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CYPRUS EARTHQUAKE

Two Sea Fury aircraft from the Light Fleet Carrier THESEUS (Captain D. Mc I. Russell, R.N.) flew 400 miles to make a photo reconnaissance of the damaged area yesterday, and to discover from local authorities what assistance was most needed. Lieutenant-Commander J.R. Routley, R.N., the Squadron Commander, having landed at Nicosia flew by Auster aircraft to Paphos and saw the District Commissioner while the other pilot, Lieutenant D.G.L. Swanson, R.N. took serial photographs of the damaged area.

The pilots reported: "Heavy damage in Stroumbi. Damaged area runs Stroumbi to Paphos. Some buildings collapsed, remainder badly cracked. Water, light, telephone and food services still functioning. Most villagers are encamped out of doors."

H.M.S. SAINTES (Captain D.P. Dreyer, D.S.C., R.N.), leader of the 3rd Destroyer Squadron, arrived at Paphos yesterday afternoon and the following report has been received from the Commanding Officer: -

"The earthquake is in the Paphos/Ktima area and surrounding villages and is localised within that area, one village being demolished and the next hardly touched. There is no damage in Limasol. A tremor occurred at 0600 Thursday when the majority of peasants were at work collecting the grapes harvest. This accounted for small casualties.

"Roads were not damaged, and telephones and the majority of power supplies are now working. There is plenty of fresh water and abundant food is being distributed. All casualties and sick have been evacuated to hospitals at Limasol and Nicosia. The dead have been buried.

"An urgent need is for the erection of tents which are available in the island and are arriving in stricken area. Houses built of stones and mud have in many cases collapsed, and many modern buildings, badly cracked, would be unsafe if further tremors occur. People are therefore living out of doors until tents are provided. Two small tremors did no damage.

"Sixty men from H.M.S. SAINTES landed on arrival to assist in erecting tents. This work was already being most ably organised by local Government officials, the Army, Police and populace, who show no signs of apathy and are fending for themselves adequately.

"There were scenes of activity everywhere in the devastated area ; people were friendly and as cheerful as could be expected, although many had lost everything. They were glad to see the sailors and distributed grapes to them. One eye witness described how he saw a Church steeple topple and fall, and the tremor then advance on his house, which fell about his ears. Another eye witness told a heart-rending tale of his Mother dying in the wreckage of her home."

A Surgeon Lieutenant, from H.M.S. THESEUS, who was at Samos during the Greek earthquakes, states that the devastation of the Paphos earthquake is far less widespread and damage much less severe, though the few villages affected are equally uninhabitable, if not so completely demolished.