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HEALY

WITH THE CANADIAN 65th M.T.B. FLOTILLA IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL –

Preventing German E-boats from laying mines in the convoy lanes off the Scheldt Estuary, four motor torpedo boats manned by Royal Canadian Navy personnel recently sank one E-boat, picked up 23 survivors as prisoners, left one E-boat afire and put guns of two others out of action. They suffered no casualties.

Outnumbered two to one, the boats were commanded by Lieut. Bert Morrow of Vancouver, Lieut. Ross Cully of Montreal and Winnipeg, Lieut John Jollins of Toronto and Lieut. Malcolm Knox of Montreal.

The action consisted of two separate engagements. The boats commanded by Morrow and Cully engaged four E-boats in the first action, and in the second engagement it was not ascertained whether the boats commanded by Collins and Knox took on the same four E-boats or another group.

In the first engagement, contact was made with the enemy and Morrow took on the first two E-boats and Cully the second two. Two of the E-boats appeared badly damaged after the action and had ceased firing.

“After two minutes of intense fire on both sides, the E-boats turned away to port under a heavy smoke screen,” said Lieut. Morrow. “We kept parallel to them by altering right into their smoke screen although we could only do 30 knots to their 40.

“When the enemy came into sight again, two had broken away but the other two were dead ahead,” Morrow continued. “The second of the two didn’t return our fire and appeared to be lagging behind. We closed her and she suddenly pulled away pouring heavy fire at us from the Bofors. Fire broke out in our stern but the crew had it under control in five minutes. Their steam of fire was intense but they didn’t have time to lay their mines.”

In the second engagement Collins and Knox closed the E-boats and raked them with gunfire for three minutes. All targets were hit and the third E-boat in line was belching black smoke as they broke away.

As the Collins-Knox unit was disengaging a straggler was discovered suffering from the intense fire from our M.T.B.s. The two boats attacked and sank her in four minutes by point blank gunfire. Twentieth-three survivors, all but three of the German crew, were rescued and the other three E-boats escaped without laying their mines.

While Collins and Knox were rescuing the German survivors, one fanatic, who was discovered later to be a German S.S. man, took a “potshot” with a revolver at Collins from a carley float and then put the gun to his own head and killed himself.

“As the prisoners were hauled aboard they were quite cocky until they discovered we were Canadians,” Lieut. Knox said. “When they were told we were Canadians they became scared as hell and asked in French if we were going to kill them.”