

Chronology of Events – Aegean Islands

1940

11 June 1940

Italy declares war on the United Kingdom.

1943

January

The leaders of the Allied nations hold a conference at Casablanca to agree the strategic aims of the war. They agree to the invasion of Sicily.

10 July

Allied forces invade Sicily.

25 July

Mussolini is deposed as head of Italian government, and he is imprisoned. Field Marshal BADOGLIO heads a new, non-fascist, government.

3 August

The new Italian government commences negotiations with the Allies for peace.

3 September

Allied forces invade Italy. The Italian government agrees to an armistice.

8 September

Italian armistice announced to the public. The German Armed Force execute Plan Achse, designed to dis-arm all Italian Armed Forces and take over responsibility for all the Italian territory under their control.

Italian forces on Cephalonia and Corfu resist the Germans and fighting breaks out between Italian and German forces.

The U.K. send a military mission to Rhodes.

9 September

British forces take control of the island of Symi.

11 September

Italian forces on Rhodes surrender to German forces.

The Italian commander of Samos agrees to support the Allies.

12 September

British troops commence landing on the islands of:

- Kos
- Leros
- Samos
- Kalymous
- Astipalaea.

13 September

Two R.A.F. Beaufighters land at Andimaki airfield on Kos.

- 14 September First company of the 1st Bn. The Durham Light Infantry (D.L.I.) land by plane on Kos.
- Colonel K. F. R. KENYON assumes command as Garrison Commander, Kos.
- In addition, over the next few days, two fighter squadrons (both equipped with Spitfires) establish themselves on Kos, namely:
- No. 74 Sqn., Royal Air Force;
 - No. 7 Sqn., South African Air Force.
- 16 September Force 292 formed for operations in the Dodecanese Islands by Headquarters III Corps. Under command:
- Headquarters, 234th Infantry Brigade
 - 4th Bn. The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment)
 - 1st Bn. The King's Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster)
 - 2nd Bn. The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment
 - 2nd Bn. The Royal Irish Fusiliers (Princess Victoria's).
- Already detached (w.e.f. 9 September 1943):
- 1st Bn. The Durham Light Infantry.
- 17 September First Luftwaffe air attacks on British positions and the airfield on Kos.
- 18 September First troops of the 2nd Bn. The Royal Irish Fusiliers land by ship on Leros.
- 20 September Headquarters, 234th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier F. G. R. BRITTOROUS) lands on Leros and he assumes command as British Troops in the Aegean Islands. BRITTOROUS was promoted to the rank of Local Major General.
- 23 September German troops gain control of Cephalonia. Many Italian soldiers are massacred in consequence
- 26 September German forces gain control of Corfu.
- H.M.S. Intrepid and H.H.N.S Queen Olga are both attack by German aircraft and sunk.
- 3 October German forces invade at 05.00 hours. They quickly overrun and capture Kos. The Fortress H.Q. is captured about midnight, and resistance ceases.
- In all, about 900 British and 3,000 Italian prisoners are taken.
- 5 October Additional British naval forces are sent to the Aegean.

- 7 October The Royal Navy sinks a convoy bound for Leros, thereby delaying the invasion of that island.
- 9 October A meeting chaired by the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean decides against reinforcing the Allied operations in the Aegean.
- Special Boat Service personnel defend Symi against a German invasion of the island, which they secure, but not without casualties.
- 11 October The British government decide to continue to act unilaterally and continue operations in the Aegean. It is decided to hold:
- Leros
 - Samos
 - Kastellorizo.
- But the decision is taken to abandon:
- Astipalaea
 - Symi
 - Kalymnos.
- Allied forces gain cooperation from Turkey.
- 12 October A meeting held in Cairo chaired by Sir Anthony EDEN discusses the Aegean situation. The decision is taken to continue to garrison Leros and Samos.
- 23/24 October Overnight, two British Hunt class destroyers, H.M.S. HURWORTH and H.H.M.S. Adrias (Royal Hellanic Navy) are both mined off Kalymnos.
- 24 October H.M.S. Eclipse hits a mine, breaks in two and sinks within about five minutes. On board were 'A' Company, 2nd Bn. The Buffs en-route to Leros; plus: Brigadier DAVY, Brigadier STAYNER, together with Captain Percy TODD, C.B.E., D.S.O., The Senior Naval Officer Aegean.
- As a result of the sinking, 119 crew are lost, and 134 troops from The Buffs. Brigadiers DAVY and STAYNER survive, but Captain TODD is lost.
- 5 November Major General (Local) Henry Ronald HALL arrives on Leros to assume command as General Officer Commanding, British Forces in the Aegean.
- 12 November German forces invade Leros.

15 November	The rest of the 2 nd Bn. The Q.O.R.W.K. Regiment transferred from Samos to Leros.
16 November	British forces on Leros surrender.
20 November	British forces abandon Samos.
1944	
August	German forces commence withdrawal from the Aegean islands, but they remain on Crete.
November	German forces withdraw from Greece, precipitating the Greek Civil War of late 1944 and early 1945.