

Complete

[Handwritten Signature]

DECLASSIFIED

REPORT ON

AIR OPERATIONS IN CRETE

17th April - 21st May, 1941

- Part 1 - Situation in CRETE at 17th April.
- Part 2 - Operations from CRETE assisting evacuation from GREECE.
- Part 3 - Phase prior to enemy attack on CRETE.
- Part 4 - Airborne attack on CRETE.
- Part 5 - Evacuation from CRETE.
- Part 6 - Enemy air tactics.
- Part 7 - Conclusions.
- Part 8 - R.A.F. personnel situation following evacuation from CRETE.

- - - - -

Enclosures

- "A" Report on R.A.F. signals in CRETE.
- "B" Report by R.A.F. patient at 7th General Hospital captured by enemy.
- "C" Report by R.A.F. officer on attack of MALEME.
- "D" ditto
- "E" Report by R.A.F. officer on attack of MALEME and No. 252 A.M.E.S. Station nearby.
- "F" Report by R.A.F. officer on attack of HERAKLION area.
- "G" Report by R.A.F. officer on attack of 220 A.M.E.S. Station near HERAKLION.

Distribution List

H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.	}	A.O.C. -in-C.	Copy No.1
		A.O.A.	" No.2
		S.A.S.O.	" No.3
		S.I.O.	" No.4
G.H.Q., M.E.			Copies 5-6
General FREMBERG			Copy No.7
Crete Committee			Copy No.8
G/Capt. Beamish			Copy No.9
Spares			Copies 10-

DECLASSIFIED

REPORT ON R.A.F. OPERATIONS
IN CRETE
17th April - 31st May, 1941

PART 1 - Situation in CRETE at 17th April

General situation.

1. CRETE became a major theatre of operations following the decision to evacuate GREECE.
2. At this time the only air forces on the island were 1 Fleet Air Arm squadron (No.805) located at MALEME and providing, as a primary role, fighter defence for the fleet anchorage at SUDA BAY. This squadron was at very reduced strength and consisted of a mixture of Fulmars, Gladiators and Brewsters; the latter only being flown in an emergency owing to engine defects.
3. Aerodromes were available at MALEME and HERAKLION with one landing strip at RETTHIO. Construction work was still going on at both aerodromes. HERAKLION was fit for use by all types of aircraft but only fighter aircraft could operate from MALEME.
4. A.M.E.S. stations were established at both MALEME and HERAKLION; the station at MALEME (No.252) was in full operation and the other (No.220) was in the final stages of erection. No. 252 A.M.E.S. fed information into the Gun Operations Room at CANEA which was developed as an Operations Centre and controlled the fighter and A.A. defences of SUDA BAY area. No R.A.F. controllers or operations officers were available at this centre. One Warrant Observer and one Lieutenant (Meteorological) attached to the F.A.A. acted as Controllers. No operations room was available at this time at HERAKLION but a protected site had been chosen and work was in hand to complete the centre. No R/T communication was available between G.O.R. and aircraft.
An efficient Greek observer system was in operation on the island reporting by telephone to a centre at CANEA which was linked to the G.O.R. CANEA.
5. On 17th April, 1941, Wing Commander G.R. BEANISH, assumed command of R.A.F. in CRETE, taking over the existing small staff of 1 Flight Lieutenant, who had been acting as S.A.F.O. CRETE, 1 Flight Lieutenant who had been posted as his relief, and approximately 17 other ranks. R.A.F. Headquarters was established in the town of CANEA near the Headquarters of the local military commander and the Naval Officer in Charge SUDA BAY. An immediate addition to the staff was a Chief Signals Officer; additional personnel were taken over on arrival of R.A.F. personnel from GREECE, between 18th and 24th April, including Operations Room Staffs for HERAKLION and CANEA.
6. R.A.F. personnel were also located at HERAKLION on a skeleton basis as a relict from "Z" Wing which had been formed for operations against the DODECANESE. Fleet

./cont'd.

Air Arm personnel only were at MALEME.

7. Stocks of fuel and ammunition were available at HERAKLION and MALEME aerodromes and additional fuel was advised from EGYPT. No maintenance spares were held on the island and no maintenance facilities were available.

8. The main R.A.F. W/T station in CRETE was at HERAKLION with point-to-point communication with EGYPT and GREECE. W/T traffic for S.A.F.O. CRETE at CANEA was handled by No. 252 A.M.E.S. at MALEME and transferred by D/R to R.A.F. Headquarters.

One telephone line was available between G.O.R. CANEA and HERAKLION. MALEME aerodrome, No.252 and No.220 A.M.E.S., and G.O.R. CANEA were also connected by direct telephone. Telephone communication was very poor and a general shortage of material prevented any major improvements being made; plans were in hand to improve the position but it was realised that a month at least would be required to achieve any duplication of telephone lines.

9. This was the general situation in CRETE on the 17th April. At this time no definite information of evacuation from GREECE was available, but it was known to be imminent.

PART 2 - Operations from CRETE assisting
Evacuation from GREECE

=====

10. On the evacuation from GREECE being ordered the immediate problems confronting the O.C., R.A.F., CRETE were :-

- (i) the provision of fighter protection for convoys to and from GREECE. Since there were no effective air forces left in GREECE the entire responsibility for the fighter protection of all ships taking part in the evacuation fell on CRETE.
- (ii) provision of administrative arrangements to receive in CRETE R.A.F. personnel evacuated from GREECE, and re-transfer them to EGYPT as opportunity offered.
- (iii) the development of a W/T station at CANEA providing communication with H.Q., R.A.F., Middle East, H.Q., B.A.F., GREECE, and all R.A.F. units in CRETE.

The evacuation of personnel from GREECE to CRETE and finally to EGYPT by Sunderland aircraft temporarily based at SUDA BAY was decentralized to No.230 Squadron under the command of Wing Commander FRANCIS.

./cont'd.

Fighter protection for convoys - Evacuation from GREECE.

11. To undertake convoy protection No. 30 Squadron equipped with 14 Blenheim I aircraft, was moved by air from GREECE to MALEME on April 18th and was supported subsequently by No. 203 Squadron (9 Blenheim IV's) from EGYPT, and remnants of Nos. 33, 80 and 112 Squadrons as they arrived from GREECE between 22nd and 24th April. Apart from No. 203 Squadron, all units were in a very low state of serviceability and no maintenance spares were available. No. 30 Squadron had only 6 - 8 serviceable aircraft; Nos 33 and 80 squadrons were combined and had a strength of 6 serviceable Hurricanes; No. 112 Squadron had 14 Gladiators of which approximately 6 were serviceable.

12. The plan for fighter escorts for convoys was based on providing patrols of Blenheim aircraft at maximum strength in the late evening and early morning to cover North and South bound convoys respectively, in the vicinity of the mainland of GREECE. As far as serviceability allowed patrols of six aircraft were employed for this task. Short range aircraft undertook protection when convoys approached CRETE and during their disembarkation at SUDA BAY. Over the intervening area of sea patrols were maintained at a reduced strength. Contingent with serviceability every effort was made to provide some aircraft over the convoy throughout the hours of daylight.

Fighter escorts were provided on this plan throughout the evacuation between the 21st and 29th April. Nos. 112 and 203 squadrons being located at HERAKLION and the remaining units at MALEME. On 30th April and 1st May No. 203 Squadron aircraft were returned to EGYPT.

Reception of personnel from GREECE.

13. To receive R.A.F. personnel from GREECE in CRETE an R.A.F. Transit Camp was established on 19th April at a well concealed site with an abundance of natural cover near SUDA BAY. With the small R.A.F. staff available the organization of this camp was a formidable undertaking. However, it was established with the aid of R.A.F. personnel disembarked at CRETE from S.S. DUMANA which was diverted to CRETE when on its way to GREECE by H.Q., R.A.F., Middle East. Off-loading of the material on this ship and its transferance to the dispersal area was also undertaken and achieved in little more than 24 hours - a superhuman effort with the small number of personnel and the limited transport available.

14. The Transit Camp aimed at providing hot food for all personnel on arrival and accommodation for all R.A.F. personnel during their stay in CRETE. Blankets were available for all personnel. Additionally, an Officers Mess was established in CANEA and provided accommodation for H.Q., B.A.F., GREECE officers, and those officers not required with their units in Transit Camp.

Despite the improvised nature of the arrangements and the fact that it was organized at short notice the Officers Mess and Transit Camp were a success and met their purposes adequately; 1500 of all ranks was the peak figure reached in the Transit Camp.

./cont'd.

The Camp was maintained in operation until May 9th when the final evacuation of all the remaining R.A.F. personnel took place by sea. From the 23rd April personnel were being transferred to EGYPT by Bomber Transport and Sunderland aircraft while a large proportion were cleared by ship on 29th April.

W/T communication at CANEA.

15. By 19th April W/T communication was established with H.Q., R.A.F., Middle East, H.Q., B.A.F., GREECE and all R.A.F. units in CRETE by R.A.F. pack sets.

A special night frequency was required for communication with H.Q., R.A.F., Middle East owing to the peculiar local wireless phenomena. A report on R.A.F. signals during the whole period is given at Enclosure "A".

PART 3 - Phase prior to enemy attack on CRETE.

=====

16. On completion of the evacuation of all R.A.F. personnel to EGYPT from GREECE via CRETE the following units remained :-

Unit	Personnel strength	Full a/c strength
No.30 Sqn. (MALEME)	less number of personnel not required owing to breaking up of specialist sections.	12
No.33 Sqn. } No. 80 " } (MALEME)	skeleton units which were combined to form a Hurricane unit. 80 Squadron had only very few personnel in CRETE, and 33 Squadron was at approx. half squadron strength.	6
No.112 Sqn. (HERAKLION)	small maintenance party only retained to operate Gladiator aircraft for short period	12
No.805 F.A.A. Sqn. (MALEME)	full squadron strength but very small number of a/craft.	6
No.252 A.M.E.S.) No.220 A.M.E.S.)	full strength in personnel.	

17. Owing to intensity of operations in GREECE the general state of serviceability of aircraft was very low and could not be improved owing to lack of spares on the island. In the / a high degree of serviceability was in fact maintained for a short period by robbing unserviceable aircraft; it was clear, however, that any

./cont'd.

high standard of serviceability could not be maintained without maintenance facilities.

From the personnel aspect, all personnel ex GREECE had had a very strenuous time and arrived in CRETE somewhat low-spirited. Virtually all personnel had lost their kit and had only the clothes they stood in. In consequence the personnel were generally below normal and required every encouragement to continue at a satisfactory state of efficiency. It was the policy as far as possible to retain with units only the minimum of personnel, thus allowing the remainder to return to EGYPT for a short rest and to be re-kitted. The intention of the A.O.C.-in-C. was to build up No. 33 Squadron to full squadron strength with new pilots and aircraft from EGYPT; No. 30 Squadron being retained temporarily in CRETE for convoy protection duties and No. 112 Squadron for local protection of the HERAKLION area.

18. Following the evacuation of GREECE the enemy continued intensive air operations against our shipping at sea and in the vicinity of CRETE and SUDA BAY anchorage; frequent enemy reconnaissance flights were now being made over the island. Our commitments in counter-acting this activity by the enemy allowed no relaxation of effort and units were operating at high pressure.

19. In this period, No. 30 Squadron continued to provide convoy protection for shipping to and from CRETE and also undertook daily reconnaissance flights in the KYTHERA Channel area for enemy shipping movements. The remaining units at MALEME and HERAKLION in the defence of local areas and of SUDA BAY anchorage and in the denial of air reconnaissance to the enemy.

The plan for the employment of short range fighter aircraft was to maintain aircraft at readiness on the aerodrome. On early warning of 1 plus aircraft being plotted, one aircraft came to stand by; if the aircraft approached the island and was identified as enemy the stand by aircraft took off and made contact with Operations Rooms by R/T (this had been developed in the meantime) 50% of the remaining serviceable aircraft were then brought to stand by. If the raid became a number of enemy aircraft all aircraft at stand by took off to engage the enemy the remainder being brought to stand by and remained under orders of the Controller at the Operations Centres.

During periods of congestion at SUDA BAY when unloading ships, standing patrols of one aircraft were maintained over this area by units located at MALEME.

The periods of readiness were a great strain on pilots and it was found desirable to pool pilots of units at MALEME to relieve the burden.

Very good results were being obtained by A.M.E.S. stations at this time. A weak sector however existed parallel to the coast and also for enemy aircraft approaching from the South very little warning was received.

Preparations to meet enemy invasion.

20. From reliable information received it was clear that the enemy attack on CRETE was to be air borne.

/cont'd.

Each aerodrome or landing ground was, therefore, a possible landing place for enemy transport aircraft and so represented a potential menace to the security of the island. Owing to the weak garrison of the island it was agreed with the G.O.C.-in-C. that no additional landing strips were to be constructed and a new site at PEDIADA KASTELLI then under construction was to be permanently obstructed, which was done by digging trenches across the site and piling earth between trenches; further possible new landing ground sites in the NESSARA Plain and near DERES in the Western end of the island were not to be developed.

X
/ it was therefore decided to retain them in use

21. The existing aerodromes and landing grounds were situated at points on the island where it was essential to locate land forces and to provide bases from which fighters could operate to reduce the scale of enemy air attack. The G.O.C.-in-C. had every confidence in the ability of the land forces to hold these aerodromes.

22. Stocks of fuel and ammunition were established at each aerodrome and at RETIMO where also a signals detachment and a small refuelling and rearming party were also located. R.A.F. Detachment HERAKLION were responsible for maintaining stocks at RETIMO.

23. All aerodromes and RETIMO landing ground were linked by W/T and by one telephone line through G.O.R. CANEA with H.Q., R.A.F., CANEA; the telephone was most unsatisfactory as it was used to capacity for reporting aircraft. All telephone lines were overhead and likely to be damaged by bombs or sabotage. The A.N.E.S. stations had W/T stand by communication with Operations Centres. RETIMO did not hold cypher books but employed transposition code for communication with H.Q., R.A.F., CANEA and HERAKLION, with key sentences sent to them by special D/R.

24. All useless ground on aerodromes was blocked with barrels filled with earth. This particularly applied to the large aerodrome at HERAKLION which by this means was reduced to flight paths with access to and from them to dispersal areas and protective pens. With the restricted size of HALEME aerodrome only a comparatively small area on the Western side of the aerodrome could be obstructed. As an additional measure full petrol barrels were also located on the aerodrome covered by machine gun fire so that they could be ignited on transport aircraft landing.

25. Protective pens were constructed at both HERAKLION and HALEME. At HERAKLION large stone built pens existed to house 3 to 4 aircraft and these were sub-divided to hold 2 aircraft. Triangular pens were built on the aerodrome adjoining the main runway, with petrol barrels. The total number of pens available was 9. At HALEME pens were made by excavating into the shallow hill ledge on the South side of the aerodrome. The height of the walls of the pen was increased by using petrol barrels filled with earth. 4 such pens were available and 6 more were under varying stages of construction. Building of the pens took 4 - 6 days

./cont'd.

with shortage of labour and interruption of work by air raids. Much time was lost with lack of spades and tools to cut the tops off petrol barrels.

Pens were located under cover of a concentration of Bofors guns; at MALEME in particular an approach from the sea was forced on the enemy, as when enemy aircraft made a low attack from the South over the hills they had very little time to locate the pens and from the angle of approach the pens made a very poor target.

Aircraft from HERAKLION were moved each night at dusk to RETIMO, returning to HERAKLION early the following morning.

26. Petrol and ammunition was built into selected pens on the aerodromes which were available for refuelling and rearming aircraft. At RETIMO no protective pens were available but a path was constructed from the landing ground area leading to a small olive grove which provided cover for a small number of aircraft. Petrol and ammunition were stored near this point. In all cases at aerodromes refuelling pens were marked with a red flag; pilots of all units were warned of the detailed location of these pens and therefore could get off the landing area with a minimum of delay to protective covering.

27. A ground signal was established at a prominent point on all aerodromes indicating the serviceability of the aerodrome. The signal consisted of 2 boards approximately 15 feet long by 2 feet wide. If these boards were in parallel the aerodrome was fit for use but if crossed at an angle of 90 degrees this signified "DO NOT LAND" and aircraft were then to proceed to either of the other aerodromes to refuel and rearm. The position of this ground signal at each of the 3 aerodromes was circulated to all pilots.

28. R/T communication was developed at G.O.R. CANEA and Operations Room HERAKLION for the control of the fighter aircraft. An additional benefit from this was that pilots could be informed in the air of the state of serviceability of all aerodromes if any surprise attacks developed.

29. The A.A. strength at MALEME and HERAKLION was built up to 10 Bofors guns, with one 3" gun section at MALEME and two 3" gun sections at HERAKLION. Alternative sites for Bofors and machine guns were established around the aerodrome, each site being protected with sandbags and camouflaged; and slit trenches were available for gun crews. In addition up to 40 machine guns provided by the Army and R.A.F. were available at or near the aerodromes. A proportion of the R.A.F. machine guns were to be retained undisclosed in buildings overlooking the aerodromes during any preliminary attack. No A.A. guns were located at RETIMO and A.A. defence was limited to machine guns provided by the land garrison.

By the 16th May two "I" tanks had been established near each aerodrome as an additional form of defence.

30. Defence plans were prepared for all R.A.F. units in CRETE and agreed between the local R.A.F. and Army Commanders. A.I.E.S. stations were provided with a barbed wire surround. All Officers Commanding Units were warned of the possibility of airborne invasion.

31. A strong liaison was built up by frequent visits between Operations Room controllers, fighter squadrons personnel, and Officers Commanding A.M.E.S. stations with the object of establishing mutual confidence and the whole was a very good working organization. Co-operation was developed also between both Operations Centres and plots of aircraft were interchanged between Centres.

32. H.Q., R.A.F., CRETE was moved from the town of CANEA to a semi-protected site on the hillside on the East side of the town and alongside Army Headquarters. A tented camp under cover of olive groves was erected for personnel.

33. Slit trenches and protected constructions were available on a large scale at all R.A.F. units to accommodate personnel.

Enemy operations

34. From the beginning of May until the 13th. May the enemy air force concentrated on the attack of our shipping to and from CRETE and while at SUDA BAY.

From 13th May onwards the enemy increased the scope and scale of attacks to include our aerodromes at MALEME and HERAKLION. At the outset only spasmodic bombing and occasional low flying attacks were undertaken against these objectives but these grew in intensity and frequency. In all attacks the enemy had a very great numerical superiority which included a preponderance of fighter aircraft either carrying out low flying attack or providing a heavy escort for the bombers and dive bombers. In all cases, except on approach from the South, we had some warning of the approach of enemy aircraft.

As a result of these enemy attacks our air forces were gradually being eliminated despite being reinforced by 10 Hurricanes over the period. However toll of the enemy was taken and 23 enemy aircraft had been shot down confirmed, 9 unconfirmed and a further 41 damaged. The heroic performance of the small number of fighter aircraft in CRETE is beyond praise. For some days pilots gave battle on every occasion at very great odds and would have continued to do so cheerfully but it was realised that, to continue, was a waste of men and material. A priority of attack of enemy aircraft was laid down but this proved impracticable as enemy fighter aircraft were always in force to protect their bomber formations and engage our fighters. Towards the end of this phase of enemy air attacks on aerodromes our fighter aircraft were therefore employed to deny the enemy air reconnaissance and to undertake reconnaissance sorties; investigation of intelligence reports such as aerodrome construction on the island of MELOS, reported concentration of enemy tanks in the MONEMVASIA area were examples of tasks carried out.

35. By May 19th our air forces were reduced to 3 Hurricanes and 3 Gladiators serviceable at HERAKLION for operations; the Hurricanes had arrived from EGYPT 2 days previously; 1 Hurricane only remained at MALEME. No. 30 Squadron Blenheims were moved to EGYPT as they became unserviceable for operations commencing May 7th. and were finally all moved by May 15th. as convoy duty had then diminished and the Blenheim aircraft were of no value against

/cont'd.

enemy fighters. At this time the enemy were attacking aerodromes with large numbers of fighter aircraft and it was clear that if our aircraft remained they would either be shot down by sheer weight of numbers or burnt up on the ground. No large scale fighter reinforcements were available from EGYPT.

In consequence it was decided, in agreement with the G.O.C.-in-C. to fly the remaining serviceable aircraft back to EGYPT at first light on May 19th until these attacks lessened. The intention was to return these aircraft to aerodromes in CRETE at a later stage and in greater numbers. Maintenance personnel were retained at aerodromes to receive aircraft on their return from EGYPT.

36. The enemy attacks on aerodromes included also the neutralization of our A.A. defences around the aerodromes. The continuous daily bombing and low straffing had the very greatest effect in wearying the gun crews and lowering their morale.

R.A.F. operations during phase prior to enemy attack on CRETE.

37. During the establishment of enemy air concentrations in GREECE for the campaign against CRETE attacks on Greek aerodromes were made nightly by Wellington aircraft operating from EGYPT; and in one case by Beaufighters which were transferred from MALTA to HERAKLION on the 16th May returning direct to MALTA on completion of the attack on the 17th May.

Details of attacks are :-

Night 13/14 May.

2 Wellingtons attacked HASSANI aerodrome.
2 Wellingtons attacked MENIDI aerodrome.

Night 14/15 May.

6 Wellingtons attacked HASSANI MENIDI and NECCARA aerodromes.

Night 16/17 May.

16 Wellingtons attacked MENIDI ARGOS and MOLADI aerodromes.
2 Wellingtons attacked MARITZA aerodrome RHODES.

Morning 17th May.

8 Beaufighters attacked concentrations of aircraft at MOLAOI ARGOS and HASSANI aerodromes.

Night 17/18 May.

1 Wellington attacked CALATO aerodrome (RHODES)

Night 18/19 May.

3 Wellingtons attacked HASSANI and ELEUSIS aerodromes.

An accurate assessment of damage caused on these raids cannot be made but it is certain that considerable material damage to enemy aircraft was inflicted.

./cont'd.

PART 4 - Airborne attack on CRETE

38. On the 20th May the attack on CRETE commenced and the narrative of events is given below.

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS.

20th May.

39. MALEME aerodrome was very heavily bombed and machine gunned from approximately 07.00 hours. Shortly after 08.00 hours some 50 (approximately) gliders began to land in the neighbourhood, mainly in the wadi on the Western side of the aerodrome. At 08.15 hours parachutists landed on the Western fringe of the aerodrome and East and West of the aerodrome, also West and South-west of CANEA, on the AKROTIRI Peninsular (North-east of CANEA) and in the SUDA BAY area. Six gliders were landed on the AKROTIRI Peninsular and three in the vicinity of SUDA BAY and CANEA.

A high proportion of the parachutists landing East of MALEME aerodrome were killed while the parties near CANEA were also rapidly mopped up; some snipers however remained on the AKROTIRI Peninsular near Headquarters.

A small number of JU-52 aircraft crash landed on the beach adjoining the aerodrome on the North side and on the aerodrome itself.

The General Hospital near CANEA was captured at 10.30 hours but was retaken later in the morning. (A report by an R.A.F. patient is given at Enclosure "B").

Low flying machine gun and cannon attacks were carried out by the enemy on a heavy and sustained scale over the CANEA - MALEME areas particularly where there were no enemy troops.

Enemy reconnaissance aircraft were most active throughout the day particularly over areas where parachutists had been landed.

Further parachutists landed West of MALEME aerodrome in late afternoon.

CANEA town was heavily bombed.

In the evening our land forces near the aerodrome were forced to retreat to positions approximately 2 miles to the East.

Heavy air attacks on HERAKLION and light scale attack on RETIMO during the afternoon and morning respectively followed by parachute landings at 1600 hours approximately at RETIMO and 1845 hours at HERAKLION. Parachute troops landed in the HERAKLION area East and West of the aerodrome and also West of the town. At neither aerodrome did the enemy have any substantial success though parachute troops established themselves to the East of RETIMO landing ground. At both places enemy casualties in parachute troops were heavy.

It is estimated that during the first day the following numbers of parachute and glider borne troops were landed :-

CANEA	1,800
MALEME	1,700
RETIMO	1,700
HERAKLION	2,000

./cont'd.

May 21st.

40. From 07.00 hours widespread bombing attacks took place in the MALEME - CANEA area.

Continuous enemy air reconnaissance over the area. Further parachute troops landed West of MALEME aerodrome and South West of CANEA about 09.00 hours and were further reinforced later in the morning.

At midday troop transport aircraft commenced to land on the West side of MALEME aerodrome and some of the beaches. Throughout the afternoon and evening an increasing number landed and took off from the West side of the aerodrome.

A further batch of parachute troops landed at 16.00 hours East of the aerodrome near New Zealand battalions and were quickly mopped up.

A sustained scale of low flying attack using machine guns and cannon guns and light bombs was maintained throughout the day over the area of fighting. Bombing was continuous in the MALEME area.

CANEA town heavily bombed.

During the morning enemy air reconnaissance was active over the HERAKLION area and was accompanied by widespread bombing and machine gun attacks mainly directed against aerodrome defences.

The enemy parachutists which had landed the previous evening attacked HERAKLION town; the attack was repulsed chiefly by the Greeks who inflicted heavy casualties.

In the evening further parachute troops and material were dropped at points where the enemy had established defensive positions including one position near the road from HERAKLION to SUDA.

At RETIMO a successful counter attack by GREEKS and AUSTRALIANS forced the enemy to retire some distance from the aerodrome.

The Navy intercepted an attempt at sea borne invasion that night.

May 22nd.

41. An attempt by our land forces to recapture MALEME aerodrome in the early hours of the morning was only partly successful and eventually they were forced to retreat from the aerodrome as a result of intensive enemy air action.

Troop carriers continued to land at MALEME aerodrome in a continuous stream throughout the day.

At HERAKLION a further large number of parachute troops landed East of the aerodrome and West of the town but none succeeded in landing on the aerodrome itself.

At RETIMO a small enemy party cut road communication with CANEA by establishing itself in strong position across the road on the West side of the aerodrome.

Enemy air activity was widespread in the MALEME and HERAKLION areas throughout the day. Dive bombing of our troops and advanced positions predominated as a form of attack.

The Navy intercepted a further attempt at sea borne invasion that night.

May 23rd.

42. As a result of the counter attack on the aerodrome the day previously, a gap had been left between brigades in

this area. The enemy advanced into this gap and further retreat to the East was necessary.

Further troop carrying aircraft landed throughout the day at MALEME.

Further reinforcements were landed at HERAKLION and by the afternoon mortar and machine gun fire was brought to bear on the aerodrome and camp.

Heavy bombing attack on HERAKLION aerodrome and town.

At RETIMO an unsuccessful attempt was made to clear the enemy out of strong points in the vicinity of the aerodrome.

The scale of enemy air attack showed no decrease. Dive bombing was now confined mainly to close support of enemy land forces.

May 24th.

43. Heavy air attacks on our positions in the MALEME sector and on CANEA town. Heavier bombs were used against the positions of our land forces.

The enemy began to advance along the coast towards CANEA and our right flank was heavily pressed.

No major change in the situation either at HERAKLION or RETIMO. HERAKLION aerodrome reported untenable as a result of enemy machine gun and mortar fire.

May 25th.

44. The enemy continued his advance towards CANEA, the advance being accompanied by a heavy scale of dive bombing and low flying attacks. CANEA town again heavily bombed.

No change in the situation at HERAKLION or RETIMO.

May 26th.

45. Severe fighting continued all day in the area between CANEA and MALEME.

General situation deteriorating.
Enemy air activity showed no relaxation of effort.

No change in the situation at HERAKLION or RETIMO.

May 27th.

46. Our land forces took up positions near CANEA. The situation now showed grave deterioration; preparations being made for evacuation.

A proportion of enemy air activity now transferred to back areas East of SUDA BAY. Movement on roads was particularly harassed; villages on the roads towards RETIMO and SPAIKIA bombed. Heavy bombing attack on HERAKLION town. No change in military situation at RETIMO or HERAKLION.

May 28th.

47. Army fighting rearguard action in SUDA BAY area. Enemy air activity in rear areas. SPAIKIA bombed.

./cont'd.

Enemy fighter patrols harassing road movement towards SPANIKIA. Enemy reconnaissance aircraft frequently over SPANIKIA area.

HERAKLION garrison evacuated night 28/29 May. Further parachute landings in the HERAKLION area on the evening of the 28th May and enemy now had strong forces established on the East side of the aerodrome, also on the road leading to the South of the island and to the West of the town. Strong attack probable on 29th May.

Situation at RETIMO unchanged.

May 29th.

43. Enemy land forces moving slowly along SIDA-SPANIKIA road. SPANIKIA dive bombed during evening. Enemy air reconnaissance over back areas. Convoy with HERAKLION garrison dive bombed throughout day.

Final rearguard position determined.
Evacuation commenced.

May 30th, 31st and June 1st.

49. Evacuation continued during these nights without serious interference from the enemy. Enemy scale of air attack in back areas reduced.

Two Sunderland aircraft were employed on the nights of 30/31 May and 31st May/1st June to assist evacuation.

Reports by R.A.F. officers on the attack on MALEME and HERAKLION are given at Enclosures 'C', 'D', 'E' and 'F'.

R.A.F. Operations during the attack on CRETE.

50. Aircraft operating from bases in EGYPT which had been bombing enemy aerodromes in Southern GREECE and the DODECANESE regularly since May 13th, continued their attacks after the invasion started.

MOL A01
On the night of May 20/21 TOPOLIA, MENIDI, ELEUSIS and MOLASI were bombed. Several fires and explosions were caused and at ELEUSIS bombs fell among dispersed aircraft. The first attack on MALEME aerodrome after the invasion started was planned for the night of May 22/23 but aircraft of the South African Air Force were unable to take off owing to bad weather conditions in the Western Desert. These conditions persisted for 2 days.

51. On the morning of May 23rd two flights of 6 Hurricanes each were despatched to CRETE with orders to land at HERAKLION. Unfortunately the first flight was shot up by a Naval barrage en route. Two of them were shot down, 3 returned to their base, 1 landed at HERAKLION. Of the second flight four were rendered unserviceable owing to damaged tail wheels on arrival and were returned to EGYPT the following morning; of the remainder one was shot up and burnt out on the ground by enemy aircraft on the following morning.

The first actual attack was made on May 23rd by 12 Blenheims which bombed enemy positions in the afternoon. An attack was made by Blenheims and Marylands in the evening. These bombed and machine gunned about 130 JU.52's. Ten of these were seen to be destroyed and many others damaged.

52. The next night (24th) 8 Wellingtons bombed MALEME aerodrome. Large persistent fires were started and five other fires were seen on the beach. During the day 5 Hurricanes attacked enemy positions in HERAKLION area. At dawn on May 25th Hurricanes and fighter Blenheims were despatched to MALEME but failed to find their objective as a result of low cloud and very heavy mist. Later in the morning Marylands and Hurricanes succeeded in finding their target and bombed and machine gunned aircraft on the aerodrome. About 24 JU.52's and fighters were destroyed. In the afternoon 2 Blenheims bombed aircraft on the ground and sticks were seen to fall among them. That night MALEME was again bombed, this time by four Wellingtons which also attacked the beaches near the aerodrome.

53. On May 26th 6 Hurricanes attacked MALEME, 5 JU.52's are known to have been destroyed. Several other aircraft were probably shot down. In this attack many JU.52's were damaged on the ground by machine gun fire. At dusk Blenheims and Marylands set fire to other JU.52's on MALEME aerodrome. That night a further raid was made. Five aircraft are believed to have been destroyed. Explosions on the beaches were heard which were followed by fires.

54. On the night of May 27th Blenheims and Hurricanes shot down three JU.88's over the sea and at dusk further Blenheims attacked MALEME aerodrome and destroyed several of the 100 aircraft (approximately) which were seen on the ground.

That night Wellingtons detailed to attack troop concentrations failed to find their target and bombed MALEME aerodrome instead. Seven fires were started, one causing four explosions. SCARPANTO was also attacked that night and again on the following night (28th) with 8 Wellingtons taking part. A fire was followed by a violent explosion.

55. Six Wellingtons attacked SCARPANTO on the night of May 29/30. Two others attacked MALEME aerodrome and a further two bombed CATAVIA (RHODES). No results were seen in any of these three raids.

56. The next night (30/31 May) 10 Wellingtons bombed MALEME and HERAKLION. At MALEME 3 unidentified aircraft were burnt out and two fires followed by explosions were started. At HERAKLION large fires were started on the aerodrome followed by explosions and six JU.52's were damaged on the ground.

57. Fighter patrols were maintained over H.M. Ships moving to and from CRETE. These were continued the next day. 5 JU.88's, 1 He.110, 2 Cant 1007 and 1 S.79 were shot down and 3 JU.88's were damaged.

58. HERAKLION was again bombed on the night of May 31/June 1. One large fire was started but this prevented further results being observed. 5 Wellingtons bombed MALEME where they destroyed 4 aircraft and probably 5 others and started 4 fires.

59. In addition to these offensive operations medical supplies and food were dropped at HERAKLION and RETIMO on the night of May 23rd. Unfortunately those at RETIMO dropped into the sea but further supplies were landed safely on the night of May 24/25. Supplies were also dropped on May 31st for troops awaiting embarkation at SPAINIA.

EVACUATION OF CRETEMALEME AREA

60. When R.A.F. personnel from Nos. 30 and 33 squadrons and No. 252 A.M.E.S. arrived at H.Q., R.A.F., CRETE on May 23rd. from the fighting zone around MALEME they were in an exhausted and pitiable condition. They had been through the heaviest fighting and borne a share of the brunt of the parachute and glider attack on the aerodrome and had lost all value as fighting troops. In consequence, O.C., R.A.F., CRETE decided on May 24th. to move these personnel, together with the R.A.F. Headquarters personnel not required, from CANEA to a camp site near VAMOS (12 miles East of SUDA BAY) and away from the fighting area. The party was approximately 230 strong of all ranks. R.A.F. operational headquarters, including O.C., R.A.F., CRETE, Signals and Cypher personnel, remained with Army Headquarters.
61. The personnel of No. 805 (F.A.A.) squadron at MALEME had filtered back to CANEA at the same time as the R.A.F. personnel. These reported to the Naval Officer i/c SUDA BAY and were subsequently evacuated by ship from SUDA BAY later.
62. On May 26th. the Army front West of CANEA was broken. In discussion with the G.O.C-in-C., it was determined by O.C., R.A.F., CRETE, that no offensive action was then possible as his troops were in no condition for such action. The military plan then was to hold a position near SUDA BAY. It was clear at this time that evacuation from the island was the only course of action open. This had been represented to G.H.Q., M.E., by the G.O.C-in-C., but no approval had been received.
63. Anticipating this development, O.C., R.A.F. CRETE moved the R.A.F. personnel from the camp near VAMOS and the 230 Squadron detachment from SUDA BAY to SPAHKIA on the South coast, a probable port for evacuation, during the night of 26/27 May. Three days rations were taken for the party and a strong signals party accompanied it. R.A.F. operational headquarters continued to remain with Army Headquarters. Headquarters R.A.F. Middle East was notified by signal of this action and was also informed of the disposition of all R.A.F. personnel on the island at this time.
64. The party arrived at SPAHKIA on the morning of the 27th. May and established themselves in caves near the beach and opened up signals communication with Headquarters R.A.F. CRETE and Headquarters R.A.F. Middle East and announced their arrival. During the day the party was joined by airmen of No. 252 A.M.E.S. who had escaped southwards after the attack on MALEME.
65. On the 28th. May Army Headquarters and R.A.F. operational Headquarters arrived at SPAHKIA. Evacuation had then been ordered.
66. On the night of 28/29 May 100 R.A.F. personnel were evacuated to EGYPT by destroyer. On the following night the remaining R.A.F. personnel at SPAHKIA, less R.A.F. operational Headquarters, were despatched by Glen ship to Egypt.

/cont'd.

67. On the night of 30/31 May O.C. R.A.F. CRETE together with the G.O.C-in-C. and Naval Officer i/c SUDA BAY and their respective staffs were evacuated to EGYPT by Sunderland. It should be noted here that arrangements at ABOUKIR for the reception of this party were excellent; hot food and beds were available for the whole party in the Officers' Mess. O.C. R.A.F. ABOUKIR (Group Captain CULL, D.S.O.) was there in person to greet the evacuated party.

HERAKLEION AREA

68. At 0600 hours on 28th. May, O.C., R.A.F. HERAKLEION was informed by the local Army authorities of the decision to evacuate that night. O.C. R.A.F. HERAKLEION did not inform the bulk of his airmen until 21.00 hours but officers were informed during the day of this decision.

69. Owing to road communication to the South of the island being blocked it was impossible to inform the party at MASSARA plain, which had been sent there to open up a landing ground, of the decision to evacuate, and wireless communication was not possible. O.C. R.A.F. HERAKLEION appreciated that the R.A.F. personnel in the southern area of MASSARA Plain should be in a position to get away from the South coast. The numbers of personnel involved were approximately 9 officers and 52 other ranks.

70. On arrival at ABOUKIR Group Captain BEAMISH was informed of the R.A.F. personnel on MASSARA Plain and he reported the situation again to H.Q., R.A.F., M.E. and to the R.A.F. Liaison Officer with the local naval authorities, but at that time nothing could be done to achieve their evacuation. It was known that the R.A.F. party in the MASSARA Plain were in touch with the local army authorities in that area.

71. R.A.F. HERAKLEION, including No. 220 A.M.E.S. personnel, were embarked on H.M.S. ORION. The embarkation of the party was uneventful. However, at about 0700 hours on the morning of 30th. May the ship was attacked by dive bombers; these attacks were sustained throughout the day until 1500 hours. During this time three direct hits with, it is believed, 1,000 lb bombs, were registered on the ship and the resulting casualties were heavy, mainly to Army personnel, but 2 R.A.F. personnel were killed, 11 were wounded, and 11 are missing and presumed killed; many bodies on board being blown to pieces making identification impossible.

72. On the night of the 2nd/3rd June a small party of all Services made an M.L.C. serviceable which had been left on the beach near TYMBAKI by the Navy and evacuated approximately 77 personnel of all Services; 9 R.A.F. personnel were included of which 3 were S.A.A.F., part of the flying crew of a Maryland which crashed near TYMBAKI on 25th. May.

About 20 miles from CRETE an Italian submarine was encountered which took all officers prisoners, including 2 R.A.F. officers (No. 112 Squadron) and 2 S.A.A.F. officers (No. 24 Squadron).

The survivors arrived in EGYPT on 5th. June and reported that approximately 1000 British personnel were in the TYMBAKI area; the remaining R.A.F. personnel were with them. As far as was known no R.A.F. personnel had been injured by the intensive day and night bombing and machine gun attacks which had been undertaken by the enemy in that area.

73. One R.A.F. officer and 11 other ranks were located at RETIMO. No communication was possible with this detachment as the roads from CANEA and HERAKLEION were blocked by the enemy. It is not known whether the decision to evacuate was received by the British troops in the RETIMO area. The R.A.F. personnel were under the guidance of the local Army commander in that area.

.

74. The R.A.F. personnel situation following the evacuation of CRETE is given in Part 8 of this report.

PART 6.

ENEMY AIR TACTICS

Reconnaissance

75. The enemy maintained intensive air reconnaissance over CRETE during the period prior to the attack and during the attack itself.

While our fighter aircraft were in operation the majority were high flying single sorties (about 15-20,000 ft) obviously taking photographs. From a crashed aircraft a most detailed photographic mosaic of the RETIMO area was found and it can be assumed that detailed photographs were available of all relevant areas in CRETE.

It was quite normal for 4 or 5 reconnaissance aircraft to be operating at intervals over the island daily. Dornier 17s and 215s were normally used.

During the attack when our air forces had been neutralized continuous reconnaissance was carried out from a very low height and at a very low speed. Dornier aircraft were again employed and in a few cases Henschel 126 aircraft were seen. To assist reconnaissance aircraft locating their own troops in this phase, white Verrey light signals were employed by enemy ground forces and ground strips were also used as ground to air signals. Large Nazi flags were also placed on the ground or on trees at conspicuous positions to indicate positions of ground forces. Messages were not dropped from the air or picked up from the ground. It is most probable that R/T communication was available in aircraft undertaking close reconnaissance.

Bombing and dive bombing

76. Attacks against aerodrome defences, shipping, A.A. and coast defence positions and against our land forces were mainly dive bombing attacks. Some medium level bombing was also employed against aerodrome defences, shipping and A.A. positions at SUDA BAY, while low level attacks were used against CANEA town, aerodrome defences at MALEME, and HERAKLEION, and our Army positions in the MALEME - CANEA area.

While our fighters were operative enemy bombing raids were practically always escorted and protected. The tactics were for a small formation of fighters to accompany the bombers and remain high above the objective during the attack, while a further independent formation circled the aerodrome from which opposition could be expected. Me 109s and 110s were employed.

/cont'd.

For the bombing attacks, the greater proportion of aircraft were JU.87, JU.88, Do.17 and Do.215, though some He.111 were seen at intervals, JU.88s predominated. Dive bombers operated in loose formations of 3 - 12 aircraft; the attack was sustained by waves of aircraft operating in succession, small formations up to a maximum of 9 aircraft undertook medium level and low level attacks.

The topography of CRETE is such that objectives were readily located on closing the island. Bomber formations frequently approached direct to the objective and carried out attacks without delay if fighter opposition was to be expected. A proportion of bomber formations, however, appeared to make a landfall near RETIMO and swing right or left depending on the objective being CANEA in the SUDA BAY area or HERAKLEION.

Each dive bomber appeared to be allotted a particular objective and attacked individually. Almost invariably the get away was made to seaward at a low altitude when fighter aircraft were operating.

Dive bombing against the well defended SUDA BAY area, was resolutely carried out in the face of A.A. opposition. Normally the dive commenced at approximately 8-6,000 feet and bombs were released at a steep angle of dive at about 3,000 feet; the aircraft made their get away at a very low height over the hill tops and headed seaward. The individual standard of bomb aiming did not appear high, but the results were achieved with numbers of aircraft employed.

When fighter opposition was improbable, enemy dive bomber aircraft formed a circle over the objective and dived at the target in succession following the leader. The attack being prolonged for approximately 45 minutes depending on the size of the formation.

Attacks appeared to be governed by the leader and all aircraft religiously followed the leader's tactics. This was the normal practice in attacking positions held by our troops. Reliable information indicates that dive bombing and low level bombing employed for close support is directed almost entirely by R/T.

The bombing of the towns of CANEA and HERAKLION, which were quite undefended, was carried out systematically by sectors over a period of days. The first attack against CANEA was made against the Government building which received direct hits. Subsequent attacks against both towns appeared to have no particular objective but to be directed quite indiscriminately against the town itself.

500 lb. bombs are believed to have been the heaviest employed; in the main the 250 lb bomb was used. No incendiary bombs were dropped. In all cases bombs were fitted with whistling vanes. Some bombs with small delay action were used but the bulk of the bombs exploded immediately on impact. The percentage of dud bombs was very low except for anti-personnel bombs dropped by fighters. A small amount of night bombing was undertaken during the moon period particularly in the HERAKLION area. This form of attack was disturbing to personnel but otherwise not profitable and it appeared to be carried out for nuisance value only.

./cont'd.

Fighters.

77. For escorting bombing raids fighter aircraft operated in formations of 6 to 9 aircraft. For low flying attacks approximately 6 - 30 aircraft were used. In most cases aircraft split up into sections of 2 with one acting as leader with the second aircraft around the tail of the leader. In practically all cases fighter formations had one wingman aircraft weaving around the tail of the formation. Low flying attacks against aerodromes were carried out from a very low height using machine gun and cannon fire and small anti-personnel bombs. Approaching the aerodrome a proportion of the aircraft opened up with machine guns fired quite indiscriminately. Near the objective, formations echeloned to one side and split off to attack individual objectives. The formation reformed after the attack. Attacks were sustained over aerodromes for an approximate period of one hour, aircraft being continually on the watch for any movement seen around the aerodrome. Slit trenches were particular objectives and were machine gunned frequently; transport moving on roads was invariably harassed and destroyed. The accuracy of fire from aircraft was good on the whole; the speed of fire of aircraft guns was very striking and it was also noticed that considerable quantity of ammunition was carried by each aircraft. Small bursts normally were used against pinpoint objectives, a number of attacks being made against each one. The greater proportion of fighters used were Me.110 after our fighter opposition had been eliminated. For the attack of aircraft on the ground, a very high proportion of incendiary ammunition was used; it seemed also that 2 separate attacks were made against aircraft with an interval of approximately 10 minutes. The theory held was that the first attack holed the aircraft and released fuel; the second attack set the aircraft on fire.

Parachute and troop-carrying aircraft.78. (a) Parachute aircraft.

For the initial dropping of parachutists waves of 9 - 12 aircraft (JU.52) were employed. The aircraft flew in open formation of 3 aircraft and disgorged parachutists in a terrifying cloud while still in formation. The aircraft flew at about 500 feet. On releasing their load, aircraft turned to seaward and returned to their bases at sea level. Reinforcing flights were always made in large formations and dropping was on an extensive scale at each point. From personal observations made on the first morning of the attack, approximately 12 parachutists were carried in each aircraft. Later this number seemed to vary and figures of 7 to 20 personnel have been reported as being dropped from individual aircraft. A number of parachutes were seen which did not open. Aircraft dropping supplies by parachute or reinforcing troops were guided to the positions of the enemy ground forces by Verrey light signals used in profusion by ground parties. Prior to dropping, J.U. 52 aircraft bringing reinforcements or supplies flew in a circle above the area and methodically studied the location of their ground forces and normally dropped their load on two runs over the area. Heavy and

/cont'd.

bulk supplies were seen to be dropped with 4 to 5 parachutes attached but normally one aluminium container was dropped with one parachute. Motor cycle combinations, anti-tank guns and mortars were seen to be dropped from aircraft. Many containers, of food and medical supplies mainly, fell into our hands and the material was found to be excellent. It is interesting to note that anti-tank rifles had a small carriage fitted with inflated rubber tyres. dropped from aircraft

(b) Air Transport aircraft

JU.52 aircraft acting as air transports normally operated in small formations of a maximum of 3 timed to arrive at their destination within short intervals and representing a continuous stream of aircraft during the hours of daylight. On landing 3 to 4 personnel already on the spot rushed to the aircraft and helped to unload it and the aircraft left with very little delay. Timed over a period of one day, one transport aircraft landed and took off within 5 minutes. These aircraft landed and took off in an incredibly small space; estimates are 400 to 500 yards. Transport aircraft returned to their bases singly proceeding at a very low height.

/cont'd.

PART 7CONCLUSIONS

79. A true picture of R.A.F. operations in Crete cannot be obtained unless it is seen in relation to the background provided by conditions existing on April 17th. At that date the general position was that there were two aerodromes in existence, at both of which a small amount of work was still going on, and one landing ground. No R.A.F. Headquarters nor R.A.F. station organization were established on the island. A form of fighter defence existed for Suda Bay anchorage with one F.A.A. squadron at greatly reduced strength supported by one A.M.E.S. station and the Greek Observer system. No experienced personnel were available at G.O.R. Canea to control fighter operations and there was no operations centre at all at Heraklion.

80. In consequence an almost entirely new organization had to be built up in Crete. Remnants of the fighter squadrons from Greece were flown to Crete but these aircraft had already been operating intensively in Greece and for the most part were badly in need of maintenance. The pilots too had been put to a very severe strain over the past six months, while the maintenance personnel had been equally overworked and had now to undertake their work with virtually no ground equipment, inadequate tools, and a very small range of spares.

81. The Headquarters and Operations Room Staffs were drawn from evacuees from Greece. Many of them, particularly the Operations Room Staff, had little or no previous experience of the duties allotted to them and there was no selection to be made while the remainder were obviously disturbed as a result of the Greek campaign and took some time to settle down. In all cases with personnel from Greece they had lost their private kits, camp kits, etc., and had only the clothes they stood in. As very limited replacements only were available in Crete this factor alone prevented personnel settling down satisfactorily; their main wish was to get to Egypt for a short rest and to be re-kitted.

82. It is clear from reports of aerodrome construction in Greece, particularly in the Peloponnese area, and from the concentrations of aircraft seen by our air reconnaissances operating from Egypt, that the enemy had established at aerodromes in this area a heavy concentration of air forces. The obvious role of these air forces was to neutralize our air forces and A.A. defences on Crete before attempting the airborne attack.

83. From subsequent happenings, it appeared that the enemy plan allowed seven days (May 13th to 19th inclusive) to liquidate our air forces. This period may well have been on a sliding scale and the final air-borne attack no doubt took place when our air forces had, in fact, been neutralized.

84. The scale of attack cannot be estimated, but it was sufficient to undertake very frequent devastating and sustained attacks on a number of aerodromes on the island, not alone the existing two and one landing ground, over the period of the operations. Waste of bomber effort, which could have been diverted more profitably elsewhere, was obvious in the continued bombing of Canea and

Heraklion towns and the attacks on previously damaged and useless shipping in the Suda Bay anchorage. Regarding fighter effort, ME. 110s were over objectives in Crete for a considerable period, literally waiting for some movement on the ground before opening up cannon and machine gun fire, and a proportion of this effort could well have been employed against aerodromes. Large numbers of fighters were also available to escort bombers if opposition was feared and also to attack individual aircraft on the ground, or individual gun defences around aerodromes. This was in itself a justification of the policy of trying to keep even a few fighters going for as long as possible. Obviously it made matters more difficult for the enemy and caused him to expend a greater effort than was really necessary.

While our fighters were in operation, attacks on aerodromes were on such a scale that our fighters were outnumbered by from 7 to 10 to 1 and the courageous work of the pilots during this period cannot be too highly praised.

85. Continuous reconnaissance undoubtedly gave the enemy a most up-to-the-moment picture at Crete aerodromes during the preparatory phase, including the positions of non-operational aircraft on the aerodromes. In this connection it is interesting to remark that one Magister at Maleme, and one dummy Blenheim at Heraklion, parked at dispersal points were untouched by the attacks on the aerodromes during this period. At a later stage during the attack the enemy close reconnaissance aircraft undoubtedly provided the enemy with the detailed situation of our land forces.

86. With the enemy scale of attack large numbers of defensive fighters would have been necessary to counter it and the task was far beyond the capabilities of the few fighter aircraft remaining and the A.A. defences existing in Crete. No large scale reinforcements were available. The fighter aircraft remaining were open to destruction on the ground either at rest or while refuelling or rearming, or likely to be shot down in the air by sheer weight of numbers. This situation governed the decision to return to Egypt in the early morning of 19th May. It should be borne in mind that the intention was to bring back fighter aircraft, in increased numbers if possible, to aerodromes in Crete if our land forces were able to hold the aerodromes successfully. As it turned out, after the second day Retimo landing ground was in fact secured but access to it by road to provide maintenance personnel, adequate refuelling parties, full W/T facilities and augmented stocks of ammunition and fuel was not possible as the enemy held positions across the road leading from east and west. It is clear also that if Retimo had been used extensively this landing ground would have suffered an equivalent intensive scale of air attack and there was no A.A. defence available for it. It was quite impossible for fighter aircraft to operate from the aerodrome at Maleme while Heraklion aerodrome represented a sheer gamble where it might be possible for fighters to land on occasions only, up to 24th May, with any degree of security. In the hope of providing a haven for fighter aircraft operating over the island such as long range Hurricanes from Egypt, it was hoped to develop a landing strip on the Massara Plain. Owing to the weakness of the land force garrison the development of a landing ground had not been possible previously. An Army garrison arrived on the Massara Plain on May 19th (Headquarters R.A.F. Crete were only informed on that morning) and a party of W. D. and G.D.

officers was despatched that day to find a landing strip which could be made usable in a very short period; a reconnaissance of this area had been made earlier in the year by Works Directorate representatives for an aerodrome and a site had been selected which would have taken some months to prepare. What was now sought was a strip landing ground for refuelling and rearming in emergency. A landing strip was in fact found which it is understood would have been ready for use by May 28th but it was then too late; additionally it would not have been possible to provide adequate stocks of material there owing to the road from Heraklion being blocked.

87. In summary, then, the enemy air attacks during the preparatory phase ending on May 19th had fully neutralized our air forces and substantially reduced the efficiency of our A.A. defences. The first enemy object had been attained and the stage was set for the airborne attack.

88. With the limited air forces available, and the very small numbers of aerodromes in Crete such a state was inevitable against the heavy enemy scale of attack.

89. Additional aerodromes and fighter squadrons would have delayed the date by which the enemy had achieved this result, but a very heavy effort indeed would have been necessary to counter it. Further A.A. guns would have had little effect on the situation.

90. The next stage was the capture of an aerodrome in Crete. This commenced with intensified bombing and ground ~~staffing~~ of Maleme aerodrome and surrounding area prior to the dropping of well equipped parachute troops and landing airborne troops in gliders. It is apparent that the scale of this attack staggered the defence and a measure of surprise was obtained on this account. There is little doubt that a large proportion of the early parachute troops was annihilated, but some sections of them obtained a valuable initial success immediately on the west side of the actual aerodrome and in the area still further west of the aerodrome. The initial success on the aerodrome was exploited later by the parachutists who had landed further west. The widespread nature of the attack was also a big factor in embarrassing the defence giving them unexpected tasks away from the aerodrome. There must have been some doubts in the mind of the enemy if it was possible to capture Maleme and this may well have inspired the heavy attack on Heraklion in the afternoon. It was clear however that his policy was decided on the night of the 20th/21st May, if not earlier, and on the morning of the 21st the enemy concentrated all his efforts on Maleme and succeeded. During that day he was able to land a stream of transport aircraft with reinforcing troops and material; this stream increased in volume as the enemy hold on the aerodrome increased. A valiant counter attack by the New Zealand Division undertaken when heavily embarrassed by enemy air forces failed to prevent this situation mainly on account of enemy air action.

91. The key to the situation in Crete had now gone and it was only a matter of days before the enemy were in a position to force the issue in that area despite the fact that the seaborne reinforcements of the enemy had been wiped out by naval action.

Capture of
Maleme
Aerodrome
21st.

92. The complete air superiority held by the enemy permitting the unmolested dive-bombing and ground strafing of our land forces continuously was undoubtedly the main factor in weakening the defence. The morale factor too played a large part at this stage; the land forces employed had returned from a campaign in Greece where the enemy also had air superiority and soon became wearied and dispirited when similar conditions developed. No trained troops were available to relieve them in the fighting area after severe bombing attacks.

93. The operations of our air forces based in Egypt during this period undoubtedly weakened the enemy but by comparison it was only a drop in the ocean. The occasional day attacks were an inspiration to the portion of our ground forces which saw them, but the value of these attacks in stimulating the morale generally was lost with the incessant appearance of enemy aircraft over our lines at a low height and with complete freedom of action. With the amount of movement of enemy land forces in small parties there were no profitable objectives for attack in support of our land forces; Maleme aerodrome and the immediate environs was the sole point of supply for the enemy land forces and represented an objective of outstanding importance where material damage could be achieved by day and night attacks.

94. Reviewing the situation in retrospect the following factors emerge in the defence of aerodromes, viz.,

- (i) that aerodrome defences against airborne attack must include deep dugouts around the perimeter to counter the effect of the preliminary attack of the aerodrome defences. Men and guns must be held undisclosed in these dugouts. A system of communication from a command post must be installed in these dugouts so that personnel can be kept informed of the development of the attack.
- (ii) independent of these dugouts a large number of small protected posts scattered over a wide area would be of value in the vicinity of the aerodrome to counter the effect of parachutists dropped in a widespread manner. The vulnerability of parachute troops when dropping or immediately on landing has been proved.
- (iii) strong armoured mobile forces must be held in the vicinity of the aerodromes in support of dugouts defences and the scattered posts in the vicinity of aerodromes.

95. Regarding operations in the second phase as a whole, it is evident that for a successful airborne attack a high measure of local air superiority must be obtained, so that the massed dropping of parachutists can be achieved; and more important still, that the continued supply of reinforcements and material can be provided. Detailed air reconnaissance also must be continued by the enemy throughout this phase to determine sectors where timely assistance is required.

96. Once the use of an aerodrome is secured by the enemy then concentrations of forces can be rapidly built up and our attacking forces will be constantly opposed by fresh men and an augmented scale of material including guns and light vehicles. The mobility and fire power of

the airborne force will be ever increasing. Without question the capture of an aerodrome is the key to the success of an airborne invasion. In this connection it must be pointed out that the Germans will endeavour to construct an aerodrome adequate for transport aircraft as soon as they land. Any prisoners taken will be employed on ~~this work~~.

97. Finally the close support afforded by the German air force in Crete to their ground forces represented the very closest co-operation and was the main factor in achieving their rapid success. In Crete this close support could not be countered but it is firmly believed that if this can be done in any future campaigns against Germany the main bulwark of the German war machine will be weakened.

PERSONNEL SITUATION FOLLOWING THE
EVACUATION OF CRETE
UP TO JUNE 8th, 1941

HEADQUARTERS, R.A.F., CRETE
and OPERATIONS ROOM, CANEA.

Returned to EGYPT :- 19 Officers and 67 Airmen.

MISSING :-

907459 A.C. Harding,	W/Op.	(Last seen in Operations Room, CANEA, 23/5/41. Forming new camp site S.W. of CANEA, 19/5/41. No news since. Injured by bomb on 17/5/41. Transferred to 7th General Hospital and placed on D.I. list. No news since 20/5/41 but no bed cases were evacuated from island.)
941074 A.C. Sellars,	"	
529974 Cpl. Gully,	A.C.H.	
523912 Cpl. Palmer,	"	
529109 Cpl. Woods,	"	
972079 A.C. Davies,	C & B.	
753055 A.C. Nutt,	E/Asst.	
1014659 A.C. Trollope,	D.M.T.	
620719 IAC. Moore,	A.C.H.	

Port Detachment, SUDA BAY.

Returned to EGYPT :- 17 Airmen returned.

MISSING :-

544130 A.C. Cassidy,	D.M.T.	Last seen near SUDA BAY 26/4/41.
----------------------	--------	----------------------------------

No. 45 Squadron.

Returned to EGYPT :- 1 Airmen.

759294 Sgt. Langrish,	A.G.	Had been shot down over CRETE
-----------------------	------	-------------------------------

MISSING :-

P/O May. (wounded)	}	Last heard of on beach, 1/6/41.
P/O Churchill		

RETINO Detachment.

MISSING :-

P/O Reeves,	112 Sqdn.	(In communication with H.Q. until 24/5/41. No news since.)
Cpl. Cantwell,	W/Op.	
643936 A.C. Schofield,	W/Op.	
976686 A.C. Underwood,	"	
775033 A.C. Star,	A.C.H.	
774245 A.C. Fenger,	"	
614044 AC1 Bassett, A.		
1157688 AC2 Bennett, K.R.		
928052 AC2 Hutson W.		
532179 Cpl. Jones, R.T.		

No. 230 Squadron Detachment.

Returned to EGYPT :- 1 Officer and 7 Airmen.

No. 230 Squadron Detachment (cont'd)

The Officer concerned was a Cypher Officer - P/O Venon - who was placed in charge of the detachment by Officer Commanding, R.A.F. Crete.

No. 252 A.M.E.S.

Returned to EGYPT :- 1 Officer and 38 Airmen.

KILLED :-

916209 Cpl. Strong, R.W.	R/Mech.
AC1 Kerr,	R/Op.

MISSING (believed killed):-

AC1 Elder, A.B.	D.M.T.
AC1 Elder, J.	"
AC1 Gibson,	"

MISSING :-

938672 AC1 Barber, H.L.	Service Police
965665 AC1 Craven, C.	u/t R/Op.
621380 LAC Mantle, J.S.	R/Mech.
AC1 Petterson,	C & B.
LAC Richardson,	R/Mech.
AC1 Roome,	C & B.
AC1 Thorpe,	u/t R/Op.
537793 LAC Salles, C.H.	A.C.H.

MISSING (wounded) :-

F/Lt. Babcock, F.H.	O.C. 252 A.M.E.S.
LAC Pearson,	D.M.T.
LAC Shipworth,	" (seriously wounded),
Cpl. Collins,	W.E.M. Left in hospital at KELLEDES

MALEME.MISSING (wounded) :-

Commander Beale, R.N., O.C. MALEME.
The remaining F.A.A. personnel reported to Naval Officer i/c SUDA BAY, and were evacuated under his orders.

No. 30 Squadron.

Returned to EGYPT :- 2 officers and 46 airmen.

KILLED IN ACTION.

Sgt. Austin.
569410 LAC Stone.
LAC Thomas.

MISSING (believed killed in action) :-

F/Sgt. Fridd.
LAC Quilliam
LAC Steedham
LAC Sturman

./cont'd.

MISSING (beleived to be prisoners of war).

523085 Sgt. Pickering.
 Cpl. Harrison.
 Cpl. Dear.
 LAC. Greenhalgh.
 LAC. Edwards. Electrician
 LAC. Williamson.
 AC Longbottom.
 AC Ralph.

MISSING :-

F/Lt. Cullen.		LAC. Darch.
P/O Daston.		A.C. Ralph.
P/O Vetton Cremer.		LAC. Lease.
Sgt. Hoves.		LAC. Dulligan.
Sgt. Hill.		LAC. Spalding.
Sgt. Ellin.		LAC. Carter.
Sgt. Beatty.		LAC. Cherry.
Cpl. Lawrence.		LAC. Stewart.
Cpl. Worthington.		LAC. Honeycombe.
Cpl. Gulliver.		LAC. Poole.
Cpl. Williams.		LAC. Wood.
Cpl. Wake.		LAC. Oswald.
Cpl. Bond.		LAC. Hoyle.
Cpl. Donohue.		AC. Thompson I/Rep.
Cpl. Smith	A.C.H.	AC. Goodhand.
Cpl. Wrigley.		AC. Zelborc.
Cpl. Pennystone.		AC. Griffiths.
Cpl. Day.		AC. Williams. A.C.H.
Cpl. Matthews.		AC. Smith.
Cpl. Gerrard.		AC. Evans.
Cpl. Russell.		AC. Hogg.
LAC. Mooney.		AC. Bell.
LAC. Stone. I/Rep.		AC. Huggin.
LAC. Fenton.		AC. Snott.
LAC. Walker.		AC. Dow.
LAC. Betts.		AC. Abbott.
LAC. Nicholls.		AC. Pritty.
LAC. Gillan.		

A.M. W.D.MISSING :-

S/Ldr. Deakin
 F/Lt. Mason
 F/Lt. Lewis Dale

} Last seen on beach, 1/6/41

At MALEME, 20/5/41. No news since this date.

No. 33 Squadron.

Returned to EGYPT :- 2 Officers and 57 Airmen.

KILLED IN ACTION

561664 Sgt. South.	F.A.E.
626946 LAC Eaton.	M/Rigg.
956986 AC2 Banks.	F/Mech.
553233 LAC Dixon.	Armr.
634430 AC1 Johns.	M/Cycl.

MISSING (wounded):-

S/Ldr. Howell. O.C. No.33 Squadron.
 P/O Myhill.
 363326 W.O. Firman. W.O.(E).

/cont'd.

No. 33 Squadron.MISSING (wounded) Cont'd.:-

349688	Sgt. Fairbanks.	N/O
647375	Ac1 Buchanan.	F/Rigg.
1010916	AC2 Craig	D.M.T.

MISSING :-

F/O Dunscombe
F/O Butcher

566695	Cpl. Whitehurst.	Fitter 2.
561114	Sgt. Elson.	"
561344	Sgt. Wilkinson.	" 1.
542272	Cpl. Mitchell.	F/Mech.
	Sgt. Butterick.	Pilot
	Sgt. Raynish.	"
	Sgt. Leveridge.	"
573107	AC1. Smithson.	W.E.M.
548957	LAC. Tweddle.	Elect.
545906	AC1. Stone	F/Mech.
775137	AC2. Gewelberg.	A.C.H.
625844	LAC. Green.	F/Rigg.
620483	LAC. Penniceard.	F/Mech.
943705	AC2. Fryor.	"
628566	AC2. Smith.	F/Armr.
774528	AC2. Geringer	A.C.H.
774710	AC2. Schütz	"
627129	AC1, Pendegras.	F/Mech.
522242	LAC. Brookes.	Armr.
911380	AC2. Farrish.	W/Op.
549487	AC1. Yeomans.	Elect.
544442	AC. Burwell.	"
629379	AC1. Frame.	A.C.H.
621123	AC1. Dean.	F.Mech.
	AC1. Find	Armr.
728094	AC1. Miller.	"
553780	AC1. Brown.	"
639373	AC1. Wickendon.	A.C.H.
	AC1. Nelson.	I/Rep.
1250619	AC1. Rogers.	Clk. G.D.
631307	LAC. Wilkinson.	A.C.H.
123.....	AC1. Walkinshaw.	"
965505	AC2. Taylor.	C. & B.
981928	AC". Riley.	A.C.H.
370368	Sgt. Cross.	N/Ord.
631988	LAC. Trinder.	"
	AC1. Beaven.	"
	AC2. Hutchinson.	A.C.H.
	Sgt. Hill.	Pilot.

No. 220 A.M.E.S.

Returned to EGYPT :- 1 Officer and 36 Airmen.

KILLED IN ACTION.

915757	LAC Nash,	L.C. R/Mech.
637661	LAC Copplestone E.	

MISSING, believed prisoner of war (wounded).

915518	LAC. Threlfall H.J.	} Wounded. Last heard of in Hospital } at HERAKLION.
915849	LAC. Cope R.	
952128	LAC. Black. A.	
985841	AC1. Marsden.	

/cont'd.

No. 220 A.M.E.S.

DIES of wounds received on board H.M.S. "ORION".

552083 IAC. Keenan.
611470 AC1. Whiteman.

MISSING :-

949908 AC2. Cookson
949901 AC2. Woodhead
643609 AC1. Fellows
643009 AC1. Walton
968851 Cpl. Fidge
952128 AC2. Dorrington

Embarked on H.M.S. "ORION",
but not seen after bomb
explosion.

R.A.F. Station, HERAKLION.

Returned to EGYPT :- 10 Officers and 54 Airmen.

KILLED.

924008 AC1. Thompson, N.G.
517861 Cpl. Greenfield L.R.

DIED of wounds.

AC. Tabern.

MISSING:-

537677 A/Sgt. Andrew
533209 A/Sgt. Harrison
556092 Sgt. Hunter 112 Sqdn.
562228 Sgt. Mackrill 33 Sqdn.

Last seen bathing on a beach 4
miles E. of HERAKLION aerodrome
on 20/5/41.

529742 Cpl. Alexander
926371 AC2. Bradley J.W.
1121683 AC2. Clark A.E.
525808 Cpl. Crabb A.G.
949738 AC1. Copley D.
535997 Cpl. Cantwell T.
552523 AC1. MacFayden J.M.
1163257 AC2. Northover N.H.C.
934293 AC2. Rankin R.J.
915033 AC2. Treasure C.R.G.
517349 Cpl. Millar W.S.

Embarked on H.M.S. "ORION". Not
seen after bomb explosion.

Admitted hospital from RETIMO
before 20/5. No further news.

MISSING :-

S/Ldr. Trumble O.C., R.A.F. HERAKLION
F/Lt. Howlett C.R.C.
F/Lt. Davis
F/O Dilly, C.N.

Last heard of on beach
1/6/41.

Last heard of proceeding to MESSARA
Plain, 20/5/41.

F/O Valachos P.J. (D.F.C.)
F/Lt. Fry 112 Sqdn.
P/O Hutton, T. 112 Sqdn.
F/O Garside 112 Sqdn.
P/O Hamilton (Hurricane Sqdn)

Last heard of on beach
1/6/41.

F/Sgt. Carter
Cpl. Lyne

Fitt. 1. ©
W.E.M.

./cont'd.

R.A.F. Station, HERAKLION.MISSING (cont'd) :-

Cpl. Findley	W.E.M. @
Cpl. Hobbs	F/Arm. @
Cpl. Griffiths	Fitt, I @
A/Cpl. Crawford	F/Rigg @
LAC. King	Fit, IIE @
LAC. Wallace	Elect, II @
LAC. Snowden	Armr.
LAC Greening	ACH(GG)
LAC Chandler	DMT
LAC Duff	"
LAC Johnstone	F/Mech @
LAC Dunlop	Fitt, IIE @
LAC Stevenson	F/Mech @
LAC Boag	F/Rigg @
LAC Beards	" @
LAC Walters	" @
LAC Jones	I/Rep. @
LAC Liddle	Fitt, IIE
LAC Walker	M/Rigg @
LAC Cunliffe	W/Op
Cpl. Bayes	A, C, H.
AC Addison	"
AC Craggs	D.M.T.
AC Hoods	"
AC Hudson	"
AC Lumsden	"
AC Scales	"
AC Woolley	F/Rigg @
AC Bishop	A.C.H.
AC Foster	"
AC Lonsdale	"
AC Paddock	Fitt IIA @
AC Allen	"
AC Brown	F/Mech
AC Mace	W/Op
AC Sken	"
Sgt. Falkner	Pilot
Sgt. Oakley	"
Sgt. Wheelan	Navigator
Sgt. Webb	W/Op
Sgt. Dawson	"
Sgt. Watkins	"
LAC Reed	@

@ Last heard of on beach near TYMBAKI on 1/6/41.

Prisoners of War.

F/O ^{BENNETT} Barnett	112 Sqdn.) Taken aboard Italian submarine 2/6/41. Believed prisoners of war
F/O Bartley	112 Sqdn.	
F/O Rees		
AC Crumwell		

No. 24 Squadron - SAAF.

Returned to EGYPT :- 2 Airmen.

Prisoners of War.

Lt. Ford	SAAF.) Taken prisoner aboard
2/Lt. Gill	SAAF.) Italian submarine, 2/6/41.

/cont'd.

	Returned to <u>EGYPT</u>	Casualties in Battle of <u>CRETE</u>	Total	$\frac{\text{Returned to EGYPT}}{\text{Total}}$ Casualties
Headquarters, R.A.F. CRETE (and Operations Room, CANEA)	6	9	95	9%
Port Detachment, SUDA BAY.	17	1	18	$\frac{1}{2}$ %
No. 45 Squadron. (1 a/c crew)	1	2	3	67%
RETIMO	-	10	10	100%
No. 252 A.M.E.S.	39	17	56	30%
MALEME (O.C.)	-	1	1	100%
No. 30 Squadron	48	70	118	60%
A.M.W.D.	-	3	3	100%
No. 33 Squadron	59	52	111	47%
No. 220 A.M.E.S.	37	14	51	27%
No. 230 Squadron Detachment	8	-	8	-
HERAKLION (including 112 Sqdn)	64	76	141	58%
No. 24 Squadron, S.A.A.F. (1 a/c crew)	2	2	4	50%
GRAND TOTAL :-	361	257	618	42%

G. E. Beamish

Group Captain,
Officer Commanding,
Royal Air Force. C R E T E.

10th June, 1941.

Enclosure "A" to report on "AIR OPERATIONS
IN CRETE.

DETAILED SIGNALS REPORT.

R.A.F. CRETE.

PERIOD 17TH APRIL TO 31ST MAY, 1941

1. Introduction.

Prior to the above period, it was intended that Crete should be used as a base for "Z" Wing operations against the Dodecanese.

For the "Z" Wing plans it was decided that Heraklion should be the Headquarters. At this unit there was already in existence three medium power transmitters carrying out the following services:-

- (a) Point to point, Headquarters, R.A.F., Middle East, and Headquarters, British Forces, Greece, on 9230 Kcs day and 4615 Kcs night.
- (b) H.F. D/F on 6500 Kcs.
- (c) M.F. Beacon on varying frequencies.

Apart from two A.M.E.S. Stations, no other wireless facilities existed on the island.

2. With the German infiltration into the Western Desert and the foreseen collapse of the Greek front, "Z" Wing was disbanded and the defence of Crete became of first priority. On 17th April, 1941, Wing Commander G. R. Beamish was appointed to command, with A/Squadron Leader G.H.F.Hurst as Chief Signals Officer.

3. On arrival in CRETE on 17th April, the only additional signals equipment available was that which had been collected for "Z" Wing operations.

4. Telephone communications on the island was limited to one operational line between CANEA and HERAKLION; an additional line was in course of construction. MALEME, 252 A.M.E.S. and 220 A.M.E.S. were linked to the operations Centre also by one direct line. No duplication was possible through shortage of material, particularly telephone instruments.

The whole telephone system was most inefficient; speech was bad, congestion of traffic delayed calls, and high winds caused breaks in communications. In fact telephone communication could not be relied on.

5. It was now decided that Headquarters R.A.F. should be established at CANEA near Army Headquarters, and on the night of arrival a pack set was installed and communications with Headquarters, R.A.F. Middle East was established on 8078 Kcs day and 4054 Kcs night.

6. From this date, 17th April, 1941, commences the signals story in detail.

./cont..

18th April.

7. On the 18th April, as it was realised that telephone communications were poor and would be the most easily sabotaged installations on the Island, pack sets were installed and opened up on a frequency of 3310 Kcs., chosen for its good day and night results; communication being established with 220 and 252 A.M.E.S., MALEME, HERAKLION, and Headquarters, CANEA. RETIMO was added to this frequency the following day when a signals detachment was despatched to this landing ground.

19th April.

8. S/S "Dumana", originally bound for GREECE, was diverted to SUDA BAY, and 560 packing cases of various classes of equipment were unloaded and conveyed to a site under olive trees about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from SUDA. Every one of these cases was examined in an eager search for wireless and electrical equipment. The following items were found, quickly transferred, and put into use:-

(a) One P.E. power unit, part of a well equipped photographic lorry. (This was the only auxiliary power on the Island, and undoubtedly saved the signals situation. It was treated with extreme care and ran for hundreds of hours).

(b) Two T.I087 transmitters.

(c) One Remote Control Panel, Type 3.

(d) Two metal rectifiers for charging.

(e) Heavy batteries.

(f) Miscellaneous items.

9. One T.I087 was installed and came into operation on R/T as soon as valves could be flown out from EGYPT. It proved its worth within a few hours in the control of fighter aircraft, all of which were ordered to revert to one frequency, i.e. 5450 Kcs.

Power supply at first proved a little difficult as it was unwise to keep the only auxiliary set working continuously. It was known that the town had a 3-phase supply, but the administrative work necessary to get this installed would have taken days, so it was done without authority. It is hoped that the CRETANS are not still looking for an enormous unbalanced load on two phases.

10. The metal rectifiers were worth their weight in gold. MALEME had no power for their starter trolleys and at times these two rectifiers were giving an output of 90 amperes at 36 volts. No charging boards were available, but coils of D.3 cable were wound and proved excellent as resistances. The Army had 400 miles of D.3 or D.8 on the Island, and none of it was put to better use.

11. Four T.77 transmitters and other equipment ex S/S "Dumana" were returned to CAIRO.

Personnel.

12. The personnel problem was ever present and the section had little rest, but they worked their 12 or 16 hours a day uncomplainingly and it is not possible to speak too highly of their good work. Communication with Headquarters, R.A.F.

Middle East, was maintained throughout the whole period, often under the most trying and difficult conditions. On 24th April, Signals personnel arrived ex GREECE, and one senior N.C.O. and three airmen asked to be posted to CRETE. This eased the situation somewhat.

13. On 26th April, a Type X was received and put into operation.

14. HERAKLION transmitting and receiving stations were heavily bombed. Equipment fortunately was not damaged and was moved into caves.

15. It was decided by the Officer Commanding that it was far too dangerous to keep Headquarters in the Town, and a new Headquarters site was chosen and speedily erected under the protection of the cliffs into which Headquarters moved on 12th May. The fact that Signals wanted nearly half of this new accommodation was a little upsetting at the time, but the Officer Commanding supported his Signals Section in every way possible, and we eventually took over four out of the nine dug-outs constructed.

Security Measures.

16. It had now become obvious that the enemy were determined to capture CRETE by an airborne attack, and the Officer Commanding satisfied himself that everything possible had been done to ensure the rapid destruction of all S. and C. Publications throughout the Units in CRETE if an emergency arose. Although 5 incinerators were ready at Headquarters and sufficient at other Units, it was thought that it would still take too long to destroy the huge number of books held. Headquarters R.A.F. Middle East was signalled regarding this and agreed that many should be returned. The Chief Signals Officer, who made repeated inspections of all units, visited MALEME and instructed the Senior Cypher Officer to return all surplus, which was done; but unfortunately, although at every other Unit full destruction was effected, MALEME books were all eventually captured by the enemy, the Cypher Officer thinking that the raid was just another bombing attack, when in fact, after this attack, hundreds of parachutists descended around the Headquarters building.

17. On 16th May, the Headquarters Camp site was bombed, One signals N.C.O., Cpl Brown, who had done excellent work, was killed, one Signals Corporal and two operators were slightly injured.

18. On the 18th May, the Chief Signals Officer visited RETIMO and HERAKLION. While at RETIMO, one M.E. 110 circled leisurely around the drome. It was considered that the W/T set and personnel, which had been located in a house near the landing ground, should be moved to a place of greater security, and the Officer Commanding agreed to this. The set was subsequently located near Army defensive positions under cover of olive groves.

At HERAKLION, it was noticed that full preparations were being made to get the transmitters working in the caves, but incessant dive bombing and machine gunning held up the GREEK workmen who were installing power. This power installation was never completed, as, on 20th May, the invasion started, thousands of parachutists being dropped at key points. HERAKLION suspended H.F. D/F and M.F. Beacon services, and continued point to point on pack sets.

19. The Chief Signals Officer returned to Headquarters CANEA, on 19th May.

20. When the parachutists arrived, it was decided to destroy the majority of S. and C. Publications, retaining one set SD.045/3 and M.E. Table No. 3, also "V" Syko cards; but when a little later six gliders landed behind Headquarters, SD.045/3 and Table were destroyed and Syko retained. Unfortunately, this was compromised at MALEME, but in an endeavour to provide a little security one card was cut into 8 pieces and a scramble arranged using only seven pieces of card. This was only for communication with HERAKLION.

Later, Headquarters R.A.F. Middle East, forwarded one set of books, though we borrowed I.D. Cypher from the Army. This we afterwards found had been compromised, so the M.E. Table was used until the final day.

21. On the 22nd May, an Army D.R. informed us that R.A.F. RETIMO, was keeping a receiving watch only; this was subsequently confirmed by portable Naval W/T Set. It is not known why the transmitter was not working, but it is assumed that this was damaged by enemy action. A new charging set had just been supplied to this Station.

22. On the 23rd May, the Officer Commanding hoped to get a landing strip working on MASSARA PLAIN, and a senior N.C.O. and party were to proceed with a pack set. This was cancelled as HERAKLION reported that they had sent out a pack set, also information was received that the road between CANEA and HERAKLION was held by the enemy for about 2000 yards, so spares could not be sent from Headquarters.

23. Early on the 24th May, intensive dive bombing attacks at CANEA commended, and on this day the Army Headquarters moved at very short notice to a position four miles east of SUDA BAY. R.A.F. Headquarters accompanied them later.

24. On the 25th May, CANEA was being heavily bombed, and the Officer Commanding ordered a move to a position three miles from VAMOS, and stated that as much equipment as possible should be transferred. All night, the Signals Section worked continuously transporting pack sets, two T.I087 Transmitters, Power Trailer and Stores, arriving on new site 0530 hours only to find that a further move was necessary, and it was only possible to drag the T.I087 transmitters off the lorries and smash them, including Power Trailer and Rectifiers. As the possibility of such an occurrence happening had been visualised, every battery had been collected and kept fully charged as it was realised that once the power supply and rectifiers had to be left behind, our pack sets were entirely dependent on batteries. These batteries kept us going for the last five days. The only small charging set available was handed over to the advanced party (see next para.)

25. On the 26th May, the Officer Commanding decided that the majority of R.A.F. personnel should move to SPAHKIA from our position near VAMOS. One senior N.C.O. and majority of Signals personnel with a pack set and charging engine accompanied the main party. On arrival of the rear party at SPAHKIA on the 28th May, it was found that this R.A.F. set was handling traffic for the 3 Services, which it continued to do with success. The set subsequently brought along by the rear party was handed over to the Navy for use on the Admiral's wave of 4205 Kcs. The rear party moved to join Headquarters after the advanced party had moved off.

./cont..

26. One night only was spent with Army Headquarters under trees at this new site, and the next day the Army, Navy and Air Force left in convoy for SPAHKIA, arriving on 28th May. The R.A.F. stopped through M.T. failure at a place about 16 miles from SPAHKIA and opened up communication later on moving during daylight to caves near the sea.

27. On the 28th and 29th May, many messages of vital importance were cleared by R.A.F. signals, which was the only wireless link available. Having had nothing but Most Immediates, Emergencies, or Immediates, for so long it was refreshing when finally on the 29th all traffic was cleared and Headquarters, R.A.F. Middle East passed through an "Ordinary".

28. A skeleton Signals party remained behind to maintain communications to the last minute. They finally left by Flying Boat about midnight 30th May.

29. The R.A.F. set was then handed over to the Navy for continued use and final disposal.

Signals Lessons.

30. So well have Signals, in general, perfected their organization, that there is little to be learned from experience in CRETE, probably one of the most difficult countries in the world from a Signals point of view, when continually on the move, owing to high mountains and impassable roads; but two points are worthy of note:

- (i) G.P. Sets, light in themselves, must be contained in light robust cases. Of the two sets moved to SPAHKIA in the final stage, one was in a light case and easily handled, the other was contained in a heavy case and proved most difficult to manhandle down a mile of cliff face. Additionally when enemy action restricts movement on roads to night only it is necessary to have some readily transportable unit so that the set can be taken away from the roads and the station set up in a comparatively secure position.
- (ii) A more efficient form of portable charging set is most desirable. Such a set must be readily transportable and should comprise two charging circuits.

(Sgd) G.H.HURST.

Squadron Leader
Chief Signals Officer,
Royal Air Force, CRETE.

3rd June, 1941.

Enclosure "B" to report on "AIR OPERATIONS
IN CRETE"
- - - - -

REPORT ON ATTACK ON 7TH GENERAL HOSPITAL,
NEAR CANEA - CRETE.
- - - - -

1. On the morning of Tuesday, 20th May, 1941, at approximately 0430 hours, the 7th General Hospital was attacked by a large number of enemy aircraft. The Hospital was dive bombed and machine gunned until about 1030 hours.
2. About this time shots were heard being fired in the hospital grounds. They were from guns of enemy troops which it was afterwards learnt were dropped by parachute. Later, GERMAN troops entered the tents and ordered all (about 300) patients to line up on the main road of the hospital; only very serious cases being allowed to remain in number one ward. All patients were dressed in pyjamas or hospital blue; a number had no shoes or slippers.
3. When we were lined up and all the tents had been searched, the red cross flag and the Union Jack were hauled down and the GERMAN Swastika hoisted. This was done by about 20 GERMAN troops.
4. We were then marched out of the hospital on the main CANEA - MALEME road, and into a wood two or three hundred yards away. We were made to sit in an open part of the wood without tin helmets. When enemy aircraft came low over us we put our hands in the air to show that we were prisoners of War.
5. In this part of the wood there was a BRITISH army ration dump. The GERMANS gave us food from this, - biscuits and cheese. Water was drawn from a nearby well.
6. Later we were ordered to move on through the wood in front of the GERMANS. We did so until a BRITISH tank was spotted in a clearing. The tank was, however, helpless with us in front of the enemy and so it moved on.
7. We carried on again until we came to a road where we were made to stop while a scout was sent out to verify that the way was clear. This done, we moved on until we came to a rather thin part of the wood where we were made to lie down flat.
8. We lay here for some time, and saw one of our patrols coming towards us. They stopped about 75 yards away and set up a Bren gun.
9. Unfortunately the men of the patrol knew that the enemy was in this part of the wood, but not that 300 patients from the hospital, now prisoners, were also there. Their first burst of fire killed several patients. At this point an AUSTRALIAN Major who was one of us, stood up and shouted directions to the patrol. After about a quarter of an hour of firing over our heads, the enemy was pushed back into the part of the wood through which we had just come.
10. We waited for several minutes and then we made off towards the hills and to the artillery position where we remained until about 2330 hours. (20/5)

./cont...

11. At this time we walked by road to the BRITISH troop positions just outside CANEA where we stayed during the remainder of the night of the 20th and until about 2100 hours on the 21st. We then moved back to the hospital and into caves on the shore. We remained here during the night of the 21st and on the day of the 22nd, until 2100 hrs when we were instructed to move back into the tents of which the hospital proper consisted.

12. On objecting to returning to the wards we were told that since no treatment could be given owing to loss of supplies - these were believed to have been burnt by the GERMANS - we had permission to rejoin our Units.

13. About sixty of us made a party, and with six rifles supplied by the hospital authorities made our way to CANEA.

14. From there the other airman, A.C. Treasure and myself made our way to R.A.F. H.Q. where we arrived at about 0300 hrs on the 22nd May.

H.D.HUNTER. Cpl.

DECLASSIFIED

Enclosure "C" to report on "AIR OPERATIONS
in CRETE."

REPORT BY PILOT OFFICER CROWTHER, NO. 30 SQUADRON ON THE ATTACK
ON MALEME AERODROME, MAY 20TH, 1941.

PREPARATIONS AGAINST ATTACK.

We had been warned by Commander BEALE R.N., Officer Commanding, MALEME, several days before May 20th that an attempted invasion by airborne troops was more than probable and that such an attempt would be preceded by heavy bombing and ground strafing. Under his direction personnel of 30, 33 and 805 Squadrons approached the New Zealanders who formed the local Army Garrison and together worked out a plan for the continuous manning of the defensive positions overlooking the river. It was agreed that between 0430 hours and 0700 hours which was considered the danger period the forces on ground be increased. Personnel not posted to a defensive position when the "stand to" sounded were to stand by as reserves in the rear at the top end of a sheltered gully.

On the north side of the hill facing the aerodrome slip trenches had been dug and machine-gun posts established. Browning, Lewis and Vickers guns were mounted and manned by 30 and 33 Squadrons. All ranks had been issued with either Lee Enfield rifles or revolvers and with 50 rounds of ammunition apiece. Constant inspection at all hours of the day and night were carried out to ensure that the men were on the alert and that no surprise attack might be successful. There were 10 Bofor guns round the perimeter of the aerodrome and one section of 3" guns on the top of the hill, and on its north side four 4" naval guns had been mounted as a defense against sea-borne invaders.

ENEMY ATTACK.

At 0430 hours on May 20th, the defence officers (S/Ldr. HOWELL, Officer Commanding, No. 33 Squadron, and Pilot Officer CROWTHER, Commanding 30 Squadron Detachment), inspected all positions, and satisfied themselves that everyone was on the alert. A second inspection was carried out at 0600 hours. At 0700 the alarm was sounded and within a few minutes very severe and prolonged bombing of the defense positions started. The Bofor crews as the result of sustained bombing and machine gunning attacks during the past seven days, were by this time almost completely unnerved, and on this particular morning soon gave up firing. One Bofors gun was seen to go into action again but the shooting was rather inaccurate. While the Camp was being bombed, enemy fighters made prolonged machine gun attacks on the Bofors positions and inflicted heavy casualties. Later in the day one Bofors gun was seen in action, but the shooting was rather inaccurate. At the same time there was intensive ground strafing of troops over a wide area in the locality. These attacks lasted for two hours, with the result that the nerves of our men became ragged, and that intended reinforcements moving towards the aerodrome were unable to do so. A fuller effect of the bombing was that the men kept their heads down and failed to notice the first parachutists dropping. This particularly applied to those which landed South West of the aerodrome sheltered by hilly country. Gliders were already seen crashed in the river bed on the west side of the aerodrome and had apparently been dropped at the same time. They had been cut off from the troop carriers with the object of trying to effect a landing in the river bed in strength. There was no opposition to them except from two R.A.F. Lewis guns which kept firing throughout the landing.

./cont..

The remnants of R.A.F. personnel and NEW ZEALAND Infantry on the hill side were being subjected to persistent ground strafing from a very low height. The GERMANS were able to profit by the spare time allowed them to assemble trench mortars and field guns which later in the morning proved so deadly and which was instrumental in driving our men back.

Meanwhile, troop carrying aircraft were landing along the beach at intervals of 100 yards. They appeared to land successfully in the most limited space, and the enemy did not seem to mind whether they could take off again or not. At least 8 aircraft were seen crashed in this way. None of these aircraft did take off again to my knowledge.

There was obviously close co-operation between the GERMAN aircraft and the parachutists. Reinforcements were not dropped indiscriminately. After the first parachutist had landed, a careful survey of the surrounding country was made and further troops were only dropped at parts indicated by signals from the ground. The success of their continual phot-reconnaissances in providing first class maps of the country they were occupying was a thorn in our side.

A system of verry signals was used by day and night to show aircraft the position of GERMAN forces. Flags marked "Victory of Greece" in red, white and yellow (and the Nazi Flag) were also used to signal to aircraft.

At the beginning of the attack I reached the pre-arranged position referred to above, at the rear of the NEW ZEALAND troops and remained there during the morning. It was here that I gathered a handful of men and obtained a hold; the men on the deep dug-outs on that side had not been warned of the approach of parachute troops. After mopping up the parachute troops here, we discovered that the enemy had obtained a foothold on the eastern side of the aerodrome, actually above the camp. We gathered 30 NEW ZEALAND troops who appeared to be without any leader, and with my handful of R.A.F. three counter attacks were made, and we succeeded in re-taking the summit. Throughout this period we were subjected to severe ground strafing by M.E. 109s. The enemy's armament at this stage was very superior to ours, namely, trench mortars, hand grenades, tommy guns and small field guns. One particularly objectionable form of aggression was by petrol bombs. These burst in the undergrowth and encircled us with a ring of flames.

At this time we tried to obtain contact with the remainder of No. 30 Squadron personnel, cut off at the bottom of the valley by the side of the Camp, in order to withdraw them to more secure positions on the slopes overlooking the aerodrome. The time was now about 1400 hours. The enemy drove our men who had been taken prisoners in front of them using them as a protective screen. A sign of faltering on their part was rewarded with a shot in the back. Our men were very reluctant to open fire and gradually gave ground. A small party of R.A.F. succeeded in outflanking them on one side, and I and a handful of NEW ZEALAND troops on the other were able to snipe the GERMANS in the rear and succeeded thereby in releasing at least 14 prisoners.

Towards the close of the day we discovered that our communications with our forces in rear had been cut, and after an unsuccessful advance made by our two "I" tanks, we decided to withdraw under cover of darkness, in order to take up positions with the 23rd Battalion of the NEW ZEALAND forces. During the next morning we were unsuccessful in locating them and had to

./cont..

withdraw from our cover under heavy aerial attack for another 3 miles where we at last made contact.

Throughout the day we held the left flank of a ridge and as evening approached took up new positions in a gully on a hill side. Here, Col. Allen, after consultation with the R.A.F. Officers, decided our men needed a rest. Unfortunately, we were unable to contact the 5th Brigade, as once more the enemy had cut us off. A message was prepared by Lieut. Sutton, R.N. to be taken to R.A.F. Headquarters, CANEA, repeated to the Naval Officer in Charge, SUDA BAY, and volunteers were called for, to wit one Officer and one airman, to take this message. I, together with 522638 Lac Cooper, started off at 1600 hours and reached 5th Brigade Headquarters in a village about half-way between CANEA and MALEME after hazardous detour between sniping enemy piquets. I later proceeded to HQ. RAF CANEA, and arrived there at 0930 hours on the 23rd May. The rest of the Squadron followed the next day, about 30 strong.

(Sgd) R.K.CROWTHER.
Pilot Officer.

Enclosure "D" to report on "AIR OPERATIONS
IN CRETE.

REPORT ON ATTACK OF MALEME BY AIRBORNE TROOPS
by
F/O Woodward, No. 33 Squadron.

1. It was arranged that 33 and 30 Squadron personnel would stand to with a local Z Brigade from 0530 to 0700 hours each morning with a view of assisting them in resisting an attack by parachutists by filling in their casualties. This arrangement did not come into effect as the preliminary bombing attack started at approximately 0730 hours when breakfast and normal work had started and personnel were spread all over the camp.
2. The attack commenced with intensive bombing of the perimeter of the aerodrome by waves of heavy bombers for a period of one hour. This was followed directly by waves of JU 52s dropping parachutists and towing Gliders; some M.E. 110s were also seen towing Gliders. The Gliders landed mainly around the perimeter of the landing ground, in the river bed west of MALEME aerodrome and on the beaches. The main concentrations of parachutists appeared to be dropped up the river bed to the south and west of MALEME, the remainder being scattered over a large area south and east towards CANEA. Parachutists continued to drop in waves in the above mentioned areas from 0830 hours to approximately 1200 hours. During this period aircraft were continually flying over the area.
3. Fighting and sniping took place all day between our troops and the enemy in the vicinity of the aerodrome. At approximately 1500 hours the GERMANS seemed to be getting the upper hand reinforcements evidently coming in from their concentrations a few miles West of the aerodrome. We were driven back but held firmly to the top of the ridge south of the aerodrome. When there was a definite line established between our troops and theirs at approximately 1900 hours, Dive Bombers and M.E. 110s so effectively attacked the ridge we were holding by dive bombing and ground strafing that we were forced to retreat. We reoccupied the ridge when the attack was finished, and held on until dusk, when the N.Z. forces decided to retreat to the West Ridge.
4. On the second day practically the same procedure was repeated. In the morning as soon as our forces had established a definite line on the second ridge, they were subjected to frequent dive bombing and machine gun attacks. Groups of 15 (M.E. 110s and M.E. 109s) covered the area almost continually all day long flying very low and ground strafing wherever they saw any movements making it very hard for any of our troops to move about. N.Z. mortars or French 75s shelled the aerodrome from the valley behind second ridge almost continually all day long, but as far as I could see or hear there were only three of these guns doing this. At approximately 1200 hours troop carriers started to land on MALEME aerodrome in a steady stream. Our shelling appeared to destroy a few of these machines on the ground, but it did not stop further machines landing during the remainder of the day, and also during the following day. Any transport aircraft damaged by shell fire was man-handled off the landing area by enemy troops on the aerodrome so that no delay resulted in the continuous stream of reinforcements.

./cont.

5. The successful landing of these carriers and the resulting reinforcements to the enemy in troops and small artillery, enabled the enemy to hold successfully the aerodrome in spite of counter attacks by N.Z. forces on the second and third day.

6. In the evening of the third day our troops were forced to retreat from the second ridge giving the enemy almost uninterrupted use of the aerodrome.

(Sgd) V.C. WOODWARD
Flying Officer.

Enclosure "E" to report on "AIR OPERATIONS
IN CRETE".

REPORT ON THE ATTACK ON MALEME AND DISTRICT
MAY 20TH AND 21ST, 1941, AS SEEN FROM NO. 252
A.M.E.S. BY F/O J.N. BRITTON.

1. No. 252 A.M.E.S. site lay on a high ridge about three miles south of the aerodrome. Another ridge lay between the site and the aerodrome, preventing actual view of the 'drome, but the whole of the surrounding country was commanded.
2. Personnel on the station at the time of the attack were as follows:-
 No. 252 A.M.E.S. - 2 Officers and 44 Other Ranks.
 Pioneer Platoon,
 HQ. Coy., 22nd.
 Batt. N.Z.E.F. - Lt. Wadey and 20 Other Ranks.
3. Defence plans provided for Lieut. Wadey to take command in the event of ground attack and, if necessary, for all personnel to withdraw to the technical site, which was well wired and had weapon pits for all personnel.
4. R.A.F. personnel had 100 per cent rifles or revolvers and five Lewis Guns. N.Z. personnel had rifles and two Bren Guns.
5. MAY 19TH. was a day of heavy air attacks on the aerodrome, culminating in a high level bombing attack at dusk by nine heavy bombers. May 19th was the date given by Army Intelligence as the probable date of parachute attack.
6. MAY 20TH. Raids began on the aerodrome soon after daybreak. After about 7 o'clock the bombing became continuous and far more aircraft were over than we were accustomed to seeing. The attack was mainly on the aerodrome, but the whole area was bombed and machine gunned. The station, (i.e., No. 252 A.M.E.S. site) was repeatedly machine gunned. The A.A. fire on the 'drome was considerably reduced.

After some hour and a half of this, the troop carriers and Gliders appeared, coming in from the west, and the ground attack alarm was sounded on the station siren.

7. GLIDERS. It is estimated that we saw twenty to twenty-five gliders. At first they were mistaken for aircraft - only when they came low enough for careful observation and for the lack of engine noise to be noticed, was it agreed that they were in fact gliders. None were seen in tow, but all were free when we saw them; slowly circling and turning and circling. They landed in all directions around us and near the aerodrome.

They were found to be an easy target for machine gun fire. Bullets from our Lewis guns penetrated the fabric without difficulty, and our gunners considered that they had effectively dealt with all troops carried in one glider which crash landed, after they had attacked it, some quarter of a mile to the west of us.

As it happens, no instance of troops disembarking from a glider on landing was observed.

Gliders were used in this first attack only. I am of the opinion, for the reasons given, that they were an experiment that failed.

./cont.

8. PARACHUTE TROOPS. The troops landed by parachute on the first morning were also widely scattered over the whole area. Green and white parachutes formed the majority, but there were also red edged white parachutes and four fold parachutes, used for dropping bulky objects. Large bright metal cylinders were dropped. A few parachutes failed to open, some fell into the sea. Instances were observed of planes dropping only one and only two parachutes.

Generally speaking, it was considered that each plane dropped from seven to ten men on this occasion, and that less than 1,000 men were dropped in the area during the morning.

It was noticed that some part of the parachute, cords or pilot parachute perhaps, trailed from the sides of the fuselage as the planes came over, and gave the appearance of torn frayed fabric.

Parachutists made their exit from a door in the side of the fuselage, nearer to the tail than the pilots cockpit. This door was usually open when the planes passed over.

The heights at which parachutists emerged varied very considerably, but was generally between 400 and 1,000 feet. The nearest parachutists to the station were about half-a-mile away due west. Others were mainly north, north-east and south-east of us, but it is again stated that on this occasion the troops were widely scattered over the area, and not concentrated on one region.

Throughout the whole time that the troops were being landed, the sky was full of aircraft, flying singly and in all directions, with very little bombing and very little machine gunning; a constant patrol broken by an occasional attack on any gun that opened up.

9. On the sounding of the ground attack alarm, Lt. Wadey took over command as Officer i/c Defence, and immediately called in one of the three outlying gun-posts. A second, on the cookhouse roof, did good work against the Gliders, but jammed soon afterwards, and was brought on to the station; the third, that to the south west of the Station, was manned until the end. All other personnel withdrew to the station and were allocated to gun posts and weapon pits, two and when possible, three to each post.

All correspondence, papers, publications, signals, except cypher books, were burned in a trench beside the Orderly Room. The fire was attended until burnt out. Cypher books were placed with technical papers inside the "R" van ready for destruction if necessary. W/T equipment was carried from the Orderly Room on to the site and set up in the pit beside the "T" van. This necessitated several journeys with the wheelbarrow, under fire from aircraft and from troops landed in the valley to the west of the site. Watch was opened immediately on the CRETE frequency and contact was soon made with HQ.RAF., CRETE; later, also with HERAKLION and RETIMO.

I now learned that all communications with Operations Room, CANEA, had been destroyed earlier in the morning. Watch was still kept, but results could not be utilised in any way.

?/cont..

10. A small patrol of the 21st. Batt., N.Z.E.F. passed through on their way to XAMONDOCHE. We reported that the five or six parachutists we had seen in this village we had disposed of. They had the information that parachutists were dressed in Green uniform. Later we were told that they wore NEW ZEALAND Battle Dress, and that all our own troops in N.Z. Battle Dress had removed their tunics. I was not able to obtain confirmation of this statement; any parachutists seen by me were dressed in a standard form of dark grey uniform.

11. A conference was now held of Officers and N.C.Os. Orders were given that there should be the minimum of movement during the daylight; that water and rations should be drawn after nightfall; that during the day only one man should man each post (the pits being very hot in the sun); and that all personnel should be on the alert in their posts during the night.

12. In the afternoon, more troop carriers arrived, most of them passing on towards CANEA. The parachutes seen falling, appeared to be carrying stores and not men. Bombing and machine gunning continued until dusk.

13. During the afternoon, parachute troops assembled in a cornfield on top of a ridge about three quarters of a mile to the south of the station. An additional Lewis gun post was, therefore, set up to support that to the south-west of the station, commanding the road. Before dusk, it was observed that the GERMANS on this ridge had dug themselves in and displayed a large red flag with some white marking in the centre on top of a tree. Concentrated fire from our two machine guns succeeded in dislodging these troops and driving them over the top of the ridge. Late in the afternoon, several troop carriers landed on the beach at MALEME, but did not take off. Shrapnel mines were then laid around the site, and all personnel and neighbouring units warned.

The dusk air attack on MALEME was met with feeble A.A. fire only. A patrol of the 21ST Batt. N.Z.E.F., however, reported to us later that the whole area had been cleared up and isolated parachutists only remained.

14. There was trench mortar fire, rifle and machine gun fire sporadically all night long. White Verrey lights were fired from many points, particularly east and west of the aerodrome, and along the coast some miles further east. White Verrey lights appeared to be the standard form of signal to indicate the position of enemy forces. This was a ground to ground signal.

15. During the night, a battalion of Maoris moved westward along the road to the south of the site. They reported to us that they were going to relieve the troops on the aerodrome. Later, however, the same night, they returned, and other troops were heard moving eastwards through the valley immediately to the north of the site. No reports were given or obtained as to the meaning of these movements.

16. MAY 21ST. The day began with a strenuous machine gun attack on the aerodrome, the station and the whole district; some bombing also.

The enemy party on the ridge south of us, were found to have returned to their positions and dug themselves in effectively. They returned our fire with rifle and automatics throughout the morning. In addition, it was found that another red flag was displayed on the ridge north of us - between the station and the aerodrome. Considerable numbers of troops could be seen on this ridge and at least one mortar was set up there. Its fire was directed eastwards to the ridge held by N.Z. troops and not on us. Rifle fire only came our way. /cont..

water-bottles and rations, ammunition and small arms.

24. THE ATTACK ON THE STATION. No sooner was this completed than, at about 1530 hours, a heavy air attack on the Station began. It was anticipated that this would be the prelude to ground attack and might be intended only to keep our heads under, while parachute troops advanced. Orders were therefore again circulated that guns were not to open fire on aircraft (ammunition being short), and that all posts were to put their heads out whenever possible and keep watch on their sector.

25 The attack developed, however, into a heavy bombing and machine gun attack. Some fifty aircraft took part, mainly Stukas, with the support of Messerschmidt 109s and high level bombers. The aircraft were fitted with a device which, when they dived, imitated the noise of bombs. It was almost impossible to distinguish the two sounds, and at every dive we waited for an explosion. Bombing was very accurate; large calibre bombs fell close to both vehicles; at least two gun posts were effectively wiped out by bombs.

26 For three-quarters of an hour, there was no lull. During this time, F/Lt. Babcock, O.C. 252 A.M.E.S. received a bullet wound in the shoulder and was put in a trench at the eastern end of the site; several other personnel were killed and wounded; the "R" van was blown up by means of gun cotton and detonators and set on fire; Lt. Wadey, with me in battle HQ. immediately below the "T" van, was seriously wounded by bomb debris.

27. When the lull came, I obtained help to move Lt. Wadey in order that the "T" van might be destroyed. I found that F/Lt. Babcock had proceeded with help, off the site in the direction of the main body of troops and while I was taking Cpl James (Nursing Orderly) to Lt. Wadey, a party of about a dozen men passed going in the same direction. I told them to return to the site when the bombers had left it.

Sgt. Ruane, Cpl James, A.C. Gibson and myself, carried Lt. Wadey into a crater as big as a house; Sgt. Ruane and I returned to the site and I confirmed that the "R" van was completely destroyed and in flames, that the "T" van was well alight, and that no personnel remained on the site.

28. We then carried Lt. Wadey into the olive groves to the north east of the site, where the patrol would pass if it came as promised.

Sgt. Ruane, Cpl James and I proceeded in the direction of the main body of troops - a slow and difficult journey, because aircraft were now bombing and machine gunning the valley, and snipers busy from behind. In the valley, I picked up three of our N.Z. guard and two more No. 252 A.M.E.S. personnel.

29. The fact that we were dive bombed alone enabled us to get away (in the dust) under the fire of the GERMANS on the ridge behind us. After a time, a mortar began to fire into the valley from this ridge. We tried for about an hour to proceed eastwards towards N.Z., H.Q., but this open uphill stretch, across which we had seen our own men proceeding safely an hour previously, had become an impossible obstacle. We decided to turn southwards and so carry out our original plan.

./cont.

SUMMARY.

In conclusion, I would stress the following observations:-

- (a) Parachutists first landed widely scattered over the area.
~~(b)~~ Later they landed, concentrated in clearly defined areas.
- (b) There is evidence of a rapid change of plan by (or regarding) the N.Z. troops at the aerodrome, on the night of May 20/21st. I regard this as a turning point.
- (c) There is some evidence that, after the first landing, enemy operations were directed from the ground; but they were carried out mainly from the air - it was the aeroplanes that advanced, a few mortars and snipers being sufficient to follow up and hold the ground so cleared.
- (d) There is no doubt that the Station was deliberately left until May 21st. On May 19th, aircraft flew so low that they narrowly missed one of the masts, and it is impossible to believe that our existence had been overlooked. Not until the afternoon of the 21st, however, did any bombs fall on the site; and then bombing was thorough and prolonged for three or four hours.

(Sgd) J.W.BRITTON.

Flying Officer.

6th June, 1941.

Enclosure "F"
to "Report on Operations
in "CRETE".

REPORT ON ENEMY ATTACKS ON
HERAKLION AREA

Prior to the actual day of invasion (20th May) attacks on the aerodrome covered a period of approximately two weeks. At the beginning a few desultory and small bombing attacks were made by day, but the bulk of operations were by night. During the moon periods, bombing attacks of average intensity took place on several consecutive nights, generally from a period of approximately 01.00 hours until first light. Damage was registered, bombs falling on the aerodrome, but not on the runways. The majority of bombs appeared to be of the 50 kilo variety, leaving a very small crater, although a number of 250 kilos were also dropped. Attacks had started after consistent daily "reccos" by the enemy, and when it was apparently realised by this that aircraft were operating from Heraklion aerodrome. These reccos were generally carried out around 15,000 feet, and although our patrols of 112 Squadron Gladiators were occasionally able to make contact with the enemy to the extent of short bursts, none were shot down over the Heraklion area; they were always out of range of ground defences, which consisted then of Bofors and Lewis guns, and consequently were not fired at from the ground. (Subsequently an Me.110 during a very low recco above Retimo aerodrome was shot down by Lewis gun fire, and amazingly detailed maps of the aerodrome were found on the pilot's body, with all gun positions and even slit trenches prominently shown. The second member of the crew of this aircraft was shown by his papers to be a parachute expert).

The ground defences, Bofors and Lewis guns were first in action on or about 10th May, when five Me.110s came in from a south westerly direction over the aerodrome at about 4,000 feet. They had made no form of attack, but had almost completed a circuit of the aerodrome when they were attacked from above by one 112 Squadron Gladiator (pilot P/O BOWKER). A dog fight at low level ensued, the Gladiator pilot endeavouring to lead the enemy over the gun positions. After a few minutes the Me.110's made off in a north westerly direction, where they appeared to run into very heavy anti-aircraft fire, presumably from a convoy reported to be in the vicinity, while the Gladiator landed safely. This was the first appearance, other than high level bombers and reccos (generally Ju.88s and DO.17s), of Me.110s over Heraklion. Two days later twelve 110s arrived over the aerodrome. Their purpose not being apparent as no bombs were dropped and they did not attempt to ground-straft. They were subjected to very heavy fire from the Bofors, and two were immediately shot down, one crashing into the sea, and the other, minus a port airscrew and rudder and fin, crash landed about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile S/E of the Mess. A further machine was shot down by F/Lt. FRY of 112 Squadron piloting a Hurricane, who himself had to bale out, landing slightly injured about 3 miles from the aerodrome; shrapnel had apparently pierced his Glycol tank. Several of the Me.110s which dropped bombs as well as ground strafing, were seen to jettison long range tanks, which fell on the shore and in the sea.

The following day (14th May) the aerodrome received ground strafing from Me. 110s. The attack was of an anti-morale nature, the enemy opening fire with

machine guns and cannons at 7,000 or 8,000 feet and diving indiscriminately at no given targets. There were a few minor casualties amongst the Army but none to R.A.F. personnel. Subsequently these attacks became more localized, aircraft in pens, gun positions, aerodrome buildings, the mess, slit trenches and tentage being singled out for bursts.

F From the 14th May onwards, attacks became more frequent and intensive. Attacks were made at dawn and spasmodically during the day, and were always varied; high level bombing was followed by ground strafing to be followed in turn by dive bombing or low level bombing by Me.110s. The latter aircraft dropped delayed action bombs with anything from 5 secs. to 10 secs. delay. Numbers of anti-personnel bombs did not explode, and at about this period there were over 25 unexploded bombs around the aerodrome area. The average number of aircraft in one attack varied generally from 20 to 40.

On 17th and 18th May there was a slight lull in the concentration of attacks. On the 19th May the ground strafing and dive bombing attacks were directed against the gun positions. On this day about 200 aircraft were employed, most of which were DO.17, Ju.88 and Me.110. It was at this point in the preliminary attack that the enemy were misled into thinking they had silenced the ground defences, only 4 Bofors guns being used on this day. The handling of these guns by the 7th Medium A.A. Battery claimed the admiration of all within the area, and our own m/gn posts also showed great courage and tenacity in face of heavy fire. The successes of the Bofors and m/guns were notably against receding targets - the enemy a/c usually making off at low level having completed their dive attack.

2. ATTACK BY AIRBORNE TROOPS

On the 20th May an early morning recon was carried out by a DO.17 which was followed by a high level bombing attack at about 08.00 hours. From that hour onwards bombing attacks and ground strafing increased in intensity until midday when there was a lull for about 2 hours. At about 16.00 hours a final blitz of maximum intensity developed and lasted till about 18.00 hours. During this attack Ju.87, He.111, Me.109 and CR.42s were used in addition to the aircraft aforementioned. During this period most of the guns held their fire and the enemy attacks were met by only light and desultory bursts. Shortly after 18.00 hours the attack developed into a final ground strafe by the Me.110s. The object of this attack appeared to be to demoralise personnel and keep them underground, and at the same time to machine gun the Bofor crews. The attack was followed shortly afterwards by the arrival of about 130 Ju.52 troop carriers which commenced unloading their parachute troops over the aerodrome and the defended area. Upon the arrival of the troop carrying a/c all the ground defence guns came into action and about 16 enemy a/c were shot down.

It should be noted that on the occasion of the first landing of parachute troops only about 12-15 parachutes were dropped from each a/c, whereas at a later period the average number appeared to be 18-20. This is ascribed to the fact that the shock troops, who were unquestionably picked for their physique and fighting qualities, were much more heavily equipped than the men dropped subsequently as reinforcements, who were regularly supplied with equipment which was dropped at specific points by air.

Some 2,000 parachute troops were dropped within the Defended Area at Heraklion, which can be described as a radius of about 4 miles from Brigade H.Q., and comprised the aerodrome, town and harbour, a total area of about 25 square miles. These troops were found to be extremely vulnerable when landing and for some minutes afterwards and in the course of a bayonet charge at the west end of the aerodrome by the Army hundreds of parachutists were killed. Within 24 hours all the first wave of parachutists had been mopped up, with the exception of a small body of men who succeeded in establishing themselves in the Greek Barracks to the west of the aerodrome, which were finally dislodged within the following 48 hours with the assistance of an 'I' Tank.

It was established as a result of rush interrogation of P. of W. that the dispersed method of defence adopted over a wide area was completely unexpected by the enemy and probably caused the failure of the first attack; for on following days no attempt was made to land troops within this defended area.

On May 21st. Reccos took place all day long and in the evening supplies were dropped in containers. Most of these supplies fell into our hands, the ground signals and code having been acquired by us on the evening of the 20th.

On May 22nd, the customary morning reccos took place and further supplies were dropped from Ju.52s. Some ground strafing of the aerodrome defences was carried out by Me.110s which dive bombed and m/gunned gun positions, buildings and slit trenches, it was observed that these a/c, which had previously been plotted in from distances of as much as 100 miles due N. all carried extra fuel tanks of plywood construction - some of which were dropped over the sea and on the area.

Some bombing of the town of Heraklion and of the area to the west of the town took place during the day, and about 18.00 hours, formations of DO.17s accompanied by Me.110s bombed and m/gunned positions west of the town and east of the aerodrome preliminary to the dropping of further troops by Ju.52s. Of about 800 troops which were dropped in the course of this evening approximately 300 landed to the west of the town and 500 to the west of the aerodrome, all outside the defended area. A few of the troops dropped to the west of Heraklion succeeded in entering the town under cover of darkness. These were mopped up throughout the following day, both civilians and priests taking an active part in their extirpation. The remainder of the troops, some 250 - 300 strong, which landed to the west of the town succeeded in digging themselves in and establishing themselves some 2 miles west of the town cutting road communications with Retimo and Canea.

The parachute troops which landed to the east of the aerodrome succeeded in occupying a ridge some 2 miles east of the aerodrome on the promontory running from 220 A.M.E.S. to the sea. It was this concentration which eventually covered the aerodrome with m/gun and mortar fire. Attempts to dislodge these troops made by the Army were only partially successful. A number of prisoners was taken of which many were boys of 15 - 17 years of age who were obviously very war weary and depressed.

23rd - 27th May. During the following three days, reccos continued to be made and supplies dropped to the bodies of troops east and west of the area, and it became clear from visual observation that a considerable concentration of troops was being built up some 10 miles eastwards. During this period bombing and ground strafing continued and on 23rd May the town of Heraklion, which was now almost completely evacuated with the exception of the hospitals, was subjected to heavy bombing attacks by large formations of DO.17s supported by Me.110s. These attacks on the town and the harbour were repeated on a smaller scale on the succeeding evenings and pamphlets were dropped warning the civilian population of the consequences of participating in action against the enemy.

During these four days attempts were made by the smaller body to the west of the town to filter across to join the larger body to the east of the aerodrome, as a result of which communications with the south by the KNOSSOS road were frequently interrupted.

On the 27th May, the town was bombed firstly by 6 - DO.17 and then by 37 Ju.88 in 3 formations approaching from the south.

28th May. On the morning of this day, at about 10.00 hours, the defences were again subjected to a very heavy attack and shortly afterwards about 50 troop carriers landed some 18 parachutists each behind the enemy defences to the east of the aerodrome, making some 900 fresh troops in all. One Ju.52 also landed on a strip some 3 miles to the south of the aerodrome on high ground, and subsequently took off again.

At about 16.30 a heavy dive bombing and ground strafing attack which lasted $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours was directed against the valley which contained Brigade and R.A.F. Headquarters. The Army and R.A.F. garrison, however, evacuated Heraklion on the night of the 28th/29th May, and did not, therefore, encounter these reinforcements.

Signed S. Gaskell F/Lt.
S. Cooper F/Lt.

DECLASSIFIED

Enclosure "G" to report on "AIR OPERATIONS
IN CRETE".
- - - - -

EXTRACTS FROM A REPORT ON THE INVASION AND
EVACUATION OF NO.220 A.M.E.S. LOCATED NEAR
HERAKLION.
- - - - -

1. On Sunday, May 11th, night raids commenced really seriously, and continued with increasing intensity until the final attack, lasting from about midnight to dawn and during this period they were practically continuous. On May 13th, there were six afternoon raids of from six to fifteen aircraft, dive bombing and ground strafing. There was a raid of about 20 aircraft at dusk, which passed over the station at about 100 feet.
2. At this period, the aerodrome was fully ready for use and there existed an operations organisation capable of controlling fighter aircraft, had these been available in numbers. So long as we had any serviceable fighters (the maximum ever available was five Gladiators), they were never caught on the ground.
3. From May 15th onward, there was severe interference of telephone communications, due to bombing and machine gunning of the lines. The results were then passed to Operations by W/T satisfactorily, but due to this interference and consequent delay, it was arranged to carry out R/T control of our fighters, when airborne from the station. For this purpose, a simple system of informing our fighters of the approach of enemy aircraft was developed.
4. On May 18th and 19th, raids were incessant, except for a period of a few hours at night. On Tuesday, May 20th, it had been impossible to obtain any information from R.A.F. HERAKLION, over the telephone, and as the situation was clearly developing rapidly, a visit was made to the Operations Room to see what information was available. It was learned that at CANEA and MALEME, all secret publications had been destroyed that morning and also at No. 252 A.M.E.S. It was agreed to keep No. 220 A.M.E.S. in operation to the last possible moment: the Army Commander arranged to send a code word as a signal for destruction, when he considered it unsafe to keep the apparatus any longer.
5. The main attack commenced at about 1400 hours, at a conservative estimate between 1400 and 2000 hours; some 750 aircraft were used in the HERAKLION AREA, in dive bombing, low flying bombing, machine gun and parachute attacks. They came over in formations of from 20 to 50. No.220 A.M.E.S., which was some 6 miles outside the defended area received a separate attack of over 3 hours duration. All personnel not on duty were in trenches. Personnel on duty continued as normally. The "T" and "R" vans were in some measure protected by the pits, but the information had to be passed by W/T and a tribute should be paid to the W/T operators for continuing this work from cover of tents.
6. During the evacuation, all cyphers, secret and confidential publications, letters, documents and records were destroyed. Each sheet was separately burned. Bombs

../cont...

were dropping within 5 feet of the pits in which the "T" and "R" vans were placed. Windows were blown in and the sides and roof were pierced with shrapnel and bullets. At about 1730 hours, a rather heavy bomb caused the transmitter to trip and completely demolished the telephone. The transmitter, however, came on the air at once, the only fault being that its time base unit no longer functioned. Almost immediately afterwards, the telephone line to the W/T was destroyed by a bomb and before it could be repaired, the W/T in the operations room had ceased to function. All remaining personnel were ordered to take shelter, as no useful purpose could be served in continuing to operate at that moment. Shortly afterwards, the bombing stopped. It was now about 1800 hours. Several large formations had been observed approaching, which turned out to be JU 52 troop carriers. The alarm for invasion was sounded and as pre-arranged, all personnel came with their rifles and packs to the technical enclosure and took up defence positions. The water trailer and rations, also the W/T set, were all brought to the site.

7. The position which now developed was that the first parachutists, estimated in number to be about 1,000 were dropped in batches of from 200 to 300 in widespread areas around the aerodrome; the A.M.E.S. station being virtually surrounded. No parachutists were, however, dropped in the immediate vicinity. By the time they were all down it was passed 2000 hours and the light was fading rapidly. W/T contact was established with the Operations Room and as there was no sign of any aircraft except those going out, it was decided that it would be better to destroy the apparatus for fear of a surprise attack by night. The code word for destruction was received from Operations Room.

8. One unsealed petrol tin was placed in the "T" and "R" and one full tin emptied over the floor of each. They were ignited at 2100 hours and burned for some 3 hours. It was found that by firing, complete destruction of the apparatus and vehicles could be achieved. The remains of the transmitter and receiver were completely unrecognisable. The "T" tower was crashed. It was impossible to crash the "R" tower, as the earth recently excavated from the pits had been placed in front of one of the uprights and had not yet been removed. The "R" tower was later destroyed by the GERMAN IN THE COURSE OF PREPARING a land strip on this site. All personnel stood by during the night, but there was no attack. Since the landing of the parachutists, the Black Watch guard had been continually pressing to leave the station. They displayed every sign of extreme apprehension and were most anxious to rejoin their Company. The sergeant in charge had no control over them. It was, of course, impossible to leave until destruction had been completed and a move in the dark would have been most hazardous. An Artillery Officer and 4 men from a forward observation post on Table Mountain entered the camp at 2130 hours and joined the unit. No. 1 Section had been destroyed by the personnel on duty, following telephoned instructions. It was smashed and completely burned out. For the purpose of protection it had been erected in a sand-bagged hut and Lac Cope, who lit the petrol was severely burned. He was assisted back to the camp, where he arrived about 2200 hours, very weak and terribly hurt.

./cont.

9. It was decided to quit the site at dawn and endeavour to enter the defended area through the Black Watch lines. No arrangements had been made officially, but in an interview with the Black Watch a few days previously, this plan had been considered. Just before dawn, though the set was failing fast, contact with Operations was made by W/T and sent a message asking that the Black Watch should be warned of our approach. This message was acknowledged and repeated back, but was in effect, never passed to the Black Watch.

10. At dawn with full water bottles, rifles, rations and all available ammunition, we left the station. It was deemed inexpedient to fire the living tents, as this might attract attention and they only contained clothing and personal belongings. All personnel wore or carried greatcoats, as at this time the nights were bitterly cold. Some enemy aircraft passed overhead when the party were en route and as there was no cover, signs were made to them in the hope they would take us for parachutists. They did not attack. Thereafter the going was rough, down and up the sides of the ridges, but there was a good deal of cover, of which all possible advantage was taken. On the approach of enemy aircraft, all personnel remained absolutely still and we appeared to be unobserved. No enemy forces were encountered at the outset but later some parachutists were met and we were attacked by machine gun, tommy gun and rifle fire. On returning fire, these attacks were for the most part quickly stopped. A party led by Corporal Banfield managed to outflank one knot who were machine gunning us, and three prisoners were taken. When approaching the Black Watch lines, it was decided that as we appeared to have passed through the major part of the enemy lines, our approach should be made somewhat more openly, so that we might be recognised. As the Black Watch had not been informed of our coming, and deceived by the Blue Greatcoats, they opened fire on us with trench mortars. Shells burst all around the leading party, but fortunately they had opened fire at the extreme limit of their range and by retiring slightly we were able to reach a more sheltered position. It was now about 1000 hours; we had started at about 0530 hours and as no one had had much sleep for about 48 hours and had been subject to incessant attack both by air and on land in every known form, during that period, a short halt was called to rest and consider the position.

11. A few bottles of wine and a bottle of gin, when passed round, had a good effect. It was then decided to send a small party to warn the Black Watch, as they would have a better chance of getting through unobserved. The Artillery Officer volunteered to lead them and a call was made for volunteers to go. Corporal Banfield was the first and was followed by two of the Artillery men.

12. The party were given one hour to get to our lines and to send back word that they had arrived. After two hours, no word had come. It was decided to attempt to enter the Australian lines. In fact, the party got in safely and just as we were moving, a patrol had been sent out from the Black Watch. We had got into the valley near the Black Watch when some Germans driven back by the advancing patrol on the crests of the ridges on either side, attacked us. L.A.C. Nash was shot outright and L.A.C. Black was wounded. He was captured by the enemy, but next day escaped in civilian clothes and regained the Black Watch lines. A small party which tried to get up a ravine to the crest was observed. A hand grenade thrown among them killed L.A.C. Copplestone and injured A.Cs. Marsden, Gray and Wiseman, but not seriously. Two Germans on this side were captured by a party led by Mr. Wormald and the rest were dispersed or killed. We were retiring down the valley between our lines when we met the patrol and so got back with the wounded. L.A.C. Cope, who had collapsed, was carried over the last mile.

13. Operations Room were informed of our arrival. We stayed with the Black Watch until May 25th, when we proceeded to join the rest of the R.A.F. personnel, who were living in the caves at the Operations Room. During the period we were with the Black Watch, our personnel gave what assistance they could, fetching rations, escorting in prisoners and carrying the wounded to safety. Parachutists were dropped at dawn and dusk, some parachutes containing supplies. So far as was observed, each JU.52 carries from 18 to 20 men and supplies vary according to bulk. They are dropped from about 300 ft and descend very rapidly. There is an instantaneous release, which enables the parachutists to go into action the moment they land. They are magnificently equipped and all the fighting forces have some sort of automatic arms. They are well supplied with maps, photographs and provisions, and carry an astonishing amount of ammunition. They are able to obtain equipment such as 4 and 5 inch mortars and light field pieces. A vast medical staff was dropped with the very best equipment. The Officer Commanding No. 220 A.M.E.S. interrogated a large number of prisoners and gathered that when they were dropped they had no idea of the strength of the military dispositions. The failure of their attack in the first instance on this account, no doubt in some measure explains the poor resistance which they offered. All those originally dropped in and around the defended area were killed or captured together with the greater part of their equipment. They are, for the most part, extremely young, and seemed to have joined the corps either because of its glamour or because of a desire to avoid ordinary army service, as it appears that the parachutist is a much admired figure in Germany. They had been well trained, each one had had to do at least 5 practice jumps in full equipment and the amount they carry makes it necessary for them to be in extremely good condition. They were extremely glad that they had been captured and expressed the hope that the war would soon end. They appear to be in no way vindictive and their doctors and medical staff were to the knowledge of the writer of this report, of the greatest assistance to our medical staff in providing supplies and all possible aid.

14. After their original defeat, those who had dropped east of the Station established, as was discovered from patrols, a Headquarters at the site No. 220 A.M.E.S. had originally occupied, where they began to prepare a landing strip. Equipment and supplies were dropped from which they kept our Eastern positions under a constant hail of machine gun and trench mortar fire. Their machine gun fire and sniping was very accurate at over 1500 yards. This, together with the incessant dive bombing and ground strafing, completely immobilised this area. In the Squadron Camp, at the east end of the aerodrome, it was impossible to move by day.

15. After arriving at the Operations Room on May 25th, the Officer Commanding, No. 220 A.M.E.S. and two of the Squadron Officers established a visual observation post above the cave to give some information to Headquarters. The Dive bombing and machine gunning continued incessantly. From the start of the attack until our arrival in ALEXANDRIA we never saw one of our own machines in operation against the enemy.

16. Notice of the impending evacuation was received on the morning of May 27th, and the R.A.F. were taken off to H.M.S. "ORION" at 2330 hours by the first Destroyer to enter the harbour. On our return journey, the "ORION" was dive bombed from daybreak until past midday, without cessation. She sustained two direct hits and five near misses which brought her near to a sinking condition. She just got back. After the first bomb, personnel of the Unit went to help to extract the wounded. The second bomb burst right among them below decks. The forward part of the ship was a shambles. Nine of the unit were wounded, Lac Keenan has since died in hospital ashore. A.C. Payton, who had shown much braveness, went mad. It is feared he will never recover, and he is now in a serious condition. Several are suffering from shock. Five personnel have never been traced since the bombs burst, though it is possible they may be among the wounded brought ashore to hospital. There were over 400 dead, many unrecognisable, and three days later they were still trying to get out bodies and pieces of bodies. It is feared that those missing are killed. The Unit personnel continued to assist with the rescue work. Conditions were ghastly and many showed great courage, especially Lac Böller and A.C. Brooks, who has since collapsed through poisoning from cordite fumes while engaged in the rescue work. During the whole of the journey back, we saw none of our aircraft engaged against the enemy. It will be impossible to pay too great a tribute to the personnel of "H.M.S. ORION" for all they did for us. On arrival we were eventually brought to R.A.F. ABOUKIR, where we arrived about 0100 hours.

17. It would seem that the main lesson to be learnt is that personnel on these units must be prepared to withstand such conditions as these and must be taught to fight and fire a rifle. Until given some instruction by the Commanding Officer and Corporal Banfield, many of them had had no experience with a rifle whatsoever. To be able to shoot when the time comes, the men should have fired at least a hundred rounds in practise.

All personnel, so long as the Unit was still functioning, performed their duties well and courageously. Those on Watch had worked as well as can be seen on any station at any time under a tremendous barrage of fire and bombing. It was when the apparatus had been destroyed and we had to fight our way through that, due to lack of experience in fire arms and a little training in strategy, the majority of the personnel were of little use. A few who could and did shoot, enabled

us to push out our way through a vastly superior and better equipped force. If all had been of the same standing, we could have been of some real value as a fighting force.

18. Of the 50 original personnel, there are at present 28 still sound, who have gone on leave. The casualties sustained in CRETE WERE small and were due entirely to our being fired upon by our own forces. Two were killed and four wounded. As these wounded were unfortunately in a hospital manned by BRITISH and GERMAN medical staff, they had to be left behind as prisoners of war, as an attempt to remove any patients might have betrayed the impending evacuation. The remaining casualties, 1 dead five missing, and the rest wounded in hospital, were all sustained on board the "ORION", but it is hoped that the wounded will, before long, be fit to rejoin the unit.

19. In our experiences, before and through this time, we have attained a certain unity. It is this unity which will enable us we hope, to be of some use in the near future and makes the group more valuable than the sum total of its individual strength. Though there may be weak links, we know them and can guard against them, so in consequence it is hoped that those who have survived will be kept together to form the nucleus of a new No.220 A.M.E.S., which may soon be in operation again.

WHITFORD
(Sgd) JOHN ~~WHITFIELD~~.
Flight Lieutenant.
Officer Commanding,
No. 220 A.M.E.S.

5th June, 1941.