

Serial 041

Subject: War Diary for the month of March, 1944.

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dropped to starboard. 0144 Three or four bombs landed abaft the beam to port, no observation due to heavy smoke throughout area. 0149 Combat reported unidentified planes to the southward appeared to be closing; two sticks of bombs landed in general vicinity of ship but not within 5000 yards; no hits noted due to smoke. 0150 Three or four bombs landed in water, could not determine hits due to smoke. 0151 Anti-aircraft fire which had diminished somewhat again opened up. 0154 Two more sticks of bombs (approximately three to four bombs in each stick) landed close aboard. 0154 Veered to 105 fathoms; engineroom requested permission to test main engines. U.S.S. LANSDALE reported by TBS that he had four (4) surface targets bearing 260°(T), distant 2000 yards; later identified as friendly. 0203 G.O.R. reported that first wave of hostile aircraft seemed to have completed run and requested that all units notify him of any planes picked up. 0204 G.O.R. reported that hostile planes had made concentrated attacks against airfields in NAPLES. 0208 Engine-room was ready to answer all bells. 0212 Fighters reported small group of planes to the east distant 15 miles. At same time Combat reported presence in area of metal strips released by hostile aircraft (radar decoys-windows). These decoys floated downwind from the eastward toward the city of NAPLES. 0216 Hostile planes reported by Combat to be north of airfield; investigated by night fighters. 0221 G.O.R. reported no planes within 25-30 miles of NAPLES. Sky becoming cloudy. Smoke still over the area. 0234 G.O.R. requested all units to stop making smoke. 0238 G.O.R. reported condition still RED. 0241 G.O.R. reported all clear. 0242 Received word over Harbor Circuit condition WHITE. Veered to 135 fathoms; secured from Condition "ABLE" and set Condition "BAKER" plus. 0247 Secured from General Quarters. NOTE: At time of attack: Sky clear, wind 6 knots from 060°(T), moon full 170°(T), angle position approximately 70°, sea calm, visibility excellent. Smoke pots very effective especially when dropped from windward (starboard side in this case). Stack smoke not wise as it stood out very clearly.

(b) Shifted berth and anchored at 2350 to TORRE ANNUNZIATA. This change of anchorage was ordered by Commander Cruiser Squadron 15 for dispersal effect against further hostile plane attacks; the U.S.S. BROOKLYN stood out and anchored off SORRENTO, ORION to CASTELLAMMARE.

16 to 30 March

(a) At 2200 18 March MOUNT VESUVIUS commenced violent eruptions, molten lava streamed down its westerly and south-westerly slopes. This vessel was silhouetted from seaward by lava flows and at 2325 shifted berth to CASTELLAMMARE.