W.P. (42) 227
(Also C.O.S. (42) 283)
May 28, 1942

TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

It is requested that special care may be taken to
ensure the secrecy of this document.

WAR CABINET

WEEKLY RÉSUMÉ
(No. 143)
of the
NAVAL, MILITARY AND AIR SITUATION
from 0700 May 21st, to
0700 May 28th, 1942

[Circulated with the approval of
the Chiefs of Staff.]

Cabinet War Room.
NAVAL SITUATION:

General Review.
1. A convoy to Russia has been repeatedly attacked by aircraft and U-boats, which caused some casualties. Elsewhere shipping losses reported have been less than of late.

Home Waters.
2. On the 27th H.M. Minesweeper Fitzroy was mined and sunk 40 miles north-east of Great Yarmouth. Seven officers and 97 ratings were rescued.

Northern Waters.
3. During the week convoys to and from Russia have been covered by the Home Fleet. During the evening of the 25th the outward-bound convoy, consisting of 35 ships, was attacked by over 30 torpedo and dive bombers. One ship, the U.S.A. Carlton (5,127 tons), was slightly damaged and taken in tow. One enemy aircraft and possibly four others were destroyed. Subsequently this convoy was frequently attacked by aircraft and to a lesser degree by U-boats. Up to the present it is known that six ships have been sunk and several others damaged. In addition the Polish Destroyer Garland was damaged and had eight killed and 40 wounded.

Mediterranean.
4. It is reported that from the 1st April to the 13th May 26 enemy convoys, seven of which were single escorted ships, have passed east of Malta. Our aircraft and submarines have made contact on five occasions, three of which were successful.

Anti-Submarine Operations.
6. Thirty attacks on U-boats, nine by surface craft and 21 by aircraft, have been reported during the week but in no case was there definite evidence of destruction. Ten attacks have been carried out in the North-Western Approaches and to the north of the Shetlands. Eleven attacks by U.S.A. ships and aircraft in the Western Atlantic have been reported, and other attacks have been made in the Mediterranean, off the Norwegian coast, off Iceland (C) and south of the Azores. Promising attacks by aircraft were carried out in the North-Western Approaches and in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Enemy Intelligence.
7. The pocket battleship Lutzow has arrived in the Narvik area, where she was located with the Scheer and a number of destroyers on the 26th.

U-boats.
8. Activity is maintained in the Gulf of Mexico and between Bermuda and New York. Since the introduction of U.S.A. coastal convoys there has been little activity between Cape Hatteras and the Florida Straits. A number of U-boats have been operating on the convoy route to Russia. Italian U-boats are again reported off the north-east coast of Brazil.

Protection of Seaborne Trade.
9. During the week ending the 27th May, 1,100 ships, including 284 Allied and 20 Neutral, have been convoyed. One armed merchant cruiser, five anti-aircraft ships, 69 destroyers (including four United States and two Russian)
and 101 sloops, cutters and corvettes were employed on escort duties. During the week ending 24th May 121 ships in four ocean convoys arrived in home waters without loss from enemy action.

Imports into the United Kingdom by ships in convoy during the week ending 23rd May totalled 652,001 tons compared with 593,286 tons during the previous seven days and an average of 653,490 tons for the past ten weeks. Of the week’s imports 102,318 tons were oil of various grades.

**Enemy Attack on Seaborne Trade.**

10. Apart from the attacks on the outward-bound Russian convoy, no reports have been received of any ships sunk by mines or aircraft during the period. Eighteen ships, including three tankers, have been attacked by U-boats; of these seven are known to have been sunk. Two ships, including the R.F.A. Montenol, were sunk in the Azores area in an outward-bound convoy to Freetown, two ships were attacked off the U.S. Eastern seaboard and 14 in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

**British Minelaying.**

11. During the week mines have been laid by surface craft off the Flemish coast. Minelaying by aircraft, somewhat restricted by adverse weather conditions, has been carried out in the Baltic, off the German North Sea coast and in the Bay of Biscay.

**Enemy Minelaying and British Minesweeping.**

12. Enemy aircraft may have been minelaying in the Humber area on one night early in the week. No E-boat activity has been reported. Twenty magnetic, four acoustic and five moored mines have been destroyed during the week off the East Coast. The mine totals are 2,076 magnetic, 1,275 acoustic and 1,278 moored.

**Enemy Merchant Shipping.**

13. The Danish Ninna (1,800 tons) is reported to have been mined and sunk on the 23rd while on passage from Stralsund to Copenhagen with a cargo of grain. The German Delos (2,580 tons) sailed from the Piraeus for Crete on the 20th.

**MILITARY SITUATION.**

**The Russo-German Campaign.**

**Finland.**

14. There is no confirmation of a German claim to have destroyed several Russian divisions in Lapland, although there has been continuous local fighting in this area.

**Leningrad Sector.**

15. Fierce local engagements have taken place in the area south-east of Lake Ilmen, but the general situation is unchanged.

**Ukraine.**

16. The Russian offensive north-east and south of Kharkov has now apparently been brought to a standstill by the weight of the German counter-attacks. South of Kharkov the Russian forces, which had earlier penetrated west of the Donets in the general direction of Krasnograd, are now threatened with encirclement owing to the success of the German drive towards Isyum reported last week. German forces advancing northwards have now seized several of the Donets crossings, and constitute a serious danger to the Russian flank and rear. The situation is still far from clear.

**Crimea.**

17. The whole of the Kerch Peninsula is now in German hands. The figures of Russian losses in this area published in the official German communiqués are very exaggerated.
Summary.

18. The Donets battle has now assumed considerable proportions. It cannot be denied that both here and on the Kerch Peninsula the Germans have had notable successes and they can be expected to exploit them to the full. On the other hand, the Russian attack has undoubtedly forestalled German preparations for an offensive and has therefore compelled the Germans to throw in several “spearhead” formations which they might have intended to reserve for use later.

Libya.

19. During the week considerable movement was again observed behind the enemy forward positions, particularly on the coast road Bomba-Tmimi, south-west of Tmimi and in the area of Rotunda Segnali.

20. On the 26th May movement commenced eastwards from Rotunda Segnali. Four columns, including over 60 tanks, some armoured cars and over 200 M.T., probably all Italian, reached a line from south-east of El Cheima to a point 15 miles south-east of Rotunda Segnali. A further enemy movement by 51 tanks, probably German, took place towards our main position between Gazala-el Hamza. Much enemy activity was reported in the Segnali area and a column of enemy M.T. advanced north-eastward on a broad front from that place. On the 27th it was reported that 250 tanks, thought to be German, after making a night approach march, were being engaged by our armoured forces between Bir Hakeim and El Gobi. The enemy approached from south of Bir Hakeim. At the same time the enemy was carrying out an apparent demonstration on our front near Gazala. Our troops in Bir Hakeim itself were attacked by Italian tanks and claim to have destroyed some of them.

21. During the afternoon, although the situation was confused, it became evident that the enemy had two main columns. One was advancing north on Acroma and was engaged by our armoured forces about 17 miles west of El Adem. The other was directed on El Adem and was located 15 miles south of that place at last light.

India-Burma-China.

22. General Stilwell has arrived in New Delhi for consultation with General Wavell.

Assam Front.

23. The Burma army has completed its withdrawal up the Chindwin valley and about 30,000 troops are now believed to be resting and re-organising in the Imphal area. There has been no contact with the enemy since the action round Kalewa on the 10th May. Enemy activity along the river has not yet developed into an attempt to follow up. The enemy does not appear to have been reinforced.

24. There are also about 6,000 Chinese troops in the Imphal area.

Yunnan Front.

25. Chinese reports indicate that the Japanese thrust up the Burma road has made little progress and is meeting with considerable resistance.

26. The remainder of the Chinese armies in Burma are finding their way back into Yunnan.

Intelligence.

France and the Low Countries.

27. It has been established that one Panzer Division and two infantry divisions have left France and have passed through Belgium, presumably en route for the Eastern Front. The number of divisions in France, however, remains unaltered at 25 (of which three are training divisions), as a Panzer Division has arrived for refit from the Russian Front and unidentified infantry divisions have taken the place of the two which have left. There are indications that another
Panzer Division may be leaving France shortly, and it is even possible that this move has already begun. In Holland and Belgium the number of German divisions is still three.

Hungary.

28. The despatch of further Hungarian troops to the Russian front has been taking place during the last month, and is believed to be continuing. Elements of two army corps appear to be included in the expeditionary force. The equivalent of six divisions is believed to have arrived at the front. It is not certain whether the two divisions which were in Russia throughout the winter have been withdrawn.

29. Russian Press and Radio announcements locate Hungarian forces as far north as the Bryansk sector, while the German communiques speak of joint German-Hungarian-Roumanian attacks on the Kharkov front.

South-West Pacific Area.

30. The Governor of Portuguese Timor reports that sporadic guerrilla activity is still continuing in the Portuguese part of the island, but has ceased in Dutch Timor.

31. Considerable U.S.A. reinforcements, including one infantry division, have reached Australia during the past week.

32. The Australian forces in Port Moresby have also been reinforced.

AIR SITUATION.

General.

33. On the Western Front, activity was greatly restricted by persistent bad weather. Enemy attacks on Malta were again on a small scale. Heavy attacks were made by our aircraft on enemy landing grounds, camps and mechanised forces in Libya.

United Kingdom.

34. Fighter Command flew 2,595 sorties by day and 206 by night.

35. Enemy activity against this country was again on a small scale, except on the night 24th/25th, when about 70 aircraft bombed the Poole area and the Isle of Wight.

Three raiders were destroyed, one was probably destroyed and three were damaged.

Germany and Occupied Territory.

Day.

30. Fighter, Bomber and Army Co-operation Commands despatched 601, 4 and 19 sorties respectively.

37. Harassing attacks on a small scale were carried out by Spitfires of Fighter Command and Mustangs of Army Co-operation Command against objectives in Northern France.

38. Fighter sweeps involved 55 squadron sorties. Several of these operations were uneventful, but on four occasions some opposition was encountered, and in combat we destroyed five enemy fighters, probably destroyed another and damaged 20. Six Spitfires are missing.

Night.

30. Six tons of H.E. bombs were dropped at St. Nazaire, but heavy cloud prevented observation of results. Three aircraft carried out this attack, which was the only offensive operation undertaken during the week.
Coastal Operations.

40. Coastal Command flew 430 sorties, of which 58 were on convoy escort. Shipping protection patrols by Fighter Command involved 870 sorties.

41. In attacks on shipping by aircraft of Fighter and Coastal Commands, an armed minesweeper was set on fire off the Dutch coast, two 1,200-ton ships near Bergen were hit with cannon and machine-gun fire, and off Dieppe an E-boat was damaged.

42. Eighty-three aircraft of Bomber Command laid a total of 133 sea mines in enemy waters.

Mediterranean.

Libya and Egypt.

43. In the early part of the week our aircraft made continuous bombing and machine-gun attacks on enemy landing grounds at Martuba, Derna and Trimi, and on camps and M.T. The attacks were intensified when enemy columns started to move eastwards on the 26th. On the 27th Bostons and bomber Kittyhawks heavily attacked columns advancing in the Bir Hakeim–Bir El Gobi area, while fighters made low-flying attacks on enemy M.T. vehicles in rear of the columns.

44. On the following night and day our aircraft continued their attacks on enemy landing grounds, and on columns south-west of El Adem and south and east of Bir Hakeim, while fighter patrols were maintained in the battle area.

45. Wellingtons bombed railway sidings and stores dumps in the Benghazia area and laid mines in the Harbour. Naval Albacores laid mines in Derna Harbour. Road traffic in the Sirte area and north of Jedabya was attacked by Beaufighters.

46. Enemy aircraft attacked our landing grounds at Mersa Matruh, El Adem, Daba and Gambut. Six aircraft bombed the railway at El Hisheiba, south of Sidi Barrani, setting fire to 30 petrol wagons. On the night of the 27th/28th a fairly heavy attack was made on Tobruk.

47. During these operations 16 enemy aircraft were destroyed, 6 were probably destroyed and 11 were damaged. We lost 16 aircraft.

Malta.

48. Enemy bomber operations against the Island were again on a small scale, only 56 sorties being flown. The enemy fighter effort was considerably reduced, a daily average of about 35 single-engine fighter sorties being flown, as compared with about 80 in the previous week. Some of these fighters carried bombs, others acted as escorts to bombers or carried out sweeps over the Island.

49. The aerodromes were hit but little damage was caused.

50. Our fighters destroyed 12 enemy aircraft, probably destroyed 5 and damaged 10. Anti-aircraft guns damaged another. We lost one Spitfire.

Sicily.

51. Wellingtons made three night attacks on Messina. Fires were started in railway yards, and bursts were seen near oil cisterns and the port power-station. Other Wellingtons dropped bombs on Catania aerodrome and Augusta Harbour. Several reconnaissances were made of harbours and aerodromes in Sicily.

Sea Communications.

52. Wellingtons attacked two merchant vessels of 5,000 and 1,000 tons, on a south-easterly course, north-west of Benghazia. It is believed that the larger vessel was hit. The smaller vessel was straddled.

53. Near misses were scored on two medium-sized merchant vessels, on an easterly course, 37 miles south-east of Cape Stilo (South-West Italy), and on a 5,000-ton merchant vessel, course south-east, 120 miles east of Cape Spartivento.
54. Attacks were also made on two destroyers off Djerba, on a tanker and an escort vessel in the Gulf of Sirte, on four merchant vessels and four destroyers north-west of Benghazi, and on a vessel north of Bomba, but results were not observed.

55. A Beaufighter attacked about 18 E-boats 20 miles south of Malta. Three vessels were hit, resulting in explosions.

India.

56. From the 19th to 25th, daily reconnaissances of Chittagong were carried out by Japanese aircraft, and two small ineffective attacks were made on the landing ground. Six enemy bombers circled Cox’s Bazaar (100 miles north of Akyab), but no attack developed.

Burma.

57. Between the 20th and 27th, our aircraft carried out eight attacks on river craft on the Mayu and Chindwin rivers; a small steamer and several barges are believed to have been hit.

58. Akyab aerodrome was bombed five times; one enemy aircraft was shot down, another destroyed on the ground, and a third damaged. Fires were started on Mingaladon aerodrome. Other targets successfully attacked included barracks and stores at Kyaukpyu and a pontoon bridge at Kangyi.

Pacific Zone.

59. Attacks by Allied aircraft against enemy aerodromes at Lae, Yamakawa and Koping, resulted in the destruction of at least three Japanese aircraft on the ground and damage to many others. Five enemy fighters were shot down and five more probably destroyed in the air. We lost eight bombers.

60. In a raid on shipping at Ambon, Hudsons (two of which are missing) destroyed one fighter and probably destroyed two more. A near miss on a 1,000-ton ship was reported. Shipping at Rabaul and Lae was also attacked.

61. Five raids by Japanese aircraft were made on Port Moresby; no reports of damage have been received. Ten of the raiders were damaged by our fighters (two of which are missing) and another by A.A. gunfire.

Russia.

62. The German Air Force now engaged on the Russian Front is estimated at about 2,300 I.E. aircraft, of which more than half is operating on the Southern Front. For the support of the attack on the Kerch Peninsula it is believed that some 600 aircraft were employed, including a strong long-range bomber force and nearly all the available dive bombers and fighters; there is every indication that a very intensive scale of effort was achieved during the first few days of these operations, and since this must have been concentrated on a narrow front of only about 15 miles, the German air attack must have been a very important factor in the rapid recovery of the peninsula.

63. The Russian offensive at Kharkov appears to have met with little air opposition in its opening stages, probably due to the concentration of forces in the Crimea, but the rapid conclusion of operations in that area probably released considerable forces which were transferred back to the Kharkov area to oppose the Russian advance; these may have been further increased by the move of units from other sectors of the front. As a result, it is believed that air operations have been on an intensity equal to that reached in the Crimea and have probably contributed to the slowing up of Russian progress not only by affording strong close support in the battle area, but also by striking at their communications, particularly the bridges over the Donetz.

64. There seems little doubt that the Germans were unprepared for the Russian attack and the movement of units between different sectors of the front.
has almost certainly dislocated German Air Force dispositions for the beginning of the main offensive in the south, to which the Kerch operation appears to have been a preliminary. Much will depend on the success of the Russians in gaining the initiative on other sectors of the front and thus compelling the German Air Force to keep its units on the move; the present air forces which the Germans possess on the Russian front are still considerably below the peak reached during operations last summer and are therefore regarded as inadequate to meet large-scale attacks on a number of widely separated sectors.

65. Air operations on the Moscow and Leningrad fronts continue to be relatively unimportant and consist mainly of patrol activity and local tactical strikes aimed mostly at road and rail communications. The force engaged in northern Norway and Finland has carried out only isolated attacks against Murmansk and shipping in the port during the past few weeks with little effect; with the passage of convoys to the north of Norway, however, operations have temporarily been on a considerable scale reinforced by units based in the Bardufoss area, and have met with some success. The number of torpedo-carrying aircraft in this area is increasing and at present constitutes 20 to 30 long-range bombers He. 111 and Ju. 88, and 15 to 20 coastal types He. 115 and Bv. 138.

HOME SECURITY SITUATION.

General.

By Day.

66. Bombs were dropped on the 23rd at the Severn Tunnel junction, Monmouthshire, and the railway was interrupted for a day and some houses and mains damaged. On the 26th a number of bombs were dropped around Southampton. Little damage was caused except temporary dislocation of rail traffic.

By Night.

67. On the night 24th/25th a number of bombs were dropped around Poole, but the bombing was scattered. Damage was caused to houses, communications and public utility services, but was not extensive. On the 27th/28th slight damage was caused around Great Yarmouth.

Casualties.

68. Estimated civilian casualties for the week ending 0600 hours on 27th May were 10 killed and 20 injured.
APPENDICES I, II, III and IV will be published periodically.

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APPENDIX V.

Casualties to H.M. Auxiliary Vessels and to Naval Personnel.

May 25.—M/S Drifter Internos damaged by mine in the Thames Estuary.
May 26.—M/S Drifter Eddy mined and sunk off Malta. Eight of the crew missing.
May 27.—A/S Trawler Arctic Pioneer bombed and sunk at Spithead. Thirteen of the crew rescued.

The following casualties to Naval personnel have been reported:

Officers: Killed 9, missing 7, wounded 5.
Ratings: Killed 108, missing 10, wounded 49.

These figures include ratings killed and wounded in H.M.S. Trinidad.
### APPENDIX VI.

Provisional operational aircraft battle casualties for the period: dawn, Thursday, 21st May, to dawn, Thursday, 28th May, 1942.

#### Metropolitan Area.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>British</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fighters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coastal</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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#### Middle East (including Malta).

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<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>British</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fighters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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(Two crews are safe.)

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Damaged</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enemy</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighters</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
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(Of the above totals, 4 were destroyed and 1 damaged by A.A.)

#### Far East.

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<th>In the Air</th>
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<td>British and Allied</td>
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<td>Fighters</td>
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<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Probably Destroyed</th>
<th>Damaged</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enemy</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombers</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighters</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(Of the above totals, 1 was damaged by A.A.)

Notes.—(a) No account is taken of enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground in any theatre.

(b) No account is taken of British Naval aircraft casualties.
APPENDIX VII.

Air Attacks on Enemy Territory in Europe.

Extracts from Recent Raid Assessment Reports.

The following reports of damage have been received during the past week:

Cologne.—In the last week of April a factory in Bayenthal was seriously damaged and the annexe thereto completely destroyed by fire. It is understood that the factory was manufacturing meteorological balloons.

Nantes.—Photographs taken on 7th May show the following damage:

On the island between Bras de la Madeleine and Bras de Permit, two large sheds, one of them in the shipyard, are gutted; six large buildings are demolished and several others are damaged by fire or H.E. In the Prairie de la Madeleine three sides have been cleared and a factory building or warehouse has been partially demolished.

North of the River Loire there is a large area of damage by blast, and probable roof damage to a block of buildings in the Rue Scribe and to a factory near the Boulevard Amiral Courbet.

There is also damage to residential property in other parts of the town.

Boulogne.—Photographs taken during the attack on 17th May reveal a concentration of bombs in the wet dock area. There are at least five bursts on the quay which joins Gare Maritime to the town station, and it is reasonable to assume that any rail traffic to the Maritime Station would be seriously impeded.

Sea Mining.

In Kiel Fjord—

(i) On 3rd May the Herrenwyk, of 3,500 tons, was mined and her back was broken.

(ii) In the same month the German cargo boat Lavinia struck a mine. It is not known whether the ship sank.

(iii) At the end of April or early in the month of May the German tanker Zabern was damaged by a mine.

On 18th May it was learnt that one of the Gjedser-Warnemünde ferries was recently damaged by a mine and it was believed that it would be out of service for some time.

The Norwegian Vestra, of 1,422 tons, was mined and sank at the south entrance to the Sound on 20th May. She was carrying a cargo of salted herring to Stettin.

The Swedish tanker Procyn, of 8,721 tons, when homeward bound, is reported to have suffered slight damage, in a position not stated, as a result of mines.