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EXERCISE "MARINER"

During Exercise Mariner, in the Atlantic, the cruiser Swiftsure, suffered severe damage to its bridge structure when it collided with H.M.S. Diamond. Thirty-two of the crew were hurt, but the fire which broke out was quickly brought under control. H.M.S. Diamond, a heavy destroyer of the Daring class, had its bows crumpled when it hit Swiftsure. No casualties were reported, but the ship was hurriedly escorted back to port. Full details of the accident are still not known but the heavy seas are believed to have been the cause.

The aircraft carrier Eagle was among 300 ships taking part in Exercise Mariner, supplying some of the thousand aircraft employed in the operation. Nine NATO nations co-operated to make it the biggest Atlantic exercise held since the war. The ship, which were divided into two opposing fleets, were soon in the thick of the sort of weather only the Atlantic can provide.

Buffeted by wind and rain, tossed by the heavy swell, the ships ploughed on -

As destroyers raced through the heavy seas, their escort aircraft returned to Eagle for refuelling. Attackers were first to touch down.

Suddenly a cry for help came over the radio as a Firefly plunged out of control into the sea. The flight decks were soon cleared for an emergency landing as a helicopter flew in after picking up the ditched pilot. Drenched from the icy waters, but otherwise unhurt.

A narrow escape - but, as usual, the Navy could take it with a smile.