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AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

TRANSLATION NO. VII/105

WAR DIARY OF PANZER ARMY AFRICA

28 JULY - 23 OCTOBER, 1942.

TRANSLATED BY

AIR MINISTRY, A.H.B.6.

MAY, 1951.

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WAR DIARY OF PANZER ARMY AFRICA

FROM 28 JULY TO 23 OCTOBER, 1942

During this period Panzer Army Africa was subordinate to O.K.H. With effect from 16 August, 1942 it was also tactically subordinate to Italian Comando Supremo.

28 July, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) Nothing to report during the day.
- 2) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 1).

29 July, 1942

Weather: fine, windy
Temp.: 35°C

- 1) The C-in-C discussed the bringing up of Italian troops with Marshal Bastico. The Marshal affirmed that the entire Italian Paratroop Division would be brought over by 10 August. 2 tank battalions and 3 assault gun batteries (7.5 cm) were expected to arrive in 14 days' time. Moreover, every effort was being made to bring over the Pistoia Infantry Division.
- 2) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 2).

30 & 31 July, 1942

- 1) Nothing to report.
- 2) Daily reports sent to O.K.H. (Appendices 2a and 2b).

1 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 34°C.

- 1) The C-in-C conferred with Fliegerfuehrer Afrika. The C-in-C stressed the necessity of protecting coastal shipping. However, Fliegerfuehrer Afrika is fully committed by operations at the front. Formations belonging to the C-in-C South will have to be brought up to protect shipping.
- 2) Elements of 580th Reconnaissance Unit were sent through Mersa Matruh in the direction of the Quattara Springs to cover this area against enemy raiding and sabotage parties thought to be there.
- 3) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 3).

2 August, 1942

Weather: Sandstorm
Temp.: 38°C.

- 1) R.A.F. aircraft sank 2 barges and 2 coastal sailing vessels in Bardia harbour. The supply situation of the Panzer Army is becoming extremely acute owing to the increasing numbers of transports and coastal vessels being sunk. Since 28 July enemy air activity has been concentrated on the Panzer Army supply routes.

/2)

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 2 -

- 2) The Q.M.G. conferred with the C-in-C. The supply situation at the front is assured for the present and sufficient supplies for two days of full-scale action have been brought up. However, it would take 5 - 6 days to replenish these stocks as supply ships are putting into Tobruk and Benghazi instead of Mersa Matruh owing to the lack of Italian escort vessels. The large amount of transport required as a result of this cannot be provided in full.
- 3) Panzer Army H.Q. made a request to O.K.W. that further German aircraft and A.A. formations be brought up to protect coastal shipping (Appendix 4).
- 4) Comando Supremo complied with the O.K.W. request not to disband the Sabratha Division, which was almost completely wiped out in the fighting on 10 July. (Appendix 5).
- 5) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 6).

3 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 36°C

- 1) Italian forces were brought up to assist in covering the area behind the front against enemy raiding and sabotage parties. One Italian company with 1 artillery Section of the Pavia Division will be moved south of Mersa Matruh on 8 August to cover the routes down into the Qattara Depression. The Pavia Division will be taken out of the front line to guard the Matruh fortress and to rest.
- 2) The C-in-C intends to withdraw 90th Light Africa Division and 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions from the front line. They will be rested and assembled behind the front for mobile operations. It is intended to withdraw the divisions upon the arrival of 164th Light Division, the Ramcke Paratroop Brigade, the Italian Bologna Division and Folgore Paratroop Division and other Italian replacements.
- 3) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 7).

4 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 35°C

- 1) A pilot who escaped from British captivity confirms the presence of an enemy sabotage organization in the G. Iskander area, on the edge of the Qattara Depression. According to his statement, this organisation consists of elements of the Long Range Desert Group with about 40 vehicles, maintaining a mobile base from which sabotage raids against our airfields etc. can be launched.
- 2) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 8).

5 August, 1942

Weather: Sandstorm
Temp.: 32°C

- 1) 3rd, 33rd and 580th Reconnaissance Units have been grouped under the command of 15th Rifle Brigade.

/2)

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 3 -

- 2) 3rd Reconnaissance Unit on the northern edge of the Qattara Depression was sent westwards with orders to establish contact with 580th Reconnaissance Unit at Qattara Springs and to comb the area between the Qattara Depression and the coast in search of enemy raiding parties.
- 3) The ships "Sestriere" and "Nino Bixio" carrying important supplies and weapons for Panzer Army arrived at Benghazi (Appendix 9).
- 4) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 10).

6 August, 1942

Weather: Sandstorm
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) 30 enemy tanks, probably covering enemy mining activity, were observed opposite 20 Corps sector. Enemy digging observed in the Deir el Alinda area.
- 2) The German General in Rome expressed his opinion regarding the Panzer Army statement of 4 August, 1942 that the ratio of 1 : 1 in the movement of German and Italian supplies had been displaced to the advantage of the Italians (Appendix 11).
- 3) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 12).

7 August, 1942

Weather: Sandstorm
Temp.: 34°C.

- 1) The C-in-C informed the G.O.Cs. of Africa Corps and 20 Corps and the Commander of 90th Light Africa Division of his plans for the resumption of the offensive.
- 2) 164th Light Division, which had originally been equipped only with 3.7 cm anti-tank guns, would have to be sent in without adequate anti-tank artillery (5 cm anti-tank guns). This deficiency would create an extremely dangerous situation in the event of an enemy attack. Following a Panzer Army request, 196 5 cm. anti-tank guns were allocated by O.K.H. (Appendix 13).
- 3) The German General in Rome reported that, with effect from 12 August, Panzer Army Africa would be directly subordinate to Comando Supremo for all questions regarding strategy (Appendix 14).
- 4) A further request for increased fighter cover over the port of Tobruk was made to C-in-C South and Italian G.H.Q. in North Africa (Appendix 15).
- 5) 3rd Reconnaissance Unit began mining the area west of Qattara Springs.
- 6) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 16).

8 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 36°C.

- 1) The Panzer Army command area was defined by Italian G.H.Q. (Appendix 17).

/2)

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 4 -

- 2) The acting Chief of General Staff referred to the inadequate organisation for unloading ships. (Appendix 18).
- 3) The Pavia Division arrived in the Mersa Matruh area for guard duties and rest.
- 4) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 19).

9 August, 1942

Weather: windy
Temp.: 32°C

- 1) The C-in-C conferred with C-in-C South and Admiral Weichold at Army Battle Headquarters. The C-in-C stressed the necessity of launching a German offensive as soon as possible, giving the following reasons:
 - a) The enemy had apparently carried out extensive mining and encircling operation would therefore soon be impossible.
 - b) Strong British forces were expected to arrive in Egypt at the beginning of September and action would have to be taken before they appeared at the front.
- 2) The C-in-C ordered the Chief of Staff to give his personal support to Panzer Army's supply demands in Rome (Appendix 20).
- 3) The German General in Rome was again requested to send all available anti-tank guns by air and sea as quickly as possible. (Appendix 21) The German General in Rome replied to this request (Appendix 22).
- 4) O.K.W. attitude towards the direct subordination of Panzer Army to Comando Supremo (Appendix 23).
- 5) The regrouping of 21st Panzer Division has been concluded. Infantry units of 15th Panzer Division have been relieved by paratroopers of the Ramcke Brigade.
- 6) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 24).

10 August, 1942

Weather: Cloudy
Temp.: 34°C

- 1) Discussion with General Barbasetti regarding questions resulting from the direct subordination of Panzer Army to Comando Supremo. In addition, details of the composition of the Pistoia Division were discussed (Appendix 25).
- 2) 10 Corps reported that by 16 August it would probably have at its disposal only 2 artillery units of the Brescia Division and no Corps artillery at all, and requested information as to what artillery could be expected in the new sector.
- 3) The supply ship "Santa Fee" carrying 100 vehicles and 2 light field howitzer batteries has arrived at Benghazi.
- 4) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 26).

/11

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 5 -

11 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 36°C

- 1) Pavia Division reported that 4th Libyan Battalion will be despatched to Qattara Springs on the morning of 12 August. A part of the battalion will be used at Bir Khaldia (Appendix 27).
- 2) a) 580th Reconnaissance Unit reported that reconnaissance over the Qattara Depression by Storch aircraft had not resulted in the enemy being sighted.
b) 3rd Reconnaissance Unit reported that the area along the railway as far as Qabr el Malki had been searched and that no camp had been discovered.
- 3) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 28).

12 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 37°C

- 1) The British convoy from Gibraltar reported on 11 August was 250 km south-west of Sardinia at 06.00 hours. In view of the situation in general and the size of the convoy, which is unprecedented for the Mediterranean, the possibility of a landing in great strength in Africa must be taken into account. A report that other British naval forces from Cyprus were moving westwards proved to be an enemy deception message. The C-in-C issued the following orders to strengthen coastal defence:
 - a) 3rd and 580th Reconnaissance Units (580th Reconnaissance Unit Qattara Depression) will proceed to Mersa Matruh immediately.
 - b) 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and Battle Group Briel (without tracked vehicles) will reach the area west of Sidi Rahman as quickly as possible and will be at the Army's disposal as Battle Group Geissler. In addition, 20 Corps will assemble a reconnaissance detachment comprising 17 armoured cars, 2 S.P. guns and 1 captured battery, which will also be moved into the area west of Sidi Rahman.
 - c) 90th Light Division (without Special Formation Menton, 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and Battle Group Briel and tracked vehicles) will stand by to move to the coastal road as quickly as possible upon Army orders for transfer westwards. This order also applies to 21st Panzer Division (without tanks and 1 light artillery section).
- 2) Acting Chief of Staff to Ia 90th Light Division:
 - a) Report on the situation in the Mediterranean.
 - b) Battle Group Geissler will leave its positions immediately (order issued direct through Army H.Q. Staff) and reach the area 5 km west of Sidi Rahman by nightfall. Battle Group Geissler will be relieved immediately by Battle Group Panzenhagen. Battle Group Briel (without tracked vehicles) will be subordinate to Battle Group Geissler. In addition, a further 2 batteries will be sent up.

/c)

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 6 -

- c) 90th Light Division (without the Geissler and Menton Groups and tracked vehicles) will stand by to move northwards in the direction of the coastal road at dawn on 13 August.
- 3) The acting Chief of Staff issued this same order to the Geissler Group with the instruction that the Group will be relieved, even if the corresponding replacements are not available. Consideration should be given to the question of leaving part of the ammunition issue on the coastal road. In this case, units would collect ammunition along the road.
- During the day reconnaissance revealed that the enemy convoy was still approaching the Sicilian Straits. The question of a British landing still cannot be answered. It is calculated that the convoy could arrive off Tobruk during the night of 13/14 August. 3rd Reconnaissance Unit had already been sent on to Sollum during the day with orders to occupy the town, prevent a British landing and establish the closest contact with the Italian garrison in Bardia.
- 4) In the evening it was still not clear whether the convoy was bound for Malta or if a landing in strength was to be carried out in North Africa.
- 5) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 29).

13 August, 1942

Weather: fine

Temp.: 38°C

- 1) Early in the morning reconnaissance reported the convoy south of Pantelleria. It was reported that some of the escort vessels had already turned back and were proceeding in the direction of Gibraltar. The convoy is on course for Malta. According to an estimate of the situation, a direct threat to the North African coast no longer exists and it is unlikely that a landing will be made. For this reason no more motorised battle groups are to be sent westwards along the coast.

3rd Reconnaissance Unit was ordered to move to Sidi Barrani instead of to Sollum. Reports on the convoy received during the day confirm that it is bound for Malta. Heavy losses have already been inflicted in an attack by German and Italian air and naval forces.

- 2) The C-in-C discussed the situation with the G.O.C. and Chief of Staff, 21 Corps, the Commanders of the Trento Division and 164th Infantry Division and Artillery Commander 104.

Reference was made to the careful construction of the mine-belt and the conduct of operations on and in the minefields and at night. The enemy must be harassed by patrol activity and sudden concentrations of fire. Axis activity will be stepped up until 22 August. Cooperation between German and Italian artillery was discussed, as were further plans for the conduct of operations by the Army.

- 3) C-in-C discussed the construction of minefields and dummy minefields with regard to future plans for the conduct of operations with the Chiefs of Staff of 10 and 20 Corps.

RESTRICTED

/4)

RESTRICTED

- 7 -

- 4) Chief of Staff, Army informed the Ia's of Africa Corps and 90th Light Division that 21st Panzer Division and 90th Light Division had been ordered to stand down. Geissler Battle Group had also been ordered to stand down, 3rd Reconnaissance Unit will remain in Sidi Barrani and 580th Reconnaissance Unit 20 km east of Mersa Matruh.
- 5) Very heavy losses have been inflicted on the British Mediterranean convoy by German and Italian air and naval forces. Only 6 ships reached port in Malta.
- 6) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 30).

14 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 36°C

- 1) 707th and 708th Heavy Infantry Gun Companies, formerly 90th Light Division, were placed under the operational command of 164th Infantry Division. All guns not available for action owing to unserviceable carriages will be mounted on wheels for towing. In addition, orders have been issued for the companies to be re-inforced with 3 and 4 captured British guns respectively.
- 2) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 31).

15 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 38°C

- 1) During the night 14/15 August British sabotage parties landed in the El Daba area. Only slight damage was caused when vehicles were blown up (for details see report Quartermaster/Africa Corps) (Appendix 32).
- 2) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 33).

16 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 40°C

- 1) Panzer Army Africa has come under the direct orders of Comando Supremo. The Italian H.Q. in North Africa (Comando Superiore) has been dissolved. Marshal Bastico had been appointed Governor of Libya.
- 2)
 - a) With immediate effect Battle Group Geissler will return to 90th Light Division and will be moved into the area ordered by the division.
 - b) The reconnaissance unit of 20 Italian Corps will be subordinate to the Corps again and will be brought up.
 - c) Following its relief, it is intended to transfer Special Formation 288 to the area west of Sidi Rahman for rest.
- 3) Major General Gause resumed the duties of Chief of Staff, Army and Colonel Westphal the duties of Army Ia. Colonel Bayerlein returned to the post of Chief of Staff, Africa Corps.
- 4) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 34).

/17

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 8 -

17 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 35°C

- 1) The enemy is entrenching and mining along the whole front, particularly on the northern sector.
- 2) 580th Reconnaissance Unit received orders to proceed to the area of the Abu Seif sanitation unit (15 km west-north-west of Sidi Abd el Rahman) on 19 August.
- 3) 90th Light Division received orders to send in its artillery section to the rear and south of the Garet el Abd sector.
- 4) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 35).

18 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp: 37°C

- 1) Order to 3rd Reconnaissance Unit: 3rd Reconnaissance Unit will remain at Mersa Matruh until 20 August and will move to Tell el Gora on 21 August.
- 2) The C-in-C conferred with Marshal Cavallero, Field Marshal Kesselring, General von Rintelen and Marshal Bastico. The following questions were discussed:
 - a) the distribution of shipping space,
 - b) the supply situation,
 - c) the inadequate anti-tank gun equipment of 164th Infantry Division,
 - d) moving forward the Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya,
 - e) effective strength of the Folgore Division; employment of the Pistoia Division,
 - f) overall control of railway movements in North Africa.
(for details see Appendix 36)
- 3) Fuel situation of German forces in Africa:
About 3,000 cubic metres available; with a current daily consumption of over 300 cubic metres, present stocks will be available for supply up to and including 26 August.
- 4) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 37).

19 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 38°C

- 1) A British reconnaissance raid supported by tanks north of Deir el Shein was repulsed.
- 2) Special Formation 288 will be transferred to the area west of Sidi Rahman on the evening of 20 August as Army reserve.
- 3) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 38).

/20

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 9 -

20 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 37°C

- 1) The C-in-C in formed the G.O.C. of 21 Corps and the Chief of Staff and Commander of 164th Infantry Division of plans for the future conduct of operations. The employment of artillery was discussed. The C-in-C again referred to the wiring of advanced positions.
- 2) The C-in-C discussed the situation and plans with the Commander of 90th Light Africa Division, the G.O.C. of 20 Corps and the Chief of Staff of 10 Corps.
- 3) The Commanders of 3rd, 33rd and 580th Reconnaissance Units reported to the C-in-C and were informed of plans for the future conduct of operations.
- 4) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 39).

21 August, 1942

Weather: Sandstorm
Temp.: 36°C

- 1) The Quartermaster General held a conference on the supply situation. The question whether fuel and ammunition supplies could be provided by the time ordered and general supply problems were discussed.
- 2) 3rd Reconnaissance Unit moved from the Mersa Matruh area to the Tell el Gora area (5 km south-west of Sidi Abd el Rahman).
- 3) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 40).

22 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 38°C

- 1) At 08.00 hours Army order Ia 88/42 (Secret) was issued to subordinate Corps and Divisions.
- 2) Chief of Staff Africa Corps discussed the Corps supply and vehicle situation.
- 3) The tanker "Pozzarica" was torpedoed in the vicinity of Corfu on the evening of 21 August (Appendices 41 - 43).
- 4) 20 Corps reported that further units could be made mobile by the repair of vehicles (Appendix 41). Appendix 1 of Army H.Q. order Ia 88/42 (Secret) of 22 August for the release of non-motorised battalions and artillery to 10 Corps is amended.
- 5) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 45).

23 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 37°C

- 1) The "Fascio" and "Pukliola" arrived at Tobruk with 1,140 cubic metres of fuel, 200 tons of ammunition etc. (Appendix 46).

RESTRICTED

/2)

RESTRICTED

- 10 -

- 2) With effect from today (23 August) 19th Flak Division is tactically under command Panzer Army.
- 3) The 13th Company of the 800th Demonstration Regiment was placed under command Special Formation 288.
- 4) 33rd Reconnaissance Unit was relieved by 580th Reconnaissance Unit and arrived in area 159, right 9 during the afternoon.
- 5) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 47).

24 August, 1942

Weather: Sandstorm
Temp.: 37°C

- 1) The Folgore Division will be under command 10 Corps with effect from 25 August. (see Appendix 48).
- 2) Captain Everth, O.C. 3rd Reconnaissance Unit, was put in charge of all reconnaissance activity by the unit (Appendix 49).
- 3) The C-in-C gave instructions for the transfer of armoured forces to be carried out in accordance with Army Order No.88/42 (Secret) of 22 August (see Appendix 50).
- 4) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 51).

25 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 38°C

- 1) At 08.00 hours Fliegerfuehrer Africa, Lt. General Hoffmann von Waldau, informed the C-in-C of Luftwaffe operational strengths. The employment of the Luftwaffe in planned operations was discussed.
- 2) At 09.00 hours General Marchese, Commander of the Italian 5th Squadra, informed the C-in-C of Italian Air Force operational strengths. The C-in-C discussed the future conduct of operations and the employment of the Italian Air Force, which would be used mainly to provide fighter cover for 20 Italian Corps (motorised).
- 3) The C-in-C approved the plan for the employment of 90th Light Division in accordance with the proposal submitted. 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment will be transferred during the night 27/28 August. (Appendix 52)
- 4) Lt. Colonel Soldani, Italian supply liaison officer, reported on the supply situation (ammunition and fuel) of the Italian Corps.
- 5) At 16.00 hours C-in-C drove to 10 Corps and discussed the execution of the planned operation with the G.O.C. 10 Corps and the Ramcke Brigade Commander.
- 6) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 53).

/26

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 11 -

26 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 38°C

- 1) There was heavy artillery harassing fire on the central and northern sectors of the front during the night. A reconnaissance raid by the New Zealand Division north of Deir el Shein and another to the south were repulsed. The raid north of Deir el Shein was made against a strong-point of the Bologna Division, which lost a number of men in dead and prisoners. Night bombers were very active again on the southern sector.

Enemy destroyers bombarded the area 5 km north-west of el Daba.

The Reconnaissance Group reported that night patrols had discovered enemy mining in the area 8 km east of Qaret el Khadim and at 152 left 5 - 155 left 5. This activity was probably covered by armoured cars and infantry (Appendix 54).

- 2) In view of the Reconnaissance Group report, the C-in-C ordered German and Italian reconnaissance parties and artillery of 10 Corps and of German reconnaissance units to harass enemy mining activity during the coming nights.
- 3) At 09.00 hours the Commander, 19th Flak Division, Lt. General Burckhardt, informed the C-in-C of the proposed employment of A.A. formations in the coming offensive. The question of how many units should be used for defence against aircraft was also discussed. The C-in-C requested the employment of searchlights against night bombers on the northern sector.
- 4) At 13.00 hours General Barbasotti, Chief of Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya, arrived for a discussion with the C-in-C. Reference was made to the fuel and ammunition situation of the Italian units.
- 5) In view of the fuel situation, Africa Corps and 20 (Italian) Motorised Corps were informed that the planned movement of tanks into the new areas during the night 26/27 August will not take place. This transfer will probably not be carried out before the night of 27/28 August (Appendix 55).
- 6) A request for the employment of air forces on x and x + 1 day was sent to Fliegerfuhrer Africa (Appendix 56).
- 7) 580th Reconnaissance Unit, Special Formation 288 and Combat Force H.Q. here transferred - see discussion memo of 17.00 hours (Appendix 57).
- 8) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 59).

27 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 38°C

- 1) At 0.800 hours C-in-C South, Field Marshal Messelring, Lt. General Hoffmann Von Waldau and the new Fliegerfuhrer Africa, Major General Scidemann, arrived at Army Battle H.Q. for a discussion (Appendix 60).
- 2) An order was issued to Africa Corps and 20 (Italian) Corps to proceed with the transfer of tank forces (Appendix 61).

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- 12 -

An order was issued to 90th Light Africa Division regarding the bringing up of 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (Appendix 62). An order to move into the new area was issued to 580th Reconnaissance Unit, Armoured Combat Force H.Q. and Special Formation 288 (Appendix 63).

- 3) At 16.00 hours the Commander, 164th Infantry Division reported at Army Battle H.Q. and was informed of the situation and plans by the C-in-C. The proposed plan of operations of the division was discussed.

28 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 37°C

- 1) The C-in-C discussed details of the operations to be carried out with the G.O.C. Africa Corps and 20 Corps, the Commanders of 90th Light Africa Division, 15th Panzer Division and 21st Panzer Division and the officer commanding 3rd Reconnaissance Unit, Captain Everth (for details of points discussed see Appendix 65).
- 2) SS "Istria", carrying a main cargo of vehicles for Artillery Commander 104 and the Ramcke Paratroop Brigade, as well as fuel for Panzer Army, was torpedoed and sunk 70 sea miles off Tobruk.
- 3) The Quartermaster General held a discussion on supplies, with particular reference to fuel and ammunition supplies.
- 4) The reorganisation of Special Formation 288 proposed in Panzer Army H.Q. order Ia 5910/42 (Secret) of 6 August was approved by O.K.H. General Staff, Army - Organisation Unit (Appendix 66).
- 5) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 67).

29 August, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 38°C

- 1) At dawn 4 enemy destroyers made an ineffective attack on el Daba. The enemy warships were forced to move off by the Italian Navy acting in cooperation with Fliegerfuhrer Africa.
- 2) The C-in-C and Field Marshal Kesselring held a discussion at Army Battle H.Q.:
 - a) C-in-C South promised that immediate use would be made of all available air transport to bring up ammunition requirements from stocks already in or arriving in Italy. Panzer Army informed the German General in Rome accordingly (Appendix 68).
 - b) Owing to the unsatisfactory fuel situation, the C-in-C decided to limit the objective of the proposed operation for the time being to "the defeat of the enemy Army in the field". A report was sent to O.K.W. and Comando Supremo (see Appendix) - see Panzer Army H.Q. Order Ia No. 104/42 (Secret) of 29 August 1942.

/c)

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 13 -

- c) 22.00 hours on 30 August was agreed as the time of the attack, and an order was issued accordingly.
- 3) Daily report sent to O.K.H. (Appendix 69).

Seen at
Army Battle Headquarters
by C-in-C ROMMEL
Field Marshal
29 August, 1942

30 August, 1942

Weather: fine; drifting sand in afternoon.
Temp.: 36°C.

- 1) Field Marshal Kesselring arrived at Battle Headquarters at 08.00 hours to discuss details of supply and the employment of the Luftwaffe in the coming operation. He placed 1,500 tons of fuel from Luftwaffe stocks at the disposal of the Panzer Army. This resulted in the following fuel situation: 2 - 3 VS held by units plus a further 2,300 cubic metres = 4 VS in Africa.
- 2) Wheeled units of Africa Corps and the Ariete Armoured Division moved into the final assembly areas during the night 29/30 August.
- 3) At 11.00 hours SS "Gualdi" arrived at Tobruk with 800 tons of fuel.
- 4) At 16.00 hours C-in-C and Ia went to Advanced Army Battle Headquarters at 143 right 7.
- 5) The day passed quietly with only slight artillery and air activity.
- 6) At 22.00 hours the attack was opened by motorised formations and infantry assault units.

Extracts from Operational orders of 22 August, 1942 (Appendix 70).
Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 71).
Situation map (Appendix 72).

31 August, 1942

Weather: morning fine,
sandstorm at midday
Temp.: 35°C

After crossing the eastern limits of the Axis minefields, the motorised formations sent in on the southern sector of the Alamein position to make an encircling attack very soon encountered strong guarded enemy mine-belts. Much time was therefore required to make lanes.

In general, operations by assault units on the central and northern sectors processed according to plan. Assault detachments of the Ramcke Brigade and the Bologna Division brought to 40 prisoners at Ruweisat. It was established by the capture of a South African soldier by assault detachments of 433rd Infantry Regiment that 1st South African Division and not 50th British Division was holding this sector. The first wave of assault troops sent in by the Trento Division and 164th Infantry Division encountered strong enemy resistance at first. The second and third waves reached their objectives unopposed. Enemy artillery on 21 Corps and 164th Infantry Division sector put down defensive fire and engaged identified Axis batteries. Artillery activity died down after the assault troops were withdrawn to their start line. The enemy carried out raids on I/61st Infantry Regiment (Trento Division) and on

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- 14 -

the northernmost strong-point held by 10 Corps. The Italians suffered losses in dead and prisoners. The 10 Corps assault detachment from the Bab el Qattara works gained very little ground owing to artillery fire and minefields.

At dawn advanced elements of the Reconnaissance Group and Africa Corps were about 12 - 15 km. east of the Axis mine-belt. 15th Panzer Division was lagging behind slightly. The enemy defended the minefields stubbornly and thus delayed the divisions' advance. During the night Major General von Bismarck was killed when he drove over a mine and the G.O.C. Africa Corps, General Nehring, was wounded in a bombing attack. The loss of these two experienced commanders at the beginning of the attack necessitated the following reorganisation:

Africa Corps	Major General von Vaerst,
15th Panzer Division	Major General von Randow,
21st Panzer Division	Colonel Lungerhausen.

After passing through the first enemy mine-belt, 20 (Motorised) Corps was held up at a second minefield. Most of the Corps' mine detection equipment was put out of action by artillery fire. During the morning there were still no definite reports on the position of 90th Light Division. Advanced units of the division were believed to be at Deir Alinda.

Units of the Folgore Division sent in along the edge of the Djebel reached Naqb el Khadim without encountering enemy opposition.

As yet no movements of major formations by the enemy have been identified. Enemy W/T traffic has not increased to any appreciable extent.

The Army plan for advanced elements of motorised formations to reach the area about 40 - 50 km east of the start-line in moonlight and to continue the attack northwards from this area at dawn was unsuccessful. This was due to the advance being held up by many hitherto unknown minefields and obstacles, some of them several kilometres in depth, in the southern part of the position. The element of surprise, an essential condition for the success of the operation, was thus lost. The C-in-C then had to decide whether the attack should be broken off or continued with a more limited objective. This decision rested mainly on the position of Africa Corps. The C-in-C therefore went to the Corps' Battle Headquarters, where he was informed that both divisions had overcome the minefields and were making good progress eastwards. The C-in-C thereupon decided to continue the operation with Africa Corps on the right, 20 (Motorised) Corps in the centre and 90th Light Division on the left. Objectives: Africa Corps Hill 132, 20 (Motorised) Corps Alam el Bueib - Alam el Halfa, 90th Light Division initial objective in original plan. See situation map for axis.

C-in-C South ordered all available dive-bombers to support the attack against the high ground which, according to air reconnaissance, was strongly fortified. Fuelling aircraft and the deployment of formations took some time, and Africa Corps was not able to attack until 13.00 hours. The attack made good progress against weak enemy defending forces, carrying the Littorio Armoured Division along with it. At this time, however, the Ariete Armoured Division and Trieste Motorised Division were engaged in making a lane and passing through a minefield at 117 right 7. It was not until 1500 hours therefore that the main force of 20 (Motorised) Corps was able to follow up behind Africa Corps' attack to the latter's left. Air reconnaissance reported that there were no

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- 15 -

large-scale enemy movements to be seen either in a north-easterly, easterly or south-westerly direction. According to an agent's report, 7th British Armoured Division had ordered artillery fire to be used to prevent tanks passing through the minefields. Divisional H.Q. has moved eastwards. Units of the Ramcke Brigade under command 10 Corps reached their objective at 12.00 hours. They were in contact on the right with 90th Light Division, advanced units of which have reached the general line 128 right 1 - 131 right 4.

Towards 18.00 hours the Africa Corps spearhead reached the area 142 right 7. The terrain over which the attack was being made was covered with deep sand and fuel consumption was therefore extremely high. Consequently, Africa Corps fuel stocks had dropped from $2\frac{1}{2}$ - 3 V.S. to less than 1 V.S. by the evening. It was quiet throughout the day on the 21 Corps and 164th Infantry Division front. Patrols established that the enemy was still occupying already identified positions. Heavy traffic in a westerly direction on the coastal road indicated that reinforcements were being brought up to the front.

By nightfall 15th Panzer Division was about 4 km. south of Hill 132, whereas 20 (Motorised) Corps, including the Littorio Division, was lagging far behind. 90th Light Division reached most of its objectives. The Reconnaissance Group was holding a covering sector facing mainly eastwards in area 475.

Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 73).
Situation map (Appendices 74 and 74a).

1 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 35°C

During the night enemy aircraft were very active over the whole front. 3rd and 33rd Reconnaissance Units suffered heavy losses in men and equipment in waves of heavy bombing attacks. In the morning the enemy launched an attack on 164th Infantry Division sector at the gap between mine-boxes J and L. He succeeded in penetrating the first mine-belt, but the attack was then contained and driven back. Vehicle movements opposite 20 Corps sector indicated that the enemy intended to launch further attacks. Fighter-bombers carried out effective operations against the vehicles and tanks. Towards 11.00 hours a further enemy attack on mine-box J was repulsed.

15th Panzer Division continued the attack during the morning and towards midday the main body of the division was directly south of Hill 132. 150 enemy tanks were reported north of Alam el Tritriya. In view of the possibility of an attack on the flank of 15th Panzer Division, Fliegerfuehrer Africa sent dive-bombers to attack this force. After many efforts, 20 (Motorised) Corps gradually succeeded in establishing contact with Africa Corps. 90th Light Division deployed in the area it had reached for defence against a possible enemy attack from the north. The Reconnaissance Group held a defensive sector facing east in its former area, and reconnoitred to the south-east, east and north-east. Air reconnaissance did not observe any appreciable changes in enemy grouping. According to W/T interception reports, 7th Motorised Brigade has fallen back to the el Huweijja area and 7th Armoured Division even further to the south-east: 1st Armoured Division has also moved its Battle H.Q. eastwards. No movements of enemy forces were observed on the fortified front in the north.

At 14.00 hours 164th Infantry Division reported that according to reports received so far, the attack on mine-box J was being made by about 20 - 30 tanks and infantry in battalion strength (Australian Division).

RESTRICTED

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RESTRICTED

- 16 -

16 enemy tanks were knocked out or destroyed by mines. 11th Company, 382nd Infantry Regiment was overrun by the enemy and suffered heavy losses in killed, wounded and missing.

In an attack on Hill 132, 15th Panzer Division knocked out 7 pilot tanks. At 14.00 hours the division was directly south of Hill 132, but was unable to continue the attack owing to lack of fuel (armoured units had only 0.3 V.S.). Strong enemy aircraft formations in waves made incessant attacks on motorised formations, particularly Africa Corps. Heavy losses were sustained in the open and to some extent stony terrain. German fighters were too weak numerically to divert the enemy formations from their objectives. Some of the escorting British fighters were shot down, but the bombers could not be approached. The ships with fuel and ammunition promised by Comando Supremo for 31 August and 1 September did not arrive. Consequently, there are only 3 V.S. of fuel for German troops between ports of discharge and the front. The supply of German units with an authorised maximum consumption of only 1 V.S. per day is assured, therefore, only until 5 September. In view of this difficult fuel situation, it was necessary to break off the attack temporarily and assume the defensive.

Field Marshal Kesselring enabled fuel to be brought up quickly from Tobruk and Mersa Matruh by making air transport available.

In general, the afternoon passed quietly on the central and northern sectors. The enemy situation opposite the front held by 20 (Motorised) Corps and 90th Light Division showed no appreciable change.

Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 75).
Situation map (Appendix 76).

2 September, 1942

Weather: fine
 slight sand drifts in afternoon
Temp.: 37°0

The enemy resumed his non-stop bombing attacks during the night. About 12 raids were made during the day between 06.30 and 18.00 hours, and these operations were continued without a break during the night from about 22.00 hours until 04.30 hours. Owing to the lack of night fighters, troops were exposed without defence to the night attacks. Apart from the considerable losses in personnel and equipment caused by these attacks, which were concentrated on Africa Corps, they were not without effect on the morale of the German and Italian troops. The night passed quietly along the whole of the fortified front in the north.

SS "Abruzzi" carrying 611 tons of fuel was attacked and damaged between Benghazi and Derna. This brought about a further deterioration in the Panzer Army fuel situation and consequently excluded any possibility of resuming the offensive for an indefinite period. The C-in-C therefore decided to withdraw troops gradually into the area east of the line el Taqa - Bab el Qattara and to go over to the defensive there, making use of the British minefields. The relief of 90th Light Division by the Littorio Division and the transfer of the former to the south-east could not be carried out as the Littorio Division was not available at the time arranged. 90th Light Division therefore remained in its positions and the Trieste Motorised Division was brought up as reinforcement. Africa Corps was ordered to withdraw 1 lorried infantry battalion, 1 artillery regiment, 1 company of anti-tank troops and 1 Regimental H.Q. from each Panzer Division to form a mobile counter-attack reserve behind

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RESTRICTED

- 17 -

fortified front in the north and to move into the area formerly held by the Panzer Divisions. The Reconnaissance Group was ordered to fall back to the line 476 right 10 - 472 right 2 to prevent the enemy moving round the right flank.

No appreciable regrouping by the enemy was observed during the morning. All quiet on 10 and 21 Corps sectors. At 15.00 hours Advanced Battle Headquarters was transferred to the area east of Garet el Yidma.

Throughout the day the enemy felt his way forward cautiously on the front held by the motorised formations. Towards 19.00 hours an attack by infantry and tanks on the 10 Corps formations detailed for the offensive (elements of the Brescia Division, of the Folgore Division and of the Ramcke Brigade) was repulsed.

Panzer Army fuel situation was such that a daily supply of only 1 V.S. could be assured until 5 September.

Reports on reasons for breaking off the operation were sent to Comando Supremo and O.K.W. (see Daily Report).

Daily report to O.H.M. (Appendix 77).
Situation map (Appendix 78).

3 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 36°C

Waves of enemy bombers continued the attack on the motorised group during the night. There was only normal artillery fire on both sides along the rest of the front.

Air reconnaissance observed about 300 tanks in 1st Armoured Division area. Dive-bombers and fighter-bombers made effective attacks on all identified tank concentrations.

Comando Supremo approved the Panzer Army decision to break off the attack.

By order of Marshal Cavallero, a staff officer from Comando Supremo delivered a supply transport schedule for the period 3 - 14 September.

In general, the day passed quietly. The regrouping of motorised formations was carried out according to plan. Enemy air attacks were less intense than of late. The enemy limited his activity to feeling his way forward from the east and south-east with tanks and armoured cars on the front held by motorised formations. Troops were subjected to frequent enemy artillery concentrations with maximum ammunition expenditure.

At 18.00 hours the 15th and 21st Panzer Division counter-attack groups arrived in the areas formerly occupied by their divisions.

Field Marshal Kesselring visited the C-in-C at Advanced Battle Headquarters and informed him that during the night 3/4 September all available aircraft, operating in waves, would be used to attack enemy forces opposite the front held by 90th Light Division and 10 Corps formations detailed for the offensive.

Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 79).
Situation maps (Appendix 80).

/4

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 18 -

4 September, 1942

Weather: fine in morning,
drifting sand in afternoon
Temp.: 34°C

The night passed quietly on the northern sector. On the southern sector night bombing attacks were less intense than of late.

A night attack by 30 tanks and infantry in battalion strength on elements of the Ramcke Brigade under command 10 Corps was repulsed towards 05.00 hours. 200 prisoners were taken in this action, including the commander of 6th New Zealand Brigade. A further attack was expected.

Tank concentrations were also observed opposite the left flank of 90th Light Division (155th Panzer Grenadier Regiment). An attack appeared to be imminent.

German aircraft carried out effective operations against enemy concentrations identified at and east of Alam Nayil. The Luftwaffe night attack on 10th Indian Division also appeared to have been effective. A sizeable concentration of units assembled for an attack southwards on the Brescia Division and Ramcke Brigade was probably dispersed.

Advanced Battle Headquarters was transferred to Djebel Kalagh at 11.00 hours.

At 11.30 hours the C-in-C ordered the Reconnaissance Group to cover the southern flank of the Panzer Army in the area of Himeimat and to the north-east against an advance by enemy tanks.

At 12.45 hours Africa Corps reported that enemy tanks and infantry were feeling their way forward from the north and east. There were heavy enemy artillery concentrations and 4 bombing attacks had been made.

At midday it was quiet along the whole of the front. Enemy forces at Alam Nayil made a further slight withdrawal. At 13.00 hours the C-in-C and Ia arrived at Army Battle Headquarters by Storch aircraft. He held a lengthy discussion on the tactical situation and the supply situation with Field Marshal Kesselring.

At 15.00 hours the Trieste Division reported that it had lost 8 killed, 55 wounded and 40 missing in a tank-supported attack on Hill 190 during the preceding night. At 16.30 hours the C-in-C and Chiefs of Staff flew back to advanced Battle Headquarters at Djebel Kalagh.

The regrouping of motorised formations was continued according to plan. German aircraft supported movements by the motorised group, attacking identified tank and vehicle concentrations.

Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 81)
Situation map (Appendix 82)

5 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 37°C

Apart from sporadic artillery harassing fire and small-scale air attacks, the night was quiet along the whole front.

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- 19 -

During the morning enemy tank-supported patrols from the east and south-east felt their way forward on the Africa Corps and Reconnaissance Group fronts, but withdrew when fired on by artillery.

Nothing to report during the afternoon.

At 19.00 hours Ramcke Brigade reported that an enemy attack on its sector broke down, the enemy falling back to his start-line.

No changes have been observed in the enemy situation.

Comando Supremo and O.K.H. were informed of general strengths of formations to be employed (for details see Daily Report).

Daily report (Appendix 83).

Situation map (Appendices 84 and 84a).

6 September, 1942

Weather: fine

Temp.: 37°C

The night was quiet along the whole front. There was average enemy artillery harassing fire during the morning.

Enemy air activity was on a smaller scale than of late.

Repeated attempts by enemy tanks and armoured cars to feel their way forward from the east and south-east were repulsed.

The regrouping of motorised formations continued according to plan.

The Trieste Motorised Division and 3 battalions of the Folgore Infantry Division were placed under command 20 Corps.

Report on successes and losses for the period 30 August - 5 September, 1942 (see Daily Report).

Report on the supply situation (see Daily Report).

Daily Report to O.K.H. (Appendix 85).

Situation map (Appendices 86 and 86a).

7 September, 1942

Weather: fine

Temp.: 35°C

All quiet during the night.

During the day enemy patrols and tanks felt their way forward on the eastern and south-eastern sectors of the Panzer Army front.

There was lively artillery activity by both sides on the southern sector.

Enemy air activity was on a smaller scale than of late.

At 10.00 hours Marshal Barbasetti arrived at Army Battle Headquarters for a conference with the C-in-C. The following points were discussed:

- a) Water supply: a water pipeline to be constructed as far as Bab el Qattara if possible,

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RESTRICTED

- 20 -

- b) The construction of a road and railway to the front by Italian civilian labour corps to save wear and tear on vehicles.
- c) The equipment of the Folgore Division with anti-tank weapons and artillery.

2 ships carrying fuel and other supplies for the Panzer Army were sunk by enemy aircraft.

1 ship carrying 800 tons of fuel arrived at Tobruk.

Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 87).
Situation map (Appendix 88).

8 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 36°C

- 1) The night and the whole of the day passed quietly. Enemy artillery activity on the southern sector increased slightly. There was slight enemy air activity.
- 2) SS "Ankara", SS "Ravello" and SS "Sestricra" carrying about 2,500 tons of fuel, 1,100 tons of ammunition and other supplies arrived in port (Tobruk and Benghazi).
- 3) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 89),
Situation map (Appendix 88).

9 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 32°C

Nothing to report.

Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 90).
Situation map (Appendix 91).

10 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) Nothing to report during the day.
- 2) At 07.30 hours the G-in-C and Ia drove to Africa Corps and then to 10 Corps, where a discussion on the following points took place with the G.O.C. 10 Corps and the commander of Ramcke Brigade (then also deputising for the wounded commander of 90th Light Division):
 - a) 10 Corps deployment on the southern sector.
 - b) Africa Corps and 20 Corps grouping.
 - c) Use of mines and consolidation of positions on southern sector.
- 3) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 92).
Situation map (Appendix 93).

/11

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 21 -

11 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) At 15.00 hours the C-in-C and Chief of Staff drove to 10 Corps Battle Headquarters, where redeployment in the southern sector was discussed with the G.O.C.s of 10 and 20 Corps and the acting commander of 90th Light Division. It was planned to use the Brescia Division, Folgore Division and elements of Ramcke Brigade on the southern sector, and to bring up Pavia Division later.

Africa Corps, 20 Corps and 90th Light Division were to be held as mixed German-Italian counter-attack groups behind the 10 and 21 Corps sectors as follows: 21st Panzer Division and Ariete Armoured Division behind 10 Corps, 15th Panzer Division and Littorio Armoured Division behind 21 Corps and 90th Light Division and Trieste Motorised Division on the coast in the area west of Sidi Abd el Rahman. The Reconnaissance Group was to be assembled in the Abu Dweis el Taqa area.
- 3) C-in-C's opinion on signal from the German General in Rome regarding the Panzer Army supply situation (Appendix 94).
- 4) Report to O.K.W. and O.K.H. on the situation of Panzer Army (Appendix 95).
- 5) Correspondence with the German General in Rome and Comando Supremo regarding the readiness of Italian troops captured by the British to give information (Appendix 96).
- 6) Personnel losses sustained by German and Italian formations during the period 25 June to 5 September (Appendix 97).
- 7) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 98).
Situation map (Appendix 99).

12 September, 1942

Weather: slightly cloudy
Temp.: 32°C.

Nothing to report during the day.

Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 100).
Situation map (Appendix 101).

13 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 30°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) The C-in-C and acting G.O.C. Africa Corps inspected the terrain of the new area to be occupied by 15th Panzer Division and Littorio Armoured Division behind 21 Corps front.
- 3) The Quartermaster General reported on the somewhat improved supply situation (see daily report).
- 4) Order to 10 Corps, 20 Corps, 90th Light Division and Ramcke Brigade regarding reorganisation in the southern sector (Appendix 101a).

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RESTRICTED

- 22 -

- 5) 580th Reconnaissance Unit arrived in the area 13 km. east of el Daba as Army reserve.
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 102).
Situation map (Appendix 101).

14 September, 1942

Weather: fine.
Temp.: 31°C

At 02.30 hours Rear Army reported that the enemy had landed at Tobruk following heavy air attacks lasting about 7 hours. Exact details regarding the type of landing and the strength of the enemy force were still unknown. An enemy attempt to take possession of the fortress of Tobruk had to be taken into account. Army H.Q. therefore assembled fast-moving units to be employed at Tobruk if required.

The following orders were issued:

- 1) 580th Reconnaissance Unit to move to Mersa Matruh immediately.
- 2) 3rd Reconnaissance Unit to stand by.
- 3) 1 Panzer Grenadier battalion and 1 light artillery regiment of Battle Group Everth (German Africa Corps) to standby.

During the night there was heavy enemy artillery fire along the whole of the fortified front in the north.

At 08.40 hours an order regarding the defence of Tobruk was sent to Rear Army. In the morning report (Appendix 103) Comando Supermo was requested to authorise the subordination to Panzer Army of all Italian troops in and to the east of the Tobruk area.

At 08.30 hours Special Formation 288 was ordered to move to the area 6 km. east of el Daba.

At 10.30 hours Battle Group Everth was disbanded and units returned to Corps. Units of the battle group which had been alerted had already been ordered to stand down at 07.00 hours. At 11.00 hours Panzer Army Headquarters received a report from Rear Army that the British landing attempt was considered to be frustrated at about 09.00 hours. So far 75 prisoners had been taken by German forces and 2 warships, apparently destroyers, had been sunk for certain by A.A. artillery. Axis losses were slight. For details of defensive measures taken against the British attempt to land at Tobruk see Rear Army battle report (Appendix 104). During the afternoon elements of the 90th Light Division and 15th Panzer Division moved into the new areas as ordered.

580th Reconnaissance Unit reached Mersa Matruh towards evening and established contact with Pavia Division. Special Formation 288 had also moved into the area ordered.

The following was the first full report to be received on the successful defensive measures against the British attempt to land at Tobruk:

The British forces which landed at Tobruk on the morning of 14 September were destroyed or taken prisoner at the cost of slight German losses. In this action over 300 prisoners were taken and several landing craft, as well as weapons and equipment, were captured.

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RESTRICTED

- 23 -

The enemy landing attempt was defeated by German troops of Rear Army and Italian formations acting in cooperation with the Navy and German A.A. artillery. The latter played particularly distinguished role in the action. A.A. and coastal artillery sank 3 destroyers and 2 escort vessels or landing craft off Tobruk. According to captured documents, the enemy's objective was to destroy harbour installations and sink ships in the port. The following losses were inflicted on warships moving eastwards from Tobruk by German and Italian aircraft:

1 cruiser (5 - 6,000 tons), 1 destroyer and 2 escort vessels sunk,
1 light cruiser (4,000 tons) and 1 destroyer badly damaged and
3 - 4 destroyers damaged by bomb hits.

Italian troops wiped out enemy sabotage parties at Benghazi and Barce. A number of prisoners were taken and several vehicles and small trucks destroyed.

Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 105).
Situation map (Appendix 106).

15 September, 1942

Weather: cloudy
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) The night passed quietly.
- 2) At 07.30 hours the C-in-C and Chief of Staff flew to Tobruk, where a discussion took place with Field Marshal Kesselring, General Barbasetti, Major General Deindl and the Quartermaster General:
 - a) Major General Deindl and Vice Admiral Lombardi reported on defensive measures against the British attempt to land on 14 September.

The C-in-C expressed due recognition to the successful defence.

To counter any further landing attempt, the unified employment of all troops in Tobruk and of rear units would be necessary. It was decided that for this purpose all German units would be grouped under the command of Major General Deindl (O.C. Army I. of C Area).

Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya would continue to be responsible for Cyrenaica and Marmarica.

The Italian Commandant would be responsible and issue orders for the overall defence of Tobruk. In the event of an enemy landing, Major General Deindl would be tactically subordinate to him. Army was informed of the defence measures taken through Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya and was to be notified immediately in the event of an enemy landing attempt. The Commander Rear Army made the same report to Army direct.

The C-in-C again stressed the danger of an enemy airborne landing in Tobruk.

- b) The former Libya - Egypt frontier was decided upon as the western limit of the area under the command of Army, which therefore also assumed responsibility for the defence of Sollum.

The number of prisoners taken in the defensive action against the attempted British landing has increased to 580.

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RESTRICTED

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- 24 -

- 3) 3rd Reconnaissance Unit and Reconnaissance Unit Nizza were ordered to move to Siwa on 16 September (Appendix 107).
- 4) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 108).
Situation map (Appendix 106).

Seen at Army Battle Headquarters
on 18 September, 1942 by the C-in-C
ROMMEL
Field Marshal

16 September, 1942

Weather: cloudy
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
The main force of Battle Group Pfeiffer (21st Panzer Division), which was withdrawn during the night, arrived in the divisional area.
- 2) Field Marshal Kesselring arrived at Army Battle Headquarters and discussed the situation in general and the supply situation in particular with the C-in-C. Field Marshal Kesselring reported that in future night fighters would operate from Crete to increase convoy protection.
- 3) German aircraft were sent out to attack 200 enemy small trucks observed south of Agedabia. Measures for the defence of Benghazi were taken by Rear Army and Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya.
- 4) Battle Group Headquarters was placed under command 33rd Reconnaissance Unit and transferred to el Taqa.
- 5) 33rd and 200th Field Reinforcement Battalions and 90th Light Division draft conducting battalion (Gruppe Hain) were ordered to garrison and defend Sollum (Appendix 109).
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 110).
Situation map (Appendix 111).

17 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) A report from Rear Army that Tobruk had been attacked again during the night 16/17 September and that British troops had landed proved to be incorrect. Apart from this, the night passed quietly.
- 2) According to an Italian report, British forces attacked Gialo Oasis during the afternoon. An enemy occupation of this place had to be taken into account. C-in-C South and Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya were requested to employ all available aircraft to destroy the enemy force in the Gialo area.
- 3) In view of the changed situation at Gialo, 3rd Reconnaissance Unit was ordered to send out reconnaissance in the direction of Kufra. 3rd Reconnaissance Unit arrived at Siwa during the afternoon.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 25 -

- 4) Battle Group Hain was ordered to defend the Sollum - Sidi Barrani sector (Appendix 112). The Italian garrison in Sidi Barrani was placed under command Battle Group Hain.
- 5) The Pavia Division was ordered to defend the Mersa Matruh sector (Appendix 113).
- 6) 50 German and 50 Italian guard dogs with keepers were requested to patrol the extensive minefields beyond the front.
- 7) O.K.H. ordered that the method of constructing "mine-boxes" employed in the Alamein position be used in the Russian theatre of operations (O.K.H. Operations Section Order General of Engineers and Fortification Troops No. 987/42 (Secret) of 9 September, 1942).
- 8) Major General Ramcke, hitherto acting commander of 90th Light Division in place of the wounded Major General Kleemann, relinquished command of the division after its withdrawal and transfer to the new area east and west of el Daba. Colonel Schulte-Heuthaus was appointed commander of the division.
- 9) General von Thoma took over command of Africa Corps in place of the wounded General Nehring.
- 10) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 114).
Situation map (Appendix 115).

18 September, 1942

Weather: cloudy
Temp.: 32°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) At 08.00 hours G.O.C. 21 Corps reported at Army Battle Headquarters and was informed by C-in-C of Army plans for the further consolidation of positions and the future deployment in depth of formations in the main defence zone.
- 3) According to an Italian report, Gialo Oasis is in Axis hands. Enemy vehicles observed at Gialo were attacked by German and Italian bombers.
- 4) During the day enemy tanks and armoured cars felt their way forward towards Axis positions on the southern sector.
- 5) After the arrival of Lt. General von Thoma, the following reorganisation took place:

Colonel Lungerhausen resumed command of 164th Light Division,
Major General von Værst resumed command of 15th Panzer Division and
Major General von Randow assumed command of 21st Panzer Division.

- 6) The regrouping of Panzer Army was carried out as follows:
 - a) Southern sector from Qaret el Himeimat to Deir Umm Khawabir:
10 Corps with Folgore Infantry Division, Trieste Motorised Division and half of Ramcke Brigade. In addition, one reinforced German Reconnaissance Unit to protect the southern flank.
 - b) Northern sector from Deir Umm Khawabir to the coast:
21 Corps with Bologna and Trento Infantry Divisions, 164th Light Division and half of Ramcke Brigade.

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- 26 -

- c) In support of the front line, which was only lightly manned owing to low battle strengths, and for mobile defence: 21st Panzer Division and Ariete Armoured Division behind the northern sector of 10 Corps. 15th Panzer Division and Littorio Armoured Division behind the northern sector of 21 Corps. These formations, in 3 mixed battle groups, were deployed so that divisional artillery defensive fire could be put down in front of 10 and 21 Corps main defence line.
 - d) German Army Artillery was deployed in several groups behind the southern and northern sectors.
 - e) The Young Fascist Division and a German and an Italian reconnaissance unit in Siwa.
 - f) Army reserves, also acting as coastal defence forces: 90th Light Division and Special Formation 288 in the area east and west of el Daba, Pavia Division and a German reconnaissance unit in the Mersa Matruh area; parent units of first line reinforcement battalions in the Sollum area.
- 7) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 116).
Situation map (Appendix 117).

19 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) At 09.30 hours the C-in-C and Chief of Staff flew to Fuka for a discussion with Marshal Cavallero. The Quartermaster General Panzer Army was also present and the following points were raised:
 - a) General tactical and strategic situation.
 - b) Situation at Gialo and Siwa.
 - c) Coastal defence up to and including Sollum taken over by Panzer Army.
 - d) Supply situation. Rate of German supply still very low and consequently stocks cannot be built up.
 - e) Intended employment of Pavia Division.
 - f) What is Pistoia Division doing in Africa? Intended employment of division?
 - g) Ruinous decrease in battle strengths of the Italian Corps owing to return to Italy of all troops with more than 2 years service in Africa before arrival of replacements.
 - h) Construction of railway to front. Transportation of 6 - 7,000 rails from Italy.
 - i) Reports by British prisoners regarding readiness of Italian soldiers to supply information.

Marshal Cavallero noted the requests and promised to make every effort to fulfil them.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 27 -

- 3) During this period 500 Italian and 270 German troops were being flown to Africa daily. After transporting the remaining 1,200 Italians and the remainder of Ramcke Brigade, 500 German replacements were to be flown over daily.
- 4) 10 Corps took over the southern sector of the front. 33rd Reconnaissance Unit and the subordinated Battle Group Headquarters were instructed to cooperate with 10 Corps. Ariete and Littorio Armoured Divisions of 20 Corps arrived in the new areas. Trieste Motorised Division remained temporarily under command 10 Corps.
- 5) SS "Carbonia" carrying 320 tons of fuel for Panzer Army was sunk by torpedo-bombers on 19 September.
- 6) General Stumme arrived at Panzer Army.
- 7) Report on the supply situation:
 - a) The ammunition situation improved slightly after anti-tank gun ammunition had been brought up.
 - b) Adequate fuel in Africa for 13 days (continuous consumption).
 - c) Food situation difficult owing to low rate of supply.

There was no appreciable improvement in the situation as a whole owing to the inadequate rate of supply. Only 1 ship and 2 submarines carrying supplies arrived in Africa during the period from 8 to 18 September. 7,106 tons of supplies, i.e. 24% of Panzer Army's monthly requirements, arrived during the period from 1 to 18 September.

- 8) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 119).
Situation map (Appendix 120).

20 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 34°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) Nothing to report during the day.
- 3) Army Headquarters requested O.K.H. permission to establish the following Army Engineer units:
H.Q. Motorised Engineer Regiment with signals and D.R. platoons.
1st and 2nd Motorised Engineer Battalions Africa each with 2 companies (to be formed from 3 companies of 33rd, 200th, 220th and 900th Engineer Battalions), Army Engineer Park Company Africa.
- 4) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 121).

21 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) At 07.30 hours C-in-C and Chief of Staff flew to Siwa to inspect the German - Italian defence force. C-in-C was enthusiastically received by the Arab population, and he gave presents (10,000 Lire and tea) to the chief of Siwa.

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RESTRICTED

- 28. -

- 3) Panzer Army Headquarters requested O.K.H. to send the anti-tank guns still required plus a 10% material reserve (Appendix 122).
- 4) Corps Headquarters etc. were instructed to submit suggestions for front line deployment in depth, bearing in mind the following points:
 - a) Battle outposts (group strong-points) to a depth of about 500 - 1,000 metres to cover advanced minefields (former main defence line).
 - b) An area 1 km in depth between battle outposts and the main defence zone to be left unoccupied.
 - c) The main defence line to be moved to the rear half of the prohibited areas ("Devils Gardens") - (for details see Appendix 123).
- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 124).

22 September, 1942

Weather: cloudy
Temp.: 32°C.

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) At 09.00 hours the C-in-C drove to an engineer demonstration by 90th Light Division, which was also seen by the following officers: G.O.C.s Africa Corps, 10, 20 and 21 Corps and the commanders of 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions, 90th and 164th Light Divisions, the Ariete, Littorio and Trento Divisions and Ramcke Brigade. Afterwards the C-in-C held a discussion on the following subjects with the G.O.C's and Divisional Commanders present at the demonstration:
 - a) The general situation.
 - b) Deployment of the front in depth (see War Diary entry of 21 September, para.4).
 - c) The necessity of intensive training for the troops.
 - d) The transfer of command of Panzer Army to General Stumme.
- 3) At 14.00 hours the C-in-C left for Derna to fly on from there to Italy on 23 September.
- 4) General Stumme took over command of Panzer Army in place of the C-in-C.
- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 125).

23 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 34°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) In heavy air attacks on Benghazi on 22 September the SS "Apuania" was destroyed and SS "Ravello", "Pertusola" and "Tripolino" and a torpedo boat were damaged. Harbour installations were slightly damaged.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 29 -

- 3) O.K.H. approved the Panzer Army request to rename Artillery Commander 104 Senior Artillery Commander Africa and to reform Army and Army Coastal Artillery into 2 regiments (1st and 2nd Artillery Regiments Africa) - (Appendix 125a).
- 4) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 126).

24 September, 1942

Weather: Sandstorm
Temp.: 34°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) Report to O.K.H. on the supply situation:

a) Fuel

9.5 V.S. including the 1,800 tons brought into Tobruk by the tanker "Rondine" on 24 September.

b) Ammunition

3.5 - 3.8 issues excluding ammunition required (5 cm anti-tank, 17 cm field gun and 21 cm mortar).

c) Food

25 daily issues. Owing to insufficient supplies of flour and supplementary rations, it will be necessary to maintain the cut in the daily bread issue to 375 grammes and the lack of variety of food for troops must be expected to continue.

The supply situation as a whole was slightly improved by the employment of coastal vessels to move forward supplies from Tripoli. The movement of supplies from Europe by sea was still inadequate. The ports of Tobruk and Benghazi were worked to only half their capacity.

- 3) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 127).

25 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 30°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) Nothing to report during the day.
- 3) Army Headquarters order on general directions for coastal defence against enemy landing attempts issued to relevant authorities (Appendix 128).
- 4) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 129).
Situation map (Appendix 129a).

/26

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 30 -

26 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 31.5°C

- 1) Heavy enemy artillery harassing fire on the northern sector during the night 25/26 September.
- 2) Nothing to report during the day.
- 3) O.K.W. signal regarding:
 - a) The bringing up and subordination of 47th Reinforced Infantry Regiment.
 - b) The movement to Africa of Personnel replacements.
(Chefsache No. 115/42 Secret - Appendix 130).
- 4) Signal from Field Marshal Rommel regarding the following agreements made with Marshal Cavallero on 23 September (Appendix 130a);
 - a) Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya to make 3,000 men available immediately for the construction of a road to the front.
 - b) Italy to deliver 7,000 tons of railway lines and sleepers. To be transported as additional load.
 - c) Giarabub to come under command Panzer Army immediately.
 - d) An additional battalion to be flown to the Young Fascist Division, which will also guard the Qara Oasis.
 - e) The Italian Shipping Division in the Aegean will be employed to improve convoy movements between Crete and Tobruk.
 - f) Comando Supremo has made arrangements for the formation of mobile groups in the area Benghazi - Agedabia - Gialo.
 - g) C-in-C South to transfer one Ju.88 bomber Gruppe to Agedabia to operate against the Kufra supply dump.
 - h) Proposals for an advance by Italian formations to capture the Kufra supply dump and for the mining of watering points.
 - i) C-in-C South promised to fly over 20 - 25,000 men every month following the settlement of the fuel situation.
- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 131).

27 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 33°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.
- 2) Nothing to report during the day.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 31 -

- 3) SS "Menes" carrying vehicles for 164th Light Division and Ramcke Brigade and about 350 tons of ammunition for Panzer Army arrived at Tobruk.
- 4) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 132).

28 September, 1942

Weather: Sandstorm in morning,
fine in afternoon
Temp.: 35°C

- 1) Heavy artillery harassing fire on the northern sector during the night 28/29 September.
- 2) The garrison at Giarabub Oasis (1 Italian Battalion with 2 light batteries) was placed under command Panzer Army on 28 September but remained subordinate to the commander of the Young Fascist Division in Siwa.
- 3) Quartermaster General was ordered to have the necessary supplies available for issue for the following eventualities (Appendix 132a).
 - a) A defensive battle on the El Alamein position.
 - b) Defensive measures against enemy landing attempts in some strength in the area Sollum - Tobruk - Benghazi.
 - c) Defensive measures against an attempt at encirclement by strong enemy forces moving approximately through Kufra - Siwa in the direction of Mersa Matruh.
- 4) In an enemy air attack on Benghazi harbour on 27 September, one ship was damaged and hits were scored on harbour installations.
- 5) On 27 September SS "Barbaro" carrying about 500 tons of ammunition as well as food, tanks, anti-tank guns (S.P.) and a large number of vehicles was sunk by submarines. In addition, SS "Unione" was damaged, and is to be towed into Benghazi.
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 133).

29 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 37.5°C

- 1) All quiet during the night and day.
- 2) At 09.00 hours C-in-C South, Field Marshal Kesselring, arrived at Army Battle Headquarters for a discussion. The following points were raised:
 - a) The general situation.
 - b) The supply situation.
 - c) Use of aircraft by C-in-C South to fly over men after settlement of the fuel question.
 - d) C-in-C south was not able to provide 5 cm anti-tank guns for Ramcke Brigade. C-in-C South reported that the Italian Navy would transfer 1 battleship, 5 heavy cruisers and 9 destroyers to Crete to counter any possible operations by the British Alexandria Squadron.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 32 -

- 3) Order for the reorganisation of the fortified front in the north with sketch map of the positions of battle outposts and main defence line and the allotment of battalion sectors to 10 and 21 Corps, 164th Light Division and Ramcke Brigade (copy for information to Senior Artillery Commander Africa and Commander Army Engineers). Order to be carried out by 20 October, 1942 at the latest (Appendix 134).
- 4) In order No. 4232/42 (Secret) of 21 September 1942 O.K.H. General Staff, Army - Organisation Department rejected the Panzer Army Ia request contained in No. 1728/42 (Secret) of 25 August 1942 for the formation of a Reconnaissance Brigade and of patrol companies within 90th and 164th Light Divisions and 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions (Appendix 135).
- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 136).

30 September, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 30.5°C

- 1) After a heavy artillery bombardment the enemy launched an attack from the north and east in the Deir el Munassib area on elements of 9th Battalion of the Folgore Division and of Huebner Battalion of Ramcke Brigade early in the morning of 30 September. The attacking force was estimated at 2 battalions with about 40 tanks. At first it was not clear whether this was only a local reconnaissance raid in strength or the preliminary move to an offensive. Owing to ground mist, air reconnaissance could not at first provide any information. Towards midday it was known that an offensive was no longer to be expected. 33rd Reconnaissance Unit reported isolated groups of enemy vehicles with tanks approaching from the east and moving in the direction of Deir el Munassib. The enemy attack was repulsed, his only success being when small groups infiltrated into the former enemy minefields and established a front facing west against Huebner Battalion and south against 9th Battalion (Folgore) in strength of 2 - 3 companies. Army Headquarters intended to force the enemy to give up the ground he had won by continuous artillery and air bombardment. In the action to repulse the attack, 9th Battalion of Folgore Division took over 200 prisoners, including a Staff officer of the British 44th Division. In addition, a number of enemy tanks and vehicles were destroyed. Throughout the day the enemy force north of Deir el Munassib and vehicle concentrations north and east of the German minefields were attacked by fighter-bombers and dive-bombers. As a further enemy attack was expected during the night or on the morning of 1 October, 21st Panzer Division Battle Group (Battle Group Mueller) was ordered to stand by. In the event of an enemy attack and a penetration being made, this force was to throw the enemy back in a counter-attack and occupy the former front line. No changes were observed in the enemy situation in the evening. The day passed quietly along the rest of the front.
- 2) The acting C-in-C, General Stumme, with Ia and Quartermaster General Panzer Army flew to Tobruk at 07.30 hours to inspect the Army dump and work in the port. A discussion with Marshal Barbasetti took place afterwards. The following points were raised:
 - a) Marshal Cavallero promised Field Marshal Rommel through Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya 3,000 workmen for the construction of a road to the front. Marshal Barbasetti stated that he could provide only 400 men without vehicles for this work.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 33 -

- b) Replying to a question when the battalion to be brought over by air for the Young Fascist Division would arrive, Marshal Barbasetti asserted that it was expected very shortly.
 - c) In a signal of 26 September, Field Marshal Rommel stated that it was intended to use Italian forces to capture or destroy the supply dump at Kufra. In reply to a question on this subject, Marshal Barbasetti stated that Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya did not intend to use fast-moving ground formations for this operation, but to limit itself to air attacks on Kufra. C-in-C pointed out that in his opinion only an attack by ground forces could stop enemy raids on Cyrenaica from the Kufra area for any length of time. Panzer Army forces could not be released for this purpose.
 - d) Marshal Barbasetti promised that the strength of the Pavia Division would be brought up to 4 battalions and 6 batteries by 10 October. After this had been done, it was planned to exchange the Pavia Division for the Trieste Division.
 - e) Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya planned to bring up the strength of 20 Corps Reconnaissance Unit to 80 armoured cars by re-allocating those which arrived on supply routes. An S.P. battery would be sent to the Reconnaissance Unit and the Corps would shortly receive Engineer replacements. Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya had no vehicle replacements available and newly-arrived vehicles from Italy would be sent to the Corps.
 - f) 1st Company of 18th Carabinieri was to remain in the Sollum area and would not be relieved until a replacement company was moved up.
 - g) Marshal Barbasetti promised to find out when and to what extent it would be possible to make available an anti-tank gun battery and paratroop equipment for 2 battalions of the Folgore Division.
 - h) 2 batteries of 105 mm guns would be allocated after the arrival of Folgore Division artillery.
 - i) Marshal Barbasetti stated that harbour installations at Benghazi were not so badly damaged in the air attack of 22 September as had at first been thought. The capacity of the port was reduced only by 1,000 tons and it can still handle 2,000 tons daily.
 - j) General Stumme requested Marshal Barbasetti to make accommodation with 250 beds available for the Panzer Army in Cirene. The Marshal promised to do this.
- 3) The astronomical navigation and map reading course conducted by Panzer Army H.Q. Ia/Survey Officer from 16 to 30 September has ended. A further course for artillery survey troops and artillery director NCOs has been arranged for the period 6 to 15 October.
- 4) Captain Marseille, the most successful fighter pilot in North Africa, credited with 158 victories, holder of the Knights Cross to the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds and the Gold Medal for Valour, baled out over the German front line as a result of damage to his aircraft and fell to his death when his parachute failed to open. Daily order of Panzer Army Headquarters. (Appendix 137).

/5)

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 34 -

- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 138).

Situation map (Appendix 139).

Seen at Army Battle Headquarters
on 5 October, 1942
The Acting Commander-in-Chief
Stumme
General

1 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 31.5°C

- 1) During the night there was artillery harassing fire by both sides in the Deir el Munassib sector. Along the rest of the front it was quiet during the night. Ground and air reconnaissance showed no apparent indication of a further enemy attack in the Deir el Munassib sector. No movements by tanks, vehicles or reinforcements were observed. Artillery continued to bombard the enemy during the morning. C-in-C ordered the Senior Artillery Commander to form an artillery group comprising Army Artillery and 10 Corps Artillery (10 batteries) to cooperate with the Luftwaffe (dive-bombers) in forcing back the enemy force in front of the mine-belt east of Munassib. The air attack planned for 17.00 hours did not materialise as 40 British fighters forced the dive-bomber formation to turn back and dump their bombs over the German front line. This did not result in any German losses. The enemy force at Deir el Munassib continued to dig in. As the area held by the enemy in no way compromised our ability to hold the Deir el Munassib sector, no counter-attack was made to retake it. Nothing to report along the rest of the front during the day.
- 2) 3rd Reconnaissance Unit and Reconnaissance Unit 'Nizza' were placed under operational command of the Young Fascist Division in Siwa.
- 3) Special Formation 238 was transferred to the area 6 km north-east of Fuka for coastal defence duties.
- 4) An account of the Panzer Army supply situation was given in the daily report to O.K.H. According to this, approximately 16,200 tons of supplies were sent to Panzer Army during the month of September, i.e. 54% of the total amount requested.
 - a) Fuel: Supply approximately 11,200 tons. Consumption about 8,000 tons. Fuel available, including unused stocks: 7,400 tons = 10.5 V.S. = fuel for about 21 days (supply runs etc.).
 - b) Ammunition: Supply about 2,550 tons. Expenditure about 1,300 tons. Slight improvement owing to increased supply and strict economy. Stocks in Africa total about 3½ issues not including types of ammunition still required (5 cm anti-tank gun 1.5 issues, 5 cm tank gun 1 issue, 7.5 cm tank gun 1.3 issues, 7.62 cm anti-tank gun (Russian) 2 issues, heavy field howitzer 13 1.8 issues).
 - c) Spare Parts Situation:
 - aa) Adequate spare parts and engines for tanks.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 35 -

- bb) Lack of interchangeable engines for armoured cars.
- cc) Insufficient spare parts for wheeled vehicles and half-tracks.
- dd) Tyre situation extremely difficult following sinking of ship carrying about 1,000 tyres.
- d) Food: Supply about 1,800 tons. Consumption about 5,250 tons. Supply extremely inadequate. Fresh vegetables, fruit, flour, supper rations and drink issues particularly short. Severe cuts were necessary.
- c) The following supplies were lost when ships were sunk:

Fuel	approx.	1,600 tons
Ammunition	"	1,000 tons
Food	"	800 tons
Misc.	"	250 tons
Total		3,650 tons

- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 140).

2 October, 1942

Weather: fine

Temp.: 30°C

- 1) All quiet during the night.

According to captured documents 1st Greek Brigade is located behind the central sector, but has not yet been sent into the line. During the day artillery and aircraft operated effectively against the enemy force at Deir el Munassib. Apart from this the front was quiet during the day.

- 2) Order regarding the training of battery commanders (Appendix 141).

Africa Corps Headquarters was made responsible for conducting the courses (duration 3 weeks).

Purpose of the courses:

Training of battery commander candidates for Divisional and Army Artillery.

In addition, it is intended to carry out courses for company commanders as from the middle of November under the direction of 90th Light Division.

- 3) C-in-C issued an order to all Italian and German Headquarters regarding artillery and infantry fire discipline for presumed and actual enemy attacks (Appendix 142).
- 4) O.K.H. was requested to send 36 super-heavy projectors (mortars) to Panzer Army (Appendix 143).
- 5) Order regarding drawing up of strength returns (Appendix 144).
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 145).

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 36 -

4 October, 1942

Weather: Stormy, cloudy
Temp.: 31°C.

- 1) All quiet during the night. Nothing to report during the day. Dive-bombers and fighter-bombers could not take off owing to the soft condition of ground on airfields. Air reconnaissance reported a great increase in the number of tented camps between Wadi Natrun and Cairo.
- 2) Major-General Gause, Chief of Staff Panzer Army, was sent to Germany on convalescent leave until 20 November. His duties were taken over by Colonel Westphal.
- 3) Panzer Army Headquarters requested O.K.H. to send over reinforced 47th Infantry Regiment by the beginning of November (see Anlage 148). In addition, it was requested that replacements for 47th Infantry Regiment's deficiencies in personnel, material and vehicles be sent up by the beginning of November (Appendix 149).
- 4) Towards 09.00 hours the C-in-C flew to Mersa Matruh for a discussion with the Pavia Division Commander and to check defence measures and installations. He gave orders for the ring of minefields to be left around Mersa Matruh. In view of a report by the commander of the Pavia Infantry Division, Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya was requested to state whether the division's deficiencies of 1½ infantry battalions, 6 batteries, half of the anti-tank force and most of the signals equipment would be sent up by 10 October so that the Trieste Division could then be relieved. (Appendix 150). Owing to the severe shortage of food, Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya was requested to provide escorts for the SS "Anna Maria", which was soon to leave Benghazi for Tobruk, and for the ships in Tripoli carrying food and ammunition on the routes to Benghazi and Tobruk (Appendix 150).
- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 151).

5 October, 1942

Weather: cloudy, occasional
rainstorms
Temp.: 28°C

- 1) Nothing to report during the night. All quiet during the day along the whole front.
- 2) According to a prisoner's statement, the British 51st Division relieved the 9th Australian Division on the northern sector two days ago.
- 3) As a result of heavy falls of rain the Tobruk - Mersa Matruh railway line was cut at several places for about 3 days and the water pipe-line to El Daba put out of action for 3 weeks by the destruction of the pumping station.
- 4) Enemy reconnaissance with tanks and armoured cars was intensified along the front. German and Italian tanks were therefore also ordered to carry out battle reconnaissance. Africa Corps and 20 Corps were made responsible for battle reconnaissance by armoured patrols in the 10 and 21 Corps sectors. Patrols to consist of German and Italian tanks. (for similar order to H.Q.'s see Appendix 152).

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RESTRICTED

- 37 -

- 5) Owing to the lack of Italian escorts for shipping along the North African coast, several vessels with large cargoes of food were held up in Tripoli. This resulted in a severe shortage of food at Panzer Army and Panzer Army Headquarters therefore requested the C-in-C German Naval Headquarters Italy, Admiral Weichold, to employ German mine-sweepers and E-boats for escort duties on the North African coast as a temporary measure (Appendix 153).
- 6) During the period 20 September - 1 October personnel replacements totalling 12 officers and 1,270 NCOs and men were flown over, i.e. a daily average of 1 officer and 106 NCOs and men. This low number hardly compensated for the increased number of sick cases resulting from the bad condition of health at that time. The following requests were made to the C-in-C South in view of the continued daily decrease in the already extremely low battle strength:
 - a) to fly over the 10th, 11th and 12th first line reinforcement battalions standing by in Greece as quickly as possible,
 - b) to achieve a monthly air transport quota of personnel replacements totalling 9,000 men (not including men returning from leave).
 - c) to fly over in addition commodities in short supply, at that time fat, (Appendix 154).
- 7) Orders issued by the C-in-C:
 - a) Enemy patrols will be allowed to approach as close as possible and will then be cut-off and taken prisoner or destroyed by fire.
 - b) Intensified ground reconnaissance will be carried out in all sectors in order to identify enemy units at the front. (Appendix 155).
- 8) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 156).

6 October, 1942

Weather: cloudy, rainstorms
Temp.: 30°

- 1) On the evening of 5 October and during the night 5/6 October enemy reconnaissance raids, some of them in company strength, at Ruweisat and Deir Umm Khawabir were repulsed with heavy enemy losses. A number of prisoners were taken. German losses were slight.
During the day intensified enemy air operations with a large number of fighter and bomber attacks were carried out along the whole of the front.
7th Indian Infantry Briagde - probably under command 5th Indian Division - was again identified at Ruweisat ridge.
- 2) At 18.00 hours air reconnaissance reported 350 vehicles, including about 50 tanks, moving westwards on the coastal road, the head of the column being at Hamman.
- 3) Supply situation:
 - a) Fuel:
Total stocks in Africa 8.5 V.S., i.e. fuel for 17 days (supply runs etc.)

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RESTRICTED

- 38 -

b) Ammunition:

Total stocks in Africa 3.5 issues, not including ammunition still required (5 cm anti-tank gun 1.5 issues, 5 cm tank gun 1 issue, 7.5 cm tank gun 1.3 issues, 7.62 cm anti-tank gun (Russian) 2 issues, heavy field howitzer 13 1.8 issues).

c) Food:

Extremely bad. Food situation very difficult owing to the lack of a number of particularly important basic types. No fat whatsoever available. Flour supplies will last for another 11 days with the reduced bread ration. Vegetables, fruit - lemons in particular - and fruit jam etc. not available at all or in very short supply. The consequences are under-nourishment, greatly reduced efficiency and a high rate of sickness (see daily report).

- 4) On 4 October Italian Navy Headquarters closed Tobruk harbour to all in-coming and out-going ships. Comando Supremo was requested to remove this restriction immediately (see daily report).
- 5) The reorganisation of Army artillery was carried out in accordance with O.K.H. General Staff, Army - Organisation Department (I) order No. 4234/42 (Secret) of 13 September, 1942. Regiments and batteries assumed the new designations as from 6 October.
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 157).

7 October, 1942

Weather: windy, some cloud
Temp.: 25°C

- 1) Nothing to report during the night. During the day the enemy carried out a large number of fighter-bomber and bomber attacks over the front. Apart from this the front was quiet. Air reconnaissance produced no report on the whereabouts of the 300 vehicles and 50 tanks reported moving westwards along the coastal road at 18.00 hours on 6 October.
- 2) Enemy situation: 8th Army had 13 and 30 Corps at the front with 10 Corps probably in the rear area. In all, these Corps disposed of the following formations:

3 armoured divisions,
1 Army armoured brigade,
8 infantry divisions and
4 independent brigades.

There was no definite information available on first line units still in the Delta area and these were estimated at:

1 armoured division and
2 infantry divisions.

It was assumed that all the divisions at the front had meanwhile been brought up to full strength with personnel and material replacements. The number of tanks was estimated at 800 - 900. The British 8th Army has therefore at least regained, if not surpassed, the strength it had at its disposal before the Axis offensive in May.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 39 -

The bringing up of infantry and tank reinforcements, the increasing activity by the R.A.F., the moving forward of supply dumps and the establishment of an advanced Army Battle Headquarters (in the area 20 km south-west of Hamman) indicated that a British offensive would soon be launched. Agents reports to this effect received by Army Headquarters were therefore confirmed to a certain extent.

- 3) The C-in-C and acting Chief of Staff drove to 21st Panzer Division, where a discussion took place with the G.O.C. Africa Corps and 10 Corps and the commander of Ramcke Brigade. The following points were raised:
 - a) The necessity of intensified reconnaissance by patrols and scouting raids with tanks.
 - b) Advanced strong-points and battle outposts to be further consolidated and fortified as a defensive measure against enemy reconnaissance operations. Area of main effort on 10 Corps sector.
 - c) Probable direction of an enemy offensive:
 - aa) along the coastal road,
 - bb) in the large new mine-belt (Deir el Qatani),
 - cc) at and to the south of Deir el Munassib,
 - dd) on the southern flank (unlikely).

Fluid command, manoeuvrable and versatile artillery and good communications form the basis of a successful defence.

- d) Reorganisation of Panzer Army (deployment in depth of front-line Infantry Corps) to be carried out in spite of the possibility of an imminent enemy offensive.
 - e) G.O.C. 10 Corps stated that the gap between Battle Group Huebner (Ramcke Brigade) and the northern flank of the Folgore Division at Deir el Munassib must be closed.
- 4) The restriction on the use of Tobruk harbour was lifted on the morning of 7 October. This measure was taken following mine-laying at the harbour entrance by British bombers and submarines. It was necessary to clear a channel.
- 5) Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya reported that the escort vessels requested by Panzer Army Headquarters had arrived and the food-ships in Benghazi would leave immediately (Appendix 158).
- 6) In view of the Panzer Army Headquarters daily report of 6 October, Quartermaster General in Rome requested that all shipping space be used for supplies and that vehicles be carried as deck cargo only. In the opinion of the Q.M.G. in Rome, this was the only way of alleviating the critical supply situation. However, this would mean virtually discontinuing transportation of vehicles as only a few could be carried on deck at any given time.

Panzer Army Headquarters expressed its opinion of this (Appendix 159) and again pointed out that as had already been reported many times, approximately 30,000 tons of supplies (including 9,000 tons of ammunition, 12,000 tons of fuel and 6,000 tons of food) would have to be sent every month if the North Africa theatre of operations were to be successfully maintained. This demand must

RESTRICTED

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RESTRICTED

- 40 -

not be refused. The fuel situation was very strained, ammunition stocks were completely inadequate and the food situation had reached an unprecedented low level. The vehicle and spare parts situation, including tyres, was also very alarming. Panzer Army demands were once again set down in detail:

- a) Approximately 30,000 tons of supplies to be sent over monthly (including 12,000 tons of fuel, 9,000 tons of ammunition and 6,000 tons of food).
 - b) Maximum number of vehicles for carrying supplies and troops to be sent over monthly.
 - c) Personnel replacements approximating at least 9,000 men and urgently needed equipment to be flown over monthly. The German General in Rome was requested to make immediate arrangements with Comando Supremo for the allocation of the required shipping space (Appendix 159a).
- 7) An order was issued to clarify uncertainty regarding the subordination of 3rd, 33rd and 580th Reconnaissance Units. (Appendix 160).

The reconnaissance units were operationally under direct command Army Headquarters. Army supplies to be issued through Army Headquarters and unit supplies and welfare to be in the hands of 15th Rifle Brigade.

- 8) On 6 and 7 October 2 ships arrived at Benghazi carrying approximately the following cargo:
- 460 tons of fuel
 - 300 tons of ammunition
 - 700 tons of food.
- 9) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 161).

8 October, 1942

Weather: fine in morning,
drifting sand in afternoon.
Temp.: 28°C.

- 1) Nothing to report during the night. Only isolated fighter-bomber and bomber attacks were carried out during the day.
- 2) At 09.30 hours the C-in-C discussed the following points with G.O.C. 21 Corps, and commanders of 90th Light Division, 164th Light Division, 15th Panzer Division and Littorio Armoured Division:

- a) Appreciation of the situation:

There are indications that an enemy offensive is imminent. It is believed that in this event the enemy will attack along the entire front. Extensive enemy reconnaissance activity on the southern sector indicates that the main effort will be made between Ruweisat and Himeimat. However, an attack in some strength on both sides of the coastal road is also possible. Extensive reconnaissance of passability in the Quattara Depression supports the belief that an attack in any strength on the southern flank of the Army is improbable. A landing may be made simultaneously east of Sollum, but

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- 41 -

there are no indications at present that an early attack will be made from the desert on our extended southern flank.

- b) Intensification of our reconnaissance activity. Improvement of opportunities for observation.
 - c) Consolidation of the fortified front held by 21 Corps and 164th Light Division.
 - d) More economical use of ammunition (see also para. 3).
 - e) Welfare for troops.
- 3) Order to all headquarters regarding economy in the use of ammunition owing to the strained ammunition situation. (Appendix 162).
- 4) As a result of a conversation between the C-in-C and G.O.C. 10 Corps on 7 October, the following order was issued to 10 Corps, 20 Corps and Pavia Division. (Appendix 163):
- a) One battalion of Pavia Division to be placed temporarily under command 10 Corps as reinforcements and will be moved to 10 Corps by 20 Corps transport immediately.
 - b) After Pavia Division has been reinforced with 3 more battalions and 6 batteries it will be brought up to 10 Corps to relieve Trieste Division between 10 and 12 October. An order on this subject will follow.
- 5) In view of the difficult food situation of the Panzer Army mentioned in the daily report of 6 October, Marshal Barbasetti offered to make part of the required food and fat available from the stocks of Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya as a temporary aid. (Appendix 164). The C-in-C expressed his appreciation of this offer of assistance (Appendix 165).
- 6) With reference to the allocation of 36 super-heavy projectors and crews requested by Panzer Army on 2 October, O.K.H. General Staff, Army - Organisation Department stated that heavy projectors Mk.41 could not be sent at that time owing to shortage of ammunition. However, 9th Nebelwerfer Battalion (15 cm projectors) was available for Panzer Army and would be sent over as soon as the transport situation permitted.
- 7) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 166).
- Situation map (Appendix 167).

9 October, 1942

Weather: Cloudy

Temp.: 27°C

- 1) All quiet during the night. On 8 and 9 October air reconnaissance observed large-scale vehicle movements on the southern and central sectors. It appeared that reinforcements were being brought up. Artillery fire along the entire front was much heavier than on preceding days. Isolated fighter-bomber and bomber attacks were made on troops in the front area.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 42 -

- 2) During the day strong bomber formations with fighter escort made 12 attacks on advanced bases for fighters and reconnaissance aircraft. 25 enemy aircraft were shot down by German fighters, 16 by Italian fighters and 7 by A.A. It is believed that a number of other aircraft were shot down by the Luftwaffe, A.A. and ground troops. Axis losses were slight.
- 3) The C-in-C and Q.M.G. flew to Derna and Benghazi to inspect rearward Army installations in Cyrenaica. Lieutenant General von Thoma, G.O.C. Africa Corps, took over command of the Army during his absence.
- 4) An order was issued to Pavia Division and Special Formation 288 regarding the relief of the Pavia Division and the taking over of the Mersa Matruh sector by Special Formation 288. (Appendix 168).

Reinforced Special Formation 288 was to report that it had taken over the sector by 18.00 hours on 12 October. Deployment in the coastal sector and plan of defence to be submitted to Panzer Army Headquarters by 15 October.

- 5) An order was issued to Pavia Division, 10 Corps and 20 Corps regarding the relief of Trieste Motorised Division by Pavia Division (Appendix 169).

Pavia Division to be moved to 10 Corps by 20 Corps transport by 17 October. Trieste Motorised Division, without the 10 cm howitzer battery subordinated to 10 Corps, to be withdrawn from the fortified front and transferred to the area on both sides of el Daba after the arrival of the whole of the Pavia Division. Accommodation to be arranged with 90th Light Division. After withdrawal the division was to be under direct command Panzer Army Headquarters and was instructed to cooperate with 90th Light Division.

- 6) C-in-C South reported that the 9,000 men required for Africa might still be brought over during the month of October. (Appendix 170).

- 7) The Projector Experimental Detachment under Lieutenant Scheidtweiler equipped with 4 15 cm and 4 28 cm projectors arrived at el Daba and was subordinated to Senior Artillery Commander Africa as auxiliary "Projector Battery Africa". (Appendix 171).

O.K.H. Chief of Army Equipment and Director General Training - General Army Branch Inspectorate 9 instructions of 8 October ordered the return to Germany of projector detachments for the formation of a new projector unit (tropical). Panzer Army Headquarters, stressing the extremely difficult sea and air transport situation, requested that the projector demonstration detachment and its equipment remain in Africa, and that personnel and equipment still required by it be flown over to Africa.

- 8) Commenting on the daily report of 6 October, Comando Supremo stated that it was planned to send 33 supply ships from Italy during the month October. 9,300 tons of fuel would still be sent over during October, and this figure might be increased by the employment of another tanker. Comando Supremo attributed the critical supply situation to heavy losses at sea. During September alone 9 ships with about 22,000 tons of supplies were sunk.

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RESTRICTED

- 43 -

Escort vessels to enable coastal shipping to operate again were already on the way to Africa (Appendix 172).

- 9) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 173).

10 October, 1942

Weather: cloudy in morning,
some rain in afternoon.
Temp: 28.5°C

- 1) All quiet during the night. Apart from slight artillery fire and small-scale enemy air activity, nothing of particular importance occurred during the day.
- 2) The German General at the Headquarters of the Italian Armed Forces reported that Field Marshal Keitel had written to Marshal Cavallero and, by order of the Fuehrer, made an urgent request that every means be employed to improve the supply situation of the German troops in North Africa as quickly as possible. Field Marshal Keitel stressed the necessity of sending ammunition required, particularly anti-tank ammunition, and also of replenishing used stocks of food. It was also necessary to make available the escort vessels required for the transportation by sea of stocks in Tripoli and Benghazi (Appendix 174).
- 3) C-in-C South received on request the following situation report by radio: (Appendix 175)

Enemy Situation: The presumed move-up of reinforcements on the southern and central sectors reported by air reconnaissance and yesterday's heavy air attacks on advanced airfields support the Army view that a British offensive may soon be launched. The enemy will need at least 3 - 4 days to bring up artillery and troops for the attack. Army believes that the main effort will be made on the front south of Ruweisat and probably in the area on both sides of the coastal road as well. Owing to the condition of the terrain, an attack in any strength on the southern flank is improbable. All defensive measures have been taken. The following factors present disadvantages for the conduct of defensive operations;

- a) Low ammunition and fuel stocks.
 - b) Minefield defences in the southern sector, which are still inadequate.
- 4) In a signal to Panzer Army Headquarters, Marshal Barbasetti reported that as a result of the reference to the reduction of the bread ration in the daily report of 6 October he had already made arrangements for the flour required to be delivered from Italian stocks. Any future reduction of the bread ration would apply to both Italian and German troops. He also asked that any other requests regarding food be made known to the Italian Army Service Corps, which would do everything in its power to be of assistance (Appendix 176).
- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 177).

11 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp: 30°C

- 1) All quiet during the night. There was heavy enemy artillery fire on the central and northern sectors during the day. Enemy air activity was slight.

RESTRICTED

- 44 -

- 2) The C-in-C returned from his flight to inspect rear Army Services in Cyrenaica. He inspected port installations at Benghazi, the convalescence centre at Appolonia and the field hospital and port at Derna. On the return journey he discussed the following points with Marshal Barbasetti at Ain el Gazala:
 - a) Increased use of coastal shipping.
 - b) Supply situation: improved by cooperation between the German and Italian Army Service Corps.
 - c) Bringing Pavia Division up to strength.
 - d) Workmen for the construction of a road to the front: Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya cannot make available more than the 300 front-line workmen already dispatched.
 - e) Vehicle replacements to fill 20 Corps establishment: not possible at present owing to shortage of vehicles.
 - f) Artillery Commander for Mersa Matruh: Marshal Barbesetti promised that an artillery commander would be detailed.

Furthermore, the Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya Artillery Commander would come up to the front during the next few days and endeavour to replace any personnel deficiencies in Italian artillery batteries.

- 3) In view of the recent increase in air attacks on the port of Benghazi, a request was sent to C-in-C South for 10.5 cm A.A. guns and a mine-locating aircraft to clear the harbour of enemy mines.
- 4) Field Marshal Rommel stated in a signal that:
 - a) Projectors were not to be used for the time being, but were to be held back as a surprise,
 - b) The bulk of fuel supplies was to be held near the front. Fuel was not to be held in the rear (Cyrenaica) unless protection by German troops was assured against paratroops etc. (Appendix 178).
- 5) Special Formation 288 moved into the Mersa Matruh area.
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 179);

12 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 30°C.

- 1) All quiet during the night. Nothing of particular importance occurred during the day. Intensified enemy ground reconnaissance was carried out on the southern flank.
- 2) At 18.00 hours Special Formation 288 took over command of the Mersa Matruh sector from Pavia Division.

During the night 12/13 October Pavia Division began to relieve Trieste Division and regrouping in the southern sector commenced.

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RESTRICTED

- 45 -

- 3) In view of the discussion on supply and the allocation of weapons and tanks conducted by Lieutenant Berndt by order of Field Marshal Rommel (Appendix 180), Panzer Army Headquarters requested that the following be sent:
- a) one heavy and one light Nebelwerfer regiment each with 9 batteries,
 - b) 300 smoke generators,
 - c) 500 mine detectors (see Panzer Army Headquarters signal Ia/Eng. of 12 October),
 - d) 500 machine-guns Mk. 42,
 - e) 1,800 discharger cups with a corresponding number of rifle grenades,
 - f) specialist personnel to refit tanks with long-barrelled gun.

In addition, the following information was requested:

- a) when will the 40 Mk.III tanks and 40 "Tiger" tanks provided for 90th Tank Battalion and 614th Light Division be available?
 - b) how many 8.8 cm guns with tractors can be allocated ? (Appendix 180a)
- 4) A.Q.M.G. in Rome, Major Weller, reported to C-in-C on the supply and transport situation at that time:
- a) Only 4 large fast-moving ships and 7 - 8 large but slow-moving ships are available for the transportation of supplies. The fast-moving ships can turn round once a month, but the slow-moving ships depend on the availability of escort vessels.
 - b) It is intended to send the following supplies during the month of October:
 - 8,435 tons of fuel,
 - 3,185 tons of ammunition,
 - 6,700 tons of food.
 - c) It is believed that 5 new motor vessels and 3 war transports may be put into service to move supplies to Africa in November. At present 5 large ships are being repaired and it is not known when they will be serviceable again. In the case of the proposed purchase of French ships, it will not be known until November how long it will be before these ships too have to go into dock for repair.
 - d) Methods of relieving the situation: At present C-in-C South-East has 4 ships at his disposal for the transfer of 22nd Airborne Division to Crete. Discussions are in progress to release these vessels for the Italy - Crete - Africa supply route.
 - e) A further 3 ships have been detailed for the transportation of 3 Italian Divisions to Tripolitania (2 Infantry Divisions to Tripolitania and 1 Armoured Division to Benghazi). However, if these divisions should not be transferred, the vessels could be used to carry supplies to Africa (Appendix 180b).

RESTRICTED

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RESTRICTED

- 46 -

- 5) In a letter to C-in-C, C-in-C South expressed appreciation on behalf of the Luftflotte for the condolences of Panzer Army on the loss of Captain Marseille on 30 September (Appendix 181).
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 182).

13 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 31°C

- 1) All quiet during the night. Normal enemy artillery harassing fire and slight enemy air activity during the day.
- 2) General Predieri, Commander of the Brescia Infantry Division, drove over a mine and was killed. C-in-C expressed to Marshal Cavallero, Marshal Barbasetti and G.O.C. 10 Corps the deep sympathy felt by himself and by the German troops.
- 3) Situation report to Field Marshal Rommel (Appendix 183).
- 4) The German General with the Headquarters of the Italian Armed Forces in Rome reported extracts of Marshal Cavallero's reply to Field Marshal Keitel. Marshal Cavallero promised to do everything in his power to bring about an improvement in the supply situation in Africa (Appendix 184).
- 5) On 11 October SS "Una" carrying 150 tons of fuel and other supplies was sunk by a submarine. In addition, SS "Tergesteia" (cargo: 240 tons of ammunition, 1,003 tons of food and 40 vehicles) was damaged by an aerial torpedo while en route for Africa and had to make for a Greek port.
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 185).

14 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp: 32°C

- 1) All quiet during the day and night. Nothing to report.
- 2) C-in-C, accompanied by Colonel Westphal, drove to Africa Corps where the possibilities of a counter-attack by formations of Africa Corps and 20 Corps in the event of an enemy penetration into the main defence zone were discussed with G.O.C. Africa Corps;
 - a) on both sides of Deir el Munassib and to the south,
 - b) on both sides of el Ruweisat,
 - c) on and south of the coastal road.
- 3) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 186).

15 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 31°C

- 1) All quiet during the night. Nothing of importance occurred along the entire front during the day. Enemy air activity was slight.

RESTRICTED

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RESTRICTED

- 47 -

- 2) Photographic air reconnaissance showed that the number of vehicles at the front had increased from 10,000 to 12,000 since 17 September.
- 3) Africa Corps was ordered to submit a report by 25 October on the measures prepared and the proposed conduct of operations in the event of the expected British offensive in accordance with the verbal instructions given by C-in-C on 14 October (Appendix 187).
- 4) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 188).

Seen at Army Battle Headquarters
on 17 October, 1942 by the Acting
Commander-in-Chief:

Stumme - General

16 October, 1942

Weather: windy in morning, sandstorm in
afternoon, gusts of wind reaching
80 km p.h.

Temp.: 34°

- 1) All quiet during the night. Early morning air reconnaissance observed a slight reinforcement on the southern sector. Owing to a very strong sandstorm, there was no activity along the entire front during the day.
- 2) At 0700 hours C-in-C flew to Giarabub and Siwa to inspect troops and defence installations.
- 3) In answer to a Panzer Army request of 13 October, O.K.W. Amt Ausland Abwehr decided to leave the von Koenen Company in Africa for the time being. The company would be brought back as soon as the transport situation permitted.
- 4) Movement Control, Africa reported that a transportation schedule could not be drawn up owing to the uncertainty of the shipping situation at that time (Appendix 189).

Marshal Cavallero reached a decision regarding the employment of tankers; provision was made for the transportation of 7,500 tons of fuel during October.

According to a report by Q.M.G. Rome of 12 October, it was intended to bring over 8,435 tons.

- 5) In reply to an inquiry from Panzer Army, O.K.W. stated that a decision regarding the appointment of a German representative for German merchant shipping in the Mediterranean and of a director of German supply transport in the Mediterranean would not be reached until after the proposed tour to Italy by the German Director of Shipping, Gauleiter Kaufmann, had been concluded (Appendices 189a and 190).
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 191).

17 October, 1942

Weather: strong gusts of wind,
sandstorm, rainy

Temp.: 25.5°C

- 1) Owing to a heavy sandstorm, the entire front was quiet during the day.

RESTRICTED

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RESTRICTED

- 48 -

- 2) A further examination of air reconnaissance photographs obtained on 13 October showed that there were 13,400 enemy vehicles at the front. This indicated an increase of about 3,400 vehicles since 17 September. However, the enemy will probably succeed in covering a much greater reinforcement by effective camouflage as was done last year at Tobruk.
- 3) On the southern sector (10 Corps) the relief of the Trieste Motorised Division by Pavia Infantry Division has been completed. Trieste division moved into the new area around el Daba.

Reorganisation on the southern sector (dispersal of the front in depth) was continued.

- 4) In reply to a Panzer Army request to O.K.H. Chief of Army Equipment and Director General of Training that to save wear and tear on vehicles only M/T drivers with at least 500 kilometres driving experience be sent to Panzer Army Headquarters, O.K.H. Chief of Army Equipment and Director General of Training stated that this could not be done owing to the lack of fuel in Germany. As a compromise, only convalescents from mobile formations would in future be sent to Africa as replacements.
- 5) Commenting on a report from Q.M.G. Rome of 15 October that a maximum of 200 vehicles could be sent over during October, Panzer Army Headquarters pointed out that this was only a stopgap measure and that as from November at least 500 vehicles would have to be sent again. The condition of supply routes was wearing out troop and supply vehicles to such an extent that unless adequate vehicle replacements were provided, the mobility of Panzer Army and the ability to move supplies up to the front would be jeopardised (Appendix 192).
- 6) C-in-C returned from Giarabub and Siwa at 19.00 hours.
- 7) In view of a request from Panzer Army Headquarters, O.K.H. Chief of Army Equipment and Director General of Training decided that the smoke unit demonstration detachment (Lieutenant Scheidtweiler) and its vehicles and equipment should be withdrawn immediately, as otherwise the ability of the proposed projector unit (tropical) to operate in the field would be prejudiced.

Panzer Army Headquarters thereupon again requested O.K.H. General Staff, Army - Organisation Department to leave the Scheidtweiler detachment in Africa stressing the difficult transport situation in the Mediterranean area.

- 8) Fuehrer order No.1 regarding battle and ration strengths was passed on to subordinate headquarters (Appendix 192a).
- 9) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 193).

18 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 30°C

- 1) Nothing to report during the night. There was lively enemy artillery harassing fire along the entire front during the day and average enemy air activity.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 49 -

- 2) In compliance with the Army order for deployment in depth in the main defence zone, reorganisation was commenced in the northern sector (21 Corps).
- 3) General Ferrari Orsi, G.O.C. of Italian 10 Corps, was killed by a mine at the front. The Acting C-in-C sent a message of sympathy on behalf of Panzer Army to Marshal Cavallero and Marshal Barbasetti.
- 4) In view of the desertion to the British by 7 Istrian soldiers of Slav descent belonging to the Brescia Division (confirmed by captured enemy documents - see Appendix 194), Panzer Army urged Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya to transfer Istrians with front-line units to rear services or to the rear defence zone, replacing them with troops of pure Italian descent (Appendix 195).
- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 196).

19 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 27.5°C

- 1) All quiet during the night. During the day there was lively artillery harassing fire, particularly on the southern sector. Enemy fighter-bombers and bombers in some strength made attacks on advanced air bases and the railway. 2 locomotives were damaged by bombs. In addition, an ineffective attack was made on Tobruk harbour.
- 2) C-in-C drove to the funeral of G.O.C. 10 Corps, General Ferrari Orsi.
- 3) Report on supply situation to O.K.H.:
 - a) Fuel: Total stocks 3,900 cubic metres = 5.5 V.S. Will last for about 11 days at the present average daily rate of consumption. A serious shortage is threatened owing to the tanker "Panuco" being torpedoed. This vessel should have arrived at Tobruk on 20 October with about 3.5 V.S. (2,600 tons of fuel). Fuel brought over from 1 - 18 October totals 679 cubic metres as compared with a consumption of 4,664 cubic metres during the same period. No more economy measures are possible.
 - b) Ammunition: Continued improvement owing to supplies being sent over and the strictest economy in expenditure. Transportation by submarine and aircraft has particularly relieved the anti-tank ammunition situation. Total stocks about 4 issued, including 2.7 - 3.3 issues in the battle area. Exceptions: anti-tank ammunition 1.5 - 2 issues, heavy 10 cm gun 3.5 issues, heavy 13 cm. field howitzer 2.3 issues, 21 cm mortar 3.1 issues.
 - c) Food: Slight improvement. It was possible to restore some cuts made in rations and, in particular, the bread ration was brought up to 500 grammes again. Present stocks in Africa will last for about 21 days. A shortage of flour, lemons and supplementary rations still exists.
 - d) Vehicle situation: Extreme shortage of tyres, spare parts and stores. About 30% of all vehicles in repair. The lack of trained personnel is particularly acute.
 - e) The recent bad weather seriously affected water supplies owing to newly-drilled springs being filled in with mud and the destruction of recently constructed water pipe-lines. Consequently, wells further to the rear have to be used, which necessitates long journeys.

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RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

- 50 -

- f) Transport conditions: As a result of damage by rainfall, enemy attacks and a high breakdown-rate, the capacity of the railway has decreased considerably. The operation of coastal barges is very irregular. For these reasons the greatest use must be made of M.T. (Appendix 199).
- 4) With regard to a Panzer Army Headquarters request on the subject of the monthly transportation rate of 30,000 tons of supplies for Panzer Army (Appendix 159a) sent to the German General in Rome on 8 October, OKW/Armed Forces Operational Staff replied that an investigation revealed the numerical ratio of German and Italian troops in Africa as approximately 91,000 to 146,000 respectively. The existing rate of German and Italian supply was in the proportion of 1 : 1 and, in view of the above numerical ratio, it would not be possible to change this proportion to the advantage of the German troops. The total rate of supplies required for the German-Italian Panzer Army, including constant replenishment of stocks held in Africa, amounted to an average of 20 - 30,000 tons (per month) to be transported by sea. The maximum rate of supplies to cover current requirements amounted to 20,000 tons, including vehicles, guns etc., and thus 30,000 tons of supplies per month for the whole of Panzer Army should be adequate (Appendix 197).
- 5) Army Order of the Day re death of G.O.C. Italian 10 Corps. General Ferrari Orsi (Appendix 198).
- 6) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 199).

20 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 30°C

- 1) Nothing to report during the night. There was lively enemy artillery harassing fire along the entire front during the day. German artillery bombarded enemy battery positions with good effect. There was a noticeable increase in enemy vehicle concentrations in the Deir el Ragil - Deir el Risw area.
- 2) There has been a considerable increase in R.A.F. activity recently. Advanced air bases and troops at the front were attacked by strong formations on 20 October. An enemy fighter-bomber attack was made on a German main dressing station marked with the Red Cross. Casualties were caused and the operation tent was destroyed. In all, 30 enemy aircraft were shot down by German and Italian fighters and a further 6 by A.A. Prisoners statements confirmed the expectation of intensified enemy air operations in the coming moonlit nights particularly by low-flying aircraft. Army therefore ordered that troops again be instructed to fire every available weapon against all low-flying aircraft. (Appendix 200).
- 3) The re-organisation ordered on 29 September (Appendix 134) was carried out in full on the southern sector by 10 Corps and up to the coastal sector on the northern front by 21 Corps. Work in the latter sector could not be completed by the time ordered (20 October) owing to the lack of engineers and re-organisation in this sector will probably be completed by 26 October.

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- 51 -

By the time this re-organisation was completed the originally planned mining operations were also practically finished. From 5 July to 20 October 1942 German and Italian engineers installed:

264,348 Teller and Schuh mines.

In addition to these, there were the captured enemy minefields in the fortified front (Deir el Shein and Bab el Qattara and also on the new southern front) with about 181,000 mines of all types. In all, mines installed on the Alamein front totalled:

445,358 (all types).

Further plans for extending mine defences in depth in the main defence zone and for increasing the numbers of mines in fields could not be carried out at that time owing to a shortage of mines (Appendix 201).

- 4) In a supplement to the daily report of 19 October, Army again stressed the extremely serious fuel situation. With the loss of the tanker "Panuco" fuel stocks would fall to 3 V.S. by 25 October, when the next tanker was due to arrive. 1 V.S. was held in Benghazi, and by the evening of 25 October only another 2 V.S. would be available in the area east of Tobruk. In the event of an enemy attack there would be some doubt about the mobility of German troops as $\frac{1}{2}$ V.S. was being used every day merely to move current supplies. Panzer Army Headquarters therefore requested the German General in Rome to make every effort at Comando Supremo to arrange for a tanker to sail immediately for Tobruk. (Appendix 202).
- 5) C-in-C demanded that 10 Corps investigate how 7 soldiers of the Brescia Division managed to leave the Axis lines during the night 13/14 October unnoticed by their immediate superiors and comrades and pass unseen through the line of battle outposts to the enemy positions. Furthermore, C-in-C ordered that suitable measures be taken to prevent repetition of this occurrence (Appendices 194, 195 and 203).
- 6) G.O.C-s and Divisional Commanders were again instructed by C-in-C to pay particular attention to fortifying the will to resist of every man in view of the coming battle (Appendix 204).
- 7) Basic Order No. 1 (raising of battle strengths) was passed on to subordinate headquarters (Appendix 205).
- 8) In reply to a Panzer Army request of 17 October, O.K.H./Organisation Department decided that the withdrawal of the Demonstration Detachment of the Schweidtweiler Smoke Unit ordered by O.K.H. Chief of Army Equipment and Director General of Training would not be carried out. The Detachment would be absorbed by the second Projector Unit which would be sent to Africa about 1 February, 1943.
- 9) Marshal Cavallero thanked C-in-C Panzer Army for condolences on the death of General Ferrari Orsi (Appendix 206).
- 10) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 207).

20 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp: 31°C

- 1) There was lively enemy air activity during the night. Aircraft bombed and shot up targets at the front and in rear areas.

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RESTRICTED

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- 52 -

During the day enemy artillery harassing fire was slighter than on preceding days, but air operations continued with bomber and fighter-bomber attacks on troops and advanced air bases.

- 2) With reference to O.K.W/German Armed Forces Operational Staff QM (I) report (Appendix 197), Panzer Army Headquarters stated that the rate of German and Italian supply must be at least 4 : 3 in favour of the German troops for the following reasons:

Of the 164,000 Italian troops in North Africa only 54,000 are subordinate to the German-Italian Panzer Army, whereas 77,000 men are subordinate to Italian Advanced G.H.Q. Libya and Italian Higher Command Libya and are stationed in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. The remaining 15,000 men belong to the Italian Navy and Air Force, being stationed in approximately equal numbers in Egypt and Libya. There are therefore approximately 90,000 German troops with about 12,600 Army vehicles in Egypt, i.e. at the front, as compared with only 62,000 Italian troops with about 3,500 Army vehicles. The supply requirements of the German and Italian troops fighting in Egypt as regards fuel, ammunition, weapons and vehicles are incomparably greater than those of Italian forces in Libya with only security duties to perform. In addition, these forces can procure part of their food supplies from the land.

Furthermore, the German troops of the Panzer Army require the following supplies every month to replace current consumption and expenditure:

6,000 tons of food, 8,000 tons of fuel, 3,000 tons of ammunition, 3,000 tons of weapons and equipment and other supplies and 3,000 tons of shipping space for the transportation of vehicles, guns etc. Thus a total monthly supply of 20,000 tons is not the maximum but the minimum current requirement during so-called quiet periods. During large-scale actions ammunition and fuel expenditure is considerably greater. Moreover, a basic stock must be maintained so that fighting can be continued during lengthy operations or if sea communications are temporarily cut. (Appendix 208).

- 3) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 209).
4) Situation map as on 21 October, 1942 (Appendix 210).

22 October, 1942

Weather: fine in morning, afternoon
windy, cloudbursts in places.
Temp. 29°C

- 1) During the night 21/22 October there was lively enemy patrol and artillery activity, mainly on the northern sector. Low-flying aircraft made ineffective night attacks on troops and vehicles at the front.

During the day there was average artillery and patrol activity by both sides along the entire front. Enemy fighter-bombers and bombers continued attacks on troops, advanced air bases and the coastal road between Sollum and the front. During these operations 2/200 German Main Dressing Station (see daily report of 20 October) was again attacked by 8 fighter-bombers from an altitude of about 1,000 metres. It is possible that

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RESTRICTED

- 53 -

the British assume that there is a Headquarters in the immediate vicinity of the Main Dressing Station owing to Storch aircraft of the Desert Rescue Staffel without the Geneva Red Cross markings landing in the area every day. This seems all the more possible in view of the fact that 2 Storch aircraft without the Geneva markings landed at the Main Dressing Station about 2 hours before the attack on 20 October. Enemy reconnaissance aircraft, which were seen over the Main Dressing Station at the time, apparently observed these aircraft landing.

In order not to expose the wounded to further air attacks, Fliegerführer was requested to use only Storch ambulance aircraft to move severely wounded troops. Furthermore, Army ordered all hospital installations to be more clearly marked. (Appendix 211).

The enemy lost a total of 20 aircraft on 22 October. Of these, 15 were shot down by fighters and the rest by ground defence.

- 2) The transfer of the Trieste Division ordered on 9 October was completed on 21 October. The entire division arrived in the new area on both sides of el Daba and was immediately placed under command Panzer Army Headquarters as Army reserve.

The division was instructed to co-operate closely with 90th Light Division in coastal defence duties.

- 3) In view of a Comando Supremo report that large-scale British naval operations might be carried out in the Mediterranean, all troops in coastal areas were ordered to increase alertness. (Appendix 212).
- 4) On completion of regrouping the period of static warfare will be used to the greatest possible extent for training, i.e. primarily by units not in the front line. C-in-C provided general directions to form the basis of divisional training orders, which were the foundation of training (Appendix 213).
- 5) In view of the many urgent Panzer Army references to the critical fuel situation (Appendices 199 and 202), Marshal Cavallero ordered the production of a fuel transportation programme. According to this, the first tanker (2,500 tons of fuel) was not expected to arrive at Tobruk before 26 October, i.e. the fuel would not reach the troops before 29 October. Stocks then held in Africa would be expended in transporting supplies by about 29 October. C-in-C South was therefore requested to fly over 1,000 tons of fuel from Greece to Tobruk, temporarily holding up the transportation of personnel (Appendices 214 and 215).
- 6) 47th Reinforced Infantry Regiment reported that, commencing on 23 October, it was to be flown over to Africa. In view of a report by the regiment that re-organisation had not yet been completed and that it had deficiencies of over 1,200 men, most of its anti-tank weapons, artillery and vehicles, Army requested C-in-C South to postpone flying the regiment over until it was fully operational. It was expected to reach this state in the first half of November. (Appendix 216).
- 7) In a letter to the German General at the Headquarters of the Italian Armed Forces in Rome, General von Rintelen, the acting C-in-C expressed his views on the supply problem of the Army in Africa. The main difficulty was in the amount of shipping available and the lack of escort vessels. Moreover, a Panzer Army Supply staff in

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- 54 -

Rome would undoubtedly provide support for vital demands and an effort to establish a completely centralised Armed Forces supply organisation, to which all three services would be well worthwhile. General Stumme summed up the Panzer Army supply situation at that time as follows: "We are living from hand to mouth; we fill one gap only to see another open. We cannot build up the basic supply which would enable us to overcome critical situations through our own resources and which allows operational freedom of movement, which is an absolutely vital necessity for the Army". (Appendix 217).

- 8) The Chief of the Italian Liaison Staff at Panzer Army Headquarters, General Mancinelli, informed C-in-C that the transportation of 3 more Italian divisions to Tripolitania would not make any incursion into the amount of shipping available for Panzer Army. The necessary shipping would be obtained by economising in the number of vessels used on the Italy - Sardinia route. C-in-C thereupon replied that this measure for economising in the use of shipping should have been introduced much earlier to the advantage of Panzer Army: if this had been the case, essential supplies could have been sent to Panzer Army at all times and the critical supply situation then existing would not have occurred.
- 9) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 218).

23 October, 1942

Weather: fine
Temp.: 28°C

- 1) Apart from lively enemy air activity, nothing of importance occurred during the night 22/23 October.

There was average enemy artillery harassing fire during the day. Air reconnaissance observed small-scale movements in a westerly direction in the area south of Hammam. Owing to strong fighter defence, observation could be made over only part of the southern area. No changes were identified. The enemy resumed his countless fighter-bomber and bomber attacks on troops, airfields and the coastal road. 7 enemy aircraft were shot down in these operations.

- 2) The employment of 361st Africa Regiment south of Tobruk in November 1941 and of elements of 164th Light Division at Alamein in July 1942 after these units had been brought over by air and sent into action immediately without the absolutely essential heavy weapons for tactical operation and vehicles for bringing up supplies, proved that the employment of units in this way was not possible in the desert and resulted only in heavy losses among the troops. Panzer Army therefore made a request to Movement Control Africa that men being brought over by air be accompanied by machine-guns, mortars and some of their motor cycles in addition to personal equipment (light weapons, tent and 3 blankets apiece). At the same time as the first detachments of men were moved, part of the heavy weapons (heavy anti-tank guns, infantry support guns and artillery) with the necessary gun-towers and a motorised field kitchen per unit should be sent over by sea. (Appendix 219).

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- 55 -

- 3) In reply to yesterday's request by Panzer Army that 1,000 cubic metres of fuel be flown over immediately, C-in-C South reported that 100 tons of fuel would be flown to Tobruk on 23 October and further regular supplies would be sent during the next few days. Although air transport would have to be used on a considerable scale, this amount represented only about 30% of the fuel required by German Panzer Army formations solely for transporting current supplies. However, bearing in mind that the British offensive was expected to open at any moment, the state of the fuel situation at that time meant that the Army did not have the operational freedom of movement which was an absolute essential (Appendix 220).
- 4) Towards 20.40 hours a full-scale bombardment opened up suddenly along the entire front. After some time the fire slackened on the southern sector, but became even more intense on the northern sector. After the artillery had been firing for more than an hour, strong enemy infantry forces supported by tanks attacked on the northern sector along the road and on a 10 kilometre front to the south of it. The attack on the coastal road was held up in front of 125th Panzer Grenadier Regiment positions, but towards midnight the enemy south of the road succeeded in over-running the line of battle outposts and penetrated the mine-boxes J and L. As line communications were largely destroyed by the bombardment, very few reports were received from front-line units. There was still no clear picture of the situation towards midnight, but the unusually heavy artillery fire and the strong attacks being made at a number of points on fronts of some width indicated that the expected British offensive against the el Alamain position had opened.
- 5) Daily report to O.K.H. (Appendix 221).
- 6) Situation map as on 23 October, 1942 (Appendix 222).

Seen at Wiener Neustadt on
22 April, 1943

ROMMEL C-in-C

A.H.B.6. DISTRIBUTION

Same as for VII/104

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