

R E S T R I C T E D

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

TRANSLATION VII/129

THE MEDITERRANEAN CAMPAIGN

Signals and Directives concerning

Axis problems of Supply and German-Italian co-operation

June-October, 1941

TRANSLATED BY

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B.6

FEBRUARY, 1954

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OKH
General Staff, Army/
Operations Department (IIb)
No. 1183/41 - Top Secret

Headquarters OKH
16th June, 1941

To:- C-in-C Luftwaffe (Luftwaffe Operations Staff)

Reference is made to the following remark made by the Fuehrer and passed on by OKW:

"Employment of incendiary oil-bombs (fire produced by liquid oil) and maximum-calibre bombs from bases in Greece or Crete" against the fortifications of Tobruk.

OKH would be grateful for information regarding the scale on which these measures may be expected.

In this connection it is pointed out that continuous operations against ships supplying Tobruk by Luftwaffe formations based on Greece and Crete would very probably have a speedy and decisive influence on the outcome of the battle for Tobruk.

Office of Foreign Relations
and Intelligence

16th June, 1941

To:- 3rd Naval Operations Staff,
Luftwaffe Operations Staff Ic

On 15th June the German General at the Headquarters of the Italian Armed Forces reported the following in teleprint No. 1507/41 Top Secret:

At midday on 15th June the Duce received me for a discussion on Chief of OKW's letter of 7th June regarding the war in North Africa. I repeated once again the views and proposals which I had already made known to General Cavallero both verbally and in writing and which had already been answered in writing. The Duce made the following comments:

- (1) The question of protecting ports of discharge with AA artillery, coastal artillery and fighters is an urgent one. However, even if adequate protection were provided, the port of Benghazi alone could not handle supplies for all the forces based in Cyrenaica. The Italian effort will doubtless benefit indirectly by the transportation of German material via Bizerta, but I hope that when the Bizerta route does open Italian material - as far as I am concerned it can be declared as German material if necessary - can also be transported by this route. The Italian General Staff has calculated that a total of twelve convoys of six ships each will have to sail to North Africa every month to prepare for an autumn offensive. However, the maximum capacity of Tripoli harbour is only seven convoys per month. The extension of the Tripoli-Zuara railway line as far as the frontier to link up with the French railway line from Tunis via Gabes to the frontier can be completed in a few weeks if the material is available.

(2) Resumption of the Offensive

Tobruk must be taken before we can think of resuming the offensive. For this purpose we require heavy artillery and I am very glad that German heavy artillery is to be made available. The fortifications of Tobruk are excellent, but

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Italian troops were able to hold Tobruk for only a short time as, unlike the British, they had absolutely no air support and were bombarded from the sea. An order has been issued for the withdrawal of German units from the positions encircling Tobruk, as a siege is no task for armoured forces. As soon as sufficient heavy artillery and ammunition is available, the attack on Tobruk must be resumed.

- (4) The employment of warships as fast transports is not unknown in Italy. As early as 1923 warships were used to carry troops to Corfu. Furthermore, warships were frequently used to transport troops to Albania. However, if material is to be transported, part of the warships' armament must be dismantled. While there are such heavy demands on torpedo-boats for convoy duties in the Aegean and as escort for transports to Libya, this is out of the question. Very little transport space would be gained and it would not then be possible to provide convoys with sufficient protection.

However, in order to open a further route to Benghazi, I have ordered ships to sail singly from Bari or Brindisi along the Greek coast and across to Crete. I am in complete agreement with the Fuehrer's views on the conduct of the war in Africa and hope for an improvement in the transport situation by the gradual employment of transports on the Tunis route.

Chief OKW
OKW/L(Atlas)
General Staff, Army, Operations Department and
General Staff, Army, Attache Department

have received teleprints direct from the German General at Headquarters Italian Armed Forces.

Teleprint No. 0488

Date:- 17th June, 1941
From:- X Fliegerkorps Ic
To:- Kurfuerst Ic

Supplement to Morning Report of 17th June, 1941

On 16th June Fliegerfuehrer Afrika reported the following ground situation:

With the capture of Capuzzo and Sollum the enemy has penetrated our line. Halfaya Pass is still in our hands, but the troops there are encircled. A counter-attack by the Africa Corps reserves from Suleimen with the main effort in the direction of Sidi Omar has reached the latter. Throughout the day the Luftwaffe made repeated and effective bombing attacks on enemy forces in the Capuzzo - Sollum area. Africa Corps hopes that the counter-attack will progress successfully during tomorrow if the indispensable air support continues to be provided by the Luftwaffe. The enemy apparently still has armoured reserves at his disposal.

The Luftwaffe fighter Gruppe has been committed to the limit by operations against the numerically superior enemy. On 17th June aircraft must be serviced and pilots rested. Fighter reinforcements of up to Gruppe

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strength are urgently required, in addition to the two Ketten (six aircraft) provided, to ensure the maintenance of air superiority and of escort operations. Reinforcements to be sent to Gazala.

Additional report from X Fliegerkorps:

One fighter Staffel had already reached the Fliegerfuehrer on 16th June. On 17th June the Stuka Staffeln employed on covering the Cerigo Straits, I/Stuka 1 and both twin-engined fighter Staffeln of III/Z.G. 26 will be transferred to Africa.

X Fliegerkorps Ic - Secret

Supreme Command of the Armed Forces

Fuehrer's Headquarters
19th June, 1941

Armed Forces Operations Staff/Abt.L (I op)
No. 441037/41 - Top Secret

To:- C-in-C Luftwaffe, Operations Staff Ia

An answer from General Cavallero in reply to a letter from Field Marshal Keitel to General Rintelen dealing with questions concerning the conduct of the war in Africa was received on 14th June and contained the following observations of interest to the Luftwaffe:

(1) Protection of Transports:

"As soon as the state of development of the Luftwaffe supply situation and ground organisation permits, the fighter formation based in Africa will be reinforced.

At present thirteen AA batteries of various calibres and eleven 2-cm batteries are being transferred to Africa. Preparations are being made for the transfer of a further twelve AA batteries of all calibres and of eleven 2-cm batteries to reinforce the AA defences of airfields and especially of ports.

(2) Attack on Tobruk:

It is observed that operations from Crete by X Fliegerkorps bomber formation will be very useful and it is requested that ships supplying Tobruk and the defences of Tobruk be named as priority targets.

(3) Shipping Routes:

Arrangements are now being made for trial runs by single ships with a speed of about ten knots from Bari or Brindisi direct to Benghazi. These ships would have to be escorted by X Fliegerkorps aircraft operating from Crete south-eastwards to the African coast."

General von Rintelen's views on General Cavallero's letter are as follows (in extract form):

"Previous experience has shown that, just as all other Italian formations, the performance of Italian AA and fighter units is not equal to that of the same number of German formations. Their effectiveness can be increased considerably if employed in close co-operation with German forces.

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It therefore appears essential that, as soon as they become available, a German AA unit and a searchlight unit should be transferred to both Benghazi and Tripoli to be stationed there permanently for the protection of these ports.

As already reported on many occasions, the movements of transport shipping can apparently also be adequately protected merely by the employment of two Me 110 Staffeln." (Marginal note by Field Marshal Keitel on this point: "Absolutely impossible. Not available)."

Formations cannot be adequately reinforced for an offensive by autumn with the ports and shipping at present available, as almost all of the transport ships are required exclusively to supply formations already in Libya.

von Falkenstein

Ia op 1

Headquarters,
23rd June, 1941

Subject:- Support for General Rommel in the Siege of Tobruk

During a conference on 6th June attended by the Reichsmarschall, the Fuehrer announced the following intentions concerning the Luftwaffe with regard to the support of General Rommel in the siege of Tobruk.

- (a) Sizeable Luftwaffe formations based on Greece or Crete will operate with 2,500 kg bombs against water points and distillation plants with a view to demoralising the enemy.

X Fliegerkorps' views: Iraklion (Crete) appears to be the only airfield suitable for aircraft taking off with 2,500 kg. bombs. Practical tests will be necessary. Only the He 111 can be adapted to carry the 2,500 kg bomb. Installation to be carried out by field units. The probability of scoring hits with this aircraft is very slight as wells and distillation plants are absolute pin-point targets (20 x 30 metres).

- (b) Small-calibre incendiary and fragmentation bombs will be dropped in mass loads to harass the garrison.

X Fliegerkorps' views: Except when aircraft are committed to other tasks, incendiary and fragmentation bombs are being dropped on the garrison continuously by Ju 88s and Stukas. In addition, the terrain is being mined from the air by the Italians. The Fliegerfuehrer has only one Ju 88 bomber Gruppe at his disposal (average of 8-10 aircraft serviceable). The following X Fliegerkorps forces may be considered as reinforcements: the He 111s of II/K.G. 26 which are fitted with bomb bays (average of 5 aircraft serviceable; torpedo-bombers have no bomb-bays) and the two Stuka Gruppen (less 1st Staffel) employed on patrolling the straits of Crete.

- (c) Preparations will be made for the capture of further enemy positions by raiding parties supported by B2 flame-thrower vehicles and by dropping incendiary oil-bombs against the troops holding these positions.

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X. Fliegerkorps' views: Incendiary oil-bombs are ineffective against troops holding concrete dug-out positions owing to the strong construction of these fortifications.

- (d) The Luftwaffe will mine Tobruk harbour. The Italian Air Force in North Africa will be reinforced.

From:- Fliegerfuehrer Afrika Ia

To:- C-in-C Luftwaffe

Date:- 26th June, 1941

The increase in the number of British fighters in the Mersa Matruh area from 55 to 94 in the period from 18th June to 25th June indicates the possibility of a rapid and intense rise in enemy fighter activity. On 24th June bombers carried out an attack with strong fighter escort for the first time.

Fliegerfuehrer Afrika makes the following requests:

- ✱
- (a) Staffel Muencheberg to be sent in the event of further enemy fighter reinforcement.
 - (b) The promised aircraft reporting unit to be sent as quickly as possible.
 - (c) The possibility of using Freya in this theatre to be investigated.
 - (d) Night fighters to be sent for operations during the coming moonlit nights.

In view of the great numerical inferiority of German fighters, this headquarters believes that a balance can be maintained until the arrival of fighter reinforcements only by the extension of the defensive organisation.

✱ Note: Staffel Muencheberg = 7/JG 26 commanded by Oberleutnant Muencheberg.

Supreme Command of the Armed Forces

Fuehrer's Headquarters,
28th June, 1941

Armed Forces Operations Staff/Abt. I
No. 441 110/41 - Top Secret - (I Op.)

To:- The German General at Headquarters Italian Armed Forces

When the Eastern campaign has been concluded and immediately Panzer forces can be released from this area, it is intended to attack the British positions in the Mediterranean and the Near East. A draft of an OKW directive is being forwarded separately for personal information.

An attack in strength from Libya in the direction of the Suez Canal will be made as part of the overall operation. In view of the British reinforcements expected to arrive in Egypt in the near future, the Axis forces to be used for the offensive must be as strong as possible.

However, OKW does not intend to send further German formations to North Africa, but instead to reinforce the two divisions of the Africa Corps

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such an extent that they will constitute a full-strength Panzer Corps with the most modern armament and, above all, to supply them with an adequate reserve of personnel and material, including tanks and guns, so that even if heavy losses are sustained they can be quickly brought up to full battle strength again. The following schedule will be observed:

- (a) Present losses will be replaced.
- (b) Heavy artillery to be provided for operations against Tobruk and the number of heavy anti-tank guns to be increased.
- (c) Supplies to be built up to an adequate level for continuous action.
- (d) 5th Light Division to be reformed into a normal Panzer Division.
- (e) Stocks of supplies to be built up for the autumn offensive.

As from 10th July the route via Bizerta will probably also be open to transports, most of which will sail from Italian ports. Four hundred French trucks will supply transport from Gabes to Libya and French coastal shipping will do likewise as far as Sfax. From this point supplies must be carried under the Italian flag.

The following orders were issued for the German General at the Headquarters of the Italian Armed Forces:

- (1) The Italian High Command will be informed of German plans insofar as they concern the offensive through Egypt. To queries regarding further intentions (Turkey), reply that information on this subject is not available.
- (2) The possibilities of carrying out the proposed reinforcement will be examined as quickly as possible in co-operation with the German Africa Corps as a basis for the schedule to be arranged on new lines by OKW in conjunction with the Italians.
- (3) The Italian High Command will be asked if it agrees to the employment of a Panzer Group Headquarters to take command of the German and Italian forces to be used in the offensive. This Headquarters would be subordinate to General Gariboldi and headed by General Rommel, who would relinquish command of the Africa Corps.

Chief of OKW

KEITEL

Appendix to OKH General Staff, Army,
Operations Department (IIb)
No. 35881/41 - Top Secret -
of 5th July, 1941

4th July, 1941

To:- OKH General Staff, Army, Operations Department (IIb)

Copy to:- German General in Rome

for information to:- Fliegerfuehrer Afrika
German Liaison Officer at Superlibia

Since mid-June the main force of the German Africa Corps has been

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located in the Bardia-Sollum area, where the heaviest fighting is now taking place. In view of this fact, the Africa Corps headquarters echelon was also transferred to Bardia. However, most of Fliegerfuhrer Afrika's formations are located 160 to 250 km behind the front in the Derna-Ain el Gazala area, with headquarters in Derna. The only advanced landing ground which has been developed and stocked with supplies is at Gambut. At present some elements of 2.(H)/14 are being moved up to Menastir (west of Bardia) and others to Rezegh (20 km east of El Adem). Owing to this wide separation and the long approach flights which must consequently be made, there is no longer any guarantee of close co-operation, quick support for Africa Corps' ground operations and secure and close communication between the two headquarters. In addition to wireless there is a telephone connection to Derna, but the line is impossible. A make-shift telephone connection is maintained by a Staff Officer left behind at the former Corps Battle Headquarters, but this arrangement cannot continue indefinitely. Repeated requests to move up his formations were rejected by the Fliegerfuhrer in view of the original agreement.

Reasons:

- (1) Difficult supply conditions.
- (2) Inadequate AA defence.

The Fliegerfuhrer even declined to carry out preparations to develop and stock with supplies airfields which will come under consideration later. The reasons given were as above, in spite of a reminder that not all Africa Corps dumps are protected by AA. The Africa Corps and the Italian divisions are also faced with difficult supply conditions. Provision has been made to release 200 trucks of the final third of the Tunis trucks to Fliegerfuhrer Afrika. Further assistance from Africa Corps is not possible. With regard to AA protection, one third of Africa Corps' light AA is at present employed exclusively on behalf of Fliegerfuhrer Afrika, who thus disposes of more light AA than the entire Africa Corps. A further weakening of the Africa Corps is not possible. Africa Corps requests C-in-C Luftwaffe to instigate the necessary emergency measures so that Fliegerfuhrer Afrika may move his formations forward and to insist on immediate commencement of preparations.

Africa Corps Ia No. 466/41 - Top Secret.

Agreement reached on the operational activity of the
Italian and German Air Forces in the Central and
Eastern Mediterranean and bordering areas
Signed in Rome by the Liaison Officer of
the two Air Forces, and dated 18th July, 1941

Preliminary remarks

The following basic principles are necessary for co-operation:-

- (a) In operations in which formations of both Air Forces are taking part the common aim must be reached by uniformity of action.
- (b) In order to achieve the highest degree of efficiency within the scope of the forces available, a limitation of the tasks allotted to both Air Forces is called for, according to the

strength of operational formations and the special characteristics of the aircraft used.

- (c) For operational reasons and from the viewpoint of supplies and reinforcements, the creation of mixed German-Italian formations seems unsuitable.

1. Co-operation in operations over the sea

- (a) Demarcation line for sea reconnaissance operations in the line from Cape Matapan to Derna, but this line is not to be regarded as fixed for it may be crossed towards the east by Italian reconnaissance and towards the west by German reconnaissance.
- (b) Results of German and Italian reconnaissance will be immediately passed on to all Italian and German Headquarters interested.
- (c) Reconnaissance and bomber operations against naval forces and convoys reported in the usual manner can be carried out by the Italian Air Force or the Luftwaffe without previous intimation and after information to the units concerned.
- (d) The protection of our sea traffic between Italy and Libya, Italy and Greece and along the coast of Africa, from bomber, torpedo and submarine attacks is exclusively the task of the Italian Air Force.
- (e) Protection of our sea traffic between Greece and Crete is given by the German Naval C-in-C Greece.

2. Co-operation in the Aegean

- (a) Daily information to be passed between X Fliegerkorps and the Italian Aegean Air Force on intended operations against land targets in the Eastern Mediterranean (Cyprus, Palestine, Trans-jordan, Egypt). Previous intimation is sufficient for reconnaissance of Alexandria. (If possible, on the preceding evening).
- (b) The Aegean Air Force to receive further instructions from Super-aereo and will, where possible, meet the demands made by X Fliegerkorps.
- (c) Generally bomber operations with fighter protection will be carried out by X Fliegerkorps and the Aegean Air Force with their own formations.
- (d) In important operations carried out simultaneously against the same target, X Fliegerkorps is to fix operational times and areas. The Aegean Air Force is to arrange operations according to those carried out by X Fliegerkorps.
- (e) All communications of an operational nature between the Aegean Air Force and X Fliegerkorps to be forwarded via the German liaison officer (Aegean) by German code method.
- (f) As a result of limited supply facilities in the Italian Dodecanese, there is to be no permanent posting of German formations to any one of the Dodecanese Islands after the occupation of Crete. There is no objection to German formations making temporary use of the Dodecanese Islands for special tasks, but these operations must be limited to the minimum possible.

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3. Co-operation in North Africa

- (a) North Africa is to be regarded as a common operational area. Generally X Fliegerkorps will fly against targets in the area Alexandria-Cairo-Suez Canal. Italian Air Force operations will be notified to X Fliegerkorps in advance. Should these activities interfere with German operations, X Fliegerkorps can demand their cancellation.
- (b) Bomber operations against Alexandria, Cairo, Suez Canal and against sea targets to be ordered by Superaereo. Italuft liaison staff will be notified in advance.
- (c) Fliegerfuehrer Afrika will co-ordinate all other operations to be carried out by "Unita avanzate" of 5th Squadra in North Africa with the operations of its own formations. "Unita avanzate", which is subordinate in every respect to 5th Squadra, is empowered to make use of its formations to fulfil the demands and orders of Fliegerfuehrer Afrika.

4. Co-operation in Sicily

- (a) The same form of co-operation as is laid down for the Aegean Air Force and X Fliegerkorps holds good in Sicily for formations of X Fliegerkorps which are posted to the island. Operations carried out by X Fliegerkorps to conform to instructions given to Italian formations by Superaereo; demands made by Superaereo will, where possible, be fulfilled.
- (b) In Sicily the airfields at Catania and Gerbini are available in case German aircraft have to land for supply purposes. Permanent posting of German formations to these airfields can be carried out at 48 hours' notice. Superaereo is taking the steps necessary to make room for German formations. German demands for other airfields in Sicily, apart from the two mentioned, will be examined by Superaereo, which reserves the right of decision according to the demands made by the situation.

5. Air and Anti-Aircraft defences in Greece

- (a) Superaereo is putting a fighter squadron of Mc 200 at the disposal of X Fliegerkorps for escort duties on reconnaissance and bomber operations within their own range.
- (b) Superaereo is posting a fighter squadron to the area Athens-Piraeus-Salamis and another squadron to the Peloponnese Islands to protect those convoys which Supermarina considers important. Both these squadrons remain subordinate to Italian Command.
- (c) Superaereo is demanding from the Italian High Command that the A.A. defences of discharge ports inside the area of Greece occupied by Italy be taken over by Italian A. A. batteries.

6. Co-operation between Superaereo and X Fliegerkorps

- (a) X Fliegerkorps to forward operational reports to Superaereo via the Italuft liaison staff; it is also to forward operational intentions which are to be carried out in co-operation with the Italian Air Force in Sicily and Libya.
- (b) Superaereo, via Italuft Liaison staff is to keep X Fliegerkorps acquainted with the situation in the Western and Central

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Mediterranean, and to inform Supermarina of the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean as shown in the reports submitted by X Fliegerkorps.

7. Signals exchange between Superaereo-X Fliegerkorps - Italian Aegean Air Force

- (a) Communications on intended operations and operations carried out go as formerly, by teleprinter channels (via Berlin or Vienna), and in especially urgent cases by radio to Italuft liaison staff for passing on to Superaereo. Information on operations planned and carried out by formations of Superaereo (with the exception of the Aegean Air Force) reach X Fliegerkorps by reverse procedure along the same channel.
- (b) Other information, aims and urgent demands from X Fliegerkorps or from Superaereo are sent to Italuft liaison staff, to be passed on as soon as possible to Superaereo or to X Fliegerkorps respectively.
- (c) Operations planned and results from Fliegerfuehrer Afrika are received by Italuft liaison staff's radio station in Rome (or if there is radio interference, by stations at Naples or Catania). Italuft liaison staff is to pass on this information to Superaereo.
- (d) A liaison H.Q. of the Italian Air Force will be set up with X Fliegerkorps for liaison between X Fliegerkorps and the Aegean Air Force. This liaison H.Q. will have an Italian Air Force radio station.
- (e) It is essential that reports on German visual reconnaissance should be passed on quickly and safely to the Aegean Air Force. In order to ensure this safety and speed, the Italian Liaison officer's radio station with X Fliegerkorps will transmit German reconnaissance reports to the Aegean Air Force (Aegean) on wave "M".
- (f) The Italian liaison H.Q. with X Fliegerkorps is to transmit the operational aims and results of the Fliegerkorps through its radio station to Italian Air Force H.Q. on Rhodes, to 5th Squadra, to the Sicilian Air Force and to Superaereo. These signal communications between X Fliegerkorps and the Italian Air Force stations are only a reserve, as direct communication already exists between the stations mentioned and X Fliegerkorps; namely the German liaison officer with the Aegean Air Force, Fliegerfuehrer Afrika, the German radio station at Catania, and the Italuft liaison staff with Superaereo. Signals traffic can only proceed with the approval of X Fliegerkorps, so as to afford the enemy monitoring service no unnecessary guides.
- (g) The results of Italian reconnaissance are received by Marisudest radio station in Athens. After de-coding and German translation, Marisudest H.Q. is to pass these on to the German Admiral in Athens. (Marisudest and the German Admiral are in the same building). The German Admiral is to pass these on to X Fliegerkorps on his own radio network.
- (h) The results of German reconnaissance are passed on by X Fliegerkorps to the German Admiral in Athens, who hands them on

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to Marisudest H.Q. The latter, after translation into Italian and coding sends them out from its radio station.

Thus, their reception is made possible to all fixed and mobile radio stations of the Italian Navy and the Air Force units concerned, who are receiving on the naval reconnaissance wavelength.

Signed by
Lieutenant General Ritter von Pohl
(Chief of the German liaison Staff
attached to the Royal Italian Air
Force)

and
General A. G. Santoro
for the Chief of the Italian Air Staff

The Minister of Air and
C-in-C Luftwaffe
Luftwaffe Operations Staff Ia

Report No. 11064/41 (Top Secret) Robinson, dated 12th August, 1941

Subject:- Supplies for Fliegerfuehrer Afrika and the German Africa Corps

To:- OKW, Chief of Operations Staff, General Jodl

The strain on the supply position of our forces in North Africa is well known.

With a renewal of the enemy's offensive, it must be expected that his influence on the supply routes to Africa will be increased.

C-in-C Luftwaffe Operations Staff makes the following suggestions which would help to keep Fliegerfuehrer Afrika and its subordinate units at front line strength and would improve the whole African supply position:-

1. At present, the main transport route is the sea route from Naples to Tripoli. The main concentration of supplies will have to remain on this route. But it also appears necessary to use the sea route Taranto/Brindisi - Benghazi/Derna/Bardia as far an alternative route for the supplies to Africa; up to the present, it has only been used occasionally. This would cause the enemy considerable difficulty in his attacks against our sea transport, because (a) he would have to split his forces, (b) when this eastern route is used, the distance from Malta is so great that effective air attacks are seldom to be expected and (c) X Fliegerkorps can be brought in to cover the eastern route.
2. So far, full use has not been made of the harbour capacity at Benghazi.

Since the recapture of Derna, nothing has been done in the harbour area to repair the damage caused by the British and to increase the unloading capacity of the harbour. In the opinion of C-in-C Luftwaffe Operations Staff, Bardia harbour must be repaired as well, so that it can be used for supplies.

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We therefore urgently request that the Italians be informed that they should begin the necessary work immediately.

It is absolutely necessary to make use of Benghazi, Derna and Bardia for supplies; this will take some weight from the port of Tripoli and will reduce the dangerous coastal traffic from Tripoli to Benghazi. It is still more vital if we look at the very serious transport situation in Africa, which makes the use of the land route from Tripoli to Benghazi even more difficult.

In connection with this, C-in-C Luftwaffe Operations Staff requests that the Italians be persuaded not to withdraw the motor vehicles placed at the disposal of Fliegerfuehrer Afrika until those vehicles bought by Fliegerfuehrer Afrika in Tunis are ready for use. According to reports from X Fliegerkorps, they will be ready about the middle of September.

3. Present supplies for Africa all pass through Italy. In addition, the present supplies for X Fliegerkorps in Southern Greece and Crete also pass through Italy, because the railway line to Athens is still broken at Lamia. According to reports from X Fliegerkorps, repair work has not yet begun. Valuable shipping space is wasted by this; moreover, after restoration of the railway line to Athens, supplies for Africa could be brought more safely from Athens than they are at present brought from Italy. Thus, restoration of this railway line would considerably alleviate the supply position in Africa.
4. It must be made clear how far the shipping space available in the Aegean sea to meet the requirements of X Fliegerkorps can be utilized for supplies for Fliegerfuehrer Afrika. C-in-C Luftwaffe Operations Staff considers it necessary to utilize this shipping space in order to improve the supply position in Africa. Of course this must not endanger Crete's supply position, because the use of the island as an air base immediately affects the situation at sea and the supply position in the Eastern Mediterranean.
5. The continual requests from various sources to move formations of X Fliegerkorps back to Sicily in order to make constant attacks on Malta and to protect the sea route from Sicily to Tripoli cannot be met.

The removal of formations of X Fliegerkorps from Southern Greece and Crete would mean that British naval forces could again enter the Aegean Sea and thus endanger the supply position for Southern Greece and Crete. Moreover, the removal of X Fliegerkorps from Crete would mean dangerous pressure from British naval forces on the African coast from the east to Benghazi; this would bring speedy end to supplies on the sea route to Benghazi. The supply position in Africa prevents our compensating for this by reinforcing Fliegerfuehrer Afrika; the latter would have to be made so strong that it could undertake the continual protection of the North African coast in addition to fulfilling its commitments on land.

C-in-C Luftwaffe Operations Staff is of the opinion that we must make full use of every opportunity of improving the supply position in Africa. Reinforcement of the Luftwaffe in the Mediterranean area so that German air forces can afford protection to sea transports from bases in Greece, Crete and Sicily

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is impossible until after the cessation of operations in the east. We therefore request that representations be made by OKM to the Italians, that the Italian Air Force be reinforced in Sicily, Southern Italy and in the Tripoli-Benghazi area in order to carry out continual attacks on Malta and to undertake the protection of transport shipping.

Liaison Staff with the Italian Air Force

Rome,
18th August, 1941

IIa Br. B. No. 9/41

Subject:- Order of Battle of the Italian Air Force as on
18th August, 1941

The order of battle of the Italian Air Force as on 18th August, 1941 is forwarded as an appendix.

The number of serviceable bombers has fallen to the very low level of 412 aircraft.

11th Bomber Stormo (Gruppi 33 and 34)

14th " " (" 44 " 45)

34th " " (" 52 " 53)

were disbanded following their withdrawal from Africa.

33rd Bomber Stormo (Gruppi 35 and 36) at Viterbo is also still not equipped with aircraft.

Although comparatively little use is being made of bombers at the moment, deliveries from the aircraft industry will suffice only to maintain present strength. There is no immediate prospect of under-strength bomber Stormi being replenished.

A gradual increase in torpedo-bombers has been observed. The following are now available:-

Six torpedo-bomber Squadriglie (numbers 278-283) and No. 41 Independent Torpedo-Bomber Gruppo (Muti) on Rhodes. In addition, 36th Stormo will soon be available at Bologna; this formation has been re-equipped with S.84 aircraft adapted to carry bombs and torpedoes. Thus, by mid-September, about sixty serviceable torpedo-bombers will be available.

The number of serviceable fighters is probably 10% greater than that shown in the list.

Gottschling

Lieutenant-Colonel

RESTRICTED

R E S T R I C T E D

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ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE

18th AUGUST, 1941

Operational Zone, formation and A.O.C.	Subsidiary formation.	Stormo	Gruppo or Squadriglia	A/c type	Bombers	Fighters
Piedmont 1st Squadra General Tedeschini-Lalli	4th Air Division General Biffi	7th Bomber Stormo (Lonate)	4th Gruppo 25th Gruppo	Br. 20	16	
		5th Fighter Stormo Caselle Tor.	19th Gruppo	Mc. 200		24
		2nd Fighter Stormo Caselle Tor.	13th Gruppo	Mc. 200		24
					16	48
Venezia 2nd Squadra H.Q. Padua General Porro	Bomber Brigade General Bisco	41st Bomber Stormo / Ferrara	59th Gruppo 60th Gruppo	Ca. 313	14	
		15th Bomber Stormo / Vicenza	46th Gruppo 47th Gruppo	Ca. 313	10	
		/ refitting				
		36th Bomber Stormo / Bologna	108th Gruppo 109th Gruppo	S. 84	18	
		18th Bomber Stormo Aviano	37th Gruppo	Br. 20	6	
			Long range recce Squadriglia Padua	Cant. Z 1007b	4	
		/ / refitting, ready middle of September				
	2nd Fighter Division General Scaroni	1st Fighter Stormo + Udine	6th Gruppo 17th Gruppo	Mc. 200		48
		(2nd Fighter Stormo)	8th Gruppo Aiello	Mc. 200		24
		4th Fighter Stormo	9th Gruppo Gorizia	Mc. 200		24
		(5th Fighter Stormo) + resting	151st Gruppo+	Mc. 200		24
					52	120

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ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE - 18th AUGUST, 1941 - Continued

Operational Zone formation and A.O.C.	Subsidiary formation	Stormo	Gruppo or Squadriglia	A/c type	Bombers	Fighters
Tuscany 3rd Squadra Hq. Rome General Cappa	5th Air Division	46th Bomber Stormo / Pisa	104th Gruppo 105th Gruppo	S. 79	20	
		9th Bomber Stormo / / Viterbo	26th Gruppo 29th Gruppo	Cant.Z 1007b	12	
		33rd Bomber Stormo / / Viterbo	35th Gruppo 36th Gruppo	Cant.Z 1007b	?	
			Atlantic Gruppo + Pisa	P.108	5	
		52nd Fighter Stormo H.Q. at Ciampino	369th Sq. Ciampino One sq. at Naples One sq. at Saracoma Night Fighter section at Guidonia	Mc.200 G.50 Mc.200 Cr.42		12 10 10 12
					37	44
Sardinia H.Q. Cagliari General Vespini	6th Air Division	32nd Bomber Stormo Decimomannu	38th Gruppo 89th Gruppo	S.79	18	
		31st Bomber (sea) Stormo Elmas	93rd Gruppo 94th Gruppo	Cant.Z 506	18	
			280th Torpedo Bomber Sq. Elmas	S.79	4	
			283rd Torpedo Bomber Sq. Elmas	S.79	4	
			153rd Fighter Gruppo / / Alghero	?		30
					44	30
<p>/ refitting. Ready for action at end of August. Earmarked for Sicily.</p> <p>// Refitting. Date ready for action unknown.</p> <p>+ in formation. Ready for action end of September.</p>						
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Operational Zone formation and A.O.C.	Subsidiary formation	Stormo	Gruppo or Squadriglia	A/c type	Bombers	Fighters	
Apulia 4th Squadra General Ilari		37th Bomber Stormo Lecce	55th Gruppo 116th Gruppo	Br. 20	18		
		35th Bomber Stormo Brindisi	86th Gruppo 95th Gruppo	C.Z. 506 Cant. Z 1007b	8 10		
		47th Bomber Stormo Grottaglie	107th Gruppo 106th Gruppo	Cant. Z 1007b	18		
			97th Dive Bomber Gruppo Lecce	Ju. 87	13		
			Fighter Sq. Grottaglie	Mc. 200		10	
			Night Fighter Squadriglia Grottaglie & Brindisi	Cr. 42		6	
					67	16	
Sicily H.Q. Palermo General Mazucco	11th Bomber Brigade General Biffi	10th Bomber Stormo Sciacca	30th Gruppo Chinisia	S. 79	16		
		30th Bomber Stormo Sciacca	32nd Gruppo Sciacca	S. 79	11		
		43rd Bomber Stormo Gerbini	87th Gruppo Sciacca	S. 79	11		
			90th Gruppo				
			31st Gruppo Catania	Br. 20	18		
			99th Gruppo Gerbini				
			101st Dive Bomber Gruppo Trapani	Ju. 87	14		
			278th Torpedo Bomber Sq. Pantelleria-Gerbini	S. 79	4		
			282nd Torpedo Bomber Sq. Gerbini	S. 84	5		
			54th Fighter Stormo Trapani	7th Gruppo Trapani	} Mc. 200	}	48
		23rd Gruppo Comiso	Re 2000	5			
	(50th Fighter Stormo)	16th Gruppo Palermo & Pantelleria	Mc. 200		30		
	(4th Fighter Stormo)	10th Gruppo Catania	Mc. 200		24		
		One Fighter sq. Reggio-Calabria	Cr. 42		8		
			Mc. 200		10		
					68	125	

due to move to Rhodes at end of August
G. 389073/EL/1/54/80

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ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE - 18th AUGUST, 1941 - Continued

Operational Zone formation and A.O.C.	Subsidiary formation	Stormo	Gruppo or Squadriglia	A/c type	Bombers	Fighters
Albania General Ranza		38th Bomber Stormo Scutari	39th Gruppo 40th Gruppo	Br. 20	18	
		(52nd Fighter Stormo)	24th Gruppo Durazzo	G. 50		24
		(53rd Fighter Stormo)	150th Gruppo Valona	Mc. 200		24
			154th Gruppo Araxos	G. 50		24
					18	72
Rhodes General Longo		39th Bomber Stormo	92nd Gruppo 50th Gruppo	S. 79 Cant.Z 1007b	10 10	
		(12th Bomber Stormo)	41st (Muti) Torpedo-Bomber Gruppo 204 & 205 Squadriglia Gadurra	S. 84	12	
			281st Torpedo Bomber Squadriglia	S. 79	5	
			161st Fighter (Sea) Sq. Leros			7
			162nd Fighter Squadriglia 163rd Fighter Squadriglia Rhodes	Cr. 42 Cr. 32		30 9
					37	46
Bessarabia		(52nd Fighter Stormo)	22nd Fighter Gruppo	Mc. 200		30

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ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE ITALIAN AIR FORCE - 18th AUGUST, 1941 - Continued

Operational Zone formation and A.O.C.	Subsidiary formation	Stormo	Gruppo or Squadriglia	A/c type	Bombers	Fighters		
Libya 5th Squadra General Aimone-Cat	13th Air Division General Rafaelli	8th Bomber Stormo (Martuba)	27th Gruppo 28th Gruppo	S. 79	14			
		13th Bomber Stormo Barce	11th Gruppo 43rd Gruppo	Br. 20	24			
		(39th Bomber Stormo)	98th Gruppo Barce	Br. 20	8			
			236th Dive Bomber Sq. Derna	Ju. 87	9			
			239th Dive Bomber Sq. Derna	Ju. 87	7			
			? Dive Bomber Squadriglia	?	?			
			279th Torpedo Bomber Sq. Derna	S. 79	3			
			103rd Desert Rescue Sq.	S. 81	8			
		14th Fighter Brigade		(6th Fighter Stormo)	2nd Gruppo Derna	G. 50		13
				56th Fighter Stormo	18th Gruppo (less 1 sq. at Sorman) Berca	Cr. 42		16
	20th Gruppo Martuba			G. 50		24		
	155th Fighter Gruppo - Castel Benito			G. 50		12		
	160th Fighter Gruppo - ?			Cr. 42		24		
(50th Fighter Stormo)	12th Fighter Gruppo ?			?		24		
(6th Fighter Stormo)	3rd Fighter Gruppo ?			Mc.200		24		
				73	137			

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Date:- 29th August, 1941

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Appendix to OKW/Armed Forces Operations Staff/Abt.L (I op.)

441447/41 (Top Secret)

Minutes of Meeting between Chef OKW (Field Marshal Keitel)
and General Cavallero at which the Duce was present

I. Italian Forces on the Eastern Front

1. Rear communications for the
corps in action

The Italians have requested an improvement in their supply position (made difficult by the great distances to be covered) by bringing forward the railway stations at which materials were unloaded and by the Germans giving up some of their transport area. Supplies have been previously unloaded at Taraczko^r in Hungary. As a result of these complaints, Italian supply trains will in a short time proceed via Breslau; from there they will be brought up to the Italian Corps through the hands of the Army Quartermaster General, on the same basis as present supplies for the Southern Army Group.

General Cavallero thanks the Germans for meeting the Italian requests, and is convinced that, in view of the abundance of Italian transport space, supply transports for the Italian corps will be sufficient as soon as the Italians make contact with the German advance.

For this reason, help with their supply area is unnecessary. In the face of the great strain placed on the supply position, such help is impossible.

Figures for comparison:

The Italian Expeditionary Corps has 3,500 tons of transport space; a similar German corps (1 motorised division + 2 infantry divisions) has only 960 tons, including horse-drawn columns.

Even the unequal comparison with a German motorised corps (3 motorised divisions) shows 1,110 tons of transport space.

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The Italians must make it a principle to make primary use of their abundant transport space for supplies, and only to use space not required for this for troop transportation. The temporary hold-up of operations on the Dnieper will give the Italian infantry division the opportunity of joining the front-line.

2. A second Italian corps for the Eastern Front is only wanted if:

- (a) There are sufficient motor vehicles both for the troops and for units in the rear, and if the question of tyres can be solved without German help.
- (b) The corps remains at our disposal for security and occupation duties.
- (c) The forces operating in the main Italian theatre of war are not weakened by drafts for the eastern front.

It cannot be expected that these conditions can be fulfilled.

II. The continuation of the War in North Africa

1. Strategy:

- (a) The forces available to the British on the Sollum front and at Mersa-Matruh constitute no serious danger at present, even if they attempt a simultaneous break-out from Tobruk. According to German documents, the British forces consist of one armoured division, parts of another armoured division, an Indian division and parts of a British division.

However, the enemy is assembling considerable forces in the Nile Delta (at present there are 5 divisions, 1 occupation division and the bulk of the armoured division, units of which are operating at Sollum. These divisions are refitting). If these forces are brought forward to

General Cavallero explains that a second Italian corps cannot be so well equipped with motor vehicles as the first. It was planned to send a normal infantry corps with reinforced rear units.

The statement made by Chef OKW makes it clear that the German Army cannot take over Italian supplies. This will be reported to the Duce.

The use of Italian troops on the southern front in Russia is gratefully acknowledged.

General Cavallero agrees with the statements made by Chef OKW.

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the Sollum front, and if Tobruk is not taken before the expected British attack, a difficult situation may arise. The British for example by attacking on the Sollum front can draw the mobile German-Italian reserves there, and can then when the Tobruk front is stripped of reserves, make an attempt to break out. On the German side, mining of the Tobruk area is being begun in places where our own later attacks will not be made.

- (b) The position in North Africa cannot be regarded as fixed until Tobruk has fallen. If all goes well with regard to transport to Africa, the German forces singled out for the attack will be ready in the middle of September. X Fliegerkorps can then support the attack with formations of Fliegerfuhrer Afrika and from Greece and Crete.

General Cavallero states that the Duce has ordered a speed-up in the preparations for the attack on Tobruk. General Bastico was asked to give a date for the close of preparations. It is certain that the Italians will not be ready by the middle of September; they will probably not be ready until the end of September.

The Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht will be informed of this.

It depends on General Bastico's decision when the attack (preparations for which were ordered by the Duce on July 16) is to be launched. Can any data be given on this subject now?

- (c) Agreement has been reached between the German and Italian Staffs on the following points:

- (1) In view of the strength of the Sollum position, the British attack will be met in the Egyptian border area; our forces will not retire yet to the Ain-Gazala Position.

General Cavallero agrees.

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- (2) A change in this decision will only be considered if the capture of Tobruk should prove impossible, and provided the Ain-Gazala Position has been strongly built up.

General Cavallero: The order has been given for construction to be speeded up.

A withdrawal there will always be difficult, because there are many non-motorised formations on both the Sollum and Tobruk fronts.

- (3) In the expected battles, the Sollum and Tobruk fronts are so closely bound together that the supreme command in this area must remain in one person's hands.

General Cavallero agrees.

- (4) In the immediate future, there are no prospects of an offensive being staged from Libya against the Suez Canal. Even if Tobruk should be taken in autumn, the balance of power would not allow of this. This applies equally to an attack with a limited goal, as every advance towards the east worsens our strained supply position and improves that of the British.

General Cavallero Agrees.

- (d) The supply question is of primary importance in the North African campaign. Supplies which are brought over from Italy by sea or by coasters from Tripoli to Cyrenaica are brought to the front by those vehicles which are available. But since troops and the greater part of supplies are unloaded in Tripoli, transport to the front is held up there for lack of room in vehicles.

General Cavallero:
The question of supplies is the main problem. Apart from shipping space, there is a lack of space in motor vehicles. The request to give Italy the 3,000 vehicles promised is renewed. The vehicles placed at the disposal of Fliegerfuhrer Afrika will remain at its disposal until replacements arrive.

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Of the German formations, Fliegerfuehrer Afrika is worst off for vehicles. Its supplies can only be brought up with the help of vehicles placed at its disposal by the Italian Command. The Germans request that, in spite of Italian shortages, Fliegerfuehrer Afrika may retain its transport until the French deliveries (expected in the middle of September) arrive.

Lorries for Italy, see Appendix 1.

2. Transport for Africa

(a) Protection of transport routes:

- (1) Italian forces alone must undertake protection of transports from the air. This applies to the sea route from Tripoli to Benghazi, because X Fliegerkorps has not the range to operate there. Whether or not X Fliegerkorps can undertake air protection of the route from Cephalonia (west of Greece) to the south is still under consideration.

One of the steps being considered to make the Italian air cover more effective is the conversion of Italian Bombers to twin-engined fighters.

- (2) Air cover will only fulfil its purpose when Malta is constantly pinned down by strong forces.
- (3) Improved air defence for Italian and Tripolitanian ports. Equipping with direction finders. (Still being examined by C-in-C Luftwaffe)

General Cavallero:

On the transport route from Naples to Tripoli there is a stretch of water through which ships have to pass without fighter protection. This stretch can be covered in about 6 weeks, by our using a new fighter. It is requested that German twin-engined fighters may be used until then.

Chef OKW:

Impossible in the face of the the present claims on the Luftwaffe.

General Cavallero:

The conversion of Breda aircraft to twin-engined fighters is said to be impossible.

General Cavallero agrees.

General Cavallero agrees:

Direction finder equipment will be gratefully received.

- (4) The sea route to Cyrenaica (ports of Bardia, Derna and Benghazi) must be used more.

In the voyage from Naples to Tripoli, bunching of traffic on the route west of Sicily must be avoided, and ships should sail east of Malta.

- (5) More stress is laid on the increase in capacity of the North African ports. For construction and clearance work, special German workers and materials will be made available.

- (b) German E-boats and minesweepers, a flotilla of each type, will be brought over to the Mediterranean after the conclusion of operations in the Baltic. (British traffic to Tobruk). German Navy has offered Italy detector equipment for submarines.

- (c) German Navy and Luftwaffe liaison staffs should, with the Duce's permission, be fitted with Italian Commands. The Italians shall decide how they should be fitted in. Practical results are not yet known.

- (d) Information is desired from the Italians about the state of their merchant shipping tonnage. Building of other suitable transport ships should be encouraged. (Appendix 2).

General Cavallero:
Orders have already been given to this effect.

General Cavallero:
Work has been stepped up. German aid is accepted, and the Navy will make the necessary liaison.

General Cavallero observes that the Fuehrer and the Duce will discuss this point. Detector apparatus is gratefully accepted.

Co-operation of Admiral Weichold in the Supreme Command of Italian Navy has already started.

General Cavallero will look into this after he returns to Rome.

III. Relationship with France

In connection with plans for the continuation of the war in the Mediterranean area and in the Middle East.

In detail:

1. Resumption of military conferences with the aim of commencing sea traffic with Bizerta as soon as possible. After our experiences in Syria, and in view of the strained relations between Britain/America and France, reinforcements for the defence of the French

General Cavallero observes that this point will form the basis for a detailed conference between the Duce and the Fuehrer. He agrees with the observations of Chef OKW.

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collaborating army in North Africa must be considered. The German Armistice Commission is ordered to proceed in this matter in the closest co-operation with the Italian Armistice Commission. The Chief of the Wehrmacht General Staff will make his decisions only on this basis. We cannot yet see when sea traffic with Bizerta can be started. Convoy duties at sea and in the air will fall to the Italians. (Question of the Italians lengthening the coastal railway as far as the Tunisian border).

2. In view of the Italian demands to the French in connection with the loss of Syria, the Italians should be suitably informed that French conduct in Syria is regarded by us as blameless and that it gives no cause for reprisals.

IV. Occupation of Crete

1. State of occupation in the area of Greece. As reinforcement for the occupation forces, 713th Division, which was brought to Athens, is posted to Crete; the division will be there in its entirety probably about the middle of September.

General Cavallero explains that an Italian occupation division will be at the disposal of the Germans about the end of August. He agrees to the Germans keeping supreme command in Crete.

2. On August 18th, General von Rintelen reports that the Italians are forming a mixed division to relieve the German troops in Crete.

It is desired to withdraw 5th Mountain Division later; it will be discussed with the Italians whether they will take over in Crete later.

Appendix 1: M.T. trucks for Italy.

Appendix 2: The shipping space situation in the Mediterranean.

Appendix 3: Italian armaments economy.

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Purchase of motor transport for Italy

Appendix 1

Italy is receiving:

(a) 500 trucks from French stocks. The German negotiations have effected this deal. They are being handed over on German soil at present.

(b) 600 trucks (Opel) from Germany. There are only tyres for 200. Delivery of these 200 trucks is beginning this week, direct from the factory.

Total 1,100 trucks

There is a residue of 1,400 trucks which probably cannot be delivered. Delivery of vehicles from those purchased in French North Africa had to be refused because of our own requirements.

Suggestion made by Chef OKW that German organisation should be adopted for M.T. matters in Italy. German experts to be sent to General von Schell to study German measures in the matter of fuel supplies and the operational use of motor vehicles.

General Cavallero points out that the Italians have made heavy cuts; Italian industry, for example, had a peace-time consumption of 150,000 tons of fuel every month, whereas to-day it was only 40,000 tons. Of this, 9,000 tons went to armaments, 3,000 to the Navy, and only 400 tons for purely civilian vehicles.

General Cavallero agrees to send experts to General von Schell. He requests again that raw materials be delivered for Italian vehicles. The Italians were advised to scrap old vehicles and to use the raw materials for building new vehicles.

Chef OKW does not think the Germans can meet these requests.

The Shipping space situation in the Mediterranean

Appendix 2

1. Losses up to 31st July, 1941 - 74%.

2. Total shipping space available by the middle of September, including shipping space ordered from the French and chartered from Spain.

29 vessels, totalling 65,700 tons. These are German, Spanish and French. (13 ships, totalling 50,000 tons, are German). 13 of these vessels, totalling 11,600 tons, are used for coastal traffic.

The French have transferred 15,300 tons of Belgian shipping to us. We are still building, buying and chartering ships.

At present, this shipping space is sufficient for our transportaion to Africa.

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Appendix 2 (continued)

Reserves are weak:

- (a) 11 ships, totalling 31,000 tons, are engaged in ore traffic; to take them away would bring us economic disadvantages.
- (b) 7 ships totalling 15,000 tons on military operations in the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea where they are almost indispensable.

3. Demands:

Increased use of Italian shipping space. (Ships available are: 120 freighters over 2,000 tons, totalling 552,000 tons and 114 freighters under 2,000 tons, totalling 122,000 tons; there are also 46 passenger ships and 19 tankers).

Previous experience shows that the Italians are holding back from using all their tonnage. Italy's intention of holding back her tonnage for business use in a post-war period when shipping is scarce is unmistakable. Here government measures must exert strong pressure. Tonnage must be given up to the German Director of Sea Transport for purely German operations.

New shipping space must be built for the great future transport tasks, and in order to relieve and improve trade traffic. Shipping for the Mediterranean must be built in Italian shipyards. Shipyard capacity and workers must be supplied by Italy. Germany will help with materials, and will take similar measures in other coastal areas, such as France and Russia. Of first importance is the construction of tankers. The Italians must make the same assurance.

After his return General Cavallero will discuss increase in use of Italian merchant shipping with Admiral Riccardi.

General Cavallero:
Shipbuilding has first place in Italian war economy. Extensive building contracts have been given, but there is a shortage of raw materials.

Chef OKW:
Declares that Germany will help in this respect. In addition, German plans for construction of small freighters and tankers and for motors (ships' motors) will be placed at the Italians disposal.

Shortages of raw materials and the main concentration of Italian armaments economy

I. German influence on establishment of Italian armaments concentrations and on the amount of production.

Up to the present, Germany has had an influence on the use of important raw materials in Italy by adapting them to suit German shortages. Germany also knows Italian raw materials requirements for the most important branches of the Italian armaments industry.

On the other hand, Germany has no accurate knowledge from monthly production figures of Italian armaments concentrations. The Armaments Industry Department's endeavours to obtain the relevant documents from General Favagrossa, were answered by a pointer to raw material shortages which prevented any concentration of production.

General Cavallero: Main points of Italian concentration are ship-building, motor vehicles and munitions. Main shortages in these industries are iron, copper and tin.

Suggestion that the Italians should increase their work for German armaments because they are not making full use of their capacity; also suggested that sufficient raw materials should be delivered for joint industry. General Favagrossa will visit Berlin and make the necessary proposals.

The main worry is delivery of fuel. It is gratefully acknowledged that at present 7 fuel trains per day are sent to Italy. Request that this may remain so for as long as possible, and that if possible the number of trains may be increased.

Demand by Chief OKW that fuel oil should be brought in as great a quantity as possible from Konstanz by Italian tankers; orders will be given immediately after return. The Italian Navy requires over 100,000 tons of fuel oil monthly, but receives at present only 45,000 tons. Supplies are exhausted. As far as possible, the Italian Navy's convoy operations on the route to North Africa have been curtailed. If their quota is not increased, transport ships for Africa cannot have adequate protection. This is a question of life or death for German-Italian troops in Cyrenaica.

Chief OKW agrees, but cannot promise German help with fuel; he points out again that fuel oil can be fetched from Konstanz and Burgas by Italian tankers.

General Cavallero reports that German weapons promised have only been delivered in small numbers:

2 cm.	20%	4.7 cm.	50%
7.5 cm.	60%	10 cm.	45%
10.5 cm.	12%	14.9 cm.	12%
Heavy artillery			15%

II. Lack of, or inadequate distribution of raw materials important for the war effort.

Despite the present shortage of raw materials and the increasing difficulty of supplies coming through Germany, Italy lacks rigid control on the use of raw materials. Examples of this are:

- (a) Construction of large ocean-going ships instead of small Mediterranean freighters.
- (b) Increase in artificial silk production which is already adequate for present needs.
- (c) Extension of steelworks, half of whose present production is not used.
- (d) Planning of new industrial centres, while the armament capacity is only partly used.
- (e) Building of government buildings for the State, the Party, etc.
- (f) The speed up in the construction of border fortifications facing Germany.

Appendix 3 (continued)

III. German inferences to be drawn from I and II.

1. The German General at H.Q. Italian Armed Forces was instructed by OKW (Armaments Industry Dept.) to ascertain from the Italian Services or Comando Supremo:
- (a) the armaments concentrations in existence to serve the Army, Air Force and Navy,
- (b) the planning figures for individual armaments concentrations and their monthly production figures.
2. OKW (Armaments Industry Dept.) considers it necessary to make the following demands on Italy:
- (a) Stopping of all building etc., which is unimportant for the war effort. (See examples under II).
- (b) Concession of a German control on use and location of all raw materials delivered by Germany to Italy; at the same time, direct German influence on direction of the Italian armaments Industry into certain concentrations.
- The same applies to munitions: 300,000 rounds were promised for 4.7 Belgian artillery, but none was delivered;
- 6,000,000 2 cm. A/A shells promised, 3,700,000 delivered, 75,000 7.5 cm. A/A shells promised, 5,000 delivered, 200,000 rounds of 7.5 promised, 120,000 delivered.
- There was no delivery of the signals equipment which was promised.
- Chef OKW agrees to an enquiry.
- General Cavallero thanks Chef OKW for his statements and for the co-operation of the German Wehrmacht.

Favagrossa is doing all he can to work according to our orders, but his orders are of no avail with the branches of the Service and the other Ministries.

R E S T R I C T E D

- 3C -

2nd September, 1941

To:- Robinson Ia

The following six questions were telephoned to X Fliegerkorps by Lieut. Koehler, Kurfuerst Ia:

- (1) How many aircraft has Kommando Petersen (divided into He 111s and FW 200s)?
 - (2) What are routes to bases and target approach routes?
 - (3) Where will the He 111s operate and why?
 - (4) Where will the FW 200s operate and why?
 - (5) Has Kommando Petersen already carried out reconnaissance?
 - (6) How has Kommando Petersen's state of readiness been determined? (e.g. were all serviceable aircraft held in readiness following the departure of a reconnaissance aircraft? Answer in detail).
- X Fliegerkorps radioed the following answers:

- (1) Kommando Petersen comprises 6 FW 200s and 9 He 111s
Arrived: 6 FW 200s and 6 He 111s
- (2) Route for FW 200s Eleusis - Derna.
" " He 111s " - Heraklion (Crete).
Approach routes to target over the desert and the Nile Delta respectively.
- (3) In view of their range, the He 111s will carry out operations against the Suez roadstead and the Gulf of Suez as worthwhile shipping targets can always be found in this area.
- (4) The FW 200s will operate in the southern part of the Gulf of Suez and in the northern part of the Red Sea in order to observe the volume of supply traffic and to carry out attacks, even on moonlight nights, against the strong AA and fighter defences at Suez.
- (5) Operations planned by Kommando Petersen for the past two nights and for tonight have had to be cancelled owing to storms and an excessive crosswind at the airfield.
- (6) Armed reconnaissance will be carried out by FW 200s as well as by He 111s so that after the three aircraft assigned to reconnaissance have given a picture of shipping movements, three FW 200s and several He 111s will be over the sea area in question every night.
- (7) Italian torpedoes are urgently required as the FW 200 has the Revi bombsight and, owing to their low running speed, German torpedoes have no prospect of success when used against moving targets. Only two of the He 111 crews are trained in angle-firing and thus, for the same reasons, the other crews will be able to attack moving targets effectively only with Italian torpedoes.

It is not possible to use German torpedoes against shipping lying at Suez roadstead owing to the depth of the water.

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- (c) Reports on plans for and results of operations by Fliegerfuehrer Afrika will be received by the Liaison Staff Italuft wireless station in Rome (or by the stations in Naples or Catania in the event of interference). Liaison Staff Italuft will notify Superaereo accordingly.
- (d) To ensure the swift and certain exchange of information between X Fliegerkorps and the Aegean Air Force, a German wireless station has been established on Rhodes and an Italian wireless station has been set up in Athens.

The German wireless stations will receive signals from X Fliegerkorps, translate them into Italian and pass them on to the Aegean Air Force, while the Italian wireless station in Athens will translate into German signals from the Aegean Air Force and pass them on to X Fliegerkorps.

The German wireless station and the Italian Headquarters and the Italian wireless station and the German Headquarters are linked by teleprinter.

Headquarters on both sides are obliged to answer inquiries immediately.

- (e) The Italian wireless link will also act as a reserve for the transmission of German signals in the event of interference with or the breakdown of the German wireless station and, conversely, the German wireless link may be used by Aegean Air Force Headquarters in case of interference with or the breakdown of the Italian wireless station.
- (f) Italian reconnaissance reports will be received by the Marisudest wireless station in Athens. After de-coding and translation into German, Marisudest (Italian Navy, South East) Headquarters will forward these reports to the German Admiral in Athens (Marisudest and the German Admiral are located in the same building). The German Admiral will pass on these reports to X Fliegerkorps through his own communication channels.
- (g) X Fliegerkorps will send German reconnaissance reports to the German Admiral in Athens. The latter will pass them on to Headquarters Marisudest which, after translation into Italian and coding, will transmit them through its own wireless station. Thus, simultaneous reception will be possible for all static and mobile wireless stations of the Italian Navy and for the "Grandi unita Aeree" (Main Air Force formations), which will listen in on the Navy reconnaissance wavelength.

Rome, 31st August, 1941 (XIX)

Chief of Liaison Staff to the
Royal Italian Air Force

for the Chief of Staff,
Royal Italian Air Force

(Sgd. Lieutenant-General Ritter von Pohl)

(Sgd. General A. G. Santoro)

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13th September, 1941
1745 hours

To:- Chief of Luftwaffe Operations Staff Ia
For information to:- OKH Operations Department
OKM Naval Operations Staff
German General attached to Headquarters
Italian Armed Forces (paras. 2, 3 and 4 only)

The Fuehrer has issued the following orders:

- (1) In order not to prejudice the success of the attack on Leningrad, Army and Luftwaffe formations will not be withdrawn until the complete encirclement of the city to within artillery range has been assured.

The time-limit for the withdrawal of certain fast-moving units and Luftwaffe 1 formations provided in paragraph 3 of Directive 35 may be exceeded by a few days for this reason.

- (2) With immediate effect the main task of the Luftwaffe in the Mediterranean (X Fliegerkorps) is the protection of Axis transports to North Africa (including those to Tripoli) and not operations against unescorted enemy shipping and the British supply organisation in Egypt. Plans to be reported.
- (3) The six U-boats assigned to the Mediterranean will commence operations in this area as soon as possible regardless of Italian plans. Date of sailing to be reported.
- (4) The Armistice Commission has been requested to obtain the French government's agreement to the movement of German E-boats and mine-sweepers through the unoccupied zone and to the reconnaissance run requested (orally) by the Naval Operations Staff. Subsequently, all available vessels will be moved immediately, followed as soon as possible by remaining vessels.

OKW/Armed Forces Operations Staff/Department L
No. 441530 - Top Secret

Top Secret

Date:- 16th September, 1941
From:- Liaison Staff Italuft Ia
To:- Robinson Ia
For inf. to:- Kurfuerst Ia
Kuefuerst Q.M. Dept. 4
Ref.:- (1) Liaison Staff Italuft Ia No. 209/41
Top Secret of 13th September, 1941
(2) German General at Headquarters Italian Armed
Forces No. 15064/41 Top Secret of 15th September, 1941
Subject:- Increase in Sea Transports to Africa

The report from the German General at Headquarters Italian Armed Forces ran as follows:-

"The discussions with Comando Supremo regarding the increase in transports to Africa and to determine a date for the attack on Tobruk were concluded at 2100 hours on 15th September."

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Comando Supremo summarised its views as follows:-

- (1) In view of the situation the capture of Tobruk is regarded as an essential prerequisite to a further advance towards the Nile.
- (2) Every effort will be made to increase sea transports so that preparations for the attack may be concluded in October or at the beginning of November.
- (3) To this end a schedule for transport movements and naval and air cover was drawn up with the provisions that X Fliegerkorps formations escort convoys (already agreed) and that the German High Command make available the steamships Ankara and Reichenfels (ready to sail) and Duisburg and Wachtfels (being repaired). (The German High Command has not yet replied, but its agreement is expected).
- (4) It was agreed that it is essential to assemble a mobile reserve of adequate strength (excluding the forces provided for the capture of Tobruk) in order to repulse enemy counter-attacks which will doubtless be launched when Axis forces move on Tobruk. Every effort must be made to bring the strength of this reserve force up to at least two armoured divisions (one Italian and one German) and one Italian motorised division.
- (5) The plan for the attack and the necessary grouping of forces will be drawn up as quickly as possible by General Rommel and will be submitted for approval to the Italian High Command in North Africa.
- (6) After hearing General Rommel's suggestions, the Italian High Command in North Africa will decide the time for the attack on the basis of the then existing enemy situation.

Liaison Staff Italuft Ia No. 1550/41 Top Secret

Top Secret

Date:- 16th September, 1941
From:- Liaison Staff Italuft Ia
To:- Robinson Ia
For inf. to:- Kurfuerst Ia
Refs:- (1) Liaison Staff Italuft Ia No. 219/41
Top Secret of 15th September, 1941
(2) German General at Headquarters Italian Armed Forces No. 15066/41 Top Secret of 16th September, 1941

The German General at Headquarters Italian Armed Forces (Reference 2) reported the following to OKW:-

With reference to Section 2 OKW/L No. 441530/41 Top Secret 13th September, 1941, it is suggested that X Fliegerkorps agree to carry out the following tasks in addition to the main task ordered in the above-mentioned teleprint:-

- (a) Operations from Sicily to neutralise the R.A.F. on Malta in addition to the operations hitherto carried out against the island by the Italian Air Force. A decrease in enemy air attacks on convoys is expected as the principal effect of these operations.

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- (b) Air cover for transports on the Italy-Tripoli route in addition to that hitherto provided by the Italian Air Force, particularly over sea areas where only limited cover can be provided owing to the short range of Italian aircraft.
- (c) Close and long range cover for shipping on the Italy-Benghazi route.
- (d) Attacks on enemy warships threatening convoys or individual ships.
- (e) Fighter and anti-submarine patrols over Tripoli, Benghazi and Derna. It is particularly emphasised that the route to Tripoli is and must continue to be the main supply route owing to the inadequate discharging capacity of Benghazi and the need to disperse enemy nuisance activity. Thus, C-in-C Luftwaffe's proposed non-participation in escorting convoys to Tripoli could prove very disadvantageous to transport shipping (to Africa).

Liaison Staff Italuft Ia No. 1551/41 Top Secret.

Abteilung Landesverteidigung
I L Op

Field Headquarters,
22nd September, 1941

Top Secret teleprint - Naval Operations Staff B. No. 1 Naval Operations Staff Ia 1551/41 of 20th September, 1941 (OKW No. 441570/41)

To:- OKW/Armed Forces Operations Staff/L
Subject:- Transport Situation in the Mediterranean

I. Losses incurred during the last few days give rise to the following observations:-

- (1) Naval Operations Staff signals I M 14425 of 1st July, 1941 and I M 16379 of 22nd July, 1941 referred to the seriousness of the transport situation in the Mediterranean and the need for prompt and energetic counter-measures. In the latter signal the necessity for X Fliegerkorps to escort transports to the west as well as to the east of 22 degrees east was particularly emphasised.
- (2) Naval Operations Staff signal I M No. 1248/41 - Top Secret - of 5th July (basis for the Fuehrer's letter to the Duce) also referred to the increasing deterioration in the situation and the necessity for immediate relief and pointed out that this deterioration coincided with the transfer of X Fliegerkorps to the eastern Mediterranean.
- (3) The Naval Operations Staff, acting through the German Admiral in Rome, made every effort to improve and intensify Italian anti-submarine operations, even to the extent of supplying large amounts of valuable location equipment in spite of the shortages still existing on the German side. However, it was a long time before there were any results.
- (4) The necessity for immediate measures against enemy submarines and aircraft was again referred to in Part II, Section 4 of Naval Operations Staff Ia Signal 1421/41 (Top Secret) of 19th August (material for meeting of the Fuehrer and the Duce).

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- (5) In view of the report from the German General at Headquarters Italian Armed Forces (No. 2448/41) and the attitude of the German Admiral in Rome, reference was again made in Naval Operations Staff I B Signal No. 1515/41 (Top Secret) of 13th September, to the decisive importance of the threatened transport situation in the Mediterranean and immediate measures - by German forces - were requested.
- (6) In Section 2 of Signal No. 441530/41 (Top Secret) of 13th September, OKW ordered X Fliegerkorps to protect transports to Africa, including those to Tripoli, as its main task.
- (7) However, in Section 1 of Operations Staff Ia (Robinson) Signal No. 11293/41 (Top Secret) of 13th September, C-in-C Luftwaffe restricted these escort duties to the protection of shipping between Greece and the African coast and along the African coast between Benghazi and Derna.
- (8) In the opinion of the Naval Operations Staff this alteration of the OKW directive, made for reasons not known to this Department, is not in keeping with the situation. Owing to the situation at sea the movement of transports on the Greece - North Africa route will continue to be limited to rare occasions and, in spite of maximum air cover, their safe arrival will be mainly a matter of chance. The main route from Naples to Tripoli is of decisive importance, while the Taranto-Benghazi route and the Tripoli-Benghazi coastal route are of secondary importance. Aircraft based on Malta and submarines constitute the principal threat to these main arteries of the entire Axis position in Africa.
- (9) Unless the operational order to X Fliegerkorps is altered to comply with the original OKW directive or fresh forces are transferred, preferably to Sicily, in the immediate future, even at the expense of the Eastern Front, it will be too late for any action to be taken and, owing to the inadequacy of Italian operations which were promised with the best of intentions, a further deterioration in the Mediterranean transport situation will be inevitable and may result in major military reverses in North Africa with corresponding effect on the entire situation in the Mediterranean and on Italy's situation as an ally.

II. Naval Operations Staff again requests the Fuehrer to comment on this assessment, which has the following aims:-

- (a) X Fliegerkorps to be assigned the tasks of protecting the route to Tripoli as demanded by the acute situation and, in particular, of neutralising Malta.
- (b) Political negotiations for the transfer of German E-boats and minesweepers to the Mediterranean to be concluded as soon as possible.
- (c) If possible, additional Luftwaffe formations to operate from Sicily as was done before the transfer of X Fliegerkorps to the eastern Mediterranean.

Naval Operations Staff B. No. 1 Naval Operations Staff Ia
1551/41 - Top Secret.

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Abteilung Landesverteidigung
I L Op

Field Headquarters
22nd September, 1941

Teleprint OKW/Armed Forces Operations Staff No. 441573/41 Top Secret of
20th September, 1941 to OKM/Naval Operations Staff.

Views on Naval Operations Staff report No. 1 Naval Operations Staff Ia
No. 1551/41 Top Secret.

I. Re Sections 1-5:

OKW has long been aware of the serious transport situation in the Mediterranean. The OKW order (see Section 6) issued after the Fuehrer was consulted resulted from reports and requests from the Naval Operations Staff, reports from the German General at Italian Headquarters and, finally, the discussion with General Cavallero.

II. C-in-C Luftwaffe justified his restriction of the order (see Section 7) to the Luftwaffe Chief of Staff as follows:-

From bases in southern Greece and Crete X Fliegerkorps can provide cover only between Greece and the African coast and along the African coast between Benghazi and Derna for the following reasons:-

- (a) German airfields in Sicily have been completely evacuated and occupied by the Italians. The latter would first have to give up airfields again and German ground organisation would have to be brought back to Sicily. This applies equally to German air defence. It would take a considerable time to implement these measures.
- (b) If substantial forces were transferred to Sicily, X Fliegerkorps would be too weak to prevent British warships and aircraft operating at will in the Aegean.
- (c) In the event of a full-scale enemy offensive or an Axis assault on Tobruk, X Fliegerkorps can provide Africa Corps with effective support only from its present bases.
- (d) C-in-C Luftwaffe asserted that the route to Cyrenaica had not been used for some time at his instigation and that material brought over to Tripoli had been piling up as there was not sufficient land transport and coastal shipping to move it up to the front.
- (e) The Italians have strong air formations in northern Italy which could be used to neutralise Malta. (The Fuehrer is sending a request to this effect to the Duce to-day).

III. The Fuehrer has decided that in amendment to the original order, X Fliegerkorps will provide cover only for particularly important transports to Tripoli and for this purpose a base will be prepared in Sicily for temporary use by German formations. C-in-C Luftwaffe issued an order to this effect (teleprint Operations Staff Ia No. 11857/41 - Top Secret - (Op 1) of 18th September, 1941).

Thus Section 8 has been settled by the Fuehrer's acceptance of C-in-C Luftwaffe's assessment.

IV. X Fliegerkorps has already been reinforced by the allocation of a further bomber Gruppe and a fighter Gruppe, but can maintain operational strength only for its present tasks.

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The weakening of the Eastern Front proposed by the Naval Operations Staff contradicts all the principles of warfare. Luftwaffe forces in the East are just adequate to provide operations in that theatre with the necessary support to enable planned objectives to be achieved this year. However, this applies to all theatres.

V. Re II a and c:

Orders which have been issued will remain in force. No provision will be made for the reinforcement of X Fliegerkorps until further notice.

Re b:

Political negotiations have been speeded up.

OKW/Chief Armed Forces Operations Staff No. 441573/41 - Top Secret

Top Secret

Date:- 26th September, 1941
From:- Liaison Staff Italuft
To:- Luftwaffe Chief of Staff, General Jeschonnek
Subject:- Visit of General Pricolo on 1st October

An improvement in the inadequate performance of the Italian Air Force can be expected only if the discussion produces definite points of agreement concerning the removal of known defects. The implementation of such points of agreement would probably be best assured if they were set down in a personal letter from the Reichsmarschall to the Duce after the discussion had been concluded.

The following is a list of what I consider to be the most important demands, and I request that they be examined:

- (1) The Reichsmarschall should exert some influence on the conduct of Italian air operations.

As a basis for this, constant, frank and comprehensive information should be supplied regarding the plans, strength, deployment, serviceability and supply situation of the Italian Air Force (including the industrial side).

Hitherto such information has been supplied only when specially requested and even then it has been incomplete.

In return similar information regarding Luftwaffe formations operating in the Mediterranean area will be made available.

- (2) In the interest of unified command, the I.A.F. fighter and bomber formations at present attached to the Commanders-in-Chief in Greece, Rhodes and Africa and to the Headquarters of the Italian Navy to come under command of the C-in-C Italian Air Force. A request to this effect by General Pricolo to the Duce will be supported by the Reichsmarschall.
- (3) An Italian blind-flying and navigation school should be placed under German control for the purpose of training blind-flying instructors and establishing a German instructor group which would superintend training at advanced flying training schools and units and improve it by personal guidance.

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- (4) Licences to manufacture the Me 210 and Ju 87D should be released free of charge as these aircraft are particularly suitable for convoy escort operations and service in a tropical climate. Assistance will be provided by German industry in the initial stages of production. To this end German influence on the Italian aircraft production programme must be conceded for the purpose of simplification.
- (5) Italian anti-aircraft artillery, at present completely useless, to be placed under Air Force control as envisaged by the Duce before the war.

A German AA instructional course should be started in Italy in order to pass on German experience and to establish a German demonstration staff to advise Italian AA headquarters.

von Pohl, Lieutenant General, Liaison Staff Italuft Ia
No. 1554/41 - Top Secret.

Teleprint dated 4th October, 1941
From:- A.O.C., X Fliegerkorps
To:- C-in-C Luftwaffe
Through:- Luftwaffe Chief of Staff personally

- (1) In connection with the report requested by Lieutenant Colonel Schlieter in the course of his telephone call at 14.00 hours on 4th October, 1941, attention is drawn to my assessment of the situation and report on British convoy operations on 27th and 28th September, 1941, and also to paragraph 2 of the same message - Ia No. 826/41 Top Secret - transmitted by priority radiogram on 30th September. Reconnaissance operations carried out on 30th September yielded no fresh facts. Similar operations on 28th September between 22° and 27° east, and on 1st October between 22° to a line Casco-Alexandria, leaving no area unreconnoitred, were also without any result that would suggest that even single ships were getting through to Alexandria.

For the rest, I have nothing further to add to the daily reports submitted to C-in-C Luftwaffe, Führungsstab Ic, through Ic report channels. These reports deal unambiguously with the reconnaissance sorties undertaken and the results obtained by them.

- (2) I have seen the report of the Italian radio intelligence service of 2nd October, in which the Italian Navy maintains that, according to intercepted radio messages, a convoy arrived in Alexandria early on 1st October. As I was not prepared to allow a claim of this nature to go unchallenged, since it was disproved by reconnaissance and seemed to interfere with the conduct of X Fliegerkorps operations, I have already expressed my views on this matter in a report sent by courier to Ia Robinson.

My views are restated below:-

- (a) On 2nd October the Italian navy stated that their radio intelligence service had reported the arrival of a convoy in Alexandria early the previous day.
- (b) In my opinion, a radio intelligence report of such questionable authenticity cannot possibly justify the issuance of a sea situation report of this nature.

Reconnaissance carried out by X Fliegerkorps from 27th to 30th September, and particularly the operations carried out

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on 29th and 30th September from Alexandria to 17° east, with visibility 100 km. yielded no results, though no part of this area was left unrecognised.

In my opinion, the results of reconnaissance carried out under favourable conditions are a much more reliable basis on which to assess a situation than the questionable results of radio intercepts.

- (c) This instance provides a further opportunity of drawing attention to the peculiarities of Italian methods of assessing a situation. In the course of nine months' collaboration with Italian Service departments it has been repeatedly observed that in spite of frequent objections the Italian intelligence service does not differentiate between reconnaissance reports, assessments of the situation, visual reports, radar reports etc., and constantly mixes them up.
- (d) As previous experience indicates that no change can be expected in the Italian method of evaluating information and drawing up reports, emphasise the above points and request that they serve as a basis in the assessment of Italian reconnaissance and situation reports.

A.O.C., X Fliegerkorps Ia
Top Secret

General Froelich
Fliegerfuehrer Afrika

20th October, 1941

Subject:- Panzergruppe Afrika's appreciation of the situation in Africa
To:- H.Q. X Fliegerkorps

Fliegerfuehrer Afrika conferred with the C-in-C Panzergruppe Afrika on 18th October, 1941, and was given the following picture of the situation in Africa by the latter's Chief of Staff:

Fremde Heere West Section of OKH believes it is possible that within a short time - perhaps before the end of the month - the enemy will launch an attack with the strong forces at present massing in Egypt, with the object of capturing Libya and thus securing his rear for future operations in the east.

Panzergruppe Afrika estimates the enemy's present strength in Egypt at 10 divisions, two of them armoured, and believes that the British could muster 1,500 tanks for an offensive of this nature. Of these forces, the enemy could employ the bulk of his armour in a drive from the Siwa-Giarabub area against the flank of the German front, at all events in the direction of Mechili.

The Germans cannot commit more than 200 tanks at the present time. Major General Gause (Chief of Staff, Panzergruppe Afrika) considers that the enemy is in a position to concentrate his forces in a very short time (about three days).

Panzergruppe therefore requests that the Luftwaffe forces designated for the attack on Tobruk be made ready as soon as possible, so that Tobruk can be taken before the British offensive starts, and further, in order to beat off an armoured thrust from the Siwa-Giarabub area with strong forces

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of the Luftwaffe, since the small size of the available Army (armoured) force is insufficient to repel such a thrust, particularly since we must expect that a frontal attack against the Sollum front to be launched simultaneously.

Panzergruppe Afrika asks to be notified as soon as possible of the date by which the Luftwaffe reinforcements will have arrived in Africa.

(Sgd.) Froelich
Major-General.

A.H.B. Distribution

Same as Translation VII/128

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