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Report on MEGARA (BERITIANA) POSITION by Capt. Royal.

On the night of 27/28 April A & B Coys under my command were detailed to occupy a position in and around the village of MEGARA 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles WEST of SOUDA to cover the occupation of the main position at STYLOS 3 miles to the SOUTH of MEGARA. Both Coys were involved in the withdrawal from Souda Bay and were detached from the Bn on reaching MEGARA. I found the position already occupied by TWO Coys LESS TWO pls of LAY-FORSE who were disposed with THREE Pls occupying a hill Feature to the RIGHT of the Rd. In collaboration with O.C. LAY-FORCE it was arranged that the Coys under my command should dispose in the Hill Feature to the Right and overlooking the Coast Rd and across the rear of the whole position ----- (CONT)

*J. H. M. S.*

MAY 1941.COMMANDING OFFICER: Lt.Col. G.Dittmer, M.B.E., M.C., N.Z.S.C.DATE AND PLACEINFORMATIONREF. TO APPEN.Capt: Royal's Report (cont)

to deal with any attack from that direction. The coys were in position at 0400 hrs with B Coy on the right forward position and A Coy facing the rear.

At 0500 hrs I received a personal request from an officer of LAYFORCE for two platoons to fill a gap on the left flank of his force created by the desertion of the Spanish element occupying that area. Two platoons of B Coy under 2/Lt Pene were immediately despatched and were fortunately in time to meet the enemy attack which developed first in that area.

The enemy attacked along the whole front at 0600 hrs and observation disclosed that the SOUDA BAY road was lined with enemy transport and troops, light armoured vehicles and field guns. The enemy had also got past our left flank and what appeared to be a Bn was streaming down the ridge towards STYLOS. The capture of a Coy of LAYFORCE in a valley half a mile to the rear of our position was also observed. At 0800hrs the look-out post reported that a coy of the enemy had got past our right flank and were marching down the KAILIARIS valley behind us and towards STYLOS. The position was thus literally surrounded and the force cut off.

At 0900 hrs the enemy mortars with an O.P. on the high feature overlooking our position began shelling and they always seemed to find us as often as we changed our position. Field arty. also began to shell our right rear obviously to cover the passage of the troops down the KALIARIS valley.

I was forced to withdraw my troops about 50 yds to the rear of the original positions just behind the crest of the hill while snipers were detailed to cover the forward slopes from positions on our right. Beyond enemy mortars, there was little action in the middle and right sectors while the positions held by the two platoons of B coy on the left was being hotly engaged by the enemy. At 1100 hrs the remainder of LAYFORCE broke and withdrew from their forward positions and disappeared behind us. The officer commanding this section on being questioned by me stated that he had sent a message to my platoon commander on the left flank to the effect that he was withdrawing. This message did not reach us.

With the centre and the most vital spot left open, the situation became acute and I was forced to withdraw A and B Coys (part of B) to a position in rear of the village where I could command both the centre and right of the position while a runner was despatched to my two platoons on the left to withdraw to the new line. At 1220 hrs my two coys were disposed on the new line and as the position appeared hopeless I decided to withdraw and try to contact my Bn in the rear.

At 1230 hrs the withdrawal commenced with a rearguard comprised of A Coy personnel, myself at head of column. In considering the route it was appreciated that the tracks as marked on the map in my possession would be watched and covered by the enemy so it was decided to take the most unlikely route and one providing cover from the air. In this choice we were fortunate for we negotiated a steep cliff face, got across the KAILIARIS valley without being detected; but on climbing the other side of the valley, the column was subjected to heavy M.M.G. fire from the enemy but there were no casualties. We negotiated the next hill feature with safety and dropped down into the MESOPOTAMIA valley where the column rested for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour. The valley was finally negotiated after crossing and recrossing canals and stream and we arrived at a re-entrant to the NORTH of ARMENOI village where we came under a crossfire of German

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WAR DIARY 28 MAORI BATTALION.SECRETMAY 1941.COMMANDING OFFICER: Lt.Col.G.Dittmer. M.B.E., M.C., N.Z.S.C.DATE AND PLACEINFORMATIONREF.TO APPEN.Capt Royal's Report Continued

Tommy guns. I turned the column about and decided to put up a bold front and go through the village of ARMENOI arranging my column as for village fighting. We passed through the village without incident and took the track to connect with the village of KAINA. We were now being followed by the Hun and the column was halted while the rearguard dealt with him. This was effectively done. Nearing the top of the hill feature the column again came under fire and as it appeared to come from some distance away we kept moving until we arrived in the village of KAINA which was just behind the then front line that was being held by the Australians. During our whole progress aircraft were searching for us and numerous stops were made en route until searching aircraft had passed.

At KAINA a Greek civilian offered to guide us to the main road to VRYSES. We followed a well-defined track and at 1800hrs we made the main road at 273423 where the column rested, washed feet and changed socks. From this point until we contacted the Bn at 0400 hrs, progress was slow and we were forced to requisition two donkeys to transport two of our wounded personnel who were carried out with the column.

We suffered in the whole of this action 7 casualties - one killed and six wounded. The wounded were all evacuated to R.A.Ps. in the rear.