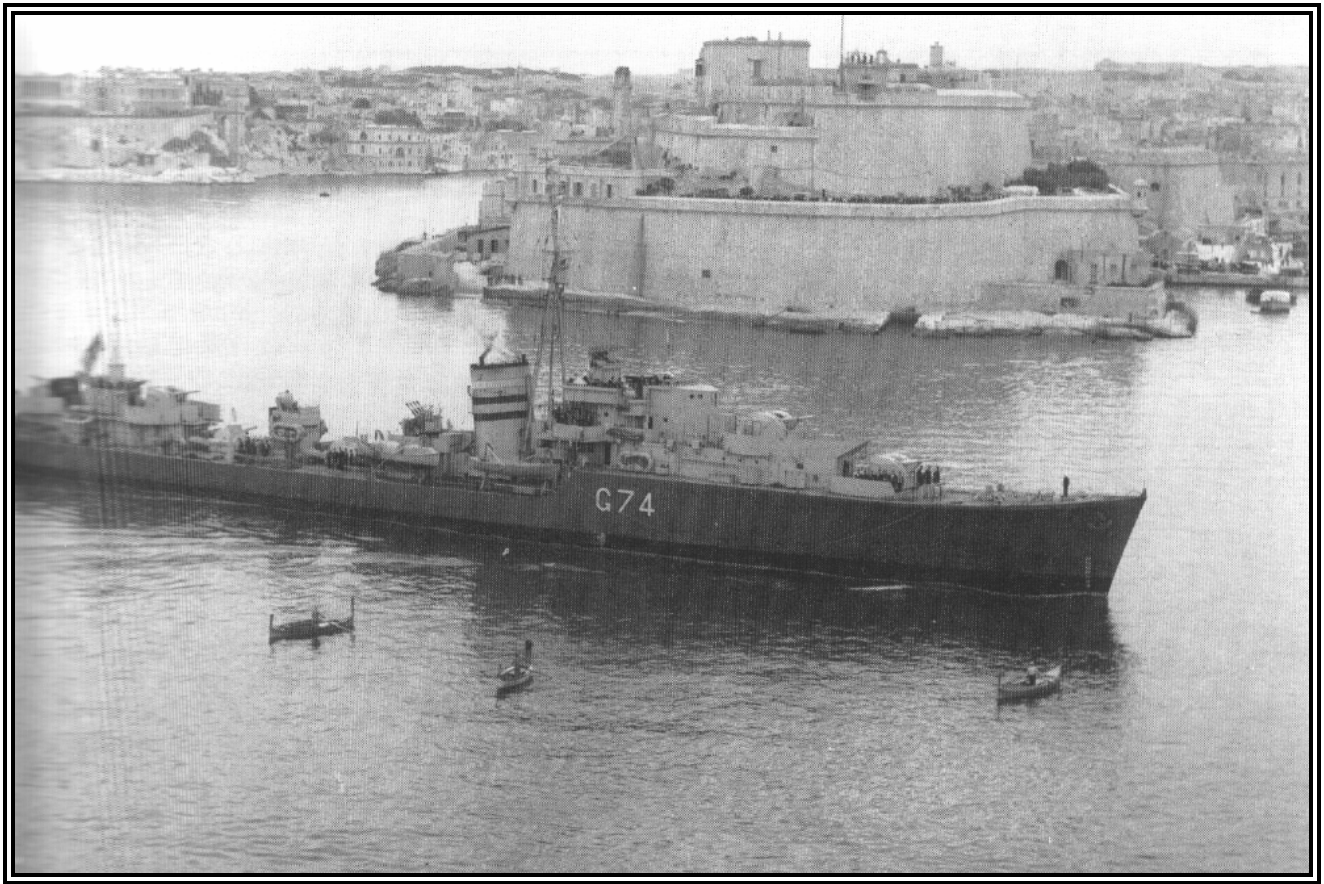


# Malta Striking Force



**1941**

# Malta Striking Force

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# Malta Striking Force

## Introduction

Malta Striking force presents a series of linked scenarios which are based on historical actions which took place in the waters of the Mediterranean involving Royal Navy surface forces based at Malta during 1941. At this time Luftwaffe air units had been withdrawn from the central Mediterranean to support the invasions of Greece and Russia, thus enabling significant Royal Navy surface forces to operate from Malta where they could intercept the axis supply lines to North Africa.

## General Rules

The games are to be fought in chronological order, with any ship seriously damaged being ineligible for subsequent actions. The Italian forces are listed for each encounter, but the Royal Navy forces must be selected by the British player specifically for each action. To do this he must choose one or more of the striking forces available at the time of the action. A list of the striking forces and their composition is shown in the table on the next page.

## Fuel Shortages

The Malta striking forces suffered from a chronic shortage of fuel oil, which limited their operations and was the main reason why larger units were never based at Malta during this time. To represent this if the British player wishes to choose multiple forces for a single action, he must first roll 1D4 before choosing his forces, the result of the roll being the number of forces he has sufficient fuel for on that day.

## Night Encounters




A target ship cannot be fired upon unless it is visible to the firer. Clear night time visibility is restricted to 15,000 yards (75cms), though this can be reduced by weather conditions. Targets outside this distance cannot be fired upon unless they are either illuminated or the firing ship is equipped with surface radar. Target illumination is determined as follows;

Star Shell	Firing of star shells will illuminate all ships in a 20cm radius for that turn, and must be written into the firing ships orders.
Parachute Flare	Dropping of parachute flares by spotter planes will illuminate all ships in a 20cm radius for 5 turns, and must be written into the spotter plane ships' orders.
Searchlights	Use of searchlights will illuminate a single target ship as long as it is within 30cm. Use of searchlights will also illuminate the firing ship. Searchlights must be used if attempting to engage enemy planes with anti aircraft fire.
Fires	If a ship is on fire above decks, it is automatically illuminated for as long as the fire continues to burn. Fires below decks do not have the same effect.
Target Fired	If the target fired on the previous game turn, this does not automatically illuminate it. It does however make the ship visible, even if it is more than 15,000 yards away, and the target can therefore be fired upon.

*\* One red D6 and one white D6 are rolled, subtract the red result from the white result*

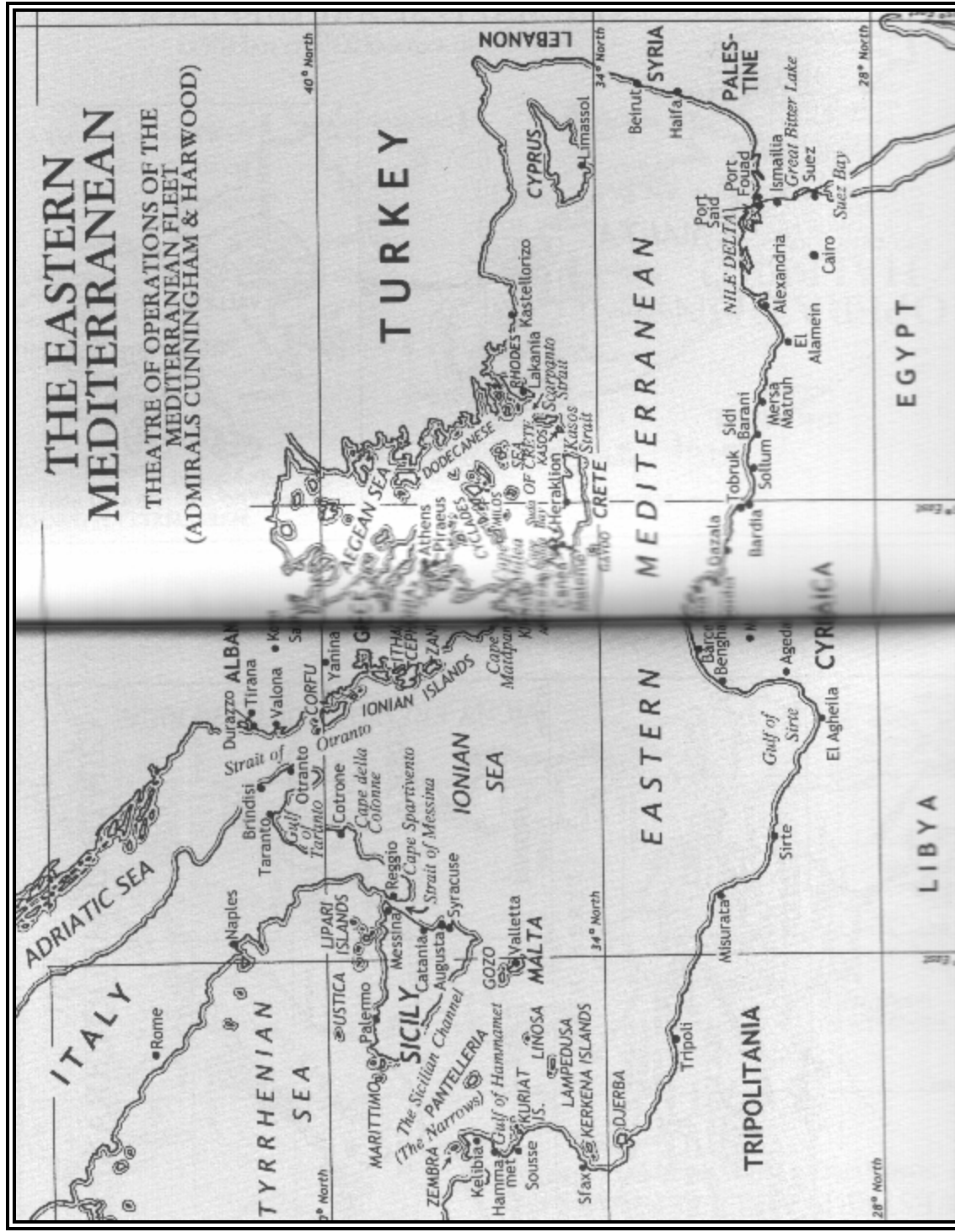
## Malta Striking Force

**Table 1 - Royal Navy Striking Force Compositions and Availability**

Force	16/04	8/11	24/11	30/11	13/12	17/12
 <p><b>14<sup>th</sup> Destroyer Flotilla</b> (Capt P.J.Mack)  <i>Jervis</i> <sup>DD</sup> <i>Janus</i> <sup>DD</sup> <i>Nubian</i> <sup>DD</sup> <i>Mohawk</i> <sup>DD</sup></p>	✓					
 <p><b>Force K</b> (Capt William G. Agnew)  <i>Aurora</i> <sup>CL</sup> <i>Penelope</i> <sup>CL</sup> <i>Lance</i> <sup>DD</sup> <i>Lively</i> <sup>DD</sup></p>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p><b>Force B</b> (Rear Admiral B. Rawlings)  <i>Ajax</i> <sup>CL</sup> <i>Neptune</i> <sup>CL</sup> <i>Kimberley</i> <sup>DD</sup> <i>Kingston</i> <sup>DD</sup></p>			✓	✓	✓	✓
 <p>(Commander G.H. Stokes)  <i>Sikh</i> <sup>DD</sup> <i>Maori</i> <sup>DD</sup> <i>Legion</i> <sup>DD</sup> <i>Isaac Sweers</i> <sup>DD</sup></p>					✓	✓

# Malta Striking Force

## Eastern Mediterranean



## Malta Striking Force

### Royal Navy

16th April 1941

Sea	<b>Swell</b>
Visibility	<b>Poor</b> (3,000 yards)
Daylight	<b>No</b>

Ultra decrypts have revealed that elements of the 15th Panzer Division are about to embark for Tripoli. Correspondingly you have been ordered to Malta with your powerful destroyer flotilla to intercept this movement. At 1430 on 15th April Sqn Ldr E.A.Whitley and Flt Lt Potter in a Maryland reconnaissance plane report sighting a troop and ammunition convoy. Covered by rain and low cloud you duly sail from Grand Harbour to make the interception.

You reach the interception point off Sfax just after midnight. As you approach the coast you slow to 20 knots and start zig zagging searching for the convoy. Finally at 0158 *Nubian* picks up the convoy on her radar 12,000 yards away and further out to sea than you'd expected. You now find that you are in a position where you can approach the convoy from the rear, a direction they would least expect. The crescent moon is on the leeward side of the convoy, silhouetting it whilst hiding your own ships. This enables you to approach the convoy to within 3,000 yards without being detected...

## Malta Striking Force

### Royal Navy

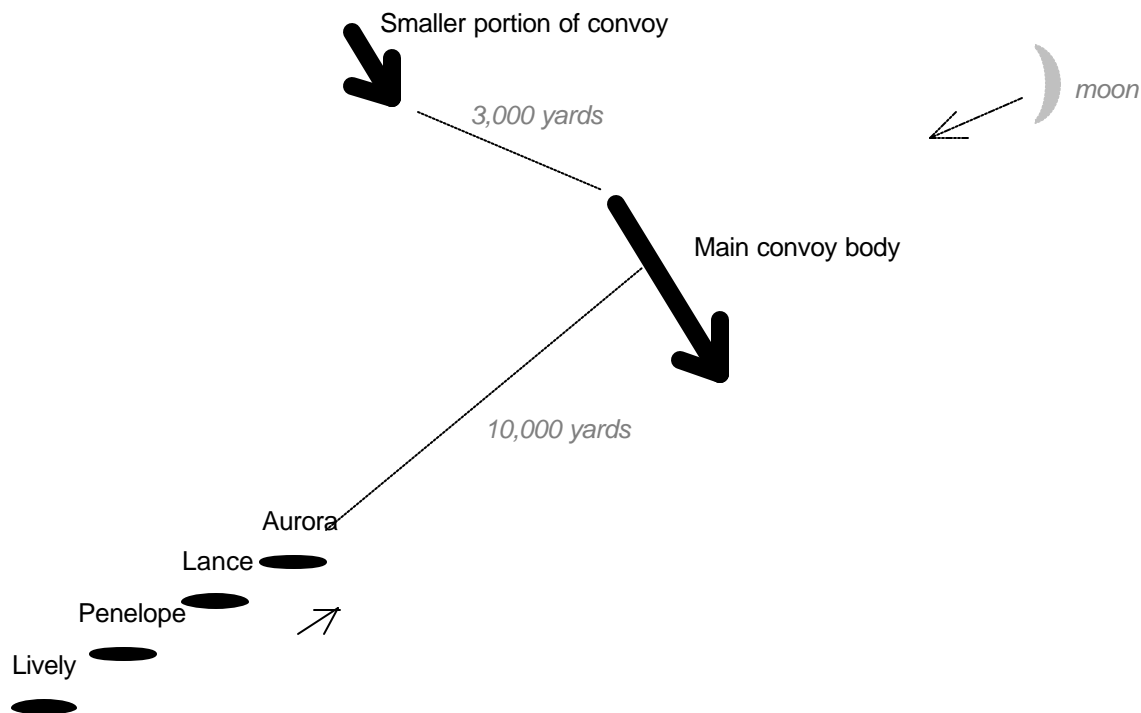
8th/9th November 1941

Sea	<b>Calm</b>
Visibility	<b>Poor</b> (3,000 yards)
Daylight	<b>No</b>

Force K arrived at Malta on Trafalgar day, 21st October, and have so far mounted two unsuccessful sorties against Italian convoys. The presence of these convoys had been passed on to you by Vice Admiral Sir Wilbraham Ford, flag officer at Malta, as a result of intelligence signals only he is authorised to receive. Today he has passed on another such report of an Italian convoy bound for Tripoli via the Strait of Messina, and confirmed by a sighting from air reconnaissance earlier in the day.

You sailed your force out of Valetta Harbour after dark. It is now just after midnight and you are in position 140 miles eastward of Syracuse. *Aurora* has just made radar contact with the convoy at a range of 8 miles. Again it is a dark night and with the advantage of your radar sets you will be able to work your way around to the starboard quarter of the convoy main body and put the convoy "up moon" thus enabling you to close to within 3000 yards without much fear of being sighted by the enemy.

The relative positions of the forces are shown in the diagram below;



## Malta Striking Force

### Royal Navy

24th November 1941

Sea	<b>Calm</b>
Visibility	<b>Fair</b> (with D6 passing thunder storms)
Daylight	<b>Yes</b>



**Vice Admiral Sir Wilbraham Ford**

You are the senior flag officer at Malta, and the only officer based there with clearance to receive the top secret Ultra intelligence reports. Ultra decrypts have informed London of the desperation of Rommel's fuel situation brought about by the attacks from British and Commonwealth forces based at Malta. They also show that the enemy are exerting themselves to resupply Rommel, and that a number of ships have been gathered to undertake the crossing to Cyrenaica. With operation CRUSADER currently underway in the western desert, Mr Churchill has insisted, via Admiral Pound, that the enemy supply line is completely severed. To this end Admiral Cunningham has agreed to supplement Force K with a second strike group, Force B.

Ultra decrypts show that the Italian's are simultaneously running one large convoy, supported by a cruiser squadron, and two smaller two ship convoys with only light cover. Air reconnaissance located the large convoy and one of the smaller convoys shortly before midnight on 21/22 November, both in mid ocean to the east of Malta, though quite far apart. Force B was already at sea in the vicinity, having sailed from Alexandria. Force K can also be ordered to sail from Malta. However the possible interception points for both convoys will mean that a daylight attack during the afternoon of 24th November is the only option. The strength of the Axis air cover over the convoys is not known.

You must decide which of your forces you are going to use against which of the two convoys that have been sighted. You can then only hope that the enemy do not get wind of those forces and either divert or recall the convoy they are meant to intercept. You may of course combine your forces to attack a single convoy.



## **Malta Striking Force**

### **Royal Navy**

**30th November 1941**

Sea	<b>Calm</b>
Visibility	<b>Fair</b>
Daylight	<b>Yes</b>

#### **Vice Admiral Sir Wilbraham Ford**

On 29 November the Axis surface convoys resumed. A large convoy of freighters, troop transports and tankers, sailing from several ports, has been sighted, it's likely destination being Benghazi via the Ionian Sea. There also seems to be at least one other small single ship convoy at sea, destination unknown. Ultra decrypts put at least one possibly two groups of cruisers providing support for the convoy operations.

You again have to decide which forces at your disposal you will send to sea, and then act on sighting reports as they come in....

## Malta Striking Force

### Royal Navy

13th December 1941

Sea	<b>Calm</b>
Visibility	<b>Poor</b> (3,000 yards)
Daylight	<b>No</b>

#### **Vice Admiral Sir Wilbraham Ford**

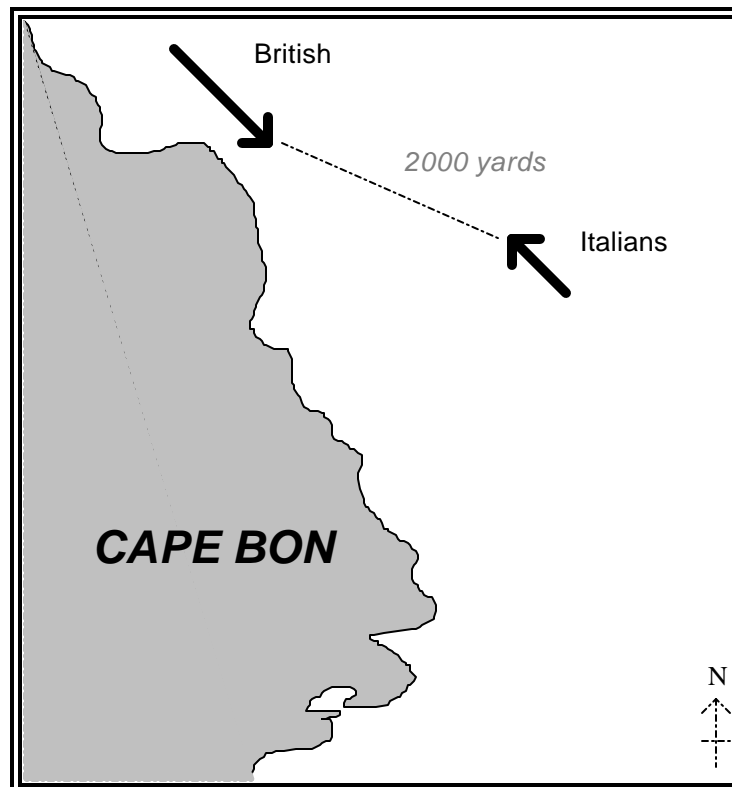
At the beginning of each month the Italians routinely changed their cipher codes, and it was a week or so before you began to receive accurate ULTRA decrypts again. During this time the Admiralty have insisted that the Malta Striking Forces continue to operate as normal in order to disguise the fact of the intelligence blackout. Hence a number of fruitless sorties were mounted, the only effect of which being to reduce your dwindling fuel supplies at Malta.

On 8 December you received an Ultra decrypt that indicated two Italian light cruisers were to sail from Palermo to Tripoli the next day carrying 100 tons of petrol and 50 tons of other stores. The ships did indeed set sail, but RAF attacks forced them to turn back. You now have information indicating that they will make another attempt on 12 December.

Admiral Cunningham (CinC Eastern Mediterranean) is concerned over the fuel situation at Malta and has diverted Cdr Stokes's destroyer flotilla, already on their way east through the Mediterranean, to intercept these Italian cruisers. You again have to decide which (if any) of the other forces at your disposal you will send to sea to support Cdr Stokes.

It is now 0320 hours. Sailing in French territorial waters off the Tunisian coast in order to avoid minefields, the British forces are just rounding Cape Bon at 30 knots, steaming in line ahead formation, keeping as close as possible to the shore. They are suddenly confronted with the Italian light cruisers, a mere 2,000 yards away dead ahead, heading straight towards them, in the opposite direction to that which was expected...

The relative locations of the forces is shown on the map below;



## Malta Striking Force

### Royal Navy

17th December 1941

Sea	<b>Calm</b>
Visibility	<b>Good</b>
Daylight	<b>Yes</b> (for the first 10 game turns only when the sun will set)



**Rear Admiral Philip Vian**

*Naiad*<sup>CL</sup>, *Euryalus*<sup>CL</sup>, *Carlisle*<sup>CL</sup>

Captain P J Mack

*Jervis*<sup>DD</sup>, *Kimberley*<sup>DD</sup>, *Kingston*<sup>DD</sup>, *Kipling*<sup>DD</sup>, *Hasty*<sup>DD</sup>, *Havock*<sup>DD</sup>, *Decoy*<sup>DD</sup>, *Nizam*<sup>DD</sup>

Plus the tanker *Breconshire*

Admiral Cunningham has given you operation MD1, the main aim of which is to escort the fast naval auxiliary tanker *Breconshire*, with her 5,000 tons of urgently needed boiler oil, through to Malta. Admiral Ford has in turn been ordered to send out all the available forces at Malta to rendezvous with you on 17 December and help bolster the escort. Once *Breconshire* is safe, Commander Stokes's destroyers are to return with you to Alexandria, but only after attempting to intercept an Italian convoy that ULTRA reports is headed for Tripoli.

You sailed from Alexandria on 15 December heading west, and for much of 16 December and most of today you have been under constant air attack, which thankfully has achieved little damage. The link up with the Malta forces happened just after dawn this morning. There have been a number of sketchy intelligence reports giving warning of enemy warship groups in the area, which you had not been unduly concerned about until Italian capital ship spotter planes were seen overhead at 1730.

It is now 1742, just before sunset, and the upper works of capital ships and cruisers can just be seen breaking the line of the northern horizon (30,000 yards distant)....

## Malta Striking Force

### Italian Navy

16th April 1941

Sea	<b>Swell</b>
Visibility	<b>Poor</b> (3,000 yards)
Daylight	<b>No</b>

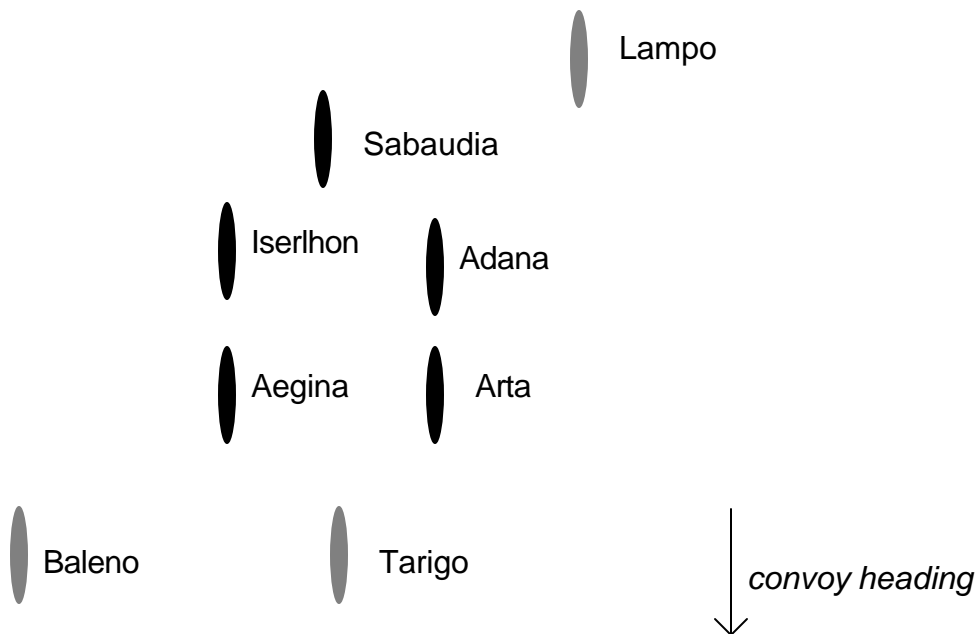
#### **Capitano di Fregata de Cristofaro**

**Escort** *Luca Tarigo* <sup>DD</sup> *Lampo* <sup>DD</sup> *Baleno* <sup>DD</sup>,

**Convoy** *Sabaudia*, *Aegina*, *Arta*, *Iserlohn*, *Adana*

You are escorting a troop and ammunition convoy carrying elements of the 15th Panzer Division from Naples to Tripoli. It's two days into your journey, and for much of it you have been shadowed by RAF reconnaissance planes. You have requested air support but have seen no friendly planes in the skies above you, and consequently expect the worst so have ordered your escorts to action stations. You are now at a point just off Sfax on the North African coast when at 0220 the convoy is suddenly taken under fire from behind...

At the point of the attack your forces are arrayed in the formation shown below:



## Malta Striking Force

### Italian Navy

8th/9th November 1941

Sea **Calm**  
Visibility **Poor** (3,000 yards)  
Daylight **No**

#### Capitano di Vascello Ugo Bisciani

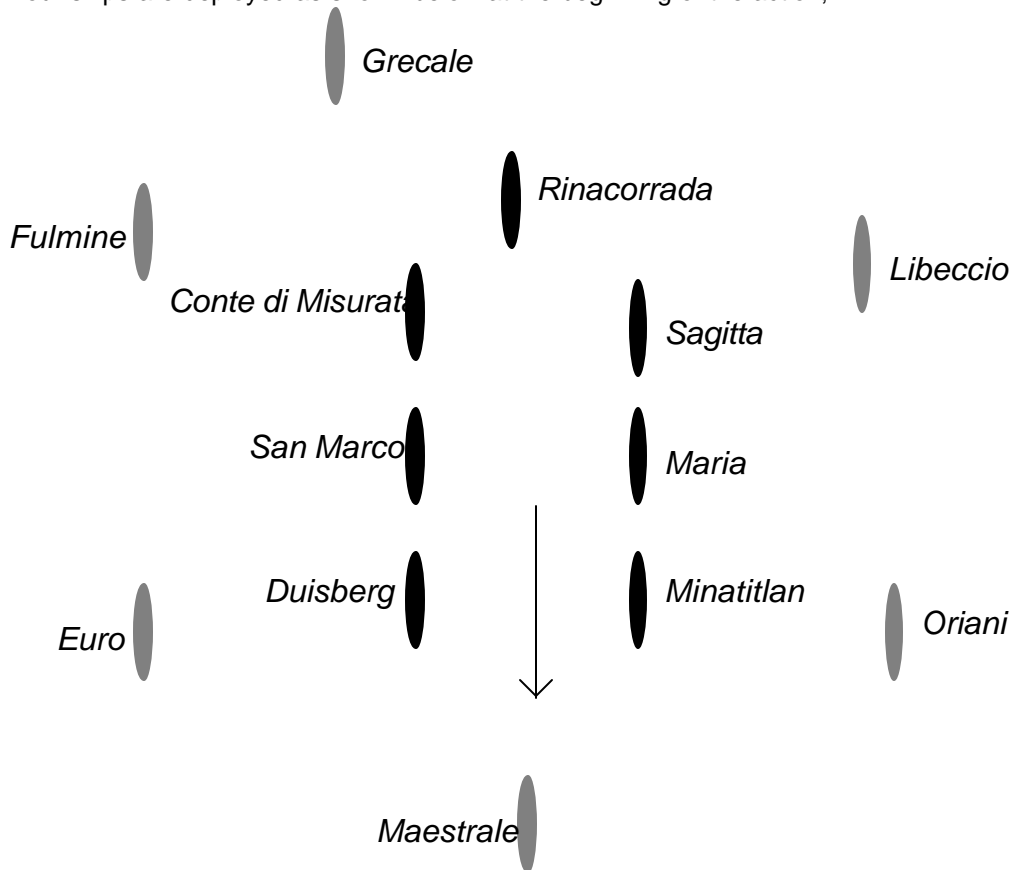
Scorta Diretta *Maestrale* <sup>DD</sup> *Euro* <sup>DD</sup> *Fulmine* <sup>DD</sup> *Grecale* <sup>DD</sup> *Libeccio* <sup>DD</sup> *Oriani* <sup>DD</sup>  
Convoy *Duisberg*, *San Marco*, *Sagitta*, *Rina Corradoi*, *Maria*, *Minatitland*, *Conte di Misurata*

You are in command of a convoy ferrying troops and supplies from Naples to Tripoli in preparation for the planned attack on Tobruk. The convoy is carrying 172 Italian and 217 German vehicles, 34,473 tons of munitions and 17,281 tons of fuel. You have been routed to the east of Malta, having sailed from Naples earlier today, and have not long cleared the Strait of Messina.

The convoy is proceeding at 9 knots, and luckily the night is dark with heavy cloud cover and very little moonlight, so you believe there is no chance of being detected by enemy surface forces tonight, though you are worried by the prospect of air attacks tomorrow when your course will take you well within range of Malta's air fields. Suddenly at 0058 the convoy is taken under fire, though you're unsure who it is that is firing at you...

To reflect this confusion each ship must make a positive random roll to identify the enemy ships emerging from the gloom, in order to allow them to engage these ships. A result of -5 will cause the ship to wrongly identify the Italian distant escort as the enemy, if they can be seen that is. A subsequent positive roll is required in order to realise a mistake and cease fire.

Your ships are deployed as shown below at the beginning of the action;



## Malta Striking Force

**Ammiraglio di Divisione Bruno Brivonesi**

Scorta a Distanza      *Trento*<sup>CA</sup> *Trieste*<sup>CA</sup>

**Capitano di Vascello Capponi**

13th Destroyer Flotilla      *Granatiere*<sup>DD</sup> *Fuciliere*<sup>DD</sup> *Bersagliere*<sup>DD</sup> *Alpino*<sup>DD</sup>

Your powerful group is providing distant cover for the convoy, and you are currently proceeding at 16 knots zig zagging about 5,000 yards behind the convoy off the starboard quarter. At 0058 hours explosions can be seen and heard coming from the convoy, but you are confused as to what's going on, and at first believe it to be an air attack.

Again due to the generally confused state of the Italian command, if and when you do come within sight of the enemy ships, each of your ships must make a positive random roll to identify them correctly, a negative roll of -5 means that you will open fire on the Italian convoy escorts instead, a subsequent positive roll being required in order to realise your mistake and cease fire. Irrespective of who your ships fire at there are standing orders forbidding the use torpedos for fear of hitting the merchant men in the convoy.

## Malta Striking Force

### Italian Navy

**24th November 1941**

Sea **Calm**  
Visibility **Fair** (with D6 passing thunder storms)  
Daylight **Yes**

The repeated attacks on the supply convoys running to North Africa have created a severe logistical crisis for the Axis forces fighting in the western desert. This has resulted in a desperate need to force a large quantity of supplies through to north Africa. To this end one large convoy and two smaller convoys have been organised. The larger convoy, with a cruiser escort, is to be routed to the east of Malta from Taranto to Bardia, the smaller convoys, sailing from Piraeus in Greece to Benghazi and Tripoli, coasting from port to port in a circuitous route via the Aegean, under the air cover of the Luftwaffe.

The German decrypting service, B-Dienst, has learnt from British naval radio traffic that Force K has sailed from Malta. Consequently Supermarina have ordered all convoys to head for the nearest port. Not all of the convoy commanders have received these orders however; To determine which convoys have received the orders, roll 1D6 and consult the table below:

1-3	A small convoy fails to receive the order.
4-5	The large convoy fails to receive the order.
6	Both a small convoy and the large convoy fail to receive the order.

#### **Small Convoy Composition**

##### **Capitano di Fregata Mimbelli**

Scorta Diretta *Lupo*<sup>DD</sup> *Cassiopea*<sup>DD</sup>  
Convoy *Maritza, Procida*

Your convoy is bound for Benghazi carrying petrol stacked in cans on the freighters decks. The Luftwaffe have provided you with air cover consisting of **5 Ju 88** bombers circling overhead.

#### **Large Convoy Composition**

##### **Ammiraglio di Divisione Parona**

Scorta a Distanza  
*Gorizia*<sup>CA</sup> *Trento*<sup>CA</sup> *Giuseppe Garibaldi*<sup>CL</sup> *Luigi Cadorna*<sup>CL</sup>

##### **Capitano di Vascello Capponi**

Scorta Diretta  
*Vivaldi*<sup>DD</sup> *Da Noli*<sup>DD</sup> *Granatiere*<sup>DD</sup> *Fuciliere*<sup>DD</sup> *Corazziere*<sup>DD</sup> *Carabiniere*<sup>DD</sup> *Alpino*<sup>DD</sup> *Turbine*<sup>DD</sup> *Perseo*<sup>DD</sup>  
Convoy of seven freighters

Your convoy is bound for Bardia, and has already suffered a submarine and an air attack from the British, the submarine attack severely damaging the *Trieste* with a torpedo, forcing her to turn back, the air attack damaging the *Abruzzi* with another torpedo hit, forcing her to turn back to port also. Of your remaining cruisers, the *Luigi Cadorna* is acting as fuel carrier, her deck crammed with cans of petrol. The Luftwaffe have provided you with air cover consisting of **10 Ju 88** bombers circling overhead.

## Malta Striking Force

### Italian Navy

30th November 1941

Sea                    **Calm**  
Visibility          **Fair**  
Daylight          **Yes**

Rommel's supply situation is still in a critical state, so the Italian high command has organised another supply operation to North Africa. Departing from several ports a large convoy of freighters, tankers and troop transports is bound for Benghazi via the Ionian Sea, whilst a smaller tanker convoy is headed for Tripoli. Strong supporting forces have also been ordered to sea to support the convoys in case of surface attack.

The main worry in the high command is that of British air reconnaissance picking up the convoys and directing enemy air and surface attack forces to intercept them. It is therefore planned that in the event of a convoy being sighted in the early part of its journey it will be ordered to turn back to base so as to avoid unacceptably high losses. The operation would then be rescheduled for another date. Furthermore the prime objective of the two covering forces is to support the main convoy bound for Benghazi, not the smaller one, so if the main convoy is ordered to turn back, these escort forces will also be recalled.

The table below gives base chances (on a D6) for early British detection, receipt of a timely recall and location by Royal Navy surface forces.

- Roll early detection first, in the order shown, letting the British player know which forces his reconnaissance has sighted.
- Whilst the British player is deciding what forces he is going to allocate, you can check for receipt of any recalls issued.
- Once the British have decided which of your units they are going to intercept you can roll for location (still make the roll even if the unit has been successfully recalled, just tell the British player that no ships were found).

	Early Detection	Receipt of Recall	Location by RN
Main Convoy	1-3 (1-5 if Scorta Diretta sighted)	1-3	1-4
Scorta Diretta	1-3 (1-5 if main convoy sighted)	1-3	1-2
Small Convoy	1	1-3	1-3
Scorta a Distanza	1-2	1-3	1-2

#### **Main Convoy**

*Da Verazzano* <sup>DD</sup>,

Freighter          *Capo Faro, Iseo, Sebastiano, Venier*

Troop Ship        *Adriatico*

Tanker            *Volturmo*

Your convoy is heading south east towards Benghazi at 8 knots. You have only a light escort with the convoy, but just over the horizon you know that the 7th cruiser division is close at hand should the Royal Navy put in an appearance. The Italian air force is also providing you with fighter cover, and at any one time during the hours of daylight there are always 2D6 CR42 fighters circling overhead.

#### **Capitano di Corvetta dell'Anno**

##### **Small Convoy**

*Alvise de Mosto* <sup>DD</sup>, *Irado Mantovani*

Your convoy is heading south towards Tripoli at 8 knots. You have only a light escort, but are relying on the distraction of the main convoy and its escorting forces to allow you to slip past the Royal Navy. The Italian air force is also providing you with fighter cover, and at any one time during the hours of daylight there are always 1D6 CR42 fighters circling overhead.



## Malta Striking Force

### **Ammiraglio di Divisione de Courten**

#### **Scorta Diretta (7th Cruiser Division)**

*Muzio Attendolo*<sup>CL</sup>, *Duca d'Aosta*<sup>CL</sup>, *Raimondo Montecuccoli*<sup>CL</sup>, *Aviere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Camicia Nera*<sup>DD</sup>, *Geniere*<sup>DD</sup>

Your cruiser division is providing direct support for the main convoy, and is steaming at 16 knots in a zig zag pattern just over the horizon from the main convoy. Should the main convoy be attacked by surface units your force will appear on the table edge behind the convoy just five game turns later.

### **Ammiraglio di Divisione Giovanola**

#### **Scorta a Distanza**

*Caio Duilio*<sup>BB</sup>, *Giuseppe Garibaldi*<sup>CL</sup>, *Granatiere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Alpino*<sup>DD</sup>, *Bersagliere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Corazziere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Carabiniere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Fuciliere*<sup>DD</sup>

Your powerfull force, the first convoy escort to include a battleship, is providing distant cover for the main convoy. It is steaming at 16 knots in a zig zag pattern roughly parallel to the course of the convoy. Should the main convoy be attacked by the Royal Navy, your force can appear on the western table edge on game turn 30.

## Malta Striking Force

### Italian Navy

13th December 1941

Sea	<b>Calm</b>
Visibility	<b>Poor</b> (3,000 yards)
Daylight	<b>No</b>

#### **Ammiraglio di Divisione Toscano**

*Alberico da Barbiano* <sup>CL</sup>, *Alberto di Giussano* <sup>CL</sup>, *Cigno* <sup>DD</sup>

The only way General Rommel's dwindling stocks of petrol have received any replenishment has been through the use of fast light cruisers loaded with cans of petrol. Two such fuel runs have successfully taken place in the first week of December, and your force has been assigned to perform a third run. You originally set sail on the evening of 8 December, laden with 100 tons of petrol in cans on your cruisers decks and 50 tons of other supplies, but were soon subject to air attacks from the RAF, so turned back. The same happened when you tried again the next night, but at the third attempt you seemed to have eluded the RAF. That was until you rounded Cape Bon, when the rumble of aero engines overhead showed that your mission had been compromised once more, so you turned your ships around and headed back north west around Cape Bon at 23 knots. You were busy signalling your change of orders to the ships in your force, *Cigno* now being 2000 yards astern of the cruisers, when at 0320 British destroyers appear out of the gloom immediately ahead of you....

Initially your ships have trouble picking out the British against the dark backdrop of the land, the Cape Bon lighthouse making your task more difficult by dazzling your gun layers. This means that none of your ships may fire on the first turn, and on turn two they must make a positive random roll to fire. All of your ships will be able to fire by turn three.

Due to the nature of the cruisers deck cargo, any shell hit on the cruisers decks will automatically result in a fire breaking out.

## Malta Striking Force

### Italian Navy

17th December 1941

Sea **Calm**  
Visibility **Good**  
Daylight **Yes** (for the first 10 game turns only when the sun will set)

#### Scorta a Distanza

##### **Ammiraglio Supremo Iachino**

*Andrea Doria*<sup>BB</sup>, *Giulio Cesare*<sup>BB</sup>, *Littorio*<sup>BB</sup>

##### **Ammiraglio di Divisione Parona**

*Gorizia*<sup>CA</sup>, *Trento*<sup>CA</sup>, *Granatiere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Bersagliere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Alpino*<sup>DD</sup>, *Fuciliere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Corazziere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Carabiniere*<sup>DD</sup>,  
*Antoniotto Usodimare*<sup>DD</sup>, *Maestrale*<sup>DD</sup>, *Alfredo Oriani*<sup>DD</sup>, *Vincenzo Gioberti*<sup>DD</sup>

Convoy M42, the main body of which departed Taranto on 15 December bound for Tripoli, is a hastily organised operation, following immediately after its predecessor (convoy M41) had been cancelled when a British submarine had torpedoed the battleship *Vittorio Veneto*, and two of the merchantmen had collided. The bulk of the Italian Navy is at sea in support of this operation, so important it has become to force supplies through to North Africa.

You are in overall command of the operation at sea, flying your flag aboard *Littorio*. You have been receiving near continuous aerial reconnaissance reports of British cruisers and at least one Battleship (though without an aircraft carrier) heading west on a possible interception course. You therefore increased your speed to 24 knots in an attempt to bring the British to action before dark. In doing so you have not been able to concentrate your forces at sea.

It is now 1742, you are just north of the Gulf of Sirte, and the British ships are in sight on the southern horizon (30,000 yards distant), heading west....

#### Scorta Diretta

##### **Ammiraglio di Squadra Bergamini**

*Caio Duilio*<sup>BB</sup>, *Duca d'Aosta*<sup>CL</sup>, *Muzio Attendolo*<sup>CL</sup>, *Raimondo Montecuccoli*<sup>CL</sup>, *Ascari*<sup>DD</sup>, *Aviere*<sup>DD</sup>, *Camicia Nera*<sup>DD</sup>

##### **Convoy**

Freighters : *Monginevro*, *Napoli*, *Vettor Pisani*, *Ankara*

Escort : *Vivaldi*<sup>DD</sup>, *Da Noli*<sup>DD</sup>, *Da Recco*<sup>DD</sup>, *Malocello*<sup>DD</sup>, *Pessagno*<sup>DD</sup>, *Zeno*<sup>DD</sup>, *Saetta*<sup>DD</sup>, *Pegaso*<sup>DD</sup>

Your forces are providing close covering support for the convoy. On receipt of the sighting reports of the British ships you reversed course to the north, to put the convoy to the north west of Admiral Iachino's main fleet, which is now in position to block the British. Not long ago you received orders to leave the convoy to its local destroyer escort and concentrate your forces on Admiral Iachino's. It is now 1742, and you are still steaming south east at full speed towards Admiral Iachino (20 game turns away).