruisers and four merchant ships each of 3 - 10,000 tons on course 120°.

1030 hours: 220 km south-east of Gavdos Island: two torpedo boats; one tanker and one merchant ship of 1 - 3,000 tons.

Operations

21 April: At 0925 hours an aircraft torpedoed a merchant ship of 6 - 8,000 tons in a convoy of 30 merchant ships 100 km south of Gavdos Island. The ship listed heavily.

Defence

Very heavy AA fire from the convoy south of Gavdos Island.

Total number of Aircraft Operational

7 reconnaissance aircraft
6 bombers
10 fighters
23 aircraft

Enemy Operations

Libya

18 April: In the previously reported attack on Tripoli by enemy aircraft and warships a large number of private houses in the town and in the harbour were hit. An empty merchant ship and a patrol boat were sunk and another ship was damaged.

Losses

Italian: 1 fighter
Enemy: None reported.

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18.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 593 (24 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 23 April and during the Night of 23/24 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre

I. X Fliegerkorps

(a) Air Situation - Libya

(i) Reconnaissance

On 23 April photographic reconnaissance was carried out along the Alexandria - Ismailia road and railway line. Visual reconnaissance was carried out off the Cyrenaican and Egyptian coasts between Benghazi and Sidi Barrani and along the coast and 50 - 80 km inland between Tobruk and Sollum. Nothing of importance was observed. Afterwards a number of reconnaissance aircraft made a nuisance attack on Tobruk. Results were not observed.

(ii) Operations

Dive-bombers made two successful attacks on shipping in Tobruk harbour. Escorting German fighters shot down four Hurricanes.

In the afternoon two Blenheims were shot down for the loss of one German fighter.

(b) Air Situation - Mediterranean

(i) Reconnaissance

No enemy warships or merchant ships were observed in the sea area between Sicily and the Tunisian coast in the morning.

Visual reconnaissance off the Egyptian coast in the afternoon observed two enemy formations, each with one battleship, as well as several light warships.

According to photographic reconnaissance over Malta, several submarines have arrived since 22 April. Photographic reconnaissance was also carried out over the airfields at Halfar, Ta Venezia and Luca.

(ii) Operations

German fighters shot down a Hurricane in air battles over Malta in the afternoon.

Bombers and fighters escorted convoys and aircraft.

II. Enemy Operations

In an attack by three enemy bombers at midday an Italian bomber was set on fire. Apart from this, only slight damage was caused. (Place not stated).

Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean

<u>German:</u>	1 Me 110
	1 Ju 88
	<u>2 aircraft</u>
<u>Enemy:</u>	2 Blenheims
	4 Hurricanes (Tobruk)
	1 Hurricane (Malta)
	<u>7 aircraft</u>

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/Situation

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

I. Ground Situation on 23 April (2000 hours)

(a) German Operations in Greece

Elements of a Panzer division penetrated the enemy positions at Thermopylae and occupied Dhelfinon and Mustapha Bey south of Lamia. Panzer and mountain units moved up in the Lamia area.

The surrender of the Greek forces surrounded in the Yamina area proceeded according to plan.

(b) Italian Operations

Ninth and Eleventh Army forces continued the advance all along the front. Elements of Eleventh Army established contact with German forces at several places.

An armistice became effective on the Albanian-Greek front at 1800 hours.

II. Air Situation on 23 April (2000 hours)

A. German Operations

Luftflotte 4 (VIII Fliegerkorps)

Bomber and dive-bomber formations attacked enemy shipping; single-engined and twin-engined fighters attacked enemy airfields. According to reports so far received, the following successes were achieved:-

Salamis:

- 1 freighter of 10,000 tons was sunk,
- 1 steamship of 5 - 6,000 tons received a direct hit amidships,
- 1 four-engined flying-boat was set on fire.

Megara:

- 1 freighter of 4,000 tons was sunk,
- 2 auxiliary warships each of 2 - 3,000 tons received direct hits,
- 2 ships totalling 3,000 tons were damaged.

Salamis Island:

An AA battery was hit and guns put out of action.

Tatoi Airfield:

- 2 twin-engined aircraft were set on fire.

Total Losses

Enemy:

On the Ground:

2 twin-engined aircraft, type not known
1 four-engined flying-boat, type not known
3 aircraft

German:

None reported.

B. Italian Air Operations

Seven aircraft carried out reconnaissance along the western coast of

/Greece

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20.

Greece and over advancing Italian ground forces.

Fifteen bombers attacked four small ships in Patras harbour and another at Missolonghi.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

During the night of 21/22 April the enemy made repeated attacks on German and Italian positions.

23 April: Situation unchanged.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

23 April: Photographic reconnaissance was carried out along the Alexandria - Ismailia road and railway line and over El Amiriya airfield (south of Alexandria).

Owing to weather conditions, photographic reconnaissance along the eastern frontier of Cyrenaica was broken off at 0700 hours.

Nothing was observed by morning reconnaissance along the coast as far as Sidi Barrani and 120 km out to sea. On the return flight the four reconnaissance aircraft dropped bombs on Tobruk (no report of results).

Nothing of importance was observed by morning reconnaissance on the right flank in the area Bir El Gobi (80 km south of Tobruk) - Gabre (?) - Calch-Cuasc (?). At Sidi Omar (30 km south-west of Sollum) six guns pointing west and three Italian (?) trucks were observed.

At 1440 hours an aircraft carried out photographic reconnaissance in the area Fuka - Sidi Barrani - Sollum - Tobruk and over the sea area to the north.

Operations

23 April: At 1300 hours six fighters took off on interception flights. Two Blenheims were shot down for certain and two Hurricanes probably destroyed for the loss of one German fighter.

Italian and German formations made several attacks on shipping in Tobruk harbour and along the coast.

At 0945 hours seventeen German and Italian dive-bombers and fifteen fighters attacked shipping in Tobruk harbour. Hits were clearly observed on three ships, one of which was seen to be sinking. Four Hurricanes were shot down over the southern side of the harbour.

In the afternoon thirty-seven German and Italian dive-bombers and thirty German and Italian fighters again attacked shipping at Tobruk, inflicting heavy damage on every ship still afloat. Large fires and violent explosions were observed.

At 1715 hours eleven dive-bombers and thirty-three German and Italian fighters were sent out to attack warships and merchant ships off Marsa ez Zeitun (10 - 12 km east of Tobruk), but the objectives could not be located.

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Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

21 April: (Late report): At 1005 hours reconnaissance south of Sicily observed an enemy formation of about 20 ships, including an aircraft-carrier, on course 350° 170 km north-north-east of Misurata. The reconnaissance aircraft was attacked by three Hurricanes. Owing to the failure of one of its engines, the aircraft made a forced landing 180 km south of Malta. After 50 hours in a rubber dinghy the crew was picked up by the air-sea rescue service.

23 April: No enemy shipping was observed by morning reconnaissance south of Sicily to the Tunisian coast.

Owing to the weather and fighter defence, photographic reconnaissance over Alexandria had to be broken off. The following visual observations were made:-

- 1230 hours: 180 km north of Sidi Barrani: 1 light cruiser and 2 transports each over 8,000 tons on course 100°.
- 1325 hours: 90 km north-west of Alexandria: 1 light cruiser on course 150°.
- 1350 hours: El Amiriya airfield (south of Alexandria):
12 multiple-engined aircraft and 6 single-engined aircraft.
- 1355 hours: Flight broken off owing to fighter attack.
- 1420 hours: 150 km north-west of Alexandria: 1 battleship, 2 destroyers and 3 large merchant ships, apparently empty, on course 150°.
- 1430 hours: 170 km north-west of Alexandria: 1 battleship (?) on course 150° and 3 large merchant ships and 2 destroyers on course 300°; apparently a convoy forming up or dispersing.

Results of photographic reconnaissance over Malta at 0900 hours:

Warships at La Valetta:

- 7 submarines, including one in dock,
- 7 destroyers, including one without bows,
- 2 minesweepers (?),
- 3 patrol boats (?),
- 2 auxiliaries (?).

5 submarines have arrived since 22 April.

The amount of merchant shipping has not changed since 22 April.

Airfields (based on photographic reconnaissance in the afternoon)

Halfar: 1 single-engined aircraft,
5 single-engined aircraft with folded-back wings,
1 multiple-engined aircraft (?)

Ta Venezia: (photograph not clear)
about 23 aircraft

Luca: 10 twin-engined aircraft, apparently Wellingtons,
2 twin-engined aircraft, apparently Blenheims,
1 single-engined aircraft,
1 twin-engined aircraft, apparently damaged.

/There

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22.

There were no aircraft at Calafrana and Marsa Scirocco.

Eight bombers and six fighters escorted a convoy. At 1410 hours a sailing craft was searched by a destroyer 80 km north-east of Kerkena. At 1630 hours a destroyer dropped depth charges 70 km north-east of Kerkena.

In the morning nine fighters escorted a reconnaissance aircraft over Malta and rescue aircraft east of the island. There were 5 - 6 destroyers in the harbour.

Operations

22 April: (Late report): A bomber was shot down by eight Hurricanes 140 km south of Gavdos Island. The enemy aircraft presumably came from a carrier.

In air battles with Hurricanes over Malta, one enemy aircraft was shot down south-east of the island at 1807 hours.

Note: It was observed that the performance of the Hurricane at 25,000 feet has improved, but is still not equal to that of the Me 109.

Defence

Malta: 0900 hours: Accurate heavy AA at about 25,000 feet.

0905 hours: Intense, accurate heavy AA over La Valetta harbour.

1745 hours: Slight heavy AA.

1800 hours: Very accurate heavy AA east of La Valetta.

Alexandria: Accurate heavy AA 8 km west of Alexandria.
3 Hurricanes 15 km west of Alexandria.

Tobruk: Intense AA. Good Italian fighter cover.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

7 reconnaissance aircraft
72 bombers
64 fighters
<u>143 aircraft</u>

Enemy Operations

Libya

23 April: Slight offensive and brisk defensive activity by Hurricanes, which appeared in formations of three to five aircraft.

At 1215 hours three aircraft made a bombing attack from about 13,000 feet (place not stated). An Italian bomber was set on fire, but apart from this only slight damage was caused by bomb fragments.

Losses

German: 1 Me 109 (Libya)

Enemy: 1 Hurricane (Malta)
4 Hurricanes (Tobruk)
2 Blenheims (Libya)

7 aircraft and 2 Hurricanes probably destroyed.

/Correction:

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23.

Correction: The He 111 reported missing on 21 April returned to base.
1 Ju 88 was lost on 22 April.

Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

22 April: No shipping movements were observed in the Suez Canal by photographic reconnaissance over Port Said and the canal. The flight had to be broken off at Ismailia owing to enemy interception.

Operations

22 April: Four fighters took off on interception flights from Benghazi. Five enemy bombers which had been reported could not be located.

Eight aircraft flew supplies to ground forces in the area Derna - Benghazi - Tripoli.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

22 April: Reconnaissance in the sea area Crete - Tobruk - Nile Delta - Crete observed an enemy formation comprising one aircraft-carrier, four battle-ships, five destroyers and five merchant ships each of 7,000 tons on a south-easterly course south-east of Crete.

In addition, there was a convoy comprising one 10,000 ton cruiser, two 7,000 ton cruisers, twelve merchant ships each of 10 - 20,000 tons and nine merchant ships each of 6,000 tons on a south-easterly course south of Crete.

23 April: There was no enemy shipping in the sea area south of Sicily and west of Malta. An enemy fighter was sighted west of Malta.

Operations

22 April: Eleven bombers were sent out to attack the convoy reported south of Crete, but could not find the objective owing to bad visibility.

23 April: Fighters escorted convoys.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

19 reconnaissance aircraft
29 bombers
36 fighters
84 aircraft

Enemy Operations

Libya

During the night of 21/22 April unsuccessful attacks were made on German and Italian positions at Tobruk and Sollum.

Air attacks were made on Benghazi on 22 April and during the night of 22/23 April. General Miele, Chief of Staff, Italian Land Forces in North Africa, was killed during these raids. Tripoli was also attacked during the night of 22/23 April.

/Mediterranean

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24.

Mediterranean Area

Enemy aircraft attacked the Dodecanese during the night of 22/23 April. No damage was caused.

Losses

Italian: 1 bomber (set on fire on ground)

Enemy: None reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 594 (25 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 24 April and during the Night of 24/25 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre

X Fliegerkorps

(a) Air Situation - Libya

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over the area Tobruk - Sollum - Sidi Barrani in the afternoon.

During armed reconnaissance operations in the morning successful attacks were made by a bomber on a medium-sized transport ship and by light bombers on enemy warships west of Capuzzo. In the afternoon a destroyer putting into Tobruk harbour was attacked without noticeable effect. Shipping and harbour installations at Tobruk were attacked. Bombs were well-placed and fires were observed.

(b) Air Situation - Mediterranean

1. Reconnaissance

During the morning of 24 April reconnaissance was carried out over the sea area south of Sicily. Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over Alexandria and Ismailia and over Malta.

2. Operations

In the evening German bombers attacked the naval base at La Valetta and Luca airfield. Observation was not complete, but bomb hits and fires were seen. In another attack by dive-bombers on the cruiser in La Valetta harbour observation of results was impeded by intense AA fire and search-light activity.

Fighter sweeps over Malta were uneventful. Fighters escorting a reconnaissance aircraft encountered three enemy fighters. There were no losses on either side.

Enemy Operations

Enemy bombers attacked Maddalena (north of Barce) during the night of 23/24 April. No damage was caused.

Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean

German: Nil return.

Enemy: None reported.

/Situation

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25.

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

I. Ground Situation on 24 April (2000 hours)

German Operations in Greece

Thermopylae Pass has been taken. Elements of a mountain division moved round the pass to the west and reached Gardikuki (7 km north of Kastelli). Other mountain and Panzer units are located east of the pass in the Katmata area. Elements of a Panzer division advanced along the Lamia - Amphissa road to a point just south of Pralos. Weapons, vehicles and artillery were captured in the evacuated enemy positions.

East of Lamia motorised units were moved across to Evvoia Island.

II. Air Situation on 24 April (2000 hours)

A. German Operations

Luftflotte 4 (VIII Fliegerkorps)

Supplementary report on operations carried out on 23 April:

The following additional successes resulted from attacks on enemy shipping:

Khalkis:

2 merchant ships totalling 9,000 tons sunk,
1 merchant ship of 4,000 tons received 3 direct hits.

Salamis:

1 destroyer received a direct hit,
1 freighter of 5 - 6,000 tons damaged,
1 freighter of 1,000 tons sunk.

Gulf of Corinth:

2 cargo ships totalling 3,000 tons damaged; crews took to boats,
1 merchant ship of medium tonnage received a direct hit.

Methana:

1 freighter of 6,000 tons sunk.

Idhra:

1 freighter of 4,000 tons damaged.

Navplion:

2 freighters totalling 14,000 tons badly damaged,
1 freighter of 6,000 tons damaged.

Other Sea Areas:

1 freighter of 6,000 tons sunk,
1 freighter of 1,500 tons sunk,
1 freighter of 10,000 tons badly damaged.
1 tanker of 500 tons set on fire.

Attacks were made on enemy columns on the Thebes - Megara - Corinth - Argos road. The road between Megara and Corinth was badly damaged by bombs. At Argos 26 enemy trucks were set on fire.

/Single-

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26.

Single-engined and twin-engined fighters shot down two enemy aircraft and destroyed 43 more on the ground (37 at Argos, 6 at Megara). One of our aircraft is missing.

Operations on 24 April

Strong formations of aircraft were once more sent out to attack enemy shipping. According to reports so far received, the following successes resulted:

Suda Bay:

4 ships totalling 27,000 tons sunk,
3 ships totalling 20,000 tons damaged.

West coast of Kithnos Island:

1 ship of 6,000 tons sunk.

Navplion:

1 ship of 5,000 tons received a direct hit,
1 ship of 4,000 tons damaged.

North of Spetsai Island:

1 ship of 2 - 3,000 tons damaged.

Methana:

1 tanker of 2,000 tons damaged.

Gulf of Corinth:

1 ship of 5,000 tons badly damaged.

Patras:

1 ship of 1,000 tons sunk.

Megara:

2 ships totalling 8,000 tons sunk.

Salamis:

1 ship of 5 - 6,000 tons received a direct hit and an explosion resulted,
2 ships of unknown tonnage sunk,
1 old warship sunk,
1 vessel of 100 tons sunk,
1 old warship damaged.

Eleusis:

1 merchant ship of 4,000 tons received a direct hit and an explosion resulted.

Pireaus:

4 ships totalling 23,000 tons damaged.

Khalkis:

1 ship of 2,000 tons damaged.

/Other

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27.

Other Sea Areas:

2 ships totalling 1,000 tons sunk,
1 ship of 500 - 1,000 tons badly damaged.

Twelve enemy aircraft were destroyed on the ground at Corinth airfield.

Small formations attacked enemy batteries in the Thermopylae Pass and troop movements in the Attica area.

Total Losses on 24 April and Losses in Late Report for 23 April:

Enemy:

In the Air: 1 Hurricane
 1 PZL

On the Ground: 55 aircraft, types not known
 57 aircraft

German: 1 Me 109 (missing)

B. Italian Air Operations

Six aircraft carried out reconnaissance along the western coast of Greece and over Crete. Fourteen ships were observed in Suda Bay and eight escorted merchant ships were seen leaving the bay.

Six fighters escorted bombers sent out to attack shipping in Suda Bay.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

22 April: In the afternoon an enemy attack with air support was made on Axis positions at Tobruk. The attack was repulsed and a number of prisoners were taken.

23 April: In the evening an enemy force comprising 60 tanks, a large number of vehicles and artillery, including some heavy-calibre guns, attempted to outflank Capuzzo from the west and south. The enemy was driven off.

During the night of 23/24 April enemy warships bombarded the Acroma area for the first time to disrupt Axis communications.

Armed reconnaissance carried out during the night and reconnaissance in force on the morning of 24 April found the enemy on the alert all along the outer defence line of Tobruk. In one of these operations 160 men of an Italian company were taken prisoner at Mdaura. There was brisk artillery activity on the Tobruk sector.

According to statements by prisoners, the enemy has plenty of food and ammunition. Reinforcements were alleged to be on the way to the garrison. In spite of constant air reconnaissance, it has not yet been ascertained whether embarkations or disembarkations are taking place.

24 April: Axis forces carried out reconnaissance in the direction of Hill 209. Small enemy groups with armoured cars reconnoitred south of Capuzzo to the coast between Capuzzo and Sidi Azeis.

/German

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28.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

24 April: Morning reconnaissance along the Egyptian frontier as far as Giarabub had to be broken off owing to engine trouble.

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over the area Tobruk - Sollum - Sidi Barrani at 1730 hours.

Operations

23 April: Ten bombers laid mines in the Tobruk area between 0450 and 0537 hours. At the same time one aircraft dropped one 500 Kg and two 250 Kg bombs on harbour installations. Results were not observed.

24 April: At 0645 hours a bomber on armed reconnaissance bombed and shot up a heavily armed transport ship of medium tonnage escorted by a torpedo boat. The bombs fell close to the ship.

At 0900 hours eleven light bombers on armed reconnaissance successfully bombed and shot up enemy ground forces west of Capuzzo.

At 1415 hours three bombers on armed reconnaissance along the coast made an unsuccessful attack on a destroyer entering Tobruk harbour.

At 1530 hours 24 dive-bombers and 15 twin-engined fighters made a very successful attack on shipping, warehouses and quay installations. Large fires broke out.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

24 April: No enemy shipping was observed by morning reconnaissance south of Sicily to the Tunisian coast.

At 0755 hours there were four enemy destroyers on course 90° 40 km south-west of Malta. These warships arrived at La Valetta during the morning.

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over the Alexandria - Ismailia area.

Results of photographic reconnaissance over Malta at 0840 hours:

Warships at La Valetta:

- 7 submarines, including one in dock,
- 7 destroyers, including one in dock and one without bows,
- 2 minesweepers (?),
- 3 patrol boats (?), including one in dock,
- 2 auxiliaries (?),
- 1 light cruiser.

The light cruiser has arrived since 23 April. The amount of merchant shipping remains unchanged.

Airfields

Halfar:

- 1 twin-engined aircraft, apparently a Wellington,
- 1 biplane,
- 1 single-engined aircraft, apparently a Spitfire,
- 5 single-engined aircraft with folded-back wings.

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/Luca:

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29.

Luca: (photographic reconnaissance at 1105 hours):

12 twin-engined aircraft, apparently Wellingtons,
1 twin-engined aircraft, apparently a Blenheim,
1 single-engined aircraft,
1 twin-engined aircraft, apparently damaged.

Ta Venezia: (1105 hours):

21 single-engined aircraft, apparently Hurricanes,
1 twin-engined aircraft, apparently a Wellington.

There were no aircraft at Calafrana and Marsa Scirocco.

In the afternoon reconnaissance observed four destroyers, one cruiser and one merchant ship of 10,000 tons at La Valetta.

Operations

24 April: No enemy aircraft encountered by fighters escorting a reconnaissance aircraft and on sweeps over Malta.

Eight bombers attacked the naval base at La Valetta between 2115 and 2130 hours, dropping eight 500 Kg and ninety-six 50 Kg bombs. Thick haze decreased visibility. A small fire broke out in the vicinity of Dockyard Creek. One 500 Kg bomb apparently hit a large merchant ship. Crews of other aircraft confirmed the violent explosions. Four of the aircraft drew the defence before the attack while four bombers laid mines. At the same time six bombers attacked Luca airfield, dropping five 500 Kg and sixty-four 50 Kg bombs. Two large and several small fires broke out in the buildings on the northern perimeter of the airfield.

Between 2130 and 2135 hours four dive-bombers attacked the cruiser in La Valetta harbour, dropping four 1,000 Kg bombs. Owing to intense AA fire and searchlight activity the effect could not be observed. One bomb fell in the town centre of La Valetta, another hit the eastern side of Sliema Creek and a third hit the searchlight position on La Valetta point.

Three fighters escorting a reconnaissance aircraft over Malta were engaged by three Hurricanes.

Defence

23 April: Tobruk: 1 fighter which did not intercept. 1 light and 3 heavy AA batteries.

24 April: Malta 0805 hours: intense, accurate AA fire, 4 Hurricanes at 21,000 feet. The German aircraft evaded attack between Halfar and La Valetta.

2130 hours: 1 night fighter with navigation lights and searchlights did not intercept. Heavy AA, mostly aimed too low. Intense searchlight activity.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

5 reconnaissance aircraft
69 bombers
35 fighters
109 aircraft

Enemy Operations

Libya

Aircraft attacked Gazala on 23 April. Maddalena (north-west of

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/Barce

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30.

Barce) was bombed during the night of 23/24 April. There was no damage.

Losses

German: None
Enemy: None reported.

Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

23 April: Nothing of importance was observed by reconnaissance over the Gulf of Sirte.

Operations

21 April: Twenty-three fighters carried out patrols over Tripoli and Derna airfield.

23 April: Two fighters carried out patrols over Benghazi.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

23 April: At 0950 hours two cruisers, two destroyers and two merchant ships each of 10 - 20,000 tons were sighted moving on course 315° 160 km south-south-east of Gavdos Island. Enemy fighters made an unsuccessful attack on the reconnaissance aircraft off Cape Spatha (north-western tip of Crete).

24 April: Reconnaissance south of Sicily sighted a biplane of unknown nationality at 0800 hours. No enemy shipping was observed.

Operations

21 April: Twenty fighters escorted convoys and reconnaissance aircraft.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

9 reconnaissance aircraft
49 fighters
58 aircraft

Enemy Operations

Libya

Enemy aircraft attacked Benghazi on the morning of 22 April and during the night of 22/23 April. Several buildings, including the governor's palace, were damaged. One enemy aircraft was shot down by fighters.

Mediterranean

During the night of 22/23 April enemy aircraft made an unsuccessful attack on airfields on Rhodes.

Losses

Italian: None
Enemy: 1 bomber

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31.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 595 (26 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 25 April and during the Night of 25/26 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre

X Fliegerkorps

(a) Air Situation - Libya

(i) Reconnaissance

In the morning aircraft carried out photographic reconnaissance over Tobruk and visual reconnaissance along the Egyptian frontier from Sidi Omar to Giarabub. No enemy movements were observed.

(ii) Operations

Aircraft on armed reconnaissance early in the morning attacked vehicle concentrations at Capuzzo.

Later in the morning escorted German and Italian dive-bombers effectively supported a German attack by bombing ground targets west of Capuzzo.

In the afternoon light bombers effectively attacked enemy positions east of the frontier and a camp east of Sollum. A Hurricane was shot down.

(b) Air Situation - Mediterranean

No enemy shipping was observed in the sea area south of Sicily in the morning. In the afternoon an enemy warship formation on a southeasterly course was sighted in the southern part of the Ionian Sea.

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over La Valetta harbour and the airfields at Ta Venezia, Luca and Halfar in the morning. Interpretation shows a shed east of the dry dock in French Creek has been burnt out.

During armed reconnaissance a medium-sized merchant ship was attacked off the western coast of Egypt. No effect was apparent. In the afternoon dive-bombers attacked a merchant ship observed off Tobruk. The attack was apparently unsuccessful.

Other bombers and fighters escorted shipping and aircraft. No enemy aircraft were encountered.

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

I. Ground Situation on 25 April (2000 hours)

German Operations in Greece

Panzer formations have overcome British resistance at Molos. 24 guns were captured and 200 prisoners taken. In the continued advance south-east along the coastal road Atalandi was taken and Martinon (26 km north-west of Thebes) reached.

Advanced detachments of a mountain division have reached Dhadhiow (south-east of the Thermopylae pass).

Mobile units which crossed over to Evvoia Island yesterday have reached Khalkis.

/SS units

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32.

SS units are continuing their advance from Yannina along the Arta - Agrinion road.

In the early morning elements of an infantry division landed on Lemnos Island. All points of military importance were occupied during the course of the day. Only slight opposition was offered by the enemy.

II. Air Situation on 25 April (2000 hours)

German Operations

Luftflotte 4 (VIII Fliegerkorps)

Bomber, dive-bomber and fighter formations carried out operations against enemy shipping with the following results:

Khalkis:

1 merchant ship of 4,000 tons damaged.

Patras:

1 merchant ship of 5,000 tons damaged.

Cape Psaromyta:
(Gulf of Corinth)

1 steamship of 800 tons damaged.

Sikionia:
(Gulf of Corinth)

1 merchant ship of 3,000 tons received a direct hit.

Navplion:

1 merchant ship of 10,000 tons badly damaged.

Cape Trypete:
(Crete)

1 merchant ship of 3,000 tons sunk.

Other Sea Areas:

Numerous small coastal vessels set on fire.

Ground attack, bomber and dive-bomber formations attacked enemy columns in the area north of Athens and on the Corinth - Argos road. The Corinth - Patras road was hit by a 1,400 Kg bomb.

Supplementary Report on Operations carried out on 24 April

Polinos Island:

1 merchant ship of 4,000 tons sunk.

Milos Island:

1 merchant ship of 6,000 tons damaged. Ship left burning.

Lavrion:

1 vessel of 8,000 tons damaged,
1 small warship of 1,000 tons received several hits.

/Supplementary

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33.

Supplementary Report on Operations carried out on 23 April

Navplion:

1 more freighter received 3 direct hits.

Paros:

1 vessel of 7,000 tons damaged.

Stenon:

1 vessel of 3,000 tons damaged.

2 Spitfires were shot down south of Navplion.

Total Losses

Enemy: None reported.

German: None reported.

Late Report from 23 April:

Enemy:

In the Air: 2 Spitfires

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

25 April: At Gabrell Msjua (west of Capuzzo) groups of fifteen to twenty enemy trucks with three armoured cars were driven off.

The Axis front runs from Sollum (town included) along the Capuzzo frontier fortifications in the direction of Sidi Omar.

A large number of enemy attacks with tanks and infantry were driven off. According to a statement by a prisoner, the enemy intends to relieve the situation at Tobruk by an outflanking attack on Bardia.

On the Capuzzo - Sollum front enemy forces south of Capuzzo were pushed back to Suleiman-Seghir by counter-attacks with strong air support. Seven tanks were destroyed and a number of armoured cars were destroyed or put out of action by Luftwaffe attacks.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

25 April: Nine old Italian aircraft and seven Hurricanes which had apparently been transferred overnight were observed on Tobruk airfield.

Photographic reconnaissance carried out over Tobruk and the fortifications to the south at 0713 hours was incomplete owing to fog banks. A large ship was observed level with the net barrage.

No enemy movements were observed by reconnaissance carried out along the Egyptian frontier from Sidi Omar to Giarabub at 0750 hours. About twenty cars, probably old Italian vehicles, were observed at Giarabub.

/Operations

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Operations

At 0545 hours three light bombers on armed reconnaissance attacked small vehicle concentrations in the Bardia - Capuzzo area at Maduar.

At 1030 hours fourteen German and Italian dive-bombers escorted by twelve Italian fighters attacked ground targets west of Capuzzo. An enemy group was dispersed, one tank set on fire and another destroyed. At the same time German ground forces launched an attack from the east and north.

At 1600 hours ten light bombers attacked enemy battery positions east of the frontier at Gabr es Seghir (?) and Sidi Suleiman (?). Bombs are believed to have hit a position. A successful attack was made on a large camp east of Sollum. One Hurricane was shot down.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

25 April: No enemy shipping was observed by morning reconnaissance over the sea area south of Sicily.

At 1740 hours reconnaissance over the sea area east of Sicily observed one battleship, one cruiser and three destroyers on course 120° 140 km south-east of Cape Spartivento. Contact was maintained until 1810 hours.

According to photographic reconnaissance, the amount of merchant shipping and the number of warships at La Valetta have not changed since 24 April. A shed east of the large dry dock in French Creek has been burnt out.

Airfields

Ta Venezia: 24 single-engined aircraft.

Luca: 14 Wellingtons,
1 twin-engined aircraft, apparently damaged,
1 single-engined aircraft.

Halfar: 1 single-engined biplane,
1 single-engined aircraft (Spitfire),
5 single-engined aircraft with folded-back wings.

The roof of a damaged hangar has been removed.

There were no aircraft at Calafra and Marsa Scirocco.

Owing to weather conditions, photographic reconnaissance could not be carried out over Malta in the afternoon.

Operations

25 April: At 0800 hours three bombers on armed reconnaissance made an unsuccessful attack on a ship of 3 - 4,000 tons escorted by a destroyer in the sea area 25 km north of Sidi Barrani. A destroyer was observed leaving Tobruk.

At 1325 hours a bomber sent out on reconnaissance over Tobruk observed a ship which had been attacked to be sinking. Another ship proceeding at low speed was observed nearby.

At 1500 hours fifteen German and Italian dive-bombers escorted by Italian fighters scored near misses on the reported ship. Results were not observed.

Six bombers carried out convoy escort operations.

/No

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35.

No enemy aircraft were encountered by fighters escorting an aircraft on photographic reconnaissance over Malta.

Two fighters which took off to intercept a drifting balloon on the eastern coast of Sicily could not locate the objective.

Defence

25 April: Sollum: Slight AA and fighter defence.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

12 reconnaissance aircraft
38 bombers
19 fighters
69 aircraft

Enemy Operations

24 April: Enemy aircraft attacked the town and airfield of Derna. Casualties amounted to two killed and two wounded. One Italian aircraft was burnt out and two others damaged.

The enemy made three air attacks on Tripoli and Benghazi during the night of 24/25 April. The bombs fell in the sea.

Losses

German: None.
Enemy: 1 Hurricane

Italian Operations

See German report.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

8 bombers
12 fighters
20 aircraft

Losses

Italian: None
Enemy: None reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 596 (27 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 26 April and during the Night of 26/27 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre

X Fliegerkorps

(a) Air Situation - Libya

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over Tobruk, Marsa Matruh and Fuka airfield.

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/(b)

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36.

(b) Air Situation - Mediterranean

No enemy warships or merchant ships were observed by reconnaissance over the sea area south and east of Sicily.

Photographic reconnaissance over Malta in the morning and afternoon gave details of warships and merchant ships at La Valetta and of aircraft at Luca and Halfar airfields.

Photographic and visual reconnaissance over Alexandria, Ismailia and Port Said on 24 April provided the following details:

<u>Alexandria:</u>	the aircraft-carrier "Formidable", three battleships, the "Lorraine" and a few destroyers and merchant ships.
<u>Port Said:</u>	1 heavy cruiser and about 45 merchant ships. 8 merchant ships and 2 small warships on the Port Said roadstead.

Fighters on escort over Malta in the morning encountered two Hurricanes. There were no losses on either side.

Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean

<u>German:</u>	Nil return.
<u>Enemy:</u>	None reported.

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

I. Ground Situation on 26 April (2000 hours)

German Operations in Greece

Panzer formations of Twelfth Army operating in two columns continued the pursuit of the enemy to the northern edge of the mountain range between Thebes and Athens, reaching Erythrai and the railway junction east of Tanagra.

Paratroops landed on both sides of the Corinth Isthmus and occupied the city of Corinth and the town of Lutrakhion (6 km north-east of Corinth). Paratroops are advancing eastwards in the direction of Megara. The canal is undamaged, but the bridge was blown up by the enemy.

SS units advanced rapidly through Arta and Missolonghi, reaching the coast north of Patras and landing on the Peloponnes. Patras was occupied and the advance continued southwards.

A Panzer division advanced south-east from Lamia in the direction of Thebes. The main force of another Panzer division is located in the area north of Pharsala.

Two mountain divisions are moving up in and north of the Lamia area.

The disarmament of the Greek Epirus and Macedonian Army is practically complete.

II. Air Situation on 26 April (2000 hours)

German Operations

Luftflotte 4 (VIII Fliegerkorps)

During the day bombers and dive-bombers attacked enemy shipping in the Athens - Crete area. The following successes have so far been reported:

/Salamis:

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37.

Salamis:

One 15,000 ton ship hit by one 50 Kg bomb.

SW of Salamis:

One 10,000 ton ship hit by several 50 Kg bombs.

15 km S of Idhira:

One ship of 600 tons set on fire.

30 Km S of Idhira:

One 20,000 ton ship hit twice on bows by 50 Kg bombs.

Ermioni (SE of Navplion):

One merchant ship of medium tonnage damaged.

N of Spetsai Island:

One freighter of 1,000 tons sunk,
One freighter of 2,500 tons damaged,
One freighter of 1,000 tons slightly damaged.

Kranidhion (N of Spetsai Island):

One ship of 5,000 tons damaged.

10 km S of Spetsai Island:

One ship of 1,500 tons set on fire.

10 km ESE of Leonidhion:

Three vessels totalling 50,000 tons hit by 50 Kg and 500 Kg bombs; fire broke out on one ship of 15,000 tons.

W of Keos Island:

One ship of 1,000 tons damaged.

E of Keos Island:

One ship of 1,500 tons damaged.

Milos Island:

One ship of 3,000 tons sunk.

30 km SE of Milos:

One ship of 6,000 tons damaged.

80 km S of Milos:

One ship of 5,000 tons sunk.

Bomber and dive-bomber formations attacked enemy columns and tanks in the Argos - Tripolis area.

Twin-engined fighters silenced enemy AA guns when paratroops landed on the Corinth Isthmus.

/Single-

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38.

Single-engined fighters escorted bombers and dive-bombers.

Defence

Fighter defence over the Peloponnes. Enemy bombers attacked in the Milos area.

Supplementary Report on Results of Operations on 25 April

Sea area Athens - Crete:

One passenger ship of 15,000 tons sunk,
One freighter of 18 - 20,000 tons received a direct hit with a
250 Kg bomb; large cloud of smoke developed.
One freighter of 2,000 tons sunk,
One freighter of 3,000 tons damaged,
One freighter of 2,000 tons damaged.

Gulf of Corinth:

One freighter of 5,000 tons damaged.
One small warship of about 1,000 tons damaged.

On Argos airfield four single-engined aircraft were destroyed and nine damaged.

Total Losses

Enemy: None reported.

German: None reported.

Late Report from 19 April:

German: 2 Me 109.

Late Report from 20 April:

Enemy:

In the Air: 2 Hurricanes

German: 4 Do 17
3 Me 109
2 Me 110
2 Ju 88

11 aircraft

Late Report from 25 April:

Enemy:

On the Ground: four aircraft, types not known.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

26 April: Brisk patrol activity on both sides at Tobruk. Enemy tanks were driven back to their own lines by strong defence. An enemy reconnaissance party was completely routed. An Italian battery was put out of action by enemy fire.

/Axis

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39.

Axis forces advanced at Sollum.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

26 April: Results of photographic reconnaissance over Tobruk:

A destroyer has arrived at the harbour; three small ships (800 - 1,500 tons) in the vicinity of the net barrage.

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over Marsa Matruh and Fuka airfield.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

Results of photographic and visual reconnaissance carried out over the area Alexandria - Ismailia - Port Said on 24 April:

Airfields

El Amiriya: (1226 hours)
(S of Alexandria)

1 twin-engined aircraft,
5 single-engined aircraft.

Ismailia: (1315 hours)

10 single-engined aircraft.

Ports:

Alexandria: (1230 hours - photographic reconnaissance)

1 aircraft-carrier ("Formidable"),
3 battleships,
3 cruisers, including one without bows in floating dock,
1 warship, apparently the Greek battleship "Giorgios Averoff",
1 submarine depot ship,
1 destroyer depot ship,
1 repair ship,
13 destroyers,
5 submarines,
1 torpedo boat, apparently Greek,
4 gunboats or mine-sweepers, including one in dry dock.

French Warships:

1 battleship ("Lorraine")
4 cruisers,
1 destroyer,
1 submarine.

Merchant Shipping:

8 tankers totalling about 58,500 tons,
49 freighters and cargo-passenger ships
totalling about 300,000 tons.

/Aircraft:

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40.

Aircraft:

5 Sunderlands (?)

Ismailia: (1315 hours - photographic reconnaissance)

1 freighter of about 1,500 tons,
1 small motor vessel,
1 freighter without stern.

Port Said: (1330 hours - photographic reconnaissance)

4 tankers totalling about 31,500 tons,
44 freighters totalling about 225,000 tons,
2 submarines,
2 escort vessels (?).

On the outer roadstead:

1 tanker of about 6,000 tons,
4 freighters totalling about 18,000 tons.

Suez Canal: (between Ismailia and Port Said)

1 tanker of about 3,000 tons going north,
1 magnetic minesweeper (?),
2 freighters each of about 5,000 tons going north,
1 freighter of about 3,000 tons going south.

Owing to thick cloud, railway movements in the direction of Ismailia could not be observed.

26 April: No enemy merchant ships or warships were observed by reconnaissance over the sea area south and east of Sicily.

Results of photographic reconnaissance carried out over Malta in the morning:

Warships at La Valetta:

7 destroyers, including one without bows,
1 light cruiser,
5 submarines,
2 minesweepers (?),
3 patrol boats, including one in dock,
2 auxiliaries (?).

2 small submarines have left port since 25 April.

Merchant Shipping:

1 freighter of about 1,500 tons,
1 freighter of about 1,200 tons (with list),
1 freighter of about 12,000 tons,
1 freighter of about 8,000 tons (being towed out of dock),
1 freighter of about 10,000 tons (unloading),
1 tanker of about 1,200 tons.

The amount of merchant shipping has not changed since 25 April.

Airfields:

Luca: 14 twin-engined aircraft,
1 single-engined aircraft.

/Halfar:

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41.

Halfar: 1 single-engined biplane,
1 single-engined aircraft (Spitfire),
5 single-engined aircraft with folded-back wings.

Ta Venezia: not covered.

There were no aircraft at Calafra and Marsa Scirocco.

With the exception of a minesweeper and an auxiliary vessel being put into dock and a magnetic minesweeper carrying out a search, photographic reconnaissance carried out in the afternoon showed that no changes had taken place since the morning. Two more twin-engined aircraft were identified on Luca airfield.

In the afternoon visual reconnaissance observed a ship, apparently a destroyer, on a northerly course 9 km south of Malta.

Operations

26 April: Fighters escorting a reconnaissance aircraft over Malta were engaged by two Hurricanes.

No enemy aircraft were encountered by fighters escorting a reconnaissance aircraft in the afternoon.

Defence

26 April: Malta: 0925 hours: very slight heavy AA fire over La Valetta.
1540 hours: inaccurate heavy AA fire over the eastern part of Malta. Heavy AA from the ship reported south of Malta.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

9 reconnaissance aircraft,
16 fighters
25 aircraft

Losses

German: None reported.
Enemy: None reported.

Situation at Sea - Mediterranean

26 April: Reconnaissance could not locate the Gibraltar Squadron during the day. It is believed to be in the vicinity of the Italian islands and it is expected that Italian ports will be bombarded. The Alexandria Squadron is still in the Ionian Sea.

Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

25 April: Nothing fresh was observed by coastal reconnaissance between Tripoli and Benghazi.

/Operations

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42.

Operations

25 April: Fighters carried out patrols over Derma airfield.

Two bombers attacked Tobruk harbour, dropping high explosive and incendiary bombs.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

26 April: Nothing of importance was observed by reconnaissance over the sea area south of Sicily.

One aircraft carried out reconnaissance over the Gulf of Taranto.

Nine aircraft carried out reconnaissance over the sea area west of Sardinia to the African coast. At 1625 hours a submarine on course 90° was sighted 235 km north-east of Algiers.

Three fighters carried out patrols over Taranto.

Operations

25 April: All operations had to be broken off owing to bad weather conditions.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

13 reconnaissance aircraft

11 bombers

18 fighters

42 aircraft

Losses

Italian: None reported.

Enemy: None reported.

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