

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF
263 (F) SQUADRON AND R.A.F.
ADVANCE PARTY IN NORWAY
(AANDALSNES BASE).

21ST APRIL TO 2ND MAY, 1940.

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PART 1.

REPORT BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER

263 (F) SQUADRON.

Appendix "A" Combat Reports.

The following summary is submitted of the activities of 263 Squadron between April 20th to May 1st, 1940.

April 20th.

At 14.00 hrs. Eighteen aircraft left Filton for Sealand. 15.00 hrs. eighteen aircraft arrived Sealand.

Note. Warning had been given by signal to Staff of Sealand that aircraft would arrive at 15.00 hrs., and therefore the C.F.I. had taken the wise precaution of keeping the aerodrome clear of ab initio flying.

17.00 hrs. Eighteen aircraft left Sealand for Prestwick. 19.45 hrs. Fifteen aircraft arrived Prestwick.

Note. Three Gladiators were unable to proceed past Blackpool owing to very bad visibility conditions and therefore returned to Sealand.

April 21st.

8. 00.30 hrs. Fifteen pilots embarked on H.M.S. Glorious. 14.00 hrs. Fourteen Gladiator aircraft landed on H.M.S. Glorious.

Note. One Gladiator was landed in the Sea some two hundred yards astern of the H.M.S. Glorious. Fleet Air Arm Pilot uninjured, aircraft total loss.

April 22nd.

3. Four Gladiators were flown on to H.M.S. Glorious. Three pilots 263 were embarked by launch from Scapa Flow.

Note. 263 Squadron at 15.30 hrs. complete to strength as required by Air Ministry. Eighteen Gladiators and Eighteen Pilots.

The following is a list of Pilots that embarked:

S/Ldr. J.W. Donaldson.
F/Lt. R.S. Mills.
P/O. Jacobson.
P/O Mc.Namara.
P/O Purdy.
P/O Wyatt-Smith.

P/O. Hughes.
P/O. Bentley.
P/O. McKenzie.
P/O. Richards.
P/O. Carpenter.
P/O. Craig-Adams.
P/O. Hogg.
Sergeant Pilot Russell.
Sergeant Pilot Kitchener.
Sergeant Pilot Milligan.
Sergeant Pilot Whall.
Sergeant Pilot Forrest.

Note. 13 Officers.
5 Sergeant Pilots.

April 24th.

4. 12.00 hours. Captain of H.M.S. Glorious gave Officer Commanding 263 Squadron warning that Squadron must be prepared to fly off the Carrier within three hours.

Note. Weather conditions were not good. In the vicinity there were local snow showers and it was ascertained that the position of the ship was about 250 miles from the shore. The Squadron Commander then consulted with the Captain of the Glorious and asked him to produce two Skuas to navigate two Formations of nine aircraft to the frozen lake. The Captain very kindly agreed; this action was most appreciated.

17.00 hours. Nine Gladiators took off from the H.M.S. Glorious for frozen Lake at Lesjeskogen. 17.30 hours. Nine Gladiators took off from H.M.S. Glorious for frozen Lake at Lesjeskogen. One Skua led each formation.

Note. For the information of R.A.F. pilots who may be called upon to take off from a carrier in future it is pointed out that, provided the take-off is made with care, there may be no anxiety for the safety of the average pilot.

19.00 hours. Eighteen aircraft landed on lake at Lesjeskogen.

5. It was noticed by Squadron Commander and Flight Commander that the road and railway line between Aandalsnes and the Lake had a continuous series of bomb craters on each side situated in groups at approximately mile intervals the whole way down. A conference was held on landing, between Squadron Commander and Flight Commander concerning the observations made and it was decided that the Flight Commander should make a reconnaissance of the valley toward the front line. On landing the Flight Commander reported that similar conditions existed toward the front line and it was therefore considered that the situation was most critical and that air activity in the district was of the most severe nature.

6. In view of this appreciation the Squadron Commander decided that little operations could be undertaken and that the Squadron aircraft must be used solely for the defence of its very existence. This decision serious as it was, considering the military situation which desperately needed Air Co-operation through constant bombing along its only line of communications, showed that the placid of the

Squadron in this particular area was dangerous and difficult and that the decision of the Squadron Commander subsequently proved to be correct.

7. Three aircraft were ordered to accelerate their refuelling and come to a state of immediate readiness. Pilots sitting in cock-pits ready to take off and air-crafthands standing by ready to start up. Pilots were ordered to take off immediately any aircraft was sighted and if hostile it must be destroyed at all costs, to prevent reports reaching the enemy.
8. 21.30 hours as it was becoming semi-dark two aircraft were sighted and the Section took off to intercept. One aircraft was unable to start its engine soon enough and was left behind. One interception was successful, but both aircraft were identified as Norwegian. Our two aircraft made a landing in the dark without the aid of any night flying equipment and one pilot who applied his brakes too severely on the runway burst a tyre. Although this slight mishap happened, it is considered that credit is due to these two pilots, Sergeant Pilot Kitchener and Sergeant Pilot Milligan.
9. At 22.00 hours all eighteen aircraft had been refuelled and dispersed around the perimeter of the lake, placed in most cases as near as the snow drifts permitted to the edges of the woods. Four aircraft were placed along the runway at 100 yard intervals.
10. 22.30 hours two aircraft had landed and were refuelled. Limited guards were placed around the aircraft. Owing to the shortage of personnel pilots were included in this duty.

Operation orders.

11. Orders were issued being based upon the defence of the aerodrome as follows.

03.00 hours to dusk ...

One section to patrol the aerodrome at 6,000 feet for two hours and to be relieved in the air.

Two sections at stand by. Pilots in cockpits.

One section available at 15 minutes.

Minutes of Conference.

12. A conference was held between Wing Commander Keens Squadron Leader Donaldson, Flight Lieutenant Mills, Squadron Leader Whitney-Straight, and Captain Uwin Chief Norwegian Air Force.
13. It was represented by the C.O. of 263 Squadron that it was quite apparent that the Squadron could not possible operate successfully from a frozen lake. With huge snow drifts surrounding the runways, the roadway cut was melting. This view was based on the lack of equipment, spares, quick rearming and refuelling facilities, grave shortage of trained personnel, i.e. there was only one armourer who was obviously incapable of maintaining 72 browning guns. It was urgently emphasised

that other landing sites should be found at the earliest possible moment. Petrol and belted ammunition to be deposited at these landing sites. It was stated that the surrounding country did not offer sites for this purpose, even with the aid of engineering personnel. Enemy intelligence was then discussed concerning previous German air operations in this theatre of operations.

14. We were informed by Captain Uwin that the enemy were employing a considerable number of aircraft in bombing operations in a swift and resolute manner, employing the most ruthless methods in bombing military and non-military targets. Parachute troops had been dropped in large numbers and the methods employed by German Officers in shooting German troops who were unwilling or frightened to leave the aircraft clearly showed the worth of our enemies. Some of these troops he explained were forced to jump into snow-drifts from a low altitude without parachutes. Quite a number of these men were found to have been seriously wounded by their fall and with bullet wounds caused by their Officers shooting them. Those using parachutes had indicated that they were surrendering and had thrown hand-grenades at their would-be captors. This practice was easily dealt with in a suitable manner.
15. It was requested by the Army authorities that patrols should be despatched to strengthen the morale of the Naval, Army, and Norwegian personnel who had been suffering through constant bombardment by the enemy air forces without rest for fourteen days. This was agreed to with limitations.

April 25th.

Fighter operations.

16. It is necessary to point out that due to the severe frosts experienced at night and being situated on ice, the carburettors and aircraft controls were frozen. Every effort was made to have the oil emptied from the aircraft to be heated but this was not possible. The starting of engines would have been simplified had the Squadron starter batteries been available. However, some were run during the night. The Squadron made superhuman efforts to start the engines, and at 04.45 hours two aircraft were able to take off, and patrol the base. This patrol intercepted and successfully attacked one He,115. This aircraft was destroyed. Two He,111 were sighted at great range, but no attack was made. Two enemy reconnaissance aircraft He,111 bombed the lake at 05.00 hours. No damage was done.
17. At 07.45 hours, the enemy commenced bombing operations against the Squadron and these attacks were continuous through-out the day until dusk. These operations consisted of bombing and machine gunning with front and rear gun from altitudes of 500 feet to 6,000 feet. The enemy employed formations of three which made their approach to within some distance of the aerodrome and broke up their formation and made individual attacks. In one case only did the enemy approach the aerodrome in vic formation and drop a salvo of twelve bombs. This attack was successful inasmuch that four aircraft were destroyed and three pilots wounded, and the

Squadron C.O. was concussed by the effect of the bombs. These officers were endeavouring to start their aircraft and it was due to the fact that the bombs fell on the ice and were nullified to a great extent by the bombs penetrating the ice before exploding, that serious casualties did not occur. After this attack this formation of enemy aircraft attacked the personnel by machine gunning. The nearest shelter being trees amid snow-drifts some fifty yards away. From this time onwards, the Squadron could not rely on the ground personnel for any assistance when enemy aircraft were approaching the aerodrome. The Officers and Sergeant pilots therefore had to rely on their own resources and efforts for the rearming and refuelling of aircraft. Many brave acts were performed by the pilots during the course of the day. They carried out these duties whilst bombs were bursting near them and when being machine gunned at the same time. During the enemy attack at 07.45 hours, Pilot Officer Purdy was severely burnt on the face and hands which was caused by a bomb bursting immediately in front of the aircraft he was sitting in, which the Squadron Commander was endeavouring to start. This officer refused to have his wounds dressed and carried on his duties rendering great assistance to the Squadron. During a later attack Pilot Officer Craig-Adams when endeavouring to start his aircraft was wounded by shrapnel; this Officer after having his wounds dressed took off and carried out a patrol. During this attack two Gladiator aircraft which were awaiting to be refuelled were set on fire by enemy action. It is desired to point out that due to impossible conditions it took anything up to an hour and a half for aircraft to be refuelled and rearmed, and many of the Squadron aircraft were destroyed due to this reason.

18. At 09.00 hours Flight Lieutenant Mills managed to start his aircraft whilst under machine gun fire. He took off to patrol the lake and for the next 30 minutes this Officer prevented enemy aircraft from making decisive attacks on the aerodrome and during this period six aircraft were able to take off. One section maintained its patrol over the base, whilst the other section patrolled the front line to prevent German reconnaissance aircraft from spotting for their field guns. In the mean time Flight Lieutenant Mills engaged six He.111 at various times during his flight, and one of which was observed to retreat with its port engine on fire and was subsequently confirmed as a victory.
19. During one of the early morning patrols Pilot Officer Hughes attacked a Ju.38. This Officer managed to fire three short bursts from an astern attack. The enemy aircraft turned on to this Officer very quickly compelling him to dive out of range, the enemy despite his superior speed did not take up pursuit.
20. At 11.00 hours Sergeant Pilot Forrest took off in Gladiator N.5705 and flew for twenty minutes patrolling the lake and his engine cut out a height of 3,000 feet due to failure to turn over on to main tank when taking off. A successful landing was however made in the soft snow near the lake, this aircraft was destroyed by enemy action shortly after. It is necessary to point out that this Sergeant made no effort to restart his aircraft after landing, and it is considered that this could have been done.

21. At 12.00 hours Pilot Officer McNamara leading a section during his patrol over base engaged an He.111 and, using full deflection tactics, secured a victory. The aircraft was seen by all personnel on the lake to spin in shortly after his attack. This had great effect upon the ground personnel, as much cheering was heard from around the lake. The aircraft was also seen to have white smoke gushing out of its port engine, prior to the moment of losing final control. The pilot of this aircraft was taken prisoner and was found to have a bullet wound in cheek.
22. 12.30 hours. At this period the Squadron had lost ten Gladiator aircraft by enemy bombing action. Aircraft were destroyed whilst waiting to be refuelled and rearmed, only four were destroyed without having flown. Two aircraft only received direct hits, the others were set alight by bombs landing close by within approximately ten yards.
23. At 13.00 hours Pilot Officer Richards took off and attacked a He.111 using all his ammunition during this attack. The attack was an astern attack. It was observed by the ground personnel that this aircraft had its port engine on fire and was losing height behind the lake. However the wreckage of this aircraft was not found and it is assumed that this was an unconfirmed victory.
24. At 13.05 hours the aerodrome was attacked by three He.111. S/Ldr. Donaldson and F/Lt. Mills were endeavouring to start their aircraft and take off. P/O. Purdy was giving assistance but as this attack was particularly vicious during which a salvo of twelve bombs were dropped near the aircraft it was decided to take shelter as the enemy then commenced to ground straff the personnel. There was a machine gun post near this part of the lake that had been deserted and F/Lt. Mills and P/O. Purdy ran to this position through the snow drifts to operate the gun against the attacking aircraft. It is considered that the run over the ice on top of the snow by these two Officers was particularly brave as the distance was some 60 yards and the machine gun bullets were striking the ice in amongst them and ricocheting off. The machine gun was then manned with F/Lt. Mills firing and P/O Purdy leading the ammunition in, it was observed that their fire was accurate (tracer) and the enemy aircraft broke off their ground straffing. This enabled two aircraft to be started by the three officers, but in the mean time a He.111 had commenced operations against the lake, this attack was ignored and aircraft took off during machine gun fire. The aircraft were piloted by S/Ldr. Donaldson and F/Lt. Mills. A patrol was carried out over the valley and the enemy occupied positions were inspected. The patrol then returned to the lake and was extended to Aandalsnes, but no enemy aircraft were sighted during this stage of the flight, which had lasted an hour and a half. The formation then returned to the lake and many engagements were made with enemy aircraft until these Officers were compelled to land through shortage of petrol. The engagements are as follows :
25. Two He.111 were attacked when nearing the lake, one He.111 was destroyed after these officers had completed their first attack which was of the full deflection type. The wreckage of this aircraft was inspected later and the pilot was found to have been seriously injured and had eventually committed suicide. This was confirmed as a victory. The other He.111

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was seen by ground personnel to be losing height rapidly with its starboard engine gushing with white smoke and part of the main plane on fire. S/Ldr. Donaldson then proceeded to attack a single He.111. This aircraft was destroyed and was seen to crash into the valley approaching Aandalsnes with F/Lt. Mills following close behind watching. This aircraft was subsequently inspected. Full deflection attack was employed and the pilot was found to be killed.

26. F/Lt. Mills states that on attempting to rejoin his Commanding Officer, he was able to witness his C.O. attack a formation of three He.111 which were approaching to attack the lake. This formation was dispersed and two aircraft were seen to be in difficulties. It seemed to F/Lt. Mills that the deflection attack from the quarter head on position caused confusion amongst the enemy pilots. F/Lt. Mills in his report was unable to watch the progress of these two aircraft as he had then to attack three individual He.111, in which he silenced two rear gunners and caused them to break off their attacks against the lake. One aircraft was seen by ground personnel in difficulties, but this aircraft cannot be claimed as a confirmed victory, no wreckage being found, due no doubt to the mountainous country and difficulty of transport.

27. At about 14.50 hours two He.111 were observed approaching the aerodrome, one from the East and one from the West. S/Ldr. Donaldson gave a visual signal to F/Lt. Mills to attack the one approaching from the East whilst S/Ldr. Donaldson attacked the one approaching from the West. Both attacks were carried out successfully but there is no evidence to show that any damage was caused to either aircraft. Both enemy aircraft disappeared from the vicinity of the lake. S/Ldr. Donaldson had by this time run out of ammunition in three of his guns, but there were a few rounds left in the port inner. It was decided to make a landing to re-arm and refuel. S/Ldr. Donaldson ordered F/Lt. Mills by visual signal to land first with the intention of covering his landing. Both aircraft had been airborne for 2 hours 15 minutes. F/Lt. Mills then proceeded to make a landing on the lake, whilst S/Ldr. Donaldson patrolled the base at 2000 ft. Very shortly afterwards four aircraft were observed approaching the lake from a southerly direction. S/Ldr. Donaldson immediately attacked the formation. He fired a very short burst and ran out of petrol on main tank and switched over to reserve tank, engine picking up immediately. From this time onwards he found that he was being completely outmanoeuvred and therefore decided to break off engagement by diving away. Three of the attacking aircraft were lost during this manoeuvre but the other followed closely. All four aircraft were able to fire several bursts but were unable to obtain hits owing to the evasion tactics employed by this Officer. After three had been lost, the aircraft that followed closely was able to fire several bursts during the course of the next 5/10 minutes at the Gladiator now flying as close as possible to the ground. Finally by applying violent right rudder and completing a loop this aircraft placed himself behind the Ju.88 in a very steep ravine. The Ju.88 thereupon broke off the engagement. In the meantime F/Lt. Mills was about to land, but noticing that all ground personnel were not visible suspected that the aerodrome was about to be attacked and took his Gladiator off again from the position of touch-down. On completing a half circuit he noticed that the

JU 88 were about to attack the aerodrome and this Officer carried out a deflection attack. The enemy aircraft broke up their formation and formed line astern, and proceeded to deliver attacks. It was observed from the ground that when the Gladiator was within a range of approximately 500/500 yards the enemy would open fire with their front cannon, and the shells were seen to burst around the Gladiator aircraft. This Officer was practically out of petrol and only had one gun firing. High pressure oil was gushing out of the high pressure trigger motor system. The combat lasted for approximately ten minutes, and the pilot states that he found himself being out manoeuvred and out climbed. It is suggested that the Ju.88 was not turning quicker than the Gladiator, but the advantage lay in the fact that the Ju.88 was able to dive on the Gladiator, climb up and cut short the turn of the Gladiator. It was only due to aerobatic manoeuvres that the pilot was able to prevent accurate fire. It was only when the pilot altered his tactics and attempted to collide with the Ju.88 that hits were scored on his aircraft. One interplane strut and the top of one of his starboard cylinders was seriously damaged, but in no way affected the flying of the aircraft. These manoeuvres however caused the Ju.88 to discontinue the attacks and to withdraw from combat. The Gladiator then commenced to climb and when the Ju.88s were practically out of sight his engine cut through lack of petrol. F/Lt. Mills was able to make a successful forced landing at the end of the lake. He attempted to examine the effects of the cannon fire and can only remember that there were large holes where the shells had struck the fuselage and also a piece of the top of the starboard side of one of the cylinders appeared to be missing, but his examination was cut short by the commencement of an attack by a He.111 for which he became the target. The Gladiator was destroyed by this attack. S/Ldr. Donaldson was able to land successfully on a small plateau which existed at Aandalsnes, in spite of the fact that three Norwegian machine gun posts fired at the Gladiator whilst it was making a forced landing. On inspecting the aircraft after landing it was found that the airframe contained many hits by machine gun fire, and two hits by cannon fire. The hits by cannon fire were glancing blows on the side of the fuselage, and had removed pieces of canvas a foot long by about two or three inches but had not affected the efficiency of the aircraft.

28.

The aerodrome surface was then inspected and it was found to be 400 yards by 80 yards, with approximately another 100 yards sloping away to the sea. A dispatch rider was sent as soon as possible as all telephonic communication was cut, to order all serviceable Gladiator aircraft to be flown to this landing ground as soon as possible, and to bring by ground party all available petrol and ammunition, from the lake. Any aircraft that were completely wrecked and not burnt out were to be set alight immediately. Four more serviceable aircraft landed successfully at this landing ground by 23.45 hours. S/Ldr. Donaldson proceeded to the lake by lorry to direct the evacuation. It was found that eleven aircraft had already been burnt out, and that two Gladiators remained in a broken up condition, these were destroyed by fire. Limited transport was commandeered and conveyed all pilots, a few of the ground personnel, and petrol and ammunition, to the new site. It was found that a Squadron could operate from this landing ground

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Dore

as Wing Commander Door of the Air Attache had expedited the preparation of this ground the previous day.

April 26th

Operation orders.

29. Two aircraft were ordered to make reconnaissance flights to locate other landing sites in the vicinity, and it was reported that no suitable sites were available but it was considered that two could have been made with limited reconstruction.
30. One section was ordered to carry out ground strafing over the enemy position in the district of Kvan. Reports had then been received that the Germans had made a landing of troops at Sundalen north east of Aandelsnes. The section reported that no movement of troops was observed. This was confirmed as the engine of the aircraft piloted by P/O. Craig-Adams seized solid. The pilot was forced to abandon his aircraft by parachute as he was over mountainous country with no place for a forced landing. The pilot made a safe landing at Sundalen, and was returned to his unit by the Norwegian army. No German troops were seen by this officer. The other aircraft returned to base safely and likewise had no oil pressure, and was then considered unserviceable due to the big end seizing up.
31. With the three remaining aircraft a section was detailed to patrol over the new base at 10,000 feet. Aandelsnes was then attacked by a number of He.111 which carried out bombing operations from 10.000 hrs. until dusk. The section attempted to engage the enemy aircraft which were flying at an altitude of 25,000 feet, but as the oxygen supplies were exhausted in the aircraft and there being no oxygen supplies available for the unit, the enemy were able to carry out bombing without any hindrance, and scored direct hits on the docks, exploding an ammunition dump. During the afternoon one aircraft was made serviceable and Pilot Officer Jacobson attacked two He.111 during two flights. The results of these combats have not been confirmed but it is assumed that severe damage was inflicted on one of the He.111, as parts of the fuselage were seen to fall from the enemy which was losing height. Deflection attack in both cases was employed, the pilot was certain that he injured the pilots of the He.111. A reconnaissance was carried out in this locality but no wreckage was found. The fire of the rear gunners ceased after the first attacks.
32. Owing to lack of petrol flying operations were discontinued with the one remaining aircraft. The aircraft was later inspected and found to be in such a state that it would have been needlessly endangering pilots' lives to carry out further flights that could not have been pursued with any effect. This decision was communicated to Wing Commander Keen, who, it is understood, advised Air Ministry of the circumstances.

April 27th

33. No operations were carried out due to the fact that there was no petrol. Nor could the aircraft be made serviceable, even with the exchange of parts from one aircraft to another owing to the structural damage received.

34. Officers were sent to examine the wreckage of the Squadron's victories, to assess the damage of our machine gun fire.

35. One salient point was obvious, viz. that where deflection attacks had been employed, the victory had been obtained not so much by material damage in the working parts of the aircraft, but by seriously wounding the pilot and personnel in the enemy aircraft. In most cases the dashboard of the pilots' cockpits were found to be smashed. Due to the amount of equipment and length, it is considered, in the light of these examinations, that many thousand rounds must be fired into the fuselage from the astern attack if any result is to be obtained and even then it is doubtful whether a He.111 can be brought down by the astern attack unless both engines are put out of action.

April 26th

36. The Squadron personnel received orders to embark that night on the S.S. Delius a cargo ship.

April 29th

37. The S.S. Delius sailed and became a target from 08.00 hrs. to 14.00 hrs. for continuous bombing attacks by enemy aircraft. They employed high level bombing attacks and low level bombing attacks, and also dive bombing attacks, accompanied by machine gun fire.

May 1st

38. S.S. Delius arrived Scapa Flow at 06.00 hrs. Pilots embarked on board tender and were conveyed to Thurso by 21.30 hrs.

May 2nd.

39. Arrived London at 20.00 hrs.

Note Pilot Officer Wyatt-Smith was wounded by shrapnel when the Squadron pilots were on the deck of the S.S. Delius assisting to carry ammunition to the ship's gun, at the request of the Captain.

CONCLUSIONS

1. A Squadron must be firmly based and well equipped in any theatre of operations; this includes Squadron personnel, equipment, spares, quick starting, refuelling, and rearming arrangements.

2. Shelters must also be provided for the personnel to work on aircraft when under fire, as maintenance is impossible when personnel are targets for enemy operations.

3. Morale effect of sustained bombing has a grave and serious effect on all ranks.

4. Aircraft and personnel must be camouflaged and clothed to harmonise with the immediate surroundings.

5. Squadrons when operating under similar conditions must have other landing sites with petrol and ammunition for immediate use. It has been clearly shown that if the enemy decided to attack an aerodrome, which is part of their tactics when establishing air superiority, it is almost impossible for the personnel to function as they are expected to do.

6. It was observed during the four days bombardment that the accuracy of the enemy bombing operations was generally good, especially from high altitude.

7. The anti aircraft fire from H.M. warships was in most cases ignored by German pilots, as the shells were always bursting some considerable distance behind the enemy aircraft. It is ventured to suggest that the fire control is too complicated and that if range finders were employed for the setting of the fuses, and gun layers then allowed to take individual action and to aim their sighting shots well in front of the approaching aircraft, more decisive results would be obtained:

- (i) By obtaining hits on aircraft
- (ii) Morale effect on pilot.

This view has been shared by personnel of anti-aircraft guns, both from warships and from A.A. personnel, based on fourteen days of continuous operations. It is therefore necessary to point out that A.A. defence with its present equipment is ineffective, against determined attacks.

8. German pilots fired at ground targets with their front and rear guns from whatever height the aircraft was operating, i.e. even 25,000 feet.

9. The Ju.88 is considered to be a well designed and manoeuvrable aircraft, and judging by the pilots' handling of these aircraft the Germans are training their bomber pilots in the employment of fighter tactics as well as bomber tactics. It is necessary to state that during the combats of S/Ldr. Donaldson and F/Lt. Mills, although both pilots are of exceptional flying category, they were compelled to use unorthodox tactics when fighting these aircraft. It must be borne in mind however that these pilots were flying Gladiator aircraft which are considered to be useless against the Ju.88. It is thought that the Ju.88s carry one moveable cannon firing from the nose and two fixed standard machine guns. The rear gunner fire is ineffective, but owing to the aircraft's manoeuvrable qualities this is no disadvantage, except when surprised.

10. Full deflection attacks were employed by the majority of the Squadron, with a certain amount of success. The pilots of the Gladiator aircraft were not in any danger from being hit by the front and rear gunners being outside the He.111 arc of fire.

Pilots who received wounds

<u>Pilot Officer Purdy:</u>	Severe burns on face and hands.
<u>Pilot Officer Craig-Alams:</u>	Bullet hole in the ear.
<u>Pilot Officer Wyatt-Smith:</u>	Shrapnel wound on the leg.
<u>Squadron Leader Donaldson:</u>	Shock and effects of near-by bursting bomb.

The following officers are recommended for recognition of acts of bravery:

Pilot Officer Purdy:

This officer is mentioned in dispatches for bravery and devotion to duty in that he remained in his cock-pit whilst three enemy aircraft were preparing to attack the aircraft, whilst his Commanding Officer was assisting in starting the engine of the aircraft. A salvo of bombs burst around the aircraft and this officer only abandoned his aircraft when it was set on fire by a near-by bursting bomb. This officer, despite the painful nature of his wounds, insisted on helping to start up other aircraft whilst the lake was being attacked and machine-gunned. This officer also made a dangerous run across the ice to assist F/Lt. Mills in the firing of a deserted machine gun post.

Pilot Officer McNamara:

This officer is mentioned in dispatches for leading a successful attack on a He.111 and showing great determination and courage in pursuing his attacks. This enemy aircraft was destroyed in front of all ground personnel and had a great effect upon their morale. On landing from this flight the officer displayed great courage in remaining in the vicinity of his aircraft and issuing orders for the refuelling of his aircraft when the lake was being heavily attacked and the officer only abandoned his place of duty when a salvo of bombs destroyed his aircraft.

Flight Lieutenant R.S. Mills.

This officer is mentioned in dispatches for marked bravery and devotion to duty in that he remained in this cockpit of his aircraft whilst a bombing attack was in progress and thus started his aircraft and took off under machine-gun fire. For attacking fourteen He.111 and three Ju.88 in which two He.111 were confirmed to have been destroyed and three others unconfirmed. For taking over a deserted gun post and firing the gun at enemy aircraft when he himself was subjected to severe machine gun fire. For attacking three Ju.88s when he himself was running short of petrol and ammunition.

These three officers are strongly recommended to be decorated.

Sergeant Russell (pilot).

This N.C.O. is mentioned in dispatches for his devotion to duty in that he rearmed the Squadron aircraft throughout the day whilst the lake was being subjected to continuous bombing and machine gun fire. It was due to this N.C.O.'s good work that the Squadron aircraft were able to operate, and it was only when this N.C.O. was ordered to leave his duty that he did so.

Summary of operations and results of 263 Squadron:

Total sorties	- 49
Attacks carried out against enemy aircraft	- 37
Confirmed enemy casualties (aircraft)	- 6

Note: Aircraft that are considered confirmed were found by ground personnel and positions tallied with that of pilots report.

Unconfirmed enemy casualties (aircraft) - 8
Four sections were employed on ground strafing.

Victories.

Flight Lieutenant Mills.	Confirmed	2	Unconfirmed	3
Squadron Leader Donaldson.	Confirmed	2	Unconfirmed	2
Pilot Officer McNamara.	Confirmed	1	Unconfirmed	0
Pilot Officer Bentley.	Confirmed	1	Unconfirmed	0
Pilot Officer Richards.	Confirmed	0	Unconfirmed	1
Pilot Officer Jacobson.	Confirmed	0	Unconfirmed	2
	Total	6	Total	8

3rd May, 1940.

COMBAT REPORT - by S/L. DONALDSON.

At 1315 hours took off.

Patrolled base for five minutes in company with F/Lt. Mills.

Patrolled front line and approximately 20 miles over for 15 minutes. Returned to base. Proceeded to Aandalsnes. Patrolled for 15 minutes. Returned to base. Time 1445 hours.

Two He.111s were sighted and attacked in company with F/Lt. Mills. Full deflection tactics employed, Both aircraft were destroyed and confirmed victories. Attacked single He.111 alone. Full deflection tactics employed, aircraft lost height without apparent damage and crashed. Aircraft was viewed later and pilot was found to have been shot.

Observed enemy formation of three He.111s. Approached formation, deflection attack, aiming at leader. After approximately 2 seconds burst, formation broke up in confusion. No apparent damage was noticed but F/Lt. Mills reports two of the aircraft were in serious trouble. It is regretted that these aircraft were not followed up, but at this moment the air seemed particularly full of He.111 and it was difficult to give any particular He.111 one's full attention. However, these two aircraft are claimed as 'unconfirmed' victories.

Two He.111s were then seen approaching aerodrome from East and West. I sent visual orders to F/Lt. Mills to attack one approaching from East whilst I attacked one approaching from West. Both attacks were carried out successfully but no damage observed in either case, but enemy aircraft disappeared from vicinity. One further attack was made on He.111; short burst fired with no apparent effect. Total 8 He.111s attacked; two shared confirmed victories, one individual confirmed victory, total 3 confirmed victories; and also two unconfirmed victories.

It is desired to point out that all attacks were made with full intention of conserving ammunition and only firing at range of 200/250 yards breaking off engagement at 150/180 yards approx. All attacks made deflection type. Height of attack varied between 2000/6000 feet. Deflection attacks similar to Sutton/Bridge type A5, A6 and A7. No difficulty experienced.

At about 1600/1610 hours flight having lasted nearly 2 hours, and had run out of ammunition in three guns port inner remained serviceable with few rounds left, it was decided to land for re-arming and re-fuelling. Ordered F/Lt. Mills to land first whilst I should endeavour to cover his landing. F/Lt. Mills had as it appeared touched down when four enemy aircraft in "Vic" formation were sighted. Quarter frontal attack was made, but gun fired a few rounds all ammunition was expended. Aircraft were identified by ground personnel as Ju.88. These aircraft quickly formed line astern and prepared to attack me. Trying to keep clear of leader, when suddenly No.2 or No.3 turned quickly and fired at me. This was unexpected. After avoiding all four aircraft for several minutes which entailed careful and accurate observation as much as possible of all four enemy aircraft, it was decided to break off and dive to ground level. This was done. Three Ju.88 were lost but one

15.

followed. During the above, ran out of petrol on mains and switched over to gravity. It appeared that the one that followed was making attack after attack for about ten minutes. In my opinion pilot opened fire at too great a range, and was using tracer. Finally looped in steep ravine placing enemy aircraft in front of me, some 150/200 yards. This aircraft then climbed quickly and was soon lost to sight. Hugging railway line closely because colour resembled aircraft camouflage flew to Aandalsnes and forced landed on piece of ground that I remembered Wing Commander Door had explained to me. Insufficient petrol to return to base. Whilst gliding into land 3 Norwegian machine gun posts opened fire on me. No hits observed. Cease fire so I understood later was given by Marine Officer near gun position, who had immediately recognised Gladiator and ordered Norwegians to be more careful. Landed 15.45 approx. Successful landing was made. After having cup of tea on aerodrome, surface was inspected and found suitable to operate Gladiator aircraft. Procured car as soon as possible. Returned to base and ordered evacuation of lake.

(Sgd.) J.W. Donaldson

S/Ldr.

Addition to above

What rear gun fire experienced was most inaccurate, and always appeared to be tracer.

(Initialed) J.W.D.

COMBAT REPORT - P/O JACOBSEN.

"Veblungsnes", Norway.

26/4/40. Time 1545 hours approx. - 1st Combat with E/A. commenced

Whilst on Offensive Patrol between "Lake Aerodrome" at Lesjeskogen (Lat 62° 15' N. Long. 8° 23' E) and base aerodrome (26/4/40) at "Veblungsnes" (Lat. 62° 30' N. Long. 7° 45' E.) near Aandalsnes, I sighted Heinkel III.K. aircraft at about 2,000 yards ahead and 1,000 yards below. Enemy aircraft was diving and approaching Lake Aerodrome at Lesjeskogen from the sun. Fighter aircraft manoeuvred into the sun also and attacked Heinkel III as it proceeded to circle Lake Aerodrome. At a range of 300 yards, fighter aircraft fired a five second burst giving full deflection. Return fire was seen from rear-gunner of Heinkel. Fighter aircraft again manoeuvred into sun, but enemy aircraft was diving and flying S.E. losing height. A second attack was made, but range was approximately 400 yards and only a three second burst was given. No return fire from enemy aircraft was noticeable. Enemy aircraft maintained a distance of 400 to 500 yards range for several minutes, when engagement was broken off by fighter aircraft owing to shortage of petrol and distance from base.

26/4/40. Time 1600 hours approx. - 2nd Combat with another E/A commenced.

Fighter aircraft proceeded back along patrol area towards base after engagement with first engaged at 1445. On

nearing base fighter aircraft encountered Heinkel 111 dead ahead and about 500 feet below. Fighter aircraft position was now in the sun. Fighter aircraft half-rolled into attack and fired a three second burst at 200 yards allowing $\frac{1}{2}$ deflection, and broke away to avoid colliding with enemy aircraft. Heinkel now started to dive and second attack was made from rear-starboard quarter at 300 yards 3 second burst. As 3rd attack was about to be made enemy aircraft employed evasive tactics, i.e. turning left and right, and appeared to be losing height steadily. Enemy aircraft was attacked from the sun, and fired upon at range of 250 yards with a 3 second burst, whereupon a portion of the undercarriage or base of fuselage and all bombs were seen to fall from enemy aircraft. 4th attack was made from above and from sun. Enemy aircraft at this period was losing height quickly and was flying over ravines and valleys at about 6,000 feet). Final burst of 3 seconds was given at very close range i.e. 100 yards, when fighter aircraft broke away to left (away from sun) to avoid collision with enemy aircraft. On climbing back into position for a further attack enemy aircraft was not to be seen, whereupon the attacker assumed enemy aircraft to have crashed into one of the numerous ravines, but on making reconnaissance of area where enemy aircraft supposedly crashed for 5 minutes, (area - 4 miles approx. E.N.E. of Norddals Fjord) Fighter aircraft was unable to locate enemy aircraft and returned to base having had to carry out both combats on Gravity Tank.

No return fire was noticed from enemy aircraft after 1st attack.

(Sgt.) L.R. JACOBSEN.

P/O

23/4/40.

Combat Report by P/O Jacobsen

- contd. -

26/4/40. 1630 hours.

Having landed after carrying out combats No.1 and 2 on 26/4/40 - I again took off to intercept several Heinkels 111 or Junkers 88 which were carrying out intensive bombing over base and Fjord. Fighter aircraft climbed to 22,000 feet, but owing to lack of oxygen in aircraft was compelled to patrol at 22,000 feet. Enemy aircraft were carrying out their bombing at this stage from 25,000 feet (approx.) After patrolling at 22,000 feet for some time and being unable to intercept bomber, fighter aircraft returned to base to avoid risk of interfering with A/A fire from ground.

(Sgt.) L.R. JACOBSEN.

P/O.

29/4/40.

COMBAT REPORT by P/O. RICHARDS.

At Lesjeskogen, Norway.

25/4/40. Time approx. 1300 hours.

Took off from base and had been on patrol for 45 minutes. Heinkel 111 on port side approx. 1,000 feet below.

17.

I attacked and gave one short burst at about 300 yards. Heinkel turned down valley and I attacked with one long burst. All ammunition used up. Last sight of aircraft when I broke away. F/Sgt. of the ground staff confirmed smoke and oil from port engine and aircraft went down below hills. No fire observed from rear gunner of Heinkel. Height 8,000 feet.

25/4/40. Time approx. 1400 hours.

While taxiing back after refuelling did emergency take off and attacked Heinkel at about 4000 feet. I got in one burst of about 5-6 seconds and Heinkel did steep turn to the left. Bullets from rear gunner went through my main planes and one through windscreen. I opened fire at about 300 yards. Rear gunner opened fire at about 600 yards.

(Signed) W.P. RICHARDS

P/O.

29/4/40.

COMBAT REPORT - P/O BENTLEY.

25/4/40.

Lesjaskogen, Norway.

Time 0445 hours.

Aircraft Gladiator No.5624.

I took off to intercept a Heinkel 115 seaplane which was bombing a railway station five miles South West of the Base. Climbing up to 4,000 feet I saw the enemy aircraft flying fairly low up a valley. I dived on it and fired a burst of about 2 seconds from 400 yards to 150 yards. The rear gunner was firing all tracer ammunition from twin guns mounted on a Scarff ring, his fire was inaccurate, most of it passing over my head. I broke away and climbed up to avoid a mountain. The enemy aircraft appeared to accelerate very rapidly, - black smoke coming from his exhausts. He had an airspeed of something between 200 and 210 m.p.h. with this acceleration.

I dived on him again, coming up underneath in a No.2 attack, I opened fire at 250 yards and closed at 100 yards, the rear gunner was able to point his guns down over the side almost vertically to shoot at my aircraft as I was coming up.

I continued firing from the astern position and the rear gunner stopped firing. The port engine was spluttering badly with smoke coming thickly from under the cowling, the airscrew of this engine could be seen to be turning slowly. I broke away and broke off the engagement.

My port outboard gun had jammed with a separated case after firing 7 rounds.

P/O. Hughes went in to attack this aircraft shortly after I broke away.

(Sgd.) M.H. BENTLEY.

P/O.

29/4/40.

COMBAT REPORT - P/O. S.R. McNAMARA.

On the 25th of April, 1940, I had landed after making a reconnaissance flight to Kvan when I observed a Heinkel 111.K. passing overhead. I immediately taxied out again and took off climbing to 3,000 feet.

The enemy turned to make a bombing attack on the lake and I made a level quarter attack on it during which the port engine issued clouds of black smoke. I then dived and made an F.A.A. No. 2 which developed into a stern attack. In the quarter attack I opened fire at approximately 200^x and broke away at about 100^x. The stern attack was continued up to 50^x.

The enemy fired a considerable amount of incendiary and tracer bullets in the first attack but ceased fire completely in the ensuing attacks.

The enemy finally crashed about 15 miles up the valley.

My aircraft was undamaged.

(Sgd.) S.R. McNAMARA.

P/O

COMBAT REPORT - by SGT. H.H. KITCHENER.

24th April, 1940.

Unidentified aircraft heard at 2130 hours. Flew up and down the valley very low and after ten minutes saw a biplane silhouetted in sky; upon investigation found to be of the Norwegian Air Force.

Another unidentified aircraft heard at 2215 hours. Took off and employed the same low flying tactics but no contact made. Landed at 2235 but owing to its being very dark and there being no night flying equipment I landed rather heavily and burst a tyre and broke the inter-plane struts on the starboard side.

25th April, 1940.

Had just landed from an inland reconnaissance flight when a Heinkel 111 was sighted approaching the base. When I made contact the port engine of the enemy aircraft was already out of action. I carried out three F.A. attacks using all my ammunition; no apparent immediate results. But enemy aircraft crashed some two miles further inland.

Two other aircraft of squadron also attacked this enemy aircraft.

(Sgd.) H.H. KITCHENER.

SGT. PILOT.

COMBAT REPORT - by SGT. MILLIGAN.

At approximately 2120 on 24th April, 1940, an unidentified aircraft passed the eastern end of base. I took off and climbed to eight thousand feet. By this time the aircraft was some way away. I gave chase and identified it as a Heinkel 111. I had not sufficient speed to make an attack and the machine was out of range so I returned to base.

At about 1130 hours on April 25th I was on patrol over the base at about three thousand feet when I saw a shadow on the snow beneath me. I looked up and saw to the right of me, an enemy aircraft which I identified as a Heinkel 111. I climbed to intercept him and found he was flying at about 3,500 feet. He was travelling very fast. I carried out a quarter attack slightly diving and gave a burst of approximately 150 rounds from each gun following through to an astern attack. As I was then approximately 10 miles from base I returned having broken off the combat. No apparent results, and no damage to own aircraft.

(Sgd.) G. S. MILLIGAN.

SGT./PILOT.

COMBAT REPORT - by P/O J. S. HUGHES

0450 hours on 25th April, 1940, I took off, after having much trouble to start my engine, to engage a Heinkel 115 (Float plane). P/O. Bentley was attacking this aircraft some distance away. P/O. Bentley broke away from his attack and I chased the aircraft which was diving towards the mountains; I fired one very long burst, at approximately 500 yards range, and the bullets entered the fuselage approximately aft of the main planes. The aircraft was flying at a high speed and I could not get into range again so I broke off the combat. No damage to own aircraft.

0750 hours on 25th April, 1940, a Heinkel 111 flew across the landing at approximately 4,000 feet. I took off to engage this aircraft, but was unable to get into range so returned to base, no rounds being fired.

0750 hours on 25th April, 1940, I took off to engage an enemy aircraft which was approaching from the East. I fired three short bursts into the tail and broke away. The enemy aircraft turned on to my tail and on diving to get out of range of his front guns lost sight of the aircraft, so returned to base and landed, no damage to own aircraft. This aircraft was Junkers 88.

(Sgd.) J. S. HUGHES.

P/O.

PART 2.Report of Activities of R.A.F. Advance Party
in Norway (Aandalsnes Base)

The R.A.F. party which embarked upon H.M.S. ARETHUSA on the 21st April, consisted of five officers, who had been diverted from their original functions in the proposed Trondheim operations, and a servicing flight of one officer and 60 men who had been hastily despatched from Cranfield.

2. The capabilities of the servicing party, the nature of their equipment, and the conditions to be expected on arrival in Norway were unknown quantities. "Movements after landing" plans were therefore drawn up on the assumption that no assistance or facilities would be available after disembarkation.

3. H.M.S. ARETHUSA arrived at Aandalsnes at midnight on the 22nd April. The importance of clearing the area of all stores was stressed by the Naval officer in charge and ARETHUSA's 50 tons of petrol deck cargo was shifted to a railway tunnel five miles from Aandalsnes by 0300 hours on the 23rd. One officer had been previously detailed to carry out an "accommodation" reconnaissance and troops were got into an empty hotel. (It was learned the following morning that the hotel had been vacated by Force Headquarters the previous afternoon because it was in the zone of "misses" of bombs aimed at the jetty).

4. On the morning, 23rd April, half the servicing party were sent by road to Lesjeskogen to arrange fuel dumps around the lake.

Force Headquarters was visited and the military situation learned. Difficulties of communication were stressed by Colonel Simpson in command of the base at the time. He emphasized that the only telephone system was operated by Norwegians whose integrity was doubtful, and the line was probably tapped by enemy agents. Nothing of importance could therefore be said on the 'phone, and as a means of guarding information, riddles and parables had to be resorted to. British officers became quite expert at translating such messages as "Send me over a few more bottles of that good drink of yours" into "Despatch a further consignment of 100 octane fuel". Often the operators spoke no English at all and numbers outside the local exchange were unprocureable.

5. At midday on the 25rd April, the site of the proposed landing ground at Setnesmoen was visited. Squadron Leader Whitney Straight was met there and the general aerodrome situation discussed with him. He was not very optimistic about finding any sites fit for immediate landing and he felt very strongly about the rejection of his proposal to use Vangsmjosa Lake. Before leaving the site a little local labour was regimented to commence levelling operations. They worked slowly however and scattered at the sound of a distant aircraft.

6. Throughout the day air attacks were carried out by the enemy against the jetty at Aandalsnes. No hits were registered though near misses destroyed houses in the neighbourhood.

7. At midnight on the 23rd, H.M.S. GALATEA arrived with the equipment of the servicing party, and with a W/T. set and operators under Squadron Leader Gilbert Smith. The 30 men remaining in Aandalsnes worked until daylight moving boxes from

the jetty to tree shelter on the outskirts of Aandalsnes. No list of equipment had been sent and boxes were not labelled as to their contents. There was no British military transport at Aandalsnes and lorries had to be impressed from the few remaining local people. Two only were procurable at this time so only the most essential gear could be shifted to Lesjeskogen. This meant that every box had to be opened to ascertain its contents..

8. At midday the essential gear and the remainder of the servicing flight left for the Lake. Wing Commander Keens and Squadron Leader Whitney Straight followed during the afternoon having previously despatched a signal saying that 263 Squadron could land at 1800 hours.

9. Conditions at the Lake were difficult in the extreme. The prepared runway was half a mile from the shore and this distance had to be covered through a depth of one foot of snow. The only available accommodation was two miles from the Lake and the only transport that could be used to convey the stores from the road to the runway was horse-drawn sledges. Three of these were procurable occasionally.

10. At 1700 hours on the 24th the Lake was ready for the arrival of the Gladiator Squadrons. Fuel and ammunition were laid in small dumps along the runway, and as only two refuelling troughs had been sent, jugs and petrol tins of all sorts were collected to help the work of refuelling. No starter trolley was available for use that day, the trolley batteries had arrived in an uncharged state and without a supply of acid. Efforts were made that evening to commandeer serviceable accumulators from lorries but without success.

11. During the afternoon Heinkels were active at a great height overhead. No bombs were dropped and it is more than likely that a photographic reconnaissance was being carried out. While this was going on, a flight of Skuas arrived and routed the reconnoitring aircraft.

12. At 1800 hours, 18 Gladiators of 263 Squadron arrived. Some difficulty was experienced in getting the pilots to disperse their machines. Squadron Leader Donaldson was given full particulars of the air and ground situation existing in the Aandalsnes-Dombas area. Stress was laid on the importance of the security of the landing ground and a request made by the Base Commander for a dawn patrol of the Dombas area was passed on to him. Instructions regarding the operational control of this Squadron which had been given to Wing Commander Keens were also passed to Squadron Leader Donaldson.

13. Late that evening, before all the pilots had left the Lake, an aircraft was heard in the vicinity and a Gladiator took off. No interception was made owing to bad light, and the strange aircraft was later identified as a Fokker belonging to the Norwegian Air Force.

14. A dawn patrol, arranged for the morning of the 25th April, failed to take off owing to the difficulty in starting the Gladiators. It is thought that the Squadron Commander should have taken steps to keep warm the engines of at least a section of his machines.

At 0700 hours two Gladiators were started and left for the Dombas area.

15. The servicing party was still struggling to start more engines when an enemy bombing attack on the landing area was launched at about 0830 hours. Three Heinkels each dropped eight bombs from 6,000 feet. One bomb fell close to two Gladiators parked near to each other and both were destroyed. The second bomb fell within 10 yards of another Gladiator in which the pilot was seated endeavouring to start it. The Gladiator was set on fire and the pilot escaped with a burnt face. Soon after this the two Gladiators which had got off at 0700 hours returned and another bombing attack was carried out whilst they were refuelling. Two more Gladiators were destroyed but three more took off almost immediately and carried out a patrol in the aerodrome vicinity. The leader of this section made the mistake of not keeping on the up-sun side of the Lake. The glare looking into the sun at the Lake was almost unbearable and from the air it must have been impossible to spot from the down-sun side an aeroplane flying over the Lake; thus at about 1030 hours two Heinkels flew serenely over the Lake and bombed the runway whilst a section of Gladiators on the down-sun side of them and close by remained ignorant of their presence.

16. By this time accumulators from lorries had been obtained and fitted to the starter trolley and five Gladiators were got into the air.

17. Enemy attacks continued, however, and it became clear that even if no more aircraft were wrecked by bombs the runway would be completely unserviceable by the evening. Wing Commander Keens therefore gave orders that all Gladiators were to take off from the Lake immediately they were refuelled and were to proceed and attempt to land at Setnesmoen. Wing Commander Keens then returned to Aandalsnes and got the available landing area at Setnesmoen cleared.

18. At the end of the day five serviceable Gladiators were at Setnesmoen landing ground and the runway at Lesjeskogen had been completely destroyed.

19. That evening, General Paget arrived and held a conference. At the conclusion, he requested that the Air Ministry be asked for heavy bomber attacks on the enemy communications in the south of Kvan. A signal to this effect was accordingly despatched but it met with a reply that the target was out of range.

20. Wing Commander Keens gave orders for the employment of the remaining Gladiators on the following day (26th April). One machine was ordered to carry out a reconnaissance of sites already earmarked as possible landing grounds. Three were to maintain security patrol over the Aandalsnes-Setnesmoen area. One was to work along the line Dombas-Otta to endeavour to obtain information regarding our own and enemy troop positions which was urgently required by Force Headquarters.

21. Although Setnesmoen landing ground was not bombed during the 26th the attack on Aandalsnes continued. The Gladiator detailed for the Dombas reconnaissance force landed near Dombas, and three of the remaining Gladiators were unserviceable with engine trouble at the end of the day. A large area of Aandalsnes in the vicinity of the jetty was burning fiercely by evening.

22. In response to the Air Ministry suggestion that Blenheim fighter should be sent, it was stressed that they would be useless accompanied by fuel, oil, ammunition and a few maintenance crews with tool kits. It was suggested that these be sent by Sunder-land.

The food and accommodation problem was acute at this time, as rations were sufficient only for the servicing flight that had been brought out originally and these had been dug into by the 18 pilots of the Gladiator Squadron. It was therefore decided to return the Gladiator pilots to England by the first available vessel.

23. On the 27th April, no Gladiators flew from Setnesmoen. It was decided that the one available could do little more than betray the whereabouts of this landing ground and it was therefore carefully camouflaged with the other three unserviceable ones. Bombardment of Andalsnes continued throughout the day. Squadron Leader Gilbert Smith, in charge of the R.A.F. W/T set was injured by a splinter. He and the pilots of 263 Squadron left by S.S. DELIUS which brought stores into Andalsnes at dusk.

24. Squadron Leader Cross, the Officer Commanding 46 Squadron, arrived by Sunderland at 2000 hours. This Sunderland was attacked by a Heinkel soon after it alighted but it replied with good effect from its tail turret, and Squadron Leader Whitney Straight, who was in the vicinity, was of the opinion that the Heinkel was shot down.

Squadron Leader Cross after inspecting Setnesmoen pronounced it usable by Hurricanes. A report to the Air Ministry was accordingly drafted and conveyed back to England by Squadron Leader Cross. This report requested that 46 Squadron proceed to Setnesmoen immediately and that their ground staff key men, and servicing equipment accompany them by flying boat.

25. Early in the morning of 28th April, at a conference at Army Headquarters, the possibility of withdrawal of the Force was announced.

A signal was drafted to Air Ministry stating that the situation demanded that Hurricanes operate immediately from Setnesmoen and the proposal for movement of the Squadron by air was again put forward. A reply to this signal was received announcing Air Ministry decision not to send Hurricanes.

Bombardment of Andalsnes continued throughout the day. Molde was also attacked and the store of R.A.F. petrol was blown up.

26. On the 29th April, the enemy bombardment was switched to the village of Vehlungsnes to where the R.A.F. contingent had moved its Headquarters on return from Lake Lesjeskogen. R.A.F. personnel were able to get away without injury but the majority of them lost their personal kit and equipment.

At a conference, at Army Headquarters, in the afternoon, arrangements for the embarkation of the first part of the Force were detailed. It was intended that about 1,000 troops should be evacuated that night. The units detailed included the R.A.F. Servicing Flight. No movement of troops took place until dusk.

At about 2100 hours enemy aircraft showered incendiary bombs on the buildings remaining standing in the vicinity of the jetty and these were still burning furiously when the first troop movements towards the jetty took place at about 2300 hours. It was anticipated that a cruiser would come in to embark the Force but instead a small sloop arrived capable of accommodating only about 200 men. Orders were therefore given for the remainder to commence to march 20 miles to Alfarnes and arrangements were put in hand for H.M. ships to call at that village the following night. The sloop had just slipped away from the jetty into the darkness of

the fjord when the enemy commenced a night bombardment. Flares were dropped low over the jetty and more incendiary bombs and H.E. dropped in the jetty vicinity.

After this attack had been delivered the problem of rounding up the stragglers of the Force who had been detailed to march to Alfarnes had to be faced.

Wing Commander Keens, Squadron Leader Whitney Straight and Flying Officer Alexander, who had been sheltering under the bulks of timber under the jetty during the bombardment, proceeded in two lorries to Hen, and by 0400 hours the following morning (30th) all R.A.F. personnel who had not been embarked had been mustered.

27. Flying Officer Alexander was detailed to proceed in charge of the R.A.F. personnel to Alfarnes and at 0700 hours Squadron Leader Whitney Straight and Wing Commander Keens returned to Aandalsnes to obtain details of the proposed embarkation of troops at Alfarnes and to take steps to make unserviceable the equipment at Setnesmoen.

28. Heavy bombardment was in progress at Aandalsnes and Squadron Leader Whitney Straight was severely injured by bomb fragments. Force Headquarters were struck by a spray of incendiary bombs and burnt to the ground. There was no casualty clearing station available at Aandalsnes and Squadron Leader Whitney Straight was taken to the Norwegian Hospital at Hen. All British casualties in this hospital and been embarked the previous night and arrangements had to be made therefore to remove Squadron Leader Whitney Straight.

On returning to Aandalsnes in the afternoon to ascertain further details from Force Headquarters (now moved into the woods on the hillside) it was found that concentrated air attack was being delivered on Setnesmoen landing ground. At least three sections of Ju.88's were carrying out a low flying bombing and machine gunning attack on the landing grounds. They continued their attack for nearly two hours by single aircraft in succession, spraying the area with front and rear guns in addition to dropping salvos of light bombs.

29. At 1900 hours on the 30th, Wing Commander Keens again returned to Hen, and collected Squadron Leader Whitney Straight and other British casualties which had been brought into that Hospital during the day and proceeded with them to Alfarnes. In spite of a drive in the blackout along the precipice road the whole party reached Alfarnes at 2300 hours.

30. H.M.S. WANDERER was lying off but had grounded by the stern and there was considerable anxiety as to whether she would be got off before next high water which was well into daylight the next day. H.M.S. SIKH arrived just before midnight and towed off H.M.S. WANDERER.

31. The majority of the R.A.F. personnel were embarked in H.M.S. WANDERER. Squadron Leader Whitney Straight and Wing Commander Keens were embarked in H.M.S. SIKH.

32. During the journey from Alfarnes to Scapa only one air attack was experienced.

33. Scapa was reached midday on the 2nd May. Squadron Leader Whitney Straight was transferred to H.M. Hospital Ship.

NOTE ON GERMAN AIR ATTACKS: AANDALSNES - LESJESKOGEN AREA.

1. When cloud forced enemy aircraft into range of Orliker or Beaufort guns, bombing was wild. At Lesjeskogen when attacked by Skuas two Heinkels released their bombs haphazardly at 1,000 feet. In one case the bombs did not explode, in the other instance, there was a delay of about five seconds before detonation after the bombs hit the ground. This was the only observed instance of delay action bombs. Bombs filled with sand and bombs with wooden nose plugs were reported found at Aalesunde.
2. Parachute troops captured by Ski patrols were well equipped with excellent rations. They were armed with an automatic machine gun pistol.
3. It was reported - though I was unable to obtain confirmation - that a Norwegian Ski patrol found three Germans in deep snow, two with broken legs and one shot dead. The report stated the men had been ordered to jump from a low flying aircraft into deep snow without parachutes and one man refused to do so and was shot and thrown out. Army intelligence from Sickle force may throw more light on this report.
4. Machine gunning was carried out by enemy bombers before and after releasing bombs from all heights. Bullets were scattered over a wide area. This practice was observed even when ships were being bombed from 10,000 feet or more.
5. Aandalsnes was bombed with H.E. of about 100 lbs. and with small incendiaries. Heinkels seemed to carry 8 100-lb. H.E. bombs and a container of about twelve incendiaries. H.E. was usually dropped in sticks of four, though salvos were occasionally released. Incendiaries were dropped in sticks covering between half a mile and one mile. Incendiaries spluttered and fizzled for half a minute before bursting into intense flame and burning for about three minutes.
6. Bombing accuracy was fairly good. With no opposition to contend with a sighter was often dropped and subsequently errors were of the order of 50 to 100 yards from 6,000 - 10,000 feet. The main jetty at Aandalsnes against which attacks were directed for over a week was never hit. The nearest bomb was twenty yards away. On the other hand, the small jetty at Vebingsness was blown up with a direct hit by the first bomb dropped in the vicinity.
7. From the 28th April to 30th April the enemy was completely unopposed by A.A. fire and he flew in rather bad formations of three - two up and one straggler on the outside of the circuit. Bombs were released in threes - one by each of the formation.
8. Only one night raid was experienced, parachute flares were used.
9. Heinkels always emitted black smoke when they opened up their engines from normal to full throttle.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Float Planes are the only suitable aircraft for all the year round operation in Norway. Spitfires on floats would seem to be a possible solution. Squadrons sent out should be operationally experienced, well-disciplined and should appreciate the magnitude of their task.

2. Refuelling troughs and starting trollies. The existing patterns of these all-important articles are most terribly unwieldy. Would it not be possible to have a standard chassis suitable for both these items, the chassis to be foldable like a child's pushchair and to have the petrol trough with its accompanying pump and the accumulator holders with their accompanying cables and switches as separate items. These could then be readily stowed in a dinghy, or if shore operation was required, they could be put into the collapsible pushchair chassis.

3. Instead of sending a "scratch" servicing party it would be better if the squadron selected to move provided its own key servicing personnel and equipment. The normal unit equipment could be augmented according to the particular requirements of the squadron's destination.

4. Whenever equipment is despatched without it having first passed through the hands of the unit each case should be labelled with a brief description of its contents.

Points of particular importance to units which may proceed to Norway are:-

5. Checks. Heavy wooden ones are bad. The ideal is light collapsible pattern with sawtooth protruding downwards from the leading edge.

6. Accumulators. These should be despatched fully charged and emptied accompanied by acid diluted ready for use.

7. Hurricane Lamps are very bulky, liable to get smashed and become an unnecessary encumbrance if no paraffin is available; therefore this item should be replaced by a supply of candles.

8. Portable solid fuel cookers would be invaluable for use until better cooking arrangements could be established.

9. Clothes and personal equipment

The following are most desirable:-

Blue high neck sweaters,
Llama coats as issued to the Navy,
White capes,
Snow shoes,
Gum boots with long stockings,
Sleeping bags much preferable to valise and blankets,
Anti-glare goggles. These should be of very simple and cheap pattern. Suggest tinted version of the Anti-gas goggles. It would be better to have a lot of cheap simple ones than a few elaborate and expensive ones.

The standard pattern steel helmet proved useless against rising splinters from bomb bursts. The ideal would be coal scuttle pattern.

10. In general, mobility of unit and personal equipment is the keyword. This can be achieved only if every piece of equipment and kit is useful and nothing but absolutely useful articles is taken. Personnel should be kitted out to an arctic "scale" before they leave their home stations and everything else should be left behind.

PART 3.COMMENTS BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER 263(F) SQUADRON ON
REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF R.A.F. ADVANCE PARTY IN NORWAY
(AANDALSNES BASE).Paragraphs 1 - 3.

No comment.

Paragraph 4.

The use of the telephone was reported to be tapped by enemy agents and Wing Commander Keens sent an arrival message as follows: "18 Gladiators arrived at Lake Lesjeskogen" over the telephone from a station near the lake to the British Headquarters to be cyphered. This telephoning was done in the presence of Flight Lieutenant Mills who reported this incident to his commanding officer.

This action was questioned as to the advisability of using the telephone for that message at the time. Furthermore when the squadron was given instructions to embark for the United Kingdom the telephone was used again by a Major from the R.A.F. Squadron giving the information that a squadron was embarking that night and the ship was bombed the following day for 6 hours.

Paragraphs 5 - 11.

No comment.

Paragraph 12.

The Squadron landed at 1900 hours and the pilots worked until 0230 hours on the following day in dispersing their aircraft. Wing Commander Keens was not present at this hour.

Paragraph 13.

An interception was made during the darkness and was identified as a Norwegian aircraft.

Paragraph 14.

The engines of the readiness section were run during night and the carburettors and the controls of the aircraft froze very quickly. At dawn, however, 2 aircraft took off at 0445 hours and intercepted a Heinkel 115, which was destroyed. Concerning the 2 Gladiators which left for Dombaas, no orders were given to pilots for this flight to be carried out.

Paragraph 15.

With reference to the remarks made about flying on the upsun side of the Lake the pilots have experienced no difficulty whatsoever, and any failure to intercept Heinkels would be due to the inexperience of the pilots.

Paragraph 16.

No comment.

Paragraph 17.

Wing Commander Keens did not give any instructions to the Commanding Officer of the Squadron, for aircraft to land at

Setnesmoen. Squadron Leader Donaldson on his return to the Lake at 1900 hours issued orders that the Lake should be evacuated and all serviceable aircraft were then flown to the other landing ground and 2 more left on the following day at 0200 hours.

Paragraph 18.

Agreed.

Paragraph 19.

No comment.

Paragraph 20.

Wing Commander Keens issued certain orders to individual officers and these instructions were not referred to the squadron commander. These orders were conflicting and in actual fact it was requested that a section of aircraft should ground-strafe at Dombaas and Otta, and not as Wing Commander Keens stated to carry out reconnaissance.

Paragraph 21.

During the bombing attack there were 2 Gladiators attempting to attack the Heinkels which were flying at 25,000 feet. This height could not be reached owing to lack of oxygen.

Paragraph 22.

No comment.

Paragraph 23.

No comment.

Paragraph 24.

No comment.

Paragraph 25.

It is suggested that the reason why the R.A.F. Headquarters were bombed was due to the use of the telephone and the fact that "R.A.F. Headquarters" was chalked up on the doors outside, making it obvious that it was an important building.

There are no further comments on the rest of the report as the squadron left Aandalsnes.

The recommendations in main are agreed with.