

With: -92/22/41

His Majesty's Embassy have been instructed to communicate to the State Department the following text of an official communique which was issued by the British Admiralty in London on March 30th.

"An incident occurred this morning between some of our light forces and French shore batteries in Algeria. Reports had been received that a convoy of four merchant ships escorted by a French destroyer was due to pass through Straits of Gibraltar and that convoy carried important war material for Germany. Accordingly orders were given for interception of convoy which however passed through Straits within Spanish territorial waters. Our forces caught up with French ships after they had left Spanish territorial waters, and called upon them to stop so that normal procedure of visit and search might be carried out. French shore batteries in the vicinity then opened fire on our ships notwithstanding that they were merely engaged in exercise of our legitimate belligerent rights. His Majesty's ships were compelled to reply in their own defence and hits were observed on shore batteries. In view of the action taken by French batteries, our warships would have been fully justified in firing on French merchant ships and their escort, but in the interests of humanity did not do so and merchant ships succeeded in entering nearby French port of Nemours.

2. During return of our forces to Gibraltar they were twice attacked by French bomber formations but without suffering damage or casualties."

FRHM:GS

BRITISH EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
March 31st 1941.