

Coastal Command B24 "Liberator"  
attacking Japanese shipping in the Andaman Sea in South East Asia.  
Painting by Lars Larsen

On May 21st 1945, high level photo reconnaissance aircraft reported two Japanese ships (called Sugar Dogs) in the Andaman Sea, making their way to the Great Nicobar Island to conceal themselves during daylight hours. Their mission was to deliver supplies to the Japanese Army fighting the British 14th Army in Burma.

No.203 Squadron of the Royal Air Force was based in Kankesanairai, Northern Ceylon. Their duties were low level anti-shipping strikes to stop armaments and food reaching the Japanese Army. The squadron flew "Liberator" aircraft. Aircrews were British, Australians, Canadians and one from Kenya. Their operations covered waters off Burma, Kra Isthmus, Sumatra and, late in the war, a detachment on the Cocos Islands.

From the report from the air-photo aircraft, group headquarters ordered a search and destroy mission by 203 squadron. Four "Liberators" took off to do a sweep through the Andaman Sea. Three of the aircraft carried 250 pound bombs, the fourth carried depth charges.

The "Liberator" captained by F/L MacDonald sighted two coasters about 200 feet in length on a course of 310 degrees. He attacked from 50 feet in altitude with depth charges. The ship was blown out of the water and disintegrated. The aircraft was hit by machine gun fire and the navigator, Sgt Watkins and flight engineer F/S Burns were wounded. The "Liberator" captained by F/L Aldercroft attacked the larger ship which opened fire with a machine gun from the bridge and with small arms fire. The bombs on the aircraft hung-up. The third aircraft, captained by F/O Law, then attacked. His bombs were released in error prematurely. The fourth aircraft piloted by S/L Waddy, R.C.A.F. made an attack and direct hits were scored. There was a massive explosion in the bridge and engine area and the ship burst into flames. The aircraft circled taking pictures.

Using the photographs taken during the operation and guidance from P.B.Waddy, the artist Lars Larsen recreated the attack. Great Nicobar Island is on the horizon with heavy tropical clouds formation. The second "Liberator" shown circling was flown by F/O Law. He and his crew were lost over the Sunda Strait on the last day of the War, shot down by a Japanese fighter aircraft. A monument has been erected in their honor on the Cocos Islands.

Lars Larsen is a Canadian artist, renowned for his wildlife scenes. His work attained special prominence across North America when he was honored with the Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl Art Award in 1988. His artwork has helped many conservation organizations in their fund raising efforts. Lars Larsen is listed in Who's Who in Canada.

