

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

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TRANSLATION No. VII/113

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AXIS OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

31st MARCH - 5th APRIL, 1941

SITUATION REPORTS ISSUED BY

LUFTWAFFE FÜHRUNGSSTAB IC

TRANSLATED BY  
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LUFTHAWFE SITUATION REPORT No. 570 (1 APRIL, 1941)

Operations on 31 March and during the Night of 31 March/1 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre:

X Fliegerkorps Operations.

Air Situation - Libya.

At noon escorted German dive-bombers participated in the ground fighting south-east of El Brega and in the afternoon attacked enemy tank concentrations 50 km. east of El Agheila.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

On 31 March no enemy shipping movements were identified by reconnaissance over the sea area west and south of Sicily. However, in the afternoon one large convoy on a northerly course and a small convoy on a north-easterly course were observed west of Crete. Two enemy cruisers on a southerly course were sighted simultaneously north of the western tip of Crete.

Details of shipping in Suda Bay and in Alexandria harbour were obtained by visual reconnaissance.

Operations

In the evening German bombers carried out attacks on shipping targets in the sea area west of Crete. Owing to the darkness, only the explosion of a heavy bomb close by a merchant ship could be observed. Further effects could not be identified.

Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean

German: 1 Me 110

Enemy: 1 Hurricane - in air battle - confirmed.

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

Greece

Ground Situation

31 March: Eleventh Army: Greek attacks on Italian positions on the left bank of the Osum river were repulsed.

Ninth Army: An attempted attack on Italian outposts on the right bank of the Shkumbin was frustrated.

Air Situation

31 March: Italian Operations from Apulia: In the afternoon one aircraft carried out reconnaissance along the Greek coast as far as Navarino.

7 fighters carried out patrols over Taranto.

Italian Operations from Albania: 9 bombers (Italian Ju 87's) escorted by 22 fighters successfully bombed an ammunition dump south-east of Hani Balaban (Hill 265).

49 fighters carried out patrols over Valona, Berat and Devoli.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational:

78 fighters

9 bombers

1 reconnaissance aircraft

88 aircraft

No Italian or enemy losses reported.

/Libya

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Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

31 March: During the afternoon about 80 - 90 British tanks came upon about the same number of German tanks on the coast south of El Brega. The action was still proceeding at 1800 hours. In the evening the line southern tip Sebcha Es Seghira (20 km. south of Brega) - El Brega was reached.

Air Situation - Libya

Operations

At 1200 hours 18 dive-bombers with fighter escort attacked enemy positions and concentrations south-east of El Brega on both sides of the Via Balbia in support of an attack by a German light division on the Brega position.

At 1600 hours 13 dive-bombers and 7 fighters attacked tank concentrations east of Es Zuera.

5 fighters escorted 9 Italian bombers on the flight to Agedabia.

1 German fighter was lost. 2 Hurricanes were shot down.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

31 March: No enemy shipping movements identified south of Sicily to the North African coast, from Cape Bon to Syrte and westwards to the limit of aircraft range.

At 1400 hours aircraft on morning reconnaissance north of Crete sighted a convoy on a northerly course comprising 5 destroyers, 17 merchant ships each of more than 8,000 tons and 1 merchant ship of 2 - 8,000 tons.

At 1420 hours there were 3 medium ships and 1 large vessel, type unknown, in Suda Bay.

In addition, the following were observed in the sea area of Crete:

1615: 1 heavy and 1 light cruiser on course 200° 20 km. north of Cape Spatha,

1615: Convoy of 2 light cruisers, 4 large and 6 medium merchant ships on course 20° 40 km. west of Crete.

In the search for shipwreck survivors in the sea area west of Crete only an Italian hospital ship was sighted.

Results of photographic reconnaissance of Alexandria harbour and El Dikheila airfield at 1130 hours on 31 March:

Warships at Alexandria Harbour:

- 2 aircraft-carriers,
- 3 battleships,
- 1 cruiser in the harbour,
- 1 cruiser moving into the floating dock,
- 1 cruiser without bows at the coaling station quay,
- 1 repair ship,
- 1 submarine depot ship,
- 2 destroyer depot ships,
- 1 net-layer ("Protector")
- 10 destroyers in the harbour,

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- 1 destroyer in dry dock,
- 2 large submarines.

No change in the number of French warships.

Special Note: Work is in progress on the deck of the aircraft carrier "Formidable" on the starboard side forward of the bridge. This may be concerned with a bomb hit. Nothing further could be observed. No damage or reduction of serviceability could be identified among the large ships.

Merchant Shipping:

- 2 passenger vessels together totalling about 27,500 tons,
- 10 tankers together totalling about 66,000 tons,
- 48 merchant ships together totalling about 257,000 tons.

Total tonnage about 350,000 tons.

The total tonnage has increased by 66,000 tons since 27 March.

Flying Boats

- 2 Sunderlands, one on land,
- 1 Walrus.

Aircraft at El Dikheila Airfield:

- 7 aircraft with folded-back wings,
- 7 aircraft with folded-back wings,
- 1 Swordfish,
- 13 single-engined aircraft (monoplanes and biplanes),
- 4 aircraft fuselages without wings.

Operations

31 March: 4 bombers were sent out to escort a convoy, but could not find it owing to the weather.

At 1935 hours 10 bombers attacked shipping targets in the sea area west of Crete. 1 bomber dropped 1 1,000 Kg. and 2 250 Kg. H.E. bombs on a stationary convoy of 25 merchant ships and destroyers 40 km. north-north-east of Cape Spatha, but owing to darkness the effect could not be observed.

In an attack on two merchant ships and a destroyer 40 km. east of Kythera Island, another bomber dropped a 1,000 Kg. H.E. bomb which missed a merchant vessel by three yards. Owing to darkness, 8 bombers did not find the target.

Defence

31 March: Slight heavy AA fire on leaving Alexandria. Light AA fire by destroyers in the sea area west of Crete.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

- 8 reconnaissance aircraft
- 51 bombers
- 18 fighters

77 aircraft.

Losses

- German: 1 Me 110 (air battle)
- Enemy: 2 Hurricanes (air battle)

/Italian

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Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya  
Reconnaissance

29 March: Visual and photographic reconnaissance over Marsa el Brega and Marada identified one sunken merchant ship in Marsa el Brega harbour, one sailing ship on the beach and two powered sailing vessels in the roadstead.

There was no shipping in Benghazi harbour. There was a large number of aircraft of different types on Berca airfield.

Nothing of importance was observed in reconnaissance of the coast between Tripoli and Misurata.

Operations

29 March: Two powered sailing vessels in Marsa el Brega harbour were bombed and shot up.

30 March: Aircraft on armed reconnaissance sighted a few sailing vessels each of about 300 tons and a pontoon at Marsa el Brega and bombed 12 enemy vehicles at Bu Grada (30 km. west-south-west of El Ahmar). Further vehicles were attacked 3 km. from Agedabia.

8 fighters escorted convoys and carried out patrols along the Syrte coast.

Air Situation - Mediterranean  
Reconnaissance

30 March: One reconnaissance aircraft did not return from a search for an enemy convoy reported to be 140 km. from Alexandria and making for Gavdos Island on 29 March.

Operations

31 March: 14 fighters escorted a convoy in the Sicilian Channel.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

12 reconnaissance aircraft  
29 fighters

41 aircraft.

Enemy Operations  
Libya

During the night 29/30 March enemy aircraft attacked Tripoli, damaging houses in the harbour area.

Mediterranean

30 March: 5 Blenheims attacked an Italian ship in Stampalia harbour (Dodecanes). No damage was caused.

Losses

Italian: 1 S 79  
Enemy: None reported.

/Luftwaffe

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LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT No. 571 (2 April, 1941)

Operations on 1 April and during the Night 1/2 April, 1941.

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

Greece

1. Ground Situation

1 April: Eleventh Army: Apart from Greek outpost activity in the Vojussa, Dhrino and Zagorie valleys and an unsuccessful attack on the right bank of the Osum, no important operations were reported.

Ninth Army: Lively artillery and patrol activity in the whole Ninth Army Area.

2. Air Situation

1 April: Italian Operations from Apulia: One aircraft attempted to carry out reconnaissance over the western coast of Greece in the early afternoon, but had to return owing to bad weather.

9 fighters carried out patrols over Lecce and Taranto.

Italian Operations from Albania: 5 fighters carried out patrols over Valona airfield.

6 aircraft carried out reconnaissance over Koritza and the Devoli and Shkumbin valley areas.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational:

14 fighters

7 reconnaissance aircraft

21 aircraft

No Italian or enemy losses were reported.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

German Operations

Ground Situation - Libya

1 April: No fighting reported.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

1 April: Results of photographic reconnaissance over Malta at 1445 hours:

La Valetta

Warships:

3 destroyers, one of them without bows,  
5 submarines,  
2 minesweepers (?),  
2 patrol boats (?).

Changes since 30 March:

Arrivals: 3 submarines,  
1 patrol boat.

/Departures

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Departures: 1 submarine.

Merchant Shipping:

No change since 30 March.

Airfields:

Luca: 9 twin-engined aircraft

Halfar: 1 biplane and  
3 single-engined aircraft identified (photo not clear)

Operations

1 April: 2 fighters sent out to escort reconnaissance aircraft returned without contacting enemy aircraft.

Defence:

1 April: Well aimed heavy AA fire over Malta.

1438 hours: 3 fighters took off from Halfar airfield, but did not attack.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

1 reconnaissance aircraft

2 fighters

3 aircraft

Losses

German: None

Enemy: None reported.

With reference to the two aircraft reported shot down in the report of 30 March, only one was damaged.

Italian Operations

Ground Situation - Libya

1 April: No fighting reported.

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

31 March: Nothing fresh observed on the coast between Zuara and Tripoli.

Operations

31 March: Italian aircraft supported the ground fighting at Marsa Brega. 10 bombers escorted by 4 German fighters made a successful attack on Agedabia. Two enemy aircraft were definitely destroyed on the ground, and another probably destroyed. 1 Hurricane was shot down. Large fires broke out in the port and town.

14 fighters carried out patrols over areas of military importance.

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/Air

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Air Situation - Mediterranean  
Reconnaissance

31 March: Morning reconnaissance in the direction of Alexandria observed nothing of particular importance.

During the search for a bomber reported missing on 30 March, two heavy cruisers and 5 destroyers were observed at 0950 hours 180 km. north of Marsa Matruh on course 160°.

10 fighters carried out patrols over Rhodes between 0815 and 1135 hours.

1 April: Nothing fresh observed by morning and afternoon reconnaissance over the Sicilian Channel.

19 pairs of fighters operating at intervals escorted an Italian convoy.

A rescue aircraft, co-operating with a hospital ship, searched from 1000 to 1630 hours for shipwreck survivors 240 km. west of Crete. 9 empty lifeboats, much wreckage and large patches of oil were observed. The hospital ship picked up 89 men.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

Details incomplete.

Enemy Operations

Libya

During the night of 30/31 March bombers attacked Tripoli.

5 aircraft bombed Misurata airfield at 1005 hours.

In both instances only slight damage was caused.

Losses:

Italian: None

Enemy: 1 Hurricane (air battle)  
2 aircraft (on ground)  
1 further aircraft probably destroyed on the ground.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT No. 572 (3 APRIL, 1941)

Operations on 2 April and during the Night of 2/3 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre:

X Fliegerkorps Operations

Air Situation - Libya  
Reconnaissance

On 1 April 1941 reconnaissance was carried out south of Agedabia in the morning, and north-east of Brega in the afternoon.

On 2 April 1941 photographic reconnaissance was carried out over Benghazi and roads leading eastwards from Benghazi.

Operations

On 1 April 1941 German and Italian formations effectively supported



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ground forces operating against Marsa Brega and Bir Sucra. In the afternoon dive-bombers made effective attacks on troop and vehicle concentrations south of Agedabia and north-east of El Brega.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

On 2 April 1941 no enemy shipping movements were identified by reconnaissance over the sea area west of Sicily.

Two enemy convoys were observed west of Crete in the morning.

Operations

In the afternoon German bombers attacked a convoy west of Crete. One transport vessel was set on fire, a second hit and damaged, and two others probably damaged.

German bombers escorting convoys did not encounter enemy aircraft.

Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean

German: Nil return

Enemy: None reported.

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

Greece

Ground Situation

2 April: Eleventh Army: After prolonged and hard fighting the Greeks succeeded in taking a strong-point in the Osum sector on the extreme left flank of the Italian front.

Ninth Army: Brisk artillery activity on the right bank of the Shkumbin.

Air Situation

2 April: Italian Operations from Albania: Two aircraft carried out reconnaissance over the Osum valley in the Italian Eighth Army Corps area. 63 aircraft carried out patrols and escorted Italian bombers attacking Florina. 39 aircraft carried out patrols over Devoli, Tomorit, Berat, Tirana, Durazzo and Valona.

2 April: Italian Operations from Apulia: 3 aircraft carried out visual and photographic reconnaissance from Porto Edda to Corfu and from Porto Palermo to Navarino without observing anything of particular importance. Five bombers made an effective attack on Florina. During the return flight an Italian aircraft was shot down south of Pogradec. A further nine bombers attacked the town and railway station of Florina; there was strong AA defence. In an air battle with ten Glosters, one of the enemy aircraft was shot down. Five bombers attacked Volos; hits were scored on the quays and the residential area. One of 10 enemy aircraft was shot down in an air battle. One Italian aircraft was lost. 8 fighters carried out patrols over Lecce and Taranto.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

19 bombers  
110 fighters  
5 reconnaissance aircraft  
134 aircraft

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Losses

2 enemy aircraft (air battle)  
2 Italian aircraft (air battle)

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

1 April: On 31 March German formations, with mixed German and Italian units covering the flanks, launched an attack on Marsa Brega and Bir Sucre and took both these places on the morning of 1 April. Advanced detachments have reached Melh en Nogra (Ahmar). The British withdrew in the direction of Agedabia at 0800 hours. German and Italian aircraft formations supported the ground forces. A large number of enemy armoured cars and vehicles were destroyed by air and ground forces. One British officer and 12 men were taken prisoner and 30 trucks captured. German losses were slight. Italian forces have taken Mn. Giofer (30 km. south of Agheila).

2 April: Agedabia was taken in the afternoon. A large number of prisoners were taken and many armoured and non-armoured vehicles captured. German losses were extremely low. In this hurried withdrawal northwards, the enemy set petrol dumps on fire.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

1 April: Reconnaissance identified large enemy concentrations south of Agedabia at 1100 hours. Only small vehicle concentrations and little movement observed 40 - 60 km. north-east of Brega at 1400 hours.

2 April: A convoy of 20 vehicles moving in the direction of Benghazi was observed on the Barce - Maraua road in the morning.

Photographic reconnaissance was carried out over Benghazi, Barce and the Benghazi - Tobruk and Derna - Tobruk roads in the afternoon. Two escort ships or minesweepers and five freighters (together totalling about 15,000 tons) were identified in Tobruk harbour. There was no shipping in Benghazi, Appollonia and Derna.

Aircraft on Airfields:

Benghazi - Berka 12 partly damaged Italian aircraft  
9 single-engined monoplanes, some Italian aircraft  
18 single-engined biplanes, some Italian aircraft  
  
Differentiation between British and Italian aircraft not possible.

Benina - North 1 Wellington  
16 single-engined aircraft, some Italian, types could not be identified  
about 70 damaged Italian aircraft off the airfield.

Barce - North 3 Lysanders  
2 Hurricanes  
1 Wellesley  
8 single-engined monoplanes

Cyrene No aircraft

Apollonia No aircraft

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<u>Derna</u>	3 twin-engined aircraft, apparently Italian 8 damaged aircraft 3 single-engined aircraft
<u>Bomba (Memelao)</u>	1 damaged aircraft
<u>Ain el Gazala</u>	11 damaged aircraft
<u>Air el Gazala (Z1)</u>	10 damaged aircraft

Apart from a few damaged machines, there were no aircraft on the airfields at Tobruk.

<u>El Adem</u>	(only small section covered)
	2 Valentias 1 Lysander 2 twin-engined aircraft 2 single-engined biplanes 1 single-engined monoplane

Transport Movements

Only section of the road between Benghazi and Tobruk were covered.

Only occasional vehicles between Benghazi and Derna. On the Derna-Tobruk road there were about 60 vehicles moving west and about 50 vehicles moving in both directions.

Only slight traffic in both directions between Ain el Gazala and Tobruk.

There were about 50 vehicles concentrated on the outskirts of Derna and about 400 vehicles on the outskirts of Tobruk. There has been a slight decrease in the number recently.

Operations

1 April: Between 1330 and 1400 hours nine dive-bombers made a successful attack on enemy concentrations reported south of Agedabia by reconnaissance. The vehicle concentrations reported north-east of Brega were also attacked by seven dive-bombers. Two tanks, one AA gun and three trucks went up in flames.

Air Situation - Mediterranean  
Reconnaissance

2 April: At 1035 hours a convoy comprising 10 medium merchant ships and four destroyers on course 150° was sighted off the west coast of Crete.

At 1038 hours a convoy comprising one large, six medium and three small merchant ships and nine destroyers on course 140° was observed off Cape Krio.

Afternoon reconnaissance west of Sicily and south of 38° north revealed no enemy shipping movements.

Operations

2 April: Between 1705 hours and 1712 hours 12 bombers attacked an enemy convoy west of Crete from heights of 150 - 3,000 feet, dropping 2,500 kg and 41 250 kg HE bombs.

Hits were scored on one transport ship of 8,000 tons with 250 kg HE bombs on the stern and forward of the funnel, and with a 500 kg bomb behind the funnel. One 250 kg and one 500 kg fell close to the starboard

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side. A boiler explosion was observed, and following aircrews saw the ship on fire and listing heavily.

A freighter of 8,000 tons received two direct hits with 250 kg. bombs. A further two bombs scored hits on the gunwales. Smoke poured from the ship.

A further freighter of 8 - 10,000 tons was hit with a 250 kg bomb and probably damaged.

Four more 250 kg bombs fell close by the starboard side of a merchant ship which may have been damaged by the underwater effect of the explosion.

During the afternoon three bombers carried out uneventful convoy escort operations.

Defence

2 April: Heavy AA fire over Tobruk; badly-aimed heavy AA fire over Derna; two fighters, probably Glosters, over Er Regina (30 km. east of Benghazi.)

Well-aimed but slight AA fire from an anti-aircraft cruiser during the attack on the convoy.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

8 reconnaissance aircraft

31 bombers

39 aircraft.

Losses

German: None

Enemy: None reported.

Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

31 March: Nothing fresh to report from reconnaissance over Zella, airfields at Abungo (?) and Tagrifet and south-east of El Mor (?).

Operations

1 April: An Italian bomber carrying out armed reconnaissance over Benghazi harbour scored definite hits on two ships and probably also hit a third. About 70 vehicles were observed near Solluch.

13 fighters carried out patrols over Tripoli and installations of military importance. An air battle with a Bristol Blenheim resulted in no losses on either side.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

1 April: Nothing to report from reconnaissance carried out from Rhodes during the morning in the direction of Alexandria, over the Caso Channel, Cerigo Island and over Port Said.

Nothing of particular importance observed in the central Mediterranean area.

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2 April: In the search for shipwreck survivors 240 km. west of Crete aircrew sighted two empty lifeboats, pieces of wreckage and 30 corpses in the water.

Operations

2 April: 12 aircraft sent out on fighter sweeps over Malta returned without encountering any enemy aircraft.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

8 reconnaissance aircraft.  
1 bomber  
25 fighters  
34 aircraft

Enemy Operations

Libya

During the night of 1/2 April about four aircraft attacked the port and town of Tripoli for about 1½ hours, dropping bombs and flares. No military installations were damaged.

Losses

Italian: None  
Enemy: None reported

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT No. 573 (4 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 3 April and during the Night of 3/4 April, 1941.

Situation in Southern Theatre

X Fliegerkorps Operations

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

Towards midday a large escorted convoy was sighted moving on a westerly course off the Algerian coast.

In the morning there was a convoy with destroyer escort moving on a westerly course south of Crete.

Operations

Escorted German bombers made unsuccessful attacks on merchant ships east of Malta.

In the sea area west of Crete a convoy was unsuccessfully attacked by aircraft on armed reconnaissance. In the evening bombers made a successful attack on the convoy. After receiving a direct hit amidships a large passenger ship caught fire and shortly afterwards was badly damaged by a violent explosion.

Other German fighters and bombers carried out convoy escort operations.

Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean

German: Nil return  
Enemy: None reported.

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Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

Greece

Ground Situation

3 April: Eleventh Army: The Italian attack to retake the positions lost on the left bank of the Osum river was impeded by bad weather. A Greek attack on Italian positions between the Dhrino and Zagorie valleys was repulsed.

Ninth Army: Only patrol activity.

Air Situation

3 April: Italian Operations from Albania: 24 bombers shot up targets on the Koritza - Pogradec road.

23 fighters carried out patrol and escort operations over Kelcyre, Tepelene, Himara and Kuqar. Another 25 fighters carried out patrols over harbours and airfields at Valona, Devoli, Tomorrice, Berat, Tirana and Durazzo.

Italian Operations from Apulia: One aircraft carried out visual and photographic reconnaissance from Porto Palermo over Santi Quaranta as far as Corfu. Five sailing vessels were observed in Corfu harbour. Another aircraft carried out reconnaissance along the western coast of Greece.

Five fighters carried out patrols over Lecce and Taranto.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

24 bombers  
53 fighters  
2 reconnaissance aircraft

79 aircraft

No Italian or enemy losses reported.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

On 3 April Benghazi was evacuated by British troops, who took up fresh defensive positions further to the east. German and Italian formations have reached Ghemines (50 km south of Benghazi).

German Operations

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

3 April: Reconnaissance was carried out over the sea area west of Sicily, north and south of the 38th parallel. At 1150 hours a convoy with one aircraft carrier, two battleships, three destroyers, three patrol boats and one tanker was observed moving on a westerly course 150 km. north-east of Algiers.

Reconnaissance south of Sicily in the area Marettimo - Cape Bon - French coast - Sirte - Cape Passero was broken off owing to the aircraft making a forced landing on the African coast.

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At 1100 hours reconnaissance south and north of Crete observed three destroyers and eight medium merchant ships on course 270° 25 km. north of Gavdos Island. There was a flying-boat in their vicinity.

Operations

3 April: 10 fighters and four bombers escorted convoys.

Four escorted bombers made an unsuccessful attack on two merchant ships of 9,000 and 1 - 2,000 tons east of Malta.

During armed reconnaissance operations three bombers attacked merchant ships in the sea area west of Crete from 1,000 - 3,000 feet dropping 12 250 kg bombs.

Two 250 kg bombs fell close behind the stern of a merchant ship of 5 - 6,000 tons.

An attack on a merchant ship of 5,000 tons was unsuccessful.

As a result of AA hits and a fighter attack, two bombers were forced to jettison their bombs.

Ten bombers attacked the same convoy from 1900 to 1930 hours, dropping four 500 kg and 24 250 kg bombs.

A passenger ship of 12,000 tons received two direct hits amidships. The ship caught fire immediately and smoke poured from it. Ten minutes after the attack all the crews observed a violent explosion and a large sheet of flame. The fire could be seen from more than 40 miles away.

A bomb fell near the gunwales of a merchant ship; the result was not observed.

Defence:

3 April: Some very well aimed light and heavy AA fire from the convoy 150 km north-east of Algiers. The German aircraft evaded an attack by three Skuas by flying into the clouds.

Heavy coastal AA and machine-gun fire from the merchants ships east of Malta.

During the morning attack on the convoy west of Crete a Hurricane attacked two bombers. Heavy, well-aimed AA fire of all calibres at 9,000 feet.

Well-aimed heavy AA fire in the afternoon from an anti-aircraft cruiser, which was in the convoy and camouflaged as a transport, and from the destroyers. Heavy AA fire from the coast of Crete and from the transport ships.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

16 reconnaissance aircraft

24 bombers

18 fighters

58 aircraft

Losses

German: None

Enemy: None reported

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Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya  
Reconnaissance

2 April: An aircraft carried out reconnaissance without result over the area Augila - Gialo.

During visual and photographic reconnaissance over the area Derna - Martuba (20 km. south-south-east of Derna) - Mechili (90 km. south-south-east of Apollonia) El Abiar (50 km. east of Benghazi) - Benghazi an Italian aircraft shot down an enemy aircraft. The Italian aircraft made a forced landing at Sirte.

The situation in the Zella Area is unchanged.

Operations

2 April: 41 fighters carried out patrols over airfields and escorted an Italian convoy.

Air Situation - Mediterranean  
Reconnaissance

2 April: During morning reconnaissance over the area Alexandria - Port Said - Haifa - Caso Channel aircraft observed two destroyers and six large and three small merchant ships 140 km. north-east of Marsa Matruh.

3 April: No enemy shipping observed in the Sicilian Channel.

In the morning there were no enemy shipping movements in the sea areas Pantelleria - Sciacca - Kelibia - Cape Bon - Lampedusa - Sciacca.

In the morning Italian fighters observed eight merchant ships at La Valetta.

Nothing of particular importance was observed by reconnaissance over the western Mediterranean.

Ten aircraft carried out searches in the western and north-western Mediterranean for an enemy warship formation and an enemy convoy.

Operations

2 April: In the afternoon four torpedo bombers and three bombers made a surprise attack on an enemy convoy 200 km. north of Marsa Matruh.

A merchant ship of 15,000 tons was hit by a torpedo and a large volume of smoke poured from the vessel. The ship was probably sunk.

Another merchant ship of 15,000 tons was hit by a torpedo. The stern sank.

A third large merchant ship was also hit and smoke poured from it. This vessel was probably sunk.

Three bombers and one torpedo bomber made another attack on the same convoy towards 1800 hours.

A merchant ship of about 10,000 tons was seen to be listing heavily. At this time the convoy comprised two destroyers, one AA cruiser and six merchant ships.

A large merchant ship was hit and was seen to be listing. Fire broke out on board.



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3 April: At 1920 hours an enemy E-boat on course for Malta was shot up 72 km. west of Gozo.

Fighters escorted two German convoys.

Other fighters escorted a rescue aircraft north of Malta. One Italian fighter crashed.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

24 reconnaissance aircraft  
11 bombers  
about 51 fighters  
" 86 aircraft

Losses

Italian: None  
Enemy: 1 Hurricane (air battle)

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT No. 574 (5 APRIL 1941)

Operations on 4 April and during the Night of 4/5 April, 1941

Situation in Southern Theatre

X Fliegerkorps Operations

Air Situation - Libya

Reconnaissance

Photographic reconnaissance identified traffic on the road between Benghazi and Derna forward of the German and Italian motorised formations which have pushed forward to Gania (170 km. north-east of Agedabia) and north-east of Benghazi.

Operations

On 3 April fighters and dive-bombers attacked retreating enemy columns east of Solluch and shot down three Hurricanes in an air battle for the loss of one German aircraft.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

No enemy warships or merchant vessels observed in the sea area south and west of Sicily.

Operations

Operations were limited to convoy escort flights and sweeps east of Malta. No enemy aircraft encountered.

Total Losses - Libya and Mediterranean (late report from 3 April)

German: 1 Ju 87  
Enemy: 3 Hurricanes (in air battle)

Situation in South-Eastern Theatre

Greece

Ground Situation

4 April: Eleventh Army: Greek patrols made an unsuccessful attempt to approach Italian positions between the Dhrino and Zagorie valleys.

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Ninth Army: During the night of 3/4 April small Greek parties approached Italian positions in the Shkumbin valley.

Air Situation

4 April: Italian Operations from Albania: Nine aircraft carried out armed reconnaissance over the Ninth Army area and dropped fragmentation bombs on enemy positions at Gur i Topit.

Twenty fighters using machine-guns and fragmentation bombs attacked enemy troops in the Gur i Topit area, concentrating on Hill 2120. Three fighters escorted a reconnaissance along the frontier. Thirty-nine fighters carried out patrols over town and airfields in Albania.

Italian Operations from Apulia: In the morning and afternoon two aircraft carried out reconnaissance along the western coast of Greece as far as Navarino. One aircraft carried out visual and photographic reconnaissance over Port Edda and Corfu. Two merchant ships and eleven sailing boats were observed at Corfu.

Thirty-eight fighters carried out patrols in the Lecce - Brindisi and Taranto areas and escorted bombers to Corfu Island.

Eighteen I.A.F. Ju 87's dive-bombed merchant ships at Corfu. One ship of 8,000 tons and another of 3,000 tons were sunk.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

13 reconnaissance aircraft  
18 bombers  
100 fighters  
131 aircraft

No Italian or enemy losses reported.

Libya and Mediterranean Area

Ground Situation - Libya

3 April: German and Italian motorised formations continued their advance through Ghemines.

4 April: Benghazi was taken at 0030 hours. Advance detachments pushed on through El Abiar (50 km. east of Benghazi) towards Mechili (90 km south-south-east of Apollonia). Gania (170 km. east of Agedabia) was reached at 1300 hours. Advance detachments are advancing straight across the desert through Haraga (130 km. east of Agedabia) towards Bomba. Enemy forces are retreating along every road leading east. There were no movements on the Northern Barce - Cyrene road.

At 1300 hours an enemy column of 50 - 100 tanks was 40 km. east of Solluch and retreating in the direction of Msus (75 km. east of Solluch). At 1700 hours eight dive-bombers and six fighters attacked this column. In an airbattle with 8-10 Hurricanes which developed, three enemy fighters were shot down for certain and another probably shot down. One German aircraft was lost.

German Operations

Air Situation - Libya  
Reconnaissance

In the morning photographic reconnaissance was carried out over the

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area with the following results:

Only small-scale movements in both directions on the Benghazi - Barce road. A large number of trucks was observed on the Barce - Derna road. There was a large number of vehicles moving in both directions on the road El Faidia (110 km. east of Barce) - Maraua (56 km. east of Barce) - Barce. Large-scale enemy vehicle movements in a westerly direction were observed west of Maraua. A fire and much smoke were observed on the southern edge of Barce. There were about 20 tents on the eastern ridge of the town. There were 75 railway trucks on the heavily damaged railway yard. A large amount of material and barrels, including 40 tractors and agricultural equipment, were identified.

A bridge was under construction on the Barce - Apollonia road 16 km. north-east of Barce.

Two bridges were down 8 km. south-west of Luigi Razza (30 km. south-west of Apollonia). There was a hut site at El Gubba (35 km. south-east of Apollonia).

Tank obstacles and road blocks were under construction 6 km. east of Tocra (65 km. north-east of Benghazi).

Groups of tents were observed, primarily on the Benghazi - Barce road and on the eastern edge of Barce.

Very large vehicle concentrations, comprising about 400 vehicles and 27 tanks, moving east and west were located in the Derna area.

There was no shipping in Benghazi harbour, and part of the boom was missing. There was a merchant ship of 1,500 tons in Derna harbour.

There were no aircraft on airfields at Barce-North, Barce-South and Cyrene. Six Blenheims, two Italian aircraft and three damaged machines were observed on Derna airfield.

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

4 April: No enemy warships in the sea area south and west of Sicily.

Operations

4 April: 4 bombers and 9 fighters escorted convoys.

8 fighters carried out sweeps east of Malta. No enemy aircraft encountered.

Defence

4 April: A German reconnaissance aircraft evaded two fighters which took off from Maraua.

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

3 reconnaissance aircraft  
15 bombers  
23 fighters  
41 aircraft

Losses

<u>German:</u>	1 Ju 87 (air battle)
<u>Enemy</u>	3 Hurricanes (air battle)
	1 Hurricane probably destroyed

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Italian Operations

Air Situation - Libya  
Reconnaissance

2 April: One merchant ship and eight powered sailing vessels in the Derna harbour area. 10 aircraft on Derna airfield. Dispersed vehicles identified in the vicinity of Martuba (20 km. south-south-east of Derna.)

A total of 80 vehicles identified in the El Mechili area; these were moving along the road in the direction of Mechili or were located in the vicinity of Fort Mechili.

One Hurricane was shot down in an air battle.

3 April: Reconnaissance over the area Giarabub - Solluch - Benghazi between 1530 hours and 1600 hours observed the following:

Advancing German and Italian forces at Ghemines; no movements on the Ghemines - Benghazi road; fires in the Benghazi area.

Armed reconnaissance over Gialo and the track to Giarabub observed nothing of importance.

No shipping movements along the coast.

Operations

3 April: 28 fighters carried out patrols over the African coast and escorted convoys.

Air Situation - Mediterranean  
Reconnaissance

3 April: No enemy warships in the sea area Cerigo - Alexandria - Caso - Haifa - Cyprus - Caso - Cerigo.

One aircraft carried out visual and photographic reconnaissance over Lavreion (Ergasteria) harbour.

In the morning two reconnaissance aircraft made an unsuccessful search for a submarine reported at Calitea (?).

In the afternoon visual reconnaissance over the Bay of Mirabella (Crete) and Cape Sidero identified new airfields.

4 April: Reconnaissance over the Ligurian Sea was impeded by bad visibility.

Towards noon reconnaissance aircraft sighted a merchant ship of about 3,000 tons on a northerly course 10 km. south-east of Kuriat Island. The ship ran up the Italian flag when the aircraft appeared.

In the sea area west of Sicily between 39°10' and 42°30' latitude and 5° longitude two small merchant ships were observed near Ajaccio on course for the port.

Operations

4 April: Fighters on free-lance operations over Malta did not encounter enemy aircraft

Total Number of Aircraft Operational

33 reconnaissance aircraft  
46 fighters

79 aircraft

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/Enemy  
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Enemy Operations

Libya

2 April: Bombers shot up Italian troops in the vicinity of Agheila, causing a few casualties

During the night of 2/3 April three waves of enemy aircraft attacked Tripoli and the airfields at Arcae Philenorum and El Agheila. There was no material damage, but in Tripoli 14 Jews were killed and 5 injured.

Losses

<u>Italian:</u>	None
<u>Enemy:</u>	1 Hurricane

A.H.B.6 Distribution  
Same as Translation VII/104