

GREEK NAVAL AIRMEN AT WAR - PART 1

BY PASCHALIS PALAVOUZIS

6 February 1913. The Maurice Farman Hydroplane of the Royal Hellenic Navy rises over Mudros Bay at Lemnos, heading to the Straits. The objective of this epic flight was to reconnoiter the Ottoman fleet at its mooring place at Nagara.

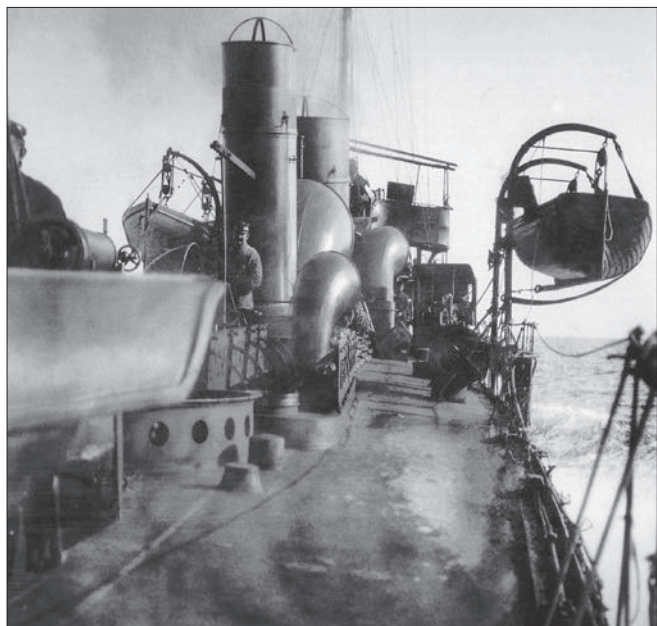
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Thursday 6th February 1913 was a sunny, clear day for the NE Aegean. Visibility was good, for there was a gentle breeze blowing from the Straits since the early hours of the day. At 07:50 a fast destroyer of the Hellenic Fleet bearing the name *Velos*, raised anchor and steamed away from Mudros Bay, Lemnos Island. Less than three weeks earlier, the Royal Hellenic Navy, under the inspired leadership of Rear Admiral Pavlos Coundouriotis, had won another major sea battle against the Ottoman Navy, which became known as the *Lemnos Sea Battle*. The badly battered Turkish Fleet was thus restrained from attempting another exodus from the Straits, but situational awareness dictated that a constant alert had to be maintained and a frequent re-assessment of the enemy ships' status was necessary.

Almost an hour after *Velos* had departed Mudros,

RHN destroyer Velos steams away from Mudros bay for the entrance of the Dardanelles, keeping a close eye to the Hydroplane and its occupants.

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the distinct roar of an aeroplane engine filled the air and a Maurice Farman Hydroplane – the sole seaplane of the Hellenic Navy in flyable condition – was seen climbing over the Bay, maintaining a steady NE course. The pilot at the controls was one of the Hellenic Army's pioneer aviators, Lieutenant of the Engineers Michael Moutousis, who was carrying as passenger a Hellenic Navy officer, Ensign Aristides Moraitinis. The main objective of

Onboard the RHN torpedo boat T.14. In the foreground is Lt Michael Moutousis of the Hellenic Army. Moutousis had gained valuable experience on the Epirus front, flying operational missions over Jannina and the fortifications at Bizani. :Etienne Labranche Collection; Museum of Photography 'Christos Kalemkeris', Municipality of Kalamaria

