

Report of A.S.R. Operation in Search of Dinghy: Carried Out by Warwick Aircraft of 292 Squadron detachment at Cox's Bazaar, 6th – 13th October 1944

Sorties were carried out by 292 Squadron from 6th – 13th October in search of dinghy believe to be in area 70 miles west of Cheduba?? Island.

6th October.

Two Warwicks "W?" and "T?", airborne Jessore at 13.45 hrs landed Cox's Bazaar 20.40 hrs, and 21.15 hrs. No sightings of dinghy was made.

7th October

One Warwick "M {or W?}", airborne Cox's Bazaar at 00.27 hrs. Aircraft landed Cox's Bazaar 06.00 hrs without sighting dinghy or making contact with Liberator reported to be in area earlier.

One Warwick "T", airborne Cox's Bazaar 1429 hrs sighted the dinghy at 16.55 hrs at 18 45 N. 92 22 E. from 300 ft. It was seen to be a new "Q" type dinghy of an inconspicuous dirty yellow colour with three men, two sitting and one standing. Aircraft attempted to drop a Lindholme dinghy, but in circling to do lost sight of it. A marine marker was dropped. The aircraft continued circling the area until 17.40 hrs, twice re-sighting momentarily the dinghy. The W/T went U/s five minutes before sighting the dinghy. At 17.40 hrs the aircraft climbed to cloud base – 1,500 ft. and carried out IFF distress procedure, to enable ground stations to obtain a fix on his position. Aircraft then set course at 17.50 hrs to contact the naval launch which was sighted at 19.00 hrs. only after setting course for base. Contact was established by Aldis lamp, and aircraft passed bearings and distance of dinghy where last sighted from the position of the launch, which was 244° and 15 nautical miles. The launch replied they were reporting information to naval base and proceeding to dinghy position. Nothing further was reported from any source during the night.

At 15.30 hrs (7th) 224 Group was requested by 167 Wing to obtain marine markers and/or flame floats immediately. These had already been requested from 169 Wing without success.

8th October

The next Warwick "M?" was airborne on search at 06.24 hrs, and proceeded to search the area dinghy was last reported, for 08.23 hrs till 13.22 hrs. without success. The launch was contacted but had nothing to report. Warwick landed 14.42 hrs. Cox's Bazaar.

Included on the immediate "Quick Report" sent to 231 Group, 292 Squadron and 224 Group, was a note to the effect that, "All marine markers and flame floats now exhausted – further supplies not available at Cox's Bazaar."

The next Warwick "Q" was airborne from Jessore at 15.11 hrs, and covered an area given by 231 Group, but nothing was sighted. This aircraft landed Cox's Bazaar at 23.15 hrs. and went unserviceable owing to starboard engine trouble. At 18.40 hrs, War Room 224 Group informed 167 that one Warwick was to standby till midnight in case dinghy was sighted and a further aircraft was required to take-off at 07.30 hrs (9th). O.C. 167 Wing was informed that no marine markers or flame floats were available, and Captains of Warwick aircraft considered a night sortie useless without this equipment. O.C. 167 Wing gave instructions for one aircraft to take-off in time to be in search area at first light. This was pass to and agreed by 231 Group.

9th October

Owing to very bad weather in the early morning, the aircraft "T?" was not airborne until 06.35 hrs. This aircraft took marine markers from Aircraft "M??" and reached the search area at 07.35 hrs. No sign of the dinghy was seen throughout the search. The naval launch was contacted by Aldis Lamp and W/T and told to proceed to 19 10 N. 92.50 E. as had been requested by 231 Group through 224 Group. Naval

Launch reported shortage of food and water and requested aircraft drop, or arrange to drop food and water. Three Birches Barrels were dropped in consequence. The launch stated they had 7 days fuel, and were prepared to remain in search area for that period if food and water was provided. Launch asked the N.O. i/c Chittagong and H.Q. 25th Ind. Division be informed of all that had passed between them. This was done on aircraft landing at Cox's Bazaar at 15.25 hrs.

A further Warwick "M?" was airborne at 11.19 hrs to take over the search but saw nothing. This aircraft landed 18.33 hrs and went u/s because of torn fabric on the mainplane.

At 18.02 hrs. War Room 224 Group instructed that one Warwick should proceed to 18° 25' N. 93° 05' E, as soon as possible as Liberator had sighted a dinghy at this position at 16.55 hrs.

Warwick "T" was airborne 19.55 hrs, reaching search area at 21.28 hrs., and at 21.42 hrs sighted a light flashing at sea level. A flame float was dropped at this position. A through low-level search with landing lights in light of flares dropped by a Liberator was made unsuccessfully. The Captain of the aircraft considered this light to be a hand torch flashing, but it is quite possible it might have been a dying flame-float, as the rest of crew were doubtful. Three flame floats were dropped altogether around this position. At 23°.35 hrs a message was originated by aircraft "Am over dinghy now, S.O.S.". A further message was sent at 03.00 hrs requesting relief aircraft to be sent.

10th October

This aircraft landed at Cox's Bazaar 04.45 hrs. and went u/s owing to torn fabric on main-plane.

The next Warwick "N??" was due to take-off at 01.00 hrs. but owing to being unserviceable with hydraulic leak, was not airborne until 02.05 hrs, reaching search area at 03.30 hrs. The Flame floats dropped by previous aircraft were sighted and circled. A search with landing lights was carried out without success. The whole area was thoroughly searched at dawn without success. Aircraft landed Cox's Bazaar at 11.45 hrs.

In the afternoon another aircraft would have taken off, but all Warwicks were unserviceable.

11th October

Warwick "N?" was serviceable at 09.00 hrs and airborne at 11.31 hrs to search an area given by 231 Group. No sighting was made and aircraft landed Cox's Bazaar at 18.15 hrs. This aircraft went unserviceable with torn fabric on the mainplane.

12th October

Warwick "X" (replacement) was airborne from Jessore for Cox's Bazaar and landed at 14.00 hrs. This aircraft took off with rear turret u/s to continue the search at 17.41 hrs. landing again 21.17 hrs at Cox's Bazaar. Flatt Island Chaduba Island and other small islands in the vicinity were searched from 200 ft between 18.02 and 10.07 hrs, but no sign of anything, except local activity. This aircraft was unserviceable on landing, requiring new exhaust pipe.

13th October

The ground crews worked throughout the night to get the aircraft serviceable, taking pieces from aircraft "Q" and at 05.36 hrs. Warwick "X" was again airborne to cover a search area obtained from 231 Group. At 05.57 the aircraft ditched 6/7 miles S. W of Cox's Bazaar owing to engine trouble. The aircraft floated for approx. one minute allowing 6 of the crew to escape, who were picked up 3 ¼ hrs later by A.S.R. launch.

Note: This report was written at my request by S/Ldr ???fe who is Intelligence Officer for 167 Wing. As he was doing all the briefing and de-briefing at Cox's Bazaar, this report is likely to be very much more accurate than the previous one sent by me.

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